



The NET

Sharing fruits of faith in Derry Diocese

ISSUE 75. APRIL 2022
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See inside...



Holy Face Devotion - Leckpatrick.



Hope Camp Show - Limavady.



Lenten Hope Talks - Steelstown.



Ukraine Appeal - St Eithne's PS, Ballymagroarty.



"Make Christ first and last in everything in our lives"
- Fr Sean O'Donnell (page 2)

Fr Sean O'Donnell celebrating the Easter Sunday Dawn Mass in the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Trench Road, Waterside.



Parish Synodal Sessions - Aghyaran.



National JPPII Award Pilgrimage - Knock.



Youth-led Adoration - Maghera.

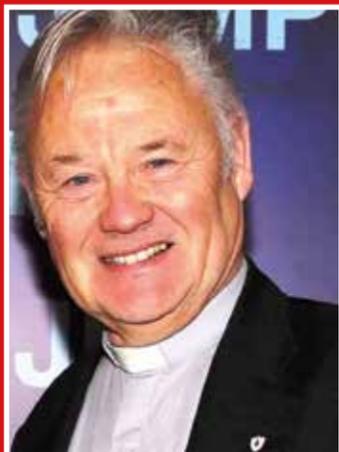
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Ciara McAlister
- Steelstown.



Fr Dr Joshy Parokkaran
- Three Patrons.



Fr Paddy O'Kane RIP
- Culdaff-Ballymagroarty.



Fr Roni Zacharias
- Waterside



Sr Kay Connolly
- Good Shepherds, Waterford.

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The world needs the Good News of Resurrection more than ever! *by Bishop Donal*

HOLY Week and Easter come round each year – but the reality of death and resurrection is an ongoing experience for individuals and for the Church.

In these months we have been dealing with the wounds caused by the Covid experience, when much of society, including churches, was closed and people were encouraged to worship on-line. Spring 2022 is a very special time when our parish communities have to rediscover Resurrection. Whatever the pain of the last years, we are never stuck at Good Friday.

Holy Week was a terrible experience for the early followers of Jesus. The disciples fled and only a few women went back to the

tomb on Easter morning. The apostles and the two people on the road to Emmaus were so demoralised that they were trapped in their own sense of loss and disillusion. A negative story, filled with self-pity, is never life-giving or faith-filled.

It is understandable that many parishes are not sure how to be renewed in their mission to bring Good News. But there is no grace in merely lamenting the emptiness of Holy Saturday and talking about how things might have been.

People of faith and love believe in Resurrection and in the future. They know that Jesus is not dead and gone. They are open to be shocked by the angels who say that He is not dead.

2022 is a time when we are called to be people of hope. We all know that the shadow of price rises and poverty hangs over many communities. We hear depressing news of ghastly events in Ukraine.

Thus, more than ever, we are called to be messengers of hope. We are not proclaimers of Christ's victory over sin and death if we simply echo the gloomy messages of secular society.

In Holy Week, we enter into the reality of betrayal, human fickleness, suffering and brutality. But we know that Resurrection can come in the most unexpected of places through the grace of God.

We are an Easter people and 'Alleluia' is our song. I pray that we can bear that in



Bishop Donal in the Diocesan Memorial Garden at St Eugene's Cathedral. Photograph by Stephen Latimer.

mind as we face the challenges of today and tomorrow. The world needs the Good News of Resurrection more than ever!

Celebrating Dawn Mass on Easter Sunday, Fr Sean O'Donnell called on those gathered to go forward from that Resurrection Day and...

Make Christ first and last in everything in our lives

WHILE some braved the rain to celebrate the dawning of another Easter Sunday with early morning Mass in outdoor locations like the top of Benbradagh Mountain, on the outskirts of Dungiven, a good number chose to join Fr Sean O'Donnell for 6 am Mass in the Church of the Immaculate Conception, on Trench Road, in the Waterside. And what a beautiful

candlelight celebration it was of Our Lord's Resurrection, beginning with Fr Sean singing 'Come Christians All Rejoice'.

Welcoming everyone, he said: "As this Easter Day dawns, we pray in thanks that Jesus has paid the ransom for our failings".

In his homily, Fr Sean recalled the various Scripture readings telling the story of salvation history that were heard during Lent and, in particular, at the Easter Vigil, remarking that many down the ages, and today, have neglected that salvation.

"As the light of resurrection rises this morning, we remember, we entered the tomb and we rose again to new life", he said, adding: "We are called to be sons and daughters of God. Christ is our light".

Commenting on the symbols traced on to the Paschal candle at the Holy Saturday Mass, including those for the Alpha and the Omega – the beginning and the end, Fr Sean said: "Christ is to become the first and the last in our lives. Through His Resurrection He has destroyed the one thing that destroyed us...death".

He added: "Up to Pentecost and beyond, the readings from the Acts of the Apostles will tell us of the story from the Resurrection, so that we will remember that Christ is and



Fr Sean O'Donnell with some of those who joined him for the celebration of Dawn Mass on Easter Sunday.



Diary Dates

Anam Og
 The new youth faith and fellowship group, Anam Og (Young Soul) will meet again on Sunday, May 15 and 29, in Termonbacca, from 6-7.30 pm.

To celebrate Easter, there will be an Anam Og Fun Day on Friday, April 22, at Termonbacca, from 12-4 pm, with games, crafts, an egg hunt and a time of prayer. This is for 10-14 year olds and places can be booked by contacting Aoife on 028 71 262512 or by email termonbaccaderry@gmail.com.

Life in the Spirit
 Omagh Charismatic Prayer Group plan to run 'Life in the Holy Spirit Seminars' after Easter.

The speakers include: Fr Luuk Jansen OP on 'God's Love', April 21; Fr Eddie McGee on 'Salvation', April 28; Fr Francis Bradley on 'New Life', May 5; Fr Damian Bresnahan SMA on 'Receiving God's Gifts', May 12; Fr Columban Toman OP on 'Baptism in the Holy Spirit', May 19; Fr Gabriel Kelly on 'Growth', May 26; and Fr Declan Boland on

'Transformation', June 2.

The seminars will run over seven Thursdays, in conjunction with 7.30 pm Holy Mass in the Sacred Heart Church, Omagh, Co Tyrone.

You can also participate in the Seminars online via webcam at www.drumraghparish.com.

"Let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price" (Rev 22:17).

Carnhill Holy Hour
 The Abraham Community will lead an hour of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament for the National Synodal Pathway in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, on Saturday, April 30, following the 6 pm Vigil Mass.

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

Children's Rosary
 Children's Rosary continues in St Patrick's Church, Claudy on the first Saturday of each month, at 2 pm. The next one will be on Saturday, May 7, and all are welcome.

was and will be.

"He is received by us, Body, Blood and Divinity, every time we receive the Eucharist. Christ is ever with us as He was with the two despondent disciples on the road to Emmaus. 'Did not our hearts burn within us', they said afterwards. They had to take time to reflect on it...to let it sink in.

"Let us go forward from this Resurrection Day and make Christ first and last in everything in our lives. Alleluia".

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

Young pilgrims at annual National Pope John Paul II Award Day in Knock encouraged to...

Live in this moment and be everything you can be now

STUDENTS and youth ministers from the Derry Diocese were amongst the young people who gathered at Knock to celebrate the return of the Pope John Paul II Award annual pilgrimage to the Co Mayo Eucharistic and Marian Shrine.

With a special word of appreciation for those who had set out early for the journey, Tony Brennan, the national coordinator of the Award, extended a warm welcome to the young pilgrims from the various dioceses, including Cloyne, Clonfert, Derry, Elfin, Kildare & Leighlin, and Limerick, and their school and parish Award leaders.

The day included fun activities as well as a prayer service, a gathering in front of the Apparition Chapel to listen to the story of Knock and pray a decade of the Rosary, an inspiring talk by Jesuit priest, Fr Peter McVerry, who has dedicated his life to caring for the homeless and those suffering from addiction in the Dublin area, and the celebration of Mass by the Award Patron, Bishop Donal McKeown. The music ministry for the day was provided by former Derry Youth Community member, Elaine Patton and her twin sister.

Fr Paul Farren, director of the Derry Diocesan Catechetical Centre, where the Award was founded, also took the opportunity to speak to the young people, reflecting on a comment by Pope Francis that young people are “the now of God”.

“What do we do now that we don’t leave until later?” pondered Fr Paul, remarking that the Pope John Paul II Award explained what the Holy Father was talking about.

“So often we hear that young people are the future, but the Pope John Paul Award says something very different,” he noted, adding: “It says that you are the present of the Church, the present of the world. You are living now. We don’t know what time we have in the future, and it doesn’t matter. What matters is that we have this time now.

“So, what do we do with the time we have now; not what you are going to do when you leave school. This is important. We see examples of people helping people in Ukraine; filling lorries with aid items. They are doing things now as the people of the Ukraine need these things now, not in the future.

“And God needs you now, not in the future. You may say, how does God need me. God is a humble God and out of love He has chosen to depend on our presence in the world now. Each one of you is called to be in this world now”.

He continued: “God has a perfect plan for your life and you live that plan by praying and asking God to guide you. The Holy Spirit is confirmed in you to guide you.”

Fr Paul went on to give “a great example of someone who lived now” in sharing the story of Carlo Acutis, who had been born in London but lived in Italy and died from cancer at the age of 15.

He told the young people: “For those 15 years, Carlo lived in the present. He went to Mass every day. His parents were not very into their faith, but the housekeeper was from Poland and she had spoken to Carlo about the faith. When they went on holidays as a family, he would ‘Google’ the destination to find out where he could get Mass when he was away. And he prayed the Rosary every day.

“He was a normal teenager, who played football and loved computers. He also loved caring for the poor. He lived in Milan and when coming home from school he noticed people who were homeless. One day he gave away his shoes to someone he met who had no shoes. And he liked to take the side of those he saw being bullied.

“In his life, he put Jesus and Mary and those in need first. He lived in the now. I would challenge you to do the same. We don’t know what is in the future.”

“If you want to live a fulfilled and joyful life, keep your eyes on God,” continued Fr Paul, “His



Fr Paul Farren, director of the Derry Diocesan Catechetical Centre where the Pope John Paul II Award originated

plans are so much greater than anyone else’s. Don’t be led from God. Lead others to God and do it now. That is what we are called to do.

“Our humble God is depending on you to put Him first and to care for those who are weakest. So often, we can exclude people and it may not even be intentional. Nobody likes to be excluded. What do you do with people in your school who are struggling or who are in need? You are the now of God. God believes in you now. He believes in who you are”.

Commenting on the desire to fit in and to act like everybody else, Fr Paul told the young people: “God made you perfect, every single one of you. You are the person who God wants you to be. He doesn’t make mistakes. He wants you to live as the person you are. He believes in you more than you believe in yourself, and probably more than you believe in Him.

“You are the now of God. Live in this moment and be everything you can be now.”



Former Derry Youth Community member, Elaine Patton, right, and her twin sister provided the Music Ministry for the Pope John Paul II Award Pilgrimage to Knock.



Iskaheen and Upper Merville Parish youth with their Pope John Paul II Award leader, Helen Grant.



Senior pupils of St Mary’s College, Derry.



Senior pupils from St Cecilia’s College, Derry, who took part in Pope John Paul II Award pilgrimage ceremony.

Speaking to young Pope John Paul II Award pilgrims in Knock Basilica, Fr Peter McVerry gave some direction as to how they might find God...

Look out for those in need and you will find God...and an unshakeable peace and joy

SHARING some of his experiences in working with homeless people in Dublin for over 40 years, Jesuit priest, Fr Peter McVerry told the group of young people who listened intently to his talk during the annual Pope John Paul II Award Pilgrimage to Knock Shrine, that if they were looking for God that He was in the people around them.

“Look out for those in need and you will find God,” he said, “and you will find a peace and joy that is unshakeable”.

He went on to say: “People look at our Church and see services, and these are important, but we need to make our Church not so much a Church of services but a Church that services”.

During his talk, Fr Peter told the young people that Christians ought to be the angriest of all people: “We are called to be angry. We’re often told we should avoid anger. Anger is destructive. No, anger is a positive emotion if we know how to release it. Anger and love go together. You cannot love somebody who is suffering unnecessarily without being angry at what is causing the suffering.”

“Look at our society. Look at our world. So much suffering. And so much of that suffering is unnecessary. So many people in our own country struggling. Struggling financially. Homeless people forced to live on the streets. People with drug problems unable to access drug treatment services. We should be angry because this world is not the way God wants it to be. And we should be angry enough to want to change it. To change it to become more like the world that God wants us to be”.

In a Question & Answer session with the young people, Fr Peter was asked how he channeled his anger to help his work.

He responded: “I challenge politicians and government in whatever way I can, by talking or writing to them to address issues of homelessness. The priority of our organization is to give people a home. Hostels are not solutions to homelessness. They get people off the streets but homeless people need a home.”

“During Covid the number of homeless people dropped by 2,000. Landlords were banned

from evicting people, but since the ban has been lifted the numbers have gone up. I want the politicians to re-impose the ban for a couple of years to give us a chance to get a grip on homelessness, but they won’t and that makes me angry, but I will keep trying.”

He went on to note that many people think homeless people are failures, saying: “They have failed in integrating into our society. But they’re not failures. They are people who have been failed. Been failed by the society they’re living in.”

“The majority of the people we deal with have had disaster childhoods. They are on the margins of our society because our society has failed them. What many of them want to know is that somebody cares. That they are worth caring for”.

Asked about what had led to his interest in helping the homeless, Fr Peter told the young people that he had never intended to spend his life working with homeless people.

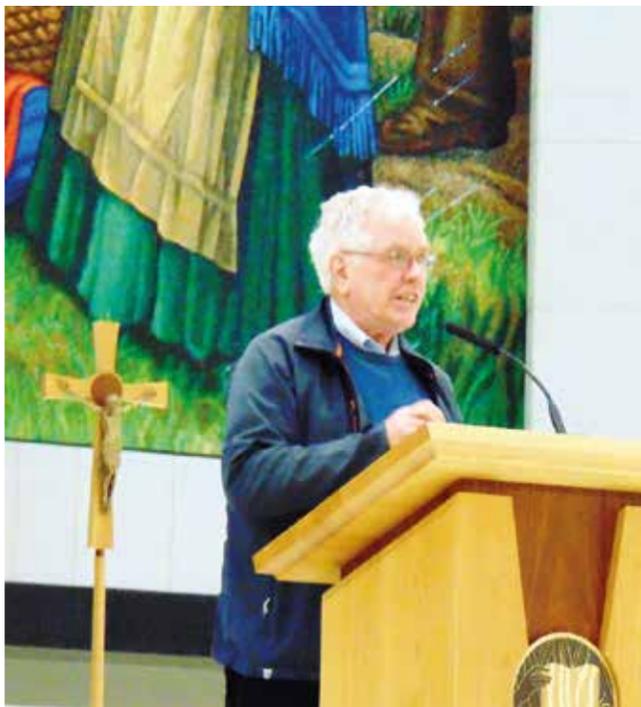
Deprivation

He recalled: “Back in the 70s, Dublin was a place of massive deprivation. People stayed at school to the age of 12, at the latest. Their parents were unemployed and couldn’t give them any money, so they turned to robbery and ended up in prison.”

“To try and address this, we opened a youth club and had a craft centre. At one stage, we found a homeless nine-year-old and said that we just couldn’t leave a nine-year-old sleeping on the streets. So, we opened a wee house as a hostel, where homeless children could stay until they were 16, and then we had to open a hostel for the over 16s. The numbers grew and we opened another hostel and then a detox centre and drug-free centre.”

“It just went on like that. There was no big plan. From the nine-year-old sleeping on the streets, we now have about 500 apartments. We can give homeless people a key and say this is yours for life; you don’t have to be homeless again”.

“We run two small schools for young people expelled from mainstream schools”, continued Fr Peter: “We hope that by keeping



Fr Peter McVerry

these young people in school that we can prevent them from being the homeless adults of the future. It is very successful and they go on to do their Leaving Cert, etc.

“So, it was all an accident. If I was to start my life again, I wouldn’t want to be doing anything else. It has been very helpful to them and very important to me”.

When asked if there was one thing those listening to his talk could do to help, Fr Peter said: “To be aware of all problems in society”.

Highlighting that his organisation’s costs were 42 million Euros and that they received 30 million from the Government, leaving them to find 12 million, he added that fundraising would be very helpful.

Fr Peter went on to say that drug dealers also make him angry, with many people addicted to drugs.

Recalling a particular incident, he said: “I had a call one day from a fella in tears, who said that he needed to get into drug treatment or he didn’t know what he would do. There is a 2-3 month waiting list for drug treatment, which makes me very angry.”

Going back to the housing issue, Fr Peter told the young gathering: “We want to get the right to housing written into the Constitution. We have the right to be educated for any young person in this country, so if we

could have a right to a home written into the Constitution too that would help greatly.

“I would like each of you to write to the Taoiseach that you want the right to housing written into the Constitution, and for every person in the country to be entitled to housing by 2030. You are the voters of the future, so they will listen to you. When you go back to your schools and communities, get them to write to the Government about this too. Take any opportunity you can to change the situation for the homeless”.

As his time with the young people came to a close, Fr Peter also encouraged them to spend time with someone who was sick or lonely.

“That is so important,” he stressed, “as it sends a powerful message that you care enough about them to give them some of your time”.



Lizzie Rea, Derry Diocesan Youth Co-ordinator, speaking to the young people gathered in Knock Basilica for the National Pope John Paul II Award Pilgrimage.



Echoing the words of Pope John Paul II to the youth of Ireland, Bishop Donal told young people on Knock pilgrimage...

You are loved and precious beyond measure

CELEBRATING Mass in the Basilica in Knock for the young people and their leaders who had travelled from Derry, and other parts of the island, during Lent for the annual Pope John Paul II Award Pilgrimage, Bishop Donal urged them to come closer to Jesus and Mary through prayer.

Patron of the Pope John Paul II Award, Bishop Donal recalled the words of the Polish Pontiff when he visited Ireland almost 43 years ago, "Young people of Ireland, I love you", and told the young people gathered in the Co Mayo Shrine: "God still tells you that you are loved and precious beyond measure. Come close to the heart of Jesus and Mary in prayer. Worship Jesus in the Eucharist for He is the one who gives His all for you – and who invites you to give your all for something beautiful and not for something passing".

Speaking of the suffering young people of Ukraine, he said: "We ask that Jesus will support them. We thank them for their generosity and self-sacrifice. And we ask that we, too, will be open to being generous and heroic in our time, in our place, in our way – for that is what we are all called to be".

Bishop Donal shared about how he had been struck by "the huge generosity of many people who have responded generously to the plight of Ukrainian refugees", and by "the huge numbers of especially young Ukrainians who seem prepared to give their all in defence of their country".

He added: "It is one thing for soldiers to fight. They have chosen

to be armed and trained. What touched me was the numbers of students and other young people who are prepared to resist a heavy equipped army – whatever the cost. Some of them were quoted as saying that they would not be able to live with themselves if they were not ready to take part in defending their home and their future."

He went on to remark: "Despite a consumerist culture which says that it is all about me and my choices, millions of young Ukrainians believe that there are more valuable things than my comfort, that there are values worth living for and worthy dying for. And many of them will die. The culture that saturates us in self-indulgence is not having the upper hand. That is a great sign of hope".

Referring to the message of Pope Francis to young people in 'Christus Vivit', Bishop Donal noted that the Holy Father "is inviting the young and the young at heart to create a counter-culture that cherishes truth and love over silly games and using other people".

He added: "He sees so many young people who are disorientated, unsure in what direction to turn. He wants you to dream great dreams and to share those dreams with one another. Becoming a saint does not mean draining the life out of yourself. It means getting steam-cleaned from all the rubbish that grows on us and slows us down. It means making you fit for doing great and generous things with your life. It means answering



Pupils from St Brigid's College, Derry, with Bishop Donal

the profound question that Jesus asked two of his disciples, 'What are you looking for?' (John 1:38)

"Know your deep desires. Don't look in shallow places. Believe in a God who calls you to do great things with your life". Commenting on the Apparition of Our Lady, Bishop Donal told the young people: "Here in Knock, Our Lady appeared to poor people just a couple of decades after the horrors of the Famine. Mary wants to give hope to people who felt left out. The same happened in Lourdes and in Fatima.

"God comes to little people. And God believes that those whom the world thinks little and unimportant can do marvellous

things. And that the big-headed and famous have little to offer. That is the counter-cultural message that Christ's followers are called to witness to. Are you prepared to take it seriously – or are you too afraid to dream of becoming a saint?"

Thanking the young people for coming to Knock, he commented: "This is not a pilgrimage to squeeze you into a tight religious mould. That is where consumerist culture is trying to force you. Jesus wants you to develop into the great person that He knows you can become. Jesus shows us the example of His own life, where He gave Himself and everything He had for people. We see that in Mary and in so many saints".



Lizzie Rea, Derry Diocesan Youth Coordinator.



Senior pupils from St Joseph's College, Derry.



Roe Valley amateur production, 'And Her Name Was', had its audience laughing, cheering and singing with joy, and ended with...

Standing ovations for joint parish and wider community fundraiser for HOPE Limavady *by Leo McCloskey*



Limavady Grammar School student, Cait Colhoun, and she was ably supported by a vast array of local talent. Brendan Kelly and Paul McFeeley were hilarious as Chiquitita and Deilah, while Mickey Cooke and Aaron McGrotty had everyone in stitches as Mick and Pat. Callum Burns, largely unscripted, was Narrator. Shaun Roddy played Angus McDonald.



"ORDINARY people working together can achieve extraordinary things!" That is how Bishop Donal McKeown summed up the spirit of HOPE Limavady.

Between March 31 and April 2, the HOPE Limavady group put on a pantomime called 'And Her Name Was', based on the story of Finvola, the Gem of the Roe. HOPE Limavady has taken on ambitious projects in the past, but this was by far the most ambitious to date.

There were stunning solo singing performances from Ciara McElhinney, Gary Lee, Dermot Douglas, Cait Colhoun, Lisa Kearney and Paul McFeeley. There were other dancers and musicians, too numerous to mention.



The parish community and the wider Limavady Community joined together to raise funds for HOPE and to organise an event that gave the entire area a great lift. For three nights, the audience laughed, cheered and sang, it was the perfect tonic after two years in lockdown.

Huge thanks to the cast, who have been working at this project for well over two years. The vast majority had never been in a play before and many had not been on stage before. This truly was amateur dramatics!

Putting on any amateur dramatic production is hard going, but the arrival of a pandemic made this particularly difficult. It is almost two years since HOPE first planned to stage 'And Her Name Was', and it has taken tremendous determination and resilience to get the show on stage.

Limavady is indebted to the cast and crew for the time they gave, the sacrifices they made and for their boundless good humour. Thanks to the local businesses who sponsored raffle prizes, which helped raise £1,575 for the Ukrainian Raffle Appeal.

The play was written by me, and fellow committee member, Jacqueline Toner managed the set. Finvola was played by

'And Her Name Was' was great entertainment but it also had a cast of all ages, and many parents were in the play with their children. It created a tremendous sense of joy amongst the people who attended and, most importantly, it was just a great night's family entertainment.

The standing ovations each night have increased the call for another at Christmas, who knows!



Amazing response to Ukrainian Appeals

PARISHES and schools around the Diocese have been responding with great love and generosity to the crisis in Ukraine through fundraising and the donation of humanitarian aid.

In addition to the Ukraine Appeal launched by Bishop Donal back in March, in establishing contact with the Archbishop of Lviv as an alternative method of providing financial aid through the church in Ukraine, people have been initiating and supporting various appeals to try and ease the suffering of their Ukrainian brothers and sisters.

As well as opportunities to donate essential items, like in Bellaghy and Dungiven, parish communities and schools have been holding fundraising activities like: coffee mornings, such as in Plumbridge, Co Tyrone; table quizzes, with the Gelvin Community Association raising £1,781 through its quiz time; and sponsored events, with St Eithne's PS in the Holy Family Parish, Ballymagroarty, in Derry, raising £2,725 through its sponsored spinathon.

'Let's Change Tomorrow', in Dungiven, had a fantastic response to its Ukrainian Appeal which filled two lorries and five vans with aid items, and raised £4,600.10 in cash donations to help Ukrainian refugees.

The response throughout Ireland has been amazing. Archbishop Eamon Martin, of Armagh, and Archbishop Dermot Farrell, of Dublin, the president and vice-president of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, have expressed their thanks for the extraordinary generosity in raising over €3.25 million in response to the crisis in Ukraine.

"Since the outbreak of this war, over 7 million people have been displaced and nearly 5 million people have been forced to emigrate from Ukraine, becoming international refugees", stated the Archbishops, adding: "As Christians, our Gospel imperative is to support the victims of this appalling humanitarian crisis, in the words of the Holy Thursday Liturgy, 'where charity and love are found there is God'."

As well as the provision of humanitarian aid, there has been an outpouring of prayer for peace in Ukraine, with Pope Francis consecrating Russia and the Ukraine to the Immaculate Heart of Mary on Friday, March 25, the Feast Day of the Annunciation of the Lord, during a penitence celebration he presided over in St Peter's Basilica.

The same act on the same day was performed in Fatima by Cardinal Krajewski, pontifical chaplain, as the Pope's envoy.

Taking up an invitation from the Holy Father to all Diocesan Bishops, and Apostolic/Diocesan Administrators, together with their priests, consecrated persons and lay faithful, to unite in prayer for peace in Cathedrals, Marian Sanctuaries and parish communities in every Diocese, around the world, on the same date, Bishop Donal led a time of prayer in St Eugene's Cathedral, including the Act of Consecration.

Times of prayer were also held in other parts of the Diocese, with the people of Claudy Parish holding an All Night Lenten Vigil, from 8 pm on Friday, March 25, until 8 am on Saturday, March 26, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament to pray for peace in Ukraine, Russia and the world.

Noreen Hickey, who lives in the Scottish city of Perth but has family in Derry, whom she visits regularly, was greatly moved by the outpouring of prayer and shares her experience with 'The Net' readers of a Rosary for Peace and the Consecration of Ukraine, Russia and all humanity, to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, which she participated in on the Feast of the Annunciation, when an estimated 2,000 converged on George Square, in Glasgow.

She writes: "We joined that day, in spirit with the Pope, his Bishops, clergy and laity throughout the world. Many of the crowd, like me, would have been from the Irish Diaspora. I was born in the west of Scotland to Irish parents, both from the Derry area of Northern Ireland.

"Led by Bishop John Keenan of Paisley Diocese, we said the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary, interspersed with hymns to Our Lady. We then joined in the prayers of Consecration: 2000 voices became as one. It was a poignant and emotive occasion, gentle and peaceful in nature, as we bore public witness to our Faith in the midst of the busy city area. We were blessed to be able to be there freely and without fear of war, thus contrasting with the

situation of the Ukrainian people in their homeland and cities.

"As we received the final blessing from the Bishop, there was a palpable sense of having entrusted Ukraine and Russia to Our Blessed Mother, in full and certain belief of her intercession. We pray for these countries, for our clergy, ourselves and for peace throughout the world".

A retired teacher, Noreen is the daughter of the late Leo Hickey, who lived for a while in Laburnum Terrace and loved the Cathedral Parish, and the late Mai (Mary Theresa) Gillespie, from Ture, in Co Donegal. Her parents married in 1947, before moving to live in the west of Scotland, where Noreen was born in 1960. Her father died in Scotland in 1979 and her mother died in 1999 in Derry, and both are buried in the City Cemetery.



Supporting St Eithne's PS School sponsored spinathon



Pope Francis during his Consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.



All donations itemised, boxed and bound for Ukraine from the Parish of Bellaghy



Fr Ignacy Saniuta CC, St Eugene's Cathedral, led public prayer for Ukraine at the Guildhall, in Derry



Consecration of Russia and Ukraine to Our Lady, and the Rosary for Peace, in George Square, Glasgow. Photograph by Paul McSherry - @Paulmcsherry2.



Claudy and Craighane parishioners took turns in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament in their all night vigil for peace in Ukraine, Russia and the world

Moving Palm Sunday Passion presentation in Cathedral

THE Passion of Our Lord was movingly presented through Scripture, reflections and sacred music in St Eugene's Cathedral on Palm Sunday.

Young people from the St Mary's College choir and their vice-principal, Roisin Rice, leading the music, along with narrators, Ava of Thornhill College and Mark of Lumen Christi College, were the key contributors to the very successful performance of 'A man



of sorrows and acquainted with grief' (from Messiah by Handel).

The performance was directed by Mary Murphy.



ANAMÓG EASTER
Egg Hunt Prayer
Join us for a day of Easter fun and activities for those aged 10-14 years old
Games Lunch Crafts
Termon bacca Derry
Friday 22nd April 12pm-4pm
To book a place call Aoife on 02871262512 or email termonbaccaderry@gmail.com

Walk with us

THE Diocesan Youth Ministry team is running a leaders programme for anyone involved in Youth Ministry in the Diocese. email at lizzie.rea@derrydiocese.org

Entitled, 'Walk with us', the four-week programme will get underway on May 17, running from 7.30-9 pm.

It will be presented via Zoom. To book onto or find out more information contact the Diocesan Youth Co-ordinator, Lizzie Rea by



WITH parishes around the Diocese offering opportunities for people to get involved in the synodal listening sessions which are happening worldwide, in response to the call from Pope Francis for the faithful to come together and listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit in guiding the Church into the future, Bronagh and Peter write about the experience in their respective parishes of Ballinascreen and Iskaheen & Upper Moville.

Congratulations to Hollie on receiving her Papal Cross Award through the Pope St John Paul II Award programme. She shares here her experience of the Award as well as reporting on the Award ceremony and the talk by guest speaker, Fr Peter McVerry.

Moved by the plight of the people of Ukraine, as well as that of migrants and refugees throughout the world, Niamh and Jodie share their thoughts and hopes for a better future for all, through people coming together to do what they can to embrace other cultures and to help make the world a more loving and peaceful place.



Hollie Frystal, Co Tyrone Deanery. Bronagh Doherty, Co Derry Deanery. Peter Grant, Inishowen Deanery. Jodie Kennedy, Derry City Deanery. Lorcan McGonagle, Inishowen Deanery.



Niamh O'Kane - Co Derry Deanery. Gemma Gallagher, Derry City Deanery. John Augustine Joseph, Derry City Deanery. Zara Schindwein, Derry City Deanery.

We must all come together...to help “turn weapons into instruments for peace” by Jodie

WITH all that is going on in Ukraine, the people there need all the help that they can get. So, Pope Francis, along with bishops and the faithful around the world, “ask the Lord of life to deliver us from this death of war”.

The Holy Father launched another appeal for an end to the “barbaric and sacrilegious” act of war, cautioning us that “war does not devastate only the present, but the future of a society as well”.

Statistics show that half of all Ukrainian children are now displaced due to the war. Children shouldn't have to go through the trauma of war.

The Pope said: “War should not be something that is inevitable. We

should not accustom ourselves to war”.

This war will massively impact these children even more so in the future.

Within the first two months of the war starting, around 1,800 lost their lives. We have all studied or heard about wars in the past and are horrified by the outcomes. Yet, this war is going on right now and not many people are doing what they can to help. This is an absolute defeat for humanity.

Too many lives have been taken through this war. We must all come together and do anything we can to help “turn weapons into instruments for peace”.



Hollie writes about the 15th annual Pope St John Paul II Award ceremony and her experience of completing the Papal Cross Award...

Growing in understanding of faith, Church and the world...and in virtue

ON March 14, the Pope St John Paul II Award was presented to 288 young people from across the Diocese of Derry and beyond (London). This year, I was one of four people who received the Papal Cross Award, after completing the Gold Award last year.

Through my experience of the Award, I have developed a greater understanding of my faith, Church and the world around me, I have obtained many skills, and believe that I have grown in virtue, especially through the work and witness of Mary's Meals and our Award guest speaker, Fr Peter McVerry.

Fr Peter spoke so passionately about the homelessness crisis and the role which the McVerry Trust plays in striving to resolve this immense issue. One thing I took from Fr Peter's talk was when he said, “The world we live in is driven by the words ‘I want’... To build a world in which all can live in peace and equality, it is necessary to replace ‘I want’ with ‘You need’”.

Today, we live in such a consumerist society, which Pope Francis often highlights in his Papal documents, for example his *Laudato Si* and *Fratelli Tutti* encyclicals. So, the homelessness crisis is recognised as a universal problem.

Pope Francis reiterates that excessive consumerism takes “The notion of ‘every man for

himself.” (*Fratelli Tutti*, n.36). I believe that we need to fall back on Jesus' teaching of ‘Love your neighbour’ (Mark 12:31 NRSV) and remind ourselves of what Jesus said, ‘If any want to come become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me’ (Matt 16:24 NRSV). Jesus is with those on the margins.

The Award enabled me and the other young people to bear witness, like Christ, to injustices present in our world today. For example, through the Award and the Derry Youth Scholarship, I worked closely with the Mary's Meals Charity, whose mission is to find ‘A simple solution to world hunger’, which they concluded with their strategy of providing one meal a day at school, which would equal education and therefore aim to break the chains of poverty.

My involvement included working on the Mary's Meals school project, attending the Mary Meals sponsored walk, raising awareness of the war crisis in Tigray Ethiopia, and other activities within the scholarship, etc. These experiences helped to develop my moral compass by opening my eyes to the reality of today's world.

Although I have only focused on one major lesson gained from the award, I have been involved in various other activities as well that were such valuable and

memorable experiences.

For my parish hours, I was privileged to be given the opportunity to read at Mass. I remember somebody once reminding me of the importance of delivering the Word of God, and recently recalling the words of Jesus during His temptations: “One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matt 4:4 NRSV). Therefore, the Word of God possesses a purpose to nourish one spiritually, which became so evident over the lockdowns.

Additionally, I was blessed to be given the opportunity to read on the 50th anniversary of my Parish, which was an opportunity that I will not forget, and a memory that I will always cherish.

Finally, the Papal Cross Award requires participants to submit a project. For my project, I hosted a six-week Lenten programme on Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation ‘*Christus Vivit*’

(Papal document on Young People). My experience of hosting our first ever Youth Ministry book club was an amazing opportunity! The programme consisted of rich and fruitful dialogue, tackling the ‘awkward questions’ and exploring the underlying theme of the concept of ‘Synodality’.

In addition, for my top tours, I attended the St Colmcille walk from the line in Derry to Carrigans, in celebration of 1500 years of St Colmcille. Establishing the new Camino de St Colmcille, I took away one thing in particular that a pilgrim shared with me. I remember Joe telling me that today we are all so concerned in getting from ‘A to B’, rather than enjoying the journey in between.

It was wonderful to get back to pilgrimages and ‘journeying together’ post-lockdown/Covid, and my experience of the Pope John Paul II Award has been just fabulous!



Hollie, far right, at the Pope St John Paul II Awards in St Eugene's Cathedral when she received the Papal Cross Award from Fr Peter McVerry, back, guest speaker

Encouraging a culture of encounter we can help refugees by Niamh

POPE Francis, in offering guidelines to promote a culture of encounter, has recalled his message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, “Towards an ever wider we”, which points out how “The encounter with migrants and refugees of other denominations and religions represents a fertile ground for the growth of open and enriching ecumenical and interreligious dialogue.”

The Holy Father was writing in the preface for a document on ‘Pastoral Orientations on Intercultural Migrant Ministry’, published by the Migrants & Refugees Section of the Holy See's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.

The document looks at the challenges of increasing migration

through highlighting the opportunities provided with the merging of diverse cultures into various societies.

Under-Secretary of the Migrants & Refugees Section, Fr Fabio Baggio highlights the possibility of a new missionary opportunity, amongst the migrants and refugees who belong to other faiths or no faith, for Christian communities through their witness and charity.

This promotion of a culture of encounter with migrants and refugees, by our Church, could be applied to the struggles of today, with the Ukraine crisis, in how we are all encouraged to welcome the refugees from there and to demonstrate empathy towards those in need of comfort and solace.



The Diocesan Youth Ministry team have been leading Synodal listening sessions amongst youth in the parishes of Iskaheen & Upper Merville, Maghera and Claudy, here Peter Grant reports on the session in his Co Donegal parish of Iskaheen...

Synodal listening welcomed in parish youth sessions

YOUTH Coordinator of the Diocese of Derry, Lizzie Rea, gave a talk to the young people of the Parish of Iskaheen about the importance of the Synod in the Church, and how we can move forward into the future with the church when the young people take over.

Lizzie emphasised Pope Francis' idea of "critical listening" and opening up to other ideas about moving forward and including more people in the church. She also said to the youth at the talk that there is a structure within the church that keeps it together, and that when we suggest new ideas, we must try them first to see if

others agree, rather than going straight to putting them into action and ignoring other people's thoughts, taking away from the idea of the Synodal approach in the Church.

Lizzie spoke to the young people as well about the use of 'bias listening' within the church today, as some people intend to stick with the old traditional ways of the church and others want to change the church for the future. The role of the young people, and the next generation, is to balance these opinions and be more inclusive in the church to keep our faith strong in our communities, and continue to do

so to achieve Pope Francis' idea of a Synodal Church.

The young people took part in many exercises of thinking about real life situations, and of how, in their opinion, the ideas of the church can be developed while also keeping the traditional values of the Church, aiming to teach the word of God in many ways and also open up to others who want to be involved in the teachings.

Many of the questions Lizzie asked the young people related to everyday society, regarding different social groups and religious groups, and how we can bring them together to work

with one another and form close relationships to achieve Synodality.

The young people of the Parish of Iskaheen learned so much from their talk with Lizzie about how they can include more people within the church.

Already, throughout the pandemic, they have brought people together with their weekly interviews and work they have carried out within their community, and they continue to do so within their Parish, expressing the idea of a Synodal Church for the future.



Iskaheen - Roisin and Roise.



Iskaheen - Niall and Caoimhe.



Iskaheen - Daniel, Conor and Peter.



Iskaheen - Lizzie, Conor and Peter.

St Colm's pupils voice views during Ballinascreen parish synodal conversation by Bronagh

ON March 23, I had the pleasure of attending, along with my classmates, the synodal conversation in our local parish, Ballinascreen. This meeting brought together people of all walks of life, all ages, and all professions, all linked by one thing in common, our faith; the Catholic faith.

The Catholic Church is undergoing change led by Pope Francis II, who opened the Synodal Process 2021-2023 on October 10, 2021.

The Holy Father talks about the synod as "the path that God expects of the Church in the third millennium."(SL Media 2021)

The Catholic Church wants

to become a "listening church" that can have these listening conversations and bring forward the steps needed for change in 2023 at the end of the synod process.

This is a three-step process, which runs alongside the Irish Synodal Process led by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, and will work hand in hand to present the ideas and wishes of the people of Ireland to the Vatican, in Rome.

The first step of the process is one where we can all get involved in our local parishes. This is the "Listening Phase", where parishioners and the laity can gather and discuss the issues and

the questions posed to them at the meeting. We were informed of the two simultaneous processes and the steps in each.

The Pope reinforced that it was vitally important to hear from those who were once shunned in society and the church, that their opinions are valued, as it is time to heal the church of its past.

The questions posed to us were: How has being a Catholic changed over your lifetime? Has the Church helped your faith to grow and how? Has the Catholic Church caused you pain or hurt?

Everyone had different answers to each question based on their life experiences and experiences within the church. It was very

insightful to listen to all the different experiences brought to us through our faith.

This encouraged us to dig deep into our hearts and minds to think what has the Church done to help us, or has it hurt us in the past, and how we can change it for our children and grandchildren. These comments are going to be accumulated by someone in each diocese.

The next stage of the process is the 'continental phase', where all the bishops gather together to formalise and process these ideas even further.

All these steps will lead to the ultimate event in October 2023, two years after it was launched,

the 'Universal Phase'. This will be a month-long gathering of the bishops in Rome, and is where the ideas formulated from every parish conversation will be presented to the Pope.

Changing the Church is a long process, but it can't happen without being started and these synodal conversations are where the seed for change is planted.

We are called, as Catholics, to take part in the synodal process in order to keep our faith alive. Without us keeping our faith alive there will be no Catholic Church for our children and grandchildren to turn to in tough times.

"Let the church always be a

place of mercy and hope, where everyone is loved and forgiven" (AZQ, 2015).



Culmore Parish synodal process by Sr Margaret McConalogue

FOLLOWING our excellent training day at deanery level on Saturday, February 12, our parish committee set to work immediately. After a number of weekly meetings, we had agreed a venue, a set of seven questions for parish discernment based on those we were given on our training day, dates for meetings etc. Two weeks in advance of our synodal meetings, two lay members of our committee spoke at the Sunday Masses, offering some background about the synodal process and announcing the dates and times of our gatherings, in an effort to encourage participation. Our priests offered a reminder on the

following Sundays, which helped a lot. On that same Sunday, we distributed personal invitations to each parishioner together with a copy of the questions for each home, to allow for adequate preparation by way of prayer and conversation in advance of our listening sessions. We agreed to have one weekend meeting, on a Sunday afternoon at 3 pm, and a weekday evening session, the following Wednesday evening at 7 pm. Refreshments were provided at each session, during two short breaks. The schedule we followed was tight, but we tried to keep it friendly, while emphasising

the need to allow each person in the group time to speak. Participants were really engaged and contributed earnestly. One could 'hear' the listening for understanding, the sharing, the deep involvement and the busy scratching of pens on paper, as well as the occasional laugh, as we moved through the seven questions about how a more synodal church might look. The feedback said it all – such rich and creative suggestions and insights, all offered in the context of hope for a more personally engaged laity. Verbal feedback about the actual experience (a word or phrase!) on the day included such remarks as

“honest”, “great to meet and hear other like-minded peoples’ views”, “I learned a lot”, “we need more of these”, “I really enjoyed this even though I was nervous coming in”, and “It has really made me think about my faith”. The next task was how to gather the written comments submitted by the parishioners in a way that was faithful to each person, to feedback to the parish and to the Diocesan Synod Committee by Palm Sunday, April 10. *“All are invited to speak with courage and parrhesia, that is, in freedom, truth and charity.” (Preparatory Document no.30)*

Culmore



Drumragh launches synodal pathway with talks and questionnaire

IN the Drumragh Parish, the Synodal team organised a series of Synodality talks, which were given during the celebration of evening Mass in Sacred Heart Church, Omagh, over a four-week period during Lent. The speakers included Fr Pat O’Hagan, on ‘Communion’, Mgr Colum Curry, of Beragh, on ‘Participation’, Fr Patrick Lagan, on ‘Mission’, and Bishop Donal McKeown, on Synodality in the Irish Church. In his talk, Bishop Donal remarked that the Synodal pathway “asks us to review how well we reflect what God has called us to be”, adding that this will not be easy as “we have our hang-ups and instant solutions and our pet subjects”, and that we have to recognise “the angers and hurts that drive some of our

beliefs”. He went to note that the synodal process is asking parishes, dioceses and the universal Church: Do we develop a deep intimacy with God? Do we build vibrant communities united around Christ in word and sacrament? Do we have a burning desire to hand on the Gospel of God’s mercy? He continued: “This is a process that will entail conversion for everybody so that we are more like what we are called to be. If we think that things would be better if only somebody else would change or some structure or rule would change, we are not even at the starting line. It will be a difficult process – change always is”. A questionnaire was also compiled by the Drumragh

synodal team and parish clergy, and parishioners were encouraged to reflect on five main questions as individuals, as a family, as a group, and as an organisation, on their relationship with God and the Church and how their journey of communion with God could be supported by the mission of the Church and their own participation in its life. The five questions were: How would you describe your relationship with God? How does the Church support your

relationship with God? How does the Church not support your relationship with God? For you, where is the Church important for your personal journey to salvation? How could the Church further support this journey? The hope is that reflection on these questions will help people reflect on how they can grow deeper in their relationship with God, through Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit as animated members of the Church.

Aghyaran



Claudy



Omagh



Leckpatrick synodal listening session *by Oliver Barrett*

ON Thursday, March 10, Leckpatrick Parish facilitated the first of two planned listening sessions at the classroom in Tulacorr allotments. Due to COVID-19, and a maximum capacity of ten people, few people attended. However, undeterred, the parish listening facilitators accompanied by our parish priest, Fr Gerry Sweeney set about answering five of the 10 questions on synodality, as outlined in the preparatory documents.

The second session was cancelled due to the low numbers willing to attend. This is completely understandable as people are still reluctant to meet in groups as we emerge from a global pandemic. Instead, a list of questions was left at the back of the Chapel for parishioners to write their responses to the questions and submit to the parochial house. Parishioners were advised about the possibility of submitting their feedback online by completing the survey on the diocesan website.

The first question focused on what is good in the Diocese. We believe one of the strong points is pilgrimage. There is a keen sense throughout the Derry Diocese of the importance and value of pilgrimage. Each year, many of

the faithful set aside time from their busy lives to go to various destinations to pray and light candles for their intentions. Our Diocese has always supported the need for its parishioners to make these journeys and have accompanied the faithful on their journey.

Everyone agreed that the priests in the Diocese are supportive of the Irish culture and traditions, and we were very thankful and appreciative for this fact. We are fully supportive and acknowledge those who have chosen celibate priesthood as a way of life and will continue to support our priests where possible.

At Parish level, we acknowledged and are thankful for being able to receive the sacraments and attend Mass during the week. We also have an opportunity to attend Ddoration on Wednesdays and devotions during Lent. During the Pandemic, we had a weekly scripture meditation, which was a source of strength for those who participated. We would like to see more opportunity and occasions for prayer e.g, Novenas and the Rosary before Mass.

We were concerned about the lack of welcome for families that move to the Parish, particularly those whose ethnic origin is

different and those who originate from the travelling community.

One thing that we were unable to understand is the sense of competition that exists between parishes. From our understanding of Church, we are expecting the Church to be non-competitive and universal. Our parish is always prepared to be ecumenical, although in our experience we have not always been well received by other Christian traditions.

When looking at areas that could be improved, those in attendance highlighted the need for greater contact between the parish and pupils in the secondary school. In Ireland, children receive First Confession, First Holy Communion and Confirmation in primary school. Pupils do not receive a sacrament in the secondary school unless their parents attend Mass regularly and encourage their children to practice their faith.

In the Strabane area, many pupils are receiving counselling in secondary school for several reasons, and we believe there is the need for a review of the pastoral approach to pupils, particularly in the early years of secondary school. We think that space and time needs to be

created in the secondary schools for local priests to be available for teenagers who would like to speak to their priests for whatever reason.

We recognised the success of the John Paul II Award and the efforts made by the youth to achieve this, however, we are fearful the importance of this Award will be diminished when it is awarded without the criteria being met. There is also the sense that many of the youth initiatives are focused on the parishes in the City of Derry, with little outreach to youth in rural parts of the Diocese.

Elderly

We identified that many of the elderly in the Diocese are not receiving the recognition that they deserve for their many years of service to the Church, for example, we are not aware of anyone in the Diocese receiving, or being put forward for, the Benemerenti medal, even though they are deserving of this award.

We discussed in depth the role of women in the Church. We agreed women are not being given the respect and recognition that they deserve. There seems to be a glass roof in the Church for women, where they can see the top although will never be able

to break through to reach it. It is heartening to hear managerial positions in the Curia, previously reserved for clerics, are now being opened to women, however, we think the book is being closed on the possibility of women in ministry.

The Hebrew word רוּחַ 'Ruach' translates as 'Spirit' and is more often feminine than masculine. We need to discern is the Holy Spirit calling women to rediscover the ministerial roles that they had in the early Church, eg, deaconesses. I think there needs to be greater impetus in setting up the permanent deaconate, otherwise we could risk being left behind in this initiative.

We discussed the need to define a pastoral approach towards members of the LGBTQ+ community and a greater need to include them in the life of the Church. We do understand that the Church does not have a gender ideology, and this will be an obstacle to greater inclusion. There is the danger that the Synod will become only about this issue and discussions will be hi-jacked by those with a political agenda.

We also discussed ways to include those who are separated into the sacramental life of the Church. The situation they are

in is often not their fault and is not their decision. We recognise the contribution they can make to parish life and do not think they should ever be refused the sacraments because of their circumstances. We understand Eucharist as medicine for the soul and not as a reward for being good.

Children in the primary school wanted to see greater care and support for the homeless within the Diocese. We do not believe there is a need for anyone to be homeless today because we were all born into our mother's arms. Homelessness is evidence that the structures in societies are failing people, and this is a social justice issue. The children are also in favour of large events such as Baptism and Marriage, where the entire family takes part in a celebration.

Avery Dulles, in 'Models of the Church', looks in depth at the Church as Institution, Mystical Communion, Sacrament, Herald, and Servant. He concludes by saying that the Church is all these things at certain times and advocates a super-model of Church incorporating all these elements. This is one possible approach to synodality.

Thornhill responds to the Listening Church

by Mrs Ciara Collins

POPE Francis formally launched a two-year consolation process within the Church and encouraged followers to take time to "look others in the eye and to listen to what they have to say."

This Synod is the process of journeying together by listening, praying, discerning and making decisions together for the purpose of understanding Christ in our lives. The idea of community and dialogue comes from the sense of responsibility we have for each other. In the Bible, God encourages us to take care of our brothers and sisters.

We must remember the importance of maintaining the connection with each other and focusing on building a community of love in word and actions, as shown in St Paul's letter to the Ephesians: "Be completely humble and gentle; be

patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."

Pupils in Thornhill College took time to respond to Pope Francis' call for the entire People of God to journey together.

During Year 8 RE lessons, pupils were placed in small groups to discuss the outreach and impact of the Church in our local and national community. These proved to be very insightful deliberations in which pupils identified how love can be shown through the Church day to day.

The Year 8 groups were also tasked with writing an open statement to Pope Francis on their thoughts for the Church in the future. The discussion proved to be most thoughtful and sensitive to the needs of the Church on a wider level, with one

group identifying how inclusion can be shown during times of prayer and Mass. For example, it was suggested that the use of sign language and Braille sheets could be accessed during Mass on a weekly basis. This is a most practical example of how the Gospel challenges Christians to "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you."

Year 8 also responded to the Listening Church through prayer and reflection. They contemplated on their own hopes and dreams for the future and how God is part of that journey. They created beautiful cards and composed their own prayers that highlight how God is with them.

Year 10 also responded to the invitation to "look others in the eye and listen to what they say." They addressed important issues on the future of the Church

and the inclusion of all groups in society through the creation of PowerPoint slides. Outreach was a key component in their dialogue, in which they identified how the Church could engage with younger members through the use of social media, the inclusion of women as priests, tea and coffee mornings once a week in the local community centre to make people feel welcome, and the development of children's liturgies during Sunday Mass for younger families.

In the words of Bishop Donal McKeown, the mission of the Church is to bring 'good news to the poor' and how we can walk together on the journey with Christ. This journey will ask us to consider 'Lord where are you leading us?' and the pupils of Thornhill have superbly begun this process.

Urney and Castlefinn



Waterside



Termonbacca retreat sheds light on Gethsemane events

THE retreatants who came along to the Carmelite Retreat Centre, Termonbacca, on the Eve of Palm Sunday for the 'Walking Through Holy Week' retreat, greatly appreciated the day of prayer, talks and reflection.

The programme got underway with Morning Prayer and a talk on the Garden of Gethsemane by retreat facilitator, Aoife O'Neill, followed by a time of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, reflection on the Stations of the Cross, and an opportunity for the Sacrament of Confession.

Following lunch, there was a talk on Jesus' descent into hell by Fr Stephen Quinn, ocd, and the retreat was then brought to a close with the celebration of Mass by Fr Cajetan Apeh ocd, who has recently joined the Termonbacca Discalced Carmelite Community.

In her talk on the Garden of Gethsemane, Aoife began by noting that to fully understand the events that unfolded that night in the Garden of Gethsemane, required going back to the story of the Garden of Eden.

She said: "In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve placed their own will over God's commands, and sin and death entered the world as a result. The events of the Garden in Gethsemane go a lot deeper than what we read in the Gospels. That night in the Garden of Gethsemane, God, in Jesus Christ, began to take the necessary steps to reverse and triumph over what went wrong in the Garden of Eden. In Gethsemane, Jesus submitted His own will to the will of the Father".

Going on to compare the two gardens, Aoife explained that the name Eden meant 'place of pleasure' and Gethsemane meant 'oil press'.

"During the time of Jesus," she continued, "in order to get oil, olives were crushed in an olive crusher. Then heavy slabs were lowered onto them, which squeezed the olive oil out of the pulp and the oil ran into a pit, where it was collected in clay jars.

"The image of Gethsemane, on the slope of the Mount of Olives, gives us a vivid picture of Jesus' suffering. The weight of the sins of the world pressed down on Him like a heavy slab of rock. His

sweat 'like drops of blood falling to the ground' flowed from Him like the olive oil".

She went on to remark: "Jesus' blood, sweat, and tears in the Garden of Gethsemane reminds us of the Garden of Eden, where the original turning away from God brought about blood, sweat, and tears. For Eve, there would be the bloody anguish of birth; for Adam, physical labour that brought sweat to his brow; for both of them, tears of sorrow as they lost their peaceful union and communion with God and each other.

"In Gethsemane, though, God is the one who bleeds, sweats, and grieves. Here, the power of the void entered into the personal existence of the Incarnate Word. 'He who knew no sin became sin'. He bore sin and death so completely that He took it into His own being, so that by His dying, it too would die".

After noting other contrasts between the two gardens, Aoife then highlighted one thing that did not change – the devil himself.

She noted: "Satan came to both gardens under the guise of a friend, in order to betray. That same serpent that tempted Eve in Eden was in possession of Judas Iscariot in Gethsemane.

What differed was that while Adam and Eve fell for the lie of the serpent and believed he had their best interest at heart, Christ knew His disciple was corrupt. Jesus knew the false mask of a friend who would betray Him with a kiss.

"Eve was tricked into co-operating with the serpent but Jesus would not be fooled and this fulfils one of the most amazing prophecies of the Bible, the very first Gospel promise which was spoken by God to the devil himself – 'I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel' (Gen 3:15).

"This is what God told the devil after he had tempted Adam and Eve to fall into sin. One day, a seed of a woman is going to come, a Saviour would be born who would be correctly hostile towards the devil and his lies".

Mask

"The devil is great at dressing up," continued Aoife, saying: "He never looks like something bad, he looks like a friend. He appears like the very thing we want to embrace. He approaches us with a kiss. He doesn't want us to think of him as an enemy. He wears the mask of a friend, just as he did with Eve. He introduced her to the root of sin which affected all of humanity, and still does. Our hostility is misplaced. We place it towards others and even towards God.

"Sometimes we are like Adam and Eve and we can think it is our husband or wife that is the problem...It's this woman you put me here with Lord'. 'It's this husband I can't change or fix'. Instead of contending for God's glory as one flesh, so many households become battlefields, where spouses square off against one another, children take their stand against parents or siblings draw lines and don't speak. Our hostility is misplaced. We have been hoodwinked by the devil into directing our hostility towards one another, or even worse, against God".

She went on to point out: "We need to remember, the human heart was created in that Garden of Eden, in that perfect place. Even though sin now affects the world, that longing for perfection is still etched into the DNA of our souls. We long for it and when we can't find it because of the sin in and all around us, we become discontent. And that's when the devil comes in. He comes in our disappointments, our discontentment, and he uses the same warmed up temptation he used on Eve.

"He says God is holding out on you, couldn't he do more for you? How could he allow this disappointment in your life? If he really loved you, he would let you have that, he wouldn't let you be discontent, so just eat the fruit.

"The devil wants to rewrite the story of God's love that has been with you your whole life into some negative narrative leaving you more than slightly suspicious of your creator. Like Adam and Eve, the devil wants you to become discontent and disappointed and

wants to foster hostility in your heart and turn it towards God".

"From the devil's desert of deception," continued Aoife, "Jesus reminds us what is actually true in the Garden of Gethsemane...There is a devil who is evil and he is going to great lengths to work against God and the souls He wants to bring to heaven.

"We see the love of God. We see that if God was willing to endure this for us, then He must truly be on our side. We see that this perfection we long for is not an example of God holding out on us. It is a promise of the eternity that has been prepared for us in Christ".

"There is a garden that God has prepared for us", she concluded: "It is a place where there is no pain, no tears, no sin, no disappointment, no hostility... This is a place where God sits on His throne. That man who was dragged away as a lowly criminal, who was crucified on Calvary, He rose from the dead and has been exalted to the highest place. He sits on that throne in victory because through His death and resurrection He fulfilled the promises of Genesis 3. He has crushed the serpent's head. He has reoriented hostility to where it belongs. Jesus has torn off the mask so we can see who the real enemy is, and he has defeated Him in our place".

She added: "Jesus in the garden teaches us how to turn to God in prayer, how to respond to the love God has for us. Love means handing over our whole lives to God and surrendering to His will, just as Jesus did when He said 'not my will, but Yours be done'. This is Jesus' fiat. We often hear of Mary's fiat, where she declares 'I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done to me according to your word'. This is Jesus' fiat, in the midst of agony.

"As Mary consented to the incarnation, Jesus utters the fiat of the redemption. We are called to imitate the fiat of Jesus in the garden. To surrender ourselves to God's will for our lives. When we find this difficult, as it often can be, we can fall on our knees beside Jesus in Gethsemane, and He will teach us how to obey".



Newest member of the Discalced Carmelite Community in Termonbacca, Fr Cajetan Apeh ocd celebrated the closing Mass for the Retreat.



Fr Stephen Quinn ocd, Discalced Carmelite Prior at Termonbacca.



Stories of hope inspire during Steelstown Lenten talks series

DURING four weeks of Lent, the Parish of Our Lady of Lourdes, Steelstown, invited a number of people to share their personal journeys of faith as stories of hope for others.

The speakers included Fr Isaac, OFM, one of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal based in Galliagh, who has been ministering to the young people of Derry for almost a decade, Mikhail Kennedy, a professional footballer who retired early due to injury, who is now training to be a qualified counsellor, Ciara McAlister, Jenny McGrath, Rev Canon Katie

of the Diocese of Derry & Raphoe, and Paul O’Hea, chairperson of Steelstown Brian Og’s GAC.

Still savouring his club’s success as the 2022 AIB All-Ireland Club Intermediate Football champions, Paul spoke about the strong sense of community within the GAA in general and in Brian Og’s, and the very positive and uplifting experience that that is, creating an environment that people want to be part of.

He also talked about the enriching experience of being part of such a community, not just in playing football but in getting

involved in other ways too, such as in club administration or through coaching.

Recalling his own successes on the Gaelic field, Paul remarked that what stood out most for him was the sheer joy and satisfaction of winning, and how much his family got out of coming along to give their support at matches, which he said was something to cherish.

He also highlighted the importance of the family unit, pointing out that parents and even grandparents get involved with such areas as fundraising.

“It is good to give up some of your time to do something for others, and that is something that we can all do,” said Paul.

Looking forward to helping his club grow further, he extended a warm welcome to anyone interested in coming along to watch a match or becoming involved in some way.

The Parish Pastoral Council thanked everyone who had supported the series of Hope talks, and encouraged parishioners to get in touch with their ideas to help enrich parish life further.

Blessed Is She Derry
Blessed Brunch & Books
 Saturday 7th May 2022
 12pm- 2pm
 Termonbacca Carmelite
 Retreat Centre
 An opportunity for women of all ages to get together, eat, pray and journey through spiritual books together.
 For bookings or queries please PM or email termonbaccaderry@gmail.com

Steelstown parishioner, Ciara McAlister had a special online listener as she shared her personal journey of faith, during which she encouraged parents to plant the seed of faith in their children, believing...

With faith the size of a tiny mustard seed...we can move mountains!



Ciara McAlister, Steelstown.

AS a young child, my five siblings and I all attended Steelstown Primary School and we attended for Sunday Mass at Our Lady of Lourdes Church. On a few occasions, I remember my little brother, David hiding behind the wheelie bin, eagerly hoping that no-one would catch him.

I always remember my Granny Sarah having amazing faith. She taught us a great love for Jesus and Our Blessed Mother at such a young age. She taught us the Holy Rosary; one of the most important spiritual weapons. My granny was the one who also grilled us a lot...especially on Sundays! Were you at Mass? What did the priest say? What was the homily about?

Looking back, for me as a child going to Mass just seemed like a chore, an obligation...the right

thing to do. Many a Sunday I didn’t even listen to a word spoken by the priest. In fact, sometimes I managed to skip having to go at all.

On many occasions I lied to my granny Sarah, telling her that I was at Mass even when I wasn’t. I sneaked into the porch at Steelstown Chapel and took with me the Mass bulletin or Mass sheet. Thank God for the Mass bulletin! It saved me many times! I knew that if I was to visit granny Sarah then all would be fine.

It wasn’t until I was in my early 20s that I felt a real conversion. I began going to Mass and really listening attentively to every word said by the priest, especially in the Homily. I then began to go to regular confessions, and that is when I learned that when we go to Confessions we are not only speaking with the priest, but directly to Jesus in the Confessional box. This is where we give and surrender everything over to Jesus, all our worries, our sins; a place where we feel washed clean, a weight taken off our shoulders, a real sense of freedom.

After this, I began attending Mass more and more, not just on Sundays but throughout the week. In confessions we receive many graces. To this day, I feel a real burning love in my heart for the Mass, the Eucharist and Confession.

My faith has taught me that in that little host is the greatest love story of all time. Here is where we feel real love and become closer and closer to Jesus. This is where we find real hope, in receiving the Eucharist and when in the presence of Jesus. In receiving the sacraments of Confession and the Eucharist, we become more and

more like Christ.

Our Lord only asks that we have faith the size of a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds but when grown becomes a huge tree. One of my favourite pieces of scripture is Matthew 17:20. Our Lord says that all we need is faith the size of a mustard seed and we can move mountains.

So, for me, it was my mother and my granny Sarah who planted that mustard seed; the seed of faith. Let us do the same within our own families; plant that seed. Bring your children to Mass, teach them the Holy Rosary and to have a personal relationship with Christ. Even if they don’t wish to come, keep bringing them and one day that seed that you planted will blossom in time.

Finally, I wish to speak about love. What is love? We cannot touch it, we cannot reach out and grab it but we can feel it. Love is what is in our hearts! It is about how we treat others. Many of us go through life finding that the hardest words to say are: “I am sorry” or “I love you”. We can become spiritually blinded, not seeing the goodness in others, not loving one another the way Christ wants us too.

When I was writing this, a song kept coming to mind by the famous Charlie Landsborough, ‘What Colour is the Wind’. Charlie wrote this song when he was inspired by a young girl who was blind, who, despite her blindness, was still able to express her love and see the beauty of life through her father’s eyes.

Charlie is a Christian man, which you can tell by his very inspirational music.

I wrote to him by email and to my surprise he called me on the phone. He thanked me for my



Paul O’Hea and Ciara McAlister, who shared their stories of faith and hope during the Steelstown Lenten talks, with some members of the Parish Pastoral Council.

Termonbacca Derry
Reading with the Carmelite Saints
 Join us as we explore learning friendship with Christ through the example of the Carmelite Saints on **Thursday 12th May 2022 at 7:30pm**

Deeply thankful to the Irish missionaries who brought Christianity to his homeland, Fr Dr Joshy Parokkaran is happy to now minister here and, as his priestly motto says...

To be a sign of God's abiding love

THE new chaplain to the Syro-Malabar community in the Derry Diocese, Fr Dr Joshy Parokkaran feels very blessed to have been appointed as curate to the Three Patrons Parish of St Patrick's, St Brigid's and St Joseph's, as the faithful in his homeland of Kerala, India, have a great devotion to and deep faith in the intercession and protection of St Patrick.

Fr Joshy arrived on November 27, 2021, for his first visit to the island of Ireland. From the state of Kerala, in the southern part of India, the 41-year-old recalled serving for six months in a parish in his Archdiocese of Trichur which had St Patrick as its Patron Saint.

"In general, the people know that there are no snakes in Ireland. The Catholic people, at least in my diocese, I could say that they pray to St Patrick for the protection from the bites of snakes. Of course, we could find different varieties of snakes in Kerala because of the congenial weather condition of a tropical land," he said, adding: "The Catholic people have deep devotion to St Patrick and faith in his protection".

The Catholic faith is very strong and vibrant in the place where Fr Joshy grew up, which he said helped to nurture and mature his own faith.

He remarked: "The people are really practicing Catholics, especially in Kerala and also in different parts of India. They go to Holy Mass and practice pious devotions such as reciting rosary, attending novenas and so on. Some people, irrespective of age groups - children, young, old - go every day to Holy Mass, which is celebrated at early in the morning. That is to say at 6 or 6.30 am.

"I have grown up seeing my grandparents going for the Holy Mass and for other activities in the parish. My parents were, too, very regular to the Holy Mass, especially on Sundays. The children, of course, had special Holy Mass on Sundays followed by one hour catechism. Faith formation, for the children begins from the early stage of their lives. This system of imparting the

Catholic faith to the children is still continuing in all the dioceses in Kerala."

It was through his involvement in his parish as an altar boy, from the age of 11, which led Fr Joshy to think about priesthood.

"There was group of altar boys who came to Holy Mass all the possible days on weekdays and, of course, on Sundays. On the last Saturday of every month, we had a one hour meeting either with the parish priest or with the assistant parish priest," recalled Fr Joshy, adding: "We played a lot of games after the meeting. There was a small library with books about saints. We used to read them. Those are the things I remember".

He continued: "Helping the priest at the Holy Mass as an altar boy instilled in me a desire to become a priest. I expressed my desire to my parents but they were not too happy about it, especially my father. I had completed my 15 years of school by then, and that is the time we have the recruitment of those who want to become priests in our diocese. However, finally my parents gave permission to go for a two-day vocation camp for boys thinking of priesthood, which I attended along with some of my friends from the altar boy groups.

"Afterwards, I came back and told my parents that I had been selected for the seminary and they weren't happy as I was their only son. They suggested that I must go for higher studies. I was obedient to my parents and went to college for two years. When I finished, I still felt that I wanted to be a priest, so I persisted in telling my parents and they finally agreed. So, when I was 17, I went on a week-long vocation camp and joined the seminary on June 1, 1997".

Fr Joshy recalled that batch he joined had consisted of 40 seminarians at the beginning, out of which eight were ordained in December 2006.

Ordained on December 27, 2006, he took the motto: "To be a sign of God's abiding love for God's people".

"Every priest is born from God's

people, by God's people, and for God's people," said Fr Joshy.

After ordination in his home parish, St Joseph's Church, Nirmalapuram, he was appointed as an assistant priest in a parish consisting of more than 1,000 families. A year later, he was appointed as secretary to his Archbishop for two years, after which he was asked to go for further studies.

"On September 15, 2009, I went to the Catholic University of Leuven, in Belgium, where I did my licentiate and Doctorate in Systematic Theology. During my eight years of stay in Belgium, I did pastoral ministry in different dioceses in Germany. The language German, of course, was not too difficult to learn as I had thought", explained Fr Joshy with a smile.

He added: "After my graduation, on November 15, 2017, I went back to India, and was appointed as parish priest as well as manager to an English medium school run by the diocese. I was also teaching in the major seminary in our diocese. So, during that time I was really with the people as a parish priest, with the children as a manager of the school, and with the seminarians as a professor.

"Four years later, my Archbishop asked me to take up another mission and I came here on November 27, 2021, as curate in Three Patrons Parish and chaplain to the Syro-Malabar rite community".

Saying that his home diocese is of the Syro-Malabar rite (individual church), Fr Joshy went on to explain that there are three different rites (individual churches) in India - Latin rite, Syro-Malabar rite and Syro-Malankara rite.

Cradle

He added: "The Catholic Church is a cradle of a multiplicity of liturgies. The history of the development of liturgies witnesses to the Church's incarnation in the cultures and traditions of different nations.

"We can speak of two broad divisions of liturgies within the

Catholic Church: the Western and the Eastern liturgies. The naming of the liturgies as 'Western' and 'Eastern' has its origins in a geopolitical division that, in the course of time, also became an ecclesiastical one. There were several liturgies with diverse forms of worship and discipline in both the west and east. However, today all of them are grouped under different liturgical rites or traditions (families) within the Western and Eastern liturgies.

"Hence, at present, there are six liturgical traditions (families), of which one is Western (Roman) and five are Eastern. Under each of these liturgical traditions, we can also find different liturgical rites. These liturgical rites are also called individual churches. At present, there is only the Roman and Ambrosian churches under the umbrella of the Roman liturgical tradition, and all other liturgies are amalgamated within them.

"There are five liturgical traditions in the East, namely, the Alexandrian, Antiochian (West Syrian), Armenian, Chaldean (East Syrian), and Byzantine liturgical traditions. Each of these liturgical traditions has different churches; for example, in the Alexandrian liturgical tradition we have the Coptic and Ethiopian churches and in the Antiochian tradition we find the Syro-Malankara, Maronite, and West Syrian churches.

"The Chaldean and Syro-Malabar churches come under the Chaldean liturgical tradition and the Armenian liturgical tradition consists solely of the Armenian Church. The Byzantine liturgical tradition consists of the following churches: the Albanian, Belarusian, Bulgarian, Greek, Greek-Melkite, Italo-Albanian, Macedonian, Romanian, Russian, Ruthenian, Slovak, Ukrainian, and Hungarian churches. In short, the Catholic Church is the communion of all the aforementioned catholic individual churches."

Fr Joshy went on to explain that the Syro-Malabar Church is the largest of St Thomas Christian



Fr Joshy

communities and the third largest individual church in the Catholic Church, with a population of 4.25 million worldwide. It has five Archeparchies, 30 Eparchies and one Apostolic Visitation. Among these, four eparchies are outside India - Chicago, Great Britain, Melbourne and Mississauga.

He continued: "The Syro-Malabar Synod of Bishops has 62 members. There are about more than 40,000 priests and more than 25,000 religious nuns across the country. Many priests, both the diocesan and the religious and religious nuns, are working as missionaries in different parts of the world. There are five to ten priests getting ordained every year in different dioceses. Priestly vocations are encouraged and appreciated by the people.

"Every priest is called to dispense the love and mercy of Jesus to the people and to the world. This he does primarily through the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, the center of Catholic life, faith and worship. The greatest gift that Jesus has given us is the Holy Eucharist through which Jesus comes to our hearts every day. Through His Body and Blood, He nourishes our souls and becomes part of our lives. He makes us worthy to be part of this wonderful mystery, giving foretaste of the heavenly banquet".

Looking forward, if God wills, to spending some years celebrating the faith and serving the people of the Diocese of Derry, Fr Joshy remarked: "In my experience of the Three Patrons Parish, I find that the people are very Catholic and religious. They are very friendly and welcoming too. They tell me, 'Father, you are most welcome to our parish and

we need you'. I reply to them that missionaries came from here to my land and we are Christians now. We came to know who Jesus Christ is. Now it's time for us to help and serve you. I feel at home and welcomed well here".

He added: "I am just continuing what my predecessor has already done with the Syro-Malabar community. Two years back, there were only 45 Syro-Malabar families in the Diocese of Derry, but now there are more than 100, and it is my mission to look for new families - most of them are working as nurses in the hospitals.

"I will visit and support them in all their spiritual needs. I will also encourage the community to integrate with the local community, without losing their identity as Syro-Malabarians and also the richness of the tradition and spiritual heritage of Syro-Malabar Church.

"I am very much grateful to Bishop Donal McKeown, who invited me to the Diocese of Derry with open arms. I do appreciate his concern, love, and support. I express my sincere thanks to His Grace Mar Andrews Thazhath, Archbishop of Trichur, and His Excellency Mar Stephen Chirappanath, Apostolic Visitor of Syro Malabar community, who were instrumental for taking up this new ministry in the Diocese of Derry.

"Last but not least, the parish priest of Three Patrons, Rev Fr Michael McCaughey, and curate, Rev Fr Gerard Mongan, in Carnhill Parish, are also remembered with gratitude. Their loving care, brotherly concern, and friendly support are much appreciated. They make sure that I am happy and feel at home... home away from home".

Former Derry Youth Community member shares taking another step closer to ordination in his native Italy...

Sebastiano Pellizzari receives Ministry of the Acolyte

MY journey to the Seminary in my diocese in Vicenza, Italy, is getting on very well and by now the steps of the formation are reaching to the ordained ministry.

On April 6, my friends and I received the 'Ministry of the Acolyte' from my Bishop, Mons Beniamino Pizzoli, which is instituted at the very last stage of a man's priestly formation, right before diaconate and presbyterate.

Acolyte' derives from the Greek term 'akolouthos', which means 'server', 'companion', or 'follower'. In the Roman Catholic Church, a person is installed in the ministry of Acolyte in order to assist the deacon and the priest in liturgical celebrations, especially the Eucharistic Liturgy. Besides the deacon and the priest, the acolyte is the one closest to the altar. All the ministries of the church, and also

the 'Ministry of the Acolyte', are given to us as a gift of God for His Church, and we are called to be gift for all the people.

Recalling the prayer of the Acolyte Institution, 'Make your life worthy of your service at the table of the Lord and of His Church', I am fully aware of the fact that I could never be or make my life worthy to be there with my own effort alone.

And yet, everything becomes

possible with the One I serve. Please pray for my classmates and myself in this service, so that we may become more worthy by God's grace to be present at the Altar and the Table of the Lord.

In this difficult time, we keep praying that the Risen Christ will bring peace to Ukraine and, above all, to the hearts of everyone. I wish to all of you a happy Easter. Dio vi benedica... God bless you.



Sharing his vocation story, Waterside curate, Fr Roni Zacharias reflects on a childhood experience that inspired his priestly motto...

By the Grace of God...I am what I am



AFTER one-and-a-half years of ministering in the Glendermott Parish, in the Waterside area of Derry, Fr Roni Zacharias is settling in well, finding Bishop Donal, his parish priest, Fr Michael Canny VG, the other priests and the people to be very welcoming and helpful.

The 39-year-old Syro Malabar priest was born in Kerala, in the south west of India, and is from the same diocese as Fr Joseph Varghese, who had ministered in the Derry Diocese too and is now in Middlesborough, England.

Reflecting on his path to priesthood, Fr Roni, whose older brother and younger sister are also in caring vocations as nurses, said that he had had a desire to be a priest from childhood.

He recalled: "I was an altar boy, and so very attentive to the Church. My family home is nearby the Church and during free time my friends and I would go to the Church, where the parish priest and curate would be.

"An incident that I remember well is of one of the priests, Fr Thomas announcing one particular year that the altar boys were going to be selected for the Washing of the Feet in Holy Week. Usually, it was older people who did this. When I was an altar boy, there were 30-40 other altar boys, and I was selected from amongst them to take part in the Washing of the Feet. It was a very touching experience in my life. I was dressed in white and I just felt that at that moment Jesus was touching me".

Fr Roni went on to share another childhood experience that later inspired his choice of Scripture for his ordination motto: "In front of my home there was a coconut tree that was leaning over. There was a danger of it falling on our house, so it was anchored to another tree by a strong, aluminium cable to stop that happening. A pastime of mine, as a 13-year-old, was to hang on to that cable. One time, while I was doing this, the cable touched an electric wire that was close to it and I got an electric shock. I was just hanging on to

the cable and the electricity was going through me.

"Hearing my loud cry, my mother and brother came running out but there was nothing they could do. If there had been a wooden stick lying around they could have touched me with it to earth me, but there wasn't any. By the grace of God, the electricity failed just at that time and I fell down to the ground and then was taken to hospital.

"Later, when I was 15, I joined the seminary. That was in 1997. After a few years there, I was recollecting my past and when that incident came back to my mind, I realised that it was God calling me, that I was to be an instrument of God to serve all over the world.

"And so, the motto I selected for my invitation card for my ordination on December 31, 2008, was 'But by the Grace of God I am what I am' (1 Cor 15:10), and it is my motto in parish life".

Fr Roni's seminary journey involved 12 years of spiritual, intellectual, human and pastoral formation, with the first four years spent in the minor seminary, followed by three years in the major seminary studying Philosophy. Then there was a one-year break, during which he served as a catechist in the Diocesan offices, before returning to the major seminary for a further four years to study Theology.

He remarked: "The prayers of many people helped me to become a priest, especially my parents, grandparents, siblings, relatives and friends. My maternal grandmother helped me a lot and prayed much for me. Her wish was to attend my ordination and she was praying for that.

"My mother told me that before my baptism I had some diseases and that my grandmother had brought me to Church for Masses and held me in her hands, praying for my healing. Likewise, she was praying in later years to attend my ordination. She was sick coming up to that and the doctors said that she might die before it, but I prayed and trusted



in God, and she was there in the front row when I was ordained in my parish on December 31, 2008. She died one month later, on January 31. The first funeral Mass I celebrated in my priestly life was that of my grandmother. God has a plan for everything.

"As it turned out, 24 years after my baptism, I became curate to the parish priest who had baptised me, Fr John".

Serving

During his first two years of priesthood, Fr Roni served as a curate in his home diocese, which was followed by 10 years serving as a parish priest, before being appointed to serve in the Derry Diocese in 2020.

"In the 12 years prior to coming here, I was doing a Masters in Social Work," he explained, adding, "then I started doing social work as well as my priestly duties. I started an NGO for Cancer Patients and worked on building a home for cancer patients coming to hospital for treatment.

"There is a regional Cancer Centre but there are poor people who have no money to pay for accommodation when they come for cancer treatment, which is not free like it is here. The State of Kerala is bigger than the island of Ireland, so people have to travel long distances to the cancer treatment hospital and there was nowhere for them to stay that they could afford.

"In building the Lourdes Mother Cancer Care Home, with funds raised through many people, I was able to provide free accommodation and food for 100 people. It is a huge three-storey building and it was started in 2016, the Year of Mercy. Up to 2020, around 25,000 people had stayed there. This was a great experience in my life and one of the blessings of Mother Mary".

Following that building project with another one to provide a home for the elderly, Fr Roni said: "There is a joint family system in Kerala, which is not always a good thing as, amongst the poor, some of the children may abandon their

parents. Sometimes the police will take them off the streets and inform us.

"This home for the homeless people is called after Mother Teresa of Calcutta and is especially for mothers. There is accommodation for about 50 women and they can stay for the rest of their lives".

"I can only do these things with Mother Mary's help," he added, saying: "I have a great devotion to Mother Mary and I was praying to her for cancer patients and older people. I recite the Rosary every day and, along with Holy Mass, that is my strength".

Fr Roni has been encouraged by his bishop to do further studies and is currently studying Social Work in regards to Methodology at the University of Ulster, Magee Campus, for which he is doing a comparative study on older people in Kerala and Northern Ireland.

"I trust that Mother Mary has a plan for me," he said, "I plan to go back to work with my people in the future. There are poor people there and I want to help them. When I think back to my time serving cancer patients and the elderly, I see this as great things that God has done through me.

"The major role I do as a priest is celebrating Holy Mass. I celebrate many Masses here; two a day and I am really happy to do that. I get a positive energy when I celebrate Mass. I once got the opportunity to celebrate Mass in the Holy Land, at Calvary, which was a very blessed moment in my priestly life.

"When people ask me to pray for a special intention, especially cancer patients when I offered Mass in the Cancer Care Home, I do so when I raise the chalice and, at times, I have got a feeling of cures happening".

Enjoying his time in Derry, Fr Roni has noted the particularly strong practice of the faith by the older generation, and he is offering up prayers for more vocations for the Church here, saying: "I am praying that many will come and work for Jesus".



If this is of interest to you, please contact the Diocesan Vocations Director, Fr Pat O'Hagan on (+44) 07703444280 or (+353) 074 9382057

Diocesan Holy Hour for Vocations

by Fr Pat O'Hagan, Diocesan Vocations Director

THE Diocesan Vocations Council meets prior to the monthly Holy Hour, the next of which will take place in St Mary's Church, Creggan, from 8-9 pm on the second Friday of the month.

During this 'Year of Prayer for Vocations', each parish is asked to encourage parishioners to keep the intention of 'Vocations' in their personal prayers.

Parishes are asked to include the Intercession which they receive from the Diocesan Vocations

Council, on a weekly basis, in their Sunday Mass.

We look forward to Vocations Sunday on May 8, which will be a significant day for the Diocese as we celebrate the ordination of Michael McCaul as a Deacon.

Michael is currently on pastoral placement in the parish of Cappagh (Killyclogher). Please keep him and our other seminarians, and all those discerning their vocation in life at this time, in your prayers.

Fr Joseph expresses thanks for special memories on move to Middlesborough

AFTER serving parishes and the Syro Malabar community in the Derry Diocese for over a decade, Fr Dr Joseph Varghese has been appointed by his Archbishop to a parish in the Diocese of Middlesborough, in England.

Having ministered in St Eugene's Cathedral, Long Tower and the Waterside, Fr Joseph spent the last five-and-a-half years amongst the people of Dungiven Parish, and was chaplain to the Pope St John Paul II Award group there.

In a heartfelt leaving message, Fr

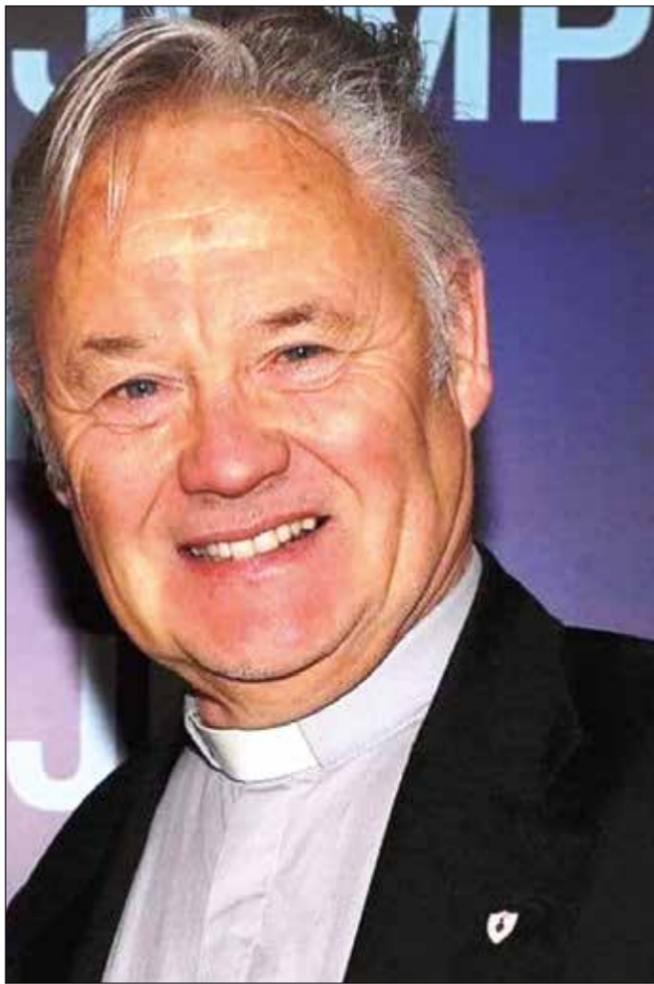
Joseph expressed deep gratitude to the parish priest, Fr Seamus Kelly, and the parishioners whom he enjoyed working amongst, saying that he takes with him special memories that will remain with him forever.

Fr Joseph now resides in St Joseph's Church Presbytery, Park Road South, Grove Hill, in Middlesborough, where, along with his parish work, he will undertake talks and lectures for the Syro Malabar Diocese.



Fr Joseph Varghese with the Pope John Paul II group he was chaplain to while serving as curate in the Dungiven Parish

Fr Paddy O’Kane at peace with the Lord he loved and served so well

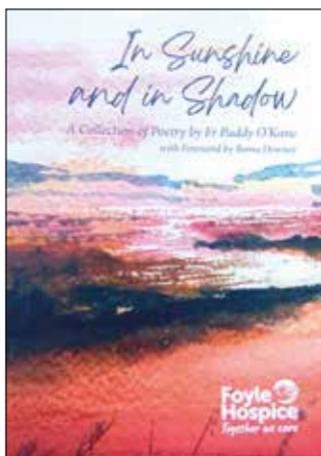


The late Fr Paddy O’Kane, PP Holy Family Parish, Ballymagroarty.

THE great sadness felt by the family, friends and parishioners of the late Fr Paddy O’Kane on hearing of his death, on March 28, still lingers in their hearts...and will do for a long time, such was the love they had for “his wonderfully effusive personality, which caused him to be universally loved”, as his long-time friend, Fr Brian Brady said in his funeral homily.

His kindness and generosity touched many lives, particularly in the Holy Family Parish, in Ballymagroarty, during his 30 year ministry there. Just one example of that is the abiding memory Holy Family Folk Group member, Erin Carlin will carry with her, of Fr Paddy giving her regular jars of honey from his precious bees to help care for her voice. A former pupil of Holy Family Primary School and choir member since the age of seven, Erin has many other memories of Fr Paddy to cherish and was delighted to receive the jar of honey that had been included amongst the items symbolic of his life that had been carried forward to the altar at the start of his Requiem Mass.

As one long-term member of the



to the same priests’ fraternity for almost 50 years, where we met together as part of a group for conversation, prayer and craic, not to mention a glorious meal”.

Ordained on June 10, 1973, along with Frs Declan Boland, Con Mc Laughlin, Frank O’Hagan and John Walsh, Fr Paddy spent his first nine years in St Eugene’s Cathedral parish, followed by eight years in Melmount. In 1990, he moved to Ballymagroarty, where he remained until his death, except for a couple of years in Moville from 2007-2009.

“I’m a city man who has come to love the country, Paddy was a country man who was totally at home in the city,” remarked Fr Brian, saying: “He brought with him a great love of nature, as is obvious from his beekeeping and poetry which reflects his enchantment with Culdaff scenery and his fond memories his family and neighbours in the area”.

He continued: “Over the years I’ve known Fr Paddy, I’ve come to admire greatly his creative imagination and inventive spirit. For me he was ‘an artisan of beauty’, with his paintings, his etchings and his poetry. His paintings reveal a raw talent, his etchings, especially of the pain of Jesus, are powerfully evocative and his poetry, deceptively simple, but laced with vivid imagery and pithy gems of wisdom. And, in accord with his generous spirit, I and many of his friends have been the recipients of so many of his masterpieces”.

Fr Brian also spoke of Fr Paddy’s love for the stage, saying: “He was most at home telling jokes and leading the assembled multitude onto the floor, or thumping on the piano as he directed the singsong. He fancied himself as a magician with his lengths of string and disappearing cards and even tried to use his talent in that area as a tool of evangelisation.

“But it is his Elvis impersonations that are most memorable. I first encountered this when he and I were part of a group of priests who provided concerts to collect funds for Multiple Sclerosis; one of our group, Fr Jimmy, had contracted the disease. Paddy’s main contribution to the show was his Elvis impersonation...and he nearly pulled the roof down one night when, during his number, his trousers couldn’t withstand the pressure of his excessive gyrations and he needed a change of costume”.

Compassion

He went on to say: “Fr Paddy had a wonderfully effusive personality, which caused him to be universally loved and he endeared himself to a multitude of people with his joyful expression of priesthood and his fun loving approach to life. His heart ruled his head in every situation and he found it impossible to say ‘no’ to anyone, which meant that he gave of himself unstintingly in the face of every need, especially

those whom society had little time for. He was very open about his struggles and his compassion made it possible for others to be more at ease with their own vulnerability and pain. He allowed his own raw scars to be transformed into sacred wounds offering peace, healing and hope to others.

“To sustain him Fr Paddy had a whole network of people who helped him to keep functioning at full throttle. Chief among these were those he called ‘his loyal friends’ the ladies of Ballymagroarty Parochial house, who surrounded him with love, affection, kindness and understanding and, in his pain, prayer and an arm to lean on. Paddy was most grateful for their devotion and knew his need of their friendship and care. Among the priests, Msgr Joey Donnelly was a supportive confidant and counsellor; Paddy greatly appreciated his sagacity and prudence”.

“The price of Fr Paddy’s mental overload, his excessively generous priestly service, his hectic lifestyle and needy personality increasingly took its toll on him and the demon darkness of depression and burnout began to dominate his life,” noted Fr Brady, saying: “He would remind one of Mother Teresa, who brought so many to Jesus and paid the price by experiencing the darkness of the absence of God so acutely for many years.

“Like Jesus, his hero and Lord, Paddy knew the awfulness of desolation in all its dreadfulness and, indeed, the appalling darkness seemed to have overwhelmed him, but our faith and his faith tells us that, in the words of the hymn, ‘Our God is light inaccessible, hid from our eyes’ and that the darkness is really ‘the splendour of light too strong for our sight’. In the depth of the darkness our friend Paddy has found the peace that he longed for with the saviour he loved and served so well.

“As we say in the Irish: ‘Ni bheidh a leitheid aris ann’ - There will never be another Fr Paddy”.

Paying tribute to Fr Paddy, Bishop Donal spoke about the many stories “told between tears” that he had heard since news spread about the 73-year-old’s death: “Stories about a priest who made people laugh, a priest who cared for and made allowances for those who stumble under the crosses that people bear, a priest who suffered with people, a priest who knew he shared the frailties of our human nature.

“In some ways, he took seriously what St Paul called being a ‘fool for Christ’s sake’ (1 Cor 4:10). But what someone called his ‘impulse of innocence’ was a huge pastoral strength. He had a hunger to know the love of God in his own life, and he knew so well how many people felt frail and unloved because of where they had been and what had happened in their lives. He was able to speak powerfully in helping parishioners who needed to know the merciful forgiveness of Christ

in the Sacrament of Penance”.

Stating that Jesus asked his followers to take up their cross and follow him, Bishop Donal remarked: “Those who minister in Jesus’ name have to carry the crosses with people who labour and are overburdened. It is no surprise that a repeated theme of his paintings was the stark head of the crucified Christ. He knew what it was like to hang on the cross.

“Fr Paddy O’Kane, and many other priests, ministered for decades during the Troubles when terrible things happened. He worked in the Cathedral, Melmount, Moville and Holy Family. But Fr Paddy didn’t really respect parish lines. Wherever people came from and needed him, Paddy tried to help them. He knew that lots of people are still suffering from the effects of violence. That has often taken its toll on those who have generously served society in many ways”.

He added: “In recent years, Fr

Paddy continued to work hard for his people. But his giving nature had taken a toll and often he had not been able to be the priest that he wanted to be. For somebody who had put his whole identity into being a priest of Jesus Christ, it is very painful when you can no longer offer what people had expected from him since 1973.

“People will remember good priests who were human and generous to a fault, especially at a time of tragedy or crisis. In our hurting society, there still is a need for those who will bear witness to the generosity of Jesus on Calvary”.

Paying their own tribute to Fr Paddy’s wonderful witness amongst them, people lined both sides of the road outside Holy Family Church and applauded as the hearse left for his final journey to his beloved Culdaff, for the burial.

Fr Paddy is survived by his brothers, Tommie, Hugh and John, and his nieces and nephews.



Fr Paddy with his parents and brothers.



Holy Family Folk Choir member, Erin Carlin with a treasured jar of Fr Paddy’s honey



Charlie Harkin, Holy Family parishioner and parish steward.



The Holy Family Folk Choir who sang at Fr Paddy’s Requiem Mass.

Eangach

Ár nDúchas

Fód na Cásca

Ghlanaidís an simléir fadó
Aoine an Chéasta,
Agus d'fhágaidís gan tine é
Go dtí an lá dár gcionn
Go bhfuair siad aibhleog bheannaithe
Ó thine na Cásca
Ar an Satharn Naofa.
Aiséirí an Tiarna
a thugann lasadh don tine teallaigh
go cionn bliana eile, ar a laghad.

Brúitíní Creidimh

(Buíochas le *Foilseacháin Ábhair Spioradálta*)

An Phaidir *Absorbeat*, le Naomh Proinsias Assisi

Go dtarraingí,
impím ort, a Thiarna,
brí bheodhearg
mhilis do ghrása
mo mheon aniar
as an uile ní atá faoi neamh,
chun go bhfaighinnse bás
le mo ghrá do do ghrása,
óir dheonaigh tusa
le do ghrá do mo ghrása,
bás a fháil.

(*Mise Proinsias bhur mBráithrín.*
Buíochas le *Cló Iar-Chonnachta.*)

Go dtuga Dia saor sinn

Go dtuga Dia saor sinn
ó thrioblóidí an lae,
mar a thug sé saor sinn
ó bhás codlata na hoíche.

(*Ár bPaidreacha Dúchais*, 13.)

Léas na Samhlaíochta



Iain MacGiollaChríost

Cónaíonn Iain MacGiollaChríost ar an Oileán Scitheanach (Oileán an Cheo — Skye). Dá mbeadh sé ag comhlánú a fhoirm daonáirimh, faoi 'stádas oibre' bheadh air 'ar scor' a scríobh, ach ní thabharfadh sé sin leid dá laghad dúinn den méid a rinne sé agus a dhéanann sé! Uile-shaineolaí atá ann. Dealraíonn sé go bhfuil sé in ann a bheith ina shaineolaí ar ábhar ar bith a ndéanann sé staidéar air.

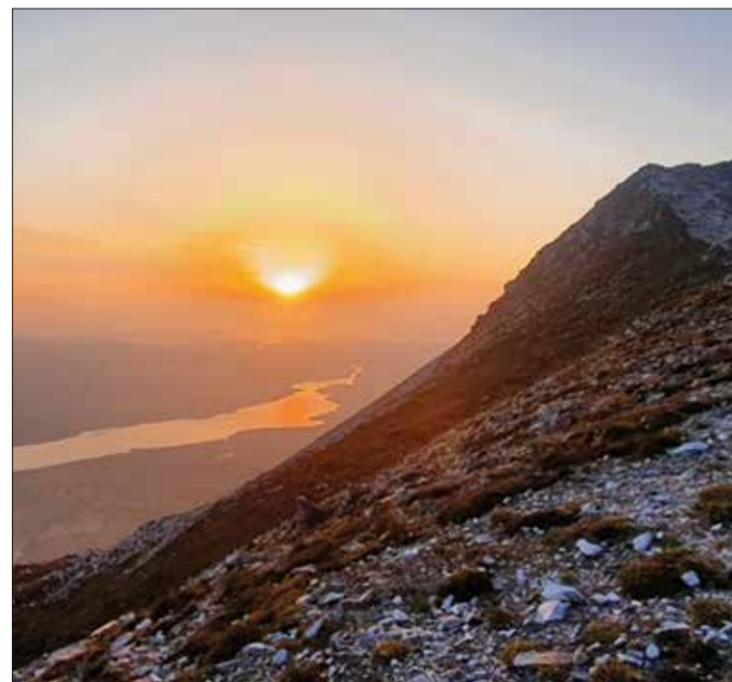
Thosaigh sé mar shaineolaí ar litríocht an Bhéarla in Ollscoil Oxford, agus bhí sé ina ollamh ansin. Ach d'éirigh sé bréan den mhionscagadh a dhéanadh criticeoirí an Bhéarla — shíl sé go raibh an pictiúr leathan agus croí na cruthaitheachta á chailliúint acu — cosúil leis an méid a dúirt Seosamh Mac Grianna: go raibh sé ag obair le litríocht mar bheadh an té a bheadh ag cruinniú min-sháibh ag obair le hadhmad! Scríobh Iain MacGiollaChríost

leabhar, 'Against the Critics', a d'fhoilsigh Faber and Faber, agus rinne sé ath-traenáil i gcúrsaí leighis.

Rinne sé speisialú ar eolaíocht an néarchórais, agus thosaigh sé ar mhion-staidéar ar dhá thaobh na hinchinne. Tháinig ga glinn tuisceana chuige go raibh tuiscint an tsaol curtha as a riocht sa domhan thiar toisc go raibh ró -bhéim ar oibriú thaobh chlé na hinchinne. Baineann an taobh chlé le mion-scagadh agus le 'rudaí'; baineann an taobh dheas le comhthéacs agus le ciall na rudaí, le samhlaíocht, le healaín agus le spioradáltacht. Mar a dúirt scoláire amháin faoi shaothar MhicGiollaChríost: 'McGilchrist demonstrates not just that there is more to the world than matter, but also that there is more to matter itself than is grasped by the shallow materialisms of our age.'

Dúirt an sagart Michael Paul Gallagher SJ go raibh tábhacht ar leith leis an tsamhlaíocht i gcúrsaí creidimh. Tá sin fíor faoin fhéin-aithne chomh maith: scríobh M. Scott Momaday, scríbhneoir de chuid phobail dhúchais Mheiriceá: 'We are what we imagine. Our very existence consists in the imagination of ourselves. The greatest tragedy that can befall us is to go unimagined.'

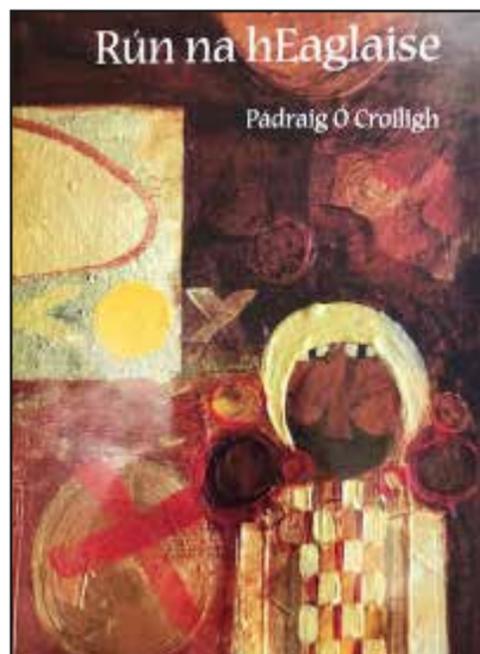
Foilsíodh leabhar mór de chuid McGilchrist ag Preas Yale in



Pictiúr le Mary Dunnion

2009 (*The Master and His Emissary*). Foilsíodh an leabhar is deireanaí leis in 2021 (*The Matter with Things, Perspectiva Press*). In 2019 foilsíodh leabhrán ina bhfuil achoimre úsáideach dá chuid smaointe: 'Ways of

Attending: How our Divided Brain Constructs the World'. Routledge a d'fhoilsigh é, ach alt scolártha irise a bhí ann i dtús. Níl ann ach thart fá 30 leathanach. Is fiú go mór é a léamh.



Ár Síocháin Libh!

Nuair a thagaimid chuig an chomhartha síochána, is fiú don lánúin machnamh a bheith déanta acu roimh ré ar an rud atá siad ag dul a dhéanamh. Go minic scarann an lánúin agus iad ag triall ar a gcairde agus a gcuid daoine muinteartha féin. Má tharlaíonn sé sin cailltear seans iontach aontacht na lánúine a chur i láthair a muintire go sollúnta don chéad uair. Ba chóir don lánúin fanacht le chéile, greim láimhe acu ar a chéile agus dul chuig an duine amháin le chéile, nó chuig lánúin amháin mar lánúin. Tá siad ag rá go soiléir: mar seo a ghlacfaidh sibh

linn as seo amach.

Tá ábhar mór machnaimh i bhfocail an Aifrinn don lánúin. Nuair a amharcann tú go cruinn ar fhocail an Aifrinn thig leat a fheiceáil go bhfuil brí faoi leith acu don lánúin agus dá saol pósta. Iad ag tosú an Aifrinn le gníomh dóláis, mar a dhéanann lánúin ar bith chomh minic sin ina muintearas pósta. Ní thig leat a dhul chun Aifrinn gan a bheith buartha faoi na rudaí a rinne tú as bealach, agus a chuir isteach ar mhuintearas an phobail. Mar an gcéanna, ní thig le lánúin a dhul chun Aifrinn gan a bheith

buartha faoi na rudaí a rinne siad a chuir isteach ar a muintearas pósta, agus maithiúnas a iarraidh ar a chéile ar a son.

Ansin éistean siad le scéal na hEaglaise sna léachtaí, faoi mar is cóir dóibh éisteacht le scéal a chéile gach lá agus oíche dá saol, mar a deir an phaidir iontach sa leagan Gaeilge den phósadh. Agus ag an oifríl thig leo a bheith ag cuimhneamh ar bhuanna a chéile a thugann siad go fonnmhar mar bhronntanas dá chéile agus do Dhia. Nuair a thig an Coisreacan cluineann siad na focail lánacha sin : is é

seo mo chorp, agus mar a thug Íosa a chorp dúinne tríd an Eaglais, tugann siadsan a gcoirp dá chéile i ngrá taobh istigh de shaol na hEaglaise le grá agus pobal na hEaglaise a mhéadú.

Caithfidh sé go bhfuil difir idir an tAifreann agus iad le chéile, agus iad ag dul ar an Aifreann mar dhaoine aonair. Ba chóir do lánúin éigin tabhairt faoi scrúdú ar an ábhar sin agus eagna an phósta a roinnt leis an chuid eile againn.



God's love in suffering

IN the lead up to Holy Week, a number of people across the Diocese reflected on the Passion of Jesus, and how the crown of thorns pushed onto His head, His beaten body nailed to the Cross and raised up for all to see His fate, intended as a humiliation, turned out to be the crowning and raising up of the King of Suffering and Eternal Life.

Here they share their thoughts on how, through our sufferings, we have an opportunity to be drawn closer to Our Saviour and to give praise to our King, who leads us through our suffering to be raised to a higher level of living in faith.

When we accept our cross we can feel its burden lighten immediately

by Bernie Doody



Bernie Doody, Omagh.

AT some time in a Christian's lifetime, we are asked the question, "Why would a good God allow so much suffering in the world?"

The question is usually asked by an unbeliever or a teenager, and there is no satisfactory answer, as only God knows the true answer.

In my own life experiences, I have tried to make sense of it for myself. Here are a few things that I tell myself...

If this world had no suffering, it would not be this earth, it would be Heaven! We have been put on this earth for a reason which will be revealed to us at the end. We can only try to live out our lives as best we can, as a follower of Jesus.

No one is missed out; everyone will have their sufferings and their crosses to carry. If we look at some people around us, it may appear that their life is so wonderful. However, we do not know what hidden conflict or inner battle they might be enduring. It is said that 'Comparison is the thief of joy'. I try to live my life by this motto.

We are not given a cross that is too great for us to bear. I have been angry with God regarding this one in the past. I believed the cross He had given me was too great for me. In hindsight, I see that my mental pain and turmoil had been prolonged and self-inflicted because I would not let go of a situation and put my whole trust in God. My prayers at that time were not so much prayers, but demands! It took some years before I truly let go, and only then did I grieve and find inner peace again with a new life. If I have a petition now to ask God know, I always add "...not my will but thy will be done", because He knows what is best for us.

The greatest reason, however, to accept our suffering and crosses in this world is in knowing what Jesus endured for us in His Passion and Crucifixion.

Jesus endured every form of human suffering possible; physical, mental, emotional and the human feeling of being abandoned by His Father in Heaven..."My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"

I always find it very poignant to do the Stations of the Cross on Good Friday as a reminder of all the personal suffering that Christ endured for us.

In dark times in our lives, we can call on Jesus because He understands and has experienced every earthly pain. When we accept our cross, we can feel its burden lighten immediately.

Íosa, tá muinín agam Ionat...
Jesus, I trust in you.

When we call out to Christ in our weakness He will give us the water of Life

by Ann McCay



Ann McCay, Columba Community.

SUFFERING and its purpose is a profound and difficult subject to grapple with, and yet, all of us at some stage in our lives have or will suffer and also witness the sufferings of others.

There are many medical staff and carers who choose to be alongside people who suffer and choose to help them, treat them, heal them, and assist them in their final journey. There are family members, friends and others in society who do the same. This is difficult but also rewarding.

There are some who choose to be alongside those who are suffering in the most dangerous and difficult places in the world, bringing God's love and mercy to people in the most dreadful and merciless conditions we could imagine and putting their own lives at risk in the process.

During the pandemic, countless men and women instead of running away ran towards the unknown in order to help others. They put others first, just as Jesus did throughout His life and in His

final act of Love as He suffered for our sins. He took our sins upon Himself so that we might be set free.

If we are honest, none of us want to suffer. Christ says to us "Come to me all you who labour and are overburdened and I will refresh you". Jesus does not want suffering. God does not want us to suffer, why would He! We are His children; would any parent want their child to suffer? Of course not, and yet, He sent His only son Jesus Christ into the world so that all who believe in Him would not die but would have eternal life. And what did we do to our Lord and Saviour? We tortured Him and nailed Him to a cross on Calvary.

When my father was dying from cancer and coming close to death, Fr Neal Carlin visited him in hospital. Daddy asked him: "Why do I have to suffer?" and Fr Neal answered: "Jesus suffered on the cross." And when daddy asked about forgiveness of his sins and would it be long now, Fr Neal answered with the words of Jesus to the repentant thief, or the good thief as we like to call him, "This day you will be with me in paradise".

My Father nodded quietly in acceptance of both answers to his questions, as if he understood and was satisfied by the response. He died during the night. Fr Neal told us how impressed he had been with the questions daddy had asked him. That was 32 years ago and I still remember it today. There was something about that generation that didn't question, but accepted everything as God's will, with grace. Maybe because they were born during one world war and lived through another, or because

they had very little while growing up, as did everyone else around them. Perhaps, because they had lived through a pandemic and survived tuberculosis, or TB as it is known, as well as the many other challenges and hardships in life.

They had experienced suffering and learned how to endure it. It wasn't and isn't an easy thing to do, but they found a way through and faith played its part. Nowadays, we don't accept hardship and suffering so readily, we don't see it as the will of God, we challenge that way of thinking. I, myself, see suffering as a reality, I don't believe it is from God but I know He helps us through it.

A friend of ours was walking the pathway of terminal cancer with their partner for many years. The person's life on earth was ending and each day death was coming closer, their strength was failing. The family was gathered round giving support and comfort. As our friend watched their loved one suffer, they sent us a message which ended with the words "Happiness and suffering are the same thing".

This was one of the most profound messages we have ever received. We felt so sad, it was so stark, and it stopped us in our tracks. "Happiness and suffering are the same thing", how can this be so? Only a person who has been through it can see how, and express it so clearly in words. What it said to me was that the person was witnessing the suffering of their loved one and was suffering with them, experiencing the pain of knowing they were going to die but at the same time savouring every precious moment they had left together. Happy that the person was still there.

It was as if time was standing still and every moment they had left with their loved one was to be cherished. They were experiencing the absolute love between them, which brought both the pain of parting and the joy of love simultaneously.

When I was growing up I remember learning these words: "The Mass is the same sacrifice as that of the Cross". These words came back to me when I was praying about suffering. What it says to me is that when I participate in the holy sacrifice of the Mass I partake in the sufferings of Christ. His sacrifice on the Cross in some way encompasses what I suffer.

Jesus has taken my sufferings, my sinfulness and those of all wounded humanity onto Himself on the Cross. It is a living sacrifice which still has meaning and effect today. Peter says to us in 1 Peter 3:18, "Remember how Christ died once, and for all, for our sins. He, the just one, died for the unjust, in order to lead us to God. In the body He was put to death, in the spirit He was raised to life".

"The Mass is a sacrifice because it makes present our Lord's own offering of Himself to His Father, on the Cross. When we participate in the Mass, in memory of Him, we enter into that offering and become a part of it". When we call out to Christ in our weakness He will give us the water of Life which flowed from His side on Calvary.

"Yet He was pierced through for our faults, crushed for our sins. On Him lies a punishment that brings us peace and through His wounds, [His glorious wounds] we are healed". (Isaiah 53:5)

Our Christian faith is called upon to make sense of suffering

by John Coyle



John Coyle

WE all know of terrible things happening to great people. Some of the most humble people seem to have suffered the most. Jesus suffered a long, painful and brutal

death for our Salvation.

It is said that "we all get a splinter of the Cross" at least sometimes in our lives. Suffering comes in many different forms: physical, mental/emotional, loss, grief, disappointment, rejection etc, the list is long. One thing in common is that it is painful.

It is understandable that we would ask, why me...or just...why? In my own experience, I have asked God during my times of suffering, what good can come out of this? Or, to be more honest, told God that no good can come out of this, and then later, on reflection, I would see the lessons and benefits and made sense out of it.

Suffering helps us to be more compassionate and understanding of other people's plight and journey. We acquire more empathy towards others from our own experiences.

It certainly is challenging in the midst of suffering to imagine there could be a benefit.

The keys to the Kingdom of Heaven are a Cross (1 Corinthians 1:18-19). The language of the cross may be illogical to those who are not on the way to salvation, but those of us who are on the way see it as God's power to save. As scripture says: "I shall destroy the wisdom of the wise and bring to nothing all the learning of the learned".

Suffering teaches us humility and reminds us that this life on earth is only temporary and short and we are on a journey, a Spiritual journey.

"You will have to suffer only for a little while: the God of all Grace who called you to eternal glory in Christ will see that all is well again: He will confirm, strengthen and support you. His power lasts

forever and ever. Amen" (1 Peter 5:10-11).

Jesus suffered for love of us and for our salvation and the gift of Eternal Life. During his Ministry Jesus suffered much by way of rejection from His own people, and the learned were often out to trip Him up while He was doing good works of Mercy. We can be assured of His understanding of our suffering and of being with us on our journey. We can take some comfort in offering our suffering up in repentance, as it brings us closer to our Saviour. We give praise to our King, "who leads us through our suffering to be raised to a higher level of living in faith".

We are an Easter people and the humiliation of the Crucifixion was followed by the Glorious Resurrection on Easter Sunday.

Learning to cope with life's contradictions *by Fr Peter McCawille SMA*



Fr Peter McCawille, SMA, Dregish, Co Tyrone

Only in Heaven will we see the fruits of suffering

by Annie Mullan



Annie Mullan, Claudy.

WHEN we reflect on the passion of Jesus we can see more clearly the gift and power of suffering; the more bitter, the more powerful.

My innocent, crucified Jesus, who was cruelly humiliated and tormented. Eternal love suffocated you. Out of infinite love for us you were scourged under a tsunami of lashes, crowned with thorns. Dressed only in blood, you were

nailed to a Cross and left to die, thirsting for souls. What anguish. What agony.

Lord, you emptied your Sacred Heart completely for us. Jesus you entrusted us to your Mother Mary at the foot of the cross, but you also entrusted us to your Cross, knowing your precious Cross and your precious Mother will take care of your precious Children.

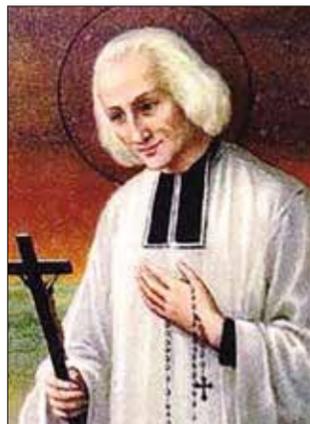
Only in Heaven will we see the fruits of suffering for you, Jesus. Together with your most sorrowful Mother, cruelly wounded in her heart also, and with St John and St Mary Magdalene, draw our hearts to your merciful heart like a powerful magnet.

Keep my gaze fixed upon your holy Cross, so that I recognise you and acknowledge you as the Son of God. Nothing escapes your gaze; there lies your love, your merits, your mercy.

Jesus, King of Divine Mercy, I trust in you. To God be the Glory.

Our greatest cross is fear of crosses

"On the Way of the Cross, you see, my children, only the first step is painful. Our greatest cross is the fear of crosses... We have not the courage to carry our cross, and we are very much mistaken; for, whatever we do, the cross holds us tight - we cannot escape from it. What, then, have we to lose? Why not love our crosses, and make use of them to take us to heaven?" (St John Vianney)



WHEN we observe the events of the last six weeks we might be forgiven for thinking that Good Friday has arrived much earlier than expected this year. The daily distressing news from Ukraine brings to our screens in stark detail further evidence of man's inhumanity to men, women and children.

Crucifixion after crucifixion carried out day after day, not on the lonely hill of Calvary but on the streets and in the homes of Kyiv, Lviv, Bucha and Mariupol. Evil stalks the earth, barbarism brutally brushes aside beauty, innocence and goodness.

However, while our thoughts and prayers never stray from the suffering of the people of Ukraine, the events of Holy Week find an echo in the thoughts of the crucified Jesus at the moment when darkness overwhelmed the land and he utters the words, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46)

before he cried out in a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.

While we get some reassurance from knowing that Jesus was like us in all things but sin, His last days on earth also help us to acknowledge the many contradictions at the heart of our Christian lives. It is not every day someone carries a heavy wooden Cross to the point of exhaustion, finds himself or herself rewarded for their efforts by being nailed to that same Cross, bows their head and dies. That this drama should be extended further by his rising from the tomb into which his body was placed, clearly points to the fact that we are not dealing with any ordinary person or any ordinary event.

While this extraordinary message still leaves huge numbers of people unmoved and indifferent, is it any wonder that neither will the wanton slaughter in Ukraine touch their hearts? By contrast the unbounded generosity of caring people throughout the world

warms our hearts.

Though there was nothing dignified about the events leading up to the death of Jesus on Calvary, we should recall that after His resurrection He appeared to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus and tried to explain to them, "Wasn't it necessary that the Christ should suffer and so enter into his glory?" (Luke 24:26).

What God has promised us in Christ is not, as is often preached and believed, a life that is free from pain, sickness, loneliness, discomfort and death. Anyone who preaches such a message is not in touch with the real Gospel, especially where Jesus promised us, "I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10).

What the incarnation promises is not that Christ will do away with our suffering, but that God will be with us in our moments of pain, since His name is Emmanuel, which means God-is-with-us.

If we are honest, we have to admit that the daily reports about the savagery in Ukraine seriously challenge our faith in the events of Holy Week and Easter. But we still cling to the conviction that after the Crucifixion comes the Resurrection, when our lives begin to radiate goodness and graciousness, when love begins to triumph over hatred and indifference, when peace replaces chaos and when forgiveness trumps cruelty and misery.

Crucifixions, bitterness and winters will come but new life will burst forth when the sun shines and "replaces hearts of stone with hearts of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26).

A truth which is beautifully expressed by Bette Midler in 'The Rose'.

"Just remember in the winter
Far beneath the bitter snows
Lies the seed that with the sun's
love
In the spring becomes the Rose"

It is the crushed seed that will grow

by Kathleen Cullivan



Kathleen Cullivan, Derry.

sometimes without hope and may well want to find a way out. What we really need is a new light in our mind, or to go to a deeper well inside ourselves. This new quality of light or depth can help unveil the mystery of the cross for us.

If we continue to reduce God to being a fixer, we will become angry, disappointed and disillusioned. We will ultimately rail against life. It is in the rawness of our life that we find the sacred. We all know that to take our children's struggles away will stop them from growing emotionally. So, we compassionately, gently, but firmly ask it of them to deal with the little events in their life so as they will learn to handle bigger events later in their life. God as Father teaches us too.

To reach the resurrection, Christ had to go through great suffering in His passion and death. One of the Psalms says, "Lord be attentive to the voice of my cry". Prayer is letting the voice of our cry out, just as Jesus did on the cross. We don't learn much from happy times, but we do learn from our struggles. They teach us so much, for example, compassion, understanding, wisdom, empathy and much more. They also teach us when we need to let go.

C S Lewis once said, "Nothing in you that has not died will ever be raised from the dead. Look for yourself, and you will find in the long run, only hatred, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. Look for Christ and you will find him, and everything else thrown in."

Here, I believe, lies a great mystery in the cross. It is the crushed seed that will grow. By removing pride, self-belief and arrogance, we grow like the crushed seed into

something very beautiful and in the likeness of God.

Sometimes God asks us to wait for an answer to our prayer. How we wait is important and who we become while we wait. Sometimes I have found the answer to prayer being the ability to live my life while walking very close to adversity. The problem wasn't removed. Sometimes we are given the ability to make the right decision.

In His passion, Christ taught us everything, beginning with His anticipation in the Garden of Gethsemane. Here, He felt overwhelmed by the darkness closing in on Him. Here was also His surrender and acceptance of God's will. Also, His torture, ridicule and, finally, His long walk to Calvary, where He would be crucified. He was misunderstood all the way, except for the few who truly loved him and didn't succumb to the darkness around them. In His suffering we can also see our own journey.

When you leave a lighted room and go into the night, you are almost totally lost and blind at first. Then, as your eyes grow more accustomed to the night, the outline of things begins to loom more clearly; shadowed presences become visible. We grow into seeing in the dark. We slowly find our way. When darkness comes into our lives, we must find a different way.

Wisdom and knowledge does not readily come to us. It only comes through walking our own Calvary. We may be childlike to begin with. We are often angry with God. We ask why this is happening. If we have faith and rely on God, we will gain comfort from this. We will see in the Passion of Christ that there

is light ahead. How we value our true friends at this time. If we are fortunate enough to have friends of faith who will love us through these times, we will begin to see the light amid the darkness we are experiencing.

I believe it was in the times of darkness that I grew closer to God. Surrender was not easy. Mother Theresa's words often come to mind. She once said if you want a tan, you must be patient and sit in the sun. Likewise, if we want to feel God's presence and gain His strength, we must sit with Him and give it time. Everything that grows must succumb to darkness first. When we sow seeds, we commit them to the dark. They are buried in clay. The earth works on them, and they must give way if they are to grow. Eventually they will break through the soil to the light and become something of beauty. We also come through our dark times to the light.

The words I hold close at these times when I cannot see is: I will learn from this, and this too will pass and come into the light again. I also look at the cross and feel strengthened because somewhere deep inside I know I am understood. When we find that wellspring of God inside us, in our very depths, we know we must constantly return to it for sustenance to help our limited mind see more clearly.

I always remember a quote from WB Yeats: "Man needs reckless courage to descend into the abyss of himself."

The willingness of Christ to walk freely and lovingly to crucifixion manifests that reckless courage. Life is never what it seems. We must look beyond the obvious.

Suffering presents an opportunity to reflect on our relationship

with God

by Dionne Doohar



Dionne Doohar, Lifford.

“FOR it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him”.

At this time of year especially, we are reminded of the suffering of Jesus. Christ died on the cross for sins and endured a tremendous degree of suffering for us to grant us eternal life.

In a world where conflict and

strife is much too apparent, Christians are exposed to suffering in a multitude of ways. While it may be difficult to understand the reasons why innocent people suffer so mercilessly, it is a reminder of the suffering of Christ.

Our suffering brings us closer to God, through imitating Jesus and pursuing Christian perfection.

Through our sufferings, we are presented with an opportunity to reflect on our relationship with God. We can take comfort in our suffering, with the knowledge and understanding that this too is part of God's plan for us, and that God will guide us through our suffering and enrich our faith.

By placing our trust in God in times of turmoil, our sufferings are lessened, and we are filled with a sense of hope and contentment, knowing that our relationship with God is strengthened by our sufferings, similar to that of Jesus.

The greatest sign of love is sacrifice

by Noel O'Sullivan



Noel O'Sullivan, Bellaghy.

THE greatest sign of love is sacrifice. Jesus offered himself as a sacrifice to save all of us. He knew the terrible ordeal which lay ahead for Him, but was willing to submit to unimaginable pain and suffering so that we all had a chance to have a better life.

If we all took a moment to redefine what love really means in our relationships, it would change the world.

Modern day living is obsessed with knowing your rights and demanding your rights, even if it is to the detriment of others. If we were to flip it around to our main concern being protecting the rights of others, it would be life

changing.

If we were all willing to make sacrifices in our lives in order to make others happy, think of the society we would have. If the first thought of husbands and wives was to be willing to sacrifice their own needs to secure their partner's happiness, there would be far less marriage breakup.

If work colleagues were willing to sacrifice some of their time to help one of their colleagues who is struggling, there would be far less disputes. If governments and politicians were willing to sacrifice their own party ambitions for the sake of the common good, there could be political harmony. If countries were willing to sacrifice their greed or obsession with land, would we have the Ukraine atrocity?

If we looked at our close relationships and decided on making some self sacrifice in order to bring a smile to a loved one's face, it would put us on the path of true love and happiness.

Jesus has done the hard work, we just have to listen to His direction and it will bring us closer to each other and closer to God himself.

Life and its sufferings are more bearable when we unite ourselves to Christ

by Rory McGilligan



Rory McGilligan, Dungiven.

ON St Patrick's morning, my nine-year-old daughter and myself decided to get up early and go for a walk. At that time she didn't know, but I had planned that we would walk up our local mountain. I thought if I told her how difficult she would find the walk, her bed would be a more comfortable place to be. I had a rucksack packed from the night before with plenty of water and treats, as it was St Patrick's Day.

All went to plan on the morning, and the first clue that she had that we would be walking up the mountain was when we got to the bottom of it. She asked: "Are we really going to walk up the mountain?" I reassured her that we would take plenty of breaks and that she would be delighted with accomplishing it when we got to the top. I am happy to say that we did make it up the mountain that morning. Yes, we stopped, rested, drank water, ate some chocolate on the journey and, when we got to the top, we celebrated by eating a cream egg.

Our journey up the mountain was tough, especially for a nine-year-old who was not used to the terrain. I suggested that she could look straight in front and see the elevation that we had to overcome or we could look around us and enjoy the beautiful landscape below us. I'm happy that she decided to enjoy the countryside. I pointed out Lough Foyle and the mountains of Inishowen in the distance. I was so impressed with her attitude. At times, she told me she could feel her heart beating

hard and I responded with words of encouragement at how well she was doing.

To see her sense of achievement was heart-warming as a father. I told her life can be like that climb; it might be tough but there is so much beauty around that helps us and that it is ok to stop, rest, and appreciate how far we have come already. It truly was a great way to start St Patrick's Day.

During Lent, I put a picture of Christ's Crowning of Thorns as a screensaver on my phone. My son asked me the question, "Why?" which started a really good conversation. I told him that it was to remind me of how much Jesus loved me and what He did so that we can be with Him in Heaven. I told him that we humans naturally try to stay as far away from suffering as possible, but Jesus was created to come into the world to suffer and die for us. He said that the picture scared him. It was probably the first time he encountered how much Christ actually did suffer out of absolute love for each and every one of us.

When I recite the Rosary on Tuesdays and Fridays, I meditate on how much Christ suffered for us. I often feel my response to such an outpouring of self-giving love as embarrassingly poor; in fact, it shows His divine perfection and my human imperfection.

As we know, Christ shares in our sufferings. He unites Himself to us in suffering if we let Him. In the 21st century, western society has become increasingly sterile. With the rise in social media, society now feels that we can only project an image of ourselves which is perfect in every way. There are now apps which can hide our blemishes, and all we should post is how great our life is, when in fact we all know that there are times when there are challenges and sufferings. This type of living makes people feel that they are alone with no true friends who truly care about them.

Not alone

When St Faustina received her First Holy Communion, she was walking home from church behind her classmates. Her teacher got concerned and enquired if she was alright, as she was by herself. St

Faustine, then known as Helena, smiled and told the teacher: "There is no 'I' anymore only 'we', I am not alone".

Life and its sufferings are more bearable when we unite ourselves to Christ, we no longer suffer alone. He is with us, He consoles us and He holds us close to Himself, knowing and loving us.

Maybe something has happened in our past and we feel there is distance between our self and the Lord, and we can't cross the bridge to God's heart and compassion. Jesus tells St Faustina to trust in His mercy and to tell the World about Divine Mercy. Sin only blocks us from God and when we go to Confession we remove the blocks, we don't let our past get in the way. When we receive the Holy Eucharist, we totally unite ourselves to Jesus and, as St Faustina says, "There is no I any longer only we".

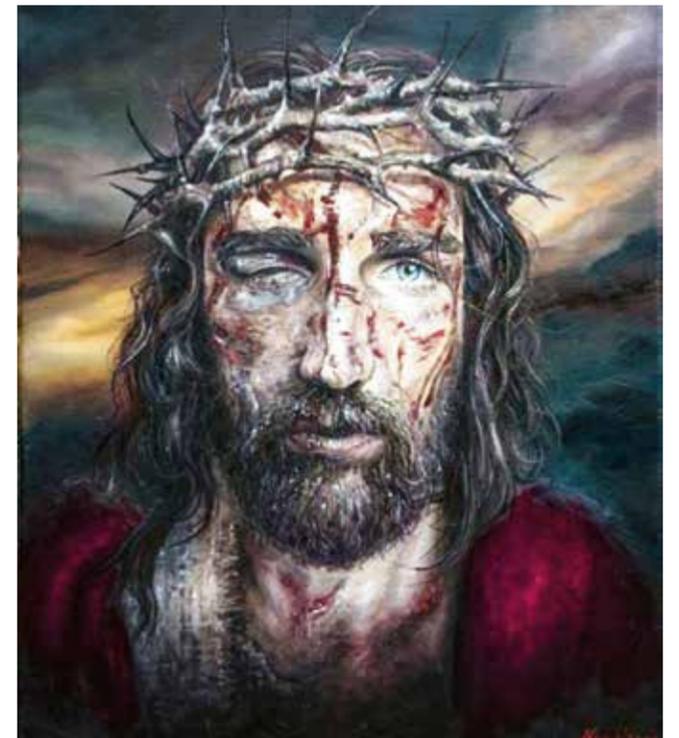
Life is like that that walk up the mountain on St Patrick's morning; it can look daunting, scary and, at times, undoable. We can, at times, look at the steep elevation in front of us and get disheartened. We can fall and struggle to get up again. We can ask ourselves, at times, what the point is. When we decide to be courageous, maybe out of faith put our best foot forward, taking our time, accepting that it's tough, occasionally looking behind, appreciating how far we have

travelled on our journey, taking rest and going to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and receiving food in the form of the Eucharist, appreciating the many gifts God has bestowed...our faith, family friends...then step by step, day by day, we continue to climb, to move forward.

I remember reading autobiographies about Olympians. Most would say that the real success was not in achieving the Gold medal but their journey towards gold, and that when they received the Gold medal it felt like an anti-climax.

I truly believe that as Catholics, unlike Olympians, although we may overcome great struggles and sufferings in this life, our destination of Heaven will be worth the journey. We will not be disappointed with what Our Lord and Saviour has in store for us. In scripture, Our Lord says, "Pick up your Cross and follow me". This is not a recipe for an easy life but one, if we put our trust in Him, that will help us on our journey. He will provide us with strength to meet the challenges which we come across.

It was heart-warming for me, a father, to see my daughter reach the top of our mountain. How much more will our Father in Heaven rejoice when we continue on our journey towards Him.



The Saints on suffering...

"One day, I saw two roads. One was broad, covered with sand and flowers, full of joy, music and all sorts of pleasures. People walked along it, dancing and enjoying themselves. They reached the end of the road without realizing it. And at the end of the road there was a horrible precipice; that is, the abyss of hell. The souls fell blindly into it; as they walked, so they fell.

And these numbers were so great that it was impossible to count them. And I saw the other road, or rather, a path, for it was narrow and strewn with thorns and rocks; and the people who walked along it had tears in their eyes, and all kinds of suffering befell them. Some fell down upon the rocks, but stood up immediately and went on. At the end of the road

there was a magnificent garden filled with all sorts of happiness, and all these souls entered there. At the very first instant, they forgot all their sufferings." (St Faustina Kowalska, Diary, 153)

"If we only knew the precious treasure hidden in infirmities,

continued on p21



St Faustina.

The Good News

by Martin McLaughlin



Martin McLaughlin, Derry.

Now my eyes have been opened, my spirit enlightened to a God of Love, I'm no longer frightened. A loving, caring Father, who knows no wrath, makes it sound so simple, as having a bath, where our filthy dirt is all washed away just like our sins on that sad Calvary day, Where Jesus spoke to Our Father, for me and for you, saying, "Please forgive them they don't know what they do". As He hung on the cross, all seemed so forlorn, when His disciples lost hope, until that Easter Morn. The women had arrived, someone had moved the stone, but on entering the tomb, they were not all alone. As they raised their heads and to their great surprise, two men in full splendour stood before their eyes. The scriptures have revealed exactly what was said, "Why are you looking for the living among the dead". For our Saviour has risen just to fulfil His Father's plan, with a simple message to every child, woman or man. I have come to release you from sickness and shame, all that I ever ask, is that you call on my Name. Your sins are forgiven and the price has been paid, It was for you I was crucified and a covenant was made. The Spirit I send you will help you along, to overcome all temptation and keep you strong. I have spoken with My Father, and we both agree, In My Spirit you will do greater things than Me. So trust Me, my people, and don't ever doubt My Unconditional Love is what it is all about. Though some may claim different and think it is odd, John's Gospel confirms that you're all children of God. So cease all your worry of reaching perfection, Just focus on Jesus, The Saviour and His resurrection. We are destined for Heaven, like the woman at the well Who put her trust in Him and was rescued from hell. When she recognised Jesus, nothing else would matter For what she drank thereafter was The Living Water. It's there for us allm no matter how often we fell, He simply invites us to, Come and see, go and tell. To all the poor people who share many different views, turn to The Gospels, where you'll discover His Good News.

continued from p20

we would receive them with the same joy with which we receive the greatest benefits, and we would bear them without ever complaining or showing signs of weariness." (St Vincent de Paul)

"We are co-redeemers of the world. And souls are not redeemed without the cross." (St Teresa of the Andes)

"If God gives you an abundant harvest of trials, it is a sign of great holiness which He desires you to attain. Do you want to become a great saint? Ask God to send

you many sufferings. The flame of Divine Love never rises higher than when fed with the wood of the Cross, which the infinite charity of the Savior used to finish His sacrifice. All the pleasures of the world are nothing compared with the sweetness found in the gall and vinegar offered to Jesus Christ. That is, hard and painful things endured for Jesus Christ and with Jesus Christ." (St Ignatius of Loyola)



St Ignatius of Loyola.

Jesus wants us to know that He is with us and will never abandon us

by Patricia Casey



Patricia Casey, Kiltrea.

EVERYONE in the world suffers in some way, maybe it is huge or perhaps it is small, but we all suffer and how is unique to each person. There are many types of suffering; for someone who suffers from depression it is different from someone who suffers a financial crisis or a family breakdown, and all need treated differently, with special delicacy.

Suffering can leave even the most prayerful and faithful person feeling fragile and that is quite understandable, and it can take some time to regain confidence with the right support.

Recently, I came across a moving story, in a book I am reading called 'Reveal The Gift, Living The Feminine Genius', of an Italian woman who is a beautiful witness of what it is like to suffer with Jesus.

Servant of God Chiara Corbella Petrillo was born in Rome, Italy, in 1984. Her father worked in the tourist industry, which allowed her family to travel extensively. So, while on pilgrimage in the summer of 2002, she met her future husband, Enrico. Their path to marriage was a modern love story filled with fears, doubts, and periodic breakups but, eventually, they determined that there was no one else to whom they wanted to commit their lives.

A month after marrying in 2008, Chiara and Enrico conceived their first child. However, their

joyous news was soon followed by complications when they learned that their baby had a rare condition that would make life outside of the womb impossible. Doctors offered Chiara the option to abort her daughter, but she declined. With heroic courage, she accepted the heartbreak of knowing her unborn child would not live long and chose to do whatever she could to give her child as much life as possible. Chiara carried baby Maria to term, and she was born and baptised. About half-an-hour later, she returned to the hands of her Father in heaven.

For a second time, Chiara became pregnant and, for a second time, complications arose as doctors determined that her baby boy would be born with many disabilities. Having already lost one child, Chiara and Enrico were undeterred and accepted their new child as a gift. However, they soon learned the prognosis was worse than initially supposed, and life outside of the womb would not be possible for this child either. Again, doctors offered Chiara the option to abort her baby, but again she chose to do whatever she could to give her son as much life as possible. Just as she did with baby Maria, Chiara carried baby Davide to term, and he was born and baptised. About half-an-hour later, like his sister, he returned to the hands of his Father in heaven.

After two intense experiences like this, nobody would blame Chiara if her heart became a bit hard and she no longer wanted to be receptive to new life. However, rather than closing in on herself, she spoke publicly about the blessings of her two children in heaven, and she remained open to life. She soon became pregnant a third time. Given her first two pregnancies, Chiara's doctors monitored her closely and rejoiced with her as this pregnancy progressed smoothly.

However, a new fear arose that nobody could have prepared for. A concerning tumour was growing on Chiara's tongue. Immediately, she underwent painful surgery to

remove the lesion, but it was found to be cancerous. This news left Chiara with a harrowing decision. She needed to begin aggressive treatments to rid her body of cancer. But undergoing these treatments while pregnant would harm her unborn child, which for Chiara was not an option. The only other opportunity to protect her own life was to deliver her son, Francesco, prematurely and hope for the best. For Chiara, this was not a real option either.

She writes: "To a majority of the doctors, Francesco is a seven-month fetus. And the one who should be saved is me. But I have no intention of putting the life of Francesco at risk...The difficult decision was to understand how to attack this tumour as soon as possible without putting the life of Francesco in peril."

Protect

Chiara stood her ground to protect her son, and her doctor put together an alternative treatment plan. Soon after, in May 2011, baby Francesco was born healthy at 37 weeks. A few days after giving birth, Chiara underwent another painful surgery, which revealed that her cancer had spread. Chemotherapy, radiation, and a host of other treatments followed, but, despite each effort, the cancer could not be stopped.

By late March 2012, the disease was detected in Chiara's lungs, eye, liver, and breast. By April, her condition was declared terminal. Enrico heard the prognosis first, and her doctor thought it was best to have him tell Chiara.

Her biography, written by two of her closest friends, recounts the moving scene: "Enrico entered [Chiara's hospital room] and, holding back tears, called his wife. Enrico accompanied her to the hospital chapel, where he told her everything without saying anything. They embraced before the Lord and repeated their marriage vows.

Out of fear that the devil might tempt her, she asked specifically:

'Just do not tell me how much time remains, because I wish to live in the present.'

"By June 13, Chiara's final day on earth arrived. From a wheelchair, she sat with Enrico gazing at Jesus in the tabernacle in her room. A question had been weighing on Enrico's heart, and at this moment, he finally found the courage to ask it. Thinking of Jesus' promise that his yoke is easy and his burden light (Matthew 11:30), he asked: 'Chiara, is this yoke, this cross, really sweet as Jesus said?' Chiara turned her attention from the tabernacle to her husband and smiled. Weakly, she replied, 'Yes, Enrico, it is very sweet.' Hours later, just like her children Maria and Davide, Chiara returned to the hands of her Father in heaven."

'Google' Chiara, you will see a beautiful young woman who had the loveliest smile while she suffered. Chiara lived the grace of carrying the yoke of Jesus which was sweet. Because of Jesus' Passion and Resurrection, many more saints are being made in our world right now and they do exist, they suffer with Jesus who is gentle, humble, and filled with love and truth.

Our world wants to eliminate suffering and, yes, we must try to ease suffering, but there are times that no matter what we try the suffering is still there and Jesus, who suffered unlike anything we could ever imagine, wants us to know that He is with us, and will never abandon us. He whispers, "Be not afraid, let's carry the cross together and look forward to the resurrection."

With Our Lord, we have hope, we have the opportunity to be purified... "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God" (Matt 5), and the more we see God, the more we will love others, we will be another Christ to someone.

I can see a much happier world if we only dared to accept the grace of uniting our pain and suffering to Jesus, who will fulfil every one of our heart's desires. God wants us truly happy.

The redemptive mystery of suffering

by Mary McMenamain

SUFFERING is a mystery. At root, the word 'suffering' means to bear, undergo or endure. It comes in all shapes and sizes and each of us is carrying some kind of cross in our daily lives. Losses of a loved one, debt, depression, anxiety, sickness are some of the many crosses that confront us. We see people around us who experience suffering and pain that seems unbearable and we wonder how they have the strength to carry on.

We are tempted to think that we can make suffering go away and

we will be spared our crosses. But Jesus made suffering a normal part of Christian life.

He said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

Each of us has difficulties and we are called to embrace our crosses and allow Jesus to help us in our suffering. We can unite our daily crosses to the sufferings of Jesus and are given the strength to endure what comes our way.

Our sufferings are the purifying

fires that heal our souls and our hardships in life and, embraced humbly and accepted wholly, bring us closer to Jesus and to Heaven.

During Lent and Holy Week, we were invited to take time to meditate on Jesus' suffering and death on the cross for us.

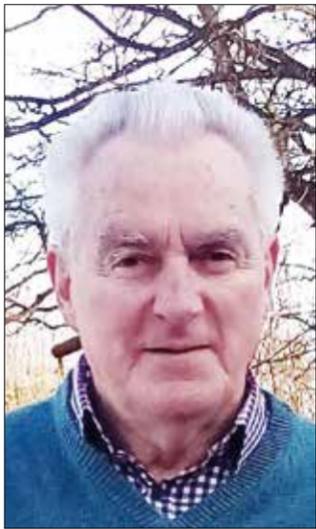
He humbly took up His cross and embraced His suffering, which is the redemptive suffering that opened the gates of heaven for all of humanity.



Mary McMenamain, Urney and Castlefin.

The law of the Cross and forgiveness

by Noel Bradley



Noel Bradley, Buncrana.

DURING Lent, Catholics will have been praying the Stations of the Cross and they will have heard or said the words at each station, "We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, for by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world". You will have heard these or similar words many times in your life as a Christian. Reflecting on the Passion of Jesus we can or may see more clearly 'the gift and power of suffering' but that seeing may not come easily. Many people reflect on or look at the Passion of Jesus, or at their own suffering, and do not see any 'gift' or 'power' in it.

The Law of the Cross

The fact of faith is that God has saved the world from sin through the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus, and it is a challenge for us to make sense of that. How is Jesus the victor over sin and death? What was the action that He took, or the process that He went through in His passion and dying that transformed the evil of His murder into an energy for goodness? How could he manage to say, "Father,

forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Lk 23:34).

The best answers that I can find to these questions is summed up by Donal Dorr, quoting two other theologians, Robert Doran and Charles Hefling, in his book 'A Creed for Today' (Veritas, pp. 106-107):

"He transformed the evil of suffering and death, accepted in love and obedience, into a supreme moral good, a new community emergent from these events, the whole Christ, Head and members".

The supreme moral good was the new community of disciples and followers that emerged eventually from Christ's suffering and death, and that, in time, goes on to include any other followers of Christ and His Way.

Donal goes on to say that this is the supreme example of the Law of the Cross, and he spells this out by quoting C Hefling:

"This is how divine wisdom, divine goodness, deals with evil - namely, not by wielding power, not by matching violence with violence, not by retaliation, not by vengeance, not by getting back, or getting even, not by combat...but by transforming these evils - making them an occasion for greater good".

He also quotes Richard Rohr saying: "You alone, Christ Jesus, refuse to be a crucifier, even at the cost of being crucified. You never play the victim or call for any vengeance, but only breathe a universal forgiveness upon the universe from this crucified place - your upside down throne".

At the time of writing this, I read in the Church Notes of the 'Irish Times' (Sat, April 9, 2022) that after Palm Sunday "almost all the verbs in the Gospel accounts are passive: Jesus is seized, brought, accused, spat upon, scourged, mocked,

sentenced, nailed, labelled. When asked to defend himself he will not. Marilynne Robinson wrote. "Nothing true can be said about God from a posture of defence".

If Jesus was fully human, as we claim, then He consciously felt the pain of injustice. I can only surmise that He consciously let in the pain of it all, feeling the raw wound of the hatred towards Him, the bitter coldness of the rejection of it all. But that somehow he was able to focus deeply inside Himself, as we sometimes experience ourselves trying to do, and find that still point at the centre of His being where He knew He was 'the Beloved' of God, (His Baptism experience). He found the love and healing energy to move out from there with concern for the good thief, to his mother and the disciple John and to his enemies. How he transformed the evil into an act of supreme goodness is a profound and stunning mystery and we can only struggle for words.

Forgiveness is not forgetting, but remembering with...?

At the heart of this process of transformation lies the act of forgiveness, and "Forgiveness is an attitude towards enemies, towards the guilty as guilty, not deserving of love" (C Hefling).

We can't say that He was divine, therefore, He could do all that. That is too easy and would be of no value to us. It would take from His humanity and His "likeness to us in all things but sin".

We can reflect on our own experience of trying to cope with evil in our own life and try to get a glimpse of the mystery involved there. We know that when faced with the injustice of others towards us, we have a basic choice. We can return evil for evil, hurt for hurt

and even end up letting it 'eat us up', or struggle against that. I am sure we have all tried in some way to make that choice. Most times, we try to forget the injury by keeping busy.

In trying to deal with a very hurtful injury a few years ago, my wife and friends kept saying to me: "Oh forget it, let it go, let bygones be bygones and just go on as if nothing has happened". That may be the best we can do at a particular time, but forgetting is not what forgiveness essentially is. Besides, bygones are never bygones. All my bygones add up to be myself. My bygones are myself. The past has happened and is part of me.

Strictly speaking, God does not forget anything, ever, just as He cannot make square circles. At least, this is true if we are conceiving God as infinitely understanding Love.

If forgiveness is not forgetting, perhaps it is remembering in a certain way, remembering with love! Even with a smile! What a challenge that is! Impossible you might say. Don't we all like keeping grudges?

Perhaps real forgiveness is quite rare in many cases of deep hurt. Perhaps, for most of us who are not saints it is a gradual thing, like a gradual conversion. It is natural for us to love our friends, because they deserve it, but supernatural for us to love our enemies, because they are not deserving of love.

It is all very well for God to command forgiveness and love. But it is beyond us. Therefore, there is a need for openness to God and a need for prayer. And here we can make St Augustine's famous prayer our own: "Give what you command, O Lord, and command what you will".

Noelbradley1512@gmail.com

What does a world look like without suffering?

by Nicole Kelly



Nicole Kelly, Ballinascreen.

To live is to suffer.

When a mother bears a child she experiences great pain but what a gift she gets at the end of her labour.

A mother would suffer anything to meet that new soul.

Our Lady will look after us, we must always ask for her help.

To suffer is to live.

In the garden of Gethsemane Jesus turned to prayer.

We have been given the tool of prayer

to get through any trials we may face in this lifetime.

Use this powerful tool.

Padre Pio said: "Pray, hope and don't worry."

To suffer is to live.

Jesus suffered greatly when He carried the cross.

We will all carry many crosses in our lifetime,

this is inevitable.

Let the tears fall.

To suffer is to live.

What is a world without suffering?

I think it must be Heaven.

What a place it must be.

Be a good and faithful servant

and one day you will be called home.

Our suffering will be no more.

Have faith and courage.

Everything will be alright.

Trust in Him, Our Lord Jesus Christ,

the One who suffered for us all.

To suffer is to live and what a gift that is.

The gift of our suffering makes us more understanding and compassionate towards others

by Rosie Johnson



Rosie Johnson, Omagh.

UPON reflecting on the 'Passion of Jesus', I see that the Lord gave His life freely and calls us to do the same. I think of all the suffering and sacrifices He has made for love of us, to die like a lamb that was led to the slaughter. What He endured, no other person could go through that, as only God could show this unconditional love for all of us.

The suffering that Jesus endured during the Passion, I find so unbearable, which makes me think of when I am suffering. I now unite it to Jesus and I say this prayer:

"Holy Mother, receive this offering, to be united to your sorrowful heart and present it to Jesus your Divine Son, for poor sinners, in union with Jesus and Mary".

I also feel that the gift of our suffering makes us more understanding, and helps us to have more empathy so to reach out and show compassion to others during their suffering.

By accepting our sufferings, and offering them to God, in reparation for the offences which we have committed, it has great power. The fruits of suffering improves our prayer life and our need for God, and goes towards the salvation of ourselves and others. It is when we are suffering that God is closer to us and shows His loves for us. When we accept our suffering, we accept the cross and imitate Jesus.

Jesus taught the disciples how to pray with the 'Our Father' prayer as an example on how to grow closer

to Him.

I feel that going to daily Mass, frequent reception of the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation, and holy hours of Adoration and prayer, are needed for one to draw closer to God.

Our faith is like a flower, the more we water a flower the more it grows and blooms, which is the same with our faith. We need to constantly educate ourselves by reading about the Saints' lives, going on retreats and reading the Word of God. I often think it would be good if we had a free library of good Catholic books in our parishes, for the continuing growth and nurturing of our Catholic faith.

Like Jesus and the Saints, who

suffered great humiliation, we too are asked to humble ourselves and unite all that we endure as a result of our faith, either through rejection or our personal sufferings, to Jesus. In His only Son's passion and resurrection, God transformed the greatest evil into the greatest good. We too, with hope and a steadfast faith in Christ Jesus, will be given the strength to embrace our cross, and in time, inherit Eternal life.

When I am in Adoration, I feel so honoured and grateful to be in the presence of a true King of Suffering. This special time shared with Him allows me to be transformed and give praise, honour, thanks and glory to our true King. In this way, my time spent in prayer and silence has brought me to an

understanding that I no longer want to offend Him by my sins, as I have grown to love and respect and appreciate Him more - I now have a great friend whom I love.

I feel that it is important that we pray for our priests daily, for the sacrifice that they make for us. Without the priest there is no Eucharist, no salvation without reconciliation...there are no sacraments. We should pray continually for their protection because, as Pope John Paul II wrote in 'Dominicae Cena', 1981, "A priest primarily guarantees that Christ is really made present in the Eucharist".

Anyone who would like to adopt a priest to pray for can contact me for further details on 07810387825.

It is only through sharing in Christ's suffering that we will one day share in the wearing of His crown

by Julie Galbraith



Julie Galbraith, Liturgist, Loreto College, Coleraine.

SUFFERING is universal. It does not discriminate on any grounds. Every human will encounter suffering throughout their lifetime. Though some may seem to suffer more than others, no one will be left untouched by this powerful reminder of our common humanity, vulnerability, and fragility.

For the most part, suffering is an unwelcome visitor. Few people are delighted when suffering comes knocking! In His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, even Christ cried out: "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done" (Lk 22:42).

There is a fundamental desire within all of us to avoid pain and discomfort, and to seek those things that bring joy, happiness, and pleasure. It seems an absurd thought to describe suffering as a gift. Why would a loving God want His child to suffer? Could this really be true?

Many years ago, I went to the cinema to see "The Passion of the Christ". My father always enjoys a good trip to the cinema, so I brought him along too as a treat. He was 'loving life', settled into his comfy chair with popcorn, chocolate and fizzy drink in hand. All was going well for the first while.

We kept up with the subtitles and enjoyed the tender, maternal moments between Mary and her young son; and laughed when the adult carpenter introduced His mother to the concept of high table dining.

While we knew that this gentle, pastoral pace wasn't going to last, we were both shocked and mesmerised by the vivid depiction of Christ's sufferings. It was like I was understanding the words of the Creed for the first time: "For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate, He suffered death and was buried".

The reality is that Christ's Passion, His cruel suffering, and humiliating death are God's gift to us. Christ's Passion radiates the great love that God has for each one of us. St John was the only Apostle who remained faithful to Jesus at the foot of the Cross. Judas had betrayed him, Peter had denied knowing him three times, and all the others ran away when the soldiers arrived.

John witnessed all that Christ endured for us and encapsulated the essence of what it all meant - Christ's Passion was motivated by love: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (Jn. 3:16).

Christ's Cross is a place of victory. In humble obedience to the Father and as a sign of His love for all humankind, Jesus had won for us the ultimate battle between good and evil. When humanity was at its absolute worst, God was at His very best. Christ's suffering makes our salvation possible. And it is only through sharing in Christ's suffering that we will one day share in the wearing of His crown.

Along Life's path, we will all experience suffering in a variety of forms. We may feel isolated, afraid, and alone. It is important to remember that God is always with us. In times of suffering, God enfolds us with His love, mercy,

Jesus has gone before us and endured all the pain we do - and much, much more!

by Sr Margaret McConalogue



Sr Margaret McConalogue, Mercy Sister, Culmore.

CRUCIFIXION was a particularly difficult and degrading form of Roman execution. The 'morphine' administered to Jesus was not given to heal His pain, rather to prolong His agony, lest He escape the extreme torture of the Cross and die.

For anyone to die this way on a Roman cross was a tragedy, no matter what crime they had committed. For an innocent man to die this way is an outrage.

The unjust condemnation to a cruel death of someone who stood in special relationship with God, and whose whole life was lived in service of others is hardly 'Good News'. Indeed, most of the human characters in the story of Jesus' passion and death have little to recommend them: Judas who

betrays Jesus in secret; Peter, the leading disciple, who denies Jesus in public; the high priest Caiaphas, who led the effort to get Jesus condemned; Pilate who hands over a man for crucifixion that he had publicly declared to be innocent.

Yet, the better side of human nature is also represented in the drama: Mary, the mother of Jesus, and John, the beloved disciple, who stayed the course when others ran; Joseph and Nicodemus, who ensured that Jesus at least had a dignified burial. These are shafts of light in the midst of the terrible darkness.

Towering above these good people is Jesus himself, the Light of the World. It is because of Him that the events of Calvary have come to be known as 'Good Friday'.

The passion and death of Jesus is good news, because there is much more going on than just the tragic execution of an innocent man. In John's Gospel, Jesus tells Pilate that He came into the world to "bear witness to the truth", meaning to reveal God to us.

The God He reveals to us is a God of love and a God of life. Jesus' whole life was about revealing God's love and life to us. It is above all, in His passion and death that Jesus reveals this God of life and love most fully. The Passion and death of Jesus is about God's giving of His Son and the Son's giving of

himself; that reveals God's nature and love. Authentic love is always life-giving.

In John's Gospel, the blood and water flowing from the side of Jesus is the symbol of this life-giving power of God's love. As Jesus said: "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself".

So, when we file up the church on Good Friday to venerate the Cross, we don't do so to venerate an instrument of torture. Rather, we follow on that path to Golgotha, to venerate the God of life and love who has been revealed to us in Jesus. We approach this "throne of grace", with great reverence and deep gratitude, knowing that there we too will find mercy and grace.

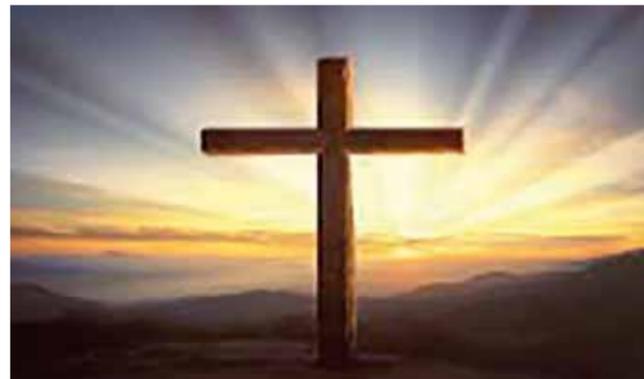
We approach the Cross of Jesus as people who have had our own experiences of the passion, that may have left us broken in body, heart or spirit. We are invited to

"look on the one whom they have pierced" (Good Friday Liturgy) and to allow the light of God's life-giving love, that shines through the cross, to envelop and to renew our hearts and lives.

Jesus has gone before us and endured all the pain we do - and much, much more! We can leave the Church in the safe knowledge and understanding that Jesus' light shines in our darkness, and the darkness does not overcome it. We continue to venerate the Cross in our own and in other peoples' lives, those who struggle and suffer in our world. We continue to venerate the Cross of Jesus whenever we help to carry each other's burdens.

As someone has said, Jesus did not come on earth to be admired, but to be followed!

(Based on reflections by Fr Martin Hogan, formerly Mater Dei Inst, Dublin)



Beautiful youth-led time of Adoration in Maghera

THE pupils and staff of St Patrick's College, in Maghera, presented a beautiful evening of singing, music and reflection in preparation for Holy Week.

The parish community greatly appreciated the time of Adoration in St Mary's Church, in the town.

Fr John Cargan RIP

EASTER Monday in the Parish of Kilrea saw a large crowd turn out for the Requiem Mass of much-loved parish priest, Fr John Cargan.

The death of the 69-year-old on Holy Thursday, after a short illness, caused great shock and sadness amongst his family, parishioners, fellow priests and all who knew him.

Following Requiem Mass in St Mary's Church, Drumagarner, Fr John was buried in the adjoining cemetery, within the Parish of Kilrea and Desertohill that he ministered in for the last eight years.



The late Fr John Cargan, PP Kilrea.

A fuller tribute to Fr John will be included in the May edition of 'The Net'.

Holy Face prayer at Tulacorr Mass Rock



The gathering at Tulacorr Mass Rock, in the Leckpatrick Parish, Strabane, on Good Friday to pray in honour of the Holy Face.



Divine Mercy – Deserve it? Need it? Want it? by Fr Francesco Gavazzi cfr



DIVINE Mercy is the love I don't deserve but desperately need. There is not one of us who doesn't need it and yet not one of us deserves it. Fortunately, salvation has nothing to do with what we deserve. It has everything to do with a gift we both desperately need and most deeply desire.

You might consider asking yourself, "Why do I need Divine Mercy?" Part of the answer lies in the reality that there is something that stands between me and my destiny. This something is the reality of my sin, whether I perceive it or not. It is Divine Mercy (and only Divine Mercy) that takes away this obstacle between me and my destiny. Therefore, Divine Mercy is what enables me to reach my destiny.

And what is my destiny? Sanctity, Heaven, Eternal Joy. The greatest tragedy in life is not to reach your destiny. This makes Divine Mercy desirable above all else. However, will I accept and receive this unsurpassable gift?

"He came to his own home, and his own people received him not. But to all who received him, he gave power to become children of God." (John 1:11-12)

You might consider that God's love seems all too good to be true. Yet, if this is the case, remember that this is because Divine Mercy is divine and so far beyond our calculating and conditional human standards. Too often our experience tells us that if you mess up you get locked up or shut out

- of society and the relationships that matter most to us. Sometimes this is justified. Sometimes it might even be necessary due to the fundamental limitations of our human condition. Sometimes it is simply that so few of us have let divine love in enough to let it out to others (that's what the saints do). But have you considered that Divine Mercy is not bound by such limitations?

Divine mercy is offered to you. To you. It is yours to receive. Faced with this glorious reality, if you mess up, the only one who can lock you up and shut you out is yourself. Hell has been described as willed self-enclosure, as barricading yourself off from Divine Mercy. It is pride that makes such harsh self-condemnation possible. Yet, what if instead of pride we choose the path of humility. In humility, we allow ourselves to feel all the weight of our own sin but choose to look longer and harder at Jesus than at ourselves. When we do this, we let His light into our darkness, we allow His love into our wounds. It is letting every judgement - that I have made about myself and that others have made about me - be eclipsed by Jesus.

Certainly, our pride leads us at times to refuse gifts, especially those we feel we don't deserve or don't think we need. Our pride prefers a sense of independence, the feeling of self-sufficiency. Our pride wants to 'earn it' and be 'worthy of it'. But consider the times when you have allowed yourself to be ruled by your pride. Were you happier, or did you end up more alone? How often our pride tells us that the goal of life is to be strong and independent. But if we choose the path of humility, we discover that it is far better (and truer to our human nature) to be in love and in communion; not independent, but dependent on God and inter-dependent on one another.

Humility

It takes great faith and humility to accept a gift when we feel most unworthy of it. When all the

evidence around us and within us seems to be saying - 'you are not lovable as you are, you are not loved as you are, you need to change and achieve before you are lovable; you need to fix this, mould that, improve this, get rid of that before you can be loved' - and still, you choose to let yourself be loved, embraced, forgiven anyway. That is great faith.

Faith is allowing ourselves to be embraced by love and mercy when we feel most unlovable. It means taking our eyes off ourselves (and others) for long enough to see the One who wants to love us back to life. It means accepting one of the ways God has chosen to heal us and love us - the sacrament of Confession. Here we are invited to come to Him as we are, not as we think we should be. Someone once told me that the cost of true friendship is vulnerability. Friendship with Jesus is no exception. We come to Him broken and bruised and messy, opening our heart as it is, with all that is within it and exposing it to His Sacred Heart, to Divine Mercy.

Some questions you might consider asking yourself: 'What do I fear (and why)?' Bring that to Jesus and let Him in there. 'What do I hate or dislike about myself?' Bring that to Jesus and let Him in there. 'What do I run to when I feel unloved or unlovable?' Bring that to Jesus and let Him in there. 'What do I use to soothe the wounds and the pain I feel at being myself?' Bring that to Jesus and let Him in there. 'What do I believe about myself or about God that keeps me discouraged and doubtful, fearful and anxious?' Bring that to Jesus and let Him in there. 'What is my 'one thing necessary', the thing (the idol and pseudo-Saviour) that I think I can't live without?' Bring that to Jesus and let Him in there.

This 'stuff' is sin at the roots. This is what needs to be touched by Divine Mercy. This is what Jesus wants to enlighten with His truth and free with His freedom. Divine Mercy is the only true remedy for every pain and wound and problem I find in me and

every human heart.

But before all, let us return to consider that fundamental question: 'Will I accept the gift?' Remember, our destiny depends on it. If yes, the second question is 'How do I accept the gift?' The answer lies in a willingness to be radically open, transparent, honest and vulnerable with Jesus.

Possibly more so than what you have ever been up to this point. If it hurts, that is where He is asking you to let Him in. We can do this anywhere and everywhere, and we should. But let us especially do so in the sacrament of Confession and anytime we meet Him in the Eucharist.

Excerpts from Sr Faustina's Diary, where she recorded what Jesus said to her...

"I desire that the First Sunday after Easter be the Feast of Mercy" (Diary 299).

"I want the image to be solemnly blessed on the first Sunday after Easter, and I want it to be venerated publicly so that every soul may know about it" (Diary 341).

"On that day, priests are to tell everyone about My great and unfathomable mercy" (Diary 570).

"My daughter, tell the whole world about My inconceivable mercy. I desire that the Feast of Mercy be a refuge and shelter for all souls, and especially for poor sinners. On that day the very depths of My tender mercy are open. I pour out a whole ocean of graces upon those souls who approach the fount of My mercy. The soul that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment. On that day all the divine floodgates through which grace flow are opened. Let no soul fear to draw near to Me, even though its sins be as scarlet. My mercy is so great that no mind, be it of man or of angel, will be able to fathom it throughout all eternity. Everything that exists has come forth from the very depths of My most tender mercy. Every soul in its relation to Me will contemplate My love and mercy throughout eternity. The Feast of Mercy emerged from My very depths of tenderness. It is My desire that it be solemnly celebrated on the First Sunday after Easter. Mankind will not have peace until it turns to the Fount of My Mercy" (Diary 699).

"Yes, the first Sunday after Easter is the Feast of Mercy, but there must also be acts of mercy...I demand from you deeds of mercy which are to arise out of love for Me. You are to show mercy to your neighbours always and everywhere. You must not shrink from this or try to excuse or absolve yourself from it" (Diary 742).

"Souls perish in spite of My bitter Passion. I am giving them...the Feast of My mercy. If they will not adore My mercy, they will perish for all eternity. Secretary of My mercy, write, tell souls about this great mercy of Mine, because the awful day, the day of My justice is near" (Diary 965).

"The Feast of My Mercy has issued forth from My very depths for the consolation of the whole world" (Diary 1517).

"Hardened sinners will repent on hearing their words when they speak about My unfathomable mercy, about the compassion I have for them in My Heart" (Diary 1517).

The Feast of Divine Mercy

THE Feast of Divine Mercy... the first Sunday after Easter Sunday...falls this year on April 24, and will be celebrated in a number of parishes across the Diocese.

While the first Mass during which the Divine Mercy image was displayed was celebrated on April 28, 1935, the second Sunday of Easter, by Sr Faustina Kowalska's confessor, Fr Michael Sopocko, in the Gate of the Dawn Church in Vilnius, it wasn't until April 30, 2000, that it was officially announced that the Second Sunday of Easter was to be celebrated as Divine Mercy

Sunday throughout the universal Church.

The announcement was made by Pope John Paul II on the occasion of the canonisation of Sr Faustina, which was on Divine Mercy Sunday. Speaking during his homily of his great joy "in presenting the life and witness of Sr Faustina Kowalska to the whole Church as a gift of God for our time", the Polish pontiff said: "By Divine Providence, the life of this humble daughter of Poland was completely linked with the history of the 20th century, the century we have just left behind.

"In fact, it was between the First

and Second World Wars that Christ entrusted His message of mercy to her. Those who remember, who were witnesses and participants in the events of those years and the horrible sufferings they caused for millions of people, know well how necessary was the message of mercy.

"Jesus told Sr Faustina: 'Mankind will not have peace until it turns with trust to My mercy' (Diary, 300). Through the work of the Polish religious, this message has become linked forever to the 20th century, the last of the second millennium

and the bridge to the third. It is not a new message but can be considered a gift of special enlightenment that helps us to relive the Gospel of Easter more intensely, to offer it as a ray of light to the men and women of our time".

He added: "What will the years ahead bring us? We are not given to know. But the light of Divine Mercy, which the Lord in a way wished to return to the world through Sr Faustina's charism, will illumine the way for the men and women of the third Millennium".

Sr Kay Connolly, of the Good Shepherd Sisters, who is well known in parishes across the Diocese from her time of travelling around with the Sharing Fair during her time in the Waterside, from 2006-2016, and is now residing in Waterford, has shared a Divine Mercy healing she has recently experienced...

A Divine Mercy Miracle



Sr Kay Connolly, Good Shepherd Sister, now residing in Waterford.

AFTER a biopsy on my leg in early 2018, I was diagnosed with skin cancer. After examining my leg, the consultant was hesitant about operating because the wound was close to the bone and the vein. We decided that I would wait and see if the cancer would grow.

By February of 2019, the cancer had grown and another growth had appeared on my arm. So, it was decided that I would have surgery and that a biopsy would be done on my arm on the same day.

The consultant warned me that I was in for "a hard time". I would

have "a hole in my leg and be out of action for some months". He explained that he would be unable to do a skin graft because my skin is like tissue. So, I awaited my appointment for surgery.

In late March, I got a call from the hospital asking me why I hadn't presented myself for surgery that morning. When I replied that I had not had any communication from the hospital, I was told that a letter had been posted to me re the appointment 10 days earlier. Although the address was correct, the letter never reached me. So, I was told that another appointment would be made.

In the meantime, I attended a service in a neighbouring Church to celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday. I was unable to get a blessing from the relic after the service due to a lack of time. The next morning, a friend offered to bless me with her Rosary beads, with which she had managed to touch the relic the evening before. We prayed together as she made the Sign of the Cross on the wound on my leg and the growth on my arm.

As I was undressing that night, I suddenly realised that I had not experienced any burning sensation or pain in my leg all day.

I examined it and discovered that there was no sign of the cancer. My leg was healed! I examined my arm but could find no change there but, during the next few weeks, the growth on my arm grew smaller.

When I eventually received an appointment for the surgery, I call the hospital, cancelled the surgery and asked for an appointment at the clinic.

On July 2, I saw the surgeon and he confirmed that my leg was cured and that the growth on my arm had reduced from a one-Euro size coin to a 20-cent size. When I reminded him that if the first letter had reached me, I would now be laid up with a hole in my leg! He laughed but made no remark. He decided to operate on my arm as, though the growth had reduced, he felt the cancer cells should be removed.

I had the operation in September and got the results on October 21. "There has been Divine intervention again, the cancer in your arm is low risk"; the consultant informed me.

Praise the Lord! The consultant examined my leg again and assured me that all was well. May devotion to the Divine Mercy spread more and more!

The Surrender Novena

Written by Fr Don Dolindo Rutolo, a Franciscan priest born in Naples, Italy in 1882, who Padre Pio, whose Feast Day we celebrate on September 23, described as a "saint", The Surrender Novena has brought comfort to many

Day 1

Why do you confuse yourselves by worrying? Leave the care of your affairs to me and everything will be peaceful. I say to you in truth that every act of true, blind, complete surrender to me produces the effect that you desire and resolves all difficult situations.

O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

Day 2

Surrender to me does not mean to fret, to be upset, or to lose hope, nor does it mean offering to me a worried prayer asking me to follow you and change your worry into prayer. It is against this surrender, deeply against it, to worry, to be nervous and to desire to think about the consequences of anything. It is like the confusion that children feel when they ask their mother to see to their needs, and then try to take care of those needs for themselves so that their childlike efforts get in their

mother's way. Surrender means to placidly close the eyes of the soul, to turn away from thoughts of tribulation and to put yourself in my care, so that only I act, saying "You take care of it".

O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

Day 3

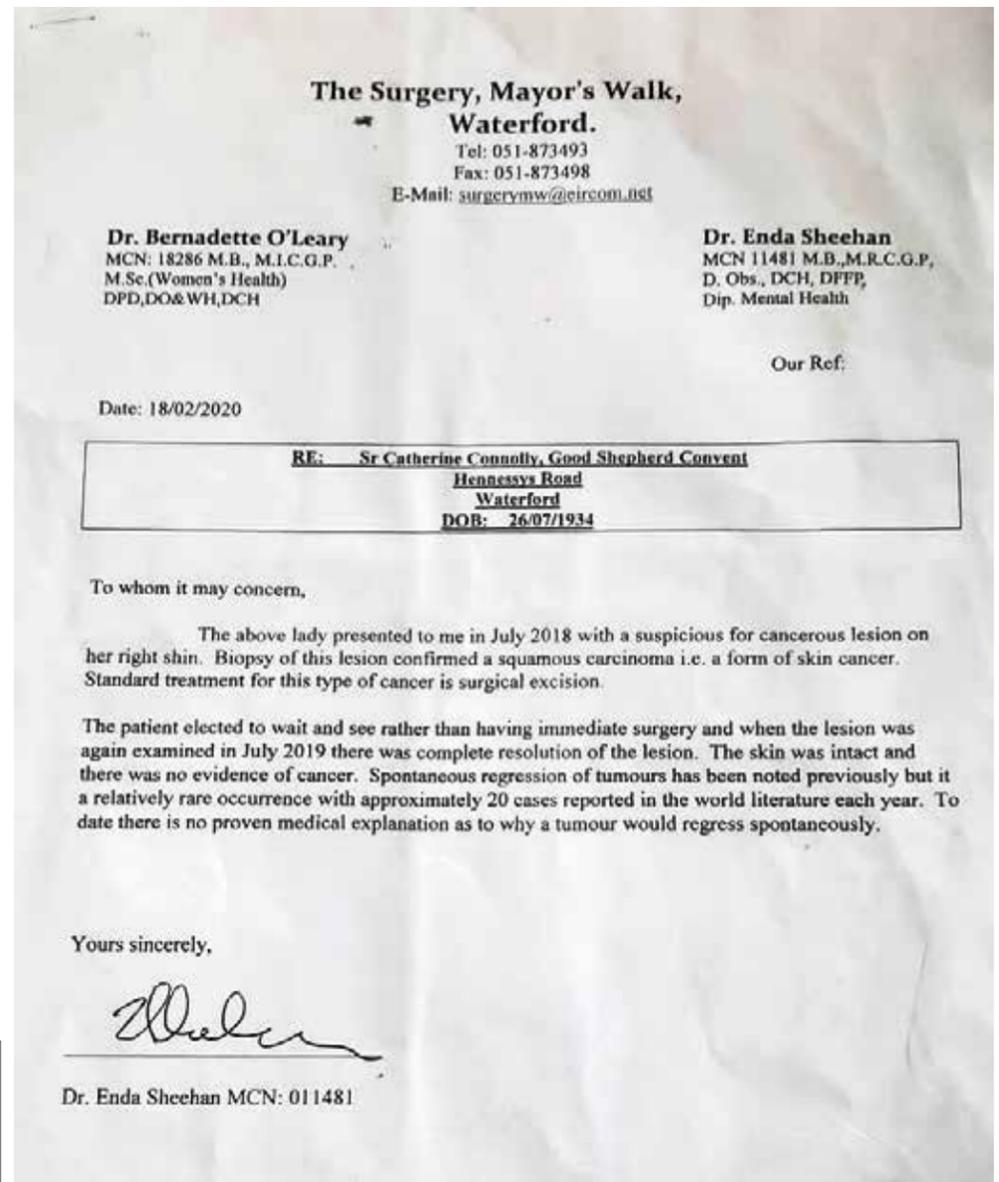
How many things I do when the soul, in so much spiritual and material need, turns to me, looks at me and says to me; "You take care of it", then closes its eyes and rests. In pain you pray for me to act, but that I act in the way you want. You do not turn to me, instead, you want me to adapt your ideas. You are not sick people who ask the doctor to cure you, but rather sick people who tell the doctor how to. So do not act this way, but pray as I taught you in the Our Father: "Hallowed be thy Name", that is, be glorified in my need. "Thy kingdom come", that is, let all that is in us and in the world be in accord with your kingdom. "Thy

will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven", that is, in our need, decide as you see fit for our temporal and eternal life. If you say to me truly: "Thy will be done", which is the same as saying: "You take care of it", I will intervene with all my omnipotence, and I will resolve the most difficult situations.

O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

Day 4

You see evil growing instead of weakening? Do not worry. Close your eyes and say to me with faith: "Thy will be done, You take care of it". I say to you that I will take care of it, and that I will intervene as does a doctor and I will accomplish miracles when they are needed. Do you see that the sick person is getting worse? Do not be upset, but close your eyes and say "You take care of it". I say to you that I will take care of it, and that there is no medicine more powerful than my loving intervention. By my love, I promise this to you.



O Jesus, I surrendered myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

Day 5

And when I must lead you on a path different from the one you see, I will prepare you; I will carry you in my arms; I will let you find yourself, like children who have fallen asleep in their mother's arms, on the other bank of the river. What troubles you and hurts you immensely are your reason, your thoughts and worry, and your desire at all costs to deal with what afflicts you.

O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

Day 6

You are sleepless; you want to judge everything, direct everything and see to everything and you surrender to human strength, or worse – to men themselves, trusting in their intervention, – this is what hinders my words and my views. Oh, how much I wish from you this surrender, to help you; and how I suffer when I see you so agitated! Satan tries to do exactly this: to agitate you and to remove you from my protection and to throw you into the jaws of human initiative. So, trust only in

me, rest in me, surrender to me in everything.

O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

Day 7

I perform miracles in proportion to your full surrender to me and to your not thinking of yourselves. I sow treasure troves of graces when you are in the deepest poverty. No person of reason, no thinker, has ever performed miracles, not even among the saints. He does divine works whosoever surrenders to God. So don't think about it any more, because your mind is acute and for you it is very hard to see evil and to trust in me and to not think of yourself. Do this for all your needs, do this all of you and you will see great continual silent miracles. I will take care of things, I promise this to you.

O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

Day 8

Close your eyes and let yourself be carried away on the flowing current of my grace; close your eyes and do not think of the present, turning your thoughts away from the future just as you would from temptation. Repose

in me, believing in my goodness, and I promise you by my love that if you say, "You take care of it", I will take care of it all; I will console you, liberate you and guide you.

O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

Day 9

Pray always in readiness to surrender, and you will receive from it great peace and great rewards, even when I confer on you the grace of immolation, of repentance and of love. Then what does suffering matter? It seems impossible to you? Close your eyes and say with all your soul, "Jesus, you take care of it". Do not be afraid, I will take care of things and you will bless my name by humbling yourself. A thousand prayers cannot equal one single act of surrender, remember this well. There is no novena more effective than this.

O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything!

Mother, I am yours now and forever.

Through you and with you I always want to belong completely to Jesus.

Followers of the Way (Acts 9.2; 22,4: 24, 14)...

The 'Labels' we impose *by Fr John McLaughlin ssc*

IN Merville, where I have retired to after more than 60 years away, I nowadays have constant reasons to be visiting the Chemist on the Main Street ...the building and business in which I was reared and learned a little about service and community.

It is a strange feeling of disorientation at times, as I stand there and wait to be served. I recall a much longer and more imposing, even intimate counter. My father - like a good confessor - would have to hear the stories behind the prescriptions for humans and animals, what the doctor and vet said, and what happened the last time, etc.

The medicines had most often to be counted or poured out, or scraped and spread out, labelled and re-labelled. On one occasion, I am reliably informed by Anna Connolly, whose late husband Gerard worked in the Pharmacy, my father was pouring out a perfume from the indicated scent; "Have you a bottle there Mary?" he asked the young lady customer. "No, Mr Mc Laughlin, I only need you to sprinkle me back and me front, I am on my way to the dance!"

As a young boy, inside at the back, I saw these processes and was often pulled in to help with labelling, spreading ointments, pouring into bottles and counting tablets. There was a constant washing of hands in the sink in behind, and labels and indications (entitled The Mixture) were written out by hand and applied carefully to box, bottle or tin. The white coat of the apothecary was often soiled and needed regular washing and cleaning. It, indeed, looked a little like what Pope Francis now calls the 'field hospital', that is, or should be, the present-day Church! And it is a big contrast to the much more sanitized and packaged pharmacy that I now have to visit with my mask and stick!

Marilynn Robinson, the great American writer, who is a convinced Christian and Calvinist, is also a penetrating commentator on the American way-of-life. In her book, 'The Give-ness of Things' as I recall, she enters into the morass of American Christianity. 'Christ' is found on 'The Christian Right' and 'The Christian Left', and on a whole lot of other allegedly more centrist forums. She wrestles honestly with the question from her own convictions as a convinced Calvinist and does, at least, indicate the necessity of a return to the 'biblical and New Testament Christ'. Having written books like 'Gilead', and 'Home', and more recently, 'Jack', I confess to being a big fan of hers.

The Christ of Acts is another big key to our belief in the kerygma of Peter and Paul and Barnabas, as it seems to me that we need a constant corrective or conversion

to the Risen Christ.

Even in the US Catholic Church, by all reports the 'label' is challenged on issues like abortion and the Latin Mass and racism and the influence of capital, where groups like the EWTN people are very selective on what they accept or release from the teachings of Pope Francis. A friend here, and an avid reader of 'The Economist' (Feb 19-2022), sent me on an article of theirs entitled 'The fight for Catholic America', and "Pope Francis is starting to get a grip on the world's fourth biggest Catholic country. Making the Church less self obsessed and more responsive to its congregants", as it summarizes. The debate - or the labeling process - will go on!

In all my years as a pastoral priest, the question of the 'Labels' in connection with being a Catholic has been present. For some, in another era, the Pioneer Badge (or even the Fainne!) was seen as a marker. I recall with affection that fine group of The Pioneers in Arklow and our excursion to Dalgan Park, where we were received by family-friend, Fr Pat Maguire, who had been in China and expelled. His Derry and highly-palated accent accompanied the group for a whole evening, visiting the Chinese artifacts, the farm, chapel and refectory for a lovely tea. Little did I dream then where I would end up in my later days as a missionary priest!

Another label, maybe, was the Consecration of the Family to the Sacred Heart, which I was often invited to preside over and sign my name under the names of the family on the large framed picture. Labels and even uniforms came as important in parish life in Chile. EME, EJE, ENE were distinguishing marks of those who professed their 'Experience of Life in the Spirit' in Valparaiso. Or the 'Nazarenos' or 'Familia de Nazaret', whose participation in the Community or Parish Council, or Eucharist, might have been a lower preference for many of its members. And in Santiago the range was much wider, as the groups like 'Retiros de Conversion' brought about a strong sense of belonging to many, with the Columbans (peregrines por Cristo), Franciscans, Dominicans, Salesians, Claretians, the Opus and other groups inducting many into the charisms of their founders. Labels were important and a badge of belonging for many. It was often refreshing to hear one of the lay people say humbly and happily, "yo soy de la Parroquia/capilla de" - I am of this or that Parish or Christian Community.

And, through the Office of the Church, I came to cherish 'labels' like these, from the first apology in defence of the Christians by St Justin, martyr -The celebration of

the Eucharist...

"No one may share the Eucharist with us unless he believes that what we teach is true, unless he is washed in the regenerating waters of baptism for the remission of his sins, and unless he lives in accordance with the principles given us by Christ.

We do not consume the Eucharistic bread and wine as if it were ordinary food and drink, for we have been taught that as Jesus Christ our Saviour became a man of flesh and blood by the power of the Word of God, so also the food that our flesh and blood assimilates for its nourishment becomes the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus by the power of his own words contained in the prayer of thanksgiving.

The apostles, in their recollections, which are called gospels, handed down to us what Jesus commanded them to do. They tell us that he took bread, gave thanks and said: Do this in memory of me. This is my body. In the same way he took the cup, he gave thanks and said: This is my blood. The Lord gave this command to them alone. Ever since then we have constantly reminded one another of these things. The rich among us help the poor and we are always united. For all that we receive we praise the Creator of the universe through his Son Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit.

On Sunday we have a common assembly of all our members, whether they live in the city or the outlying districts. The recollections of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as there is time. When the reader has finished, the president of the assembly speaks to us; he urges everyone to imitate the examples of virtue we have heard in the readings. Then we all stand up together and pray.

On the conclusion of our prayer, bread and wine and water are brought forward. The president offers prayers and gives thanks to the best of his ability, and the people give assent by saying, "Amen." The Eucharist is distributed, everyone present communicates, and the deacons take it to those who are absent.

The wealthy, if they wish, may make a contribution, and they themselves decide the amount. The collection is placed in the custody of the president, who uses it to help the orphans and widows and all who, for any reason, are in distress, whether because they are sick, in prison, or away from home. In a word, he takes care of all who are in need.

We hold our common assembly on Sunday because it is the first day of the week, the day on which God put darkness and chaos to flight and created the world, and because on that same day our Saviour, Jesus

Christ rose from the dead. For he was crucified on Friday and on Sunday he appeared to his apostles and disciples and taught them the things that we have passed on for your consideration."

I feel strongly that you can't just 'label-in' Christian or Catholic' without looking into the rear-mirror and realizing where we came from. The famous 'Letter to Diognetus' would also be a resource, not to mention the whole treasury of the Communion of Saints, some of whose names were invoked over us on the occasion of our Baptism.

The Christians in the world

"Christians are indistinguishable from other men, either by nationality, language or customs. They do not inhabit separate cities of their own, or speak a strange dialect, or follow some outlandish way of life. Their teaching is not based upon reveries inspired by the curiosity of men. Unlike some other people, they champion no purely human doctrine. With regard to dress, food and manner of life in general, they follow the customs of whatever city they happen to be living in, whether it is Greek or foreign.

And yet there is something extraordinary about their lives. They live in their own countries as though they were only passing through. They play their full role as citizens, but labour under all the disabilities of aliens. Any country can be their homeland, but for them their homeland, wherever it may be, is a foreign country. Like others, they marry and have children, but they do not expose them. They share their meals, but not their wives.

They live in the flesh, but they are not governed by the desires of the flesh. They pass their days upon earth, but they are citizens of heaven. Obedient to the laws, they yet live on a level that transcends the law. Christians love all men, but all men persecute them. Condemned because they are not understood, they are put to death, but raised to life again. They live in poverty, but enrich many; they are totally destitute, but possess an abundance of everything. They suffer dishonor, but that is their glory. They are defamed, but vindicated. A blessing is their answer to abuse, deference their response to insult. For the good they do they receive the punishment of malefactors, but even then they rejoice, as though receiving the gift of life. They are attacked by the Jews as aliens, they are persecuted by the Greeks, yet no one can explain the reason for this hatred.

To speak in general terms, we may say that the Christian is to the world what the soul is to the body. As the soul is present in every part of the body, while remaining

distinct from it, so Christians are found in all the cities of the world, but cannot be identified with the world. As the visible body contains the invisible soul, so Christians are seen living in the world, but their religious life remains unseen. The body hates the soul and wars against it, not because of any injury the soul has done it, but because of the restriction the soul places on its pleasures. Similarly, the world hates the Christians, not because they have done it any wrong, but because they are opposed to its enjoyments.

Christians love those who hate them just as the soul loves the body and all its members despite the body's hatred. It is by the soul, enclosed within the body, that the body is held together, and similarly, it is by the Christians, detained in the world as in a prison, that the world is held together. The soul, though immortal, has a mortal dwelling place; and Christians also live for a time amidst perishable things, while awaiting the freedom from change and decay that will be theirs in heaven. As the soul benefits from the deprivation of food and drink, so Christians flourish under persecution. Such is the Christian's lofty and divinely appointed function, from which he is not permitted to excuse himself!"

New life

One of the observations often made in the Latin American Church is that we lost-out as well as gained from the 'Decree of Constantine', making the Christian religion the official one in the Empire. While removing persecution, the accession to power proved a temptation too great for many leaders, at all levels, in those centuries. And CELAM, or the Church in Latin America in the great Assemblies of Medellin, Puebla, Santo Domingo and Aparecida, where Pope Francis was amongst the leaders and maybe, the most inspired and inspiring, set about to adjust much of that. So also did Gustavo Gutierrez and others with The 'Theology of Liberation', and groups like 'Amerindia' where many Columbans participated and drew new life for their mission. There was a lot of 'Re-labelling' in that for most of us!

One of the great features of The Conference of Aparecida for those of us active and present in the Continent at the time, was the consultations with the base at all levels, way before that final Assembly where See-Judge-Act was the operating system, under the strong insistence of CELAM, the Latin American Church. And the inspiring words of Pope Benedict at its commencement would surprise many who may have other images of that recent Pope.

A great Irish Catholic layman and friend, with a certain sense of humour always around him, used to talk about people who had been laid down and depressed by sickness, or tragedy, or work unemployment-situations, and coming back into life again... "Now he/she is starting to get impotent again!" The phrase might well be applied to our own Catholic way of life and more or less dormant signs of witness and 'paresia', a word that Pope Francis likes to bring before us and recall the witness and daring of the Early Church. The almost self-deprecating phrase, 'people of faith', 'faith-people', that I hear around, tends to leave me rather cold.

In the Chilean Pastoral Orientations of 1989, if I recall correctly, there was a projection of what a modern Catholic might be expected to be and to show: A personal knowledge of God; convinced and convincing in their faith; tremendously and authentically human; witnesses to their Faith, and where being Christian is the noun and not just the adjective, eg, a Christian journalist, rather than a journalist who happens to be a Christian. And my great grace was to have known and worked alongside many people who displayed these conditions.

Only last year, I was informed of the death of Señora Trinidad Espindola, known to the whole neighbourhood of Sauce and to the Parish of San Columban as 'La Trini'. Of humble rural background, she was at domestic work in Santiago at 14 years of age, and in her married life in that neighborhood served the whole area and the chapel community, catechist, leader of the liturgy and minister of the Eucharist, solidarity coordinator. And that all marked by a gentle self-deprecating humour and a welcome presence in any group. As well as being host at Sunday lunch to many groups of Columban priests! The neighborhood of Sauce once crowned her Queen of the area and paraded her around in an open truck with songs and flags!

One of the great projects of the active youth in the parishes around Holy Week was the preparation and proud presentation of 'La Obra', the Work that is 'Jesus Christ Superstar'. I remember one group who had the project in hand and seemed to me rather casual about it, as I commented that it appeared rather 'al lote', whatever comes out, as it were. And the young people responded almost indignantly, "we don't do things like that al lote".

Dublin priest, Fr Chris Mangan had been for a number of years (five, I think) serving as a priest-associate with the Columbans in Santiago, in Chile. On returning to the Diocese, he served first in Bayside, Sutton. There, he

The Lamb of God by Vera McFadden

MY sister, Bridie often sang a lovely song, the lyrics of which had been written by Catherine Tynan. The last verse was, "All in the April evening, April airs where abroad, I saw the sheep and the little lambs, and I thought on the Lamb of God".

It is one of the most beautiful sights at this time of year to see the lambs frolicking in the fields, enjoying themselves, while the fresh scented breezes blow.

It is surely not just a coincidence that it was at this time of year that the Lamb of God was sacrificed for us. Pagan people had awareness that someone greater than themselves is in charge. As they did not know who it was, several imaginary gods and goddesses were conjured up and the people lived in fear of them and offered sacrifices.

However, there was one true prophecy in the pagan religion of the Aztecs. That was about the return of the true God. When Our Lady came and left her image on the Tilma, they realised that the true God had offered Himself for them.

Catherine Tynan's verse mentions the April breezes. There is another more recent song that does this. It is about the capture, death and resurrection of our Lord. The last verse is: "He stood and smiled one April morning and the sun was high in heaven. He stood and smiled one April morning, and as He smiled again blew the wind in April, blew the wind in April".

The Jews believed in the true God and offered to Him. The lambs they offered first had new life and were then sacrificed. Jesus, the Lamb of God, was sacrificed and then had the new life of resurrection.

There are many references to the sacrificed lamb all through Scripture, from the very beginning to the end. One of the first is in the Book of Genesis. Abraham is preparing to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. On the way to the place of sacrifice, Isaac asks his father, "Where is the lamb for the slaughter?" And he is told that God will provide it. It had not been necessary for Isaac to be offered up by his father. However, God found it necessary to sacrifice His Only Begotten Son for the salvation of mankind.

The Book of Exodus, chapter 12, tells us about the first Passover. God had instructed Moses and Aaron to gather the people of Israel together. He wanted each home to offer a sacrifice of their best sheep or goat at the same time. Those who were very poor were to share with another household.

When the animal was killed, its blood was to be drained into a container and then sprinkled on the doorposts and the lintel. This was for protection of the family members, because the angel of death was to pass by that night and the firstborn in every Egyptian household would die. The sprinkled blood would be an indication of a Jewish household.

The animal was to be roasted over a fire and then eaten with unleavened bread. Any leftovers were to be destroyed – not to be kept until morning. The people were to be dressed with their girdles around their waists and sandals on their feet.

The time chosen for the Passover, around our present time April, was to become the first month of the Jewish year.

Just as the sprinkled blood saved the householders, so the

blood of Christ gave us the opportunity of salvation, for Jesus shed even the last drop of His blood for us.

One of the prayers in the Divine Mercy Chaplet is: "O, blood and water which gushed from the heart of Jesus as a font of mercy for us, we trust in you". A priest suggested that we could place the picture of Jesus, the Divine Mercy, beside or on our doors during the pandemic.

At the first Passover, unleavened bread was used and, at our Mass, unleavened bread is used.

Isaiah 53 is a prophecy of Our Lord's sufferings and death. Verse 4 is: "Yet ours were the sufferings he bore, ours were the sorrows he carried." Verse 7 is: "Ill-treated and afflicted, he never opened his mouth. Like a lamb led to the slaughter, like a sheep dumb before its shearers, he never opened his mouth".

At the beginning of St John's Gospel, we are told about John the Baptist baptising in the River Jordan. Before he was born, John had been given an insight into the presence of Jesus in his mother's womb. Now, as the precursor of Christ, he has felt called to prepare the way of the Lord and is preaching and baptising in the Jordan River. He has had an insight that the one on whom he sees the Spirit descending on is the Chosen One. He sees Jesus coming towards him and says: "Behold the Lamb of God. Behold him who takes away the sin of the world".

Revelation

There are mentions of the Lamb of God in the Book of Revelation, which is the very last book in Scripture. So, the theme of the Lamb extends from the beginning to the end of the word of God. In Chapter 5 of the Book of Revelation, we are told about the throne of God and the angels, the living creatures and the elders gathered. There is a scroll with seven seals. An angel asks who is worthy to open it. No one is. Then an elder calls that the lion of the tribe of Judah is worthy. The lion of the tribe of Judah is the Lamb of God.

The Angel, living creatures and the elders cried out: "Worthy is lamb that was slain to receive power, riches, wisdom, strength, honour, glory and blessing". Then all living things in heaven, earth, under the earth, and on the sea cried out: "To the One that is on the throne and to the Lamb be all praise, honour, glory and power forever and ever".

In Chapter 7, we are told about a vast number of people from every nation, dressed in white, with palms in their hands, standing before the throne and shouting, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb!"

In Chapter 14, we are told that John saw the Lamb and 144,000 priests without fault standing on Mount Zion. They had the seal of God and of the Lamb on their foreheads. They were singing a new song which only they could sing, and the singing was accompanied by a powerful sound like many harps being played in Heaven.

In Revelations 19, we are told about a voice proclaiming, "Blessed are those who have been invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!"

In last chapter of Revelations, we read that John saw the river of light in the city. The throne of God and of the Lamb was in the city. There was no more night and need for day because the light of God shone on everything. The people with the seal of God on their foreheads sang constant praise of God.

We praise the Lamb of God in the Gloria during Mass, we ask His mercy and peace during Mass, and the priest identifies the Eucharist as the Lamb of God just before we receive Communion.

In 1879, a group of people in Knock, Co Mayo, saw figures on the gable wall of the church. Men, women and children saw it, though only some of them were there from the beginning. Later, when they were questioned, their testimonies showed that each one of them had seen the same figures and reported identical details about the vision.

What they described was the Lamb of God, with John the



Evangelist holding an open scroll. Mary and St Joseph and angels were there also. It was about the Book of Revelations. Mary's hands are stretched out but are close together. Is she saying, "Time is short", or is she saying, "Stay close to the Lamb of God"?

The first time I visited Knock, I was on my way home from a camping holiday at Barna, in Connemara. We decided to park the caravan in the big empty car park beside the church grounds. I remembered the story of the Apparition and told it to my children. We joined in the torchlight procession and attended Mass the following morning, before leaving the town. Since then, I have been in Knock many times. Perhaps, the most memorable was the time I went to the Lamb of God Retreat. It was a silent retreat, but I told the lady in charge that I would be making a telephone call to ask about our very sick friend. When I did, I was told that the doctors thought that he had only a few days to live. Of course, I had to leave the retreat the following morning.

The retreat director, a Greek orthodox priest, Fr Emmanuel McCarthy, spoke to me about the Mass and the Rosary at a time like

this. We attended morning Mass. It was the Mass that had been written by St John Chrysostom. In his talk, Fr Emmanuel asked the people to remember my dying friend at the Mass and evening Adoration every day during their retreat. He told us that the moment of death was the most important moment in life. So there were 100 people praying at least twice a day for my friend at Mass, and at Adoration in the chapel with the images of the Apparition; the Lamb of God, John the Evangelist and Our Lady, St Joseph and the angels.

Jesus is called the Lamb of God. He once told the apostles that He was the Good Shepherd. He said, "I know my sheep and they know me and they follow me. Other sheep I have that are not of this fold. Them also will I bring, and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd. He also told Peter to feed His lambs and feed His sheep.

I remember one time in Fatima seeing a young Shepherd being followed by his flock. That is how it must be between Jesus and us. He is the Lamb of God. We are His lambs and we can try to follow Him.

"Wherever He leads us, wherever He goes".

Continued from p26

created a very lay-orientated and participative parish community - new labeling! Moved on as PP to Dun Laoire, Fr Chris inspired a whole new pastoral-minded parish community with a wide variety of services and community groups, so that other diocesan teams invited him to speak to them of his ideas and priorities. Fr Chris was a gentle and quiet-spoken man, who radiated pastoral energy and initiative. Hopefully, his joyful pastoral spirit lives on in those and other pastoral initiatives around the country.

On my milk carton, every morning I read the little phrase (curra cainte!) "ni he la na gaothe la na sgoibe!" - - You don't set out to thatch on a windy day! In Pope Francis' message for Lent, which I shared with a small Legion Praesidium, the word 'Kairos' was commented on; being the 'Time of God' and His action and presence, rather than our routine chronological time, to which we

are so attached. Surely in this, as much as any time in recent history, the active presence and 'glory of God, in the Kingdom', must find witnesses and pastoral agents in our troubled world...and under whatever 'labels' - pouring, counting, pasting, sprinkling and spreading, and written with our own hands and lives...as in those pharmacies of yesteryear!

Juan Manuel Serrat, the great Spanish trovador, was often inspired by the poetry of Antonio Machado, and sings so well and with such inspiration "Caminando se hace camino, se hace el camino al andar"...you find the Way by getting underway, the Way unfolds as you move along. And I was enthusiastically very present on an occasion when his words were immediately taken up tunefully by a worshipping Chilean audience...that would be another 'Label' to motivate us once again as Disciples of The Way!

May Rosary at the Grottos

THE Rosary at the Grottos around Ireland will take place during May, with people asked to pray the Rosary each day at 8 pm, or any time that suits, at their local Grotto.

There are hundreds of Grottos around Ireland and, in praying to honour Blessed Mother, the intention offered up is for Our Lady to wrap her mantle of protection around the island and to bring peace to this troubled world.

For the previous Rosary at the Grottos, there were over 300

grottos registered and people can register the various Grottos where the Rosary will be prayed during May at www.coastalrosaryireland.ie

St Louis de Montfort highlighted the importance of praying together when he said: "Almighty God is very pleased to have people gathered together in prayer; the angels and the blessed unite to praise Him unceasingly. The just on earth in several communities join in communal prayer night and day.

"Our Blessed Lord expressly

recommended common prayer to His Apostles and disciples and promised that whenever two or

three were gathered together in His name He would be there in the midst of them" (Cf. Matt. 18:20).



The Quiet Man *by Fr Stephen Quinn ocd*



St Joseph and St Teresa and John.

IS it not an interesting phenomenon that not one word that St Joseph ever spoke was recorded in the Gospels? What could be the meaning of such an occurrence? The seeming fact that Joseph seems so taciturn is only a difficulty if you happen to have a problem with silence. The sad state of affairs is that a considerable amount of modern people do have a profound problem with silence. They eye silence suspiciously, as if it holds within it some lurking threat that is going to emerge and harm them.

You have heard the phrase 'the glass is always half empty', it describes a mentality that regards things exclusively from a negative perspective, and silence suffers such a negative response in so many perceptions. This negative response is seen in regarding silence as merely a lack of words, as being empty of the normal vibrancy of human communication, and that silence is an expression of absence rather than presence.

That vision of silence only holds if life is all about what we as individuals think and say, what we make of life, and that our time is filled up with nothing but our own ego. If this is your life, then silence is going to be as inert and lifeless as a lump of rock. For Joseph to remain so intently silent then there has got to be another side to silence that remains to modern people an 'undiscovered country'. With Joseph, let us set out on a journey of discovery to explore the new possibilities that lie beyond the region of our negative caricatures of silence.

I want us to begin this journey with Joseph using some of our

imaginative powers. For a moment in your mind, try to picture that precious moment in the life of the carpenter of Nazareth when, a few hours before the whole episode of the young Jesus going missing in the Temple, the two of them, adopted father and son, stand together. They are standing in the simple, homespun clothes of the peasantry. They are surrounded by a throng of people in the courtyard of the temple. Joseph's face is turned in the direction of the sanctuary; the Holy of holies, the place where the Lord God abides with His people Israel. Joseph is so engrossed in what he is doing, that the child who stands at his side lets go of his hand and slips away into the crowd around them without him even noticing.

Joseph stands rooted to the spot, his face turned towards God, his whole demeanour is one of prayer, his hands are raised in offering, his eyes are closed, and his features are marked with concentration, conviction, seriousness and sincerity. Behind the appearance of prayer, there is even more going on than we can think off. In the silence of that moment, his words, his petitions, his plans, and his repetitions are off little matter. At the heart of what Joseph is praying is nothing other than him simply wanting. Joseph's silence as he stands there in the temple is not merely a lacking of words, it is not empty, and it is not full of absence, rather the opposite is true, it is vibrating with life and presence. His whole silent interior is preoccupied with one thing. He is willing for God, wanting God, wanting God to come close to him, and wanting to be as open and responsive as

possible to the God who comes to him in that silent world.

A few simple words are all that is needed to express that expansive wanting of God. Words move in the interior of Joseph, words that would never be heard by any human ear, but they are more than any simple words that fall from our lips, they involve a movement of the heart as it genuinely moves towards its Maker. That interior world looks for His coming with eyes peeled, and it cries from its very depths how much it wants Him. All this is involved in that seemingly empty silence.

A heart that is engaged by prayer has everything within it directed towards the ever-listening ear of the Almighty and that silent place where only God dwells. Whatever words Joseph cooked up in his interior, they were only ever meant for God. If I were to take a guess at what was passing in that secret communication, I would suggest that Joseph could not have found better words than those crafted by his very own ancestor, King David, who wrote in the Psalms, "my heart has said to you, I seek your face, O Lord." Such words of wanting could sum up, as much as any human expressions ever could, the depths of Joseph. The prayer that comes from Joseph's heart on that day can be the prayer of each and every Christian who wants to go into their silent, undiscovered territory.

Insufficient

No matter how we might seek to dress it up, the wanting and desiring of the human heart will never be satisfied with homes and lifestyles, with gold and silver, with paper in your wallet, with holidays and travels, with alcohol or drugs, not even other people are enough for it. Life as lived here is not enough, not even Heaven itself, paradise thrown wide to us, it is all terribly insufficient. Only in God, in seeing His face with our very eyes, in encountering Him as He truly is in Himself, and in experiencing His loving majesty, does human wanting and desiring find its terminus, its end. Only then do we have enough. Yes, indeed, it is only God's face that we seek.

What gives Joseph his great advantage over us in the undiscovered country is that he has come to know, in faith, that the Face that he is seeking and wanting is not as far from him as he first imagined. The Face cannot be hidden behind walls and curtains, it is not locked away in any temple, it does not wait until blessed eternity in order to show itself, and more even than that, as much as we might want to see that beautiful face, God has wanted the meeting more and for longer. Eternity is as much as He has wanted such a meeting, and He has wanted it to be face-

to-face. Everything God has said and done over the centuries... creation, salvation history, and redemption...it has all been about one simple thing; clearing the way for God to have a face-to-face encounter with Joseph and the rest of very fortunate humanity.

Again, go back to your imaginary picture of Joseph praying at the Temple, and attempt to put that image into a deeper and wider context than just the figure of a man wrapped in silence. As Joseph stands praying his prayer of wanting, with his heart given over to words of welcome to the divine, we are missing a very salient detail. All around his small frame there is another; a Face is looking absorbedly at him. It is a Face so majestic and glorious that compared to that Face all that Joseph amounts to seems as if it were nothing at all. The Face of God has never taken its eyes away from him. The attention that God's gaze pays to Joseph is so intense that it would make one think that Joseph is the only one in His entire creation that mattered.

If we look closely at that Face as Joseph obviously did, then we will discern a few noticeable features. A life of prayer is the only thing that will assist us to discriminate some of the features on that Face, but until we have truly prayed with the heart we are going to have to rely on Joseph's prayers and testimony. Joseph sees on that Face a goodness, a truth, and a beauty that is ignited with such intensity that it burns like the sun in our solar system. The flame is such that even a person as faithful as Joseph has to shade their eyes even to get the slightest glimpse of its light. Other sentiments etched upon that Face are an eternal joy and blessedness

that wants to share Itself with humanity for eternity and for a heavenly existence with Him. As impressive as those features may be, all pales into insignificance beside the eyes that peer out at us from the Light.

Joseph would have us know that it is the eyes that are the most impressive feature of the face; they look into us and comprehend us with depth, they have searched us to the very bottom of our existence and know who we are better than we do ourselves. Those eyes are not blind to our glaring failures and weakness; it knows all too well our betrayals of His love and our true selves. Not for one moment does the steady gaze of those eyes change, they do not flicker with condemnation and disgust. They never look away from us! All is love in those eyes!

They contemplate us with infinite quantities of pity and compassion, and have only one unique desire, to suffer this state with us. A look that is all wise, a look that is all merciful, and a look that is all love; it is no wonder then that one Christian mystic observed that if we were ever to comprehend how we are loved by God, then the simple thought of it would cause us to melt away.

Now we discover the true source of Joseph's reticence to speak in the Gospel. What does he need to add? God's glance of love says all that is needed to be said. As Joseph stands praying in the courtyard of the temple, in his silence, he simply allows the light of that face to shine upon him, there is nothing more to do but to bask in the light! Such is his prayer!

ALL IRELAND

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SAT, JUNE 4TH
FROM 1.30 PM
KNOCK

Talk, Stations of the Cross,
Rosary and Holy Mass

Main Celebrant: Archbishop Jude
Thaddeus Okolo, Papal Nuncio to Ireland
Homilist: Bishop Michael Duignan

Rosary Talk: Fr Marius O'Reilly

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SISTER CLARE

Rosary

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All Or Nothing

Join Us!

Hosanna, Crucify, Risen *by Fr Johnny Doherty, CSsR*



Fr Johnny Doherty

IN the sporting world, one of the phrases that is often heard is 'it was a game of two halves'. Generally what that means is that one of the teams had control in the first half and it seemed that they were going to run away with the game. Then, in the second half, the other team took over at some point and eventually won the match.

In a way, that is a good description of what happens this month of April in our following of Christ through the week-by-week celebration of the Eucharist. Of course, it is not a game but rather a story of two halves.

Part 1: Holy Week

In this first part of the month, the forces of evil would seem to be winning in the contest, with God's desire to draw the human heart to believe in God as one who loves us with a compassionate and

extreme love.

The first week of this part is the story of how people wanted to kill a woman who was caught committing adultery. Jesus sets her free, while pointing out that none of us have any right to condemn anyone because we are all sinners.

The second week is this same struggle, only now it is aimed at Christ. In our life of faith as Christians, this is a very special week of each year. We call it Holy Week. That means that we see it as totally different from every other week of the year. How different is it in practice?

We can make Holy Week very special by:

- Taking a lot more time than normal for prayer and reflection.
- Being more committed than usual to being part of our local faith community.
- Sharing our story of faith, our roots, our journey, especially in our families.

Holy Week is like a call to the whole Church throughout the world to go on retreat together, using all the resources we have for making Christ present in the world, so that, together, we can shout out His resurrection at Easter; a shout that will shake the ends of the earth.

Like the life of the Church in general, Holy Week depends so much on how each of us personally, and as communities, takes our part fully, freely and

joyfully in all the ceremonies.

Week 1: April 3-9 The Lord who wipes away our sins

Jesus said to the crowd: "If there is one of you who has not sinned, let him/her be the first to throw a stone at her".

We live in a world that takes delight in other people's sins, a world that is always baying for punishment and revenge. In a very real way, we can understand this and accept it. And yet, it has no place in our following of Christ.

The Gospel story of the woman who was caught in the act of adultery, and whom the Law said should be stoned to death, is a wonderful revelation of the way Christ sees the person who has sinned. He does not condone her actions but, with great gentleness, He sets her free with the command to go and not to sin again. This is the gentleness we are called to develop towards one another, while always remembering that our own sins should hold us back from throwing the first stone.

Week 2: April 10-16 Through death to life

The week ahead, known to us as Holy Week, is the most important time of the whole year for us as Christians to grow in knowledge of what our faith is about. Unfortunately, it has increasingly become a time of heading to the sun for so many people. During

this week, we are put in touch with the reality of Christ's death on the Cross for us and the wonderful knowledge of His Resurrection from the dead.

We are also put in touch with the reality of the human condition that can change so quickly from enthusiasm to hatred, as on Palm/Passion Sunday, or from love to cowardice, as on Holy Thursday.

Thursday, Friday and Saturday are particularly important for us to give time to prayer and reflection that are provided for in the various liturgies. The Church is greatly weakened when people don't give this time. Will you?

Part 2: Easter joy

The second half of April is filled with the joy and amazement of Christ being raised from the dead. What seemed a disaster becomes a triumph because of the power of God in raising Christ from the dead in a new beginning for humanity.

Easter Sunday proclaims the truth of this extraordinary event. Darkness can never again overcome the light. Christ's disciples, who had all scattered, now began to reassemble because of the news, and the world would never again be without their presence and witness of this new beginning.

However, the second week of this new beginning puts us in touch with the difficulties and doubts they had to face and work their way through. These continue to

be with us today and will always be there in the Church. But they can never again overcome the faith that Christ is truly risen and so will we.

Week 3: April 17-23 A day of celebration

"They have taken the Lord out of the tomb," Mary of Magdala said, "and we don't know where they have put him."

On the first Easter morning, there was a sense of excitement among the disciples but it was mixed with anxiety and fear. They didn't know what was happening but they knew that something was. As we celebrate our Easter, we can know exactly what has happened.

However, we can be so familiar with this wonderful truth that we may have little if any excitement about it.

It was not the soldiers who took the body of Jesus from the tomb but rather the power of God. And where God has put Jesus is into our hearts, our minds, our company with one another, above us, below us, all around us.

The deepest reality of our lives has been changed forever by what happened today and Jesus is risen and living among us in our homes and in our faith community. We need to attend to Him there.

Week 4: April 24-30 Christ, the living one

Thomas said: "Unless I see the holes that the nails made in His

hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into His side, I refuse to believe".

Thomas has gone down in history with the nickname 'Doubting Thomas', and is often referred to in relation to those who are always questioning. And that is one of his roles, to assure us that questions and doubts are an important part of true faith.

We can so easily look only for certainty and perfection and then we will believe and hope and love. Our call is to believe in the setting of uncertainty, to hope even though there is insecurity, to love in spite of a lack of perfection. There can be no doubt that all of these are present in our lives and our Church today.

It is often because we can see the gaping holes in the Body of Christ, left there by so many scandals, or because we are asked to put our hands into His side opened by the sins of one another, that we find it difficult to believe. And unfortunately, many give up.

Conclusion

Over the weeks of May, the Liturgy will bring us through the struggles of the early Church so that we can be in touch with those of today. Ultimately, it is through the power of God's Holy Spirit that we will be freed up to continue to proclaim Christ to the world and bring His salvation to the ends of the earth.

1978 Celebration of Dr Neil Farren's Diamond Jubilee of Ordination to Priesthood



Former Bishop of Derry, the late Dr Neil Farren, front row, fourth from left, photographed in front of the former Lough Swilly Hotel, Bunrana, with Bishop Edward Daly and Bishop Anthony McFeely, along with priests of the Derry Diocese, visiting priests, and ministers of other churches, on the occasion of his Diamond Jubilee of Ordination to Priesthood.

Bishop Farren was ordained a priest on April 28, 1918 and a bishop on October 1, 1939. He retired on April 13, 1973 and died on May 7, 1980. How many priests in the photograph can you name? The provider of the photograph is offering a £50 prize to the first person who can correctly name all included. Email your list of names to editorthenet15@gmail.com.



Pope's monthly intention

The Holy Father has asked for prayer during April for:

Health care workers:

We pray for health care workers who serve the sick and the elderly, especially in the poorest countries; may they be adequately supported by governments and local communities.

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.

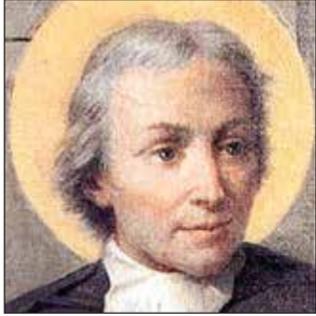
Bless, in a special way, Your servant Father, Send your Spirit upon him

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:

- All priests (April 1st)
- Fr Con McLaughlin (2nd)
- Fr George McLaughlin (3rd)
- All priests (4th)
- Fr Peter McLaughlin (5th)
- Fr Kevin Mulhern (6th)
- All Priests (7th)
- Fr Peter Madden (8th)
- Fr Anthony Mailey (9th)
- Archbishop Eamon Martin (10th)
- Fr Gerard Mongan (11th)
- All Priests (12th)
- All Priests (13th)
- All Priests (14th)
- Fr Kevin Mullan (15th)
- All Priests (16th)
- All Priests (17th)
- Fr Sean O'Donnell (18th)
- Fr Seamus O'Connell (19th)
- Fr Joseph O'Connor (20th)
- Fr Colm O'Doherty (21st)
- Fr Kieran O'Doherty (22nd)
- All Priests (23rd)
- Fr Francis P O'Hagan (24th)
- Fr Patrick O'Hagan (25th)
- Fr David O'Kane (26th)
- All Priests (27th)
- Fr Peter O'Kane (28th)
- All priests (29th)
- Fr Arthur O'Reilly (30th)

Saints we celebrate during April *by Fr Michael McGoldrick ocd*



St John Baptist de la Salle

St John Baptist de la Salle

St John Baptist de la Salle was born in Reims, France, on April 30, 1651. He was the eldest of seven children born to Louis de La Salle and Nicolle Moet de Brouillet. He entered the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice in Paris in October 1670. His mother died in July 1671 and his father in April 1672. He was now 21 and had to leave the seminary to take care of his siblings. He later completed his theological studies and was ordained to the priesthood in 1678.

At that time, most children had little hope for advancing in the social and economic worlds. John Baptist also knew that the teachers in Reims were struggling, lacking leadership, purpose, and training. He rented a house into which he and the handful of teachers moved. This was the beginning of his new religious family, the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, entirely dedicated to the Christian education of the children of the poor.

St John Baptist died on Good Friday, 1719. His feast day is April 7.

St Bernadette Soubirous

St Bernadette was born in Lourdes, France, on January 7, 1844, the eldest of nine children. Her parents were very poor and lived in part of disused prison. As a child, Bernadette contracted cholera and suffered extreme



St Bernadette Soubirous

asthma, and lived the rest of her life in poor health.

In 1858, while collecting firewood, Our Lady appeared to her at the grotto called Massabielle. She would appear another 16 times. During her 16th vision, Our Lady told Bernadette her name, "I am the Immaculate Conception".

Bernadette found the attention associated with the visions too much and entered the Sisters of Charity of Nevers. She spent the rest of her life there working as an infirmary assistant, and later as sacristan. She died at the age of 35 on April 16, 1879. Her feast day is April 16.

St Anselm

St Anselm was born in Aosta, then part of France but now in Italy, around 1003. After his death, he was canonized as a saint; his feast day is April 21.

At the age of 15, Anselm desired to enter a monastery but his father would not give permission. Following the death of his mother and father, Anselm entered the abbey of Bec in Normandy at the age of 27. Three years later, he was elected prior. He carried out that role so effectively that, in 1078, he was unanimously elected as Bec's abbot. Under Anselm's direction, Bec became the foremost seat of learning in Europe, attracting students from France, Italy, and elsewhere.

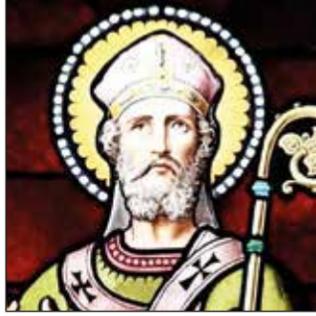
He was consecrated by the Bishop of Évreux on February 22, 1079. In 1093, he was nominated Archbishop of Canterbury at a time of conflict between church and state. He strenuously defended the rights of the church against the interference of the state. He died on Holy Wednesday, April 21, 1109. His feast day is April 21.

St George

St George is believed to have lived in the Holy Land in the



St George



St Anselm

third century. According to tradition, he was a Roman soldier and was tortured and beheaded under Diocletian's persecution of Christians in 303. His remains were taken to Lydda, the homeland of his mother, and were later transferred to the church that was built in his name there.

During the Middle Ages he became an ideal of martial valour and selflessness. According to a legend, he rescued a Libyan king's daughter from a dragon and then slayed the dragon. St George is often depicted in art wearing knight's armour with a scarlet cross slaying the dragon. His feast day is April 23.

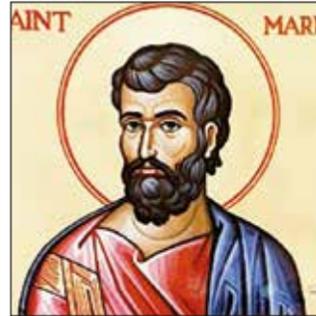
St Mark

St Mark, or St John Mark (John is his Jewish name and Mark, Marcus, his Roman name), was a close friend of St Peter. Mark was young at the time of Jesus' death and resurrection. Some believe that Mark was the young man who ran away naked when Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane (14:51-52). He was deeply involved in the Jerusalem church and was well-known to Peter and the other disciples.

Mark was the cousin of Barnabas. Barnabas and Paul took him with them back to Antioch from Jerusalem (Acts 12:25). Barnabas later sailed to Cyprus with Mark (Acts 15:36-41). Mark joined Paul in Rome during Paul's first imprisonment (A.D. 60-62). During Paul's second imprisonment and just before his death, he asked Timothy to bring Mark to Rome, "because he is helpful to me in my ministry" (2 Timothy 4:11 NIV).

Mark probably left Rome in about AD 65 or 66, during Nero's intense persecution. Both Paul and Peter were executed by Nero in about AD 67 or 68. According to tradition, Mark died soon afterwards.

Mark's Gospel was probably



St Mark

written between 60 and 70 AD and was based upon the teachings of St Peter. It is believed Mark provided both Luke and Matthew with basic sources for their Gospels. The feast day of St Mark is April 15.

St Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort

St Louis was born in Montfort, Brittany, on January 31, 1673. As a child, St Louis-Marie already possessed a strong devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and to Our Lady. He also developed a great love for the poor.

St Louis-Marie discovered his gift for preaching at the age of 32 and committed himself to it for the rest of his life. He promoted devotion to Our Lady and to the Rosary. His most famous writing is, "True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin".

One year before his death in 1716, St Louis founded two congregations: the Daughters of Divine Wisdom, which tended to the sick in hospitals and the education of poor girls, and the Company of Mary, missionaries devoted to preaching and to spreading devotion to Mary.

St Louis is best known for his prayer of entrustment to Our Lady, "Totus Tuus ego sum" ('I am all yours'). St John Paul II took the phrase "Totus Tuus" as his episcopal motto. The feast day of St Louis is April 28.

St Peter Chanel



St Peter Chanel

St Peter Chanel was born in 1803 at Clet, France. After his ordination to priesthood, he felt called to missionary work. In 1831, he joined the newly formed Society of Mary (Marists). He was initially appointed to teach in France and accepted that disappointment as God's will.

In 1836, St Peter was appointed superior of the mission in New Hebrides in the Pacific. He went to the island of Futuna accompanied by a laybrother and a layman. They were at first well received. However, the king of Futuna became jealous of St Peter's popularity when he learned the local language and began to gain the confidence of the people. When the king's son wanted to be baptized, the king sent soldiers to kill St Peter. He was martyred on April 28, 1841. His feast is celebrated on April 28.

St Pius V

Antonio Ghislieri was born in Bosco, Italy, in 1566 to a poor family. He worked as a shepherd until the age of 14, when he joined the Dominicans. He was ordained in 1528.

He taught philosophy and theology before becoming bishop of Nepi and Sutri in 1556. He was made a cardinal in 1557 and was unanimously elected pope on January 7, 1566.

As pope, Pius saw his main role as implementing the reform of the Church mandated by the Council of Trent. He published the Roman Catechism, the revised Roman Breviary, and the Roman Missal. He made an alliance with Venice and Spain to stop the Ottoman Turks advancing across the Mediterranean. This culminated in the Battle of Lepanto, a victory that was attributed to the intervention of Our Lady in answer to the recitation of the Rosary by Catholics all over Europe.

Pope Pius V died in 1572. As



St Pius V



St Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort

pope, he insisted on wearing his white Dominican habit and is credited with introducing the tradition of the pope wearing a white soutane. His feast day is April 30.

St Catherine of Siena

St Catherine of Siena was born in Siena, Italy, on March 25, 1347. She was the 25th child born to her mother, although half of her brothers and sisters did not survive childhood. Rather than enter a convent Catherine chose to join the Dominican Third Order.

When she was 21, she had a mystical experience that she referred to as her "mystical marriage to Christ". In her vision, she was told to re-enter public life and to help the poor and sick.

St Catherine also began to travel and worked tirelessly for the reform of the Church. She was instrumental in persuading the Pope in Avignon to return to Rome. In 1377, she established a monastery for women near Siena.

From 1375 onwards, St. Catherine began dictating letters to scribes. She is believed to have composed over 400 letters. She also composed her Dialogue, and her prayers. She died on April 29, 1380.

Her writings have been so influential that she was declared a Doctor of the Church in 1970 and a patron saint of Europe in 1999. Her feast day is April 29.



St Catherine of Siena

Sr Clare retreat to reflect on universal call to holiness *by Aoife O'Neill*

THE annual Sr Clare Crockett Retreat will take place this year in St Mary's Church, Creggan from Monday, April 25 until Sunday, May 1, with the theme being 'The Universal Call to Holiness'.

This week is not intended to simply honour a famous nun or the wonderful things she did for God, but rather to celebrate how she responded to God's call to holiness.

The talks on the retreat will

encourage us all, following the example set by Sr Clare, to respond to God's call to holiness in our own lives.

We have all been made to be saints and we can look at and take inspiration and encouragement on the journey from Sr Clare.

Every morning, from Monday-Saturday, Mass will be celebrated at 6 am and 10 am. Each evening, Monday-Friday, at 7.30 pm, there

will be a Eucharistic service with Benediction led by a different priest each night, and a guest speaker who will share how Sr Clare has inspired them.

Monday night service will be led by Fr Luke Demasi SHM and Sr Kirsten Gardner SHM will be the guest speaker. Tuesday night will be led by Fr Joe Gormley and Rev David Latimer as guest speaker. Wednesday evening will

be a healing service led by Fr John Grennan OCD. Fr Gerard Mongan will lead Thursday night and the guest speaker will be Kelly Barr. Friday night will be led by Fr Patrick Lagan, with a student from St Cecilia's College as guest speaker.

On Saturday, the service will take place at 3 pm and will be led by Fr Stephen Quinn OCD, with guest speaker, Sr Mary Crowe OCarm. On Sunday, the retreat will conclude

with Mass at 3 pm celebrated by Bishop Donal McKeown.

The retreat is open to all and seats will be given on a 'first come first served' basis, so no need to pre-book places.

We hope that this week of prayer and reflection will inspire the people of Derry and further afield to follow in the footsteps of Sr Clare and allow God to transform their lives.



Children's Catechism Club - C3

by Veronica Harley

HELLO children. Welcome to the month of April. This month is dedicated to the Holy Eucharist. During this month, Lent comes to an end with the wonderful celebration of Easter in the Church. "Easter is not simply one feast among others, but the 'Feast of feasts'." (CCC 1169). We also celebrate a special feast called Divine Mercy Sunday, in which the great gift of God's mercy is given to all who come to Him with a sincere heart.



Easter

This year we celebrate Easter Sunday on April 17. The celebration of Easter is the highest and holiest days for all creation. Easter is the celebration of Christ's resurrection from the dead (CCC 1166). It is celebrated on a Sunday and marks the end of Lent, the end of Holy Week and of the Easter Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Saturday). It is the beginning of the Easter season of the liturgical year.

The Gospels tell us that Jesus Christ rose from the dead on the third day following His crucifixion, which would be Sunday (Mt. 28:1-10, Jn 20:1-18). His resurrection marks the triumph of good over evil, sin and death. Jesus' resurrection is a remarkable event, which proves that those who trust in God and accept Christ will be raised from the dead.



Holy Week Quiz

1. Where did the Agony in the Garden take place?
2. Who betrayed Jesus?
3. Who denied Jesus three times?
4. Who ordered Jesus to be scourged?
5. What criminal was released instead of Jesus?
6. How many Stations of the Cross are there?

7. How many times does Jesus fall on the way to Calvary?
8. Who helped Jesus to carry His cross?
9. Who wiped the face of Jesus?
10. What does the sign on the cross say?
11. Who made the arrangements for the burial of Jesus?
12. Who was the first to discover that Jesus had risen?

Answers: 1. Gethsemane, 2. Judas, 3. Peter, 4. Pontius Pilate, 5. Barabbas, 6. Fourteen 7. Three times, 8. Simon of Cyrene, 9. Veronica, 10. King of the Jews, 11. Joseph of Arimathea, 12. Mary Magdalene

The Eucharist

The month of April is dedicated to the Eucharist because Holy Thursday, the day on which Catholics celebrate the Institution of the Eucharist, usually falls in the month of April.

On Holy Thursday night, Jesus shared an important meal with His apostles. This meal was called the Last Supper, as it was the last meal Jesus shared with His disciples before He was crucified and died. At this meal, Jesus took bread and wine, blessed them, gave them to the apostles and told them that the bread and wine which they were given to eat was now His Body and Blood. At the meal, Jesus instructed His apostles that they should do the same in memory of Him.

At Mass, the bread and wine offered up by the priest becomes the actual body and blood of Christ. The bread and wine do not change in appearance but remain the same. However, they are transformed beyond our human understanding into the body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ. This is called 'Transubstantiation' (CCC 1376), and it happens at the celebration of every Holy Mass.

The Eucharist is the most important act of worship. All Catholics are bound to attend Mass every Sunday and are encouraged to receive Holy Communion. Some practising Catholics go to Mass every day to receive the Eucharist.

Eucharistic Adoration

The Catholic Church has also developed the beautiful practice of Eucharistic Adoration. This practice is century's old, dating back to the apostles, when the Eucharist was



carried into the homes of those people who could not attend Mass. Eucharistic Adoration is a sign of devotion and worship of Jesus, who is truly present – Body and Blood, Soul, and Divinity – in the Eucharist.

The Holy Eucharist is placed in a very special vessel called a 'monstrance'. This is made of a precious metal and is shaped like the sun to symbolise the resurrection of Jesus. The centre of the monstrance has a round glass through which the sacred Host can be seen. Behind the glass is a round container made of glass called a 'lunette'. The lunette holds the host securely in place. When the Host is not in the monstrance for adoration it is kept safely in its lunette, within a strong container known as a 'pyx' in the Tabernacle.

When the monstrance contains the sacred Host, the priest will not touch the vessel with his bare hands. Out of respect for the Eucharist, the priest holds the monstrance with a humeral veil, a wide band of cloth that covers his shoulders (humera) and has pleats on the inside, in which he places his hands. A humeral veil is a liturgical vestment, normally made of silk or gold cloth, and is used by priests during Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

We are invited to come and spend

time with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. When we come to spend time with Jesus in adoration we praise and adore Him. We thank Him for all the wonderful things in our lives and the many gifts which He has given us. When the angel appeared to the children at Fatima, he/she showed them how they should worship Jesus in the Eucharist. He/she bent low in worship until his/her forehead touched the ground. He/she taught the children a beautiful prayer to say to Jesus. Please try to visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and spend some precious time with him.

Saints of the Month

- St Vincent Ferrer - April 5
- St George, martyr - April 23
- St Mark the Evangelist - April 25
- St Catherine of Siena - April 29

Divine Mercy - St Faustina

Saint Faustina was born in Poland on August 25, 1905. She was the third of 10 children. When she was almost 20, she entered the convent and joined the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, who devoted themselves to the care of troubled young women.

On February 22, 1931, Sister Faustina received from Jesus a message of mercy that she was told to spread throughout the world. She was asked to become the apostle of God's mercy, to be a model of how to be merciful to others. The message was that God loves us, all of us, no matter how great our sins may be. God wants us to know that His mercy is greater than our sins, therefore we should always call on Him with trust, receive His mercy and let it flow through us to others so that all will come to share his joy.

Jesus showed Faustina an image of Himself which He wanted painted, so that all could see the abundant mercy which flows from His heart. Under the image, He told her to write, 'Jesus I trust in you'.

Faustina lived her entire life in imitation of Christ's, always making sacrifice as Jesus did for others. At the request of Jesus, she willingly offered her personal sufferings with Jesus to atone for the sins of others; in her daily life she became a doer of mercy, bringing joy and peace to others. She wrote about God's mercy, and she encouraged others to trust in God and prepare the world for His coming again.

During her life, Faustina wrote and suffered in secret, without many knowing that anything special was taking place in her life. After her death from tuberculosis in 1938, even her closest friends were amazed to discover what great sufferings and mystical experiences she had received. She had listened carefully to God's gospel command to "be merciful even as your heavenly Father is merciful". The message of mercy that Sister Faustina received has been spread throughout the world.

Jesus asked Faustina that a special Feast Day would be set aside to celebrate God's wonderful gift of mercy to the world. This feast day is called Mercy Sunday and it falls on the Sunday after Easter. On this day, God pours out His mercy on all those who come to Him.

The novena prayers which we say for nine days prior to Mercy Sunday is called the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. We say these prayers as part of our daily prayers to always ask God's mercy to come upon us.

Quiz Time with Lawrence

1. How many metres are there in a mile?
2. Who is the current First Minister of Wales?
3. Name the only landlocked country in Europe to start with the letter 'B'?
4. In what year was Davor Šušter top goalscorer at the FIFA World Cup?
5. What war took place in central Europe between 1936-39?
6. How many times has the song 'Do They Know It's Christmas...?' been top of the singles chart on Christmas Day?
7. What does the 'AC' button on a calculator stand for?
8. Which eagerly-awaited (by some) movie was released to UK cinemas on 15 December 2021?
9. In which two Capitals is the Charles Dickens' Novel 'A Tale of Two Cities' set?
10. Which is the first of the USA states alphabetically?
11. Which actor played James Bond immediately before Daniel Craig?
12. What travel aid did Percy Shaw invent in 1934?
13. In what 1995 movie did Sandra Bullock play the role of computer programmer, Angela Bennett, where she hacked an entire government computer system?
14. Who did France beat last month to complete Rugby Union's 2022 Grand Slam?
15. Laura Kuenssberg recently stepped down from what high profile broadcasting role having been the first female to hold the position?
16. What nationality is singer, Celine Dion?
17. Oneirophobia is the fear of what?
18. In terms of population, which of these regions is the smallest - Monaco, Liechtenstein or San Marino?
19. In the TV programme 'The Simpsons', what is 'Grandpa' Simpson's Christian name?
20. What Japanese fish is so poisonous that only a suitably licensed Chef is permitted to serve it?
21. Comedian Lucy Beaumont is married to which fellow stand-up entertainer?
22. Only 31 counties contest the All-Ireland football championship. Which one does not?
23. St Joachim and St Anne are the Biblical parents of whom?
24. Which country governs the Cook Islands?
25. What nationality is violinist and conductor, Andre Rieu?

Quiz Answers: 1. 1,609 (accept 1600). 2. Mark Drakeford. 3. Belarus. 4. 1998. 5. Spanish Civil War. 6. Three. 7. All Clear. 8. Spider Man: No Way Home. 9. London and Paris. 10. Alabama. 11. Pierce Brosnan. 12. Cat's eyes on roads. 13. The Net. 14. England. 15. BBC Political Editor. 16. Canadian. 17. Dreams. 18. San Marino. 19. Abraham (Abe). 20. Fugu (Blowfish). 21. Jon Richardson. 22. Kilkenny. 23. Blessed Virgin Mary. 24. New Zealand, 25. Dutch.

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

Let Your Light Shine!



**O' Jesus, I surrender myself to you,
take care of everything (Fr. Ruotolo Dolindo)**

Greenlough, Iskaheen, Killyclogher, Killygordon, Kilrea, Lavey, Leckpatrick, Lifford, Limavady, Maghera, Magilligan, Malin, Melmount,

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

Clonmany, Coleraine, Creggan, Culladuff, Culmore, Desertmartin, Donnyloop, Drumquin, Duramannagh, Dungsiven, Fahan, Faughanvale, Garvagh, Gortin, Greencastle,