



The NET

Sharing fruits of faith in Derry Diocese

ISSUE 95. APRIL 2024

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See inside...



REACH Mission - Leckpatrick



Passion Presentation - Ballinascreen



Lourdes Youth Fundraiser - Rouskey



“Divine Mercy requires outreach as well as reaching into our own hearts.”
Bishop Donal (see p22)

Bishop Donal celebrating Divine Mercy Sunday in St Mary's Creggan



Lenten Faith Talks - Steelstown



Lenten Eucharistic Talks - Greencastle & Badoney Lower



Children's Stations - Clonmany



'Back in the Day' Party - Bunrana

People in focus



Bláthnaid McMenamin - Leckpatrick



Fr Michael McCaul - Omagh



James Tourish - Cathedral Parish



Paul Madden - Strabane



The late Susan Duffy, Plumbridge, Co Tyrone.

Also featuring: Anam Og Family Day; Youth Synod; Claudy Passion Drama; Youth Lourdes Team fundraisers; Celebrating St Joseph at St Joseph's Boys' School, Derry; Successful SPARK weekend; Greencastle musical celebration of St Patrick; Children's Catechism Club - C3; Young Writers' section; Cathedral Lenten Programme; Long Tower & Bunrana Palm Sunday Processions; Culdaff Church fundraiser; Chrism Mass; Ballinascreen Easter Dawn Mass; Bunrana Easter Vigil; USA Cathedral tour; Eucharistic Procession through Derry City; Diary Dates; Quiz... and much more...

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The Role of Women

A reflection on Pope Francis’ prayer intention for April...

“Let us pray that the dignity and worth of women be recognized in every culture, and for an end to the discrimination they face in various parts of the world.”



Sr Deirdre Mullan RSM

STUDIES in the last 10 years, sponsored by both the United Nations and the World Health Organization, make it undeniably clear that violence and discrimination against women is a global problem of staggering proportion and

urgency. Whether in the West or the East, North or global South, women are the main victims of discrimination.

The April Intention and call of Pope Francis that “the dignity and worth” of women be upheld is a wake-up for each of us. We live in a world in which too many women are objectified and seen as less than human.

The images on our television screens coming out of Gaza, Afghanistan, Israel, Ukraine, Sudan, and Haiti, to name a few of the places of turmoil in our world, clarify very clearly the plight of women and girls in a world that still fails to recognize fully the consequences of gender inequality, violation of human rights and the depth of suffering endured by women and girls.

None of us can be complacent

about the stark issues of the dangers faced by women across the globe.

When I reflect on the prayer intention of Pope Francis calling for the dignity and worth of women to be recognized in every culture and for an end to discrimination, I am drawn to the Visitation Journey of Mary to visit her cousin Elizabeth.

The two women, one younger and the other older, are a model of respect, openness, and mutual understanding. There is no judgement, no preconceived knowing that I am right, and you are wrong. The encounter is a reminder that a person’s road to freedom happens when we recognize the inherent right to dignity and respect of each other.

The ‘Visitation Women’ meet each other and immediately

foster openness to different ways of thinking and speaking. The Visitation encounter is an example of what happens when we recognize and respect the dignity of difference.

May we, like and Mary and Elizabeth, widen our vision and never underestimate our power to make choices which recognize each other’s need to be treated with respect.

We do this best when we listen and try to understand and hear the other’s story. Then, we too are enriched and in step with the plea of Pope Francis in this age of extremism which, in so many cultures, targets women and girls.

Perhaps 10 years from now, when a new set of statistics are released, we will be among those who have tried to live



Sr Aloysius’ Visitation.

as Pope Francis has invited us and treat each other, especially women and girls, with dignity and respect. Are we up to the challenge?

Sr Deirdre Mullan RSM
Sisters of Mercy – Northern Province and USA

The message of new life and resurrection is needed as much today as ever – Bishop Donal

IN an Easter message for readers of ‘The Net’, Bishop Donal writes: “Easter is a time when people remember many things. For some the events remembered are religious. For others, Easter is a time of political significance. For many, Easter is just a weekend of celebration as we dare to dream of the summer.

“But memories can energise us - or weigh us down because of painful experiences. There is little joy in remembering past events if they do not energise us to hope.

“The Christian celebrations of Christ’s death and Resurrection invite people to remember love that was stronger than hatred, life that was stronger than death.

“I hope that everyone can find ways of remembering even the pain of the past so that our young people can have hope for the future. The message of new life and resurrection is needed as much today as it ever was.”

In his Easter homily, the Bishop reflected further on why Christians “put so much emphasis on recalling the events surrounding Christ’s death.”

Saying that life is tough and always has been tough, he continued: “We think of current wars and financial pressures. They hint at a gloomy future. But human life has always lived in the shadow of illness, violence and tragedy – for we are not in charge of all that happens to us.

“Our celebrations of Christ’s death and Resurrection are not just looking back to distant historical events. The first lesson of Easter... is that God is in charge. God is present with grace on our Calvaries... We will not be subjected to evil that will crush us. Your body is sacred and, whatever it has suffered or however it is scarred, it can be raised up in glory on the last day. Easter celebrates the ultimate victory of hope over despair.

“We all know great people who have been able to face great loss or broken dreams and still find a balance through believing that their lives are not a disaster. Easter makes a statement for all times and places about who we are and how our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. Our lives are of eternal value in the eyes of God.

“Resurrection challenges us not just to believe in God but to believe in a God who believes in us. In an age of superficiality that offers little meaning to human life, Jesus announces the triumph of good over evil, of life over death, of love over hatred.”

“Looking through the lens of the Resurrection,” added Bishop Donal, “Christians have a way of remembering the awful events of Calvary. The Gospels do not deny the deceit of the high priests and pharisees, the brutality of the Romans or the cowardice of the disciples. But the Gospels look back with hope because God is at work in all the circumstances of our lives.

“The early Church told a story that made out of Calvary a foundation for healing rather than a cesspit of anger. That is a lesson for our own times. In ongoing wars, in Ukraine and the Holy Land, the pain of past hurts is often remembered in such a way as to justify wholesale dismembering of the other side, the evil ones now.

“In our own society, we have constant anniversaries to remember the past. But some will use the memory of

historical events in order to justify present violence. They follow the logic that blood should be shed to avenge bloodshed. Jesus breaks that cycle and offers us a way out of the prison and the twisted logic that we create – for they glory in a narrative that will visit more violence on our children.”

“The narrative of Jesus being burdened with the sins of the world can offer us healing,” he said, “We can generate a narrative about those who suffered in our painful past, not merely as victims of our brutal enemies but as those who bore the cross because of our sinful political structures. As we search for ways to deal with the legacy of the past, Christ’s death and Resurrection offers us a grace-filled language that generates hope and not merely anger.”

Highlighting that resurrection “speaks of the victory of good over evil”, Bishop Donal noted: “Our culture struggles with the reality of evil. On the one hand, the narrative says that the individual is entitled to choose and that no-one’s choice should be judged. And yet, we risk drowning in a wave of laws that

try to control human behaviour in a context where we are told that there is neither right nor wrong, just what is legal and what is illegal.

“The triumph of life and love in the Resurrection points to the power of virtue and grace. Without the God who calls us to new life, our existence is merely a series of thrills to be stroked off our bucket list of experiences, full of sound and fury signifying nothing - and going nowhere. The Resurrection of Jesus proclaims that virtue and faithfulness will bear fruit in God’s own good time, that injustice and arrogance will not have the last laugh.”

He added: “Easter is God’s vindication of Christ’s message that the gentle, the merciful, those who hunger and thirst for justice, will be victorious... So many are trapped in a world that fears to speak of virtue because the concept of good challenges the arrogance of the strong. The Resurrection is the source of the ultimate liberation theology and an unwelcome calling out of abuses of power. No wonder it is unwelcome in some quarters.”



Sharing the fruits of the faith in the Derry Diocese

Supporting us:

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

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

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

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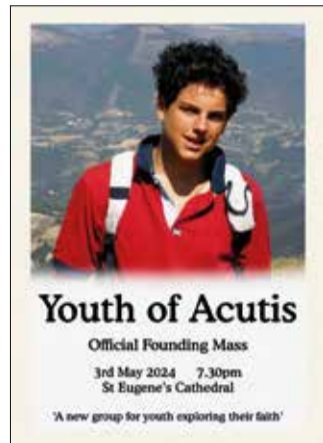
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'Youth of Acutis' Derry faith group to launch on Blessed Carlo's birthday *by James Tourish*



YOUTH of Acutis, a new group for young people exploring their faith, is to be launched at a special Mass celebrated by Bishop Donal in St Eugene's Cathedral, Derry, at 7.30 pm on Friday, May 3 - the birthday of Italian teenager, Blessed Carlo Acutis.

With news of the 15-year-old's saintly life spreading since his beatification on October 10, 2020, the Mother Church of the Diocese has been promoting his story and had a statue and relic of Carlo installed for the Cathedral's 150th anniversary, so it is fitting that the official founding Mass for the youth group named after him is to take

place there.

Indeed, the founder of the group is a young parishioner of St Eugene's, 18-year-old James Tourish, who is also one of The Net's team of Young Writers and head-boy at St Columb's College.

James introduced the idea for the youth group in one of his recent articles and he has been encouraged by the initial response and the support of both Bishop Donal and Fr Sean O'Donnell, the St Columb's College chaplain.

Enjoying the opportunity to discuss faith matters during get-togethers between 'The Net' Young Writers and Bishop Donal, James felt that it would be beneficial to have more regular gatherings of young people as a support to growing in their faith, discovering how they can be of service to their communities, and going on pilgrimage together.

Aware of the difficulties his peers face to openly talk about their faith and issues regarding the Church, James remarked: "In an increasingly secular world, the importance of the Church and Christ in people's lives are not highlighted and talked about enough, especially among young people."

With the help of some like-minded friends, he has been doing a lot of ground work for the setting up of a youth faith group in the Diocese for those aged 16-21 years, which he decided to call 'Youth of Acutis' because of the relevance of this young saint-in-the-making to the youth of today, and his inspirational story.

James said that the focus will be on having mature conversations on their faith, struggles they may have as practicing Catholics in this generation, and what they can do to help the Church and their local communities.

He added: "We will have meetings and events to enable young people in the Diocese to come together and feel part of a community and space that truly recognises the necessity of Christ and Christian values in our own lives, and in society as a whole."

James' hope is that, through the intercession of Blessed Carlo, interest in 'Youth of Acutis' will spread not only to young people throughout the Diocese with a desire "to act out the teachings of Christ", but also nationally and internationally.

Delighted to be chaplain to the



Youth of Acutis founder, James Tourish receiving a blessing with the Blessed Carlo Acutis relic in St Eugene's Cathedral

'Youth of Acutis', Fr Sean told 'The Net': "This is a great initiative from James and the gang to start this youth group, where youth can come together to discuss and learn about their faith and, in prayer, come to know the reality of Jesus present with us in our lives."

"What a perfect role model to choose in Carlo, who did so much in his life to promote the reality of Jesus in the Eucharist. I'm delighted that they have asked me to be chaplain to the group. I ask everyone to hold the mission of the 'Youth of Acutis' in their prayers."

Welcoming the youth faith initiative, Bishop Donal said: "There are many signs of new life in the local church. One of them is a proposal from some senior students in St Columb's College, who would like to gather like-minded young Catholics."

"The intention is that, under the patronage of Blessed Carlo Acutis, young people could learn about Christ, the scriptures and the teaching of the Church, so as to prepare them for engagement with their peers in social action."

"God is continuing to inspire

young hearts. As in every generation, it is they who will renew the Church."

To kick-start the group, 16-21 year olds attending the launch Mass in St Eugene's on May 3 will be invited to gather afterwards for some conversation and refreshments. Anyone older or younger than the stated age interested in being involved is encouraged to contact James.

For further information, James by contacted by emailing him at Jamestourish@outlook.com.

Another great family day out with Anam Og *by Aoife O'Neill*

YOUNG people from Anam Og, a Termonbacca-based youth group, enjoyed a day out together with their families to the Rossnowlagh Franciscan Friary, in Co Donegal, on Saturday, April 6.

We boarded the bus at 10 am, where we met our driver for the day, John from the Reddins' bus company. The young people were filled with excitement, while the adults wondered what the weather would have in store for us. With Storm Kathleen forecast to batter the country, we went prepared with fun and games for every eventuality. The hour-and-a-half journey went by in a flash of excited chatter, and we were soon disembarking at the beautiful, scenic Rossnowlagh Friary.

We unloaded all our bags in a hall there and went as a group to climb the Way of the Cross. The young people led us in beautiful reflections on the Stations of the Cross, as we gradually made our way up the hill. Apart from some wind, the weather was kind to us, as we managed to avoid any rain. Reaching the end of the Way, we were able to enjoy the breathtaking view from the hill's

summit. A beautiful rainbow was stretched across the sky over the beach, where the waves let us see just how windy it was. Back down the hill, we gathered in the hall to enjoy our picnic together.

Once everyone had ate their fill, it was time for fun games. A game of Easter bingo had the young people sweating as they hoped to win themselves some chocolate treats. Bouncy eggs soon filled the hall, as an Egg & Spoon race was sabotaged by Fr Stephen ocd, who took great delight in trying to cheat his team's way to victory. The story of the Resurrection was then told, followed by a sorting activity, where teams raced to try to arrange symbols of the story in the proper order.

Next, it was time to get back outdoors into the gardens, where we all enjoyed a highly contested Easter egg hunt. No briars or brambles could stand in the way of the young people eager to retrieve the hidden eggs, and hoping to find one of the special golden eggs. The competitive streaks could be seen in not only the young people but some parents also, as eager eyes



scanned the grounds on the hunt for eggs. Two of our five golden eggs were not found at all - so some unsuspecting person may stumble across them in the near future.

Once the excitement of the hunt ended, we all headed off on the walk to the nearby beach.

We had almost reached the beach when the rain decided to show up, however, this didn't dampen any spirits as the competition continued with races on the beach.

A while later, a very happy but wet group walked back up to the friary to gather our belongings.

Our final stop was at the lovely chapel to offer some prayers of thanksgiving for yet another day of fun together, learning more about our Catholic faith. The bus journey home gave a wonderful opportunity for the young people to ask Fr Stephen any questions they had. Young and old alike learned a lot from this time. as

subjects ranged from creation, to what happens when we die, what happens during Mass, Guardian Angels and many other questions.

At 5 pm, we all arrived back at Termonbacca, where we said our final farewells to one another.

These family days out have been a very important part of the ministry we do with the young people. A chance to get out seeing different places and discovering the wealth of ways Catholics follow God's

calling for their lives. For parents, it is a great opportunity to gather with other families raising their children in faith and to provide support and advice to one another.

Anam Og continues to meet in Termonbacca on the first and third Sunday every month, and any young person aged 8-14 years is welcome to come along and join with us. To find out more contact Aoife on 028 71 262512 or email termonbaccaderry@gmail.com

Youth of Derry Diocese voices heard again in second synodal round



Some of the young people and youth leaders who attended the Youth Synod in Maghera Pastoral Centre.

IN tandem with synodal gatherings for parishes around the Diocese, reflecting on the Rome document from the Synod held there towards the end of last year, the Derry Diocesan Youth Ministry Team organised two for young people; one in the Cathedral Hall in the City and the other in Maghera Pastoral Centre.

The evenings included a time of sharing faith, with conversation, prayer, and refreshments, and there was a particularly good response from the young people who gathered in South Derry.

Led by Lizzie Rea, Diocesan Youth director, and Niamh McLaughlin, Diocesan Youth co-ordinator, the Derry & Inishowen, and Co Derry & Co Tyrone youth responses were included in the response from Derry regarding the Irish Diocesan phase of the synodal process, to be reported back to Rome.

Speaking about what stood out for them with regards to what Derry and Rome had heard during the initial synodal phase, the young people were struck by the similarities in issues raised, including more recognition needed regarding the role of women and their leadership value, addressing the control men have in the Church, and past hurt experienced making people wary of the Church, which needed to be addressed more fully for healing and for the Church to be seen as welcoming.

With regards to the involvement of young people, it was felt that were not enough opportunities for the youth to serve in their parishes, though those offered through the Pope John Paul II Award were appreciated. Instead of the oft heard question, 'Where are the young people?', it was felt better to first address the question, 'Why aren't they there?', and to make an effort to go where they are to connect with youth more.

It was mentioned that the Church is old fashioned, that there is no teaching in schools about what happens in Mass, particularly in second level, that there should be more focus on the Bible and teachings of Jesus, for a deeper understanding, and more ways of celebrating faith together.

It was also felt that parents should encourage their children to come to Mass, and set example by going to Mass as a family and getting involved in parish life. It was pointed out that young people add character to parish life and were willing to help more, including 'behind the scenes' in parish life, and should be trusted to do so, but are not appreciated and this is hurtful. And it was suggested that involvement should be encouraged from primary school years, and that the starting age for Eucharistic Ministers should be lowered from 18.

It was felt that young people worried about other youth looking

down on them for being part of the Church, thought of Mass as being for older people, like their grannies, and tended to only go to Mass on special occasions, choosing other activities, such as sports training, over it.

There was a suggestion that young people who understand the Church should mentor other young people, that the reception of First Holy Communion and Confirmation should be delayed as current ages are too young to understand them, and more training provided to help the young get involved in Church roles.

Offering their views on what they thought God is asking of the Irish Church at this time, these included: to be more inclusive of younger generations; parents becoming more involved as an example to their children; to consider the role of women; to encourage more volunteering; learn about other faiths so as to better understand them; be more welcoming and inclusive; encourage people by example; have scripture meetings to learn more about how to react towards others in society; do more to address the legacy of scandals in the Church; and help people develop a meaningful relationship with Jesus.

It was also felt that God would want it remembered that Jesus had died for everyone, for everyone to live by the example of Jesus, and for society and religion not

to be separated. Other comments included that while people's values have changed, the meaning of Christ's teachings shouldn't be lost, and, while respecting the views of others, not to give in to social pressures and keep believing, living and spreading the faith, going to Mass every Sunday and encouraging others to come along and get involved.

With society too secular today, it was felt that God would want those in the Church to look to Jesus to be more like Him, to be more kind to each other and be together more as community, and that people needed to be able to look to the Church for advice in dealing with problems.

With regards being a more welcoming Church, it was noted that simple acts of inclusion can change people's experience of Church and lead to change in them. Good experiences stay with people, and giving young people space and responsibility to lead others, through initiatives such as Hope Camp, is important in enabling them to lead, with their vibrancy filtering down to the younger ones whom they have responsibility for.

The role of young people in parishes should be seen as the same as others, as age should not matter. Some people have the mindset that there is no point asking young people to do anything, but they make an assumption without asking.



Ballinascreen Palm Sunday Passion presented by St Colm's pupils



An exciting opportunity for young singers

THE St Eugene's Choral Scholar Scheme, currently in its second year, provides an opportunity for students over 16 and in full-time education, including mature students, to receive a monthly stipend based on attendance at choir rehearsals and church services in the beautiful acoustic of the Cathedral.

This is an excellent opportunity for budding musicians of all genres to develop their musical skills; sight-reading, working as a member of a musical ensemble, singing technique, solo performances, as well as meeting others of all ages!

One of this year's students was able to participate in a masterclass

given by Belfast-born baritone, Malachy Frame in October 2023.

Potential new members are invited to submit applications for the upcoming academic year. Applications from tenors and basses are particularly welcome. The closing date for forms is April 30, after which auditions will be held.

To apply email: magnusmonaghan@hotmail.com Adults, particularly males, interested in joining the choir on a voluntary basis are also welcome to contact the choirmaster, either by email or after 12.30 pm Mass on Sundays.



Current Cathedral Choral Scholar, Jack McGinn sang in St Eugene's on Good Friday

Claudy parishioners drawn into time of reflection with... St Colmcille PS Y6 Passion drama



Clonmany parishioners moved by children's reflection on Stations

CHILDREN from the four primary schools in the Parish of Clonmany were the narrators in a thought-provoking time of reflection on the Stations of the Cross during Holy Week, in St Mary's Church.

The reflection was created for children in second to sixth class by Fr Kevin Doherty, Administrator for the Parish, who is one of the musically gifted members of the Doherty family from Moville, and he shared his talents on the night with his keyboard playing.

Fr Kevin was joined by Finbarr Doherty, on guitar, and Joanne O'Donnell, whose beautiful singing along with the stirring music really enhanced the whole experience.

Welcoming everyone to the Children's Stations of the Cross slide-show, which involved the Confirmation candidates in the parish narrating the story for each of the Stations shown on a screen on the altar, Fr Kevin remarked: "We're telling a very beautiful story and it is our story too."

At the end, those gathered expressed great appreciation for the way the Stations of the Cross story was relayed, leaving them with much to reflect on in the lead up to the Holy Week ceremonies.

The children involved were pupils attending schools in Urris, Cloontagh, Rashenny and Clonmany.



Fr Kevin Doherty, Adm Clonmany & Culdaff, with Joanne O'Donnell and Finbarr Doherty



Buncrana senior citizens enjoy Scoil Mhuire 'Back in the Day' party

SCOIL Mhuire College, Buncrana, continues to encourage interaction between its students and senior citizens in the local community.

with the help of teachers, Annette McGonagle and Olwyn O'Donovan, organised a wonderful Senior Citizens' Party called 'Back in the Day', which was greatly enjoyed by all.

Recently, third year students



Tyrone Coffee Mornings raise thousands for Diocesan Youth Lourdes Team

FUNDRAISING for the Lourdes Youth Team received a great boost when the parishioners of Cappagh, Drumragh and Lower Badoney responded generously to Coffee Mornings in each parish, following the Sunday Masses on April 14.

Over £6,000 was raised between the three parishes in support of the 15 young people from various parts of the Diocese, who will be travelling to the French Shrine in the summer as part of the annual Derry Diocesan pilgrimage, including a number of their own young parishioners.

Lower Badoney parishioners helped to raise £2,100 through donations and raffle tickets at the Coffee Morning organised by Lourdes Youth team members, Claragh Mossey and Daragh Ellis, who are pupils at Sacred Heart College, Omagh.

The duo greatly appreciated the delicious tray bakes and sandwiches made by many family members and friends, as well as the promotion of the event by the Parish and Gortin GAC, and for the help of Fr Donnelly, PP, Fr Colhoun and Fr Devine, in encouraging whole Parish support.

There was a great turnout as well at the Coffee Morning organised by Lourdes Youth team member, Madison Curran in Killyclogher Hall, which raised a total of £1,666 through donations and a ticket raffle. Delighted with the success of the fundraiser, Madison is very grateful to all who baked and supported in any way.

The Lourdes Youth Team Coffee Morning after each of the Sunday Masses in Omagh raised £2,432.17, under the direction of Fr Michael McCaul, who has been appointed by Bishop Donal as the new Diocesan Spiritual Director for the Lourdes Pilgrimage, and is keen to have the Youth Team up and running again to accompany the pilgrimage this year, from July 1-5.

Once more, there was fantastic turnout, with many volunteering their time to help on the day, especially all the Pope John Paul II Award participants from Loreto College, Omagh, which has four girls going on the Lourdes pilgrimage with the Youth Team.

Delighted with the success of the Coffee Morning, Fr Michael told 'The Net': "The enthusiasm and



Rouskey, Lower Badoney - Francis McLaughlin, winner of first prize of a hamper, with his wife, Regina

Killyclogher



spirit of charity that the youth displayed was very encouraging and a true joy to witness.

"The Coffee Morning and the Christian experience were truly amazing and a blessing for us all. I hope, trust and pray that this project for the youth is the start of something which will help us all go

forward in faith, hope and love."

The theme for this year's Lourdes Pilgrimage Season is 'Let them come here in procession'; the invitation extended by Our Lady through St Bernadette, when she appeared to the 14-year-old in 1858.

Lower Badoney



photographs continued from page 6
Drumragh

Special celebration in St Joseph's Boys' School on Patron's feast day *by Evan Curran*

THE Solemnity of St Joseph was marked in St Joseph's Boys' School, on Wednesday, March 20, 20th March, in St Joseph's Boys school with a Mass celebrated by Fr Shaun Doherty, School chaplain.

During the Mass, gifts were brought to the altar to represent St Joseph, such as a hammer & chisel to represent St Joseph's life as a carpenter, and also a lily to represent integrity and indicate that St Joseph was the earthly spouse

of the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose purity is represented by the chaste white lily.

On the occasion, a blessed portrait of St Joseph and the Child Jesus was presented to Mrs Fiona Page for the new chaplaincy room in the School.

Many attended the Mass, including Derry boxer, Charlie Nash, a proud past pupil of St Joseph's who also got a look at his new mural in the school's PE Department.



DERRY YOUTH PILGRIMAGE TO MEDJUGORIE YOUTH FESTIVAL

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2024 This pilgrimage is for 16+.

If interested in coming on this Pilgrimage please email lizzie.rea@derrydiocese.org

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(18 to 30 year olds)

SATURDAY 27 APRIL 2024
10AM-4PM

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THIS month, when we celebrate Easter and the Feast of Divine Mercy, Cara-leigh and Evan write about the powerful, merciful love of God, while Seán shares what came to mind while reflecting on the events of Holy Week and John reports on his Holy Week experience with the Syro Malabar Mission Derry.

Luke reflects on the importance of humility, highlighting the danger of false humility, and James focuses on repentance and how Jesus came to call sinners, not the righteous.

On the fifth anniversary of 'Christus Vivit', Bronagh writes about Pope Francis' message to the young, reminding them that they are the "living hope of the Church on the move".

Niamh, a student of Lumen Christi College, shares how the spreading of the Easter light of Christ connected with her experience in a Catholic school and the importance of being who God created us to be, and Erin writes on a similar theme about trusting in God's plan for our lives, while she reflects on the Annunciation.



Cara-leigh Doherty - Derry City Deanery
Bronagh Doherty, Co Derry Deanery
Peter Grant, Inishowen Deanery.
John Augustine Joseph, Derry City Deanery.
James Tourish, Derry City Deanery.
Erin Whoriskey, Derry City Deanery



Shea Doherty, Derry City Deanery
Evan Curran, Derry City Deanery
Seán McLaughlin, Co Tyrone Deanery
Niamh Sharkey, Derry City Deanery.
Cadhla Shivers, Co Derry Deanery
Luke Doherty, Inishowen Deanery

Thankful for Catholic school where 'Light of Christ' shines upon relationships by Niamh



THIS month I have decided to explore what it means to me to attend a Catholic school. As a student of Lumen Christi College, I am thankful that Christ is at the centre of everything we do. The words 'Lumen Christi' are Latin for 'Light of Christ', and it is during the Easter Vigil that we are reminded that Christ is the light of the world.

When the Paschal Candle is lit, and this light is then passed from the candle to smaller candles, held by everyone in attendance at Mass, it serves as a powerful symbol of our duty to carry Christ's light wherever we go.

When I think of the name of my school, I am struck by the significance of Christ being the 'Light of the World.' In John's Gospel 14:6, Jesus tells Thomas:

"I am the way, the truth and the light." This is an important message for young people in today's increasingly secular world. Many things will appear to be the light, such as fortune or fame; however, as Catholics we know that it is only in the light of Christ that we can gain the true understanding and meaning of life.

Our school motto states: 'In Tuo Lumine Videmus Lumen' - 'In your light, we see light.' If we walk in Christ's light we will become the best versions of ourselves, we will become who God has created us to be, by using the gifts and talents that we have been given. I think this is also meaningful for us, as teenagers, because life can present challenges for us, however, the light of Christ can help us overcome any troubles we may face. The light of Christ rescues us and brings hope into every situation, no matter how difficult.

As a student of Lumen Christi, I am encouraged to look to Christ as an inspiration, as a role model on how I should live my life. At school, there are many ways we, as a community, walk in the light

Reflecting on the events of Holy Week, Seán shares realisation that...

Jesus existed so we could learn for ourselves

THIS year, Easter aroused my thinking nature. I felt compelled to freshly comprehend the meaning of Easter – past just the Christian holiday/festival side of it. On the surface, we have our special Masses and services, we say extra and specific readings, maybe our praying is more meaningful, and we carry out extra ceremonies at Mass, like the washing of feet on Holy Thursday.

In the week after Easter, I had time to think through the events spanning from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday, only now with a much more mature and seasoned mind.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the Jews there, living under Roman rule, were waiting for a prophesied leader to free them from the grasp of the greatest and most advanced cultural and military imperial power that the world had ever seen.

As He rode his humble donkey into the heart of the Jewish world, many of the Hebrews mistook Jesus for a military saviour. They called out (Matthew 21:9), "Hosanna to the Son of David." As a descendant of King David, one of the kings of old Israel, the Hebrews who did take him to be the Messiah expected this 'salvation' to be from the Romans, rather than the woes of the world and the influence of Satan.

I believe that even now people use the Christ as an excuse for physical force to achieve their unloving goals, like the repetitive crusades eastwards into the Holy Land in the medieval period. God is not a mask for the seeds of evil sown in the human heart. Right from our beginning, the devil has seen human weakness and has exploited it to turn humans against their own Creator. I find it far worse for a person to use God to justify their wrongdoing than those who renounce God and do wrong. Those who use God to justify their faulty aims do not understand God and, therefore, are as bad as those who do wrong and are non-believers.

God came to Earth as a man because humans relate better to another human than to an omnipotent extra-terrestrial being that resides in spirit in another dimension, inaccessible

to humans before our physical demise.

Jesus Christ the Nazarene lived 33 years as a human being, with a normal occupation and a human personality. He died a gruesome human death. He was God on Earth and could have easily halted this pain if He had wanted to, but chose to suffer for us, so that we could learn and have a chance to better ourselves and try to live up to the model of humanity that we should be. Jesus preached with fierce opposition for some three years and gathered thousands of people to listen to His word, healing the sick and raising the dead. Jesus made a long lasting impact, and we still remember it.

When Jesus was arrested and taken into custody, He was berated and beaten by His own people, despite being the saviour Messiah that they had waited to arrive for centuries. But because He did not live up to the mighty military leader they had hoped for, they handed Him over to the Romans whom they wished to be free from.

Not even the Romans understood what Jesus had done wrong. The governor, Pontius Pilate, saw no need for the death of Jesus. He asked Jesus (John 18:35), "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?" He expressed visible doubt over His crucifixion. In front of the populous of Jerusalem, Pilate would not take responsibility for the death of Jesus, who he classified as an innocent man. (Matthew 27:24) "He asked for water, washed his hands before the people, and said, 'I am innocent of this man's blood.'"

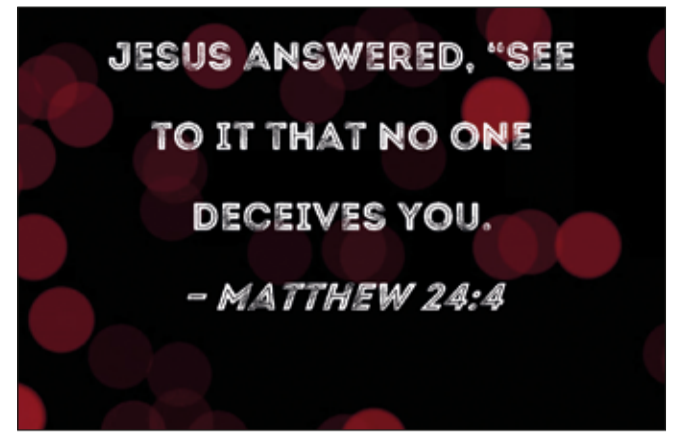
Kingship

The Kingdom that Jesus had come to save was not Israel. He said to Pilate, who did not understand (John 18:36): "My kingship does not come from this world. If I were a king, like those of this world, my servants would have fought to save me from being handed over to the Jews."

Jesus rightly points out (Matthew 24:37), "Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You murder the prophets and stone those sent to you by God."

keep, and many of us carry it in our pocket. It not only includes the prayers said each morning, so pupils can follow along and respond, but also prayers that are important to us as Catholics, for example the Rosary, the Memorare, and the Angelus.

Other ways that we walk in the 'Light of Christ' at school is through the celebration of Mass and Reconciliation, and attendance at retreats, which provide us with time to reflect on our faith and relationship with



The Sanhedrin had the influence over the whole of Israel, and they used it in Jerusalem to turn the people against Jesus. They were influenced into treating Christ as just another false prophet who blasphemed against the true word of God in the old scriptures.

When Jesus was handed over to the Romans, He was first taken to be 'scourged'. This was done using a Greek tool known as a 'Phragelloo', a wooden handle attached to many leather strips. Embedded in the leather strips were shards of bone and metal. It was a lethal weapon designed to hack into human flesh and tear up a person's body before they were crucified. A Phragelloo was said to often expose bones and organs. Jesus hung from the cross He had carried to Golgotha for hours, slowly dying from wounds and exposure. He died a painful death for us.

When Jesus saw the Jewish Temple upon the first entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, he looked at it with disinterest. (Matthew 24:2) "But he said, 'You see all this? Truly I say to you: not one stone will be left upon another here. All will be torn down.'"

Jesus renewed humanity. We even count this age (Anno Domini) from his birth, although it is off by about six years. So many values and traditions now came about as a result of our ancestor's reverence to Christ. So why did God bother to suffer like a human when He could have simply used His ultimate power to show us directly? Why leave billions of people today still blind in misunderstanding and repellent to the costly teachings of Christ? Well, what is the point

of guiding a human being so exactly? What do they learn?

Doing a child's homework for them teaches them nothing at all. I learned after this Easter that Jesus existed so that we could learn for ourselves. If the exact truth was revealed to every human being, then we learn absolutely nothing. We have free will and we can choose what to think. Coming to an understanding of Christ's mission on our own accord is far more special and meaningful than a total mass thought.

I have come to know myself that, within humanity, there are many people who will try to tell you otherwise and make you believe that what is wrong is the truth. But God is the truth and Christ's word gave humanity a new chance.

"Jesus answered, 'Be on your guard; and let no one mislead you. Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Messiah,' and they will mislead many people.

You will hear about many wars and rumours of wars, but do not be troubled, for these things must happen; but the end is still to come. Nations will fight one another, and kingdoms oppose one another. There will be famine, and earthquakes in different places; but this is only the beginning, the first pains of childbirth. Then, they will arrest you, they will torture and kill you. All nations will hate you, for you bear my name.'" (Matthew 24:4)

Misled people will blindly misunderstand us, for we bear a truth that they cannot comprehend. What people cannot comprehend; they fear. Easter was an opportunity for people to comprehend if they chose to.

God. This year we visited the IOSAS Centre, where we were offered a peaceful break away from 'the frantic pace of modern life.' Another way is through the charitable life of the school, for example the 'Shoe Box Appeal' at Christmas.

In addition to this, I have had the opportunity to worship God through liturgical music by being a member of the Folk Group and the Choir.

Finally, and most importantly, I believe that in Lumen Christi,

as a Catholic school, the 'Light of Christ' shines upon the relationships I share with others. From the many beautiful friendships that I have formed over the years to the kindness, care and support that I have received from my teachers. In my opinion, this is where Christ's light is truly evident in my school, and it is the reason that I not only have grown in faith but also in confidence as a young person.

Christian humility *by Luke*

HUMILITY is one of the key traits that a good person should have. While it is mentioned explicitly many times, we can also see many more examples through the actions of people in the Bible. Humility is a fascinating attribute, not only because of what it is but also because of what we often mistake for it.

Humility is the opposite of arrogance. Like essentially every positive trait the Bible teaches us, Jesus is a good example of humility. The most obvious example is when Jesus washed His disciples' feet in John 13.

Part of humility is seeing everyone as equals, regardless of the position society says we should place them in. John 13:16 says: "Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him."

Philippians 2:3 explains humility succinctly: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves."

However, there is more to humility than merely looking out for the needs of others. Humility also involves reverence



for God. People, such as Moses, Nebuchadnezzar and Abraham, show that they are humble and respectful of God, by listening to what He tells them to do, even when it goes against their personal desires.

It is clear that humility is incredibly important. However, there are some pitfalls that are often overlooked when talking about humility. The Bible warns against the false humility that is peddled by some teachers. It is not about showing to others that you are humble, because that is only a different type of arrogance. True humility is constant regardless of any audience.

I'm sure we've all been guilty of such practices at some point in our lives. It is certainly not uncommon; for example, the

constant unnecessary apologising that is ingrained into Irish culture sometimes becomes a form of false humility when it becomes insincere, albeit a comparatively harmless one.

The Bible says things such as Proverbs 18:12: "Before a downfall the heart is haughty, but humility comes before honor."

However, being humble purely in the hope of an award, whether material or divine, is fruitless. Perhaps the humble will be rewarded, but true humility is a prize unto itself. We shouldn't need anything more than that.

Like all good attributes, it is difficult to cultivate. Perhaps, one day we will be able to honestly say that we have achieved it, at which point we won't need to say anything at all.

A Church for the sick, not the healthy *by James*

I think that everyone's own faith is unique; it is something between them and God and it perhaps cannot be accurately conveyed through words. We are all on a journey because that's what this life is, a trip through the fog of this world, one that we cannot predict, nor completely control.

We have our ups and our downs, we sin, we do wrong, we do not always appreciate the Lord's Mercy and Grace, however, what is truly remarkable, is that Christ knew all of this while on the cross. When enduring the mocking and humiliation, the beating and scourging, the crown of thorns and the weight of the cross, Jesus knew that we would, as professed followers of His, continue to spit in His face in the form of sin.

Yet, as Romans 5:8 so beautifully puts it: "But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

I would certainly describe my own experience of faith as a journey, one that can be difficult at times, but never impossible to continue with.

I think in today's world, a defining characteristic amongst young people is the desire to have the answers right here, right now, to whatever problems they may be facing. Perhaps this is due to 'Google', which can at times appear to answer any question at any time, or even new inventions like AI and ChatGPT.

Of course, this desire is not necessarily a bad thing, it is pragmatic and a practical approach to take in our ever-changing world. However, the reality is, we cannot always obtain the answers to everything, mysteries and puzzles that existed thousands of years ago, still exist today, and no matter how strongly we persist, there are certain questions that will always maintain unanswerable in this world.

Having faith is obviously not only confined to religion. Every

day we rely on things that we are not certain on, sometimes this may completely backfire. However, life is comprised of making rational choices based on the reasonable evidence we have, we don't know everything, and it is probably better that way.

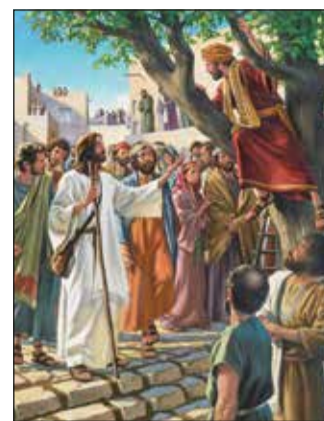
One of the ways that I feel my faith was truly strengthened, particularly during the early stages of my journey, was in reading the Bible, particularly the Gospels. It is such a simple thing to do, although I admit I do not do it enough. Just reading the parables, the words of Jesus and His teachings, it all makes sense.

I commonly make the equation that a Christian without an understanding of the Bible, is like having an author that is illiterate. And in this world, where everyone wants to make sense of everything around them, the teachings of Christ just made sense to me; they were logical, and even if some sounded counter-intuitive, upon further examination they actually made practical sense.

The theme of repentance and change is what I would like to particularly focus on, as it is one that we can all relate to in some way. The fundamental message of, 'yes you are a sinner, but you are worthy of love and help, and have the ability to change', genuinely has an impact on me. The concept that no matter what you may have done in the past, there is always a route back into the loving embrace of Christ, is important and must be proclaimed as strongly possible.

It is the theme found within the 'Parable of the Lost Sheep', in which Christ says "I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in Heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent".

It is the theme found within the 'Parable of the Lost Sheep', in which Christ further reiterates, "In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the



angels of God over one sinner who repents."

It is the theme, of course, found within the 'Parable of the Prodigal Son', in which the father celebrates the return of His son, despite the foolish actions of the son.

Did Jesus tell Zacchaeus, the tax collector, to stay up the tree, and that he was not worthy of love and help, or did Christ take the opportunity to visit the home of Zacchaeus and stay with him...to the shock of the crowd.

The point is quite simple; God's mercy is greater than the weight of your sin and actions of the past. The opportunity to change is in front of you, and it is your choice whether or not to make use of that opportunity.

Jesus staying and welcoming sinners and tax-collectors is a common feature within Scripture, it emphasises the point that Christ did not come down to this earth, as well as die, for the 'righteous', but for the lonely sinner, and the outcast.

When Jesus heard the Pharisees ask His disciples as to why He ate with tax collectors and sinners, Christ gave a very simple answer: "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

May we never forget that although we constantly fall short of God's grace, there is always a route forward, back into the loving embrace of His arms.

Divine Mercy *by Evan*

THE message of Divine Mercy is pure love and mercy. It shows us that God loves us - all of us.

He gives this 'love letter' to us to make us aware that no matter how great our sins are, His mercy and love is always greater. God wants us to put our trust in Him, so that when we receive His mercy it may continue to flow through us to others, especially the most vulnerable and broken in our world, so that the joy of the Resurrection may wave throughout the world.

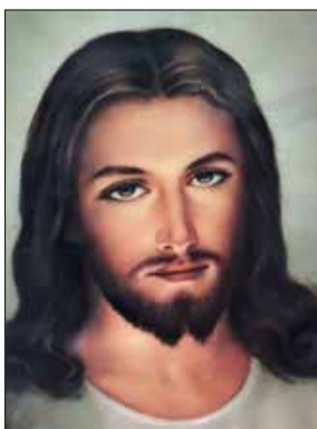
This is the reason why Our Lord appeared to St Faustina with the holes in His hands, feet and side, to remind us that Good Friday wasn't the end for us, His people, but only the beginning.

The victory of the Cross broke down the barriers between us and God, Our Father, so that

we may enjoy the fulness of God's kingdom and that we may be nourished through our relationship with Jesus, Our Saviour.

When Our Lord appeared to St Faustina, He said: "The loss of each soul plunges me into mortal sadness." These words explain to us that we must pray for all souls many times a day, especially those whom we know that are drifting away from virtue and piety, and especially every day for the souls of those dying.

Jesus is always there and always listening, no matter how long it has been since we last invoked His name. So, people shouldn't be afraid of religion, they should embrace it, for the most beautiful thing we will ever experience is the love and mercy of God. It costs nothing except honesty. It's



always there with us and, most importantly, always there in our local churches in the confessional.

So, let's save souls and bring them back to the shore of God's mercy, just as Jesus said to Simon and Andrew: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Jesus I Trust In You!

The Annunciation - trusting God's plans for our lives *by Erin*



THE Feast of the Annunciation, celebrated this year on Monday, April 8, is a day for remembering when the Archangel Gabriel visited Mary to tell her that she had been chosen as the mother of Jesus.

The Angel said to Mary: "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name Him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called Son of the Most High." (Luke 1:30-32)

On this Feast Day, we remember

Mary's willingness to accept God's plan for her life. Although she had her worries and questions, she trusted God and surrendered to Him.

This is important for us, as Catholics, today, as we also need to remember to trust God's plans for our lives. Although it's unlikely that an angel will appear to any of us as it did to Mary, we may experience our own little annunciations in life.

This Feast can teach us obedience and help us understand that we need to open up to God's

will and His unending love. Sometimes, we may not like or understand what He wants from us, or it may be very different to what we want for ourselves.

This is why this principal Marian Feast not only celebrates Our Lady's obedience but also reminds us that His plan is much greater than ours.

Pope St John Paul II said: "Let us imitate Mary, who accepted the Word of God with faith, and allowed it to take root in her heart, so that it might bear fruit in her life."



God is merciful and loves us all unconditionally! *by Cara-leigh*

DIVINE Mercy Sunday is celebrated on the second Sunday of Easter, as requested by Jesus Himself, and this year it was on April 7.

A Polish nun now known as St Faustina received mystical revelations from Jesus in the 1930s, and He expressed His wish that this Feast of Mercy be celebrated.

There are two special graces on Divine Mercy Sunday: a special plenary indulgence and the extraordinary grace.

There are three places in St Faustina's diary where she records promises from Our Lord that He will make available through the devout reception of

Holy Communion on this feast day...

- "I want to grant a complete pardon to the souls that will go to confession and to receive Holy Communion on the feast of my mercy." (1109)

- "Whoever approaches the fount of life on this day will be granted complete forgiveness of sins and punishment." (300)

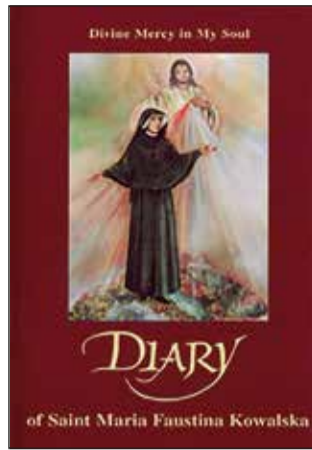
- "The soul that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion will obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment." (699)

We can celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday by receiving Holy Communion, going to Confession, going to Mass, and

praying the Chaplet of Divine Mercy.

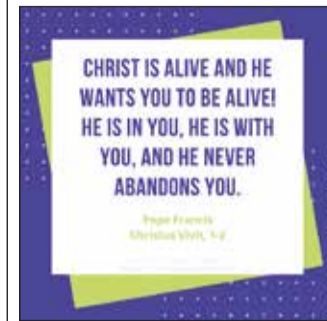
Going to Confession isn't the only way we should prepare ourselves for Divine Mercy Sunday. Cardinal Francis Macharski, when he was the Archbishop of Cracow, in Poland, said that we should be merciful to others as well. He stated that Christ does not only reveal the mercy of God but, at the same time, places before people the demand that they conduct themselves in life with love and mercy.

Our Lord told St Faustina about this requirement in her diary also: "I demand from you deeds of mercy which are to arise out of



love for me." The clear message of Divine Mercy Sunday is that God is merciful and loves us all unconditionally!

The Church 'on the move' *by Bronagh*



FIVE years after the Apostolic Exhortation (a document written by the Pope), titled, 'Christus Vivit' was published, Pope Francis invites young people to spread the word of God, and celebrate their faith to "make their voices heard". This document was written after the 2018 Synod on 'young people, faith and vocational discernment.' (Vatican News, March 2024)

The importance of youth in the Catholic Church has been emphasised many times, and we were reminded once again in the Holy Father's message, when he assured us, young people, that "Christ is alive and He loves you with an infinite love".

Regarding Jesus, Pope Francis also invited young people to "walk with Him as a friend, welcome Him into your life, and let Him share all the joys and hopes, the problems and struggles of this time in your life." (Vatican News, March 2024)

In the Bible, we are reminded of the 'light of the world' that is Jesus, and we are encouraged to follow Him, "Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). By following Jesus, we live in His footsteps, spreading the Gospel and teachings.

The importance of youth involvement and the passion they have for our Church became so clearly visible to me during my time in Portugal last summer, for World Youth Day. I travelled with a group of young people from Derry and the Clogher Diocese, led by Derry Youth, to Porto and Lisbon in August 2023. During my two weeks here, I witnessed the strength of our faith and, when people come together, the power we had.

I was one of millions who were in the audience of the Pope for the overnight Vigil, held in Parque Tejo, and the atmosphere there was overwhelming. So peaceful, but powerful and it dawned on me that faith was not lost, and the 1.5 million people there represented the future of the Church, a hopeful and peaceful future.

It showed the Catholic Church spread throughout the world, with every country represented, except the Maldives. We were reminded of the family Jesus has created for us.

The Holy Father said, in his message to those in front of him, in Lisbon on the last day of WYD 2023 that he wanted to "share with young people a dream that I carry within me. It is the dream of peace, the dream of young people praying for peace, living in peace and building a peaceful future". (Euro News, August 2023)

Pope Francis reminded youth that they are, "The living hope of the church on the move", and he thanked them for their presence and contribution to the life of the church. (Vatican News, March 2024)

Holy Week with St Mary's Syro Malabar Mission Derry *by John*

THE days leading up to the crucifixion, death and resurrection of Our Lord and Our God Isho M'shiha (Jesus Christ) are of particular importance to the Christian Community. I wrote in my previous article about the traditions of the Syro Malabar faithful, and in this article you will see how the Syro Malabar Mission in Derry observed these events.

The Saturday before Palm Sunday, the community

celebrated Lazarus Saturday with families from the community making Kozhukatta (a sweet dumpling made of coconut and rice flour), and Fr Joshy then blessing them before the Qurbana.

The next day, the community celebrated Palm Sunday with great solemnity and pomp. The ceremony started with a procession originating from outside the church, with the faithful carrying coconut palms

which were blessed by Fr Joshy.

On Holy Thursday, or as we call it 'Pesaha', the community celebrated Qurbana and, afterwards, the faithful celebrated the institution of the Qurbana by breaking 'Pesaha appam' (unleavened bread) and drinking 'pal' (made of Jaggery and coconut milk) in their own homes.

On Passion Friday, the Mission held the Stations of the Cross inside the church, and afterwards

celebrated the Service of the Church in which the Holy Cross was venerated.

Following this, the faithful received bitter gourd juice as they left the church, to symbolise the common wine that was given to Our Lord.

Finally, on the Sunday of the Resurrection, the community celebrated the Resurrection of Our Lord.



Fantastic response to new youth faith initiative blessed through prayer crusade, with...

Plans to keep light of faith ignited on first SPARK weekend burning brightly

THE first SPARK weekend of fun and faith for 12-16 year olds was a resounding success for all involved, with the leaders delighted to have to find more chairs to seat the large turnout of families and Friends of Spark for the closing Mass in Termonbacca on Sunday, April 14.

Indeed, such was the interest in attending the weekend that the surprised but overjoyed organisers, who were expecting about 12 candidates, had to start a waiting list for the next weekend when they reached their maximum number of 26 and more enquiries were coming in.

As well as the candidates, there were 14 youth leaders and around seven senior mentors, all vetted, who happily reported that the weekend had turned out much better than expected for a first run.

Such a successful start is no doubt due to the power of the prayer that has been offered for this new youth venture by a Prayer Crusade that has grown in membership alongside the planning for SPARK, with a prayer card circulated to members who commit to pray daily for "the protection, guidance and success of SPARK and all involved."

It is hoped that the SPARK programme, "supported by much prayer, will help to bring those who take part closer to Our Lord Jesus, who will guide them on the right path."

Prayer Crusaders' names are placed before the Blessed Sacrament, and they will be

contacted periodically to support them in their prayer, and with information about SPARK events. It is hoped to gather the Prayer Crusaders for the celebration of Mass every three months or so, in thanksgiving for their prayers of support and, in turn, to support them in their prayer for SPARK.

The new youth initiative also has the blessing of Bishop Donal, and the support of Fr Sean O'Donnell and Fr Malachy Gallagher, who were both involved in the initial weekend, with Fr Sean celebrating the closing Mass on the Sunday.

During his homily, Fr Sean spoke to those gathered about being witnesses, like Christ's first disciples, "carrying forth into the world the living truth of Christ's victory over death, His forgiveness of sins, and His eternal promise of salvation."

"Each one of us is called to start out on this sacred journey with God," he said, "a journey marked by our continual conversion, continual striving, and the unwavering promise that God never abandons us."

"Our pilgrimage with the Lord is not always straightforward; each step forward may be accompanied by stumbles and falls. Yet, in this Easter season, we are vividly reminded that no fall is so great, no sin so grave, that it is beyond the reach of God's infinite Divine Mercy."

"As witnesses of Christ," added Fr Sean, "we are called to proclaim that for every seeking soul, there is always a way back to

God through Jesus, our Saviour, showing the world that Jesus lives, not just in the pages of Scripture, but in the everyday acts of love, mercy, and compassion that define our existence as Christians.

"Our witness is to be our way of life; it is how we forgive, how we love, and how we share the good news with those around us and bring them with us. It is how we live our lives as a testament to the truth that Christ has indeed risen, that He is present among us, and that His love is unending."

He concluded: "May our witness be strong and our hearts be brave as we carry this message into the world with compassion and love. And may you always remember, no matter the journey, no matter the fall, no one is ever beyond the reach of God's loving embrace, and you may be the one He is seeking to bring another back."

Speaking afterwards to 'The Net' about the youth initiative, Fr Sean said: "SPARK brings fun, faith and friendship together as it presents an opportunity to our post Confirmation youth (12-16 year olds) to build themselves up with more knowledge of what they are about as followers of Jesus Christ."

"It uses the YouCat (Youth Catechism) as a catechetical tool, and Sr Clare Crockett and Bl. Carlo Acutis as two great present day examples for our youth to follow. SPARK is a gift to us in Derry Diocese, and it was a privilege to be asked to be

part of the planning team and to assist them with parts of the programme over the weekend, such as a talk on the parts of the Mass, called 'Learning Mass', and to write the reflections for the Stations of the Cross which are prayed as part of the weekend.

"All-in all, it was a fun-filled and faith enhancing experience for all 26 candidates that had the privilege of being on the first SPARK Weekend. Every blessing to all involved as they pass on what they themselves have received from the Lord (cf. 1Cor 11:23) to the next gang."

The weekend will be followed up with a monthly gathering under the banner, 'Burning Bright', which will give the young people who attended the opportunity to get together again, and enjoy more fun and faith time, with the aim of keeping the light from the spark burning. It is hoped to take the follow-up gathering to a different parish each month, with the idea to go out to where the young people are.

Other weekends will take place according to demand, and the feeling is that the demand is very much there, gauging from the interest in this first one. With a waiting list already started, there are plans to hold the next weekend in September and another before Christmas.

Further information can be obtained by contacting Brendan via text message or WhatsApp on 00353 86 8043065.



Greencastle musical celebration of St Patrick

GREENCASCADE folk, in Co Tyrone, turned out in strength to celebrate St Patrick at a concert in the local Community Centre on Friday, March 15.

The concert was organised by Bronagh Maguire, Cultural Officer for An Caislean Glas, and

involved children from the local Our Lady of Lourdes PS, Dean Maguirc College, Carrickmore, Loreto GS, Omagh, and the Irish School, Gaelscoil na gCrann.

(Photographs courtesy of Jason McCartan Photography)



Barra McCrumlish



Conlagh McCrumlish



Kayleigh Brogan



Gearoid McNamee



The Glass girls.



Caillin Joe McDonald



Sorcha Hughes



Clodagh Brogan, Clara, Bronagh & Caoileann Maguire



Grainne Conway, Stephen McNamee, Kate McCullagh and Conor McCullagh, Instrumental Group



Children from Our Lady of Lourdes PS

Leckpatrick Mission celebration of God reaching out to all *by Fr Gerry Sweeney*

IT had been quite some time since there had been a Mission in the Parish of Leckpatrick. So, over the past several months, with the help of the Parish Pastoral team we put together our Mission for 2024.

We aimed for Lent and the Mission began the same weekend that Mother's Day fell. We decided it was a good weekend to begin and, with the theme of Mother's Day in mind, we dedicated our Mission to the intercession of Mary, Mother of God and our Mother too.

Mary being a Sacred Doorway to faith is an example to follow. She heard the Word of God spoken by an angel, listened to God's Word and then she acted on it. Mary gives the example to follow and, for us, was the first sacred doorway of faith into the mission.

Our Mission was led by Fr Peter O'Kane, who preached at

the 7am and 10am Masses each morning, and returned each night for the Mission Service. He began the Mission by preaching at the weekend Masses and leading devotions on the Sunday evening.

The overall theme for the week and the topic for our nightly preachers was the word 'REACH', relating to a basic theme of what is termed salvation history. God reaches down to us and we, in turn, reach out to God.

The first night, Fr Peter preached on the theme of Resurrection. We are a people saved by Jesus, who calls us to be a resurrected people by our life. We are saved through Him.

On the Tuesday, Fr Shaun Doherty preached on evangelisation. We are a people called by Jesus to make disciples of all nations by our baptism. With these two themes, we are called to preached the message from God, Abba (Father) Christ

and Holy Spirit.

On Wednesday night, Fr Chris McDermott preached on Abba, God the Father, and Marguerite Hamilton preached on Thursday night on Christ the Son of God. A reminder we are called to be part of the Body of Christ in daily life.

Finally, on Friday night, St Perpetua McNulty preached on the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God that empowers us.

Each night at the end of the evening Mission talk, everyone was invited to go to the altar to receive a gift. On Monday night, all were given a wooden cross, a reminder that through the cross of Jesus, and His passion and resurrection, we have been redeemed.

On Tuesday night, everyone was handed a bottle of holy water, a reminder of baptism and the Mission given by Jesus, go make disciples of all nations.

After Fr Chris had preached

on God the Father, on the Wednesday, those present all received a copy of Mark's Gospel; a reminder that we need the Word of God.

Following the talk on Thursday by Marguerite, all were given a book marker with a prayer for Eucharistic Adoration, and a reminder of Adoration every Wednesday in the Sacred Heart Church.

Finally, on the Friday night, after Sr Perpetua preached on the Holy Spirit, everyone received a candle; a reminder that we have been given the light of Christ, Lumen Christi, to bring the Light, the Good News, into the world.

Our Mission drew a conclusion on St Patrick's weekend with Bishop Donal celebrating and preaching at the Vigil Mass.

St Patrick was the second Sacred Doorway of faith, as a Missionary. We are all called like St Patrick to take the message out of the



chapel into the world, our homes, schools, places of work. It's about good news and we are all called to play our part, regardless how small or big it may be.

A tag line from one of our mission posters read: "This is just a beginning", and so it is. With Holy Week approaching, the

themes from the Mission were just an echo of the good news to be celebrated of the Resurrection, Evangelisation, Abba, Christ, Holy Spirit...The Word of the Cross, Go make disciples of all nations, The Word of God, The Body of Christ and Lumen Christi.



Reflecting on Leckpatrick Mission as a young parishioner and Pope John Paul II Award participant, Bláthnaid McMenamin writes...

Mission highlighted call for all to go into the world with message of hope

A week long Lenten Parish Mission began on the fourth Sunday of Lent in Leckpatrick Parish. This was organized by the Parish Pastoral Council and Fr Gerard Sweeney PP, and led by Fr Peter O’Kane. All parishioners from the parish’s three churches - St Mary’s Church, Cloughcor, St Joseph’s Church, Glenmornan, and Sacred Heart Church, Derry Road, came together each day in the Sacred Heart Church for all aspects of the mission.

At the opening talk, on what was Mother’s Day, Sunday, March 10, the Mission began by seeking the intercession of our Holy Mother, Mary, with the hope that as She did, we too can become great examples of faith by following in Her footsteps of not only listening, but also acting on the Word of God.

This session was led by Fr Peter O’Kane, who introduced parishioners to the Mission’s theme REACH: Resurrection, Evangelisation, Abba, Christ and Holy Spirit.

Daily Mass was held at 7am

to accommodate early risers, students and working people. This was well attended and created a real sense of community in the Parish, whilst encouraging people to start their day in company and companionship with Jesus. A second Mass was celebrated at 10 am every day and evening sessions at 7 pm, which focused on each day’s theme, or letter of ‘REACH’.

Monday’s session began with a Gospel passage, followed by a talk on Resurrection delivered by Fr Peter, in which he discussed how through the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ, we have become “A resurrected people.”

He also posed the question: “Do you feel alive to your faith or are you still in the tomb afraid to fully commit to Christ in the world today?” Those present were given time to reflect on this during Adoration, guided prayer and spiritual hymns. A small wooden cross was given to each person on their way out, acting as a reminder of Christ’s Resurrection and love for us.

The following evening, Tuesday, March 12, the theme delivered by Fr Shaun Doherty was Evangelisation. A passage from the Gospel of John (4:5-15) was read, reminding us that God wants us, He will provide for us and “the well is deep.” Members of the congregation were invited to consider themselves as evangelists and ask the question, “Would I, could I, speak up for my faith that would bring others to follow Jesus too? Do I have what it takes?” After Adoration, bottles of Holy Water were distributed, with the invitation to bless others and pass the joy of Jesus on with it.

Fr Christopher McDermott led the Wednesday session on the theme Abba, knowing God as Our Father. A copy of the Gospel of Mark was offered to everyone, with the reminder of “not letting it get dusty” and the importance of regular reading and reflection on the Gospel when entering into “a personal relationship with God.” Fr Christopher also put forward the question for personal contemplation, “Do I really listen

to the Words of Jesus and act on them?”

The high attendance continued on the Thursday night, when we heard Marguerite Hamilton’s talk on Christ, with a particular focus on His Body, Soul and Divinity present in the Eucharist. After reflecting on the question, “What am I offering to God this day?” the Blessed Sacrament was carried throughout the Chapel during a healing service. Many were moved to tears as they were encouraged to give up their own cross and troubles to Jesus. All those who were present at this service were very much able to see Christ at work in His people.

Thursday night’s gift was a prayer card for the spread of Perpetual Adoration, with a reminder of when Eucharistic Adoration takes place in Leckpatrick Parish - Wednesday morning following 10 am Mass in the Sacred Heart Church, Derry Road, until 5.30 pm.

Parishioners gathered again on Friday evening to encounter Jesus in both the Gospel and Adoration

of the Blessed Sacrament, with a talk led by Sr Perpetua McNulty on The Holy Spirit. She focused on the light of Christ within us and how it is ever present in the Altar lamp in every Catholic Church throughout the world. The reading was from St Paul’s letter to the Ephesians (3:14-21) and all present were reminded of John (1:5), “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it” when presented with a candle at the conclusion of the service.

Other highlights of the Mission included an invitation to a class led by Fr Peter on Lectio Divinia, Praying with Scripture, a Mass for the dead, daily offerings of petitions, sacred music led by the Parish choir, and many opportunities for confession.

On Thursday morning, after 10 am Mass, many gathered at the local Parish Mass Rock to pray the Rosary together. All who attended, including some Sisters from Home of the Mother, found this to be a very spiritual and uplifting experience, ending with



refreshments provided at local allotments after.

The Mission concluded with a Vigil Mass celebrated by Bishop Donal McKeown on Saturday, March 16. All were invited to remember how St Patrick’s Day acts as a reminder that “we are missionaries by our Baptism.”

The mission was deemed to be a huge success in content and delivery by all participants. Many were sad to see it come to an end, however, left the Chapel knowing that “the second doorway is out of the Church into the world with a message of hope.”



Miracle Prayer

DEAR Heart of Jesus, in the past I have asked many favours. This time, I ask you this special one... (mention favour). Take it, dear Heart of Jesus and place it within Your Heart, where your Father sees it. Then, in His merciful eyes, it will become your own favour not mine. Amen.

(Our Lady of Lourdes, Steelstown, parishioner, Jenny Clements shares this Miracle Prayer in the hope that it will bring others the warmth and relief she receives in praying it for special intentions.)



Recalling inspiring Steelstown Lenten 'Faith Journeys' talks, pastoral council chair, Marian Gallen notes...

Faith journeys are unique to each and seldom perfect



St Patrick, 'Light the Fire', and her much-loved 'Lady of Knock'.

Moville parishioner, Geraldine Mullan, shared about the faith, love and hope that have enabled her to keep going each day, since the tragic deaths of her husband, John, and children, Tomás and Amelia.

Danny Quigley, who has been awarded the freedom of Derry City for his incredible fundraising and sporting achievements, spoke of the hope and resilience that helps him on his faith journey, particularly since suffering the loss of his father through suicide.

The fourth speaker was Strabane native, Sr Perpetua McNulty, of the Sisters of Mercy, who has always been involved in faith development work.

The 'Faith Journeys' series was organised by the Parish Pastoral Council, and the chair, Marian Gallen opened the talks by saying: "A faith journey is a simple reflection of our ever changing relationship with the God of our understanding at a given time. It is uniquely ours and it doesn't have to be, or seldom is, perfect."

Commenting on the success of the Lenten talks afterwards, she told The Net: "On Sunday, March 17, we celebrated the Feast of St

Patrick and gave thanks for the faith he brought to Ireland. All of our speakers are models of people continuing the work of St Patrick, and it was so good to hear that their faith grew and developed not from lessons or studies, but rather from the example set by their parents, relatives, friends and neighbours, of how they lived, prayed and cared for those around them

"Praying the Rosary was fundamental to all of them when they were growing up, and none of their faith journeys, as one would expect, were perfect. It is ok at times not to be friends with God. Indeed, Dana, for a short period in her younger years, debated whether or not there was a God.

"Likewise, Geraldine had really good cause, as did Danny, with their personal life experiences, to not believe in or even like their God. But, despite these low periods they all continued daily wrangling with their faith, living it as best they could and trying to pass it on to others."

Marian continued: "Dana has taken her God-given gift of musical talent and uses it in her mission to re-light the 'Fire of Faith' throughout Ireland and

America.

"Sr Perpetua has spent her adult life working with others, especially young people, spreading and keeping alive the Faith, and she, like Dana, enhances her ministry with music.

"Geraldine Mullan and Danny Quigley have turned the pain of losing their nearest and dearest into something positive, by not only keeping the memories of their dead loved ones to the fore, but by showing others how to put one foot in front of the other and survive with the help of God."

"It is our task," she added, "as it was that of St Patrick, to help keep the faith alive and pass it on to the next generation. And we do that by simply listening to and talking with others, and setting an example for all to follow."

Marian also paid tribute to the music ministry during the Lenten talks programme, noting that it had contributed much to making each night special.

She concluded by thanking, on behalf of the Parish Pastoral Council, the speakers, those who listened to the stories online as well as in the church, the musicians and all who helped in any way to make the Lenten talks the success that they were.



The Mystery of the Eucharist

by Colm O'Neill

THE parishioners of Greencastle and Badoney Lower were treated to a fascinating journey throughout the season of Lent, with Fr James Devine, through the biblical origins of the Holy Eucharist; from the fall of Adam in Genesis right through to the Institution of the Eucharist as told in the Gospel of John.

Commencing with Adam's breaking of his covenant with God in the Garden of Eden, and the introduction of original sin, Fr Devine explained how Jesus would institute a new and eternal covenant between God and His people for our salvation. Jesus, as the new Adam, with Mary at His side as the new Eve, would redeem humanity on a tree (the cross), countering the fall of Adam and Eve at the Tree of Knowledge.

Fr Devine also gave us an insight into several Eucharistic miracles, focusing in particular on the miracles at Lanciano, Italy, and in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Whilst explaining the scientific analysis undertaken by renowned scientists of the specimens in both locations, Fr Devine stressed the point that, as faithful Catholics, our belief in the Eucharist is not based on scientific evidence, but

science is an aid to belief in the real presence.

Bringing us back to the Book of Exodus, we learnt of the origins of the Passover, how the sacrificial lamb was to be killed, the blood spilt, and the different customs and rituals strictly observed by the Jewish people at the time of Jesus.

Fr Devine stressed the requirement that the lamb had to be consumed by those present for the sacrifice to be fully observed. Quoting extensively from the Gospel of John, he gave us an amazing insight as to how the actions of Jesus at the Last Supper relate back to the original Passover, while simultaneously instituting the new and eternal covenant. Jesus gave his body as the sacrificial Lamb of God so that the new covenant foretold in Isaiah (31:31) would be fulfilled.

Fr Devine then led us through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, where the unbloody sacrifice of our Lord takes place on the altar every time the priest celebrates Mass. He left us in no doubt, whatsoever, that Our Lord is truly present in the Eucharist, and that we must show the utmost reverence and humility before Our Lord every time we go forward to receive Him in Holy



Communion.

In conclusion, he explained how Eucharistic Adoration is an extension of the Holy Mass, and that we receive so many graces just by being in the presence of the Lord and adoring Him; "The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian Life" (CCC1324).

We were truly privileged to have had the opportunity to attend this series of talks, and wish to sincerely thank Fr Devine for so professionally preparing and delivering his presentations each night. We also wish to thank Green Elves Playgroup for the use of its premises to host the course.

U3A Foyle members enjoy Cathedral Audio Tour



U3A Foyle members visited St Eugene's Cathedral to take the Audio Tour. U3A Foyle is a voluntary organisation, based in the grounds of Gransha Park, in Derry City. Its aim is to encourage men and women to enjoy an active and fulfilling lifestyle in their later years. For more information visit <https://u3afoyle.com/>

Cathedral Lenten programme a nourishing time of reflection in lead-up to Easter Triduum

by Anne Marie Hickey

THE 'Seven Last Words of Christ' was held on the night of Palm Sunday in St Eugene's. Helping us prepare for Holy Week, we shared our time in the presence of Jesus, contemplating His final words. The ceremony was led by Fr Shaun Doherty, with music by myself and Aidan Watkins.

The provision of 'Confession and Adoration on the way home' in the Cathedral Lenten Programme provided time for the Sacrament of Reconciliation each Monday, from 5-7.20 pm. There was Eucharistic Adoration at this time also, when sacred music filled the air of the Cathedral. There was an atmosphere of stillness and peacefulness, which was encountered by many on the way home.

Each Monday to Friday, at 7.45 am, there was Morning Prayer of the Church, with people gathering early for the 8 am Mass and reflecting on the Morning Prayers. It was an early start to the day, with beautiful sunlight shining through the Bishop Kelly Memorial window helping us all.

We celebrated Lunch-time Mass at 1 pm each weekday (Monday to Friday), and a lot of people gathered. Some came on their lunch break from work,

some in the middle of their daily routine.

A Lenten Holy Hour of prayer led by Fr Shaun Doherty was held each Thursday evening, with adoration, reflection and singing. I had the privilege of singing at this Holy Hour, which, for me, was a time of deep reflection and prayerfulness. The quietness and peacefulness of this time let us all relax with Jesus and, in turn, open our minds and hearts more fully.

'Live Life to the Full' was a series of evenings of reflection on the sacraments, which ran each Tuesday night. We considered how the sacraments help us to live life to the full. During each session, we reflected on a brief scripture passage linked with the relevant sacrament, together with a short video. After this, we had discussion on the key message of the week, followed by a closing prayer.

The themes each week were: Baptism, 'An explosion of love'; Reconciliation, 'The whisper of God'; Eucharist, 'His body and His Life'; and Confirmation, 'The Holy Spirit bursts through in our lives'. On the final evening, we discussed 'Understanding the Easter Vigil, the mother of all Vigils' On this holy night, the

Church keeps watch, celebrating the resurrection of Christ in the sacraments and awaiting His return in glory. This was facilitated by Thérèse Ferry, Rosemary Finan and Fr Paul Farren.

Mass of Chrism

Bishop McKeown celebrated the Mass of Chrism with priests from all over the Diocese. During the Mass, the Holy Oils, which will be used in Baptism, Confirmation, Anointing of the Sick and Ordination, were blessed by Bishop McKeown, and the priests renewed their priestly vows to serve Christ and His Church. Celebrating the gift of the Eucharist and the ministry of service, we celebrated the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday evening. It was revealed to us that to be the Body of Christ, we are called to serve.

Bishop Mc Keown washed the feet of 12 parishioners, reminding us all that we are called to wash the feet of others - to be their humble servants. After processing to the Altar of Repose, there was Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament until 11 pm.

On Good Friday at 3 pm, we meditated on the Passion and the

death of Jesus. We focused on the cross; the crude instrument that took the life of our saviour, the key that opened eternal life for us all. Each person present was given a wooden holding cross as a symbol of the unconditional love Jesus has for each one of us.

The high point of the Church's year is the Easter Vigil, when we celebrated the resurrection of our Saviour. In the words of St Augustine, "This is the mother of all vigils". The Easter Triduum reaches its high point on this most holy night. On this night we tell our story. It is not just a distant memory, it is not only historical fact, it is living reality. It is the story of salvation. We are a saved people. Through His cross and resurrection, Christ has set us free. We symbolise our salvation and freedom with fire and the single flame of the paschal candle. We have been called out of darkness into the wonderful life of Christ. Over the Easter Ceremonies, music was provided by St Eugene's Cathedral Choir, led by Maghnus Monaghan with Aidan Watkins as organist, while the Cathedral Folk Group sang at the Celebration of the Passion on Good Friday evening.



Palm Sunday processions...



Brandywell Grotto to Long Tower Church

(Photographs by Ivor Doherty)



St Mary's Oratory, Buncrana

(Photographs by Martin Moloney)



Culdaff fundraiser for St Mary's Church

THE Culdaff community helped to rise well over £5,000 from a fundraiser earlier this month, in Bocan Hall, for St Mary's Church.



Eangach



Ainm Milis Íosa

Go raibh ainm milis Íosa go taitneamhach scríofa i lár mo chroíse.

A Mhuire, a mháthair Íosa go raibh Íosa agamsa agus mise ag Íosa.

Ceangal grá 'bheith eadrainn go brách gan scaoileadh

Áiméan, a Íosa Go brách agus choíche.

Cúpla paidir aistrithe ó Mhionphaidrín na Trócaire Diaga

As ucht a pháise dólásaigh, déan trócaire orainn agus ar an domhan uile.

A Íosa, tá mo mhuinín ionat



Iomhá na Trócaire Diaga

An Eaglais Chaitliceach – Éagsúlacht agus Aontacht

Caitliceach. Caitlicigh. An Eaglais Chaitliceach. *Caitliceach Rómhánach*, fiú. Is dócha gur téarmaí iad seo a chuala gach duine againn, agus anuas air sin, a bhfuil smaointí ar leith againn inár gcinn maidir le cad é atá i gceist leo. Bheadh pictiúr go maith againn, bíodh sin rudaí áitiúla atá i gcleachtas na hÉireann (Lá Fhéile Pádraig, Crosóga Bhríde), nó rudaí atá i gcoiteann ag mórán caitliceach ar fud an domhain, m.sh. an paidrín, nó an chuma atá ar an aifreann. D'aithneofa an t-aifreann céanna in Éirinn agus sa Bhrasáil, seachas difear teanga a bheith ann anois. Tráth, ní raibh sin amhlaidh, fiú toisc an t-aifreann a bheith sa Laidin. Nach dtuigfeá cad chuige an focal *Rómhánach* a bheith in úsáid, b'fhéidir?

Ach an raibh a fhios agat go bhfuil comhthéacsanna ina bhfuil na traidisiúin éagsúil ar fad, nach bhfuil *Rómhánach*? Gan an t-eolas a bheith agat, b'fhurasta smaoinemh go bhfuil tú in eaglais eile ar fad. Ach gan amhras, is caitlicigh iad na daoine seo ar fad. Is iad *Caitlicigh an Oirthir* atá i gceist agam anseo. Cuirimis aithne níos fearr ar an ghné seo dár gcreideamh.

Caitlicigh Biosántacha

Is fíor a rá go bhfuil ár n-eaglais "Caitliceach" – teideal a tugadh uirthi óna luathstair. Seo

focal Gréigise, "katholikos" .i. "Comhchoitianta" ("Universal" i mBéarla). Leathnaigh an eaglais thar dhá mhórcheantar, le tionchar Laidineach san Iarthar (as a dtagann an traidisiún atá in Éirinn) agus Gréigeach san Oirthir, bunaithe thart ar an chathair Biosáintiam, ar a suíonn Istanbul inniu, ach iad uilig i gcomaoin leis an Phápa. Bhuail tragóid an eaglais in 1045AD, nuair a scaradh an dá thaobh óna chéile, agus tá na hOrtadocsáigh scartha go fóill. Ar fud Oirthear na hEorpa, áfach, tá críostaithe an oirthir ann nach bhfuil scartha leis an Phápa. Ina measc, tá Caitlicigh na hÚcráine, Caitlicigh Rúitéineacha agus mórán eile in chomh fada leis an Ghréig. Streachail cuid mhór acu le déanaí faoi bhrú a bheith curtha orthu ina dtíortha, ach maireann siad go fíochmhar faoina dtraidisiún. Tá saol spioradálta domhain saibhir acu; tobar as a dtarraingíonn daoine eile inniu.

Críostaithe Syro-Malabar

India, Iú Aois AD. Tagann cuairteoir coimhthíoch as an Mheánoirthear agus é ar mhisean. Is é atá ann, creid nó ná creid, ná Tomás é féin, deisceabal Íosa. I ndiaidh d'Íosa deascabháil ar neamh, chuaigh na haspail (an dáréag) – na chéad easpaig – amach a chraobhscaoileadh an tsoiscéil. Cé go ndeachaigh an



chuid is mó siar fríd Impireacht na Róimhe, chuaigh Tomás i dtreo eile, agus sheol soir, go ceantar Kerala san India. Bhaist Tomás daoine anseo agus bhunaigh eaglais, agus cuireadh chun báis é san India. Mhair an pobal go dtí an lá atá inniu ann – *Críostaithe Naomh Tomáis*. Tá traidisiún láidir acu, ina bhfuil tionchair ón Mheánoirthear agus ón India le chéile, leis an chreideamh a cheiliúradh. Go traidisiúnta, d'úsáid siad an teanga ársa *Síris*, leagan den Araimís, a labhair Íosa féin. Le tuilleadh imirce inniu, tá pobail bhriomhara Syro-Malabar le fáil ar fud na cruinne, agus tá pobal ann inár ndeoise féin.

Agus eile!

Tá go leor rudaí eile is féidir a phlé ar an ábhar seo, agus tá scata de thraidisiúin eile ann, a thagann faoi na catagóirí *Airméanach* (cuimhnigh gurbh í an Airméan a chéad stát a ghlac leis an chreideamh), chomh maith le *Caildéach* agus *Maróiniteach* atá dúchasach don Mheánoirthear. Thug na Moróiníigh dúinn

an naomh clúiteach Charbel Makhlof. Tá an traidisiún Alastrach ann fosta a thugann isteach críostaithe na hÉigipte agus na hAetóipe – seo ceann de na traidisiúin is sine, bunaithe ar obair Naomh Mharcais, an soiscéaláí.

Mar chaitlicigh, is luachmhar a bheith ar an eolas faoinár gcomhbhráithre, a mhaíonn an creideamh céanna in Íosa, agus a dhéanann seo ina gcultúir féin. D'iarr Críost ar a dheisceabail dul amach chuig na náisiúin. Is fearr is féidir linn creideamh a chéile a shaibhriú, aontaithe san aon Eaglais Chaitliceach Naofa agus Aspalda.



Tá an tEaspag Kenneth Nowakowski i gceannas ar na Caitlicigh Úcráineacha sa Bhreatain agus in Éirinn

Trócaire Diaga

Ar an Domhnach go díreach tar éis na Cásca (nó, an 2ú Dhomhnach na Cásca), chéiliúir muid Domhnach na Trócaire Diaga, féile réasúnta nua curtha ar bun ag an Phápa Eoin Pól II in 2001. D'ainneoin gur féile nua é seo, thig leat a argóint go bhfuil dul i bhfeidhm mór aige cheana féin ar an Eaglais, agus gan dabht go bhfuil seo amhlaidh maidir leis an deabhóid bainte leis. Seo giota faoin Trócaire Diaga

Thig linn toiseacht leis an bhean rialta Polannach Faustina Kowalska, Naomh Faustina mar a aithnítear inniu í. Gnáthchailín óg a bhí inti, ball de theaghlach bocht tuaithe ag tús 20ú hAoise. Bhí rud éigin as an ghnáth, áfach, in óige Kowalska, thaispeán Íosa é féin di, ag iarraidh uirthi bheith ina bean rialta. Ina bean óg, d'imigh sí

go tobann gan mórán aici le dul a chuartú oird a ligfeadh isteach í. Ag an tús, bhí an-deacrachtaí aici agus diúltaíodh í. Sa deireadh, thug clochar isteach í, agus ghlac sí a cuing chnábhaidh sa deireadh in 1928.

Is iomaí rud is féidir a rá maidir le saol Faustina, agus na heispéiris iontacha a bhí aici. Ba rud ró-iontach é, go díreach, ná gur a bhí Íosa á thaispeáint féin di, ag labhairt léi, nó gur labhair sé léi ar bhealach níos ciúine ina croí. Labhair sí go rialta lena anamchara – an tAthair Sopoćko – faoi na heispéiris mhistiúla seo agus thug sé stiúradh di. Rud amháin a bhí mar thoradh air seo ná a dialann spioradálta a scríobh sí. Is anseo a chláraigh sí na comhráit idir í agus Íosa inar labhair sé faoin ghá atá lena thrócaire ar an domhan,

trócaire ar mhian leis tabhairt don chine daonna.

D'iarr Íosa ar Faustina go mbeadh íomhá speisialta péinteáilte le tabhairt don tsaol mór, ina bhfuil sé féin, agus dhá ghá solais ag teacht amach as a chroí – a chroí a bhí leonta le sleá ar an chros – a sheasann don fhuil agus don uisce ag 'brúchtadh amach' ar son anamacha. Rud eile a tháinig as ná *Mionphaidrín na Tócaire Diaga*. Seo paidir speisialta is féidir a rá ar chlocha an phaidrín. Ba mhian le hÍosa é a thabhairt do dhaoine le tarraingt as 'taisce do-ídithe' a thrócaire, go háirithe inár saol inniu.

Nuair a bhí Faustina beo, rinneadh ionsaí ar a tír dhúchais agus tosaíodh an Dara Chogadh Domhanda. Sna campaí géibhinn ann, maraíodh na milliún daoine

agus bhí áir ann go domhanda. Go fóill, tá an cumas ag daoine eile, agus tá mórán ag maireachtáil gan aird ar Dhia agus gan dóchas. Is mó atá an leigheas air seo de dhíth orainn, tarraingt ar 'aigéan na trócaire' a ofrálann Íosa dúinn, aigéan an ghrá.



Naomh Faustina Kowalska

Celebrating Chrism Mass as the church embarked on the Easter Triduum, in this time of synodality, Bishop Donal highlighted the challenge to...

Allow the Spirit of Jesus to be the Lord of the Church

THE priests of the Diocese were joined by the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, from Galliagh Friary, and the Discalced Carmelites, from Termonbacca, for the annual Chrism Mass celebrated in St Eugene's Cathedral on Holy Thursday morning by Bishop Donal, during which they renewed their commitment to priestly service.

The magnificent sound of the Cathedral Choir filled the air as the ceremony got underway with the procession of the priests, including Frs Eddie Gallagher, Patrick Lagan and Stephen Ward dressed in ceremonial robes as they carried up the Oil of Catechumens and the Oil of the Sick to be blessed, and the Oil of Holy Chrism to be consecrated during the Mass.

Reflecting on the Scripture readings in his homily, Bishop Donal noted that Jesus was clear that he had come "to take the road less travelled and bring healing and hope to those most in need of care and belonging, whatever the cost".

Considering the message for the Church today in the readings, he stated: "The first principle of our identity as the Diocese of Derry is the mission of evangelisation as the driving force of the Church. We have no other purpose."

He added: "Synodality is not about changing church teaching or making us more palatable to modern tastes. It is not merely prioritising the question as to how we will supply Masses with fewer ordained clergy. It is a matter of letting the light of the Holy Spirit shine on how we are parishes and seeing clearly what we need to change in order to better proclaim mercy, live mercifully and bring good news to the poor.

"Our parishes and diocese have to be structured and to prioritise their resources so as to serve the mission. There is a huge need in our society for hope and outreach. There is no grace in retreating to look after

ourselves or trying to bolt a little bit of mission onto a structure whose priority has been reduced to maintenance. Maintenance is centred mostly on those who are there and allows us to lament those who are absent. Mission is directed to those who are not there and to lament our absence at their side. That is much more difficult territory - but it is where Jesus wants us to go."

Addressing another temptation when thinking of renewal, Bishop Donal said: "I have heard plenty of apparently sensible suggestions that the future will be secured by having permanent deacons, or changing the criteria for who can be ordained. That would, people argue, help the priests to do all the work that they have to do, especially with funerals, weddings etc.

"But that starts with the fatally flawed premise that the church is an organisation with a clerical class who do all the holy stuff. When we begin with that assumption, we simply increase size of the clerical caste and promote a lay clericalism."

He went on to point out that the Synod's report, last October, had a second principle - the promotion of participation in the mission, "which is the gift and responsibility of all the baptised".

"The Synthesis Report approved at the end of the First Session of the assembly," he noted, "recognises that the co-responsibility of all in the mission 'must be the criterion at the basis of the structuring of Christian communities and of the entire local Church with all its services, in all its institutions, in all its organism of communion.' (SR 18b).

"Pope John Paul II in his 1988 document 'Christifideles Laici' had the subtitle 'on the vocation and the mission of the lay faithful in the church and in the world'. Synodally driven renewal is not about getting parishioners to help the clergy with some of their work,

but about helping the laity to take on their roles. The ordained, the consecrated religious and the laity are all constituent parts of the line of kings and priests to serve God our Father. Restructuring that is not centred on the whole Body of Christ as salt to the earth and light to the world is built on sand.

Antidote

"Renewal does not come by helping Father with his many existing jobs. It comes from laity taking up the mission proper to them. That is a real challenge to clergy and parishes. But it is only by cherishing the giftedness of all in the Body of Christ that we can become what one author calls 'an antidote to an age of decomposing bonds and identity fundamentalism'."

Remarking that the world "is coming down with courses on managing change", Bishop Donal said: "The ongoing temptation for the church down through the centuries is to think that we manage the church and that it is our job to take decisions. But the Holy Spirit wants to liberate us from the illusion of self-sufficiency. We see that temptation in the shallow theology of those who say, 'let's change this or that, let's modernise and all will be well'.

"Following Jesus always invites us out into the desert or via the hill of Calvary. Discipleship means leaving behind our agendas and being open to being led by the Holy Spirit. 'Unless the Lord builds the house, in vain do the builders labour' (Ps 127)."

He concluded: "Thus, the most radical and demanding lesson of renewal is the spiritual character of the synodal process. It is easy to descend into a battle over ideas or between opposing factions. But the Acts of the Apostles shows the early church being relentlessly driven from where it felt comfortable into a space where it knew it was not in charge.

"The church in Antioch was praying when the Holy Spirit told them to set Barnabas and Paul aside for a mission to modern Turkey (Acts 13:2). At the Council of Jerusalem, the members talked and prayed - and wrote a letter that 'it has been decided by the Holy Spirit and by us' (Acts 15:28).

"Renewal comes from listening together to discern the voice of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit in prayerful hearts. Those who reduce church to a parliament for the strong will find it easy to hear loud voices, but it will be deaf to the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit and to the voice of the poor who cry from the margins."

Embarking on the three solemn days of the Easter Triduum, Bishop Donal left the congregation with two challenges from Jesus: "Do people look at our parishes and see communities anointed by the Holy Spirit and focussed on bringing good news to the poor and needy? If not, we need to ask ourselves 'why not?'"

"Are we working together to become a missionary church, helping hurting people unburden themselves of the sin that clings so easily, or are we trapped in cosy, self-serving agendas of managing decline? Jesus in the Gospel has no time for that.

"Jesus calls us to work hard, to listen to one another and to allow the Spirit of Jesus to be the Lord of the Church. If we labour under the illusion that we know better, in the future we will certainly have fewer clergy, but they will be more than sufficient for the small numbers of active parish members! Are we prepared to walk on the rough surface of the road less travelled?"

A Iveleigh. First Belong to God, Dublin, 2024, Messenger Publications, pxxviii



Magnificence of Easter Morning heightened at Eagle's Valley Dawn Mass

AROUND 400 faithful, hardy souls made it out of their beds early on Easter Sunday morning to be part of the Dawn Mass at Eagle's Valley, in the Parish of Ballinascreen.

Amongst them was the parish priest, Fr Peter Madden, who was celebrating the 6 am Mass, the first Dawn Mass in the Parish since Covid struck.

In words of encouragement for

the faithful to join him for the celebration of the Eucharist atop Eagle's Valley, accessed via the Feeny Road, outside Moneyneena, in the days previous, Fr Peter quoted Luke 24: 1-6 - "On the first day of the week, at the first sign of dawn, they went to the tomb... They found that the stone had been rolled away...two men in brilliant clothes suddenly appeared at their side...the two said to them, 'Why

look among the dead for someone who is alive? He is not here; He has risen."

He added: "We too will go this Easter Morning to greet the Risen Christ at this Dawn Mass, which will be celebrated in the open air, in Eagle's Valley."

Other parishes across the Diocese celebrated the Eucharist outdoors at dawn as well to mark this most significant of celebrations within

the Church. Gathered together with others for the celebration of open air Mass, as the sun rises and gradually casts its light upon the earth, is a deeply moving and beautiful experience on Easter Sunday morning, especially on such magnificent sites as Eagle's Valley, and Benbradagh Mountain where the Dungiven Parish also celebrate the Easter Dawn Mass.



Buncrana Easter Vigil at St Mary's Cockhill



Continued prayers for Vocations encouraged as National Year of Prayer ends

FOLLOWING the very enjoyable and successful Vocations Retreat in Larne, in March, the Derry group of discerners met with the Vocations Director, Fr Pat O'Hagan, at the Emmaus Room at St Patrick's, Pennyburn, at the beginning of April.

They were joined by two of our Diocesan seminarians, who were home for the Easter break, one of whom is currently studying in Rome and the other completing his propaedeutic year of studies at the Scots' College in Salamanca, Spain.

Over pizza and chips, the discerners had an opportunity

to talk with the students about seminary life and the joys of spending time abroad.

It is hoped that the discerners will be able to gather on a monthly basis, and be joined by the seminarians whenever possible. The next meeting will take place at the end of May.

The evening finished with a very competitive game of bowls. Modesty forbids the Vocations Director revealing the name and score of the winner.

Although the National Year of Prayer for Vocations to the Diocesan Priesthood ended on

CALLED TO BE A PRIEST?

DERRYVOICATIONS.ORG

If this is of interest to you, please contact the Diocesan Vocations Director, Fr Pat O'Hagan on (+44) 07703444280 or (028) 7938 6452

Good Shepherd Sunday, April 21, the people of the Diocese are encouraged to continue praying for this intention.

Please pray also for our four current seminarians, and for those who will soon be submitting application forms with a view

to beginning their studies in Salamanca in January 2025.

Anyone interested in serving the Church as a priest of the diocese of Derry should contact Fr Pat, in Bellaghy, at (028) 79386259 or at pgoh2111@gmail.com.



Large turnout for Eucharistic Procession through heart of Derry

Welcoming the Lord to bless hearts, homes and streets

DERRY City is one of the locations in the Diocese where men have been gathering on the First Saturday of each month to pray the Rosary together publicly in an act of reparation. On the first Saturday of February, they felt blessed to not only be able to gather to pray their public monthly Rosary, just inside the Walls near to Guildhall Square, but to also take part in a Eucharistic Procession starting from St Columba's Church, Long Tower, which included a period of prayer for Divine Mercy outside the Walls, in Guildhall Square.

The Procession with the Blessed Sacrament set out from the Long Tower with the sun pushing through a cloudy sky to shine brightly upon it. Made up of priests and religious, men, women and children, the procession made its way through Bishop's Gate on the Walls, and onwards through the Diamond and out through the Shipquay Gate to the Guildhall area. There, those taking part knelt before the raised Blessed Sacrament to sing The Divine Mercy Chaplet, drawing some passers-by to kneel in reverence too, with many commenting on the beautiful sense of peace they experienced.

The procession then made its return to the Long Tower through the Bogside, blessing a community that has suffered much over the years, but which has also been blessed by the many prayers offered down the generations in the beautiful St Columba's Church that stands magnificently on the height overlooking it, offering the help and protection of Heaven.

The Eucharistic Procession entered the Church, where those unable for the walk had remained in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament exposed in a second Monstrance on the altar, and the ceremony was brought to a close with Benediction.

This was a fore-runner to 40 days of Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration as part of an Effatha (Be Opened) Revival, that ran worldwide from February 8 to March 19 and was based on the call of 2 Chronicles 7:14 – "If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn

from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

It followed a Eucharistic Procession led by the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal in the Galliagh area last year, on October 28, which had been initiated by Fr Antonio Maria Diez de Medina cfr, who had organised two previous Effatha Revivals with friends in Cenacle London, during his time ministering there.

The Galliagh Procession prompted local man, Mark Kerr to approach Fr Antonio about the possibility of a Eucharistic Procession through the heart of Derry City, and, with the blessing of Bishop Donal and the help and prayers of others it came to be.

Fr Antonio expressed thanks for the support of Fr Gerard Mongan, Adm Long Tower, and the Knights of the Blessed Sacrament, and for the accompaniment during the Procession of Fr Peter O'Kane, the local Discalced Carmelite Fathers and Benedictine Monks of Perpetual Adoration from Silverstream Priory, in Co Meath, as well as the Home of the Mother Servant Sisters, and members of Cenacle London who had led the Galliagh Healing time of prayer the night before.

Welcoming all who had come to take part in the Eucharistic Procession and time of prayer and Adoration during it, in St Columba's Church, Fr Antonio said: "We give thanks to God for this day and this opportunity to process. On October 28, we did a procession in the Galliagh area for God's blessing on the land, neighbourhood and the people. We had gone around the bridges at a time as well. The Lord wants to bless His people, that is why you are here, because you have noticed that the Lord is doing something here."

"We want to praise the Lord and ask Him to bless the land with His Eucharistic presence, to open hearts and minds. He has already done great work here."

After a Scripture reading for some food for thought during the time of Procession, Fr Antonio asked: "Are you ready with your heart to move forward with the Lord, walking in

the Light of His Eucharistic Holy Face?"

Lion of Judah

He added: "God restores our joy and gives us a new song. What He wants of you today is to be open. The Lord is doing new things and we pray for the grace to hear His music and come alive. Jesus, who is the Lion of Judah, is roaring right now. He desires His Word to be heard within you so that we can have lions' hearts. We are going forward in procession as people of love."

The silent procession was headed by four members from Cenacle London, who carried over their shoulders a blessed Guadalupe Mantle, which Fr Antonio explained symbolised "Our Lady covering the land with her mantle, like St Brigid did with her cloak"

This was followed by a copy of the original image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Unborn. Commenting on the significance of this, Fr Antonio said: "It means Mother Mary was with us and preparing the way for Her Son."

He added: "We were praying for new life and Jesus is the Truth and life, and to change the spiritual atmosphere as there is a lot of suicide here. Jesus' presence cancels out anything not of God. So, we were telling God that He is Lord and welcoming Him into our hearts, homes and the streets."

"It was highlighting, that Jesus is not just in the church building but out on our streets as well. We need His Fatherhood radiating upon us. We also asked for the intercession of the Patrons of Ireland – Patrick, Columba and Brigid – and Sr Clare Crockett, and other saints too. We invited the Church Triumphant (the souls of Purgatory) to accompany us too."

Afterwards, all were invited to a reception in the Maldron Hotel, sponsored by Human Life International (HLI), and Fr Antonio expressed deep appreciation for that to its executive director, Patrick McChrystal, whom he first met at a pro-life event and told him about Effatha (Ephphatha).

Fr Antonio also expressed thanks

to all who had responded to the call for Adorers during the global 40 days of Perpetual Adoration, from February 8, the Feast of St Josephine Bakhita, the Patron Saint of victims of human trafficking, to March 19, the Feast of St Joseph.

The intentions prayed for were for: hearts to be open to God and others; reparation and repentance for the world's turning away from God and His Commandments; the undoing of global forces of fear, lies, evil and sin; revival and unity in the Church; the end of human trafficking, abortion and euthanasia; the Spirit of Truth to bring freedom; and priests to be deeply Marian and Eucharistic.

Commenting on this, Fr Antonio said: "Many graces were poured out over the 40 days, wherein we prayed for particular intentions associated with life."

"This was God's work, may it continue to bear fruit in the Church and in the world, so that transformed lives lead to transformed families and communities, in a revived Church and a renewed world."

Another major faith event to be held in the City, on Saturday, May 11, is a Conference and Gala on 'Following Christ as a Catholic in Ireland today,' organised by Patrick McChrystal, who lived the first 10 months of his life with his family in the Cathedral Parish, before they moved to live in Fintona, Co Tyrone.

The guest speakers at the conference include: Dana, Eurovision Song Contest winner and former MEP; Mickey Harte, manager of Derry GAA senior team; John Pridmore, former East London gangster; and Patrick McChrystal, HLI.

The conference will be held in the Guildhall, starting with Mass at 9 am and ending at 4.45 pm, with the Gala evening running from 6.15-11 pm, where Dana and Mickey Harte will again be special guests, and Bishop Donal will also be in attendance. Music will be by Hugh P and Maria Doherty.

To book a place call the HLI Office on 00353 94 75993, or book online at www.humanlife.ie





Ireland Needs Fatima May Rosary Rallies

MEN continue to gather on the First Saturday of each month to pray the Rosary publicly together within the Diocese, particularly in Derry City and towns in Inishowen, and in towns nationally and around the world. The power of Our Lady's

Rosary is becoming more and more recognised and Rosary movement, Ireland Needs Fatima is in the midst of sponsoring 560 Public Square Rosary Rallies across the island for May 11; the Saturday closest to the anniversary of Our Lady of

Fatima's first apparition.

Rally organisers are offered manuals, posters, intention sheets, prayer programmes, as well as a 7ft long banner of Our Lady of Fatima.

There are 285 Rosary Rallies already being organised across

the island, and the Ireland Needs Fatima campaign, set up 15 years ago, is hopeful that the number will continue to grow in the weeks and days leading up to May 11.

Further information can be found at <https://www.isfcc.org/portfolio/rosary-rallies/>



Following Christ AS A CATHOLIC IN IRELAND TODAY
 Conference and Gala Dinner
 SAT 11 MAY 2024, 9AM (Mass) - 4.45PM GUILDHALL, DERRY

MICKEY HARTE Manager, Derry GAA
JOHN PRIDMORE Former East London Gangster

DANA Former MEP, Eurovision Song Contest Winner
PATRICK MCCRYSTAL Executive Director HLI Ireland

And Others

Equipping You with the practical tools of faith for the challenges of everyday life.
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Followed by **EVENING GALA DINNER CELEBRATION!** 6.15-11pm

You Are Invited!!
 A Unique Evening Celebrating our Faith!
 MUSIC & SOCIAL DANCING TO: HUGH P. & MARIA DOHERTY
 With Special Guests: Mickey Harte & Dana
 Grace by Bishop Donal McKeown

DAY EVENT only: (Incl. Lunch & Tea/Coffee)-€20 (or €18 if booked by 6th May)
 EVENING GALA DINNER: (Beautiful Meal, Testimony, Music & Dancing) - €45
 EARLY BIRD: €60 for Conference PLUS Dinner Event. Cut-Off Dinner Booking 6th May

Book Now! Call our HLI Office (00353)94 93 75993 OR Book Online: www.humanlife.ie

Human Life International (Ireland), Guadalupe Centre, Main Street, Knock, Co. Mayo.
 Email: mail@humanlife.ie Phone: (00353)049375993 Charity Number: CHY 11138



Pope's monthly intention

The Holy Father has asked for prayer during April for:

The Role of Women:
 Let us pray that the dignity and worth of women be recognised

in every culture, and for an end to the discrimination they face in various parts of the world.

Prayer for Priests

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

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

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

Bless, in a special way, Your servant

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

Remember in prayer during April:

- Fr Michael McCaul (April 1st)
- Fr Con McLaughlin (2nd)
- All Priests (3rd)
- All Priests (4th)
- Fr Peter McLaughlin (5th)
- Fr Kevin Mulhern (6th)
- All Priests (7th)
- Fr Peter Madden (8th)
- Fr Anthony Mailey (9th)
- Archbishop Eamon Martin (10th)

- Fr Gerard Mongan (11th)
- All Priests (12th)
- All Priests (13th)
- All Priests (14th)
- All Priests (15th)
- All Priests (16th)
- All Priests (17th)
- Fr Sean O'Donnell (18th)
- All Priests (19th)
- All Priests (20th)
- Fr Colm O'Doherty (21st)
- Fr Kieran O'Doherty (22nd)
- All Priests (23rd)
- Fr Francis P O'Hagan (24th)
- Fr Patrick O'Hagan (25th)
- Fr David O'Kane (26th)
- All Priests (27th)
- Fr Peter O'Kane (28th)
- All priests (29th)
- Fr Arthur O'Reilly (30th)

Celebrating Divine Mercy Sunday in St Mary's Creggan, Bishop Donal spoke of how...

Divine Mercy requires outreach as well as reaching into our own hearts

THE Feast of Divine Mercy, on the first Sunday after Easter Sunday, was celebrated with special 3 pm ceremonies in a number of parishes across the Diocese, including St Mary's Creggan, where Bishop Donal spoke on the theme of Mercy.

While this second Sunday in Easter time was declared as Divine Mercy Sunday by Pope John Paul II, when he canonised St Faustina Kowalska on April 30, 2000, Bishop Donal pointed out that "the entire of mission of Jesus was always directed at bringing mercy where it was most needed."

"Just look at His teachings and how He responded to people in need," he stated, adding: "The revelations to Sr Faustina may be very relevant in our merciless culture, but mercy has always been at the heart of the Resurrection message."

Reflecting on the readings of the day, including the account of Jesus meeting the disciples on the day of the Resurrection, the Bishop remarked: "These are the disciples who had abandoned Him on Good Friday, and include Peter who had denied that he even knew Jesus. We all know what it is like to meet someone in an embarrassing situation. But Jesus puts their minds at rest. Jesus meets us where we are. He understands what is going on in our hearts - our hopes and disappointments, our life with the plans that are fickle and the problems that do not go away. But He meets us with the same words that He uses to the frightened disciples - peace be with you."

"He then tells them to go out and to offer forgiveness. They might have thought that they were ill equipped to do that, since they had betrayed him. But the message of Jesus is that we all need mercy, and

that only those who have known mercy in their own lives can have merciful hearts for others in their distress.

"Jesus knew too many religious leaders in His own time who loved to see their own merits and to condemn others. Jesus wants followers who know they are forgiven sinners and who can reach out with that peace to others who find it hard to forgive themselves. Divine Mercy Sunday invites us to know where we have experienced the peace of mercy in our own lives, and to believe that we are called to spread it in a harsh world where many people are hurting and crying out to hear the words of Jesus, 'peace be with you.'"

Commenting on how the "free gift of mercy is communicated to doubting Thomas by a personal encounter", Bishop Donal said: "Jesus knows the doubts that lie in Thomas' heart, and He addresses them personally. Belief in who Jesus is follows on from the experience of mercy, and not because of an outburst of divine anger or a reprimand."

He went on to highlight that the Gospel passage showed that there is also a structured approach to celebrating forgiveness, saying: "The disciples are given the gift of the Holy Spirit so that they can celebrate forgiveness in Jesus' name and with hearts full of divine mercy."

"The prayers of the Church are full of references to forgiveness. We begin Mass with the penitential Rite, and before Holy Communion we pray to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The Night Prayer of the Church begins with calling to mind the failings and the graces of the day that is coming to an end. But, over the centuries, the Church has also developed the Sacrament of Reconciliation as the

place where we can all name our sins.

"Thus, our faith journey is not a question of either personally asking for mercy or doing that in a sacramental context. Our Church practice emphasises both. In an age which is full of talking therapies, where we acknowledge and name the dark sides of our lives, it would be a crazy idea to say that the Sacrament of Reconciliation was out of date."

Confessions

"Parishes without merciful hearts and without regular access to personal confessions are letting their people down," stated Bishop Donal, adding: "Those places which offer ample access to this sacrament, know that their ministry is desperately needed. Those places that try to reach out to young people know that many of them are desperately seeking places where they can deal with pressures and mistakes of a very confused society."

Pointing out that one of the characteristics of the Early Church was the sense of community, he commented: "A sense of belonging is not just the context where faith is handed on; community is part of the content of our faith. As we gather around the altar, we share in the one Body of Christ. Therefore, we are constantly challenged by the call to be a community that welcomes. That includes being conscious of where we are divided by man-made barriers, and where we need forgiveness for being unwelcoming or protective of our little comfort zone."

"Do we greet the unfamiliar face that we have never seen before? Do we look beyond our circle of friends and greet those who may come from a different racial or

social background? Do visitors sense a smile that says, 'peace be with you, whoever you are'? Our personal relationship with Jesus does not allow us to be excessively private about our faith. Divine mercy requires outreach as well as reaching into our own hearts."

Remarking that the Scripture readings "show that divine mercy is not just a nice theoretical concept or devotion", Bishop Donal added: "It is experienced in the concrete circumstances of our lives. The disciples come to know it in their confusion and sense of having betrayed Jesus."

"The Sacrament of Reconciliation is based on the human experience that we need to both name our faults and hear the mercy of God proclaimed on the specific circumstances of our lives. And we are told that parishes that are communities of mercy are signs of where divine mercy is lived in word and in deed. Doubting Thomas meets the Risen Jesus, who bears the signs of His pierced hand and side, in His wounds which are real, but which have ceased to bleed. Mercy touches our wounds, recognising them but knowing that, because of the Resurrection, they can be places of grace and not merely of disgrace."

He concluded: "Therefore, all our synodal conversations are not merely about tinkering with structures or teachings, but about how we can take seriously the merciful Jesus and proclaim that He is alive and active in our scarred communities. We have not always been good at this in the past. But Jesus still says to us, receive the Holy Spirit. We have to decide whether we really want to receive that uncomfortable merciful Spirit!"

Creggan



Carnhill



Claudy



The Parish Children's Rosary Group closed the Divine Mercy ceremony in St Patrick's Church, Claudy, by taking turns to lead those gathered in praying the Rosary.



Buncrana



Maghera



Killyclogher



Sharing a special story about the old oak cross venerated in Camus Parish on Good Friday, Paul Madden reflects on his life and faith journey which has taught him...

No pain is as great as what the Lord suffered for us

THE Good Friday Veneration of the Cross had a touch of nostalgia for some Camus parishioners this year, when their parish priest, Fr Declan Boland presented an old oak cross that had once hung in the Strabane Sisters of Mercy Convent.

Gifted to Fr Declan by the recently deceased Sr Carmel Fanning, a former Reverend Mother in the Convent and teacher for many years in the Convent Primary School, the century-old Cross is cherished by him and he felt it fitting to use it for the Veneration on Good Friday in memory of Sr Carmel.

However, with the arm of the figure of Christ on the Cross having broken in a fall, and a finger and thumb having come away, he set about getting it repaired and knew instantly the man for the job... parishioner, Paul Madden, whose interest and talent in restoring religious objects has been bringing joy to many these last few years.

"Paul is an amazing man," remarked Fr Declan, "the love of God and the Holy Spirit just leap out of his heart. He is a great parishioner and daily Mass goer. All he wants to do is to spread the Word of God. Nothing is a bother to him and he asks nothing in return, saying that he gets more out of seeing the joy on people's faces."

"He made crosses for the children who came along to our early morning Lenten Masses with their parents, with a pink tinge in the crosses for the girls and a blue tinge for the boys' crosses. He told me that mix for the mould for these beautiful crosses included water from Medjugorje, Knock, Fatima, Lourdes and from Our Lady's Well in Nazareth, plus all the holy wells in Ireland. And he also embedded in the back of these crosses, pieces of the old slates that had been taken off the chapel roof when we were putting on the new roof."

Fr Declan went on to share a special story about one of the crosses gifted to the children: "It so happened that the grandfather of one of the children died on the night she received the cross, and what was hanging above his bed as he died but that cross."

As for Paul's work on the old Convent Cross, Fr Declan said: "When I asked him about repairing the old cross he did so to perfection. He took such an interest in restoring it, and puts great love, dedication and precision into his work. I was delighted with the result."

"The cross has a great association with the Parish and is special to me because it was gifted to me. The Immaculate Conception Church was opened in 1895 and the Convent preceded that, so it is quite an old cross. From its large size, I imagine it would have hung at the end of one of the long corridors in the old convent."

Working on the old Cross was not only a labour of love for Paul but also a blessing. Recalling Fr Declan

mentioning to him after Mass one morning that he had an old cross in need of fixing, which he hoped to use for the Veneration of the Cross on Good Friday, Paul said: "I thought it was a small cross, but when I called up to the Parochial House to see it, I was surprised to see that it was about four feet tall. A beautiful oak cross, from which the figure of Christ had become detached, I could see from the carvings that it was old. Fr Declan told me that it was about 150 years old and that it had come out of the Convent of Mercy Sisters."

Prayed

"One of the hands, some fingers and an arm were broken off the figure. I took it thinking, what am I going to do with it! I prayed over it for four or five hours, as I didn't know where to start. I can't describe the feeling...the power from it."

"It brought back to my mind all the orphans who had lived at the Convent. Many times in my childhood, I was with my Granny Ita and her sister, Katie, when they were passing the orphans' plot and they would always stop to pull any weeds out. They attended the Convent school, but appreciated that they were able to go home after the school day was over. There are 23 orphans in that plot and I couldn't help thinking that they would have viewed that old cross during their time in the Convent."

He added: "I put the cross under my bed for safe keeping during visits from my four grandchildren, who are aged 18 months up to nine years, until I felt ready to work on it. One Saturday night, I got it out and had lifted the wee finger that Fr Boland had given me to fix, but I dropped it on the tiled floor. I searched and searched for it, but couldn't find it. I made new fingers out of a two-part putty called Milliput, which sets like steel in about 20-30 minutes, and you can't do anything with it once it sets."

"It was the only stuff that I could work with for the job, and it was left-over from fixing a finger on St Anthony's statue in Immaculate Conception Church too, and making three fingers that were missing from the big statue of St Columba in Ards chapel, which the monks asked me to fix. I also used it to replace the missing nails in Christ's hands on the old Cross. I just had the right amount left in the packet."

Having finished work on the cross for Fr Declan, leaving the wood untouched so as not to lose its aged look, Paul said that part of him was hoping that he could keep it: "I didn't want to part from it, as I felt such a power coming from it."

He went on to recall fixing a hand on the Sacred Heart statue and a finger on the St Anthony statue in Melmount Chapel as well, saying that he felt privileged to be able to do this.

Paul's Lenten journey this year



also led to him making St Anthony of Egypt Tau Crosses for a number of young people he had noticed attending the morning Masses.

"Every morning during Lent," he said, "I went to the 7 am Mass in Immaculate Conception Church and noticed that there were some children there too. I counted 14 of them and I wanted to give them a wee gift, so I made 14 St Anthony of Egypt Tau Crosses, featuring the Holy Family and using pieces of the slates that had been on the chapel roof from 1895 and taken off during the renovation in 2020. Five generations of my family had been baptised under that slate roof, so I wasn't going to let those slates go to the landfill and I salvaged them."

"I took the crosses with me for the children at the last Wednesday morning Mass of Lent, and there were 15 of them! So, I have since made another Cross for the child who didn't get one that morning."

Artistically talented, Paul began using his gift for the Church, in praise of God, following a major turning point in his life that came about after joining Cursillo in 2017. Saying that before his Cursillo weekend he hadn't been practising the Catholic faith he had been raised with as a child, the 57-year-old went on to share the story of his gradual conversion.

Cursillo

Involved in the funeral Mass for a friend of his who had died by suicide, Paul recalled: "I heard things about my friend that day that I hadn't known; like that he had done Cursillo. I didn't even know what that was. My cousin explained a bit about it, but wouldn't answer all my questions. He just told me that there was a Cursillo weekend coming up if I wanted to go and find out for myself, but I had no intention of going."

"Shortly after that, I was travelling in the car with my mother, Theresa. We were on our way back from a hospital appointment in Belfast about my leg, when my cousin phoned to tell me that the Cursillo weekend was starting that night and asked me if I was going. We chatted about it but when I hung up I had no intention of going on the Cursillo weekend. My mother had overheard the conversation and encouraged me to go. I had got good news about my leg that day and it was also the 51st anniversary of my brother, John Anthony's death, so by the time I got back

home to Strabane I had decided that I would go on the weekend. I suppose, the timing was right."

Paul had one of his legs amputated back in 1988, when he received a compound fracture during an incident when he was 21 years old, and gangrene set in.

Recalling the experience, he said: "The pain in my leg was so bad that I was begging for more injections of morphine from the nurses, but it could be administered only so often. When my leg was eventually taken off, I had no pain and my relief was so great that I was actually smiling. I will never forget that pain. I wouldn't wish it on anybody, but when I look back now I see it as a blessing in my life."

"My leg was removed 35 years ago, and if I ever feel sorry for myself I think of the pain I suffered with the gangrene. I prayed a lot during that time but, even though Mother Mary had intervened for me, I lost my way again. They were dark years of the soul and I was definitely hell bound."

He continued: "The turning point was my Cursillo weekend. I can't describe it. It came just at the perfect time in my life. I look on it as a God-incidence. When I look back, I can see the jig-saw being put together and I know exactly who is in charge."

"The weekend made me face up to things in my life. Afterwards, I went back to the Wednesday friendship nights, but it was a slow process. I had a long way to go. It was the night of October 10, 2019, that I came to full trust in the Lord. He didn't talk to me or appear to me, He just put it on my heart that He was there for me. Short of me seeing Him standing in front of me, I felt His strong presence. I just knew that He was there and what I had to do; I had to put my full trust in Him. I had ignored lots of small signs up to that, but I hit a turning point that night."

"The next morning, my whole life was turned around. I walked away from a situation that I didn't think I could, but it was only through the power of the Lord and having full trust in Him. I thank God every day for that."

"No matter if things are bad or good, I thank the Lord," said Paul, "because it's His plan and nobody will convince me otherwise. I just focus on the cross, because no pain is as great as what the Lord suffered for us."



The Divine Mercy Image explained...

The inscription: "Jesus I Trust in You!"

(Part 2) by Sr Benedetta Hutnikiewicz ZSJM

"Trust works miracles because it has God's omnipotence at its service." (Bl. Michael Sopoćko)

LAST month, I talked about trust and its role in our spiritual lives. Now, I want to further develop the topic and tell you a bit about trust in the thought of Bl Michael Sopoćko, St Faustina's confessor and spiritual director.

I am well aware that Bl Michael is not a very well-known figure in Ireland. And yet, without his wisdom and direction we would know nothing about St Faustina; we wouldn't have the Divine Mercy Image either. It would also be very unlikely that we would have such a devotion to Divine Mercy as we have in our times, spread throughout different places around the world. Fr Michael was not only a visible help for St Faustina, he is also indispensable to understanding the whole devotion to Divine Mercy.

Sr Faustina often told Jesus that she could not fulfil His desires. She felt that she was too small and insignificant to carry out His wishes. She said that she felt that she was wasting His graces and asked that Jesus take them and give them to someone else, someone who would be able to fulfil His orders. Instead of taking away these graces, Jesus promised Sr Faustina to give her help. This visible help for her was Fr Michael Sopoćko.

These are the Saint's own words: "But the goodness of Jesus is infinite; He had promised me visible help here on earth, and a little while later I received it in Vilnius, in the person of Fr Sopoćko. I had already known him before coming to Vilnius,

“ Blessed Michael wrote a lot about Mercy, therefore also trust has a prominent place in his writings. Trust is, as Fr Sopoćko writes, expecting somebody's help. It is expecting to achieve something because we are sure of the help of others. Trust in God is the guarantee of a good and happy life.

” thanks to an interior vision. One day I saw him in our chapel between the altar and the confessional and suddenly heard

a voice in my soul say: "This is the visible help for you on earth. He will help you carry out My will on earth." (Diary, 53)

Fr Michael first met Sr Faustina in 1933, while he was serving as confessor to the community of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy. This meeting was very important both for Sr Faustina and Fr Sopoćko. He wrote: "There are truths that you know and often hear and talk about, but you don't understand. So it was with me as to the truth of God's mercy. I mentioned this truth so many times in sermons, I thought about it during retreats, I repeated it in church prayers - especially in the psalms - but I did not understand the meaning of this truth, nor did I go into the depth of its content: that it is the highest attribute of God's outside activity. It was therefore necessary to have a simple nun, Sr Faustina, from the Congregation of the Protection of the Mother of God (Magdalenas), who told me about it briefly lead by intuition; she repeated it often, stimulating me to do research, study and think about this truth often."

After meeting the future Saint, Fr Michael was aflame with the idea of mercy; since then the main purpose of his life was to proclaim mercy. He gave theological foundations to the devotion by spending long hours in research; reading the Church Fathers and the Saints, diving into Scripture. He wanted to show that Divine Mercy doesn't come from the revelations Sr Faustina had, but rather is a truth present in the Bible and teaching of the Church from its very beginning. He recognised in it a truth well known in the Church, but requiring a bit of refreshing.

Blessed Michael wrote a lot about Mercy, therefore also trust has a prominent place in his writings. Trust is, as Fr Sopoćko writes, expecting somebody's help. It is expecting to achieve something because we are sure of the help of others. Trust in God is the guarantee of a good and happy life.

Fr Michael compares trust to an anchor: "Often a soul - like a ship at sea during a storm - loses everything that is its strength, beauty and value: the mast of faith can be shattered, the rudder of love broken, and all good deeds it possessed become a prey to the waves; the ship seems to be in danger of final wreckage... But the soul is not lost if it catches on the anchor of trust in God's all-powerful mercy."

Trust lies in the fact that more than himself, his reason, riches, ideas, etc, man believes God.



This attitude is associated with the rejection of pride, understood as a conviction that one can do everything best, all by himself.

“ Blessed Michael saw that due to human weakness, our trust is imperfect. However, thanks to God's grace it can become supernatural, strong, persistent, complete, pure, unwavering, and boundless. Our trust should be childlike - relying solely on God Himself, as a child relies on its parents.

” “To believe” in the Bible, means to believe God (trust in Him, build one's life on Him), rather than believe in some truth about Him.

Supernatural trust is the correct answer to God's goodness, love and Mercy.

God does not deny His grace to anyone. All we have to do is turn to Him with confidence and humility, and then God reveals His unfathomable Mercy. The only obstacle that limits the gift of Divine Mercy is a lack of good will; closing oneself up, rejecting God because of a sense of self-sufficiency. This lack of trust often comes from a false and misunderstood image of God. It makes it difficult for God's grace to penetrate a human soul. The message of God's revelation, especially the Incarnation, encourages and stimulates boundless trust in His Mercy.

Supernatural

Supernatural trust is a tribute to God's Mercy. A man expecting God's help recognizes Him as good, omnipotent and ready to show him that help. Blessed Michael writes that Christ performed miracles to strengthen faith and trust in His disciples. Great examples of such miracles are the calming of the storm and walking on water. Once, when the

disciples and Jesus were crossing the lake, a storm broke out. Jesus was fast asleep. The terrified disciples began to call and ask Jesus for help. Then Christ calmed down the storm and said to His disciples: "Why are you fearful, of little faith" (Mt 8:24). Christ wanted to awaken in the Apostles trust and faith in His power. He wanted to show His power and Mercy to strengthen them for the future. He knew about the difficulties and persecution that awaited the Apostles. Jesus rebuked His disciples for lack of trust and emphasized that He always watches over every person and is always ready to help. Jesus is not sleeping, Jesus is ever awake.

The miracle of walking on water has a similar meaning. Christ told His disciples to cross over the lake to Capernaum and went to pray on His own. As the disciples were fighting against a storm during the night in the boat, suddenly, at dawn, they saw a man walking towards them. They were horrified because they thought it was a ghost. Then Jesus said, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." (Mt 14:27). Peter, wanting to make sure that it is really the Lord, asked to be able to come over to Him. Jesus commanded Peter to come to Himself. Peter started walking, but after a while he became afraid and began to sink. So he called out to Jesus for help. Jesus gave him His hand and said words full of sadness and regret, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Mt 14:31). This event shows how important trust in God is. Unwavering faith and trust are the foundations on which Christ wants to build His Church.

“ Our trust should go hand in hand with the virtue of fear of the Lord. Fr Sopoćko compares it to a sailing ship: trust is like the wind blowing into the sails, the fear of the Lord is like the load that keeps the ship submerged in water. Without trust, we can easily fall into despair, and without fear, into presumption.

” Blessed Michael saw that due to human weakness, our trust is imperfect. However, thanks to God's grace it can become supernatural, strong, persistent,

complete, pure, unwavering, and boundless. Our trust should be childlike - relying solely on God Himself, as a child relies on its parents. It should know no limits. Our trust should go hand in hand with the virtue of fear of the Lord. Fr Sopoćko compares it to a sailing ship: trust is like the wind blowing into the sails, the fear of the Lord is like the load that keeps the ship submerged in water. Without trust, we can easily fall into despair, and without fear, into presumption.

“Whoever trusts God, will never be disappointed”, Fr Michael wrote.

What then are the effects of trust in our lives? According to Blessed Michael, it brings many favours and even works miracles (see quote at the beginning of the article). It protects against the attacks of hell; it is a defence during a time of temptation. Trust brings joy. It defends us from our vices, especially selfishness, laziness, discouragement, and sluggishness. It is the cause of spiritual growth. It gives bravery, strength, and peace. Trust allows us not to give in to fear and anxiety; gives comfort in the suffering and hardships of life. It provides the protection of the Saviour; is a special source of comfort for one who is dying. Finally, it brings a promise of reward after death.

Fr Sopoćko is very down to earth. He writes: "Jesus, I trust in You" does not automatically mean that we will avoid unpleasant events or that suffering will be taken away from us. However, thanks to relying on Christ, we will receive the power thanks to which we will be able to bravely face the difficulties and repeat after St Paul: 'I can do all things through him who strengthens me'."

I wish to leave you with a very special prayer by Bl Michael Sopoćko. May it become a source of inspiration for your own prayer:

"Holy Spirit, give me the grace of unwavering trust when I think of Our Lord's merits and of fearful trust when I think of my own weakness. When poverty comes knocking at my door: Jesus, I Trust in You. When sickness lays me low, or injury cripples me: Jesus, I Trust in You. When the world pushes me aside, and pursues me with its hatred: Jesus, I Trust in You. When I am besmirched by calumny, and pierced through by bitterness: Jesus, I Trust in You. When my friends abandon me, and wound me by word and deed: Jesus, I Trust in You. Spirit of love and Mercy, be to me a refuge, a sweet consolation, a blessed hope, that in all the most trying circumstances of my life I may never cease to trust in You."

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

The Four Marks of the Church: A Series

SOMETIMES repetition, or even complacency, causes us to miss important aspects of our faith. When responding at Mass, we can become so used to rattling off the appropriate responses that we can become desensitized to what we are actually saying and its underlying meaning.

Every Sunday, following the homily, we recite the Nicene Creed - a statement of belief developed by the Early Church Fathers (early bishops) during the ecumenical councils of Nicaea (325 AD) and Constantinople (381 AD) to combat heresy. The text of this prayer includes the words "I believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church." While perhaps a small statement, it is key to salvation because this is the means which Christ provided us to enter Heaven - through His Church.

We know that Christ is God, who founded His Church and promised it would endure until the end of time. He gave specific qualities to this Church so that it could be easily identified, namely those we list in the Creed: one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. Of all the Churches that exist, the Catholic Church is the only one that possesses all these qualities. Thus, we are faced with a serious moral choice: we must enter this Church through baptism and live according to its teachings, because this is the instrument through which Christ provides His grace for us to be saved.

In the next four articles, we will summarize each of these marks to better understand the words we are reciting, and to recognize that the precious faith we have been given is the one that will guide us on the most direct path to Heaven.

The Church is One

Perhaps, at times, it is difficult to recognize that the Church is one. Consider the Great Schism of 1054, which separated the East and the West, or the Protestant Reformation in the 1500s, which tore the Church apart. Still today, there are many different people with differing opinions even concerning Church teaching.

How can there be unity when there seems to be so much polarity among the faithful, and even the hierarchy; particularly with the way social media and other sources present Church news.

Fortunately, as with any of the four marks, the oneness or unity of the Church does not rely on human ability, but rather through establishment by Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. If God is steering the ship, there is no need to fear!

Jesus expresses this unity as a foundation of the Church during His Last Supper discourse, from John 17. While this text is often confounding due to its many pronouns, He emphasizes the oneness of the Father and the Son, which translates to His desired

oneness for His Church. The Father and Son are united by being of the same divine nature, and so, He desires too that His Church might share in this divine life, as well.

Further, we can see that Christ compares His Church to a unified body. In His "Judgment of the Nations" discourse from Matthew 25, we can see that how we treat others, is how we treat Christ; this implies that all those united to Him are affected by the actions of others. In the Conversion of Saul found in Acts 9, we know that Saul is a great persecutor of Christians. When Jesus questions Saul, He states, "Why do you persecute me?" In this way, Jesus is recognizing that those Christians who suffered under Saul were united to Him in a unique way.

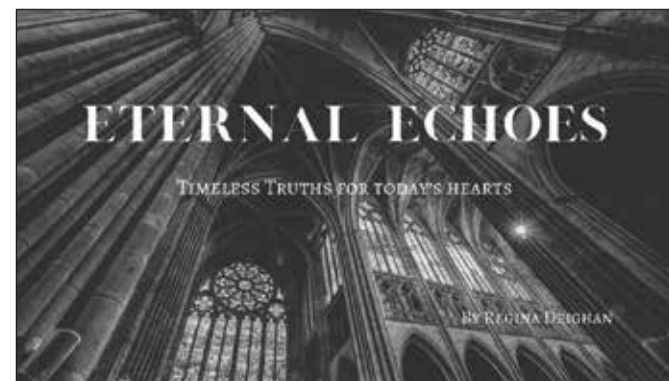
As Jesus establishes His Church, as recounted in the Gospels, we can also notice that Christ's Church is united in three ways: through leadership, teaching, and worship. Each of these are related to the three-fold offices of Christ - priest, prophet, and king. Jesus establishes the Twelve Apostles as His successors in His mission, the leaders of His Church. This role is fulfilled by our bishops today. His Kingdom is not divided, but rather led by the successors of the Apostles with the successor of Peter (pope) as the head among equals. In this way, all Catholics are united under the jurisdiction of the bishops, who work in union with the pope, and

are subject to the ultimate authority of Christ, who is Head of the Body (cf. Col 1:18).

The Church is also united in teaching and belief. In the Great Commission (cf. Mt 28), Jesus gives the command to the Apostles to "teach all I have commanded." Thus, the dogmas of our faith come directly from Christ to His Apostles and are handed down through the bishops, under the protection of the Holy Spirit. There is no need to debate what Christ taught if we trust in the authority given to the Apostles, as well as the divine guidance of the Holy Spirit.

We have an obligation to uphold and live by these teachings because they come from Christ, who is God, and passed through the authority of His successors (this is what we refer to as the Magisterium, or sacred teaching office of the Church). We can rely on the Tradition of the Church, as well, because of that same authority. Not only does the Church possess the richness of Scripture, but also Sacred Tradition, since it comes to us from the Apostles and early bishops.

Finally, the Church is united in worship. The sacraments, most especially the Eucharist, were established by Christ and are opportunities for the members of the Church to grow in grace. These seven saving and sanctifying mysteries, direct encounters with Christ and His divine life, are preserved and administered



through the leadership that Christ established for His Church and are essential for entry into Heaven.

Consistent

The sacramental life of the Church remains consistent, even while some specific ritual differences might be noted among the different liturgical families of the Church (eg, the Roman Rite, the Byzantine Rite, etc.). This is particularly true with the celebration of the Novus Ordo, and the ability for more flexibility and personal choice in the liturgy. Despite this, however, the heart of worship and the sacrifice of Christ made present to us remains, regardless of rite or form of Mass.

In examining other major Christian Churches, we can see there is a lack of unity. Consider the over 44,000 Protestant denominations that all teach a slightly different faith from their other Protestant neighbours down the street. Or even our Orthodox brothers and sisters, who possess most of the marks but lack proper unity with the Bishop of Rome, the Pope. The Catholic Church is the only Church that is able to claim this unity according to the way that Christ established it.

What does this mean for us? It means we have a very serious obligation to live out our membership in the Church. If Christ is God and has all authority, and then gives this authority to the Apostles through the ministry of His Church, all people have an obligation to follow it because it comes directly from Almighty God.

For those of us that are already baptized, we must faithfully adhere to the teachings of the Church that have been passed through the leadership of the Church and participate wholeheartedly in the rich sacramental life of the Church. Ultimately, we must remember that we are united for a common purpose: to glorify God; to work for the salvation of souls; and to reach Heaven.

Jesus gave us the gift of this beautiful Church body as a way for us to be with Him in Heaven someday. Let us cling to our oneness, to our Tradition, and dive more deeply into the grace He offers, knowing that it is truly a gift from the Lord.

Second-level education in Derry Diocese by Dr Seán Beattie



Carn College 1960. Seated centre: Fr McKenna; Fr O'Reilly; and Fr Campbell.

THE history of secondary education among Catholics in the Diocese of Derry has been dominated by two establishments: the Convent of Mercy, Thornhill, for girls, and St Columb's College for boys. In the case of the latter, it has been the primary education path for students who wished to study for the priesthood, but it has also played a key role in the education of prominent laymen, among whom Seamus Heaney, Brian Friel, and John Hume have become household names. Much of the credit for the building of St Columb's College must go to Bishop Kelly (1849-1889), who

purchased a site known as the 'Casino' for £10,000.

For the greater part of the twentieth century, two different systems have operated in the Diocese. On the one hand, a selective system, which has included the Eleven Plus examination, has been a dominant force in Northern Ireland. By contrast, across the border in Donegal, a non-selective system was in operation. Perhaps one of the few elements they had in common were the Shakespearean plays, which were studied by students on both sides of the divide.

In my own case, I have always felt that I had an insight into the pros and cons of both systems, as I have served as a teacher in two different jurisdictions. Looking back over the last 50 years has been more than a trip down memory lane. This month, therefore, I would like to share my experiences of working as a teacher at second-level, and hopefully offer my perspective on some aspects of the education sector in the Republic.

Rev Kevin McKenna, Principal

Rev Kevin McKenna, a native of Moneyneena, Co Derry, was appointed the first Principal of Carndonagh College. He served for three years before Rev Art O'Reilly replaced him. Fr McKenna returned as Principal in 1971 and remained in this post until 1973, during which time he managed to oversee the amalgamation of the College with the Convent Secondary School and the Vocational School to form Carndonagh Community School (CCS).

I joined the staff of Carndonagh College in 1971 and taught there over the next two years. There were four priests on the staff. My induction to the teaching profession had already taken place in St Joseph's Secondary School in

Creggan, Derry, and in the City of Dublin Vocational School in Ballyfermot. The change from working in large urban schools to a small rural college was welcome. In Derry, text books were supplied free to students but this was not the case in the Republic.

The Colgan Hall

All classes were held in the Colgan Hall at this time. Facilities were basic: a blackboard; duster; chalk; and desks. Among the students in Fr Jack Gallagher's English class was a Buncrana pupil called Frank McGuinness, now one of Ireland's leading playwrights. As Latin was still a requirement for the National University colleges, Fr McKenna took classes in Latin.

The Colgan Hall has been involved in education since 1919, and the ground floor was originally designed with educational facilities in mind. There was a large science classroom, which was identical in style and layout to its counterpart in St Columb's College. Next door, there was a small library, which consisted of a single shelf of books. Most of them had been culled from priests' collections in the Diocese and included some gems, such as Colgan's 'Acta Sanctorum Hiberniae' and the 'Annals of the Four Masters', to name but two.

As a new Principal, Fr McKenna saw himself as a new broom and he made many small but important changes in the college which improved conditions for staff and students. He invited me to start a school magazine. We had it published by the following Christmas. Looking back at the first edition of 'Inisdúinn' from 1971, I am surprised at the quality of the writing and the beauty of some of the poetry.

A School Magazine

In Fr McKenna's former school in Maghera, Co Derry, the school magazine always contained class photos and he thought this would be a good idea. It certainly was and the photos taken from 1971 onwards for the school magazine are a fantastic legacy of earlier days. Thus, every issue of the magazine recorded photos of every class in the school, apart from a gap in publication in the late 1980s. 'Inisdúinn' is still being published. Former students can view the full collection of photos on display in one of the corridors. It can be a challenging experience trying to identify former classmates disguised under massive hairstyles and dressed in a bizarre range of 'uniforms'.

Pioneers in Education in the Diocese

While many regretted the closure of the old schools, we were pioneers in a great new experiment in Irish education and opened one of the first ten landmark community schools in the country in 1973.

On that first September morning, Fr McKenna and Jim A McDonough, Vice-Principal, welcomed staff and students as they passed through the gates to become the first students of CCS.

It was my first day in CCS also and, in total, I was destined to spend over 32 years as a permanent, full-time teacher and guidance counsellor in the town. I also served for seven years as one of the first teacher representatives on the Board of Management. The school would become the largest in the Republic in due course, with 1,700 students.

In April 2024, CCS held a weekend of celebrations to mark its 50th anniversary. Among those in attendance was Msgr Andy Dolan, who joined the staff as Chaplain in 1973 and served for 12 years. It has been a privilege to have served in schools on both sides of the Border in the Derry Diocese.

Surprised by Joy by Fr John McLaughlin ssc

THERE is probably by now a whole generation to whom that title would not evoke even a raising of the eyebrows, and that seems a pity to me. C S Lewis was writing about the love of his life in the American-born wife of his later life, and the moments of love and joy and sorrow that they shared together, before her early death.

Anthony Hopkins took the role of Lewis in the film 'Shadowlands', as I recall with some wonder. From the days of reading his books like 'Mere Christianity', the 'Screwtop Letters', the 'Problem of Pain', and others, I was a converted and zealous fan. There was a sense of optimism, challenge and spiritual satisfaction about him that attracted me and drove me to read what I found of him on the shelves, long before the days of Internet and Kindle and Amazon. They marked for me a point where I could appreciate that religion could indeed be about Joy, fulfilled manhood and challenge.

These sentences from Lewis - "If you enjoy it...then it must be wrong!", "She went about doing good for others...you could recognise the others, by the haunted look in their eyes..." - never left the list of my prized quotes.

In so much of the writing on the life of the Catholic Christian, the element of personal and shared joy is sometimes a guilt bearer, or a turn-off topic. Even today!

This article started to come to a head for me in recent weeks, as we celebrated 'Laetare Sunday'. There, once again, comes the question: Why Laetare Sunday during the abstinence and hard reflection of Lent? Every year, especially since moving in to retirement and few pastoral obligations, the answer takes a different form, as should be the case, when dealing with the mysteries of religion, which continue to remain spaces where we are 'with-in' and 'with-out', at different moments.

In one of those other and active years, I can recall on a Sunday like that producing for the young community on the News Sheet, a list of 50 or so Reasons for Joy, and having an interesting dialogue during the Mass on where and on what number would anyone of them settle for their joy...I leave here the texts in the original language, which you can guess pretty easily, for the realism they contain...

CUARENTA Y CINCO PEQUEÑAS ALEGRÍAS

1. Enamorarte.
2. Reírte hasta que duelan las mandíbulas o la pancita.
3. Recibir e-mails.
4. Escuchar tu canción favorita en la radio.
5. Acostarte en tu cama y escuchar cómo llueve afuera, golpeando los cristales.
6. Salir de la ducha y que la toalla esté calentita.
7. Aprobar un examen final

8. Recibir una llamada de larga distancia.
9. Tener una breve y jugosa conversación.
10. Encontrarte dinero en una chamarra que no usaba desde el invierno pasado.
11. Reírte de ti mismo.
12. Encontrarte triste y recibir la llamada de la persona que quieres.
13. Llamadas a medianoche que duran horas.
14. Reírte sin motivo.
15. Tener a alguien que te diga que eres linda, que eres guapo.
16. Reírte de un chiste interno.
17. Enamorarte y saber que nos es por primera vez, pero hoy sí estás enamorado.
18. Escuchar accidentalmente que alguien dice algo bueno de ti.
19. Despertarte y darte cuenta, al ver el reloj, que todavía puedes dormir un par de horas más.
20. Escuchar la canción que te hace recordar a esa persona especial.
21. Ser y formar parte de un equipo.
22. El primer beso.
23. Hacer nuevos amigos.
24. Asistir a una buena película.
25. Sentir a un buen concierto.
26. Sentir cosquillas en el estomago cada vez que ves a esa persona.
27. Ganar un juego, ganar un torneo.
28. Pasar un buen rato con tus mejores amigos y amigas.
29. Recordar la sensación que tuviste la primera vez que subiste a un escenario o hablaste en público.
30. Pasar una noche entera sin pegar ojo y de fiesta.
31. Darle la mano o abrazar a una persona a la que quieres.
32. Usar la cazadora de la persona que te gusta y que todavía huele a su perfume.
33. Volver a ver a un viejo amigo y sentir que la relación no ha cambiado.
34. Ver felices a las personas que amas, a la que quieres.
35. Descubrir que el amor es incondicional.
36. La cara de alegría de alguien cuando le haces un regalo que le gusta.
37. Contemplar un atardecer.
38. Sentarse junto al mar y ver cómo se traga al sol.
39. Hacer sonreír a alguien.
40. Conseguir que un niño pequeño se ría.
41. Escuchar que alguien te dice Te quiero.
42. Cortar unas margaritas frescas del campo.
43. Sudar subiendo una montaña y en la cumbre de camiseta.
44. Tomarse una naranja en el descenso de una marcha.
45. Beber agua fresca en un día caluroso y camino de Santiago etc

Litanies of Loreto

Discovering, once again, recently the 'Litanies of Loreto', of Jesus and others, I have the feeling that we have let slip another gateway to Joy



Marian celebration.



Month of Mary procession on December 8

in our prayer lives. Certainly, as we prayed 'Loreto' with the small Legion of Mary group here, I had that sensation coming from those people. 'Cause of our Joy' is one of many rich phrases that can once more be evoked. Cause of my Joy... in so many moments: the Rosary in private or in community during the Month of Mary devotions, often held in the street or lay-bys where people drifted in and out; the end of the Month procession on the Feast of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception; my own visits to the National Shrines of Our Lady in Guadalupe in Mexico, in Bolivia and Paraguay, and to Knock and, only in recent times, to Lourdes. Cause of much personal and community Joy, worthy of another and long article!

On the occasion of an end-of-the-year Vigil here, on the final day of the year, I led a short Litany of Advent which I had translated from the Spanish of one of my fellow Columbans, and one person remarked that she had "got a lot out of the vigil".

So why is it that Christian Joy seems to be in such short supply, or offer, in the life of the Church today?

Pope Francis, in one of his Wednesday reflections on the virtues and vices, recently referred to one condition that leaves Joy very much on the outside. I had come across the same comment years ago from a fellow Jesuit, Cardinal Martini of Milan, who

appeared entirely useless to them," the Pope observed to the faithful gathered in the Paul VI Audience Hall.

'Tis difficult to see Christian Joy entering the heart of people languishing in that condition.

There is another condition that seems to be affecting people today and maybe away beyond my lifetime, which is known as 'The Culture of Entitlement'. Perhaps, I am only coming to discern in the autumn of my own life, where it has made some onslaughts too. I find it difficult to imagine how the sense of Christian gratuitous Joy can gain an entry there and this does bring its own sense of distress, as I regard the world around me and its many distractions and aberrations. Of course, any one of my generation will have recognised the "Spirit breathes where He will".

During the past Lent, I had been getting some materials from Jesuit sources. And I had the privilege of getting on to a couple of Webinars where those finer elements of 'Consolation', 'Desolation', 'Discernment', 'Agere Contra', etc, familiar from days with the Spiritual Exercises Month in Manresa and later with my Jesuit spiritual directors, like P Pepe Correa in Chile, and Fr Willie Reynolds, surfaced once more.

Another of the great writers in my life has been Marilyn Robinson, much-cited author of books like: 'Gilead'; 'Home'; 'Jack'; 'The Givenness of Things'; and, more recently, 'Creation in Genesis', which won't be an easy read when I get around to it. She is a believing and convincing Calvinist and challenging in all her novels and non-fiction works. For me, there is a deep sense of Christian Joy running through her commentaries and her novels, as I felt in the presence of the elderly pastor in 'Gilead' and his talks with a neighbouring minister. Try 'Gilead' for a start, if you want to dip in to her wisdom!

Eternal Happiness

St Thomas Aquinas, in his commentary on Eternal Happiness, talks of the moment when we enter into the Joy of the Lord and are swept up into that embracing joy. I have the piece stored away but just cannot unearth it at the moment. Too many nuggets and the Aladdin's Cave seems always to be just around the corner!

A couple of the songs I have been known to have sung recently might illustrate a little of my searching and yearning. There is one from St Louis Music of Folk-group days, based on Isaiah chapter 49: "I will never forget you my people, I have held you in the palm of my hand... Can a mother forget her baby...I will never forget my own." Even the very singing of it is a healing and an opening to Joy! By contrast there is the song of Gregory Porter on Loneliness: "Even our worst

days were better than loneliness... it's like water under the bridges that have already burned."

Through all my life, I have been aroused and enthused by sport: rugby; soccer; golf; Tennis etc. Those that must have served as a personal re-creation for me, at an ordinary level, have never brought any sense of acclaim or public achievement. In my days of 'serious' golf, one of my friends often remarked: "I always knew you had been playing well from the way you came out on the altar for evening Mass!" As the Americans say, for me they were great 'fun' moments and the fellowship was also 'a lot of fun', even while never hitting any lofty heights on the courses.

In that context, I was interested in the comment in the Irish Times of a few weeks ago...

"Sport has long been understood as a place where people channel a desire for religion in their lives, consciously or not. Christianity in the United States is declining at a rapid clip. Pew Research found in 2019 that the number of adults who described themselves as Christian fell by 12 per cent over a decade, while one quarter of the nation identify as essentially irreligious. Perhaps the Super Bowl is just evidence of cognitive displacement. It looked like a megachurch for a secular America: loud, rich, glitzy, with the star players worshipped like idols. In ancient Greece the Olympics began with a dedication to the pantheon of gods. The crowd on Sunday night seemed in reverence of something just as holy." (Finn Redmond, February 14)

Maybe it would sound like heresy to ask if there might be some of that adulation, endeavour and sacrifice found in sporting pursuits in Ireland, at amateur as well as a professional level, pitched at a higher ideal; and where a more enduring form might be found in the pursuit of Christian Joy - though always as a 'consequence' rather than an 'achievement', as a valid vocation? The much used term 'amazing' would have a real meaning there!

A seminal film in my life had the title 'Amadeus'; Ken Loach was the director, as I recall. He left me with the words put into the mouth of the plagiarist of Mozart, justifying his crime "I hate mediocrity!"

The Jesuit, Karl Rahner left my generation, or the survivors of it, with the observation which ran more or less "Christians of the twenty-first century will be mystics...or nothing at all." I was pleasantly surprised last night to come across a piece that he wrote in 1950, almost as a foretaste of what Pope Francis writes in Laudato Si. One sentence from that quoted article - "Christ is already at the very heart of all the lowly things of the earth that we are unable to let go of and that belong to the earth as mother. He is at the heart of the



Karl Rahner

nameless yearning of all creatures, waiting — though perhaps unaware that they are waiting — to be allowed to participate in the transfiguration of his body. He is at the heart of earth's history, whose blind progress amidst all victories and all defeats is headed with uncanny precision toward the day that is his, where his glory will break forth from its own depths, thereby transforming everything. "And because Christ is at the heart of all of creation, we can say that it is not only Easter but all of Holy Week that has significance for more than just humanity alone." - would bring back memories to Rahner readers (US Catholic, March 2024, online).

Mental Health

On a brief viewing of the BBC 'Any Questions' from Middlesborough (Thursday, March 21), the question of Mental Health got a strong airing from some of those present; nurses, therapists, and a former sufferer, who now purports to have it as a priority for those in his employment. So that the public representatives present had a hard time responding to the problem of long and extended waiting lists and what the next government might or might not do. A journalist and writer called Rod Little proved to be very insistent that the problem was not just for the Poor but a society condition all across western Europe, a 'malestar' as the Spanish would say. Society, he seemed to maintain, had lost something in its capacity to socialise and communicate, almost as a tribe, and people felt alienated, though he did not use that word. It struck a note in my memory-cords going back to pastoral occasions with less-privileged communities.

There were the Conversion Retreats and the Nazarene gatherings where, in testimonial form, people would bear witness to their own change of life, or conversion. In both of those movements the sense of joy was palpable and enduring, as men and women, and sometimes youth, came to be aware in their guilt that there was another person inside each of them that could now emerge, despite failures in addictions, marriage, family, work and social relationships. It often seemed to me that their sense of self-worth, from the testimony, and prayer of their mentors and leaders, grew and lead them to a

real Joy. This joy would be shared in a meal the following Thursday, in my presence in the case of the Nazarenes, and everyone would speak to what that moment meant to them. In the case of the Conversion Retreats, male and female on alternate weeks, the joy and celebration would be at family-level on the evening of return to the hosting chapel, and in group meetings during the week. In one parish, a process of follow-up continued through the year, and some of those participants became competent and convincing catechists, or Christian community leaders.

I recall now at this remove a rather distasteful moment after one of those retreats, where a Spanish priest, almost self-invited and kept on the margin of the celebration by me got his moment of response, and after the Communion of the Mass, took over the floor and proceeded to try to 'liven up' the group emerging from a very important occasion of their lives. The embarrassment of the leaders and my own deep discomfort was palpable on the faces of the emerging retreatants. Humour and 'fun' had very little to do with the deep Christian Joy that those retreatants had still to process during the days and weeks ahead!

One of the people whose pieces have helped me keep in touch with a sense of that joy in this very post-secular Ireland, is Canon Robin Gibbons and a piece of poetry like this...

Poem Sheer Silence Fr Robin Gibbons Obl OSB

*"The apocalypse is what many fear,
the drama of terror,
earthquake, flood, tsunami,
hurricane, fire!
All unwanted
except by those false prophets,
who love the misery of others,
whose ministry is noisy shouting,
bellowing imprecations
and preaching hell fire,
making documentaries about the
end time,
and punishments for so called
sinners.*

*These prophets cannot hear
themselves
above the shouting of arrogance.
They are not prepared to face
their inner fear,
that of the emptiness of themselves.
Yet we must turn away from them-
to hear the angels trumpets,
soft-sounding in the mists of Horeb,
to know that earthquake,
wind, and fire pass by.
Only then will we hear
the spluttering of our tempest die
down,
and a wall of silence envelope us.
Sheer in its immensity,
Rich, deep,
loving as a mother holding fast her
child.
Then where language and noise no
longer hold sway,
the sheer silence of
the hissing sound,
the complete sound*

*of God's heart
beating all about us
will call us out of our cave
to a complete embrace."*

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*"I myself taught Ephraim to walk,
I took them in my arms;
yet they have not understood that I
was the one looking after them.
I led them with reins of kindness,
with leading-strings of love.
I was like someone who lifts an
infant close against his cheek;
stooping down to him I gave him
his food." (Hosea ch11)*

*Almighty, ever-living God,
we confidently call you Father as
well as Lord.
Renew your Spirit in our hearts:
make us ever more perfectly your
children,
so that we may enter upon the
inheritance you have promised us.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ,
your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in
the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.*

The Fathers

The former Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid, is still a much-maligned and almost 'hate-figure' amongst many of the Press and media intelligentsia. He is the person who ordained me and so many others, and we had, of course, as with other bishops of the time, a certain awe in their presence. Later on, I would come to discover, like many lay persons and sisters, that he was very approachable and open to listening. In my own spiritual life from a couple of personal encounters, I will definitely assert that he helped 'to make a man out of me', and that was no small contribution to the challenges of an active and not always easy, later pastoral life, as a priest and missionary.

One of the sentences some of us would have heard from him, is "You must get to know the Fathers of the Church, father!" And I think of St Augustine and his Confessions, which is, I know, well read by people who cannot find around them others with whom to share a sentence like "Late have I loved thee...you were within and I was without..." There is a Christian Joy in so many of these Fathers that often far outstrips a more 'user-friendly or self-help spirituality' today, on YouTube and the Internet etc. A piece that came to hand this week was a paragraph from Dietrich Bonhoeffer on Discipleship that does not pull its punches.

Some of the deeper memories I carry from my pastoral life are those where Padre Hurtado was brought in to the narratives. Now known as San Alberto Hurtado, he left 'witness' to a whole generation as his obituary. Thousands of young Catholic men (just 'men' in those days!) drew inspiration from him in the Young Catholic Action movement, where Bishop

Larain of Talca also had a strong influence; his talks and spiritual direction on Vocation appealed to the highest ideals and there have been many, including one Minister in the present government, who were drawn in to public service by his teachings, spiritual accompaniment and encouragement.

The underlying current of so much of it, and I still have some of those phrases in my personal archives, was a very definite and clear, Christian Joy. One of those challenging phrases of his that comes back to me contains the word 'cursi'. It's a word that is hard to translate, 'being shallow, blown along by every wind, superficial', maybe even the modern phrase, 'snowflake generation'. But the youth of those generations understood, as he used it to challenge them. 'Being Magnanimous', in its Spanish form, was another big word of his; as was, "What would Christ do in my place?"

In an era where the 'Me and My fulfilment, my Rights', and so on, seem to dominate, the writings and teachings of St Alberto Hurtado, now on-line, would serve well for the spiritual motivation and direction of many who have the wider education of Catholic young people in their care.

At the time of Brexit, some of us grew weary of listening to the phrase on the English media, 'Brexit is Brexit!' By the same note and key, I am inclined to say, at least to myself, that 'Grace is Grace, and Joy is Joy!' Maybe there are some out there who need to get that right, as they launch themselves in to life, a new vocation, and call to service of and in the world!

The Diocese of Brentford, in its Report 'Believing and not Belonging', may have gifted many people with insights as to why former parishioners no longer show up to Mass or Church; and I found it fascinating, if not surprising personally. As so often, I turned to the final appendices and came across this well-loved poem, once again, with which I end my own reflection on the theme of Christian Joy today...

Missing God by Dennis O'Driscoll

*His grace is no longer called
for before meals: farmed fish
multiply without His intercession.
Bread production rises through
disease-resistant grains devised
scientifically to mitigate His faults.
Yet, though we rebelled against
Him like adolescents, uplifted to see
an oppressive father banished - a
bearded hermit - to the desert, we
confess to missing Him at times.*

*Miss Him during the civil wedding
when, at the blossomy altar of the
registrar's desk, we wait in vain to
be fed a line containing words like
"everlasting" and "divine".*

*Miss Him when the TV scientist
explains the cosmos through
equations, leaving our planet to*

*revolve on its axis aimlessly, a
wheel skidding in snow.*

*Miss Him when the radio catches
a snatch of plainchant from some
echoey priory; when the gospel
choir raises its collective voice to ask
Shall We Gather at the River? or
the forces of the oratorio converge
on I Know That My Redeemer
Liveth and our contracted hearts
lose a beat. 113 Miss Him when a
choked voice at the crematorium
recites the poem about fearing no
more the heat of the sun.*

*Miss Him when we stand in
judgment on a lank Crucifixion in
an art museum, its stripe-like ribs
testifying to rank.*

*Miss Him when the gamma-rays
recorded on the satellite graph seem
arranged into a celestial score,
the music of the spheres, the Ave
Verum Corpus of the observatory
lab.*

*Miss Him when we stumble on the
breast lump for the first time and
an involuntary prayer escapes our
lips; when a shadow crosses our
bodies on an x-ray screen; when
we receive a transfusion of foaming
blood sacrificed anonymously to
save life.*

*Miss Him when we call out His
name spontaneously in awe or
anger as a woman in the birth
ward bawls her long-dead mother's
name.*

Miss Him when the linen-covered

*dining table holds warm bread
rolls, shiny glasses of red wine. Miss
Him when a dove swoops from the
orange grove in a tourist village just
as the monastery bell begins to take
its toll.*

*Miss Him when our journey
leads us under leaves of Gothic
tracery, an arch of overlapping
branches that meet like hands in
Michelangelo's creation. 114*

*Miss Him when, trudging past a
Church, we catch a residual blast
of incense, a perfume on par with
the fresh-baked loaf which Milosz
compared to happiness.*

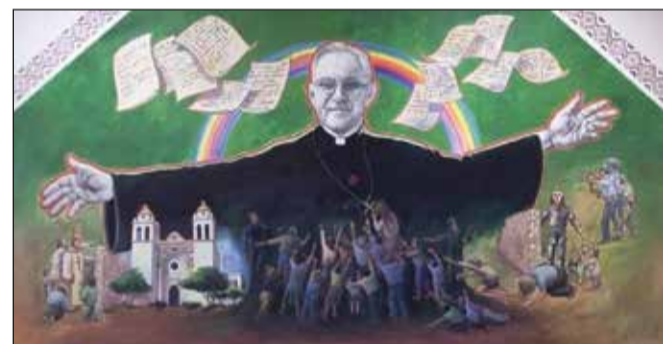
*Miss Him when our newly-
decorated kitchen comes in Shaker-
style and we order a matching set
of Mother Ann Lee chairs.*

*Miss Him when we listen to the
prophecy of astronomers that the
visible galaxies will recede as the
universe expands.*

*Miss Him the way an uncoupled
glider riding the evening thermals
misses its tug.*

*Miss Him, as the lovers shrugging
shoulders outside the cheap hotel
ponder what their next move
should be. Even feel nostalgic, odd
days, for His Second Coming, like
standing in the brick dome of a
dovecote after the birds have flown.*

(Dennis O'Driscoll, *New and Selected Poems*, London: Anvil Press)



Parish Post-its

Aghyaran

Adoration: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place on Thursdays after 10 am Mass, and finishes at 12 noon.

Ardstraw East (Newtownstewart)

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

Badoney Lower (Gortin-Rouskey)

Adoration: Adoration takes place in St Patrick's Gortin, after the 12.30 pm Mass until 5 pm on Tuesdays, and in St Mary's Rouskey after 7.30 pm Mass on Wednesdays, when there will also be Confessions.

Badoney Upper (Plumbridge-Cranagh)

Evening Prayer: Evening Prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours (Vespers) takes place on Sundays at 7 pm in Sacred Heart Church, Plumbridge.

Ballinascreen

Blessing of Graves: The Blessing of the Graves in the parishes of Ballinascreen and Desertmartin will take place on the following dates: Saturday June 8, 6.30 pm, Mass in St Patrick's Keenaught followed by blessing of graves...Note earlier Mass time; Sunday June 9, 11 am - Mass in St Patrick's Church, Sixtowns followed by blessing of graves, 12 noon, Mass in St Eugene's Church, Moneyneena, followed by blessing of graves, 2 pm blessing of graves at St Columba's Straw, 3 pm blessing of graves at St Mary's, Coolcalm, and 4.30 pm - blessing of graves at Old Keenaught Church.

St Pio Mass: Mass in honour of St Pio of Pietrelcina is celebrated on the first Monday of each month at 7.30 pm, in Holy Rosary Church. The Novena prayers and Rosary are recited at 7.10 pm.

Ballymagroarty

Adoration: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in Holy Family Church, Ballymagroarty, every Sunday, from 1.30 - 6 pm.

Padre Pio Prayer: The Holy Family Padre Pio Prayer Group meets on the

first Tuesday each month at Holy Family Chapel, Ballymagroarty, Derry. It starts with the Rosary at 6.45 pm, followed by Mass at 7.15pm, and Novena to St Pio directly afterwards. There will be a first class relic available for veneration.

Banagher

HOPE fundraiser: A Car Wash for HOPE Camp will take place on Sunday, May 5, from 8.30 am - 1.30 pm. Experienced car washers. All support greatly appreciated

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

Bellaghy

Cemetery Sunday: Graves in Bellaghy & Ballyscullion will be blessed on Sunday, July 7.

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

Buncrana

Adoration: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament now takes place in St Mary's Oratory every Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday, beginning at 6 am and closing at 10 pm, and on Sundays 2-10 pm.

Rosary: The Rosary is prayed each weekday at 9.30 am in St Mary's Oratory, prior to 10 am Mass.

Guided Holy Hour: A Guided Holy Hour of Adoration in Honour of the Holy Face of Jesus takes place on Sundays, 6-7 pm in St Mary's Oratory. All welcome.

Rosary for Priests: Three Rosaries are prayed each Tuesday, between 1-2 pm, in the Oratory for vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

AA: Alcoholics Anonymous Amazing Grace Group, Buncrana, has five meetings per week: Sundays - 8 pm, Tuesdays - 8.30 pm, Thursdays - 11.30 am, Fridays 8.30 pm, and Saturdays at 11.30 am. If you think you may have a problem with alcohol, please come along. Venue for all meetings is St Teresa's Room.

Al-Anon: The Al-Anon Group, for anyone whose life is or has been affected by someone else's drinking, meets in St Teresa's Room on Thursdays at 6:45 pm.

Burt, Inch & Fahan

Grave Blessings: The annual blessing of the graves will take place in St Mura's Parish Church on Sunday, June 9,

at 11.30 am, in St Aengus' Church, Burt, on Sunday, June 16, at 3 pm, and in Our Lady of Lourdes, Inch, on Sunday, June 16, at 6 pm.

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

Cappagh

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

Eucharistic Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration takes place on Wednesday from 8-9 pm in Christ the King, Strathroy, concluding with Night Prayer, and on Sunday from 3.30-6.30 pm, in Christ the King.

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

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

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

Carndonagh

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

Castleberg & Ardstraw West

25 Card Play: 25 Card Play, with all proceeds going to the Church Spire project in Castleberg, will be held in St Patrick's Hall, Castleberg, on Friday, April 26, starting at 8.30 pm sharp. £250 in prizes (top prize £100). Adm £10. Tea and refreshments served. All card-players are warmly invited to come along.

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

Claudy

College Anniversary: St Patrick's & St Brigid's College will be celebrating its 60th

anniversary with Mass in St Patrick's Church at 7 pm on Thursday, May 2, 2024, followed by further celebrations in the College, until 9.30 pm.

Adoration: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place from after the 10 am Mass until 8 pm on Tuesdays in St Patrick's Church, Claudy, and on Wednesdays in St Joseph's Church, Craigbane.

Living Word: There is a 'Living Word' gathering in the Upper Room in St Patrick's Church on Thursdays, 7-8.30 pm, for a time of reading and reflection on the Mass readings for the following Sunday. All welcome.

Children's Rosary: Children's Rosary continues in St Patrick's Church, Claudy on the first Saturday of each month, at 2 pm. All are welcome.

Coleraine

Cemetery Sunday: The blessing of the graves will take place on Sunday, May 5, at Aghadowey after 9.45 am Mass, St Johns at 3 pm, and Dunboe at 5 pm.

Parish Picnic: The Parish Picnic will take place at Chapelfield on Sunday, May 19.

Lough Derg: A Parish Pilgrimage to Lough Derg will take place on Saturday, September 7.

SJYP Meet: St Joseph's Young Priests' Society meets on the last Monday of each month at St John's Church Sacristy, after the 10 am morning Mass, and is open to everyone. New members are welcome at any of the meetings, which support praying for and assisting to support the vocation to priesthood and the religious life.

Exposition: St John's Church Monday Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place on Wednesdays in St John's Church, from 2-4 pm with Rosary at 3:45 pm.

Creggan

Catechism Course: The YOUCAT Catechism Course continues on Wednesdays at 7 pm.

Bereavement Support: Parish Pastoral Bereavement Support. The Parish Pastoral Bereavement Support Group meets on the second Sunday of each month at 3 pm in the Parochial House community room. All are welcome to share a cup of tea, have a chat, remember and talk about their loved one and find support with others experiencing similar feelings. In addition to the group, there is an ongoing opportunity to speak on a one-to-one basis with an experienced grief counsellor. The contact number for more information on the group or to arrange one to one support

is 07907085178.

Vocations Prayer: There will be Vocations Holy Hour in St Mary's Church, Creggan, on the second Friday of each month, running from 8-9 pm.

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

Culdaff

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

Desertmartin

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

Donagheady (Aughabrack & Dunamanagh)

Cemetery Blessing: The Blessing of the Graves will take place at Killenagh on Saturday, June 1, after 6.30 pm Mass, and at Aughabrack on Sunday, June 2, after 10.30 am Mass.

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

Drumquin

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

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

Drumragh (Omagh)

Cemetery Sunday: The Blessing of Graves will take place on Sunday, June 2, at 3 pm, in St Mary's, Drumragh, and 5 pm at the Dublin Road Cemetery.

Prayer Group: The Charismatic Prayer Group meetings take place in The Pastoral Centre on Thursday evenings, with Rosary at 7.40 pm and prayer meeting at 8 pm. All welcome to come and pray.

Legion of Mary: The Legion of Mary Men's meetings take place on the first, second and last Monday, and third Tuesday of each month at 7.30 pm, in St Vincent's Hall (beneath Sacred Heart Church Sacristy). Contact: Sean on 07730671370.

Adoration: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in Sacred Heart Church on Wednesdays following morning Mass until 5.30 pm.

Every Friday 3:30-6pm

ALL OR NOTHING Youth Club

FOR GIRLS 11-14 YEARS OLD

ACTIVITIES:

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

Parish Sisters of the Home of the Mother
Parochial House
Crossroads, Killygordon F93 PN CX
hnaetiv@dioceseofomagh.com

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

Dungiven

Lectio Divina: The Lectio Divina Group meet for meditation and Scripture reflection on Wednesdays, at 7 pm, in the Parish House, 30A Chapel Road.

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

St Pio Healing Mass: A St Pio Healing Mass is celebrated monthly, on the first Tuesday, in St Patrick's Church at 7 pm.

Errigal

First Saturdays: The Five First Saturdays devotion asked for at Fatima by Our Lady is underway in the parish, is underway, having begun in Glenullin on April 6, and continuing on May 4 in Ballerin, June 1 in Glenullin, July 6 in Ballerin, and August 3 in Glenullin. There will be a period of Adoration from 5-5.40 pm and during this time Confessions will be available. During Adoration, we will keep Our Lady company for 15 minutes while meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary, with the intention of making reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Rosary will begin at 5.40 pm and the Vigil Mass will follow at 6 pm, finishing with the Fatima Prayers.

Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration takes place on Mondays after the morning Mass in St Mary's Church, Ballerin, until 2.30 pm.

Rosary & Chaplet: The Rosary and Divine Mercy

Chaplet are prayed in St Joseph's Church, Glenullin, every Wednesday evening at 6.30 pm.

Graves Blessing: The Blessing of the Graves will take place at St Mary's Church, Ballerin, on Sunday, June 2, at 2 pm, and at St Joseph's Church, Glenullin, on Sunday, June 9, at 12.30 pm.

Fahan

Fundraising Dance: St Aengus NS Parent Association fundraising dance takes place on Friday, April 26, in An Grianan Hotel. Music by the David Craig Band and supported by Joanne Lily. Tickets on sale from any Parents' Association member.

Graves' Blessing: The annual blessing of the graves will take place at St Mura's Parish Church on Sunday, June 9, at 11.30 am, St Aengus' Church, Burt, on Sunday, June 16, at 3 pm, and Our Lady of Lourdes, Inch, on Sunday, June 16, at 6 pm.

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

Faughanvale

Alpha Course: The three local churches - St Canice's, Star of the Sea and Faughanvale Presbyterian - are running an Alpha Course at the Faughanvale Community Project, beside the Vale Centre, Greysteel, on Wednesdays at 7.30 pm. Alpha is a series of group conversations that freely explore the basics of the Christian faith in an open, friendly environment. What's the meaning of life? What is faith really all about? etc. All welcome.

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

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Greencastle

Divine Mercy: The Divine Mercy Chaplet is prayed on the First Tuesday of every month at 12.15 pm before Mass in St Patrick's Church, Greencastle.

Adoration: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in St Patrick's Church after 7.30 pm Mass on Mondays, with Confessions.

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

Greenlough

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

Cemetery Sunday: Cemetery Sunday will take place on July 14.

Iskaheen, Drung & Muff

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

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

St Peregrine: The St Peregrine Novena Prayer and veneration of relic takes place in St Columba's Church, Drung, after the 10.15 am Mass on the first Sunday of each month.

Kilrea

Stations of the Cross: The Stations of the Cross are prayed on Sundays in St Anne's Oratory at 7 pm, with Confessions beforehand from 6.30-6.50 pm.

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

Cemetery Sunday: The

Blessing of Graves will take place at St Mary's Church, Craigavole, on Sunday, June 23, at 1pm, and at St Mary's Church, Drumagarnier, on Sunday, June 23, at 2.30 pm.

Lavey

Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration takes place on Fridays after 9.15 am Mass Adoration until 5 pm.

Leckpatrick

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

Limavady

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

Grave Blessing: The Blessing of Graves will take place at: Roemill at 6 pm on Sunday, June 2; Christ the King at 6 pm on Sunday, June 9; St Mary's at 6 pm on Sunday, June 23; and St Finlough's at 3 pm Sunday, June 30.

Children's Prayer: A Children's Prayer Group is held in the Drummond Hotel, Ballykelly, on the First Saturday of every month, from 2.30-3.30 pm. All welcome. Contact: Kathy on 07538749627.

Maghera

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

Graves Blessing: The Blessing of the Graves will take place in Glen on Sunday,

May 19 at 3 pm.

Melmount

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

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

Moville

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

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

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

Graveyard Sunday: The Blessing of the Graves will take place in Ballybrack on Sunday, July 7, and in Ballinacrae on Sunday, July 14.

Sion Mills

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

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

Steelstown & Culmore

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

Adoration: Spend some quiet time before the Lord Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament each Sunday, from 6-7 pm.

Adoration also continues each Friday after 10 am Mass until 6.50 pm.

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

Strabane (Camus)

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

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

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

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

Padre Pio Mass: The Padre Pio Mass takes place in the Church on the first Wednesday of the month at 7 pm, with Rosary beforehand at 6.40 pm.

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

Swatragh (Granaghan)

Graves' Blessing: The Blessing of the Graves will take place on Sunday, May 5, at 3 pm.

opportunity to bring along someone you know who may like to avail of this sacrament. The Stations of the Cross begin at 2 pm, followed by the Rosary Procession at 2.30 pm. This year, there will also be

Templemore - St Eugene's

Little Way Novena: The annual Little Way Novena to St Therese of Lisieux takes place in St Eugene's Cathedral from May 11-19.

Eucharistic Adoration: Every Sunday, there is Eucharistic Adoration from 3-6 pm and every Tuesday from 10.30 am until 7.20 pm.

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

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

Fatima Pilgrimage: St Eugene's Cathedral Pilgrimage to Fatima will take place from October 19-24. The cost is £770 per person sharing, with a single room supplement of £150 (subject to availability). For more information contact Anne Marie Hickey on amhickey@derrydiocese.org or 'phone the Parish Office on 048 71262894.

Three Patrons

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

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

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

Be Still: Be Still is a Men's Prayer and Friendship Group

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

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

Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration takes place in Our Lady's Chapel, St Joseph's Church, Galliagh, on Mondays after 11 am Mass, concluding with a Youth 2000 Holy Hour from 7-8 pm. It also takes place seven days a week in the Adoration Room in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, from 8 am until 6 pm, and in St Patrick's Church, Pennyburn, on Wednesdays from 10 am - 7 pm.

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

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

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

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

Healing Night: A Healing Night with the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal takes place monthly on the first

Friday, from 7-10 pm, in St Joseph's Church, Galliagh. Everyone welcome.

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

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

Women's Laugh & Craft: The Women's Laugh & Craft Group meets every Monday from 7.30 -9 pm in the Kildare Room, St Brigid's, Carnhill. £3 per class. Spaces limited.

Urney & Castlefinn

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

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

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

Waterside & Strathfoyle

Eucharistic Adoration: There is Eucharistic Adoration in St Oliver Plunkett Church, Strathfoyle, on Monday mornings, and on Wednesday evenings from 7-9 pm. All welcome.

Lectio Divina: Reflect on the Scriptures with Lectio Divina in the side chapel in St Columba's Church, Chapel Road, on Thursday nights, starting at 8 pm.

...other Diary Dates

Youth Retreat: The Knights of St Columbanus, Omagh, are organising a retreat on Lough Derg for young adults, aged 18-30 years old, on Saturday, April 27, from 10 am - 4 pm. Guest Speakers, inspirational talks, reflective time and concluding with Mass. This event is free of charge and will include guest speakers, inspirational talks, reflective and Mass to finish. For further information, email info@knightsostcolumbanusomagh.co.uk.

The Deepening: A Morning Retreat, The Deepening, takes place on Saturday, April 27, from 10 am - 1.30 pm in An Grianan Hotel, Burt, led by Fr Paschal. For more information contact Erin on 07736832458 or thornhill-

ministries@derrydiocese.org. This retreat morning allows us to hold Easter hope and a renewed Pentecost in our lives. Retreat includes Contemplation, Input, Personal Time and Celebration of Eucharist and lunch.

St Peregrine Day Retreat: A day retreat in honour of St Peregrine will take place in the Carmelite Retreat Centre, Termonbacca, Derry, on Thursday, May 2, from 10 am - 3 pm. Cost, including light lunch, £20. Please bring along a bottle of olive oil to be blessing in honour of St Peregrine. A first-class relic of St Peregrine will be available for veneration on the day. For bookings, telephone 028 71 262512.

Little Way Novena: The annual Little Way Novena to St Therese of Lisieux takes place in St Eugene's Cathedral from May 11-19.

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

opportunity to bring along someone you know who may like to avail of this sacrament. The Stations of the Cross begin at 2 pm, followed by the Rosary Procession at 2.30 pm. This year, there will also be

a Marian Conference in the morning from 9.30 am in St John's Centre. It will feature great speakers from around Ireland. Further details to be announced. Those who register for the event will auto-

matically receive updates and information via email.

LIFE Camp 2024 - Registration is open for LIFE Camp 2024. The Camp takes place in St Mary's College, Northland Road, Derry City, and is for

all pupils currently in P3-7. Week 1 runs from July 1-5 and Week 2 from July 8-12. The cost for each week is £40. To register visit <http://www.klub-funder.com/Clubs/Life%20Summer%20Camp>

Diocesan Diary

Diocesan Youth Pilgrimage: The Diocesan Youth Ministry team is organising a nine-night youth pilgrimage to Medjugorje for young people aged 16+, from July 30 to August 8. This will be a unique experience for young people and an opportunity to engage with peers from around the world, in a faith context. Up to 50,000 young people attend the Medjugorje Youth Festival each year. The cost is £800 and there will be a budget plan to help with this. Names and

deposit of £100 are required as soon as possible to secure a place. For more information, or to book in, please contact lizzie.rea@derrydiocese.org 028 71264087.

Diocesan Lourdes Pilgrimage: The Derry Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes in 2024, led by Bishop Donal, will run from July 1-5, leaving from City of Derry Airport. Full board £799, single room supplement £150. Telephone

028 71260293, or email derrypilgrim@outlook.com for enquiries or bookings.

ACCORD: Accord Derry Marriage Preparation Courses (Pre Marriage Courses) will take place on May 17/18, and June 14/15, 2024, in the Everglades Hotel, Prehen Road, Derry. Please note that these courses are not virtual and are in person. Bookings are now being taken on www.accordni.com.

Leadership Masters: The Derry Diocesan Catechetical

Centre, working in partnership with St Mary's University, Twickenham, offers the Masters in Catholic School Leadership. This is a post graduate degree dedicated to the professional development and spiritual formation of Catholic school leaders. If you are interested in registering for the Masters in September 2024 or require any further information, please contact the Derry Diocesan Catechetical Centre on 004428 71264087 or email

Peace be with you *Fr Johnny Doherty CSSR*



Fr Johnny Doherty CSSR

FOR all Christians, the month of April is the time when we begin to celebrate the Resurrection of Christ from the dead. During Holy Week, we journeyed with Christ through the horrors of His passion and death. We experienced with Him the degradation and dehumanisation of His journey to the Cross. And we were shown again the depths of human cruelty and depravity, as they forced Jesus along the Way of the Cross.

Then came the Easter Resurrection. Even though Jesus had told His disciples that He would be raised from the dead on the third day, they did not know what that meant. When it happened they found it impossible to believe it. These weeks of April are about the disciples – and us – growing in faith in this wonderful truth and finding their lives, and ours, being transformed by a new reality.

Alleluia

For the weeks of Lent, Alleluia was not heard in the Liturgy of the Church – except, of course, when it was introduced by mistake and by force of habit! This was to help us to enter into the spirit of reflection on the darkness that Christ had to face in His Passion and Death, which we celebrated in Holy Week this year at the end of March.

Then, at the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday all the stops were pulled out to celebrate the wonder of Christ's Resurrection from the dead. And 'Alleluia' was reinstated. It is now again a feature of every Mass and of most gatherings of Catholic people for prayer.

What does it mean? Alleluia is a word of joy, of praise, of thanksgiving, of hope. It is a word that comes from the heart and from the deepest place in the human spirit. It cannot be forced. But it does need to be released from the heart of the Church and from us as believers in Christ.

A culture of criticism

Day after day, almost hour after hour, there is a constant stream of negative and controversial programmes on our various media platforms. This is true particularly of the radio stations. But it is also true of television and the printed media. What keeps them going would seem to be the opportunity of setting one person or group of people up against another, without any chance that they will come together in harmony. That would spoil the attraction altogether!

This is even more true of the social media platforms. Here, everyone can say whatever she or he wants to say without any care for truth or goodness or love.

The media people would claim

that they are only representing the reality of society. But this constant barrage of negativity is also creating a society of negativity. This can be seen in marriage and family life where there is more break down than ever, and in local community life where there is a great decline in neighbourliness and care for one another, because we no longer know one another.

It is also seen in politics, which has become ever more adversarial. It is even seen today in sport, where the headlines are more often about what someone is doing badly than what they have done well!

And, of course, we see this also in the life of the Church. There is so much criticism of one another that you would think that we are enemies of one another rather than sisters and brothers. Pope Francis is leading us in the way for the Church for today and he comes in for so much opposition, even from some of those closest to him in the hierarchy.

An attitude of gratitude

The Death and Resurrection of Christ that we celebrated on Holy Week and at Easter calls on us, as followers of Christ, to develop a real sense of gratitude and joy so that the world we live in can be transformed by Christ's salvation. The 'Alleluia' that we proclaim during this month, and also through the rest of the year, is a reminder to us that we have so much to be grateful for and so much to be joyful about.

This attitude of gratitude is not about how we feel, but about how we choose. In spite of all that may be wrong for us and around us, there is so much good and goodness that we have a responsibility to bring forward and rejoice in. This is what

it means to be counter cultural as followers of Christ. And it is this that has marked the journey of Christianity from the beginning and must mark us today.

Peace be with you

Alongside 'Alleluia', the other significant word of this season of Easter, and consequently of April, for us is the word 'peace'. 'Peace be with you' is the constant greeting that Jesus, risen from the dead, has for His disciples and now for us.

How badly the world around us needs to hear that word, and yet, how we might easily think that it is impossible. We are in a world that is caught in a whirl wind of war and rumours of war.

I just now 'Googled' 'places at war today' and there was a list of 21 countries given. We are only too familiar with the awful daily scenes of slaughter and carnage in Palestine and Ukraine. There is the threat of nuclear war given by Russia recently. There is so much unrest in many other places that we could say that, although we do not have a World War we certainly have a world that is at war. In many of these places, the war is directed at Christianity, at our own people who are being persecuted and martyred almost by the day.

Our call

From the truth of the Resurrection of Christ from the dead, it is obvious that the central call of the Church today is to be peace makers. It is good to see the many efforts that Pope Francis is making to bring peace to our troubled world. He is certainly following the way of Christ and is made to suffer for it.

It is so important that all of us, as Catholics, and our other Christian

sisters and brothers too, are seen to be fully behind Pope Francis in his peace efforts. He is one of the very few people that are able and willing to speak about peace, and in his call for leaders to talk to one another. Everyone else is tied up with taking sides for political or social reasons. We can be very proud of our Holy Father for his courageous statements and calls.

Our responsibility

As we keep peace between nations and peoples in our thoughts and prayers and major concerns, we also need to remember that joy and peace are not just for the world we live in. They are also our responsibility to foster where we are in life.

"If you want to be a voice for peace in the world, begin by making peace a permanent condition of your own life" (Dr Wayne Dyer).

That is where it has to start, otherwise peace becomes just a good idea that everyone would agree with. The same can be said about joy and gladness.

Marriage and Family Life

This is where everything that is good and possible ultimately comes back to. It is in these committed, permanent relationships that all that is good for humanity finds its most fertile ground. Unfortunately, it is also true that it is here that all that is worst and most destructive can also be found. For me, one of the most heartbreaking things is to hear of domestic abuse where especially women and children are harmed.

As followers of Christ, it has to be our choice to aim for building our homes and relationships into

beacons of peace and hope and love for the world in which we live.

Peace process

Peace, like joy, is not something that exists. It is something that is constantly being created. That is true on the big scale between nations and peoples. It is also true on the smaller scale of marriage and family life.

- It entails first of all commitment of the people involved: for marriage, each of the couple; for family, each member of the family.

- Secondly, it means putting away all weapons of destruction. On the small scale between couples and within families these are: criticism; anger; coldness; selfishness etc.

- Then it means putting in place the qualities of God's Spirit, such as: love; joy; patience; forgiveness; humility; gentleness etc.

- All of this takes time - good time, regular time, creative time - so that the relationships can grow day by day.

Domestic Church

As we pray for and hope for peace and joy throughout the world, the great challenge for us as people of faith, is to keep creating these two qualities in our homes and families. This is what is meant by calling the family the Domestic Church. This will then radiate out to the community of the parish, our faith community, and be supported there.

The Easter promise will become real for us. And the Easter spirit of peace and 'Alleluia' will become more possible for the world that we live in, a world that is so troubled and yet so wonderful.

Heartfelt 'thank you' for MNDA donations



The late Susan Duffy, Plumbridge, Co Tyrone

THE family of the late Susan Duffy, Plumbridge, in Co Tyrone, would like to express their heartfelt gratitude to Susan's family and friends for their generous donations of £1250, after gift aid, to the Motor Neurone Disease Association.

The donations will be used exclusively for Motor Neurone Disease Research and Clinical Trials.

Susan's daily prayer was: "Every day is a blessing. I'm so glad to be here."

Organised by the Council for Life of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference

KNOCK NATIONAL PILGRIMAGE FOR LIFE

Join the National Pilgrimage for Life in Knock Shrine, County Mayo, as we pray for the protection of all human life - Starting at 3pm with Mass and Anointing of the Sick.

SATURDAY 4TH MAY 2024

"You gave hope to your people in a time of distress and comforted them in sorrow."

www.councilforlife.ie

NOYE'S FLUDDE

a community opera by Benjamin Britten

Sunday 2nd June at 6pm

Christ Church, Infirmary Road

Tickets £8 available from Eventbrite

Logos for Arts Council, Every Voice Festival, and Allegri.

Captivating evening with Allegri Junior & Youth Choirs

STEP into a world of musical enchantment with Noye's Fludde, Benjamin Britten's wonderful contemporary interpretation of the timeless tale of Noah's Ark.

Join Allegri Junior & Youth Choirs, in collaboration with Orchestra NorthWest & St Mary's College String Orchestra, as they present the community opera for amateur youth performers alongside adult musicians.

Don't miss out on this evening of captivating storytelling at Christ Church, Infirmary Road, Derry, on Sunday, June 2, at 6 pm.

Tickets are available from: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/noyes-fludde-tickets-884130216277?aff=ebdshpsearchautocomplete>

Children's Catechism Club - C3

by Veronica Harley

HELLO children. Welcome to the month of April. Easter Sunday fell on the 31st of March just passed, but that does not mean that the Easter celebrations end on that day. Anything but! We continue to celebrate Easter for 50 days, up until Pentecost Sunday – the descent of the Holy Spirit and the beginning of the Church.



and joined the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, who devoted themselves to the care of troubled young women.

On February 22, 1931, Sister Faustina received from Jesus a message of mercy that she was to spread throughout the world. She was asked to become the apostle of God's mercy, to be a model of how to be merciful to others. The message was that God loves us, all of us, no matter how great our sins may be. God wants us to know that His mercy is greater than our sins, therefore, we should always call on Him with trust, receive His mercy and let it flow through us to others, so that all will come to share His joy.

Jesus showed Faustina an image of Himself which He wanted painted, so that all could see the abundant mercy which flows from His heart. Under the image He told her to write, "Jesus I Trust in You."

Faustina lived her entire life in imitation of Christ, always making sacrifice, as Jesus did for others. At the request of Jesus, she willingly offered her personal sufferings with Jesus to atone for the sins of others; in her daily life she became a doer of mercy, bringing joy and peace to others. She wrote about God's mercy and she encouraged others to trust in God and prepare the world for His coming again.

During her life, Faustina wrote and suffered in secret, without many knowing that anything special was taking place in her life. After her death from tuberculosis in 1938, even her closest friends were amazed to discover what great sufferings and mystical experiences she had received. She had listened carefully to the Gospel command to "be merciful even as your heavenly Father is merciful". The message of mercy that Sister Faustina received

has been spread throughout the world.

Jesus asked Faustina that a special Feast Day be set aside to celebrate God's wonderful gift of mercy to the world. This feast is called Mercy Sunday, and it falls on the Sunday after Easter Day. On this day, God pours out His mercy on all those who come to Him. The novena prayer, which we say for nine days prior to Mercy Sunday, is called the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. We say these prayers as part of our daily prayers to always ask God's mercy to come upon us.

God will give us something else which is even better for us, in His own time.

When Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount, He encouraged people to always ask God for the things that they may need: "Ask, and it will be given to you; search and you will find" (Matthew 7:7).

The 'Youcat for Kids' also lets us know that it is important to regularly pray to God just as you would like to often meet and talk with your friends. So, wherever or whatever you are doing, there is always time for a short prayer to God. The 'Youcat for Kids' says it is like a secret text message to God when you wake up, eat your breakfast, on your way to school, out playing or going to sleep. Remember to always make time to pray to God.



The Year of Prayer 2024

The 'Youcat for Kids' tells us that God always hears our prayers. He often fulfils our wishes, but there are also times when He does not fulfill our wishes immediately. Instead,



Unscramble the word in () to complete each sentence.

- The Last Supper is the special meal that _____ shared before he died. (seusj)
- The _____ is the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ. (trisEauch)
- The _____ is another name for the celebration of the Eucharist. (saMs)
- We join with our _____ for the celebration of the Mass. (rasiph)



The Eucharist

The month of April is dedicated to the Eucharist because Holy Thursday, the day on which Catholics celebrate the Institution of the Eucharist, usually falls in the month of April.

On Holy Thursday night, Jesus shared an important meal with His apostles. This meal was called the Last Supper, because it was the last meal Jesus had before He was crucified and died. At this meal, Jesus took bread and wine, blessed them, gave them to the Apostles and told them that the bread and wine which they were given to eat was now His Body and Blood. At the meal, Jesus instructed His apostles that they should do the same in memory of Him.

At Mass, the bread and wine offered up by the priest become the actual Body and Blood of Christ. The bread and wine do not change in appearance. However, they are transformed beyond our human understanding into the Body and Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ. This is called 'Transubstantiation', and it happens at the Consecration during every Holy Mass.

The Eucharist is the most important act of worship. All Catholics are bound to attend Mass every Sunday and Holy Day, and are encouraged to receive Holy Communion. Some practising Catholics go to Mass

every day to receive the Eucharist.

Eucharistic Adoration

The Catholic Church has also developed the beautiful practice of Eucharistic Adoration. This practice is centuries old, dating back to the Apostles, when the Eucharist was carried to the homes of those people who could not attend Mass. Eucharistic Adoration is a sign of devotion and worship of Jesus, who is truly present – Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity – in the Eucharist.

The Holy Eucharist is placed in a very special vessel called a 'monstrance'. This is made of a precious metal and is shaped like the sun to symbolise the resurrection of Jesus. The centre of the monstrance has a round glass through which the sacred Host can be seen. Behind the glass is a circular, or semi-circular, metal receptacle called a 'lunette'. The lunette holds the Host securely in place. When the Host is not in the monstrance for Adoration, it is kept safely in its lunette, within a strong container known as a 'pyx' in the Tabernacle.

Saints of the Month

- April 5 - St Vincent Ferrer
- April 23 - St George, martyr
- April 25 - St Mark the Evangelist
- April 29 - St Catherine of Siena



Divine Mercy – Saint Faustina

Saint Faustina was born in Poland on August 25, 1905. She was the third of 10 children. When she was almost 20, she entered the convent

Quiz Time with Lawrence

- What artist painted the iconic 'Starry Night'?
- What is the chemical symbol for silver?
- What river flows through the city of Rome?
- From what country did 70s/80s disco band, 'Boney M' originate?
- What alcoholic beverage is made almost exclusively from various extracts of sugar cane?
- How many London-based football clubs currently play in the English Premier League?
- What is the national currency of Denmark?
- What do the letters ACL stand for when referring to knee injuries in sport?
- Name the American actor who plays the role of Sheldon Cooper in 'The Big Bang Theory'?
- Of which US state is Columbus the capital?
- Who are the current world champions in women's international cricket?
- What nationality is the global environmental activist, Greta Thunberg?
- What is the main language of Brazil?
- How many strings are there on a standard acoustic guitar?
- What 1985 movie featured Simply Red's hit song 'Don't You Forget About Me'?
- What does the 'A' stand for when referring to DNA?
- What Irish county uses the letters 'TN' at the start of its car registrations?
- What high-profile American figure made a cameo appearance in the final episode of Derry Girls?
- What is the name given to a word that reads the same forward and backwards?
- Name the Irish horse racing trainer who, in March of this year, became the first person to train 100 winners at the Cheltenham festival?
- What is the Dublin tram network known as?
- From what London bridge does the annual University Boat race traditionally start?
- What is the Latin term for the Papal blessing delivered by the Pope at Easter, Christmas and on the election of a new Pontiff?
- What Yorkshire city will become the UK City of Culture in 2025?
- Who took over from Stephen Fry as the host of long-running TV quiz show 'QI'?

Quiz Answers: 1, Vincent van Gogh. 2, Ag. 3, The Tiber. 4, Germany. 5, Rum. 6, Seven. 7, Krone. 8, Anterior Cruciate Ligament. 9, Jim Parsons. 10, Ohio. 11, Australia. 12, Swedish. 13, Portugese. 14, Six. 15, The Breakfast Club. 16, Acid. 17, Tipperary (North). 18, Chelsea Clinton. 19, Palindrome. 20, Willie Mullins. 21, Luas. 22, Putney. 23, Urbi et Orbi. 24, Bradford. 25, Sandi Toksvig.



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

Let Your Light Shine!

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, Duramannagh, Dungiven, Fahan, Faughanvale, Garvagh, Gortin, Greencastle,



Youth of Acutis

Official Founding Mass

**3rd May 2024 7.30pm
St Eugene's Cathedral**

'A new group for youth exploring their faith'

Greenlough, Iskaheen, Killyclogher, Killygordon, Kilrea, Lavey, Leckpatrick, Lifford, Limavady, Maghera, Magilligan, Malin, Melmount,