

# The NET

Sharing fruits of faith in Derry Diocese

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See inside...



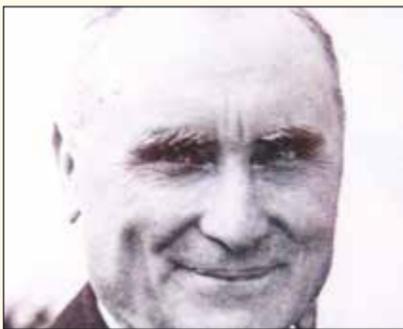
Fr Clerkin's Golden Jubilee - Culmore



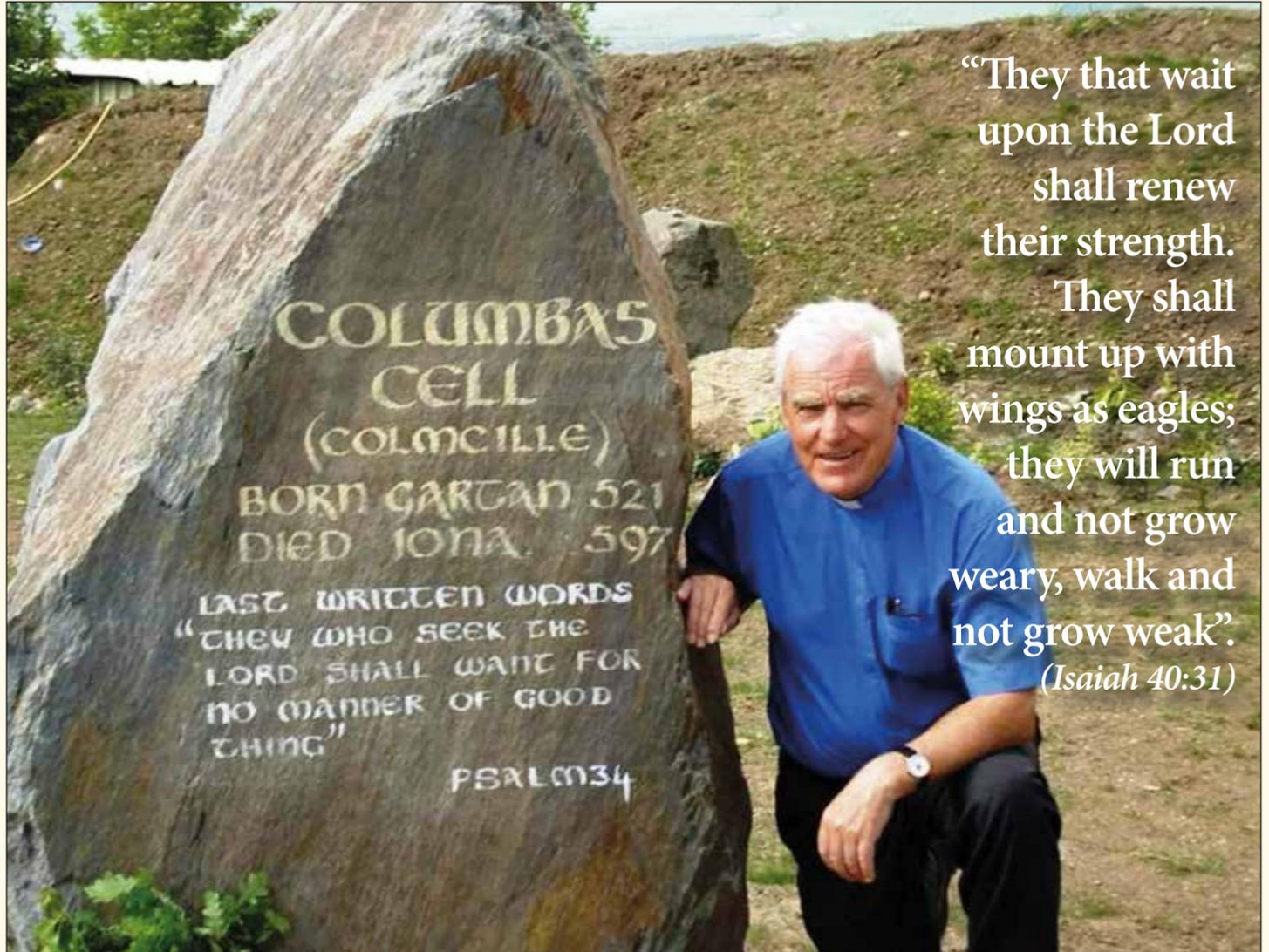
Fan the Flame - Buncrana



Youth Scholarship - Derry



Remembering Fr Michael Collins - Ballinascreen



The late Fr Neal Carlin, founder of The Columba Community.

“They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles; they will run and not grow weary, walk and not grow weak”. (Isaiah 40:31)



Mass Rock celebration - Granaghan



Derry Search pilgrimage - Knock



Fr Stephen Kearney Award - Newtownstewart

People in focus



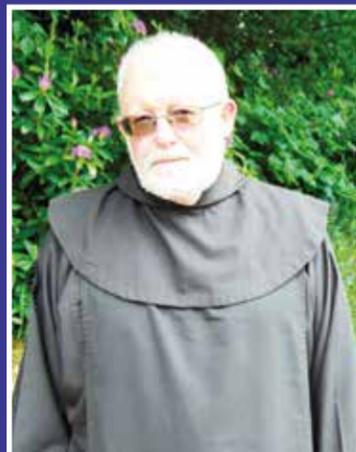
Emma Devine - Three Patrons



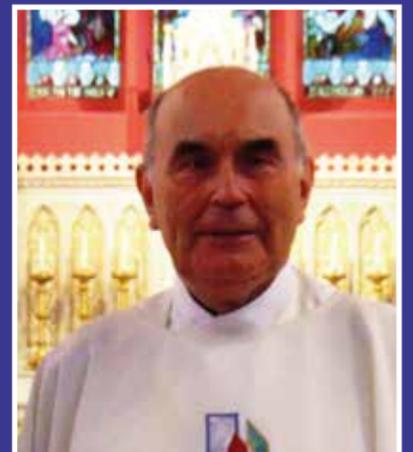
Fr Kevin Mullan PP - Drunquin



Fr Michael Canny - Waterside



Fr Mike Spain ocd - Termonbacca



Mgr Andy Dolan - Bellaghy

Also featuring: Termonbacca venue for Youth 2000 Summer Festival, Youth writers section; Celebrating grandparents & the elderly; Great vision for future ministry of Carmelites in Derry; Stations of the Cross find; Celebrating faith of ancestors at Mass Rocks; Preparing for the Season of Creation; Blessed Is She Retreat; Children's Catechism Club; Quiz and much more.

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## Bishop Donal reflects on the prayer intentions of Pope Francis for July and August...

### Be courageous and passionate architects of dialogue and friendship

*"We pray that, in social, economic and political situations of conflict, we may be courageous and passionate architects of dialogue and friendship." (July: Universal intention - Social friendship)*

ONE of the great symbols of Derry City is the Peace Bridge, opened on June 25, 2011. It has been described as two arms reaching out from the banks of the Foyle and meeting in the middle. These two straining arms have enabled people to cross over. It is not straight, for the path to peace has never been easy. But its construction is a thing of beauty and it has changed the landscape of the city for the better. The city can now breathe with both of its lungs. Jesus is described by St Paul

as the one who, in his own body, has broken down the walls that divided Jews and Gentiles (Cf Ephesians 2:14). In his body he bridged the gulf. God in Christ was reconciling the world to Himself and has entrusted to us the news that they are reconciled (2 Cor 5:19). It is not surprising that Jesus would say that the peacemakers are blessed (Mt 5:9).

Social, economic and political situations around the world can be very angry and tense. Whatever goes

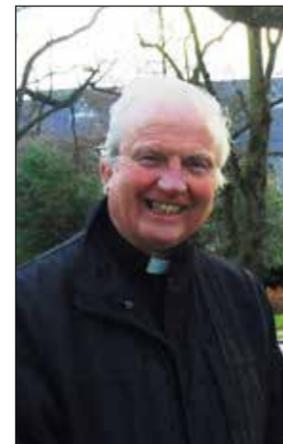
wrong, someone has to be condemned for it, and pay for it. Public discourse and social media comments can be brutal and vicious. Sometimes conversations in church can be bitter and angry.

It is remarkably easy to see '-isms' rather than people. But Jesus saw individuals before him, not labels. Those who love to label rarely have Jesus-eyes.

Pontiff comes from the word Pontifex; a builder of bridges. Pope Francis has consistently asked that we model graceful,

gracious ways of dealing with divisions. He has asked us to be architects of dialogue and friendship. He knows that bridge-builders will often be laughed at as traitors. He is aware that the path to the other side will not be straight.

But he asks us to be experts in building bridges, and thus to bear witness to what Jesus has done. That is how the face of the earth will be renewed, and how the Kingdom of God will spread.



Bishop Donal

## Only a church that lives repentance can preach repentance

*"Let us pray for the Church, that She may receive from the Holy Spirit the grace and strength to reform herself in the light of the Gospel." (August: Intention for evangelization - The Church)*

THE document of the Second Vatican Council on the Church (Lumen Gentium) says that the Church is "at the same time both holy and in need of purification." (LG 8) It would be heresy to think that the Church is perfect. We are saved by the grace of God and not by our own efforts. That is why St Paul could say that we are earthenware vessels bearing a great treasure (2 Cor 4:7).

Thus, constant prayer for renewal lies at the heart of all of our prayer.

We are seeking renewal, not for our glory but so that we can better be used as instruments to evangelise the world. Thus, the prophet Jeremiah could be content that God could remake his people as a potter remakes a vessel that has turned out wrong (Jeremiah 18:4).

The Church is constantly in need of renewal because we are all tempted to sin, just as Jesus was at the beginning of his public ministry. And the world in which we preach is changing. That does not mean

that the message about Christ changes. But it does mean that we have to be ready to adapt to make us fit for mission. Only a church that lives repentance can preach repentance.

And the standard against which we measure ourselves is to be found in the scriptures. The Word of God can open our hearts if we listen to it carefully. That is why the scriptures are proclaimed each day and each weekend at Mass. We are invited to be disciples, learning from the Master.

As Pope Francis wrote in

'Evangelii Gaudium': "God's word is unpredictable in its power...The Church has to accept this unruly freedom of the word...in ways that surpass our calculations and ways of thinking". (EG22)

And the Mass points clearly to the fact that we are called to discern God's call to renewal, not merely individually, but together.

The synodal path in the Irish Church is merely an opportunity for renewal. It simply asks the question, "What is God asking of the

Irish Church in 2021?"

If we are to be effective in making Jesus known and loved, we have to examine how hard we have been trying. Sometimes we can end up trying to make ourselves known and loved, and then we miss the whole point of being Christ's Church.

Pope Francis asks us to pray in August that we will let the Holy Spirit blow through the Church so make us fit for purpose in our time. Our sanctity lies in recognising our need of God's purifying grace.

## Celebrating St Maria Goretti...and the power of forgiveness

by Mary McMenamin



St Maria Goretti

WE have many beautiful feast days in our Liturgical year, but one particular saint that I feel drawn to mention for the month of July is St Maria Goretti. Her feast day is celebrated on July 6.

Maria's short life is an example for all of us and especially the youth. At 12 years old, Maria was attacked by her neighbour, Alessandro,

where he tried to force himself upon her. She told him that she would rather die than offend God and he proceeded to stab her several times.

When she was dying, she held no bitterness in her heart and forgave her attacker completely, wishing that his soul would be saved. Alessandro was sent to prison for 30 years for the crime he committed. He remained unremorseful until one night he had a dream, where he was in a garden and Maria gave him some lilies which immediately burned in his hands. When he woke the next morning, he was a changed man and began living a reformed life.

When Alessandro was released from prison, he went to see Maria's mother and begged her forgiveness. Her mother replied, "If my daughter can forgive you, who am I to withhold forgiveness?"

On June 24, 1950, Maria was declared a saint and Alessandro was there, in the St

Peter's crowd, to celebrate her canonisation. He later became a lay brother of the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin, where he lived in a monastery and worked there until he died.

St Maria's concern for her enemy extended even beyond death and we can see the miracle her forgiveness produced in his life. Her life and example is an encouragement for us to forgive others and pray that others may do the same for us.

The Assumption of The Blessed Virgin Mary is celebrated on August 15. Let's look at what the Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us about this amazing Feast Day: "The immaculate Virgin, preserved free from all stain of original sin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things, so that she might be more fully conformed to her son, the Lord

of Lords and conqueror of sin and death. The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is a singular participation in her Son's Resurrection and an anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians."

This Feast Day, in particular, is a great time to renew our

dedication and consecration to Our Lady. This can be done by doing our own personal act of consecration, or it can be preceded by a nine-day preparatory novena in honour of Our Lady and then the consecration on the feast day.

### Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary

*O purest heart of Mary, filled with overflowing kindness, show us your love. Let the flame of your heart, O Mary, descend on all people. We love you so. Impress your love in our hearts so that we may always long for you. O Mary, gentle and humble of heart, stand by us when we sin. You know that we are sinners. Grant that, through your pure and maternal heart, we shall all be healed of everything that makes our souls sick. Grant that we may always see the goodness of your mother's Heart and that we may be converted through the flame of your heart.*

Amen

The NET

Sharing the fruits of the faith in the Derry Diocese

Contacting us:

If you have a story that you would like to share or an event you would like covered by The Net, just drop an email to

editorthenet15@gmail.com  
or ring/text 07809292852

# Search family bond still strong despite Covid enforced separation

THE strong family-like bond within the Search Youth Group in Derry has remained intact for the duration of the Covid-19 restrictions and lockdowns, and with the easing of restrictions in the numbers who can meet in and outdoors, the leaders and young people have been enjoying coming together again, though in smaller numbers to start with.

And, a group of them enjoyed a pilgrimage to Knock Shrine, in Co Mayo, on Sunday, July 4, as part of a late celebration of the youth group's 35th anniversary.

Search youth worker, Caoimhe Mahony explained: "Last year was the 35th anniversary and, as part of the celebrations, we wanted to take a group of young people to Knock to mark the first trip there, which had led to Martin McLaughlin getting involved in setting up Search in Derry, in 1985.

"However, we couldn't go last year because of Covid-19 restrictions. So, on the 36th anniversary this year, we took a 50-seater bus to the Shrine. Those who went included some of the youth leaders and young people, as well as some of the wider Search family who keep connected through our community prayer meeting.

"It was the usual Knock pilgrimage – we prayed the Rosary

and attended Mass, and the young ones also had some free time to explore the area. Then on the way back home, we stopped in Bundoran for a while".

Caoimhe shared a couple of comments made by the young people about their experience in Knock: "Erin said that the best part of the day for her was being able to touch the gable wall where the Knock Apparition had taken place. She added that it had had been great to experience such an amazing place with everyone, including her mummy.

"Jennifer commented on the peacefulness and stillness she had felt while there, and said that it was great to be together with everyone as well."

Delighted to now be able to meet up with the young people, Caoimhe talked about how the leaders had kept in contact with them during the lockdowns, saying: "I went from door-to-door to keep engaged with them, and we also had Zoom calls to keep the connection".

She added: "Since the restrictions were eased about the numbers who could meet outdoors, we have had a walking group that meets on Monday nights, at 7 pm, at the old railway station.

"There is a core group of about 10, but it is open to anyone who

wants to come along. It is not just for those connected with Search. We just walk out the line and back.

"Some of our young people join us and enjoy having little competitions, such as who is fastest at completing the walk, so it has been a way of enabling them to come together.

"Sometimes some of our leaders will bring their babies in prams or their young children, and we have had people come along on their bikes. It's a lovely occasion to meet and chat with others, and anyone who would like to join us is welcome."

Easing back into the Search programmes, Caoimhe said: "We are currently running limited programmes, involving 15 young people on Thursday nights and the same on Friday nights. These have been happening since guidelines permitted 15 to meet indoor, with social distancing to keep people safe".

While the usual summer scheme will not be running this year, a mini-programme is planned for 14-18 year olds, with day trips away to Enniskillen to climb the 'Stairway to Heaven' and to the beach. They will also be taking a group to visit the Tulacorr Mass Rock in the Leckpatrick Parish, in Strabane.

In addition, a four-week 'Paint

and Pray' programme has been organised for Friday nights, followed by a four-week Girls' Group on Thursday nights.

Hoping to resume their Search weekends in November, Caoimhe said that a team training session for over 18s has been organised to take place in Termonbacca on July 28.

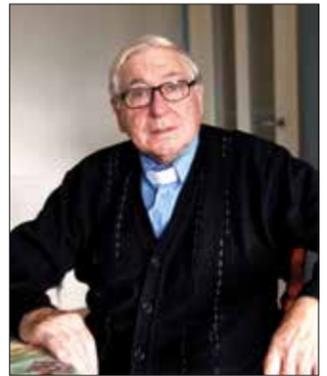
She added: "This will involve an overnight stay. We will be doing some training in preparation for our Search weekend that we hope to have in November, if restrictions allow.

"Search means Search for Christ and so we want to use this time to journey with the young people with regards to their spiritual development, and we will also be covering such areas as Child Protection and the latest Covid guidelines."



## Parish of Ardstraw East introduces the Fr Stephen Kearney Award...

# The late Fr Kearney lives on in Newtownstewart P7 Award



The late Fr Stephen Kearney.

NEWTOWNSTEWART has introduced a new liturgical award to the parish. The recipients are the Primary Seven children; the school leavers. The purpose of

the Award is to acknowledge the children's contribution to the liturgical life of the parish during their primary school years. They serve the Mass, lead the readings and sing in the choir.

The parish presents the Award with the great hope that the children will continue to be active in the parish for years to come. The name the Pastoral Forum has chosen is "The Father Stephen Kearney Award, in honour of the late parish priest.

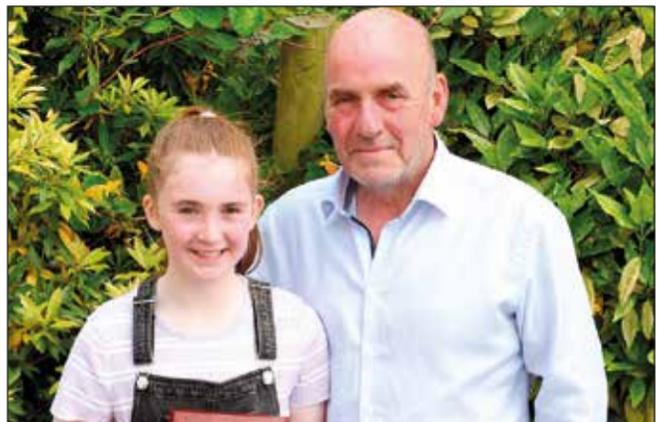
Fr Kearney (1944-2020) had served in Ardstraw East for 18 years, from 1995 to 2013, and did Trojan work in every aspect of parish life. Regarding the school, he was chaplain to the classes

and chair of the governors, seeing almost three school generations through to completion. The parishioners say it is fitting to honour this great priest with an annual award for the P7 children.

Catholic education is all-encompassing. It includes liturgical training, so that the children flourish in body, mind and soul. Children who cultivate these liturgical skills have a deeper prayer life and this will serve them well in their new schools, and in whatever role they assume later in the workplace. Active participation in the liturgy also promotes vocations to priesthood and religious life. And each parish needs vocations.

There are four recipients of the first ever Fr Stephen Kearney Award. They are Oscar Canning and Ciabhan Kilpatrick, of St Patrick's PS, and Grace Quinn and Melissa Tait, of St Eugene's PS, Tyrcur.

They received their awards from Fr Roland Colhoun in their schools on Monday, June 21 2021 and brought the plaques to Mass in Glenock on the following Sunday. At the end of Mass, the four children led the procession to the main door, for photographs in the grounds of the church. In attendance was Fr Kearney's brother, Paddy Joe and sister-in-law.



Full of praise for the Diocesan Youth Ministry Scholarship programme, Bishop Donal told first successful participants...

## This is merely the beginning...God has great things in mind for you



Shaciara and her family, from the Parish of Iskaheen & Upper Moville



Sarah Jane and her family, from the Limavady Parish.



Zara and family, from St Eugene's Parish, Derry.

THE first Derry Diocesan Youth Ministry Scholarship has been a great success despite the restrictions of Covid-19, and those who took part in the online programme during the past year were treated to a special celebration at St Eugene's, where they met in person for the first time on July 3, the Feast of St Thomas, the Apostle.

Welcoming the young people and their families for Mass in the Cathedral, for the first part of the celebrations, Bishop Donal said that he was delighted about the occasion for three reasons: it was great to celebrate the energy and initiative of the young church in the diocese; it was the Feast of St Thomas, whose passionate doubts, he said, echo something in all of us; and it was the anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood 44 years ago.

In his homily, Bishop Donal pointed out: "The story of Thomas is included in the Gospel, not because St John wanted to mock Thomas, but because a real faith journey always entails an element of doubt. That was the experience of the early church. All the apostles doubted the women's message that Jesus had risen. And then they stayed locked away in an upper room in fear."

"If faith or faithfulness were easy," he told the young people, "then there would be no challenge in it. It is like all significant emotions. Love is not just a nice feeling. In marriage and family, it often has to be a decision, even when you don't feel very loving. A crying baby at 3 am or a sick family member call for dedication, even when you want to look after yourself, or you are too tired to care.

"That is why the 'obey your thirst' and 'let's feel good' messages are so damaging. Muscles grow only when they have been stretched and strained. Faith, hope and love are real only when they have been

tested.

"Thus, the message of St Thomas is not that you have to believe in God, or you are in trouble. The Gospel message is a challenge for you to dare to believe – in love and mercy, in eternity and holiness, even when that is hard and you are asked to do difficult things."

He added: "Doubting Thomas teaches us that faith is not merely believing that God exists. That is an intellectual argument. Faith involves falling in love.

"Pope Benedict put it as follows: 'Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.' (Deus Caritas Est, 1)

"St John writes elsewhere, 'We have come to know and to believe in the love of God for us.' (1 Jn 4:16)

"Thomas has to meet the real Jesus with the marks of his real wounds," continued Bishop Donal, "Faith involves daring to believe that we are of eternal beauty and value in God's eyes. That is not easy in a culture which tells us that nothing is important or true except feeling good now – no matter how miserable and stupid you will feel tomorrow."

He went on to tell the young people that growing in faith needed two things if it was to survive "the cold blasts of cynicism and consumerism".

### Prayer

"Firstly, it needs prayer," he noted, adding: "A loving relationship needs time, honesty and commitment. Faith will shrivel unless it is watered and fed. It needs the warmth of God's smile. And prayer is not merely saying prayers. It means revisiting that encounter with the person of Jesus through personal prayer, through the sacraments and especially through the sacraments

of Eucharist and Confession.

"Thomas discovered that he was loved by Jesus despite his doubts. The sacrament of reconciliation entails discovering that we are loved as we are despite our failings – and that is amazing".

He continued: "Secondly, faith needs a community, other people who will walk with you, sharing the journey with others with whom you can share your dreams and doubts. We are all disciples, learners. On Easter Sunday, the young John and the older Peter ran to the tomb. John got there first but did not go in. Peter arrived and went in. We need the passionate enthusiasm of the young – and the experience of the old, who can help the young to put words on what they experience".

Pondering what St Thomas might say to young believers who had encountered the Risen Jesus, Bishop Donal told the young people: "Firstly, handing on faith means making disciples for Jesus and not just offering gimmicks to get people back to Mass. Secondly, it involves young people ministering to other young people. The Church will be renewed by you, not me.

"Thirdly, faith, like love, is always growing through challenges. Otherwise, it is dying.

Fourthly, faith is not just a private hobby. It has to bear fruit. The church has always been renewed by the passion of young people who founded movements and started something.

"Finally, as Pope Francis said, 'youth is more than simply a period of time; it is a state of mind.'" (Christus Vivit 34)

Encouraging the young people "to be open to God's outrageous dream", he added: "I thank God for this programme and all who have seen it through. But it merely marks the beginning of the next stage. God has great things in mind for you".

The Youth Scholarship Programme was led by Diocesan Youth Coordinator, Lizzie Rea, who was full of praise for the commitment of the young people who completed the programme despite the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic.

And, along with Diocesan Youth Pastoral Leader, Yvonne Rooney, she was delighted that restrictions had been eased enough to enable this limited celebration of their achievement to go ahead, and to bring them together face-to-face for the first time, with eight out of the 10 participants attending the Mass and continued celebration in the Cathedral Hall afterwards, which included their families.

"These young people worked really hard throughout the year and we wanted to mark this in some way. We presented them with gifts of a Derry Youth Scholarship half-zip top, a Mary's Meals t-shirt and Mary's Meals book, as well as a certificate. And, Bishop Donal added Pope Francis Rosary beads to each of the gift bags.

"We had invited a representative from Mary's Meals, the Youth Scholarship's chosen charity for the year, to come along, and she spoke to the young people and thanked them for their great support for the charity.

"We also enjoyed eating some Domino's pizzas and chatting to the young people about what university they hoped to attend to further their studies. And we look forward to meeting up with them again in December."

Following the success of this first Youth Scholarship programme, Lizzie said they hoped to run it again in the new school year.

"All being well, we hope to introduce a residential element to the programme and have more input from ourselves when we can introduce a bit of face-to-face ministry, as the first programme was all delivered online."

Young people interested in taking part in the next Diocesan Youth Scholarship are asked to message @derryouth or #derryouthministry or email lizzie.rea@derrydiocese.org



Fionnuala, Grace, Shaciara and Kayleigh, with Caoimhe from Mary's Meals, the chosen charity for the year.



Hollie and family, from Melmount Parish, Strabane.



Joshua and his family, from the Errigal Parish.



Shaciara with Bishop Donal and Lizzie Rea.

*Delighted to have been part of the first online Derry Youth Ministry Scholarship, Hollie Frystal writes...*

## 'Class of Covid' meet in person to celebrate exciting and unforgettable experience

LAST year, the Derry Youth Ministry team came up with a new youth initiative. The scholarship was a programme that would consist of various commitments and tasks, such as working with a charity, gaining an OCN qualification in Leadership/Youth Ministry Skills, faith, social media, and fun.

This year, 10 young people from across the Diocese completed the Scholarship and were awarded a certificate for their time, effort and dedication. Obviously, this year was unique in many ways, and the Derry Youth Ministry team thought outside the box on how they could administer to young people from their homes amidst a pandemic.

The result was the first ever such scholarship...and completed via Zoom. Thankfully, the 'Class of Covid' has eventually met in person to celebrate and mark the end of what was an exciting and unforgettable experience, in St Eugene's Cathedral, Derry.

On July 3, the Feast of St Thomas the Apostle, we concluded our scholarship with Mass, a presentation, good craic and food. Reflecting on the past 12 months, I have many favourite memories of

my time as a scholarship student. One of which was our monthly meetings.

As we all know, during Covid-19 life was turned upside down and we were living in a global crisis. Most of the time, we were in lockdowns, therefore, we could not attend school, Mass or meet up with friends or family. The Derry Youth Ministry scholarship helped me to get through the coronavirus, while also supporting me in faith. I suppose it also cheered me up when times were challenging and made my extra time worthwhile.

Secondly, I absolutely loved working with Mary's Meals. This humble charity originated in the highlands of Scotland, and was founded by Magnus McFarland-Barrow in 1992, and dedicated to Our Lady the Mother of Jesus.

We chose to work with Mary's Meals this year and, hands down, it is the most genuine and authentic charity I have ever got to know. It was an absolute privilege to be working with Patricia and Caoimhe. I will forever support Mary's Meals and their excellent, clever and successful strategy of feeding and educating children in poor countries.

To conclude our work for Mary's

Meals, the young people walked 5 km each to raise money for their cause. Faith and prayer is a significant necessity in Mary's Meals' mission, which is expressed so wonderfully through their hard work and determination. It was a refreshing and eye opening experience, and I ask everyone to keep them in their prayers and support them in any way that they can.

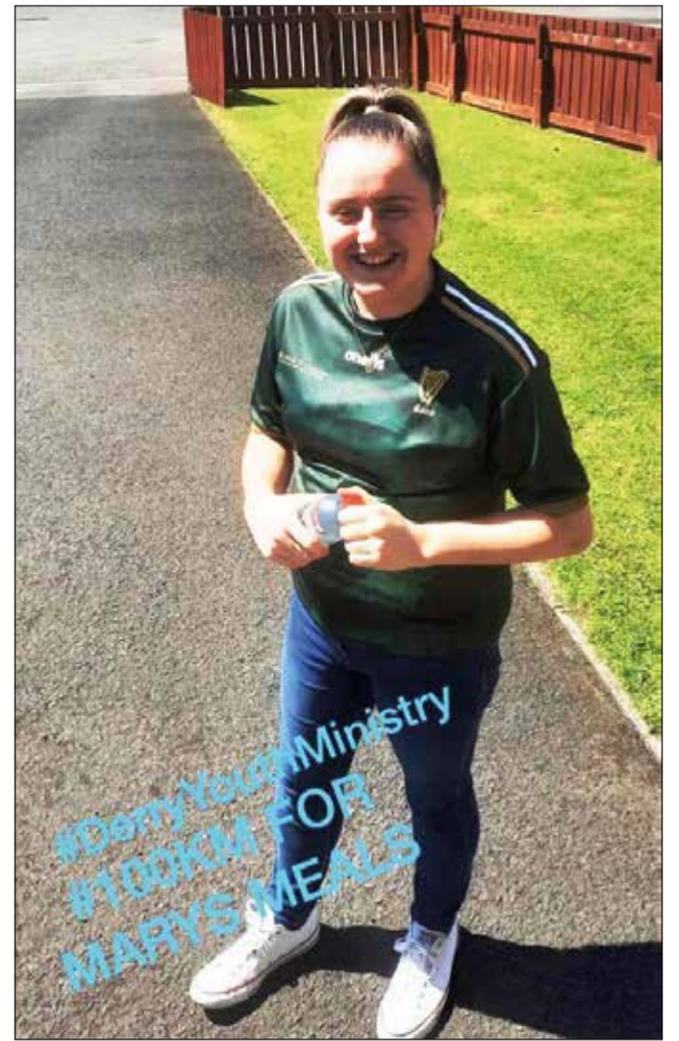
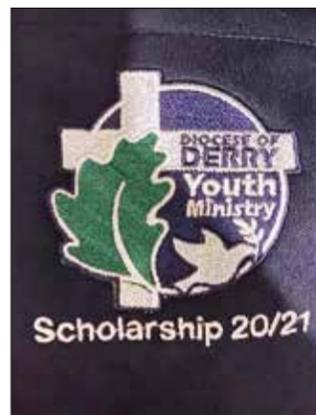
Finally, in addition to having fun and growing in faith together, we also gained an OCN qualification in Youth Ministry/Leadership Skills. As Bishop Donal said in his homily at our Mass, we have been assisted in our preparation to become young and future leaders of our Church. Hence, the Church has always been renewed by communities, and I see the scholarship as an opportunity for a group of people to 'walk together' in working collectively on a common mission.

I believe that the basis of the Derry Youth Ministry Scholarship is faith and to enable young people to embark upon this concept of 'Synodality', making them present and included whilst the Church moves forward. This was evident, when we received a very important

opportunity to ask the awkward questions at the webinars that were hosted during Eastertide.

Lastly, I highly encourage fellow young people to sign up for the 2021/2022 Derry Youth Ministry Scholarship. It is a fantastic opportunity to meet new people, make new friends and, more importantly, a chance to talk, pray and laugh together as young people and as a friend of Christ.

I feel privileged to have received one of the first Derry Diocesan Youth Ministry Scholarship half-zip tops and am very proud to wear it. Wearing the crest brings me a great sense of belonging and it will always be something I'll have to look back on the time I had with the Scholarship.



## Anyone remotely interested in Youth Ministry Scholarship should go for it

*by Zara Schindwein*

AFTER a year of virtual fundraisers, Zoom meetings and fun activities, I finally got to meet up in person with the other members of the Derry Youth Ministry Scholarship when we gathered for a celebration at St Eugene's on July 3.

As the first class to undertake the Scholarship, we wanted to do something special to mark the end of a fantastic year. I thoroughly enjoyed the experience. It provided me with many opportunities to meet new people, explore my faith and have fun too.

Looking back, we accomplished so many things, such as raising money for Mary's Meals, whom we worked closely with all year. I

found their work truly incredible, and it was an honour to play a small part in their mission.

We also adapted our skills set to face the challenges that the pandemic brought. We provided Live Advent Reflections and Pancake Tuesday Tutorials online and enjoyed stepping outside of our comfort zones.

By taking part in these activities, my confidence has hugely increased when faced with public speaking. We also worked closely with Youth Link in preparation for the OCN course, which proved to be immensely insightful.

Besides that, the Derry Youth Ministry Scholarship gave everyone a place they could go

to when faced with worry or questions, but also a place full of laughter and craic. I believe that a close community was built, and I hope that it will last as time goes on.

We would not have been able to achieve this had it not been for the wonderful work of Lizzie Rea, the support of Bishop Donal McKeown and everyone who helped organise and make the Derry Youth Ministry Scholarship so great.

So, I think it's safe to say that I loved the Scholarship and I encourage anyone even remotely interested to go for it, because I believe that you will enjoy it just as much as I did.



*Celebrating the annual Fan the Flame Mass, Bishop Donal told young people...*

# You can set the world ablaze in your own beautiful way

YOUNG people in Year 7 and Sixth Class, in primary and national schools around the Diocese, tuned into Bishop Donal's celebration of the annual 'Fan the Flame' Mass in St Eugene's Cathedral rather than the usual colourful gathering in Celtic Park, with the continued Covid-19 restrictions.

While the youngsters missed out on what is a highlight in June each year for children in the Diocese who have just received the Sacrament of Confirmation, the Diocesan Catechetical team managed to make it a special occasion, with many of the children wearing the 'Fan the Flame' t-shirts they had designed for the online Mass.

A small representation of pupils were present in the Cathedral for the ceremony, which got underway with Bishop Donal carrying up a book containing the names of every P7 and Sixth Class pupil and their teachers, written inside large hand shapes. The young people were also encouraged to write their reflections.

Acknowledging that some of the children had yet to be Confirmed, Bishop Donal assured them that they would get the opportunity to celebrate their Confirmation.

Encouraging them to look forward to an end "to the whole Covid experience", he also spoke to the young people about this being a time "to look back on the years spent in primary or national school, to look forward to a summer break and to imagine

what life in the new school will be like".

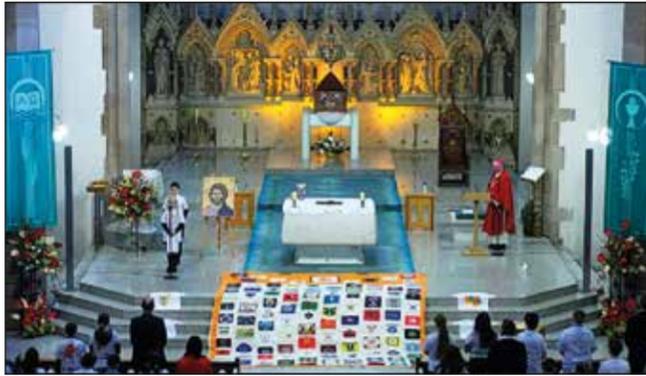
"It is a time," he said, "when you can look back on lessons learned and friendships made, and look forward to building on those lessons".

Adding that it was also a time for them to start making big decisions in their lives, Bishop Donal said: "I don't just mean what subjects you will study at school or who you want to be friendly with. I mean that this is a time for you to ask what ideals are going to guide your decisions in life. You will have many choices to make. How will you judge what is right and valuable – and what is not good?"

"Jesus in the Gospel puts it clearly - love God with your whole heart, soul, mind and strength, and love our neighbour as yourself. That may sound a tall order that is asking too much of you. But Jesus tells people that human beings are capable of great things.

"Some people will tell you that life is just a bit of joke and that you shouldn't grow up too quickly or take too much responsibility in life. Jesus invites people to expect great things from themselves and from others".

He added: "Some of your friends will tell you that God is a bit of a spoil sport and that faith in Jesus will limit you. But if you look back in history, you will find that belief in God has inspired great scientists, artists, writer and musicians. Great figures like Saints Patrick, Brigid or Columba were heroes in their time and are still remembered.



"We have more modern figures like Sr Clare Crockett from Derry, who dedicated her life to God at the age of 18 and died in an earthquake five years ago as she protected children, or Carlo Acutis, a young man who loved Jesus in the Eucharist and died at the age of 15, just 15 years ago".

Highlighting the 'Fan the Flame' title for the ceremony, Bishop Donal remarked: "The problem is very often that we doubt there is a spark in each of us that can be fanned into a flame. Jesus invites you to fan the flame by asking yourself the question, 'How would I love to be a blessing on the world?'"

"How do you want to leave your mark so that you will leave the world a better place because you have passed through? We are all tempted to pick famous role models. But young Carlo Acutis said that we are all meant to be originals and too often people end up being little more than photocopies of somebody else.

"Jesus asks you to be an original,

not by being an idiot but by being loving. Be outstanding for your kindness and thoughtfulness. Jesus does not want love of God to drag you away from the world. He wants you to know that you are loved so that you can spread that love where it is most needed.

"There is spark of sainthood in your heart. You can let it die – or you can fan it into a flame. That was what the Apostles let God do at Pentecost – the message about Jesus was brought to the boil and it burst out. The Bible tells us that 3,000 people became believers that day".

Urging the young people to let the love of God shape their hearts to do beautiful things, Bishop Donal encouraged them to learn to love, even when that is not easy.

"Decide today to make decisions in life that help you blossom and give life to others," he said, "And without even knowing you are doing it, you can set the world ablaze in your own beautiful, God-given way"

*Scoil Íosagáin, Buncrana*



*Good Shepherd, Waterside*



*St Brigid's Cranagh*



*St Columba's, Ballinascreen*



St Colmcille's Claudy



St Eithne's Ballymagroarty



St Columba's, Kilrea



St Mary's Bellaghy



St Mary's PS Altinure



Bishop Donal comments on Sacramental situation south of the border...

THE Fan the Flame ceremony was not quite the same for a number of reasons this year, with one being that Covid-19 restrictions in the South of Ireland meant that young people in Co Donegal parishes within the Diocese were still waiting to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Echoing the frustration felt amongst the Donegal faithful, Bishop Donal commented: "Following the Government announcement of early June, many parishes in Donegal were looking forward to being able to celebrate First Holy Communion and Confirmations any time after July 5th. Then in an apparently casual comment at the end of June, Leo Varadkar announced that Baptisms, First Communion and Confirmations should not take place. That came as a huge shock to families all over the Republic.

"I know that our parishes all want to act very responsibly in these difficult circumstances. However,

the Sacrament of Baptism is the door by which people enter membership of the Body of Christ. "Secular governments everywhere need to engage with religious bodies before making regulations that affect them. It is hard to understand how that lesson has not been learnt over the last 18 months."

In the latest development regarding government guidance on the celebration of some of the sacraments in the context of the current pandemic, Bishop Donal has joined other Irish bishops in giving the go ahead for baptisms, Holy Communion and Confirmation to take place.

Writing to his priests, he stated: "I have considered this guidance, and considered the guidance being given by the government in relation to other social settings, in particular, the permission being granted by the government for weddings and associated receptions to have a maximum of 100 from 5 August. "In addition, I have consulted with

other bishops. Having done all of this, I have decided that First Holy Communion and the sacrament of Confirmation can take place in parishes in this diocese, subject to the maximums currently in place for the celebration of Mass, from 15 August 2021.

"It would be important to encourage people to have any associated social events in accordance with government guidance".

Baptisms are to be celebrated from August 5.

Bishop Donal told 'The Net': "I recognised that the problem was never the sacramental celebration but the parties afterwards. However, when the state allowed for 100 at weddings and receptions, it became impossible to justify banning sacramental celebrations, whatever happened afterwards.

"Thus, I am delighted for children, families and parishes that these key sacraments can be celebrated as times of grace and hope".

THIS month, Hollie, Peter, Oisin, Zara, Gemma and John, 'The Net' youth contributors from the Co Tyrone, Inishowen, Co Derry and Derry City Deaneries, have been writing on a variety of topics, including sharing their appreciation of the older people in their lives as we prepare to celebrate the first World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly.

Oisin and Zara have been continuing to follow the Pope's weekly teaching on prayer and they write about the benefits of prayer in helping young people face life's challenges, while Peter writes about the impact of social media.

A member of the Syro-Malabar community in the Diocese, John reflects on the faith of the 'doubting' St Thomas, and, struck by the Pope's message on the Feast of Sts Peter and Paul calling us to "be like Peter and Paul, free but humble", Hollie reflects on the lives of these great saints in our Church.

Hollie also shares her thoughts after listening to a Zoom event addressing the question, 'Is Catholic Education worth keeping in Northern Ireland', during which Bishop Donal and former, St Mary's College, Derry, principal, Marie Lindsey, were amongst the guest speakers.



Hollie Frystal,  
Co Tyrone Deanery.



Oisin Mulhern,  
Co Derry Deanery.



Peter Grant,  
Inishowen Deanery.



Gemma Gallagher, Derry  
City Deanery



John Augustine Joseph,  
Derry City Deanery.



Zara Schindwein,  
Derry City Deanery.

## Is Catholic Education worth keeping in Northern Ireland?

# Jesus must be at the centre of every Catholic school

by Hollie Frystal

ON June 12, Iona Institute NI hosted a Zoom discussion focusing on the question: 'Is Catholic Education worth keeping in Northern Ireland?' I was quite concerned when I first read this question. I wondered why people doubted the influence and contribution that Catholic schools have to offer society.

One very interesting thing I noticed was that there are many people who possess the view that Catholic schools promote religious sectarianism and division. However, our Catholic schools are built on the foundation of Christ's teachings, which strive with the effort and aim to imitate His shining example. Jesus must be at the centre of every Catholic school, as from Him we learn to love our neighbour and to welcome the marginalised. We are taught to be inclusive; to develop a community of respect and inclusion reflecting the example of Christ.

Therefore, our schools cannot be deemed or accused of being the source of division, but must be acknowledged and appreciated as being sources of unity, and the foundation upon which love, respect and understanding is built.

The Iona Institute NI welcomed four guest speakers to the online event: Professor Peter Finn, Professor Francis Campbell, Mrs Marie Lindsey and Bishop Donal McKeown, all of whom have long experience in Catholic Education and have also taken the time to

explore this interesting question.

Firstly, Prof Peter Finn reflected on a "political" perspective "or more specifically one concerned with public policy", on the "theme of justification", in regards to discussions surrounding school expenditure on resources parallel with its worth at a business level.

He quoted the British Schools' Minister, Nick Gibb on the definition of education in 2015: "Education is the engine of our economy; it is also the foundation of our culture, and essential preparation for adult life."

Without listing every example of how Catholic schools provide both valuable and necessary resources to the needs of wider society, governmentally, Prof Finn examined and spoke of how "456 schools would not be funded by the department of education in Northern Ireland, if there was not a robust business case to provide such a public service."

Although I mildly understand politics, I think the point that is made here is that schools such as Catholic schools provide such an excellent contribution to society and internationally, that it would be foolish to withdraw it.

Secondly, we listened to Prof Francis Campbell who examined 12 brief points in his answer to this question. He addressed the issue of 'difference' by assessing points such as 'pluralism', 'multicultural', 'social inclusion' and 'broad over narrow'. He similarly argued that Catholic schools do promote inclusion



and also "focuses on the broader aspects to form good social beings".

Catholic schools do not only educate via a textbook, but are morally obliged to assist and support young people on their journey by preparing them for real life.

Thirdly, Mrs Marie Lindsey acknowledged the positives and successes of Catholic schools, despite the "fallen status of the Catholic Church" in previous and recent years, and posed the question: "Why do so many parents still place a high value on Catholic education?" As a result, Catholic schools have proven numerous times to produce high and impressive examination performances and also in various other fields.

Mrs Lindsey reflected and asked, "Why Catholic schools do so well, since all schools in Northern Ireland follow the same curriculum, and they all do the same exams?" In response, the former principal of St Mary's College in Derry said: "This suggests that what Catholic schools do is not just about great teaching, great discipline and great structures. It is about their culture. It is about the values that inform what they do and how they do it, and, of course, these values are rooted in the Gospel."

I believe that the Gospel shines a unique light on the mission of Catholic schools, by focusing our attention on the formation of the whole person. We see each and every young person as a child of God, and that God has a plan for each and every one of us.

Fourthly, our last guest speaker was Bishop Donal McKeown, who reflected on three points. First and foremost: "Christ driven education is guaranteed to be counter-cultural." Secondly, the emphasis was on the word 'ideology' in relation to language and attitude used in our present day.

Nowadays, society relies a lot on materialistic pleasures and safety nets, unlike years ago

when people had faith. Such ungrounded attitudes, languages, beliefs and values will not last. Therefore, as we learnt previously, Catholic schools promote the enriching and fruitful values of Christ. Whilst acknowledging that secular society can also promote some of these values, we can be sure that a Catholic school will try and imitate the perfect example of Jesus, as we are obliged to focus, inspire, practice and share such values.

Lastly, it has been repeatedly acknowledged that "we have a long history of political and communal division". However, it can be confirmed that Catholic schools, like any other school, have the full potential and ability to promote integration, inclusiveness, unity and peace.

My answer to this question, 'Is Catholic Education worth keeping in Northern Ireland?' is "Yes!" Personally, I went to a Catholic nursery, primary school, secondary school and, hopefully, this September I will attend a Catholic university. Like the guest speakers, I do accept and appreciate integrated schools in Northern Ireland and across the world; however, I am very grateful that I attended Catholic schools that were specially equipped to provide support, with the ability and interest to assist me on my faith journey as a young Catholic.

As well as practicing faith at home, by attending a Catholic school I have been brought closer to Jesus and my Church, and I sense that I am part of something greater - that being, part of a faith community. I have been taught the core values of Christ and I am encouraged to implement them into my day to day life, to strive with the effort to imitate His shining example.

There are so many reasons why Catholic education is worth keeping in Northern Ireland; which are highlighted on the Iona Institute NI YouTube channel, where you will find the recordings of the discussion.

## On the Cross Jesus prayed for each of us by Oisin Mulhern

AT one of his recent Wednesday General audiences, Pope Francis concluded a year-long series of lessons regarding prayer with a focus on the priestly prayer of Jesus. This final lesson related to Jesus praying for us when He was nearing His crucifixion and death.

The Pope described this perfectly when he said, "We have already been received in Jesus' dialogue with the Father, in communion with the Holy Spirit."

He further described how prayer was "one of the most evident features in Jesus' life", as "the dialogue with the Father was the core of His whole existence".

Pope Francis explained that prayer is the Core of Christian proclamation and gave specific examples of when Jesus was fully immersed in prayer, such as when He was in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the Cross.

Finally, he explained again how Jesus prayed for each and every one of us on the Cross and beforehand, and how this intense prayer that Jesus was committed

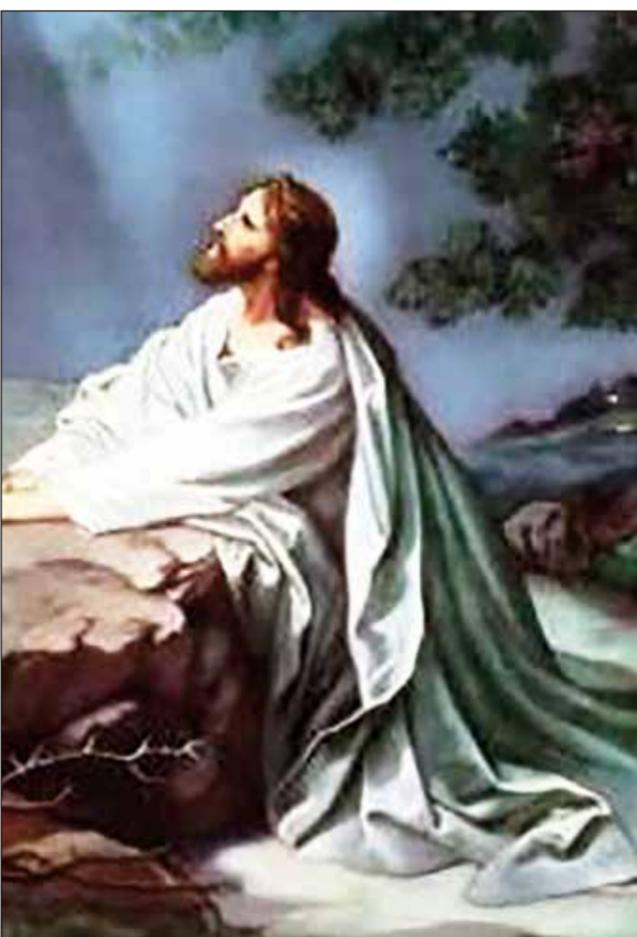
to should be the model for our prayer as well.

The Pope's last point was how we should never forget this fact and, instead, live our life with God at the forefront and give Him glory.

Personally, the message that the Pope gives us here resonates with me deeply. There are many times in our lives where we may struggle with a wide variety of different issues, that can make us feel lonely and sad, however, we need to remember that Jesus and God offered everything for us through prayer and that, no matter what we are going through, they are always there with us.

Furthermore, this point also shows how Jesus especially has such a deep care for us, as not only is He always with us through our issues, but He is able to give Himself fully and pray for all of us, despite the sins we commit after He has prayed for us.

Overall, the message the Pope brings is one that I feel we should all take and learn from, so that we can further improve our relationship with God through it.



*John writes about lessons from St Thomas...*

## What the 'doubting' Saint can teach us about faith



Our Lord and St Thomas

GROWING up as a child in 'Catholic' Ireland, the saints one would expect to hear about would usually be St Patrick, St Columba,

and St Bridget, etc. However, St Thomas the Apostle would not be one of them.

My parents, immigrants from

central rural Kerala in India, and many others from their background, would often call themselves 'Mar Thoma Nasrani', that is, to give a simple translation, St Thomas Christians (Nasrani doesn't mean Christian but rather a follower of Jesus of Nazareth).

It is a very proud statement to say that your Christian community was one of apostolic origin, by referring to the saint who evangelised my ancestors two millennia ago. Every July 3, we would go to church to celebrate Dukhrana, the feast day of St Thomas. In Kerala, this would be, without a doubt, a pompous affair, much like St Patrick's day here.

But for me, this was much more than that. It was a symbol of my identity as a St Thomas Christian. The idea that a Jewish man, from Roman Palestine, would travel thousands of miles across an ocean to a foreign land to speak about the God who died on the

cross for the sins of all mankind, who rose from death on the third day, to a people and culture that was foreign to him, with such conviction that they would convert, was an astonishing feat to my ears.

Whether St Thomas came to India is not certain, but it was certainly plausible to travel to India from Palestine in those days, as seen by excavations of Roman coins in Kerala dating back to the first century.

Without the faith, Thomas would not have made the journey and I would not be a Christian. His willingness to put his faith in Christ and come this far is a true testament to his trust in Christ; a trust that we often fail to have.

St Thomas is not mentioned many times in the Bible. When he is, he is mentioned in a list of apostles or making a statement of belief or disbelief. We often hear St Thomas labelled as 'doubting' Thomas for his lack of belief in

the other apostles when Jesus first appeared to them after his resurrection, when he says that unless "I shall see in his hands the print of the nails and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe" (John 20:25).

This label doesn't recognise the faith that St Thomas had in Jesus; that is the faith that made him say, "Let us also go, that we may die with him" (John 11:16), and the statement of faith, affirming Jesus' humanity and divinity, "My Lord and My God". And it is with this faith that he went out of the Roman Empire into the East, to proclaim the Good News to the ends of the Earth.

After being mentioned in the Gospel of John, St Thomas is not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible. It is believed that he went towards the East and eventually came to India where he established seven and a half churches, in eight different places throughout the

Malabar Coast.

They are Kodungalloor, Palayoor, Kottakavu, Kokkamangalam, Nilakkal, Niranam, Kollam and the half church in Thiruvithamcode.

In these places, he converted locals as well as Jewish and Middle Eastern traders who lived in these trading towns. Afterwards, he went on to the east coast of India, where he was martyred in a place outside of the modern-day city of Chennai.

He was far away from home and his family. He had come this far to share the truth that he witnessed, the God incarnate, Jesus Christ, to a people and culture that was foreign to him.

He had done exactly what he had said before as he marched towards his death: "Let us die with Him". He may have doubted in Jesus once, but his life shows that he put his trust in Jesus and proclaimed what he knew to be the truth.

*Hollie writes about the great Sts Peter and Paul, highlighting the Pope's message for us to...*

## "Be like Peter and Paul, free but humble"



THE Church celebrated the Feast of Sts Peter and Paul on June 29. As we know, St Peter was called by Jesus along the shore of Galilee to be a "fisher of men", and thus was given the Hebrew name of 'Cephas', also known in the Latin translation 'Petrus' to both mean 'rock'. God chose St Peter to be the 'rock' upon which Christ would build His Church.

Similarly, as Saul travelled to Damascus to persecute the Christian community, God appeared to him and a powerful light from Heaven blinded him.

Saul set out for Damascus and was baptised there by a man named Ananias. Hence Saul's sight was restored, and he obtained the name 'Paul', and from then he worked tirelessly to spread the Gospel message.

This year, Pope Francis tells us to "be like Peter and Paul, free but humble".

Sts Peter and Paul are both excellent figures of great faith, who serve as authentic examples of what it is to be human, and, despite their weaknesses and challenges, had remained faithful

to God's call. They both received the crown of martyrdom and are buried in Rome.

When I think of St Peter's death, a very famous, interesting and emotional painting springs to mind. That is Caravaggio's depiction of St Peter crucified upside down. It is a sad and traumatic image, as Peter humbly watches the nail about to be hammered into his hand. At that very moment, he must have felt a wave of guilt and wonder, when thinking back to how Jesus felt, especially when He was on His own and lost support from His apostles, especially Peter.

Although Peter felt unworthy to be crucified the same way as Christ, there must have been a sense of atonement. Peter was 'free but humble.' He humbly died confessing to be a follower of Christ, and whilst fulfilling his life and vocation he was set 'free' in reconciliation and was eventually united with Christ.

St Paul is a shining example of one who displays repentance. Receiving the Sacrament of Baptism was essential in St Paul's conversion, as it washed away his sins and gave him the grace to see life in a new light, and he was blessed to receive true understanding of Christ's mission and vision.

The story beginning with Saul and ending with Paul, prompts me to think about the Sacrament of Confession. When we enter

the Confessional, we confess the darkness of our sins humbly in hope for forgiveness. After the blessing and prayer of absolution, we exit the Confessional and pray the prescribed penance. We are set 'free' and life is a lot fresher and brighter.

Today, Pope Francis sits on the chair of St Peter as the 266th Pope of the Catholic Church. Personally, I find it interesting that some people still oppose the retirement of a pontiff, for example, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. However, if it weren't for Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI to step down we wouldn't have had Pope Francis. It was a clear response to God's will that took courage and careful consideration.

I find it even more interesting that God again uses 'construction' allegorically, when He calls St Francis of Assisi to "Go, rebuild my Church." It echoes with Pope Francis' chosen name as he administers with energy and determination to lead the Church in 'walking together' to discern God's will and to act 'free but humbly'.

The Holy Father is aiming to knock down a 'clerical Church' and to rebuild with a 'Synodal Church'. Like St Paul who preached to the Gentiles, we must go to the peripheries and to those on the outside as well, and bring the Good News to them.



*Considering the challenges and pressures facing young people and how the Church can help, Zara writes...*

## First step to greatness lies within our grasp... are we willing to change?

IT is evident that there are many challenges present in the world today, many of which affect the lives of young people; climate change, poverty, injustice, discrimination and mental health problems, to name but a few.

Everyone is aware of these obstacles, so I am not going to dwell on the devastating effects that arise from their existence. However, I do believe that it is important to acknowledge our role in eradicating these challenges.

In my opinion, that can only be achieved if we decide upon a common goal and work towards reaching that.

Thankfully, our Diocese has

offered young people a platform in which they can discuss such issues and promote change. We, as the youth, are eager to make the world a better place by helping each other along the way.

I think that the attitude towards change is just as important as change itself, they must work symbiotically.

If we wish to deflect from the pressures present today and choose the easier road, then how can we hope for refinement?

However, I believe that the first step to greatness lies within our grasp; all we need to do is ask ourselves, are we willing to change?

*Zara reflects on Pope's message regarding having faith and trust in the Lord...*

## “Ask for the grace of faith that never tires of seeking the Lord”

AS Pope Francis reflected on the Gospel passage about the storm calmed by Jesus, he likened the waves and wind to the trials of our daily lives and encouraged us to “ask for the grace of a faith that never tires of seeking the Lord”.

He also assured us that the Lord is always there by our side waiting for us.

I agree with the Pope's words. There is a clear parallel between the suffering that comes our way and the trials that the disciples faced. In addition, the metaphorical connection between the two scenarios is matched by another constant: the help of the Lord.

No matter how intense our worries and tribulations may be, we should always place some level of trust in God.

It can sometimes be difficult to maintain hope in certain situations, and we may feel a sense of guilt when brushing over our problems

with optimistic expectations. However, these reasons do not justify abandonment of aid from above.

Pope Francis tells us to “ask for the grace of faith that never tires of seeking the Lord”. And I believe that we should do so, if we have any hope of making it past the storm.



## Social media in the Church *by Peter Grant*

YOUNG people in this generation are influenced by social media, mainly through the use of their phones, and use them to catch up on the latest news around the world, such as reality TV, sports, fashion and other things that they are interested in.

Unfortunately, social media can also be a dark place for many young people that can put pressure on them, and also make them vulnerable and alone at times when not getting the help they really need, especially during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Church, however, shone a light in the darkness for many young people, as many Church services across the world were online and easy to access, and there were loads of online programmes too.

Examples of these online programmes in the Church are the Alpha programme and the Pope John Paul II Award lives on Instagram in our very own diocese.

These programmes mainly include young people completing tasks and having the opportunity to be creative and express their unique talents with others, like what Jesus did with His followers, and help them lead them into the light.

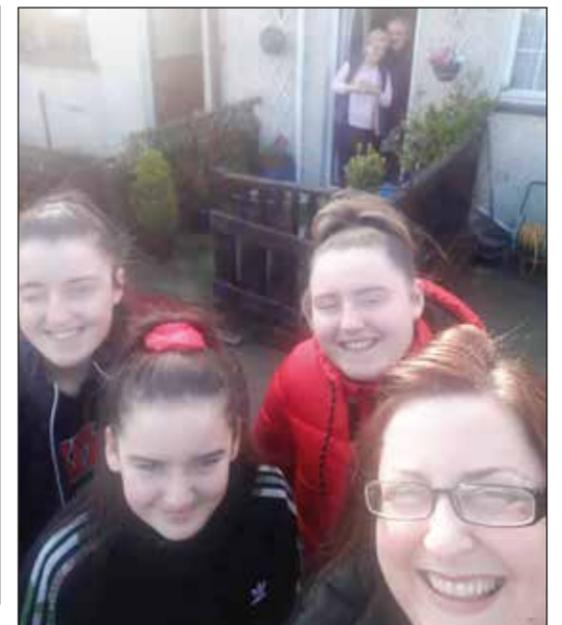
These online programmes are aimed at helping young people find relief from pressure and the negative influence of social media too.

Whenever the pandemic came and these online programmes were set up in the Diocese, it helped me to look at the use of social media in a different way, like spreading the Word of God online to others, and like being one of Jesus' disciples and expressing my thoughts and talents with others, and understanding others as well.

This would be the positives that I, and many others like me, would take from these online programmes set up by the Church during the pandemic, as well as spreading positivity to others too.



Hollie's grandparents, Matt and Gwendoline Curran, Melmount Parish, Strabane.



*Reflecting on the forthcoming First World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, Hollie Frystal writes...*

## There are so many ways people of all ages and interests can interact at parish level

THIS year, Pope Francis has declared July 25 as the first official 'World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly' in the Church. The chosen theme for this year's celebration is: "I am with you always." This theme requires time for reflection on our relationships with the elderly, and to come to appreciate the older people who have served as a positive influence and excellent role models in our lives.

The words of Jesus, "I am with you always", describe how we see and feel about the older generation. The theme indicates closeness, assurance, peace, nurture and eternity. Pope Francis said, on the Feast of Sts Joachim and Anne: "The elderly are your grandparents", therefore, all old men and women serve as our first teachers, who kindly share their wisdom and experience out of love, concern and interest for the younger generations. They offer us a certain degree of influence and serve as a source of formation that contributes to our embarkment upon our own life's journey, to discern where God is calling us to be - both individually and collectively as a Church.

In chapter six of 'Christus Vivit', entitled 'Young People with Roots', Pope Francis focuses on the relationship between the young and old. Within this chapter, there are striking quotes from the Holy Father that emphasize the importance of intergenerational relationships.

Proclaiming the words of the prophet, Joel, His Holiness wrote: "The old dream dreams, and the young see visions." In other

words, young people can benefit from the memories embedded within our elders' experience, which help to keep our young people firmly grounded and rooted, which further helps us to 'walk together' into the future and to build upon those memories.

By staying connected to our roots, we inherit the gems of our tradition, we ensure that the mistakes of the past are not repeated and that our elders' achievements are respected and secure for future generations.

In addition to chapter six of 'Christus Vivit', our first Derry Youth Ministry Book Club members analysed and reflected on this topic. We acknowledged that our elders are often marginalized and that it is "wrong to be dismissive" of such an important group of privileged people in our society.

Regarding a solution to this problem, I asked my Book Club members: "What way can our parishes become more inclusive and collaborative in helping different generations take responsibility for building up the local community of faith?" ('Exploring Christus Vivit')

In response, we came up with practical ways to encourage intergenerational relationships, such as: hosting parties, charities, activities and events. Basically, creating space to bring the old and young together to dialogue. Another idea was that our elders could assist sacramental talks and help to prepare our young people for First Confession, Holy Communion and Confirmation.

Furthermore, in 'The Net's' Young Writers exclusive

interview, I had the privilege to ask Sr Nathalie Becquart, the first woman Undersecretary of the Synod of Bishops in Rome, a similar question. I asked: "How can we bring the young and old together to discern the way forward? Is there anything we can introduce to our parishes with the aim of encouraging intergenerational relationships?"

In response Sr Nathalie acknowledged the difficulties nowadays of "intergenerational dialogue". There seems to be a lack of education, confusion and friction between opposing perspectives, therefore, we must make more of an effort to understand each other from different eras.

In solution to this problem, Sr Nathalie shared her advice on how to bridge the gap between the young and old. She said that we need "bridge builders who know both generations." My hope is that, in the near future, we will create space for intergenerational dialogue, and take on Sr Nathalie's advice by introducing a project that both the young and old can work on together. It's definitely doable and is a great way to enable the local parish to get involved and to contribute to our first ever Irish National Synod.

For example, I am presently involved in Camus Parish's history and heritage project. The project involves young volunteers led by older and experienced leaders, and encompasses art and design, construction, research and technology, environment, etc.

There are so many sectors in which people of all ages

and interests can get involved, therefore, I would like to see something like this introduced at local parish level. Then, if we can get enough parishes involved, we can create a 'Pilgrimage of History and Heritage exhibitions' that reflect the strong bond between the young and old within the Derry Diocese.

We have so much history, and in particular Celtic history. In relation to our Columban year, this could also open the door to ecumenical work that will help to support Christian unity.

To conclude, I am blessed to have such amazing grandparents, great aunts and uncles, and other older people in my life. I have learnt so much from them and I hope they may have learnt something from me.

Especially during this time of pandemic, in the context of technology and quarantining, the old and young had no choice but to work together, and have proven to be an excellent team. Although sometimes we may have differing views, Pope Francis encourages young people to not be afraid to have a "critical spirit" whilst the Church moves forward. It is a time of education.

And lastly, Pope Francis emphasizes that in order for the Church to move forward, the young and old must "walk together" to listen, encounter, discern and, more importantly, to act on where God is calling His Church to be today.

"If the young had the knowledge and the old strength, there would be nothing they could not accomplish" (Pope Francis).

## “I am with you always” by Peter Grant

JULY 25 marks the first ‘World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly’ in the church established by Pope Francis, highlighting the importance of the closeness that generations of both young and old share with one another.

Throughout your childhood, not only do you look up to your parents but you also look up to your grandparents very much, and cherish how they comfort you in tough times and learn life lessons from them too.

For me, growing up in my childhood and thankfully still with us today, my granny is an inspirational person whom I look up to, as she always takes the positives from the negatives in situations in her life.

After my granddad’s death, 10 years ago this year, the whole of my family was in great sadness, but my granny always said: “He is now in the Lord’s care and we will see him again in the Lord’s Kingdom”.

If things ever went wrong for me growing up and even today, she would always be patient and have the time to talk to me and help with my problems, not just by lighting a holy candle for me during my exams, but everything else too, from school life to my personal life.

My granny is like the cement that keeps our family together, like Jesus did with His disciples whenever they were in need, and

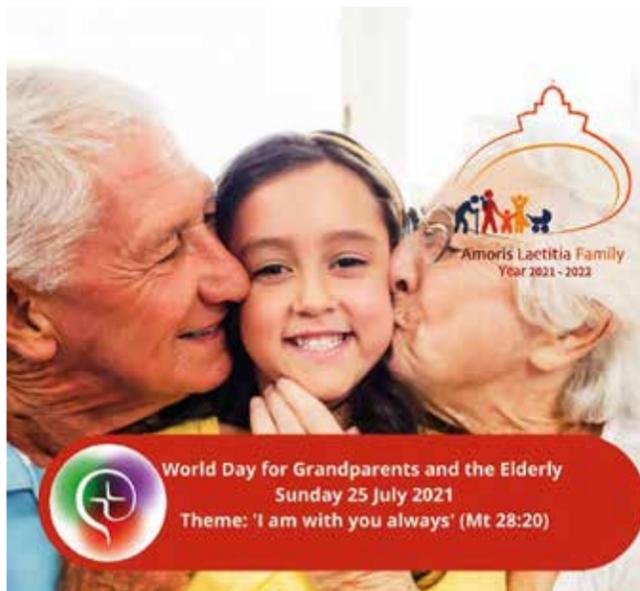
really that is the main role of all grandparents these days, to bring families and friends together to help each other out and not to be worried about everything that life hits you with.

The elderly folk and young folk in my parish, of Iskaheen and Upper Merville, have a great bond with one another and help each other out. Whenever the elderly move on in life, they pass their knowledge on to the next generation.

Pope Francis states that all elderly people have a huge role in the church and society to pass down the knowledge and teachings of Jesus, saying; “I am with you always”, and forever guiding us on life’s journey, as my granddad did and my granny still continues to do.



Peter with his grandmother.



**POPE Francis has instituted the first World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly into the Church calendar, on July 25. The theme is ‘I am with you always’, highlighting the promise of closeness that generations share with each other.**

**To celebrate this special occasion, a number of people from across the Diocese have shared reflections on the elderly people who have impacted in a positive way on their lives through their closeness, while some grandparents have expressed the joy that their grandchildren bring to them.**

**The Irish Bishops’ Council for Marriage & Family have collated some resources for use in dioceses and parishes planning to mark the day, which can be accessed on their website - <https://www.catholicbishops.ie/2021/07/06/resources-for-the-world-day-for-grandparents-and-the-elderly/>**

**The Catholic Grandparents’ Association is also inviting families and parishes to mark the occasion and ‘Plant a Tree in their Memory’ on Sunday, July 25, to enable families to remember the grandparents and older people, including priests and religious, who have passed away after a life-time of dedication to and love for their families and parishes.**

## I feel blessed to have my grandparents teach and lead me through the beginnings of adult life by Oisín Mulhern

POPE Francis has instituted the first ‘World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly’ into the Church calendar on July 25. The theme of this day is “I am with you always” and is meant to highlight the promise of closeness between different generations.

In regards to my grandparents and my closeness with them, I have benefitted greatly in many different ways. This is true for both my grandparents as they have contributed so much to my life as a whole.

In the case of my grandmother, she has provided me with not only many great life lessons regarding generosity and kindness, but she has also made many efforts to ease my worries regarding many different problems I have had, ranging from worries about my school life and different tests, but also for my worries regarding the wider world, like the COVID-19 pandemic.

This is not the only way our closeness shows itself however, it also shows through her loving nature which makes sure that,

whatever goes on in my life, she is always there for me and offers me a way to shoulder any and all of my negative emotions. For me, this is the greatest way that she shows the closeness between us.

Similarly, I share a great closeness with my grandfather, and he has also helped shape who I am as a person. He does this in similar ways to my grandmother, such as helping me with my worries and having an overall loving nature towards me.

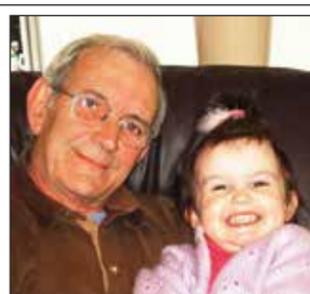
However, he also shows his closeness with me in other ways, such as sharing many jokes. The humour between him and myself never fails to make me laugh, and this has also helped my own sense of humour develop, making sure that I am not overly serious about certain things that may end up dragging me down.

After reflecting on how I have benefitted from their presence, I asked my grandparents how they have benefitted from mine. Some of the different things that they brought up included my presence in general, which not



only allows them to keep up with current events that are happening through me, but also to add some level of excitement and discussion that may not have occurred otherwise.

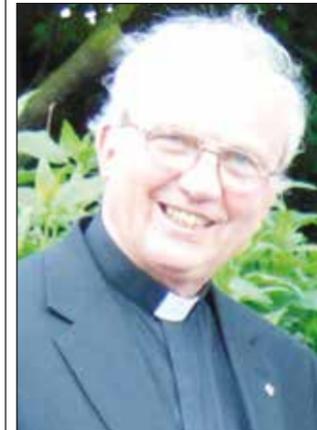
Overall, I am constantly thankful for the relationship I have with my grandparents, and every day I feel blessed to have them there to teach me and lead me through the beginnings of my adult life.



MY Granda Reggie has a massive impact on my life. He shows me how to live in the present and to be thankful for everything I have.

I share a great closeness with my

## Pope Francis wants us to cherish experience of those who have gone before us by Bishop Donal



OUR society tends to focus heavily on young people, for they are the new and emerging markets who must be won for the world of commerce. But if youth is to be prized most of all, and if older people are only one more age group to be exploited for their spending power, we lose a sense of the unity of society.

The scriptures talked about honouring those who are older. They have wisdom and experience. And they still have dreams.

The older generation have experienced much and know that life is not just trapped in a narrow

bubble called ‘now’. They have loved and suffered. They have seen much and overcome many hurdles.

Thus, the younger generation stands on the shoulders of those who lived in different times and whose insights have led to many of the modern inventions.

So, Pope Francis is not merely creating a ‘be nice to old people’ day. He wants us to cherish the experience of those who have gone before us. Many of them have given much so that their children could benefit from education.

My own parents grew up in poor homes where there were many mouths to feed, but where there was also much music and laughter. Thanks to their work, my generation has had access to unimagined opportunities.

The Holy Father asks us to cherish the generosity of earlier generations who have made so much of today possible.

The celebration of older people is a statement that we are one human race across racial and age differences. And that lies at the heart of the scriptural message.



Bishop Donal’s mother with her children and grandchildren.

## My Granda shows me how to live in the present by Gemma Gallagher

granda and I often visit him. He has always been a big part of my life since I was born, and now that he is sick with cancer it makes me appreciate every memory that we have made, and all the support that he has given me right up to this day.

Granda has helped me with problems many times and so our bond is really strong. He was there for me and now I am going to be there for him.

Another part of our relationship that I cherish was how he loved to build things and so was always making me doll houses when I was younger, and how he has a great interest in everything I do.

Granda really enjoys viewing my art, and when I was Irish dancing, he always would sit waiting for me to come and visit him after competitions to show him my medals and trophies.

He always makes me laugh, and every time I visit he sneaks me a couple of pound.

Every time I see Granda, I can see how proud he is of me and how much he loves me, which means more than anything to me.

When I mentioned to Granda about this article, he told me that I give him “a reason to live” and that to see me coming and to enjoy my company is “a good reason to wake up in the morning”.

# Tribute to an elder *by Noel Bradley*

THE first time I met Fr Donal Dorr was in my first year studying philosophy in Cork University, in 1963. He was small and enthusiastic about his part of the subject. What was different about him was that he tried to get us to think about experience/life and not just bombard us with notes.

Philosophy was relevant to our lives. He introduced me to a Canadian philosopher and theologian called Bernard Lonergan, whom I continued to study in the years afterwards, and it has left a lasting influence.

In philosophy, Lonergan offers a theory of knowledge, the conditions for truth, objectivity and authenticity. In theology, he offers an empirical approach to religion that can stand shoulder to shoulder with the empirical approach of modern science. His 'theology mediates between a cultural matrix and the significance of a religion in that matrix', as he says in the opening sentence of his 'Method in theology'.

Donal also went on to write articles and books himself and I have read these because I have always found his writing enriching. They have left a lasting influence! His latest book was 'A Creed for today-faith and commitment for our New Earth Awareness' (Veritas). If you are interested in theology and spirituality, it is excellent.

The next time I met him was in Nigeria, and he was giving a lecture on Morality and Religion, and the very important and helpful distinction between the two. Then we began to relate more as fellow missionaries and friends,

but for a good while I found it hard to get free of the teacher/student relationship, and he graciously pointed that out to me.

I was sent to Rome to study for a doctorate and Donal was there for a while and I remember sharing some of my personal life story with him and asking him questions. His support meant a lot to me at the time.

Donal had gone to Kenya and South Africa for a stint and, while there, had found a new way of working with people and doing theology at the same time. It included: personal development, leadership training, community building, scripture and faith sharing, working for justice (later to include care of the planet). It was a workshop method rather than direct teaching. He said it was a conversion experience for him and he tried to introduce the approach to his missionary friends.

I had gone back to Nigeria and joined in the workshops that he tried to set up. Over a series of these I, too, had a transformative experience and a group of us set up our own leadership training team (DELES programme) and started doing similar work with groups. I worked with Donal on these in Nigeria, Ghana, and Ireland. By this stage we were working more as equals, but I was always learning from him and enjoying and grateful for our friendship.

If he wrote a book, he often sent me a transcript for comments and then a copy of the published edition, with a comment of gratitude. I just checked one, 'The Pope Francis Agenda', and



Noel Bradley with Donal Dorr

he wrote: "To Noel and Rosanna, with gratitude for your friendship and support, with admiration for your inspiration and commitment - and with prayer and hope for your welfare and family".

He was a theologian but, more importantly, he was very loving and committed as a Christian. Rosanna had gone to Kenya and Tanzania with him to facilitate two groups of MMM sisters in a process called 'The Transformation Game'. Donal, Rosanna and I all trained in this process and have worked together on it at various times before Covid-19.

A similar group as DELES was started in Ireland, called 'Partners in Mission' (later called 'Training for Transformation') and I worked with them. It changed my whole approach to being part of the mission of the Church. I still work out of it today, 43 years later, especially with a group called SHEP (Social, Health, Education Programme) in Cork for the last 25 years.

It seems now that this kind of

approach, through group work facilitation for justice, is what Pope Francis is quietly working for in encouraging the approach of synodality at all levels in the Church. "What affects all needs to be discussed by all", he says. The Church "needs nearness, proximity...and we have to start from the ground up". I am so grateful to Donal and to God for this breakthrough in my life.

Around 1981, Donal recommended that I try a 30-day directed retreat when I came home from Nigeria on leave. I had experienced a few six-day directed retreats and found them helpful, and I felt 'yes', this is just what I need at this time in my life. Like my decision to move into group work, it was one of the most important decisions of my life. Ignatian spirituality has also been a formative influence ever since.

Just recalling these memories and influences in my life evokes my gratitude to Donal and to God. "My soul gives thanks to the Lord and forgets not His blessings". It is a very helpful exercise to do.

# Elderly people like my friend, Mary, are a precious gift to our Church and world *by Patricia Casey*

Dear Grandfathers and Grandmothers, Dear Elderly Friends, "I am with you always" (Mt 28:20) Pope Francis.

The Holy Father addressed the theme from the Gospel of Matthew to all grandparents and the elderly, reminding them that this is the promise the Lord made to His disciples before He ascended into Heaven.

Elderly people are a treasure. They have life experience and bucket loads of great wisdom. I love to listen to wise elderly people, and feel guided and helped by their life experiences. I've been very blessed in life by several elderly people, one who particularly stands out for me is a wee woman called Mary.

Mary is a devout Catholic who truly loves Our Blessed Lord and Our Blessed Mother. I met Mary

when I was only 14 years of age on a Marian pilgrimage, and from that we shared a journey of being prayer partners for many years in the pro-life movement.

I was so amazed at her commitment and strength, for example, on a very cold wet miserable day, Mary was always there to stand outside humbly and discreetly praying many rosaries for the end of abortion and protection of life.

One day, after many years of knowing each other, Mary shared with me how she saw me as another daughter. This was special but also big, as Mary had lost her precious daughter to an awful tragedy - I now held a special part of her heart in my hands.

She has taught me the importance of prayer and what

the works of mercy truly look like.

Elderly people, like Mary, are a precious gift to our Church and world. They pray and offer many sacrifices; they are kind, loving and caring.

Mary makes this world and our church a better place.



Patricia Casey, Kilrea.

# My grandchildren keep me going...I'm very grateful for them *by Donal McColgan*

I am very blessed to have a grandson like Niall living very close by. I look forward to him calling in, as he's always full of fun and stories.

Himself and my other two grandchildren are a gift to me. They used to call in for a couple of hours after school when they were younger, as their parents were working.

I have very fond memories of playing cards and games like Connect Four. This was more fun compared to doing the homework!

They keep me going, and I'm very grateful for them.

# How my grandparents have had a positive impact on me

*by Niall McColgan*

MY grandparents have had a positive impact on me. I have always respected them and tried to learn from them. Sadly, both my grandmothers died when I was younger, but I'm thankful to still have my grandfathers.

My Granda Brian is living in Co Meath and I have always looked forward to going down to see him to find out what he has been up to and what new story about his life I will hear. The stories I hear from him always make me laugh. I look forward to him coming up to visit us too.

When we were younger, my granny and granda would have some sort of present for us, whether it e a toy or a jigsaw or something to make us smile. Brian lives in an estate and I enjoyed getting to know the other people my age living there, which added to my visits to him.

Brian is always giving me life advice and little tips here and there. He has had an eventful life and has certainly got around and heard plenty of stories to tell me. He has been great to have in my life. Whenever I ask him to take me somewhere or help me out with something, he never hesitates and always helps, and I am very grateful for that.

My Granda Donal lives right below me, and has always been there for me too. When I was in primary school, both my parents were working during the day so I would go into his house after school. I would sit at his table and

do my homework and he would try to help, if I needed it. After I finished my homework, he would bring out his game of Connect Four and a deck of cards, and we would play game after game until my parents got home from work.

When I was younger, I looked forward to just popping in to see my granny and granda, as they would always have a packet of crisps or something nice waiting for us. Donal has always helped my parents if they went out and needed someone to look after us; he never hesitated. We had great fun when he came up to look after us.

I look up to my Granda Donal as he is always doing something, whether looking after his sheep, going to the hill or going out for walks. I admire how he keeps himself going and doesn't waste a single day.

I look forward to family holidays, such as Christmas, when we get the whole family together. My grandparents never fail to make us laugh and have a good time. After Christmas dinner, we set up games like darts or the Wii and that always creates a laugh. Watching my grandparents trying to get a grasp on how to play the Wii is always a sight to see.

All in all, I look forward to spending time with my grandparents and learning from them. I always have and always will look up to them, respect them, be grateful for them, and aspire to put all their life advice into practise.



Niall with his grandfathers, Donal and Brian.

# I treasure all my grandchildren and am so thankful for them *by Brian Hand*

MY grandson Niall was a delight as a young child. You always knew he was glad to see you coming as you'd be met at the door with a great big hug and a smile from ear to ear. What a welcome!

Now that he has grown into a fine young man, that hasn't changed a bit. He still meets me with that big hug at the door. That's

what I missed the most during the lockdown.

Niall is not only my grandson but he's my buddy.

I consider myself to be very blessed to have him and, of course, my other two grandchildren, Sean and Clodagh. I treasure all three and am so thankful for them.

# My best friend was 60 years older than me!

by *Orlaigh Deighan*



Orlaigh and her best friend, the late Eileen Deeny, Claudy.

SOME might think it strange how a 30-year-old and a 90-year-old could connect in much of a way, having an age difference of 60 years. I was often asked what we had to talk about and how our relationship was so special.

Well Eileen Deeny and I had a bond and a relationship built

around respect and we both depended greatly on each other to understand the society we now live in. Just simply knowing we were there for each other when we were struggling, helped us both.

Meeting Eileen, and having had her sort of fill the roll of a grandmother, is an experience

I am forever grateful to have had! We have had many laughs together, cried together... although, to be fair, it was me doing that mostly...and we planned many an adventure.

Eileen loved to hear all the modern gossip, trends and about life in general. She especially loved hearing about my three boys and their daily mischievous adventures, but mostly we spent a good few hours looking at pictures of animals, as she had a love for animals that was plain to be seen through her devotion to Penny, her dog. Avoiding the wrath of Penny's devilish ways was a talent I mastered over the years.

Eileen often talked straight to the point, especially on the importance of family. Her love for her family I often heard in her voice and saw in her eyes, as I listened to her talk and reminisce!

As the years drifted past and my friend's health declined, her sharp, witty personality never left. As Eileen turned 99, knowing she had fought illness on so many occasions over the years that

would have taken many, all the stories I had listened to from her over the years began to feel ever more important. I suddenly had the realisation that these stories would soon be all I would have left!

Having a best friend at the age of 99 years young, I was not ready to be alone, yet I knew someday that was the inevitable. We often talked about when she would be gone and she always said that she felt ready, and had done for a very long time. She was tired waiting, she often joked!

Eileen was a positive influence in my life as she was always quick to remind me of my inner heart feelings for my family unit. Through the bad times, she quickly made things seem a lot brighter.

The day Eileen passed away, I not only lost my best friend but my anchor. She kept me grounded in modern society by all her guidance, stories, and simply being there as my friend.

We were not bonded by blood, but by love!



## My life is so blessed by the presence of Uncle Andy

by *Myra McLaughlin*

MY thoughts on a real inspirational person in my life immediately turn to a multitude of family members, such as my late grandparents and my own parents, but one who truly stands out is my dear uncle, Andy Kearney,

Andy is 75 and never got married, and my life is so much the richer and blessed for having such a wonderful person in it.

From my childhood, and being the first niece, I was more than spoiled – as we say in Derry, I was 'ruined' or 'spoil rotten'.

Nothing is too big ask of Uncle Andy, if you need anything sorted, he's on board, with his warm, infectious smile. His laugh and huge heart blesses many, as he is kind to all.

Having been diagnosed more than once with cancer over the

past 16 years, Andy jokes that he is leaving his body to medical science. He has never looked for sympathy; only every saying "I'm grand. Thank God, they can treat me".

He never fails to impress me. He just accepts all with and unconditional trust in Our Blessed Mother's care for him. His faith is inspirational.

I always come away from Andy feeling so much better for having been in his presence. There is always a laugh or a joke.

I cannot put into words how much my Uncle Andy means to my husband, children and I. And I hope and pray he stays in good health and with us for long, long time

Thank you Andy. You are my Hero

## Tribute to our Granny Mary Stewart

by *Maria, Paul, Grace, Mark and Sarah Kennedy*



Kennedy children with their Granny

OUR granny in Sligo, Mary Stewart, lived in a small house in Sligo town with our granda, Charlie Stewart, and our mum was their only child. For as long as we can remember, we went to visit her and granda in Sligo. We had the best time there.

Everything was different to what we were used to, living in the country, and it was so much fun. The shops were right beside us and we spent a lot of time at the beach and the play parks. Granny always spoiled us. We have so many happy memories of our time in Sligo.

When we went to visit granny, she always went out of her way to have all the little things that each of us loved, our favourite breakfast cereal, chocolate and sweets, she had it all. Even though

we all liked different things, she knew what each of us liked and made sure that she had something special for each of us.

The most special thing about Granny Stewart was that she always put others before herself. She was a gentle and selfless lady, with the kindest heart. She had a great sense of humour and she had time. She gave us so much of her time, listening and talking to us.

She was very loving and kind to everyone she met. Although granny lived the latter part of her life with a serious illness, which hindered her ability to breathe, we never once heard her complain. Even in times of severe pain and discomfort, she was always concerned about others, especially mum and dad, and

her grandchildren. She had an interest in each one of our lives and knew what each of us was doing. She was always able to relate to each of us in a special and unique way.

She prayed the Rosary every day and every time she passed Our Lady's statue she touched her head, and said a silent prayer to her. St Martin was her favourite saint and she prayed his Novena often.

Mass was so important to her and, in her later years, when she was unable to attend she missed this so much. However, she looked forward to the monthly visit of the local priest, who brought her Holy Communion and gave her the sacraments. That gave her great solace.

Granny spent the last eight months of her life in a nursing home because of her failing health. She moved to a nursing home near to us, so we were able to visit her very often. Even though she was a very private person and was happy in her own company in Sligo, in the years after granda died, she grew to love the people she lived with in the nursing home, especially the staff. She knew all of them by name and they would often sit with her and tell her their worries, which she remembered in her prayers.

When we went to see her in the nursing home, she had a cupboard filled with all our favourite treats,

just like when we visited her in Sligo. She would insist that we took something nice from it each time we visited. Her health was poor during that time in the nursing home. Sometimes people would look sympathetically at my mum and say that granny hadn't much quality of life, as though the life she had wasn't worth living. Physically, it was very difficult for her and she bore her suffering very bravely. But she was very happy and the time we spent with her, and the memories we have during those months before she died, are so precious. God blessed us and blessed her during that special time.

Faith was so important to granny during her life. She passed her faith on to mum who, in turn, has passed it on to all of us. We used to pray together for a few minutes each time we visited her in Sligo and in the nursing home, just before we left to go home. No matter what her concerns were, she left them God's hands.

We benefitted so much from her closeness to us in our lives and have so many beautiful memories of the time we spent with her. They have a very special place in our hearts, which we will treasure forever.

Granny taught us what it is to be a good and selfless person, to value the gift of faith and to thank God for all His blessings.

## My children are blessed by their grandparents' presence in their lives

by *Andrea McGowan*

MY name is Andrea McGowan. I'm married to Brian for 19 years. We met as teenagers. We have four children; one boy, called Lee, and three girls, named Hannah, Grace and Ellen.

I have grown up praying the Rosary at night and going to Mass on a Sunday with my family. It is very important for me to bring up our children knowing God and praying, going to Mass as I had done; to give them a solid foundation in the faith so that they know God is with them at all times throughout their lives.

My parents are very good role models for me and also for their grandchildren. My father asked us to do a month of prayer for the Holy Souls in purgatory for a special intention, which we did a number of months back. For me, it was a great way for us, as a family, my children and I, to learn about the Holy Souls and how important it is for us to pray and get Masses said for them, especially when I think about the generations

of grandparents that have gone before us.

My children love their grandfather. They love to talk and sit by his side, all surrounding him and giggling with him. He has a great love for prayer, but in a private way, and the peace he emanates is so lovely.

My mother uses every opportunity to teach the children about their faith. Just the other day, my youngest daughter said to me, "Mammy, when I was a baby, Jesus jumped into my heart". When I asked her how she knew, she told me that it was Granny who told her.

My mother looks after our children when we are both working, so it is a blessing to know they spend time those days with the most precious gifts in my life, my mother and father.

I am so blessed that God chose my mum and dad to be my parents, but most of all to be the grandparents of my children.

# My elderly father died leaving me an example of faith, integrity and love

by Roseanne O'Donnell

LIKE most people, I could name many older people who have had a positive influence on my life. I can't write about them all, but there is one whom I would like to remember here.

My late father passed away a number of years ago, at the age of 86, leaving me an example of faith, integrity and love, which I sometimes struggle to emulate.

My father's faith was simple and unfussy, yet strong and deep, and it carried him through many trials. While I was growing up, and in my early adulthood, my father answered my faith-related questions patiently and clearly. I know more about faith, than I would have done, had it not been for my father's guidance.

Besides his faith, which permeated everything he did, my dad had a sense of humour that was almost childlike and sometimes mischievous, but never hurtful. He was also very trusting and tended to see the good in others.

He was a shopkeeper, with a typical country shop that formed part of our house. It was not unusual to find three or four people chatting away to him or each other, as he weighed carrots or counted out a customer's change.

However, he also provided a listening ear, when the shop was quiet and the chance arose for a private chat. I never heard the details, as the confidentiality of those exchanges was treated with the highest respect, but I knew that many conversations were

held across the counter, which went beyond the weather and the news of the day.

My father had great reverence for Our Blessed Mother, and he loved the Miraculous Medal. He kept a Medal in our car and was unswerving in his belief that its presence saved his life on one occasion.

One morning in winter or early spring, my father drove me to school. On the way home, the car skidded on ice and hit a pole. Thankfully, my father was unharmed, but the car was badly damaged as the middle of the bonnet had collided with the pole. My father attributed his escape to the intercession of Mary and to the fact that he carried a Miraculous Medal in the car. He told the story often.

My father's greatest suffering came with the death of my late mother, at the age of just 56. My mum was a few years younger than my father and I am sure they never imagined that she would be the first to depart.

Despite his own grief, my father tried to hide, from me, the seriousness of my mother's condition, as he wanted to spare me pain. On the day of the funeral, he went to the church with the same dignity that he had shown throughout my mother's illness.

He lived just a few more years after my mother and, in all that time, he never uttered a word of complaint about his loss.

Because of my father's example, I have no trouble in imagining

Roseanne's father



something of the life of St Joseph, who was a working husband and father. I can believe that he knelt down to pray each morning, and that, in the course of any given day, he answered Jesus' questions, taught him to pray and instructed him in the basics of his trade, speaking kindly and patiently even when he was busy or tired.

I can easily imagine Joseph eagerly helping Mary in their home, maybe bringing in wood for the fire, or helping to clear the table after a meal.

I can believe that, in his

workshop, he chatted with customers and neighbours, sometimes listening with quiet respect to their difficulties, providing a kind response and the assurance of confidentiality, even when he could not provide the full solution to their difficulties.

My earthly father loved God and neighbour, and the love of One was reflected in his attitude towards the other. I am grateful for his good example and I pray that, by grace, I may learn to follow it more faithfully.

## I love spending time with my Granny Sarah

by Lucy O'Hagan

MY name is Lucy O'Hagan and I am seven years old. I live in Desertmartin beside my Granny Sarah and she is 86 years old.

I love my granny so much and go to visit her most days. We play Draughts, do Word Searches, and she gives me sweets and makes me tea.

I love spending time with her.



Best friends, Lucy O'Hagan and her Granny Sarah, Desertmartin.

## I love my grand-daughter's visits as I live on my own

by Sarah O'Hagan

MY name is Sarah O'Hagan. I am 86 years old and from Desertmartin. I live beside my grand-daughter, Lucy, who is seven years old.

I honestly love to see Lucy

coming to visit as I live on my own, and she is such a pleasure.

Lucy is such a good girl. She brushes the floor and helps me clean up.

I love her dearly.

# My parents spent their lives living out God's Will...and passed that precious gift onto me

by Michelle Burns

THERE are two people in this world that I hold in such high regard, with a heart full of abundant love and a life full of fond childhood memories. Those two people are my parents, Hugh and Etta D'Arcy. Both of them have guided me through my life instilling values, teaching me life lessons and showing unconditional love but both in very different ways.

Daddy was a quiet unassuming man who went about his life without any fuss, and that is exactly how he reared me also. He always taught me that it was wise and the right thing to do to never speak wrongly of anyone, even if sometimes their actions didn't warrant it. He always said: "Let it go love, just let it go. Put them in God's hands." He believed that if we let go then God would take care of things, even if we didn't like it.

He always gave us a look, with a

gentle soft smile, and a nod. That nod would make me feel safe and secure, but most importantly truly loved. Imagine knowing that your daddy loved you no matter what. Now that daddy has passed, it has made me realise that he loved me so unconditionally because he knew that's how our God felt about him.

He would never walk past anyone homeless in the street without buying them a cup of tea or giving them the last couple of pound in his pocket, always walking away saying a gentle prayer to himself.

His life brought many struggles but he never once gave up on God; going to Mass every night, trusting in Him so much, knowing and believing that God would sort everything out. His gentle and kind nature often reminds me of the Holy Spirit, quietly drifting around in the background but

with so much strength and power behind it. My daddy, Hugh D'Arcy, will always be my shining light of love.

Now mammy, Etta D'Arcy is the complete opposite. She is such a strong and fiery woman, with opinions equal in measure. My mammy never ever stops praying. My childhood memories are of her kneeling at the side of her bed with a Pieta book and Rosary beads, staring up at the holy pictures in her bedroom, and till this day things haven't changed.

She is the holiest and most genuine person that I know. Her love and absolute trust in God astounds me. Her desire to get to know the Lord more and her thirst to love him more has made me very privileged to have her as my mammy. Her daily Mass, Holy Communion and visits to the Blessed Sacrament are as

important to her as the air she breathes.

Her kindness to those less fortunate knows no bounds, and she showed this by bringing children from Romania and Russia to our home, every year, to give them a good summer holiday. Her empathy towards anyone and everyone is limitless. When life became a struggle for her, she surrendered all to Our Lord, not once doubting.

My parents' marriage was also an important example of love and trust. They valued the beautiful promise that they made to each other and to God; it really was a wonderful love story.

I thank God every day that He blessed me with such special parents. They spent their lives living out God's Will full of love and trust, which has been passed onto me now...such a precious gift.



Michelle with her parents



Bronagh, left, with her mum and sister.

## My mum's faith has been a precious gift in my life

journey by Bronagh Currie

I daren't call my mum elderly, so let's say she is a 'more mature person' whom I have benefited from closeness with.

All my memories of my mum are filled with acts of kindness to me; an ever-present love. She has always put my brothers, sister and I first, before her own needs.

We have shared so many happy times like shopping trips, holidays and endless cups of tea.

The holidays have been known to include a day trip to Lourdes, Lisieux and Knock.

She has given me great advice and encouragement all my life, as well as tips and sayings that I am now recycling and using with my own family.

I have benefited from her faith and the gift that that can be on life's journey, with its twists and turns.



## Termonbacca one of this summer's Youth 2000 festival venues

YOUTH 2000 has announced that its Summer Festival for 16-35 year olds will take place this year both online and in person, from August 13-15, at a number of satellite locations in each of the Provinces, one of which is the Carmelite Retreat Centre, Termonbacca, in Derry City.

The festival will mainly take place online, with all talks, testimonies, Liturgies, prayer and worship taking place online for the course of the weekend.

With regards to the in person locations, due to ongoing Church and Government regulations regarding Covid-19, each venue will be capped at a maximum, so spaces at the liturgies are available on a first come, first served basis on the day.

Termonbacca is one of two locations for the day programme of the festival, which is non-residential, the other location being the Catholic Chaplaincy at Queen's University, Belfast.

The festival schedule gets underway on Friday, August 13 at 6 pm and closes at 10 pm, and starts at 9 am on the Saturday, finishing again at 10 pm, then starting at 10 am on the Sunday and closing at 3.30 pm.

This year's theme is: "I keep the Lord ever in my sight, since He is at my right hand, I shall stand firm" (Psalm 16:8), and the main speaker will be Fr Aelred Magee, a Cistercian monk at Bethlehem Abbey, Portglenone, who previously taught in St Malachy's College, Belfast, and later served as chaplain to Queen's University, in Belfast.

Those attending the Festival locations are asked to follow guidelines as decreed by the Government and the Church at the time of the event around masks, sanitising, social distancing and all Covid related regulations.

Further information can be obtained by emailing Emma at office@youth2000.ie.

# Preparing for the Season of Creation

by Patricia McCormack

THE liturgical Season of Creation is celebrated by Christians throughout world from September 1 until October 4, the Feast of St Francis of Assisi.

It is a special time to celebrate, in praise and thanksgiving, the beauty and joy of

Creation. We are invited to pray with, and for, Creation and to see everything around us as a loving care of God.

It is also a time to examine how the way we live today is changing the climate,

polluting the seas, disordering the balance of life and dispossessing the poor and future generations. It is a time to commit to living more sustainably.

Pope Francis reminds us that caring for our common home "is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience".

(Laudato Si' 217)

We can mark the Season of Creation individually, as a family, in a school and especially as a parish community. "Indeed there is much to be done". (Pope Francis)

Excellent resources for use in parishes, schools and in the home are available at:-

[www.catholicbishops.ie/2021/07/21/season-of-creation-2021/](http://www.catholicbishops.ie/2021/07/21/season-of-creation-2021/)

These include Sunday Liturgy notes – homily notes for each Sunday, Prayers of the Faithful, music suggestions and reflections. There are also guidelines for Prayer Services, Practical Actions for parishes, and positive suggestions for each day. In addition, there are images, videos, podcasts and power point presentations which can be used in a variety of ways.

This 2021 Season of Creation, we are also urged to advocate for

robust commitments and bold effective action by world leaders at the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP 15), scheduled for October in China, and at the 26th UN Climate Change Conference in November, in Glasgow.

We are challenged to hear the concerns of young people for their futures, to listen to the voices of people on the front line of climate crisis and to heed the advice of scientists, who have given us 12 years to limit global warming to the critical level of 1.5 degrees centigrade.

We are asked to join millions of Catholics in raising our voices by signing the Healthy Planet Healthy People petition at this critical moment...[www.thecatholicpetition.org](http://www.thecatholicpetition.org)

Hundreds of parishes throughout Ireland and the UK are committed to holding a



'Climate Sunday' during the Season of Creation and in the run up to COP26. Resources are also available for a COP Prayer Vigil.

<https://www.climatesunday.org/>  
<https://prayandfastfortheclimate.org.uk/2021/07/31/prayer-vigil-for-cop26/>

For further information please contact: [laudatosiderry@gmail.com](mailto:laudatosiderry@gmail.com)

## 'Blessed Is She' retreat offering opportunity to cast your burdens by Aoife O'Neill

LADIES, let's think about burdens. Those awful heavy loads that no-one likes and no-one wants. However, at some time or another we can all find ourselves carrying them. In today's world we can often find ourselves crushed beneath the weight of the things we are trying to carry.

The Bible tells us how we can cast all our cares on God, which is great news! How amazing it is to know that God doesn't leave us to bear our burdens alone? God is so good and He hears our prayers, but what do you do when you find yourself crushed by the weight of your burden? How do you manage when things get too much and you feel trapped in anxiety and worry? How do you truly let go and let God?

If you are a woman, 18+ and you would like to find the answer to the questions above; are looking to grow in relationship with the Lord; are in need of some peaceful prayer time; long for community with other Catholic women...the, you need a retreat!

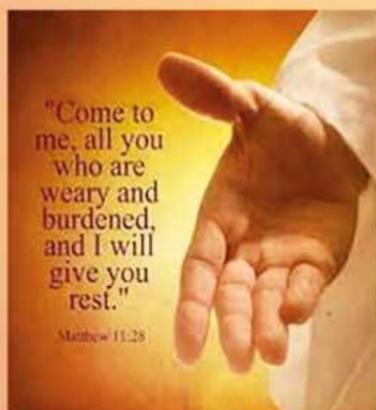
'Blessed Is She' Derry invites you to join us on our 'Cast Your Burdens' Retreat in Termonbacca Carmelite Retreat Centre, Derry, from Friday, August 20–Sunday, August 22.

The 'Blessed Is She' Retreat offers you a chance to come away and spend some quality time with the Lord. Let the Lord help you carry your burdens.

This retreat will be led by Sisters from The Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and will include some talks, prayer, Adoration, Mass and space to commune with God and with other Catholic women.

If you would like to join

*Blessed Is She Derry*  
Ladies Residential Retreat



*Cast Your Burdens*

Friday 20th-Sunday 22nd August 2021  
Termonbacca Carmelite Retreat Centre

Retreat talks will be given by  
Sisters from The Apostles of the  
Sacred Heart of Jesus

To register or for further information email:  
[termonbaccaderry@gmail.com](mailto:termonbaccaderry@gmail.com)



us or would like any further information please contact [termonbaccaderry@gmail.com](mailto:termonbaccaderry@gmail.com)

# Mass rocks powerful reminder of ancestors' sacrifices to preserve the faith

THE annual celebration of the Eucharist at the Mass Rock in Glenshane Forest was celebrated this year by Dungiven curate, Fr Joseph Varghese, and was attended by around 50 men, women and children.

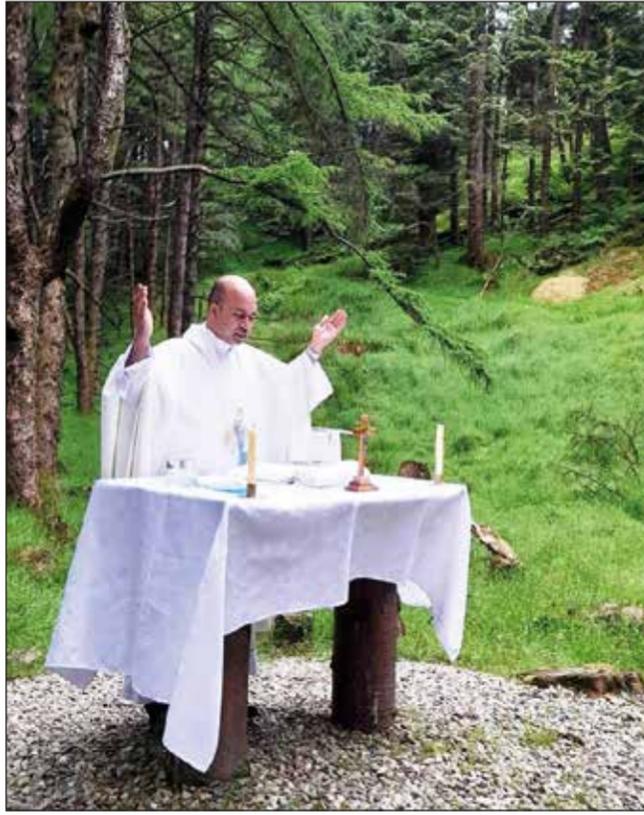
In his homily, Fr Joseph noted that there were thousands of Mass Rocks "dotted all over Ireland, helping the Christian faith survive under persecution in an age of many priest-martyrs."

"We constantly associate Mass Rocks with the period of Irish history known as the Penal Times," he remarked, adding: "During those difficult times many Catholic Churches were closed down and many bishops and clergy were forced to flee the country. Laws banned the saying of Mass. That is when many committed and faithful priests, usually under disguise, risked their lives to minister to their flocks, often in isolated, remote, rural areas and very often in

mountainous areas where they could watch for any incursion by the military.

"It was in such places that they would have found large rocks, which they used as altars to celebrate Mass. These Mass rocks serve as powerful reminders for all of us today of the sacrifices made by our ancestors and priests to preserve the faith that we profess to belong to today. We should remember how indebted we are to them. They displayed such courage and bravery in our account. They weren't worried about how long Mass would last, or about lack of material comforts. They went to Glenshane and similar locations in all types of weather so that they might receive the sacraments.

"Today, we thank these noble people for the sacrifices they made on our behalf. Surely then, we are under an obligation to preserve the Mass for our descendants in turn, today"



## In every generation people have had to walk forward in trust

– Bishop Donal

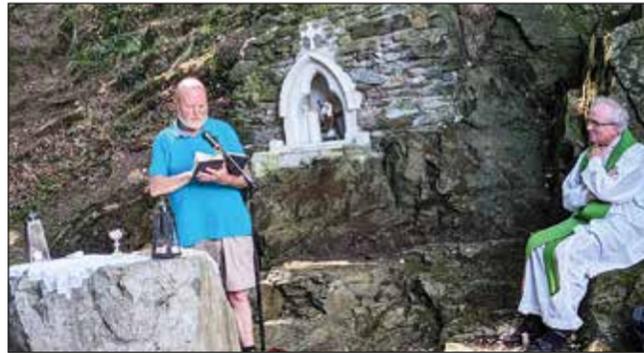
WITH the annual 'Walk to Knock' by the Derry-based Cursillo and COR faith groups not taking place this summer, due to the continued risk of Covid-19, a small number walked from Derry to Strabane to pray for an end to the pandemic.

On reaching the outskirts of the Co Tyrone town, the walkers joined in a Mass celebrated at the Tulacorr Mass Rock, in the Leckpatrick Parish, by Bishop

Donal.

Saying that it was "wonderful to be with people of faith in a simple site, made holy by centuries of prayer", Bishop Donal remarked: "In every generation, people have had to walk forward in trust, even when they faced huge odds.

"Today, we continue to look forward and not merely hanker after the past. Without walking in trust, there is no real missionary church".



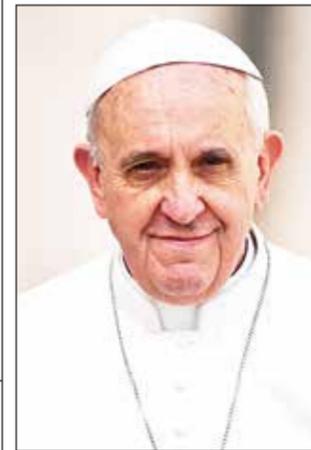
## Gathered on holy ground for Irish Mass

THE annual Mass in Irish at the Mass Rock above the old Granaghan Chapel, in Swatragh, was celebrated by Fr Charles Keaney PP, on July 13.

Commenting afterwards, Fr

Charles said: "What a privilege for us to have celebrated the Eucharist at the Mass Rock".

Over 100 people attended the ceremony, and Fr Charles thanked all who organised and took part.



### Pope's monthly intention

The Holy Father has asked for prayer during July & August for:

#### Social Friendship (July)

We pray that in social, economic and political situations of conflict, we may be courageous and passionate architects of dialogue and friendship.

#### The Church (August)

Let us pray for the Church that She may receive from the Holy Spirit the grace and strength to reform herself in the light of the Gospel.

#### Prayer for Priests

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

As they stand before us as ministers of Your Sacraments, may they be channels of the love and compassion of the Good Shepherd, who came not to be served but to serve.

Give them the grace they need to respond generously to you, and the courage to proclaim your Word of justice, love and truth. Bless, in a special way, Your servant

Father...

Send your Spirit upon him So that he may always walk in the path of faith, hope and love, in the footsteps of Christ, the eternal priest, who offered Himself on the cross for the life of the world. Amen.

#### Remember in prayer:

Fr John Gilmore (July 1st)

- Fr Joseph Gormley (2nd)
- Fr Eamon Graham (3rd)
- Fr Dermott Harkin (4th)
- Fr Karl Haan (5th)
- Fr Eugene Hasson (6th)
- All Priests (7th)
- Fr John Irwin (8th)
- Fr Charles Keaney (9th)
- All Priests (10th)
- Fr Gerald Hasson (11th)
- Fr Michael Keaveny (12th)
- Fr Seamus Kelly (13th)
- Fr Edward Kilpatrick (14th)
- All Priests (15th)
- Fr Charles Logue (16th)
- Fr Paul McCafferty (17th)
- Msgr Bryan McCanny (18th)
- Fr Michael McCaughey (19th)
- Fr Andrew McCloskey (20th)
- Fr Patrick Lagan (21st)
- Fr Francis Lynch (22nd)
- Fr Noel McDermott (23rd)
- Fr Eamon McDevitt (24th)
- Fr John McDevitt (25th)
- Fr Christopher McDermott (26th)
- Fr Kevin McElhennon (27th)
- Fr Declan McGeehan (28th)
- Fr Dermot McGirr (29th)
- All priests (30th)
- Fr Brian McGoldrick (31st)

Fr Neil McGoldrick (Aug 1st)

All Priests (2nd)

Fr James McGonagle (3rd)

Dr James McGrory (4th)

Fr Daniel McFaul (5th)

Fr Edward McGuinness (6th)

Fr Micheal McGavigan (7th)

Bishop Donal McKeown (8th)

Fr Con McLaughlin (9th)

Fr George McLaughlin (10th)

All priests (11th)

Fr Peter McLaughlin (12th)

All priests (13th)

Msgr Ignatius McQuillan (14th)

Fr Peter Madden (15th)

Fr Anthony Mailey (16th)

Archbishop Eamon Martin (17th)

Fr Gerard Mongan (18th)

All Priests (19th)

Fr Sean O'Donnell (20th)

Fr Aidan Mullan (21st)

Fr Kevin Mullan (22nd)

All Priests (23rd)

Fr Patrick Mullan (24th)

All Priests (25th)

Fr Seamus O'Connell (26th)

Fr Joseph O'Connor (27th)

Fr Colm O'Doherty (28th)

Fr Kieran O'Doherty (29th)

All Priests (30th)

Fr Francis P O'Hagan (31st)

# Eangach

## Ár nDúchas

### Liodán Cholm Cille

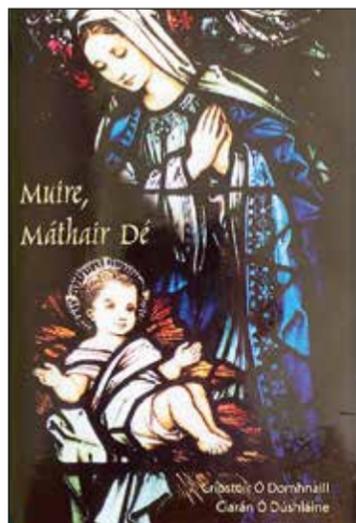
A Naomh Colm Cille,  
**guigh ar ár son.**  
A Naomh Colm Cille,  
a Aspal na nÉireannach ..  
A Naomh Colm Cille,  
a Aspal na nAlbanach ..

A Naomh Colm Cille,  
a Cholm an Tiarna ..  
A Naomh Colm Cille,  
a Cholm na hEaglaise ..  
A Naomh Colm Cille,  
a Cholm Ríoga ..  
A Naomh Colm Cille,  
a Cholm Oileán Í ..  
A Naomh Colm Cille,  
a Cholm na Síochána ..  
A Naomh Colm Cille,  
a Cholm Suáilceach ..  
A Naomh Colm Cille,  
a Cholm Dlíis ..

A Naomh Colm Cille,  
a Cholm Carthannach ..  
A Naomh Colm Cille,  
a Cholm Geanmnaí ..  
A Naomh Colm Cille,  
a Cholm Séimh ..  
A Naomh Colm Cille,  
a Cholm Modhúil ..  
A Naomh Colm Cille,  
a Cholm Uiriseal ..  
A Naomh Colm Cille,  
a Cholm Eagnaí ..  
A Naomh Colm Cille,  
a Cholm Lúcháireach ..  
A Naomh Colm Cille,  
a Cholm Naofa,  
**guigh ar ár son.**

(Buíochas le  
Comhlacht na Fírinne  
Caitlicí, Londain.)

## Réalt na Mara



Muire Máthair Dé

Cumadh an t-íomann 'Ave Maris Stella' san naoú haois. Céad bliain ina dhiaidh sin tagaimid air i liotúirge Eaglais an Iarthair. Tá diagacht iomlán Mhuire ann: is íse Máthair Dé, gan teimheal, Máthair uile-thrócaireach, ár nAbhcóide.

An t-ainm sin a thugtar ar Mhuire, 'Réalt na Mara', tá sé fíor-ársa. Fiú in aimsir Naomh Iaróim (+420), níor tuigeadh a bhrí go hiomlán. Is cosúil go raibh Iaróm féin den tuairim gur tháinig an t-ainm Muire ón fhocal Síreach 'mar' — duine uasal — ag tagairt don seasamh ard a bhí aici i bplean Dé.

San íomann seo tugtar Réalt na Mara uirthi (i Liodán Loreto, 'Réalt na Maidine'). Is mionsholas é an réalt; is é Críost an ghrian! Fógraíonn réalt na maidine breacadh an lae, agus fógraíonn breacadh an lae ar a seal éirí na gréine. Bhíodh na mairnéalaigh ag brath go hiomlán ar na réaltaí len iad a threorú trasna na farraige.

Tagtar ar shiombail an réalta i dtraidisiún an Mheisias (Uimhr 24:17 — 'réalt ó Iacób'). De ghnáth cuireann an focal 'réalt' maorgacht nó mórgacht in iúl, ag tagairt do ní atá dosháraithe nó doshroiste, nó ní a bhaineann leis na flaithis agus a lonraíonn, agus atá ina chomhartha leighis, dóchais, nó treorach. Ba réalt a threoraigh na Trí Ríthe go Beithil Iúdáia mar a bhfaca siad 'an leanbh le Muire a mháthair' (Matha 2:11).

I dtraidisiún na Críostaíochta, agus go háirithe i dtraidisiún na gCairmilíteach, luaitear Muire i siombail mara eile: feiceann Eilias comhartha dóchais agus slánaithe sa scamall beag a déirigh as an fharraige chun beatha a thabhairt do thalamh a bhí neamhthorthúil (1 Ríthe 18:41–45).

Is é an t-ainm a thugtar ar Mhuire san sáriomann 'Akathistos', seoid Eaglaisí an Oirthir, ná 'Máthair an réalta nach dtéann faoi riamh' agus 'an réalt a cuireann an ghrian ag taitneamh', siombail dhiamhrach a thagraíonn do Ionchollú ár dTiarna!

Ós siombail é 'Réalt na Mara', is féidir brionna éagsúla a bhaint aisti. Cuardófar a brí ar bhealaí agus ar leibhéil éagsúla. Is trí dhianmhachnamh, áfach, seachas trí réasúnú a éireoidh linn brí iomlán na siombaile seo a thuiscint.

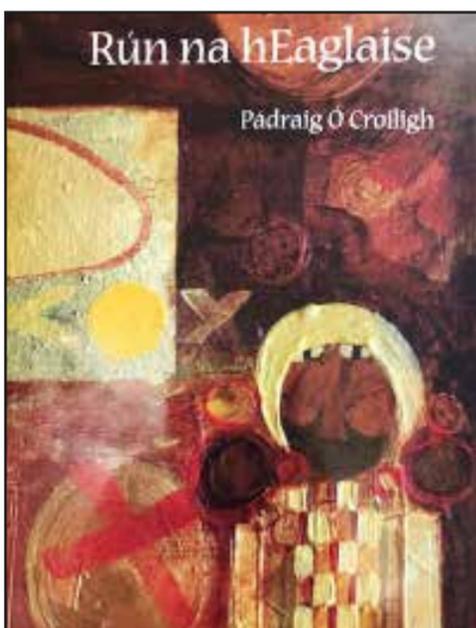
(*Muire, Máthair Dé*, Ó Domhnaill; Ó Dúshláine.  
Buíochas le Foilseacháin Ábhair Spioradálta.)



Sliabh Liag



Muire, le Andrei Rubliev



## Go Leigheasa agus Go Slánaí Sé Thú

Tá míniú iontach soiléir ar bhri na sacraiminte sa chéad phaidir i ngnás na n-easlán. Labhraíonn an sagart lena bhfuil i láthair sna focail seo leanas:

*A chlann ionúin, táimid tagtha le chéile in ainm ár dTiarna Íosa Críost a leigheas na heaslán agus a d'fhulaing a oiread sin ar ár son. Tá sé anseo inár measc anois agus deir sé linn trí Shéamas aspal: "Má tá duine agaibh tinn, cuireadh sé fios ar sheanóirí na hEaglaise agus is leosan an ola a chur air in ainm an Tiarna agus guí os a chionn.*

*Slánóidh paidir an chreidimh an t-othar agus tógfaidh an Tiarna é arís agus, má tá peacaí déanta aige, maithfear dó iad."*

*Cuirimis ár mbráthair faoi choimirce ghrásta agus chumhacht Chríost chun go bhfaighidh sé faoiseamh agus slánú.*

Bíonn cathú ar dhaoine a cheapadh gur chóir don othar a bheith ina aonar sula dtosaíonn an sagart ar Shacraimint na n-Easlán. In amanna thig leis sin a bheith cruinn ceart, ach cuimhnigh go bhfuil sé mar chuid

den saol sacraimintiúil daoine a ghairm agus a chruinniú le chéile, agus go bhfuil leas na clainne le glacadh san áireamh fosta. Is deas an rud é an chlann agus na cairde a bheith cruinnithe thart ar an leaba, agus páirt á ghlacadh acu sa tearmanas, mar shampla a lámha a chur ar chloigeann an othair in éineacht leis an sagart, nuair a thig an t-am cuí. Sin é an t-am a nguimid ar an Spiorad Naomh a theacht anuas ar an othar lena neartú. Ansin cuirtear an ola ar chláir an éadain, agus ar bhosa na lámh leis na focail seo leanas:

*Tríd an ungradh naofa seo agus trína chaointrócaire féin go gcuidí an Tiarna leat le grásta an Spioraid Naoimh. Amen.*

*An Tiarna a shaor ó do pheacaí thú, go leigheasa agus go slánaí sé thú. Amen.*

# Mgr Andy Dolan celebrates Golden Jubilee marking 100 years of priesthood in family tree



THE Golden Jubilee of Mgr Andy Dolan's ordination to the priesthood turned out to be a double celebration for the Aghyaran native and his family, with the Feast of The Body and Blood of Christ also marking the 100th anniversary of the ordination of his uncle, the late Fr Michael Collins.

Celebrating his 50 years of priesthood at the Corpus Christi vigil Mass in St Mary's Church, Bellaghy, where he has ministered since 1995, Mgr Andy was joined on the altar by Fr John Forbes and Fr Paddy McErlean.

Referring to the special Feast Day also being celebrated, he remarked: "What better day to be celebrating priesthood," adding, "Celebrating this Mass in thanksgiving, I am sorry for the times I didn't live up to the priesthood the way that I should have, and ask God's pardon

and yours as well."

Sharing how special it had been to be ordained on his uncle, Fr Michael Collins' Golden Jubilee, Mgr Andy recalled: "When I came home as a deacon, he told me that he would be 50 years ordained the next year and asked if my ordination and his Golden Jubilee could coincide. I told him that he was in a better position than me to see about that. So, this weekend, we are also celebrating 100 years since his ordination in the Nazareth House, Derry."

During the ceremony, Fr Forbes spoke a few words in tribute to his long-time friend, whom he first met in August 1968, when Mgr Andy was starting his fourth year in the seminary and he was about to begin his first year.

He recalled: "Andy heard that I was going to be sent to Kilkenny, where he was, so he thought it

would be nice to go to Strabane to meet the Forbes'. He made me feel very much at ease with him and the whole Kilkenny experience. A lot has happened in my life and his since".

Adding that having an older brother a priest, the late Canon Eugene Dolan, who had ministered in England, had been a great gift to Mgr Andy, Fr Forbes remarked: "Every priest has his own model of priesthood, and Fr Andy's is simple but effective; after God, people first.

"People are always important in his life. If there was a wake in Cork, Andy would be at it. He has a unique mind that doesn't forget people. He visits the sick, and has been attending to them, night and day, for the last 50 years.

"Reliable, loyal, sincere, helpful, generous with time, energy and money, he would tackle anything at any cost and would see it through. That is very evident when standing in this beautiful chapel".

Fr Forbes went on to share a special memory of serving Mass for his friend in the College Oratory, after he has just been ordained: "I was kneeling behind him, and when he held up the Body of Christ, held up God in his hands, it came to me as a shock that my friend was now a priest. Something had changed in him. Something wonderful had happened to him. I was thinking that maybe I might be the same in

two years' time.

"Now we are celebrating 50 years of priesthood of this faithful servant of God. I hope he has many happy years ahead of him".

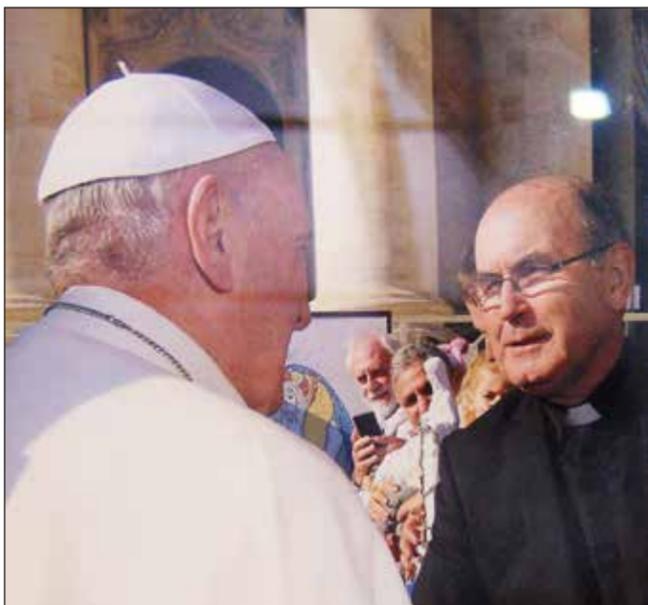
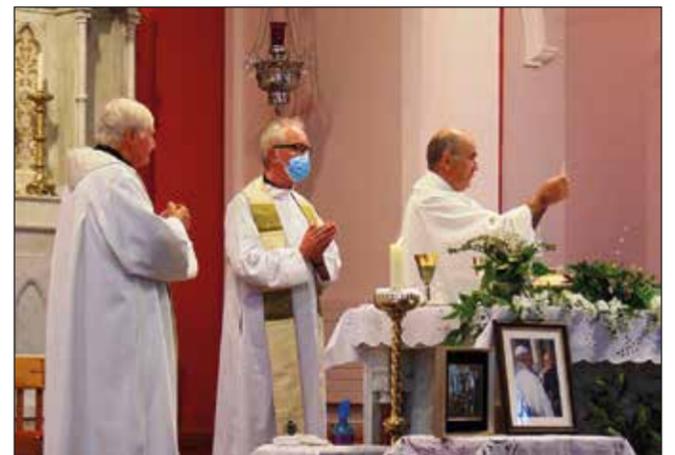
Speaking at the end of the ceremony, Mgr Andy said that whatever had been achieved in his priesthood had been with God's help and the support of other great people.

Paying particular tribute to the people of Bellaghy, where he has ministered for 26 years, he added: "I am very fortunate here in this parish to be surrounded by great people. We are friends and have done things together. I thank people in parishes I was in prior to here, as well".

Noting that his uncle, Fr Collins had ministered in the Parish of Ballinascreen from 1939 to 1979, Mgr Andy remarked: "I don't think I will make 40 years here".

Delighted to be able to celebrate 100 years of priesthood in his family, he finished up by saying: "The only disappointment to me is the lack of vocations. We are in very difficult times that will be talked about when we are all gone. It's great to have our chapels open again. All I would ask now is that you pray for vocations".

The parish made a presentation to Mgr Andy, including a painting of Church Island and Slieve Gallion by local artist, Liam Horner.



## Ballinascreen mark 100th anniversary of late parish priest, Fr Michael Collins' ordination

THE parishioners of Ballinascreen fondly remembered their former beloved parish priest, Fr Michael Collins when they gathered in Holy Rosary Church, Draperstown, to celebrate not only the Feast of Corpus Christi but also the 100th anniversary of the late Fr Collins' ordination to the priesthood.

Current parish priest, Fr Peter Madden was joined on the altar by Fr Collins' nephews, Fr Michael Collins and Mgr Andy Dolan, who was celebrating 50 years of priesthood on the same date, and Fr Colum Clerkin, PP Culmore, who also once served as parish priest in Ballinascreen and now a Golden Jubilarian too.

In his homily, Fr Peter recalled a special find when clearing out the old safe during the move of the parish office from the old parochial house in the centre of the town, where Fr Collins had resided as curate, administrator and then as parish priest of Ballinascreen.

Considered empty and ready for removal, Fr Peter recalled how they then discovered two small, steel drawers at the bottom: "We took them out just to check that there was nothing there. They were empty too but underneath, covered in dust and obviously there a very long time, were two small coins, the size of pound coins, and we took them out and cleaned them off.

"To our surprise, we discovered they weren't pound coins at all, but two half gold sovereigns. They must have been there a very long time. The following week, I took them to an antique shop. The dealer took out his small scales and weighed them and the parish got £450 for them".

"A few months later," he added: "I mentioned this to Mgr Andy Dolan, who took the story even further. On the day of his ordination, 50 years ago yesterday, he told me, his uncle, Fr Michael Collins gave him a set of half gold sovereigns that had been given to him on the day he was ordained 50 years before, and Mgr Dolan told me he still has them".

While Fr Peter hadn't known Fr Collins, he said that he had

heard much about him over the past 25 years, remarking: "While he would certainly have been a priest of his time and not giving to having his word contradicted too often, he is remembered as having been an exceptional pastor. I was curate under his curate, Fr Leo Deery, and Fr Deery idolised his memory. There was hardly a week when he didn't mention his name and many others in the parish did likewise...and still do.

"But I believe Fr Collins would not be interested one bit in being remembered today if, in remembering him, we forgot or lessened the importance of the Feast we celebrate, that of Corpus Christi. When you think that here was a man who left two gold-half sovereigns lying in the bottom of a safe where he forgot about them and the others, he gave away, it seems to me that Fr Michael Collins knew where true riches lay, and that was in a relationship with Jesus and, in particular, in the tabernacle of every church, the Blessed Eucharist.

"It is more than appropriate that today, the centenary of his First Mass, is the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, Corpus Christi. No dust ever settled on Fr Collins' commitment to Jesus' presence in the Holy Eucharist in the tabernacles of Ballinascreen".

He went on to note that the Feast of Corpus Christi was first celebrated almost 800 years ago, when St Thomas Aquinas, Doctor of the Church, proposed to Pope Urban IV, a feast focused solely on the Holy Eucharist, emphasizing the joy of the Eucharist being the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ.

### PROCESSIONS

Referring to the processions that would have taken place to celebrate this special feast day, Fr Peter said: "Many of you will remember those processions taking place here in this parish, with Fr Collins at the head of it. And maybe I can hear some of you think to yourselves, 'Ah those were the days'. It's always tempting to think that if we recreate what was, it will be so again, as if the certainties of faith we seem to remember can be replicated by a

liturgical retrospective.

"But the Feast of Corpus Christi today shouldn't be an opportunity to be nostalgic for the past; it is about Jesus present to us today, as we are, and as the world and the church is, not as we would like it to be. The more Pope Francis speaks of the church being a field hospital, the more at home we should feel in it".

He added: "There was a time when you were told never to pass the church without blessing yourself and going in to say a prayer before the Lord. People still bless themselves passing a church, I notice, but personal visits to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament are not so common. Yet, we are no less in need of Jesus now than those who went before us.

"We have, I believe, a greater need. For unlike in the past, our faith in Jesus risen from the dead and present in the Eucharist has to be personal in a way that didn't really need to be back then. When the Guards and the Police stopped the traffic to let Jesus in the Monstrance through it was easy to follow behind. But what of now?

"Indeed, faith in Christ is no longer the culture of the times that we can swim along in, but a response you and I personally have to make, and no one can make it for us, even if our parents chose to have us baptised. Just as we grow up in all other areas of our lives, our faith in Christ must become our own grown-up faith too".

Referring to the mention of 'couches' in the Gospel reading that describes Jesus sending the disciples to see that all was ready for the Passover, he remarked how this suggested comfort and ease, adding: "Maybe it is not unreasonable to think that the Lord is saying to us that in the Blessed Eucharist, whether received at Mass as the bread of life to eat or in adoration quietly before the tabernacle, we will know an ease and a peace that no amount of half sovereigns can buy.

"And that we have to find out for ourselves. Whether it be for our children's sake or our parishioners, the only way we can convince others of the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is

to be convinced ourselves. To get to know the Lord by visiting Him often. To be so familiar with the church in the personal visits we make that, if there were couches everywhere, we couldn't be more comfortable".

Returning to the two dust

covered half gold sovereigns, Fr Peter concluded: "Fr Collins put ashes on the heads of parishioners here for over 40 years and said those memorable words, remember man, as I said he was of his time, that thou art dust and unto dust thou shall return.

He has gone to his reward and the best way for us to remember his contribution to life here in Ballinascreen is to let the dust gather on whatever is the gold in our lives and genuflect before the Lord present in the tabernacle instead...where true wealth lies".



## Sacristan shares childhood memory of Fr Collins

SACRISTAN of the Holy Rosary Church in Draperstown, Marie O'Kane, shared her memories of Ballinascreen's much-loved parish priest, Fr Michael Collins.

One of her clearest memories is of him visiting St Mary's Primary School in Draperstown, where she was a pupil in the mid 70s.

"I remember him coming into the school and us all mobbing him. There were always children around him," recalled Marie, with a smile.

She added: "He had a great interest in the schools and the local people. He visited the school often and we were always glad to

see him. All the children would surround him when he walked up the street and came in.

"He was part of the community. You always saw him about and everybody was very fond of him. He was just a lovely person".

Marie went on to recall some of the great work Fr Collins' accomplished during his time in the parish: "He was a quiet man but he was the driving force in the parish, getting the schools and new chapel built.

"He was here 40 years and always wanted a chapel built in the town, but he didn't live to see it finished on the site where there had been

a little Oratory, where we used to go down to for Confession, but he was there to oversee the start of its development".



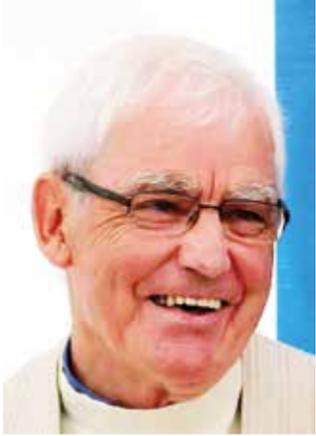
## Thornhill celebrates Golden Jubilee of beloved chaplain

JUST before the summer break, the staff of Thornhill College celebrated the Golden Jubilee of the ordination of its beloved chaplain, Fr Colum Clerkin.

Thornhill is located within the parish of Culmore, where Fr Colum ministers as parish priest.



# Fr Neal Carlin, founder of Columba Community, laid to rest



THE Columba Community joined with their founder's family in helping to celebrate a beautiful Requiem Mass for Fr Neal Carlin in St Eugene's Cathedral, Derry, on Monday, August 9, which was concelebrated by Bishop Donal McKeown, Fr Francis Bradley, PP Buncrana, Fahan, Inch & Burt, Fr Michael Sweeney and Fr Seamus O'Connell.

Delivering the homily, Fr Bradley relayed how the life story of Fr Neal, the third eldest of nine children born to May and Neal Carlin, at Enagh Lough, Strathfoyle, Derry, began on May 1, 1940, the Feast of St Joseph the Worker.

He noted that the family later moved to Newtowncunningham, where, in the old chapel, the young Neal "first promised God that, if he got through his exams, he would offer himself to him as a priest".

When he was 14, the family moved to live in Fahan, where, Fr Bradley said: "He became aware of the Celtic Saints and his devotion to them and his sheltering under their protection and guidance has been life-long.

"That idea of shelter is a powerful

part of his story; the shelter of the Church he knew he needed, the shelter of Care needed by others, and the shelter of a Compassionate Community which inspired him to lay foundations and forge new pathways to bring people together. His journey of discernment would take him to St Eunan's College in Letterkenny, then on to St Peter's Seminary in Wexford, and to the Diocese of Motherwell in Scotland, for which he was ordained in 1964.

"In the 11 years he spent there after ordination, he ministered in Hamilton, New Stevenston, Plains, Bell's Hill and Airdrie. His great mentor there was Father Tom Winning, later the Cardinal and Archbishop of Glasgow...His years in Scotland were happy and care-free; he worked a lot with youth where he used his love of sport to evangelise".

Fr Bradley added that, feeling called back to Ireland at the height of "The Troubles", Fr Neal came to the Cathedral Parish in 1975, where he loved visiting homes and hearing confessions.

He went on to note that Fr Neal used to say how he would "stand looking down over the city, conscious of the disintegration of society around him, all the more convinced that the healing, comfort and challenge of the Holy Spirit was needed to confront the darkness and injustice of the Troubles".

Mentioning Fr Neal's founding of St Joseph's Prayer Group and how Charismatic Renewal was becoming a strong thread in his priestly ministry at this stage, Fr Bradley went on to say: "Experiencing conflict and challenge, hurt and bewilderment

in his own life, he withdrew for a time to the Cistercian Abbey at Nunraw in Scotland, inspired by the text of the Prophet Isaiah, 'They that wait on the Lord renew their strength' (Is 40.31). And so, with the blessing of his Bishop in Motherwell, Bishop Thompson, Fr Neal went to the United States for a sabbatical period, visiting houses of prayer there.

"Despite his own struggles, the spiritual attacks he experienced and the difficulties which beset him by times, his love for the Church was deepening. On one occasion Fr Michael Collins spoke of how Fr Neal was out on the sea, battling the waves, but feeling the need of the overcoat which is the support and encouragement of the Church".

"In his writings and preaching, Fr Neal always emphasised the central importance of building community as the heart of the Church's mission," noted Fr Bradley, adding: "In 1981, in the year of the Hunger Strikes, he founded the Columba Community.

"After praying with a Protestant minister in Wexford, he heard the clear voice of God saying, 'In a few days, a stranger will point out to you a house.' And sure enough...a few days later, a man who was prominent in the SVdP, pointed out a house in Queen Street which he thought would be good for Fr Neal. It was owned by the RUC and had been bombed by the IRA - so it had the perfect pedigree to become a place of reconciliation.

## Contemplative

"With his love of the Blessed Sacrament and his unshakeable belief in God speaking in silence,

the first thing to be opened in it was the Oratory. Despite Fr Neal's boundless energy and frenetic work rate, he yearned to be a contemplative. So, as the Columba Community built up Columba House, which quickly became teeming with people looking for help and where no one was turned away, a sanctuary of peace and quiet was needed.

"After an all-night Vigil with readings about land and places of peace, as Fr Neal called with people to thank them for their support and generosity, a man said to him that he had a farm at Dundrean, on the border in Donegal and if he wanted it, it was his. And so St Anthony's came to be.

"St Anthony's was perfectly located. The border ran along the bottom of the garden; it was basic and rural. Many benefitted from its quiet solitude; none more than Fr Neal himself. At last, he could come closer to the depth of contemplation for which he yearned. But in time, further diversification was needed, when numbers seeking help with substance addiction grew and so, over the road and around the hill, White Oaks was developed. And as the land for this was being secured, a little gift was in the offing, for it was discovered that, in addition to what was needed, there was a patch of boggy land across the road which was also included. Fr Neal had always had the vision of having a prayer garden - and so the IOSAS Centre and Celtic Prayer Garden became a reality.

"But it was never ever about places; it was always about people and bringing them to God. Stones which he saw hurled in violence



and frustration in the Troubles to hurt people were now being built into facilities which would gently bring healing to people. It was his vision though which, guided by God himself, was allowing all this to happen".

Fr Bradley went on to say that Fr Neal "was always confident in the belief that God never withdraws his gifts - that the blessings given to the Celtic saints of old were still present and available to us as their followers in the here and now".

He added: "He had a great grá for justice; the social Gospel had to be preached and lived. He was forever conscious of his limitations, especially his temper and sharp tongue - so he relied more than most on the mercy of God and others; he was usually the first to be heard saying sorry.

"Whilst he made great strides across the years, it was in 1995 when Bishop Séamus Hegarty, who had been the year ahead of him in St Eunan's College, granted the Columba Community canonical status as a private association of the faithful, that Fr Neal could put on the overcoat mentioned by Fr Michael Collins, and enjoy to the full the shelter of the Church".

At the end of the ceremony, Bishop Donal, on behalf of the priests of the Diocese, acknowledged "the witness and ministry of Fr Neal over so many years", remarking: "Like many other men and women in the church, he had a dream for how people of faith could inspire and heal".

"Church has been at its best," he said, "when it is creative and takes risks to reach out to people. Church has been at its weakest when it merely supported the strong and lost its prophetic voice".

Bishop Donal added: "On behalf of many, I thank God for the courageous witness of Fr Neal. The church will be renewed by courageous, creative voices and not just by chats over a cup of coffee.

"As we lay him to rest, Neal would want us to pray for new outpouring of the Holy Spirit so that the hope and healing of Jesus can be made visible in our hurting world".

Buried in Ardmore Cemetery, Fr Neal was predeceased by his sister, Una, and survived by the rest of his siblings, Joe, James, Angela, Dessie, Aidan, Brendan and Christine.

## "Listening prayer is central to a new, revived concept for the Church of the future" - Fr Neal Carlin

IT was with great sadness that I received the news that Fr Neal Carlin had passed away, having spent much time with him during the writing of his autobiography, 'They that wait on the Lord - An Uncharted Journey'.

I learnt so much from him about being open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and trusting in God... in Divine Providence, which has stood me in good stead in the years since.

My first encounter with Fr Neal was in my early 20s...some 30 years ago now. I had read a newspaper article about the Columba Community and St Anthony's, where hermitage cells were being built. Noting from the article that there was a weekly prayer gathering at St Anthony's, I felt drawn to go along and find out more.

I don't remember much about the prayer gathering, other than a memory of people seated along the walls around the room, in an old white-washed cottage-type building, and Fr Neal sitting in our midst. What I recall more vividly is, afterwards, walking around the grounds where the hermitage

cells were to be built. I got a deep sense that this place would be a very peaceful refuge for anyone wanting some quiet time to pray and reflect.

As I left, I had a feeling that I would return, and I did...about 20 years later. In between times, I read with interest any news I came upon regarding the Columba Community, for it had found its way into my heart. While I had intended returning to more prayer gatherings at St Anthony's, work, marriage and motherhood kept me busy, though I did manage to spend some time every now and then in the Community's Blessed Sacrament Chapel in Columba House, at Queen Street, in Derry City. And it was here, one day in 2012, that I came upon a prayer intention that had been left on the seat beside the one I happened to sit on, which led to my second encounter with Fr Neal.

The little note asked for prayer that the community would find someone to help promote their various centres. It struck me immediately as something I would love to do, but at that time I was already very busy writing for a

local publication. So, I put the note back on the seat and offered a prayer for the intention. As it happened, I was also praying at this stage in my life about how best I could use my time and talents to serve God.

A few weeks later, I was made redundant because of the growing economic recession and during prayer about the situation I found myself in, I remembered about the prayer intention I had read in the St Columba Oratory. Wondering about the timing of all this, I decided to write to Fr Neal to find out if the Community was still looking for someone to help promote its activities. He responded with a 'phone call and asked me to come along to St Anthony's to discuss the possibility of a story to promote the hermitage cells for retreats.

## Grateful

I still remember the feeling I got when I stepped out of the car and looked around me...it was this sense of having 'returned home'. The visit led to me writing promotional pieces on St Anthony's and the other centres,

and then to Fr Neal asking me to help him write his autobiography; an experience for which I will be forever grateful.

Working so closely with Fr Neal on something so personal to him, I got a great insight into his life and personality, and into the faith journey that had led to his deep awareness of God and the Holy Spirit working in his life. I learnt so much that was to later help me in my own life - including trusting in Divine Providence.

When I undertook the publication of 'The Net' to promote the fruits of the faith in parishes across the Derry Diocese, after a long period of praying and discerning about how God desired me to use my time and talents, many, many times the faith experience and wisdom that Fr Neal had shared with me came to mind and gave me the courage to keep going when the going got tough.

In particular, the words of Isaiah 40:31 that Fr Neal had repeatedly received during a crossroads in his life, and which he often quoted, were a great source of encouragement to me: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew

their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles; they will run and not grow weary, walk and not grow weak."

Fr Neal's openness to the Holy Spirit and awareness that there was a message for him in this Scripture quote, having received it so many times from different sources, encouraged me to pray more for the guidance of the Holy Spirit and to become more aware of its promptings.

From his ministry with prisoners and their families during 'The Troubles', to his ministry of healing, particularly for those suffering from addiction, Fr Neal touched many lives; his great faith bringing people into a deeper, more living relationship with God.

He had a great energy, vision, determination and faith, that will surely now merit him a "well done good and faithful servant" and see him intercede for our Church, as it follows the path of prayer and discernment that he faithfully tread and led to him founding the Columba Community and to the development of St Anthony's Retreat Centre, White Oaks Rehabilitation Centre, and the

IOSAS Visitors' Centre and Celtic Peace Garden.

Founded in 1981, on the four pillars of normal Christian life - prayer, community, evangelisation and repentance - the Columba Community of Peace & Reconciliation was officially recognised and declared a lay institute canonically by Bishop Seamus Hegarty in 1995.

In the chapter about 'Formation of Community' in his autobiography, Fr Neal wrote: "The Columba Community, its employees and beneficiaries, testify to one thing, which is the prayer of listening and waiting on God's Word before we move with any apostolate. For 'unless the Lord builds the house, they labour in vain who build it.'" (Psalm 127)

"Listening prayer," he added, "is central to a new, revived concept for the Church of the future. We cannot rely on man's good ideas for renewal of the Church. We must believe God wants to guide us with His ideas for rebuilding the Church and the Kingdom."

May Fr Neal rest in peace.

Mary O'Donnell

Reflecting on 50 years of priesthood, Fr Kevin Mullan appreciates still having...

Photographs by Jason McCartan

# Deep friendships from all the parishes I have been

TWO months after ordination, one of the top scholars in our class died on a mountain in Germany. He was an all-round person, a magnificent friend to all and a born leader. Dominic was filled with the Spirit. With strength of mind and heart he would bring good news to the poor. We sang a hymn with those words as we joined in laying him to rest near the banks of the Shannon. We could not now leave his work undone.

Eleven years later, we lost Tom, here in our diocese. People who didn't fit into the tidiness of church life found that they fitted into his. Listening and talking, he found them a place of relief and hope and questioned the priorities of those who didn't question with his intensity. The comfortable made him uncomfortable. He was pushed to the margins. Forty years later, Pope Francis is telling us that is where we all should have been.

Two companions on the journey who still journey with me and pull me their way. That journey of service began in the Cathedral city, the training ground for those just out of seminary. My mentors were two brave and clear-sighted clerics. Pennyburn had its faith and loyalty, its warmth, talent and generosity. In common with the whole city, it had its traditions.

But on its fringes, a new conurbation was being born to deal with the housing situation. It was my privilege to eventually work with an older, kind-hearted companion in that virgin territory whose name suggested a religious settlement in days long past.

It was an exciting time of great innovation, as priests and people co-operated to create new models of parish, community and business life.

I ministered then in Limavady, where identity was often protected by separateness, and inclusion,

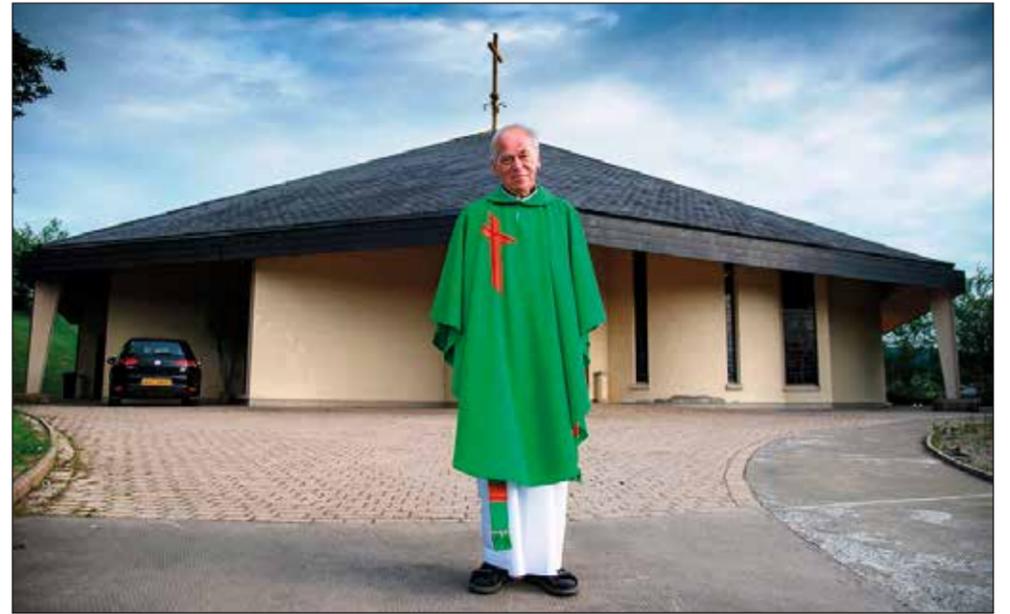
though richly rewarding, had its costs. One minister was driven to seek sanctuary in England. I was temporarily exiled to the Republic.

There, as in all the parishes where I have been, I still have deep friendships. I renewed older ones when I returned home to my native Omagh, and carried them all with me to Drumquin, possibly the end of the road.

Woven bitterly through these fifty years has been the northern conflict. We probably all ache for someone special we have lost.

Without the kindness of people, the partnership of colleagues and religious women, the understanding of bishops, the patience of dear housekeepers, the closeness of family and a few prayers, I might not have survived.

There are other matters I cannot write about here, known to a few and to God. In their mercy I leave them, as I wait for Jesus to fulfil all he has promised



Fr Kevin Mullan outside St Patrick's Church, Langfield, Drumquin, following his memorable 50 Year Jubilee Mass.



St Joseph's PS Drumquin had a special outdoor celebration of their beloved pastor's 50 years of priesthood, to show their great love and appreciation for his dedicated ministry.



Loyal friend and helper, Deidre Thompson with Fr Mullan.



Maeve Corry and her aunt, Geraldine McNabb present Fr Mullan with a Papal Blessing to mark his 50 year Jubilee.



Siblings Joan and Fr Kevin celebrate a memorable occasion for the Mullan family.



Fr Kevin Mullan celebrated Mass with Drumragh PP, Eugene Hasson and Drumquin's Sister Geraldine McAleer.

## “The past 40 years have been a blessing” – Fr Michael Canny

NEWLY appointed Vicar General for the Diocese, Fr Michael Canny has celebrated the 40th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood with a Mass in St Columba's Church, Waterside, where he is parish priest.

The Clonmany native was joined on the altar by his three curates, Fr Sean O'Donnell, Fr Malachy Gallagher and Fr Roni Zacharias, and there was a good turnout of parishioners for the socially-distanced celebration, who presented him with gifts afterwards.

Thankful for all those who had helped him along the way, Fr Michael recalled: “This day 40 years ago I was ordained by Bishop Daly. Two weeks later, I was asked to take up residency in St Eugene's and also to help in Strathfoyle.

“As I remember, Margaret Thatcher was the Prime Minister, and we had the hunger strikes. I was living in one of the corner rooms at the very top of St Eugene's, and when a hunger striker died there was a tremendous racket with bin lids. I thought there must be a better way of making a living!”

Saying that his 40th anniversary was an occasion to return to the enthusiasm he had set out with on his journey, he remarked:

“Hopefully there was enthusiasm. I look on life as a marathon not a sprint – to be run at a steady pace”.

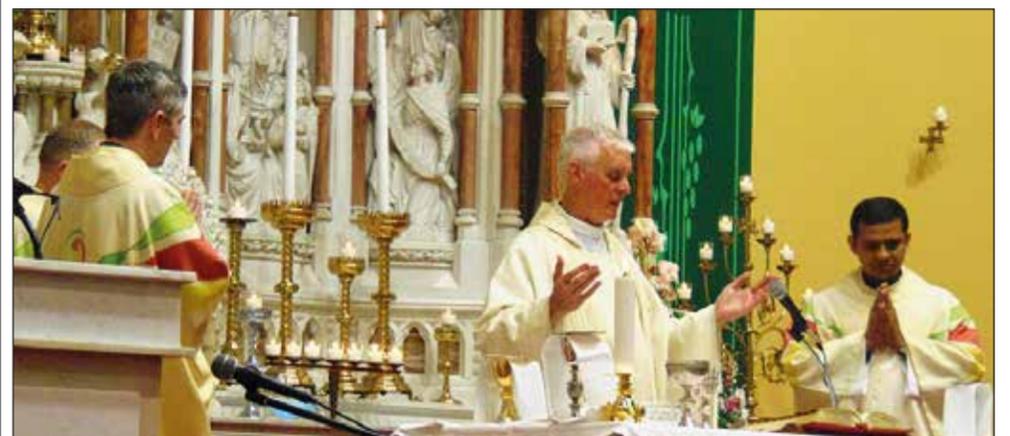
He added: “This is an occasion to rejoice. The past 40 years have been a blessing. I have been with very many people at special times in their lives. Hopefully, it was a spiritual occasion for them.”

Recalling that he had lived and worked with as many as 50 priests in the Diocese, Fr Michael said: “Unfortunately, many of them are no longer with us. They have embellished my life and, I hope, made me a better person. I give thanks and praise for what I have

received and what I will receive”.

Remarking that 40 years ago the Church was the same but in a very different time, Fr Michael referred to the mention in the First Reading that the time we find ourselves living in is the favourable time, saying: “God is in this place and in this time. God has made us His witnesses”.

Going on to say that he is never happier than when he is in the Waterside Parish or back home in Clonmany, he added: “Hopefully I can come back in 10 years' time and celebrate again”.



*Entrusting herself more and more to God's Will, Galliagh sacristan, Emma Devine says she has never felt peace and happiness like she does now, adding...*

## We are born to live in The Divine Will



Emma Devine, sacristan at St Joseph's, Galliagh.

WHEN a Derry mother gave up her well-paid job for a part-time, lesser paid one that didn't compromise her growing faith values, she soon came to realise that it was the best decision she had ever made.

Three years later, Emma Devine, of Hazelbank, in Derry, feels she is living the dream in her role as sacristan in St Joseph's, Galliagh, through which she has been drawn to spend more and more time in prayer and has had further life-changing experiences in her encounters with many wonderful people of faith amongst the parishioners.

Amazed and more at peace than she has ever felt, the 37-year-old has shared her faith story with 'The Net'; a story that began in the Carnhill family home of 15 born to

Aileen and Greg Devine, of which she is third eldest.

"We were reared in the Catholic faith," said Emma, "I was an altar server and, later, a member of the choir. Then the usual story evolved; when I was about 16 years old I went absolutely off the rails.

"For years I lived in sin, with a partying lifestyle. I didn't think about God, but that changed when I fell pregnant when I was 21. I started going to Mass when I was pregnant with my son and eventually broke up with his daddy, as it wasn't a good relationship. I had also suffered from a bad eating disorder for years and had become very thin and depressed".

Recalling how she was healed three years after the birth of her son, Emma said that it came about during her Cursillo weekend in Termonbacca, which had been recommended to her by colleagues she had worked with as a volunteer.

"I had a great experience," she continued, "I encountered Jesus on that weekend and the depression lifted. It just left me. I believe that God healed me. He showed me my soul and its woundedness. I could see these deep wounds and by the end of the weekend I saw my soul again, and this time it was healed but with scars.

"I came to know Christ and love him on my Cursillo weekend, and really trusted Him, but while my heart was transformed my lifestyle hadn't caught up with it. I had encountered Jesus but, afterwards, I was still living a life that was not of God".

"I didn't understand the importance of living the Gospel. I still wasn't aware. I was still drinking and all the rest," added Emma, "I met another fella who I was mad about. We were living together and, when I was 33, we had a baby girl.

"I was still going to Mass but I didn't think I was doing anything very sinful. I thought I was leading an ok life. Then, one morning we woke up and found our little girl had died in her sleep. She was three months old. This was an awakening for me.

"Just at that moment, when I discovered our daughter was dead, my soul woke up. I felt that I had to get to Heaven, as my baby was in Heaven. My main focus was how to get there. I wanted to do everything I needed to do to get to Heaven. I knew in that instant that how I was living wasn't right. I just understood that every action of ours on earth impacts on our eternal life".

Still off on maternity leave, Emma said that, when her son was in school, she went to Mass and spent many hours during the day in front of the Blessed Sacrament.

An experience in the Confessional proved to be another eye-opener, she recalled: "About three weeks after my daughter died, I went to Confession and I couldn't get absolution as I was still living with my partner. This shocked me, but I knew what I had to do.

"For the next year and a half or so, I kept falling. My efforts were

on and off, but eventually that all ended".

As she grew in her faith life, Emma became more and more aware of other areas that she needed to change.

"I had been working for a young parents' project, which provided accommodation for homeless young people," she said, adding: "When I was working there, I realised I was promoting contraception and helping people living together. I just felt that I couldn't do this anymore.

### Sacristan

"I was praying about a new job and then the role of sacristan in St Joseph's came up. It was a massive cut in pay, but I thought if I got the job then it was for me. And I got it! The Lord is so good the way He provides. I was now getting paid to go to Mass and be in the chapel.

"The Lord is always pouring out His goodness in so many little ways as well as big. After my daughter died, my son and I were homeless for nine months. I was staying on my sister's sofa...and I was praying for a car! Then I said to the Lord, if I get a car, I'll need insurance but I can't afford it. The day I got the car, I got a pay rise which was the exact amount that I needed for the car insurance!"

Reflecting on her work as a sacristan, Emma said: "It doesn't feel like a job to me. I get to set up the altar and meet the priest and parishioners, and it never gets boring, even though I am doing the same thing every day. It's a

dream!

"I have met so many wonderful people, and get to interact with the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal four days a week when they celebrate Mass here, and then Fr Chris, Fr Michael and Fr Gerard on one of the other three days.

"And, on top of all that, when I started as sacristan, I asked Fr Michael if I could hold a Holy Hour for the Unborn, as I was able to expose the Blessed Sacrament, and he said 'yes'. So, that has been happening on a Thursday night at 7 pm, during which we have silent Eucharistic Adoration and offer up the Rosary for the Unborn. There are about 10 regulars who come each week, and during lockdown, we prayed at the Grotto outside the chapel, socially distanced."

Cherishing her role as sacristan and all the time she feels blessed with to spend in prayer, Emma has found herself entrusting her life more and more to God, to the point that, on meeting a parishioner who introduced her to Living in the Divine Will, she feels that her mission now is to promote this way of life.

Wanting to find out more about the gift of Living in the Divine Will, Emma has been reading the writings of Luisa Piccarreta, who is known as the Little Daughter of The Divine Will, and listening to talks given by Frances Hogan, a lay missionary and educator working in the Catholic Church since the late sixties.

Born in Italy in 1865, Luisa's story tells of her receiving

revelations when she was 12 years old, and being called by God to "become a victim soul", which is referred to as Living in the Divine Will. While the Vatican is holding a neutral position regarding Luisa and her writings, it continues to allow the cause of her beatification to proceed.

Feeling drawn to help spread the good news about Living in the Divine Will, Emma gave a talk on it at various established prayer groups and invited people to an information night, from which a small Divine Will Prayer Group was set up last September.

"We had been meeting via Zoom and then in person, but now we're back on Zoom again," she explained, "We have about 30-35 people joining this, some from France, Poland, England, and Galway, as well as Derry.

"I also started another couple of groups that are smaller than this, and the hope is to have a day of retreat in St Pio House, here in Galliagh, when it opens. I feel that this is my mission in life at this time; to promote the Divine Will.

"I have never felt peace and happiness like I do now. We are born to live in the Divine Will. You really know how to love God with His own love. You actually feel that you are doing something for Him. What you do in the Divine Will touches the past, present and future. It does so much good work not just in our own life but for the world".

*With the Diocese holding its Vocation's Day this month, Fr Malachy Gallagher shares how the late Fr Brian O'Donnell helped nurture his vocation as a child...*

## Life's tapestry

I was an altar server for Fr Brian O'Donnell when I was a student at St Bridid's PS, Mayogall. His recent passing has me reminiscing about those days. I was always

eager to serve Mass because it was an opportunity to spend time with Jesus and receive Him in Holy Communion, but there was also the added bonus that I hated Maths and I had a valid excuse to be out of class.

Fr Brian was always most patient with me, who was far from an exemplary altar server; I could be very absent-minded and would often forget to ring the bells at the appropriate times. He never uttered a cross word or even gave the faintest look of disapproval. Even if I have not overcome my absent-mindedness, I nonetheless have grown more patient as I try to follow his example.

I felt called to the priesthood around nine years of age, even though I wasn't fully aware of all

that being a priest entailed. My only real experience of priesthood at that time was the celebration of the Mass, but that for me was enough.

The Mass was an experience of Heaven breaking through to earth. When I was at Mass, I felt at peace; I felt that God was near and that He loved me.

Fr Brian's simple but solemn celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass helped me, as a boy, to recognise how sacred and extraordinary the Mass truly is. He didn't have to say anything. I remember the great care with which he held the sacred vessels and how he diligently made sure to purify any remaining particles of the Blessed Sacrament.

From his actions, I could tell that every tiny particle of the host and every drop of what appeared to be wine was actually Jesus and was infinitely precious. It was clear, in the manner he celebrated the

Mass, that he believed that Jesus was truly and really present and this, in turn, reinforced my own belief in the real presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.

I think the way we celebrate Mass as priests should, in a sense, be the blueprint for our lives, because the Mass is filled with seemingly small gestures, but which all mean a great deal.

St Therese of Lisieux said: "Nothing is small in the eyes of God. Do all that you do with love".

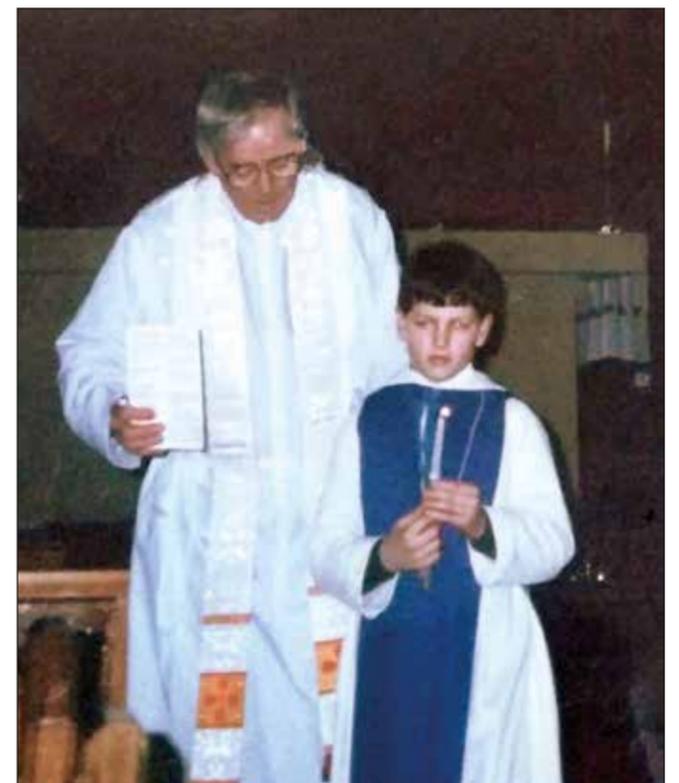
I try to infuse love into everything I do, even things that seem on the face of it to be relatively unimportant. I don't always succeed in this mission, of course. God is love, and if God is to be all in all, then our lives have to be lives of real charity – there is really no room for pretence.

St Therese is right, there really are no small things – it all matters. I have heard it said that life is like a tapestry and while on this earth

we can only see it, as it were, from behind – all the threads are exposed and appear pretty random, and we can't really see the pattern. In this life we don't see how, what appears at least to be, small threads all add up. But when we leave this earth, the tapestry will be turned around and we will see the design in all its richness. We will see how God made use of all the little yeses; all those times we cooperated with His Holy will.

I hope that when the tapestry of my life is revealed to me that it is woven with the love of God. It is God's love that motivates everything I do as a priest.

If anyone is discerning a call to the priesthood, my advice is to start trying to manifest the love of God in everything you do. It may sound like a tall order, and it definitely is, but God's love is so wondrous that although it may start out like a small mustard seed in our hearts, if we nurture it by



Fr Malachy Gallagher, CC Waterside, as a young altar boy with the late Fr Brian O'Donnell.

saying 'yes' to God every day, that love will most certainly grow. In fact, it will grow exponentially; transforming us, making us into a new creation in Christ.

Now that the tapestry of Fr Brian's life is revealed to him, may He rest from his labours and enjoy eternal peace.

*Settling in well since his arrival as the latest member to join the Termonbacca Carmelite community...*

## Fr Mike Spain reflects on almost 40 years of ministry in Ireland, England and Nigeria, and his return to Derry

THE latest member of the Carmelite community to join Fr Stephen Quinn, prior, and Fr Michael McGoldrick at the Iona Retreat Centre, Termonbacca, is Tipperary-born, Fr Mike Spain.

Like Fr McGoldrick, Fr Mike's first posting as a Carmelite was to Termonbacca and he is delighted to be back amongst the people of Derry, where the Carmelite Fathers are preparing to welcome more and more of the faithful as Covid-19 restrictions ease.

Reflecting on his own faith journey, which was first nurtured in the family home in Neenagh, where he grew up as the eldest in a family of six, the 64-year-old's main memory is of them praying the Rosary together every evening, around supper time.

Attending Catholic schools, with one being run by the Christian Brothers, and having the influence of vocations in the family tree, including a grand-uncle who was parish priest in the City of Pascagoula, Mississippi, and who stayed with Mike's family when home on holiday, and two great-aunts as Mercy Sisters who wrote to him and his brother, he grew up familiar with religious life.

So, when a Carmelite priest came into the Christian Brothers School one day looking for boys to go to the Carmelite College in Cork, it didn't unsettle 12-year-old Mike Spain one bit to find his teacher, Bro Walsh's hand on his shoulder as he indicated him to join the six others he had already sent out from the class of 50, as potentially having a religious vocation.

His mother was a bit surprised though and when she asked the teacher the following week why he had sent him out, Bro Walsh replied: "For the craic, Mrs Spain".

And young Mike was hopeful of having a great time there when he saw the hurling goalposts on the prospectus.

"I was smitten immediately," he recalled, "because I loved hurling and football".

The College was 100 miles away on the other side of Cork and he excelled on and off the pitch. With his love of sport growing, he applied to train as an accountant at the National College of Physical Education (NCPE) in Limerick.

"My selling point in my application to them was that I hoped to be on the Tipperary Minor Hurling team, but it didn't happen," said Fr Mike, adding: "I was a big, strong fella but I wore glasses, which probably would have gone against me rising to the very top in hurling".

However, during his Leaving Cert year, he had an experience that enlightened him with regards to his path in life.

"I was praying in the oratory during our mid-morning break," he recalled, "and as I got up off my knees after genuflecting, I had complete certainty that I wanted to join the Carmelites. I came out feeling like I was walking on air."

"I also remember, in our fifth year, kneeling to say my prayers in front of the others in the open dormitory and I never felt any embarrassment, even though I was the only one doing it."

"When I went home and my parents asked what I was thinking of doing, I said it straight out. The day I entered the novitiate, my dad said, 'Mike, the door is always open. I wasn't my parents' vocation; it was my decision and I have never regretted it'."

After spending a year in The Abbey, the Novitiate House for the Carmelites in Loughrea, Co Galway, he spent six years in Donnybrook, Dublin, studying Philosophy for two years and Theology for four years at 'Gayfield House', which was later called 'Avila' after the Order's founder, St Teresa.

Ordained in 1982 by Bishop Michael Harty, Killaloe, at the age of 26, Fr Mike's first posting was to Termonbacca, where he spent about eight weeks helping with some refurbishment work. Fr Gerry Fitzpatrick was the prior at that time, and the other members of the community there included Fr Michael McGoldrick, Fr Joseph McElhinney and Bro Christy Gannon.

From there, he went to the St Patrick's Liturgical Centre in Carlow, where he spent eight months before being sent to a parish in Somerset, Wincanton, in England, where the Carmelites have had a parish since the late 1800s. Living with the community in St Luke's Priory, Fr Mike was assigned to the areas of Castle Cary and Bruton.

Amongst those he visited and celebrated Mass with was a community of sisters in a convent in Castle Cary, who were from different countries and had disabilities. They were called the Sisters of Jesus Crucified.

A decade later, Fr Mike was moved to a big parish in Gerrards Cross, in Buckinghamshire, where he spent two years before being sent to Nigeria for what turned out to be the best years of his ministry.

### Phenomenon

"I spent 14 years in Nigeria and they were great years," he recalled, "The people were so friendly and so strong. You were very much occupied, with no time for pastimes such as golfing or hurling, so I went to bed tired every night. I used to walk for

recreation, and some would have been long walks, like 20 miles. I was a bit of a phenomenon".

He added: "I was in a big university town called Ekpoma, in Edo State. There was so much more need there. Most people needed a shoulder to cry on. Many needed material help. The international organisations, like St Vincent de Paul and the Legion of Mary, were all very active there and if you could spare a few minutes for any of them they would be very pleased."

"There was a lot of poverty. Sometimes, if you had the equivalent of a tenner, it could make the difference between someone living and dying. The SVP became my best friends as they knew who was genuine, so I would always go out of my way to get money for the SVP if they made a request of me".

During his time there, Fr Mike, who was prior for the last six years, oversaw the building of 12 churches, the creation of three new parishes and the building of a school.

Commenting on a challenging start for the school build project, Fr Mike said: "The site was associated locally with superstition as babies had been buried there, but people were happy when the Church was taking it over and that something good was happening, so the old superstition was put to bed."

"The teenage altar servers helped to clear the ground and we moulded the bricks on site. The sun baked the moulds and the bricks were ready within a week, and this is how we proceeded, with the bricks made as the building took shape".

Recalling his sadness on leaving in 2009, Fr Mike said: "The morning I was leaving, the Sisters of Mary, who were running the school, brought out the children in rows. There must have been a dozen rows of kids standing there and, at the same moment, they all waved and said, 'Bye-bye Father'. "I had to turn away as it was a very emotional moment. It was so different to here. Children would have been coming to hug your legs and nearly knock you down".

Having left with predominantly good memories of his time in Nigeria, he remarked: "There were times when we had armed robbers come to our house, but it is the appreciation of the people that stands out for me; how welcome they made us feel".

On his return to Ireland, Fr Mike took part in a renewal course with the Columbans, in Dalgan Park, Navan, and afterwards set off to walk the full 500 miles of the Way of St James – the Camino de Santiago, beginning at Saint

Jean Pied de Port, France and going through Spain to reach the final destination of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, in Galicia, having walked about 25 km every day.

"I set out with my brother, who was an army man and who loved walking," he recalled, "but he had to give up after the second day with an old injury, so I continued on my own. But you are never on your own on the Camino."

"I got some great insights during that walk. I had tendonitis and on one particular occasion, as I was making my way to O Cebreiro, it was very painful. I could see the lights of the village about six or seven miles away, so I started saying the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary and I had this extraordinary experience of 'The Agony in the Garden' and all the agonies in Africa, and not being able to help people. Then I could see all the people who had been a scourge to me over the years when I was praying 'The Scourging at the Pillar' Mystery. Memories of different people came crowding into my mind".

He added: "During 'The Crowning of Thorns' Mystery, I recalled a massacre of about 200 Muslims that I had come upon while in Nigeria. I had been driving in my car when I saw hundreds of people crossing over the main bridge trying to get home. It was groups of Muslims who were flanked by soldiers trying to protect them from being fully wiped out. Each side of the bridge was flanked by vehicles."

"Burnt bodies lay everywhere. There was a minibus in front of me packed with people, and I let six women into my car. We had to drive over corpses to get out of there."

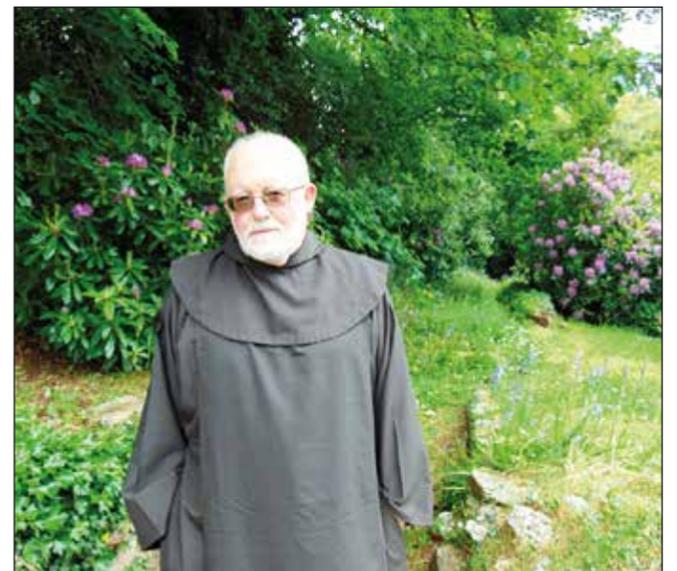
### Hatchets

"We were stopped at one point and these fellas, who were carrying large bamboo sticks and butchers' hatchets for chopping tendons, came over to see who was in my car. Obviously, it was women from their own tribe because they let me drive on."

"The market was on fire and there were sandals all over the road from people who were murdered. There was a little motorcycle which looked like a little black toy that was burnt out where it had stood".

"It was one of the very few times I had seen a massacre," continued Fr Mike, "and the next day, when I went past, it was shocking to see that the bodies had just been pulled aside to let traffic flow. A lot of them were women."

"It didn't occupy much space in the local or national papers. It had



been a revenge attack. Igbo traders had been attacked and murdered in a place called Maiduguri. Two lorry loads were filled with the bodies and they made the long journey to the City of Onitsha and dumped them in the Muslim market, where animals were sold, and then turned on the Muslims and killed any they could find".

Commenting on the affect this had had on him, Fr Mike said: "I slept that night, but a few years later when I was in Dublin, I came upon a young black man in our refectory. I shook his hand and he stayed for a meal. One of the priests afterwards asked me who he was and I said that I didn't know...and he had stayed for a meal! Nobody knew who he was...he had just walked into the place. During the night, I woke up screaming a silent scream as I had been dreaming someone was coming to get me. I think that was a flashback to that massacre".

He recalled contracting malaria after this experience in Nigeria, which resulted in him having to go home for five months to recover, and then return for three more years as parish priest.

Returning to his Camino experience, Fr Mike said: "It was extraordinary how memories rushed into my consciousness of people who had bullied me, who had leached on my time and made me do things I hadn't wanted to do, and had given abuse to some of my friends".

He added: "For me, the Camino was primarily a spiritual journey, though there were physical sores, like my tendonitis and blisters. I had my little Mass kit in the bag and never let a day go by without celebrating the Eucharist. I had the most extraordinary company for Mass, including a Buddhist and her Catholic friend one day. The Buddhist wanted to be a Catholic but her parents wouldn't let her. It was a very simple celebration of the Eucharist on a stone that was just on a path, on the side of a hill.

I heard some confessions en route as well".

Undertaking the Camino in the latter part of his sabbatical year, Fr Mike spent some time at home with his family afterwards before returning to his community in Clarendon Street, Dublin.

"Confession was the main ministry there, and a very rewarding one," he remarked.

After spending two years in Dublin, Fr Mike was asked to go to Preston, Lancashire, in 2012, where he spent the next couple of years with their community in Tabor Retreat House, before taking up the role of parish priest at St Joseph's, Gerrards Cross.

"Gerrards Cross is such a lovely place," he commented, "and suited me, as I am a people's man. I was just finished my time there when Fr John Grennan, who is now our Provincial, 'phoned me about coming to Termonbacca."

"I felt that I would be a proper fool to be anything but ebullient about the change. I said that maybe the best friends I will ever make will be in Derry, and the signs are promising. I am now a member of the Cursillo men's walking group and the Foyle Golf Club, and I have managed a few spins on the bicycle, which gets me out and about".

Having settled in well with the rest of the Termonbacca community and staff, and feeling blessed to have already met some very pleasant people, Fr Mike's life would be almost bliss but for some greedy little garden thieves.

"My biggest enemy since I have come here," he announced, narrowing his eyes, "are the rabbits that have taken every single thing I have sown – carrots, onions, cauliflower, lettuce, cabbage, beetroot and leeks!"

And, it doesn't look hopeful that the resident canine will help with that particular problem, with his easy going nature endearing him to everyone who visits.

# Fr Stephen Quinn shares great vision for future ministry of Carmelites in Derry



Fr Michael McGoldrick, Fr Stephen Quinn, prior, and Fr Mike Spain of the Carmelite Community at the Iona Retreat Centre, Termonbacca, Derry.

THE winds of change have been blowing through the Carmelite monastery at Termonbacca these last few years, especially since the arrival of Fr Stephen Quinn, whose eagerness to engage with all age-groups, particularly the young, has led to an increase in the number of people seeking spiritual direction to help them grow in their faith.

The Carmelites have won the hearts and deepened the faith of many since arriving in Derry 40 years ago, and the sudden deaths of Fr Jerry Fitzpatrick on May 19, 2019, who had been the prior, and Fr John McNamee, last year, on April 23, was a great shock for both the Carmelite and local communities, and left a deep void.

But God can turn all to the good and under the guidance of Fr John Grennan, who took over as prior, Covid lockdown time became a gifted time of even deeper prayer and discernment for the community of two, the fruits of which were to be seen when the Anglo-Irish Province of the Discalced Carmelites held its 2020 Chapter. During this Chapter, Fr Grennan was appointed Provincial, leaving the Termonbacca community without a prior...but God had a plan, involving Fr Stephen Quinn being asked to take on the role.

Surprised at the request as he was only newly professed, Fr Stephen told "The Net": "You have to be solemnly professed for at least three years to become prior, so I had to get special dispensation from our Superior General in Rome, Fr Cannistra."

The appointment makes the

44-year-old the youngest Irish prior amongst the Carmelites, but he is more than up for the challenge with the help of his greatly experienced fellow friars, Fr Michael McGoldrick, former Provincial, and Fr Mike Spain.

With the Order coming out with a Charismatic Declaration on the meaning of its vocation in the Church in the 21st Century, which focuses on the life of St Teresa of Ávila as the inspiration that gave life to the Order, Fr Stephen has been reading her works again to try and get behind what she wanted for her community.

Noting that prayer is central to St Teresa's message, he remarked: "Whatever communities she founded were praying communities rather than communities that evangelised or got involved in social work. Her communities were mainly about praying and deepening the personal relationship with the Lord, Himself."

"So for me, as prior, a priority will be to retain our monastic schedule. The praying of the Divine Office and our personal meditation will be the fuel for whatever else we do."

He added: "In many ways, the last year for me has seen a growth in the amount of people who are interested in spiritual direction and who want a regular confessor, especially amongst younger Catholics."

"This is not an easy thing for anyone to take on, as the spiritual director comes to know them in a personal way, their reality, and challenges that reality with the truth of Christ to help people

see where it is that the Lord is at work in their life and where it is that they have put up barriers and boundaries where He can't go, and that usually has to do with fears from their past."

Highlighting Matthew 14:22, and following, as a very important Gospel for spiritual direction, Fr Stephen continued: "It is about Jesus walking on the water and then inviting Peter to come out. That Gospel catches so much of Christian life and our commitment to that, because there are so many things in life that make us frightened; they are the waves and the wind. They assist us in believing that what Christ asks of us is unreal, impossible to us; that holiness is impossible."

"It is through focusing on who Christ is and what life offers us that we are able to overcome the fear that steals the heart out of us, that makes Christ's commitment to us unreal, and that is the great tragedy for most Catholics today. They do not get to see that Christ is calling them as radically and dynamically as St Teresa or St John of the Cross."

He added: "I think a big part of our work here, going forward, is going to be around Confession and spiritual direction, and deepening people's awareness within themselves about their own call to holiness within the Church."

"Beyond that, we will try to bring new ideas and new forms of retreat to the community here in Derry. I don't think that trying to teach about St John of the Cross and St Teresa of Ávila in a technical sense will have much attraction for

people.

"It is encouraging a devotional life and a prayer life that is capable of deepening, and goes beyond the superficial, that invites people to put out a little deeper than what they are comfortable with, or what they have been taught up until now about praying, which often can be just a matter of words, beads, pamphlets, and all kinds of pieces of information."

## Prayer

"As St Teresa of Ávila said, prayer is a simple conversation with someone whom you know loves you. We will try to get people to pray with something more than what is in a book, with what is in their heart and their will, and when praying, to ensure they are not praying for something but that they are praying to someone, and that they are loving God and taking God on His own terms."

Looking ahead to when Covid restrictions are lifted, Fr Stephen spoke about their hope to help the Cursillo committee and chaplain, Fr Joe Gormley, rebuild "what has been left fallow for the last year and a half".

"Cursillo is a very important evangelisation tool in the City of Derry and surrounding environs," he said, adding: "and we are open to helping them deepen their calling to evangelise and to share the wealth of knowing the Lord."

"The Diocese also has needs, pastoral and spiritual, and we are willing to assist in whatever way that we can. It is preparing for this Synod that is coming and people need to be ready by having the necessary formation."

"In response to the problem that it is facing, the Church wants to enable lay people to take responsibility, but lay people can never take that responsibility until they have made their own personal commitment to Christ, until they have their own healthy spiritual life, and until they realise that Christ has called them not to some job or task but to always be converted. Conversion has to be first, not just for one day but for life."

Explaining that the tradition of the Carmelite saints gives an insight into how conversion works, Fr Stephen highlighted the importance of prayer formation and the ability to read the Scriptures in a prayerful way, and to have access to the witness of the Saints.

"All is necessary food for any person before they take on a role in the Church," he said, adding: "Too often, we put people in roles that they are not ready for and they do not see the deeper consequences and the deeper issues that arise. It is through these tasks that they are being called to a deeper way of life

and a deeper appreciation of who He is.

"In many ways, from Pope Paul VI's call for the evangelisation of the modern world and Pope John Paul II's new evangelisation, we take that as merely preaching the Lord's name, but I think it is far more than that. The heart of any evangelisation is the formation in knowing the identity of the Lord, and that identity has implications for who I am and how I live my life."

"Evangelisation is deeply connected to prayer and to such things as Confession and spiritual direction, for the growth of a human person in relationship with the Lord."

Eager to get going, Fr Stephen is looking forward to being involved with the Youth 2000 retreat in August, for its members from all over Ireland: "They are having it by web-link in various places across the country, and we are hoping that will be the beginning of new connections and a new relationship with young people."

He also highlighted the great work of the local 'Blessed is She' group that meets in Termonbacca: "This is a group of women who have come to develop a deeper relationship with the Lord through various aspects of the faith. We are very positive about the influence of that group on women who come along to interact and learn. They pray and try to develop their own

engagement with Jesus in the faith.

"We are hoping to form a male group on similar lines, and are looking around to see what else people would be open to and interested in. There has been a growing movement, in Portugal, Spain, France and Italy, of Carmelite Fathers teaching a specific Carmelite Way of praying to lay people, in trying to make the Carmelite Saints and their method of prayer more approachable."

"We hope at some stage, when lockdown ends, to go to those countries and see what works for them and if it will work here in Derry, in helping people's experience of prayer."

With this great vision forming for the future ministry of the Carmelites in Derry, Fr Stephen is keen to ensure that the environs of the monastery will add to the experience of those who come to Termonbacca for help in their spiritual life.

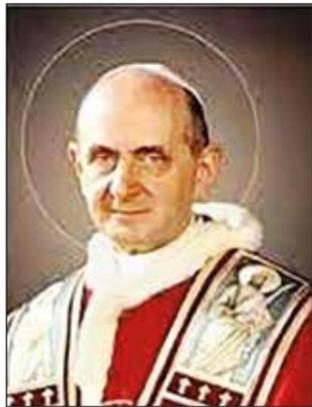
"We have started a little bit of renovation involving the chapel," he said, "and refurbishment will be ongoing to make the running of the building more economic, in terms of heating etc, and also to make it a more inviting and warm house."

The Termonbacca Carmelite Community can be contacted by telephone - 028 71 262512, email - ocdderry@hotmail.com, or via Facebook.



# Bearing witness to Jesus – the Way, the Truth and the Life

*The homily of Pope Paul VI at Mass in the Philippines, Manila, in the Quezon Circle, on Sunday, November 29, 1970, during his Apostolic Pilgrimage to West Asia, Oceania and Australia...*



"I Paul, the successor of Saint Peter, charged with the pastoral mission for the whole Church, would never have come from Rome to this far-distant land, unless I had been most firmly convinced of two fundamental things: first, of Christ; and second, of your salvation.

Convinced of Christ: yes, I feel the need to proclaim him, I cannot keep silent. «Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!» (1 Cor. 9: 16). I am sent by him, by Christ himself, to do this. I am an apostle, I am a witness. The more distant the goal, the more difficult my mission the more pressing is the love that urges me to it (Cfr. 2 Cor. 5: 13).

I must bear witness to his name: Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matth.16: 16). He reveals the invisible God, he is the firstborn of all creation, the foundation of everything created. He is the Teacher of mankind, and its Redeemer. He was born, he died and he rose again for us. He is the centre of history and of the world; he is the one who knows us and who loves us; he is the companion and the friend of our life. He is the man of sorrows and of hope. It is he who will come and

who one day will be our judge and - we hope - the everlasting fullness of our existence, our happiness.

I could never finish speaking about him: he is the light and the truth; indeed, he is «the way, the truth and the life» (Jo. 14: 6). He is the bread and the spring of living water to satisfy our hunger and our thirst. He is our shepherd, our guide, our model, our comfort, our brother. Like us, and more than us, he has been little, poor, humiliated; he has been a worker; he has known misfortune and been patient. For our sake he spoke, worked miracles and founded a new kingdom where the poor are happy, where peace is the principle of living together, where the pure of heart and those who mourn are raised up and comforted, where those who hunger and thirst after justice have their fill, where sinners can be forgiven, where all are brothers.

## Alpha and Omega

Jesus Christ: you have heard him spoken of; indeed the greater part of you are already his: you are Christians. So, to you Christians I repeat his name, to everyone I proclaim him: Jesus Christ is the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega; he is the king of the new world; he is the secret of history; he is the key to our destiny. He is the mediator, the bridge, between heaven and earth. He is more perfectly than anyone else the Son of Man, because he is the Son of God, eternal and infinite. He is the son of Mary, blessed among all women, his mother according to the flesh, and our mother through the sharing in the Spirit of his Mystical Body.

Jesus Christ is our constant preaching; it is his name that we

proclaim to the ends of the earth (Cfr. Rom. 10: 18) and throughout all ages (Rom. 9: 5). Remember this and ponder on it: the Pope has come here among you and has proclaimed Jesus Christ!

In doing this I express also the second dynamic idea that brings me to you: that Jesus Christ is to be praised not only for what he is in himself; he is to be exalted and loved for what he is for us, for each one of us, for every people and for every culture. Christ is our Saviour. Christ is our greatest benefactor. Christ is our liberator. We need Christ, in order to be genuine and worthy men in the temporal order, and men saved and raised to the supernatural order.

At this point several questions present themselves. They are questions that torment our times, and I am sure that they are in your minds too. These questions are: Can Christ really be of any use to us for solving the practical and concrete problems of the present life? Did he not say that his kingdom is not of this world? What can he do for us? In other words, can Christianity give rise to a true humanism? Can the Christian view of life inspire a real renewal of society? Can that view harmonize with the demands of modern life, and favour progress and well-being of all? Can Christianity interpret peoples' yearnings and identify with the tendencies special to your culture?

These questions are many, and we cannot answer them with one single formula which would take account of the complexity of the problems and the different needs of man, spiritual, moral, economic, political, ethnic, historical and social. Yet, as far as the positive and

happy development of your social conditions is concerned, we can give a positive answer: Christianity can be salvation also on the earthly and human level.

## Dynamic

Christ multiplied the loaves also to satisfy the physical hunger of the crowds following him. And Christ continues to work this miracle for those who truly believe in him, and who take from him the principles of a dynamic social order, that is, of an order that is continually progressing and being renewed.

For example, Christ, as you know, constantly proclaims his great and supreme commandment of love. There exists no social ferment stronger and better than this. In its positive aspect it unleashes incomparable and unquenchable moral forces; in its negative aspect it denounces all forms of selfishness, inertia and forgetfulness which do harm to the needs of others.

Christ proclaims the equality and brotherhood of all men: who but he has taught and can still effectively teach such principles which revolution, while benefitting from them, rejects? Who but he, we say, has revealed the fatherhood of God, the true and unassailable reason for the brotherhood of men? And whence comes the genuine and sacred freedom of man if not from human dignity, of which Christ made himself the teacher and champion? And who, if not he, has made available temporal goods, when he took from them the nature of ends in themselves and declared that they are means, means which must to some extent suffice for all, and means which are of less value than

the supreme goods of the spirit? Who but Christ has planted in the hearts of his followers the talent for love and service on behalf of all man's sufferings and needs? Who has proclaimed the law of work as a right, a duty and a means of providence? Who has proclaimed the dignity that raises it to the level of cooperation with and fulfillment of the divine plan? Who has freed it from every form of inhuman slavery, and given it its reward of justice and merit?

To you who are students and can well grasp these fundamental ideas and these higher values, I would say this: Today while you are challenging the structures of affluent society, the society that is dominated by technology and by the anxious pursuit of productivity and consumption, you are aware of the insufficiency and the deceptiveness of the economic and social materialism that marks our present progress. You are truly able to reaffirm the superiority, richness and relevance of authentic Christian sociology, based on true knowledge of man and of his destiny.

## Workers

Workers, my message to you is this: While today you have become aware of your strength, take care that in the pursuit of your total rehabilitation you do not adopt formulas that are incomplete and inaccurate. These, while offering you partial victories of an economic and hedonistic nature, under the banner of a selfish and bitter struggle, may later increase the disappointment of having been deprived of the higher values of the spirit, of having been deprived of your religious personality and of your hope in the life that will

not end. Let your aspirations be inspired by the vigour and wisdom that only the Gospel of the divine Worker can give you.

To you, the poor, I have this to say: remember that you have a supreme friend - Christ who called you blessed, the privileged inheritors of his kingdom. He personified himself in you, so as to turn to you every good person, every generous heart, every man who wishes to save himself by seeking in you Christ the Saviour. Yes, strive to raise yourselves: you have a right and duty to do so. Demand the help of a society that wishes to be called civilized but do not curse either your lot or those who lack sensitivity, for you know that you are rich in the values of Christian patience and redemptive suffering.

A final word, to you who are rich: remember how severe Christ was in your regard, when he saw you self-satisfied, inactive and selfish. And on the other hand remember how responsive and grateful he was when he found you thoughtful and generous; he said that not even a cup of cold water given in a Christian spirit would go unrewarded. Perhaps it is your hour: the time for you to open your eyes and hearts to a great new vision not dedicated to the struggles of self-interest, hatred and violence, but dedicated to solicitous and generous love and to true progress.

All this, dear sons and daughters, dear brothers and sisters, is part of the message of the Catholic faith. I have the happy duty to proclaim it here, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour".

## One of the reasons we have our faith by Michael Devlin

*(This article first appeared in the Strabane Chronicle)*

IT takes a certain amount of effort to see any project through, from inception to completion. But for one Strabane man, two decades of work - work which remains ongoing - is indicative of his perfect devotion to a mission dedicated to the people.

When Patsy Barrett (73) bought a patch of ground on the Derry Road in the town circa 1982, little did he know that it already had a resident, a longstanding resident in the form of an ancient Mass rock.

A huge, dark stone with a flat surface to be used as an altar, Patsy believes this particular example of our shared heritage would have been in use in the 1700s, as a location for the then illegal Catholic Mass. This illegality was a result of Oliver Cromwell's campaign against the Irish and also the Penal Law of 1695.

Although little is known about the provenance of this Mass rock at Tulacorr, in many other instances

a stone would be taken from the ruins of a church and relocated to a rural area so that people could celebrate Mass covertly.

"There just happened to be one on ground I bought," Patsy remarked.

"I acquired the ground in '82, I think, and I discovered from local folk and the parish that there was a Mass Rock on it. It was all over grown back then. I suppose, before I did anything with it I had to tame the ground.

"It was a right wee bit of work. I suppose it really started about 20 years ago. Then, when the houses were built I was able to make a proper access to it, to suit the less able bodied and push chairs and that.

"I've started to call it, this last 20 years, The People's Mass Rock."

These days though, The People's Mass Rock isn't merely a Mass Rock but rather, more like a local facility. Patsy has installed seating in the leafy glade and there's also

a grotto including statues, as a backdrop to the rock itself.

All of that work was done in conjunction with maintaining the area each year, as the plant-life and trees around the glade grow and shed their leaves.

However Patsy is in no doubt that all of the work is worthwhile, as the importance of the Mass Rock cannot be under-estimated in terms of our religious traditions. According to website, findamassrock.com, so pervasive was the Mass Rock in the image of past persecution of Catholics that Pope John Paul II spoke of it during his 1979 visit to Ireland. Mass continues to be said at a number of Mass Rock sites today.

"It's ongoing work, keeping it tidy, because of the growth and the fall of the leaf.

"And I'm trying to improve it by putting seating at it," the former fruit and vegetable wholesaler continued.

"When I was working full time,

I would have got a wee bit done every year and it worked out that every step you made, every bit of progress you made, you would look the next year to see what improvements could be made. It's more to make it for the people rather than myself.

"And people are visiting all the time. I've met people at it from Germany, South America, Derry."

Originally from the Dromore area, Patsy says The People's Mass Rock would have been used in the middle of the 18th Century.

"Very little was written about Mass Rocks because they were secretive.

"But from local knowledge, there might have been one paragraph written about it.

"This Mass Rock would have been there in existence from the 1760s and then when things were relaxed, Mass was moved to the workhouse in Strabane, which is now the council offices on the Derry Road. Mass would have

been said there for over 100 years. Mass then moved from the work house to the Sacred Heart in 1939.

"Most of the Mass Rocks that people used to visit were lost because there were dotted around the countryside.

"I personally think they should never be forgotten about because they are one of the reasons - and I am emphasising one of the reasons - why we have our faith. Our

ancestors sacrificed a lot to make sure the holy sacrifice of the Mass could be offered up for the people."



Prayer experience at Carmelite garden and Strabane Mass Rock deepens as...

# Discarded Stations of the Cross restored and multiplied thanks to prayer of two faith friends



had been dumped during a house clearance, he was dismayed that they had been discarded in such a way but delighted to take them into his care and clean them up.

“When I was shown the first one, I thought it was beautiful,” said the Steelstown parishioner, “and I couldn’t believe it when I was told that there were 13 more lying dumped at the bottom of the garden. I fell in love with them and took them home, where I steeped them in Coca Cola before cleaning each one with wire wool.”

Of the mind that there is a reason for everything, Patsy began to pray and think about what to do about this find, which he felt was so special that he had to discover a way of sharing the beauty of these Stations of the Cross.

“I have a great friend called Paul Madden who does amazing work making moulds, and one of his favourites is the face of Jesus, so I took the Stations to him to see what he thought,” said Patsy, adding: “His eyes lit up when he saw them and we both prayed hard about what we could do with them.

“Thanks to Paul’s great work, we now have moulds to make copies of these 14 Stations of the Cross to go wherever requested.”

He went on to explain that Holy Water from Knock, Lourdes and the Holy Land, as well as from

Derry’s own St Columba’s Well, which is blessed by the Bishop every year on the Saint’s Feast Day, June 9, are sprinkled into the mixture from which the moulds are made and in the cement mixing for the foundations, along with pebbles from Holy Shrines and pieces of old slate that came from the roof of the Immaculate Conception Church in Strabane, during the renovation work on the building.

A devoted Cursillista and champion of the youth faith group, COR, which regularly met in the Iona Retreat Centre pre-Covid, Patsy has a special place in his heart for the Carmelite Fathers of Termonbacca and is always trying to find ways of helping them.

So, it was no surprise when he announced that the first set of Stations made from the moulds were bound for the Carmelite Retreat Centre, as a gift for the 40th anniversary of the Fathers arriving in Derry.

With the help of other Cursillistas and Termonbacca staff members, Patsy set the stations around the edge of the monastery garden. They were then blessed in a special little ceremony which happened to coincide with a visit by the former prior and now Provincial of the Order, Fr John Grennan.

Another set is to be installed

at the Tullacorr Mass Rock, on the outskirts of Strabane, and it is hoped to have them blessed during a ceremony there on July 20, when a small number of people are planning to walk the 14 miles from Derry to the Strabane Mass Rock, in place of the traditional Derry-to-Knock walk this year.

This date is significant in that a Derry family, who want to mark the traditional Walk to Knock by undertaking it as a small group rather than the usual larger group of walkers, in keeping with Covid restrictions, will be setting out that same day.

The future hope is to have a set of the Stations planted along all the Walk to Knock routes – from Derry, Belfast, Dublin and Cork – to create, on each of them, a Via Dolorosa...Latin for ‘Way of Suffering’, which is a route through the Old City of Jerusalem that is thought to be the path Jesus



walked to his Crucifixion.

One set has already been installed in a private prayer garden in the City, and others are to be given to the Columba Community to mark its 40th anniversary and to the Waterside Parish, to form part of a special creation to mark the 40th anniversary of The Church of the Immaculate Conception, Trench Road.

WITH his heart as big as his faith is deep, well known Derry painter and decorator, Patsy McCallion is always willing to offer a helping hand, especially when it comes to the celebration and promotion of

the Catholic faith that is so dear to him.

So when a work colleague showed him the charred remains of what turned out to be a complete set of the Stations of the Cross, that



Patsy McCallion at work erecting the outdoor Stations of the Cross in the garden of the Iona Retreat Centre, Termonbacca.



Patsy getting Holy Water from St Columba’s Well on the Feast of St Columba, for mixing into the cement for the base of the Stations.



Patsy sharing the story with Bishop Donal.

The beautiful Stations are being greatly admired.



# Pope Francis and his critics *by Fr Stephen Quinn OCD*

**I**N the Gospel of Matthew, the Lord asks the question, “Who do people say that I am?” The whole group of disciples is literally flummoxed into silence by the far-reaching implications of such a question and its answer. Where Andrew, James, John, and Bartholomew refuse to answer, one voice pipes up loudly, speaking from the inspiration that the Holy Spirit has given to him and the faith that he has come to, since he left his nets months, weeks, and days before. “You are the Son of God,” Simon the fisherman assuredly and infallibly proposes in front of all the onlookers.

For his courage, his generosity, and his faith, the Lord renames this disciple as the Rock. Peter is to be the rock on which the whole Church will rest, even when all others are being drawn into error and are abandoning truth, the rock will remain what it is, solidly fixed on the truth of Jesus Christ. The Lord’s promise does not fail with the establishment of solid rock in his Church; he goes on to guarantee that with this rock anchoring her, the Church will stand, even when the gates of hell have opened up against her.

To be Peter was not going to be something static and locked into one particular historical personage. Rather it was going to be something dynamic. In every generation, another man would step into the shoes of the fisherman, he would take on the task of leadership of the Church, he would bind the Church to all the implications of that original faith of the Apostle, and endeavour to loose from the Church the dead wood of corruption and decay. There have been two hundred and sixty-six Peters in the history of the Church.

It is without doubt that the history of the successors of the Rock is a chequered one. Alexander VI, the Borja Pope, was a libertine of epic proportions, Julius II was more interested in War than in being a good shepherd to the flock, and Leo X was so consumed with his own comfort and pleasure that he “fiddled while Rome burned” with the Reformation. But for every Alexander there was a St Clement, St Leo the Great, St Gregory the Great, St Pius V, Benedict XV, Pius XI, St John XXIII, and St John Paul II. Men in whom even their enemies had to admit that “Peter had spoken through them.”

What made the incredible history possible was that in its greatest weakness and when the Church was but a heartbeat away from the precipice of defeat there was always Christ’s Word; that remained valid, nothing, not even hell would prevail against the Church. The power of the Paraclete, in fulfilment of Christ’s spoken promise, would be constantly at work. The Spirit would draw out truth, goodness, and the beauty of this human

institution, even in the midst of the deliberate sin of its leadership and membership, making good on the mess that these far too human members had made of Christ’s Body. This is the faith that has sustained the Church through the ages and that has remained unquestioned maybe until now?

Given that history and that faith, it has been startling and disturbing in equal measures the response of some sons and daughters of the Church to the Peter who came from almost the very ends of the Earth. A pope had not willingly resigned his office since Celestine V in 1294; given that unusual beginning, it is no wonder that a number of things have been different since then. Even though he was legally elected pope, chosen by the Lord to be Peter, from the moment Francis stepped out on to the Loggia on March 13 2013, he has been the open object of hostility veering towards hate from certain parties.

It began innocently enough with picking holes with his choice, or rather non-choice, of regalia; that he did not wear the traditional red shoes, and that he carried a different Ferula (pastoral staff) from Pope Benedict XVI. Those parties did not leave off there. It only seemed to gather momentum; his preferential option for the poor, when it disturbed the assumptions and comfort of the rich and powerful, was labelled liberal, leftist, even Marxist. When asked directly what he thought of homosexual priests who carried out their missions in chastity and fidelity, the Pope had had the temerity to answer, “Who am I to judge.” When he correctly and directly applied the Church’s own teaching to such situations, people started immediately to overreact that the new Pope was sympathetic to homosexual causes.

The heat of opposition grew even more intense when the Pope chose to raise the issue of divorced and remarried Catholics. Surely, it should be of pastoral concern to the Church that members of the Body are locked into a lifelong interdiction that can only be remedied by death. Two synods were held to examine the question of how to share Christ with people in

these peripheral situations. Pope Francis was accused of creating “chronic confusion”, “demeaning doctrine” and of “scandalising the faithful!”

## Vocations

The Pope did not seem to be perturbed at all; he ploughed on into another thorny issue. He proposed to seriously examine the issues churned up by the ongoing reality of a vocations’ crisis... how does the Church evangelise without priests and how can the Church that is formed by the Eucharist endure without the celebration of that Eucharist in priest-less communities? An acute problem that the whole Church must face at this time.

This issue was due to be raised at the Amazonian synod but was completely side-tracked into contrived games about ‘Pachamama’. Spurious accusations were levelled by theologians that the Pope had committed the sin of idolatry and it was demanded of him that he repent of his grievous sin. All that pales into insignificance compared to the events that occurred on the last day of the World Meeting of Families, when the former Nuncio to America accused the Pope of a “conspiracy of silence” about the abusive actions of the former Cardinal Archbishop of Washington, Theodore McCarrick, and demanded that the Pope take responsibility for it and resign.

They could not have picked their moment better! A major Catholic event was under way, there was pressure from there not being a particularly warm welcome in Dublin, the World’s media was focused on the whole pilgrimage, and the whole sad history of clerical abuse hung like a pall over the whole event. It could not have been a more perfectly scripted moment to create a crisis. The various forces all started to move at once. They came out of the shadows that they had carped behind, carrying a devastating accusation but no evidence. It may as well have been a knife that they were carrying! Who could doubt that it was an avowed effort to assassinate a papacy, played out on our television screens, to rid themselves of this “troublesome priest”? Cassius, Casca, and Brutus could not have manipulated the situation better!

There has been a criterion for the discernment of spirits in the Church of long duration. A movement or inspiration in the life of the Church could discern its origins by its complete submission to the authority of the successor of Peter and the bishops.

St Ignatius Loyola classically voiced that discernment pattern, “To keep ourselves right in all things, we ought to hold fast to this principle: What I see as white, will believe to be black

if the hierarchical Church thus determines it. For we believe that between Christ our Lord, the Bridegroom, and the Church, His spouse, there is one same spirit who governs and guides us for salvation for our souls. For it is by the same Spirit and Lord of ours, who gave the Ten Commandments, that our holy Mother Church is guided and governed.” Ignatius is emphatic that the measure of all things is obedience.

The critics of Pope Francis emphasise that they only confront him out of deference to the teaching authority of the Church and the Tradition. If that is true, then they will, of course, have been consistent in their application of obedience? When John Paul II prayed with all the faith communities at Assisi in 1986, were there threats of schism and accusations of idolatry? When Pope Benedict XVI did it again in 2011, where were these people’s shrill voices? When Cardinal Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict, gave Eucharist to Brother Roger of Taizé, a Swiss Reformed Protestant, did they raise their voice in protest at his orthodoxy? When Oscar Romero, a martyr for the faith, was being defamed as a Marxist and not worthy to be considered for canonisation, where were they on the matter?

One of the most devastating stories in the long litany of clerical abuse; the infamous history of Marcial Maciel, founder of the Legionaries of Christ, hailed by that order as a living saint yet guilty all the time of the most fundamental betrayal of his priesthood and the most grievous crimes, when complaints about his abuse were finally aired these were met with only profound silence by those in the highest positions of authority in the Church. Where were the petitions of concern then? Maybe, truth, goodness, and justice are not included in the Deposit of the Faith for these people?

I have no interest in opening old wounds and in pointing fingers, there being enough blame to go around, but we must see the truth that the obedience of so many children of the Church is flawed. It seems to depend on which ideological compass point the wind is blowing. When it is coming from the perceived ‘our party’s’ line then there is obedience, but when it comes from the perceived ‘their party’s’ line then obedience becomes conditional. It seems clear, from the above examples, that Francis is not measured in the same manner as previous papacies and that all smacks very much of some political party or an ideology rather than the Church. So then, based on an old pattern of discernment, we can simply judge what spirit prompts this reaction to Francis. It is not a good one.



## Spirit

Another indicator that a bad spirit moves such reflections comes from no less a personality than Benedict XVI himself. The critics of the present Holy Father have this predilection to assert that Francis has brought about some rupture between himself and his two predecessors. On one side of the rupture, two moral and doctrinal rigorists and on the other this liberal flirting with all kinds of dangerous reforms. The only problem for them is that their favoured Pope does not agree with their estimation of affairs and has said so on several occasions.

Benedict XVI, in a letter dated June 2018, “applauded initiatives that wanted to oppose and react to the foolish prejudice” against his successor. He dismissed out of hand all those who attempted to hold up John Paul II and himself as intellectual heavyweights, comparing and contrasting that against Francis as just a practical man with nothing intellectual to offer. Benedict noted that the books that Francis had produced demonstrated “a profound philosophical and theological formation” and, most importantly of all, that they contained “an inner continuity” with the two previous pontificates. Benedict sees this continuity precisely in that area that Francis’ critics deride him for: Mercy.

Benedict argues that the continuity between these three has its source, very appropriately for three Peters, in common confession of Christ not just as Son of God but as the expression of God’s Mercy. These men, who have each stood in the shoes of the fisherman, have all interpreted the Resurrected Christ as the face of the Divine Mercy turned towards every individual human being. They assert with Peter that Jesus, the Divine Mercy, is stronger than humanity’s and each individual’s most grievous weakness and sin. Because Divine Mercy has this potency then Mercy puts a limit on the depravity and violence of the World.

In this notion, the three popes recapture an image of Christ that had been side-lined for too long: Christ as the Good Physician. The Mercy generated by the Cross and Resurrection creates a medicine

that can heal the gangrenous and sickened souls of each individual, no matter the sin. In this context then, we can understand Francis’ memorable image for the Church as a “field hospital” on the battlefield, the field hospital of the Good Physician, there to heal the gaping wounds of suffering humanity. If this is these three popes’ joint notion of the Church, then we discover the impulse that drives Francis to grasp for some the thorniest issues, that is why he goes to the very peripheries and to the places where the most wounded hang out. No wonder he goes where angels (the pious and the conventionally religious) fear to tread.

This emphasis on the Son of God as Mercy itself finds clear expression in the pastoral activity of the Holy Father. Look at him in action, look at his body language, and you will see a man engrossed in the moment, completely focussed on the person in front of him, connecting with them, being tactile, and speaking in a simple way. He steps into their space, into their situation, and wants to be an instrument of his Master’s healing touch.

One of the main drawbacks of this selective obedience and the political antics of these critics is that, at a time when the Church has serious problems to face and has found a serious person to suggest serious answers, the agenda for dealing with these problems gets lost, as we are too busy fighting amongst ourselves in decadent ideological games.

The sheep of the Lord’s pasture, the children of God, are abandoned to fend for themselves while the Church goes through a thinly veiled civil war. As a solution to such a civil war, how about we all firmly shut our own mouths, put down our waving hands, and listen as a whole Church to what the Good God is saying. It was the Good God who chose Francis, it was the Good God who called him, and it was the Good God who appointed him as the fisher of men and women. If that is the case, then it follows that God is speaking a whole language in the papacy of Francis. Francis’ word and example calls to each member of the Church, are we not then bound to listen and to act?

# Where have the treasures gone? *by Vera McFadden*

MANY precious objects from Ireland's ancient churches have been lost forever, as they were taken by the Vikings and other raiders. An Aon Druim, now known as Nendrum, was subjected to Viking raids. Originally a holy place founded by St Mochai, it later became a monastic settlement.

Though it had been quite famous, its whereabouts has been forgotten and it was only rediscovered when a small, round ruin was discovered under some bushes. This was identified as the stump of a round tower, and an archaeological investigation began. Many interesting articles were found, such as evidence of colours being prepared for the work of the scribes, of metal working etc.

Perhaps the most treasured item found was an early Christian bell, believed to have belonged to St Mochai. We saw these at the museum, in the excellent visitor centre at Nendrum. And nearby there was that wonder of technology, the tidal mill which had been constructed by the monks. On the way home, we visited a war and peace exhibition at the Ulster Museum and we discovered a sad memory of the Viking raids at Nendrum – a human skull that had been struck by an axe. Sometimes there were lives lost in these raids.

The oldest manuscript in Ireland, and perhaps even in Europe, is a sixth century copy of the Psalms which was transcribed by St Columba. It shows that he had a very neat but hurried style of handwriting. It is written in Latin and the script is of the early Irish method. The capital letters are decorated. This psalter is known as the 'Cathach' (Battler). As it had been transcribed by St Columba, it was considered to be holy and the O'Donnell warriors were blessed with it before riding into battle. Holding the precious psalter on high, the leader rode around them three times.

At one period, the precious relic was in a Belgian library, and the librarian in charge was told who its owners were. In the meantime, the librarian was to keep it for safety, but if an O'Donnell could prove his identity, it should be returned to the clan's custody. This happened and it was brought

back to Ireland, where one member of the O'Donnell family gave it to the Royal Irish Academy in 1824.

When I read this, I wanted to see it. Twice when I visited Dublin, the Academy was closed. One day I went to the art gallery and discovered that the Cathach was there, on loan from the Academy. I could have looked at it for hours, for this was the script of St Columba. I have seen it twice since then, but for several years now, for preservation reasons, it is only on view for a couple of days each year.

The silver casket, in which the Herenagh family protected the psalter, is now in the National Museum. Another relic of St Columba, part of his crozier, is now in the Royal Irish Academy.

The remains of Ireland's three Patron Saints, Patrick, Bridget, and Columba, were at Downpatrick. After the Norman invasion, they could not be found. St Malachy was praying in church that they might be rediscovered. Suddenly the sun shone brightly through the window and lit up a part of the floor. When that area was investigated, the remains of the three Saints were found in a little room. The relics were brought to the altar section of the church and revered for generations.

Of course, during the Reformation, there was a lot of wrecking and despoiling, and most of these were lost. Years later, the relic of St Patrick's hand was found in a small cabin. It was in the safe keeping of several families until it was given into the custody of the Bishop of Down and Connor. The most important item, the hand of Patrick, had been lost, and only the silver reliquary remains. It is in the shape of a forearm and a hand raised in blessing. There is also an extant reliquary of St Patrick's tooth.

St Columba officiated at the enshrinement of St Patrick's relics in 556 and, after angelic prompting, he took a copy of the Gospels, a chalice, and a bell. He gave the chalice to Down, the bell to Armagh and brought the book to Derry. The bell and chalice were probably made by St Assicus, who as well as being one of St Patrick's bishops, was a gifted metalworker

and made items for use in church celebrations. This bell is the finest in Ireland and was mentioned when Pope John Paul II met the young people at Galway.

The copy of the Gospels, which St Patrick had treasured and Columba took to Derry, had once belonged to St Martin of Tours. Columba had a shrine built near to the present-day St Columba's Well, and the bottom of Fahan Street. It was revered here for centuries, but taken away in a battle at the end of the 13th century and never found again.

## Bells

Some of the ancient bells are still in their own locality. St Buadan's was found in the neighbourhood where he had worked and is in the parochial house at Bocan, in Inishowen. St Machee's was found at Nendrum and is in the little museum there. St Bronagh's is in the Catholic church at Rostrevor (once called Cill Bronaigh – Bronagh's Church). People who had heard the ringing of her bell regarded it as a mystical experience, until a great tree fell in a storm and the ancient relic of the abbess was found in a hollow in it.

We saw this bell when the Northern Region Lay Franciscans had a day's outing in Rostrevor. We began that day with Mass in the new Holy Cross Abbey, on the hill near St Bronagh's ancient site. I bought a tape of the monks chanting and the sound of her bell after the Mass. On the way down to Rostrevor, we stopped at the Saint's well, where we needed my walking stick to reach the water.

In Inishowen, the shrine of St Mura's bell was kept safe by the Herenagh family, the O'Morrison's, until during the famine. Then a poor fisherman sold it for six pounds, and shortly afterwards it was sold in an auction for almost 30 times that and was then in the custody of the Wallace collection.

Some pectoral crosses still remain. Among these are the Cross of Cong and one which had belonged to St Cuthbert. The body of this Anglo-Saxon Abbott of Lindisfarne was incorrupt for 850 years, and probably remains so. When the Vikings were raiding North-eastern England, the monks carried the coffin

containing his incorrupt body for miles, and eventually left it at Chester on Sea, and then at Durham, where it remained for centuries. Then came the Reformation and the saint's shrine was violated. Valuables which had been left as gestures of thanksgiving were stolen, and then the thieves broke into the coffin and were quite shocked to discover the incorrupt body.

King Henry VIII instructed that the coffin was to be reinterred in a stone box beside the original shrine. When this was examined 300 years later, a skeleton was found and the same vestments in which the saint's body had been clad. There was evidence that the burial place had been disturbed, and most people believe that the incorrupt body had been moved to a safer place, somewhere else in the church. I believe that is the case, for if all those centuries ago, it was carried across the country because of the Viking raids, surely it would not be left for further desecration by the pillagers of the Henry VIII era.

Once, my daughter, Mary and I visited Clonmacnoise. The guide was a fellow student of hers at Galway and, as we were in the final group, he offered to show us something very interesting, not far away. He led us to the shrine of St Manchin in the little church at Boher. It was an inspiring experience – still in its own area, the remains of the saint in a large reliquary inside a burglar proof glass case.

My class at St Patrick's Girls Primary School did a project about former crafts, old cures, and sayings. It had been organised by the folklore commission and there were three prizes; three copies of the Book of Kells. A limited number of these had been printed at the time. The girls in my class had really enjoyed doing the local research and they won a copy of the beautiful book.

The original book had been brought to the Monastery at Kells from some other Columban foundation in the year 800 AD. While the Cathach of Columba has only the capital letters decorated and only a few colours used, the Book of Kells has a lot of very colourful, interwoven designs, pictures, and illuminations. These were worked by monks who were gifted scribes and probably myopic.

At Nendrum, and some other places, archaeologists were able to locate the site of the scriptorium by the position of tools and raw materials – the little hollowed stones in which the Lichen and other sources for colour were ground, the wax impressions for stamping patterns, etc. There was a traditional site for Columba's scriptorium in folk memory in Iona. Several years ago, it was proved to be correct when



pieces of timber, which had been formerly excavated at the place, were carbon dated and shown to belong to his period.

There are accounts in Adamnan's 'Life of Columba', about the miraculous preservation of books transcribed by the saint. They tell of some which had accidentally fallen into rivers, remained there for some time and then removed. It was found that the vellum leaves were still dry. Another story tells that St Kevin was standing in the lake and he dropped his book. An otter dived down and got it and brought it to Kevin. It was completely dry.

Other books have been found in marshy places and have needed a lot of restoration work but, unfortunately, not all of them could be saved.

While there are many ancient relics in Ireland, many more are unfortunately missing, perhaps forever.

## Relics

Relics of saints continue to be revered. I remember when the relics of St Therese of Lisieux came to the Carmelite Monastery and when the relics of St Anthony came to St Eugene's Cathedral. One time in Padua we queued to revere the relics of St Anthony. Once in San Giovanni Rotondo, we met several ladies who conversed in Italian with our spiritual director. Later, he told us that they had been talking about

the relic of St Anthony's jawbone which had been stolen from the Basilica, and how they were praying for it to be found again.

As St Anthony's help is usually invoked when something is missing, I wondered if they were asking for his intercession. Two weeks later, my son-in-law gave me a newspaper report about the relic of St Anthony's jawbone having been found on its way out of the airport at Rome. The thief had been clever, but no match for the saint's well-known gift for finding lost objects.

The next time we were in Padua, we again queued to revere the relics in the basilica. When most of the pilgrims went to Venice, my friend and I stayed and walked through some long streets to the little Capuchin Monastery. We prayed in the church and then at the tomb of St Leopold. Then we went into a room where items that had belonged to him were on display. This little saint had worked and prayed for ecumenism, peace, and mutual understanding. He had spent long hours in the confessional.

On our way out of the Monastery, we saw a little adoration chapel. We went to pray there and, as we left the seat, we discovered that there was a relic of St Leopold on the wall beside it. His incorrupt hand, raised in blessing, was in a glass shrine. The hand of the saint was in the same position as the relic of St Patrick's



hand had been. St Columba also had blessed the other monks just before he died.

I was introduced to the story of Fr Solanus Casey, an Irish American who was also a Capuchin, by Brother Edward at Ards. He gave me a relic and a video about the holy friar's life.

Many relics of another Capuchin friar of the same period, Padre Pio, have been sent all around the world and hundreds of miracles have been granted through their use and/or the saint's intercession. One first-class miracle that led to his beatification was the healing of Ann Mulrine, a lady from Derry.

A medical missionary sister, Cabrini Quigley from Bunrana, was instrumental in the miracle that led to the canonisation of St Oliver Plunkett. Cabrini had grown up with the habit of praying daily for the canonisation of Oliver Plunkett, as their parish priest had urged them to. They had prayer cards with third class

relics. When Cabrini was working in an Italian hospital, surgeons told a family from Naples that they could not save their mother who was bleeding to death. She told the distressed relations about Oliver and prayed with them for his intercession. The bleeding stopped, and the woman lived.

Millions of miracles have been worked through the centuries by the intercession of these saints and the use of their relics.

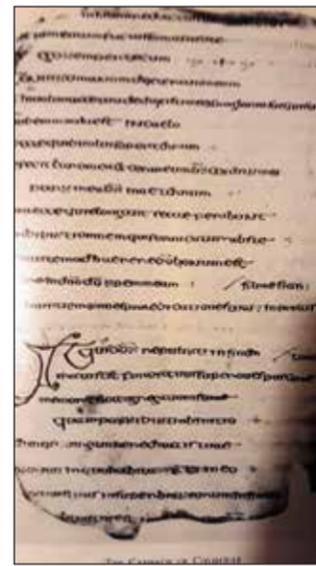
St Therese of Lisieux said: "I will spend my Heaven doing good on earth". Padre Pio said that he would be able to do more for us from Heaven. St Columba told Dermot: "Have true love among you and if you shall act in this way, God provides all from Heaven and I, living with Him, will pray for you". Jesus said: "You shall do even greater things because I go to the Father".

Many people have little relics of saints. When I worked in the Carmelite monastery, I was given a collection of cards which

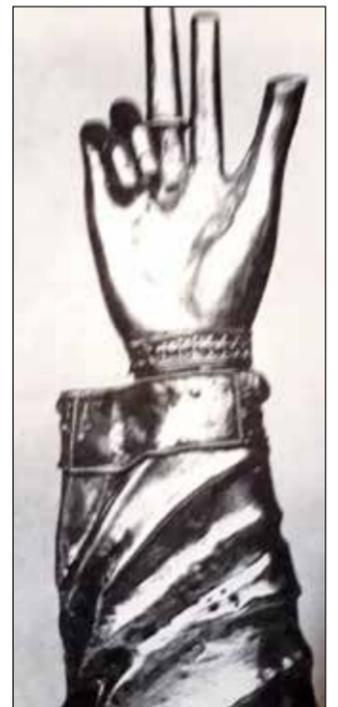


had been among Fr Joseph's keepsakes. As he had been a very holy little priest, I treasured them and I found a relic of St Columba Marmion and one of St Francis of Assisi among them. The latter was quite unusual. It had a picture of St Francis' vision at the Portiuncula on one side of the card and, on the

other, there was a message in small copperplate writing in a language which no one could identify, not even language teachers. There was also a relic with a bishop's seal. It seemed to be a tiny strand from the weave in the saint's garment. Because I am a lay Franciscan, this relic was very precious to me.



To protect these two relics, I put them in plastic CD covers. Unfortunately, I lost the St Francis relic after I was praying at St Columba's Church. I had put it inside my Bible but it must have fallen out. If you have found it, or know someone who did, I would appreciate its return. All relics,



big or small, third class or first class, are precious because of their association with the saint and all of them have a story of their own.

## Rejoice and be glad *by Fr Johnny Doherty, CSsR*

NORMALLY the months of July and August are experienced as a time of holiday. It is not that we are all on holidays for the two months. But there is a sense that this is a different time for everyone. However, the past year and a half has not been a normal time.

We are now on our way out of lockdown. It has been a very strange time. It has been a most difficult time for many. It has been a good time for some. As we gradually emerge from it, we need to do so with caution but also with a real sense of purpose. A good part of this is to make sure to take a good break in whatever way is possible for each of us and our families.

### A source of strength

All through the past time of crisis, Christ has been journeying with us as our source of strength. Even though the Churches have been closed to congregations for much of the time, very many people have found the online Masses a real lifeline. Through these, we have been able to follow the various seasons of the Church's Year. And we have been part of the Eucharist week by week and, for many, day by day. Thank God for the gift of the Internet!

I offer you the following as a help to letting Christ walk with you through these next two months. Each week I have a short reflection on a thought from the Gospel of the Sunday and its implications for married couples, for families and for parishes.

### July

#### Week 1: July 4-10

##### Jesus despised by his own

*Jesus said to them: "A prophet is only despised in his own country*

*among his own relations and in his own house."*

One of the mistakes we often make is to think that what we see is all there is to see; what we know is all there is to know. There is always so much more to know about ourselves and certainly about those close to us.

In marriage and family life we need to constantly look for and acknowledge the goodness that is there and set it free. Our homes should be places of praise instead of criticism, as is so often the case. There is so much richness also in every parish that never gets a chance to come to the surface. This is a week for letting this happen.

#### Week 2: July 11-17

##### The Missionary Church

*"So they set off to preach repentance."*

There are many strange contradictions in our world today. One of them is that so many of us have lost a sense of sin. And yet the power of evil has never been so obvious. Maybe this is a reaction to the past, when sin seemed to be in everything!

One of the major sins for most of us is in settling for so little when so much is on offer. This happens when a couple settles for mediocrity rather than a sense of adventure in their marriage; when a family settles for coexistence rather than love; when a parish settles for duty rather than building a real community of faith. We may not be able to do a lot about the general evil that is in the world. We can do a lot about our own setting limits. This, in turn, will affect the world we live in.

#### Week 3: July 18-24

##### Christ the Good Shepherd

*"Christ took pity on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd."*

We are all aware of a lot of turmoil in the world in general and often in our own communities, and even our own families. The temptation is either to despair or to ignore. For us as followers of Christ, the only way is to see the opportunity rather than the problem, and to work together to bring Christ ever more fully into our world.

We do this firstly in our homes through love and prayer. Our homes should be places where each one is glad to be. This can only happen when we make it happen for each other. We make Christ present in our community when we work together to make the parish a community of faith and hope. And we do it for our world by becoming an ever-greater sign of hope because we are a people among whom Christ lives.

#### Week 4: July 25-31

##### Christ who feeds us

*Jesus said to Philip: "Where can we buy some food for these people to eat?"*

In spite of all the riches of our world, countless people die each year of starvation. We can feel totally helpless in the face of this and as a result ignore it. Generosity is one of the great virtues of our people over the generations and is one that we need to practice in a special way today.

But there are other hungers that we can do more about and Jesus is calling on us to attend to these also. One of the greatest human hungers is for love and affection. This may be in our close relationships of marriage and family life. There is also a hunger in so many people in our

community to have someone to look out for them. That is a must if we are to be a true community of faith in the parish.

### August

#### Week 1: August 1-7

##### Our bread from heaven

*Jesus said to the crowd: "Do not work for food that cannot last but for food that endures to eternal life."*

Every one of us has a variety of people and things that are important to us. We don't want to neglect any of them. However, we all have a responsibility to set priorities and to get those priorities right. That is what Jesus is calling us to this week.

The most important things are those that last forever like, love, faith, hope. And the most important people are those of our families and communities. Married couples need to make their marriage their priority. Parents need to make their family their priority. And as people of faith we need to make our parish our priority. This means that other things and people become less important, while not neglecting them.

#### Week 2: August 8-14

##### I am the bread of life

*Jesus said to the crowd: "I am the bread of life. And the bread that I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world."*

By far the most extraordinary gift that God has given to His people is the Eucharist. In it, we are constantly invited to receive the Body and Blood of Christ as our nourishment for the journey of life. In it, we celebrate the salvation of the world and renew that salvation every time we celebrate it.

This week is a time to reflect on our appreciation of this wonderful gift and renew our enthusiasm for it. Because it is so accessible, we can get used to it and take it for granted and we can lose the joy of our celebration. In the Eucharist, God speaks most clearly of the extent of His love and how special each one of us is to Him. To live as a people of the Eucharist we need to speak clearly of our love for one another in our homes and in our parish community.

#### Week 3: August 15-21

##### Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

*Mary said: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit exults in the Lord God my saviour; because he has looked upon his lowly handmaid."*

Mary is given to us as a model of what a follower of Christ should be. Today, as we celebrate her Assumption into heaven, she models especially the importance of a spirit of thanksgiving and praise. Each of us has so much to be thankful for to God and to one another, and yet we spend so much of our time complaining.

This week, we are invited to turn this around and practice praise and thanksgiving. We start with those who are closest to us – for example as husband and wife, parents and children, friends. And, of course, take time this week to thank God for all the gifts we have in our lives.

#### Week 4: August 22-28

##### It is the spirit that gives life

*Jesus said to the Twelve: "Do you want to go away too?" Simon Peter answered: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the message of eternal life."*

With all the scandals and consequent upheaval in the

Church today, many people are finding it difficult to stay with the Church. And many are leaving. Today's Gospel is a strong plea to think again.

This does not mean turning a blind eye to all that has happened. That would be totally irresponsible. It does mean though getting back to the basics of what the Church is about, Jesus Christ, and committing ourselves to Him again.

We do this by committing ourselves to one another in marriage; by making our homes true Domestic Churches through the quality of our love and prayer; and by making a commitment to develop our faith community as a place where everyone is revered and loved, and where we worship our God in spirit and in truth.

### Conclusion

Christ opened the path to us. He is like a roped guide climbing a mountain who, on reaching the summit, pulls us up to Him and leads us to God. If we entrust our life to Him, if we let ourselves be guided by Him, we are certain to be in safe hands; in the hands of our saviour, of our advocate. (Pope Francis)



Fr Johnny Doherty

*“Lo comido y lo bailado”... What we have eaten and celebrated, no one can take away from us...*

## Fun and Games *by Fr John McLaughlin ssc*

“I had a great deal of fun out there today,” A US golfer remarked to his interviewer. “Doing that research was demanding...but I got a lot of fun out of it all the same,” an American writer told interviewing book club enthusiasts over the radio. Surely, I could say that about many, many moments of a long life in the ministry!

Away in one of the early parishes in Wicklow, I yielded to the repeated offers of Eddie McElheron of the local Columbia Showband. With Fr John Jones, and in the convenient absence of the parish priest, we put them on the final years’ Mass in Sts Mary and Peters, with the total support of the nuns, who had a prize-winning choir, and teachers in the Christian Brothers and Community Schools. It was a success! The music was well chosen and the interest was intense. It was fun.

Years later, in St Mark’s in Tallaght, around Italia 90 when all the young and not so young had once again appropriated the national flag and its colors, we had a church full of the end-of-the-year primary schools. The temptation was too much for parish priest, Fr Paddy Battelle, as he whispered to me after the Communion in the Mass. So the rafters were nearly lifted as the concourse sang the anthem of Jack’s Army...away ahead of all the songs that had gone before...and entertaining too.

Pope Benedict, in his Pastoral Letter on the Eucharist, has a nice convenient division which I have used on the occasion of First Communion Masses. He says that the Eucharist is: A Mystery to be Believed, to be Celebrated and to be Lived - each at the head of a well explained couple of paragraphs. Obviously they are interconnected.

And, of course, there is a challenge in all three of these at a personal level too.

Involved around the years ’74 seq, in St Vincent de Paul in Marino, Dublin, I fell on my feet. To be there for the initiation of a Folk Group on the altar for a Mass was indeed...“a lot of fun”. Groups were emerging all over the Diocese, and music, courses, retreats were being offered.

The Carmelites in Gort Muire, with Fr Eltin Griffin at the head, were offering wonderful weekends for interested folk groups. The resultant materials were offered with great enthusiasm in the parish churches for their Folk Masses. I remember going out to Rathmines, where the church was full to the doors for their Sunday evening Folk Mass; the young and the not so young, all enthusiastic and often with a simpatico celebrant.

On one occasion, during Holy Week, we decided that the Folk

group would lead the special Children’s Mass. Ben Wade and teacher, Eilish Fletcher, were amongst the leaders. Somewhere before the start, as I mingled with the young people on the floor of the church, getting them ‘warmed up’, there was an approach from one of the girls. “Father,” she timidly told me, “there is a girl down there who wants to get married.” “Is there now?” I responded to the topic, “Where is she?” So there were hand signals and, from a bench, a hand went up on the girls’ side. “And where is the man?” I asked, and an attentive young hand shot up from the boys’ side. “Well, you know there is a problem. This is Holy Week and there can be no weddings on Good Friday, or on Holy Saturday, or on Easter Sunday.” So, off she went with this report, only to appear back fairly quickly, to tell me: “Father, she said to tell you...that they can’t wait!”

I was in that same parish at the formation of a Men’s Choir, to be directed by Sean Hayes and animated by local man, Pat Keegan, with others like Nicky Murphy, Bob Morrison and Denis O’Sullivan whose names have stayed with me. On one occasion, as the choir and congregation were being pre-animated by Pat Keegan, Bob Morrison met the visiting Fr Brendan Cooney on his way in. “We’re doing ‘the bodily’ today, Fr,” he announced, in his broad Dublin accent. Fr Brendan began to fear the worst as to what this might mean for his celebration, as he questioned me. So, I put his mind at ease by telling him that the choir was very enthusiastic over the ‘Seoirse Bodley’ score that they had been practising. Unforgettable moments...and a lot of fun!

### Animators

In my Chilean days, the custom was that there were animators at all the Sunday Masses. They welcomed the people, and often specifically asked if there were any people present for the first time. This, on occasion, led to interesting opportunities to welcome, console or congratulate the visitors. People like Gilda Franco, Guillermo Pizarro and, of course, our own Columban, Fr Mike Hoban, were amongst those whose gifts helped to encourage a regular congregation...with a little bit of wit or warmth. It often lifted the actual celebrant of the day just to have a congregation already ‘warmed up’ as he settled into what might be a second or third Mass. So there was a momentum there too for a Dialogue Homily, with often unpredictable and spontaneous reactions!

C S Lewis in one of his books, maybe ‘The Screwtape Letters’, remarked that for many people, if you were enjoying it, there

must be a sin involved, it must be bad. I wonder has that changed completely in these intervening years!

I lived for a couple of years in non-parochial settings, with a family or with a lay Secular Institute (Hermanos Oblatos) and got to know the folklore music quite well. As I had attended recitals in Ireland of The Chieftains, Clannad, The Fureys, and Altan... so also, I began to get to recitals in Chile, often having invited along a well-initiated aficionada. Names that I had on tape came alive in these outings: Inti-Ilimani on three occasions, Illapo, the Cuban Silvio Rodriguez, Congresso, Sol y Lluvia, and also the great Spanish trovador, Juan Manuel Serrat, when he returned to visit Chile after the Pinochet era ended.

Similarly, the wonderful Argentinian, Mercedes Sosa, with a voice to override anyone and where the audience was on their feet right through the performances. That took only a little adjustment on our parts! Serrat had a song taken from poet, Antonio Machado, which everyone knew in those households that I frequented: ‘caminante se hace camino’...‘you make your own way by getting under way’. In both the Irish and the Chilean scene, I always felt that I was once more being led into the Soul of the Nation in those recitals. And it really was FUN!

There was a nice moment at the start of a Mass in the chapel where I lived with the lay brothers. Having vested just inside the door of the chapel, I was involved in greeting the people entering. So, on this occasion, I was humorously showing off my new woolen stole, of which I had bought a set in Bolivia. “How do you like my new stole, Señora?” I rattled off to one woman whom I knew. “Very nice, padre,” she responded, and then, as she moved away, said rather loudly to her companion: “Seems like the priests also have their vanities!” If she only knew, and I laughed to myself the whole way through the celebration!

Another series of memories along those lines of animating the liturgy, I associate with dance at Mass. I remember that one of the many great gifts that the Lay Missionaries from Fiji, like Tila Tanumi, my own partner in Valparaiso, brought us were the Liturgical dance processions at the entrance, the Offertory and the Recession of a Sunday Mass. Then there were, in many Chilean Parishes, the ‘Bailes Religiosos’, the dance groups that formed a kind of a confraternity with a deep allegiance to the Virgin Mary. With their silk outfits and the simple energetic dance steps, with drums, etc, accompanying the songs, they lifted any congregation for their

Mass devotion. Columban Lay Missionary, John Hayes joined up and loved it, and the Bailes San Andres group loved him!

One of many memories I have in those early years in Santiago was the celebration of the Feast of the Virgin of Mount Carmel, July 16, in La Tirana, in the north of Chile. Over those days and nights, I can recall the number of assisting (Religious Dance) groups as over 160. They all made their solemn musical and dance entry to the church and made their promises and homage to the Virgin, and then withdrawing with their banner, in the same devotion. That was a long and cold vigil, as the visiting priests made themselves available for Confession to the members and supporters of the ‘cofradia’, to use a Spanish word.

On the same Feast in July - of Carmen - many of the local Chilean Folklore groups wished to parade and have their celebration in the local chapels. These groups, with the Chilean and Latin American dance, ‘the cueca’, were often at the centre of many cultural and National festivals, eg September 18, moments in the chapels. And those of us may be a little ‘buttoned-up’, had to ‘be sprung’ on the floor with our handkerchief in hand, as we made what we could of the movements. On the visit of a Dublin classmate, Fr Dermot Clarke, I was left in the wings at a meal in Chiloe as Dermot was ‘sprung’ to the floor after an early couple of ‘pie de cueca’. He was chuffed at how he had made out!

### Dance

During the Faith and Mission Course in Dalgan, in the early noughties, some of us got interested in the Celtic Circle Dances. So much so, that we were permitted to have it included during the retreat days that were part of that course. Back in Chile, I got a great kick out of introducing one or two of those Circle Dances on the occasion of a couple of seminars in Santiago, and later in Valparaiso, having kept the tapes and, more or less, remembered the steps. It was a lovely way to end a community outing and a one-day seminar from the Las Palmas area in Valparaiso.

On one of those years, in the month of November and on the Feast of St Columban, 23rd, the Parish whose name we bore decided to have a month-long celebration. Under the form of the Alianza, the competition was to get the local Community candidates elected as the Queen of the Alliance, accompanied by her Rey Feo (her ugly king!) So, the seven chapels went on campaign for the month with their aspiring queen. Marks were to be allotted



Shed music session.



Fr John with Merville NS friends, fourth from left, back row...na milte blian o shoin!

for solidarity food campaigns, the best song to or about St Columban, and a special sketch. There were no dull moments that month! On the first Sunday night, the Columban missionary group there presented a tableau of the life and mission of the great Saint, and it was a great success. On other nights there had to be eliminatory runs off, as some chapels had to decide between two or three songs and sketches.

On the night of the Gran Finale...there were problems! The outside jury did not turn up. So there were hasty moves to get an acceptable and representative group to step in there. Fortunately, one young, talented singer-member was having serious musical training and the nerves held up, under her guidance. There were tensions also about the sketches, with some being rather too ‘earthy’, and others a little too profound or allegoric for people to grasp what was being hinted at. But, it was the culmination of a whole Month of Fun for the seven chapels and their communities!

Agus rud eigin eile...go meadh leithséal - in my own language, what a lot of ‘sleip’/craic’ there was, in those Masses in Irish, in Glasnevin, and as chaplain to Dominican Gaelscoil Colmcille, Arklow and Marino, where the congregations were smaller but appreciative and affirming, and the music and the ‘spriod’ was often great. So, also, after spending a couple of enjoyable days with Fr Seamus Farrelly in Carn, golf of course included, was the Summer School in Gaoth Dobhair, under Noel O Galchoir, and the songs, the ‘curra cainte’, and the Ceilis...well into this century, this occurred!

So, just a quick word about the ‘Games’ part of the title. My Columban brother, Fr Mike Hoban, with his special humour,

used to remind some of us, “Treat it like a Game...It’s a game!” You could win and lose in all these undertakings and pastoral plans. You could get lost for an hour trying to find a parish or a chapel, driving around on a winter’s night. Something might turn out a ‘Fracaso’ in the attendance, or the public might not show up at all. The games mentality was familiar to most of us Columbans, from our own sporting lives! Being described as a ‘scrubber’ in my early years in Arklow at playing golf, I knew the challenge. The Communities could accept the ups and the downs and move on to the next project.

If you have got this far in reading this, well maybe I could say, using the same metaphor, “Perhaps the ball is in your court now!”

The spirit of the whole thing is well summed up in this little piece from Dickens’s ‘Little Dorrit’: “Mr Plomish amiably growled, in his philosophical but not lucid manner, that there was ups you see and there was downs. It was in vain to ask why ups, why downs; there they was, you know: He had heard it given for a truth that accordin’ as the world went round, which round it did revolve undoubted, even the best of gentlemen must take his turn of standing with his ed upside down and all his air a flying the wrong way into what you might call Space. Wery well then. What Mr Plomish said was, wery well then. That gentleman’s air would be a pleasure to look upon being all smooth again, and wery well then!”

Or, as in more recent times, James Michener wrote: “Never put off till tomorrow, what you can do today! Because if you enjoy doing it today, you can do it again tomorrow!”

# Children's Catechism Club - C3

by Veronica Harley

*Hello children. Welcome to the months of July and August. Summer time has arrived. These are fantastic months filled with fun and plenty of things to keep you amused.*



## Prayer To The Precious Blood

ETERNAL FATHER,  
I OFFER THEE THE  
PRECIOUS BLOOD OF  
JESUS CHRIST,  
THE MERITS, LOVE AND  
SUFFERINGS OF HIS  
SACRED HEART, THE  
TEARS AND SORROWS  
OF OUR IMMACULATE  
MOTHER, AS THE  
PRICE OF THE FAVOR I  
WISH TO OBTAIN, IF IT  
IS FOR THY GLORY AND  
MY SALVATION.

*Amen*

### Precious Blood of Jesus – July

The month of July is dedicated to the Precious Blood of Jesus. We all have blood in our bodies, which helps us to live and stay healthy, therefore, we know how important and precious blood is. The Church and the sacraments, which we receive, have all come about through the precious Blood of Christ, which was poured out on the Cross when Jesus suffered and died for us.

### Saints of the Month - July

St Thomas the Apostle - July 3  
St Benedict - July 11  
St Mary Magdalene - July 22  
St Bridget of Sweden - July 23

### Saint Mary Magdalene

Mary Magdalene was one of the women who accompanied Jesus and His apostles during their travels, caring for and supporting them. She was close to Jesus and played a major role in the events surrounding His death and resurrection. Over the centuries, there has been some debate about who Mary Magdalene

really was. Some have thought that she was the sister of Martha of Bethany (Luke 10:38-42) and the sinner who dried Christ's feet with her hair. Despite any of these problems, the existence of Mary Magdalene is not questioned. She is known for her sincere conversion and generous heart.

The story of the repentant sinner is one of the most significant accounts that is believed to be related to Mary Magdalene. While Jesus was dining at the home of the Pharisee called Simon, a woman crept in and knelt before Him (Lk 7:36-50). Simon was very angry at this interruption because the woman was a known sinner. The woman began to kiss Jesus' feet and beg forgiveness for her sins. She dried His feet with her hair and covered them with expensive perfumed ointment. Jesus told the woman that all her sins were forgiven.

Mary Magdalene is very important because she was a devoted and committed follower of Jesus who witnessed some of the most important moments of His life. She accompanied Jesus on His last journey to Jerusalem and was present at the crucifixion, keeping vigil.



Three days after His death, Mary went to the tomb where Jesus had been laid, intending to anoint His body. When she arrived, she found the rock that covered the tomb had been rolled back and the body was gone. Mary ran to whom she thought was a gardener nearby, but it was only when the man spoke her name that she recognised him as the risen Lord. Jesus told Mary to go and tell the apostles that He was



ascending to the Father. (Jn 20:17). Mary Magdalene announced to the apostles that she had seen the Lord and told them what Jesus had told her. Mary Magdalene was the first evangelist; a messenger of the good news.

We celebrate the feast day of Mary Magdalene on July 22. Her Feast Day reminds us of how anyone can transform their lives if they are truly repentant. Mary Magdalene has always been an example of great love and forgiveness of someone who grasped God's love for humanity and spent her own life bearing witness to that love.



### The Blessed Sacrament - August

The month of August is dedicated to the Blessed Sacrament. The Blessed Sacrament is the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. Special times are set aside in our Churches called 'Adoration', where we can come and worship Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, the Eucharist (CCC 1178). The Blessed Sacrament

## Quiz Time with Lawrence

1. What 2014 movie saw Seth Rogen recruited by the FBI to kill Kim Jong-Un?
2. At what venue is the French Open tennis championship played?
3. What is the most popularly spoken language in Brazil?
4. Which thriller novel and movie was set in the fictional Overlook Hotel?
5. What is the more popular name for the UK landmark, Elizabeth Tower?
6. Which singer won an Oscar for the 1987 movie, Moonstruck?
7. What number is written as LXXVII in Roman numerals?
8. Which country is credited with giving wine the term 'plonk'?
9. What is the UK's biggest land carnivore?
10. Who was the USA's first female Secretary of State?
11. Which US boxer won World titles at six different weights from super featherweight to middleweight between 1993 and 2004?

**Quiz Answers:** 1, The Interview. 2, Roland Garros. 3, Portuguese. 4, The Shining. 5, Big Ben. 6, Cher. 7, 77. 8, Australia. 9, The badger. 10, Madeline Albright. 11, Oscar De La Hoya. 12, Gary and Martin Kemp. 13, 88. 14, 1999. 15, Illinois. 16, New Zealand. 17, The Professionals. 18, Dreamt. 19, £25. 20, The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas. 21, Hungary. 22, Durham. 23, Mark Selby. 24, Trigger in Only Fools and Horses. 25, Russia.

reminds us that even when Mass is not celebrated, Jesus in the Eucharist, is still present in the Church.

**O Sacrament most Holy,  
O Sacrament Divine  
All praise and all thanksgiving  
Be every moment Thine**



### The Transfiguration

The Feast of the Transfiguration is August 6. On this special day, we celebrate how Jesus showed Himself to be truly divine to the three Apostles who accompanied Him to the top of Mount Tabor.

In the Gospels, we hear how Jesus took with Him Peter, James and John and went up the mountain to pray. While the disciples were there with Jesus, Elijah and Moses appeared to speak with Him. Then before their eyes, Jesus was transfigured, completely changed, His face and clothes becoming dazzlingly white! The Feast of the Transfiguration helps us to see, as the Apostles saw, that Jesus is really and truly God (CCC 554-555). This same Gospel story is heard during the second Sunday of Lent every year. It is part of the Lenten readings to remind us that the Apostles were given great hope at seeing Jesus in His glory, before He was put to death and crucified. Likewise, we can reflect during Lent on the glory and joy which we will celebrate in the Easter story which will follow.

### Saints of the month- August

St Dominic - August 8

St Clare - August 11  
St Bartholomew - August 24  
St Augustine - August 28



### Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The beautiful Feast of the Assumption of Mary into Heaven is celebrated on August 15. The Assumption of Mary means that She was taken up into heaven, body and soul. Mary's body was always pure. She gave birth to the Son of God, therefore, God rewarded Her by taking Her pure, immaculate body into Heaven (CCC 966).

Mary now reigns as Queen of heaven and earth. She is our Mother who listens to our prayers and asks Jesus for special graces for us. On the Last Day, in the General Resurrection, we too hope to enter Heaven with our newly glorified bodies. Our resurrected bodies will not suffer any illness nor need food or drink, but instead will be splendid and eternally beautiful.

If we use our bodies for doing good while we are alive, we will share the heavenly reward. On this great Feast, we ask the Blessed Mother of God to guide, protect and care for us.

Aghyaran, Ardmore, Ardstraw West & Castlederg, Ballinascreen, Ballymagroarty, Banagher, Bellaghy, Bunrana, Carndonagh, Claudy,

# Let Your Light Shine!

Moville, Newtownstewart, Omagh, Plumbridge, Sion Mills, Steelestown, Strabane, Swatragh, Templemore - Long Tower and St Eugene's, Three Patrons, Waterside

Clonmany, Coleraine, Creggan, Culladuff, Culmore, Desertmartin, Donnyloop, Drumquin, Duramnanagh, Dungiven, Fahan, Faughanvale, Garvagh, Gortin, Greencastle,



**“Today, we need a new covenant between young and old. We need to share the treasure of life, to dream together, to overcome conflicts between generations and to prepare a future for everyone.” (Pope Francis)**



Greenlough, Iskaheen, Killyclogher, Killygordon, Kilrea, Lavey, Leckpatrick, Lifford, Limavady, Maghera, Magilligan, Malin, Melmount,