

See
inside...



Auction raises £36K for Trocaire - Faughanvale.



Celebrating 15th Pope St John Paul II Awards
- St Eugene's Cathedral.



Young souls enjoying faith chats at Anam Og
- Termonbacca.



Sod cutting for new school - Faughanvale.

The NET

Sharing fruits of faith in Derry Diocese

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Bishop Donal planting a memorial oak sapling at St Patrick's Church, Pennyburn, on St Patrick's Day, with the help of a young parishioner.



OpenDoor Cafe building community - Bellaghy



Synodal sessions underway - Iskaheen & Upper Moville.



Heritage exhibition launched
- Camus, Strabane.

People in focus



Marie Lindsay, Iskaheen.



Kathleen McCloskey, Greenlough



Sharon Gorman, Galliagh,
Three Patrons



Eamon McCamphill RIP,
St Eugene's Derry



Michael McCaul,
St Eugene's Derry

Also featuring: Claudy youth enthusiastic at Synodal sessions; Youth writers section; ‘Behold Your Mother’ Retreat; Derry men continue support of public Rosary; Diocesan Year of Vocations launched; Long Tower in BBC ‘Pilgrimage’ series; Go Fair Trade after Lent; Irish section; ‘Who do you say I am?’ comments feature; Book Review - ScrewTape Letters; Children’s Catechism Club, Quiz...and much more...

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The NET

Sharing the fruits of the faith in the Derry Diocese

Contacting us:

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Keep human dignity to the fore when taking difficult bioethical decisions by Marie Lindsay

POPE Francis has asked that during the month of March we pray for a Christian response to bioethical challenges and that the dignity of human life is defended with both prayer and action.

I'm no expert in philosophy or theology, so for me ethics is simply the moral compass that helps you decide what is the right thing to do both for individuals and the wider global community. The scientist in me thinks of bioethics as that branch of ethics concerned with life, particularly human life, health, and wellbeing.

Most of us when we hear the word 'bioethics' immediately think about the big moral issues that impact on human life. These include: human embryonic stem cell research; genetic engineering; assisted reproductive technology; contraception; abortion; care of the dying; living wills; organ donation and euthanasia. It is clear from this list that biotechnology has expanded rapidly in the last forty years, so bioethics is becoming increasingly important since it affects so many of the medical decisions made by Governments, healthcare providers and patients themselves. Pope Francis, aware of this, has drawn our attention to it during the month of March.

As someone who studied

Science, I have always been filled with a deep sense of awe and wonder at the beauty of creation and the miracle of life. This wonder is due not only to the miracle of life but the fact that, as humans, we have the ability to both understand life and the world we live in, and to use that understanding to try to improve life. This is a great gift.

There is no doubt that biotechnology and biomedical procedures are bringing huge benefits to millions of people. However, it is also true that some of the innovations and emerging procedures have the potential to cause harm and raise serious bioethical questions. Pope Francis is asking us to pray for a Christian response to these challenges.

Some of us are old enough to remember when Dr Christiaan Barnard performed a ground-breaking procedure for the first human-to-human heart transplant in 1967. Heart transplants are now commonplace and largely successful. Most recipients go on to live full and healthy lives. Earlier this year, doctors in the United States, in another ground breaking procedure, transplanted a genetically modified heart from a pig into a human recipient. While the recipient sadly recently died, using animal organs for human transplants would

significantly increase the number of organs available for transplants and has the potential to save thousands of lives each year. Using animal organs, usually genetically modified, for transplants in humans, like so many new medical procedures, raises complex challenges. Pope Francis says that we must respond to these challenges and not be "hiding our head like an ostrich".

Pope Francis specifically mentions "the dignity of all human life" in his prayer. At the very core of the Church's teaching is a belief in the sanctity of the life of every human being, including the unborn, the elderly, the poor, and the marginalised. We are taught from an early age that we have both body and soul, and that we have a spiritual destiny beyond life here on earth.

One of the things that I love about the teachings of the Catholic Church is what I call 'the great leveller', the fact that we are all equal in God's eyes because we are all created in His image. It is this beautiful and powerful way of seeing every human being that underscores the Church's teaching on the sanctity of life.

In the Pope's video message that accompanies his prayer for March, he says that the "applications of biotechnology must always be used based on

respect for human dignity" and this means that "for example, human embryos cannot be treated as disposable material, to be discarded."

He also rejected the throw away culture that exists in relation to people with physical disabilities and those nearing the end of life. Our Faith teaches us that human life is a gift from God, and as such, should be cherished. Pope Francis is concerned that the sanctity of life and the dignity of every human are being eroded. He is worried that a "culture of waste" and our "sin of indifference" are contrary to a "consistent ethic of life".

Pope Francis says that biomedical research should not be driven by financial gains. However, he is not asking Catholics to try and block biotechnological advances in healthcare. Instead, he suggests that we should "accompany them". He feels that progress in healthcare and human dignity should move forward hand-in-hand. "We cannot pay the price of human dignity for progress." In this way, human dignity will always be to the fore when difficult bioethical decisions are being taken, including those decisions at the very beginning of life, including unborn life, and at the very end of life.

So, it is important that we



Marie Lindsay, Iskaheen, former principal of St Mary's College, Derry.

inform ourselves and try to understand these profound changes that are taking place, and make informed judgements about them based on our respect for all human life. That respect is rooted in the belief of the dignity of every human being because we are created by God and created in His image. It is this beautiful image of the sacredness of human life that underscores Pope Francis' prayer for March...

"For a Christian response to bioethical challenges: We pray for Christians facing new bioethical challenges: may they continue to defend the dignity of all human life with prayer and action."

This Lent a good time to "steam clean ourselves of all that has got stuck on us" – Bishop Donal



Diary Dates

Anam Og

The new youth faith and fellowship group, Anam Og (Young Soul) will meet again on Sunday, April 3, in Termonbacca, from 6-7.30 pm. To celebrate Easter, there will be an Anam Og Fun Day on Friday, April 22, at Termonbacca, from 12-4 pm, with games, crafts, an egg hunt and a time of prayer. This is for

10-14 year olds and places can be booked by contacting Aoife on 028 71 262512 or by email termonbaccaderry@gmail.com.

Youth Synod

The Clady Parish are running a Youth Synod in the Pastoral Centre, which is within the grounds of St Patrick's Church. The three Wednesday night sessions start at 7 pm, with the remaining two taking place on Wednesday, March 23 and 30. The youth sessions led by

Diocesan youth team will also take place in the parishes of Iskaheen & Upper Moville, with the first on Zoom on March 31, followed by a session in the Community Centre on Wednesday, April 6, and Maghera on March 29 and April 5 and 12, in the Pastoral Centre.

Other parishes are welcome to contact Lizzie for resources to run them for their youth as part of the Synodal process.

ourselves, wallow in self-pity", he went on to highlight a piece of Scripture quoted by Pope Francis: "Let us not grow tired of doing good, for in due time we shall reap our harvest, if we do not give up" (Gal 6:9-10).

And he suggested that this Lenten time is a good opportunity to "break the chains that tie us to the armchair...steam-clean ourselves of all that has got

stuck on us". Prayer and fasting break the pattern of self-indulgence that saps us of our energy," noted Bishop Donal, adding: "Prayer and fasting open us up to new horizons. Prayer and fasting are liberating. Prayer and fasting are not merely to lose weight or collect for Trócaire, but add to the pool of grace and open us to be used by the Lord".

Inviting prayer for peace

Carnhill Holy Hour

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

Vocations Holy Hour

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

The ministry of

The NET

was dedicated to Our Lady, through the intercession of St Maximilian Kolbe, in a ceremony celebrated by Bishop Donal McKeown on August 14, 2019.

Youth of Derry Diocese urged to get involved in synodal sessions



Lizzie Rea, Youth co-ordinator for the Derry Diocese.

THE Derry Diocesan Youth Synod Programme is now underway, with the youth team coming up with three different ways for young people to engage with the process that is hoped will

lead to a new way of being Church. Promoting the programme, Lizzie Rea, the youth coordinator for the Diocese, is encouraging all young people to get involved and share their thoughts.

Pope Francis is asking everyone to participate and give our opinion about how we feel about being a Catholic in today's world," remarked Lizzie, "and the Derry Youth department has created three avenues to enable us to hear from our young people: an online questionnaire; an online discussion event; and a face-to-face gathering in selected parishes."

She explained that the online survey, for young people aged 13-25 years, can be completed anonymously, or they can give their name, and that of their parish and school. Hoping that many young

people will take this opportunity to give their views, Lizzie said: "It won't take long to complete and so we really encourage young people to fill the questionnaire out during this Lenten season."

The questionnaire is available on Derry Youth social media.

The online discussion programme got underway via Zoom on the evening of Monday, March 7, at 7.30 pm. This is for young people aged 14-18 years and will focus on where they fit within the Church, with discussions on vocation.

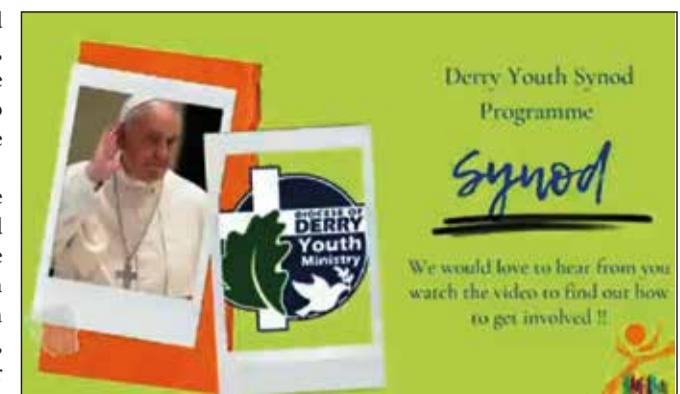
The face-to-face programme will take place in selected parishes throughout the Diocese and is a three-week programme.

"Like the online discussion programme, the face-to-face gatherings will be informal, with

opportunities for some fun and to make new friends," said Lizzie, adding that there was a programme pack available for other parishes to use to engage their youth in the listening process.

Highlighting the importance of young people getting involved with the synod programme, she added: "The voice of the youth matters. We need them to explain how they feel in the Church today, and Pope Francis wants to hear this as well as us here in the Derry Youth department".

Lizzie concluded with a quote from Pope Francis to young people in his post-synodal apostolic exhortation, 'Christus Vivit' ('Christ Lives'), a reflection on the 2018 Synod of Bishops on young people, the faith and vocational discernment...



We would love to hear from you
watch the video to find out how
to get involved !!

make good decisions. Take risks, even if it means making mistakes. Don't observe life from a balcony. Don't confuse happiness with an armchair, or live your life behind a screen. Whatever you do, do not become the sorry sight of an abandoned vehicle! Don't be parked cars, but dream freely and

(Lizzie can be contacted via email - lizzie.rea@derrydiocese.org)

Young souls enjoying fun and faith chats at Anam Óg

THE young souls turning up at Termonbacca for the fortnightly gatherings of Anam Óg, the new faith group for young people aged 10-14 years, are appreciating the wit of Fr Patrick Lagan as he helps lead the time of prayer and catechesis.

Fr Patrick is joined by Fr Stephen Quinn OCD and Aoife O'Neill in coordinating the hour and a half of discussion and fun, through which they hope to offer accompaniment and support to the young people during their formative years.

Welcoming the dozen or so young people to the first night of Anam Óg, which is Irish for 'young soul', Fr Patrick thanked them for their interest in learning more about Jesus, telling them: "All Jesus wants is for us to be happy".

After some ice-breaker games, the trio gathered the young people around to listen to a reading of the Sunday Gospel before breaking

into discussion groups to share their thoughts on it.

And, there was plenty of buzz as they offered their views on love and forgiveness, particularly on forgiving those who say bad things about them.

Offering his thoughts on how to love and forgive people who don't like you, Fr Patrick said: "You can try and take away their anger and tension by forgiving and loving them, even if it is through gritted teeth at times. Build a relationship with God to help you to be able to do this, as it won't always be easy. Pray for them, for healing in their hearts".

A time of prayer around an icon of God and a lighted candle was then led by Fr Stephen, and the launch night came to a close with pizza for everyone.

Following the launch of Anam Óg, Bishop Donal told 'The Net': "There is a range of new initiatives in the Diocese focussed on building up young saints, who

will face the reality of sin with love and grace.

Anam Óg, the Young Soul, is one such welcome initiative that offers the opportunity for young people to grow in faith together. It focuses on building relationship with one another and with Christ.

"It hopes to build on the great work done in many schools so that we can prepare the next generation of young saints from Derry".

More young people are encouraged to come along and enjoy this time of faith, fun and friendship. Anam Óg will meet again on Sunday, April 3, in Termonbacca, from 6-7.30 pm.

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



Special day for youth of Ireland at Knock

YOUNG people aged between 16 and 18 were invited to come along to Knock Shrine, in Co Mayo, for the Pope John Paul II Award Youth Pilgrimage on Tuesday, March 22.

Organised by the Pope John Paul II Award body, the day saw youth from all over Ireland gather together for prayer, talks and music.

The guest speaker was Fr Peter McVerry, of the Peter McVerry Trust and Elation Ministries provided the music.

The pilgrimage programme included Mass celebrated by Bishop Donal, who is Patron of the Pope John Paul II Award.

Full coverage in the April edition of 'The Net'.



Easter fun with Anam Og

ANAM OG, the new youth faith and fellowship group for 10-14 year olds in the Diocese, is hosting an Easter Fun Day at the Termonbacca Retreat Centre on Friday, April 22.

The event will get underway at 12 noon and run until 4 pm, and will include games, crafts, an egg hunt and a time of prayer.

Places can be booked by contacting Aoife on 028 71 262512 or by email - termonbaccaderry@gmail.com

In the lead up to that, the fortnightly Anam Og (Young Soul) gatherings in Termonbacca will continue on Sunday, March 20, and then on Sunday, April 3, from 6-7.15 pm.

ANAM OG EASTER

Egg Hunt

Prayer

Join us for a day of Easter fun and activities for those aged 10-14 years old

Games

Lunch

Crafts

Termon bacca Derry

Friday 22nd April 12pm-4pm

To book a place call Aoife on 02871262512 or email termonbaccaderry@gmail.com

Opening Derry's 15th Pope John Paul II Award ceremony, Bishop Donal congratulated the young recipients, saying...

In a world that promotes individualism you have shown you want to contribute to community

Photographs by Stephen Latimer



Guest speaker at the Pope John Paul II Awards, Fr Peter McVerry receiving a painting of Pope St John Paul II.

THE 15th annual Pope St John Paul II Award Ceremony was celebrated this year again in St Eugene's Cathedral, where young people from 21 different second level schools and 42 parishes across the Diocese gathered to receive their award from special guest, Fr Peter McVerry, SJ, who works with people at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness primarily in Dublin, and Bishop Donal McKeown, Award Patron.

This year, 288 young people from all over the Diocese and beyond received the Award, with 19 parishes from outside the Derry Diocese involved, seven of which are from the London area. And there were four recipients of the Papal Cross Award.

In what could become a new format for the Award Ceremony, instead of two different events involving the young people, family members and Award leaders, one ceremony was organised in St Eugene's for the recipients, who gathered in their school/parish groups, with their Award leader and principal/priest.

Each group was called forward and presented with boxed medals and certificates, to be presented individually to Award participants at a later date, either in their school or parish, and their families were able to view the ceremony via the Cathedral webcam.

Congratulating all involved in the ceremony, Fr Paul Farren, director of the Catechetical Centre that oversees the running of the Award in the Diocese, remarked that this was the second group of participants to be affected by the impact of Covid-19, both in the undertaking of the Award and the presentation ceremony.

"I hope that the Pope John

Paul II Awards have been a good experience for you in difficult times. As a diocese, we have tried to be available for you on-line during lockdowns and that has opened up all sorts of new possibilities for journeying together. I hope you can look back on your experience and be enriched by the memories it has created and the growth that you have experienced".

Communities

Highlighting the Awards as an important celebration for parish communities, Bishop Donal said: "In a world that promotes individualism and privatised thinking, you have shown that you want to contribute to community. Loneliness is a killer. Together we can do amazing things."

"The Gospel will not be promoted by pressure. Faith in a loving God will be handed on in communities of people who are growing in faith together. Those sorts of bonds can see all of us through difficult times. In a world of much violence and danger, depression and addiction, community is a vital part of human capital that we waste at our peril".

Telling the young people that God has a dream for each to become a saint, "a hero in our own unique way", the Bishop continued:

"Self-centred consumerism damages community, limits our horizons and wastes the limited resources of the earth. Recently, I was talking to a young woman who trained as a doctor and then decided that her calling was to dedicate her life to living in a community of consecrated women who are committed to promoting love of, and respect for, life from the womb to the tomb.

"This year, she was one of 10 young women who have joined this community and who are undergoing formation for the challenge of spending their lives dedicated to this mission in Christ's name. She said something that struck me - 'I have been asked to give up all those things that I was told I needed to make me happy, and I have never been happier!'"

Bishop Donal concluded by expressing his hope that the generosity of the young people would not be "stifled by a selfish culture that focuses on little but the selfish 'I'm worth it' mindset".

"Continue to be generous and idealistic," he urged, "Focus on the common good and not just on what suits 'me'. Pope John Paul II called us all to be heroes and saints. Never doubt that this is your divine calling".

Youth coordinator for the Diocese, Lizzie Rea chatted to four recipients about their experience of doing the Award, and they spoke of the friendships made and satisfaction they got from being involved in their parish and community through various activities, such as Church collector, wiping down seats after Mass, on-line book club, the GAA and the Order of Malta.

This year's recipients came from two parishes, St Eugene's and Cumber Upper & Learmount, and 21 schools: Moville Community College; St Colm's, Ballinascreen; Carndonagh Community School; St Cecilia's, Derry; St Patrick's, Dungiven; St Columb's, Derry; St Joseph's Boys, Derry; Loreto, Coleraine; St Mary's, Limavady; Sacred Heart, Omagh; Loreto, Omagh; St Mary's, Derry; St Conor's, Clady/Kilrea; Holy Cross, Strabane; Lumen Christi, Derry; St Patrick's, Maghera; Crana College, Buncrana; Scoil Mhuire, Buncrana; St Brigid's, Derry; Christian Brothers, Omagh; and Thornhill, Culmore, Derry.

Musical entertainment for the occasion was provided by the Long Tower Folk Group, Scoil Mhuire Traditional Band, and a duet by Lizzie Rea and Anne-Marie Hickey, from the Catechetical Centre.

The ceremony closed with the promotion of a number of upcoming youth events, including the JPII Pilgrimage to Knock on March 22, when the guest speaker will again be Fr Peter McVerry, Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lough Derg in June, Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes in July, and World Youth Day in Lisbon in 2023.



Founder of Dublin homeless charity commends achievement of JPII

Award participants, telling them...

In your service to others you witnessed the world God wants us to become

FR Peter McVerry, the Jesuit priest who established a charity in Dublin almost 40 years ago to provide services in the areas of prevention, housing, homelessness, and under 18s residential and drug treatment, was the guest speaker at this year's Pope St John Paul II Award Ceremony for the Derry Diocese.

And judging by the long and loud applause that erupted from the young people in the pews of St Eugene's Cathedral, his passionate talk about homelessness and his dream "of a world in which we all live together as a family" had impacted them greatly.

The vision of the Peter McVerry Trust is for "An Ireland that supports all those on the margins and upholds their rights to full inclusion in society".

Congratulating the JPII Award recipients, Fr Peter said: "I have no doubt that the people you have worked with, and for, have benefitted greatly from your work, and I hope you have benefitted too".

Going on to remark that working with people in need is a two-way process, he spoke about his experience of working with homeless people for over 40 years, saying: "I have got far more from them, than I have given them. I have learnt so much from them, in fact, they have totally changed me. They have challenged my values, at least some of my prejudices, they have challenged my understanding of God and they have turned me from a young conservative adult to an old radical one.

"I thought my job was to provide homeless people with a bed for the night, or with drug treatment or counselling, and we do that for several thousand homeless people each year. But they taught me that they wanted something much more important from me".

He went on to tell the young people: "What many on the margins of our society, who feel unwanted, want is to know that someone cares for them, that they are worth caring for. You may not appreciate fully the significance

of what you have done. You have challenged the society in which we live.

"This world we live in is driven by the word, 'I want'. We are encouraged to want what we do not now have, so that we will go out and purchase it. The more we spend, the higher is economic growth. Without this consumer spending, economic growth stagnates or declines. But as our basic needs remain more or less the same, millions of Euros are spent on advertising designed to make us want what we do not need."

Recalling presenting certificates to students some years ago, who had spent some weeks working in very poor communities, both in Ireland and abroad, Fr Peter said: "They had to report on their experience to the rest of the school. I was particularly struck by one group of students who had gone out to Africa and worked with children who were very physically disabled and, at the same time, lived in extreme poverty.

"They reported that these were the happiest kids they had ever met; they had nothing, and wanted nothing. And they contrasted them with their own peers, who had everything and wanted more".

"These two simple words, 'I want', have caused untold suffering, despair and even death to millions of people," remarked the 78-year-old, adding: "Those two words have started wars and been responsible for countless murders, rapes, robberies...I want Ukraine', 'I want an Islamic State', 'I want your property', 'I want your girlfriend', 'I want your life'.

"And they cause deep unhappiness in each of us, because we are constantly wanting what we do not have and cannot rest until we get it. To build a world in which we can all live in peace and equality, it is necessary to replace 'I want' with 'you need'. 'I want' divides me from others as I seek to secure, often in competition with others, what I do not have. 'You need' binds us together as I seek

to secure what another needs. My concern for what I want, and my efforts to secure it, is replaced by my concern for what you need and my efforts to secure that".

Solidarity

Stating that solidarity replaces individualism, Fr Peter told the young people: "In showing solidarity to others, you have challenged, in a small but very important way, the individualism which is the very foundation of the society we live in".

He went on to note: "Anger is a positive emotion if we know how to use it. You can't serve someone suffering unnecessarily without being angry. So many people in our country are struggling financially, homeless people are on the streets, and those with addictions are not getting access to the treatments they need. This world is not the way God wants it to be and we should be angry enough to change it to what God wants it to be."

He continued: "In reaching out to others you have challenged our Church. How do you define a Catholic? Jesus told us

how to recognise a Catholic, a Christian...By this shall all know that you are my disciples, by your love for one another". In doing what you did, you were a practising Catholic.

"We Christians differ from all other religions in this respect. Other religions tell their followers that their God can be found in sacred places. For the Jews, God is to be found in the Temple in Jerusalem; for Islam, God is to be found in the holy city of Mecca; for Hindus, God is to be found in the sacred Ganges River. But, we Christians do not find God in sacred places, in churches or temples. We find God in other people. God comes to us in disguise; disguised as a homeless person, the drug user, the hungry, the lonely, the sick. In doing what you did, you were in the presence of God, even if you were unaware of it."

Fr Peter went on to share that he dreamed of a world in which

all live together as a family: "In a family, the parents do not give three of their children a steak for dinner and give the fourth child bread and jam. No, in a family, whatever they have they share. In a family, the parents do not tuck three of their children up in a warm bed and tell the fourth child to sleep outside the front door, on the porch. No, in a family, what few rooms they have, they share".

"In a family, everyone looks out for everyone else, everyone cares and shares what they have, everyone carries each other's burdens. I dream of a world in which all people love each other, care for each other, share with each other, respect each other. I dream of a world where no-one would be hungry and have nothing to eat, where no-one would be thirsty and have nothing to drink, where no-one would be naked and have nothing to wear, where no-one would be sick and have no-one to visit them, where no-one would be in prison and rejected by their community".

"Now, as then, there are many who do not want this dream to become reality," he noted, "There are those who accumulate the world's wealth to themselves, while one billion people live in destitution. There are those who abuse their power for their own self-serving interests, while people wait in poverty and powerlessness for the changes which could transform their lives, but which those in power resist.

"There are those who will not reach out to the homeless, the drug user, the prisoner, those in social housing, but will reject them, want nothing to do with them and push them to the margins of their society."

He concluded: "Global economic growth, on its own, cannot build such a world. Such a world can only be built by love, by replacing 'I want' by 'You need'. In a small but important way, you witnessed, in your service to others, the world that God wants us to become."



JPII Awards 2022





The Net's team of young writers has been joined by another parishioner from the Parish of Iskaheen & Upper Moville. Representing the Inishowen Deanery, Lorcan McGonagle is a pupil at Scoil Mhuire, Buncrana, Co Donegal, and in his first article he shares some thoughts on Lent.

Bronagh also focuses on the Lenten season and the hope that it helps to bring to those in poverty through people's generous donations to Trocaire.

Zara comments on the Pope's reflection on 'The Beatitudes', while Peter writes about forgiveness overcoming hatred, and John continues with the theme of Christian unity and its achievability.

Niamh writes about how the example of the Church's inspirational female saints is much needed in our world today, and Hollie reports on the launch of the heritage exhibition completed at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, in Strabane, by a group of volunteers that she was part of.



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



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



Inspiring example of female Saints much needed in world today by Niamh O'Kane

THERESE of Lisieux, Hildegard of Bingen, Teresa of Ávila, Edith Stein, Bridget of Sweden and Catherine of Siena are all women who the Catholic Church has determined to be inspiring, in offering hope in times of daunting challenges and fear.

Their impact is so needed in our current society all across the world, with the trepidation brought upon us through the COVID-19 pandemic, and in times of fear and worry where violence is prominent in many areas across the world, especially

in Ukraine and Russia. These remarkable women have the ability to guide and inspire us in our times of uncertainty and unease.

Catholic academics believe that these remarkable female figures can be seen as beacons of light and can provide much-needed hope, and help restore momentum as humanity searches for the best way forward.

An international inter-university congress took place earlier this month entitled 'Female Doctors of the Church and Patron Saints of

Christian unity can be achieved!

by John Augustine Joseph

THE City of Brest, in Belarus, lies on the border between Belarus and Poland. Four hundred years ago, a union was formed between the Church of Kyiv and the Church of Rome. The fruit of this union is what is now known as the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church.

This church throughout the centuries has gone through a great many trials and upheavals. It has gone through suffering and grief, joy, and growth. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church stayed steadfast in its communion with the Bishop of Rome, the Vicar of Christ, even when it was made illegal, its bishops and priests sent to the gulags, and their property confiscated and given to the Russian Orthodox Church. In summary, it has been through much and yet it is strong and alive.

Today, in Ukraine, the majority of Catholics are Greek-Catholic. They are strongly in favour of the independence of their nation, and they are not willing to give up.

Just a week before Lent began, we heard of the news that Russian troops were advancing further into Ukraine, beyond the ceasefire lines that existed before. Air raids and the like have been destroying many buildings and infrastructure across the cities of Ukraine, and the people flee towards the west, seeking refuge with friendly neighbours. We all have heard the stories from the news. The war that is taking place is clearly unjust and this is being condemned by many.

The point of this article is in continuity with the article I wrote last month, when I commented on Christian Unity and ecumenism. This is an important thing to

achieve and clearly it can be achieved if all parties wish to do so, and I pray that it will happen. If it could happen 400 years ago at Brest, surely the Christian churches today can unite under the Bishop of Rome.

We can stay faithful to Tradition and to Sacred Scripture whilst being One, Holy, Catholic and

Apostolic Church. This unity will bring with it many struggles, like it did for the Ukrainians. They have kept strong; they have kept the faith and they have fought the good fight. We must as well, so that we can fulfil the wish of our Lord, that we Christians may be united.



My Lent 2022 focus is to pray for peace and end of suffering of innocent Ukrainian people by Lorcan McGonagle

LENT is a very special and religious period in the Church's calendar year. It is a time of repentance which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Thursday. For me, Lent means a time to reflect on the events leading up to and including the death of Jesus Christ. It is a time to remember that Jesus' life and His teachings are the foundation of my Christianity. Therefore, Lent provides me with an opportunity to rediscover and remember all the suffering that Jesus went through for us Christians worldwide.

"Lent comes providentially to awaken us, to shake us from our lethargy," said Pope Francis. Whenever I was a young boy, I would have always gone off sweets and fizzy drinks for Lent. However, as I got older I began

to understand and grasp the true meaning of Lent and what it offers to the Christian community.

This year, Lent is particularly different and poignant for me and for many others also. This is the case because of what is happening in Ukraine at the moment. So, for Lent 2022 my focus is to pray for peace and for the end of the suffering of the innocent Ukrainian people.

I will take time to be more grateful for all that I have, as seeing what other people are going through in another part of the world puts things into perspective. Most of all, the aim is to have a war-free and peaceful world.

The people of Ukraine are enduring so much suffering - just like Jesus did for us. So, with

the awful times that they are experiencing, we should look upon this Lent as a special time to also petition God for His help.

As Pope Francis says, "Let's keep the memory of this people in our hearts".

Lent is a very special time of the year for our Christian community worldwide. It is particularly special as it offers us

the opportunity to reflect and to be more grateful for what Jesus has sacrificed for us.

Our sacrifices are small in comparison to what Jesus and the victims of war have experienced. We should be thankful for what we have and pray for those less fortunate, who, through no fault of their own, are enduring untold and unnecessary suffering.



demonstrating great tenderness and goodwill to one another.

It was stated by Professor Anita Cadavid that one trait women theologians and saints have in common, is the belief that Christian life must "give life". This proves relevant in our lives today, as we must show one another mercy and not deprive ourselves of this.

Professor Cadavid also noted: "These were all women, who 'were in the world.' They were in touch with people's feelings, sufferings, struggles." It is a Christian's

duty to follow this practice, as in allowing ourselves to understand what others feel in demonstrating empathy, we can find peace knowing we have followed our hearts and God.

She explained that the message of the exceptional women honoured

by the Congress was an important one for "the development of a feminism with Christian values" and "helps women today in their quest to live according to deep principles".

(vaticannews.com)

Forgiveness overcomes hatred by Peter Grant

DURING one of his Sunday Angelus reflections, Pope Francis spoke about how we react to wrongdoing by others, and how we should forgive and guide them to a lifestyle of peace and forgiveness, pushing aside the problems and hateful views people may have of others.

As Jesus would say...“Love your enemies and do good to those who hate you”.

In life, nobody is perfect and we must learn to accept that view, and put our hate views to one side and help the people who have done wrong to see the light and leave

behind the dark past they have lived and embrace a new day and rebirth of a peaceful, forgiving life that Jesus wants us to follow.

During the uncertain times of war in Ukraine, we can reflect on our dark past with regards to our own city of Derry, where people fought over the differences and beliefs that they had, which lasted over 30 years until the Good Friday Agreement was signed by leaders who wanted to put their differences aside and achieve peace in the country, and follow what Jesus would have wanted for His people; to rebuild closer

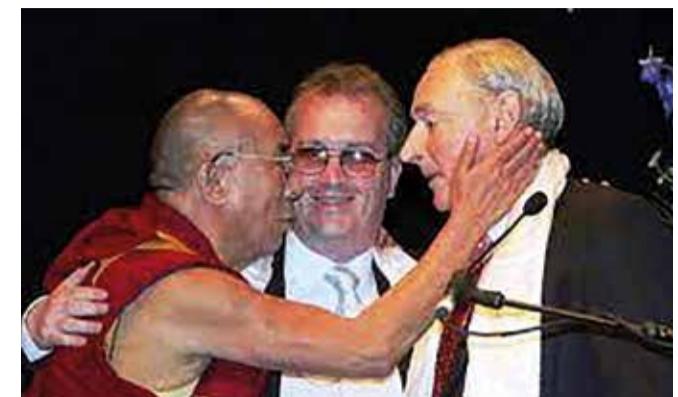
connections with others, even the ones who have sinned and done wrong.

One of the people who guide others into the light and show forgiveness is Derry man, Richard Moore. Losing his sight after being hit with a rubber bullet at a young age, he learned to accept this change in his life, and did not let it stop him achieving his goals in life, such as his great work for Children in Crossfire.

In 2007, Richard met the man that transformed his life, Charles Inness who had shot him that day, and instead of showing the

emotion of anger and hurt, he opened his heart to him and forgave him for his actions he all those years ago. Now they share a great friendship with each other ever, reflecting how Jesus treated those who had done wrong or hated Him for His actions.

Richard's story has inspired me and many others. Forgiveness isn't just the morally right thing to do, it helps others to see a new light and come out from the darkness of their wrongdoing and connect with others. Now, in our country, we live a peaceful life and we must help other parts of the world to



achieve that and not live in hatred with others. As one famous saying goes, “Keep your friends close and your enemies closer”.

Reflecting on The Beatitudes with Pope Francis by Zara Schlindwein

POPE Francis has recently reflected on the Christian identity encapsulated in the Beatitudes, revealing that Jesus' disciples are blessed because they are poor, and continued to focus on this blessing.

Whilst reciting the Beatitudes, the Pope noted that Jesus was surrounded by a large crowd and addressed the Beatitudes to “His disciples”. Pope Francis highlighted that these blessings “define the identity of the disciples of Jesus.”

“They may sound strange, almost incomprehensible to those who are not disciples,” he admitted, “However, if we ask ourselves what a disciple of Jesus is like, the answer is precisely in the Beatitudes.”

Pope Francis focused his attention on “Blessed are you poor, for yours is the Kingdom of Heaven.”

He said: “Jesus says two things to His people: that they are blessed and poor, and that they are blessed because they are poor.”

This captures the essence of Christianity, in which joy can be found in the gifts we receive daily from God. This happiness is truly more sustainable than the material goods that thrive in society today.

Disciples, in essence, should be humble and sincere, condemn prejudice and inequality, all whilst sharing all that they have with those in need.

He continued: “This type of poverty, urges us to share the goods we have according to the logic of God.”

If we do so, then we are expressing the identity of a true disciple.

The Beatitudes

**Blessed are the poor in spirit,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

**Blessed are those who mourn,
For they shall be comforted.**

**Blessed are the meek,
For they shall inherit the earth.**

**Blessed are those who hunger
and thirst for righteousness,
For they shall be filled.**

**Blessed are the merciful,
For they shall obtain mercy.**

**Blessed are the pure in heart,
For they shall see God.**

**Blessed are the peacemakers,
For they shall be called Children of God.**

**Blessed are those who are persecuted
for righteousness' sake,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

Matthew 5

LENT | A Better 2022 | Tomorrow

Religious Education Resource for Children

**'The Lord's Prayer gives me courage,
hope and strength in tough situations.'**

(Thandekile)



trocaire

A Lenten promise we can all make... offer a glimmer of hope to those in poverty by Bronagh Doherty

DURING Lent, many of us have given up something; perhaps its chocolate, crisps or screen-time. The Trocaire box is a common sign of Lent in many Catholic households in Ireland. The box, holding the heart-wrenching picture of yet another starving child, heartbroken mother and famished family, once again stands in our houses, crying louder than ever for donations.

UNICEF has released the stark statistics that at least 1.2 million children under the age of five are likely to be severely malnourished due to drought, with 300,000 of

those likely to die unless they receive hospitalisation (Vatican News – January 22).

There is a drought in Somalia that is causing food shortages. Three seasons of less than average rainfall has led to crop failure and lack of safe drinking water. Crops have failed to grow and that leads to lack of food and nutrition. Drinking water supplies have been depleted and this leads to dehydration in already starving children and forcing them to drink unsafe, diseased water.

Trocaire is calling for donations to help bring drinking water and food

nutrition packs to these countries. These children need our help in order to survive. It is a life-or-death situation, worsened by the fact that food supplies are dwindling and water sources are drying up.

As water dries up, parents start to move their families across the country in search for water. This leads to increased tension and, in some cases, conflict arises. Trocaire expects the number of people who have fled their homes to rise exponentially to 1.4 million in the coming months, which are expected to have less rainfall than

the previous months (Vatican News).

Trocaire does wonderful things, but they cannot work their magic without the help of volunteers and donations. It offers emergency and lifesaving treatment to the most vulnerable, and sanitation and hygiene, and distribution of emergency kits to those who are in emergency shelter system.

Success stories of the work Trocaire can do are heart-warming. It provided a small cash sum to Elizabeth to help her provide food for her children and set up

a market stall to sell fish and earn an income. “It makes me happy to see my children eating two meals a day,” she says. “I am proud of my children and grandchildren that surround me. Even when you’ve a lot of issues and stress, when you see them running around it makes you happy.” (Trocaire - October 2019).

Trocaire has offered Elizabeth’s family a new lease of life and offers them hope for the future.

Trocaire has set up an exciting new platform to donate. Visit their website and fill out the online platform, and donate a sum of your

choice to help children, orphans, widows and families surviving the toughest conditions.

The charity calls us to “be their blessing” and offer a glimmer of hope to the poorest in the world. Proverbs 19:17, “Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and He will repay him for his deed”, encourages us to give to the poor as that is what God wants us to do. God will reward us for our work in Heaven.

Do something good this Lent, donate to Trocaire and their life-changing work.

"The Church you're sitting in today has stood here in its elegance and architectural grandeur since 1895. It is the focal point of our community, serving all the spiritual needs" – Fr Declan Boland PP Camus

Heritage exhibition launched at Church of Immaculate Conception Strabane

by Hollie Frystal

ON February 24, the community of the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Strabane, marked the end of their History and Heritage Restoration Project, and have now embarked upon a new phase, having launched their exhibition in the 'Old Gallery'; a large room upstairs, above the sanctuary of the Chapel.

It is said that the men of the town helped with the infrastructure, such as stone making, design, etc. The community's desire was to have a beautiful place of worship, where family, friends and neighbours would unite together in celebration of the Holy Eucharist. As Fr Boland, the current parish priest of Camus, described at the launch of the exhibition: "The Church you're sitting in today, has stood here in its elegance and architectural grandeur since 1895. It is the focal point of our community, serving all the spiritual needs".

Around August 2016, Fr Boland had concluded that the Chapel needed some refurbishment in order to preserve its original and natural structure. Improvement was needed especially on the roof, and in other areas such as the stain-glass windows, etc. Additionally, various objects and artefacts were discovered in a room within the Parochial House, which were brought out,

people of Strabane in previous generations, who were quite poor, funded the construction of the building on a weekly basis to ensure that the cost was fully paid by the day it opened. Therefore, the Chapel is literally the people of Strabane's inheritance today.

researched, and displayed in the exhibition/museum, for example, vestments, receipts, etc. Entitled, 'Camus' Restoration and Inclusive Participation Programme: Living History in the Community', the project began in 2016 and was completed this year. The programme involved a diverse co-responsible leadership, consisting of volunteers, a range of expertise, and most importantly it brought the young and old together to work on a common project. It embraced the generational aspect, which Bishop Donal McKeown highlighted the importance of during the launch, when he said; "Love your past... cherish the work of generations that went before you, and if you can find beauty even in the speckled history of all of our communities then we can find beauty in the future as well".

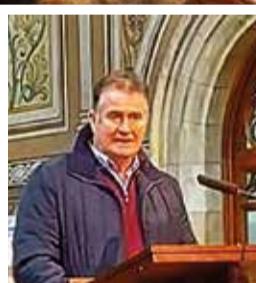
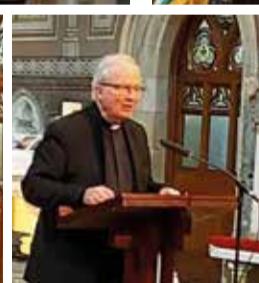
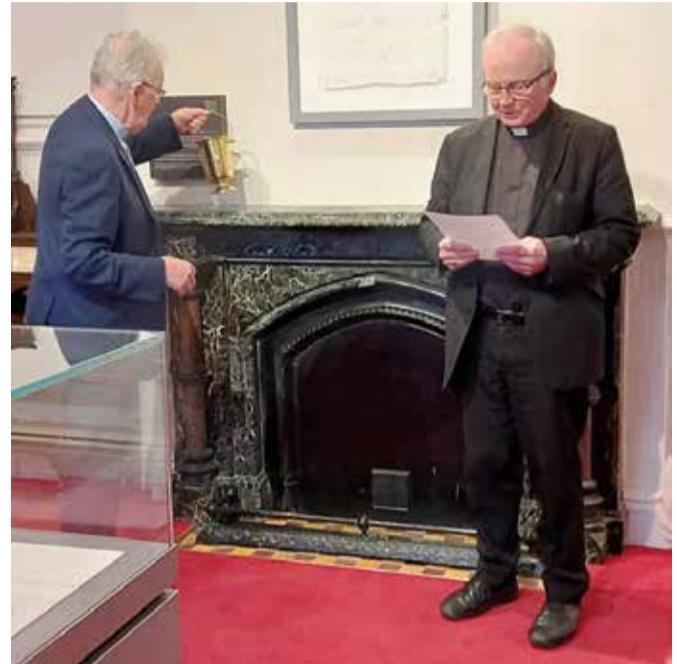
He added: "The secular agenda tells us to be ashamed of our past and blindly to face some vague glorious future. This excellent project in Camus Parish seeks to help us understand the past, so as to face the future with trust and hope. It celebrates the achievements of earlier generations in Strabane, so that the parish can look forward to the new challenges.

"I congratulate Fr Declan and his team for a great project that will help the young generation to look forward in hope, because of the great things that were achieved in difficult years in the past".

The leaders and facilitators extended their gratitude to all who were involved with the project. The Strabane community had once again come together and fundraised an amazing amount of well over £200,000. The remaining monies needed for the first phase of the project, £524,600, was generously granted from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Finally, the Camus Parish welcomed Mayor Graham Warke to the launch of the exhibition. The Mayor extended particular thanks for his invitation, to those involved, and was very complimentary on the beauty of the Church of the Immaculate Conception.

In turn, Camus expressed its appreciation for all who were involved in and attended the launch day, which ended with the cutting of the ribbon to officially open the exhibition.



Long Tower features in latest BBC 'Pilgrimage' series

DERRY and the Long Tower will feature in the latest BBC Two series, 'Pilgrimage' when it returns for a new series in April, in which seven well-known personalities followed in the footsteps of St Columba as they travelled across Ireland to Scotland.

The celebrities involved in the programme, entitled 'The Pilgrimage: The Road to the Scottish Isles', are interior designer and TV personality, Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen, who describes himself as a non-conforming pagan; England cricketing legend, Monty Panesar, a practising Sikh; actress, Louisa Clein, who

is Jewish; TV personality Nick Hewer, an agnostic with Catholic roots; TV presenter and podcast host, social media influencer, Scarlett Moffatt, a Christian; comedian, Shazia Mirza, a Muslim; and Paralympian, Will Bayley, a lapsed Christian.

Filmed last year, the 'pilgrims' set out from Donegal Town and, following ancient pilgrimage and heritage walking trails, made their way to Derry, via Gartan.

Their arrival at the Long Tower coincided with the first night of the retreat led by Fr Pat Collins. After attending the talk and time of prayer, the celebrities visited Aras Cholmcille, the St Columba

Heritage Centre, for refreshments and some conversation with invited guests.

Travelling onwards through Northern Ireland, the group made their way over sea by boat to western Scotland, where they made their way to Iona.

Covering over 1,600 km, the

pilgrimage takes in places of worship such as pagan stones, an early Christian cave, a contemporary mosque and Sikh temple.

The first programme in the series will air on Friday, April 8, and then on the following two Fridays.



Faughanvale sod cutting for first Our Lady of Lourdes school in Diocese by Fr Noel McDermott



ON January 31, work commenced on the construction of the new primary school adjacent to St Mary's Church, Tamnaherin. That day was the Feast day of St John Bosco (1815-1888), who is the Patron Saint of the Young and of Educators. It was, therefore, a most providential day for the commencement of the construction of our new primary school.

The school will be dedicated to Our Lady of Fatima, to whose patronage this project has been entrusted since its inception. This will be the first primary school in the Diocese to be dedicated to Our Lady of Fatima.

The new school is designed to accommodate 160 children and will replace Craigbrack Primary School, which opened in 1962 to replace the old Craigbrack Primary School dating from

the 1800's, Mullaboy Primary School, which opened in 1967 to replace the old Mullaboy Primary School, and Listress Primary School, which opened in 1967 to replace Ervey Primary School.

On March 10, the Minister for Education, Ms Michelle McIlveen, cut the first sod at the site of the new school. The minister was especially welcome as she is well known for her advocacy of a level playing field for all schools, regardless of their ethos or founding principles.

With the completion of the new school, the Parish of Faughanvale and Lower Cumber will have three fit-for-purpose buildings that will, for the remainder of this century, provide an excellent educational environment in which the children of the parish can receive a first class education.

We do not take for granted the amazing contribution that our schools, which are the most integrated schools in Northern Ireland, make to the spiritual, academic, physical and emotional development of all the children who attend them, regardless of their religious, cultural, ethnic or socioeconomic background.

Our schools prepare children to make their way in the world as well adjusted, gifted, capable and productive members of this community and, indeed, any community in which they may find themselves on the journey of life.

Yet, while buildings are important in the enabling of a quality education to be delivered, it is the personnel who serve in our schools that make the most important contribution to our children's education, outside, of course, of the primary responsibility of parents as the first educators of their children.

In whatever capacity they serve, every person in our schools makes an invaluable contribution to the education and advancement of the children in their care. Heartfelt thanks to one and all.

We owe a great debt of gratitude to all who presently serve in our schools and on Boards of Governors, and to the generations past who laid the foundations upon which our present educational system stands, and

continues to deliver the best education available anywhere.

Parents who entrust their child to our schools, do so in the knowledge that their child will receive an education second to none.

We thank parents for the trust they place in our schools and for their ongoing support for this vital part of the life and mission of our parish.

We thank God for the commencement of this work and pray that, under His providential guidance and through the intercession of Our Lady of Fatima, it will continue smoothly, so that we can look forward to welcoming the first intake of pupils in the Spring of 2023.

Welcoming the cutting of the first sod for the new school in Faughanvale Parish as "a vote of confidence in the future of Catholic Education in the area", Bishop Donal remarked: "Catholic schools have made a huge contribution to the formation of young people and to their development in a community context.

"Despite opposition from some quarters, Catholic schools will continue to be popular because of the quality of their education.

"Our Lady of Fatima spoke to three children in Portugal in 1917. 105 years later her message of prayer and renewal still speaks to us today".



Lent...Chocolate...Fairtrade

by Patricia McCormack

I just love chocolate! I give it up each Lent, put the money in the Trocaire box...and then reward myself with chocolate treats at Easter. Lenten Fasting...ticked, Lenten Giving...ticked.

But a simple fact has made me stop and think. The average income of many cocoa farmers in West Africa is 74p per day; less than the price of a bar of chocolate.

It is just not fair that people who produce things that we enjoy and take for granted are paid so little for their work and remain trapped in poverty. The cocoa industry is fraught with modern slavery. The prophet Micah tells us that what the Lord requires of us is "to act justly, to love mercy and walk humbly with our God" (Micah 6:8).

Through simple shopping choices we can all act more justly towards millions of small-scale farmers who are facing very uncertain futures due to unfair trade and a climate crisis they did so little to cause.

We can switch to items that carry the Fairtrade logo. This Fairtrade logo guarantees that the



farmer is getting a fair price and that their community will receive a premium to build schools, improved health care, and roads, etc. So, this year, I will only be buying Fairtrade chocolate when Lent is over.

Our Eco Group in Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Steelstown, recently organised a 'Fairtrade Cuppa Morning'. Parishioners dropped into the adjoining Conference Room after Sunday Masses for Fairtrade Tea, Coffee and tray bakes, and made generous donations totalling £785 for the Trocaire Lenten Appeal.

It was a good opportunity

to meet, chat and highlight the wide range of Fairtrade products available, including the alternative Real Easter Egg.

Steelstown PS pupils celebrated Pancake Tuesday by making Fairtrade lemonade and

Pancakes, and P6 class prepared an excellent School Assembly to share the message.

The Fairtrade logo is included in a new colourful mural celebrating the school's ethos and activities.

We can all make a difference - person by person, household

by household, school by school, parish by parish. Let's switch to some Fairtrade items in our regular shopping. Let's start with Fairtrade chocolate this Easter.

See - <https://www.fairtrade.org.uk>; <https://www.traidcraftshop.co.uk>; <https://rpbooks.co.uk/> (The Real Easter Egg).

Auction of late Fr Patrick Mullan's household items raises over £36K for Trocaire by Fr Noel McDermott

IN his last will and testament, the late Fr Patrick Mullan, retired parish priest of Faughanvale and Lower Cumber, directed that his furniture, paintings and other household items be sold, and the proceeds given to Trocaire.

Those who knew Fr Mullan were not in the least surprised that this should be his wish as he was a lifelong supporter and generous benefactor of Trocaire.

He tirelessly promoted the message and mission of Trocaire in the parish to such an extent that the parish of Faughanvale and Lower Cumber has responded to the annual Lenten appeal with extraordinary generosity during Fr Mullan's tenure as parish priest and since his retirement.

Among the many ways in which Fr Mullan's ministry and example enriched the life of Faughanvale and Lower Cumber, his support for Trocaire is undoubtedly the one that will be his enduring legacy in the minds and hearts of his parishioners, whom he



Gerry McAfee, front centre, of McAfee Auctioneers, with the cheque for £36K raised for Trocaire from the auction of household items belonging to the late Fr Patrick Mullan, former parish priest of Faughanvale. Included are, Parish secretary, Paula Donaghy, and Sacristan, Brian McCloskey, front/right, with Fr Noel McDermott, Faughanvale PP, and Tristyn Whitehead, representing Bensons Estate Agent, back/right.

inspired to support Trocaire through their prayers and their financial support.

The auction of Fr Mullan's furniture, paintings and other items raised a total £36,253. This includes the commission and fees of Colum Henry (Bensons Estate Agents) and McAfee Auctioneers,

which they have kindly given to Trocaire.

A big thank you to all who bought items and supported this worthy cause, which will be a great help to the work of Trocaire, a cause very dear to Fr Mullan's heart.

May he rest in peace.

Building community again, Bellaghy opens doors to welcome all on parish synodal journey

EMBRACING the opportunity to build community again with Covid-19 restrictions lifted, the Parish of Bellaghy has introduced an OpenDoor Cafe for parishioners to meet for a coffee and a chat after the Sunday morning Mass in St Mary's Church.

The Cafe is open from 11 am until 1 pm, and after Mass and a visit to the graves of loved ones, families and neighbours make their way to the Parish Hall for a lovely cup of tea/coffee and maybe a scone or mouth-watering fry.

The OpenDoor Cafe is one of the venues that the Parish Synodal Team has visited as part of its Parish Listening Sessions for the Synodal journey underway in the Diocese, and in the Church worldwide.

In a presentation at Mass, Synodal team member, Noel O'Sullivan has explained that the listening sessions are a response to Pope Francis' call for the faithful to journey together and listen to where the Holy Spirit is guiding the church.

While there are many issues that could be discussed, Noel noted that one of the biggest to

be addressed was how to connect with people to encourage and enable them to practice their faith.

Relating the decline in the number of people practicing to the decline in numbers going forward for priesthood, he posed a similar situation for other areas of life: "If children stop going to school, where will the teachers of the future come from? If kids stop playing football, where will coaches of the future come from? If we are not practicing our faith or going to Mass, where are the clergy of the future going to come from?"

Adding that the Synodal Pathway was about the revival of the Church, from the bottom up, Noel said: "All opinions matter and are listened to. Jesus established the Church through Peter so we would be in communion with each other. We all experienced the isolation of Covid and the contrast in celebrating Mass through online.

"No matter what organisation you are part of, it is unlikely that you will agree with all their beliefs or regulations, but that doesn't mean we can't work

together and support each other, we should not be afraid to be questioned. Differences should be celebrated. The Church was never supposed to be a society of saints but a hospital for sinners. All are welcome, warts and all".

He continued: "In our community, there are many people out there, especially our young, with huge energy and gifts, but we are not connecting with them in a way which allows them to encounter Christ and allows them to be active participants in our Church".

Delighted to be part of such an active parish as Bellaghy, Noel noted some of the groups and volunteer roles that had been greatly supported pre-Covid, and which were in the process of rebuilding, for example Baptism Team, Children's Liturgy, In Memory of Me, GIFT, JPII, SVP, Eucharistic Ministers, Altar Servers, Choirs, Readers, Sacristan, Cleaners, Car park Stewards, Hospitality group, Finance Group, AccessNI, Buildings & Maintenance, and the Legion of Mary.

Expressing the hope that many in the parish would take up this

opportunity to have their say about life in the Church today, Noel gave examples of questions to ponder: What memory or experience of the Catholic Church do you value or cherish most in your life? How can our Church be a welcoming and inclusive community? How can we be listened to more effectively and encouraged to participate in decision-making processes in the Church? What inspires you in the life of your parish community to bring the love of Christ into the world? What discourages you? How can the duties of our priest be carried out by the laity? What do you think would make our parish better? What can each of us do and what can we do collectively to make it better?

He concluded: "We are part of this worldwide process of renewing the church from its deepest roots to be more united with one another and better carry out our mission. Your answers to the questions posed will be collated into a Diocesan report, which will inform the meeting of Bishops from all over the world in Rome in 2023".



Bellaghy Parish Synodal Team member, Noel O'Sullivan talking about the synodal process at Sunday Mass.



Claudy youth enthusiastic in response to Synod Listening Sessions

THE youth listening sessions as part of the Synodal process in the Parish of Clady are underway, with the young people happy for the opportunity to share their thoughts on the Church today.

Claudy is one of three parishes where the Youth Listening Sessions led by Diocesan Youth team are taking place, with the parish Faith Formation Co-ordinator, Charlotte Gormley

helping to co-ordinate it.

Held in the Parish Pastoral Centre on three Wednesday nights during March, Lizzie Rea and Niamh McLaughlin, of the Diocesan youth team, explained

on the first night what the Synod was about and they have been enthusiastic in their response.

The two remaining sessions for the youth of Clady take place on Wednesday, March 23 and 30,

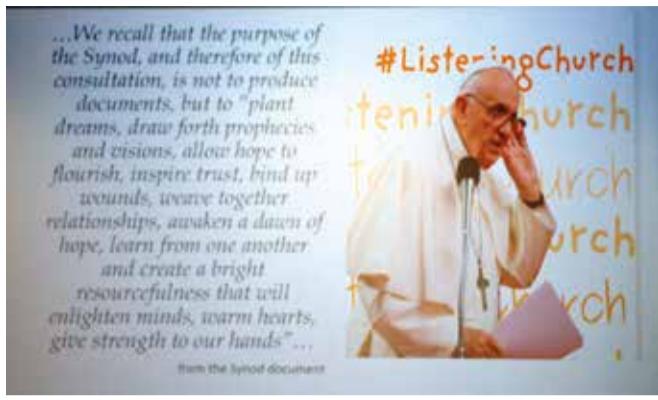
starting at 7 pm.

Youth Listening Sessions led by the Diocesan youth team will also take place in the parishes of Iskaheen & Upper Moville and Maghera, and other parishes are

welcome to contact Lizzie for resources to run them for their youth as part of the Synodal process.



Synodal sessions underway in parishes around the Diocese



SYNODAL initiatives are underway in parishes across the Diocese, with questionnaires being made available and listening sessions taking place in various locations, from parish halls in places like Iskaheen & Upper Moville, Three Patrons, Cappagh, and Bellaghy, to community allotments in Leckpatrick and a community hub in Culmore.

Addressing the gathering in Quigley's Point Community Centre, following an opening prayer, Maureen Scott of the Iskaheen & Upper Moville Pastoral Council, welcomed all as they set out "on a synodal journey, seeking together the way forward for the Church in the third millennium".

"We know that the longest journey begins with a single step. This is our first small, faltering step on that journey," said Maureen, "We will make mistakes but that is ok. We can hopefully learn from those mistakes. We speak and listen,

acknowledging that everyone has something to contribute to the search for the way forward and that we will all have something to learn from others. We share openly and honestly our own experience of Church life – the joys and sorrows, the hopes and fears, the successes and failures."

Noting that one of the first examples of this synodal process is to be found in Acts of Apostles Chapter 15, Maureen continued: "In the Church in Antioch there were differences of opinion between Christians from a Jewish background and Christians with no Jewish tradition. It was decided to send Paul and Barnabas and some others to Jerusalem to seek guidance from Peter and the Apostles. When Paul and Barnabas addressed the assembly, telling of their experience, we are told that 'the whole assembly kept silent and listened'. The whole assembly then agreed a way forward which seemed 'good to the Holy Spirit'.

"We can see clear parallels between that synod and what is happening in the current synod. There will be differences of opinion expressed in this room today, but we will listen respectfully and with open minds. It is not about debating or trying to convince others of your point of view".

Each table had a note taker to record comments/views anonymously on the various questions that were provided for the session, which included: What are the strengths of the Church here in the Diocese of Derry? What does this Diocese need to do to ensure people are more engaged in finding the way forward for our Church here? In our Church and parish, who is included/excluded? How is God speaking to us through the voices that are in our midst? How is God speaking to us through voices we sometimes ignore, including those on the margins? How do prayer and liturgical celebrations, especially Sunday Mass, inspire and guide you and your parish community? What hinders people from being active in your parish? To what issues does the Church need to pay particular attention? How could authority be better exercised in your parish? In a time of diminishing numbers of clergy, how can the authority of one become the responsibility of the baptised? From your small group sharing, name one insight where you heard the voice of the

Holy Spirit today?

The Three Patrons Parish held two listening sessions, one in the Emmaus Room beside St Patrick's Church, Pennyburn, and the other in St Pio House, beside St Joseph's Church, in Galliagh.

Led by parishioners, Fiona Payne and Sr Ethna McDermott, those gathered were given a number of questions to consider, including: "What are the ways in which our parish most successfully brings people together? What else could we do to invite others who currently feel excluded? How could we, individually and collectively, encourage more dialogue and participation to make our parish better? Are we looking in or are we looking out, as a parish community? How could we do both effectively?

The buzz of conversation suggested great interest in being part of this synodal journey within the Church...the hope is that the conversations will continue on from these parish gatherings and into homes, work places and social gatherings, etc, and lead to a renewed interest in building and being part of the true Church community that God has always desired.

The next monthly Holy Hour for the national Synodal Pathway in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, will take place on Saturday, March 26, after the 6 pm Mass.



Helping prepare some refreshments for those gathered for the Iskaheen & Upper Moville listening session.



Some of those who attended the Parish Listening Sessions in Three Patrons.



Facilitating the synod listening session in the Parish of Iskaheen & Upper Moville.



Greenlough centenarian stays true to the Rosary that bonded her family down the generations



Kathleen with beautiful Rosary beads brought from Rome as a gift from her grand-daughter, Aileen.

GREENLOUGH centenarian, Kathleen McCloskey looks nowhere near 100 years old as she sits serenely in her comfortable armchair in the living room of her Beechland Park home, in the village of Clady, Portglenone. And that calm and accepting nature, along with her strong faith, may well be the secret to her long life.

Born on February 6, 1922, she was just 17 when World War II broke out and with some talk about the current war between Russia and Ukraine risking the outbreak of World War III, Kathleen's response is the same as in the face of any difficulties down the years, including this challenging period of Covid-19... to quietly pray and put her trust in God.

Born in the townland of Moneystaghan, on a small farm just down the road from her current home, Kathleen is the only surviving member of the family of 11 children born to Charles and Cassie Rankin. She was the third eldest of five girls and six boys, who lost their mother when she was only 42. All of the boys moved to live in either England or America, except Pat, who stayed in the home place.

After leaving school, Kathleen worked in Clady factory, and when she got married at 19 to local man, Thomas Edward McCloskey, known as 'The Scutcher' from the townland of Innishrush, she devoted herself to rearing their family of nine and working from home as a very successful dressmaker.

"She doesn't go out to Mass

As well as making all her children's clothes, and even their bedroom slippers using cardboard for the sole and stitching material to it, the gifted seamstress made dancing dresses for her daughters and the local dancing school, as well as kilts for the Greenlough Pipe Band. She was the go-to person for anyone wanting a formal or wedding dress, with the first wedding dress she made being for her sister, Carrie, and she made all her grandchildren's First Holy Communion dresses.

Her son, Barry, took after her and was working as a fashion designer on 5th Avenue, in New York, when he sadly died 26 years ago, at the age of 36. Kathleen also suffered the loss of her son, Ted. Her remaining children are Tom and Mary, who live in Toronto, Chris, who lives in Melbourne, and Joe, Bernadette, Brigid and Ann, who live locally. She also has 25 grandchildren, 53 great grandchildren and one great, great grandchild.

Just as her parents handed on the faith to Kathleen and her siblings, she has done a good job of passing on the baton of faith to her family, with Ann believing that her mother's great faith has been a major contributing factor to her healthy mind and body in her 100th year.

"My mother has great trust in God," said Ann, "no matter what difficulties she has had in life, she has never flown in the face of God. Her Rosary beads are never far from her."

"She doesn't go out to Mass

now, but the priest comes to visit her once a month, and she enjoys joining in the celebration of Masses being said in different parts of the country, on the television, though her eyesight isn't as good these days".

Commenting on how attentive her mother had been to handing on the faith to them, Ann recalled: "Mammy instilled the faith in us, and daddy did too, and we all have great faith to this day, even down to this latest generation. Our faith was between us and God, but steered by mammy.

"Before we went out the door every morning to go to school, she started us off with our prayers and we prayed until we got finished, and that was maybe at Clady corner.

"The Rosary was said every night; it was our bonding as a family. The girls in the family joined the choir and the boys served on the altar, just as daddy had done, though he was put off the altar for drinking the wine!"

Charitable

Ann went on to say that her mother was also very charitable, always giving to St Vincent de Paul and Trocaire, etc, remarking: "It wouldn't matter if it was the last pound in her purse, it would go to charity, and this is something that has been passed down the generations as well".

Confirming that her Catholic faith is very important to her, Kathleen recalled: "When I was at home, we all said the Rosary together at night and our own prayers in the morning and during the day. I kept this up with my children as best I could, though I was kept busy with a big family. The first prayer I always say is the Rosary and I mostly pray it for my family".

Feeling very blessed to have had such a devoted mother, Ann said: "Mammy lived and worked for her family. She absolutely adores her family and we adore her. She is very gentle and quiet, but she was also the disciplinarian in the family and brought us up well".

Having lived through many changes in society, Kathleen has been a great source of information for her grandchildren, and now her great-grandchildren, about life in days gone by. Her great-granddaughter, Evie was delighted to have the oldest interviewee for a school project, when Kathleen shared her memories of what Christmas was like when she was a young girl.

Sharing what is still a clear Christmas memory from her

childhood, Kathleen said: "People had nothing then, not even a tree because they were so poor. But I remember one Christmas getting a mug with a rabbit on the side of it and an orange inside it".

Very content with her life now, Kathleen remarked: "I notice no difference now that I am 100. I just take every day as it comes. I just go with it".

Saying that her mother was very good at adapting to change and going with the flow, Ann added: "Nothing is any bother to her. She is always a great sport and if she can make it somewhere, she will go. Nothing ruffles her at all, she is very peaceful and gentle, and didn't get excited in the slightest about reaching her 100th birthday.

"When I said to her a couple of weeks before that it was very hard to believe that she would soon be 100, she just said that she didn't know what all the fuss was about, and that it was only another birthday".

To celebrate the very special occasion, Kathleen's daughter, Brigid, and son-in-law, Terence Laverty, hosted a gathering of 70 members of the immediate family in their home at Carlane Road, Toomebridge. Covid restrictions prevented some family members travelling home from abroad, so it was a great birthday gift when her daughter, Mary and her husband managed to travel home from Toronto for the celebration.

Being well cared for in the cosy home she has lived in for the last 70 years, with the garden she spent many years lovingly creating now full of beautiful flowers and plants to give thanks for, as she sits restfully in her armchair looking out the window each day God gifts her, Kathleen looks set to see another few birthdays.

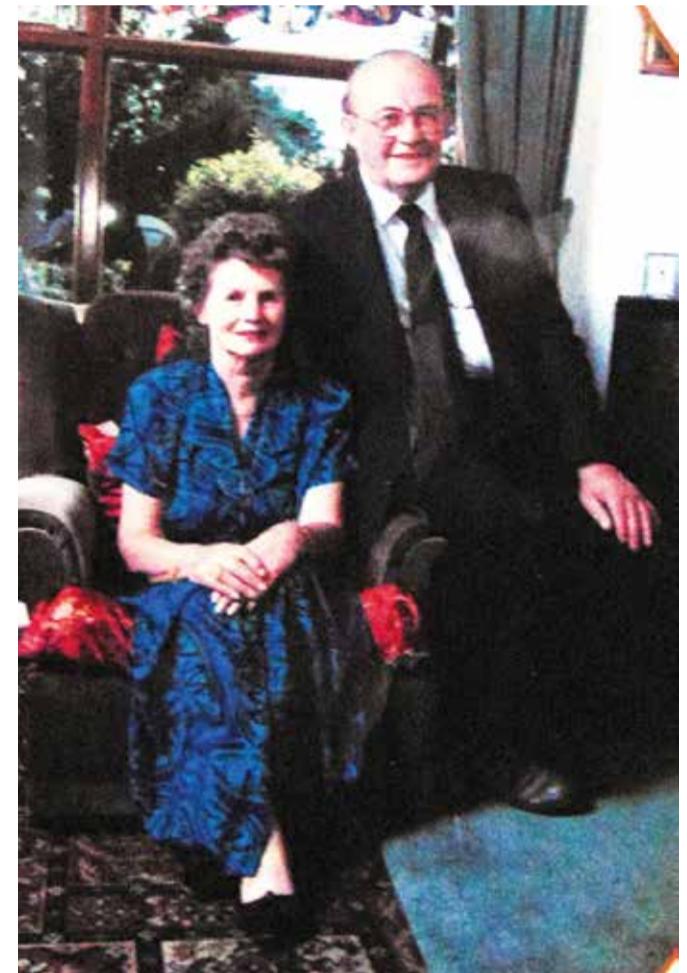
At 100 years young, she is still mobile, sleeps well, and looks forward to a glass of wine with her dinner at the weekend...a blessed life indeed.



One of the 100th birthday gifts Kathleen received was a portrait sketched from a photograph taken on her 99th birthday.



Kathleen and Thomas with their family of nine.



Kathleen and her late husband, Thomas on their 50th wedding anniversary.



A gifted seamstress, Kathleen still has the star blanket she made about 50 years ago.

As second set of men's five First Saturday Rosary prayer in public gets underway, Derry men were amongst Magherafelt gathering that heard...

In kneeling to pray, we are humbling ourselves and saying sorry to God

THE first Saturday in March saw the beginning of another set of five First Saturdays Rosary Prayer in public by an ever-growing number of men, led by Patrick McChrystal, of Human Life International, and Owen Gallagher.

On Saturday, March 5, a number of men from the Derry Diocese were amongst the 120 men who met in the centre of the town of Magherafelt, on what was a lovely sunny day, to kneel and pray the Rosary. This was the sixth town in Northern Ireland that they have gathered in since the crusade of prayer was launched in Derry on the first Saturday in October 2021.

After this, they gathered on the First Saturdays of the following months in Newry, Belfast, Armagh and Omagh.

Addressing the men at the start of the time of prayer, Patrick said: "After fulfilling the five First Saturdays, let's give thanks to God that restrictions are significantly lifted. We could not be doing anything better than what we are doing today."

"With my colleague, Owen Gallagher, this started in October in Derry after we were inspired by seeing a couple of hundred Polish men on their knees in a town square in Poland. We had a conversation on the 'phone and,

low and behold, Our Lady worked and here we all are".

He added: "St Louis de Montfort tells us that public prayer is far more powerful than private prayer and what you are doing right now, as the traffic goes past, who knows what soul God wants to use you to touch".

Commending the men for getting down on their knees to pray, Patrick noted: "Louis de Montfort was told by Our Lady that praying the Rosary kneeling is far more powerful".

He went on to explain that the First Saturday prayer was also to honour Our Lady of Fatima, saying: "Our Lady promised that she would grant the graces necessary for salvation for all those who, on the First Saturdays, receive Holy Communion, go to Confession within seven days either side, pray five decades of the Rosary and meditate on them for 15 minutes. She promises to grant all of us the gift of the graces necessary for salvation".

If the men of Ireland had taken proper responsibility for the women in their lives there would not be an abortion crisis. In some way, an abortion crisis is a manifestation of men's irresponsibility. I was a pharmacist for multiple years and dispensed the contraceptive pill, so I can't point the finger at

to what is going on in the world right now and we want to lift up Russia in our hearts in this Rosary, for its conversion.

"Russia is probably one of the only countries that Our Lady actually mentioned by name in all the different apparitions around the world, and there is no doubt that Russia is close to her heart, and the Enemy wants to corrupt anything that is good. So, we cannot be doing anything better than making reparation and repentance today".

Quoting 2 Chronicles 7:14, which reads... "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land", Patrick remarked: "In kneeling now to pray, we are humbling ourselves and we are saying sorry to Heaven, we are saying sorry to God".

"If the men of Ireland had taken proper responsibility for the women in their lives there would not be an abortion crisis. In some way, an abortion crisis is a manifestation of men's irresponsibility. I was a pharmacist for multiple years and dispensed the contraceptive pill, so I can't point the finger at

anybody. "The contraceptive pill is an abortive drug. Not everybody realises that. I am making my own reparation. We all have our own stories - we have girlfriends and wives and all sorts of relationships over the years. We are here to say sorry to God for any way in which we have used or abused any woman in our lives, directly or indirectly."

"But not only that, we can do it on behalf of all the men of Ireland, our brothers in Christ who may not even know we are here."

"Heaven," he continued, "sees a repentant heart, a repentant nation. If Ireland turned back to God and repented, which we are doing today, I guarantee you the whole of Ireland and the world would be changed forever. It is very simple, but reparation and repentance is key to unlocking God's heart."

He went on to say: "We are praying for an end to the entire Covid circumstances, giving thanks for what has happened so far, and for the conversion of our nation back to God, for an end to abortion, contraception and all forms of impurity, and in reparation for all of those things". Kneeling in five rows before a Statue of Our Lady of Fatima, the men prayed the five Joyful



Mysteries of the Rosary, and meditated on a reflection on each. The praying of each decade was led in a different language – Latin, English, Spanish, Irish and Polish – while the men responded in English.

To mark St Patrick's Day, on March 17, men and their families

gathered at the Mass Rock at Slemish Mountain for the praying of the Rosary, followed by the celebration of Mass.

The next Men's Public Rosary will take place on the first Saturday of April in Ballymena, at Greenvale Street, just off Thomas Street, at 1 pm.

Rosary Campaign for peace in the world

THE heartbreaking news of the plight of the people of Ukraine under a Russian attack that has shocked the world, has led to many people and their priests in parishes around the Derry Diocese offering much prayer for their suffering brothers and sisters, as well as responding to calls for humanitarian aid.

Calling for schools around the Diocese to get involved in a Rosary campaign to pray especially for the suffering children of the Ukraine, Fr Paul Farren, director of the Diocesan Catechetical Centre, said: "One million children are refugees due to the war in Ukraine. We want to pray one Hail Mary for each of them, that is 1,000,000 Hail Mary's, which equals 20,000 Rosaries".

St Mary's PS in Draperstown, in the Parish of Ballinascreen, was one of the first to respond with a message to say that they would be joining the Rosary Campaign to pray the Rosary for peace in the world, by saying a decade of the Rosary with the children every morning at 9.15 am.

During the apparitions of Our Lady in Fatima to three shepherd children 105 years ago, from May 13 to October 13, 1917, Mary told Lucia Dos Santos and her cousins, Jacinta and Francisco Marto, to pray the Rosary each day to bring

peace to the world and an end to the war. She also asked them to pray for the conversion of Russia, and to do penance, and said that God wanted the world to have a devotion to Her Immaculate Heart.

In response to the continuing devastating attacks on Ukraine by Russia, Pope Francis has invited the bishops of the world, along with their priests, to join in the Consecration of Russia and Ukraine to the Immaculate Heart of Mary on Friday, March 25, the Feast of the Annunciation, which will be pronounced by the Holy Father in St Peter's Basilica.

The Papal Almoner, Card Konrad Krajewski will perform the act of consecration at Fatima, as the envoy of Pope Francis.

The Apostolic Nuncio to Ireland, Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo, has contacted the Archbishops and Bishops of Ireland regarding

In response to this, Fr Paul Farren is to lead a decade of the Rosary for peace for Ukraine with Russia at 9.30 am on Friday, March 25, in St Eugene's Cathedral, and it is hoped that all schools in the Diocese will join in via the Cathedral webcam – <http://steugenescathedral.com/webcam.html>



SISTER CLARE
Rosary

EVERY MONDAY
AT 8.30pm

ST JOSEPH'S
TERMONBACCA
CARMELITE PRIORY
& RETREAT CENTRE
Southway
Derry
N. Ireland BT48 9XE

Join Us!

All Or Nothing

May Rosary at the Grottos

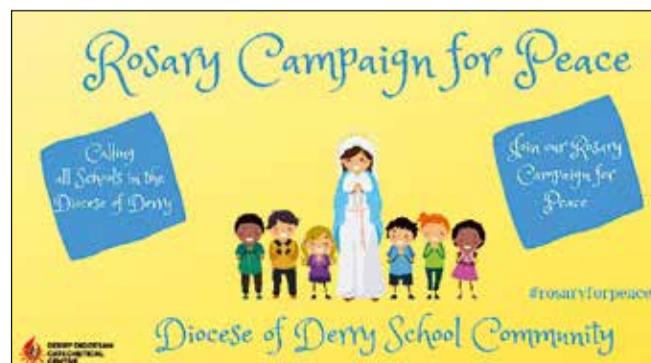
coastalrosaryireland.ie

St Louis de Montfort highlighted the importance of praying together when he said: "Almighty God is very pleased to have people gathered together in prayer; the angels and the blessed unite to praise Him unceasingly. The just on earth in several communities join in communal prayer night and day."

"Our Blessed Lord expressly recommended common prayer to His Apostles and disciples and promised that whenever two or three were gathered together in His name He would be there in the midst of them" (Cf. Matt. 18:20).



Fr Sean O'Donnell leading the Rosary for Faith and Life at the Immaculate Conception Grotto in the Waterside, last year.



Celebrating St Patrick's Day Mass in Pennyburn, and planting an oak sapling in memory of dedicated deceased parishioners, Bishop Donal told those gathered...

The task for this generation is to learn from Patrick about clearing the ground and planting good seed

ON St Patrick's Day, Bishop Donal had the honour of planting an oak sapling in the grounds of St Patrick's Church, Pennyburn, with the help of a young parishioner.

It was one of three that were blessed for planting in the grounds of each of the churches of the Three Patrons' Parish to commemorate deceased parishioners whose faith and commitment was the bedrock of the parish community.

Fr Dr Joshy Parokkaran, Three Patrons curate and new chaplain to the Syro Malabar Community, blessed the sapling to be planted within the grounds of St Joseph's Church, Galliagh, at the end of the St Patrick's Mass there, while Fr Gerard Mongan blessed the sapling for planting in the grounds of St Brigid's, Carnhill, on Sunday, March 20.

The idea was that of Lily Tyre, a dedicated member of the St Brigid's faith community, and when she put the memorial suggestion to the Parish Council they gladly took it on board, contacting Derry City and Strabane District Council with regards it providing the Parish with the oak trees.

St Patrick's weekend was chosen for the planting of the memorial trees as it marked two years since the Covid-19 lockdown in the country, and beginning of a period of great suffering and loss for many.

It was also fitting to mark the occasion on the Feast Day of Ireland's Patron Saint, who had returned to Ireland as a missionary despite the suffering he had experienced as a slave there.

In his St Patrick's Day homily while celebrating Mass in Irish, in St Patrick's Pennyburn, Bishop Donal commented on the love Patrick had had in his heart for God and the people of Ireland on returning as a missionary.

"This tells me", he said, "that what can hold us back from being good missionaries for Christ is not merely lack of enthusiasm but

a shortage of love – love for Christ and love for our neighbour".

He added: "The most effective missionaries to the hurting often have to go through a period of painful conversion, so that they enable the suffering to encounter the Christ who suffered for them. Like Jesus, Patrick spent his life for the sake of the Good News. There is no easy way to become a credible witness for Christ".

While Patrick faced many challenges, with the task of converting the Irish seeming impossible, Bishop Donal remarked: "On many occasions he will have wondered whether he was going to have any real effect on Ireland. We face many challenges in the Irish Church. There is the reality of a very uncertain society, where many people's dreams have been shaken by frightening economic pressures, Covid, widespread addiction and the clouds of war.

"We are also living through a major change in how we, as Church, relate to our society. Sins from the past hang over us. Clergy and laity can seem increasingly old. And yet, that is the reality that we face. Patrick would tell us, not to moan about the problems but to get started. Self-pity was never the mark of a disciple of Christ, nor of a follower of St Patrick".

He continued: "The Synodal Pathway is not merely a gimmick or a short-term notion. It is a Gospel way of discerning together where God is leading us in the concrete circumstances that we face. We need each other as we take on the mission that we have to preach the Gospel here and now, today.

"There is no value in moaning about how hard things are or blaming somebody else for where we are. These are the realities in which we are called to be a missionary people. St Patrick, the realist, would tell us to get started. We can only start from where we are".

Saying that what is really amazing about Patrick's ministry is what happened over the next



decades, Bishop Donal noted: "He died in 461 and 60 years later our own St Columba was born. Within a short time after Patrick's ministry, something powerful began to develop on this island. Monasteries of idealistic young women and men sprang up, producing learning and great manuscripts. Waves of young missionaries headed for Britain and Europe. Many of them re-evangelised areas that had previously been Christian but which had collapsed with the demise of the Roman Empire.

"People of faith sow seeds, without having to see the harvest. Like St Paul, they trust that one sows and another waters but that it is God who gives the growth (Cf 1 Cor 3:7). The task for this generation is to learn from Patrick about clearing the ground and planting good seed. We do not need the pride of seeing that our labours have borne fruit. We

are people who journey in hope, trusting that the Church needs spring-time sowers so that others can reap the rich harvest to the glory of God".

He concluded: "This island faces many challenges. The main ones are not starvation or foreign occupation. But the Druids of the new secular agenda have little to offer that inspires generous young hearts. 'Eat, drink and be merry - for tomorrow you die' is a sad message that has never inspired heroism or beauty.

"A society that does not know whether it loves life or scorns it will never help people live life to the full. For those of us who seek to follow Christ, Patrick is a model of one driven by love of Christ and of people, a missionary who deals with the realities in front of him and one who labours with supreme hope that grace will win in the long term".



Parishioner, Lily Tyre planting the oak sapling in the grounds of St Brigid's Carnhill.



Bishop Donal planting the oak sapling in the grounds of St Patrick's Pennyburn on St Patrick's Day.



Fr Dr Joshy Parokkaran blessing the oak sapling on St Patrick's Day, to be planted in the grounds of St Joseph's Church, Galliagh.

Eangach

Lúireach Phádraig

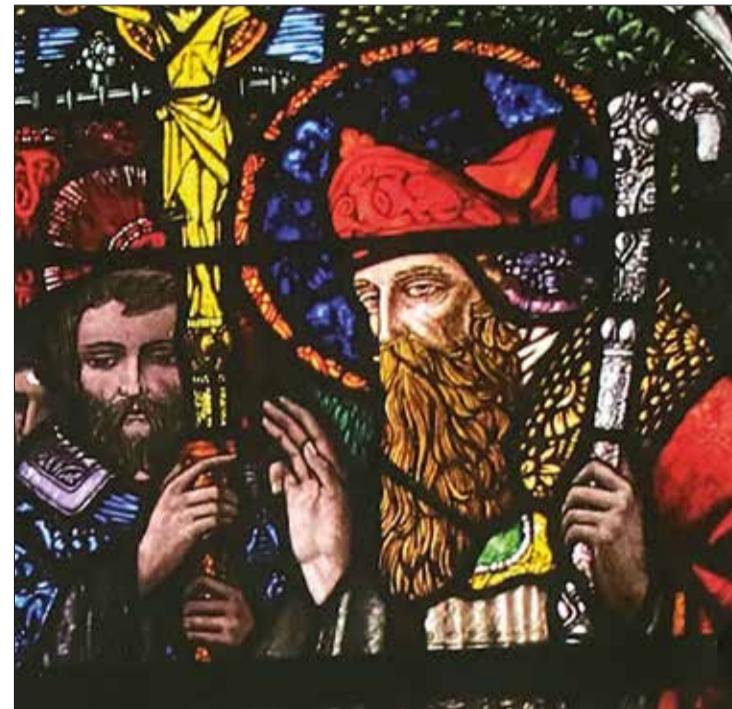
Ár nDúchas

Lúireach Phádraig

Críost liom,
Críost romham,
Críost i mo dhiadh,
Críost ionam,
Críost fóm,
Críost os mo chionn,
Críost ar mo dheis,
Críost ar mo chlé,
Críost i leithead,
Críost i bhfaide,
Críost in airde,
Críost mar a luim,
Críost mar a shuim,
Críost mar a n-éirim,
Críost i gcroí gach duine
a smaoiniún orm,
Críost i mbéal gach duine
a labhraíonn liom,
Críost i súil gach duine
a fhéachann orm,
Críost i gcluas gach duine
a éisteann liom.

Dílseacht is Dóchas

Fion is flúirse
ag bainis an iontais;
suáilceas is saorise
ag bord an mhuintearais.
Grá foighdeach is séimh,
lán de mhaithiúna;
grá seasmhach, gan maíomh,
le dílseacht is dóchas.



Naomh Pádraig

Éirím inniu
tré neart tréan-ghlaoch ar an
Tríonóid,
tré chreideamh i dTriaracht,
tré admháil Aondacht
Cruthaitheoir na Cruthaíochta.

Éirím inniu
tré neart giniúin Chríost agus a
bhaisteadh,
a chéasta agus a adhlactha,
a aiséirí agus a dheasghabhála,
tré chumhacht a philleadh chun
breithiúnais.

Éirím inniu
i neart grá Seirifim,
in umhlaiocht Aingeal,
i bhfreastal Ardaingeal,
i ndóchas aiséirí chun luach

saothair,
in urnaithe uasalaithreacha,
i dtairngireacht na bhfáithe,
i dteagasc na nAspal,
i gcreideamh na gcreidmheach,
i neamhchiontacht maighdean,
i gníomhartha na bhfíréan.

Éirím inniu
i gcumhacht na bhFlaitheas,
i soillse gréine,
i ngile na gealaí,
in áilleacht tine,
i mire lasrach,
i luas gaoithe,
i ndoimhneacht farraige,
i mbuanseasmhacht talún,
i ndaingneacht carraige.

Éirím inniu

Neart Dé dom stiúradh,
cumhacht Dé dom chumhdach,
críonnacht Dé dom threorú,
súil Dé ag faire dom,
cluas Dé ag éisteacht liom,
briathar Dé ag labhairt liom,
lámh Dé dom chosaint,
slí Dé dom tharraingt,
sciath Dé mar dhídean dom,
slua Dé dom chaomhnú
ar ghaiste diabhal,
ar chathú duáilcí,
ar mhianta mí-ionraic,
ar lucht mo mhillte,
i gcéin is i gcóngar,
im aonar nó i gcomhluadar.

Gloim chugam inniu
na móir-chumhachtaí
in aghaidh náimhde coirp agus
anama
in aghaidh asarlaíocht fáithe
bréige,
in aghaidh droch-dhlíthe

págánacha,
in aghaidh claoen-reachta
eiriceach,
in aghaidh adhradh íola,
in aghaidh geasa cailleach,
gaibhne agus draoithe,
in aghaidh gach eolas
a thruaillíonn coirp agus anam
duine.

Críost do mo chumhdach inniu
ar nimh, ar loscadh,
ar bháthadh, ar ghoineadh,
go dtaga chugam
luach mo shaothair.

Is leis an Tiarna an Slánú,
is leis an Tiarna an Slánú.
Is le Críost an Slánú.
Go raibh do Shlánú linn de shíor,
a Chríost.

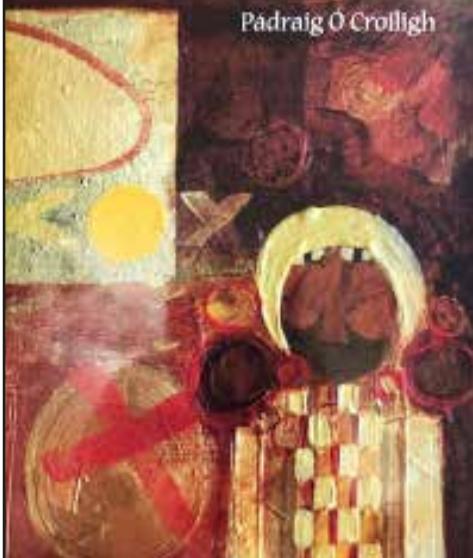
Amen.



An Leabhar Aifrinne

Rún na hEaglaise

Pádraig Ó Crolligh



Ministrí na Sacraiminte

Táimid i ndiaidh a bheith ag meabhrú ar shaol na lánúine mar shacraimint. Caithfear bealach éigin a aimsiú leis an tuiscint seo a léiriú ag an searmanas i dteach an phobail, lá an phósta. Tá sé soiléir le feiceáil gurb é seo an tuiscint a bhí ag na hEaspag nuair a cuireadh an searmanas seo le chéile. Mar shampla, ba chóir aontacht na lánúine atá le ceiliúradh ar an ócáid seo a bheith soiléir don phobal atá i láthair. Is é an nós atá againn sa tir seo go mbíonn an fear sa suíochán tosaigh ag fanacht leis an bhrídeog, a thiocfaidh isteach go sollúnta — in éineacht lena

hathair. Ní mar seo a tharlaíonn sé i dtíortha eile, mar shampla sa Fhrainc siúlann an bhrídeog agus a fear isteach le chéile.

Tá sé le tuiscint fosta go bhfanfaidh an lánúin le chéile i rith an tsearmanais, agus iarrann an Eaglais orthu seasamh ar aghaidh a chéile, go mbeidh sé soiléir go bhfuil an bheirt seo ag labhairt lena chéile, agus ní leis an sagart. Níl sa sagart ach finné, atá ansin ar son na hEaglaise, agus go minic ar son an stáit chomh maith. Ach is iad an lánúin ministrí na sacraiminte, bunaithe ar shagartacht a mBaiste. Is

leosan na focail thábhachtacha a dhéanann sacraimint as seo, agus is leosan an gníomh tola a fhógraíonn siad leis na focail sin. Gníomh agus focal curtha mar bharr ar an lámh agus focal a bhí eatarthu go dtí sin. Is sacraimint iadanois.

Tarlaíonn an searmanas seo i lár an Aifrinne, i ndiaidh an tsoiscéil. Mar sin caithfidh an ceol a bheith fóirsteach don Aifreann agus a bheith sollúnta dá réir. Caithfimid cuimhneamh ar an rud iontach atá ag tarlú san Aifreann, agus gan a bheag a bheas gach lá dá saol Criostaí as seo amach.

ofrála ag dul a bheith ann, ba chóir na hofrálacha a thabhairt chuig an lánúin sa chéad áit, agus ansin an lánúin iad a bhrónnadh ar an sagart. Léiríonn sé sin go bhfuil gach rud san Aifreann seo tóightha thart ar an lánúin, faoi mar a tharla i gCána. Más féidir é, is ceart an lánúin a bheith le chéile taobh istigh den sanctóir ionas go mbeidh sé soiléir le feiceáil go bhfuil an pósadh seo ceangailte go dlúth leis an Aifreann, mar a bheas gach lá dá saol Criostaí as seo amach.

Galliagh parishioner, Sharon Gorman shares her growing awareness of the Holy Trinity in her life and her desire to be transformed more and more, saying...

When you surrender to God, everything is so much easier and better



Sharon Gorman, Galliagh.

MANY are the changes that have taken place in our lives over the past two years, with the arrival of Covid-19 in our midst; some have been traumatic and some therapeutic. For Three Patrons parishioner, Sharon Gorman it was a time when she felt drawn closer to God and filled with a great sense of peace that led, at one point, to her writing 25 spiritual poems within the space of a couple of weeks.

The poems reveal Sharon's love for the Holy Trinity, her ever-growing awareness of the presence of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in her life, and her desire to be transformed more and more through this.

Having grown up in a faith-filled home, the 46-year-old has been building a beautiful relationship with God throughout her life, opening herself up to living more and more according to His holy Will.

The third eldest in a family of three boys and one girl born to John and Annemarie Gorman, Sharon recalls living in the Carnhill area of Derry until she was eight years old and then the family moving to live in Galliagh.

"Growing up, we were regular attendees at Mass with mum and dad," she said, adding: "We always prayed the Rosary as a family at night. Dad has great faith, but mum was the one who really instilled it in us from a very young age."

"However, during my teenage years, I did my own thing a little. God was always there in my life, though I fought with Him a lot when I was younger, and when I was about 17, I started going back to Mass regularly".

"My mum tried to get me to go to Search," recalled Sharon, "but I never had the draw to go to it or to go on pilgrimages. I used to fast a lot when I was younger, and it was no bother for me to fast for three days at a time.

"From I was very young, I have always felt the Father's hands on my life, His protection. I have always heard His voice and what He wanted me to do in life. I believe that everybody can hear the Father, if they listen to Him".

She continued: "As I got older and started to fancy certain boys, I would say to the Father, 'I fancy that one, what do you think?', and He would say, 'No, he is not for you'. I wasn't always a 'good girl' but I always knew what God wanted for me.

"I discovered that whatever I did, if I chose it for myself it wasn't right, but when I listened to God, everything would go smoothly. So, I decided to let Him take control and that is what I have been doing for a long time now.

When you surrender to God, everything is so much easier and better. At the end of the day, He has our best interests at heart".

"The last date I was on was when I was 27 years old, so I

have been celibate about 20 years now," revealed Sharon, saying: "I felt that the Lord didn't want me dating anyone. When I stopped going on dates I had great peace because I was doing what He wanted, and I couldn't be happier. People have asked me if I miss being married, and I say 'No'. I just feel it in my soul that it is the right thing".

She added: "When I was really young, I always knew that this wasn't home and I would always ask God why He didn't take me home as I could do more than I could here. When you know your home is Heaven, you desire to go home at any time. I used to tell my parents when I was younger that if the Father came for me that I was going with Him. I said the same into my 20s.

"God has told me that I am not here to do great things, but little things. He showed me a pitch black scene with a fire on top of a mountain, and said that the little light was me and that I am to become fire to ignite lives. When the Father ignites you and you ignite others, that is spreading your little light to others".

Sharon has felt called to be a carer for her parents, which she has been doing since she left school.

A former pupil of Carnhill Primary and St Brigid's High School, she recalled having great difficulty at school in being dyslexic: "When I write, I can write anything, but if I look at a word and it doesn't look like it sounds that's where I have difficulty.

"After leaving St Brigid's High School, I went to the Tech to do hairdressing and beautician and I was terrible at both. When the course was finished, I started looking after my parents and I have been their carer ever since I was 20.

"People say to me that I have given up my life for my mother and father, but I feel that that is what I am supposed to do; I am to care for my mother and father. My mother is 70 now and has a lot of health issues, including possibly being in the early stages of dementia, and my father has heart problems.

"One thing that the Father has told me is that He can always change His mind, but for now this is where He wants me".

Grief

Recalling a particular painful time in her life, Sharon spoke of the sudden death of her brother, Patrick on January 25, 2014: "He died of a massive heart-attack when he had just turned 40. We were very close and part of me died with him; the grief just overtook me and it took me a

good five years to get over his death. Patrick had a great faith and he would always say to me that he couldn't wait to go home to the Lord.

"I didn't feel angry with God when my brother died; instead I stepped closer and closer to Him. However, in becoming more aware of Elohim in recent years, I have had an illumination of conscience and noticed that my language was not very lady-like. I think that was part of my grief from Patrick dying; that was the effect it had on me."

Referring to the Holy Spirit as 'Elohim', Sharon explained: "We all know Our Lord's name and the Father's name, so I asked the Holy Spirit for His name as I didn't want to be calling Him Holy Spirit all the time, and He said to call Him 'Ruach Elohim'."

Meaning 'breath of the spirit', 'Elohim' is the name for God used frequently in the Hebrew Bible. In many references in the Old Testament, the Ruach Elohim comes upon an individual and allows him to speak for the Lord."

"Two years ago, Elohim sought me out," said Sharon, "I wouldn't really have spoken to the Holy Spirit before that. I was quite happy going to Mass and living a quiet life, then during lockdown Elohim came to me. He filled me with great peace and calmness; nothing bothered me. I felt that the Lord was in control and He brought me to 'Living Disciples', which is led by the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal.

"I was on Facebook one night during lockdown, nosing, and this website came up about 'Living Disciples'. I went into it to find out what it was about and, as I was reading, I knew that God wanted me to be part of this. I watched the classes online for two or three weeks and then Fr Charles, cfr, started the group meeting in-person again and I decided to go along. That was in April last year and I am still going. It wasn't like me to do anything like that, but I just went along on the Tuesday night and felt like I had been going there for years".

She continued: "When I started 'Living Disciples', they were discussing the spiritual gifts and about developing them, for example, going out and spreading the Word of God, or maybe the gift is that of healing or prophecy. It is opening us to what God wants for us; how to use the gifts of the Spirit that we have been given.

"For me, it is about getting closer to Elohim and letting Him fill my life with His love. It is all about building the Church and building the body of Christ. The Lord is doing a lot of healing. With Covid, people have been locked away from each other.

The Father wants people to come together again and connect, and to open the eyes of non-believers to believe that God is real. All that He asks of us is to love Him. No one else will ever love us like He does".

Following a conversation with Emma Devine, the sacristan at her local Church of St Joseph, in Galliagh, Sharon is now also learning more about Divine Will, attending classes led by Emma on Wednesday nights in St Pio House.

"God wants me to surrender everything to Him, for me to realise that He is in control of everything," said Sharon, "Everything He does is for my best interests. I just have to place myself in His hands and He will lead. I cannot say 'No' to Him for I am the Father's daughter".

She is learning more too about the Third Order, which consists of religious and lay people who try to follow St Francis' spirit by performing works of teaching, charity and social service.

Sharon has found that when reading the Scriptures or about Divine Will she has been writing more and more.

She remarked: "The words just keep coming and I have this urge to write them down. Last year, I

wrote 25 poems in about two weeks. My poems are spiritual and the more I read the Scriptures, the more I write. The more you read the Word, the more you hear The Word, and I find that whatever I read relates to whatever I am going through that day; it is personal to me. Whatever God wants me to learn that day, I will get in the reading. I was reading Daniel the other night and what I heard was – I am the Father and I am here. I am in control. I have everything in my hands, don't worry about anything".

"Whatever He wants for me I am happy to go with it," added Sharon, "Right now, it is about my writing and sharing it. If it is to go out onto the streets and set people on fire for the Lord, I would be happy for that. I feel that the Holy Spirit works with your personality. I have seen Him do that with other people. If someone is more confident to speak out, He will use that for a different purpose for evangelising.

"For me, I feel that this would be on a one-on-one. It is nice and intimate to sit and have a conversation. You could change someone's life with a simple word and not know it because is not you, but the Holy Spirit that is speaking".

Divine God

*My love My light My joy
Holy is your name
Mercy is your gift
Love is your blessing
There is none like you
There is no other than you
My peace My hope My faith
I adore you
My thoughts are all of you
Love me Hold me Mould me Mend me.
Amen*

Love of you

*Beloved Jesus
You have perfumed and bejewelled me
You have dressed me in many colours
You have placed a smile upon me
Like flowers rising to meet the sun
Pour out your oil faith maker
For your love is strong as death
It burns like blazing fire
Its passion powerful
I am your precious pearl
I sing songs of praise
I feel my heartbeats harmonise with yours
I let my will flow through your divine
Light and life
Embraced in you the rhythm of life never ends.*

'Behold Your Mother' retreat deepens appreciation of Our Lady by Aoife O'Neill

DURING the first weekend in March, Termonbacca hosted its first large retreat since the Covid-19 pandemic began, when the Servant Sisters of the Home of the Mother came to deliver a women's retreat.

Sr Mary, Sr Megan, and Sr Rachel Maria led the weekend retreat, which was attended by over 40 women.

The theme was 'Behold Your Mother' and, through various talks and guided meditations, the Sisters presented Our Blessed Mother as an example, teacher, model and mother for women today.

Taking part in the retreat helped many of the women to gain a greater appreciation of the gift given to us by Jesus at the foot of the cross, when He said, "Behold Your Mother".

There was ample opportunity to take time and reflect on the many ways Our Blessed Mother guides, protects and loves us, her children, and how she intercedes with her Son on our behalf.

The beautiful music and singing from the Sisters really helped create an atmosphere of prayer and praise, and many of the retreatants were visibly touched through it.

Adoration and the celebration of Mass formed the central part of each day and, with stunning guided reflections during

Adoration, it became the highlight for most of the women.

Group discussions on various topics gave us all the opportunity to share personal experiences of our own relationship with Our Lady.

The sun shone brightly all weekend, making it even more pleasant, with

plenty of free time and opportunities to walk in the beautiful surroundings and process what was being said.

On Sunday afternoon everyone was reluctant to leave, however, we were all looking forward to a new appreciation of Mary in our lives.



Eamon was a member of the Cursillo Secretariat.

Great sadness over death of Derry Cursillista, Eamon McCamphill

THE news of the death of Eamon McCamphill, of Northland Avenue in the Cathedral Parish in Derry, after a short illness, caused great shock and sadness amongst his family and the many who had known him, especially his good friends in Cursillo, which he and his wife, Kathleen were dedicated to.

The large congregation gathered in St Eugene's Cathedral for Eamon's funeral on Saturday, March 12, was a reflection of the high regard and fondness many had for him. His Requiem Mass was concelebrated by Fr Paul Farren, Adm St Eugene's, Fr Joe Gormley, Cursillo spiritual director, and Fr Sean O'Donnell, a fellow Cursillista.

In his homily, Fr Paul spoke of Eamon as a man of peace, saying: "I can say without fear of contradiction that he embodied the peace of Jesus. He was a peaceful, holy man, which enabled him to live a life of peace and tranquillity, and that enabled him to spread this to others."

He added: "Jesus, Mary, Mass and prayer were central to his life. This helped him life and it certainly helped him to accept his death. Eamon had no fear of death. Not only did he prepare himself for his death, but his family too. After faith, family was priority for Eamon".

Addressing Eamon's three children, Noeleen, Aidan and Kieran, Fr Paul said: "I know he taught you how to love, and that is the most important gift that parents can give to their children"

Pointing out that the 71-year-old

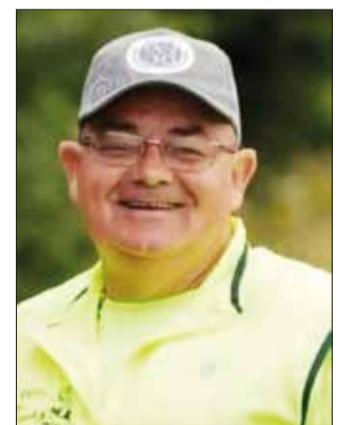
had also been "a good, hard and committed worker", he added: "He was a wonderful example of living the Beatitudes, of living a Christian life to live a good life. We were so blessed to have him and Kathleen in our parish, for their attendance at Mass and supporting all that we did. And Cursillo gives thanks for him too, and will miss him. We give thanks for Eamon's joy, love and peace".

Speaking about Eamon's great commitment to the annual Cursillo 'Walk to Knock' for peace, Fr Paul said: "We pray now that he is walking with Mary in the beauty of Paradise and will see God face-to-face, and will praise and adore God in His presence forever."

As Eamon's coffin was carried from St Eugene's at the end of Mass, fellow Cursillistas, wearing their 'Walk to Knock' t-shirts, formed a guard of honour and sang the Derry Cursillo anthem, 'Lady of Knock'.

Fellow Cursillista, Patsy McCallion paid tribute to his long-time Cursillo friend, recalling first meeting Eamon on the Walk to Knock many years ago, when he came upon him and his soulmate, Kathleen, cutting fruit and filling cups with juice and water as refreshments for the walkers en route from Derry to Knock.

"Eamon was the lead man in what we call 'back up,'" said Patsy, "He organised everything from the drivers in the vans to the boiled sweets at every water stop. Never without that beautiful, he and Kathleen joyously met the walkers."



The late Eamon McCamphill, Derry Cursillista.

"He was a man of great faith and just loved the Walk to Knock. The shock amongst the Cursillo community is testament to the hard work overall he did within it. His dedication to passing on the faith also involved him and Kathleen taking on the roles of 'mum and dad' during the Cor youth group weekends. He led many young people back to their faith".

Recalling the pleasure of climbing Cross Mountain in Medjugorje with Eamon in September 2021, Patsy remarked: "Even after that three-hour climb, he still had a smile on his face."

May he rest in peace.



Enjoying the 2019 Walk to Knock.



Some of the Cursillistas who formed a guard of honour as Eamon's coffin was carried from St Eugene's Cathedral.



Who do you say I am?

IN a recent homily, Bishop Donal spoke of how many had chosen not to follow Jesus in His own day, saying, that we, too, have to make up our own minds whether we want to take Jesus seriously. This Lenten season is perhaps a good time to reflect on this.

Considering two very important questions that Jesus asked during His ministry: "Who do you say I am?" (Mt 16:13-20) and, "Do you believe that I can heal you?" (Mt 9:28), a number of people from around the Diocese have shared their thoughts on who Jesus is for them, reflecting on whether His teachings and miracles impact on their lives today, or are they just part of the story of His life lived over 2,000 years ago.



Praying to God through St Therese brought healing by Bronagh Currie



WHEN I was an adolescent, I experienced a seizure and there was a worry that I could have epilepsy. I was sent for tests to check for this. Unknown to my sister and me, my Mum prayed to St Therese of Lisieux that this would not happen again.

The words of St Therese's prayer

are: "St Therese of the Child Jesus, please pick for me a rose from the heavenly garden and send it to me with a message of love. Please ask the heavenly Father to grant me this request.....and tell Him I will love Him more and more each day".

My little sister found a rose at the side of our road and brought it into my Mum. My scans did not show any signs of epilepsy and I never had another seizure.

This is maybe a coincidence and not strictly any sign of a miracle, but praying to St Therese brought healing.

I visited Lisieux years later and, during a celebration of the Mass, a French lady turned to me to say that the song the choir was singing means "Do not be afraid", which I thought was inspired and healing words for someone I didn't know to say to me, a foreigner visiting.

Lent is an opportunity to try to conform my will to God's greater plan

by Aoife O'Neill



Aoife O'Neill, Termonbacca Retreat Facilitator

AS it happens, I have been thinking a lot about how well am I responding to Jesus' call to follow Him. I have recently been taken by surprised to realise just how many obstacles I can put in place of my attempts to follow Christ. Like the man who wanted to first bury his father, I too can fall into the pattern of putting off following the Lord...I will do it when...or first I need to...

This Lent is an opportunity for me to try to conform my will to God's greater plan. I am trying to come to understand myself in a new way, because it is only when we truly know ourselves that we can come to know Christ. We all must discover our true selves that may be buried under years of fears, hurts, worries, complacencies and comfortable familiarities.

So, this Lent, I am working on

uncovering and discovering the real me - the Aoife whom God created. This is no easy task and is downright uncomfortable most of the time. However, God reminds me that we are not made for comfort, rather, as Pope Benedict XVI said, we are made for greatness - God's greatness.

God calls us to leave behind many things and follow more closely His way. For every person it will be a different thing, or many things, they are asked to leave behind.

I take a lot of comfort from the response of the disciples when Jesus asked the question, "Who do you say I am?" These men had spent a lot of time with Jesus, witnessing first hand who He was and the things He was doing and yet, they did not know Him. Despite their utter failure, Jesus loved them still and remained with them. He didn't give up on them.

I can hear Jesus asking me that same question: "Who do you say that I am?" Some days, I feel like I have the faith of St Peter and I can truly say, "You are the Christ". Other days, I feel like I don't, though I may understand who He is. Unlike the disciples, we have an advantage of being on this side of the death and cross to know that Jesus is the Christ. We may experience moments of doubt or hardship of faith but, ultimately, we know the truth...but do I live like He is the Christ? Do I live my life with the faith of Saints Peter and Paul...the faith that would lead me

to my own cross every day? I don't.

If I am honest, I can say it is highly unlikely that I will ever face physical martyrdom. I will probably never be in the situation where I will be asked to renounce the faith or die. However, Christ isn't offering me a free pass. He has given me my crosses, eager for me to unite mine to His as the action of my love and of my faith. My crosses are much simpler than those of Saints Peter and Paul, but they are crosses nonetheless, and they are mine, intended for me, to make me holy.

I have places in my heart that I would like to keep hidden, tucked away safely. Places I want to conceal because I am afraid what might happen if they are revealed. I think most of us have these. Painful memories we have stored up, places of brokenness we don't want Jesus to see. We learn to hide. Hide the hurts, hide the emotions, hide our shattered dreams, hide our weakness, hide the shame.

We make our own creation of ourselves. We hide behind masks where we make everything seem alright and prettier. But God does not deal with a mask. He does not engage with our false notions of self. God wants a relationship with the child He created - the real me.

This brings me to another important question that Jesus asked, "Do you believe that I can heal you?" What I am discovering is that it is often right in the place of our deepest wound that Christ

has planted the cross. If we hide or run from our wounds, we reject the cross. It is only in really discovering and working to heal our wounds that we can accept and unite our cross to Christ's.

G K Chesterton, the famous author, said that the longest journey is the distance between our head and our heart. We can know something, yet still hold back. This short statement contains profound wisdom.

We cannot be healed through our thoughts or the knowledge we store up in our minds. Having 'head' knowledge of Christ won't cut it. We cannot figure Him out. It is only in being open and vulnerable enough to allow Christ in to the deepest, darkest places within that He is able to heal us. It is only in coming before Christ as I really am, without the masks, that I can enter into true relationship with Him.

I hope and pray that I can continue on this journey of allowing Christ into those places in me and let Him heal and transform me into the person He created me to be.

With the grace of God, I hope to shake off the false notions of myself that I have created, and clear away the things that are hindering me from following Him more closely.

I pray that I may live out the fullness of our Catholic faith, that I may break free from fear and live with an unshakable faith rooted in the reality that I have a Heavenly Father who loves me infinitely.

Jesus is still with me today in the beauty and generosity of others by Martin Callaghan



Martin Callaghan, Burt, Co Donegal

I visited Lourdes Grotto, in France, in 2001 and this image of "The Blind Man and the Lame", by Johann Theodor de Bray, and the scripture passage, "Jesus says that we will be judged on the care we give to others" (Mt 25), came alive when I saw two gentlemen with disabilities coming into a café, because the lame man was leading the blind man to a table for a meal. This action reminds me of

the Sermon on the Mount, "The Beatitudes" (Mt 5), when Jesus teaches His disciples how they, and everyone who proclaim to be a follower of Christ, should be living their life to gain the kingdom of God...being helpful to others in their need, like a parent, doctor, family carer and neighbour.

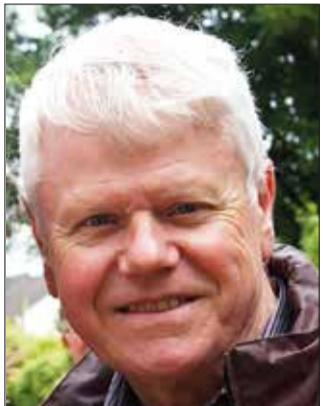
My own faith evolved as a family carer for my mother during the Covid-19 pandemic. She ended up in a hospital room, number 13, and I was next door, in room 12. Both of us were seriously ill, with no hope of recovery. Three days later, after receiving a blessing on the Feast Day of Our Lady of Guadalupe, she passed away and I made a full recovery.

My thoughts focused more on Jesus words, "I am with you always, to the very end of the age". I have put all my trust in this verse from childhood because it is a powerful statement. It challenges your intellect to accept that someone has the power and the right to impose



God's presence in me is as natural as breathing or eating

by Martin Harran



Martin Harran, Urney & Castlefin.

I find this question difficult to answer, not because I don't know the answer, it is just the difficulty in expressing it. I was asked pretty much the same question recently in an online scientific discussion group with some people who don't believe in God. They are not strident atheists like Richard Dawkins, for example, they are just people who are convinced that everything we see and experience is due to natural causes. To them, God is simply not necessary.

They struggle to understand how a rational person like myself can accept things like the Theory of Evolution yet still hang onto my religious beliefs.

The best analogy I could give them is the relationship I have with my wife. We are coming up to our Golden Anniversary this May and as I reflect on our married life, I see much in common with my relationship with God.

I first met my wife at a dance just over 52 years ago. Saying that it was 'love at first sight' might be an overstatement, but there was an instant attraction for me and, as I got to know her better over the following weeks and months, that attraction deepened into true love, a love that has constantly deepened and matured over the last 50 years, a love that I have never wanted to be without, a love that has never been challenged or threatened by any other person.

How do I explain that love and what it is? The short answer is that I can't, it's just something that I know in every fibre of my being

without being able to adequately express it in words. It is the same with God. Unlike my first meeting with my wife, I can't pinpoint exactly when God became an integral part of my life. I was born and raised a Catholic, so God has always been there, but in my teenage years, as many of my peers moved away from religion, my love of God and His importance to me became ever deeper. His presence in me became as natural as breathing or eating.

One of the greatest joys of a happy marriage is that I know I have someone whom I can always come home to. No matter what difficulties I have encountered, no matter what mistakes I have made, there is someone there who loves me despite all my shortcomings and will always welcome me home without reservation. So it is with God; no matter how I have erred, no matter what my shortcomings, he too will always welcome me home without reservation.

Even in the happiest of marriages, things are not perfect

all the time. Sometimes my wife and I get on each other's nerves or annoy each other though. To be honest, I provide far more annoyance than I receive! So, too, it is with God. I do plenty that I'm sure He finds annoying and He, in turn, annoys me from time to time.

But just as in my marriage, those are minor in the overall scheme of things. In my marriage and in my relationship with God, I can honestly say that those issues have never become threatening to my relationship; tiffs have never become serious rows and the relationships have never been ruptured.

The day we got married, my late father in his wedding speech gave me some useful advice: "At the end of each day, no matter what differences you have had, kiss each other and remind each other of your love."

I think that good advice is equally applicable to our relationship with God.

Jesus is more relevant today than 2,000 years ago and represents the pinnacle of what humanity could achieve

by Oliver Barrett MTh

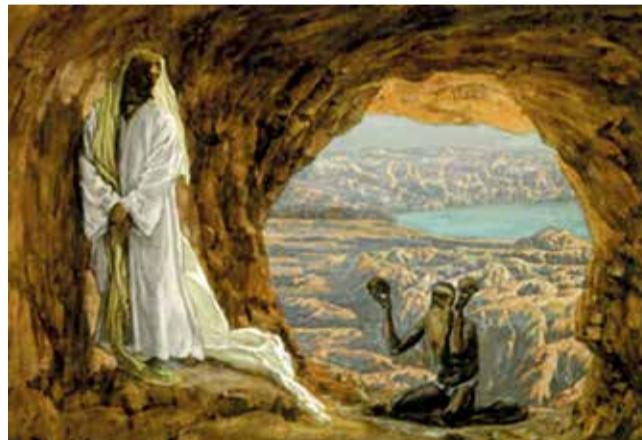


Oliver Barrett, Leckpatrick.

LENT is an old English word used to refer to the fast of forty days before Easter and reminds us of the time Jesus spent in the wilderness before He began His public ministry (Matt 4:1-11). The observance of Lent is widespread and even continued in the Church of England after the Reformation.

During this period, the Catholic liturgy is penitential in character, as reflected in the use of purple vestments and the omission of the Alleluia until Easter. Lent begins with the distribution of Ashes on Ash Wednesday, and they are a sacred sign.

Romano Guardini writes: "Ashes signify man's overthrow by time. Miracles are evidence that there is



a force that is not restricted by the laws of nature, a force we refer to as God.

Many people today do not see any relevance in Jesus' words and deeds and prefer to consign Jesus' life and death to history. Lack of faith in Christ is not a modern phenomenon, as we know from the Scriptures even those who heard His words and saw His deeds did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah and thought He could be another prophet (Matt. 16:14).

It takes a leap of faith and divine revelation to exclaim as Peter did: "You are the Christ the Son of the living God" (Matt 16:16).

I believe Jesus is more relevant today than two thousand years ago. I would go as far to say He is the authentic modern man and represents the pinnacle of what humanity could achieve. When we examine His life and teachings, particularly His attitude toward women and the marginalised, it is evident that we can learn much from His teachings and miracles.

I believe when we, through practicing our faith, open ourselves up to the vertical channels of divine grace, this can have a positive impact on our horizontal relationships with others.

God is the One with the power to heal and transform us... but our faith is a necessary part of it

by Marian Murphy



Marian Murphy, Dungiven.

also necessary. Do I trust Him for my salvation, for my healing, for my forgiveness, for Him to answer my prayers?

God is the One with the power to heal and transform us, but always our faith is a necessary part of it.

If I were to answer the question, "Do you believe that I can heal you?"...I think my answer would be "yes", as nothing is impossible to God.

When Jesus asked the Apostles, "Who do you say I am?"...Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God".

Jesus also revealed who He was..."I am the living bread that came down from Heaven" (John 6:51)... "I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father, and I will lay down my life for my sheep" (John 10:14-15)... "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:20).

Jesus was both human and divine. It is easier to understand His humanity, as we know that He ate and drank, laughed with His friends, felt compassion for the people He healed, was angry, and was hurt by His enemies. Because

That was two thousand years ago. Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. Today, because of their faith, many are healed, physically and spiritually.

For me, the key word in the sentence, "Do you believe that I can heal you?" is "believe". Trust is

Who Jesus is to me

by Sharon Gorman



Sharon Gorman, Galliagh.

raindrop on my window screen, but not only that, there is also the intelligence that has gone into creating every creature and living thing.

At the age of 46, I can say that I have learned many things along the way, and the biggest has been that Jesus is my balance! Like a good father, he tells me when I'm wrong and blesses me when I do His will and not my own.

Jesus is the light and strength of my soul and I am the tabernacle of His, as He lives and breathes within me. I feel His spirit rejoice in my faith and hope in Him.

He delights in all who know that He is the Risen Christ, who gave His life for you and me. He is the one and only true Lord and King of all mankind. His death and resurrection are a miracle.

My family has great faith in the

continued over...

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Father and we had our faith tested last year when my mum got sick with Covid-19. She has a lot of health problems and COPD is one of them. As you can imagine, Covid hit her body so bad that she took pneumonia and, at one point, the doctors gave her only four days to pull through and if there wasn't a change before that, then there wasn't anything else they could do because her lungs were so damaged.

As I gave the news to my father and brother, they both broke down, but I had a great calmness and peace. I knew in my soul that she would be ok. Many friends, family members and church friends prayed continuously for the next few days and, within the next couple of days, my mum

started getting stronger and was breathing on her own! Is that a miracle?

I would say most definitely that the power of the Lord is beyond anything we can comprehend.

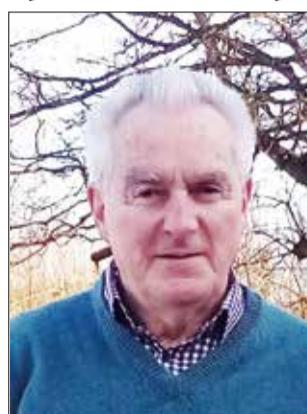
As for His love for us, well what I say is would you be willing to be crucified, humiliated, and stripped of all your dignity for the ones you love!

This is how great the Father's love is for us, that He sacrificed Jesus, His only Son to atone for all our sins. The acts of love on God's part couldn't get any bigger.

The crucifixion is important because it teaches us how important we are to Him...in Him, with Him and through Him. Amen.

Catholics taking Jesus seriously

by Noel Bradley



Noel Bradley, Buncrana

Catholics and Conversion

At a prayer meeting once, I made friends with an Evangelical Christian. She shared with me her conversion story of moving away from drugs and into a personal relationship with Jesus, and then asked me if I had "surrendered my life to the Lord Jesus". This stopped me in my tracks. Catholics don't talk like this. It made me reflect more deeply on my relationship with Jesus.

I found out later that evangelicals put a great emphasis on their moment of conversion and that people have to make a decision about being a Christian. If anyone reading this participated in any of the ALPHA programmes around the Diocese, they will have noticed many testimonies from people who shared their conversion experience. These stories can be very inspiring but, perhaps, a bit strange for Catholics, in that we don't normally talk about these things.

It was challenging me in that the movement emphasised experiencing the love of God and the power of that love to heal. These two aspects of faith did not get much emphasis in my earlier study of Theology. In prayer with others, I did experience a healing of emotional hurt that I carried, unconsciously, from a beating in boarding school.

While in Rome, I did a yearly directed retreat, Ignatian style, and tried to keep up the practice later in my life. This deepened my prayer life and helped me to commit myself more personally to Jesus and His mission. Reflecting on the words and entering into the scenes of Scripture and a conversation with Jesus, 'as one friend to another', has been at the core of this journey.

question, what does this mean for me today over 2000 years on? Bishop Donal spoke in a recent homily of how many had chosen not to follow Jesus in His own day. He reminded us of how we, too, must make that choice of taking Jesus seriously.

Today, it is certainly not easy to follow Jesus in a world that talks about "self" and "my truth", "your truth", with not much talk of "the truth"!

We live in a world that, perhaps unknowingly, follows the false gods of a secular world. Alcohol, drugs and having a good time appear more attractive than following the road less travelled to the interior of our being, where our maker dwells.

We were reminded recently in readings at Mass that Jesus tells us, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Lk 9:23).

Perhaps, this is not seen as a great advertisement to reaching the path to freedom, but it is freedom, and anyone who has experienced this encounter with Jesus would be only too glad to share.

It so happened that straight after this I was heading to Medjugorje. Feeling the peace of Medjugorje, when I arrived home I also felt a little disappointed. I think this was, perhaps, due to the fact that I was looking for some extraordinary sign, that perhaps Our Lady would speak directly to me.

Anyway, the Lord works in

I think it is fair to say that we cannot assume that just because a person is baptised and is brought up in a Catholic family, that they will automatically become a fully committed Catholic. Somewhere along the line they have to be personally committed to God.

That means making up our minds, as Bishop Donal says, about taking Jesus seriously. We have to make a personal choice. Do we believe in God (the Father)? Do we believe in Jesus and His way of salvation? Do we believe in the Holy Spirit?

Changes in Catholic Practice

I was born very pre-maturely and the mid-wife was afraid that I would die, so she baptised me. At that time, Catholics believed

that if you died before being baptised you would not go directly to heaven but to an intermediate place called 'Limbo'. This teaching, as you can imagine, caused great heartbreak for parents whose infants died shortly after birth or had a still birth. This teaching has been quietly dropped and most of us now widely take for granted that God loves every child from the first moment of its existence.

People no longer believe the older idea that 'original sin' would prevent an infant child who died before being baptised from going directly to God. So, there is no longer that same sense of urgency about getting the child baptised immediately.

Infant Baptism and the Moment of Truth

Where does all this leave infant baptism? There is a renewed emphasis on baptism being a

mysterious ways, and it wasn't until I looked back sometime later did I understand how the Lord was working. Our Lady did do something extraordinary for me. She took me to the foot of the cross, where Jesus took me in His arms and by that gentle breath, that soft breeze, began to heal my wounded heart.

When I returned from Medjugorje, I quite miraculously, came across a Bible Study run by the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal. I bought my first Bible and, week after week, I was just blown away. I wondered how on earth I had never heard these things before. Truly, I was shocked to hear and find out that the word of God is as much alive and active today as when Jesus walked the earth.

I now meditate on scripture daily and, at times, have fallen into what feels like deep union with the Lord during these periods of prayer. It makes me hunger and thirst for more. I truly believe that this was the same encounter that brought Peter to his knees.

I also understood how Peter's reaction was to ask Jesus to depart from him, as he recognised his

family affair. Parents, Godparents, grandparents and other family members are all important in taking the child into the Christian community.

The baby is not an isolated individual and will depend on the immediate family, and wider Christian community and its love, for its development. Everyone is invited to commit themselves to play a role in teaching the child what is involved in living a Christian life. After a certain period of formation in moral and religious education, the child will have to begin to make personal choices about moral issues of right and wrong, for example, Will I take advantage of this person? Will I do what I know what is right here?

heir faith will also be put to the test. Will they continue to believe and trust God even when things go wrong or life seems meaningless? Will they accept that Jesus is the Way and the one who has brought salvation and so is a source of hope? Do they believe that the Spirit guides them? If they can say a wholehearted "Yes" then, in the language of the Evangelicals, they are converted.

Talking about religious conversion is something new for Catholics in recent years. We have to accept that there is 'a moment of truth' for all of us in our life of faith. Each of us must make a personal act of faith commitment as a member of the community of faith into which we were baptised as infants.

(Noelbradley1512@gmail.com)

Saints full of joy in understanding the grace of taking up their daily crosses to follow Christ

by Rhonda McColgan



Rhonda McColgan, Iskaheen & Upper Moville.

AS I reflect upon Jesus' life here on earth, I am reminded of His ministry and how He would have walked with the disciples. We hear in the Bible that He performed many miracles and healings during this time. So, I wonder how this is relevant to my life today over 2,000 years on. Who do I say Jesus is?

We know from scripture that Jesus asked the disciples this very question: "Who do you say that I am?" Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God" (Mt 16:15-16).

How come Peter was so sure of this? Well, as we know Peter, along with the other disciples, walked with Jesus as He was in the flesh. We hear that Peter and Andrew heard the call as in Mt 4:19, when Jesus said, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men. Immediately they left their nets and followed Him".

Moreover, we hear in Luke 5 of how Jesus, just before this, had been preaching at the side of the lake and needed to get into Peter's boat as the people were pressing on Him. After He finished preaching, He told Peter, who by the way had been working all night but caught

no fish, to "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch" (Luke 5:4).

We are told that they caught such a great number of fish that their nets were almost breaking. Peter, realising this extraordinary miracle, fell down on his knees and said, "Depart from me for I am a sinful man O' Lord" (Luke 5:8).

Peter fell on his knees! This

encounter left him with no doubt who Jesus was. This got me thinking that I don't recall reading or hearing anywhere in the Gospels about Jesus' appearance.

I'm pretty sure that I haven't come

across any passages that talks

about His striking good looks or

extraordinary athletic abilities he

may have had, for example. But,

what we are told are the many

stories about how He spoke and

what He did.

Even in the temple as a young boy, we are told in Luke 2:47: "All

who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers", and in Matthew 7:28-29:

"When Jesus had finished these words the crowds were amazed at His teachings. He was teaching them as one having authority and not as their scribes".

We also hear of the many

miracles and healings witnessed by

the disciples that Jesus performed.

We get a great sense of His

compassion and love that moved

Him to feed the 5000, to heal the

paralytic man at Bethesda, to heal

Bartimaeus, the blind beggar, to

raise Lazarus from the dead and

much, much more.

The disciples witnessed and

encountered this compassionate,

kind, merciful, loving and all

powerful Jesus.

Going back to the original

Healing

own sinful nature in the presence of such love and mercy, for I wasn't that long at Bible Study when the Lord, through the word, gently convicted me of my own sin.

I made my way to Knock to finally give all my sins, even from childhood, to God. This was the first time in my life that I made a true and honest confession. The chains of slavery were broken. Freedom! I truly believed that He had forgiven me as He spoke such kind and compassionate words through His priest. It reminds me now of Psalm 103: 12: "As far as the East is from the West, so far does He remove our transgressions from us".

Finally, I now understand the gift of the cross. It is precisely in this place where we are close to God. The saints were full of joy because they understood the grace of taking up their daily crosses to follow Christ.

The wilderness of our lives is where we learn to place our trust in the Lord. This is the place where He is most present, providing for our daily needs in that dewfall. It

continued over...

Who do you say I am? by Rory McGilligan



Rory McGilligan, Dungiven.

THE heading of this reflection comes from Matthew's Gospel, most of us are aware it is what Our Lord asked His disciples

In the past, faith was considered by some as fulfilling obligations

continued from page 22

is here that I accompany the Lord and hear my favourite words of Jesus in Matthew 11:28-30: "Come to me all who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take

at Caesarea Philippi. From this chapter of Matthew's Gospel, we read that other disciples said that our Lord may be John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the other prophets. Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the son of the living God".

This question that Our Lord posed was not a random question to pass a quiet afternoon, or one from a man that was unsure of himself. This question is a timeless one, which is as equally relevant today as it was two thousand years ago. It's a question that Our Lord wishes us to consider especially at the beginning of Lent.

In the past, faith was considered by some as fulfilling obligations

my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden light".

due to societal pressures. Questions like this were never given the consideration that they deserved. To truly follow our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, it is important to meditate and pray about this question. We, as Catholics, must ask ourselves who we believe Jesus to be. It is a question that should be asked more by ourselves.

In Our Lord's time, some Jews moved away from Him... they found His teachings uncomfortable. In today's society, this is also true. Christ's message, if lived true, is the polar opposite of a society that is centred on the self. If we believe that Christ is the Son of the living God, focusing on the self is contrary to His teachings.

We hear in John's Gospel that God is Love, but what does that mean? Probably you have heard the following quotations from scripture, 'Love one another as I have loved you', 'Forgive them Father for they know not what they do', "The first among you must

be the last" or, from Matthew's Gospel, "For I was hungry and you gave me to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me to drink, I was a stranger and you took me in, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to visit me".

Christ wishes that we love each other and Him, serve each other, forgive each other, do not judge each other, but to help each other, to pray for each other and to share in the Holy Eucharist. This is the love I believe that God wants.

I love the verse in John's Gospel where Our Lord was telling His followers about eating His body and drinking His blood to attain eternal life. Some could not accept what he was saying and went away..."Therefore, Jesus said to the twelve, 'Do you also want to go away?' Then Simon Peter answered, "To whom would we go? You have the words of eternal life. And we believe and recognise that you are Christ the Son of God" (John 6:68-71).

What Peter says here really

resonates with me. Living my Catholic faith, staying true to the teachings of our church, can be a challenge at times, but, if we do not do all that we can to grow closer to Jesus, what is the alternative? I don't think there is one.

Peter did not answer Our Lord as a man who was desperate, He answered him honestly. Following Jesus, letting Him love us, is the only way. We have nowhere else to go.

Letting Jesus love me, bringing Him more into my life, gives me encouragement. It helps prevent me from being a slave to serious sin. People often think that our Church and our Lord's teachings is full of rules and regulations, some mistake it as walking a tight rope, where you dare not fall off.

When I stopped having a tick box faith and started trying to grow in relationship with Jesus through prayer and the Mass, I found a lot of freedom and peace. Prayer was not a chore but a time to communicate with Jesus. Some

family members would say please pray for someone or thing, and I always respond, "Of course, but you must also pray".

Faith must be lived. A relationship with Jesus is a two-way one. I have talked to many people who have been blessed with miracles; they were all humble, holy people knowing what happened was a blessing from God. Their humility and total trust in Jesus is a recurring theme with all of them.

As I journey through life, I continue to pray that I be like the early Christians...strong in courage and faith, even though society may ridicule me. I am happy in the knowledge that Jesus is Our Lord and Saviour, and by following Him I may get a chance of eternal life.

I hope to stay humble and at peace, and let the Lord's hand guide me throughout my life, happy in the knowledge that He is "the Messiah, the son of the living God".

The Screwtape Letters Book Review by Aoife O'Neill

THE 'Blessed Is She' ladies group has recently finished looking at C.S. Lewis' 'The Screwtape Letters' in their spiritual book club. This is a classic collection of letters between a senior demon, Screwtape, and a junior tempter, Wormwood, charged with undermining the newfound Christian faith of his 'patient'. Screwtape concerns himself with giving advice on unravelling the faith of this new convert.

In this fictional depiction of spiritual warfare, we get a glimpse into what the enemy of our souls is plotting. On beginning to read this book, it can be difficult to keep a focus as Screwtape's 'enemy' is really the 'good' side

of the spiritual battle. We are not used to hearing God referred to as the 'enemy'.

There are many thought-provoking and eye-opening statements throughout the book. In the letters, we see Screwtape prescribing the use of subtle distractions rather than obvious attacks. Playing on subtle annoyances is far better than tempting to spectacular sin. He points out the importance of a gradual slipping in, so that the convert doesn't notice he is drifting away.

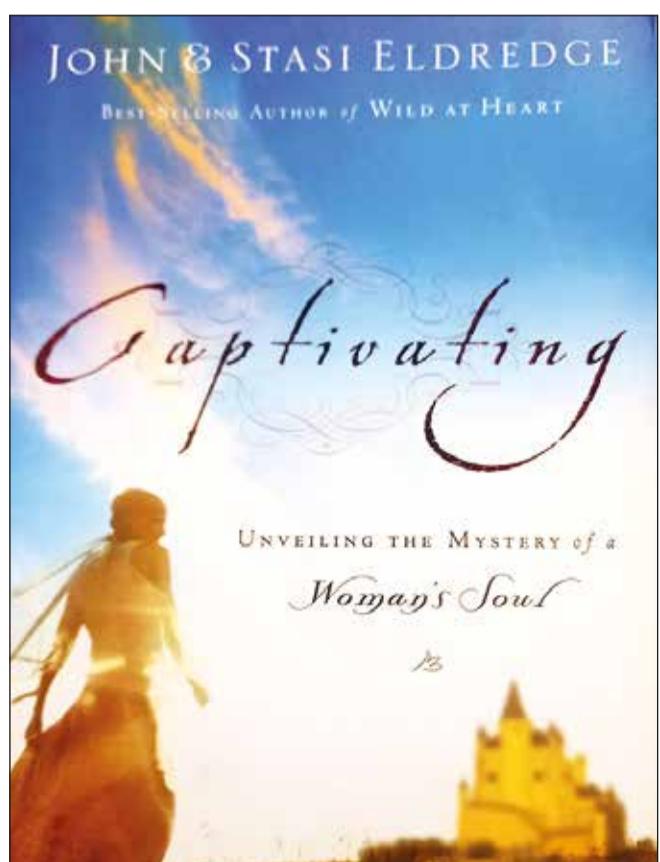
Screwtape urges Wormwood to let him spiritualize his concern for his mother while detesting her annoying habits, to have noble

visions of fellowship while being put off by the neighbour in the pew.

In the letters, we see the lack of power that the tempter has. All he can do is twist and distort. He uses a new circle of friends the convert has found, a Christian woman of character, to make him look down on others. Through several letters on sexuality, he points out how it is often in the rough times, when the affections are depressed, that temptation may be most effective.

Through this book, the reader is given insight into what the enemy considers to be a victory, and it is interesting to see just how much the small stuff matters. From the demons' acknowledgement that pleasure is designed by God, however encouraging us to overindulge in that pleasure, is their way of bringing human's spiritual fervour into the 'lukewarm' category.

Many of the topics covered in this classic book are still applicable today. Time may pass, but human nature stays the same. I would recommend this book to anyone. It can be read as a witty diversion, or it can expand our perception of the realities of the spiritual battle in the midst of which we live.



THE Blessed Brunch & Books group at Termonbacca have chosen 'Unveiling the Mystery of a Woman's Soul' by John and Stasi Eldredge, as their next read.

Exploring how every woman was once a girl and every girl holds in her heart the most precious dreams, this book longs at how every woman longs to be swept up into a romance, to play an irreplaceable role in a great



Blessed Is She Derry Blessed Brunch & Books

Saturday 2nd April 2022

12pm- 2pm

Termonbacca Carmelite

Retreat Centre

An opportunity for women of all ages to get together, eat, pray and journey through spiritual books together.

For bookings or queries please PM or email termonbaccaderry@gmail.com



Unveiling the Mystery of a Woman's Soul

adventure, to be the Beauty of the story.

The authors see those desires as far more than child's play, but are the secret to the feminine heart, yet how many women ever find that life?

The blurb for the book points out that, as the years pass by, the heart of a woman gets pushed aside, wounded, buried. She finds no romance except in novels, no

adventure except on television, and she doubts very much that she will ever be the Beauty in any tale. But her heart is still there.

Sometimes when she watches a movie, sometimes in the wee hours of the night, her heart begins to speak again. A thirst rises within her to find the life she was meant to live - the life she dreamed of as a little girl.

The message of 'Captivating'

is this: Your heart matters more than anything else in all creation. The desires you had as a little girl and the longings you still feel as a woman - they are telling you of the life God created you to live. He offers to come now as the Hero of your story, to rescue your heart and release you to live as a fully alive and feminine woman; a woman who is truly captivating.

"I had felt something calling me and now I realise that it was 'someone' who was calling me, and that someone was Jesus"......Derry seminarian, Michael McCaul shares his faith story...

You won't have life to the fullest without Christ in your life.



Michael McCaul, who will be ordained to the Diaconate for the Derry Diocese on Vocations Sunday.

IN this month when we celebrate St Patrick, who responded to the persistent call to return to Ireland to spread the Word of God and did so to such effect that he was adopted as the primary Patron Saint of the 'land of saints and scholars', Derry-born seminarian, Michael McCaul shares the story of how the call to priesthood persisted from childhood throughout his teaching career in England, leading to his return home with a burning desire to become a priest.

Now, after a few twists and turns on the way, the 45-year-old is preparing for a very special occasion on Vocations Sunday, May 8, when he will be ordained a deacon and brought another step closer to ordination to priesthood.

Speaking from the family home on Marlborough Street, in the Cathedral Parish, before leaving for a week's retreat with the Benedictines in Rostrevor, Michael reflected on his journey of faith.

He recalled: "Fr John Farren was a priest in the Cathedral when I was young and he was a big influence on me, but the story of my faith began in my family home; that is where I was gifted with faith, hope and love."

The third eldest in a family of four boys and two girls born to Philomena (nee McKinney) and the late Michael Anthony McCaul, Michael spoke of his early experience of the Catholic faith: "We prayed the Stations of the Cross and the Rosary as a family, and attended Mass. I remember my mother piling us into the car and taking us to First Friday Masses."

"When I was around 14, I became a Minister of the Word under Fr John Farren, and then a Minister of the Eucharist when I was about 17. All of this nurtured

my faith, which continued to grow over the years to what it is today – a more mature and deeper faith".

He added: "My mother recently told me a story about how I used to act out Mass when I was a child during visits to the caravan in Donegal. I put a towel around my shoulders and used an egg cup as the chalice."

"I had an attraction to priesthood from a young age, though one minute I wanted to be a priest and the next it would be something else. But, all through school I always felt something there and, when I was 17 years old, I applied for the Diocese. I was in touch with Bishop Francis Lagan and all was good, but he advised me to get a bit more experience of life for a while first."

"I suppose I thought that I had tried and obviously wasn't called to priesthood, so I went to UCD to study History and Politics and became a history and politics teacher. I then went to England, as there were plenty of jobs and opportunities there, and got a job teaching in a school in Essex. I spent six or seven years there and loved it; however, the notion of vocation was still niggling me during that time".

While he was in Essex, Michael took six months out to work on a programme in Nairobi through the Braeburn Group of International Schools, which is a group of co-educational international schools that offer British/international curricula in Kenya and Tanzania.

He explained: "I found the programme while looking online at different opportunities. I was still thinking about the priesthood but I had it in my head that I had tried that, so I decided to try this route and it was an eye-opening experience.

"While the Braeburn Schools are

private and cater for the children of diplomats, etc, they also set up community schools. It was great to experience another culture and I found it very interesting, but the poverty was extreme. We don't realise how fortunate we are here".

"After this programme, I went back to teaching in Essex," he added, "I was in my 30s at that stage and found that I still couldn't shift the whole idea of a religious vocation. So, I went to see Bishop Seamus Hegarty. Bishop Lagan was there too, and when I mentioned my initial conversation with him about priesthood, he joked that when he had told me to experience a bit of life first and then come back, he had meant in a couple of years not 13 years later!"

"Bishop Hegarty accepted me and I was sent to St Malachy's Seminary, in Belfast. It was a great experience, though looking back I think there had been too much of me and not enough of Christ. With all the experiences I had had out in the world, I couldn't get used to the solemn silence at night, though everything was good during the rhythm of the day. After a year-and-a-half, I decided it wasn't for me and went back to teaching in Essex. I had a lot of contacts there and there were plenty of opportunities, and I also had a nice bunch of friends.

Sacred Heart

"However, the 'calling' began again. I thought, 'No, Jesus, you have the wrong man. I have been there.' Then, in 2014, when I was home for Christmas, I was sitting in front of our family Sacred Heart image in the living room and got a great sense of peace. The Scripture passage came to me where Jesus said, 'I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled'. These words stayed with me and I couldn't get to sleep that night. Eventually, I had to say to the Lord, 'If you let me sleep tonight, I will go down and see the vocations director in the morning'."

"The next day I went down to see Fr Paul Farren, who was the vocations director then. We chatted and he thought that maybe a religious order was for me, so I decided to check that out. I did some research on various orders, like the Carmelites, Franciscans, Dominicans, but I was most struck by the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. Their motto is 'May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved'; and this reminded me of my experience in

"I then wrote to Bishop Donal and he invited me along for a chat. That was early July 2017 and in order to enter the seminary in September, I needed to make a fresh application to the Diocese, go through the psychological evaluation and submit my sacramental records, etc. I was running around like a mad man trying to get everything done. Then I had a series of interviews, with Bishop Donal and others,

and within a week of that I was accepted for the Diocese.

For the next eight months, Michael travelled back and forth to the MSC's Dublin base, in Dundrum, discerning with their vocations director, Fr Alan Neville.

"During one of our conversations," Michael recalled, "Fr Neville told me they had a programme starting that September that I was welcome to join. It involved spending a year with them in their house. I had to do a bit of serious discerning about that and decided that I had nothing to lose by doing it. So, I spent a year with them and it was a lovely time. My faith was continually deepening. They were very gentle and humble men, and were involved in community and parish work. I really enjoyed that year, and at the end of it they put me in a parish placement in St Albans, in Hertfordshire, England.

"I went to St Albans and all the time I was growing in love. The MSCs were talking to me about doing a novitiate. It was a serious moment, for I wanted to be a priest and my heart was burning for it. In the back of my mind was a comment made by a parishioner I had met in St Eugene's one morning, that the Diocese needed missionaries too!"

Taking time to discern what to do, Michael decided to contact Bishop Donal McKeown regarding priesthood in the Derry Diocese, and he felt confirmed in this when a short time later he was in Maynooth College and walked around a corner into the path of Bishop Donal!

"I had met Bishop Donal long before that when I had been in St Malachy's Seminary," said Michael, adding: "I explained to him where I was at in my life and he advised that I would have to officially leave the MSCs and make a fresh application to the Diocese. Shortly after that I told the MSCs that I wasn't going to apply for the novitiate, but was going back to my Diocese."

"I then wrote to Bishop Donal and he invited me along for a chat. That was early July 2017 and in order to enter the seminary in September, I needed to make a fresh application to the Diocese, go through the psychological evaluation and submit my sacramental records, etc. I was running around like a mad man trying to get everything done. Then I had a series of interviews, with Bishop Donal and others,

"I had been down many roads and there I was back where I had first started in seminary. I told myself to leave 'Michael' at the gate, as I had discovered that when I leave things to the Lord that is when the greatest things happen for me".

Saying that his favourite prayer is the Angelus, Michael remarked: "You have everything in it...the calling...that acceptance...yes...let it be done to me according to thy will. That really struck me...that was the moment of acceptance that this is where God wants me to be. 'The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us'...God is not just in a chapel but wherever we are, as He promised 'I am with you always'. To any would-be seminarians, I would say to begin to really pray the Angelus – that is what helped deepen my faith".

After a year at St Malachy's, studying Philosophy, Michael received news over the summer break that the seminary was closing.

"I couldn't believe it," he recalled, adding, "but then Bishop Donal contacted me to say that I was going to Maynooth, where I did another year of Philosophy, which was three years in total. I had done a year of Theology with the MSCs and so I did another two years study of this in Maynooth too".

Finishing up his studies in St Patrick's Seminary in 2021, Michael began pastoral work in the Co Tyrone parish of Cappagh last September.

Commenting on his experience

there, he said: "I feel the people of Cappagh have welcomed me into their hearts, and I have them in my heart. I am learning every day that I am there. I don't know if any other parish could have given me such a wide range of experiences. I am out now walking the walk, dealing with people and real issues, involved in visiting the schools, residential homes, with funerals, and helping in the sacristy. There is just a whole mixture of the ministry I will be ordained into. It has been an amazing insight into priesthood and I have really enjoyed it.

"Cappagh parish priest, Fr Kevin McElhennon and Fr Declan McGeehan have been very good to me, as have Fr Patrick Lagan and Fr Joe Gormley. They have been such great examples and an excellent help with my formation".

Diaconate

Delighted to have been called to the Diaconate by Bishop Donal, Michael is now preparing for this special occasion on Vocations Sunday, May 8, which is also known as Good Shepherd Sunday.

"I will be ordained a deacon in Christ the King Church, in Cappagh Parish, and I am very happy to go with that," he said, adding: "It has been a journey. We are all on a journey in our lives. We all have a different vocation. We are all walking with Christ.

"I had felt something calling me and now I realise that it was 'someone' who was calling me... and that someone was Jesus. You won't have life to the fullest without Christ in your life. I have tried a few different things and that will help bring some life experience to my ministry... maybe that is what God wanted. I have never felt as content. I have an inner peace in my heart.

"Jesus asked, 'Who do you say that I am?' Now that I have come to the diaconate stage, I am beginning to see more clearly who Jesus really is – Our Lord and Saviour. I am starting to really enter into that. There is peace with



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

Recline towards Our Lord like St John and ask Him to send labourers to our Diocese

- Fr Patrick Lagan

PRAYER for vocations to the priesthood and religious life in the Diocese includes Holy Hours, during which there is Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, a short Scripture reflection, a period of silence, and Benediction.

Leading the Holy Hour in St Mary's Church, Creggan, on Friday, March 11, Fr Patrick Lagan, of St Eugene's, set the tone in telling those gathered of St Therese's description of prayer as "the very simple act of turning the heart and mind to God", and inviting them to "recline towards Our Lord" as St John did at the Last Supper and ask him, "in love and compassion, to send labourers to this church, this diocese we so dearly love".

Recalling that, shortly after his election to the Seat of Peter, Pope Francis began his ministry echoing the call to mercy, Fr Patrick said: "Indeed, it wasn't very long before he inaugurated the Jubilee Year of Mercy, inviting the Church universal to discover that the very name and face of God is mercy. It was a truly blessed time. For priests it was not only a reminder of this great gift to the Church, but in our lives, our ministries, our call to serve God our Father. We are disciples proclaiming the mercy and compassion of our Saviour".

Gathering to pray that God will send more labourers to the harvest in the Diocese of Derry, Fr Patrick said: "We come

imploring God to give us priests that will radiate and live this call to commission, to seek ye first the Kingdom, to be anointed, to bring the blind new sight, to proclaim liberty to captives and to set the downtrodden free.

"We don't have to look too far to see the prisoners walking among us, calling out for that purity of heart, that blessed gift which we know that only our Lord can give. We are called to seek them out, to find them, to go to them, searching for that one lost sheep. This ministry of seeking out, of finding the sinner, was the very charism that drew so many to Jesus' feet, literally to the very hem of His garments.

"St John Vianney once said, 'Jesus...seeks them by giving them remorse of conscience, leads them by means of His grace and conquers them by His kindness'. We ask for priests who will conquer the faithful with kindness, kindness that will lead to the abundant grace of God flowing out into the world through their faithfulness to God".

He added: "This time set aside to pray for vocations in the Diocese of Derry is also to awaken in all people that sacred command to proclaim this message of mercy to the world...In a world that is at war, that needs mercy, that longs for mercy, for peace, we are reminded once again of just how central and necessary this gift is. Let us pray for this gift of mercy,

for merciful hearts in those called to serve as priests of our Blessed Lord".

Fr Patrick went on to recall what Bishop Francis Lagan had once said to a group of seminarians about the need to meditate every day on the word of God and described the practice "as calling to mind a promise", suggesting that "the entire Word of God was one great promise made by God and it was our role, our task, to develop the art of listening".

"To hear what the Holy Spirit is saying to us takes time, it takes practice but, fundamentally, it requires a faith, a love, a knowledge, conviction, a confidence in this promise. We are told by our Blessed Lord that if we ask for anything in the Father's name, we will receive it. When we come, calling for it, asking for it through the love of the Father, then that gift will be our very own".

He continued: "To do this requires prayer, it requires time, it requires sacred time given over to God, simply being with the Father. We know that in every occasion, every instance where Jesus calls...it is God who makes the first move. It is God who begins the process, the journey, the encounter between the Creator and His creation.

"St John Vianney says that prayer is to the soul, what rain is to the soil. To serve God, we must be a people of prayer".

continued from page 24

that. That is what we are all called to...to live life to the full.

"At the beginning of my journey, it was more about Michael. Now there is less Michael and more Christ. I am trying to prepare myself inwardly and outwardly. It is other people's prayers that have got me this far and for that I am very grateful".

One of those people is his father, who passed away on November 5, 2020. Describing his father as a man of love, Michael said: "We, as a family, believe that God is love... so for us, love was returning to Love. I really miss my father. He had a great sense of humour. He was a simple and practical man, and a family man. I will miss him very much on the day I am ordained a deacon, but I know that he will be there in spirit as I feel his presence still".

Looking forward to a quiet time of prayer and reflection during the week of guided retreat with the Benedictines in Rostrevor, after all the busyness of parish work, Michael said: "As the Psalm says, 'Oh God my heart is ready'. My

'slagging' exercise, but that is not what I have experienced so far. People are genuinely concerned about how we, as a Church, can move forward. It is not the whole 'knocking match' that I feared it would be, it is about listening to people and discovering how we can make people disciples of Christ".

"I am hopeful about it now. People are happy to talk and journey together, and I am very happy to be part of that...I just need to remember to keep 'Michael' out of it and listen. In Cappagh, the synodal listening process began with the people who work in the church, sacristans, cleaners, etc, and this is being followed by listening sessions in the parish centres of the four churches of Mountfield, Strathroy, Killyclogher and Knockmoyle. Each has a night for the people to come and talk and listen".

"Some of the comments are very refreshing. People have a lot more to say than I thought. Ultimately, it is the Holy Spirit moving us. Are we open to that movement?"

Diocesan Year of Vocations

WITH the blessing of Bishop Donal McKeown, the Diocesan Vocations Council will hold a Year of Vocations in the Diocese of Derry. The idea behind this venture is to promote prayer for vocations throughout the Diocese, from St Patrick's Day 2022.

Encouraging people to support this year-long focus on vocational prayer, Bishop Donal highlighted that, at the heart of church renewal is the "rediscovery of the fact that we are all called to be saints, whatever our state in life".

"The message of self-indulgence stunts our idealism and generosity," he said, adding "The Year of Prayer for Vocations is a time to prioritise the call of all Catholics to be part of a missionary church".

"And in our sacramental church, God has called people to dedicate their whole lives to the mission of the Church. They are called not just to do jobs for the Church but to witness by their lives to the primacy of God, and of the crazy generosity of Jesus".

"This is not just a time of prayer to God. It is also a challenge to our parish communities and families to call young people to generosity for the sake of Christ and His Gospel. We are all responsible for the mission of the Church!"

A survey in the United States found that 80% of vocations to the diocesan priesthood came from the 20% of parishes where there were people praying for vocations.

Speaking at a Holy Hour for

vocations in St Mary's Church, Creggan, in February, the Diocesan Vocations Director, Fr Pat O'Hagan, said that he would like to promote a culture of prayer for vocations, in the hope that the prayers would help bring about an increase in the number of men applying to the diocese to begin studying for the priesthood, as well as more and more men and women considering serving the Church as priests or religious in Religious Orders or Missionary Societies.

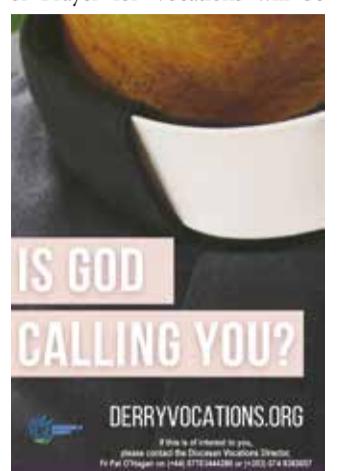
Currently, the Diocese of Derry has five men in formation, three of whom are nearing the end of their seminary days and looking forward to ordination as deacons and, eventually, priests.

There are also a number of men who are actively discerning their vocation. They have all met with Fr Pat, in person or virtually, during the pandemic, and are all engaging in regular discussion with their priest-mentor.

With the number of priests in steady decline over the years, the fact that the Diocese can boast of the numbers in the seminary and of those who are discerning is a very positive place to be right now, but those numbers are far from adequate if every parish in the Diocese of Derry is going to maintain the number of priests who are currently serving the people of God in this part of the country.

So, fervent prayer is very much

needed. Please God, the Year of Prayer for Vocations will be



embraced and promoted in every parish, and we will see the fruit of the prayer in due course.

When the Diocesan vocations website is up and running again – sadly, there have been some technical problems lately – there will be a poster campaign in the Diocese, as well as prayers, information, and news of events relating to vocations.

The Vocations Council hope to continue the monthly Holy Hours which will take place on the second Friday of the month, from 8-9 pm.

Please join us in prayer, that the "Lord of the harvest will send out labourers into His harvest".

Imagine how things might be if the culture of prayer for vocations took hold in every parish in this Diocese, in the country, and throughout the world!

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 Irwin (March 1st)

Fr Charles Keaney (2nd)

All Priests (3rd)

Fr Patrick Lagan (4th)

Fr Michael Keaveny (5th)

Fr Seamus Kelly (6th)

Fr Edward Kilpatrick (7th)

All priests (8th)

Fr Charlie Logue (9th)

Fr Paul McCafferty (10th)

Mgsr Bryan McCann (11th)

Fr Michael McCaughey (12th)

Fr Andrew McCloskey (13th)

Fr Frank Lynch (14th)

Fr Peter Madden (15th)

Fr Noel McDermott (16th)

Fr Eamon McDevitt (17th)

Fr John McDevitt (18th)

Fr Anthony Mailey (19th)

Fr Kevin McElhennon (20th)

Fr Daniel McFaul (21st)

Fr Dermot McGirr (22nd)

Fr Micheal McGavigan (23rd)

Fr Brian McGoldrick (24th)

Fr Neil McGoldrick (25th)

All priests (26th)

Fr James McGonagle (27th)

Dr James McGrory (28th)

All Priests (29th)

Fr Edward McGuinness (30th)

Bishop Donal McKeown (31st)



Pope's monthly intention

The Holy Father has asked for prayer during March for:

A Christian response to bioethical challenges:

We pray for Christians facing new bioethical challenges; may they continue to defend the dignity of all human life with prayer and action.

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 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

The Conservative who preached liberation

by Fr Stephen Quinn ocd



Bishop Oscar Romero

ST Oscar Arnulfo Romero was born in 1917 in Ciudad Barrios, a city in eastern El Salvador. He was the second of seven children in a devoutly Catholic family. At the age of 12, Oscar entered into the San Miguel diocesan minor seminary. He continued in those studies until the age of 20, when he was sent off to study theology in Rome. He remained in the eternal city until 1943, furthering his academic qualifications.

Oscar's stay in Rome culminated in his ordination to the priesthood on April 4, 1942 and, in the following year, his bishop called him home to El Salvador to take up a position in the diocese. For the next 20 years, until 1967, Oscar held positions of official responsibility; he was a diocesan secretary, a chancellor, a vicar general, a seminary rector and professor. As seriously as he took these jobs, they were all jobs which protected him from the harsh realities of life in El Salvador.

If we look beyond the external realities of Oscar's life and look inwards to his character and nature, we find a man of conservative inclination.

Conservative in a truly catholic sense, in the sense that he observed everything through a lens of continuity, that the Spirit of God had worked continuously through the traditions, existing structures and theologies. Any kind of rift or rupture in the fabric of the Church, he observed with profound concern and trepidation.

In this spirit, he contemplated with concern some of the changes that were being suggested by the Second Vatican Council. The changes risked, in Oscar's eyes, the wrong spirit entering the Church, a spirit that the Church Father, St Basil had warned against centuries before... "the raucous shouting of those who through disagreement rise up against one another, the incomprehensible chatter, the confused din of uninterrupted clamouring, has now filled almost the whole of the Church, falsifying through excess

or failure the right doctrine of the faith..."

He was truly perturbed by the change of priority that had been suggested by the Latin American Bishops' Conference at Medellin in 1968. The bishops at that conference renounced their traditional relationship with the ruling elites and military juntas, who baptised their corruption and abuses of power behind a veneer of Catholic respectability. The bishops then made a preferential option for the poor, meaning that the Church would make a conscious and deliberate stand with the poor, the oppressed, and the dispossessed of the Latin American continent.

Oscar Romero, as he interpreted the statements of the bishops, heard the language of taking sides and it perturbed him, for he had always understood the Gospel as essentially a message of peace and reconciliation. It ran through his head that if the Church was taking a side amid political divisions, was not the Church hurtling towards preaching division and open conflict?

What was the catalyst that turned a bookish, inoffensive, reticent, and conservative man into an authentic prophet for the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st Century?

Pope Paul VI called Oscar to episcopal orders and authority, first as auxiliary bishop in San Salvador on November 21, 1970, then as bishop of Santiago de María in 1974, and, finally, as Archbishop of San Salvador in 1977. With one sweep of his hand, the Holy Father had pushed aside the safe walls of the seminaries and the desk jobs that Oscar had busied himself with for those first 20 years as a priest. In the office of a chief pastor in a diocese, Oscar was forced to face some of the cruel realities that the people in his care had been facing for years.

El Salvador was a poster child for far-reaching corruption and political oppression. The elite one per cent of Salvadoran society had possession of 97 percent of the

country's wealth. Just to illustrate the point further, 14 families alone owned over 60 percent of the whole land of the country. Modernity and capitalism were not improving the situation at all, the situation was only getting worse. In 1961, 12 percent of the peasants were completely landless, in 1971 that figure had risen to 30 percent and, in the last year of Oscar's life, the figures had exploded to 65 percent.

In addition to the disparity of wealth and land ownership, there was the issue of the treatment of workers on the large coffee plantations, for which the greater part of the land was devoted. The workers received a treatment that barely rose above the levels of a form of wage slavery.

The injustice of the system is palpable in those figures, but that corrupt system was upheld by a police force and a national army that acted like a private security force for the political and financial elites of El Salvador.

At gunpoint, the army firmed up the claims of the elite to governance and power. For instance, in just one year of the 70s, the army identified 90 percent of the population as a potential threat to the established order. The military moved stealthily to act against these threats. In one year alone, that army killed an estimated 30,000 Salvadoran citizens. And it wasn't as if they tried to disguise their terrible handiwork, to demoralise and terrorise the population, the army would not just assassinate individuals, they would torture, mutilate, and leave the bodies of their victims with all their handiwork marked in their bodies in town and city squares for the whole population to see and fear that they could be next.

Silence

When Oscar was first called to be a bishop, he attempted to work with the system. He would go to the office of a politician, or an army general, and have a private, polite word in his influential ear, hoping that at the

right time and in the right place, it would bring on a change of course for the whole country. He had made the error that some of these things were aberrations and not systematic policy. The only problem with these whispers in the right ear was that they seemed to reduce the Church to silence and inactivity in the midst of such critical problems both in the life of an individual and the nation. Oscar's silence ended with what has been called, by some, his "conversion".

On March 12, 1977, Salvadoran Jesuit, Fr Rutilio Grande was assassinated. Grande had been hated by the landowners and the military for his work in promoting peasants' rights. He was killed with two peasants at an isolated section of the road to Aguilares. Fr Rutilio was a humble and generous man, who had given up an academic career to live simply amongst the peasants, convinced that the only solution to the evils racking the country was a spread of the Gospel among the dispossessed and downtrodden. He exhorted the peasantry to the practice of Christian charity and avoided political involvement.

The official muteness and political stonewalling that Oscar received in protesting this murder in the offices of the powerful, finally convinced him that his method was being counterproductive.

The Church's silence had only enabled the cancer of corruption to spread throughout the social and political system of the country. The Church, including himself, had settled into playing political games that suited those who manipulated the oppression and corruption to their own benefit, and had never remedied the malady that was ailing the country. Most of all the Church had not been honest with itself. It was supposed to be the servant of the Kingdom of Christ and yet had continued to say nothing while real evil was raising its face all around it in El Salvador.

A more radical and far-reaching option had to be used for the evil to be tackled. From this moment, his preaching and speaking would be to this fundamental point, to challenge the evil and to preach conversion to Jesus Christ, to be always challenging, defending, and exhorting. "I decided it was my duty to take a firm stand to defend, my Church, and from within the Church to stand side by side with my people who were so oppressed and abused."

The Church, under his pastoral care, would become a voice for the voiceless, a defender of the rights of the poor, a promoter of every just aspiration for liberation, to be a guide, an empowerer, and a humaniser of every legitimate struggle attempting to achieve a more just society, a society that

would point beyond itself to the coming of Christ's kingdom.

This preaching was alive with the inspiration of Pope Paul VI's apostolic exhortation 'Evangelii Nuntiandi'. In that document, that called for a new evangelisation of the world, such an evangelisation had to be dynamic and responsive to the conditions of human life, especially for people who "remain on the margin of life" and who experience famine, chronic disease, illiteracy, poverty, injustices, situations of economic and cultural neo-colonialism.

The Pope stated that the liberation that Christ brought to humanity had to be directed and spoken to these situations, so to unleash the grace of Christ upon all layers of human existence.

Pope Paul went on to point out the essential content of the Church's proclamation of liberation. The preaching of liberation was always the preaching of a person not an ideology or a philosophy of governance. Liberation is what Jesus Christ is. He is the Son of God, who was made man, who died, and rose from the dead. Only in him is liberation offered to all human beings, as a complete gift of God's grace and mercy.

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hope. With Mary, the Salvadoran people could sense the power of Mary's Son, He and He alone "can solve problems that humanly speaking cannot be solved." Salvadorans, in conjunction with Mary, could appreciate that it was more than enough to tell Him, "they have no wine". With those words on their own lips, they could present Him all Salvadoran conditions in the confidence of faith, for the person of faith knows that the prayer is presented to Him who can make all things possible. He exhorted his audience... "Ah! If only we Salvadorans knew how to tell Jesus about the anxiety of this hour with Mary's confidence, without pessimism and desperation."

He turned his guns on all ideologies that put systems of thinking ahead of human dignity. In this he was particularly hostile to Marxism, which he argued put "false visions of the world that people have created for their own interests, especially those that make the person an instrument to exploit, or to those Marxist ideologies that make the person nothing more than a cog in a machine."

He rubbed anything less than Christianity that held up the individual person "as the summit of every human organisation." Oscar preached and worked on the basis of rigorous realism. He saw exactly how difficult the situation was in his country... "without being aware of it, each one of us is polarized, stubbornly taking one side."

Into this polarized community, love and reconciliation was the only answer. For Oscar the love that was necessary to heal the wounds of El Salvador could only come through a remembering that each person is exactly like one of those two sons of the loving father in the parable of the Prodigal Son. How irreconcilable they seemed in the Gospel, just as irreconcilable as the parties in El Salvador. The barriers could only be broken by the realisation that we are all children of the one Father, who loves us even though we are great sinners, and to remember the prayer of every prodigal, "forgive us, as we forgive" and try to do that for even enemies.

On the last Sunday of his life, Oscar raised his voice with the most controversial sermon of his life. In many ways, it sealed his fate with the government. He made an appeal to individual members of the military... "I would like to appeal to the men of the army, and in particular to the troops of the National Guard, the police, and the garrisons. Brothers, you belong to your own people. You kill your own brother peasants, and in the face of an order to kill that is given by a man, the law of God should prevail that

Derry Lenten support sought for Zimbabweans facing huge challenges

TROCAIRE'S 2022 Lenten Appeal will be launched on Ash Wednesday, March 2, and this year's appeal is focusing on the challenges facing people in Zimbabwe who are facing the twin threats of drought due to climate change and Covid-19.

Seven million people living in poverty, especially women, in drought-prone southern Zimbabwe have been disproportionately affected by the long-term impacts of Covid-19. Families were already unable to grow enough food to feed themselves because of drought and climate change, and now these challenges have been further exacerbated by the impact of the virus.

Women, who are the primary producers of food, have faced a massive increase in violent gender-based violence since the Covid-19 pandemic hit. Travel restrictions have also resulted in far fewer opportunities for people to earn a living and poverty levels have increased.

The face of the appeal this year is 31-year-old Thandekile. Thandekile and her young family are facing hunger because the impacts of the pandemic have compounded the effects of drought and reduced the ways for people to earn a living.

Every day is a struggle for Thandekile, whose only wish is to be able to provide for her children, Nomatter (11) and Forward (8). The effects of climate change, including three droughts and a severe cyclone in the past five years, means that crops are failing, affecting the ability of the family to feed themselves.

Even before Covid-19, Thandekile and her family were facing hunger as droughts and heavy rainfall caused their plants and crops to fail. The family would often go nights without

eating as food was not always available in their community.

In November 2020, the family's already fragile world was turned upside down when Covid-19 hit. Thandekile's 35-year-old husband, Donovan passed away from Covid-19 while he was working in South Africa to earn an income to provide for his family. Left widowed, now Thandekile's greatest fear is that she will die from Covid-19 or hunger and there will be no-one to look after her children.

"I live for my children and my wish is to be able to provide for all their needs," said Thandekile, adding: "My greatest fear is to die whilst my kids are still young. I pray that the Lord keeps me so that I raise them until they are old enough to take care of themselves."

"The death of my husband hit me very hard and I was bedridden for days. I did not know how I was going to move on and raise my children without the presence of their father. His death greatly affected my children too. Donovan was a good father to our children and a good husband to me."

Following the passing of Donovan, Thandekile struggled even more to provide food for her family, as grieving for her husband meant that she couldn't engage in farming activities, which delayed the planting of crops and made them even more vulnerable to heavy rainfall.

"Following Donovan's death, my life was very hard financially since he was the breadwinner," she commented: "It also affected my ability to earn an income, as at times I would be so stressed and too sick to even go out and work. I did not have the means to pay school fees for the children, to buy uniforms and all our other basic needs because I had no source of income."



Thandekile with her two children, Nomatter (11) and Forward (8). Photograph by Cynthia Matonhodze.

"Due to Covid-19, a lot of businesses were shut down which made a lot of people unemployed. This worsened the ability for

management and planting methods. The garden is also used for Covid-19 awareness training.

"The greatest gift that people can give to one another in life is food and money, because we need it to survive," said Thandekile, "What gives me hope is that I am still alive despite all that we have been through as a family. Whatever the problems you have been through in life, it is important to dust yourself off and move on, have hope and work hard for the children, even if it's very difficult. I thank the people of Ireland for all the help you give to us, please do not tire."

Determined to provide for her two children, Thandekile began buying and selling women's clothes in order to make money: "My wish is to be able to provide for all their needs, so I hope that my business will grow. My hope is that my children will be able to continue in school and be successful in life."

Trócaire has been working in Zimbabwe since 1980 in areas such as humanitarian aid, food security, women's empowerment and human rights issues. In Thandekile's community, Trócaire operates community gardens with its partner Caritas Bulawayo, in which locals can plant vegetables, store seeds and learn about watershed

This Lent the UK government will match all public donations in Northern Ireland to the Lenten Appeal pound for pound, doubling the impact you can make. To find out more about the appeal or to make a donation visit www.trocaire.org

trocaire

Walking through Holy Week

Join us for a day of reflection on the events of Holy Week and preparation for the celebration of Easter

Saturday 9th April 2022

10am-3pm

For queries or bookings please contact Aoife on 028 71262512 or email termonbaccaderry@gmail.com

'Walking through Holy Week' – A day retreat

'WALKING through Holy Week' is the name of a day retreat day to be led by the Discalced Carmelite Fathers on Saturday, April 9.

Running from 10 am until 3 pm, this will be a day of reflection

on the events of Holy Week and preparation for the celebration of Easter.

For queries or books contact Aoife on 028 71 262512 or email termonbaccaderry@gmail.com

PERSONAL JOURNEYS OF FAITH

7PM START - ALL WELCOME

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<http://www.steelstownparish.com/>

8th March 2022

FR ISAAC
Fr Isaac from Greencastle speaking to young people about being a priest for almost 30 years.

15th March 2022

CIARA MCALISTER
How faith changed early for her and from family like the mustard seed.

22nd March 2022

REVISED CANON KATIE
Diocese of Derry and Raphoe and a leading figure of faith.

29th March 2022

MICHAEL KENNEDY
Professional footballer joined early but in injury now helping to be identified immediately, more. God and youth football.

13th April 2022

JENNY MCGRATH
Her journey to faith and how hope is always there.

PAUL O'HEA
Chaplain of Steelstown Brian OG's GAA Club. Non local based community sports are so rewarding.

Lenten spiritual preparations...

Greencastle & Gortin

Spiritual preparations during the season of Lent in the parishes of Greencastle and Gortin include early morning Mass in St Patrick's Church, Greencastle, on Mondays at 6.30 am, and in St Mary's Church, Rouskey, on Thursdays at 6.30 am.

The Stations of the Cross will be prayed after 10 am Mass on Thursdays in St Patrick's Church, Greencastle, and after 10 am Mass on Fridays in St Mary's Church, Rouskey.

Steelstown

During the Tuesdays of Lent,

Stories of Hope are being told in Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Steelstown, by local people, including Fr Isaac and Mikhail Kennedy, March 8, Ciara McAlister and Jenny McGrath on March 15, Rev Canon Katie McAteer on March 22, and Paul O'Hea on March 29. The talks begin at 7 pm, with music and tea/coffee afterwards, and all are welcome.

Three Patrons

Weekly sessions of Lectio Divina are taking place in St Pio House, within the grounds of St Joseph's Church, Gallagh, on the



'Going on...for the Church' by Fr John McLaughlin ssc

AS an altar boy in Moville, all those years ago, I was amongst the small number present in the old Convent Chapel on the early morning Holy Saturday and the Blessing of the Easter Water, with prayers for the whole world led by Fr Dan Mc Laughlin PP. Many years later, as a curate in Arklow on some of those same Easter Saturday mornings, I found myself on my doorstep on St Mary's Terrace answering requests for the same Easter Water, to people in from the farms around Coolgreeney and Castletown and Johnstown. It was difficult to explain to some of them that things had now changed. The Easter Water was now available ('ready') only in the night of the Saturday, as the Church had changed to new ways of doing things. Some of the faces expressed a certain amount of irritation and even disbelief... Eclesia semper reformanda!

There was a lovely book that I came across in the hands of Kike, a youth in the La Cruz chapel in Valparaiso, Chile. It was on some dialogues between Pope Paul VI and French layman, Jean Guitton, who had been invited to the Vatican Council. It had been lying on a bookstand in Viña del Mar and something prompted my young man to pick it up and later show it to me and then, seeing my interest, pass it over to me.

The two men were having a dialogue about the nature of the Church and its capacity to change. Pope Paul, the first Pope to make those visits outside the Vatican that we have become so accustomed to, was recalling his appearance in New York and the United Nations General Assembly, where he had spoken about peace and used the text from Isaiah which spoke of turning swords into plowshares... and all the nations wound approach the holy mountain.

In the early years of my life as a priest, I read most of the pastoral letters of Pope Paul with great interest, amongst them 'Ecclesiam Suam', which displayed a very open and dialogue attitude to the other great religions, enough to inspire me. Later on in those years, I found myself once in his presence in Rome in 1965, on the Feast of the Assumption in Castelgondolfo, and that afternoon in the Academia Diplomatica, where one

of my classmates had studied.

'Humanae Vitae' was for many Catholics and commentators the point of no return for Pope Paul. Not for me, as I went on in my Latin American years to study and share 'Evangelii Nuntiandi' on the role of the Laity and part of the catechetical, youth and parish courses in Santiago. So also was 'Populorum Progressio', which tackles the question of Private Property and its Christian limits and duties in a very direct and challenging way. As, I mentioned in another article here, 'Marialis Cultus' still remains my favourite document on Our Lady.

By now, I was not just "going on for the Church". I was standing up for, promoting, the Church, being Church, and in good Chilean Spanish, 'sacando la cara... poniendo la camiseta de...la Iglesia'. And many, many more were on the same path; laity and clergy.

In one parish, in those early days in the 80s, a group called Indiso was present on the Monday nights, the 'Institute for the Social Doctrine of the Church'. Such was the enthusiasm of the time, in the then political climate of Pinochet etc, that young people were knocking at the door, seeking the cheap copies of some of those documents, such as 'Rerum Novarum', and then John Paul's 'Laborem Ejercens', on the rights and dignity of Labour.

Nowadays, it seems like a dream... 'Edifica la Iglesia, somos la Iglesia'... ran one of the hymns we sang in the groups, 'construct the Church... we are the Church...' Columban missionary, Niall O'Brien, a notable face in the Philippines in the troubled times, remarked that this was the "best kept secret of the Catholic Church", its Social Doctrine. It marked the path for me in all those years... 'rayando la cancha'... marking out the pitch.

Cardinal Raul Silva, one of the great Latin American Church leaders and who had been influenced by participation at the Vatican Council, used often recite with some affection the little poem/hymn, 'La Santa Iglesia de Dios', which had been composed by another prophetic priest, Padre Esteban Gumucio, a Sacred Heart Father whose poetry, plays and teachings we gobbled up for use

in our own pastoral areas. He is a candidate for canonization in the eyes of many who knew him.

Patti Vilches was a gentle and zealous member of the Enrique Alvear Community and Chapel. At her funeral at a still young age, she had been an efficient president of the 'Comunidad', and accomplished in administration and responding to the needs of the moment, with, for example, a Sunday afternoon of recollection for the adults and the youth. With the Vincentian Fathers, she participated in Alpha, being a missionary group with the desire to re-enchant people who had fallen away from the practice of the Faith.

In her day-job, in the Universidad Diego Portales, in the finance section, she still exercised her Church allegiance and reached out to some of the young people who were being led astray. One such, as she told me later on, had come to the City from Osorno in the Deep South, at the insistence of his father, a military general, and never settled. So, he fell behind in his work and his scholarship was threatened... and she winkled this out of him, encouraging him to face up to his father about studying in his home city. It was Patti who helped save the situation and persuade the father, on his visit, to take a broader view.

Men and women and youth would speak of their Capilla, and parish, as theirs, and to the departing priest or sister or lay animators, would say... "gracias por estar con nosotros"... thank you for accompanying our little base-church on our journey!

Confidence

So that we all grow into 'being Church' and we bear its wounds and its celebrations... there is no 'Us' and 'Them' in my experience. On the occasion of the Diocesan gathering of lay leaders in Punto de Tralca, we were invited to send three representatives from our Parish, which had seven Capilla (CEBs) and communities. It was an occasion of learning and sharing amongst the laity from the whole enormous Diocese. So, after one of those assemblies, I was heartened with my Columban brothers when two of them sought me out to share about the experience and to say, Padre we found down there that "none of the parishes give their lay people the confidence you place in us".

Not that there weren't differences and doubts. On one occasion, the young people being prepared for Confirmation in Valparaiso had sat down from their three chapels and composed their own Creed for the Mass of the ceremony. It was a thoughtful and well put together Mission Statement, and would fit in the Mass just before the Prayers of the Faithful. But the young... much younger than me!... Auxiliary Bishop Juan

Barros peremptorily scrapped it, insisting that it be the Nicene or the Apostles Creed in the Mass for their Confirmation. And there was no come back allowed from me, the PP, who knew any number of Vicars and Bishops who would have smiled and said, "carry on"!

On two occasions, I had the privilege of getting to Puerto Alegre, in Brazil, for the World Social Forum, 'A Better World is Possible'. Present were activists from all over the world, and the Churches had many representatives in the throngs and pleading the causes of the Poor and the paths for Justice. In one of the many conferences that I attended, Eduardo Galeano, a notable Uruguayan writer and political commentator, told us that he had found a small tribe in Central America that did not have the word 'I', only the word 'We', amidst the general applause of his audience.

It was, and still seems to me, the case that Church can only attract and integrate people who are prepared to let go of the personal pronoun and become communion. That might be the real challenge in Ireland, if there is to be a road back to a lively and challenging Catholicism.

During some of my more active years in Dublin, I became aware that some priests and some of the young people of the Parishes where getting life from a Friday night meeting in Eustace Street, under the name of the Charismatic Renewal. Fr Martin Tierney, of my own time, in Clonliffe, was one of the key figures in leading the meetings of Praise, and Intercession, and 'Praying in Tongues'. The first night I arrived too late, as there was not even standing room, so it took a second trial and an earlier arrival. As they say now, maybe about Sr Clare Crockett, which had the same effect on me, I "was blown away", and instead of driving straight home to Griffith Avenue, I drove out to the Bull Island trying to make sense of what this could mean for me; the wonder of having people share Scripture and Praise... and Church... on at least the same level as the priest.

In the years that followed, I found it a real moment of Grace for the Church, with a weekly meeting with many younger people and a Sunday night 'corporal group' in my house, in Marino and later in Glasnevin. It was, indeed, a Renewal in the Church for very many people across the world, and Ann Arbor in the USA became almost the inspirational centre. At the International Conference in Ballsbridge in 1978, the big names and the ordinary names sat, and danced, and prayed with people like Cardinal Suenens of Belgium, who had taken it all on board.

Later on, in my first parish in Chile, I joined in with Mercy of New York Sister Margaret and



prayed with the local group; they were dynamic and militant when the time came to get out on the streets and protest at some of the barbarities of the Dictatorship! Two references from that time are still vibrant. Suenens it was, I think, who quoted St John of the Cross, "If you seek love, put love, and you will find love". Ralph Martin was one of the young laymen from Ann Arbor who was then much cited. Recently, on YouTube, I came across a couple of interviews with him, now for many years a University Professor of Theology. His 'Challenges to the Church' interview did for me what all good interviews can do. It left me uncomfortable to be just a 'progressive' in the Church, as it questioned the Leadership and Scripture exegesis now in effect, amongst other 'challenges' to discomfert the comfortable, as we used to say!

One of the other great graces of 'marching with the Church' (sacar la cara!), was the discovery of new heroes and saints. Jesuit priest, Alberto Hurtado had operated within the lifetime of some of my Jesuit friends and directors. He had, with Chilean Bishop Manuel Larraín, led huge assemblies of young Chilean men under the auspices of Catholic Action. He combines all that is attractive in the Contemplative and the Active ministry and his writings and sermons were readily available and inspiring. One of his most quoted was 'Chile, a Catholic Country'... in later years adapted by militant Catholics as 'Chile, an equitable - a just society'.

Another modern Saint, of recent memory there, was St Teresa of Los Andes, a cousin-member of the Fernandez family; Mgr Jaime Fernandez, a cousin, was Vicar General in Valparaiso in my time and a great advocate of the Mission Ad Gentes', and whose shrine

Wounded

Of course, we had to face the wounded Church of the Abuses, and it hurt many, with some high profile priests leading to the scandal of the faithful. We all had to face our people and talk to the issues, and acknowledging that many of them were taking a lot of flack in their own offices and places of work, where they made no secret of being 'de la Iglesia'. Even on an occasion, speaking in a small chapel whose building I had been involved in, I found the homily one of the hardest I had ever faced, with sadness and shame, and anger welling up in those moments of witness.

On another occasion, while out on the street with the people of one chapel for the Way of the Cross, I found it a burden and a blow to be heckled by one of the men-of-the-streets (los curados), and alleviated only by the determination of the participants to keep moving and singing on their way back towards the chapel. On some occasions, challenged by friends or family, I melted into tears under the shame and found that one of my audience did not remain stone-faced, but shared my emotions. It was, I supposed, the difference of



People, places and Patrician sites by Vera McFadden

I was attending a seminar in Rathmullan. One of the speakers was Cardinal Tomas O'Fiaich. He was talking about one of Hugh O'Neill's spiritual directors, Fr Patrick Loughran, who went to Europe at the same time as the earls. He did not go with them from Rathmullan.

He went to a Monastery and stayed for some time. Later he returned to Ireland to continue his work among the Catholic people. On his arrival at Cork, he was arrested and put in prison. Later, he was brought to Dublin, where he was tried with Bishop Devaney, from Raphoe. They were found guilty, dragged through the streets, and hung, drawn and quartered at Georgia's Hill in Dublin. He told us that their names were on a list which was being sent to Dublin so that they would be beatified.

After his talk, two questions were allowed. I wanted to know where Patrick Loughran had grown-up. My paternal grandmother had been Elizabeth Loughran, from Donaghmore. Cardinal O'Fiaich smiled and said, "You will be extremely interested in that if it is part of your family history."

Prayer leaflets were made for the beatification, and Fr Shiels, a Derry priest who taught in the College at Dungannon, sent some to our family and all our cousins in Derry. He knew that Fr Loughran had belonged to our family tree. So did my older brothers and sisters, although I had not known.

My brother, Seamus, who was four years older than me, had often been to visit Donaghmore and the countryside around it with my father. I had only been there once as a child. That was when we went to the funeral of Mrs O'Neill, my father's aunt. I remember my mother talking to his cousins as a house across the road from a big high cross.

I decided to go back to Donaghmore and discover if those cousins still lived there. They did not, but the lady next door directed me to another

cousin who lived at the other end of the town. When I met this lady I could see the family resemblance immediately, and when she showed me some photographs of other cousins, I could see many resemblances in them too. She told me about cousins in Limerick and, when I met them, I discovered that I was related to two of the Sagart folk group, and that my oldest Limerick cousin had been the person selected to represent the family at the beatification in Rome.

Historically, the Loughran family had been the keepers of church lands and relics for Donaghmore. However, Christianity was in this area even before the Monastery.

St Patrick had come to Maighe Fir iomChlair, the name of this place at the time. He had preached and baptised the converts in the Torrent River. He had founded a church here.

Patrician sites are known by the word Domhnach, the Irish for Sunday. Patrick left Colum Cruithin in charge. Some centuries later, it became a monastic site. All this was destroyed at the time of the Reformation, except the high cross. Its survival is fortunate, for it is a beautiful monument.

It is ornamented with panels depicting biblical scenes. It does not date to the time of Patrick but was placed there centuries later. It is remarkably similar to the high cross at Ardboe on the shore of Lough Neagh, and most of the scenes depicted on it are the same, so obviously they were sculpted by the same craftsman.

I broke my ankle in four places at Carrownaffe, which is near Moville. If one has to break a bone, this is a very apt place to do so, for the English translation of the name is 'the quarter land of the bones'. It was called this because of the old graveyard at Cooley, or even because of more ancient burial sites. It was the signpost at the corner which first drew me to Cooley. My children and I went there often, sometimes walking, sometimes driving. At

a corner of the road, just outside the graveyard wall, there was an ancient cross.

A notice on the gate informed us that this place had been founded by St Finian. Of course, that was a mistake for Finian had founded the other Moville in Co Down. There was an ancient, corbelled mortuary house in the graveyard which was well preserved.

When the Bernician Studies group came to Moville, they did some archaeological work there. They found that the old cross was at the perimeter of an ancient site. The town's name comes from the Irish words 'Maighe Bhile', which means 'the plain of the sacred tree'. St Patrick's biographers recorded that the saint founded a church called Domhnach MaigheBhile.

He also noted its measurements. The archaeologists found that these were exact. They also found some sculpted stones and a small ancient cross.

So, Patrick had come here to this place and converted the people who had worshipped a sacred tree. He had baptised them in the nearby streams. That is where he baptised Aengus, in the river beside Moville. Aengus became a missionary and is the patron saint of the church at Burt.

Downpatrick

One Saturday, my children and I went by bus to Downpatrick and Saul. We looked around the church and graveyard at Downpatrick. There we had a light meal and began our walk to Saul, carrying light refreshments with us. We did not know anyone, but the local people gave us directions. For me, this was like a dream come true. I had often seen the mountains of Mourne in the distance, after I got off the bus on the Falls Road and climbed Hannahstown Hill. Halfway up there was a magnificent view of the Mourne Mountains.

When St Patrick was coming on his missionary journey to Ireland, a storm blew his boat into Strangford Lough. The chief, Díchu welcomed him, converted

to Christianity, and gave him a barn to use as a church. The Irish words 'Sabhal' (a barn) became the name of this place from that time on.

We walked out to Saul, and a couple of people showed us the traditional site of Patrick's foundation. We then climbed the nearby hill and prayed at the Stations. We reached the top, where there was a massive statue of the saint and a panoramic view. I will always remember the coastline where Divine Providence blew St. Patrick ashore.

I thought I was giving my children an unforgettable experience, but when I recently asked them they could not remember anything about it. Of course, it was over 50 years ago.

It is almost 80 years since I was a teenager, but I still remember visiting Mulach Buidhe village, where my brother and his wife were teachers. The tiny school was ancient, and so was the church. However, an early cross was the most ancient feature of all. It stood outside the church wall. It had short arms and no sculpted patterns or biblical pictures. I read that it had been moved there from an unsuitable site.

Later, I heard about the nearby area called Leitir Sean Domhnaigh (the sloping field of the old Patrician church). I began to wonder exactly where St Patrick had founded his church in this locality. My brother used to say, "St Patrick was walking on the Highmoor Road, and he said, 'Slaughtmanus, you're there', but he didn't go up". I used to think that that was a silly story, but now I think it was a folk memory to indicate where Patrick had founded his church.

My niece Ethna grew up in the area. She has also worked with historian, Henry Jefferies on early sites in this area. We did a few hours' research on the locality and discussed our exploration with Fr Farren, who had organised the pilgrimage to the seven churches in the Faughan Valley. I would not



have been fit enough to go on that pilgrimage, but my exploration was about one of the seven sites. Patrick's biographer called it 'Domhnach Sen's(Sean) Lios'.

Fr Farren told me to go to the Highmoor Road, where I would see a circular shape in the moor and Slaught maus raising up to the right. Henry Jefferies thought that the cross had been moved from a field called Gor Tacross. The whole area has ancient sites. There was a monastic site which was investigated by an archaeologist a long time ago. There was an area where a wooden statue of a lady with a basket of bread was found. This statue is now called 'Our Lady of Lettershandoney'.

There is now a new school and a new church at Mullach Buidhe. At one end of the churchyard, just before the wall, there is a shelter and in it an ancient cross with one of its short arms damaged. It is protected from acid rain and other environmental problems.

When St Patrick crossed to the Western bank of the Foyle, he went up past the Three Trees area and onto the road now known as Tochair Padraig. He

may have stopped for a drink at a spring which is now known as St Patrick's Well. He went on to a place about three miles further, where he founded a church. This is now known as Carndonagh.

There is a Church of Ireland church on this site today and, outside it, an ancient cross, which is beautifully inscribed and has two little standing stones either side of it. The cross was originally on the other side of the road. That is where the Bernician Studies group found part of an ancient circular enclosure. The centre of this is the site of the current church.

During the years, I have visited other places connected with St Patrick and other Saints, and this research has brightened and coloured my life.



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looking on in an 'Us-Them' way at the Church, or just 'US-US'...we are all wounded.

Pope Francis, at the end of last year, was speaking in Rome to a group of Catholic Youth, where he commended having their dreams about life and Church and mission. Back at an early Synod of the Church, post Vatican Two, Cardinal Basil Hume admitted to drifting off and having a vision, which he shared in the Synod. He told about seeing a vision of the Fortress Church, where those within had only a hazy idea about those who were outside, and those outside could not get the attention of those insulated within the fortress. Then he told of the vision of Pilgrim Church, which moved

forward in some hurry in search of truth, often with mishaps that are painful. But the co-responsibility felt by the pilgrims demanded joint efforts. It represented, he said, the difference between the Temple of Solomon and the Tent of Abraham.

The third vision will resonate with those of us active in the Church at the time: that of Paul VI and his Pastoral Letter, 'Humanae Vitae'. The message was correct, Hume says, but the signage or communication of the time was faulty. We should never tire of listening to the other pilgrims on the way...speak gently with them, guide them gradually along the way and address them in a language that allows them to say, "certainly it is now clear and

acceptable this teaching...So I saw these happier pilgrims who had approached what is the truth...and sang of their joy with acts of gratitude".

When I revisited Chile almost three years ago, there was a lot of smoke in the air around the Church as the Abuses and lack of response from Church leaders filled the columns of some of the papers. The name of Karadima, one of those under suspension, and a high profile member of the Church in Santiago, was bandied around in all kinds of columns where the Solidarity Church of my earlier years seemed like a dream.

A large group of committed Catholic women wrote a public letter to the press... "The Church we want". It has a preamble of a

Confession of Faith..."Of loving the Church and the amount we have received from her...knowing Christ and His message...infusion of lofty ideals centered in love...awakening an anxiety for the sacred and the transcendent...inculcate in us the sense of community being there for each other...inspiring us to construct the Kingdom which gives meaning to our lives...without the traditional church, with all its light and shadow, it would not have been possible to transmit this faith from generation to generation, and whose mission is only to direct us on to Jesus".

In the lengthy document, they outline what they desire from and in the Church: A Church centered in Jesus and His project of life; a

Church that lives and symbolises what it preaches; a Church that evangelizes and is missionary; a Church whose magisterium is centred in the essential; and a Church that distinguishes the ideal sharing the basic norms that the faithful must fulfil, and finally, in another lengthy but challenging paragraph, 'A Church whose institutionalism is in line with its message.'

I have in archive, the complete document, in Spanish of course, and could make it available through the editor to anyone who is interested.

There is a little saying in Spanish that goes..."no tan adentro que te quemes, ni tan afuera que se resfrie" (don't go so far in that you get burnt, nor stay so far off that

you...die of the cold.) Maybe that is where we, in Ireland, are finding ourselves in these recent years; where the voices are often loud and strident and re-connecting is rather challenging!

I liked the prayer of the Faithful in the Office of Laudes this week: "We pray for the Church: that her leaders may be faithful ministers of your word, that all her members may be strong in faith and hope and that you may be recognized in the love she bears to all. Lord, in your mercy hear our prayer."

And this prayer: "Be with those who are persecuted for their faith, and those cut off from the support of the Church: Good Shepherd, in their pain and isolation may they know your care. Lord, we need your care".

Saints we celebrate during March by Bishop Donal



St David, Patron Saint of Wales.

March 1: St David (520-589)

David lived about a century after St Patrick. He was an abbot and bishop, and his monks evangelised South Wales and made foundations in Cornwall and Brittany. He is remembered as the Patron of Wales.



St Casimir.

March 4: St Casimir (1458-1484)

St Casimir was a royal prince who died at the age of 28. He was known for his devotion to the Eucharist and to the Virgin Mary.

March 5: St Ciaran

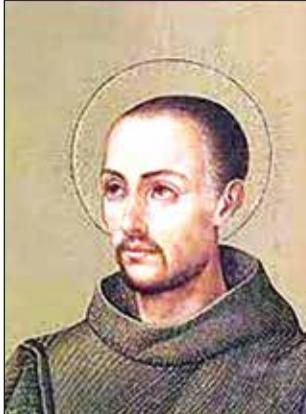
There are two Irish saints called Ciaran. This one was a monk and bishop about a century after St Patrick. He is the patron of the Diocese of Ossory, which has its cathedral in Kilkenny.

March 7: Saints Perpetua and Felicity

These were two women who were martyred in Carthage in North Africa in 203. There is a detailed contemporary account of their martyrdom from witnesses.

March 8: St John of God (1495-1550)

John was born in Portugal and served as a soldier. He spent some time as a shepherd. After a prolonged search, he felt a call to dedicate his life to the service of the poor, as a penance for his rather dissolute life. He set up a community of Brothers (called Hospitallers), dedicated to this work. He died on his 55th birthday.



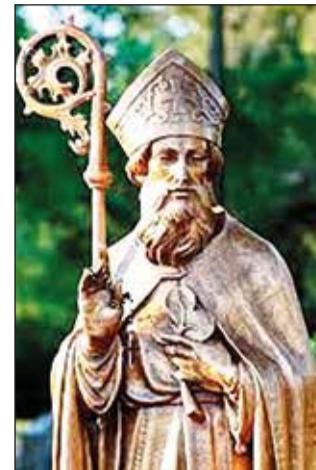
St John of God.

March 9: St Frances of Rome (1384-1440)

Born in Rome, Frances was married at 13 and was married for 40 years. She was known for her generosity to the poor. When her husband died, she retired to a convent which she had founded.



St Frances of Rome.



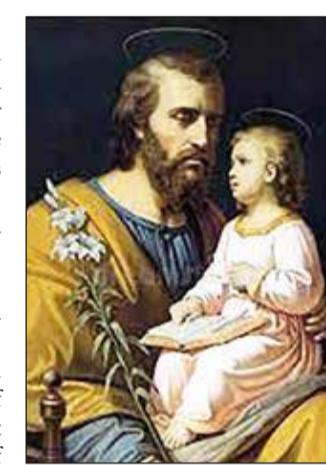
St Patrick.



St Cyril of Jerusalem

March 17: St Patrick (385-461)

The Patron saint of Ireland is well known in many parts of the world where his name was brought by Irish missionaries. His love of the people who had enslaved him is a model in a fragmented world. And his missionary zeal is a model for modern evangelisation.



St Joseph

March 18: St Cyril of Jerusalem (315-386)

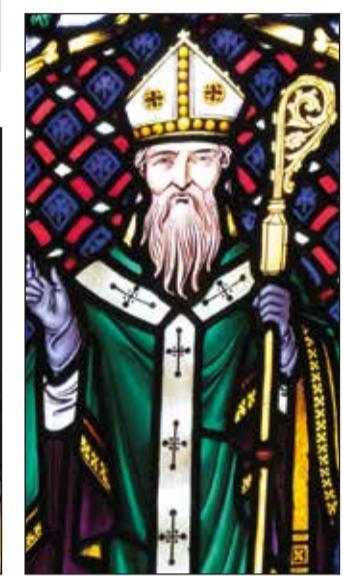
St Cyril was born of Christian parents and became Bishop of Jerusalem. He was a prominent teacher of the faith and many of his works are still read.

March 19: St Joseph

Nothing is known of St Joseph except what we read in the Gospels. The recent Year of St Joseph has helped us focus on the many dimensions of St Joseph's fatherhood for a modern church.

March 24: St Macartan

This saint was a companion of St Patrick, who made him Bishop of Clogher. The Cathedral in that Diocese and the Diocesan College are in Monaghan.



St Macartan

Lent – Decision Time? by Fr Johnny Doherty, CSSR



Fr Johnny Doherty

Wealth mania

Week after week, people are putting their trust in the future on winning the Lottery. And, week after week, they go away disappointed. Our society can so easily form people into being graspers for all they can get. Lent is a time for learning again the art of giving to others, and the freedom that this brings.

Pleasure pursuits

People have a right to enjoy living. But when pleasure becomes the purpose of life, as it would seem to be for so many people, it leads to all kinds of abuses of others.

Pain is also a normal part of life. There is physical pain that has to be borne gracefully. People experience pain in relationships as a necessary part of growth and have to be able to work their way through it towards proper love. And there is the pain of hurt in life that needs to be healed by forgiveness.

When pleasure is promoted for us as the only thing in life, we give up when there is suffering of any kind, either by looking for a new relationship that won't hurt, by revenge that will hurt others, or by suicide that will take it all away.

Lent is the time to restore the balance of life, where we can learn again and again to live in the present moment to the full.

What is it all about?

Isn't it amazing the hours that are spent in pubs and at parties solving all the problems of the world! It is equally amazing

how many pages are taken up in newspapers every day, how many chat-shows there are on radio and TV, endlessly pontificating on life. So much of it is like children's games played out by adults and with far less real interest.

Lent is a time for reflecting again on what life is really about. We are ultimately people who desperately need God to show us our true dignity and worth. Human life can only be truly lived in love and compassion and concern. Life can only be enjoyed when it is placed in God's creative plan, in which we can know our smallness and realise our greatness.

It is in the death and resurrection of Christ that we come to see how much we are treasured and for what we are destined. These weeks of Lent can be a time of real hope.

Week by week through March**Week 1: February 27 - March 5
What Christ calls us to**

Jesus said to His disciples: "Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's/sister's eye and never notice the plank in your own?"

What a powerful statement that is to help us to change in our relationships of marriage, family, and faith community, if we are to make a real difference in our world. Negative criticisms so easily become a way of life in marriage and family life. Generally, these are about relatively unimportant things, and we make mountains out of mole hills.

The plank in our own eye is what blocks us from seeing the

goodness in one another and acknowledging that goodness as our way of life. Criticism leads to unhappiness, coldness, and distance in our family life. Praise and thanksgiving lead to joy and happiness and peace. The same is true in our life with one another in our parish community. That is what Christ calls us to.

**Week 2: March 6 - 12
Jesus is Lord**

"Jesus was led by the spirit through the wilderness and was tempted there by the devil for forty days."

As we begin Lent, we are put in touch with the basic temptations of human life that can lead us to disaster. The first of these is pride. This does not mean thinking well of ourselves, but rather thinking of ourselves as the only and most important thing in our lives.

During this time, we are invited to sort out our priorities once again. The second temptation is to power that makes us want to prove that we are better than others. The only power we should exercise as followers of Christ is the power of love, through which we forget ourselves, die to ourselves so that others may have life.

And Lent is also a time to change our ways of life that are not in accordance with God's ways, as the third temptation is presumption. God does respect our choices and rewards and punishes us accordingly.

**Week 3: March 13 - 19
The Lord in whom we put our faith**

Peter said to Jesus: "Master, it is wonderful for us to be here".

As we gather for Mass this Sunday, how many of us can say those words of Peter from our hearts? And yet we have a right to be able to say them. Unfortunately, for so many Catholics, Mass has become a burden rather than a joy and a source of enthusiasm and energy. We need to help each other to gain that grace.

And as we return home from Mass this Sunday, how many of us can say those words of Peter in relation to our marriage and/or family life? At best, so many can only say it is not bad, it is ok. But can we say it is wonderful? And yet we have a right to be able to say that.

It takes a lot of working at the relationships in our home, the relationships of marriage, of family, of neighbourliness, to make those words possible and to ring true. But it is in those two places that the practice of faith takes place.

**Week 4: March 20 - 26
The Lord of compassion and love**

God said to Moses: "Take off your shoes, for the place on which you stand is holy ground".

All religions designate certain places as holy places and rightly demand a certain level of reverence and respect. For ourselves, as Catholics, our sacred place is the church where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved.

But the revelation of Christ is that the most sacred place of all is the company of another human being. He said that what we do

to even the least person we do to him. Because of Christ, we are always standing on holy ground and our response always has to be one of reverence and respect. This has very far-reaching implications for us in the practice of our faith.

The intimate relationship of husband and wife is a sacred place and calls for great reverence from all of us. And equally, our homes and families and our faith community are places where we very often need a change of heart.

**Week 5: March 27 - April 2
The Lord who welcomes sinners**

"This man", they said, "welcomes sinners and eats with them."

One of the dangers with religion is that it can be thought of as for good, holy people. And one of the lovely aspects of Christianity, especially as experienced within our Catholic tradition, is that it is for sinners.

Holiness is our call, sinner is our condition, and there is no need to worry or be fearful. It can be difficult for us to accept this for ourselves and also for other people around us, and so we find ourselves standing in judgement on one another and, at times, condemning one another.

If we want to find Christ, though, we have to learn to reverence the poor, the weak, the sinful, and the faults and failings of others and ourselves. This is why criticism of one another has no part in our following of Christ, whether in our homes, in our close relationships or in our faith community.

Children's Catechism Club - C3

by Veronica Harley

Hello children. Welcome to the month of March. This month is dedicated to Saint Joseph, the spouse of Mary and foster father of Jesus. In Saint Matthew's Gospel, Joseph is described as a just man. This means that he was a true and faithful person, filled with justice and virtue. Joseph was given a very important task by God; he had to protect Mary and Jesus, to work hard to provide for them, to teach Jesus and lovingly watch over Mother and Child. St Joseph fulfilled this family mission beautifully. As a result, he has been loved and celebrated down the centuries. St Joseph, pray for us!



Lent

Lent begins every year with Ash Wednesday, and this year it falls on March 2. The word 'lent' means to lengthen and is also an old English word for Spring. The season of Lent lasts 40 days (not including Sundays) before Easter. During Lent people give things up, like eating chocolate, biscuits, or maybe try to do something which helps others, like helping at home. Some adults fast and pray as part of their penance so that they can prepare themselves better to celebrate Easter. Lent, then, is a time when we have the opportunity each year to change our thoughts and actions, so that we can open our hearts to Jesus at Easter.

On Ash Wednesday, the priest places the mark of a cross on our forehead with blessed ashes. The ashes are made from the burnt Palm branches from Palm Sunday the year before. The ashes are a symbol of sadness and death, while the cross reminds us that we belong to Jesus, who died for all humanity on the cross.

Lent- How Much do you Know?

True or False?

Can you figure out which of these phrases are true and which are false?

1. Lent starts on Ash Wednesday.
2. During Lent we fast, which is to go without food on certain days.
3. Lent recalls the time that Jesus and the disciples were out in the desert.
4. A cross is marked on our foreheads with blessed ashes on Ash Wednesday.



Saints of the Month

- March 4 – St Casimir
- March 9 – St Francis of Rome
- March 17 – St Patrick
- March 19 – St Joseph

Saint Patrick

St Patrick is the Patron of Ireland, but he was born in Britain. When he was 16 years old, he was captured and taken to Ireland as a slave, where for six years he took care of sheep and pigs. The young Patrick was very lonely and prayed to God all the time. Eventually, he escaped from his captives and returned to Britain. He studied to become a priest and teacher. His studies may have been in France.

In 432AD, he returned to Ireland as a Bishop to teach the love of the true God. Bishop Patrick used the shamrock to explain the Holy Trinity. A shamrock has one stem and three leaves. There is only one

God but God is three Persons; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Patrick worked many miracles as he preached and converted people all over Ireland. He baptized and confirmed thousands and ordained many priests. As a result, many kingdoms within Ireland converted to Christianity. He lived in poverty and did constant penance, especially in places such as Lough Derg and Croagh Patrick.

After a life of prayer and many sufferings, St Patrick died on March 17, 461AD. He is buried in Downpatrick, the little town that bears his name.



The Annunciation of the Lord

– March 25th (CCC 494)

On the feast of the Annunciation of the Lord (CCC 494), March 25, we celebrate that the Archangel Gabriel appeared to Mary of Nazareth with

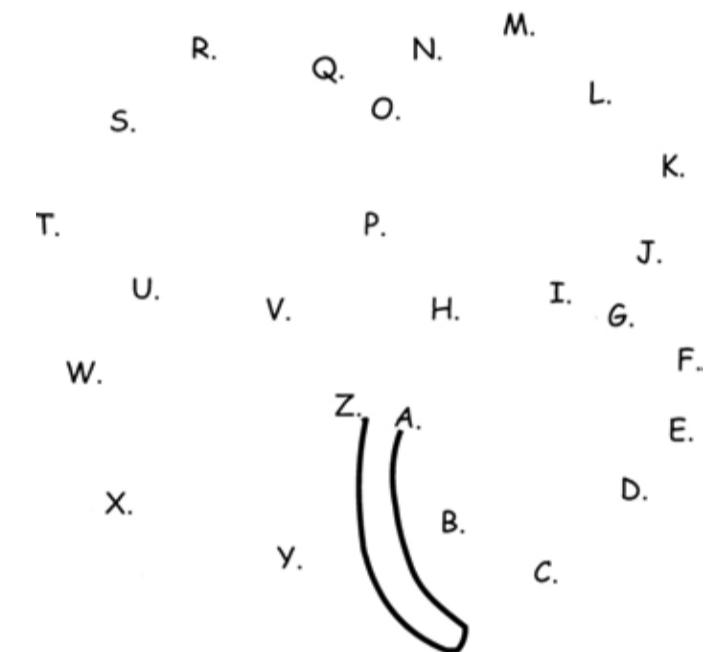


a special message. The Angel Gabriel announced to Her that She was full of grace and that the Lord was with Her. God had chosen Her to conceive through the power of the Holy Spirit. The angel said she must call Him Jesus. The baby would be unique. He would be the Saviour of the world, the Son of God (Luke 1:26-33).

Mary, trusting in God, replied 'Yes' to what the Angel Gabriel had told her. She was meek and obedient to God's will. We can learn from Mary how to live humble Christian lives and to be always ready to say 'yes' to God, as She did.

St.Paddy's Day Surprise

Celebrate St. Patrick's Day with some connect the dot fun. Just draw a line from "A" to "Z" and find a lucky charm!



Quiz Time with Lawrence

1. What is the capital city of Syria?
2. In which movie/novel is 10-year old Mary Lennox the lead character?
3. Which Saint is often referred to as the Maid of Orléans?
4. Who played Jim Rockford in the Rockford Files?
5. Which country currently holds the title of World Ice Hockey champions?
6. What type of drink is made from white rum, fresh lime juice, sugar and mint leaves?
7. Carly Simon's 1972 hit 'You're So Vain' is believed to be about which US actor?
8. What is the name given to a baby goose?
9. Who is the owner of the toys in the movie Toy Story?
10. Who scored England's first goal after just two minutes of their opening match against Italy, in last year's European Championships?
11. In the US sitcom 'Friends', which character made most appearances outside of the six main stars?
12. Who is the current UK Chancellor of the Exchequer?
13. What is the Ulnar Nerve better known as?

Quiz Answers: 1. Damascus. 2. The Secret Garden. 3. Joan of Arc. 4. James Garner. 5. Canada. 6. A Mojito. 7. Warren Beatty. 8. Gosling. 9. Andy Davis. 10. Luke Shaw. 11. Gunther from the coffee shop. 12. Rishi Sunak. 13. Funny Bone. 14. Harry Potter. 15. Red. 16. Clontibret. 17. Steptoe and Son. 18. 1984. 19. Birmingham. 20. The Arctic. 21. Annapolis. 22. Steve Davis. 23. Dmitry Medvedev. 24. Butros Butros-Ghali. 25. Willie Nelson.

Moville, Newtownstewart, Omagh, Plumbridge, Sion Mills, Steeletown, Strabane, Swatragh, Templemore - Long Tower and St Eugene's, Three Patrons, Waterside

Aghyaran, Ardmore, Ardstraw West & Castlederg, Ballinascreen, Ballymagroarty, Banagher, Bellaghy, Buncrana, Carndonagh, Claudy,

Clonmany, Coleraine, Greggan, Culdaff, Culmore, Desertmartin, Donnybrook, Drumquin, Dunamanagh, Dungiven, Fahan, Faughanvale, Garvagh, Gortin, Greencastle,

Our Lady of Sorrows Pray for Us



Blessing of the Cathedral Memorial Garden for all those who died during Covid-19 in the Diocese of Derry.

Photographs by Stephen Latimer.

Greenlough, Iskaheen, Killyclogher, Killygordon, Kilrea, Lavey, Leckpatrick, Lifford, Limavady, Maghera, Magilligan, Malin, Melmount,