

## Letters of the Catholic Poor

This innovative study of poverty in Independent Ireland between 1920 and 1940 is the first to place the poor at its core by exploring their own words and letters. Written to the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, their correspondence represents one of the few traces in history of Irish experiences of poverty, and collectively they illuminate the lives of so many during the foundation decades of the Irish state. This book keeps the human element central, so often lost when the framework of history is policy, institutions and legislation. It explores how ideas of charity, faith, gender, character and social status were deployed in these poverty narratives and examines the impact of poverty on the lives of these writers and the survival strategies they employed. Finally, it considers the role of priests in vetting and vouching for the poor and, in so doing, perpetuating the discriminating culture of charity.

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# Letters of the Catholic Poor

*Poverty in Independent Ireland, 1920–1940*

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Lindsey Earner-Byrne

University College Dublin



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*To Patrick St. John Byrne (1984-2003)*  
*This book is written in memory of you.*

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## Abbreviations

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AB	Archbishop Byrne
CBS	Christian Brothers' School
CC	Charity Cases
Clonliffe	Holy Cross College, Clonliffe
CSTI	Catholic Truth Society of Ireland
CUS	Catholic University School, Leeson St., Dublin
DDA	Dublin Diocesan Archives
DD	Doctor of Divinity/Theology
DV or <i>Deo Volente</i>	['God willing']
E. de M.	Enfant de Marie Immaculée i.e. a member of the Sodality of Our Lady
<i>JSSISI</i>	<i>Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland</i>
Maynooth	St Patrick's College, Maynooth
Mgr	Monsignor
NAI	National Archives of Ireland
NLI	National Library of Ireland
PC	Parish Chaplain
PE	Pastor Emeritus
POS	Protestant Orphan Society
Pro-Cathedral	St Mary's Pro-Cathedral, Dublin
SVP	Society of Saint Vincent de Paul
UCDA	University College Dublin Archives

## Editorial Rubric

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This book was inspired and deeply influenced by the work of David Fitzpatrick and Thomas Sokoll.<sup>1</sup> I wish in particular to credit Sokoll's work for much of the editorial principles and transcription conventions that have been adopted in this study.

### Transcription Guidelines

- [ ] insertions of editorial text are placed in these
- [ / ] suggested readings of ambiguous, indecipherable or illegible parts, where it is not possible to guess, hyphens are provided i.e. [----]
- < > conjectured readings of physically destroyed and irrecoverable parts
- / indicates page breaks except where the pages were numbered by the authors; then this is indicated by the number and line space.

### Editorial Principles

When letters are cited the original spelling, punctuation or lack thereof is retained. There is no editorial correction or standardization, for example, abbreviated words have not been extended, irregular capitalization or erratic spelling has been maintained. Editorial suggestions and/or additions have only been made when words were missing, illegible or could possibly cause confusion.

*Topography:* Errors and/or crossed out words have been retained in order to capture as much as is possible of the original 'look' of the texts.

<sup>1</sup> D. Fitzpatrick, *Oceans of Consolation: Personal Accounts of Irish Migration to Australia* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1994); T. Sokoll, *Essex Pauper Letters 1731–1837* (Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 70–87.

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*Names and Addresses:* While the first names of those who applied for charity have been fictionalised, the initials have been maintained and surnames have been reduced to initials. As this collection is uncatalogued, keeping the initials but fictionalising the names allows others to follow the archival trail while affording anonymity to the writers of the letters. Addresses have been retained but identifiable features such as the house/flat number or house name have been removed.

Priests' full names have been retained since they were public figures easily linked to their parish.