

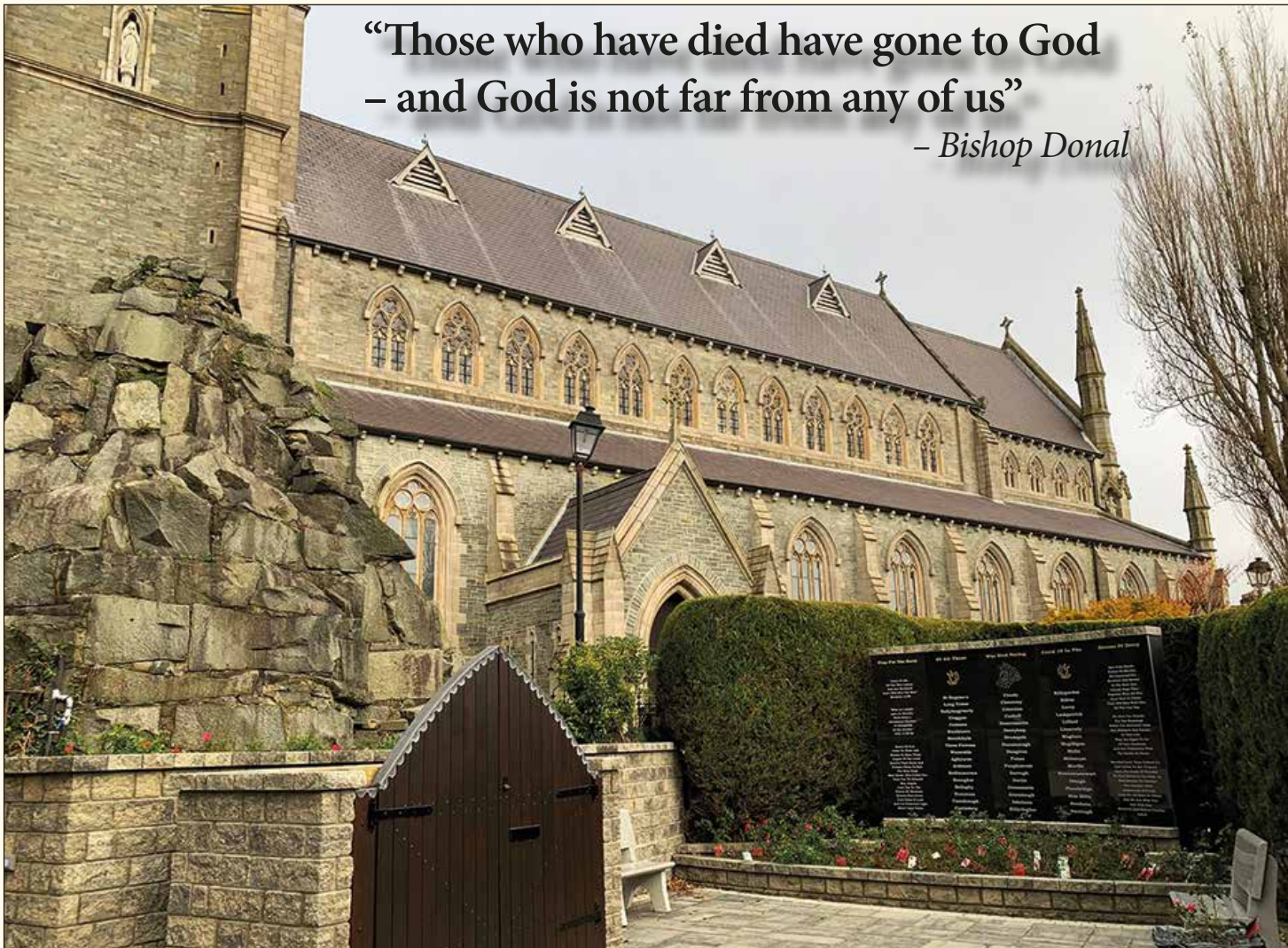
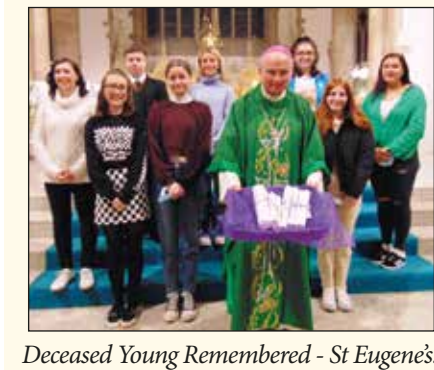
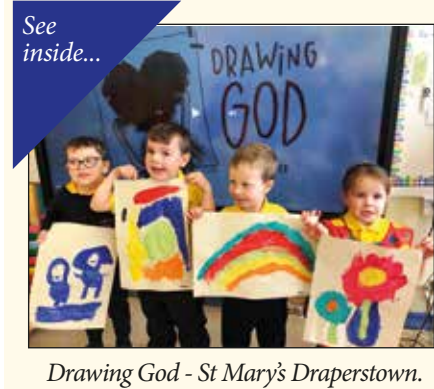


The NET

Sharing fruits of faith in Derry Diocese

ISSUE 70. NOVEMBER 2021

PRICE - £1.50 /€2.00



The newly created Memorial Garden in the grounds of St Eugene's Cathedral, in memory of all those in the Diocese who died during Covid-19.



People in focus



Fr Isaac cfr - Galliagh.



Geraldine Mullan - Moville.



Martina Purdy - Long Tower Novena.



Sr Myriam McLaughlin - Dungiven & Waterside.



Sr Clare Crockett - Long Tower.

Also featuring: Youth writers feature; Newtownstewart sponsored hill climb; Banagher Flower Workshop creations; Holy Souls feature; Matt Talbot Society talk; Divine Child Novena; Vocations Promotion; Children's Catechism Club; Quiz and much more...

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Copies of 'The Net' will be available in parishes again after restrictions, as a result of Covid-19, are lifted.

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In our very darkness, we can discover a sense of being loved by God

by Fr Michael McGoldrick ocd

IT is significant that Pope Francis has made depression the focus of his prayer intention for November. His intention reads: "We pray that people who suffer from depression or burn-out will find support and a light that opens them up to life". It is recognition of how widespread depression is today.

Depression is a very complex illness and doctors are only gradually coming to a more complete understanding of it. It affects people in different ways and symptoms vary.

According to the NHS website, the symptoms range "from lasting feelings of unhappiness and hopelessness, to losing interest in the things you used to enjoy and feeling very tearful. Many people with depression also have symptoms of anxiety. There can be physical symptoms too, such as feeling constantly tired, sleeping badly, having no appetite or sex drive, and various aches and pains."

A side effect that is not mentioned is loss of self-confidence. This can be very debilitating, making it difficult for the sufferer to engage in social events and, in some cases, even to doing things as simple as to leaving home to shop, etc. The persistent feeling of sadness can make one feel as if life isn't worth living and lead to feelings of despair.

Sadly, there is still stigma

attached to depression and to mental illness in general. Those who suffer depression speak of the subtly expressed prejudice they experience. People with depression can be considered as not reliable or dependable. It makes depression a lonely place for sufferers. The stigma surrounding depression makes it difficult for people to admit that they are suffering. It is, therefore, very encouraging that depression is more openly discussed today. 'The NET', in giving space to this subject, is to be applauded.

Depression can appear at any stage in life. There may be no apparent cause or it may be the result of painful experiences in childhood. It may also be triggered by a life changing event, such as bereavement, marriage breakdown or loss of one's job.

A more recent cause of burnout and depression is the demand in some workplaces for one to be constantly available. This has been an unfortunate side effect of Covid on many hospital staff. The unusually large number of patients and the shortage of staff has meant that hospital staff have had to remain on duty for abnormal lengths of time. Our minds and bodies are not intended to work those hours, and it is not surprising that doctors and nurses in particular feel burnout and depressive feelings.

Because depression erodes self-confidence one can feel they are imposing on others by asking for help. There can, of course, also be a bit of pride that does not want to accept that one is depressed! It can seem like weakness. Depression is not weakness, and suggestions that one should "snap out of it" or "pull oneself together" are very unhelpful.

It is vitally important when we are suffering from depression that we seek help. It may be a friend, our doctor, or a mental health support group that we approach. We need to trust that there are people around us who want to help us.

For those with mild depression, help from a counsellor or psychotherapist, and a combination of exercise, better eating patterns and sufficient sleep may be enough. For many it will require a visit to a GP and medication, in addition to exercise, better eating patterns and sufficient sleep. For some it will require hospitalization. On the positive side, with right treatment and support, most people with depression can make a full recovery.

For people of faith, depression has a spiritual dimension. Prayer is central to the Christian life and depression makes it difficult for one to pray. God may seem to have become distant or to have stopped listening. The spiritual



Fr Michael McGoldrick ocd, Termonbacca.

darkness is painful. However, good spiritual guidance can turn this experience into something very positive. It can become a breakthrough experience. Our images of God can be purified. We may discover that there is quite a degree of fear of God in our lives which we can replace with a sense of God's love for us.

In our very darkness, we can discover a sense of being loved by God. This can come through the experience of being loved by those who

care for us and help us. We can begin to embrace our weakness and turn it into strength. We can learn to be gentle with ourselves as God is gentle with us.

As we come out of depression, our experience is well described in the poem, 'Footprints in the sand' - The Lord replied, "My precious, precious child. I love you, and I would never, never leave you during your times of trial and suffering. When you saw only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you."

Super Soul Sundays at Columba House

THE Columba Community is calling 20-35 year olds to come along to its Super Soul Sundays, which get underway on Sunday, November 28 in Columba House, 11 Queen Street, Derry.

The Community is offering this time of prayer, praise and contemplative adoration, from 7-9 pm, as a way of finding more peace from the rushed pace of life, and an opportunity to encounter Jesus and develop a deeper

relationship with Christ.

"This is a perfect opportunity and invitation to make time and space for God in your life, with like-minded individuals who walk with you on the journey," say the Community.

Those interested are asked to get in touch to register for a place as soon as possible, as places are limited due to restrictions on numbers.

Contact Jacklyn by DM Columba House FB page or call 02871262407.

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.

The NET

Sharing the fruits of the faith in the Derry Diocese

Contacting us:

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

editorthenet15@gmail.com
or ring/text 07809292852

“Teach our young people to change the future and not be crushed by the thought of it” – Bishop Donal



THE annual Diocesan Mass for Deceased Young People and Children began with Bishop Donal placing a basket of scrolls, containing the names of the young who had died during the past year, at the front of the Cathedral altar.

In his homily for the Mass, during which young Pope John Paul II Award participants from the Cathedral Parish took part in the liturgy, Bishop Donal looked at what the Gospel reading had to offer with regards how to channel the enthusiasm and love for life of young people, amidst the “struggle with the reality of so many young deaths”.

He also referred to the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, COP26, saying: “It is easy enough to be angry about what somebody else is doing in the rain forests on the other side of the world. But we can be blind to the little ones in our towns and cities who are being crushed by the

system and circumstances”.

He added: “The great founders of religious congregations and movements sacrificed themselves to bring people in from the cold. Young people are motivated by generous love that costs a lot - and not merely by satisfying anger that costs little. Help them to be prophets of hope”.

Remarking that the Church in this country faces many challenges, Bishop Donal posed the question, “Do we simply jump on slogan-led bandwagons, or do we have an uncomfortable prophetic voice?”

He continued: “The turbo-charged economic system is not just damaging the equilibrium of nature, but it is also crushing

millions of little people. Can we discover a language that defends not just the environment but also the tens of thousands of children who die each day of preventable diseases and the ten million who are prevented from being born each year?

“Unless we have a distinctive grace-filled voice, we are merely parroting the fears and anger of others. Young people will respond when they hear Christ’s voice”.

Commenting on the second reading, which spoke of Jesus who sacrifices Himself to destroy the power of sin, Bishop Donal said: “Our weekly attendance at the celebration of the Mass invites us to be part of the divine initiative

which will heal the face of the earth that has been so scarred by addiction, abuse, sin and greed. We are challenged by the teachings of scripture, we dare to call God ‘Our Father’ and, through Communion, we join in the power of the Christ’s self-giving on Calvary”.

He added: “In the face of an economic model that suits the rich and powerful – whatever the cost to the little ones – Jesus invites us to let divine wisdom, generosity and love shine through our simple lives...We who share each week in the memorial of Christ’s sacrifice are called to model what grace-filled relationships can look like. A prophetic church will be both an inspiration to the hurting and

the idealistic - and a threat to the defensive and powerful. That is where the future lies for Christ’s followers”.

Concluding, Bishop Donal highlighted the need to “teach our young people to change the future and not be crushed by the thought of it”, saying: “The power to face the future and not to fear it flows from the sacrament of Christ’s death. Inspire our young people to have faith, to be able to hope and to believe in love. That will protect them against the sadness and despair that has crushed too many lives too early. And for those whom we have lost too early, can we let them go in peace”



Drawing God at St Mary’s PS Draperstown

by Corinne Coyle – Principal

WE welcome ‘World Drawing God Day’ each year. A day when our school community spends time considering this most revealing question – What does God look like?

Great care is taken around a question of such magnitude. Planning and preparation is key. Time is set aside to be still, to be silent, to be mindful. Moments of quiet awareness are essential for developing the discipline of spirituality with young children.

Outcomes and revelations cannot be guaranteed, but we have found that the power of prayerful meditation is such that if we experience it, a fire is enkindled and begins to burn. We begin with a readiness to see what is there and let what is there speak.

I recall being told, “Your image of God creates you”. This powerful statement defines the impact of the perception of Our Lord that we hold in our hearts.

Scripture is filled with images of God and metaphors for the sacred. Male figures dominate much of Christian liturgy – Father, King,

Lord. Other images are beyond gender – fire, light, a rock, wind, breath, spirit, love.

Our image of God is central to our relationship with the divine and our relationship is key. A child’s relationship with God is an invitation to the deepest of relationships, one in which they grow to understand who they are and what their life is made for.

God is love. Children must experience this love to spark the relationship and develop their unique image of God. It is, therefore, vital that we value and nurture our children’s image of God.

At St Mary’s, we enjoy asking the important questions: Who is God? What is God? We see God in so many ways – in people, in nature, in the world around us, in the universe, in the manifestation of a virtue and in the love and joy that abounds each day.

Enjoy the wonderful images of God created in love by the children of St Mary’s PS, Draperstown.

More drawings on p32





World Youth Day at home

Sunday 21st Nov
Termonbacca
12-3:30pm
Diocesan event
Ages 14- 18

- Gain Pope John Paul II Hours
- Take part in celebrating young people of faith
- £5 to secure booking

SIGN UP HERE OR MESSAGE @DERRYOUTH FOR AN APPLICATION FORM




Celebrating World Youth Day in Termonbacca

by Lizzie Rea

DERRY Diocesan Youth will be holding a youth event in Termonbacca on November 21, from 12 noon until 3:30 pm.

This event is for young people in the Diocese, aged 14 and up, to come and to get involved with their faith and celebrate world youth day in preparation for World Youth Day in Lisbon 2023.

We encourage participants of the Pope John Paul II Award to come and join us and receive some hours for their award.

Young people will get a chance to meet other young people from

around the Diocese and also speak to Bishop Donal. There will be refreshments, fun and fellowship throughout the day.

If you have any further enquires please email lizzie.rea@derrydiocese.org or message @derryouth social media pages. A Student Contribution of £5 deposit must be paid before November 16 to secure a place.

The deposit can be posted to or you can drop it in to the Diocesan Youth Office at The Catechetical Centre, The Gate Lodge, 2 Francis St, Derry BT48 7DS.

THIS month, we welcome another new youth writer, Niamh O’Kane, of the Banagher Parish in the Co Derry Deanery, who attends Thornhill College.

In her first article for ‘The Net’, Niamh has written about the Pope’s relaunched ‘Click to Pray’ app and shares her own experience of it.

Peter and Bronagh have also downloaded the app and they share their thoughts on this new digital age way to pray.

Keeping a close eye on news from the COP26 Conference, in Glasgow, Zara comments on the ‘Sacred People, Sacred Heart’ Statement signed by faith leaders from around the world, as part of their efforts to address the climate crisis.

Settling into university life at Trinity College, Dublin, John shares how the experience has offered an opportunity to come closer to God, while Hollie reflects on a recent retreat she enjoyed at Glenstal Abbey along with fellow students from Maynooth University.



Hollie Frystal,
Co Tyrone Deanery.



Bronagh Doherty,
Co Derry Deanery



Peter Grant,
Inishowen Deanery.



Niamh O’Kane - Co
Derry Deanery



Gemma Gallagher,
Derry City Deanery



John Augustine Joseph,
Derry City Deanery.



Zara Schlindwein,
Derry City Deanery.

Appreciating the opportunity to consider the sirens in her life, Hollie shares her experience of...

Glenstal Abbey’s ‘Tune into Prayer Retreat’

ON Saturday, October 23, I attended the ‘Tune into Prayer Retreat’ in Glenstal Abbey with a group of students from across St Patrick’s University, Maynooth, and members of St Catherine’s Society.

The retreat was led by Fr Luke McNamara, both a Benedictine monk of Glenstal Abbey and a lecturer of St Patrick’s Maynooth. It was such a wonderful retreat acknowledged not only by the students, but also the monks, as we learnt from them that we were their first visitors since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The ‘Tune into Prayer Retreat’ consisted of a series of talks, prayers and reflection, personal time, the opportunity to attend Confessions and the gathering for the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Upon our arrival, the Abbot of Glenstal Abbey welcomed us and gave his talk on the theme of prayer. Father Abbot Brendan Coffey posed a question for reflection: “What are the sirens in my life?”

I thought this was an excellent question, encouraging one to

reflect on what are the things that hold them back from creating time and space to talk and listen to God, hence, also discerning and identifying the areas in one’s life that needs to be strengthened by prayer. It also raises the question: Does my prayer life in itself need strengthened?

Coinciding with the concept of ‘Synodality’, Glenstal has highlighted for me the importance of community and prayer.

Furthermore, in our NET publication’s faith conversations between the youth writers and Bishop McKeown, the Bishop spoke of the impact that the beauty of prayer has on the expression of oneself, saying: “Somebody said that the longest thirty centimetres in the world is from the head to the heart. You can think all you want, but I think prayer, particularly repetitive prayer, that chanting prayer, is about allowing the divine to percolate into your imagination. Then it is from that, they will write music or do beautiful art”.

This expression of prayer was evident in Glenstal’s Icon Chapel, which portrayed many old pieces



Glenstal Abbey

of art and icons that featured many of the most important and famous biblical scenes, constructed with colours and shapes to convey the emotion and meaning of the image.

Prayer is the springboard to discipleship, as it encourages us to take up Christ’s mission with a profound understanding of God’s vision and will, especially in how we will ‘walk together’ as a Church community.

Finally, I would like to

thank the Benedictine monks of the Congregation of the Annunciation in Glenstal Abbey for their warm welcome, hospitality and their insightful retreat programme. It was widely appreciated by all, as the absence of retreats and pilgrimages were sorely missed during the worst of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The retreat reminded me of the words of St James, that prayer and action go hand in hand.

A click closer to God – ‘Click to Pray 2.0’ by Bronagh Doherty

MODERN day living involves our mobile phones and tablets. One of the best inventions since light, some may say, others may disagree. Endless, mindless scrolling can be turned around into mindful, resolute prayer.

‘Click to Pray’, an app created by the ‘Pope’s Worldwide Prayer Network’, aims to invite people from all corners of the world to pray with Pope Francis daily. This app reaches out to those who lead busy lifestyles but still wish to keep God in their lives. It offers a daily prayer which Pope Francis has offered up for the various intentions of the world, and also hosts a “school of prayer”, that teaches users which prayers to say for their own intentions. Also

available on the app is an eRosary.

As a user, you can share your prayers if you would like other people to join you in offering thoughts. App users can find a daily schedule which incorporates prayer into their day up to three times: morning, to start your day off right; afternoon, to reflect on your day and ask God for assistance in what you are doing that particular day; and evening, to thank God for His protection that day and turn your worries over to Him, and ask for guidance.

Over the past 19 months, our lives have gone more digital than ever expected with Zoom quizzes, webcam Masses and online schooling. ‘Click to Pray’ is the latest advancement, and

one which is greatly welcomed by many. Social media and technology often get portrayed very negatively but there are positive aspects, such as bringing us closer to God every day, thanks to ‘Click to Pray’.

This fantastic app can give users an intention to offer their prayers up for, or can give them the words to say when we struggle to find the right words when we are praying.

As we are taught, “When two or more are gathered in my name, I am there”, the power is in numbers, and this app aims to get more people praying for our shared intentions. For example, on October 24, Pope Francis updated the app with a prayer for the migrants of Libya, stating:

“I express my closeness to the thousands of migrants, refugees and others in need of protection in Libya: I never forget you; I hear your cries and I pray for you. So many of these men, women and children are subjected to inhuman violence. (Click to Pray 2.0 - 24/10/21)”.

I have joined the ‘Click to Pray’ community so that I can be involved in prayer for the wider issues of humanity in our world that I may otherwise be unaware of. I urge you to do the same.

‘Click to Pray 2.0’ is available to download for IOS and Android devices. Prayer is just a click away, in our pockets and our hearts all day long.

Pray on the go with ‘Click to Pray’ by Peter Grant

A new prayer app has been launched by the Pope’s Worldwide Prayer Network called, ‘Click to Pray’. This app aims to share daily prayers with many people across the globe on smart devices anywhere and anytime.

The many lockdowns throughout the pandemic sparked this idea for people to

access daily prayer on the internet anytime they want, at work or at home. It connects others into God’s community as people can share their thoughts and prayers with one another from different sides of the world, and also access Pope Francis’ teachings every day.

In my view, this app is part of building the future of the church

with young people today, and for the next generation. We learnt through this pandemic that we can always be connected to God in prayer on smart devices and apps such as this. Many changes had to be introduced throughout the pandemic, like online Masses, and, in our Diocese, the Pope John Paul II Award students tuning in every week to the Derry Youth Group on Instagram, completing tasks given to them and helping out in their own communities.

We need to adapt and expand

such changes, as this, I believe, is what the future of the church is going to be as the world goes forward into the digital age.

Apps such as ‘Click to Pray’ will be common for younger people around the world in the next five years, and this will help give them access to the teachings of God not just in a book but on a screen too, as the world is changing but not the teachings of God.

After having ‘Click to Pray’ for a week, I discovered it offers a wide range of prayers for many different people and age groups,

and it also keeps us mindful of others who may be struggling through illness, homelessness, poverty or depression during difficult times, and that prayers from around the world will be heard by Our Lord to give them strength.

Every day during the week, I scrolled through many shared prayers from people across the world in many different languages. I wouldn’t be the best at languages, such as Spanish, at school, but I managed to translate them and understand

the thoughts and prayers of those who wrote them, in everyday life.

I would recommend this app hugely in my parish and in our Diocese to many young and, indeed, everyone, as a means to learn about the teachings of God and share in the thoughts and intentions of Pope Francis in daily prayer.

This is only the beginning of a new digital age in the Church, where we can come together in prayer and faith in our community and across the globe at the tap of a screen.

Settling in to university life in Dublin, John writes about...

Life at Trinity...an opportunity to become closer to God



John in the grounds of Trinity College.

GOING to secondary school is one sort of experience. It is similar to what you have done before in primary school, yet you are given more responsibility for your own study as you move through the years.

If you went to Catholic school, you would have had a chance to be formed in the faith. University, on

the other hand, is a new universe compared to primary and secondary school. You are thrust into a campus with a multitude of buildings, surrounded by thousands of confused students. No one cares if you do or don't do your work. No one cares if you even attend classes. There is no religious formation.

One has to find his own way through university. Some may call this freedom to live and study as you like – the freedom espoused by many in the world, but I think it is not. I find it an opportunity to become more disciplined, an opportunity to grow in my faith, an opportunity to carry your daily cross.

When I first went through the front gate of Trinity College, about a month ago, I did not really know what I was getting myself into. I had only been informed two weeks prior of my offer and now I was in college.

My first day was just figuring out where I had to go. Trinity is not a big campus, so getting around is fairly easy, but when you don't know where you're going, Trinity is a big maze that is difficult to find your way out of.

Since it was my first day, I decided I might as well go to a Mass. If you want a reason from me, why Dublin is a great city, this is why. There are many Masses taking place at any time you want, whether it be morning, afternoon, or evening; not that Derry does not have this, but the scale in Dublin is just another level.

Again, these are the advantages

of living in a city with three million people. There is at least one church in every street in Dublin. I was told they were built during a time when the city centre was more packed than it already is. If memory serves me correctly, I think I went to Whitefriars Church. And this is where I discovered that there are confessions during the day in Dublin. Again Dublin is large. The point here is this, going to college in a place that is completely foreign to you, whilst confusing and annoying, can be a great blessing as well.

A month-and-a-half has passed since I have come to Dublin. Whilst college is definitely all-consuming for me as I do Physics (I still have no free time unless I procrastinate), I have felt that I have had an opportunity to become closer to God.

Even though the struggles I face are not as great as those of many others, they remind me of the daily cross I must take. I thank God for everything He has done for me during these weeks. For without Him, life as a college student, for me, would be a lot less lively.



'Click to Pray' fantastic way of connecting with others in prayer

by Niamh O'Kane

'CLICK to Pray' is an app that can be downloaded by anyone onto iOS or Android platforms. This app was launched by the 'Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network' and it creates great opportunities for those who wish to use it.

The app's users are able to pray with Pope Francis on a daily basis, and are able to support the synodal process and help to expand the influence of the Catholic Church.

Monsignor Lucio Ruiz, who is the Secretary of the Dicastery for Communication, commented that through the COVID-19 pandemic, a lesson everybody should have learned is that the "digital culture has much to offer...to reach and accompany men and women wherever they may be..."

Through use of social media and technology, it is evident that Pope Francis' social media following has grown exponentially and Monsignor Ruiz highlights this.

The 'Click to Pray' app offers a wide range of content for prayer at any moment throughout the day, which in turn inspires people to take an interest and to understand the intentions of Pope Francis.

The app also enables its users to pray for the challenges facing humanity as a whole and even to pray for those close to you and those struggling. It is very easily accessible to everyone too, and is available in seven different languages.

The app aims to bridge the divide between generations by promoting interactions amongst different users to understand each other in a shared space. Each user can share their intentions and prayers throughout the app,

allowing for communication to be made and learning opportunities to be experienced through the teaching tool provided within the app.

Over 2.5 million people use the app, 'Click to Pray', which allows around 400,000 users to pray with Pope Francis at a time.

"The Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network is at the service of the spiritual process, which invites us to be available for the encounter, listening from the heart and the discernment of the Holy Spirit," said Cardinal Mario Grech, the Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops.

I, myself have used this app and, in my opinion, it is a fantastic way to connect with others and Pope Francis. The options are essentially endless within the 'Click to Pray' app, with access to many prayers and attitudes at your fingertips. The layout of the app allows navigating different areas within it to be a simple and easy process, allowing prayer to come first. You will be able to organise your very own prayer schedule, which can allow people who are usually very busy and preoccupied with other things to fit prayer into their everyday lives.

Prayer sustains community and personal conversion, and springs from silence and contemplation. This app is of an immense help to the Catholic Church as it stresses the importance of prayer, while being available to those who may not have had the means to attend Church before, or the time to engage in prayer. It is also important for younger generations with regards to reigniting the spirit and prayer needed in the Church.

(source: vaticannews.va)

"All people, all living things, and the Earth are sacred" *by Zara Schlindwein*



FOR the COP26 Conference, many faith leaders from around the globe united with the aim of addressing the climate crisis, by signing a "Sacred People, Sacred Heart Statement".

The leaders acknowledged the escalating damage that the climate emergency, and subsequently the Covid-19 pandemic, is causing, and revealed that a "far better

future is possible if our collective response to the pandemic and the climate crisis is guided by compassion, love and justice at a scale that meets this moment".

They continued to stress that "the good life is one of connectedness - with each other and all of nature".

Whilst the Sacred Heart of Jesus symbolises God's boundless

and passionate love for mankind, I believe that God's love extends to all living creatures that reside in this world, and that is why it is our duty, as human beings to extend our love to the forms of life that desperately need it.

The moral of this statement outlines the plea for governments to stop using an outdated economic system that relies on fossil fuels and the "destruction of the very forests, waters, oceans and soils that make life possible".

As they addressed financial institutions, the signatories announced that they need to "abandon systems based on exploitive returns", because money "must serve the common good, not exploit the vulnerable, destroy nature, and increase income inequality".

In my opinion, if we were to abandon all avarice for economic gain, the environment would thrive.

On their part, the faith leaders vowed to be "models of environmental leadership", and pledge to power their own facilities with 100% renewable energy where possible and

divest from anti-environmental companies. They also promise to invest in climate solutions and encourage the people under their care to participate in transforming the earth through advocacy, education, job training and other means.

The faith leaders also addressed civilians on a personal level, expressing that they too can contribute, with a different and healthier lifestyle that will benefit our lives and the life of the world that surrounds us.

It is not a time for blame. If we began to list all the people that caused damage to the world, the list would go on and on. However, whilst it is not time for direct accusation, it is time for collective responsibility, something which we can all have trouble accepting.

The means to save the world are both available and accessible, the only thing that needs enhanced, is mankind's attitude towards it. We need to embrace the message of the 'Sacred People, Sacred Heart Statement', and continue living with the divine love for all creatures, that God so desperately wants us to have.

Mini Mission an uplifting time together for Banagher parishioners

FOR three days towards the end of October, the Banagher Parish held a 'Mini Mission' that was so appreciated by the parishioners that they are looking forward to a longer one next year!

Parish administrator, Fr Micheal McGavigan and the Parish Pastoral Council are delighted with its success, with good numbers turning out for all the Masses, even the early morning celebrations of the Eucharist, and the evening talks on the theme, Faith, Hope & Love, by the Mission director, Fr Dominic McGrattan, of the Down & Connor Diocese, who is also the Catholic chaplain to Queen's University, Belfast.

Paying tribute to the strong faith amongst the people of the Banagher Parish, Fr Micheal also greatly appreciated the input from retired priests, Fr Seamus O'Connell, in St Mary's Altinure, and Fr Arthur O'Reilly, in St Peter

& St Paul's, Ballymonie, Foreglen, and Fr David O'Kane, of the neighbouring parish of Claudy.

In the Mission booklet, Fr Micheal wrote about how the tradition of the Parish Mission is longstanding throughout Ireland, adding: "It was seen as a time to enthuse parishioners, to encourage them in their faith and to inspire them to grow closer to God."

"During this last year and more, we have all faced great upheaval, fear and, indeed, isolation. A small virus, invisible to the naked eye, has brought about the closure of churches, cancellations of weddings and Baptisms, playgrounds locked up, lonely hospital stays, redundancies and so much more."

"It could feel like we can no longer be certain of anything. But St Paul reminds us that three things always remain; faith, hope and love."

He went on to note that the three-day Mission, from October 25-27, would provide "an opportunity to reflect on these three theological virtues; faith, hope and love".

He also expressed the hope that each person who came to the Mission would find something to inspire their thinking, that they would draw closer to God, and that they would realise their own role as a witness of faith, hope and love in these times.

As well as the Mission being a time of prayer, the parishioners were also called to action. On the first day, which focussed on 'faith', they received a small bottle of Holy Water which they were asked to place at the back door of their homes, and to bless themselves each day, calling for the protection of the Holy Trinity upon all in their homes.

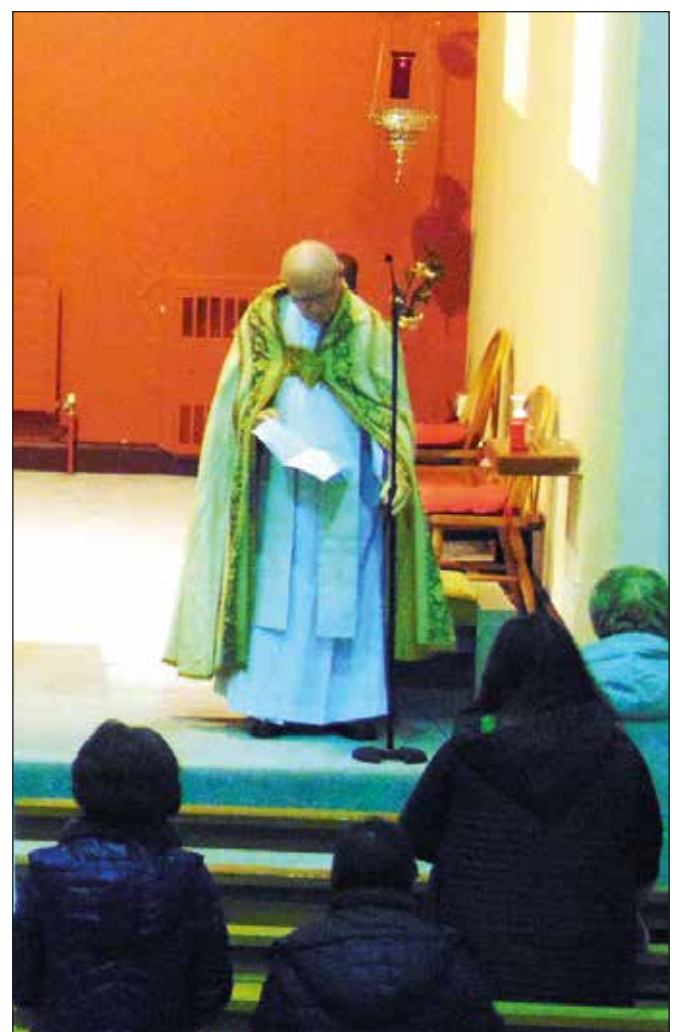
On the second day, which focussed on 'Hope', they received

a bag of spring flowering bulbs, which they were invited to plant, and they were given a prayer of hope to say on doing so.

On the third day, which focussed on 'Love', the parishioners received an envelope containing a scripture reading and prayer for discernment. The hope was expressed that in the days following, they would become aware of an action they should make to witness the Love of God and the charity of the Church to the community.

To celebrate their special time together, the parishioners enjoyed a cuppa and sweet treat after the second morning Mass in each of the three churches in the Parish, on the final day of the Mission... toasting its success and the faith, hope and love to be nurtured in their lives as they looked forward to better times.

Altinure



Fincairn



Foreglen



Opening the Mullan HOPE Centre in memory of her family and in thanksgiving to the community of Moville for their support, Geraldine Mullan shares how...

“Faith, hope and love keep me going”

MOVILLE Garden Centre was the ‘go to’ place for many gardeners in and around the Inishowen coastal town for 25 years because of the friendly and trusted advice of its owner, the late John Mullan, as to what, or what not, to grow in order to get the full potential out of their green spaces.

In the aftermath of the tragic accident which claimed the lives of John, 14-year-old Tomás and six-year-old Amelia, when the family car plunged into Lough Foyle on a stormy August 20 night last year, the silence that filled their home and the garden centre over the hedge spurred bereaved wife and mother, Geraldine, to find a way of bringing life back to this once busy hub and giving her something positive to focus on.

Knowing little about gardening herself, the 46-year-old nurse had a couple of people consider the facility with a view to leasing it, but the set-up didn’t suit their requirements.

“I didn’t know what to do with the space,” said Geraldine, adding: “We had been closed down during lockdown and were one of the first businesses to be able to open up again afterwards, with it being an outdoor space, so it was a place the community could come to and feel safe meeting up.”

“With Covid still with us, I thought of how the garden centre offered a lot of outdoor space that wasn’t being utilised now, so the idea of offering it as community space came to mind.”

Thanks to the help of family, friends and the local community, the garden centre has now become a space for community activities and a hub of positive energy and well-being, with the non-profit Mullan HOPE Centre having opened in the lead-up to the first anniversary of the accident.

“I look for hope every day,” said Geraldine, “John, Tomás and Amelia were so full of life, yet their lives were far too short. John was only 49 and he had given so much of himself to the garden centre. It was always a place of hustle and bustle, especially over the summer. The Hope Centre has brought a bit of life back to the centre and I hope it will benefit the community, especially regarding mental health.”

“So, this is my way of giving back to the community, as they have been so good to me since the accident. The whole idea is for it to be a space for community groups to use, for educational courses, horticulture, recreation, fitness, music, or whatever the community want to use it for. Hopefully, going forward, it will be a place for schools to use too. I am very happy for the space to be

utilised.

“We started with a Farmers’ Market weekly for the months of July and August to give some local businesses a chance to show their products and their craftsmanship, and there are refreshments and music. The Market is now on the first and third Sundays of every month, from 11.30 am until 3 pm.

“We had a special one for Halloween, which had 29 stalls, and the traditional music group, Ceolan played, so people were able to have tea/coffee and listen to some music as well. A lot of local schools got involved with the Halloween Market and made Halloween related props. The children loved taking their parents to show them what they had created. We had pumpkin carving and colouring competitions too, with prizes given out.”

The schools also got involved in a Sunflower project using some of the 170 Sunflowers Geraldine had managed to get from one of the Sunflowers the children and John had grown and entered in a Sunflower Festival organised by the Redcastle Hotel.

As well as the Moville schools, Steelstown Primary School, in Derry, got involved in this, and Geraldine was welcomed along by the principal, Mrs Siobhan Gillen, to help plant some of the flowers. Sunflower seeds were also sent to schools further afield, including Dublin, Monaghan and Waterford, and the Redcastle sponsored a prize for the tallest flower.

“The Sunflower stands for hope,” remarked Geraldine, “and I look for hope every day.”

Commenting on the Family Hope Day that was held at the centre on the first anniversary of the accident, Geraldine said: “I have lost my family but I would like to offer opportunities for other families to have fun. So at the Family Hope Day, we had activities like balloon modelling, singing and dancing.”

She added: “Donegal Youth Services used the space for youth leadership courses over the summer, and The Men’s Shed held a concert there in September. They raised €1,900 and gave it to the HOPE Centre.

“The Inishowen 100 bikers came back here at the end of their run out on Sunday, August 1, and donated the funds they raised. The money from these events has been used to buy chairs for the centre, and these were used at ‘Amelia’s Glad Rags for HOPE’ event in October. Amelia would have been eight on October 8. She was only a couple of weeks shy of her seventh birthday when the accident happened.

Poignant

“It was a very poignant but successful night. We had a drinks reception. People gave up clothing they would have worn to weddings or a ball, which they would not wear again, and we turned John’s tunnel into a catwalk. Each tunnel is named after one of my family – John, Tomás and Amelia. We had three former Miss Irelands amongst the models, as well as my mum, who was the oldest model at 83 years old.”

“Thanks to a number of sponsors that came on board with me”, remarked Geraldine, “we had that fashion show organised within the space of three weeks. The MC was Miriam O’Callaghan, RTE presenter, and Barbara Power, fashion editor with the Independent News & Media Group, and Noel Cunningham, manager of Harvey’s Point were also involved.

“The event was about sustainability, re-using outfits. It was something different. It allowed ladies to get dressed up and have a bit of fun. We also had the Inishowen Harp Ensemble, which has been recently formed to reinvigorate the playing of the harp, and the traditional group, Ceolan, play music. It was beautiful.”

With Christmas approaching and people starting to pick up presents, there will be a weekend Christmas Market at the Hope Centre from December 3-5, which will be open on the Friday from 6-9 pm, and during the day on the Saturday and Sunday.

There will also be a special festive event held on Sunday, December 19, with carol singing, arts and crafts for the children, as well as a Santa’s Grotto, with Mrs Claus there too, and refreshments.

“Each of the tunnels will be decorated. John loved Christmas and spoiled me decorating the whole house, so this is for him.”

Talking about how her Catholic faith has been a source of solace for her, Geraldine said: “My faith has definitely helped me during this time. Faith, hope and love are central to our faith and it is these three things that are keeping me going. The love I got from John and the children and the memories I have of them keeps me going. I hope to be with them again one day and my faith tells me that I will see them again. John is with the two kids and minding them, and the kids are minding their dad until we can be together again.

“We regularly went to Mass as a family. Tomás was an altar server and Amelia should have been making her First Holy



Designed by Eileen McLaughlin of Greencastle, the three Sunflowers in the Mullan HOPE Centre banner signify John, Tomás and Amelia, as do the large pebbles, with the smaller pebbles representing the community, and the heart and dragonfly representing Geraldine.



Geraldine helping to plant Sunflowers at Steelstown PS, Derry.

continued from page 9

Communion. We brought the kids up with faith, it was very much part of our life. John was all about the morals of a good family life.

"I feel them very close to me. I visit their grave at Ballybrack every day, and just pray and talk to them there. I don't agree with the way they were taken from me but that is how it is.

"There is obviously a reason why I survived and they didn't. I don't know what that reason is and I don't know if I will ever get that reason".

"At their funeral, I got up on the altar to speak because I wanted people to know John, Tomás and Amelia the way I did," said Geraldine, "My final words were to say to people to tell their loved ones that they are precious. I was lucky to be loved by John and the children. Unfortunately, since the events of August 20, I don't have that anymore. They are with me in spirit – they are the first I speak to in the morning and the last I speak to at night. And I ask them to keep me going.

"I have to believe that there is a resting place and when my time comes I will join them there. All I have are memories. I can't turn back the clock, so I want to remind

people to slow down and appreciate their loved ones. I take one day at a time and sometimes it's hour by hour. I know that John and the kids want me to keep going. It is not the journey I want to be one but it is the cross I have to bear.

"I would also urge people to ask for help if they need it. Covid has brought its own struggles for people. Everyone has their own stress. If something I say gives people strength to keep going, then that is a good to come from all of this. I would always say never to lose hope. Always hope. Cherish each moment and keep going, and how each does that is up to them. I have got strength and love from family and friends, and I also have my faith".

Originally from Co Galway, Geraldine has been living in Moville for 10 of the 19 years she has spent in Co Donegal, and looks on it as her home now. Deeply appreciative of the wonderful support she has received from the community since the accident, her desire now is to give something back through the Mullan HOPE Centre.

Enquiries regarding the Centre can be sent to mullanhopecentre@gmail.com.



Beautiful creations at Banagher floral workshops

THE Banagher Parish held a Flower Arranging Workshop over three Sundays in Fincairn Hall during October, and the finished

arrangements showed great promise for some beautiful floral displays in the chapel and homes of the parish going forward.

Addiction can only ever be beaten by going to Jesus – Fr Paul Farren

"NO matter what circumstances we are living in, Jesus is comforting us with the knowledge that Heaven and meeting God outweighs any burdens of this life," Fr Paul Farren said in his homily for the November Matt Talbot Prayer Society Prayer gathering in St Eugene's Cathedral.

Referring to the Gospel passage read, he said: "I think that Jesus also reveals that it's inevitable that for us to live as Christians there is persecution in this life. I suppose for some it's a tension between the way of the World and the way of the Christian. For others, it's more than a tension; it's a full scale battle".

"On the first Monday of each month, in this Cathedral and in Ennis Cathedral," he continued, "we pray specifically for those enrolled in the Matt Talbot Prayer Society. Those enrolled are dealing with addiction; addiction is a full scale battle.

"Jesus speaks specifically to those in an addicted state through this Gospel - 'Happy are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.'"

"Addiction is always an attack on the human person. All forms of addiction are an attempt to

Stepping Beyond – an Advent retreat for men by Ruairi O'Neill

THIS Advent, we would like to invite any man who is interested to come along and join with us in this 'Stepping Beyond' series at Termonbacca, which will be a weekly meeting each Monday night at 7.30 pm, beginning November 29.

We invite men, aged 18+, to journey together through this sacred time in the Church's calendar. We are a group of men who recognise the need to take action, to mobilize resources and stay connected.

We can share in a rich dialogue, which calls us to deeper reflection on Jesus' life. Jesus, in very real sense, stepped beyond His world and entered our world. Where does all this closeness and familiarity come from? Communion is the answer to this question.

isolate the individual, to remove the recognition that we are all made in the image and likeness of God. Addiction can only ever be beaten by going to Jesus; Jesus died for our freedom. No one who goes to Jesus can remain a prisoner of this world".

He added: "One of the great tricks of the devil is to not allow us to recognise his work. It's possible to be listening to this sermon tonight and believe that we may know someone dealing with addiction. It's also possible to be listening tonight and not recognise that we are also dealing with an addiction.

"It's so important to continuously reflect on our own

This series is a call to each man to step beyond his isolated existence and to step into the fullness of life. It is inspired by the Holy Father's Encyclical letter, 'Fratelli Tutti', on companionship and fraternity.

For me, personally, stepping beyond represents what the monk, Thomas Merton spoke of when he stated: "The constant in life was that still point within us where the presence of Christ resides."

Basically, it is in companionship with other men that we reach that stillness and recognise the Divine Child within us as we journey through Advent together.

It has been nearly two years since the impact and ongoing difficulties associated with the pandemic. The consequences have produced a trauma 'freeze response' within our communities. I am vulnerable to the mental impact

of the pandemic; stress, fatigue uncertainty, loneliness, and isolation.

Kurlander 2020 speaks right into the heart of how we unfreeze ourselves, or the Three Tools to Thaw the Freeze response in our communities:

1. Social engagement: In companionship with other men through Advent 2021, stepping out with an encounter with a friend or another smiling face can really help men to thaw the freeze response.

2. Get Inspired: In our companionship with each other we can listen to the Advent podcasts together and this can help connect into yourself. Connect with the Divine Child within.

3. Shake it off: Pope Francis' Encyclical letter, 'Fratelli Tutti'

speaks of fraternity and social friendships. If you are feeling 'Frozen', you can begin to thaw yourself by standing up with friends in fellowship, shaking your fear and uncertainty off together.

I feel a profound gratitude that Christ has called us to discover new possibilities with each other in this Advent retreat. Essentially, it is "a fixed point among the waves of the sea." We are being renewed and deepened by beauty and the adventure of our Christian living.

"Is there hope?" In men coming together, I believe we will witness a 'strange positiveness' to challenge our difficulties during Advent.

If you are interested in coming along, please let us know by emailing termonbaccaderry@gmail.com.

the Saints in Heaven, we pray for those enrolled in the Matt Talbot Society. We also pray especially for those who are struggling to

recognise addiction in their lives, that they also can find the path to your freedom. Lord we are yours, do with us what you will".

Matt Talbot Prayer Society

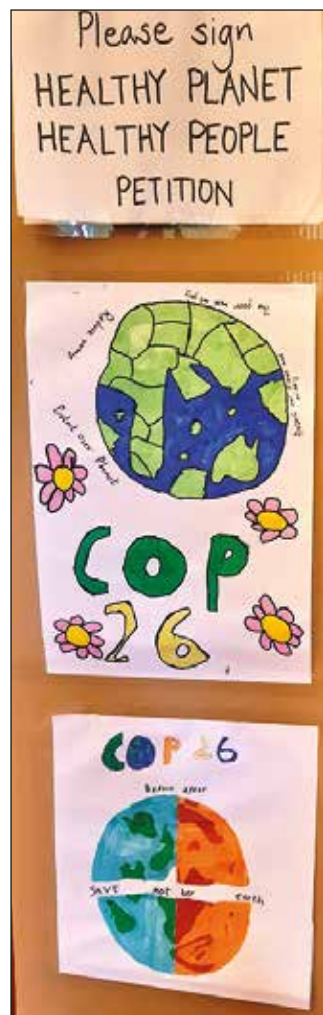
The Matt Talbot Prayer Society prays for those suffering from any form of addiction, for those recovering from addiction, and for all those affected by addiction, especially family members.

To join the Society, people are invited to enrol the name of the person to be prayed for and the addiction for which prayer is to be said to be freed from. Those enrolled are prayed for every

day by members of the Society, and Mass is offered on the first Monday of each month in St Eugene's Cathedral, at 7.30 pm. An enrolment card is given that includes the prayer that is said.

To enrol someone in the Society contact St Eugene's by calling 028 71 262894 or 028 71 365712, or emailing steugenes@btconnect.com, or private messaging St Eugene's Cathedral.

Steelstown and Thornhill parishes pray and advocate for Climate Justice *by Patricia McCormack*



INCLUDED in the 120,000+ 'Healthy Planet, Healthy People' petitions presented to World leaders and negotiators gathered in Glasgow, for COP26, were over 400 signatures of parishioners in Steelstown and Thornhill parishes.

We care about God's Creation. We care about those already impacted most by the heat waves, droughts, wildfires, intense storms and floodings. We care about what kind of world our children and grandchildren will inherit.

We can see the damage that is being done by the present rise in global temperatures of just 1.1degrees Celsius and we fear the climate catastrophe we are facing, with devastating consequences for all life on Earth, unless there are drastic cuts in global greenhouse emissions. This is very much our concern and an essential part of being a Christian today. So we advocated and we prayed during COP26.

The Catholic Petition, promoted by the global Laudato Si' Movement, gave us an opportunity to raise our voices and to call on governments to set ambitious targets that tackle

the climate emergency and biodiversity crisis.

We felt strongly that it was important to send a message to this critical summit on climate change, and to join with the many leaders and people of all faith traditions in appealing for speedy, responsible, and shared action to safeguard, restore, and heal our wounded humanity and the shared home entrusted to our stewardship.

Organising the petition signing was a cooperative venture. Thank you to Hollybush PS for providing and submitting the petition forms. Thanks also to the pupils and young people who made the posters and placards which were on display in both Steelstown and Thornhill Churches. Thanks to our priests for their sermons, the members of our joint Eco Group and other parishioners for helping to highlight and explain what the petition was about in the Parish Newsletter, social media, and at weekend Masses.

Steelstown PS, in addition to a School Assembly on Care of the Earth, helped to focus our attention on COP26 in a very effective way. Every pupil in the school drew a picture with the

message, "The eyes of the World are watching...and so are we."

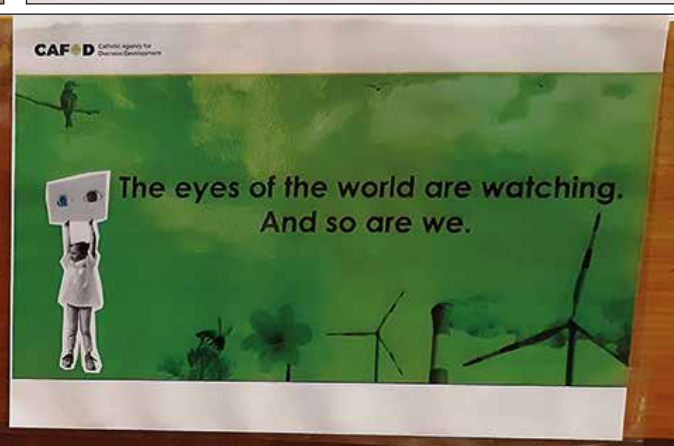
They highlighted their concerns for what is happening to our world. This artwork was displayed on pews throughout Our Lady of Lourdes Church to prompt everyone to pray and commit to the necessary changes.

We prayed, in the Prayers of the Faithful, that the loving Spirit of God would guide all those involved in COP26 to make wise, courageous and just decisions for the benefit of all. We also prayed for ourselves that we may have the necessary change of heart to embrace a simpler and more sustainable lifestyle.

When COP26 closed on November 12, the real work begins now. Pope Francis has asked all people this question: "What must I do in the face of this catastrophe?" As a parish, a school, a family, an individual?

One of the children's pictures carried the message: "No one is too small to make a difference... and I agree"

We are even stronger when we come together as a faith community.



November gathering for Blessed Brunch & Books



THE ‘Blessed is She’ Derry group had a very successful launch of its monthly ‘Blessed Brunch & Books’ in Termonbacca towards the end of October, when over 20 ladies gathered and received their copy of the first book to be focussed on – ‘Holiness For All’ by Fr Aloysius Rego ocd.

After enjoying some lunch together, the ladies broke into various groups to introduce themselves and share what they hoped to get from the sessions.

With St Therese of Lisieux having a special place in the hearts of many, particularly the people of Derry with its Carmelite Monastery, the choice of ‘Holiness For All’ as the first book to be read and discussed by the group went down well, with themes relating to ‘The Little Flower’ being the subject of the book.

Describing ‘Blessed is She’ as a sisterhood that desires two things: prayer and community, Aoife O’Neill, a founding member of the group, explained that ‘Blessed Brunch & Books’ was “a gathering of women ready to seek a deeper relationship with Christ through community”.

The next ‘Blessed Brunch & Books’ gathering will take place in the Carmelite Retreat Centre, at Termonbacca, on Saturday, November 20, from 12 noon until 2 pm. New members are always welcome.

Further information can be obtained by emailing termonbaccaderry@gmail.com.



Glenock chapel window fundraisers conquer Mullaghcarn

by Fr Roland Colhoun

THE parishioners of Ardstraw East embarked on a mountain climb on Sunday, November 7. The outing was a fund-raiser for manufacturing and installing new windows in St Eugene’s Church, Glenock.

The fourth oldest church in the Derry Diocese has undergone many restorations since it opened in 1785. Historic buildings need continuous maintenance, and this was the fifth sponsored walk in three years.

The group of thirty plus, energetic pilgrims set off from Newtownstewart to ascend the nearby majestic Mullaghcarn Mountain, in Gortin Glens. With a slight breeze and beautiful winter sunshine, the Sunday weather was ideal for walking. Our cheerful and experienced guide, Brendan McGonagle, led us upwards on the delightful forest road.

Climbing for an hour, we reached an altitude of 542 metres above sea-level. The summit affords panoramic views of the south Sperrin valleys. A summer’s day would enable the eye to catch Malin Head in the north, and Lough Neagh and the Mourne Mountains to the east. Descending is 15 minutes speedier! The distance covered was 4.3 miles in total, according to the guide’s estimate.

The purpose of the climb was social and financial. Each pilgrim was asked to contribute a registration fee of £15, but many of them gave extra and some are collecting sponsorship to increase the figure. The total income will be known in a few weeks’ time.

Despite the weary limbs, our pilgrims returned home with joyful hearts, delighted to have reached the famous summit of Mullaghcarn, the 370th highest in Ireland.

Pope Saint John Paul II relics blessing for Buncrana parishioners



Buncrana parish priest, Fr Francis Bradley giving a blessing with one of the Pope St John Paul II relics that recently visited the parish.

Reflecting on 50 years of ministry in the consecrated life, Sr Myriam McLaughlin has found...

There is something special about the Good Shepherd way of life

THE compassion and mercy of the Good Shepherd has always been needed, but never as much as now. People today are crying out for that touch that Jesus had, to hit the spot where healing is needed. At the core of the ministry of the Good Shepherd is being able to listen deeply, so that people feel they have been understood...that they have been touched by mercy, by compassion, for that is where healing happens.

Reflecting on 50 years of life with the Good Shepherd Sisters, Dungiven-born Sr Myriam McLaughlin shared these thoughts with 'The Net' as she talked about the journey she embarked on after joining the Order that was founded by St Mary Euphrasia Pelletier, in France in 1835, to assist women and children in most need, and how the Good Shepherd continues to call people to consecrated life and play an integral part in the life of the Church.

The sense of a religious vocation was present in Sr Myriam from a young age. The second eldest in the family of seven born to Michael and Sarah McLaughlin recalls growing up in a "very faith filled" home in 'The Benedy', which continues to hold a special place in her heart.

"The home place is very special to me still because, in the Penal Days, Mass would have been said in a field down by the river," explained Sr Myriam, adding: "The Mass Rock at Dungiven Chapel came from our farm, so the grounds of our home place are blessed and very special to me. There is a fishery there now, but the ground in that sacred corner of the farm is respected".

Recollecting the prayerful spirit of the community she grew up in, Sr Myriam said: "At that time, daily prayer in the home was important".

She added: "I had an aunt a Good Shepherd Sister in Belfast. She is buried in Dungiven with her parents. Sr Philomena was my dad's only sister and we had an annual trip to the Good Shepherds on the Ormeau Road, to visit her. We didn't have a car, so we went in a hire car, and I remember one time sitting on dad's knee in the back. He was talking to the driver and I was tapping his face to get his attention. I told him that I wanted to be a nun and he said, 'Well, we'll see when you grow up'.

"Later, after I left school, my mum was very happy that I got a job, but I remember thinking 'That won't satisfy me'. I was very good at needlework and went to train in Hasson's tailor shop in

Dungiven.

"However, I found that nothing was fulfilling me. I remember writing a letter on the window sill of the house to Sr Philomena to tell her what I wanted. I didn't go to a lot of dances or outings. My dad was keen for me to go out, so that I would know I was making the right decision. It was alright being out but there was something missing. The best way I can describe that 'something missing' is that it is like your favourite dinner – if the spices aren't in that dinner that you have in your head, then it doesn't fulfil. So, I sought, I looked and found".

Leaving her job, she went to Cork, where there was a Good Shepherd programme for young women who were interested in entering: "It was thought that it would be good for me to join them, and my parents agreed. So a car load of us, including my mum, dad, and aunt, headed off to Cork. I was about 15-and-a-half at the time. It was a big change from home, with very different accents and the move to city life.

"I remember talking to my dad before I went for my interview and him asking what I wanted to do – to go or not? I said, 'Whatever you say', and he replied, 'It's not what I say but what you want for your life'. That linked in very strongly to when I told him as a little child that I wanted to be a nun and he had said 'We'll see when you grow up'. So I saw that as a blessing. That was pretty strong stuff from my dad. It was probably killing him to let me go, but he wasn't going to stand in my way. His one condition on my entering was that I would not leave the country while he and mum were alive".

Profession

Entering the Good Shepherd Convent in Limerick in 1968, Sr Myriam made her first profession on September 29, 1971, and her final profession on October 3, 1976, in St Patrick's Church, Dungiven. She was the first Good Shepherd to have her final profession celebrated at parish level, up to that it would have been in the Convent.

Over the years, she has worked in different ministries with various age groups, including crisis intervention for families and preparing young women for life, having trained in social work and as a childcare worker.

Never putting her name forward any time there were requests for volunteers to go away on mission, because of what her father had said to her, Sr Myriam recalled receiving a request to

consider going to volunteer in Ethiopia shortly after he had died in 1986.

She said: "I went home to talk about it with my mother, who was still grieving dad. One of my brothers mentioned to her about the agreement I had had with dad, and mum said that I was now free to go and do what I wanted to do. So that was her blessing to let me be free to go.

"So, on September 30, 1988, I went to Ethiopia, where I had a very different experience, part of which was the internationality of our community. We had about six nationalities represented amongst us, including America, Ethiopia, Philippines, Indonesia and India. That was a very rich experience.

"Shortly after arriving there, I wanted to know the African way of working with women, so I did a training programme in Kenya called DELTA (Development Education and Leadership Teams in Action). This gave me a broader perspective of working in Africa and I used that to set up a development project, on which we had a staff of about 30 local people working with us".

"The highlight of my work in Ethiopia," continued Sr Myriam, "was working with women who were being trafficked. I did some training in Kenya regarding that. I particularly remember working in Addis Ababa, the capital. I was sent out to an area that was considered the poorest of the city, where we set up a community development centre for the local community, addressing all sections of that community.

"After it was well set up, I got itchy feet and so we moved to the inner city where poverty had driven women to prostitution in order to provide for their families, and some women had been trafficked for sexual exploitation. We could also see that there were advantages in networking with the Good Shepherds in Lebanon, so, we did a bit of work there, between Lebanon and Ethiopia".

Saying that the experience of Ethiopia with different religious communities (Christian and Muslim) had deepened her faith, Sr Myriam remarked: "Ethiopian Christian living is very much Old Testament. I love the liturgy there – the Ge'ez Rite, which is the ancient language of Ethiopia. Their liturgy would go on for three hours and their feast days were very special. They had more fast days in their liturgy than non-fast days. All of that had its influence on me. I really loved it.

"I came home from 1992-95 and then went back out again



until 2011, when we left Ethiopia because of the difficulty of getting visas for sisters. However, I have since visited on a few occasions and have continued to support the project for women being trafficked".

After leaving Ethiopia, Sr Myriam did a 100-day renewal programme in New Mexico, which she found very enriching. Returning to Ireland, she ministered for a time in Belfast before coming to the Good Shepherd Convent in Derry in 2012, where she was appointed local leader in 2016.

Commenting on her return home, Sr Myriam recalled wondering how she fitted into society here after being away for so long: "I had left the north of Ireland in 1965 and had never really lived long-term in it. It was a very different and new experience. I decided that I needed to do something to tune in, so I did CPE



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(Christian Pastoral Education) training for chaplaincy. At the end of that, I decided to do Spiritual Direction training in Drumalis House, Larne.”

She added: “I still do a bit of work at national level and, up to last year, I was on the board of the Ruhama Project, which was set up by the Good Shepherd Sisters and Our Lady of Charity Sisters in Dublin, in 1989”.

Ruhama was established to offer nationwide support to women impacted by prostitution, sex trafficking and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation.

Prayer

Highlighting the ongoing prayer ministry of the seven Good Shepherd Sisters in the Derry community, Sr Myriam said: “Our door is always open. We had a very busy house up to Covid. A lot of people ring to ask us to remember them or some intention in prayer, or just for a chat. Prayer ministry is something that the Sisters here can all continue in their older years. We are also involved in various initiatives in the local community and we find inspiration in the faith of many parishioners and their availability to support others.

“While it might be viewed that the Sisters are old and few, we, as consecrated religious, remain committed to supporting others. As we get older and have less energy for active ministry, we continue to keep our finger on the pulse. Our elderly sisters continue to be outward looking, to be touched by the challenges that others face, and to support them mainly through prayer”.

Very appreciative of the support from Derry Parishes for projects that the Good Shepherd Sisters are involved in internationally, Sr Myriam said: “We ensure that the many small individual donations that we receive are put to good use. Funds were raised for a Water Project in Kenya. Funds also went out to Beirut, Lebanon, that the parish had started raising prior to Covid. So, we are engaged in providing support, both at home and abroad, in ways that aren’t always obvious. My home parish

of Dungiven has also been very supportive. It is in little ways that people are getting involved”.

Due to Covid, Sr Myriam’s Golden Jubilee was celebrated in a quiet way, with Fr Michael Canny, Waterside PP, celebrating Mass with the community, followed by a meal in their home.

“In spite of the challenges I have faced over the years, I have continued to feel called to religious life, and I have gained much more than I could ever have anticipated,” she remarked, adding: “People sometimes question the relevance of religious life. From time-to-time, I return to words spoken by Bishop Daly at my final profession where he said, ‘that it was a courageous decision, a particularly courageous decision, a decision to be a contradiction to the world...and the full potential of this decision to be fully realised will be by God’s help and strength; to love, be patient, understanding, to listen to people. Only He can teach us to be Good Shepherd’.

“I believe the consecrated life remains an integral part of the Church. We each have a role in the Church and Pope Francis is very strong on that. I remember hearing a lecturer referring to the Creation story. He used the image of an incomplete circle, saying that the open space is God’s invitation to us to engage with all of creation in ‘one great act of giving birth’ (Rom. 8:22). His mission for all of us is that we be in communion with Him. That is the challenge we have as Church, to follow that mission of Christ.

“The Church is always evolving. We are part of whatever happens between now and whenever.”

Saying that the Good Shepherd lifestyle was one of accompanying people on the way and valuing people, Sr Myriam added: “Our foundress held that ‘one person is of more value than the whole world.’ There is that sense of belonging to our Shepherd God in accompanying people through whatever they are going through, and at the same time enjoying life. There is something special about the Good Shepherd way of life.”



The opening of a Community Development initiated by Sr Myriam.



Sr Myriam at the opening of a Community Development she was responsible for getting built.



Children supported by the Dungiven Parish.



Women supported by the Dungiven Parish.

This month, and next, Fr Stephen Quinn ocd, Termonbacca, reflects on the question – ‘Is Sr Clare Crockett a saint?’

The Holiness of the Empty Hands of the Crucified One

ON November 14 of this year, Sr Clare Crockett would have been 39 years old. In order to celebrate that birthday, I want to pose a profound question: Is Sister Clare Crockett a saint? Of course, that is not a question that any individual can answer by themselves, the answer lies with God, and will be discerned by His Church.

In this two-part series, I hope to present a hypothesis of holiness, to see what holiness truly is, and then to see if that holiness is reflected in the life of Sr Clare. There will be those who will say all kinds of nasty things, “Don’t be hasty”, “Who does she think she is”, “She’s from the Brandywell”, “She spent so much of her life as an utter tear-away,” or even “We know her.” We have got to realise that each of those statements comes from a similar place as those people in Nazareth who refused to accept the carpenter. We know exactly how that worked out. You may well have known Clare in life, but I am prepared to bet that you did not know her as God knew her and as God loved her.

I am going to begin this examination of holiness by turning to the world of literature. I want to draw your attention to two characters and to two very different stories. The first character you will recognise immediately, and the other maybe not so much, if you like musicals you may know the second one.

The first is Ebenezer Scrooge. He is the main protagonist of the famous ‘Christmas Carol’ of Charles Dickens. Ebenezer begins life in the novel as a villain, as a money lending terrorist, and as a parasite who wants to draw the last penny out of everyone’s pockets.

Dickens’ description of this character is quite something: “... but he was a tight-fisted, hand to the grindstone Scrooge, a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner, hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out a generous fire, secret and self-contained and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him froze his old features and nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheek, stiffened his gait, and made his eyes red and his thin lips blue and he spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice: a frosty rhyme was on his head, and on his eyebrows and on his wiry chin, he carried his own low temperature always about with him, he iced his office in dog days and didn’t thaw it one degree at Christmas.”

What a description! What an account! Listen to the power of those words: “a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner.” The character was a man who had

literally turned life into a wet towel and who rung it out and continued to ring it out until he got the last coin for himself. Christmas, to him, was a humbug, charity was ridiculous, send poor people to prison or to the workhouses, and if they wouldn’t go then let them just die and decrease the surplus population. His wretched employee, Bob Cratchit, only got fifteen shillings a week.

The second character could not be more different, he only appears in a few pages of the epic tale of Victor Hugo, ‘Les Misérables’. The whole action of this epic turns on one chance meeting. The character I want to draw your attention to goes by the name of Bishop Myriel and he has only a comparatively small role in the book; appearing on only a few pages. Bishop Myriel is the chief pastor of the city of Digne, more than that, he is a Bishop who is renowned for his simplicity and generosity. His own house has no ornamentation, and he wears an old thread-bare priest’s cassock. He is a fictionalised version of what Pope Francis would later describe as a pastor smelling of the sheep. It is on his pastoral duties that the bishop runs into a dark and sullen man called Jean Valjean.

Well, Jean, up onto that moment, had lived a very unfortunate life. He had just spent many years in Gaol over the trifling offence of stealing bread in order to save his sister’s children, and those years in Gaol had twisted and contorted him. Just at that moment of meeting, Valjean is like a pressure cooker, ready to go off at any moment. His being paroled has only made things go from bad to worse; he has only met with rejection, derision, and abuse.

Honoured

Bishop Myriel breaks Valjean’s duck. He generously takes Valjean to his own house and sets before him the only thing of any worth in that house, a silver service, and treats him as an honoured guest. However, Valjean in the night explodes in bitterness and resentment, and it pours out in large amounts against the very one who did him so much good. In the dark of the night, he wakes up, rifles the house, then, taking all the silver service that he can carry, runs into the night.

As he is about to escape with the loot, he is spotted by the gendarme and dragged, kicking and screaming, back to the bishop’s house. Valjean, at this moment in the book, is looking into a very dark hole that he is about to be thrown into headfirst. Dumped in the front room of the bishop’s house, he can hardly

look up at the bishop. The bishop surveys the situation, he forgets his rifled house, and he simply says to Valjean, “You forgot these”, and hands him two more candlesticks; a completely unmerited, unearned, and uncalled-for act of generosity that redeemed Valjean’s life from darkness. He is to use the silver to build a new life. The bishop had bought his soul for God, as the musical says.

These are two ever so different characters. They are two representations of two clearly contrary forces, and between them are each and every human nature that has ever existed. Scrooge, the self-centred, self-obsessed, selfish, and unredeemed nature, and Bishop Myriel, the generous, open-handed, loving, and grace-filled nature.

There is but one problem now, where are we on the scale between these two characters? The answer is probably somewhere in the middle between the two. All too often, we turn a blind eye to our grasping, clutching, covetous old nature, in the way in which we cling so tightly to our time, our

“In order to find the open hands of Bishop Myriel, the open hands of the Lord himself, to let go of the candlesticks, we must learn our lesson from the wounds of the Lord. Freedom is not something to be hoarded for ourselves and to be parcelled out in small manageable amounts; it is to be radically and generously given to others.”

energy, our talents, our strength, our nature, and ourselves, and we measure these elements out in such small, controlled quantities. At the same time, we have moments in which we make the most of these most precious of things and generously give them away, just as Bishop Myriel did with his candlesticks.

How do we move from one to the other? How do we become more like Bishop Myriel? What the difference is between the two characters is best described by one of our Carmelite Saints. St Elizabeth of the Trinity has an

answer for us as she describes a Carmelite vocation. She tells us that “a Carmelite is someone who has looked at the face of the crucified one and has seen him offering himself as a victim for us; pondering on the tremendous vision of Christ’s love he or she has understood the love burning within Christ and has longed to give himself or herself as He has.”

Not everyone is called to be a Carmelite, in that case, let me slightly change some of that wording, let me take away that second word ‘Carmelite’, and let me replace it with the word ‘Christian’ - “A Christian is someone who has looked at the face of the crucified one and has seen him offering himself as a victim for us; pondering on the tremendous vision of Christ’s love, he or she has understood the love burning within Christ and has longed to give himself or herself.”

For Elizabeth, the key difference between Scrooge and Myriel is that one of them penetrated into the heart of Jesus Christ crucified, coming to know the meaning of that cross and to live it out.

Just to follow up on this point, I want us to meditate on the crucifix and, in particular, the skewered hands of the Crucified One. Let us stand before the cross and see as Jesus’ hands are grasped hold off. They are dragged to a certain place and then very deliberately weighted down. A detachment of Roman legionaries set irreverent hands on Him and shape Him to their purpose. A measure of old fibrous rope is wound around His hands, tying them down to this strange wooden structure. Jesus’ hands are strapped down and drawn tight, so that even if they flinched these soldiers will not miss their mark with their hammer. And the nails are driven through his hands, fixing him irrevocably to that cross. He is going to remain in this spot. He can go no further. Up there he hangs, hardly able to move a finger now, those hands are totally helpless and absolutely weak. What a strange Lord we have taken to ourselves?

Contemplate

As we contemplate that cross, it should make us shudder to recall that those hands, those very hands that hung up on the cross, are the very same ones that, with one sweep, called forth creation out of nothing, that tossed the stars out into space, and literally set the world spinning on its axis, yet here they are and here they will stay!

A demonstration, if we didn’t already know, that this Lord of ours is not like any other; He does not jealously guard what is His, He does not hold on to what is His own, or to His own rights, but

rather with open hands gives them over. His rights, His privileges, His possessions, His very body and His very blood are meant for others, even for those who reject

oftentimes stuck with Scrooge in his counting house, wringing out life for ourselves.

In order to find the open hands of Bishop Myriel, the open hands



Him, strike Him, despise Him and kill Him. He lays everything that He is down for humanity. He lets them go for us, He gives them up. The Lord’s power is not to do whatever He pleases but rather is a power for others; it is the power of service.

As we go on meditating upon the face of the crucified one, all of a sudden each one of us is forced to take a good look at our own hands. We realise, instantaneously, the profound distance that lies between ourselves and Christ! Each of us is supposedly the servant and yet we are free to go and do as we please. Yet the master is bound, imprisoned and fixed upon a cross. The Lord is tied up, but the servant is at liberty? We look down at our own hands and we consider just how many times they’ve only ever carried out what we have wanted them to do. How often have they merely cherry picked at what was convenient, what suited, and they have often only reached and taken the sweetest and juiciest morsels in life. His hands are pierced through and through so that they cannot hold or withhold anything from us. This freedom that we cling to, every bit as tenaciously as Scrooge did, was never meant to be only about us. This freedom we cannot let go off is not freedom at all; it is slavery to our own whim and to our own self. We have got to see at the foot of the cross that we are

of the Lord himself, to let go of the candlesticks, we must learn our lesson from the wounds of the Lord. Freedom is not something to be hoarded for ourselves and to be parcelled out in small manageable amounts; it is to be radically and generously given to others.

The former Jesuit General, Father Pedro Aruppe, many years ago gave a beautiful definition for Christianity. A Christian, he argued, was a man or woman for others. Men and women who live their whole lives not for themselves but, first and foremost, for their Father in Heaven, the Son, Jesus Christ and for their Holy Spirit. Then, secondly, men and women who cannot conceive of life without concern for their neighbour, whoever and wherever they find them. The words of our neighbours cry out loudly to us all the time, “I am in need”, “I am hungry”, “I am thirsty”, “I am in prison”, “I am lonely”, “my love has been destroyed”, and, “I am addicted”.

It is only when we respond, and we do not leave it to others, that we finally discover the hands of Bishop Myriel and the crucified hands of the Lord. When we love the other, when we open our hands to them, and when we give them some type of service, it is only then that our hands become crucified every bit as much as Padre Pio’s hands!

Rocked by 'Braveheart' movie in his youth, Franciscan Friar, Fr Isaac shares the seed that helped him grow...

“Every man dies but not every man lives”

ORIGINALLY from Omaha, Nebraska, Fr Isaac of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal has been part of the Galliagh-based community in Derry for five years now, and, as he and his fellow friars continue to prayerfully discern how best to minister to the needs of the people, he reflected on his own ongoing journey of faith.

The eldest of six – three boys and three girls, the 46-year-old recalled growing up in a family of strong faith, however, with strict values that eventually led to him inwardly rebelling.

“I was an altar server for nine years and really enjoyed it. When I wasn't serving Mass I was bored, but when I was serving I was attentive to what was going on,” he said, adding: “I always had a belief in God, but our home was strict and severe at times, and by the time I was 14 or 15, I was done with it. I rebelled inwardly.

“I had never really met God. I just knew He had a lot of rules that I didn't want to keep. Outwardly, I was still a good son and student, etc, but inwardly I began to rebel and dove into partying, alcohol and drugs at the weekends. That was the case all through my secondary school and university years”.

“I went to a Catholic university to study History, as my parents had given me a shortlist of universities that I could attend for the first year,” he continued, “and I met hundreds of kids like me who didn't want to be there.

“Midway through college I was already burning out. I was spiritually empty. I remember watching 'Braveheart' on what I thought was just another movie night with the guys, but I was rocked by that movie. I saw this guy who just wanted to do his own thing – have a wife, kids and a farm, and that wasn't bad. The English killed his wife, so he was drawn into the rebellion against them, and ended up leading it and giving his life to something greater than himself. At one point in the movie, his mates are telling him to calm down or he will be killed and he said – ‘Every man dies but not every man lives’. He wasn't afraid of dying – he was afraid of not living, which is exactly what I was doing. This really struck me. It planted a seed. I wasn't ready to change but I knew I needed to”.

Saying that he had still felt “spiritually empty” when he finished university two years later, Fr Isaac went on to share a watershed moment in his life: “I got a job as a restaurant manager and that summer I was involved in my second drink driving accident. That one really woke me up. I had stayed after work and got drinking with my work mates.

When I went to go home, they told me not to drive but I wanted to get home so I sneaked out the back. I fell asleep driving and woke up with my car crashing through a barrier at the side of the road. It went down an embankment and ended up wedged between two trees.

“Instantly, I was cold sober. I knew two things immediately – that there was an angel in the car and that was why I was still alive and that God had a plan for my life. I was 23 years old at the time and didn't know where to go after my accident”.

He added: “I didn't really have a relationship with my dad. He was away when I had the accident and I remember saying to my mum to tell dad that I didn't need a judge, but that I needed help with my life.

Listen

“I had been sitting out in the garden at the back of the house when my father got home, and when I heard the patio door opening I thought, well this is it. It could have gone either way but he put his hand on my shoulder and told me that he loved me. It was a turning point in my relationship with my father; I began to share with him about my unhappiness. He became a great listener and I would just tell him what was going on in my life. He would listen and offer counsel, and at one point he said that he thought I should talk to a priest, so I went to our parish priest, whom my parents knew well.

“The long and short of it was that the accident had helped the dam to break and my life began to change”.

“Within about a year of that,” he recollected, “I answered a call to do missionary work and joined a group called Family Missions Company, in Louisiana. They sent me to Mexico, which was a great experience. I was a very, very green and young believer. I was really raw and they were just so good to me. It was a very nurturing experience.

“I feel that my mission here is to proclaim the hope that is found in Jesus Christ and to help people stay focussed on Him.”

“We lived in a mixed community – male and female – and one of my best friends from university was there too. We also lived amongst, and worked with, the very poor down there, which was awesome – they were

beautiful people.

“I was immediately thrown into sharing the faith and it was while I was in Mexico that I first heard the call to priesthood. It all happened very fast. I told my friend, who was in the same community, that I thought I was being called to be a priest, but that I wanted to live in community and help the poor and disadvantaged. He said that I should check out the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal. I had never heard of them before but I trusted my friend, so I started writing to them and was invited to come and visit them in New York.

“The first visit was good but I was really scared of celibacy, so I decided it wasn't for me. I was happy that I had checked out the priesthood and decided that I would find a girlfriend. There was an American girl from the Family Mission Company that I got on really well with, but I found that I couldn't commit. I was angry with myself about not being able to go after this lovely, Catholic girl, until I realised that the call to priesthood hadn't gone away. So, I contacted the Friars again and on my second visit to them I felt like it was home”.

Saying that the “real journey begins after entering the friary”, Fr Isaac added that it is a journey that will last a lifetime. Joining the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal in the year 2000, he was ordained in 2010 by Cardinal Timothy Dolan, the Archbishop of New York.

“It has been 21 years now of the Lord helping me to take off all my masks, such as my self-reliance, pride, fear and bitterness, and letting Him love me, and learning how to love myself and love others – and that is way more exciting than my story about drunk driving”, remarked Fr Isaac, adding: “The real conversion is when you commit to Jesus. He really wants to make us new”.

As well as experiencing a massive culture shock during the first year after his arrival in Derry, in 2016, Fr Isaac recalled arriving needing a much needed break: “I felt in need of a reset because of the journey that I had been on, and my five years here have really been that.

“On one hand, we can focus too much on the past but, on the other hand, until we deal with our past we can't move forward. However, in dealing with it, God doesn't want us to stay there, He wants us to deal with it and move forward”.

Mission

He added: “I feel that my mission here is to proclaim the hope that is found in Jesus Christ and to help people stay focussed on Him. I think there is a strong tendency in people in general, and specifically people here in Derry,



Franciscan Friar of the Renewal, Fr Isaac.

to focus on the negatives, to focus on what is not going well, and to focus on the past. There is no life there.

“I am passionate about proclaiming the newness of Christ – that there is no situation we are involved in that He can't influence. So, I go after physical and spiritual healing. This is something that I am going through myself, too.

“When I arrived here, there were still things in my past that I hadn't dealt with. I have certainly dealt with more of it now. I'm still on that journey and will be until I die. None of us are ever finished. Two words that really get me fired up are 'I'm grand'. When I ask people if I can pray for something for them and they say 'No, I'm grand', I sometimes ask them 'Really?' No one is always 'grand'. Everyone needs God. There is always something in our lives that God can work on”.

As well as his work as director of both St Pio House and the community's healing nights in St Joseph's Church, Galliagh, on the first Friday of each month, Fr Isaac is involved in lots of

preaching, confessions, spiritual direction and prayer ministry, as well as helping out with the weekly, Tuesday night 'Living Disciples' gathering from time to time.

Saying that the brothers, particularly Fr Columba, had felt inspired to start the Healing Nights about seven years ago, Fr Isaac noted that the response of the people showed a great need for healing.

He added: “There have been many healings, from the tiniest bone pain to stage four cancer. We place a value on all of them. It is important to say this – it is all about Jesus. He does the healing. When someone is healed it means that He is here. He loves people and wants a relationship with them. We do it because He tells us to. At the end of Mark's Gospel, He basically says 'Go and set the world on fire...lay your hands on the sick and they will be made well'. So we are trying to obey Him”.

Excited for their future ministry regarding St Pio House, Fr Isaac described it as “a place of encounter with other human beings but also with God”.

He continued: “It is a place where anyone can come. We want the church and unchurched to feel welcome. It is not an exclusive community, but an open community. There is free coffee/tea in the Cafe, which is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11.30 am until 2.30 pm, though we have a donation box to help pay the overhead costs.

“We have some great groups using the place, such as Youth Initiatives, a cross-community youth ministry, and local prayer groups. There is an amazing hall space, with a 13 ft screen, which gives great potential for retreats, video conferences and movie nights. It is an amazing gift. The community has been so generous, with money especially, with time, and, most importantly, with prayer.

“St Pio House is a Franciscan apostolate that will benefit the parish and community, but it's not a parish or community hall. The activities will be primarily spiritual with a Franciscan flavour. We are just taking it slow as we really want this to be God's work. Right now, we are praying about what God wants there”.

Beginning a process of prayer in all parishes around the Diocese, with the launch of a monthly Holy Hour in Carnhill for the synodal journey the Church is setting out on, Bishop Donal asked that we...

Pray for a spirit of hopefulness and the grace not to be afraid as we put out into the deep

THE diocesan phase of the synodal process in the Derry Diocese was launched by Bishop Donal on the Eve of Halloween, during a special time of prayer in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill.

With St Brigid the Patron Saint of Travellers, as well as one of Ireland's Patron Saints, it was a fitting setting for the launch of a journey of discovery as to the pathway God wishes His Church to take, that both clergy and laity in parishes and dioceses around the world are invited by Pope Francis to set out on together, led by the Holy Spirit.

It was also very fitting that St Brigid's is within the Parish of the Three Patrons...the other two being St Patrick, another Patron Saint of Ireland, and St Joseph, the Guardian of the Church. And it is well known in the Diocese that the third Patron Saint of Ireland, St Columba, happens to be the Patron Saint of Derry, where events are taking place this year to mark the 1,500th anniversary of his birth.

The launch of what is hoped to be a great time of prayer, discussion and listening as part of the synodal process in the Derry Diocese, coincided with the launch of a special monthly time of prayer with members of the Abraham (Abramo) Community in St Brigid's Church for this process in the Three Patrons' Parish.

While Bishop Donal led the Holy Hour, following the celebration of the vigil weekend Mass in St Brigid's, on Saturday, October 30, Abraham Community members, Luca and Seanan Zaltron, and Dylan and Cecilia Creagan, provided

the music ministry for what was a very beautiful and prayerful experience in front of the Blessed Sacrament for the many who stayed on after Mass.

Noting that the most common phrase in the Bible is 'Do not be afraid', Bishop Donal spoke of how, after the Ascension, the apostles had hid in the upper room until the Holy Spirit came to 'kick them out' and they went on to make converts amongst the Samaritans and the pagans.

"The history of the Early Church was always of people tempted to be frightened," said Bishop Donal, adding that the message of the New Testament is that "God is in control and we are His instruments. There is no need to be afraid. He may ask us to do crazy things, like Moses, Mary and the Apostles, but do not be afraid. He will use us as He wants to".

Highlighting another phrase that Jesus used to the Apostles after they had been fishing all night and had caught nothing, "Put out into the deep", he went on to say: "Jesus tells Peter and His Church in every generation – put out into the deep, do not be afraid".

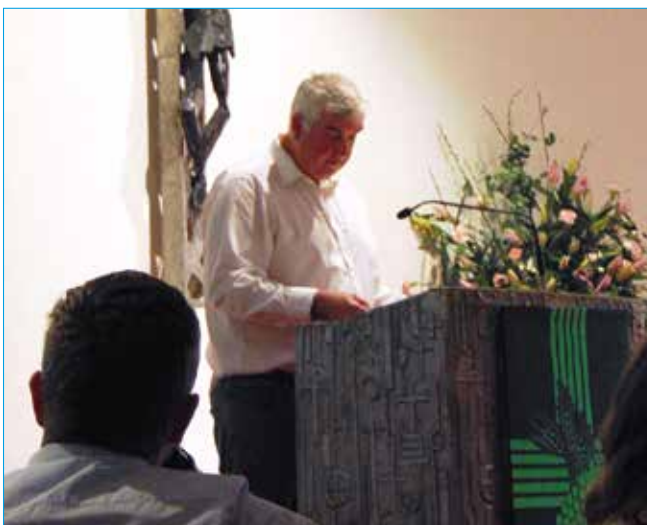
Bishop Donal continued: "We are facing a lot of fear and anger in the Church. Some want to stay as we are, others say no, we must change. We have to ask ourselves in this generation whether we have been doing things as best we could to make disciples for Jesus. I think the answer is 'no'. We have not been making disciples for Jesus. That is the only mission Jesus asks His Apostles to take on."

"This synodal process is recognising that the world is

changing rapidly. Pope Francis says that it is not a time for change, but a change of time. How do we bring the love and mercy of God to those lying on the Strand Road, to those in mental hospitals, in homeless shelters, in women's aid hostels, in the Simon Community? If we are not bringing the love and mercy of Jesus to them, then we are not walking in the footsteps of Our Saviour.

"This process is about us asking the Lord, 'How do you want us to go forward?' Pope Francis says if we are going to discern God's Way forward, the main protagonist is not the Pope, the clergy or the laity; it is the Holy Spirit.

"The synodal journey is an interior journey to see what the Lord wants for His Church in 2021. It is not our ideas, as they are usually far wide of the mark. I propose that we begin a regular campaign of prayer with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, so that we can hear where He wants us to go. How we can bring His love and mercy? How can we listen for the voice of God in others?"



"The whole process is based on the assumption that we all have to be converted to God's ways. If we fail in this, we will fail to be Jesus' disciples and fail to make Jesus' disciples."

"Beginning with this parish," said Bishop Donal, "I want to begin a process of prayer in all parishes around our Diocese. Can we bring the Lord all the needs of our parishes and Diocese, and, with trust, say 'Lord, show us Your way...not the full journey, but the next step. Help us not to be afraid to put out into the deep because you, Jesus, are there at our side'."

"We pray for a spirit of hopefulness and the grace not to be afraid as we put out into the deep, as that is where the Church has always been at its best."

Thanking Bishop Donal and the Abraham Community for leading the time of prayer and blessing, Fr Gerard Mongan extended an invitation for more to come along and join in the next Holy Hour after the vigil Mass on the last Saturday of November.

Prayer for the Synod

*We stand before You, Holy Spirit,
as we gather together in Your name.
With You alone to guide us,
make Yourself at home in our hearts;
Teach us the way we must go
and how we are to pursue it.
We are weak and sinful;
do not let us promote disorder.
Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path
nor partiality influence our actions.
Let us find in You our unity
so that we may journey together to eternal life
and not stray from the way of truth and what is right.
All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place
and time, in the communion of the Father and the
Son, forever and ever.*

Amen.



Synodal pathway in Diocese of Derry

by Bishop Donal

POPE Francis famously said that this is not a time of change so much as a change of time.

At every level in society, we face a range of changes and challenges - economic problems, the environment, a world of instantaneous communications and widespread political instability.

The Church has always to be asking itself a basic question, and that question is not 'how do we keep our system going'. There is a more fundamental issue - how effective are we in bringing God's mercy and healing to the people and situations of our day?

And the answer is quite clearly... 'Could do an awful lot better'!

Pope Francis has invited Catholic communities all over the world to begin a prayerful conversation to see how we can understand what the way forward is.

And the Pope is clear that this is not a parliamentary process, where parties vie to get their policies and views to win victories. The early Christian Church believed that, if they prayed together and listened, they would discern where God was leading the Church.

That is the process that Pope Francis has asked Derry Diocese - and every other diocese in the world - to start. It is based on the belief that leaders have to lead - but that we all have to listen to hear where God is leading.

In preparation for a major month-long Synod of Bishops on the theme 'Communion, Participation and Mission' in October 2023, we are beginning a diocesan process which will lead to an Irish national listening process, feeding into the Vatican, which will then come back with a further document for local discussion.

And, the Synod in 2023 will just be one more stage on a journey of listening to God and to one another - a different way of being Church.

In the conversations, we will hear many things - some inspiring and some uncomfortable. But only the truth will set us free. My hope is that we will be able to be silent and

listen with our hearts and not just with our ears. In history, God has spoken in many unexpected little people!

There is much need for grace, forgiveness and healing in our society. Jesus found ways of reaching the people of His day. We are beginning a way of being Church that will. Resources will be uploaded to www.derrydiocese.org and can be viewed there.

This is a new way of facing the future with trust rather than in fear. I have every confidence that future generations will look back on this time and be grateful for people of courage, honesty and hope, who were not afraid to set out on a new missionary path.



*God speaks in
the silence of
the heart.*

*Listening is the
beginning of
prayer.*

-Mother Teresa

Eangach

Ár nDúchas

Adsumus Sancte Spiritus

Seo muid,
a Spioraid Naoimh,
cruinnithe le chéile
id ainmse,
agus tusa amháin
ár stiúruí.

Cónaigh inár gcroíthe.
Léirigh dúinn ár gcasán
agus díriú ar dtíall.
Peacaigh dearóile muid:
ná cothóimis achran.
Ná treoródh ainbhíos
ar an chasán chontráilte muid,
agus ná bíodh
ár ngníomhartha
claonta.

Bíodh ár síth
is ár muintearas ionatsa,
is muid ag taisteal le chéile
i dtreo na beatha síoraí,
gan dul ar seachrán
ó bhealach na firinne
nó ón rud is ceart
agus is cóir.

Iarraimid seo uilig ortsá,
atá gníomhach
in achan áit agus in achan am,
i gcumann an Athar
agus an Mhic,
le saol na saol.

Amen

Sionad



An Pápa Proinsias Editorial credit: softdelusion66 / Shutterstock.com

Tá beart rannpháirtíochta ar bun san Eaglais ar fud an domhain san am i láthair. Tugtar 'An Casán Sionadach' ar an phróiseas seo. Tá sé á spreagadh ag inspioráid an Phápa Proinsias. Tagann an focal 'sionad' ó dhá fhocal Gréigise: sún (= le, nó in éineacht le) agus hodos (= bóthar). Ciallaíonn sé 'bheith ar an bhóthar le chéile'. Is íomhá den Eaglais é: pobal Dé idir chléir is tuata ag taisteal le chéile agus ag obair le chéile chun plean Dé a chomhlíonadh.

Seo mar a mhíníonn Rúnaíocht Ghinearálta an tSionoid é: 'Focal ársa uasal é 'Sionad' i dTraidisiún

na hEaglaise, agus tá a bhrí préamhaithe go domhain i dtéamaí Fhoilsíú Dé. Tagrann sé don chasán ar a siúlann Pobal Dé in éineacht le chéile. Agus tagrann sé don Tiarna Íosa, a chuireann é féin i láthair mar 'an tSlí, an Fhírinne, agus an Bheatha'. Cuireann sé i gcuimhne dúinn gur tugadh 'lucht leanúna na Slí' ar na Críostaithe, deisceabail Íosa, i dtús na hEaglaise.

De ghnáth, tar éis sionoid (cruinniú de chuid na nEaspag), déantar toradh na taighde uilig a scagadh, cuireann an Pápa a chrot féin — agus a shíniú — air, agus foilsítear é mar leabhar oifigiúil, a

bheas mar fhoinsé údarásach ar an ábhar. Tá cáil ar leith ar fud an domhain ar chuid de na leabhair a tháinig amach ón Phápa Proinsias: 'Amoris Laetitia' ar an Phósadh, mar shampla, agus go speisialta 'Laudato Si' ar chúram na plainéide. Tá aidhm eile ag an phróiseas atá ar bun faoi láthair. Sa litir a chuir an Cairdinéal Grech amach leis na doiciméid ullmhúcháin, scríobh sé:

Físeanna agus Fáistine

'Níl sé d'aidhm ag an Sionod doiciméid a sholáthar, ach aisling a spreagadh, físeanna agus fáistine a mhúscailt, dóchas a chaomhnú, muinín a chothú, créachta a chóiriú, muintearas a chruthú, camhóir an dóchais a fhógairt, foghlaim óna chéile, acmhainneacht bhríomhar a spreagadh a bhéarfais léargas dár n-intinn, taitneamh dár gcroí agus neart dár lámha.' 'Cuireadh atá



sa Sionad', deirtear: 'cuireadh do phobal gach deoise siúl ar chasán na hathnuachana faoi anáil agus faoi ghrásta Spiorad Dé.

Tá paidir speisialta, 'Adsumus Sancte Spiritus', curtha amach leis na doiciméid a tháinig ón Róimh. Dúradh an phaidir seo gach lá ag easpaig an domhain le linn Dara Comhairle na Vatacáine. Iarrtar orainn an phaidir a rá go rialta roimh an Sionad in 2023. *Féach an colún ar chlé.*



Pobal Dé

Gníomh agus Focal

Nuair a chuimhním ar an Phósadh i gCána i Soiscéal Eoin, feictear dom go bhfuil rud éigin tábhachtach sna focail dheireanacha, faoi mar a bhí sna focail tosaigh. Ag deireadh an scéil sin deir Soiscéal Eoin linn:

Rinne Íosa sin i gCána i nGaililí, an chéad chomhartha dá chomharthaí, agus nocht sé a ghlóir; agus chreid a dheisceabail ann. (Eoin 2:11)

Is fiú cuimhneamh ar an rud a insítear sa scéal, nach raibh a fhios ag duine ar bith go ndearna Íosa fíon den uisce. Mar sin, níorbh é sin an comhartha, ná an ghlóir.

Ní comhartha é muna bhfeiceann duine ar bith é, ná níor nochtadh glóire é muna bhfeiceann duine ar bith é. Ní fhaca siad ach an rud amháin, agus sin í an lánúin. Is é atá sa scéal seo go bhfuil radharc againn ar an lánúin trí shuíle Íosa, agus gur comhartha é agus nochtadh glóire.

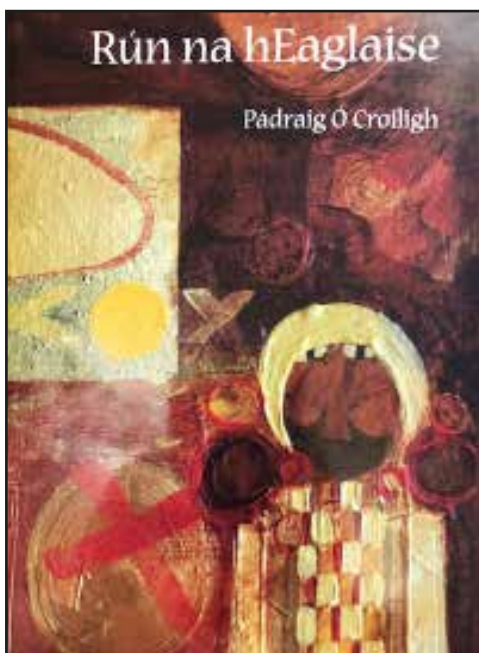
Ní amháin sin, ach choinnigh Íosa an mhíorúilt i bhfolach ón slua, amhail is dá mbeadh sé á rá nach raibh an chéad mhíorúilt a rinne sé ar iarratas óna mháthair, Muire, chomh tábhachtach leis an lánúin nua-phósta. Sin é an áit ar

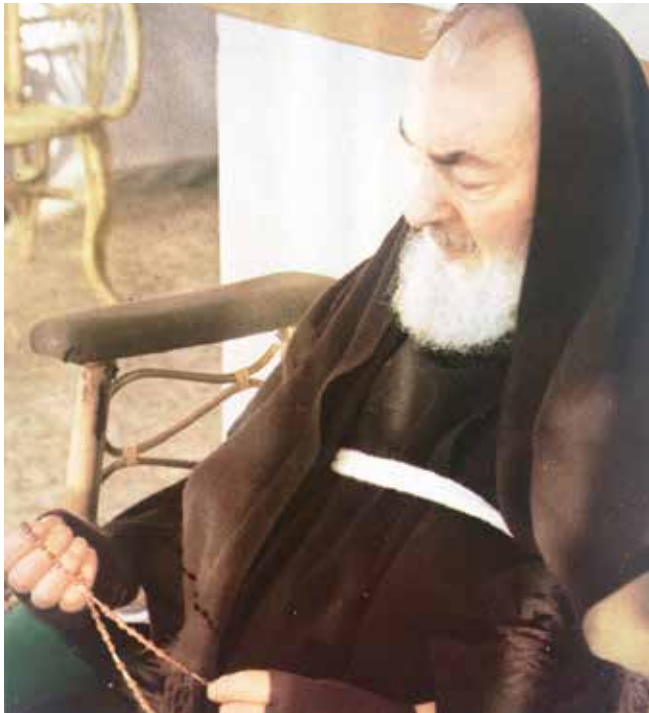
nocht sé a ghlóir, agus sin é an áit a nochtann sé a ghlóir go fóill — i dtaispeánadh ghrá na lánúine. Agus is foinse creidimh agus iontais é go dtí an lá atá inniu ann — an lánúin i gcomhlúadar le hÍosa agus Muire agus na deisceabail, an lánúin ag croí na hEaglaise.

Sin é an fáth go dtugtar sacraimint ar an phósadh. Ní beannú atá i gceist, ná searmanas deas de réir mhian na lánúine, ach comhartha ghrá Dé i gcroí na hEaglaise. Rud eile atá éagsúil i gcás an phósta: ní hé go nglacann siad sacraimint ar lá a bpósta, ach go ndéantar

sacraimint díobh don chuid eile dá saol. Is comhartha ghrá Dé san Eaglais iad an lánúin phósta. Agus rud eile de, ní hé an sagart ministir na sacraiminte, ach an lánúin. A ngrá siúd dá chéile an gníomh, agus deir siad féin mar lánúin focail na sacraiminte nuair a mhalartaíonn siad a ngealltanais phósta os comhair an tsagairt agus os comhair phobal na hEaglaise i láthair i dteach an phobail. Gníomh agus focal.

Buíochas le *Foilseacháin Ábhair Spioradálta*.





Praying for the Holy Souls

"MORE souls of the dead from Purgatory than of the living climb this mountain to attend my Masses and seek my prayers".

These are the words of Padre Pio regarding the souls of Purgatory, who were constantly remembered in his daily prayers and Masses. The fact that he was visited by multitudes of people during his 52 years in San Giovanni Rotondo, makes his statement very revealing regarding the great need to pray for departed souls.

In this month of November, when we especially pray for our dearly departed, a number of people from across the Diocese have shared their thoughts on Purgatory and praying for the Holy Souls.



Altar display in St Mary's Church, Ballerin, commemorating parishioners deceased during the past year.

We are expected to continue prayerful solidarity with those who have gone from this life *by Bishop Donal*

HALLOW E'en has become a predominantly secular party time as the leaves fall and the nights get long. There are also renewed attempts to promote a vague pagan Celtic emphasis on Samhain. It ends up being a mixture between some uneasy sense of the other world, a vague attempt to acknowledge the reality of death and a dabbling with the occult. Such celebrations can be fun for children – but be tinged with unresolved adult fears and feelings of unease. And people have always tried to deal with those human feelings and unanswered questions.

However, Christianity is a revealed religion, not man-made. God has made known to us in Christ who we are and who God is. Our Christian teaching speaks God's revealed word into the reality of human fears and questions. It goes far beyond yielding to a cultural domestication of human neuroses!

So, what revealed truths do we mark with the month of November that begins with the Feasts of All Saints and All Souls?

Firstly, we celebrate the fact that we are all united in the Body of Christ, whether on this side of the grave or beyond. Those who have died have gone to God – and God is not far from any of us.

I learned an important lesson about a healthy faith-filled attitude to death when I was a seven-year-old. My grandfather died and I remember being lifted up to kiss him goodbye as he lay in his coffin. The message from faithful people was that death should not be feared.

Therefore, we approach the

reality of death with a sense that God is in control and that grace is victorious. Death has been defeated on the cross. Life continues. It is changed, not ended. That means that death has lost its sting.

That applies both to those who are with God and those who await the fullness of salvation in Purgatory. Thus, Catholicism is strong in its sense that, just as we pray for one another in this life, we can continue to ask the saints for their prayerful support before the throne of God. That is our unity in the Body of Christ. Similarly, we are united with those who are not yet ready to see the face of God and enjoy the Beatific Vision.

Because of this, Catholicism underlines the importance of asking the intercession of the saints. They are models of holiness and concerned for us in the Church on earth. Similarly, we are not divided from those who are in Purgatory. They, too, are still members of Christ's Body.

Secondly, All Saints and All Souls celebrate the destiny that we are called to hope for. Through grace, people can become saints. Through grace and forgiveness, sinners can enjoy the divine life forever.

Church is renewed when people rediscover the universal call to holiness. Sanctity is an amazing everyday miracle. Holiness can be lived out at work and in a monastery, in the mundane tasks of every day and before the tabernacle, in silent interiority and in celebration, on Calvary and in the Resurrection.

In the darkness of autumn nights and leafless trees, we are those who



Diocesan Memorial Garden at St Eugene's Cathedral for all those who died during Covid-19.



celebrate the hope of Easter.

Thirdly, November is not a cult of the dead – but a proclamation of the living. In God all are alive, Jesus tells his listeners (Cf Luke 20:38).

I have no idea how the prayers of one Christian can affect another. We leave the mystery of grace to God, who knows the secrets of every heart. But we remember that we are all imperfect people on the way to God. Just as we are expected to reach out to those who need our support in this life, so we are expected to continue that prayerful solidarity with those who have gone from this life. And we entrust everything to the loving

mercy of the Father who made us in the divine image and likeness.

All Saints and All Souls are Feasts with a great rich message for November.

Despite the darkness of the month of November, the Eve of the Feast of All Hallows (Hallow E'en) is meant to be reassuring, not frightening. It faces death with faith, not fear. It acknowledges life beyond the grave without ghosts, skeletons and ghouls. That is a grace-filled worldview, not a frightened pagan one. Christ offers us peace – here and hereafter. In these worrying times, we need the peace that the world cannot give.

Indulgences, prayers and sacrifices for souls of deceased are wonderful expressions of spiritual works of mercy *by Margaret Harte*

WE learn that it is a holy and pious thought to pray for the dead from reading 2 Maccabees 12. Following victory in battle, Judas Maccabaeus assembled his army. As the seventh day was coming up, they purified themselves according to the custom and they kept the Sabbath in the City of Adullam.

The next day, Judas and his men went to take up the bodies of the fallen and bring them back to lie with their kinsmen in the sepulchres of their fathers. Then, under the tunics of every one of the dead they found sacred tokens of the idols of

Jamnia, which the law forbade the Jews to wear, and it became clear to all why these men had fallen. They turned to prayer, begging that the sin which had been committed might be wholly blotted out.

He also took up a collection to the amount of 2,000 drachmas and sent it to Jerusalem to provide for a sin offering. In doing so, he acted very well; honourably taking account of his belief in the resurrection.

Commentary in the Didache Bible, based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church, notes that this is the most explicit evidence

in the Old Testament of the existence of purgatory; a state of purification for those who have died in faith but require temporal punishment for their sins and imperfections.

Judas had recognised that the men who died were carrying idols and, thereby, concluded the reasons for their deaths. And, he believed that the prayer and sacrifices of the living could help atone for the sins of the deceased, so that they might be resurrected to new life.

This passage also confirms the doctrine of the Communion of Saints, which exists among

the members of the Church in Heaven, in Purgatory, and on Earth.

Indulgences, as well as prayers and sacrifices for the repose of the souls of the deceased are a wonderful expression of the spiritual works of mercy for those in need of purification.

We are told that Padre Pio used to witness Holy Souls on their way to Heaven. One time, while praying in the chapel late at night, Padre Pio suddenly noticed a young monk whom he didn't recognise. He enquired who he was, and the monk replied that he had been coming

there from Purgatory for the past 200 years to atone for negligence in his work.

We know from St Faustina's Diary that she saw Purgatory. Once she asked the Lord for whom she should pray and He said that He would tell her the following night. The next night she was led by her Guardian Angel into "a misty place full of fire in which there was a great crowd of suffering souls", whom she noted, "were praying fervently, but to no avail, for themselves; only we can come to their aid". Asking the souls what their greatest suffering was,



Margaret Harte, Strabane.

continued from page 18

Faustina wrote: “They answered me in one voice that their greatest torment was longing for God”. (Diary, 20)

Amongst the promises of Jesus to those who pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet, which He gave to St Faustina, are that if it is recited at the bedside of a dying person, He would stand between the dying person and His Heavenly Father not as the Just Judge but as the Merciful Saviour. He also asked for it to be said for the Holy Souls in

Purgatory and for the granting of petitions.

Through Faustina, Our Lord requested the first Sunday after Easter to be known as Divine Mercy Sunday, on which He asked for people to sincerely repent of all their sins, place their complete trust in Him, go to Confession, receive Holy Communion on the day of the Feast, venerate the Divine Mercy image, and be merciful to others.

Praying for Holy Souls embeds link between the living and the dead... We need each other

by Briège O'Neill



Briège O'Neill, Banagher.

THE Catholic Church teaches us that death is not the end, as the eternal part of a person, the soul, may go to Heaven or, initially, Purgatory to be purified and then to Heaven. Purgatory is viewed as an opportunity to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of Heaven.

When I was in primary school, the word Purgatory was in common usage, especially during the month on November. However, for many years in my role as a teacher, we didn't really include this in our delivery of the religious curriculum in the primary school. We were always particularly sensitive when dealing with the death of a loved one and tried to support the children with the positive message of the loved one now “being a special angel” or “with Jesus in Heaven”. Dealing with grief was not something a lot of us were taught how to deal with, so we mostly tried to make it less painful for the deceased relatives, especially the children.

However, now being older, I still struggle to fully understand Purgatory. I don't like to think of it as being a place of pain and torment, but much rather a place of expectant joy. Although suffering occurs from the soul being a temporary distance from God and Heaven, it will be worth

the wait. I also tend to think of Purgatory as a temporary place/state; that the soul is absolutely going to Heaven but not just yet.

Thinking of Purgatory this way links with the importance of what we, the living, can still do for our deceased family and friends. Everyone likes to be able to support and comfort those whom they love. Even though our loved ones are now dead, with the belief in Purgatory, we can still help our family and friends after death. Therefore, praying for the Holy souls is vitally important.

2 Maccabees 12:46 says that “it is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from sins.” It is important to have this focus in the Church and within our families.

Praying for our deceased relatives keeps them forever present in our minds, and in a positive way. The grief journey is very difficult and I have found that having a positive thing to do, such as praying for them, helps the healing process.

Every November, we, as a family, piled into the car and completed our visitation of all the graveyards that any of our family relatives were buried in. Remembering this now, I fondly think of the positive family experiences these annual journeys became. We prayed, talked and remembered our dearly beloved and kept their memory alive. Looking back, I do not have sad memories but only positive ones. Praying together as a family embedded the link that will always be there between the living and the dead. We need each other.

It brings me great comfort when I am praying for the souls of family members, as it reinforces the close bonds that are always there. I offer up intentions for the Holy Souls, especially in times of worry and concern, and it is reassuring to know that they can also help me on a daily basis if necessary.

May the Holy Souls of the faithful departed rest in peace. Amen.

Purgatory is a stage of loving where we prepare to meet God face-to-face in Heaven

by Sr Margaret McConalogue RSM



Sr Margaret McConalogue RSM, Culmore.

THE idea of Purgatory has roots that date back into antiquity. A sort of proto-purgatory called the “celestial Hades” appears in the writings of Plato and in many other pagan writers. The underworld described as Hades was understood as an intermediary place where souls spent an undetermined time after death, before either moving on to a higher level of existence or being incarnated back to earth. The exact location of this place varied from author to author - frequently thought of as between the fixed stars and the earth!

It is probable that these ideas entered Jewish religious thought, through Greek influence, in the centuries before Christ. For example, in the Book of Maccabees in the Old Testament we find the practice of praying for the dead to be purified. Catholic teaching on purgatory is based on this pre-Christian (Judaic) practice of prayers for the dead.

Descriptions and doctrine regarding purgatory developed over the centuries. We Catholics regard Maccabees 12:41-46, 2 Timothy 1:18, Matthew 12:32, Luke 16:19-16:26, Luke 23: 43, 1 Cor 3:11-3:15 and Hebrews 12:29, as the basis for our prayer for the dead. The first Christians did not hold consistent and universal beliefs about this interim state, but gradually the concept developed. We know that Christians both East and West prayed for the dead, although theologians in the East refrained from defining it as a physical location with a distinct name.

Many scholastics, like St Thomas Aquinas and St Francis de Sales, considered that the dead in Purgatory are at peace, because they are sure of salvation and may be helped by the prayers of the faithful, especially by the Eucharist, because they are still part of the communion of Saints.

It was Pope Gregory the Great who established a connection between earthly penance and purification after death. All Souls Day, established in the 10th century, turned popular attention to the condition of departed souls. The idea of Purgatory as a physical

place (like heaven and hell) became Catholic teaching in the late 11th century, and a few medieval theologians introduced the notion of purgatory as material fire. The Western concept of purgatory proved to be a sticking point in the Great Schism between East and West.

Catholics believe that the living can help those whose purification from their sins is not yet completed, not only by praying for them but also by gaining indulgences for them. In time, this practice of gaining indulgences led to abuses in some quarters, mainly related to monetary payments for indulgences. This became a strong factor in the Protestant Reformation, resulting in most Protestant religions rejecting the idea of Purgatory altogether because it conflicted with the Protestant theology of “salvation by grace alone”.

Martin Luther put forward the idea that “becoming perfect” is an instantaneous act of God, and not a process or journey of purification that continues into the afterlife. Protestantism considered that each person experiences instant glorification at death, so there is little reason to pray for the dead. After he stopped believing in purgatory around 1530, Luther openly affirmed the doctrine of “soul sleep”. Calvin, the central figure of Reformed Protestantism, considered purgatory a superstition!

Following the Protestant Reformation, the Council of Trent reaffirmed the concept of Purgatory as it had previously been taught by the Council of Lyon in 1274. This included two points: (1) Some souls are purified after death (2) such souls benefit from the prayers of the living for them. After Trent, Purgatory became central to late medieval religion and advocated indulgences and other penitential practices such as fasting, and penance for the deceased, ‘though there was never any definition of the nature or duration of purgatorial punishments. From this time, the Catholic practice of praying for the dead has continued to our time.

I well remember pre-Vatican II days, where the practice was to make as many visits to the Church as possible, on All Souls' Day, and to say the required prayers (six Our Fathers, six Hail Marys, six Glorias and a prayer for the Pope's intention) on each visit - in order to gain a plenary Indulgence for each deceased person.

Today, the classic teaching on Purgatory in The Irish Catholic Catechism for Adults (published in 2014), tells us that:

“The soul is immortal: it does not perish when it separates from the body at death. At the final resurrection, it will be reunited with the body”.

“Those who die in the state of

grace and friendship with God, but are not fully purified, are assured of their eternal salvation. They must undergo a purification to attain the holiness needed to enter heaven. This process is called Purgatory. We pray for those in Purgatory, that they may soon be with God in heaven.” (Page 178)

Mystery

Clearly, we are dealing with the realm of mystery here, and with a topic that is of God, rather than mere mortals. As Scripture reminds us, “the souls of the virtuous are in the hands of God”. The ‘purification’ needed to see God face-to-face (what is sometimes called ‘the Beatific Vision’) has been pondered on by some theologians.

One well-known Scripture scholar and theologian of our time, Ron Rolheiser OMI, speculates about this process of purification, using the analogy of an adult person, blind from birth, who receives his sight for the first time. He quotes a famous brain surgeon, Professor J Z Young, about the incredible reaction of where this miraculous operation has actually been performed in our time...

“The patient on opening his eyes gets little or no enjoyment: indeed he finds the experience painful. The patient reports only a spinning mass of light and colours. He appears unable to pick up objects by sight, to recognize what they are, or to name them. He has no conception of space with objects in it, although he knows all about objects and their names by touch... This takes a very long time, in fact years, because his brain has not been trained in the ‘rules of seeing’. We, sighted people, are not conscious that there are any such rules; we think we see naturally. But we have in fact learned a whole set of rules during childhood”!

Rolheiser suggests that this analogy might help us to imagine Purgatory. Could the purification we experience after death be the opening up of our vision and heart, to a light and a love, that are so full, as to bring us into a state of relearning and reconceptualizing – something like the analogy of the blind person receiving sight for the first time? Might Purgatory be understood as being embraced by God in such a way that this warmth and light would dwarf our earthly concepts of love and knowledge, so that like the newly sighted person, we have to struggle painfully to learn and relearn our entire way of thinking and loving? Might Purgatory be understood, not as God's absence or some kind of punishment or retribution for sin, but as what happens to us when we are fully embraced, in ecstasy by God, in perfect love and perfect truth?

St Paul seems to agree! In describing our condition on earth, Paul tells us that in this life, we see only as “through a mirror, reflecting

dimly” (1 Cor: 13:12), but that after death, we will see God “face to face”. Paul seems to highlight in this passage, a certain blindness in us, an inability to see things as they really are! Significantly, Paul speaks of this in the context where he is pointing out that, already here on earth, a life of faith, hope and charity helps lift that blindness! Might Purgatory be the process whereby we grow these virtues in their fullness as we prepare to meet our God and live in his presence forever?

Rolheiser goes on to remind us that true purgation or sorrow for sin happens only through love, because it is only when we experience love's true embrace that we can see our wrongdoing, and “drink in” for the first time the power to move beyond it. Only light dispels darkness and only love casts out sin.

Therese of Lisieux would sometimes pray to God: “Punish me with a kiss!” The embrace of full love is the only purification for sin, because only when we are embraced by love do we actually understand what sin is, and only then are we given the desire, the vision, and the strength to live in love and truth. But that inbreaking of love and light is, at the same time, delightful and bewildering, ecstatic and unsettling, wonderful and excruciating, euphoric and painful. Indeed, it is nothing less than purgatory.

Purgatory, Rolheiser also suggests, is not a physical location, separate from heaven, but a stage of true loving! “It's the initial pain of entering into community in a pure and selfless way”. Mystics have classically defined it as the pain of letting go of a lesser love and life - in order to accept a deeper life and love.

Nor is it necessarily even a purification from sin. It is the pain of entering Heaven, of having the grain of wheat fall to the ground and die, so as to come to a new fruitfulness. When we die, if our hearts are sufficiently open, God embraces us fully, affectionately, and unconditionally. To the extent that we are not yet fully saints or have not yet fully “let go” of those attachments, that are now incompatible with us being in this new embrace, we will experience purgative pain.

Purgatory is a stage of loving where we prepare to meet God face-to-face in Heaven. It is the pain of standing with Mary of Magdala on the morning of the Resurrection and hearing “Do not cling to what was. Eternal life is much richer, but it is not your old life!” Letting go of this world, with its joys, its beauties and its attachments, is the pain of Purgatory! What a thought!

“Lord, you will show me the path of life and fill me with joy in your presence”.

(Communion anthem of the 31st Sunday of the Year)

Resurrection, Purgatory and Souls

by Noel Bradley



Noel Bradley, Buncrana

ON All Souls Day, November 2, I was at Mass and I was recalling one by one, my parents, my sister, all my uncles and aunts, and friends who have died, and I felt moved by the memory of them and that all of them had given me love in so many different ways over the years, and I thought that that love was God's love given to them and then given to me. I was grateful.

As I write this, I think of my sister, Anne, who died this day two years ago, and I think of the couple of hard years she had before she died and I feel close to her. I feel the same love for her now that I always did. I believe this is God's love given to me for her. I think this close connection that we feel towards the dead is a common thing for us, and I find it easy to believe in the 'Communion of Saints' and to pray for them during Mass. Graveyard Sunday is a great idea.

When I was about 12 years of age, my mother used to send me and my sisters to St Mary's Oratory, in Buncrana, on the Feast of All Souls, to say six Our Fathers, six Hail Marys and six of the Glory Be, to get souls out of Purgatory or, at least, to shorten their time there. We went in and out of the Oratory each time and named each person. We also prayed for one or two who had no one to pray for them and this seemed a very good thing to do. We then went home and told proudly how many times we went in and out, and thinking that it was a good number that we got out of Purgatory or, at least, helped to get out. No harm in all that. It was childish but then I learned some more.

The new story of the universe and our faith

Our understanding of the universe has changed greatly in recent years. Our planet, Earth is not the centre of everything. It is only a tiny dot in a galaxy

of which there are billions. The universe is about 14 billion years old and is still expanding. It is a vast network of galaxies, stars and planets, where everything is being recycled, and evolving from the beginning up until the present. It may go on for billions of more years, even if we make this planet almost uninhabitable for future generations.

Pope Francis refers to this interconnection of all things in his encyclical, 'Laudato si'. There is a web of life and each of us, including those who have died and are yet to come, are all a part of it.

In the light of this, I find it hard to think of disembodied souls wandering around, maybe for billions of years, waiting for the final fulfilment of 'all things in Christ', when He 'will be all in all'.

No one knows really what state we will be in when we die. It is helpful to go back to some Scripture texts and let our faith be nourished there. One is that Jesus "will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body" (Phil 3:21). The other is: "We will certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His" (Rom 6: 5). This is very hard to reconcile with disembodied souls or spirits. Can we not say with faith that after death we will be alive with God as soon as we die, and that we will be alive in a bodily way just as Jesus was? He ate and drank with them after His death.

However difficult it is to imagine, the Resurrection of Jesus and ours is a bodily one! We will have made our contribution to the transformation of the universe by the way we have lived and when we die we will become one more element in the gradual build-up of the transformation of the universe and "then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known" (1 Cor 13: 12).

The dualism of body and soul

The dualism of body and soul is not a biblical notion. It seems that medieval theologians in their struggle to imagine life after death turned to ancient Greek philosophy and borrowed the terms 'matter' and 'form' from there. Matter and form were seen as distinct aspects of the reality of our world but they were not seen as separate or separable parts of reality.

"Some Christian theologians distorted and misapplied these terms by assuming that each of us humans is composed of two distinct parts or realities: a body that is just matter and a soul or spirit that inhabits the body but that can exist independently of the body. When we describe humans as embodied spirits we can be making the assumption that it is possible for us to exist as disembodied spirits after death. This way of thinking is not true either to the Scriptures or to authentic Greek philosophy." ('A Creed for Today' by Donal Dorr, p138. Veritas)

In this book, Donal goes on to suggest that what is required of each of us is a leap of faith, like that made by Mary Magdalene and John 'the disciple whom Jesus loved', and eventually by the other followers of Jesus.

The risen Jesus is the 'first fruits' (1 Cor 15:20) of our transformed world and we will be made alive "each in turn...when He comes" (1 Cor 15: 23-24). We can think of Mary, the mother of Jesus, whom we believe was 'assumed body and soul into heaven' as the 'second fruits' of our transformed world. She, like Jesus, is alive with God in bodily form. This gives us the hope that the same can happen to each of us.

"Why should we have to wait for millions or billions of years for this to happen? There is no scriptural basis for claiming that we wait for it as disembodied spirits...We are, I suggest, entitled to believe that 'he comes' for each of us as soon as we die, that we do not have to wait in disembodied form until his final coming. Why not face the issue that if we choose to believe in life after death, then we are talking of a fully bodily life, like the bodily life of the resurrected Jesus" (Ibid, 139).

This bodily life is very difficult for us to imagine and so we are inclined to dismiss it. But something can be true even if we can't imagine it. This is where faith comes in.

What about Purgatory?

All this, I am sure, has been fairly heavy reading for a newspaper article and it leaves a lot of questions unanswered. What of our understanding now

of purgatory. Will it go the way of Limbo, which as a teaching in the Catholic Church has now been withdrawn? The Catholic Catechism teaches that purgatory is a place of purification for certain people who are not holy enough to enter Heaven and so we should pray for them, give alms for them and do penance (CCC 1030-1032).

One theologian suggests that purgatory is about "being stripped... of the hangovers of sin, of their illusions and addictions" (Herbert McCabe in 'God, Christ and us', p.150). My question is: "Can we not grow to be detached from these things and all the things of this world, especially as we face death or in the process of dying?"

Another theologian suggests, and I prefer this rendering, that "Our purgatorial suffering will perhaps be limited to seeing, with absolute clarity and in a single view, all the ways we slap God in the face and all the ways God welcomes us with love anyway. It is the purgative experience of having our faults overlooked and forgotten by someone deeply in love with us. It is purgative in the sense of a catharsis, a welcome elimination of useless baggage. Standing maskless before God, we burn, not from fire but from a poignant mixture of shame and gratitude" ('Love you, Matty' by Tad Dunne, p.80).

One thing that purgatory does point to is that, even if I have argued that when we die we are already living a resurrected life with God, there is still something incomplete. I cannot forget that I am not an isolated individual and that I am not saved alone. I am part of a community, indeed, a part of the whole web of life. Am I saved if my family and friends and, indeed, all others, and even the earth and all its creatures in some way, are not included? I want my parents, my uncle and aunts and my sister, Anne, and even my twin sister, Joan, who died at 11 months old, to be with me in some way and others as well. God is not just my God but the God of all history.

Purgatory suggests that there may be something incomplete for some time, and we know that "the entire creation has been groaning in one great act of giving birth; and not only creation, but all of us who possess the first-fruits of the Spirit, we too groan inwardly as we wait for our bodies to be set free" (Rom. 8:23).

We can feel that 'groaning' in our bodies and we are not saved yet, but must wait for that with patience. Perhaps that is part of our purification too.

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We can offer sacrifices up for departed souls

by Siobhan Gillen



Siobhan Gillen, Steelstown.

NOVEMBER is such a very special month. We remember those who have passed this world before us each and every day, but in November we especially pray for our dearly departed.

On All Souls Day, we pray for those who have gone before us in faith. We remember their lives dearly and pray for our deceased friends and relatives especially during this calendar time.

We offer up Holy Communions for their intentions. As a community, we have Masses said

for our dearly departed loved ones, especially on the anniversary of their death.

We practice small acts of sacrifice throughout the month and offer the sacrifices up for the souls of our dearly departed.

We ask for the intercession of saints, especially the saints who were great friends of the Holy Souls during their lifetime, to join us in prayer for the faithful departed, for example, Our Lady of Lourdes, St Padre Pio, St Anthony, St Martin, St Patrick and others.

When passing by a cemetery, we pray the short Eternal Rest prayer: "Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord. And let the perpetual light shine upon them. And may the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen."

Our loved ones are always with us, guiding and supporting. We pray for their souls and look forward to a time when we will all meet up again.

The greatest charity we can offer departed loved ones is prayer on their behalf

by Patricia Casey



Patricia Casey, Kilrea

husband. She would want to look her best, not feeling overwhelmed with an intense desire to escape notice. Such extreme discomfort is like standing before God with a stain of sin on the soul. His gaze of love and forgiveness in no way diminishes our desire to hide that spot.

Purgatory is a gift of our merciful God. Instead of cutting ourselves off from His all holy presence eternally into Hell, we can voluntarily place ourselves into the 'washing machine' called Purgatory, knowing that we will be purified and brought to Heaven to enjoy the eternal presence of God.

The holy soul's most intense torment is having seen God but not yet able to be in His presence.

The Church this year provides the whole of November to gain each and any day a plenary indulgence for the souls in purgatory. Let's intensify our prayers this month and release these souls to enjoy the warm embrace of God.

Our Blessed Mother not only visits the souls in Purgatory, but she also comes to bring them to Heaven. Let's pray the Holy Rosary this month especially for these souls who will, in return, always pray for you.

By helping the Holy Souls, they will obtain even greater graces for us once they get to Heaven and become saints *by Fr Gerard Mongan*



Fr Gerard Mongan, Carnhill.

IN this sombre month of November, when we perhaps think of and pray for our loved ones who have died even more than usual, we might find comfort in the beautiful words of Jesus, "Do not let your hearts be troubled". We may well be troubled because we're still grieving.

We have lost someone special whom we all love deeply and hurt deeply because our loved one is no longer here with us.

We go to Mass to pray for them. Our prayers, especially praying the Mass, is the closest way of being in contact with our dead. Just as we might have held a loved one's hand when they were dying, or maybe we didn't get the chance to do that, we are holding their hand in our prayer at Mass because they are in the gentle and humble heart of God and God is very near at Mass. We come to be reassured that Jesus has said the same thing to our loved one who has died as he says to us: "Come to me", "I will give you rest".

When we die, many of us, including myself, may not be completely ready to come to Jesus, or to enter into the pure unconditional, loving and warm embrace of God. That's why for centuries, the Church teaches

that when we die, most of us are in some need of purification, an experience known as 'Purgatory'.

Now there is a lot of material around that attempt to describe purgatory in vivid and sometimes frightening detail. It is always important to remember that the Church never speculates as to its exact nature but basically teaches that purgatory is a purifying process before the soul can come face to face with the perfect love of God.

Fr Ronald Rolheiser remembers talking to a very holy priest one time who gave him an example of what purgatory might be like when it is placed in the context of a loving God who says, "Trust in me...I have prepared a place for you."

Several years ago, he was counselling a young man who was experiencing a pain, of a pretty intense type, that was new to him. He had fallen in love with a wonderful young woman and was preparing to marry her. Prior to meeting her, he had been living rather irresponsibly, been sexually promiscuous, and had been comfortably smug and insensitive in that state. The woman he had fallen in love with was aware of his past but was not throwing this into his face. The opposite. She was loving and forgiving him unconditionally. But there was the rub!

Being in love with this wonderfully good, generous, and moral person made him aware of himself in a fuller way. Her love was a prism through which he began to see his own immaturity (which is what unconditional love always does). Her love was a light that gave him new eyesight and what he saw inside of himself caused him a lot of pain. To his credit, he sought help - confession, spiritual direction, psychological counselling. Her loving him, purely and unconditionally, caused him the deepest pains

he had ever endured. It was his first taste of purgatory. But note: it was love, embrace, warmth, and unconditional forgiveness that triggered that pain and the subsequent purification.

Prepare

We can picture purgatory as a bit like that, where the soul sees just how inadequate he or she is and accepts that he or she needs to prepare and be made ready for entering fully into God's warm, loving unconditional and passionate embrace in heaven. Our prayers can help them do that. Our prayers for them is our way of caring for them and loving them still on their journey to Heaven. Our prayers help them to let go and be free from the things that bound them in this life and really accept God's love for them, to free them may be from the damage that was caused by not repenting of a particular sin or not being reconciled with someone in this life, which may have left its scar on other people.

So, instead of seeing Purgatory as something frightening, we can see it as a gift from God to those who are in most need of God's mercy, part of God's never-ending love and mercy for us, even beyond death.

Pope Benedict XVI, in his usual clear and intelligent way, explained the necessity of Purgatory. He said that "between the two extremes, the evil that totally reject God and goodness and the saints, who are extremely holy, in between there is the great majority of people. And for them their remains in the depths of their being, an ultimate interior openness to Truth, Love and God. In the concrete choices of life however, this is covered over with ever new compromises with evil. Dirt covers purity but underneath it all, the thirst for purity remains".

"What happens to such individuals when they appear before the judge?" Pope Benedict

asked. He added, "before Christ's gaze, all falsehood melts away... that encounter with Jesus transforms us and burns away all the imperfections and frees us... the pain of this encounter, the impurity and sickness of our lives becomes evident to us, there lies salvation in His gaze, the touch of His heart heals us... it is a blessed pain in which the holy power of His love seers through us like a flame, enabling us to become totally ourselves and thus totally of God... the pain of love becomes our salvation and our joy".

On November 1, we rejoiced with all the saints, the ones who have entered fully into that joyful embrace of God because they accepted God's love for them and lived it in their lives. On November 2, when we remembered the holy souls who are still on their journey to the fullness of life in Heaven, the words of St Paul come to mind: "Now that we have been reconciled, surely we may count on being saved by the life of His Son? Not merely because we have been reconciled but because we are filled with joyful trust in God". It is with that joyful trust in God that we commend the soul of our loved one to the warm embrace of a loving God and pray that where Jesus is, they may be too, cleansed and purified in the place He has prepared.

By praying for the dead this November, we will help many Holy Souls, who are already praying for us - even though they cannot pray for themselves, they do pray for us. And by helping them now, they will obtain even greater graces for us once they get to Heaven and become saints.

Our prayer and penances will help us by reminding us that death does not have the last word and that we are not powerless in grief. That we can still help them. And therefore, we can always be people of hope.

Pray for the Holy Souls as the rewards will be great in Heaven *by Joe Carlin*



Joe Carlin, Columba Community, Derry.

PRAYING for the Holy Souls is not just a prayer but a humble ministry in which each of us can partake, and play our part in encountering and deepening our relationship with those whom we have loved and have gone before us, and need our daily prayer.

Many people think Purgatory is a particular place, time or space but, in prayer, we come to know it is a state of being, a cleansing and a preparation on the way to oneness with our Father.

I believe that if we are praying for souls who are special to us, and we are praying continually all our lives, our Lord will take all those prayers for those special souls and place them at the time of their death, so to help their soul reach that oneness that we spoke of with the Father. This is why it is so important that we are encouraged to pray for the Holy Souls in our daily prayer, so that their journey is more peaceful.

When speaking of the Holy Souls, I would like to share my own experience in prayer. A while after my dad passed away, I had

a beautiful vision of him. This vision consisted of my dad being in a chair but looking upwards to Heaven, to the light in awe and at peace. However, I realised that even though he was strapped to this chair, the contentment and peace he portrayed gave me great comfort and consolation, as opposed to desolation. I believe seeing my dad held in this chair was God's way of showing me, in a way that I would understand and search my heart, that I needed to, perhaps, forgive my dad for something and set him free.

God always uses our imagination to help us see things in His light. This vision has confirmed in me that forgiveness is one of the key factors in letting souls go and enter their heavenly home.

I believe that faith in the merciful love of our God is another important factor, and we should all be encouraged to have compassion for all souls on their journey home. For when we lose someone close to us, it is incredibly difficult to let them go, but by allowing them this merciful act of compassion, in letting them go, we set them free.

If we only knew the bliss they were about to experience in the arms of the Father, we would never hold them back.

Praying for the Holy Souls can be viewed as a personal and unspoken ministry as we walk this earth, humbly and gently praying for those whom we have lost, and I would encourage anyone who is seeking a ministry, that is proactive and worthwhile, to pray for the holy souls, as the rewards will be great in heaven.

Let's pray for departed souls yet to reach Heaven *by Kate O'Kane*



THE souls of the dead are available for us to request intercession for our daily needs. They are also available to pray for our souls; for it is in giving that we receive. When we give to them in prayer and Masses, they give to us through their intercession.

When a soul departs from the body, it is no longer attached to earthly things. It is then on its way to God, and this destination can be quickened by our prayers and Masses.

It is, without doubt, a great occasion when a soul reaches Heaven, its eternal reward, for it is at this moment that the soul is united with God to live for eternity.

This is a time of great rejoicing in Heaven, so let us pray for the souls who have yet to reach their eternal reward.

Jesus, Mary, I love you, save souls.

My prayer for the Holy Souls *by Martin Gallagher*

I am blessed to be able to attend daily Holy Mass. Before and during Mass, I am conscious of the Holy Souls of my family, friends and all the Holy Souls before the altar of God.

This is the simple prayer that I offer up for them...

"Jesus, you know my heart. I believe in your great mercy for All the Holy souls, gathered here before you, especially for the souls

that are passing from this earthly life to meet you this day, and for those souls closest to my heart. Please, grant them eternal peace with you, in paradise. Amen".



Martin Gallagher, Galliagh.

The people of Ireland have always had great devotion to Holy Souls

by Mary McMenamin



those who die in God's grace and friendship but still imperfectly purified". It notes that this final purification of the elect is entirely different from the punishment of the damned.

The purification is necessary because, as scripture teaches, nothing unclean will enter the presence of God in Heaven and, while we may die with our mortal sins forgiven, there can still be many impurities in us, specifically venial sins and the temporal punishment due to sins already forgiven.

Here are a few quotes from some well-known saints on the Holy Souls in Purgatory...

"I saw my guardian angel, who ordered me to follow him. In a moment I was in a misty place full of fire in which there was a great crowd of suffering souls. They were praying fervently, but to no avail, for themselves; only we can come to their aid. The flames, which were burning them, did not touch me at all. My guardian angel did

not leave me for an instant. I asked these souls what their greatest suffering was. They answered me in one voice that their greatest torment was longing for God." (St Maria Faustina Kowalska).

"By assisting them we shall not only give great pleasure to God, but will acquire also great merit for ourselves. And, in return for our suffrages, these blessed souls will not neglect to obtain for us many graces from God, but particularly the grace of eternal life. I hold for certain that a soul delivered from Purgatory by the suffrages of a Christian, when she enters paradise, will not fail to say to God: 'Lord, do not suffer to be lost that person who has liberated me from the prison of Purgatory, and has brought me to the enjoyment of Thy glory sooner than I have deserved.'" (St Alphonsus de Liguori).

"As we enter Heaven, we will see them, so many of them, coming towards us and thanking us. We will ask who they are, and they will

say 'a poor soul you prayed for in purgatory.'" (Ven Fulton Sheen).

As St Pio of Pietrelcina once said, "We must empty Purgatory with our prayers." He was convinced that it can be done. During his life on earth, Padre Pio was visited often by the Holy Souls from Purgatory, asking him for prayers and Masses to release their soul. We too, can help the Holy Souls in Purgatory, especially those who have no one to pray for them, by getting Masses said, hearing Masses, and offering up our sufferings.

Let us take a moment now and recite this prayer given to us by Jesus through St Gertrude the Great for the Holy Souls: "Eternal Father, I offer Thee the Most Precious Blood of Thy Divine Son, Jesus, in union with the Masses said throughout the world today, for all the Holy Souls in Purgatory, for sinners everywhere, for sinners in the universal church, those in my own home and within my family. Amen."

THE month of November is dedicated to the Holy Souls in Purgatory. The people of Ireland have always had a great love and devotion to the Holy Souls.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines purgatory as "a purification, to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven, which is experienced by

As we pray for our dead, we help purify those who may be in Purgatory by Evelyn Heaney & Kathleen Winters



themselves.

Masses for the deceased and praying in the cemetery, as well as the Stations of the Cross, the Rosary, prayer to St Gertrude and the Chaplet of the Divine Mercy are all very powerful prayers for the souls in purgatory. A plenary indulgence can be gained for a Holy soul each day during the month of November, by visiting a cemetery and praying for the deceased and praying the Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be for the Holy Father, going to confessions and receiving Holy Communion.

Padre Pio had a great devotion to the Holy souls. He was able not only to hear but to see souls from the other world. At times, he was given the gift of knowing the eternal condition of those who had died. His supernatural gifts did not come easily. They marked a life of intense suffering, including Padre Pio's bearing the wounds of the stigmata for 50 years.

Padre Pio said: "I see so many souls from Purgatory that they don't frighten me anymore," and "More souls of the dead than the living climb this mountain to attend my Masses and seek my prayers".

Early in his priesthood, he wrote to his spiritual director, "For some time I have felt the need to offer myself to the Lord as a victim for poor sinners and for souls in purgatory. This desire has grown continuously in my heart, until now it has become a powerful passion. I made this offering to the

Lord, imploring Him to lay on me the punishments that are prepared for sinners and for souls in purgatory, even multiplying them upon me a hundredfold as long as He converts and saves sinners and quickly releases the souls in purgatory."

St Gertrude, whose Feast Day is on November 16, was given a prayer which is said to release many souls from Purgatory: "Eternal father, I offer you the most precious blood of your Divine son, Jesus, in union with the Masses said throughout the world today, for sinners everywhere, for sinners in the universal church, those in my own home and within my own family, Amen"

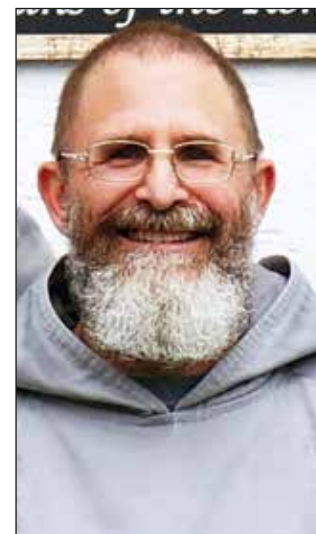
Names of the deceased placed in a book beside the Baptismal font in the Sacred Heart Church, in Omagh, are prayed for in all Masses during November.

On Sunday, November 14, the Drumragh Parish Community will remember in a special way those who have died over the past 12 months. There will be two services - at 4 pm (the deaths from November 2020 to April 2021), and at 7 pm (May 2021 to October 2021), at which the names of the deceased will be read out.

Family members and friends are welcome to join the services in the Sacred Heart Church or on the Drumragh Parish webcam.

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and may perpetual light shine on them forever.

Prayer for souls in Purgatory very important as they can no longer pray for themselves by Fr Thomas Cacciola cfr



Franciscan Friar of the Renewal, Fr Thomas Cacciola cfr

She also said, "...seeing it in itself, the impediment which can be taken away only by means of Purgatory, the soul casts itself therein swiftly and willingly".

So souls want to go to Purgatory in order to be purified before they see God, because they now see who He is; they see He is love, they see what it takes to be in His presence - that purity.

There are also revelations from Ann, the Lay Apostle, which does have approval from the Bishop, and the Vatican has had all the messages. She has a book called 'Mist of Mercy, in which she talks about how the souls, when they are in Purgatory, are in a mist. That is the same kind of image used by many for fire - a kind of dark mist. In this mist, the soul is reflecting on how its sins affected others; that is part of the purification in Purgatory, to see the effects of our sins.

In Purgatory, souls also learn how to love now in a way that they didn't know how to do when they were on earth.

It is very important to pray for the souls in Purgatory, as they can no longer pray for themselves.

Ways in which we can prevent ourselves from going to Purgatory include doing acts of charity here on Earth. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states, "A conversion which proceeds from a fervent charity can attain the complete purification of the sinner in such a way that no punishment would remain" (CCC 1472).

We have opportunities, through showing love and charity, and through doing penances and sacrifices, of making up for temporal punishment due to sin, so that when we die, if we have no more punishment due to sin, we can go straight to Heaven. That is the gift that God gives to us - the beautiful reward for that purification.

THE Catholic Church designates the month of November to praying for the Holy Souls. The month begins with the Feast of All Saints, on November 1, and the Feast of All Souls, on November 2.

The church refers to three different groups of souls:

*Souls on earth (Church militant)... ourselves striving through the ups and downs of everyday life.

*Souls in Purgatory (Church suffering)... souls of the dead who are dependent on our prayers for release from purgatory.

*Souls in Heaven (Church triumphant)... souls who have reached Heaven.

The Bible and the Catechism of the Catholic Church, as well as saints such as Padre Pio and St Gertrude, encourage us to pray for

the Holy Souls.

Scripture says "It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins" (2 Macc 12:43-46.)

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 958) says: "Our prayer for them is not only capable of helping them but also of making their intercession for us effective".

As we pray for our dead, we help to purify those who may be in purgatory and, therefore, help them to go to Heaven. We believe that all the ties of friendship and affection, which knit us together as one throughout our lives, do not unravel with death. As we pray, we are expressing our unity with other members of God's family, and are sharing in the outpouring of God's mercy, and they can pray for us, even though they cannot pray for

Thoughts of Purgatory by Myra McLaughlin

NOVEMBER is a month devoted the Holy Souls, during which we are more aware of praying for them.

When I think of Purgatory I think of souls waiting to be cleansed, made pure, to enter Heaven without sin.

Remembering the Holy Souls during this month is an opportunity to pray daily for them, to fast, go to Confession and visit the graves of loved ones in the cemetery.

May the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace. Amen.



Myra McLaughlin, Derry.

It can only be out of love that God permits some to go to purgatory *by Sr Ethna McDermott*

WHEN I hear the word 'purgatory' my heart sinks! My hope is that, on passing from this world, everyone would immediately experience the unimaginable joy of heaven. If I, who love imperfectly, care so much, how could God, whose love is perfect, want anything less for us?

Yet the Church teaches that purgatory exists. In the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1993) we read that "All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation;

but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven. The Church gives the name Purgatory to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned" (Articles 1030-1031).

There are many ideas about what purgatory might be like. Saints have had revelations that many people spend time in purgatory before reaching heaven. It is St Thérèse's understanding of purgatory that resonates most with me. She said: "As soon as you try to

please God in everything and have an unshakable trust He purifies you every moment in His love and He lets no sin remain. And then you can be sure that you will not have to go to Purgatory".

St Thérèse also said that when we love, we can't go to purgatory. Love is the key – love of God and love of our neighbour. Our love can never be perfect as God's love is, but for St Thérèse the desire to love is enough.

God is love, and it can only be out of love that God permits some people to go to purgatory before entering into the fullness of eternal

life, and I believe that those who may have to endure purgatory are in no doubt of God's love for them. Rather this is an opportunity to deal with unfinished business, a time to let go of attachments or resentments, a time for reconciliation – with God, with others and oneself.

Those in purgatory may need to forgive others, while also relying on receiving forgiveness from those they have left behind. It is a time to put aside anything that distracts from loving God completely, a time to 'become' the Beatitudes, especially the sixth one, "Blessed

are the pure in heart for they will see God" (Matthew 5:8).

"Those who have died in grace have gone no further from us than God, and God is very near" (St Ambrose).

In the Apostle's Creed, we profess our faith in the Communion of Saints, that is, communion of all the baptised, living and dead. Prayers are constantly being offered 24/7 worldwide, particularly in the Mass and the prayer of the Church. All our prayers are carried on a wave of prayer throughout the whole Church, and likewise, we too are supported by the prayers of the entire Church. We pray with each other and for each other.

The artwork in some Churches helps us to enter into this mystery, when saints are depicted around or above the sanctuary. I remember being very struck by this in the newly refurbished chapel in the Irish College in Rome. On visiting the chapel when it was empty, while admiring the beauty of the artwork, it also felt cluttered. But when I went to Mass there and saw the saints towering over the group of priests concelebrating, the artwork became complete; it felt as if heaven and earth met.

I have since been more tuned in to such artwork in other Churches, including the Long Tower and St Eugene's Cathedral. We can catch a tiny glimpse of heaven in Church, but also in the beauty of all creation and in the love we experience in some relationships. I imagine that in purgatory people see much more of this than we do.

We often see St Monica's request to her son St. Augustine on



Sr Ethna McDermott, Good Shepherds, Derry.

memoriam cards. 'One thing only I ask you, that you remember me at the altar of the Lord wherever you may be.' St Monica doesn't ask for prayers, just to be remembered at the altar of the Lord. I understand what she says to be a request that we realise our deceased loved ones are constantly with us. As well as offering prayer and sacrifice for them, we pray with them and to them. All our prayers ripple through the communion of saints. While we trust that our loved ones have gone to Heaven, we also unite ourselves in praying for eternal salvation for all.

"I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nothing already in existence and nothing still to come, nor any power, nor height nor depths, or any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

If we pray for souls in Purgatory, we can depend on their help when we can't help ourselves *by Marian Murphy*



Marian Murphy, Dungiven.

God's friendship without having been purified of the consequence of personal sin. The Church gives the name Purgatory to this final purification of the elect.

In many churches, during November, the priests offer a Requiem Mass to remember and pray for those parishioners who have passed away in that year. This is very comforting for the living members of those families, as well as the prayers being beneficial for their dead.

People who have passed from this life are totally dependent on our prayers. As we remember and pray for them, they intercede for us.

The Feasts of All Saints and All Souls, at the beginning of November, help to strengthen our commitment to praying for our deceased relatives and friends, but we should also remember those souls who have no one left in this life to pray for them, and those

who are furthest from Heaven.

We have access to many forms of prayer for the souls in Purgatory, but often we are encouraged to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for them.

St Malachy was disturbed by visions of his dead sister calling out to him for prayers. He realised he had stopped offering Masses for her, so he resumed this practise and soon she appeared to him and was at peace.

Our Lady is said to often ask the visionaries of Medjugorje to pray for the dead. St Faustina, in her biography, recalls a time when she was taken by her Guardian Angel to Purgatory. From her experience, she faithfully continued to pray for the conversion of sinners and the souls in Purgatory.

We can obtain indulgences for the dead. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, an indulgence is: "A remission before God of the temporal

punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven".

Indulgences are either partial or plenary, depending on if they remove part or all of the temporal punishment due to sin.

Many Saints are renowned for their devotion to the dead, such as St Nicholas and St Gertrude, and they penned specific prayers which help to release souls from Purgatory.

Often, when passing a cemetery, I try to remember to pray for the dead. One prayer always comes to mind: "Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May their souls, and the souls of all the faithful departed, rest in peace. Amen."

Someday, we will need prayers when we pass from this life. If we pray now for the souls in Purgatory, we can depend on their help when we can't help ourselves.

SEARCH youth commit to praying daily decade of Rosary for Holy Souls *by Caoimhe Mahony*



Search Group praying for the Holy Souls.

WHEN we first discussed the topic of purgatory with our young people at Search, they found it somewhat uncomfortable. The idea that our loved ones may be in purgatory and not receiving a straight pathway to Heaven, left a level of unease. But, as we discussed it further, they understood it as a "waiting space"; a time to let go of our earthly baggage in preparation

for an eternity with God.

One young person's perception was, "Well if my loved one is in purgatory then, at least, I know they are going to Heaven one day." We agreed that this was a very positive way to view it.

As we explored the idea of what purgatory looked like and what happens there, it became clear that it was urgent that we prayed for

all the souls in purgatory. So, we devoted our prayer that night to all the souls in purgatory and all of our loved ones that are deceased.

We challenged our young people to say a decade a day of the Rosary for all the souls of purgatory, for the intention that they may find peace and be reunited in Heaven with their Father.

Search had its first monthly

prayer meeting on Sunday, November 7, which was powerful and full of the Holy Spirit. We dedicated time during the meeting to pray for all our deceased loved ones and those souls in purgatory.

Padre Pio's statement - "More souls of the dead from Purgatory than of the living climb this mountain to attend my Masses and seek my prayers" - reminds us that, in our busy day-to-day lives, it is important to pray for those that have gone before us.

He further reminds us of the power of prayer and the impact that it can make.

In praying for our deceased, it reminds us to give thanks for our life, for each day we live on earth, and that we can continue to have courage to live our lives boldly in the name of Christ.

November plenary indulgences period extended

OPPORTUNITIES to gain indulgences for the benefit of the faithful departed have been extended this year as well, for the whole month of November, due to health and safety measures regarding Covid-19. The indulgence is normally limited to the first eight days of the month.

The decree published by the Vatican's Apostolic Penitentiary regarding this allows the faithful to gain plenary indulgences for the souls in purgatory by visiting, even if only mentally, a cemetery on any eight days in November, which need not be consecutive, and praying for those who have died.

A second plenary indulgence is also established for the day of the commemoration of the faithful departed, All Souls' Day, November 2. The current decree allows the faithful to obtain that indulgence for the benefit of the deceased on any day of November, of their choice.

This indulgence is obtained by devoutly visiting a church or an oratory, along with the recitation of the Our Father and the Creed, and the other requirements associated with a Plenary

Indulgence.

Anyone unable to leave their home can obtain the Plenary Indulgence too by uniting themselves spiritually to other members of the faithful. For this, the condition of being completely detached from sin and the intention of completing the other requirements for obtaining a Plenary Indulgence remain. These conditions are Sacramental Confession, reception of Holy Communion and a prayer for the Holy Father's intentions.

It is suggested that this prayer takes place before an image of Jesus or the Blessed Virgin Mary. Recommended prayers include prayers for the deceased, Morning or Evening Prayer from the Office of the Dead, the Rosary, the Divine Mercy Chaplet, meditating on various Gospel passages proposed for the liturgy of the Dead, or completing a work of mercy by offering to God the suffering and discomforts of one's own life.

The Decree also asks priests to make the Sacrament of Confession generously available and make Holy Communion available to the sick.

Powerful book on Padre Pio and the Holy Souls by Fr Alessio Parente ofm cap highlights how...

Holy Souls anxiously await end of their sorrow...and it's within our power to assist them *by Mel O'Dea*

I have a very clear memory of a dream I had in my late teens, of one of my deceased grandfathers. It was his wake and while I was in the room with others, where he lay in his coffin, there was a sudden commotion. My grandfather had seemed to come alive and had raised his head and shoulders up to look around. Everyone fled the room in fear, except for a lady who was dressed in what looked like a white nurse's uniform, with a wide hat, who stood next to the coffin talking to my grandfather, while trying to make him comfortable.

I was standing in the doorway, with one leg in and one out of the room, in readiness to flee too, if need-be. Curious about what was happening, I stood looking at my grandfather, who was looking directly at me before he sighed and lay back down in the coffin, apparently dead again.

The dream had such an impact on me that I spoke to my priest about it. He asked if it was around the anniversary of my grandfather's death and I realised that it was, so he suggested that I pray for his soul.

On another occasion, again in my late teens, I had just entered the grounds of my chapel to attend a week-night Mass, when suddenly I got a very strong sense of the presence of another elderly relative who was deceased. So strong was the feeling that I could almost visualise her face looking at me. Because of the darkness and proximity of the graveyard, with no-one else with or near me, I felt a little afraid and hurried my step to get inside the chapel.

Again, I shared the experience with my priest, and he, again, suggested that I pray for her soul. He also told me that if something like this happened again, not to be afraid as these are departed souls just looking for prayer and would not harm me.

After praying for both of these souls, I had no further such experiences of either of them, and so I came to realise the great importance of praying for the deceased. Since then, I have tried to make a point of remembering to offer Rosaries, Divine Mercy Chaplets and Masses for the suffering souls of Purgatory.

However, the fervour with which I do this wanes from time to time, and this was the case when, during the summer just past, I received a book to read about Padre Pio and the Holy Souls written by Fr Alessio Parente ofm cap, entitled 'The Holy Souls – Viva Padre Pio'. And what an eye-opening read it was! The author certainly succeeded in achieving his wish that those who read the book would "become a little more aware of the plights

of our departed brothers and sisters – our loved ones now in Purgatory".

Considering ancient beliefs in the first chapter, Fr Alessio noted that St Paul had said that souls who are not pure cannot reach Heaven "but only as through fire" (1 Cor 3:15). He also refers to the Book of Maccabees (2 Macc 12:42-45), where it is written that "after the battle against Gorgia's men, Judas made a collection and sent it to Jerusalem so that a sin offering could be made for the souls of those who had died in battle, as it was holy, pious and beneficial to pray for the dead, so that they could have been freed from their sin".

He also highlighted Matt 5:25 and 12:32, writing: "According to the teaching of Jesus, our enemy is the devil, or our conscience. If we don't do penance for our sins in the present life, they will be our accusers before the Judge, the Lord, who will put us into the hands of His ministers, the angels, and they will bring us to the expiation place of Purgatory, which we shall not leave until all our sins are expiated".

Urging the reader not to forget the dead, Fr Alessio continued: "We do not know how long they suffer, or how great their sufferings are, but we are sure that they suffer. The time may be a little while, or it may be long, long years, even ages. These souls are anxiously awaiting the end of their sorrow, and it is within our power to assist them. They see Heaven before them, and they long to enter its blessedness; they see God before them and it is unspeakable anguish to be separated from Him".

Noting that Padre Pio had "a very particular relationship with the Holy Souls", and at one time had said, "I see so many souls from Purgatory that they don't frighten me anymore", Fr Alessio added that he had, himself, heard Padre Pio say on another occasion: "More souls of the dead than of the living climb this mountain to attend my Masses and seek my prayers".

Relieve

Commenting on this, Fr Alessio wrote: "It would appear that souls in Purgatory are constantly present to us even if we cannot see them. They look longingly at us, beseeching a prayer or good work to relieve their sufferings... The fact that we cannot see them, unfortunately renders us less sensitive to their plight. Let us, therefore, always keep present in our minds these poor brothers and sisters of ours".

He added: "Padre Pio was one who offered his pains, prayers and

sufferings for the release of those in a state of purification, and those souls never ceased to thank him for this...But we too must be truly grateful to Padre Pio for lifting the veil which separates this world from the next for a few instants...thereby helping us to understand things more clearly".

Regarding the existence of Purgatory, Fr Alessio quotes St Catherine of Genoa and St Augustine, before commenting: "The existence of Purgatory is so certain that really no Catholic should even entertain a doubt in this regard. It has been taught from the earliest days of the Church and was accepted with undoubting faith wherever the Gospel was preached. The doctrine was revealed in Scripture and has been handed down by tradition, taught by the infallible Church and believed by millions and millions of faithful throughout time".

Recounting how Padre Pio sought permission of his spiritual director, in 1910, to offer himself as a victim for the souls in Purgatory, Fr Alessio quotes from his letter: "For some time now I have felt the need to offer myself to the Lord as a victim for poor sinners and for the souls in Purgatory...I have, in fact, made this offering to the Lord several times, beseeching Him to pour upon me the punishment prepared for sinners and for the souls in Purgatory, even increasing them a hundredfold for me, as long as He converts and saves sinners and quickly admits to Paradise the souls in Purgatory".

He noted that once Padre Pio "had been given permission to become a victim, and once he had willingly offered himself, the apparitions of the deceased souls to Padre Pio became innumerable".

The book recounts several stories told by Padre Pio of souls that had visited him asking for prayers that they may be freed from Purgatory and "enter the joy of God in Heaven".

"Purgatory", explained Fr Alessio, "is a place of redemption where souls gather on the brink of the abyss. It is the last place of refuge – an invention of merciful love".

He includes Padre Pio's response when, on one occasion, he was asked about Purgatory: "...the souls in Purgatory would like to throw themselves into a well of our earthly fire, because for them it would be like a well of cool water".

Commenting on this, Fr Alessio wrote: "Unfortunately...we do not sufficiently think of the rigours of Purgatory. If we meditated a little

more on this fact, we should surely avoid at least those small errors to which we pay little or no account, and we would pray more earnestly for those unfortunate souls whom we could so easily help during our daily lives".

He also wrote: "Let us remember that we can form God's stairway for the poor souls in Purgatory through our prayers and pious actions offered for their intentions".

Highlighting the risk of losing sight of the fact that souls in Purgatory, while in a state of grace, are suffering, and that, "it is within our power to ease and even to end that suffering", Fr Alessio wrote: "We are part of the Communion of Saints, so we must surely help them. Let us not forget the poor souls in our daily prayers and Masses, and in our little sacrificial acts. Maybe one day, from their place of joy in Heaven, those same souls will intercede with God for us and ask Him to bring us into their company".

In another chapter, he writes: "Our faith tells us that at the very instant of death – at the very moment the soul leaves the body – it appears before its Judge...None of us will escape it, and every instant of our lives will be taken into account. This idea provoked extreme anguish in the hearts of the saints and led them to practise severest penances".

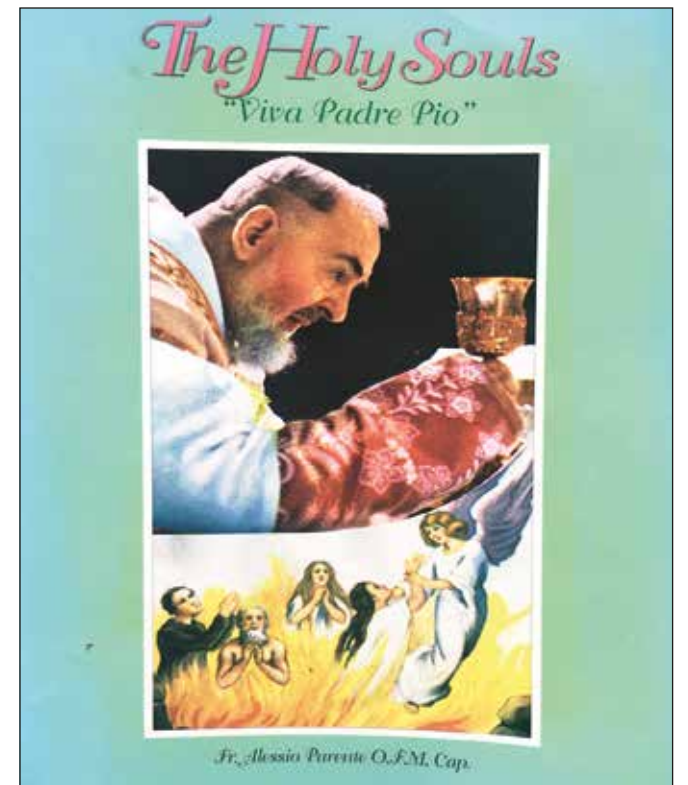
He goes on to note that when asked how Purgatory could be suffered here on earth so that a soul can go directly to Heaven, Padre Pio replied: "By accepting everything from God's Hands. By offering everything up to Him with love and thanksgiving, so as to enable us to pass from our death bed to Paradise".

Action

Highlighting that Padre Pio was speaking from experience when he spoke of what the Holy Souls suffer, Fr Alessio wrote: "He did all in his power to instil in all those who came in contact with him love for those poor unfortunate brothers and sisters of ours. He made us understand that it is not enough for us to be moved with pity toward them, but we must take action. We must follow his example by offering our daily prayers and sufferings to the Lord for their release".

Writing about the Feast of All Souls, Fr Alessio stated that the Church has always been particularly faithful in remembering the dead, and not only on November 2, All Souls Day, though they are remembered in a particular way then.

He highlighted: "The Church knows that nothing impure can be



admitted to the Kingdom of God (Rev 21:27). Nobody who at the moment of death has not reached perfection in love can enter into the vision and enjoyment of God".

Commenting on "the wonderful gift of indulgences", Fr Alessio explained: "A partial or plenary indulgence offers the person concerned a partial or plenary reduction of the suffering due to sins which have already been forgiven. This can also be used in favour of the deceased so that they may be freed from suffering, in part or totally".

He added: "Every year, the second of November reminds us of a great truth: the transition of earthly things. Everything passes...In the final analysis we will pass away too...what at one time caused us to suffer will no longer exist...Many of us may have some regrets. If only we had suffered everything for the love of God we would feel much more serene. Everything passes. Only one thing remains: the love of God!"

Describing the Holy Souls as "our dear friends...always ready and willing to help us in our daily lives, Fr Alessio wrote: "Many are the favours received through their intercession...The faithful who have always had a particular devotion to the Holy Souls and who have made it a daily practice to pray for their release, tell of many occasions in which their help was returned a hundredfold. They are extremely powerful in this regard.

"...Those who have passed to the other world know that life is short and that we must try to do as much good as we can while on earth so that we will gain merit for it in the other world. So why don't we ask for their help in

times of temptations? Why don't we ask their help in times of trial and anguish? Rest assured that they are ready and waiting to help us and will become our dearest friends if only they are given the chance".

He added: "If the Holy Souls in general care so much about us, how much more concerned, then, must our own departed ones be? The members of our own families? Be sure that they are closer to us than ever before and that their assistance is constant... Call on them and ask their help, and you will see the results".

Fr Alessio also pointed out that it is our duty to pray for those who are in Purgatory "owing to error on our part", writing: "We often think that a sin we commit in a hidden way, unknown to anybody else, has no effect on others. But this is not true. Every sin affects our character, our attitude to others, and life in general. So no sin is personal. What a responsibility this is!"

While it may not be easy to know these souls, Fr Alessio states: "God knows who they are, and it is our duty to remember them in a special way every day, for it is perhaps partly owing to our errors that they find themselves in their present position.

"Let us never forget, either, the priests who have taken care of our souls – popes, bishops, priests who have ministered the sacraments to us. They, perhaps, in addition to our parents, brothers, sisters, wife or husband and children, were instruments of our conversion. And remember all those who have had a special place in our lives here on earth...we must pray for everybody in Purgatory. We are obliged to do this".

Hope and joy in the darkness

THE annual Long Tower Novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help continues this month, taking place every Sunday evening in St Columba's Church in the run-up to Christmas.

Amongst the guest speakers who have already shared their thoughts on this year's Novena theme, 'The Sacred Gifts of Hope and Joy in a Time of Darkness', was former BBC correspondent, Martina Purdy, who became the headlines herself when she joined the Sisters of the Adoration community in Belfast.

Speaking about the many twists and turns that her life has taken since, and the 'hope and joy' she found in the darkness, Martina shared some very good news during her Novena talk, about the latest development in her journey of hope leading to a renewed call to the consecrated life.

Delighted to be back speaking in Derry, Martina joked: "I feel like I already know St Columba really well because he is buried in Downpatrick, next to St Patrick. I'm never away from his graveside and I feel a little bit like I'm literally back from the grave myself, because two years ago my amazing vocation as an Adoration Sister came to an abrupt end... when my life as Sr Martina of The Blessed Sacrament expired at 3 pm on September 23, 2017.

"Cause of death? The congregation had grown too small to continue my formation, and I, along with other Sisters, entered the valley of the shadow of death. Disaster seemed to have struck in a way that I could never have imagined seven years ago, when I first came to Derry to share my story in St Eugene's."

"Back then," she recalled, "I had just quit my job as a BBC political correspondent and was a new postulant in The Sisters of Adoration on the Falls Road, in Belfast, and those supernatural gifts of hope and joy were flowing like Niagara.

"But, after I left, in that dark valley, there were times when my hope and joy had slowed to a trickle, usually when I was questioning God's amazing plan for my life, and worst of all, it seemed my life had become just like a country song!"

Acknowledging that some listening to her at the Novena, or someone they love, might be in dark place...through such trials as bereavement, illness, unemployment, homelessness, loss of a business or loss, even, of hope, Martina said: "I am here to tell you not to give up and to remind you that no matter how dark it gets, there is always hope and joy.

"These were Mary's sacred gifts – hope and joy; gifts of God which carried her through every trial – persecution, poverty and even death, with the brutal agonizing

death of Jesus, her Son, on a cross. Mary's joy and hope sprang from her experience of God.

"Looking at the icon for this Novena, we see a woman of sorrows, yes, but also a woman who is holding Jesus, the Divine Son of God, the source of her hope and joy. And, I'm glad to see that the Angel Gabriel is there too. I have never seen an angel but I have heard an angel speak...through the Scriptures. In Luke's Gospel, in the Christmas narrative, the Angel Gabriel said something to Mary that she pondered in her heart, words that have stayed with me in a profound way for the past seven years, words of hope and joy in the darkness of impossibility – 'For God nothing is impossible' (Luke 1:37)."

Recalling her talk at St Eugene's seven years ago, Martina said: "I told you that I would have laughed in your face if you had told me I would one day quit my job as a BBC political correspondent to enter a convent on the Falls Road, two doors down from where I used to interview Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness. I would have said that this was impossible...and I'm pretty sure Gerry and Martin would have said the same thing!

"Of course, after I entered the convent, I would have said it was impossible that I would ever leave. But it happened...because for God nothing is impossible. I don't know why I was so shocked at what happened because it says in the Scripture, in the Book of Sirach, if you aspire to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for an ordeal!

"In suffering and darkness, I clung to the words of an angel – 'For God nothing is impossible'. These words gave me hope of new life and the joy of resurrection because God's hope and joy is possible, even in the worst of circumstances, even in suffering and death...in the darkness of impossibility."

World

She added: "Of course, the world has a different view of hope and joy. It mistakes joy for pleasure, Christmas drinks, Christmas parties, Christmas presents, which are great pleasures but they are not a sacred joy; they can be bought and sold, and they don't last.

"And the world can have a cynical view of hope too. When I was covering the Peace Process, waiting for agreement, I sometimes quoted the comedian, John Cleese – 'It is not the despair. I can stand the despair. It's the hope that's killing me'.

"I saw a sign the other day that said – 'Avoid disappointment. Give up hope!' Well, we Christians know this is simply no way to live! We know that no matter what is happening now, we can rejoice

and hope because we have been transferred from the darkness of this world to the Kingdom of Light. Already, we are on our way to a better place, with God who is love and life, without limit. That is our Christian joy and that is our hope.

"This Christian message, in fact, came to us from the Lord Himself, and eventually through our beloved St Patrick and St Columba, and it took deep root in Ireland and deep root here in Derry, where monasteries and churches like this have been founded. So deep that 1,500 years later there was even a pop song about hope...it was a Derry man who wrote the hit, 'Things can only get better'. Things can only get better. The best is yet to come!"

However, Martina went on to admit that there was a time last year when she was thinking of giving up hope...to avoid disappointment: "I was about a year out of the convent and I was doing well. God had worked miracles in my life. After we left the convent, Sr Elaine Kelly and I landed on holy ground. A friend offered us a house in Downpatrick and, miraculously in answer to prayer, we even got a mission as pilgrim guides on St Patrick's Way, at the St Patrick Centre.

“For God nothing is impossible’. These words gave me hope of new life and the joy of resurrection because God’s hope and joy is possible, even in the worst of circumstances, even in suffering and death...”

"Despite our poverty, we never missed a single meal, but we did miss our old life of Adoration, and then one day, last autumn, the impossible seemed to come about. We got this amazing offer, one that would restore almost everything we had lost, including a new home where we could adore Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament every day and every night. We were overjoyed. We were, as Elaine always said, living the dream!

"But then, almost as suddenly as it arrived, the offer was withdrawn and, frankly, I was really disappointed. I started wondering what God was up to. Instead of trusting in His love and His amazing plan for my life, I was in danger of plunging into a dark place; a place of anger, resentment and confusion."

She continued: "So, I did what every sensible Catholic does when this happens...I went on retreat to a monastery to get

some perspective, some spiritual direction. One of the first things I saw in that retreat centre were four words, in bold, written literally on the wall – 'Hope does not disappoint'!

"Well, I looked at those words with all the cynicism of a BBC political correspondent – Hope? Hope does not disappoint! Ha! I couldn't wait to question the holy monk assigned to give me spiritual direction. 'Father,' I said, in my best BBC voice, 'it says on your wall that hopes does not disappoint! Now, is this really true? I mean aren't hopes dashed all the time?'

"I suspect I wasn't the first person to bring this up. The holy monk smiled patiently and said that it was, indeed, true – hope does not disappoint. And then he explained that they were the words of St Paul, in his letter to the Romans. So, of course, I consulted my Bible to find St Paul's Letter and there it was in Romans 5:5 – 'Hope does not disappoint'.

"St Paul wrote these words 2,000 years ago at a time when he had every reason to be angry, resentful and disappointed, because, at the time, he was under house arrest, chained to a Roman soldier, unjustly accused, awaiting trial and even possible execution. Yet, Paul, in this dark place, was not angry, resentful or disappointed. In fact, Paul was rejoicing! He was full of hope – a hope that does not disappoint.

Rejoice

"In Chapter 5 of Romans, Paul writes, 'We must rejoice, even in the darkness of suffering'. Why...because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit'.

"Hope does not disappoint. In other words, hope doesn't deceive us. Hope doesn't put us to shame. Hope can be relied upon, because hope, like joy, is a sacred gift of God; a God who so loved the world that He gave His only Son, Jesus, to save us from the darkness of sin and death, so we could live, without limit, love without limit. That is Christmas joy and hope in the darkness. Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us always, even until the end of time."

Referring to Chapter 1 of St Luke's Gospel, Martina noted how Paul's companion on the road had "beautifully recorded Mary's hope and joy, and also her cousin, Elizabeth's, and eventually Zechariah's, who declared with joy and hope about the Christ Child – 'He will give light to those in darkness'.

"When I read Luke's Gospel about these ordinary people having extraordinary experiences," she added, "I relate

it to my own life, and my own experience of God, and I hope you can too. That is what Christians do. We hear the story and live the story.

"Mary had an experience of God that led her on an amazing journey. A journey that involved suffering but also great joy and great hope."

Having read Chapter 1 of Luke's Gospel and the Christmas story in preparation for her talk, Martina spoke about how she had been really struck by the words of Elizabeth, who had just experienced the impossible...a miracle...she is pregnant with new life – 'The Lord has done this for me. In these days He has shown His favour and taken away my disgrace among the people' (Luke 1:25).

Saying that the Lord had done this for her too, Martina went on: "The words 'He has taken away my disgrace' jumped off the page because I could really identify with Elizabeth. When I left the convent, there were times I felt the scandal of it. I was rather embarrassed, feeling barren, and I was getting pitying looks. And, like Mary to the Angel Gabriel, I kept asking, 'How can this be?'

"It didn't make sense because I knew I was called and I knew God is faithful to His promises. Then, this summer, a miracle came out of the clear blue sky...a miracle! Elaine and I received an amazing offer...without even looking for it...a chance to return to religious life, one that honoured our desire to adore Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, but also to go out and bear witness to the Gospel message.

"Well, we grabbed the chance and, two weeks ago, we were formally accepted into The Poor



Clares in Co Louth, and later this month, on the Solemnity of Christ the King, we will be Sisters again...back from the dead, full of new life, living the dream!

"Like Mary and Elizabeth, we are giving thanks in hope and joy! And so, with Elizabeth, I say, 'The Lord has done this for me'. And, with the Angel Gabriel, I say, 'For God nothing is impossible'. And, with Mary, the Mother of God, I say my own Magnificat, 'My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, because the Mighty God has done great things for me and holy, holy is His name'.

Concluding, Martina told those listening to "rejoice in the dark, rejoice through suffering, and never give up hope...no matter what, because God is with us, because St Paul and that holy monk were right – hope does not disappoint".

The Novena starts at 6 pm every Sunday, until December 19, when it will conclude with a Carol Service. The remaining speakers include Maire Gormley, Buncrana Parish Pastoral Co-ordinator, on November 14, Kieran Griffith, Director of the Playhouse, on November 21, Martina Davidson, Head of RE at St Cecilia's, on November 28, Fr Brendan McManus, a Jesuit priest, on December 5, and Fr Michael Donnelly, on December 12.



Our Lady and Columba *by Vera McFadden*

ONCE when I was working in the kitchen a melody came into my head. It had a wide range and was very memorable. I decided to work out some lyrics about Our Lady to go with the air. Years later, when I was asked to provide a song about St Columba, I used this melody. As I had also used the air of another Marian song that had come to me in Medjugorje, for a song about Columba, I began to wonder if there was any significance in it.

The eighth of December is the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Our Lady appeared to Catherine Laboure in Paris and gave her the design of the miraculous medal. Years later, she appeared to Bernadette in Lourdes and told her, "I am the Immaculate Conception."

After that her Immaculate Conception was made an article of faith. However, this had already been believed for centuries.

Many birthdays fall on a feast day, or the day before or the day after. I went to the clinic on the Feast Day of Our Lady's birthday and my eldest daughter was born at six o'clock the following morning. Of course, I called her Mary.

St Columba was born in Gartan

on the seventh of December, 521. Of course, the following day was not a Marian Feast Day in his time. However, Columba had great devotion to Our Lady, like many other people of his era. Wasn't she the mother of our Lord and Saviour, and hadn't she been specially chosen by God from all women who ever lived?

He wrote prayers to her and poems about her. There may have been a feast day in honour of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady in St Columba's time, but it would have been on a different date than it is now. We know that it was celebrated on the third of May in early times in this country. This date is mentioned in the calendar of Aengus as a great feast day, and the Martyrology of Tallaght, which was compiled before 792 AD, has an inscription in Latin saying that it is the Feast Day of the Conception of Mary.

Later, the Feast of her Conception was held on the eighth of December and, later again, it was this date that was declared a holiday of obligation for the universal church. The fact that Mary's conception had been immaculate would not become an article of faith until after Our Lady appeared to St Bernadette at

Lourdes.

Some of the holy men who wrote prayers, poems, songs, or commentaries about Our Lady were: Brendan of Clonfert, Columbanus and Colmcille in the sixth century; Colman ua Clasaigh in the seventh century; Blathmac and Cú Chuimhne of Iona at the turn of the seventh and eighth centuries; Sedulius Scottus in the ninth century; and, several centuries later, John Duns Scotus, the Franciscan Friar of Irish descent in Paris.

Several poems are believed to have been written by St Columba, but scholars think that they were written a few centuries later. That is probably because the language used is not the old Gaelic. However, if we remember that the Cathach is now the oldest manuscript in Ireland, and in Europe, we can realise that many manuscripts were lost or stolen by raiders.

Poems written by St Columba would certainly have been committed to memory by many people who revered the saint. Also, while the older writings were still there, it is extremely likely that some of them would have been copied down, but this time in the new Gaelic.

Tradition is usually found to be accurate, and if these poems are attributed to St Columba, then it is almost certain that they were written by him. One of these appears in several manuscripts and has been translated by several people. One of these was Kuno Meyer.

It reads:

"Gentle Mary, give us help!

Casket of the Lord's body, and shrine of all mysteries.

Queen of Queens, pure holy maiden, pray for us that our wretched transgressions may be forgiven through you.

Merciful one, forgiving one, with the grace of the Holy Spirit, Pray with us to the just king of the heavenly family.

Branch of Jesse's tree in the beautiful hazel grove, pray for me that I get forgiveness for my terrible transgressions.

Mary, splendid diadem, thou that Has saved our race,

Glorious, splendid diadem, orchard of Kings!

Brilliant one, transcendent one, with the deed of pure chastity!

Fair golden illumined ark, holy daughter, from Heaven!

Mother righteousness, thou that excels all else,

Pray with me thy first born to save

me on the day of doom.

Noble rare star, tree under blossom, powerful choice lamp, sun that warmeth everyone, ladder of the great track by which every saint ascends, be thou our safeguards towards the heavenly kingdom.

Fair fragrant seat chosen by the King,

the noble guest who was in thy womb three times three months.

Glorious Royal porch through which He was incarnated, the splendid chosen Son, Jesus, Son of the living God.

For the sake of the fair babe that was conceived in thy womb,

For the sake of the holy child that is high king in every place,

for the sake of His cross that is higher than any cross,

for the sake of His burial when He was buried in a stone tomb,

for the sake of His resurrection when He arose before everyone,

for the sake of the holy household from every place to doom,

Be thou our safeguard in the kingdom of the good Lord

that we may meet with dear Jesus – that is our prayer – hail!"

(Translation by Kuno Meyer)

This poem prayer is like a litany, and it has a lot of symbolism, like

the prayer that Columba said in Derry when the people came to him in the bad thunderstorm – "The flame of God's love dwells in my heart as a jewel of gold is placed in a silver dish". Happy feast days!

(Sources – Queen of Ireland written by Mrs Concannon, published by M. H. Gill and Sons, 1938. 'The rainbow cloak' is the name of the book written by Vera McFadden, Lederg Press 2014.)



St Columba and the Book *by Ken McCormack*

DID St Columba's copying of St Finian's psalter lead to the first ruling on copyright viz: "To every cow belongs its calf; to every book its copy?" A psalter is a book of psalms and the incident, which is said to have occurred around 560AD, led to the battle of Cúl Dreimhne, near Ben Bulbin, Co Sligo, and Columba's eventual exile to Iona.

The famous tale was referred to by Dr Stephen Kelly in his talk 'Calves and Kindles: St Columba and the History of the Book', on Friday evening October 22, in St Eugene's Cathedral Hall. This was the inaugural event in a year of Columban celebrations organised by St Columba's College to commemorate the 1500th anniversary of St Columba's birth.

The talk was introduced by Mr Finbar Madden, principal, St Columba's College, who commented on the superb setting of St Eugene's Hall and warmly welcomed Dr Kelly, himself a former pupil of St Columba's College and an expert on medieval texts alongside other research briefs.

On the subject of St Columba and the copied psalter, Dr Kelly was quick to say that the tale found its origins in the early 1500s long after the Derry saint's death (AD 597) - there being no mention of it in 'Adomnan's Life of St Columba', written about a hundred years later. Nonetheless, one school of

thinking links the saint's copied text to that contained in the Cathach (or 'Battler'), a reliquary used by the Clan Ó Domhnaill as a rallying cry and protector in battle. Certainly, this manuscript is one of the oldest surviving in Ireland, and the second oldest Latin psalter in the world.

Discussion on the Cathach brought Dr Kelly on to the wider world of early medieval, such as the 'Book of Kells' and the 'Book of Durrow', and the evolution from scroll to the eventual layout in columns and paragraphs that made the book much more practical to read. We were treated to a succession of magnificent pictures of early texts, many of them sublime in their interweave design and colour, and all extraordinary examples of literary, artistic and religious innovation. Here Stephen Kelly made the very significant point that some texts appeared to have had a mystical, awe inspiring effect, on both scribe and viewer, while others served a more devotional or prayerful role. This despite the occasional irreverent doodles ("woe is me"...etc) written on margins by exhausted young scribes.

Whatever the nature of these early texts, they were confined to monasteries or the very privileged and this more or less persisted until the quantum leap of the Gutenberg Printing Press in 1450.

Thereafter, with books more accessible, eventually the thrust of knowledge spread throughout the globe helping to bring about the dawn of modern civilization as we know it.

Pivotal

Dr Kelly demonstrated that the medieval period is pivotal in the development of the book as we have come to know it in today's world. That, of course, includes the modern 'Kindles' so cleverly mentioned in the talk's title, the 'Calves' furnishing the vellum that originally made the texts possible.

The abiding question is what made such progression come about? Experts tell us that it is down to technological innovation - the next phase driven by the last. Yet, underpinning this is 'why?' What urges man to take the next step? We see it with the book so ably explained by Stephen Kelly, and we see it in art from Giotto to Leonardo da Vinci and the high Renaissance, and similarly in music, medicine and science. Historian, Jacob Bronowski called it the 'Ascent of Man' sadly omitting the God factor, to which believers thoroughly adhere and the breath-taking ancient Irish texts surely give voice to.

But is the book a thing of the past? Stephen Kelly believes not, feeling that despite the internet the book is alive and well in its many modern forms; "Even in a

digital age it shapes profoundly our understanding of memory, history – and ourselves", he says.

Thus, long live the book in its pop-up forms, its talking and 'kindle' forms, its new and innovative jackets and layouts, and much more - and isn't it the case that a beautifully bound text is truly delightful to hold and possess. We must not forget that even the look of a library of books can be awe-inspiring. This, so well evident in the ancient Melk Library near Vienna, where the gold binding on the books is said to cast a mystical glowing light over the setting, lifting minds and hearts to contemplation. Books here seem not destined for

reading but rather for inspiration, for though full of knowledge the removal of one destroys the balance of the whole magical aura.

Thus, on it goes with the book in its many guises as popular as ever it was.

Dr Kelly's talk was most eloquent, skilful and absorbing. Expert in his discipline, he delivered a challenging topic in an easy, relaxed and comfortable style before a highly appreciative audience. Full marks to the St Columba's organising committee for such an enjoyable evening. One looks forward to forthcoming events and, perhaps, another time when Dr Kelly can take us

into the world of the monastery scriptorium to witness how such beautiful texts came about.

Covid restrictions were in place for the talk but it would be remiss not to mention the delightful refreshments at the end, so well managed by the eager young students of St Columba's.

Note: The 'Book of Durrow' and the 'Book of Kells' - ancient Irish masterpieces, may be viewed in the old library of Trinity College, Dublin (booking necessary).

An excellent recent copy of the 'Book of Kells' on vellum, by the late Cyril Morrison, may be viewed in the Chapter House of St Columba's Cathedral, Derry (closed presently due to Covid).



Dr Stephen Kelly.




Mr Finbar Madden, principal of St Columba's College, Derry.



Nathan Thiruvengadam, St Columba's College teacher and College Columba Celebrations Committee member.

Novena to The Divine Child with Derry Carmelites

Novena to the Divine Child Jesus
Nine Days of Recollection



In Carmel, dating from the time of our holy Mother, St Teresa of Avila, the Carmelites observe what we affectionately call "the child Jesus days of recollection."

Once again this year Termonbacca Derry will observe this tradition. The child Jesus will journey through the city of Derry resting overnight in homes in various parts of the city. We will have Mass and Novena prayers each night here in Termonbacca at 7:30pm. You are welcome to join with us in person or online via Termonbacca YouTube channel.

THE Carmelite-led Novena to the Divine Child will take place again in the lead up to Christmas, from December 8-16, with the Infant Jesus statue to be taken to various homes in Derry during this special time of prayer, which deeply touched those blessed with having the beautiful statue in their homes overnight last year.

The Novena to the Divine Child, or to the Infant Jesus, has a long tradition dating back centuries in many countries throughout the world. The religious images can be traced back to the 14th century in Europe. There are several depictions in paintings and statue form venerated in many Churches throughout the world. Over many years, devotion and veneration for personal communal veneration has taken various forms.

Probably one of best known in Europe and Ireland is the Devotion to the Infant Child Jesus of Prague. In many Irish homes, you will find a statue of the 'Child of Prague'. Indeed, many Irish homes will place the statue in a prominent window and facing outside for protection of the home and all those who live there. A tradition, still very much prevalent in Ireland, even to this day, is to place it outside in the garden on the eve of a bride's wedding day, and pray for protection from inclement weather on that special occasion. Many devotions to the Child Jesus will focus on protection from harm of one sort or another.

The image of the infant Christ Child has widespread appeal among many Catholic people. It is a very visible and physical reminder of what Christmas is all about – the incarnation – Emmanuel, God is with us.

It was, and is, very much a family orientated novena. The devotion, in the past, was often passed down through families, particularly the devotion to 'El Divino Nino' (The Divine Child). This novena originated in Bogota, Columbia, in 1914, where the Christ Child appeared to a Father

Rizzo, a Catholic priest of the Salesian Order, and where the devotion became associated with children and the poor.

It is recorded that El Divino Nino (The Christ Child) appeared to Mother Angelica during her mission to Colombia in an effort to expand the Eternal Word Television Network. She returned to the United States and eventually built the Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament as a devotion to El Divino Nino. She later explained in interviews that the miracle of the apparition inspired her to build the shrine as a devotion for women, and specifically to end the scourge of child abuse.

Carmelite Tradition

The Carmelite Order has a rich tradition of devotion to the Child Jesus and can trace their beginnings back to the hermits that lived on Mount Carmel. The Carmelite Marian tradition had an original oratory on Mount Carmel that was devoted to Mary. The original hermits became known as the Brothers of Saint Mary from Mount Carmel. The patroness of the Carmelite Order is Our Lady of Mount Carmel, a title given to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Later, when the Carmelites spread out in Europe, they carried the devotion to the Divine Child everywhere. In 1200, St Anthony of Padua and, in 1500, St Cajetan had great devotion to the Child Jesus, and because of that, there is a painting of each Saint carrying the Divine Child in his arms. But those who most popularized the devotion to the Divine Child Jesus were St Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, also well known as St Therese of Lisieux, St Teresa of Avila and St John of the Cross.

When she was novice mistress in Lisieux, St Therese placed a Child of Prague statue in the novitiate because she knew of the many blessings the Divine Child brought to the Carmelite novices in Prague, when it was placed

in their midst. Tradition has it that St Teresa of Avila also had a personal devotion to the infant Jesus of Prague.

From St Teresa, we are told that, as she was climbing some steps towards a corridor, she saw the Child Jesus who greeted her kindly. After this, the Saint always carried with her on her travels a statue of the Divine Child, and she asked that a picture of the Child Jesus be placed and honoured in all the homes of her Order. She almost always left one as a present.

There is wooden statue of the Child Jesus in the Discalced Carmelite Church of Our Lady Victorious, in City of Prague, that is reputed to have belonged to St Teresa of Avila. Pope Benedict XVI crowned that image, for only the second time, during his Apostolic visit to the Czech Republic on September 26, 2009.

The Discalced Carmelite Order, following the example of their founding saints, Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross, have made the point of explaining that the devotion to the infant Child Jesus is not the belief that an image made of plaster, metal or wood, will perform a miracle for us, because images cannot work miracles for anyone. It is an image that helps us call to mind and to honour the first hidden 12 years of Jesus' life on Earth, His childhood years, and to draw from the merits that Jesus gained during his 12 years of childhood by asking the Divine Child to help us. It is a novena particularly focused on families and young people.

In 1636, Our Lord made a promise to Venerable Marguerite of the Most Holy Sacrament that became famous: "Everything that you want to ask for, ask for it through the merits of my childhood and your prayer will be heard".

Crib

In many Carmelite monasteries or convents, an old tradition grew up of placing the image of the infant Child Jesus that would be placed in the crib at Christmas, in

a nun or monk's cell for one night. This was part of a nine-day novena, during which, they prayed and venerated the infant Child Jesus, reminding themselves that the whole purpose of the incarnation was "the word becoming flesh and living among us" (John 1:4). It was that Child who went to the Cross for each and every one of us. Emmanuel, God had pitched His tent among us.

Following on, somewhat, from those rich associations and traditions of the Order, the Discalced Carmelites in Termonbacca, Derry, have decided to do the Novena to the Divine Child again, this year. The Novena Mass and prayers will be streamed live from Termonbacca at 7:30 pm each evening, and copies of the prayers will be available on the Termonbacca Facebook page and from Termonbacca itself.

As well as having a strong emphasis on protection from harm, the family and young people, this Novena to the Divine Child unashamedly highlights the real meaning of Christmas - that Christ has come among us. It presents for us all, as believing Christians, an opportunity to be

still and ponder the incarnation and what that event means to us today. It provides time for personal and family prayer and allows us to refocus our attention on the Christ Child, the nature of His coming, (born in a byre) and, importantly, why He came. The answer to that question is provided in the Gospel of John, "Yes, God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not be lost but may have eternal life" (John 3:16).

As Christians, perhaps we are in need of a change of mindset that opposes the world view that has almost eliminated the birth of the Christ Child from Christmas. However, it most certainly is an occasion for Christians to exclaim with great joy, as the angel told the shepherds "that a saviour has been born to us; He is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11).

This Novena will have a unique aspect to it, mirroring the Carmelite tradition of housing the image of the Child Jesus in a nun or monk's cell prior to it being installed in the crib. The image of the infant Child Jesus will be carried to nine homes in nine different areas throughout

the Derry area, by an escort of volunteers, where it will stay overnight. This journey in many ways will also call to mind the journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem to be counted in the census, a journey of some 90 miles.

While there is an emphasis on the protection of families and young people during the Novena, everyone is invited to join along with the Carmelite Fathers in Termonbacca in this time of prayer to the Divine Child. They are encouraging anyone who wishes to join in the nightly walks, moving 'the child' statue from house to house, and also anyone interested in singing carols or joining in this beautiful celebration in some way.

Whether you are taking part or not, perhaps only occasionally, the Carmelite Fathers are encouraging that old Christian tradition of placing a lighted candle in the window of homes in Derry for the entire nine nights, as a sign of hope and as a welcome of the infant Child Jesus into your homes this Christmas. They are also encouraging those taking part to erect and display a crib prominently in their homes.

Termonbacca Carmelite Retreat Centre Derry

Christmas Raffle

£500 Cash	50inch Smart TV
£300 Furniture Plus Voucher	Washing Machine
2 x Double Beds	Fridge Freezer
Cooker and pan set	Christmas Photoshoot Package
	By Martina mcLaughlin Photography
2nts B&B & evening meal for 2 Strand Hotel Ballyliffen	Link48 Voucher
Grainian Aileach overnight stay plus meal for 2	
Overnight stay Diamond apartments and meal at Gate Bistro for 2	
Overnight stay Benedicts Belfast/Landsdowne	
Link47 Voucher	Browns Voucher
	£50 Paolos Pizza
	Timberquay meal for 2
Shipquay Hotel	£30 Thirsty Goat Voucher
Bottomless Brunch for 2	£40 Factory Bistro Voucher
	Matt's Diner Beechwood £20
Family Pantomime	Meal for 2 Habit Restaurant Limavady
Tickets Millennium Forum	
£20 Beauty by Louise & Co Voucher	
2 x Cribbs	Hampers
And many, more prizes	

Tickets available from Termonbacca or by calling 02871262512 or 07592252436

Raffle will take place on Thursday 16th December 2021

Entry £5 or 5 for £20

The Glory of God...is a marriage fully alive *by Fr John McLaughlin ssc*



Moville group.

SAUL Ureta and Monica Medina are now grandparents, and still active and physically present to their chapel community in the eastern part of Santiago Diocese, in Chile. They have been members of a Christian Community of families (CCBs) for more than 30 years, with their weekly meeting of scripture reading and reflection upon their lives.

Saul waited anxiously for many years to share in the Eucharist, when his first marriage was declared null by the Church's Diocesan Tribunal in Santiago. I had the pleasure of celebrating with local priest, Fr Manuel Carmona, who graciously invited me to share even the witnessing to their Marriage promises in the presence of sons, Irak and Siri, with their spouses.

From Pinochet times, I had been a guest in their house and witnessed their generosity to all; even to the giving of injections, the taking in of stray animals, and weekly visiting of Salvador Hospital in the Centre. They shared the outrage of many at the excesses of the Pinochet regime, and prayed openly in their chapel and community (CEB) of Maria Medianera. With 'comadre' Silvia and husband, Juan Caceres and family, there was mutual support and inspiration.

I had the pleasure of being offered lunch in both their houses, living as I then was with members of a secular institute and sharing the benefits! It is a model marriage, if such there can be, and on recent visits back to Chile, their home has been one of my first destinations. And the mystique and commitment is there still.

A similar privilege was placed in my path on other occasions. A married couple living out their lives open to each other and their

families, and their surrounding parish and world. May and Paddy Lynch were always open to visits from the priests of the parish (a kind of 'priests' house' as they were known in those days) and, for me, they were an inspiration at a very difficult time in my own life and that of the Parish Community in Arklow, often walking out around the estate saying the Rosary aloud,

“A doctor friend of mine, early on in my life as a priest, said to me: “John, the women will come to you with their marriage problems... but the men tell them to me”. That was a great piece of advice early on and a warning about hearing both sides of the marital story.

before getting supper!

Paddy was reared by an aunt and made his own way in the world, no scholarship (missing one by a couple of points, as he told me later!) and kept his faith in God and Man, with his song and humor, capacity to share, and his daily Rosary and visit to the Blessed Sacrament. He knew the scene, being manager of the Entertainment Centre, the Bingo in the Ormonde Hall, a Pioneer and member of the Knights of St Columban, leader of nearly all the concerts, The Marian Arts and singing sessions of the time.

May Dillon, too, knew her town, having worked as a

secretary, leader in the Girl Guides (if I remember correctly), the Parish Choir, painted under Yan Goulet, and shared, sang, joked and encouraged Paddy in his more difficult moments in his home community. It is one of the few couples that invited me to share their holiday on a few occasions, in Ireland and in Dorking in England. Of both, I have to say they were a seminal couple in my own life as a man and leader, priest and, later, as missionary.

A doctor friend of mine, early on in my life as a priest, said to me: “John, the women will come to you with their marriage problems...but the men tell them to me”. That was a great piece of advice early on and a warning about hearing both sides of the marital story.

Late one evening in the Chilean Parish of San Columbano, Jorge, one of the leaders and catechists in a chapel community, brought me his sad story. We knew each other well; he and his wife, Rosa, were leaders in the Retreats for Conversion group and also Eucharistic catechists. Each had given their individual testimony on their lives as spouses and parents, facing especially into their personal need for conversion in certain areas.

Jorge was always one of the keen commentators in the weekly meeting with the catechists, so his news came as a bombshell to me...and later to his little chapel community, whom he felt ashamed to approach. Rosa was leaving him, having formed a relationship with another woman. In those days, none of us knew even the term LBGT and there was no way of saving Jorge, who moved out of the house of his in-laws which he had rebuilt, and estranged himself in shame from his chapel and Dominican Sister Vierge, who valued him there. Never can I forget that sad disclosure and the haggard face of Jorge Basualta.

Whirlwind

As a young priest, and with a young couple from Moville, times I got tickets in London to the play 'Who's afraid of Virginia Wolfe', where Moville man, Ray MacAnally had the role later taken up on screen by Richard Burton with Elizabeth Taylor. There, in the front stalls of that theatre, Michael and Maureen and I were swept into a whirlwind marriage drama of what would nowadays be called verbal violence or abuse. It was a while before I came to recognize that such situations were not so unusual in the marriage lifestyles of some.

Rather more easy to watch was the film 'Shirley Valentine', which I saw in Dublin and later in a solo performance from Alicia Quiroga in Santiago, in Chile, to a small group largely of women; so I kept

low in my seat and enjoyed their belly laughs. A group of Dublin priests had recommended it to me, having enjoyed it on a day where golf was not possible. One of the priests had a tremendous and raucous (horse type) laugh, which erupted in great bursts through the scenes of the rebellion of Shirley, and heads – mostly of women – turned sharply around when the lights eventually came on! I tried to get a Spanish version of the video in my time in Santiago, accompanying some marriage groups, but failed to strike the luck!

The Spanish writer, Martin Descalzo, has a reflection on married couples under the title – ‘Restrain, Sustain, Push’ – in which he shows how couples face the world. In response to a question from a couple who asked his opinion about their marriage, he said: “There is nothing more difficult than to say to a person about their loved one who adores and idealizes him – or her”, to say about those spouses who ‘Hold back, Sustain or Support’, and those who challenge and push their partners. And there are, he says, men who fill the same roles and lead their children along the same paths. “The ideal couple is that of both being ‘multipliers’ and leading their children so, towards awakening their own marriage souls”. I brought that into one group of married couples with some hesitation, and it did bring alive the group for an evening!

Fr Alvaro Gonzales, in whose company I holidayed for a few years in the South of Chile, has been head of 'Cenfa', the Catholic Family Centre in Santiago, for more than 40 years and is also a trained guide in Ignatian Spirituality. He sometimes lets out little bits about how normal and healthy it is for couples to have their quarrels. In one of his little published books of reflections, he makes a series of points that served me well in giving homilies at weddings.

This happened especially in Valparaiso, where the Corazon de Maria Church had been rebuilt from the flames of a wooden and preserved heritage building in the city centre. So it became a desired spot for young couples looking for a bit of elegance in the church, where they would have their weddings. That meant that I had little previous knowledge of any of the couples who had been given dates for the Saturday nights, some of them arriving rather late on the hour, to my irritation! So the homily would be directed at the sometimes rather frisky attendees on Marriage as a constant 'learning to: Trust each other... Forgive each other and their failures and themselves for being different to others...Celebrate their union, anniversaries, triumphs...Thank each other for their growth...and Thank God for

His many interventions in their lives at key moments'. Hopefully it got to some as a challenge maybe in their security or insecurity!

Accompanying movements in parishes for married couples were a huge grace in my own life. The Conversion Retreat Movement was started by Santiago Diocesan priest, Pepe Valdes, whom we had as neighbour in the Deanery. Pepe had gathered momentum in his pastoral zeal after acquiring funding for a couple of houses down the coast, and he brought taxi drivers down there for weekends with their spouses, with the material being largely testimonial, accompanied by a Penitential Service and Mass on the Sunday of departure. These retreats opened out to those for women one weekend and men on the following. They had a series

“ 118. Panta hypoménei. This means that love bears every trial with a positive attitude. It stands firm in hostile surroundings. This ‘endurance’ involves not only the ability to tolerate certain aggravations, but something greater: a constant readiness to confront any challenge. ”

of attractive ways of getting the whole family into the act by letters and good will cards, and a big welcome back to the local chapel on the Sunday evening.

Forgiveness

Being vivential and testimonial from their own ranks, on subjects like relationships with spouse, with family, and children, addictions such as alcohol and later on, drugs, and abortion, there was often a charged atmosphere. It helped to have priest or religious sister present all day as part of the team to deal with personal guilt and shame. The real felt-experience of forgiveness was often a light that shone in the couples' lives and led to some later successfully taking up roles as catechists and animators in the chapels.

A comparable movement fell into my path in Valparaiso, with the 'Nazarenos', or Family of Nazareth, Movement, which had its Diocesan centre in our own parish rooms. Their practice was also testimonial, and with married couples, sometimes of three generations, present at the retreat house for the weekend. From the parish, I had access to the group from its weekly meetings of biblical songs and reflections on



their lives.

Confession was a large part of the activity of the first day, after their 'Palestra', or presentation, had been given, by either a man or a woman. A part of the group spent the entire day in the Ministry of Prayer before the Blessed Sacrament; Sergio and Yvette, from one of my parishes, being committed to that moment. It was not uncommon for the couple to approach the Sacrament together and touch on their own manner of living and relating to each other and to their wider families.

I will never forget one couple in their early 40s, celebrating 25 years of married life. Coming from humble circumstances as street dealers, they had both suffered just about every abuse and survived, through the support of the 'Nazarenos' and other groups. I can remember my deep admiration as I listened and then gave the absolution and an emotional embrace. One Thursday night, the weekly meeting moved into the theme of their often difficult adjustments to each other, their fidelidad, faithfulness (lo nuestro). It was a gold mine of lived experiences, and I later went off to my room to get some of it into my own journals!

In one of those years in Santiago, I had four celebrations of Golden Weddings, with couples in their homes and surrounded by their families. With a flexible liturgy of Readings, Renewal of their Promises, testimony from them and their families, the final Blessing was a moment of great gratitude for all present. With my own parents, Charles and Maureen, I had the privilege of accompanying a similar thanksgiving for 50 years of faithful love.

One summer on holidays, in February, in Castro, in the south of Chile, I went to Mass in the local Franciscan Church. It was the 14th and the 'Feast of St Valentine', and it suddenly dawned on me why there were so many couples in the congregation. Padre Juan de Dios, whom I later had as a neighbor in Valparaiso, led a celebration of their marriages with Renewal of Vows and a Blessing during a lively Mass. That was a joy to behold!

Reading, as I did, the teachings of Pope John Paul II on Marriage and the 'Theology of the Gift',



May and Paddy Lynch, Arklow.



Valentines Day.

it was very obvious that he had shared contacts with his marriage groups in his young days, and later invited some to the Vatican as life-long friends. I have seen the book on sale and would recommend it to married couples at any stage of their lives.

Similarly, it seems so sad that many couples, all couples, could not explore with wonder and gratitude ‘Amoris Laetitia’, being the reflection of Pope Francis from the great Synod on the Family, with input from all over the Catholic world. Themes like loneliness, par 43, housing, in 44, saying ‘Thank You’, 133, poverty, 49, not being rude to one another, 99. It is a treasure house of reflection for any married couple.

In another part of my pastoral life, in Santiago, we had the ‘Week of the Family’ every year, in October, at Church and local level. In the Chapel of Jesus Hope of the World, with a particularly vibrant lay presence of Amerigo and Gladys, Ricardo and Maria, Teresa and Fernando Flato, we offered activities for every night of that week. There was a spot for the young people, ‘pololeando’, for the settled couples, many of whom were in the CCBs mentioned early and whose weekly meetings had their own character (liturgical, scriptural, social doctrine of the Church). And there was also a space for single people and separated and widowed. That took some organizing and it culminated in a really significant Eucharistic celebration on the

Sunday.

Growth

I remember feeling challenged to put some of my own experiences into the final roundup, and I told of the growth that has no final point for couples, having witnessed a deeper tenderness in the lives of my own parents on a recent visit home.

One of the many inspiring features of Chilean pastoral life was that of the preparation for the Sacraments, all of which was worked in from the Great National Mission at the end of the Second Vatican Council. Courses and Summer Schools at diocesan and parish, or deanery levels, provided a training ground for catechists for Baptismal, Youth, Confirmation, Adult preparation on the RCIA model, Marriage, Eucharistic (First Communion, and trying to get away from that term!), and Confirmation moments. The norm became a thorough preparation of all candidates for sacraments, and for all Ministers of the Word, of Baptism and Marriage, Youth leaders, amongst the laity. Hence, a considerable energy and enthusiastic presence at the Sunday Eucharist, often led by the Liturgy group, which had reviewed the content of the Word, suitable hymns, and dynamic presentation of the major themes of the Sunday liturgy.

One other little moment that I can recall is that of the Marriage Encounter couple, Tina and Patricio administering the Host

and Chalice to each other in the Holy Family Chapel.

Amongst many many paragraphs of inspiration in ‘Amoris Laetitia’ (119) is that on Endurance or Resilience (quoting Martin Luther King, one of my own heroes), which must face most married couples somewhere through their lives:

“118. *Panta hypoménei*. This means that love bears every trial with a positive attitude. It stands firm in hostile surroundings. This ‘endurance’ involves not only the ability to tolerate certain aggravations, but something greater: a constant readiness to confront any challenge. It is a love that never gives up, even in the darkest hour. It shows a certain dogged heroism, a power to resist every negative current, an irrepressible commitment to goodness. Here I think of the words of Martin Luther King, who met every kind of trial and tribulation with fraternal love: ‘The person who hates you most has some good in him; even the nation that hates you most has some good in it; even the race that hates you most has some good in it. And when you come to the point that you look in the face of every man and see deep down within him what religion calls ‘the image of God’, you begin to love him in spite of [everything]. No matter what he does, you see God’s image there. There is an element of goodness that he can never sluff off...Another way that you love your enemy is this: when the opportunity presents itself for you to defeat your enemy that is the time which you must not do it...When you rise to the level of love, of its great beauty and power, you seek only to defeat evil systems. Individuals who happen to be caught up in that system, you love, but you seek to defeat the system...Hate for hate only intensifies the existence of hate and evil in the universe. If I hit you and you hit me and I hit you back and you hit me back and so on, you see, that goes on ad infinitum. It just never ends. Somewhere somebody must have a little sense, and that’s the strong person. The strong person is the person who can cut off the chain of hate, the chain of evil...Somebody must have religion enough and morality enough to cut it off and inject within the very structure of the universe that strong and powerful element of love’ (114 119)”.

Taking over temporarily as Diocesan Vocations’ Director, Fr Pat O’Hagan, PP Moville, writes about this...

Challenging but exciting time to be involved in promotion of vocations



Fr Pat O’Hagan PP, Moville.

A few years ago, I was asked to become a member of the Diocesan Vocations Team, working alongside the Vocations Director, Fr Chris Ferguson. In that time, our group met regularly to organise the promotion of vocations to the priesthood for the diocese of Derry.

In September of this year, Bishop Donal McKeown asked me to stand in as Vocations Director until the end of August of next year, while Fr Chris is on leave. He asked me to do so as I was “the senior man” on the team – that was a euphemism for “the oldest!!”

Since then, I’ve spoken with Fr Chris, and I’ve arranged to meet with the team on November 16 (probably around or after the time this edition of ‘The Net’ is published). The new team, as with the old one, reflects the geographic spread and the population of the Diocese. We are now Fr Daniel McFaul and Fr Patrick Lagan (Derry City), Fr Declan McGeehan (Co Tyrone), Fr Chris McDermott (Co Derry) and myself (Inis Eoghain).

This is a challenging but exciting time to be involved in the promotion of vocations. Challenging because of the small numbers of men who are coming forward to offer themselves for

priestly training and service, reflecting the fall off in the numbers of people now regularly attending Mass, receiving the sacraments and calling on the services of the Church. Fewer now than they were pre-pandemic, but we still live in hope that there will be a return to practice once people feel comfortable again to gather in our churches, or anywhere at all, in bigger numbers than at present.

It is an exciting time to work in the area of vocations because I can see, at first hand, that God is still calling people to service in the Church – as priests, as religious brothers and sisters, and as committed lay people.

Right now, the Diocese of Derry has five men in seminary formation – one in Rome, two in Maynooth, and two who are currently on pastoral placements in the Diocese, one in

Three Patrons Parish, in Derry city, and one in Killyclogher Parish, in County Tyrone.

As well as those five men, there are eight who are considering a vocation to the priesthood for the Diocese, as well as others who are speaking with religious orders with a view to joining them and working with them as priests or brothers.

I can’t speak for all the religious orders ministering within the Diocese or elsewhere, but I hope to engage with them as much as possible over the coming months with a view to working together in helping people to discern how God might be calling them to serve Him in the Church and in the world today.

One very exciting area which the Bishop has asked me to explore is the call to Consecrated Virginity. At present there are three consecrated virgins in the diocese. These are women who have decided to offer their lives to Christ without taking on the

formality of religious vows and living in a religious community. They go about their lives and their work ‘as normal’, but with the added dimension of their overarching commitment to Jesus and the Church. I’m currently speaking with two young women who are actively considering this way of life.

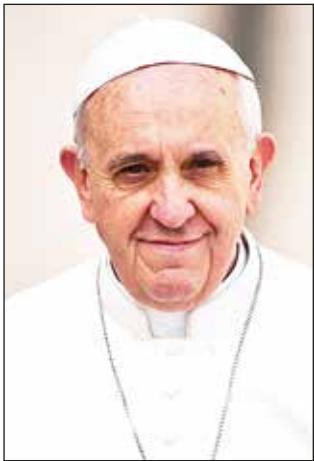
For me, right now, as I begin my time of serving the Diocese as Vocations Director, I give thanks to God for calling people to serve Him and His Church in a variety of ways – ordained, vowed, consecrated or lay.

It is comforting to know that, despite the reduced practice rate today, and in spite of the fall-out from the problems that have beset, and continue to beset, the Church, God is still calling and, more importantly, people are listening to that call.

They are responding generously to the Lord of the harvest as He calls them to work with Him in the harvest, bringing people to know, love, and serve Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, and to be witnesses to His love and mercy in today’s world, in a world which, more than ever, needs to hear a message of hope coming from the God of love and mercy through men and women who are courageous enough, and enthusiastic enough, to share their faith and the sense of hope their faith gives them, with their brothers and sisters in Christ.

I look forward to speaking with the priests, vowed religious and consecrated virgins of the Diocese, and with my own team, as we work together to promote vocations and encourage all those who feel called to service by the Lord, to spread the Gospel, and build up the Kingdom of God here, in the Diocese of Derry, and in the wider Church, well into the future.

Please pray with us and for us.



Pope’s monthly intention

The Holy Father has asked for prayer during November for:

People who suffer from depression...
We pray that people who suffer from depression or burn-out will find support and a light that opens them up to life.

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 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 Neil Farren (Nov 1st)
Fr Paul Farren (2nd)
Fr Christopher Ferguson (3rd)

Fr John Forbes (4th)
Fr Edward Gallagher (5th)
Fr Paul Fraser (6th)
Fr John Gilmore (7th)
Fr Joseph Gormley (8th)
Fr Eamon Graham (9th)
Fr Dermott Harkin (10th)
Fr Karl Haan (11th)
Fr Eugene Hasson (12th)
Fr Malachy Gallagher (13th)
Fr John Irwin (14th)
Fr Charles Keaney (15th)
All Priests (16th)
Fr Gerald Hasson (17th)

Fr Michael Keaveny (18th)
Fr Seamus Kelly (19th)
Fr Edward Kilpatrick (20th)
All priests (21st)
Fr Charles Logue (22nd)
Fr Paul McCafferty (23rd)
Msgr Bryan McCanny (24th)
Fr Michael McCaughey (25th)
Fr Andrew McCloskey (26th)
Fr Patrick Lagan (27th)
All Priests (28th)
Fr Noel McDermott (29th)
Fr Eamon McDevitt (30th)

Saints we celebrate during November *by Bishop Donal*

AS for every month, the feast days of November recall those who worked to inspire and reform the church at times of crises, those who loved the Lord in hidden lives even to the point of martyrdom, and saints who were dedicated to service of the poor.

That is where the new saints of the 21st century will bear witness to the Lord.

The Saints we celebrate this month include...

***St Malachy (November 3)**, who was a major reforming bishop in 12th century Ireland. He was called to leadership as the Celtic monastic church was in need of urgent reform. He worked in the dioceses of Down, Connor and Armagh. He brought renewed life to the Irish Church through the introduction of the Cistercian Order from France, where he was a great friend of St Bernard. He died in Clairvaux in 1190.

***St Charles Borromeo (November 4)**, who was a leading figure in the Catholic response to the Reformation. He was archbishop of Milan and played an important role at the Council of Trent. He met much opposition from those who did not want reform and an attempt was made on his life. He died in 1584 aged 46.

***St Martin de Porres (November 5)**, who was born in Peru as the illegitimate son of a Spanish nobleman and a black ex-slave.

He became a pharmacist and a Dominican Brother. He had a great devotion to the poor and to the Eucharist. He died in 1639.

***All Saints of Ireland (November 6)**. Ireland has been producing saints since the time of St Patrick. They were monks and religious, missionaries and martyrs, founders of religious congregations and movements, clergy and lay, some famous, most forgotten. We celebrate all those who recognised that we are all called to sanctity, whatever our circumstances of life.

***Dedication of the Lateran Basilica (November 9)**. Rome's Basilica of 'The Most Holy Saviour, and of Sts John the Baptist and John the Evangelist' (the Lateran Basilica) is the 'mother and head of all the churches of the City and the world'. It is the Pope's Cathedral. This feast celebrates its dedication in 324. It is a few hundred yards from the Irish College.

***St Leo (November 10)**, who was Pope at a very difficult time for the young church. The Roman Empire was collapsing, and Pope Leo struggled to both keep peace and hold the church together. He died in the 461, the same year as St Patrick.

***St Martin of Tours (November 11)**, who was a native of Hungary and a soldier who became bishop of Tours in France. He was renowned for his generosity to the

poor.

***St Albert the Great (November 15)**, who was born in Germany and became one of the leading teachers in the recently founded Dominican Order. He died in 1280.

***St Margaret of Scotland (November 16)**, who combined marriage to King Malcom of Scotland, being mother of eight children, the foundation of monasteries and support for Church reform. She died in 1093.

***St Gertrude (November 16)**, who was a religious sister and a mystic in 13th century Germany. Her great devotion was to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and her writings influenced many of her contemporaries. Silent contemplatives are powerful witnesses to Christ.

***Dedication of Basilicas of St Peter and St Paul (November 18)**. Along with the Lateran Basilica (November 9) and that of St Mary Major, these two basilicas make up the four most important churches of Rome. St Peter's was built over the tomb of the first Pope on Vatican Hill and St Paul's was erected where Paul was believed to have been beheaded and buried.

***St Cecilia (November 22)**. Little is known about St Cecilia other than that she was a virgin and martyr who died for the faith about 230AD. Her name was included in the Roman Canon of

the Mass (Eucharistic Prayer 1). She is known as the patron saint of musicians.

***St Columbanus (November 23)**. Like so many Irish monks, he is better known on the Continent than at home. He was a monk of Bangor and left to preach and found monasteries in Burgundy, Switzerland and Italy. That was a challenge as he had to re-evangelise places where the church had been weakened by the fall of the Roman Empire. The Swiss city of St Gallen is named after one of his companions, St Gall. He died in Bobbio in 615. There are major civic and religious celebrations for his feast day both in Bobbio and in the town that bears his name, San Colombano al Lambro.

***Sts Andrew Dung-Lac and companions (November 24)**. The Catholic Church in Vietnam, and among Vietnamese in other countries, is very vibrant. That is the case because of, rather than despite, centuries of persecution when perhaps 130,000 Christians were killed. Andrew D ng-Lac was a priest who was beheaded in 1839. These martyrs were canonised by Pope John Paul II in 1988.

***St Clement (November 25)**, who was the fourth Pope after Peter, Linus and Cletus. He, too, is named in the Roman Canon. He died by martyrdom about 99AD. The fascinating 3-level Church



Bishop Donal McKeown

dedicated to him in Rome is run by the Irish Dominican Fathers.

***St Fergal (November 27)**, known in Europe as Virgil, was an Irish monk who preached in France and Germany. He became bishop of Salzburg, and the Cathedral there bears his name. He died there in 784.

***St Andrew (November 30)**. In St John's Gospel, Andrew, the fisherman, brought his brother

to Jesus. He has been venerated from the earliest time. According to legend, some of his bones were brought to the town that bears his name in Scotland. He became the patron of Scotland, and the Cross of St Andrew is the national symbol and one of the parts of the Union Jack flag. But people more often think of golf than of sainthood when they visit St Andrew's!

The message of Eternal Life *by Fr Johnny Doherty, CSsR*

SO many people live in a very small world, sometimes of their own making, at other times forced upon them. One of the signs of living in a small world is where molehills are made into mountains. No one can live without mountains. In a small world, molehills suffice. Jesus introduces us into a very big world as His followers. The ends of the earth are our horizons. Eternal life is our hope.

What is Eternal Life?

We tend to think of eternal life only as what happens after death. No one is in any hurry to get to it. As the song puts it: 'Everyone wants to go to heaven, but nobody wants to die'. Death is a part of life that scares us and yet it is inevitable. It looks like the end. Jesus, however, gives us the assurance that it is only the beginning. It is like putting out the candle because the lights have been switched on. This knowledge of faith does not make death attractive, but it does put it into context. We are not just destined for now but forever.

Eternal life and everlasting happiness are going to take many people by surprise. Can you imagine having to be happy all the time? It will be torture for those who have practiced being miserable! Imagine being with people for all eternity and not a

fault to be found anywhere. It will be hell for those of us whose main occupation is giving out about all that is wrong with the world and with those around us!

Begin eternal life now

Eternal life has to be practised for, and now is the time to begin. The Liturgy of these Sundays highlights some of the ways of doing that, and of actually living eternal life now.

*The first way is to forget your own self-importance and enjoy all that life has to offer. We get so caught up in ourselves that life can pass us by. The happiest person is the one who can be glad of who they are now and rejoice in all the wonderful, simple things of life that even a servant has.

*The second thing is to recognise our own short-sightedness and often blindness. We can think that the only reality is what we can see ourselves. Our own opinions become the truth. We are very limited by ourselves. It is only through the power of God that we expand.

*Thirdly, we need to set our sights on what is most important in life. Jesus is very clear on what that is: To love God with our whole heart, our whole soul, our whole mind, and our whole strength, and to love our neighbour as ourselves. When our sights are fixed there, we gain true freedom.

*And then Jesus teaches us generosity with one another as vital for the journey. We get possessed with our own possessions. We need to be able to give them away because we cannot bring them with us!

All of this is in the context of our knowledge that Jesus is with us. He is our King, He is our Lord, He is our Saviour and He walks with us. Nothing can ever destroy us.

Week by week in November

Week 1. October 31–November 6

Christian faith
One of the scribes came up to Jesus and put a question to Him: "Which is the first of all the commandments?"

On the face of it, this looks like a very good question. And it is. However, a lot depends on how it is asked and on the kind of answer being looked for. In our minds, we can consent easily to the answer that Jesus gives, but in how we live our lives it is often different.

Jesus teaches us that the only way to full human living is to love God with our whole hearts and to love one another as God's family. It is difficult to hold with this even in the intimate relationships of marriage and family life, because other things become more important to us than our love of God or one another. It is even more difficult when we move out to the areas of social and work life

to really live a life of love.
This week, we are asked to commit ourselves again to this way of life of love and to make that our first priority.

Week 2. November 7–13
Christian trust

Jesus said to His disciples: "This poor widow has put more in than all who have contributed to the treasury".

Today we judge the importance of things by how much they cost. And we also judge the importance of people by how wealthy they are. Jesus gives us a different way of judging, namely by how generous a person is.

Generosity is one of the best signs of how free people are within themselves because the greatest freedom is to love with our whole hearts. So many things block that freedom in us, particularly our need to protect our possessions and to increase them. In the person of the poor widow, Jesus gives us the example of complete freedom.

This week, we are invited to practice this freedom in our homes and in our community by giving time and attention to one another. We are also asked to give to those in need in our world. How free are you to be generous?

Week 3. November 14–20
The Christian vision

Jesus said to His disciples:

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away".

Every now and again someone spreads the rumour of the end of the world. So far it hasn't taken place! We have something far more important than the end of the world to make our preoccupation, namely the wonderful presence of Christ with us and in us and around us.

As followers of Jesus we have a great responsibility to the world we live in to witness to Him by the way we live as His people, in spite of all the scandals and all the upheaval in the Church today. We do this by the joy of God's presence and love shining out through us. And we do it by the quality of life we develop in our homes and in our parish community, a quality that is characterised by kindness, gentleness, care, enthusiasm, peace, hope, forgiveness.

Week 4. November 21–27
Christ our King

Jesus said to Pilate: "All who are on the side of truth listen to my voice".

We celebrate Christ as King, not in the sense of the world around us, which would look to power and strength, but as the one who has the true power of truth. In Him, we know God as one who loves us so much that He has given us His only Son to bring us to a knowledge of His love.

In Christ, we also come to know

the deepest truths about ourselves: that every human person is made in the image of God; that each of us is a dwelling place of God's Holy Spirit; that we are destined for eternal life; that the only way to live human life fully is to love God with our whole hearts and to love our neighbour as ourselves. It has been said that Christianity has not so much failed, as it has never been tried!

Conclusion

With the Feast of Christ the King, we come to the end of this Liturgical Year, a year of following Christ empowered by the Eucharist. Next month, December, we begin a new year of our journey with Him, with the four weeks of Advent and then the wonderful Feast of Christmas. May it be a year of renewed hope for us.



Fr Johnny Doherty

Children’s Catechism Club - C3

by Veronica Harley

Hello children. C3 welcomes you to the month of November. Winter has arrived, so the days are shorter and the nights are longer. Traditionally, this month is dedicated to the Holy Souls in Purgatory. Although November can be dark and cold, we still have many special days to celebrate. We begin November with a splendid feast – All Saints Day!



All Saints’ Day

The Feast of All Saints is celebrated on the 1st of November. On this day we go to Mass to honour all the saints and martyrs, known and unknown, who have died and are now with God in heaven. Saints are people who have loved God very much and who have dedicated their lives to living God’s will. The Lord calls us all to be saints, to be holy people (CCC 2013). We give thanks to God for the saints and all their good deeds. These are an example for us to live by each day. We, too, can live like the saints and one day join God in Heaven, for we shall be saints.

Saints of the Month



- Nov 3: St Martin de Porres
- Nov 11: St Martin of Tours
- Nov 17: St Elizabeth of Hungary
- Nov 30: St Andrew the Apostle

All Souls’ Day

The Feast of the Holy Souls is the 2nd of November. On this day we especially remember all those people who have passed from this life to the next. The Holy Souls are the people who have died in the state of God’s grace and friendship. These souls are assured of reaching heaven and eternal salvation. The Holy Souls remain in Purgatory because after their death they still need to be purified of their sins. With this purification, they achieve the holiness needed before entering heaven (CCC 1030). The word ‘purgatory’ was originally a Latin adjective meaning ‘clean’. This gives us the English word ‘purge’ with the same meaning.

Purgatory is more than a place. It is a process in which we are made holy and pure so we can live with God forever in heaven (CCC 1054). The Holy Souls are not separated from

God while in Purgatory but instead are surrounded by God’s love and mercy. We can help to purify the Holy Souls by praying for them. We pray at their graves but the Mass is the greatest prayer for the dead. By making small sacrifices, we can give an offering to God to ease the suffering of the Holy Souls (CCC 1032). This hastens their arrival in Heaven.

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

The Season of Advent

‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths’ (Matthew 3:3). The beginning of our Church year is marked with the season of Advent. The First Sunday of Advent this year is on November 28. The word ‘Advent’ comes from the Latin word ‘adventus’, which means ‘arrival’ or ‘coming’. It begins four Sundays before Christmas and ends on Christmas Eve. Advent is a season of preparation for Christmas. It is a time of reflection and hope as we keep in mind both ‘advents’ of Christ, the first in Bethlehem and the second at the end of time.



The Second Coming Word Puzzle

Jeremiah 33:14-16
Fill in the missing letters from the first reading of 1st Sunday of Advent and copy them to finish the last line
The days are c_ming (5), says _he (14) Lo_d (10) when I f_lfl (9) the p_omise (6) I made to the _ouse (2) of Israe_ (4) and Judah. In tho_e days

(13), in that tim_ (3) I will raise up for _avid (7), a just shoot; he shall d_(8) what is right and jus_(1) in the land. In those days _udah (11) shall be safe and Jer_salem (12) shall dw_ll (17) secure; th_s (15) is what they shall _all (16) her:

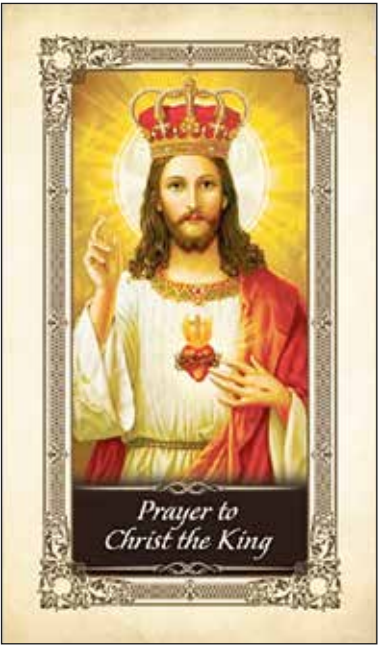
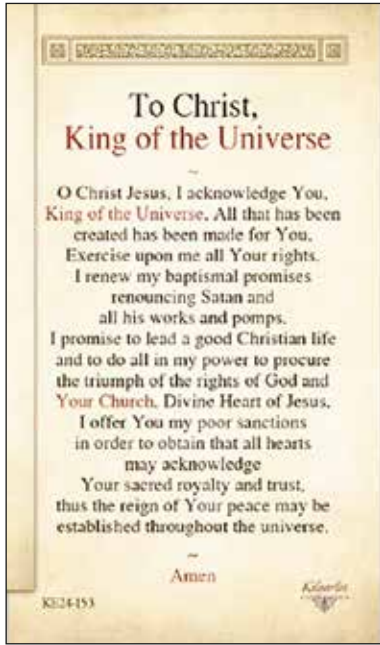
- 1, 2, 3 4, 5, 6, 7 8, 9, 10

11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17

Answer: The Lord Our Justice

Feast of Christ the King

Every year on the last Sunday before Advent, we celebrate the Feast of Christ the King (CCC 559). This feast was instituted by Pope Pius XI in 1925. At that time, the world was increasingly telling Christians to be completely loyal to the government



in power and to forget about God and his existence. Consequently, Pope Pius XI established this Feast to remind Catholics and the world that Jesus Christ is Lord of the Universe. This wonderful feast day not only marks the end of the Liturgical Year

for our Church (CCC 1168), but it is also a day on which we celebrate Christ’s royalty and His reign over all of creation. *Jesus you are my King and my God and I love you. Help me to be your good servant.*

Solve the Puzzle

To solve this puzzle, match the correct letter to the number. Choose the correct letters and you will have a message about our faith.

A 3	B 8	C 13	D 10	E 18	F 15	G 4	H 2	I 21	J 26
K 14	L 9	M 1	N 11	O 22	P 24	Q 25	R 20	S 23	T 16
U 5	V 19	W 6	X 17	Y 7	Z 12				

23, 3, 21, 11, 16, 23 3, 20, 18 4, 22, 22, 10 3, 11, 10

15, 3, 21, 16, 21, 5, 9 24, 18, 22, 24, 9, 18.

16, 2, 18, 7 9, 21, 19, 18 21, 11 2, 18, 3, 19, 18, 11

6, 21, 16, 2 4, 22, 10

in heaven with God
Answer: Saints are good and faithful people. They live

Quiz Time with Lawrence

- The Spanish word ‘Queso’ refers to what type of food?
- Which singer/songwriter had NINE songs in the top ten of the UK singles charts in March 2017?
- In which Southeast Asian country is Rangoon the largest city?
- With which club did Diego Maradona have two separate spells as a player?
- Jude Riordan plays what character on popular TV programme ‘Coronation Street’?
- Name the UK Secretary for Foreign Affairs who was recently locked in a very public spat with French fishermen?
- Who plays the role of Ron Burgundy in the ‘Anchorman’ films?
- Who wrote the 1992 novel ‘The Bridges of Madison County’?
- Which country uses the Kuna as its national currency?
- Name the keyboard player and founding member of pop band ‘Duran Duran’?
- In a greyhound race, what colour of vest is worn by the runner in Trap 2?

- Name the two US states which start with the letter ‘S’?
- What is the capital city of Belarus?
- Name the 2014 comedy Western directed by and starring Seth McFarlane?
- On what day of the week did the 9/11 attack on the US take place?
- In which city would you find the world’s current tallest building?
- In the 50s and 60s, one of Derry’s largest employers was the BSR factory near Creggan. What did BSR stand for?
- Which berry gives Gin its unique aroma?
- Which British stand-up comedian has landed a leading role in the new ‘Dr Who’ TV series?
- Believed to be the deepest body of water on earth, in which Ocean would you find the Mariana Trench?
- Which of these animals is not a Chinese Zodiac sign - dog, cat, snake or rabbit?
- What is the fifth book in the New Testament, after the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John?
- Tachophobia is the term for the fear of what?
- Who played Lee Mack’s father in the TV sitcom ‘Not Going Out’?
- Which European country has the most land borders?

Quiz Answers: 1, Cheese. 2, Ed Sheeran. 3, Myanmar. 4, Boca Juniors. 5, Sam Blakeman. 6, Liz Truss. 7, Will Ferrell. 8, Robert James Waller. 9, Croatia. 10, Nick Rhodes. 11, Blue. 12, South Carolina, South Dakota. 13, Minsk. 14, A Million Ways to Die in the West. 15, Tuesday. 16, Dubai. 17, Birmingham Sound Reproducers. 18, Juniper. 19, John Bishop. 20, Pacific. 21, Cat. 22, Acts of the Apostles. 23, Speed. 24, Bobby Ball. 25, Russia.

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

Let Your Light Shine!



World Drawing God Day

*Images of God created in
love by the children of
St Mary's PS,
Draperstown*



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

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

Greenlough, Iskaheen, Killyclogher, Killygordon, Kilrea, Lavey, Leckpatrick, Lifford, Limavady, Maghera, Magilligan, Malin, Melmount,