

**Last week I celebrated mass at St. Munchin Church in Limerick, Ireland, the mother church of our parish in Cameron. Father Michael O'Shea, who visited here last year, sends his greetings to one and all.**

**Little is known about Munchin except he is the founding bishop of Limerick. The Vatican says he died around the year 700, and the people of Limerick think he is buried in the ruins of a 6<sup>th</sup> century church there. In 1691 Catholics were forbidden to celebrate mass inside the city limits of Limerick, so they built a church outside the main gate and called it St. Munchin's. They replaced it with another one a century later, and replaced it with a third one a century after that. Protestants built their own St. Munchin Church over the site of the 6<sup>th</sup> century one in the old city limits, but it has been closed and sold to a theatre group. A photograph of the second Catholic church shows it resembles this one. It should; people who worshiped there came here, where they built this church on property purchased by Father John Hogan, originally from Limerick. He became the founding bishop of the Diocese of St. Joseph and the Diocese of Kansas City. Those two dioceses were joined 50 years ago next month. Today, there are only 2 St. Munchin Catholic Churches: one in Limerick built in 1922, the other in Cameron, built in 1893. This building is now the oldest functioning St. Munchin Church in the universe.**

**I had a great trip. We had plenty of sunshine. The food was tasty and the company was tremendous. Father O'Shea put me up, and he drove me to see the shrine of Our Lady at Knock, the Irish coast at the Cliffs of Moher, Adare Manor, and Glenstal Abbey; he took me to his home parish and I met his mother. The pastor of St. Munchin's is Canon Micheal Liston, and this was the first time in history that the pastor of St. Munchin's shook hands with the pastor of St. Munchin's. He drove me out to some prehistoric ruins dating to about 4500 BC, near the modern town where Bishop Hogan came from, and he showed me the plaque our Bishop Boland recently unveiled in the church there.**

**I also met Bishop Donal Murray, the current successor to St. Munchin. All the priests in the entire world who are currently working for a church called St. Munchin had lunch with the bishop of Limerick last Sunday. I preached at all 5 masses that weekend. St. Lelia's Church is under repair, so two masses were in halls. The people were great. And Father O'Shea is a marvel. He had a funeral and a wedding the first two days I was there, and 3 more people died before I left. He works very hard.**

**Today's responsorial psalm is the most famous one in the bible, Psalm 23, "The Lord is my Shepherd." It envisions God as a shepherd guiding us through times of trouble, and as a host of a great banquet. Father O'Shea acted as both shepherd and host, and we are all called to that kind of leadership whenever we're in charge at work or at home. God loved us enough to send us Jesus and to send us missionaries who passed on the faith from one generation to another, from one land to the next. With the help of the good shepherd it is our task to do the same.**