

A QUIET SEA  
RMS TITANIC



CLERGY

# TITANIC: CLERGY

## INTRODUCTION

On the morning of Sunday, April 14, Titanic's passengers were greeted by grey skies and placid seas. Church services were held at 10:30 a.m. Captain Edward J. Smith officiated in First Class, while clergy traveling in Second-Class led services for Second- and Third-Class passengers. The eight priests and ministers crossing the Atlantic on Titanic's maiden voyage included a Methodist, three Catholics, a Lutheran, an Anglican, and two Baptists. All perished.



Reverend Bateman  
Credit: John Cowart

## REVEREND ROBERT BATEMAN

Rev. Bateman was born in Bristol, England in 1860. He worked as a stonemason and as a Methodist minister, becoming involved in missionary work. He emigrated to Canada, then the United States, where he continued working as a traveling stonemason while performing his ministerial duties. He and his wife eventually had five children. In 1912, Rev. Bateman returned to Bristol for a visit and convinced his sister-in-law, Ada Balls, to accompany him back to the United States. He booked passage in Second Class, and they boarded the ship in Southampton. The reverend and Ada, who was deeply religious, organized prayer meetings in the Second-Class dining room, leading the group in hymns. After the collision, Rev. Bateman woke Ada and insisted she get into a lifeboat. He tossed his necktie to her while the boat was descending and shouted, "If I don't meet you again in this world, I will in the next." Nothing else is known about his remaining time on board. His body was retrieved by the mortuary ship, Mackay Bennett, and sent to his widow for burial in Jacksonville, Florida.



Father Montvila  
Credit: Nobility.Org

## FATHER JUOZAS MONTVILA

Born in Lithuania in 1885, Father Montvila was ordained in 1908 and sent to be vicar in Lipsk, Poland. At the time, the Tsarist government was forcing Eastern Catholic Churches into the Russian Orthodox Church, and it

was forbidden for a priest to minister to Ukrainian Catholics. Nonetheless, Fr. Montvila covertly provided spiritual support, was arrested and lost his position as vicar. While awaiting final disposition of his offense, he wrote sermons and illustrated stories for newspapers in Vilnius, Lithuania. When it became apparent that he would not be reinstated, he decided to leave and be a priest for the Ukrainian Catholic community in America. He hoped to head a parish in Brooklyn, New York, where his sister lived, although he had an offer to found a Lithuanian parish in Worcester, Massachusetts. After a brief stay in England, Fr. Montvila boarded Titanic and headed for his new life in America. While on board, he said mass each day in the Second-Class library with two fellow priests, Fr. Byles and Fr. Peruschitz. During Titanic's final hours, Fr. Montvila followed his religious ideals, offering comfort and listening to confessions. He was lost with the ship, and his body was never identified. Fr. Montvila's heroic service was honored with a monument erected in Lithuania in 2012.



Reverend Lahtinen  
Credit: Encyclopedia Titanica

#### REVEREND WILHELM LAHTINEN

There is scant information regarding Reverend Lahtinen's early years, other than that he was born in Finland in 1876. He may have been in the military as a young man. He arrived in America in 1903 aboard Cunard's Campania. After traveling through several states, he was married in South Dakota; he became a citizen in 1910. He and his wife, Anna, adopted a daughter and eventually settled on a farm in Minnesota, where he became pastor of the local Lutheran Church. In late 1911, he and his family traveled to Finland to visit his newly widowed mother. While there, he approved the building of a new home in Minneapolis, which was to be ready upon their return. When his young daughter Martha became ill and died in March of 1912, Rev. Lahtinen and his wife, accompanied by one of his wife's relatives, Lyyli Silven, booked Second-Class passage on Titanic. Ms. Silven, awakened by the collision, rushed to find the couple and stayed with them during the evacuation. Anna refused to leave her husband, and they died together. Their bodies, if recovered, were never identified.



Father Peruschitz  
Credit: Wikipedia

#### FATHER JOSEF PERUSCHITZ

Father Peruschitz was born in Bavaria 1871. After graduating from the Royal High School in 1890, he entered a seminary to study theology, and in 1894, he joined a monastery. Fr. Peruschitz became an instructor,

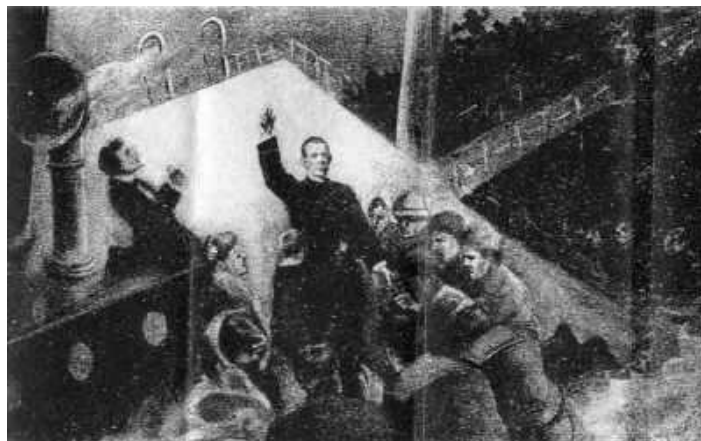
proficient at mathematics, music, and physical education. In 1912, he was headed to St. Cloud, Minnesota, to become principal at St. John's Preparatory School. He boarded Titanic as a Second-Class passenger in Southampton. While at sea, another passenger observed that he and Fr. Montvila and Fr. Byles, held mass each day in the Second-Class library. Fr. Peruschitz was known to take time to explain Bible verses to those who had questions. After the collision, Catholics on board implored the priests to provide spiritual comfort. While leading prayers and rosary recitations, and giving absolution, the priests were jeered by several passengers, who perhaps participated in the religious divisions of the day. As he consoled those entering the lifeboats, Fr. Peruschitz was offered a seat, but he declined and returned to those who he had earlier led in prayer. If found, his body was never identified.



Father Byles  
Credit: Encyclopedia Titanica

## FATHER THOMAS BYLES

Born in England in 1870 to a minister and businessman, Fr. Byles studied mathematics, history and theology at Oxford and converted to Catholicism, taking a position at a Roman Catholic seminary. Because he suffered from poor health, depression and fits, he was not sure any order would accept him. However, he was ordained in 1902 and from 1905 until 1912 was rector of a church in Essex, England. His younger brother, living in Brooklyn, New York, was planning to marry and invited Fr. Byles to officiate at the wedding. Elated at the invitation, Fr. Byles booked passage on another White Star liner but abruptly switched to Second-Class on Titanic. During the passage, he joined Frs. Peruschitz and Montvila in holding services in English, French, Hungarian and German for the Second- and Third-Class passengers. His sermon used the metaphor of a spiritual lifeboat in the form of prayer, and the need to hold to the sacraments in the event of a spiritual shipwreck during times of temptation. Fr. Byles was on deck reading his breviary when Titanic struck the iceberg. He went below to lead Third-Class passengers to the boat deck and into the lifeboats, whispering words of comfort to the women and children. With the boats gone, he went aft in the final stages of the sinking, reciting the rosary, hearing confessions and giving absolution to those trapped on the rising stern. His body, if found, was never identified.



Father Byles with his final congregation.  
Credit: Encyclopedia Titanica



Reverend Carter

Credit: Encyclopedia Titanica

## REVEREND ERNEST CARTER

Anglican Reverend Carter was born in England in 1858. His father was also a clergyman. After undergraduate studies at Oxford, he took his holy orders and in 1889 became a priest. He served as curate in the village of Chieveley, moved to London to be vicar of St. Jude, and was named president of Sion College in London. He married Lillian Hughes in 1890. The couple were known to be devoted to each other; they had no children. The Carters boarded Titanic in Southampton as Second-Class passengers. Rev. Carter was slightly ill and obtained some medication from another passenger. The evening of April 14, Rev. Carter, wanting to lead a group in hymns, asked fellow passenger Lawrence Beesley if he knew the purser well enough to ask for the use of the Second-Class dining room. Permission was obtained, and Rev. Carter invited a large group to select the hymns to be sung. Once a hymn was chosen, he would give a brief history of the hymn and its composer; the group was impressed with his knowledge. The meeting ended with the steward serving coffee and people excitedly discussing their arrival in New York. After the collision, the Carters made their way to the boat deck, where they were offered seats in a lifeboat. They refused and stayed together until the end. Their bodies, if recovered, were never identified. A plaque erected at St. Jude's Church reads, "Lovely and pleasant in their lives, in death they were not divided."



Reverend Kirkland

Credit: Encyclopedia Titanica

## REVEREND CHARLES KIRKLAND

Born in Canada in 1841, Rev. Kirkland started as a master carpenter. However, he followed his calling and became a Baptist minister—a traveling pastor in the Free Will Baptist movement in Maine, known for his earnest and powerful sermons. Once established in south central Maine, Rev. Kirkland founded his own ministry. Eventually, he was appointed pastor in Penobscot County, continuing his traveling revival meetings and baptizing converts. After three of his youngest children died in the 1888 influenza epidemic, the family moved several times, and he was given a parsonage at the Danforth Baptist Church. When his wife of 30 years died suddenly, Rev. Kirkland, lonely and deeply depressed, left the church. In time, he remarried (a woman with four children from a previous marriage) and returned to his ministry, becoming pastor of a church

in central Maine. However, the marriage failed; the two separated in 1904. Tragedy continued to stalk the family: Rev. Kirkland officiated at the funerals of five grandchildren who died from cholera and influenza. He was close to his sister and visited her in Tuxford, Saskatchewan. He then left for a family business trip to Scotland. His return to Tuxford was delayed because of a coal strike that was crippling England. Letters indicate that he was looking forward to resuming his evangelical work. He and fellow Canadian Frank H. Maybery purchased Second-Class tickets and boarded Titanic in Queenstown, Ireland. They attended the Sunday morning religious service and participated in the 8:30 evening hymn, but little else is known. Rev. Kirkland's body was never recovered, and the family gravestone is simply inscribed, "Charles L. Kirkland – Buried at Sea." Interestingly, his older brother William was lost when RMS Lusitania was torpedoed in 1915.



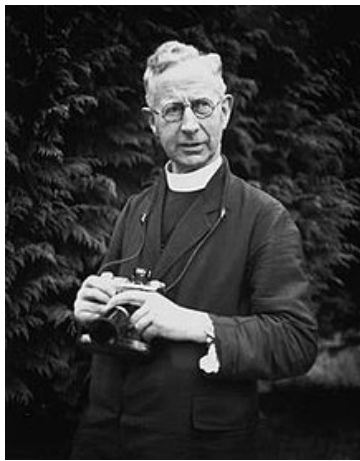
Reverend Harper  
Credit: Wiki Fandom

## REVEREND JOHN HARPER

Scottish-born Rev. Harper began preaching in 1890 at the age of 18 and became well known for his sermons. While working as a laborer in a mill, he was approached by a pastor who found him a position doing ministry work. In 1897, Rev. Harper became the first pastor of the Road Baptist Church, where he increased membership from 25 to 500 and gathered large audiences for open-air revivals. In 1912, Rev. Harper was a widower traveling to Chicago with his daughter Nina and a niece, Jessie Leitch. Having gained distinction for his services in America, he had been invited to speak at the Moody Church in Chicago and was considering an offer to lead the church. Rev. Harper had planned to travel aboard Cunard's Lusitania but pushed back his schedule to travel Second-Class on the new Titanic. On the evening of April 14, Rev. Harper was standing on deck with other passengers admiring the sunset, saying, "It will be beautiful in the morning." When Titanic collided with the iceberg, Rev. Harper woke his daughter and niece, wrapped his daughter in a blanket, and rushed them both to the boat deck, where he kissed his daughter goodbye and handed her into lifeboat #11. What he did in his remaining time isn't certain. It was said that he gave his lifebelt to a man who refused his sermon, saying that, "you will need this more than I do"; the man lived. After Titanic sank, other survivors believe they heard Rev. Harper preaching the Gospel to those in the water until he succumbed to the cold. In 1923, when the Road Baptist Church—his first parish—moved to a new building, the church was renamed Harper Memorial Baptist Church in his honor.



Possibly John and Nina Harper, underlined in yellow. They have just passed lifeboat 11, which will save Nina.  
Credit: Wiki Fandom



Father Francis Browne  
Credit: Wikipedia

## FATHER FRANCIS BROWNE

Fr. Browne, a Jesuit priest, was born in Ireland in 1880. He had received a First-Class ticket from his uncle and was traveling on Titanic from Southampton to Queenstown, Ireland. An amateur photographer, Fr. Browne took the only photos of life on the Titanic during her maiden passage. A wealthy American couple was so taken with him that they offered to pay his way to New York and back to England. However, when Fr. Browne telegraphed his superiors for permission, they replied: "Get off that ship." So, he did, taking the last photos of the doomed liner when he departed. His photographs were widely seen after the sinking (leading Eastman Kodak to give him a lifetime supply of film). Fr. Browne volunteered as a chaplain during World War I, serving in some of the most vicious battles of the war. He was wounded five times, once in a gas attack. Fr. Browne, tending to the wounded under heavy shellfire, was honored as "a magnificent example to all." He continued his camera work under the most horrific conditions, taking photographs that captured the brutality of war. Fr. Browne died in 1960.

## EPILOGUE

"God himself could not sink this ship." This assertion was attributed to a number of individuals, from a crewman loading luggage to the ship's Master, Edward J. Smith. It has come to represent the arrogance associated with the "unsinkable" Titanic. Countless ministers railed against the expression in self-righteous sermons, measuring human failings against a religious metric. For them, the impudent declaration symbolized misplaced faith in materialism that the Lord's hand struck down. The eight clergy on Titanic did not have the luxury of indulging in such harsh denunciations. They offered consolation to those around them at the time of their death, elevating not only their own humanity but also the decency of their calling. Several of the Catholic priests are being canonized as saints for their actions that night.

Sources: Alan Byles, Middletown Bible Church, Bible.org, Catholicism.org, Catholic Exchange, Catholic Insight, National Catholic Register, Find a Grave, Baptist Press, Priest Stuff, America the Jesuit Review, Churchpop.com, Encyclopedia Titanica, Irish Post, Wikipedia, Crew of Titanic by Gunter Babler, The Loss of SS Titanic by Lawrence Beesley, Titanic Minute by Minute, A Night to Remember by Walter Lord, Mainers on the Titanic by Mac Smith, John Cowart blog, Wired, Quora, Old Town Public Library,