

# The NET

Sharing fruits of faith in Derry Diocese

ISSUE 83. JANUARY 2023  
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See  
inside...



Play and Pray - Maghera.



St Mary's Charity Support - Draperstown.



Coastal Rosary - Benone.



Diaconate ordination of Omagh native, Stephen Ward in St Columb's Church, Waterside.



Diaconate Ordination - Waterside.



Carol Singing - St Eugene's.



Christian Unity - St Eugene's.



Life in the Spirit - Derry.

## People in focus



Cait Glass  
Maghera



Rev Michael McCaul  
St Eugene's.



Rev Stephen Ward  
Cappagh, Omagh



Shauna Clifford  
Holy Family Parish, Ballymagroarty



Yvonne Rooney  
Draperstown

*Also featuring:* Youth Section; Children's Catechism Club – C3; Life-changing experience with the Holy Spirit; Bishop Donal's Pastoral Letter; Rosary feature; Irish Section; Pope Benedict XVI reflections from across the Diocese; Diary Dates; Quiz and much more...

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## 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

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**Mrs Fiona Page, ASC teacher at St Joseph's Boys' School, Derry, reflects on the Pope's prayer intention for January...“We pray that educators may be credible witnesses, teaching fraternity rather than competition and helping the youngest and most vulnerable above all.”**

## Teacher as Story Keeper?



Mrs Fiona Page

Often, and in different ways, I hear my pupils say, "I can't do it", "nobody cares", and "what's the point", and, just like Jesus, teaching and caring is about leading them to a quiet place, away from all their distractions and showing them that places of possibilities and potential exist.

To be a credible witness, to convince others of your ways, they must see it in your words and actions.

"Then he said to Thomas, put your finger here, see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Stop doubting and believe." (John 20:24-29)

In the Early Church, story keepers had to come out of the shadows and leave their places of safety and comfort. They had to believe in Jesus whom they could no longer see. They also had to preach His word and preserve His mission at great risk and cost to themselves.

The risks and costs are different today. We are not putting our lives on the line but, as teachers, we may be asked to be more tolerant, absorb ridicule and negativity. We must adapt and embrace constant changes in education which can be difficult. Just like Thomas, we are asked to not be afraid but to believe, despite our own doubts.

As a teacher, I set about helping children see what they cannot see about themselves. As a story keeper, I listen as a teacher, a mother, and

a friend. Sometimes words fail and my witness may just be my presence, a smile, or simply recalling with a pupil a past conversation or positive experience that we have previously shared. Other ways include a follow up with a teacher to share information or simply a telephone call to a parent to ask how things are.

In St Joseph's, my role is that of a learning support teacher in an Autism Specific Classroom (ASC). Vital to my role is the support of my fellow teachers and support services.

Availing of the skill base within the school fraternity ensures that each child can grow and fulfil their potential in their own unique way. This shared protection of the child adds to the overall ethos within our school family that 'no one gets left behind.'

To ensure that the child flourishes, the role of each child's parents and extended family, as well as the local community and parish, is crucial.

Central to my witness within the ASC is the on-going support and encouragement of families. Often my conversations with them are about sharing positives and finding solutions to a world, whether it means to or not, that can drive parents to distraction; a world that views school results like a football



league table full of promotions and relegations.

'No one gets left behind' must start and be nourished at home, as well as supported by the community and parish, and when they come to school, we are an extension of that belief system.

Therefore, the ethos of our school is to encourage our pupils to be the best versions of themselves, to work to the best of their ability and learn from the world around them to value and respect their own human dignity as well as others.

As teachers, by living out our Catholic Ethos, which is to value everyone, we can ensure that our boys have the opportunity to forge a path that embraces others and excludes no one.

"Sometimes it is not for us to

know the times or the seasons" and, in the absence of faith, much of what lives in our school community may seem difficult to understand. Faith backed up by example can be a witness in such darkness. Our celebrations of the Eucharist and prayer services serve our school community well; reminding staff and pupils that God should always be present in our school and in our work, just as He is always with us throughout life.

To preserve something valuable you must protect it, words are important but living His example will show others the way.

"You must be the change you wish to see in the world." (Ghandi)

So, as we embark on another year, I cast out the invitation to you; are you a story keeper?

## Bishop Donal asks for prayer as he takes second diocese under his wing

TAKING on the temporary role of Apostolic Administrator of Down and Connor, while continuing as Bishop of Derry, Bishop Donal has asked for all to be kept in prayer during this time.

The appointment was made by Pope Francis and took immediate effect from Saturday, January 21, following the appointment back in November of Bishop Noel Treanor, who had been the Bishop of Down and Connor since 2008, as Apostolic Nuncio to the European Union.

Commenting to 'The Net' that it was "quite a challenge to be asked to act as Apostolic Administrator of Down and Connor until a new bishop is installed", Bishop Donal, who is on the countdown to his 73rd birthday and the longest serving of the Irish Bishops, 2001-2023, noted: "The area covered by Derry and my new responsibilities covers from

Malin Head to Kilkeel, with perhaps 1.3 m inhabitants."

He continued: "However, Down and Connor has a very substantial structure to manage the pastoral development of the Diocese. I hope to spend perhaps two days a week there, engaging with the very large groups of volunteers who work with the Diocesan family.

At this early stage, I ask only for prayer so that Down and Connor can be supported – without Derry being neglected!"

"One immediate challenge," remarked Bishop Donal, "is that I no longer know which county to support in GAA, as I have to minister in parts of Donegal, Derry, Tyrone, Antrim and Down!"

An Apostolic Administrator is appointed to temporarily govern a diocese when special circumstances warrant it, and governs in the name of the Holy Father pending the

appointment of a Diocesan Bishop.

The Down and Connor Diocese is the second largest in Ireland, with 87 parishes, and is well known to Bishop Donal, who hails from Randalstown and served as priest and then Auxiliary Bishop within the Diocese, until his appointment as Bishop of Derry in 2014.

Archbishop Treanor, who received his new title on being appointed as the Pope's personal representative in Brussels, warmly welcomed the appointment of Bishop Donal, pending the appointment of a new bishop to Down and Connor.

He remarked: "Bishop McKeown brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to this appointment having already served the people, priests and religious of Down and Connor as a priest (1977-2001) and as Auxiliary Bishop (2001-2014).

"It was an honour to have

worked closely with Bishop Donal when I first arrived in this diocese in 2008. As an auxiliary, Bishop Donal was strongly committed to the fields of education, youth ministry, the Living Church project and I highly valued his insightful guidance and his advice. I know that he will bring these same skills to his governance of the diocese, a responsibility he will carry alongside remaining Bishop of the Diocese of Derry."

"As I take leave from the diocese," he added, "I entrust Bishop Donal to the warmth and care of those whom I have had the privilege to know and serve over the last 14 years, and I know that they will welcome him back as they embraced me upon my arrival. I pray God's blessing on Bishop Donal as he generously takes up this ministry and service within the Diocese of Down and Connor."



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.

# Maghera 'Play & Pray' time offers new way of building parish community



Yvonne Rooney, Ballinascreen



Cait Glass, Maghera.

A WONDERFUL new baby and toddler group set up in the Maghera Parish just before Advent has been warmly welcomed by the parents, grandparents and carers who attend, in offering something different as a 'Play & Pray' event.

The group is for children aged three years and younger, and meets every Friday in Fairhill Youth Club, in the town, after the 10 am Mass next door in St Mary's Church, running from 10.30 am-12 noon.

While the babies and toddlers are mixing and playing, the parents and carers appreciate being able to relax and have a chat and cuppa.

The little ones love the singing, dancing, music, and stories. A special element of the group is a short period of catechesis in the form of songs, art, prayer or story, prepared especially with young children in mind.

The idea for the Parish Play & Prayer Group came from a conversation between friends, Cait Glass, Maghera, and Yvonne Rooney, of the Ballinascreen Parish.

Originally from Tipperary, Cait is married to Sean Glass, from the townland of Fallaghloon, and is the mother of a five-month-old boy.

Commenting on how the group came about, Cait said: "Yvonne and I would meet up regularly to go for a walk. When I was pregnant, we talked about being able to enjoy a bit more time together, but that is not as easy to do as you would think with a baby

child.

"Also, when you have kids it is not as easy to get out to Sunday Mass, so this group may offer another way to feel connected to the parish."

As someone who has only been living in Maghera since she got married almost eight years ago, Cait appreciates the opportunity the 'Play & Pray' group gives her to meet people: "I am big into playing football but that is not feasible for me at the moment, so I have stepped outside of that and it is nice now to have this opportunity to mix with others every week at the 'Play & Pray' group, especially with me being from outside the parish and a new mum."

## Entertained

As a mother to three young children, aged one, six and eight years, Yvonne, who is married to Paul and lives in the Ballinascreen Parish, not only has plenty of experience in keeping little ones entertained but brings to the group her skills as the former Youth Coordinator for the Derry Diocese, which included rolling out the Growing in Faith Together programme to parishes for post-Confirmation aged children.

Delighted with the initial interest in the 'Play & Pray' group since it started in November, Yvonne said: "Our hope was that it would offer people at home with young children somewhere to go to socialise, as well as build a bit of parish community by bringing people together."

"The first week we had around 12 families and their kids. Most of the children are 2-3 years old and there are also little babies. We have some children coming with their grandparent or childminder."

Saying that she and Cait had been thinking of running the group monthly, Yvonne added: "We were going to have it on the First Fridays, but when we asked those who came to the first one they said that they would like it to be every week, as they would love to have something to take them out of the house."

With the faith and parish element to the group, when Yvonne and Cait deliberated over what part of the day to run it, they decided to

hold it after the Friday morning Mass so that those who wanted to, could go to the Mass first.

"In deciding to start with Mass," remarked Yvonne, "we were thinking about those who might be happy to take their kids to Mass and might be happier if there were other kids there too. It works for some to go to the Mass beforehand, but people are welcome to come along whatever time suits them."

She continued: "There are loads of parent and toddler groups but we thought this was something different to try and connect to the parish. Before Christmas, we did the Christmas Story and Christmas crafts, and we are now thinking of doing something for the parents, grandparents and carers for Lent."

Hoping to get some volunteers to help out, Yvonne said: "Cait and I have kiddies and so we could do with a bit more help. It is a time for the parents to relax and socialise, so we don't want them to have too much jobwise to do when they are there, but have the time to talk to the other parents when their children are playing. Hopefully, we will get a few volunteers, and it can be a social experience for them as well."

Yvonne and Cait would also like to highlight that while there is a parish aspect to the Maghera 'Play & Pray' group, people from other areas are very welcome to come along too.

Maghera Parish Pastoral Council member, Kate Lagan volunteers with the group and commented: "This is a very welcome initiative from Cait and Yvonne. The children are a joy, and the mothers and carers are very happy with the activities and the play."

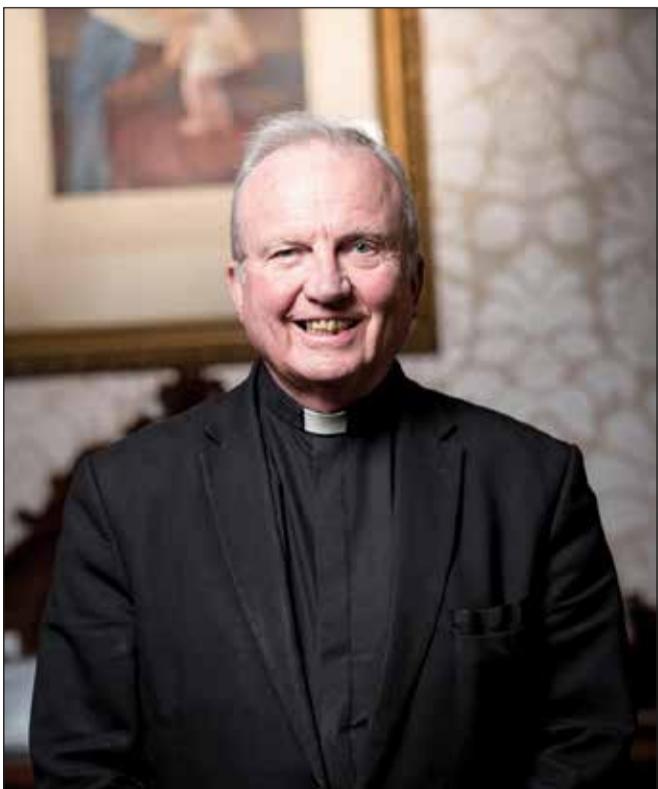
"There are still some spaces available and it is a wonderful opportunity to meet up and mix in a social way."

The group is grateful to the Parish and the Youth Club for their support. Anyone interested in volunteering to help the group weekly can contact Cait on 07531375252. And anyone thinking that the initiative would be good to have in their parish is welcome to come along and find out more.



# God has plans for His people

**Join in the Mission of Prayer, Exploration and Renewal  
...A Pastoral Letter from Bishop Donal McKeown**



*I know well the plans I have made for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare, not for disaster! Plans to give you a future full of hope. When you call me, when you go to pray to me, I will listen to you. When you look for me, you will find me. Yes, when you seek me with all your heart, you will find me with you, says the Lord.' (Jeremiah 29:11-13)*

## Where we are

The prophet Jeremiah lived some centuries before Christ. In his lifetime, the Jewish people saw Jerusalem destroyed and their leaders exiled to Babylon. That seemed to be the end of the Chosen People.

But the prophet was told to proclaim that, despite all appearances, God had great plans for His people – and a future full of hope.

I share this scripture passage with you as we, in this diocese today, face a time of change and a change of time. Sometimes, we can be tempted to believe that all is lost. In such a negative narrative, some frightened voices talk of coming disasters and judgement.

But the message of the scriptures is always one of hope. God has plans for His people. Faith means believing that God is at work, even in difficult times. Faith involves discerning where God is in the middle of fear and loss, anger and division.

It is very clear that, like much of Europe, the Diocese of Derry faces many difficulties.

1. The model of Church that seemed so confident 50 years ago is no longer marked by large

numbers at Mass. Where smaller numbers attend Mass, there is a lesser chance of bringing people to know and love Jesus, of numerous vocations to priesthood and religious life.

2. The scandal of abuse and cover-ups from the past have damaged our ability to speak about Jesus with moral authority.

3. To a large extent we have failed to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus to young people.

4. We face a secular culture which has little time for faith communities. Along with other Christian churches, we know that the problem in the future will not be religious difference so much as religious indifference.

5. Our society is stalked by fears of poverty, war in Europe and a climate emergency.

But the scriptures tell us that, despite obvious problems, God has a future full of hope for the Church in the Derry Diocese.

## A future full of hope will involve change

In our time of listening and sharing during our parish synodal conversations, there was a recognition of change in our faith community. There were suggestions about how we need to change as a Church. Many suggestions focused on the role of women, on the disconnect of life and faith, on who should be ordained and sexual morality. All of these are important issues.

But the key question is not merely how we change so that we can maintain the current model and structures. With that model we have been failing in our mission

of bringing people to know and love Jesus.

If we ask the right question, we discover that renewal is not only a question of managing changed structures and rescheduling parish Mass. This is a time where we need to make space for grace so that God's plans – and not our limited imagination – can renew the mission of the Church. Merely tinkering with the current system is not the divine solution.

## So, what is the right question to ask?

At the end of St Matthew's Gospel, Jesus gives the apostles a commandment – go, make disciples of all nations (Mt 28:19). In renewing the diocese, our main question has to be, "How do we use our resources and people so that we make new disciples for Christ in this diocese?"

And, in seeking that way forward, the New Testament tells us that there is another vital consideration.

Since the Church belongs to God and not to us, we have to discern where God wants us to go in 2023. That is why all parish conversations need to be synodal and steeped in prayer. Otherwise, we end up merely with our limited answers to our narrow questions.

## What is our model for Church?

In the Gospels, Jesus is quoted as using the word 'Church' on only two occasions (Mt 16:18 and 18:17). But there are many times when both Jesus and St Paul and St Peter use images to describe who Christ's followers are.

Some images refer to a very intimate relationship between Jesus and the Church

- Head/body, vine/branches, shepherd/sheep, bridegroom/bride

Others point to how we are closely connected with one another in Church

- Body, Living stones, Pilgrim people, God's family

Another set of images speaks of the purpose of the Church, namely to bring Christ to the world

- Salt/light, mirror, ambassadors, soldiers.

A Church that merely provides religious service to those who come is not an image of Church found in the Bible!

If we take seriously St Paul's image of the Church as the Body of Christ where we are all living cells, each person is uniquely gifted because of our baptism. Each of us at baptism received

the seeds of Christian life, which grow and bear fruit as we develop our relationship with God during the course of our lives. This means that each of us has a role in building up the Body of Christ. We all can play a part in searching out God's way forward.

## A ministry-rich Church, a faith-rich people

The Church has always been at its best – at home and overseas – when we have cherished a range of God-given ministries. Ask those who went from our parishes to work in Asia, Africa and Latin America – and they will tell you about the role played by local faith leaders and parish catechists.

I believe that we will be more like the Holy Spirit-filled Body of Christ when our diocese is blessed with many:

- Families which hand on the faith;
- People of all ages exploring and developing their faith;
- Lay people with the official ministries of Lector, Acolyte and Catechist;
- Consecrated Virgins – who publicly dedicate their lives to the Lord but live and work among their fellow-parishioners
- Female and male religious (such as the Carmelites and various communities of religious Sisters and Brothers);
- Permanent Deacons; and
- Ordained priests.

## What structures best serve the mission?

How might we review our current parish structure so that we are better prepared to bring Christ to our contemporaries?

One of the challenges is that, by 2032, we might expect to have about 35 priests for the current 51 parishes in our diocese.

The large city parishes will remain as individual parishes with at least one priest. But, for the parishes outside Derry city, we have two choices. Either, we plan to load multiple rural parishes on individual priests, or we aim to create missionary pastoral communities with at least two priests in each.

Having talked with clergy, I propose the second of these.

This would mean that we will have:

- In County Derry, five pastoral communities with 14 parishes;
- In County Tyrone and Finn Valley, five pastoral communities with 17 parishes;
- In Inishowen, three pastoral communities with 8 parishes.

In Derry City, because of the larger populations, the parishes will remain distinct.

The emerging Church is called to be rich in ministries. These will include:

- The new ministries of lay Catechist, Lector and Acolyte;
- Consecrated Virginity;
- Male and female communities of consecrated religious;
- Permanent Diaconate; and
- Ordained clergy.

All of this implies major changes for clergy and lay people regarding:

- The celebration of Masses, funerals, baptisms, etc;
- How parish communities work to teach and hand on faith;
- Developing new ways of learning and practising our faith;
- Developing new ways of gathering as parishes for prayer in the absence of a priest;

- How Parish Pastoral Councils and Parish Finance Councils work to plan the ministry of their community.

These challenges and changes will involve letting go of some of the familiar. It will give parishes more of an opportunity of working cooperatively with neighbouring parishes, sharing their gifts, talents and resources. Parishes will retain their individual parish identity but will share a priest. These changes will involve imagination, training and a gradual introduction over a period of time. In some parts of the diocese, however, sudden changes have already been forced on us.

## A future full of hope and renewal

As we face the future,

- We have the conviction that Christ is with His Church until the end of time.

- We have many people of good will who are keen to be involved in the mission of the diocese and its parishes.

There is a beautiful phrase in the Book of Revelation "behold, I make all things new" (21:5). Christ renews His Church in every generation to make us more like what we should be.

On their journey through the desert from slavery in Egypt, the Israelites were often tempted to go back. But they discovered that God was with them and that the Promised Land always lay ahead of them, never behind them.

## Next Steps

Every journey begins with the first steps, even when we are not sure where we are going or when we will arrive.

In our synod conversations it became clear that the Church in the Diocese of Derry is in a period of transition. There is recognition of the need for a new model of Church which may require a certain mind-shift in all of us.

I invite all our local parishes to have prayerful discussions about how each can explore and review our way of being Church so that we:

- Build an open and welcoming community, reaching those who feel like outsiders in our churches;
- Grow in faith together throughout our lives; and
- Make Jesus known and loved.

It entails what Pope Francis calls 'a pastoral conversion'. St John Paul II also wrote that each parish community must become 'a school of prayer'. This period of transition will involve many conversations at local and diocesan level – and new openness to the Holy Spirit.

But none of the conversations will bear fruit if they are not held up by prayer. I encourage each parish to promote a specific period of time to Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament to pray and reflect on this mission of renewal. Only by being open to the Sacrament of the Cross will we be renewed. Unless changes in Church are rooted in the foolishness of the Cross, they will be built on the shifting sands of human agendas.

In 2032, Ireland will celebrate the 16th centenary of St Patrick's arrival in this country. We walk forward in hope, as our national patron did. A hurting world still needs to hear the message of God's abundant mercy revealed in Jesus.

In a context of prayer and of openness to the Holy Spirit, I invite the parishes of the diocese to set out on this mission of renewal, believing that if we listen for the voice of the Lord, we can enter into His peace. Like generations of missionaries before us, we walk into the future, filled with hope, that the Lord has already prepared for us.

+Donal  
Bishop of Derry  
January 2023



*In his homily during the closing Mass for the Life in the Spirit weekend in Termonbacca on the Feast of the Baptism of Jesus, Bishop Donal told those gathered...*

# You are part of this mission that began one day on the shores of the River Jordan

CELEBRATING the closing Mass of the Life in the Spirit weekend in the Carmelite Retreat Centre, Derry, on the very fitting Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, Bishop Donal called on those gathered to "reflect on the fact that, if we are baptised, we have become children of the Father, companions of Jesus in His mission to bring healing to the world and anointed by the Holy Spirit."

Noting that many see baptism as not "much more than a nice little sort of naming ceremony", he went on to explain: "That anointing is not merely some sort of spiritual gift, invisible and hidden away. It is our bodies that are washed in baptism and anointed to become temples of the Holy Spirit. These bodies will be raised up on the Last Day for they are not merely carcasses carrying the soul."

"We believe that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. The baptism underlines that we are saved in our bodies and in how we use them. That is the context for our belief about the destruction of human life, its reduction to being a commodity that we can play with or dispose of – all of these convictions find their root in the nativity and baptism of Jesus."

Bishop Donal spoke about how baptism had been "a turning point in Jesus' life", saying: "Up until now He was living the life of an anonymous tradesman. Something happens at the River Jordan and He begins to preach and heal. What happens? The voice refers to Jesus as His beloved Son. This is not just a statement of theological interest. It echoes one of the psalms and the passage from Isaiah which speak of who the Messiah will be and what he will do. The words from above are a shorthand that the Jewish audience would have easily understood."

"Furthermore, the phrase 'my favour rests on you' tells us that God's love is permanent. The voice reassures Jesus that He is eternally loved by the Father. God's mission to Jesus is based on intimate divine love and does not come merely as a cold command. That is why Jesus could teach the Apostles the Lord's Prayer, and

why Jesus could later say, 'as the Father has loved me, so I have loved you' (John 15:9). When we know who we are, we can be clearer about where we are going."

Remarking that the story about the baptism of Jesus appeared in all four Gospels, with different emphasis, Bishop Donal went on to highlight how it "underlines how the baptism of Jesus and the baptism of Christians was not merely a nice little ceremony".

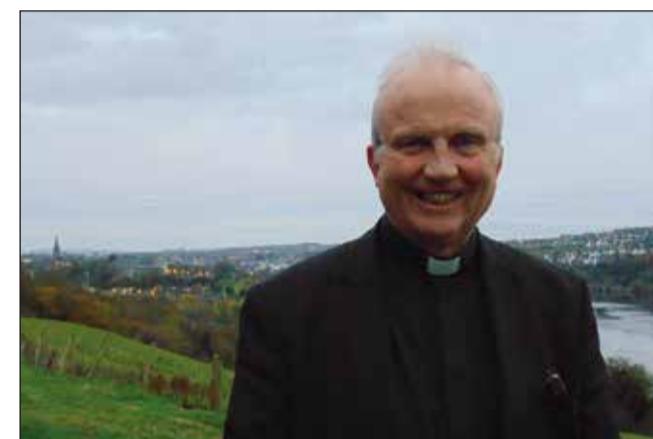
"It marked the beginning of a new chapter in a person's life", he said, adding: "Jesus, when speaking later to Nicodemus, will say that we need to be born again of water and the Holy Spirit (Jn 3:5). And when Nicodemus mocks the idea of 'being born again', Jesus simply repeats the image.

#### Make disciples of all nations

"Similarly, the last instructions from Jesus to His disciples in Matthew's Gospel were to make disciples of all nations and to baptise them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Mt 28:19)."

While noting that the Baptism ceremony "needs only the pouring of water in the name of the Trinity", the Bishop went on to say: "But the church has built other elements around the core, all directed to underlining the meaning of the sacrament. All emphasise that this is a public ceremony for a person who is joining God's holy people. It is never a merely private event."

"The celebration has four core parts: The welcome where parents are asked whether they are clear what they are freely asking; the Word of God, to make clear that



what happens at the font is on Christ's instruction and on His terms, followed by the profession of faith in the Trinity; the pouring of water followed by the anointing with chrism (for Christ means the anointed one), the white garment and the lighting of a candle; and the final prayers at the altar, for baptism is just the first stage of initiation into the Church, followed by Confirmation and Holy Communion."

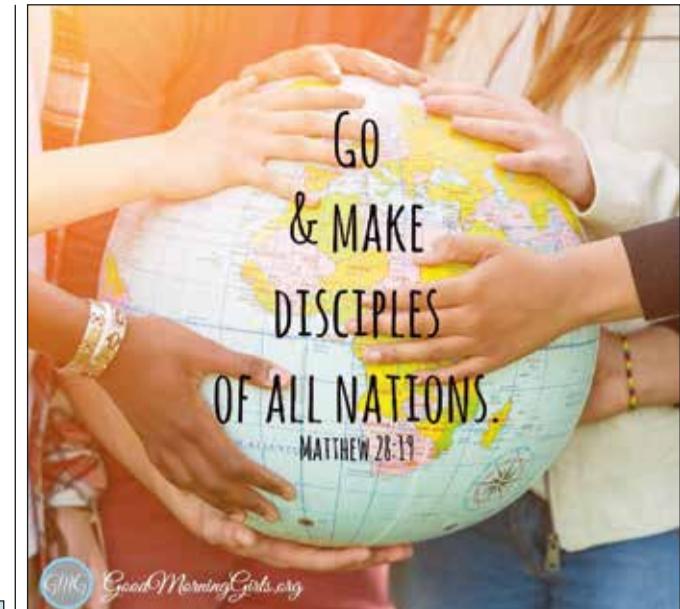
Referring to the Irish and universal church being on a synodal pathway, Bishop Donal said: "A re-discovery of baptism has to be part of that new chapter in our journey. All Christians, of whatever age, have been reborn as children of the Father. At the heart of our prayer, lies the conviction that God has told each of us that we are His beloved son, His beloved daughter and that His favour rests on us. All have been anointed with the Holy Spirit for the mission of bringing good news to our world."

He encouraged helping children to know the date and place of their baptism and making reference to "the anniversary of the day when they were born again as children of God".

"Perhaps, there could be a family renewal of the baptismal promises," he suggested, "Keep the baptismal candle in a prominent place as reminder of the light of Christ that was lit in their lives around the font. Acknowledge the role that godparents play, not just in the ceremony but in the life of the growing child."

The church will be renewed when we re-learn the intimate link between what happens in the church at the parents' request and what happens in the family home as Christ's request. In a world of much self-doubt and loneliness, can we invite our neighbours to know the God who wants everyone to hear the message 'you are my beloved, my favour rests on you'?

"Only through knowing the love of the Father, our membership in the Body of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit can the world be renewed. You are part of this mission that began one day on the shores of the River Jordan."



## Moving forward...

THE Pastoral Letter from Bishop Donal was referred to by the priests of the Diocese at the weekend Masses of January 14/15, and initial feedback is that it is being well received.

In the Letter, the Bishop points out the direction of travel for the Diocese over the next number of years, and he invites parishes to have prayerful discussions about how each can explore and review our way of being Church.

In a follow up to it, Tony Brennan, the Diocesan Pastoral Development Coordinator, is overseeing a rolling out of a programme of prayer, guidance and engagement with all parishes by deanery area on this mission of renewal.

Noting that this will take place over the coming weeks and months, Tony said: "There will be meetings in the four Deaneries of the Diocese through February to early April and again before June."

"The basis of these will be prayer, exploration and renewal so that, come September each parish will have plans for how it is going to grow, develop, train and learn new skills."



Tony Brennan, Diocesan Pastoral Development Coordinator.

Live & Exclusive on **RADIO MARIA IRELAND**

**2023 TOTUS TUUS EUCHARISTIC CONFERENCE**

**Saturday February 4th From 2 pm**

**FEATURING:**

Fr. Patrick Lagan  
Fr. Patrick Cahill O.J.S.S  
Maura Murphy (Holy Family Mission)  
Fr. Columba Mary Toman OP

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Fr Patrick Lagan will be one of the guest speakers at the 2023 Totus Tuus Eucharistic Conference.

# Starting the New Year encountering the Holy Spirit a life-changing experience

ALMOST 200 men and women gathered in the Carmelite Retreat Centre, on the banks of the Foyle, in early January for a weekend of 'Life in the Spirit' seminars and couldn't have asked for a better start to the New Year, with amazing talks, prayer and singing that left them hungry for more.

The weekend came about when four faith friends from the City felt moved to share what they had experienced on a similar weekend last September, and they are delighted with the response, which has led them to discern the way forward in helping to further fan the flame of the Holy Spirit stirring within themselves, in the lives of those who attended the talks, and others besides.

'The Net' caught up with two of the group members, 35-year-old Mark and 41-year-old Jenny, and they shared their story of how the group got together and how the weekend came about.

Jenny recalled that she, Mark, Anthony and Bernard had known each other for a couple of years now, having first come into contact through seeing each other at Mass and prayer groups.

"We were in different prayer groups," said Jenny, "and were involved in faith based things, like attending Mass and Adoration in the Long Tower and Carnhill. We seemed to be coming together a lot through this and, in conversation, realised that we felt a mutual call to draw closer to the Holy Spirit."

Interest in the weekend was high, with around 180 people attending, who ranged in age from teenagers up to 80 year olds, with the majority being 30 and 40 year olds.

## Praise & Worship

The programme consisted of praise and worship, an overview of Life in the Spirit seminars, talks on God's Love, Salvation, The New Life, Receiving God's Gifts, Preparation for receiving the Holy Spirit, and Growth & Transformation, as well as testimonies, discussion time, Mass and Confession.

She continued: "This happened over the first weekend in September, in Termonbacca, and it was a powerful weekend. We experienced the love of God and the Holy Spirit in a truly different way, and our lives haven't been the same since."

The weekend was led by Deacons John Taaffe and Pat Buttlerly and, as well as cementing us as a group, we developed a lovely bond with them, and have since travelled up and down to their Centre."

Taking up the story, Mark spoke about how their experience had led them to believe that a renewal of the Holy Spirit was needed in Derry: "There is a fire in us to be more united to God. We got a new depth of love for God through the

Holy Spirit on our first Life in the Spirit weekend and, in the weeks following, we knew the calling that we felt was to bring the Life in the Spirit experience to Derry to share with others what happened to us. It just wasn't something that happened and went away. It deepened our unity with each other. We believe this is what Derry needs, especially its young men and women.

"After Confirmation, nobody talks about the Holy Spirit or its role in our lives. The Third Person of the Trinity is present in our lives every day and is so important. Our first Life in the Spirit weekend was something very different for us. It changed our lives. The Holy Spirit brings a joy and peace that the world can't give.

"We want to help renewal of the faith through the power of the Holy Spirit to ignite and build up the Church – through Mass and the sacraments, Adoration and living the Word of God. We want to serve and we believe that Life in the Spirit will bring people back to the faith."

Adding that they had been drawn into praying, fasting and Eucharistic Adoration much more as they prepared for the Life in the Spirit weekend on January 7 & 8, along with the Apostles of Love, Mark said: "Unity is very important. We prayed together often, fasted and went to Mass."



Mark and Jenny, who helped to organise the recent very successful Life in the Spirit weekend in Termonbacca.

Bishop Donal told 'The Net': "It was wonderful to be present for the opening and closing of the weekend in Termonbacca. The numbers present reflected a great hunger in many people for renewal.

"There were two further important points that struck me. Firstly, this was led by a group of four lay people who have themselves experienced the grace of such a weekend. Secondly, as in the synodal process, the emphasis was very much on the work of the Holy Spirit as the driving force behind the Church.

"Please God, this will be one more stage of the journey of church renewal in this part of the island."

Thankful to have the blessing and support of Bishop Donal, the group is now praying and discerning about the way forward.

"This isn't about us," stressed Mark and Jenny, "It's for God. It's for Him, through Him and With Him. We just want more people to experience what we have experienced."

They concluded by expressing thanks to: Bishop Donal for his support and for opening the weekend and saying the closing Mass; to Deacons John and Pat and the Apostles of Love team; Fr Pat McHugh, who was the resident priest for the Life in the Spirit weekend, for guiding them as a group; Fr Thomas Cacciola cfr for hearing Confessions; Carmelite Frs Stephen Quinn, prior, and Cajetan Apeh for their support; and Fr Bill Keogh, who wasn't on the weekend but gave the group spiritual guidance.

"Life in the Spirit is all about the Holy Spirit," added Mark, "but in our ministry, the Eucharist, Holy Spirit and Our Lady are front and centre, and we opened the weekend with the Bishop consecrating it to Our Lady."

Delighted at the response to the Life in the Spirit weekend,



# Holy Family parishioner to fulfil childhood desire to be Christ's Bride



Shauna Clifford, Holy Family Parish.

A BEAUTIFUL soul is set to become Christ's Bride, with Holy Family parishioner, Shauna Clifford to take the Rite of Consecration in a ceremony to be celebrated by Bishop Donal in St Joseph's Church, Galliagh, on Friday, February 10, at 11 am.

Taking time out from the preparations for her special day, Shauna shared the journey of faith she has been on since a wonderful experience during a pilgrimage to Lourdes as a five-year-old.

Originally from the Creggan, she has lived over 30 years in the Holy Family Parish, Ballymagroarty, with her family moving to live in Barr's Lane, Hazelbank, when she was a child.

The second of three children born to the late Daniel and Bernadette Clifford, Shauna has suffered quadriplegia from birth, with impairment of her muscles in both her arms and legs.

Accepting of her condition, she remarked: "I am not paralysed, but because of the way my muscles are impacted, it is difficult for me to move. I remember when I was younger, wanting to move and being frustrated that I couldn't."

"And, just before Christmas, I was diagnosed with Arthritis, which has impacted on my mobility now to a certain extent. There are challenges in life; it is not a smooth run."

Only five years old when her mother took her to Lourdes, Shauna remarked: "I don't remember much about the pilgrimage because of my age, but I remember my mother telling me about it and showing me a photograph."

"She had taken me to the Baths one day, and when we got back to our hotel she put me down on

## God's Will

"As my relationship with Jesus and Our Lady developed over time, every decision I made in my life, I took it to prayer. When I was younger and got ideas in my head that I wanted to do, I told God about it, but when I got older it wasn't so much that I was telling God but more that I was asking Him if it was His Will for me to do whatever I had in my head to do."

When Shauna was 16, she left school and went on to a training scheme, and then spent over four years with the Health Service, before having to leave work because of her condition worsening.

"My muscles got very painful," she explained, "For some time, because the pain was considerable, I couldn't go out and about, but when the pain started to ease I got involved with the voluntary sector and volunteered for a while through the outreach service, Compassionate Communities, which was based at Foyle Hospice. It was a befriending service for people living with a life-limiting illness. Volunteers were matched up with the service users. I enjoyed this and continued with it up to the Covid lockdown."

"I prayed before getting involved with the volunteer service, as I tend to do now before I make decisions. I get a feeling of inner peace that lets me know what is right; it is like a peace that doesn't come from this world."

Shauna went on to share a lovely prayer that she likes to say: "Our Lady lead me, guide me and use me."

She remarked: "It is short but it has a lot of meaning. It has been one of my personal prayers for years."

Shauna also has a strong devotion to St Joseph, following a special experience a few years ago, when she was praying for someone else's intentions.

"I got a strong feeling that I was to encourage devotion to St Joseph," she recalled, "and the next day a stamped envelope arrived at my door with the name S Clifford on it, and my address. Inside it was a leaflet about how to encourage devotion to St Joseph, along with information about the Carmelite Order. To this day, I don't know who sent it."

"I went into my room thinking that I hadn't contacted any Carmelite Order, so I said to Jesus, 'How did an envelope from the Carmelite Order, with a leaflet to encourage devotion to St Joseph, end up at my door?'

"When I was thinking about it later, I realised that this envelope hadn't come through my door for nothing. In my ignorance, I didn't know that there was a

Carmelite Order in Derry, until I was searching online to see if there was a local number I could contact. I rang the Termonbacca number I found and got speaking to a lady who explained about the Carmelite Third Order, through which lay people can commit themselves to the Carmelite way of life.

## Carmelites

"She said that she would send me an invitation to come along as a visitor, which is how the process is started. You attend monthly meetings, for six months, with other secular Carmelites, as a visitor to pray and discern if God is calling you to live the spirituality of the Carmelites through the Third Order. The prayer includes the Breviary of the Church, and Morning and Evening Prayer."

"I went for the six months as a visitor and really enjoyed it," said Shauna, adding: "You have a spiritual director who talks with you to help you discern your desire to become a Third Order Carmelite, and then you have an Admission Mass. The date for my Admission Mass was postponed due to my father becoming ill in the early hours of the original date. I ended up having my Admission Mass six days before

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**I prayed before getting involved with the volunteer service, as I tend to do now before I make decisions. I get a feeling of inner peace that lets me know what is right; it is like a peace that doesn't come from this world.**

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Christmas 2015, the year my father died.

"After this, you spend five years undergoing Carmelite formation, but I didn't do the five years. I took my Temporary Promise but I didn't take my Final Promise because, for a considerable time before that, I had a strong desire to become a nun."

Shauna went on to recall: "I had a desire when I was a really young girl to be a nun but because of my disability I didn't think it would be practical for me to be in a convent. So, I had been thinking very practically about how I would manage in a convent with my wheelchair and everything. But this thought resurfaced about three or four years ago and I

decided to follow up on it.

"I was at St Joseph's Chapel in Galliagh with my friend and there was a young Franciscan nun there. I thought it would be nice to talk to her about my desire to be a nun, to see if she could help advise me. As it turned out, she was American and was going back the next day. I spoke to her of my concerns about how I would manage in a convent with my disability. I told her that I was living independently at home with a walker and was wondering how that would work in a convent, but that I really felt strongly in my heart that I wanted to be Christ's bride."

"She asked me if I had heard of a vocation called Consecrated Virginity. I hadn't and she then started to explain to me that I could be Christ's Bride, just like a nun, but didn't need to go into a convent. As a Consecrated Virgin, I could live in my own home. Afterwards, I thanked Jesus for putting this nun in my path."

Excited by this and curious to know more, Shauna spoke to Fr Columba Jordan cfr, about what the nun had told her.

She recalled: "Fr Columba told me about Ann Walker and Lida Bulf, who were Consecrated Virgins and lived in the Three Patrons Parish, and gave me a contact number for Ann. Firstly, I met with Ann and the second time I met with both Ann and Lida, and they explained to me that usually there was a formation period.

## Encouraged

"I have been on that journey since 2020, and Ann and Lida have stayed in contact with me. The first step I took was to write a formal letter to the Bishop telling him about my desire to be a Consecrated Virgin. Bishop McKeown responded and encouraged me but, unfortunately, due to Covid things were put on hold."

"Just prior to meeting Ann and Lida and writing to the Bishop, I had met him at a Vocations Day for the Diocese. It was actually a Vocations Day for those considering the priesthood, but my friend and I had gone along because the bulletin notice about it had just invited anyone who had a vocations desire to come to a day in Thornhill to explore. There was no specific mention that it was for those considering priesthood, but the Bishop came over to speak to us and said that we were very welcome, so we stayed until it was over and I still had a desire to go forward."

After receiving Shauna's letter, Bishop Donal asked the Diocesan Vocations Director at the time, Fr Chris Ferguson to visit her.

Commenting on this, she said: "Fr Ferguson asked how long I had had the desire to be a Consecrated Virgin. I told him about my desire to be a nun as a young girl and that I had put it to the back of my mind as I had concerns about the practicality of that, but that I now felt I was on the right path in wanting to become a Consecrated Virgin. I explained that when the young nun told me about this vocation, it was like a light-bulb moment."

"He then explained that it would be a real marriage between Jesus and me, to let me know that it was a serious step as it is a genuine marriage."

She continued: "Then we had the Covid lockdown, during which I did a lot of reading about Consecrated Virginity and listened to the online stories of some Consecrated Virgins. With my situation and my having spent time with the Carmelite Third Order, I got word before Christmas there that my Consecrated Virgin ceremony could happen in the New Year."

"I felt really excited and happy when I got the date for my ceremony, and my family and friends are very happy for me, although my family don't have a deep understanding about Consecrated Virginity. They

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**As a Consecrated Virgin, my mission will be to pray for my Bishop and for the salvation of the world. A Consecrated**

**Virgin is to be a witness on earth of the world to come, as this world is only temporary.**

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know that I will just continue as I am, while being officially set apart to be a Bride of Christ."

"Christ's gift to me is the desire to be a Consecrated Virgin, and how I live that is my gift back to Him," remarked Shauna, adding: "I know it is down to the pure Grace of God and His Mercy, and not that I am any better than anyone else or that I have done anything spectacular. As I say to people, 'I am a work in progress'. God is working on me and there is still work to do."

"As a Consecrated Virgin, my mission will be to pray for my Bishop and for the salvation of the world. A Consecrated Virgin is to be a witness on earth of the world to come, as this world is only temporary."

*Seeing God's hand in all the struggle and strife he has experienced on the pathway of life that has led to him being ordained a deacon, Rev Stephen Ward shares his story so far, remarking...*

## I know now that this is where God wants me to be



Rev Stephen Ward, from Cappagh Parish

**ORDAINED a Deacon for the Derry Diocese earlier this month, on the Feast of the Epiphany of The Lord, Cappagh parishioner, Stephen Ward took time out from his ministry in the Waterside Parish to reflect on his vocation story.**

The 37-year-old is the eldest of two children born to Patricia and the late Paul Ward, of Killyclogher, and while they played an important role in his faith life, it is the example of his grandparents' faith, particularly his maternal grandparents, that had the greatest influence on him as a child.

"However, in later years, I didn't really care much about faith," he added, "I went through the typical teenage rebellion, which was surprising because I would have attended the Five-Day Club, which was an Evangelical Christian youth group that came to the park where I lived, as well as other residential areas. They sat in the green and sang hymns and Gospel songs. So, I was drawn to something."

Stephen attended St Mary's PS, Killyclogher, and then the Christian Brothers' School in Omagh, before going on to study Mechanical Engineering at the University of Ulster, Jordanstown Campus, and graduating in 2008.

He remarked: "There definitely wasn't much in the way of praying or God at that stage in my life."

Unemployed for two years after graduating, Stephen then worked for the insurance company, Allstate, for six-and-a-half years, after which he entered

the seminary in 2016, having come back to the practise of the Catholic faith some nine years previous.

Recalling his first thoughts of priesthood, he said: "When I was younger, I was always curious about priesthood, though I probably wasn't actually thinking of being one. When I was very small, I couldn't have told you what was happening at Mass, but I was drawn to what the priest was doing."

"The thought of priesthood really first came to me around 2007. My dad had done his Cursillo weekend that year and he came home a completely different person, for the better in every way. This began a bit of soul searching in myself. What I saw in my dad was that he had found a profound relationship with Jesus and I wanted that. The only way I can describe it is that there was a God-shaped hole in my life. I was yearning for Him, not realising that it was actually the other way around; that God was searching for me."

"While I had been suspicious of my dad's conversion at first, I realised on observing him that it was genuine. As time went on, I just felt compelled to go on the Cursillo weekend and it was life-changing. I went on it with a mutual friend of my family,

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**When I was younger, I was always curious about priesthood, though I probably wasn't actually thinking of being one. When I was very small, I couldn't have told you what was happening at Mass, but I was drawn to what the priest was doing.**

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Eamon Cassidy, and attended the friendship nights afterwards at Termonbacca and at Christ the King Church in my home parish. I got involved with it straight away, helping out on other Cursillo weekends through joining the Liturgy team and praying for all those on the weekends."

"About a year or so after that," continued Stephen, "I realised, particularly as part of the team training, that discipleship would often be referred to in relation to what we would be doing on the weekend, and that it applied more to me personally. I realised that God wasn't just calling me to Cursillo or weekends, but that He was calling me to priesthood."

"That was around 2009 and, initially, like Jonah, I ran away. I was too afraid to respond. I basically just wanted Him to leave me alone. I still kept involved with Cursillo, but not as much as I had been as it was just too close to the bone. I never mentioned these thoughts about priesthood to anyone there, but some would have asked if I had ever thought of it and I didn't want to hear that, as I was so strongly in denial; that was how strongly I felt. It was a strange time."

### Hand

He added: "It was really after that that my thoughts on priesthood began to change, and when I tell what happened some people may think I am nuts, but I feel that God had a hand in it the whole time."

"My dad got sick. He had Motor Neurone Disease. The symptoms manifested in the summer of 2010 and he was diagnosed in January 2011. One morning he woke up and found that he had lost the power of his arms. At the time, I was angry about this; angry with God and with myself as I had this feeling of helplessness that I couldn't do anything about it. I questioned what was this about? Why was God doing this?"

"But, it was also a time when I came to realise that God was working in all of it; to bring us closer to God as a family. Mum was dad's primary carer and between the three of us, we looked after him. In and through all of this, and particularly afterwards when my father had died, the idea of priesthood never went away."

Noting that St Paul had talked much about redemptive suffering, Stephen referred to Philippians 3:8-11 – "What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead."

He then remarked: "As I look back on it, that is what really happened. I thought I was serving Him in some way through caring for my father, but what I didn't realise was that the Lord was using that as a means to heal me."

"I thought that my dad was the only one suffering but I realised as time went on that the person who really needed healing was me."

It was through that experience with my dad that I became more open to accepting the call to priesthood.

"In relation to what St Paul said about redemptive suffering, one of my uncles believed that my dad was permitted this suffering by God so that some good might come out of it, such as the conversion of souls, and I realised that one of the souls was me. So, God is good."

Stephen's father died on March 15, 2014, and some six months later a comment his parish priest made to him felt like confirmation that God was, indeed, calling him to priesthood.

He recalled: "I went to Confession one night in my home parish to my parish priest, Fr Kevin McElennon, and afterwards as I was just about to get up from the chair, he took me by the arm and said if I was thinking of priesthood to come and talk to him about it, and that he thought that I would make a great priest."

"It wasn't the first time that I had heard this, but it was the first time that I accepted that it was coming from God, not Fr McElennon. When he came to the house after dad had passed away, he would have hinted at it. I knew what he was hinting at but I didn't take it on. But, at the point when he

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**I thought that my dad was the only one suffering but I realised as time went on that the person who really needed healing was me. It was through that experience with my dad that I became more open to accepting the call to priesthood.**

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mentioned it in the confessional, I felt comfortable talking about it.

"Afterwards, I spoke to my mum and sister, and to Eamon Cassidy. As Eamon said at the time, and as I realised, the person who was most surprised was me."

Eamon wasn't one bit surprised when I mentioned it to him.

"I then spoke to Fr McElennon and we talked about it and agreed that it was too soon after my dad's death. I didn't want any decision about priesthood to be influenced by grief. I had actually grieved for my dad's death before it actually happened, but I grieved further when he died...and it is still with me, but I have grown a lot and it is something that you learn to live with."

### Discerned

He added: "I had said to God, Fr McElennon and myself that I would give it a year and see if the idea of priesthood was still with me, and it just didn't go away. So, after the year, I went back to my parish priest and we went through a period of accompaniment for almost a year. During that time, Fr McElennon gave me things to pray about, books to read and pieces of Scripture to reflect on. We talked and I actively discerned about whether I had a vocation or not to the priesthood.

"When the time was right I met with the Diocesan Vocations Director at the time, Fr Paul Farren, who asked me to attend the Vocations Day that was coming up. Around this time, my prayer became more deliberate. I spent time before the Blessed Sacrament, doing Lectio Divina, going to daily Mass and receiving the sacraments of the Eucharist and Confession frequently.

"When I look back to when I first rejected the notion of priesthood, the main stumbling block was celibacy, but this time around I had a feeling of utter and complete unworthiness. Then a couple of things happened, one being on the Vocations Day. I can't remember all that the Bishop spoke about, but I do remember him talking about looking at stained glass, at small fragments of different coloured glass, with each piece seeming broken, insignificant, but when the light shines through it, it shows beauty. This helped me to see and recognise that this feeling of unworthiness that I had was natural.

"Also, just after Holy Communion, after a moment of recollection, Bishop Donal said, 'Don't think you're not worthy,'



know you're not worthy'. Those words stayed with me."

Stephen recalled another happening that helped him in his discernment: "The only time I spoke to my dad about priesthood was before he became sick, and it was to say that I didn't want to be a priest. I had just felt that it wasn't for me and he didn't really know what to say. I didn't speak to him about it after that."

"The year after his death, for Christmas 2015 we decided to put up the Christmas tree. As I mentioned earlier, I had been involved with Cursillo and attended grouping in Omagh, during which we prayed the Rosary and used a particular prayer book written by Fr John Woolley called, 'I am always with you'. Well, when we were getting the Christmas tree out of the cupboard, this little book by Fr John Woolley dropped down to the ground, and my sister and I wondered where it had come from. I hadn't known that there was a copy of the book we used in our Cursillo grouping in our house."

**I felt that it was God responding to me, and that it was also a way of dad letting me know that he was praying for me. Maybe he even had an inkling all along that that was how it was going to be.**

"I realised it was my dad's when I opened the book and found a bookmark which was a prayer card for the beatification of Pope John Paul II, as he always had a big devotion to him. I happened to look at the page that the bookmark was on and saw a line of Scripture from the Old Testament, 'I shall take you and make you like a signet ring. For I have chosen you...' (Haggai 2:23)."

"I felt that it was God responding to me, and that it was also a way of dad letting me know that he was praying for me. Maybe he even had an inkling all along that that was how it was going to be."

#### Ready

He continued: "From that point on I felt that I was ready to respond, and I told Fr Farren this on the Vocations Day. He helped me to apply to the Diocese and I was taken before an interview panel. That was the summer of 2016 and I entered the seminary at Maynooth that August."

"I drove there in one car, with Eamon Cassidy, and my mum and sister were in another car as we were taking all my stuff. I was given directions to Maynooth, but got lost when I got to Ratoath, in Co Meath. Eventually, I found the right road and I got to Maynooth, but I couldn't find the seminary. I was getting very frustrated. I

decided to go out towards Tesco, which was in the direction of Leixlip, and then hoped to find someone who could direct me. I said to myself that if that didn't work then I was going home."

"As I was driving out the road, I saw two women walking a dog and I stopped and asked for directions to Maynooth seminary. I was able to see the spire of the College chapel but I couldn't find my way to it. The women said that they had never heard of such a place. I got back into the car, put my hands on the steering wheel and said, 'Lord, if you want me to be here you are going to have to take control of this steering wheel and direct me, because I can't do it without you'."

"A calm and peace then came over me. I just turned the car around and drove through the village and through the traffic lights, and found myself at the gates of the seminary. There was a car park just inside the gate and I parked in the first spot I found and started walking. I didn't say anything to the others and they started following me, probably wondering what I was doing. I walked into St Joseph's Square and found the front door and then two other seminarians who were walking up the corridor to meet me. I had missed the most of the opening speech by the President, but my journey there was what I had needed."

"I wouldn't say that the rest of the journey was happy ever after," said Stephen, "it was far from it, but from that first moment I learnt that I wasn't going to be free of any struggle or strife, but in it all was God, and all of it was a means to help form me into the person He wants me to be."

"Thanks be to God, I am now a deacon of this Diocese and, please God, I will become a priest of this Diocese. Meanwhile, I will be based in the Waterside Parish for the next six months."

He added: "I am incredibly thankful to God for the love, the insistence and the patience He has had with me, and I am grateful to all those people who have helped me along the way."

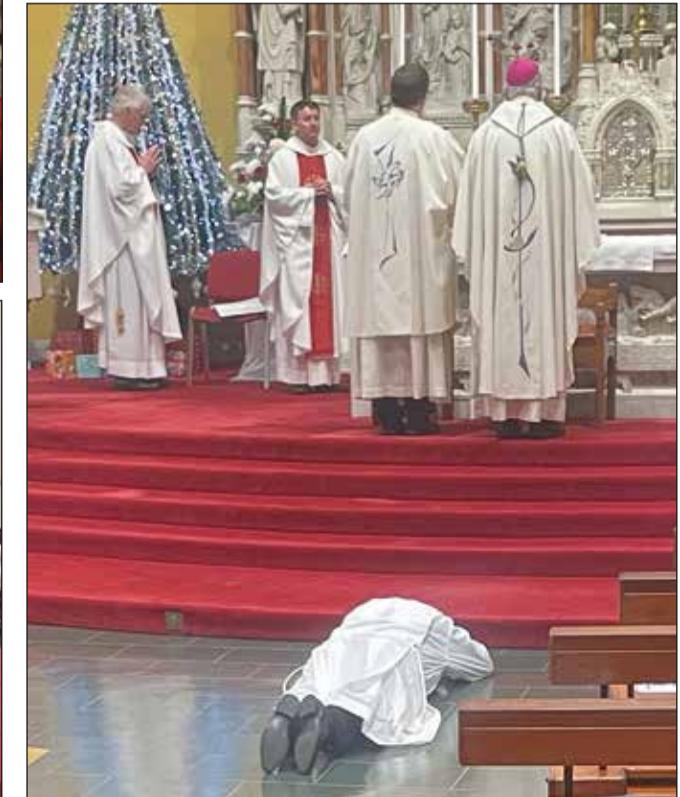
Commenting on the day of his ordination to the Diaconate, Stephen said: "It was an amazing experience, and emotional, but in a good way. I felt my dad and grandparents near and, more than anything else, I know now that this is where God wants me to be. I hope that I can be a signpost for others to Him and not a stumbling block. All I want to do is let God be God and not get in the way. As John the Baptist said, 'He must increase, I must decrease'."

Stephen finished with this quote from Psalm 121:1-4...

"I lift up my eyes to the hills – where does my help come from?

My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.

He will not let your foot slip – He who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, He who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep."



*Ordaining Stephen Ward to Diaconate on the Feast of the Epiphany, Bishop Donal told those gathered that the ceremony was a call to the whole Diocesan church to...*

# Be led by the star that beckons us forward...not backwards



Bishop Donal

THE Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord was a very special day in the Diocese of Derry with the Ordination to the Diaconate of Omagh native, Stephen Ward.

The ceremony was celebrated in St Columb's Church, in the Waterside Parish, amongst Stephen's family, friends, parishioners and members of the clergy, where he has been assisting with parish life.

Following the calling, presentation and election of Stephen as a candidate for ordination to Diaconate, Bishop Donal spoke to him and the congregation about the significance of the solemn rites taking place.

Remarking that the Feast celebrating the Magi finding Jesus was a fitting one for the ordination of a new Deacon, he noted: "It is some years since Stephen felt drawn by a star in the distance and has gone up hill and down dale in order to follow it. That has not always been easy. There were times when unnecessary obstacles seemed to be blocking the journey and sending him on detours. But Stephen has continued to keep the star in sight. We thank God for the ups and downs of the journey that has brought him this far – and for the many people and structures which have enabled him to be formed as an ordained disciple of Jesus Christ."

Saying that such events as this were "comparatively rare occurrences in Ireland now", Bishop Donal continued: "Some suggest that, if only we changed the regulations for who could be ordained for ministry, then we would have lots of clergy. That seems a perfectly logical argument. However, we all know from our congregations on Sundays that the problem is not the lack of priests to celebrate. In fact, we currently have at least

Magi", Bishop Donal continued: "It will mean a long trek, facing many obstacles and detours, having to put up with those who mock the stupidity of our exodus and often wondering whether we are crazy or deluded. And, when we get to the end of the journey, we will not find what our limited imagination expected. God always surprises us.

"Thus, the synodal journey is not just about developing parish structures that involve lay people. The process has to involve the People of God in discerning how the structures are developed and changed as required. Therefore, the synodal process is not some sort of quick vox pop that gathers a few ideas and passes them on to someone else so that 'somebody else' can do something. It is a journeying together to see where God's star is leading us. It means this diocese – clergy and laity – praying for divine guidance so that we can take the road less travelled and discover that this choice has made all the difference."

Addressing Stephen, Bishop Donal told him that was the sort of church that he was being ordained a deacon for: "It is not just about you. You are called to discover your call to holiness within the concrete situation and structures of here and now. Circumstances will change during your years of ministry. And you will have to change, with an eye on the star that calls you to seek Jesus and make Him known and loved.

"In a world which is told that everything is about 'me', you are being called to venture out into the desert of serving Christ, knowing that some people will think you silly for following your star. But you believe that you have been called by one greater and wiser than yourself. You believe that the Lord is your shepherd

and that there is nothing you shall want. You will be led to discover something completely unexpected because God has plans for us that exceed our horizons."

"And your ministry is not merely doing a job of helping people to know Christ," said Bishop Donal, "Your ordained lifestyle and radical choice to be chosen by Christ – these are signs, sacraments that point to the primacy of God's actions in all of our lives. Your decision today also points to the fact that following Jesus means taking Christ on His terms, and not merely on our terms. Christ is the morning star who comes to visit us like the dawn from on high. It takes a prayerful heart to be vigilant to that visit each day."

Adding that the ceremony was "a call to the whole of our diocesan church to let ourselves be led by the star that beckons us forward, not backwards", he remarked: "It invites all of us to venture out into the unknown, believing that the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom."

Thanking Stephen for his openness to his call, Bishop Donal went on to thank God "for all those laity, religious and clergy who sense God's call to be sacraments of faith, hope and love."

"The church will be renewed," he added, "not when we dilute the tough invitation which the Magi heard but when we take seriously the radical call to follow Christ. The church has always been renewed by unexpected people whom God picks."

Praying that God may bless Stephen and many people through his ministry, Bishop Donal concluded by telling him to let many people bless him in his ministry, saying: "You need them as much as they need you."



## Surprises

Commenting that this "change of focus will involve a journey that is not unlike that of the



*Reflecting on his preparation for priesthood as a deacon over the last few months, Rev Michael McCaul shares how his ministry with people has shown him...*

# The spark of faith is very much alive...it just needs fanned

IN the same month that the Diocese has been blessed with the ordination of Stephen Ward, from Omagh, to the Diaconate, it is preparing to celebrate the ordination of Deacon Michael McCaul to the priesthood on Sunday, January 29.

A St Eugene's parishioner, Rev Michael will be ordained in the Cathedral by Bishop Donal, some nine months after his ordination to the Diaconate, which took place on May 8, 2022, in Christ the King Church, Cappagh.

While he served as deacon in the Cappagh Parish up to the clerical changes of September last year, he has been ministering in his home parish since and is looking forward to being fully ordained into the priesthood at the end of the month.

Reflecting on his experience as a deacon of the Church, he told 'The Net': "I have learnt in my dealings with people over the last few months that the spark of faith is very much alive. It just needs fanned. What is important for people, and myself, is to keep the faith and the faith will keep us."

"We live in a very busy world, but we need to take time to remember the Real Presence of the Living God in our lives. We seem to be pushing God off the stage and placing ourselves as the main actors, as if we don't need God."

Saying that he could see "a marked difference between those attracted to the World and those attracted to God", he remarked: "Those attracted to the world always seem to be busy, busy, and while they might still have faith their hope might be lost, but those attracted to God have a noticeable peace."

"When I was in the seminary, I had some wonderful ideas and was going to do this and that," recalled Rev Michael, "but in the reality of ministering as a deacon, I see the key is evangelisation. I have come to the conclusion that there is no other way to do that than to get back out amongst the people."

"As Bishop Donal says, the model of being Church that we have now is not working, which can be seen from the dwindling congregations. There is a need to reconnect people with their Church, and my feeling is that we need to get out on the streets and around doors and into schools. Maybe parishes could look at building teams to do this, like the Baptismal Teams that go out to help parents prepare for the baptism of their child."

"We had the golden time that

people talk about, when people and the Church and society were moving together, but now there is a separation and a lot of blurred lines. The Church was founded in the home – the domestic church – and there was a real sense of Christian community. Somewhere along the line, the big institutions shot up and we lost that sense of community."

Referring to the mission of the Synodal journey underway in the Church, he commented: "Maybe the Holy Spirit is calling us to go back to our roots. The Church is the people and they need help to reconnect with their faith, such as reinstalling a sense of devotion. Praying the Rosary in homes seems to be gone, but maybe this could be reawakened."

## Shine

Quoting John 10:10, where Jesus said: "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full", Rev Michael remarked that there was "too much darkness" in people's lives: "If we choose to walk paths away from God, well, we know that the further we go away from the light the longer the shadow. People need help to come to God so that they may live life to full, but they have to take some first steps themselves. We need to let God shine His light in the areas of darkness in our lives. The Church is for sinners. It is inclusive."

Preferring to say 'children of God' rather than 'people of God', Rev Michael commented: "Being children of God, which we are through our baptism, is a different relationship than people of God. As children, why not come back to our Father?"

He continued: "I would encourage giving God a try over a prolonged period of time to see that whatever you thought was giving you healing, wasn't, but that true peace and healing is from God."

Recommending praying and reflecting on the 'Angelus' prayer, Rev Michael spoke about the importance of this prayer in his life: "The 'Angelus' is Mary's vocational story and I have made it my vocational story. I would recommend this especially to anyone considering priesthood or any deeper role in the Church. Start with praying the 'Angelus' and really build it into your life."

"There will be plenty of roles coming up in the Church. It is a great time now to fan the flame. The faith is still there but hope is dwindling."

Saying that his motto for priesthood is, "To live a life of



Diocesan Vocations' Director, Fr Pat O'Hagan with new deacon, Rev Stephen Ward, and Deacon Michael McCaul who is to be ordained to the priesthood on January 29

love in Christ', Rev Michael added: "I am not going to make any spectacular difference but I do hope to make a wee bit of a difference. All the wee bits together, as clergy and laity, the children of God, will make a difference."

"I thank all my family and friends, and everyone who has helped me reach this point, and believed in me when I didn't always believe in me. All roads lead to Christ. Christ is gathering us all together to His Sacred Heart and that is a lovely journey to be on. With the Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, we'll be ok."

Heartened by the stirring of new vocations in the Diocese, Bishop Donal told 'The Net': "I have often said that renewal in the church always comes from young people. For that reason, it is a huge encouragement to our diocesan family that we celebrate

two ordinations in the month of January.

"On January 6, Stephen Ward, a native of Cappagh Parish, was ordained as a deacon. He will continue to serve in the Waterside Parish. On January 29, we hope to celebrate the priestly ordination of Rev Michael McCaul, a native of the Cathedral Parish.

"Furthermore, we have a small group of Consecrated Virgins in the Diocese. These are women who formally dedicate themselves to the Lord. One new member hopes to be consecrated in February, and some other women are discerning their vocations."

Deacon Michael's ordination ceremony will begin at 3 pm on Sunday, and he will celebrate his first Mass in the Cathedral on Monday, January 30, at 7.30 pm, following which all are welcome to refreshments in the Cathedral Hall.

## Diocesan Prayer for Vocations

*God our Father, you call us by name, and ask us to follow you.*

*Help us to grow in the love and service of your Church today.*

*Grant us the courage to embrace Christ's mission of love and justice.*

*Bless the Church here, in the Diocese of Derry, by raising up generous and dedicated leaders from among our families and friends, who will serve your people as Priests, Sisters, Brothers, Deacons, and Lay Ministers.*

*Bless those who have already answered your call and who are now preparing for service in your Church. Inspire us to know you better and open our hearts and minds to the guidance of your Holy Spirit. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen*

"Come and see!"  
ANSWER  
THE CALL!

DERRYVOCATIONS.ORG

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



## Pope's monthly intention

*The Holy Father has asked for prayer during January for:*

### Educators:

*We pray that educators may be credible witnesses, teaching fraternity rather than competition and helping the youngest and most vulnerable above all.*

### 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 Alex Anderson (Jan 1st)

Fr Patrick Arkinson (2nd)

Fr Patrick Baker (3rd)

Fr Declan Boland (4th)

Fr Eugene Boland (5th)

Fr Francis Bradley (6th)

Fr Manus Bradley (7th)

All Priests (8th)

Fr Brian Brady (9th)

All Priests (10th)

Fr Thomas Canning (11th)

Fr Michael Cann (12th)

All Priests (13th)

All Priests (14th)

Fr James Devine (15th)

Fr Colum Clerkin (16th)

Fr Roland Colhoun (17th)

Fr Michael Collins (18th)

Fr Oliver Crilly (19th)

Fr Patrick Crilly (20th)

Fr Brendan Crowley (21st)

All Priests (22nd)

All Priests (23rd)

All Priests (24th)

Mgr Brendan Devlin (25th)

All priests (26th)

Fr Peter Devlin (27th)

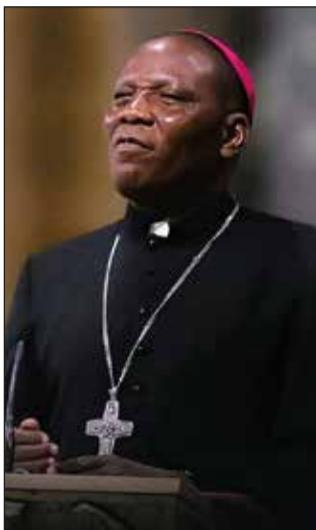
Fr Fintan Diggin (28th)

Fr Brendan Doherty (29th)

All Priests (30th)

All priests (31st)

# Nigerian Bishop to highlight power of Rosary at All Ireland rally in Knock



Bishop Oliver Doeeme



Venerable Patrick Peyton CSC

THIS year's All Ireland Rosary Rally at the International Eucharistic and Marian Shrine of Knock, in Co Mayo, will take place on Saturday, June 3, when the guest speaker will be Bishop Oliver Dashe Doeeme, of Maiduguri, Nigeria.

Bishop Doeeme is expected to share the amazing story of a vision he had of Christ and the power of the Rosary against the Islamic terrorist group, Boko Haram, following the April 2014 kidnapping of almost 300 schoolgirls in the remote town of Chibok.

The Bishop said that he had gone into his chapel to pray the Rosary, as he usually did, when he saw Christ appear "as a vision" on the right side of the altar, causing him to drop his Rosary beads. He also reported that Christ said three times during the vision: "Boko Haram is gone."

Speaking during a webinar sponsored by Aid to the Church in Need, the international organization and papal

charity that helps threatened communities of faith, the Bishop referred to the power of the Rosary, saying: "With Mother Mary on our side, victory is ours."

He added: "As history shows, any time there is persecution, the church becomes more alive...and more vibrant. Our people have become unshakeable in faith."

When Our Lady appeared with the Lamb of God, St Joseph and St John, on the gable wall of the Parish Church in Knock on the evening of August 21, 1879, the poor, suffering people of Mayo and beyond were confirmed in the strong faith that had been keeping them going...they too knew that with Mother Mary on their side all would be well, and from that Heavenly visit life began to change for the better.

Thirty years later, a little boy was born on January 9, 1909, into a devout Catholic farming family in the Co Mayo Diocese of Achonry, in the parish of Attymass, who was to grow up to become known as the Rosary Priest – the now

Venerable Fr Patrick Peyton CSC (Congregation of Holy Cross). His Cause for Sainthood was officially opened in 2001.

Commenting on his early faith formation that led to his love of the Rosary, the late Fr Peyton said: "My getting to know Mary began in that little home in the West of Ireland where I was born and raised, and learned to pray the Rosary."

He devoted his life as a priest to spreading devotion to Mary and encouraging family prayer, especially the Rosary, through every means at his disposal – such as radio, television, film and Rosary rallies around the world.

A documentary on Fr Peyton's life and ministry, entitled 'Pray: The Story of Patrick Peyton' has been greatly received since its release in 2020, which coincided with the launch of a 'Pray Together Now Campaign', offering families access to practical tools and resources to enable making family prayer part of family life.

It also includes prayer reflection nights for parishes and groups to gather and build community.

Currently, there is a growing interest in Ireland, including the Derry Diocese, in the Children's Rosary Movement founded in 2011 by Dr Blythe Kaufman, a young mother in Connecticut, America, with prayer groups now established in over 30 countries.

Children from Children's Rosary Groups throughout Ireland are to lead the Rosary during the National Rosary Rally at Knock Shrine in June, which will be a wonderful opportunity to promote this powerful prayer.

Men's Rosary gatherings around the Diocese of Derry and the island of Ireland are going from strength to strength, with the

January one held in Castlederg.

Held on the First Saturday of each month, at 1 pm, the next few venues are as follows: February 4, Warrenpoint, Junction of Newry Road and Charlotte Street; March 4, Market Street, South side/junction Irish Green Street, Limavady; April 1, Strabane, Pagoda, at Junction of Castle Street/ Railway Street; May 6, Cookstown, Main Street, opposite Two Patricks house of prayer; and June 3, Crossmaglen, The Square Cardinal Ó Fiaich Gardens.

An extra Rosary is being organised for St Patrick's Day, March 17, on Slemish Mountain, at the Mass Rock, and Men's and Women's Rosary Groups from throughout the island are invited to come along. The Rosary will begin at the Mass Rock at 1 pm, and will be followed by Mass there at 2 pm.



## Benone Rosary every third Sunday of month

On the cold, third Sunday of January 2023, the faithful group of Rosary Coasters met at 3 pm as usual on Benone Strand, Limavady, to say the Rosary and Divine Mercy prayers for world peace and to protect our unborn brothers and sisters from the evils of abortion.

Why not consider holding a similar monthly event in your own parish, whether at the seaside or a local park, to evangelise as we as Christians and Catholics are all called to do, and continue sending these beloved and powerful prayers to Heaven?

For more details about the Benone event, call John on 07730330028.



## Family Prayer and the Rosary – Ven Patrick Peyton

*"The family that prays together stays together."*

*"A world at prayer is a world at peace."*

*"The Rosary is a chain that binds the family together."*

*"The Rosary has saved the world in the past. It will save the world now, by saving the family."*

*"The Rosary disposes of all difference and brings unity and great love to the Family Circle."*

*"The world hasn't got a prayer without yours."*

*"Every night I would hear my mother call us to pray, and then my father would lead us in the Holy Rosary. To see a man who lived totally what he believed left an impression on me, even as a little child, that nothing could erase."*

*"I believe in God the Father Almighty. This is the greatest sentence your heart or mouth will ever speak as long as you're alive."*

*"What love you could get for your little sacred home if you gave 10 minutes out of 24 long hours to your family."*

*"Make your wife glad, forever, that she had a husband like you. Make your daughter and your son remember, forever, with joy, that they had a father like you. Men have the power to bring our Holy God into the home that you live in, if you will do it."*

*"That question, 'Where does prayer fit in today?' I'd say where does your heart fit in?"*



Men's Rosary in Carndonagh, Co Donegal.



Men's Rosary in Buncrana, Co Donegal.

## Draperstown school support for SVP and Food Bank



## Cathedral Christmas Carol Singing

A beautiful afternoon of Carol Singing took place in St Eugene's on December 27, as part of the Cathedral's 150th anniversary celebrations.

Set amidst the crib scene and Christmas tree on the altar, the various artistes included Roisin Rice, Bruno Tamiozzo,

Anne Marie Hickey, Sally Mae Comey, and the McGinley School of Music. And they were accompanied by organist, Aidan Watkins, and pianist, Charlotte Logue.

Afterwards, those gathered enjoyed some refreshments in the Cathedral Hall.



The St Mary's PS children also brought in food for the local Foodbank in December. Laurence O Kane and Georgina Grieve from Workspace collected the food for the newly established Sperrin Foodbank. The local schools continue to be a drop off point for Sperrin Foodbank.



St Mary's PS in Draperstown raised £1,600 for the local St. Vincent de Paul during the month of December. SVP members, Mickey Lawless and Julia McGuigan collected the cheque.

**Sperrin FoodBank**

HELPING LOCAL PEOPLE IN NEED

If you can, please pick up an extra item today to donate

ITEMS YOU COULD DONATE:

Cereals	Milk (UHT or Powdered)	Shower Gel
Tinned Vegetables	Fruit Juice (long life)	Shampoo
Tinned Meat/Fish	Biscuits	Toothpaste
Soup (can/packet)	Instant Mash Potatoes	Household Cleaner
Pasta/Rice/Noodles	Tinned Fruit	Washing Up Liquid
Pasta Sauces	Jam/Spreads	
Ten Bags/Instant Coffee	Toilet Roll	

GET IN TOUCH  
07543 420639  
[foodbank@theworkspacegroup.org](mailto:foodbank@theworkspacegroup.org)  
[sperrin.foodbank](http://sperrin.foodbank)

Supported by the **workspace** group



*THIS month, as a New Year, gets underway, Jodie reflects on the benefits of silence for mental health and in helping us to draw closer to Jesus, recommending it as New Year's resolution if anyone is still thinking of one.*

*Shea shares a wonderful experience of personal healing while attending his first Healing Night with the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, and John writes about the life of a young Italian man, Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, who died in 1925 at the age of 24 and whose story has greatly inspired him.*

*Bronagh and Evan have shared their findings and thoughts on the life of the late Pope Benedict XVI, with Evan particularly impressed by the great friendship he extended to young people.*



Hollie Frystal,  
Co Tyrone  
Deanery.



Bronagh  
Doherty,  
Co Derry  
Deanery



Peter Grant,  
Inishowen  
Deanery.



Jodie Kennedy,  
Derry City  
Deanery.



Eimear  
Doherty, Derry  
City Deanery.



Niamh O'Kane,  
Co Derry  
Deanery



John Agustine  
Joseph, Derry  
City Deanery.



Zara Schlindwein,  
Derry City  
Deanery.



Shea Doherty,  
Derry City  
Deanery



Evan Curran,  
Derry City  
Deanery



**"Jesus is always waiting for us in silence"...all we need do is push ourselves to join Him**

*by Jodie*

I FEEL that people today could really do with hearing this quote: "Silence gives us a new outlook on everything, we need silence to be able to touch souls...Jesus is always waiting for us in silence", from St Teresa of Calcutta, in the book 'Love, a Fruit Always in Season'.

Most would know Mother Teresa, who devoted her life to caring for the sick and poor, as a nun and missionary.

Although her book was first published on October 1, 1987, I feel that this quote would resonate with many today.

We see people today posting pretty much everything in their life on social media and spending a significant amount of time looking at what other people have posted. This can really damage our own mental wellbeing, as we end up criticising ourselves for not living up to standards and loose ourselves in the quest to be like others.

St Teresa's quote can be used as motivation to shift to silence. Spending silent time in prayer can be far more beneficial for our own personal wellbeing.

We're all our own individual, unique selves, so why not spend time with yourself and find out how truly special you are. As St Teresa says, this solitary silent time can give "us a new outlook on everything".

Spending time with our own thoughts and sharing these with God can help us transform into the true version of ourselves. This version will be who Jesus knows we are, who He wants us to grow to be; a version of ourselves that will "be able to touch souls".

If you haven't already got one, make your New Year's resolution to take some silent time for yourself. Take part in silent prayer, and share your thoughts with Jesus.

"Jesus is always waiting for us in silence" all we need to do is push ourselves to join Him.

## The man of the eight beatitudes by John

IF I was to think of anyone who has influenced me a lot in the last year, it would be no one other than Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati.

In the words of John Paul II: "Behold the man of the eight beatitudes who bears in himself the grace of the Gospel, the Good News, the joy of salvation offered to us by Christ."

Pier Giorgio was born into a well-to-do family, to say the least. As a child, it would be fair to say that he was very pious and devout. He had a rich spiritual life, receiving Holy Communion daily, and didn't hesitate to share his faith with his friends.

He went onto study mining engineering in Turin, so that he could "serve Christ better among the miners." For context, the mining industry was not a great place to work, and this attracted his 'missionary spirit'.

But what inspires me about Pier Giorgio is the way he lived his life, at that time in which he lived. As he, himself, said about life: "To live without faith, without a homeland to defend, without constantly upholding truth in the heat of battle, is not living but simply getting along. We should never just get by, we should live."

And he did exactly that, whether it was helping the poor, by donating what he had that day, or being playful with his friends, or even his devotion to his studies, despite the fact that he found them difficult.

Pier Giorgio's example showed me what was possible, when I had thought that living out the faith to its fullest was a difficult task.

Through his writings and his witness, he showed how the 'joy of the Gospel' bore fruit in him.

As I was researching for this article, I came across this text



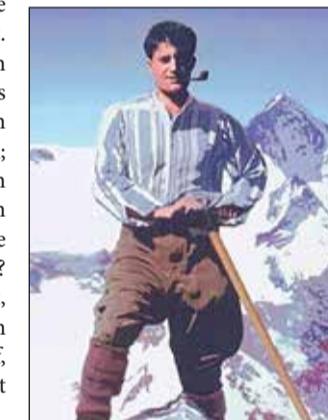
that was written by him. I tried to think of ways to shorten it and write it in my own way, but I couldn't do any justice to the spirit of the text. But this, I hope, will give some people the hope and the joy that Pier Giorgio so clearly had in his life:

"With every day that passes, I grow more and more convinced how ugly the world is, of how much suffering there is, and, unfortunately, of how it is the good who suffer the most. Meanwhile, we who have been given so many of God's blessings have repaid Him poorly. This is an awful reality that racks my brain; while I'm studying, every so often I ask myself: will I continue on the right path? Will I have the strength to persevere all the way? In the face of this pang of doubt, the faith given to me in Baptism reassures me of this: by yourself, you will accomplish nothing, but

if you place God at the centre of all your actions, then you will reach the goal."

I'd like to end this article with the prayer for his canonisation:

*O merciful God,  
Who through the perils of the  
world  
designed to preserve by Your grace  
Your servant Pier Giorgio  
Frassati*



## Pope Benedict XVI extended great friendship to youth by Evan

*"Dear young people, do not be afraid to risk your lives by making space for Jesus Christ and his Gospel" - Pope Benedict XVI*

WHAT I take from his late Holiness, Benedict XVI's quote, is that you must always make time and space for Jesus, as everything in this world will pass except the love of God, so we shouldn't get caught up on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, Instagram and all other domains,

because without Jesus we are nothing but a lonely and unhappy soul, as every man has a longing for God the Father.

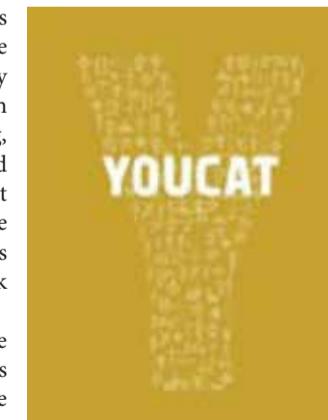
The late Pope Benedict, without a doubt, extended a great friendship to the youth of the Universal Church. This is very clear as he truly supported and promoted a great catechism for youth called

'YOUCAT'.

He wrote a foreword for this youth catechism, and in it he addresses the readers as simply "young friends". For me, although it was a simple and brief greeting, it really touched my heart and opened my mind. It shone a great light on how down-to-earth he was and showed how eager His Holiness was to get youth back into church.

Pope Benedict is known as one of the best minds and theologians of the 20th and 21st centuries. He was brought up a Catholic in his humble home at the foot of the Alps in Bavaria and, as a young boy, he faced the challenges of World War II and Hitler's evil regime.

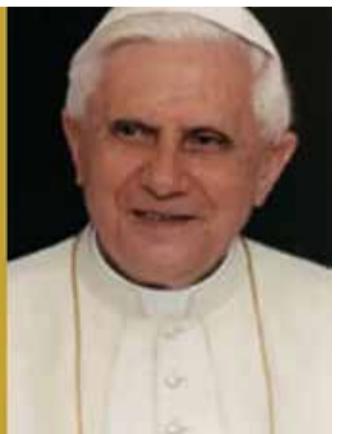
As a cardinal charged with enforcing doctrinal purity, Josef Ratzinger was given the nickname 'God's Rottweiler' for his uncompromising conservative



views.

His 95 years on this earth were made up of 71 years of homilies, innumerable essays, 66 books, three encyclicals and four exhortations, yet, at the hour of his death, he spoke only four powerful words: "I love you, Jesus".

Pope Benedict XVI has certainly



taken us by the hand and led us towards God's heavenly Kingdom. He will go down in history as a very noble, affectionate and kind man, who has without a doubt guided us back to Jesus Christ, and everyone will miss his guidance and wisdom.

May He Rest in Peace

## Remembering Pope Benedict XVI by Bronagh

THE last day of 2022, December 31, brought terrible sadness amongst the Christian community as Pope Emeritus Benedict passed away aged 95, in the Monastery Mater Ecclesiae, Vatican City. With just under nine years as head of the Catholic Church and sovereign of Vatican City, he is admired by thousands around the world.

Born and baptised on Holy Saturday, April 16, 1927, Joseph Aloisius Ratzinger, he began to lead his life as a Catholic. On June 29, 1951, he was ordained a priest in Freising Cathedral, in Munich Diocese. In 1977, he progressed and became the Archbishop of Munich and Freising, named by Pope Paul VI.

In 2002, aged 75, Joseph Ratzinger became Dean of College of Cardinals and on April 8, 2005, he presided at the Mass for the funeral of Pope John Paul II. On April 19 of the same year, he was elected as the 265th pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church and took the name of Benedict XVI, and his life as pope began. (Catholic News Agency, Dec'22)

During the next eight years, he led many Christians around the world by penning letters. He also published a book in the US, called 'Jesus of Nazareth'.

Pope Benedict wanted to keep the Vatican moving with the times and, in 2007, announced that the first "carbon neutral" state would be the Vatican City. In his final working years as pontiff, he presided over the beatification



of his predecessor, Pope John Paul II in St Peter's Square.

In 2013, on February 11, Pope Benedict XVI shocked the world with the news of his retirement at age 85, stating: "I'm simply a pilgrim who is starting the last stage of his pilgrimage on earth" (Catholic News Agency, Dec'22).

Pope Benedict XVI was the first pope to resign in 600 years due to ill health (BBC News Jan'23). He then became Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI; 'emeritus' referring to his retirement and in honour of being the former head of Catholic Church. He then resided in the Mater Ecclesiae Monastery, where he peacefully died on December 31, 2022. He is the longest living person to have been Pope, as he surpassed Pope Leo XIII who died aged 93. (Religion Unplugged 2020).

Thousands of people from all over the world travelled to pay their respects to Pope Benedict XVI at the Vatican. He was displayed in an open casket in St Peter's Basilica until the day of his funeral, after which he was laid to rest in the papal tombs.

## Can God do anything for me? by Shea

MY first experience of a Healing Night was about five or six years ago. I was only around 11 years old and didn't have a lot of faith, but I still in some way believed in God.

I went to the First Friday Healing Mass in St Joseph's Chapel in Galliagh, Derry, with my cousin, Aimee and my Uncle Colm. We were there because Aimee has ongoing issues with her lungs.

When I knelt down at the altar for the Eucharistic blessing, I began to think, 'Can God do anything for me? Will He show me anything? Will He heal anything that I have wrong? I had glue ear my whole life, which affected my hearing.'

I doubted that He would because we were there for Aimee and that is what I prayed for the whole time, until one of the Franciscan Friars stood up and started shouting out things that he felt God was saying He was going to heal.

One of the last things the Friar said before sitting down was "healings of the ear". My cousin



and I just looked at one another, because she was aware that I had ear problems.

In that moment, I felt a sharp pain go down through my left ear and there was a burning sensation. Then my ear popped and it was like someone had turned the volume up, as my hearing was so much clearer, and I stopped getting ear pains.

At the time, I could hardly believe it. It just felt so surreal.

## Young Derry pilgrims to set out for WYD 2023

A GROUP of 25 young people from across the Derry Diocese is planning to join Bishop Donal, and a group of 15 from the Clogher Diocese, in pilgrimage to the World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal, this summer, from August 1-6.

The scriptural quote, 'Mary arose and went with haste' (Lk 1:30) has been chosen by Pope Francis as the motto for this major youth evangelising event in the Catholic Church's calendar, which has been gathering thousands of young Catholics from all over the world together since 1986.

In his WYD Lisbon 2023 message, the Pope tells young people: "In these troubling times, when our human family, already tested by the trauma of the pandemic, is racked by the tragedy of war, Mary shows to all of us, and especially to you, young people like herself, the path of proximity and encounter."

"I hope and I firmly believe that the experience many of you will have in Lisbon in August will represent a new beginning for you, the young, and – with you – for humanity as a whole."

Remarkung that Mary "could

have focused on herself and her own worries and fears about her new condition," Pope Francis added: "Instead, she entrusted herself completely to God. Her thoughts turned to Elizabeth. She got up and went forth, into the world of life and movement... She arises and sets out, for she is certain that God's plan is the best plan for her life."

He went on to note: "To experience the presence of the risen Christ in our own lives, to encounter Him 'alive', is the greatest spiritual joy, an explosion of light that can leave no one untouched...The Mother of the Lord is a model for young people on the move, who refuse to stand in front of a mirror to contemplate themselves or to get caught up in the 'net'. She is the woman of Easter, in a permanent state of exodus, going forth from herself towards that great Other who is God and towards others, her brothers and sisters, especially those in greatest need, like her cousin Elizabeth."

Pope Francis encouraged young people to ask: "How do I react to the needs that I see all around me? Do I think immediately of some

reason not to get involved? Or do I show interest and willingness to help?"

"To be sure, you cannot resolve all the problems of the world," he added, "Yet you can begin with the problems of those closest to you, with the needs of your own community."

Asking the young to consider what kinds of 'haste' they have, Pope Francis continued: "The haste of the young woman of Nazareth is the haste of those who have received extraordinary gifts from the Lord and feel compelled to share them, to let the immense grace that they have received be poured out upon others. It is the haste of those capable of putting other people's needs above their own.

"Mary is an example of a young person who wastes no time on seeking attention or the approval of others – as often happens when we depend on our 'likes' on social media. She sets out to find the most genuine of all 'connections': the one that comes from encounter, sharing, love and service."

The Holy Father concluded his message by sharing that his



dream is that "at World Youth Day you will be able to experience anew the joy of encountering God and our brothers and sisters... May the Holy Spirit kindle in your hearts a desire to 'arise' and the joy of journeying together, in synodal fashion, leaving behind all false frontiers. Now is the time to arise! Like Mary, let us 'arise and go in haste'. Let us carry Jesus within our hearts, and bring Him to all those whom we meet! In this beautiful season of your lives, press ahead and do not postpone all the good that the Holy Spirit can accomplish in you! With affection, I bless your dreams and every step of your journey."



Faughanvale PS, whose choir led the singing during the Catholic Schools Week launch Mass in St Eugene's Cathedral

## Walking Together in Faith & Love... ...Celebrating Catholic Schools Week

THE annual Catholic Schools Week has been launched in the Diocese with the celebration of Mass in St Eugene's Cathedral by Bishop Donal, on Thursday, January 26.

This year's theme is 'Walking Together in Faith & Love', connecting in with this time of synodality in our Church and inviting schools to explore its three features: Communion, Participation and Mission.

Fuller coverage of Catholic Schools Week and the launch Mass will be included in the February edition.

## New 2023 date for Medjugorje Youth Festival

THIS year, the Medjugorje International Youth Festival will be held from July 26-30. It has been moved from the traditional first week in August to enable participation in the World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal. The 'Mladifest' attracts over



**Walking Together in Faith and Love**  
**29th January-4th February**

**Monday Walking Together in Faith**

**Tuesday Walking Together in Love**

**Wednesday Walking Together to Celebrate (Grandparents Day)**

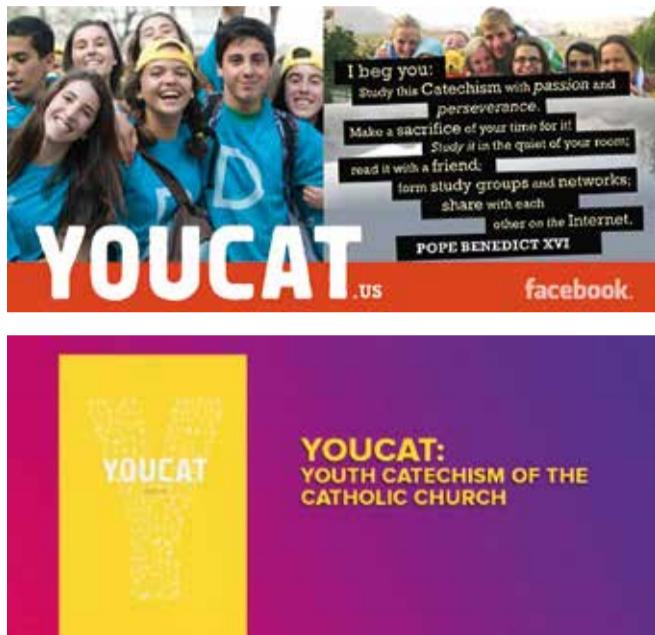
**Thursday Walking Together to Transform our World**

**Friday Walking Together in Hope**



Writing in YOUCAT foreword, Pope Benedict XVI urged young people to...

# Be deeply rooted in faith so to engage challenges and temptations with strength and determination



DURING his time as Supreme Pastor of the Catholic Church, the late Pope Benedict XVI gave his seal of approval to the youth catechism publication, YOUCAT, which was compiled under the direction of the primary editor of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Cardinal Christoph Schönborn of Vienna.

Promoted as a faithful and contemporary presentation of the Catholic faith, the YOUCAT was developed with the help of young Catholics, as secondary school-age pupils and young adults are

the main readership it is aimed at, and it has been published in many languages.

It has an easy to read question-and-answer format, which appeals to many adults as well, with light commentary and definitions of key terms, citations from the Bible, quotes from saints and reliable teachers of the faith, and cross references to the Catechism of the Catholic Church for more in-depth reading.

Readers of the YOUCAT will find in its four parts explanations about what Catholics believe and

why, how Catholics celebrate the mysteries of the Faith, how Catholics are to live, and how Catholics should pray.

Endorsing YOUCAT, which was also reviewed by the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Congregation for Clergy, and the Pontifical Council for the Laity, Pope Benedict wrote the forward to the book, recommending it to his 'Dear young friends', the youth of the world.

Explaining about the catalyst for the publication of the YOUCAT, he referred to the compilation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church back in the 1980s, which Pope Benedict described as "a difficult time for the Church and for society worldwide", when "new guidance was needed to find the path to the future".

He wrote: "After the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and in a changed cultural situation, many people were confused about what Christians actually believe, what the Church teaches, whether in fact she can teach anything at all, and how everything can find its place in a culture that had changed from its very foundations. Is it still reasonable today to be a believer? These were the questions that even good Christians were asking."



Recalling that Pope John Paul II had given him the task of coordinating the contributions of bishops from all over the world for a book in which they would answer these questions, which was given the title: Catechism of the Catholic Church, Pope Benedict admitted doubting whether something like this could succeed.

"How could men," he wrote, "who not only geographically but also intellectually and spiritually lived on different continents create a text with an inner unity, one that would also be understandable throughout all those continents?...I must admit that even today it still seems to me

to be a miracle that this project finally succeeded."

## Unity in diversity

He added: "One can, of course, criticize some things or even many things in such a work: Everything that man makes is inadequate and can be improved. Still it is a marvellous book: a witness to unity in diversity. We were able to form a single choir from many voices because we had the same score, the faith that the Church has borne through the centuries from the apostles onward."

Noting that they had realised at the time of working on the book that "not only are the continents and cultures diverse, but that even within individual communities there are again diverse 'continents': The worker thinks differently from the farmer; a physicist differently from a philologist; an executive differently from a journalist; a young man differently from an old man", Pope Benedict

Reflecting on a statement many people made to him, that the youth of today were not interested in this, Pope Benedict wrote: "I disagree, and I am certain that I am right. The youth of today are not as superficial as some think. They want to know what life is really all about."

He then invited his 'dear young friends' to study the YOUCAT: "That is my heartfelt desire. This Catechism was not written to please you. It will not make life easy for you, because it demands of you a new life. It places before you the Gospel message as the 'pearl of great value' (Mt 13:46) for which you must give everything. So I beg you: Study this Catechism with passion and perseverance. Make a sacrifice of your time for it! Study it in the quiet of your room; read it with a friend; form study groups and networks; share with each other on the Internet. By all means continue to talk with each other about your faith."

Urging young people to know what they believe, Pope Benedict wrote: "You need to know your faith with that same precision with which an IT specialist knows the inner workings of a computer..you need to be more deeply rooted in the faith than the generation of your parents so that you can engage the challenges and temptations of this time with strength and determination."

Offering a final piece of advice to young people, he continued: "You all know how deeply the community of faith has been wounded recently through the attacks of the evil one, through the penetration of sin itself into the interior, yes, into the heart of the Church. Do not make that an excuse to flee from the face of God!"

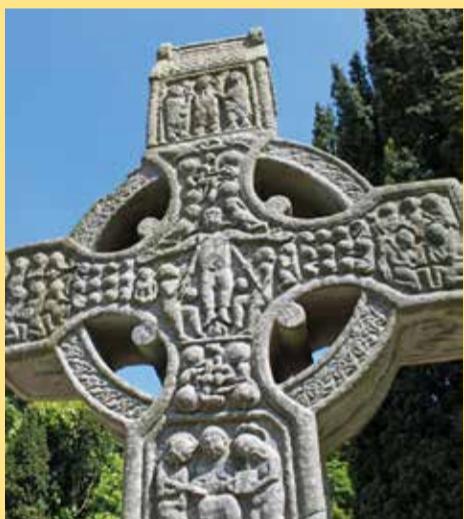
"You yourselves are the Body of Christ, the Church! Bring the undiminished fire of your love into this Church whose countenance has so often been disfigured by man."

# Eangach

## Ár nDúchas

Fáilte dhuit, a Mhuire mhór  
a Mhaighdean shíoraí, ár ndídean cóir  
a scáth na mbocht, ár n-anamchara;  
is tú 'thóig an bláth a thit le hÉabha,  
is tú 'thóig is d'oileán tUan a shaor sinn.

A scáthán na suáilce 's a chiste 'n reacht',  
a chathaoir na heagna 's na humhláiochta,  
a Mháthair mhuirneach 's a Rón na ndúl,  
scaoil ó na glais mé 'tá ceangailte go crua.  
Anois agus uair ár n-éag'  
tabhar dúinne síocháin Dé.



## A Thiarna, tá grá agam duit



Anois i Mí Eanáir, tugaimid brón a fhágann muid slán leis an Phápa Emeritus Benedict XVI. Ní amháin go raibh ról suntasach aige

in Eaglais an lae inniu mar Phápa ó 2005 go dtí gur éirigh sé as in 2013, ach dar leis an easpag Robert Barron, is dócha gur chaill muid 'duine de na pearsana ba mhó dár linne, agus ceann de na heaglaisigh ba shuntasai'. Rugadh Benedict XVI (Josef Ratzinger ab ainm dó) i mBaváir na Gearmáine in 1927, do thuismitheoirí cráifeacha Maria agus Josef. Ó aois óg, léirigh sé suim sa sagartacht. D'fhulaing a theaghlaigh nuair agus na Naitsithe i réim sa tir. Oirniodh é Sa bhliain 1951. De réir a chéile, d'éirigh sé dhiagaire óg cumasach.

Is dócha gurbh é an eachtra is cinniúnaí ina shaol ná an Dara Chomhairle Vatacánach. Tháinig sé chun na Róimhe agus gan ach a bheith sna tríochaídí, níor bheag a ról i gcruthú na ndoiciméad a tháinig amach ón Chomhairle. San am, dearcadh air mar liobrálach. Ba thábhachtach leis leasaithe chun freastal ar gháonna na bhfíréan inniu. Níos moille annón, chán daoine eile é toisc é a bheith 'róchoimeádach'. Níor athraíodh a dhearadh áfach, d'oirbhrigh sé an creideamh a chur in oiriúint don aois seo, ag fánacht dílis di.

Bhí bua na hacadúlachta ag Ratzinger, rud a bhí ina bhuntáiste mór ag an Eaglais inniu. Cuirtear i gcéill inniu go bhfuil an Eaglais in éadan na réasúnaíochta ach chosain sé an creideamh ar a leithéid d'ionsaithe agus thaispeán gur féidir linn eolas a bheith againn ar rudaí faoi Dhia trí úsáid

ár réasúin. Bainfear tarbhe as saothair a scríobh sé nó ar chuir sé leo amach anseo, an Caiticíosma ar cheann acu.

I ndiaidh bháis a dhlúthchara Eoin Pól II in 2005, thug sé seirbhís dílis don Eaglais mar Phápa (Benedict XVI) go dtí gur éirigh sé as sa bhliain 2013. Tugadh air an teideal Pápa Emeritus agus mhair sé ag guí agus ag scríobh go dtí a bhás i Mí Nollag 2022. Bhí caidreamh mór aige leis an Phápa Proinsias sa tréimhse sin. Sa seanmóir a thug an Pápa ag an sochraid, luaigh sé na tréithe atá ag tréadaí maith, dlúthchaidreamh leis an Tiarna ina measc. Ó fhocail dhereannacha Benedict, is léir gur spreagadh é mar seo: "A Thiarna, tá grá agam duit".

"A Thiarna, tá grá agam duit".



## Machnaimh ar an tSéasúr

Rún na hEaglaise  
Pádraig Ó Croílligh

Ag an am seo den bhliain, aimsir na Nollag agus ina dhiadh, tá neart ábhar machnaimh tugtha dúinn atá bainte le cuid de na bunclocha dár gcreideamh. Ar dtús, tá 'tús an scéil' againn ar bhealaigh. Is é sin ná Breith Chríost, atá á chéiliúradh againn i bhféile mór na Nollag. Is iomaí bealach nach é seo an tú, ach leanúint ar aghaidh le scéal mór mar a noctann Dia é féin dínn. Ach gan amhras, is é seo an tú le rud éigin iontach, Dia é féin ag teacht mar dhuine daonna, ionchollaithe, pleán mór Dé agus pleán ár slánaithe. Ní thagann Íosa, Rí na Rithe, chugainn i bpálas mór, ach i gcruth naónán i máinséar i dtimpeallacht bhocht. Prionsa na Síochána.

Ansin ar 8ú Eanáir, (ag deireadh

séasúir na Nollag) tá an Nollaig Bheag againn, nó an Eipeafáine. Tagann na Trí Rithe 'ón oirtheá' chuig an áit a bhfuil Íosa agus a thuismitheoirí, Muire agus Íosaef, chun an leanbh a fheiceáil agus ómóis a thabhairt dó. Nár bhointeach an radharc é, rithe móra ag tabhairt ómóis don leanbh seo i mainséar bocht! Bhí a fhios acu go maith gur ri a bhí sa leanbh seo, agus tháinig siad ón choigríoch lena fheiceáil. Is é ceann de na rudaí is mó faoi seo ná gur tháinig na rithe páigánacha seo, ó náisiún na nGintlithe (a bhfuil muidne ar cheann acu) le adhradh a thabhairt dó. Is é an Meisias a raibh na Giúdaigh ag fanacht leis, a tháinig dúinn ar fad.

Go gearr ina dhiadh seo, is é atá á chéiliúradh againn ná Báisteadh

ár dTiarna. Tá céim chun tosaigh sa scéil tógha againn, tá Íosa anois fásta a thagann chuig a chol ceathrar Eoin le bheith báistithe. Iarann sé ar Eoin é a bháisteadh ach nuair a iathníonn Eoin gurbh é Íosa an Meisias, atá níos mó ná é féin. Iarann Íosa arís leis "an fhíréantacht

a chur i gcrích go hiomlán" (Matha 3:15). Íslíonn Íosa é féin le go mbéidh muidne aontaithe leis sa bháisteadh.

Tagann sé chugainn mar dhuine daonna. Is dúinn uilig a tháinig sé. Tá muid aontaithe leis sa bháisteadh.





## God's power works quietly in this world...but it is the true and the lasting power

*POPE Emeritus Benedict XVI passed into Eternal Life on Saturday, December 31, 2022, as we continued our celebration of Our Lord's birth and prepared to welcome another New Year. Reflecting on the following quote by Pope Benedict, or another by him of their own choosing, a number of people have shared their thoughts in tribute to him...*

*"What did Jesus actually bring, if not world peace, universal prosperity, and a better world? What has he brought?"*

*"The answer is very simple: God...He has brought God, and now we know his face, now we can call upon him. Now we know the path that we human beings have to take in this world. Jesus has brought God and with God the truth about our origin and destiny: faith, hope and love. It is only because of our hardness of heart that we think this is too little. Yes indeed, God's power works quietly in this world, but it is the true and the lasting power. Again and again, God's cause seems to be in its death throes. Yet over and over again it proves to be the thing that truly endures and saves." Pope Benedict XVI (Joseph Ratzinger), Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration.*



*"Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." (Psalm 46:10)*



Andrea, in blue, with Karen and her son at World Youth Day

## In the midst of man-made turmoil Jesus continues to be the One who is, and who teaches the truth by Bishop Donal

WE are all marked by the times in which we live. Like his predecessor, St John Paul II, Pope Benedict's life was marked by the reality of the Second World War and the Cold War. He grew up in a dark time for his native Germany. Adolf Hitler came to power when the young Joseph Ratzinger was six. That meant that his teenage years were lived under the shadow of war and the awful results of defeat for his homeland. His home town and diocese lay close to the Iron Curtain that split Europe for over 40 years.

It is interesting to note that he was born on Holy Saturday 1927. That strangely empty day lies between the awful events of Good Friday and the unimaginable happenings of Easter Sunday. It seems to be to be an image of his life and ministry. He endured war as a young man, then the years of desolation and uncertainty as to the future of Germany - and finally he experienced the renewal of his country and of the Church in the 1960s, especially through his participation in the Second Vatican Council (1962-65).

But he lived in the real world in which the Word had become flesh. Jesus had to come to terms with the failings of His disciples and rejection from some followers. The enthusiasm of Vatican II was tempered as different

interpretations emerged of what the Council Fathers intended. And the political idealism of the early 60s descended into riots. In some places, the cry for freedom descended into anarchy. Pope Benedict would later describe the abuse of freedom as 'the dictatorship of relativism', where nothing has any agreed meaning and the adult becomes the self-proclaimed infallible source of truth.

Jesus did not water down the truth. Similarly, in his environment, Cardinal Ratzinger – and later Pope Benedict – sought to be a pastor without neglecting his mission to be true to the one who declared that He was the Way, the Truth and the Life. The former was clearly visible in his first encyclical letter, 'God is Love' (2005). As regards the latter, he was not merely some sort of grumpy old-fashioned conservative. He was philosophically convinced of the value of human reason and the limits of human reason. We cannot not speak of God – and yet our words can never comprehend God.

That is the context for the quotation given for reflection. He knew the history of the human race and of the church only too well. In the midst of man-made turmoil, Jesus continues to be the one who is, and who teaches



the truth. Divine grace works for forgiveness and healing.

Pope Benedict would have known well the phrase from 'Lumen Gentium', the Vatican Council document on the Church...

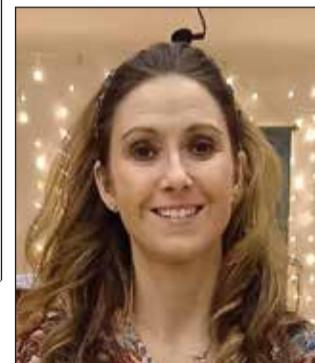
"Until there shall be new heavens and a new earth in which justice dwells, the pilgrim Church in her sacraments and institutions, which pertain to this present time, has the appearance

of this world which is passing and she herself dwells among creatures who groan and travail in pain until now and await the revelation of the children of God."

(LG 49)

The mission of the church is not merely to wave a divine wand and to bring peace. With a prophetic voice, the Church bears witness to hope through love in a world that has not known the Prince of Peace. The Truth will set you free, said Jesus.

## I felt love and hope and the strength of God within me by Andrea Long



Andrea Long, Sessaghoneill parishioner and principal of Scoil Naomh Iósaf, The Illies, Buncrana .

AS I reflect on this quote by Pope Benedict XVI (Joseph Ratzinger) it brings back fond memories of my experience at the World Youth Day celebrations in Cologne 2005, when hundreds and thousands of young Catholics gathered to share their love of God and grow in faith development.

I remember distinctly when Pope Benedict arrived at the Kölner Dom to pray with us for the first time. The energy and excitement within the crowd was something that I had never

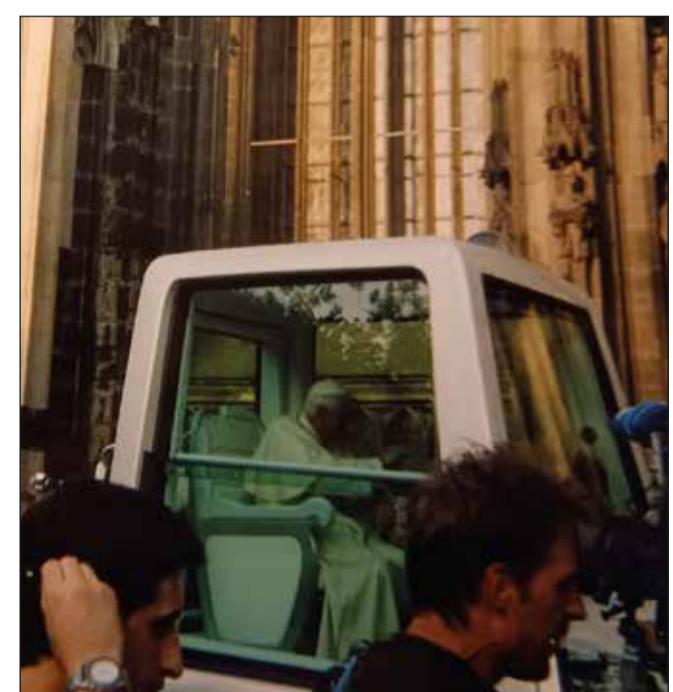
experienced before. God was with us. Standing between two barriers, I had made friends with a German lady and her son, as I was able to speak the language. We shared stories about our faith and our experiences of God within our lives, and we talked about how honoured we were to be chosen to attend such a special event.

When Pope Benedict arrived, the crowd became evermore excited and, in their anxiousness to get a better view of him, there was a massive crowd crush which became quite dangerous and worrying. I remember feeling my body being pushed against the barriers and I had nowhere to go to escape. It was actually quite painful and frightening. Then, out of nowhere, a German Police lady appeared, pulled my friend and her child from the crowd, and subsequently grabbed my hand and took me with her to safety. We were taken to a quiet, calming part of the square right outside the doors of the Kölner Dom. As Pope Benedict XVI describes it, "God's power works quietly in

this world". I couldn't believe it. German TV cameras recorded us and the family whom I had stayed with during the previous days saw me on the news!

However, that was nothing

in comparison to the feeling that I had when the doors of the Cathedral opened and the most wonderful procession of priests appeared. Then Pope Benedict appeared in his Pope-mobile. He



Pope Benedict XVI arriving at World Youth Day.

# What a difference it would make to the day if we took a moment to listen to the Lord's voice

by Ann McCay

THE death of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI has drawn our attention to his life and his written work, and many have focused on his voluntary retirement as pope after eight years as a very significant moment in the history of the Church.

"Yes, indeed, God's power works quietly in this world but it is the true and the lasting power." These words of Benedict's remind me of the prayer poem attributed to our Patron Saint, Columba, which begins "Sometimes in a lonely cell in the presence of my God I stand and listen. In the silence of my heart I can hear His will when I listen." These men and women, these saints of Ireland's Golden Age, knew how to listen; they learned how to do so as they committed themselves to following Christ wherever He would lead them.

As Columba's rule tells us, "The measure of your prayers should be until your tears come", meaning pray fervently, ardently, with the whole body, mind, spirit and emotions. Then "their eyes would be washed clean" so that they could "see into the very nature of things" and know how to act according to the "true and lasting power" of God.

Pope Benedict paid tribute to the early Celtic saints and the impact they had, these holy men and women who came to his own birthplace, the state of Bavaria in south eastern Germany, and evangelised there.

During his retirement, Benedict would have had many opportunities to benefit from the quietness of God, and offer, as the Lord himself did while He was on earth, silent prayers and entreaties to God for His will to be done on earth. As Pope Francis stated, the Pope Emeritus was offering everything for the Church right to the end.

We have here, by his example and that of others, an opportunity to look at the value of silence, not an empty silence but an expectant silence waiting to be filled by the Holy Spirit, who empowers us with His gifts so that we can do good in the world. Even if we are

old or sick or frail, it doesn't mean we are useless. Benedict's life this last 10 years was spent mostly hidden and quietly praying "in the world but not of the world", aware of but not openly participating in the life of the Church. Whether we are retired or in active work, religious, or lay, whether we are unemployed, frail, living with sickness, in recovery, fit and able, old, young, or somewhere in the middle, whatever challenges we are living with we can still contribute and our contribution matters; our contribution has value, our contribution makes a difference.

In the Christmas Carol, 'O Little Town of Bethlehem', we sing out "How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given".

In the silence of the night, do we take time to silence ourselves, to still ourselves? Do we decide to take time, even a moment, to listen before we get on with our day, or do we shrug off that opportunity and say no, I haven't got time for this right now, I have to get on. What a difference it would make to the day if we took just a moment to listen to the voice of the Lord, Christ, our cornerstone, our foundation, our compass, our rock, our strength, our shield.

## Nourished

So many times through His Word, God is calling us to spend time in silence, to rest in Him and be replenished and nourished...

"I said, oh that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest. I would flee far away and stay in the desert; I would hurry to my place of shelter, far from the tempest and storm." (Psalm 55:6-7 NIV)

"My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from Him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; He is my fortress, I will never be shaken." (Psalm 62:1-2 NIV)

"Be still and know that I am God." (Psalm 46:10 NIV)

"The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still." (Exodus 14:14)

"And he said to them, 'Come

away with me by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.' (Mark 6:31 NIV)

"Jesus remember me when You come into Your kingdom." (Luke 23:42-43)

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

"God loves and cares for all creation." (Matthew 6:25-34)

Any of the above readings can be used as the focus for a quiet moment of prayer in the morning, during the day or at night. Read the chosen scripture slowly and thoughtfully once or twice. Choose a word or phrase and repeat it to yourself. Recall the word or phrase during the day and use it as a way of stilling yourself. If you are not used to praying using a scripture text, this can be a beginning for you.

Pope Francis, for example, suggested that we say the phrase "Come Lord Jesus" each day during Advent, and I found this a very useful way to have a moment of silent reflection during the busyness of the day.

Each of us is in the world to fulfill a purpose. God says to each of us: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart. I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

I wonder did Joseph Ratzinger ever imagine as a young boy, as a student priest, and later as cardinal, that he would be called to such a high office; that he would be among the successors of St Peter and at 78 years of age?

Pope Benedict's predecessor, Pope Saint John Paul II, would have been a difficult person to follow with his outgoing nature and charismatic personality. John Paul II, although shy himself, was able to adjust to the media interest, was outgoing, strong, charismatic. We took time to adjust to the new leader because Pope Benedict's own quiet, shy

something so beautiful, but when I was taken to safety, I felt peace and calm. As Pope Benedict XVI highlights God's power is the "true and the lasting power".

On reading Pope Benedict's quotation, I feel that it is important to remember to always open our hearts to God and let go of the 'hardness'. Feel God's love, and trust in His presence during difficult situations or times of struggle that we may face. As highlighted by Pope Benedict we can call upon God. We need to remember this. His quotation gives me a great sense of hope.



Ann McCay, Columba Community.

nature did not lend itself easily to the media spotlight, which the role of pope demands in our time.

This softly spoken, learned, intelligent man could not see himself continuing in the role of Pope. He was already experiencing health problems when elected and after eight years of failing health and advancing years, realised that he could best serve the church in a different role and, in 2013, took the difficult decision to resign.

I was listening to a documentary recently about Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. The Commentator highlighted the fact that while in his role as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, under John Paul II, the then Joseph Ratzinger had tried to retire five times. He had expressed a desire to return to Germany to be near his older brother, Georg and the rest of his family. The quiet retirement he longed for in his homeland near his family was not to be.

Now he has found that quiet place he longed for, in the house of the Lord... "In the Lord's own house shall I dwell forever and ever." (Psalm 23)

I will finish with these words of encouragement from Pope Benedict XVI: "Dear friends, may no adversity paralyze you. Be afraid neither of the world, nor of the future, nor of your weakness. The Lord has allowed you to live in this moment of history so that, by your faith, His name will continue to resound throughout the world."



Brige O'Neill, Banagher.

# Jesus showed us how to live a simple God-filled life...and not just follow the crowd by Berni Doody

WHAT do we expect in this life from believing and following Jesus? All our dreams to come true? A life full of plenty, love, success, world peace?

Pope Benedict addresses this question when he asks, "What did Jesus actually bring?", as our present world is still full of troubles and hardship.

Jesus says, in Matthew 10: "Do you think I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword." Jesus

is telling us that He is not here to solve the world's problems. That is not His purpose. We are His purpose, not our problems. Jesus' coming into this world shows us a way to navigate through this troubled world, and that way is through Him.

Pope Benedict XVI's answer to "What did Jesus actually bring?" is simply "God".

Who in this world, believer or non-believer has not asked the question, "Why are we here?" Pope Benedict XVI says that Jesus has brought "the truth about our origin and destiny."

Jesus gives our life meaning, shows us our destiny/salvation and the means to get there.

We know that everything in this life will pass away and the only enduring thing is God's power and love. Pope Benedict XVI says "God's power works quietly in this world." How often have we found that in our own lives? We are reminded of the Old Testament when the Lord does not come to Elijah in a forceful way, in a strong wind or



earthquake or fire, but in a gentle breeze.

Jesus entered the world in a quiet, humble way. He showed us how to live a simple God-filled life, but to be courageous and speak for Truth and not just follow the crowd.

Pope Benedict XVI will be remembered by many theologians on account of the many books he has written, but what about the ordinary man and woman, how will he be remembered by them?

For many, Pope Benedict will be remembered as the Pope that retired and what an act of great courage that was! He must have spent so many harrowing hours in prayer before making this difficult decision. He knew he would face a backlash of criticism and be seen by many as weak for not keeping with tradition. How far from the truth! Through his retirement, he opened the way for the possibility of change, enabling the Holy Spirit to move freely and inspire us all.

# We have great power with our daily prayer by Brige O'Neill

RECENTLY, I have noticed the increased number of advertisements on TV gently nudging us to leave a legacy.

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, who passed into Eternal Life on December 31, has left us a legacy in several of his published letters during his time as our Pope.

The most powerful words, personally to me, is the recognition that God's power works quietly in the world.

Currently, as we find ourselves bombarded with the various news channels reporting bad news - war in Ukraine, refugee crisis, cost of living crisis, COVID, strikes etc - it is hard to imagine how we can convince people that God's power works quietly in the world.

The suffering of the people and all those affected by these ongoing situations seems to be difficult to explain and appears contradictory to the sentiments of God's power working quietly in the world.

God knows that we, too, live in uncertain times. It appears that we are living through a time of trial and testing. It is important to reflect on our own individual reactions to these situations. We must always remain hopeful.

We can make a difference one word at a time, one step at a time, one gesture at a time. All these little actions will begin a sea of change. We cannot believe we are powerless.

St John reassures us though, when we read, "In sorrow and

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passed right by me and I had a full view of him so closely. I felt like it was a miracle. My German friend, Kärin and her son were overjoyed. The happiness and love that we felt from the experience was overwhelming.

To refer to Pope Benedict's thoughts, I felt that I was experiencing the "truth about our origin and destiny: faith, hope and love". I love telling this story to the children in my class in Scoil Naomh Iósaf, The Illies in Buncrana. I have the pictures to

prove it, which is even better!

Pope Benedict XVI talks about Jesus bringing God, and by using that example of one of my experiences of World Youth Day, I think about how God's love for us can prevail during times of anxiety, worry and fear. God led me to a safer place that day, just as Pope Benedict describes God's "cause saving us". I felt love and hope and the strength of God within me. I couldn't understand why people were being so thoughtless and why they were creating a dangerous situation for everyone in the midst of

something so beautiful, but when I was taken to safety, I felt peace and calm. As Pope Benedict XVI highlights God's power is the "true and the lasting power".

On reading Pope Benedict's quotation, I feel that it is important to remember to always open our hearts to God and let go of the 'hardness'. Feel God's love, and trust in His presence during difficult situations or times of struggle that we may face. As highlighted by Pope Benedict we can call upon God. We need to remember this. His quotation gives me a great sense of hope.

# Pope emeritus, Benedict XVI – A complex legacy by Grainne Doherty

ALL of us reflect the family and the times in which we grew up. This was no less true for the late pope emeritus, Benedict XVI. At five years of age, the then Joseph Ratzinger pronounced to his parents that he wanted to be cardinal after meeting a German cardinal at a school event. Although he obviously achieved his young ambition, life also took him in another direction.

As a young boy, he lived through the rise of Hitler and on becoming a teenager was obliged, by German law at the time, to join Hitler youth. At 16, he was drafted into the army and became a prisoner of war when Europe was liberated from Nazism in 1945. The following year, he joined the seminary alongside his older brother Georg, and both were ordained together in 1951.

A former soldier, as pope, he frequently used the annual World Day of Peace to pronounce on and affirm some of his deepest beliefs about peace and justice. Perhaps one of the greater parts of his legacy is a reminder that all of us, and the lives we lead, are complicated. We are, like the former pope emeritus, made up of a myriad of experiences and influences, but ultimately called to discern what are our core values, and our deepest selves.

In many ways, therefore, the life and leadership of Benedict XVI is complex. And it is on this complexity that I wish to concentrate in this article: the complex theologian, man, and pope that was Benedict XVI.

Although pope for less than eight years, he nevertheless was firmly situated at the centres of power and leadership in the Vatican for almost four decades. Many theologians saw his move from being Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger - head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith - to pope Benedict XVI more of a continuation of his ideas and theology on the papacy, than a new beginning.

As a young and passionate theologian and popular theology lecturer, he was invited to be an

advisor at Vatican II – a Council that was to change the course of the church. Although being involved in shaping how the church was being called to be in the modern world, Benedict XVI will be remembered for his narrowed interpretation of many of its documents. For him, the purpose of Vatican II was not so much about modernizing the church, but rather about turning it away from poor theology and corrupt practices, to once again looking towards the theologies of the early saints and teachers for inspiration and direction.

While strongly recognising the role of laity in the mission of the church, such thinking in Benedict's hands, however, often focussed on the particular role of the ordained. This interpretation has sadly contributed to a distinct separation between both clergy and laity in much of the church's official teaching and pastoral practices over the past few decades.

One of the obvious displays of the complexity of Benedict XVI lies in his engagement with theology. As I have already pointed out, Benedict XVI was a popular theology lecturer. He was well known for encouraging robust discussion and freedom of thought among his students. As head prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), however, he had the responsibility of overseeing the theology of the universal church – not just a theology department in a German university.

In a role he took very seriously, he closely monitored new trends that were emerging in theology after Vatican II. The role of the theologian is to interpret the meaning of God for the world in which we live and to discern how God's message is being revealed within it. They do this by bringing the tradition of the church, scripture, and philosophy together to help them understand how God is speaking to the world.

For most of the history of the church, the CDF turned to the knowledge of theologians to help

them decide what the teaching of church should be. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger changed the focus however, and saw the role of the theologian less as an adviser to the CDF, and more of a defender of the doctrine it drew up. From 1988, the CDF, under his leadership, introduced the Oath of Fidelity which was required of all theologians and others with roles of responsibility in the church to "hold fast to the deposit of faith in its entirety," and to shun "any teachings contrary to it." Theologians, priests, and religious, were therefore forbidden to question the church's teachings on the ordination of women, sexuality, contraception, and same-sex relationships and, were often censured/silenced for doing so. Such thinking contributed to a culture of fear among those working in the church that still influences our thinking and practices today.

#### Liberation

One group of theologians who were closely monitored were those who supported what is called Liberation theology. With its roots in Latin America, Liberation theologians often used the political thinking of Karl Marx to help them interpret the Gospel through the eyes of the poor and the marginalised in society.

Traumatic experiences frequently influence how we respond to similar situations long after the original event has passed. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger later shared that his experience of Nazism and his knowledge of Mussolini taught him what could go wrong when religion was used by politics for its own ends. He also talked of a student revolt that happened in 1968 in the university where he taught. While giving a lecture, the rioters came in and took over the hall, taking the microphone from his hands in the process. When he saw the mixing of Christianity and politics in Liberation theology, he believed that he was protecting the church and Christianity from similar abuses of power. While some of his instincts had some grounding, his silencing of very many theologians working on behalf of justice for the world's poorest, was akin to using a hammer to crack a nut.

His approach to many theologians garnered much attention, as did his investigations into women religious, and often overshadowed his focus on the environment. While many of us are familiar with Pope Francis' wonderful writings on ecology and care of the earth, what we may not notice, is the number of times that he refers to the writings of his predecessor. Known as 'the Green Pope', Benedict XVI was quietly but very strongly committed to protecting the earth. Introducing solar panels

to the Paul VI Audience hall, and guiding Vatican city towards the use of renewable energy, he also chose to use an electric car and a hybrid popemobile, as well as drawing up what he called the '10 Commandments of the Environment', which he later published as a book with female spiritual author, Woodeene Koenig-Bricker. Calling our ability to pollute, a 'sin against society', he said that we must model our love for the world in which we live on the love God has for us.

Whatever way we view the complex legacy of the theologian/man/pope that was Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger/Pope emeritus Benedict XVI, there is no doubt that his understanding of himself as priest and servant of the church was most visible not only in his resignation, but in how he announced it. Although often portrayed as serious in public, for those who knew him he was known for his humour. I like to think that in his most

serious actions as pope, his love of humour as well as his humility broke through. Announcing his decision to step down from the papacy, one of the most historical and prophetic decisions made in regards to the papal role in over 700 years, he chose to speak in Latin. He did so to a hall filled with cardinals and theologians, fully aware that the majority of those in the room could not understand what he was saying. Naturally, it took a while for the meaning of what he was actually saying to make its way around the room.

I finish this reflection on pope emeritus Benedict XVI with words that he spoke in his very last public audience as pope. Sharing what a "great weight" was being lifted off his shoulders in resigning, he reflected that during his papacy he "felt like St Peter and the apostles in the boat on the Sea of Galilee." He went on to say that "the Lord has given us many days of sunshine and a light breeze, the days when the fishing is plentiful.



Grainne Doherty, Moville.

But there were also times when the water was rough... and the Lord seemed to be sleeping."

Who, at some point, has not experienced the same? Such was the complexity of the man who, while being a religious and world leader, could, at perhaps the most significant moment of his priesthood, speak out of his deepest humanity in words that speak to each one of our lives.

## "If you want to cultivate peace, protect creation"

by Mary Wilson, Derry Diocesan Laudato Si' Group



WHO do you think wrote the following: "The Church has a responsibility towards creation, and she considers it her duty to exercise that responsibility in public life, in order to protect earth, water and air as gifts of God the Creator meant for everyone, and above all to save mankind from the danger of self destruction"; or this: "Can we remain indifferent before the problems associated with such realities as climate change, desertification, the deterioration and loss of productivity in vast agricultural areas, the pollution of rivers and aquifers, the loss of bio diversity, the increase in natural catastrophes and the deforestation of equatorial and tropical regions."

Many of us might guess Pope Francis because of his encyclical, Laudato Si', but these are not the words of Pope Francis, they are the words of Pope Benedict XVI. The above are excerpts from his address, given in 2010 for World Peace Day. In a nutshell, he summarised his theology in eight words. "If you want to cultivate peace, protect creation". He called for a profound, long term review of our model of development and recognised that every economic decision had an environmental and social consequence.

Throughout the intervening years, from 2010 to the present day, information has poured in charting the changes being experienced on our earth and the urgent need for a change in

lifestyles. We live with impending crisis, with an emergency and yet it is the everyday which dictates and dominates us. Pope Benedict, and after him Pope Francis, urge us to think, to see with the eyes of faith, to act. They call us to fall in love with God's creation and with one another; not in a sentimental, naïve, simplistic manner, but aware of the honesty and struggle and perseverance that this way of living demands.

At his inaugural Mass, Pope Benedict said his aim as Pope would not be "to do my own will, nor to pursue my own ideas, but to listen together with the whole Church, to the word and the will of the Lord". The spirit of listening together has gathered momentum in the synodal conversations that have been held here in our local parishes and throughout the Church.

In his pastoral letter, Bishop

Donal writes: "If we ask the right question, we discover that renewal is not only a question of managing changed structures and rescheduling parish Mass. This is a time where we need to make time for grace, so that God's plans – and not our limited imagination – can renew the mission of the Church."

Pope Benedict placed the climate emergency and its deep and complex roots and repercussions at the centre of Catholic spirituality and practice. Pope Francis has reiterated and built on that teaching. As we are challenged to be Church in our time, it is clear that we take this teaching and embed it into our lives and our parishes.

An interesting postscript...

During Pope Benedict's tenure, he described pollution as among the 'social sins' of the world.

#### *continued from page 19*

suffering go straight to God with confidence and you will be strengthened enlightened and instructed." This must be of great consolation to us; otherwise we would be a people of despair.

We have great power with our daily prayer and with our daily interactions with others. In Matthew 18:18-20, Jesus tells us about the power of prayer - "Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bind in heaven. Again, I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I amongst them."

Therefore, if we truly believe that our prayers are being heard and answered, then God's power is working quietly in our world.

St Teresa of Calcutta spoke very profoundly when she said, "We need to find God, and He cannot be found in noise and restlessness.

God is the friend of silence. See how nature - trees, flowers, grass, grow in silence; see the stars, the moon and the sun, how they move in silence...we need silence to be able to touch souls."

Mother Teresa was such an inspirational person working quietly in some of the most difficult of circumstances and areas, and it is with this inspiration that we should be assured that God's power indeed does work quietly in our world.

# God's cause truly endures because of the faith, hope and love that has been given us in Jesus and now in our hearts

by Noel Bradley

POPE Benedict as Cardinal Ratzinger says in his book, 'Jesus of Nazareth', that "The great question that will be with us throughout this entire book: What did Jesus actually bring, if not world peace, universal prosperity, and a better world? What has He brought?

"The answer is very simple: God...He has brought God, and now we know His face, now we can call upon Him. Now we know the path that we human beings have to take in this world. Jesus has brought God and with God the truth about our origin and destiny: faith, hope and love..."

On reading the first question: "What did Jesus actually bring, if not world peace, universal prosperity, and a better world? What has he brought?", you might be tempted to think, 'well Jesus didn't bring us world peace, or universal prosperity or a better world but he brought us God, something far better than all of these things and that is what is important. Nothing could be better than God. God is the greatest, the absolute good', and that is true.

But that leaves us with a lot

of questions. Where does that leave this world? The fourteen years of evolution and the myriad of elements, in the galaxies, the stars and planets, in the trees, the plants, animals, including ourselves and the rest of humanity? Then there is the work that Jesus did for world peace, universal prosperity, and a better world? The work that others in His religious tradition before Him and after Him did for these values? The work and searching that others did in other cultures as well?

There is a danger that we could downgrade all the work and things of this world and end up with a very spiritual world view that is so "heavenly minded that it is no earthly good". So, in some way, the values included in 'world peace, universal prosperity, and a better world' must be included in our understanding of the word 'God'.

Each created reality is a limited participation in the word and a manifestation of God's presence.

Thinking of the long length of time before Jesus, some words and thoughts of Scripture come to mind that would verify that

we must keep this world and God together. Every thing was created by God and 'God saw all He had made, and indeed it was very good'. (Genesis 1:31).

Modern science has shown us that we live within a single universe - an interlocking network in which every element is linked to everything else in what we have come to call the web of life, or what Pope Francis refers to in 'Laudato si' as the network of all things. The cosmos in which we live is called a universe, a word that indicates a fundamental unity. We believe that this universe was created by God but, in recent years, there has been a new prominence given to creation. We now recognise more explicitly that creation is not merely a gift from God but is also an expression of God. The whole of creation, the universe and each part of it, is a 'word' from God.

We read that 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God (Jn 1:1) before the World existed (Jn 17:5); that 'all things were made' through the Word of God (Jn 1:3). This is made more explicit in the Letter to the Colossians:

'In him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible...; all things have been created through him and for him' (Col 1:15). Just before this passage, we read the statement that the Word of God is 'the first born of all creation' (Col 1:15). This suggests that we may perhaps think of the Word of God as in some sense not only uncreated but is also created. ('A Creed for Today' by Donal Dorr, p.42,43. Veritas)

We are beginning to take seriously that, long before we came to live on this Earth, the Word of God was present in the myriad of creatures of our universe. Every creature is a partial manifestation of the Word of God. Our universe in all its aspects is somewhat 'divinised', a divine 'mileau'.

All this needs a lot of meditation and it is important because it is out of this mystery of the evolution of the story of the universe that the historical Jesus arrives on the stage of history for us. It is the mystery of the self-emptying love that inspired the Word of God to become embodied in creation in the primordial moment called

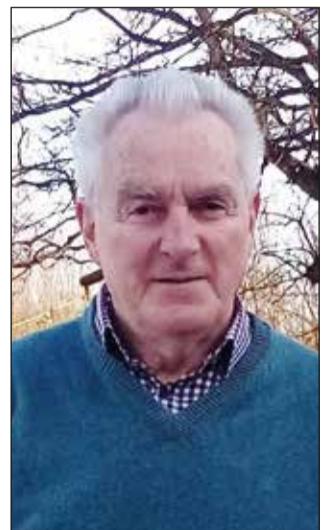
the Big Bang and to continue to be embodied in each and every creature that has evolved and emerged over fourteen years since that initial created and creative instant' ('A Creed for Today' p.43).

All of creation must in some way be included in and with God. Of course, that includes not only the non-human universe that I have been emphasising so much but also, and especially, us humans. I am thinking of the named prophets and others in Israel who spoke, prayed, worked and tried to live in righteousness with Yahweh until the time was ripe for the coming of Jesus. But also, there have been other humans in other cultures all over the world searching for wisdom and direction in the movement of life. God 'wants everyone to be saved and reach full knowledge of the truth' (1 Tim. 2:5) and so He must give everyone His grace to come to that.

#### **Jesus is the face of God**

Now we come to Jesus, and Benedict states it beautifully. He says Jesus 'has brought us God, and now we see His face'. We see the kind of God Jesus brought. In Him we see a God of compassion, forgiveness, reaching out to where the suffering was among the poor, exploited and oppressed, and He taught this in His parables, which offered them and us a different dream for the world He called His Kingdom and Paul called His 'reign'. A world of peace, universal prosperity, a better world is how we might put it today. Jesus worked and preached about that and, obviously, He did not achieve His dream in His historical life time. But it was not a waste of time. His crucifixion was His resurrection and His work continues in His Spirit that He has left.

Now Benedict says "we can call upon Him. Now we know the path that we human beings have to take in this world. Jesus has brought God and with God the truth about our origin and



Noel Bradley, Buncrana.

destiny: faith, hope and love". Yes, we can call upon Him as 'one like us in all things but sin', as one who has been tempted in every way like ourselves, a compassionate High Priest who knows our suffering, raised up as Lord at the right hand of God the Father.

Yes, we know the path to follow. He is the Way for us. He is the Human One. He shows us that if we want to be fully human we have to be like Him. We have to aspire to love everyone as He did and does now. God lets His rain fall and sun shine on everyone. Love is a tall order when you think of how He suffered and died. Love is our origin in God and love is our destiny. In the meantime, we live in that love that gives us hope 'and this hope is not deceptive, because the love of God has flooded our hearts by the Holy Spirit' (Rom 5:5). In that Spirit God continues to work 'quietly in this world'. Yes, "the Father goes on working and so do I", says Jesus.

"God's cause seems to be in its death throes", as Benedict says, but we believe too that 'the darkness cannot overcome the light'. God's cause truly endures because of the faith, hope and love that has been given us in Jesus and now in our hearts, and the greatest of these is love because 'God is love'.

(Noelbradley1512@gmail.com)



Edel O'Connor, Coleraine.

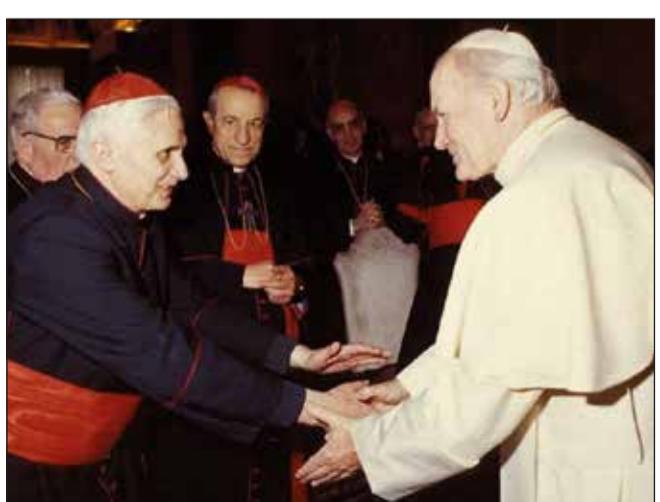
This may lead us to seeing things in a new way, or to challenging their church from within and Pope Benedict was not afraid to challenge contentious issues.

The final task in the race is to pass the baton on, which Pope Benedict XVI had the courage to do. Placing his trust in the Holy Spirit to guide and protect the Church, he became the first Pope in 600 years to resign.

Pope Francis, on hearing of the death of Pope Benedict XVI, said, "We feel in our hearts so much gratitude. Gratitude to God for having given him to the Church and to the world; gratitude to him, for all the good he accomplished, and especially for his witness of faith and prayer, especially in these last years of his retired life".

Pope Benedict had the trust and courage to be a leader in God's story, but to also realise he was not all of God's story and he entrusted the Church to continue that story.

Jesus' words and wisdom, His example and presence, were directed towards making the concrete world we live in a better place, where peace and unity, justice and freedom, equality and diversity reign.



## Through his leadership, writings and deep faith, Pope Benedict XVI helped to bring us closer to Jesus

by Edel O'Connor

POPE Benedict XVI has "fought the good fight, finished the race and kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7-8) and has returned to the Lord. The symbolism of a relay race comes to my mind when I think of Pope Benedict XVI. His reign from 2005-2013 linked our faith between the past, present and future.

In a relay race, the first task is to hold the baton. In 2005, Joseph Ratzinger chose the name Pope Benedict XVI. Influenced by St Benedict, who with the establishment of the Benedictine monasteries helped to bring light and hope during the Dark Ages. Likewise, Pope Benedict became a leader willing to share his gifts and knowledge to bring light and hope in our modern dark times.

Through his speeches and encyclicals, he confronted secularism and the danger of pushing religion aside. He was a supporter of evangelisation and the need to reach to the "digital continent" in the ever expanding world of the internet and social

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Thousands of solar panels were installed in the Vatican's main

auditorium and a commitment made to generate 20% of electricity from renewables. He used a gifted electric car from 2012.

## Pope Benedict XVI – ‘The reluctant Pope’ by Oliver Barrett



Oliver Barrett, Leckpatrick.

I first encountered Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger in 1998 as a student of Education at St Mary's University College in Belfast. Our lecturer at the time, Fr Timothy Bartlett, introduced his students to Cardinal Ratzinger during a lecture. At this time, he had earned himself a sobriquet and was known as 'The Pope's Rottweiler'. He earned this nickname because, as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, he was known for his orthodoxy.

Fr Bartlett made the prediction that Cardinal Ratzinger could be the next Pope. Seven years later, that is precisely what happened.

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was elected Pope Benedict XVI in 2005. Thanks to Fr Bartlett, I have been betting on Cardinals ever since!

The election of Benedict XVI as Supreme Pontiff did not come as an absolute surprise. Even the brick bats at the Vatican had an idea who Pope John Paul II's successor would be. What was unpredictable was that the Papacy of Pope Benedict XVI could be marred with controversy and ultimately end in his resignation in 2013. This was the first time a Pope had resigned his office in over 600 years. The last time this happened was during the Middle Ages. Time does not permit me to go into the reasons for Pope Benedict XVI offering his resignation. I prefer instead to examine his legacy.

For me, one of the high points of the Papacy of Pope Benedict XVI was his four-day state visit to the UK in September 2010. It is important to put his visit into context. The Church in England was reformed in the 16th Century partly because Henry VIII sought to dissolve his marriage with Catherine of Aragon in a quest for a male heir. As Clement VII

could not approve the annulment of Henry's marriage to Catherine of Aragon this eventually led to the transfer of the headship of the Church in England to Henry VIII. Henry was subsequently excommunicated by Clement VII, who declared his divorce and remarriage to Anne Boleyn null. Up to this time, England had been known as 'Mary's Dowry', as English Catholics had recourse to Mary during difficult times.

I believe Pope Benedict accomplished three things on his state visit to the UK. Firstly, he reached out and acknowledged English Catholics and their fidelity to the See of Peter when he visited the tomb of St Edward the Confessor in Westminster Abbey. Westminster Abbey was originally a Benedictine foundation under the protection of the Holy See up to 1540, when the monastery was dissolved.

Secondly, when he beatified John Henry Newman during his visit, he acknowledged and recognised the important contribution he made to the deposit of faith and paved the way for his canonization.

There is a parallel between Pope Benedict XVI and St John Henry Newman because Pope Benedict XVI was known as 'the reluctant Pope' and St John Henry Newman is known as 'the reluctant Saint'. Thirdly, Pope Benedict extended an olive branch of peace through his attendance and participation at ecumenical services. His visit was successful because it was based on the first principle of ecumenism – ie, reception. I had the privilege of travelling with the Knights of Columbanus to the Mass in Bellahouston Park in Glasgow at the beginning of the visit.

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Pope Benedict XVI was first and foremost a scholar and a theologian. Like his predecessor, St John Paul II, he was a polyglot and could speak seven languages fluently, including Italian and Latin. He had the ability to make complex theological concepts easy to understand using simple language. He averaged three foreign trips each year and visited Lourdes, USA and Australia in 2008.

I believe Pope Benedict XVI had the green agenda first and foremost in his mind. In my opinion, chapter four of his encyclical, 'Caritas In Veritate' prepared the way for



the publication of 'Laudato Si'. In chapter four, Pope Benedict XVI writes... 'Truth, and the Love which it reveals, can not be produced: they can only be received as a gift. Their ultimate source is not, and cannot be, mankind, but only God, who is Himself Truth and Love' (52).

Of the many books he wrote, I enjoyed reading 'Jesus of Nazareth'. His insights enlightened my mind, and I will be forever grateful for his wonderful intellect.

I will remember Pope Benedict XVI as someone who liked the simple things in life. I know he enjoyed a beer every year on his birthday and enjoyed Bavarian food. He liked classical music and would often play the piano to relax.

May he rest in peace.

## What can I bring to Jesus? by Martin Harran



Martin Harran, Urney & Castlefin

MEDIA coverage of Pope Emeritus Benedict has been wide-ranging in the various aspects of his papacy, with some very positive reviews and some rather negative ones on some aspects. One thing that all commentators seem to have agreed on is that Benedict was an outstanding theologian, possibly the greatest of his generation. This, however, has often been said almost in passing, as if it was a relatively unimportant aspect of his papacy. On the contrary, it is a rich legacy that he has left the church.

Another area where many seemed to miss an important point is when they compare Benedict to his predecessor and successor. The work of any individual pope cannot simply be contrasted with other individual popes, they must be considered as part of a sequence which is the foundation for the continuing development of the church.

I think that in our ongoing Synodal Pathway, it is important that we bear those three aspects in mind. It would be easy to get caught up, for example in the way we treat people or the form of liturgy we practice, without taking the other aspects into account.

One of the issues that have come out in the listening part of that Synodal Pathway, both locally

and nationally is the need for a greatly improved faith formation for parents and for those exercising various lay ministries within their parishes.

Back in 1997, eight years before he became Pope, writing as Cardinal Ratzinger in 'Salt of the Earth', Benedict predicted that our church would become much smaller; she would no longer be able to inhabit many of the edifices built in prosperity; that as the number of her adherents would diminish, she would lose many of her social privileges; as a smaller society, she would make much bigger demands on the initiative of her individual members. That is exactly what has happened and is effectively what we are trying to deal with in the Synodal Pathway.

Much of Benedict's thinking and writing was focused on dealing with the changes he foresaw, and I believe his theology could make a major contribution to that formation.

Benedict's writing, like that of most theologians, can be difficult for lay people to read due to theological jargon and terminology. One of his concepts, for example, that I think can be very relevant to us is that of "hermeneutic continuity". Despite the difficult-sounding theological terminology, that concept reflects a very simple but very important principle – that changes we make in the church must be a development of what has gone before rather than a departure from it.

As Pope Francis and Bishop Donal have both reminded us, in our listening process, we are not trying to arrive at a solution that only reflects what we think would be best for us as individuals, or our personal opinion of what is best for the Church; we are trying instead to discern what God wants for his Church.

To me, that is a mirror of the question that Benedict posed, except that instead of asking "What did Jesus bring?", we should perhaps ask ourselves "What can I bring to Jesus?"

## Pope Benedict ensured that Jesus Christ was active in every area of his life by Rory McGilligan



Rory McGilligan, Dungiven.

Since his death on New Year's Eve, I have read more articles and listened to more podcasts to learn as much as I possibly could about him. Pope Benedict didn't make it easy for us to find out who he was; this was intentional for a reason. Reading and listening to various accounts about the man, they all come to the same conclusion: Pope Benedict lived a Christ centred life. This means, Jesus Christ dominated everything he participated in. The man Joseph Ratzinger was well down the list of his priorities. Christ always came first.

When Joseph Ratzinger was elected Pope on April 19, 2005, he looked out upon St Peter's Square to the thousands of well-wishers below and greeted them with the following words: "I am a simple humble worker in the vineyard of the Lord." When I first heard those words, watching it live on the television, I got the smallest glimpse of who our new Pope was. His humility astounded me and, as the years passed by, the more I got to read his material and listen to different people who were his aids, my admiration for him continues to grow.

Bishop Fulton J Sheen discussed the topic of humility in his book, 'Way to Inner Peace'. Bishop Sheen links humility with knowledge. He states: "Humility is a recognition of the truth about ourselves." A few lines later, he writes: "When a thousand people

*In his World Communications Day message, Pope Francis reflects on 'speaking with the heart', pointing out...*

# We are all called to seek and speak the truth...with charity

'SPEAKING with the heart: Veritatem facientes in caritate' - 'The truth in love' (Eph 4:15) is the theme of the 57th World Communications Day message published by Pope Francis on January 24, the Feast Day of St Francis de Sales, the Patron Saint of Journalists, Editors and Writers, and a Doctor of the Church.

The Holy Father opened his message explaining that having reflected in previous years on "to go and see" and "to listen" as conditions for good communication, he decided to focus this time on "speaking with the heart".

He remarked: "Once we have practised listening, which demands waiting and patience, as well as foregoing the assertion of our point of view in a prejudicial way, we can enter into the dynamic of dialogue and sharing, which is precisely that of communicating in a cordial way. After listening to the other with a pure heart, we will also be able to speak 'following the truth in love' (cf. Eph 4:15). We should not be afraid of proclaiming the truth, even if it is at times uncomfortable, but of doing so

## continued from page 22

are walking to the edge of an abyss, he who is walking in the opposite direction is taunted for not following the mob. A man must be prepared to be humble to bear up under these reproaches and dare to be right when the majority is wrong. This humility is the pathway to truth."

As mentioned earlier, popular culture/media were not fans of our late Pope. We can see from Bishop Sheen's example, Pope Benedict walked, lived and ministered on the pathway to truth. The truth is that our salvation can only be achieved in and through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Pope Benedict ensured that Jesus Christ was active in every area of his life.

I have read so many beautiful accounts of his life. One account was when a fellow cleric, who concelebrated Mass with our late Pope, said he never knew another cleric who disappeared so much during Mass. Pope Benedict was always making the presence of Jesus in the Mass the most important part. The same cleric stated that his homilies were filled with humility and gentleness.

In another interview on Vatican TV, the late Pope's private secretary told the viewers that, at the start of each day, Pope Benedict ensured that prayer time was adhered to. Prayer was not an afterthought or something that could be done if things were not too busy. Prayer was scheduled; the importance of the daily Rosary and Breviary kept

without charity, without heart."

Referencing what Jesus warned, that every tree is known by its fruit (Lk 6:44): "The good man out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil man out of his evil treasure produces evil; for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks" (v. 45), Pope Francis continued: "This is why, in order to communicate 'truth with charity', it is necessary to purify one's heart. Only by listening and speaking with a pure heart can we see beyond appearances and overcome the vague din which, also in the field of information, does not help us discern in the complicated world in which we live. The call to speak with the heart radically challenges the times in which we are living, which are so inclined towards indifference and indignation, at times even on the basis of disinformation which falsifies and exploits the truth."

He added: "Communicating in a cordial manner means that those who read or listen to us are led to welcome our participation in the joys, fears, hopes and suffering of the women and men of our time. Those who speak in this way love

the lines of communication open with Christ throughout the day.

Another account tells of Pope Benedict in private conversation with people. How he took the time to listen to and talk to children, how he was able to resolve disagreements. In fact, it is known that the more pressurised the situation, the more relaxed Pope Benedict became. How this level of peace and calmness flowed out to all that he met.

I think Pope Benedict XVI wants us to bring Christ into our lives. We may, like our late Pope, walk in the opposite direction than popular culture dictates but with the sure and certain knowledge that on our journey we will not only be accompanied by our Lord, but that He will lead us to paradise.

He went on to express the hope that "people who work in communications feel inspired by this saint of tenderness, seeking and telling the truth with courage

the other because they care and protect their freedom without violating it."

He went on to point out that "the commitment to communicating 'with open heart and arms' does not pertain exclusively to those in the field of communications; it is everyone's responsibility. We are all called to seek and to speak the truth and to do so with charity."

The Pope noted that the centenary of St Francis de Sales being proclaimed as Patron of Catholic Journalists, by Pope Pius XI, takes place in 2023, and that this Doctor of the Church had offered "one of the brightest and still fascinating examples of 'speaking with the heart'".

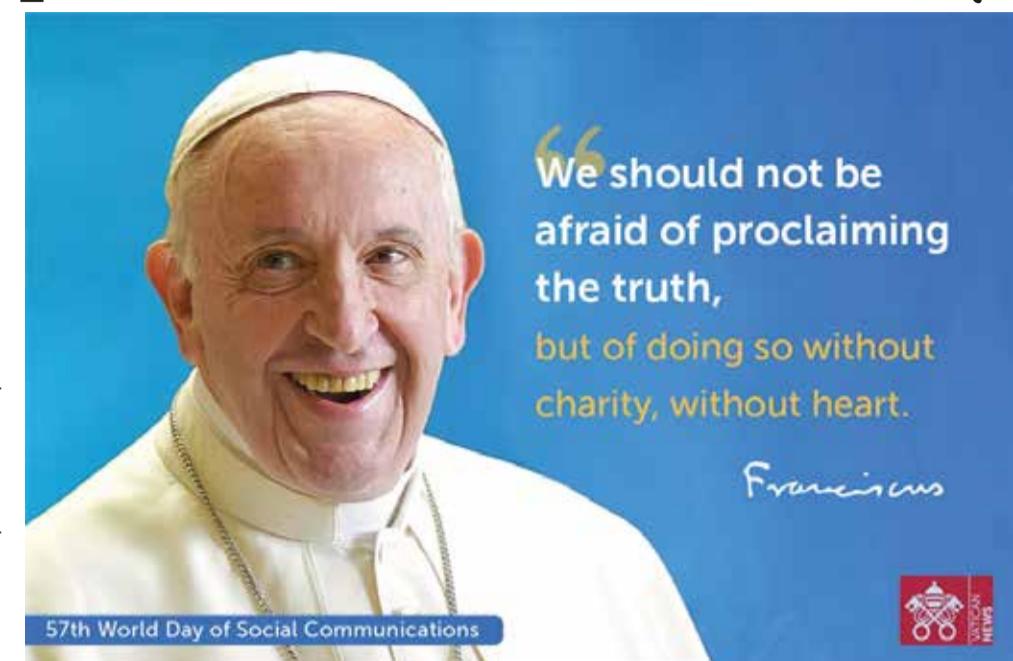
He added: "A brilliant intellectual, fruitful writer and profound theologian, Francis de Sales was Bishop of Geneva at the beginning of the XVII century during difficult years marked by heated disputes with Calvinists. His meek attitude, humanity and willingness to dialogue patiently with everyone, especially with those who disagreed with him, made him an extraordinary witness of God's merciful love."

Highlighting that one of St Francis' most famous statements, "heart speaks to heart", had inspired generations of faithful, Pope Francis remarked: "For St Francis de Sales, precisely 'in the heart and through the heart, there comes about a subtle, intense and unifying process in which we come to know God'."

### Exploited

And he added that the Saint's reminder that "we are what we communicate", goes against the grain today, "at a time when — as we experience especially on social media — communication is often exploited so that the world may see us as we would like to be and not as we are."

He went on to express the hope that "people who work in communications feel inspired by this saint of tenderness, seeking and telling the truth with courage



and freedom and rejecting the temptation to use sensational and combative expressions."

Emphasising a great need to listen to and hear one another in the Church too, Pope Francis stated:

"We have a pressing need in the Church for communication that kindles hearts, that is balm on wounds and that shines light on the journey of our brothers and sisters. I dream of an ecclesial communication that knows how to let itself be guided by the Holy Spirit, gentle and at the same time, prophetic, that knows how to find new ways and means for the wonderful proclamation it is called to deliver in the third millennium. A communication which puts the relationship with God and one's neighbour, especially the neediest, at the centre and which knows how to light the fire of faith rather than preserve the ashes of a self-referential identity. A form of communication founded on humility in listening and 'parrhesia' in speaking, which never separates truth from charity."

The Holy Father went on to note that today more than ever, "speaking with the heart is

essential to foster a culture of peace in places where there is war; to open paths that allow for dialogue and reconciliation in places where hatred and enmity rage."

"In the dramatic context of the global conflict we are experiencing," he remarked, "it is urgent to maintain a form of communication that is not hostile... We need communicators who are open to dialogue, engaged in promoting integral disarmament and committed to undoing the belligerent psychosis that nests in our hearts, as Saint John XXIII prophetically urged in the Encyclical 'Pacem in Terris': 'True peace can only be built in mutual trust' (No. 113). A trust which has no need of sheltered or closed communicators but bold and creative ones who are ready to take risks to find common ground on which to meet."

"As was the case sixty years ago, we are now also living in a dark hour in which humanity fears an escalation of war that must be stopped as soon as possible, also at the level of communication. It is terrifying to hear how easily words calling for the destruction of people and territories are

spoken. Words, unfortunately, that often turn into warlike actions of heinous violence. This is why all belligerent rhetoric must be rejected, as well as every form of propaganda that manipulates the truth, disfiguring it for ideological ends. Instead, what must be promoted is a form of communication that helps create the conditions to resolve controversies between peoples."

He concluded: "May the Lord Jesus, the pure Word poured out from the heart of the Father, help us to make our communication clear, open and heartfelt. May the Lord Jesus, the Word made flesh, help us listen to the beating of hearts, to rediscover ourselves as brothers and sisters, and to disarm the hostility that divides. May the Lord Jesus, the Word of truth and love, help us speak the truth in charity, so that we may feel like protectors of one another."

The 2023 World Day of Communications will take place on Sunday, May 21, the Sunday before Pentecost.

## How do I 'Put on the Lord Jesus Christ'? by Aoife O'Neill

'PUT on the Lord Jesus Christ' is the theme of the upcoming ladies retreat in the Carmelite Retreat Centre, Termonbacca, Derry, which Sisters from the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus will be leading at the beginning of Lent.

Sisters Clare, Katherine and Maureen, who are currently based in Waterford, will join us to lead the retreat. This is a perfect opportunity at the beginning of Lent to take some time out, reflect and reset.

The weekend will run from 7 pm on Friday, February 24, and finish with lunch at 1 pm on Sunday, February 26.

It can be done either on a residential basis or non-residential basis. The price, including meals, is £90 for residential and £60 for non-residential.

For further information/booking please contact Aoife on 028 71 262512 or termonbaccaderry@gmail.com



**Put on the Lord Jesus Christ**

Romans 13:11

**Ladies Lent Retreat**  
Led by  
**The Apostles of the Sacred Heart**

**Friday 24th- Sunday 26th February 2023**

For bookings/queries please contact Aoife on 02871262512 or email termonbaccaderry@gmail.com

# Special ecumenical ceremony in St Eugene's celebrates Christian Unity Week



DURING Christian Unity Week, an ecumenical ceremony was held in the Mother Church of the Diocese, St Eugene's Cathedral, as part of its 150th anniversary celebrations, and pupils from various schools across the City joined in the celebration of the shared message to love one another as God loves us.

The service was led by Bishop Donal and the Church of Ireland Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, the Rt Revd Andrew Forster, and young people from schools, including the Fountain and Long Tower Primary Schools and Lisneal and St Mary's Colleges, took part in the Liturgy.

Led by members of the St Mary's College Choir, everyone joined in singing the opening hymn, 'Christ Be Beside Me', and concluding hymn, 'Be Thou My Vision', and the ceremony got underway with four pupils bringing forward a cross, Bible and candle in a procession of symbols during the Gathering Prayer.

Thankful for the great shared experience happening between schools, Bishop Donal led the Gathering Prayer: "How great is this place, for it is the touching-place of God. In Christ, we are gathered from the edges and woven into the dream. Here, we feel the hint of Heaven, where justice, love and mercy meet. Here, we celebrate the blessedness of unity in God. We, who were

once far off, are brought near. And so we pray, God, creator of all, in Your love, You have made each one of us, in Your grace, you gather us together in Your image, in Your mercy, You make us restless until we find our rest in You and Your kingdom comes and your will is done."

In an invitation to confession and forgiveness, he continued: "We gather to pray for the unity that is Christ's gift to the Church. We gather in hope that the world might believe and be reconciled to God. We recognise that we are part of churches and communities that are divided by injustice, especially the sin of racism, which stands contrary to the image of God shining from every human face.

"Forgive us, loving Father, when we come to worship without walking humbly before You. We ask forgiveness for our sins of injustice and oppression. We ask forgiveness for the times we have hurt others in word or deed. We ask forgiveness for the times our churches have failed to show leadership in times of turmoil and strife.

"We have been called to unity. Forgive us anew and reconcile us to one another. May God's Mercy free us from our sins to do justice, love, kindness and walk humbly with our God."

"Loving Father, God of all," prayed Bishop Donal, "because of Your great love our sins have been washed away and we are

part of the beloved community. We come before You, a holy family, united in the beautiful diversity of your creation. We celebrate the rich tapestry of the human family. We commit ourselves to overcome prejudice and disunity wherever we find it and to walk humbly in Your presence."

Bishop Forster read the Gospel passage, 'The Parable of the Good Samaritan' from Luke 10:25-37, and in his homily, Bishop Donal remarked that this Parable wasn't just a nice story, but Jesus' "response to someone who wants to think that God is happy if we get the religious laws right."

## Loving till it hurts

He added: "Jesus says that the only law is that we love God with all of our hearts and love others as much as we love ourselves. That may sound a bit of a tall order. But it sums up the teaching of Jesus. We become the best that we can become by loving till it hurts. Religion that is limited to keeping laws misses the point."

Telling those gathered that the ceremony was not just a celebration of their shared faith in Jesus, but also "a celebration of what all Christian churches have been trying to do through our involvement in education", Bishop Donal remarked: "For hundreds of years, churches have had a role in schools because education can never be reduced to just getting information about different subject areas – and passing exams. Jesus tells His followers that we can be good and not just be good at things.

"But there are those who would prefer if schools only repeated the message that the world will be great if everybody – and that just means the strong – is free to make their own decisions, whatever the cost is for others.

"In a world with much violence and division, that is clearly a crazy idea. We can see how war, division and domestic violence scar all our communities. Free choice can imprison us in bad choices. All we have to do is look

at Adam and Eve. In the Gospel story, the priest and the Levite were too caught up in their own issues to see the man in distress. The Samaritan was an outsider but he was free enough of prejudice to help someone in need."

He went on highlight: "The challenge for all of us involved in education will be to claim space for our way of looking at the world, despite many voices who want only their views to be heard by young people. But there is no such thing as neutral and factual education. A curriculum that does not deal with the reality of sin and bad choices, with the need for grace and good choices – that curriculum will simply nourish the fear and distress that so many young people suffer.

"Too many young people suffer because of poor choices by adults in their lives. Too many young people are pressurised into making bad choices by those who seek either their votes or their money. The powerful will always try to ban any voices that would damage their power and control."

Thanking Bishop Forster and the schools for joining in the ceremony, which was organised by the Diocesan Catechetical Centre, Bishop Donal said: "Today we can celebrate in this city our shared inter-church commitment to ensure that the voice of faith is not pushed out of education by illiberal liberals, who would make space for every view except the voice of faith.

"Here, we already have a remarkably wide range of great schools and a huge amount of close collaboration, so that we make space for diversity and celebrate it rather than fear it... Jesus invites us to see people in need rather than human divisions. By focusing on love of God and of neighbour, we can be lifted up from pre-occupation with self and with divisions. And together we can pray for unity amid injustice. That is what Jesus would want us to do."



**Photography by Stephen Latimer**



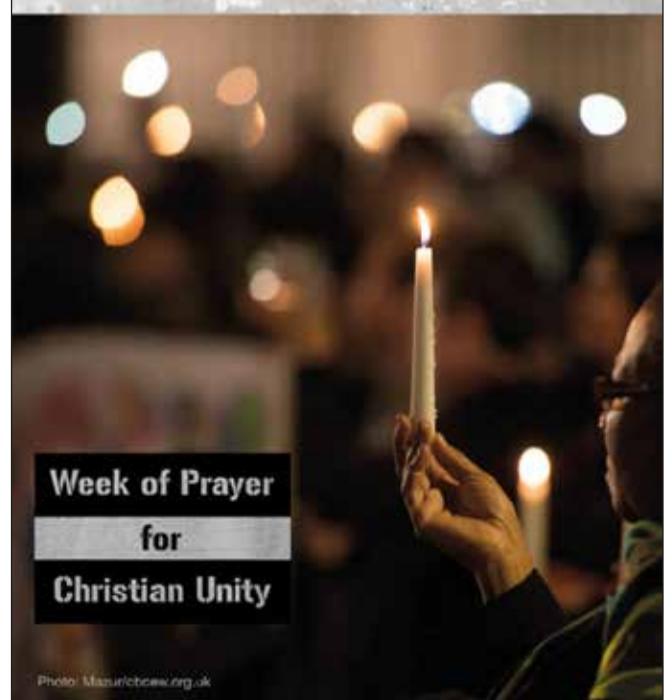


## Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

A Week of Prayer for Christian unity can contribute to the promotion of racial justice across all levels of society.

During the week, Christians around the world were united in praying that hearts will be open to see and hear the many ways in which racism continues to destroy lives, and to discern the steps that can be taken as individuals and communities to heal the hurts and build a better future for everyone.

**Be-Longing:**  
Praying for Unity amidst Injustice



*Speaking at the Irish Council of Churches and Irish Inter-Church Meeting joint service of worship during Christian Unity Week, Archbishop Eamon Martin reflected on...*

# Looking to future with holy ‘longing’ for greater togetherness and deeper friendship

“CHURCHES together confronting homelessness; together responding in practical ways to racism and sectarianism; Churches together tackling human trafficking, exploitation and poverty; Churches together welcoming and providing hospitality for migrants and those seeking refuge among us; Churches together addressing climate injustice; Churches together upholding the right to life and dignity of every human person.”

These were the thoughts expressed by Archbishop Eamon Martin when he spoke at a gathering during Christian Unity Week marking the Centenary of the founding of the Irish Council of Churches, and the 50th anniversary of the ‘Ballymascanlon Talks’ that led to the establishment of the Irish Inter-Church Meeting that engages with the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, which he suggested might be included in a manifesto for the next 50 years.

The Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland was one of the preachers at a special joint service by the Irish Council of Churches and Irish Inter-Church Meeting in St Anne’s Cathedral, Belfast, on Sunday, January 22, which had as its theme, ‘Celebrating our Reconciling Vision of Hope’.

The service was led by the Dean of Belfast Cathedral, Very Rev Stephen Forde and, as well as Archbishop Eamon, Rev Dr Harold Good, former President of the Methodist Church in Ireland and recipient of the World Methodist Peace Award in 2007, also spoke.

Reflecting on the Christian Unity Week theme – ‘Belonging: Praying for Unity

Amidst Injustice’, the Derry native noted that the anniversary celebrations were also an opportunity “to look to the future with a holy ‘longing’ for greater togetherness and deeper friendship”.

He recalled: “Although I was only 11 years old in September 1973, somewhere lodged in my boyhood memory are news images of Church leaders gathering for an historic meeting - while others marched in protest. I knew instinctively that something special was happening at Ballymascanlon - it was a beacon of hope in dark times.

“Some years afterwards Cahal Daly and Stanley Worrall described a sense of ‘excitement’ and ‘momentous new departure’ as the delegates convened at Ballymascanlon; but they also admitted their anxiety that perhaps the Churches might have been too ambitious and it all might fail (see Cahal Daly and Stanley Worrall, Ballymascanlon, ‘An Irish Venture in Inter Church Dialogue’, CJL/Veritas 1978, p 10).”

“But it couldn’t fail,” added Archbishop Eamon, “for its vision was inspired by the longing of our Saviour who

prayed, ‘That they may be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you’ (John 17:21).

“That high priestly prayer of Jesus is the motivation behind all our working and praying and hoping together as Churches; and the reason why we ‘be longing’ that we may be one! For decades those words, ‘That they may be one’, have guided visionary people from our various traditions to boldly confront the reality and pain of our divisions and to set out on a pilgrim journey, daring to dream of greater unity.

“Sadly, it hasn’t always been so. On St Patrick’s Day 2021, our Church leaders lamented that sometimes in our history we have ‘failed to bring to a fearful and divided society that message of the deeper connection that binds us, despite our different identities, as children of God’ (Church Leaders’ message: In Christ We Journey Together of 17 March 2021).”

He then called for a recommitment “to being the peacemakers, the healers, the reconcilers that our Saviour longed for His followers to be, even though we know that our on-going pilgrimage towards unity will always involve risk - just as it did for the pioneers of the Inter-Church bodies that we are commemorating.”

Referring to the Memorial Service for Queen Elizabeth II four months ago, in St Anne’s Cathedral, Archbishop Eamon said: “My brother Archbishop John, reminded us that ‘Reconciliation is about the restoration of broken relationships. And the word should never be cheapened by

pretending it’s an easy thing to achieve...Reconciliation requires the greatest of all religious virtues, love; and it requires the greatest of all civic virtues, courage’.

## Trust

He added: “I also believe Reconciliation requires trust. And trust is perhaps all the more important on this island where people from different traditions have often regarded one another with fear and suspicion. I thank God today for the trust and friendship that has already been built up between us - fellow pilgrims - on the path to unity.”

Noting that it was agreed at a recent Irish Inter Church Meeting that “our friendship allows us to go together places where it might be difficult for us to go as individuals”, the All Ireland Primate said: “In recent years, trust has enabled us to facilitate together shared spaces for encounter, dialogue, healing, conversion and reconciliation. There have been initiatives at Church leadership level and - even more importantly - on the ground, in partnerships between groups of Christians at parish, congregation and community level.

“We long for more of this. For it is only in safe, shared and prayerful spaces, inspired by the Word of God, that the truth of our divided past can be sensitively unfolded and hopes enkindled for renewed encounter and healthy relationships on this island.”

He went on to quote from Pope Francis’ World Day of Peace message three years ago: “(every) peace process requires enduring commitment. It is a patient effort to seek truth and justice, to honour the memory of victims and to open the way, step by step, to a shared hope stronger than the desire for vengeance” (Message for the 2020 World Day of Peace p8).

“Peace, reconciliation and forgiveness on this island,” added Archbishop Eamon, “can only be progressed if we bring to light the truths about our troubled past that remain hidden and festering, and engage in respectful conversations across our communities about what we mean by a shared future.

“It may seem ambitious, but might we in the Churches offer to help develop an agreed truth recovery process to address the legacy of pain and mistrust that continues to hang over us? And



Archbishop Eamon Martin.

might our Churches also work together to create spaces for dialogue at parish, congregation and community level so that all voices can be fully heard about the kind of society and values we want for our children and grandchildren.”

“Such initiatives,” he said, “are essentially about deep and intentional listening to ‘the other’ who differs from us - and really ‘getting’ where they are coming from. The Churches have no desire to dominate such conversations. We are merely servants, inspired by the words of the prophet Micah in this afternoon’s reading: ‘What does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8).’

He continued: “The theme for this year’s Christian Unity Week calls on Churches not only to connect with each other, but also to engage with the questions and demands of justice - and to do so together - not separately.

“A manifesto for the next fifty years might include: Churches together confronting homelessness; together responding in practical ways to racism and sectarianism; Churches together tackling human trafficking, exploitation

and poverty; Churches together welcoming and providing hospitality for migrants and those seeking refuge among us; Churches together addressing climate injustice; Churches together upholding the right to life and dignity of every human person.”

“To engage in such issues - together, and with honesty - may uncover ways in which we ourselves might be supporting or facilitating unjust systems and structures. But it will also bring us closer in Christ, and strengthen our sense of common Christian purpose.”

Paying tribute to the pioneers of Ballymascanlon, Archbishop Eamon concluded: “It is a credit to our predecessors... that we gather today as much closer companions on the Way; looking around the Cathedral this afternoon we see brothers and sisters - friends - in Christ who can share each other’s joys and burdens, successes and vulnerabilities.”

“So let us journey onwards with a reconciling vision of hope, singing together an anthem of ‘be-longing’: ‘There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all (Ephesians 4:5-6).’ Amen.”



## Join the choir by Vera McFadden

THERE was great musical talent in our family, like many Derry families. My older brothers and sisters had medals for solo, duet and trio quartet, and had been in prize-winning singing competitions.

When I first started school, the Head Teacher sent for me. I was asked stand on her big chair and give a performance of 'The Good Ship Lollipop' for the senior class. I did this well, but later, some of my class were asked to join the choir for the Feis and I was not. I went home crying.

My mother wrote a letter to the teacher, and I was allowed into the choir, but the teacher told me to pretend I was singing the words, but not to make any sound. I disobeyed her request, and the choir did not win. However, I did not think it was my fault, but still I wondered if I was singing some notes out of tune.

When I went to secondary school, this did not change, for I was not invited to join any Feis competitions. But later, when I went to study teaching at St Mary's Training College, I got a surprise. The Dominican Sister in charge of music was taking individual auditions. When she asked me to sing, I told her: "I can't sing."

She told me: "You don't need to sing a whole song. Sing a couple of lines and I'll tell you what I think."

I did this and she said: "You're in the choir. Don't you know any niece of Anthony Johnston can sing."

She was Sr Francesca Faller from Derry and she knew my uncle Anthony. He had been placed second to John McCormack in a national tenor competition, and his very large, mixed voice, Post

Office Choir won many awards nationwide.

We learned all the Mass and Benediction responses and hymns, the High Masses and the special masses for the Christmas and Easter seasons. At Easter, we stayed in the college until the liturgy was finished.

After graduating as a teacher, I did not join any choir but I taught my pupils a new song every day and, when I came to teach in St Patrick's Girls' School, I was appointed to teach all the girls the hymns to sing in church.

I did not think of joining a choir until I was almost pension age. The most famous choir in Derry was Michael Mason's, which performed in St Patrick's church, Pennyburn, and at other venues. It was a prize-winning choir. If I were good enough to join it, surely my voice would improve. I still had a feeling that I was singing slightly out of tune.

I was given an audience and accepted into the choir, and told that I would be in the soprano section. As I did not think I would be able to hit the high notes, I asked if I could join the altos. He agreed, but said that my voice was suitable for either altos or sopranos.

Two of the altos were very fine singers and I always sat close to them, so that I would be singing in tune with them.

We always sang at the Sunday Masses or devotions and holy hours, and also at the Church religious festivals.

One song that was sung very often was 'Deus Meus', which had been written by an early period monk from the O Brochlan, or Bradley family, a local clan.



### Major festivals

There was always great preparation for St Patrick's Day. Sometimes, at the major festivals or special occasions, we had the added guidance of Fr Eamon Martin, now Archbishop Martin, who was a very skilled music teacher. He led us through the finer points of musical interpretation.

When there was ice on the ground and we had a practice in the church, I got a lift from Michael Mason's daughter, who was a neighbour of mine. We arrived at the church with all our layers to keep warm. When we were almost finished with the practice, the caretaker unfortunately arrived feeling the cold pipes and said they will be warm for the people coming in.

When we left, the car was frozen over and needed defrosting several times that day.

I remained with this choir even after I moved to the Holy Family Parish. In my new parish, I asked Fr Colm Doherty if I could join the Folk Group in Ballymagroarty. It was made of people from all ages.

One Sunday, I heard this beautiful voice and I said this cannot be me. My friend, Paddy said to me that when you sing in praise of God, your voice gets anointed. A group of us decided to learn the St Francis and St Columba songs. We rented a room in

Prayer Group in Carnhill to give a small retreat, I asked the musicians from our Folk Group if they would supply the music.

As well as attending the Folk Group in Ballymagroarty, I also joined the main choir. While I was singing, I met a lady on the Branch Road who told me that if I had made a record when I was younger, it would have been a hit!

I also met a man in Dunelm who told me that I had a good voice in the choir. "Do you think I could have been 'Top of the Pops'?" I asked!

Sometimes, when I lived in Ballymagroarty, I went to the vigil Masses in Carnhill. One day, after Mass, a lady tapped me on the shoulder and asked me to join the community choir. I did not know what this was, and she told me that it was a group of people who gathered at the main church festivals. There were only a few practices before Christmas, Pentecost and Easter.

Our leader was Evelyn, who was very gifted musician. She motivated us and there was a great sense of fulfilment at a job well done, when we were finished.

Whenever I get to church now, I just join in with the choir. In St Brigid's Carnhill, there are many

## I love You, Lord by Laurie Klein

*I love you, Lord,  
and I lift my voice,  
to worship You,  
Oh, my soul, rejoice!*

*Take joy my King,  
in what You hear,  
may it be a sweet, sweet sound,  
in Your ear.*

*I love you, Lord,  
and I lift my hands,  
to worship You  
any time I can.*

*Take joy my King,  
in what You hear,  
may it be a sweet, sweet sound  
to You.*

Pilots Row and some of my friends gathered with me and others. One, a retired nurse, added some energy to the way we worked. She typed our song sheets at home, creating our own collection.

At the end of this project, the choir mistress in the Long Tower asked us to join the choir for an ordination. So, we had the privilege of singing at a young priest's ordination.

Music soothes the spirit, and encourages and lifts the heart and soul, and singing is praying twice. I would encourage everyone to start and keep singing.

of my pupils, who thanked me for teaching them songs and said that I had helped them to develop a love for music

So, my singing ability in my old age seems to contradict my experiences of younger age, and if you think or are told, that you can't sing, try again. You never know,

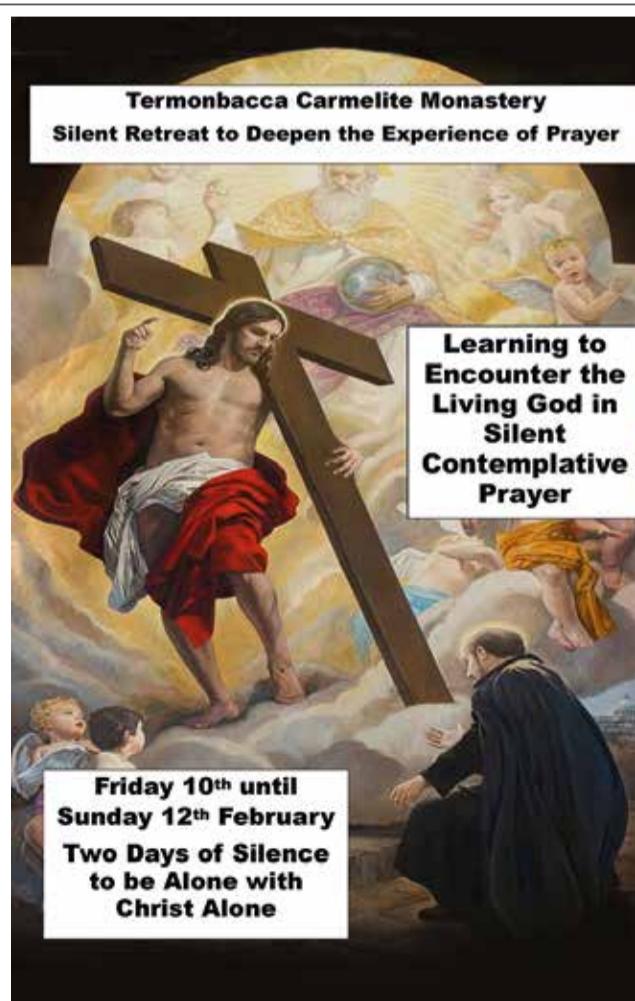
even as we age music stays with us. Music soothes the spirit, and encourages and lifts the heart and soul, and singing is praying twice. I would encourage everyone to start and keep singing.

## Encounter the Lord in silent contemplative prayer by Aoife O'Neill

"Our most important task consists in remaining silent before this great God, silent with our desires as with our tongue. He understands only one language, that of silent love." St John of the Cross in a letter to a Carmelite nun.

What keeps us from getting to know God better? What gets in the way of us basking in the reality of God's love for us?

Termonbacca Carmelite Retreat Centre, Derry, invites you to join us for a weekend free of the distraction of daily life by way of the Silent Directed Retreat. Directed by Fr Stephen Quinn OCD, retreatants will be introduced to and led through teaching on methods of prayer, particularly meditation and contemplation.



## Carmelite Book Club by Aoife O'Neill

THE Carmelite Book Club will meet again on Thursday, February 16, at 7.30 pm, in Termonbacca Retreat Centre.

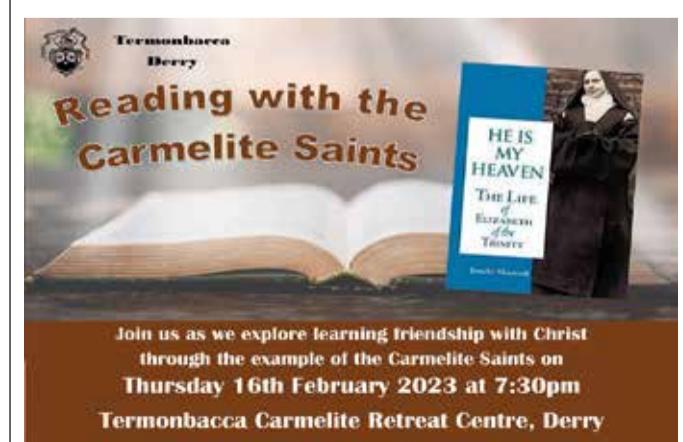
The purpose of the Club is to explore learning friendship with Christ through the example of the Carmelite Saints.

The Carmelite vocation is committed to a life of 'allegiance to Jesus Christ', as a Friend and Companion along the way. Through the reading and discussion of various books

about or by the Carmelite Saints, we hope to get encouragement and growth in our own spiritual journey today.

The current book is 'He Is My Heaven. The Life of Elizabeth of the Trinity', by Jennifer Moorcroft.

Everyone is welcome to come along and join us in this venture. If you have any further queries please contact Aoife on 028 71 262512 or termonbaccaderry@gmail.com



# Parish Post-its

## Aghyaran

### Adoration:

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place on Thursdays after 10 am Mass in St Patrick's Church, and finishing at 12 noon. Come and spend some time in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament during this special time of blessing in the parish.

## Ballymagroarty

### Adoration

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in Holy Family Church, Ballymagroarty, every Sunday, from 10.30 am - 6 pm.

## Banagher

### Sycamore Faith Programme

The Sycamore Faith Program for adults will take place on Tuesday evenings, beginning on February 7, from 7-8 pm, in the Grotto Chapel, at Fincairn, and will continue until Easter. Led by Charlotte, the faith formation coordinator, this is an informal course about the Christian faith and its relevance for life today. It gives you space to meet other people, share ideas, explore beliefs, and think about questions that really matter. Each session involves a short film and some time for great conversations. The main speaker in the videos is Fr Stephen Wang, a Catholic priest and popular speaker. Everyone is welcome, and it is a great opportunity to experience a real sense of community and a spirit of friendship, and there will be a cuppa to enjoy too.

### Adoration & Chaplet

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

## Buncrana

### Adoration

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place daily in St Mary's Oratory after Mass until 1 pm (Monday-Friday), 11 am - 5 pm (Saturday), 1.30-7 pm (Sunday). Please consider spending one hour per week in Adoration at St Mary's Oratory.

### Rosary

The Rosary is prayed each weekday at 9.30 am in St Mary's Oratory, prior to 10 am Mass. The Rosary at the Oratory Grotto will continue for the month of January on Sundays, at 7 pm.

### Guided Holy Hour

The Guided Holy Hour of

Adoration in Honour of the Holy Face of Jesus will continue on Sundays, 6-7 pm in St Mary's Oratory. All welcome.

### Rosary for Priests

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

## Burt, Inch & Fahan

### Adoration

Adoration in St Mura's Parish Church, Fahan, takes place each Friday after 10 am Mass. "Can you not come and watch one hour with Me?" All welcome!

## Claudy

### Adoration

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

### Children's Rosary

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

## Creggan

### Vocations Prayer

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

## Dungiven

### Prayer Group

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

## Errigal

### Adoration

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

### Rosary & Chaplet

The Rosary and Divine Mercy Chaplet are prayed in St Joseph's Church, Glenullin, every Wednesday evening at 6.30 pm. Everyone welcome.

## Iskaheen

### Faith Conversations

The Adult Faith Group in the parish is holding a series of faith conversations over the next few months, with the first taking place on Monday, January 30,

in Warren View Manor, Muff, at 7.30 pm. The guest speaker will be Richard Moore, who is best known for being blinded by a rubber bullet as a child and later meeting and becoming friends with the soldier who shot him. The evening will be informal, with an opportunity to join in the conversation and will last approximately an hour. There will be a cup of tea afterwards. Everyone welcome.

### St Peregrine

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

## Lavey

### Youth 2000

Youth 2000 Prayer Group, for 16-35 year olds, meets in Lavey Parochial House, opposite the chapel, on Friday evenings at 7.30 pm.

## Leckpatrick

### Cloughcor 200th

For the 200th anniversary of St Mary's Church, Cloughcor, preparations are underway to create a display in the Church. Anyone who has old photos, which will be copied for the display, or any items of historical interest, is asked to contact Fr Gerry.

## Maghera

### Pray & Play

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

## Melmount

### St Brigid

St Brigid's Crosses will be blessed at 10 am Mass on the Feast of St Brigid, Wednesday, February 1, for those who have them.

### Candlemas Day

Candles will be blessed at all Masses on Thursday, February 2.

### St Blaise

The traditional Blessing of Throats will take place after the 10 am and 7 pm Masses on Friday, February 3, the Feast of St Blaise.

## Moville

### Prayer

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

### Adoration

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

## Omagh

### Prayer Group

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

## Sion Mills

### St Brigid

St Brigid's Crosses will be blessed at 11 am Mass on the Feast of St Brigid, Wednesday, February 1, for those who have them.

### Candlemas Day

Candles will be blessed at the 10 am Mass on Thursday, February 2.

### St Blaise

The traditional Blessing of Throats will take place on Friday, February 3, the Feast of St Blaise, place after 10 am Mass.

### Legion of Mary

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

## Steelstown

### Lectio Divina

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

## Strabane

### Padre Pio Mass

The Padre Pio Mass will take place in the Church of the Immaculate Conception on Wednesday, February 1 at 7 pm, with the Rosary at 6.40 pm.

### Prayer Group

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

### SJYP Society

The St John Vianney branch of the St Joseph's Young Priests' Society (the three combined Strabane parishes) meets on the first Tuesday of the month, excluding January, July and August, with Rosary in the church after 10 am Mass and continues in St Patrick's Hall. More people are encouraged to join in this prayer for new students to join the priesthood. The Society assists Irish and overseas student. Please contact Margaret Harte on 028 71883159.

## Templemore – Long Tower

### God Club

Young people wanting to learn about their Catholic faith are

**Termonbacca Derry**

**Day of Recollection for all those involved in Church Ministry**

**Thursday 9th March 2023 10am– 3pm**

**Wednesday 15th March 2023 10am– 3pm**

**St Joseph Day of Reflection**

**£25 including lunch**

welcome to come along to the 'God Club' in Aras Colmcille, in the grounds of Long Tower Church, on Saturdays, starting at 10.30 am.

Belfast on 956 80005 or Dublin on 00353 1 8788159.

## Three Patrons

### Holy Hour

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

### Adoration

Eucharistic Adoration takes place on Mondays after 11 am Mass, until 11 pm, in St Joseph's Church, Galliagh. Everyone welcome.

### First Saturday

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

## Waterside

### Lectio Divina

Reflect on the Scriptures with Lectio Divina in the Church of the Immaculate Conception on Thursday nights, starting at 8.15 pm.

# Diary Dates

## Songs of Praise

Songs of Praise is coming to Derry and people are invited to join the congregation for the recording of modern hymn singing, with New Irish Arts, on Tuesday, February 7, and traditional hymns and songs on Wednesday, February 8, with conductor, Donal Doherty, from 6.30 – 9.30 pm in The Guildhall.

All tickets to Songs of Praise recordings are free of charge and can be applied for by contacting SOPcongregations@afantimedia.tv with your name, contact number and the number of tickets you would like. Be sure to include 'Songs of Praise' in your subject header.

## Coastal Rosary

Rosary on the Coast for world

peace and the protection of unborn babies takes place at Benone Strand on the third Sunday of every month, at 3 pm.

## Omagh CBS Fundraiser

The Omagh CBS 10K/5K Run/Walk will be held on Saturday, February 4, at 11 am. All proceeds will be donated to the Enda Dolan Foundation and Ukrainian Refugees in the Emmaus Centre, Dublin. Register online at <https://endurancecui.active.com/event-reg/select-race?e=84174234>.

## Irish Mass

The next Irish Mass will be celebrated on Sunday, February 5, at 12.30 pm in St Joseph's Church, Galliagh. All welcome.

## Sr Clare Mass

Mass in honour of Sr Clare Crockett is celebrated on the second Sunday of each month, at 7 pm, in Termonbacca. All welcome. The Mass is streamed live via Termonbacca YouTube channel.

## Maria's Gospel Hour

Due to huge interest, Buncrana singer, Maria Doherty will be starting a show on YouTube at 4 pm on Sundays. Search '@mariadoherty' on YouTube.

## Reading with the Carmelites

The Carmelite Fathers at Termonbacca hold a monthly session of 'Reading with the Carmelite Saints', to explore learning friendship with Christ through the example of the Carmelite Saints. It takes place on

the third Thursday of the month at 7.30 pm.

## Healing Night

The monthly Healing Night with the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal in St Joseph's Church, Galliagh, in Derry, takes place on the First Friday of each month, at 7 pm.

## Sr Clare Rosary

The Sr Clare Rosary continues every Monday night, at 8.30 pm, in St Joseph's Room, at the Carmelite Retreat Centre, Termonbacca.

## Matt Talbott Society

The Matt Talbott Society Mass, praying for those suffering from addiction, is offered for those enrolled on the first Monday of every month in St Eugene's Cathedral, at 7.30 pm.

## BURNT OUT & READY FOR CHANGE?

THE 12 STEPS  
AN INTEGRATED GROUP APPROACH USING  
PHYCHOTHERAPY TO ENGAGE WITH THEMES OF  
TRAUMA, GRIEF, ADDICTION, DEPRESSION & MORE

## ONE DAY WORKSHOPS

10am - 4pm

NEXT WORKSHOP  
Saturday 25th Jun 2023  
VENUE  
St. Joseph's Church, Fairview  
Road, Derry BT48 8HU, Derry

TO BOOK CONTACT  
[ishealththehurt@gmail.com](mailto:ishealththehurt@gmail.com)

FACILITATED BY LIAM STEWART  
A psychotherapist with over 30+ years experience  
Donations kindly accepted

These workshops exist to help people find new tools to  
step away from their destructive behaviours & reignite  
new passions & choices going forward.

\*The only requirement is an honest desire for change.

# Diocesan Diary

## WYD LISBON 2023

The Diocese of Derry is inviting any young person who is over 18, or will be 18 by July 2023, to join us on Pilgrimage to Lisbon for World Youth Day. WYD is the gathering of young people from all over the world with the Pope. It is also a pilgrimage, a celebration of youth, an expression of the universal Church and an intense moment of evangelization for the youth world. This pilgrimage will take place in August 2023. For now, we are taking expressions of interest until we have more information on dates, times and prices. We have limited space so signing up is essential. You can register your interest on the derrydiocese.org website or on the @derryyouth Facebook page. If you have any questions regarding this pilgrimage, please email Lizzie Rea, Youth Coordinator at: lizzie.rea@derrydiocese.org

## ACCORD

Accord Derry Marriage Preparation Workshops will take place on the weekends of February 20-21, March 6-7, March 27-

28. These virtual courses can be booked at [www.accordni.com](http://www.accordni.com). Accord Inishowen is hosting a Marriage Preparation Programme (Pre-Marriage) In Person Course on Friday 3 and Saturday 4 February in Accord Inishowen, Pastoral Centre, Barrack Hill, Carndonagh. To book: [www.accord.ie/services/marriagepreparation](http://www.accord.ie/services/marriagepreparation) or email for more info accordinishowen@gmail.com.

## Lourdes 2023

The 2023 Derry Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes, led by Bishop Donal, will take place from July 3-7. Going direct from City of Derry Airport, the pilgrimage consists of four nights' full board in the Hotel Agena, costing £745 sharing, with a £35 single supplement. Travel insurance up to age 79 is available at £39, and £78 for age 80 to 94 (pilgrims may wish to use their own insurance). For further details and payment arrangements contact the Lourdes Pilgrimage Office, 164 Bishop Street, Derry, [derrypilgrim@outlook.com](mailto:derrypilgrim@outlook.com), telephone 028 71 260293.



Fr. James Blount



Fr. Chris Alar



Sr. Mary Claire Kenneally



Fr. Eamonn McCarthy

## 2023 DIVINE MERCY NATIONAL CONFERENCE

**Friday 17<sup>th</sup>, Saturday 18<sup>th</sup>  
& Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2023**

*Jesus I Trust In You*

**"Act justly, Love mercifully and Walk humbly with your God."**

### Friday, 17<sup>th</sup> February 2023

- 18:00 Fr. Hayden Williams. Chaplet/Rosary/Praise and Worship Music
- 19:00 Fr. Eunan McDonnell
- 19:30 Sr. Mary Claire Kenneally
- 20.00 - 21.00 Fr. James Blount. Holy Mass



Fr. Hayden Williams

### Saturday, 18<sup>th</sup> February 2023

- 10:00 - 10.20 Fr. Frank Trias Blessing of Divine Mercy Image/Morning Prayer
- 10:20 - 11.00 Fr. Billy Swan Break
- 11.00 - 11.30 Fr. Hayden Williams
- 12.10 - 13.00 Fr. James Blount Lunch Break
- 13.00 - 14.30 Fr. Eamonn McCarthy. Reconciliation Service
- 14:30 - 15.00 Sr. Mary Claire Kenneally and Dcn. Don Devaney Confessions and Stations of the Cross/ Divine Mercy Chaplet/Rosary
- 15.00 - 17.00 Fr. Hayden Williams. Holy Mass
- 17:00 - 18:00 Fr. Hayden Williams. Holy Mass
- 18:00 - 19:15 Break
- 19.15 - 19.30 Chaplet of Divine Mercy
- 19.30 - 20:45 Fr. James Blount. Healing Service
- 20.45 - 21.00 Night Prayer



Fr. Billy Swan

### Sunday, 19<sup>th</sup> February 2023

- 10:00 - 10:30 Morning Prayer of the Church
- 10:30 - 11:00 Fr. Chris Alar
- 11:30 - 12:00 Break
- 12.00 - 13:00 Fr. James Blount. Holy Hour
- 13:00 - 14:15 Lunch
- 14.15 - 14:30 Glorious Mysteries of the Holy Rosary
- 14:30 - 15.00 Fr. Hayden Williams
- 15.00 - 15.15 Divine Mercy Chaplet
- 15:15 - 17.00 Dr. Dermot Farrell D.D. Archbishop of Dublin. Holy Mass



Fr. Eunan McDonnell

Web: [divinemercyconference.com](http://divinemercyconference.com)

Email: [divinemercyconference@gmail.com](mailto:divinemercyconference@gmail.com)

Telephone: 085 221 6128

# March for Life

SATURDAY 11TH MARCH 2023

• Custom House Square • BELFAST •

#StopAbortionViolence  
[www.preciouslife.com](http://www.preciouslife.com)

The Divine Mercy Conference will be available Free on [www.divinemercyconference.com](http://www.divinemercyconference.com) or [churchservices.tv](http://churchservices.tv) or via audio-only on [www.RadioMaria.ie](http://www.RadioMaria.ie) or Saorview 210 or dial up listening service at 014373277. If you would like to make a donation towards the cost of the conference you may do so via the 'Donate' button on the website or by sending a donation to 22, Castle Grove, Clondalkin, Dublin D22Y2W9, or you may send a donation to the Divine Mercy Conference Account, IBAN: IE91IPBS99060620173532. Any further queries to 0852216128

## “He (Jesus) grew to maturity” by Fr Johnny Doherty, CSSR



Fr Johnny Doherty CSSR

IN one of his Encyclical Letters called ‘Familiaris Consortio’, St John Paul II made an amazing statement. He wrote: “The future of humanity passes by way of the family.”

It is an amazing statement, first of all, because it is such a simple statement of a great truth. Our world today is in such turmoil at almost every level that we can easily lose heart. Where do we dare look for a way forward? Most things are beyond our immediate control. What we can take charge of is the quality of life and love that we live in marriage and family life. It is this that will change the world for us and around us – and beyond us.

Secondly, this statement is amazing because it is so revolutionary! All kinds of people and groups think that they are the ones who determine the future of humanity – politicians, business people, media people, and so on. And we let them do this because we think that this is how it has to

be. The more we reclaim the centre ground for marriage and family life, the more freedom we will find in making our best choices for the future for ourselves and for those who come after us.

Thirdly, this statement of St John Paul II is for us a restatement of something that is vital for us to remember and renew for ourselves, namely that the family is the Church of the home. It is here more than anywhere else that we find the Church at its best and, sometimes, at its weakest. We can paraphrase his statement by saying: “The future of the Church passes by way of the family.”

### 2022 into 2023

Moving from one calendar year to another is always significant for people. All around the world, it is marked by New Year’s Eve parties and fireworks displays. And, in many places, there is the countdown to midnight, when we anticipate that things are going to change because we are now in a new year, with new possibilities.

New Year’s resolutions are made to try to ensure that the changes will be good for us and for those we love. Unfortunately, so many of those resolutions are let go of early on and we revert back to how we were the year before and maybe for many years before that.

### The Holy Family

In our Christian journey of faith, the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph is given to us to straddle each old year and

new year. The feast is scheduled for the Sunday after Christmas. This year, however, since Christmas Day was on a Sunday, the one after that was New Year’s Day. This meant that the Feast of The Holy Family was transferred to the Friday, December 30! But it is still what bridges the gap between the old and the new year.

This is a reminder for us that it was primarily in the context of their family life together that Jesus progressed from the crib in Bethlehem to eventually be our Saviour on the Cross of Calvary.

It is also true that the life of Christ that we have received through our Baptism is largely nurtured through our family life. And it is so important to realise and accept that the life of the Church can only be developed through strong and dynamic families. Maybe this year of 2023 we can learn and accept this truth and act on it.

### A word-picture

In St Luke’s Gospel, Chapter 3, verses 39-40, we have a word picture of the Holy Family of Nazareth. It comes after the account of Jesus being presented to God in the Temple, in accordance with the Law for every first-born male.

“When they had done everything the Law of the Lord required, they went back to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. Meanwhile the child grew to maturity and he was filled with wisdom; and God’s favour

was with him.”

Like most young people, Jesus probably thought He knew everything! And like all of us, He had to learn that there was so much to discover about life.

It is lovely to think of Jesus growing up in the home of Mary and Joseph and learning all the ordinary things of life, and then going beyond them to the deepest mysteries of God. That is why we refer to them as the Holy Family – they were just like our own families.

### How did Jesus grow to maturity?

In first century Palestine, Jesus, Mary and Joseph would not have lived in a little cottage together all by themselves, as we might be tempted to imagine. Like most first-century Jews, they would have lived with an ‘extended family’ - grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins - all under the same roof. It was within that structure that Jesus grew to maturity and was filled with wisdom. Mary and Joseph were the main influence on Him and had the greatest responsibility for Him. But they were not alone.

### Roots

One of the most important things that Jesus was given as He grew up was a great sense of who He was because of those to whom He belonged: His family; His people; His faith tradition; their values for living and their hope for the future as God’s people. It was because He was so rooted like

this that Jesus could then go on to become the person that He was.

This is one of the most important things that children of all generations need to receive, primarily from their family life. And, unfortunately, it is what is very often missing in today’s world. Our children and young people can grow up today without any experience of where they have come from, without roots that give sense to their lives. And, as a result, they do not grow to maturity.

### Wings

Jesus, like every human person, had to eventually find His own place in life. And He did. What a place that was! He was only able to take this on because of the confidence He found from His firm foundation with Mary and Joseph and His wider family.

One of the greatest fallacies that is so easily accepted today is that each person can become whatever she or he wants to be. It is alarming because it simply is not true. It leads to constant disappointment and to despair. Instead of being able to fly, they flounder, aimlessly pursuing dead ends.

What is true is that each one can become the person that she or he is meant to be. Each one needs to be able to find their place in life and make their contribution to life, with the unique gifts and talents that he or she has. That can only happen if they have been strengthened to fly with wings

of goodness and truth and self-confidence.

### New Year Resolutions

As we face into this New Year of 2023 together, we are invited to do so with a real determination to make it a fresh start in our commitment to marriage and family life as the basis for all that is good in life. I suggest the following as a basis for making resolutions for the New Year – individually, as a couple, as a family, and as a faith community.

- Reclaim the centre ground of life for Marriage and Family.

- Strengthen the adult relationships that surround children and young people.

- Give children and young people strong roots on which to grow into who they can become.

- Prepare children and young people to fly with wings of goodness and truth and faith, when they are ready to find their own ways.

- Make family prayer a real feature of family life if it is not one already.

- Make our homes places where everyone can find peace and joy and hope because of love.

Have a very happy New Year. May God’s blessing be with us all through 2023.

### Faith and Science...

## Fr Georges Lemaître and the birth of modern Cosmology

by Oliver Barrett

THE origins of the split between science and religion can be traced back to the Galileo affair. In 1632, Galileo published ‘Dialogo dei due massimi sistemi del mondo’. His paper attacked Ptolemaic astronomy rejecting the assumption the Earth was the centre of the universe.

Galileo favoured the Copernican theory of the solar system. The Copernican theory found the Sun to be the centre of the solar system on the grounds it was improbable that a large body, such as the sun, should revolve around a small body like the earth.

Galileo’s publication caused tension between the Church and the Italian astronomer, as the Copernican theory had been condemned at Rome in 1616 and Galileo forbidden ‘to hold, teach or defend it’. He was subsequently imprisoned for his actions.

Copernicus’ theory was placed on the index ‘until it was corrected’ and not removed until

1757. The misunderstanding between Pope Urban VIII and Galileo provided canon fodder for those with an axe to grind against the Church. In reality, it had more to do with ego than a conflict between natural science and religion.

Fr Georges Lemaître was born in Charleroi, Belgium, in 1894, and is an example of the possibility of reconciling faith and science. He walked on both an intellectual and spiritual path and, by the year 1920, he had already obtained his doctorate in mathematics and his bachelor’s degree in Thomistic Philosophy.

Throughout his life, Lemaître devoted himself to the Catholic faith and to science, and is living proof of the compatibility of these two callings.

A contemporary of Einstein, Fr George Lemaître found the solution to Einstein’s equations. Einstein had proposed a model

of the universe as a static four-dimensional sphere, meaning the total size of the universe does not change over time (1917). Lemaître proposed a dynamic model of a universe with its origin in a primeval atom known as the ‘cosmic egg’ (1931). After the ‘Big Bang’, an explosive expansion occurred following the breakup of the primeval atom. After a period of deceleration, the balanced cosmological constant allowed the stars and galaxies to evolve, with the final phase being a second period of rapid expansion.

In an interview in 1933, Lemaître was asked just how a priest-physicist reconciled his faith with science. He answered: “The writers of the Bible were illuminated more or less - some more than others on the question of salvation. On other questions they were as wise or as ignorant as their generation. Hence it is utterly unimportant that errors of historic or scientific fact should

be found in the Bible, especially if errors relate to events that were not directly observed by those who wrote about them. The idea because they were right in their doctrine of immortality and salvation, they must also be right on all other subjects is simply the fallacy of people who have an incomplete understanding of why the Bible was given to us at all”.

It is important to remember that science can only give us half of the story. For Christians, the cause of the ‘Big Bang’ is God. The Bible teaches us creation theology in Genesis chapter one and is providing us with the reasons for the existence of the universe. Nowhere is it claiming to be a science textbook. In fact, the most interesting aspect of the biblical account of creation happens to be the purpose and authorship of Genesis chapter one.

Fr George Lemaitre successfully reconciled faith and science. We can learn from his example.



Lemaître with Einstein (right to left) at Pasadena 1933

# Children's Catechism Club - C3

## by Veronica Harley

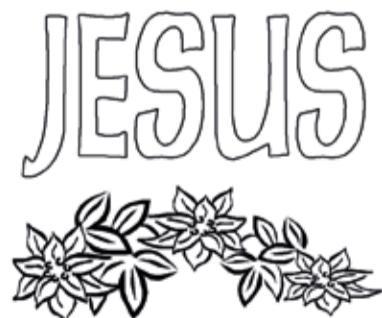
**HELLO children. C3 wishes you all a very happy New Year!**  
**Welcome to the month of January. The first day of January is very special. We begin a new year and look ahead to new beginnings and hopes for the future. But it is also the day that we celebrate the wonderful feast of our Blessed Mother Mary, the Holy Mother of God (CCC 493). Mary received the Word of God in her heart as well as in her body and gave life to The Saviour of the World. We treasure and honour Mary on this day as a faithful servant of God and truly the Mother of Jesus.**



### The Holy Name of Jesus – January 3

This month is dedicated to The Holy Childhood and Name of Jesus. We remember the years that Jesus spent growing up with Mary and Saint Joseph. We celebrate the special feast, The Holy Name of Jesus on January 3. On this day, we honour the powerful name of Jesus. The name Jesus (CCC 430), which was commanded by God to be given to the Child, is a Hebrew word 'Yeshua', which means 'salvation'.

"In the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth and under the earth". (Philippians 2:10)



And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcision of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

Luke 2:21

### Epiphany – January 6

The Feast of the Epiphany (CCC 528) is on the 12th day of Christmas and is sometimes referred to as 'Little Christmas'. The word 'Epiphany' comes from a Greek word which means 'appearance' or 'to show oneself'. We celebrate this day in remembrance of how the Three Wise Kings visited Jesus and recognized Him as the Saviour the world had

been waiting on.

Traditionally, the kings are known as Balthazar, Casper and Melchoir, and it is believed that they were very clever men who probably studied mathematics and astronomy (the stars). They knew about the prophecies of the birth of God's Son and how He would bring salvation to the whole world. They looked for a sign in the stars for the birth of the baby. When a very bright star appeared in the sky, they knew that if they followed it, they would be led to where the baby had been born.

The bright star guided the kings to the stable where Jesus had been born. They brought with them special gifts of frankincense, gold and myrrh. On the day of Epiphany, we give thanks to God for the gift of His Son and for all the other gifts and talents which we have received.



### Tradition – Epiphany Chalk House Blessing

An ancient Catholic tradition on the Feast of the Epiphany is to bless the home using blessed chalk. Blessed chalk is taken by a family member and used to write across the lintel of the front door  $20+C+M+B+ \underline{\hspace{1cm}}$ . The last space is filled in with the numbers which make up the last half of the New Year.

**20+C+M+B+23**

**Christus Mansionem Benedicat**

This is what the chalked markings on the door mean: The 20 is for the first two numbers of the year, the three letters are the first initial of each



of the kings (Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar) and the last two numbers are the last half of the year. The C, M, B also stands for the Latin blessing 'Christus Mansionem Benedicat', which means 'May Christ bless this House'.

Chalking the lintel of the door is a way to celebrate and mark the occasion of the Epiphany and God's blessing of our lives and home. In time, the chalk will fade but we hope that the meaning of the symbols written above the door will sink into the depths of our heart and be visible through our words and actions. Remember the Latin words, 'Christus mansionem benedicat', 'May Christ bless the house'.

### Saints of the Month:

January 2 – St Basil & St Gregory Nazianzen

January 17 – St Anthony of Egypt

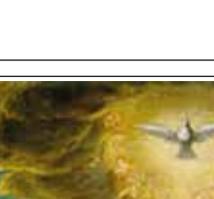
January 24 – St Francis de Sales

January 28 – St Thomas Aquinas

### Baptism of Jesus

"And when Jesus had been baptized, just as He came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to Him and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased'" (Matthew 3:16-17)

The Baptism of Jesus (CCC 535) is celebrated each year on the Sunday following the Feast of the Epiphany. This feast day brings the Christmas season to a close. The Church recalls on this day how Jesus went down into the River Jordan and was baptised by John the Baptist. The baptism which



John the Baptist offered moved people to confess their sins and repent. Jesus, however, was sinless and, therefore, did not need this baptism. But He did not hesitate to identify Himself with humanity and our struggles, and accepted the baptism from John. The baptism of Jesus marks the beginning of His public ministry.

Many of the aspects of Jesus' baptism happen at baptism today. The Holy Spirit descended on Jesus in the form of a dove; likewise, at our baptism the Trinity comes to live in our soul. At His baptism, Jesus was proclaimed Son of God; likewise, at our baptism we are called to be the adopted sons of God. The heavens opened at Jesus' baptism and through our baptism Heaven is open to us. Jesus prayed at His baptism and we, too, are called to that special relationship of prayer which leads us to God.

**Everything that happened to Christ lets us know that, after the bath of water, the Holy Spirit swoops down upon us from high heaven and that, adopted by the Father's voice, we become sons of God.**

**St. Hilary of Poitiers (CCC 537)**

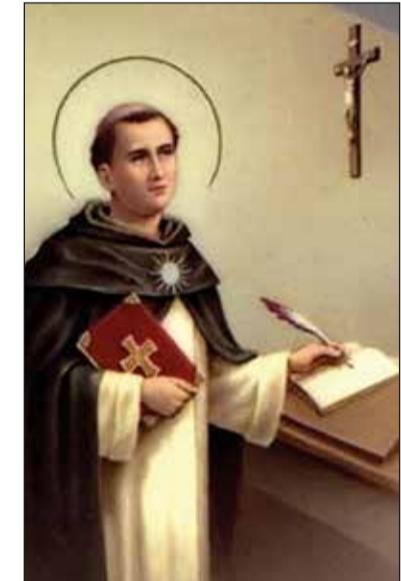
### St Thomas Aquinas

We celebrate the Feast Day of St Thomas Aquinas on January 28. St Thomas was born in Italy in 1225 to a huge family. He had eight brothers and sisters. Thomas studied religion and philosophy and joined the Dominicans; an order of monks. He was an exceptionally clever man, who was able to understand complicated things and explain them very easily.

His school friends nick-named him the 'Dumb Ox' because he was big, strong and sometimes slow to speak. However, Thomas was one of the greatest theologians the Church has seen. He wrote over 85 works of philosophy and theology. One of his most famous writings is the 'Summa'. Today, the Church refers to St Thomas Aquinas as the Angelic Doctor – a teacher who is like an angel – pure, strong, close to God and a true messenger of divine light.

Thomas Aquinas is the patron saint of schools, universities, students and booksellers.

St Thomas Aquinas, pray for us



### Quiz Time with Lawrence

- What colour is obtained by mixing red with a dash of green and blue?
- What is the only position in a rugby team that doesn't have a name (eg scrum-half, fly-half etc) but is known only by number?
- Which US state is the home of 'Cajun' food?
- According to the Highway Code, what background colour should be used for road signs identifying tourist attractions?
- Who wrote the 2022 self-help book 'The Light We Carry'?
- How many different countries have won football's World Cup?
- What is Scotland's longest river?
- What were the Christian names of German composer J S Bach?
- In 2000, the Irish Government purchased the former Butlins site in Co Meath. For what purpose has it been used since?
- Which singer, the son of a former 'Beatle', had a 1984 hit with 'Too Late For Goodbyes'?
- What does 'ACL' stand for when describing a serious knee injury?
- What is the collective noun for dolphins?
- How many of England's 92 senior football clubs

**Quiz Answers:** 1, Burgundy. 2, Number 8. 3, Louisiana. 4, Brown. 5, Michelle Obama. 6, Eight. 7, River Tay. 8, Johann Sebastian. 9, Housing Asylum seekers. 10, Julian Lennon. 11, Anterior Cruciate Ligament. 12, A Pod. 13, Three- Brighton, Burton and West Bromwich. 14, Bob Holness. 15, Old English Sheepdog. 16, Martin Clunes. 17, May. 18, Greece. 19, Bobby Charlton and Geoff Hurst. 20, Salmon. 21, Canada (6) (Australia has 3 and China 1). 22, Everything Everywhere. 23, The Dandy. 24, Essex. 25, The Scream.

Moville, Newtownstewart, Omagh, Plumbridge, Sion Mills, Steeletown, Strabane, Swatragh, Templemore - Long Tower and St Eugene's, Three Patrons, Waterside

Aghyaran, Ardmore, Ardstraw West & Castlederg, Ballinascreen, Ballymagroarty, Banagher, Bellaghy, Buncrana, Carndonagh, Claudy, Clonmany, Coleraine, Greggan, Culdaff, Culmore, Desertmartin, Donnybrook, Drumquin, Dunamanagh, Dungiven, Fahan, Faughanvale, Garvagh, Gortin, Greencastle,

# Let Your Light Shine!



*"The Lord bless you and keep you,  
The Lord make His face to shine  
upon you  
and be gracious to you,  
The Lord turn His face toward you  
and give you peace. Amen"*



Schools across the City attended the Christian Unity Service in St Eugene's Cathedral

Photographs by Stephen Latimer



Greenlough, Iskaheen, Killyclogher, Killygordon, Kilrea, Lavey, Leckpatrick, Lifford, Limavady, Maghera, Magilligan, Malin, Melmount,