

# The NET

Sharing fruits of faith in Derry Diocese

ISSUE 114. JANUARY 2026

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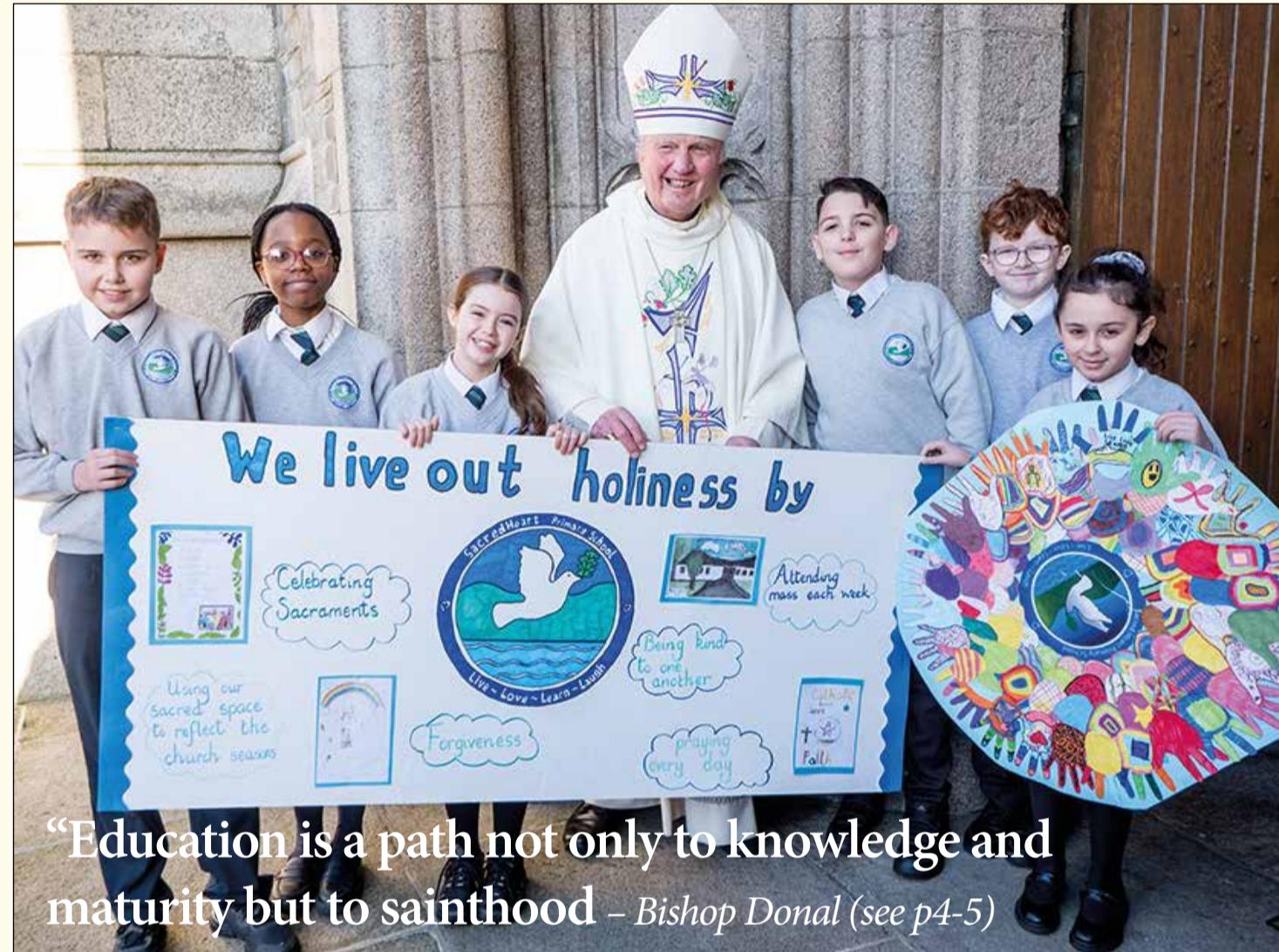
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Open Wide The Doors Novena - Buncrana



GIFT programme - Greenlough



**“Education is a path not only to knowledge and maturity but to sainthood – Bishop Donal (see p4-5)**

Cathedral Mass to launch Catholic Schools Week



Follow the Christmas Star - Creggan



Baptismal celebration - Kilrea



Church-to-Church Walk - Urney &amp; Castlefin



Crucifix Restored - Newtownstewart

## People in focus

Brendan Diver,  
ClonmanyMargo Doherty,  
MelmountMarie Kilpatrick,  
BallyscullionPat Kennedy, Ballyarnett  
& Long TowerServant of God  
Sr Clare Crockett

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**Bishop Donal reflects on the Pope's January prayer intention for prayer with the Word of God:**  
*"Let us pray that praying with the Word of God be nourishment for our lives and a source of hope in our communities, helping us to build a more fraternal and missionary Church."*

## Make the Word of God a source of ongoing hope



IN his Apostolic Letter 'Aperuit illis', issued on September 30, 2019, Pope Francis instituted the celebration of Sunday of the Word of God, which is held every year on the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time. This year that Sunday falls on the weekend of January 24-25. And the Gospel passage at Mass is from St Matthew's Gospel – where Jesus began His preaching with the message, "Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is close at hand."

Since the Second Vatican Council's groundbreaking document 'Dei Verbum' (November 1965), (Divine Revelation), there has been a flourishing of engagement with the Word of God.

This emphasis on the Word of God builds on St John Paul II's introduction of the 'Luminous' Mysteries of the Rosary, where the Third Mystery is 'The Proclamation of the Kingdom'.

Similarly, following the 2008 Synod of Bishops on the theme 'The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church', Pope Benedict XVI published a wonderful document called 'Verbum Domini' (The Word of God).

The Holy Father's prayer theme for January 2026 is not just that we learn more about the Bible, but that we learn to nourish ourselves by praying

with the Word of God. This is a most appropriate emphasis in that the Synodal pathway is based on so called 'conversations in the Spirit', fed on listening together to the Word of God.

And what outcome is Pope Leo XIV praying for?

Firstly, he wants us – as we move on from the Jubilee Year of Hope – to make the Word of God a source of ongoing hope for us.

And, in these early days of 2026, we need a lot of divine hope. World politics seem to be dominated by those who put self-interest as top of their list.

Praying with the Bible, the Word of God, enables us to engage with a whole range of emotions that people of faith have experienced through all sorts of circumstances.

The Psalms offer us so many feelings – joy, abandonment, hope, praise and love. The prophets, like Isaiah and Jeremiah, spoke at times of national crisis. The letters of the Apostles reveal a wide range of struggles. And the public life of Jesus shows Him facing opposition and death.

Praying with the Scriptures can nourish us to be people of divine, especially in difficult situations.

Secondly, we are asked to let scriptural prayer bind us together and send us out as a people with a mission. Prayer is sometimes private, but unless there is also some communal prayer, we risk having a very privatised view of God and church.

There is a beautiful episode in the Acts of the Apostles (AA 13:1-3). It is when St Paul and

other members of the church in Antioch were praying and fasting that they heard the Holy Spirit calling for Paul and Barnabas to be sent off on a mission "to which I have called them".

Only a prayerful community will be open to the uncomfortable Word of God, which calls all of us to mission. Only together will we be able to discern where God is calling us.

The saints are important companions in our prayer. But, unless we are praying with the Word of God, we are missing out on so much.

We need to check whether we are doing too much talking when we pray, and not leaving space for the Word of God to speak to our hearts.

That might be an ideal New Year's resolution!

## Eucharistic Adoration in the Diocese

<b>Aghyaran:</b> Thursdays, 10.30am-12 noon.	<b>Donaghmore:</b> Tuesdays, 10.30 am-7.30 pm, St Mary's Church, Sessiaghonnell; Concludes with Benediction.
<b>Ardstraw West &amp; Castlederg:</b> Fridays, 10.30am-12 noon, St Patrick's Church.	<b>Lavey:</b> Fridays, after 9.30 am Mass until 5 pm.
<b>Badoney Lower:</b> Tuesdays, after 12 noon Mass until 5 pm, St Patrick's Gortin; and Wednesdays, Mass 7.30 pm, Adoration and Confession until 9 pm, St Mary's, Rouskey.	<b>Leckpatrick:</b> Wednesdays from 8.15 am-5 pm.
<b>Badoney Upper:</b> Wednesdays, after 7.30 pm evening Mass until 9 pm, St Patrick's Cranagh.	<b>Lifford (Murlog):</b> 9.30 am - 12.30 pm
<b>Ballinascreen:</b> First Mondays, from 12 noon-7.30 pm, in Holy Rosary Church, Draperstown.	<b>Limavady:</b> Sundays from 3-5 pm in Christ the King (with Confessions).
<b>Banagher:</b> Thursdays, 10.30-11.30 am, St Mary's Church, Altinure, and Fridays, 10-11am, St Joseph's Church, Fincairn.	<b>Magilligan:</b> Wednesdays, 3-7 pm; First Sundays, 3-6 pm, St Aidan's Church.
<b>Bellaghy:</b> Every Friday, from 10 am until recitation of Rosary at 7.30 pm, in St Mary's Church.	<b>Melmount:</b> Mondays, after 10 am Mass until 6 pm.
<b>Buncrana:</b> Mondays, Tuesdays & Wednesdays, 6am-10pm, Fridays, 6 am-10 pm and Sundays, 2-10 pm, St Mary's Church, Aughabrack.	<b>Moville:</b> Mondays, 2-9 pm, and Wednesdays, 6-9 pm, St Pius X Church.
<b>Coleraine:</b> Wednesdays, in St John's Church, 2-4 pm, with Rosary at 3:45 pm.	<b>Newtownstewart:</b> Thursdays, 6.30-7.30 pm, Oratory of Mary, Mother of God.
<b>Creggan:</b> Sundays 1.30 pm-6 pm; Mondays 10.30 am - 7 pm; Tue - Sat 10.30 am - 12 pm, Divine Mercy Chapel.	<b>Greencastle (Tyrone):</b> Thursdays, 6-10 pm, St Patrick's Church.
<b>Donagheady:</b> First Fridays after Mass until 12 noon, St Mary's Church, Aughabrack.	<b>Greenlough:</b> Thursdays, 9am-5 pm, St Oliver Plunkett's Church.
<b>Iskaheen:</b> Tuesdays, from after 10 am Mass until 2 pm, St Patrick's Church.	<b>Iskaheen:</b> Tuesdays, from after 10 am Mass until 2 pm, St Patrick's Church.
<b>Kilrea:</b> Mondays, 12 noon -	<b>Steelstown:</b> Mondays, from

Please send any additions/amendments via: [editorthenet15@gmail.com](mailto:editorthenet15@gmail.com) or 07809292852.



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.

## Donating

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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.

# Fantastic St Carlo Acutis night hosted by Moville Papal Cross youths *by Roseann O'Donnell*



Luke Doherty (left) and Daithí Clerkin (right) with guest speaker, Luke Murphy, from Dungiven.

THE Parish of Moville gathered on Sunday, December 7, to honour one of the Church's youngest and most-recently canonised saints, Carlo Acutis.

This young Saint of the new Millennium hardly needs an introduction, as his statue and relic take pride of place in St Eugene's Cathedral, next to the Baptismal font.

However, the Parish of Moville was no less enthusiastic or sincere in honouring this popular young Saint, on an Advent evening in December 2025.

A gathering of over 50 parishioners and visitors were joined by main speaker, Luke Murphy, and two young men from the Parish who were working towards the Papal Cross Award, as part of the Pope John Paul (JP II) programme in the Parish.

Luke Doherty and Daithí Clerkin had spent several weeks in preparation for the event which, as Luke explained, they hoped would have real impact, rather than being

simply a means to achieving an award.

Luke's hopes were fulfilled, if feedback from attendees is anything to go by. One member of the audience spoke at the end to congratulate Luke Murphy for his maturity and his powerful witness to faith. Parish Priest, Fr Colm O'Doherty commended parishioners, Luke and Daithí for their willingness to witness to faith, both to those present and to other young people.

The evening began with tea on arrival, followed by an opening prayer and a few warm words of welcome from Fr Colm, before Luke D (Doherty) stepped up to the podium to introduce the programme and the main speaker.

Luke D gave a brief but interesting introduction to the JP II Award overall, explaining that the Papal Cross Award is a more involved undertaking, with a project to be undertaken and a written report to be submitted. He explained that he and Daithí

had chosen St Carlo as the subject for their project as Carlo was only 15 years old when he died, and because he had lived in this century and had many interests in common with the youth of today. St Carlo, they felt, had something to offer the young people of 2025.

His clear and informative introduction was followed by a short, but informative video by Daithí, in which the life and spirituality of St Carlo were laid out clearly. The video was narrated by Daithí, with beautiful graphics to enhance the text.

Next, Luke D introduced Luke Murphy (Luke M), the guest speaker for the evening, who is a member of Derry-based youth faith group, Youth of Acutis, as well as having established the Fraternity of St Pier Giorgio Frassati. As a young man himself, at just 21 years old, with a keen interest in the things of Heaven and a sound knowledge of the life of Carlo Acutis, Luke was an excellent choice for guest speaker.

Luke M proceeded quickly from a short biographical introduction to Carlo, to a deeper examination of the spiritual life of the Christian. He reminded us that Heaven is our home, and that everything we do should bring us closer to the goal of union with God.

#### Prayerful relationship

During a Q&A session, Luke M responded to questions on various aspects of his talk, including the Fraternity of St Pier Giorgio and the need for young people to form a prayerful relationship with God.

Afterwards, there was another opportunity for refreshments, followed by an introduction to St Carlo's website and the screening of an interview with St Carlo's

mother, Antonia Salzano Acutis

Luke D had prepared an informative leaflet on St Carlo, with comprehensive and easy-to-read content, as well as a QR code, which he had created as part of his project, on the back. He explained what a QR code is, and how to read one, before demonstrating that his QR code would bring us to the website created by the teenage Carlo Acutis, just a year or two before he died.

Luke D then gave a tour, as it were, of the website, pointing out elements of particular interest, such as the alphabetical list of locations where Eucharistic miracles had occurred throughout the world.

After the introduction to the website, he went on to introduce a very moving video, which gave viewers an insight into the life and spirituality of young Carlo. The video was an edited version of an interview between well-known Catholic speaker and evangelist, Chris Stefanick, who was in conversation with Antonia Salzano, Carlo's mother.

When asked whether she sometimes asked Carlo for help, Ms Salzano replied that she did, but that Jesus and Our Lady are first, and that most of her prayers are directed towards them.

Ms Salzano also explained that she had been prepared for her son's unexpected passing by Carlo's faith, and by her own, of course. After Carlo's death, she had had a dream in which Carlo spoke to her, telling her: "Mama, one day I will be beatified and then I will be canonised". So, again, this remarkable woman was prepared for events which might have been overwhelming, but which, by grace, she has accepted with peace.



Carlo was canonised in Rome on December 7, 2025, alongside another young Italian man, Pier Giorgio Frassati. St Pier had been an avid mountain walker and a champion of the poor. At his funeral, thousands appeared to pay their respects because he had helped them. Likewise, Carlo, from the age of only nine years old, showed great love for the poor and homeless, even going so far as to provide for their material needs.

Pier Giorgio died on July 4, 1925, after a short illness, and Carlo Acutis went home to the house of the Father, on October 12, 2006, after an illness of just one week. During his illness, the

young Carlo, ever serene, told his parents that he was offering all of his suffering for the Holy Father, and so that he, himself, would go straight to Heaven. He said that he was not afraid because he had never wasted a single moment of his life on anything that was displeasing to God.

The interview ended with Ms Salzano's comment that, if we do everything "for Jesus, in Jesus and through Jesus, our life will become a continuous prayer, so this is the secret. I think it's possible for everybody; it's not so difficult. The important thing is to give space to God."

## Links...

### Luke Doherty's leaflet:

<https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:EU:767ea073-120f-43b7-a280-f1f940fbcc37>

### Link to video (edited by Luke Doherty):

<https://youtu.be/1aiv9nVxxDQ?si=K3BpHL0A8P1PaxUs>

### Link to Daithí's video:

<https://youtu.be/u3HLP-ozf00?si=-5w6xa8oQy2g5fNw>

### Video links:

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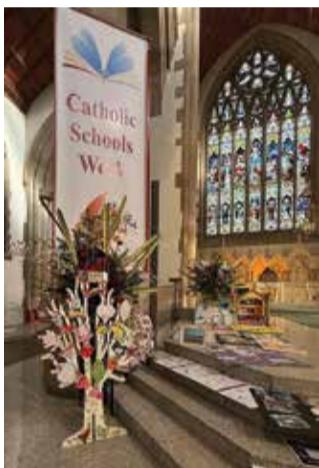


## Catholic Schools Week



Reflecting on the Catholic Schools Week theme - 'Normal Lives, Called to Holiness' – Bishop Donal remarked...

### Education is a path not only to knowledge and maturity but to sainthood



from January 18-24.

This year's theme invited school communities and their families to reflect on how holiness is lived through ordinary daily life, and was inspired by Pope Francis' comment regarding St Carlo Acutis: "Holiness does not mean performing extraordinary things, but doing ordinary things with love and faith."

An annual event, Catholic Schools Week is an opportunity to promote how Catholic education helps young people to be grounded in their faith, and to understand the purpose of their lives through prayer and service in daily life.

#### Focus

Each day of this special week concentrated on different aspects of everyday holiness, with Monday's focus on holiness through prayer, Tuesday's on love and friendship, Wednesday's (Grandparents' Day) on family life and the role of grandparents in handing on the faith, Thursday's on holiness through service and courage, and Friday's on joy and mission.

The hope is that through prayer, liturgy, classroom activities and community involvement, Catholic Schools Week 2026 will celebrate the belief that ordinary lives, lived with faith and love, can become paths to holiness.

In his homily, Bishop Donal spoke about how Jesus had come "to renew the earth, to bring peace and hope" and had given "the uncomfortable message that the world can be healed only by generous, merciful love," which He showed on the Cross.

"He asks for courageous young followers to be prepared to take part in that struggle," added the bishop, saying: "that means living normal lives but trying to be holy every day and in every way."

He continued: "This is a difficult time for many young people. The culture has created many dangers online, on the streets and sometimes in their homes. Experts would say that many of our young people belong to what is called the anxious generation."

"Some people still say that religious beliefs should play no role in education, that personal beliefs are private, that the only



# Catholic Schools Week

*continued from page 4*

article of faith is the freedom to choose. Catholic schools were not created to indoctrinate anybody. They exist to form individuals who have hope and know that their lives have a purpose and a calling, that there are good choices that we can make – and some things that we can choose but which are bad choices. But we are not supposed to talk about bad or sin. Secularism says that would impede our freedom!

"Our own Sr Clare Crockett," he added, "had an amazing experience of Jesus' love for her when she was 17 and she dedicated her life to being holy. And the photos that we have of her show a happy, smiling face – even when she was very tired and under pressure. Holiness made her happy, not frustrated.

"Holiness is not for a few, but for all; not reserved for religious professionals or mystics, but for every student, teacher, parent, and grandparent! Living each day in friendship with Jesus Christ."

"There are so many signs that our anxious generation wants to hope – but some are afraid to," noted Bishop Donal, adding: "Jesus says 'hope and do little things well'. He wants to offer peace to those who suffer. He offers compassion and mercy to those who have been scarred by others or by their own unwise decisions.

"Pope Leo XIV recently said, 'The saints show us that holiness is not about escape from the world, but deep engagement with it in the Spirit of Christ.'

Referring to the statues and stained-glass windows of many saints in the Cathedral, Bishop Donal remarked: "The one which draws most attention is the statue of St Carlo Acutis. He developed great computing and communication skills. He loved the presence of Jesus in Holy Communion and

*Photography by Stephen Latimer*

in the Tabernacle. And he was extraordinarily generous to the poor. Love for the Jesus, who died for us, gave him strength to go to those who were suffering on Earth. He is a saint because of all that God did in his normal, teenage life before he died at 15 years of age."



## St Mary's PS Walking Carol Service a striking sight and sound in Maghera

ST Mary's PS, Glenview, in the Maghera Parish, brought the South Derry town to a standstill when the whole school community set out on a Walking Carol Service, starting from the school and ending at St Mary's Church.

With family members and other parishioners congregating in the chapel for the beautiful pre-Christmas celebration, P1 and P7 children told the story of The Nativity through song and drama, while P2-P7 children sang beautifully on the altar throughout the evening.

Delighted at how successful and memorable the occasion was, principal, Mr Michael O'Kane expressed thanks to the parish priest, Fr Paddy Doherty and

the parish for all the help and guidance.

He also expressed appreciation to Oonagh and Pearse Kelly, at Kelly's Eurospar, Maghera, for their support with selection boxes and refreshments, and to the members and stewards of CLG Watty Graham, An Gleann, for keeping all safe on the roads and for the use of Glen Club, and not forgetting Tilly, Claire, Kelly and their team in the kitchen for the beautiful shortbread.

"Thanks so much to the staff of our school," he added, "for all that they do for the children in our school. We are very lucky to have such caring staff and their high level of excellence was clear to see on such a wonderful occasion."



## Creggan 'Follow the Christmas Star' a memorable lantern walk with Holy Child community



IN the lead-up to Christmas, the people of Creggan enjoyed the beautiful sight of the Holy Child Primary School community walking with lanterns from St Mary's Church to the school as part of their 'Follow the Christmas Star' event.

All gathered in the chapel for the telling of the Christmas story through word and music, before processing from there along the route to Holy Child School, led by Bishop Donal and Fr Ignacy Saniuta CC.

The memorable occasion proved to be a wonderful evening of reflection and prayer and togetherness, as the children were joined by their families and staff members in walking by lantern

light to place the Baby Jesus figure in the school crib.

The occasion was also taken as an opportunity to remember former staff members, particularly much-loved librarian, Patricia Gillan, whose storytelling had been a special part of the Holy Child school's Christmas tradition, and former principal, Charlie O'Donnell, whose tradition of the Christmas Star Tree was revived within the school, as a place to remember loved ones who had passed away.

The Holy Child community were delighted to be joined by Bishop Donal, who blessed the Christmas Star Tree, making the moment even more meaningful.

# Great joy in St Mary's Drumagarner for Baptismal Celebration

THE Feast of the Lord's Baptism, on Sunday, January 11, was a beautiful celebration in many parishes throughout the Diocese, particularly for all baptised in 2025.

The Parish of Kilrea & Desertoghill Baptismal Team and curate, Fr Christopher McDermott, extended a special invitation to parents, guardians, Godparents and all family members to come along to St Mary's Church, Drumagarner, as the community gathered to renew the day the Holy Spirit came upon the baptised and they became children of God.

Commenting afterwards, Fr Christopher said: "There was a great sense of joy amongst the faith family of Kilrea and Desertoghill on the Feast of the Lord's Baptism, as those

christened in 2025 gathered at St Mary's, Drumagarner, for a special celebration.

"A representative from each family placed the name of the recently baptised on the baptismal tree, and keepsake bags were distributed to parents and guardians by the parish baptismal team.

"Included was a celebratory prayer card, a bottle of Holy Water, and child-friendly Rosary beads, which will hopefully help as the little ones learn to pray in the years ahead."

"Their names," he added, "will remain on the baptismal tree throughout 2026, and visitors to the church are invited to pause, read the names, and offer prayer for the recent arrivals to the parish family."



## Another very successful GIFT programme in Greenlough

THE Greenlough Parish ran another very successful GIFT programme towards the end of last year.

Year 8 children experienced fun through faith activities over a six-week period, during which some Pope John Paul II Award students from the parish volunteered to help.

The focus this year was on the importance of the Rosary, which

ties in with the construction of the new Grotto in the Parish, dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes.

The programme came to an end with the GIFT Mass celebrated by Parish Administrator, Fr Pat O'Hagan, which was followed by the weekly Parish Rosary.

Afterwards, all were treated to refreshments, including selection boxes for the children.



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## Urney & Castlefinn end Jubilee Year with crispy cold church-to-church walk

URNEY & Castlefinn parishioners marked the end of the Jubilee Year of Hope by gathering for the parish's second Church-to-Church walk on December 31.

Parishioner, Collette Carlin recalled: "It was a cold, crisp morning but, thankfully, the frost cleared by noon to allow us to gather at St Mary's Church, Castlefinn, to begin the walk.

"We had a lively gathering of all ages and a dog or two! We proceeded on the Greenway from Castlefinn to Cloghfin, where we crossed the main road to Clady and continued to St Columba's Church in Doneyloop.

"Light refreshments were most

welcome here, organised by Mary Louise."

Expressing appreciation to all involved, Colette said: "Thanks to all our walkers, those who donated, Gerard Holmes who sponsored transport, Ballyholey Farm Shop for sponsoring fruit, Aidan and Collette who stewarded, Mary Louise and clan who helped with refreshments, and to Fr Ciarán Hegarty, who concluded the event with a vote of thanks and a blessing."

"This was a very sociable parish event enjoyed by all and we hope to do it again next year, weather permitting."

Donations made on the day were in aid of the Parish.



# Doneyloop community celebrate re-opening of newly decorated St Columba's Church

THE Doneyloop community welcomed Bishop Donal for the celebration of the Gaudete Sunday Vigil Mass and the re-opening of St Columba's Church after re-painting.

The Church had been closed for about a month for the work, which included the laying of carpet in the porches.

Thanks to a great team of workers, including JAK Contracts, Ballybofey Carpets, Tús workers and the Doneyloop Cleaning Squad, St Columba's

was looking fabulous for the visit by Bishop Donal, on Saturday, December 13.

Deep appreciation was also expressed to parishioners for their financial contributions through the weekly envelope and parish fundraisers throughout the year.

On the night of the Mass, there was beautiful singing throughout the Liturgy by the choir, led by Ursula.

Afterwards, refreshments were enjoyed in the Community Centre.



## Young Writers share thoughts...

*IN this first edition of the New Year, we welcome Templemore parishioner, Ellie Donnelly, a Pope John Paul II Award student at St Brigid's College, Derry, on to the Young Writers' team. As Derry marks the first anniversary of the opening of Sr Clare Crockett's cause for canonisation, Ellie reflects on her inspirational story and the hope that it gives.*

*Harry reflects on Bishop Donal's message on the Church's World Day of Peace, January 1,*

*that "with grace, peace is a possible reality and not a far-off dream", while Sean writes about the Gregorian Calendar and changing of New Year by the Church in 1582.*

*Niamh reflects on the year just passed and her growing understanding of the scripture quotation: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not rely on your own understanding" (Proverbs 3: 5-6)*

*James writes about the seven Irish Columbans who were martyred in Korea in the early 1950s, asking for their intercession for us today.*

*Ryan shares his research on St Thérèse of Lisieux and her 'Little Way', and Conor reflects on the evidence for the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin.*



## Sr Clare Crockett...an inspiration to many by Ellie

I have decided to write about Sr Clare Crockett. I believe she is an inspiration to many as her story shows God's love is for everyone and that it is never too late to give your heart to God.

Sr Clare gives hope to all, as when we feel as though we are going down the wrong path and steering away from God, He will always be there with open arms when we are ready to accept His love and guidance.

Sr Clare's journey for sainthood is a very proud thing for Derry and its people, as she is an inspiration to people not only in Derry but the entire world.

*I would like to dedicate this article to Mr Gallagher, who taught at my school, St Brigid's College, and sadly passed away this month.*



## The Shroud of Turin by Conor

THE Shroud of Turin, also known as the Holy Shroud, is a length of cloth which contains a faint image of a man believed to be Jesus of Nazareth after his trials and crucifixion. The Shroud has been preserved for centuries by various members of the Catholic Church. The image matches traditional depictions of Jesus.

The furthest back the Shroud was documented was 1354, in the new Collegiate Church of St Mary in Lirey, a village in north central France, where it was denounced as forgery by the Bishop of Troyes, Pierre d'Arcis.

During the Hundred Years' War between the Kingdoms of France and England, the Shroud was seized and deposited in the Castle of Monfort for safe-keeping, where it was later handed over to the House of Savoy. It was then relocated to Savoy in 1453 and was placed in the Holy Chapel in Chambery, where it faced damage from a fire in 1532. The shroud was moved to the capital city of the Piedmont region, Turin, where it still remains to this day in the Chapel of the Holy Shroud, which is connected to the Turin Cathedral.

After the death of King Umberto II of Italy, the Catholic Church obtained the Shroud. A fire which occurred in 1997 caused threat to it, but it was restored in 2002.

When the Turin Shroud was examined by microscopist and forensic expert, Walter McCrone, he found that an image had been painted with red ochre pigment and also found that the apparent bloodstains were painted with vermilion pigment. However, McCrone's findings are still

heavily debated by other experts and researchers in the field, and many believe his research to be blatantly wrong.

The modern Catholic Church neither rejects or approves of the relic's authenticity. There is substantial evidence that would support the authenticity of the Shroud, such as the fact that it matched other linen samples dated from the time. It also had blood which contained pollen from a plant that grew in the Ancient Middle East. Many x-rays conducted on the Shroud suggest that it dates back 2000 years, and the presence of blood with creatine/ferritin, plus wounds matching Gospel depictions, would suggest that the Shroud image is of a victim of crucifixion.

The Turin Shroud has religious significance as the cloth is made from the same material which Joseph of Arimathea wrapped Jesus in (linen cloth) and placed in a tomb. The Gospels of Matthew Mark and Luke all agree on this, with the Gospel of John stating that Jesus' body was wrapped with a significant quantity of myrrh and aloes. After the resurrection of Jesus, Simon Peter is recorded to have spotted the linen cloth lying there, in the Gospels of John and Luke.

Many people consider the Shroud to be a tangible link to the suffering and resurrection of Jesus, and shows modern Christians evidence of the presence of Jesus 2000 years ago.

The image is unexplainable by science, suggesting the potential occurrence of a miracle in the creation of the Shroud. It stands as a major piece of evidence for the existence of Jesus and it can



strengthen our faith in God by such an anomaly.

Overall, I think that the Turin Shroud stands as authentic evidence that could only have been created and preserved by a miracle, and it still remains today against all odds. There is an abundance of evidence which supports the authenticity of it due to the carbon dating and the pigment analysis conducted by many researchers. Also, the depiction on the Shroud matches the traditional imagery of Jesus with the wounds He had during the crucifixion, which

should help give us certainty on the existence of God and His Kingdom.



## Is peace possible? by Harry

BISHOP Donal McKeown remarked on World Peace Day, January 1, that "with grace, peace is a possible reality and not a far-off dream," and this stuck with me, so I would like to expound on his words.

Firstly, we all know how the story of Genesis goes; Eve eats of the tree as well as Adam and, as a result, man has fallen into original sin by trying to become like God. Without God, we can see the effects of sin, like when Cain murders Abel. It is further shown throughout human history with the world wars, as well as lack of peace among humans due to greed, wrath and envy.

It is evident that our world is in need of peace and to state the contrary would be folly. Another problem going less noticed

is that mankind has plunged into the abyss of relativism, or 'dictatorship' as Pope Benedict XVI calls it, as well as atheism. Without truth and God, justice becomes subjective, love becomes preference, and peace becomes temporary control and is nowhere on the horizon.

Secondly, Grace is the favour, the free and unmerited help that God gives to us to respond to His call as His children, partakers of divine nature and eternal life (CCC 2003). Grace heals the soul, strengthens the will and enlightens the intellect, restoring the proper order of the heart allowing love to flourish. It allows us to rise above pride and to forgive, reconcile and work for the common good. With grace, the restless heart finds rest, fractured relationships can

be healed and, even in a world of turmoil, the soul can experience peace - 'the tranquility of order'.

However, one must distinguish between perfect peace and imperfect peace; the former is only attained in the next life, while the latter is a possible reality with the help of God's grace and our co-operation.

Lastly, "With grace, peace is a possible reality and not a far-off dream." How can we make this a possible reality? We must open ourselves to God's grace through the sacraments; baptism being an essential one, restoring our soul to God. Prayer is also a must, as it aligns our hearts with God's Will and transforms us to be more like Jesus.

Co-operation with grace through acts of charity, forgiveness, patience and



humility, allows the soul to be ordered and harmonious, which are conditions for peace. Peace flows from a living relationship with God, nurtured by prayer, the sacraments and obedience to God's truth, allowing grace to work in us in which we experience interior calm, justice and charity that make peace a real and attainable reality.

May 2026 be a year of peace.

## Young Writers share thoughts...

# The Seven Columban Irish Martyrs in Korea by James

IN 1917 the Maynooth Mission to China was established in Ireland, and a year later gained official recognition from the Holy See. Renamed the Missionary Society of St Columban, and more commonly known as the Columbans, this Society of Missionaries would spread the Gospel and Good News of Jesus Christ, even at great expense.

The society was founded through the inspiration of Fr Edward Galvin, later Bishop Galvin. Though interested in serving as a missionary abroad as a young man, he was dissuaded by his parents over their concerns of such a life and what it would entail. Instead, he entered St Patrick's Pontifical University (Maynooth Seminary) to study for the priesthood of the Diocese of Cork, being ordained in 1909. Due to an oversupply of clergy in the diocese, his Bishop suggested that Edward might go to the US, until there would be an opening in Cork. Fr Galvin dutifully accepted this request and was assigned to the Diocese of Brooklyn, in New York City.

While there, he met a Canadian priest, Fr John Fraser, who stayed in New York while en-route back to China. Fr Edward, embracing his missionary zeal from his youth and from hearing about the lack of knowledge of the faith in China, requested permission to start a mission in China from his Bishop; a request that was accepted. He then departed for China on February 25, 1912.

While there, Fr Edward was aghast at the poverty of the people, both economically and religiously. They were friendly and industrious people and, through no fault of their own, they knew nothing of Jesus. It was here that a dramatic spark was lit. Fr Edward requested assistance for these people from back home, this was to be the start of a story of missionary zeal, love of others, and martyrdom.

This idea would transform into the Columban missionaries, with lay-people, clergy and seminarians assisting the effort to bring the Gospel to the people of China. The missionaries encountered many difficulties, ranging from famines to flooding, as well as operating amidst the Chinese Civil War and WWII. In 1927, Fr Edward was consecrated Titular Bishop of Hanyang.

The situation in China would deteriorate for the Columbans, even after WWII. When the communists under Mao took control, they expelled Bishop Galvin in 1952 and then all 146 Columbans serving in China in 1954. Three-and-a-half years after Bishop Galvin's expulsion, death would come quietly for him when back in Dalgan Park, Ireland. This

great Irish missionary's mortal existence might have come to an end, but his legacy would surely live on through those who would continue to take up the mantle of his life's mission.

### The struggle in Korea

Missionaries are often called upon to risk their lives for their faith. Since 1929, 23 Columban Fathers and one Sister paid the ultimate sacrifice when they answered that call. From 1929, the Society expanded beyond China, to mostly Asian countries in China, including that of Korea.

One of the Missionaries to go to Korea was Fr Frank Canavan, of Headford, Co Galway. His mother, Sarah was very upset at the thought of his gentle soul going to a 'godless' country so far away. Fr Frank gave his mother his Rosary beads to console her, which she always cherished. In her final years of illness, these beads gave her comfort and were entwined around her fingers until she drew her last breath.

After WWII, Korea had been partitioned along the 38th parallel dividing line. In 1950, Communist North Korea, backed by China and the Soviet Union, invaded South Korea. At the outbreak of the conflict, 42 Columban priests were posted in Korea, two-thirds being Irish born. Even as the North Koreans advanced, many of the priests posted near the border opted to stay with their flock, despite the danger of artillery and gunfire that they had been constantly hearing since the war began, and kept only getting closer.

In the coming weeks, many of these Irish Columbans were arrested and imprisoned by the North Korean soldiers. Three of these men were transported to Seoul, where they were thrown into a basement with up to 100 men, women and children, including many religious priests and his Excellency, Bishop Byrne, the Apostolic Delegate in Korea. Rations were scant, with little water or food, and fleas, mosquitoes and the extreme heat had a psychological impact. They were lectured on the evils of capitalism and were told to renounce their faith and embrace communism, but still their belief stood firm. They were moved to Pyongyang for two months, and then taken to Manpo following the arrival of General Douglas MacArthur's troops in North Korea, which had brought hope to the prisoners. At Manpo, the group was joined by about 700 American POWs who had been captured.

On Sunday mornings, the Catholics, who comprised about a third of the internees, sang hymns in Latin, a common language for all. The priests were prohibited from saying Mass, but still attended to the personal and spiritual needs of all those that they could. When Monsignor Tom Quinlan celebrated his first Mass after release in 1953, he was so overcome with emotion that he broke down in tears halfway through.

After being moved to Kosan, due to American strafing from the air, they returned to Manpo, where Major Chong Myong Sil took command of the prisoners. Nicknamed 'The Tiger' because of his love for killing people, he addressed the group through a translator, mocking the missionaries and calling them parasites. The prisoners were told they would be marching, at military pace, to Chunggang, a town 145km away. Anything that could be used as a weapon had to be discarded, including 82-year-old Fr Villemot's walking stick. POW British Commissioner, Herbert Lord, of the Salvation Army, protested that children, exhausted, and the elderly would have to maintain a fast pace that they were incapable of staying at. 'The Tiger's' response was simple and horrific: "Then let them march 'til they die. That is a military order."

### The Death March

Throughout the march, those who failed to keep up were beaten and then executed. The Columbans helped those who fell behind, making makeshift stretchers and helping carry people, knowing this would tax their strength. Conditions were terrible; they were beaten, tortured and made to endure the outdoor elements. They slept in tightly packed houses, where they became cramped and illness spread. Those without shoes left bloody footprints in the snow. Execution was the price for those who could not continue, and their bodies were pushed off cliffs to avoid identification.

Bishop Byrne and Fr Frank Canavan became gravely sick and had to be wheeled in ox carts. Monsignor Quinlan managed to get special rations for them of white rice and sugar. He remained in constant attendance for his brother clergymen, and not once did either complain. Bishop Byrne had to go to a nearby 'hospital', nicknamed 'the morgue' due to its horrific conditions and lack of medical competence. On the morning of November 25, Bishop Patrick James Byrne slipped into his eternal rest.

Fr Frank, in his illness on December 4, stayed strong. The others tried to cheer him up saying that they would soon escape and eat their Christmas dinner in the free world. "I'll have

my Christmas dinner in Heaven," he replied, prophetically. Msgr Quinlan stayed with him on the night of December 5. His tenacity and perseverance had kept him alive, but only for so long. Hampered by childhood and earlier illnesses, his body could take no more. Fr Frank Canavan took his last breath on December 6, the Feast Day of St Nicholas, Patron Saint of his native Galway, whom he had great devotion to. He was buried nearby Bishop Byrne, in his light summer soutane.

### Aftermath

The surviving priests were largely released in April 1953. Seven out of the missing men were dead, only Fr Crosbie and Monsignor Quinlan survived. Fr Crosbie travelled to Headford to personally offer his condolences to Fr Frank's mother and sisters. For the Canavan family, hopes of a homecoming were dashed.



The seven Irish Columban Martyrs were: Fr James Maginn; Fr Tommie Cusack; Fr Paddy Reilly; Fr Frank Canavan; Mgr Patrick Brennan; and Fr Anthony Collier.

There would be no chance to say goodbye, no grave to visit.

In a tribute paid by Monsignor to Fr Frank in 1997, he summed up the young priest's commitment to his calling, saying: "No words of mine could sufficiently extol his priestly virtues." Although depleting his limited resources in the process, he continued to help the sick and the old who could not keep pace on the Death March, bringing them spiritual comfort

and giving them a chance to live another day.

The names of the seven Columban priests killed in Korea, in 1950, were inscribed in the Book of Martyrs presented to St Pope John Paul II at a ceremony in the Colosseum in Rome, in 2000, commemorating Martyrs of the 20th century. In 2013, they were declared Servants of God.

Holy Irish Martyrs of Korea, pray for us!

## "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not rely on your own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5-6)

### by Niamh

LOOKING back on 2025, the year was one of learning rather than certainty. Through reflection on successes and failures, I realized how easily I tied my sense of peace to outcomes and plans, and how unreliable that can be. When things went well, it was easy to feel confident and secure. When they didn't, that sense of stability vanished, leaving behind uncertainty and self-doubt.

A Bible verse that I heard has stayed with me: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5-6). I first heard it mentioned in conversation earlier in the year. It was shared casually, without much explanation, yet the words remained with me long after. At the time, I did not fully understand why. There was something about the verse that felt relevant, though I couldn't yet explain how.

At first, I understood the verse at surface level. Trusting God sounded reassuring, but also distant, something easy to agree with in theory, yet much harder to live out in practice. I accepted it as a reminder rather than a challenge. During busy moments, I returned to it briefly, but without questioning what it truly asked of me or how it might change my life.

As the year went on that trust was quietly tested. Plans didn't unfold as expected and effort

didn't always lead to the outcomes I had hoped for. In moments of disappointment and uncertainty, I returned to the verse repeatedly. Slowly, it became clear how often I relied on my own understanding to feel secure. I depended on planning, expectations, and a desire for control to reassure myself. When those things failed, so did my sense of peace.

Proverbs 3:5-6 took on a deeper meaning. I realized that trusting in the Lord doesn't mean everything will make sense or work out neatly. It doesn't mean uncertainty disappears or that disappointment is avoided. Instead, it means choosing to place confidence in God even when clarity is lacking. Letting go of my own understanding wasn't about giving up responsibility or effort, but about accepting that my perspective is limited, while God's is not.

This realization was challenging, requiring humility. It meant accepting that I don't always know what is best for me, even when I think I do. Trusting God with all my heart meant learning to hold my plans more lightly and allowing room for God's will to unfold, even when it differed from my own expectations.

This shift in understanding influenced my prayer life. Instead of asking God only for specific outcomes, I started to ask for patience, humility, and the grace

to trust His will. Prayer became less about seeking immediate answers and more about learning to remain faithful in uncertainty. Through prayer and moments of stillness and reflection, I began to understand that God's guidance often comes gradually. It is not always found in sudden clarity, but in steady reassurance and quiet strength.

Looking back now, the year may not have unfolded as I expected, but it taught me something far more important. Proverbs 3:5-6 reminded me that peace doesn't come from having everything planned out or fully understood. True peace comes from placing trust in God, even when the things ahead feel unclear. It is a lesson which I know I will continue to learn, but one that I am grateful to carry forward as I move into whatever comes next.



## Young Writers share thoughts...

### St Thérèse of Lisieux and the 'Little Way' by Ryan

ST Thérèse of Lisieux, who was born on January 2, in 1873, and died on September 30, 1897, is also known as Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face. Born in Alençon, France, the youngest daughter of devout Catholic parents entered the Carmelite convent at Lisieux when she was just 15 years old. This is where she would spend the rest of her life. She died of tuberculosis at the age of 24 and, while unknown to the wider world, she gave one of the most important teachings in modern Christianity: The Little Way.

The Little Way is Thérèse's spiritual insight into the power of doing small, ordinary things with great love and trust in God. The Little Way is finding holiness in daily chores, being kind to, and patient with, all people you meet, and accepting your imperfections. It tells us to rely on God's mercy rather than personal strength in life. It views

life as gathering flowers of love for Jesus

Central to the Little Way is a spiritual childhood. Thérèse believed that just as a small child relies completely on a loving parent, so too should a Christian rely entirely on God. As it says in Mark 10:15 - "Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the Kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." Rather than attempting perfection, Thérèse taught that you should accept your personal weakness and offer it to God with confidence. For Thérèse, acknowledging one's limitations was a piece of grace.

This approach transformed ordinary actions into acts of holiness. Mundane tasks such as cleaning, listening to others and remaining patient became opportunities to love. Thérèse deliberately embraced unnoticed sacrifices, such as responding kindly to a difficult sister or performing duties without

recognition. These hidden acts, she believed, delighted God more than grand gestures performed for admiration.

Trust is the heart of the Little Way. Thérèse rejected fear-based spirituality and placed complete confidence in God's mercy. She famously wrote: "In the evening of life, I shall appear before you with empty hands, for I am not asking you, Lord, to count my works." In other words, she would be relying not on her merits but on the divine love of God. Her spirituality is, therefore, deeply hopeful. To Thérèse, holiness is accessible to everyone, regardless of strength, intelligence, or status.

After her death, Thérèse's autobiography, 'Story of a Soul', spread rapidly and resonated with ordinary believers who saw their own lives reflected in hers. She was canonised in 1925 and later declared a Doctor of the Church; an extraordinary



honour for someone with no formal theological education. Pope Pius X stated that Thérèse was the "greatest saint of modern times."

St Thérèse of Lisieux teaches that faith in God is not loud or boisterous shows of love, but instead that faith of God is in the quiet and simple moments experienced through day-to-day life. St Thérèse teaches us that every day is a blessing and every moment is a gift, and that they should be treated as such.

### The Gregorian Calendar and the Church's 1582 changing of New Year' by Seán

THIS month of January is the final descent into the cold grips of winter. It may feel like an odd time to celebrate the New Year, considering how bleak and dreary this month seems every year; the disappointing cool-down from Christmas festivities. The New Year represents to most people an opportunity of renewal, a time to make resolutions for personal betterment of character, a shift in energy, a motivation to make changes.

There are 168 countries around the world that use the Gregorian Calendar, beginning their New Year on January 1. However, here in the northern hemisphere, it feels unnatural to celebrate a time of rebirth when the nature of God's Earth is at its lowest point. As it happens, this was not always the case. Celebrating the New Year in mid-winter has only been the norm in Christian tradition and Western culture since the 16th century, when Pope Gregory XIII made a fundamental change to our measurement of time, throwing our psychological clock off balance. The Italian physician and astronomer, Aloysius Lilius (1510-1576), authored the new calendar, which was officially implemented by the papacy in 1582.

As early Christians spread throughout the Roman Empire, the Julian Calendar was used by the Church, and this remained the case until Pope Gregory XIII's change made in 1582. This calendar was organised by the Roman general and statesman, Julius Caesar in 45 BC, just

decades prior to the birth of Christ. In its traditional form, the New Year was celebrated on April 1 rather than in January. This was a natural decision, with April marking the arrival of Spring, the season associated with a rebirth of life, renaissance of nature, and an internal feeling of energy and refreshment. Winter is a time of mental and physical hibernation rather than the beginning of the year.

In 2 Corinthians 5:17, St Paul wrote: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come!"

A central tenant in our Catholic faith is that of renewal. Christ has always represented a chance for redemption and rebirth for people who wish to find comfort and love through God. Therefore, all Christians before 1582 regarded the beginning of the New Year as April; a time of natural rebirth of nature and energy, the winter having washed away the old and the spring ready to bring the new.

Pope Gregory XIII was born on January 7, 1502, as Ugo Boncompagni in Bologna, Italy, and studied law at the city's university, graduating in 1530. He later was a teacher of jurisprudence there, which can be described as the philosophy of law, perspectives of what law should be and how it should function. He was not ordained into the priesthood until 1558, but impressed Pope Pius IV enough to be created Cardinal by 1565, and sent him to the Council

of Trent in northern Italy. The council was an agent of counter-reformation against Lutheran Protestantism in Northern Europe, with much of the policies discussed implemented when Gregory XIII was elected to the pontificate in 1572, after a conclave which lasted less than 24 hours. His papacy lasted until his death on April 10, 1585. Gregory XIII implemented significant reform in the Church, but his most notable action was the commissioning of the new calendar.

This altering of the ancient calendar is a highly interesting event in Catholic history; a decision made in 1582 which has echoed through the centuries and still affects how we perceive the passing of time. The Julian Calendar was largely similar to Pope Gregory XIII's, containing 365 days, with a leap year every four years, and the same months with the same number of days. Caesar's leap year system was slightly inaccurate and caused eventual drift. The Gregorian

in mid-winter is a negative thing. It corresponds well to our celebration of the birth of Christ. The first day of January can represent an opportunity to thank God for the passing of another year of life, His greatest gift which I am eternally grateful for. It is simply an interesting fact that we used to celebrate the New Year with the coming of Spring, the renaissance of nature and the healing of the world after the slow, bleak atmosphere of winter. Spring represents for us a time of awakening, like the resurrection of Christ, a new beginning, a fresh start.

In Isaiah 43:19 it is written - "For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun. Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness. I will create rivers in the dry wasteland."

The rebirth of nature aligns with the rebirth of human energy, when we awake from winter's slumber and begin anew.



Pope Gregory XIII

### Derry Youth Music Group recruiting new members

DERRY Youth Music Group is now open for new members, aged 16+, as musicians and singers.

Putting out the call, Bethany Doherty of the Diocesan Youth Team said: "This is a great opportunity to use your God-given talents and be with like-minded young people across the diocese, as well as participate at various events throughout the year."

**DIOCESAN YOUTH Music group**



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For more information contact Bethany:  
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📞 02871 264087  
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### Rome faith formation for young adults

THE Pontifical Irish College has opened applications for its Young Adult Faith Formation experience in Rome for the next academic year, 2026-2027.

If you are a young person of faith from Ireland seeking to deepen your relationship with Christ and

discern your path in life, then this programme may be for you.

Find out more on their website [www.irishcollege.org](http://www.irishcollege.org) or contact [eoин.mccormack@irishcollege.org](mailto:eoин.mccormack@irishcollege.org)

Places are limited and subject to application and interview.

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**Retiring from Bellaghy Pastoral Council after two decades of service, Marie Kilpatrick urges others...**

# Don't be afraid to get involved in pastoral councils for the good of parish life

AFTER almost 20 years of service on the pastoral council for the parish of Bellaghy, serving as Chair for most of that time, dedicated parishioner, Marie Kilpatrick is taking well-earned retirement from this important service to the Church in her parish community.

In appreciation of her unstinting service, there was a special night in Marie's honour before Christmas, with Fr Pat O'Hagan, PP Bellaghy, leading the tributes. Noting that the former teacher was also a parish Lector and the outgoing president of the local St Vincent de Paul, where she will continue to serve, Fr Pat remarked: "Service to the parish community is the hallmark of Marie, as it has been for many years."

Chatting to 'The Net' about her lengthy experience of serving on the Pastoral Council for Bellaghy Parish, the native of Ballyscullion, which she quickly points out is the proper name for the parish, said that it was a privilege to be have been involved at the heart of parish life.

This chapter in her life began back in 2008, after she had retired from her vice-principal post at St Joseph's School, in Plumbridge, Co Tyrone, after some 33 years as a teacher there and over 10 years as VP.

"All my years of teaching were in the one school, St Joseph's, and when it closed in June 2007, I took early retirement," recalled Marie, who had taught Maths, and Sports & Games.

She added: "While teaching in Plumbridge, I would have stayed there during the week and went home at the weekends, when I would have helped in the church as a reader. So, when I retired, I came back to live in my home parish permanently."

"Fr Dolan would have known me well enough and asked me to join the Parish Pastoral Council in 2008, when I also joined the local branch of St Vincent de Paul, which I am still part of."

Marie was asked to become chairperson of the Pastoral Council shortly after joining it, and ended up being the Chair for about 12 years.

Commenting on the experience, she said: "The Parish Council was an excellent body, which was probably down to Fr Dolan being very good at asking for and taking advice. I enjoyed it immensely, working very closely

with an excellent group of hard-working people under Fr Dolan's inspiring leadership, until he retired in 2022."

#### In-depth discussions

"We had in-depth discussions about whatever we were planning to do, and we organised many faith events, with special ceremonies to mark the Year of Mercy and, last year, the Year of Hope, as well as parish missions. We also had Lenten Talks, which were very successful, with some well-known guest speakers coming along to talk about their lives and faith on the Sundays of Lent.

"Another very successful initiative was having Station Masses for the various townlands in the Church. The tradition of Station Masses in the homes of parishioners had more or less stopped, so we arranged for them to take place in the chapel instead, with the people coming along on whatever date their townland Station Mass was on, and there was a cup of tea afterwards. It took a couple of years to cover all the areas of the parish, but it was very successful and appreciated."

With recent changes due to there being less priests on the ground, Bellaghy now share their current parish priest, Fr Pat, with the neighbouring parish of Greenlough.

"Each parish still has its own pastoral council," explained Marie, "but have joined up

thinking depending on what is happening, such as novenas or retreats etc."

Considering advice that may be helpful to other parishes considering starting up pastoral councils, she said: "For me, it is important for pastoral council members to have the opportunity for good, extensive discussions on everything concerning the parish, as it is through this discussion time that ideas are shared.

"I also think that it is important to have a broad spectrum of people on board, with a good mix of male and female. We might not have had enough young people on ours. At a recent meeting before I retired, we were discussing about bringing school-aged parishioners on board.

"A parish definitely benefits from having a pastoral council, as its members are people on the ground talking to other parishioners, who are voicing opinions that they may not voice to the priest."

She added: "With priests having to take on two or three parishes now, I feel that there is going to be a greater need for parish pastoral councils, and people should not be slow or afraid to get involved for the good of parish life."

"For my own parish, I wish Fr Pat and the present members of the pastoral council every blessing in their future work, as there are challenging times ahead."



# Beautiful prayer for Clonmany Parish attracts big online interest



A recent posting of a 'Prayer for the Parish of Clonmany' on the Co Donegal parish's Facebook page was appreciated by many, with it receiving 15,361 views, 978 clicks, 290 reactions, 55 comments, 27 shares and eight saves!

Some interested to find out who the author of such a lovely prayer was, were surprised to discover that it was put together via AI.

The Clonmany Facebook page is managed by parishioner, Brendan Diver, who has his own IT company, 'Inishowen Computer Systems', as well as being a well-known local photographer.

Delighted with the many admiring comments received about the Parish Prayer, the 59-year-old remarked: "I wish I could say that I sat down and composed it, but I gave some prompts to AI and it created the finished piece. I put in what I wanted the prayer to be about – the different places in the parish, such as Glenevin Waterfall; Slieve Snaght; The Cross; Meendoran; and the fields and homes of Urris, Strайд, and Ballyliffin."

Saying that he enjoyed looking after the page, though it is a bit of a responsibility having to keep regular checks that nothing untoward had been posted on it,

Brendan added: "I like to include references to local aspects, such as the St Colmcille connection, and to have a sense of community through it. I post such notices as deaths of parishioners, or from any of the local schools, organisations, etc, and put up wee messages encouraging everyone to look out for each other."

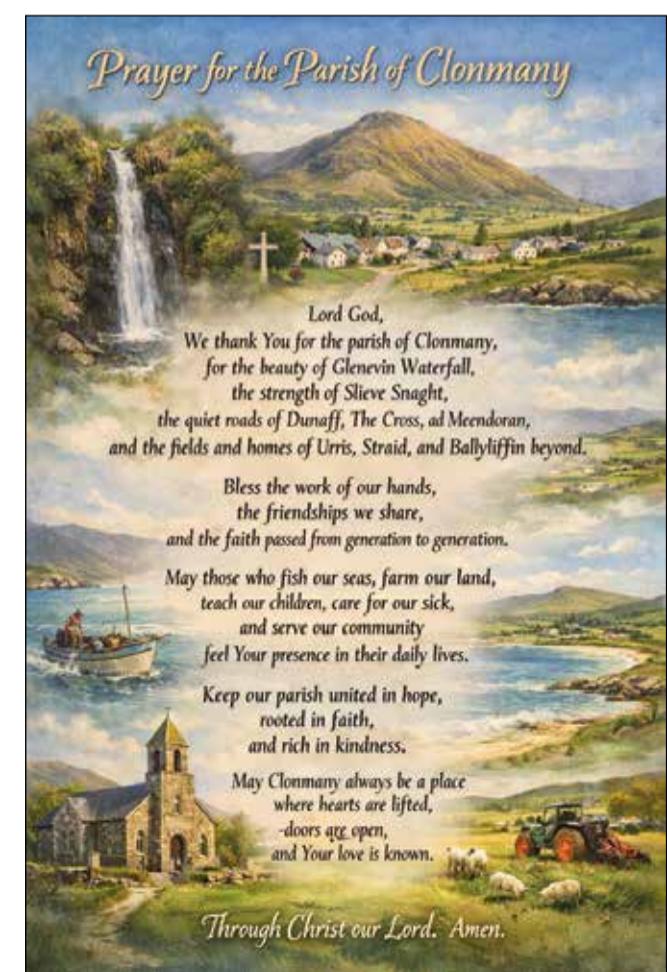
And, it certainly seems that many appreciate his posts, with 109,424 page views and 8,928 engaging with the parish Facebook page over the past month.

"I enjoy using my skills to help my parish," said Brendan, who was born in Manchester but

moved with his family over 40 years ago to live in Clonmany, where his father, Henry, was born.

"My dad is from Clonmany and my mother, Bridie, is from Galway, so I am 100 per cent Irish! We had always come here in the summer for our holidays, and then mum and dad moved the family back 41 years ago; I was 18 at the time."

"I live next door to my parents now, with my wife, Susan, who is also from Clonmany, and my daughter and son, Caoilinn and Lorcán, who were born and raised here too...and so, unlike me, have Donegal accents!"



# Inspiring talks at Buncrana pre-Christmas Novena

THE annual Buncrana nine-Sunday Novena in the lead-up to Christmas, in honour of Pope St John Paul II for the renewal of faith, was another great success, with many appreciating the nourishing and inspiring talks and the special time of prayer together as a parish community.

The hour-long ceremony included the praying of the Rosary, a talk by an invited speaker, the Novena prayer and petitions, a Eucharistic Healing Service, finishing with Benediction.

Entitled 'Throwing open the doors to Christ', the Novena took place in St Mary's Church, Cockhill, with the speakers including Fr Robert McCabe, Central Spiritual Director of the Pioneer, who presented Pioneer certificates and pins marking special anniversaries; well-known Castlederg undertaker, Charles Lynch; Sr Cornelia Walsh; Fr Stephen Quinn OCD; Clare McGrath; Fr Vincent Finnegan OFM; Archbishop Eamon Martin; Peadar Toibin; and the parish priest, Fr Francis Bradley.



## Youth gathering to honour St Patrick and Catholic faith

ON the weekend following St Patrick's Day, a group of young people from the Diocese will be hosting a gathering of youth to celebrate their Catholic faith, while offering an opportunity to network with various youth faith organisations as a means of seeking support from peers in living the Christian faith today.

Initiated by some of The Net Young Writers' team, following their annual Christmas meet with Bishop Donal, and a call from Young Writer and Youth of Acutis founder, James Tourish for a major youth event to help harness the growing energy amongst young people regarding growing in their faith, the hope is that young people from throughout the Diocese and beyond, who are curious about the faith they were baptized into, will take this opportunity to come together to find out more.

With the support of Bishop

Donal, initial plans for the day of prayer, song, and talks by guest speakers, on Sunday, March 22, include starting with the celebration of Mass.

Hoping to finalise the programme at their next meeting, the core group aims to get the word out to as many young people as possible and welcomes anyone over 18 interested in getting involved in the preparations to get in touch.

As the event lead, James can be contacted via his mobile – 07375 528580.



# Christian Unity Week reaffirms our 'oneness in Christ'



Ladies from First Derry Presbyterian.

FAITHFUL from churches across Derry City sheltered under one roof to celebrate Christian Unity Week earlier this month, on what turned out to be one of the wettest nights of the year.

Plans to host the annual Walking Service had been abandoned earlier in the day, as news bulletins forecast heavy downpours. Consequently, the annual mini-pilgrimage, that sees ministers and priests from all the main Christian denominations in the city offer prayer at various key locations around the city centre, was switched to Carlisle Road Methodist Church.

Still, the weather warnings didn't stop a large group of



Rev Peter Morris, Rev John Merrick and Mr William Lynn.

Canon Katie McAteer and Canon John Merrick.

Although this yearly event is by definition a Christian celebration, fervent prayers were offered for people of all faiths and cultures and for peace.

"Strengthen the bond of peace among us and in our troubled world. Disturb the hearts of all who would make war; touch the wounds of all who are afflicted by war," we prayed.

Prayers were also offered for the health service, our schools and education sector, the local economy, civic and government agencies, people in residential homes, those in need of care and support and those who provide such services building personal relationships as they work.

Mrs Joan Doherty, also of Carlisle Road Methodist, said she was "particularly pleased that a group of pupils from Oakgrove Integrated College brought a youthful spirit to the gathering". And she thanked principal, John Harkin for accompanying them.

Canon Katie McAteer, Church of Ireland, said that the gathering was a welcome opportunity to affirm our 'oneness in Christ': "Although we didn't physically walk around the city centre

churches, our souls got a good workout! It was good to meet again with fellow Christians and affirm our oneness in Christ.

As the variety of biscuits (plain and chocolate) offered with a cuppa seemed to demonstrate - we all have our different tastes but we all need the same nourishment. One body, one Spirit!"

Captain Sharon Stevens, of Salvation Army Church, reflected: "It was encouraging that so many people came for the virtual prayer walk, the joint prayer service seemed to be well received by all. It was great to have different churches represented and we enjoyed a lovely time of fellowship together over supper."

Darinagh Boyle of St Columba's Long Tower, witnessed a "palpable sense of togetherness" at Monday evening's gathering: "Because many of us meet regularly now - we've become much more familiar with each other. A sense of togetherness has grown among us. Mindful of suffering elsewhere in the world, it's no bad thing to encounter a little discomfort. And if so many people are willing to gather on a cold wet January evening, it shows real commitment here in this city to our shared ethos."



Archdeacon Robert Millar, Rev Nigel Cairns and Mr Bobby Millar



Sylvia Lester, Canon Katie McAteer, Captain Sharon Stevens and Fergus McAteer



Rev Colin Jones and parishioner Iris, from First Derry Presbyterian.

## 'Sliabh Armenia' remembered on a rainy night

The furthest borders of old Christendom joined in prayer last week in the city of St Columba to celebrate this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Prayers and reflections read at WPCU 2026 had been prepared by the Armenian Churches. Armenia was the first nation to adopt Christianity as the state religion in 301 AD. This ancient faith culture is known to have influenced Irish Christianity from the fourth century on.

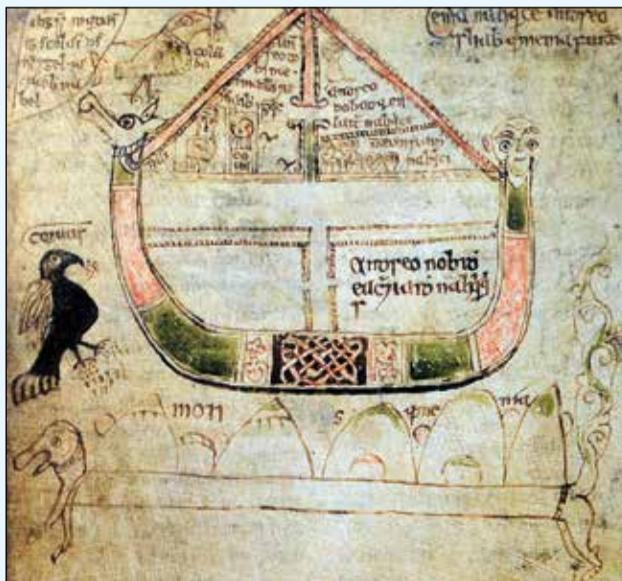
The connections between Ireland and Armenia survive to this day in icons, carved stone crosses, as well as Coptic-Armenian decorative devices adopted by Gaeilge scribes creating the illuminated manuscripts that Ireland became

famous for.

Among the most fascinating of the connections that have survived, is a depiction of Noah's Ark in a 14th century Irish manuscript accompanied with a title that translates "the building of the ark with 'Sliabh Armenia fuithe' - the Armenian mountains under it."

The image depicts paired figures, animals in the hold and various birds - one of which is carrying what looks to be a liturgical fan, an image of divinity recognised across the Early Christian world.

<https://www.peopleofar.com/2014/05/06/noahs-ark-in-armenian-mountains-depicted-on-a-14th-century-irish-manuscript/>



A depiction of Noah's Ark in a 14th century Irish manuscript accompanied with a title that translates "the building of the ark with 'Sliabh Armenia fuithe' - the Armenian mountains under it."

## Annual Sr Clare Retreat

Mon 13th  
April  
- Sun 19th  
April,  
2026

Servant of God  
Sr. Clare Crockett  
14 November 1932 - 16 April 2016



## Visit to Spanish Home of the Mother houses an emotional but blessed time for Sr Clare's sisters and friends, with Shauna recalling...

### Powerful experience on anniversary of Clare's cause opening will never leave me



ONE year after the opening of the cause for the canonisation of Sr Clare Crockett, the sisters of the Derry-born nun, Shauna and Megan, marked the occasion by leading a group of 90 devotees in visiting the Home of the Mother houses in Spain that she had stayed in.

Landing in Santander and going on to spend time in Zurita, Garabandal and Covadonga during the five-day trip, accompanied by Fr Gerard Mongan, Adm Long Tower, and Fr Michael McGoldrick OCD, the group had an amazing time together and with the Servant Sisters there.

One particularly poignant moment was when Shauna and Megan first viewed the damaged guitar that their older sister had been playing during a music lesson, when the building she was in collapsed with the force of the earthquake on that fateful April day in Ecuador, in 2016.

"It was overwhelming to see her guitar," recalled Shauna, adding: "We knew that the Sisters had it, but we didn't know that it was going to be there that day. It is kept in the chapel in one of their houses in Zurita. It was a very emotional moment, and it was all the more difficult because mammy and daddy weren't there with us."

"We also saw the Cross that Clare kissed on that Good Friday, in the wee chapel next door, and everyone was able to go up and have their moment with that as well."

The visits to Zurita and Garabandal were a trip down memory lane for Shauna and Megan, with them having been there to visit their sister over two decades ago, when she entered the Servant Sisters Home of the Mother as a novice.

"This trip was to celebrate the first anniversary of the opening of Clare's cause, which was on Monday, January 12," said Shauna, "We were in her house in Zurita that day for Mass, and there was a definite presence

there during the Mass that was experienced by everyone who was there. I can't put into words what it was like, and neither can any of the others. It was so powerful that it will never leave my memory.

"This was the house Clare had been in when she joined the Servant Sisters after her conversion. I remember being in that chapel with her and staying in that house. That was over 20 years ago."

#### Garabandal

She continued: "I also remember going to Garabandal and there was no path then, but there is one now. We went there on the Tuesday. It is a very special, peaceful place. The Servant Sisters met us all up at the top of the hill, where everybody spent some time praying on their own. Then Sr Karen told us stories about Clare, and about Garabandal and the visionaries, and afterwards we all prayed the Rosary together."

#### Unbelievable

She added: "We had the best week. It was actually unbelievable because there wasn't much planning put into the trip, but everything just fell into place. Before we went out, we were told that there would be snow on the mountains and to be prepared for the buses not to be able to get up them. We were advised to bring warm clothes as the weather was supposed to be awful cold, with lashing rain expected, but when we got there it was very decent weather with not a spilt of rain, never mind snow! Even the locals there couldn't believe how good the weather was, compared to what was expected."

After returning home on the Friday night, Shauna said that she spent the Saturday crying most of the day as she felt so emotional from the experience. However, she hopes that it will help prepare them for their next trip, when only she and Megan, and their immediate families, will make the trip to Ecuador in April to mark the 10th anniversary of Sr Clare's death, which takes place during the annual Sr Clare Retreat on April 16.

"This year, the Sr Clare Retreat will take place in Long Tower from April 13-19," explained Shauna, "and the week after, Megan and

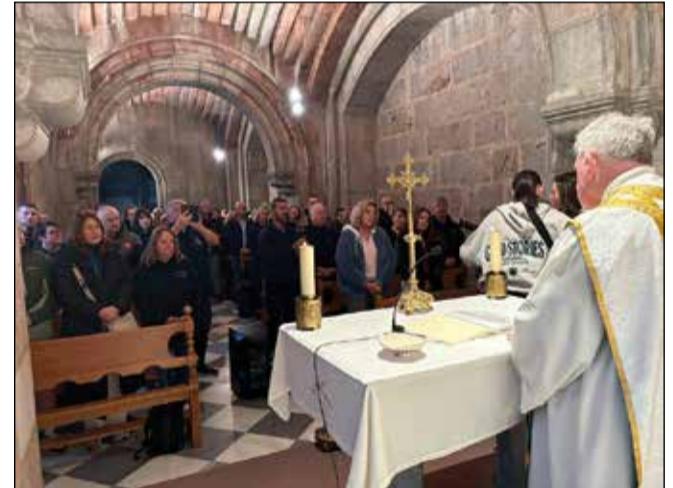
I are going to Ecuador, with just our families coming with us this time, as I expect it will be a very emotional experience and a lot for us to take in."

"We will be visiting the place where Clare's body was found. There is a church built around it now. We will be meeting the people who helped to look for Clare and those who found her body. We will also meet some of those who were children in the school where Clare taught, but would have been at home when the earthquake struck. Some of them will be teenagers now, and there maybe also some in their 20s, who would have been in the older groups that she taught."

In the lead-up to the visit to Ecuador, Shauna and Megan are hoping to raise funds for the school there that Sr Clare had worked in, which has been rebuilt. To this end, there will be a fundraising night on March 21 in The Cosh Bar, on the Buncrana Road, starting at 8 pm.

Sr Clare's faith influence continues to grow in her home town and far beyond, with more and more parishes and schools encouraging people to explore and reflect on her faith journey, and notably so during this month's Catholic Schools Week. As well as the Sr Clare Masses celebrated in Termonbacca on the second Sunday of each month, at 7 pm, the Sr Clare Rosary Group continues to meet weekly on Tuesday nights in the Bishop Street Youth Club building, at 6.30 pm, and all are welcome. In addition, there is an Evening of Prayer, entitled 'From St Columba to Sr Clare', led by Fr Gerard Mongan in St Columba's Church, Long Tower, on the first Thursday of each month, during which there is an opportunity to go to Confession. This starts with the Rosary at 7 pm, then Mass at 7.30 pm, followed by Adoration from 8-10 pm, and finishing with prayers at 10 pm.

There is also a Sr Clare Information Point, at 1C West End Terrace, which is open from Monday-Friday, 10.30am until 1pm. It stocks Sr Clare candles, slates, hoodies, t-shirts, books, calendars and prayer cards, with funds from this going towards the annual retreat costs. Anyone wanting access to the Information Point outside of the stated times is welcome to make contact through the Sr Clare Facebook page.



**Having raised thousands for Foyle Hospice over the years, marathon runner, Pat Kennedy is seeking support in raising more with...**

## Cloisters Charity Coffee Morning fundraiser



Pat with Fr Gerard Mongan, Adm Long Tower.

CLOISTERS Café, in the lower floor of the former 'Wee Nuns' school building, now known as Aras Cholmcille, is not only a place of physical nourishment for hungry souls out and about in the Long Tower area of Derry, but one of increasing spiritual nourishment for the man who responded to the call to take on the catering venture as part of the parish plans to promote the legacies of St Columba and Servant of God, Sr Clare Crockett.

Reared in the Abercorn Road area, Pat Kennedy describes himself as "a Long Tower man through and through", so when his good friend, Fr Gerard Mongan, the parish administrator, saw him behind the counter of his 'City Chippy' while walking along Bishop Street one day, and called in to ask if he would take on the 'Wee Nuns' café, he felt privileged by the proposition.

"Fr Gerard married my wife and I, and baptised all our children, so we have a bit of history," remarked the 38-year-old, who now lives in Ballyarnett with his young family. He added: "When he came into the chippy and asked me to take on the café, Fr Gerard told me that it wasn't something he had set out to do, but when he was passing and saw me working behind the counter, it just came into his head to come in and ask me. He had been praying about what to do about the café and said that he had felt the Holy Spirit saying to him that day as he walked past my chippy, 'Ask Pat'.

"As it happened, I was looking for somewhere to continue the 'Meet & Bite' charity kitchen I had started with James McMenamin, since the lease for the place it had been held in had run out. I had been praying for a new location as I am very passionate about this. I believe that I was asked to

they looked out the window, I'd be a rich man! A lot of people like looking out the big window over to the Bog too.

"While it has been challenging since we opened last April, coinciding with the Sr Clare Crockett retreat, it has been a good year, with many people coming in. There have been a lot of changes for the better regarding the building and Fr Gerard has fantastic plans for it.

"It was a great honour to be asked to take over the café in Aras Cholmcille. I am a devout Catholic, and so is my wife, Louise. We go to Mass every Sunday, but since Fr Gerard has asked me to come in to run the café, I feel pulled even closer to God and the Church. The whole Sr Clare story is great. I think these younger saints are badly needed to pull people back to their faith and to the Church, and maybe Sr Clare is the one to do that here."

Raised in a strongly Catholic family and then straying from the practice of his faith after leaving home, Pat remembers the temptation to lie on in the morning after a night out drinking, rather than getting up to go to Mass. However, when he got married that began to change.

"Louise and I started going to Mass once a month, but then we decided to go back every week," he recalled, "and now Mass always comes first in our family. We have four children, aged 1-13 years old and, no matter what is on, we say 'God is first in this house and everything will be grand'."

Pat went on to share a special find recently while clearing out his garage: "I came upon a wallet

I had when I was 21 and, when I opened it, I found a Sacred Heart prayer and some holy medals. I really feel that I am being brought closer to God. We are very privileged as a family to be where we are at the moment, with Fr Gerard as a dear friend and with the Church. I feel very honoured to be asked in by the parish to run the café and the parishioners have been so welcoming. It is not just a business for me, but an opportunity to help the parish as well."

At the end of this month, on Saturday, January 31, Pat is hosting a Charity Coffee Morning in Cloisters to raise funds for Foyle Hospice through the London Marathon, which he plans to run at the end of April. He has to raise £4,000 for the entry and is hoping that many people will come along to the coffee morning to support the fundraiser.

Foyle Hospice is a place close to many people's hearts and the team there do a great job. Over the years, I have probably raised about £8,000 for Foyle Hospice through running half-marathons for it.

"I have run about 12 half-marathons before this, including the Great North Run, which I have done three times for Foyle Hospice. This time, I decided to do the London Marathon for it, which will be my first full marathon."

With Pat's mother, Eileen, and Fr Gerard's housekeeper, Christine happy to bake for the coffee morning, those who go along will be sure of some delicious home-bakes to enjoy with their cuppa.



*Starting a Rosary Group in her school in 2022, Christine O'Hara shares how this powerful prayer has led to there now being three Rosary groups and an Adoration Club, and how...*

# Students experience great joy and peace through the Rosary...it has brought happiness into their lives



Christine O'Hara, teacher in Coláiste Chríost Rí, Cork City, who promotes the Rosary and the Five First Saturdays devotion.

I am a secondary school teacher in Coláiste Chríost Rí in Cork City. I am very grateful to God for the gift of faith which I received from my mother, Mary Christina. She instilled in me a very strong devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Our Lady and St Joseph. I have always prayed with my students at the start of every Maths class, but I only started a Rosary group in the school in 2022, after I joined a small Catholic teachers' WhatsApp group.

One evening, there was an exchange of messages on the group; one teacher was starting a Rosary group in her school and the other teachers were encouraging her. I was really surprised to learn that they had Rosary groups in their schools and I decided to ask my principal for permission. He thought it was a brilliant idea, so I booked a Holy Mass for the specific intention that the Rosary would work in my school, and we now have three Rosary groups that meet each week and one Eucharistic Adoration Club.

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is powerful. I am so grateful to God for the gift of Himself in the Mass. The Lord gives Himself completely to us out of His immense love for us. A lot of fruits have come from the Rosary. We have visited Knock Shrine four times since we introduced the Rosary in our school. Students have had many powerful encounters with the Lord in Knock Shrine.

During the last school year, we had two Reconciliation Services, and approximately 100 students chose to come to each service. I surveyed the boys after Confession and many students said that they felt touched by Christ and that they felt warmth in their hearts. One student said:

"The feeling after the service is amazing...there is a weight lifted off your shoulders and it brings you closer to God...you can feel Jesus upon you."

Another student said: "I felt washed by the Holy Spirit," while another said: "It was very peaceful and I really felt the presence of God." Yet another student said that he had felt Jesus was joyful. I was reflecting on this afterwards and thought, of course Jesus was joyful! Jesus has said that there will be more rejoicing in Heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine virtuous people who have no need of repentance. Jesus knows His own mind and He is faithful to His word.

At the start of the Rosary session, I call upon the Holy Spirit and encourage the students to say "Come Holy Spirit" in the silence of their hearts. This is very powerful because the students are praying with great faith and hope does not disappoint! The Holy Spirit always comes in a very special way when we call upon Him.

#### Deep belief

I say to the students that all prayer begins with a deep belief that you are in the presence of God. Inviting them to take a moment to become aware of the Lord in the room, I encourage them to whisper any worries or concerns to the Lord in the silence of their hearts. I encourage them to really approach the Lord and touch Him with their faith. I truly believe the bigger the problem is the more it delights the Lord's Heart to see you coming with this problem, because it requires more trust to approach the Lord with a big problem.

I encourage my students to be still with the Lord and enjoy knowing that He is very near and that He is looking at them with great delight. I remind them that we are in contact with Someone who is pure goodness and pure love. I believe this increases the students' confidence in prayer, and confidence in prayer is essential. The Lord Jesus said to St Teresa de los Andes: "Trusting souls are the ones who steal away my graces. I am all Love, and the greatest pain one can give my Heart is to doubt my Goodness."

I encourage the young people to use their imagination to visualise the Lord: How far away from you is He? What is He wearing? Is it bright or is it dark? St Teresa of Avila said that the imagination is a faculty of the soul; so, we can use our imaginations to lead us

deeper into prayer.

I also remind the students of the presence of Our Heavenly Mother Mary, and invite all the Heavenly Angels and Saints to pray with us too.

Some days, at the end of the Rosary, we might say short prayers which Fr Oisín Emmanuel Martin CFR gave me. There is one for boys and one for girls. The students insert their own name and we repeat the prayer. Fr Oisín advised me to keep encouraging the students to believe that they are loved by the Lord.

*Boy's prayer: I am [insert name]; good warrior, beloved son of God and He loves me to bits.*

*Girl's prayer: I am [insert name]; beautiful precious, beloved daughter of God and He loves me to bits.*

I often tell the students to enjoy the Lord in the silence for a minute or two after the Rosary. This is very powerful; it gives them a chance to receive from the Lord and to listen to Him and be aware of Him. St Carlo Acutis said: "Jesus speaks to us within and we should listen to Him and follow Him in everything".

The Lord does things for the students during the Rosary that no human could do for them. He makes them feel special; they feel loved and wanted. When I ask students what they like the most about the Rosary, the most common response I get is that they enjoy the peace and the presence of Jesus in the room. One senior student told me that he felt "hugged by God" during the Rosary, while a First-Year student told me that he felt God was over him and thinking about him. The students have had many beautiful encounters with the Lord during the praying of the Rosary.

#### Faith event

In November, we had a Faith event where we collaborated with St Mary's Secondary School in Macroom. Nineteen Sixth Year students visited us and there was Rosary, Eucharistic Adoration and Taize prayer. I surveyed the students after the event and one commented: "I really appreciated feeling God's presence and receiving His blessing, it was very meaningful", while another said that the Faith Event created "a valuable opportunity for students to connect, share experiences, and learn from one another."



Another student said: "I felt more connected to Jesus".

The Lord Jesus certainly blessed the joint Faith initiative. Please God there will be many more in the years ahead.

A number of staff members attend the Rosary also and they find great peace through praying it. The biggest task at the beginning was promoting the Rosary amongst the students and encouraging them to come. I made announcements over the school intercom, visited the classrooms and invited students individually, and I encouraged students to invite their friends to the Rosary as well. I also put up posters around the school.

Thank God the numbers attending has grown over time. I never dreamt when I started the Rosary that it would grow to three Rosary groups. The Lord is very generous and Our Lady's prayers are very powerful!

The feedback from parents has been very positive too. Parents have told me that their children find the Rosary very calming. This prayer has really helped students' mental health and well-being. I would recommend starting a Rosary group to any principal or teacher or parent. The students' encounters with the Lord are very edifying. The Lord is truly with us and He really makes His presence felt during the Student Rosary.

During personal prayer time, I would advise parents to encourage their children to enjoy the Lord. The Lord deeply desires a friendship with all of us. I would advise parents to bring their children to the Church when it is quiet and encourage them to use their imagination to visualise the Lord, and pray that they will open their hearts to Him. Encourage them to share their worries and

dreams with the Lord and then to listen to Him. Young people are naturally very disposed to receiving from the Lord and I believe their prayers are a great delight to His Sacred Heart.

Parents have the immense privilege of facilitating this joyful encounter for the Lord; "Let the little children come to Me" (Matthew 19:14). I would also highly recommend trying Fr Oisín's short prayers that I mentioned earlier. Eighteen-year-old students of mine felt grace in their hearts when we said those prayers. I also gave them to a cousin of mine, who has four children, and she said that they are powerful and really highlight the "nearness of the Lord".

#### Scripture

I would recommend Christian praise and worship songs as well. Music draws us deeper into prayer and is a powerful way to encounter the Lord. And I would encourage parents to read short pieces of scripture to their children, like the Parable of the Lost Sheep. Ask the children what they learned about the Lord from the piece of scripture. Scripture is a very firm basis for getting to know the Lord, because it is the living Word of God.

I would also recommend giving children blessed Miraculous Medals, enrolling them in the Brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and giving them blessed Rosary beads. My students feel peace when they receive a blessed medal or Rosary. A blessed item is powerful because the priest's blessing is the blessing of the Lord Jesus.

I go on a number of primary school visits and the children have time in Eucharistic Adoration and we pray the Rosary and read Holy Scripture. Students say beautiful

things about the Lord after we read the piece of Scripture. It is really beautiful. I would highly recommend seeking permission from your local school principal to visit the school and pray the Rosary with the children. A friend of mine visits a number of primary schools and prays the Rosary with the children. The students have experienced great joy and peace through the Holy Rosary. You can see the difference it has made in them; it has brought great happiness into their lives.

I am also a strong believer in Our Lady's Fatima messages. I lead two First Saturday groups in two different parishes. The First Saturday devotion is Heaven's peace plan. Venerable Sr Lucia of Fatima said: "Whether there is peace or war depends on the practice of the First Saturdays. Communal prayer is so powerful. Doing the First Saturdays together as a community is a very powerful way to honour Our Lady and to bring peace in our hearts, peace in families and peace in the world. The Lord Jesus has really blessed the First Saturday groups.

I would highly recommend starting a First Saturday Group to any parish. There is no extra work required for the priest. There are four requirements which all need to be made with the intention of making reparation for the sins committed against Our Lady's Immaculate Heart: Holy Rosary; receive Holy Communion; 15-minute meditation on the Mysteries of the Holy Rosary and Confession (ideally within eight days, but it could be up to 20 days).

Our Lady promises Her special assistance at the hour of death to those who practice the First Saturday devotion. Our Lord

continued from page 20

Jesus assured St Catherine of Siena that He would save her soul. This is a very great grace. Anyone who does the Five First Saturdays Devotion has the same assurance of salvation! Our Lady is faithful like her Son. She is the Seat of Wisdom. She knows what will bring peace. I trust in Our Lady's message and I believe the First Saturday devotion will bring peace to the world.

I would also like to point out that it is not just primary and secondary school children who enjoy praying the Rosary in their place of learning, but colleges students too. The Rosary is being

recited on both University College Cork and Munster Technological University campuses.

I include a link and QR code to an EWTN documentary on my school, Coláiste Chríost Rí, which features our students at prayer: [https://youtu.be/pGag94s14\\_w](https://youtu.be/pGag94s14_w)



Artwork on Confession by Diarmuid O'Donovan, a Sixth Year student

## Children's Rosary Groups on the rise

CHILDREN'S Rosary Groups are being established in a growing number of parishes and schools across Ireland, with six now within the Derry Diocese.

As well as children coming together regularly to pray the Rosary in the parishes of Claudy, Three Patrons (Carnhill), Long Tower and Steelstown, there are

two school groups within the Drumragh Parish – in St Conor's PS and Holy Family PS.

And bordering the Derry Diocese, there is a Children's Rosary Group which alternates its gatherings between St Patrick's Church, Castledawson, and Our Lady of the Assumption Church, in Magherafelt.



Children from the Craigbane and Claudy areas celebrated the fourth anniversary of their Rosary Group on the first Saturday of December. This Children's Rosary Group meets on the first Saturdays of each month, at 2 pm, in St Patrick's Church, Claudy. All welcome.

## Lighting the fire of faith, hope and love in Dungiven



Fr Gerry Sweeney, PP Dungiven.

THERE is a line from Isaiah that seems to speak boldly to the Irish: "Look to the rock from which you were hewn..." The prophet's words are especially apt for St Patrick's Parish, Dungiven, as it prepares for a week-long retreat designed to build - and rebuild - on old foundations.

A symbol of these ancient foundations - prayer, evangelisation and service of the poor - rests on a mound to the south of the Parish Church; a tall thin rock known as 'The Standing Stone'. Tradition holds that St Colmcille attended an official church meeting in 590AD at this very spot.

St Colmcille is among generations of Irish who caught the fire of faith thanks to St Patrick, who lit the first Easter flame at Slane in 433AD in defiance of the High King; a blaze the druid priests warned would never go out.

"It is the call of every generation of Irish to keep this fire lit," said Parish Priest, Fr Gerry Sweeney, adding: "For all of us, parishioners and priests, are called to reach a little more every day into the mystery of our faith. To have trust in the Lord, to be always hopeful, constantly loving and not to be afraid."

Fr Gerry, who was appointed parish priest for Dungiven 14 months ago, has been blessed with a very special mission field, which takes in St Patrick's on the Glenshane Road, along with the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Gortnaghey, and St Matthew's, Drumsurn.

He remarked: "It has been and remains something special. I stand on strong foundations of the brother priests who have gone before me."

He appreciates the seeds already sown by the preaching and teaching of the Gospel - as well as the celebration of the sacraments which sustain our life.

"The faith has grown," he said, "now it is time to harvest."

Whether our faith is still taking root, or already fruitful, it always needs renewed and replenished - something Fr Gerry has been reflecting on.

Something he read recently brought him back to a fond but frustrating childhood memory. One of his brothers - he can't remember which - had an annoying habit once he had poured out the last remaining cornflakes into his bowl. "He

would put the empty box back in the cupboard," said Fr Gerry, "then came the morning filled with hope and great expectation. You had your bowl ready, spoon to the side, ice cold, full-fat milk waiting - and you reached for the box and nothing...maybe just a string of colourful words, but no cornflakes. What a terrible start to the day!"

Fr Gerry confessed that he may have been equally guilty at times. Now as a parish priest, he is concerned about those who are experiencing this kind of emptiness and disappointment in their spiritual lives.

"How much more a disaster, today," he said, "when people - who are lost and searching for God - find the cupboard empty. They go to a church and it's an empty shell. A building of no presence. Yes, it's open, yes, it's used, but something is missing. Time to stock the shelves. Time to reach up, reach out and grasp the moment. Carpe Diem. I truly believe this."

With that in mind, Fr Gerry has unveiled plans for a parish retreat from March 1-7 at St Patrick's. It is titled REACH, an acronym for Resurrection, Evangelization, Abba (Father), Christ and Holy Spirit.

### REACH

"The theme of REACH," he said, "came many years ago in another parish. For some strange reason, it stayed with me in prayer and developed over time. I just applied the word 'reach' to the story of salvation: a God who reaches out to save His creation - the people reaching out to touch the divine."

The retreat is being led by former BBC political correspondent, Martina Purdy and Elaine Kelly, a former barrister; two professional women who left everything for a life of Adoration in the convent - only to find that the convent had to close due to falling numbers before they could make their final vows. Elaine is now chaplain to Maghaberry Prison and Martina writes for The Irish Catholic. Both also serve their parish of St Michael The Archangel in Belfast, leading pilgrimages and prayer, especially Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

Fr Gerry heard them speak at a priests' retreat last year and was inspired by their journey, and how St Patrick, who had his own trials, helped them to keep going in hope. He also experienced a "deep desire" to do more for the people, as he looked out from the altar at Mass-goers across his parish. "They deserve more and more," he said, "their faith needs to be fed and nourished."

On Friday, March 6 - the penultimate day of the retreat - Derry's own Dana 'Rosemary' Scallon, who penned a song for St Patrick called 'Light the Fire', will sing and share testimony. "My



Dana with Martina and Elaine as Pilgrim Guides.

husband, Damien and I," said Dana, "are delighted to take part, along with my brother, Gerry Brown on keyboards."

Inspired by St Patrick, Dana and Damien have founded a 'Light the Fire' faith movement, involving Martina and Elaine. "We have got to know St Patrick much better in recent years, and the song was encouraged by my husband's brother, the late Fr Kevin Scallon, who said, 'We need a new hymn to St Patrick because he's a saint for today and his message is for the whole world.'

"There is a line in the song about faith, hope and love remaining forever. But a fire, as we all know, must be fed and fanned or it goes out. We need the breath of the Holy Spirit. We believe that St Patrick, St Brigid, and St Colmcille - and all the Irish saints - are interceding for the Irish to turn to God once again, to the love of God, a love that frees us from fear and gives us peace and hope and life!"

Bishop Donal McKeown has been invited to formally close the retreat at the Saturday Vigil Mass on March 7. Fr Gerry said that the call to faith and holiness is for everyone, as all the baptised share in the royal priesthood of Christ.

"We are challenged, like St

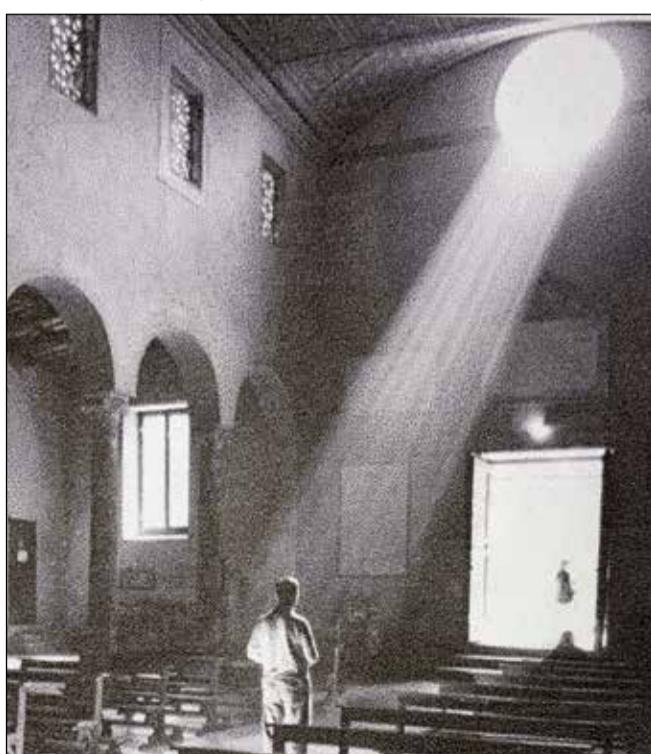
Patrick our Patron, to share that faith, hope and love with others. Only doubt and fear can stop us. With God on our side, we have nothing to fear."

What are Fr Gerry's hopes for this retreat? "Very simple," he answered, "that the parishioners of Dungiven will see and believe that they too are called and chosen to be someone truly wonderful in faith and not just a bystander." He also hopes that those who are trapped in the past, like Lot's wife, will be freed to move forward into "a deep encounter with Christ."

He hopes that many souls will begin again this Lent - especially those who have not been present at church for a long time: "A mission or a retreat can be a gentle awakening. I hope and pray people come, and I hope that the retreat will light and rekindle their faith. It is never too late - never."

"To come to know God's only Son, who opened His arms on the cross and said, 'I love you this much. I died for you.' It's life-changing. It was this mystery of God's love that saved a wretch like me. Amazing Grace!"

Ms Kelly said that the retreat was an invitation "to be transformed and to be amazed!"



## How Paul III righted the Barque of Peter...

# The purification of the Church after the Reformation *by Gerard McReavy*



Gerard McReavy, Waterside, Derry.

ALESSANDRO Farnese was born on February 29, 1468, in Canino, Latium, Italy, into the Farnese family, one of the many great families who dominated Italy. All these families put men into the Church to safeguard their interests and Alessandro was the Farnese choice. His career prospered and, in 1493, he was appointed Cardinal-Deacon by Pope Alexander VI (Rodrigo Borgia) - partly due to the influence of his sister, Giulia Farnese, who was Alexander VI's mistress. He served under several popes, gaining a reputation as a capable administrator. His early life marked by worldliness and nepotism - he fathered four children, which was not unusual for clergy of the time. In other words, he was part of the problem.

Alexander VI was succeeded by Pius III, a devout man who only reigned for a month. Next came Giuliano della Rovere, the warrior Pope, who called himself Julius II, after Julius Caesar. When not fighting, he was a patron of the arts and made one decision which has reverberated down the ages: the basilica of St Peter was falling down, so he demolished it and ordered a complete rebuild. It was to be paid for by the preaching of

an indulgence for the repose of the souls of the faithful.

The preaching of the indulgence, in Germany at least, stepped over the bounds of decency and theology: "As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs." It also rhymes in German. It attracted the attention of a professor of theology at Wittenberg: Martin Luther. Luther drew up a list of abuses for discussion and called for a debate. This is now recognised as the start of the Protestant Reformation. Luther's ideas spread swiftly over Germany, driven not just by a desire for reform but by German nationalism. Ironically, only two or three of the 95 theses were definitely heretical, 20 to 25 were misleading, due to exaggerations and unclear wording, but correctable, and 69 to 70 were orthodox.

The attitude of Julius' successor, Leo X, was summed up in the remark he made on his election: God has given us the Papacy, let us enjoy it. He dismissed the protests of Martin Luther as "a monk's quarrel," without any thought of the consequences. As Luther's ideas spread, he became more aggressive and rejected any attempt at correction. He was condemned at the Diet of Worms and excommunicated.

Leo X died shortly after. The Papacy was almost bankrupt, the reformation was spreading in Germany and cardinal electors were split between pro-French and pro-Imperial factions. They decided on a total outsider, who wasn't even at the conclave, as he was serving as a bishop in Spain: the Dutchman, Cardinal Adrian Florensz, Pope Adrian VI. Adrian was pious and learned,

and those who hoped for reform were delighted but the outside candidate was still an outsider and his best efforts came to nothing, frustrated by corruption. He reigned only 20 months and then the corruption re-asserted itself with Clement VII, Leo X's cousin. Clement's disastrous reign ended in 1534.

### Stability

The cardinals wanted stability and moderation. Alessandro Farnese had no major enemies, decades of experience and, at 66, wouldn't be around too long. He became Paul III. What only his close friends would have known was that during the crises which had fallen on the Church he had begun to take his religion seriously, and had accepted the papacy so that he could affect reform, which was why he took the name of the Apostle to the Gentiles.

He was under no illusions about the magnitude of the task he had embraced. The pontificate of Adrian VI had shown that a pope might decree reform, but that didn't mean that it would be carried out, and the roots of the corruption were deep. This was no time for half-measures.

He had to gather all the forces of renewal in the Church and that meant that he had to call an ecumenical council. This was no easy task; to be genuinely ecumenical, the Spanish, French and German bishops would have to attend, not just the Italians, and that required more than wishful thinking. Philip II of Spain would co-operate fully, but his father, the Emperor Charles V, was in a more difficult position. Charles wanted to restore religious unity

and political unity. He wanted the council to be held in the Empire so the Protestants would attend. (Actually, that never happened, the council was too late.) Francis I of France didn't care about church reform but he feared that a council, if dominated by Charles, would weaken French influence and control over the church and influence over the Papacy.

Their continuous wars in Italy made it nearly impossible to gather bishops in one safe, neutral location. Also, many cardinals and bishops feared that a genuine reforming council would expose their own corruption and abuses. Some were reluctant to support measures that might reduce papal or episcopal power. Despite all these obstacles, Paul III finally succeeded in opening the Council of Trent - in north east Italy, but at the time part of the Holy Roman Empire. It was December 1545, 11 years into his pontificate. Even then it was interrupted several times (first in 1547, later in 1552) and only completed long after his death, under Pope Pius IV in 1563.

Paul realised that he also had to work from the bottom up. As he had turned his own life around, he was influenced by St Cajetan and Gian Pietro Carafa, the future Pope Paul IV. These two men had not waited for instructions but simply started to live a Gospel life. Cajetan, the Latin form of Gaetano, was ordained in 1506. He had to gather all the forces of renewal in the Church and that meant that he had to call an ecumenical council. This was no easy task; to be genuinely ecumenical, the Spanish, French and German bishops would have to attend, not just the Italians, and that required more than wishful thinking. Philip II of Spain would co-operate fully, but his father, the Emperor Charles V, was in a more difficult position. Charles wanted to restore religious unity

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### Society of Jesus

The most important of these copyists was a Spaniard studying for the priesthood in Paris, Ignatius of Loyola. After much prayer and discernment, at which he was very good, he and his companions applied to found a new order to be called the Society of Jesus. Paul declared that in this work he detected the finger of God. They received approval in 1540. Paul III died in 1549. He had started the Counter-Reformation and, with the exception of his immediate successor, he was followed by a remarkable series of energetic, reforming Popes.

Paul's promotion of holy people was arguably even more important than his high-level diplomatic work. They were working at the pastoral level to promote faith and reform lives. St Charles Borromeo was appointed Archbishop of Milan by his uncle, Pius IV, the pope who completed the Council of Trent, and worked for 20 years to turn a huge, neglected diocese into a model for other bishops to copy, if they so wished. St Francis de Sales was appointed Bishop of Geneva in 1602, although he could not reside in the city. He was a great theologian and a persuasive missionary, who brought many back to the faith.

Protestantism in France followed John Calvin rather than Luther. Calvin was a much more systematic theologian than Luther, and much more likely to follow an argument to its logical conclusion. He lacked any form of political support, but his rigorously argued positions

made his followers very good at individual conversion. Small Calvinist congregations spread all over France and Europe. Some of these converts were powerful men like Gaspard de Coligny, who were prepared to fight for control. France was split by religious wars, which were eventually won by Henry of Navarre, the champion of the protestant cause. However, Henry IV, as he now was, announced his conversion to Catholicism. This was the religion of 90% of the population and he felt that a Catholic king of a Catholic nation would be more likely to enjoy peace. He proved to be an admirable king, but he did not promote reform in his new faith.

The Counter-Reformation in France was entirely from the ground up: three priests, St Vincent de Paul, St John Eudes and Jean-Jacques Olier founded orders for the training of priests. This was work that should have been done by bishops, but the sort of bishops who would have done this work were the products of these seminaries. And so, the spirit of the Counter Reformation eventually pervaded the whole of France and Europe.

The point that I want to make is that it is a distraction to ask, "What is the Pope doing?" "Why is the Bishop not doing whatever?" God wants us to keep praying and attending the sacraments, irrespective of what anyone else, cleric or otherwise, is doing. St Cajetan did not wait for the Council of Trent to tell him what he should be doing. He already knew, because he was determined to follow Christ, and so he got on with it. And so should we.

## A pastoral response to pornography from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops... 'Create in me a clean heart' *by Oliver Barrett*

THE internet and mobile technology, when used correctly, can be very powerful tools for evangelisation. During the pandemic, for example, we were able to attend Mass, albeit from the comfort of our own homes, because we could connect online. This is one example of the good use of the internet.

As with every form of communication, there is the possibility that the internet and mobile technology may be used improperly and without intent. This may lead to behaviours such as 'Doom Scrolling' and feelings such as 'FOMO', or fear of missing out. The internet and social media are no different from any other form of communication, in that they may be used incorrectly and often by bad actors who seek to exploit vulnerable people.

The very possibility that the internet and mobile technology

may be used for the production and circulation of pornography prompted the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops into a pastoral response to counteract the scourge of pornography. In 2017, they published 'Create in me a clean heart' as a response to the increased use of pornography in societies. The title of their pastoral response is taken from Psalm 51:12.

From their ministry in the confessional and working with families, the American Bishops understood very well the corrosiveness and toxicity of pornography. Their warning about the damage that pornography can do ought to spur us on to act and to be on our guard against it. Pornography is essentially like a thief who is stealing our sleep, our confidence and our innocence. It has the

potential to steal the innocence of children, traumatising those who are exposed to it when they have not yet reached the age of understanding. It can be the source of great shame to men and women who may view it occasionally or habitually.

Now with the IoT, that is, the internet of things, it has become readily accessible. It is only a click away for those who wish to access it, and is often presented under the illusion of being free to those who wish to view it. This ease of access has only served to compound the problem of pornography.

Pornography is not something we talk about much. Nowadays, people are very open to talking about addictions such as gambling, alcohol and drug use, however, pornography is something we very rarely hear mentioned and it can often remain lurking in the shadows. I do not

ever remember being educated about its dangers. Pornography is not something new, although the means of creating and distributing it have changed with the technological revolution. In recent years, its impact has grown exponentially due to the internet and mobile technology.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, in paragraph 2354, gives a good definition of what pornography is. It states pornography is when intimate acts are deliberately displayed to third parties. It has at its core the objectification and exploitation of those involved in its viewing and production. It is never an acceptable substitute to forming a relationship with another person.

It is never an acceptable substitute to good education about healthy relationships. Pornography is morally unacceptable as it offends the dignity of the human person

who is made in the image and likeness of God.

'Create in me a clean heart' is a very broad statement on the problem of pornography. I recommend this publication because the dignity of the human person is central to the teaching of the American Bishops. The pastoral response focuses on the ocean of God's mercy and the need for healing for those who are traumatised or afflicted by pornography. It is a positive effort to shed a light on the sin of pornography.

'Create in me a clean heart' is one of many great resources that exist to repair the damage caused by pornography. Another good support group is the Samson Society. The Samson Society is a support group for men who struggle with addiction to pornography <https://www.samsonociety.com/>. 'Strive 21

day detox' for men <https://www.strive21.com/>, or 'Arise 21 day detox' for women <https://www.covenanteyes.com/arise/>, are excellent resources for anyone who wants to take the first steps and start living porn free.

Covenant Eyes Screen Accountability Software <https://www.covenanteyes.com/> is another excellent resource that can be installed on devices to filter content. Finally, 'Good Pictures Bad Pictures' is an excellent resource for parents who want to porn proof their children. It outlines the 'Can Do Plan' as an appropriate response to exposure to pornography.

I have written this article to give hope to anyone who is struggling with pornography. Know that you are not alone and there are excellent resources that can assist on the journey to living a porn free life.

# A faith journey through Kerrytown



Margo Doherty, Melmount Parish.

BORN into a Catholic family in Donegal, practising the faith was part of my life, even at the age of eight years walking five miles to Sunday Mass. After moving to the North, marrying and becoming the mother of three daughters, my faith became much more important to me, and it deepened greatly after my first pilgrimage to Medjugorje in 1985 - when it was a very different place to what it is now. It has been a truly great blessing to continue to go on pilgrimage to this sacred place.

It was after my retirement that I made my first visit to Kerrytown, near Dungloe, in the late 1980s, and through encouragement from Brother Moloney, a Christian Brother with a great love of Kerrytown and who wrote the book 'Our Lady of the Rosses', that I became more involved in the shrine. This was to the extent that my husband and I made an appointment to visit the Bishop of Raphoe, who at that time was Bishop Philip Boyce, and he gave us permission to organise days of Prayer at Kerrytown.

So, for the last 32 years that is what I have been doing - always in honour of the special Feast days of our Blessed Mother.

Almost 87 years ago, on January 11, 1939, two sisters of the Ward Family said that they had seen Our Blessed Mother on the Mass Rock of Kerrytown, in Co Donegal, one winter evening. When the news spread that Our Lady had appeared on the Mass Rock of Kerrytown, many flocked to visit that site.

The family of Minnie and Jimmy Ward had been evicted to allow Glenveagh Estate to

be developed, and 47 families had been left homeless. Then a benefactor gave Jimmy Ward a piece of land on which to build his cottage and shelter his family. Now the cottage is a facility for pilgrims.

Of course, eventually the Parish Priest of Annagry in those early days of 1939 or 1940 was informed about the apparitions, and of the number of people coming to the Rock to pray. On one particular evening, the crowd was so big that some locals thought it best to go visit the Parochial house and invite Rev Fr McAteer (the 'Big Priest' as he was known) to the Rock to pray.

After some persuasion, he decided to come in the early hours of the morning. After prayers and discussions, as he was leaving the Rock the people heard him exclaim loudly "Oh! Oh!" and they knew that he had seen Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception. Fr McAteer later confirmed to the people and stated on his deathbed that he had seen Our Lady on the rock at Kerrytown, and from then until this day many healings have taken place.

People have converted back to their faith and all receive the greatest gift of Kerrytown through Our Lady's apparition in 1939. It is a special gift of peace to all who come on pilgrimage, individually or as part of a group, or on the special Days of Prayer.

By tradition, Days of Prayer are usually on the Sunday nearest to the date of the Feast Day as it suits pilgrims best. We usually start with the Divine Mercy at 3 pm, then the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary at the Rock, followed by the Sorrowful Mysteries as we process down the lane. We intercede for our bishops and priests, as well as for vocations to the priesthood. Pilgrims then return to the Rock, praying the final Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary for peace.

By tradition, from the very earliest days, we carry Our Blessed Mother's statue, which was donated by Dublin pilgrims in 1947, on a bier surrounded by roses. At the end of the Day of Prayer, we give to the pilgrims present one of the roses as a gift.

This is followed by a cup of tea and a biscuit before they return home.

On the way forward, we are planning to record any healings, Miracles, or spiritual conversions we come to hear about, which have taken place at Kerrytown. So, anyone aware of any of these please get in touch.

What have we but our faith when we lose loved ones or when tragedy strikes our family. It is then that "We trust in God" and need peace of heart. Come to Kerrytown and experience true peace.

Many changes have taken place at Kerrytown over the years, thanks to the kind donations and fundraising of pilgrims.

A field turned into a car park. A new roof on the house. A lean to for serving of tea and biscuits.

Good facilities in the house. A very special prayer room.

Almost all pilgrims write out their petitions and place them in the petition box to be brought to the Rock, at the feet of Our Blessed Mother for intercession on our special days of prayer.

The most recent additions have been the erection of the Divine Mercy picture and, before that, a statue of the Immaculate Heart of Mary placed on the spot of the apparitions by the family who had the miracle of sight restored to a grandmother who came to pray at Kerrytown.

It was on a First Saturday in February, in the early 90s, that the cross was placed on the top of the rock, and more recently the figure of Christ the Corpus was attached to the cross. This figure had been blessed by Fr Francisco, a Franciscan Friar of the Renewal.

In more recent years, the house has been painted and many new holy items donated to Kerrytown, including a beautiful statue of the Sacred Heart and one of Our Lady of Fatima. We have our special room of prayer and peace but, of course, it is at the Rock where our Blessed Mother wants us to come and pray.

We don't promote any other private revelations at Kerrytown - Kerrytown has to stand on its own - due to Our Lady's apparition at the rock over 87 years ago.

However, we do promote in prayer Don Bosco's Vision, St Carlo Acutis and Servant of God, Sr Clare Crockett.

There comes a time for all of us to pass the baton on to a younger generation. Though I will always be a pilgrim to Kerrytown as often as I can, the good Lord has inspired me to ask someone else to continue the work of promoting prayer at the rock at Kerrytown into the future.

So, a new year is to herald a new era. I will be passing on the responsibility for promoting the prayer at Kerrytown with gratitude to all who have helped at this very special shrine and Rock. Heartfelt thanks are due to so many people for their support and help at Kerrytown over the years. From the original committee of Anne, Bea, Kathleen, Nigel, Joe and Pat (RIP), who made it possible for the land to be bought all those years ago, and to our faithful volunteers of the early days: John; Frances; Sadie and Fionnuala. Thanks also right through to our current team of helpers in their blue hoodies: Ciaran; Philip; Helen; Josephine; Sarah; Jemma; Roseanne and mum Annie; Rosalee; Denis; and Cliona.

May Our Blessed Mother shower them with every grace and blessing for their dedication to her, including our special friend, Fr Thomas Cacciola.

## Dates of Prayer at Kerrytown Rock for 2026

*Sunday, January 11 - 87th anniversary.*

*Sunday, January 25 - John Bosco.*

*Sunday, February 8 - Our Lady of Lourdes.*

*Sunday, March 15 - St Patrick/St Joseph.*

*Sunday, May 10 - Our Lady of Fatima.*

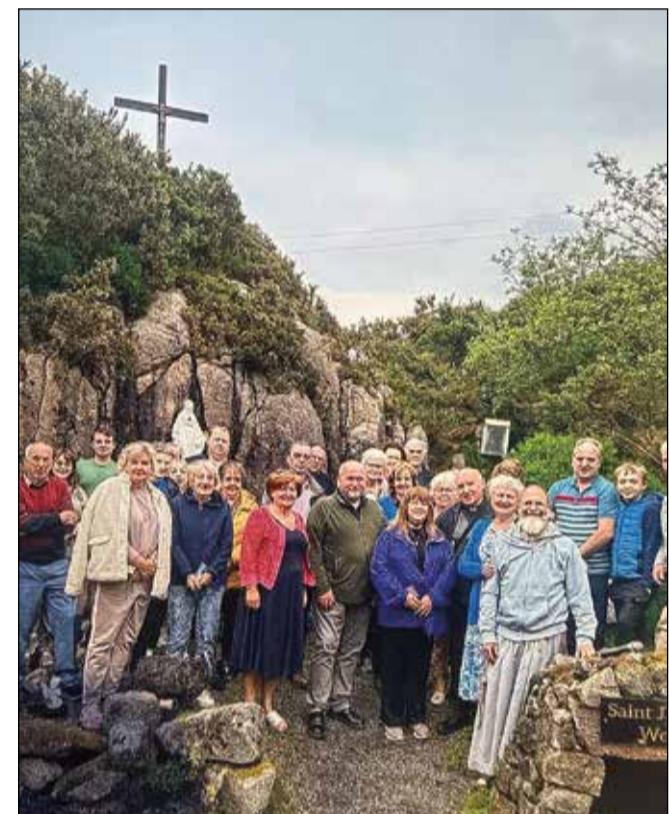
*Sunday, July 12 - Our Lady of Mount Carmel.*

*Sunday, August 16 - Assumption of Our Lady.*

*Sunday, September 6 - Our Lady's birthday.*

*Sunday, October 4 - Our Lady of the Rosary.*

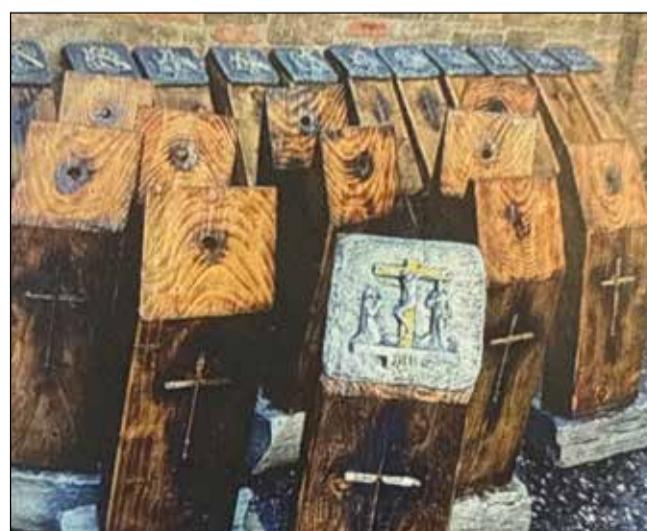
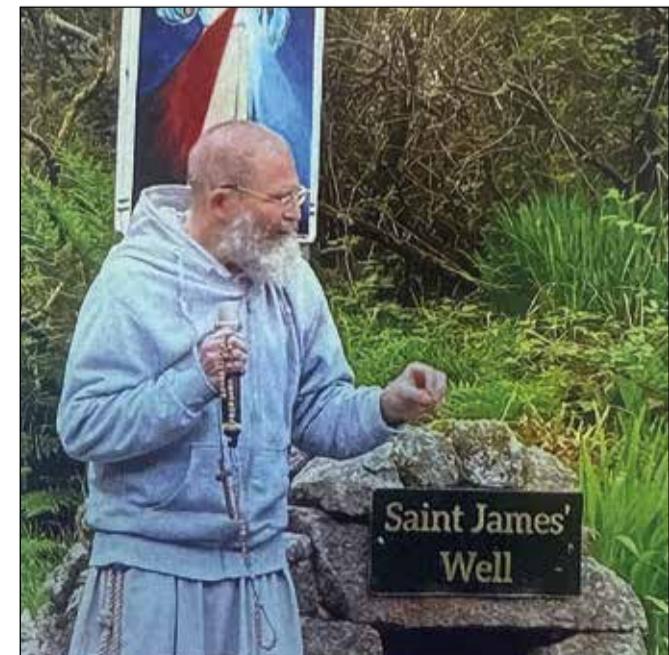
*Sunday, December 6 - The Immaculate Conception.*



## Don Bosco's Dream

*The Church will be safely anchored between The Two Pillars of The Eucharist and Our Blessed Mother*

*Pilgrim please pray for the fulfillment of God's Plan.*



# How is Catholic religion the right one when so many other religions claim the same? *by Deirdre McKeever*

IN our world today, where the ideology of relativism is widespread, people argue that even if what we believe as truth differs from what someone else believes as truth, they say both are truth. However, it is not possible to have two opposing truths about a single reality and call them both truths. Humans seek and deeply desire truth by their very nature. We don't wish to be led through life in a state of deception, darkness nor confusion. We want to know who we are, why are we here and where are we going. The question we ask is, where can we find truth, pure and unadulterated? We are pointed towards the Divine Person of Jesus Christ, Who is truth: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" - the Son of God and the Second Divine Person of the Holy Trinity.

It is amazing to ponder on how Jesus, when departing from this world, gave His beloved children His precious and beautiful gift of His Holy Catholic Church, through the loving, self-sacrifice of His Passion and Death on the Cross. His Catholic Church, which He alone established, is where the fullness of the truth resides, because as St Paul says, the Church is Christ's Mystical Body here on Earth and, before she was burned at the stake, St Joan of Arc exclaimed: "All I know is Jesus and the Church are the same thing!" Through the Church's teachings and the sacraments, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit deeply desire that each of us be immersed in their own eternal relationship of life, love and happiness - here now on earth and then in all its fullness in heaven. St Pope Paul VI said: "The Catholic Church is necessary for our salvation."

#### Growing up in the 60s-80s

I am the youngest of seven and our family lived across the road from our Parish Chapel. From earliest memories, I can remember the sound of the Church bells radiating a joyful sound into our kitchen. Even though the faith wasn't much talked about at home, I remember at the age of three being excited that, finally, I was deemed old enough to be brought across to the Sunday Mass with the rest of the family, and to the Sunday evening devotions. All happy memories.

It was commonly perceived that this was naturally and effortlessly all part of the rhythm of our parish lives, of the entire village. In my young mind, it was like going to God's house out of love and obedience to Him, as if the whole week was pointing towards this momentous occasion. After Mass, the revitalised parishioners left with a spring in their step and a friendly chat, as they went

home to spend their Sundays with their families and begin the new week. Fortnightly, on Saturday mornings, we went to confessions, with usually two priests in attendance and several pews filled, and a peaceful, sacred atmosphere. On Saturday nights, my siblings and I each took our turn with the chore of polishing everyone's shoes for Sunday Mass the next morning, when we would be dressed in our Sunday best!

During these formative years, there was a sense of a deep unspoken conviction amongst the parishioners that attending all the sacraments was not optional, or an extra add on to our

Christian lives, but as essential - if not more essential - as the air we breathed and the food we ate.

#### Be like a little child

Jesus calls each of us to fully believe in His teachings within His Church, because it is His own loving instructions and not some human opinion. Every morning, we are faced with this choice: Are we prepared to accept Jesus' gift of His Church and His teachings wholly? Or are we accepting only those practices and teachings that fit in well with our own circumstances, our family and our friends' approval, rather than seeking to please God first? Do we avoid trying to find out the beautiful truth that God longs to tell us from His heart, about such issues as abortion, immigration and sexuality? Or do we rather think it is my opinion that matters or, perhaps, what the mass media portrays - or even decide what we think is right or wrong for ourselves and live accordingly, rather than seeking first to know what Christ Himself teaches us about Christian moral living, which we can find in the Catholic Catechism and in Sacred Scripture?

In Matthew 18, Christ lovingly invites each of us to change and become like little children: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven." We are to fully believe and trust Christ's own Word in His Church, like a little child would fully believe and trust what his earthly father says to him. Just as a doting father would tell his little son not to run out in front of oncoming traffic after his ball, even more so God our Heavenly Father, who deeply loves each one of us personally and collectively beyond all understanding, tells us through the Holy Catholic Church all His loving and saving instructions, so we can avoid eternal death. His Fatherly words rather lead us into the fullness of life, freedom and happiness in Him, here now on Earth and then

fully in Heaven! For Jesus said: "The thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (Jn 10).

Sr Clare Crockett invites each of us to go all in for God - "All or nothing" - to fully believe, trust and obey Him - as Mary, our Mother, did, who is our perfect role model in faith and obedience. She who held nothing back from the Father, so became the worthy and sublime vessel by which Christ Our Saviour would enter the world.

#### The watchmaker

Think of wind-up watches, with all their intricate, delicate, minute parts and complex mechanics all working in a synchronised harmony. When it breaks down, where would we bring it to be fixed? To a car mechanic? A baker? Dentist? None of these. We would bring it to a watchmaker, who makes watches, who knows exactly how a watch works

**“**  
Jesus calls each of us to fully believe in His teachings within His Church, because it is His own loving instructions and not some human opinion.  
**”**

at its optimum, so he can fix it and make all the parts work in harmony again. This restores the watch once more to its fullness of purpose, of telling the time correctly. Likewise, when we become spiritually wounded, broken, or confused, through our sins or by the sins inflicted on us by others, we go to our Heavenly Father, our Creator, Christ our Redeemer and the Holy Spirit our Sanctifier - through the Church, which Pope Francis called a "Field Hospital" for the wounded. Here we are healed in Confessions, nourished by the Holy Eucharist and, through the Church's sacraments and teachings, in the workings and promptings of the Holy Spirit, we are made whole, renewed and unified in Christ, to be sent out in His love, joy and peace again, on our pilgrim journey through life and in our fullness of purpose. Which is why St Catherine of Sienna says: "If you be who you are meant to be, you will set the world on fire!"

#### Fullness of Truth

How can we say that the fullness of truth resides within the Catholic Church and not in other religions?

Before Jesus ascended to the Father, He promised His 12

Apostles that He would send the Advocate (Holy Spirit) who would lead them into all the truth (Jn 16:7,13). Since Jesus is Truth, His promises are never broken. The Holy Spirit came down upon the Apostles in the Upper Room at Pentecost, as in tongues of fire; filling them with the Holy Spirit so to lead the Church which He established into all the truth down the ages. Our Lady, the Spouse of the Holy Spirit, was amongst them, fervently interceding for the Holy Spirit's coming; She who is the Mother of the Church.

The Holy Spirit, down the ages since Pentecost, gives guidance and direction to all the Bishops (Teaching Office of the Church), who gather together in prayer from around the world, during the 21 ecumenical councils, from the Council of Nicea (325) to our present day Second Vatican Council (1962-65), and also to all those in the future. By the promised presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit at each ecumenical council, the Church Doctrine is kept whole, safe, intact and without error, so it can be handed down to each new generation in all its truth, vigour, fullness and beauty.

The Church teaches that no human being - pope, bishop, priest or lay person - has the authority to put their own opinion above what God, our loving Father, has divinely revealed to us through the prophets of the Old Testament, and through Christ and the Apostles of the New Testament, which is recorded in Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. All Divine Revelation, which Christ's flock are called to fully believe, ended after the last Apostle (John) died, so there has not been, nor is there to be, further Divine revelation from then to the end of time. The Church can receive, however, private revelation, which the Mystics and the saints receive, but the faithful do not have to fully believe in these. Rather, those private revelations that are Church approved help the faithful to have a better and deeper understanding of the mysteries of the faith.

The 4,500 non-Catholic Christian denominations in the world, that are all founded by human beings and have subtle differences between them in their doctrine, have truth in them, but not its fullness. Most especially, in today's mass media and social digital platforms, it is vital to know what the Church actually teaches and not what the world says it teaches, which often can be in error, so we can filter through all the YouTube videos, etc, and know what is truth and what is not. It is only when we peer deep into the Church's own awesome

teachings that we become enthralled, and even dazzled, by the immense love, treasures, truth, abundant gifts and beauty that lie within it, only for our benefit, that transcends us, builds us up, restores, frees and consoles us, beyond all imaginings.

Jesus established the structure of His Catholic Church, before He ascended to the right hand of the Father.

#### Jesus assigned our first Pope

Jesus appointed the first pope, Peter, and his successors, to be the Head Steward of His Church, for every age. In Matthew 16, Jesus said: "You are Peter and on this rock I will build My Church...I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on Earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on Earth, will be loosed in Heaven."

Just as earthly institutions have a Head, such as the headmaster of a school or a nursing sister of a hospital ward, so too, Jesus wishes us to have one apostle to be the earthly head of His Church. His divinely appointed chief shepherd is to act in the place of Him, when He would be ascended to the Father.

The faithful are called to honour and revere the Chair of Peter, which Christ gave to us, who is not above Jesus and His teachings but is commanded to be the watchful servant; to guard Christ's Word and to protect and feed His flock.

Jesus promised that no matter what evil exists in the world, His Church would always exist and be victoriously triumphant against it, to the end of time! "The gates of Hades will not prevail against it." (Mt 16:18)

#### Jesus institutes the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Although it is God alone who forgives sins, Jesus gave His own power and authority to His Apostles, their successors and helper priests to forgive or to retain sins: "He breathed on them and said to them, receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." (Jn 20:22-23)

Therefore, in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the priest has Christ's authority to say: "I absolve you from your sins, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Order of Penance).

For Catholics to know that their sins are completely forgiven and wiped away by our merciful God at the Sacrament of Reconciliation, so they can become a completely new person again in Christ - "that you put off the old man...and put on the new man" (Eph 4) - is an unspeakable gift. Pope St John



Deirdre McKeever, Limavady.

Paul II went to confessions daily. St Pio recommended that we attend this sacrament at least every 11 days. Proverbs says that a righteous man sins at least seven times a day, and Jesus said, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 Jn 1:8).

A Catholic priest was once showing a Protestant minister, who had recently moved to the town, around his parish Catholic Church. As they were walking past the confessional, he turned around to the priest and said, "This is something that the Catholic Church got right!" There is such peace of mind, soul and heart knowing that we are fully cleansed of our sins, on a regular basis, keeping us in right relationship with the Lord and being in a state of grace, here and now and, most importantly, for our day of judgement.

#### Jesus institutes Holy Sacrifice of Mass at same time as Catholic Priesthood

At the Last Supper, Jesus established, at one and the same time, His most precious gift of His Body and Blood and the ministerial priesthood of the New Covenant, to replace the sacrifice and the priesthood of the Old Covenant, when He said: "This is My Body, this is My Blood, which will be given up for you" (Lk 22:19, Mt 26:28).

Jesus did not say, this is a sign, a symbol, or it is like My Body and Blood. He said, It is His Body and Blood. This is His Real Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity, made fully present for each of us for our pilgrim journey through life. The Church has always taken seriously His Words and their power, just as God said in Genesis 1, "Let there be light and there was light". As Catholics, the Church calls us to fully believe Christ's teachings, by being like little children and by faith, even if we find these mysteries too difficult to understand.

The Bread of life [Holy

**continued from page 22**

Eucharist] discourse, in Jn 6, given by Our Lord, is the only recorded teaching of Jesus in the Bible where droves of His disciples left and stopped following Him because they found His teaching too difficult to accept. Yet, Jesus didn't change or water down His Words to stop them, rather He was even more affirming in His message about the Holy Eucharist being His real flesh and real blood, His full and Real Presence.

A Catholic research study was recently conducted by the Pew Research Centre in America, which unfortunately reveals that only 31% of Catholics believe in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist; the remaining 69% were of the classical Protestant belief that the host is only a sign, or symbol of Our Lord Jesus Christ. During the Church schism in the 1500s, the Council of Trent (1545-1563) set out to address and counteract the circulating false heresies that were leading some of Christ's flock into error, and astray from the true teachings of Jesus Christ in His Church.

The Holy Eucharist, Christ's Full and Real Presence here on Earth, is the source and summit of the whole Christian life (Catholic Catechism 1324). As believing Catholics, we are not permitted to receive the bread at non-Catholic Christian celebrations, where the Real Presence is not present, since this would be bearing false witness that would lead our fellow Christian brothers and sisters into error. Christ earnestly prayed to

the Father, before He ascended, that His children would all belong to the one flock: "That they may all be one, as You Father are in Me and I am in You, may they also be in us" (Jn 17). Ecumenism is a vital mission of the Church. It is to reach out to our fellow Christian brothers and sisters in Christ to help create fellowship, mutual understanding and unity in truth, without compromising the truth.

**The Catholic Priesthood**

At the Last Supper, Jesus also instituted His Priesthood of the New Covenant, when He commanded His Apostles, which are today our pope, the bishops and their helper priests: "Do this in memory of Me" (1 Cor 11:24).

It is Christ's ministerial priesthood alone who are commanded by Jesus to offer up the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, in the place and person of Him, perpetuated to the end of time. By the power of Christ's own Word, spoken through the priest's lips, Jesus lavishes upon us the majestic miracle of The Real Presence of His Body and Blood at every Mass and at every age.

For Jesus said before He ascended: "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." (Jn 14:18) In the little white Host, Jesus makes Himself very vulnerable for us so that we can consume Him often, if we are in a state of grace. The Early Church Fathers say that, during receiving Our Lord in Holy Communion, we are in much deeper intimacy and friendship with Him than were His apostles and disciples

who physically walked the earth with Him!

Each priestly vocation is especially chosen by God in the depths of His loving heart, from before the foundation of the world. It is not a decision made by themselves, nor inferred upon them by men, but is chosen for them, from all eternity by God the Father, through Jesus His Son and in the love of the Holy Spirit (Lk 6:12-16).

**Valid consecration**

Why only the Catholic

laying on of the bishop's hands and the Consecration Prayer. The Holy Spirit places in them an interior, unerasable mark, which endows them with Christ's own Sacred power; in Latin: 'sacra potestas' (Lumen Gentium 21, Catechism of the Catholic Church 1538). By Christ's own sacred power and not their own, they make the daily miracle of the Holy Eucharist at every Mass and sanctify God's people through the Church's sacraments.

St John Chrysostom (349-407) said: "Even the angels and



Priesthood can validly consecrate the Holy Eucharist and provide the Catholic Sacraments.

The pope, the bishops and the priests of the Roman rite, have all been endowed with the sacred power and the authority of Christ Jesus, by virtue of their Ordination, during the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Christ's own power is bestowed upon them by the direct and unbroken line of succession, from the time of the Apostles right up to now, by the

archangels have not been invested with this power!" And St John Vianney said: "See the power of the priest, the priest's tongue makes God out of a piece of bread; this is greater than creating the world!"

**Catholic Faith foremost a deep relationship**

Fr Boniface Patrick Hicks, a Benedictine Monk, who has written books on intimacy with God and other good works, in

the service of the Church, echoes the words of Pope St John Paul II when he says, "A Christian at risk is one who maybe ticking all the boxes but only has a shallow prayer life." While it is right and good to attend all the sacraments, do all the devotions and strive to obey all the Church teachings, Jesus, however, deeply desires that we go further and

seek an ever-deeper knowledge of Him, so that we can find out who He wants to be for us and what all His loving plans and awesome promises are that He has in store for us. And, to know who we are in Him, which is where we alone find our true identity, rather than in some human ideology.

If, in our close earthly relationships, we converse regularly, look each other in the eye, repeatedly make ourselves present and be intent to get to know one another at an ever-deeper level, by listening to what they have to say to us, then we could ask, is it not even more important that we seek to have an even deeper intimacy, knowledge and friendship with the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity, who

have invited us to have an eternal intimate and loving relationship with Them, here now on Earth and then fully in Heaven.

The saints let us know how to do this. St Therese of Lisieux says that when we peer into Sacred Scripture, we dive into Jesus' Most Sacred Heart and see the burning abyss of flames, of His Divine and merciful love and His unquenchable thirst for love and for souls. Scripture reveals to us all

Jesus' merciful deeds, wonderful miracles, loving teachings and awesome promises. "How can we love someone, if we first don't get to know them?" St Catherine of Sienna asks, and St Jerome says: "Ignorance of Scripture, is ignorance of Christ."

Within Catholic tradition, there are many excellent beautiful ways to dive deeper into Jesus' own Heart through Sacred Scripture, such as by the practice of Lectio Divina and Catholic Scripture Study. By meditating on Christ's Word, we are also sanctified and transformed into other 'Christs', by the loving power and action of the Holy Spirit, in a mystical way. Every human situation is written about in Sacred Scripture, that teaches us how to live it, in Christ's way.

On pondering that Jesus established for us His vessel par excellence, His Catholic Church, so we can have a safe, easy and direct passage home to the Father, we can't help but be in awe and reverence of such a magnificent gift that contains everything possible and more, only for the sake of our salvation! God has pulled out all the stops in His loving, abundant and infinite generosity, so to make us all into saints. The decision lies within each one of us today - are we prepared to stay the course and onboard His wonderful ship?

*(Deirdre is from the Parish of Limavady and has a Bachelor of Divinity through the Maryvale Institute.)*

## The Earl v The Queen by Dr Seán Beattie

ONE of the last great wars that took place in Ulster before the Plantation was the Nine Years' War (1594-1603). It was a last-ditch assault against the power of Tudor England, led by Elizabeth I. Her chief opponent was the Earl of Tyrone, Hugh O'Neill (1550-1616), supported by the great Chieftains of the North. O'Neill had most of the northern half of the country under his control towards the end of the 16th century. Some of the battles of this war have gone down in folklore as the most memorable in Irish history: the Battle of the Yellow Ford, to name but one.

**A War of Religion?**

The Nine Years' War was a series of military engagements of significant importance, but behind the conflict lay deeply-held religious beliefs on both sides. It could easily be seen as a war of religion, if O'Neill's objectives are anything to go by. The majority of his demands were of a religious nature, as if O'Neill was a man of great religious principles whose role was to take a stand on behalf of the Christian world.

Historians have commented that Hugh O'Neill was not a particularly religious man at the start of the Nine Years' War. By the time the War ended, however, his religion came to mean much more to him. At

**Ballinascreen**

Take the parish of Ballinascreen as an example. O'Neill called on the men of the parish to take up arms in his cause. He demanded constant levies. Sir Arthur Chichester, Lord Deputy of Ireland, was in no doubt about his influence, as recorded in the 'Calendar of State Papers' (Ireland, 1606-08): "It may be taken as certain that every mother's son of them will go into rebellion if any foreign assistance...should arrive.

They are all filled with treachery and malice against the English which can neither be reclaimed with time nor appeased with benefits; (they are) prompt to ruin themselves and others; easily abused and carried away by the venomous breath of their priests; and it is no less difficult to contain them long in peace, honest liberty and welfare, than it is to subject a prudent free nation into servitude and slavery."

The parish of Ballinascreen was at the forefront of the Nine Years' War. By the time the War ended, however, his religion came to mean much more to him. At

first, he saw it as a bond that might hold his followers together, but as he drew near the end of his days, he regarded it as a cause worth dying for. The discipline he imposed on his soldiers ensured that he led one of the most formidable armies to face Elizabeth 1.

**The Treaty of Mellifont 1603**

That was a year after the Battle of Kinsale. O'Neill knew that there was no hope. He submitted to the Crown at the Treaty of Mellifont. What he did not know on submission was that the Queen was already dead. Had he known, he probably would not have capitulated and the Flight of the Earls (1607) might never have taken place.

It was the end of an era for the people of Ballinascreen. The inhabitants, however, had much to be thankful for. They had escaped the destruction that Mountjoy had inflicted elsewhere in Ulster. The devastation that scorched the province has gone down in folklore: the destruction of crops leading to widespread starvation and the squalid efforts of the sick and dying to obtain food.

**The Flight of the Earls 1607**

In 1607, Hugh O'Neill was a broken man, worn out by incessant warfare. The Flight of the Earls from Lough Swilly in that year brought a

measure of escape.

Historians have speculated about what life in Ballinascreen would have been like had O'Neill been victorious. It is generally agreed that he would have been a harsh taskmaster. Even in exile, he claimed the right to present to certain benefices in Derry and Armagh on the basis that his ancestors had a right to them. It was the desperate voice of a humiliated leader. He claimed he had the right to present to the rectory and vicarage of Ballinascreen, and to appoint priests to them. The Pope listened to his pleas, but Rome knew full well that O'Neill's writ was dead in the water, not just in Ballinascreen but throughout Ulster and across Ireland.

Hugh O'Neill died in Rome on July 20, 1616, and he was buried in the Church of San Pietro in great pomp and ceremony, beside his son. His tomb is marked with the words, D. O. M. Hic Quiescunt, Ugonis, Principis, O'Neil, Ossa. At time of writing, plans are afoot to erect a statue in his honour in Dungannon. Whether that project will come to fruition or not, his place in Irish history is assured as one of the greatest leaders, despite his flaws, that Ireland has ever produced.



Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, was defeated by the armies of Elizabeth I. He fled to Rome in the Flight of the Earls from Lough Swilly, Co Donegal, in 1607.

## Ruach...Breath of the Spirit

# Take care not to be deceived by Fr Eamonn Kelly



Jesus said, 'Take care not to be deceived.' God has provided us with the Spirit of Truth. Ask that Holy Spirit for guidance. Jesus prayed a lot in His day. We can imagine that He was praying for guidance. If Jesus wanted help, it is good for us to seek help also.

Jesus said, 'Take care not to be deceived.' The houses being built today will, one day, stand in ruins. Just like many of the buildings people built in bygone days, the work of today will be a faded and fading memory. The human being is much more than the house or building or car of painted-on beauty.

Jesus said, 'Take care not to be deceived.' There are a lot of false ideas about. Many people shout about bits of half-truths, but little of what is shouted is true. Many experts have only a limited knowledge, but they pretend to know more than they do. Think about what you accept to be true. Do not be too quick to give your approval to all that you hear. Look at the influencers of today. Wake up to reality. Live in truth.

Jesus said, 'Take care not to be deceived.' Time moves on. It waits for no one. It waits for nothing. Yesterday is gone, never to be repeated. Last year has already begun to become hazy in our memories. In seconds, minutes, hours, days and weeks, life drifts by and cannot be paused. There is no stopping the clock.

Jesus said, 'Take care not to be deceived.' In our time, we are seeing many of the wars, revolutions and upheavals that Jesus spoke of. The only things that matter are relationships, faith and belief in Jesus Christ. Jesus has gone to the Cross to redeem us. That redemption is His gift to you and I. Is the gift still wrapped up or is it opened? We are in a time for action.

Jesus said, 'Take care not to be deceived.' We, as human beings, are great and wonderful and beautiful and brilliant. But we are also wounded and hurt and fragile and

cracked. We are sinners, but we are redeemed and loved sinners. Know your place. Take your place. Live for Jesus.

Jesus said, 'Take care not to be deceived.' Jesus picked very ordinary people to be His companions. People from all sorts of backgrounds. Now, He calls us. To leave everything. To follow Him. We need the Holy Spirit to help us repent, believe and live. We need God's Power to see how we are loved and how we are to love.

Jesus said, 'Take care not to be deceived.' We are in relationship with God and God is looking for a

deepening of that relationship. We are made for more than a passing fling or a bigger bank balance. We are made for betterment of the world and of the people around us. Take care not to be deceived. Don't lower the standard.

Jesus said, 'Take care not to be

deceived.' Now is the time to be alive with truth. You have read. You have seen. You have heard. It is time to take the Spirit of God into the heart at a new level and walk with your God. It is time to claim the victory. It is time to take care and not be deceived.

Omagh Charismatic Prayer Group invites you to

### Life in the Spirit

Seminars 2026

**Sacred Heart Church**  
Omagh, Co.Tyrone  
Accessible online at [www.drumraghparish.com](http://www.drumraghparish.com)

**Thursday 7.30pm Holy Mass**  
**Grace filled Lenten Journey**

19th February	God's Love	Fr John Keane
26th February	Salvation	Fr Eamonn Kelly
5th March	New Life	Fr Barney McAleer
12th March	Receiving God's Gifts	Fr Peter McAnenly
19th March	Baptism in the Spirit	Fr Joseph Mary Deane CFR Derry
26th March	Growth & Transformation	Fr Owen Gorman

*"Preach the Gospel at all times, if necessary use words." St. Francis*

**LIFE IN THE SPIRIT**

**SEMINARS**  
**ST PIO HOUSE, GALLIAGH, THREE PATRONS PARISH, DERRY**

**The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control.. Galatians 5:22-23**

**SPEAKERS**

FR JOSEPH MARY, FR JOHN KEANE, MARGARET FRISL, FR JAMES O'REILLY, FR EAMONN KELLY, BR THOMAS PAUL, FR ANTONIO MARIA

**WHAT IS LIFE IN THE SPIRIT?**

IT IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO DEEPEN IN YOUR FAITH AND TO ACTIVATE THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT YOU RECEIVED IN THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM.

Tuesday Evenings 7-9pm  
Commencing 13 Jan 2026  
Ending 24 Feb 2026

7pm Mass available in St Joseph's Church, Galliagh, Derry

**ST PIO HOUSE HALL**  
7:30pm - 9.00pm

## Newtownstewart News

### Slieve na Mon residents enjoy Newtownstewart Legion's Christmas visit



The Legion of Mary's McNamee, Fr Roland Colhoun, Nuala Glass, Sinead McKenna. The Legion members visit Slieve na Mon Nursing Home, Omagh, on December 29, 2025. Included are Yvonne McKenna, Majella



### Unveiling of 1972 crucifix

Fr Roland Colhoun with craftsman, Steven Moore, who restored a 53-year-old pine crucifix and enhanced it with a mahogany sub-cross for the parish Oratory in Newtownstewart. The crucifix, from the original Oratory (1972),

was unveiled by Alfie as the final event of the unique year, 2025. The Jubilee of Hope marked the 350th anniversary of the apparitions of the Sacred Heart (1675), and the Silver Jubilee of the Oratory of Mary Mother of God (2000), in Newtownstewart, Co Tyrone.

### New arch for Oratory Tabernacle



Fr Roland Colhoun in Newtownstewart Oratory with Faolan Patton (P7), who unveiled the new mahogany arch surmounting the tabernacle on Sunday, December 21, 2025. It is one of the enhancements of the Oratory for its Silver Jubilee (2000-2025).

## Vocations News

# Christmas Vocations celebration

OUR Lady of Lourdes Church, in Steelstown, was the venue on Tuesday, December 30, for Evening Prayer (Vespers) celebrated by Bishop McKeown and members of the Diocesan Vocations Council, along with some of our diocesan seminarians and a number of the men who are currently discerning their vocation.

Vespers began with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and concluded with Benediction.

Afterwards, the group moved to The Belfray Country Hotel, where Bishop McKeown hosted a Christmas dinner.

The gathering was an

opportunity to bid 'Bon voyage' to Kieran Burns and Jim Maley, as they made their final preparations to fly to Salamanca to begin their propaedeutic course, and to Jamie McDaid prior to his departure for Rome to take the Catholic Studies programme at the Pontifical Irish College.

The Vocations' Directors of the northern province are organising the annual Vocations Retreat weekend at Drumalis, Larne, from March 6-8.

Booking details and other information will be posted on the Diocesan website and published in parish bulletins/websites.



**DISCERNMENT RETREAT FOR THE DIOCESAN PRIESTHOOD**

**SAVE THE DATE: MARCH 6-8, 2026**  
**DRUMALIS, LARNE**

## Vocations Holy Hour

THERE will be a Holy Hour for Vocations to the diocesan priesthood in St Mary's Church, Bellaghy, on Thursday, January 29, at 7 pm; in St Columb's Church, Waterside, on Tuesday, February 17, with Mass at 7.30 pm, followed

by a Holy Hour from 8-9 pm; and in St Oliver Plunkett's Church, Clady (Greenlough) on Thursday 26 February at 7 pm.

Anyone who can't attend in person can join in the prayers via the respective parish webcams.

## Pope's monthly intention

*The Holy Father has asked for prayer during January for:*

**Prayer with the Word of God:**  
Let us pray that praying with the Word of God be nourishment for our lives and a source of hope in our communities, helping us to build a more fraternal and missionary Church.

## 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:

Fr Alex Anderson (Jan 1st)

Fr Patrick Arkinson (2nd)  
Fr Patrick Baker (3rd)  
Fr Declan Boland (4th)  
Fr Eugene Boland (5th)  
Fr Francis Bradley (6th)  
Fr Manus Bradley (7th)  
All Priests (8th)  
Fr Brian Brady (9th)  
All Priests (10th)  
Fr Thomas Canning (11th)  
Fr Michael Canny (12th)  
All Priests (13th)  
All Priests (14th)  
Fr James Devine (15th)  
Fr Colum Clerkin (16th)  
Fr Roland Colhoun (17th)  
Fr Michael Collins (18th)  
All Priests (19th)  
Fr Patrick Crilly (20th)  
Fr Brendan Crowley (21st)  
All Priests (22nd)  
All Priests (23rd)



All Priests (24th)  
All Priests (25th)  
All priests (26th)  
Fr Peter Devlin (27th)  
Fr Fintan Duggin (28th)  
Fr Brendan Doherty (29th)  
Fr Shaun Doherty (30th)  
All priests (31st)

# Island Silent Retreat with Home of the Mother

ON the weekend of Divine Mercy Sunday, Servant Priests and Sisters of the Home of the Mother, the Order of Servant of God, Sr Clare Crockett, will be leading a Silent Retreat on St Patrick's Island, Lough Derg.

While silent, this retreat from Friday, April 10 to Monday, April 13, will also be guided. There will be a series of meditations and talks over the course of the weekend led by the Servant Priests of the Home of the Mother, as well as time for Confession, Rosary, Adoration, Holy Mass, and free time to reflect, read and pray.

Retreatants will have exclusive use of the island, which is a uniquely peaceful setting for a silent retreat, and they are asked to bring a Bible, notebook and

pen, as well as suitable clothes and footwear for walking around the island, and an alarm clock and watch.

It is also important to bring your own bedding - sheets/sleeping bag, duvets, pillow etc - and towels.

The cost of €260 includes full board, meals, and accommodation. For further information contact: Sr Mary Donovan - hmactivitiesireland@gmail.com (085 876 3564); or Rory O'Donnell - odonnellphotography@gmail.com (086 823 1717).

To sign up please fill out the form at the following link:

<https://forms.gle/v5xbRrRQC6ZRvtgZ6>

## Silent Retreat

Friday April 10th - Monday April 13th 2026  
Led by the Servant Priests of the Home of the Mother



### St. Patrick's Island - Lough Derg, Donegal

Exclusive use of the island — a uniquely peaceful setting for a silent retreat. Experience a profound encounter with Christ through silence, prayer, and spiritual renewal.



Home of the Mother

#### What to Expect

Daily spiritual exercises  
Confession available  
Rosary and guided prayer

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament  
Holy Mass celebrated each day  
Time for silence, reflection, and personal prayer

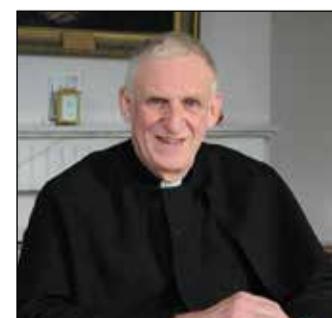
**Full board meals and accommodation included: €260**

*"Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." — 1 Samuel 3:10*

## Great sadness with passing of Father Eugene Hasson

THERE was great sadness across the Diocese with the passing of Fr Eugene Hasson on January 12, particularly in the Drumragh Parish where he had served as parish priest, and other parishes he had ministered in, and in his home town of Dungiven.

A tribute to Fr Eugene will be featured in the February edition. May he rest in peace.



# Parish Post-its

## Aghyaran

**Weekend Mass Times:** 7.30 pm Vigil, and 11 am.

## Ardstraw East

### (Newtownstewart)

**Zoom Catechism:** All are welcome to join Catechism by Zoom on Mondays, from 7.30-8.15 pm. Email: ardstraweast@derrydiocese.org to get the link. Learn how to answer hard questions.

**Pope John Paul II Award** – Sessions for Pope John Paul II Award participants take place on Thursdays at 6.30 pm, in the Oratory of Mary, Mother of God.

**Holy Hour:** 6.30 pm, Thursdays, Oratory of Mary, Mother of God.

**Weekend Mass Times:** 11.30 am, St Eugene's Glenock.

## Badoney Lower

### (Gortin-Rouskey)

**Adoration:** Adoration takes places in St Patrick's Gortin, after the 12 noon Mass until 5 pm on Tuesdays, and in St Mary's, Rouskey, after 7.30 pm Mass on Wednesdays, with an opportunity for Confession, until 9 pm.

**Weekend Mass Times:** 7.30 pm Vigil, St Patrick's, Gortin; 10 am, St Mary's, Rouskey.

## Badoney Upper

### (Plumbridge-Cranagh)

**Adoration & Confession:** Adoration and Confessions take place in St Patrick's Cranagh after the 7.30 pm

Wednesday evening Mass, until 9 pm, and after the 12 noon Mass on Saturdays in Plumbridge.

**Confessions:** Confessions are available after 11 am Mass on Saturdays in Sacred Heart Church, Plumbridge, and after the 7.30 pm Saturday Vigil Mass in St Patrick's Church, Cranagh.

**Weekend Mass Times:** 7.30 pm Vigil, St Patrick's Cranagh; 10 am, Sacred Heart Plumbridge.

## Ballinascreen

**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.

**Adoration:** Eucharistic Adoration takes place in Holy Rosary Church on the First Mondays from 12 noon until 7.30 pm.

**Confessions:** Holy Rosary Church every Saturday at 5.30 pm, before the Vigil Mass.

**Weekend Mass Times:** 6 pm Vigil, Holy Rosary; 9 am in St Columba's Straw; 11 am in St Patrick's, Sixtowns; 12 noon in St Eugene's, Moneyneena.

## 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.

**Confessions:** Saturdays from 10.30-11.30 am & 5.15-5.50 pm; Tues & Thurs 6.45-7.10 pm.

**Weekend Mass Times:** 6 pm Vigil; and 9.30 am, 11 am, and 12.30 pm on Sunday.

## Banagher

**St Brigid Cross-making:** Come along to Learmount Community Centre on Wednesday, January 28, from 7-9 pm, and join in making St Brigid crosses. The fee of £5 per person includes materials. To book/further information, telephone 028 777 81871 or email: admin@learmountgroup.org.

**Adoration & Chaplet:** Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and Divine Mercy Chaplet take place in St Mary's Church, Altinure, Thursdays, 10.30-11.30 am; St Joseph's Church, Fincairn, on Fridays, 10-11 am.

**Confessions:** St Mary's

Church, Altinure, Thursday 10.30 am; St Joseph's Church, Fincairn, Friday 10 am & Saturday 6.30 pm.

**Weekend Mass Times:** 7 pm Vigil in St Joseph's Church, Fincairn, 10.30 am in St Mary's Church, Altinure, and 12 noon in St Peter's & St Paul's Church, Foreglen.

## Bellaghy

**Lenten Retreat:** The Parishes of Bellaghy & Greenlough are having a combined Lenten Programme in memory of Sr Clare Crockett's 10th Anniversary. It will commence on Thursday, February 12, with an information night, followed by weekly prayer nights from February 19 to March 26. The prayer nights will include informal small group discussion reflecting on spiritual lessons from Sr Clare and application to our own daily lives. Guest speakers will attend the information night who have been involved in Sr Clare's life and legacy. Come along to Bellaghy Church at 7.30 pm on Thursday, February 12, to hear more.

**Adoration:** Fridays from 10 am-8 pm (Rosary at 7.30 pm).

**Weekend Mass Times:** 5.30 pm Vigil livestreamed to Bellaghy from St Oliver Plunkett's Church, Greenlough; 10.15 am in Ballyscullion, and 11.30 am in Bellaghy.

## Buncrana

**Burt Concert:** Irish Country Music singer, Michael English, will perform in concert at St Aengus' Church, Burt, on Sunday, February 22. All profits will go towards the fund for the installation of a new heating system there. Tickets are priced €30 and available from the parish offices in both Fahan and Buncrana. Otherwise contact Sinead on 086 1673669 or Siobhan on +44 759 927 8823.

**Adoration:** Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament now takes place in St Mary's Oratory every Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday, 6 am-10 pm, Fridays, 6am-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.

**Weekend Mass Times:** St Mary's Oratory – Vigil 4.30 pm, 8.30 am and 12.30 pm; St Mary's Cockhill – 11am; Star of the Sea, Desertegey – 9.45 am.

**Weekend Mass Times:** 6.30 pm Vigil, 12 noon, Christ The King, Strathroy; 9 & 11 am, St Mary's, Killyclogher.

## Burt, Inch & Fahan

**Adoration:** Adoration in St Mura's Parish Church, Fahan, takes place each Friday after 10 am Mass.

**Weekend Mass Times:** 6.30 pm Vigil, 10.15 am, St Aengus' Burt; 9 am, Our Lady of Lourdes, Inch; 11.30 am, St Mura's, Fahan.

## Cappagh (Killyclogher)

**Eucharistic Adoration:** Eucharistic Adoration takes place on Wednesday from 8-9 pm in Christ the King, Strathroy, concluding with Night Prayer, and on Sunday from 6-7 pm, in Christ the King, with Devotions and Benediction.

**Rosary:** The Rosary is prayed in St Mary's Church, Killyclogher, Monday-Saturday at 9.15 am, and in Corpus Christi, Mountfield every Thursday evening at 8 pm.

**Legion of Mary:** Legion of Mary meets every Monday after 10 am Mass in St Mary's Church, Killyclogher. New members always welcome.

Anyone wishing to welcome the Pilgrim Statue of Our Lady into your home and pray the Rosary is asked to contact Rosaleen on 07917421119 to make arrangements with the Legion of Mary, Cappagh Group.

**St Pio Novena Devotions:** Novena devotions through the intercession of St Padre Pio take place on the first Wednesday of the month in Christ the King Church, Strathroy. Rosary at 7 pm, followed by Mass as 7.30 pm. Veneration and blessing with relic will be available after Mass.

**Stations of the Cross:** The Stations are prayed on Fridays at 3 pm in St Mary's Killyclogher.

**Confessions:** Confessions

are heard on Saturdays after 10 am Mass in St Mary's Killyclogher, and from 5.45-6.25 pm in Christ The King, Strathroy.

**Polish Mass:** Mass is celebrated in Polish in the Church of Christ The King, Strathroy, Omagh, on the first and third Sundays of each month at 10 am.

**Weekend Mass Times:** 6.30 pm Vigil, 12 noon, Christ The King, Strathroy; 9 & 11 am, St Mary's, Killyclogher.

## Carndonagh

**Weekend Mass Times:** Vigil 7 pm; Sunday 9 am & 11 am.

## Castlederg & Ardstraw West

**Adoration:** Adoration takes place following 10 am Mass in St Patrick's Church on Fridays, until 12 noon.

**Weekend Mass Times:** 6 pm Vigil and 11 am, Castlederg; 9.30 am Dregish; and 12.30 pm Drumnabey.

## Claudy

**St Brigid:** There will be a St Brigid's Cross Traditional Craft Evening on Friday, January 30, from 7.30 pm, at Cumber House. All

materials, including rushes, will be provided, with complimentary refreshments on the night. Admission is free and all are welcome, whether you are continuing a tradition or discovering it for the first time.

**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.

**Rosary:** The Rosary is prayed on the Parish webcam from St Patrick's Church, Monday-Thursday, at 6 pm.

**Divine Office & Chaplet:** The Divine Office (Mid-day Prayer of the Church) and the Divine Mercy Chaplet are prayed on the Parish webcam, from St Patrick's Church, Monday-Friday, at 3 pm.

**Holy Face Devotions:** Holy Face Devotions will be prayed on the Parish webcam in St Patrick's Church, Claudy, every Friday, beginning with Divine Office (Evening Prayer) at 6 pm. All welcome to join.

**Society of St Joseph:** The Vocation Society of St Joseph prayer meeting, in support of religious vocations, takes place on the first Thursday of each month, at 6.30 pm, in the Upper Room, St Patrick's Church.

**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.

**Weekend Mass Times:** 6.30 pm Vigil, St Patrick's; 10 am, St Joseph's; 11.30 am St Patrick's.

## Clonleigh (Lifford)

**Weekend Mass Times:** 6.30 pm Vigil, 11 am.

## Clonmany

**Exposition:** Exposition of The Blessed Sacrament in the Oratory of the Assumption, Ballyliffin, on Tuesdays, 7.30-8.30 pm; and in St Mary's (in room behind altar), on Wednesdays, 2.30-3.30 pm, and in St Michael's Church, Urris, on Fridays, 3-6 pm (Rosary at 5.40 pm).

**Confessions:** Confession is available in St Mary's Church

from 7 pm on Fridays, in lead

up to 7.30 pm Mass 6 pm on

Saturdays, in lead up to 6.30

pm Vigil Mass.

**Weekend Mass Times:** St Mary's Church, Clonmany, Vigil 6.30 pm (Rosary at 6.10 pm);

Sunday 11.30 am; St Michael's Church, Urris, Sunday, 10 am.

support of religious vocations 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.

**Weekend Mass Times:** 6 pm Vigil, 11 am, St John's; 7.30 pm Vigil, St Mary's Dunboe; 9.45 am, Our Lady of the Assumption, Aghadowey.

## Creggan

**Sycamore:** The Sycamore sessions continue in St Mary's Parochial House Conference Room on the second and fourth Fridays of the month, running from 6-7 pm. The sessions are an opportunity to explore faith, ask questions and meet people, and include a short film and friendly chat over a cuppa. The next dates are January 23; February 13 and 27; and March 13 and 27.

**Adoration:** Exposition of Blessed Sacrament takes place in the Divine Mercy Chapel on Sundays from 1.30 pm - 6 pm, Mondays from 10.30 am - 7 pm, and Tuesday - Saturday from 10.30 am - 12 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



## Sr. Clare Crockett & our daily lives Lenten Programme



All welcome to an information night at 7:30pm on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> February in Bellaghy Chapel to hear more

# Parish Post-its

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.

**Polish Mass:** Mass for the Polish community will be celebrated at 4 pm every second and fourth Sunday of the month in the Divine Mercy Chapel, at St Mary's Church.

**Confession:** Monday - Friday 5-5.30 pm, Saturday 10.30 am & 5.30-6.20 pm.

**Weekend Mass Times:** 6.30 pm Vigil; 10.30 am; 12.15 pm.

## Culdaff

**Good as New Shop:** St Mary's Church Bocan Re-decorating Committee has the 'Good as New Shop' now open in Carndonagh. All proceeds are for the Re-decorating Fund.

**Weekend Mass Times:** 8 pm Vigil; 10 am Sunday.

## Desertmartin

**Knit & Natter:** Knit & Natter classes take place in Knocknagin Hall on Tuesdays at 7.30 pm. Bring your own project or you can help with knitting for local charities.

**Weekend Mass Times:** 7.30 pm Vigil in St Patrick's, Keenaught; and 10 am in St Mary's, Coolcalm.

**Confessions:** Saturday evenings in St Patrick's, Keenaught, from 6.30-7.10 pm.

## Donagheady

### (Aughabrack & Dunamanagh)

**St Brigid:** St Brigid's Cross Making will take place in Aughabrack Community Hall on Friday, January 30 at 7.30 pm. All are welcome to come to learn the traditional skill of making a St Brigid's Cross or to help pass on the knowledge to others.

**Adoration:** Eucharistic Adoration takes place in St Mary's, Aughabrack, on First Fridays, after 10 am Mass until 12 noon.

**Weekend Mass Times:** 6.30 pm Vigil, St Patrick's, and 10.30 am, St Mary's.

## Donaghmore (Killygordon)

**Holy Hour:** Prayerful reading of the Scriptures & Rosary with the Home of the Mother, Servant Sisters every Tuesday from 6.30-

7.30 pm at St Mary's Church, Sessiaghoneill, Ballybofey, and every Thursday from 7-8 pm at St. Patrick's.

**Adoration:** Eucharistic Adoration takes place on Tuesdays, 10.30 am-7.30 pm, St Mary's Church, Sessiaghoneill; Thursdays, after 9.15 am Mass, St Patrick's Church, Crossroads.

**Weekend Mass Times:** 6 pm Vigil, 10 am, St Patrick's; 8 pm Vigil, 9 am & 11 am, St Mary's Sessiaghoneill.

## Drumquin

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

**Eucharistic Adoration:** Eucharistic Adoration takes place on Wednesdays from 6 pm - Mass at 7.30 pm.

**Weekend Mass Times:** Vigil 6.30 pm, and 11 am.

## Drumragh (Omagh)

**Silver Jubilee:** Bishop Donal will be celebrating Mass in Sacred Heart Church, Omagh, on Friday, February 6, at 7 pm, to mark the 25th anniversary of Sacred Heart College.

**Life in the Spirit:** Omagh Charismatic Group's annual Life in the Spirit seminars will get underway on Thursday, February 19, with the celebration of Mass in Sacred Heart Church at 7.30 pm.

**Prayer Group:** The Charismatic Prayer Group meetings take place in The Pastoral Centre on Thursday evenings, with Rosary at 7.30 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 10 am 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.

**Stations of Cross:** The Stations are prayed after 10 am Mass in Sacred Heart Church.

**Confessions:** Confession take place on Saturdays after 10 am Mass and after 6 pm Mass in Sacred Heart Church.

**Weekend Mass Times:** 6 pm Vigil, 9 am and 12 noon, Sacred Heart Church; 10.30 am, St Mary's Drumragh.

## Dungiven

**Legion of Mary:** Dungiven Legion of Mary meets every Tuesday at 6 pm in the Parish Committee Room. New members welcome. If anyone would like to have the Legion of Mary Statue, (Our Lady of Peace), please telephone 078 9552 9563. Many blessings have been bestowed upon those who have taken the statue to their home for a week.

**Prayer Group:** The St Canice's Charismatic Prayer Group meets each Thursday at 7 pm, in the Conference Room, and invites anyone who wishes to deepen their faith through shared Scripture, Prayer and Praise.

**St Pio Healing Mass:** A St Pio Healing Mass is celebrated monthly, on the first Tuesday, in St Patrick's Church at 7 pm. Society of St Joseph: The Society of St Joseph's for the support of religious vocations meets on the second Tuesdays of the month in the Committee Room, after 10 am Mass in St Patrick's Church.

**Children's Liturgy:** Children's liturgy recommences on Sunday, October 20 and will continue every third Sunday of the month at 11.30 am Mass. Children from P2-P4 are invited to participate.

**Stations of the Cross:** The Stations of the Cross will be prayed after the 10 am Mass on Fridays, in St Patrick's Church.

**Rosary:** The Rosary is prayed on Mondays, Tuesday, Wednesdays and Fridays, at 9.35 am, in St Patrick's Church.

**Adoration:** Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays, 9 am-6 pm, and Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9 am-8 pm, in Adoration Chapel.

**Weekend Mass Times:** 6 pm Vigil, 9 am and 11.30 am, St Patrick's; 10.15 am, St Matthew's; and 4.30 pm, Immaculate Conception.

**Confession:** Confession is available in St Patrick's Church at 11 am on Saturdays.

## Errigal

**Adoration:** Eucharistic Adoration takes place on Mondays after 10 am 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.

**Weekend Mass Times:** 6 pm Vigil, St Joseph's Church, Glenullin, and St Mary's Church, 10 am, St Mary's, Ballerin, and 11.30 am in St

Joseph's, Glenullin.

## Faughanvale

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

**Vocations Society of St Joseph:** The Faughanvale Branch meets in St Mary's Church on the second Monday of the month (not Jan July, August) following morning Mass. They pray for and sponsor vocations to the priesthood. New members are needed. The meeting only takes less than an hour.

**Rosary for Priests and for Vocations:** A Rosary for priests and vocations is recited each Monday before morning Mass.

**Weekend Mass Times:** 5 pm Vigil, 12 noon, Star of the Sea; 6.30 pm Vigil, 10 am, St Mary's.

## Granaghan (Swatragh)

**Weekend Mass Times:** 12 noon & 7 pm Vigils; 10.30 am.

## Greencastle

**St Brigid:** St Brigid Cross Making will take place in Greencastle Community Centre on Friday, January 30, from 11 am until 1 pm. Refreshments provided.

**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 on Thursdays, 6-10 pm.

**Stations of the Cross:** The Stations of the Cross are prayed after 7.30 pm Mass on Fridays in St Patrick's, Greencastle.

**Weekend Mass Times:** 6 pm Vigil, St Patrick's, and 11.30 am, Our Lady of Wayside, Broughderg.

## Greenlough

**Lenten Retreat:** The Parishes of Bellaghy & Greenlough are having a combined Lenten Programme in memory of Sr Clare Crockett's 10th Anniversary. It will commence on Thursday, February 12, with an information night, followed by weekly prayer nights from February 19 to March 26. The prayer nights will include informal small group discussion reflecting on spiritual lessons from Sr Clare and application to our own daily lives. Guest speakers will attend the information night who have been involved in Sr Clare's life and legacy. Come along to Bellaghy Church at 7.30 pm on Thursday, February 12, to

**Errigal**

**Adoration:** Eucharistic Adoration takes place on Mondays after 10 am 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.

**Weekend Mass Times:** 6 pm Vigil, St Joseph's Church, Glenullin, and St Mary's Church, 10 am, St Mary's, Ballerin, and 11.30 am in St

hear more.

**Rosary:** Tuesday Night Rosary is prayed at 7.30 pm in the Church.

**Adoration:** Eucharistic Adoration takes place in St Oliver Plunkett's Church from 9 am-5 pm on Thursdays.

**Weekend Mass Times:** 5.30 pm Vigil, and 9 am (alternates with 11 am Sunday Mass in St Mary's Bellaghy).

## Iskaheen, Drung & Muff

**Adoration:** Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place on Tuesdays after 10 am Eucharistic Service, until 2 pm, in St Patrick's Church, Iskaheen.

**Divine Mercy:** Divine Mercy Devotions take place on Wednesdays after 10 am Eucharistic Service in Sacred Heart Church, Muff.

**Rosary:** The Rosary is prayed before all weekday Masses.

## St Peregrine Novena & Blessing:

The St Peregrine Novena Mass and relic blessing takes place on the First Fridays at 7 pm, alternating between the three parish churches.

**Confessions:** Confessions are available in Iskaheen on Saturdays, 9.45-10 am, and in Muff on Saturdays, 6 pm, and after 6.30 pm Vigil Mass.

**Weekend Mass Times:** 6.30 pm Vigil, 11.30 am, Sacred Heart Church, Muff; 8 pm Vigil, 10.15 am, St Columba's, Drung; 9 am, St Patrick's, Iskaheen.

## Kilrea

**Eucharistic Adoration:** Mondays, from 12 noon - 7pm, at St Mary's Drumagarran. Concludes with Public Prayers.

**Stations of the Cross:** The Stations of the Cross are prayed on Sundays in Christ the King Church; 6 pm Vigil, St Finlough's Church; 10.30 am, St Mary's Church.

## Maghera

**Holy Face of Jesus:** The Holy Face of Jesus prayers take place every Tuesday after the 9.30 am Mass and Divine Mercy.

**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.

**Confession:** Daily after morning Mass (except Sunday and Holydays), and St Mary's at 7 pm on Wednesdays (before evening Mass) and Saturdays at 11am/12noon and 5.30pm/6.15pm.

**Weekend Mass Times:** 6.30 pm Vigil and 11.30 am, St Mary's; 9.30 am, St Patrick's.

## Lavey

**Adoration:** Eucharistic Adoration takes place on Fridays from 9.30 am until 5 pm.

**Confession:** Confessions are heard from 5.15-5.45 pm on

Saturdays.

**Weekend Mass Times:** 6 pm Vigil, 9 am and 11 am.

## Leckpatrick

**Adoration:** Eucharistic Adoration takes place on Wednesdays from 8.30 am Mass until 5.30 pm.

**Weekend Mass Times:** 5 pm Vigil, St Mary's Church, Cloughcor; 9.45 am St Joseph's Church, Glenmornan; 11.15 am, Sacred Heart Church, Derry Road.

## Lifford (Murlog)

**Adoration:** Eucharistic Adoration takes place on Tuesdays after 10 am Eucharistic Service, until 2 pm, in St Patrick's Church, Lifford.

**Stations of the Cross:** The Stations of the Cross are recited publicly each Friday after 9.30 am Mass in St Patrick's Church, Murlog.

**Adoration:** 9.30 am-12.30 pm.

**Confessions:** Saturday, 6-6.15 pm

**Weekend Mass Times:** 6.30 pm Vigil; 11 am.

## Melmount

**Adoration:** Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in the church on Mondays after 10.30 am - 6.30 pm (Benediction at 6.30 pm if priest available).

**Confessions:** Second and fourth Saturdays at 11.30 am in St Mary's; for First Fridays - after Mass Thursday & Friday mornings (if no funeral) and after First Friday evening Mass.

**Weekend Mass Times:** 7 pm Vigil, 11.30 am.

## Moville

**Stations of the Cross:** The Stations of the Cross are prayed after 10 am Mass on Fridays.

**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.

**Confessions:** Confessions will be heard in St Pius X Church on Saturdays from 5.45-6.15 pm.

**Weekend Mass Times:** 6.30 pm Vigil, 10 am, St Pius X Church. 11.30 am on alternate Sundays in St Mary's Ballybrack, and St Columba's Ballinacrae.

## Sion Mills

**Adoration:**

# Parish Post-its

## cont. from page 27

the Scriptures together and takes place every Wednesday after 10 am Mass, in the Parish Conference Room. All welcome.

**Adoration:** Mondays after 10 am Mass until 6.50 pm. Stations of the Cross: Come along to reflect on the Way of the Cross on Fridays at 7.30 pm.

**Weekend Mass Times:** 6.30 pm Vigil; 9 am, 11 am, and 12.15 pm.

## Strabane (Camus)

**Adoration:** Eucharistic Adoration takes place on Wednesdays from 8.30 am Mass until 5.30 pm.

**Stations of Cross:** Stations of the Cross are recited publicly each Friday after 10 am Mass in Immaculate Conception Church.

**Adoration:** Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place every day, from 10.30 am-1 pm, 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.

**Society of St Joseph:** The St John Vianney branch of the Society of St Joseph (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 is welcome.

**Weekend Mass Times:** 6 pm Vigil, 9.45 am & 12.15 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 Talbot 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.

**St Dymphna Mass:** The St Dymphna Mass with Anointing of the Sick takes place on the third Tuesday of each month at 7.30pm. This Mass is to give thanks to God for positive mental health and to pray for those who are struggling with mental health issues and those who care for them.

**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. Weekend Mass Times: 6.15 pm & 7.30 pm Vigils; 9.30 am, 11 am, 12.30 pm & 7 pm.

## Templemore - Long Tower

### Charity Coffee Morning:

Cloisters are hosting a Charity Coffee Morning on Saturday, January 31, to support the incredible work of Foyle Hospice.

### From St Columba to Sister Clare:

Evening of Prayer in St Columba's Church, Long Tower on the first Thursday of each month, at 7 pm for Rosary (Confessions available), then 7.30pm Mass, followed by mini vigil to midnight for healing and intercession. At this Mass, there will be music and refreshments provided.

New Course: The Parish is running a course entitled, "Genesis (1-11) and Church Teaching" on Thursdays in the Kildare Room, St Brigid's, Carnhill, from 7-9 pm. All are welcome; bring along a Bible and come discover how these ancient stories speak powerfully to our faith today. Children's Rosary: Children's Rosary takes place in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, on the second Saturday of the month, at 2 pm.

**Legion of Mary:** The Legion of Mary meets on Mondays, from 1-3 pm in the Meeting Room at St Joseph's Church, Galliagh.

**Folk Group:** The Carnhill Folk Group meets on Mondays from 7-8.30 pm in St Brigid's Church.

**St Brigid's Choir:** The 10.30 am St Brigid's Choir meets on Thursdays from 5-5.30 pm in St Brigid's Church.

**Bible Study:** Bible Study takes place on Tuesdays after 11 am Mass in the Meeting Room, St Joseph's Church, Galliagh.

**Men's Bible Study:** Men's Bible Study takes place in the Upper Room in St Brigid's Chapel, Carnhill, on Tuesdays from 7.30-8.30 pm.

**Women's Bible Study:** Women's Bible Study takes place on Wednesdays from 7-8 pm, in the Upper Room, St Brigid's Church, Carnhill.

**Children's Rosary:** Children's Rosary takes place in the Long Tower on the

First Friday of every month, at 3.30 pm.

**Weekend Mass Times:** 6 pm Vigil, 10 am & 12 noon.

**Siopa Cholmcille:** St Columba's Gift Shop in Aras Cholmcille has a variety of Confirmation/First Holy Communion gifts & cards, candles, Rosary beads, books, occasion cards and other gifts & mementos available.

The shop is open after 10am morning Mass during the week. For enquiries, please contact Sheila Doyle/Jim Doherty via (parish office 028-7126230 or Sacristy 028-71261946) who will be happy to help.

**Cloisters Café:** Cloisters Café in Aras Cholmcille (Wee Nuns building), in the grounds of Long Tower Church, is a cosy place to relax and have a bite to eat or a cuppa and a cake! The café is open Tuesday – Saturday, from 10 am to 3 pm.

### Three Patrons

**St Brigid:** There will be an evening celebrating St Brigid and the making of St Brigid Crosses in the Kildare Room, at St Brigid's Parochial House, on Friday, January 30, from 7-9 pm. There will be music and refreshments provided.

New Course: The Parish is running a course entitled, "Genesis (1-11) and Church Teaching" on Thursdays in the Kildare Room, St Brigid's, Carnhill, from 7-9 pm. All are welcome; bring along a Bible and come discover how these ancient stories speak powerfully to our faith today. Children's Rosary: Children's Rosary takes place in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, on the second Saturday of the month, at 2 pm.

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**Women's Bible Study:** Women's Bible Study takes place on Wednesdays from 7-8 pm, in the Upper Room, St Brigid's Church, Carnhill.

**Children's Rosary:** Children's Rosary takes place in the Long Tower on the

First Friday of every month, at 3.30 pm.

**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 8.15-10 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.

**Confessions:** Confessions takes place in St Joseph's Church, Galliagh, on Tuesdays from 6.15-6.45 pm and Sundays from 5.30-6 pm; in St Patrick's Church, Pennyburn, on Wednesdays from 6.15-6.45 pm, and Saturdays from 5.15-5.45 pm; and in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, from 8 am until 8 pm, and in St Patrick's Church, Pennyburn, on Wednesdays from 10.30 am - 7 pm.

**Adoration:** Eucharistic Adoration takes place in Our Lady's Chapel, St Joseph's Church, Galliagh, on Tuesdays from 6.15-6.45 pm and Sundays from 5.30-6 pm; in St Patrick's Church, Pennyburn, on Wednesdays from 6.15-6.45 pm, and Saturdays from 5.15-5.45 pm; and in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, from 8 am until 8 pm, and in St Patrick's Church, Pennyburn, on Wednesdays from 10.30 am - 7 pm.

**Youth Prayer Group:** A Youth Prayer Group takes place on Thursdays, from 7.30-8.30 pm, in St Pio Centre, Galliagh.

**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 7.30-8.30 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:** Under The Gaze of Our Lady of Montligeon, the Holy Souls

to learn together about their faith. It takes place in the Kildare Room, Carnhill, on Saturdays from 11.30 am until 12.30 pm.

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

**Vocations Society:** The Vocations Society of St Joseph hold monthly meetings on First Fridays after 10 am Mass, in the Emmaus Room, Pennyburn. New members welcome.

**Women's Laugh & Craft:** The Women's Laugh & Craft Group meets every Monday from 7-9 pm in the Kildare Room, St Brigid's, Carnhill. £3 per class. Spaces limited.

**St Pio Café:** St Pio's Café, in the St Pio Centre, Galliagh, is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 11.30 am-2.30 pm.

**Confessions:** Confessions takes place in St Joseph's Church, Galliagh, on Tuesdays from 6.15-6.45 pm and Sundays from 5.30-6 pm; in St Patrick's Church, Pennyburn, on Wednesdays from 6.15-6.45 pm, and Saturdays from 5.15-5.45 pm; and in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, from 8 am until 8 pm, and in St Patrick's Church, Pennyburn, on Wednesdays from 10.30 am - 7 pm.

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**Weekend Mass Times:** 6.15 pm Vigil & 9.45 am, St Patrick's, Pennyburn; 5 pm Vigil, 10.30 am & 12.30 pm St Brigid's, Carnhill; 11 am, 12.30 pm (An tAifreann Naofa), and 6.30 pm Youth Mass, St Joseph's Galliagh.

**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.

**Living Disciples:** Living Disciples meet on Tuesdays at 7.30-8.30 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

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**Holy Souls Prayer:** Under The Gaze of Our Lady of Montligeon, the Holy Souls

**Eucharistic Adoration:** pm, before evening Mass; Immaculate Conception, after 11 am Mass every Saturday and at 5.30 pm before evening Mass on a Saturday; St Oliver Plunkett, Every Saturday 5.30 pm, before the Vigil Mass.

**Weekend Mass Times:** 7 pm Vigil, St Columb's; 6 pm Vigil, 10.15 am & 12.15 pm, Immaculate Conception; 6 pm Vigil and 11.15 am, St Oliver Plunkett.

**Confessions:** St Columb's - Saturday after 10 am Mass, Monday-Friday at 7 pm.

## Flame of Love - North of Ireland

### Weekly Cenacles

**Every Monday @ 7pm**

### Venue

**Termonbacca**

**Carmelite Retreat Centre, Derry City, BT48 9AH**

**Available also on YouTube**

**LIVE - every Monday night @ 7pm**

**Search: Termonbacca Derry**

**Facebook Page: Flame of Love - North of Ireland**

**WhatsApp: FoL 🔥 - North of Ireland**

**Website: www.flameoflove.ie RCN: 20206554**

## SYCAMORE

Explore faith, ask questions, meet people

**Every 2nd & 4th Friday (twice a month)**

**6:00-7:00pm**

**St Mary's Parochial House - Conference Room**

**Short film Friendly chat coffee**

**No pressure – everyone welcome!**

### Next sessions:

• 9 & 23 January 2026

• 13 & 27 February 2026

• 13 & 27 March 2026

### Why come?

• Curious about faith and life's big questions

• Want community and good conversation

• New to church or returning – come as you are

## Diocesan Diary

**PII Awards:** The annual Pope John Paul II Award ceremony will take place on Wednesday, January 28, at 2 pm, in St Eugene's Cathedral.

## ...other Diary Dates

**St Brigid Cross-making:** Come along to Learmount Community Centre on Wednesday, January 28, from 7-9 pm, and join in making St Brigid crosses. The fee of £5 per person includes materials. To book/further information, telephone 028 777 81871 or email: admin@learmountgroup.org.

**Charity Coffee Morning:** Cloisters are hosting a Charity Coffee Morning on Saturday, January 31, to support the incredible work of Foyle Hospice.

**Marriage Enrichment Weekend:** Catholic Marriage Encounter in Ireland will be hosting a Marriage Enrichment Weekend in St Mary's Knock, Co Mayo, on March 20-22. For further information see [www.marriageencounter.ie](http://www.marriageencounter.ie)

**Sr Clare Prayer:** From St Columba to Sister Clare- Evening of Prayer in St Columba's Church, Long Tower on the first Thursday of each month, at 7 pm for Rosary (Confessions available), then 7.30pm Mass, followed by mini

vigil to midnight for healing and intercession. At this Mass, we will pray for the cause of Sr Clare in the Monastic site where St Columba knelt and prayed. Everyone is welcome to attend.

**Derry Search Youth Group:** The monthly Search prayer meeting takes place on the first Sunday of each month, at 7 pm Everyone is welcome whether you have been before or not. It will start with a cup of tea, then open the prayer meeting with a theme to reflect on. The meeting is in the Search centre at Iona Business Park, Southway.

**Anam Óg:** This faith-based youth group, for those aged 8-14 years, meets on Sundays in Termonbacca, Derry, to explore the faith through fun and friendship, from 6-7.15 pm. We are always open to new members or anyone who wants to give it a try. If anyone wishes to sign their child up, you can do so at this link: <https://forms.gle/RFFF9kffzE5yBtq8A>

**St Therese Prayer Hour:** This

year, it is 100 years since St Therese of Lisieux was declared a Saint. In order to mark this wonderful occasion, the Carmelites at Termonbacca Retreat Centre, in Derry, have built a new chapel which holds a first-class relic of St Therese. There is now a weekly prayer hour in the new chapel on Mondays, praying for the intercession of St Therese, particularly praying for world peace. The prayer will be from 7.30-8.30 pm and everyone is welcome to come along and join in.

**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.

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

**Holy Souls Prayer:** Under The Gaze of Our Lady of Montligeon, the Holy Souls of Purgatory Prayer Meeting takes place on Mondays after 11 am Mass in Our Lady's Chapel, within St Joseph's Church, Gallagh, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. The Group will also meet in Termonbacca on the last Wednesday of every month, from 12.30-1.30 pm.

**Polish Mass:** Mass for the Polish community is celebrated in the Church of Christ The King, Strathroy, Omagh, on the first and third Sundays of each month at 10 am, and at 9.30 am every second and fourth Sunday 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.

**Coastal Rosary:** Rosary on the Coast for world peace and the protection of unborn babies takes place at Lisfannon Beach, Buncrana, on the first Sunday of every month at 3 pm, and at Benone Strand on the third Sunday of every month, at 3 pm.

**Men's Rosary:** The Men's Rosary takes place on the first Saturday of every month at Market Street, Omagh (opposite Primark) and at the side of O'Neill's Sports Store, near Guildhall Square, at 1 pm. All Welcome!

**Sr Clare Mass:** Mass in honour of Sr Clare Crockett is celebrated on the second Sunday of each month, at 7 pm, in Termonbacca. All welcome. The Mass is streamed live via Termonbacca YouTube channel.

## Forty Hours - February & March

Sun 22 Feb	St Eugene's Cathedral	Templemore, Derry
Sun 22 Feb	St Oliver Plunkett's	Strathfoyle
Sun 1 Mar	St Teresa's	Sion Mills
Sun 1 Mar	St Patrick's, Pennyburn	Three Patrons, Derry
Sun 8 Mar	Sacred Heart, Derry Road	Leckpatrick
Sun 8 Mar	St Patrick's	Dungiven
Sun 8 Mar	St Columba's, Doneyloop	Urney & Castlefin
Sun 15 Mar	St Mary's, Drumagardner	Kilrea
Sun 15 Mar	St Finlough's, Ballykelly	Limavady
Sun 15 Mar	St Joseph's	Banagher
Sun 22 Mar	St Mary's, Rouskey	Badoney Lower (Gortin)
Sun 22 Mar	St Joseph's, Glenmornan	Leckpatrick
Sun 22 Mar	St Patrick's, Glen	Maghera

## Termonbacca News...

### 'Lent Matters' Retreat

THERE will be a Lenten retreat in Termonbacca led by Philip McParland, beginning on the evening of Monday, February 23, and concluding on Wednesday, February 25, in the afternoon. Entitled 'Lent Matters', the retreat is residential and the cost is £150. For further information and booking contact Philip on 07722572753 or email [philipmcparland@hotmail.com](mailto:philipmcparland@hotmail.com).

### Divine Mercy Day Retreat

ON Saturday, February 7, around 3.30 pm. There will be a day retreat in Termonbacca on the theme of Divine Mercy as a tool for life in these challenging times.

This day is open to all and, to help with planning, if you intend to come interest should be registered by calling Aoife on 02871262512 or emailing [termonbaccaderry@ocd.ie](mailto:termonbaccaderry@ocd.ie)

*A Day with*

# Divine Mercy

**Thee Real "Game Changer"**

**In Our Challenging Times**

**Led by**

**Fr. Eamonn O'Driscoll O.F.M.**

**& Other Speakers**

**Venue: Termonbacca Retreat Centre, Derry**

**Saturday 7th February 2026**

**Registration from 10am - Donation Only**



*You Are All Welcome, Young & Old Sinners & Saints*

# No place like home *Fr Johnny Doherty CSsR*

If I had the power, I would canonise Annie and Mickey Doherty, my parents, and declare them saints of the Church! As I wrote that sentence, I could hear my mother say to me: "Stop that old chat, Johnny". But I will keep going.

Looking back on my life, I have no idea how my parents did what they did for us as a family. We lived in a small house on Bridge Street, Carndonagh. There were seven children - there was one other little girl, Annie, who tragically died as a baby before I was born - and then our two parents. If that were not enough, there was always room for other extended family members when the need arose. Eventually, my grandmother on my mother's side lived with us for a few years at the end of her life - although that was when most of us had left home.

There is a lot of talk today about people living in poverty. In those days, almost everyone had very little. And that was the case in our family. But the strange thing is that we never seemed to want for anything. How our parents provided for our well-being is one of the great mysteries of my life experience. And I know that it was the same for many families around us at the time.

#### The secret

When I say that I do not know how my parents did what they did, that is not really quite true. They both came from what we could say were stable families. They certainly loved one another deeply in their marriage. And

they saw that their vocation of love was the best call that they could have and they dedicated themselves to that. They had good support systems around them of family and friends, in which they found strength and also resources. They also were able to share their resources with others through these networks

And both my parents were people, each in their own way, of deep faith in Christ and His Church. I know that this faith was a great power in their lives that made life not just manageable, but wonderful. Life was not easy for them by any means. But they lived life very fully and enjoyed living because of the values of abundance that they had.

#### Holy Family of Nazareth

I have been thinking a lot about my parents and our family life at this time because the Feast of the Holy Family of Nazareth was celebrated by us, in the Church, on Sunday, December 28. This celebration is always the first Sunday after Christmas Day. In celebrating the Holy Family so close to Christmas Day, we are acknowledging that this is where

Christ had His first taste of the reality of life as He grew up in their home in Nazareth. On the surface, at least, that taste was not sweet.

He was born in a stable because there was nowhere else open for Him and His parents. As we remember Christ's birth through the Crib in our Churches and in our homes, we can never quite catch the degradation of where He

was born. It was nothing as clean and attractive as we have to make it out to be!

As we remember the songs of the angels and the presence of the shepherds, we get nothing of the cold and isolation that Jesus, Mary and Joseph experienced in those first few hours and days after His birth. As we marvel at the arrival of the Magi with their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, we can easily forget that this heralded a death threat for Jesus, and maybe also for His parents, from the fear that Herod had that his kingdom may somehow be threatened by this birth. They had to escape to Egypt and live as asylum seekers there.

And when the threat to the life of the Baby Jesus was no longer there, and the parents could come home with Him, they went to live in Nazareth, which was probably where Joseph's family lived. It was a most insignificant place. They lived a very hidden life, where no one would ever hear about them again. And they lived with the extended family in which Jesus grew up as one of that family, in which His cousins became His brothers and sisters.

Their life in Nazareth was poor by our standards - maybe by any standards. But Jesus grew in wisdom and age there until "he was anointed by the Holy Spirit to bring the good news to the poor". That is where we came in and where we have been ever since.

#### Mary and Joseph

In this story of our salvation, there is no doubt that Jesus is at

the centre of it. But we also have to acknowledge that Mary and Joseph are the key to it. Their love for each other and their devotion to each other was the solid foundation on which their life with Jesus was built. Nothing would ever shake that.

Mary had said her 'yes' to the Angel Gabriel to be Mother of the Son of God. She remained faithful to that 'yes' through thick and thin and she nurtured Jesus, physically and spiritually, into adult life. And she stayed by His side all through His torture and death on the Cross on Calvary - and beyond into His resurrection from the dead.

Joseph risked everything of his life to be faithful to Mary, his beloved. In that fidelity, he protected Jesus from all harm and accompanied Him as he grew into maturity of mind and heart.

Together, they built a home where Jesus of Nazareth became Christ, the Redeemer of the world for all time and for every generation.

#### A troubled world

We live in a very troubled world today. But then, the world has always been troubled. As we pray and work for peace and justice in so many parts of the world, we also need to remember that the real hope for the world is, as always, to be found in the resilience of ordinary people like you and me.

One of the many important insights that the Catholic Church has given us, is that the family is the Domestic Church, the Church

of the Home. It is there that all that is good in human life has the greatest chance of making a difference. It is there that love is the driving force. It is there that fidelity to one another has its greatest effect. It is there that each person has the opportunity of being affirmed and set free. And it is there that prayer becomes most personal and from the heart. But all of these have to be worked at and developed for the sake of the world in which we live.

It is because of this that the Holy Family of Nazareth is the great model for the Domestic Church.

Inspired by Mary and Joseph, parents today are shown the way of love and fidelity in which their children are nurtured into full life. But they need the support of a community as they hand on the values of the Gospel, which are the values of the inherent dignity of each human person as loved by God. And the family, as the Domestic Church, needs to have regular prayer together so that they can all come to know the presence of Christ with them and the power of Christ for their love for one another.

#### Back to the beginning

At the beginning of this article, I said that I would canonise my mother and father if I had the power. I hope you can say the same about your parents, or about the people who were responsible for you becoming the person that you are.

I know that I have been very blessed in my life by the people who have loved me into life and those who continue to do so. One of the great blessings of my life has been the close relationship I have had with so many married



Fr. Johnny Doherty CSsR

couples, and with families of all sorts.

The married couples keep teaching me - as indeed my parents did right from the beginning - that holiness is to be found in committed loving that mirrors God's extraordinary love for each of us. Being close to families has brought me into contact with so many people of amazing generosity, as I could see parents who give themselves so fully to their children of all ages, often at great sacrifice to themselves.

As the Feast of the Holy Family of Nazareth spans the Old Year and the New, we should make this month, and indeed this year of 2026, a special time of focus on enriching marriage and family life in all our homes and families.

#### Let us pray

Heavenly Father, help us to live as the Holy Family, united in respect and love. Bring us to the joy and peace of your eternal home. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

## New year - New start... . . . Drawing closer to God by Sinéad Strong

AS another year begins, many of us find ourselves swept up in the familiar rhythm of setting resolutions and goals. The phrase 'New Year, New Me' echoes everywhere, urging us to get fitter, eat healthier, read more, or finally tackle the long list of self-improvements that we have been postponing.

It is easy to become absorbed in the idea of self-betterment and, with good intentions, we commit ourselves to these changes. Yet, if we are honest, most resolutions often fizzle out before the first month ends. I know this all too well - last year, my own list of goals was quickly abandoned. This year, though, I want to take a different approach, one that isn't entirely centred on myself and my achievements, but rather on something that offers deeper fulfilment: drawing closer to God.

Beginning anew means taking stock of where we have been. It is recommended to pause and reflect on the year just gone by. Consider the moments when you felt close to the Lord, and also the times when you distanced yourself from Him. Reflection is not about dwelling on shortcomings or regrets, but rather

about recognising patterns - what drew you closer to God, and what pulled you away? In those areas where you struggled or felt weak, invite the Lord into your journey. Ask Him to walk with you through the coming year, to guide you and remain present in every aspect of your life.

Last year, we had a talk by Jim Deeds at one of our Catholic Mothers Ireland retreats. One of the most striking things that he said was, "You can't get there, you can only be there." At first, his words seemed puzzling. Aren't we all striving to "get there", to reach some spiritual milestone or achieve a deeper faith? But his point was profound; so much of our effort to do, achieve, and perfect can actually stand in the way of simply being with Christ. We often fill our days with activities, programmes, and spiritual checklists, hoping that if we do enough, we will be better children of God. Yet, this constant striving can distract us from the simple, transformative act of being still in God's presence.

Jesus calls us to be still and listen. His voice is often gentle, a quiet whisper amid the noise of daily life. To truly hear Him, we must

intentionally create moments of calm and silence. One of the most powerful ways to do this is through Eucharistic Adoration. Sitting in the presence of Christ, allowing ourselves to rest and simply 'be', is a profound blessing. It is in this stillness that we open the door to His grace and guidance. He is always with us, ready to enter our hearts if only we make space for Him.

St Augustine expressed this longing beautifully when he wrote, "You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in You." Within every human soul is an innate desire for God and spiritual fulfilment - a desire no worldly pursuit can satisfy. Whether we chase after pleasure, achievements, or recognition, a deep part of us remains unsatisfied. We sense that there is greater meaning to our existence, one that transcends what the world can offer. True contentment, therefore, comes from cultivating a meaningful relationship with our Creator.

We can develop this friendship with God through familiarity with the Scriptures and looking to the example of the saints. The Bible

is filled with stories of ordinary people who learned to trust God, often in the most challenging circumstances. Their journeys remind us that spiritual growth is not about perfection, but about genuine relationship and openness to God's love. Likewise, the saints were not flawless individuals; many struggled and faltered on their path. Yet, their lives inspire us to persevere, seek forgiveness, and continually turn to God.

So, as we step into this new year, perhaps it is worth rethinking our resolutions. Instead of focusing solely on self-improvement or ticking boxes, we might consider how we can deepen our relationship with God. This could mean setting aside time each day for prayer, reading a passage of Scripture, or simply sitting in silence before the Blessed Sacrament. It might involve reaching out to others in kindness, serving those in need, or forgiving someone who has hurt us. Each of these actions, no matter how small, draws us closer to God and reflects His love to the world.

Of course, the journey will not always be easy. There will be days when we feel distant or distracted,

when prayer seems dry or life's demands overwhelm us. But in those moments, we can remember that God's love is constant. He does not require perfection, only our willingness to draw near and let Him work in us. When we stumble, we can start again, trusting in His mercy and grace. So, let us make space for stillness, seek out the voice of Christ, and allow ourselves to rest in His love.

By doing so, we may discover a hope and fulfilment that surpasses anything the world can offer, and truly experience a new beginning grounded in faith.

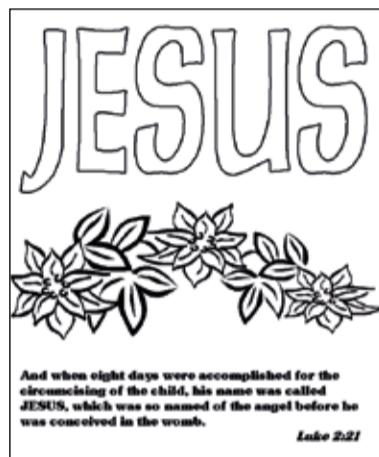
Lord, as we enter this new year, help us seek You above all things and rest in Your love. Guide our steps, fill us with hope, and make us instruments of Your peace. Remain with us always. Amen.



# Children's Catechism Club - C3

by Veronica Harley

HELLO children. C3 wishes you all a very happy New Year! Welcome to the month of January. The first day of January is very special. We begin a new year, and we look ahead to new beginnings and hopes for the future. But it is also the day that we celebrate the wonderful Feast of our Blessed Mother Mary, the Holy Mother of God (CCC 493). Mary received the Word of God in Her heart as well as in Her body and gave life to the Saviour of the world. We treasure and honour Mary on this day as a faithful servant of God and truly the Mother of God.



of the kings (Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar) and the last two numbers are the last half of the year. The C, M, B also stands for the Latin blessing 'Christus Mansionem Benedicat', which means "May Christ Bless this House".

Chalking the lintel of the door is a way to celebrate and mark the occasion of the Epiphany and God's blessing of our lives and home. In time, the chalk will fade, but we hope that the meaning of the symbols written above the door will sink into the depths of our heart and be visible through our words and actions. Remember the Latin words, Christus mansionem benedicat, "May Christ bless the house."

## Saints of the Month

January 2 – St Basil & St Gregory Nazianzen

January 17 – St Anthony of Egypt

January 24 – St Francis de Sales

January 28 – St Thomas Aquinas

## Baptism of Jesus

"And when Jesus had been baptized, just as He came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to Him and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and a voice from Heaven said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased' (Matthew 3:16-17).

The Baptism of Jesus (CCC 535) is celebrated each year on the Sunday following the Feast of the Epiphany. This Feast brings the Christmas season to a close. The Church recalls on this day how Jesus went down into the River Jordan and was baptised by John the Baptist.

The baptism which John the Baptist



## Tradition – Epiphany Chalk House Blessing

An ancient Catholic tradition on the Feast of the Epiphany is to bless the home using blessed chalk. Blessed chalk is taken by a family member and used to write across the lintel of the front door 20+C+M+B+ \_\_\_\_\_. The last space is filled in with the numbers which make up the last half of the new year.

20+C+M+B+26

## Christus Mansionem Benedicat

This is what the chalked markings on the door mean: The 20 is for the first two numbers of the year, the three letters are the first initial of each



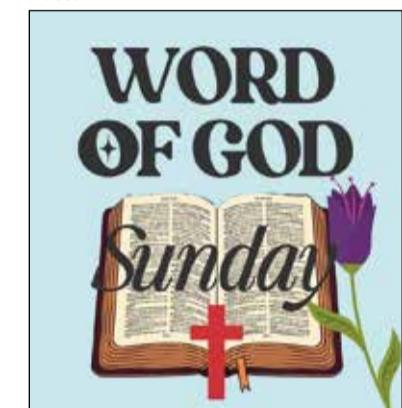
## Epiphany – January 6

The Feast of the Epiphany (CCC 528) is the 12th day of Christmas, and is sometimes referred to as 'Little Christmas'. The word 'Epiphany' comes from a Greek word which means 'appearance', or 'to show oneself'. We celebrate this day in remembrance of how the three wise kings visited Jesus and recognized Him as the Saviour the world had



## Sunday of The Word of God

The 'Sunday of the Word of God' is a special day in the Church. It was started by Pope Francis in 2019 and is celebrated on the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time. This day helps us to focus on celebrating, studying, and spreading the Sacred Scriptures. It encourages Christians to deepen their connection with the Bible and to recognize its vital role in our daily lives.



offered moved people to confess their sins and repent. Jesus, however, was sinless and, therefore, did not need this baptism. But He did not hesitate to identify Himself with humanity and our struggles, and accepted the baptism from John. The baptism of Jesus marks the beginning of His public ministry.

Many of the aspects of Jesus' baptism happen at baptism today. The Holy Spirit descended on Jesus in the form of a dove; at our baptism the Trinity comes to live in our soul. At His baptism, Jesus was proclaimed Son of God; at our baptism we are called to be the adopted sons of God. The heavens opened at Jesus' baptism and through our baptism, Heaven is open to us. Jesus prayed at His baptism and we, too, are called to that special relationship of prayer which leads us to God.

"Everything that happened to Christ lets us know that, after the bath of water, the Holy Spirit swoops down upon us from high Heaven and that, adopted by the Father's voice, we become sons of God."

St Hilary of Poitiers (CCC 537)

This day helps to highlight for us that the bible isn't just any book, but one where we find God who speaks to us, loves and nourishes us. This day helps to urge people to listen attentively to the Word of God and to live their lives obeying God's teachings.

## Do the Maths!

Answer the mathematical problems to find the right words to fit in the spaces, to give us the words of Pope Francis on Sunday of the Word of God.

"Let us (6x2) a (25-5) or two of the (4x4) and (13+5) it to (3x8) us (30-15)."

Answers: Let us read a verse or two of the Bible and allow it to inspire us daily

## Quiz Time with Lawrence

- Which organ in the human body is responsible for purifying blood?
- What fabric is made using the shearings of the Angora Goat?
- What country boasts the world's longest coastline?
- What well-known brand uses a green mermaid on their company logo?
- In what sport is Marnus Labuschagne a prominent International?
- What is the chemical symbol for Iron?
- Which of the Brontë sisters wrote 'Wuthering Heights'?
- What planet is closest in distance to the sun?
- Celebrated annually on February 2 in the US and Canada, what quirky tradition became the subject of a 1993 movie starring Bill Murray?
- Who was the founder, lead singer and also lead guitarist of the British rock band 'Dire Straits'?
- In what popular 1970s sitcom did actress, Frances de la Tour play 'Miss Jones' - the subject of affection for her landlord, Mr Rigsby?
- Of which US state is Hartford the capital city?
- In what country was football's African Cup of Nations played this year?
- In what year did the Berlin Wall come down?
- What European country boasts over 200,000 islands under its governance, although only 1,000 of them are said to be inhabited?
- What annual awards are presented by Columbia University in New York for achievements in Journalism, Arts and Letters?
- In a standard deck of playing cards, which is the only King that doesn't have a moustache?
- In what city would you find the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building?
- For what 2024 film did Cillian Murphy win an Academy Award for Best Actor?
- Who wrote the novel 'To Kill a Mockingbird'?
- Who is the current World Number 1 darts player?
- Which country is the world's leading producer of coffee beans?
- What country became the first to win football's World Cup in 1930?
- In what year did 'Coronation Street' first air in the UK?
- What is the largest island in the world?

## Quiz Answers:

1, Kidneys; 2, Mohair; 3, Canada; 4, Starbucks; 5, Cricket; 6, Fe; 7, Emily; 8, Mercury; 9, Groundhog Day; 10, Mark Knopfler; 11, Rising Damp; 12, Connecticut; 13, Morocco; 14, 1989; 15, Sweden; 16, Pulitzer Prize; 17, The King of Hearts; 18, Dubai; 19, Oppenheimer; 20, Harper Lee; 21, Luke Little; 22, Brazil; 23, Uruguay; 24, 1960; 25, Greenland.

Aghyaran, Ardmore, Ardstraw West & Castlederg, Ballinascreen, Ballymagroarty, Banagher, Bellaghy, Buncrana, Carndonagh, Claudy, Clonmany, Coleraine, Gregg, Culdaff, Culmore, Desertmartin, Donnyloop, Drumquin, Dunamanagh, Dungiven, Fahan, Faughanvale, Garvagh, Gortin, Greencastle,

# Let Your Light Shine!



*Catholic schools celebrate 'Normal Lives, Called to Holiness'*



Greenlough, Iskaheen, Killyclogher, Killygordon, Kilrea, Lavey, Leckpatrick, Lifford, Limavady, Maghera, Magilligan, Malin, Melmount,