



THE COMMUNITY OF ST EDMUND
PARIS — DOUAI — WOOLHAMPTON



**A Commemoration of
400 Years of Benedictine Life
1615 – 2015**



Father Sebastian Simpson in the rubble of St Osburg's, Coventry

1940 Air-raid on Coventry

... If the raid had never happened, the night of November 14th - 15th would always be remembered as phenomenal for never was night more beautiful. The moon at the full bathed the earth in such brightness that its borrowed glory seemed to vie with that of the mid-day sun. The heavens were telling the Glory of the Lord. Then, suddenly, it seemed that the powers of evil were leaping from hell itself to challenge and destroy this manifestation of God's might and majesty, for there fell on the ear the wailing as of lost souls in the bottomless pit, the warning of impending doom.

... It was not long before enemy planes had selected their targets and incendiaries were raining down. No one could distinguish sound from sound for the uproar from guns and bombs merged into a deafening peal of continuous thunder.

... A ghastly spectacle confronted us. The whole interior of the church was an appalling melee. The roof on the Gospel side had gone completely; windows had been blown out; the new oak seating was shattered and piled up in heaps; the organ was smashed to atoms; nothing of the altar could be

seen for tons of masonry.

... About 8.30 in the morning the parish priest returned to St Osburg's, with some stalwart young Irishmen and set about the task of reaching the Tabernacle. With nothing but their bare hands these men tore away great massive stones until the priest was able to open the Tabernacle. The ciborium with its silken veil lay near its base, but not a single Host had been disturbed. Then came the saddest moment of all. Our Lord must leave His Temple in which for nearly 100 years He had been adored and where he had fed with His own Body the souls of countless men. Did the thousands of Faithful Departed who once worshipped here, the good priests of long ago witness this departure of His? One imagined all of them uttering the lamentation of the Magdalen - "They have taken away my Lord" and hoped that their prayers would help to bring Him back again. St Osburg's became an empty tomb on November 15th 1940. As we bore Him away we prayed that by Him, and in Him and through Him, all might be soon restored.

Fr Sebastian Simpson A Centenary Memorial of St Osburg's,
Coventry 1845 - 1945