



The NET

Sharing fruits of faith in Derry Diocese

ISSUE 103. JANUARY 2025

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See inside...



Celebrating Baminelli Sunday - Lavey



Papal Nuncio celebrates with Drumragh community - Omagh.



Pilgrim Rosary Walk - Buncrana.



COME FOLLOW ME "I am the Way, the Truth and the Light"

Eucharistic Processions on the Feast of St Brigid (See page 16)

The main Eucharistic Procession in the Derry Diocese on Saturday 1st February, starts at the Long Tower at 1pm



St Joseph's Church re-dedication - Glenullin.



Celebrating 100 years of education - Buncrana.



Children's Rosary - Claudy.



Sunday Tea & Chat - Steelstown.

People in focus



Cara McGilligan - Dungiven



Fr Dermot McGirr - Lifford & Banagher.



Jennifer O'Kane - Long Tower.



Marian Murphy - Dungiven.



Michael O'Kane - Swatragh.

Also featuring: Young Writers' feature; Child Consecration journey; Sr Clare declared Servant of God; Children's Catechism Club; JPPII Award inspiring young Dungiven people; Newtownstewart & Dungiven Kenyan experiences; Christmas scene setting in Glendermott PS, Limavady & Maghera; Carmelite Divine Child pilgrimage; Maghera biblical walk through the Mass; Church Island pilgrim walk; Carnhill St Brigid reflection; Legion of Mary Retreat; Galliagh Eucharistic Procession; Features, Quiz, Diary dates and much more...

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Bishop Donal reflects on the Pope's prayer intention for January for the right to an education:
 "Let us pray for migrants, refugees and those affected by war, that their right to an education, which is necessary to build a better world, might always be respected."

It is wrong to keep people in the dark and frustrate their hopes and dreams

EDUCATION has always played a major part in the work of the church. Often missionaries started with a school which served as a Mass centre. The Church building came later. In so many countries, Catholic education enabled young people to blossom. And Catholic education tends to outperform other sectors here in Northern Ireland and elsewhere

We know from our own reality in Northern Ireland that education, so often generously given by many religious and clergy, was a key way to escape poverty and to sow seeds of hope. Many of us who benefited from education are descendants of those who were intelligent, but who had little chance to go beyond primary school.

Pope Francis is very aware of the phenomenon of migration, which affects huge numbers of younger people. Wars, famine and climate change are driving waves of migrants from Asia and Africa. And the Holy Father is clear that education is a right for people. It is wrong to keep people in the dark and to frustrate their hopes and dreams. Their education will benefit them but also enrich the human family, because migrants and refugees can contribute to the economy and culture of receiving countries.

It is interesting to note that Catholic education, far from divisive, is the place where very many of the 'new Irish' tend to value. Here, as in many other countries, Catholic schools are increasingly multi-cultural. A clearly faith-based education

is attractive for many who come from another faith background. Catholicism seems to be able to celebrate diversity and to be flexible in making arrangements for a range of religious beliefs.

Pope Francis is making a general point about education for those who have come here from other countries. But in our context, he is also asking us to go the extra mile in welcoming children and young people who have come from different culture and traditions. Some of them have experienced trauma in their own lands because of war, persecution, economic exploitation and starvation. They will have special requirements, but we are asked to do everything to welcome them.

January is the first month of the Jubilee Year and January 1 is the World Day of Peace. The 2025 theme is "Forgive us our trespasses: grant us your peace".

In a very divided world, with the clouds of war hanging over many countries, we are asked to be pilgrims of hope. And the World Day of Peace theme suggests that we might help our world to know forgiveness and peace.

That is a challenge for our schools as we welcome increasing numbers of migrants and refugees. Exam results are great. But unless we also offer the message of forgiveness and peace, we are not offering the Jesus who is Prince of Peace.

Peoples of all nations have the right to education. But they



also have the right to know Jesus Emmanuel, God with us.

I hope and pray that this New Year will inaugurate a time of blessing for us and for those who have come to live in our midst. Jesus, the brother of every human being, asks us to be pilgrims of that hope and dream.

Eucharistic Adoration in the Diocese

Aghyaran: Thursdays, 10.30am-12 noon.

Ardstraw West & Castlederg: Fridays, 10.30am-12 noon, St Patrick's Church.

Badoney Lower: Tuesdays, after 12.30 pm Mass until 5 pm, St Patrick's Gortin.

Badoney Upper: Wednesdays, after 7.30 pm evening Mass until 9 pm, St Patrick's Cranagh.

Banagher: Fridays, 10-11am, St Joseph's Church, Fincairn.

Bellaghy: First Fridays, from 10 am until 6.30 pm, in St Mary's Church.

Buncrana: Mondays, Tuesdays & Wednesdays, 6am-10pm, and Sundays, 2-10 pm, St Mary's Oratory.

Cappagh: Wednesdays, 8-9pm, concluding with Night Prayer, and Sundays, 3.30-6.30 pm, in Christ the King, Strathroy.

Claudy: Tuesdays, after 10 am Mass until 8 pm, St Patrick's Church, Claudy,

and Wednesdays, after 10 Mass until 8 pm, St Joseph's Church, Craighane.

Clonmany: Tuesdays, 7.30-8.30 pm, the Oratory of the Assumption, Ballyliffin; Wednesdays, 3-4 pm, St Columbcille Village, Cleagh;

Coleraine: Wednesdays, in St John's Church, 2-4 pm, with Rosary at 3:45 pm.

Creggan: Sundays 1.30 pm-6 pm; Mondays 10.30 am - 7 pm; Tue - Sat 10.30 am - 12 pm, Divine Mercy Chapel.

Donaghedy: First Fridays after Mass until 12 noon, St Mary's Church, Aughabrack.

Drumquin: Wednesdays, 6 pm until Mass at 7.30 pm.
Drumragh: Wednesdays, following morning Mass, Sacred Heart Church until 5.30 pm.

Dungiven: Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays, 9

am-6 pm, and Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9 am-8 pm, in Adoration Chapel.

Errigal: Mondays, after the 10 am Mass until 2.30 pm, St Mary's Church, Ballerin.

Fahan: Fridays after 10 am Mass, St Mura's Parish Church.

Greencastle (Tyrone): Thursdays, 6-10 pm, St Patrick's Church.

Greenlough: Thursdays, 9am-5 pm, St Oliver Plunkett's Church.

Iskaheen: Tuesdays, from after 10 am Mass until 2 pm, St Patrick's Church.

Kilrea: Mondays, 12 noon - 7pm, St Mary's Drumagarnier. Concludes with Benediction.

Killygordon: Thursdays, after 9.15 am Mass, St Patrick's Church, Crossroads.

Lavey: Fridays, after 9.30 am Mass until 5 pm.

Leckpatrick: Wednesdays from 8.15 am-5 pm.

Lifford (Murlog): 9.30 am -

12.30 pm
Limavady: Sundays from 3-5 pm in Christ the King (with Confessions).

Magilligan: Wednesdays, 3-7 pm; First Sundays, 3-6 pm, St Aidan's Church.

Melmount: Mondays, after 10 am Mass until 6 pm.

Moville: Mondays, 2-9 pm, and Wednesdays, 6-9 pm, St Pius X Church.

Newtownstewart: Thursdays, 6.30-7.30 pm, Oratory of Mary, Mother of God.

Sion Mills: Adoration takes place in the side chapel (Oratory) and will be available every day during the Church's opening hours, moving to the main body of the chapel on Fridays, from 11am-6.50 pm, ending with Benediction before 7 pm Mass.

Steelstown: Fridays, from after 10 am Mass until 6.50pm.

Strabane (Camus): Every day from 10.30 am-1 pm in the Adoration Chapel (Oasis

of Peace), at the back of the Church.

St Columba's Long Tower: Wednesdays, after 10 am Mass until 7.30 pm Mass.

St Eugene's Cathedral: Sundays, 3-6 pm, and Tuesdays, 10.30 am-7.20 pm.

Three Patrons: Tuesdays from 11 am-7 pm in Our Lady's Chapel, St Joseph's Church, Galliagh;

Wednesdays from 10.30 am-7 pm, in St Patrick's Church, Pennyburn, and seven days a week in the Adoration Room in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, from 8 am until 6pm.

Urney & Castlefin: Tuesdays, 12 noon-8 pm, St Anthony's Chapel.

Waterside: Mondays, 11.30 am-12.30 pm, St Oliver Plunkett, Strathfoyle;

Thursdays, 1-6 pm, Immaculate Conception Church; Fridays, 1-6 pm, St Columba's Church.



Supporting us:

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

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

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

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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.

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

Great joy as Derry's Sr Clare declared Servant of God

THREE days after the Derry Diocese set out on 33 days of prayer for Consecration to Jesus through His Mother, in beginning this Jubilee Year as Pilgrims of Hope, famous 'Derry Girl', Sr Clare Crockett was proclaimed a 'Servant of God' as the cause for the Servant Sister's beatification was officially opened on January 12, in Madrid.

This young nun from the Brandywell, in Derry City, was only 33 years old when she died in the rubble of the Home of the Mother building that was heavily damaged during an earthquake in Ecuador on April 16, 2016; the Feast Day of St Bernadette of Lourdes who died on April 16, in 1879, and was canonised over 50 years later on December 8, and whose relics visited the Derry Diocese last year.

People note that Sr Clare passed on from this life at the same age as Jesus, when He died on the felled wood of a tree on the Hill of Calvary. It so happens, that the great moment of realisation in 17-year-old Clare's life that Jesus had suffered and died for her on the Cross, came while kissing the Crucifix during a Holy Week Encounter that she hadn't fully signed up to when she left her native City of the Oaks on a group trip to Spain, in the year 2000.

Her moment of conversion happened during the Good Friday ceremony 'in the bosom' of Mother Mary, through the presence of the Home of the Mother Servant Sisters who were leading the retreat in a 15th century monastery in Spain.

A powerful experience during the adoration and kissing of the Crucifix brought Clare to tears, and afterwards she kept repeating, "He died for me. He loves me! Why hasn't anyone ever told me this before?"

Going on to discover that she wanted to give Her Saviour "All or Nothing" in return, Sr Clare spent the rest of her life ensuring that those whom she came into contact with as a Servant Sister, wouldn't have the same to say – sharing the joyful news with all who would listen about Jesus' unconditional love and great mercy for all...and that this is a call to action; a call to love others as Jesus does and to live in service to others.

Her faith journey and selfless example has awakened and given hope to many throughout the world, moving the Church to acknowledge her as a Servant of God with the opening of her cause. And, in acknowledgement that there is something special about Sr Clare Maria of the Trinity and the Heart of Mary, and of favours granted through her intercession, over 100 people travelled from Derry with Sr Clare's family for the official ceremony in Madrid, which was attended in person by around 1,000 people and countless more from around the world on-line.

In her native City, many gathered to watch the ceremony together in Brunswick Moviebowl, Pennyburn, where two screenings were quickly sold out, while a large crowd also gathered in the City Cemetery to

pray at Sr Clare's grave during this time.

Boost

A very special occasion that will live long in the memories of her family, friends, Home of the Mother Sisters and Brothers, and many in her native land and around the globe who have come to know and love her, the opening of Sr Clare's cause in the first month of this Jubilee Year has been a great boost for all called to be Pilgrims of Hope.

Amongst those in Madrid for the formal canonical setting-up of the Diocesan Commission, in the Alcala Diocese, to enquire into the cause for canonization, as proposed by the Home of the Mother, was Bishop Donal, who celebrated Mass afterwards in the Oratory of St Philip Neri College and joined others in giving testimony.

Discalced Carmelites, Fr Michael McGoldrick ocd and Fr Stephen Quinn ocd, who encouraged the promotion locally of Sr Clare's story after watching the film on her life, 'All or Nothing', Fr Gerard Mongan, Adm Long Tower, and Fr Roland Colhoun, who had known Clare as a youth while ministering in the Long Tower, were also in attendance.

In his homily for this Mass on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, Bishop Donal commented: "Lots of investigations have to be undertaken, for the Church does not lightly recognise the sanctity of anyone. How long that will last and what the outcome will

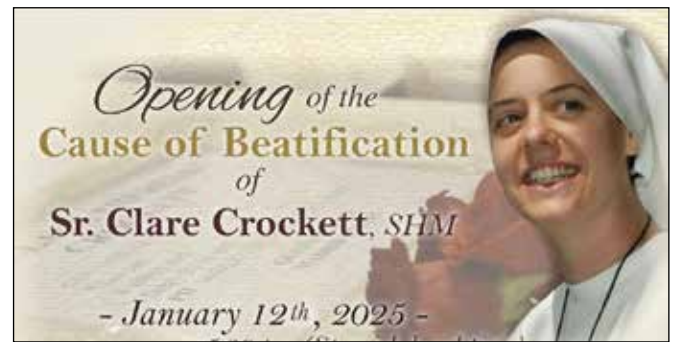
be, we do not know. But on the basis of the information that has come to hand over the last almost nine years, we know how God burst into her life on Good Friday 2000 with a shattering experience and awakened the grace of her Baptism and Confirmation that had lain dormant for years.

"We know about her enormous sense of mission to bring God's love for many who felt unloved and unwanted. We have heard the cost to herself and to her family, especially in the early years when many, as with Jesus, thought she was mad. And we marvel at how someone who, in early 2016, was almost unknown except to a small circle, should have become – after the apparent tragedy and waste of her death in the earthquake – a magnet for young people in many countries."

"God has always worked in strange ways and unexpected people," he added,

"Whatever the outcome of the process that has begun, we give thanks for our own Baptism and Confirmation, we praise God for the experience of God and of grace that has nourished us during our lives; and we pray in this Jubilee year that we will be enabled to become pilgrims of hope for our very confused and angry world. And we ask that the little girl from the Brandywell will walk with us as we, too, seek to become the saints that God has called us all to be."

Back in Derry, the Bishop reflected on what he found to be "a most encouraging weekend – full of joy and hope", saying: "The



Derry pilgrims seemed to be the centre of much attention as they relaxed and joined in everything. The sight of 130 young Religious Sisters was very impressive. I trust that people at home will now realise the worldwide reputation of Sr Clare."

The process of beatification is the first step towards canonisation, and there will be a Mass celebrated

in Sr Clare's home parish Church of St Columba, Long Tower, by Bishop Donal on Sunday, January 26, at 3 pm, to invoke the Holy Spirit on her cause.

Plans are also underway for this year's Sr Clare Retreat in Long Tower, which will start on Monday, March 31, giving people more food for thought during the season of Lent.

Many signs of hope in Derry Diocese – Bishop Donal

THE theme for this year's Jubilee has been translated as 'Pilgrims of Hope'. But I have seen it also translated from the Latin as 'Pilgrims into Hope'. Where does that take shape in Derry Diocese?

Firstly, it says that there is no place in our story for a sob story about persecution and how hard things will be in the future. Jesus faced all of that as did the early church. But we have to constantly sing to the music of the psalms that God is to be glorified in all things and at all times.

Those who promote a culture of Catholic victimhood risk becoming angry evangelisers, seeing those who do not agree with us as enemies rather than as sisters and brothers to be loved into faith.

Secondly, the Opening of the Cause of Sr Clare Crockett is a huge boost for people of faith here. A worldwide audience has been moved by the story of God's grace in someone who grew up in the city. She is a real image of joyful hope, because it is in that joyful hope that we await the coming of our Saviour Jesus Christ. She had come to know the love of God

around the Cross, and is a model of how to evangelise with hope and joy, not with anger or threats.

Thirdly, we had great numbers coming to venerate the relics of St Bernadette last October. And we are building on that with the 33 Days of Prayer leading children and their families to a consecration to God in the company of Mary. That began on January 9 and goes through to the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes on February 11. It is based around helping children to see the Rosary as Mary accompanying us to meditate on the love of God for us revealed in the life of Jesus.

Those who know the love and mercy of God can become new missionaries of hope. There are many signs of hope and of people searching for God around the Diocese of Derry. Together we can allow the Lord to help us discern His way forward for our church, locally and nationally.

It is dangerous if we think that we know God's way forward. If you doubt that, ask the Virgin Mary or Sr Clare Crockett!

Diocesan Consecration prayer broadcasts attracting over 1,000 views

THE 33 days of prayer in the Diocese, leading to Consecration to Jesus through Mary, is progressing well in the Diocese, with over 1,000 views each night between the live and recorded broadcasts.

Amongst those tuning into the live nightly broadcasts is Dr Blythe Kaufman from America, founder of the Children's Rosary and promoter of this Child Consecration to Jesus through Mary, following in the spirit of St Therese, the Little Flower.

Delighted with the response, Blythe had words of encouragement for all, particularly for those who have found themselves fading away or who haven't yet joined in, but would like to.

"Individuals and families can keep being added through the days," she said, highlighting the parable in Matthew's Gospel about the workers in the vineyard: "Some came at the beginning of the day, others almost at the end (Mt 20:1-16). Our Lord will honour the Consecration if we spend 33 days preparing or just one.

"Many may think that a missed day or coming in late to the journey will invalidate the final

Consecration. While preparation is good, we should not miss the call to join because we are late. Consecrations can be renewed and the journey can be done again, so there is no worry one should miss this opportunity to participate now. There is grace flowing through this journey and with shepherds leading, they instinctively will keep calling and drawing the flock close."

The prayer is mostly led by Bishop Donal, with other priests from around the Diocese stepping in whenever he has other engagements in his diary for that time.

Commenting on the very positive engagement to date, Diocesan Pastoral Co-ordinator, Tony Brennan noted that between 300-400 people have been joining the 7 pm live feed most evenings, with 800 tuning in for the first evening, between Facebook and YouTube.

He added: "Each broadcast is saved on the Diocesan YouTube channel and Diocesan Facebook page to be viewed after the broadcast, and most of these are getting over 1,000 views each night, both live and after.

"The vast majority of the audience is from within the



Derry Diocese and Ireland. There are others joining in from across the world, such as Canada, Australia, America and parts of Europe. A lot of the comments on Facebook and YouTube are really encouraging, with people encouraging each other and expressing gratitude for the opportunity to do the Consecration in this way."

Tony went on to explain: "The broadcast is simple and to the point, lasting about 15 minutes, to encourage people to follow the prayers at home, building up to the praying of the Rosary from Day 17 to Day 33. Everyone is encouraged to come along to St Eugene's Cathedral on the final day for the Consecration Prayer

at 7 pm led by Bishop Donal, who will then celebrate Mass at 7.30 pm.

"Those attending the Cathedral will have an opportunity to receive their Consecration certificate, while others can download it themselves at home on the day. It is great if people can do the whole 33 days, but it's fine if they can only do some, they can still continue to complete the 33 days afterwards if they wish."

Broadcasting live each evening at 7:00pm on Facebook at this link <https://www.facebook.com/derrydiocese>

Broadcasting live each evening at 7:00pm on YouTube at this link <https://www.youtube.com/DioceesofDerryNorthernIreland>

Claudy Children's Rosary Group celebrates 3rd anniversary



Celebrating its third anniversary, Claudy Children's Rosary Group is one of three currently in the Diocese. The children meet to pray in St Patrick's Church, Claudy, on the First Saturday of each month at 2 pm, and more are welcome to come along.

Celebrating 100 years of education on Scoil Íosagáin site in Buncrana...

Donegal's biggest National School gets green light for new build



THE centenary celebrations for Sacred Heart NS in Buncrana, which became Scoil Íosagáin following an amalgamation with St Columba's Boys' School, have been followed with the very welcome news that the building of the new Scoil Íosagáin has finally been given the go-ahead, with the first sod cut in the grounds of St Mary's Oratory by Bishop Donal in a special ceremony on Monday, January 20.

Speaking on behalf of a delighted Board of Management, School and Parish community, at the celebrations, Buncrana Parish Priest, Fr Francis Bradley remarked: "There have been many promises made, questions asked and false dawns over the last three decades; now, at last, our hopes appear to be being realised..

"This will be a great relief to our long-standing Principal, Ms Sinead McLaughlin, the dedicated staff, and very especially the current pupils and their families..With around 800 pupils, Scoil Íosagáin is the biggest National School in Donegal..It has, for years, needed more space than that afforded by its current buildings.."

Noting that some brief but significant administrative measures will soon be put in place so that the work can begin shortly, he continued: "This work will be demanding in many respects for the new school is being built on part of the present site. This will require the installation of a series of temporary classrooms.

"It will require more than that, for it will demand the patience and determination of staff and pupils, of the builders and specialists, of Mass-goers and the general public, as there will be traffic and other disturbances over the twenty-seven months

which the project is envisaged to take..But these will be minor difficulties when viewed against the beauty and design of the new facilities.

"We know that all of this will only be possible with God's help. The Psalms remind us that 'if the Lord does not build the house, in vain do the builders labour'. With God's help a new legacy of teaching and learning will take hold as the School turns a fresh page of its long history and begins yet another new adventure."

Celebration

Coming a few days before the Christmas holidays, the news was joyously received within the school community, particularly by the principal, Ms McLaughlin, who had a warm welcome for everyone who had joined them the previous month for the celebration of Mass in St Mary's Oratory to commemorate 100 years of education on the school site.

Speaking at the anniversary function in Scoil Íosagáin after Mass, the principal expressed delight at having present some of the oldest past pupils: Mary Coyle, who attended the Sacred Heart School in the 1920s; and Noeleen Galbraith (Doherty), Rosaleen Hegarty (Doherty) and Maureen Ginty, who were pupils in the 1930s.

Coming together to remember, to reflect and to look forward, Ms McLaughlin said to those gathered: "We remember those who were instrumental in ensuring that a school building and a primary school education was provided for the children of Buncrana. We remember a generous benefactor, an ambitious Parish Priest and a congregation of Nuns from the Sisters of Mercy, who had a vision and a plan for

the children of the new state. We remember with pride, their tenacity and determination, and we thank them most sincerely for their endeavours."

She added: "We reflect on the hundred years that have passed since the Sacred Heart School opened its doors for the first time; a time when a new state had been formed after a decade of war and turmoil. We reflect on the hundreds of children who have passed through our doors, and we acknowledge that, for some, school days were not always happy days, there was disappointment and sadness for some, joy and happiness for others. We appreciate that there were many challenges faced by schools, by families, by society in general in the early years and, at times, people had been living in very difficult circumstances. Sacrifices were made and often choices were limited.

"And while we still grapple with economic and social change today, we are none-the-less, thankful that many things have changed for the better. Education is now free, children's rights are underpinned by legislation and schools are supported financially by the state."

Child-centred

Noting that the philosophy of education had also changed, the principal recalled: "A child-centred curriculum was introduced in 1971, followed by a New Curriculum in 1999/2000, with further curricular change developing as we speak. A child-centred education is important, looking at the uniqueness of every single child, their strengths and needs, their holistic development and potential.

"The Sisters of Mercy in the Sacred Heart School embraced the 1970s curriculum and its philosophy with an openness and enthusiasm that certainly made my school days very happy. Their commitment to providing an appropriate education to all children resulted in a class for children with Special Educational Needs being opened in the late 70s. This was a ground-breaking development in the provision of education for children with additional needs in an inclusive school environment, and was the foundation for what followed in Scoil Íosagáin thereafter.

"We are proud to be the first school in Ireland to have opened a class for children with Severe and Profound General Learning Disabilities in a mainstream setting. We are proud to be carrying on the the great work begun by the Sisters of Mercy. We are proud to support an educational environment in which all children can learn together, play together and grow

together, in a school setting that embraces diversity and celebrates difference."

"As we embrace the importance of a child-centred education," added Ms McLaughlin, "we must reflect on what a child-centred education looks like in a Catholic school in 2024. We must hold on to our legacy, and embrace our mission as a child-centred and a Christ-centred school. Pope Francis said that Educating is an act of love; it is like giving life. May we always remain true to our mission to appreciate that every child is precious and deserves our love.

"And so we look forward to the future with hope and ambition, with the same hope and ambition that motivated the Sisters of Mercy in the 1920s. Their legacy, our inheritance, is to carry on with commitment and dedication, to continue to provide the best possible education for the children entrusted to our care."

Changemaker

Highlighting that they were designated as a 'Changemaker School' in 2016, one of 19 in Ireland, she explained: "A 'Changemaker School' is one that promotes the pillars of Empathy, Creativity, Leadership and Teamwork in the school's teaching and learning, in the relationships among all members of the school community, and in the culture that pervades across the school. These pillars marry well with the values that underpin our Catholic ethos, an ethos that embraces the importance of a child-centred, Christ-centred education."

Ms McLaughlin concluded by expressing gratitude to the Sisters of Mercy for the great education that she had received, not only during her primary years in the Sacred Heart School, but also her secondary education in Scoil Mhuire, in Buncrana, and her university education in Our Lady of Mercy College, Carysfort, in Dublin.

She recalled: "My first teacher in Baby Infants, Sr Columba, instilled in me a great love of learning and a desire from a very young age to be a teacher. It has been my great privilege to have been educated by her and by other great nuns, changemakers in their own way. I will be eternally grateful to them."

Thanking her colleagues, the staff of Scoil Íosagáin, the principal remarked: "They are wonderful. I want to especially thank Lisa McShane who has put her heart and soul into organising our centenary celebrations, from the production of our Scoil Íosagáin centenary book to ensuring that every one of our 790 pupils got to enjoy a special cupcake!"



Bishop Donal encourages Scoil Íosagáin to continue to talk about God's dream for whole world

THE huge role that religious congregations have played in primary and secondary education down the years was commended by Bishop Donal during the anniversary Mass in St Mary's Oratory, Buncrana, to mark 100 years of education on the neighbouring site of Scoil Íosagáin.

Celebrating the Mass on the Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, on November 21, 2024, the bishop recalled how much had changed since the original Sacred Heart School – Scoil Croí Ró-Naofa – was opened in 1924.

“The Irish Free State had just been set up in 1922, leaving Inishowen cut off from its natural connection to Derry,” he noted, adding: “The country had little money available, and a very large portion of education, hospitals and social services were provided by religious congregations such as the Sisters of Mercy. These communities of committed women, along with the parish, offered premises and teaching personnel, and this is an opportunity to acknowledge the huge role they have played in primary and secondary education.

“The Sisters of Mercy were clear that girls deserved high quality secondary education. Scoil Mhuire and its boarding school were set up in 1933. Internationally, Ireland is now seen as a country with a very highly educated workforce, fit to achieve in any part of the world. It is right to recognise the foundations of that education, north and south.”

Bishop Donal went on to comment on how few principals had served in Sacred Heart Girls' School, St Columba's Boys' School and Scoil Íosagáin, saying:

“All of that speaks of a huge level of dedication to education in this community. A good school has high quality teachers but also needs dedicated leaders, who see education as a vocation and who bloom where they are planted.

“We thank those whose dedication have opened doors and helped young people to dream. But we have to recognise that it is hard for many young people to dream. Poverty, wars, environmental issues and violence hang over every community, even in the natural beauty that surrounds Buncrana.”

Message

Considering the message Catholic schools try to hand on today in a town which has young people from many national backgrounds, he said: “Firstly, the name of the school – Íosagáin, the Baby Jesus – tells us that every child is important. Mary's baby was born in a stable, far from home, and died on a cross between two thieves. And He was the One who came to save us all. Jesus made time for little children. Our God is hidden in small people and unexpected places.

“We have created a world where life is threatened before and after birth. Thousands of children are dying because of war in Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan and elsewhere, and because of hunger and preventable diseases around the world. We also know of situations where children in the care of church have not been treated with dignity. A world that does not value all children is its own worst enemy. A church that does not look after all children is being unfaithful to Jesus.”

He continued: “A Catholic school says that everyone has a contribution to make. None



of us is as smart as all of us. Good education is not about discovering how smart you are, but helping everyone to discover how they are smart. We live in a very competitive world where competition for celebrity status and power can be vicious, and where many so-called celebrities live crazy lives.

“A Catholic school like Scoil Íosagáin is not just about helping people learn numeracy and literacy, an information factory without values. It is also about building a community where people of various talents and identities can live and grow together. In a divided world, you seek to model the best that human beings can be. Jesus said that His family were those of any background who sought to do God's will. Don't be ashamed of your identity.”

Sacred

Bishop Donal went on to say: “Jesus was one of us. Because of that, our bodies are sacred. They are anointed at Baptism and Confirmation; they receive the Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion. Our bodies will be raised up on the last day. The culture seems to focus on having what is supposed to be the perfect figure. Body shaming is widespread. Irresponsible behaviour at weekends is accepted

as the best we can be. ‘Obey your thirst’ seems to apply not just to fizzy drinks but to everything. And there are those who would ban any talk of morality from school. Don't be ashamed to speak of the dignity and sacredness of our bodies.”

Describing the school's centenary book as “a treasure trove of information and memories”, the bishop remarked: “This school has changed as the world has changed. But you have tried to remain faithful to your core values. You have tried to hand on a vision for human beings thriving in healthy communities, and believing that life has meaning here and hereafter. The original name of Sacred Heart tells us about God who speaks to the human heart and not just to the head.”

He concluded: “We face the future with hope because we trust that Jesus is with us all days, until the end of the world. This school will continue to talk about God's dream for the whole world. That involves forgiveness and reconciliation, justice and mercy. Those values still remain the only basis for a human flourishing. Jesus still says to us here today – go make disciples of all nations. The world is still waiting for Good News. Your school still wants to inspire faith, hope and love. Be proud of that mission.”



Angela Gormley's School Building Project... Newtownstewart goes to Kenya!

LAST summer, Newtownstewart Parish and Plumbridge Parish made appeals for donations to build a school in Africa. It was the communities' effort to support Angela Gormley's journey from Newtownstewart to Naro Moru, in central Kenya.

The practical project proved to be a great help to children who need primary education. The charity overseeing the project is Granaghan Outreach Charitable Trust. It was founded a couple of decades ago in the Parish of Granaghan, in Swatragh, Co Derry, by Fr Kieran O'Doherty in association with the SMA Fathers, Dromantine, Co Down. It offers a chance for Irish people to go to Africa, even for a short period, to do hands-on work with the needy.

The spoken appeal by Charity

member, Paul Ward, from Auhabrack, and the example shown by Angela Gormley, from Gallon Upper, generated multiple donations. Newtownstewart raised £2,010 and Plumbridge raised £1,400.

Fr Roland Colhoun paid tribute to his parishioner: “Angela has shown exceptional benevolence by using her holidays to undertake the physical work of building a school in Kenya. She paid her own fare and all the associated expenses, and took inoculations against malaria and yellow fever in advance. Folk who attend Mass every Sunday, learn about projects like this and put their shoulder to the wheel. Mass-going people are exceptionally generous individuals. I salute the big-hearted parishioners of Newtownstewart and

Plumbridge!” When she returned, Angela wrote a short account of her experience: “The children of Kenya have no material wealth. They have holes in their socks and their school uniforms are all tattered and torn, but the love and warmth I received from them spoke louder than all the deprivation that surrounded me.

“The children held my hand and hugged me, and asked me if I believed in God. I said ‘yes’. I can see why these children have big smiles on their faces. Materially, they have nothing, but with God in their lives, they are millionaires. They have everything.

“Most of the local workmen toiled with us to build two classrooms. They wore flipflops because they can't afford working boots, so when we were leaving we



gave all our boots to them.

“The enrichment of the lives of the children and teachers in that Kenyan village was all thanks to the generosity of the people of Ardstraw East (Newtownstewart) and Badoney Upper (Plumbridge). Without their donations, none of this would have happened. A massive thank you is due to Fr Roland Colhoun and to Fr Brian Donnelly and their parishioners!”

JPII Award

Ten fulfilling years as Pope John Paul II parish leader

AFTER a decade of giving her time and energy as the Pope John Paul II Award leader in Dungiven, Marian Murphy has passed on the baton to fellow parishioners, grateful for the rewarding time she had in helping many young people from the Parish achieve their Award.

Marian felt that 'new blood' was needed for the leadership role, and is delighted that Mary McGill and Eimear O'Kane have happily taken over the reins. Reflecting on her journey as JPII leader, the retired post-primary school teacher recalled being invited to get involved by one of her former pupils, Rory McGilligan.

"Rory rang me one night and asked if I would like to be involved with the Pope John Paul II group in the parish. I didn't know much about it, but decided to go along and check it out.

"I was more on the sidelines then, as Rory did most of the work with the young people, along with Joe McVeigh and Roisin Heaney. I mostly organised the sweets and juice," said Marian.

She continued: "Joe and Roisin were there for a few months and then left. A while after that, Rory left too and I carried on as leader for about eight years.

"I enjoyed meeting the young people; I wouldn't have known them before becoming a JPII leader. It also gives the young people an opportunity to be in each other's company and build friendships, as they attend different schools, such as St Patrick's Dungiven, St Patrick's Maghera, and Loreto Coleraine. Occasionally, some are from St

Columb's or St Cecilia's, Derry, and we had a few who lived in Drumsurn and attended St Mary's Limavady."

Marian went on to remark: "While they mostly take on the Award for their CVs, the young people seem to enjoy the activities and being involved in their parish.

"We started and ended our meetings with prayer, including the Pope John Paul II Award prayer, which I laminated and gave to them. These young people are 17 years old, an age when many of them feel that it is not cool to be seen praying, but I hope they got something from it."

Saints

Reflecting on the activities undertaken, she said: "As well as spending time in our Parish Adoration Chapel, talking about the Mysteries of the Rosary and other aspects of our faith, we focused on whatever Saint's feast day was being celebrated around our meeting day. For example, we made St Brigid crosses and acted out the St Brigid story, which our chaplain at the time, Fr Joseph Varghese was very interested in and he even succeeded in making St Brigid crosses on a few occasions.

"We made newsletters for Saints' Feast Days too, in which they wrote about the named saint. They also wrote in the newsletters about their experience as Eucharistic Ministers, Ministers of the Word, or their involvement with Children's Liturgy."

Meeting often as a group, Marian recalled some other activities they got involved in: "They helped with

cleaning the chapel, did the parish basket and SVP collections some years. In better weather, they went out to tidy up the graveyard, including their family graves and those who had no one left to look after them. They also helped with the annual Requiem Mass in November for the deceased of the Parish, lighting candles and handing them to bereaved family members.

"On one occasion in the run up to Easter Sunday, the young people got involved with filling holy water bottles for those attending the Dawn Mass at the top of Benbradagh, celebrated by Fr Seamus Kelly when he was the Parish Priest. We also helped out in charity shops and visited the elderly living in Dungiven Fold. The boys particularly enjoyed talking with some of the men there who were big into football.

"When the HOPE Camp was set up in Dungiven, they helped out at the fundraising breakfast and got involved as leaders on the camp itself, as well as helping out at the GAA summer camps. In addition, they handed out copies of 'The Net' each month, and envelopes for charities such as Children in Crossfire."

Presentation

A particular part of the Award programme that Marian enjoyed was the Presentation Ceremony, appreciating what the young people had achieved having journeyed with them.

She remarked: "I thought it was lovely to see around 400 young people coming together from the different schools, for a lovely,

relaxed occasion with Bishop McKeown, and it was inspiring to hear the testimonies of the guest speakers, particularly those who had hard lives."

Commending the Diocesan Pope John Paul II Award team for their hard work, Marian said that she particularly appreciated the support she received from Youth Director, Lizzie Rea, throughout her time as leader. And she hopes to attend this year's ceremony in St Eugene's Cathedral on January 29, at 2 pm, to applaud her last JPII group.

As someone who worked with young people for many years, Marian said that she loved helping them, and so enjoyed her time as a JPII Award leader. "I will miss it," she remarked, adding: "It is wonderful to meet young people now who took part in the Award years ago, and listen to them talk about their lives."

In seeking out potential people to take over the role, at first, she found that no matter who she asked, the role didn't suit them, with many having work and their own families to contend with. However, hope was on the horizon when she got involved with the Parish HOPE Camp and got a feeling that fellow committee member, Mary McGill was perfect for the role.

"Mary is involved with lots of different people through her work with RAPID, and it came to me that she would be a good JPII leader. So, when it transpired that I would be in Medjugorje on the day of the annual Fan the Flame Mass in Celtic Park, which I occasionally went to as some of the



Marian Murphy, who has retired after a decade as Dungiven Parish JPII Leader

JPIIs were involved as volunteers, I asked Mary at one of the HOPE committee meetings if she would be interested in attending, and she said that she would.

"When I came back, I asked what she had thought of it and she said that she had loved working with the young people. So, when I finally decided to end my JPII

role, I told Mary that I would be happy to pass the baton on to her and she accepted."

A mother of five grown-ups and grandmother of four, Marian will continue to be involved with young people, looking after her grandchildren for a couple of days a week.

JPII Award inspiring young people in Dungiven

THE Pope John Paul II Award is an initiative that recognises and celebrates the contributions of young people, aged 16 to 18, to their parish, school, and wider community. Established in honour of Pope Saint John Paul II, the award encourages participants to live out their faith in practical and meaningful ways.

Through parish involvement such as reading at Mass, serving on the altar, or assisting with sacramental preparations, and volunteering in their communities through outreach programmes, charity work, or justice and peace projects, participants gain invaluable experience.

The Award has three levels - Bronze, Silver, Gold - each requiring participants to complete a set number of volunteer hours. Upon completion, young people receive a certificate, recognising their commitment to faith, service,

and personal growth. Beyond the accolades, the Award offers participants a transformative experience, helping them deepen their faith, develop life skills and build stronger community connections.

By challenging themselves and taking on leadership roles, young people gain confidence, resilience, and a sense of purpose, enhancing their future opportunities. Above all, the programme inspires them to live the Gospel in action, following Pope Saint John Paul II's example of serving others with compassion, humility, and love.

This year, Dungiven Parish is proud to have 16 young people striving to achieve their Gold Award. These participants attend three secondary schools: St Patrick's College, Dungiven; St Patrick's College, Maghera; and Loreto College, Coleraine. They

first met as a group in November 2024 and were officially commissioned as Pope John Paul II participants during the Vigil Mass on Saturday, November 30. Under the guidance of the parish priest, Fr Gerry Sweeney, the young people carried out various roles during the celebration.

Since their commissioning, the participants have eagerly collaborated and, to date, have completed numerous hours of volunteering. Their efforts include supporting parish Masses and celebrations, distributing 'The NET' newspaper after Mass, decorating the parish Christmas tree, and assisting with carol services and Nativity plays hosted in churches across Dungiven Parish.

Through the Pope John Paul II Award, the volunteers within Dungiven Parish offer young people a remarkable opportunity

to make a meaningful difference, not only in their own lives but also in the lives of others. It is a chance to live their faith with courage and conviction, while honouring the legacy of Pope Saint John Paul II, whose mission was to inspire and empower young people worldwide.

This year, Dungiven Parish welcomes two new Pope John Paul II co-ordinators, Mary McGill and Eimear O'Kane, both of whom already volunteer within the parish and are active committee members of Dungiven HOPE Summer Camp. Together, they bring unique skills to the role, ensuring the young people remain committed to promoting Catholic faith, challenging themselves, and embracing this transformative journey.

Mary works in community development, specialising in supporting rural children, young



Eimear O'Kane, Dungiven Pope John Paul II Award co-ordinator



Mary McGill, Dungiven Pope John Paul II Award co-ordinator

people, and families, while Eimear is a teacher whose primary subject is Religion.

On behalf of Dungiven Parish, Mary and Eimear extend heartfelt gratitude to parishioner, Marian Murphy. After more than a decade of volunteering and guiding

young people with unwavering dedication, Marian has decided to pass the baton to Mary and Eimear. Her years of service have left an enduring legacy and the parish is deeply thankful for the profound impact she has made on the community.

JPII Award

Cara McGilligan, who completed her Pope John Paul II Award in the Dungiven Parish two years ago, writes about her two-week trip to Kenya last summer with Granaghan Outreach...

I have never seen happier children in my 18 years of living



Cara McGilligan

MY trip to Kenya was amazing. If I had to choose one word to describe it, I would say 'rewarding'. From the people that I headed out with and met along the way, there is nothing that I would change.

In Kenya, it is a completely different world. We truly don't know how fortunate we are and yet, we still are ungrateful.

While there, we built classrooms at Kimbo Primary School. In my entire 18 years of living, I have never seen happier children. Every day they arrived, not one didn't have a smile on their face. They enjoyed the simplest things we had to offer and made it seem like they had won the lottery.

It was such a wake-up call to be able to have this amazing opportunity and see how different the world is. In a matter of 10 minutes down the road there, the difference between a rich area and a poor area is stark.

I set off on my journey at the end of August, last year. Leaving Claudy 'Cow Market' at 11.40 pm, we flew out of Dublin Airport and headed to Paris. That was our first flight and it took about two hours. From there, we flew to Kenya.

Nairobi was our destination. When we arrived there, it was too late to travel further as it was 11 pm – two hours ahead of our normal time. We stayed in a lovely hotel, where we got a quick bite to eat before going to bed. After so much travelling, I was glad to get some sleep.

The next day, I woke up at 9.30 am and got ready to set off for the day after breakfast. We were collected in an outback safari truck and headed into the city first, where we got sim cards to enable us to keep in touch with our families back home. Then we went to a giraffe sanctuary, where we got to feed the animals before making our way to our hostel in Naro Moru, four hours away. After settling in, we got dinner and then went to bed to rest for work in the morning.

I woke up at 7.15 am and got ready for the day. After breakfast, we left for work at 8 am. On arrival, we met a few of the workers and began to work at 9 am. We painted rafters green, which were to be used to make the roof. The men started laying the bricks and got quite a lot done. Out there, everything is hand-made. The cement is mixed by hand and the bricks are cut with machetes. Some local people worked on the site along with us,

as a paid job to make a living for themselves.

We had a great start to the day and were well looked after. We met a few of the children who attend the school and they were happy with our work. Returning to our hostel at 4 pm, I got showered and we relaxed for the rest of the evening.

Grateful

This experience has taught me so much and especially to be grateful for all that I have. The toilets at the school are a small hole in the ground. We were told that some of the children live local to the school, but others have to walk around 10k to get there, and they walk alone. We also learnt that it was part of the culture to have three names: the name they are born with; the name they are baptised with; and the name of their father.

When we arrived at the site on day three, all the children were waiting on us. We started painting windows, 10 of them, and a door. We also played different ball games, skipped and danced with the children.

I discovered that primary school education is free there, however, parents have to pay a fee to the teachers to cover books, pencils and extra-curricular activities, such as PE and Dance on a Saturday. The children attend school from 7 am-5 pm on Mondays-Fridays, and on Saturdays from 7 am-1 pm. Parents have to pay for their children to attend secondary

school, and if they cannot afford it the children have to stay at home and work. However, if a child is smart enough, they can be funded to go to secondary school by charities or the government, in certain areas.

With regards to healthcare, there is basic government funding. However, there is a lack of adequate expertise to address medical needs and most healthcare facilities do not have the equipment to handle medical challenges. There are private hospitals which are costly, so many cannot afford to get checked out. Another problem is not having transport to get to these facilities, which can take 30-45 minutes to get to.

I don't think it is possible to explain all of what I experienced, as I feel there aren't the words in the world to describe it adequately, other than to say that you just have to see it for yourself.

Something as simple as taking part in playground games with the children, or just a hug, brought them so much joy.

I will cherish this experience for the rest of my life and I will definitely be back again. I highly recommend it to everyone, as it is so refreshing to be in a part of the world where 'who has the best phone or the best clothes' isn't all the rave or competition.

I want to thank Granaghan Outreach 'Moving Mountains', the others on the trip with me, and my family for making this an amazing once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.



My Fan the Flame experience

by Padraic McAreavey

I took part in 'Fan the Flame' in 2024 as a volunteer, along with others from my parish Pope John Paul II Award group. Taking a bus into Derry City from Dungiven, we arrived at Celtic Park a few hours before all the children participating in the Mass who had been recently confirmed,

so that we could prepare for the tasks we were given.

My job was to carry the Cross in the procession, ahead of the priests and Bishop Donal, as they walked around the pitch, which really didn't require much preparation.

On reaching the altar, I had to

put the Cross in a stand on the pitch, and went to my seat for the celebration of Mass.

Once Mass was finished, I went and lifted the Cross again and joined the procession around the pitch and out towards the changing rooms. Afterwards, I joined the others in helping to

tidy up, before we took the bus back to Dungiven.

I thoroughly enjoyed my experience in helping at the Fan the Flame Mass, as it is a really enjoyable ceremony attended by thousands of people. It was great to be a part of it.



Padraic, second from left, with the rest of the Dungiven Parish JPII group who volunteered at Fan the Flame

Catholic Schools Week is celebrated this month from January 19-25...

The Gifts and Fruits of Catholic Schools

by Michael O'Kane



St Mary's PS, Glenview, Maghera, pupils with Bishop Donal at the launch Mass for Catholic Schools Week in St Eugene's Cathedral.

EDUCATION is a gift from God and in my experience and view it can be summed up by a line from Psalm 40: "He set my feet upon a rock and gave me a firm place to stand."

As we have grown up, education has given us the opportunity to think critically, analyse, collaborate, form our own judgements, indeed, it has given us the opportunity to reflect and revise our judgements. In my own experience and of observing those who I have grown up with, studied with, competed in sport with and worked in schools with, education, and in our case Catholic education, has been a solid foundation for us to gain a firm understanding of how to navigate life.

In the week leading up to writing this article, I have observed the Confirmation preparations of our P7 children in St Mary's PS Glenview, Maghera. The children have been learning about the Beatitudes from Jesus, Himself, during the Sermon on the Mount - Blessed are the poor, Blessed are the meek, Blessed are the peacemakers. They have also touched upon the Fruits of the Holy Spirit - Love, Joy, Kindness and Goodness, among others.

In schools all across the North of Ireland at this time,

teachers, classroom assistants, coordinators, principals and support staff, alongside parents, governors and, importantly, the children, are working on developing school values as a basis for each school to move forward with their vision.

Having taught in controlled schools, integrated schools and maintained schools, I can point to a number of excellent initiatives and operational plans around the development of values in all different types of schools. However, not too much money has to be spent or not too much time has to be spent in looking far and wide for a basis of values when forming the vision and way forward within a Catholic school. The Beatitudes, the Fruits of the Holy Spirit, the examples of Jesus and, indeed, the Saints that our schools remember everyday, form a strong and secure buttress to Catholic schools that shape and form young minds, alongside families and the community, to become compassionate young people who care for others and empower them to act within the local, national and global community to advance justice and inclusion.

Values

These simple values that our

young people experience in our schools, young people that are empowered by hard working, forward thinking, caring and loving school staff, are based on Jesus' own vision of the world and how people should live - by treating others like we would like to be treated ourselves.

It is a wonderful world that we live in, however, it is a difficult and challenging world. There is a rising number of polarising world leaders, indeed, closer to home this week in the North, I listened to a politician and political commentator argue about school transformation on the radio. The argument descended into a tit-for-tat argument questioning each participant's personal points of view, and I'm sure a lot of listeners turned over the station. We need to ensure that our children, in partnership with their parents and the community, grow up with joy, positivity and humility. We need our children to work together with those of opposing points of views and be accepting and, indeed, celebrating of diversity.

In a large number of Catholic schools across the North, a number of school leaders are prioritising the placement of children with additional needs on their school site, alleviating the pressures on other schools. I can only say that I have learned patience, love, joy and care from children with additional needs, their parents and the school staff that teach them every day. Divergent thinking is a blessing and can help us to look at and reflect on things in a completely different way, and in a way that sees the good in all situations and the positives in working together to ensure that every single child is given the opportunity to flourish.

Jesus' Ministry

Educationalists, business leaders and governments spend thousands of pounds on leadership books, courses and

initiatives. This amazes me. Regardless of anyone's beliefs, the examples of Jesus' ministry are there for all to see and learn from. His caring approach, the way He developed and nurtured a team of people - His disciples - from diverse backgrounds. His strength through testing times and ultimately, His servant leadership and how He put the needs of others ahead of His own.

In these difficult times, with so much disinformation, the need for strong effective links between home, school and the community have never been more important. Leaders with the courage, convictions and moral authority of Mandela, Marie Curie and Mother Teresa are few and far between. We need to look closer to home at ourselves as parents and community members, at being strong, positive role models for our children.

In our Catholic schools, we strive to give our children unconditional love as a safe base for them to feel happy in their surroundings. We serve them with as many opportunities as possible to nurture their unique talents and gifts. When I look at the social media pages of a large number of Catholic schools, I see the wide, diverse and amazing opportunities they provide their children.

Diversity, understanding, patience, kindness and goodness, all values that are woven through the culture and fabric of our Catholic schools, are paramount for the success of our children in this challenging world that we live in.

I make absolutely no apologies for my views. I try, and fail, to live by the ethos and values that I have grown up with through my Catholic faith and I see these in action every day in our Catholic schools. It may not be the opinion of others, and I fully respect the opinion of others, however, I think it the very best way to live.



Michael O'Kane, headmaster of St Mary's PS, Glenview, Maghera

Christmas Crib tradition at Glendermott PS

by Niamh Kehoe

AS a tradition, on the last day of term for the Christmas holidays, the children of Glendermott Primary School, in the Parish of Ardmore, place the Baby Jesus into the crib to celebrate His birth on December 25.

On the lead-up to this day, the boys and girls have told the story of the Annunciation, Nativity and Epiphany through their school plays and Carols at their Carol service.

As we have reflected during the holiday period on the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the hope, peace and joy that He brings, may we be pilgrims of hope this year, which Pope Francis has called a Jubilee Year; a Holy Year with a special theme that is celebrated every 25 years.

We pray for the staff and children that they in-still hope

in each other, encouraging one another to let their light shine, as Jesus teaches us to do to enter the Kingdom of God (Mt 5:14-16).

We particularly pray for the children who will celebrate the sacraments of Reconciliation, First Holy Communion and Confirmation, and that the light of Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit will guide them.

Bishop Dónal has invited us, as a Diocese, to pray and consecrate ourselves to Jesus Christ through Mary from January 9 to February 11. Perhaps, as a school community or with our own families, we will accept this invitation.

The Child Consecration to Jesus through Mary is a new book available in St Eugene's Cathedral, Derry, and also in parishes throughout the Diocese.



St Patrick's College Maghera Christmas Service



Carmelite Divine Child pilgrimage around City parishes a blessing

THE annual nine-day Divine Child Novena led by the Discalced Carmelites in Termonbacca, was undertaken by many in preparation for Christmas.

Inspired by the old Carmel tradition dating back to the time of St Teresa of Avila, the Child Jesus statue from the crib at Termonbacca journeyed around the city, spending 24 hours in a different parish before moving on to the next.

Each night, the Carmelites celebrated Mass with Novena Prayers. People were invited to

submit prayer intentions, which were then written on a 'straw' strip and placed in the empty manger to prepare a bed for the Child Jesus.

The Child Jesus figure was first carried from Termonbacca to St Mary's Creggan then, in turn, to St Columba's Long Tower, Immaculate Conception, Waterside, St Patrick's Pennyburn, St Brigid's Carnhill, Ballyarnett, Holy Family, Ballymagroarty, St Joseph's Galliagh; and back to Termonbacca.



Celebrating Bambinelli Sunday in Lavey

BAMBINELLI Sunday was celebrated in the Church of Our Lady of Mercy, in the Parish of Lavey, with a special blessing of Baby Jesus figurines by Fr Eamon Graham, at Masses on the weekend of December 14 & 15.

This Advent tradition of blessing the Christ Child on Gaudete Sunday was instituted by Pope St John Paul II, when he invited children and adults to bring the Baby Jesus figures from their homes to St Peter's Square for him to bless after his Sunday Angelus address.

The tradition has been continued by Pope Francis and parishes around the world also join in the celebration, which

helps children to make the connection between the Nativity set at home and their parish church.



Young Writers share thoughts...

WELCOMING a new year, the Young Writers have been in reflective mode, with Erin reflecting on the birth of Jesus and Seán in awe at the amazing winter skies and landscapes, reflecting the greatness and glory of God.

Bronagh is excited for all that lies in store for the Catholic Church in this Jubilee Year of 2025, and James highlights Pope Francis' call to uphold the Constant Ethic of Life.

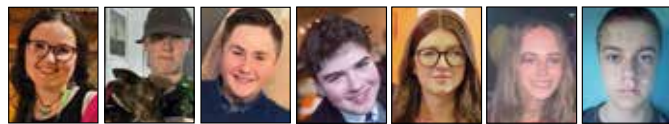
Niamh comments on the joy and deepening of faith that comes from singing as a form of worship, and Luke considers the great dangers of materialism for the soul and its prevalence in today's world.

Paying heed to the inspiring example of the lives of saints, Evan encourages all to journey as pilgrims of hope with Sr Clare, while Bláthnaid reflects on the story of St Therese of Lisieux and the power of doing little things out of love, and Cara-Leigh shares her discovery of St Agnes as a great role model in how to love God.

Doing its part in helping to form saints, the Syro Malabar's annual Sunday School and Parish Day celebration is shared by John.



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



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

“Little things done out of love are those that charm the Heart of Christ” – St Therese by Bláthnaid .

THE youngest doctor of The Church, St Therese of Lisieux is arguably one of the best Saints to pray through when searching for a true conversion of heart. With her own inspiring conversion story occurring on Christmas Day 1886, when she realised that something in her was beginning to change drastically, she is an excellent example of the Grace of God working in our hearts. She commented on this in her autobiography, 'Story of A Soul', writing: "I felt charity enter into my soul, the need to forget myself and care for others; since then, I've been happy!"

After first being introduced to St Therese when in conversation with a local priest, I began to notice both her appearance and relevance in many different areas of my life. These vary in nature, from realizing that there is a statue of her in the Chapel that I've been going to my entire life that I'd never noticed before, to recognizing flaws in my own approach to prayer after reflecting on her life's work.

However, what continues to draw me to St Therese is her 'Little Way', as it inspires us to do the little things the right way with good faith, allowing us to

practice Glorifying God in each small moment of our daily lives. This 'Little Way' stems from her feeling far removed when she compared her life to the Saints, despite knowing that it had always been a desire of hers to become one.

Naturally, most of us would probably feed into discouragement when comparing ourselves like this, although St Therese showcases how we can overcome these negative feelings and proactively find a way to honour God, when she decided that it was through her very own littleness that she could become a Saint. She comments on this in 'Story of A Soul'... "but I will seek out a means of getting to Heaven by a little way – very short and very straight, a little way that is wholly new."

Through following the Little Way of St Therese of Lisieux, we are able to grow in appreciation for the Love of The Father and realize our true reliance on Him, allowing us to recognize our identity as Children of God. Whether it be taking a moment to appreciate God's Presence in the ordinary moments of life, practicing gratitude even in times of despair, or maybe even just



switching from secular music to a spiritual podcast on your morning commute, these "little ways" are great stepping stones in helping us grow in Holiness, and ultimately in relationship with Jesus.

In the Parable of the Mustard Seed, Jesus explains to us how the Kingdom of God had humble beginnings, likening it to a small mustard seed that grows into a large shrub. Personally, I always tend to think of St Therese's little

way as a mustard seed, which enables us to grow in conversion of heart so that we may truly know, love and honour Our Lord in all that we do.

St Therese is a great friend to have in our spiritual lives, and this new year is an excellent opportunity to see the fruits that her little way may bear for you because, as she said, "little things done out of love are those that charm the Heart of Christ."

2025...A momentous year for the Catholic Church by Bronagh.

CHRISTMAS Eve 2024 saw the remarkable opening of the Holy Door in St Peter's Basilica, in Rome, by Pope Francis. This marked the beginning of the 2025 'Jubilee Year of Hope' in the Catholic Church. There are five doors in total which will be opened throughout this Jubilee Year, the remaining four located in St John Lateran, St Paul Outside the Walls and St Mary Major (Vatican News 2024).

This event only takes place every 25 years, or at another time declared by the Pope such as in 2000 at the turn of the millennium, and in 1933 to mark the 1900th anniversary of Christ's death. The 2025 Jubilee also coincides with several events, such as the canonization of Blessed Carlos Acutis in April, during the Church's Jubilee of Teenagers, a remarkable story of charity, faith and a true 'pilgrim of hope'.

The idea of the door is significant due to the idea of crossing the threshold of the Holy Door. It is also linked to the Gospel of John: "I am the door, whoever enters through Me will be saved" (Vatican News 2024). The back of the door is bricked up until the Holy Year, when the bricks are removed and the door is opened

by the Pope, and pilgrims can once again walk through it.

This Jubilee focuses heavily on the theme of 'Pilgrims of Hope' – two words that are key in Pope Francis' pontificate. Hope is needed, more than ever, in our world of conflict, anxiety and change. The Jubilee will bring renewed hope to all of those cynical about the future (OSV News, Jan 2024). By focusing the Jubilee on 'Pilgrims', Pope Francis is calling us all to be involved in our parishes as this jubilee year progresses.

The opening of the door symbolizes the renewed chance, a new opportunity, to become 'pilgrims of hope', especially at a time when the world is full of 'new year resolutions', and ideas of 'transformation'. This change could be one which we could all make, to join in and invite God into our lives, helping us to live better lives.

Whilst the Jubilee is happening in Rome, it is also happening in all of our parishes, and in our hearts, and a prayer has been written to help unite everyone across the world in celebrating...

"Father in Heaven, may the faith you have given us in your Son, Jesus Christ, our brother,

and the flame of charity enkindled in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, reawaken in us the blessed hope for the coming of your Kingdom.

May your grace transform us into tireless cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel.

May those seeds transform from within both humanity and the whole cosmos, in the sure expectation of a new heaven and a new earth, when, with the powers of Evil vanquished, Your glory will shine eternally.

May the grace of the Jubilee reawaken in us, Pilgrims of Hope, a yearning for the treasures of heaven.

May that same grace spread the joy and peace of our Redeemer throughout the earth.

To you, our God, eternally blessed, be glory and praise for ever. Amen. (Jubilaeum2025. va Jan2025)



St Agnes - Amazing example of how we should love the Lord with all our hearts! by Cara-Leigh

IN the month of December, I got the amazing opportunity to visit Italy with the Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matará! On our journey we visited the most stunning churches in Vatican City and Rome.

Many of these chapels had relics and the bodies of saints. As we travelled round each church, learning about these saints' beautiful lives and the zeal they had for the faith one, in particular, stuck with me. It was the young virgin martyr, St Agnes.

Agnes was a beautiful young girl, who was sought after by many men to have her hand in marriage, however she had made a promise to God to protect her purity. There are many stories that surround how the young Saint died.

It is said that whenever a man wished to marry Agnes, she would say: "Jesus Christ is my only spouse". The men she turned down became very angry, leading to them reporting her to the authorities for being a Christian (at this time Christianity was illegal).

One incident that has been

recalled is when a Governor's son promised her riches if she was to marry him, but the young saint said: "I am already promised to the Lord of the universe. He is more splendid than the sun and the stars". Out of anger, the man reported this to his father, the governor, saying that she was a Christian. Agnes was asked only to deny God, but the young saint refused. She was then sentenced to death and had her head cut off. St Agnes was only around 12-13 years old at the time of her death.

The life of this young saint really stood out to me because

of her perseverance in the face of evil. She had complete trust in the Lord and had a great love of Him. Her life is a shining example of how we must deepen our relationship with the Lord and grow in love for Him!

It is incredible to hear a story of a girl so young, with such an outstanding spiritual life. She was totally committed to God and, even in the face of death, would not turn her back on Him.

St Agnes is an amazing example for us all on how we should love the Lord with all hearts!



Young Writers share thoughts...

Let us journey as pilgrims of hope with Sr Clare to better ourselves *by Evan*

Sr Clare Crockett's cause for beatification opened this month, as many of you will know, and this is something that fills my heart and deepens my faith.

One of the key elements of this for me is that it comes after having celebrated the Epiphany and the start of the Jubilee Year of 2025 as 'pilgrims of hope'. Ever since Sr Clare's death, and more so during the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns, the people of Derry and further afield have been pilgrims of hope and faith, placing their trust in the intercession of their very own 'Derry Girl', Sr Clare.

For me, Sr Clare has been a key example of how we 'Derry wans' can turn our lives around completely, regardless of what we have done or been through. It reminds me of wise words

once penned by Irish poet, Oscar Wilde: "The only difference between the saint and the sinner is that every saint has a past and every sinner has a future."

This is absolutely true because we, as Catholics, from the moment we come into existence, are given that real opportunity to become saints, whether we are from Derry, Lourdes, Rome, etc.

However, to do that, we have to take Sr Clare's example and truly give to Jesus "all or nothing", because if we hold back and don't take that leap of faith, we may never achieve the heavenly goal offered to us on Good Friday, when Jesus was crucified and died for us. This is the same goal that was offered to Sr Clare that Good Friday in 2008, when she kissed Our Lord's feet and felt the urge to turn her life around, to change



from her old ways so that she could serve Jesus fully with all her mind, body and soul.

In this Jubilee Year as pilgrims of hope, let us embark on the journey with Sr Clare to better ourselves, so that we too may share her company in Heaven when our lives here on Earth end.

Pope Francis' New Year message...

A call to uphold the Constant Life Ethic *by James*

IN Pope Francis' New Year's Day homily for 2025, he made a plea for peace and respect for human rights, urging a "firm commitment to promote respect for the dignity of human life, from conception to natural death."

This Mass took place on the Solemnity of Mary, which aligned with the 58th World Day of Peace, emphasising human dignity and peace as essential values. Pope Francis connects human dignity, peace, and the protection of life in relation to Mary's motherhood and the World Day of Peace.

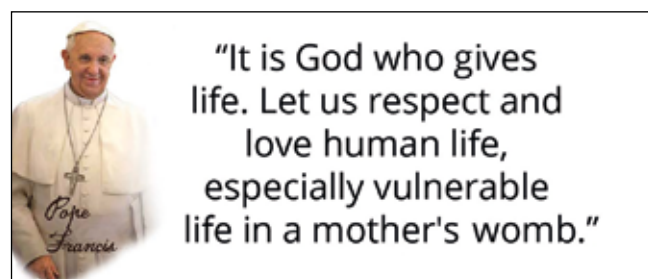
Living in alignment with the Church's values promotes a deep respect for human dignity, peace, and the sacredness of life. It helps create a caring, fair society, where all people are treated with love, care, and respect, reflecting Christ's teachings.

The Pope called for us to value and protect human life at every stage, from conception to natural death. This highlights the importance and basic value of each and every one of us. Fostering this care and protection is vital for maintaining a just society and allows us to build a culture of peace and justice.

The Constant Life Ethic of the Catholic Church values every stage of life, regardless of

age, ability, or situation. This ethic rejects abortion, euthanasia, or assisted death; instead, it emphasises the value of caring for all stages of life, especially those who are suffering or most vulnerable in society.

The Pope highlights how taking the Constant Life Ethic into our



own consciousness and valuing every life is vital for maintaining peace in today's world: "Protecting life, caring for wounded life, and restoring dignity to the life of every 'born of woman' is the essential foundation for building a civilisation of peace."

Pope Francis reminds us that, like us, Christ was "born of woman." He was held and cared for in the same way that many of us were as babies, in a vulnerable and dependent stage of life. The Pope explained that because of this, the Lord "comes among us in all those who need similar care." This illustrates God's presence in human vulnerability.

By acknowledging Christ's presence in the weak, Pope Francis' message highlights how Catholics are required to embody the Church's ideals in clear acts of compassion and care, such as helping the sick, elderly, and unborn, while ensuring their dignity is maintained throughout their lives. He noted that "Mary is the door through which Christ entered this world," quoting St. Ambrose.

Mary is a model of life, hope, and purity, which is important to consider in this Jubilee year, which began at Christmas.

Catholics are urged to reaffirm their faith and pursue spiritual reconciliation during the Jubilee Year, a unique time of grace and forgiveness.

By accepting God's will and caring for Jesus from His conception to His upbringing, Mary demonstrated firm respect for the value and dignity of life. This reflects the

Church's mission to care for all life at all stages, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable.

In his New Year's Day homily, Pope Francis emphasised the importance of human dignity, peace, and the sanctity of life in fostering a society that is compassionate and just. He calls on Catholics to embrace and maintain these ideals. We are reminded of the Constant Life Ethic, which calls on us to defend and cherish life at all stages, especially the most vulnerable, as we consider Mary's acceptance of God's decision and her concern for Jesus.

Catholics are urged to reaffirm their dedication to upholding these principles as we begin the Jubilee Year, ensuring that every life is treated with dignity, love, and respect, in keeping with Christ's compassion for all.

Syro Malabar Sunday School and Parish Day celebrations *by John*

THE anniversary celebrations of the Sunday School and Parish Day of the Syro Malabar community, in Derry, were inaugurated by Bishop Donal McKeown, for the year 2024–2025, in a ceremony after Holy Qurbana (Mass) on the last Saturday of November.

The Parish Trustee, Mr Leo Jose welcomed the new and continuing students, as well as their families, and encouraged

the students to persevere in their studies of the faith this year.

Speeches were given by Fr Joshy Parokkaran and Fr Libin Joseph. The Parish Council Secretary, Mrs Maria Ranjeevan, read out the report detailing the progress of the Parish community over the past year, and the Sunday School Headmaster, Mr Joseph Augustine gave the annual report for the Sunday School.

The prizes for the competitions held by the Sunday School were given out by Bishop McKeown.

Finally, a Vote of Thanks was given by Mr Thomas Robin George. Afterwards, a few cultural programmes took place, which were coordinated by the teachers and students at the Sunday School.

At the end there was an agape meal to finish off the festivities.



Annual General Meeting of the community taking place.



A song sung by the children of the community.



Bishop McKeown lighting the candle during the inauguration.



Annual General Meeting of the community taking place.

Reflection on the birth of Jesus *by Erin.*

ENTERING a new year, it is important for us as Catholics to reflect back on Christmas and what the nativity means to us. For me, both the birth of Jesus and the new year make me think of new beginnings. Jesus' birth was a new beginning at that time and it continues to be now. His birth brought hope and light in the midst of the messy world, and He came to unite us all as one family.

Christmas time allows us to celebrate the unlimited love which Jesus has for each and every one of us, and reminds us to express our gratitude. Dorothy Day, who was an American journalist and has been named a Servant of God, expressed her own gratitude: "I am so glad that Jesus was born in a stable because my soul is so much like a stable. It is poor and in unsatisfactory condition because of guilt, falsehoods, inadequacies and sin. Yet, I believe that if Jesus can be born in a stable, maybe He can also be born in me."

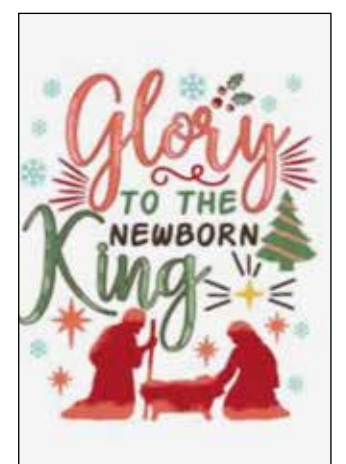
This quote reflects on the idea that Jesus' birth in a stable was very significant, and it continues to teach us to look for God in the

most unexpected places. We can find God in all things, especially when we least expect it, and we can pray to see Him in everyone we meet.

The nativity of the Lord also shows great humility. He becomes one of us, signalling that we should try to become like Him. God becomes an infant in a manger, the most humble state which He could be in. This birth scene, as well as His obedience and total surrender, ultimately shows His love for us. This is why it is important, even after the joyful season of Christmas ends and a new year begins, to keep thanking Him in any way we can.

Personally, I believe we are so blessed in the many ways we can thank God for loving us, such as through prayer or spending time with Him in adoration. However, there is no better way to live out our gratitude than receiving Jesus.

As Catholics, we have Holy Communion as a physical representation of the joy of receiving Him, and a reminder of His presence in our hearts and



lives. Coming into the new year, we should reflect on the fact that we continue to have this gift and that God is still the same. He is always there for us.

Here is a short prayer that I found which reminds us of this:

"Dear God, though Christmas day has passed, the reason we celebrate Christmas continues every day. Your gift of love, grace, and mercy to us is never ending. Thank you that we can count on that every day of our lives. Amen."

Young Writers share thoughts...

Singing a vibrant form of worship that brings joy and strengthens faith *by Niamh*

MUSIC has a way of reaching deep into our hearts, lifting our spirits, and connecting us to something greater than ourselves. For young Catholics, singing is more than just a way to pass the time or a hobby; it is a vibrant form of worship that brings joy to the Church and strengthens our faith.

I recently enjoyed some singing myself, during my school's Carol Service. Throughout history, singing has been central to the Catholic Church's worship. But why does singing bring so much joy to our faith community, and how can it deepen our relationship with God?

When we sing in church, we actively participate in the Mass and engage with the liturgy in a profound way. St Augustine famously said, "He who sings prays twice." This means that when we lift our voices in song, we not only pray with words but also with our hearts and emotions.

Singing is a way to offer our whole selves to God in body, mind, and soul. Hymns and sacred songs often carry messages of hope, gratitude, and love for God. By singing these songs, we immerse ourselves in the truths of our faith. Whether it's the solemnity of 'Ave Maria' or the joyful energy of 'Joy to the World,'



music allows us to connect deeply with the divine and feel God's presence in our lives.

One of the greatest joys of singing in the Catholic Church is that it brings people together. When a congregation sings in unison, it creates a sense of unity and shared purpose. We are reminded that we are not alone in our journey of faith; we are part of a larger family of believers.

Singing alongside people fosters friendships and creates a supportive community where people can grow in faith together. Whether it's preparing for a Sunday Mass or a Christmas celebration, the experience of working together as a choir is

both fulfilling and fun.

Each of us is called to use our talents for the glory of God and singing is a beautiful way to do so. While not everyone feels they have a perfect voice, that's not what matters. What matters is the intention behind the song. God delights in our efforts, whether we're performing in a choir or singing quietly in a pew.

As Catholics, we have the unique opportunity to fill the Church with energy and enthusiasm. When we sing, we inspire others to join in worship, spreading joy throughout the congregation. Our voices can be a light that leads others closer to God.

Materialism *by Luke*

A simple definition of materialism is a tendency to consider material possessions and physical comfort as more important than spiritual values.

From that stock definition alone, it is abundantly clear that this philosophy and lifestyle is fundamentally at odds with the core values that are held to be important in the Bible's teachings. Materialism is a harmful stance and one that easily and almost inevitably leads to greed.

Luke 12:15 plainly records Jesus stating Christianity's position on greed: "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."

Materialism is not necessarily denying the existence of the spiritual realities of the world. To be materialistic isn't exclusive to those who do not hold faith in God. Even those who believe can be materialistic if they prioritise their physical state in the present over their eternal spiritual state.

Anyone who loves money is materialistic to some extent, and the Bible states clearly in the well-known verse Matthew 6:24 that those people must make a choice about what is truly important: "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."

This verse states that it is categorically impossible to hold both God and wealth as your prime motivation. One must supersede the other.

We are also taught that prioritising wealth over religion is a foolish and fruitless endeavour. Matthew 6:19-20 explains the impermanence of all material possessions. "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal."

There is more that is wrong with materialism and greed than just the harm it does to oneself. Greed necessitates selfishness. With this selfishness, people can become willing to hurt others, directly and indirectly, for their own personal gain. Proverbs 29:4 says this plainly: "By justice a king gives a country stability, but those who are greedy for bribes tear it down."

However, ancient examples surrounding kings are far from the only example of this. We see this often enough in the modern world. It is not hard to look on the news and find a story of a rich person or corporation that violates the rights of their employees for their own profit, whether it be through forcing them to work in

THEN HE SAID TO THEM, "WATCH OUT! BE ON YOUR GUARD AGAINST ALL KINDS OF GREED; LIFE DOES NOT CONSIST IN AN ABUNDANCE OF POSSESSIONS." LUKE 12:15

unsafe conditions, withholding pay, paying them less than what their work is worth, or so much more.

We can also see those same people and corporations willing to harm their customers. Creating deceitful advertisements, unsafe or addictive products, and avoiding additional costs wherever possible.

Looking at this, we can conclude that materialism is a real problem in the modern world. There are so many people who see their short time on Earth and decide to fill it with luxury, power and the false god that is money, completely and wilfully blind to the costs to the people around them and their own eternal souls.

I will end with a quote that everyone has heard but I find nonetheless potent. Matthew 19:24: "Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands"

(Ps 19:2) *by Seán*



I have spent all my life living in the isolated countryside of hilly West Tyrone. Surrounded by rolling green hills and distant, obscure blue slopes dotted in trees and divided fields, I always held a deep appreciation for the wonderous nature of the world around me. The crunch of frosty blades of grass in the winter, the flawless, white icing layer of snow that blankets the hills, the smell of soil and wet grass in spring, the dry summer months when the trees are abundant with leaves and memories seem hazy in the sunny heat, and the rustling of parched leaves in the chilling autumn breeze.

Such sensations I have come to love and anticipate, watching each go by as the next one comes, a constant cycle that defines the world we live in. December of

2024 has been the best month for the movement of the sun that I have ever personally witnessed; it seems a strange thing to say, considering that this is the dead of winter, and the days are short and gloomy. However, the movement of the sun this December, both at dawn and dusk, have been remarkable moments to witness.

One aesthetically depressing evening, as I was making the journey home from Derry, my eyes were drawn to a sharp orange line ahead, the sharpest I have ever seen, deeper than that of a steady fire. I thought, at first, it was a man-made structure that had suddenly been erected, but as the next line of trees passed, I was able to reassess the view ahead of me and realised that it was the sunset. It was the oddest thing; a line of the deepest orange

I had ever seen naturally, sharp in definition, drawn out across the entire horizon, outlining the tops of the hills, and yet above it the rest of sky was dark, cloudy, and uninteresting, its light reflecting onto the rippling waters of the Foyle below.

Every time January comes around, I stop to think about the sheer, indescribable beauty of what I can see around me. My experience of that sunset led me back to the hundreds of pages of scripture that have offered me so many words of wisdom and inspiration over the years. I found myself immersed in the words of the Psalms, and I was intrigued by a particular verse. Psalm 19:2 reads: "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands." This verse outlines how the glorious landscapes we are blessed to survey are a result of the great, immeasurable creativity of God. To think that every single, miniscule atom of this universe was individually designed by Our Lord and formulated in such a way that we cannot help but be in awe at it, is frightening in a way.

The complexity of everything around us is beyond our comprehension. Some may attempt to describe it on some weak level through limited language or through scientific hypothesis but, at the end of the day, the pure splendour of our world is far beyond what we as humans can ever understand or explain. It is such a beautiful combination of experiences which our five senses grant to us. Brutal as the creatures of this earth can be, it is a great thing to appreciate their beauty as creations of God.

Psalms 104:24-25 reads: "How many are your works, Lord? In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. There is sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number - living things both large and small."

January is an opportunity for reflection and appreciation of the world that God gave to us. The world exists for our benefit, for our flourishing, for us to live upon and look up to the distant stars of this vast universe. Some people believe that there is no purpose to our 'accidental'

existence. They take the opposite direction in appreciation of our vast universe, instead believing it to be too complex and intricate to have been designed. People who adopt this logic feel personally empowered by rejecting the fact that they were created by a Designer. They dismiss the art of the universe as coincidence, pure chance, and reduce their thought of humanity to little more than disposable, biological matter, and that is why they fall into atheistic immorality.

Rather than tossing aside God in the face of greatness, can we not acknowledge that that greatness is a result of His work? We were placed as the guardians of this world in Imago Dei (image of God). Humans are exceptional beings and the world is our place, where we live and die, flourish and fall.

Right from the beginning of scripture, in the Book of Genesis, this fact was clear. In Genesis 9:2-3, God proclaims: "Fear and dread of you will be in all animals of the earth and in all the birds of the air, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the

fish of the sea. They are given to you. Everything that moves and lives shall be food for you; as I gave you the green plants, I have now given you everything."

The world that God created for us provides everything that we need, and that is why we are the keepers of it, so wonderous in all its intricacy. Genesis 9:7 includes the words, "be fruitful and increase. Abound on the earth and be master of it." This world of shadows where we fail and succeed, where we learn and grow, is all we need.

With the arrival a New Year, it is good to spend time thinking about all that we have to appreciate in the world around us, whether that be our family, our friends, our health, or nature.

John 1:3-5 includes some of the most chilling words of the Bible. It reads: "All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing came to be. Whatever has come to be, found life in Him; life, which for human beings, was also light, light that shines in the darkness, light that darkness could not overcome."



Advent Sundays Tea & Chat in Steelstown



Waterside Ministers of Eucharist & Word Retreat

Epiphany gifts for Gortin & Glenock Churches



Fr Roland Colhoun, Newtown Stewart, Co Tyrone, celebrating the eve of the Epiphany by presenting two antique artefacts to the parish churches. To harmonise with the Magi's gifts to the Christ Child, two generous individuals made these bestowals. The pitch pine pedestal was donated to St Patrick's Church, Gortin. The pedestal originated in the St Louis Convent in Monaghan (1910-2022). The brass lectern was donated to St Eugene's Church, Glenock. The lectern originated in a Sligo convent. The convents closed some years ago and the artefacts became available.

Limavady Carol Service lovely community occasion



Maghera biblical walk through the Mass a wonderful experience by Julie Zeoli

IN the Parish of Glen, Maghera, we recently experienced a wonderful series of video/prayer meetings going under the title: 'A Biblical Walk through the Mass.'

The five video presentations, given by Dr Edward Sri from Ascension Press, were based on The Sacrament of the Eucharist, the Introductory Rites of the Mass, the Liturgy of the Word, The Liturgy of the Eucharist and the Concluding Rites.

Dr Sri spoke with knowledge, love and understanding of the faith, and the sessions were very much appreciated by all who came. There were between 20-25 people at these sessions, mainly older people, but some young ones too! Our parish priest, Fr Paddy Doherty also attended, and at our first meeting, Fr Patrick Lagan from Derry, but originally from Maghera, was present. Also attending each week were four or five people from Derry City and Buncrana, in Donegal!

Each video lasted approximately 30 minutes and we then divided into three groups for the discussion after each one.

Three facilitators helped in leading each of the groups: Julie Galbraith; Paddy Joe Doherty, who also managed all the technical work of showing the

video on the large screen in the Pastoral Centre; and myself. Paddy Joe is used to leading groups for the Marriage Counsel Organisation 'Accord,' and he put up on a flip chart the method of synodal discussion which he said each group should adopt..

Round 1: The facilitator asks each person in turn to give their opinion without interruption.

Round 2: Each person is then asked what moved them the most or impressed them in the contribution of any other speaker.

Round 3: Each person is asked in turn: "What do you think the Holy Spirit is drawing us towards, based on what we have shared?"

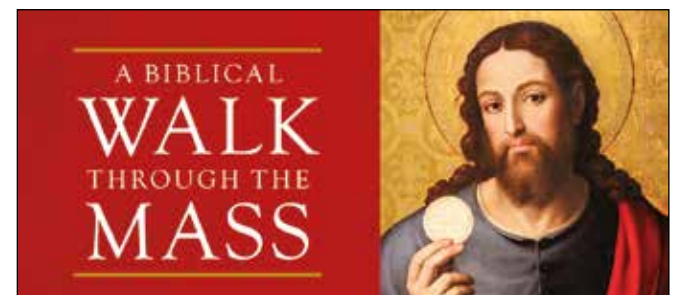
With this method of organising discussion, there was constant chat and contribution in each of the three groups, which was very effective and pleasing.

All the people who attended are regular Mass attendees. It would be natural to think "would it not

be wonderful for some people who do not go to Mass often to come to understand more through watching such a video?", but as an elderly lady, a daily Mass goer, commented, it was beautiful for her to be able to understand all the more about the deeper meaning of the Mass..

These special prayer meetings were initially introduced to us through a Zoom meeting offered by the Living Church Office of Down and Connor Diocese, which also provided excellent work books for use during the sessions (these also contained some home reading and preparatory questions for the next video.

The series of videos is available from Ascension Press at the following website (a year's access costs \$5.95): A Biblical Walk Through The Mass - Ascension (ascensionpress.com).\$5.95.



Re-opening of St Joseph's Church Glenullin

Glenullin community fill church to overflowing for Re-Opening Mass



WHEN the Golden Jubilee of St Joseph's Church in rural Glenullin was celebrated in June 1936, it was recorded that "for some time before the commencement the church was crowded", and when the 100th anniversary of the laying of its foundation stone was celebrated in June 1979, records show that the South Derry church was again "crowded with members of the congregation coming from all over the parish former and parishioners coming back to be present on this very special day."

Well, on November 17, 2024, it was no different, with little children asked to gather on the steps of the sanctuary to free up seats for the many people who gathered in the magnificently refurbished church building for the Re-Opening Mass and Dedication of the Altar by Bishop

Donal. The faithful began arriving as early as 45 minutes before the Mass was due to start, so that by the time the celebratory bells rang out over the countryside the number of people that had passed beneath the 'Céad míle fáilte' banner above the main entrance of St Joseph's had already exceeded seating capacity, with many having to stand during the ceremony.

The ages of those in the congregation crossed the generations, from little babies to great-grandparents, and it was surely one of those great occasions that will live long in the memory, particularly for the children who were seated in the midst of the action, from the arrival of the procession of priests and Bishop at the altar, handing over of the keys from the builder, including

the original 1885 church key, to the blessing and sprinkling of Holy Water throughout the Church by Bishop Donal, the presentation of The Lectionary, the Rite of Dedication, including the Anointing of the Altar and Incensation of the Church, Dressing of the Altar and Lighting of Candles, Procession of the Blessed Sacrament after Holy Communion through the Church, Incensation of the Tabernacle after the Blessed Sacrament was again placed there, the lighting of the Sanctuary candle and its placement within the swinging Sanctuary Lamp by the parish priest, Fr Brendan Crowley, denoting the presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament once again reserved in the Tabernacle, and the powerful singing of the recessional hymn, 'Sing it in the valleys' by the lively Children's Choir.

Grace of God

In a brief address before the ceremony got underway, Errigal Pastoral Group member, Anthony McCloskey welcomed all, saying: "This day has been a long time coming for this community but with the grace of God, it has arrived. A great thank you is owed to everyone who has contributed and those involved who have worked hard in the planning and redevelopment of the Church.

"This Church is the heart of our community, and it has been for generations. Let us pray that through the rededication of our beloved Church, we may grow in faith, hope and love in Christ Our Lord."

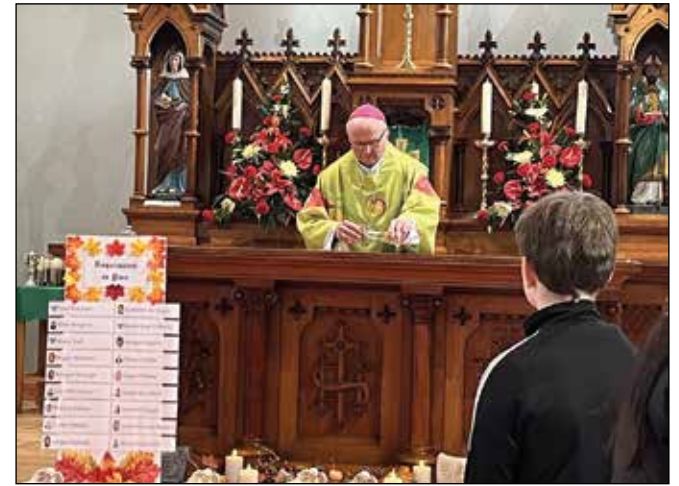
Instrumental in helping the local community pursue their desire to have St Joseph's Church renovated since arriving as parish priest of Errigal, which also includes Ballerin, Fr Brendan told those gathered: "The endeavour of the renovation of this church has been ongoing for almost 18 years, and it is with the effort and determination of many Glenullin parishioners that this dream has been realised.

"It is with grateful appreciation that I acknowledge those who have been associated with the ongoing development of the restoration and renovation over the years, particularly acknowledging the work of the committees both past and present."

Thanking those who had contributed individual donations towards the building fund, as well as those who contribute weekly via the white envelopes and standing orders, he went on to express gratitude to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for its significant £600,000 investment in the project.

Fr Brendan also thanked all who had prepared and participated in the Liturgy of Rededication, and Glenullin GAC and Glenullin Community Centre for the use of the hall over the past 14 months, while work was carried out on the Church building.

Noting that St Joseph's was originally dedicated in 1885, he expressed hope that the extensive renovation will provide a building that is not only fit for purpose for the present community, "but one that will serve future generations who follow in the renewal of their faith in the years to come."



Re-opening of St Joseph's Church Glenullin

Bishop Donal urges Glen of the Eagle parishioners to keep soaring



THIS is a sacred place, made holy by the prayers of generations and by the presence of God, who is hidden in the midst of His people.

These were the opening words spoken by Bishop Donal in his homily for the Rededication of St Joseph's Church in Glenullin, as he assured those gathered that they were "standing on holy ground."

Noting that the building dated back over 140 years, the Bishop remarked that it was "only one of a succession of churches where people have gathered in sunshine and in snow, in famine and in years of plenty, in times of peace and through conflict and persecution, to celebrate life and death, love and heartbreak – and to ask divine grace on the ordinariness of everyday life."

He added: "Today, we give thanks for the ongoing commitment of the people of this community that wants to give glory to God and to have a sacred space that reflects your own rich spiritual and cultural traditions."

Asking what it was that had kept people going down through the centuries, Bishop Donal stated: "The answer is simple enough. Today's readings reflect one simple phrase that we hear at every Mass – 'We wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Saviour Jesus Christ.'

"This life, marred by loss and tragedy, is not as good as it gets. 'Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.' We don't know when that will happen. But it is the certainty of Christ's

victory over sin and death on Calvary that gives meaning to the life that we live here and now."

"There are those who claim that religion takes people away from engaging with the here and now," he remarked, adding: "But the message of Jesus says that life is not just 'eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die'. The secular message says that life is just full of sound and fury, dignifying nothing. Jesus says that life is invaluable, and that love is eternal. Those who have a 'why' for living can cope with almost anything."

"The human heart longs not just to have the means by which to live but thirsts to have a meaning for which to live. Today this community says that it believes in a God who walks with us and calls us by name to share His life – here and hereafter."

Reflecting on the Irish name for Glenullin, 'Gleann an Iolair', translated as the 'Glen of the Eagle', Bishop Donal referred to a passage in the second book of the Bible, where God says to the Israelites whom He is leading from Egypt to the Promised Land: "I have carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself" (Ex 19:4).

He noted: "For someone 3,000 years ago, the wings of the eagle were the most amazing feat of creation, as the bird soared high. As St Peter would later write of God's love and power, 'you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a people set apart' (1 Pet 2:9). Faith in God calls us beyond ourselves to greatness and holiness. We

see that in the lives of saints who found in God one who says that, individually and together, we are capable of great things.

"This independent-minded community has been working for 18 years to reach this day. But your ancestors started working in the decades after the Great Famine to erect a church worthy of God and of yourselves. Then it seems to have taken them seven years from the laying of the foundation stone in 1879 until the opening in 1886. But they knew the strength of the eagle's wings. They erected this fine building, not merely because the clergy were forcing them but because they wanted to assert that they were nobody's poor relation."

"In this hill community, you have a fine church, a community and shopping centre and excellent playing facilities. These have come about because you have produced an intelligent, industrious people who are proud of who you are. It is not through personal greed and power but through strong communities that God can renew the face of our fragmented earth. Keep soaring in Gleann and Iolair."

Synodal

Going on to comment on the large gathering of bishops and laity in Rome during October, with their final document calling for a more synodal church, Bishop Donal remarked: "It seems to me that they must have visited Glenullin to get ideas. Why do I say that? The document insists that, in a church with many big hearted and competent parishioners, pastoral work has to be organised by the community working together, and that we are all co-responsible for the mission of the parish, and accountable to each other for how well we do that work."

"On this re-dedication Sunday, I say, 'Well done, Glenullin. You have fought and argued and worked together to deliver this

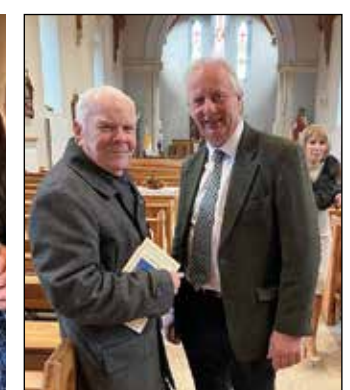
project'. There have been bumps on the road. But you have stuck together and seen this project through. That is church at its best and an example to other communities."

He continued: "Now you have the church which you have long dreamed of and worked for. The next challenge is to keep building a strong faith community here. That does not just mean a people who gather once a week and then disappear. It means developing yourselves as a community of Christ's disciples who want to learn more and more about your faith, and who are determined to help our young people know that they are loved, and that they are called to become saints."

"In earlier generations, people from this part of the Sperrins went as missionaries to the ends of the earth. In a very dangerous world, we still need those who will talk of love and mercy, even when they are laughed at. There is a line in Brian Friel's 'Philadelphia, here I come' where Gar says, 'It's all over and it is all just about to begin'. You have much to celebrate today. Because of that you can face the future with confidence, though we have no idea what it will entail. Gather here each week to worship God. Continue to be open to whatever God is calling you to do and to become. Believe in the God who believes in you, and you will be amazed how you can soar on eagles' wings."

After Mass, Bishop Donal was joined by Fr Brendan and the other concelebrating priests, Fr Brian Brady, Fr John Walsh and Mgr Andy Dolan, along with Fr Chris McDermott, who assisted, and the congregation, as he planted a tree in the church grounds to mark this special occasion in the life of the parish community.

All were then invited to Glenullin Community Hall for a light lunch.



Many feet on the move during Eucharistic Procession with Galliaugh Friars

THE Franciscan Friars of the Renewal in Derry were joined by a few hundred people for its Eucharistic Procession to celebrate the Feast of their patron, Our Lady of Guadalupe, on December 12, including Year 4 and 5 pupils from St Brigid's College, and a number of pupils from St Paul's PS, Slievemore, wearing their Children of the Eucharist t-shirts.

Following the celebration of Mass in St Joseph's Church, Galliaugh, there was a short period of Eucharistic Adoration before the procession made its way along Fairview Road, Fern Road, Glengalliaugh Road, Bradley's Pass, Racecourse Road, Carnhill, and back to St Joseph's Church via Glengalliaugh Road and Moss Road.

En route, Rosary beads, holy medals, prayers and roses, which were blessed at the end of Mass, were given to passing motorists and those who came out of their homes and schools to stand respectfully as the Eucharistic Procession passed by.

Very pleased with how the Blessed Sacrament Guadalupe Procession proceeded, Fr Antonio Maria Diez de Medina CFR commented: "God blessed us with good weather, that is, we had no rain or wind, as a few hundred people walked the streets with our Eucharistic Lord,

a 15 ft x 10 ft banner of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the St Michael the Archangel statue, many other banners and, more importantly, the people themselves who participated and gave witness.

"Our CFR Sisters from Drogheda led the music during the Mass at St Joseph's Church, as well as leading the recitation of the Rosary and song during the walk. I'm grateful to all the lay people who formed part of the core team that realized this event, without them it would have been very small and low-key; but they brought their energy, enthusiasm and commitment to realise this event!

"Several secondary students also participated in handing out blessed roses, prayer cards, miraculous medals and crosses, and a few of the Children of the Eucharist also accompanied us for part of the walk. Our CFR brothers from Limerick had travelled up to Derry to join us for the Guadalupe festivities, and a few Carmelite monks from Termonbacca and Benedictines from Silverstream Priory also blessed us with their presence."

He added: "In the weeks leading up to December 12, many local friends volunteered to help hand out leaflets for the event, which helped build up excitement and spread the word. I'm also grateful to

Bishop Donal McKeown and Rev Michael McGavigan for the use of St Joseph's Church and support for the procession. The police were also helpful as they escorted our group in the streets.

Graces

"Many graces were poured out before and during the Guadalupe Mass and Procession, and new hope is generated as we continue to walk in the Spirit and follow the Spirit's lead."

Celebrating the Mass before the procession got underway, Fr Antonio began his homily by quoting Luke 12:49-50, "I have come to bring Fire to the Earth, and how I wish it were blazing already." Explaining that Jesus was talking about the fire of the Holy Spirit, he told those gathered: "It is here now."

He added: "People are fearful for the future, but God is doing new things amidst the destruction. So what is the Lord doing here in Derry?...On this procession, Jesus is on the move and He is bringing Mama Mary with Him, so there is no need to fear...The Lord wants us to go out and be missionaries on the move."

"When we have the Holy Spirit, we are empowered to go forward," said Fr Antonio, "God wants His people to be fully alive. We need to

be ambassadors for Christ and Our Lady as our life coach."

This Eucharistic Procession will now be followed by a procession with the Blessed Sacrament through the City of Derry on the Feast of St Brigid, February 1, also involving the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal. It will take the same route as last year's very successful Eucharistic Procession, with people gathering in St Columba's Church, Long Tower, at 1 pm before making their way behind the Blessed Sacrament as it is carried through the City Walls down to Guildhall Square for a time of prayer, and then proceeding back to Long Tower via the Bogside.

This year, as well as parishes around the Diocese and other parts of the island being encouraged to hold Eucharistic Processions on the same day, the 'Come Follow Me' titled faith event has attracted attention from various parts of the world, particularly Medjugorje and America, where similar processions will be also held on February 1.

In response to the call, there will be a Eucharistic Procession within the grounds of St Patrick's Church, Claudy, at 2 pm on the Feast of St Brigid, led by Fr David O'Kane PP, while children from the Children's Rosary Group in the Parish will lead the praying of the Rosary.



COME FOLLOW ME
 I AM THE WAY THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE
EUCCHARISTIC PROCESSION
SAT 1ST FEB 2025
STARTS 1PM
LONG TOWER
CHAPEL DERRY

Derry - Medjugorje Processions united at the same time

Feast of St Brigid
www.elfatha.live

Prayer Intentions -

- That world governments recognize Jesus Christ as King
- The end of abortion, euthanasia, war and other measures detrimental to human life
- For the healing of families from sin, division, addictions, suicide
- For the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary
- For the global elite agendas and healthcare dictatorships to give way to the tranquility of God's order
- That the Holy Spirit pour out a new Pentecost of Hope during the Jubilee Year

be.healed.derry.procession@gmail.com

Eangach

Glóir is moladh duit, a Dhé!
Tú an flaitheas ag a bhfuil buanré,
Tú a bhí sa chlí gan choir,
Tú an rí os na ríthe.
Tú do chruthaigh an chruinne,
Tú an sóisear is an seanduine,
Thug crú do chneá ar ár son,
Tú neamh is tú an talamh.
Leat a cumadh an teach thall,
Tú an saor d'ullmhaigh ifreann;
Lá na hainbhine is tú thig,
Is is tú an tairngreacht tháinig.
Tú naofacht mínbhroinn Mhuire,
Tú an diagacht fuil daonnaí,
Tú an té a chathaigh fáir gcóir,
Tú an rí is d'Athair in aonghlóir.

Bás Naomh Stiofáin:

Fad a bhí siad á chlochadh bhí Stiofán ag glao os ard á rá: "A Thiarna Íosa, glac chugat m'anam." Ar thitim dó ar a ghlúine scread sé in ard a ghutha: "A Thiarna, ná hagair orthu an peaca seo." Agus leis sin shíothlaigh sé. (Gníomh: 7)

Rop tú mo baile

(Iomann sa tSean-Gaeilge)

Rop tú mo baile, a Choimdiu cride:
ní ní nech aile acht Rí secht nime.

Rop tú mo scrútain i l-ló 's i n-aidche;
rop tú ad-chear im chotlud caidche.

Rop tú mo labra, rop tú mo thuicsiu;
rop tussu dam-sa, rob misse duit-siu.

Rop tussu m'athair, rob mé do mac-su;
rop tussu lem-sa, rob misse lat-su.

Rop tú mo chathscíath, rop tú mo chlaideb;
rop tussu m'ordan, rop tussu m'airer.

Rop tú mo dítiu, rop tú mo daingen;
rop tú nom-thocba i n-áentaí n-aingel.



Naomh Proinsias Aisís

Naomh Stiofán, an chéad mhairtíreach

Gach bliain, ar an lá i ndiaidh Lá Nollag, ceiliúránn muid *Lá Fhéile Stiofáin*. In Éirinn, ní bhíonn i gceist leis, dn chuid is mó againn, ach lá saoire ina ligeann muid ár scíth mar chuid de shéasúr na Nollag. Itear píosaí den dinnéar Nollag atá fágtha, b'fhéidir, nó téitear ar cuairt ar ghaolta, nó bíonn lá suaimhneach ann. Fadó, bhíodh nósanna traidisiúnta ag muintir na hÉireann ar an lá seo, agus rachadh *lucht an Dreoilín* ó dhoras go doras ag bualadh ceoil.

Ní bhíonn muid eolach, b'fhéidir, gur ar an lá seo a cheiliúrtar an chéad mhairtíreach inár n-Eaglais, an chéad duine a cuireadh chun báis mar gheall ar an chreideamh a bhí aige in Íosa, agus a d'fhógair sé. Lena scéal a aimsiú, ní mór dul siar go laethanta luatha na hEaglaise, fiú go leathanaigh an Bhíobla é féin. Sa leabhar *Gníomhartha na nAspal*, bhí an Spiorad Naomh i ndiaidh tuirlingt ar na hAspail ar lá Cincise, tháinig borradh ar líon na ndeisceabal. D'éirigh conspóid nuair a deir dream amháin nach raibh freastal go leor ann dá mbaile leochaileacha. Ní raibh an *dáréag* (na chéad easpaig) ábalta stad den obair ag fógairt an Bhriathair agus an fás ollmhór ar an eaglais, agus i

ndiaidh dul i gcomhailre le chéile agus guí ar Dhia, roghnaigh siad seachtar fear 'a bhí lán den Spiorad agus den eagna' a mbeadh sé mar chúram acu a bheith ag obair mar chúntóirí. Leag an *dáréag* lámha orthu, agus bhí páirt acu i ministreacht an *dáréag*. Ba iadsan na chéad *Deochaine* (i. *diakonos*, a chiallaíonn *seirbhíseach*). Ba é Stiofán duine den seachtar seo a bhí tofa.

Tá umhlacht i gceist leis an ról seo a tugadh don seachtar, cinnte. Ba í an chonspóid a bhí ann a ba chúis leis seo ná go raibh na *Heilléanaigh* (an dream a raibh cultúr Gréigeach acu) ag maíomh in éadan na *nEabhrach* (an dream le cultúr Giúdach) nár freastalaíodh ar a mbaintreacha féin i gceart sa fhriothálamh laethúil. Toghadh na fir seo le freastal ar na daoine – "*chun dul ag freastal ag boird*" – agus amharc i ndiaidh an phobail. Umhlacht cinnte. Ach tá le feiceáil ina dhiaidh sin go bhfuil níos mó i gceist leis seo – atá léirithe ag Stiofán.

Deirtear linn gur leath briathar Dé agus gur tháinig borradh mór ar líon na gcreidmheach in Iarúsailéim agus gur ghlac cuid de na sagairt iad féin leis an chreideamh (sagairt



Naomh Stiofán á chur chun báis

an Teampaill). Tcítear, ansin, Stiofán lán den Spiorad Naomh: "*Bhí Stiofán lán de ghrásta agus de chumhacht agus é ag déanamh éachtaí agus míorúiltí taibhseacha i measc an phobail*". Bhí éad ar fhear nárbh fhéidir leis Stiofán a shárú le hargóintí, agus rinne comhcheilg ina éadan. Gabhadh Stiofán agus tugadh os comhar na Sainidríne é.

Stiofán os comhar na Sinidríne
Cruinníodh finnétithe bréige le chéile fianaise a thabhairt in éadan Stiofáin, agus cuireadh an diamhasla ina leith. Tá line neamhghnách ann sa scríoptúr ansin: "*Bhí a raibh ina suí sa tsainidríne ag faire go dlúth ar Stiofán agus thug siad faoi deara go raibh a ghnúis mar bheadh gnúis aingil*."

Bhí ar Stiofán a chosaint a thabhairt ansin, agus is é an rud a rinne sé ná ciall na scríoptúr "a oscailt" dóibh siúd a bhí i láthair. Chuaigh sé siar fríd stair phobal Dé, ó Abrahám, Íosac, Maois, Dáivi, agus na fáithe, agus mhínigh sé dóibh gurbh é Íosa an Meisias a bhí le teacht, de réir theachtairacht na bhfáithe! Bhí siad ina éadan seo agus nuair a bhí fis ag Stiofán ansin – "*Féach, feicim na flaithis ar oscailt agus Mac an Duine ina sheasamh ar dheis Dé*" – thug siad amach as an chathair é ansin lena chlochadh. Cuireadh chun báis é, an chéad duine san Eaglais a dúnmharaíodh mar gheall ar an chreideamh. An lá ina dhiaidh theacht Íosa ar an tsaol mar Chríost, cuimhnimid air!

Deochaine, an seanrud agus an rud athnuaithe

Leis seo, tugadh dúinn rud éigin atá linn go fóill. Ba í Lá Cincise 'lá breithe' na hEaglaise, nuair a tháinig an Spiorad Naomh de réir mar a gheall Íosa dá dheisceabail. Ó shin, craobhscaoileadh an Dea-scéal agus stiúir an Spiorad an Eaglais. Cuireadh ar bun an lá sin, le roghnú an tseachtair, Ord na nDeochaine, a bhfuil páirt acu in obair na nEaspag, ag tabhairt seirbhíse ar son phobal Dé. Tá an deochain ina chomhartha ar Íosa a bheith ina sheirbhíseach dúinn. Cosúil leis na Sagairt, tá Oird Bheannaithe acu. Thig leo feidhmeanna saicrimintíúla a chomhlíonadh, m.sh. a bheith mar mhinistir nuair a bhíonn baisteadh nó pósadh ann, agus tugann siad seirbhís ag an altóir le linn an Aifrin. Fógraíonn siad Briathar Dé, agus is é an deochain a léann an tSoiscéal agus a thugann seanmóireacht, má tá sé i láthair ag an Aifreann. Bíonn ministreacht seirbhíse acu taobh amuigh den seipéal chomh maith agus déanann deochaine obair iontach ag tabhairt cúraim do na

heasláin, do phríosúnaigh, dóg agus aosta, agus ina bparóistí.

Is léir go raibh na deochaine ann ó thús na hEaglaise, luaite sna scríoptúir féin (agus *b'fhéidir* go raibh siad ann sular bunaíodh na Sagairt, ministreach eile a ghlacann páirt i ministreacht na nEaspag!) Níl muid chomh cleachtaithe lena bhfeiceáil go minic in Éirinn inniu. Bhí siad ann mar ord buan ag tús na hEaglaise. Sna meánaoiseanna, bhí go leor deochaine ann, ach ba dhaoine iadsan a bhí ag dul le bheith ina Sagairt de réir a chéile (bhí mórán Sagart de dhíth an t-am sin). I lár na 20ú hAoise, d'aithin an Eaglais an luach le hathbheochan na ministreachta seo mar ord buan inár saol inniu, agus inspioráid faighte ó eiseamláir na ndeochaine a chonaic siad i measc Chríostaithe an Oirthir (ár gcomhChaitlicigh Biosántacha agus na hOrtadacsáigh). Tá Deochaine Buana againn arís mar ord ar leith, agus tá bláth ar a n-obair cheana féin. Tá sé oscailte d'fhir neamhphósta agus – cosúil leis na

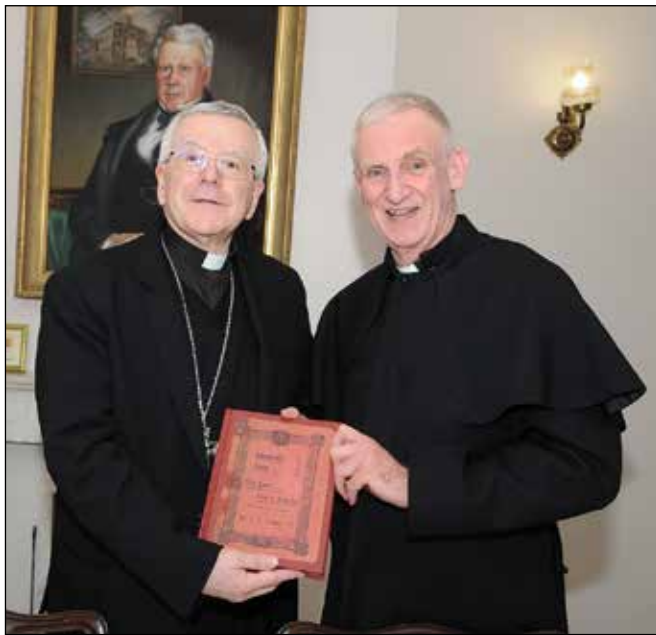


caitlicigh i dtraidisiún an Oirthir – tá sé oscailte d'fhir phósta chomh maith, fhad is a bhfuil siad pósta roimh ré.

I stair na hEaglaise, tá deochaine ann a mhair go fíréanta agus atá ina eiseamláir iontach dúinn féin inniu. Is é ceann acu na Naomh Labhrás, a bhí ina dheochain sa Róimh. Le linn thréimhse na gearleanúna, thug na húdaráis air *saibhreas na hEaglaise* a thabhairt dóibh. Mar fhreagairt, thug sé slua bocht na gcríostaithe

leis chucu – gnáthdhaoine – agus ar leis gur iadsan saibhreas na hEaglaise. I ngan fhios don chuid is mó againn, ba dheochain é Naomh Proinsias chomh maith, a bhfuil clú agus cáil air mar dhuine. Oirníodh ina dheochain é, ach ní raibh sé riamh ina shagart. Bhí saol umhal aige amach is amach, agus i measc rudaí eile, bhunaigh sé na Proinsiasaigh, agus d'athnuigh sé mórán in Eaglais an lae sin.

Multilingual welcome for Papal Nuncio at Drumragh 125th celebration



THE Year 2024 came to a close with the final commemoration of the opening 125 years ago of Sacred Heart Church, Drumragh, in Omagh, with the Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Luis Mariano Montemayor visiting on Sunday, December 8, to celebrate a special anniversary Mass.

Parish Priest, Fr Eugene Hasson extended a warm welcome to

His Excellency, Archbishop Montemayor and Bishop Donal, who were joined on the altar by a number of priests for the celebration of the Eucharist, including former Parish Priest, Mgr Joseph Donnelly, with 97-year-old Fr Michael Keaveny joining in via the church webcam from Longfield Nursing Home.

This was followed by members

of the parish community coming forward to deliver a message of welcome to the Papal Nuncio in different languages, to reflect the various nationalities of those present for the ceremony, including French, Spanish, German, Italian, Ukrainian, Filipino and Irish.

In return, the Papal Nuncio expressed his happiness at being amongst the Drumragh parish community, not only to celebrate the 125th anniversary but also for the relaunch of Rev John J McGlade's book, 'Five Years Tour in America', which was first published in 1906. Many took the opportunity to purchase a copy of the historical document afterwards and have it signed by Archbishop Montemayor and Bishop Donal, while enjoying refreshments in the neighbouring St Joseph's Hall.

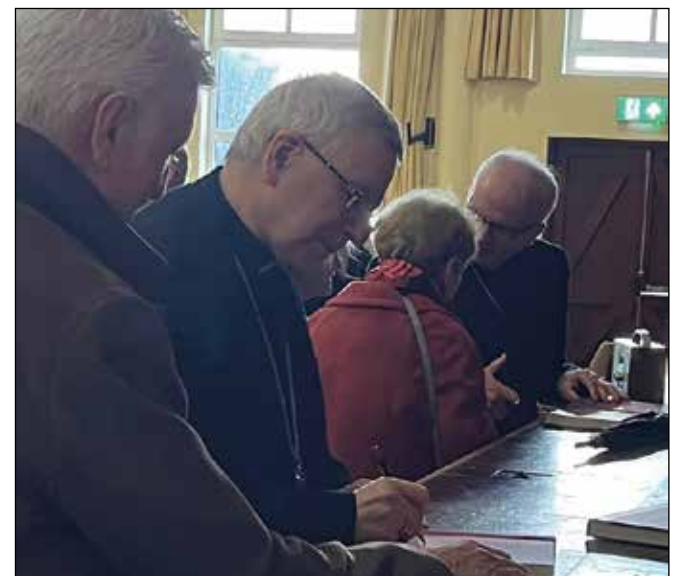
Delighted to be part of the occasion, Bishop Donal told 'The Net': "It was great to see the faith community in Drumragh gathered to celebrate its pride in who they are before God. This celebration of the church's 125th anniversary reflected the parish's confidence in its identity, history and mission.

"I was struck by the range of languages in which the Papal

Nuncio was greeted by parish representatives - French, Spanish, Italian, German, Irish, Ukrainian and Tagalog. That is a sign of the different people who now make up the community, but the relaunch of Fr JJ McGlade's book shows that, even 125 years ago, the people of Drumragh thought big and thought internationally.

"This year of celebrations is a great preparation for the Jubilee Year with the theme 'Pilgrims of Hope'. And that is reinforced by the 350th anniversary of the Sacred Heart visions to Sr Margaret Mary Alacoque and the Letter from Pope Francis 'Dilexit Nos'. The parish is blessed in being able to celebrate its 125th anniversary with such blessed messages from Heaven."

As the final part of the anniversary celebrations, the Nuncio also blessed the historic Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto that was recently relocated from Loreto Convent, Brook Street, Omagh, to the grounds of St Mary's Church, in Drumragh. And he enjoyed hearing about the history of the 260-year-old Church, which is the oldest in continuous use in the Diocese of Derry, and admiring its penal cross.



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Carnhill time of prayer and reflection on St Brigid – The Peacemaker



Fr Sean O'Donnell with Grainne Doherty and some members of the Parish Pastoral Council who prepared the St Brigid night of reflection.

AS part of the Three Patrons' Parish programme to mark the 1500th anniversary of the death of St Brigid of Kildare, a special evening of music, prayer and reflection on this 'Woman of Peace' was celebrated in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill.

Welcoming those gathered to pray for peace in the world, Fr Sean O'Donnell also prayed in thanksgiving for the generosity of countless people who strive to relieve suffering in the world.

Taking place as the clocks were turned back an hour, the time of reflection was entitled 'A change of hour, a change of heart – pausing to pray for peace in our world', and was led by Grainne Doherty, in conjunction with members of the Parish Pastoral Council.

A piece of Scripture from Matthew 5: 43-48 was read, in which Jesus told His followers: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you that you may be children of your Father in Heaven. He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?."

Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Reflecting on this "most challenging Gospel passage", Grainne remarked: "It is one of Jesus' ultimate statements of what being a follower of His involves. He is saying that God is in every person we meet, not just those who we naturally like. He tells us that we are both most like Christ and encounter Christ when we care and look after one another, whoever they may be and whatever they may do. As Christians, we are called, and challenged, to respond to hate and violence with love and compassion and peace. This does not mean that we passively accept the hate and violence. Rather, we hold out another way! God is saying to us that if we choose to respond with anger, with hatred, with violence to another when they do us wrong, then we are only contributing to the violence."

She continued: "We gather at a time when very many parts of the world are immersed in a daily hell of fear, and pain, and grief. I can't begin to imagine the terror that a person undergoes every time a siren goes off letting people know that yet another bombardment of bombs are heading towards them. Every time I come home and put the key in my front door,

I think of all those who no longer have a home in which they can do the same. And thinking of all of those who are suffering at the hands of others, I wonder how does it all start? How do we get to a point that we think the only way for us to feel safe is to hate, and maim, and perhaps kill others?"

Resentments

Grainne went on to encourage those gathered to ask themselves what resentments each was carrying, saying: "They might be over years, or they might've come from much more recently. Sometimes our resentments become so much part of us, we can't even remember how they began, and sometimes, these resentments can grow and spiral into lashing out at others, often violently."

Holding up St Brigid, the Peacemaker, as a role model to look upon in learning how to follow Christ's challenge to love those who do us wrong, Grainne noted that she was "famous for bridging divides in her family, in society, in the monasteries she established, in the church", and that there are many stories of her bringing warring tribes together. The daughter of a pagan father and Christian mother, Brigid was known to be able to bring harmony between different religious groups.

Recounting the famous story of Brigid's cloak as a reminder of God's love and desire for peace for each one, Grainne invited those gathered to imagine this cloak, which was so large that its edges were out of sight, was God's love and protection gathered around them.

"We remember all of those in war-torn situations," she added, "people who are being bombed, people who are homeless, people who are hungry and in pain, and who are grieving. We pray that we can work in a way that they will also feel God's cloak of protection and peace and love gathered around them."

"As we imagine Brigid's cloak of

peace and love, we ask ourselves: How are we called to live out this peace and love in our own lives? How do we live out this peace and love with members of our families, our friends, our neighbours? How do we deal with our anger, our pain, perhaps our sense of betrayal at past hurts? How can we work towards alleviating the pain and the grief of people in the world today who are experiencing hatred and terror, rather than love, and peace?"

"Brigid understood that peace often goes hand in hand with justice," continued Grainne, "Loving and caring for someone often calls us to look at how unequal and how unjust our world, our society, our church often is."

Referring to the story of St Brigid giving away her father's jewelled sword to a beggar who asked her for help, and of a beautiful icon of St Brigid by Sr Aloysius McVeigh, that is now in Kildare, Grainne spoke of how the Derry Mercy Sister portrayed Brigid as 'standing' on the sword "as a sign that we are called to stamp out injustice and war."

"It is not sufficient," she said, "to look after the poor, we must also ask 'why they are poor' and really strive to help those who we, as a society, normally choose to ignore, to silence, to disempower, to discriminate against."

Peace Cross

She went on to tell the story of St Joseph's School, Derry, in 1983, learning how to make St Brigid's crosses and about St Brigid, the Peacemaker: "Looking at their own situation of violence in Northern Ireland at the time, they wanted to work to bring about the end of war, not only in their own country, but in the world. As a result, they made crosses, sold them and gave the proceeds to Afri – a charity that works for peace in the world."

"This led to the launch of the Brigid Peace Cross Campaign by Nobel and Lenin Peace-Prize

winner Sean MacBride in Derry in 1983. Thousands of young people throughout Ireland took up the campaign, availed of the education material produced by Afri and, by making the crosses, not only kept the ancient tradition alive but also supported Afri's work for the promotion of justice, peace and human rights. This associating our struggle for peace in the world and the power and symbolism of St Brigid's cross continues up to the present day.

"When we make our Brigid's cross – and keep turning it in order to weave it together – we are reminded that at the same time as three points of the cross reach out into the world, one of its points is always directed inwards towards ourselves. In the weaving, we are challenged to remember that we are all connected to one another and responsible for one another. 'Whatever you do to the least of your sisters and brothers, you do to me'."

Reflecting on how Brigid had lived on the threshold, always caught up in working for change, opening herself up to new possibilities, Grainne remarked: "On the day, that we change back the clocks and face into the Winter months, we are called to

take this threshold time to reflect on what we can change in our own lives to help bring peace into our families, into our communities, into our world. What attitudes and behaviours can we let go of in ourselves that will help bring healing rather than pain? What actions can we change in our lives that help lift people up rather than making them feel small within themselves? What relationships within our lives might need more attention and compassion at this time?"

"As each one of us feels St Brigid wrapping the cloak of God's love around us, as we remember how we are each made in the image and likeness of the divine, we reflect on where God may be calling us to be especially loving and welcoming in our lives at this time. We ask God to help us reach out in a special way to someone we know who may be struggling a bit with life at the moment, someone who may be feeling vulnerable or lonely, or who finds it difficult to believe that they are truly gifted and unique human beings who are deeply loved by God. We pray that St Brigid's thirst for peace will enter our hearts to help us work for that peace in our lives and in the life of the world at this time."



Fr Sean O'Donnell CC Three Patrons wearing his new St Brigid vestments

After 25 years of priesthood, battling back from cancer and serious car accident...

Bond fan Fr Dermot McGirr reflects on a life shaken but not stirred



REFLECTING on an eventful 2024 as he welcomed another New Year, Fr Dermot McGirr is thankful for his 25 years of priesthood, while getting used to his first appointment as a parish priest.

Shortly after celebrating his Silver Jubilee last July, whilst ministering as a curate in the Parish of Desertmartin, Fr Dermot was entrusted with the principal role in the Parish of Banagher, encompassing the Churches of St Joseph's, Fincairn, St Mary's, Altinure, and St Peter's & St Paul's, Ballymonie, Foreglen.

He recalled: "When the Bishop said that he was making me a parish priest I felt nervous about the added responsibility of the position. When you are a curate someone else is in charge, now all the calls are for me!"

However, the friendly welcome by the people of Banagher and their great support has helped to make the adjustment that bit easier. Indeed, Fr Dermot feels blessed by the many wonderful people who have supported him in his vocation, since he took the initial step in responding to the call to priesthood that first came to him as an altar boy.

The Lifford native shared a memory of standing at the sacristy door one Sunday morning before Mass and watching the Clonleigh Parish Priest at the time, the late Fr William McGaughey, setting up the altar, and thinking: "I'd like to do that."

He continued: "Later, at St Columba's College in Stranorlar, the interest came back. I thought about it more seriously in my leaving year,

when teachers and career staff were talking to us about our future path.

"The College was in the Raphoe Diocese and one day its Vocations' Director came in to speak to the senior boys about vocations. I found him very encouraging in what he said that day and talked to him. He understood that if I wanted to continue to find out more, I would be talking to my own Diocesan priests.

"Eventually I approached my home parish curate, Fr Brian Donnelly, for a chat. This was followed by conversations with Fr Michael Doherty, the Vocations' Director, and then a Vocations Retreat in Termonbacca. After interviews with the Diocese I was accepted."

Fr Dermot went on to share another memory of the process, which is all the more special now: "I had to get a reference for the seminary from my parish priest, Fr McGaughey. I still remember that Sunday evening, going to the Parochial House and sitting in Father's front room while he sat at his desk writing the reference that I needed. He and his brother, Fr John, were from the Banagher Parish, and now I find myself in their home parish for my first time as a parish priest."

Seminary

He started the seminary at Maynooth in September 1988, with 71 others. The first month was a spiritual one, introducing them to seminary life. After this, 10 seminarians were sent to St Malachy's Minor Seminary in

Belfast, leaving 61 to journey together in Maynooth.

Recalling happy memories of the seminary, Fr Dermot said: "I was fortunate to have good friends in Maynooth, and I met some good, capable, genuine, eccentric, and unique characters. Some were ordained come their time, while others left as they reflected more on their distinct path.

"In such an environment, you learn about one another's journey and hear different viewpoints of worldly experiences and how faith is lived in that. Encouragement was also given in the more challenging, thoughtful, and personal moments, as we deliberated on our own path."

He added: "My own journey took a few extra turns and years, until I was told that my Ordination Day was on July 4, 1999. I thought it appropriate, with that date being American Independence Day and me an American football fan.

"I was ordained along with Fr Adrian Porter, who actually helped me all through the Ordination ceremony. We had rehearsed but, on the day, I couldn't remember what we had to do next... the consecration prayer... the anointing! Thankfully, we were taken alphabetically at each step, so Adrian went first and I watched and followed his lead to keep me right.

"Sadly, Fr Porter died in an accident a year-and-a-half later. May the Lord grant eternal peace for his young priestly servant who had made an impact on his parishioners."

The middle child of three sons born to Fiona and the late Pat McGirr, Fr Dermot highlighted the importance of parents in the story of a priest, as his were for him.

He recalled: "When I came home from school one day and asked my mum would it be ok if I went on to be a priest, without hesitation she said, 'Of course. We'd support you whatever you go on to do.'

"Mum and dad helped me to flit to Maynooth and called to Kildare to visit one Sunday a month, to see how I was getting on. And at the end of each year, before the summer

holidays, dad came down in the car and packed in whatever was going home for the summer months.

"Their steady support, their presence, encouragement and faith mattered a lot. Dad died in Christmas week 2016, on December 27."

Ministering

Fr Dermot's life ministering as a priest began as a curate in Derry City, in the Parish of Creggan, where he spent eight years before moving to Galliagh for six-and-a-half years, then to Omagh for two-and-a-half years, and Desertmartin for eight years, before being appointed as Parish Priest of Banagher in 2024.

Reflecting on the experience, he said: "The priests I have ministered alongside in different situations have been sure of their vocation, and have given me things to think about and learn from along the way.

"Each Parish has its own spirit and variety of personalities to fit in with. Each parish community also has its sincere, forthright, brave and unique brand of faith, goodness and decency being lived out by real people, from the young to the elderly. I have met incredible people in each parish."

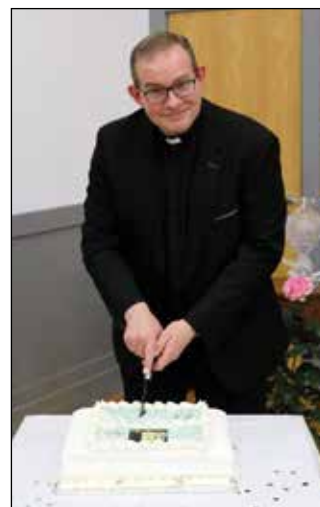
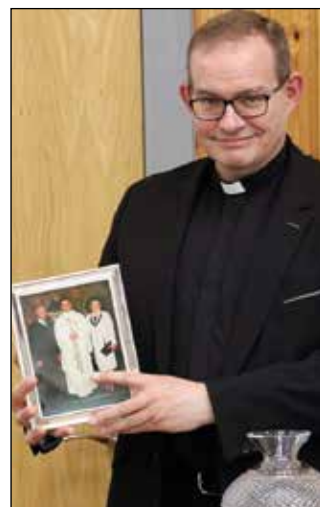
Fr Dermot's priesthood has also been enriched by a couple of challenging episodes in his personal life, one being diagnosed with cancer in his left kidney, which was removed in 2010, and another being involved in a car accident 10 years ago while he was a curate in the Drumragh Parish, Omagh, in which he suffered a badly broken humerus, four fractured ribs, a damaged spleen, and double vision that required eye surgery.

"I have no memory of it," he commented, "all I can remember is putting a bag into the back seat of my car and next thing I remember is Mgr Donnelly and Fr McCaughey standing over me in the hospital. I had been cut out of the car. Now, I have plates and pins in my upper arm."

A major Bond movie fan, Fr Dermot may have been a little shaken by these traumas in his



Silver Jubilee



continued from page 20

life, but not stirred. Instead, he has found that he is able to connect better with people he visits who are experiencing illness.

"I find it helps patients I visit to know that priests experience accidents or illnesses too," he remarked, adding: "It is a shared experience that offers hope and encouragement. Also, my father had Alzheimer's for the last five years of his life, which has given me an insight into how very difficult this illness is to work with."

Movie buff

Being a movie buff also helps connect with his parishioners and what a collection of albums the 54-year-old has; filled with signed photographs of film stars he has managed to meet at movie conventions (cons) over the years.

As well as meeting three of the seven James Bonds – George Lazenby, Roger Moore, and Daniel Craig, some minor Bond characters, crew members, and director, John Glen, he has met Mads Mikkelsen, of the Hannibal series, Gillian Anderson, who played Scully in X-Files, and lots of Star Trek actors, including William Shatner and Leonard Nimoy, who played childhood heroes, Captain Kirk and Mr Spock, and actors from the Marvel movies.

He has also met Burt Reynolds, Ernest Borgnine, Tony Curtis, Sylvester Stallone, Jason Statham, Michael Fassbender, Tim Allen, Robert Powell, who played Jesus in the television series 'Jesus of Nazareth' in the late 70s, and Starsky & Hutch and Huggy Bear stars, Paul Michael Glaser, David Soul and Antonio Fargas.

He has also enjoyed going along to film premieres on occasions with fellow movie buffs in the off-chance of meeting the stars and getting their autographs or even a photograph with them.

Recalling a couple of experiences, Fr Dermot said: "To get a good spot at a premiere, you have to go early, and while you are waiting around you get to chatting with people next to you. One guy we were talking to at a Bond premiere was surprised when he asked what I worked at and I told him that I was a priest. Sometime later, a German news reporter came along looking to interview people in the crowd, and the guy I was talking to told her to talk to me, as I was a priest!"

"On another occasion, years ago, I and two other priest friends and one of their sisters were at a recording of an episode of the television show 'Frasier', in Los Angeles. It takes four-and-a-half hours to tape a 22-minute show, so to keep everyone going a comedian comes into the audience between scenes being recorded and tells jokes and talks to people. When he asked if anyone was from out of town, we four stuck up our hands. Getting that we were from Ireland, he asked what we worked at. Again, when we said that we were priests, he was surprised, and chatted with us for a bit.

"Fast forwarding a few years, the four of us were back for another recording of 'Frasier' and it happened that the same comedian was entertaining the audience. When we told him that we were Irish, he studied us for a few seconds and then said, 'Hold on, I remember you guys! You were here before and you have some kind of unusual job. You're like firemen or something. The three of us said that we were priests and he exclaimed, 'That's it! You're priests! I knew there was something about you!'"

As well as celebrating his priesthood and enjoying life in general, word is out that Fr Dermot has a special celebration during the first month of each new year... his birthday is on January 22! No doubt, the Banagher folk will make sure it is a good one!

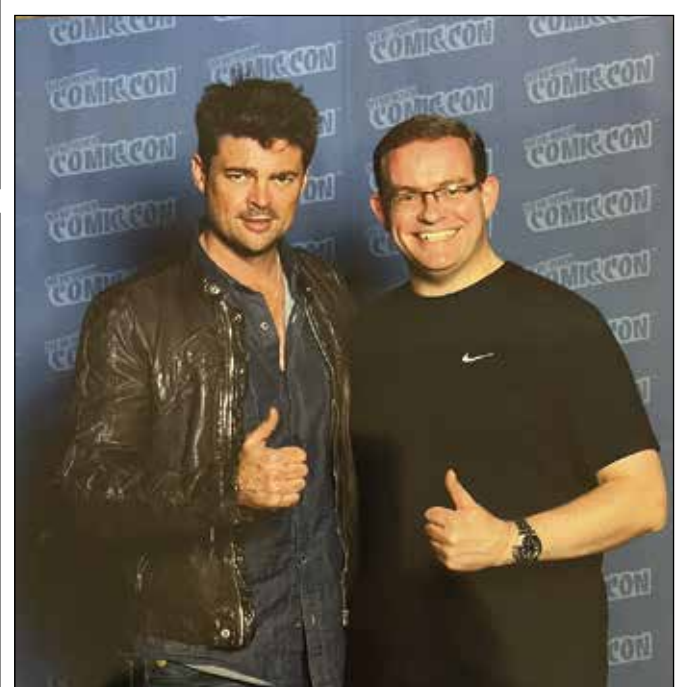
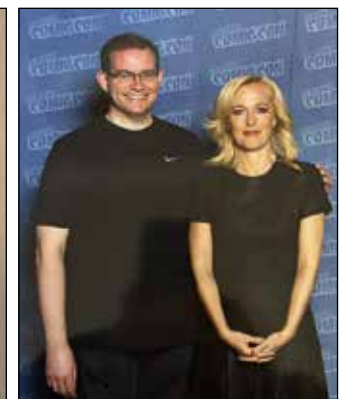
Leaving Desertmartin



PP Banagher Induction



Movie Cons



Ruach...Breath of the Spirit

Committing to change in 2025 ...as Pilgrims of Hope



AS the New Year gets underway, many will be embracing the tradition of making resolutions with the intention of improving their life in some way in the coming year. This ancient tradition was apparently established about 4,000 years ago, by the Babylonian kings as a way of welcoming a new year with the hope of becoming better.

Pope Francis has designated 2025 as a Jubilee Year, with the theme 'Pilgrims of Hope', which he officially launched on Christmas Eve by opening the Holy Door of St Peter's Basilica. During the opening rite, the Holy Father prayed: "In this season of grace and reconciliation grant that we may put our trust in your mercy alone and discover once more the way that leads to the Father."

He continued: "Open our souls to the working of the Holy Spirit, that He may soften the harshness of our hearts, that enemies may speak to each other again, adversaries may join hands, and people seek to meet together."

The Papal Bull announcing the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025 is entitled 'Spes Non Confundit' - 'Hope does not disappoint' - the words of encouragement spoken by the Apostle Paul to the Christian community of Rome (Rom 5:5).

Romans Chapter 5 is entitled 'Faith guarantees salvation' (New Jerusalem Bible), and is reassurance for today too (see Rom 5:1-11). Following on from the words in this passage used for the title of Pope Francis' Bull of Indiction, we read "because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given us" (Rom 5:5). This is the same Holy Spirit that descended upon the Apostles, who were chosen by Jesus "through the

Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:2). Jesus told them in conversation after His Resurrection: "John baptized with water but, not many days from now, you are going to be baptized with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5). And, it is the same Holy Spirit that we receive at Baptism and Confirmation.

Just as Jesus told His Apostles that they would "receive the power of the Holy Spirit" and then be His "witnesses to earth's remotest end" (Acts 1:8), the same mission has been given to all baptized in the name of The Father, of The Son and of The Holy Spirit.

We read in Acts 1:14 that while the Apostles waited in the upper room to receive the power of the Holy Spirit, "with one heart they all joined constantly in prayer, together with some women, including Mary, the Mother of Jesus" (Acts 1:14).

Holy Spirit

Acts also tells us of this great coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost day, in the upper room: "Suddenly, there came from Heaven a sound as of a violent wind which filled the entire house in which they were sitting; and there appeared to them tongues as of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each of them. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak different languages as the Spirit gave them power to express themselves" (Acts 2:1-4).

When a crowd gathered on hearing this great sound, some "amazed and perplexed" while others made fun of them, Peter stood up and reminded them of what the Prophet Joel had said: "In the last day - the Lord declared - I shall pour out My Spirit on all humanity. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your young people

shall see visions, your old people dream dreams. Even on the slaves, men and women, shall I pour out My Spirit. I will show portents in the sky above and signs on the earth below. The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the day of the Lord comes, that great and terrible Day. And all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Acts 2:14-21).

Those gathered asked: "What are we to do?" (Acts 2:37), and Peter told them: "You must repent, and every one of you must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise that was made is for you and your children, and for all those who are far away; for all those whom the Lord our God is calling to Himself" (Acts 2:38-39). And this promise is for all today too.

Constant community prayer is highlighted here, while those gathered in the upper room waited, uniting them in not giving up on the promised gift of the Holy Spirit and strengthening their belief that what Jesus had told them, would come to pass.

Our Diocese is marking the start of the 'Pilgrims of Hope' Holy Year united in 33 days of live, online prayer with Bishop Donal and some of our priests, including the Rosary, which will lead to our consecration to Jesus through Mary. This time of prayer begins each night by calling upon the Holy Spirit. The hope is that families will get involved in this prayer journey and that the experience will encourage them to continue to gather together for prayer each night, and so strengthening our belief in Jesus and His teachings handed down the generations, while Mary, Our Heavenly Mother, draws us ever closer to His Sacred Heart.

Sacred Heart

As well as the Papal Bull of Indiction, 'Spes Non Confundit', we also have Pope Francis' recent encyclical, 'Dilexit Nos', celebrating the Human and Divine Love of the Heart of Jesus Christ, to contemplate during this Holy Year

as Pilgrims of Hope.

The day before our consecration journey started, Pope Francis blessed four Pilgrim Sacred Heart Statues bound for Ireland as part of the 2025 Jubilee Sacred Heart Crusade of Love and Hope; one for each of the four provinces. They will be brought throughout the dioceses for pilgrims to visit and venerate until June, the month of the Sacred Heart. The Irish Sacred Heart Crusade will culminate at the International Eucharistic and Marian Shrine in Knock, Co Mayo, on June 22, where Archbishop Eamon Martin will celebrate Mass and consecrate Ireland to the Sacred Heart for the first time in over 150 years.

So, the Holy Year is off to a good start in Derry and the island of Ireland, with these spiritual events and with the opening of Sr Clare Crockett's cause for beatification on January 12, the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. The process of beatification is the first step towards canonisation, and there will be a Mass celebrated in Sr Clare's home parish Church of St Columba, Long Tower, by Bishop Donal on Sunday, January 26, at 3 pm, to invoke the Holy Spirit on her cause.

All of this along with the canonisation of Blessed Carlo Acutis scheduled for April 27, in St Peter's Square this year, during the Jubilee of Adolescents (April 25-27), certainly gives great cause for hope amongst the faithful around the world as well as Derry, where a Youth of Acutis group founded by young people is making plans to celebrate the Church declaring this inspiring Italian teenager a saint. Central to all of this is the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, which the Charismatic Movement in the Diocese and beyond endeavours to promote through weekly prayer meetings and facilitating 'Life in the Spirit' seminars.

Charismatic

Giving his blessing to the Movement during an audience in the Vatican last January, Pope Francis highlighted how "the charismatic movement, by its very nature, gives space and emphasis

to prayer, especially to the prayer of praise, and this is very important." He encouraged charismatics to "continue serving the Church in this, especially promoting the prayer of Adoration. An Adoration where silence predominates, where the Word of God prevails over our words..."

He also encouraged Charismatic Renewal Groups to be "at the service of the entire diocesan community, of the entire parish community, according to the pastoral indications of the bishop," and to be in communion "with other ecclesial realities, associations, movements, groups."

Telling charismatics to "go forward with joy", Pope Francis added: "May the Virgin bless you, may she always be among you as among the first disciples in the Upper Room."

Charismatic prayer groups are a way for Catholics to live their faith in a communal setting. They meet to pray, learn about Scripture, and develop their relationship with God. The Holy Spirit gives believers charisms, or gifts, to build up the Church, so they may experience gifts like prophecy, faith healing or speaking in Tongues. Some say that charismatic prayer groups have revitalised their faith and deepened their devotion to Jesus.

Charismatic Prayer Groups in the Diocese are open to everyone, and include one in the Tyrone Deanery, based in Omagh Pastoral Centre, Brook Street, which meets on Thursdays, starting with the Rosary at 7.30 pm and then the prayer meeting at 8 pm.

The Dungiven Charismatic Prayer Group, in the Co Derry Deanery, celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. It meets weekly in the Parish Conference Room, beside St Patrick's Church, on Thursdays after 7 pm Mass.

The Portlone Charismatic Prayer Group, while outside the Diocese, borders the parishes of Bellaghy and Greenlough, and is mainly attended by people from the Derry Diocese. Celebrating 50 years as a prayer group too, it takes place in the Cistercian Monastery on Tuesdays, starting at 7 pm.

"If nothing changes, nothing changes" is a quote by author, Courtney C Stevens, that we may find worth reflecting on for our lives as we journey as Pilgrims of Hope in 2025 and beyond. And maybe going along to one of these Charismatic Prayer Groups, or other prayer groups, or getting back to joining in celebrations of the Eucharist in our churches, will give us encouragement from fellow pilgrims.



Buncrana Pilgrim Rosary Walk with Dominicans



Continuing the Sr Clare retreat talk series, this month's is from Jennifer O'Kane, childhood friend of Clare's and now St Cecilia's College teacher and Pastoral Head of Year...

How blessed are our young people to have someone like Clare to aspire to be like in the world



Jennifer O'Kane

I am very proud to have been a friend of Clare's since primary school and we were in the same class throughout our time in St Cecilia's too.

When I heard the theme of the retreat, 'Come follow me', my initial thought went to the call of the disciples. These men who gave up everything in order to follow Jesus. I don't know many of us who would be willing to do that nowadays, to leave our homes, jobs, and families to spread the word of God.

These men saw something in Jesus and trusted completely that God would provide everything for them. And Clare had the same experience. We all know her story of what she left behind, yet she trusted that God had a purpose and a plan for her life. In Sr Kirsten's book, Clare she spoke about being worried about leaving her mammy and daddy, but she felt that God was telling her, "If you look after my flock, I will look after yours."

Clare trusted Jesus. From the moment she left Derry as a teenager, she trusted in God's plan

for her life. She knew that God had a bigger purpose for her. I'm sure there were times that she didn't understand what His plan was, but her faith and trust never wavered. And that's something I learn from Clare. Through all the difficult times in life, when I've questioned why things have happened or what's the reason for it, I think back to Clare's journey of devotion and pure love of God. Every time I look at a photograph of her, it's like she is reminding me of that, to trust God. Don't worry about the small things, let God take care of them.

Clare's life was full of joy and happiness. We only have to look at a picture of her to see that. I know that's what she would want for all our young people, to live their lives full of joy and hope, a life pleasing God, because they know they are loved by God, a God who died for them, a God who saved them.

In St Cecilia's, this is what we always want our girls to know, that their life should have a purpose because God has a purpose for them. It is probably one of the hardest things to do, to trust someone that you can't see physically, or hear, in the same way you would have a conversation with your friends. There is someone who always helps me when I worry or have doubts, my friend and colleague, in school, Martina. We often joke that we are twin spirits, but she is someone who always keeps me right, saying, but did you ask God to help, or, we have to trust that God has a reason for this happening, why are you worrying? And I know I would

be lost without her. You probably have that person in your life too.

Every morning in St Cecilia's, we begin the day with Rosary and Adoration in our school oratory. We ask God to release His Holy Spirit into the school, to protect the staff, pupils and their families and keep anything that's not of Him out of our school. We trust that God will look after all members of our school community.

Jesus, I trust in You

As I sat here at Mass on Divine Mercy Sunday, I thought to myself about the message of the Divine Mercy, "Jesus, I trust in You" and began to reflect on it. A few years ago, my mammy gave all of us a Benedict Crucifix blessed in Medjugorje to carry with us. The Benedict Crucifix is very powerful and provides spiritual protection. When any of our sixth-year girls pass their driving test, we give them a Benedict Crucifix to put in their car to protect them.

I keep mine on top of my bedside locker and every morning and night bless everyone in my family with it, praying, Sacred Heart of Jesus I place all my trust in you. When I was having my son, Aodhán, I had a few complications and many people thought he was going to be born early. From the moment I found out I was having him, I blessed him with my crucifix every morning and night, saying the words, "Please keep this baby here until he needs to be born." When I went into labour with him, they were deliberating whether to let me go ahead with my labour or take me for an emergency section.

I'll never forget the Sister on duty that night, it was her last shift as she was retiring. She came in and sat on the bed and held and my hand and said, "this baby is telling me I need to be born, I need to be born." At that moment I remembered the words I prayed every morning and night and looked down to my hand at my Benedict Crucifix. There was no way I was going into have a baby without it.

I know I received grace from God that night and it was comforting for me to hear those words that I prayed repeated to back to me. I knew then everything would be okay with him, and that God was protecting him. I ended up being taken for an emergency section; he had a condition called vasa previa that we were told is usually fatal in babies. We were told within minutes of me going into labour he should have bled to death, and within five minutes I should have. Yet, he was born alive and, thankfully, has none of the health conditions they feared he may have. He is a typical six-year-old wee boy, full of fun and craft. I know he is alive because I begged God to look after him and trusted that He would, and I can't wait to see what God has him doing in the world.

I often think that it would have been great to have kept in contact with Clare when she was a Religious Sister. For her to come into school and speak to our girls and tell them about her vocation story. I knew the earthly Clare and not the heavenly Clare. In a strange way, I feel like I know her in a better way now. But I know,



the impact that she is having now, on our young people especially, surpasses anything that would have been when she was alive.

How do I know that she is different from any other good or holy person? Just look at the way she has impacted young people in particular. As soon as our girls learn about her in Year 9, they are intrigued, inspired and in awe of her. They can't stop talking about her and want to find out more about her. How blessed are we that our children and young people have someone like Clare to aspire to be like in the world.

When I was preparing for this talk and thinking about the theme and what I wanted to say, it helped me realise how important it is to tell God that I trust Him. As I said earlier, every morning and night I say the prayer, 'Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in you'. This short prayer is one that we say every morning in assembly with

our girls. Trusting God is something that we all can learn from Clare. I came across a poem she wrote in 2002 dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and I would like to end with that...

*Dear Mother, when I am afraid,
under your mantle you shelter me.
When I am lost, you reach out
your hand to guide me.
When I am weak, with your
loving gaze you strengthen me.
When I am alone, with your open
arms you embrace me.
When I am tired, you, my Mother,
let me rest in Thee.
When I am discouraged, you
smile and encourage me.
How could I not trust in You!
You, who never leave my side,
My Model, my Mother,
Queen of my heart, the one I can
trust.
You, my Mother, Queen of my
heart, my refuge.*

Church Island annual pilgrim walk revived

A tradition which, like so many other things, had to be suspended during the Covid pandemic, was revived in the parish of Bellaghy on Sunday, October 6, when a group of 50 parishioners and friends accompanied Fr Pat O'Hagan on his first visit to Church Island, the site of a monastic settlement founded in the 12th century, and the burial ground - in use until the 1930s - of a number of priests and parishioners.

The pilgrims braved the elements - rain and mud - to reach the now derelict church

building; some on foot, others transported on a tractor-driven trailer. Once gathered in the cemetery by the side of the ruins, they recited a decade of the Rosary for their personal intentions and the intentions of the parish, remembering Pope Francis' request for prayers for peace.

Fr Pat then led them in a celebration of The Stations of the Cross; there's a wooden set of Stations placed around the cemetery. A second decade of the Rosary was offered for vocations to the diocesan priesthood for



the Diocese of Derry, followed by three Hail Marys in Irish..

Now that the tradition has been revived, the hope is that the Church Island Sunday Walk will once again become an annual

event. It may even be possible to host some events there during Holy Year 2025, which, at Pope Francis' invitation, calls all of us, God's people, to be 'Pilgrims of Hope.'



Men's First Saturday Rosaries in Derry & Malin

ACTIVITIES WITH THE SERVANT SISTERS OF THE HOME OF THE MOTHER 2024-25

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JUNIORS 4th-6th year Primary *Assistant directed according to age group

SENIORS 7th-10th year Secondary

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- Painting & drawing
- Faith Formation

EVERY FRIDAY 4:30-6:30PM

MONTHLY DAY GET-TOGETHERS

8-12 years divided according to age

- Crafts
- Painting & drawing
- Baking
- Games
- Faith Formation

STARTING OCTOBER 12 1:30-4:45PM *9:30 pick up for those who do not come to Mass with us!

MONTHLY SISTERBUCKS FOR TEENAGE GIRLS

REAL ITALIAN PIZZA & MOVIE!

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WEEKLY FAITH FORMATION

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At: Parochial House, Crossroads, Killygordon

WEEKLY HOLY HOUR

PRAYERFUL READING OF THE SCRIPTURES & MUSIC

TUESDAYS 6-7PM
St. Mary's Church, Sessiaghoneill

THURSDAYS 7-8PM
St. Patrick's Church, Crossroads

Solidarity *by Oliver Barrett*



Pope Mobile.- Pope John Paul II

IN September of 2024, I had the privilege of travelling to Gdansk in Poland. Gdansk is situated on the Baltic and is most famous nowadays for its amber market. Amber is made from solidified tree resin, and it is sometimes referred to as 'Baltic Gold'. It is even possible to drink amber, although I did not try to do that.

There is, however, a spectacular amber altarpiece in St Bridget's Church, a church dedicated to St Bridget of Sweden. There is also St Mary's Co-Cathedral Basilica, the largest brick-built church in the world. It can accommodate up to 25,000 worshippers. For those in good health, it is possible to climb the 408 steps to the top of the Church for a panoramic

view of Gdansk.

The purpose of my visit was not to visit the amber markets. It was because of the historical significance of Gdansk. Also known as Danzig, it is the place where the first shots of World War II were fired in Westerplatte in 1939. More recently, Gdansk shipyard set the scene for the struggle between the dockworkers of Gdansk and the Soviet Union. The earliest blows struck against communism occurred in the Gdansk shipyard. The action of the dockworkers provided an early spark to fire the dissent that dismantled communism in Eastern Europe.

Gdansk is the birthplace of the

Solidarity movement, a social movement that swept across Poland in the 1980s. Poland's first democratically elected president, Solidarity leader, Lech Walesa, was an important person whose dissent against communism ultimately resulted in the end of the Soviet Rule in 1980s. He is such an important person that the airport is named after him. In the European Centre for Solidarity, it is possible to see the demands of the striking Solidarity workers in 1980, hand-written on the original plywood board used.

Also contained within the European Centre for Solidarity is a Pope Mobile from one of Pope John Paul II's eight pilgrimages to Poland. For three of the pilgrimages (1979, 1983, 1987), Poland was oppressed under communist rule. The Pope Mobile is a symbol of hope and optimism.

It is important not to underestimate John Paul II's influence in the overthrow of communist rule. His first visit to Poland took place in 1979. It was a visit of important political and religious significance. Paul VI was not allowed to visit Poland by communist authorities in 1966.

Pope John Paul II's visit in 1979 heralded the downfall of communism in Eastern Europe. It was an event of international importance on a social, religious and cultural level.

The importance of his visit has grown over time. His visits to Poland were as much liturgical as patriotic, uniting Poles under the banner of truth, freedom and solidarity. What Lech Walesa was to politics, Pope John Paul II was to ethics and the moral order, as he sought the moral victory. He succeeded in reviving Catholicism in Eastern Block countries of which Poland was one.

At the end of his homily in Victory Square, Warsaw on June 2, 1979, he prayed...

"And I cry - I who am a Son of the land of Poland and who am also Pope John Paul II - I cry from the depths of this Millennium; I cry on the vigil of Pentecost: Let your spirit descend Let your spirit descend And renew the face of the earth, The face of this land. Amen."

His homily in Warsaw was the most expressive speech of Pope John Paul II on political issues. It was a declaration of his views and support for any actions that could overthrow the system. The Polish people knew that communism was oppressive and hypocritical. Pope John Paul's pilgrimages to Poland were counter cultural and the source of political transformations in Poland and Europe. His pilgrimage was the source of a wave of strikes. His portrait was placed at the gate of the Gdansk shipyard, the cradle of the Solidarity movement.

Solidarity was subsequently outlawed by the communist authorities. The Security Service tried to prevent members from bringing banners during the 1983 pilgrimage. During this pilgrimage, Pope John Paul II had a meeting with the leader of the Solidarity movement, Lech Walesa, in the Tatra Mountain range. The meeting was an expression of the Holy Father's support for Solidarity. He sought not only a political breakthrough but the spiritual renewal of the youth. His pilgrimage was a catalyst for change, as one month after his visit in 1983 martial law was cancelled and 500 political prisoners were released.

Pope John Paul II's final visit to Poland under communism took place in 1987, when Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in the Soviet Union. The outlawed

Solidarity movement reported, described and commented on the course of the pilgrimage. His message was clear. Each person has their own personal dignity and deserves to be treated as an independent entity.

Communist propaganda strived to discredit the Pope's words. His pilgrimage was broadcast to the nation to encourage people to stay at home. He spoke to young people at Westerplatte, saying that they each encounter their own Westerplatte in life too, that is, a just cause that you cannot help but fight for. All of his homilies during the visit contained social content.

My visit to Gdansk has taught me that as much as I like to read about communism, it does not work in practice.



European Centre for Solidarity

A great diocesan historian - Fr Walter Hegarty *by Dr Seán Beattie*

ALTHOUGH the Diocese of Derry is rich in manuscript sources for those wishing to study its history - with the exception of the loss of its synodal records - few priests have taken time to publish a detailed history of the Diocese. The Franciscan friar, John Colgan, born in Carndonagh in 1592, has made a significant contribution to ecclesiastical history in his 'Acta Sanctorum Hiberniae', which contains some references to the Diocese. In 1902, Bishop O'Doherty published 'Derriana, Essays and Occasional Verses', which contains some fine studies of selected periods in the life of the Diocese. In the Preface, he expressed the hope that his book would encourage an historian of the future "to undertake a full investigation of our ancient local records and antiquities". Bishop Daly and Fr Kieran Devlin appear to have responded by publishing 'The Clergy of the Diocese of Derry: An Index' in 1997, which is a useful starting point for those seeking more information.

A Fight for the Faith

One of the most active historians in modern times was Fr Walter Hegarty (1885-1950). Although many of his studies have not been published in book form, for most of his life he was engaged

in active research on the ground, so to speak, collecting folklore and examining and recording religious sites. He wrote articles for the 'Derry Journal', but his main published work was 'A Fight for the Faith, Three Centuries of Bunrana's History'. He was a founding member of County Donegal Historical Society in 1946, and served as a member of the Council for many years. For some strange reason, he was not listed in 'Donegal Authors, A Bibliography' by Brenda O'Halloran in 1982.

His book is now out of print. It was published to mark the centenary celebrations of St Mary's Church, Cockhill, Bunrana, Co Donegal and was based on a lecture given by Fr Hegarty to a large audience in the town. A gifted preacher, he was in demand as a public speaker, because of his eloquence and understanding of historical events. In the Foreword, Very Rev Dr McShane PP VI, Bunrana, quoted from the 'Book of Ecclesiasticus': "Let us now praise men of renown, and our fathers in their generation". McShane reminded his readers of the era of the Mass Rocks, when priests were hunted across the bleak hillsides of Ireland. He recalled that it was Bishop Maginn who organized the construction

of the church against the dark realities of the Great Famine.

Dramatic Times

In his original lecture in St Mary's Hall, Fr Hegarty concentrated on the struggles for the faith in the Diocese and the role played by the clergy following the Plantation of Ulster. The name Hegarty comes up on a regular basis and the name was associated with Fahan, Bunrana. The Abbot of the Dubh Regles was also Rector of Fahan, while Maurice O'Hegarty was Vicar there in 1607. Thus, he would have been aware of the Flight of the Earls in that year, when Hugh O'Neill and Rory O'Donnell fled in a ship from Lough Swilly, bound for France, never to return to their Earldoms. O'Hegarty was also perceived as the last of the old regime. He may have witnessed the burning of Bunrana, which was a reprisal for the burning of Derry by the Inishowen rebel chieftain, Cahir O'Doherty.

Shortly afterwards, Sir Arthur Chichester leased the Castle at Bunrana, with 11 quarterlands, to Henry Vaughan for 51 years. The church lands and the church were also confiscated. That process was overseen by Bishop Montgomery, the Protestant Bishop of Derry, known as 'Black' Montgomery. The final blow came in 1611, when

all priests were banished from the country.

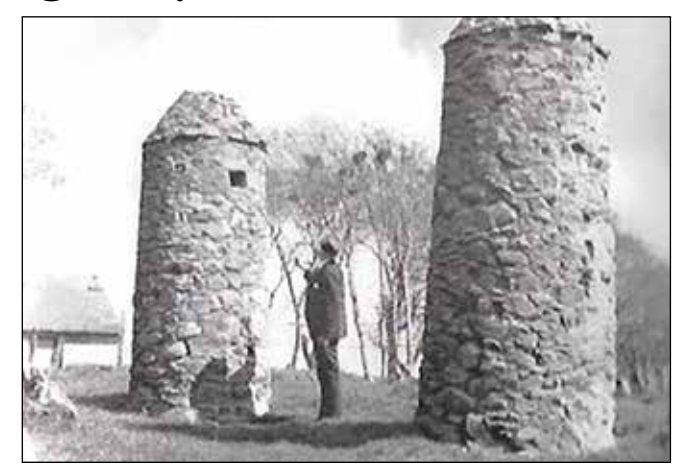
A Native of Derry City

Fr Hegarty was born 140 years ago in Glendermott, Derry. He served in the parishes of Faughanvale, Dungiven, Doneyloop, Bunrana and Culdaff, where he died in 1950 and is buried. As Parish Priest in Culdaff in the 1940s, he was consulted frequently by an amateur archaeologist from Derry. Her name was Mabel Colhoun, who belonged to a family of builders in the City, who originally came from Malin. In her notes, she records their meetings and long hours perusing antiquarian maps in the Parochial House at Bocan.

I have spoken to some of the older parishioners who recalled Fr Hegarty making visits to their homes. If he came across a religious site in his maps, he made every effort to find out everything about it. For example, one of the sites overlooking Tremone Bay in Moville parish is called Cill Bhríde (the church of the saint). Across the Derry Diocese, there are many locations associated with her, particularly holy wells. Elsewhere, he examined wallsteads and rough stone ditches to find any evidence of a building on a particular site.

Friar Hegarty

In his 'History of the Diocese of



Derry', Brian Bonner consulted Fr Hegarty's papers, particularly in relation to Friar Hegarty of Bunrana. Bonner and Fr Hegarty had different interpretations on the fate of the Friar. Both agreed on one fact: that he was hunted down and finally murdered. Bonner, on one hand, clearly states that it was George Vaughan who murdered the Friar, but Fr Hegarty, on the other hand, appears to place the blame on a Col Montagu and not George Vaughan. It is a surprise to find Fr Hegarty apparently absolving Vaughan. The Bunrana historian, Harry Swan, in his book 'Romantic Inishowen', paints a different portrait of the man. He prints a photo of two pillars, which are known locally as Vaughan's

Gallows. Swan states that in his role as Governor of Donegal, Vaughan had the gallows erected for the execution of rapparees and robbers.

Legacy

Fr Hegarty wrote up his research and, after his death, the handwritten manuscript was presented to the Diocese of Derry. There is an opening for a future historian to collate the notes which he has written together with his contributions to the 'Derry Journal' and other publications. His 'Fight for the Faith' is also worthy of reprinting. His passion for the history of the church in the Diocese is clearly evident throughout his writings and publications.

Let Go! *Fr Johnny Doherty CSsR*



Fr. Johnny Doherty CSsR

JIMMY lived on his own, almost a mile from his village and half-way up a mountain. He walked into the village three times a week. On a Friday evening, he went in to have a few drinks and to meet his friends and neighbours. On Saturday, he went in to do his shopping for the week, and once a month to go to Confession. And on Sunday morning, he went in to go to Mass and to meet his friends again, especially those he would not have met in the pub on the Friday night.

One Friday night, after a couple of drinks too many, Jimmy headed for home as usual. He refused a couple of people who offered to drive him because, as he said, he could make his way home with his eyes closed! As usual he was singing and whistling as he went.

As he was walking close to the edge of the cliff near his home, he stumbled and fell. As he fell he grabbed hold of a bush that stopped him from falling over the edge. It sobered him up quickly. He knew that he was in danger, but had no idea how he could get out of it. No one would hear him calling no matter how loudly he shouted.

“Is there anybody up there?”

Jimmy was reared to pray every morning and every night and he was faithful to this all his life. But he found it difficult to pray at other times. He never prayed out loud, even at Sunday Mass. Now, he thought, was a good time to try it. He was surprised to hear his own voice cry out: “Is there anybody up there?”

He was even more surprised, even very shocked, when he heard another voice, a very gentle, strong voice replying: “Yes, Jimmy. This is your heavenly Father. How can I help you?”

“I am in danger of falling over the cliff. Holding on to this bush is all that I have to save me. Can you get me out of this awful danger? I will do anything you ask of me if you do.”

“Of course I can get you out of this safely, Jimmy,” answered the voice from heaven, “but are you sure you will do what I ask of you?”

“I promise that I will” said Jimmy.

“Alright then”, said God, “All I ask of you is to let go!”

“Is there anyone else up there?” shouted Jimmy.

A New Year

As we begin a new calendar year this month, we are into a time of making resolutions – and maybe of breaking them as well! Many of our resolutions are around our health – going off food or drink or other things that can lead to ill health. Or our resolutions can be around our fitness or our time for ourselves, and so on.

A Holy Year

For us as Catholics, Pope Francis has declared this a Holy Year. This happens every 25 years, when we are called to renew our commitment to our faith by letting go of the past and putting our trust,

once more, in the love of God and the presence of God in our world.

Because of this, our resolutions for the year can – and maybe should be – around the living of our faith so as to be more of a sign to the world of the presence and love of God.

What does this mean?

In Chapter 17 of St John’s Gospel, Jesus gives us His vision of what the Church is called to be, in what is called Christ’s Priestly Prayer: “Father, may they all be one. May they be so completely one that the world may believe that it was you who sent me, and that I have loved them as much as you loved me.”

Unity with one another as God’s creation, and unity with God as our Creator is the purpose of the Church in the world.

And in the Gospels, when Jesus was asked what is the first and most important commandment, He clearly stated: “You must love the Lord, your God, with your whole heart, your whole soul, your whole mind, and your whole strength.” And then goes on: “The second is this; You must love your neighbour as yourself.”

Unity

When we think of the unity of the Church as our aim in Christ’s name, we almost automatically think of it in terms of unity between the Churches, Catholic and Protestant, and so on. Of course, it means this. But it means a lot more. And Christ tells us that the only way to unity at every level is the way of love.

Scriptures

In the Acts of the Apostles and in the Letters of St Paul, we are told that the unity of the Church is built in three ways.

1. Unity of mind: This does not mean that everyone has to think the same way. That would be impossible and also would be wrong. It does mean that people would have a common vision, a common purpose.

2. Unity of heart: This means that people would be predisposed to the goodness of one another.

3. Unity of affection: This means that people would be committed to affection in words and in actions towards one another

All of these call for change in behaviour and in priorities in different areas of life and at the different levels of the Church. They call for a lot of letting go to one another.

Marriage

In the Book of Genesis, the first book of the Scriptures, marriage between a man and a woman is named as the most basic human community. The Word of God tells us that ‘a man must leave his father and mother and cling to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’.

It is difficult to talk about this today because we need to be sensitive about same sex relationships and marriage, and also to the many people who live together without marriage. However, unless we can get back to this basic beginning, we cannot really move forward with the truth.

The big mistake we made in the past was to condemn these other relationships or ignore them. We are rightly challenged to deal with them together with great sensitivity and love and help find the way forward for them. But all of us are called to let go of our own preoccupations in order to promote the special place that this primary relationship has in human life and in the life of God’s People.

Unity of Affection

Affection is the origin of this

relationship and community of two. A good marriage is when you marry the person you love. A great marriage is when you love the person you marry. The only way to do this is to develop unity of mind by good, regular, and creative communication, in order to develop the marriage relationship to its full potential. This is what will sustain and nourish affection. And a couple needs to develop unity of heart by constantly affirming one another and doing away with negative criticism that destroys self-worth. There is a lot of letting go involved in this. This is what we as Catholics call the Sacrament of Marriage.

Family unity of heart

The second basic community is the family – parents/guardians and children/siblings of all ages. Unity of heart is the origin of this set of relationships. We are predisposed to our parents, our sisters, and brothers even when we don’t get on well with them. Someone said to me recently: “I can criticise my sisters. But God help anyone else who does!”

There are many different combinations in family life today. Each one is sacred, especially when there is Baptism involved. We have a serious responsibility to support each family in the ways they need our support.

The Domestic Church

In the Church, we describe the family as the Domestic Church, the Church of the home. It is the responsibility of each family to keep building this community, especially by working at a unity of mind – by always behaving in ways that are best for the other people in the family. This entails a lot of letting go of our own needs and preoccupations in order to be better for the others.

And we build the family by

working on unity of affection. This means caring for one another in how we speak to each other – with praise rather than with criticism – and how we behave towards one another – with gentleness rather than with anger. There is a lot of letting go involved in this. But it is always worth it as we create the home into a place where each one wants to be, where each one feels at home.

The Faith Community, Unity of mind

The Church is essentially a Community of faith in Jesus Christ. It is expressed at various levels – each of us, and our family belongs, to a Parish; each parish belongs to a Diocese; each Diocese belongs to the Universal Church under the leadership of the Bishop of Rome, the Pope.

We are united in a common purpose – to bring Christ’s salvation to the ends of the earth. Our task is to build a unity of heart where we are predisposed to the goodness of one another and affirm that. And we also develop a real affection for all our people by getting involved in the needs of the Community, rather than leaving it to others all the time and then often criticising them for their mistakes!

Opening outwards

Unity in Christ is a unity that opens outwards to include everyone. We open to the other Churches as our sisters and brothers who are following Christ. We open to the other religions of the world who are honouring God. We open to all people of good will so that the world we live in may be transformed by the Holy Spirit, and where peace, love and joy may become a reality. All of that calls on us to let go of so many things in ourselves for the common good.

The importance of prayer in our busy lives *by Sinéad Strong*



THE greatest challenge within our family life, especially where it is so busy, is making time to pray. We often yearn for those quiet times of prayer, those hours of Adoration that you look for, but that might only end up being 10 or 15 minutes, or that retreat that you would like to go to, but because of the ‘busyness’ of family life, you have to surrender that, and you can’t go to it.

When you are at that stage of life, it is all about trying to find those moments throughout the day when you can pray and spend some time with the Lord. For some, it is getting up half-an-hour before the children, sacrificing that

wee bit of time in bed to really tune in with God and get prepared, so that you can be the best version of yourself that day. Carving out different prayers times throughout the day, such as the Angelus at 12 noon, Divine Mercy at 3pm and the Angelus at 6pm, is a way of reminding ourselves that there are those moments, small moments, that can be incorporated into the day.

St Teresa of Avila said: “Oh then, my daughters, let there be no neglect: but when obedience calls you to exterior employments (as, for example, into kitchen, amidst the pots and dishes), remember that our Lord goes along with you, to help you both in your interior and exterior duties.”

In fact, St Teresa believed that it is these mundane tasks that help us more along the path of sanctity than receiving a heavenly vision from God. It sometimes requires a lot of effort to do those things that we are obliged to do with a joyful countenance, but we are greatly rewarded for it. So, you can

make a prayer out of all your daily tasks; when you are washing the dishes, when you are hanging out a wash on the line, whatever it is your doing, bring Jesus with you throughout the day.

We, as part of Catholic Mothers Ireland, have a WhatsApp group where there is always prayer intentions requested. We often say that our unofficial motto has become ‘When you can’t pray for yourself, we’ll pray for you!’

It is a great way to fit in prayers and you find yourself offering short prayers throughout the day for those intentions. It also highlights the importance of community, being together and supporting each other. There are many graces and blessings poured out on us when we unite in prayer like this.

A popular prayer on it is Mother Teresa’s miracle novena of the 10 Memoraries (nine in petition and one in thanksgiving). It is a quick one, but it is very powerful!

As Catholic Mothers, it is important to look to Our Lady as the perfect example of

motherhood. She was dedicated to Jesus in Her daily life, caring for Him and nurturing Him. We can reflect on Our Lady and ask Her to be with us in the joys and sorrows of our own lives. In doing so, our Blessed Mother will show us that the way of the disciple is the way of prayer and making an offering of all our sufferings with Jesus to the Father.

Mary is our Mother and Mother to all. We must make a permanent place for Her in our life. It is important to do this because we can get overwhelmed when we have so much to do. Motherhood is such a rewarding vocation but it can be gruelling at times. We need Mary to be with us and get the graces we need to be the best we can for our families and for ourselves. We are all different; there is no ‘one size fits all’ way to be as a mother. We must find what fits for us in our lives and ask Our Lady for help. Praying the Rosary is like holding the hand of Our Lady; she will take us under her maternal care and guide us in our life and our motherhood.



Let us pray...Mary, Mother of Jesus, be a mother to me now! If you are interested in finding out more about Catholic Mothers Ireland, please visit www.catholicmothers.ie.

Parish Post-its

Aghyaran

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

Weekend Mass Times: 7.30 pm Vigil, and 11 am.

Ardstraw East

(Newtownstewart)

Zoom Catechism: All are welcome to join Catechism by Zoom on Mondays, from 7.30-8.15 pm. Email: ardstraweast@derrydiocese.org to get the link. Learn how to answer hard questions.

Pope John Paul II Award – Sessions for Pope John Paul II Award participants takes place on Thursdays at 6.30 pm, in the Oratory of Mary, Mother of God.

Holy Hour: 6.30 pm, Thursdays, Oratory of Mary, Mother of God.

Weekend Mass Times: 11.30 am, St Eugene's Glenock.

Badoney Lower

(Gortin-Rouskey)

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

Weekend Mass Times: 7.30 pm Vigil, St Patrick's, Gortin; 10 am, St Mary's, Rouskey.

Badoney Upper

(Plumbridge-Cranagh)

Adoration & Confessions: Adoration and Confessions take place in St Patrick's Cranagh after the 7.30 pm Wednesday evening Mass, until 9 pm.

Weekend Mass Times: 7.30 pm Vigil, St Patrick's Cranagh; 10 am, Sacred Heart Plumbridge.

Ballinascreen

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

Confessions: Holy Rosary Church every Saturday at 5.30 pm, before the Vigil Mass.

Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil, Holy Rosary; 9 am in St Columba's Straw; 11 am in St Patrick's, Sixtowns; 12 noon in St Eugene's, Moneyneena.

Ballymagroarty

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

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

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

Confessions: Saturdays from 10.30-11.30 am & 5.15-5.50 pm; Tues & Thurs 6.45-7.10 pm.

Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil; and 9.30 am, 11 am, and 12.30 pm on Sunday.

Banagher

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

Confessions: St Mary's Church, Altinure, Thursday 10.30 am; St Joseph's Church, Fincairn, Friday 10 am & Saturday 6.30 pm.

Weekend Mass Times: 7 pm Vigil in St Joseph's Church, Fincairn, 10.30 am in St Mary's Church, Altinure, and 12 noon in St Peter's & St Paul's Church, Foreglen.

Bellaghy

Marriage Plans: A meeting for Couples planning to get married in 2025 and early 2026 will be held on Sunday, February 9, at 2 pm in The Open Door Complex.

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

Weekend Mass Times: 7 pm Vigil in Bellaghy, 10 am in Ballyscullion, and 11 am in Bellaghy.

Buncrana

Holy Year of Hope events: At parish level, the Holy Year of Hope will be marked with times of prayer, participation and pilgrimage. The first of these initiatives is entitled 'Come away from your nets for a moment', and involves gathering special interest groups of people from the parish in St Mary's special Mass and ceremony of blessing, each third Wednesday of the month (except in July & August).

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

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

Guided Holy Hour: A Guided Holy Hour of

Adoration in Honour of the Holy Face of Jesus takes place on Sundays, 6-7 pm in St Mary's Oratory. All welcome. Rosary for Priests: Three Rosaries are prayed each Tuesday, between 1-2 pm, in the Oratory for vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

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

Al-Anon: The Al-Anon Group, for anyone whose life is or has been affected by someone else's drinking, meets in St Teresa's Room on Thursdays at 6.45 pm.

Weekend Mass Times: St Mary's Oratory - Vigil 4.30 pm, 9 am and 12.30 pm; St Mary's Cockhill - Vigil 6 pm, and 11am; Star of the Sea, Desertegney - 10 am. (Note new Vigil times, which will be reviewed at the end of Daylight Saving Time in March.)

Burt, Inch & Fahan

St Brigid: St Brigid Cross Making, along with social music and refreshments, will take place in Burt GAA Clubhouse on Friday, January 31, at 7 pm. All welcome.

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

Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil, 10.15 am, St Aengus' Burt; 9 am, Our Lady of Lourdes, Inch; 7.15 pm Vigil, 11.30 am, St Mura's, Fahan.

Cappagh

(Killyclogher)

Padre Pio Prayer Group: Cappagh Padre Pio Prayer Group Pilgrimage 2025 will take place from September 10-17, visting the shrines of Assisi, Giovanni Rotondo and St Michael's cave. Cost: £1,135 pps. For information contact: Marie on 07799112224 or Clare on 07778025587.

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

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

Legion of Mary: Legion of Mary meets every Monday after 10 am Mass in St Mary's Church, Killyclogher. New members always welcome. Anyone wishing to welcome the Pilgrim Statute of Our Lady into your home and pray the Rosary is asked to contact Rosaleen on 07917421119 to make arrangements with the Legion of Mary, Cappagh Group.

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

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

Weekend Mass Times: 6.30 pm Vigil, 12 noon, Christ The King, Strathroy; 9 & 11 am, St Mary's, Killyclogher.

Carndonagh

Weekend Mass Times: Vigil 7 pm; Sunday 9 am & 11 am.

Castleberg & Ardstraw West

Concert: Michael English will be in concert in St Patrick's Church on April 25. Tickets are available in the Sacristy before and after Masses in St Patrick's, Castleberg, in the parish office and in Dinny's and Taggart's shops.

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

Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil and 11 am, Castleberg; 9.30 am Dregish; and 12.30 pm Drumnabey.

Claudy

St Brigid's Cross-making: John Mitchel's GAC is hosting St Brigid's Cross making at Cumber House on Thursday, January 30, at 7.30 pm. Light refreshments will be provided. If possible, bring own rushes.

Eucharistic Procession: There will be a Eucharistic Procession in the grounds of St Patrick's Church on Saturday, February 1, at 2 pm, uniting with the Processions in Derry, Medjugorje and New York. The Rosary will be led by the Children's Rosary Group.

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

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

Rosary: The Rosary is prayed on the Parish webcam from St Patrick's Church, Monday-Thursday, at 6 pm.

Divine Office & Chaplet: The Divine Office (Mid-day Prayer of the Church) and the Divine Mercy Chaplet are prayed on the Parish webcam, from St Patrick's Church, Monday-Friday, at 3 pm.

Holy Face Devotions: Holy Face Devotions will be prayed on the Parish webcam in St Patrick's Church, Claudy, every Friday, beginning with Divine Office (Evening Prayer) at 6 pm. All welcome to join.

Society of St Joseph: The Vocation Society of St Joseph prayer meeting, in support of religious vocations, takes place on the first Thursday of each month, at 6.30 pm, in the Upper Room, St Patrick's Church.

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

Weekend Mass Times: 6.30 pm Vigil, St Patrick's; 10 am, St Joseph's; 11.30 am St Patrick's.

Clonleigh (Lifford)

Weekend Mass Times: 6.30 pm Vigil, 11 am.

Clonmany

Parish Pilgrimage: A Parish Pilgrimage to Lourdes will take place from June 10-14, 2025. Staying at Hotel Padoue, the cost will be 760 Euro per person sharing, full board. Enquiries to the Parish Office.

Exposition: Exposition of The Blessed Sacrament in St Michael's Church, Urris, on Fridays, 3-6 pm (Rosary at 5.40 pm); in the Oratory of the Assumption, Ballyliffin, on Tuesdays, 7.30-8.30 pm; and in St Columbcille Village, Cleagh, on Wednesdays, 3-4 pm.

Weekend Mass Times: St Mary's Church, Clonmany, Vigil 6.30 pm (Rosary at 6.10 pm); Sunday 11.30 am; St Michael's Church, Urris, Sunday, 10 am

Coleraine

Society of St Joseph: The Society of St Joseph for the support of religious vocations meets on the last Monday of each month at St John's

Church Sacristy, after the 10 am morning Mass, and is open to everyone. New members are welcome at any of the meetings, which support praying for and assisting to support the vocation to priesthood and the religious life.

Exposition: St John's Church Monday Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place on Wednesdays in St John's Church, from 2-4 pm with Rosary at 3.45 pm.

Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil, 11 am, St John's; 7.30 pm Vigil, St Mary's Dunboe; 9.45 am, Our Lady of the Assumption, Aghadowey.

Creggan

YOUCAT: The YOUCAT Programme is underway in the Parochial House Conference Room on Wednesdays at 7 pm. All welcome.

Adoration: Exposition of Blessed Sacrament takes place in the Divine Mercy Chapel on Sundays from 1.30 pm - 6 pm, Mondays from 10.30 am - 7 pm, and Tuesday - Saturday from 10.30 am - 12 pm.

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

Weekend Mass Times: 6.30 pm Vigil, 11 am, St Patrick's. **Clonleigh (Lifford)** **Weekend Mass Times:** 6.30 pm Vigil, 11 am. **Clonmany** **Parish Pilgrimage:** A Parish Pilgrimage to Lourdes will take place from June 10-14, 2025. Staying at Hotel Padoue, the cost will be 760 Euro per person sharing, full board. Enquiries to the Parish Office. **Exposition:** Exposition of The Blessed Sacrament in St Michael's Church, Urris, on Fridays, 3-6 pm (Rosary at 5.40 pm); in the Oratory of the Assumption, Ballyliffin, on Tuesdays, 7.30-8.30 pm; and in St Columbcille Village, Cleagh, on Wednesdays, 3-4 pm. **Weekend Mass Times:** St Mary's Church, Clonmany, Vigil 6.30 pm (Rosary at 6.10 pm); Sunday 11.30 am; St Michael's Church, Urris, Sunday, 10 am

Polish Mass: Mass for the Polish community will be celebrated at 4 pm every second and fourth Sunday of the month in the Divine Mercy Chapel, at St Mary's Church.

Confession: Monday - Friday 5-5.30 pm, Saturday 10.30 am & 5.30-6.20 pm.

Weekend Mass Times: 6.30 pm Vigil; 10.30 am; 12.15 pm.

Culdaff

Good as New Shop: St Mary's Church Bocan Re-decorating Committee has the 'Good as New Shop' now open in Carndonagh. All proceeds are for the Re-decorating Fund.

Weekend Mass Times: 8 pm Vigil; 10 am Sunday.

Desertmartin

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

Weekend Mass Times: 7.30 pm Vigil in St Patrick's, Keenaught; and 10 am in St Mary's, Coolcalm.

Confessions: Saturday evenings in St Patrick's, Keenaught, from 6.30-7.10 pm.

Donagheady (Aughabrack & Dunamanagh)

St Brigid: There will be a St Brigid Cross making session in Aughabrack Community Hall on Thursday, January 30, at 7.30 pm.

Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration takes place in St Mary's, Aughabrack, on First Fridays, after 10 am Mass until 12 noon.

Weekend Mass Times: 6.30 pm Vigil, St Patrick's, and 10.30 am, St Mary's.

Drumquin

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

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

Weekend Mass Times: Vigil 6.30 pm, and 11 am.

Drumragh (Omagh)

Prayer Group: The Charismatic Prayer Group meetings take place in The Pastoral Centre on Thursday evenings, with Rosary at 7.30 pm and prayer meeting at 8 pm. All welcome to come and pray.

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

Adoration: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in Sacred Heart Church on Wednesdays following 10 am Mass.

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

Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil, 9 am and 12 noon, Sacred Heart Church; 10.30 am, St Mary's Drumragh.

Dungiven

Prayer Group: The St Canice's Charismatic Prayer Group meets each Thursday

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at 7 pm, in the Parish Committee Room, and invites anyone who wishes to deepen their faith through shared Scripture, Prayer and Praise.

St Pio Healing Mass: A St Pio Healing Mass is celebrated monthly, on the first Tuesday, in St Patrick's Church at 7 pm. Society of St Joseph: The Society of St Joseph's for the support of religious vocations meets on the second Tuesdays of the month in the Committee Room, after 10 am Mass in St Patrick's Church.

Children's Liturgy: Children's liturgy recommences on Sunday, October 20 and will continue every third Sunday of the month at 11.30 am Mass. Children from P2-P4 are invited to participate.

Adoration: Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays, 9 am-6 pm, and Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9 am-8 pm, in Adoration Chapel.

Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil, 9 am and 11.30 am, St Patrick's; 10.15 am, St Matthew's; and 4.30 pm, Immaculate Conception.

Confession: Confession is available in St Patrick's Church at 11 am on Saturdays.

Errigal

Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration takes place on Mondays after 10 am Mass in St Mary's Church, Ballerin, until 2.30 pm.

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

Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil, St Joseph's Church, Glenullin, and St Mary's Church, 10 am, St Mary's, Ballerin, and 11.30 am in St Joseph's, Glenullin.

Faughanvale

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

Weekend Mass Times: 5 pm Vigil, 12 noon, Star of the Sea; 6.30 pm Vigil, 10 am, St Mary's.

Granaghan (Swatragh)

Weekend Mass Times: 12 noon & 7 pm Vigils; 10.30 am.

Greencastle

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

Adoration: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes

place in St Patrick's Church on Thursdays, 6-10 pm.

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

Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil, St Patrick's, and 11.30 am, Our Lady of Wayside, Broughderg.

Greenlough

St Brigid: St Brigid Cross Making will take place on Wednesday, January 29 at 7 pm in Moneystaghan Hall. Everyone welcome.

Rosary: Tuesday Night Rosary is prayed at 7.30 pm in the Church.

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

Weekend Mass Times: 5.30 pm Vigil, and 9 am.

Iskaheen, Drung & Muff

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

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

St Peregrine: The St Peregrine Novena Prayer and veneration of relic takes place on the first Friday of each month, alternating between the three churches.

Confessions: Confessions are available in Iskaheen on Saturdays, 9.45-10 am, and in Muff on Saturdays, 6 pm, and after 6.30 pm Vigil Mass

Weekend Mass Times: 6.30 pm Vigil, 11.30 am, Sacred Heart Church, Muff; 8 pm Vigil, 10.15 am, St Columba's, Drung; 9 am, St Patrick's, Iskaheen.

Kilrea

Eucharistic Adoration: Mondays, from 12 noon - 7pm, at St Mary's Drumagarnier. Concludes with Public Prayers.

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

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

Confession: Confession is available immediately after the 7 pm Vigil Mass in St Anne's Oratory each Saturday. Alternatively, feel free to request the sacrament before or after any weekday Mass.

Weekend Mass Times: 7 pm, Vigil, St Anne's Oratory; 10am St Mary's, Drumagarnier; 12 noon, St Mary's, Craigavole.

Killygordon

Holy Hour: Prayerful reading of the Scriptures & Rosary with the Home of the Mother, Servant Sisters every Tuesday from 6.30-7.30 pm at St Mary's Church, Sessiaghoneill, Ballybofey, and every Thursday from 7-8 pm at St. Patrick's.

Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration takes place in St Patrick's Church, Crossroads, every Thursday after 9.15 am Mass.

Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil, 10 am, St Patrick's; 8 pm Vigil, 9 am & 11 am, St Mary's Sessiaghoneill.

Lavey

Anointing of Sick Mass: Mass with Anointing of the Sick will take place on Sunday, February 9, at 3 pm.

Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration takes place on Fridays from 9.30 am until 5 pm.

Confession: Confessions are heard from 5.15-5.45 pm on Saturdays.

Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil, 9 am and 11 am.

Leckpatrick

Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration takes place on Wednesdays from 8.30 am Mass until 5.30 pm.

Weekend Mass Times: 5 pm Vigil, St Mary's Church, Cloughcor; 9.45 am St Joseph's Church, Glenmornan; 11.15 am, Sacred Heart Church, Derry Road.

Lifford

Adoration: 9.30am-12.30pm.

Confessions: Saturday, 6-6.15 pm

Weekend Mass Times: 6.30 pm Vigil; 11 am.

Limavady

Adoration: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place on Sundays in Christ the King (with Confessions) from 3-5 pm.

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

Weekend Mass Times: 4.30 pm Vigil, 9 am, 12 noon, Christ the King Church; 6 pm Vigil, St Finlough's Church; 10.30 am, St Mary's Church.

Maghera

St Brigid: St Brigid Cross making will take place in An Carn on Saturday, February 1,

from 5-7 pm.

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.

Confession: Daily after morning Mass (except Sunday and Holydays), and St Mary's at 7 pm on Wednesdays (before evening Mass) and Saturdays at 11am/12noon and 5.30pm/6.15pm

Weekend Mass Times: 6.30 pm Vigil and 11.30 am, St Mary's; 9.30 am, St Patrick's.

Malin

Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil, and 10.30 am, St Patrick's Church; Vigil 8 pm, Star of the Sea Church; 9 am, St. Mary's Church.

Melmount

Blessing of Graves: The annual Ceremony of the Blessing of Graves will take place on Sunday, May 25, at 4 pm.

Exposition: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in the church on Mondays after 10 am Mass until 6 pm. The Rosary will be recited prior to closure of Adoration at approximately 5.40 pm. Everyone is welcome.

Weekend Mass Times: 7 pm Vigil, 10.30 am and 12.30 pm.

Moville

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

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

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

Confessions: Confessions are available on Saturdays, 6.15-6.45 pm.

Weekend Mass Times: 7 pm Vigil, 10 am, St Pius X Church. 12 noon on Sundays as follows - St Mary's Ballybrack, 1st and 3rd Sundays; St Columba's Ballinacrae, 2nd and 4th Sundays; St Pius X 5th Sunday.

Sion Mills

Blessing of Graves: The annual Ceremony of the Blessing of Graves will take place on Sunday, May 18, at 3 pm.

Adoration: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place on Fridays, from 11 am-6.50 pm, ending with Benediction before 7 pm

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.

Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil; 9 am & 11 am.

Steelstown & Culmore

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

Adoration: Fridays after 10 am Mass until 6.50 pm.

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

Weekend Mass Times: 6.30 pm Vigil; 9 am, 11 am, and 12:15 pm.

Strabane (Camus)

Adoration: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place every day, from 10.30 am-1 pm, in the Adoration Chapel (Oasis of Peace), which is situated at the back of the Church.

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

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

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

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

Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil, 9.45 am & 12.15 pm.

Templemore - St Eugene's

Eucharistic Adoration: Every Sunday, there is Eucharistic Adoration from 3-6 pm and every Tuesday

from 10.30 am until 7.20 pm. Matt Talbot Mass: The Matt Talbot, Freedom from addiction Mass takes place on the first Monday of each month at 7.30 pm in St Eugene's Cathedral.

St Dymphna Mass: The St Dymphna Mass with Anointing of the Sick takes place on the third Tuesday of each month at 7.30pm. This Mass is to give thanks to God for positive mental health and to pray for those who are struggling with mental health issues and those who care for them.

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

Weekend Mass Times: 6.15 pm & 7.30 pm Vigils; 9.30 am, 11 am, 12.30 pm & 7 pm.

Templemore - Long Tower

Sr Clare: Mass to invoke the help of the Holy Spirit for the Cause of Sr Clare will take place on Sunday, January 26, at 3 pm, in St Columba's Church, with Bishop Donal presiding. Everyone is welcome to attend. For those unable to attend in person the Mass will also be streamed live via the Church webcam which can be accessed from our website. www.longtowerchurch.org and also via the Long Tower Facebook page.

Come Follow Me: The 'Come Follow Me' Eucharistic Procession on Saturday, February 1, led by the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal departs from St Columba's Church at 1pm, going through Derry City. All are welcome.

Mental Health Mass: A monthly Mass for Mental Health, and a mini-Vigil to midnight, takes place on the first Thursdays at 7.30 pm. This Mass is to give thanks to God for positive mental health, and to pray for those struggling with mental health issues and those who care for them. After Mass, Adoration will follow until midnight.

Lectio Divina: Praying with the Scriptures, using the method of Lectio Divina for the Sunday Gospels of Advent, continues downstairs in Aras Colmcille on Tuesdays, December 10 & 17, from 8-9 pm, and Thursdays, December 12 & 19, from 11 am to 12 noon. All welcome to attend. Leaflets will be provided.

Purple Hearts: The Purple Hearts group gathers every Tuesday in Aras Colmcille after 10 am

Mass in Long Tower, for a cuppa, conversation, and some activities such as dancing, knitting, bingo and organising day trips. All welcome.

Long Tower & Brandywell Memories: A collection of old cine film transferred to DVD, taken from 1950's onward. The pack contains a double DVD with many clips of Derry in the 50s up to 80s. Much of the footage was filmed in the Brandywell area and the Long Tower School. Cost £10, available from Parish Office and Aras Cholmcille.

Children's Rosary: Children's Rosary takes place in the Long Tower on the last Saturday of every month, at 3 pm.

Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil, 10 am & 12 noon.

Three Patrons

Children's Rosary: Children's Rosary takes place in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, on the second Saturday of the month, at 2 pm.

Legion of Mary: The Legion of Mary meets on Mondays, from 1-3 pm in the Meeting Room at St Joseph's Church, Galliagh.

Folk Group: The Carnhill Folk Group meets on Mondays from 7-8.30 pm in St Brigid's Church.

St Brigid's Choir: The 10.30 am St Brigid's Choir meets on Thursdays from 5-5.30 pm in St Brigid's Church.

Bible Study: Bible Study takes place on Tuesdays after 11 am Mass in the Meeting Room, St Joseph's Church, Galliagh.

Men's Bible Study: Men's Bible Study takes place in the Upper Room in St Brigid's Chapel, Carnhill, on Tuesdays from 7.30-8.30 pm.

Women's Bible Study: Women's Bible Study takes place on Wednesdays from 7-8 pm, in the Upper Room, St Brigid's Church, Carnhill.

God Club: God Club is an opportunity for teenagers to learn together about their faith. It takes place in the Kildare Room, Carnhill, on Saturdays from 11.30 am until 12.30 pm.

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

Be Still: Be Still is a Men's Prayer and Friendship Group that meets every Thursday night from 8.15-10 pm in Our Lady's Chapel, within St Joseph's Church building, Galliagh. Its mission as a group is to provide a safe place where men can pray and share in a confidential

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and supportive setting. All men are welcome.

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

Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration takes place in Our Lady's Chapel, St Joseph's Church, Galliagh, on Tuesdays from 11 am until 7 pm. It also takes place seven days a week in the Adoration Room in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, from 8 am until 6 pm, and in St Patrick's Church, Pennyburn, on Wednesdays from 10.30 am - 7 pm.

Youth Prayer Group: A Youth Prayer Group takes place on Thursdays, from 7.30-8.30 pm, in St Pio Centre, Galliagh.

First Saturday: On the First Saturday of each month, after 11 am Mass in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, there is Adoration and Rosary, ending with Divine Mercy and Benediction at 3 pm. Living Disciples: Living Disciples meet on Tuesdays at 7.30-8.30 pm in St Pio House, St Joseph's Church grounds, for Praise & Worship, friendship and a cup of tea. All welcome.

Holy Face Devotions: Devotions to the Holy Face of Jesus takes place every Tuesday after 11 am

Mass in Our Lady's Chapel, St Joseph's Church, Galliagh. All welcome

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

Healing Night: A Healing Night with the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal takes place monthly on the first Friday, from 7-10 pm, in St Joseph's Church, Galliagh. Everyone welcome.

Holy Souls Prayer: Under The Gaze of Our Lady of Montligeon, the Holy Souls of Purgatory Prayer Meeting takes place on Mondays after 11 am Mass in Our Lady's Chapel, within St Joseph's Church, Galliagh, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. The next monthly meeting for the intercession of Priests takes place on Tuesday, December 10, at 12.30 pm in Termonbacca.

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

Women's Laugh & Craft: The Women's Laugh & Craft Group meets every Monday from 7-9 pm in the Kildare Room, St Brigid's, Carnhill. £3 per class. Spaces limited.

St Pio Café: St Pio's Café, in the

St Pio Centre, Galliagh, is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 11.30 am-2.30 pm.

Confessions: Confessions takes place in St Joseph's Church, Galliagh, on Tuesdays from 6.15-6.45 pm, Saturdays from 6-6.30 pm, and Sundays from 5.30-6 pm; in St Patrick's Church, Pennyburn, on Wednesdays from 6.15-6.45 pm, and Saturdays from 5-5.30 pm; and in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, on Thursdays from 6.15-6.45 pm, and Saturdays after 11 am Mass and from 5-5.30 pm.

Weekend Mass Times: 6.15 pm Vigil & 9.45 am, St Patrick's, Pennyburn; 5 pm Vigil, 10.30 am & 12.30 pm St Brigid's, Carnhill; 11 am, 12.30 pm (An tAifreann Naofa), and 6.30 pm Youth Mass, St Joseph's Galliagh.

Urney & Castlefinn

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

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

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

Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil, St Columba's, Doneyloop;

10.30 am, St Mary's Castlefinn.

Waterside & Strathfoyle

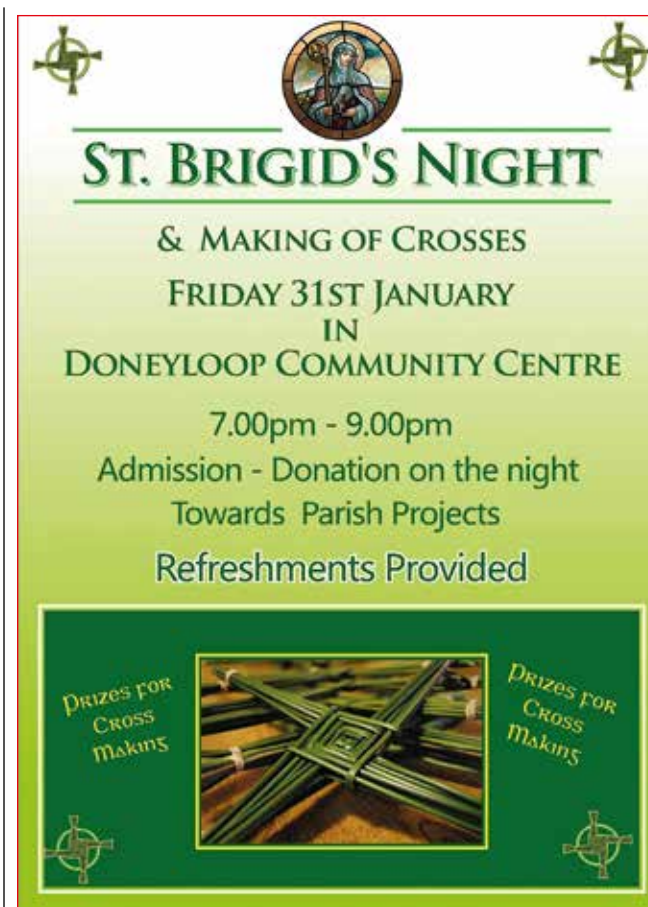
Vocations Prayer: Holy Hours for Vocations to the priesthood in the Diocese of Derry will take place on Wednesday evenings at St Columba's Church, Waterside, on January 29, February 19 and March 12, starting at 8 pm.

Lectio Divina: Reflect on the Scriptures with Lectio Divina in the side chapel in St Columba's Church, Chapel Road, on Thursday nights, starting at 8.15 pm.

Eucharistic Adoration: There is Eucharistic Adoration in St Oliver Plunkett Church, Strathfoyle, on Mondays, 11.30 am-12.30 pm; in Immaculate Conception Church on Thursdays, 1-6 pm; and in St Columba's Church on Fridays, 1-6 pm.

Confessions: St Columba's - Saturday after 10 am Mass, Monday-Friday at 7 pm, before evening Mass; Immaculate Conception, after 11 am Mass every Saturday and at 5.30 pm before evening Mass on a Saturday; St Oliver Plunkett, Every Saturday 5.30 pm, before the Vigil Mass.

Weekend Mass Times: 7 pm Vigil, 10 am, 12.30 pm & 6 pm, St Columba's; 6 pm Vigil, 10.15 am & 12.15 pm, Immaculate Conception; 11.15 am, St Oliver Plunkett.



ST. BRIGID'S NIGHT
 & MAKING OF CROSSES
 FRIDAY 31ST JANUARY
 IN
 DONEYLOOP COMMUNITY CENTRE
 7.00pm - 9.00pm
 Admission - Donation on the night
 Towards Parish Projects
 Refreshments Provided

Prizes for Cross Making

Diocesan Diary

Catholic Schools' Week: Catholic Schools' Week 2025 runs from Sunday, January 19 until Saturday, January 25. The theme for this year is 'Catholic Schools: Alive in Christ'. To launch Catholic Schools Week in the Diocese, Mass was celebrated by Bishop Donal in St Eugene's Cathedral, on Thursday, January 16.

Fatima Youth Pilgrimage: The Derry Diocesan Youth Team invites young people aged 16+ to join them on pilgrimage to Fatima for four nights from July 14-18. This will be a unique experience for young people and an opportunity to engage with their peers from around the world in a faith context. Cost is £700 and there will be a budget plan to help with this. Names and deposit of £100 are required as soon as possible to secure a place. For more information or to book in please contact lizzie.rea@derrydiocese.org 00 44 2871264087.

Family Prayer: Bishop Donal is leading the Diocese in 33 days of Family Prayer towards Consecration to Jesus Christ through Mary, as part of a diocesan programme for the Jubilee Year of 2025, Pilgrims of Hope. You can join him by logging online on the Diocese of Derry Facebook, each evening at 7 pm.

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

Vocations Holy Hour: Holy Hours for Vocations to the priesthood in the Diocese of Derry will take place on Wednesday evenings at St Columba's Church, Chapel Road, Waterside, on January 29, February 19 and March 12, starting at 8 pm.

Knock Pilgrimage: The Diocesan Pilgrimage to Knock will take place on Sunday, June 15, 2025.

Lourdes Pilgrimage: The Derry Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes 2025, led by Bishop Donal McKeown, will take place from Monday, June 30 to Friday, July 4, leaving from City of Derry Airport. Price £849 plus insurance and single supplement if required. The Pilgrimage Office, 164 Bishop Street, Derry, will open for booking on Saturday, February 1, 11am-1 pm (and each following Saturday & Thursday at the same time unless notified). Enquiries via email: derrypilgrim@outlook.com.

Accord Derry: Marriage Preparation Workshops with Accord Derry take place on: February 21-22; March 28-29; April 11-12; May 30-31; June 20-21. To book contact www.accordni.com.

Room, at the Carmelite Retreat Centre, Termonbacca.

Matt Talbot Society: The Matt Talbot 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.

...other Diary Dates

Book Launch: All are invited to a Book Launch celebrating the life of Dr Tom McGinley, founder of Foyle Hospice, on Wednesday, January 29, at 7.15 pm - Doors open from 6.45pm. St Columba's Hall, Orchard Street. Doors open from 6.45 pm. Entry is free but booking is essential at www.ticketsource.co.uk/stcolumbshall. The new book is written by Dr Keith Munro and costs £15 (cash only). Proceeds to Foyle Hospice.

Christian Unity Service: A Christian Unity Service will be held in Omagh Methodist Church on Sunday, January 26, at 7pm. Light refreshments will be served afterwards in the Church Hall. Everyone is very welcome to attend.

St Brigid's Cross-making: Sixtowns History & Heritage Group is hosting an evening of cross making in Shepherds' Rest on the Eve of St Bridget, Friday, January 31, from 7-9 pm. A traditional session will follow the making of the crosses. All welcome.

Come Follow Me: There will be a Eucharistic Procession on Saturday, February 1 at 1pm, beginning at Long Tower Church. Derry and Medjugorje procession united at same time. All welcome.

Pause for Peace: The Pause for Peace movement invites people from around the world to stop and pause for one minute's silence at 12 o'clock local time on St Brigid's day, February 1st.

Termonbacca Faith Talks: The Termonbacca Carmelite Retreat Centre monthly talks on different elements of the faith are on Thursdays led by Fr Cajetan Ikedi Apeh OCD. The talks are aimed at leading the participants towards personal development through meditative prayer and convivial discussions of the Church doctrines. The theme for the remaining talk on February 13 is Purgatory and the purification for Eternal Life. These nights are open to everyone aged 18 and above who has an interest in growing more in their personal faith development. Anyone who wishes to know more can speak to Fr Cajetan by calling 02871262512.

Ladies' Bible Study: Ladies interested in coming to a deeper understanding of scripture are welcome to come along to the Ladies' Bible Study in Termonbacca, Derry, every Tuesday evening from 8:30-9:30 pm. It is led by Fr Stephen Quinn ocd, who is currently working through the Gospel of Mark,

which is the Gospel for Mass for this year. This Bible Study is open to all women who are interested in coming along. There is no need to book, you can simply show up. For further information contact Termonbacca on 028 71 262512.

Servant Sisters: The Sisters of the Home of the Mother are hosting weekly formation meetings on Tuesdays, at 7.30 pm, in the Parochial House at Cross, Killygordon, (F93PN0X), and the weekly Holy Hours on Thursdays at 7 pm.

Holy Souls Prayer: Under The Gaze of Our Lady of Montligeon, the Holy Souls of Purgatory Prayer Meeting takes place on Mondays after 11 am Mass in Our Lady's Chapel, within St Joseph's Church, Galliagh, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. The next monthly meeting for the intercession of Priests takes place on Tuesday, December 10, at 12.30 pm in Termonbacca.

Polish Mass: Mass for the Polish community is celebrated in the Church of Christ The King, Strathroy, Omagh, on the first and third Sunday's of each month at 10 am, and at 9.30 am every second and fourth Sunday in the Divine Mercy Chapel, at St Mary's Church, Creggan, in Derry City.

Stations of Cross: On the First

Friday of each month, after 10 am Mass in St Eugene's, there is a silent procession from the Cathedral to St Columba's Church, Long Tower, meditating on the Stations of the Cross.

Coastal Rosary: Rosary on the Coast for world peace and the protection of unborn babies takes place at Lisfannon Beach, Buncrana, on the first Sunday of every month at 3 pm, and at Benone Strand on the third Sunday of every month, at 3 pm.

Men's Rosary: The Men's Rosary takes place on the first Saturday of every month in Market Street, Omagh (opposite Primark) at 1 pm. 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.

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

ACCORD seeking facilitators

ACCORD Catholic Marriage Care Service, CLG, is currently recruiting volunteers to train as marriage preparation programme facilitators.

If you are supportive of marriage in the Catholic Church and have the enthusiasm to be part of the Accord team that supports couples preparing for the Sacrament of Marriage, then Accord wishes to hear from you!

facilitator is a personally fulfilling role, blending life experience and faith. Successful applicants will receive professional training in the Accord marriage preparation programme and be part of a team delivering programmes locally.

Contact Aisling on 003531 505 3112 or email marriagepreparation@accord.ie and for further information see www.accord.ie

Trócaire school volunteers

TROCAIRE is looking for volunteers to support its 2025 Lent Appeal in the Derry Diocese. If you think you have the right skills and experience and will be available to help during school hours over Lent, then they would love to hear from you.

Full training and ongoing support will be provided.

For more information, contact Naomi Purnell on 028 9080

8033 or email naomi.purnell@trocaire.org



Jubilee Year of Prayer handbook

FOR the occasion of the Jubilee Year of Prayer 2025, the Dicastery for Evangelisation has created a handbook to accompany Christian faith communities and parishes on the path.

Inspired by the teachings of Pope Francis, the handbook is written as an invitation to intensify prayer, understood as a personal dialogue with God, and to lead readers to reflect on their faith, and their commitment in today's world.

The booklet contains very useful guides and reminders of



occasions of prayer and can be downloaded at: <https://www.derrydiocese.org/news/teach-us-to-pray>

The Jubilee Prayer

FATHER in Heaven, may the faith you have given us in your son, Jesus Christ, our brother, and the flame of charity enkindled in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, reawaken in us the blessed hope for the coming of your Kingdom.

May your grace transform us into tireless cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel. May those seeds transform from within both humanity and the whole cosmos in the sure expectation of a new heaven and a new earth, when, with the powers of Evil vanquished your glory will shine eternally.

May the grace of the Jubilee reawaken in us, Pilgrims of Hope, a yearning for the treasures of Heaven. May that same grace spread the joy and peace of our Redeemer throughout the earth.

To you our God, eternally blessed, be glory and praise for ever. Amen.

DDS Daily Masses 2024-2025

St Eugene's
17 Jan, 9 Mar, 29 Apr, 19 Jun, 9 Aug, 29 Sep, 19 Nov

St Columba's
18 Jan, 10 Mar, 30 Apr, 20 Jun, 10 Aug, 30 Sep, 20 Nov

The Three Patrons
19 Jan, 11 Mar, 1 May, 21 Jun, 11 Aug, 1 Oct, 21 Nov

St Mary's, Creggan
20 Jan, 12 Mar, 2 May, 22 Jun, 12 Aug, 2 Oct, 22 Nov

Our Lady of Lourdes
1 Dec 2024, 21 Jan, 13 Mar, 3 May, 23 Jun, 13 Aug, 3 Oct, 23 Nov

Holy Family
2 Dec, 2024, 22 Jan, 14 Mar, 4 May, 24 Jun, 14 Aug, 4 Oct, 24 Nov

Culmore
3 Dec 2024, 23 Jan, 15 Mar, 5 May, 25 Jun, 15 Aug, 5 Oct, 25 Nov

Glendermott
4 Dec 2024, 24 Jan, 16 Mar, 6 May, 26 Jun, 16 Aug, 6 Oct, 26 Nov

Donagheady
5 Dec 2024, 25 Jan, 17 Mar, 7 May, 27 Jun, 17 Aug, 7 Oct, 27 Nov

Leckpatrick
6 Dec 2024, 26 Jan, 18 Mar, 8 May, 28 Jun, 18 Aug, 8 Oct, 28 Nov

Ardmore
7 Dec 2024, 27 Jan, 19 Mar, 9 May, 29 Jun, 19 Aug, 9 Oct, 29 Nov

Strathfoyle
8 Dec 2024, 28 Jan, 20 Mar, 10 May, 30 Jun, 20 Aug, 10 Oct

Camus
9 Dec 2024, 29 Jan, 21 Mar, 11 May, 1 Jul, 21 Aug, 11 Oct

Urney & Castlefin

10 Dec 2024, 30 Jan, 22 Mar, 12 May, 2 Jul, 22 Aug, 12 Oct

Mourne
11 Dec 2024, 31 Jan, 23 Mar, 13 May, 3 Jul, 23 Aug, 13 Oct

Donaghmore
12 Dec 2024, 1 Feb, 24 Mar, 14 May, 4 Jul, 24 Aug, 14 Oct

Termonamongan
13 Dec 2024, 2 Feb, 25 Mar, 15 May, 5 Jul, 25 Aug, 15 Oct,

Langfield
14 Dec 2024, 3 Feb, 26 Mar, 16 May, 6 Jul, 26 Aug, 16 Oct,

Sion Mills
15 Dec 2024, 4 Feb, 27 Mar, 17 May, 7 Jul, 27 Aug, 17 Oct,

Ardstraw East
16 Dec 2024, 5 Feb, 28 Mar, 18 May, 8 Jul, 28 Aug, 18 Oct,

Ardstraw W & C'derg
17 Dec 2024, 6 Feb, 29 Mar, 19 May, 9 Jul, 29 Aug, 19 Oct

Clonleigh
18 Dec 2024, 7 Feb, 30 Mar, 20 May, 10 Jul, 30 Aug, 20 Oct

Drumragh
19 Dec 2024, 8 Feb, 31 Mar, 21 May, 11 Jul, 31 Aug, 21 Oct

Cappagh
20 Dec 2024, 9 Feb, 1 Apr, 22 May, 12 Jul, 1 Sep, 22 Oct

Greencastle
21 Dec 2024, 10 Feb, 2 Apr, 23 May, 13 Jul, 2 Sep, 23 Oct

Badoney Lower
22 Dec 2024, 11 Feb, 3 Apr, 24 May, 14 Jul, 3 Sep, 24 Oct

Badoney Upper
23 Dec 2024, 12 Feb, 4 Apr, 25 May, 15 Jul, 4 Sep, 25 Oct

Maghera
24 Dec 2024, 13 Feb, 5 Apr, 26 May, 16 Jul, 5 Sep, 26 Oct

Desertmartin
25 Dec 2024, 14 Feb, 6 Apr,

27 May, 17 Jul, 6 Sep, 27 Oct

Faughanvale
26 Dec 2024, 15 Feb, 7 Apr, 28 May, 18 Jul, 7 Sep, 28 Oct

Claudy
27 Dec 2024, 16 Feb, 8 Apr, 29 May, 19 Jul, 8 Sep, 29 Oct

Banagher
28 Dec 2024, 17 Feb, 9 Apr, 30 May, 20 Jul, 9 Sep, 30 Oct

Ballinascreen
29 Dec 2024, 18 Feb, 10 Apr, 31 May, 21 Jul, 10 Sep, 31 Oct

Dungiven
30 Dec 2024, 19 Feb, 11 Apr, 1 Jun, 22 Jul, 11 Sep, 1 Nov

Limavady
31 Dec 2024, 20 Feb, 12 Apr, 2 Jun, 23 Jul, 12 Sep, 2 Nov

Magilligan
1 Jan, 21 Feb, 13 Apr, 3 Jun, 24 Jul, 13 Sep, 3 Nov

Coleraine
2 Jan, 22 Feb, 14 Apr, 4 Jun, 25 Jul, 14 Sep, 4 Nov

Garvagh
3 Jan, 23 Feb, 15 Apr, 5 Jun, 26 Jul, 15 Sep, 5 Nov

Kilrea
4 Jan, 24 Feb, 16 Apr, 6 Jun, 27 Jul, 16 Sep, 6 Nov

Greenlough
5 Jan, 25 Feb, 7 Jun, 28 Jul, 17 Sep, 7 Nov

Bellaghy
6 Jan, 26 Feb, 8 Jun, 29 Jul, 18 Sep, 8 Nov

Lavey
7 Jan, 27 Feb, 9 Jun, 30 Jul, 19 Sep, 9 Nov

Moville
8 Jan, 28 Feb, 20 Apr, 10 Jun, 31 Jul, 20 Sep, 10 Nov

Granaghan
9 Jan, 1 Mar, 21 Apr, 11 Jun, 1 Aug, 21 Sep, 11 Nov

Buncrana
10 Jan, 2 Mar, 22 Apr, 12 Jun,

2 Aug, 22 Sep, 12 Nov

Fahan
11 Jan, 3 Mar, 23 Apr, 13 Jun, 3 Aug, 23 Sep, 13 Nov

Clonmany
12 Jan, 4 Mar, 24 Apr, 14 Jun, 4 Aug, 24 Sep, 14 Nov

Carndonagh
13 Jan, 5 Mar, 25 Apr, 15 Jun, 5 Aug, 25 Sep, 15 Nov

Malin
14 Jan, 6 Mar, 26 Apr, 16 Jun, 6 Aug, 26 Sep, 16 Nov

Iskaheen
15 Jan, 7 Mar, 27 Apr, 17 Jun, 7 Aug, 27 Sep, 17 Nov

Culdaff
16 Jan, 8 Mar, 28 Apr, 18 Jun, 8 Aug, 28 Sep, 18 Nov

1ST FRIDAY MASS FOR LIVING MEMBERS 2024 / 2025

Ballinascreen
06/12/2024

Banagher
03/01/2025

Bellaghy
07/02/2025

Coleraine
07/03/2025

Desertmartin
04/04/2025

Dungiven
02/05/2025

Errigal
06/06/2025

Greenlough
04/07/2025

Kilrea
01/08/2025

Lavey
05/09/2025

Limavady
03/10/2025

Maghera
07/11/2025

LECTIO
Encountering Christ
in his word

Thursday evenings at 8:15pm

St. Columb's Church
Chapel Road, Waterside

All welcome.

Schedule of Prayer in St. Eugene's Cathedral Ordinary Time

Monday to Friday 8.00am – Morning Mass 10.00am – Morning Mass 12.00noon – Angelus & Rosary 3.00pm – Divine Mercy Chaplet 7.00pm – 7.20pm - Confessions 7.30pm – Evening Mass followed by Rosary & Night Prayer	Tuesday after 10.00am Mass until 7.30pm Mass
Saturday 10.00am – Morning Mass (11.30 am – 1.00 pm) (5.30 pm – 6.00 pm) (7.00 pm – 7.20 pm) - Confessions 6.15pm – Vigil Mass 7.30pm – Vigil Mass	CONFESSIONS Saturday (11.30 am – 1.00 pm) (5.30 pm – 6.00 pm) (7.00 pm – 7.20 pm) Eves of Holy Days (5.30pm – 6.00pm) (7.00pm – 7.20pm) Monday – Friday 7.00pm – 7.20pm
Sunday 7.00am – Sunday Mass 9.30am – Sunday Mass 11.00am – Sunday Mass 12.30pm – Sunday Mass 7.00pm – Sunday Mass	DEVOTIONS Sunday 6.00pm

EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION
Sunday 3.00pm – 6.00pm

ST EUGENE'S CATHEDRAL
1878-2023

REJOICED WHEN I HEARD THEM SAY
LET US GO TO GOD'S HOUSE. PS 121

A New Year...A Renewed Hope *by Fr Peter O'Kane*



Our Lady statue in St Mary's Church, Melmount.

Hope renewed as decorations gone again!

As this edition of 'The Net' is published, we have commemorated the arrival of the Magi on the Feast of the Epiphany, and returned to Ordinary Time with the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. With Christmas decorations down, trees taken for recycling, lights and baubles carefully placed away, we walk through the ever-lengthening days of January that will bring us to the Solemnity of the Presentation of the Lord at the beginning of February, when Christmastide ends for some as they return the crib to its storage for another year.

In all of this, the promises brought by a new year can seem to fade and yet the hope of those first days of January ought to sustain us with renewed hope. We can say this with confidence because we are rooted in the Word-made-flesh, the God-Incarnate who gifts us with His Word, sustains us with the Sacraments and enlivens us with the people who share

our lives. We live this way rooted in the joy of the Jubilee Year as pilgrims of hope, joining with our brothers and sisters here at home and throughout the world, as we make our way on the path of life towards the fulfilment of God's promises.

Hope renewed in daily living

The renewed hope offered at Christmastide sustains us as we read afresh the words of St Paul in his letter to the Colossians. This gives us a pattern for how to live, how to love, how to believe and how to echo hope in our daily living. To the first Christians, and in turn to us, he says: "You are God's chosen race, His saints; He loves you, and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another; forgive each other as soon as a quarrel begins. The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same."

With a life rooted in love and compassion, every action and

word echoes Christ's kindness and humility enfolded in gentle patience so that, in the face of joys and sorrows, laughter and tears, we live with one another in a manner that brings peace and reconciliation, forgiveness and hope. But this way of living is not a means in itself nor self-centred, rather it is a way that is founded in the experience of love itself – as we experience the forgiveness and mercy of God in our own lives, then we ought to be inspired to share this forgiveness and mercy with others. This is demonstrated most profoundly as we don the clothes of love so that, with peace in our hearts, we are called together "as parts of one body" that causes us to "always be thankful."

Hope renewed in Christ's Incarnation, Death and Resurrection

The mystery of Christ's hope is rooted in the story of His Incarnation, public ministry, Passion, Death and Resurrection. It is easy to recall with romance the events at Bethlehem two thousand years ago, where at times our crib scenes are clinicalised and tidy, somewhat missing the messiness of that actual moment in time. Yet, it was the events in the stable that inspired others in how to live...the Blessed Virgin Mary and her spouse, St Joseph, the shepherds and the magi as the locals gazed on, the families of the martyred innocents and the community at Nazareth.

As the pen of the Howard Thurmann in 'The Work of Christmas' recounts, "When the song of the angels is stilled, when the star in the sky is gone, when the kings and princes are home, when the shepherds are back with their flock, then the work of Christmas begins: To find the lost, to heal the broken, to feed the hungry, to release the prisoner, to rebuild the nations, to bring peace among brothers and sisters, to make music in the heart."

Hope renewed as Jubilee begins

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 Canny (12th)
All Priests (13th)
All Priests (14th)
Fr James Devine (15th)
Fr Colum Clerkin (16th)
Fr Roland Collhoun (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)
All Priests (25th)
All priests (26th)
Fr Peter Devlin (27th)
Fr Fintan Diggin (28th)

Like every other celebration of Christmas, the Christmas of 2024 caused us to recall memories and history, invited us to rejoice in the present moment and beckoned us to move into a future with renewed hope. This is at the heart of the Jubilee Year of 2025, as Pope Francis invites us to be pilgrims of hope together, as he preached on Christmas Eve: "This is the season of hope in which we are invited to rediscover the joy of meeting the Lord. The Jubilee calls us to spiritual renewal and commits us to the transformation of our world, so that this year may truly become a time of jubilation."

As Christmas carols fade for another year, perhaps we will be sustained with the consolation that comes from the words of the lovely hymn 'O Little Town of Bethlehem', which hit the mark: "The hopes and fears of all the years are met in Thee tonight". As we renew our lives in Christ, we know that daily living brings its messiness and confusion, pains and sorrows, yet there is always the hope of clarity and direction, joy and laughter. Whether we are surrounded by the stories of our own lives or acutely aware of the narratives of peoples far away, this Jubilee of Hope invites us to renew our confidence in the promises unveiled to us in Christ as the eternal Son of the Father. In the power of the Holy Spirit, God the Father invites us to live in the fulness of life with Him, so that we might, "with gratitude in hearts, sing psalms and hymns and inspired songs to God."

Hope renewed as God blesses!

So, it is with confidence that we begin this new calendar year and new liturgical season, we entrust ourselves to the care of the Blessed Virgin Mary, as Pope Francis invites us to "entrust to her this new Jubilee Year. Let us entrust to her our questions, our worries, our sufferings, our joys and all the concerns that we bear in our hearts. She is our mum, our mother!"

May God bless us in all our

efforts, so that we and others may be renewed in the ultimate hope who is Christ. So, even if Christmas season is over, may these words of blessing sustain and inspire us: "May the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the

shepherds, the perseverance of the wise men, the obedience of Joseph and Mary, and the peace of the Christ child be yours always; and the blessing of God almighty be among you and remain with you."

January Liturgical Calendar

Jan 1 – Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God – World Day of Peace	Jan 16 – 1st Week of the Year – Ferial Day
Jan 2 – Memorial of Sts Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen, bishops	Jan 17 – Memorial of St. Antony, Abbot
Jan 3 – Memorial of the Holy Name of Jesus	Jan 18 – Saturday Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Jan 4 – Saturday before Epiphany (Christmastide)	Jan 19 – 2nd Sunday of the Year – Catholic Schools Week begins
Jan 5 – 2nd Sunday of Christmas	Jan 20 – Optional Memorial of Sts Sebastian and Fabian
Jan 6 – Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord	Jan 21 – Memorial of St. Agnes
Jan 7 – Tuesday after Epiphany (Christmastide)	Jan 22 – Optional Memorial of St. Vincent
Jan 8 – Wednesday after Epiphany (Christmastide)	Jan 23 – 2nd Week of the Year – Ferial Day
Jan 9 – Thursday after Epiphany (Christmastide)	Jan 24 – Memorial of St. Francis de Sales, bishop, doctor
Jan 10 – Friday after Epiphany (Christmastide)	Jan 25 – Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, Apostle
Jan 11 – Saturday after Epiphany (Christmastide)	Jan 26 – 3rd Sunday of the Year
Jan 12 – Feast of the Baptism of the Lord	Jan 27 – Optional Memorial of St. Angela Merici, virgin
Jan 13 – 1st Week of the Year – Ferial Day	Jan 28 – Memorial of St. Thomas Aquinas, priest, doctor
Jan 14 – 1st Week of the Year – Ferial Day	Jan 29 – 3rd Week of the Year – Ferial Day
Jan 15 – Memorial of St. Ita, Virgin	Jan 30 – Optional Memorial of St. Aidan, bishop
	Jan 31 – Memorial of St. John Bosco

Vocations News

THE Diocese of Derry is delighted to announce that three men travelled to Salamanca in Spain on Monday, January 6, the Feast of the Epiphany, to begin their propaedeutic studies for the priesthood at the Royal Scots' College.

Over the following six months, they will be living in community with a number of men from other Irish and Scottish dioceses, and a man from Mexico.

They will pray and attend Mass together, learn some basic Spanish, and attend courses on Philosophy, Scripture, and Spirituality.

We hold all our seminarians and those discerning a vocation to the priesthood in our prayers, especially Gerry Friel, Gary White, and Gary Duddy.

May the Lord bless and guide them in the years ahead..

Pope's monthly intention

The Holy Father has asked for prayer during January for:

The Right to an Education: Let us pray for migrants, refugees and those affected by war, that their right to an education, which is necessary to build a better world, might always be respected.

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



Fr Brendan Doherty (29th)
Fr Shaun Doherty (30th)
All priests (31st)

IS GOD CALLING YOU?

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

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.

JESUS



And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising 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

The Holy Name of Jesus – January 3rd

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 the 3rd of January. 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'.

"At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in Heaven, on Earth and under the earth" (Philippians 2:10)..



Epiphany – January 6th

The Feast of the Epiphany (CCC 528) is 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 Melchior, 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+ _____. The last space is filled in with the numbers which make up the last half of the new year.

20+C+M+B+25

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

Jan 2nd – St Basil & St Gregory Nazianzen

Jan 7th – St Anthony of Egypt

Jan 24th – St Francis de Sales

Jan 28th – 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)

Pilgrims of Hope Jubilee Year

The logo of the Jubilee year is made up of many symbols that help us to understand what this special year

can mean for us.

The four figures represent everyone on earth, all different kinds of people from all various places on earth. They are all hugging each other to show friendship and how they are united as a global family.



The figure at the front is holding on to a cross. The cross is a sign of great faith and hope. We should always remember to never let go of the cross as we will always need Jesus in our lives.



Underneath the figures in the logo, we see rough waves which symbolise for us that our life's pilgrimage does not always go smoothly in calm waters.

In the logo, the lower part of the cross has been stretched and taken on the shape of an anchor, which is let down into the waves. The anchor is known as a symbol of hope.



The pilgrim's journey is something that everyone is doing together, and the group leans closely towards the cross.

The cross is seen bending down towards the people, reassuring them that they are not alone and stretching out to them, offering them the safety of hope.



Quiz Time with Lawrence

- Near which Irish town is the popular Tyrella Beach situated?
- Which actor played the role of Gary Strang in the TV comedy 'Men Behaving Badly'?
- What number is represented by Roman Numerals XCIX?
- In a regular game of Monopoly, what is the highest value note in use?
- How many players are there in a rugby league team?
- What is the capital city of Venezuela?
- What is the correct cooking term for food that is sealed in a vacuum packing and cooked in hot water?
- What high-profile peacekeeping role - formerly held by Kofi Annan - does António Guterres currently hold?
- Name the pop star/actress daughter of country singer Billy Ray Cyrus?
- What was the name of teenager Vanessa Paradis's 1987 UK chart-topping single?
- What two 'sides' are traditionally served with Haggis at a 'Burns' Night' dinner?
- How many time zones does Canada have?
- What nationality is Formula 1 racing driver, Llando Norris?
- Who wrote and illustrated the children's book, 'The Tale of Jemima Puddle Duck'?
- Who is the longest running character still appearing in TV soap 'Eastenders'?
- What ironic song did Roy Orbison record vocals on, but then sadly passed away before the song's video was shot?
- What does a Ciborium hold?
- During what century did Joan of Arc live and die?
- With what all-girl band did pop icon Beyoncé Knowles begin her rise to fame?
- Over what distance is the longest indoor swimming event at the Olympic games?
- In what part of the UK did Grampian TV originate?
- What is US President-elect Donald Trump's middle name?
- In what country did the Cursillo Apostolic movement originate?
- Who got his first six-string guitar in the summer of 1969?
- The city of Chemnitz is this year's European City of Culture. In what country is it located?

Quiz Answers: 1, Downpatrick; 2, Martin Clunes; 3, 99; 4, £/\$500; 5, Thirteen; 6, Caracas; 7, Sous-vide; 8, Secretary General of the United Nations; 9, Miley; 10, Joe Le Taxi; 11, Turnip and potatoes (Neeps & tatties); 12, Six; 13, English; 14, Beatrix Potter; 15, Ian Beale; 16, The End of the Line (Travelling Willburys); 17, Communion; 18, Fifteenth; 19, Destiny's Child; 20, 1500 metres; 21, Scotland; 22, John; 23, Spain; 24, Bryan Adams; 25, Germany.



33 DAYS OF Family Prayer



Bishop Donal McKeown



Step 1:
Get your **free** book

Child Consecration To Jesus through Mary.

Look for it in your parish church. Why not say a prayer while you are there?

Towards Consecration to Jesus Christ through Mary

Join Bishop McKeown each evening for family prayer at 7 o'clock, live on Diocese of Derry Facebook or YouTube

Step 3:
Open Derry Diocese on **Facebook or YouTube**

Ask an adult to open the Diocese of Derry Facebook or YouTube page before 7 o'clock each evening to follow the story and prayers of each day.



Steps to follow the 33 days of family prayer

Will you and your family join Bishop McKeown each evening?

Starts 7 o'clock Thursday, 9th January. Ends Tuesday, 11th February.

derrydiocese.org/consecration

Step 2:
Have your **rosary beads** and **prayers** ready

Have the correct page open for the story and prayers of the day.

Day 1 starts on Thursday, 9th January.



Step 4:
Cross off each **day**

On the prayer calendar overleaf, cross off each of the 33 days of prayer as you do them.

Followed on the 34th day (Tuesday, 11th February) with a Consecration to Jesus through Mary.

FOLD

FOLD



Decades of the Rosary

The Joyful Mysteries
The Annunciation to Mary
The Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth
The Nativity of Jesus
The Presentation of Jesus
The Finding of Jesus in the Temple

The Luminous Mysteries
The Baptism of Jesus
The Wedding Feast at Cana
The Proclamation of God's kingdom
The Transfiguration of Jesus
The Institution of the Eucharist

The Sorrowful Mysteries
The Agony in the Garden
The Scouring at the Pillar
The Crowning with Thorns
The Carrying of the Cross
The Crucifixion of Jesus

The Glorious Mysteries
The Resurrection of Jesus
The Ascension of Jesus
The Descent of the Holy Spirit
The Assumption of Mary into Heaven
The Coronation of Mary as Queen

A decade of the rosary is made up of one 'Our Father', ten 'Hail Mary' prayers and one 'Glory Be'.

You can use a set of rosary beads or your fingers to count!



Prayers of each Day

Come, Holy Spirit
See page 11 in the book

Our Father
See page 11 in the book

Hail Mary
See page 11 in the book

Glory Be to the Father
See page 12 in the book

Ave Maris Stella
See page 12 in the book

Sign of the Cross
See page 15 in the book

The Apostles' Creed
See page 15 in the book

Hail, Holy Queen
See page 16 in the book

Look for this book in your parish Church



Scan me

What does consecration mean? Scan the code to find out more.



Prayer Calendar

Cross off each day as you finish the prayers

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Day 8	Day 9	Day 10	Day 11	Day 12	Day 13	Day 14
Day 15	Day 16	Day 17	Day 18	Day 19	Day 20	Day 21
Day 22	Day 23	Day 24	Day 25	Day 26	Day 27	Day 28
Day 29	Day 30	Day 31	Day 32	Day 33	Consecration to Jesus through Mary	

Prayers that will be used over the 33 days towards Consecration