Lately I have been reflecting on the important work of our Order with a great sense of achievement and pride. We have defended the Church and our faith and confronted those who would disparage those of Irish heritage. We recognized those patriots of Irish descent who served and sacrificed for our Country. Our charitable work for Catholic hospitals, schools and churches is acknowledged across our nation. A silent testament to the reach of this generosity is displayed in magnificent stained glass windows gifted by the AOH more than 100 years ago to St Patrick’s Church at the beginning of the American Road in Cumberland, MD to Immaculate Conception Old Cathedral in Sacramento, CA.

But a core mission of our Order---Ireland’s re-unification--- remains a significant challenge. The 1998 Belfast Treaty and its subsequent implementation agreements brought a measure of peace but not justice to those Irish men and women still living behind Britain’s partition wall. Hibernians were in the forefront of fighting every effort by the British to corrupt law and justice. Opposing internment and juryless Diplock courts. Challenging anti-Catholic discrimination in housing and jobs with the MacBride Fair Employment Principles. Highlighting the injustice of the Birmingham Six and Guildford Four cases. Supporting the imprisoned and their families. And today demanding the truth about the Dublin Monaghan bombings, assassinations of lawyers Pat Finucane and Rosemary Nelson, and Sinn Fein Councilors and workers as well as hundreds of Catholics whose murders have NEVER been investigated.

Our work is not done. We must keep our eye on the prize and stand tall again as the spectre of Brexit is proving that British bullying of Ireland threatens not only the entire economy of the Ireland but it will unravel the Good Friday Agreement. Some in Ms. May’s government have even boasted of once again teaching Ireland a lesson with higher food tariffs!! The Irish Language and Human rights obligations of the GFA have been ignored and legacy investigations are constantly undermined by the British Attorney General, the N. Ireland Secretary along with the Ministry of Defense. A “security veto” has made a mockery of efforts to secure the truth of hundreds of killings. British police have arrested journalists who produced ***No Stone Unturned*** about the Loughlinisland murders and Parliament seeks to grant amnesty to all British soldiers involved in killing innocent civilians in the North. Indeed it is we who should start punishing a British government that conducts itself in such a despicable fashion.

Our fight must be carried to the American people with new allies like the McGuinness Principles and American Brexit Committee along with traditional friends like the Irish American Unity Conference and the Brehon Law Society. President Trump’s threats to the EU and fawning over the Queen make it imperative we inspire our friends in Congress to our cause. Hearings should be held to document Britain’s Treaty and Brexit treachery. And before any new US-UK trade deal is adopted their treaty promises MUST be fulfilled and a re-unification referendum conducted. Brexit has changed the landscape!! Since England has ignored the democratic vote of N. I. to Remain in the EU the unity referendum is all the more imperative. In this we must be resolute. We dare not fail.

JAR