



The NET

Sharing fruits of faith in Derry Diocese

ISSUE 93. FEBRUARY 2024

No Fixed Charge.
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Big Breakfast HOPE fundraiser - Dungiven



Blessing caring hands - Cappagh



Blessing of Sick - Lavey



“God has a track record of using young people in powerful ways” – Alexander McLean (see p12-15)

Pope John Paul II Award guest speaker, Alexander McLean receiving a gift of appreciation



Celebrating Catholic Schools - St Brigid's PS Mayogall



Celebrating St Brigid & Consecrated Life - Three Patrons




Prayer Calendar - Iskaheen & Upper Moville




St Brigid cross making - Urney & Castlefin


People in focus




David James McNamee
- Killea, Co Donegal




Fr Shaun Doherty
- Derry



Michaela Bradley
- Rouskey, Badoney Lower



Philip McCullagh
- Ballinascreen



The late Mary Doherty (Sean)
- Moville

Also featuring: Catholic Schools Week celebrations; Pope John Paul II Awards; Young Writers section; Parishes celebrating St Brigid; Moville faith talk; Children's Catechism Club; Irish section; Vocations News; Book Review; Termonbacca News; Parish Post-its; Diary Dates; Quiz; Features and much more...

Contents

Pray for the sick in final stages of life
– Reflection by Fr John McDevitt, Hospice Chaplain.....p2
Blessing of hands and prayer for the sick
– Cappagh & Lavey.....p2

St Brigid's PS Mayogall
shares celebration of our faithp3

Catholic Schools Week feature...
– Communities of Service.....p4-10

Derry Youth 'Awesome God' Lenten programme.....p10
All or Nothing Youth Club for Girls.....p10

New St Patrick's & St Brigid's principal considers
'communities of service' at values driven Claudy College.....p11
Busy morning at HOPE Dungiven Big Breakfast.....p11

17th Pope John Paul II Award celebration...
*God has a track record of using young people in powerful ways
– Alexander McLean
*Money can't buy fulfilling reward of JPPI Award
– Michaela Bradley
*David James sings praises of youth Award.....p12-15

"Thus says the Lord: Remember that you are dust...
but you are my dust!" – by Fr Peter O'Kanep16
Termonbacca News...
*Novena to Sleeping St Joseph
*Lenten Lectio Divina
*Holy Week up close...Ladies Retreat.....p16

Irish section by Déaglán Ó Laithbheartaigh...
*An tAthair Emil Kapaun
(Father Emil Kapaun)
*Tógadh sé a chros agus leanadh sé mé
(Let him pick up his cross and follow me).....p17

Young Writers share thoughts on...
*Lent – an opportunity to draw closer to God
*Powerful experience of Eucharistic Procession
*St Gianna Beretta Molla and gratitude
*Inspirational life of St Catherine of Siena
*Importance of relationships in illness
*Power of the Rosary in Tammy Petersons' journey with cancer
*The Mysteries of Lifep18-20

Iskaheen & Upper Moville calendar
created in response to desire for family prayer
by Maureen Scottp20

Warm welcome for Fr Shaun Doherty
at Iskaheen & Moville faith talk by Marie Lindsay.....p21
Girls Get-Together Weekends with the Servant Sisters.....p21

Carnhill celebration of St Brigid & Consecrated Life.....p22

Keeping St Brigid Cross tradition alive in Carnhill.....p23
Passing on St Brigid tradition at Buncrana GAC session.....p23
Donaghedy gets creative with St Brigid Crosses.....p23

Dregish rejoices on Feast of St Brigid
by Fr Peter McCawille.....p24
Greenlough Camogs enjoy making St Brigid Crosses.....p24
Aghyaran gathering for annual celebration of St Brigid.....p24

Urney & Castlefin folk delighted
at return of St Brigid celebration
by Emby O'Donnellp25
Strong St Brigid Cross community in Desertmartin.....p25
Killyclogher cross-making a lovely St Brigid get-together.....p25
Cathedral Hall cuppa & cross-making to celebrate St Brigid..p25

Divine Mercy Image explained: The Feet of Jesus
by Sr Benedetta Hutnikiewicz ZSJm.....p26
Vocations News.....p26
Prayer for Priests.....p26
Pope's Prayer Intentionp26

Eternal Echoes...Timeless Truths for today's hearts
by Regina Deighan – Soulful Literature.....p27
Spreading the Gospel in the Diocese of Derry:
Two Saints by Dr Seán Beattie.....p27

Parish Post-its.....p28-29

Diocesan Diary.....p29
...other Diary Dates.....p29

I love you
by Fr Johnny Doherty CSsR.....p30
'To Quell The Terror'
– Book review by Bernie McKinney.....p30
Tribute to the late Mary Doherty (Sean) – Moville.....p30

Children's Catechism Club – C3
by Veronica Harley.....p31
Quiz Time with Lawrence.....p31

As one of the chaplains ministering in the Foyle Hospice, Fr John McDevitt, PP Steelstown & Culmore, reflects on the Pope's prayer intention for February for the terminally ill...

Pray the sick in final stages of life and their families receive necessary medical and human care and accompaniment

FEBRUARY is the month in which we celebrate the World Day of the Sick on the feast day of Our Lady of Lourdes, February 11. On this day, we are invited to remember and pray for all those who are sick, their families and those who care for them. This February, Pope Francis invites us to focus in particular on those who are in the final stages of life. Unless we have someone in our family circle or a friend who is seriously ill or dying, we might rarely think about people who are in their final days on earth. This can be a precious and enriching time for the person, the family, friends and those who accompany them. In their final days, people may have a new appreciation of the gift of each day and the gift of life itself. Despite the Lord's advice, that we do not know the day or the hour, not everyone has the opportunity to prepare themselves, or their family and friends, for death. For many people, death can come suddenly and unexpectedly. In the Derry area, we are blessed to have the Foyle Hospice and the Foyle Hospice team. The Foyle Hospice itself has an inpatient unit, a Day Hospice Team and a Specialist Palliative Community team, who support patients and their families who wish to remain in their home. There are also counsellors and facilitators, who provide bereavement support to adults and children. There are approximately 80 employees and volunteers associated with the Hospice. An integral part of the Hospice team is that of chaplaincy, which is provided by the ministers of all the main denominations. The hospice building has an interdenominational prayer room, which is open for patients, their families and staff. The chaplains minister together, providing Remembrance Services and a Christmas Service of light for the families and staff. Quite often, the families find it part of their healing in their bereavement to return, meet the staff and remember their loved one. The chaplains visit the patients on a regular basis and provide the spiritual support that is requested, accompanying them and their families in their final days. Every person is unique, with their own understanding of this journey. As chaplains, we are called to be there, to listen sensitively and attentively, and support as best we can both the person and the family. Prayer and the sacraments are an integral part of the journey for many people. Bringing the Eucharist is central; they meet the risen Lord Jesus and are strengthened by Him. Celebrating the sacrament of Reconciliation brings forgiveness, healing and peace to people. The Sacrament of the Sick is another sacrament of the Church in particular for those who are sick; it continues the healing ministry of the Lord. For those who believe that they do not journey alone, the Lord Jesus is with them sacramentally, through their families and in the staff of the Foyle Hospice. I have found the Foyle Hospice to be a welcoming, warm and enriching place to be. It is a privilege to work with many dedicated medical staff and




Fr John McDevitt, PP Steelstown & Culmore and Foyle Hospice chaplain.

volunteers all with one focus. This February, spare a prayer for that team of medical staff, the chaplains and volunteers in the Hospice, in the community and also in our hospitals. Pray also for all those in their final stages of life, their families and friends.

Blessing of hands and prayer for the sick

WORLD Day of the Sick, on Sunday, February 11, was observed in parishes across the Diocese, including Lavey and Cappagh. At the Saturday night Vigil Mass in Christ The King Church, Strathroy, on the outskirts of Omagh, the hands of those who care for the sick and the elderly received a general blessing, and on the Sunday, at the 3 pm Hour of Mercy, a Holy Hour for the Sick took place, during which there was an opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick. In St Mary's Church, Lavey, on the Sunday, Fr Eamon Graham and Fr Chris McDermott concelebrated Mass at 3 pm, which included the Anointing of the Sick. Afterwards, refreshments were served by the parish's Pope John Paul II participants at the back of the Church.





The NET

Sharing the fruits of the faith in the Derry Diocese

Supporting us:

The mission of 'The NET' is to share the fruits of the faith in homes, parishes and schools across the Diocese of Derry, and be a source of hope and encouragement in living our Catholic faith each day.

'The NET' is a Lay Apostolate that has the blessing of our Bishop, Most Rev Donal McKeown.

With no fixed charge to read this publication, donations would be most welcome to help cover costs. Annual accounts will be available to view on request.

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The ministry of

The NET

was dedicated to Our Lady, through the intercession of St Maximilian Kolbe, in a ceremony celebrated by Bishop Donal McKeown on August 14, 2019.



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Sharing the fruits of the faith in the Derry Diocese

Contacting us:

If you have a story that you would like to share or an event you would like covered by The Net, just drop an email to

editorthenet15@gmail.com
or ring/text 07809292852

St Brigid's Primary School, Mayogall, shares celebrations of our faith...

St Brigid's Feast Day a great time of joy in Mayogall PS



THE Feast Day of the School's patron – St Brigid, is always a cause for celebration in Lavey, however, this year as we approach the 1500th anniversary of her death, it was even more of an event.

Under the guidance of Mr Francis Kelly and Mrs Jean McNally, all 265 pupils had the opportunity to make a St Brigid's Cross. These crosses were blessed at Mass in Our Lady of Mercy Church on February 1, when the children joined the parish community to mark the special date.

Pupils led the Liturgy at Mass, and the Primary 1 pupils took to the altar to dramatise the story of St Brigid. A few parishioners were even gifted their own St Brigid's Cross. The school also created a colourful display to adorn the Church, telling of the life of our national saint. There was also a display of different St Brigid's crosses, showing the variety of styles used in different areas over time.

That afternoon, Mrs O'Neill's class entertained the whole school with a remarkable Assembly telling the life story of St Brigid, through drama, dance, and song. St Brigid was portrayed as a strong, independent, fearless

woman.

We celebrated how Brigid brings the spring, with a thoughtful piece telling of bluebells, snowdrops, and daffodils. Incorporated into the drama was a short mindfulness practice, led by a P5 boy, who helped us to reflect on our wellbeing and emotions.

Everyone enjoyed the dance performance, the beautiful solo singing and the whole audience joined in, with the choral singing.

February 1 was, indeed, a day of joy and celebration for everyone in St Brigid's PS, Mayogall.

Sacramental talk

The Derry Diocesan Catechetical Team, led by Therese Ferry and her colleagues, met with parents and children who were about to receive the sacraments in St Brigid's on February 6. The Catechetical Team prepared the First Penance and First Communion children and those preparing for Confirmation. The children enjoyed the sessions with their leaders, as much laughter ensued in the classrooms. A capacity audience of parents had an informative session in the school hall, giving lots of practical advice on how to help their children on their faith journey.

The Catechetical Team was

supported by Pope John Paul II Award candidates, who assisted the children's groups on the evening.

The session ended with a rousing rendition of 'This Little Light of Mine', which captured the effort and enthusiasm shown by the families of Lavey as they prepare for the sacraments.

Catholic Schools Week

Pupils and staff in St Brigid's PS enjoyed various activities during Catholic Schools Week. In our school, we look to Jesus as a role model and teacher as we come to a greater understanding of our faith. Jesus put his faith into action by showing those around him how the Holy Father was compassionate, courageous and forgiving. We are called by faith to go into the world to share the love of God with all those we meet. We used Catholic Schools Week to go into our community and share the love of God by our actions.

Throughout the week, various classes attended and participated in morning Mass in Our Lady of Mercy Church and then visited groups in the community.

Primary 7, with their teacher, Ms Gráinne O'Kane, and assistant, Susan Kuczog, visited Patrick in the Parish Office and then met with local MLA Emma Sheeran and local councillor Sean McPeake.

When visiting the Parish Office, Patrick told the pupils all about his roles and responsibilities in the office and in the Church, and he showed them the beautiful new Paschal Candle. The children really enjoyed a guided tour of his office and it was so interesting learning about the day-to-day running of the Church.

Primary 7 also had a visit from Emma Sheerin MLA and local council representative, Sean McPeake. The children put our politicians in the hot seat and had many tough questions for them.

We would like to thank them for taking time out of their busy schedules to talk to us.

Miss Anna Martin and the Primary 5 children had a wonderful day celebrating their local community by litter picking around the village of Gulladuff. The children were also joined by local councillor and parishioner, Sean McPeake. The children see their community as a vital part of their day-to day life and decided a Parish clean up was the best way to show their commitment to Catholic Schools Week.

To mark the end of Catholic Schools' Week and as part of Friday's focus, 'Service in our Faith Community', Primary 6 and their teacher, Miss Oonagh McAlister, and assistants, Caoimhe and Rosin, spent some time researching the Parish of Lavey. Pupils found lots of interesting facts about Our Lady of Mercy Church and enjoyed looking at old photographs of the chapel, before it was renovated. Pupils also discussed the townlands of Lavey and Termoneeny.

When studying their Parish, the children decided that one important place in our community was Lavey Early Years. The pupils visited both the morning and afternoon sessions of nursery. They had great fun playing with the boys and girls and enjoyed sharing memories of their time at nursery school. Some pupils even got to see their younger brothers and sisters. A wonderful experience for everyone involved.

As Catholic Schools Week drew to a close, it had been wonderful learning more about our local community and those in it who make it so special. We would like to express our gratitude to all those we met and talked to during this important week. An extremely valuable learning experience for all!



St Brigid's College celebrates Catholic Schools with week of Mission

THE school community of St Brigid's College, Derry, celebrated Catholic Schools' Week 2024 with their annual Mission, which was once again an amazing week of prayer.

Head of Religious Education at St Brigid's, Mrs Shauna Sharkey told 'The Net' that the aim of the Mission Week was to celebrate their Catholic faith as a whole school community.

She added: "As Head of RE, I am a firm believer that faith must be something which is alive, something the children can experience. Each day of this week, the most important week in our school calendar, is centred upon a different theme."

The theme for Day 1 was 'God's Love', which was addressed by this year's key speaker for the opening of the Mission, Liam Stewart.

"Each year, our key speaker shares their story of how God has shown them love in their life," said Shauna, "and this year, local man, Liam Stewart gave his testimony. It was an honest, and at times sad, story of how Liam and several of his family members struggled with addiction. However, his faith and relationship with God changed everything for him. It was a lesson on how much God loves us and how He can save us."

'God's Healing' was the theme for Day 2, when the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, who minister in St Brigid's, led Eucharistic healing services for the whole school.

"This was a deeply spiritual encounter with God, for both pupils and staff," remarked Shauna, adding: "During the Service, pupils were given the opportunity to reach out in faith and touch the humeral veil, just as the woman with the haemorrhage touched the cloak of Jesus. Afterwards, many pupils reported a feeling of peace and closeness to God."

The theme for the third day was 'God's Mercy', which began with Franciscan Friars, Fr Francesco and Br Benedict, accompanied by school principal, Mr O'Mianáin, leading a Eucharistic Procession throughout the school.

"They blessed all areas of our school building, entrusting everything we have to Christ," recalled Shauna, "and, as a school we celebrated the Sacrament of Reconciliation. As a community we are always thankful for all the priests in the Diocese who kindly give of their time."

She continued: "Days 4 and 5 saw the conclusion of our Mission Week with the celebration of Mass for all year groups. This included a number of our students joining with our local parishioners to celebrate St Brigid's Day, and some of them taking part in a dramatization of the life of St Brigid."

Noting that the theme for this year's Mission Week was "I have called you by your name, and you are mine" (Isaiah 43:1), Shauna commented: "This was the message for the children throughout the week, and it is an important message in today's world."

"I believe that if children accept that they are both called by God and belong to Him, then their life would be one filled with joy. A life where they have respect for themselves and others, a life where they use their talents to the best of their ability and, last but not least, a life lived with God at the centre of everything they do."

In a fitting end to a week filled with blessings, the St Brigid's RE Department participated in the Effatha Eucharistic Procession that took place on the City streets, processing from the Long Tower to Guildhall Square, and back to the Long Tower via the Bogside.



St Mary's Draperstown musical celebration for Grandparents & St Brigid



Loreto College Coleraine reflect on being the Body of Christ



Warm St Columba's Draperstown welcome for Grandparents



Walking together to service others at St Mary's PS Altinure



Great turnout for Grandparents' Day Mass at Scoil Naomh Iósaf

THE children at Scoil Naomh Iósaf, in The Illies, Buncrana, enjoyed making their St Brigid's Day crosses with Fr Francis Bradley PP and the staff of the school, on Wednesday, January 31.

The crosses were then blessed the next day, February 1, the Feast of St Brigid, during the celebration of Grandparents' Day Mass, when the school hall was full with grandparents and parents.



St Joseph's Derry pupils enjoy visit with Abbey House residents

ABBEY House residents, in the Little Diamond area of the City, beside St Eugene's Cathedral, enjoyed a visit during Catholic Schools Week from Year 13 and 14 students of the nearby St Joseph's Boys' School.

During the week, pupils participated in a variety of Catholic Schools Week activities, including celebrating Morning Prayer online with Bishop Donal and making St Brigid Crosses.

They also welcomed grandparents to Mass in the School Oratory on Grandparents' Day.



Wonderful week of prayer and activities in St Patrick's & St Joseph's Garvagh

CATHOLIC Schools Week began in St Patrick's & St Joseph's PS, Garvagh, with P7 pupils leading a prayer service to begin the week, while pupils from other classes led the praying of a decade of the Rosary at an assembly each morning.

To conclude, P4 did an assembly on the theme of Catholic Schools as 'Communities of Service'. The children also wrote about their grandparents and completed various activities throughout the week.

On St Brigid's Day, grandparents were invited into school to help the children to make St Brigid crosses. The P3 class then led a beautiful prayer service about St Brigid.

The school community was delighted that so many grandparents came along, making it a very special morning, with the children loving having them in their midst.



St Brigid's cross-making at Scoil Naomh Treasa, Clonmany



St Columb's spirit of prayer highlighted during Catholic Schools' Week

THE St Columb's College chaplaincy team, Fr Seán O'Donnell and Mr Nathan Thiruvengadam continued their great work of leading the school community in prayer during Catholic Schools' Week. The regular Tuesday morning Mass was celebrated by Fr Seán in the College Oratory, and prayer was encouraged in the Memorial Garden, which features the Stations of the Cross. During the College Open Day, those visiting got the opportunity to make St Brigid's Crosses.



Gaelscoil Léim an Mhadaidh St Brigid Cross creations



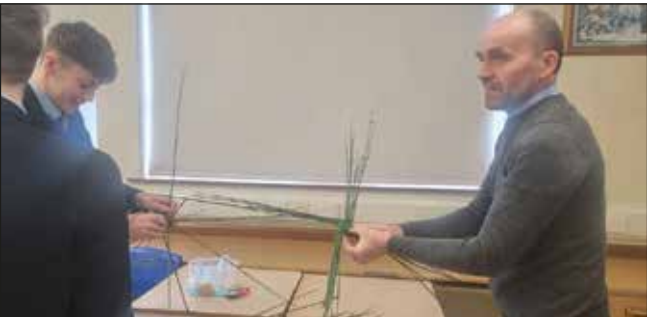
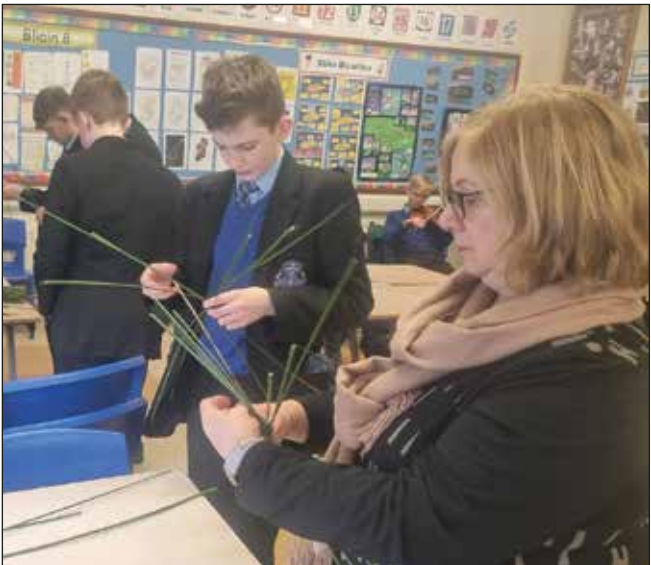
Warm welcome for Long Tower PS grandparents



Celebrating St Brigid at St Mary's PS Maghera

Beautiful art of St Brigid Cross making encouraged in CBS Omagh

Míle buíochas don roinn ceoil, do na múinteoirí eile, na ceoltóirí 's na daltaí uilig a tháinig chuig céiliúradh Naomh Bríd ag am lóin inniu. During Catholic Schools Week, the Irish Department in Christian Brothers GS, Omagh, ran a cross making session, while the School Trad Group provided beautiful music.



The Eucharist central to St Cecilia's celebration of Catholic Schools

ST Cecilia's College community joined with Holy Child and St John's primary schools for the celebration of Mass in St Mary's Church, Creggan, as part of the

Catholic Schools' Week activities. The College was also represented at the Effatha Eucharistic Procession from the Long Tower to Guildhall Square, and back.



Buncrana schools celebrate Catholic Schools Week



Grandparents' special love celebrated at Steelstown PS

ONE of the highlights for Steelstown PS & Nursery, Derry, during Catholic Schools Week was welcoming some very special people in the lives of the children, their grandparents/grandfriends.

The school community gave thanks for grandparents; for all that they do, teach, share and, most importantly, for being the face of God's Love always.



St Caireall's PS Castlederg enjoy St Brigid cross making





Scoil Mhuire Buncrana celebrating Catholic Schools Week



St Columba's Kilrea grandparents help craft St Brigid's crosses



St Mary's pupils enjoy College & Cathedral cross making



St Brigid cross-making a family effort at St Mary's PS Gortnaghy

THE pupils of St Marys PS, Gortnaghy, in the Dungiven Parish, celebrated the Feast of St Brigid, one of Ireland's three patron Saints, alongside Sts Patrick and Columba, as part of Catholic Schools' Week.

The children brought in rushes and were assisted by parents and grandparents in making the crosses, which were then distributed out amongst the local community.



Great St Brigid Cross making at Dristeran NS Gleneely



Dungiven JPPII participants celebrate St Brigid with cross making



Derry Youth 'Awesome God' Lenten Programme



THE Diocesan Youth Ministry team is facilitating a Lenten online programme for the young people of the Diocese who are completing their Pope John Paul II Award.

The programme will be facilitated on Zoom and will run for four weeks, starting on Wednesday, March 6,

and finishing on Wednesday, March 27. The hour-long session will begin at 7 pm.

This Lenten programme is a great way for Pope John Paul II participants to gain some hours. They will also be able to talk to other young people about their faith and how it helps them within their lives.

It promises to be a fun way to meet new people and grow in faith.

For further information email lizzie.rea@derrydiocese.org or message any@derryyouth social media pages.



Every Friday 3:30-6pm

ALL OR NOTHING Youth Club

FOR GIRLS 11-14 YEARS OLD

ACTIVITIES:

- Guitar classes
- Spanish
- Baking
- Sewing & Crochet
- Games
- Crafts
- Painting & drawing
- Faith Formation

Servant Sisters of the Home of the Mother
Parochial House
Crossroads, Killygordon F93 PN 0X
hmoactivitiesireland@gmail.com

'Busy morning at HOPE Dungiven
Big Breakfast



Taking on principalship of Claudy School in its 60th year...
Mr Philip McCullagh considers 'Communities of Service' at
the values driven St Patrick's & St Brigid's College



Mr Philip McCullagh, recently appointed principal of St Patrick's and St Brigid's College, Claudy

HAVING been principal of a large all-boy Catholic school in London for the past eight years, it has been in some ways quite a shock to the system becoming principal in a co-educational, post primary school in rural Claudy. Yet, having grown up on the other side of the Sperrins, in South Derry, in many ways it has felt completely natural.

Founded in 1963, the aim of St Patrick's & St Brigid's College was to create a Christian environment inspired by the teachings of Christ and to provide an education focused on the formation of the whole person.

The motto at the College is Laudate Dominum, 'O praise the Lord, all ye nations; praise him, all ye people' (Psalm 117). My message as part of Catholic Schools Week was to stress the importance of meeting life's difficulties together, as a school community, using our Christian values of compassion, courage, service and thankfulness.

During Collective Worship, our reflections on 'Communities of Service' have centred around having a willingness to demonstrate compassion to others, making decisions without self-interest and supporting all those in our community, particularly the vulnerable.

One of the reasons I was drawn to St Patrick's & St Brigid's College was its vision to not only help

pupils flourish academically but also socially, emotionally and spiritually, so that they are equipped for life, to be able to make the strongest possible contribution in their parish and wider community.

I am fortunate to have served my time in a range of schools with religious character and what I have learnt is that the best schools are not made of bricks and mortar, but made of the people who work together in a close-knit community; caring, supporting and encouraging one another to fulfil their God-given potential.

Located in the gateway to the Sperrin Mountains, St Patrick's & St Brigid's College strives to work in partnership with pupils, parents/guardians, governors and the local community. As soon as I walked through its doors, I experienced a warmth of welcome, a sense of 'family' and somewhere where there is an ambition to become even better. I have always been guided by the proverb that 'it takes a village to raise a child' and I know that, together with the teaching team, support staff, parents/guardians and the wider community, we can continue to grow as a school that we are truly proud of.

Celebrating its 60th year, St Patrick's and St Brigid's College actively promotes Christian values in its day-to-day business. It welcomes and embraces pupils from all backgrounds. It is a fully inclusive school which recognises the need to promote tolerance, respect and acceptance of others, and strives to fully integrate all children.

An education with Christ at the centre, which is what our values aspire to, equips young people to see the value of things and to exercise good judgement. We encourage pupils to become more centred individuals, conscious both of their strengths and areas for development, able to separate truth from noise and distraction. Pupils are encouraged to value the small, day-to-day moments of life and not always be looking impatiently for the next diversion.

Our Christian values teach us that while living in a community requires effort, that effort brings great benefits, such as a strong sense of belonging. These values are not easy to measure but they have a deep impact and are fundamental to the formation of who we become as people, which is why we place them at the heart of the provision we offer at St Patrick's & St Brigid's College.

The school's Catholic ethos is manifest above all in the conviction that, in the words of St John Henry Newman, God has created us "to do Him some definite service", that we find ourselves in giving ourselves through joyful service in the knowledge that we are children of God.

We assist parents/guardians, in their role as the first educators of their children, to provide effectively for their overall development. Our teachers are vital partners with parents/guardians in each child's education. The basis of this partnership is loyal, mutual understanding of each other's complementary roles. All adults within the school foster close and productive relationships with pupils, showing them a blueprint for how they can engage positively with their wider community.

All staff have a role in supporting the well-being of pupils, with Form Tutors being the key figure in

the pupils' lives to support them through the many challenges of being a young person today. All pastoral care is provided with the full support of Year Leaders and the Senior Leadership Team to ensure that meeting the needs of pupils, both collectively and individually, is always at the forefront of our work.

I would ask that I'm kept in your thoughts and prayers as I take on my new position as principal of St Patrick's & St Brigid's College, Claudy.

The prayer of St Brigid

Brigid,
You were a woman of peace.
You brought harmony where there was conflict.
You brought light to the darkness.
You brought hope to the downcast.
May the mantle of your peace cover those who are troubled and anxious,
and may peace be firmly rooted in our hearts and in our world.
Inspire us to act justly and to reverence all God has made.
Brigid you were a voice for the wounded and the weary.
Strengthen what is weak within us.
Calm us into a quietness that heals and listens.
May we grow each day into greater wholeness in mind, body and spirit.
Amen.



Pupils and staff from St Patrick's and St Brigid's attended the launch Mass for Catholic Schools Week

Celebrating the 17th Pope John Paul II Award Ceremony as guest speaker, Alexander McLean, barrister and founder of Justice Defenders told his young listeners to remember...

God has a track record of using young people in powerful ways



Guest speaker, Alexander McLean

THE Derry Diocese has held its 17th annual Pope John Paul II Award ceremony, with 381 young people representing 19 second level schools and 47 parishes across the Diocese, and three schools and 11 parishes outside of it, receiving their Awards in St Eugene's Cathedral on February 7. In addition, there were three recipients of the Papal Cross Award.

Currently the largest youth movement in the Irish Church, having spread to 23 dioceses across the island, Derry is the founding base for the Award created by Fr Paul Farren, director of the Diocesan Catechetical Centre.

Since its launch in Derry in 2006 by the then Papal Nuncio to Ireland, Archbishop Lazarotto, 48,000 from throughout Ireland have enrolled in the Award, with 6,797 young people in the Diocese having received it since then.

Saying that the Award was created "to be good news", Fr Paul noted that more parishes each year were inviting lay people to help their youth with it. He added: "For various reasons, the Parish part can be the most challenging and so needs more support, as we focus more on getting young people doing the Award."

Opening this year's ceremony, Bishop Donal, the Award's Patron, congratulated the young people for their "generosity and enthusiasm to be involved in community and parish".

Remarking that many young people still have "a sense that belonging and community are important" despite today's culture tending "to put me at the centre of everything", he went on to say: "So many of you want to do great things with your lives. You want to know that your contributions

and ideas are valuable."

He added: "I pray that your experience of multi-generational communities has helped your own journey of maturity and growth. Communities, people working together, can do great things. We saw during the pandemic that so many things were being undertaken by voluntary organisations which stepped up to the plate.

"The financial pressure on many families has shown how community-based support groups are indispensable for a healthy society. Government can't deliver everything. I hope this Award has helped you to appreciate volunteerism. Many people complain about things. But the real heroes step up to the plate and do things that make a difference. Never forget that lesson."

Highlighting that the Church that Jesus founded "is focused on bringing good news and hope to the concrete circumstances in which we find ourselves", and is about "building communities where we can support one another to be salt to the earth and light to the world", Bishop Donal continued: "There are many conversations taking place around our local church as to the way forward for us. We need to hear the idealism and insights of young people.

"We need to hear where the message of Jesus can be of most help for you and your contemporaries. For I know that you have to live with many pressures and dangers. Meet to discuss these issues with other like-minded people. Make your voice heard. That is what Jesus would want."

This year's guest speaker was Alexander McLean, founder of

Justice Defenders, which is based in Uganda and seeks to improve the lives of people imprisoned in Africa.

Commending the Award recipients for their achievements, Alexander shared how his experiences of serving in church and volunteering in the community in his youth changed the direction of his life. He began volunteering at his local hospice in London as a 16-year-old, and a couple of years later, having read about the Hospice Africa Uganda established by a former Benedictine nun, he travelled to Uganda to, initially, spend a couple of weeks volunteering with the hospice.

He shared his experience of caring and advocating for a man he had seen lying naked on the floor of a ward in Uganda's main government hospital, thought to be in a diabetic coma and not getting care as he didn't have any money.

He recalled: "One morning I arrived and he had died the night before. A porter arrived with a dead woman on a trolley and lifted the man up and put him on top of her. I was told they would go in a mass grave with everyone else who had no one to bury them. I called my mum that evening and cried for that man. I couldn't believe that there were people in our world whose lives were judged not to have value by their communities."

Ending up spending several months on that ward, washing, feeding and advocating for patients dying of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis who had been abandoned by their families, Alexander told how, over time, others began to join him: cooks and security guards from the hospice; student nurses and medical students; Ugandans and people from different parts of the world.

Love

"We had little money, limited qualifications, no organisation," he said, "but we had a desire to serve those that others had rejected, inspired by Jesus instruction that we should love our neighbours as we love ourselves. It was then that I began to learn something about the power of proximity and the sacrament of encounter. Pope Benedict spoke about the fact that as Christians who want to serve others, we need to have skills and something to offer, but the most important thing is the formation

of our hearts, so that we don't see those we are serving as needy and desperate people needing a hand out from us, but rather as our brothers and sisters, in whom we meet Christ."

He continued: "The experience of caring for dying prisoners in hospital led to me bulldozing my way into Uganda's maximum security prison to see the kind of environment that they came from. What I saw there changed my life...I went on to study law at university and qualify as a barrister. All the while I was spending my university holidays in prisons around Africa. I saw things that I couldn't unsee – injustices which moved me deeply.

"I founded the African Prisons Project, now Justice Defenders, when I was 21. Initially our work was to bring dignity and hope to men, women and children in prison through providing health and education facilities. With time, our focus shifted from dealing with the fruit of the problem, being injustice, to going to the root of it. In countries where 80-90 % of prisoners have no lawyers, we train prisoners and prison officers together as paralegals and lawyers. We work to equip those who have been defenceless to become defenders of the defenceless."

He added: "It's now almost 22 years since I started volunteering in my church and local hospice and 20 years since my first visit to prison. In that time, we have raised more than £15 million to improve the lives of prisoners. We have trained 600 paralegals and have 60 prisoners and prison officers in Uganda and Kenya who have followed in Nelson Mandela's footsteps by studying law with the University of London from prison, and now have law degrees. We have served more than 100,000 clients in our 32 prison based legal offices in Uganda and Kenya, about 35,000 of them went on to be released from prison by the courts."

Alexander went on to tell the young people: "I am certain that during this time that you have been working for your John Paul II Awards, you will have seen things, heard things, spoken with people who have made a mark on you; that seeds will have been planted in your hearts. Seeds which suggest that you might develop a passion in a certain area - for me, it's being alongside those that others have rejected - for you, it might be serving the



sick, the transformative power of sport, religious life, journeying with other young people.

"Whatever it is, I urge you not to ignore those seedlings growing inside you. St Catherine of Siena said, 'be who you were created to be and you will set the world on fire'...That's not be who you were created to be once you have a degree, once you have a stable job, once you have a few more decades' life experience. It's you, just now."

"This award," he said, "aims to make young people visible in the community and church. I encourage you not to shy away or to doubt yourselves. In my experience, there is a clarity with which we see when we are young, which can be lost as we grow older. A sense of injustice and asking if things have to be this way, that can turn to compromise or a sense of powerlessness as we get older. Remember, God has a track record of using young people in powerful ways.

"John Paul II said when he visited Ireland - tomorrow you will have the power to make dreams come true, tomorrow Ireland depends on you. I don't believe that he meant tomorrow when you are grown men and women, I believe he meant tomorrow...once you've

had a good night's sleep and a little party to celebrate this Award.

"He said do not be afraid, do not be satisfied with mediocrity. Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch. He said, you are a thought of God, you are a heartbeat of God. Have no fear of moving into the unknown. Let yourself be taken over by the light of Christ, and spread that light wherever you are."

The Ceremony came to a close with local country singer, David James, who presents 'The Jivetime Show' on Highland Radio, singing 'Our Lady of Knock' and 'Will the Circle Be Unbroken'.

As well as spreading further around Ireland, the Pope John Paul II Award has been introduced in the Archdiocese of Birmingham, the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle, and has just been introduced in the Diocese of Portsmouth, supported by international coordinator, Tony Brennan.

For more information on the Award, contact Lizzie Rea on lizzie.rea@derrydiocese.org or phone +4428 71264087. www.thepopejohnpauliiaward.com www.catecheticalcentre.org.

*Photographs by
Stephen Latimer*





Not realising at the time the great impact the JPPII Award would have on her, former recipient and current Badoney Lower JPPII leader says...

Money can't buy fulfilling reward of Pope John Paul II Award



Michaela Bradley, JPPII leader for Badoney Lower Parish.

AMONGST the Pope John Paul II Award recipients at this year's ceremony in St Eugene's Cathedral were young people from the Parish of Badoney Lower (Gortin and Rouskey), in Co Tyrone.

And one parishioner particularly delighted with their achievements was their JPPII leader, Michaela Bradley. The 26-year-old recently qualified teacher has been the JPPII leader for the Parish since 2021, and thoroughly enjoys the role.

A JPPII Award recipient herself, Michaela feels blessed to have been brought up in a faith-filled family and a parish where she was encouraged to be involved in parish life, and so she is happy to give of her time and talents now to help nourish the youth of today.

One of four daughters born to

Mickey and Pauline Bradley, of Camcosy, near Rouskey, Michaela shared how their faith gave them strength when her younger sister, Sarah, died 21 years ago, aged only three years old.

"Our faith grew after Sarah's death," she said, "and we were brought up with the belief that she was taken to Heaven as God needed her."

Michaela was also encouraged in her faith by Fr John Forbes, who arrived in the Parish as the parish priest when she was about 13 years old.

"Fr Forbes was always very interested in the youth of the Parish and encouraged me to do the JPPII Award," she recalled, adding: "I did both the JPPII Award and the Papal Cross Award. As I would be musical, I was a member of the choir for both Awards, and I read the Prayer of the Faithful and helped with the Sunday collection too. For my social hours, I mostly volunteered in an Irish Youth Club in Greencastle, as I am a fluent speaker."

"For my Papal Cross Award, I did 10 hours Sacramental, which involved me helping children attending my school, Sacred Heart College, who wanted to come into the Catholic faith. Two ladies from the Omagh Parish led these classes and I assisted."

Commenting on her experience, Michaela said: "When I started out doing both my Awards, it was

for the purpose of getting them on my application forms when applying for RE teacher training. I tell this to my JPPII students because they are probably doing it for the same reason and don't realise how much impact it will have on them."

"When I got my Papal Cross Award, I went on to university in England, so I didn't do much in my home parish until after that."

Michaela is also appreciative of the good influence that Head of RE in Sacred Heart College, Omagh, Ms Cullinan had as her RE teacher from first to third year, and then for A'level RE, and as her JPPII leader.

She remarked: "The way Ms Cullinan spoke about our faith and other faiths had a big impact on my faith and also on my choice of career. She made me want to study my faith further and she also sowed the seed for my wanting to be an RE teacher."

Graduating

After graduating with an Honours Degree in Theology and Religious Studies, from York St John's University, in 2021, Michaela went on to do her PGCE at Queens, graduating in 2023. Since November, she has been in a teaching post in Holy Trinity College, Cookstown, and enjoying the experience.

On returning to her home Parish, she was asked if she would

take over the youth choir, as both Fr Forbes and his housekeeper, Kathleen, who had taken the choir under her wing, would be leaving in September 2021.

Welcoming the opportunity, Michaela said that she had also been attracted to the role of JPPII leader in the Parish, and when Fr Eddie Gallagher took over as Parish Priest of Badoney Lower, along with Greencastle, she was delighted to not only be offered both of these roles, but also the leadership of the 'Do This in Memory' programme, and she has been doing all three since and loving every minute.

"Even though I had been away from my Parish for three years when I was at university in England," she remarked, "the good memories of being in the choir and doing the JPPII Award stuck with me and I was happy to be involved with them again when I came back."

"I find it very fulfilling; it's something that money can't buy. I am not getting paid for these roles and I don't want paid to do them. I am involved because I love what I am doing."

Michaela is currently leading six JPPII participants, one girl and five boys, two of whom attend Sacred Heart College, while three attend CBS Omagh, and one attends the Dean Maguirc College, in Carrickmore, which is in the Armagh Diocese.

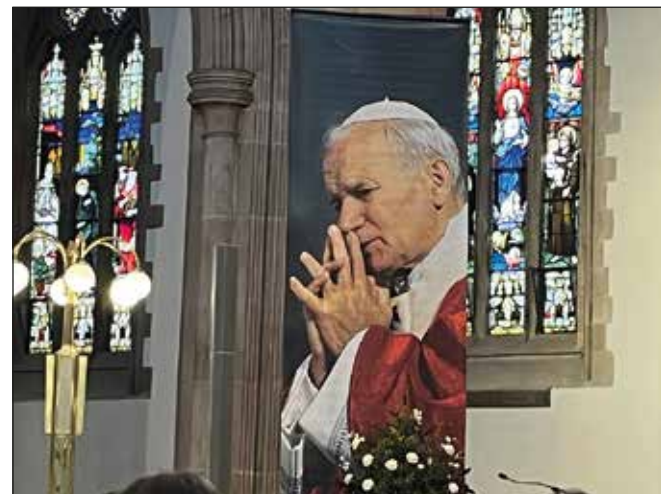
She explained: "It is very hard to meet young people with all their commitments, but I try to meet with them every two months to see how they are getting on and to sign their sheets. We have a group WhatsApp, so that helps me to keep in regular contact with them. I give them activities to do, for example, for the Feast of St Brigid I asked them to make a cross and put it up on the Parish Facebook page."

"It is great to see so many boys taking it on," she said, adding: "I have also noticed more boys coming along to help with the collections in the chapel."

Thinking that the Covid lockdowns may have led to a spiritual awakening amongst young people, she recalled: "In our parish, Fr Forbes was a big

hit on Facebook during the Covid lockdowns with his Masses. You could see who was watching the live feeds and I noted that there were a lot of young people in the parish watching it, and I think this may have stirred them to do more in the parish after Covid. Fr Forbes also led Night Prayer online during that period, which a lot of people watched as well."

Michaela added: "We now have Fr James Devine as curate for Greencastle and Rouskey, and Fr Roland Colhoun is now curate for Gortin as well as Newtownstewart. Fr Roland oversees the 'Do This in Memory' programme and Fr James is more looking after the JPPII students, and I would be in touch with them, and also with Fr Brian Donnelly, our Parish Priest."



Country singer and Highland Radio presenter...

David James sings praises of Pope John Paul II Award



Country singer and Highland Radio presenter, David James

IMPRESSED by the number of young people gathered in St Eugene's Cathedral to receive their Pope John Paul II Awards, and by the comments of those who shared their experience of undertaking the parish and social aspects of the programme, popular country singer and Highland Radio presenter, David James was delighted to be part of this year's ceremony.

Speaking to 'The Net' afterwards, the 25-year-old

said that while he had been involved in too many other extra-curricular activities to do the Award when he was a student at St Columb's College, he would highly recommend it to young people as a way of challenging and developing themselves.

He remarked: "From what I gathered at the ceremony, a lot of young people are learning something new about themselves through undertaking the Pope John Paul II Award programme, and it also teaches them important life skills."

"It is a great initiative and I would encourage anyone who has the opportunity to do it."

The youngest of three children born to Margaret and Martin McNamee, residing in the Co Donegal village of Killea, which borders Derry, David spent his spare time as a youth developing his skills as an Irish dancer and singer.

The outcome of his dedication saw him travel the world as a competitive Irish dancer and become World Champion in Dublin in 2017, and, on the

singing front, he has released two albums and is working on his third, while also working as a presenter on Highland Radio for the last six years.

On leaving St Columb's, where he had sung in the school choir and took part in musicals, David focussed on a music career, building up a band with his brother, Gerard as drummer, and singing in bars and clubs around his native Donegal and various locations in the north of Ireland.

Signed up to Daniel O'Donnell's record label, David and his band have an album out entitled, 'The Promise', taken from the title of one of the songs on it, which was written by Darren Holden, from The High Kings.

"The Promise is my second album, the first one, called 'Country Heart', was brought out seven years ago," he said, adding: "Our latest release has gone very well, with two million streams on Spotify. The physical copies are going well too, but there is not as big a demand for these as there would have been in the past."

"I'm back in the studio now

working on a new album, which I hope to release in either October or November."

David's fan-base may well have grown bigger following his beautiful rendition of 'Our Lady of Knock' and the century-old Gospel song, 'Will the Circle Be Unbroken', as he brought the Pope John Paul II Award ceremony in St Eugene's to a musical close.

Saying that 'Our Lady of Knock' was his mother's favourite song, David went on to remark that while he hadn't yet recorded any religious songs, he liked singing them and wouldn't rule out recording a Gospel album sometime in the future.

A country singer at heart, he went on to point out that while 'Will the Circle Be Unbroken' is a Gospel song, it crosses over to Country as well.

Liking the idea of doing a Gospel concert at some stage, David said: "I got into Gospel through Country music, the two are very similar. A lot of times country singers sing Gospel songs in our sets, whether subconsciously or not."

Nurtured well in the Catholic faith through the example of his parents and paternal grandparents, with his mother's parents having died when he was a young child, David's faith is important to him.

He noted: "The music industry can be very tough and you can have a lot of setbacks, with empty promises, so my faith helps me to keep going when I feel like giving up."

David is a good friend of Fr Shaun Doherty, having met him through their Highland Radio connection, and he was delighted to be at his ordination in the Cathedral last year.

Thoroughly enjoying working

with Highland Radio as a presenter of 'The Jivetime Show' on weekdays, 2.30-5 pm, David recalled being particularly aware during the Covid lockdowns of the positive impact of radio on people's lives, saying: "A lot of people took a bit of comfort during Covid from listening to radio shows; for many it may have been the only voices they heard in their houses from day-to-day."

Appreciating the opportunity to sing for the Pope John Paul II recipients, David also welcomed the opportunity of a catch-up with his former Highland Radio colleague, Fr Shaun, who is currently ministering as a curate in the Cathedral Parish.



David singing at the Pope John Paul II Awards ceremony in St Eugene's Cathedral

“Thus says the Lord: Remember that you are dust...but you are my dust!” by Fr Peter O’Kane

AS we began our Lenten pilgrimage this year, there was a clash of days! Ash Wednesday and St Valentine’s Day shared the same date. Perhaps easily interpreted as a clash between the sacred and the secular, and yet there is always someone trying to bridge the gap. It was suggested that cards for this day would read: “I’ll never give you up for Lent”, “My stomach is empty but my heart is full”, “Spending time with you is never a penance”, “Remember that thou art dust...but you’re my dust”. There were even suggestions that priests impose ashes on people’s foreheads in the shape of a heart.

Whether or not that was our experience, this image strikes to the heart of Lent, as Cardinal Dolan of New York summed it up: both days centre on the heart. The very symbol of St Valentine’s Day is the heart, the icon of love. Ash Wednesday, the first of 40 days of prayer, penance, and charity we call ‘Lent’, leading us to Holy Week and Easter, is also about the heart: a heart called sacred, wounded by unreturned love, broken by sin and selfishness: the heart of Jesus.

In the rhythm of the liturgical calendar, Lent stands as a sacred season within the Catholic faith, heralding a period of reflection, repentance, and renewal. The ‘Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy’ (Sacrosanctum concilium), issued at the beginning of the Second Vatican Council, describes the nature of this season: “Lent is ordered to preparing for the celebration

of Easter, since the Lenten liturgy prepares for celebration of the Paschal Mystery both catechumens, by the various stages of Christian Initiation, and the faithful, who recall their own Baptism and do penance.” (§109)

It is good for us to keep our eye on the focus: it is a preparation for Easter. But it is a path that is journeyed on from different vistas because, on the one hand, there are those preparing to become new Christians through the celebration of the sacraments of Christian Initiation at the Easter Vigil; on the other hand, there are those who are already members of Christ’s Body by their baptism, called to do penance and, as we heard on Ash Wednesday, “repent and believe in the Gospel”.

This 40-day journey, mirroring the 40 days Jesus spent fasting in the wilderness, holds profound significance for Catholics worldwide. Rooted in centuries of tradition and theological understanding, Lent offers believers a structured opportunity for spiritual growth, drawing them closer to God through acts of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. As the ‘Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy’ reminds us: “Lent is a time to hear the Word of God, to convert, to prepare for and remember Baptism, to be reconciled with God and one’s neighbour, and of more frequent recourse to the ‘arms of Christian penance’: prayer, fasting and good works (cf. Mt 6, 1-6. 16-18) (cf. §124). In this time, we delve deeply into the rich tapestry of

these practices.

Curiosity

Even when we look to social media and entertainment, there is a curiosity about why Christians undertake this season of fasting, prayer and almsgiving – why is there any sense of penance and for whom or to whom it is orientated. As an episode of the BBC drama, ‘Call the Midwife’ begins: “During Lent we give up the things we love. We repent, we make sacrifices, even the altar must go without flowers. We deny ourselves pleasure, we forego cake, coffee, biscuits, sugar in our tea...or we try to! We promise to forbid ourselves cigarettes and when we fail we are policed by fellow penitents. Enjoyment itself is contraband. Much is ruined in pursuit of self-improvement and we are all exposed as very far from perfect.” And there is the crux of the matter: Lent is not primarily about self-improvement but rather, because we are aware that we are far from perfect, the season is about walking in the Paschal Mystery of Christ so that we know we are redeemed by His blood and, as Saint Peter writes, “by His wounds we have been healed.”

The Catholic understanding of Lent rests upon the foundational belief in the Paschal mystery – the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Lent serves as a time of preparation that leads to the climax of the liturgical year. Holy Week, also known as the Great Week, is the moment when Catholics commemorate Christ’s passion, death, and triumphant

resurrection. The Lenten journey, therefore, is not merely a sombre exercise in self-discipline but a profound engagement with the salvific events central to Christian faith.

This engagement is referred to in the liturgical texts associated with the celebrations of Eucharist during the season. As the journey begins on Ash Wednesday, the Collect of the Mass (the opening prayer) reminds us that Lent is a time of holy fasting calling the baptised to a time of Christian service, taking up battle against spiritual evils. The primary weapon in this engagement is not action towards others but primarily self-restraint. Lenten journeying is a time of sacrifice where efforts are accompanied by works of penance and charity so that, by acts of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, cynicism, coldness and sin is cast out from our own hearts and we are open in a new way to receive the Lord’s grace and know His love. So what does this look like in terms of living faith?

Prayer: To make some effort to pray that is more than a public statement to our family and friends about how holy we are – to go to Mass on weekdays; to come privately to this place or a corner set aside in your homes; to pray the Stations of the Cross.

Fasting: We jump and think ‘time to starve our stomachs!’ But really, why miss dinner but keep on sinning! Our first obligation is to fast from sin! So, the challenge is to fast from those things, in



body and spirit, that cause us to sin. If we are talking about fasting from food, then perhaps traditional fasting be observed on Wednesdays and Fridays, as well as abstinence especially on Fridays.

Almsgiving: We should share the gifts of love, compassion, understanding, forgiveness – our most precious gifts. Otherwise, we can flippantly throw money into a charity box and still not give anything of ourselves; we can still be as arrogant, rude, horrible, difficult – but we think we’ve fulfilled our duty! Let our charitable actions echo the love of our hearts and the warmth of our words towards those who share our lives.

Renew

In many ways, as the world rapidly changes around us, the season of Lent allows us to renew once again our faith and belief in the Cross of Jesus Christ. The Latin motto of the Carthusians is: ‘Stat crux dum volvitur orbis’, which translated into English reads: “The Cross is steady while the world turns.” The Lenten campaign orientated to the Cross offers believers a counter-cultural invitation to pause, reflect, and realign their priorities in accordance with their faith values. In an era characterized by instant gratification and consumerism, the disciplines of fasting and

simplicity challenge Catholics to resist temptations of excess and materialism, in a sense to play a long game towards a greater victory which, despite seeming messy and painful, results in the unveiling of God’s eternal promises to His faithful ones.

Lent is also a time when, in a world plagued by injustice, inequality, and violence, believers can more profoundly respond to the Gospel invitation to be in solidarity with the oppressed and marginalized, embodying Christ’s message of compassion and justice.

In the spiritual life, in the midst of the hectic pace of life, this is a time to carve dedicated time for prayer and reflection to deepen spiritual nourishment so that we come to realise that our hearts echo something of the beat of Christ’s heart. In the words of the prophet Joel, “Now, now – it is the Lord who speaks – come back to me with all your heart, fasting, weeping, mourning”. We can give Him our hearts and our minds, so that He will transform and make all things new so that we know to rejoice in His own Sacred Heart. The holy season of Lent is a moment to renew our response to imitate Christ, who in his great almsgiving, gave the greatest gift to those who were in need: the gift of Himself.

Termonbacca News...

Novena to Sleeping St Joseph

STARTING on Monday, March 11, and running until the Feast of St Joseph on March 19, Termonbacca Derry will once again hold the annual Novena to the Sleeping St Joseph. Every evening Mass will be celebrated at 7.30 pm and it is open to all who wish to come along and participate.

Praying for the intercession of the sleeping St Joseph became widespread when Pope Francis shared his personal devotion to the practice. Thanks to the Holy Bible, we all know how important and fundamental has been the slumber for St Joseph. During his sleep, an Angel came to tell him to marry Mary. In the same way, in his dreams he had the apparition of an Angel telling him about escaping to Egypt, due to the imminent Slaughter of the Innocents, ordered by Herod to kill Jesus.

This Saint is a merciful father that always helps those in need. Many times, Pope Francis has told about his habit of putting

underneath the Sleeping St Joseph statue some little notes with requests for grace and prayers of the faithful, trying to invite the Saint to sleep on it and put in a good word with God.

The Pontiff declared in 2015 that he particularly loves St Joseph, as he is such a strong and silent man, the man of the dreams, that protects and helps everyone even in his sleep.

The themes for this years novena will be as follows: Day 1 - The Sleeping St Joseph; Day 2 - St Joseph and forgiveness (Confessions will be available); Day 3 - St Joseph and his Eucharistic Son (Eucharistic Healing Service); Day 4 - St Joseph the Worker; Day 5 - Jesus, Mary and Joseph – A unique relationship; Day 6 - St Joseph – an example of fatherhood; Day 7 - St Joseph and the lives of the Saints (Youth led Mass); Day 8 - St Joseph and healing (Anointing of the Sick); Day 9 - Thanksgiving to St Joseph.



Holy Week up close...Ladies Retreat

THE Termonbacca Retreat Centre is organising a Ladies weekend Retreat to journey together into Holy Week.

This retreat is hosted in a setting of beauty and tranquillity and is designed to help you to pause, step out of the busyness of every day and take a look at the gift of Christ’s sacrifice. Through talks, prayer time, and guided periods of reflection, we will explore together the final week of Jesus’ earthly life.

The weekend will be led and directed by the Apostles of the

Sacred Heart of Jesus, who have led many successful retreats here in the past.

The cost for the weekend is £90, which includes accommodation and meals, or for those who wish to participate as non-residents it is £70. The weekend begins on Friday, March 22, and will conclude on Sunday, March 24.

For further information or booking contact Aoife at Termonbacca on 02871262512 or by emailing termonbaccaderry@gmail.com.

Lenten Lectio Divina

THIS Lent, Termonbacca Carmelite Retreat Centre is holding group Lectio Divina every Monday morning, from 11am until 12 pm. Lectio Divina (literally divine reading) is a way of becoming immersed in the Scriptures very personally.

The Christian form of Lectio Divina was first introduced by St Gregory of Nyssa (c 330-395), and also encouraged by St Benedict of Nursia (c 480-547), the founder of the Benedictine order.

Everyone is welcome to come along and join us in this journey with Jesus through the Scriptures this Lent. It’s a way of developing a closer relationship with God

by reflecting prayerfully on His words.

When we practice Lectio Divina, we can imagine we’re actually involved in the events of Scripture – for example, hearing God’s words to the Israelites in the desert. It’s an intensely personal experience.

Over the six weeks, we will discover together what God is saying to us today through His Word. There will be an opportunity to discuss and share with others, and each week will finish with a cup of tea.

If you have any further questions, contact Aoife on 02871262512 or termonbaccaderry@gmail.com



Eangach

Salm 23 – An Bíobla Naofa

Is é an Tiarna m'aoire:
ní bheidh aon ní de dhíth orm.
Cuireann sé féin i mo luí mé
i móinéar féir ghlais.
Seolann sé ar imeall an uisce mé
mar a bhfaighim suaimhneas.
Seolann sé ar shlí na firéantachta mé
mar gheall ar a ainm.
Fiú dá siúlfaínn i ngleann an dorchadais,
níor bhaol liom an t-olc
agus tú faram le do shlat is do bhachall
chun sólás a thabhairt dom.
Cóiríonn tú bord chun béile dom
i láthair mo naimhde.
Ungann tú mo cheann le hola;
tá mo chupa ag cur thairis.
Leanfaidh cineáltas is buanghrá mé
gach lá de mo shaol;
i dteach an Tiarna a mhairfidh mé
go brách na breithe.



An tAthair Emil Kapaun

I stair na críostaíochta, ó tháinig árd-Tiarna chugainn ar an domhan seo timpeall dhá mhíle bliain ó shin, is iomaí duine a tháinig ina dhiaidh, a ghlac le teachtaireacht Íosa go croí agus a chaith a saolta ag maireachtáil mar a mhair seisean, agus atá ina eiseamláirí dúinn ar cad é is féidir linn a dhéanamh agus muid ag leanúint Íosa. Is eiseamláir sármhaith atá san fhear ar a bhfuil muid ag amharc in alt na míosa seo, a léirigh grá dá ndeartháireacha go dtí an deireadh. An uair seo, amharcfaimid ar scéal sagairt chróga a bhí ina aoire maith amhail Íosa; an tAth. Emil Kapaun.

Rugadh agus tógadh Emil Kapaun i gceantar tuaithe Kansas sna Stáit Aontaithe. Bhí sé ina mhac le Enos agus Elizabeth Kapaun, imircigh Seiceacha. Chuaigh sé leis an sagartacht, oirníodh é in 1940 agus d'éirigh sé ina shagart paróiste san áit ar báistíodh é agus ar thóg a thuismitheoirí é. Ach d'ainneoin sin, mhothaigh sé Dia á ghlaoch chuig an líne tosaigh. D'éirigh sé ina sheiplíneach san arm. Ní i bhfad ina dhiaidh sin, d'ionsaigh an Chóiré Thuaidh an Chóiré Theas, agus briseadh amach cogadh sa Chóiré, a d'éireodh i gceann de na cogá is dorchacha agus is fuilte i stair an domhain. Chuaigh Kapaun isteach sa chogadh sa Chóiré. Ba anseo a bhí deabhóid agus grá an tAth.

Kapaun le sonrú go soiléir.

Ba iomráiteach an grá a bhí ag Kapaun do na saighdiúirí, ar tugadh sé “mo bhuachaillí” orthu. Rinne sé iarrachtaí ollmhóra taisteal ó áit go háit leis na sacraimintí a thabhairt dóibh agus ba mhinic a dúirt sé an t-aifreann dóibh, ag baint úsáid as boinéad a jíp mar altóir. Ar 2ú Samhain 1950, bhris cath fíochmhar amach agus fuair na saighdiúirí iad féin faoi ionsaí ag níos mó ná 20,000 saighdiúirí cumannacha. Chuaigh Kapaun isteach sa bhearna baol i lár an chatha agus d'fhóir sé ar a “bhuachaillí”. Chuidigh leo siúd a bhí gortaithe. Chuir sé ola ungha orthu a bhí ag fáil bháis. Nuair a tháinig an glaoch do na Meiriceánaigh le cúlú agus tarraingt siar, lean sé leis ag obair. I measc seo uilig, tháinig sé ar shaighdiúr – Herbert Miller – ina luí ar an talamh, bhí sé gorthaithe. Bhí saighdiúr cumannach ina seasamh roimhe agus gunna in airde, réidh lena mharú. Bhrúigh Kapaun é amach as an bhealach, phioc sé Miller suas, bhí an ionad iontais ar an fhear eile nár mharaigh sé iad, ach sheas sé ag stánadh orthu. I ndeireadh na dála, ba olc an cás do na Meiriceánaigh agus ghabh na cumannaigh iad. Bhí siad anois ina bpríosúnaigh

Chuir na cumannaigh orthu uilig tabhairt faoi mháirseáil bháis níos mó ná 40 mhíle. Agus iad ag siúl, mharaigh siad duine



An tAthair Kapaun “ar an líne tosaigh”



An tAthair Emil Kapaun

ar bith a thit siar nó nach raibh ábalta siúl níos faide. Chuidigh sé le Miller, siúl agus phioc sé suas daoine eile. San áit seo nach raibh

dóchas ar bith le fáil ag na fir seo, thug sé inspioráid dóibh leanstan ar aghaidh.

Tógadh sé a chros agus leanadh sé mé

Tá an Carghas tosaithe againn anois agus ag an am seo den bhliain liotúirgí, tá muid ag tabhairt faoin troscadh, agus ag iarraidh leorgníomh a dhéanamh inár bpeacaí agus i bpeacaí dhaoine eile. Sa léachtaí ón tSoiscéal a bhíonn léite ag an aifreann ag an am seo, tá léargas tugtha dúinn ar an saol críostaí. Ar an Déardaoin i ndiaidh Chéadaoin na Luaithre i mbliana, feiceann muid Íosa a rá seo faoi aon duine atá ag iarraidh é a leanstan: “séanadh sé é féin, tógadh a chros gach lá agus leanadh mé”. Sílim gur maith an áit í seo le pillleadh ar scéal an tAth. Kapaun.

I ndiaidh na máirseála, tugadh na saighdiúirí uilig go campa géibhinn, áir ar coinníodh iad mar phríosúnaigh cogaidh. Thug Kapaun air féin aire a thabhairt dóibh agus iad sa champa seo. Ba

ghnách leis an iliomad rudaí a dhéanamh; ghlanadh sé a gcuid éadaí, d'éirigh leis bealach a aimsiú éalú go rúnda ón champa le tuilleadh bia a fháil dóibh, agus bealach le babhla a dhéanamh as phíosa miotail ar mhaithe le huisce a bhrúith leis na saighdiúirí a choinneáil ó thinnis. Léadh sé aifreann go rúnda nuair a bhí an deis aige. Ar Dhomhnach na Cásca, rinne sé seirbhís paidreacha agus phléasc siad amach le hamhráin mholta do Dhia. Níor thaitin le gardaí an champa é dá bharr seo uile agus rinne siad gearleanúint air mar sin. Sampla amháin a bhí ann ná gur thug siad air seasamh amuigh san fhuacht gan éadaigh lena chlúdach. D'ainneoin na fulaingte, lean é leis ag freastal ar a “bhuachaillí”.

Nuair a déirigh Kapaun tinn

gur thug na cumannaigh a ndeis faoi deara. Tháinig siad lena thabhairt leo go háit ar thug na príosúnaigh “teach an bháis” air, ós rud nár tháinig duine ar bith beo as, cé gur “an t-oispidéal” a thug na cumannaigh air. Thug Kapaun sólás do na “buachaillí” agus dúirt “tá mé ag dul go dtí an áit ar mhaith liom dul riamh, agus nuair a bhím ann, guífidh mé ar bhur son”. Bheannaigh sé na cumannaigh a bhí á ghlacadh agus dúirt “A Athair, maith dóibh óir níl a fhios acu cad tá siad a dhéanamh” agus b'shin an uair dheireanach a bhfaca siad é.

In 1953, scaoileadh saor na príosúnaigh ón champa, agus cros adhmaid 4 through in airde ar iompar leo. Rinne fear Giúdach (cheann de na “buachaillí”) é as adhmaid tine in ómós don Athair

Kapaun. Anois, is é an seiplíneach is mó a bronnadh suaitheantais air san arm Meiriceánach agus nuair a bronnadh air an Bonn Onóir in 2013, bhí naonúr fear a shabháil Kapaun i láthair ann; ba é Miller ceann acu.



Cros a rinne príosúnach sa champa in ómós dó



IN this Lenten season, Evan and Seán reflect on the opportunities this presents to draw closer to God and become a better person.

Erin shares her thoughts on her favourite saint, Gianna Beretta Molla and her example of showing gratitude in life, while Cara-leigh writes about the inspirational life of St Catherine of Siena.

Bronagh writes about this year's World Day of the Sick' and Pope Francis' message regarding the importance of relationships in illness, and James shares the amazing story of the healing of Tammy Peterson and her powerful experience of praying the Rosary with a friend who accompanied her on her cancer journey.

Niamh shares the wonderful experience of her first Eucharistic Procession, and Luke ponders the mysteries of life and how there are many things that we will never understand, no matter how much we search for an answer.



Experience of Eucharistic Procession helps deepen faith *by Niamh*

ON Saturday, February 3, I attended a Eucharistic Procession led by Fr Antonio and the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal through the city of Derry. I arrived at the Long Tower Chapel at 12.15 pm, accompanied by my mother, sisters and aunt.

I heard that it had been 400 years since 'Jesus' walked through the streets of the Walled city in a Eucharistic Procession. The Procession allowed us to bring Our Lord through our streets, and near our homes and businesses.

As a young person of faith, I had never heard of a Eucharistic Procession, let alone being involved in one. The experience was inspiring, seeing the people of Derry come together to show their love for Jesus in such a profound way.

Carrying the Blessed Sacrament is an active way to worship



World Day of the Sick 2024... It is not good that man should be alone *by Bronagh*

FEBRUARY 11 marked 'World Day of the Sick', and this year had a particular focus on the "importance of relationships in illness", which Pope Francis spoke about during his Sunday Angelus in St Peter's Square (Vatican News, Jan 2024).

The relationships needed by an individual in times of sickness are those with their families, health workers and medical staff, and God, all of which form an essential support network providing for all aspects of health; the physical, emotional and spiritual facets.

The guiding comfort of the Church and prayer is most often what people turn to in times of sickness. The Church can offer prayer for those who are sick and suffering. The Catholic Church observe this day annually. It is a day that gives hope to those who are sick; they can look forward with hope that they can be healed.

People are reminded of the healing powers of Jesus. One instance is when Jesus heals

Peter's mother-in-law who had a fever; Jesus lay hands on her, and the fever left (Mark 16:18). Another is when Jesus cleansed the man with leprosy, as recorded in Luke 5:12.

During the Sunday Angelus, Pope Francis expressed the closeness of "the whole Church" to those who are sick and suffering (Vatican News, 2024).

This year, there was a special focus on those who are sick and can not access care. The Holy Father noted that the Church should not be silent "about the fact that there are so many people today denied the right to care, and therefore the right to life" (Vatican News, Jan 2024).

The Holy Father prayed for those living in poverty and in war-torn countries; where basic rights are violated and people are denied the right to life. The WHO spokesperson reported, on January 22, that "only 14 hospitals are still functioning in Gaza". In war-torn countries like Palestine, Israel, Myanmar and



Ukraine, healthcare demands are at an all time high, with record numbers of people suffering, and services not able to meet these demands as they are stretched and destroyed. These people are denied the basic right to life, and the Pope prayed and renewed his prayers for those who "continue to be subject to extreme violence and ethnic persecution", which he also prayed for during his General Audience on February 7 (Vatican News, 2024). Pope Francis describes war as the "most terrible of social diseases". This strengthens the need

for relationships, relationships with other countries to help get healthcare and medical assistance to the people in need around the world. Relationships with God within these countries are important to maintain hope, and give comfort to those going through the toughest times.

On the 32nd World Day of the Sick, Pope Francis reiterated that the "sick, the vulnerable and the poor are at the heart of the Church; they must also be at the heart of our human concern and pastoral attention" (St John Lateran, 10th January 2024).

St Catherine of Siena – an inspirational Doctor of the Church *by Cara-leigh*

ST Catherine of Siena was born on March 25, 1347, during a time of plague. One of the most influential and popular saints in Church history, she was canonised by Pope Pius II in 1461.

St Catherine is known for multiple things, one being that she was a mystic. She started having mystical experiences when she was only six years old! She also had the stigmata and was a miracle worker.

At the age of 16, she joined the Third Order of St Dominic, which allowed her to still live at home. Catherine's parents did not want this for her, they wanted her to get married, but Catherine refused. In protest, she began fasting and cutting her hair short to mar her appearance.

Her parents did try to resist her protests, but they were

unsuccessful. One of the reasons they allowed her to live the life she wanted was her devotion to her family. Catherine said that she viewed her father as 'Jesus', her mother as 'Mary' and her siblings as 'the apostles', which allowed her to serve her family with humility.

She developed a habit of giving away her family's things to those who were in need. She never asked permission, so she dealt with her family criticisms.

When Catherine was 21 years old, she had a mystical experience that changed her. She described it as her "mystical marriage to Christ." During this vision, she was told to re-enter public life and help the poor/sick. She immediately did this, visiting hospitals and homes where the sick were. Catherine quickly developed followers who

helped with her mission!

In later years, she travelled and became more involved with politics. She helped restore papacy to Rome and participated in petitioning for peace during a time of war.

In 1377, Catherine established a monastery for women just outside of Siena. By 1380, when she was 33 years old, she became extremely ill due, it is believed, to her extreme fasting. She lived off communion alone! Catherine died on April 29, a few weeks later, which is also now her feast day.

Catherine is credited for over 400 letters, in which she called on church officials to use their power for the good of the people and her prayers. These works are so influential that Catherine was declared a Doctor of the Church.

Pope Paul VI, in 1970, said



that we can be inspired by her activism and stand against the evils in our society, whether we fight for the unborn, for the family or for the poor and vulnerable. She is the patron saint of journalists, media, and nursing!

ended back at Long Tower Chapel, and marked the beginning of 40 days of Adoration by many all over the world.

This experience had a deeply spiritual effect on me as a young person, and it is something, in my opinion, that everyone should experience to help deepen their faith.

Mother Teresa said: "The best time spent on this earth is in front of the Blessed Sacrament". I couldn't agree more; time spent with Jesus opens your heart and brings you closer to God.

and sang the Divine Mercy Chaplet. Some men held flags displaying images of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mary, Our Mother in Heaven, St Patrick and Sr Claire. As I knelt and sang, I couldn't help but feel proud of both my faith, and my City. Many passers-by stopped and blessed themselves, even those with suitcases who appeared to be in a rush.

There was also a relic, a cloak that had been blessed by the tilma which an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe had appeared on. It was carried by some of those taking part in the Procession. The significance of the cloak is that Our Lady appeared to a man

called Juan Diego and asked him to build a shrine in her honour. However, when the Bishop didn't believe him, Mary appeared again and asked him to take flowers to the Bishop. Juan gathered them in his tilma, and when he presented them to the Bishop an image of Mary appeared on the tilma, where she was draped in a blue cloak. On her cloak was a pattern of stars that made up the constellation of the day that she had appeared. The cloak carried throughout the Procession added to the holiness of the day.

The Eucharistic Procession

Lent - an opportunity to reach deeper understanding of God’s lessons *by Seán*

THIS year, 2024, the period of Lent begins on February 14. It is often an overlooked phase of the year – some see it as a time to eat less crisps or chocolate, or something along those lines. However, making these small sacrifices like eating less crisps or chocolate will bring you no closer to God. Lent is a solemn 40-day period (excluding Sundays) in the build-up to the Easter celebrations. It is meant for thought, worship, and reflection – an opportunity to better yourself spiritually and mentally.

Lent is a time of repentance, to listen to the Word of God closely, to recognise that God is an imminent feature in your life. You can choose to accept God as a personal, omnipresent being, if you so wish, or you can choose to reject Him and make yourself feel independent and empowered.

Independence is not much good to a human at all if they do not feel love. Love is the very pinnacle of Christian mindset. You can dislike but do not hate. Allow God to make the judgements when the time is right. God does not have to make His influence on your life blatant. He is not intrusive or forceful. Your life on earth is yours to live. Other humans or even

nature can change how you can live it. But God does not need to be obvious. You have an opportunity to be faithful to Him here, and if not, then the consequences are available afterwards.

We have to use Lent as an opportunity to transcend to a deeper understanding of God’s lessons. They are discreet and hard thinking is required to truly understand them. Not in this world will anyone ever come to truly understand them. God is not comprehensible to the human mind.

Lent originated from the Old English word ‘lencten’, meaning spring, as this time of penance and mental preparation occurs in the blooming transition from the harsh cold winter to the symbolic season of rebirth – spring. Lent became an official Church celebration as a result of the Council of Nicaea (325 AD).

The 40 days in history were often used for fasting in accordance with Jesus’ isolation period in the desert by Himself for reflection. The Christian celebration begins always on Ash Wednesday (February 14) and ends on Holy Saturday (30 March). The tradition was derived as a result of Christ’s fasting in the desert

wherein he overcame Satan’s temptation.

The Bible is littered with examples of fasting, especially in the Old Testament, usually implemented when petitioning for something important that only God could grant. In James 4:7-8, it is stated, “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and He will come near to you.” This is a perfect example of Lent’s aim. We should use the time to filter out our wrongdoings (this is never entirely possible) and become the best Christians that we can be.

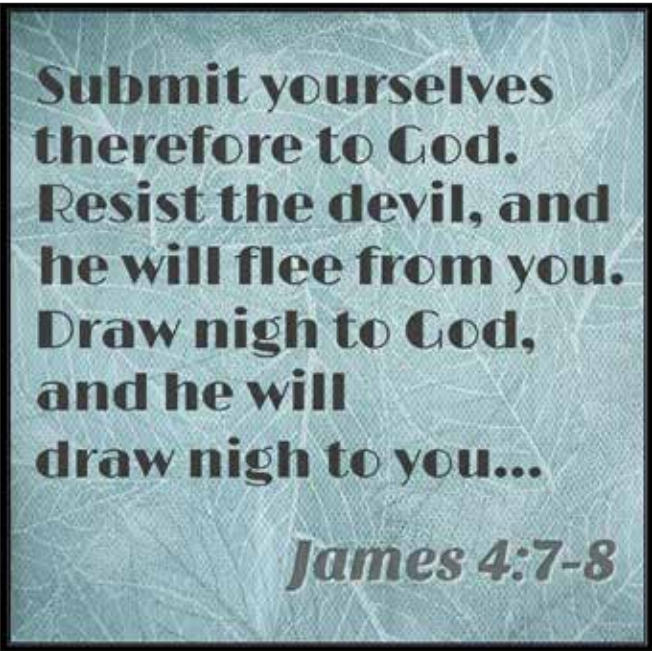
During the fasting in Lent, some people would usually eat only bread and avoid all meat products for the duration of the 40 days. Traditionally, Catholics would abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, and on all the Fridays in Lent – but fish was allowed.

Although, on the surface, the traditional celebration of Lent is focused on fasting and penance in preparation for the annual remembrance of Christ’s sacrifice and resurrection at Easter, we, as individual Christians, must find a deep, personal meaning and interpretation of the annual event.

Luke’s Gospel presents the story of Jesus’s temptation by the devil while in the desert fasting. Satan knew that Jesus was desperately hungry and desperate for some nourishing salvation to keep Him going. Satan told Jesus, (Luke 4:3): “If you are the son of God, turn this stone to bread.” Jesus replies, (Luke 4:4): “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone.’”

On the surface this, once again, appears to refer to the hardship of fasting during Lent. In reality, I interpret this as broader human necessity. On earth, we seek material needs rather than spiritual ones. Saying that “Man does not live on bread alone” is to say that we need more than just what material goods offer us.

I am a teenager. By instinct I want more so that I feel better about myself. As a child, I developed an annual sense of tension and build up in the Lenten period leading up to Easter. As an altar server, it was always the night Mass of Holy Saturday that I most looked forward to – the atmosphere, the smells, the sheer spirituality of the event after six weeks of preparation really showed its worth with the bright relief provided by Easter Sunday morning.



My first time experiencing the outcome of Lent in this way was when I was eight years old, which was my first year of altar serving. Being so involved with the many Masses of Easter week after the long Lent period felt so much more fulfilling than usual. I believe that this feeling came about as a result of both the lessons of Lent and emotional maturity. Every altar that I have seen in the last five years has been absolutely devoid of altar servers. This is quite saddening.

I urge you all to use this Lent as a time to reflect on wrongdoings. It is never too late to repent and try to better yourself. Never stop

trying to better yourself. Help others to better themselves too, but do not force it upon them. Those who reject the opportunity to repent will wish for it later.

Use Lent to think deeply, to hone in on what bothers you about your mind and your thinking and your actions. Pray more and talk to God. God already knows your feelings, but do you? Jesus instructed us to (Luke 11:9-10): “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.”

Incomprehension *by Luke*

IT is an accepted aspect of life that there will always be things that we do not understand. Sometimes, the things we do not understand have an answer, and while we may not know now, we have the potential to in the future. Many examples fall under the domain of science.

However, there are many things that we will never understand, no matter how much we search for an answer. In religious terms, these are often called mysteries. According to Pope Paul VI, a mystery is “a reality imbued with the hidden presence of God.” (1) As the word ‘reality’ implies, just because we are not capable of comprehending the truth, does not make it any less real.

There is a story from the book ‘Legenda Aurea’, by Jacobus de Voragine, about St Augustine pondering the nature of God on a beach. Unsurprisingly, neither can agree on a certain definition. He walks past a young child digging a hole in the sand. When asked what they are doing, the child states that they are digging a hole so that they can put the whole ocean into it. Naturally, the Saint finds this absurd idea amusing. However, the child points out: “I shall lightlier and sooner draw all the water of the sea and bring it into this pit than thou shalt bring the mystery of the Trinity and His divinity into thy little understanding as to the

regard thereof; for the mystery of the Trinity is greater and larger to the comparison of thy wit and brain than is this great sea unto this little pit.” (2)

This story uses vague but appreciable example of a mystery, God’s nature, and shows how we cannot hope to grasp more than a tiny facet of it.

Personally, I prefer another, less abstract analogy. Think of a cat, a dog, or any other similar animal. They are able to understand many things intuitively, such as their need to find food, and that they must avoid dangerous and other things that they require to survive. Furthermore, there are many things that these animals can learn. They can learn to beg for food from humans, how to perform simple commands, or how to navigate unnatural environments, like cities. Beyond that, some individuals can comprehend more impressive things. Some corvids can use tools, solve puzzles, and some chimpanzees can learn basic sign language.

However, there are some things that they will never be able to understand. No animal will ever be able to create things like humans do. If we take that as true, then it is only logical that there is also an upper limit to what we can understand. Speculation beyond that is possible, but likely pointless.

Ecclesiastes 8:14, 15-16, uses one of the most common examples of our incomprehension, the ancient question of why good people suffer. “14 There is something else meaningless that occurs on earth: the righteous who get what the wicked deserve, and the wicked who get what the righteous deserve. This too, I say, is meaningless...16 When I applied my mind to know wisdom and to observe the labour that is done on earth - people getting no sleep day or night - 17 then I saw all that God has done. No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun. Despite all their efforts to search it out, no one can discover its meaning. Even if the wise claim they know, they cannot really comprehend it.”

It can be an uncomfortable

feeling to know that there is so much that we can never appreciate while on Earth, but a part of our faith is trusting that while we may not know the objective truth of the universe and God, He has a plan that will ensure things go as they should, however that may be.

I will end with 1 Timothy 6:16: “It is he alone who has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see; to him be honour and eternal dominion. Amen.”

1. <https://catholicidentity.bne.catholic.edu.au/scripture/SitePages/Mystery-of-God.aspx?csf=1&e=08gLVw>
2. https://brittlebooks.library.illinois.edu/brittlebooks_open/Books2008-04/voraja0001golleg/voraja0001golleg.pdf



Tammy Peterson’s amazing Rosary testimony *by James*

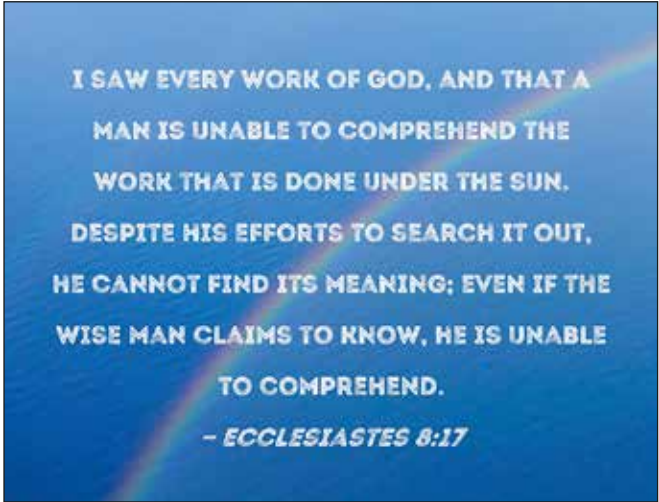
IN 2019, the wife of world-famous psychologist Jordan Peterson, Tammy, was sat down by a doctor and told that she had less than 10 months to live. Visiting several of North America’s best specialist hospitals led to no avail, all said that the rare kidney cancer she had developed was terminal, with a 0% survival rate.

Earlier this month, Colm Flynn from ETWN sat down with Tammy Peterson five years on from her terminal diagnosis, to deliver a truly exceptional interview.

Tammy recalled the day that she was told the news, it was a routine check-up six weeks after a surgery that she had, however, it would become anything but a usual appointment.

Recollecting being in the doctor’s office, she told of how she noticed that “his hands were shaking” when he handed her papers to sign, and her instantly thinking “this isn’t good news”.

Upon further examination of a kidney biopsy, which medical professionals first believed to show renal cell carcinoma, they



During Lent it would be good to abstain from what tarnishes our souls *by Evan*

*“A good roast or meat stew won’t make you a bad person. Nor will a fish fillet make you a saint. Better try to have a deeper relationship with God through better treatment with others.
Let’s be less superficial and more humble at heart.”*

THIS statement, which has been attributed to His Holiness Pope Francis, shows to me that actions do speak louder than words. During this Lenten period, many of us are more concerned about what we are giving up and what we are going on, even though we aren’t living our lives Christ-like at all; between gossiping about others or having a hatred in our hearts for some people.
If we want to abstain from things during Lent, it would to good to abstain from the things that tarnish our souls and hold us back from being pious and resilient. His Holiness is telling us that if we want to live with, and be like, Our Blessed Lord, we

must do it through the treatment of others around us. These actions could be very small, yet mean a great lot, and could be as simple as saying ‘hello’ to someone on the street or as difficult as rebuilding broken relationships which are still very bitter and painful to face.
Actions like this, remind us of Matthew 10:42, when Jesus said: “And if you give even a cup of cold water to one of the least of my followers, you will surely be rewarded.”
However, actions like these are best done in a discrete manner, without publicity that would just make the act of kindness an act of popularity.
Through giving to the needy and walking with Christ through challenging circumstances, we will become closer to Him and more like Him in many ways.
I am also reminded of John 13:34, when Jesus said: “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”



This quote reminds us that we cannot be hypocritical and be merciless to others and expect the mercy of God, which was won by Our Lord on the cross. Therefore, we must love one and other like Christ loved us, through the smallest actions of love and compassion.
Below is a prayer I have put together to help us become more like Christ and live a life of holiness and compassion...
Dear God, we come before you

sinful and broken, asking for Your mercy and forgiveness to be poured out upon us. We pray for our own hearts, that you may make them pure, gentle and full of compassion, so that we may become more like Christ in word and deed. So that we can love others like Jesus loves us, help us grow closer to You and help us to become better people. Fill us with holiness and help us grow in Your love. Amen.

Gratitude *by Erin*

ST Gianna Beretta Molla was an Italian woman who lived from 1923-1962. Personally, St Gianna is one of my favourite saints and I chose her as my Confirmation saint’s name, due to her inspirational story and the message behind it.
She was married to a man called Pietro Molla, and they had a son and two daughters. St Gianna was a very loving wife and mother. She was also a paediatrician, and her husband said that she was deeply attached to her patients.
When she fell pregnant with her fourth baby, it was discovered early in the pregnancy that she had a fibroma, a tumour on the uterine wall. Gianna firmly rejected any form of surgery which would abort her baby. She had a very risky surgery to remove just the tumour, despite her medical knowledge and awareness of the complications. This surgery was successful, and she later gave birth to her baby.

She insisted that if the delivery ever came down to her life or the baby’s, she wanted her husband to choose the baby.
Just the day after the birth, she contracted a post-op infection called septic peritonitis. She passed away a week later, her last words being: “Jesus, I love you.”
St Gianna Beretta Molla once said: “The secret of happiness is to live moment by moment and to thank God for what He is sending us every day in His goodness.”
This quote reminds us that we shouldn’t take anything for granted. Life can be tough and sometimes we can get caught up thinking about our past difficulties, things that we have been through in the past. However, this can distract us from what’s going on at present and affect our prayer. The past is behind us and we cannot change what has already happened, but we should try to have gratitude

for what we have right now.
There are other times where we think a lot about the future, for example, worrying about exams or going back to school/work. Wasting time thinking about what has already happened, or what will happen later can impact our mental health and take away from anything we have going on at the minute.
We, as Christians, should work hard to have gratitude for everything in our lives. Even small happiness’s are gifts from God, and we should pray to Him about our thankfulness every day. Praying in thanksgiving, like for having a roof over our head or warm meals, helps us to realise just how much we take for

granted.
It may be hard to realise just how blessed we are every single day. Despite any trials that we have been through, God is always there for us. He wants to listen to us talking about our day, whether we did something small or lots of big things. There is no need to worry about the past, because we have already made it through that. We may have even prayed to be in the position we’re in today.
God gives us strength, and we should have faith in what will happen in the future because He has a plan for all of us. Instead, let’s focus on living in the moment, because every breath we take is a gift from God.



Iskaheen & Upper Moville Calendar created in response to desire for family prayer *by Maureen Scott*

A parish survey was carried out by the Iskaheen & Upper Moville Pastoral Council in March/April 2019 and, in response to the question ‘What aspects of your faith would you like to learn more about?’ family prayer was the top answer.
The Council’s Marriage & Family Life Group decided to consider how we might respond to this request. After looking at various suggestions, we decided on the idea of a Prayer Calendar.
We then drew up a list of themes for each month as follows: January

– New Beginnings; February – New Life in Nature; March – Mother’s Day & St Patrick; April – Easter & Resurrection; May – Mary & Exams; June – Sacred Heart & Father’s Day; July – Grandparents; August – Holidays & Families; September – Starting School & Back to School; October – The Rosary & Missionaries; November – The Holy Souls; December – Christmas.
As well as researching suitable prayers for each month, we chose a quotation from Scripture for each. Covid intervened to delay

the process. We also had to seek permission to use many of the prayers and this took time.
We wanted to have pictures for the calendar, and it was suggested that we might approach the schools to get the pupils to draw them. Our two schools, Scoil Naomh Fionan and Scoil Naomh Brid, were very willing to help and the children produced some beautiful art work. Unfortunately, we could not use all the pictures. There are only 12 months in the year!
Our hope is that the calendar

will encourage families to pray together. Families can decide how they want to use the calendar. We would not expect them to say all of the prayers for the month every day but, perhaps, choose a prayer for a week and then choose another prayer for the next week.
Delivered after the New Year’s Eve Mass and to families through the schools, we hope that families will find the calendar helpful in their prayer life...and remember it only takes a couple of minutes.
Commenting on the prayer initiative, Fr John Farren PP

continued from page 19

came to the conclusion that she had in fact a Bellini tumour, which are very rare and grow so fast that they are typically only diagnosed only after someone has already passed away.
“What you have will kill you, and you’re going to die in about 10 months.”
These words would surely have a harrowing effect on any of us, however, Tammy had unique faith, and told her son, “That doctor, he’s a man, he has an opinion, and maybe he’s right or maybe he’s not right, but the only way we’ll know is by God and God will decide when I die.”
Within weeks, she was in hospital. Surgery was her only option and she recalled engaging in a deep prayer the night beforehand. The surgery went well but, within a week, her legs and lower body began to fill up with fluid; they had got the cancer but had missed some of the lymph. A doctor then urged her to go to emergency, where surgery to drain nine litres of fluid was undertaken, an amount they had never done before.
This would not be the turning point though, in her words, “I wasn’t getting any better, I was wasting away”. Still in hospital, she received an email from her friend, Queenie Yu, asking if she could visit her in the hospital. Upon arrival, Queenie showed Tammy her two rosaries, both blessed by the Pope, and asked, “Would you like to pray the Rosary?”
Enthusiastically, Tammy answered: “Yeah!” Although not raised Catholic, and unsure about how to actually pray the Rosary, she was accompanied by her friend to the hospital’s atrium that had trees and plants, a place where patients that were so sick would be taken to feel like they were outside and could have fresh air, to pray in a peaceful and quiet setting. This would be a practice that would carry on for five weeks, in which both would pray for two hours a day and say the Rosary, with Tammy calling the rhythm of praying the Rosary, “calming”.

A glimmer of hope would creep through; Tammy would be informed that a doctor based in Pennsylvania might be able to help. Before leaving the hospital to depart for the specialist, Queenie asked her if she would like to be Blessed, and so a Catholic priest, Fr Eric Nikolai of the Opus Dei Prelature, blessed her and asked her to pray the Novena for the sick and to pray focusing on gratitude.
Earlier, in June 2019, she had told her husband, Jordan, that she thought she’d be better by their anniversary, and so in August when the first procedure failed, a second one was due on the fifth day of the Novena. However, when doctors checked her lymph bag, to their surprise it was clear, and so they ran some tests...she was cured.
“That’s when I realised that it was my wedding anniversary, August 19, I found it pretty amazing,” she said. Within half an hour, she was out of the hospital.
Now, Tammy is currently in RCIA, the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, the formal process of joining the Church. She is due to be baptised at Easter.
Tammy recalled herself being a “little kid in the Protestant Church, missing Mother Mary”, and that she just “felt something was missing”.
After her recovery, Tammy learnt that her great-grandmother was a Polish Catholic. Her cousin, who had not known of her illness, found out about it after a phone call and she sent Tammy a Rosary, one that had belonged to her Polish great-grandmother and was around 150 years old.
The power of prayer is real and one that should not be taken for granted. We should learn from the testimony of Tammy to always have faith, to let prayer be the guiding force in our life, and to always hold Our Lady close to our hearts.
In the words of St Josemaría Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei, “The Holy Rosary is a powerful weapon. Use it with confidence and you’ll be amazed at the results”.



said: “It was a brilliant idea and the children were delighted to be involved. As we couldn’t use all of their pictures, we have given the schools folders with them all included, so that these can be shown to the school community.
“The drawings make the

calendar colourful, which will attract children. Indeed, it may well be the children who will encourage others to use it, rather than the other way around. I thank the Group very much for all of their work.”

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you” (Jer 1:5).

Warm welcome for Fr Shaun Doherty at Iskaheen & Upper Moville faith talk *by Marie Lindsay*



THE Iskaheen and Upper Moville Parish Adult Faith Group continued their series of Faith Talks recently, when they welcomed Fr Shaun Doherty to Warren View Manor. On arriving, he was formally welcomed by the Adult Faith Group, including Grainne McCool, who acted as MC for the evening, and Fr John Farren PP.

It was clear from the first moment that Fr Shaun is ‘a people person.’ On his way to the talk, he spotted a Crochet class in a nearby room and took the time to call in, chat and admire their beautiful handiwork, some of which was for the residents of Warren View.

Before formal proceedings got underway, he mingled with the large crowd who had gathered, enjoying making new friends, and warmly reacquainting with those he already knew.

Introducing the event, Grainne extended a very warm welcome to Fr Shaun, reminding him that, even though he didn’t know everybody in the room, they all felt that they knew him, since he had been a daily guest in most homes over many years when he was an award winning broadcaster on Highland Radio.

Fr Shaun’s excellent communication skills and good sense of humour were evident from the moment he started speaking. He referred to his journey to the priesthood as a series of nudges and falls, but the nudges were there from an early age.

He spoke very warmly about his family, quick to highlight that his ties with the Northwest extend beyond Highland Radio, as his father was from Urris, in Clonmany, while his mother was from the Bogside, in Derry. His parents emigrated to England after they were married, and his father worked in the mining industry, sinking the shafts in the coal mines, so they moved about quite a bit.

Shaun and his twin sister, along with their eight siblings were

all born in England. He said his parents were devout Catholics and the family attended Mass, Devotions and Benediction, regularly. He said that although he didn’t consider himself very holy, he always loved his faith and enjoyed going to Mass.

Fr Shaun said that his mother’s strong faith had carried her through many very tough times in her life. He spoke very tenderly about the loss of his sister who died when she was just six years old, the death of his father, his older brother and his mother, who died of cancer when she was just 60 years old. Although the death of his mother was a huge blow, he felt privileged that she had come back home to Derry and lived with him before she died.

As a teenager, the nudging increased and the idea of becoming a priest took hold. He attended a weekend retreat to help him decide and although he really enjoyed it, he was put off by the amount of study required. He realises now that he didn’t have the confidence to embark on a journey to priesthood back then.

Fr Shaun talked about some of the jobs he had in England, including his work as a professional actor. He got an equity card and performed in a number of stage productions, as well as some film and TV work. He moved to London and then to Derry in his early 20s. He worked on a pirate radio station in Letterkenny, DCR, for a year. He laughed as he recalled how his ‘English accent’ was requested for many Radio advertisements.

However, Highland Radio was granted the broadcasting licence in 1990 and Shaun got the opportunity to work at the fledgeling station. He loved everything about his time at Highland, the people he worked with, the listeners and in particular, the people who came on air and shared their stories. He said that it was a huge privilege to be a small part of people’s lives and to be able to allow them to tell their stories. Fr Shaun emphasised

that he learned the importance of listening in a non-judgemental way, and believes this is a great help to him in his priestly ministry.

Stillness

The nudges continued throughout his time at Highland, and he continued to practice his faith and pray. He remembers walking into Columba House on Queen Street in Derry. He had never seen anything quite like it before, just the Blessed Sacrament and the stillness. He remembers a man putting his hand on his shoulder and saying, “Do you mind if I say a prayer with you?” That man was Fr Neal Carlin, and Fr Shaun ‘blames’ Fr Neal for his becoming a priest. He became good friends with Fr Neal and joined the Columba community.

He said that Fr Neal had a very profound impact on him, although he never pushed him or put him under pressure to enter the priesthood. He was hugely impressed by Fr Carlin’s ministry to prisoners and those coping with addiction, which eventually led to his opening of the White Oaks addiction Centre and the IOSAS Centre and Celtic Prayer Garden. Fr Shaun is a member of the Columba Community to the present day.

Apart from the influence of Fr Carlin and his beloved Columba Community, the other big nudge came on one of Fr Shaun’s many visits to Medjugorje. He acknowledged the help he received from Donna and James (Jimmy) McGettigan on his many visits. He talked about how special a place it is and so hard to describe how peaceful it is. He realised when he went there that he had interviewed Fr Slavko, of Medjugorje, on Highland Radio many years earlier.

When Fr Shaun visited Medjugorje in 2017, it became very clear that it was time to consider a change of direction. He came home and announced live on air that he was leaving Highland Radio. He said that he loved every minute of his time at Highland, and it was a big decision, but that he was certain it was the right decision.

After having taken a year out, he met Fr Paul Farren who told him that it was time to ‘step out into the deep.’ He felt ready, and went to speak to Bishop Donal McKeown, who was incredibly supportive right from the start.

He went to a College in Spain and then the Beda College in Rome, which is a seminary for older men who are interested in the priesthood. He said that he had a wonderful time there and formed lasting friendships with fellow

seminarians. He was ordained a deacon in St Paul’s Basilica in Rome in June 2022.

Fr Shaun beamed from ear to ear as he talked about the joy of his ordination in St Eugene’s Cathedral last July. He said “everybody was there”: all his family, the first time they had ever all been together; Bishop Donal; his brother priests and seminarians; his Highland Radio family; his beloved Columba community; and his many friends from near and far. He said that his ordination in St Eugene’s had a special link to his mother, as he learned that, as well as his mother’s funeral in the Cathedral, she was baptised and married there too. So, it was very fitting that he be ordained there.

Fr Shaun answered questions from the floor before taking time to meet and chat with the audience over a cup of tea and Helen Grant’s fabulous home baked pancakes.

In thanking Fr Shaun for generously and honestly sharing his very inspirational faith journey, Grainne presented him with a small token of appreciation, saying that all gathered in Warren View were truly blessed to hear his remarkable faith journey first hand.

It is clear to anyone who spends time with Fr Shaun that he was always going to be a priest, the call came ‘dropping slow’ but he had the wisdom and courage to follow that call. The Northwest may have lost one of its most famous broadcasters, but the Church and the Derry Diocese has gained a great ‘listening’ and compassionate priest.



Mark Your Calendars

for ages 8-12

February 24th

April 20th

June 15th

Girls get together

Organised by the Servant Sisters

For more details email bnactivity@irelandmagmail.com

Games Arts & Crafts Faith Fun

Celebrating St Brigid and Consecrated Life, Bishop Donal looked at example of early missionaries for today's Church, remarking...

Early Irish Church brought good news and healing...setting up structures to best deliver hope and dignity



RELIGIOUS from various Orders in the Diocese where amongst the congregation in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, for the celebration of Mass by Bishop Donal on the evening of February 1, to mark the Feast of St Brigid and the 1500th year since her death, as well as the World Day for Consecrated Life, February 2.

Reflecting during his homily on how Sts Brigid, Patrick and Columba had been key pillars in the young Irish church, Bishop Donal noted that, in about a century, the faith of Patrick, who died when Brigid was about 10, had taken hold in so many parts of the island.

"What seem to have been the key elements in this Irish form of Christianity that became a powerhouse of monasteries and missionaries over the following centuries?" he pondered, in the context of the huge need for renewal of our Church today.

"We can look back on those early saints and note how successful their work was," remarked Bishop Donal, adding: "St Brigid and her friends had no idea how their ministry would work out. But they knew, as last October's document from the Synod on synodality said, that 'Rather than saying that the Church has a mission, we affirm that the Church is mission'

(Section 8, Convergences a).

"Like so many generations of missionaries, the early Irish Church did not come to preserve an already existing institution. They came to bring good news and practical healing, and they set up structures that would best deliver that, best promote human hope and dignity. Education and medical care have always been at the forefront of a missionary church that wants to be good news.

"There is a role for all the baptised in that mission. But the meeting in Rome acknowledged that there is a tension between the involvement of all in the mission of the Church, the role of the 'some' in a sacramental church with ordained members; and the role of the 'one' in the unique ministry of the Pope. There is the temptation to excessively distinguish the difference between laity and clergy, or to forget that we are a sacramental church and replace a clerical elite with a lay elite.

"An excessively politicised church forgets that we belong to Christ, not to those in our midst who might want to think they are stronger or smarter. Even the apostles thought sometimes that they knew better than Jesus. That temptation has not gone away. St Brigid and her contemporaries knew that they had to be prayerful and let the Holy Spirit lead the young church. Otherwise, they would be building on sand and not on rock. Brigid would want to warn us about the purpose of Christ's Church."

Commenting that Brigid had lived a life of consecrated virginity, and founded monasteries for those who wanted to join her, Bishop Donal said: "Such communities provide both support and protection. And it seems that the early Irish Church was based around leadership by abbots and abbesses rather than by bishops alone. That has been another strength of the church. We have been able to accommodate a whole range of different spiritual

traditions under one umbrella, seeing diversity as a gift rather than as a threat.

Charismatic

"The synodal document wants to encourage the different charisma for renewal that religious congregations and lay movements have brought to the church. Thus, the members of the Assembly wrote: 'The Church's charismatic dimension is made manifest in the rich and varied forms of consecrated life. This testimony has contributed to renewing the life of the ecclesial community in every age and provides an antidote to the perennial temptation towards worldliness...Those in consecrated life have often been the first to sense important historical changes and to heed the promptings of the Spirit' (10. Convergences b)."

He went on to recall: "A few generations ago, we had a flourishing national Church, rich with various charisms – religious communities providing hospital and education service, as well as movements such as the Legion of Mary. Brigid would remind us that communities are vital for renewal, not just because of the work that they do but because of the witness value of committed celibate communities in a fragmented and highly sexualised world."

Holding up St Brigid as an example of how the early Irish Church, right from the beginning, "had room for leadership roles for strong women of faith", the Bishop said: "Even 100 years ago, when women played huge roles in running schools, hospitals and other institutions, lay women were also heavily involved in pastoral initiatives such as the Apostolic Workers and the Legion of Mary. In recent decades, we have lost that vision of church.

"The Assembly document wrote: 'Many women expressed deep gratitude for the work of priests and bishops. They also spoke of a Church that

wounds. Clericalism, a chauvinist mentality and inappropriate expressions of authority continue to scar the face of the Church and damage its communion. A profound spiritual conversion is needed as the foundation for any effective structural change.' (9. Convergences f).

"And they add: 'Where dignity and justice are undermined in relationships between men and women in the Church, we weaken the credibility of our proclamation to the world. Our synodal path shows the need for relational renewal and structural changes.' (9. Convergences g)."

"That does not merely mean that we change who has power," remarked Bishop Donal, "It also challenges us to discern how we can all use and abuse power, and to seek the Holy Spirit's guidance and not merely what comes from current secular agendas. St Brigid would call us to be credible witnesses to Jesus and not merely social conformists."

He concluded: "St Brigid lived at a time of birth for the young Irish Church. She had no idea what she was preparing for. But she knew that missionaries in every age are seed planters. Who plants and who waters are unimportant, writes St Paul. It is God who gives the growth. Our job is to plant the seed in the soil and, in God's own good time, somebody else will reap. Some seed will fall on rocky ground or amid briars. That does not matter; keep sowing, for, as the psalm tells us, those who are sowing in tears will sing when they reap (Psalm 126).

"As we begin this year leading up to the centenary of St Brigid's death, we ask for the same Spirit that filled her heart."

During the ceremony, Bishop Donal blessed St Brigid's Crosses, which included those made the night before in the Kildare Room, at Carnhill Parochial House, where everyone was invited back to for refreshments at the end of Mass.



Pupils from St Brigid's College and Primary School, Carnhill, and St Patrick's & St Brigid's College, Claudy





Keeping St Brigid Cross tradition alive in Carnhill



Passing on St Brigid tradition at Buncrana GAC session



Donaghedy gets creative with St Brigid Crosses



Dregish rejoices on Feast of St Brigid

by Fr Peter McCawille SMS

“If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind” (Percy Bysshe Shelley)

SPRING was already beginning to rear its head, and there was an air of quiet optimism, as parishioners gathered in St Eugene’s Hall, Dregish, on the evening of February 1 to celebrate the Feast of St Brigid (Lá Fhéile Bhride).

The Dregish Community Group marked the Feast by inviting the parishioners to a special ‘St Brigid’s Evening’, which included a short talk by parishioner, Mairead Morris, on the life of St Brigid, an opportunity for people to make traditional St Brigid’s Crosses, a musical interlude associated with St Brigid and Irish dancing.

For many people, it was symbolically appropriate that only a few days earlier the news broke that, at long last, the log-jam in the North in the post-Brexit era would soon be broken. Some even suggested that this new-found hope and renewal were the direct result of an intervention by St Brigid herself. Only time will tell whether this initial optimism will endure and bear the much-awaited progress that people so much cherish.

While dates regarding St Brigid’s birth and death are speculative,

since there are no actual records of that time, there is still much evidence over the past few years of a renewed interest in her, which has eventually led to the establishing of a public holiday (to be held on the nearest Monday following the feast day), the first to be named after a woman on the island of Ireland. In addition to affording people another day off, it can also be understood as welcome, if somewhat belated, evidence of a rebalancing of the patriarchy, ensuring that Sts Patrick and Columcille will no longer have the whole show to themselves!

In her talk, Mairead Morris gave a brief outline of St Brigid’s career, telling us: “She was born in 450 AD to a Druid family in the village of Faughart, near Dundalk, to a pagan Chieftain named Dubhthach and a woman named Broicsech, who was a Christian. Her father named her after a powerful pagan goddess. She was a contemporary of St Patrick, who is credited with changing the Druid tradition in Ireland to Christianity and his teachings inspired her to become a Christian.

A list of her rich and varied gifts – a feminist, a farmer, an abbess

who founded a community under a great oak tree, hence the name Cill Dara, or Kildare, the church of the oak, a miracle worker, a friend of the poor – clearly entitles her to be recognised and acknowledged as ‘a woman for all seasons’.

Everyone noticed her personal holiness as a young child, in her desire to serve God by comforting the poor and removing their anxiety. At the age of 16, she set out on her journey to be a nun and, along with seven companions, she was professed by Bishop Mel, who had a vision and foretold her future when she was still in her mother’s womb.

Devotion to St Brigid spread widely throughout the world, and the origin of the popular tradition of making St Brigid’s Crosses is linked to an encounter with a dying pagan chieftain, whose servants had summoned St Brigid to his bedside. She reached down, picked up a handful of rushes from the floor and made a cross which she used (akin to St Patrick using the three-leaf shamrock to explain the Holy Trinity) to instruct the dying man on how Christ came to save mankind by His death on a Cross. Her calming words brought

peace to the chieftain’s soul and he asked to be baptised.

St Brigid passed away on February 1, 523 AD, and her remains were buried beside the high altar of her church in Kildare. Her tomb became a place of pilgrimage and many miracles were attributed to her. With the coming of the Vikings, her remains were transferred to Downpatrick Cathedral and buried alongside Sts Patrick and Columcille, to keep them safe from the invaders. Tradition holds that a fragment of her remains was later transferred to the Continent and a portion of the relic was brought back to Ireland in the 1930s by the Brigidine Sisters in Tullow, Co Carlow. A few weeks ago the relic was moved to St Brigid’s Parish Church in Kildare, where it will be kept in a specially designed shrine.”

‘St Brigid’s Evening’ in Dregish was brought to a close with the blessing of the St Brigid’s Crosses, a group photograph, a sing-song and a welcome cup of tea in gratitude to St Brigid, for her contribution to the dignity of women and to the spread of Christianity in Ireland and all over Europe.



Greenlough Camogs enjoy making St Brigid Crosses



Aghyaran gathering for annual celebration of St Brigid



Urney & Castlefin folk delighted at return of St Brigid celebration

by Emby O'Donnell

A great celebration was held in Doneyloop Hall on the Eve of St Brigid. We have missed this celebration since 2020 and are delighted that it has been reinstated to keep this lovely tradition alive.

We were also delighted to see so many young people taking part, as well as the not so young!

A lovely supper was served before 'St Brigid' arrived in the

hall.

A sincere thank you to the Organising Committee, the hard working hall and kitchen teams, those who donated food, those who attended on the night and not forgetting 'St Brigid'.

Thanks also to Fr Hegarty for leading us in prayer, and blessing the Crosses and St Brigid's Well Water.

Prizes for Crosses made on the night were won by: Mia Bogle and Kayla Harvey (Primary School); Edel Quinn and Lily May McGrath (Post Primary); Cathal Hendron (Novice); Hugh Kelly, Geraldine McGranaghan, Ally Logue and Riofagh Cannon (Adults); Natalie McConnell (Most Creative); and Sean Quinn (Overall Winner).



Strong St Brigid Cross community in Desertmartin



Killiclogher cross-making a lovely St Brigid get-together



Cathedral Hall cuppa and cross-making to celebrate St Brigid



The Divine Mercy Image explained... The Feet of Jesus by Sr Benedetta Hutnikiewicz ZSJM

THIS month as we continue to journey with the Divine Mercy Image, we will have a closer look at the feet of Jesus. But first let us see what the meaning of feet in the Bible is and what does God want to teach us about them through His holy word.

Feet are very important in the Bible. We have to bear in mind that the Scriptures were written in times when people mostly walked from place to place. From that comes the importance and symbolic meaning of feet.

The most common symbolic use for feet in the Bible is to represent our lives. This is so because we usually go where our feet go. Hence, in various places the Bible encourages us to choose the right path, to be careful lest our feet would slip. "Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure. Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil" (Proverbs 4:26-27). "My steps have held fast to your paths; my feet have not slipped" (Ps 17:5). Keeping our feet on the right path signifies here the importance of making good choices in our everyday lives.

When we are unsure which path to choose, God equips us with the gift of His word. "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path" (Ps 119:105). Without his guidance, we can easily stray.

Unfortunately, since we are

sinner, our feet often rush to doing evil. I'm sure each of us can recognize in himself "a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil" (Proverbs 6:18). In Isaiah 59:7, God complains: "Their feet run to evil, and they are swift to shed innocent blood; their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; desolation and destruction are in their highways".

Thank God, the truth that we are sinners is not the whole truth about who we are. We are also God's beloved children, redeemed by the sacrificial death and resurrection of His Son. As St Paul writes: "Sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace" (Romans 6:14). The Blood of the Lamb cleanses us of our sins, enabling us to walk in the light. "But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

Another meaning associates feet with the fact that they are very sensitive and can easily be hurt. In Psalm 91:11-13, the sacred author writes: "For He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the adder; the young lion

and the serpent you will trample underfoot".

Isaiah 40:31 contains a wonderful promise: "But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint".

It was customary to wash a guest's feet, as in the climate of the Near East they would get dirty walking around all day. We have traces of this in the Gospel: "Then turning toward the woman He [Jesus] said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.'" (Luke 7:44)

And so, we come to Jesus. He is the One who brings us Good News about God: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns.'" (Isaiah 52:7)

As we look at the Image, we can easily picture Jesus walking about the Holy Land, preaching the Good News, healing the sick. Many times His feet must have been weary. Many times they must have been hurt and bruised. And yet, that did not stop Him. He is the Good Shepherd, so He continually went out to seek for the lost sheep. He wanted to bring us all back to the heart of the Father. And He does so to this day, searching out those who are lost.

St Faustina wrote down these words of the Saviour in her Diary: "With My mercy, I pursue sinners along all their paths, and My Heart rejoices when they return to Me. I forget the bitterness with which they fed My Heart and rejoice at their return" (Diary, 1728).

In biblical times, to wash one's feet, to bow at one's feet, or to lay something at one's feet was a sign of great humility and submission. We have many scenes in the Gospel where people fall at Jesus' feet (see for example Mary, sister

of Martha and Lazarus in John 11:32; Jairus asking Jesus to heal his daughter in Luke 8:41; the grateful Samaritan in Luke 17:16) or when they lay their sick at His feet: "Great crowds came to Him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at His feet; and He healed them" (Matthew 15:30).

Bearing this in mind, it is no wonder that Peter was so aghast when Jesus knelt down in front of him to wash his feet during the Last Supper. This task was given to the lowest of servants. And here is Jesus, whom Peter recognizes as the Lord, stooping down to wash the Apostle's feet. It was completely unthinkable, shocking, scandalising even. Peter needed this confrontation with himself to realise that his thinking is not yet that of Christ's; that his mentality is still very much of this world.

When we look at the bare feet of Jesus in the Divine Mercy Image we may want to call to mind that scene. Jesus comes to us barefoot, like a slave. He kneels down in front of you and me to wash our feet. This takes place in a special way in the Confessional, where He washes and cleanses us of our sin. No matter how filthy our soul is, He stoops down to wash us clean with great love and humility. He waits for us in this Sacrament to serve us. It brings delight to His Heart when we allow Him to do so!

At the same time, the scene of washing the disciples' feet reminds us of the great commandment Jesus gave us: "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet" (John 13:14). We are called to imitate our Master and serve one another. This takes place in our families, workplace, in the ordinary everyday tasks. Every time we choose to serve our neighbour, we are really serving God.

Last, but not least, the feet of Jesus in the Image call to mind a scene from the book of Exodus. Moses, who is tending to the

flocks of his father-in-law, notices an unusual sight: a bush that burns but is not consumed by the fire. As he comes closer to have a look, he hears the voice of God calling out to him: "Do not come any closer. Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5).

Jesus comes to our hearts barefoot. He knows our hearts our holy ground. He has great respect for our story, as He knows that it is all part of the Father's plan. He has the power to work out for the good even things that were evil. But He also knows the tenderness of some places, the hurts, the wounds. He is very gentle. He won't trample on our heart as people sometimes do. He comes barefoot, like a slave, to serve us, to heal us, to touch us very delicately. It is up to us whether we will open the door of our hearts to Him. The doorknob is only on our side. He won't break in, He's a gentleman. Hear Him saying to you, personally: "Here I am! I stand at the door and



knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me." (Revelation 3:20)

(Sr Benedetta is of the Congregation of Sisters of Merciful Jesus)



Gathering of men discerning vocation

THE Vocations Directors of the northern dioceses organised a gathering for men discerning a vocation to serve the Church as diocesan priests.

Those who were able to attend came from the dioceses of Down & Connor, Dromore, Clogher, Raphoe, and Derry.

Fr Pat O'Hagan, Derry Diocesan Vocations Director, was the main

celebrant at the 12 noon Mass in the Church of Christ the King, Omagh, after which the group visited the Ulster American Folk Park.

The day out was rounded up with a meal at the Mellon Country Inn, when the group was joined by Bishop Donal McKeown.

Please continue to pray for vocations to the diocesan priesthood.



Pope's monthly intention

The Holy Father has asked for prayer during February for:

The terminally ill:
Let us pray that the sick who are in the final stages of life,

and their families, receive the necessary medical and human care and accompaniment.

Prayer for Priests

Heavenly Father, I ask you to bless our bishops and priests and to confirm them in their vocation of service.

As they stand before us as ministers of Your Sacraments, may they be channels of the love and compassion of the Good Shepherd, who came not to be served but to serve.

Give them the grace they need to respond generously to you, and the courage to proclaim your Word of justice, love and truth.

Bless, in a special way, Your servant Father, Send your Spirit upon him So that he may always walk in the path of faith, hope and love, in the footsteps of Christ, the eternal priest, who offered Himself on the cross for the life of the world. Amen.

Remember in prayer during February:

Fr John Doherty (Feb 1st)
All priests (2nd)
Fr Michael Doherty (3rd)
Fr Patrick Doherty (4th)
Mgr Andrew Dolan (5th)
Fr Brian Donnelly (6th)
Mgr Joseph Donnelly (7th)
Fr Liam Donnelly (8th)

All priests (9th)
All priests (10th)
All priests (11th)
Fr Malachy Gallagher (12th)
Fr Jack Farrell (13th)
Fr Paul Fraser (14th)
Fr John Farren (15th)
Fr Neil Farren (16th)
Fr Paul Farren (17th)
All priests (18th)
Fr John Forbes (19th)
Fr Edward Gallagher (20th)
Fr Dermot Harkin (21st)
Fr John Gilmore (22nd)
Fr Joseph Gormley (23rd)
Fr Eamon Graham (24th)
Fr Gerald Hasson (25th)
Fr Karl Haan (26th)
Fr Eugene Hasson (27th)
All Priests (28th)
All Priests (29th)

DIOCESAN VOCATIONS RETREAT

"Do you love me? Feed my Lambs, look after my Sheep"

Come join us as we'll help you discern and answer the call of God's love in you.

8th-10th March @Drumalis Retreat Centre, Larne

for more information email **Fr Pat O'Hagan - pgoh2111@gmail.com**

Eternal Echoes... Timeless Truth for today’s hearts by Regina Deighan

Soulful Literature

SEVERAL years ago, my husband bought me a shirt that says ‘Reading is my favourite sport’; a humorous, yet highly appropriate, gift for a bookworm such as myself. Reading is something I have always loved. When kids came along and I had less time to myself, reading was the hobby that I always pursued.

A few years ago, I decided to start the practice of committing myself to spiritual reading during Lent; but, because I had spent so much time immersed in theology during my graduate studies, doing extra spiritual reading was never my priority. Once I graduated with my Master’s degree and the work was done, I felt this gap in my life. I missed diving into theology and nourishing my soul through the written word.

This new Lenten book haul plan would give me the opportunity to pursue titles that were of special interest and would allow me to grow in my spiritual life. It has truly become one of my favourite spiritual activities, because I can allow the Lord to work in my heart through means of my favorite hobby.

We often fall into the same patterns during Lent - giving up the same vices or pleasures, saying the same prayers. I invite you to consider choosing a book to read

during Lent to grow in your own faith journey; something that will meet your personal needs and hold your attention and invite you into greater communion with the Lord.

If you aren’t a reader, start simply. If you love to read, maybe pick a few. There are no rules or guidelines; just ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in choosing a book that will allow you to be open to the Lord.

Below are a few recommendations based on your desires for your spiritual life...

If you are looking for inspiration from powerful witnesses, try... *‘With Glory and Honor You Crowned Them’* by Matthew Manint.

This short text shares the stories of the seven women martyrs listed in the Roman Canon (Eucharistic Prayer 1). Many people believe that women are looked down upon in the Church and treated unequally to men. This is simply untrue! Women hold an esteemed place in the Church, and these women are witnesses to that, but more importantly to the peace and joy that comes with having one’s hope placed in the Risen Lord, no matter the cost.

If you want to be inspired by indomitable faith and unshakeable love for the Lord in the midst of grievous trials and persecutions,

give this little book a try.

If you want to reflect on Jesus’ sacrifice of love on the Cross, try... *‘The Seven Last Words’* by Venerable Archbishop Fulton Sheen.

In this text, the great orator and shepherd, Fulton Sheen reflects upon the seven last statements Jesus makes from the cross. Evoking the devotional practice of preaching the ‘seven last words’ on Good Friday, before the solemn liturgies of the Passion of the Lord and the Veneration of the Holy Cross, Sheen explains what they mean in context, but more importantly what they can mean for our lives in this present moment of our faith journey.

This text is very short, and I make a habit of reading it every Holy Week. I always learn something new from his poignant and sobering meditations, as if Christ were speaking directly to me in those painful three hours. This text is also easily accessible for free online through a Google search.

If you want to learn more about the power and purpose of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, try... *‘Lord, Have Mercy’* by Scott Hahn.

One of the central themes of Lent is repentance and turning our hearts back to the Lord. While any time of year is good for going to Confession, Lent is an especially

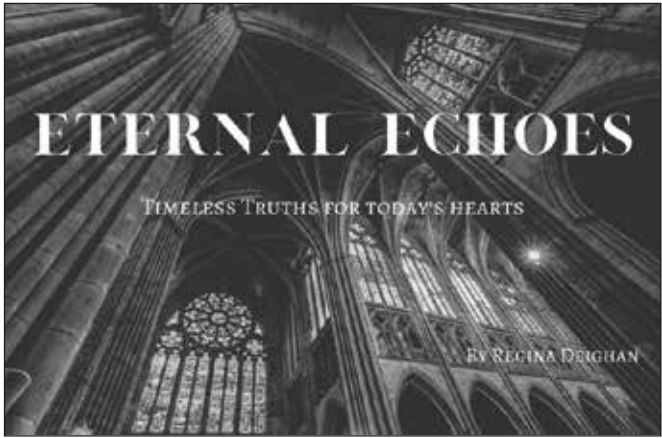
appropriate time. If you have curiosities about this sacrament, such as why does the Church have this sacrament or why do I have to verbally confess and enumerate my sins to a priest, this is a book for you.

Hahn makes the scriptural foundations, history, and practice of this sacrament very accessible, as well as logical. Perhaps it will motivate you to make good and thorough Confessions a more regular aspect of your spiritual life throughout the entire liturgical year.

If you are struggling with perfectionism in the spiritual life and looking for holy companions, try... *‘The Heart of Perfection’* by Colleen Carroll Campbell

This is, perhaps, one of my favourite spiritual reads. Campbell addresses the Gospel command to be “perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect” (cf. Mt 5:48) in our faith life, by examining the lives and examples of several different saints who struggled with a sort of disoriented Christian perfectionism, which we often call scrupulosity.

She ties in examples from her own life, as well, to illustrate the ways in which these saints walked with her on her own journey of coming to understand what it means to



live according to God’s plan, and not the one we have created for ourselves.

Bonus Recommendation! If you are a blossoming theologian and want to dive deeper with a more challenging text, try... *‘Jesus of Nazareth’* by Pope Benedict XVI

This is a series of three volumes (choose one or all three) about the life of Christ. Pope Benedict gives an in-depth examination of the Gospel accounts of the life of Jesus, so we can get to know Him better. These texts are a bit more challenging in content but are well worth the read.

If you want a particularly Lenten focus, try the second volume (Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection) during Holy Week. This covers Jesus’ Passion, Death, and Resurrection.

If you seek to grow in greater theological and scriptural

knowledge of Our Lord’s life and are looking for more of an intellectual and spiritual challenge, this is the book for you!

While all of these texts are fantastic reads, nothing can ever replace the Sacred Scriptures as the most important text to grow in our faith lives. It is here that we encounter the living Word of God. The Holy Spirit can enlighten our hearts in a way like no other text when we open up the Bible.

As a final thought, consider reading the daily Mass or Sunday readings for the Lenten season, maybe even using a Missal/Lectionary-based devotional like ‘Magnificat’ or Word on Fire’s Lenten meditations.

Get to know Jesus even more through the text that was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and can break open our hearts of stone to turn back to our Beloved, who calls each of us by name.

Spreading the Gospel in the Diocese of Derry: Two Saints by Dr Seán Beattie

THE northern area of the Diocese of Derry has two well-known loughs, the Foyle and the Swilly, which border the peninsula of Inishowen. This region has a close association with the introduction of Christianity into the North West, covering large parts of the Diocese of Derry. To arrive here, St Patrick travelled through several kingdoms, each jealously guarding its territory. The dynasty in control of Inishowen was the Cineál nÉoghain.

Barnesmore Gap

According to the ‘Tripartite Life of Saint Patrick’, Patrick entered the lands of the Cineál nÉoghain when he came from the south through Barnesmore Gap, imparting a blessing to the territory, its forts, estuaries and settlements. It was a diplomatic as well as a religious occasion, as it gave him something of a ‘carte blanche’ to deliver his message. In some writings, the Barnesmore Gap is often known as the ‘Gap of the Sons of Conall’. Early travellers relied on sea highways, rivers and mountain gaps to reach their destinations. Patrick followed the course of the river Finn, a natural route when roadways were untrustworthy and often dangerous. He founded Donagh Mór Maige Ítha (Donoughmore) to the west of Castlefinn. Then he travelled northwards through

what is now the modern village of Manorcunningham or St Johnston. A hilly landscape lay before him, unmapped, unknown and remote.

Domhnach Mór Maghtochair: Carndonagh

His destination was the Plain of Maghtochair, (the ‘Plain of the Causeway’), which was bordered by the waters of Trabreaga Bay to the north. Overlooking the estuary, he established a church, known as Domhnach Mór Maghtochair. The name is important, as the denomination of ‘domhnach’ was reserved for a church founded by the saint, thus enhancing its status in the Early Christian world. It was a good choice, with views of the estuary, its dramatic tidal movements, the distant Atlantic, regarded at the time as the super highway to the rest of Europe, and a backdrop of the majestic Slieve Sneaght, the ‘snow mountain’, where the first snows of each winter would herald the seasonal changes.

Today, the historic links of Carndonagh to the saint have survived, not only in the name of the town but in the magnificent High Cross, known as the Cross of St Patrick. It is unique among a group of monuments known as the Northern High Crosses – it is the first of the free-standing crosses of the Early Christian Church

in Ireland. Earlier crosses were merely inscribed on large rock faces, but the Cross of St Patrick had the appearance of a real cross. Monks had an eye for design: they had access to a rich combination of colours and dyes, best exhibited in the Book of Kells. It is possible that this Cross was painted also, but there is no direct evidence to prove this.

The Cross has been moved many times and its present location is not where it was originally. It marks, however, the site of the early monastery established by the saint. The Cross is over 1,000 years old, dating perhaps to the eighth century. The sculptors who carved this monument are unknown, but they belonged to a travelling band of skilled craftsmen who went from one great monastery to another, creating works of art from local stone and bringing the Gospel to a pagan society. The stone pillars were brought to the site from other parts of the monastic domain and they may originally have served as boundary markers. They, too, defined a Gospel message.

Since 2012, a group of archaeologists from the Universities of Sunderland and Newcastle have been investigating the main monastic sites in the peninsula. Using magnetometry, they have identified the twin ditches which marked the monastic enclosure at Carndonagh. Inside,

the strict rules of the monastery applied regarding prayer, fasting, labour and education. Outside, the secular world held different values, some pagan, others hostile. Today, a modern roadway cuts through the ancient monastic site.

National Monument

The Cross is a National Monument and attracts a large number of visitors. In Early Christian times, crowds came for a different reason: they thronged the place to pray, the largest assembly being on the Feast Day of the Saint himself. The spiritual celebrations, lasting several days – processions, music, penance, prayer, and meditation – continued for many centuries after his death, into the medieval period. The existence of these rites and commemorations were noted by the great Franciscan academic who hailed from Carndonagh, John Colgan. It was during his lifetime, in the seventeenth century, that the religious activities went into decline. He did not give any reasons, but it is possible that the Plantation of Ulster had a negative impact. Subsequently, the Penal Laws of the early eighteenth century would have made such public religious events virtually impossible.

St Mura of Fahan, Buncrana

While the month of March

is dominated by our national saint, it is prudent to remember another great icon of the church whose Feast Day occurs in the same month, on March 12, and is, indeed, overshadowed by the national celebrations. St Mura of Fahan, Buncrana, founded a monastery on the west of the peninsula which brought the Gospel to the shores of Lough Swilly and beyond.

Mura’s main claim to fame was the association of his church at Fahan with Colmcille. He wrote an account of the saint’s life in metrical form. The manuscript was around in the seventeenth century but there is no trace of it now. John Colgan claimed to have seen a copy. The O’Hogan’s of Tulach Óg, in Co Tyrone, held Mura in high regard.

St Mura’s Bell Shrine

St Mura’s Bell Shrine is in the Wallace Collection, Hertford House, Manchester Square, off Oxford St in London, and it is worth making a visit to see it on public display when in London. It was sold by an unknown resident of Ludden, in Buncrana, who was in dire straits just after the Great Famine and the money was probably used to buy meal. It is to be found in the Sixteenth Century Collection and is dated between the 11th and 16th century. It is highly ornamented and is made



of brass, bronze and silver, with decorations of rock crystal and amber. The bell itself was used to call monks to prayer and also in church ceremonies.

Parts of his crozier are in the National Museum in Dublin. It was used in the taking of oaths in the same manner as the Bible is used today. St Mura’s Well at Fahan, close to the old Lough Swilly railway line, was once a place of great pilgrimage on his Feast Day.

It would be wonderful if the Diocese of Derry decided to honour St Mura but this could be a challenge, given the dominant position of our Patron Saint in the same month.

Parish *Post-its*

Aghyaran

Adoration: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place on Thursdays after 9.15 am Mass, and finishes at 12 noon.

Ardstraw East (Newtownstewart)

YOUCAT Study: A one-hour interactive YOUCAT programme, for those aged 16+ years, takes place on Tuesdays in the Oratory, at 7 Main Street, Newtownstewart, starting at 6.30-7.30 pm. For further information contact 028 81661445 or email ardstraweast@derrydiocese.org. This may be of particular interest to those undertaking the Pope John Paul II Award.

Badoney Lower (Gortin-Rouskey)

Adoration: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place on Tuesdays in St Patrick's Church, Gortin, following 12.30 pm Mass, with Benediction at 5 pm.

Ballinascreen

Renovation Fund: To kick start Parish fundraising for emergency work beginning shortly at St Eugene's Church, Moneyneena, a Parish Dance will be held on Friday, March 1, in An Ráth Dubh. Music will be by Bleed'N Cowboys. **St Pio Mass:** Mass in honour of St Pio of Pietrelcina is celebrated on the first Monday of each month at 7.30 pm, in Holy Rosary Church. The Novena prayers and Rosary are recited at 7.10 pm.

Ballymagroarty

Adoration: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in Holy Family Church, Ballymagroarty, every Sunday, from 1.30 - 6 pm. **Padre Pio Prayer:** The Holy Family Padre Pio Prayer Group meets on the first Tuesday each month at Holy Family Chapel, Ballymagroarty, Derry. It starts with the Rosary at 6.45 pm, followed by Mass at 7.15pm, and Novena to St Pio directly afterwards. There will be a first class relic available for veneration.

Banagher

Lent: Stations of the Cross will take place in St Mary's Church, Altinure, for the Sundays of Lent, at 6 pm. **Adoration & Chaplet:** Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and Divine Mercy Chaplet take place in St Mary's Church, Altinure, on Thursdays 10.30 am – 11.30 am, and St Joseph's Church, Fincairn, on Fridays, 10–11

am.

Bellaghy

Community Café: The Open Door Community Café is open on the last Sunday of each month, from 11.30 am until 1 pm.

Buncrana

Adoration: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament now takes place in St Mary's Oratory every Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday, beginning at 6 am and closing at 10 pm, and on Sundays 2-10 pm. **Rosary:** The Rosary is prayed each weekday at 9.30 am in St Mary's Oratory, prior to 10 am Mass. **Guided Holy Hour:** A Guided Holy Hour of Adoration in Honour of the Holy Face of Jesus takes place on Sundays, 6-7 pm in St Mary's Oratory. All welcome. **Rosary for Priests:** Three Rosaries are prayed each Tuesday, between 1-2 pm, in the Oratory for vocations to the priesthood and religious life. **AA:** Alcoholics Anonymous Amazing Grace Group, Buncrana, has five meetings per week: Sundays – 8 pm, Tuesdays - 8.30 pm, Thursdays - 11.30 am, Fridays 8.30 pm, and Saturdays at 11.30 am. If you think you may have a problem with alcohol, please come along. Venue for all meetings is St Teresa's Room. **Al-Anon:** The Al-Anon Group, for anyone whose life is or has been affected by someone else's drinking, meets in St Teresa's Room on Thursdays at 6:45 pm.

Burt, Inch & Fahan

Grave Blessings: The annual blessing of the graves will take place in St Mura's Parish Church on Sunday, June 9, at 11.30 am, in St Aengus' Church, Burt, on Sunday, June 16, at 3 pm, and in Our Lady of Lourdes, Inch, on Sunday, June 16, at 6 pm. **Adoration:** Adoration in St Mura's Parish Church, Fahan, takes place each Friday after 10 am Mass.

Cappagh

Catholicism Series: A journey around the world and deep into the Catholic Faith, through a 10-week Catholicism series, with acclaimed author, speaker and theologian, Bishop Robert Barron, is underway in the Parish. Running in two locations on two different days, the Series runs on Mondays, from February 12 in Christ the King Church at 7 pm, and/or on Thursdays, from February 15 in Cappagh Parish Hall at 10.30 am.

Rosary: The Rosary is prayed in St Mary's Church, Killyclogher every Monday-Sunday after 10 am Mass, and in Corpus Christi, Mountfield every Thursday evening at 8 pm.

Carndonagh

Graves' Blessing: Cemetery Sunday will take place on Sunday, July 7.

Castlederg & Ardstraw West

Gospel Concert: A Spire Repair fundraising Gospel Concert will take place in St Patrick's Church, Castlederg, on Friday, March 8, at 8 pm, featuring Michael English. Doors open 7 pm. Tickets, costing £30, are available in Dinny McCrory's shop, Castlederg, Taggart's Costcutter, Castlefin Road, and in Killeter Post Office. **Adoration:** Adoration takes place following 10 am Mass in St Patrick's Church on Fridays, until 12 noon.

Claudy

Parish Mission: The Dominica Fathers will be leading a Parish Mission in St Patrick's Church, Claudy, and St Joseph's Church, Craigbane, from March 2-9. **College Anniversary:** St Patrick's & St Brigid's College will be celebrating its 60th anniversary with Mass in St Patrick's Church at 7 pm on Thursday, May 2, 2024, followed by further celebrations in the College, until 9.30 pm. **Adoration:** Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place from after the 10 am Mass until 8 pm on Tuesdays in St Patrick's Church, Claudy, and on Wednesdays in St Joseph's Church, Craigbane. **Living Word:** There is a 'Living Word' gathering in the Upper Room in St Patrick's Church on Thursdays, 7-8.30 pm , for a time of reading and reflection on the Mass readings for the following Sunday. All welcome. **Children's Rosary:** Children's Rosary continues in St Patrick's Church, Claudy on the first Saturday of each month, at 2 pm. All are welcome.

Coleraine

Guided Prayer: Pope Francis has dedicated 2024 as 'A Year of Prayer'. Guided Prayer on Gospel Passages will be held on the Mondays of Lent from 7-7.30 pm in the sacristy. All are invited. **Parish Picnic:** The Parish Picnic will take place at Chapelfield on Sunday, May 19. **Lough Derg:** A Parish Pilgrimage to Lough Derg will take place on Saturday, September 7. **SJYP Meet:** St Joseph's

Young Priests' Society meets on the last Monday of each month at St John's Church Sacristy, after the 10 am morning Mass, and is open to everyone. New members are welcome at any of the meetings, which support praying for and assisting to support the vocation to priesthood and the religious life. **Exposition:** St John's Church Monday Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place on Wednesdays in St John's Church, from 2-4 pm. with Rosary at 3:45 pm.

Creggan

Celebrating Lent: Morning Mass, Monday - Friday at 7 am and 10 am; Evening Mass, Tuesday and Friday at 7.30 pm; Chaplet of Divine Mercy and for the Holy Souls, Monday - Friday at 12 noon; Rosary, Monday - Friday at 7 pm; Stations of the Cross, Tuesdays and Fridays after the 7.30 pm Mass; Confessions from 5-5.30 pm Monday – Friday, Saturday after 10 am Mass and 5.30 pm - 6.20 pm; Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament on Sunday 1.30 -6 pm, Mondays after 10 am Mass until 7 pm, and Tue -Sat 10.30 am-12 noon in the Divine Mercy Chapel; Rosary and Devotions on Sundays at 6 pm. **Catechism Course:** The Catechism Course continues on Wednesdays at 7 pm. Bereavement Support: Parish Pastoral Bereavement Support. The Parish Pastoral Bereavement Support Group meets on the second Sunday of each month at 3 pm in the Parochial House community room. All are welcome to share a cup of tea, have a chat, remember and talk about their loved one and find support with others experiencing similar feelings. In addition to the group, there is an ongoing opportunity to speak on a one-to-one basis with an experienced grief counsellor . The contact number for more information on the group or to arrange one to one support is 07907085178. **Vocations Prayer:** There will be Vocations Holy Hour in St Mary's Church, Creggan, on the second Friday of each month, running from 8-9 pm. **Polish Mass:** Mass for the Polish community will be celebrated at 9.30 am every second and fourth Sunday of the month in the Divine Mercy Chapel, at St Mary's Church.

Drumquin

Rosary: The Rosary is prayed each Tuesday morning at 10 am in St Patrick's Church, Drumquin.

Drumragh (Omagh)

Life in Spirit: The Omagh Charismatic Prayer Group is hosting a Lenten series of Life in the Spirit seminars, on Thursdays, up to March 21, starting with 7.30 pm Mass in Christ The King Church, Strathroy (note change of venue). **Cemetery Sunday:** The Blessing of Graves will take place on Sunday, June 2, at 3 pm, in St Mary's, Drumragh, and 5 pm at the Dublin Road Cemetery. **Prayer Group:** The Charismatic Prayer Group meetings take place in The Pastoral Centre on Thursday evenings, with Rosary at 7.40 pm and prayer meeting at 8 pm. All welcome to come and pray. **Legion of Mary:** The Legion of Mary Men's meetings take place on the first, second and last Monday, and third Tuesday of each month at 7.30 pm, in St Vincent's Hall (beneath Sacred Heart Church Sacristy). Contact: Sean on 07730671370. **Adoration:** Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in Sacred Heart Church on Wednesdays following morning Mass until 5.30 pm.


Culdaff

Graves' Blessing: Blessing of Graves will take place on July 7 and Mass for the Dead of the Parish will take place on November 24..

Drumragh Parish Lenten Programme



Life in the Spirit



Seminars 2024

Omagh Charismatic Prayer Group invite you to

Life in the Holy Spirit Seminars

Thursdays in conjunction with 7.30 pm Mass in

Christ The King Church Strathroy

<https://www.churchservices.tv/strathroy>

15th February	God's Love	Fr Charles Cross, The Grann
22nd February	Salvation	Rev Dr Columba M Toman, OP
29th February	The New Life	Martina Purdy
7th March	Receiving God's Gifts	Fr Eugene Barrett, OFM
14th March	Baptism in the Spirit	Fr Eamonn Kelly
21st March	Growth & Transformation	Bishop Donal McKeown

"Let him who is thirsty come; Let him who desires;

Take the water of life without price". (Rev. 22:17)

Dunamanagh

Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration takes place in St Patrick's Church after 10 am Mass on Saturdays, until 12 noon, and on Mondays from 7-8 pm.

Drumquin

Rosary: The Rosary is prayed each Tuesday morning at 10 am in St Patrick's Church, Drumquin.

Drumragh (Omagh)

Life in Spirit: The Omagh Charismatic Prayer Group is hosting a Lenten series of Life in the Spirit seminars, on Thursdays, up to March 21, starting with 7.30 pm Mass in Christ The King Church, Strathroy (note change of venue). **Cemetery Sunday:** The Blessing of Graves will take place on Sunday, June 2, at 3 pm, in St Mary's, Drumragh, and 5 pm at the Dublin Road Cemetery. **Prayer Group:** The Charismatic Prayer Group meetings take place in The Pastoral Centre on Thursday evenings, with Rosary at 7.40 pm and prayer meeting at 8 pm. All welcome to come and pray. **Legion of Mary:** The Legion of Mary Men's meetings take place on the first, second and last Monday, and third Tuesday of each month at 7.30 pm, in St Vincent's Hall (beneath Sacred Heart Church Sacristy). Contact: Sean on 07730671370. **Adoration:** Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in Sacred Heart Church on Wednesdays following morning Mass until 5.30 pm.

Rosary of Reparation: On the first Saturday of each month, a Rosary of Reparation will be prayed at 1pm on Main Street, Omagh. All welcome to join.

Dungiven

Lectio Divina: The Lectio Divina Group meet for meditation and Scripture reflection on Wednesdays, at 7 pm, in the Parish House, 30A Chapel Road. **Prayer Group:** The St Canice's Charismatic Prayer Group meets each Thursday at 7 pm, in the Parish House, and invites anyone who wishes to deepen their faith through shared Scripture, Prayer and Praise.

Errigal

Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration takes place on Mondays after the morning Mass in St Mary's Church, Ballerin, until 2.30 pm. **Rosary & Chaplet:** The Rosary and Divine Mercy Chaplet are prayed in St Joseph's Church, Glenullin, every Wednesday evening at 6.30 pm. **Social Gathering:** Tea and scones are available in Glenullin Social Club after the Wednesday morning Mass, offering an opportunity to have 'a cuppa and a natter' after the prayers are said! Everyone welcome.

Fahan

Graves' Blessing: The annual blessing of the graves will take place at St Mura's Parish Church on Sunday, June 9, at 11.30 am, St Aengus' Church, Burt, on Sunday, June 16, at 3 pm, and Our Lady of

Lourdes, Inch, on Sunday, June 16, at 6 pm. **Adoration:** Adoration takes place in St Mura's Parish Church each Friday after the 10 am Mass.

Faughanvale

Rosary: The Rosary is prayed every Friday at 7 pm in Star of the Sea Church.

Greencastle

Divine Mercy: The Divine Mercy Chaplet is prayed on the First Tuesday of every month at 12.15 pm before Mass in St Patrick's Church, Greencastle. **Adoration:** Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in St Patrick's Church after 12.30 pm Mass on Tuesdays until 5 pm.

Iskaheen, Drung & Muff

Adoration: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place on Tuesdays after 10 am Mass in St Patrick's Church, Iskaheen. **Divine Mercy:** Divine Mercy Devotions take place on Wednesdays after 10 am Mass in Sacred Heart Church, Muff. **St Peregrine:** The St Peregrine Novena Prayer and veneration of relic takes place in St Columba's Church, Drung, after the 10.15 am Mass on the first Sunday of each month.

Kilrea

SVP: The St Vincent de Paul Thrift Shop is open on Saturdays from 10 am -1pm.

Continued on p29

Leckpatrick Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration takes place on Wednesdays after 10 am Mass until 5.30 pm.

Limavady The Chosen: ‘The Chosen’ is an historical drama based on the life of Jesus, through the eyes of those who knew Him. The second series of ‘The Chosen’ is being shown in the Minor Hall on Monday nights at 7.30 pm. Tea and coffee are served beforehand. All welcome.

Children’s Liturgy: Children’s Liturgy for children in P1-P3 takes place every Sunday at the 12 noon Mass in Christ the King Church.

Maghera Pray & Play: The Maghera Parish Pray and Play for Parents, Grandparents & Tots (three years old and younger) meets every Friday, in the Fairhill Youth Centre, after the 10 am Mass. It runs from 10.30 am until 12 noon.

Melmount Exposition: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in the church on Mondays after 10 am Mass until 6 pm.

Graves’ Blessing: The annual Blessing of Graves will take place on Sunday, May 19, 2024 at 4 pm.

Moville
Prayer: **The Rosary** and Divine Mercy Chaplet will be recited in St Pius X Church, Moville, at 7.30 pm every day, from Sunday – Friday.

Adoration: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place on Mondays, from 2-9 pm, and Wednesdays, 6-9 pm, in St Pius X Church.

Sion Mills Blessing of Graves: The annual Blessing of Graves will take place on Sunday, June 2, 2024, at 3 pm.

Legion of Mary: The Legion of Mary meets in the Green Room, behind the church, each Monday evening at 7.30 pm. This is open not only to members of the Legion but to anyone interested in joining. Anyone can come along to the start of the meeting for the Rosary.

Steelstown & Culmore Lectio Divina: Lectio Divina is a way of praying the Scriptures together and takes place every Wednesday after 10 am Mass, in the Parish Conference Room. All welcome.

Adoration: Spend some quiet time before the Lord Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament each Friday after 10 am Mass to 6.50 pm.

Stations of the Cross: Come

along to reflect on the Way of the Cross on Fridays at 7.30 pm.

Strabane (Camus) Graves’ Blessing 2024: The annual ceremony of the blessing of graves for the parish will be held on Sunday, May 26, 2024, at 3 pm.

Adoration: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place all day in the Adoration Chapel (Oasis of Peace), which is situated at the back of the Church.

Prayer Group: The Contemplative Prayer Group meets on Mondays at 8 pm in the Prayer Room in the Parochial House. All welcome. Entry by Parish Priest’s front door.

SJYP Society: The St John Vianney branch of the St Joseph’s Young Priests’ Society (the three combined Strabane parishes) meets on the first Tuesday of the month, excluding January, July and August, with Rosary in the church after 10 am Mass and continues in St Patrick’s Hall. More people are encouraged to join in this prayer for new students to join the priesthood. The Society assists Irish and overseas student. Please contact Margaret Harte on 028 71 883159.

Padre Pio Mass: The Padre Pio Mass takes place in the Church on the first

Wednesday of the month at 7 pm, with Rosary beforehand at 6.40 pm.

Grotto Rosary: The Rosary is recited at the Grotto on the last Sunday of each month. Everyone welcome.

Templemore – Long Tower Lenten Programme: 7 am Mass Monday-Friday during the season of Lent, up to Wednesday, March 27, Holy Week; Stations of the Cross will be prayed each Monday & Friday before Evening Mass at 7 pm. Confessions on those days will be at 6.30 pm; Lenten Healing Service/ Vespers (Evening Prayer) on Sundays at 6 pm, with Healing Service and Vespers on alternate Sundays up to, and including, Palm Sunday; The Chaplet of Divine Mercy & Rosary will be recited Monday-Friday at 3 pm.

Templemore – St Eugene’s Eucharistic Adoration: Every Sunday, there is Eucharistic Adoration from 3-6 pm and every Tuesday from 10.30 am until 7.20 pm.

Matt Talbott Mass: The Matt Talbot, Freedom from addiction Mass takes place on the first Monday of each month at 7.30 pm in St Eugene’s Cathedral.

Cathedral Club: The

Cathedral Club meets after the 10 am Mass each Thursday in the Cathedral Hall. Everyone is welcome to this parish social group. Refreshments will be served.

Three Patrons Men’s Bible Study: Men’s Bible Study takes place in St Brigid’s Chapel, Carnhill, on Tuesdays at 7.30 pm.

God Club: God Club is an opportunity for 16-30 year olds to learn together about their faith. It takes place in St Pio House, in the grounds of St Joseph’s Church, Galliagh, on Sundays from 7.30-9 pm on Sundays.

Family/Youth Mass: A Family/Youth Mass is celebrated every Sunday at 6.30 pm in St Joseph’s Church, Galliagh. Everyone is welcome.

Be Still: Be Still is a Men’s Prayer and Friendship Group that meets every Thursday night from 8-9.15 pm in Our Lady’s Chapel, within St Joseph’s Church building, Galliagh. Its mission as a group is to provide a safe place where men can pray and share in a confidential and supportive setting. All men are welcome.

Holy Hour: A Holy Hour for the Unborn & Expectant Mothers takes place on Thursdays at 7 pm in Our Lady’s Chapel, St Joseph’s Church, Galliagh. All

welcome.

Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration takes place in Our Lady’s Chapel, St Joseph’s Church, Galliagh, on Mondays after 11 am Mass, concluding with a Youth 2000 Holy Hour from 7-8 pm. It also takes place seven days a week in the Adoration Room in St Brigid’s Church, Carnhill, from 8 am until 6 pm, and in St Patrick’s Church, Pennyburn, on Wednesdays from 10.45 am - 6.45 pm.

First Saturday: On the First Saturday of each month, after 11 am Mass in St Brigid’s Church, Carnhill, there is Adoration and Rosary, ending with Divine Mercy and Benediction at 3 pm.

Living Disciples: Living Disciples meet on Tuesdays at 7.30 pm in St Pio House, St Joseph’s Church grounds, for Praise & Worship, friendship and a cup of tea. All welcome.

Holy Face Devotions: Devotions to the Holy Face of Jesus takes place every Tuesday after 11 am Mass in Our Lady’s Chapel, St Joseph’s Church, Galliagh. All welcome

St Pio Mass: A monthly Mass in honour of St Pio takes place on the first Monday at 7 pm in St Patrick’s Church, Pennyburn.

Healing Night: A Healing Night with the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal takes

place monthly on the first Friday, from 7-10 pm, in St Joseph’s Church, Galliagh. Everyone welcome.

Holy Souls Prayer: Praying for the Holy Souls, Our Lady of Montligeon Prayer Group meets on Wednesdays after 9.15 am Mass in the room adjacent to St Brigid’s Parochial House, Carnhill, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

Urney & Castlefinn First Saturdays: The First Saturday Devotion and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament will take place in St Columba’s Church, Doneyloop, from 12 noon until 1 pm on the First Saturday of each month.

Adoration: Weekly Eucharistic Adoration takes place in St Anthony’s Chapel every Tuesday, from 12 noon until 8 pm.

Cenacle: The Cenacle for Priests takes place every Tuesday in St Anthony’s Chapel immediately after the 7 pm Mass.

Waterside & Strathfoyle Lectio Divina: Reflect on the Scriptures with Lectio Divina in the side chapel in St Columb’s Church, Chapel Road, on Thursday nights, starting at 8 pm.

...other Diary Dates

Life in Spirit: The Omagh Charismatic Prayer Group is hosting a Lenten series of Life in the Spirit seminars, on Thursdays, from February 15 to March 21, starting with 7.30 pm Mass in Christ The King Church, Strathroy (note change of venue).

Effatha Revival: Effatha Revival is a Eucharistic campaign consisting of two parts, the first being the Eucharistic Procession that took place in Derry city on Saturday, February 3. The second part is underway, with 40 days of Eucharistic Adoration running from Thursday, February 8 to Monday, March 18, and ends with the Solemnity of St Joseph on March 19. Adorers of Jesus needed. For further details email effatharevival@gmail.com or sign up at www. effatha.live.

Ladies’ Bible Study: Ladies interested in coming to a deeper understanding of scripture are welcome to come along to the Ladies’ Bible Study in Termonbacca, Derry, every Tuesday evening from 8.30-9.30 pm. It is led by Fr Stephen Quinn ocd, who is currently working through the Gospel of Mark, which is the Gospel for Mass

for this year. This Bible Study is open to all women who are interested in coming along. There is no need to book, you can simply show up. For further information contact Termonbacca on 028 71 262512.

Faith Talks: The monthly talks by Fr Cajetak Apeh ocd on different elements of the Catholic faith will continue in the Carmelite Retreat Centre, Termonbacca, with the next on Thursday, March 14, from 7.30-8.30 pm. The talks are aimed at leading the participants towards personal development through meditative prayer and convivial discussions of the Church doctrines.

The remaining themes for 2024 are: March 14 - The Angels - The relationship between the visible and the spiritual world; April 18 - The Demons and the reality of spiritual combat; May 16 – Mary - Eschatological Icon of the Church; June 13 - The role of Authority in the Church; July 18 - The Role of the Lay Faithful in the Church.

These nights are open to everyone aged 18 and above who has an interest in growing more in their personal faith development. Anyone who wishes to know

more can speak to Fr Cajetan by calling 028 71 262512 or 07933123633.

Irish Pilgrimage Trust: The Irish Pilgrimage Trust Group 190 of Irish Pilgrimage Trust are looking for Male carers, around age of 18 up to 45, to travel to Lourdes at Easter from March 31 until April 6, 2024. All Carers are to pay their own fare, which is as follows: €495 for 3rd Level Students; €750 for any other persons. If anyone is interested in volunteering, or if you know of a child or young person who would like to go on the pilgrimage, please contact Margaret Rose Gormley on 07922237986.

All Ireland Rosary Rally: This year’s All Ireland Rosary Rally will take place on Saturday, June 4, from 9.30 am to 4.30 pm at Knock Shrine, Co Mayo. Last year over 10,000 people attended. This year, Mother Adela Galindo, SCTJM, will deliver the key address on the Rosary. She is a very well renowned international speaker, and is travelling all the way from Miami, Florida, for her 1 pm talk in the Basilica. Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan will be the Main Celebrant of the Holy Mass at 3 pm which will be concelebrated by priests from all around Ireland. The

Anointing of the Sick will also be available, so this is a great opportunity to bring along someone you know who may like to avail of this sacrament. The Stations of the Cross begin at 2 pm, followed by the Rosary Procession at 2.30 pm. This year, there will also be a Marian Conference in the morning from 9.30 am in St John’s Centre. It will feature great speakers from around Ireland. Further details to be announced. Those who register for the event will automatically receive updates and information via email.

Servant Sisters: The Sisters of the Home of the Mother are hosting weekly formation meetings on Tuesdays, at 7.30pm, in the Parochial House at Cross, Killygordon, (F93PN0X), and the weekly Holy Hours on Thursdays at 7pm.

Holy Souls Prayer: Under The Gaze of Our Lady of

Montligeon, the Holy Souls of Purgatory Prayer Meeting takes place on Wednesdays after 9.15 am Mass in the room adjacent to St Brigid’s Parochial House, Carnhill, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. It also takes place on the third Monday of each month in Termonbacca, with prayers especially for deceased priests and religious. All welcome.

Polish Mass: Mass for the Polish community will be celebrated at 9.30 am every second and fourth Sunday of the month in the Divine Mercy Chapel, at St Mary’s Church, Creggan, in Derry City.

Stations of Cross: On the First Friday of each month, after 10 am Mass in St Eugene’s, there is a silent procession from the Cathedral to St Columba’s Church, Long Tower, meditating on the Stations of the Cross.

Diocesan Diary

Diocesan Vocations: The Vocations Directors of the northern dioceses invite anyone interested in serving the Church as a diocesan priest, to attend a retreat at the Drumalis Retreat Centre, Larne from March

8-10. Anyone aged 18, or over, wishing to attend should contact the Diocesan Vocations Director, Fr Pat O’Hagan at pgoh2111@gmail.com, or on (028) 79386259, with their name, date of birth, and phone number.

Diocesan Lourdes Pilgrimage: The Derry Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes in 2024, led by Bishop Donal, will run from July 1-5, leaving from City of Derry Airport. Full board £799, single room supplement £150. Telephone 028 71260293, or email derrypilgrim@outlook.com for enquiries or bookings.

ACCORD: Accord Derry Marriage Preparation Courses (Pre Marriage Courses) will take place on March 22/23, 2024. Venue: Everglades Hotel, Prehen Road, Derry. Please note that these courses are not virtual and are in person. Bookings are now being taken on www. accordni.com.

I love you *Fr Johnny Doherty CSsR*

Valentine's Day

THIS year, like every other year, the first half of February is marked by a variety of expressions of love. This leads up to the Feast of St Valentine on February 14. The shops are full of Valentine Day cards and gifts. The hotels and restaurants are advertising special deals on romantic meals for two and so on. 'I love you' is a sentence that will be expressed more often in these days than maybe in the rest of the year – even though many men, particularly, will take refuge in the card to express it rather than having to say it themselves!

Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday, which marks the beginning of Lent, is also an annual feature of February. This year, for a change, it is also on February 14! This would seem to complicate things for us. It might not look too good to go out for your Valentine's Day romantic meal with ashes on your forehead! Indeed, it puts the whole thing of celebrating in question, as Ash Wednesday, for us as Catholics, is a day of fast and abstinence! What are we going to do?

Far be it from me to tell you what to do. But I want to think with you about how we can learn from these two seemingly contradictory occasions about each of them.

I love you

It is easy to see how this heading, 'I love you', relates to Valentine's Day and all that this involves. It is much more difficult to see how it might relate to Ash Wednesday and the weeks of Lent. And yet it is much more relevant to that.

Ash Wednesday and the 40

days of Lent are not an end in themselves. They constitute a time of preparing for Holy Week and Easter, so that we are more ready to be part of the wonderful story of the Death and Resurrection of Christ. This is the greatest love story ever told. It is the story of the extreme love of God for us and for all creation. It is a story of love which involves every human person, whether they know it or not. It is the love story that every human person has a right and a need to know so that every person can know who they are; how loved and treasured they are, and the great dignity that each person has as the beloved daughter or son of God.

Elements of Preparation

There are three elements that we use during Lent as we prepare for Holy Week and Easter. These are Prayer; Fasting; Almsgiving. I want to look at how these are engaged with and how we can translate them into our love relationships that we celebrate on Valentine's Day.

Prayer...

Most of us probably pray at least occasionally, even if it only when we are desperate. Many of us maybe pray regularly, in the morning or evening and/or at weekly Mass. Some of us may have a deeper prayer life in which we live in the atmosphere of prayer. Wherever we are personally with prayer in our lives, Ash Wednesday is a commitment to give some more time to pray during Lent, so that we will make Christ and God more central to our lives for at least these few weeks. The chances

are that we will continue to make prayer more a part of our ordinary life then afterwards.

Purpose of Prayer...

The purpose of prayer is to become even a bit more aware of the presence of God in our lives, and to be able to take on God's Spirit as our way of life.

Prayer is really two-fold. It is a time of talking to God and, by so doing, become more convinced of God's presence with us. But prayer is also listening to God who speaks to us all the time through the daily happenings of our lives, and through the Scriptures and the teaching of the Church.

Prayer is about communicating with God and letting God communicate with us in real ways of gentle healing and guidance. The most important thing about communication is that we have to give time to it – time to listen, time to speak, and time to enjoy.

Love is a decision...

Just as Ash Wednesday is a commitment to grow in a relationship with God, so Valentine's Day should be a commitment to grow in your love relationships. This is particularly true of the most important love relationships of Marriage and Family life. And as prayer is the way of communicating with God, so good communication is essential to growing in love for one another.

All of this takes a firm decision and then a series of decisions, so that time is made regularly for one another. That is why I say that love is a decision. Growing in love can only happen when time is being

made to be together and to enjoy the gentle healing and guidance of your love.

Fasting...

The word 'Lent' means springtime, a time of new life, new growth, fresh hope and anticipated joy. On Ash Wednesday, we commit ourselves to looking for all of this in our relationships with God and with one another. Fasting is not just about giving up things. It is about dealing with the things that block our relationship with God through sin, which is about going against God's way of life.

Fasting is about a decision to deny ourselves in ways that free us to experience new growth in our love of God. It can mean going off some of our regular food so that we can experience hunger, even for a short time, and so maybe find a new hunger for God. It can be about going off drink, so that we break a habit of drinking that is harmful or that dulls our senses and so our sense of the important things of life. It can mean dealing with some addiction in order to experience greater freedom for what is good. And so on.

Priorities...

In the love relationships symbolised by Valentine's Day, especially the significant relationships of marriage and family life, setting priorities is essential. This means prioritising those things in life that are most conducive to the growth of the love that has been pledged. This entails giving up the things that are damaging to these relationships. This is similar to what I have said about fasting as part of our relationship with God.

Some of the things that need

to be given up are harmful to the relationships; other things may not in themselves be harmful but prevent the freedom of growing in love. Addictions, for example, will always be harmful unless they are being dealt with. Habits of behaviour can also be harmful, but they can also be blocks to having time with one another or having the goodness to be more involved with one another, and so grow closer in love.

Almsgiving...

The third thing that we commit ourselves to looking at on Ash Wednesday and doing something about during Lent is almsgiving. This means giving away some of our possessions. It is a very important discipline for life and a difficult one to have.

There is a two-fold reason for practicing this. In our world today, there are so many people in great need both on our doorstep and around the world. We are faced every day with appeals for donations to one kind of need or another. It is a wonderful tribute to human nature, and often also to the goodness of faith, to see how generous so many people are and yet the needs never seem to get less.

The second reason to practice almsgiving is to practice being free from our own possessions. Possessions possess us in ways that are not healthy for the human spirit. They hem us into very small worlds of self-preoccupation. Giving some of these away, frees us up to live a larger life of love and concern and goodness. 'It is in giving that we receive' is a saying that is proven true time after time, and yet it is a difficult one to practice. Lent is a time to practice

freedom from what we possess. Others will also benefit.

Generosity...

One of the features of St Valentine's Day is the size of everything – the cards, the bouquets of flowers, the box of chocolates, etc. It is almost that you have to prove how much you love this other person by the expense of your gift.

For the important love relationships of marriage and family life, generosity is a very important element for growth in love. But generosity does not necessarily entail expensive gifts. It is much more generosity in giving time, in thanking and praising one another, in affirming the goodness in the one you love, in being affectionate in words and in actions, in constantly surprising your loved one with your thoughtfulness.

Conclusion...

The journey of love, symbolised by Valentine's Day, is always towards being able to give and receive unconditional love. That is the journey of committed love in marriage and family life. Each year, we can move along that road or we can let ourselves get stuck at particular points.

The journey of faith, symbolised by the ashes on Ash Wednesday, is always towards unconditional faith in which we can totally surrender to the wonderful love of God in Heaven. Each year, the call is to move along this road or we can settle down at particular points as if we have all that is possible.

This year, the challenge is there for all of us. I hope you can meet that challenge and live life and love to the full.

Tribute to the late Mary Doherty (Sean) - Movable



My Mother, one woman, three names, Mary Doherty, Mary McCann, some even knew her as wee Mary Sean.

If you needed something knit, or a garment to sew, a quilt, or a cross stitch to hang, then, one woman would know.

She would know how to fix whatever you did need, and she always had enough food for an army to feed.

There was never a house that had so many to call, for the banter and craic, and she even fed them all

Her and Charlie for a lifetime, a true double act, always together and happy in their own wee marriage pact.

A mum and a gran, she put them all first, And they returned that love, especially during the worst

Growing up, so many memories Of people galore, Like Dolores and John, Patrick Harkin, and more.

It didn't matter how long since your last visit there. You were always made welcome, and there was always a spare chair

She will leave a huge void in her family to fill, and an even bigger one up there, in Summerhill.

But, the memories she made will last forever more, and something we will hold onto going ahead, when our hearts are sore.

Because, however you knew her, Doherty, McCann or even Sean, Mary will live on as some woman, for her one man.

And for her daughters and grand kids, and the community and all, her gentle, generous, kind manner will be what, we all recall.

To Quell The Terror ...Book review by Bernie McKinney

'To Quell the Terror' is the most recent book read, reviewed and discussed at the Termonbacca Book Club; monthly club led by Fr Stephen Quinn OCD, to study the lives of Carmelite Saints.

The book provides an historical account of the guillotining of 16 Carmelite Nuns, condemned as fanatical and enemies of the people, during the French Revolution.

The 'Great Terror' adequately describes the horrific events of that time, when the 'New Order' was determined to annihilate religious practice from France. Dreadful consequences followed for those who continued to be faithful.

To replace God, a 'Supreme Being' was manufactured, and the Christian Festival of Pentecost was replaced by the Festival of the Supreme Being and the nation compelled to honour it.

The nuns in the Carmelite Convent of Compiègne, following the fall and guillotining of the monarchy, could foresee the destruction of their Convent life, the dangerous threat to themselves and to Catholicism.

A document found in the library,

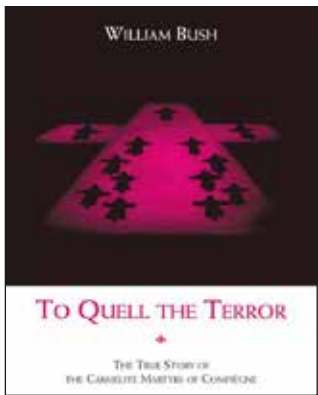
that was written a century ago by Carmelite nun, Sr Louise Baptiste, described a 'Mystic Dream' in which she saw the Crucified Lord surrounded by nuns she did not recognise, covered in Glory.

The Prioress saw this as a prophecy, a calling to consecrate and offer their deaths for peace, not just for France but for all humanity. There began their decision and daily Consecration to offer their lives to God as a holocaust.

Their convent was ransacked and they had to seek refuge in lodgings in the village. They were not allowed to live in community or wear their habits, and were eventually arrested.

After their imprisonment, they were sentenced to be guillotined on July 17, 1792. As they were paraded through the Paris streets, they sang hymns, showed great courage and dignity until the last one, the Prioress, walked up the steps to be martyred.

The book gives an insight into the faith, courage and internal struggles of a group of Religious, contemplating and agreeing together to sacrifice their lives.



Though compelling and hard to put down, this book wasn't an easy read. Following the history of each nun, her family and Religious names, in addition to the history of the monarchy, was at times difficult to follow. The cruelty of the era and the regime was distressful to read.

Nonetheless, it was excellent and provided the reader with an understanding of how the French Revolution influenced the religious direction of France and French Catholicism, and how a whole proud nation can be led astray.

It also illustrates the immense faith and bravery of these little-known Christian Martyrs. Their sacrifice turned the tide of revolutionary executions and it is believed to have begun 'To Quell the Terror'.

Children's Catechism Club - C3

by Veronica Harley

HELLO children. Welcome to the month of February. This month is dedicated to the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. The holy house of Nazareth is where Jesus spent the time from His birth until He started His public journey to tell us about God. The Holy Family is our best example of love, hope, faithfulness, and joy (CCC 533).

During the month of February, we celebrate The Presentation of the Lord – Candlemas Day (CCC 529). The Presentation of the Lord is the story of Jesus being brought to the Temple in Jerusalem by Mary and St Joseph. It was customary for Jewish parents to present their child in the temple 40 days after birth. When St Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to the Temple, they met Simeon, a devout Jew who had prayed that he would live to see the coming of the Messiah. Simeon, filled with the Holy Spirit, took Baby Jesus in his arms, blessed Him and proclaimed that He was truly the Saviour.



The Feast of the Presentation is also known as Candlemas or Candle-Mass Day. It is given this name because Christ is the Light who has come into the world to chase away the darkness and drive out sin. Since the 7th century, candles have been blessed before Mass on Candlemas Day and used in the year ahead for celebrations like baptisms and prayers in the home.

Saints of the Month

February 1: Saint Brigid of Ireland

February 3: Saint Blaise

February 5: Saint Agatha

February 10: Saint Scholastica

Our Lady of Lourdes

We celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes on February 11. This Feast celebrates one of the most famous apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It took place in Lourdes, in southern France. On February 11, 1858, a young girl named Bernadette Soubirous was collecting firewood with her sister and a friend near a grotto. Suddenly, Bernadette saw a vision of a beautiful lady. This was the first of 18 appearances.

During these visits the Lady (who did not immediately identify herself as the Blessed Virgin Mary) asked

for a chapel to be built there, so that Bernadette could pray for the conversion of sinners. She also asked Bernadette to drink the spring water that was revealed to her at the grotto.

The news of the apparitions spread rapidly and caused quite a commotion in the town. As a result, Bernadette was detained, interrogated and harassed by the civil authorities and treated as if she were a common criminal. The villagers, however, came to Bernadette's rescue and demanded that she be released. Through all these difficulties, Bernadette was given an interior strength.

Many of the townspeople believed that it was the Blessed Virgin Mary who was appearing to Bernadette, and they came down in large numbers to the grotto to pray. The spring which the Lady asked Bernadette to drink from at the grotto, quickly revealed itself to give forth blessed water with miraculous healing properties.



On March 25, the Feast of the Annunciation, the Lady appeared at the grotto again, this time identifying herself as the Immaculate Conception.

"With her two arms hanging down, she raised her eyes and looked up at the sky, and it was then that she told me, joining her hands together now at the height of her breast, that she was the Immaculate Conception. Those were the last words she ever said to me."

The Marian dogma of the Immaculate Conception (CCC 490-493) had been announced by Pope Pius IX a few years previous, on December 8, 1854. This infallibly defined dogma stated that the Blessed Virgin Mary, "from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God, and in view of

the merits of Jesus Christ, Saviour of the human race, was preserved free from every stain of original sin, is a doctrine revealed by God and, for this reason, must be firmly and constantly believed by all the faithful."

Lourdes has become a place of pilgrimage and healing, but even more of deep faith. A beautiful church has been erected near the grotto. The shrine of Lourdes is visited by millions of pilgrims each year. It has become one of the most prominent places of pilgrimage in the world. The water of Lourdes is readily available to all pilgrims and numerous miraculous healings of Lourdes have been medically documented. Many people who visit Lourdes return home with renewed faith and a readiness to serve God in their lives.

Our Lady of Lourdes, pray for us.

February 14 - St Valentine's Day

"...and the greatest of these is love"
(1 Corinthians 13:13)



February 14 is always a very special day as we celebrate the love we have for each other, and we remember especially the love that God has for us. According to Catholic history, there were two saints named Valentine who were both martyred. Little is known about the lives of these men, but tradition does speak of their great love for God and for others.

Lent

Lent begins every year with Ash Wednesday. This year it falls on February 14. The word 'lent' means to lengthen and is also an old English word for spring. The season of Lent lasts 40 days (not including Sundays) before Easter.

During Lent, we give things up and take things up. We give up things we like, such as chocolate or biscuits. We take up doing things to help others, such as helping at home. The Church asks adults to fast and pray to prepare for the celebration of Easter. Lent gives us the opportunity to change our thoughts and actions so that we can open our hearts to Jesus at Easter.

On Ash Wednesday, the priest places the mark of a cross on our forehead with blessed ashes. The ashes are made from the burnt Palm branches from Palm Sunday the year before, and are mixed with Holy water. The ashes are a symbol of sadness and death, while the cross reminds us that we belong to Jesus who died for all humanity on the cross.

The Year of Prayer 2024

Pope Francis has asked that this year, 2024, be dedicated a Year of Prayer. This will help us all prepare for the Jubilee Year 'Pilgrims of Hope' 2025. We are to focus our attention on the prayer Jesus taught the Apostles – the Our Father.

"Now it happened that He was in



a certain place praying, and when He had finished, one of His disciples said, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.'" (Luke 11:1)

The book 'YOUCAT for Kids' tells us that praying is talking to God, listening to Him in our hearts, thanking Him for everything that we have, telling Him about our worries and asking Him for His help (Q 139).

It also explains that people pray because God exists. Within each of us there is a deep longing for God because God is longing for us (Q 138). We all want to be close to Him and spend time with Him.



The 'Youcat for Kids' asks the question, what is God's phone number? The answer is very simple. It is 333.

Jeremiah 33:3 says: "Call me and I will answer".

God can be called anytime. He is available 24 hours a day!



Quiz Time with Lawrence

1. Fictional children's character, 'Peppa Pig', wears what colour of dress?
2. What is the capital city of Malta?
3. In what year did Derry's Foyle Bridge officially open?
4. How many carats are there in pure gold?
5. Which actor, the last surviving member of the 'Dad's Army' cast, passed away earlier this month?
6. From what plant does Linseed Oil come?
7. With how many countries does France share a land border?
8. Who is currently the oldest living former UK Prime Minister?
9. The top prize in what annual British Institutional competition is worth just £200 to the winner?
10. Name the Co Down castle, parts of which date back to the 12th century, which is the oldest inhabited castle in Ireland?
11. What comic book character attended the fictional 'Greyfriars School'?
12. Who was the original lead singer with 'The Undertones'?

13. With which Premier League club is Thomas Frank the current manager?
14. Who played Basil's wife, Sybil, in 'Fawlty Towers'?
15. Which hugely successful UK singer recorded the 2010 music album, 'In and Out of Consciousness'?
16. What does the 'D' stand for in Michael D Higgins?
17. The popular New York resort of Coney Island is located along which borough's coastline?
18. Which country won this season's Africa Cup of Nations after sacking their manager during the competition, thinking they had been knocked out in the Group stages?
19. What is the least populated county in Northern Ireland?
20. Who played the role of coach, Irving Blitzer in the 1993 movie 'Cool Runnings'?
21. What is the US state capital of Connecticut?
22. On which Spanish 'Costa' is the popular holiday resort of Benidorm?
23. What is the maximum number of dining 'stars' that are awarded by Michelin?
24. What title did Carlos Alcaraz win in July 2023?
25. What fictional institution was set in the village of Remenham, Henley-on-Thames?

Quiz Answers: 1, Red; 2, Valletta; 3, 1984; 4, 24; 5, Ian Lavender; 6, Flax; 7, Eight; 8, John Major; 9, Crufts; 10, Killyleagh; 11, Billy Bunter; 12, Feargal Sharkey; 13, Brentford; 14, Prunella Scales; 15, Robbie Williams; 16, Daniel; 17, Brooklyn; 18, Ivory Coast; 19, Fermanagh; 20, John Candy; 21, Hartford; 22, Costa Blanca; 23, Three; 24, Wimbledon Men's Singles; 25, St Trinian's School.

Moville, Newtownstewart, Omagh, Plumbridge, Sion Mills, Steelestown, Strabane, Swatragh, Templemore - Long Tower and St Eugene's, Three Patrons, Waterside

Clonmany, Coleraine, Creggan, Culladuff, Culmore, Desertmartin, Donnyloop, Drumquin, Dunamansha, Dungiven, Fahan, Faughanvale, Garvagh, Gortin, Greencastle,

Aghyaran, Ardmore, Ardstraw West & Castlederg, Ballinascreen, Ballymagroarty, Banagher, Bellaghy, Buncrana, Carndonagh, Claudy,

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St Brigid

of Ireland



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