

The NET

Sharing fruits of faith in Derry Diocese

ISSUE 73, FEBRUARY 2022

PRICE - £1.50

/€2.00

See inside...



Synod Facilitation Training - Irishowen Deanery.



New Sr Clare Mural - Shantallow, Derry



Men's Rosary - Omagh.



Catholic school communities celebrate 'living life to the full' - (see p4-5)

Enjoying Catholic Schools' Week in St Mary's College, Derry.



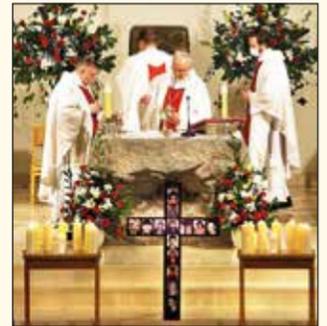
Celebrating St Brigid - Desertmartin.



Catholic Schools' Week - Scoil Mhuire Buncrana.



All or Nothing youth project - Termonbacca



Bloody Sunday 50th Anniversary - Creggan

People in focus



Bernadette O'Doherty RIP - Waterside.



Karyn Birney, Cappagh.



Kathleen Moss - Aghyaran.



Sr Teresa RIP - Malin.



The late Sr Clare Crockett

Also featuring: Anam Og - new youth group launching in Derry; Youth Ministry News; Cappagh 'Do This in Memory' Programme; Children's Catechism Club; Youth Writers Section; Honouring St Brigid; Vocations News; Seven Sisters & Fasting Brothers Apostolate; Deanery Synod Sessions; Termonbacca Retreats; Irish Section; Quiz...and much more...

Contents

Parish deliveries

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

Prayerful presence of Religious among us a blessing - A reflection by Fr Colum Clerkin	p2
Upcoming Vocations events	p2
Diary Dates	p2
New youth faith & fellowship group launching in Diocese Derry Youth Ministry news by Lizzie Rea	p3
Catholic school communities celebrate 'living life to the full'	p4
Catholic Schools Ethos Paper - comments invited Spotlight on Northern Ireland education	p5
Be John 10:10 people - Living a life of fulfilment and happiness by Mrs Collins, Thornhill College	p6
Scoil Mhuire Buncrana students fill kindness jars by Edel O'Connor	p7
Youth enjoy fun, friendship and prayer during 'All or Nothing' project by Aoife O'Neill	p8
Sr Clare has made being a nun cool! - New mural in Shantallow	p9
Cappagh couple's faith deepened during son's sacramental journey Hopeful return to Cappagh's seed-planting 'Do This in Memory' programme	p10
Another good turnout for Men's Rosary Sleeping St Joseph Novena by Aoife O'Neill	p11
Prayer to Sleeping St Joseph Feast of St Joseph Day Retreat 'Behold Your Mother' Lenten Retreat	p11
Young writers share thoughts on... *Word of God through Bible *Remembering the Holocaust *Living life to the full *Christian Unity *Importance of community & co-responsibility as a pilgrim Church	p12-13
Aghyaran Pioneer receives Gold Pin	p13
Bloody Sunday 50th Anniversary *A grace-filled art in forgiving and remembering - Bishop Donal *Need to work together on healing the legacy of our shared past - Archbishop Eamon Martin	p14-15
Seven Sisters & Fasting Brothers Apostolate	p15
Malin nun's ministry second only to desire for Adoration - Remembering Sr Teresa	p16
An Bíobla do Pháistí Irish section by Fr Oliver Crilly	p17
Derry Diocese sets out on its synodal journey by Janet Forbes Deanery synodal sessions encouraging by Bishop Donal	p18
Synodality - A change of time by Fr Peter Madden Carnhill Holy Hour for Synodal Pathway	p19
Brigid - A Saint for Today's Church by Grainne Doherty Keep Cross making tradition alive... ...in Desertmartin & Culmore	p20
Honouring St Brigid - Mary of the Gael - Prayers shared from across the Diocese	p21-25
Rembrandt's 'Return of the Prodigal Son' - Part II: The Loving Father by Fr Stephen Quinn ocd	p26
Holiness for All - Book review by Aoife O'Neill Tribute to the late Bernadette O'Doherty - by Wednesday Art Class member Prayer for Priests Pope's Prayer Intention	p27
Santa Maria del Camino... by Fr John McLaughlin ssc	p28-29
St Brigid by Vera McFadden	p29
Saints we celebrate during February by Bishop Donal Lord, that I may see by Fr Johnny Doherty CSSR	p30
Children's Catechism Club - C3 by Veronica Harley Quiz Time with Lawrence	p31

In his role as Episcopal Vicar for Religious in the Derry Diocese, Fr Colum Clerkin reflects on the Pope's Prayer intention for the month of February...

"For religious sisters and consecrated women: We pray for religious sisters and consecrated women; thanking them for their mission and their courage; may they continue to find new responses to the challenges of our times".

Prayerful presence of Religious among us continues to be a blessing

THE Church celebrates World Day for Consecrated Life on February 2 each year, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, also popularly known as Candlemas Day. Pope St John Paul instituted this Day in 1997 to give thanks for the gift of Consecrated Life, and to acknowledge with gratitude the witness of all those men and women who have dedicated their whole lives to God, faithfully following the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience in the service of Christ and the Church.

Pope Francis, of course, is himself a member of a Religious Order, the Society of Jesus, and as a Jesuit he brings his own distinctive Ignatian spirituality to the celebration of the Day for Consecrated Life each year. When he addresses members of other Religious Congregations, he is speaking to them from his own personal experience, and sharing with them at a deeper level what it is to live out the vocation to the Consecrated Life in the Church today.

On this 25th anniversary of the institution of the World

Day for Consecrated Life, we reflect again on the significant contribution that so many Religious women and men have made to the life of the Church in our Diocese, and in the various parishes where Religious Congregations have established their Communities over the years.

While it is true that the numbers of Religious have declined in more recent years, and their active involvement in our schools and parishes has gradually decreased, their prayerful presence among us continues to be a blessing.

Religious Sisters of the various Congregations in the Diocese, as well as the Discalced Carmelite Fathers and the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, have not been as free to carry out their regular ministry and constant outreach to so many groups of lay people and clergy in our Diocese for almost two years now because of the Covid restrictions. We now look forward to the time when we can all share again in the many different programmes and activities provided by Thornhill Ministries, by the

Carmelite Retreat Centre in Termonbacca and by the Franciscan Friary in Galliagh, as well as the other ministries provided by individual Religious Sisters in the Diocese of Derry.

The Presentation of the Lord is one of the most ancient feasts in the Church, and its title has changed over the centuries. It was given the popular name of Candlemas because on that day candles are blessed during Mass for use in churches and in homes for the coming year.

St Luke records in his Gospel that Mary and Joseph brought the Child Jesus to the Temple forty days after his birth to offer him to God in accordance with the law of the Lord. Simeon, guided by the Holy Spirit, recognised in this Infant the long-awaited Saviour, "a light for revelation to the Gentiles".

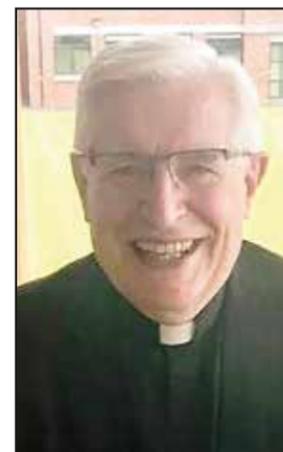
Pope St John Paul intentionally chose this feast as a sort of gospel icon of Consecrated Life in the Church, and decreed that it was to be observed each year as a World Day of Prayer in recognition of all those men and women who have

consecrated themselves to God in Religious Life.

The Church gives thanks for their wonderful witness and prayerful presence, as well as for their varied apostolic work, including caring for the sick and elderly, and with their own distinctive charisms inspired by those who originally founded their Religious Congregations.

St Luke's Gospel account of the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple refers to Christ as "a sign of contradiction". This also reflects what is nowadays often referred to as a counter-cultural sign given by those men and women who have answered the radical call of the Gospel to follow Christ in the Religious Life. This radical witness to Christ is certainly needed even more in the secular and consumerist society we live in today, pointing us instead to the standards and values of the Gospel.

On the occasion of World Day for Consecrated Life this year, we give thanks to God once more for the gift of Religious Life in the Church. We pray for all the



Fr Colum Clerkin PP Culmore, Episcopal Vicar for Religious in the Derry Diocese.

Religious Congregations in our Diocese, as we gratefully acknowledge their dedicated service and inspirational witness: the Good Shepherd Sisters, Loreto Sisters, Sisters of Mercy, Sisters of Nazareth, Discalced Carmelite Fathers and Franciscan Friars of the Renewal.

We pray, too, for an increase in vocations to the Religious Life, both in the long-established Religious Congregations as well as in the more recently-formed Religious Institutes approved by the Church.

Upcoming Vocations events

THE Derry Diocesan Vocations Working Group hopes to host a Holy Hour for Vocations in St Mary's Church, Creggan, on the second Friday of each month, from 8-9 pm.

Everyone is welcome to attend, but for those who cannot be there, the Service will be broadcast on the webcam at www.creggan.chapel.com

The National Vocations

Office is hosting a Zoom session from 8-9.30 pm on Tuesday, March 1 for anyone interested in finding out about seminary life and priesthood.

For further details, contact info@vocations.ie

To celebrate Mary's "Yes" to God, there will be a Time of Prayer in St Eugene's Cathedral, Derry, on Friday, March 25, the Feast of the Annunciation.

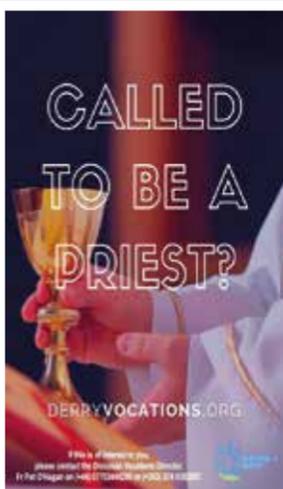
Further details will be posted soon on the diocesan website www.derrydiocese.org, on social media, and in parish newsletters and websites.

With the blessing and approval of Bishop Donal McKeown, the Diocese of Derry will hold a Year of Prayer for Vocations, beginning on St Patrick's Day, Thursday, March 17.

For further details or

information, please contact the Diocesan Vocations Director, Fr Pat O'Hagan, PP Merville, at +353 749382057 / (074) 9382057.

"The harvest is rich, but the labourers are few." Let's pray for a positive response from those whom God is calling to serve the Church today and into the future.



Diary Dates

Anam Og

The new youth faith and fellowship group, Anam Og (Young Soul) will be launching on Sunday, February 20, in Termonbacca, from 6-7.15pm.

Youth Synod

The Claudy Parish are running a Youth Synod in the Pastoral Centre, which is within the grounds of St Patrick's Church. The first of three sessions will

take place on Wednesday, March 16, starting at 7 pm.

Knock Youth Pilgrimage

There will be a Pope John Paul II Award youth pilgrimage to Knock on Tuesday, March 22.

Carnhill Holy Hour

The Abraham Community will lead an hour of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament for the National 5 Pathway in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, on Saturday, February 26, following the 6 pm Vigil Mass.

Church Music Workshop

There will be a Folk & Church Choir Workshop on Music for Mass held in the Waterfoot Hotel, Derry, on Saturday, February 26, from 11 am-3 pm. It will be led by Rev Brendan Dowd.

Blessed Brunch & Books

The monthly Blessed is She, Derry, Brunch & Books gathering for ladies in Termonbacca will take place on Saturday, February 26, from 12-2 pm.

Lenten Retreat

There will be a Women's Weekend Lenten Retreat in Termonbacca, running from March 4-6, focussing on Our Lady. The theme will be 'Behold Your Mother'.

St Joseph Novena

A Novena to the Sleeping St Joseph will be run from March 11-19, led by the Carmelites in Termonbacca. There will also be a Day Retreat on the Feast of St Joseph, March 19, in Termonbacca.

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

New youth faith and fellowship group launching in the Diocese

ANAM OG is a new faith group for young people, aged 10-14, which will be launched in Termonbacca, Derry, on Sunday, February 20, in an effort to provide accompaniment and support during these formative years, as well as exploring the teaching of the Catholic Church with them and having some fun in the process.

Irish for 'Young Soul', Anam Og will meet once a fortnight on Sunday nights from 6-7.15 pm, and it is hoped that young people from all over the Diocese will come along and enjoy some time of faith, fun and friendship together.

The programme is a joint effort of the Diocese and the Carmelites to accompany this age-group following their Confirmation, which is a period identified as easy for them to drift away from faith and God.

It will be led by Aoife O'Neill, retreat facilitator at Termonbacca, Fr Stephen Quinn ocd, and Fr Patrick Lagan, of the Cathedral Parish.

Commenting on how the programme came about, Aoife, who is experienced in youth ministry and has recently led the successful 'All or Nothing' Sr Clare project at the Carmelite monastery, said: "From discussions with different groups concerning youth ministry provision over the years, I am aware that post-Confirmation there is a drop-off in young people practising their faith.

"Often, by the time they get to the age to take part in what does exist, for example, Search and Cor, a lot of young people may have fallen away from the practice of the faith. That 10-14-year-old age group isn't really catered for.

"When I started my role in

Termonbacca and was completing my OCN in Youth Work, for part of that I had to develop a youth programme and that is how the Sr Clare 'All or Nothing' project came about.

"Alongside planning this, Fr Stephen and I were planning Anam Og with Fr Patrick. I was able to see the responses of the young people to the 'All or Nothing' faith-based programme, and just how open and willing they were to explore, so that confirmed what we are trying to do with Anam Og."

She remarked: "The young people who attended 'All or Nothing' had a great time. I was surprised how receptive they were and how well they engaged. In their feedback comments, they mentioned about the games and that they had fun, and it was heartening that some also mentioned the prayer time as their favourite part.

"After the programme finished, as part of my OCN course, evaluation questionnaires were sent to the parents, and the feedback from these includes comments that they felt happy to be supported and helped in bringing their child up in the faith, with the lack of opportunities that there are at present.

"One parent wrote that they were bringing their daughter up with faith and that it was lovely for her to be with people of her own age talking about faith, rather than just with the adults in the family".

Hoping that, through Anam Og, the young people will be a support to one another in many ways, Aoife explained that the content will be based around exploring the faith: "We will be following the Church calendar and using the Sunday Gospel of each week, and

we will have games to match the theme of the evening.

"Once the young people get comfortable and open up more with their questioning, we will find out what it is that they want and need to talk about, and address these. The programme is a mix of human formation, Catholic faith formation, opportunities to encounter Christ through prayer, and get a better understanding of, for example, Eucharistic Adoration and why we do it. We will also have days out together, going on hikes and trips to places like Knock and Croagh Patrick.

"The aim is to help them experience and understand what our faith teaches. The years following Confirmation can be very difficult for young people as they try to figure out who they are and what they believe in a world that makes little or no room for God. We hope to provide a place where they can come and hear the truth about God and the Catholic Church, where they can meet friends and enjoy some wholesome fun."

Positive

Saying that the focus was not going to be on the number of young people turning up, Aoife added: "Even if it is a case of one or two turning up, it will still be worthwhile doing to accompany them in their formative years and being there for them as a positive role model".

The trio have been meeting since last November to consider several ideas for a programme for young people, particularly the 10-14 age-group, and Fr Patrick explained that it became clear through their discussions that it should be more than just meeting for prayer and

pizza.

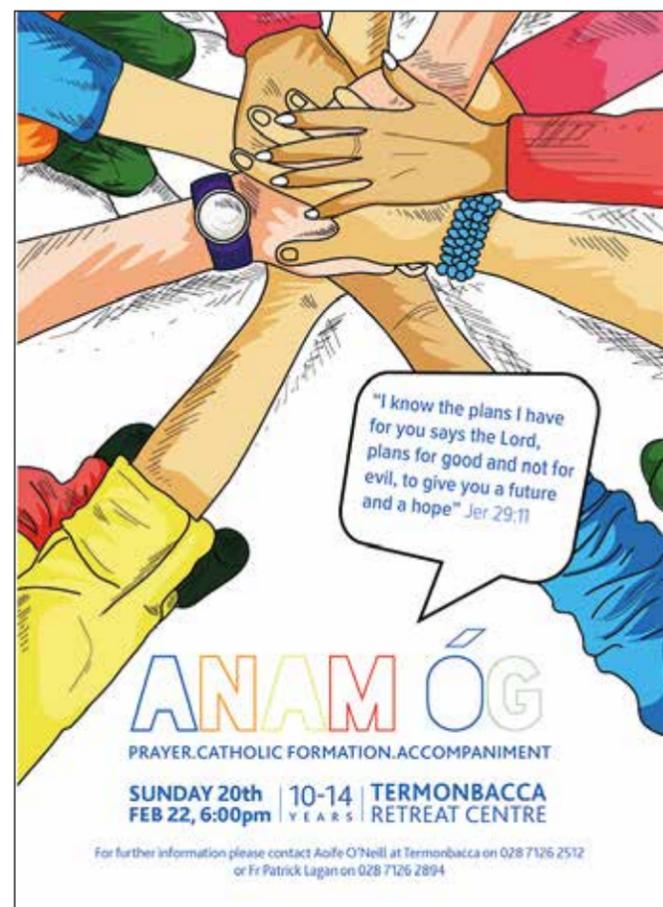
"Hospitality and fellowship are included," said Fr Patrick, "but we felt that there was also a need for the teaching of the Catechism – passing on the faith, which we feel is an extra special ingredient. We will also have little extras, like handing out fridge magnets or little cards with inspirational quotes.

"On top of what is happening in the Diocese for young people, we wanted to have some kind of accompaniment. We will take the opportunity to have general conversation with the young people, to chat about how they are getting on and this is where the name, Anam Og, comes from. We are hoping that through this programme we can help a young person's eternal soul; that we can help them to understand that from the day of their Baptism they have been called to be a saint, called to be disciples and prophets".

He added: "We will also go on day trips to pilgrimage sites like Lough Derg, Knock and Croagh Patrick, in an attempt to establish some kind of fraternity amongst our young people. This is in keeping with what is coming out in our parish conversations regarding the Synodal Pathway, with the buzz word being 'accompaniment'.

"Parishes can have all the amazing DVDs and other faith resources, but if there isn't an opportunity to have that encounter with each other through talking to each other, then there is something lacking. We need to talk to one another and accompany one another.

"I think parents are under very severe pressure with all kinds of cultural influences. We are saying to them that this is an attempt to accompany them too on their



journey. I commend Anam Og to all readers of 'The Net' and ask for their prayers for this mission over the coming weeks and months".

Saying that Termonbacca was "very happy to work with Fr Patrick and the Diocese in developing a Catholic formation programme for young people between the ages of 10-14", Carmelite Prior, Fr Stephen Quinn added: "My hope is that it will give young people an opportunity to experience the faith, the Sacraments and Catholic doctrine, and that it will give them a positive experience of being a member of the Church and the awareness that the Church needs and wants them, and that God has called them to be part of the Church.

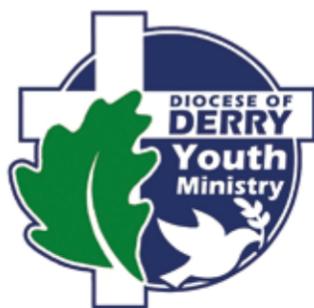
"Any social aspect is secondary to it being a Catholic formation programme, but, at the same time, we want the young people to see

that their faith is fun and that they can get together and enjoy their faith.

"It is not like a Sunday School. It is taking up the challenge of Pope John Paul II regarding youth evangelisation, and to teach young people about Jesus. There will be games and other activities, and each night a part will be devoted to prayer and learning some aspect of the faith, and those aspects will be based around the Gospel for each Sunday. The four elements of catechesis will be looked at – moral, spiritual, liturgical and doctrinal formation".

Young people from all over the Diocese are welcome to come and check out the programme. For further information or to sign up, just contact Aoife on 028 71 262512 or Fr Patrick Lagan on 028 71 262894, or email termonbaccaderry@gmail.com.

Derry youth ministry news by Lizzie Rea



DERRY youth are continuing with the online programme for the Pope John Paul II Award Live on their Instagram page on Monday's at 7 pm. Students can receive tasks for both their parish and social hours with this programme. Some of the themes for this month are 'Fishers of Men', Happy are those and also

Love your neighbour as yourself.

Derry Youth are also facilitating a Youth Alpha programme online on a Monday night at 7.30 pm. We are delighted with all who have signed up and have students from all across the Diocese.

As we approach Lent, Derry Youth will be facilitating various forms of the listening process for the synod. There will be an online programme on Monday nights at 7.30 pm, starting on March 7. This will be open to students 15 and over.

There will also be a face-to-face programme delivered in certain parishes in the Diocese. We hope to have all responses in by Easter and look forward to hearing what young people have

to say.

The Pope John Paul II Award Ceremony will take place on March 14 in St Eugene's Cathedral at 2 pm. Final details have yet to be confirmed and for all those involved you will receive the information via your schools and parishes.

The Pope John Paul II National Pilgrimage to Knock will take place on Tuesday, March 22, in Knock Shrine from 11 am-3 pm. We are inviting all year 14s and 13s who have completed or are currently doing their Award to come

If you wish to join us, please inform your Award leader in school, as schools will be making all travel arrangements to the event.

Catholic school communities celebrate 'living life to the full'

Photography by Stephen Latimer.



'LIVING life to the full' was the theme for Catholic Schools' Week 2022, when the communities of primary and post primary schools in the Derry Diocese, and throughout the island of Ireland, celebrated all that is good about their Catholic faith and education.

The theme was taken from a quote in John's Gospel, when Jesus was explaining to the man whose sight He had restored that He was the Son of Man and what He had come into the world to do.

Some Pharisees were also listening as Jesus told the man: "I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10: 9-10)

During the week of Monday, January 24 to Sunday, January 30, a different theme was focussed on each day: Living life to the full with God; Living life to the full together; Grandparents Day – Celebrating being together again; Living life in wonder and awe; and Living life and facing the future.

As well as the special Mass celebrated by Bishop Donal in St Eugene's Cathedral to launch Catholic Schools' Week, priests in the various parishes celebrated Mass during the week to mark the occasion, particularly Grandparents Day, when grandparents and others were welcomed to come along in person or join in via the webcam.

Commenting on the Catholic Schools' Week theme in his homily for the launch Mass, Bishop Donal remarked: "Sometimes the message goes out that Jesus doesn't want us to have too much fun. Wrong! He wants us to live life to the full. He wants you to be full of love and life.

"And that is the message that Catholic schools have always tried to communicate by word and by deed. Catholic schools are clear that they are not just about teaching maths and literacy very well. When we forget living life to the full for each student and get caught up in league tables, we miss the point".

He went on to share a recent conversation with a young woman who had just finished all her seven years of training as a doctor, and had decided that her dream life is to enter a convent

and join other young women who are dedicating their life to loving Jesus and loving others.

He recalled: "She said that, on entering the convent, she had to give us so many of the things that she was told would make her happy – plenty of clothes, nice jewellery, her mobile devices, her car – and that now without them, she is happier than she ever was before. Life to the full is more than a full wardrobe or list of on-line friends".

Highlighting that Catholic schools stand for a specific way of looking at life, Bishop Donal pointed out that because of that, there were people "who want to get rid of any role for faith in public life and especially in schools. We are told that Catholic education is a negative influence on our society and that we ought to have schools that must talk about everything - except making reference to God".

He added: "The message goes out that you can believe anything that you want – but that religious beliefs should be avoided. The implication is that faith is little more than a private hobby that should not be talked about in polite company. Religious believers who want to talk about their faith will sometimes be portrayed as extremists and fanatics, whose views ought to be ignored by normal people. There is clearly a campaign to blame Catholic schools for being something to be embarrassed about in a modern society.

"And yet Jesus keeps saying, I want you to have life and have it to the fullest. And in today's Gospel He uses the parable of the Good Shepherd. Jesus says that He knows us by name. He wants to lead us; He wants to protect us from false shepherds".

Value

Considering how Catholic schools try to help pupils live their lives to the fullest, Bishop Donal said: "Firstly, we offer a view of the world that speaks of God and grace, hope and eternity. In a world that measures your value by the size of your house or your bank account, Jesus says that each person's life is of eternal beauty and value.

"The hidden curriculum in our schools finds ways of helping young people find ways of facing the challenge of life. When problems arise or tragedy strikes,

so often the school community has an invaluable common language of faith that can help everyone process the pain and shock. Jesus wants us to escape from a one-dimensional view of life that knows plenty about prices but little about values. Daring to believe and daring to dream are parts of life to the fullest".

Going on to note that young people spend 80% of their waking hours outside of school, he remarked: "So, it is crazy to dump everything on schools – and to blame them for problems that some young people have. There are so many other influences on a young person's life. But our schools have bridged that gap because they have traditionally been rooted in communities. And that link between school, community and family can be a vital element in supporting the rounded learning of our children.

"A healthy school is linked to its local community – and that has a huge educational advantage. In every country, the Catholic school is open to pupils from all faith backgrounds and none. A Catholic school wants to form young people to be healthy citizens of a vibrant varied society. That, too, is part of handing on the idea of life to the fullest".

Bishop Donal also spoke about the need of the consumerist world "to break us down into niche markets where there is huge pressure to conform to certain types of clothes, music and hobbies", and he pointed out that Catholic Schools' Week "has a deliberate outreach to the different generations that play a role in a young person's life".

"Grandparents and the extended family," he said, "can be a great source of inspiration and learning. There is a famous image from some of the Pacific Island nations. A canoe needs young and old people on board. It needs the energy of the young to power the boat. And it takes the wisdom of the old to steer it. A wise education integrates the various dimensions of a young person's life and seeks to help them flourish. That helps to promote life to the full".

Bishop Donal concluded by inviting school communities to find opportunities in Catholic Schools' Week to celebrate the great work that they do, saying: "You integrate the different relationships in young people's

lives – within the school, with the community and with God. Much of your creativity and achievements is well known outside your school. But much of the great work that you do happens automatically, without you being aware of it or you assume that there is nothing special about it. But much of what you do is amazing and inspiring.

"Reflect on the fullness of life that you offer through your faith in God; through your being a school community; on your being back together again; on being amazed at the beauty of people and of the world – and then you will be better able to face the future with confidence together. Jesus wants you all to flourish and your schools have great power to help that.

"There are so many problems in the world. But you believe that, with God on your side, you can help the world to be a wonderful place rather than a frightening place, afraid of the future. Look back to the past with gratitude and you can look to the coming years with hope. And then you will be living life to the fullest – just as Jesus wants for each of you".

At the start of the ceremony, pupils presented Bishop Donal with four large jig-saw pieces; each bearing a word, which when put together created an image that had Jesus as the central figure surrounded by the words, Care-Hope-Pray-Act.

Care!Hope!Pray!Act! is a programme for primary and post primary pupils that seeks to promote a positive lifestyle for children and young people, combining their spiritual, mental and physical well-being.

It is designed to help the young participants to live in friendship with Jesus and, guided by the Holy Spirit, to know that God has a plan for their lives and calls each to live as unique, gifted and precious members of His family. Encouraging the young to place Jesus at the centre of all that they do, the programme helps them to appreciate the sacraments as gifts from God to strengthen them to live life fully.

During the week, Bishop Donal also had a series of conversations with people involved with Catholic Schools, including Marie Lindsay, former principal of St Mary's College, Derry, and a member of the Independent Review of Education Committee Panel, Fiontan Bradley and Arwen Fegan, pupils at St Conon's College, Siobhan McIntyre, chair of St Joseph's Boys School Board of Governors, and Emmet Thompson, pastoral coordinator of the Templemore Parish (St Eugene's and Long Tower). These are recorded and can be viewed on the Diocesan Catechetical Centre website.





Comments invited on Catholic Schools Ethos Paper

THE Catholic Schools Ethos Paper, setting out the principles of Catholic Education and future vision for Catholic Schools, was launched at Long Tower Primary School during Catholic Schools' Week by the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) and the Catholic Schools' Trustee Service (CSTS).

Bishop Donal is the chair of CCMS and CSTS and, speaking at the launch of the Paper on Catholic Schools Delivering for Communities in the 21st century, he commented on how "today's children and young people are growing up in an increasingly complex world".

"The ministry and message of Christ is the foundation for all Catholic Schools," he said, highlighting a quote from Cardinal James Hickey of Washington (b.1920-d.2004): "We educate communities, not because they are Catholic but because we are!"

He continued: "Catholic schools contribute to the pursuit

of excellence within education, whilst remaining faithful to their distinctive culture, vision, and approach. They listen, encourage constructive dialogue, and support the development of mutual understanding; in so doing, they enhance local communities and provide the opportunity for holistic growth."

There are 469 Catholic Schools throughout Northern Ireland, with 149,626 pupils in attendance – 1,725 attending Nursery, 333 attending Special School, 81,995 attending Catholic Primary Schools and 65,513 pupils in attendance at Post Primary.

As well as setting out the future direction and vision for all schools within the Catholic Managed sector, the paper will inform educators, parents, learners and the wider community of the philosophy at the heart of Catholic Schools and the importance of their distinctive voice within the wider education landscape.

The CCMS chief executive, Gerry Campbell explained

that the paper "communicates the underlying philosophy and characteristics of Catholic education, that is, to promote the dignity and worth of every human person; the purpose, value and relationship between education, family, community; and the purpose and meaning of life itself".

"Pupils who attend Catholic Schools," he said, "receive a stimulating, holistic, high-quality academic experience in a supportive environment. Over the past five years, examination data shows that Catholic maintained school outcomes remain well above the average for non-selective schools."

"The degree to which Catholic schools continue to attract such a significant percentage of the school age population is testament to the quality of the educational provision in those schools."

Catholic Schools Trustee Service chief executive, Fintan Murphy said that the paper was designed "to provide a clear articulation of the ethos and vision which is the foundation of Catholic Education".

He continued: "In striving to deliver this challenging vision, our Catholic Schools continually review and develop their capacity for diversity, academic excellence, and achievement for all. At the centre of our understanding of the Catholic school is a Gospel values based focus on ensuring that every child, irrespective of religious, ethnic, cultural or socio-economic background, has access to a high quality educational experience, gets to identify and develop their talents

and skills and can reach their full potential; allowing them to take their place as contributors to the common good.

"In doing so, the school community is assisting parents/carers in the support of the individual learner as they continue on a journey of lifelong discovery which began at birth. This journey allows them to appreciate their own value as individuals, to value and understand the contribution others make and promotes strong, diverse communities for the future."

The principal of St Mary's University College, in Belfast, Prof Peter Finn KSG, feels that the paper will be "particularly beneficial to the educators in Catholic Schools, as well as student teachers, as it sets out a collective and world-wide shared understanding of the key characteristics which contribute to the distinctive ethos of the sector."

He stated: "It emphasises children and young people being educated within an integrated values-led curriculum, which promotes critical thinking within a moral framework and underpins high-quality learning and teaching with exceptional levels of pastoral care."

The Ethos Paper considers: How do Catholic schools ensure that young people are provided with a learning and teaching environment that enables the human potential to flourish? How does the Catholic school celebrate and grow community? How important is faith formation within the Catholic school? How does the Catholic school



ensure holistic growth, academic excellence and achievement for all? Why do people choose Catholic Schools?

To view Catholic Schools delivering for all Communities visit www.onlineccms.com or www.catholiceducation-ni.org



At the launch of the Catholic Schools' Ethos Paper are Bishop Donal McKeown, Chair of CCMS & CSTC, Gerry Campbell, Chief Executive CCMS, Fintan Murphy, Chief Executive CSTC, Pat Carville, Vice-Chair of CCMS, and Long Tower Primary School Principal, Joyce Logue and pupils. Photograph by George Pennock.

Spotlight on education in Northern Ireland

AN independent review of education is underway in Northern Ireland and the public have been asked to express their views of the current education system.

Commenting on the review, which is a key priority of the New Decade, New Approach Agreement, Bishop Donal remarked that all recognise that "not everybody has a good experience of education".

"We have some superb results for many," he said, adding: "but too many people leave school ill-equipped for the world of work and life as a human being.

"The NI Executive has set up an independent review panel to ask how we can get the best outcomes for all and best value for money."

Bishop Donal also commented on a Bill going through Stormont which, he said, will "unduly favour 'integrated education' and treat Catholic schools as of lesser value in our society."

He added: "I would certainly encourage people to ask their political representatives as to where they stand on this bill, which will seriously disadvantage Catholic schools into the future".

See Integrated Education Bill (niassembly.gov.uk)

Mrs Collins and the Thornhill College RE Department reflect on their active Catholic Schools' Week, encouraging all to...

Be John 10:10 people, living a life of fulfilment and happiness

THORNHILL school community focused on what is unique about our Catholic ethos and education during the annual Catholic Schools' Week celebrations.

During the opening Mass for CSW, on Thursday, January 20, Bishop Donal outlined the theme for this year from the Gospel of John; "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full", (John 10:10). He explained how Catholic Schools emphasise the hidden curriculum and actively show how young people can find ways of living life to the fullest.

Inspired by his homily that schools should 'Care, Hope, Pray and Act,' we integrated this message into our activities for CSW. The whole school community took time to pray and quietly reflect during the Monday morning, by watching

the beautiful digital assembly led by our Year 8 pupils. During this reflection, we witnessed the many gifts and talents, showing how Thornhill pupils exemplify 'living life to the full' through the shoe box donations, the Hands Hampers, the enrichment crochet class and the wonderful fundraising completed by the Year 13 Mercy and JP2 groups for SVP, Sands and Children in Crossfire.

The school community also demonstrated their collegiality by departments entering our 'Bake-off' competition. Departments were tasked with baking a cake which best represented their subject and how this contributes to our school community by 'living life a full life'. It was a marvellous response and we were all amazed with the outstanding effort and creativity of our

colleagues. Not only did the cakes look spectacular, but they also tasted delicious and we bonded together by all sharing slices of these fabulous bakes!

Throughout the week, pupils in their RE class reflected on the theme for each day of CSW. They enjoyed discussing how living life to the full can be shown with our relationships with others, with God, within our school community and by reconnecting with our Grandparents following lockdown.

Key Stage 3 pupils designed bunting, poignant hearts with their examples of living a full life, and flower bouquets of what being fulfilled means to each of them.

Key Stage 4 and 5 pupils were given time to connect with these themes through mindfulness colouring and the creation of

'Crosses of Hope'. This work has been displayed in our Oratory, and both pupils and staff are invited to pop in to look at these stunning displays and offer a prayer of quiet contemplation.

We certainly bonded as a school community and thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to celebrate the great work of our fabulous pupils.

Finally, we ask you to consider the words of Pope Francis to young people on how living a full life has meaning: "Make the most of these years of your youth. Live life to the full. Whatever you do, dream and make good decisions...take risks even if it means making a few mistakes along the way."

Be John 10:10 people, living a life of fulfilment and happiness.



St Patrick's & St Brigid's Claudy



Loreto College, Coleraine



Lumen Christi College, Derry



Scoil Iosagain, Buncrana



Scoil Mhuire students fill kindness jars

SCOIL Mhuire Buncrana put the Catholic Schools' Week theme, 'Living life to the full', into action by promoting acts of kindness within the school.

Ms Doherty's RE class made kindness jars and each class in the school was asked to carry out acts of kindness all that week.

It was great to see the jars filling up with the great various acts of kindness, bringing alive the theme of 'living life to the full'.

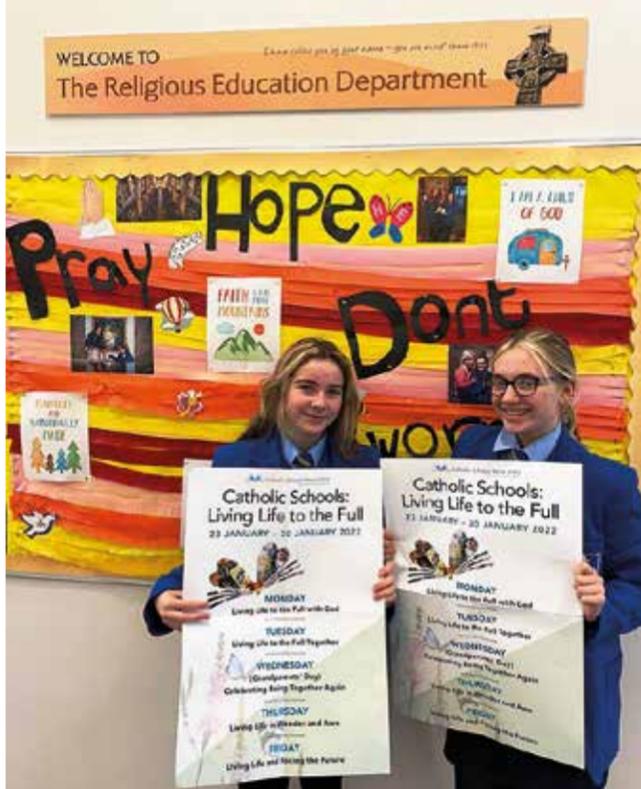
Our Pope John Paul II students made scones as an act of kindness for the staff.



St Columb's College, Derry



St Mary's College, Derry



St Mary's PS, Draperstown



St Patrick's College, Maghera



St Columba's PS, Straw, Ballinascreen



Steelstown PS, Derry



Termoncanice PS, Limavady



St Colm's Ballinascreen



Young people loved the fun, friendships and prayer during 'All or Nothing' project

by Aoife O'Neill



THE four-week 'All or Nothing' youth project at the Iona Retreat Centre, Termonbacca, in Derry, looking at the late Sr Clare Crockett as a model for young people today, has been a great success, with the young people loving it not only for the fun they had and friendships they made, but also for the times of prayer, talking about Sr Clare and meeting other Servant Sisters from the Home of the Mother, and how happy the experience made them feel.

The project was launched on Sunday, January 16, and 14 young people aged from 10-15 years old signed up to take part. On the first night, we spent time getting to know one another and about Sr Clare.

After designing name badges that would show something about themselves to others and taking part in different fun games to get to know each other, the young people watched a short introductory video on Sr Clare. All of them said they had heard about Sr Clare before and that they were drawn to find out more about her.

At the end of the session, we gathered with Fr Michael Spain ocd, who led a short time of prayer with the young people.

We continued the project on week two by looking at Sr Clare's gifts and talents and how she was able to use these in the service of God and others. The young people then worked in small groups to discuss their own gifts and talents, and how they might be able to use these for God. They wrote about them and drew some pictures.

Afterwards, we watched a short video in which Fr Patrick Cahill introduced the idea of doing things for an audience of one. He explained that in daily life the most important person is God and that we could offer everything to Him. The young people were then set a challenge to choose one good thing to do discreetly through the week – to do simply for God. Fr Stephen

joined us to finish the evening in prayer.

Week three of the project began quite boisterously, with the young people completing a blindfolded obstacle course, where they had to follow a voice calling directions. What started out easy soon became a challenge, as more voices joined in and caused a lot of distraction. Also, one sneaky priest moving obstacles around brought a lot of delight to the young people, who were watching the poor blindfolded person try to find their way.

This was a fun introduction to the theme of the night, which had everyone thinking about the voices they can trust in life. They considered how hard it can be to hear God's voice when our lives are filled with distractions. We listened to Sr Clare's story about her cousins telling her and her sister that they were going to grow trees after swallowing some apple seeds. Following this, we had some great group discussions. The young people had to list who they could and could not trust to tell them the truth about themselves and their lives.

Bringing the night to a close, Fr Stephen explained to the young people about prayer and how the Lord is truly present with them. He explained the prayer for Sr Clare and that it was asking for a miracle, and encouraged the young people to take the prayer home and pray it through the week.

Light

On the fourth and final week, the young people had surprise visitors, when six of the Servant Sisters from the Home of the Mother came to join us for the session. The night began with some challenging games played in the dark. They were soon made easier when the light was introduced. These got the young people thinking about how in life it can be difficult when we try to do things on our own, but when we allow Jesus, who is the light of the world, to help us, then we find

things easier.

We listened to what Sr Clare wrote in an article, "Why am I not happy?", and how we only find true happiness when we do what God has planned for us. The young people then held group discussions on the topic of vocation. What they thought it meant and sharing their thoughts and ideas through drawings and writing. We held a questions and answer session then with the Sisters, and the young people heard about their memories of Sr Clare.

Sr Mary told the young people about the time she shared with Sr Clare in Florida and how Sr Clare had a great ability to be very direct with the young people. She said that Sr Clare had no trouble saying things with truth, but at the same time always made the kids laugh. She also shared the story of Sr Clare's last Christmas; how she was playing the guitar and making them laugh, and that she actually radiated joy and holiness.

Sr Mary remarked that she had seen a difference in her from the first time she had met her and that she had seen a big spiritual transformation. She also told them that it was only later that the

sisters learned how sick Sr Clare had been at that time, but she never let it show.

Sr Megan told the young people how she wouldn't be here now as a nun if it wasn't for Sr Clare. She said that the example of Sr Clare helped her to say 'yes' to God. She also recalled that even when she first met Sr Clare, she immediately felt loved by her.

Sr Miriam then shared with the young people about how she had discerned the Home of the Mother as the Order God wanted her to join. The sisters worked together to answer questions for the young people about what they do all day and gave an insight into the many different activities they are involved with. Sr Rachel Maria explained how their prayer and time with Jesus most the important activity of all, as it is what nourishes them and gives the strength they need to do all the other things they do.

Finishing off with the final prayer session, Fr Stephen shared a story from the Gospel where Jesus calls Peter and Andrew. He explained to the young people how Jesus is asking the same of them, to "Come Follow Me".

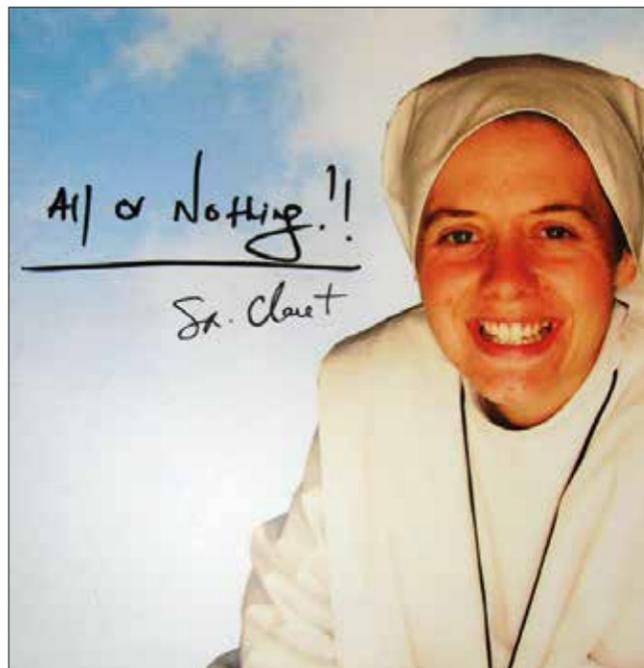
We finished the night off with pizza and chips, and the young people were having such good conversations with the Sisters that they didn't want to go home. Before leaving, the young people completed evaluation questionnaires and below are some of their comments:

"I found it very fun. The games were very good and I loved the prayer at the end every week."

"I will remember most the nuns visiting and talking about Sister Clare."

"I learned everything here and I am happy."

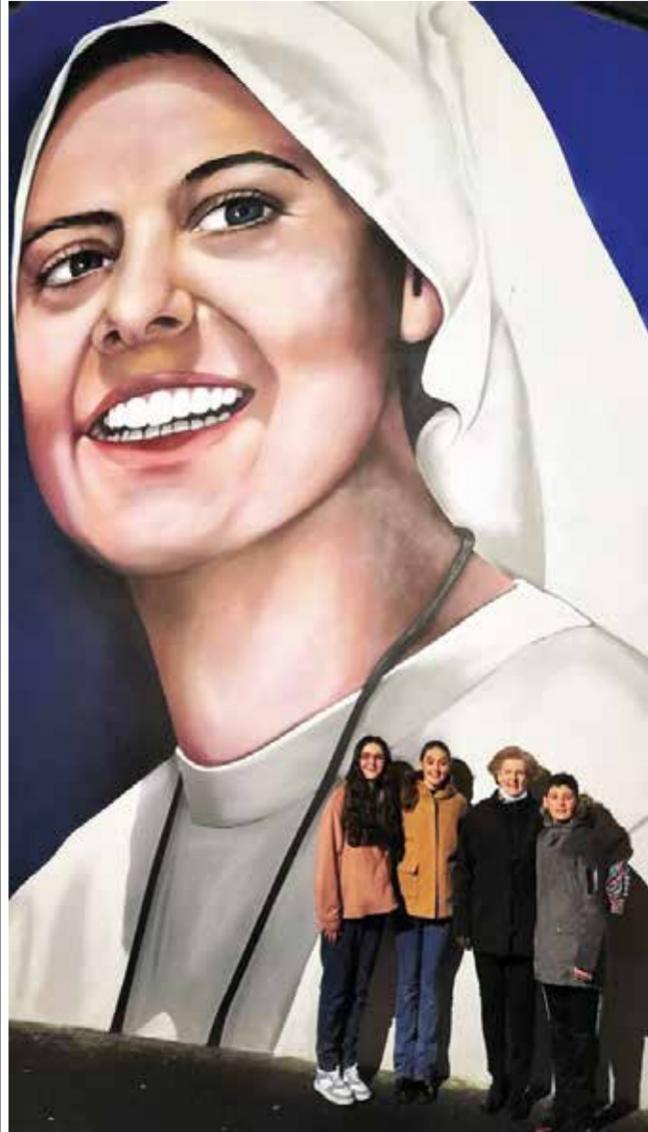
"I will remember most making new friends."





Father of young Derry boy who inspired painting of second Sr Clare mural, says...

Sr Clare has made being a nun cool!



Isabella, Melissa and John Joe McErlean, with their grandmother, Nuala, at the blessing of the Sr Clare mural in Shantallow.

JUST as Sr Clare captivated and inspired young people in life, during her ministry in schools and communities, her story is continuing to do so after her death, with a second mural to the Home of the Mother Servant Sister now gracing a gable wall in the Shantallow area of her home city inspired by the words of a 10-year-old boy.

Dermot McErlean had been visiting property he owned on the Racecourse, after collecting his son, John Joe from school one Friday evening, and had been mulling over what to do with the gable wall of Medicare Chemist that was somewhat weather beaten.

"The gable wall had seen the worst of the elements and I was thinking that it would need redone," said the 45-year-old father of three, adding: "Just about five minutes after I had mentioned that, as we were driving off around the corner, John Joe said: 'Wouldn't it be a great place to put another picture of Sr Clare'. That ignited the idea in my mind and I told him that that is what we will do.

"The Derry artist, Ray Bonner's brother and I are married to two sisters, so I knew that Ray would be capable of doing something like the other Sr Clare mural for

us, but first I wanted to ask her family if that would be alright".

Friendly with Sr Clare's uncle, Kenny Crockett, Dermot asked him what the family would think of another mural to Sr Clare, and he was then introduced to her sisters, Shauna and Megan.

"They were very accommodating," remarked Dermot, "just through talking to them, I got this feeling that I knew Sr Clare. My family has been aware of Sr Clare since her unfortunate death, and because she is a Derry girl we have always had an interest in her life and all that she had covered in the short time that she lived".

As well as his son, John Joe, Dermot and his wife, Tracey, have two daughters, Isabella, who is 13, and 12-year-old Melissa, whom they encourage in their faith life.

"The girls, in particular," noted Dermot, "have a connection with Sr Clare and think that there is something special about her. My wife has a great devotion to Sr Clare, and we have the little prayer cards and the Sr Clare candles.

"A lot of people, whether practising Catholics or not, have a fondness for Sr Clare. I love that she was an ordinary girl doing ordinary things and that she had an extraordinary transformation.

We would know some of the nuns from Thornhill, in our Parish of the Assumption Culmore, but Sr Clare's youthfulness and her life story have made being a nun cool! My girls can identify with her; she was a singer, entertainer, could speak Spanish as well as she did English, and was from Derry.

"What shone through for me in her story was the deep faith that was unveiled as she went on her mission. Her mural overlooks the pedestrian line between Carnhill and Shantallow Health Centre, and if it inspires even just one child walking past to ask who that is, what did she do, and to go on and follow her example, like Sr Clare's story has inspired my children, that alone will be worth it for me".

Continuing to be amazed at the depth of devotion to her older sibling, Sr Clare's sister, Shauna recalled their initial reaction on hearing about the request for another mural to her: "We thought that one was enough, as we don't want to be pushing Clare down people's throats, but when we spoke to Dermot and heard his reason for wanting the mural and that the idea had come from his young son, we then thought why not".

Interest in Sr Clare remains high as the sixth anniversary of her death draws near, with many people continuing to visit her grave, which is constantly filled with flowers that they bring with

them as a token of their love and appreciation of the hope inspired by her story and for favours granted through her intercession.

Welcoming the invitation to bless the new Sr Clare mural, Bishop Donal told 'The Net' afterwards: "Anyone who believes that God is predictable should come to Derry! The marvellous story of God's work in Sr Clare Crockett has gone round the world.

"People of this community see Clare as one of themselves, someone in whose life God did amazing things.

"So, it was no surprise to see the new mural in Shantallow, with local people happy to look upon that smiling face which is now known in so many countries.

"They gathered in the showery weather to pray the Rosary, and to echo Mary's words...My soul glorifies the Lord for the Almighty has done great things for me - and holy is His name!"

Preparations are currently being made for a follow up to last year's very successful Sr Clare Retreat, when people will get the opportunity to gain more insight into the life of the Servant Sister who grew up in the Brandywell, and is well on her way to being the famous nun she joked about when she felt called to discern about following a religious vocation, instead of the path to stardom through acting that she originally had her heart set on.



Bishop Donal with Sr Clare's sisters, Shauna and Megan, and her father, Gerald.



Patsy McCallion led the Rosary after the blessing of Sr Clare's mural.

Involved in her parish 'Do This in Memory' programme for eight years, Cappagh mother shares how...

Child's sacramental journey can refresh and deepen adults' faith too

ONE of the stalwarts involved in the 'Do This in Memory' sacramental programme in the Cappagh Parish is mother of two, Karyn Birney, who happily shares how the journey she and husband, Brian, set out on with their eldest child led to a deeper development of their own faith and a greater involvement in parish life.

Describing herself as a 'blow-in' to the parish that lies on the outskirts of Omagh, Karyn explained that she had been born in Fermanagh, but had moved as a young child with her family to live in Dromore, where her father was originally from.

The second youngest in a family of four girls and one boy, the 44-year-old says that it is her grandparents that first come to mind when thinking of those who had most influenced her with regards to her Catholic faith.

"Both sets of my grandparents had great faith," she said, recalling a particular memory of her Irvinestown grandfather: "If we were with granny and granda and the Angelus Bell rang, everything stopped".

Reared on the Cappagh-Beragh border, the second eldest in a family of five boys and one girl, Brian's family were regulars at Killyclogher Chapel.

"Both of us come from a typical Catholic upbringing," remarked Karyn, adding: "We both attended Catholic schools and we were regular Mass-goers. It was a habitual routine. I remember growing up with the Rosary said some nights, probably more so in October and May, and my father would have led us in that prayer".

The late Canon Tom Breen was the parish priest of Dromore when Karyn was a youth and she spoke fondly of him as another positive influence: "He loved the

young people of the parish and was such a good influence on many. He took a real interest in everyone and had such a gentle way in guiding people in the faith, without any pressure".

When they got married in 2003, the couple set up home in Killyclogher, so that Brian, a fire fighter, could be closer to the Fire Station.

"We have been living here now for nearly 19 years, but it took me a while to settle, coming from the country into the town," recalled Karyn, adding: "We would not have been really involved in the parish community in the first number of years, apart from attending Mass.

"As a newly married couple, we were our own authority and we mishandled that a bit. Not having our parents to guide us regarding going to Mass and Confessions, etc, we chose to practise the bits of our faith that we were comfortable with. That was the case up until our eldest son, Niall started the sacramental programme at school and we realised the important year that lay ahead for him.

"The school was teaching him about his faith but we were not stepping up to the mark and fulfilling the promises we made at his Baptism. We realised this when we sat in the Chapel at the introductory meeting in the parish regarding the 'Do This in Memory' programme.

"This programme is designed to encourage the active involvement of parents with their own Year 4 children for First Holy Communion and Confession. Not really knowing what the programme was about, we hadn't given Niall preparation for First Holy Communion or Confession before that. Naively, we thought that the school would be taking

care of all this.

"We began to realise then that there was much more to it and that we, as Niall's parents, had a major role in helping him to understand what the Sacraments meant, and that we needed to be leading him more in his faith".

Karyn went on to recall that she and Brian had fallen out in the Chapel during the night of the introductory talk about the Sacramental programme, which was led at that time by Seamus McDonald, Fr Kevin McElhannon and Fr Daniel McFaul.

"Seamus was asking for volunteers," she said, "and I had this overwhelming feeling that we needed to volunteer. I was saying this to Brian, but as a fireman, and with all that this entailed, he was wondering how he was going to fit in volunteering for this programme.

"I went to the monthly meetings and talked to Brian about what was said at them when I got home. So, the programme also gave us the opportunity to talk about what was important for Niall and what we needed to do".

Confession

She continued: "When Niall was preparing for his First Confession, Brian had this great realisation that he was being asked to do something that he had never seen us doing. Fr Daniel, who had only arrived in our parish the year before, was instrumental in guiding and encouraging parents about the programme. We wanted to learn more about our faith and he suggested things like looking up Eucharistic Miracles etc, which Brian said was very helpful to him.

"The gentle nudge that Fr Daniel gave him to look up Eucharistic

Miracles was a defining moment for my husband, and now, if Brian is having a conversation with people challenging the Catholic faith, he will tell them to look up Eucharistic Miracles.

"Fr Daniel helped us to understand the Mass in a different way, as did Fr Kevin and the late Fr Stephen Kearney. They took the children up around the altar and talked to them, but a lot of what they said was very beneficial for the parents listening in the pews, in helping them to learn and understand the Mass too.

"So, we found that the programme presented us, as adults, with opportunities to refresh our own understanding and practice of what being a Catholic really is. This was all taking place around the same time that we were starting into our adoption journey with the Western Trust. Our own faith development was deepened at the time we were seeking guidance regarding our family."

Saying that there were 10 years between Niall and their five-year-old son, Eóghan, Karyn remarked: "We went through a long, tough journey to grow our family. We said at a St Joseph Retreat last year, in Cappagh Parish, that when we handed everything over to God, our path changed. We accepted the road that we were on at that point and we began to see beyond ourselves and our own needs.

"It all came together at the same time; helping Niall prepare for First Holy Communion and starting our adoption journey. When looking back now, we can see that Eóghan was always meant to be part of our family; he was six days old when he arrived with us, straight from hospital, and we adopted him two years later.



Karyn and Brian Birney with their sons, Niall and Eóghan.

"It was around then that I joined the Catholic Mothers' Group as well. By reaching out in our parish in faith groups, we had the support of others in those groups, especially the other mothers".

With regards to the 'Do This in Memory' programme, Karyn said that they had taken away three key elements from it; the learning and understanding of the Mass, prayer at home and Confession.

She added: "Prayer at home was massive for us. Apart from bed-time prayer with Niall, there wasn't much more prayer at home. Brian would say that it was awkward at the start. Family prayer was difficult with Brian on evening calls, so we introduced saying prayers on the way to school and saying the Rosary in the car.

"With regards to Confession, Brian hadn't been to it in 10 years and didn't see the need for it, but he realised that we were asking Niall to do something that he wouldn't have seen us do or even hear about at that point. So, he reached out to Fr Kevin about that and he helped him to understand.

"We used the programme to do something about these areas

that we were lacking in. Since then, we have both attended the parish Bible programme with Fr Kevin. It is rewarding to avail of these opportunities; we have met so many people who lived locally to us, but we hadn't known them. To be in circles like this with like-minded people gives you great confidence".

Commenting on her still being involved with the 'Do This in Memory' programme eight years later, Karyn talked about her desire to help other parents get what they had got out of it: "Seeing the children develop in their faith is great and I want to help other families get involved.

"Niall is growing into a young fella who is confident in his faith. He has a better understanding of it than we had at his age and that comes from Brian sitting down to talk to him about it.

"I feel blessed that Brian is a father who is able to sit down and lead our sons in the faith. I think that will be great for the boys when they grow up. And we are also blessed to have developed our faith together, through looking for opportunities in our parish and taking them".

Cappagh 'Do This in Memory' team hope to return to 'seed planting' programme soon

THE team behind the very successful Cappagh Parish 'Do This in Memory' programme had to get even more creative and go online when Covid-19 stopped its in-person activities, but hopes are now high of being able to return soon to the memorable gatherings and processions so effective in planting the seeds of faith in the children.

The Parish has 160 children, from five Catholic primary schools, an Irish school and an integrated school, preparing for the sacraments of Holy Communion and Confession, so it has been most appreciative of the parents who volunteer to help out during the year with the 'Do This in Memory' monthly Masses and other activities.

Originally, Seamus McDonald and Fr Daniel McFaul hosted the meetings regarding the 'Do This in Memory' programme, now the team consists of Karyn

Birney, Seamus McDonald and current parish curate, Fr Declan McGeehan.

Karyn first got involved when her eldest son, Niall, was preparing for his First Holy Communion and First Confession eight years ago. Preferring the more traditional programme of her first six years' involvement, Karyn explained that it had to be adapted to go online because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"During the pandemic, the monthly 'Do This in Memory' Mass was attended virtually," she said, "but we encouraged families to still be involved, with one school at a time coming into the church because of the restrictions. We sent out the activities to schools the week before, relying on them to transfer these to the Year 4 children, along with the gifts we would normally have given out.

"Fr Declan adapted the

activities, asking the children to do, for example, artwork or write newspaper articles. These were all put on show behind the altar, as all the children were not there at the Mass and so it was a way of involving those watching the ceremony online".

Commenting on the traditional programme, Karyn said: "We would hold a big introductory meeting, during which I would ask for volunteers from the Year 4 parents from each of the schools, so I could have ended up with about 20 volunteers. Then we had monthly meetings, where we delegated different responsibilities to parents of whatever school was doing the Mass each month, giving them an opportunity to organise the ceremony and so be involved in helping their child to prepare for the sacraments.

"It's the three-legged stool model; the schools do the catechesis, and this is the parish

doing its bit and encouraging the parents to do their bit. The parents were the links to the schools. They helped to get readers and gift bearers, and that rotated around each of the parents as the year went on, giving them responsibility.

"During the homily, we could have had over 100 children on the floor and the priest talking to them directly, but what he said was also for the benefit of the parents, who were listening too".

"For the first and last Mass of the programme, all the schools would be represented, but in between, one school at a time was represented," explained Karyn, saying: "We would have had a procession on Holy Thursday, Palm Sunday and Corpus Christi, with all the children taking part in it. For Palm Sunday, we would have got palm branches for the children to carry up the aisle, and they all gathered around

the altar. On Holy Thursday, after the altar was cleared at the end of the night Mass, the priest would process down the aisle with the monstrance, with the children following him into the crying chapel, where the priest would have had them sit around reflecting.

"The programme runs from September to the Feast of Corpus Christi, and, traditionally, the children would come together for one Mass a month, with the last Mass always on Corpus Christi, for which the children wore their First Holy Communion outfits".

She added: "With Covid, all that had to stop. So, in 2020 that programme came to an abrupt end in March. We held one Mass at the end of that year, and during 2021 it was all virtual and we sent out packs to the schools. So, the children that year didn't really get to benefit from the programme. "This year, with the churches

more open, we have a bit of both. It is not back to the normal 160 children, but we have been able to bring in one school at a time, with the parents doing the reading".

With Lent approaching, Karyn said that the programme had a Lenten booklet, which had been developed by one of the parents.

"Rather than the child giving up something for the whole of Lent," she explained, "it was broken up to pick something weekly to do or say prayers. There is a list of suggestions to do for the week and a space in the booklet for the child to say how they got on, and a space for the parent to comment. We had a lot of parents come to ask for booklets for other children in the house too".

"I loved the original programme," remarked Karyn, saying: "Taking part in the processions and bringing up the gifts was 'seed planting'; something that the children

continued from page 10

would remember being involved in, whereas during Covid we were trying to recreate these memorable moments virtually, but it is not as effective online. It has been more challenging but we are hoping, as the year goes on, that we can do more in person.

"This year we brought all the children, along with one of their parents because of the restrictions, to the Christ the King Church for the Enrolment Mass, during which all the names were read out. It has been the only time all the children were together since the start of

Covid. We held it in the evening time and dimmed the lights and had candles. Our aim is to bring them all together for the Corpus Christi Mass at the end of the year, if not sooner".

Finding that the programme encourages and empowers parents to be part of their child's sacramental preparation, Karyn said that was why she was still involved with it: "I feel it could help encourage those who haven't been to Church for a while to come back, and help parents to see that it is not just about the one day, but the next chapter in their child's faith journey".



Michael McCaul, seminarian, who has been helping Karyn Birney and Fr Declan McGeehan with the parish 'Do This In Memory' programme.

Another good turnout for Men's Rosary

DESPITE the stormy weather, there was another great turnout for the Men's Rosary of Reparation on Saturday, February 5, this time in Omagh.

The men were responding to the call from Human Life International to join in praying

the Rosary for Reparation, Repentance and Conversion of the nation, on the first Saturday of each month.

Men also gathered to pray publicly together on the first Saturday of February in Knock, Athlone, Tralee and Dublin.



Termonbacca Lenten Retreat...

Behold Your Mother

"Behold Your Mother"
John 19:27
Friday 4th - Sunday 6th March 2022
Ladies weekend retreat led by the Servant Sisters of the Home of the Mother. This weekend will focus on Our Lady as a model, mother and teacher for women today.
For bookings/queries please contact Aoife on 02871262512 or email termonbaccaderry@gmail.com

THE Servant Sisters of the Home of the Mother, Sr Clare Crockett's Order, will be leading a weekend

retreat for ladies from March 4-6. This is the first weekend of Lent and will be an opportune time to

take a break away from your usual routine and spend some time in prayer and contemplation.

The theme of the retreat will be 'Behold Your Mother' and will focus on Our Blessed Mother as a role model for women today. It will include talks, private prayer time, Mass and Confession.

The weekend will cost £70, which includes all meals and accommodation. Places are limited to allow for social distancing and can be booked by leaving a £20 deposit at Termonbacca.

For further information contact Aoife on 02871262512 or email termonbaccaderry@gmail.com

Sleeping St Joseph Novena

by Aoife O'Neill

A nine-day Novena to the Sleeping St Joseph will once again be run by Termonbacca from Friday, March 11 until Saturday, March 19.

This devotion to the sleeping St Joseph has been made popular by Pope Francis, who shared his own devotion and faith in the intercession of St Joseph.

Thanks to the Holy Bible, we all know how important and fundamental has been the slumber for Saint Joseph. During his sleep, an Angel came to tell him to marry Mary. In the same way, in his dreams he had the apparition of an Angel telling him about escaping to Egypt, due to the imminent slaughter of the innocents, ordered by Herod to kill Jesus.

This Saint is a merciful father that always helps those in need. Exactly like St Joseph, men must

rise from their slumber, once they have heard the Word of God, get up and act for their lives.

Mass will be celebrated each evening at 7.30 pm, with the exception of Sunday, which will be at the earlier time of 7 pm and be amalgamated with the monthly

Sr Clare Mass. Each Mass will be followed by the Novena prayers.

All are welcome to join us for this in-person or online, via the Termonbacca YouTube channel. Prayer intentions can also be submitted and we will include these in our prayers.

Sleeping St Joseph Novena
11th-19th March 2022
From Friday 11th March until Saturday 19th March Termonbacca will lead a 9 day Novena to the Sleeping St Joseph. Mass will be celebrated at 7:30pm each evening (7pm on Sunday) followed by Novena prayers. Everyone welcome to join us in person or via Termonbacca YouTube channel.

Prayer to Sleeping St Joseph

OH St Joseph, whose protection is so great, so strong, so prompt before the throne of God.

I place in you all my interests and desires.

Oh St Joseph, do assist me by your powerful intercession, and obtain for me from your Divine Son all spiritual blessings, through Jesus

Christ, our Lord.

So that having engaged here below your heavenly power, I may offer my thanksgiving and homage to the most loving Fathers.

Oh St Joseph, I never weary of contemplating you and Jesus asleep in your arms; I dare not approach while He reposes near

your heart.

Press him in my name and kiss His fine head for me and ask Him to return the kiss when I draw my dying breath.

St Joseph, Patron of departing souls, pray for me and my loved ones. *Amen*

Termonbacca Derry
"Go To Joseph"
Come and celebrate the feast of St Joseph in a day prayer and recollection looking at the life and example of our spiritual father.
Saturday 19th March 2022
10am - 3pm
For queries or bookings please contact Aoife on 02871262512 or email termonbaccaderry@gmail.com

Feast of St Joseph Day Retreat

TO celebrate the Feast of St Joseph, on Saturday, March 19, Termonbacca Retreat Centre, Derry, will host a day retreat entitled, 'Go to Joseph'.

The celebration will include talks on St Joseph, time for personal prayer and reflection, Adoration, Mass and Confession. Lunch will also be provided.

For any queries, or to book a place, please contact Aoife on 028 71 262512 or email termonbaccaderry@gmail.com.

In their articles this month, Niamh and Jodie reflect on the Holocaust and the importance of memory as highlighted by Pope Francis.

Following the annual celebration of Christian Unity Week, January 18-25, John writes about the need for Christian unity, while Hollie considers the importance of community and co-responsibility as a pilgrim Church in the light of our celebration of the feasts of Sts Brigid, Gobnait, Fintan and Colman this month.

Welcoming the invitation to live life to the full during this year's Catholic Schools Week, Bronagh writes about the themes of the week and the opportunities they presented within school communities.

And, acknowledging the great benefits of today's technology, Peter highlights Pope Francis' call for people to turn all off to give time for God to commune with us through the pages of the Bible.



Hollie Frystal, Co Tyrone Deanery.



Bronagh Doherty, Co Derry Deanery.



Peter Grant, Inishowen Deanery.



Jodie Kennedy, Derry City Deanery.



Niamh O'Kane - Co Derry Deanery



Gemma Gallagher, Derry City Deanery



John Augustine Joseph, Derry City Deanery.



Zara Schlindwein, Derry City Deanery.

The importance of memory by Niamh

ON Holocaust Remembrance Day, Pope Francis reflected on the importance of historical memory with Edith Bruck, Auschwitz survivor.

The conversation between the pair was full of warmth and respect after Pope Francis expressed his desire to meet with Edith, marking the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the many victims of the Holocaust.

The Holy Father and the 90-year-old Hungarian author focused on the "priceless value of passing down the memory of the past to young generations, including its most painful aspects, so as to avoid falling into the same tragedies."

Through this, Pope Francis strives to encourage us to follow his example through demonstrating kindness and compassion to those around us.

The Pope told Edith: "I came to thank you for your witness

and to pay homage to the people martyred by the craziness of the Nazi population."

No matter what the situation may be, we have a duty to put our differences aside and to come together as followers of God and employ gratitude and benevolence in our everyday lives whenever we can.

Pope Francis has demonstrated these merciful actions in his own everyday life, and another example of his compassion is when he kissed another Auschwitz survivor's tattoo.

Lydia Maksymowicz, who was the woman with the tattoo he kissed, recounted her experience, "We understood each other with a glance."

Pope Francis encourages an understanding amongst everyone and, where we can, each promote kindness and compassion every day in every moment.

(Sources: thevaticannews.com, theguardian.com)



Celebrating the lives of Sts Brigid, Gobnait, Fintan and Colman, Hollie writes how we witness...

Importance of community and co-responsibility as a pilgrim Church

AS we embark upon the new year of 2022, the Diocese of Derry is responding to Pope Francis' invitation to host and engage in discussions surrounding who we are as Church. What is our mission? How do we respond to God's Will and the mission of today?

Hence, also tackling the 'awkward questions', such as what have been our successes and failures of being Church in the past and present?

One way to explore these topics is to delve back into our strong Irish Celtic Christian roots. In this month of February, we witness the importance of community and co-responsibility as a pilgrim Church through the lens of the Irish monastic saints.

Coinciding with the celebration of the four Irish monastic saints, Brigid, Gobnait, Fintan and Colman, Pope Francis has asked the Church, in this month of February, to pray 'For Religious Sisters and Consecrated Women'.

St Brigid is well known for her courageous and faithful response to her vocation, by making the decision to not marry and instead vowing to enter the religious life.

"In the 470s, Brigid founded Kildare Abbey, 'Church of the Oaks', on the plains of Cil-Dara. This small oratory developed into a Cathedral city, supporting a double monastery, one for men and one for women. From this monastery, a center for religion and learning, Irish missionaries were sent out to preach and to

teach, therefore, contributing to the spread of Christianity throughout the country. Brigid travelled extensively..." (Illustrated Lives of the Saints, ed. Fr. Michael Sullivan, Archdiocese of New York).

St Brigid is an excellent example of one who encouraged and strived to achieve, accompanied by the Holy Spirit, for a missionary enriched Church consisting of both men and woman, young and old.

Brigid, and her fellow sisters and brothers, demonstrated what it meant to be a 'community on journey', which is a very helpful example for us to consider whilst we embark upon the Irish Synodal Pathway.

St Colman succeeded Finan as the third abbot/bishop of Lindisfarne in 661, notably a faithful follower of Colmcille in Iona, and said to have been often working alongside Aidan. Colman is remembered for his indisputable influence and presence, ironically, at the Synod of Whitby, which took place at Northumbria in 664, where the monk became well-known for defending Celtic customs.

Interestingly, Colman's view on King Oswy's decision was refusing "to accept the ruling, believing that the power of the king should not extend beyond secular matters into spiritual matters" (The Celtic Church: Origins, Development and Themes, Anne Hughes).

It is interesting that one of the



St Brigid of Kildare.



St Gobnait.

suggested topics for focus in our Synodal pathway is the rapid secularization of society, hence, the relationship between Church and state always requiring a healthy ongoing relationship of dialogue. Ironically, such a topic was up for debate in Colman's day, reminding us that the concept of 'Synodality' is not a new idea but an old one, which required the people of God to tackle the awkward questions and discern what was right.

Unlike Sts Colman and Brigid, we have less knowledge of Sts Gobnait and Finan. One thing that all four saints have in common is that they established foundations, monasteries; which served as places of education, hospitality and faith formation. Finan was supposedly the successor of Aidan and the predecessor of Colman in the Abbey of Lindisfarne.

Gobnait's story includes an encounter of divine revelation; "An angel told her that this

was not to be the place of 'her resurrection' (death) and that she should tour Ireland until she found a place where she found nine white deer grazing. On her travels she is said to have founded churches at Dunquin in Co Kerry and Dungarvan in Co Waterford" (Diocese of Kerry website). Therefore, this Irish legend reiterates the importance of 'journeying together' in discovery of where God is leading us.

To conclude, as we celebrate the feast days of Sts Brigid, Gobnait, Finan and Colman this month, we could take some time to reflect on where we are on our own faith journey, and as a whole Church, a community, discerning where God is calling us to be today.

We can identify the importance of one's vocation, the strong sense of community and relationship at the service of one another, hence, lastly, we are reminded that we are a pilgrim people guided by the Spirit

Why we need Christian unity by John

"MAY they all be one, just as, Father, you are in me and I am in you, so that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me".

Jesus said these words just before He was to be betrayed by one of His disciples. This was Jesus' prayer for unity amongst His disciples.

However, as we all know, the Church did not stay united for long. Whether due to schisms or to heresy, the unity of the early church ceased to be a reality. Two thousand years later, the situation has not gotten any better. Despite many efforts that were made throughout the centuries, Christian unity still seems far off the cards.

If there is anything the Church should be aiming towards, it is towards Christian Unity. But then the question is: What is Christian Unity?

Christian unity "reflects the unchanging truth that there can be no real unity apart from union with that Rock, established by

Christ Himself, which is Peter and his successors".

This definition is of great importance as it stipulates that unity with the See of Peter, unity with the Pope is necessary to be one. Other Christians may disagree with this but that does not mean we stop the dialogue. On the contrary, we should come to understand each other's position, so that we can get to a point in which we can say that Christian Unity is something that we can achieve.

The annual Week for Prayer for Christian Unity should not be an occasion for some nice words and a pat on the back, instead, it should be a week that leads to progress in Christian unity, whilst staying true to the Catholic faith that we hold. It should be a week that leads to an understanding amongst one another. It should be a week that makes Christians seek greater unity with one another as Christ wished for before He was betrayed.

Last year, Cardinals Koch and

Grech wrote a letter to all bishops responsible for ecumenism and they made suggestions aimed at implementing the ecumenical dimension of the synodal process in the local churches.

They wrote, "Both synodality and ecumenism are processes of walking together." Indeed, "since ecumenism can be understood as an 'exchange of gifts,' one of the gifts Catholics can receive from the other Christians is precisely their experience and understanding of synodality."

This synodality that can be found in the Eastern Catholic churches, as well as the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches, is a model that the Roman Church can follow. By receiving and giving gifts to one another, we can be closer to Christian unity.

This year, the theme for the Week for Prayer for Christian Unity was based on the Magi's response to the 'star in the East'.

Reflecting on the theme, both Cardinals affirmed, "Like the Magi, Christians too journey

together (synodos) guided by the same heavenly light and encountering the same worldly darkness. They too are called to worship Jesus together and open their treasures. Conscious of our need for the accompaniment and the many gifts of our brothers and sisters in Christ, we call on them to journey with us during these two years and we sincerely hope that 'opening our treasures' we will be able to share the gifts that the Holy Spirit has bestowed on the various Christian communities which are meant for the up-building and unity of all".

Christian Unity will not be something that can be easily achieved. However, with great prayer, fasting and almsgiving, as well as working with fellow Christians, I hope that we can become aware of the need for a One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, as we say in the Creed every Sunday.

<https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/liturgicalyear/prayers/view.cfm?id=127>

After 20 months of masks, sanitizers, and missed events and opportunities, Bronagh welcomed theme of Catholic Schools Week 2022...

Live life to the full

DURING Catholic Schools' Week, pupils, teachers and all school staff across Ireland shared the same interest and activities for one of the highlights of the Catholic calendar.

Every year there is a theme to help us concentrate our prayers and intentions, this year's theme was 'Living life to the full'.

This theme appears very appropriate after the last few years that school children have endured. The past 20 months have been filled with masks, sanitizers, and missed events and opportunities.

For Catholic Schools Week this year, leaders of the Catholic Church were encouraging children and students to make up for the memories and lost time with family and friends.

They encouraged us to have fun with friends and family, whilst praying and offering our special intentions up for those who have lost someone special during the pandemic or, at this time, can't see their family or friends, many of whom are separated by distance, sickness or other factors which have been worsened by the pandemic.

This was particularly celebrated on the Wednesday, for which the theme was 'Celebrating being

together again'.

On the Friday, the theme was 'Living life and facing the future'. We can do this by praying to God to protect us as we embark on the rest of 2022 and whatever it holds for us. We thank those who have improved our future, including: the teachers who teach the lawyers, doctors, teachers, nurses and construction workers of the future; the priests who enlighten our future and help us through the difficult times we will face through the teaching of the Word of God; the scientists who have worked to create vaccines and treatments to improve the future of many and the future of public health; the farmers who produce the crops to ensure the future is one where hunger is reduced or even eradicated.

We thank our primary and post-primary schools, who have created resilient, loving and caring children who will grow into inclusive, ambitious and faithful adults who will teach the Catholic faith to their children and encourage a world where everyone treats others with kindness.

Bishop Donal McKeown and Fr Paul Farren led schools in our Diocese in Morning Prayer each day during Catholic Schools



Week and there was live Q&A with pupils from various schools.

The Diocesan Catechetical Centre encouraged all schools to pause their busy schedules at 11 am every day and pray the 'Diocesan Prayer for Catholic Schools'.

The prayer is: "Loving God we thank you for the gift of faith that we have received through the witness of our families, our school and our parish. Bless our school community, unite us and help us always to be the love and compassion of your Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus tells us to ask and

we will receive, to seek and we will find, to knock and the door will be opened. Help us always to know our need for you. Open our hearts in prayer so that we can become closer and closer to you. We make this prayer through your Son, our Saviour and brother, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

In schools all over Ireland, assemblies were held, prayers were said, memories were made during Catholic Schools Week 2022, which lived up to theme of 'Living Life to the Full'.



The Word of God through the Bible

by Peter

POPE Francis expressed his thoughts of what it means to understand the word of God, "Let us ask the Lord for the strength to turn off the television and open the Bible, to turn off our cell phone and open the Gospel. It will make us feel God's closeness to us and fill us with courage as we make our way through life."

As we know in modern society, social media and technology such as TV and cell phones, like Pope Francis said, have a huge influence on us every day in our life, simply to give us the news and latest gossip, but in the church we have adapted to this new change in the technological world of broadcasting Mass online and youth programs, like the Derry Diocesan Youth Group.

However, while we may rely on modern technology and these new changes that are happening in the church, we must not forget how the Word of God was first sourced. Jesus' disciples didn't have Facebook or Instagram to share and spread to people across the world a thousand years ago. It was simply spread through word of mouth to others and later through writing, as we know from the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Jesus was the first to spread the

Word of God to many people and, after His resurrection and ascension into Heaven, His disciples had to fill His shoes in spreading the Word of God to others across the globe through word and writing, which led to the creation of the Bible.

From his words, Pope Francis emphasizes the importance of the Bible in our faith as it is the doorway to share that strong bond with God, through His words giving us the courage to spread them to others who are lost and less well off than others in our world.

Yes, we may have to be prepared for the future and work along with technology in the Church, but we must not forget the roots of the past and spread the word of God through the Bible.

Even in today's world, not everyone can access TV or a cell phone in different parts of the globe, but they can access a book of teaching where they can learn from the teachings of God and Jesus' good work, and become prophets themselves, as the word of God will never die down.

Remember, a TV or a cell phone can get broken or stop working for us and we can lose all our information, but a book will last forever!

Remembering the Holocaust by Jodie

EVERY January since 2001 in the UK, we remember the tragedy of the Holocaust, where many Jews and others suffered under Nazi persecution. Holocaust Memorial Day is held on this date to celebrate the freedom of those in the Auschwitz concentration camp by the Soviet Union in 1945.

As Holocaust Memorial Day came to an end this year, Pope Francis looked at the importance of historical memory with Auschwitz survivor, Edith Bruck.

The Pope read her interview about the tragedies she and her family experienced during the Nazi persecution and was massively moved. So he asked to meet her and paid her a visit in her home. They spent an hour in conversation.

Edith talked about her time working in the officers' mess and of, on one occasion, the figure of a cook emerging. He asked Edith her name, and when she gave it, he replied, with a trembling voice, "I have a daughter your age", and then pulled a comb from his pocket and, looking at her head of new-grown hair, gave it to her.

She recalled the sensation of

finding herself, "after so long, in the presence of a human being", saying: "I was moved by the gesture, which was life and hope".

Edith has dedicated her life to spreading the word of what she saw. In fact, she was motivated to do so by two strangers she had spoken to at the Bergen-Belsen camp. They told her: "Tell the story. They will not believe you. But if you survive, tell the story, for us too".

Pope Francis and Edith focused on the "priceless value of passing down the memory of the past to young generations, including its most painful aspects, so as to avoid falling into the same tragedies".

As an A-Level History student, I would be a big advocate for studying the past and learning from it. It's not only interesting but also massively important to listen to survivors like Edith.

One thing that the two focused on that touched me was the "priceless value of passing down the memory of the past to young generations, including its most painful aspects, so as to avoid falling into the same tragedies". There is always a positive outcome of learning history!



Gold Pin for Aghyaran Pioneer



Kathleen Moss, Aghyaran, receiving her Pioneer Gold Pin from her parish priest, Fr Paul Frazer.

Speaking at Bloody Sunday 50th Anniversary Mass in Creggan about how people of Derry had shown great dignity and courage, often leading the way for the rest of Northern Ireland to follow, Bishop Donal remarked...

There is a grace-filled art in forgiving and remembering



A SANCTUARY of peace and hope for the people of the Creggan down the years, particularly during the time of The Troubles, the beautifully renovated St Mary's Church was the socially-distanced setting in yet another troubled time for the Mass marking the 50th anniversary of Bloody Sunday.

Welcoming all gathered to the house of God where the funeral Mass had taken place for those who had died in the massacre on the streets of Derry on January 30, 1972, Bishop Donal recalled the sombre scene in the packed St Mary's Church on the Wednesday, February 2, when "many thousands of us stood outside in a soft swirling mist and a storm of emotions".

"The shooting of 26 unarmed civilians in little more than 10 minutes, and the death of 14, including six who were under 18 years of age," he said, "was a trauma never to be forgotten".

He added: "We gather in faith, as people have done here every year. In the Lord's presence we are sensitive to where everybody is and to the still voice of God who speaks grace into pain and loss".

In his homily, Bishop Donal stated: "What happened 50 years ago on the streets of this city was such a shocking event that has reverberated down through the years and around the world. Unarmed civilians were gunned down by the state when all they were doing was protesting against decades of injustice.

"There is no doubt now as to what we remember. The Saville tribunal overturned the Widgery whitewash, though it took 38 years for an acknowledgement of what the families always knew to be true. But though there are no doubts as to what happened, we can reflect on how we chose to

remember what we recall with love".

Sharing his thoughts on what Jesus might have to say to help in remembering "the loss of life and the loss of innocence that happened that Sunday afternoon", Bishop Donal said: "Firstly, Jesus said that the truth will set you free. Had truth been spoken that day and over the next weeks, so many lives and so much pain could have been spared. But when truth is killed to protect the system, the initial pain is multiplied.

"As with many other tragedies in our history, the system frustrated the desire of families to get at the truth. Blatant lies were told. Campaigners were sometimes seen as obsessive. That put huge pressure on mental health and on relationships. Institutions - whether in state, church or non-state actors - tell stories of their own heroism. And that makes it very hard for them to admit the presence of sin in their ranks. People are crushed when institutions or organisations lie to preserve their reputation".

Noting that there was still much truth to discover about many other deaths, he continued: "Many people still know truths that they are reluctant to share. We deserve an agreed system that creates space for the truth to be told about the thousands of unsolved murders. Drawing a line under the past always suits those who have much to hide. Today we remember those whose lives were lost by brutal violence - and all those who suffered terribly because of the lies that were told".

Acknowledging that finding peace with the past is very difficult, the Bishop commented: "Many of our societies struggle to know how they remember

unsavoury chapters in their history. How do we deal with slavery and colonialism, the treatment of those who offended against society's morals and the banishment of the poor to Australia for stealing food or a handkerchief?

"There are various attitudes that can be employed. There are those prefer to stoke the flames of rage, believing that the fire of anger will cleanse the wound or promote a modern agenda. There are others who want to let sleeping dogs lie and prefer not to grapple with uncomfortable truths that might disturb our comfort in the present.

Foundation

"But there is another way. It seeks to acknowledge the past but to have compassion and forgiveness for those who were caught up in systems and situations that they can now look at with other eyes. There is a grace-filled art in forgiving and remembering. It takes a wise heart to look at the rubble of what has been shattered in the past and to make it into a foundation for the future. If all we do with the past is to use it as a heap of angry stones to throw at other people, then we cannot build. Either we process the rubbish of the past and make it into life-giving compost - or it lies in the corner and benefits no-one".

Bishop Donal expressed a hope that the celebrations of the weekend would "help us all to hand on to our young people a healthy way of dealing with the past and give them the confidence build a future full of hope despite mistakes and tragedies".

He added: "We want to give our young people nuggets of wisdom that have been hard won from the horrors of the past and not nourish them on bitter anger that

can only kill and destroy. A new society on the island needs big hearts. It will not be created by small minds".

Welcoming Church of Ireland Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, Rt Rev Andrew Forster, Bishop Donal said: "His presence builds on the courageous work begun by Bishops Daly and Meahaffey some 40 years ago. They showed a way forward long before warring politicians would sit in the same room. That good work was built on when, at the publication of the Saville Report, Bishop Ken Good, Rev Norman Hamilton and Rev Paul Kingston received a warm welcome when they came to meet victims' families at the monument.

"The people of this city have shown great dignity and courage, often leading the way for the rest of Northern Ireland to follow. The suffering endured has borne the seed of solidarity and not merely of anger. The dignity of the people means that we do not look like a post-conflict society. Music and community have enabled the population to be known for its welcome and great stories.

"This is a city that can look back with compassion on the past; for it is a town that we all love so well. Phil Coulter's song doesn't forget the barbed wire and guns and the gas that hung on every breeze. But he knew the burning local pride and remembered his first pay and what he learned about life. Love changes everything and gives us eyes to see little beauties that brighten the dark. Bishop Andrew, your presence here invites us to pray together and work for a bright brand-new day".

While they gathered to remember those who had died and those who had been scarred by their deaths, Bishop Donal said they also remembered "those who risked everything as they went to

Photographs by Margaret McLaughlin Pictures, Press Photographer - 07711 932 889



help the injured", noting: "Some are here tonight, and others died on that January afternoon. We remember heroism and strength of character in those who sought and fought for the truth. And, as people of faith, we remember that there is more grace and goodness

in the world than sin and evil".

He concluded with a prayer using words of St Columba: "Be a bright light before me, O God, a guiding star above me. A smooth path below me, a kindly shepherd behind me, today, tonight and for ever."

Returning to his home city to celebrate Cathedral Mass on 50th Anniversary of Bloody Sunday, All Ireland Primate, Archbishop Eamon Martin highlighted...

We have to find ways to open ourselves to hidden truths about our past so that proper healing can happen

IF we are to unite hearts and minds and nourish a genuine hope for lasting peace and reconciliation in Ireland, then we have to work together on healing the legacy of our shared past, because peace can only flourish in the light of knowledge, truth and justice.

This thought was shared by Archbishop Eamon Martin when he returned to his home city to celebrate Mass in St Eugene's Cathedral on Sunday, January 30, to mark the 50th anniversary of Bloody Sunday.

Archbishop Eamon began his homily with the opening lines of the 'Peace Prayer' that the people of Derry in the 70s were encouraged to pray during the Troubles by the late Bishop Edward Daly, shortly after his ordination in St Eugene's - 'Oh Heavenly Father, God of love and peace, send your blessed peace into our hearts, our homes and our country'.

He recalled praying it at home at the end of the family Rosary every evening, and he also remember the day, in the mid '70s, when the people of Derry "took to the streets in their thousands praying that prayer in a great crusade for peace - calling for an end to the sectarian violence which was bringing so much death and destruction, injury and grief to our city". "Bishop Daly," he remarked, "was unequivocal in his calls and work for peace. I have no doubt that his strong opposition to violence was shaped not only by his deep

respect for all human life, but also by his first hand experience of horrific violence, death and fear on Bloody Sunday".

He added: "The horror inflicted on Derry on that day has thankfully been challenged and exposed. We are grateful for the dignity, determination and example of the families, friends and neighbours of those whose lives were so cruelly taken on 30 January 1972, just a short walk from this Cathedral".

"The shocked silence which fell on Derry when the shooting stopped around 4.40 pm that afternoon was compounded by the deliberate silence of governments and politicians who wilfully ignored the truth," stated Archbishop Eamon, adding: "Immediately the priests who had been present, tending to the wounded and dying, and many other eye witnesses, called it as it was: wilful murder; shooting indiscriminately; no provocation.

"Many years later - too many years - Lord Saville would conclude that the shooting and killing of these innocent civilians, who had not posed any kind of threat, was 'unjustified and unjustifiable'. Saville found that the soldiers, as a justification for their actions, 'knowingly put forward false accounts' about shooting at only armed targets".

Quoting more of the 'Peace Prayer' - 'O Lord Jesus, you died to make peace between God and mankind. We long for justice and peace; send us your gift of peace.' - Archbishop Eamon went on to

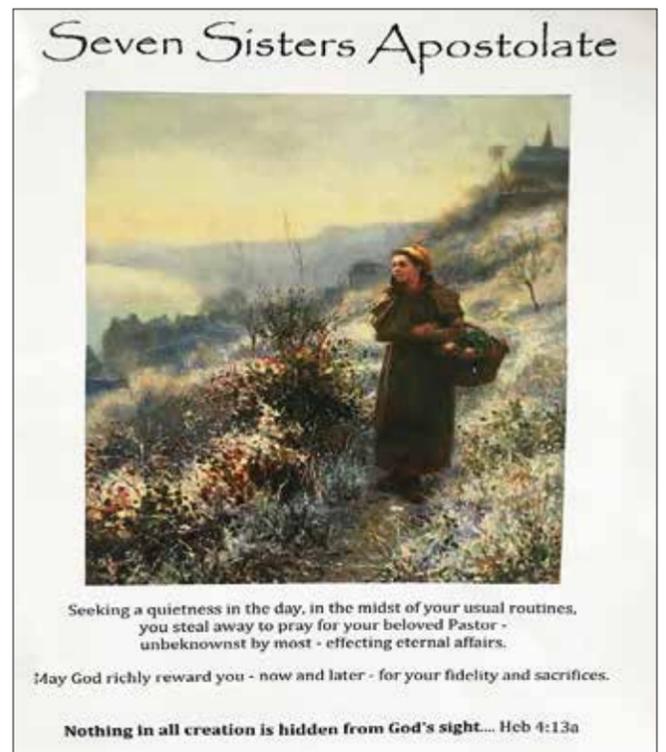
say that, even as a 10-year-old at the time, he "had a sense of the awful calumny that followed Bloody Sunday. I remember we were asked to bring to school our family's copies of the Derry Journal so that the truth could be sent out and shared around the world. The pain of loss suffered by the Bloody Sunday families continued to be sharpened for many more years by blind eyes, deaf ears and the deliberate concealment of the truth".

He continued: "Very painfully, the Bloody Sunday families were denied for too long the truth about what happened to their loved ones. And sadly they are not alone. A legacy of heartbreak, and with it, a dark shadow of secrecy, still hangs over much of our troubled past. "Many families from right across our communities still endure the anguish of not knowing why, or how their loved ones were killed or injured or punished or targeted or disappeared or defamed or locked up, or interned or otherwise banished. Their unanswered questions linger on, as a constant nagging reminder to the next generation of unfinished business, of a grief that is unsatisfied with silence, a pain that does not go away but lies beneath, an unhealed wound that is passed on to the next generation. It is difficult for them to move on. It is hurtful, as some have proposed, to expect them to simply 'draw a line' under the past".

He remarked: "Dealing with the

legacy of our past and building meaningful reconciliation is complicated and delicate. As a society we have to find ways to open ourselves to the hidden truths about our past so that proper healing can happen. We have begun to explore and build a shared vision for our future on this island. But if we are to unite hearts and minds and nourish a genuine hope for lasting peace and reconciliation in Ireland, then we have to work together on healing the legacy of our shared past, because peace can only flourish in the light of knowledge, truth and justice".

Concluding with the final words of the 'Peace Prayer' - 'O Holy Spirit, you work always for our peace. Show us the value of peace; take away all sorrow and hatred from our hearts', the All Ireland Primate said: "We know that peace is so much more than an end to war and conflict. Peace from poverty; peace from hunger; peace for those living on the streets or in camps for migrants; peace of mind and heart for those denied the truth, closure and justice both here and around the world; this is the kind of deep peace we should all strive for today. "It is the peace of Christ. Such a gift of peace would be fitting reward for those who marched on that awful day in 1972 - some of them never to march again. May they rest in the peace of the Lord, and may we live in, and build that same peace today".



Seven Sisters and Fasting Brothers Apostolate

IT is hoped to get every parish in the Derry Diocese involved in the Seven Sisters Apostolate, and the associated Fasting Brothers, as a powerful support for priests and, so in turn, parishes, in these difficult times.

The initiative is already in existence in the Diocese, with a group of seven women from the Carnhill area taking a different day in the week to offer a Holy Hour for their chosen priest, while two men have each chosen a different day to fast for the same intention.

Co-founded in St Paul Parish, Minnesota, in America, by Fr Joseph Johnson and Janette Howe, who has a son a priest, the Apostolate currently has over 2,600 groups internationally in six continents, 25 countries, all 50 USA states and most of the provinces in Canada.

The group in Carnhill, within the Three Patrons Parish, was set up two years ago this month by Bridget Cregan following a conversation with the mother of a priest friend, who asked if

she had ever heard of the Seven Sisters Apostolate, which she was a member of back home in America.

"I hadn't heard of it," recalled Bridget, "and I wouldn't be one for starting anything, but I would be close to the priest and because it was his mother who had asked me if I would consider getting involved in the Apostolate, I decided that I would and offer the prayer for him."

She explained: "I mostly asked my family if they would join me in the group, along with two other ladies from the Carnhill community. The aim is to have seven women each choose a different day in the week to offer an hour of prayer for their priest, and for a deepening devotion to Our Lady for the priest.

"As the anchoress, the main contact for the group, I emailed the Apostolate to register our group and we received the Initiation Prayer, which we came together to pray to launch our group. We have the same seven that first started out together two years ago."

This year, the group has been praying for a priest of the Three Patrons Parish and will continue to do so.

Saying that everyone in the group has always managed to do their day, Bridget added: "We set up a Whatsapp Group in case someone needed their hour covered, but it has never happened that anyone couldn't do their hour. I offered to do my niece's hour which fell on Christmas Day this year, but she said that she was fine to do it, and when my daughter was heavily pregnant, she still wanted to do her hour as well."

"Once a month, in return, the priest celebrates a Mass for the Seven Sisters and Fasting Brothers. My husband, Matthew, and son-in-law fast on the days my daughter, Seánán and I are praying our Holy Hour.

"There are a lot of graces to be had from being involved in this Apostolate, and Fr Gerard, whom we have been praying for this past year, has said that he has really felt the power of the prayer. I feel that

we need to help strengthen our priests, to have their back, and the fruits will fall on the people of the parish because of it. That has been my experience and the same for the other members of our group. They have said that they get more from the Holy Hour than they would have thought".

Appreciative

Deeply appreciative of the prayer and fasting for his ministry, Fr Gerard commented: "I am greatly humbled in realizing that, each day of the week, someone from the parish is praying a whole hour specifically for me. It has certainly influenced the way I live out my vocation. It has encouraged me to do my priestly ministry even more diligently and devoutly. It is a spiritual lift for me as a priest.

"To know people are praying for you, your intentions, is very profound and overwhelming to say the least. I know in my heart and soul that their prayers are affecting me in ways I don't understand or perceive. In this

vocation of priesthood, that God has placed me, I wouldn't want to even imagine what it would be like without their prayers. May our Lord bless them abundantly."

Welcoming the spread of the Apostolate in the Diocese, Bishop Donal remarked: "If the Lord does not build the house, in vain do the builder labour - so wrote the Psalmist".

"Thus", he added, "I welcome the Seven Sisters and Fasting Brothers Apostolate in parishes of this diocese. Pope John Paul II wrote in 2001 that all our parishes should be 'schools of prayer'. I hope that this apostolate can encourage people to develop their own prayer life as they make space for grace through time on our knees - and the discipline of fasting.

"And in these challenging times, priests need to know that people are praying for them - just as parishioners need to know that their priests are praying for those in their spiritual care. We pray - and the God of surprises will do the rest!"

It is hoped that each parish will have seven women each choosing a different day of the week to offer an hour of prayer for their priest, and hopefully six men, as there is no Sunday fasting, to choose a different day to fast for the same intentions. In parishes where there is more than one priest serving, then more than one group is set

up, with participants able to join more than one group if they wish.

Sometimes it works for a husband and wife, or some other family member, to choose the same day; the woman offering her hour of prayer, whatever hour that day that suits her, and the man doing a day's fast of whatever is manageable for him. For example, it could be fasting from social media, sweet treats, etc, if he needs to be able to eat for strength for work.

There is a prayer booklet which can be used, or the women can do their own prayer, preferably in a church, but not necessarily. It is hoped to have deanery launches for the groups, at which copies of the prayer booklet will be available.

The initial commitment is for a year, but groups in other countries find that people are usually happy to continue past that as they see the fruits of it.

Anyone interested in joining or starting a group in the Diocese is welcome to contact Bridget regarding any queries, on 07522436443 or by emailing her at bridgetcregan@hotmail.com, or Seánán at seanan.cregan@gmail.com.

The Apostolate's website can be viewed at: <http://www.sevensistersapostolate.org/> and founder, Janette Howe can be contacted by emailing sevensistersapostolate@gmail.com.

Remembering 93-year-old Sr Teresa (Brigid McGilloway) buried on Feast of St Brigid... Malin nun's ministry second only to desire to be in presence of Blessed Sacrament



Sr Teresa in the 1970s

BRIGID McGilloway was born in January 1929 to David and Celia McGilloway, Lougherbraghy, Malin Head. She was the fourth of nine children, and her father was a small farmer on marginal land near the Ben Gorms cliffs. He kept a few cows, some sheep and two horses for farm work and cut turf on the nearby hill for themselves and for sale.

They lived in a traditional two-roomed thatched cottage. Brigid's mother, Celia, looked after the house and the children – baking, churning, knitting and spinning their own wool. Celia and Brigid's older sisters crocheted lace – gloves and trimmings for soutanes and altar cloths.

Brigid went to Urrblereagh National School when she was six – a walk of three miles from her home. It was a three-teacher school and lessons were mostly through Irish. Religion played a natural part in their lives, both at school and at home, from the family Rosary at night and the making of St Brigid's crosses, to the trip in the jaunting car to Lagg Church on Sunday mornings for Mass. Brigid enjoyed school and had a happy childhood with her siblings, until her older sister, Sadie died after a year's illness, when she was aged 18 and Brigid 14.

On completing her Primary Certificate, her teacher, Master Jimmy Doherty (Jack), gave her special lessons after school so that she could sit the Civil Service entrants exam – which she duly passed. Brigid wanted to work in Donegal and as there was only one Civil Service position available in the county that year, which she didn't get, she went to work in Malin Head Post Office in 1947, where she quickly became one of the family. She then worked in Culdaff Post Office from 1950 to 1954.

As a young woman, Brigid had many friends and enjoyed socialising and dancing like all the other young people her age, and

had several boyfriends.

Aged 25, Brigid entered the Convent of Mercy in Newry, Co Down, on December 8, 1954. She was received on July 14, 1955, professed on July 19, 1957, and made her final profession as Sr Teresa in the convent chapel in 1960.

Sr Teresa began her working career in a secretarial capacity in Our Lady's Grammar School, Newry. Although she wrote home regularly and her family visited her on occasion, she wasn't allowed home from the convent until 1962, prior to leaving for Alabama. Then, she and Sr Perpetua spent a week in the Glen and borrowed John's precious Morris Minor to attend daily mass in Malin Head.

Later in 1962, she joined the Sisters of Mercy Foundation at St Dominic's Parish, Mobile, Alabama, USA. There she completed her teacher training and taught in St Dominic's school, Mobile, until she came back to Ireland in 1971.

On her return to Newry, Sr Teresa re-trained for her new role, in Religious Formation. She became Novice Mistress in the Catherine Street Convent in 1972, as well as teaching full-time in the Primary School in Bessbrook, Warrenpoint, and then in St Joseph's Convent Primary School, in Newry, adjacent to the Convent.

She now could visit home regularly. She got to know her siblings again and her many nieces and nephews, to whom she became Auntie Brigid, Sr Brigid or even just 'the Nun'. She delighted in attending various family functions and her brother, John often remarked that the convent had taught her to sing! She kept up-to-date on news relating to family, relations and neighbours, and anyone who was sitting exams, or sick, or had bother in their lives, were always included in her prayers.

She retired from teaching in June 1994, after 20 years as an educator.

However, Sr Teresa may have reached 'retirement age', but she wasn't for retiring!

In 1996, at the age of 67, she took on yet another new venture and headed to the Mercy mission in Minna, Nigeria, West Africa, which was established in 1975 by the Mercy Sisters from Strabane. For Sr Teresa, it was a new culture, a new language, and a new and harsh climate. She wrote home as often as she could and described her living and working conditions in Nigeria. She always asked after all the family at home and requested everyone to keep up their prayers for her work in Maikunkele. She continued to teach, but this time it was young women, who in turn would become the class teachers in a fledgling nursery/primary school, which was founded three years earlier.

Her family and community backing, both spiritual and monetary, during this time was so precious to her. She often spoke of the enormous support she had from 'home' and that was Malin Head! She loved her family, and nothing gave her more joy than heading off to Donegal at any opportunity, home to her sisters and her brother, John, who was the light of her life!

In Maikunkele, Nigeria, Sr Teresa is still held in high esteem. She is remembered for her great wisdom, care, and compassion. She instilled in the young women the love of teaching, and many of her teachers are still at the school, now mothers themselves and taking their own children to school. She was known as 'Kaka', a term of endearment, meaning the Elder, the wise one, the Grandmother to all.

Sr Teresa returned to Newry in 2005, still not ready to retire! When the need arose, she stepped in to bring the Blessed Sacrament to the residents of Our Mother of Mercy Home, on the other side of the town.

Sr Teresa was a woman of great faith and outstanding courage and trust in her God, and a very independent lady. Her commitment to her ministry was only second to her desire to be in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. Throughout her life she spent long hours in the convent chapel. Her prayer life was paramount and daily Mass, when possible, was the centre of her day. She had special devotion to the Little Flower. Her motto in religious life was 'To Jesus through Mary.'

She died on January 29, 2022, aged 93 years and, after a touching funeral Mass in the convent chapel in Newry, she was buried in her beloved Lagg, Malin Head, Co Donegal, with her parents and her brother, John, on St Brigid's Day.

Go nDéana Dia Trócaire ar a hanam.



D O'Kane, Fr McKee, Eddie McGilloway, middle, Patricia, Teresa and Mary McGilloway, and front. Celia, Brigid and David.



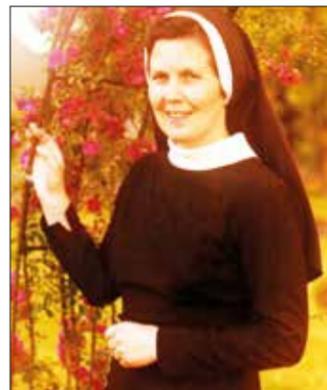
Sr Teresa with the Chapel Crib in Maikunkele, Minna, Nigeria, on Christmas Day 1998



McGilloway family, August 1994 - John, Eddie, Brigid (Sr Teresa), David A, Mary, Frances, Teresa and Patricia



Sr Teresa on Golden Jubilee of her Profession, in Malin Hotel on August 1, 2007, with David A, Teresa, Frances, Mary, Patricia and John.



Sr Teresa, July 14, 1975.



Eangach

Ár nDúchas

Naomh Bríd

A Bhríd, bí linn nuair a thig an tachrán isteach agus ascallán feagacha léi ag iarraidh fáilte agus i ag scairteadh — oscail agus lig Bríd isteach! 'Sé beatha, 'sé beatha, 'sé beatha na mná uaisle!

A Bhríd, bí linn nuair a chasaimid feagacha thart mar bheadh lámha an chloig ag tiontú in aghaidh an lae, ach casta thart ar a chéile i bhfoirm croise. Bí linn nuair a dhéanaimid ag tús an earraigh é.

A Bhríd, bí linn nuair a chuirimid crois in airde i bhfrathacha an tí agus thíos ag doras an bhóithigh le cosaint a iarraidh don chlann agus iomlán an eallaigh, is don bhliain úr romhainn anseo os comhair an teallaigh.

A Bhríd, bí linn agus treoraigh muid slán go deo i dtreo an Chríost, mar a rinne tú féin fadó i gceantar Chill Dara le feagacha ón urlár mhór casta ar a chéile agus scéal na páise i do ghlór.

'Sé beatha, 'sé beatha, 'sé beatha an Slánaitheoir!

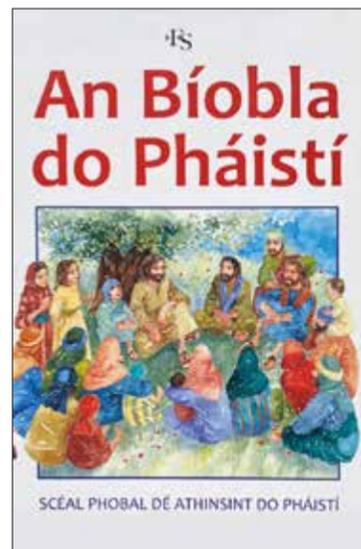
(Brúitíní Creidimh)

Chun Bríde Naofa

A Bhríd, a Mhuire na nGael, a Bhríd, scaoil tharam do bhrat agus coinnigh faoi do chumhdach mé go mbeidh mé leat i bhFlaitheas Dé. (Ár bPaidreacha Dúchais 530)

Foilseacháin Ábhair Spioradálta: Ár bPaidreacha Dúchais, le Diarmuid Ó Laoire SJ, Brúitíní Creidimh, le Pádraig Ó Croiligh.

Íosa leis na Páistí



An Bíobla.

Sa bhliain 2021 d'fhoilsigh Foilseacháin Ábhair Spioradálta leabhar scéalta le hAileen McBride — scéalta do pháistí bunaithe ar scéalta ón Bhíobla. Bainfidh daoine óga an-tairbhe astu, agus féadfaidh múinteoirí iad a úsáid sa seomra ranga.

Is múinteoir bunscóile í Aileen, a rugadh i gContae Ceatharlach, agus atá ina cónaí anois i mBaile Munna i mBaile Átha Cliath, mar a mbíonn sí páirteach i saol pharóiste Naomh Phapáin. Ba é athair Aileen a spreag a spéis sa scéalaíocht, agus bíonn sí ag obair mar scéalaí — ag insint scéalta trí Bhéarla agus trí Ghaeilge — i scoileanna, i leabharlanna, agus ag féilte éagsúla ar fud na tíre.

Seo scéal as an leabhar nua: 'Scéalta ón mBíobla do Pháistí.'

D'imigh Íosa ó áit go háit ag caint

agus ag múineadh faoin ngrá mór atá ag Dia do gach aon duine dinn. Tháinig daoine ón timpeallacht chun éisteach leis. Tháinig na fir, na haoirí, na hiascairí; tháinig na mná, na máithreacha, na seantuistí; agus tháinig na páistí, na déagóirí, na leanaí agus na naíonáin. I gcónaí bhíodh slua mór ann.

Lá amháin tar éis bheith ag caint agus ag múineadh an lá ar fad, bhí an-tuirse ar Íosa. D'fhág sé na haspail agus d'imigh sé go háit chiúin chun sos a ghlacadh ina aonar.

Ach tháinig máithreacha lena leanaí agus Íosa ag glacadh sosa. "Cá bhfuil Íosa", ar siadsan. "Ba mhaith linn é a fheiceáil; ba mhaith linn go dtabharfadh sé beannacht dár bpáistí."

"Tá Íosa an-ghnóthach", arsa na haspail. "Níl an t-am aige beannacht a thabhairt do pháistí. Ná bígí ag cur isteach air; imígí libh." Agus chuir siad na mná abhaile lena bpáistí. Ach chuala Íosa iad agus ní raibh sé sásta.

"Ná cuirigí na páistí uaim," arsa Íosa. "Ligigí isteach iad. Tá gach páiste an-tábhachtach do Dhia; tá an-ghrá ag Dia do gach páiste; ná diúltaigí cead isteach dóibh. Agus éistigí," arsa Íosa, "mura féidir libhse — na daoine fásta — a bheith cosúil le páistí óga, ní bheidh sibh in ann teacht ar neamh."

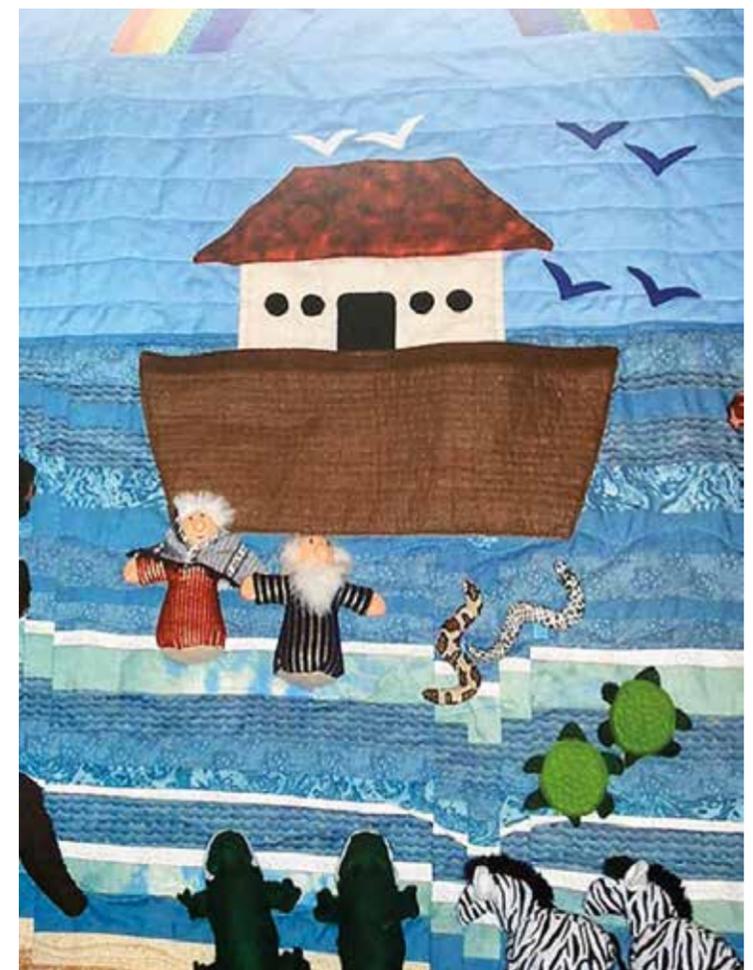
Agus shuigh Íosa síos faoi chrann leis na páistí. Thug sé beannacht do

gach aon duine díobh, agus d'inis sé dóibh faoin ngrá mór atá ag Dia do gach aon duine, agus go mór mór do na páistí.

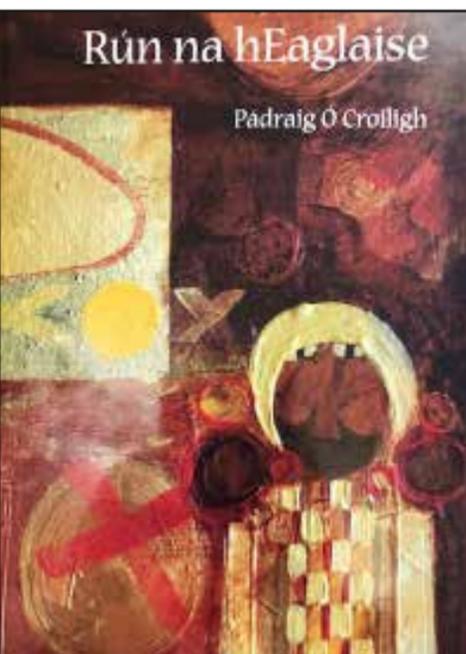
Buíochas do Foilseacháin Ábhair Spioradálta.



Méaracáin Síogaí.



Bád Naoi.



Saothrú na hAontachta

Is é an tuairim atá ag an domhan gurb é an sonas saolta an rud is tábhachtaí i saol na lánúine, agus má imíonn sé sin gur chóir dóibh scaradh ó chéile, "ar mhaithe leis na páistí". Ach má amharcann tú ar an phósadh faoi léas na hEaglaise, is cirte a rá go dtiocfaidh an sonas má shaothraíonn tú an aontacht. Más féidir leis an lánúin aontacht a lorg ina saol ó thaobh ama agus áite, is iontach mar is féidir feabhas a chur ar a muintearas. Nárbh é Íosa féin a dúirt ag an Suipeár Dheireanach agus é ag guí leis na deisceabail: go mba aon iad. Tá a fhios agam go mbíonn sé seo ag

tagairt d'aontacht na hEaglaise, agus d'aontacht na ndeisceabal a bhí i láthair, ach feictear dom go bhféadfadh sé go mbeadh ciall leis agus muid ag tagairt don lánúin, agus do dhá phearsa na lánúine, go mba aon iad.

Caithfidh an lánúin an aontacht seo a shaothrú agus a bheith ag obair chuige. Ní thiofadh leat a rá go raibh lánúin ag iarraidh aontacht a chothú eatarthu féin mura gcaithfeadh siad am le chéile, nó mura mbeadh siad mórán san áit chéanna ag an am chéanna. Is iomaí lánúin na laethanta seo nach gcastar ar a

chéile ach ag an doras, duine ag teacht agus duine ag imeacht. Uaireanta bíonn ar lánúin athraithe a dhéanamh i bpleanáil na beatha laethúla ionas go bhfaighidh siad am le chéile. Níl mé ag maíomh gur chóir rud costasach a dhéanamh as seo. Is iomaí tráthnóna grámhar a caitheadh agus gan ag an lánúin ach sceallóga agus cóla!

Agus níl rud ar bith is mó a thógann croí na bpáistí, is cuma cén aois iad, ná iad pilleadh chun tí agus athair agus máthair in éineacht le chéile sa teach. Is fusa i bhfad forbairt a dhéanamh ar

urnaí an teaghlaigh chomh maith má bhíonn lánúin le feiceáil le chéile ina dteach féin in amanna. Agus ní rud cianaosta agus as faisean é urnaí teaghlaigh. Má chreidimid i nDia agus i saol na hEaglaise, agus má chreidimid go bhfuil saol an teaghlaigh bunaithe thart ar shacraimint an phósta tá sé bunúsach go mbeadh urnaí le chéile sa teach.

(Buíochas le Foilseacháin Ábhair Spioradálta.)

Derry Diocese steps out on its Synodal Journey

by Janet Forbes

BACK in October 2021, Pope Francis opened preparations for the 2023 Synod of Bishops' Gathering in Rome which will focus on the theme "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission". In simple terms, this Synod focuses on how we are operating and journeying as a Church in this third millennium.

The invitation that Pope Francis has extended to all inside and outside the Church, invites each person across the globe to reflect on their experience of Church and articulate their own sense of where God can be found in their community, their lives and, indeed, in the world at large.

The concept and language of Synodality is something new and perhaps difficult for many to understand, yet it offers great promise for the future in that it is grounded in an ancient way of being Church that stretches back to the earliest Church communities of the first millennium.

A synodal Church is one that listens deeply, journeys with all God's people regardless of their position in Church and society, and, most importantly, a Synodal Church respects the gifts we each have by virtue of our baptism and the fraternal bonds that this calls us to as Catholic Christians living

in community.

This Synod on Synodality represents the largest consultation of all God's People in recent, if not all of Church history and, therefore, this unique moment is to be seen as special. The Diocese of Derry has taken Pope Francis' invitation seriously and, after forming a Synodal committee, has developed a listening and consultation process that all parishes and communities have readily engaged in planning over the past few months.

There has been a series of webinars on Synodality that have been well attended across the Diocese, and four training days for Parish Synod facilitation teams have taken place in the Inishowen, Co Derry, Co Tyrone and Derry City Deaneries.

In March and April, across the Diocese of Derry, people from all walks of life are being asked to engage in spiritual conversations facilitated in each parish community. These conversations will call us to listen deeply to others, whilst speaking courageously and freely about our own experiences of Church. Invariably, such conversations will be challenging, and each person is called to encounter those who hold opinions vastly different from their own with humility

and a deep sense of respect and reverence.

On commencing this journey, the Holy See in Rome produced a series of documents to help each Diocese and their communities on the journey to the October 2023 Synod. In one of those documents, the Vademecum, we are warned of the "The temptation to treat the Synod as a kind of a parliament" and that these conversations should not be treated as a "political battle in which, in order to govern, one side must defeat the other".

This Synodal pathway and the Synodal church it strives to create is one whereby the Holy Spirit is the agent and one whereby prayer, encounter and relationship are the primary characteristics.

My own experience of Synodality is one that stretches back to studies at Boston College's School of Theology and Ministry with a Venezuelan theologian, Rafael Luciani, who has now been appointed to the theological Commission for this Synod convened by Pope Francis.

Like many I meet in the work I am now engaged in, the learning curve around Synod and the language of Synodality was a steep but graced one, and what strikes me most now is the fact that it was not in learning the vocabulary of Synodality, or the Theology

that underpins it, that allowed me to grasp this way of being Church, but by walking the path in a diverse, open and faith filled community which was orientated to Sharing the Good News with all.

We have just celebrated the 1500th anniversary of the birth of St Colmcille, Patron Saint of Derry Diocese, known as the dove of the Church. It strikes me that the community in Iona that St Columba founded saw the Holy Spirit not as a peaceful dove, but as a wild goose; a wild goose that disrupts, challenges and breaks the peace.

The Synodal pathway in situated by Pope Francis is only the beginning of a longer journey and the way ahead will be challenging as we endeavour to learn this new way of being Church, but it also offers hope and the promise of a vibrant and authentic way of living our Catholic Christian faith.

I encourage all across the Derry Diocese to engage in the spiritual conversations in your parishes, and invite you to welcome those you know and love who have, perhaps, stepped away from the Church.

(Janet is an Irish Synodal Task Group member)

Co Derry Deanery



Inishowen Deanery



Tyrone Deanery



Deanery synodal sessions encouraging by Bishop Donal

PART of building a more collaborative church is developing each parish's skills in listening to the Holy Spirit and to each other. Our Deanery meetings have been aimed at helping each parish to promote prayerful listening in each parish community.

It is easy enough to facilitate a session where people can air their concerns, and sometimes get anger or hurt out of their system.

However, prayerful listening is not a group therapy course! But it does involve skills in hearing the sometimes angry words that people use – and hearing what God may be saying to us through

those words.

Similarly, the Holy Spirit will also be asking us to put out into the deep...when we would rather fish in the harmless shallows!

I have been very encouraged by the level of engagement from

people of all ages from so many parishes. There is still a great fund of good will. There are still people who want the message of Christ to get out into the pain and stress that many communities suffer.

This is just the first stage of a

journey. It is a time for spring cleaning, for digging up the soil so that we can bear rich fruit in Christ's name. But unless we do that work, starting from where we are, we will not be salt to the earth and light to the world.



Synodality...A change of time

by Fr Peter Madden

IN 1953, Pope Pius XII, with the encyclical 'Fulgens Corona' (Radiant Crown) ordered a Marian Year for 1954, the first in Church history. It was called to commemorate the centenary of the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary.

The Marian Year, which ran from December 1953 to December 1954, was filled with Marian initiatives, in the areas of Mariology, cultural events, and charity and social gatherings.

What that meant in practical terms in parishes all across Ireland was special Masses, devotions, processions, Marian Shrines and, practically in every parish, the building of a Parochial Hall, under the patronage of Mary.

Marian Halls became the centre of parish life for many years and Desertmartin Parish was no exception. St Mary's Hall opened that same year, 1954 and up until the pandemic it was an active centre of parish and community life. It is slowly reopening now, week on week, and on Saturday, January 29, 2022, it hosted the parishes of the Co Derry Deanery for what was called a Facilitation Day for the upcoming Parish Synod Conversations.

Knocknagin Hall Committee were generous hosts and, as well as providing a warm welcome and regular cups of tea and coffee and a lovely lunch, the Co Derry Deanery availed of the great facilities the hall now boasts. On behalf of the Synod Team and all who attended, a big thank you.

Over the past five months, myself and others that make up the Diocesan Synod Team (Bishop Donal, Tony Brennan, Lizzie Rea, Dympna Kelly, Anne Friel and Mark McConnellogue) have met frequently to read over the Synod material being sent from Rome, and to discern how we can best use it to facilitate a conversation about faith in our Diocese of Derry.

As we met in the Cathedral Hall to ponder and discuss, to pray and discern, and on occasions share a pizza or two, I couldn't help

compare the model of church as lived for example in 1954, when St Mary's Hall in Desertmartin was built and Pope Pius XII sat on a papal throne, to the church as we experience it today, with all its faults and failings, under the leadership of Pope Francis.

His Jesuit formation and life experiences have given him a vision for the Church, a vision of a Church familiar to Peter and Paul's understanding and experience of church and that of the early followers of Jesus. Pope Francis wants the Church to resemble that first early Church model, back to the days when a papal throne would have been a misnomer and the entire people of God believed the Holy Spirit spoke through them as well.

The title 'Body of Christ' wasn't a pious cliché but a real expression of how the faithful, the people of God, viewed their place in the Church. There were still leaders, bishops they were called, even Peter was more of a bishop than a pope, but the people of God understood they had a calling too, to listen to the Holy Spirit. It wasn't an add-on to make them feel more involved in a male hierarchical structure, but a real calling from God to live life in the power of the Holy Spirit. Everyone had a part to play to build up the Church on earth.

Conversations

Everyone still has a part to play and that is why the conversations that Pope Francis is inviting us to have in our parishes are so important. They are only the beginning of rediscovering this ancient paradigm, a gateway into understanding this model of Church that is as old as the Church itself, but must be lived anew each day and by every generation.

Essentially, Pope Francis wants the people of God to tell him what it is like to be a Catholic today. What is it like to believe in God as a Catholic? What are its blessings? What are its comforts? What makes it difficult? What would you change if you could and why?



Janet Forbes and Laurie Randal, who led the Synod Listening Facilitation training sessions in the Diocese.

How challenging is it to pass faith in God on to older children who seem not to want it anymore? How could the Church help? So many questions. So many points of view. So much to say and the Pope is asking us to provide the space for it all to be said.

But Pope Francis is very clear about the 'Conversations'. They are not debates. He does not want the conversations to descend into arguments over different issues, not because he wants to silence dissent of any kind but he wants us to begin to understand what real discernment involves.

The word 'discernment' means the quality of being able to grasp and comprehend what is obscure. But biblical discernment means more. The fundamental definition for Christian discernment is a decision-making process in which an individual makes a discovery that can lead to future action. In the process of Christian Spiritual discernment God guides the individual to help them arrive at the best decision. So, it's about more than having your say. It's also about God having a say too, and we learn over time to listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Pope Francis has provided an outline we are to follow when having our conversations that every parish in the world is obliged to follow, whatever plans are in place. The conversations are to begin with prayer and reflection and conclude with prayer as well.

They are not just conversations but 'Listening Conversations'.

Is there a difference? Yes, and the difference is in the space someone is given to have their say and their willingness not to expect an answer at that meeting. The facilitators who will convene the meeting are not expected to have any answers. That is not their purpose. They will have their own opinions etc, but they will not be allowed to express them. Their role is to make sure everyone has their say and that everyone is heard respectfully.

At every 'Listening Conversation', there will be recorders taking notes so that we will feedback to our diocese an accurate account of what has been said. The diocese will then forward to the Irish Episcopal Conference the collected views of the people of God in the Diocese of Derry and, in time, the bishops of Ireland will forward to Pope Francis the views of the entire people of God in the Catholic Church in Ireland.

Each parish will make its own arrangements and plans as to when and where these 'Listening Conversations' will take place. Please check out your own parish webpage, Facebook and weekly bulletin for news of the 'Listening Conversations' arranged for your parish.

For more information on the Synod and to view the many imaginative and detailed resources, go to: synod@derrydiocese.org

Carnhill Holy Hour for Synodal Pathway

THE next monthly Holy Hour take place on Saturday, February 26, after the 6 pm Mass. in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, will



Derry City Deanery



Brigid – A saint for today’s Church

by Grainne Doherty



Gráinne Doherty, Merville.

ACCORDING to various legends, St Brigid was an expert at straddling two different realities simultaneously. We see this in different ways. We are told that she was born in the doorway – half inside and half outside – of her home. Her entry into the world occurred just as the first rays of the morning sun broke through the night sky.

Her death occurred on February 1 (c.524) – marking the transition of the darkness of winter into the awakening of the new life of the Celtic ‘Imbolc’ (or spring).

Her mother, Broicseach, was a Christian and a slave-woman, while her father, Dubhthach, was a wealthy pagan.

She connects two forms of religious belief, as many of the values and virtues attributed to Brigid the ‘saint’ have strong echoes with Brigit, the ‘goddess’ of pre-Christian Ireland.

For these and many other reasons, St Brigid is a powerful symbol of liminality – those times that mark a time of transition or ‘in betweenness’ in our lives. Being in a liminal place signifies the experience of knowing that certainties that we previously held – certainties that informed the values and direction of our lives – are behind us, while what will take their place remains unclear and unknown.

Liminality involves feeling

anxious and lacking direction, while at the same time, being aware that it can also be filled with rich potentiality and possibility. It is the space when you are ‘on the verge’ of something new: you are between ‘what was’ and ‘what will be’. You are waiting and not knowing what will come.

It is precisely this sense of ‘in betweenness’ associated with St Brigid that especially speaks to our Church today.

At the moment, the Derry diocese, as part of its response to Pope Francis’ invitation to contributing to the 2023 Synod of Bishops, is entering into a period of listening to people’s experience of, and hopes for, the Church. The word ‘synod’ has been part of the Church’s history almost since its beginning 2,000 years ago, but is being given a whole new lease of life and understanding under Pope Francis.

Since becoming Pope in 2013, Francis has called four synods. These are large gatherings, not only of bishops but of increasing numbers of laity as well. All work together to look at what is happening in the Church at the moment and discern ways to move forward. ‘Synod’ comes from a Greek word and means ‘along the path’, and has grown to mean the path along which the whole Church, lay and ordained, walks together, sharing their concerns and hopes of what the Church is being called to become.

There is little doubt that the local Church of our parishes and our diocese, as well as the wider national and universal Church, is currently in a liminal place – many of the previous certainties have disappeared, while the shape of what is to come is yet unclear. Such change should not surprise us. The very fact that we are called a ‘pilgrim’ Church and are, therefore, ever-changing and moving, and because our core belief as a Church is that it is ‘incarnational’, meaning that God is constantly being revealed to us in new ways, demands that

we are always being called into a place of liminality.

Celebrating the feast day of St Brigid, while at the same time, reflecting on the current synodal listening process, I was struck by how much we can learn from our female patron saint at this time in the Church. Being born on her home’s threshold represents her ability to stand between two ways of being and show us different perspectives on particular situations, where we might be instinctively inclined to see things from just one point of view. She is a woman of two worlds, of two states of mind, of two ways of seeing the world. The Church and the world need that bigness of vision at this time.

This wider perspective is being reflected in the rising popular appeal of Brigid to an increasingly wide variety of groups. It was announced in recent weeks that from next year, in the Irish republic, a national public holiday will be accorded to St Brigid, and for the first time this week, Dublin’s Lord Mayor held a special St Brigid’s Day festival which encompassed the whole city. Alongside these events, a week-long festival rooted in Celtic spirituality organised every year by the Brigidine sisters in Kildare, becomes increasingly popular.

Pope Francis wants the upcoming synod to highlight and respond to the daily reality of oppression and voicelessness of almost half of the world’s population who live in extreme poverty. The many stories of St Brigid giving to the poor (remember the story of her father’s jewelled sword?) are an example that challenge us to be a Church that does the same, while her famous cloak that mythically spread far and wide, calls on us to be a Church that embraces and envelopes every person equally – regardless of class, colour, sexual orientation, or gender.

Events such as those already mentioned, highlight how the

symbol of a Brigid that reflects both Christian and pagan parts of our history speak not only to those who choose to remain within the Church at this time, but also to the very many who have become disaffected and disillusioned with established religion, and yet search for a spirituality and ritual that feeds their ongoing sense of the divine in the world and in their lives.

The example of St Brigid’s establishing monastic communities of learning for both women and men, and her having, during her life, the status of a bishop – as well as challenging patriarchal systems that legitimised various forms of oppression, such as widespread poverty, and her mother’s slavery, bear witness to women’s capacity for leadership in the Church of today.

Finally, at a time when Pope Francis reminds us that caring for the environment is a constitutive part of our faith, we can learn much from the many stories about St Brigid that tell of her milking the cows, churning the milk, helping with the harvest, and even brewing the ale! Attuned to the seasons and cycles of nature, in keeping with her Celtic tradition, she valued the elements of nature: earth, air, fire and water.

And so, the ability of St Brigid to live in that liminal space, on the threshold between the certainties of the past, and trusting in the untapped potential of an unknown future, can speak deeply to our journeying forward as both a local and universal Church today. Living in such a space demands our trusting in the creative power of the Spirit.

As Pope Francis famously reflects: “I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty, because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security.”

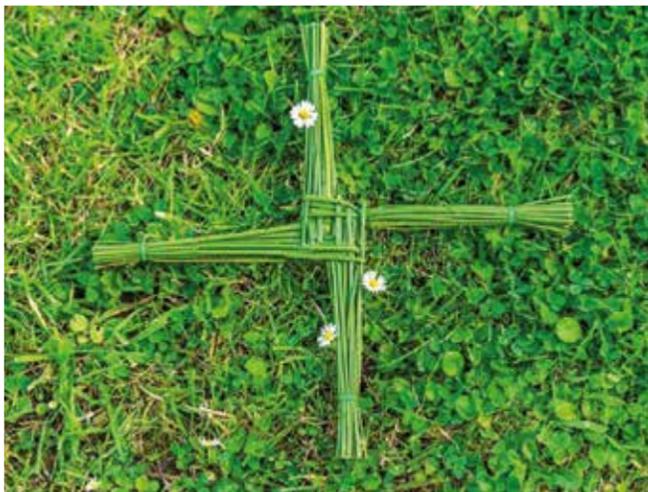


Desertmartin



Culmore





Honouring St Brigid – Mary of the Gael

FEBRUARY is the month in which we celebrate the Feast of St Brigid - known as Mary of the Gael and one of Ireland's three Patron Saints, who once said, "Christ dwells in every creature".

A perpetual flame burned in Kildare in pre-Christian times and was kept alight by Brigid and her nuns until the 16th Century. In Christian tradition, the flame is a symbol of the Holy Spirit.

Today, we are called to be 'little lights' of hope fuelled by the

Holy Spirit, and reflecting on the following prayer attributed to St Brigid, a number of people from across the Diocese have penned prayers for themselves, their families, our Church and our world, with some writing in a style similar to that used here...

I would like the angels of Heaven to be among us.

I would like an abundance of peace.

I would like full vessels of charity.

I would like rich treasures of mercy.

I would like Jesus to be present.

I would like the three Marys of illustrious renown to be with us.

I would like the friends of Heaven to be gathered around us, from all parts.

I would like myself to be a rent payer to the Lord;

That should I suffer distress,

He would bestow a good blessing upon me.

The people of Brigid's time believed that there was a peace in her blessing, that disagreements

dissolved in her presence and healings occurred at the touch of her hand. May her will for "an abundance of peace", "full vessels of charity" and "rich treasures of mercy", be ours today and spread out as her cloak once did, passing from person to person to cover all the land under her patronage, keeping the light of faith burning so that the angels of Heaven, the "three Marys of illustrious renown", the friends of Heaven, and Jesus may be amongst us.

Thanksgiving Prayer by Search Youth Group



Search Youth Group, Derry.

We pray in thanks for St Bridget:
for the role model that she is
for young women in our community;
for all the good works she has done,
and continues to do in Jesus' name.

We give thanks for the power of the Holy Spirit
and how it continues to work in each of our lives,
even if we don't always recognise it.
Our faith allows us to have deeper
and more connected relationships,
we give thanks to God for all of our 'Faith Friendships'.

As young people, we see how 'society' can cast shadows of shame,
guilt and pain in our lives,
we give thanks for the truth in the Bible
that reminds us that we are loved children of God.

We continue to pray for all of those in our society
who are suffering in any way,
that they can find comfort in God's word.
We are grateful for Search,
and the spaces that it creates for us
to continue to grow and develop in our faith.

We give thanks for the gifts of joy and laughter,
and how we can use these
to be beacons of light for others.
We ask all the angels and saints to bless us
and give us grace,
so that we can continue to spread Jesus' message
of Peace, Hope and Love.
Amen

Thornhill Year 13 Pope John Paul II Award students share... Prayers of the youth

*I would like to ask for us all today,
the courage to do God's bidding,
whatever the world may say,
the grace to be strong and valiant,
the grace to be strong and true,
the grace to be faithful always to God.*

(Jessica Kelly)

I would like...

*Peace, Health,
No hunger in the world,
For the world to be greener,
To give to charities,
Hope in the world and
Love in communities.*

(Anna McMonagle)

*I would like peace in the world.
I would like the pandemic to stop
taking over people's lives.
I would like everyone to feel safe in
the world, especially women.
I would like everyone to be accepted
for who they are.*

*I would like everyone to feel happy.
I would like all my family to keep
healthy throughout the year.
I would like the world to be a safer
and cleaner place.*

(Cora Biggs)

*I would like compassion and
kindness to be our guide,
Everyone to be kinder to the*

*environment,
My family to be protected from
sickness and harm,
The pandemic to come to an end
and return to normal life,
The courage to do God's bidding,
The grace to be faithful always,
The grace to be firm and true.*

(Lauren Devenney)

*I would like peace amidst society.
I would like charitable voices within
the world.
I would like hope to prosper
amongst everyone.*

*I would like to grant freedom to
those trapped.*

*I would like to spread kindness
between communities.*

*I would like to keep the spirit alive
in all parts of the earth.*

*I would like to thank all those who
spread faith throughout the globe.*

(Kadee Mc Cauley)

*Lord, thank you for your
faithfulness in me, my family and
those around us.*

Thank you for your patience.

Thank you for your hope.

*And mostly we thank you for your
forgiveness.*

*Help me to live the life I live right
now, in the present moment, and
to find acceptance in the mistakes I*



*make, help me to learn from them.
Help me to find strength in you
to continue on everyday and find
opportunity in anything I can.
Help me to find forgiveness in those
who have wronged me.
I believe that you will guide me
through my battles and allow me to
show love and kindness through my
actions Thank you, Lord, for giving
me the gift of guiding.*

(Amie Donaghey)

*I have hope for all of the children
who have been affected by hardship.
I have hope for all of the families
detrimentally affected by COVID.
I have hope for all those who have
lost their jobs and struggling for
basic means.*

*I have hope for humanity to come
together in preventing
and overcoming the effects of
climate change.*

*I have hope that all people will come
together and donate whenever they
can to starving children.*

*I have hope that every person will
learn to love and respect their
neighbour.*

*I have hope that in the face of
adversity, we can come together
and support one another I have
hope that good faith and the
practice of kindness will be restored.
I have hope that those who have
passed away have found peace
and their families have solace.*

(Niamh O Kane)

Love from our hearts by Annie Mullan

IF we truly love God, we will love one another. When we love one another we will love God, because God is love. Our blessed Mother Mary leads us to the love of her Son. She desires for us, as her children, to open the door of our hearts so Jesus can pour His love deep down where no one else can reach.

She wants us to pray with our whole heart and to open ourselves to God our Creator, to adore and venerate the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, in reparation for our sins and for all who have not yet come to know the love of God.

The enemy wants to disorder our hearts, he wants to distract us and keep us from prayer, but our hearts must be united in Christian love and mercy.

We pray, God, give us abundant

graces through Mary's Immaculate Heart. Let us kneel at the foot of the cross and look at Jesus with the eyes of our heart. In His mercy, He suffered and died for us so that we may have eternal life in Heaven. May our hearts be permeated in God's love.

In simplicity and prayer from our listening hearts, we can truly live our faith, this beautiful gift from which flows love, peace, hope, and joy. Let our hearts glorify the name of God and Heaven will reign in our hearts. Great is the Divine love of God, may we dwell in His Heart forever.

"I need nothing but God and to lose myself in the Heart of Jesus" (St Margaret Mary).

"Let us love, since that is what our hearts were made for" (St Therese).

"O Loving Host my one and only strength, fountain of love and mercy, fortify faint souls. O blessed be the instant and moment when Jesus left us His most merciful heart" (St Faustina).

"Our hearts won't rest until they rest in you" (St Augustine).

And let's not forget our very own St Brigid...

Eternal Father, we praise you for raising up St Brigid, Queen of the Gael, full of faith, love and charity, her heart knew no bounds.

Help us, St Brigid, by your example to renew our hearts.

Intercede for us that the light of faith in Irish hearts will never extinguish. Like you, may we be rooted in prayer and good deeds for each other, may



Annie Mullan, Claudy.

our trust in God be our stronghold; The God who loves us faithfully. St Brigid, pray for us.

Brigid – voice for wounded and weary

by Sr Margaret McConalogue

*Brigid, you were a woman of peace.
You brought harmony where there was conflict.
You brought light to the darkness.
You brought hope to the downcast.
May the mantle of your peace cover those who are troubled and anxious.
May peace be firmly rooted in our hearts
and in our world.
Inspire us to act justly
and to reverence all that God has made.*

*Brigid, you were a voice for the wounded
and the weary.
Strengthen what is weak within us.
Calm us into a quietness that heals and listens.
May we grow each day into greater wholeness
in mind, body and spirit.
Guide our Irish Church today
as you did while on this land of ours.*

*Brigid, you led the Irish Church in the ways of wisdom,
unity and hospitality in your time.
Bless us now with listening hearts,
as we discern together
the promptings of the Holy Spirit among us today.
May we respect our differences
and encourage each other
on our Synodal path,
towards a renewed Church for our time.
Amen.*



Sr Margaret McConalogue, Culmore.

Hope by Sharon Gorman

*Beloved Jesus,
Light of thy earth,
I see your glory,
I feel your presence among us,
I see your plan for our salvation,
I see a new dawn of grace,
I see a unity of hearts,
I see illumination of souls,
I see waves of faith and hope,
I see a united church,
Wrapped in garments of love.
I see the holy angels and saints,
I see man coming together as one,
I see peace and love,
I see harmony of nations,*



Sharon Gorman, Galliagh.

*I see how blessed we are
as children of God. Amen*

May the heart of Jesus rest within me by Patricia Casey

*I ask for the grace to be merciful.
I ask for love of Jesus to be present in my heart.
I ask for light to show me the path I am to walk.
I ask for patience for myself and others.
I ask the three Marys of illustrious renown to be my friends.
I ask to have and to be an instrument of peace.
May the Heart of Jesus rest within me, as I adore Thee.
Amen*



Patricia Casey, Kilrea.

A Prayer to St Brigid by Noel Bradley

I welcome and rejoice and give thanks to God that our government has made you our National Patron Saint, along with St Patrick, and that you will be celebrated with a national holiday every 1st of February. It seems only right that a woman should be there along with St Patrick.

I heard a Brigidine Sister speak of you on the 1st of February and the first thing she emphasised was your hospitality. I would like to see us all working for a more hospitable, welcoming, inclusive, and warm church. I use the word 'warm' because with all our teaching, morals and rules, and structures and hierarchies and titles, we seem to have lost that sense of belonging to a warm and loving communion of people, a holy communion. 'Warm' is the word that our Pope Francis used when asked what was his dream for the Church. He said, "the thing the church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity." To be inclusive, we need to change, among other things, the Eucharistic words of the Consecration from blood poured out (shed) 'for many' back to the original words 'for all', as it was in the two previous translations of 1973 and 1998. Christ died for all not just many.

The words in Greek and Hebrew do not have a restrictive meaning. I pray for a change here because redemption is for ALL, whether they accept it or not.

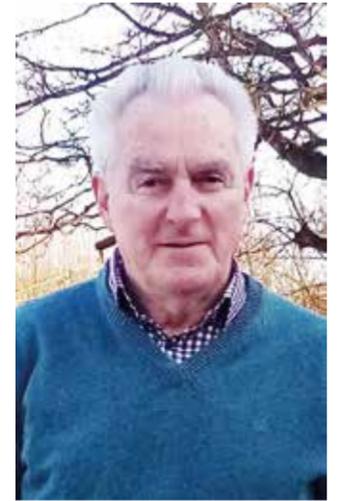
Along the same lines of being inclusive, I would like to see a greater participation of women in ministry and governance, and greater participation for all the laity in the ministry and governance of the church. I pray for success of the new initiative of Synodality, which is a call for this participation. They seem to have been excluded from power for most of history, but maybe not in your time. I wish we knew more about your experience in this matter. I would like to see a better outreach to LGBTQ+ people and all non-nationals in our country. This is a question of justice, and I believe it would be dear to your heart, as it is to the heart of Jesus, who prayed that we all may be one in Him.

As one of our Celtic saints, I believe the Earth, with all its land, water, wells, mountains, insects, plants, trees, animals and people, were all sacred to you. We have been told that you said 'Christ dwells in every creature', I would like to take that 'every creature' literally. This would be so much in harmony with the teaching of Pope Francis, that 'all things are connected' in a great web of life,

of which we are all a strand. Even more than this, we are, he says, 'called to accept the world as a sacrament of communion.' I would like people really to commit to care for the earth, since it is in so much danger from climate destruction and the kind of massive consumptive lifestyle that we blindly live and feel entitled to. I wish our leaders in parish life would at least read the Pope's encyclical, 'Laudato si', in the hope of moving them towards 'an ecological conversion.' I think there has been little preaching or discussion on it within our local churches, since it was offered to us more than five years ago.

I would like our Eucharistic celebration to be a fuller and deeper experience of Holy Communion, with Jesus and with one another. In other words, it would not be just some individual private devotion but a Holy Communion with Jesus not just in the species of bread, but also in the Word and in the gathered community of my sisters and brothers. Jesus is really present too in the Word and in the people gathered. We know that you set up your own community or communities of men and women. We need help to build up these kinds of community again in our time.

Your Feast day is the beginning of



Noel Bradley, Buncrana.

Spring, when we see the day's light lengthen again and snow drops are up and daffodils are beginning to push through wet, cold soil. It is a time of hope. I need more hope, not just a naive optimism that things will get better and better, but a supernatural hope that, despite how bad things are or seem, my life and efforts are worthwhile and that 'all shall be well and all manner of things shall be well.'

I believe in the Communion of Saints; the Saints that are famous, including Brigid, and all the other holy people that have gone before us and are still connected to us, and we with them, in a great sacrament of communion. May you and their communion strengthen me not just to say what I would like, as I have done in this prayer, but to actually do what I can, however small, to bring it about. Amen

My prayer of hope by Rhonda McColgan

ON February 1, we celebrated the feast day of our very own St Brigid, here in Ireland, as one of our three patron saints. So, it is fitting to be reminded of Saint Brigid's vision of her time as we enter into a period of new and renewed vision in our church and prepare for the upcoming Synod.

St Brigid expressed so beautifully in prayer what her vision of hope was like. As I ponder upon this question, in prayer, it got me thinking about what my vision is for myself, my parish, diocese and universal church...

*Dear Lord,
I pray most sincerely for an outpouring of your Holy Spirit,
A new Pentecost in the upper room of our united hearts;
united as one in prayer,
pleading to our God of love.
I pray that the fragrance of our prayers is so sweet that your response, as it reaches the heavenly places, is a bursting forth of Holy Spirit Fire!*

I pray for a stirring up, an

awakening, for dry bones to come alive so that we will be made new O' Lord.

I pray that we will once again become a new beacon of hope for the whole world.

I pray that we will work together in a labour of love to fan the flame that has not yet gone out, but, perhaps, clinging on by a smolder.

The smolder of Christians that refuse to surrender to a secular way, those that never lose hope, that flame that was once lit by St Brigid and others and kept alive through the faith of the mighty soldiers of God and Marian devotees.

*I pray for new saints to rise up in our midst,
I pray for the leaders in our church to know that in this time of poverty, it is you, God, that is with us. Emmanuel!*

I pray that in the desert of our once rich expression of faith, we come to understand that it is You who provides.

You O' Lord who provided twelve wells of water in a barren land and daily manna to nourish.

That in our poverty, we learn to truly surrender to You, You who are as much the great I Am today as You were then.

Lead us, O' Lord on our journey home to the promised land. A place that is flowing with milk and honey. A place of delight and joy, a fertile land that sees the fruits of our labour prosper.

I pray that each and every one of us is filled by the fire of God's love, and to hear, believe and understand, in our hearts, that delightful truth, that it is God Himself that has chosen us.

God, who knew us before the creation of the world and knit us together in our Mother's womb!

I pray that we hear St Paul talking to our hearts as he so eloquently writes, 'Brethren, beloved by God,



Rhonda McColgan, Iskaheen and Upper Merville.

we know that He has chosen you, because our Gospel came to you, not merely in words alone but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and with profound conviction.'

*St. Brigid of Ireland,
Pray for us.
Amen*

Sign of the Cross

by Rory McGilligan

Let us remember our heavenly Father is never far from us, we only have to call "Abba" and He is there patiently waiting for us.

Let us remember the words of His Son

and Our Lord and Saviour Jesus,

"I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness,

but will have the light of life".

With Our Lord's light in our life, Where there is despair may we bring hope.

Where there is anger may we show love.

Where there is judgment may we show acceptance.

Where there is sadness may we show joy.

Where there is indifference may we show care.

Where there is hostility may we show peace.

Where there is darkness may we bring light.

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ may the light of life shine within our home, our place of work and our place of recreation.

We are Christ's ambassadors, letting Our Lord's light shine in every area of our life.

Amen



Rory McGilligan, Dungiven.

Let me as kind as St Brigid

by Nicole Kelly

Angels wrap your holy wings around me.

Let me use my gifts and talents well.

Mary, Queen of Angels protect me.

May the Holy Spirit always guide me.

All my loved ones in heaven, give me strength to do my best.

Let me be as kind as St Brigid.

Please Lord, let me do my very best every day.

I pray for peace on this beautiful planet.

Let us see clearly the beauty of our world.

Let us see clearly the beauty in every person.



Nicole Kelly, Ballinascreen.

Let us see and feel awe and wonder every day.

Amen

Accepting others...

by Lucia Hughes

HELP me God

to accept people who I encounter in my life on a daily basis, especially the poor, unkempt, those under the influence of drink and drugs etc.

May I never judge them.

I make them feel loved by making them tea, sandwiches and biscuits,

but, most importantly, I give them my time,

I listen to their stories.

I hope they leave feeling better.

I certainly feel humbled and grateful

for their company.



Lucia Hughes, Dromore.

My prayer for the Church

by Kathleen Cullivan

I pray that we be a pilgrim people advancing on our way towards God. A pilgrim travels differently. Always in a pilgrimage there is a change of mind and a change of heart. We become a living source of beauty, wisdom, and transformative spirituality. This does not come without suffering.

We are constantly undergoing change within ourselves as we advance towards God. How much easier it is to resist internal change. Being rooted in the traditions and allowing ourselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit, we can embrace the new. So much prayer is necessary to achieve this, as we will find it much easier to cling on to the security of the past or present, where we may be more comfortable.

I have often been in awe of the differences and beauty of every human being, physically, intellectually, and emotionally. This has taught me how vast and wonderful God is and how He is a God of surprise. In my mind of so many limitations, my prayer is to ever understand more deeply the complexity of each person, so as I do not judge, and I follow God's wish that we love one another. Not necessarily to like each other, but that we treat each other as we would like to be treated ourselves.

I pray that we foster and encourage generous reactions of solidarity to each other, to open a future of hope in each other. How often we hear the words, I disagree, or this is how it should be done. To enhance somebody's viewpoint or to inspire it creates much more unity. I look to the Gospels for the way in which Jesus spoke to the people for inspiration.

Each family is a living cell in the

church. Without family there is no church. I pray that each and every family will find its own uniqueness and beauty in God's word and in His love. As parents, we see with the birth of every child something very wonderful at play. We recognize the special individuality of each child, and we know there is something very vast and wonderful taking place because we have so little control in this. Each child will be as God wants him/her to be.

I look to prayer for wisdom on how to relate to each child as we recognize one size does not fit every personality. How easy it is for things to go wrong. The fragility of each human being can only be met by God's mercy. I pray every family will be exposed to God's mercy in each other and within the community we live in. That God's mercy will be the yardstick by which we sort our differences or disputes.

I would love our parish, or community, to be places of support and care for each other. That we would overcome individualism. That we would be a church within a church involved in caring for each other, with no segregation of old, young, or any form of grouping.

I believe I received faith from my grandmother, who lived with us. She tried to put everything within my understanding. I used to ask her who cooked the Last Supper. I never really got the answer to that. She was crippled and unable to do much, but imparted her faith in the most beautiful way.

I would like to see a new unity between clergy and laity, where laity would have a bigger say in decision making, not just to inform it, but that as a church we would truly

learn the maturity of informed and unified decision making. Where Our Lady, as Mother, would be central to everything, and that we would look at the vastness of her role within humanity and the church; the woman who is true feminist, who God asked to be Mother of His Son and who also said that She would crush the serpent, whom Christ said you cannot come to me unless you come through my Mother. I pray and would love to see the Church teach of Our Lady's numerous roles and involvement with humanity through time.

I pray for a more simplified church rather than a top-down approach. The words of Pope Francis paint a vision of a church constantly on the move, as a dynamic missionary community of disciples. He calls bishops, priests, catechists and parents to become apostles of the Church while building it up. Taking this seriously would change the very nature of catechesis and clergy formation.

I would like a Church that lets go of fear and stops clinging to its own security. The first discipleship requirement of Jesus that comes to the fore is littleness, humility, nothingness, which will cause pride and arrogance to disappear. I get excited at the thought of a Church of the Gospels rather than a hierarchical institution, with the beautiful example of Jesus as centre, who spoke of tenderness and forgiveness, and who understood the law and knew that love transcends the law. The law itself could not contain or bind His message; He who was all powerful but lived humility.

I pray that we learn that love



Kathleen Cullivan, Derry.

cannot be found in intellectualism but in the heart. I was very inspired by a lecturer at university who continually called my writing out. He said that I should be able to write and portray my understanding in a way that my grandmother could understand. I learned from this that I have to be about understanding people, not them grappling to understand me; that our manifestations of love will reach the hardened and hurt hearts, and the heart that cannot understand intellectualism, but often knows the secrets of life which is wisdom itself.

If I need clarity, wisdom, or direction, I go to the life of Jesus because I find it nowhere else. In the words of Eduardo Bonnin, who founded the Cursillio movement, (I am the apprentice Christian).

I pray that God protects both me and the Church from rigidity, so that we remain open to the wonders to come.

I would like to spread God's fragrance

by Geraldine Conwell



Geraldine Conwell, Dunamanagh.

I would like our home to be a sanctuary of blessing, comfort and love for one another.

I would like strength, comfort and protection in times of need.

I would like grace to trust in God when we don't see immediate answers.

I would like wisdom to make the best choices in life.

I would like guidance as we continue on the journey through life.

I would like children to respect the wisdom of their grandparents.

I would like the saints of Heaven to wrap their arms around us and fill us with their love.

I would like family bonds to be treasured and preserved.

I would like grace to allow each family member to individually blossom.

I would like our family members who are sick to be touched with Your healing hands.

I would like hearts full of anger and bitterness to find peace.

I would like to entrust our parish family to the care of Mary, Our

Mother.

I would like our parish community to discover the life of Jesus, and to live and share this joy with others.

I would like our parish to be a community of discipleship, outreach and charity.

I would like the Spirit of Wisdom and understanding to guide us in our ministry.

I would like our community to be a blessing beyond our parish.

I would like opportunities to serve you and bring others to your light.

I would like us to recognise gifts in ourselves and in others.

I would like your blessings on all who share in the life and work of our Church and parish.

I would like that we may be good stewards of our time and talents.

I would like fresh vision and new opportunities to advance your kingdom

I would like young people to be a light in the dark

I would like the Church to reach out to those broken, angry and hurting.

I would like to spread God's fragrance everywhere I go.

I would like strength, courage and vision

to use our gifts to serve you.

I would like God's Spirit to move freely among us,

guiding us with the mind of Christ.

I would like Christian people to grow in virtue day by day.

I would like those burdened by any need to receive the help and Grace from above.

I would like Pope Francis, all bishops and clergy,

to continue to lead the Church to a deeper faith in God.

I would like leaders to be effective in achieving peace and defending the rights of all.

I would like all deceased members of our families to rest in the peace of Christ.

Divine Will Prayer

by Emma Devine

LORD, you said to your servant, Luisa Piccarella, that we can enter into your Holy, Divine Will, take what we find there and make it our own. You also pledged that what we desire in your Holy Will, You will do. With these words on my heart... I call on all the Angels to fly to all souls and steep them in the waters and tears that You washed the apostles feet with, and the water that gushed forth from your side to cleanse, soften and dispose them to receive all the abundant graces you wish to pour forth. I desire that Our Blessed Mother join me in going to every soul to administer Your most Precious

Blood to each soul, giving each soul on earth the particular graces they need. We go to the Holy Souls in purgatory with your Precious Blood and administer to each of them, bringing them relief in their purging. I desire to accompany Mary and Joseph to each soul in their dying moments, to embellish their soul with your Precious Wounds, so that, as You look at their soul as it leaves their body, You see your image in them. I desire to be with You in every place your Blessed Sacramental Presence is, to adore and love You in the name of all and make reparation for the offences committed against You, in The Most Holy Eucharist.

I make your Divine Love and Wisdom my own, and desire to plant this in each heart in mankind, so all may grow to love You and each other, as the Father Loves You and as You Love us. Everything in creation You created out of Love for mankind, I desire to make Your Love for us my own and reciprocate Your Love through every dimension of Your Love for us. Finally, Lord, In your Will, I wish to receive all the Love that consumes you that mankind has rejected, and respond to this perfectly in Your Holy Will, in the name of all, so You receive all the Love You would have received had mankind not fallen.



Emma Devine - Three Patrons.

I pray this in Your Holy Will, knowing it is not I but You doing this through me, for I am nothing and You are all. Amen.

Prayer for respect, peace and unity by Myra McLaughlin

I would like inner peace, strength, guidance, for us all and the world; for a world no longer divided but united.

I would like all people to know Jesus through each other's heart, to treat each other with respect, humility, kindness.

I would like justice for the hungry in the world, for the Rich to share with those less fortunate than themselves.

I would like a peaceful world, where all can love and enjoy. No war. No barriers.

May Our Blessed Mother bless us all. Forgive us our sins, and help guard each daily, this we ask in Jesus' name. All glory and praise given. Amen



Myra McLaughlin, St Eugene's Parish.

Prayer for St Brigid's blessing

by Maebhe McMullan



Maebhe McMullan, Cappagh Parish.

During this month of February, we dedicate our prayers to St Brigid, together we pray:

St Brigid of Ireland, I would like you to bless the sick

and all who need the Lord's healing touch at this time.

May they have the strength and courage to continue to fight and overcome their illness.

I would like you to bless our beloved dead.

We hope they are enjoying the eternal rewards in Heaven. May they rest in peace.

I would like you to bless and protect all the vulnerable in our society and those whose lives are at risk; victims of war and political unrest, the homeless and the unborn.

May we learn to love, protect and respect our neighbours, show mercy and justice, and appreciate the true importance of the sanctity human life.

I would like you to bless all young people and the children of God.

May we continue to inspire, educate and nurture them, as they are the future of our Church.

I would like you to bless and protect our families, especially those with difficult family circumstances.

May our homes be places of true happiness and love.

I would like you to bless all those in religious life.

May they be inspired to continue to serve God and spread the Good News.

I would like you to bless our world leaders and politicians.

May they continue to work hard to serve their people, do what is right and help promote peace in our world.

I would like you to bless Christians

around the world, especially those who live in places where it is difficult to practise their faith and show their love and belief for Our God.

May the Holy Spirit continue to guide and protect them.

I would like you to bless the people of Ireland.

As a nation, may we continue the work of you and St Patrick to keep our island one of faith and hope and love of God.

I would like you to sustain the perpetual flame of the Holy Spirit, alive in each of our hearts.

And I would like you to bless all those who need our prayers at this time.

St Brigid, Mary of the Gael, Pray for us. Amen

Rich treasures! Full vessels!

by Lexie Morrison



Lexie Morrison, Galliagh.

I pray for us to be all one, for a deeper recognition and living out of those phrases, 'full vessels' and 'rich treasures'.

That's what needs stirred up within us.

Jesus prayed to His Father, pleading the case, "Let them (us) be one with me, as we are one".

What does this mean, the Father and Son being one?

What does it mean for us to be truly one with Jesus?

Rich treasures! Full vessels!

We are one with our Father.

If we are nothing and God is all, once united in Him we are all.

We must believe we are true children of God.

With God everything is possible, but only with Him, in Him and through Him.

A prayer for Ballinascreen and Beyond

by Bronagh Doherty

TO those experiencing hunger and thirst, may you be filled and quenched by the Holy Spirit. We pray for those who are fuelled by Holy Spirit, who volunteer in charities and help heal world issues like hunger, war, violence and poverty.

We pray that this growing crisis of homelessness and poverty can be reduced, may God protect them.

To all those who, over the last two years, have fought dangerous conditions during a global pandemic.

To the key-workers, we pray that you will be rewarded in Heaven for your efforts, you are "little lights of hope" in very dark times,

and collectively we pray for those who have gained their wings because of the pandemic.

We pray that the angels of Heaven are amongst us.

To those suffering in pain, may God use His healing hands just like He did with Jairus' daughter.

To those who are worried and anxious about the future, may Jesus be present and bring comfort to you all.

May Jesus protect my town, the people of Ballinascreen and beyond.

May He reward the keyworkers and frontline staff.

May God guide Bishop Donal McKeown as he leads the Derry

Diocese closer to God through prayer.

May He bless our parish and all those who belong to it, especially Fr Madden, Fr Downey, Fr O'Neill and Fr McGirr.

May God be instilled into the hearts of our young children, 'the littlest lights of hope', especially those from St. Eoghan's, St Columba's, St Mary's, Knocknagin PS, St Columb's PS Cullion and Gaelscoil Na Sperrini.

May God guide the young people as they make tough decisions and come spiritually into their hearts at exam time, especially those in St Colm's High School.

May God be present in our daily lives. Amen



Bronagh Doherty, Ballinascreen.

Prayer of Hope

by Kate Sharkey



Lord, in times of despair, give us hope.

In times of judgement, give us compassion.

In times of desolation, give us comfort.

In times of denial, give us truth.

In times of fear, give us joy.

In times of destruction, help us to rebuild.

In times of loneliness, give us friendship.

Lord, you are the Master of all things.

Lord, send us your Holy Spirit to comfort us in our times of need, that we may be true receivers of your love

in us, through us and with us, for you are the living God

and you give us life.

Amen

My little light of hope by Aoife O'Neill

I would like the strength to always burn this light of mine.
I would like the wisdom to know where God wants me to shine.
I would like the shelter of the angels to help my light stay lit.
I would like the courage to face what comes and never quit.
I would like to look around and see others' lights of hope.
I would like if no-one ever felt that they just couldn't cope.
I would like if loving, caring ways became my first reaction.
I would like if I could sit in prayer without undue distraction.
I would like a childlike trust in God that never suffers doubt.
I would like to see a world

where no-one has to go without.
I would like if we could all be friends in every tribe and nation.
I would like if every person loved and cared for God's creation.
I would like my little light to spark a fire in all I meet.
I would like if fires of hope burned bright in every town and street.



Aoife O'Neill, Galliaigh.

May we foster the faith shown by Mary of the Gael by Dionne Dooher



Dionne Dooher, Lifford.

Ignite the perpetual flame within us, so that we may strengthen our faith in God.
May the flame shine bright

for those who are lost in darkness.
Bring hope to those who are in despair, and grant peace to those who are in distress.
Guide us to the grace of God's love, and may He grant protection over our family and parish community.
As we celebrate the Feast of St Brigid and turn to a new season of light, may we foster the faith shown by Mary of the Gael, to enable us to become little lights, and to allow us recognize the spirit of God in our everyday lives.

As Spring Dawns by Edel O'Connor

AS Spring dawns in our hearts,
May the cloak of St Brigid offer protection to the earth.

Blessed be the small acts of hope manifesting in nature.
All revealing to us that each day is a sacred gift.

May the snowdrops emerging through the crevices, remind us to trust in God's work.

As longer days emerge, may we release our fears, may we restore our faith, may we find harmony around us and within us, may we find courage like Mary of the



Edel O'Connor, Coleraine.

Gael to awaken in our hearts the flames of faith, hope and love.

Cross of Rushes by Bernie Doody



Bernie Doody, Omagh

As I make my cross of rushes, St Brigid, the centuries slip away.
In every fold, I feel your love for Christ and for His Mission.

As I turn my cross of rushes, I sense your world of conflict, is our present world so different?

As I weave my cross of rushes, I feel your strength and conviction.
Help me, dear Saint, to find my courage to play my part in Christ's mission.

Like this cross of rushes, we are weak and easily broken, but with our eyes fixed on the Cross, therein lies our strength,

our peace our light, our one salvation.

May this cross of rushes, Naomh Bríd, that now hangs upon the wall, be my constant reminder to answer to His call.



This little cross of rushes, visible to all, a source of love and mercy to turn to when I fall.

Guigh Naomh Bríd ar ár son agus ar son ár hEaglaise Amen

Prayer of intercession for the coming of God's Kingdom on Earth by Brenda Deery



Brenda Deery, Faughanvale Parish.

CHRIST Our King, through Mary, our Queen and Mother, send forth your Spirit in awakening all souls to their baptismal call to build your everlasting kingdom on earth.
Through the intercession of St Patrick, St Brigid and St Columba:
Reawaken your living Presence within all our souls,
Reawaken your Domestic Church within every home,
Reawaken the gift of Fatherhood and Motherhood within every

family,
Reawaken the gift of Self-Sacrifice within every spousal relationship,
Reawaken the gift of Life within every marriage,
Reawaken within parishes your living Eucharistic Community,
Reawaken within Catholic schools the Truths of your Sacred Tradition,
Sacred Scriptures and Magisterium teachings,
Reawaken within hearts your Heavenly Call for their lives,
Enroll all homes in a renewed

Consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary,
Enroll all parishes in new missionary endeavors,
Enroll all your heavenly powers to bring about a new Spiritual Awakening in our country,
Awaken a universal call to the Holy Spirit for a Second Pentecost,
And hasten the Reign of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in our world.

My prayer for our Church and our world by Ann McCay



Ann McCay, Columba Community.

around hospitals and care homes, into places of education, so that all can experience the healing presence of the Eucharist, come to know the power of God's love and give Him praise.

I would like the Word of God to be held up before the congregation and celebrated during the Liturgy of the Word.

I would like women from all backgrounds and walks of life to have a more prominent role in decision-making and leadership in the Church.

I would like faith and love to be at the centre of our family life.

I would like to receive the grace to be a good example to our children and grandchildren.

I would like an open and listening heart that listens to God and to others.

I would like to see fair and equal distribution of vaccines and treatments throughout the world.

I would like to see an end to this pandemic and resolution among governments and people to do everything in our power to ensure it doesn't happen again.

When it is over, I would like us to take time to reflect and grieve, and then take time to rejoice and give thanks.

I would like those who have little

or no resources to fight against disease to be saved from further suffering.

I would like a cancellation of debt for poorer countries. I would like the laying down of arms and an end to armed conflict.

I would like to be a voice among many voices that speak for peace. I would like to see respect for our common home, not just in our words, but in our actions.

I would like the work of justice and mercy to continue in the world.

I would like to see an end to dictatorship and oppression and a rise in good governance with

integrity and justice.

I would like to see an end to selfishness and greed and an increase in compassion and generosity.

I would like every human life to be valued equally, and the dignity of every human being to be respected and upheld.

I would like us to give the Holy Spirit free reign in our hearts and minds, so that we can go out and spread the Good News of God's Kingdom.

I would like to use my gifts and talents for the benefit of others and the glory of God.

May we be like St Brigid by Anne McNamee



Anne McNamee, Newtown Stewart.

St Brigid, Our Lady of Ireland, Patron of poets, midwives and unmarried parents, Innocent, prayerful, forgiving and humble, Spread your cape over us.
St Brigid's day is the first day of spring. Spring flowers bring new beginnings.
Brighter days are ahead of us. May we be like St Brigid... on our worst days, Pray and on our best days, Pray.
St Brigid bless our homes.

Rembrandt's 'Return of the Prodigal Son' - Part II:

The Loving Father *by Fr Stephen Quinn ocd*



WE return to the masterpiece of Rembrandt, but before we go into more details of the image, we should raise a query as to the title of the painting. The artist gave his painting the title 'The Return of the Prodigal Son'. On first perusal there would seem to be no problem with that at all. It is the title that seems to be ever used of the Lucan parable. If by some happy incident we could speak to the Lord directly, we could ask Him about the title that He would give to His parable and, subsequently, the painting that is based on His words.

I think that there is some reason to believe that the Lord would not be quite satisfied with that title 'Return of the Prodigal Son', for it sends our reflections and thoughts going off in a certain direction. A direction that does not fully capture what the Lord himself intended and the overall message that the painting shares. That direction only manages to turn this image and the parable inside out and upside down. Look at the Lord's parables and look at the titles that we have given to them. We speak of the 'lost sheep', the 'lost coin', and then our own 'prodigal Son'. Is this what the Lord actually meant?

What then is the Lord getting at in His parables? Rather than worrying about the lost sheep, the Lord draws our attention to the one who responds to the lostness of the sheep, the one who sets off directly in search of the one sheep and, upon finding it, lifts it up onto His shoulders and carries it back to the place of safety. In another parable, the Lord is unconcerned about the copper coin; He instead intends to speak only of the poor widow, who turns herself and her house inside out and upside down so as to discover the whereabouts of her coin.

When He spoke that parable that is represented by Rembrandt, the Lord was not primarily interested in either of the two sons; instead He was painting in painstaking detail the behaviour of their father as he interacts with their various behaviours. A father who anxiously awaits his son's return, who at the first hint

of the son on the horizon runs to meet him, and who picks the son up and embraces him. So, let's get it clear in our heads this one important detail, the parable, and subsequent painting, is not 'The Return of the Prodigal Son', but rather 'The Parable of the Loving Father'.

This is such an important point to get into our heads. It is challenging us to gaze beyond the ragged figure of the son, to look beyond self, to look beyond our problems, and to look beyond our own life. It is asking us to look over the shoulder of the prodigal for him who comes running down the road to meet us, who with wide open arms arrives and pulls his children into a great bear hug of joy and love.

In each of these parables, and most especially this one of the 'Loving Father', Jesus, in His storytelling, is filling out the features of the one whom He, Himself, calls "Father". Enabling His audience to see those features for themselves; features of one who never directly shows us His face in the Scriptures. Every word and action of Jesus points directly to His Father. Over and over again, we hear that word Gospel bandied around. Gospel, of course, means Good News, but the Good News is not primarily about Jesus, rather it is a simple statement of how the Father loves each of us.

Rembrandt, in His oil painting of the parable, attempts to represent the Father's love in a profoundly understated manner. It is not a difficult thing, as you investigate the action of the image, to see the aged Father express his love. The Father's bodily posture speaks loudly of love. It is almost as if he has become a blanket, draping himself around the son, enveloping him in the warmth of his embrace and drawing the son towards him, so that all the distance that the son has created is at an end. That is a statement in oils of the instantaneous reaction of the father to the distress of the son, but there is more detail painted into the arms and hands that reach over the prodigal.

Hands

Take a careful look at the hands that are placed on the shoulders of the son. The Father's left hand is large, it has width, the fingers are fat and have short nails. The Father's right hand is subtly different, and if you were not careful you would not pick up the details. It is longer than it is wide. The fingers, too, are long, have a definite more delicate quality to them and have longer nails. This distinct difference is by no means an accident, nor is it that the artist is playing a game with us, he is stating something significant. The left hand is a male hand and the right hand is most definitely female. We will have to ponder the meaning of this mystery further.

In the Gospel, written by the Evangelist St Matthew, Jesus, phrase by phrase, teaches his Church a prayer. That prayer that He taught has become so familiar to us, that we could almost recite it in our sleep. That familiarity is not without its problems, we have been lulled into a low-grade indifference that permits us to sleepwalk through the prayer's words and sentiments, and so little or nothing of its words have any impact upon us. Familiarity has finally bred contempt for words that have been brought to us from Heaven! The first time Jesus spoke His prayer in this World, it was as if He had cast fire upon the earth. It was something that had never been heard before. It blew people's socks off. Things couldn't be more different today!

The real power and dynamism of the Lord's prayer is spiritual and mystical. There are three clauses of the prayer that the Lord taught to us that are particularly illuminating, and that I want to bring up in relation to this painting. There is the first clause, in which Jesus teaches us to address His Father as 'our' own 'Father'. Then there is the sixth clause, in which He teaches His disciples to pray that the Father would "give us this day our daily bread". And lastly, the seventh clause, in which the supreme element is asked of God's Fatherhood, "forgive us our

trespasses".

When Jesus gave us the words of His prayer, we must not make the miscalculation that these words are casually thrown together. If we believe that, then we couldn't be any further from the truth. The formula that was handed down is as carefully crafted as any Sistine chapel. Jesus has crafted them to speak to us of His Father and of the relationship that is possible with the Father, when we recite the prayer in a fitting manner.

Until that moment, when the Lord taught it to humanity as an element of the Sermon on the Mount, that prayer had only ever been shared in Heaven between the Three Divine Persons. In the glory of heaven, the Son had eternally turned to His beloved Father and had prayed in the Holy Spirit: "Abba!" "Father!" Before space and time, before the act of creation, before Israel, and long before the Church, that prayer had been eternally sung in the bosom of God. Now the Son chooses to open the Triangle and share it with all humanity. It is difficult to overestimate the significance of what Jesus is putting upon our lips.

In just one word, the Lord is reinterpreting the whole history of the relationship between the people of God and the one He calls Father. In the Scriptures up unto this point, God has revealed Himself in terms of mystery and power. God was far beyond anything Israel could imagine or express. God had been the burning bush on Sinai's height. God had been the great pillars of dust and fire that had gone ahead of the people into Exodus. God had been the great wind that had dedicated the Holy of Holies in Solomon's temple.

Familial

Jesus totally rewrites the rule book for Israel. God is now interpreted in terms of person and in terms of familial relationship. What Jesus is doing is radical and dangerous, for He is breaking with all the old taboos of Mosaic Law. Under that law, it had been deemed illegitimate to present any image of God, but under the careful painting of words, Jesus is doing exactly that, drawing up an icon of the most High God.

In His painting Jesus is giving Him a fatherly face. In certain places in the Old Testament, there had been hints of this truth. Hosea had spoken of it in his prophecy, "when Israel was a child, I loved him. It was I who taught Israel to walk. I took him up in my arms. I led him with cords of compassion, with bonds of love and I became to them as one who eases the yoke of their jaws and I bent down to them and fed them."

Jesus' imagery of the Father

now takes the faith of Israel a few steps further down the road to the identity of God. Hosea's words were not merely lovely poetry, metaphor, or even simile; they were, in fact, the deepest truth of the First Person of the Trinity. Those lovely words are who God actually is!

God is a Father who has long planned for the arrival of His first born. God the Father was there for the birth of each of His children. As soon as they were born, He took them up in His own arms and tenderly kissed them. No human being ever had a child as unique and special as this Father had over and over again. Each one the joy of his heart. God the Father, as He receives each beloved child, cannot take His eyes away from the child. For one eternal moment, it is as if He is transfixed by their beauty. He takes in every individual detail. This image is what Jesus wants us to remember every time we pray that one word, 'Father'.

We turn to the sixth clause of the Lord's prayer, "give us this day our daily bread." Jesus celebrates that the Fatherhood of God adapts and changes in regard to each one of us and to our changing needs. At each moment, this Father wants only what is best for these children of His. He wants to draw out what is greatest in their character. More even than that, He wants them to be more than even He can hope for Himself.

As each child begins to grow and develop, it wriggles and squirms in its Father's arms. It points its finger to be let down. The Father acquiesces to His child's fervent plea and permits the child to get down on the ground, to move around, and to get up to whatever takes its fancy. No matter where the child goes, the Father's protective arms and legs have not gone anywhere. They are always within reach; ready to dart out and catch a hold of the child as soon as there are any danger signs, or even the slightest whimper of discontent.

As the child grows and develops, the expressions of the Father's love and support take on ever new forms. The focus moves from simply nourishing and cleaning up the child, to speaking with, teaching, giving counsel, giving the child the tools necessary to reach for its destiny and to accomplish its mission. Over and over, the Father shares with His child all His profoundest wisdom. Those words from the depths of the Father's mind offer the child what is truly good and what is truly wholesome, so that they can build a life on solid rock.

The Father, more than anything, wants His children to be all that they can be. He wants the child to achieve all that is in

their hearts and souls, and He wants their lives to flourish. Any word that comes forth from the mouth of the Father has this single purpose. The Lord, through His prayer, encourages the children to ask his Father for bread. Jesus, of course, is not speaking literally here of any food stuffs, but rather the spiritual food of the Father's attention and affection. Those things are the authentic food stuffs of the human soul. We cannot truly live without this 'bread'.

Forgive

Now, we come to the seventh clause of the prayer of Jesus. He teaches us to say, "forgive us our trespasses." In this moment, we come to the gut-wrenching core of the Parable of the Loving Father, an experience that every parent feels from time-to-time in their parenting life. The very child that has been cherished and nurtured, that has been given every advantage, turns to his Father, looks him in the eye and says "you are wrong", "I have had enough of this", "I am sick of your advice", "I am done with this", "I am going my own way now", and eventually enough anger builds up in him to allow him to say, "I hate you and I wish that you were dead." Exactly what the son in the parable said to his father when he asked for his inheritance; he wished for his death.

What is our heavenly Father to do in the face of such flagrant contempt and rebellion? Does he discipline? Does he give up his parenting as just a bad job? Does he revert to just simple violence? No, none of the above are the Father's response. The words of the Prophet Hosea come from our Father's lips as His very own reaction to His children: "My heart recoils within me, my compassion grows warm and tender. I am God and not man." In the face of His children's rebellion, the Fatherhood of God does not shiver and shake, rather the opposite is true, it only develops, intensifies, and magnifies.

The Paternal love of the Father metamorphosizes into what can only be likened to maternal love. A mother's love seems to be a more all-embracing variety of love. It reaches out from herself to the fallen child with all kinds of tenderness. I think that a mother's love comes from a deeper place than that of a father. It reaches down into the core of the mother. A mother's love has a more visceral edge to it.

The mother's reaction to the child is quite different from that of the father. Her first reaction to the child's failure or rebellion, no matter what it is, no matter how much there is of it, no matter how it impacts her own life, the first

Aoife O'Neill reviews the book read by the ladies of Termonbacca 'Blessed Brunch & Books' on the writings of St Therese of Lisieux...

Holiness for All

THE ladies from 'Blessed Is She', Derry get together once a month and enjoy brunch and a discussion on a spiritual book. We spent October and November journeying through Aloysius Rego's small book 'Holiness For All'. This book reaffirms Vatican II's teaching on the universal call of holiness to all of us and it focuses on various themes from the life of St Therese.

The book begins by giving the reader a brief biography of Therese and the significant relationships which shaped her in life. It is amazing to see the great role models Therese was influenced by in life, and how each person helped shape and mould her into the person Pope Pius X calls "the greatest saint of modern times."

Reading through this led me to reflect on the relationships and people in my life and how these have had an impact on my own spiritual life. I can look back at my family relationships and see all the good and not so good ways they have shaped me. It has also helped me to reflect on the fact that we can influence the lives of all those we come into contact with on a daily basis in such a profound way.

Next, the book gives a brief overview of the writings of St Therese. Even though Therese died at the very young age of 24, she has left the Church with quite a considerable body of work. There are 266 letters from Therese which have been preserved, her autobiography 'Story of a Soul' and then 'Last Conversations', which give other people's reflections on St Therese. The reader is shown how all of this is a Grace of God's providence.

The chapter on 'The Scriptures'

continued from page 26

impulse is to open wide her arms and to welcome the child back, to lift him from the dust that he has just fallen into, to bring him into the house, to feed him and clothe him, and to encourage the father of the house to pause, to set aside anger and to let the child back into the home. Now where have I heard that before?

The Lord's Prayer and the parables of the Gospel of Luke interact with each other to illustrate that Jesus' Father is a Father who has within Him the heart of a Mother. Now we have the authentic source of the artistic detail of the two hands of the Loving Father of the prodigal. The hands don't just represent masculine and feminine but rather the two aspects of the loving found in the Father. They coalesce and interact in Him, and Rembrandt ever so subtly

spells out Therese's deep love for the sacred word of God. We see many examples of Therese in life seeking solace, comfort and direction through the scriptures. Therese was not content with superficial knowledge of the scriptures, but rather had a profound desire to penetrate into the very truth of the word of God.

After reading, this I believe Therese is a great role model for us of a person who lived according to the word of God.

In the book, Aloysius Rego explores the spirituality of the Little Way. One of my favourite parts is where he describes how Therese discovered the Little Way. It is well known that Therese had a great desire to be a saint. However, looking at the saints who went before her, she felt she could never live up to the same expectations as she felt the weight of her weaknesses and limitations. She knew that God would never give a desire that could not be fulfilled, so she set about discovering a way to become a saint.

One thing I never knew before, which this book explained was that when Therese went to the scriptures, she looked at a text Celine had copied out, "Whoever is a little one, let him come to me." This was a mistranslation, however the words "little one" resonated with Therese and she discovered her little way through a faulty translation of the Word of God.

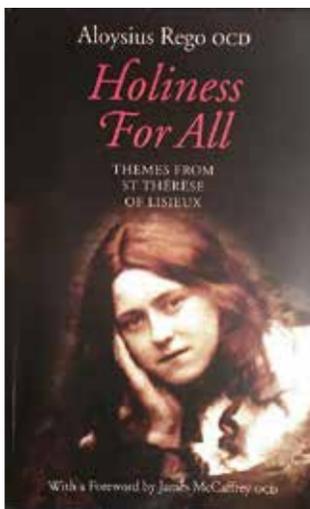
Aloysius rightly points out, "This incident reveals how God's grace can come to us through any means He chooses."

This was my favourite line in this little book and is something I never tire of contemplating.

represents that.

Why has information like this not had an impact on our lives? The way we have named the parables give us a hint. We have only ever been looking at ourselves, even when we come to the Scriptures. We haven't yet looked to him who hugs his son to himself. At this juncture, we have arrived at a profound problem; we have been measuring the Father by our own meagre standards.

The Father is infinitely removed from all our poor opinions of Him. St Francis de Sales, the saintly bishop of Geneva, had it absolutely correct when he said that the failure of the human heart only serves as the throne on which God takes up His reign. When are we going to figure this out for ourselves at last? We waste so much of our lives worrying about our sins, obsessing about



God's ways are not our ways and, as someone who struggles with perfectionism, I try to remind myself that sometimes mistakes can become so much bigger and better than anything we could imagine.

The book then moves onto prayer in Therese's life and finishes with her search for truth. Through this book the reader can listen as St Therese really speaks for herself through her own words and images. It provides the opportunity to prayerfully reflect on her teachings and allow her message on holiness to take deep root in the heart of the reader.

St Therese shows us a way of attaining holiness that is not intimidating. If you would like to discover more on how Therese began her journey from initial stirrings of God towards her complete self surrender, I would highly recommend this book.

The next Blessed Brunch & Books will take place on Saturday, February 26, in Termonbacca, beginning at 12 noon with brunch.

failure, bemoaning our faults, worrying about weakness, and being torn to pieces by our guilt and shame.

The problem is that our eyes have become locked on to the wrong thing. We are looking only at ourselves; no wonder we see only weakness and failure. Why are we not looking at our Father in Heaven? Even a single glance would make us stronger! God really has no need of our strength, but He can definitely use our weakness. Our weakness allows God to be our Father; to be who He is in Himself. God's Fatherhood longs for nothing else than for us to give our weakness to Him so that He can give Himself to us. The emptier I am of myself, the more I can receive from Him.

Tribute to late Bernadette O'Doherty by Wednesday Art Class member

WE all will remember 2021 for the raging pandemic of Covid-19, but the parishioners of the Waterside Parish will also remember it with sadness with the passing of their fellow parishioner, Bernadette O'Doherty.

I first got to know Bernadette as a member of Brother Joe Connolly's Art Class in The Playhouse on a Wednesday afternoon, where she worked away on her paintings in a quiet and peaceful manner. She was quite shy of her obvious talent and she enjoyed every minute of the Art sessions.

Her forte was landscapes, which she worked in Acrylics with a confident and painterly style. One of her paintings of the river near Crolly, in Donegal, won a competition set by The Anglers of the Donegal Rivers. In it, she captured those subtle lights you get in Donegal when the sun slices out from behind a cloud and lights a whole valley, or simply highlights the one green field near a river.

She had a beautiful painting, too, of the Poisoned Glen and, at one of the art class's exhibitions, I purchased a painting she did of a woodland with a small river running in it. This painting reminded me of the woodland river associated with St Brigid's Shrine, and it perfectly captures the bubbling energy of the flowing water.

Bernadette's faith was always evident in her life. She attended daily Mass and translated her love of God to love for her neighbour.

In some writing sessions at Pilot's Row, she shared some memories of summers spent taking young people on holidays in the West of Ireland to get them away from the sombre



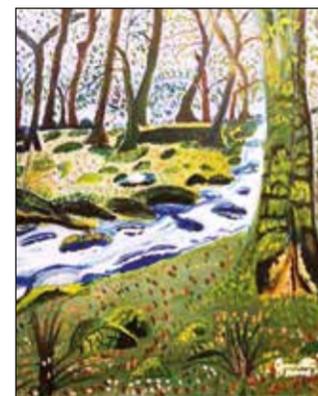
The late Bernadette O'Doherty, back left. atmosphere of The Troubles in the city, and show them some new horizons and the chance to experience a country at peace.

She also did some work providing for alcoholics on the streets, by bringing them food and clothing, particularly in winter time.

Her care for her family was always evident too, and she invested in a little cottage in Donegal to where she would take her father in his later years, when The Troubles flared up. Her care for others was her vocation.

Bernadette has left a lasting legacy of kindness and care, and

will be sadly missed. May her gentle spirit rest in God's loving peace.



Bernadette's woodland scene.



Pope's monthly intention

The Holy Father has asked for prayer during February for:

Religious Sisters and Consecrated Women
We pray for religious sisters and consecrated women;

thanking them for their mission and their courage; may they continue to find new responses to the challenges of our times.

Prayer for Priests

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

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

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

Bless, in a special way, Your servant

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

the world. Amen.

Remember in prayer:

- Fr John Doherty (Feb 1st)
- All priests (2nd)
- Fr Michael Doherty (3rd)
- Fr Patrick Doherty (4th)
- Mgr Andrew Dolan (5th)
- Fr Brian Donnelly (6th)
- Mgr Joseph Donnelly (7th)
- Fr Liam Donnelly (8th)
- All priests (9th)
- Fr John Downey (10th)
- All priests (11th)
- Fr Malachy Gallagher (12th)
- Fr Jack Farrell (13th)
- Fr Paul Fraser (14th)
- Fr John Farren (15th)
- Fr Neil Farren (16th)
- Fr Paul Farren (17th)
- Fr Christopher Ferguson (18th)
- Fr John Forbes (19th)
- Fr Edward Gallagher (20th)
- Fr Dermot Harkin (21st)
- Fr John Gilmore (22nd)
- Fr Joseph Gormley (23rd)
- Fr Eamon Graham (24th)
- Fr Gerald Hasson (25th)
- Fr Karl Haan (26th)
- Fr Eugene Hasson (27th)
- All Priests (28th)

“Santa Maria del Camino...mientras recorres la vida”

“No matter where I go you’re in my soul...” - Patsy Cavanagh! by Fr John McLaughlin ssc

IN the Upper Main Street in Moville there used to be a shop with pictures for sale. As a very young boy, I set my eyes on one and waited till my monthly pay - 2/ 6 came around, hoping that it would not get away from me or the window. It was of the Children with Our Lady of Fatima about whom I had learned. I rested it on the shelf of my room and it formed the highlight of the May Altars we were encouraged to set up, with our own flowers and ornaments. Being used to kneeling and praying the Rosary as a family, there was a devotion to Our Lady there from the beginnings.

I can recall in my pastoral life in Arklow, where we had both the May and October devotions with the Rosary and, in the latter, with the Prayer to St Joseph. Clearly, I recall that urgent sick call early one morning over to Templarainy. When I arrived at the factory there was a hushed silence and sense of sadness. One of their companions had fallen through the asbestos roof and died immediately on hitting the ground.

I recall stepping in to anoint him, before the doctor or ambulance came. In those days, the priest was often the first called. Then I started a decade of the Rosary, in which all joined ...and decided to keep on slowly through the whole Rosary which might help to calm the panic and sorrow, dragging it out as much as I could. There were no other words that could be said at such a moment.

I loved the Pastoral Letter of Pope John Paul II on the Rosary for its simple and prayerful tone...‘Rosarium Virginis Mariae’.

At about that period, during a monthly get-together with classmates, in a restaurant, as few of us had then the domestic conditions to host the gathering, there came a moment that all of us would forever remember. John, who had hosted the night, called us into a group and made his announcement. He was leaving the priesthood, and joining a ‘church’ that only one member of the class had ever heard of. In his parish in Dundrum, was the Dublin base of this Church of the Unification, which was drawing in some very idealistic young people, and distressed parents were coming to the parish to seek help. And John had decided to pitch in his all to that sect! It was a huge shock to each of us and to me, whom had shared holidays with him in Fiesole and Florence, and swooned over the architecture and art in that city...a man with big ideals in his parish and diocesan commitments up to that point.

On my drive back to Arklow, there was no radio switched on. It was just a long protracted Rosary from a deeply shaken heart and mind. Somehow, I knew that Our

Lady would take us all under her protection in a very lonely and shaken moment. John stayed for the rest of his life in that cult, or ‘church’, meeting us all again at another meal; though there was the suspicion that he might be really wanting to bring some of us back to New York with him, as he went on to leadership in his chosen church.

On entering Chile as a volunteer associate with the Society of St Columban, I found and relished a whole list of new titles of ‘la Virgen’, as people there spoke of her with great affection and hope.

The Month of Mary there is celebrated in November till December 8. At parish levels and community level we often celebrated its launching on November 8 with a procession in the streets around the chapels, with banners and guitars and even drums. The nightly meetings, in those summer nights, were often celebrated by little groups gathered around a corner in the streets or laneways. There were themes allotted for each day of the Month and, in Pinochet times, there was a slight touch of rebellion about that ‘illegal assembly’, and subjects like Liberation and the Option for the Poor expressed a certain movement against the currents of the times. The Magnificat had that tone of defiance and liberation and there were some good melodies around for its intonation.

One of the years, on the hills of Valparaiso, the themes were centred around the Women in the Old Testament - Ruth, Sarah, Judith - and the group, largely composed by women of all ages, took the persons to heart and applied the images to their own challenges, as we dialogued before getting into the Prayer to the Virgen of Carmen and the Hymn to her name. It was a Lady of Hope and strength, and leadership that was emerging from these conversations. And a short while after the month ended, Helga, one of the leaders, put it all down on fine paper and produced a frame in which to insert our admiration and praise; I had to leave that behind me with her as I eventually left that parish and returned to Santiago.

Devotion

Quite recently, while reading the fine book on Our Lady by Fr Tom Casey of Maynooth (‘Mary in other Traditions’ Messenger Publication), I came across the same suggestion about trying to restore, and maybe widen and modernize, our Irish devotion to Our Lady. He, too, sourced the images of the Women of the Old Testament - Esther, and Judith and Sarah and Rebecca - who all come alive again and enrich what might be our fading concepts of Marian

spirituality. So also from the Old Testament, does he rescue the image of the Ark of the Covenant, and once again ennobles Mary for some of us. It’s worth also here maybe pointing out the value and meanings that Fr Tom places on Ikons and Acathist Hymn in the Orthodox Churches.

One of my parishes there in Valparaiso, in Chile, was ‘The Heart of Mary’ (Corazon de Maria), which brought me new joys and insights on Mary. It had suffered a major fire and was reconstructed just before my time, through the contacts and promptings of local bishop Jorge Medina, who later became an influential Cardinal in the Roman Curia.

In the Diocese was also one of the major national Marian shrines, of The Virgen of Lo Vazquez. Around the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, there was a huge movement towards that shrine, just a few miles outside the city of Valparaiso. Something in the region of 600,000 people attended there over the two or three days of the Fiesta. From amongst the poorest, people came on horseback, bicycle, walking and some even dragging themselves along the ground as they completed their ‘manda’ to the Virgen. There were long sessions of Confessions on the two nights previous and people camped outside in the plaza behind the Church, with a large group of dealers offering souvenirs, and priests mingling with the families blessing their images.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation, for us confessors, was a time of grace on both sides. In an open circle of booths, people could see their priests going through their confessions with people of all ages, and a group of nuns and lay volunteers helped them through the procedure of the Sacrament with a hand-out examination of conscience and a suitable act of contrition. So the penitent could choose from what they saw before them in that semicircle, deciding maybe on who looked severe, or simpatico... and go forward for the blessing. For very many, this was their only real contact with church or priest for the year and it was sacred, as I found when some friends of my own groupings in Santiago appeared before me smiling.

There was no haste, as there were sufficient priests there, even in the small hours of the morning in a biting cold. And tales could be told in no hurry: about not having this year present their companion of many years in marriage; about the anguish of the addiction of a son or brother due to addiction to alcohol or drugs, and trials of accompanying them till just this year and their recent deaths. It was a meeting, an experience at first

hand, of the Soul of Chile, and its hopes and resilience and gratitude. Sometimes a young ‘mocosó’ from amongst the dealers would let his curiosity bring him forward, though with no catechetical preparation just to talk and chat to the priest confessor, who encouraged him or her to enter into their parish programmes for the Sacrament.

Later on in the day of December 8, and after celebrating one of the huge Masses under the large tented esplanade, a little nervously from the sheer numbers in front of you but strengthened by members of our own parish choirs or the seminarians, we left and went off to join in our own parish celebrations of the Immaculate Conception. In the case of my Corazon de Maria parish, this also involved a procession on one of the hills around which the main church was situated. So getting up and down the streets around any of the hill-based chapels, like the Santa Cruz, was another moment of grace, as the people ornamented their houses and the wayside altar with flowers and simple artisan decorations, with the young playing a special part in leading the prayers and the promises. It was to a Lady of Hope and Joy and Triumph that this ‘Virgen del Carmen’ national devotion was directed, and it was the poor and humble were those present in great measure.

In other parishes in Santiago, and amongst the ‘poblaciones’ or townships, it was not very different. There was a national holiday on the Feast in July of the ‘Virgen del Carmen.’ The ‘Folclore’ groups came out in strength, and I recall in one parish, in their procession through ‘La Lecheria’, a very poor district with drink and drug problems of which all in the procession were conscious, there came a powerful intonation from one of the women in the procession. She sang from ‘the Decimas’, straight from Chiloe and the deep south. They were the memorized verse-texts of their faith and traditions, brought in by the Spanish and passed on by their leaders, the so-called ‘fiscales’, of their parishes and communities.

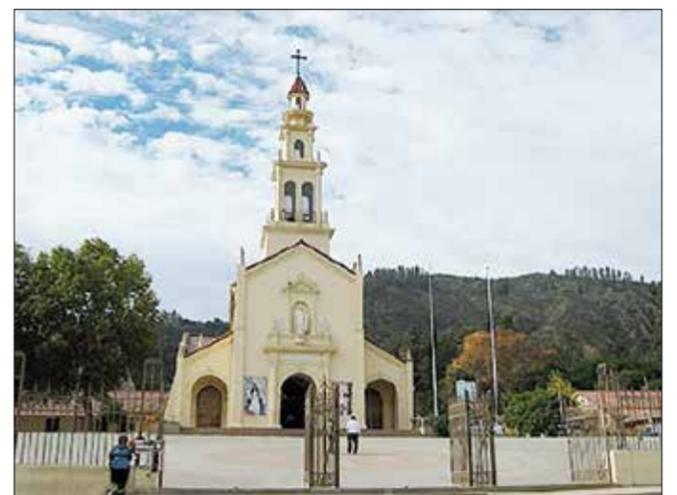
Hymns

On a retreat in that island, I had heard one of our great priest leaders, P Mariano Puga, intone and accompany them on his squeeze-box. Mariano, a legend in the townships of Santiago, had come away to spend some of his quasi retirement there, trailing around the islands and encouraging the lonely communities, often with those same hymns, the so-called ‘decimas’.

Another great asset in one of our Santiago parishes was the religious dance group San



Bailes Religiosos en Virgen del Carmen capilla.



Basilica of Lo Vazquez Valparaiso, Chile.

Andres. The ‘Bailes Religiosos’, again through the influence of the Spanish, were groups committed to celebrate and confirm allegiance to La Virgen in a simple series of chants accompanied by energetic dancers, men and women of all ages, and in a colourful attire of bright silks and other figures of reference like the horns or masks. Their influence on groups of young people was positive and the sense of worship and belonging to the Virgen and the Church made them a huge asset in any parish. They were available for all the Liturgical celebrations, especially on the Feasts of Our Lady, not for show, as they constantly indicated, but for allegiance and worship.

There were national occasions like that in Iquique, La Tirana, where for three nights around the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, in July, some hundred of groups gathered to pay homage to their Virgen through day and night. The Church in Chile, and Latin America, coming around to closer terms with the ‘Religiosidad’ of its peoples, accompanied them with Masses and the overnight Penitential celebrations. On the one occasion that I was present, I can recall that there were 160 groups from all over the country and there was a constant entry and solemn exit from the chapel, as each group came to pay its homage, prayer and ceremonial dance to the large image of the Virgen del Carmen in the apse of the chapel.

In some of those years, seeking material for my own updating, I recalled the words of the French theologian who spoke at the International Charismatic Conference in Dublin, and evoking Mary as the ‘Lady of Beginnings’ in the history of the early Church. Then I moved on to reflecting on the wonderful and up-to-date pastoral Letter ‘Marialis Cultus’ of Pope Paul VI and of Mary as ‘a strong woman’, not a plaster saint, for our time:

“37. Finally, we wish to point out that our own time, no less than former times, is called upon to verify its knowledge of reality with the word of God, and, keeping to the matter at present under consideration, to compare its anthropological ideas and the problems springing therefrom with the figure of the Virgin Mary as presented by the Gospel. The reading of the divine Scriptures, carried out under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and with the discoveries of the human sciences and the different situations in the world today being taken into account, will help us to see how Mary can be considered a mirror of the expectations of the men and women of our time. Thus, the modern woman, anxious to participate with decision-making power in the affairs of the community, will contemplate with intimate joy Mary who, taken into dialogue with God, gives her active and responsible consent,(102) not

Continued from p28

to the solution of a contingent problem, but to that "event of world importance," as the Incarnation of the Word has been rightly called. (103) The modern woman will appreciate that Mary's choice of the state of virginity, which in God's plan prepared her for the mystery of the Incarnation, was not a rejection of any of the values of the married state but a courageous choice which she made in order to consecrate herself totally to the love of God. The modern woman will note with pleasant surprise that Mary of Nazareth, while completely devoted to the will of God, was far from being a timidly submissive woman or one whose piety was repellent to others; on the contrary, she was a woman who did not hesitate to proclaim that

God vindicates the humble and the oppressed, and removes the powerful people of this world from their privileged positions (cf Lk. 1:51-53). The modern woman will recognize in Mary, who "stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord," (104) a woman of strength, who experienced poverty and suffering, flight and exile (cf. Mt. 2:13-23). These are situations that cannot escape the attention of those who wish to support, with the Gospel spirit, the liberating energies of man and of society. And Mary will appear not as a Mother exclusively concerned with her own divine Son, but rather as a woman whose action helped to strengthen the apostolic community's faith in Christ (cf. Jn. 2:1-12), and whose maternal role was extended and became universal on Calvary. (105) These

are but examples, but examples which show clearly that the figure of the Blessed Virgin does not disillusion any of the profound expectations of the men and women of our time but offers them the perfect model of the disciple of the Lord: the disciple who builds up the earthly and temporal city while being a diligent pilgrim towards the heavenly and eternal city; the disciple who works for that justice which sets free the oppressed and for that charity which assists the needy; but above all, the disciple who is the active witness of that love which builds up Christ in people's hearts."

(cf also pp 35, 36, 38, in regard to the relevance of Mary for the world of today-time of Paul VI ...and onwards!) Allow yourself to be surprised by Our Lady, as seen in this Letter!

On the occasion of an extended stay and study period in the Holy Land, I chose to separate myself from the group in order to spend a couple of extra days in Nazareth. There I visited, once again the magnificent Basilica of the Annunciation, called in on what had been the residence of Blessed Carlos de Foucauld, to whom I have a strong devotion, also the splendid and tranquil Chapel of the Sighs, and got transport out to the remains of the Roman town of Sepphoris, where Joseph very probably would have found work. In the night, I wandered over to the nearly empty Basilica and made my own prayer, based on what I had learned about the Nazareth of the times of Jesus. Suddenly, there came from the lower chapel the sound of a quite exquisite voice of a lady singing alone in

what I presumed to be German and the words of the Magnificat. The moment will ever stay in my mind...the warmth and devotion coming up to our level of an empty chapel. I could only express and pray my gratitude and wonder to Our Lady, the origin of it all.

Of course, like many Catholics, devotion to Our Lady has been far wider and deeper that we can realize in our brief lives on this earth; pilgrimages to Knock, leading a group from Arklow, with an early morning and late evening return by train, and praying on the then bare stones, exposed to the weather elements of the West, and accepting a rather long homily from Dr Cahal Daly on the troubles and excesses in the North. He was leading the Ardagh Diocesan Pilgrimage in that year.

Finally, as for the moment my

lived-history must be, I want to mention what for many of us was our point of reference for our imagery of Our Lady, the Litany of Loreto. Not many will have noticed these days that Pope Francis has added three new invocations for our devotion; in the fourth line, after 'Christ have mercy', he puts 'Mother of Mercy', two below that he places 'Mother of Hope', and below, after 'Refuge of Sinners', places the invocation 'Solace of Migrants'.

And, the overall thought that has been going through my mind as I tried to bring some of these strands together, is the Spanish proverb, "no se puede tapar el sol con el dedo" (we cannot cut off the sun with our thumb!) Mary is there for all of us!

St Brigid *by Vera McFadden*



lost.

Brigid was born in Faughart, Co Louth, in the fifth century. I have visited Gartan, in Donegal, where St Columba was born. It is quite a remote place. Brigid's birthplace seemed to be remote as well, and it was further away from our home. However, we located it just a short distance from the main road.

We had come on a pilgrimage and it was a lovely secluded pilgrimage site. One of its most interesting aspects was the Stations of the Cross, which were along a little stream. There were other prayer places – some stones near the entrance, and a spot on an elevated site which looked like a former rath; possibly the remains of Brigid's home or the spot where she was born.

Her father was called Dubhach and he was a minor chieftain. Even when she was a child, the girl was very kind and always giving something to those in need. She shared what she had. She gave drinks of milk, some of her clothes, and one time she even gave one of her father's favourite swords to a beggar man! Dubhach was naturally very annoyed at this and he brought her to his superior chief and offered her as a servant. The chief told him to bring his little daughter home, and when Dubhach complained about his sword he offered him another one.

Most chief's daughters were eventually promised to a young chief, but Brigid insisted that she wanted to give her life to God. With her father's permission, she approached the Bishop to ask if she would be allowed to found a convent and she got his consent. He told her that she could have as much ground as her cloak would cover. The story is told that when her cloak was put on the ground it spread over a large area. One interpretation of this could be that there were so many drawn to her order that they were given a sizeable area for their convent and grounds. Brigid was given the

same status as a bishop and she carried a crosier (like St Bronagh of Rostrevor or Cill Bronagh).

Like St Francis of Assisi, she was extremely generous. He had given away rolls of cloth that belonged to his father, and she had given her father's sword away. She was also like St Francis in her care for the earth. All three of Ireland's Patron saints protected the planet. St Patrick wrote the Lorica, a hymn of oneness with the rest of God's creation. St Columba took great care of the Oak Grove.

One ancient custom in Gortahork, and probably other places too, is the 'Brat Bridghe' on St Brigid's Eve. It is believed that a rag left out on a hedge or bush that night will be specially blessed by the saint. Then it is used as protection for the barns and the farm. This custom may date back to pagan times, but there seems to be a connection with the story of St Brigid's cloak, which spread over a large area, as the piece of rag is called 'Brat Bridghe' (Brigid's cloak).

Another Brigid's Eve custom is the making of St Brigid's Crosses to place in the homes or outbuildings for the saint's protection. Every year at this time, I remember the late Helen and Willie McIntyre, from Bunrana. They always made a lot of Brigid's crosses and distributed them in many churches. May they rest in peace.

The crosses are usually made from rushes and there are plenty of them about the countryside. The St Brigid's Cross is easy to make after a short instruction, but it still takes considerable time to make a big number of them, which is what the workers do on St Brigid's Eve. There are several types of the cross. I have one with five diamond shapes, one in the centre and one on each arm of the cross. It is made from golden straw and has retained its bright colour. It was made by a man from Clonmany and is the type

of Brigid's Cross which hung on the wall in my mother's parental home in Desertegney.

I always enjoyed the children's drama and song in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, on her Feast Day. There were also classes teaching how to make the cross.

Rush Cross

The story is told that St Brigid was sitting by the bed of a pagan chief who was dying and she made a rush cross to introduce him to Christianity. I wrote a little song about it:

1. *She sat by the bed of a dying chief, And lifted a rush from the floor, She looked at it carefully for just a while And then she reached down for some more.*
2. *The old man watched as her fingers wove the rushes together in lines, he wondered what was that she would make – the shape of a cross its design.*
3. *Then Brigid said, "Do you see this cross? "On one made of wood Jesus died – "to help us to Heaven, to get us that grace, "He suffered and was crucified.*
4. *The old man said, "How I love that Man, "Who suffered so I could be free! He took Brigid's Cross and he smiled as she said, "There's a place in His Heaven for thee!"*

There are many stories told about St Brigid. One of them is about the time that several bishops visited her. She knew that she did not have enough to offer them a meal or refreshments. She prayed and then there was enough food and drink.

This may seem to be an unbelievable story. However, a similar one happened in our own time. During the depression in America, the Capuchin friars started a feeding centre in Detroit. One day they had no bread left and there was still a long queue of hungry people. When Fr Solanus Casey heard, he came and said the 'Our Father' with them. A couple of minutes later, a bread van arrived and the man left its contents in the porch. Then he realised that the porch, which had been empty, now held more bread than his van could hold.

Brigid was like St Francis in

another way. She was very fond of music and liked to give visitors musical entertainment after refreshments. One story tells that she visited a chief to plead for the release of a prisoner. He was not at home, but the servants told her that she could sit and wait for him. She noticed a few musical instruments and asked them if they could play. They could not. She prayed and asked them to try and they began with great hesitation, but after a while they were playing like master musicians, and they were doing this when the chief returned. He must have been amazed and I believe that she obtained the release of the prisoner.

It is probably because of her extreme generosity that experts decided that a very ancient poem about spirituality, but written with references to aspects of hospitality, must have been written by her. It was translated by O'Curry.

St Brigid was an inspiration in the early Christian period. St Columba wrote a prayer to her and St Brogan Cloen and St Ultan wrote poems about her.

An ancient poem about Brigid was translated by Seán Ó Tuama. A translation of the first verse of a poem written by St Brogan Cloen reads:

The veiled virgin who drives over the Curragh is a shield against sharp weapons. None was found her equal except Mary. Let us put our trust in her strength.

I had often heard of the Curragh and sung about it, but I had never seen it. Then one summer, a friend and I went to Newbridge for the Gerard Manley Hopkins week. When we learned that the Curragh was quite near, we were able to visit it in our spare time. There was another bonus, for of course the Curragh is just beside the town of Kildare and St Brigid's only well not far away. It is in a secluded area quite near the main road. The turas site is reminiscent of the one at her birthplace, with the stream and the prayer stops along it, and the holy well in the corner and the quiet.

After that, we went to see the site of her convent, which was the most famous of all her foundations. The only part that may have dated back to her time was a square area which is traditionally the spot where Brigid kept the fire burning. There is a round tower and my friend was able to climb to the top. My disabled foot prevented me from doing so, but I do not have a head for heights anyway. While she was climbing, I looked around the interesting Abbey Church, which is now being cared for by the Church of Ireland.

I was told that there were nuns at Kildare until the Reformation. Then, about 1993, a new Brigidine Order was started. It is inspired by her spirituality and it spread all over the world. We were told this when we visited the convent at Kildare, where they keep the fire alive in the hearth and welcome visitors. They also told us about the retreat centre they were building. It was almost finished and it had little hermitages. They told us that it had been inspired by St Anthony's Retreat Centre at Dundrean, Co Donegal, in the Derry Diocese.

Fr Liam Lawton wrote a song especially for the sisters. St Brigid, who lived 16 centuries ago, still colours our lives, particularly at this time of year with the activities, the stories and the songs. We can understand her strengths and try to imitate her. Fr Liam Lawton's song is about these, and the first verse and the chorus show this:

There travels forth from the pages of history a woman's voice that is heard across the plain, that calls once more for people of new vision to heal our wounds and to green our earth again (Repeat - To heal...) (Chorus)...

So light the fire of God's desire, within all hearts let sorrows end, so light the fire of God's desire, God's chosen one, let peace on us descend.

(Sources: 'The Rainbow Cloak', by the author. Fr Lawton's song used with permission).

Saints we celebrate during February *by Bishop Donal*



St Brigid of Kildare.

St Brigid (died 525) – February 1

St Brigid was a native of Faughart, Co Louth, in the middle of the 5th century, when Patrick was still alive. Inspired by the missionary work of St Patrick, she founded the first monastery for women in Kildare.

Presentation of Our Lord – February 2

Coming 40 days after Christmas, this celebrates the presentation of Jesus, the first-born of Mary. This happened in the Temple in Jerusalem, and there Simeon and Anna prophesied about His mission.

St Blaise (died 315) – February 3

St Blaise was a bishop of Sebaste

in modern Armenia. He was martyred there. Since the 8th century, he has been associated with the blessing of throats.

St Agatha (died c 250AD) – February 5

St Agatha was a martyr in the middle of the 3rd century. She was known from early time and her name is mentioned in the Roman Canon (First Eucharistic Prayer).



St. Agatha.

St Josephine Bakhita (1868-1947) – February 8

St Josephine Bakhita was a native of Sudan and was brought to Italy as a slave. There she became a Catholic and later entered a congregation of nuns. Her Feast Day is now also celebrated as the 'International Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking'. It is estimated that, each year, around 2.5 million



St Josephine Bakhita.

people are victims of trafficking and slavery and it has become one of the most lucrative illegal activities for criminal gangs.

St Scholastica (480-547) – February 10

St Scholastica was born in Umbria, a twin of St Benedict, the father of Western monasticism.

Our Lady of Lourdes – February 11

Our Lady appeared to Bernadette Soubirous in 1858, and the first of the 16 apparitions was on February 11. The last of the 18 apparitions was on July 16. Mary revealed herself as the 'Immaculate Conception', a dogma which had been solemnly defined just four years before.

Cyril and Methodius – February 14

Cyril and Methodius were two brothers from Greece who lived in the 9th century. They preached to the Slav peoples and invented the Cyrillic alphabet that is now used for Russian and some Eastern European languages. They were declared patrons of Europe by Pope John Paul II in 1980.



St Fintan.

St Fintan – February 17

St Fintan was born in Munster, where he founded a monastery. He died in 603 after a life of very strict austerity.

St Peter Damian (died 1072) – February 21

St Peter Damian was a reforming Benedictine monk in Northern Italy. He was a writer and preacher and was made a



Bishop Donal



St Peter Damian.

Doctor of the Church.

Chair of St Peter – February 22

Behind the main altar in St Peter's Basilica in Rome is a relic of an ancient chair. This feast celebrates the unique leadership role of Peter and his successors in the church.

St Polycarp (69-155) – February 23

St Polycarp was a disciple of St John the Evangelist and served as Bishop in modern Turkey. He was martyred there at the age of 86.

Lord, that I may see *by Fr Johnny Doherty, CSsR*



Fr Johnny Doherty

ON Christmas Day last a massive telescope was launched into space. They say that it is the size of a tennis court! It will be travelling for 28 days before parking a million miles from the earth. It has taken 30 years, and a huge amount of money, to build, because of all its technology.

The purpose of this great venture is for scientists to learn more about the origins of the Universe. If everything works to plan, images will begin to come back to earth in about six months' time and we will all grow greatly in our knowledge of the wonders of creation in the years ahead.

A journey, not a destination

One of the many things that has influenced my life is a poster that I received many years ago. It had a picture of a beautiful sunrise – I always thought that this could

only have been taken in Donegal! – and the caption on it read: 'Life is a journey, not a destination'. I have been able to apply that to so many things in my own life and in my ministry.

If we can live with that thought as a guiding principle, then we have to look at a couple of things that are common to any journey.

1. Where do we want to go?

So many people would seem to drift through life without much thought. It is within our power to decide what we want to get out of life and to shape the kind of life that is best for us.

2. How do we get there?

This question confronts us with the fact that we need to make decisions and choices for what is best for our lives. That means that some things are good for us and we pursue those. It also means that other things are not good for us and we have to let go of them.

Marriage is a journey, not a destination

One of the main ministries of my life as a priest has been with married couples. In working with them, I have very often held this motto up to them as a star to follow. And what a difference it can make. It means that each couple has to face the reality that their marriage keeps changing. Their journey is towards unity with one another in mind, heart, and affection. This will entail constantly having to make

decisions for the sake of their love and life together.

It is said that a successful marriage is that of a couple who enter into between 15 and 20 different marriages with the same person in the course of a lifetime. The secret is in how they enter into each of these to make their marriage the best that is possible in the present. That takes communication and decisions about what is most important in the present and for the future.

Faith is a journey, not a destination

In our faith journey, we often want everything to be the same as it always was. But this is impossible because it is a journey with Christ, and a journey into unity with one another in Christ.

This journey is mapped out for us by what is called the Liturgical Year. In the course of every three years, we listen to almost the full Scriptures in our daily, and especially, weekly celebration of the Eucharist.

We began a new year of this in Advent leading us into Christmas and beyond. We are now in what is called Ordinary Time, when we can take time to apply the Word of God more to our ordinary everyday lives before we enter into Lent, leading us to Easter and Pentecost and back into Ordinary Time.

These weeks of February will help us to do just that. I hope

you will benefit from the short reflections on each of the Sundays.

Week 1: January 30 - February 5 The struggle of faith

Jesus said: "I tell you solemnly, no prophet is ever accepted in his own country".

The word prophet conjures up the image of someone who foretells the future, a bit like a fortune-teller. No! A prophet is someone who gets to the deepest reality of human life and is able to proclaim that this deepest reality will come to the surface sooner or later, and calls us to make it sooner.

Generally, people don't like to hear about these deepest realities because they get used to the way things are. A good example of this is: the deepest reality of marriage is that it is a sacrament, a source of Christ's presence in and salvation of the world we live in.

Couples need to do a lot more to bring their love to that pitch. Every home is a Domestic Church, a sacred place. Every parish is the living Body of Christ. We have a lot of change to work on.

Week 2: February 6 - 12 Christ makes us his disciples

Jesus said to Simon: "Do not be afraid; from now on it is people you will catch." Then, bringing their boats back to land, they left everything and followed Him.

The image that Jesus uses has a very special relevance for those

He was talking to. They were fishermen. But it continues to be relevant for us today because it simply means that our task is to make Christ attractive to and available for the people of our world.

This is done first of all in our homes, where the faith is handed on by parents in the ways they make their home a place of joy and gladness. This involves giving up their time and their own preoccupations for the sake of each other and their children.

It also determines how a faith community is developed. The most important thing about any faith community should be that it is attractive for others. This will mean giving up our own comfort zones so that others can find a home among us.

Week 3: February 13 - 19 Our trust in God

Fixing His eyes on His disciples Jesus said: "How happy are you who are poor; yours is the kingdom of God. Alas for you who are rich; you are having your consolation now".

Isn't this a very difficult teaching to accept, even when we know that it comes from Jesus? And because it is difficult, we can tend to ignore it and go on our way. Obviously, Jesus is not promoting poverty. Rather, He is saying that when we are poor, we know that we depend on God. When we have riches, we put our trust in them even though

in reality we still depend totally on God for everything, including our next breath.

The task of every human person is to let go of our self-importance and enter into the wonderful love relationship God wants to have with us. We will then use our resources, material and spiritual, for the well-being of each other.

Week 4: February 20 - 26 Praise and Thanksgiving

Jesus said to His disciples: "Treat others as you would like them to treat you".

This teaching of Jesus has very wide-ranging implications for our lives. These begin in the most intimate relationships of marriage and family life.

If you want to have a really good marriage, treat your husband/wife with the kind of affection, passion, generosity you would want her/him to give to you. If you want to be successful as a parent, show your children the respect, gratitude, gentleness you would want them to show to you.

If you want to have a vibrant parish community, get involved in building it in the ways you expect others to do, so that you will have all the amenities that you and your family want.

And if you want a strong relationship with God, listen to Him, respond to Him in the ways you want Him to listen and respond to you.

Children's Catechism Club - C3

by Veronica Harley

Hello children. Welcome to the month of February. This month is dedicated to the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. The Holy Family is where Jesus spent the time from his birth until He started His public journey telling us about God. The Holy Family is our best example of love, hope, faithfulness, and joy (CCC 533).



During the month of February, we celebrate **The Presentation of the Lord – Candlemas Day (CCC 529)**. The Presentation of the Lord is the story of Jesus being brought to the Temple in Jerusalem by Mary and St Joseph. It was customary for Jewish parents to present their child in the temple 40 days after birth. When St Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to the Temple, they met Simeon, a devout Jew who had prayed that he would live to see the coming of the Messiah. Simeon, filled with the Holy Spirit, took the baby Jesus in his arms, blessed Him and proclaimed that He was truly the Son of God.

The Feast of the Presentation is also known as Candlemas or Candle Mass Day. It is given this name because Christ is the light who has come into the world to chase away the dark and drive out sin. Since the 7th Century, candles have been blessed before Mass and used in the year ahead for celebrations like baptisms and prayers in the home.

True or False The Presentation

How well do you know the story of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple?

Can you figure out which of these phrases are true and which are false?

1. Fifty-five days after Jesus was born, His mother Mary and St Joseph took Him to the Temple. True or False?

2. Mary and Joseph offered two doves as a sign of their offering of the Baby Jesus, since that is what the law required. True or False?

3. A holy man named Solomon came to meet them in the temple. True or False?

4. When he has seen Baby Jesus, Simeon said to God that now, he was ready to die in peace, since he had seen God's salvation. True or False?

5. Simeon said, "This Child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and will be a sign to be contradicted". True or False?

6. A holy widow, who was named Anna, was in the temple and came and looked at Baby Jesus, but did not say anything. True or False?

7. When Mary and Joseph had done what the law required, they went home to Nazareth. True or False?

Answers: 1. False (40 days), 2. True, 3. False (Simeon), 4. True, 5. True, 6. False (she thanked God and spoke about Jesus), 7. True

Saints of the Month

February 1: Saint Brigid of Ireland

February 3: Saint Blaise

February 5: Saint Agatha

February 10: Saint Scholastica



Feast of St Brigid of Ireland

St Brigid, one of the most loved saints in Ireland, was born during the fifth century. There are many stories about Brigid, especially her generosity to others. One story tells how St Brigid, after giving her mother's whole butter supply away to the poor, prayed to God that the butter would be replaced. And it miraculously re-appeared!

Brigid founded a monastery under an oak tree in Kildare. The monastery quickly grew in numbers. Many men and women came there to study the faith and learned the



skills of ornate writing and religious art.

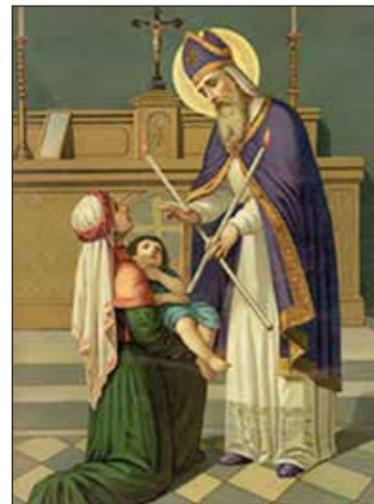
In Ireland we have special devotion to St Brigid's Cross. Tradition speaks of how Brigid went to visit a dying pagan who needed to hear the Gospel. The man was very unsettled, so she sat and prayed with him and, as she prayed, Brigid lifted some straw from the floor and weaved it into a cross. When the man had become quiet, he asked her what she was doing. Brigid explained the Gospel to him with the use of her cross made of straw. He immediately came to believe in Jesus. Brigid baptised him before he died. Today people still make St Brigid's crosses out of rushes and place them in their home to ward off evil and welcome Christ.

Saint Blaise – The Blessing of the Throats

The feast of St Blaise is celebrated on the third day of February. Blaise was a doctor before he was consecrated Bishop of Sebaste in Armenia. He was imprisoned for his faith during the persecutions of Licinius. While in prison, he miraculously cured a young boy who was choking to death on a fishbone lodged in his throat.

From the sixth century people who have been sick with diseases of the throat have prayed to St Blaise asking for his intercession.

The custom of the blessing of throats arose from this and is practised every year in our churches. The priest holds two blessed candles over the head of the faithful or touches their throats, while he says



the prayer of the saint and imparts God's blessing.

The priest says: "Through the intercession of St Blaise, Bishop and Martyr, may God deliver you from all ailments of the throat and from every other evil, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit".

We should also ask St Blaise to protect us against any spiritual illness showing through our tongues, such as cursing, gossiping or making unkind remarks. St James in his Letter (James 1:26) reminds us that our tongues should be used to praise God and not to curse others. Therefore, we pray to St Blaise to protect us from all physical and spiritual ailments which attach to our throats.

Our Lady of Lourdes

We celebrate the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes on February 11. This feast celebrates one of the most famous apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It took place in Lourdes, in southern France. On February 11, 1858, a young girl named Bernadette Soubirous was out collecting

firewood with her sister and a friend near a grotto. Suddenly, Bernadette saw a vision of a beautiful lady. This was the first of 18 appearances.

During these visits the Lady (who did not immediately identify herself as the Blessed Virgin Mary) asked for a chapel to be built on the grounds, so that Bernadette could pray for the conversion of sinners. She also asked Bernadette to drink the spring water that was revealed to her at the grotto.

The news of the apparitions spread rapidly and caused quite a commotion in the town. As a result, Bernadette was detained, interrogated and harassed by the civil authorities and treated as if she were a common criminal. The villagers, however, came to Bernadette's rescue and demanded that she be released. Through all these difficulties, Bernadette was given an interior strength.

Many of the townspeople believed that it was the Blessed Virgin Mary who was appearing to Bernadette, and they came down in large numbers to the grotto to pray. The spring which the Lady asked Bernadette to drink from at the grotto quickly revealed itself, to give forth blessed water with miraculous healing properties.

On March 25, the Feast of the Annunciation, the Lady appeared at the grotto again, this time identifying herself as the Immaculate Conception.

"With her two arms hanging down, she raised her eyes and looked up at the sky, and it was then that she told me, joining her hands together now at the height of her breast, that she was the Immaculate Conception. Those were the last words she ever said to me."

Quiz Time with Lawrence

- Name the giant container ship that blocked the Suez Canal in March 2021?
- What colour is the background on the national flag of New Zealand?
- Which 'Eastenders' character is the longest serving in the show's history?
- Who are the current Six Nations rugby champions?
- Complete the following nursery rhyme...which was against the rule. It made the children laugh and play...?"
- Who replaced Angela Merkel as German Chancellor at the end of 2021?
- In a deck of playing cards, which card was originally stamped with a 'tax paid' motif, making it the highest value card in the deck?
- In which Irish county would you find Bunratty Castle?
- According to the New Testament, what was Jesus' last miracle before His death and resurrection?
- Which is Scotland's oldest professional football club?
- Who was British Prime Minister when the UK first joined the European Union?
- In which US state is the covert 'Area 51' located?
- What is the hottest planet in our solar system?

- For what species of bird is an 'unkindness' the collective noun?
- What is the name given to cooking Indian food over charcoal in a clay oven?
- Of what is Cynophobia a fear?
- Stephen Hendry has won seven World Snooker titles and three other players have won six. Steve Davis and Ronnie O'Sullivan are two - can you name the third?
- Which 2014 Seth Rogen film caused North Korea to threaten action against the US if it wasn't withdrawn?
- For what radio station does fictional DJ Alan Partridge work?
- What French-originating phrase describes lesser pieces of art, pottery and china that are usually for sale but with little significant value?
- Roughly how many pints of blood are in the human body?
- What is the world's largest landlocked country?
- Who had a Number 1 hit in 2001 with the song 'Whole Again'?
- The hugely popular online word game 'Wordle' has just been bought over by what media group?
- This year's late Spring Bank Holiday has been moved from its traditional Monday to a Thursday to accommodate what?

Quiz Answers: 1. Ever Given. 2. Blue. 3. Ian Beale (Adam Woodyatt). 4. Wales. 5. To see a lamb at school. 6. Olaf Scholz. 7. Ace of Spades. 8. County Clare. 9. The Rising of Lazarus. 10. Queens Park. 11. Ted Heath. 12. Nevada. 13. Venus. 14. Ravens. 15. Tandoori. 16. Dogs. 17. Ray Reardon. 18. The Interview. 19. Radio Norwich. 20. Bric-a-brac. 21. Ten. 22. Kazakhstan. 23. Atomic Kitten. 24. The New York Times. 25. A two-day holiday to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee

Aghyaran, Ardmore, Ardstraw West & Castlederg, Ballinascreen, Ballymagroarty, Banagher, Bellaghy, Buncrana, Carndonagh, Claudy,

Let Your Light Shine!

Prayer for the Synod

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

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, Durngryven, Fahan, Faughanvale, Garvagh, Gortin, Greencastle,



Greenlough, Iskaheen, Killyclogher, Killygordon, Kilrea, Lavey, Leckpatrick, Lifford, Limavady, Maghera, Magilligan, Malin, Melmount,