Witness Walk

THURSDAY AUGUST 21ST

AT 6.45PM

The Witness Walk is a quiet, reflective walk through Knock Village, tracing the paths taken by some of the witnesses on the evening of the Knock Apparition in 1879. This simple route includes a number of stops that mark places connected to the people who were present that night. Along the way, visitors are invited to pause and reflect on the story of the Apparition and the lives of those who saw it. It is a gentle way to connect more personally with the events of that evening and the local community that experienced it.

The village of Knock was typical of any rural village in the West of Ireland in the late 19th century. At the centre was the local Parish Church with two School Houses nearby and a scattering of small, thatched houses.
1879 was a year of uncertainty and unrest in Ireland where conflict erupted over land and landownership. In the West of Ireland, matters were even more stark with the threat of another famine. A combination of excess rain that year and a swift and devastating potato blight added to the fears of those people for whom the Great Famine of the 1840s was still a painful memory. It was against this backdrop that the Apparition at Knock took place.

1. Confessional Chapel

On this evening, the 147th anniversary of the apparition, as we remember the events of that evening and remember the 15 Knock witnesses – let us walk in their footsteps, united in faith as a parish family, united as these 15 people were on Thursday August 21st, 1879.

2. Archdeacon Cavanagh & Mary McLoughlin

Archdeacon Cavanagh was the parish priest of Knock in 1879 and lived here. He had just completed 100 masses for the Holy Souls when the Apparition occurred in Knock in 1879. Mary Mc Loughlin lived here as his housekeeper. At around 7:30pm that evening she left the house on her way to Mrs Byrne's house, passing by the chapel on her way. She saw the Apparition but decided to keep going by – and when she reached Byrne's she didn't tell them what she had seen.

3. Judith Campbell

Judith Campbell was at home here, caring for her dying mother when Mary Byrne came for her and told her to come up and see the great sight at the chapel. They ran back together.

4. Patrick Byrne

Patrick Byrne was in his house here when young Dominick Byrne ran in to tell him to come up to the chapel and see what was happening there.

5. Dominick Byrne Senior, Patrick Hill, John Durkan and John Curry

This is the house where Dominick Byrne Senior, Patrick Hill, John Durkan and John Curry were. Dominick Junior came in to tell them to come out. Patrick Hill was from Claremorris and was visiting his aunt here. John Durkan was a casual labourer and John Curry was a relative who was staying there.

6. Bridget Trench and Mrs Hugh Flatley

Bridget Trench lived out the Kiltimagh road. On the night of the Apparition she was visiting Judith's mother, Mrs Campbell – the woman who was dying. That was how she came to be in the village at the time. Mrs Hugh Flatley also lived out that road and was returning home on her bicycle from visiting relations when she passed by the chapel and saw the visions there. Curiously she never stopped but continued her journey homeward.

7. Patrick Walsh

Patrick Walsh was never at the chapel, in fact, but saw the very bright lights on the south gable of the church from his land about a half mile away in Ballinderrig.

8. Margaret Byrne Senior, Margaret Byrne, Mary Byrne, Dominick Byrne Junior and Catherine Murray

Margaret Byrne, a widow, her daughter – also called Margaret, her son Dominick, other daughter Mary and her granddaughter Catherine Murray all were in their thatched cottage here at the site of the Basilica on that evening. Mary had gone out with Mary McLoughlin who had come visiting and came back to tell them of the vision they had both just seen at the gable wall of the church.

9. Graveyard

10 of the witnesses are buried here in this cemetery. Let us pause for a moment's silence as we pray for them. We also remember the other 5 witnesses who are buried elsewhere.

10. Apparition Chapel

This glass Chapel encloses the original gable wall of the Parish Church, where the Apparition took place on Thursday, 21 August 1879. The statues are an exact representation of the Apparition scene as described by the witnesses.