

The NET

Sharing fruits of faith in Derry Diocese

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See inside...



Covid Care - Limavady



Forty Hours - Newtown Stewart



First Holy Communion - Bellaghy



Mercy Day - Thornhill College



“True relationship with God is in the silence”
(Christy Burke, Faith Story, p27)

Silence before the Lord



JPII Reflections - Ballinascreen



Umbrella Room - St Eithne's, Ballymagroarty



Schools' Mass - St Eugene's

People in focus



Josy Augustine - Waterside, Derry



Christy Burke - Ballymagroarty



Mary Hampson RIP - Creggan



Niamh McLaughlin - Kinnagoe, Inishowen



Sr Genevieve Mullarkey RIP - Omagh

Also featuring: Youth programmes update; Youth reflections on Sr Clare Crockett's life, Back to School, World Day of Life, St Francis of Assisi and Beatification of Carlo Acutis; Parish Feature - Part 3; Challenge for Parishes reflections; Children's Catechism; Quiz; and more...

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Bishop Donal reflects on the Pope's prayer intention for October...

The Laity's Mission in the Church

"We pray that by the virtue of baptism, the laity, especially women, may participate more in areas of responsibility in the Church" (Pope Francis)



Bishop Donal

THE Covid emergency has thrown up many challenges for our parishes. And many of the parishes have responded with energy and creativity.

In some areas of our church life, we have moved forward by leaps and bounds. On-line Masses and prayer services, as well as web-based ministry with young people – these have made great advances. And we have come to realise that faith is still a very significant aspect of life for many people. What has it taught me about the way forward?

Three things strike me... Firstly, we are all discovering that active lay roles in parish life are not just theologically important but practically necessary. In the uncharted waters of Covid-19, it is patently obvious that priests should not be trying to handle

issues alone. There are many great parishioners who want to be involved in finding ways forward. They are entitled to play a key role in planning the way forward - and implementing that plan.

It was St Augustine who said, "With you I am a Christian, for you I am a priest/bishop". The priest has a unique role within the community of the baptised. But it is bad theology to think that he has to have all the roles - or that the life of the parish should be reduced to whatever the priest can do.

As our diocesan plan says, we are a welcoming faith community. We are not just a dispenser of religious services. Parishes need to be characterised by empowerment, not by power.

Thus, at a time when clergy numbers are dropping, the

focus has to be on increasing the part that laity can play in the ministry and mission of the local, diocesan and international Church. Just because there are fewer clergy does not mean that the parish should dream of doing less and less.

Secondly, if we are to change our way of being Church, it is essential that our communities are 'growing in faith together'. If parishioners are to 'participate in more areas of responsibility', ongoing faith formation of lay people has to be at the heart of any parish planning.

Lay men and women have the right to mature in the head, heart and hands dimensions of their faith. Indeed, it is irresponsible for a parish not to help its people

- Grow in their relationship with Jesus;
- Understand Church teaching more fully; and
- Be active in parish life.

And that does not just mean training for specific ministries, such as coping with bereavements or leading a prayer group. It means enabling intelligent people to know as much about their faith as they do about other areas of their personal and professional life.

Thirdly, there have been new words circulating in the Church such as 'discernment'

and 'synodality'. A synodal Church is not just reducing Church life to Church politics. We know from civic politics that it can become a venue where powerful interests clash.

Synodality is a way of walking together, seeking not to further our agenda but to promote what God wants. There are many theological, liturgical or pastoral 'hobby-horses'. The Lord's priorities are generally much bigger than the limited perspective of any of us.

We see this in the life of the early Church, where the apostles tried to tell Jesus that He ought to be sensible. We see it at Pentecost and throughout the Acts of the Apostles, where the Holy Spirit pushed the believers away beyond their comfort zone or preferred positions.

Synodality and discernment are not just a way of giving way to the loudest voices. It involves trusting that the Holy

Spirit will guide a praying, community-focused Church. The principal responsibility for laity is not just to be given more paid and unpaid posts. It is about creating structures where they can use their baptism-based gifts to inform the community process of discernment.

Parish Pastoral Councils are just the beginning of a journey. They are part of a way of being Church that we have too often forgotten and neglected. God always leads us forward and never backwards.

And that is what the Pope's prayer intention for October asks us to hold dear. The future may seem unclear to us. But the future is safe in the merciful and loving hands of God.

In this month of the Rosary and of Mission, can we ask Mary to remind us of the lessons that she learned from God's wise and mysterious plans?

WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?
The time to discern is now. It's not just about the future, it's about the present. The Holy Spirit is calling you to a life of faith and service. Discover your gifts and how they can be used in the Church and the world.

HEY LAYPERSON, YOU TOO HAVE A VOCATION!
Every Catholic, whether a homemaker, student, teacher, office or shop worker, farmer, engineer, labourer or retired has an important mission and calling in the life of the Church, to be a missionary wherever he or she is.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES
CHURCH DOCUMENTS: Catechism, Apostolic Exhortation, Missionary Mandate, Evangelical Mission, etc.
BOOKS: Laymen and Women in the Church, The Lay Vocation, etc.
TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE LAY VOCATION: Laymen and Women in the Church, The Lay Vocation, etc.

LIVE & EXCLUSIVE ON RADIO MARIA

HAIL HOLY QUEEN CONFERENCE

FEATURING: FR. RUAIRI O'DOMHNAILL, DANA FR. DAMIAN POLLY MARINO RESTREPO, FR. MARIUS O'REILLY

SATURDAY OCT 10TH FROM 12.30PM

EVERY LAY CATHOLIC HAS THE DIGNITY OF BEING CALLED A LAY APOSTLE OF CHRIST

The Holy Spirit is calling you to a life of faith and service. Discover your gifts and how they can be used in the Church and the world.

WORKING TOGETHER
We need lay people who take risks, who get their hands dirty, who are not afraid of making mistakes, who go forward. We need lay people with a vision of the future, not confined to the little things of life. - Pope Francis



The First Holy Communion ceremony for the pupils of St Mary's PS, Bellaghy.



Bellaghy parish priest, Mgr Andy Dolan celebrated the First Holy Communion ceremony for the pupils of St Mary's PS.

First Holy Communion joy in Bellaghy

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

The NET
Sharing the fruits of the faith in the Derry Diocese

Contacting us:
If you have a story that you would like to share or an event you would like covered by The Net, just drop an email to editorthenet15@gmail.com or ring/text 07809292852

Schools tuned into online Diocesan Mass for new academic year

SCHOOLS around the Diocese tuned into the Mass celebrated by Bishop Donal to mark the opening of the new school year, via the St Eugene's Cathedral webcam because of the continuing health risks associated with Covid-19.

The great work between the Diocesan RE advisors and the primary and post-primary schools in preparation for the start of year Mass, amidst all the extra efforts needed to prepare schools for the safe return of pupils, had helped to keep the focus on faith and the importance of the blessing of this Mass for the school year ahead and the opportunity to give thanks for Catholic education.

In his homily, Bishop Donal told the pupils: "This will be a school year for you to remember. When you are much older, you will be answering the question from your grandchildren – granny and grandpa, what did you do during Covid? You will tell them about being off school and away from many of your friends for six months. You will remember not being able to visit older relations. And you will talk about people wearing masks and washing their hands again and again.

"This is the year when we are not worrying so much about what presents we want to get or give for Christmas – but how we can celebrate Christmas at all, without so many of the things that we take for granted."

Hoping that all were glad to be back at school, he remarked:

"Being at home is ok – but young minds want to learn, and teachers want to help them. And young people want to be with their friends. I hope this school year has gone well so far, especially for those who have been moving to a new school. You have had to face new opportunities and new challenges".

In a special message for those who have moved school, Bishop Donal said: "When you are asked who you are, you can give your name. But you are more than your name. You have family and friends. You have memories of good events in your life and perhaps some painful ones. Each of us has different talents and dreams. We all have a past and we all look towards the future. You are aware that you are feeling happy, or lonely or sad. All of those things make you a unique person. Your name or your exam results do not sum up who you are. Who your mum and dad are do not define you. You are you".

Referring to the Gospel reading of the day, in which Jesus asked his close friends, 'Who do you say that I am?'; Bishop Donal commented: "You may think that this is not a terribly important question. But I believe it is".

He continued: "If you say that you believe in a Jesus who so loved the world that He wanted to take away all its pain and sin, then you will look at everything in the world with eyes of faith. Your life has value and you cannot be

crushed by wrong things that you or others do. If you say that Jesus was just some guy who lived and died far away a long time ago, then you have to ask yourself who you are and what value your life has. If you believe that Jesus told us that He was the Bread of Life and that those who eat His flesh and drink His blood would have eternal life, then that puts a different slant on First Holy Communion and what you do on a Sunday morning".

"Our Catholic schools are not just trying to help you learn, live and laugh," he said, adding: "They also want to help you believe that you are a precious child of God, whose life is worth all the gold in the world a million times over. If you believe that, you can face anything that life throws at you. If you have that belief, you will be able to see something of God in nature, the sciences, history, music and every other subject. You can grow, believing that you are a person with eternal life ahead of you and not just a head that has to be filled with information for exams."

Highlighting that this time of the year, when food is harvested from fields and orchards, from the land and the sea, is known by Christians as 'The Season of Creation', Bishop Donal remarked: "It is a time when we are invited to be amazed at the beauty of creation – and to be aware of how much damage we can do to it.

"All our schools have been provided with material to help

them pray during the next week. Young people often have a great love for the environment. But we do not love creation just because it is amazing. We love Creation because in it we see something of the One who has created this beautiful world for us – and because we are amazed at ourselves. We know that, when the environment is damaged, much suffering is caused to our poor brothers and sisters, for they too are children of the God who loves each one of us. So, we pray that we will learn to use the beauties of creation wisely – and not selfishly".

Asking for God's blessing on everyone involved in education and His help in facing challenges together, Bishop Donal finished by telling the young people that when their grandchildren ask them what they did during Covid-19, they won't moan, but say: "Thank God, it taught me some of the most important lessons of my life."

Many of the schools had composed their own prayers to celebrate the Season of Creation and these had been placed in baskets on the altar steps during Mass, along with the large blanket decorated with school crests.

At the close of the ceremony, Bishop Donal read the prayers composed by St Peter's PS, in Plumbridge, and St Patrick's and St Brigid's College in Claudy, before the singing of the final hymn, 'Give Me Joy in My Heart'



Bishop Donal celebrating Mass for the start of the academic year



Our Lady of Lourdes PS joining online with the Mass for the new school year.



Mary O'Boyle, Post-Primary RE Diocesan Advisor.

St Eithne's school family singing with delight at new Umbrella Room to shield them in the rain



THE school family of St Eithne's, in the Holy Family Parish of Ballymagroarty, in Derry, are celebrating the fantastic development of a most special area within their school with the opening of its unique 'Umbrella Room', as a shield for the children during these difficult times of the Covid-19 pandemic, while also developing emotional resilience and life skills.

As Vice Principal, SENCo and Designated Teacher for Child Protection at Saint Eithne's, Sean Conaghan told 'The Net', that he is "acutely aware of the scale and impact of not only COVID-19 on our children, parents and families, but also the prolonged referral process to the Education Authority in relation to Special Educational Needs".

As a result, he explained that the school had "identified the need for a self-funded and self-sufficient approach to meeting not only the educational needs of our

SEN children but the emotional and wellbeing needs of all of our children".

Stating that this has been their most significant challenge yet, Sean spoke about how this academic year has presented significant challenges in meeting the needs of children.

"The strict constraints of COVID-19 and social distancing guidelines," he said, "have resulted in very limited face-to-face support and interventions from outreach support services. All of this, paired with our present financial crisis, has led us to a position whereby we felt the need to develop an internally driven and strategic in-house support mechanism to meet all the needs of our children.

"This response takes into consideration meeting not only their educational needs but also their social, emotional and mental well-being, which we aim to do through a pastorally rich and

nurturing ethos".

"In a direct response to this issue," he added, "we, at St Eithne's Primary School, have worked tirelessly to create a nurturing presence and ethos within our school and have created our very own unique 'Umbrella Room # To shield us when it rains'.

"This entire room and project has been developed in order to support our children, parents and families in dealing initially with this very difficult and challenging return to school as well as developing emotional resilience and life skills".

Sean explained that they endeavoured to use their 'Umbrella Room' to "support and facilitate children with Social, Emotional, Behavioural and Well-being difficulties in a very calm and nurturing space".

"This room," he said, "will provide a quiet, reflective, peaceful and relaxing atmosphere for not only small groups of children but for the entire school community.

"In this room, the children will be provided with experiences of mindfulness, circle-time and social skills, as well as activities focussed on building confidence, self-esteem and developing relationships and trust".



St Eithne's PS principal, Mr Terence McDowell (centre), who is involved with the school's Pastoral Care Team, and Mr Sean Conaghan, vice-principal, SENCo and Pastoral Care Team leader, with Pastoral Care Team members, Mrs Una Devlin and Mrs Julie Spence.

Its purpose is to emulate the six principals of nurture, which are: Children's learning is understood developmentally; the classroom offers a safe base; the importance of nurture for the development of wellbeing; language is a vital means of communication; all behaviour is communication; and the importance of transition in children's lives



My JP II experience enabled me to participate in new events and create amazing memories

by Enya McDermott



Enya McDermott, Templemore Parish.

I have been completing my Pope John Paul II Award at St Eugene's Cathedral, and it has been an experience I'm so grateful to have gone through. From day one, both of my leaders, Charlotte and Elaine, made me feel so welcome

and part of the group.

Through the Award I have gained more confidence, as the leaders made me feel very comfortable, to the point where I could openly speak to them about anything that bothered me or ask them any questions that were on my mind. I was also able to develop knowledge of my faith, as they educated us more about our religion whilst we attended Mass.

Throughout my Pope John Paul II experience, I have been given the opportunity to participate in new events, allowing me to create amazing memories. One event which will always stick with me is being involved in the annual sleep-out in order to experience how the homeless live daily. Throughout the night we participated in many

different activities, which were extremely enjoyable but also gave us a realistic insight as to what the homeless deal with every night, such as spending a period of time outside and being given the task of building a shelter within that time, whilst being in the harsh, horrific weather.

This opened my eyes about what the homeless have to do in awful weather conditions. It also made me feel sympathetic towards those who suffer; giving me the motivation and drive to do anything I can to help the homeless.

Throughout that night, we were also given numerous talks all on different topics. For example, one had been about a woman's experience of becoming homeless.

This, once again, gave us an insight into how vulnerable these individuals would have been and how life isn't always easy even for the best of people.

Life can change drastically quick and the people who gave the talks made us aware that things can get better, and that just by attending the sleep-out event was a way of showing support.

This is only a short paragraph on my individual experience, even though I could go on and talk about more of the different events we did. The JP II Award was an amazing experience which I'm extremely happy I got to go through and, with the guidance and support of my amazing leaders, things turned out great.

I undertook many activities that were usually completely out of my comfort zone

by Amy O'Kane



Amy O'Kane, St Colm's Draperstown.

DURING the completion of my Pope John Paul Award, I completed many activities that prior to this would usually have been completely out of my comfort zone.

One of the main things I hadn't done before was reading at our full school's assemblies last year, as I am usually quite a shy person.

One of my community hours that I really enjoyed doing was my volunteering in the Cornstore Youth Club. I helped out with the younger children who attended

for two hours every Tuesday night. I played games with them and helped some of the slightly older children prepare to do their Duke of Edinburgh Award.

This helped me gain a lot of different skills that I could use in my everyday life, such as leadership skills, which most employers look at it shows that the person can work independently and take responsibility.

Another activity that I completed, which went towards my parish hours, was the Derry

Diocesan youth 'sleep out' in aid of the homeless people who live in Derry.

This gave me a great insight into how hard life must be for a person who hasn't got a safe home, clean water, food and all the basic necessities that we take for granted every day.

The thing I enjoyed most about completing my Pope John Paul Award was that it gave me a lot of skills and experiences that I would have never have got otherwise.

I am much more involved in my community through JP II Award

by Alaine Doyle



Alaine Doyle, St Colm's Draperstown.

otherwise. For my social hours, I began volunteering every week in my local youth club, which gave me the opportunity to take part in a course in youth work and leadership, and to develop skills which will be useful in the future when I am looking for a job.

Volunteering in the youth club has also meant that I, along with a few of my friends, was able to host a movie night for primary school pupils who went to youth club, as a fundraiser for our pilgrimage to Lourdes, which unfortunately couldn't happen due to lockdown.

I was able to grow my confidence by reading at assembly in school, which I might have been too nervous to do if it were not for the

Pope John Paul Award.

For part of my parish hours, I attended another course in youth work and ministry and, because of this course, I was able to attend a 'sleep out' at St Eugene's Cathedral in Derry. This was important to me and I enjoyed it, as I previously had little knowledge of the issue of homelessness in my community, and this raised awareness of, and raised money for, three different charities which fight against homelessness.

I would never have gone to the 'sleep out' if it were not for the Pope John Paul Award, and would have never realised the significance of this issue, and I now plan on attending the 'sleep out' again if I

have another opportunity to this year.

The course and the 'sleep out' meant that I had the opportunity to meet new people and develop my teamwork skills.

However, personally I have found the most significant impact that the Pope John Paul Award has had on me is that I have become much more involved in my local community. This is due to volunteering in the youth club, helping at Mass and cleaning the chapel, working in the parish office, helping out at events in local primary schools and in my own school, and volunteering at my local doctors' surgery.



It felt rewarding to be part of something to benefit the community

by Ella Doyle



Ella Doyle, St Colm's, Draperstown.

FOR my Pope John Paul Award, I had to do volunteering both in a social and parish setting. Social involved volunteering in my local community, and I really enjoyed this side to it as I got to work with children in my local youth club. I did fun activities with them, such as sports, arts and crafts and dance.

I also helped at local coffee mornings in my community and it felt rewarding to be part

of something to benefit the community and help others.

For my Parish volunteering, I chose to read at my local Mass every week as well as taking part in religious assemblies in school, which really helped with my confidence. I was talking in large groups, which before I would not have done.

I helped at the 'Service of Light' Mass for the primary school children going on to make their Confirmation later that year.

As we were meant to go to Lourdes in July of this year, my friends and I organised a fundraiser to take place in March but, due to Covid-19, it sadly did not take place.

We had already raised a lot of money, which we are going to donate to the Lourdes community to benefit those going next year on their Lourdes Pilgrimage.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed taking part in the Pope John Paul Award and cannot wait to the Award ceremony.

I enjoyed meeting new friends in fun environment

by Holly-Ella McLaughlin



Holly-Ella McLaughlin, St Mary's College, Derry.

I am a student at St Mary's College, and throughout my time completing the Pope John Paul II Award I had a lot of different experiences, which have now helped me to become more confident in myself when interacting with new people and speaking out in front of crowds.

My parish involvement took place in Long Tower Church, with guidance from Charlotte and Elaine. I worked well with the children during children's liturgy,

reading to them and helping them understand some of the stories of Jesus. I also read some of the first readings and this allowed me to become more confident when speaking out in front of a large crowd.

For my Social Awareness, I worked closely with my local youth clubs. Volunteering with the inclusion group at Long Tower Youth Club, I helped in teaching them how to complete several tasks, such as cooking.

At Bishop Street Youth Club, I worked alongside a group of young people who were completing a hamper appeal to gift to the residents of Alexander House at Christmas as part of their social action project.

I would recommend taking part in the Pope John Paul II Award to any young person as I found it a great experience; meeting new friends in a fun environment while appreciating and becoming more aware of the society we are living in.

JPII Award gives young people a sense of belonging in the Church *by Mícheál Murray*



Mícheál Murray, Ballinascreen.

I come from the parish of Ballinascreen and attended St Colm's High School, Draperstown, for seven years.

I first heard about the JPII Award through going to Mass weekly and seeing pupils within the parish partake in Mass on a regular basis. I always liked that, at the end of every Mass when a student had helped out in some way during it, the priest always thanked them for their participation in the Mass.

I signed up because the JPII Award would look amazing on my CV but, more importantly, it allowed me to grow in confidence and also allowed me to help out my parish in various ways.

For my Parish Hours, I read at Mass in my local chapel in Moneyneena, and helped out as a Eucharistic Minister. I also helped to clean Holy Rosary Chapel along with some peers from St Colm's, and helped out at my local chapels with the St Vincent de Paul collections.

I was on a rota for all of these activities. This then meant that I was not tied down to these activities every weekend.

Reading at various Masses in St Colm's, as well as at assemblies, totalled up to be a lot of my parish hours too. Through being a student in St Colm's, everyone has the opportunity to gain hours reading at assemblies and these are very helpful when it comes to achieving the JPII award.

For my social community hours, I volunteered in An Rath

Dubh Community Hall, in Moneyneena. I volunteered at various functions such as funeral dinners and parties, and also set the hall up for meetings and gatherings.

In school, I volunteered at Homework Club, Maths Club and Open Night and Prizegiving. I also helped fundraise for various charities and through doing this it increased my awareness of the needs of others and to minister their needs.

During the winter months, I helped out at the Cubs' Club every Saturday morning, with my local GAA club, Ballinascreen.

I loved the fact that volunteering allowed me to socialise with both the younger and older generations. One of my favourite experiences from the Award was being part of the Derry Youth Team on the Derry Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes. As part of the youth team I was given certain roles, such as reading at Mass and pushing wheelchairs for the elderly. It was fantastic to see how much the older generation appreciated our support for them throughout the whole trip to Lourdes.

I strongly believe that every young person associated with the Catholic Church should take part in this Award. It gives every young person an opportunity to try new things out. Some young people may actually try out something new that could lead them to pursuing that for a career, such as helping out with the older generation at Lourdes or helping with the younger generation at Cubs Club.

The Pope John Paul II Award allows young people to express themselves in the church and also gives them a sense of belonging in the church. Once young people have a sense of belonging in the church then they are more likely themselves to influence other young people to get involved within the church too.

My JPII Award experience has been fantastic!

by Sarah Toland



Sarah Toland, Templemore Parish.

I have been doing my Pope John Paul II Award with the Templemore Parish and my

experience has been fantastic!

I have enjoyed every minute of the activities, ranging from doing the children's liturgy and teaching younger children about the stories of Jesus, be it the Sermon on the Mount or the Beatitudes, and doing a reading.

It was also an amazing experience being able to work alongside our Award leader, Charlotte Gormley, and to see the amazing dedication that she and the rest of the clergy have with regards their preparations for Sunday Mass.

Planting daffodil bulbs and enjoying scrummy buns...

Thornhill celebrates Feast of Our Lady of Mercy *by Ciara Collins*



ON September 24, Thornhill College commemorated the Feast of Our Lady of Mercy by celebrating the Mercy Ethos of our school. The foundation of our Mercy Ethos can be traced back to the life and teaching of Catherine McAuley. Catherine based her life works on the Parable of the Sheep and Goats and the teaching "whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me".

It is through this teaching that our school community was reminded that all of us have a specific responsibility to reach out in mercy to those who are in need, and to give of our surplus.

Catherine taught that "the tender Mercy of God has given us one another", and our acknowledgement of the needs of our worldwide family has meant that this same spirit of love and justice was experienced by all.

With the impact of COVID restrictions, our school community adapted the annual traditions for this day and, instead, the celebration of our Mercy ethos focused on activities for each year group.

Each form class accessed a short video that reminded our pupils of why Mercy Day is celebrated, and encouraged the class to reflect on the impact of the Mercy Girl effect globally, especially with the plight of tea pickers in India.

The girls empathised with the needs of this group and of how young girls were facing living a life without their family due to human trafficking. The music, prayers and short video clip resonated with our pupils, in which they reflected on our unique Mercy Ethos and the impact it can have when we reach

out with open hearts.

Representatives from Year 8, along with our school chaplain, Fr Colum Clerkin, continued our annual tradition of planting a tree in the school grounds to symbolise the educational journey of this year group. As the tree grows, this will be a symbol of the journey that each of them will experience during their time at Thornhill College. Each Year 8 class was escorted outside separately to plant their own daffodil bulb for the Season of Creation.

This positive action will encourage the school community to realise the importance of acting as good stewards of God's creation. The Season of Creation was also emphasised with Years 9 and 10, as they were given their own packaged daffodil bulb to take home and plant in their garden.

In honour of Catherine McAuley's 'a comfortable cup of tea', both the Middle and Senior School students were given a

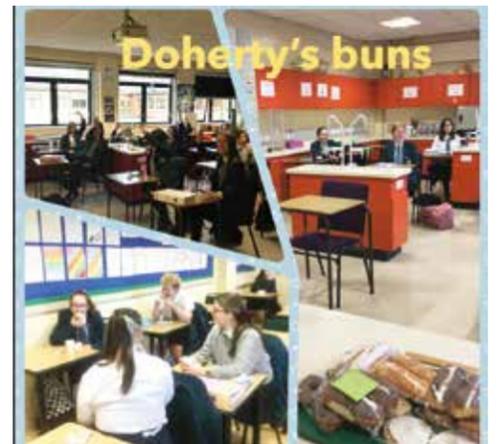
cup of tea and Doherty's bun in their form groups. This period of bonding was very much welcomed and time was given to catching up with their friends and making new ones.

Catherine said that sharing a cup of tea was a means to bring about healing, counselling and a positive way to warm your spirit. This was most certainly apparent for our pupils and could be easily seen in their smiles and happy chatter.

On the whole, the celebration of Mercy Day enabled the school to come together to reflect on our unique history and the value that Mercy has on both individuals and our wider community.

In the words of Pope Francis, "a little bit of mercy makes the world less cold and more just". Happy memories were made and these will see us through the next weeks and months ahead.

(Ms Collins is a teacher of Religious Education and Liturgical Co-ordinator at Thornhill College, Culmore, Derry)



On placement with Diocesan Youth Team, Inishowen student hopes to be...

A rock for those who feel their storm won't take them to port

MY name is Níamh McLaughlin and I am from the Kinnagoe Bay area in Inishowen, Co Donegal. I am 21 years old, and am currently on placement in the diocese of Derry. I am currently doing a Higher Diploma in Pastoral Ministry in St Patrick's Pontifical University, Maynooth.

In May of this year, I completed the Baccalaureate in Theology and Arts course from the same university. Theology is now a big part of my life because of that course. When my undergraduate course came to an end, I was sad as I wanted to continue my theological studies. That was when I came across this course which sounded perfect for me! I

applied and, by the grace of God, I was accepted!

I am very happy to be working with the Derry Diocesan team. I have especially been working closely with Lizzie in the youth department, which I am really enjoying so far.

Very appreciative that the Diocesan team was able to take me on during these uncertain times, I am thankful that they are giving me this opportunity to become a better disciple of Christ, by taking on an active role to help spread the Word of God.

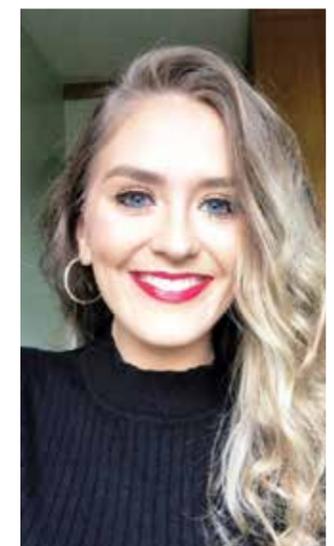
Living in such a scary and anxious time had me concerned about whether or not this was a good year for me to complete this

course, but then I thought, why wouldn't this be the perfect year to do so?

It is a challenging time for everyone, but it is in the challenge that we can become stronger, more faithful and even more spiritual.

I believe that the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us all many things, and the most important for me was trust in God.

By working with the Derry Diocesan team, I am hoping that I will be able to give back to the community, to be a hand for anyone to take when they need the help, and to be a rock for those who feel that their storm won't take them to port.



Níamh McLaughlin, Inishowen.

THIS month, Hollie, Peter and Oisin, 'The Net' youth contributors from the Co Tyrone, Inishowen and Co Derry Deaneries, share their thoughts after viewing the video on Sr Clare Crockett's life, 'All or Nothing'. This film, which has had a powerful impact on many who have seen it, preceded the writing of a book with a fuller account of the young Derry nun's amazing story. 'Alone with Christ Alone' has just been published by the Home of the Mother Order that Sr Clare belonged to as a Servant Sister, when she was tragically killed in an earthquake in Ecuador in 2016.

With Pope Francis signing his new encyclical, 'Fratelli tutti', about fraternity and social friendship, on October 3, which was inspired by Francis of Assisi, Peter also reflects on the life of this Saint, while Hollie reports on the return to school and the greater appreciation of education felt following months of online learning.

Hollie also writes about the annual World Day for Life and Pope Francis' call for care for our common home and for all life, as well as the upcoming beatification of teenager, Carlo Acutis.



Hollie Frystal,
Co Tyrone Deanery.



Oisín Mulhern,
Co Derry Deanery.



Peter Grant,
Inishowen Deanery.



Hollie's thoughts on Sr Clare...

THIS month, I have learned about the extraordinary transformation of a young woman who went from a crazy teenage life to discovering the beauty of her vocation, as a humble nun in the order of the Servant Sisters of the Home of the Mother.

I began watching the film/documentary on Sr Clare, and was struck by her normal, bubbly personality and character. It wasn't something that I was expecting. An 18-year-old choosing God over Hollywood was an amazing decision, which she had concluded after a troublesome journey of self-discovery.

In the words of St Bonaventure, which Sr Clare quoted, "Voluntas Dei, pax nostra" - "The will of God is our peace."

Sr Clare has displayed an example of one who had everything that one could wish for,

eg fame, partying, talent. However, she persistently made known to us her unhappiness through it all. She described a 'void', an emptiness, which she could not fill with luxury and fame - but little known to her, at one time in her life, the love of God and her call was what she had hungered for.

Sr Clare displayed an act of sacrifice in order to follow Jesus, which reflects Jesus' plea to the rich young man in the Gospel; to give up his temporary riches for he will inherit 'treasure' in Heaven.

I believe that Sr Clare is the ideal role model for everyone when it comes to vocation and happiness.

Melanie, from Strabane, who also watched the documentary, commented: "I noticed that she was extremely happy in what she was called to do".

I think this way of life surprises people and it is amazing to know

Sr Clare Crockett's life story highlights...

A life without God is a life without love

by Oisín Mulhern

UNTIL recently, I had never heard of Sr Clare. It was by chance that a friend of my grandparents left Sr Clare's picture with them, explaining a little snippet of her story. It was the first time any of us became familiar with Sr Clare and it sparked my curiosity, I had to learn more. The story struck a chord with me.

Before I discuss the profound effect Sister Clare's life story has had on me, I feel it is important to first highlight who she was and what she did for the church. Clare Crockett was born in Derry, in November 1982, midway through the troubles but, despite this, everyone who met her described her as a loud and energetic personality that could not be dimmed. She had originally aspired to become a famous actress and had the personality to do so.

This all changed, however, when she went on a retreat to Spain after taking the place of her friend who was unable to go. Up to this point, Sr Clare had been leading a lifestyle that many would characterise as wild. She, herself, called it "sinful". Surprisingly, she had even thought that the trip to Spain was going to be a party when, in reality, it was a religious retreat.

However, whilst attending the Easter Service on Good Friday, as part of the retreat, her outlook changed drastically. As she kissed the feet of Jesus on the Cross, she felt the overwhelming urge to cry as she could liken the sins she had committed to the nails that were piercing Jesus' hands and feet. She felt that she was contributing to Our Lord's pain. This realisation led Clare to promise, from that point on, she would live her life according to the ways of God. Clare now had a profound understanding of the love Our

Lord has for His children, as He died on the cross for us.

Despite Clare's initial realisation of the wrong path her life was taking, she, being human, fell back into her old ways. The bright lights of her movie career lured her back into living a superficial life, filled with sin. She continued to drink, party, and even began smoking drugs. However, she felt the Lord's call a second time, during a night in which she had over indulged in alcohol again. This time, whilst throwing up in the toilets, she felt Jesus asking her, "Why do you continue to hurt me?"

Finally, whilst in a hotel room in London reading over her taping schedule for the film she was to star in, she once again felt the need to cry. In that moment, she was sure that her current life was empty and had no meaning. She knew she had to answer Our Lord's call.

The third and final call had solidified Clare's need to become closer to God, so on August 11, 2001, she became a candidate in the Servant Sisters of the Home of the Mother. She had to change many things in her life in order to surrender her life to God. It was not an easy task and in the beginning she considered returning to her blossoming career in acting, but the calling of Our Lord was stronger than that of acting, thus Clare's journey to becoming a nun began. She took her first vows on February 11, 2006, and on September 8, 2010, she made her perpetual vows.

From 2006 right up to her death on April 16, 2016, Clare travelled to a number of countries of the world to spread the Word of Our Lord. During this time, she worked with young girls who came from very difficult family

that there are such happy people out there doing the most humble and selfless things. It is a lesson to us all, for example, to be more charitable. With trust, Sr Clare had let God direct her in the path that He had planned for her and, with courage, she gave up everything that she had achieved in her climb to the spotlight in performing the arts. Instead, Sr Clare replaced her dream to become a "famous actress" with the idea of becoming a "famous nun". She used her influential talents in singing and acting, to attract young people and to deliver the message of Jesus. She was a true inspiration!

Sr Clare also recalls the moment her heart was touched by Jesus' overflowing love through His sacrifice on the Cross. She notes when she knelt and kissed Jesus' feet on the Cross, that within that moment - which only lasted about 10 seconds - she felt a wave of sadness and guilt which she once

felt in the past whilst praying the Stations of the Cross.

She felt compelled to give something back in return for what Christ had done for her and for us all. This struck me that such a simple act can transform and inspire someone to take on a different course of life.

In Sr Clare's life story, I was also taken by the claim that she made a few months before she died. Fellow Servant sisters recall that Sr Clare had told them that she was going to die young, and then some months later she died in a natural disaster of an earthquake. This to me indicates that Sr Clare's relationship with God must have been very close for her to be able to sense when her time would come for her to reunite with Christ.

For young people today, I believe that Sr Clare Crockett is an outstanding role model for us all. I find her teenage years to be very relatable for many



situations. No easy task. However, Clare had a special gift of reaching the souls of children and young people. Through her enthusiasm and commitment, she was able to bring about the healing of their trauma. She also spent time with those who were dying, enabling them to reach peace.

Evangelising

In 2012, Sr Clare was sent to Ecuador to help with evangelizing and teaching the youth. She put her heart and soul into her role. Then, in 2016, she once again found herself in Ecuador, in a region called Playa Pieta. Here she visited the impoverished people and helped to assess their needs and supply them with medicine, food baskets and other items to meet their material needs. It was during this last mission of helping the poor that the terrible earthquake struck the region, leading to Sr

Clare's untimely death.

As with many special people, Sr Clare has become more widely known since her death, particularly in her home county of Derry. My initial curiosity arose due to this fact that Sr Clare is, as they say, 'one of our own'; an inspirational woman from my locality.

After familiarizing myself with Sr Clare's life story, it really resonates with me, as she was an ordinary girl who turned her back on sin to live in the way of God. She had many opportunities of living the life of 'dreams', that is, becoming famous and possibly making lots of money. Many of us will never have such an opportunity, however Clare found that God's calling was much more important.

This, in itself, highlights how happiness is not brought about by money and fame. Life can be overrun with what we see as our

young people out there today; delivering a message of hope and encouragement, to listen out for your call and to respond with complete confidence, humbleness and obedience. Also, to answer

God's love with gratitude, like she did. Sr Clare has also proven the fact that we can gain satisfaction by putting ourselves to the service of God and others





need for material items. When this becomes our goal in life, it is likely that we veer off down the path of sin. A life without God is a life without love. Clare was a 'normal' teenager, partying and boys were the important things in life. However, this life style led to her over-indulging in alcohol, which led to a drop in standards and morality. She, however, had the blessing of realizing that such material ways of living do not bring happiness and fulfillment.

Sr Clare's life story is very current and could resonate among many young people in society today. She led what she described as a sinful life, like many of us do. Young people often party, which, in itself, is not a sin, however binge drinking and drug misuse is extremely prevalent today, ruining many lives.

The message from Clare's life is that she did these things, but realized that in order to live a fulfilling life, she must let God back in. Faith can get us through many struggles and if we ask God for help, as Clare did, we may find facing these struggles much easier.

Clare found meaning in helping others; another great message to us all. We need to learn to put others first. Life is never going to be easy, but when we work together, or for the good of others, we often find happiness and satisfaction.

Not all of us will get a specific calling like Clare; however, God calls us every day to live by his way. We need to take time out to reassess what actually is important in life, and talk to God when we need help. Jesus died for us on the Cross because He loves us all. He is with us always and, as Clare realized, we need to ask Him for help, as Jesus will guide us when we let Him in.

Clare's story is powerful because of how she turned her life around. She faced the struggles that all young people face. She showed us that life is by no means easy but we can find meaning in helping others and accepting God's call. She highlights how God loves all His children, how He forgives time and time again, and how He can change lives when we open our hearts to Him.

Peter reflects on the religious 'Derry Girl'



WHEN Clare finally realised that she was to devote her life to God and give up her dream of acting, she took that step, on August 11, 2001, and joined the Servant Sisters of the Home of our Mother, in Spain.

Following her years as a candidate and novice, she took her first vows on February 11, 2006. Soon after, she received a grace to comprehend what the Lord

had said one day to St Catherine of Siena: "You are the one who is not, and I am He who is." And this truly transformed her and helped her as she matured physically and spiritually with God.

Sr Clare arrived at her first assignment in the community of Belmonte, in Cuenca, Spain. There she helped girls to thrive in life through the tough times their families were going through, and used her natural talents and happiness to help vulnerable girls in the area.

It was not long until she was moved and assigned to the 'Land of Dreams', the USA, in 2006. Her work in Jacksonville, Florida, where she did pastoral work at the Assumption School, inspired the young people and helped them learn more of God.

On September 8, 2010, Sr Clare came back to Spain from the United States to make her perpetual vows. Afterwards, she was sent to Valencia, where the Home of our Mother opened another sanctuary. Her superior, Sr Isabel Cuesta, remembers: "Sr

Clare had just taken her perpetual vows. She had given herself completely to the Lord and she did so with all her strength."

In 2011, she returned to Belmonte, and the following year received a new destination where she would be able to put into practice her potential for evangelization. That was in Ecuador, with a small community in Guayaquil. She and the Servant Sisters had only been there for a year and had managed to create a sense of joy, happiness and peace for the people of Ecuador. Most of the children there fondly remembered her for singing and playing her guitar, and teaching them the good things Jesus had done for them.

Sadly, Sr Clare tragically died in an earthquake, along with five other young aspirants, in Playa Prieta, on April 16, 2016, and later was buried in her home place in Derry.

A documentary was made in her honour and I got a chance to watch it. My view of Sr Clare is that she always stayed positive, even in the

most horrible times of life, and she always showed her love of acting.

In her early years, funnily enough, she reminds me on the characters in the comedy series, 'Derry Girls', with her always staying positive about things and, on the odd occasion, having a few drinks and cigarettes, and the craic with her friends.

What I found about Sr Clare, was that she never gave up on her dream, even if she had to go a totally different path to do so. She wanted to become a nun and devote her life to God and leave her dream of becoming an actress. She also inspired others in her teaching about God and Jesus through different and unique ways, like learning through music with her guitar and song.

Sr Clare always made every minute count during the short life she had, and she still managed to be that 'Famous Nun' she wanted to be, as that is what she is regarded as across the world and by her fellow sisters in the Home of our Mother in Spain.

Back to school! – by Hollie Frystal

I remember way back on March 18, the day after St Patrick's Day, we got word that we were not to come back to school as the Education board had to discuss what was going to happen in relation to Covid-19.

That same day, the First Minister announced that schools were to close from the following Monday onwards as we were entering an official lockdown. This time last year, there was no way anyone could have anticipated something like this to happen. All students were two months off sitting their exams and this was soon to be withdrawn.

In the past six months, everyone has had to adapt to the 'new normal' and most recently on the return to school. Whilst being in lockdown we have found a new way of educating and learning via online. Many teachers, parents, and students will know both the positives and the struggle of going online/virtual.

However, I believe I speak for all when I say that we are very thankful we found a 'new form of education' when the traditional and ideal one was not at hand. In keeping with the Season of Creation, we can see how online educating has also contributed to preserving our environmental resources. For example, less paper used. I ask everyone to think about these things and try to combine

both the traditional and virtual online learning tactics for the future, as they have proven to be a success.

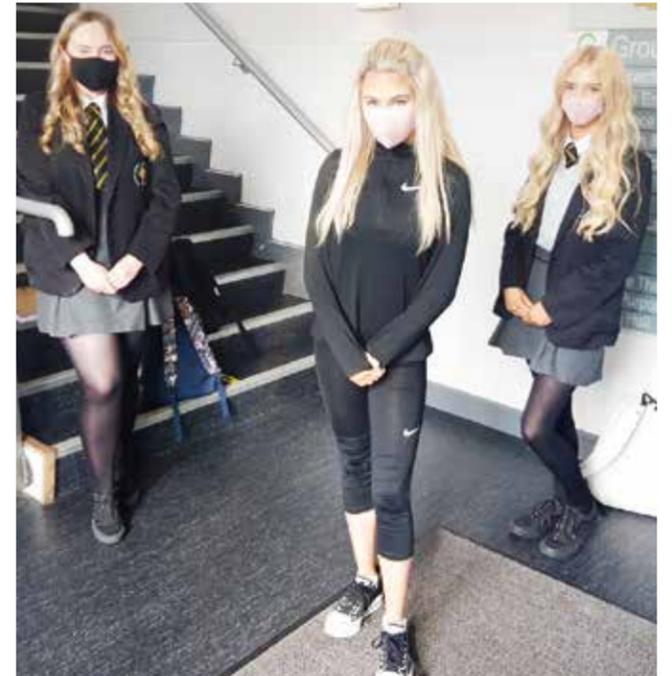
Whilst still living during this pandemic, we have been taught through Matthew's Gospel by Jesus (our teacher) to "Be not afraid". These are the comforting words that I took with me on the first day of school.

Frankly speaking, going back to school was not something I was expecting, however, I was delighted to hear it! Like for so many young people, lockdown and the summer holidays have been a rollercoaster of ups and downs, and a sense of normality really cheered us up.

Rylee, from Strabane, commented on how she felt on the return to school. She said: "I was simply fearful of the unknown, however, now I am glad to be back and I am enjoying the normal sense of routine."

Kellie, who is also from Strabane, commented: "The school has been very cautious and is operating as safely as possible, therefore, I feel better about attending school during this time of pandemic."

And Claire, who is from Strabane as well, said: "I feel very comfortable with the precautions that have been taken, and confident with the effort that everyone is making to manage and control the virus to the best of



Kellie, Rylee and Claire, who are students at Holy Cross College, Strabane - Photograph by Hollie Frystal.

their ability."

I think that these three fellow students' comments reflect how everyone is feeling. Most importantly they express huge enthusiasm which I and so many can relate to.

I believe that this pandemic has had an immense impact in all areas of life. The old saying, 'I didn't know what I had until it was gone' is a common saying which I feel is something we can relate to.

I know so many in the past

dreaded school, however, in September, they were so excited to get back. This surprised me.

We have learned to be more grateful for the gift of education and it has made me think of those who have been deprived of it. We should never take it for granted.

On an endnote, I would like to thank everyone who has made it possible for our young people to attend school and other areas of education this September.

In relation to the 'World Day for Life', Pope Francis has concluded with a positive invitation to each and every one of us; asking that we each be a "guardian of the common home". What this requires is change.

We must approach our world with love and be considerate of

In other words, Pope Francis is expressing the importance of rethinking and discovering the intrinsic value of what God has given to us.

Our actions have led to so many problems, such as water pollution, deforestation, climate change

and the destruction of war, at environmental as well as human cost. This is not a reflection of what God has asked us to do. We are neglecting, if not destroying our planet, and most certainly not loving our neighbour.

In relation to the 'World Day for

Life', Pope Francis has concluded with a positive invitation to each and every one of us; asking that we each be a "guardian of the common home". What this requires is change.

We must approach our world with love and be considerate of

what we will leave to our children and grandchildren...think about that. We must preserve, if not improve "our common home" for the sake of others, and also acknowledge God's beautiful creation and cherish it

World Day for Life "Be a guardian of the common home" (Pope Francis) – by Hollie Frystal



in the courtyard of San Damaso in the Vatican. His Holiness said: "The best antidote against the misuse of our common home is contemplation".

Pope Francis is pointing out that we are misinterpreting what our responsibility is. In Genesis, God told us to "cultivate the world and take care of it", but we seem to be misusing our role and taking advantage of the position that we have been entrusted with. We sometimes forget that we are called to take "care of our common home", instead we try to control it, but that's God's job.

In terms of vocation, taking "care of our common home" is a calling for us all. It is something that we all share responsibility for.

Pope Francis continued to say that the Earth is demanding that "we take another course" of action, because of the damaging results our current attitude has led to in terms of injustice, contamination, and destruction.

On September 16, Pope Francis addressed his general audience

St Francis of Assisi....

The man who focused on friendships and care for others – by Peter Grant

St Francis of Assisi was devoted to God. He gave up his life of luxury to rebuild the Christian Church, care for others and focus on fraternity, teaching us that we are the children of God and that everybody is equal.

St Francis was born in early 1182, in the Italian town of Assisi, into a wealthy family where his father was a prosperous silk merchant. In his youth, he helped his father sell cloths and velvet at the marketplace. He was a handsome, caring and understanding person, who was friendly amongst his wealthy friends.

One day, as he was working at the marketplace selling cloths and velvet, a beggar came up to him and asked for alms. In his father's absence, Francis emptied his pockets of money and gave it to the beggar. His friends found out what he had done and mocked him for his actions, and his father felt humiliated and angry towards Francis for what he had done.

Later on in his early life, he went on a pilgrimage to Rome, where he joined the poor people in St Peter's Basilica. He later returned to Assisi, where he saw a vision of Jesus outside the chapel in the countryside of San Damiano. In the vision, Jesus said to Francis to

repair His beloved house, as which it is in ruins.

Francis did as he was told and sold some of his father's cloths from the market, donating all the money to the local priest for the purpose. He tried to flee from his family but, after a month, his father found him beaten and starved, and he dragged him back home and locked him in a cellar. When Francis was freed by his mother, he immediately returned to San Damiano, where he devoted his life to God.

One morning, Francis was hearing Mass in St Mary of the Angels' Chapel and was listening to the Gospel of 'The Commission of Twelve' from the book of Matthew, where the disciples spread the news of the Kingdom of God. Francis was inspired by this and wanted to do the same as the disciples did but, in his case, he wanted to prove that the poor were also God's children. In other words, everybody is equal and no one is a stranger to one another. That was the message Francis spread to followers, as he was preaching the Word of God.

He soon founded a religious order and travelled to Rome to seek the permission of Pope Innocent III. Francis had the

support of the Cardinal Bishop of Sabina. The Pope agreed to this and supported Francis' religious Order, the 'Franciscan Order'. The Order rapidly grew in numbers across Italy and soon Francis spread his teachings in Morocco, Egypt, and Western Europe.

Francis also strongly believed that nature itself was the mirror of God and that everyone should treat it with respect. He would often preach to birds on his travels and had a strong connection with them that no one had ever witnessed before. He always thanked God for 'Brother Sun', 'Sister Moon', Wind, Earth, Fire and Water.

He had a powerful understanding of animals, too. One day he was in the hills outside the city of Gubbio, where there was a wolf that scared the people. When Francis came across it, he made the Sign of The Cross and commanded the wolf to accompany him to the town. The wolf did as bid and followed Francis to the town of Gubbio, where he faced the people. Francis declared that the wolf had done wrong and that the townsfolk had to feed it, and that, in return, the wolf would no longer harm the people or their flocks.

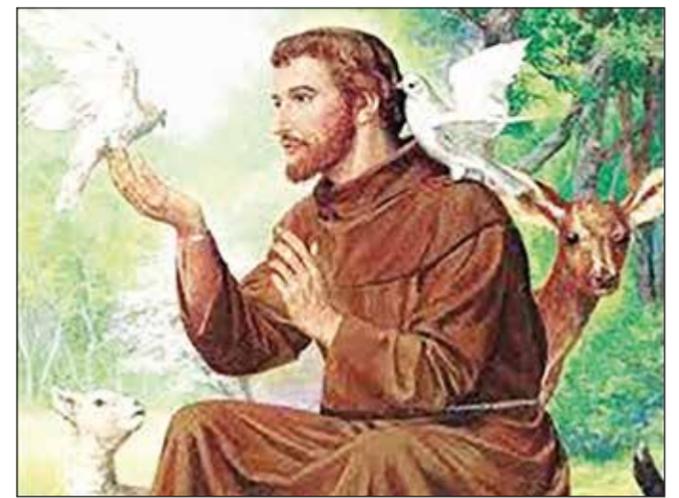
St Francis of Assisi died on

October 3, 1226, and two years later he was pronounced a Saint by Pope Gregory. His Feast Day is October 4.

St Francis will always be remembered for helping the poor and for his teachings of everyone being God's children and equal in the world, no matter how much money you have. Francis will also be greatly acknowledged for his compassion for animals, and his understanding of them and the world that God created for us to respect.

St Francis of Assisi was declared the Patron Saint of Nature and Ecology on November 29, 1979. Pope John Paul II said: "Saint Francis' love and care for the creation was a challenge for contemporary Catholics and a reminder not to behave like dissident predators where nature is concerned, but to assume responsibility for it, taking all care so that everything stays healthy and integrated, so as to offer a welcoming and friendly environment even to those who succeed us."

I believe that we should follow in the footsteps of St Francis in caring for the environment a lot more than we are now, as there might not be a future for younger



"And after that the Lord gave me brothers, No one showed me what I had to do, but The same Most High revealed to me that I Had to live according to the form of the Holy Gospel". (St Francis of Assisi)

people of this generation and the one after that one too. I agree with his teaching that we, brothers and sisters, are to be equally treated and that we should follow the golden rule, 'Treat others as you would like to be treated yourself', and also help the poor.

Pope Francis chose St Francis of Assisi as his papal name as he has a love for the poor and fully

supports them too. You could say that Pope Francis steps in the footsteps of St Francis of Assisi, as he lives a normal life most of the time and understands the people who come and visit the Vatican.

St Francis of Assisi has inspired so many, such as Pope Francis and others, to treat the environment with respect and to treat everyone equally across the globe.

Beatification of Carlo Acutis – by Hollie Frystal



The remains of Carlo Acutis on view for prayer on lead up to his beatification on October 10.

"We pray that Carlo will intercede for all of us with God and obtain many graces for us." – Antonia Salzano (Carlo's Mother).

ON February 22, the Vatican announced the approval of a miracle attributed to the intercession of Venerable Carlo Acutis; an Italian teenager and computer whiz who proclaimed the Word of God through his website 'The Eucharistic Miracles', by using his skills and God-given talents at the service of others.

This approval has paved the way for Carlo's road to sainthood and, on Saturday, October 10, the

London born, Italian teenager will be beatified in the Basilica of St Francis in Assisi.

Carlo Acutis died on October 12, 2006, at the age of 15, shortly after being diagnosed with Promyelocytic Leukemia. Soon after, there were calls for the young boy to be made a saint. This resulted in Carlo becoming a 'Servant of God' in 2013, which is the first stage on the road to Sainthood. Additionally, with

further investigation by the Congregation of the Causes of Saints, he was declared 'Venerable' by Pope Francis on July 5, 2018.

Medical experts confirmed a miracle attributed to Carlo on November 14, 2019. The miracle involved a Brazilian boy, aged 11,

who was gravely ill, suffering a rare congenital disease of the pancreas which prevented him from eating solid foods. The Brazilian boy, with his family and the local parish priest, prayed a novena for the intercession of Carlo Acutis. Within three days, the boy claimed that he was "hungry". He ate solid foods and proved that he was

completely healed. Furthermore, on January 23, 2019, Carlo's body was found incorrupt.

These events have been a turning point for Carlo's road to Sainthood, and have led Pope Francis to announce that Carlo will be beatified on October 10; the last step to Canonization. On October 1, the teenager's tomb was opened for public veneration in Assisi ahead of his beatification.

After Carlo died, his family wanted to donate his organs, however, they were unable to do so because of the leukemia. Carlo's heart is considered a relic and will be displayed in a reliquary in the Basilica of St. Francis.

The rector for the Sanctuary of Spoliation in Assisi, where Carlo's tomb is located, has said that a bit of reconstruction work on Carlo's face was necessary because he had brain hemorrhaging at the time of his death, however, his body was discovered to be fully integral, not intact and having all his organs.

For young people today, I feel that Carlo is an amazing role model for us all. He is modern, therefore relatable and he also appears to have been a very normal teenager. He played video games, the saxophone, and sports. His use of technology was most unique and clever because he used the internet as a way of spreading the Gospel.

Carlo represents the fact that

young people are important in the life of the Church, and that we should use the skills and talents that God has given us. Carlo teaches us to be "original" and not a "photocopy".

I am, personally, looking forward to the beatification ceremony this month. I find Carlo very interesting and inspiring, and what surprised me is the clothes that he is wearing. He is wearing a jumper,

jeans, and Nike shoes! His trainers caught my eye immediately, which further shows his youthfulness and modernity.

In the words of Carlo's mother, "We pray that Carlo will intercede for all of us with God and obtain many graces for us."

I encourage you all to stay in touch with his story, as he is a remarkable figure who is a great role model for us all.

a prayer for guidance

Dear Father,
Thank you for being
The Almighty God
who holds the entire world
And yet cradles my heart.
Today I humbly recognize
the need for your guidance.
How I crave your presence to lead me.
Without your light to shine down,
The path is dim and unclear.
Without your voice to order my steps,
The journey is confusing and obscure.
Show me the movements to mirror your will.
Reveal the master blueprint as only you can;
So that I may boast
in your glory and your plan.
Amen.

rachelwojo.com

Derry Syro-Malabar youth share pandemic reflections on YouTube video

YOUTH from the Syro-Malabar community in the Derry Diocese have produced a YouTube video in which they reflect on their experience of COVID-19, in the light of messages of encouragement delivered by Pope Francis during the pandemic.

The short film was the inspiration of Fr Joseph Varghese, chaplain to the Syro-Malabar community in the Diocese and curate in the Dungiven Parish, who invited Bishop Donal to the launch of the video following the celebration of Mass in St Columb's Church, in the Waterside, Derry.

The first of the six young people featuring in the recording is John Joseph, who speaks about how we are living in unprecedented times, with many losing their lives to the virus, while others have lost their jobs and their savings.

"We have seen our once lively cities become silent and desolate, all because of a microscopic virus," says John, adding: "Yet, as we have heard in many of our Holy Father's addresses, hope is not lost.

"As Christ said to us, do not be afraid. During these times we stand together with the Holy Father and Catholics worldwide as we pray to the Lord to lead us through this crisis."

Then Mekha Saji recalls that when the churches were closed down "each home became a domestic church, each member of the family became a sign of the Sacrament; a visible sign of the unseen Divine Grace".

She mentions how "what used to be a monthly prayer unit has turned into a daily virtual prayer unit as we pray together with our families and our friends. We have now prayed more in our homes than we ever have done before. The family that is able to pray together is able to grow together.

And a group that prays together grows together."

Jermy Jomon follows up, recalling the message of Pope Francis to pray together to bring an end to the coronavirus pandemic.

"He also reminds us," says Jermy, "that this is not the only pandemic that we are facing in the present time. There is also the pandemic of poverty; the pandemic of hunger; the pandemic of war; and much more."

Jermy also speaks about the weekly prayer service the youth of his parish in Cappagh started during the pandemic, which involves music, praise and worship, and a Gospel reflection, before the hour of Adoration ends with Benediction.

"Many youth and even elders join our virtual prayer service from our home parish and from different parts of the country," he notes, adding: "We are with the Church and we are for the Church".

Ashly Sojan tells how the youth of her parish responded to Pope Francis' message urging the faithful to contemplate the face of Christ with the heart of Mary.

"This message," she says, "encouraged us youth to actively participate and take the lead in our family prayers, with more devotion and to say the Rosary with much more love. Saying the daily Rosary gives us time to remember and pray for those who are suffering during these difficult times."

Reflecting on the situation where many students and educators have had to resort to online education, Josh John comments: "This has brought many grave challenges and has now become a great source of worry for many students, as many don't know



Youth of the Syro-Malabar community in the Derry Diocese who produced a pandemic reflections video, with their chaplain, Fr Joseph Varghese and Bishop Donal at the launch ceremony.

what the future holds in store for them.

"However, the Syro-Malabar community in Derry has provided extensive support for our youth, and continues to do so. We have held various virtual prayer sessions, and such great efforts from our parish, combined with consistent prayer, has enabled the youth to develop a strong sense of faith.

"Our Holy Father continues to remind us of Jesus' consoling words – Do not be afraid, for I am with you always".

Praying for the sick, Jainy Jomon talks about how, after she had finished her degree, she had got "an amazing job as a cardiac physiologist".

"I was so happy and blessed

in my life, until the Covid-19 pandemic happened," says Jainy, adding: "We were all sent to Covid-19 wards to look after those patients affected by the pandemic. During those difficult times, I always remembered the words that Jesus said, 'When I was sick, you visited me'."

She finishes by saying that the prayers of the Pope, and his concern for the sick and dying, had comforted her and given her joy as she helped every patient in her care.

Speaking towards the end of the video, Fr Joseph points out that, although in isolation, "we can be together in prayer", and he went on to pray St Patrick's prayers, inviting the Resurrected Christ to surround, protect and guide us.

Commending the video, Bishop Donal describes the Syro-Malabar community as being "an enormous blessing on the Irish Catholic Church ever since it came to our shores, not just in terms of the wonderful work that some of them are doing in the healthcare sector and in other areas of life, but because of the wonderful sense of community and faith that they have brought to the Church".

He adds: "They have inspired people to marvel at their commitment to one another and at their journeying in faith together."

Bishop Donal goes on to recall his experience of the 2018 Synod of Bishops regarding young people and faith: "The emphasis

was very clearly there of the Church being renewed by young people. It will be renewed not by old folk like me, but by us making sure that our young people, full of grace and full of the Holy Spirit, are able to be the evangelisers in this new millennium."

Commending the spirituality behind the video and the wonderful contributions of the young people, he says: "I marvel at what you as a community have to offer, what the young people have to offer, and our job is to ensure that, like St Eugene and St Columba here in Derry, they will be the new apostles of the new time of flourishing in the Church."

The Syro-Malabar youth video can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/yoPM0CNy2w0>.

Pandemic period offers time to nurture faith

THE technical work on the production of the Syro-Malabar youth video was a labour of love for 27-year-old, Josy Augustine, who thoroughly enjoyed his involvement in the venture.

After the young contributors had sent him the recordings of their reflections, Josy embarked on the editing and compiling of the video content, and community chaplain, Fr Joseph was delighted with the outcome.

Since he arrived in Derry from Kerala, in India, as a 14-year-old with his parents, Augustine Joseph and Jeltrude Augustine, Josy has been very involved within the Syro-Malabar community in the Waterside.

"When I was 14, I was an altar boy at our Syro-Malabar Masses and I used to be the coordinator for the choir," he recalled, adding: "Now, I help Fr Joseph with online work and preparation for Mass.

"When Fr Joseph came up with the idea for the video, we decided to approach the youth in the community about sharing their experience during lockdown, and they were very open to it."

While the former St Columb's

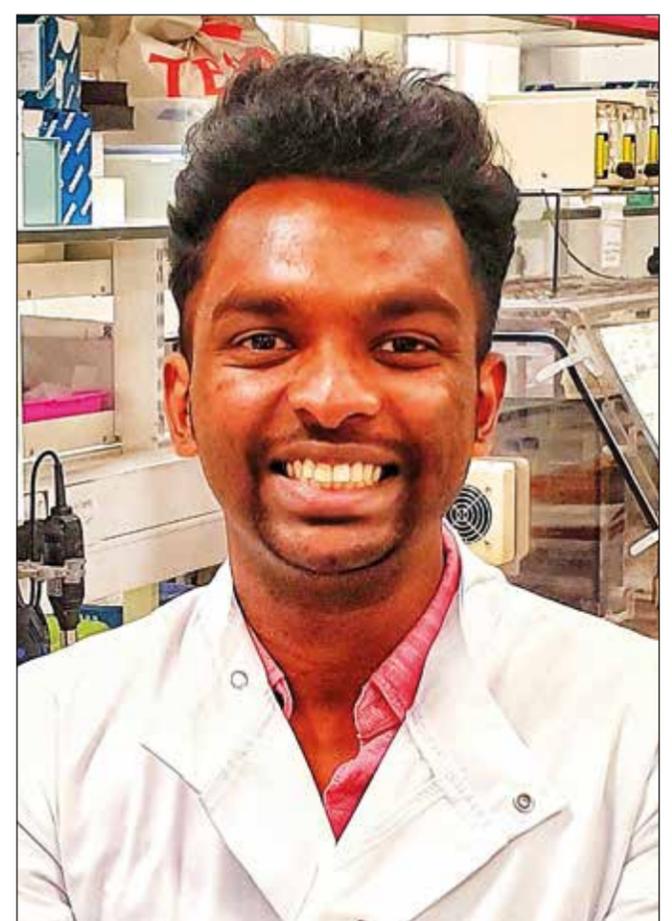
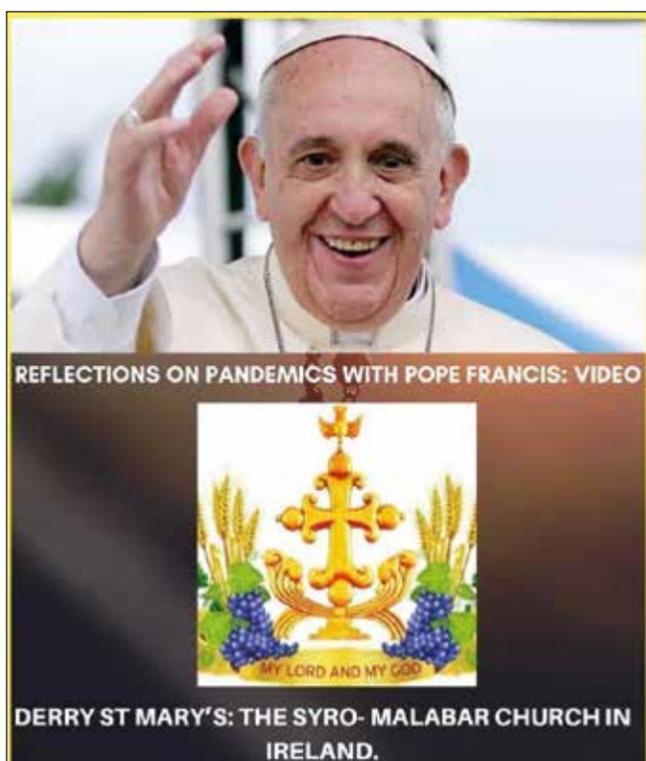
College pupil is a bit of a computer whizz, his main work is as a scientist at Queen's University, in Belfast, where he stays during the week.

"I finished my PhD in Medicine and now I am involved in Diabetic Research," he explained, adding that he loves going home at the weekends and enjoys helping with the online streaming of the Syro-Malabar Mass, which is celebrated every Sunday at 3 pm in St Columb's Church.

Faith is very important to Josy, who was happy to be able to continue his Catechism studies in Derry after moving from Kerala.

He remarked: "The study of the Catechism definitely helped my faith, teaching me how to pray and be close to God from a young age.

"When a problem arises, I find it good to have my faith and to pray about the situation. And, I think this time, during Covid, is a perfect opportunity to nurture faith. It is a good time to read and gain more knowledge, and I would recommend watching online videos to help connect with God."



Josy Augustine of the Syro-Malabar Community in Derry.

Youth News by Yvonne Rooney...

Online outreach to parish leaders and volunteers

THE Diocesan Youth Team want to continue to connect online with parish leaders and volunteers involved in Youth Ministry. Our team is currently offering online Zoom meetings for parish leaders to come together to share practice and explore ways to engage with youth at parish level, in these exceptional times.

It is a difficult time in parishes when many ministries that are

specifically for young people simply cannot take place to ensure everyone's safety. However, there are still some ways to engage young people online, such as online programmes and social media platforms. Parishes interested in these and the safeguarding protocol for them are welcome to get in touch.

Zoom meetings for parishes are also available to provide

information on various programmes and initiatives such as Children's Liturgy, GIFT, Alpha, Nua, Summer Camps, the Pope John Paul II Award and Youth Pilgrimages, all of which we hope and pray will return in due course.

During lockdown, we offered some parish leader online training sessions, for example in Zoom and Instagram, and an online Adult Alpha for parish leaders that ran

for eight weeks. This was a very fruitful forum for gathering and we will offer more of this in the year ahead.

Beginning this October, we will offer another eight-week programme to gather, pray, watch a video and discuss our faith, albeit, from our own homes via an online platform.

For more details contact yvonne.rooney@derrydiocese.org.

Update on Pope John Paul II Award

CIRCUMSTANCES have changed drastically for young people completing their Pope John Paul II Award this year, and Year 14's/Sixth Years due to complete the award have been granted an extension to January 22, 2021 to submit record cards and reflections.

The Derry Youth Team has put in place an online youth programme that will help young people complete tasks and activities as part of their award.

The 14th Annual Award Ceremony will take place in March/April 2021, but the form of this ceremony is dependent on public health guidelines and may take place at local level.

Regarding the new cohort of students for 2020/2021, materials have been sent to schools/parishes via the award leader for a video launch to Year 13/Sixth Form students.

Given the significant level of change in every parish and the variation in parish ministry at this time, we are encouraging parishes to communicate possible roles for the young people who sign up this year.

If you would like more information about this please contact yvonne.rooney@derrydiocese.org or lizzie.rea@derrydiocese.org

Many parishes have appointed a Parish Award Leader to help

coordinate young people as they fulfil the parish involvement strand of the award.

Parishes have found this very beneficial and there will be a virtual meeting of parish award leaders via Zoom on Tuesday, October 6 to discuss new additional guidelines for completing the award this year, considering Covid-19 Restrictions.

For more details contact yvonne.rooney@derrydiocese.org

Papal Cross Award

The Papal Cross Award is a tremendous opportunity for those students who have achieved Gold in the Pope John Paul II Award.

If young people have completed Gold, we invite them to consider



staying involved for another year by doing their Papal Cross.

In addition to parish and social awareness involvement and the diocesan youth ministry online programme, participants are asked to undertake a project of their choice.

We hope Papal Cross Students will have the opportunity to do an accredited leadership course with Youthlink NI during this year.

Derry Youth Ministry Online Programme

THE Youth Team is offering young people, Year 12 and upwards, the opportunity to get involved in an online programme that will begin on October 19.

This programme will run for eight weeks each term and include a range of faith, social action, and personal development sessions for young people.

It will be delivered via the #derryyouth social media platforms of Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.

Youth programmes, such as Youth Alpha Online, will be delivered via Zoom.

For more details contact the Diocesan Youth Coordinator lizzie.rea@derrydiocese.org.

Derry Youth Ministry Scholarship

FOLLOWING on from the Derry Youth Ministry Online Programme that ran from March-July 2020, senior students were invited to apply for the Derry Youth Scholarship.

This new initiative has accepted 11 students for the incoming year. The Scholarship is a programme enriched with faith formation, community involvement and

opportunities to gain life and team building skills.

It offers:

1. A chance to learn about and grow in faith with a community of young people;
2. Gain a qualification in youth ministry eg a Level 2 OCN course with Youth Link NI;
3. Experience and participate in service through community outreach projects;
4. Have a laugh and a fun time getting to know yourself better and those you journey with;
5. Continue or become an active member of your parish and/or

diocese;

6. Be well equipped and supported with your discernment and transition from school to working life or university.

For more information contact lizzie.rea@derrydiocese.org.



Youth Link NI

YOUTH Link NI is the inter-church youth service for Northern Ireland. It exists to provide support and training for youth workers and to provide good community relations experiences for young people.

Most training is accredited at OCN Level 1, 2 or 3. Courses or sessions can be on youth leadership, community relations, citizenship and peace and reconciliation issues.

Congratulations to the Diocesan group of young people who recently were awarded their Level 1 Certificates in Practical Skills in Youth Ministry.

We hope to run this course again, this year, and any young person aged 16-18 is welcome to

apply.

Youth Link have made changes with many courses and training programmes and are now offering online facilitation and participation.

Parish leaders and volunteers are invited to consider the OCN NI Level 2 qualifications in Youth Work Practice. This enables learners to develop knowledge and practical skills to deliver quality youth work in a faith setting.

These qualifications can also provide progression opportunities from Award to Certificate and to a Level 3 qualification in youth work. They are also recognised by Ulster University and will assist learners in applying for the Level

4 Certificate in Youth Studies and the BSc (Hons) Community Youth Work.

The OCN NI Level 2 Certificate in Youth Work Practice is particularly suited to those who have some limited experience in youth work and want to further develop their skills. Learners must be over the age of 18 and currently volunteering or working in a youth work setting. We already have interest from parish leaders in the diocese wishing to do this Certificate in Youth Work Practice and a cohort will begin this October 2020.

For more information contact yvonne.rooney@derrydiocese.org.



Team work activity during Level 1 Training Day.

GIFT Growing in Faith Together Parish Programme

GIFT is a parish programme for which participants are recruited through their post-primary schools and/or their parish. The programme is aimed at students in KS3/Years 1-3.

Last year several parishes ran GIFT 1 for Year 8/Year 1 students and it is hoped to run GIFT 2 for Year 9/Year 2 students after Christmas, but this will be subject to public health guidelines.

Unfortunately, due to current social restrictions, the GIFT 1 programme due to run this autumn will not be possible in its current form and we are proposing an online version as an option.

The GIFT programme creates

opportunities for young people to grow in faith through the experience of friendship, where students have an opportunity to participate in a varied holistic programme of activities in a spirit of faith, fun and prayer together.

For more details please contact the Diocesan Pastoral Youth Leader at yvonne.rooney@derrydiocese.org.



Derry Youth Community

THE Derry Youth Community continues to seek new members for the incoming year and interviews are underway for new recruits.

Young people are invited to commit to nine months working with the Diocesan Youth Ministry Team to serve the young people of our Diocese.

Pastoral outreach for the community includes retreats, talks, Pope John Paul II Award support and other faith formation initiatives, including programmes such as Youth Alpha and GIFT.

There will be a greater focus on developing and delivering online

youth material this year and assisting with the Diocesan Youth Ministry Online Programme, which begins in October.

For bookings or more information, please contact the Derry Diocesan Catechetical Centre.



Limavady parishioner excited about Youth Ministry Scholarship

MY name is Sarah-Jane Carten and I am a Year 13 student at Lumen Christi College, in Derry. I live just outside Limavady and am a member of the Limavady Parish.

I was very interested in the Derry Youth Ministry Scholarship for a number of reasons. First of all, I loved the idea that it involved connecting with my community through faith, outreach programmes and social media.

I was also really excited about the prospect of meeting new

people with similar interests to myself through the scholarship. I felt that this would be a great opportunity for me to deepen my understanding and appreciation of my faith.

By the end of the year, I hope to have gained experience from the scholarship, to have made memories and developed new friendships with the other scholars, and to have strengthened my faith and relationship with God.

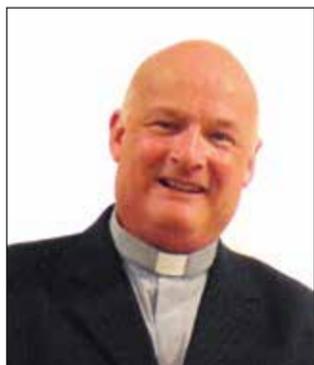


Sarah and Amy, from the Ballinascreen Parish, and Maria, from Cranagh, who recently were part of the group of young people from the Diocese who received their OCN Level 1 Certificates in Practical Youth Ministry Skills.

THE series of reflections from people in parishes around the Diocese, on their experience of life in lockdown due to Covid-19 continues, alphabetically, this month, with more to follow in the next edition of ‘The Net’.

Errigal – Glenullin...

The Holy Spirit is igniting our hearts with a new burning love and appreciation of our faith



Fr Brendan Crowley, who is PP Errigal (Ballerin & Glenullin)

AS a mother of four, ranging in age from 4-12 years old, lockdown provided its challenges initially. However, after the first week, which seemed eternal, we settled into our new routine. We enjoyed quality family time, no running here or there. It was just the six of us together, in our own company, enjoying what was a much simpler way of life.

I quickly became thankful for living in such a rural area in the middle of Co Derry. We often went through fields to the river to play, swim and splash. We packed picnics, climbed trees and were in no rush to go anywhere. We all noticed God’s beautiful world more. We heard birds singing and watched wild flowers appear. We saw the famous ‘Glen Eagle’ and its young soar, hover and hunt over mountains and our valley.

We took time to breathe, savoured new-found quality family time and enjoyed the peace. Daddy finished building a tree house; we began to sew and bake. We bought chickens and made a hen house under the tree house. We were free range, living ‘The Good Life’.

We were thankful for our community volunteers who rallied around and organised very efficient services for the elderly and those at risk from COVID 19, who had to shield at this time. The local shop provides a telephone and delivery service, and a safe shopping experience for all. Volunteers, led by our GAA committees, identified and approached those in need, collected prescriptions and provided their support to enable those in need with any ‘messages’.

The camogs and footballers quickly came together and organised a fundraiser to help the SVP group facilitate any requests during this time. Lots of parishioners walked and/or sponsored the Glen 500k walk. Albeit alone and in our own time doing 5 km or more, together the people of Glenullin walked

1,007 kms and raised £2,000+ for Errigal SVP.

Our community Whatsapp group grew and was a great asset, providing valuable information and comfort to all, especially to those who live away from home who had elderly loved ones living on their own in the parish. Everyone was in good hands; everyone would be looked after. Our community Whatsapp also enabled a resourceful group of volunteers who, with donations of fabric from hot-presses across the country, lovingly made scrubs that were in short supply for keyworkers. This truly was God’s love, shining through strongly and brightly in every stitch; “... God is love.” (John 4:8)

Ruairi Boylan, @RuPic Photography, took a beautiful collection of photos of all our OAPs, or Silver Citizens or VIPs as we prefer to think of them, and extended the invitation to those with ‘ties’ to the various townlands of Glenullin. A historic document, but it was also a collection of cherished people that we could all see again, all with their lovely smiles. They were living and looking well and, by God, we were glad to see them. The warm, fuzzy feelings of pride, joy and happiness flowed as we flicked through the album on Facebook, and we were reminded of the need to cherish and protect the ‘Golden Oldies’ in our community as best we could, and of the loyalties we should have for them. “Honour your father and your mother.” (Exodus 20:12)

We were thankful for our parish priest, Fr Brendan Crowley, who quickly set up a webcam and Facebook page. He was diligent in keeping us informed of the Word

of God, providing the comfort of a local Mass from St Mary’s Ballerin, our sister church, where we could experience the Eucharist in a spiritual way.

He also posts his sermons and notes to the Parish of Errigal Facebook page for us to read and ponder in our own time. I look forward to this post. I can prepare my mind to hear the message God wants us to, here, now, today. Fr Crowley strove to re-open St Mary’s Church and St Joseph’s Church simultaneously for public worship, ensuring all protocols were met.

The staff of St Patrick’s and St Joseph’s Primary School were excellent and provided packs, resources and learning aids for home schooling, and also provided invaluable support and time to their pupils and parents. Mrs Feeney kept us informed of all the Feast days and sent out online lessons and links for these, such as that of Our Lady of Fatima, the Feast of The Sacred Heart, Trinity Sunday and Pentecost, etc. Our faith has been kept alive and somehow we appreciate it all the more.

As a Children’s Liturgy leader, I set up a Whatsapp group for all parents and children of the parish to have access to the Sunday Gospel with guidance, questions and answers, along with various practical activities, themed songs and videos suitable for children.

As a parishioner, I was given the opportunity within the Derry Diocese to embark on a series of Zoom meetings hosting the Alpha program. Time for me, time to reflect, time to study, time to pray, time I enjoy. We congregated and discussed all sorts of fascinating elements of Faith, Hope and Love.

“The greatest of these is Love.” (1 Corinthians 13:13)

In 2020, I feel the presence of the Sacred Heart and the Holy Spirit more than ever. This is a positive outcome of this pandemic. The Word of God is triumphant in our homes, loud and clear, with broadcast Mass and online Healing services and Rosaries from near and as far away as Macroom, in Co Cork, thanks to churchservices.tv. ‘The Good News’ is being sought after, has new-found value, is being cherished, and God is being truly worshipped. Communities have become bigger and stronger. People post links and prayers and have confidence to do so. People are thankful for these notes and links. The Word of God is penetrating through and being heard.

God was here; He always had been. We just had to cut back some of the briars of our busy lives, and open the door from the inside. Jesus Christ is here, waiting for you! The Holy Spirit is igniting our hearts with a new burning love and appreciation of our faith. “But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.” (Romans 8:37)

As Christians, our response to the Coronavirus pandemic has been positive. Pope Francis talks about the concepts of Newness, Harmony and Mission in his book, ‘The Church of Mercy’; a message of hope for all people. “Spirituality, Generosity, Solidarity, Perseverance, Fraternity and Joy are all values whose deepest root is in the Christian faith.” Let’s embrace it.

(Clare)



St Joseph’s Church, Glenullin.



2020 Collection by Ruairi Boylan, @RuPic Photography



2020 Collection by Ruairi Boylan, @RuPic Photography

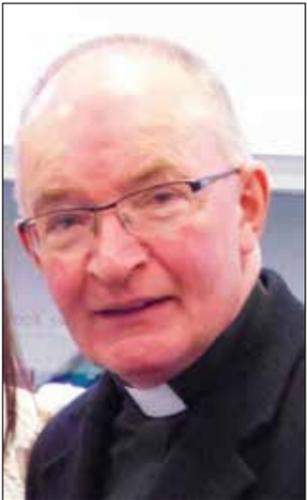




Star of the Sea Church, Faughanvale.

Faughanvale and Lower Cumber Parish...

Fr Noel kept busy dealing with our prayer requests and emergencies



Fr Noel McDermott, PP Faughanvale.

JUST before the March lockdown was announced we had the privilege of having Bishop Donal with us for our Confirmation service, during which we received his blessing as we embarked on our 'Covid-19 lockdown journey'. St Patrick's Day was to be our last public Mass for the foreseeable future.

With the lockdown of our churches and no access to Holy Mass, we, like many others, had to renew our reliance on the sacramentals of the Church, including the Rosary, Divine Mercy Chaplet, holy water, blessed candles, scapulars, readings from the Bible etc.

Added to this 'holy armour of God', we were fortunate to already have the webcam installed in our Church, so were able to 'tune into' the Masses celebrated by our parish priest, Fr Noel McDermott.

Of course, for some this was a complete 'learning curve' regarding IT and social media. Unfortunately,

some of a particular generation did not have access to this technology.

A bonus of this IT experience, since we were now house bound and with more time on our hands, was that we had time to access and avail of the many and varied catechesis and prayer programmes being offered throughout our diocese and further afield, including the possibility of joining with Pope Frances for his extraordinary apostolic blessings, plenary indulgence and daily homilies.

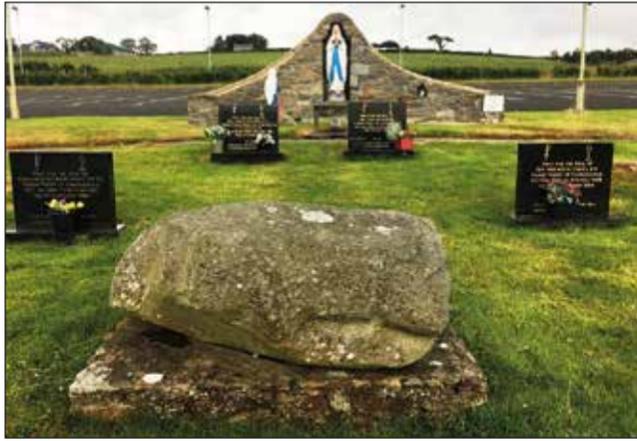
We were happy to receive our parish bulletin on-line on a weekly basis, which kept us up-to-date with deaths and prayer resources, courtesy of Fr McDermott and our secretaries.

Our sacristans kept our churches accessible for our funerals and even looked after our graves for us in our absence. Candles and Mass cards were available on request and our priest was kept busy, via his emails and text messages, dealing with our parish prayer requests and emergency situations.

Thankfully, our Churches were opened again for quiet prayer and visits to the graveyard, which was consoling to so many, and we all looked forward to gathering again around our altar to celebrate the sacraments with our priest in person.

Virtual parish communities cannot and should never replace a vibrant, living, prayerful community of all generations, which we are blessed to have in Faughanvale.

Brenda



The beautiful grotto in the grounds of Star of the Sea Church, Faughanvale, near to the graves of former priests of the parish, whose intercession parishioners continue to seek.



Two young Faughanvale parishioners who helped out with little fence painting jobs, etc, during the pandemic.

Granaghan (Swatragh)...

Fr Keaney kept us nourished with his excellent homilies

OUR parish, like all other parishes, went into lockdown on March 17. It is been strange times. No one could ever have imagined that our Churches would be locked up. It made me realise how much I had taken daily Mass for granted, but here in Granaghan we are truly blessed

Our parish priest, Fr Charlie Keaney made a big effort and got a webcam into our Church, which made it possible for us to see and hear Mass daily. He also kept us nourished with his excellent homilies, breaking God's Word for us daily.

At the beginning of the pandemic I felt so fearful and worried, but as time went on I realised that the Church is more than bricks and mortar. Jesus is

always present everywhere and to everyone; locked doors can't keep Him out.

It has brought us back to the early days of the Church, where the faithful all met in their homes for prayer and the breaking of bread.

Thank God we are now able to be present in our Church, though smaller in numbers, for Mass and the Sacraments.

It is a very stressful time for our priests, who have to go to great lengths to keep themselves and their parishioners safe. May God reward them for their generosity and care.

Hopefully we will all come out of this pandemic better and more grateful people.

(Jane)



Fr Charlie Keaney celebrating Mass in St John's Church, Swatragh.

Greenlough...

The Living Church is not just about a building



Fr Dermot Harkin, Greenlough.

JUST like other parishes during the last few months, the parishioners of Greenlough have had to face into unprecedented and fundamental challenges as to how we live our daily lives, including how we work, shop, come together, take leisure and stay safe.

Our lives have all been affected but, in the worst of circumstances, we have seen the best of people.

We are indebted to our curate, Fr Dermot Harkin, who has particularly enriched our faith experience so much by daily Mass through the medium of webcam at 9 am and 7.30 pm.

He has shown us that the Living Church is not just about a building. He has kept in regular contact with us all, praying for our intentions as and when required. He has kept our spirits up, especially the pupils of St Mary's PS, who were looking forward so much to the Sacraments of Confession, First Communion and Confirmation. His good humour has been a bonus and much appreciated.

The local Parish Community

Group, Bann Valley, have played their part also, providing food parcels and general assistance throughout the wider community.

Thanks to volunteers, St Oliver Plunkett's Church has now re-opened and normality is slowly returning.

As a local councillor, I had the opportunity at a recent Council meeting to pay tribute to frontline services that we are all indebted to, and sometimes forgotten are our clergy, many of whom are 'shielding' themselves. They have encountered many challenges, in particular, visiting the sick and sadly burying the dead. As 'essential workers', they have truly played their part in this pandemic.

(Martin)



St Oliver Plunkett's Church, Clady.



The congregation in St John's Church, Swatragh, for Bishop Donal's parish visit Mass.

Greencastle – Co Tyrone...

There were new wonders every day and God was everywhere



Fr Eddie Gallagher, PP, Greencastle, in St Patrick's Church.

We are a retired couple who shielded since the establishment of the lockdown in Northern Ireland. What could have been a very isolated and difficult time for us was made immensely special through the kindnesses of family, fellow parishioners and, of course, our inspirational priest, Fr Eddie Gallagher.

A Derry native, Fr Eddie has made himself well and truly at home in the hills of Tyrone and has been our anchor over the last few months of 'staying at home'. We looked forward to and participated in his daily Masses from the oratory in the parochial house, which became such an important start to our days. Not only were Fr Eddie's Masses popular within the parish, but there were people with links to the parish and to Fr Eddie himself

tuning in from all over Ireland, and as far away as America. We felt very much part of the universal church, praying for an end to the Coronavirus pandemic sweeping the world.

The oratory in the parochial house was built by a former parish priest, Fr Ryder, and what foresight he had in creating this beautiful space and collaborating with very talented parishioners in the design of the stained-glass windows behind the altar, which are so uplifting during the daily broadcast.

Fr Eddie ensured that he was on top of all the technical issues of broadcasting by enlisting the help of his tech experts in the parish. His singing and choice of music were especially prayerful and we all joined in at home. He also included some updates on parish life at the end of each Mass, so we felt connected both in worship and in secular matters. Fr Eddie also broadcast the Rosary every day, and the great thing about that was if you missed it in the morning you could listen and pray it on your daily walk.

He also broadcast the Angelus/ Regina Caeli every day at noon, which in my opinion revived the tradition of praying this beautiful short prayer amid the busyness of our daily lives. Fr Eddie excelled at getting everyone to feel that they were part of what was going on,

by having Rosary walks through all the townlands of the parish over a number of weeks. He took the time to stop and chat to everyone at end of their lanes or at the various crossroads, and some even brought their instruments to better join in the praise of Our Lady.

When the Rosary walks were completed, he then had The Blessed Sacrament walks through the townlands, where he stopped and blessed each family as he passed their lane/house. These walks were more solemn and were very special indeed. After these were completed for each townland, Fr Eddie began evening broadcasts (as well as the ongoing morning broadcasts) where he journeyed with us through the Acts of the Apostles, which were both interesting and informative.

We were very blessed to have such wonderful weather during lockdown. This gave us the opportunity to spend time outside and to reflect on the beauty of our surroundings and the biological diversity of our mountain parish; the fields, the birds, the butterflies, the wild flowers, the trees. We had the opportunity to observe the leaves sprouting on the trees in early spring and were excited at the return of the cuckoo and the swallows. How lovely it was to sit and listen to the humming of the bees in their colourful paradise

during Fr Eddie's Rosary!

We were never disappointed, there were new wonders every day and God was everywhere. We were fortunate that our adult children returned from the city to work from home just before lockdown. They were able to go hiking in the mountains, swimming in the river and cycling all over the parish in their free time. Could the appreciation of life's simple pleasures become for us all the 'new normal'?

The youth of the parish have been inspired in no small measure by Fr Eddie's leadership during this strange time, with his enthusiasm and constant good humour. He was particularly mindful of the children of the parish during lockdown, and it was lovely to see him make the First Communion/Reconciliation and Confirmation children feel so important by having special broadcasts just for them.

When it wasn't possible to visit the sick and housebound in the usual way, he connected to them by 'phone, and he was very sensitive to the family and friends of the late, well-loved Kenny Conway during his lockdown funeral. Because we were shielding, we were fortunate to receive many offers of help from our parish GAA club and our local Centra store.

Our parish is a really caring



Parishes are using a disinfectant fogging process to sanitise churches, and this is carried out in the Greencastle Parish for both St Patrick's Church and Our Lady of the Wayside.

place, but as Christians we are aware that we must look out beyond our own boundaries and help those who are not as privileged as we are. On Sunday, June 28, Fr Eddie, who is the Diocesan representative for Trocaire, completed a 12-mile fundraising walk in memory of an exceptional man and wonderful parishioner, Micky Bradley. A total of over £20,000 has been raised so far for the life-saving

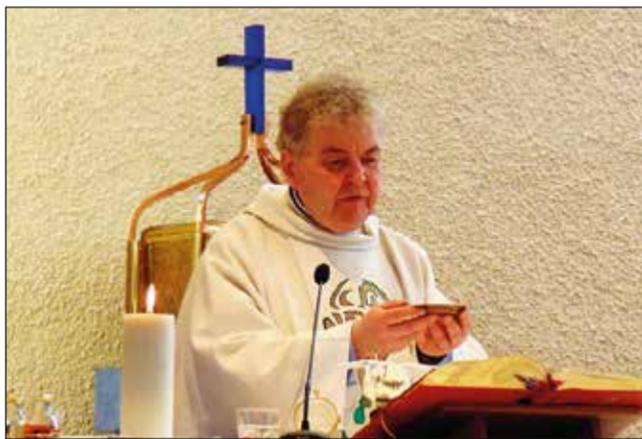
work of Trocaire worldwide from this Memorial Walk.

As lockdown eases, we are emerging renewed and optimistic, with a strong sense of community, with a well-nourished and stronger faith, and with a constant prayer for the ending of the present pandemic by whatever means.

(Martin & Catriona)

Kilrea & Desertohill...

COVID-19 humbled us into identifying how little we need in order to be happy



Fr John Cargan, PP Kilrea.

NO one ever imagined a virus would affect our lives just as dramatically as it did. Our normal lifestyles and routines were brought to a halt and we had to comply to a 'new normal' very quickly.

As a family, we said the Rosary every single night. We prayed for the front line staff, those who had the virus, and those who were lonely, scared and confused. We also showed appreciation and gratitude for being so lucky to be healthy and well.

Between working and university, living away from home and football training, gathering

in one room and spending family time together was not a priority. COVID-19 humbled us into identifying how little we need in order to be happy and the vast majority of it is in the four walls of our house.

I met a local woman out on a walk and she had earphones in. It was 12.15 pm and she stopped to explain to me that she was listening to the Rosary being said at 12. She did this every day. It was refreshing and wonderful to see how many people turned to prayer in a time of crisis.

Lockdown has been a transformative time and we have

had to adapt to a brand new way of life. New hobbies and habits were adapted and lockdown provided people an opportunity to discover new interests and fall back in love with old activities they once enjoyed.

Just as we have all had to adapt and adjust to a new way of life, the Church also had to do this. Sitting in the pews in our local Chapel was replaced with watching Mass from a web-cam that live streamed the service onto a device in our home.

This pandemic has shown just how kind and compassionate humans can be and how much we rely on one another. We now recognise the craving for human interaction that we didn't know we needed – a warm hug, a firm handshake, a gentle touch.

COVID-19 presented multiple worries and problems for everyone – physical and mental health worries, financial concerns, exams, unemployment...the list goes on. One factor that appeared to relieve these anxieties was faith; faith that it will all work out despite the unknown circumstances.

"To one who has faith no explanation is necessary."

(Nicola)

IN March 2020 the world had entered into a time of great uncertainty, confusion and fear. The first week of lockdown, my mum and two sisters became sick with the flu - they said it was the worst flu they had experienced. We don't know if they had COVID-19, testing wasn't available at that time, but the fact that a deadly virus was out there became a scary time for my family. As a family, we united together in prayer via 'phone calls and group-chats, to pray for mammy, my sisters and all those who were sick.

Not being able to attend public Mass was heartbreaking and deeply painful, as I'm sure many faithful Catholics felt. Every day I had a strong yearning to receive Our Lord in the Eucharist and to sit alone with Him in Eucharistic Adoration, and not getting there was so tough.

God is a faithful Father and He took good care of me and those whom I love - "I will never leave you or forsake you". (Hebrews 13:5)

It was great to be able to access online Mass. I had been tuning into

Masses from different countries, and it was good listening to great homilies each day. But one day I just wanted my own local priest and I was delighted when Fr Cargan installed a webcam. It was good to be able to tune into the Mass I normally attended.

Finally, the day came for a return to public Mass and it was absolutely amazing to be there. Fr Cargan is doing an absolutely amazing job in the parish by making sure the chapel is kept clean and safe for us. One thing that really makes me smile is when he puts on nice music and at the end is humming away and smiling. Those small things are

special and I truly appreciate all that Fr Cargan is doing for us all, may God continue to bless him and protect him.

The Rosary and meditating on God's Word is a powerful way for me to find deep inner peace, and throughout the whole of lockdown, when the days of uncertainty became overwhelming, I was always renewed in strength and received peace, thanks be to God.

We still live in a time of great anxiety and uncertainty but, by having faith in God, He will see us through.

(Patricia)



St Anne's Oratory, Kilrea.

Iskaheen & Upper Merville...

Our sitting room became the centre of our prayer life

THE coronavirus, or COVID-19, came as a bolt from the blue. Yes, we had heard about China, but everyone's daily life went on here as normal and 'China was far away'...but was it?

When my son returned from a skiing trip in Italy and the following Sunday the first deaths were announced there, a shudder ran through me - Were they from where my son had been? Did he or his friends or teachers catch it while there or while travelling? I lit my old faithful, the blessed candle and prayed that none of them had contracted it and, thankfully, my prayers were answered...no one did.

My work on the frontline was at this stage on heightened alert, as we headed into March 12, when schools closed, churches closed, patients started going into the hospitals, and the hard reality hit regarding this highly infectious killer virus. Our world as we knew it had ended.

We were lucky as a parish to have had a long established webcam installed by our forward seeing spiritual leader and parish priest, Fr John Farren. As soon as church closures were announced, Fr Farren quickly arranged daily on line 9 am Mass through the webcam in St Patrick's Iskaheen,

with an extra 11 am Sunday Mass. In addition, Fr Farren has Eucharistic Adoration (Exposition) of the Blessed Sacrament for two hours every day, ending with Prayers and Benediction.

It amazes me that the number of people participating in Mass and Eucharistic Adoration online and via social media far exceeds the number who attend Mass in person.

It seemed, in times when I felt most vulnerable, with the virus raging around me at work and the stress and worry of infecting my family at home, there was no safe haven of popping into the church for private prayer. Like many others around the world, I had discovered new ways of prayer and attending online Mass during the lockdown. Despite missing receiving the Eucharist, I have found online Mass and Eucharistic Adoration deeply nourishing. Our sitting room became the centre of our prayer life, where we would attend Mass as a family, call in during Eucharistic Adoration, light a candle and have some quiet prayer time. This now was my safe haven.

During the month of May, the young participating in the Pope John Paul II Award, their parents

and leaders, all set up their May Altars with the beautiful wild flowers that we now had time to see, smell and pick for our Altars. The beautiful scent of primroses met you when you approached the Altar. This amazing group of young people said the Rosary each evening at 8 pm in May and everyone, in their turn, sent their intention for each day. Fr Farren displayed photographs of our May Altars on the altar in Iskaheen, which had been printed and laminated by Nuala.

One of our young parishioners, Siuin organised a Zoom group Rosary during this time. It was such an uplifting time every evening to gather as a family and group of parishioners, go online, light our candle, and say the Rosary. Such faith from our youth has brought me through this worrying and uncertain time.

We are truly blessed as a parish to have so many people volunteering their services, talents and abilities in the midst of this pandemic, to assist in the preparation for the safe opening of our Churches for public Masses and the ongoing safety of our parishioners.

COVID-19 has not flattened our sense of parish, community and caring for each other; in fact, I think it has enhanced it.

We now take time to look at the needs of others. Life is no longer the whirlwind that it used to be. Yes, we miss meeting up with our friends and family, and being physically involved in the life of the parish, but the pandemic has made us think of other ways we can reach out to those who need us. It lifts the heart to see so many of our parishioners and organisations doing so much good work in time of lockdown, ensuring the needs and safety of all are catered for.

We have all been in exile over the past few months, but there have been many positives during this time too, as our churches slowly opened up...though our Masses here in Donegal are now only online again with the rise in the number of Covid-19 cases.

We can't continue doing things the way we did. The world has changed and moved on and we have to think of new ways of continuing our faith journey. I have no doubt that, led by Fr John Farren PP and Fr Tony Mailey, and the wonderful parishioners in the Parish of Iskaheen & Upper Merville, we will meet the challenge of this 'New World' head on with hope and go forward with a deepening faith.

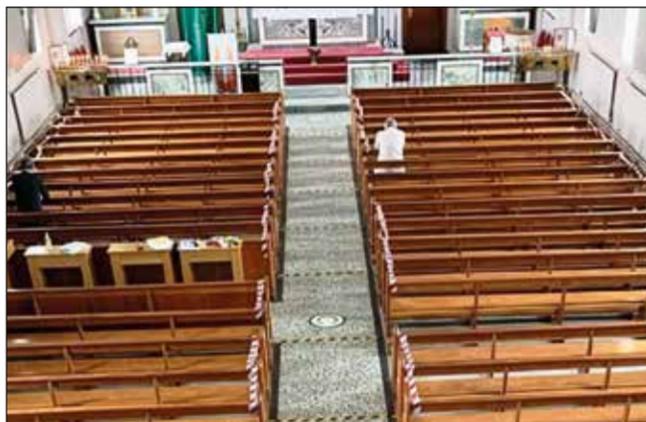
(Helen)



Fr John Farren PP concelebrating Mass in St Patrick's Church, Iskaheen, during Bishop Donal's parish visit.



St Patrick's Church, Iskaheen.



Sacred Heart Church, Muff.



St Patrick's Church, Iskaheen.



Lavey...

Every morning Fr Graham delivered a positive message that uplifted spirits

DURING the period of lockdown, the parish of Lavey was very fortunate to be able to view Mass in our beautifully renovated church on the web. Fr Graham celebrated all the usual weekday and weekend Masses and provided comfort, support and spiritual guidance to parishioners at home and abroad.

Readers were introduced again over the Easter period and have continued to read The Word of God since then. The Parish also participated in both virtual Lough Derg pilgrimages and announced the 3 am Station, which was an interesting experience!

The people of Lavey are blessed to have the extraordinary leadership of Fr Graham throughout this unusual period

in our lives, and he is ably assisted by parish secretary, Patrick Boyle, and sacristan, Tom Magill, who prepare the church impeccably for all occasions.

It has been of regret that weddings, baptisms, First Communion and Confirmations were postponed and all those affected have been supported in a very sensitive way by Fr Graham.

Funerals have been conducted with utmost care to the family, while adhering to current government guidelines.

As we emerge from lockdown, we are guided by Fr Graham's analogy of "coming down the mountain being more dangerous than going up", and we join him in taking "baby steps" towards returning to church attendance

or continuing to view all services from home.

(Pauline)

AT the beginning of the lockdown, my normal routine came to an abrupt stop and I felt very fearful about the impending impact of the pandemic on our community. I found solace in watching Church services that were broadcast via webcam, from Lavey and also from surrounding parishes.

At every morning Mass, Fr Graham delivered a positive message that lifted my spirits. I feel so fortunate that we have such a wonderful priest looking after the spiritual welfare of each and every member of our parish. I also

enjoyed being able to see inside our newly-refurbished Chapel from a distance, particularly during the Holy Week ceremonies. We had four very sad funerals in Lavey Parish during the lockdown. The restrictions meant I couldn't attend the funerals in person but I was glad to still be able to participate in them online.

In June, local sports clubs and community groups got together and arranged the 'Lavey5000' fundraiser in aid of the amazing restoration of Lavey Chapel. Members of our community were invited to walk, run or cycle and make donations over the course of a week, with the aim of travelling at least 5,000 km altogether and

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having some fun along the way.

At the beginning of the campaign, Fr. Graham posted a video on social media of himself and his parochial team going for a run in their Lavey GAC gear, which motivated us all to join in. I was only too glad to take part as it is a cause close my heart. I am a member of the Termoneeny Hill Walking Club and our leader organised a long walk in a scenic part of the local area every day that week. We were fortunate to have some great weather so it was a lovely opportunity for members of our community to reconnect after a long period of isolation.

So many people participated - young and old, near and far - walking, running, cycling, pushing prams and wheelchairs, swimming, golfing, skipping and bouncing over 10,000 km. I feel

very proud that we raised £20,000 for the Church restoration fund!

(Christine)



Sanitise Stations as you enter and leave the Church.



First Public Mass celebrated on Monday, June 29 – the Feast of Sts Peter and Paul.



First Public weekend Mass celebrated on the weekend of Sunday, July 5.



Termoneeny Cyclists take part in LAVEY5000 Fundraiser for the Parish Restoration Funds.



Church of Our Lady of Mercy seating prepared for reopening.



Leckpatrick...

Blessed with dedicated priests who found new ways of offer pastoral support

WHEN the lockdown came in March, it came quickly! When the rug was pulled from under us all, everything that was familiar, everything that gave a pattern to life, seemed to evaporate.

And then, as lockdown eased, I moved to a place of gratitude, a place of thanksgiving, a place of deep appreciation for so much.

Ultimately, from the perspective of faith, I found the last few months strangely comforting. Through the wonders of technology viz Facebook and Webcam, I very quickly developed a rhythm of prayer from those early days of March when, like so many, I wondered how I would get through the Covid-19 weeks.

Liturgies, Rosaries, Holy Hours, Contemplative Prayer, Scripture reflections, Novenas and so forth from my own parish, and the parishes all around, were great

sources of spiritual support.

Some friends would ring for a chat and suggest 'going to' such and such a parish for a particular spiritual nourishment. In truth, I often participated in a few Masses in the one day.

In Leckpatrick Parish, Mass was celebrated each day from the Sacred Heart Church, Derry Road, Strabane, by our parish priest, Fr Gerry Sweeney. It was always prayerful and comforting, drawing me into the familiar. Listening to many others, I think seeing Mass being celebrated from our own church was a source of great consolation.

Fr Sweeney was constant in his attention to the spiritual life of the parish. As well as daily Mass, he facilitated 'Hours of Adoration'. He led Scripture Reflection periods and I looked forward also to the 'Holy Hours' which he led

each week as well.

It must have been difficult and a little lonely for our priests to have continued to lead us in prayer when the Church buildings were empty.

While Mass via webcam was certainly no substitute for being present in the Church, the constant efforts of our priest and the variety of spiritual supports offered in the neighbouring parishes did help sustain me and many others through the last number of months.

I know I am not alone when I express my thanks to Fr Sweeney and the other priests in the area. We are blessed, indeed, to have dedicated priests who, in the most difficult of times, found new ways to offer pastoral support to their faith communities.

(Mary)

Lifford (Clonleigh)...

Grateful for webcam and our priest keeping us all connected



MY church is in Lifford, Co Donegal, so I had the joy of tuning in to the Parish of Clonleigh every day during the lockdown. I have deliberately chosen the word 'joy' because that was the experience I had.

Fr Colm O'Doherty is our priest and his commitment, his dedication and enthusiasm at the 9 am morning Mass were a constant source of support to all of us.

Firstly, he began every Mass by welcoming all, and especially those tuning in for the first time. He then reminded us of our community and all who were working to care for the vulnerable and those working to keep us safe. I thought it was a lovely touch when he mentioned those who work in the supermarkets and he never forgot the guards!

Fr Colm was not yet a year in our parish and, by going into the webcam every day, I got a chance to sense how blessed we are to have him as parish priest

of Lifford. He gave us hope at a time when we were all afraid. He encouraged our faith at a time when we were doubting. He helped us trust in those months when we were isolated from the normal supports of family, of our work, of the things we normally do with our time.

I think, too, the Masses he said were very reflective. His daily homily was so inspiring and, at the same time, relevant. He spoke in a language that I could understand what the readings were saying to me in my everyday life. Often, something he said would stay with me afterwards, and would carry me through the day.

It must have been hard for all the priests, since there were no people in the chapel. At the start of Mass, I would hear the chunk of the sacristy door close and then Fr Colm would process in, lifting our hearts from the word 'go' as he sang 'Hail Redeemer', or another well known hymn.

There was something, too, in the

way he prayed the Act of Spiritual Communion and the prayers for our protection. It made me think! And then before the blessing and final hymn, Fr Colm would remind us "to keep washing the hands and remember to social distance!"

I am not sure how best to convey my overall sense of just how much the Masses in the chapel and the 12 noon Rosary helped me and all of us.

Maybe the efforts the priest made in representing the different weeks through the decor was something that also showed his commitment and enthusiasm. Using materials, lighting and flowers, you couldn't but know there was something different to celebrate: Easter Sunday; The Ascension; Pentecost; the May altars; and then the beautiful displays for the Sacred Heart Novena.

I never thought I'd be a person that would be getting up in the

continued over...

continued from p15

morning and looking forward to the 9 am Mass, or that I'd be encouraging others too, but it really was also because the priest was so enthusiastic.

This Mass with Fr Colm set me up for the day. I look forward again to when I can go to Mass in person, but I'll always be grateful for the webcam and for what Fr Colm has done to keep us all connected to our faith and one another through this difficult time.

(Bernadette)

WHEN I heard of the Lockdown back on March 12, one of my first thoughts was what about Mass! As Choir Mistress and a Eucharistic Minister, this was a big part of my daily life.

I had started going to daily Mass in September last year because a family member was unwell, and not being able to go and not saying the Rosary daily with the

rest of the congregation, I knew was going to be a big void for me.

I need not have worried because our parish priest, Fr Colm said daily Mass and then the Angelus and Rosary every day, and we watched it on line via the Webcam.

As a family, we said the Rosary every day, praying for everyone to be safe. It was unreal that we were unable to go to Mass on St Patrick's Day and I found Easter week very tough not being able to go to the ceremonies, but, once again, we watched them on line.

It was great to get back to public Mass, though with restrictions. My hope had been that, with the Choir taking its usual break for the summer, things might be back

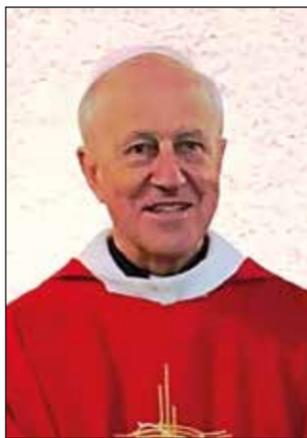
to some normality by then, but no, our public worship has once again been stopped. However, this time, I know that our parish prayer support will keep going.

(Grace)



Limavady...

No longer will we take our priests for granted!



Mgr Bryan McCanny, PP Limavady.

PARISH life, as we knew it changed completely back in mid-March. Covid-19 had come along to make us all appreciate our priests a lot more. No longer will we take them for granted!

Thankfully, our parish priest, Monsignor Bryan McCanny, after more than a year on his own, now has the valuable assistance of Father Paddy Baker. They are an

excellent duo!

During lockdown, able-bodied people and those less fortunate were able to benefit from live streamed Masses from St Mary's at 6 pm. Prior to that, we had the Rosary every day and spiritual reading at 10 am. On Sundays, we had 11 am Mass.

The sick were not neglected, nor were the children of the parish. The sacraments of Confirmation and First Communion had already been given without any fuss. In the spacious Christ the King Church, classes from the schools were taken in turn with the school headmaster acting as sponsor and both parents present. It was simple and serene, with no hint of a fashion parade that sometimes overshadows these important occasions.

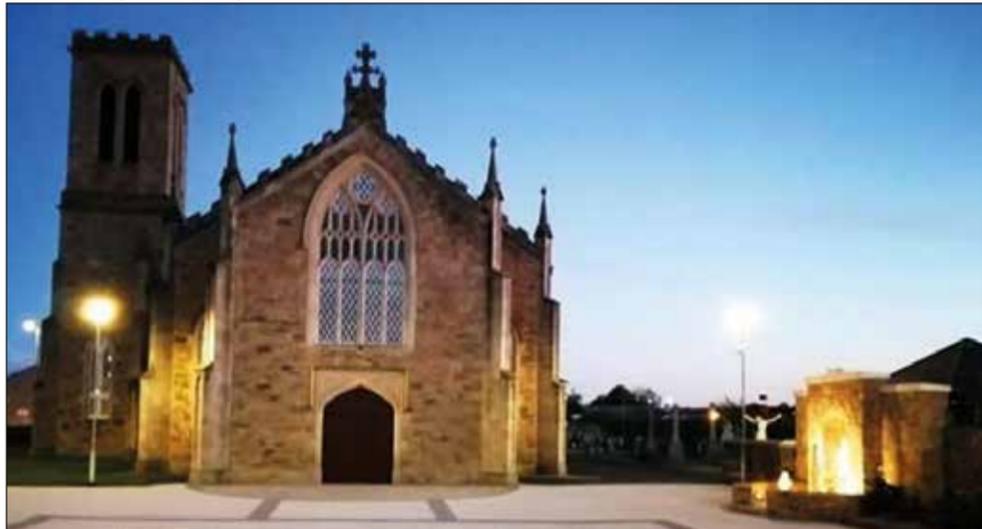
Monsignor McCanny was very much in line with Bishop Donal's thinking; if you can open an off licence why not a church?

We were kept up-to-date with the weekly and bi-weekly parish bulletin and, remarkably, the weekly envelope collection stayed at a high level. People could leave their envelope at various locations. The value of a weekly collection is a good way of judging the value of our PP. Ten out of ten Monsignor!

One highlight was open air Eucharistic Adoration in the Christ the King car park, on a sunny Sunday afternoon. The attendance was large and Holy Communion was distributed. People could sit in their car, sit on a chair, sit on the grass or stand. A reflection of the Penal Days without a car or tarmac!

The gradual opening up of our churches has been welcomed and our pastors have it well organised, with sanitizers and stewards in place. We pray for a full return to normality.

(Berni)



Maghera...

We found time to rediscover the power of prayer

AS we cautiously emerged from the COVID-19 lockdown in St Patrick's Parish, Glen Maghera, we reflected on the energy of our priests calmly guiding us through months of daily morning Mass, and prayer at 3 pm every single day.

Lent took on a new intensity and we looked forward to Easter with so much hope in 'The Risen Lord.'

We found time to rediscover the power of prayer to keep us safe in Novenas, Divine Mercy, May Devotions, Adoration and, always, the Rosary before morning Mass.

St Patrick's Parish Church had the benefit of webcam streaming, so also took on all of St Mary's Church Masses and Lenten Healing Service, thereby becoming the centre of our community.

That sense of community will be remembered for a long time to come, created by the efforts of the priests to combine two churches in communal worship on line.

The Pastoral Centre became a hub for collecting the Sunday Mass missalette to participate in webcam streaming, and the parish newsletter, when both churches eventually opened for private prayer.

Whilst online engagement was a vehicle to communicate when unable to have our usual routine, there is nothing to compare to the personal encounter.

Thankful to be able to go into our churches again for the celebration of Mass, we appreciate all who assisted our priests in preparing for the return to the public Mass, by exercising individual and

collective responsibility, ensuring health and safety is strictly upheld.

May our faith continue to be passed down through the generations. We take comfort in the simple and profound promise: "Where two or three are gathered in My Name, I am with you."

(Maghera Parish Pastoral Council)



St Mary's Church, Maghera.



Fr Paddy Doherty PP Maghera and Fr Kieran O'Doherty



Some of the parish volunteers in action in Christ The King Church, Limavady.



Eangach

Ár nDúchas

Liodán Mhuire le Piaras Mac Gearailt

Muire,
Banríon na bhFlaitheas,
Crann soilse agus
Criostal na Críostaíochta,
Farraige na daonnachta,
Grianán na Glóire,
Gile, greann
is garda na bhFíréan,
Péarla na Glóire,
Parrthas na Tríonóide,
Réaltán eolais
gach seachránaigh,
Teannta na larán,
Bean réitigh na feirge,
Sásamh an Bhreithimh,
Teannta na mbalbhán,
Ómós na bhfáitiosach,
Suairceas na beannaitheachta,
Seomra séad
na suáilce,
Tuile na ngrás, agus
Tonn Chlíodhna na Trócaire.

(Buíochas le *Foilseacháin Ábhair Spioradálta*.)

A Mhuire Mhín

A Mhuire mhín,
a Mháthair an Rí,
Déan mo shíocháin
le do Mhac,

A Ghnúis is gile
ná an ghrian,
Is ná lig i bpian
m'anam i bhfad.

(Ár bPáidreacha Dúchais, 438. Buíochas le *Foilseacháin Ábhair Spioradálta*.)

An Paidrín Páirteach



Coróin Mhuire, Caisleán na Finne

Cuireann Mí Dheireadh Fómhair Muire agus Iósaef i gcuimhne dúinn, agus cé go mbíonn an Paidrín á rá i rith na bliana, cuirtear béim ar leith ar an Phaidrín i rith na míosa seo. D'fhás an Paidrín as cleachtadh a bhí san Eaglais an 'Sé do Bheatha a Mhuire' a rá 150 uair mar aithris ar phaidir na hEaglaise (an Portús) inár léadh 150 salm as Leabhar na Salm gach seachtain. Sa bhliain 1573 bhunaigh an Pápa Pius V Féile Mhuire an Phaidrín mar chuimhneachán ar chath Lepanto. Is é an Pápa Naomh Eoin Pól II a chuir Rúndiamhra an tSolais leis an Phaidrín ag deireadh na 20ú haoise, rud a d'fhág fiche rúndiamhair ann ar fad.

'Teicneolaíocht' an Phaidrín

Is nós le daoine na paidreacha a

chuntas ar chlocha a cheanglaítear le chéile ar shreang nó ar shlabhra éadrom — deich gcloch do gach Deichniúr den Phaidrín, agus clocha aonaracha don Ár nAthair agus don Ghlóir. Bíonn cros bheag



Muire Chluain Fearta.

— cros chéasta — ar a bharr ar fad. Bhí an Paidrín chomh coitianta i measc an phobail gur thug sé brí do nathanna cainte mar 'Sin an chloch a ba lú ar a Phaidrín' — ag tagairt do rud nach raibh spéis ar bith aige ann. Tugtar 'Coróin Mhuire' amannáí ar an slabhra agus na clocha, agus in áiteacha tugtar 'Coróin Mhuire' ar an phaidir féin chomh maith.

Borradh Nua

Tá borradh nua faoin Phaidrín le blianta beaga anuas, mar phaidir teaghlaigh, mar dheabhóid aonarach, nó mar cheiliúradh pobail — roimh Aifreann ar maidin, nó ar ócáidí speisialta mar Phaidrín cois Cósta, nó ag iarraidh choimirce Dé in am an ghátair.

Tá cuid mhaith leabhar i ndiaidh a theacht amach le cúpla bliain anuas

a thugann léargas ar spioradáltacht agus ar dheabhóid an Phaidrín, agus a spreagann an pobal lena chleachtú le díograis. Ina measc sin tá leabhar beag spreagúil so-léite curtha amach ag Foilseacháin an Timire (Irish Messenger): 'Telling the Rosary', leis an Sagart Vincent Sherlock. Tá sé bunaithe ar an amhrán: 'The Isle of Innisfree'. Tá deoraí as Éirinn i Meiriceá, agus cuimhníonn sé siar ar laetha a óige in Éirinn. I measc na gcuimhní luann sé an teaghlach ar a nglúine agus an Paidrín á rá acu:

— 'The folks I love
around the turf fire gathered.
On bended knee their Rosary is told.'
(Richard Farrelly)

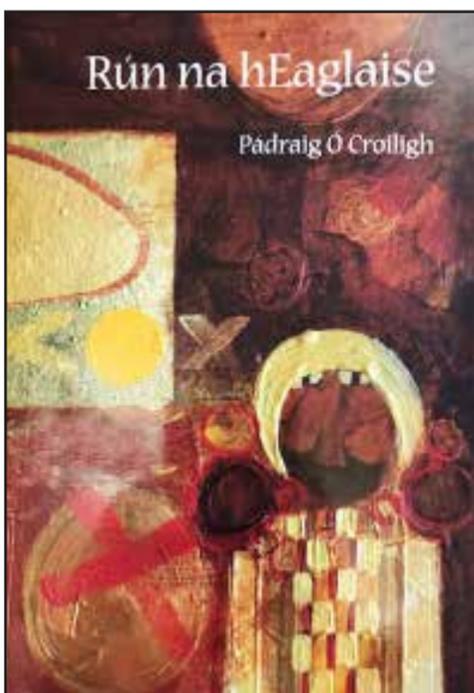
Cuireann an tAthair Vincent an Paidrín inár láthair mar scéalaíocht ar bheatha Chríost.



Madonna, Centro Ave, Loppiano.



Fr. Vincent Sherlock, údar 'Telling the Rosary'.



Faoi Lámh Easpaig

Duine ar bith a bhfuil saol urnaí roimhe, agus sin muid uile, le cuidiú Dé, ní thig leis féin mórán a dhéanamh fá dtaobh de ach paidreacha a fhoghlaim. Tagann a mbrí agus a mbeocht agus spiorad na hurnaí féin leis an Spiorad Naomh, agus ar bhealach is le hÍosa, fear na hurnaí, a bhuailimid sa tsacraimint seo, sa Chomhneartú. Tá an urnaí bunaithe ar Íosa a bheith istigh ionainn ag guí ar ár son agus ag éisteacht lenár n-urnaí. Is trí chumhacht an Spioraid Naomh a tharlaíonn sé sin, agus neartaítear láithreach an Spioraid Naomh sa Chóineartú go mbeimid ábalta Íosa atá istigh ionainn a chur i

láthair an phobail inár saol féin agus in imeachtaí an lae.

Le fírinne, iarrtar ar na daoine óga dul ag spreagadh na Críostaíochta ina gceantair, in ionad a bheith ag spreagadh na diabhlaíochta. Táimid i bhfad anois ó bheith ag caint ar shaighdiúirí Chríost, mar a bheadh sna seanmóirí fadó. Amhail is dá mbeadh orthu a bheith réidh le dul ag troid, in ionad a bheith réidh le dul ag scaipeadh muintearais agus grá.

Bíonn lá mór sa pharóiste uair amháin sa bhliain nó mar sin nuair a thagann an tEaspag ar cuairt chuig an pharóiste, agus

an Spiorad Naomh leis mar bhronntanas chuig an mhuintir óga atá sa bhliain dheireanach ar an bhunscoil. Sa Chóineartú tagann an Spiorad Naomh anuas ar na páistí ar bhealach speisialta nuair a shíneann an tEaspag amach a lámha agus é ag guí go dtiocfaidh an Spiorad Naomh anuas orthu, agus nuair a shéalaíonn sé iad le hola an chriosma agus é ag déanamh fíor na croise ar chlár a n-éadan. Sin é an fáth go dtugtar Dul faoi lámh Easpaig air go coitianta.

Guíonn an tEaspag an phaidir seo, agus a lámha sínte os cionn na ndaoine óga:

A Dhia uilechumhachtaigh, Athair ár dTiarna Íosa Críost, shaor tú do chlann anseo ón pheaca le huisce agus leis an Spiorad Naomh agus bhronn tú beatha nua orthu. Tabhair dóibh an Spiorad Naomh, a Thiarna, mar threoraí agus mar shólásaí. Tabhair dóibh spiorad na heagna agus na tuisceana, spiorad an bhreithiúnais agus an nirt, spiorad an eolais agus an ghrá, spiorad na hurraime duit féin. Sin é ár nguí chugat trí Chríost ár dTiarna. Amen.

Buíochas le *Foilseacháin Ábhair Spioradálta*.

A tribute to Sr Genevieve Mullarky (IBVM)

IT is something more than a coincidence that I sit to write a tribute to Sr Genevieve on the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, thanking God for the wonderful handiwork that He has entrusted to all of us.

Born into the Mullarky family in Rosslea, Co Fermanagh over 80 years ago, Mary grew up in a loving family with fond memories of her parents, Patrick and Kathleen, and brothers, Patrick, Tom and Michael, and her only sister, Kathleen.

She ended her school days at the Loreto Grammar School, Omagh, after which Mary Mullarky responded to the stirrings of being called by God to a life of prayerful service. She joined the Loreto Sisters, who inspired her from school and took the name Genevieve for her Religious Life, which she remained faithful to for over 60 years, until her death on May 22.

As the Loreto Sisters are known for their contribution to the world of education, so, too, Sr Genevieve studied for a role in teaching. This brought her to Loreto schools in different parts of Dublin and Wexford, but the greatest part of her religious life and teaching profession was lived out in Omagh.

Sr Genevieve was never known for putting up school buildings or creating structures or systems that might change the social or political world of her time. Her

gift to her religious community, to the schools where she taught and, most importantly, to the students and her teaching colleagues, was her ability to create and maintain personal connections and build relationships. The nurturing of relationships with generations of students to whom she gave encouragement was, in some way, the hallmark of her religious ministry and what kept her in Omagh to end her earthly journey.

As a secondary student herself, and throughout the rest of her life, Sr Genevieve had a lovely quality of presence. She had an ability to make someone feel important and special by being fully present to their company. Despite a sometimes busy schedule, she always made time for the people she met on the road of life. There was always time to listen and to share the stories and experiences of life.

Education was more than what happened in the classroom, as Sr Genevieve had a keen interest in the arts and cultural activities around her and she presented this as the bigger picture of education. Supporting the events of town or parish was always important, especially if the local young people were participants.

The new generations of the Mullarky family always had a special place in Sr Genevieve's life (or Auntie Mary as she was known by all the family). For



Sr Genevieve, it was always important to nurture relationships with family by remembering birthdays and special family anniversaries, and making sure a greeting card was sent, no matter where in the world the niece or nephew may have been.

So, too, with friendships. It was a real privilege to have Sr Genevieve as a friend for over 40 years. She was so faithful in her accompaniment throughout

life. Whether I was in Ireland, England, Italy, Nigeria or the Philippines, Sr Genevieve was only a stamp away. She never failed to keep the connection and nurture friendship in a most freeing and supportive way.

I believe Sr Genevieve's religious life was motivated and driven by her faith in Jesus Christ and inspired by Mary Ward, the foundress of the Loreto Sisters. She was sustained by a faithful

life of prayer, a great awareness of the wonderful and wondrous world in which she was privileged to live in, and a mutual love and appreciation of all the wonderful people she felt blessed to have known.

The funeral Mass for Sr Genevieve was celebrated on May 24 in Sacred Heart Church, Omagh, amidst the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown. Very appropriately, she was laid to rest

in the cemetery at the back of the same church alongside many wonderful Loreto Sisters, and close to the people of Omagh and parish of Drumragh, to whom Sr Genevieve gave her heart and life.

May she rest in the fullness of God's presence.

*Fr Damian Bresnahan SMA
Privileged friend*

A tribute to the late Mary Hampson (1938-2020) by Fr Roland Colhoun



A Loyal Servant: It was with enormous sadness that I learned of the sudden death of Mary Hampson in Derry. She had been a loyal servant of the Church in multiple capacities down the years. For many decades, her financial acumen was particularly helpful with parish accounts and Gift Aid claims. But in retirement, her principal service was answering the telephone for various Parochial Houses. Mary

has been answering my 'phone for 22 years in four parishes in succession. She gave the same service to several parishes in Derry City and around the Diocese. Having reached her eighties, Mary had to her credit a long life of outstanding service to the Lord, free of charge. Her generosity underlines the valuable vocation of the single person in the Church and the world. Living alone since her parents died, her

faithful companion was her collie dog.

Personality: By disposition, Mary Hampson was professional, mannerly and kind. With attention to detail and an encyclopaedic memory, she dispensed advice clearly and responded to calls with accuracy. Parishioners commented on her efficiency when she answered the phone. "Hello. Yes?" was her standard opening. She had learned great courtesy in her earliest days. Her mother and father were Donegal natives who had moved to the Lecky Road, in Derry. Accordingly, Mary had the rich faith of St Columba by inheritance and by upbringing. She had never lived in Tyrone but through constant telephone contact with my parishioners over the last five years, she was able to take the ecclesiastical pulse of the area every day. If I wasn't available, she gave a listening ear to everyone who called, never rushing anyone, taking time to give practical counsel, to reassure and to resolve problems. For the caller, Mary was patience and peace personified.

Service: Small in stature but huge in personality, Mary Hampson was endowed with an

excellent mind. Having spent thirty-two years as personal assistant to the accountant and MP, Eddie McAteer (1914-1986), she knew the workings of local and national government and she understood politics and media. One of her workplace duties was to read through the newspapers every morning, to highlight the principle stories for Mr McAteer and arm him with reading material for the train journey to Belfast. Fearless, she would telephone any office or department, near or far. Undaunted by anyone's rank or position, she once rang the Taoiseach's office to get a matter resolved. And with her customary tenacity, Mary got a resolution. As recently as last year, with telephone in hand, she got to the bottom of two cases of overcharging and got thousands of pounds repaid to our parish.

History: Mary had a phenomenal memory for everything that had happened in her lifetime. She kept books, pamphlets, posters and anything of historical value. I recall my lengthy search in 2008 for the original Prayer to St Columba. It had been written by Fr Willie Doherty, who opened the present Long Tower Church in 1909. The

parish had been using a shortened version for as long as anyone could remember, but our committee needed the original text for the centenary publications. Mary Hampson unearthed it in a Long Tower booklet from the early twentieth century.

Faith: Faith, hope and love underpinned everything Mary said and did. Daily Rosary, Sunday Mass and monthly Confession were the building blocks of her life. Having grown up in an era when religion was not complicated, Mary had a clear grasp of catechetics and the gaps in RE today. Her incisive mind could sum up a religious problem in an instant and propose a spiritual solution. She loved pilgrimages too, particularly the shrines at Knock and Lourdes. Of course, the lockdown caused by the Covid-19 virus brought her considerable anguish. Fortunately, the churches had opened for private prayer a few weeks before her death and she was able to get to Confession at Long Tower. But she was longing to get back to Mass. She said to me that if the churches in the Republic were the first to recommence public Masses, she would travel to Inishowen to receive Holy

Communion. This demonstrates that Mary had genuine faith. The deprivation of the Mass was not a matter of losing out on routine. She felt deeply the loss of the Eucharist. Another sign of the depth of Mary's faith is that she never wanted attention drawn to herself. She served the Church quietly without any recognition and desired to have her name on nothing except a Christmas card.

Death: Sadly, Mary was found dead at her home on Demesne Avenue, Creggan, in Derry on the evening of Monday, June 15. Her Requiem Mass was offered on Thursday, June 18, in Long Tower, the church of her childhood. The restrictions of the coronavirus era meant that her many friends were bound to watch the funeral on webcam. I could not attend either. Mary is a huge loss to me, to my parishioners and to the many people she helped and consoled down the years. Her eighty-two years have drawn peacefully to a close. This holy woman served the Church to the very end. Now that she can no longer answer my telephone, I'm asking her to hear my prayers. And I'm certain her reward will be great in heaven.

May she rest in peace.



Bishop Donal with members of the Pastoral Forum of the Parish of Ardstraw East, Martin Kerrigan, Shauneen Kilpatrick, Anne McDonnell, Ashlene Canning and Fr Roland Colhoun.

Forty means forty in Newtownstewart!

THE people of Newtownstewart have just completed the annual Forty Hours Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. The Church's choice of the number 40 has a biblical origin. The Old Testament and New Testament describe historic events, such as the forty-day flood, the forty years in the wilderness, Christ's forty days fasting in the Judean Desert, the forty days between the Resurrection and the Ascension, the forty days of Lent, and so on. Down the years, parishes have reduced the Forty Hours to a less demanding period, sometimes just the hours between Sunday Mass and evening Devotions.

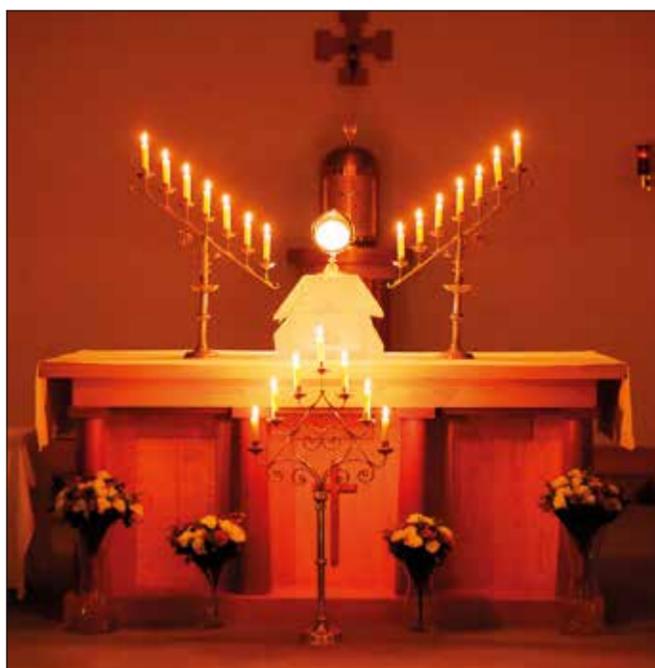
However, in the light of global anxiety about the Covid-19 virus, the Pastoral Forum in Newtownstewart decided to organise a lengthy period of Eucharistic Adoration. The result

was 40 continuous hours with the Blessed Sacrament, so that forty meant forty!

Exposition began in the Oratory on Main Street at three o'clock on a Friday afternoon, September 25, and continued for two days and two nights, ending on the Sunday morning.

There were at least two volunteers for every one of the forty hours, and some hours had up to twenty adorers. Even throughout the nights, many people knelt in silent prayer.

Bishop McKeown drew the solemn celebration to a close with the Sunday Mass in St Eugene's Church, Glenock. Praising the Church's tradition, he underlined the importance of Eucharistic Adoration for the renewal of parish life and thanked the people for their generosity in prayer and intercession for forty hours.



With missionary hearts we will be led into

IN last month's edition of 'The Net', Bishop Donal elaborated on comments he had made in his Sunday homily of July 26, regarding the "real challenges for parishes" in this "critical time for our church". He had asked "how do we celebrate our sacramental unity in the Body of Christ without coming together as much", and commented on how "limitation in church attendance means that the domestic church has to take on a greater part of handing on the rich treasure of the faith".

A number of people have reflected on Bishop Donal's comments and have shared their thoughts in this feature.



Bishop Donal

The link for the full text of the homily for the 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time is: <https://www.derrydiocese.org/news/homily-17th-sunday-in-ordinary-time-bishop-mckeown>

One Little Church at a time Sweet Jesus...that's all we're asking of you

by Michael McCaul



Michael McCaul, seminarian for the Derry Diocese.

BISHOP Donal presents us with two challenges from his homily of the 17th Sunday of Ordinary Time. Firstly, he reminds us of the fact that "We are now in a critical time for our church...There is a real challenge for parishes...How do we celebrate our sacramental unity in the Body of Christ without coming together as much?" Secondly, he reminds us of the new reality that "Limitation in church attendance means that the domestic church has to take on a greater part of handing on the rich treasure of faith." We shall explore and discern in this piece what exactly is the 'domestic church' and how we might all respond to this challenge with energising hope.

The term 'domestic church' refers to the family, the smallest body of gathered believers in Christ. Though recovered only recently, the term dates all the way back to the first century AD. The Greek word used is 'ecclesiola', which referred to 'little church'. Our

Early Church Fathers understood that the home was fertile ground for discipleship, sanctification, and holiness. It is the same for us today living unwaveringly through this pandemic in our 'Little Church' families, united spiritually within the Body of Christ yet temporarily apart from full communal worship.

Just as in life, the body cannot be separated from the soul, our little church family does not function in isolation or separation from the institutional church in this critical time. In reality, we can speak of four distinct levels of Church. There is the Universal Church led by the bishop of Rome and all bishops in union with him. There is the local diocesan church led by Bishop Donal, who guides us on how best to implement our faith in our own time and culture, in this strange but passing reality. There is the local parish church, from which we receive most of our religious instruction and sacramental grace. Finally, there is the fourth layer of Church, the Domestic Church, which plays a key role in our sanctification because it is the primary place where we practice coming to intimately love other persons.

It is in the home that children ordinarily first receive the faith. One of the documents of the Second Vatican Council, 'Lumen Gentium 1964' ('Light of the Nations'), describes the family as the 'domestic Church' because it is the first place where young, baptized Christians learn about their faith.

'Lumen Gentium 11', goes on

Embracing our call to be 'beacons of faith' as we build a 'new normal' by Davog McCaffrey



Davog McCaffrey, Omagh

BACK in May's edition of 'The Net', I wrote about building a 'new normal' as the course of the pandemic progressed. As a vast array of lockdown restrictions have eased and we have regained some elements of routine in our daily lives, we are undoubtedly well on our way to this 'new normal'. I firmly believe that the uncertainty surrounding Covid-19 and the need for social distancing will be with us for many months and even years to come, meaning that – without being complacent – we must learn to adapt and live with this virus, without letting it take complete control of our lives.

This obviously poses challenges for every element of our lives, not least in terms of our faith and particularly how we profess this faith with limited numbers of people allowed at the celebration of Mass, and other Church Services, and, of course, the risk of more severe lockdown measures being reintroduced as has been

to explain that this domestic Church has a particular role and responsibility in leading souls to heaven: "In it parents should, by their word and example, be the first preachers of the faith to their children; they should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each of them, fostering with special care vocation to a sacred state".

Through this dogmatic constitution, the Council Fathers

the case in some other counties. A few weeks ago, Bishop Donal gave us some 'food for thought', when he asked us how we can celebrate our "sacramental unity in the Body of Christ" when we are physically and socially distanced, and how the "domestic Church" can take a greater role in passing on the faith.

In my opinion, these present times have allowed us to take a step back from the hustle and bustle of normal living and reassess where we are on our faith journey. This has allowed me to strip things back and really think of my Catholic faith in more simple terms.

As a young Christian in today's world, one of my favourite pieces of Scripture has to be John 3:16 – "For God so loved the world, He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not die but have eternal life". Perhaps like many of you, I've heard this quote thousands of times, but each time I have

intended to emphasise that Christ is the Light of the Nations, and that, as the Church, we each have a responsibility to bring the Light of Christ to others. Within the domestic Church, this means that parents are to cultivate a family life that is centred on Christ.

St Pope John Paul II was proud to be a champion of the family and its crucial role in the life of all Christians. Along with the many letters and homilies

to pause and ponder to really comprehend how amazing this message actually is! I know the love of Jesus in my heart and in my life and chances are, if you are reading this article, you are likely to know it too. However, the sad reality is that so many people are looking for this love, contentment and fulfilment in all the wrong places. It is, therefore, our duty as practicing Catholics to help them find this love without letting Covid-19 get in the way!

If we think of faith development in three strands – Parish, School and Home. Firstly, in terms of Parishes, it is truly incredible to see how parishes throughout our Diocese and, indeed, far beyond have embraced technology and a wide array of different means in order to spread the Good News in these times. From Masses via webcams and Facebook Live to virtual Holy Hours, to religious-themed podcasts and vlogs, there really has been something for everyone! As the lockdown has eased and some of us have been able to return to public worship with restrictions in place, we must not forget the vulnerable who are still shielding or those who are uneasy about coming back to Mass for whatever reason; may their love of Christ and their hunger to receive Jesus in the Eucharist grow stronger each day.

We must also pray for our bishops, priests, religious, pastoral workers and parish volunteers, that they may be granted wisdom, guidance and courage as they continue to develop innovative ways of reaching the people of God both virtually and now in person with, perhaps, small socially distanced Eucharistic Adoration or prayer groups, as well as regular Masses.

Secondly, now more than ever, our Catholic Schools have an even more important role to play in nurturing the faith of our children and young people across all levels of education. We pray that teachers and educators can use their facilities and expertise to work with local parishes in offering more

regular opportunities for staff and students to join together in prayer, Sacramental celebrations and learning about Christ and His Gospel message.

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, is the role of the Home or the Domestic Church in "handing on the rich treasure of faith". In my family, without doubt the first 'seeds of faith' were sown in the family home and these seeds have been nurtured throughout my childhood, teenage years and now my adult life.

This can take many forms, like regular family prayer, faith-based discussions at mealtimes and, of course, vitally living out a Christian life in our schools, universities, workplaces and communities! Regardless of what is going on in the outside world – even during a Global Pandemic! – we still have control of what goes on in our own homes and, therefore, we must pray for parents, guardians and carers that, supported by church and pastoral leaders, they may place Christ at the centre of their families and homes. Inspired by the Holy Family, may they embrace their pivotal role in evangelisation to help and guide their own families as they set out on their journey of faith.

As I finish writing this piece, I am conscious of a prayer card I keep on the back of my 'phone. It contains a very famous quote from St Catherine of Siena – "Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire".

As we embrace the challenges and also the opportunities of building our own "new normal" and spreading the message of Christ, may we recognise God's unique and individual path for each of us in life and may we act as 'beacons of faith' in our world of today.

Davog, from the Cappagh Parish, Omagh, is a 21-year-old fourth year medical student at Queen's University, Belfast.

the Church.

In an excerpt from the text of St Pope John Paul II's homily at Aqueduct Racetrack, New York, 1995, we recall his desire that: "Catholic parents must learn to form their family as a domestic church, a church in the home as it were, where God is honoured, his law is respected, prayer is a normal event, virtue is transmitted by word and example, and everyone shares the hopes, the problems

new ways to proclaim that ‘God is Love’ *(Bishop Donal)*

continued from p20

and sufferings of everyone else. All this is not to advocate a return to some outdated style of living: It is to return to the roots of human development and human happiness!”

The Catholic Church recognizes that grace builds upon nature. In his homily, I believe Bishop Donal is advocating that the family is one of the most basic, yet important gifts that God has given us. Through a firm marital commitment between men and women, and through their own active participation in the faith and their pledge to raise their children with a love for Christ and his Church, the domestic Church is one of first places that young Catholics experience the light of the faith in their own lives.

Some Tools for Building a Domestic Church

- Begin praying as a family and reading from Scripture daily, certainly before meals, but also first thing in the morning or before bed. Find a time that works for your family. Use the liturgy of the Church as a model for prayer and try to include heartfelt, unstructured prayer as well.

- Pray a Family Rosary (each member leads a decade, and everyone shares intentions).

- Have a crucifix in a prominent place in the home, and in every bedroom.

- Make your annual ‘virtual’ holiday a holy pilgrimage by participating in the various on-line services, like the Virtual Derry Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes or the Virtual Lough Derg Pilgrimage.

- Make worshipping God a priority. Never intentionally miss Mass.

- Demonstrate love for your spouse, your children, your neighbours, and the world. Remind children that they are loved by God and have been given gifts to serve others. Pope Francis

suggests using three words more often: “May I? Thank you. I’m sorry.”

- Talk freely about the presence of God in the joys and sorrows of your life.

- If possible, get involved with your local parish. Participate in the lay ministries and activities of your parish community.

The emphasis that our recent Popes and Bishop Donal have placed on the family speaks to the profound dignity and importance of the work of all laypeople! The need for the domestic church to take on a greater part of handing on the rich treasure of faith, as proclaimed by Bishop Donal, is a powerful idea; one that has the potential to transform our faith and our families. It is a way for each of us to discover the incarnated Christ, the fulfilment of the prophecy of marriage ceremonies and the promise of eternal life in our own homes and families.

Taking the time to explore the meaning and the theology of the Domestic Church will only continue to energize us and expand our passion for the unique role that God has in mind for our lives and the lives of our family members. All this will take time, something that we have more of now. It is a critical time, as Bishop Donal stated. A time of great trials and temptations, yet it is also a time of greater graces.

It is only by sharing and building together the Kingdom of God exactly as we find ourselves here and now, will our domestic churches, in unity with the whole Church as the whole people of God, be able to restore our faith, our hope, our charity, our culture, and transform our society with love, with and in Christ, one domestic church at a time.

Michael is from Derry and is currently a seminarian for the Derry Diocese, studying in Maynooth.

Now, more than ever, importance of domestic church is highlighted

by Nicole Simpson

THE situation that we currently find ourselves in is certainly challenging how faith is practised. Now, more than ever, the importance of the domestic church is highlighted. Virtual Mass attendance, via live stream online, has widely become the norm in households and is certainly helping keep the faith alive in the domestic setting.

With limited church attendance still being a factor, particularly

for smaller, rural parishes which can only accommodate small numbers at Mass, this availability of online Mass is helping people still feel connected to local Church life in some way. However, it makes me think about how dependant on the internet we have become and raises the question about how older members of our parishes, who may not necessarily have access to internet, are finding not being able to see weekend

We are all one in the Body of Christ!

by Lexie Morrison

On the 17th Sunday of Ordinary Time, Bishop Donal, in his homily, highlighted a challenge for parishes as we try to celebrate our Sacramental unity in the Body of Christ, without being able to gather as frequently. Bishop Donal also made reference to the greater role the Domestic Church has to now play in handing on the rich treasure of our faith, whilst a limitation is put on Church attendance.

MY initial thought on this homily was the important role of the Domestic Church. But what is this Domestic Church? We need to go back to the beginning. The first Domestic Church consisted of three people: Jesus, his Mother Mary and St Joseph. The Holy Family moved from a stable, to Egypt then onto Nazareth and, hence, this little Domestic Church moved along with them. How was this possible? Because the three of them were there irrespective of their location. So, today whatever side of the webcam you are on – we are forming islands of little Domestic Churches.

Is Covid-19 and social distancing limiting us in our ability to unite as the body of Christ? Maybe...but Christ is not limited! I wonder is the Lord teaching us more about his Divine Love and power rather than wanting us to see our own finite inability to come together as we once did?

In March 2020, as our Churches closed for public worship, a lot of people felt despair and a

lack of hope. At the start of the lockdown, I participated in Mass online via the webcam and soon began to feel a sense of regret. Regret for the many times I took Holy Mass for granted. How many times did I choose not to avail of holy Adoration? I began a time of reflection and, thankfully, I started to spend more time with the Lord. I even became thankful to the Lord for webcams - the Lord was opening more doors.

Is it enough to just love the Lord and desire our own salvation and that of our loved ones? I believe Our Lord is calling us into much more than that. I believe our Lord desires that we reach out to each other. Our Lord Jesus spoke to us of the greatest commandment “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and all your mind”. (Matthew 22: 37-40) But then Our Lord follows that up with another equally important commandment “Love your neighbour as yourself.”

How, in these strange times can we love our neighbour? Whether you are at home alone, or with

family participating online at Holy Mass, or go to Mass in Chapel, these are our little islands of Domestic Churches. But are these islands isolated? If so, they shouldn't be. We should be praying as one and reaching out to each other as the Body of Christ. We should be all united within the Holy Divine Will.

For years, I have seen and admired the older generation for their love of the Lord, our Blessed Mother and the Holy Catholic Church. But now, some of that generation and others are absent at Church, by no fault of their own. Do we sit back and do nothing or do we let ourselves be pressed into service like Simon of Cyrene, who helped Jesus carry his Cross? Are we willing to be united to all beyond the webcam and those far away? Spiritually, there is no social distancing!

Within the Body of Christ, our brothers and sisters: they may not be hungry, so we have no need to feed them, they may not be thirsty, so we need not offer them a drink, but they may be a stranger, and so we can invite them into our homes – that home within us where God dwells. Thus, then shall we be united in Christ! “And the King will say, ‘I tell you the truth, when you did it to the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!’” (Matthew 25:40)

Bishop Donal talked about the ‘challenge’ for the Church, so



Lexie Morrison, Derry.

let us be people of faith. Let us impress the Good Lord today, like the good Centurion who came to him in faith on behalf of his servant. Let's be united and bring everyone to Him in faith. God can do the impossible. Let our faith move mountains. Let's ask the Good Shepherd to allow each one of us to enter within his Holy Divine Will for the salvation of the World.

And remember, sometimes it's not just about the destination to which we are going that is important, but who we take, the friends we make along the way. Even those friends we will never know! Because we are all One in the Body of Christ!

From Derry, Lexie is a 49-year-old Carer and volunteers with his parish and Age Concern.

Mass being practised in their own parish.

I understand that Mass via radio and TV is an option. However, this is not necessarily from local parishes and so, although this helps celebrate sacramental unity in the Body of Christ without coming together as a local parish community, still allows people to feel present and part of weekend Mass.

Also, with such easy access to Mass at the click of a button, will this make more people fall back into the way of their faith which they had become estranged from for one reason or another, or oppositely, could such easy access result in a decrease in numbers at Mass whenever the time comes that greater numbers of people can gather to celebrate Mass together as a parish community?

Could it become the case that we use the excuse of an adjustment of routine over the last five months, and getting used to private Mass attendance at home, as a way out of actually attending Mass as a parish community? Or as more and more people return to work/school/university, will the readjustment

to this new normal life of social distancing, face masks and hand sanitising or simply being “too busy” to attend Mass in person, become another excuse to avoid reintroducing Mass attendance in person into our lives again?

The strength of faith in the generation of our grandparents is stellar and something that has always stood out for me. I think many people can relate to a belief in the power of prayer like myself, and the comfort of knowing your granny has a candle lit for you for upcoming exams or interviews, for university studies or work, when life presents challenges or simply to keep you safe and on a guided path in life. Even through this simple act, the domestic church is highlighted but, unlike attending virtual Mass online, this is a tradition that has long been passed on for generations and is a fantastic example of just how longstanding the domestic church truly is. It is not something that has just become important during these days of pandemic; although for many its importance has definitely been highlighted during this time.

I recently read a quote by Pope Francis which stands out in relation to this point about grandparents and faith. It reads: “There are some things we really need to take care of: the children and the grandparents. Children, whether they are young or older, they are the strength that moves us forward. We place our hope in them. Grandparents are the living memory of the family. They passed on the faith; they transmitted the faith to us.”

Had it not been for that generation passing the treasure of faith on to our parents, and them on to us, we would never be in the position of faith we are in today. But, will this global pandemic have an impact on the numbers of people of my generation who are continuing to practise their faith and, therefore, affect numbers for generations to come? Hopefully not, of course, but for families with young children especially in these times, the domestic church now plays what might be argued as a bigger role than ever before in passing on the faith.

With many children missing out on either the preparation for,

or receiving of, the sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation at the originally scheduled time, the domestic church will certainly play a massive part in helping them prepare for receiving these sacraments at the postponed dates.

Growing up attending weekend Mass was part of a routine and, as I grew older, I continued that way. But, with no option of attending Mass in person during the lockdown, this routine became more of a conscious effort rather than just simply attending Mass with my family at the weekend.

Now, with attendance at my local parish church ceremonies allowed, I hope that more and more people are encouraged to actively choose to attend Mass, receive Holy Communion and join in the parish community which passes on the treasure of faith to future generations.

Nicole is from Derry, volunteers with her parish community of St Eugene's, and is a final year student at Queen's University, Belfast.

With missionary hearts we will be led into

Virtual platform something we can harness to promote Domestic Church *by Roisin Rice*



Roisin Rice

AS I reflected on Bishop Donal's homily the words of the spiritual communion rang in my ears... "never permit me to be separated from you." It struck me that even though I wasn't able to receive the Holy Eucharist, it did not prevent me from feeling God's presence. Rather, being unable to physically receive the Holy Eucharist made me appreciate more fully the wonderful gift that Jesus gave to us to help us be His face, His light and His touch in the world.

Yes, we are at a critical time for the Church. The worry is that the virtual Church, its ease of use, will, as Bishop Donal states in his homily, promote a private, on demand faith, where we need

encounter only our families. These are all very valid concerns; however, I feel very strongly that the evolution of the Church to the virtual platform is something that we can harness to promote the domestic church. The Church that is in our hearts, homes, and family lives.

When I think of sacramental unity and the Body of Christ, I recall the beautiful words of Saint Therese of Lisieux: "Christ has no body now but yours, no hands, no feet on earth but yours." We are the Church. The catechism states that Jesus "proclaimed a mysterious and real communion between his own body and ours, He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him."

When we physically cannot receive the Holy Eucharist, where and how can we be blessed with this unity? Ideally receiving the Blessed Sacrament, sharing this heavenly banquet with stranger and neighbour alike, should be part of our weekly worship but in its absence the faithful can celebrate in other ways.

The connectivity and unity of prayer is one way. During lockdown, the rise in participation of public prayer was notable in the social media channels that I subscribe to, in particular the praying of the Rosary. We walked each evening, as a community, through a different scriptural mystery led by Bishop Donal. Each mystery helping us to reflect and focus on how, even without receiving the Body of Christ, we could be the Body of Christ; resolving to be kind, put others before ourselves and acknowledge the suffering of those around us.

This message was being beamed right to the place where it is most difficult to do these things, our homes. In my case, the kitchen, which had not only become my place of worship but also my home office and classroom; the place where I need to embody Christ most.

It also struck me that seeing who was watching with you virtually was often followed by "I saw you online at Mass last night, wasn't it a beautiful homily", subsequently leading to a discussion. This is something that did not happen to me as frequently prior to lockdown, and especially not with work colleagues and friends.

Having Mass beamed into our homes can promote greater

dialogue and the handing on of the chain that is our faith to our young people, lots of whom were living their faith by providing essential jobs and services in shops, care homes and other service industries, and taking the place of those who could not work because they were shielding. They were, indeed, Christ's presence in the world.

All that said, we have a challenge, in regards to those who were shielding who do not have WiFi, internet, devices, or family with the knowledge to set it up for them; those for whom the daily trip to Mass was their only encounter not just with Jesus but with others.

The church building is a place where the lonely can find comfort and healing and some were unable to attend even virtually. This is heart breaking, along with the thought that some of them may never be able to return to the Church building again and receive the Blessed Sacrament while this virus still grips our world. This is, indeed, a challenge.

I agree that we are at a critical time for our Church, but we were before COVID-19 forced the doors of the physical Church building shut. This opens up new opportunities to engage our young people in a platform that they are familiar with and, if done correctly, will bring them to the physical building of the Church and ignite the will to discover Christ, as Bishop Donal states, as the hidden treasure or a pearl of great value.

From Derry, Roisin is the Acting Vice-Principal of St Mary's College.

The Holy Spirit is guiding the Church through pandemic *by Helen Grant*



Helen Grant, Muff, Co Donegal.

DOWN through the ages, there have been many times when the Church has had to change and adapt but the faith has remained strong through all the turmoil. When COVID-19 eventually abates, the Church will have come out as a more caring Church, where we are careful and take responsibility for each other, and the Gospel will live in our lives in new ways. We realise how much we need each other as members of our parish families.

This time of pandemic has brought families closer together. We have spent time together watching Masses online in rooms of our family homes. We have shared our faith as a family, we have prayed together, talked about our worries, our fears, spent time together, laughed together and had time for each other. COVID has challenged us and our faith to 'think outside the box'. It has given us a unique opportunity to advance our spiritual growth by inventing ways of celebrating the sacraments and ministering to our faith communities through online platforms.

We cared for each other during lockdown, we care for each other now when our Churches are open and Sacraments celebrated again, by ensuring everyone is kept safe in our Church environment.

We have worked together as our Church family by planning a safe Church building for our parish family to come to, by Church cleaning after Masses and

waiting, he is just as present as that loved one and he is waiting with open arms.

We should follow the Church's guidelines on public worship and continue to pray, pray, pray. Be Christ-like in the way you live, reach out to those in need.

I sometimes feel comfortable and peaceful participating in the online world of worship that we have been forced into, but as the lockdown has eased I am so thankful to be among others, blessed to be able to participate

Services, and by volunteering as stewards to keep everyone safe during Masses.

We will have to involve our youth with their vast experience of online technology, by facilitating them with opportunities to discuss their faith ideas together as a group, by using online meeting platforms to plan their suggestions, and Church webcams and social media to deliver them to our parish family community. Our youth have suffered greatly during this pandemic, maybe not with the virus itself but with the effects of the isolation it has caused them. We have been blessed by the youth in our parish, who have had virtual online meetings, joined daily for the Rosary during the month of May and the Diocesan Youth Ministry's online programmes and they have volunteered as Parish Stewards. Our youth are our treasures that, undoubtedly, will carry on the faith to future generations.

The Holy Spirit is guiding the Church through the pandemic and, in the process, we will all rediscover what is essential in our faith. Our COVID lockdown, fears and anxieties have revealed that much of what we thought was essential in our lives is actually not needed. It has given us all a different perspective to our faith and in our lives. There was no access to the Eucharist during lockdown and this made us reflect on what it really means to be a part of the Body of Christ, and what Scripture has told us in 1 Corinthians 12:12, "Christ is like a single body, which has many parts; it is still one body, even though it is made up of different parts". This has a new meaning in this time of pandemic.

"Technology should enable us to reach out and advocate, both lovingly and effectively, on behalf of large portions of our faithful." (Pope Francis)

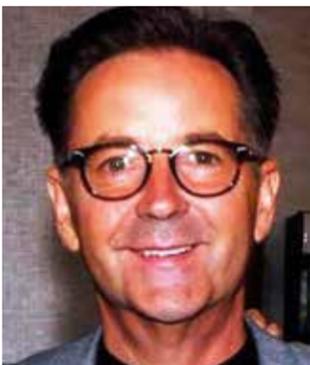
From the Parish of Iskaheen & Upper Moville, Helen is a 56-year-old mother and radiographer.

again in the sacrifice of the Holy Mass.

The Church founded by Christ needs you. In the words of the great St John Henry Newman, part of his prayer reads: "God has created me to do him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another. I have my mission. I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next, he knows what he is about".

Shaun is studying in Rome for the Derry Diocese.

The Church founded by Christ needs you *by Shaun Doherty*



Shaun Doherty.

AS I reflect on Bishop Donal's sermon of 17th Sunday of Ordinary Time, it strikes me that we are being challenged in a profound and unprecedented way, to live out our faith as Christians who may have become accustomed to the safety net of a big church with its many support mechanisms.

With the Government's recent changing regulations; the luxury of attending daily Mass or even Sunday Mass, baptisms, confessions, marriages, funerals are now allowable. How long this present crisis will last no one can say with certainty, but one thing we can say is that right in the midst of this moment in history is Loving Kindness itself, the Shepherd who never abandons us, Jesus, the name above all names, the name that came and comes before corona virus, lockdown, social distancing and yes, virtual worship.

He is the Lord who always took centre stage in the lives of the saints, holy men and women over the history of the church, and whose stories are so easily accessible in books or perhaps more conveniently on the internet. Shining examples of virtue such

as Therese of Lisieux, Therese of Avilla, Columbkille, and more recently, Sr Clare Crockett, whose life and premature death is inspiring many to consider how the Lord offers continuous conversion to all who cooperate with free grace.

In our own land and elsewhere, the faithful faced times where attendance at Mass meant death, whose lives were marked by sacrifice, suffering, generosity, but most of all Love. Love for the Creator and love for the Creature. People who gave all their talents and gifts in the service of God because they believed in a merciful and compassionate Jesus.

Christians today are facing persecution in all manner of ways because they cannot in conscience deny what they have been graced to believe, that belief is in a loving, merciful father who has showered

countless blessings upon them and has promised immeasurably more. We are not all called to die for our faith, but we need to aspire with God's grace to enter eternal life in the hope that the Lord we tried to follow will recognise us when the time comes to meet our maker.

We rejoice in the saints that have gone before us, parents and individuals that looked at us with the eyes of Christ, that loved us and forgave us with the heart of Christ, famous not for their wealth or status but for their close relationship to Christ.

If, due to the lockdown, you were denied the opportunity to be with the person you loved the most, and suddenly got the option of being present to him/her, would you jump at the chance or opt for the virtual choice? I know which one I would choose. Jesus is

new ways to proclaim that 'God is Love' *(Bishop Donal)*

Go home! The Mission of the Domestic Church

by Willie Krause



Willie Krause.

IN the eighth chapter of Luke's Gospel, Jesus drives out the devils that possess a man from Gerasene, on the shore of the Lake Gennesaret. Filled with gratitude and enthusiasm, the healed man pleads with Jesus and wants to follow him. But what does Jesus do? He says: "No!" And: "Go home!" (Lk 8:39)

In the current situation, when the coronavirus has come to stay and the "new normality" still feels quite abnormal, we can understand the frustration this man must have felt better than ever before. Still we have to be careful, still we cannot move as freely in public as we are used to, still our churches remain mostly empty and the sign of peace remains a friendly wave over a safe two-meter-distance.

The frustration connected to the omnipresent "No!" and "Go home" is growing. And still we have to see it as a chance, for Jesus continues: "Go home and tell how

much good God has done for you!" This is not a rejection. It is a mission...our mission in this strange time.

This mission indicates the unique importance of the home. The home is the space that shapes, defines and sustains our faith more than any other, since it is here that most of us are introduced to a relationship with God as children, and it is here that we continue to encounter Him in the concrete reality of our lives.

Naturally, discipleship yearns to break into the open and find a companion in the community, to reassure and demonstrate itself in public. Parish, school and society, as the places where we build community, show solidarity and practice charity, are sorely missed and, even more, we feel the anguish about the restricted access to the sacraments in the liturgy, where the Body of Christ truly unites to worship and give thanks. However, the painful absence of these spaces of public expression of faith can once again remind us to appreciate the foundational part that the domestic church plays in our spiritual and religious life.

In his homily for the 17th Sunday of Ordinary Time, Bishop Donal reminded us: "Limitation in church attendance means that the domestic church has to take on a greater part of handing on the rich treasures of the faith."

In the home, we discover and pass on the rich treasures of the faith in a unique way, since it is here, where we live our lives day in and day out, where we laugh

and love and mourn, that we experience God in our lives. The richest treasures of the faith that help to sustain us throughout our lives are not a set of rules taught schoolmasterly and memorised dryly, as it used to be the case with the old catechism. I dare say, they are not even the beautiful sets of age-old prayers and pious devotions that we look to for consolation and support. The richest treasure of the faith is the faith itself, the knowledge of a living and loving God that comes close to us in every moment and that opens us up to a world beyond that which we can see with our eyes, to a reality that allows us to see meaning, purpose and hope in our existence.

This knowledge of a loving God can only be won in the daily struggle of our lives, with its small and great joys and disappointments. It is a knowledge that cannot be indoctrinated but demonstrated by personal example. It can never be fully grasped but is always fragile and fleeting when lighting up the most wonderful moment of our lives. It is out of these moments, which are touched by the Divine, that our faith lives and we truly fulfil our calling to share in the prophetic mission of Christ, in which we all partake through our baptism.

Like the great prophets of old, we have to listen to the Word of God addressed to us in the smallest details and attempt to pass it on, through our own lived example, to those closest to us. And, as for the prophets, these

are words of encouragement and love, of challenge and exhortation, inexpressible but nonetheless of striking reality. They cannot be forced or manufactured, but only awaited in radical openness to the God who is sure to speak to us. We are only called to live our lives in gratitude and humble acceptance, and to respond courageously and generously to our calling.

Thus, the most ordinary moments of our life at home, the day-to-day routine, open up opportunities to come close to God that then in turn will motivate us to go out into the world, in whatever way it might be possible.

Truthfully, without these reinvigorating, real-life experiences and motivations, all the grand structures, institutions and rituals become lifeless and empty. It is only a richly lived relationship with God, nourished, challenged and sustained in the daily domestic experience, the greatest gift of our spiritual life, which will again help us to unlock these other great treasures of our faith.

It is the task of the domestic church, and not only in these times, to explore this spiritual life and to pass it on in a lived example to those around us.

Willy Krause, from Germany, spent two years with the Derry Youth Community and looks on Derry as his second home. The 23-year-old is currently studying at NUIM, in Maynooth.

Challenge can often provide opportunity by Bernie Nixon



Bernie Nixon, Omagh

WE live in a technological world and we know through social media, news commentary, that thousands of people have been and are currently tuning in to the many 'Church Services' networks provided throughout Ireland and beyond.

Surely, this is testament to the great need people have for spirituality and God. Not only is there a 'remnant' of religion within the Church, there is also a 'remnant' within the majority of those who have 'left' the Institutional church for one reason or another.

Karl Rahner SJ, the great Jesuit theologian, once compared the Church to, "Embers buried in ashes. The fire may seem to have gone out, but under the pile of ash are gently glowing embers. If embers cannot get oxygen they too will go out."

I believe this "challenge for parishes" provides an opportunity. One example: Given the current limitation on numbers receiving communion sacramentally, time could be given to a short homily. A homily based on the Scripture reading of the day. During the past months, I have occasionally been privileged and enlightened to experience this via 'Church Services', all within 30 minutes.

While it is vitally important to focus on Christ's presence in the Eucharist, it is also important to emphasise The Word of God in Scripture.

It is almost 60 years since the Vatican II document on 'Sacred Liturgy', on different

modes of God's presence: "Christ is present too in his word, for it is he who speaks when the scriptures are read in church...the people have a right to be nourished by the word of God and by the minister's explanation of it".

Many have an interest and would appreciate the deeper meaning within scripture. Many may not voice questions, but rather than leave a certain scepticism surely they need "an explanation" of it. Is it true? Did it really happen like that? We should be asking, what does it mean, what is the reading saying to us...asking of us. The truth of the story is in the meaning...what is the meaning of the story?

"At all times the Church has the responsibility of reading the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the gospel in language intelligible to every generation" (Vat II 'Church in the Modern World' 1965)

With regard to the role of the 'Domestic Church' taking on a greater role in handing on our faith, this is certainly needed due to priest shortage and pressure of work. However, this needs to be done in a more professional way. Lay people could be trained in many aspects of ministry at parish level. There is a wealth of part-time and correspondence courses available in various ministries. No specific titles or vestments required, simply lay people with sound knowledge of Scripture within the Roman Catholic tradition. The Diocese could offer financial support in some cases.

Let us broaden our perception of vocation within the Church. Challenges can provide great opportunities, Are we ready to 'GO FOR IT'?

GO: Matt 28:10 - "Go and take my word to my brothers"; Mk 16:7 - "Go and say to his disciples"; Lk 24:45 - "Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures".

From Omagh, Bernie is the 76-year-old mother of three grown up children

Domestic Church – Handing on the baton of faith

by Clement & Paula Kennedy

AS parents of five children, who have returned to their respective schools post lockdown, we agree with Bishop McKeown, that the domestic Church, that is, family in whatever shape or form, has to take on a greater part in handing on the rich treasure of faith.

However, the notion that faith starts in our home is nothing new, it has just become more apparent during this social distancing pandemic. Like putting on new glasses to see clearly for the first time, nothing has changed, it is just that our view is now enhanced.

Jesus, Himself, was born into a domestic church with his mother, Mary and his foster father, Joseph. This little church existed wherever they laid their head - Bethlehem to Egypt to Nazareth. In the times of the Early Church, there were no public churches, Christian communities gathered in homes

and became examples to others around them. Now, through the COVID pandemic, we have been able to recapture that sense of our faith being grounded and nurtured in our homes once again. Today, we are all being called to build up our own domestic churches and strive to be "islands of Christian life in an unbelieving world" (Catechism 1656).

Pope Francis said in his apostolic exhortation, 'Amoris Laetitia': "The Church is a family of families, constantly enriched by the lives of all domestic churches". However, obviously the domestic church can't exist on its own without the other three spokes of the wheel, namely the hierarchical church (Pope and Bishops), local diocesan church, and local parish church, including our schools, community from which we receive our religious instruction and the sacraments.

Perhaps now more than ever, the COVID-19 pandemic has created an opportunity to take stock of the rat race of life, to treasure what is most important. There is no doubt that when our Churches were closed, there was a greater expression and experience of the domestic church in action. It became necessary and more apparent that the home is the first place where faith is lived, taught, and transmitted from one generation to the next.

It is the place where, St John Paul II said, "God is honoured... prayer is a normal event, virtue is transmitted by word and example and everyone shares the hopes, problems and sufferings of everyone else".

It is here perhaps, in the ups and downs of everyday domestic life - from the routine to the mayhem, from death to new life, from the youthful mood swings

to settled adulthood, from broken relationships to forgiveness, from selfishness to charitable virtues of self-denial, from sad events to the joyful, from sleepless nights to peaceful dreams, from sickness to healing, from prayer requests to prayers answered - all combine in the rich tapestry of life and the countless opportunities to experience God's grace, and so point us towards the narrow gate that leads to Heaven and its rewards.

With a growing family, everything is a work in progress but, with God's grace and mercy, we can all aim to be beacons of light in a darkened world. We pray in hope - "I waited, waited for the Lord; who bent down and heard my cry". (Psalm 40)

Clement & Paula live in Cranagh, Co Tyrone, with their five children.



With missionary hearts we will be led into new ways to proclaim that 'God is Love' (Bishop Donal)

The challenge for each to discover is...

How can I play my part in this critical time? by Aoife O'Neill



Aoife O'Neill.

ONE of the many consequences of the coronavirus pandemic for us as a Church is that we can no longer do things the way we have always done them. We have been shifted into a time where we need to think 'outside of the box' about ways to celebrate our faith.

Bishop Donal in his homily on 17th Sunday of Ordinary Time

posed the important question:

"We are now in a critical time for our church... There is a real challenge for parishes... How do we celebrate our sacramental unity in the Body of Christ without coming together as much?"

Throughout the weeks of lockdown, I believe as a Church we had some great examples

of this. Pope Francis delivered an extraordinary 'Urbi et Orbi' blessing to the whole Church, reminding us to not fear and that "God turns everything to our good". In our home, and many others, this was a very touching and emotional experience where we could truly appreciate the gift that it is to belong to the Church and feel united with our brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the whole world.

The shut down of parishes threw many into new territory - for the first time ever parishioners could not come together. Many people had to discover new skills in technology or face isolation. Internet connections became vital as a source of connection - helping us all to see that though we were apart we were never separated.

On a local level, as Churches were closed and parishioners could not come and join in traditional Holy Week celebrations, we were encouraged to join together in common activities. Pictures were shared on social media of homes decorated with Palm branches to celebrate Palm Sunday, and of sacred spaces with the crucifix ready to join in Veneration of the Cross from home on Good Friday. Virtual Lough Derg, May altars,

Rosary processions through the streets and Eucharistic Adoration were among the many ways that people have joined together spiritually.

In a recent homily, Fr Johnathan Meyer likened the Church to the apostles in the boat when Jesus called Peter out onto the water. If the boat is how we as a Church have always done things, then he said it is time for us to get out of the boat. We need to look to ways we can continue to step out onto the water and join Jesus. We have an opportunity to prepare for possible future lockdown scenarios and look for more new ideas of how we can celebrate together while physically apart. Every one of us in our own parishes can help by sharing ideas, offering our time and talents and by joining in with new initiatives. Everyone has something to offer. How will YOU step off the boat?

In the same homily, Bishop Donal also stated: "Limitation in Church attendance means that the domestic Church has to take on a greater part of handing on the rich treasure of faith."

Perhaps this is where we can step off the boat? The family has always been the vital place of faith formation, however, we can

sometimes forget every single one of us has a role to play in the mission of the Church.

We, as families and as members of the Church, need to step up to the challenge of our time. We need to reach out and support one another in order to ensure the faith is handed on. This can include sharing ideas of family faith activities, supporting other families and friends, sharing scripture, praying with one another and sharing discussion around matters of our faith.

When we could not attend public Mass, we were reminded that Jesus is made present to us in four ways in the Mass - in the person of the priest; in the Eucharist; in the Word of God, and in one another. In a time when we can only watch Mass through a screen, we need to remember that Christ is present to us through His Word and through one another. We have a great opportunity as families, friends, and fellow parishioners to create space to join and meet Jesus in one another and by sharing scriptures. If each family set aside even a small portion of time each week to read and discuss a piece of scripture, we would reap the fruit of having a deeper and richer faith. At the beginning of lockdown,

the daily life of most of us was brought to a halt. After initial shock and disbelief faded, people began to settle into new, much quieter routines. With this space and time, many began to rediscover the gift of one another as members of the same family. People began to share their experiences of how their families were enjoying quality time together, playing games, baking, talking and praying together. The empty schedules made way for people to see what it is in their lives that has REAL importance. Material items, shopping and superficial things faded as people pined for the opportunity to see those they cared for and share a loving embrace once more.

Now and in the time ahead, I pray we hold onto the lessons we have learned in this time about what is truly important. The challenge to every single one of us is to discover what it is that God is asking of me? How can I play my part in this critical time? Am I willing to get out of the boat and go and meet Jesus on the water?

Aoife, 39, is a youth ministry coordinator in The Three Patrons' Parish, Derry.

Seeing Church with fresh eyes by Sr Ethna McDermott



Sr Ethna McDermott.

REFLECTING on the Body of Christ during this pandemic, Rublev's Icon of the Holy Trinity comes to mind. The three unique socially-distanced persons of the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are bound together in a comm-union of love. The viewer is drawn into comm-union with the Holy Trinity through the open space in the foreground, while divine love/grace streams out "from the Trinity through and into all Creation, including humankind, and back to the God who initiated the love cycle."

(Anne Marie Mongoven OP, Trinity, a Story of Deep Delight)

Instead of the familiar 'linear perspective', where the visual reference point is within the viewer and the vanishing point in the distance within the image, iconography employs 'reverse perspective', where the visual reference point is within the icon and the vanishing point within the viewer. With reverse perspective, the world depicted in the icon is central and the viewer becomes a small distant speck on the horizon, as viewed from Heaven.

Icons challenge us to look with fresh eyes, to see from a different perspective, to step outside and look back in. Covid-19 has also forced us to slow down and view what we always took for granted from a different perspective.

In her book 'A Stone for a Pillow', Madeleine L'Engle writes, "Sometimes the very walls of our churches separate us from God and each other. In our various naves and sanctuaries we are safely separated from those outside, from other denominations, other religions, separated from the poor, the ugly, the dying."

The walls separating the Church from the world have become

very thin. What once seemed steadfast and secure, presence of large numbers of priests, access to the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist, Last Rites for the dying, can no longer be taken for granted. Significant milestones in our lives, marked by the Sacraments, are occasions when large numbers of the faith community turn out to support us in the Church building, with celebrations continuing elsewhere. The frills have disappeared and the Sacraments have been stripped back to their essence.

COVID restrictions dictate that families can no longer gather in Church in large numbers; instead support is given by those closest to us in the family home. Access to the Sacrament of Reconciliation is also limited; can we be reconciled and offer reconciliation to others wherever we happen to be? Can we see the face of Jesus in each person we meet, those who are vulnerable, those who are different to us, those we instinctively keep at a distance? Can we offer and receive welcome and reconciliation and healing from them?

COVID is giving us a long overdue nudge to look with fresh eyes at how we relate to the world,

to those around us, to God and to ourselves. We are challenged to look with fresh eyes, to be pro-active in living our baptismal commitment and to "show the world a completely different face of Christianity." (Tomáš Halík. 'Christianity in a Time of Sickness' - America Magazine).

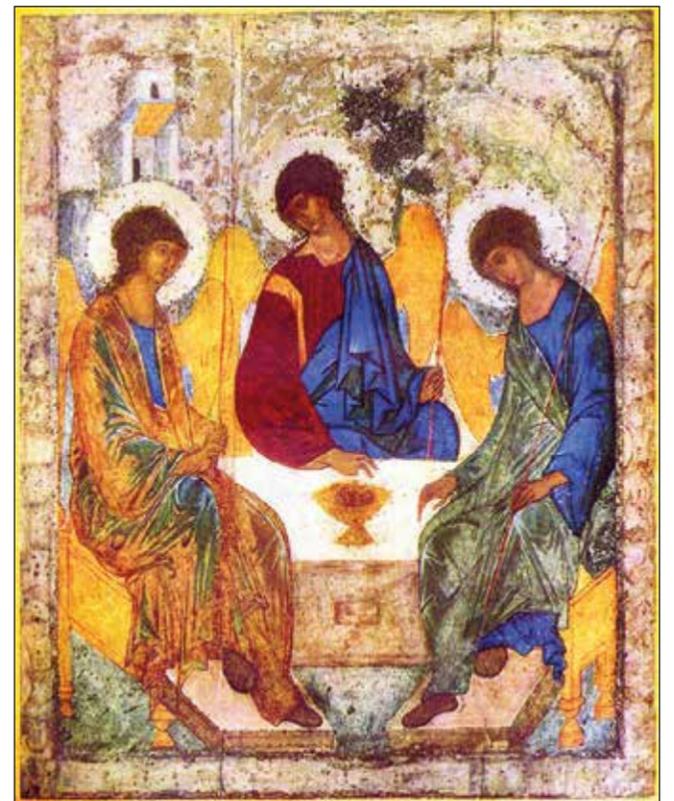
Identity and Mission

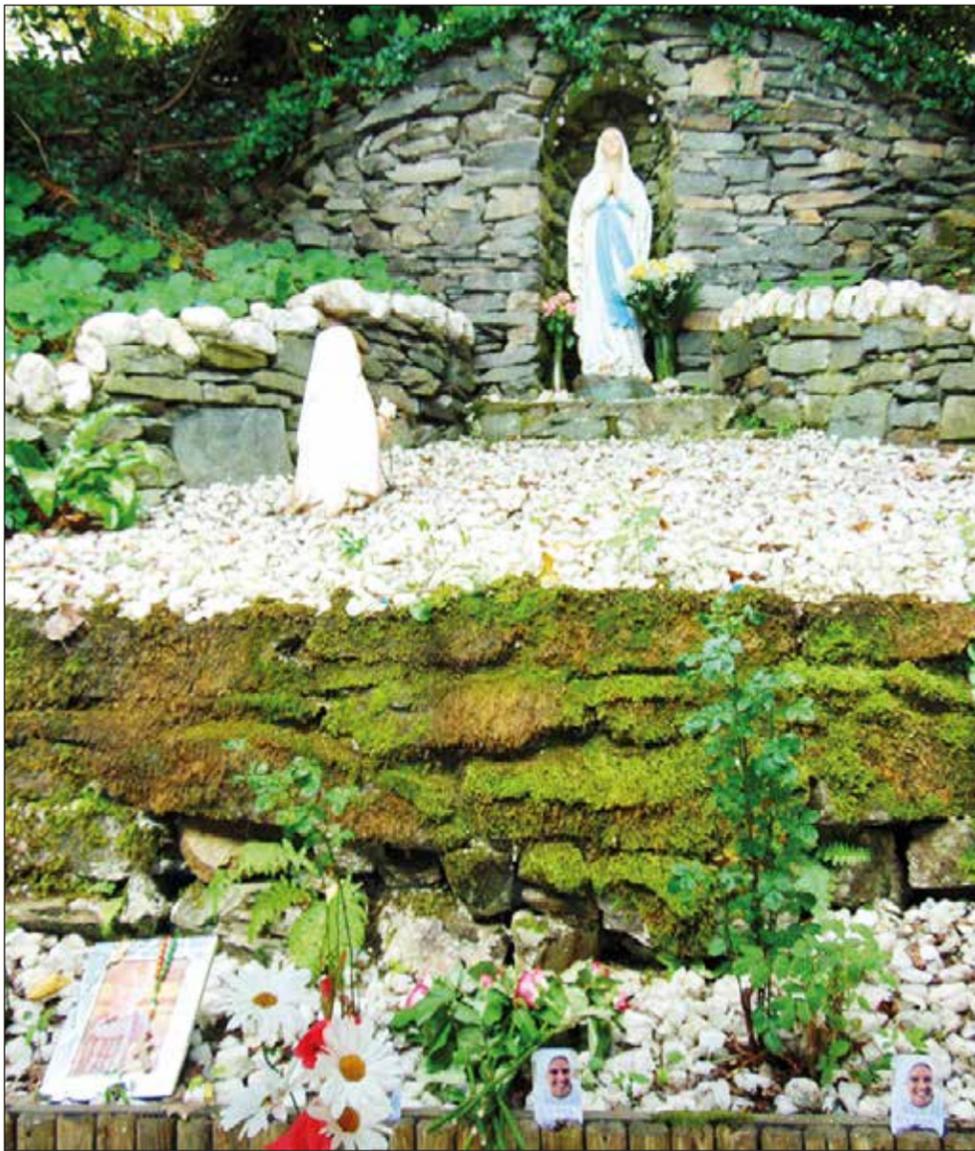
How can we create more balance between the Church and church? We still find God in a special way within the Church building, but God is also present where we are, in the world. How can we create space in our homes and our hearts to welcome the grace that streams out from the Holy Trinity and channel it through and into all Creation, including humankind, and back to God who initiated the love cycle?

Can we create a focal point in our homes, a sacred space, where we create our own ritual with a rhythm, a routine, where we gather regularly to be still and reflect before God and with God? Can we keep ourselves connected to the wider Church through prayer, study, outreach, all of which are freely available online right now?

As individuals and a community, can we strive to "become a sacramental people; "people who live like Jesus - loving, forgiving, challenging, healing, inviting others to be the best people they can be"? (<https://www.mn.catholic.org.au/church-mission/catholic-life/sacrament/>)

Sr Ethna, from Derry, is the Province Leader of the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd.





Coastal Rosary for Life & Faith

THE Rosary on the Coast for Life & Faith will take place this year on Sunday, October 11, at 2.30 pm, when people around the globe will be united in this prayer.

October 11 is the traditional feast of the Maternity of Mary, and the faithful are invited to join in the praying of the Rosary from wherever is convenient, such as grottos, churches, homes etc, while observing social distancing and regulations regarding gatherings.

Many have been praying 15 decades of the Rosary every day since August 15, the Feast of Our Lady's Assumption into Heaven,

as part of the 54 Day Rosary Novena for Life & Faith, which comes to an end on October 7, the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary.

Another upcoming Marian event is 'The Hail Holy Queen Conference', which will be broadcast on Radio Maria Live on Saturday, October 10 and will feature Fr Ruairi O'Domhnaill, Dana, Fr Damien Polly, Marino Restrepo and Fr Marius O'Reilly.

For more information regarding the Coastal Rosary the next day, October 11, and to register a Rosary location, visit www.coastalrosaryireland.ie.



Exploring a selection of inspirational poems with Mary Murphy

DURING October, there will be an online opportunity to explore a selection of inspirational poems with Mary Murphy, with the aim of stimulating an interest in poetry as an inspirational art form.

By gently exploring a number of poems by, among others, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Mary Oliver, Seamus Heaney, Patrick Kavanagh, the course aims to show how, by tapping into a rich seam of language, the poet offers us an in-depth exploration of the human condition.

Like other forms of art, remarked Mary, "poetry can offer us a route to the Divine by reaching into and touching our innermost spiritual needs".

The course aims to be friendly, informal, inclusive and nourishing.

It will commence on Friday, October 9, at 11 am live on the St Eugene's Cathedral Facebook page and via the St Eugene's Parish Hall webcam.

This programme will continue for eight weeks and everyone is welcome to watch it online.



Derry seminarians return to study

THE seminarians for the Derry Diocese have returned to their places of study, at St Patrick's College, Maynooth and the Pontifical Bede College, in Rome, with the good wishes and prayers of family and friends.

Before heading off they gathered for the celebration of Mass and a meal with Bishop Donal and the Vocations Director for the Diocese, Fr Chris Ferguson.

Saying that the seminarians had been at home from their colleges for almost six months because of the Covid-19 pandemic, Bishop Donal told 'The Net' that he was very grateful to them for their involvement in parish life at various levels during that period.

He went on to remark: "Seminary will be different both in terms of how they live their community life in a safe manner and prepare for priesthood in a post Covid Ireland".

He added: "I hope that the example of many priests and parish communities during lockdown will encourage other men and women to consider whether they are being called to dedicate their whole lives to God's work in priesthood and religious life."

As the new academic year got underway, 13 seminarians from various Irish dioceses began their formation and academic programme in St Patrick's College, Maynooth, Bede College, Rome, the Redemptoris Mater Seminary, Dundalk, and the Venerable English College, Rome, while a number of others began their propaedeutic programme in other locations in Ireland and abroad. This brings the total number studying for the priesthood for Irish dioceses to 72.



Bishop Donal was joined by the seminarians for the Diocese, and Vocations Director, Fr Chris Ferguson, for a meal following the celebration of Mass

Derry Diocesan Vocation Prayer



Lord Jesus Christ, gentle shepherd,
You know your sheep,
and you know how to reach their hearts.
Give to the people of the
Diocese of Derry,
hearts that are open to the call of the
Holy Spirit.
Speak to the hearts of the (young) men
of our Diocese,
that they may hear your call to follow you
and serve your people as priests.
Awaken in them the courage to answer:
'Here I am, Lord, Send me.'

*St Eugene, pray for us.
St Columba, pray for us.
St John Vianney, pray for us.*

Pope's monthly intention

The Holy Father has asked for prayer during October for:

The Laity's Mission in the Church

We pray that by the virtue of baptism, the laity, especially women, may participate more in areas of responsibility in the Church.

Prayer for Priests

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

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

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

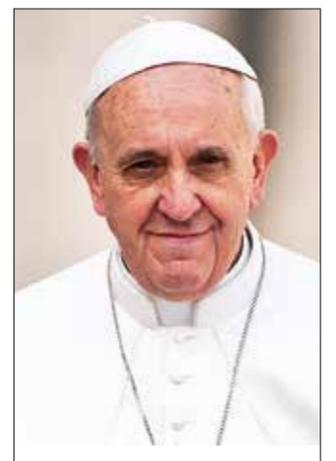
Bless, in a special way,
Your servant

Father...

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

Remember in prayer:

- Fr Colum Clerkin (Oct 1st)
- Fr Roland Colhoun (2nd)
- Fr Michael Collins (3rd)
- Fr Oliver Crilly (4th)
- Fr Patrick Crilly (5th)
- Fr Brendan Crowley (6th)
- All priests (7th)
- All priests (8th)
- All priests (9th)
- Msgr Brendan Devlin (10th)
- Fr James Devine (11th)
- Fr Peter Devlin (12th)
- Fr Fintan Diggin (13th)
- Fr Brendan Doherty (14th)
- All priests (15th)
- All priests (16th)
- Fr John Doherty (17th)



- All priests (18th)
- Fr Michael Doherty (19th)
- Fr Patrick Doherty (20th)
- Mgr Andrew Dolan (21st)
- Fr Brian Donnelly (22nd)
- Msgr Joseph Donnelly (23rd)
- Fr Liam Donnelly (24th)
- All priests (25th)
- Fr John Downey (26th)
- All priests (27th)
- All priests (28th)
- Fr Jack Farrell (29th)
- All priests (30th)
- Fr John Farren (31st)

Creevagh... Then and Now *by Vera McFadden*

WE had just turned into Bligh's Lane. My father was talking to my mother. Then he moved forward and he called me over. "Holy people came here to pray", he said, "and there were little houses."

I looked back at Holywell Hill, which we had just passed, thinking they had been there. I couldn't see any sign of former houses, so I looked up at my father and asked him, "Where?" He nodded at the field beside us. I looked all over it. I saw grass and heather, wildflowers and weeds, gorse, and rushes. There was a little right of way which ran up along one side of the place, but I could not see any evidence of former buildings. I looked back at my father, not understanding. "I am too young," I said, "I can't learn about all that."

That was 80 years ago; I was eight years old at the time. I never asked about that field again. I remember that we once had a picnic there about a year before. That was all I could remember about it. Perhaps because I had only asked "Where", my father never told me anymore. I could have asked "When?" or "What kind of houses?". Surely my father had something interesting to tell me when he mentioned it in the first place.

Years later, I met people who told me how he had explored the landscape and researched the antiquities. One old man in Desertegney who told me that was helping me with place names and ancient monuments for, by the time I was 40, I was as fascinated by the story of the past as my father had ever been. And so was my 11 years old son.

It was one of those missed opportunities; a regret for not listening more at the time. My father died when I was 12 years old.

Several years ago, I looked into the work of The Four Masters, the Franciscan monks who came from Europe in the 16th century to gather heritage that was in danger of being lost or forgotten. One of them, John Colgan from Carndonagh, had noted a ruined monastery in our townland. A couple of my friends agreed to help me to look for its forgotten site. This help was necessary as I had not been able to read for several years.

During our research, we discovered an ancient road that branched out in a few different directions. It was called Priest's Lane. Professor Cormack MacSparran, from Queen's University, had agreed to assist us, so we contacted him. He sent me a map which had the lane on it. We had seen maps in the library, but in this one the lane was much longer. I thought there was a mistake on that map.

A few days before, I had had an operation on my right eye. I had

been told to avoid the sunlight, as it would damage the recuperating eye. I was wondering if the map could possibly be correct. When the sun went down, my daughter took me to investigate. There was no mistake – the road went on up past the farmhouse and over the mountain. We went along Groarty Road and then the Sheriff's Road to see where it came out. It emerged beside a big transformer and part of it went on across the road beside the transformer. It ended beside Holywell Hill.

Recalling childhood memories of outings to Holywell, suddenly, like a bolt from the blue, a memory shot out from 70 seven years before – my father telling me about holy people and their houses! I sat straight up in my chair. I had completely forgotten that. I had been working at history in so many ways – researching, fieldwork, archaeological digs, teaching, writing and courier for the foreign visitors. I had visited many places, but I had completely forgotten this place, where I would have had my first history lesson if I had been confident enough to listen and learn. The irony of it all! Here we were, two of us in our 80s, searching for holy sites and this was the only one about which we could be positive. But what kind of holy site? There is a tradition that St Columba came to Holywell to pray in solitude. That is quite probable for, in Celtic times, the monks liked to retire to remote places as Jesus had done. The hill is called Holywell, but I have never met anyone who knows of a well on it.

We visited the place in Creevagh townland again. Of course, after 70 years, it was greatly changed. It was now a grassy field with a high hedge of bushes and a high gate. The little right of way still ran up the edge of the field. A local man told me that it led to a well. Surely there was something special about this place. Was this the Holywell?

This was the highest point on the Priest's Lane. "Holy people... Little houses"...what kind? Made of stone and shaped like beehives? Or were they made of wattle? Did the holy people come at a later date? Was this part of the pilgrim route of which Brian Bonnar had written? He had said that its branches went in several directions so that prayer was said over a wide area. It had been a continental custom, and it was called, "Prier..." - I can't remember the second part of the name, but it sounded exactly like 'Priest's Lane'. Was this little place used for centuries?

It was not long until there was another change, this time not for the better. The little right of way was blocked, with metal fencing heaped along it, and a radio transmitter put up at the top, beside the holy well! The owner of the adjoining field had not

done this. Whoever did, ignored the fact that right of way was an ancient route. That is the problem one encounters on fieldwork, that a lot of heritage is being destroyed in the name of progress.

The archaeological professor kept in touch with us. He came to Derry to record the positions of the sites we had considered. The others were also monastic sites, according to oral tradition, and I believe one of them is mentioned in a story in Adamnan's 'Life of Columba'. That would protect them in one way, in that they would need to be explored if any development was being considered. Unfortunately, it had come too late to protect a few of them.

The historic field I was wondering about is in Upper Creevagh. This townland covers a large area. The other townlands near it are Creggan, Bally McGowan, Termonbacca, Altraderry, Killea and Bally MacGroarty. All of these names are historic; telling what the land was used for, what it was like, or who its keepers were.

Creevagh (Craobhach) means bushy area. Its keepers were the O'Deary family; a branch of the Cineal Eoghain. In 1609, the keeper was Denis O'Deery. The landscape had been important enough to be used for the townland name and it can be studied to discover traces of the past.

One day, early in the year, my daughter pointed out to me that there might be field marks to be seen in the short grass at this time of year; that is, some lighter coloured vegetation indicating a former feature. We went up to discover if there were any. She had noticed a path at the top of the field and we got the owner's permission to use it. I had to stay in the car as my handicapped foot would not allow me to walk on the rough surface. She photographed the field and, on the way back to the car, she noticed some circular structures in a small wooded area. We yet have to discover if this is an indication of any historical feature. The photographs did not show any field marks. My granddaughter pointed out that these only came to light whenever they best quality inks were used. So, we can have another go at developing the photographs.

When we went to Holywell on family walks long ago, this field was our learning point, for we came via Sheriff's Road or along Bligh's Lane. The name of this route comes from the Bligh family. I remember seeing the foundations of a palatial house in the area when I was researching for my 'Termonbacca' book. I wonder if it was owned by a Bligh? The lane leads from the Lone Moor and goes through Churchlands, passing close



to Rathmore. I believe that it follows an ancient pathway. As we went along it, we passed Sam Campbell's farmhouse. Across the road there was a barn. He told us that Lundy had sheltered there after his escape from the besieged City. Further on, we passed the home of Bridget Ward, a classmate of mine. Across the road from their house, a lane leads down to a well. Many walkers stopped there for a drink. There were three at the entrance to that lane, so it may be the one beside the circular structures. The old house across the road is no longer there.

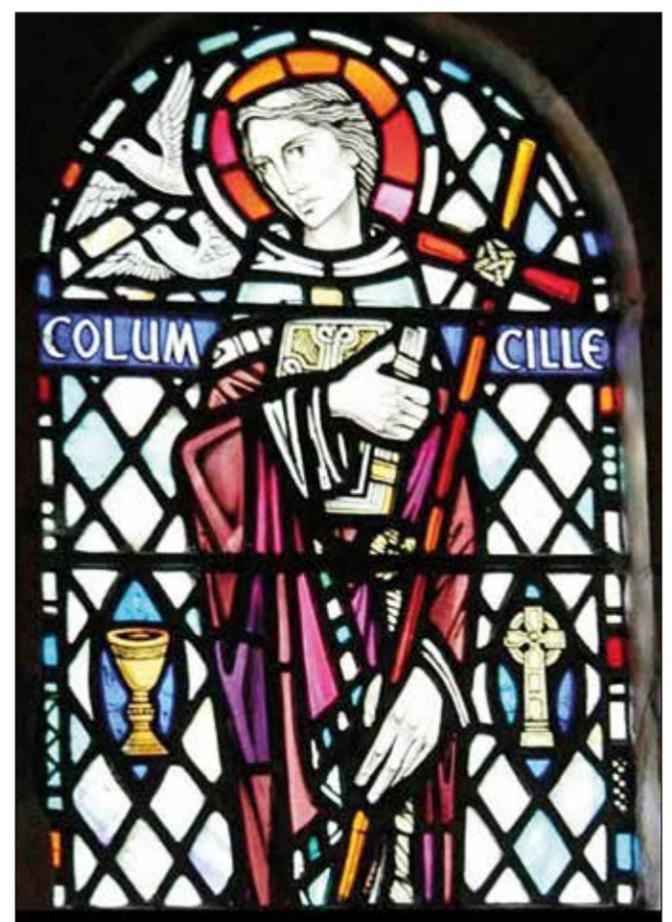
During the 1939-1945 War our walks stopped, partly because of the emergency situation and also because my father was ill during that time. Many people went out here to go to the little shop beside the border. Of course, the land in Creevagh has been put to many uses over the years and now there are several businesses as well as farming. Changing land use causes changes in the landscape. Now, the little field that was shown to me long ago has undergone other massive changes. The pieces of metal fencing have been removed and now a new lane goes along most of the route of the right of way.

I would have liked the discovery of some indication of the former holy site. I hope more is found out about all of these ancient places which are part of our heritage. John C Colgan and the other monks from Louvain preserved a lot of our country's heritage for us. We could be doing with some people like them today.

Note – I would like to thank Stephen Doherty and other members of the DTHG for the prompt action in establishing the position of the Long Tower. I was delighted. Maybe there are still some John Colgans about after all.



John Colgan.



Saint Columba.

What is the reason for the hope that you have? (1 Peter 3:15)

My faith journey

by Christy Burke

I didn't really come to faith until I was about 21 years old. My mother, Mary has a great faith, and so had my father, Peter. The youngest of seven, I was born in Shantallow 46 years ago, in the Steelstown Parish, where we lived until I was 15 years old and then we moved to Hazelbank, in the Holy Family Parish, Ballymagroarty. We always went to Mass on Sundays and went to Confessions monthly.

I had very bad health from the age of eight. I suffered from severe epilepsy, which changed things for my life right up until I was 32 years old. But, when I was 21, a friend asked me to go to a prayer group called Search. I was very reluctant to go but I did, so that was my first introduction to what was a more social approach to faith. I wasn't really taking my faith that seriously at the time, but I went to Search for many years and then Cursillo, before discovering and joining another faith group called Youth 2000, and that is when I really started to think about my faith.

Seeing so many people in silent Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament during the Youth 2000 festival was a profound experience for me. Looking back, I think that is what I was being drawn more into...silent communion with God, so that I could become aware of His presence.

I became a leader with the Youth 2000 group in Holy Family Parish and was involved in the Youth 2000 festivals. I also became a Knight of the Blessed Sacrament in the Long Tower.

At one of the Youth 2000 festivals, in Clonmacnoise, a young fella said to me that there was a man I needed to talk to. I was doing electrical work at the festival and thought it was just someone who wanted a wee electrical job done. It turned out that the man was a Pallottine Father, a family friend of the fella who suggested that I talk to him. In the course of our conversation, he asked me if I had ever considered priesthood. It so happened that I was discerning about priesthood with the Derry Diocese at the time.

My thinking about becoming a priest had come from listening to Youth 2000 talks about vocations and discerning what your call is. The Pallottine Father asked if I would like to meet again to chat further and so I met him a few times, to discern, and then he invited me to a vocations weekend retreat in Thurles. That was in 2012.

I was used to going on retreats by this time and this one gave

me an insight into St Pallotti, the founder of the Pallottine Order, and his charism. He worked with the poor, the sick and the homeless, and started up things for the youth. He was known as 'the walking saint' and had the gift of bi-location. I was attracted to St Pallotti because of what he had done and also because he had suffered with poor health as a child as well.

The Pallottines asked me to spend a year with them discerning. I was at a crossroads at the time and felt that I needed to do something, as there was something niggling at me. I felt that I needed proper guidance so, in 2013, I went to spend time with them for a year and ended up staying for six fantastic years. I was based in Dublin and studied in Maynooth.

After doing a spiritual year, I studied Philosophy for two years and then Theology for a year. After this were two years of pastoral placement. I was in the second year of placement in a parish when I experienced a severe spiritual battle, which was also a physical battle. I had to be pulled out of college. I had collapsed and fractured my back. The force of the fall had put two of my vertebrae out, so I took time out from my studies for the rest of that year.

Stillness

When I went back, I was put into a different parish to repeat my second year of pastoral placement. During that year, I felt that I was being drawn into something deeper, and that was stillness. While in the student accommodation in Dublin, I found myself spending a lot of time in the oratory or in my room in silence. This is when it started to click with me about where the true relationship with God is; in the silence.

During these times of silence, the Spirit spoke to me and revealed, "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you by name." Christopher means 'Bearer of Christ', and 'Christ' means 'The Anointed One'. When I asked my

mother why she had called me Christopher, because no-one in my family had had that name, she said that she didn't know.

My mother had had a very troublesome pregnancy with me. They couldn't find my heartbeat, so my mother sent for a healing priest who was based in Derry back in the 70s. He told her that her child was going to be alright. I was still in her womb. My epilepsy was caused by a lack of oxygen to my brain while I was in the womb.

At its worst, I was taking 70 epileptic attacks a month and ended up having brain surgery about 12 years ago because of that. I had been on the highest dose of medication there was, so tests were carried out to see if I was a candidate for surgery. Only one percent of epileptics are eligible for this surgery, so I prayed about this and spent time at St Anthony's Retreat Centre with Fr Neal Carlin.

I prayed that God would send me a sign if the surgery was for me because I was unsure about going for it. I had some minor operations and was always looking for ways out of them, but I reminded myself that I had made this commitment to the Lord. Every time I passed a stage and got closer to the major operation, I got more nervous. Then the time came, when I was told that I was a candidate for the surgery, to make my decision. So, I battled with that and was looking for a sign.

The surgery was taking place in Liverpool and the night before the operation I said to my mum, who was with me, that I didn't think I could go through with it. She just said, "Ok, we'll leave in the morning". I continued to pray about it and then felt that I had to have the surgery as I hadn't received a sign to indicate otherwise.

The next morning, I went over to the hospital for 10.30 am, but I had been given the wrong time. My unit wasn't open until 1.30 pm. While I was in the waiting room, a young girl came in. There were others in the waiting room who were being prepared for operations on their nervous system, but this girl and I were the only two going for the epileptic surgery.

I was well versed in what I was going through - I had checked the hospital's background, the side-effects of the operation, etc, and was very wary of the whole thing. But, this girl, who had been having the same level of epileptic attacks as me, was so at peace. She hadn't done any reading about the operation etc, like I had done. Thinking about this, I realised that she was my sign. She had her operation before me the next



Christy Burke meditating in St Dymphna's Cell within the Celtic Garden of Peace & Reconciliation, at the IOSAS Centre

day. I had to wait as my blood platelets were low, but was greatly reassured when she sent me a message telling me to go for it as she felt fantastic.

For me, this was all spiritual training. The Lord was saying, this is how much you need to trust Me.

On reflection, I feel that I had been led into a deeper awareness of the presence of God through the different faith groups I had experienced, so that I would surrender to the brain surgery. I also feel that my illness was a grace; training on my journey to spiritual awakening.

I found total inner peace in the stillness, which made me want to journey more into this and understand it.

I stumbled upon the spirituality of John Maine, who teaches meditation through a mantra - 'Ma-ra-na-tha'. I started to practise this on my own. During the summer, I knew that the priesthood wasn't for me, but I wanted to finish the year. I realised that I was already ordained "priest, prophet and king" through my baptism.

Surrender

The Pallottines knew that I was battling and had encouraged me to hang in there, which I did, but the physical battle continued during my second year of pastoral placement. I learnt to surrender in the stillness and I believe that is why the battle was so intense. When we surrender our all in the stillness we become more aware of the Spirit of God, and that is why we have this battle...to keep us from this experience.

The more I practised the stillness, the more alive the Scriptures became and I understood why they are called The Living Word. The Scriptures come alive when we allow the Spirit to be revealed. This led me to understand why Jesus said, "Be still and know", because in the stillness there is wisdom. I was encountering the truth in the stillness. I was set free. My view of myself and the world was changing. This total inner peace was incredible.

I just go with the Spirit now and have sat for anything from 10 minutes up to three hours meditating. I have come to understand how God is beyond time and space.

When I left my studies for the priesthood in August just past, I didn't know where I was going or what I was going to do, but I didn't care as I had such an inner peace. With the awareness of how the Spirit works, all fear and anxiety has been taken away from me. I know now the place to engage with God.

My relationship with the Spirit has taught me, 'Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and the rest in its own time will follow'.

Before I joined the Pallottines, I was aware of the Columba Community's Celtic Peace Garden, on the Derry-Muff border. I had done a retreat at St Anthony's with Fr Neal Carlin when I was discerning about whether or not to go for the brain surgery and had spent time in the Celtic garden. I loved walking around it.

I was drawn back there as I continued to pray and discern. While in my second year of pastoral placement with the Pallottines, I had created a programme for the parish called 'Discover the pearl of great price' and through it taught people about silence. This came from my own awareness. We did Lectio Divina and engaged with The Word and how to be silent.

Feeling that this was something I wanted to continue now, having left the seminary, I set up a group at the Columba Community's IOSAS Centre called 'Ma-ra-na-tha'. Meeting in the Conference Centre, we were going for about 8-10 weeks before lockdown happened in March. We looked at John Maine's teaching, the Scriptures, and Lectio Divina, and there was a time of silence followed by sharing. I had just started the group back again but the number of COVID-19 cases was rising, so we have stopped and now we do the meditation in our homes but at the same time, 7pm on a Sunday night, and share what comes to us via our Whatsapp group.

I was asked to join the Columba Community, which I did, and I think that move was Spirit-led as well. Fr Neal's vision for here is to have a monastic type community, where people can pray and be aware of the silence.

I now work as marketing manager and programme developer for the IOSAS Centre,



Christy Burke at the entrance to the Celtic Garden at the IOSAS Centre.

and am currently developing a programme for youth which is based on the book, 'Adam's Return', by Richard Rohr, who travelled the world looking at different initiation processes for taking a person from childhood to manhood.

The programme that I am creating is for 16-21 year old males, and I am hoping to go ahead with the pilot programme on October 28, which will run from the Thursday through to the Sunday, but this depends on the situation regarding Covid-19.

There will be a similar programme developed for young females, and I have had a couple of men in their 40s interested in doing a programme like this, so I intend to develop one for older men as well.

It is a holistic, spiritual approach, which provides a circle of courage and a circle of support, with an awareness of God in the present, through stillness. It is Christ-centred; a relationship with God and self through an awareness of the presence and stillness.

I am a qualified youth worker, so I am used working in religious and non-religious groups, through my time working with Reach Across before I went to the Pallottines. When I get the programme up and running, I would like to see us going into parishes and schools to talk about it and encourage people to participate in it.

In the meantime, I would encourage taking time to journey within to encounter God and you will know what it means to be held in unconditional love.

"O that you would be completely silent, and that it would become your wisdom." (Job 13:5)

St Teresa of Jesus of Los Andes (Part II)

Vocation *by Fr Stephen Quinn OCD*

IN the previous article on the lay life of St Teresa of the Andes, we discovered a young woman profoundly open to the movements of the Spirit of God, literally, speaking to her. In this present article, we examine what that Spirit of God spoke to her about herself and what she was to do with her life. As so often, that Spirit chose to speak through the people who had the privilege to share the life of Juanita Fernandez Solar.

Juanita attended the Sacred Heart College in Santiago. There she was taught by Mother Julia Rios, and Mother Julia was the one who introduced her pupil to the saints of Discalced Carmel. Juanita, until this introduction, was completely unaware of their collective witness. Mother Julia recommended the 'Life of Teresa of Avila', the 'Story of the Soul' by St Therese of Lisieux, and finally the 'Praise of Glory' on the life of St Elizabeth of the Trinity.

St Teresa of Avila, the mother foundress of Discalced Carmel, summed up the form of life that she had created as "this life can be heaven on earth for those who seek God alone." Therese of Lisieux was just one of many who had gone after "God alone."

Therese's 'Story of the Soul' profoundly moved Juanita and she drew great profit from its teaching on the Little Way. Juanita, in all humility, could not help but to notice that there were points of congruence between her life and that of the Saint from Lisieux. Juanita noted in her diary, "Therese's soul has points in common with my own. Like her, I have received many favours from our Lord that made her come to perfection in a short time: but I repaid Jesus very poorly."

And as enthused as Juanita was by St Therese's own account of being transformed in Christ, she gave her heart truly to St Elizabeth of the Trinity. There was a real synergy between the souls of Juanita and Elizabeth. Elizabeth, like Juanita, was a gifted musician but there was more to their synergy than the playing of tunes. Elizabeth was a deeply contemplative soul and she had felt that her "mission in heaven would be to encourage souls to go out of themselves in order to cling to God in a very simple and loving way." Juanita wanted to become a saint using this simple and loving way that Elizabeth had pioneered; she wanted "to live with Jesus in the most intimate depths of my soul." The Discalced Carmelite saints gave expression to what had already been going on in her soul and to what she wanted to dedicate her life, "my mind is filled with Him alone," and "He never leaves me."

In a letter to her younger sister, Rebecca, Juanita described in detail the effect that these saints

lived upon her. In one of the most beautiful letters that we have from the pen of Juanita, she gives voice to so much going on within the sacred precincts of her interior. In the letter, Juanita covers many of the significant spiritual themes on the whole character of her vocation. As she begins the letter, she hails her sister wishing her "a thousand happinesses" on her birthday. Juanita sees this birthday as an opportunity to give thanks "that another year has been given." Now, that it is Rebecca's fourteenth birthday, Juanita advises that it is an opportunity for reflection. "Believe me, Rebecca, at 14 and 15, people understand their vocation." Juanita advises that it is a time for listening for the Spirit, for if you are open "you hear a voice and a light shows you the path of your life."

The voice that she was to wait for was, of course, that of Christ's. Christ had been speaking to Rebecca from the first moment of her existence, and those words had imprinted themselves deeply into the soul of Rebecca. If Rebecca were to listen with real intent, she would be able to free those words from the bondage of going ignored and unused and she would find the great potential of her life. Juanita advises that fourteen was the same age as when her own vocation started to clarify. She tells her sister that "the beacon began to shine on me". By beacon, Juanita means the One who called himself the Light of the World, and the shining of that light upon her, Juanita believes, changed the course of her life. She tells her sister that she has already started to plan the steps that she would need to take in order to make her plans come to fruition.

Authentic

Now she takes the opportunity to share with her younger sister the secret of what God had been saying to her, for at least a year or more. In an interesting aside, she gives the credit for her vocation to her parents and family not to herself. Juanita believed that her Catholic parents, endeavouring to live the faith in the ups and downs of life, had imprinted themselves on their children. So much so, that their children would want to put their life on the line for that faith. Juanita said that her family had been a "star shining" upon both her and Rebecca. And if her parents had

lived such an authentic faith, it is only natural for their children to reach even higher.

So, Juanita goes on to speak of what Jesus had been saying to her for all this time. In her vocation she believes that "the Divine Master had captured her in His loving nets." He had drawn her close to Himself in complete graciousness and had invited her to "leave father and mother and all that she possessed" for His own sake. Juanita believed that her "Divine Master" had called her to share the position and role of Mary of Bethany, which the Lord Himself described as the "better part." Mary had sat transfixed at the Lord's feet, not taking her eye away, straining to hear every word as it fell from His lips, and refused to allow the housework and the activity of Martha to get in Christ's way.

These two figures from the Gospel had traditionally been illustrative of two aspects of the Church's life. Martha had traditionally been used as a stereotype of all those vocations that had thrown themselves neck deep into the 'pots and pans' of the apostolic mission of the Church, to go to the very ends of the World preaching Christ. While Mary has traditionally been illustrative of all those orders who have jettisoned all superfluous activity and fixed themselves to the feet of Christ in contemplative life. Juanita tells her sister that she has chosen the role of Mary of Bethany, to be a contemplative, and to join the ranks of the Discalced Carmelite Nuns.

Juanita goes on to draw out the heart of the Discalced Carmelite Nun. It was to be simply and wholly devoted to being with Christ. "It is impossible to say how much I love Him. My mind is filled with Him alone. He is my ideal, an infinite ideal. I long for the day when I can go to Carmel to devote myself to Him alone, to abase myself before Him and so live for Him alone."

Being a Carmelite necessitates that each Carmelite cultivate a life that is "one-eyed," "one-eared," "one-hearted" and single minded upon Christ. "Oh, I never need anything, because in Jesus, I find everything I am searching for! He never leaves me. His love never diminishes. He is so pure, so beautiful. He is goodness itself." Above all else, a Discalced Carmelite is, as St Therese said before Juanita, a lover of Christ.

In the days when theology spoke of monastic life as a superior vocation to married life, Juanita likened the love a Carmelite had for her Lord to that of her eldest sister, Lucia for her husband, Isodore. The depth of their commitment to each other and their giving of themselves to each other reflects what it is that a Carmelite must give in order to have a real relationship

with Christ. The only thing greater about Carmelite monastic life is the object of their love; Jesus Christ is greater than any other spouse. In Him there is none of the helplessness that so afflicts the relationships of men and women; helplessness that even afflicted her parent's relationship.

A vast horizon of relationship opens for the Discalced Carmelite because of who their lover is, "Jesus already lives in my heart. I try to unite myself to, and become like him, and humble myself before him. I'm a drop of water that must disappear in an infinite ocean of loving." Surely, the ultimate expression of loving is preparedness to die for the person we love. The same is true of a Carmelite; a Carmelite must be prepared to die for Christ, to suffer the loss of everything that is not Christ, and to sacrifice and suffer all things for the sake of this Beloved One. In living this type of love, a Carmelite lives the very life of Christ Himself, giving all away to save sinners and lost souls. Every penance, mortification, and sacrifice that the role and life of Carmel asks of the individual Carmelite is given to give life to those who had wandered furthest from the Church, and to assist those charged with calling back the lost sheep.

Inadequate

There can be no doubt that Juanita saw becoming a Discalced Carmelite nun as a big ask. To love Christ in this Carmelite way is beyond the normal powers of a human being. Juanita, herself, knew that she was inadequate. In the letter, she characterises herself as "a poor little bird without wings." Rhetorically, she wondered how she would ever find the wings to carry her to such dizzying heights, as she said herself, "to go build my nest and be close to Him." She told her sister that she will have to rely utterly on the prayers of her sister, others, and on the Lord's strength to make all these things that she has been writing about possible.

The letter between Juanita and Rebecca is a tour de force on vocation, on contemplative life, on Carmelite life, and on the grace to realise vocation. So much so, it was persuasive enough that Rebecca herself discerned her own vocation through it and became a Discalced Carmelite nun in the year after Juanita. In the letter, she can lead other young men and women to their vocation, to know the call to contemplation, and to love Christ utterly. You almost have to pinch yourself when you remember that this letter is being shared between a fourteen-year-old and a fifteen-year-old. One can only imagine a comparison of an email message passing between two teenagers today.



Juanita and her sister, Rebecca.

One can imagine such a message passing between two modern individuals as being full of empty sentimental outbursts, perfectly forgettable expressions, a retelling of the exciting events and, dare we say, complaints about what they had not been given. You might well argue with me that I am too harsh with the younger generation, but can we expect anything more from young people brought up in such a toxic environment? How can they escape the prison of selfishness when they are educated into a life that is utterly forgetful of God, to live life as if God were not there at all, where even what it is to be human is questioned, where humanity is being turned inside out and upside down in order to suit each and every self-conception, where there is no pursuit of goodness, of the beautiful, and, the most frightening word by modern standards, the truth? We leave it to our young ones to make it all up as they go along. Living lives that are crammed with compromise and to improvisation at whim. What child could thrive on such a diet?

It leaves them in the cul-de-sac of self. To these children and to all our young people, I hold up this letter in order to begin a re-education project, asking them to hear for themselves the overt power of the letter and, more than that, the beauty of the soul that wrote this letter and the one who received it. To a people made ugly by selfishness and indifference, Juanita gives them an escape clause, a journey to God in holiness. Juanita, with every fibre of her being, would share with them the insight that far from God being dead, God is alive and well in the centre of their souls. God's presence can fill each life that comes to Him with joy and life-giving love. With every ounce of her being, Juanita bears witness that she no longer lives for herself,

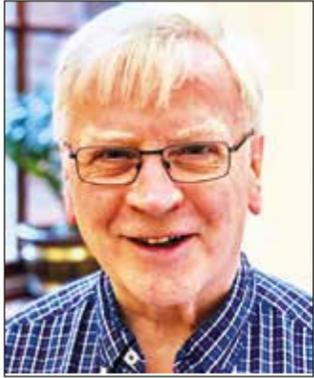


Juanita and Rebecca.

but Christ rather lives His life in her, and that in giving herself utterly she received true happiness. From Juanita they could know a whole new life, "the intimate life of a poor soul, who, without merit on her part, Jesus Christ loved in a special way and filled abundantly with his favours and graces."

Mother Angelica of the Most Blessed Sacrament, the prioress of the Carmel at Los Andes, invited Juanita to visit Los Andes for an interview. Juanita came with her mother on January 11, 1919, to Los Andes for the first time. In the interview, Juanita was utterly candid with her future prioress and Mother Angelica gave the full picture of Discalced Carmelites, holding nothing back. Mother Angelica was so confident in Juanita that she immediately gave her a date for her entry, May 7 of that same year, and also the name that she would receive in religion, Sr Teresa of Jesus of the Los Andes Carmel.

A Word of God for your Family Life **Reconciliation** by Fr Johnny Doherty, CSsR



COVID-19 has forced all of us to take refuge in our own homes, with those who are closest to us, and to find there our safety in the present and our hope for the future. That, for me, has been the single most important thing that has happened in the past seven months of this virus and its power over us.

For myself, this has meant being in lockdown with the members of our Redemptorist community in Clonard Monastery, Belfast. There are 18 of us here. Most of us are over 70, which means we are a vulnerable group who needed to isolate ourselves in order to keep safe and to help keep the Health Service from becoming overloaded.

Normally, we were used to being away a lot of the time on Parish Missions, retreats etc. The past few

months were a new experience of being together 24/7. Like everyone else, this experience was a mixture of good and not so good. For me, it has generally been good. But I'll be glad when it is over, and everyone is safe once again from the threat of the virus.

Families

Most people have spent much more time than usual over the past six to seven months in their own homes and with their families than they were used to. Again, the experience has been a whole mixture of good and not so good.

In a recent article entitled, 'What I will miss post Covid-19', a few of the contributions were as follows:

"I have had time to breathe, to re-evaluate how I have been living my life and trying to focus more on the things that truly matter to me, and that make me happy."

"I will miss spending quality time with my family, and the feeling that I have more free time, which is something I have dreamed of."

"I will miss my space. Covid-19 has made me realise that I need time to sit alone, to reflect and plan my life without people bothering me."

"I will miss the comfortable feeling of It's OK not to do

anything. It's OK not to be 'productive' in the way we usually think. Things would come and go, the sun would rise and set, and I would just be living. And that's totally enough."

Positive and negative

Many people have had very positive experiences over these months that we need to treasure and develop, especially for the nurturing of marriage and family life.

Many people also have had very negative experiences. The reported incidences of domestic abuse have increased greatly during this time as compared to 'normal' times. This is a terrible tragedy for those who are caught up in abuse and they need the help of all of us in society and in the Church. They will often need to call on the services of the state to help them remove themselves from this abuse and to keep themselves and their children safe from harm.

It is also projected that the number of divorces will greatly increase as a result of being forced into such close contact with one another over such a protracted time. This, again, is a very traumatic tragedy for those who are involved, and we need to

respond to them with compassion and with support. Couples who are moving in this direction need to call on the counselling services that are available to bring them through this time before it is too late.

Pope Francis

In recent times, Pope Francis has been actively encouraging all of us to take our relationships in hand and let go of the past that divides us...

"Let this be a time to end all family feuds, to forgive each other and let bygones be bygones."

"I think about so many brothers and sisters who are estranged from their families; they don't speak to each other."

"This is a good occasion to meet up again, to embrace each other and forgive each other; to leave bad things behind."

"We are called to forgive each other, to harden not our hearts and to not let pride get in the way of reconciliation."

St Paul's teaching

Forgiveness is vital – but it is not easy. St. Paul, in his letters, gives us two teachings that are particularly important for us at this time.

"Do not let the sun go down on your anger." He does not tell us that

we should never be angry. That would be totally impossible. What he is telling us is that, as followers of Christ, we have no right to get up today with yesterday's anger. It will eat away at us and destroy our love. We have to work hard at letting go of anger and then sort out what divides us.

"Forgive each other as soon as a quarrel begins." Again, he does not say we should never quarrel but rather that we owe it to one another to nip every quarrel in the bud immediately through forgiveness, so that no issue ever becomes more important to us than each other.

These two teachings are vitally important for couples in marriage and for families in their love for each other. They need to be practiced in order to become part of the growth of these special relationships.

The Sunday Mass

For us as Catholics, the Sunday Mass is our way of constantly making a fresh start with Christ and with one another as couples, as families, and as a faith community. Week after week we begin again with the admission that we are sinners. We fail, but we have the power of Christ to rise above that.

In October, the Sundays

challenge us as follows:

1. October 4: "This was the Lord's doing and it is wonderful to see." Grow in a real sense of gratitude for all that we have in one another.

2. October 11: "Everything is ready. Come to the wedding." Celebrate with joy your love relationships of marriage and/or family life. Celebrate also the joy of your faith in Christ and his presence with you and in you.

3. October 18: "Give back to Caesar the things that are Caesar's – and to God what belongs to God." All the gifts that we have are from God – life, love, faith, hope, joy, creation etc. Open yourself up to the wonder of life and feel the awesomeness of who you are.

4. October 25: "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart; you must love your neighbour as yourself." Christ gives us this as the only way to true human living. Commit yourself to His way and follow Him with joy.

Conclusion

Pope Francis says to us at this crucial time: "Love alone is the answer to our yearning for infinite happiness that we think we can satisfy with the idols of knowledge, power, and riches."

'Fratelli Tutti' a powerful reminder of message of love at heart of Gospel – Archbishop Eamon

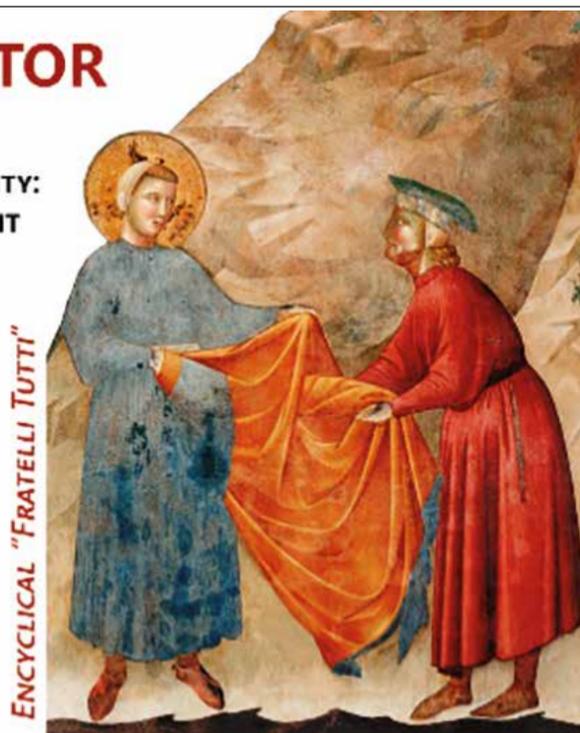
A PRAYER TO THE CREATOR

**LORD, FATHER OF OUR HUMAN FAMILY,
YOU CREATED ALL HUMAN BEINGS EQUAL IN DIGNITY:
POUR FORTH INTO OUR HEARTS A FRATERNAL SPIRIT**

**AND INSPIRE IN US
A DREAM OF RENEWED ENCOUNTER,
DIALOGUE, JUSTICE AND PEACE.**

**MOVE US TO CREATE HEALTHIER SOCIETIES
AND A MORE DIGNIFIED WORLD,
A WORLD WITHOUT HUNGER, POVERTY,
VIOLENCE AND WAR.**

Franciscus



THE publication of 'Fratelli Tutti' (All brothers and sisters), Pope Francis' letter to all of humanity on fraternity and social friendship, during a global pandemic, has been welcomed by Archbishop Eamon Martin for its timeliness.

Launched on the Feast of St Francis of Assisi, the Primate of All Ireland said that this latest encyclical by the Holy Father was a powerful reminder "of the message of love that is at the heart of the Gospel – a love which reaches out to all of our 'brothers and sisters' who share our common humanity."

Noting that Pope Francis had

written this encyclical during a global pandemic, Archbishop Eamon commented on how this time was reminding us "not only of our connectedness around the world but also of our fragility, our shared vulnerability and common need for compassion and love and for the hope that faith in God can bring."

Commending the Holy Father's gift for "opening up and reflecting on the Word of God", he continued: "He loves to select a passage from Scripture and 'meditate out loud' on what God's Word is saying to us. This time he chooses the challenging Parable

of the Good Samaritan and he slowly 'breaks open' the wisdom and teaching of that Parable for today. Yes, we might agree, we are all 'brothers and sisters'; we are all neighbours sharing this planet. But, 'Who is my neighbour? Who is my brother? Who is my sister?'

"Pope Francis reminds us of how his namesake, Saint Francis, answered this question. He 'heard the voice of God, he heard the voice of the poor, he heard the voice of the infirm and he heard the voice of nature. He made of them a way of life.'"

He added: "In Fratelli Tutti Pope Francis therefore makes a special

appeal in the name of justice and mercy for the orphan, the poor, the stranger, the migrant, the refugee and all those on the 'margins', the 'peripheries' of life and society. He envisages an 'open world' motivated by what he calls 'social friendship' and sincere hospitality towards others.

"I find it particularly challenging when he mentions that 'Some peripheries are close to us, in the city centres or in our families.' This of course reminds us here in Ireland to consider who might be left out, who do we tend to shuffle over into the margins of society and perhaps try to forget?"

Archbishop Eamon highlighted that he sometimes wondered "about the impact on us of seeing a homeless person lying on our streets, or watching live pictures on the media of thousands of refugees huddled in camps, or starving children swatting away flies from their faces - how easily we can 'shift our gaze', feel sorry for them but never really question our own values, lifestyle, attitudes?"

"This dilemma," he noted, "is at the heart of Fratelli Tutti. These days we speak about social distancing during the pandemic. Perhaps the real social distancing is the way that the great majority of people in the world can get on with their lives seemingly oblivious or 'anaesthetised' to the tremendous suffering, inequality and neglect of the poor and the most vulnerable among us.

"Solidarity with the poor and vulnerable, Pope Francis says, means looking into their faces, touching their flesh, sensing their closeness and trying to help them. It never tolerates any assault on human life or the human dignity of any person."

Commenting on the challenging message the Holy Father had in his third encyclical for "political leaders and Church leaders about dialogue, mutual understanding and combined effort towards practical actions to make a difference in the world", Archbishop Eamon continued: "It encourages us to 'pay attention to the global' while also 'looking to the local', avoiding both global

uniformity and local narrowness or narcissism.

"We are called to have a 'gaze transformed by charity' which touches our hearts like the Good Samaritan and shows a preferential love to those in greatest need. That gaze 'is at the heart of the authentic spirit of politics'. It 'undergirds everything we do on their behalf'."

He added: "Pope Francis' questions to politicians might also be asked of all of us who are entrusted with leadership positions. He says: 'The real, and potentially painful, questions will be, 'How much love did I put into my work? What did I do for the progress of our people? What mark did I leave on the life of society? What real bonds did I create? What positive forces did I unleash? How much social peace did I sow? What good did I achieve in the position that was entrusted to me?'"

Recommending 'Fratelli Tutti' as "a must read for everybody", Archbishop Eamon noted that the encyclical was addressed not only to Catholics but to all people of goodwill.

He also found it to be "a natural companion to Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical letter 'Laudato Si, on care for our common home', which highlights our collective responsibility to manage natural sources and to sustain our God-given environment."

Text summary and video resources accompanying 'Fratelli Tutti' are now available on www.catholicbishops.ie.

Mission Month highlights how all can participate in the mission of Jesus in His Church

WORLD Mission Day will be celebrated on October 18 around the world, and it is Pope Francis' hope that it will also be "an occasion for reaffirming how prayer, reflection and the material help of your offerings are so many opportunities to participate actively in the mission of Jesus in His Church".

Sharing some missionary thoughts, Carndonagh native, Fr Johnny Doherty, CSsR, who has just celebrated the 60th anniversary of taking his first vows as a Redemptorist, recalled the difficult but great years to his ordination, before setting out as a Redemptorist missionary in Ireland as well as India, the Philippines and Brazil.

"For me, that journey has been and continues to be a wonderful experience of life," said Fr Johnny, adding: "In everything I did, I knew that I was never on my own. It has been a great strength as a missionary to always work with others. I worked mostly with other Redemptorists but also, very often, with other people, especially with many wonderful married couples. This helped me to remember that what we were doing was the work of the Lord and so was assured of success".

Remarking that there is a strong pressure today to focus on the negative things that are happening in the Church and in society, he said: "There are many of those and they cannot be ignored. But the way that Christ sees things makes such a difference.

"I have been in very many parishes throughout the country and abroad doing parish missions and other programmes of parish

renewal. I have been in awe of the extraordinary people of faith and love that I have met everywhere, without exception. Christ is very much alive in all of these places, as I'm sure he is in all the places where I have not been.

"Our world is truly anointed by the presence of Christ through us, his people – families, married, single, widowed, separated, divorced, priests and religious. We have so much to be grateful for and proud of".

Making his comments, while also reflecting on the Gospel reading for October 1, the beginning of Mission Month, in which Jesus appointed "seventy-two others and sent them out ahead of him in pairs to the towns and villages he himself was to visit" (Luke 10: 1-12), Fr Johnny noted: "Jesus makes it very clear what the focus is for the mission of his disciples: 'Be sure of this: The Kingdom of God is very near to you.' This was His mission and now it is ours."

He added: "One of the most important things that we have to keep learning is that we cannot save the world. We cannot even save ourselves – and we don't have to. Our only saviour is Jesus Christ. Our part in it is to make it possible for him to save the world by how we love one another. That is such a difficult lesson to learn.

"We can sometimes think that the Kingdom of God means the punishment of God and then we can easily condemn others. We live in a world that is focused so much on issues that divide us. The Kingdom of God however means the love of God, the forgiveness of God, the compassion of God, the heart of God".

Fr Johnny went on to say: "One of the main challenges we have today is to encourage and support young people to become part of the faith community of each parish. There are many influences in their lives that make this difficult. But we need them so much. We need their energy and their goodness. We need their sense of joy and vibrancy. We need their openness and sense of hope.

"But we also believe that our young people need to be part of the faith community in order to come to know the wonder of Jesus Christ and know the power of his love in their lives. We need them for the future of the mission of the Church to the next generations so that those who come after us will also come to know the embrace of God and so live lives of confident hope".

The second Friday in October celebrates Children's Day of Mission Prayer, which helps children to develop an understanding that by being missionary and by living out Gospel values they will become kinder and more socially and globally responsible.

To help schools and parishes prepare, the Society of Missionary Children provides resources for the day. This year, due to the challenges of COVID-19, they have decided to go a step further and bring mission home to enable children to celebrate wherever they are – in their homes, schools, parishes or communities. It also lets overseas girls and boys, who are suffering even more because of the virus, know that children in Ireland are really thinking about them and want to help.

Resources for Children's Mission Month include activities for every day of October and can be accessed at <https://www.wmi.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Childrens-Mission-Month-Resource.pdf>.

The Irish Church also has a wealth of print and digital resources to celebrate World Missions Day, - <https://www.derrydiocese.org/>

Reading Sr Clare Crockett book had me laughing and crying many times...

by Aoife O'Neill



'Alone with Christ Alone' has given me hope "Changing is HARD! And fighting is TIRING!...Listen to me. IT'S WORTH IT!!!!...Keep going, don't be afraid!"

THESE are the words of the late Sr Clare Crockett written to encourage a friend and published in the new book about her life. When the postman delivered my copy of 'Alone with Christ Alone', I settled down to read with great interest and was glad it had come on my day off from work.

When Clare died in that tragic earthquake in Ecuador, the newspapers and social media were filled with the story. Reading the reports, I had felt sad that someone giving their life to Christ had met such a tragic ending. As the days and weeks passed, more stories about Clare began to emerge. She was only a year younger than me and grew up not far from my home, so I listened with great interest to the things Christ had done through her.

When the movie about Sr Clare, entitled "All or Nothing", was screened in the cinema, I, along with many friends, watched in awe as the beauty of God's plan for her life unfolded before us. It was so touching to see how God completely transformed her life and used it to lead many souls to Him. Clare went from not knowing him at all to, in my opinion, becoming a Saint. The circumstances no longer seemed so tragic, but more a perfect ending of a life lived to the full for Christ - every ounce of what she had to give was given to Him.

Since the movie, and with stories about her intercession and prayers being answered through her, I have had many questions. How

did she change so much? Was it a split moment thing? Did Clare Crockett get some special favour from God that the rest of us were denied? If God was giving out complete conversions like this, then what did we have to do to get one?

Reading this book about her life, I have seen so much more in the story of Clare. From the very preface, I felt I could relate to her. It had me laughing and crying many times. As a teenager in Derry in the 90s, I dreamt of being hypnotised and receiving that leprechaun. Clare's story confirmed what I had long suspected - they weren't hypnotised at all! I laughed at her question why people could easily believe she had a leprechaun but struggled to accept that God had called her.

In this book, we are given front row seats to Clare's response to that call of God. What a response it was too! Personally, I have found the answers to my questions. God had not given Clare any preferential treatment. She had fought, tooth and nail, many spiritual battles to become the person God wanted her to be. She set her heart on Jesus and there was nothing she would let come between her and union with Christ.

Through this book on Clare's life, I have seen how God granted the desires of her heart in bigger ways than she could ever have imagined. Our God truly is a great God.

As I turned the pages of this book, I couldn't help but think I have so far to go. What I wouldn't

give to have one iota of the heart Sr Clare had for Christ. I also have hope. If God did it for Clare, He will do it for us too.

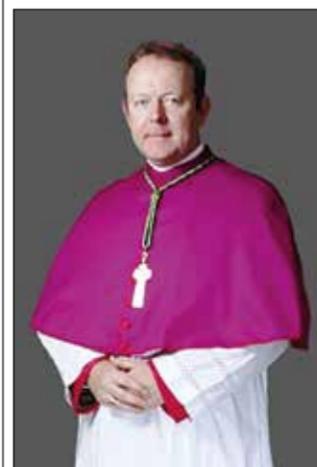
Sr Clare Crockett continues in her mission to win souls for Christ even after her death. Death certainly does not have the final say. We hear it from the girl herself - it is hard and tiring but it is worth it!

Thanks to the life that Sr Clare lived we have the benefit of this help on our journey. We have one of our own spurring us on. Keep going...she calls. I have absolutely no doubt that this extraordinary Derry Girl is in Heaven with Christ and is interceding for us all. Sr Clare, pray for us.

'Sr Clare Crockett: Alone with Christ Alone' is now available online from Amazon.com and Amazon.co.uk. This first book about the Derry nun is written by the same sister who made the video 'All or Nothing', Sr Kristen Gardner.

In the introduction, Sr Kristen writes: "This book is far from being a complete biography. Only four years have passed since Sr Clare's death and there are yet many, many testimonies to be gathered. I hope, however, that it will permit all those who have heard about her death and watched the documentary, 'All or Nothing', to get to know her better. Even those who knew her personally will learn a lot about Sr Clare, just as I have."

Family Rosary Crusade for October



Archbishop Eamon Martin.

THE Primate of All Ireland, Archbishop Eamon Martin has called for a Family Rosary Crusade during October, to pray for protection against COVID-19.

The inspiration for this came from a visit by Archbishop Eamon to the Missionaries of Charity, in Armagh, when he was reminded that Mother Teresa, now St Teresa of Calcutta, had once urged: "Cling to the Rosary as the creeper clings to the tree – for without Our Lady we cannot stand".

Inviting families across the island of Ireland to pray the Rosary together in their homes each day, he spoke about how the past six months had "reminded us of the importance of the 'domestic Church' – the Church of the sitting room and kitchen – the Church that meets every time a family stands or kneels down, or sits down to pray together!"

He added: "It has also helped us realise how important is the vocation of parents to be the

primary teachers and leaders of their children in faith and prayer.

"That is why I am calling for a 'Family Rosary Crusade against Covid-19' during October, encouraging you to pray the Rosary, or even a decade of the Rosary, each day during the month of October. Pray for your own family and loved ones and for all those whose health or livelihood is being seriously impacted by the coronavirus crisis."

Archbishop Eamon is also inviting families to spread the word online: "Using the #FamilyRosaryCrusade or #OctoberFamilyRosary hashtags, please feel free to share a picture or a short sound clip of your family saying a 'Hail Mary', 'Our Father' or 'Glory Be', on social media."

Children's Catechism Club - C3

by Veronica Harley

Hello children. Welcome to the month of October. This month is dedicated to the Our Lady of the Rosary. October 7 is the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. The Rosary is a beautiful prayer, which tells us the story of Jesus' life in four parts: The Joyful Mysteries, The Sorrowful Mysteries, The Glorious Mysteries and The Luminous Mysteries. Every time we pray the Rosary, we should focus on Jesus' life and remember a special intention that we want to pray for.



Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary

October 7 is the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. This feast was introduced by Pope St Pius V (1504-1572) in 1571 to honour Mary for the Christian victory over the Turks at Lepanto, on October 7, 1571.

During the 16th century, Pope St Pius V was having trouble with the Ottoman Turks who were a danger to Christianity. Pope St Pius V and all Christians had prayed the Rosary for the victory of the Christians in battle. The Christians defeated the Turks in a magnificent victory and it was believed that their success came about through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin. Pope St. Pius V dedicated this day as a day of thanksgiving to Our Lady of Victory.

The name of the feast was changed in later years by Pope Gregory XIII to Our Lady of the Rosary (CCC 971). The story of the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary is very important as it shows us that when we are in trouble, discouraged or lonely, that we also can turn to Mary, who prays to her Son for us and with us (CCC 975). Mary the Mother of God never ceases to intercede for us in Heaven and, therefore, she is called in the Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress and Mediatrix (CCC 969). Every time Mary has appeared on earth, she encouraged us to pray the Rosary.

The Rosary

The Rosary is a beautiful prayer to remind us that Jesus loved us so much that He died on the cross for us. The Rosary tells us the story of Jesus' life in four parts: The Joyful Mysteries, The Sorrowful Mysteries, The Glorious Mysteries and The

Luminous Mysteries. Every time we pray the Rosary, we should focus on Jesus' life and remember a special intention that we want to pray for.

The Joyful Mysteries tell us about Jesus' birth and His early life. We pray the Joyful Mysteries on a Monday and Saturday.



The Joyful Mysteries

1. The Annunciation
2. The Visitation
3. The Nativity
4. The Presentation
5. The Finding of Jesus in the Temple

The Sorrowful Mysteries teach us about the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross. We meditate on the Sorrowful Mysteries on a Tuesday and a Friday.

The Sorrowful Mysteries

1. The Agony in the Garden
2. Scourging at the Pillar
3. Crowning with Thorns
4. Carrying of the Cross
5. The Crucifixion

The Glorious Mysteries speak about Jesus' resurrection from death and the glorious life that awaits us in Heaven. We reflect on the Glorious Mysteries on a Wednesday and a Sunday.

The Glorious Mysteries

1. The Resurrection
2. The Ascension
3. The Coming of the Holy Spirit
4. The Assumption of Mary
5. The Coronation of Mary

The Luminous Mysteries lets us know about Jesus' ministry when He went out to the people to teach them about God. We ponder the Luminous Mysteries on a Thursday.

The Mysteries of Light

1. The Baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan
2. The Wedding Feast at Cana
3. The Proclamation of the Kingdom of God
4. The Transfiguration of Jesus
5. The Institution of the Eucharist

Saints of the Month – October

October 1: Therese of the Child Jesus (the Little Flower)

October 4: Francis of Assisi

October 15: Teresa of Avila

October 18: St Luke



Saint Therese of the Child Jesus

We celebrate the feast day of St Therese on the 1st of October. Therese Martin was born in 1873 in the small French town of Alencon. She was the youngest of five children. Her mother died when she was only four years old, so her father had to sell his business and move the family to Lisieux, where their aunt could help to raise them. Therese had an ordinary and joyful childhood. She always showed a great love for Jesus and her Little Way approach to God



has become a great help to others in their daily lives. The Little Way, which Therese spoke of, meant that we should come to God as a little child goes to their father; always trusting in their love and care. Therese fully surrendered herself to God's unconditional love and mercy.

We should always try to remember St Therese's Little Way by trusting completely in God's mercy and love. It is good to be merciful to everyone and even if we fail to do this, as we often do, then we should be merciful to ourselves and know that God is all-merciful.

St Therese Pray for us

Guardian Angel

'See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in Heaven' (Matthew 10:18)

Angels are servants and messengers of God (CCC 329). Angels are signs of God's care and love and they remind us of how God knows each one of us. God loves us so much that He gave each one of us our own



Guardian Angel as 'a protector and shepherd' (CCC 336) to watch over us. We celebrate the Feast of the Guardian Angels on October 2. We honour our Guardian Angels on this day.

October 31 - All Hallows' Eve

October 31 is always a day that children and big people look forward to, as they love to dress up and enjoy the fun of Halloween. So what is halloween?

'All Hallows Eve' is where the word Halloween comes from. A hallowed person is another name for a saint. October 31 is called all hallows eve because it is the eve of All Saints' Day, which is November 1. The night before November 1 became known as Allhallowe'en, which was short for evening before 'All Hallows Day'. It was then shortened to what we know as Halloween. The Mass which is celebrated by the Catholic Church on November 1 was called 'Allhallowmass'. This meant the Mass of all hallowed saintly people. November 1 was called All Hallows Day, All Saints Day.

Halloween traditions of dressing up with costumes and masks, and carving faces into turnips to make lanterns, are rooted in Celtic customs. The Celts divided the year into two parts: summer and winter. It was believed that October 31 was the last day of summer, 'Samhain', and on this night, when the seasons changed, that the curtain which separated the living and dead was very thin, therefore, Spirits could rise up and roam the earth on that night. The Celts thought that if they dressed like the Spirits and carried eerie lanterns that they would fool the wandering Spirits into thinking that they were Spirits too, so they would come to no harm.

In celebrating Halloween this year, let's remind ourselves of its true, good meaning and that, someday, we also will be a saint in Heaven.

Quiz Time with Lawrence

1. Derry man, Adam Beales was recently appointed to what high-profile television role?
2. Of which European country is Ljubljana the capital city?
3. How many time zones does China have?
4. What sport is played at 'Winged Foot' in New York?
5. Which country's longest river is the Meuse?
6. Who played Victor Meldrew's long suffering wife, Margaret in the series 'One foot in the grave'?
7. How many clubs have won the English Premier League?
8. What is the name of Russia's national airline?
9. By what name is Irish comedian James Mulgrew better known?
10. Which actor narrated the film 'Inside Job', about the 2008 US financial crisis?
11. In which city was the current Pope Francis born?
12. How many 'lines' make up the London Underground system- 9, 10, 11 or 12?
13. Which is the last of the 50 US states alphabetically?
14. Wimbledon, the French Open, the US open and which other event make up the tennis 'Grand Slam'

15. Who played the lead role in the 2008 movie, 'The Curious Case of Benjamin Button'?
16. What is the highest rank in the British Army?
17. The statue of 'Holy Mother of God', in Haskovo, is the world's largest monument to Mary. In which country is that?
18. Which football team plays their home games at Signal Iduna Park?
19. After Tokyo, what is Japan's next largest city by population?
20. Who played the role of Sabrina the Teenage Witch?
21. The ferry crossing between England and Spain operates between Portsmouth and which Spanish town on the Bay of Biscay?
22. Who was Queen Elizabeth II's father?
23. What was the name of Michael D Higgins' dog that unfortunately passed away recently?
24. In the Bridget Jones film trilogy, what was the name of Bridget's baby?
25. Which traditional West Indian children's song was on the 'B side' of Boney M's 'Rivers of Babylon' before becoming a hit in its own right?

Quiz Answers: 1. Blue Peter presenter, 2. Slovenia, 3. One, 4. Golf, 5. Belgium, 6. Annette Crosbie, 7. Seven (Man Utd, Man City, Liverpool, Chelsea, Arsenal, Blackburn and Leicester), 8. Aeroflot, 9. Jimmy Cricket, 10. Matt Damon, 11. Buenos Aires, 12. Eleven, 13. Wyoming, 14. Australian Open, 15. Brad Pitt, 16. Field Marshal, 17. Bulgaria, 18. Borussia Dortmund, 19. Yokohama, 20. Melissa Joan Hart, 21. Signal Iduna Park, 22. Santander, 23. Sioda, 24. George VI, 25. William, 26. Brown Girl in the Ring.

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

Let Your Light Shine!

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

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



Our Lady of the Rosary, Pray for Us



Greenlough, Iskaheen, Killyclogher, Killygordon, Kilrea, Lavey, Leckpatrick, Lifford, Limavady, Maghera, Magilligan, Malin, Melmount,