

# 1916 RISING



## **Fr. Laurence Joseph Stafford (1867-1943)**

Laurence Stafford was born in Waterford on 4 December 1867 and was educated at St. John's College before entering the seminary at Holy Cross College, Clonliffe. He completed his studies for the priesthood in Maynooth and was ordained there on 21 June 1896 by Archbishop William J. Walsh.

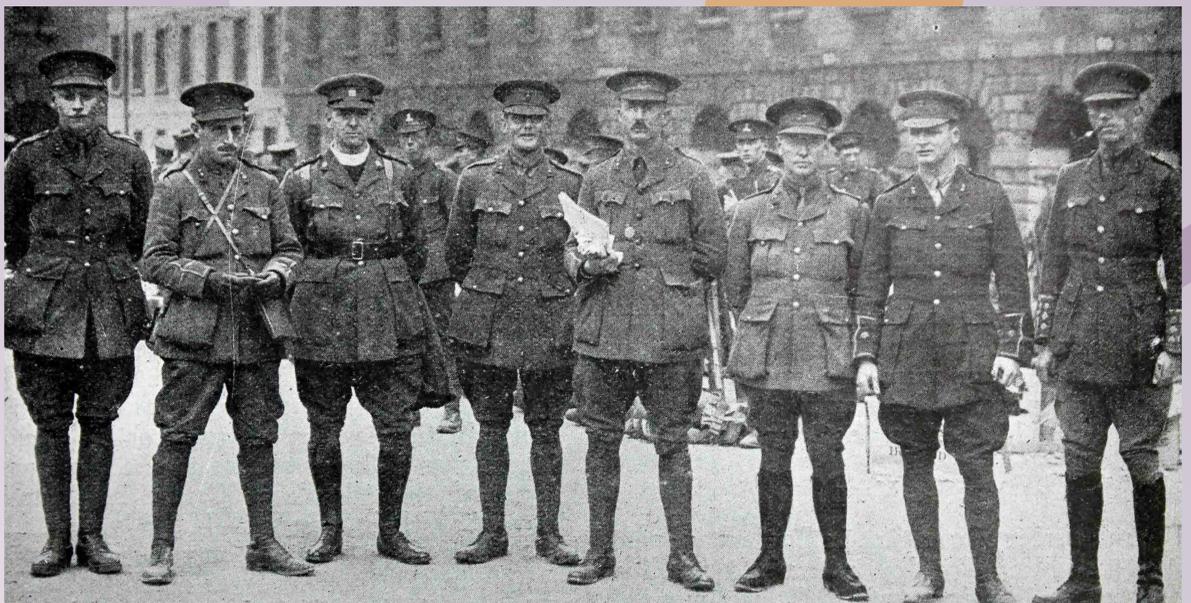
Fr. Stafford's first appointment as Curate was to St. Margaret's (1897-1901). He then moved to St. Michael & John's (1901-1912) before being appointed to Dolphin's Barn (1912-1915).

In August 1914, Fr. Stafford asked that he be given permission to serve as a Catholic Chaplain to the British Expeditionary Force. For many years he had been involved with the Dublin Fusiliers. He was appointed Chaplain in March 1915 to the 10th Irish Division. By August 1915 he was sailing to Cyprus, having stopped at Malta and Alexandria. During the voyage he had the 'cure of nearly 3000 men'. He served in Salonica and during his leave he visited Palestine taking in the sights at Galilee, Lake Tiberius and Capernaum and during a second visit he crossed the Jordan and went to Damascus.

By 20 August 1916 Fr. Stafford was ministering to the Irish Volunteers who were being held in Frongoch, North Wales. He was well known to many of the men although some found it difficult to initially accept him as he was a 'kaki chaplain'. He said Mass on alternative days in the upper and lower camps; he heard confessions; and when there was time, recited the Rosary. He arose at 5am each day. The men played football, and handball; read the daily newspapers; played the pianos, which were available in both camps, and also a set of Irish pipes. During his months in Frongoch, many prisoners were released. On 23 December 1916 Fr. Larry Stafford was the last Irishman left in the camp. During his time there he had worked tirelessly for their release and his argument towards the end had simply been that 'Christmas was Christmas'. 'Today the gates of the compounds are thrown open and tonight there will not be a single Irishman (save myself) left in Frongoch'.

By mid-January 1917 Fr. Stafford was back home in Waterford visiting his mother who was seriously ill. On returning to duty he was sent to the Italian front and was finally demobilised in 1919.

He was appointed Chaplain to the Skin Hospital in 1919 and in 1920 moved as Curate to Lucan parish where he remained for five years. He was made Parish Priest of Narraghmore in 1925 and remained there until his retirement in 1942. Fr. Laurence Stafford died 17 May 1943.



**From left to right: LIEUT. HICKS, LIEUT. KELLY, FATHER STAFFORD, LIEUT. RUSSEL, MAJOR HARRISON, LIEUT. FITZGIBBON, LIEUT. GIRVIN, CAPT. PALMER.**

