

# The NET

Sharing fruits of faith in Derry Diocese

ISSUE 85. MAY 2023

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See inside...



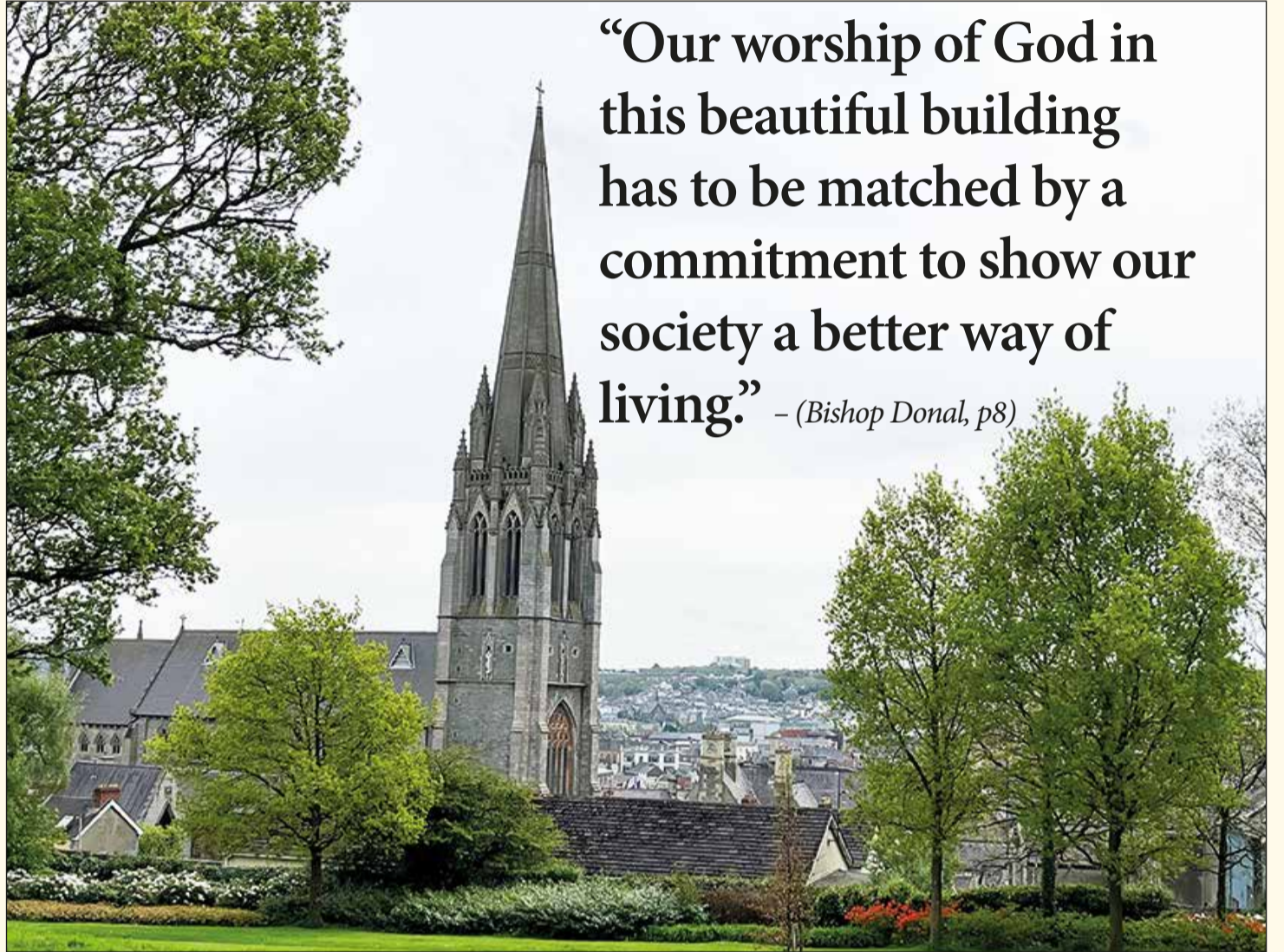
Sr Clare Retreat – Long Tower



Pope John Paul II Award Pilgrimage – Knock



May Eve Well Rosary – Faughanvale



“Our worship of God in this beautiful building has to be matched by a commitment to show our society a better way of living.” – (Bishop Donal, p8)

St Eugene's Cathedral – a place of welcome and prayer for 150 years.



Dominican Mission – Limavady



Memorial Garden – St Columb's College



'Mere Christianity' Study – Cranagh



Children's First Saturday Rosary - Claudy

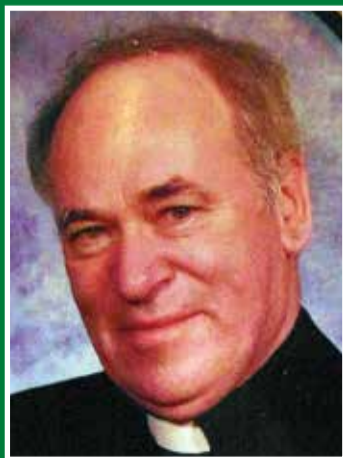
People in focus



Anne Marie Hickey – St Eugene's



Sr Ruby HoM – Killygordon



The late Fr Kevin Mullan



Niamh Kehoe – St Eugene's



The late Sr Clare Crockett

Also featuring: Excitement mounting for World Youth Day; St Eugene's Blessed Carlo Acutis statue & relic; Young Writers share thoughts; Children's Catechism Club; St Mary's Cloughcor to celebrate 200th anniversary; Divine Mercy feature; Home of the Mother activities; Vocations News; Irish Section; Features, Diary Dates, Quiz... and much more...



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## Bishop Donal reflects on the Pope's prayer intention for the month of May...

"We pray that Church movements and groups may rediscover their mission of evangelization each day, placing their own charisms at the service of needs in the world."

# We are enriched by a constant rediscovery of the wisdom of the ages



Bishop Donal McKeown

ONE of the great strengths of Catholicism is that it has tried to be true to its name – for 'Catholic' means universal. In some other Christian traditions, there has been a tendency to see a new idea as a reason to found a new church.

In the Catholic tradition, we have always sought to keep a wide range of new and long-established spiritualities

together through religious congregations and lay movements. New movements have constantly been the source of new life and energy.

Thus, we have the Carmelite and Franciscan and Ignatian traditions alive and well in our own time. We are enriched by a constant rediscovery of the wisdom of the ages.

Many religious families were born of lay people who wanted to respond to the needs of the time. The Sisters of Mercy were founded to bring education and health care to the poor. The Christian Brothers were set up because poor boys had no access to education in 19th century Ireland. The Legion of Mary was set up by Frank Duff and his companions to respond to need in early 20th century

Ireland.

We are blessed by the many gifts that God gives to the Body of Christ.

But, in this time of Church renewal, Pope Francis asks us to pray that the great variety of Church movements and groups will rediscover two things. Firstly, they were all set up to evangelise, to make Jesus known and loved.

At a time when many church bodies are struggling to attract members, there is a temptation to withdraw into self-preservation mode. But Pope Francis knows that renewal will come by going out to evangelise, not by getting smaller and expecting little.

Renewal comes from rediscovering the generous idealism and spiritual wisdom

that came from founders, and not merely from trying to get new funders to keep our sometimes creaking structures going.

Secondly, renewal will come from each movement appreciating its own distinctive spiritual strength, and cherishing the wisdom of other groups. We are called to complement each other in the Body of Christ, not to compete with one another.

As St Paul said when writing to the Corinthians, we are all living cells and all have different purposes in the Body of Christ. Catholicism does not seek conformity. It encourages the appreciation of diversity within the one body, where different traditions need each other.

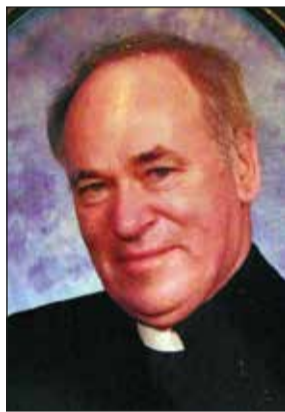
Thus, the whole idea of

discernment is about each spiritual strand in the beautiful fabric of God rediscovering its own beauty and seeking to work with the other emphases. There is no place in church for those who love to look down on others in order to promote themselves.

Pope Francis wants us to pray that Church movements and groups may rediscover their mission of evangelization each day, placing their own charisms at the service of needs in the world.

And, he wants us to join movements and groups, not just to leave that mission to others. By our baptism, we are all called to be evangelisers. Our prayer is that we will discover how – and not whether.

## Much-loved Fr Kevin Mullan laid to rest



The late Fr Kevin Mullan

ST Patrick's Church in Drumquin was filled to overflowing for the Ecumenical Evening Prayer Service in thanksgiving for the life and ministry of the late Fr Kevin Mullan on Monday, May 8.

When news spread of the 77-year-old Omagh native's peaceful passing in the early hours of Saturday, May 6, tributes flowed on social media from many of those whose lives he had touched in over 50 years

of ministry.

The high regard in which he was held was further reflected in the large turnout of people of all faiths and none to pay their respects, many having to park their cars in Drumquin village and walk in the rain when the road to the Church and its car park were filled to capacity.

Staff and pupils from the local St Joseph's PS, where Fr Kevin was a frequent and much loved visitor, were also in attendance.

Bishop Donal joined Fr Eugene Hasson, Fr Brian Donnelly and Fr Kevin McElhennon, and clergy from other faith denominations who had worked closely with Fr Kevin on the Omagh Churches Forum, in the sanctuary for the time of prayer and hymn singing.

On behalf of the Forum, Fr Eugene welcomed all gathered and spoke about how Fr Kevin had "given so much of his time, skills and gifts" to it, "because he believed in the work of

the Forum and he believed in ecumenism."

He continued: "At the Coronation of King Charles on Saturday, a beautiful prayer was said about inclusivity. If anyone made inclusivity his mission, it was Fr Kevin Mullan."

"We are grateful for what he has done," said Fr Eugene, "and our prayer this evening is a prayer of thanksgiving."

Fr Kevin was born on March 30, 1946 and, after seminary training in St Patrick's College, Maynooth, went on to be ordained a priest on June 20, 1971. He first served as a curate in St Patrick's, Pennyburn, before going to study at the National Liturgy Institute in Portlinton, from 1975 to 1976.

On returning to the Diocese of Derry, he served as a Curate in St Joseph's, Galliagh, until 1983, when he was appointed to the Limavady Parish as a Curate. In 1988, he was transferred to a Curacy in Castlefin, where

he remained until 1991, when he was appointed as Curate in Strathroy, Cappagh. In 2002, Fr Kevin was appointed as Parish Priest of Langfield, where he remained resident after his retirement.

Loved by many for his compassion and sense of humour, Fr Kevin will be fondly remembered for his example in extending the hand of peace and friendship, particularly at the height of the 'Troubles', when, in 1984, he and his Presbyterian counterpart, Rev David Armstrong, shook hands on Christmas Day outside their churches in Limavady; an act which subsequently made headlines around the world. He also touched many lives in his comforting of those grieving following the Omagh bombing in 1998.

Fr Kevin was a driving force behind the Ulster Project, which came into being in the midst of the violence here, bringing teenagers in Northern

Ireland and America together to educate and develop them as leaders to effect change in their communities.

He was also well known for his love and dedication to Feis Dhoire Cholmcille, remaining its chairperson until his passing, and delighting all with his annual visit to the Easter Feis a few weeks before he passed away.

The streets of Drumquin were lined by people in a silent tribute to Fr Kevin as his remains were brought to the Parochial House, where they were reposed for two nights before being transferred next door to St Patrick's church, Drumquin, where they were reposed until the Tuesday afternoon. From there, Fr Kevin's remains were moved to his sister Joan's house, Dublin Road, Omagh, for a private Requiem Mass with family only. Afterwards, he was interred in the Dublin Road cemetery.



# The NET

Sharing the fruits of the faith in the Derry Diocese

## Supporting us:

The mission of 'The NET' is to share the fruits of the faith in homes, parishes and schools across the Diocese of Derry, and be a source of hope and encouragement in living our Catholic faith each day. 'The NET' is a Lay Apostolate that has the blessing of our Bishop, Most Rev Donal McKeown.

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

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The ministry of

## The NET

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a ceremony celebrated

by Bishop Donal

McKeown

on August 14, 2019.



# The NET

Sharing the fruits of the faith in the Derry Diocese

## Contacting us:

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

**editorthenet15@gmail.com**  
or ring/text 07809292852



# Pope John Paul II Award Knock pilgrimage impacted young pilgrims

THE annual Pope John Paul II Award national pilgrimage to Knock Shrine took place on the last Tuesday of March, when young people travelled from across Ireland to participate.

And going by the feedback comments of some of the youth, the programme of prayer and catechesis made an impact on them.

Led by Bishop Donal McKeown, Bishop of Derry and Awarard Patron, the theme of the pilgrimage was 'Peace'.

During the day, the young people took part in prayers, readings, dance performance and activities, all with the message

of encouragement to become involved in their parish and grow in faith.

One of the highlights was when the young pilgrims led and participated in the Stations of the Cross, reflecting on the Way of the Cross from the perspective of Mary, Mother of Jesus.

The pilgrimage focus was on Catechesis and Explanation, with an explanation of ritual and prayers, the story of the Apparition, of the structure and order of Mass and the Holy Eucharist.

When asked what they most enjoyed about the pilgrimage, the comments included:

"Stations of the Cross, Mass and singing, seeing young people enjoying the experience";

"The Mass ceremony";  
"I enjoyed the opening ceremony and Stations of the Cross from the perspective of Mary";

"I really enjoyed all aspects of the day. I particularly enjoyed the Stations of the Cross and the fact that it was outside";

"I really enjoyed the Mass itself and the carrying of the Cross";

"Being able to participate in the closing Mass as a reader".

The young people, from the dioceses of Armagh, Cloyne, Elphin, Derry, Dromore, Kildare & Leighlin, Limerick,

Meath, Raphoe and Tuam, were accompanied on the pilgrimage with school and parish leaders.

The Pope John Paul II Award is a faith achievement award for young people between the age of 16 and 18, which enables participants to take an active part in the life of their Church, community and society.

Created to commemorate the late Pope Saint John Paul II, who had a great love for and confidence in young people, the Award was launched by the Papal Nuncio to Ireland, His Excellency Most Rev Dr Giuseppe Lazzarotto on November 7, 2006, in the Diocese of Derry.





# St Columb's Memorial Garden Stations of the Cross a walk of prayer for deceased College Community



*"For I am certain of this: neither death nor life, no angel, no prince, nothing that exists, nothing still to come, not any power, or height or depth, nor any created thing, can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8)*

Quoting from St Paul's Letter to the Romans at the blessing and dedication of the new Memorial Garden at St Columb's College, Derry, by Bishop Donal McKeown, the principal, Finbar Madden expressed the hope that they would resonate and bring comfort to those gathered.

"This is not an easy day as we gather to mark the creation of a space that brings to mind, individually and collectively, those members of our College Family who are no longer with us," he remarked, adding: "We know how difficult it may be for some of you to be here and we thank you for your presence; we hope that knowing that your loved ones will be remembered here, as well as in our hearts, can be of some comfort."

Among those present were members of the families of Reuven Simon and Joseph Sebastian, who died in the Enagh Lough tragedy, at Strathfoyle, last August, and the ceremony included the blessing of two trees to be planted in their memory.

Mr Madden explained: "The trees will be planted down at the

front of the school where we have an existing memorial garden, dedicated to our much-missed colleague, Miss Patricia Hughes. The trees will commemorate Reuven Simon and Joseph Sebastian, two exemplary #collegeboys who we lost in such tragic circumstances last August."

Many of the pupils present for the blessing and dedication of the Memorial Garden were Year 13s, Joseph and Reuven's classmates, and the principal paid tribute to them for having played an important part in the creation of the garden and making the ceremony possible.

The garden, with benches and planters, incorporates an existing water feature in the centre of the courtyard, around which the 14 Stations of the Cross have been newly erected, and during the ceremony the Year 13s and staff members movingly led the praying of the Stations, guided by College chaplain, Fr Sean O'Donnell.

As the current school year got underway in September 2022, under the shadow of the loss of Joseph and Reuven, Fr Sean and the school's chaplaincy team had come up with a proposal to create an outdoor Stations of the Cross in a visible and accessible place, for the school community to pray and reflect upon, and as a reminder of the centrality of the Way of the Cross in life. This coincided with the expressed wish of the boys' peer group to have a memorial to Joseph and Reuven, and so it was decided to have the Stations of the Cross at the Memorial Garden.

### Holy Water

The Station images are from the set that the late Bishop Seamus Hegarty had in the Oratory at

his house in Muff, and which were rescued during renovations of the house, when they were mistakenly dumped on a fire. Moulded by Paul Madden, of Strabane, the background shape of the mould for the Stations is from old roof slates from the Immaculate Conception Church there, and the resin mix for it contains Holy Water from Knock, Fatima, Lourdes and Medjugorje, along with soil from these places of prayer, as well as from the Holy Land and other pilgrimage sites.

Paying tribute to Fr Sean, Mrs Caroline McLaughlin, Mr Nathan Thiruvengadam, Mr Michael Hegarty, Mr Tony Donohoe, Mr Martin McKinney and Mr Martin McEleney for their vision and endeavours regarding the Memorial Garden, Mr Madden added: "We are humbled by the generosity of those individuals whose contributions have allowed us to create this oasis of peace.

"In particular, I would like to acknowledge Mr Paul Madden, Mr Brendan Durning, Mr Patsy McCallion, Mr Sean McIvor and Mr Owen Doherty. Thank you, too, to Springrowth Garden Centre for their beautiful benches, trees and displays, and to Lermagh Graphics for their work in producing our Prayer Booklet."

The Stations of the Cross booklet includes striking illustrations by past pupil, Conall Melrose.

During the ceremony, Bishop Donal commended the College for its reflective response to the tragedy that had led to the loss of two of its pupils, Reuven and Joseph, highlighting that "God is in the middle of all the mess of life".

He remarked: "When we get to the end of the Stations of the Cross, we see the tomb empty. Death does not have the final say. It is wonderful to have this Memorial Garden to remember all who have died in the College community, including Patricia,

Reuven and Joseph.

"Life is difficult. If we can accept that, we can grow through difficulties. In the context of the Cross, nothing is wasted."

Former chaplain to the Syro Malabar community in the Diocese, Fr Joseph Varghese, who had known Joseph and Reuven very well, found the Memorial Garden to be an appropriate and novel way of remembering them.

He told 'The Net': "I watched Joseph and Reuven grow from children into fine young men, full of both potential and aspiration for very successful lives in the years that lay ahead. Throughout their short lives they always displayed impeccable character and integrity and whatever the task or situation, they gave of their very best. They were particularly popular within our community and never did I meet them without being greeted by their huge smiles."

He continued: "We can gain so much comfort from Sacred Scripture at times like this. Like St Paul said to the Romans (15:13), 'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.' So we see that by giving all our sorrow up to God He will replace the bad feelings with joy, peace and hope over time."

Current chaplain for the Syro Malabar Community, Fr Joshy Parokkaran, also attended and took part in the ceremony.





# Honouring Our Lady during May

DURING the month of May, people are encouraged to gather at their local grottos to pray the Rosary each evening at 8 pm, or a time that suits. Last year, this 'Rosary at the Grottos' initiative saw people gathering to pray at over 300 grottos throughout Ireland during Mary's Month.

People also gather throughout the year for the Coastal Rosary for world peace and the protection of unborn babies. Within the Derry Diocese, is prayed at Lisfannon Beach, Bunrana, on the first Sunday of every month at 3 pm, and at Benone Strand on the third Sunday of every month at 3 pm.

You can register your grotto at [www.coastalrosaryireland.ie](http://www.coastalrosaryireland.ie).

Each month, a 'Children of the Rosary' group gathers in St Patrick's Church, Claudy, at 2 pm on the first Saturday to pray a beautiful Rosary led by children

of the parish. The children and parents were delighted that the Servant Sisters joined them for the prayer on Saturday, May 6.

The Columba Community has extended an invitation for people to join them each day in May to pray the Rosary at its Columba House, in Derry, and the Rosary will also be prayed every Tuesday of May at Inch Chapel Grotto, at 1 pm.

The countdown is now on for the All Ireland Rosary Rally at Knock Shrine, in Co Mayo, on Saturday, June 3.

As well as praying the Stations of the Cross and the Rosary, there will be a Rosary talk in the Basilica, at 1 pm, by Bishop Oliver Doeme, of Nigeria, who has a powerful personal testimony about the Rosary to share, and Mass will be celebrated by the Primate of All Ireland, Archbishop Eamon Martin.

Many buses are travelling to Knock from various parts of the island of Ireland for this national event, and anyone who would like to organise one is asked to spread the word by contacting Fiona on 086 876 0058.

Currently, from within the Derry Diocese area, buses are travelling from Limavady (call 07743264331), Dungiven (call 07808718145), Castlefin (call 087 7586350), Omagh (call 07734562102) and Aghyaran (call 028 816771003).

Many parishes throughout the Diocese have been honouring Our Lady in a variety of ways during this month of May, from crowning statues of Mary with flowers, having May Altars and reflecting on Mary's life.

The Badoney Lower Parish, including Gortin and Rouskey, is offering an opportunity for people to gather and reflect on

'The Seven Joys of Mary' on the Wednesday evenings of May, at 7.30 pm, in The Oratory, Cormac House, in Gortin.

In the Parish of Ardstraw West & Castleberg, children taking part in the recently introduced Children's Liturgy programme had learned all about the May traditions and then thoroughly enjoyed taking part in a procession of flowers at the start of Mass in St Mary's Church, Dregish, to adorn the May Altar, while the choir sang, 'Bring Flowers of the Rarest'.

The Cappagh Parish had 150 children take part in its Do This in Memory Programme, and each of them received a Rosary pack for the month of May at the last DTIM Mass on April 30. The children also created a beautiful display around Our Lady's Shrine to honour Mary.



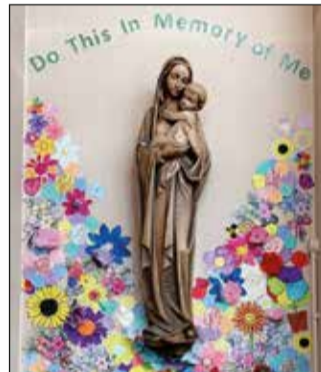
Children's Rosary in St Patrick's Church, Claudy



The Rosary was prayed for Ireland outside St Mary's Church, Maghera, on the Feast of Our Lady of Fatima



May altar in St Mary's Church, Dregish



Children taking part in the Cappagh Parish Do This in Memory Programme created this beautiful display around Our Lady



One of the beautiful May Altars created in the homes of Donagheady Parish (Dunamanagh & Aughabrack), in honour of Our Lady



The Rosary was prayed for Ireland at the Grotto in Claudy Cemetery on the Feast of Our Lady of Fatima

# Egg-cellent Anam Og Easter fun

by Aoife O'Neill

THE Carmelite Retreat Centre, Termonbacca, was full of life on Friday, April 14, as Anam Og, the youth group for those aged 10-14, held its annual Easter fun day.

The day was action packed from start to finish, and there was fierce competition to try to win some of the Easter treats up for grabs.

From an Egg & Spoon Race to a Blind-folded Bunny Hop Carrot Hunt, the young people made use of many different skills and talents. The Easter Escape Room challenged all their brains, with Easter stories from the Bible used to help crack the codes and escape the room. Artistic flair was tested in an Egg-cellent Fashion Parade, with boiled eggs being transformed into many wonders, ranging from Rapunzel to a corpse.

A game of chocolate-themed Bingo had the tummies of the young people rumbling, after which they devoured a lunch-time treat from McDonald's. Lunch break didn't last long, as it was back to the fun and games with

cotton buds flying through the air in attempts to hit the targets.

The main event of the day took the form of the outdoor Easter Egg Hunt. Children ran all over the gardens and the grounds finding the eggs that had been hidden there just in time before the rain came.

The day finished with Fr Stephen picking the winner of the Egg-cellent Fashion Parade, and with the inside hunt for one lucky golden egg. All-in-all, the day was a great success and thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended.

Anam Og continue to meet on the first and third Sunday of each month in Termonbacca, from 6-7.15 pm. The next meeting will be Sunday, May 7, and newcomers are more than welcome.

We hope to continue our fun days and day trips over the summer months also. If you would like to find out more, or sign up, please contact Aoife on 028 71 262512 or email [termonbaccaderry@gmail.com](mailto:termonbaccaderry@gmail.com), or contact Fr Lagan on 028 71 262894.





*Giving glory to God on Good Shepherd Sunday, gathered in the Mother Church of St Eugene for 150th anniversary Mass...*

# Diocesan Family hear Papal call to experience original freshness of Gospel and shine as peacemakers

THE 150th anniversary celebrations for St Eugene's Cathedral, in Derry City, began with an invitation for people from every parish in the Diocese to join Bishop Donal and their priests in the Mother Church for a special three o'clock Mass on Good Shepherd Sunday, April 30, to commemorate its opening.

The gathering as a Diocesan family of faith was celebrated with a procession of people of mixed ages around the aisles of the Cathedral, carrying high flags with the names of each parish in the Diocese.

Water from each parish was then brought forward and poured into the Baptismal Font, where it was blessed by Bishop Donal before he walked by the pews sprinkling the large congregation.

Amongst those gathered were the recently appointed Papal Nuncio to Ireland, Archbishop Luis Mariano Montemayor, from Buenos Aires, Argentina, and his secretary, Mgr Julien Kaboré, as well as the Derry-born Primate of All Ireland, Archbishop Eamon Martin, Bishop Michael Router, the Auxiliary Bishop of Armagh, Bishop Martin Hayes, Kilmore Diocese, Archdeacon Robert Miller, who represented Bishop Andrew Forster, Church of Ireland, Very Rev Raymond Stewart, Dean of St Columb's Cathedral, Derry, and Rev Colin Jones, First Derry Presbyterian Church. Rev Dr Stephen Skuce, Superintendent of the Methodist Church, was unable to attend due to a family bereavement.

The Mayor of Derry City & Strabane District Council, Cllr Sandra Duffy also attended, as did local seamstress and former shirt factory worker, Marie Horton, who made the very special chasuble worn by Bishop Donal for the occasion.

Creating the design for the Bishop's chasuble and mitre to mark not only the important part the Cathedral has played in the spiritual life of so many in the City and beyond, but also the commitment and financial support of the factory girls of Derry for many years, as well as other significant local history,

Marie embroidered the name of every shirt factory in Derry on it, as well as an image of the Cathedral Parish's Rosemount Factory and images from shirt making. In a special touch, the cross on the chasuble was made from shirt material.

A message from Pope Francis for the sesquicentenary was read by Archbishop Montemayor, which expressed the Holy Father's good wishes "to the Clergy, Religious, and Lay Faithful of the Diocese", his thanks to God for "the many graces received over the past century and a half", and his prayer that "the people of Derry, centred upon the Mother Church of Saint Eugene, will be drawn ever more deeply into a loving relationship with Jesus Christ and experience anew the original freshness of the Gospel (cf *Evangelii Gaudium*)."

The message included Pope Francis' hope that "the members of the Diocesan Family will be ever radiant with the Beatitudes, especially as peacemakers for the sake of the present and future life of the local community", and finished with the Holy Father imparting his blessing "as a pledge of peace and joy in The Risen Lord".

Highlighting at the start of his homily that the Mass was "first and foremost a celebration of the Good News of Christ's resurrection on the fourth Sunday of Easter," Bishop Donal remarked: "The scripture readings focus specifically on the theme of Jesus the Good Shepherd, and that guides our focus as we give thanks for the 150 years that have passed since Bishop Francis Kelly opened St Eugene's Cathedral for worship on May 4, 1873."

He went on to note: "By a strange co-incidence, that year May 4 was also Good Shepherd Sunday. Bishop Kelly had been Co-adjutor Bishop of this Diocese for 15 years, from 1849, and thus was the one who shepherded the construction of this building through many challenges. But today we give thanks for the one Good Shepherd Jesus, who works through people and events in every generation, so that we



might have life and have it to the full."

Emphasising the message in the Gospel of the day that the flock belongs to the Good Shepherd, Bishop Donal said: "The Church is not of our making. Different people are charged with responsibilities and are given gifts that come from their baptism. But we are not in charge."

"It is not uncommon to hear some people in church asking how we can regain or retain credibility with people. And they base proposed changes in church processes on what will bolster the credibility of the church where they have status. That is based on the false assumption that it is about our credibility. We will bear fruit when we are faithful to the Good Shepherd who calls us. The one who hung naked on the Cross between two thieves was not concerned with credibility or popularity."

Finding it interesting to note that it took "practically 100 years between the idea of a Cathedral, dreamed about in the 1830s shortly after the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, and the final consecration of the high altar that took place in April 1936, when the debt was eventually paid off," he commented: "Those who planned and worked knew that they would never see the end of the process. But, with faith, hope and love, they were prepared to lay stone upon stone, knowing that when the Lord builds the house, the builders do not labour in vain."

"As we seek to let the Good Shepherd work in our day, we need this reminder that the sheepfold will never stand unless it is built on solid rock and

centred on Jesus. It is his church, not ours."

### Welfare

Bishop Donal went on to reflect on how the shepherd in the Gospel reading was concerned for the welfare of his flock, saying: "Jesus speaks about his voice reassuring the sheep and about them having both protection from thieves and brigands, and access to pasture. The church of Christ has the mission of building communities where the little ones are fed."

"It is no coincidence that the word 'pastoral' comes from the Latin word for a shepherd. A bishop's crozier is made to resemble a shepherd's crook, with a curved top to pull sheep and lambs out of dangerous places." He added: "Today's Gospel suggests to me that our main question as church is not merely 'how do we get more people to Mass on Sunday', but, 'are the hungry and the frightened being fed and led?'. That applies to all age groups, but especially to young people who face many pressures and stresses."

Bishop Donal went on to refer to the Cathedral's new statue of Blessed Carlo Acutis, who died in 2006 aged 15, as "part of a commitment to help the young to find the One who wants to lead them to fresh pastures and call them by name".

"Renewal," he said, "will come when we focus on the good shepherd who does not want even one of the little ones to be lost (Matt 18:14). They are poor shepherds who do not care about the ones who go astray."

Going on to note that St Eugene's Cathedral had ministered in





*continued from page 6*

many difficult periods, including “the unsettled post-Famine decades leading to the creation of Northern Ireland, years of unemployment and injustice, the awful years of the Troubles and the huge current economic and social uncertainties”, he added: “Often, we think of church leaders whose names are known. But there was the famous piece of local graffiti to the effect that women did not just make shirts, they made communities. It is strong women and men of faith who were the salt to the earth and the light to our world in difficult times. And we were blessed with generations of extraordinarily generous consecrated women and men who provided education and many other services.

“In 1973, when the centenary of St Eugene’s was marked, it was impossible to have any substantial celebrations because of the raging conflict on our streets, not just here but across Northern Ireland. It took a further 25 years of work by dedicated peacemakers to bring us to the watershed moment of the Good Friday Agreement.

“Just as Jesus suffered on Calvary, as St Peter writes ‘He was bearing our faults in his own body on the cross’, the fragile peace was built on generous hearts who did not stop believing in a God who believed in people.

“We can wax eloquently about the past or what might be. But if we are going to build a future for people, we have to do that on an honest story about the past with its highs and lows. When history is written by the strong, the little ones who suffered are easily forgotten about. Honesty about the past has to be a central plank for both church and politicians. The pain of the past has to be processed through the lens of truth, not merely through what is politically expedient for the strong.”

“Jesus the Good Shepherd,” Bishop Donal highlighted, “offers leadership to do with promoting human flourishing and not merely economic policies. Jesus has a vision for what we can become by living for holiness. When church or politics fail to speak of human greatness and virtue, we have nothing to offer.

“Jesus wants His followers to be good shepherds concerned with human wholeness, and to resist

the temptations to show off in the cheap search for popularity. People want a hand-up and not merely a hand-out. If we are to face the current challenges across church and society, we need generous-hearted leaders who speak with honesty. Shallow theology or pious political platitudes will never feed hungry hearts, who want to know that there are shepherds whom they can trust.”

Gathered in the Cathedral to give thanks for those who built it “in hope when many must have told them to be sensible”, Bishop Donal said: “We give thanks for those clergy, religious brothers and sisters, and laity who gathered here over the last 150 years to be nourished for the work of community building, so that people might know the grace of God and have life to the full. We acknowledge the failings of the past but do not cease to have hope in the Good Shepherd, who is at work in our midst. It is through the wounds of the Good Shepherd that we have been healed and not by our own holiness.

“Please God, some of you will gather here in 2073 to celebrate the Good Shepherd who has been faithful to his flock since Saints Eugene and Colmcille spoke of Christ in our part of this island.

“We give thanks for the saints who have gone before us, the famous ones and the little unknown saints who worked for and with Christ in every generation. When we can tell a good story about God’s goodness even in difficult times, we can face whatever the future holds.”

The ceremony concluded with the presentation of two oak saplings to representatives from each parish in the Diocese, and the Cathedral Choir raising hearts and minds to God with its singing of the recessional hymn, “Thine Be The Glory”.

Afterwards, all were invited to St Mary’s College for refreshments and a slice of one of three cakes especially made for the Sesquicentenary, which were cut by Fr Neil McGoldrick, Cathedral Administrator from 1983-1997, Anna McMahon, a faithful server in the parish for many years, and two of the Cathedral’s young altar servers.

**(Photographs by Stephen Latimer)**



## Urging young people to dare to believe that they can become saints... Bishop Donal blessed striking Carlo Acutis statue celebrating Cathedral 150th



YOUNG people from primary schools and second-level schools across the Diocese were joined by St Eugene’s parishioners and many from other parishes, as well as members of Net Ministries and the Carlo Acutis Apostolate from the Down & Connor Diocese, on May 3, for Mass and the blessing of a very striking statue of the teenage Blessed Carlo Acutis, which was commissioned to mark the 150th anniversary of the Cathedral.

Born on May 3, 1991, the Mass was celebrated by Bishop Donal on what would have been Carlo’s 32nd birthday. While born in London, where his Italian parents were working, he grew up in Italy, with the family moving to Milan when he was a few months old.

From a young age, while his parents were not that devoted to their Catholic faith, Carlo loved to pray the Rosary and showed a special love for God, going to Mass as often as he could after he made his First Holy Communion, making Holy Hours before or after Mass, and going to weekly Confession.

As a result of his great witness, which included pilgrimages to places of saints and sites of Eucharistic miracles, his mother experienced a deep conversion.

As well as soccer, Carlo also had a love for computer programming and built a website cataloguing and promoting Eucharistic miracles, which has been widely viewed throughout the world,

and he enjoyed playing video games, though was careful to play them only for an hour a week as a form of penance and spiritual discipline. And, at school, he was known for defending other pupils who got bullied.

Diagnosed with leukaemia as a teenager, Carlo offered his sufferings for Pope Benedict XVI and the Church, saying: “I offer all the suffering I will have to suffer for the Lord, for the Pope, and the Church.” He died on October 12, 2006, and was buried in Assisi as he had requested, such was his love for St Francis of Assisi.

Carlo’s cause for canonization began in 2013 and five years later he was designated ‘Venerable’, and then ‘Blessed’ on October 10, 2020. Dressed in the casual clothes he preferred in life, Carlo’s body lay in repose in a glass tomb, where he was venerated until October 17, 2020.

His tomb is located in Assisi’s Sanctuary of the Renunciation, a part of the Church of St Mary Major. The sanctuary is located on the spot where a young St Francis of Assisi is said to have cast off his rich clothes in favour of a poor habit.

Carlo’s heart, now considered a relic, is displayed in a reliquary in the Basilica of St Francis in Assisi. His mother, Antonia has gifted St Eugene’s Cathedral a lock of his hair as a first class relic, which has been placed in a reliquary there, beside his statue.

Carved in the factory of

Ferdinand Stuflesser, in Italy, it is hoped that the striking statue of Carlo in a casual pose, wearing jeans and t-shirt, complete with sunglasses tucked into the neck opening, will attract the attention of the young especially and encourage them to come and pray in the Cathedral.

### Role model

Before blessing the statue, Bishop Donal encouraged young people to take Blessed Carlo Acutis as a role model and to dare to believe that they, too, were called to be a saint. He told of how, the day before, he had come into the Cathedral to pray and noticed a mother with two children, one a teenager and the other eight years old, standing beside the Carlo Acutis statue and saying a prayer while lighting a candle. Speaking to them as they left, the mother said that her daughter, a P4 pupil, had asked her if she could become a saint too.

Bishop Donal went on to ask those gathered for the Mass to consider, on reflecting back on their life, how they would answer the question, ‘Have I lived my life well?’, and how they would measure the quality of someone’s life.

He then remarked: “Life is tough for many young people: Loneliness; stress; uncertainty about the future; concerns about the environment; many countries with more deaths than births; pressures to conform; aspiring to be like someone else.”

Stating that faith is not just believing that God exists, but involves choosing role models who inspire, Bishop Donal added: “Saints are not just magic people who get things done for us, they are role models for what you can dream of becoming.

“Here we have a 15-year-old saint from the 21st century. Carlo Acutis died in 2006 of cancer, after a battle that lasted a couple of years. He was fascinated with the love of Jesus in the Eucharist

and Holy Communion, even though his parents were not particularly involved in church. He was not afraid to be himself. We come into the world unique and so often go out as photocopies of someone else.”

Referring to the 150th anniversary of the community that erected St Eugene’s Cathedral and kept it going, he asked: “Will you leave anything of beauty and value by becoming the unique person that you can become? Do you dare to believe in a God who believes in you? Or do you accept the message that life is just a joke and that growing up is to be avoided?”

“Carlo Acutis and Clare Crockett, another young holy person from this City, say: Dare to believe that you are called to be a saint; Dare to believe in a God who calls you to be great; Dare to ask awkward questions of leaders in society and of yourself. Don’t be ashamed to say that you love Jesus.”

“The big choices in life,” added Bishop Donal, “are not just what do I sing or wear, but, what do I stand for, what am I prepared to give my life for, who inspires me?”

“When you are facing those questions, think of and pray to young saints like Carlo Acutis. They have been there, done that and got the t-shirt, and they want to encourage you to be a saint as well.”

At the end of the ceremony, Bishop Donal thanked all the young people who had taken part in the liturgy, including the St Eugene’s PS choir and singers from St Joseph’s Boys’ School. He also highlighted a beautiful painting made from the fingerprints of each child attending Ardnashee School, Derry, to celebrate the Cathedral’s 150th anniversary.

Afterwards, various school groups queued for a close up view of the Carlo Acutis statue and relic, and to have their photograph taken to mark the occasion.





# Cathedral parishioners encouraged to keep the flame of faith lit



DANA returned to her childhood home city for the celebration of Mass in the parish church of her youth on Thursday, May 4, to mark the anniversary of the opening of St Eugene's Cathedral 150 years ago to the day, and fittingly sang her new song, 'Light the Fire', with the vibrant parish community keen to keep the flame of faith alive for future generations.

This was the third of three special Masses celebrated within the one week in the Cathedral to commemorate the sesquicentenary, and it was dedicated as the Parish Mass of Celebration, with members from the various choirs that sing at the Cathedral Masses coming together to lead the large congregation in the hymn singing.

Dana (Rosemary Brown) and her husband, Damien Scallon, who were married in the Cathedral almost 45 years ago, joined the Anniversary Mass choir, with Dana uplifting hearts and minds with her singing of 'Light the Fire' as the post-Communion reflection, and following it with what has become the Derry anthem for many, 'Lady of Knock'.

The parish celebration, like the other two Anniversary Masses, was very much a joyous occasion involving all ages, with six young Irish dancers leading the Offertory procession and members of the McGinley youth choir joining in the singing.

Joined on the altar by a number of clergy, including former administrators of the Parish, Bishop Donal referred to recent celebrations in the City, especially in regards to the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement and those who helped to achieve it, before highlighting that the focus of the Cathedral celebrations was on "what God has done for us, and through us, in this parish over the course of the last turbulent 150 years".

Noting that the Cathedral had been built following over a century of the Penal Laws and the terrible years of the Famine, he said: "We celebrate those who, despite undoubted opposition, were determined to construct

a beautiful building that would give glory to God and welcome people."

Bishop Donal went on to comment on the current thinking by many that "the Church needs to downsize, to lower expectations, to work on the assumption that fewer and fewer people will be coming to Church", saying: "I have no idea what the future holds. But our celebrations are clear about one article of our faith, Jesus told us to expect great things from divine grace in this place and at this time. Those who built this cathedral knew that... Whatever happens, God is active in the mix, and He asks us to continue to expect great things from God and from His people."

Speaking of the beauty of the building, Bishop Donal remarked: "The cathedral builders knew that beauty and art are part of how God speaks to His people. The enormous Bishop Kelly window tells the story of our salvation, not just because many people in the 19th century could not read books but also because beauty lifts the mind and heart to the beautiful plan of God for us."

He added: "The builders and parishioners of this Cathedral knew that those who can glimpse the beauty of God will have eyes to see the beauty of people. When the Creator is ignored, the creatures are diminished, more easily disposed of at the beginning and end of life. The builders of this cathedral tell us through the ages not to ignore the value of beauty if we are to glimpse the beauty of God."

### Missionary

Pointing out that St Eugene's Cathedral was planned "in order to point towards the glory of God and to minister to people in Christ's name", Bishop Donal stated: "Those purposes of the church building remain. This community exists as the Body of Christ that is broken so that Christ's healing grace can be poured out over the hurting world. That is what it means to be a missionary parish. We ask, where is there need in our streets and how can we respond to it in Jesus' name? That ministry took place during the terrible years of

the Troubles.

"Often it was hard to know just how to be faithful to Christ in the midst of bombs and bullets. Sometimes dubious decisions were taken in the heat of confrontation. But whatever political role church people played and whatever faults some clergy had, the pastoral commitment of the clergy in the parish was generally very strong. People do not forget kindness in a time of need. I pay tribute to those who worked here in very difficult times. And I say a big thank you for all who ministered from the Cathedral, and other parishes, during the Covid lockdown."

"Now we face another struggle," he added: "Adults and young people keep telling me that it is a jungle out there - substance abuse, anger, a race to the bottom in terms of behaviour and a frightening sense of no direction. And nobody is calling for a change of tack. 'Just give the strong more freedom of choice and they will eventually be blissfully happy, whatever the cost to others'. But freedom without values is a playground for the strong."

"We have to find ways to speak that truth in a way that encourages hope for the future. In another 25 or 50 years, people will look back and ask why society in the 2020s was so critical of earlier generations but so blind to its own dark side. Our worship of God in this beautiful building has to be

matched by a commitment to show our society a better way of living. That means offering hope and not merely self-righteous condemnation. We have to get beyond the trite slogan that all problems can be solved by throwing money at them. The great witness of good people from the past encourages us to be courageous Christians in the present."

He concluded by sharing that, following the Diocesan Mass celebrating the 150th anniversary, the new Papal Nuncio to Ireland had said to him, "You have a living community here."

Giving thanks for that living community, Bishop Donal said: "It is built on gratitude for great people in the past and the present. And, with trust in God's goodness, we face the future with its challenges... Thank God for St Eugene's Cathedral parish. God bless it in the years that lie ahead."

Fr Paul Farren, the current administrator for the Cathedral Parish, then paid tribute to Bishop Donal for being such a central and constant presence in the Cathedral, supporting all that they do, and thanked Dana for coming along to sing her new song dedicated to St Patrick.

Afterwards, many gathered around Dana to welcome, thank and reminisce with her, while others enjoyed the parish treat from the ice cream vans awaiting them as they left the Cathedral.





# Reflections on 150th anniversary

"I have always lived within the sound of St Eugene's Bell and have been involved in the Parish from childhood. My grandfather was a steeplejack and was involved in the construction of the Cathedral spire. This 150th Anniversary is such a joyous celebration of the vibrant active Community in the Cathedral, both past and present. I think of all the support the priests in the Cathedral gave to the people during the 'Troubles' and more recently, the Pandemic. The Parish celebration brought everyone together to remember and celebrate the important role that St Eugene's has played in our lives over the years and will continue to do so in the years to come." (Anne Griffin)

"As Scout leader with St Eugene's Scouts and a parishioner, it was a privilege to be asked to do a guard of honour at the Diocesan event. People spoke afterwards about how well all were turned out and that we did a great job. It was brilliant to be part of the 150th celebrations. St Eugene's is number one for me. I was born and reared in this parish, and have been involved with the Scouts here since 1973. I want to thank the priests, especially Fr Farren, for all their support, and the principal of St Anne's school, which has been our base now for 40 years." (Dessie Taylor)

"I thought it was a really joyful and prayerful celebration, and found out that my great grandfather, Henry McHugh, along with another man, had been paid a half crown to put the cross on top of the Cathedral spire.

I felt privileged that I was asked to design and make a new chasuble for the occasion for our Bishop. There were plenty of Rosaries said and candles lit when it was being made. I was very pleased with how it turned out, and would say that God's hand was in it all. Every City factory is embroidered around the edges of the robe, 60 in total from over the last 150 years, and I included images of praying hands, sewing machines, ribbons, bobbins, thimbles, needles and

threads, as well as oak leaves and a dove, all centred around a cross made out of material from an unworn Ben Sherman shirt that was in the house." (Marie Horton)

"Fr Paul joked about me cutting one of the anniversary cakes because I was at the opening of the Cathedral, and I feel as though I have been here since then because I have lived within the shadow of Cathedral all of my 85 years. When I pull back the curtains, I see the spire of St Eugene's. It is a place that is very close to my heart and I am very much involved with it, doing anything that I can. Our parish has an unbelievable number of volunteers. There is always someone willing to help out and there is so much happening each day, especially since the Covid experience.

We didn't do anything big for the 100th anniversary as it was during troubled times, but Fr Kieran O'Doherty, who was curate at the time, organised pilgrimages to Lourdes to celebrate it and I went on one of them. It was my first time in Lourdes, but I have been lots of times since. So, it was lovely to have this great celebration for the 150th. While the Cathedral is the Diocesan Church, it is our parish church, and I felt the Parish Mass was more personal for us, the parishioners, and it was lovely to have Dana there and to speak to her afterwards.

The Carlo Acutis statue is just unbelievable and seems to be attracting quite a lot of people to it, including young people. They are probably as amazed as me about it, how life-like it is, and even has a watch on his arm and glasses on his t-shirt!" (Anna McMahon)

"All the celebrations for the 150th were wonderful, especially the Parish Mass. There was a great feeling of community, and a lot of people said that afterwards. Everybody came out uplifted and were hugging each other. It sounds dramatic, but it felt almost like a rebirth after the time of

Covid. All down the years, I have always found a great togetherness amongst the Cathedral congregation. There is a feeling of inclusiveness and being part of a large family, especially since the lockdown, with people so glad to meet each other. That has all come from the lead of our priests, who have helped us through very trying times. The Gospel of love and care is epitomised in our parish and the people feel that. It is evident in the large amount of young people who have been involved in reading or lifting the collection through the Pope John Paul II Award programme and are now more focussed on their faith. They feel welcome in our church and that they belong." (Pat Carlin)

"I thought the 150th anniversary celebrations were fantastic. I am 74 and I thought it was just the best week. It brought out all the older generation and the talks brought back memories for many. My father, Hugh Tierney, was baptised in the Cathedral and I still have the gown that he was christened in. It must be about 150 years old as it was handed down to his mother, and she handed it on to him. I was christened in it and so were my children, and it is still in very good condition though maybe not modern enough for today.

It was brilliant to have Dana there. I almost cried when I heard her singing her new song. I haven't a great singing voice, but even I joined in, and the singing of 'Lady of Knock' was just a great finish." (Carmel Moore)

"It was a time of great joy for me. Being a parishioner all my life, I was so happy to be celebrating the 150th Anniversary with all the people I know. Young and old, we have a great connection; a second family for most of us. I thought of all the people that are no longer with us, generations that went before us, music providers, readers, cleaners, sacristans, all the people who make up parish life, and of my own parents who took us as a family to every event; generations of faith and,

thankfully, more to come. I talked to visitors from Europe and USA, all with connections to Derry and to the Cathedral. It means so much to so many people. St Eugene's is very much a historic building in our city but also in all our hearts." (Anne Marie Hickey)

"The Anniversary celebration was a time of prayer and great joy when the Parish and the Diocese came together to give thanks to God for 150 years, as we look forward to the future. People were very happy to be a part of it. I witness this time and again in our Parish. As Parish Administrator, it is a great privilege to be here in this moment in history. I am so thankful to God for the faith here for 150 years and pray it will be handed on to future generations." (Fr Paul Farren)

"The series of celebrations to mark the sesquicentennial of the Cathedral's opening were not merely a glance back to a distant past. They were also a statement by the Cathedral parish - and by the Diocese - that we are a community that is looking forward to the future. We remembered how courageous men and women laboured both to erect the building and to fuel the fires of faith through difficult decades. We face new challenges. But we remembered how Christ's disciples have always been inspired by the Holy Spirit to expect and to aim for great things. We know that the Church building will not last forever - but Christ will be with his Church until the end of time.

I would like to pay tribute to the men and women, young and old, clergy and laity, who worked so hard to prepare the events. They showed great creativity and energy, which brought joy to many of the large crowds who took part in the ceremonies. I am particularly thankful for the representatives of other churches and of civic society who took part. In a time of many problems, Christ calls us to generate hope. That is how we continue His mission in our time and place." (Bishop Donal)





*With a heart full of love and song for her parish and parishioners, Anne Marie Hickey is...*

# Cathedral Parish's new pastoral coordinator bursting with positivity for busy role



Anne Marie Hickey, new Pastoral Coordinator for the Cathedral Parish.

***THE 150th anniversary of St Eugene's Cathedral in Derry City will be quite a memorable time in the life of at least one of its parishioners. Anne Marie Hickey, well known now for her beautiful, uplifting singing from the Mother Church of the Diocese during the darkest period of the Covid-19 pandemic, is the parish's new pastoral coordinator, and she had to hit the ground running as the baton passed to her just four weeks before the sesquicentennial celebrations!***

Having celebrated a milestone anniversary herself with her 50th birthday back in October, the Cathedral was almost a century old when Anne Marie was born into the family of Anne and Franco Hickey, whose home was within view of the Spire of St Eugene's.

Indeed, over the years, her parish house of prayer became a second home to Anne Marie, where she not only received the sacraments of Baptism, Confession, Communion and Confirmation, and practised her faith weekly, but was involved in many other aspects of parish life.

Saying that her late parents had been parishioners of St Eugene's all their lives, she added: "We lived in the shadow of the Cathedral spire. My mother was on the pastoral council and we were always involved in whatever was happening in the parish."

"There was a great link between school and parish. I attended St Eugene's Primary School and then St Cecilia's College, and have

been a parish volunteer for as long as I remember. I sang at Devotions every Sunday at 6 pm and, when I was 15, I joined St Eugene's Cathedral Choir. I auditioned by singing 'Water of Life', which was my sacred solo at the Moville Feis. That was 35 years ago. Now, I run the Hickey School of Music in the choir room of the Cathedral."

Recalling starting work in the Diocesan Catechetical Centre in 2005, in the role of secretary, Anne Marie said: "Fr Paul Farren had taken over the role of director in 2004, and when Therese Ferry and I started the following year, the three of us grew the Centre as a team."

"I loved my time working there and being involved as administrator for the Pope John Paul II Award. I loved working for the Diocese and will miss being part of the Gate Lodge team in the Catechetical Centre, but I am excited for my new role with the Cathedral Parish."

Being an active member of her parish has always been a great

joy for Anne Marie, and so she felt privileged when, during the dark days of Covid-19, Fr Paul, as parish administrator, asked her to come to the Cathedral to sing hymns for its online parish ministry.

"It was nothing for me to go and do that," she remarked, "but people have said that it was such a lifeline. There was fear about what was happening in Italy, which was three weeks ahead in the pandemic, and what was coming to us, so it was a distraction for people to join in the Cathedral hymn singing. Singing is not only good for the spirit, but also for the lungs and mind."

"After I had sung all the hymns that I could think of, I asked people what they wanted to hear. During that period, our priorities in life changed and it taught me not to take singing for granted. My getting up to sing a few hymns then meant more to me than any music exam or grade I ever did."

"Music and singing is a gift, like many others, to be shared in small or massive ways to connect with people, and Roisin Rice took turns with me in singing as part of her outreach during that time too, with the schools being closed."

#### Privilege

Anne Marie went on to comment on the privilege it had been to be asked by Pat Hume to sing at John's funeral: "I was a parishioner and they were parishioners as well. John's funeral was on a world stage, but I was just singing in my parish."

She added: "Singing at parishioners' weddings and funerals is a great privilege, especially funerals, where families are trusting you to make the Mass so special. You can calm people with singing and music, and make them feel good. However, singing for a neighbour's funeral is always a hard one, as they are like an extension of my family."

This great love in her heart for her parish and fellow parishioners is the fuel energising Anne Marie, who took over the role of the Cathedral Parish Pastoral Coordinator from her hard working predecessor, Emmet Thompson, at a very busy time in the parish, starting on the Monday of Holy Week.

Fortunately, the parish is blessed with a large team of well organised volunteers, including established groups of readers and cleaners, etc.

"It is great to be working with these people who give of their time so freely," remarked Anne Marie, "A parish can't have enough

volunteers as there is always a lot to be done. Our priests trained to be priests but sometimes there is so much else for them to do, so it is great to have a good network of volunteers to take care of these things."

Looking forward to learning more about her new role, she noted: "There is a great connection here between our parish and schools. We have three Catholic primary schools and two Catholic post-primary schools and I will be liaising with those."

"I will also be involved with our wonderful parish programmes, such as 'Do This in Memory', Children's Liturgy, and the Pope John Paul II Award programme."

"I would like to establish more programmes and activities as well, such as a Parent & Baby Club. There is a great Baptism team here, but I would like to be able to have a group for parents to come to."

"I can't wait to work with the older people too. I think they need as much communication and activities as our young people do. We did a Songs of Ireland and afternoon tea event for St Patrick's Day and we had over 100 people, who came along for a chat together over tea. I think something like that is needed every now and then for all age groups. Social interaction is very important, with some prayer included too."

Getting started into her role, Anne Marie has had more than enough to keep her busy, with the 150th anniversary celebrations for the Cathedral including the Diocesan Mass on Sunday, April 30, the blessing of the new Italian-made statue of Blessed Carlo Acutis and installation of a First Class Relic on Wednesday, May 3, and the Parish Mass on Thursday, May 4, marking the actual day the Cathedral was opened, and this then all followed by the annual Little Way Novena from May 6-14, which is in its 20th year and attracts a large number of devotees of St Therese the Little Flower.

The next major event for the parish after that will be the annual LIFE faith-based camp in the first two weeks of July for 7-14 year olds, which is based at St Mary's College and is already fully-booked up.

Bursting with positivity about this opportunity to build on the great parish programmes already in place, Anne Marie welcomes suggestions parishioners may have. She can be contacted via email at [amhickey@derrydiocese.org](mailto:amhickey@derrydiocese.org) or on 028 71 262894.





*One of the young people travelling with the Derry Diocese to World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal, this summer is Niamh Kehoe. Having attended WYD 2016, Niamh writes about her experience as she shares her faith journey so far...*

## Overjoyed to share God's love



MY name is Niamh Kehoe. I am a church musician and reader in the Derry Diocese. When I think of my own unique journey in faith, which I wish to share with you all here, I think of Isaiah 43: "I have called you by your name; you are mine!" I believe God has called me to share his love for us through the talents He has given onto me.

My parents, active members of the Derry faith community, took me to Mass as a young child, but it wasn't long before I branched out to begin my own faith journey with God. At the age of eight, I became an altar server in my own parish, St Eugene's Cathedral.

It was while serving at the 7.30 pm Mass that I first developed an interest in music ministry, captivated by the folk choir singing every week. I joined the same folk choir the following year, singing and playing the flute, while continuing my altar service at a different Mass.

The choir travelled to London during Easter 2003 and also recorded CDs at the IOSAS Centre, with Marguerite Hamilton and the late Fr Neal Carlin. Little did I know that I would be back there 20 years later, as a primary school teacher, sharing the gift of music and sharing the brilliant work that Fr Neal created with my very own Primary 5 class.

It is beautiful that God has brought me back to this place in my own life journey. There was never a need for me to worry or create any opportunities myself; there was always something waiting for me. I think of Psalm 23: "The Lord is my shepherd; [...] he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness."

In 2004, at 11 years old, I travelled on my first pilgrimage with the Derry Diocese. My mother and father had been to Lourdes numerous times before and took me with them on this pilgrimage. I have had the honour and privilege of being there almost every year since, working in various capacities on pilgrimage and playing the flute in local basilicas and churches. No matter what role I had or who was there, the best part of the pilgrimage was always going down to the Grotto at midnight with friends or fellow pilgrims. It was very peaceful.

A big turning point in my journey came in 2005, when my mother showed me a notice that was in our parish bulletin: an organ scholarship! I had no hesitation in applying and was delighted when I was accepted. That was the start of a very full schedule, with many appointments for me as organist and choir director, and Mass two or three times at the weekend. During this busy time, I often reflected on and was inspired by the scriptures, where Jesus, in Matthew, says: "In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father."

I attended St Cecilia's College from 2004. I was just a nervous 11-year-old starting a new school. My friends from primary school all had transferred to different secondary schools and I was starting out on a new path on my own. During my years there, until 2011, I would attend 8 am Mass with my mother during Advent or Lent before going to school for 8.30 am, which helped me find the courage and confidence to lead

the Rosary later during morning assembly.

Fast forward a couple of years when I got accepted to Maynooth University for BMus Degree (hons). My Maths A-level teacher at the time 'slagged' me for going there and asked me if I was going to study to become a nun, but this was not the case at the time. I attended Maynooth University, again setting out on a new journey by myself, having to make new friends on my own all over again. As I was studying the organ, I got to spend a lot of time in the College Chapel, St Mary's Oratory and St Joseph's Chapel.

A family friend was studying to become a priest in Maynooth also. Speaking with him, I got to know other seminarians who are now priests in our Diocese and with whom I am great friends. When their ordinations were upcoming, I was asked to notate the music for their Mass booklets and to compose my own music to St Vincent Pallotti's "The Eucharistic Prayer", which I gratefully accepted. I thank them for giving me the opportunities and trusting in me to do a good job.

### Challenge

In 2013, when my father stepped down from reading at Mass, I decided to take on the baton as a reader. Reading at the huge St Eugene's Cathedral can be a daunting enough experience, however, my biggest challenge came after a year reading when, just 10 minutes before my new godson's Christening in the tiny chapel at Termonbacca, I was asked to do the readings in Irish for the baptism during the Irish Mass. It was a challenge because, at the time, I hadn't spoken Irish regularly for a year as my studies' focus had been more on my music that year. The congregation was filled with very fluent Irish speakers; some teachers and principals. However, Bishop Dónal McKeown, who celebrated the Mass, obviously had faith and trust in me. I undertook the challenge as I do always, finding encouragement in Psalm 18:32: "It is God who arms me with strength and keeps my way secure".

In 2014, my father and I went to Lourdes ourselves and spent two weeks working at the 'City of the Poor'. Not only were the living conditions and long working hours a challenge, but communicating with various nationalities was even more so, especially having to communicate with 700 people at every mealtime for 13 days. It was tiring but a worthwhile experience.

My confidence and stamina developed greatly. I grew as a person, as I was able to persevere in difficult circumstances.

When I returned to Lourdes in 2015, I went to work rather than going as youth or youth leader, supporting a child with autism. It was a new role but a role I knew I would be good at, as at this time, in my own career at home, I was working alongside an organisation that provided education and various opportunities in the arts for adults with a learning or physical disability.

The following year, 2016, was a busy year travelling for me. I went on three pilgrimages: Lourdes; World Youth Day; and the Rome, Assisi and Perugia pilgrimage with the Derry Diocese, all of which were led by Bishop Dónal.

I remember when the opportunity came to express interest to go to World Youth Day. I really wanted to go but was quite anxious to ask my parents. However, to my surprise, they persuaded me to go. That was it; I was going on a pilgrimage to Poland for 10 days on my own again with a lot of people I did not really know. The pilgrimage involved five days in Katowice with families and five days in Poland together as a group in a hostel.

On our first outing, I jumped at the opportunity to evangelise around the outdoor concert area with another pilgrim. I was overjoyed that I got the opportunity to share God's love talking to strangers that walked by in our direction, in a different country. This opportunity tested us, but I was happy and felt safe. My faith was strong. As a group, we attended catechesis in various locations inside the arena. One catechesis that comes to mind took place in the largest area, which was filled to capacity for a talk about the life of St Faustina. My heart was full.

The highlight of the trip was the outdoor vigil, where we stayed overnight in a field with two million young Catholics between the ages of 18-35. I have remained friends to this day with some of the group who went on World Youth Day, and I look forward to going to it again this year.

In September of that year, through the grace of God, my parents and I went on a pilgrimage to Rome, Assisi and Perugia. Our names were on a waiting list and when the secretary called to ask us if we still wanted to go, she informed us that we were in fact extremely lucky as no one had answered her previous seven calls!

It was an honour to attend the canonization of Mother Teresa of Calcutta and the chapel in Perugia where Mary and St Joseph's wedding ring is kept. We felt so grateful that, through the grace of God, we had the good fortune to be called on this pilgrimage, reminding us of Psalm 145: 17, "The Lord is righteous in everything He does; He is filled with kindness".

Lourdes 2022 was a significant year for me, as I got to know Rev Shaun Doherty. We both had a connection to the Columba Community. In August 2022, I started playing at the Columba House and St Anthony's Retreat Centre. Later in the month, I was successful getting a job as a primary school teacher in the only Irish Medium Catholic Maintained Primary School in Northern Ireland, Bunscoil Cholmcille, on Steelstown Road.

During the school year, I have been able to share the love that God has for each of us by sharing my faith experiences and music through the medium of Irish. I have taken my own class to the IOSAS Centre and Celtic Prayer Garden. A boy in my class came up to me and said afterwards: "I want to come here for my next birthday". That melted my heart!

I believe Fr Neal Carlin and the Holy Spirit have guided me to these opportunities that I have been sharing with young children so that they, too, will open their hearts to God and allow God to let their light shine.



## Excitement mounting for WYD 2023

EXCITEMENT is mounting amongst the young people from the Derry Diocese travelling with Bishop Donal and the Diocesan Youth Ministry team to Lisbon, in Portugal, for the next World Youth Day, which has the theme – 'Mary arose and went with haste'.

Gathered for a meeting in the St Eugene's Cathedral Hall about the forthcoming pilgrimage, that has been enjoyed in the past by well over a million young people from across the globe, Lizzie Rea, Diocesan Youth Coordinator, talked the young people through the programme.

Away from July 25 until August 7, the group of over 18s will spend a few days in the Diocese of Porto before travelling on to Lisbon on July 31, with the World Youth Day programme running from August 1-6.

The youth from the Derry Diocese will be joining with the Clogher Diocese to form a group of around 25. While in Porto, it is expected that they will be staying with host families and taking part in Catechesis.

When they travel onwards to Lisbon, they are going to spend

some time in Fatima, where Our Lady appeared on May 13, 1917, to three children – nine-year-old Lucia dos Santos and her cousins, eight-year-old Francisco and six-year-old Jacinto Marto, while they were tending sheep.

One of the highlights of the WYD programme is the all-night vigil in a large outdoor space, and the next day Pope Francis is expected to arrive in Lisbon for the grand finale.

Costing 1150 Euros, which includes accommodation, travel, registration and food, there will be two group fundraisers, but it is also hoped that the young people's parishes will support them either by donating or helping with fundraising.

In preparation for the pilgrimage, the Diocesan Youth Ministry team is organising formation events, including a weekend on Lough Derg from June 23-25.

There are still some places available and anyone interested can find out more by contacting Lizzie Rea, Youth Coordinator for the Derry Diocese, on 028 71 264087.



*PRAYERFUL good wishes to the Young Writers and other young people involved in examinations during this period.*

*This month, Bronagh reflects on the Golden Jubilee of her uncle, Fr Pius McLaughlin OFM, and how an encounter with Padre Pio in the confessional led to him overcoming a perceived obstacle to his desire to be a priest by entrusting all to God.*

*Seán shares his gratitude for a supportive and loving family, commenting on how a stable and faith-driven home is key to the building of a stable and faithful individual, who in turn can have a positive influence on their community and the world.*

*A parishioner of the Cathedral Parish, Zara reflects on St Eugene's 150 year history and how blessed she feels that it is her parish church, where she feels a strong sense of belonging and hope for the future.*

*Having attended the recent Sr Clare Novena in the Long Tower, Evan writes about how he was particularly inspired by Fr Joe Gormley's talk, which got him wondering whether he is living life his way...or God's way.*

*We also have included the winning entry in the Life Advocate Awards 2023 Essay Competition, which was written by St Columba's College Head Prefect, James Tourish, on how we must do all in our power to protect life and do good, because "the time is always right to do right."*



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



Niamh O'Kane, Co Derry Deanery. John Augustine Joseph, Derry City Deanery. Zara Schindwein, Derry City Deanery. Shea Doherty, Derry City Deanery. Evan Curran, Derry City Deanery. Seán McLaughlin, Co Tyrone Deanery.

## My way or God's way? by Evan

ONE of the celebrants during the recent Sr Clare Retreat in the Long Tower was Fr Joe Gormley, parish priest of Holy Family, Ballymagroarty.

On the second night of the Retreat, he delivered a powerful homily, within which he reflected on the song, 'My Way', which was famously sung by Catholic singer, Frank Sinatra.

Fr Joe strongly stated that this song must not be played or sung at funerals, especially in the church.

As he spoke about the song, the lyrics of it began coming to my mind and I started to question if I have lived a "life that is full", or have I done it "my way"?

Deeply pondering the song,

it struck me that if it is my way, then it certainly isn't God's way, therefore, I have not lived a life that is full.

Although it is hard to do, we simply must put our own selfish ways aside and listen to the voice of God, because through Him and His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, we certainly do receive the fullness of mercy, love and compassion.

Also, through God's way, we receive unimaginable peace and hope, as Our Lord Jesus Christ promised us eternal life with Him in the Kingdom of God under one condition, that we live our lives with Him and for Him.



*Writing about her Uncle Fr Pius McLaughlin's 50th Jubilee celebrations, Bronagh highlights...*

## Trust God with our ambitions in life as He has the greatest power of all

FIFTY years ago, the first Franciscan priest ordination since the reformation took place in Rosstown, Co Donegal. The first of its kind in 350 years! The story behind this ordination is extraordinary and has been and will be inspiring to many. The priest behind this story is Fr Pius McLaughlin, my great uncle. A man we are all proud of every day and congratulate him on his vocation as he celebrates his Golden Jubilee Year of Priesthood.

Born Seamus McLaughlin, in Feeny, Co Derry, in 1942, he was the eldest of six children; five girls (one of these my granny) and himself. In 1959, after reading a vocations' advertisement in St Anthony's Brief Magazine, he was inspired and applied, and later got accepted into the Franciscan Order.

He was sent then to Killarney Friary in September 1959, aged just 17. This was a move that would kick start the rest of his wonderful vocation.

The name Pius came to life three years later as he made his First Profession and got sent to the Irish Franciscan College in Rome, where he spent the next four years of his life. This was in 1962, the Second Vatican Council, and Fr Pius arrived on the opening day, October 11, 1962, an exciting time in the Christian church.

In 1966, he was assigned to the International Franciscan College in Florence. Whilst he was there, he went with some provincials

to San Giovanni Rotondo to meet Padre Pio, and on Saturday afternoon he had the opportunity to go to confession, an experience that transformed the rest of Fr Pius' life, and consequently the lives of many through his work.

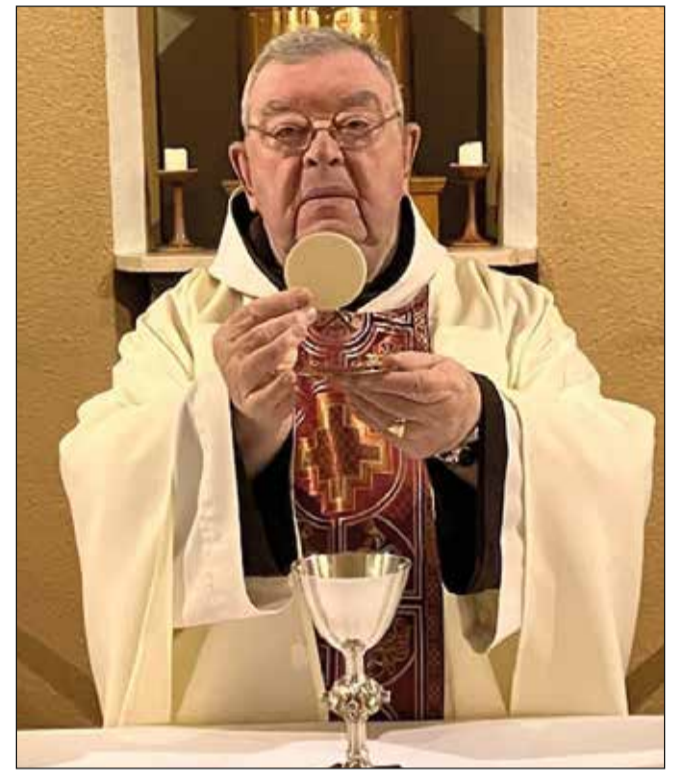
Whilst he was in his confession, in the words of Fr Vincent Finnegan, he "rattled off his confession", unaware of what was about to happen. There was silence. Padre Pio told Fr Pius he was a Franciscan lay brother and asked Fr Pius if he would like to talk about his problem. Fr Vincent's sermon at the Golden Jubilee Service referred to Fr Pius getting "really scared and (that) he could feel himself breaking out in a sweat". Pius denied having a problem, to which Padre Pio was adamant he did.

Padre Pio brought to life a fact in Fr Pius' life that he hadn't yet discussed. It finally dawned on Fr Pius what Padre Pio was talking about, his desire to follow his heart and become a priest. There were a few obstacles in the way of his dream. Padre Pio gave him advice, which he followed through when he got back to Assisi.

The advice summarised in Fr Vincent's sermon was to pray fervently, then speak to his provincials, and finally, trust in God and leave the rest to Him.

There is an important message here to all of us, to trust God with our dreams and ambitions in life as he has the greatest power of all.

Becoming a priest at that time



required a secondary education and the biggest hurdle of all – he was a brother. A brother had never gone on for priesthood...until then! Fr Pius' desire was strong – strong enough to overcome all hurdles that came his way.

I have the utmost admiration for this, as we can sometimes become reluctant to deal with our problems, so we should be inspired, and I definitely am, by Fr Pius' strength and commitment to following his heart.

And so, he began the journey to priesthood. Fr Pius was sent to America where he did all his

studies and was ordained in March 1973. Since then, he has been involved in many faith missions, including ministries, teaching, chaplaincy, and retreats, and now he is based in Rosstown Franciscan Friary.

Fr Pius' life story is astonishing, and he continues to inspire us all every day. I would like to congratulate him on his Golden Jubilee of Priesthood and thank Fr Vincent Finnegan, of Rosstown Franciscan Friary, for the wonderful sermon at the service, which has inspired many parts of my article.

## My physical home was built by men but God allowed for it to be spiritually built as well by Seán

PLACES and people make us. We all have that place, or places, person or persons, which have contributed to our development over the years. How we develop depends on the environment and the people in it. We all grow up somewhere, but does that make it a good place? Not necessarily. What I'm trying to imply is that a good home is vital to a good, resilient character – and there are major factors that impact how effective it is in your development: people and environment.

First, I'd like to talk about people. A house for living in is built by men, but men were built by a house also, and yet God built everything. I take inspiration for this concept from Hebrews 3:4, which states, "For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything."

God is the base of a good home, and God must be the inspiration of those who run the house,

because without Him their home would not have come into existence.

I am glad that I was brought up Christian in a practicing Catholic home, and then confirmed this belief personally, by my own free will, but I am thankful that I was brought up by a family that was willing to pass down their beliefs to me.

My mother is the one I looked to so that I could learn kindness, patience, and consideration – all traits that are necessary in life – and from my father I learned how I should present myself and to grow mentally as a man. But, in both cases, I have very far to go in learning.

I am beyond thankful to God for both of my parents and everything that they have done for my own good. I know that I am lucky, as some people lack such role models and have to draw inspiration from others.





*continued from page 12*

I also have had the privilege of having grown up in my home with my younger brother. I have watched him from being a small child to growing into a teenager. Having him as a companion over the last 13 years has allowed to me to have a friend in my home; once again, something I thank God for, as some people never had the privilege of having such an accommodating sibling, or even a sibling at all.

Without these people in the home that I grew up in, I wouldn't be the same person I have grown into today and will be in the future. My physical home was built by men, but God kindly allowed for it to be spiritually built as well.

In my study of this concept, I found that analysis of this part of Hebrews has established that Jesus has been found of a greater honour than Moses, being the Son of God, just as the spiritual builder of the house, God, who builds everyone in the house, has a greater honour than the physical home itself.

Now that I have explained how people in a home build you, and

you can build them, I will explain as best as I am capable of how the environment you grow up in also builds and develops you.

I have many visual memories of my home from when I was a young child. Standing at one end of my garden the other day made me remember myself there years before, looking out from the small wooden porch of my treehouse that I no longer fit in. It caused me to realise how small that distance is now. Years ago, the trees that surrounded my home seemed like they were a tremendous distance away. I couldn't really comprehend that there was anything beyond the thick, evergreen wall. The trek towards them made me feel like the first person trying to cross the Atlantic to the Americas – my New World.

I find it quite symbolic now that most of those trees blocking the view of beyond the garden have been removed gradually as I've grown up, revealing more of the world to me as my comprehension of it improved with age and development of my young mind.

My home, which once seemed so big and lacking in information when I was so

small, now seems so small and so full of the information that I compiled. It feels like my home has changed along with me, but it is really only me that has changed, and my mental and spiritual comprehension of it. How its healthy environment has helped me to grow mirrors a very meaningful verse from Luke 2:40, "The child grew, and he became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom and grace of God was upon him."

Although I have much more growth to go through, and much more wisdom to attain, what I do know is that it is the environment of my home and all the supportive, loving people in it that God built that has gotten me this far.

In my home, my faith and I have grown strongly, and it is a place that I will be forever thankful for. I think that a strong, stable, and faith-driven home is the key to the building of a strong, stable, and faithful individual that can be beneficial to the world. I write this from my own personal experience and my own observations. Quite often, information of such matters is best when it comes from those who've witnessed it themselves.

## It is the souls of the people that make the Cathedral so distinctive *by Zara*

SAINT Eugene's Cathedral celebrates its 150th Anniversary this year, standing tall and welcoming in its unwavering stability. However, the Cathedral has not always been the magnificent structure we know today.

Construction took place over many long and challenging years; the country was coping with famine, disease, and persistent foreign invasion. Despite this, the people of Derry, sustained in their faith, came together to create a sacred place of worship.

William Roddy, editor of the Derry Journal, said in 1899: "Do not let us forget that this is a Cathedral built out of the pennies of the poor, the sixpences of those not quite so poor and the shillings of those who were better-to-do". It really is the peoples' cathedral.

The unique features were not completed until later, such as the tower, spire, and illustrative stain glass windows. Further details were then added over the next 150 years.



Zara's christening in December 2004

Personally, I have always found Saint Eugene's Cathedral to be quite distinctive, though perhaps I am biased, as it is my home parish. I often sit and wonder how many other people have shared a special moment within its walls; how many people have been baptised, confirmed, married, or ordained, how many have received Holy Communion, confessed their sins, or said goodbye to a loved one. A lot can happen in 150 years.

The architecture may be grand and the furnishings ornate, but

it is the souls of the people that make the Cathedral so distinctive. Whether you are at the Easter Vigil or casually passing through on a Tuesday afternoon, you will always find company, with a bilateral offering of solace.

So, as we celebrate the wonderful memories and remain thankful for our beautiful space, we look forward to the future Masses, initiatives, and wider opportunities that will stem from the great oak of Saint Eugene's Cathedral.

*St Columb's College Head Prefect, James Tourish shares below the essay that won him first prize in the Life Advocate Awards 2023 Essay Competition...*

## The time is always right to do right



St Columb's College Head Prefect, James Tourish, who won the first prize in the Life Advocate Awards 2023 essay competition, 'The time is always right to do the right thing', receiving his prize from Senator Ronan Mullen, in Leinster House.

WHAT does the quote 'The time is always right to do right', actually mean? We live in a world where there are various conflicting ideas of what morality is, and how we can live in a moral way, however, that does not mean we should not strive to live righteously and to do good in our life. If we focus on making a true and genuine positive impact on the world, then a lot can be accomplished. There is never a time where doing the right thing is the wrong option. So, we must ask ourselves then, what is 'doing right'?

The most fundamental right in life is the right to life. If we do not

protect life, if we do not defend life and if we do not place the value of life in the highest regard possible, then we will become cynical, malevolent and immoral.

In the world today, we see wars and violence that reach all parts of our planet, innocent lives are lost, communities are ravaged and the devastating effects are still felt long after the last battle has ended. Although war and violence are unfortunate realities around the world today, so much work is done to promote peace, prosperity and stability.

United Nations peacekeeping missions take place in some of

the most volatile and unstable places in the world, in an effort to prevent conflict and protect innocent people. These missions are dangerous, and the tragic death of a young Irish soldier in December 2022 during one of these missions reminds us of how these issues can hit very close to home, but we should never be persuaded to be complicit.

Bravery and doing the right thing in the face of adversity is something we should all aspire to achieve. The promotion of values such as freedom, peace and equality are examples of 'doing right'. The successes of Martin

Luther King's peaceful civil rights campaign, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the signing of the Good Friday Agreement that brought peace to Northern Ireland are all modern historical examples of what can be achieved when people come together and act against injustice in the world.

Much of the time in life, it's the simple things that make a difference, putting a smile on someone's face or helping someone out when they're worried can do a lot more than you may think.

The right to life applies to the unborn too. No person, organisation or government should have the authority to end human life, especially before it can even leave the womb. If we do not treat our young and most vulnerable with love and fairness,

how can we then expect to treat each other in such ways.

In the United States, Roe v Wade has been overturned; a momentous step forward towards the ultimate goal of protecting and defending every single human life in the world, whether they be in the womb or outside the womb.

US President John F Kennedy once said, "effort and courage are not enough without purpose and direction". Right now, each and every one of us has the choice to do good, 'to do right'. We must live our lives in a way that exemplifies the right to life, we must take responsibility for our words and for our actions as we will be examples to the future generations of the world.

If we truly value life, and doing the right thing, then ultimately

the world will be a better place for all. Our goals and ambitions should not be selfish and self-serving, but rather they should be selfless and altruistic. We possess the opportunity to achieve greatness and to improve the lives of so many in this world. We must strive, together and united, against all injustice and evil in our world today. We must do everything in our power to protect life, and to do good in this world, because the time is always right, to do right.

(Footnotes: <https://amp.theguardian.com/world/2022/dec/15/irish-soldier-killed-lebanon-un-peacekeeping-mission>  
<https://www.jfklibrary.org/archives/other-resources/john-f-kennedy-speeches/raleigh-nc-19600917>)



With the recently unveiled bust of John Hume in Leinster House, Dublin, are Year 13 St Columb's College students, from left, Adam McIntyre, Aaron Kelly and James Tourish (Head Prefect), and teacher, Mr Mark McConnellogue.



# Great response to Dominican-led Mission in Limavady



AFTER a three-year delay due to Covid-19, the Limavady Parish enjoyed a powerful week of prayer and talks during a Mission led by the Dominicans, which came to a close on the Feast of the Annunciation of the Lord.

While the Mission programme included ceremonies in each of the parish's three churches during the week, the rural and town communities gathered together in Christ The King Church on the morning of Saturday, March 25, with the three Dominican friars and the priests of the Parish, Mgr Bryan McCanny and Fr Dermot Harkin, for the closing Mass and Anointing of the Sick, which many found a very moving experience.

Known for being an Order that is under the maternal care of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Dominicans have a great devotion to Our Lady and the Rosary, and one of the trio, Fr Patrick, spoke of the power of the Rosary during the homily.

With it being the Feast of the Annunciation, Fr Patrick reflected on the scene of the Angel Gabriel appearing to Mary, saying: "All the angels of Heaven would have been wondering if She was going to say 'yes' or 'no'. You can almost see all of Heaven coming to a stop, wondering if Mary will say 'yes', as so much hinges on this. Thankfully, She did."

He added: "It is impossible to speak about Christ without Mary, and it is impossible to think about Mother without Child. Our brothers and sisters of other faiths do not understand our reverence for Our Mother. We go to Christ through Mary because He came to us through Mary; simple logic."

With regards to renewal in faith, Fr Patrick said: "I would like to propose a sure method...the Rosary. It is a solid Mariological and Christological prayer. It has been producing saints for centuries. Those who pray the Mysteries of the Rosary faithfully come to know Christ. The Rosary prayers are pure Scripture: the Hail Mary, 'Blessed is the fruit of Your Womb', and the Gloria, invoking the Holy Trinity."

Highlighting the importance of Mary in the story of our salvation, Fr Patrick noted: "The Joyful, Sorrowful and Glorious Mysteries are all the story of salvation."

He went on to point out that the Rosary was "not about mechanically reciting words", saying: "The Holy Spirit is busy reeling the golden thread of God's life into your heart as you pray the Rosary. It is a tried and trusted method used by such saints as St Dominic and St Pio of Pietrelcina. "Centuries after centuries of saints talk about the power of the Rosary. It works! If you want to know Jesus Christ, if you want to know your faith, pray the Rosary every day faithfully. Come to Mass and participate in the Sacraments, and you will get the strength to go the distance. You will see God."

The success of the week of Mission was evident in the large turnout of parishioners for the closing ceremony and their attentiveness, which absorbed the power of the healing prayers during the Anointing of the Sick.

At the end, Roses were blessed for people to take and give to those sick at home or in hospital.

Mission leader, Fr Damian spoke of the great privilege it had been

for them to spend a week with the Limavady Parish community, saying: "We do not take it lightly coming into a parish, but we have been so well received. Thank you all for coming out like you did, it wouldn't have been much of a mission if you hadn't turned out."

He went on to thank Mgr Bryan and Fr Dermot for extending the invitation to them, telling those gathered: "You are very blessed to have them as your priests. They are wonderful. Continue to pray for them and keep us in your prayers too, as we continue in mission around more of the country, and we will pray for you."

### Reinvigorate

Thankful for such a wonderful week of prayer in the Parish, Mgr Bryan commented: "Three years ago, this week, we were to have this Mission but Covid intervened. Curates have come and gone and there have been a few Dominican changes, but it eventually happened and it was worth waiting for, with the focus then becoming to reinvigorate us in the faith following lockdown."

"It was a marvellous week and that was down to the generosity of Fr Damian, Fr Patrick and Bro Ruaidhri, and their liturgies, confessions and work in the schools. Their enthusiasm for the Word of God was inspiring, and they showed gentle care for people of this parish. They were a wonderful example of prayer, whether individually or as a community."

Giving a special mention to Dungiven native, Bro Ruaidhri Grieve, which drew an impromptu round of applause, Mgr Bryan remarked: "If this Mission had went ahead three years ago, we would not have had Deacon Ruaidhri, and we hope that next time he will come back as a priest."

Speaking afterwards to 'The Net', Mgr Bryan highlighted how generous the Dominicans had been with their time, dedicating a lot to hearing confessions.

Commenting on the Mission programme, he noted that as the Parish usually had 7 am Mass during Lent, he took on to say the early morning Mass during the week, allowing the friars to concentrate on the 10 am Masses and 7.30 pm ceremonies for preaching and Benediction, followed by Confessions for

however long it took.

"In between, they visited the schools, particularly the primary schools," recalled Mgr Bryan, adding: "At Termoncanice PS, they gave a short retreat for the Confirmation classes. They visited the P4 classes too and had a chat with the pupils about making their First Holy Communion. They went to St Finlough's PS as well and spent a morning there, meeting the teachers and all the pupils, as it is a smaller school and so that was possible."

"They also went to the school assembly at St Mary's on the Monday morning to introduce themselves, and they gave a brief outline of how they came to be involved with the Dominican Order, which was very interesting to hear. While they were there, I assembled other priests to come along to help hear Confessions for the whole school."

"We also had a 'meet and greet' for the parishioners and friars after the Monday morning Mass in our new community centre."

Delighted with the feedback from people, including those who had been unable to attend in person and watched online, Mgr Bryan remarked: "They were so positive about it that they would like them to come back as soon as possible. So, we are thinking it would be a good idea to bring them back next year. We usually try to have a Mission every two-to-three years anyway."

"It certainly lived up to our expectations. I am blessed that we have a great Pastoral Council organising everything. They take the burden off me, organising readers, music, etc, and I just turn up. I pray that many blessings were received individually and as a community."

Grateful to have the Drummond Hotel, in Ballykelly, accommodate the Dominicans during the Mission, and provide their breakfast and evening meals, Mgr Bryan said: "It was particularly good that the Drummond has an Oratory where the friars were able to gather together for their communal prayers."

Buoyed up by the week of prayer and talks, the Limavady Parish is now looking forward to its next big event, the annual HOPE Camp in the summer, where their young people and a team of volunteers enjoy a week of faith, fun and friendship.





# 'Mere Christianity' Lenten study inspiring for Ardstraw, Badoney and Greencastle faithful

by Paula Kennedy

AN invitation to join a Lenten reading group was extended to the parishioners of Ardstraw East, Badoney Upper, Gortin and Greencastle before the beginning of Lent. We began our study of 'Mere Christianity' by C S Lewis on the second Wednesday of Lent, having prepared by reading the first five chapters of the book.

We discussed what we had read, sharing our thoughts about it and teased out any difficulties we might have had in understanding its meaning. Fr Brian posed questions based on what we had read and we discussed these.

Our reading was supplemented by watching a DVD study guide on Mere Christianity. This audio/visual aid was most helpful and inspiring as it presented further background information about C S Lewis' life, and various people offered insightful and inspiring explanations of the different themes in the book. We progressed through the book in the weeks that followed throughout Lent.

C S Lewis, from Belfast, was a Professor of English Literature at Oxford University. He was an atheist. His conversion to Christianity came through his discussion of philosophy and religion with several Christian

friends, including J R R Tolkien. His friends were very persuasive!

'Mere Christianity' was adapted from a series of BBC radio talks made between 1941 and 1944, addressed to people at war, during World War II. The book consists of four parts: Lewis' arguments for the existence of God; his defence of Christian Theology; exploring Christian ethics through the cardinal and theological virtues; and finally the Christian concept of God.

C S Lewis has a quite unique power of making theology an attractive, exciting and fascinating quest. While those who had inherited Christianity might be able to write about it with truth and learning, it took someone like Lewis who had found Christianity after many years of unbelief to write about it with the full excitement it deserves.

We found our reading of 'Mere Christianity' a challenging but very valuable experience. It allowed us to take time out to reflect more deeply about what our Christian faith means. Even though it was written in the 1940s, we discovered the world was in turmoil in much the same way as it is today.

C S Lewis addressed the people

during the war with a message of hope, hope in the person of Christ. This message of hope is still relevant for us in 2023. Fr Brian expressed his hope for the group to be more than just a 'reading group', but by using 'Mere Christianity' as a form of Catechesis, we would be the seeds which would help promote the renewal of faith in our parishes.

'Mere Christianity' has given us an appreciation of our utter dependence on God and a sense of gratitude for our Christian Faith, which is His gift to each one of us.

## Reflections

At the end of our reading of 'Mere Christianity', we reflected about why we joined the group and what we gained from being part of the reading group. The following are some of our reflections...

"I joined the reading group having heard Fr Brian speaking about 'Mere Christianity' occasionally in his sermons and I wanted to explore and learn more for myself. The reading group made me realise that it is somewhat easy to drift through life. One has to make a more conscious effort to think about what I am doing to consolidate my faith."



'Mere Christianity' Study Group gathering in Cranagh, Co Tyrone.

"My first encounter with C S Lewis was a school production of 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe', a magical world exploring themes of reconciliation and resurrection. I was eager to explore his writings further. The discipline of working with committed Christians in a friendly group situation was growthful and rewarding. Thoughts, ideas and questions were clarified and developed through listening to others and to our group leader, Fr Brian."

"I joined the reading group for personal faith development and

to explore Christianity from the perspective of C S Lewis. I gained a deeper understanding and appreciation of my Christian Faith through the guidance of Fr Brian, our group discussion and much time given to self-reflection."

"Mere Christianity was an inspiring read. It challenged my understanding of the faith. Reading the book, watching and listening to the commentary on the DVD, as well as our group discussions, left me with lasting insights and has encouraged me to be more Christ-like in my daily life. I would recommend the reading of

'Mere Christianity' as a resource

for parishes endeavouring to grow in faith and understanding."

"I joined the reading group because I thought it would be a good Lenten exercise and an opportunity to look more deeply at my call to be a Christian. Through the various discussions and from reading 'Mere Christianity', I am more focused on my Christian mission. I hope that this mission will deepen my relationship with God and be reflected in my interaction with family, friends, neighbour and community."

# Celebrating 200 years of worship in St Mary's Church, Cloughcor

by Geraldine Devine



MUCH is happening in the small hamlet of Cloughcor, where priest and people are preparing for the Bi-Centennial celebration of St Mary's, the Parish Church of Leckpatrick and the second oldest church in the Diocese of Derry.

Three miles from Strabane, on the road to Derry, this small but beautifully formed church can be seen proudly standing on the side of a steep hill, overlooking the Foyle Valley, surrounded by its adjoining cemetery and

beside the remains of the ancient Cloughcor Wood.

Little is known about the history of Leckpatrick Parish before the 16th century, and anything we do know has been passed on as folklore from earlier generations. A survey in 1609 gives the names of Cormac O'Cleary and Aeneas McEaney as active clergy in the parish, and the district was seen as a refuge area for Catholics in the Plantation period, due largely to the patronage of the local

landowner, Sir George Hamilton, himself a practicing Catholic.

It seems clear that there was continuing pastoral ministry, with mention of Mass being celebrated at Mass Rocks and in sheltered houses or barns. It is thought that there was some sort of shelter or open-air church at 'Old Altar Green' near the present church, sheltered by a holly bush and under an ancient oak tree. Cloughcor was very much a wooded area at this time and the site would have been discreet and out of sight of prying eyes.

The Abercorn letters of 1785 record a petition from Cloughcor Catholics to the Earl of Abercorn, seeking help in providing land for a church. Despite a vague promise of help, nothing much was done until the 1820's. In 1816, Fr William O'Kane was appointed parish priest of Leckpatrick and Donagheady, and he was largely responsible for embarking on the daunting task of securing land and raising funds for the building of St Mary's Church.

It would, indeed, have been extremely difficult for a relatively impoverished people, who would



have had to make significant sacrifices in order to raise the necessary funds to build a church. Leckpatrick Parish, however, was also fortunate to have some prosperous Catholics who could afford to make generous contributions.

It is likely that the basic structure of the church was completed in 1823, though the congregation would have had to stand or kneel on the clay floor in those early days. Over the following 200 years, improvements have been undertaken, with the last major work having been completed in 2006, leaving us with the beautiful

place of prayer and peace we enjoy today.

It is, therefore, with great pride that Fr Gerry Sweeney and the parishioners are planning to mark this very significant occasion in the life of the parish. To begin the celebrations, Bishop Donal McKeown will celebrate a special Mass of Thanksgiving on Sunday, May 28, at 3 pm. Concelebrating with him will be local priests and those who have previously served in Leckpatrick. A huge welcome is extended to all parishioners past and present, who have worshipped and continue to worship in this place.





*Sr Benedetta Hutnikiewicz ZSJM, of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus, Letterkenny, writes the first of a series of articles promoting Divine Mercy...*

# History of original Divine Mercy Image

WHEN I think about devotion to Divine Mercy, so many things run through my mind. The Scripture passages that speak about God's unfathomable Mercy, the life of St Faustina and her Confessor, Bl Michael Sopocko, the Divine Mercy chaplet, the prayers in the Hour of Mercy, numerous promises of Jesus attached to the devotion, the Divine Mercy Image. Out of all of those, I would like to start this series with the Image; its theology and history are so rich!

Let's begin with a bit of background information. The first request of the Lord Jesus to Sr Faustina was for her to paint the image. She writes the following words in her Diary: "In the evening, when I was in my cell, I saw the Lord Jesus clothed in a white garment. One hand [was] raised in the gesture of blessing, the other was touching the garment at the breast. From beneath the garment, slightly drawn aside at the breast, there were emanating two large rays, one red, the other pale. In silence I kept my gaze fixed on the Lord; my soul was struck with awe, but also with great joy. After a while, Jesus said to me, Paint an image according to the pattern you see, with the signature: Jesus, I trust in You. I desire that this image

be venerated, first in your chapel, and [then] throughout the world." (Diary, 47) This revelation took place on February 22, 1931, in Plock.

This posed a number of difficulties. Sr Faustina was an uneducated Sister, assigned to the most humble tasks in her Congregation (the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy). She didn't have any significance in her Congregation, no influence either. Moreover, she was not a painter. The Priests to whom Faustina went to Confession said that this vision was about spiritual matters, that she was to paint the image of Jesus in her soul. Jesus insisted that He wanted an image to be painted on canvas.

Perhaps, we would never have received a Divine Mercy Image, if not for a certain meeting. The accomplishment of Jesus' request became possible when Sr Faustina met Fr Sopocko in Vilnius. Having heard about her visions, out of plain curiosity (which he admits to in his diary), he organised a painter. The man was named Eugeniusz Kazimirowski and lived in the same house as Fr Sopocko. He agreed to paint the image according to the instructions of Sr Faustina.

Sr Faustina personally went to him every week, from January

to June, to give him detailed instructions and make sure that everything was as Jesus had shown her. Fr Sopocko served as a model.

And so, in June of 1934, the painting was completed. It was first kept in the home of Fr Sopocko, and then, in the autumn of 1934, it was moved to the corridor of the convent of the Bernardine Sisters, which was beside the Church of St Michael where Fr Sopocko was rector.

But Jesus kept demanding that it will be exposed for public veneration. During the Jubilee of Redemption, from April 25-27, 1935, it was exposed in the Gate of Dawn, and Fr Sopocko preached about Divine Mercy. St Faustina, who was present there, saw the Image of Our Lord come alive, and He extended His hand and spread His blessing over the huge gathered crowd of the faithful.

The image was not available for public veneration until 1937, when the Archbishop of Vilnius gave Fr Sopocko permission to hang it in the Church of St Michael.

In 1948, the Soviet government closed the Church of St Michael. Though many of the sacred objects and artworks were moved to another church to be saved from Soviet hands, the Divine Mercy image was left undisturbed

in St Michael's for a while.

In 1951, two women were able to bribe the keeper of St Michael's Church and save the image. It was then hidden in an attic and remained there for a few years. Since it couldn't be taken across the border to Poland, in 1956 they gave it to the priest in charge of the Church of the Holy Spirit in Vilnius for safekeeping.

Soon after, it was moved to a church in Belarus, where it remained for over a decade. In 1970, this church, too, was shut down by the government and looted, but miraculously, again the Image of Divine Mercy was saved. It was hanging so high up that it would have been bothersome to take it down, and so it remained.

Eventually, it was brought back to Lithuania in secret in 1985 and again given to the Church of the Holy Spirit. In the early 2000s, its significance was rediscovered and, after a professional restoration, it was re-hung in the nearby Church of the Holy Trinity in 2005, which is now the Shrine of Divine Mercy. There it remains, attracting numerous pilgrims.

In my next articles, I will want to take you through different parts of the Divine Mercy Image, bit by bit, to discover its rich meaning.

## Creggan



## Divine Mercy devotion growing in the Diocese

DIVINE Mercy Sunday ceremonies were celebrated in a number of parishes across the Diocese this year, including Ardstraw East (Newtownstewart), Ballinascreen, Banagher, Cappagh, Carnhill, Claudy, Creggan, Dungiven and Long Tower.

In St Patrick's Church, Claudy, a candle was lit as parishioners gathered to pray for complete trust in God's Mercy and an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. During the ceremony, as well as the praying of the Chaplet there was a talk on Divine Mercy, and parish priest, Fr David O'Kane blessed the Divine Mercy Image and Divine Mercy medals.

Fr Daniel McFaul, PP Creggan,



## Claudly



## Carnhill





# Eangach

## Ár nDúchas

### An tAivé Maria

Sé do Bheatha a Mhuire atá lán de ghrásta, tá an Tiarna leat. Is beannaithe thú idir mná agus is beannaithe toradh do bhroinne, Íosa

A Naomh-Mhuire, A Mháthair Dé, Guigh orainn, na peacaigh anois agus ar uair ár mbáis. Áiméan

### An Salve Regina

Go mbeannaithear duit, a Bhanríon Naofa, a mháthair na Trócaire. Go mbeannaithear duit ós tú ár mbeatha, ár milseacht is ár ngrá. Is ortsa a ghlaoidimid, clann bhocht dhíbeartha Éabha. Is chugatsa a chuirimid ár n-osnaí, ag mairgnigh is ag gol i ngleann seo na ndeor. Dá bhrí sin, ós tú ár n-abhcóide, iompaigh orainn do shúile atá lán de thrócaire, agus i ndiaidh ár ndíbeartha anseo, taispeán dúinn toradh beannaithe do bhroinne, Íosa. A Mhaighdeán Mhuire cheansa ghrámhair mhilis. Guigh orainn a Naomh-Mháthair Dé, Ionas go mb'fíú sinn geallúna Chríost.



## Shil sí a deora dúinn

Lár Mhí Lúnasa, agus mé ag mórimeacht creidimh don aos óg, shiúil mé thar stalláí ag a bhfuil réimse earraí creidimh a ndíol nó á dtabhairt amach, is go tobann a bhí m'aird tarraingte ag an phictiúr seo ag stalla de chuid Clonmacnoise Press. Bhí sé cosúil is gur phreab sé amach as an chúlra agus as an rírá ginearálta máguaird. Dar liom go raibh rud éigin speisialta faoi, agus go gcuirfinn ceist faoi, rud a rinne. Tar éis labhairt le bean an stalla dom (agus giota staidéar a dhéanamh fosta) is léir go bhfuil an íomhá seo i bhfad níos speisialta ná mar a shíl mé ar dtús.

Ní raibh an 15ú haois, ina thréimhse furasta don chreideamh in Éirinn. I lár chogaíochta na 1640í agus brú á chur ar an Eaglais, fágann Walter Ó Loingsigh, easpag Chluain Fearta, a dheoise agus turas chun na hEorpa roimhe. I ndiaidh tamaill faoi ghlas ar Inis Bó Finne, éalaíonn sé agus triallann chun na Mór Roinne. Tá rud éigin ar iompar aige – pictiúr den mhaighdeán Mhuire. Tamall sular fhág an t-easpag Éire, chruinnigh easpaig na tíre os comhair an íomhá seo agus d'fhógair gurb í Muire Banríon na hÉireann.

Sroicheann an t-easpag Ó Loingsigh an Ungáir go tuirsiúil agus, sa bhliain 1663, fhaigheann sé bás ann, i gcairdeas an easpaig áitiúil i gcathair Gyor. Fágann sé an pictiúr mar bhronntanas

ag an easpag, a choinníonn é san ardeaglais. Is anseo a tharlaíonn rud éigin iontach. Ar 17ú Márta 1697, i ndiaidh aifreann na maidine, buaileann iontas mór an slua atá i láthair nuair a fheiceann siad an íomhá ag sileadh deor fola. Téann seo ar aghaidh ar feadh trí huair go dtí 9 a.m. Scaipeann an scéal go forleathan, ag cothú suime i measc mhuintir na hUngáire. Tagann daoine ó fud fad na cathrach lena fheiceáil, ina measc, tá an t-easpag, ministéir phrotastúnacha agus raibí Giúdach. Maireann éadach ar baineadh úsáid as leis an fhuil a ghlanadh den phictiúr, atá ar taispeáint, chomh maith leis an phictiúr, in ardeaglais Gyor inniu.

Is iontach na comtharluithe a bhaineann leis seo uile. Is ar Lá Fhéile Pádraig a thiteann seo amach, agus pictiúr a tháinig ó Éirinn. Is sa bhliain céanna seo (1697) a cuireadh dlí úr i bhfeidhm; An tAcht díbeartha. De réir an dlí, bhí ar gach sagart nó easpaig caitliceach Éire a fhágáil agus gan filleadh, faoi phian an bháis. Bhí an eaglais ag fulaingt go mór in Éirinn anois. Léiríodh nach ndearna Muire dearmad ar fhulaingt a clainne in Éirinn. Blianta níos moille agus an Drochshaol ar siúl, is í an Bhanríon céanna, mar aon le Naomh Iósaef, Naomh Eoin, agus a Mac, an tUan Dé, a tháinig ar cuairt orainn ar Chnoc Mhuire.



Tá an pictiúr seo le feiceáil in ardeaglais Gyor go fóill.



Éire agus bratach Ungáireach

## Suntas an Phictiúir

Measaim gur fiú staidéar a dhéanamh ar an íomhá atá pléite sa chéad alt, agus tuiscint a bhaint as an suntas atá le sonrú go mór ann. Thig aithne a chur ar ár Máthair ann. Máthair síochánta, comhbhách, sólasach.

Dar ndóigh, is é an chéad rud atá le feiceáil anseo ná cé atá léirithe agus cad é atá a dhéanamh acu. Tá Muire agus a Mac ann. Is é seo an rud is coitianta atá léirithe ag íomhá ar bith ina bhfuil Muire. Is é an ról is mó atá aici go díreach ná Íosa a nochtadh dúinn. I gcónaí,

tá a haird dírithe air. Tugann sí a Mac dúinn. Ach chomh maith, tugann sí sinne dó. Is féidir léi cuidiú linne teacht níos cóngaraí dó.

Níl Íosa múscaíte, ach feictear é ina chodladh ar philiúr agus faoi phlúid. Tá Muire ag dearcadh air le grá ciúin, mar a dhéanann máthair ar bith eile nuair atá an naoinán s'acu ina suain. Tá suaimhneas agus síochán álainn le braith. Amharcann sí, gránn sí agus bíonn sí ag machnamh. Iarrtar orainn bheith ansin in

éineacht léi, ag machnamh ar a Mac, Rí na Ríthe.

Amharc ar an chuma atá orthu. Ar bhealaigh, tá sé cosúil le mórán de phictiúir eile ina bhfuil siad. Ach cad é a sheasann amach? Tá seál gaelach á chaitheamh ag Muire. Chomh maith leis sin, tá gruaig rua le feiceáil ag an leanbh Íosa. Cuireann seo i gcosúlacht le muintir na hÉireann iad. Tá coróin orthu beirt. Os comhair an phictiúir seo a chruinnigh easpaig na tíre le Muire a chorónú ina Banríon ar Éirinn. Tá Íosa ina

Rí ar gach ní, agus tá Muire ina Banríon ar gach ní. Mar sin de, is Rí agus Banríon na hÉireann iad fosta, agus sa phictiúr, nascann siad iad féin linne sa tír seo.

Cé go bhfuil súile Mhuire dírithe ar a Mac, tá a cluas nochtaithe, réidh le héisteacht linn. Réidh lenár n-impí a chluinstin. Is í seo Muire a éisteann linn, a bhronann sólas ar dhaoine atá ag fulaingt. Seo í Muire a éisteann linn, a thugann sólas do na heasláin, agus dúinn a bhíonn ag fulaingt. Tá grá aici dá clann.



# Great sense of joy and peace during Sr Clare Retreat



THIS year's Sr Clare Retreat in St Columba's Church, Long Tower, was another powerful time of prayer for people from the late Servant Sister's home City of Derry and beyond, with many who were unable to attend in person, tuning in online to listen to the testimonies and talks on 'Life in the Seven Sacraments'.

Throughout the week, there were great attendances at the 7am and 10am Masses and the evening Benediction services, with talks by guest speakers, including Martina Davidson, RE teacher at St Cecilia's College, Fr Gerard Mongan, Andrea Corr, of the Corr Sisters, Fr Joe Gormley, Fr John Joe Duffy, Creeslough, Fr Colum Clerkin, Cora Sherlock, Pro-life Campaign, Fr Philip Kemmy, PP Killea & Newtowncunningham, Sr Elena HoM, Fr Stephen Quinn ocd and Bishop Donal, who celebrated the closing Mass.

Heartened by reports of the high turnout, the Bishop remarked: "This shows just how many people want Good News in their lives, and how many people have good news to share about what God has done in their lives. "The story of the little girl from the Brandywell has gone around the world. But Sr Clare Maria of the Trinity and the Heart of Mary, the religious name of Clare Crockett, would want it to be good news about what God can do and not merely some flimsy hero-worship. Jesus offers more than a holy Beyonce!"

Speaking on the readings for the third Sunday of Easter, Bishop Donal remarked: "Clare Crockett knew that Resurrection is not

merely about what happened to Jesus. Resurrection is what happens to us when we review our personal story in the light of Christ's resurrection. A resurrection people find ways of looking at the pain of the past and believing that God was present, even in the worst of times, just as God the Father was at work on Calvary.

"As we gather around the altar today, He asks us whether we are stuck broken hearted and self-pitying on Calvary or whether we want to let the Risen Jesus help us find grace in how we tell our story. Clare Crockett tells us from beyond the grave that Resurrection starts here and now."

Commenting on the Retreat's sacramental theme, he explained: "We belong to a church tradition that places emphasis on the sacraments. Some other Christian traditions emphasise the Word only and avoid religious imagery. But even a superficial reading of the Gospels reveals that the early church had a strong sense of sacramentality. Jesus talked about being born again of water and the Holy Spirit...about eating His flesh and drinking His blood,

"In today's Gospel, we see the shape of the Sunday Eucharist; Jesus walks with people in their real lives, He explains the scriptures to them and then takes bread, gives thanks, breaks it and gives it to them – and they recognize Him. It makes clear that what we gather here for is not something that we organise to please God. God in Jesus is calling us each week and doing something for us, helping us

make sense of our lives through the scriptures and then revealing Himself to us in the breaking of bread."

Reminding those gathered that, at the end of Mass, they will be called to go and announce the Gospel of the Lord, Bishop Donal said: "The message about Christ's resurrection is not merely to help me with my personal story. Clare Crockett met Christ in the scriptures and the sacraments and that drove her to go out to share that Good News with others. Sunday Mass is not merely an escape from pressure or a place where we can feel good in some shallow way. A sacramental community is being prepared to be a missionary community. There are thousands of people in our cities and towns who are like the disciples leaving Jerusalem - they tell a sad story about shattered dreams, and they expect little joy in the future. Indeed, many of them are understandably made angry by the sad story that they tell about their lives.

### Hope

"Handing on the faith is not merely telling others that they ought to go to Mass, and then leaving them to feel guilty. It is about knowing what God has done to give you joy and hope in the ups and downs of your life, and helping others to discover that new way of looking at life which can offer them hope and healing as well.

"Sr Clare knew that journey of meeting Christ in the sacrament of Calvary, the Eucharist, and sharing that experience. That is why, despite all sorts of problems, she could smile while giving everything. A parish is not just a spiritual petrol pump where individuals serve themselves and drive on. It is a community of people who are nourished by the Word and the Sacrament – and support each other to go out and share what they have come to know."

He concluded: "Renewal in the Church will happen, not when

we make merely structural and legal changes but when we take on board the rich sacramental message that the early church hands on to us. And Sr Clare's religious name tells us that we can find healing only in the name of the Trinity, and following the Heart of Mary who was called by God the Father, overshadowed by the Holy Spirit and bore the Son of God.

"Anything else is tacky, shallow religion that offers good feelings but is without content. Today's Mass, like every Mass, is meant to be as transformative for us as the Emmaus meeting was for the two disciples, and as it was for Sr Clare Crockett who knew she had to give all or nothing."

Thankful for all the blessings of the Retreat week, Myra McLaughlin, of the Sr Clare Committee that organised it, remarked: "It was a great week. It was such a humbling experience and amazing how it all came together, bringing people from all walks of life and different denominations too. There was a great sense of peace and joy throughout.

"I got something to think about from all the talks. The speakers were all fantastic and the notable thing is that none of them said they had to think about it when asked to give a talk, but said right away that they felt honoured to be asked. It is just wonderful how a wee girl from the Brandywell can do extraordinary things.

"This has all strengthened my faith and I feel blessed that one day we will have our wee saint from Derry. Until then, we will continue to celebrate the life and example of Sr Clare. It can only bring blessings on our families. I feel blessed to be part of the organising committee and the success of this retreat is a good boost to the planning of the next one."

In the meantime, the Sr Clare Mass continues to take place in Termonbacca on the second Sunday of each month, at 7 pm.





# Retreat talks highlight Sr Clare deeply touching lives...



Sr Elena HoM.

IRISH singer/songwriter, Andrea Corr received a warm Derry welcome when spoke on the second night of the retreat in the Long Tower, sharing how Sr Clare has been impacting her life since she first heard of her during a pilgrimage on Lough Derg, when she met one of the Sr Clare Committee members, Myra McLaughlin, who later sent her the book and film on the Servant Sister's life.

Recalling her experience while watching the 'All or Nothing' film, Andrea said: "I was half watching it at first, as I was doing things in the kitchen, but then I was struck by some things which made me want to sit down.

"This girl was very familiar to me as a child. It was hard to watch because it was almost like me. I was always mimicking, trying to make people laugh, and acting the maggot to try to get people's attention. I would never go unnoticed; it was just my nature. It does embarrass me a little now.

"I wanted to act and sing, like Sr Clare, in a big and dizzy way. Her drinking resonated with me too. Unlike me, Sr Clare walked away from all that she could have been and chose a life of poverty, chastity and obedience, and seeing that has strengthened my faith.

"She put herself in God's Hands. Naturally, she met with strong resistance about her choice from her mum, dad, sisters and friends, but God's draw is stronger. It must have taken profound courage and trust to do that."

She continued: "This is where she grew beyond me. I could see myself no more in her. She quietened. Her head was bowed with humility, like she was in communion with The Lord."

Andrea finished by reading a prayer of meaning to her, the 'Litany of Humility' by Rafael Cardinal Merry del Val y Zulueta,



Cora Sherlock, guest speaker, with Myra McLaughlin of the Sr Clare Committee.

who was the Secretary of State to Pope St Pius X, and she then sang a song that had been a great favourite of Sr Clare's - 'Come to Jesus'.

Cora Sherlock, a spokesperson for the Pro-Life Campaign in Ireland, shared how she had come to know about Sr Clare over a year ago, when her sister mentioned that a nun kept popping up on her Facebook page. Doing some research, her sister discovered that the nun was a Clare Crockett from Derry, who had an amazing experience that led her to join the Home of the Mother.

"Listening to my sister made me want to know more about her, and it was the same for the rest of my family," recalled Cora, saying: "During a visit to Knock, my father came to us with her book, 'Alone with Christ alone', which he had picked up in a shop. I read the book and watched the film, and then felt that we should visit Derry and her grave. Then we came to her 40th birthday Mass, where we met the Home of the Mother Sisters and Myra McLaughlin.

"The thing that struck me most about Sr Clare was how she was able to give up all for God. She held nothing back in the sure knowledge that He would make her happy. I really appreciate and admire her for that. I don't think I could do it."

She went on to share an experience a few years ago of putting everything that she could into organising a major fundraising event, only for all her best laid plans to begin falling apart. She found herself asking God why He was not making this worthwhile event into a success.

"I felt God telling me," added Cora, "that if He wanted it to happen, it would, and if He didn't, then it wouldn't. I couldn't get my head around it. It took me a long

time to understand that God is a far better architect for my life than I am.

"Sr Clare knew what she wanted to do and when things went bad, she was able to hand her life over to Him, whereas God has to wrangle things from me. When we are trying to achieve something in our own lives, we push and try to make it happen, but sometimes it can happen that we are pushing against what God has in store for us; something better.

"I don't doubt that Sr Clare is going to be a saint. I think she is going to be more than that; I think she is going to be a great saint. I couldn't believe some of her reflections about God in her book and her so young. I don't think anyone could read Sr Clare's writing and not realise that God was intervening in her life."

Sharing that her prayer life began to change when she started to visit Sr Clare's grave, Cora said: "I was in charge of my life; when I would pray and what I would pray for. It was all me, me, me. I feel that she was giving me a nudge to write some of those blank cheques to God that she did. She has had a profound effect on my life so far. Through my sister, I came to visit her grave and then I was brought here to speak at this retreat, having met Myra.

"Sr Clare was able to change her life and start this entirely new journey because she had such great faith in God. He kept His commitment to her, so she kept hers to Him. Life is about God; having a relationship with Him. My prayer is that we will be able to do what Sr Clare did and write God a blank cheque every morning, and let Him lead us."

Home of the Mother Servant Sister, Sr Elena introduced herself as one of the Sisters who had visited over 20 years ago and spoke at St Cecilia's and St Mary's colleges, saying: "Clare was at St Cecilia's at that time. She was just 17. I remember her in her uniform at a meeting after school with people who were going to come to the Holy Week Encounter, at which she had the experience of Jesus on the Cross. I later saw her process of becoming a Sister and how she was at the end of her life, as I was in Ecuador at that time."

Noting that the theme of the Retreat was 'Life in the Seven Sacraments', Sr Elena spoke

about how in love Sr Clare had been with the Eucharist from the beginning: "After the Holy Week Encounter in 2000, we invited her to come to a retreat in Rome. We were walking through the streets and when we came to a church where the Blessed Sacrament was exposed, we popped into say 'hello' to Jesus. Clare knelt in front of the Blessed Sacrament and I was struck by how she was in deep prayer. I could see that she was really in love with Jesus in the Eucharist. That was her great discovery.

"Love for Jesus was throughout her life, and we can see in the video how she tried to bring others, with her enthusiasm, to love Jesus in the Eucharist. She also loved the Sacrament of Confession, as she, herself, experienced the healing of that."

"Sr Clare let Jesus lead her," added Sr Elena, "and she became serene in her life. The legacy she has left is her love for Jesus. I think it is a great gift from God that He allowed her corpse to be brought here. She wants to bring the love of God and the peace that Jesus transmits to all of you here, and to all in Ireland.

"Many times she asked us to pray for her family, city and country. She loved you all. She offered many of her sufferings for you and for her country, that it would not lose its faith. You are the ones now that have to fall in love with Jesus and let yourselves be transformed by Him, by going to daily Mass and Confession, which is the Sacrament of Healing."

She went on to say: "Sr Clare is a gift but she is also a responsibility for you - to accept her legacy and transmit it to others, especially the youth. Young children and the youth were the favourites in Sr Clare's life and she would do anything for them.

"If you start going to frequent Confession and Eucharist you will change, and you will be able to transmit that love to your children and grandchildren to renew the faith here in Derry and Ireland...and the whole world. Let us thank God for everything that He has done in Sr Clare's life. I am sure that she is praying for all of you, now she is so close to God. We pray that the Church will also recognise her virtues and wonderful example for the world of today."



Andrea Corr with Myra McLaughlin and members of Sr Clare's family





# Life in the Seven Sacraments

THE seven Sacraments were the focus of the talks during the Sr Clare Retreat, with Fr Gerard Mongan, Adm Long Tower, starting off with Baptism, a sacrament that, as babies, we have no memory of receiving.

"We had no hand, act or part in it, but we were at the centre of it and its influence remains with us to this day," remarked Fr Gerard, adding: "Like Jesus standing in the Jordan at His Baptism, the heavens opened for us too and the spirit descended on us and a voice from Heaven said to us, 'You are my beloved son, my beloved daughter'."

"Because of it, we are here now in this church, sharing this special week of prayer. We are here because one day we were brought to the water's edge and were baptised, and others spoke for us but we continue to come because of our own convictions."

He pointed out that a read of Sr Clare's prayer notebook reveals how she was striving to live her baptism, "even though she went through a deep spiritual darkness, torn apart by doubts, confusion, sadness and feeling down with just going through the motions of prayer...yet feeling a great thirst for God."

Pondering what Clare's life means for those trying to live the call to holiness, he said: "Most of us are not called to a convent or monastery. We are called to holiness right where we're at, in the middle of the world, in our jobs, in our family life, in our ordinary day-to-day activities. We care called to daily conversions, to a daily dying to self, to live a life of love, maybe going out of our way to do something nice for a spouse or friend that we would rather not do, to put them first, offering the least enjoyable task of our day to the Lord as a prayer for someone who is sick, to control our temper and be patient with someone who is driving us crazy, to encourage or praise someone, maybe face our self-destructive habits.

"Like Clare, we reject sin and try to live in a state of grace, to keep God's commandments as best we can. Confession and prayer were a great help to Clare, and it can be for us – to have an undivided heart, it is all or nothing. When we truly understand our baptismal calling, how can we who died to sin still live in it? Like Clare, we would never want to go back to old ways that never really satisfied."

Encouraging his listeners to consider "what that moment of baptism means for us now...what hopes God had and has for us and the future He plans for us", Fr Gerard concluded: "When we think of that, we begin to understand what we mean to God...Feel the grace of God in you, the Spirit of God within you from your Baptism, the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the

dead! What power we have within us! And what powerful words God speaks to you, 'You are my beloved'."

Fr Joe Gormley, of Holy Family Parish, Ballymagroarty, spoke about the Sacrament of Confession, noting that it was "probably the least popular sacrament" and much misunderstood.

He remarked: "We fear that we will be humiliated if someone knows who we really are. There is blindness in that fear about what Confession is really about... Each of us is a unique gift from God, and who we become is our gift back to God. When we go to Confession, we realise that we are a gift to ourselves and to others, but somehow we have been blinded by trying to be someone we're not."

Stressing that sin matters, he said: "We can tell ourselves that it doesn't really matter. Everybody else is doing it. Get with the times. But, when you get with the times does it bring peace? No, because we search for God in places He cannot be found.

"Jesus calls us to be more than mediocre. Clare lived a life of mediocrity, but was she happy? She discovered that Christ was calling her to something greater. When she kissed the Cross that Good Friday, she realised what sin does."

Going on to speak about spiritual despair, Fr Joe said that a huge psychological problem for many was how God could forgive them for what they had done, and went on to point out: "There is no sin that Christ can't forgive. We have just celebrated Divine Mercy Sunday. The greatest sinner has a right to God's Mercy."

He added: "When we rely more and more on Confession, we change to become who God wants us to be. Christ says, 'Come to me with your sins'. That is why He died. We can never understand what God's Mercy can do within us. When it comes to the Sacrament of Mercy, our sins are like a drop in the ocean of God's love for us. Please, if you confess a sin, you are forgiven. Don't torture yourself. Jesus not only forgives us, He forgets."

Fr Joe then asked for prayer for himself and his fellow priests, that they be gentle shepherds.

## Eucharist

On night three, Fr John Joe Duffy, of Creeslough, Co Donegal, spoke on the Eucharist and led a Eucharistic Healing Service. Recalling the tragedy that struck the Creeslough community on Friday, October 7, 2022, he said: "One of the things that sustained us was prayer at that time. I received messages from [Fr] Stephen [Quinn] and my old Maynooth classmate, [Fr Gerard Mongan], assuring me of your prayers.

"That Friday, there was Eucharistic Adoration in our Church and people were there praying when the explosion occurred. I am sure those prayers carried people through the days that followed.

"We gathered as a community each night in the Church and prayed. Who better to bring us into the presence of Jesus, but Mary, the original Tabernacle. We unite ourselves with Mary in prayer, She brings us into the presence of Jesus."

Recalling hearing, when he was a young boy, two prominent public figures talking about Derry, which was suffering much tragedy at the time, and saying that it was like a city that's soul had been diminished, Fr John Joe remarked: "I disagree with them. This City's soul was never diminished. This City has seen much loss and it is your prayers and the Eucharist that has sustained you. Jesus kept the heart of this wonderful place strong."

He added: "In my times of difficulty, I have come to this Church to pray and I have gone to the grave of Sr Clare Crockett, for whom the Eucharist was very important...Each of us has a mission, like Sr Clare and Sr Ruth O'Callaghan, to bring the message about Christ's love in the Eucharist out to others who do not know Jesus' love for them in the Eucharist.

"Jesus' love for us is immense and emanates from the Eucharist. His love can't be contained. He wants us to take His love to our families, to our workplaces and into our everyday lives...Maybe we as priests and you as laity need to spend more time with Jesus."

He went on to say: "Since our tragedy in Creeslough, the number of people who come into the Church to spend time with Jesus every day is notable. I encourage you to come, even for five minutes, every day to spend time with Jesus in the Tabernacle. It is with Jesus in the Eucharist that you are closest to Heaven. In the Mass, Heaven and Earth are one. I encourage you to be a Eucharistic people."

Noting that Eucharistic Adoration had been very well attended in the late 80s and 90s but then waned, Fr John Joe said: "Eucharistic Adoration is important for the renewal of priesthood and renewal of the Church."

He then shared that when he experiences difficulties in life, he goes before Jesus in the Eucharist and receives a great sense of peace and contentment.

"The gaze of Jesus' love is jumping out at us from the Tabernacle and Monstrance during Eucharistic Adoration, and in the Eucharist at Mass," said Fr John Joe, adding: "I pray that we all be bathed in His love

this evening. Thanks to God for giving us the Eucharist and remaining with us through the Eucharist."

The Sacrament of the Sick was offered on the fourth night, following a talk by Fr Colum Clerkin, in which he recalled an analysis of the four Gospels by a scripture scholar finding that Christ's number one priority was healing.

Pointing out that Christ's healing miracles were, by no means, isolated events, he said that their whole purpose was that people would believe and have faith in Jesus Christ.

Fr Colum said it was also clear from the miracles recorded in the four Gospels, that Christ's healing was more than just physical, with people who suffered mental torture healed and their lives restored by Christ's healing touch.

He went on to note that many of those healed became Jesus' disciples and that this ministry of healing did not end when Christ's public ministry over, with the Apostles going on to exercise the power that Jesus had given them to heal the sick in His name. He then highlighted that Christ's healing ministry continues in the Church, through the Sacrament of the Sick and the Eucharist.

"In the Eucharist, Christ is truly present through the power of the Holy Spirit under the signs of bread and wine. And that real presence continues in the Blessed Sacrament," explained Fr Colum.

Saying that we associate cures with places like Lourdes, he went on to highlight the most recent of the 70 miraculous healings approved by the Lourdes medical bureau and recognised: "In 2008, a 79-year-old French nun in a wheelchair, with total paralysis, was completely and instantaneously healed after the blessing with the Blessed Sacrament in the monstrance during the Eucharistic Procession. She was able to leave her wheelchair. She was cured of her paralysis and has walked unaided since. After tests that lasted eight years, her cure was accepted as miraculous and is now the 70th accepted miracle of Lourdes."

Fr Colum also referred to the cure of Marion Carroll of MS at Knock Shrine, in Co Mayo, 30 years ago, saying: "Like those who were healed by Christ in the Gospels, Marion literally got up and walked, with her health completely restored."

He then explained that in the Sacrament of the Sick, the Risen Lord is present, "acting through the ministry of the priest, and all anointed are touched with the healing touch of Christ through the laying on of hands."

As hospital chaplain, Fr Colum said that he has had many experiences of the Sacrament of the Sick being given: "The



Fr Gerard Mongan, Adm Long Tower.



Fr Joe Gormley, Holy Family, Ballymagroarty.



Fr John Joe Duffy, Creeslough, Co Donegal.



Fr Philip Kemmy, PP Killea & Newtowncunningham, Fr Gerard Mongan, Adm Long Tower, and Fr Stephen Quinn ocd.



Fr Colum Clerkin, second from right, with Fr Cajetan Apeh ocd, Fr Gerard Mongan, Adm Long Tower, and Fr P.





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sacrament brings inner healing and in some cases physical recovery. I have seen doctors amazed at the power of the Sacrament of the Sick on their patients."

"For all anointed with the Oil of the Sick," he concluded, "there will certainly be a deep inner healing."

#### Vocation

Fr Philip Kemmy, PP Killea & Newtowncunningham, spoke about the vocational sacraments, saying: "We are all called to commit our life to some grand project of God; what we call our vocation. By modelling our lives on the mystery of the Lord's Cross, we priests are to live out our vocation. But this is not just for the priesthood. All Christians are going to be formed and conformed in the Lord. The reality is that the majority of us are called to the vocation of marriage, and in that vocation too, the cross will plant itself."

Asking those married when was the last time they had told their spouse that they loved them, that they were really grateful to God for bringing them together, and that they were grateful to them for putting up with them for better or for worse, Fr Philip said: "You can't leave these things unsaid. Say it like you mean it. And it just can't be words. Love is proved by deeds, which are little signs that you do not take each other for granted."

He added: "Vocation is a call to love and love will cost us, but it will be a price that we will be willing to pay...Marriage is hard but the grace of God makes possible what we find impossible."

"The Cross," he said, "is a symbol of love for us Christians. In her book, we read that Sr Clare had a great hunger and thirst for the Cross. The saints know that this is the way...The sacraments of Marriage and Holy Orders are particularly hard, but God provides the way through and the way forward."

A talk on Confirmation was given by Fr Stephen Quinn ocd, Prior of the Carmelite Retreat Centre, Termonbacca, where the monthly Sr Clare Masses are celebrated.

Fr Stephen explained that when the Holy Chrism is put upon us, confirming us in the Spirit, it is another act of Pentecost: "It is that moment when the Tongue of Fire comes down upon that house and

sends them forth. Under the Holy Spirit's influence, the disciples were able to step out of the Upper Room to go and proclaim Jesus as Lord to the ends of the Earth.

"The miracle of Pentecost was not the balls of fire or the power that filled that room, but the change that came over those men and women. You will never see the Spirit of God in great winds etc, but you will find Him in an encounter with yourself. The Gospel tells that the chief place to find that Spirit is to sit behind the closed door of our room and wait for Him in silence."

He added: "The Holy Spirit is the chief agent in our relationship with the Father and the Son. He attracts us to them and He can only do that in prayer."

Saying that everyone is invited to prayer, not just Religious, Fr Stephen remarked: "We all have our own way of praying. My fondest memory of home is of us having a chapter from a novel and then prayers. We were taught to kneel down at our bed, join our hands and close our eyes and pray."

"I left prayer at that bedside. I went to Mass every Sunday and to Devotions. I practised my Faith as a young fella, but it never entered my head what it is to pray. When I look back now, as a monk, I see that I never took prayer seriously until I was forced to. In the seminary, we had to sit for an hour in prayer. We had to learn to do something with that hour. It began with reciting the Rosary and reading Scripture, but to get anything out of it, we had to enter into it."

"The Doctors of the Church encountered something in prayer," he noted, "they experienced what it was to love. My parents were right in that posture is important in order to pray properly; to have our backs straight, to close our eyes from any distractions, and to be still. Only in being still will we be able to enter into the stillness of our own hearts. In closing our eyes, we have to give over control to somebody else. We put our hand in the hand of the Holy Spirit and trust Him to take us to the proper destination."

Pointing out the prayer has to be more than words, he said: "We need to rejoice in the meaning of what we are saying to the Person we are speaking to, to move us to tell our feelings and our emotions, to go into a silence where we silently adore God, Who is in that room with us."



## The power of the Eucharist and Rosary can change hearts - Martina Davidson

"I want to do better. I want to be better. I want to change." This was the thought that came into the mind of St Cecilia's College RE teacher, Martina Davidson when she first saw Sr Clare in her school assembly hall.

Holding the former St Cecilia's pupil up as "a perfect example of what the glory of God can do in a human soul", Martina, who has been working in the school for 18 years, explained that Sr Clare had been incorporated into their Year 9 scheme of works "to teach the girls about her beauty, goodness and faithfulness."

Saying that her own conviction and belief in God's existence stems from "the change in a person when they have an encounter with our Lord Jesus", Martina went on to share an experience she had at a Parish Retreat she attended a few years ago, when she found it a struggle to go to the 6 am Mass towards the end of the week and planned to take the next morning off, until she had, what she called, "a heart thought".

She said: "This is what Jesus spoke to my heart that day, 'But I am changing you'. How could He change me if I wasn't around Him?"

"As Catholics we are the most blessed people on earth because we have the Blessed Sacrament," added Martina, "We have the body, blood, soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. When we look at the Eucharistic miracles, we see that the bread and wine change to actual human tissue and human blood. When this tissue is tested, we find it to be the heart muscle, the part of the heart that causes the heart to beat that gives a person life."

Believing that, in the Eucharist, Jesus is "changing our heart so that we will think, speak and love with the heart of Jesus", Martina remarked: "We will have Jesus' heart and this is why Mass and time spent with the Eucharist is so important, 'we will change, we will have a new heart'."

"Sister Clare knew this," she noted, "This is why she brought the little children to Jesus in the Eucharist. We, today, need to follow her example and tell young people there is nothing on this earth more important

than receiving the Eucharist; not homework, not hobbies, not eating or sleeping. We have to get young people to see this is why we go to Mass, not because we have to go out of duty, but because Jesus comes down from Heaven to give us His heart, so that our hearts can be like His heart and we can be changed."

Going on to speak about the importance of the Rosary, Martina mentioned that her favourite picture of Sr Clare is the one of her holding her Rosary beads.

She explained: "Her devotion to the Rosary and her need to tell others about the power of the daily Rosary really resonates with me because, in St Cecilia's, we also have a devotion to the Rosary. Many of the staff say the Rosary daily, and every morning, at 8.20 am, we say the Rosary and have Adoration in our Chapel, praying for the school, staff, pupils and our families."

"We ask Mary to be a mother to us and welcome Jesus' spirit down every corridor, into every classroom and into every heart and mind in our school, to be enlightened. I believe it is why St Cecilia's is no normal school. People talk about the peace in our school. People feel it in the air and among the staff and pupils. This peace is the presence of God, the peace of Christ and the power of the Rosary at work in St Cecilia's College."

Referring to Venerable Fr Patrick Peyton's quote, "the family that prays together stays together", Martina remarked: "I believe that can be used in St Cecilia's College, as we gather to pray in our Chapel every morning and our assemblies; 'the school that prays together stays together'."

Martina went on to share how the Rosary, dreaded in her childhood, became her favourite prayer, when she thought about Our Lady's repeated message in her Apparitions to pray the Rosary being like a loving parent repeating themselves because they really want their children to listen

#### Listen

Like a loving Mother, said Martina, Mary "feels the need to

repeat this message because she really wants us to listen. She loves us, she wants to help us, protect us from evil, guide us to Jesus and for us, her children, to be all that God created us to be."

She continued: "The Rosary is the power of a loving mother in her child's life and many of us have been fortunate to know what the power of a loving, earthly mother can do in the life of a child. How much more can the power of our heavenly Mother do for her child."

"If we look at the saints, we know there is something about the Rosary. Padre Pio, a Derry favourite, said 34 rosaries a day. When he was asked how he got time, he said, well there is always night time. He called the Rosary beads his weapon; his weapon against evil. St Pope John Paul II's favourite prayer was the Rosary too."

She went on to quote what Oliver Cromwell, during the Penal times in Ireland, wrote to his superiors in England on failing to get the Irish to give up their Catholic faith: "All is not well with Ireland yet. You gave us the money, you gave us the guns. But let me tell you that every house in Ireland is a house of prayer, and when I bring these fanatical Irish before the muzzles of my guns, they hold up in their hands a string of beads, and they never surrender."

"It was the power of the Rosary that kept Ireland Catholic in spite of centuries of persecution", added Martina, "By the power of the Rosary, our Catholic faith was the one thing we held on to even when they stripped us of everything else."

Saying that praying the Rosary daily had been "a game changer" in her life, bringing her more peace, more joy, more contentment, more awareness of her sin, and helping her feel God's love and presence, she continued: "Jesus, through my heavenly Mother, has helped my relationships, my home life, my work and even my relationship with myself...I have seen many graces and blessings since I have started to say the Rosary every day. Now, even when I hold my Rosary beads, which is something I like to do, I feel peace. It is the

same feeling a small child has when it holds its mother's hand. As Sister Clare said it is the reassurance that 'Our Lady has everything under control'."

Warning anyone thinking of starting to pray the Rosary daily that there will be obstacles to overcome, such as feeling too tired, too busy etc, which will tempt them to give it up, Martina urged: "Give it a month, a few weeks. Commit to it no matter what. Make the time. It takes between 15 and 20 minutes. And like any new habit you have to make a decision and you have to commit to it. No matter what, say it and you will have what I call a breakthrough. The image I get is Mary in Revelation crushing the snake's head."

"I promise you, if you continue to say it, the Rosary will become your favourite prayer. You will turn to it with every worry and every concern. It is turning to your mother and saying to her, go to Jesus for me, and Jesus was the perfect son, we know from scripture He was obedient and He never could say no to His mother."

"St Pio knew there was something about the Rosary. St John Paul knew there was something about the Rosary. Sr Clare knew there was something about the Rosary. Even Oliver Cromwell knew there was something about the Rosary."

Martina ended by saying: "Jesus loves us just the way we are but he loves us too much to leave us there. He wants to give us a new heart and a new spirit. He will be changing you through the intercession of Sr Clare throughout this retreat. He is changing you through the intercession of our Mother Mary in the Rosary. He is changing your heart every time you go to Mass, Adoration or Confession. Jesus changed the people in the Gospel, He changed the saints, He changed Sister Clare. He is changing me and He is changing you."

"As Sister Clare said, 'when this change occurs all the masks will fall away and God will show you who He is and who you are created to be and you will be changed'."





## Servant Sisters share their vocation stories...

ALONG with coverage of the very successful Sr Clare Retreat in St Columba's Church, Long Tower, 'The Net' continues with the vocation stories of the Servant Sisters of the Home of the Mother Order who have set up community within the Derry Diocese, and are now residing in Crossroads, Killygordon, in Co Donegal. This month, Sr Ruby shares the story of her faith journey, which led her to discern that she had a religious vocation with the Home of the Mother Servant Sisters.

## Jesus Youth Movement led me to ask God about His plan for my life - Sr Ruby



DRAWN back to practising her Catholic faith after experiencing a great joy that she didn't ever want to lose during Confession as an 18-year-old, Sr Ruby Molayal shares how personal time with God during Eucharistic Adoration and the good example of a youth faith group then helped her to discern that God was calling her to a religious vocation with the Servant Sisters, who have true joy as one of their charisms.

Born in Chicago, Illinois, the 32-year-old recalled growing up with her Catholic faith not meaning much to her on a personal level.

"My mum is Catholic and my dad, who passed away when I was 18 years old, was Orthodox. My mum practised her faith and my dad didn't," said Sr Ruby, adding: "The Catholic faith was taught to me and my older sister by my mother and my maternal grandmother, who both prayed the Rosary in the evenings. I was baptised, went to Mass on Sundays, but that was just because it was tradition. It was just something I had to do on a Sunday."

Pointing out that she had never doubted the existence of God, she said: "As a child, I used to pray a lot and talk to God. However, because of the environment I was in, with my friends not really practising their faith either, that started to subside, and by the time I was 15 I had stopped going to Mass altogether because I didn't understand the reasons for it, and I stopped going to Confession and Sunday School for catechism as well."

"By God's grace," continued Sr Ruby, "when I was 18, right before I started university, I came back to the faith through the gift of Confession at a retreat in my parish. I had skipped four of the five days of the retreat, using all kinds of excuses, and on the day I had to go because I had no excuse, that was the day they had Confession."

"I didn't have to go to Confession but I was there with my cousins,

who were younger, and they said that they would go if I did, so I thought I had to be a good example to them and said, let's go. We were in the youth section of the retreat. There were lines for Confession and my cousins were sent to one line and I was sent to another. I felt this was perfect. With my cousins no longer with me, I didn't have to go to Confession, so I decided to leave. But God being merciful had me remain in the line. I felt that I could only move forward. I wanted to run away but something kept me in that line. I kept moving up the line as people confessed and left. I was having this back and forth in my own heart. It was a huge interior struggle. All of a sudden, the door of the Confessional opened and it was my turn. I hadn't done an examination of conscience...I hadn't prepared myself for it!

"I sat in front of the priest and started saying my sins of the last three years...not going to Mass or Confession and all that that produced in my life. I was doing my examination of conscience during the Confession and that is when I felt true sorrow for my sins. God gave me the grace to experience the weight of my sins. I had felt up to this that I was happy, but when I felt the weight of my sins I realised that I wasn't."

"As the priest spoke to me and gave me absolution, I started to feel the weight being lifted off me. I experienced an immense joy; a joy that I hadn't experienced in a very long time. Up to then, I was looking at material things, money, gadgets, jewellery etc. I kept wanting more and more because nothing was satisfying me, and I realised in that moment that God was the only One who could satisfy me."

She added: "After Confession, I felt that I never wanted to lose this joy again. I wanted to get my life back on track. I didn't really know how to do that, but I decided that day to not miss another Sunday Mass and God brought order into my life and the influence of good people. That is when my mum introduced me to Adoration. I started going on my own and could spend hours and hours in the quiet, speaking with the Lord."

"At first, it was hard, but I then became drawn to it. One day, after a lot of time attending Sunday Masses and frequent Adoration, I realised that I needed something more. So, I started praying for a community of other young Catholics; people who would help

me live my faith. After praying for this in the Adoration chapel, I met a family friend on leaving who asked me to help at the Vacation Bible School - a Catholic summer camp for kids.

"I had no interest in helping at a kids' summer camp but, because that particular person had asked me, I couldn't bring myself to say 'no'. I said to her, let me get back to you, hoping that she would forget, but she didn't. She followed up a couple of weeks later and, because I had given up my past ways of using an excuse, I decided to say that I would help."

Remarking that the Lord uses everything, Sr Ruby went on to recall how through helping out at that summer camp she met many young people that were part of a movement in the Catholic Church called 'Jesus Youth'.

### Jesus Youth

"These young people in 'Jesus Youth' were so different from all the other young people I had met," she remarked, "they were joyful and practised their faith and there was just something different about them. I realised that my prayer about meeting other young Catholics was answered. I started a friendship with these young people and later became part of that movement."

"It was being part of 'Jesus Youth' that helped me to really feel live and grow in my Catholic faith. It was through them that I started to go to daily Mass, frequent Confession, and pray the Rosary. We would get together for weekly prayer meetings and look for opportunities to serve through the summer camps and different activities for kids."

"By the time I was 20, I was still part of that movement. There were a lot of girls my age and older talking about discernment and discerning their vocation. It was through them, and the movement in general, that I learnt about asking God regarding His plan for my life; that this was normal to ask God what He wants of you."

"Even without discerning, I was certain that my vocation was to married life," said Sr Ruby, "but with everyone around me being open to the will of God, I realised I should also be open to the will of God and ask Him what He wanted of me."

Sometime after this, she heard a talk by a member of the Jesus Youth Movement on the universal call to holiness, which was based on the Catechism of the Catholic

Church, and something clicked for her.

"I realised that my vocation was my key to holiness, to being a saint," recalled Sr Ruby, adding: "I learned that we were all called to be holy. So the next month, while in my Adoration Chapel, I was praying and telling God my plan for my life: what university I wanted to transfer to, the job I wanted, where I wanted to buy my house and the car I wanted."

"I then became aware of the need for a time of silence to give God a chance to respond. I was expecting Him to approve all that I had said, but He asked me a question, 'What about consecrated life?' It was so clear. I looked at Him in the Eucharist and said, 'What about it?'"

"That day, my holy hour ended very abruptly and I took off running. Between February and December of that year, I fought against my vocation. It was a constant struggle between 'yes' and 'no'. The Lord made it very clear that He wanted me for consecrated life but I really wanted to get married and have a family, so it was hard for me to let go of that."

During this period, she spent three months in Haiti, on a mission trip with the Jesus Youth Movement.

Finding it a very beneficial experience, Sr Ruby said: "We helped with local parishes and youth groups, and did whatever good that we could for the people and community. What I most remember from my time there is the feeling of walking hand-in-hand with the Lord. I heard Him so clearly. I had these conversations with Him that I would have with a person. I would say the reasons why I couldn't go for consecrated life, but every doubt or question that I had, He always had the solution. For me, it was three months of falling in love with Jesus Christ."

"In December, before I left to go back home, I knew that I had to make a decision. The Lord had given me many signs over the past year and especially in the three months, but I was like a 'Doubting Thomas'. So, I asked for one last sign to be extra sure. The Lord responded to me but in a way I hadn't expected. He said the decision is yours. I felt so bad and said, 'Yes, yes, Lord!' My answer was 'yes' to consecrated life."

For the next three years, she visited about seven different religious communities all over

the world, looking at the different charisms and the different rites in the Catholic Church.

She recalled: "Through my spiritual director and the Jesus Youth Movement, I met the Servant Sisters of the Home of the Mother after three years of discernment about which Sisters for three days, it was so clear to me that this was where God wanted me. What I couldn't find in the other places, I found in it."

"I had visited the Sisters in Jacksonville, Florida, for two weeks but after the third day I already knew. That was October 2014. In mid-December, I flew over to Spain, where our founder and Mother General are, and I got to know to the large community of Servant Sisters. Then, on January 10, 2015, on our founder's birthday, I entered the community

as a postulant and started to learn the ways of religious life. I took my first vows in 2018, and from then on it has been a time of ongoing formation and discernment."

Coming directly to Ireland on leaving the novitiate, Sr Ruby was in Roscommon for three years and then Tipperary for one year, in the Waterford & Lismore Diocese, before moving to the Derry Diocese as a member of the new community established there, in Crossroads, Killygordon.

During her time in Ireland, Sr Ruby has found that it is "definitely missionary territory", remarking: "People are genuinely looking to grow in their faith."

Offering another special observation, she said: "Over the last four years, it has been very evident to me that Our Lord and Our Blessed Mother have a very big love for Ireland!"

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Pentecost Holy Hour and Vigil Saturday, May 27 at 7:30pm St. Patrick's Catholic Church, Crossroads, Killygordon

Corpus Christ Holy Hour and Vigil Saturday, June 10 at 7:30pm St. Patrick's Catholic Church, Crossroads, Killygordon

**Family Encounters** (EMAIL TO REGISTER)

Knock Shrine Monday, May 1 (Bank Holiday)

Sunday, May 28 St. Patrick's Catholic Church & Parochial House, Crossroads, Killygordon Co. Donegal.

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Saturday, June 24 from 1pm - 5:30pm Parochial House, Crossroads, Killygordon or the CAKE centre

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# Inter-Diocesan Vocations weekend very positive experience

by Fr Pat O'Hagan, Diocesan Vocations' Director

THE Drumalis Retreat Centre at Larne was the venue for an inter-diocesan Vocations weekend from April 21-23. A group of 20 men, ranging in age from 18-55, from the dioceses of Down & Connor, Dromore, Armagh, Clogher, Raphoe, and Derry, gathered to hear a series of talks from Fr Stephen Langridge, a priest of the Archdiocese of Southark, England, who is currently serving as a parish priest in the Wimbledon area, and who for many years was Vocations' Director for England and Wales.

A number of Vocations' Directors and some other priests from the northern dioceses were also there over the course of the weekend. Bishop Donal McKeown was there on the Friday evening and Saturday morning, and Bishop Alan McGuckian, SJ, Bishop of Raphoe, came along on the Saturday afternoon. Bishop Michael Campbell, the retired Bishop of Lancaster, and a native of Larne, called in to the Centre

on the Sunday morning, and joined the group for the final talk. Before he left, he prayed with the group, wished everyone well, and gave us his blessing.

Fr Stephen's introductory talk was about saying "Yes" to Jesus, listening to His call to serve the Church as a priest, whether in a diocese or in a religious congregation. Some people, he said, are perpetually discerning their vocation, but there comes the time when one must bring the discernment process to the next stage, whether that's moving on to a different choice, or entering the seminary and beginning the formal preparation for priesthood.

After each of the talks and presentations, there was time for 'round table' group discussion and a Question & Answer session. These proved to be very lively, once everybody got to know each other and felt more comfortable about asking questions and discussing various aspects of

vocation and discernment.

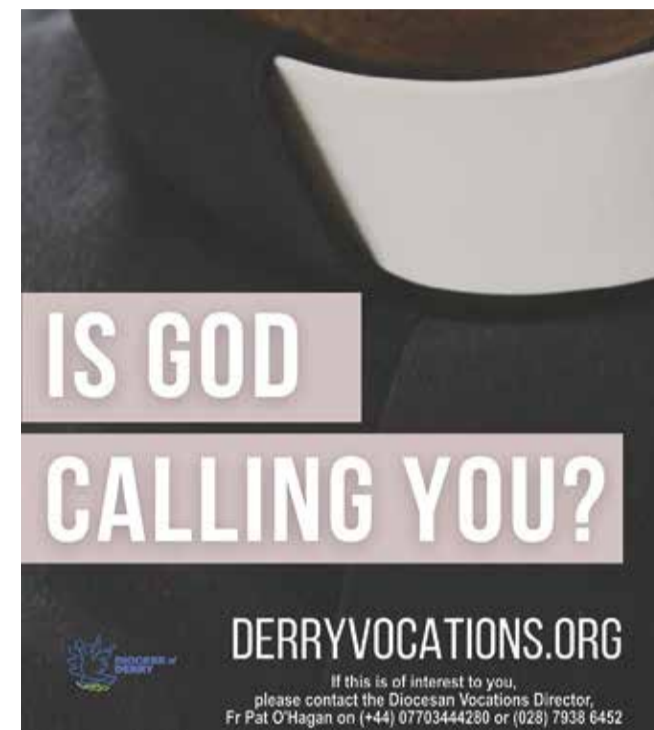
On the Saturday morning, after Mass, there was an opportunity for the group to put some questions to the Vocations' Directors who were there at that time. The questions were mostly about the process around applying to the diocese for acceptance to a seminary: how long should a man be in touch with the Vocations' Director beforehand; how long does training take; what kind of qualifications are needed; how much does it cost? All very practical questions.

Following on from a question about on-going discussions with Vocations' Directors, the group learned that the Vocations' Director will always have an interest in men who are in seminary formation, but that there's a difference between Vocations' Directors and Directors of Formation, and the people who work in the seminary and whose role it is to prepare seminarians for priestly ministry.

That session also touched on the need for anyone discerning a Vocation to have a Spiritual Director, someone with whom they can discuss their prayer life and their on-going discernment.

Fr Stephen also talked about Our Lady as Mother of the Church and Mother of Priests, emphasising her "Yes" to God when she was asked to be the mother of the Saviour. In another session, he emphasised the need for prayer, saying that "...the candidate who doesn't pray becomes the seminarian who doesn't pray who becomes the priest who doesn't pray." His closing talk on the Sunday was about the Mass.

The feedback from the group has been very positive, and everyone was very grateful to Fr Conor McGrath, Vocations' Director for the diocese of Down & Connor, who organised the weekend. It was generally agreed that opening the weekend to people from the dioceses of the Northern Province was an excellent idea.



## 'Take the Risk for Christ' by Fr Pat O'Hagan

...A Year of Prayer for Vocations to Diocesan Priesthood

FOLLOWING on from the Year of Prayer for Vocations, which we celebrated in the Diocese of Derry from March 17, 2022 - March 17, 2023, the Bishops' Council for Vocations has launched a national Year of Prayer entitled 'Take the Risk for Christ'.

Archbishop Rino Fisichella, Pro-Prefect of the Vatican Dicastery for Evangelisation, was the keynote speaker at a Conference in Maynooth on Tuesday, April 25, attended by over 100 people committed to vocations to the diocesan priesthood. The audience was made up of seminarians, religious, parents, clergy, and other members of the lay faithful.

The theme of the Conference was 'Evangelisation and Vocation', and Archbishop Fisichella spoke about 'Priesthood in a Synodal Church'.

He said: "The encounter with Christ must be personal; the Master's eyes must be on mine, and only then does the encounter become a vocation. A good priest is always a miracle of grace... Let us not forget the sacramental grace of the priestly office. It helps one to break out of oneself... Let us pray for priests."

He went on to say that the Good News proclaimed by Jesus is about the nearness of God, that God is in our midst. We should never, he said, overlook the significance of the word 'news'; the mission of the Church is to proclaim the Good News. Without this, there is no

Church. "We will always have to be radical about this," he said.

Archbishop Fisichella spoke also about the challenges of Evangelisation, living and preaching the gospel, in a digital age. The gospel must reach everyone as we strive to help the world to discover the value of the truth of our faith.

Encountering Jesus is paramount to the life of all Christians and, especially, to those called to serve the Church as priests. St Peter answered the call of Jesus because he met Him, he heard Him as a real, living person, who spoke to him. When he allows Jesus to advise him and help him, he succeeds in what he wants to do.

Vocation is a project. God calls us by His grace and sets us apart. Archbishop Fisichella recommended George Bernanos' 'Diary of a Country Priest', where the priest at the centre of the novel is the icon of every priest and whose final words are, "Everything is grace." A good priest, he said, quoting von Balthasar, "is a miracle of grace and faith."

Talking of his own vocation story, and how his mother reacted to his desire to be a priest (she would have thought that another one of her sons would have been better suited), he said that it's important to remember that it's God who chooses men to answer His call to service in the priesthood, and God does so

through parents, family and the wider community.

Evangelisation is the primary mission of the Church, helping God's people to rediscover the Body of Christ, and the giftedness of God's people. We shouldn't water down the faith. Young people especially, who are hungry for Christ, are looking for faith and leadership within the Church, and will respond to a challenge.

Whilst everyone is called to holiness, priests are vital to the Church. Those considering a vocation to the priesthood need good discernment, and the accompaniment of a good Spiritual Director.



### Pope's monthly intention

The Holy Father has asked for prayer during May for:

**Church Movements and Groups:**  
We pray that Church

Reminding us that we are still in a time of preparation for the Synod in October of this year, Archbishop Fisichella, recalling something Pope Francis had said to him, invited us to see 'Synod' (walking together) as a verb, not an adjective. It's something that we should be doing, and we do it best when we walk together, when we accompany one another along the way. In this, we will all be evangelisers, as every baptised person should be.

There were also presentations by a seminarian, the mother of a priest, a seminary vice-rector, a parent, and by Bishop McKeown,

**movements and groups may rediscover their mission of evangelisation each day, placing their own charisms at the services of needs in the world.**

### Prayer for Priests

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

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

Give them the grace they need to respond generously to you, and the courage to proclaim your Word of justice, love and truth.

Bless, in a special way, Your servant

who talked about priesthood in the context of the six counties, about how priests have been to the forefront of their communities during the darkest days of the Troubles and at many other times.

A former Anglican bishop, who is now a Catholic priest, spoke about the differences between Anglicanism and Catholicism, and encouraged fidelity to the teachings of the Church, echoing the Archbishop's call not to water down the truths of our faith and Church teaching.

In a very entertaining address, Fr Brendan Kilcoyne talked about prayer and the Mass as being at the centre of the priest's mission. He asked who among the audience, if any, prayed for the thugs, drug pushers, rapists, child molesters, and gangsters of today's world.

He asked also if any priest would be willing to get into trouble for their parishioners. He quoted the novelist, Hilary Mantel, who once said that "Catholicism is not a religion for respectable people." We should act, he said, only for God's love and God's approval.

He also quoted a priest who once said to his congregation, "The worst thing about being a parent is that I worry about you all." As a father to his people, the priest must be steady, constant, and reassuring. He must carry his people in his prayer and in his presence to them.

He concluded by reiterating the centrality of prayer in the life of the priest, encouraging priests to listen to Jesus, just as Peter did in the gospel story of the miraculous catch of fish.

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

### Remember in prayer during May:

- All Priests (1st May)
- All Priests (2nd)
- Fr Michael Porter (3rd)
- Fr Roni Zacharias (4th)
- Fr Ignacy Saniuta (5th)
- All Priests (6th)
- Fr Gerard Sweeney (7th)
- Fr Joshy Parokkaran (8th)
- Fr John Walsh (9th)
- Fr Alex Anderson (10th)
- Fr Patrick Arkinson (11th)

- Fr Patrick Baker (12th)
- Fr Declan Boland (13th)
- Fr Eugene Boland (14th)
- Fr Francis Bradley (15th)
- Fr Manus Bradley (16th)
- All Priests (17th)
- Fr Brian Brady (18th)
- All Priests (19th)
- Fr Thomas Canning (20th)
- Fr Michael Canny (21st)
- All Priests (22nd)
- All Priests (23rd)
- All Priests (24th)
- Fr Colum Clerkin (25th)
- Fr Roland Colhoun (26th)
- Fr Michael Collins (27th)
- Fr Oliver Crilly (28th)
- Fr Patrick Crilly (29th)
- Fr Brendan Crowley (30th)
- All Priests (31st)



# The Mission of Pere Jacques of Jesus – Part 2 *by Fr Stephen Quinn ocd*

HANS Urs Von Balthasar, the celebrated Swiss theologian, argued that the word ‘mission’ takes a central place in spirituality. So many times, when we are working and thinking with that word, we are working and thinking in an exterior sense; of going from one place to another, sharing the words of God and the holy name of Jesus. Von Balthasar saw ‘mission’ as something more defining than that. Von Balthasar had seen that Christian spirituality had been dominated from its early history with a certain notion of the human heart having a restless desire for God, to get at the object of that restless desire a person had to gaze into their own restless heart. In that gazing and desiring, the person came to meet the singular and overwhelming heart of the Divine. Von Balthasar believed that you could work out another idea of spirituality based solely on Jesus Christ’s existence. In that existence, Von Balthasar believed that mission played a key role.

To understand Christ’s own mission, Von Balthasar explores the Scriptures and discovers an answer in St Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians. In the hymn that Paul records there, the Apostle speaks of two choices being central to the Christian Gospel. The first choice is that of the Father, who freely chooses to share with corrupt and sinful humanity His most precious treasure, His own dear Son. Then, there is a second choice, that of the Son, who in obedience to His Father’s will and to please Him, chooses to give Himself over to these poor creatures.

The Epistle to the Hebrews has the Son say to His Father, “Here I am Lord, I have come to do your will,” so that means that every word of Jesus, every action of His, every miracle He works, every event of His life, was a choosing to give Himself ever more, culminating in the passion, cross, death, descent into hell and resurrection. An ever-increasing statement in human nature and human terms of the love He lives in blessed eternity with the Father.

Christ’s life amounts to one definitive choice and that choice challenges those who recognise it; they have their own choice to make. Christ’s choice becomes the archetype of many choices made by saints in their own turn. Spirituality is for Von Balthasar an entry by ordinary human persons into the “ever-greater love of Christ” demonstrated in His mission. The word and the will of the Father is spoken through the Holy Spirit to the saint, that word is his/her mission, and as he/she gives him/herself over to that mission in praise, reverence, and service, there is a fusion of existence between Christ and the saint.

In last month’s article, we

explored the initial Words that were spoken to Lucien-Louis Bunel, the Words spoken through his parents and family, through time in the seminary, and even in the fragility of his character. We are going to emphasise that the mission that the Lord spoke to Lucien did not pause or falter with ordination. The mission only metamorphoses and grows with the person’s awareness. In the run up to ordination, in the various pastoral placements to which Lucien was sent, he was consistently asked to take on the task of teaching children.

In the time between his ordination and his first placement by the bishop, Lucien was sent to a parish in La Havre. In the parish, he devoted himself to the education and evangelisation of the children of the working class of the parish, taking his lead from Fr Ternon. He set up youth groups, youth activities, and clubs. For the children who attended these various groupings, Lucien did not seek to fill their heads with just book learning. Instead of many verbal words, he preferred to make his dedicated, devout, and gentle example to do his talking for him. His example spoke so loudly that even the ‘tough guys’ were convinced by him, and the memory of Lucien long outlived his placement in the parish.

## Unorthodox

Given all the academic achievements of his time in the seminary, it is not at all surprising that the Archbishop chose to send Lucien into one of the diocesan colleges. He was placed in St Joseph’s College, in La Havre. In that stuffy institution, he became a thoroughly unorthodox teacher. The pupils in the college were used to grey classrooms, with the school masters standing at a podium at the top of the class. Lecturing from notes, Fr Bunel’s class was utterly different. His unorthodox style hit the school like an earthquake. His unorthodoxy found various forms of expression.

First, he covered his classroom in brightly coloured paper and posters, attempting to make the room a more appealing environment for learning. Secondly, once class began and for the whole of class, Fr Bunel never stood still. He was in constant motion, his active and attentive eye picking up almost every detail of his pupil’s demeanour and participation. This meant that he could more effectively hold the attention of his class for the whole period.

Thirdly, he had his very own teaching model drawn from the Socratic dialogues of Plato, in which, questions were the key to coming to insight. Lucien would present a child with question after question, ensuring that the child was clear as to what the teacher

was doing and that he was coming to some new insights about himself and the world. Fourthly, by his handling and treatment of the children, they were to realise that their school master wanted to draw out their singular dignity, their potential, and their significance in God’s eyes.

Fifthly and lastly, test results were not the ultimate statement of success or failure; rather it was the forming of the pupil’s character and nature that Fr Bunel’s class aimed at. He spoke of the education he tried to practice in his class in St Joseph’s, he often said “true education, the only one that gives complete and definite results, consists in teaching children to make use of their freedom.”

We have an anecdote from a later period in Lucien’s life. It is a description of a short interaction between a prospective pupil and his teacher, and the immediate effect of the priest upon this child who feels distinctly uneasy and vulnerable. The child describes his experience of the teacher, “my terror was so evident that Pere Jacques took me with him to visit the house and to feed breadcrumbs to the fish. He was so full of kindness that the word headmaster lost all its solemnity for me, and my greatest desire was to come to this school which only a few days before I had emphatically hoped never to see again.”

From the boy’s anecdote you can get a good impression of Lucien as a teacher, of a person who has taken, what could seem just like any job, as God’s word and mission for him, who gives his whole attention to the child in his care, who can empathise and sympathise with each, and encourages them to step over their anxiety and trepidation and give themselves over to the process of formation of character through education. There could be a temptation to simply dismiss this simple moment, but the moment the boy describes is full of spiritual potential. In the few moments that the boy was with Fr Bunel, he had been moved by the priest’s attention away from his fear to seeing the opportunity of his education.

It did not become instantly evident to the boy all that education could mean, but he was opened to what he could become, full of the dignity that Christ gave to him in baptism, illuminated by the Blessed Trinity, to live for the glory of God by living up to his own potential, and to know that he had an eternal destiny. This boy and many of the others that Lucien taught never could give full voice to what their teacher had done for them in their classes, but the nickname, that the boys whispered behind their hands, ‘Il Santo’, or ‘The Saint’, hinted that they had recognised that their teacher gave himself completely

to his task and that his energetic self-giving had empowered them to take on their own mission in life.

## Surrender

Back in 1916, while still a seminarian, Lucien paid his first visit to a Cistercian Abbey in Montligneon. While there, the penitential, silent, simple, communitarian, contemplative and mystical life of the Cistercian monk spoke to the soul of Lucien about who he must attempt to be. The life of the monk came as a Word from God to him, that Word spoke to him of a total surrender of himself in a loving union, and to become what St Paul speaks about in his writing; a living sacrifice offered to God. The religious life of the Cistercians spoke of that living sacrifice in the conversion of life to monastic living, in stability in the monastery and in obedience to the abbot and community.

Intermittently, for the next 10 years of his life, Lucien would visit various Cistercian Monasteries to nourish this experience and to ask himself about the Word that the Lord was speaking to him through this inspiration. In the notes that he left behind about those retreats, Lucien admits to a profound interior struggle, the life of the monk did speak so deeply to him, but all the time he was wracked by insecurity about his own ability to endure, and a concern that he would be letting down those pastoral missions that he had been given by the bishop. So, he was caught in a cul-de-sac, not knowing what to do with this word first spoken through the Cistercians.

There was no resolution to this quandary until a happy and accidental discovery that occurred in a conversation with a Mother Prioress of a Discalced Carmelite convent. Lucien had, of course, encountered Discalced Carmelite spirituality in the forms of the autobiographies of St Therese of Lisieux and Mother Angelique. These works left a lasting impression on Lucien of the quality of friendship and intimacy with Christ that is possible for a person. In their writings, friendship with Christ was likened to a journey into a wealthy mine, the deeper that the person climbs down into that mine, the wealthier and more precious the seams of metal that the person discovers. The precious metals of the mine speak of the wealthier experiences of Christ and that a person only ever becomes enriched by such contact. It was only when he was speaking to this Mother Prioress that he discovered that this spirituality and mission was not exclusively feminine; he discovered that there was such a thing as a Discalced Carmelite Friar.

This Mother Prioress not only spoke of the friars, but made the



necessary introductions for him to meet his first actual friar. She introduced him not to an ordinary friar but to a Discalced friar who would become a saint in his own right, Blessed Marie Eugene of the Child Jesus. Marie Eugene set before Lucien the Carmelite ideal of a life oriented to prayer, conversation with God, and to authentic friendship with Christ, but unlike the Cistercians, the Discalced Carmelites undertook apostolic missions, seeking to share with the People of God the riches turned up by their prayers. That initial conversation with Marie Eugene had such an effect on Lucien that it led him to do his annual retreat at the Carmelite monastery in Avon, under the spiritual guidance of the Paris province’s novice master, Fr Jean of Jesus.

Jean of Jesus during the retreat exhorted Lucien to stay close to the writings and vision of St John of the Cross. As Lucien went through his retreat, one particular passage from John’s Spiritual Canticle played a pivotal role in his reflections and subsequent understanding of what God was asking of him. St John of the Cross had written there, “a little of this pure love is more precious to God and the soul and more beneficial to the Church, even though it seems one is doing nothing, than all these other works put together.”

The words of John of the Cross served to salve Lucien’s conscience and the quandary he had been in for such a long period, about leaving his pastoral work behind and to go off and seek a more contemplative mission. When he returned from his retreat, he told the Discalced Carmelite nuns that his retreat had been to him a conversion experience. The Word that had so long been spoken to him had clarified itself, “there, for me, is the ideal of the religious life - to live in solitude; in intimate union with God; then, to leave the cloister to bring him to souls, to make him known and loved...and then to return to total recollection in order to be immersed in prayer:

that is what attracts me.”

## Map

Every day of his life, St Bernard of Clairvaux had posed himself the question; “Bernard, what did you come to the monastery to do?” In his own turn, if Lucien was ever to make the move from Diocesan life to the monastic life of a Carmelite friar, he had to be crystal clear in his mind and spirit as to what the Lord was asking of him in the Carmelite monastery. Remembering what Jean of Jesus had asked him during his retreat - to stay close to John of the Cross, Lucien kept before his mind the map of sanctity drawn up by the first friar of the Discalced reform. At the beginning of his book of commentary on the poem, ‘The Dark Night’, St John of the Cross had sketched a map to the goal of Carmelite life.

The map charted a steep ascent up Mount Carmel. At the top of the mountain, at the summit, at the goal, Lucien himself described, “is the withdrawal from the World that we must undertake to arrive at this point of all-embracing union with God.” Then Lucien describes how John proposes that anyone who desires to live this climb to such a summit: “In the middle is a steep path; on each side John sketched the easier routes, which were makeshift and incomplete. Then, between them, with a quick stroke he drew what must be the way of our retreat - a direct, exacting road on which one hears the refrain, ‘nothing, nothing absolutely nothing but God alone.’”

The map represents Lucien’s mission in Carmel; a letting go of personal vanities, of distractions and noise, and the comforts that cling to the heart, a letting go so that God can be everything. Only in this letting go could any prospective Carmelite realise his own vocation, so rightly expressed by a famous prioress of Toulouse Carmel, “what purpose do these Carmels serve?” “They serve to reveal God!”

The Archbishop of Rouen did not appreciate losing one of his



# Celebration of Eucharist - Christ's invitation to join on-going hymn of praise before God's Throne – Bishop Donal



Bishop Donal

“THE Mass is both the source of all healing, the supper of the Lamb to which all are invited, and a sacred mystery that should never be taken lightly. It is food for the hungry and hope for the sinner. We face many challenges in making that shocking teaching of Jesus real, without being excessively exclusive or far too careless with the mystery of the Eucharist.”

This was the message of Bishop Donal in his homily at the Holy Thursday Mass of the Last Supper, when the Eucharist was instituted by Jesus.

Noting that earlier in the day, the Mass of Chrism had been celebrated, at which the Oils had been blessed for sacramental anointing in the year ahead, the

Bishop remarked: “It is hard to take on that we have been anointed by the Holy Spirit and that our bodies are sacred. But tonight, we celebrate another piece of Christian teaching that scandalised many of Jesus’ followers, even those who knew him on earth – that He is Bread of Life, and that we eat His flesh and drink His blood.”

Noting how Jesus had been criticised for healing on the Sabbath and touching outcasts, and damned for eating with tax collectors and sinners, and so it was not surprising that His teaching on the Eucharist was also received as “outrageous”, he went on to state: “Any attempt to water down or to simplify Jesus’ teaching is being untrue to Christ’s vision and mission.”

He continued: “We have many simplified versions of Christianity. For some, it is just a private relationship with Jesus which gives us comfort but does not help to renew the face of the earth. Following Jesus without washing each other’s feet is selling the Gospel short.”

“There is also the temptation to think that it is enough just to be nice to people most of the time and to say an occasional few prayers. But we cannot reduce the Jesus of

Calvary to an insipid message that has lost its taste.

“The one who is the way, the truth and the life, lived and died in order to bring more than just good manners into our lives. He was killed because He did not merely practice pleasant middle of the road virtues.”

“Jesus reminds us,” added Bishop Donal, “not to play down the uncomfortable reason for His death and the startling sacrament of Calvary that we celebrate as He instructed us to do at the Last Supper.”

Explaining that the Last Supper was a re-presentation of the Passover event in Egypt, when the blood of the Lamb was shed to protect the people and to liberate

them from slavery, he went on to point out: “Jesus now says that He is the new Lamb of God whose blood takes away the sin of the world. What we do in memory of Him re-presents, makes present again, His death on Calvary. In this sacrament, as St Paul writes, when we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim His death until He comes again.”

“The purpose of our celebration of the Eucharist is not to show off beautiful music or magnificent ritual, but to underline the mystery of Christ’s death for us and His invitation for us, His holy people, to join the angels and saints in ongoing hymn of praise before the throne of God.”



Washing of the Feet at Long Tower Holy Thursday Ceremony.



Some of those who gathered for the 6.30 am Easter Dawn Mass at St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, with Fr Sean O'Donnell.



Cappagh Do This in Memory children Palm Sunday creation.

*continued from page 24*

up-and-coming young priests. He did not, at first, appreciate the delicate discernment that Lucien had practiced. The Archbishop asked Lucien to postpone any further discernment for two years. After what amounted to a cooling off period, he sought authorisation to join the Paris Province of Discalced Carmelites and, after his long wait, he received the proper permissions.

Lucien arrived at the door of the Discalced Carmelite monastery at Lille on August 28, 1931.

He described his mixed feelings as he knocked on the door of Carmel: “I enter here with closed eyes, asking myself nothing about the future. I do not know if I will have the health of body and strength of soul to persevere. I do know that there will be some painful periods, when this life of silent activity will weigh me down after my years of abundant apostolic activity...I entrust all to the Good Lord.”

He entered the Carmelite monastery trusting in a Word that had been spoken to him 15 years before, a Word that had moved him, and that had been clarifying over those years. When he entered the novitiate, he received the brown scapular of Mary, the white mantel of the order, and a new name, that of Jacques of Jesus. Each a sign of a new identity in Christ, a mission to make Jesus transparent to this darkened world.

Jacques spoke of the engine

room that truly generated this new identity as Jacques of Jesus: “One enters Carmel, above all else, to find God and to have the personal and living contact that is achieved by the most intense prayer.” In the long hours of solitude, silent prayer, and spiritual reading, so much a part of Carmelite life, Christ was to increase while Lucien was to decrease, that was the secret that created the new man, Jacques of Jesus. And so it was that, on September 15, 1932, Jacques of Jesus made his profession of temporary vows, and three years later, in September 1935, he was fully professed into the Discalced Carmelites.

That moment of trepidation, as the would-be Pere Jacques stood unsure at the door of Lille Carmel, captures so much of our human condition and our response to God’s overtures. The Words that God speaks seem so daunting, to be almost asking of us a leap into the dark, and to land in a destination beyond our sight. Yet if we hear them and act on them, as Pere Jacques did, then we will come to know that they are absolutely sure, a solid rock on which to build a whole life, that the Word is full of promise, that it has a better conception of who we are than we ourselves do, and that the Word will put small, insignificant, individuals, to work building up God’s kingdom among human beings, making God’s face more manifest to this tired old World, and leading others to look to that Face.



Cappagh Parish Palm Sunday procession.



Mass of Chrism in St Eugene's Cathedral



# An Meitheal... Una Minga(Sp)... Tejiendo Pueblo (Ronaldo Muñoz)

by Fr John McLaughlin ssc

*"People who need people, are the luckiest people in the world!" (People - a popular song by Barbra Streisand)*

IT was the aftermath of a Parish meeting in Marino all those years ago, and the three curates with the parish priest had just completed our monthly meeting, reviewing dates and events pending and planned. Being the appointed secretary, as the assuredly junior member of the team, I seemed to have been doing most of the talking. So much so, that as we broke up, Fr Brian remarked: "Do you know, Mac, that you have the real power in this group, from the way you present the minutes of the meetings and what should be on the agenda?"

That was another learning experience for later years. Even in my Golf Club committee days, where Pat Kenny, the long established secretary, wielded far more influence than the incoming Captain or President, there was another occasion to re-learn the same piece of practical wisdom.

There were Parish Pastoral Councils, meetings of Collectors and Ministers and youth leaders, and there always seemed to be a 'mover', who generally was the acting secretary. I can recall 'Paddy the Painter' taking his little shot at the rather formal and dignified, Fr Liam the PP, and the little current of expectancy that his introduction would evoke from those attending: "Excuse me Father, with respect, would I be right in saying...or...People are saying around the town, etc." A key moment for the alert secretary to come in and effect a rescue, or an advance on the theme.

This was the case especially, and often, in my years on Mission in Chile. Rosa could deliver a very succinct summary of the minutes of the previous month in our little pastoral council, and knew how and where to put the emphasis on the clashes of opinion, the criticisms which were lurking in the group, and the promised line-up for the actual plan of action.

## Rooted

"(If synodality is to have any real meaning in the Catholic Church, it must be rooted in the local parish. An area that would benefit from a parish synodal process is the manner in which First Communion is celebrated. Many Catholics are questioning the present conventions surrounding this sacrament, which can lead to a situation where people who have no particular commitment to faith put their children forward for the communal celebration." Margaret Lee is a member of the Newport, Birdhill and Toor Parish in Co Tipperary, Irish Times March 2023.)

Whether in a completely new and emerging parish or in one

with practices already formed, we were always in the process of what Ronaldo Muñoz, Sacred Heart priest and Liberation theologian, called 'tejiendo pueblo', weaving together and integrating new elements in the formation of a living faith-community. From the Parish of San Columbano, in Santiago, with a long Columban line of priests and sisters, and a very alive well-formed laity, I heard one of the leaders, Gladys Vera, comment on the years where the local Vincentian priests took over. She said to me, "When the Columbans were here, the Council would be presented with proposals, whereas, in those other years, the Council would be presented with a program." That was meant and received, as a compliment!

So, in starting off a pastoral project, on the hills of Valparaiso, traditions were being formed for their pastoral activities and assessments which didn't have to contend with "we always did it this way in this parish, Father!"

The leaders would emerge in the dialogues and the comments. I can recall at a meeting of the Tenants Association of Dolphin House, in Rialto, when the women had just been integrated into the committee and spent only a short time listening to their spouses debating. "Listen Davy Boland, us women know a lot more about these things than you fellows," and Mary and her sisters made a rapid 'sequester' of the discussion.

Something similar occurred years later, in the Valparaiso Parish of Corazon de Maria, where Luis and Hector, etc, had been trying to plan how they would get together the materials and the 'chicha' for the national feast of September 18 at local level. After inviting the attendance of the women, the decisions were made in a record time and I could be in my bed nearly an hour earlier! There were no gender issues in those days, they just got on with it at a faster rate!

## Listen

"(From what I have read, a synodal process has to try to avoid a 'winner-loser' mentality. The people who gather have to try very hard to forego their own agenda, their own viewpoint, and listen to other voices, other perspectives. This means the participant has to give up their own conviction of what should happen. Most of all, the participant has to believe in the Holy Spirit, and see this same Holy Spirit as someone who is not interested in power grabs." Margaret Lee)

When the Youth were incorporated into the councils, there was often an even richer debate, where the themes of 'tidying up the rooms and the cigarette butts', etc, were left on the backburner. I recall the

lady in Tallaght who declared, on the planning for a Eucharist community meeting that was open to integrating the youth, that she would definitely not be joining in!

Part of any council meeting could be easily devoted to just blaming! So, there would be hints and threats of reprisals and a 'desahogo', a clearing the air, at the cost of some victim or non-committed members. In one of my young, or new, councils on the hills in Valparaiso, the meeting might have to go into overtime, and sleep prolonged, when one of the women protagonists, Sonia, threw in an 'exocet' about the failure of her rival, Magdalena to carry out an agreed course of action. As the accusing party was our neighbour on the block, Sonia had to be given her moment or minutes, after the intervention, as the yawns would go up from the remaining members.

## Guiding

"(All of this is difficult. For starters, it is difficult for us to have a concept of the Holy Spirit because it is spirit, something intangible that we cannot see or touch and, for myself, a guiding presence I can only usually experience in hindsight, if at all. Even mention of the Holy Spirit can seem like a foreign language." Margaret Lee)

Columban leader, Fr Mike Hoban, had an interesting rite on the occasion of Pentecost or bringing in the leaders, assessors and pastoral agents, and having us renew our Commitment (Compromiso) to the mission and pastoral programme adopted for the year, making it both entertaining and challenging, from that unique humour that he possesses.

Perhaps, one of the other key lessons picked up from groups and movements, and councils, was the importance of a good Evaluation carried out on the project or plans on the minutes or the programme. I can recall how a very young Charlie Hernandez spoke through the activities of Holy Week on the Placeres Hill in Valparaiso. He had been actively present in the Palm Sunday procession and blessing of the Palms, the liturgies held in the tenants association buildings for want of our own proposed chapels, the Stations of the Cross held out in the public streets and with integrated dynamics, and the Holy Week adaptations that were part of our planning. The young adult gave a masterly evaluation of how it had worked out, and how it had been received by the people on the Hill. There could, of course, be harsh comments and severe criticisms that could be off-putting and that was one reason why, through the years, I always held the chair of the

meetings at Parish levels at least. Just the presence of the priest, without effusive commentaries, was sufficient to maintain respect for the meeting and the members, and control the language being used in earlier and tense times (Pinochet dictatorship) at a political and local church level.

There were some occasions when I recall passions boiling over, including my own, and using the right words in decent Spanish was urgent. On one of those occasions, I was requesting a pastoral agent to step down from her role on a temporary basis, because of the hostilities being built up around her conduct, and a minor storm resulted which lasted for about a quarter of an hour. There was no one else in the community fit or able to make the decision, so it fell to me to make it in the best language I could manage, despite her protestations and the energy generated. Padre Pedro Touhy, fellow Columban, whose language would not have been sufficiently nuanced in any case, sat and prayed in a corner as that debate nearly boiled over!

Community building was like weaving different strands together in the lovely words of the gentle Ronaldo Muñoz, whom we knew at Zonal level in the Southern Zone of the Diocese of Santiago. He was a Sacred Heart priest and theologian who could use agricultural images from his own background and their parish of La Union in the south of the country. The phrase 'Yo soy catolico, pero no fanatico', would hardly need translation in the present Irish ambient as Catholics waver from involvement at any serious level. Nor would the Spanish proverb, 'no tan adentro que se quema, ni tan afuera que se resfrie': too far committed and you get warmed up, stay too far away and you grow cold. So there was the challenge at parish pastoral level and it goes on.

## Aware

"(Here, especially, we have to be aware of our own stances, our own biases. We have to detach from our beliefs about what we have seen. We could try to appreciate the pressures under which people are acting, the pressure to "do the best for the child" even if this "best" is viewed in material terms.

"We may need to consider that the phone strollers may be acting out of feelings of unease, may just want to appear "cool", to give the impression that they are gone way past this "whole religion thing". Conformity has many faces." Margaret Lee)

Generating the energy, or the Sprid in Irish terms, 'el animo', was the reward for pastoral action. Recently, I had an Easter Card from a member of the old folk group in Marino Parish, Bernie Healy, back in the day.



Such energy at choir and folk group level that it was contagious and would warm you up. Bringing some of those groups up to Ghoirt Mhuire for a weekend workshop with Fr Eltin Griffin and his team was a great booster for the young people there, from many parishes across the city. The Mass in the Parishes the following day would try to replicate the music and the tones from their Saturday night celebration on the retreat.

Through the years, there have always been moments when the 'Comunidades' could spark up and get going on a mission, a retreat, procession, workshop (Jornada) an act of solidarity, evening of reflection or reconciliation.

In one of those years, the Jesuit Centro Belarmino offered a course to pastoral priests which compared the conditions climate and structures in industry with our parochial structures and planning. In that workshop, we were invited to compare our planning, systems of promotion, climate of the enterprise as to the buy-in to the project, tensions and disputes, how members saw themselves in the general promotion of the product.

There was a lot to be learned from those comparisons for those of us who were organizing parish chapels and leaders. One of the handouts that I used with the Chapel Coordinators was that of the football field. Being a country mad about the beautiful game, people responded when invited to identify themselves with one of the places on the field...goalkeeper, full backs and defense, creative midfielders and the forwards. At one stage, it seemed that they were all midfielders, but in the debate others admitted that they were more at ease in the defensive roles, or even being goalkeepers!

My heart leapt a couple of weeks ago while reading an account from Margaret Lee on her vision of their Pastoral Council in the Synodal process, and the going and coming that occurs during

the modern First Communion and Confirmation celebrations. Her capacity to see how the Spirit might be working in these times of passive membership and very different levels of commitment was impressive.

## Respectfully

"(Parishes need structures where what is seen can be discussed respectfully and where assessments and opinions can be exchanged, respectfully, and where assessments and opinions can be exchanged

"A very rough outline of this process is already present in parishes in the form of the pre-First Communion meeting, which usually takes place in the first quarter of the calendar year. This assembly has often involved having a motivational speaker." Margaret Lee)

Finally, I recall attending monthly one of the chapel communities called San Columbano, in a very deprived part of the Columban Parish of San Matias, in the eastern part of the huge Diocese of Santiago. Not many would be taking an evening stroll in the area of Lecheria, where Deacon Juan Pacheco gathered his pastoral council on a monthly basis. Some would profess to be worn out, others were complaining at the lack of support or the need for renewal.

That was one meeting that I left Juan to lead off, for I had come to admire the way that he drew out the opinions of the participants, however negative, and gradually brought about the 'desahogo', or letting-off steam, as we might say. By the halfway point, members had settled down to the projects, the evaluations, and the celebrations that brought renewed energy to the group and, subsequently, to the Parish Pastoral Council meetings.

Some have it and some don't, you might say, as I did in admiration of the patience of Juan Pacheco, now a very active, ordained, married deacon.



# The Rosary by Vera McFadden

MY mother grew up on a hill farm in Inishowen. She told me that when she was a child, she prayed the Rosary as she herded the cattle. That was a common practice worldwide in Christian countries. Other religions also used beads for counting prayers. However, she did not tell me that she used Rosary beads. I didn't have any when I was a child. Fortunately, our fingers and thumbs made it easy to take a note of 10 Hail Marys.

I was given my first Rosary beads when I was 12 years old. I had been helping my sister-in-law who was ill, and she gave me lovely blue beads. I thought that I would keep them for the rest of my life, but I can't remember what happened to them.

Like my mother, there were three children minding sheep on a mountain in Fatima, Portugal, and saying the Rosary as they did so, when Our Lady came to them. It was the thirteenth of May and she asked them to come on the thirteenth of every month for six months. On the last day, the miracle of the sun was seen by people all over the world, for it had been photographed.

At Fatima, Mary was asking for prayers for peace and end to war on the earth. She also asked for the consecration of Russia to Her Immaculate Heart. Sadly, this did not happen and there was another terrible war, World War II. This only ended when the Americans dropped an atomic bomb on Nagasaki. Many people were drawn up into the vacuum created by the atomic blast. Midori Nagai, a young Catholic housewife, was one of these and all that was left was the charred remains of her Rosary beads on the ground.

That was a horrifying day for the people of Nagasaki and for the world, when so many were killed and the Cathedral that had taken so long a time to build was demolished in a second. There is no such thing as a just war. We are all created by God and must try to live as Jesus taught us. He said: "Blessed are the peacemakers".

The Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary is a powerful prayer. Of course, it is more than a prayer, as it contains five sets of 10 Hail Marys, as well as Our Fathers, Gloria Be, and the Hail Holy Queen. The Rosary is more than a prayer. I remember my oldest brother,

Anthony, telling me, "You say the first prayers, and then you go for a walk around the garden with our Lady." He meant, of course, to think about the life of our Lord. That is what the Rosary is; a very powerful prayer, but more than a prayer, it is a meditation on the life of Jesus for the duration of the accompanying prayers.

The Rosary is so powerful because it is biblical. For many years, we prayed the Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious Mysteries, meditating on the coming and childhood of our Lord, His suffering, death, resurrection, ascension, the descent of the Holy Spirit, the assumption of Mary and her being crowned Queen of heaven. Then Pope John Paul II introduced the Mysteries of Light. We had been leaving out a very important part of the life of Jesus Christ, the time when He had walked among the people and told them the way to live.

Rosary beads are made of different material, like plastic, crystal, Irish horn, marble and several others. I remember I once bought beads made of Connemara marble for my mother and, after her death her death, I used them and lost them. A friend told me that she had bought Connemara marble beads for her mother, and that her mother had lost them and looked for them for years, but never found them.

When people returned to prayers as Mary had requested, Rosary beads often changed colour. This may have been a sign of approval. Sometimes it was the beads that changed, sometimes it was the links. I have seen Mother of Pearl Rosary beads that turned to a golden colour and many others. A very strange occurrence was when my granddaughter gave me a Rosary bracelet that she had bought at Durham Cathedral. I had read about St Cuthbert who had been Abbot of Lindisfarne. His body had been incorrupt for centuries and probably remained so.

Because of the saint's body having been at the Cathedral, I really treasured the bracelet and decided to use it for praying the Divine Mercy Chaplet. The beads were tiny and looked like pearls. They were very fragile and broke into two pieces, which I continually repaired. One day, the two pieces dropped from my hand onto the

floor. I lifted one and kissed the little cross, saying 'Cuthbert', and to my amazement, I saw that they were not the same colour. I lifted the other part and found that they too had changed. I examined them and found that there were little specks of different colours. One day, I went into a jewellery shop on the Strand Road. I told the young lady what had happened and she said, "Maybe they turned to opals". She showed me what they were like under a microscope, but I don't think that is what happened.

Sometime later, I was reading a book about Lindisfarne which had been written by David Adams. Imagine my surprise when I read how the author and the children had gone for a walk on the beach. They were looking for tiny fossils. If they found enough they could make a Rosary. The fossils were called 'Cuthbert's beads'!

After doing the turas at ancient holy sites, people often leave Rosary beads or a medal as a memento of their visit. At Medjugorje, sometimes pilgrims hang their beads on the branches of trees. Mary asked that they would not do this, but instead use them for prayer.

I used the cross of my beads in Medjugorje in a different way. One day our pilgrimage group was going up the mountain. It was a very hot day and I knew that I was not going to be able to go with them. There was a little Religious Sister who was delicate, so we stayed down near the church and went for a cup of tea.

On our way back to the church, I noticed two men who were fighting and punching each other. I thought that their behaviour was disrespectful to the Holy place. I said to the Sister, "Excuse me for a moment", and I went over and in between them. I held the cross in front of one man's chest, turned and did the same with the other man. They stopped fighting and took a couple of steps back. I wondered if I had been right to intervene.

When the others returned from the mountain, the Sister told them what had happened and the priest said, "We were up the mountain looking for a miracle but the real miracle was down here with Vera". I think he meant that I could have been attacked by both of them or got one of the punches intended for the other man.



One time in Medjugorje, we were at Mass in the chapel on the hill. At the offertory, the zip on my handbag would not work so I could not give a donation. As we left the church, I realised that my passport and other important documents were also in the bag. A tall man was sitting on the ground beside the tiny church and I signalled to him if he could open the zip. He also tried but was unsuccessful. Then I remembered my mother telling me how my grandfather had made a Sign of the Cross over any work he had to do. I held out the cross of my Rosary and touched the zip, and it opened.

The Rosary brings people together. When I was young, my family said it before bed time. My mother and her family also recited it at 6 pm, after the Angelus. I also remember some great Rosary processions at Lourdes, Fatima and in Carnhill estate.

We keep in touch with Scripture everyday as we mediate on the Mysteries. I think Our Lady could have meant the Rosary when she said, "The world shall call me great and ponder on my story".



## Faughanvale parishioners continue May Eve Rosary tradition at Holy Well

THE tradition of praying the Rosary on May Eve at the Flowerfield Holy Well, on the outskirts of Eglinton Village, was strongly upheld this year again, with many parishioners making the trek across fields from Ballygudden Road to gather with Faughanvale Parish Priest, Fr Noel McDermott at 9 am on Sunday, April 30, to pray there.

Having drawn crowds of people in generations past, the history of the Well goes back to the Penal

Days of the late 17th century. The story told is that a Fr Elliott would often take refuge at the Gallagher homestead when priests were being hunted by the soldiers, and would walk and pray around the Well from which the Gallagher family got water.

It is thought that Well would have been blessed through all this prayer and, over the years since, many have gone to pray there for peace of mind, with some claiming to be cured of ailments.





# Parish Post-its

## Aghyaran

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

**Cemetery Blessing:** The Blessing of the Graves will take place on Friday, June 23, after the 7.30 pm Mass.

## Ardstraw East

**Cemetery Sunday:** The Blessing of the Graves will take place on Sunday, June 4, at 3 pm.

**Mystery Walk:** A Mystery Walk, the eighth Walk for Glenock, will take place on Sunday, May 28.

## Badoney Lower (Gortin-Rouskey)

**Joys of Mary:** During May, there is an opportunity to reflect on 'The Seven Joys of Mary' on Wednesday evenings, at 7.30 pm, in The Oratory, Cormac House, in Gortin.

**Thanksgiving Mass:** Fr Francis Bradley will be celebrating a Thanksgiving Mass in St Mary's Church, Rouskey, on Sunday, June 4, at 3pm, for people from the Parish who ran the bus to Knock over the years. There will be tea and a music session afterwards in Rouskey Community Centre. Everyone welcome

**Adoration:** Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place on Sundays in St Patrick's Church, Gortin, from 3.30-5.30 pm.

## Ballinascreen/Desertmartin

**Mary Meditations:** During the month of May, Meditating with Mary sessions to help rediscover the beauty of God's message of hope and love in contemplating the wonders God worked in Mary's life, will continue on Friday, May 19 and 26, at 8.15 pm in the Community Hub, Draperstown. All welcome.

**Grave Blessing:** The Blessing of Graves will take place on: Saturday, June 10, after 6.30 pm Mass in St Patrick's, Keenaught; and Sunday, June 11, following 11 am Mass in St Patrick's Church, Sixtowns; following 12 noon Mass in St Eugene's Church, Moneyneena, at 2 pm at St. Columba's, Straw; at 3 pm at St. Mary's, Coolcalm; and at 4.30 pm at Old Keenaught Church.

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

## Ballymagroarty

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

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

## Banagher

**Adoration & Chaplet:** Adoration

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

**HOPE Camp:** HOPE Camp Banagher will run from July 31 until August 4.

**Cemetery Blessing:** The Blessing of the Graves will take place at St Joseph's Church, Fincairn, on Sunday, July 9, at 10.30am, at St Peter & St Paul's Church, Foreglen, on Sunday, July 16, at 12 noon, and St Mary's Church, Altinure, on Sunday, September 3, at 10.30 am.

## Bellaghy

**Cemetery Sunday:** The Blessing of the Graves will take place at Ballyscullion on Sunday, June 25, at 10.45 am, and at Bellaghy at 3 pm.

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

## Buncrana

**Earth Film:** To highlight Laudato Si' week, May 21-26, which marks the eighth anniversary of Pope Francis' encyclical, Laudato Si, 'The Letter' film will be shown in St Mary's Hall on Tuesday, May 23, at 12:30 pm, and again on Friday, May 26 at 7.45 pm in The Exchange, Castle Avenue, Buncrana. Please pre-book for either showing by calling the Parish Office on 074 9361253 or the Exchange 074 9362526.

**Adoration:** Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place daily in St Mary's Oratory after Mass until 1 pm (Monday-Friday), 11 am - 5 pm (Saturday), 1.30-7 pm (Sunday).

**Rosary:** The Rosary is prayed each weekday at 9.30 am in St Mary's Oratory, prior to 10 am Mass. During May, the Rosary will be prayed on Sundays, at 5 pm at the Grotto at Cockhill, and 7 pm at the Oratory Grotto. All welcome.

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

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

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

**Al-Anon:** The Al-Anon Group, for anyone whose life is or has been affected by someone else's drinking, meets in St Teresa's Room on Thursdays at 6:45 pm.

## Burt, Inch & Fahan

**May Rosary:** During May, the Rosary will be prayed every Tuesday at 1 pm at the Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes, Inch Chapel. All welcome.

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

**St Mura's Church:** St Mura's Church of Ireland, Fahan, is having an afternoon tea and cake sale in the Parish Hall, Fahan (opposite the old Roneagh building) on Saturday, May 20, from 2 pm.

## Carndonagh

**Jubilee Concert:** There will be a variety concert in Colgan Hall, in Carndonagh, on Saturday, May 27, at 8 pm, to mark Fr Con McLaughlin's 50 years of priesthood.

**Cemetery Sunday:** The Blessing of the Graves will take place on July 2.

## Castleberg & Ardstraw West

**Prayer:** The Rosary and Angelus are prayed in St Patrick's Church, Castleberg on Tuesdays at 2 pm.

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

**Prayer Group:** The Parish Prayer Group will meet in St Patrick's Hall on Friday, May 26, at 8 pm. Everyone is welcome to come along and share in this prayerful time of reflection on the Scriptures.

**Spring Clean:** Families are invited to come to St Mary's Church, Dregish, on Monday, June 5, from 7.30-9 pm, to help with a Spring clean around the Church and the hall.

**Graves' Blessing:** The Blessing of the Graves will take place in: Castleberg on Saturday, June 24, after 6 pm Mass; Drumnabey on Sunday, June 25, after 12.30 pm Mass; Carncorn on Sunday, June 25, at 3 pm, and Dregish on Sunday, June 25, at 5 pm.

## Claudy

**St Colmcille's PS 50th:** Bishop Donal will be celebrating Mass in St Patrick's Church on Tuesday, June 6, at 7 pm to mark the 50th anniversary of St Colmcille's PS (formerly known as Claudy Central PS), with refreshments afterwards in the school.

**HOPE Camp:** This year's Claudy-Craigbane HOPE Camp will launch with an opening ceremony on Sunday, August 6 and run until Friday, August 11.

**Cemetery Blessing:** The Blessing of the Graves will take place on Sunday, June 25, following the 11.30 am Mass in St Patrick's Church, Claudy, and at 3 pm in St Joseph's Craigbane.

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

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

## Clonleigh (Lifford)

**Grotto Rosary:** The Rosary will be prayed at Our Lady's Grotto, Porthall, on Monday, May 22, at 7.30 pm, for the protection of Our Lady on parish families and for peace. All welcome.

**Pentecost Blessing:** The children of the three schools in the Parish, who received the Sacrament of Confirmation this year, are invited to the 11 am Mass on Pentecost Sunday, May 28, for a special blessing in thanksgiving for the coming of the Holy Spirit on them.

**Graves' Blessing:** The Blessing

of the Graves will take place on Monday, June 12, at 7 pm.

**Corpus Christi:** There will be a Corpus Christi Procession at the 11 am Mass on the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, Sunday, June 11. This will be the final day of the Do This in Memory Programme, and the children who made their First Holy Communion are asked to wear their outfits for this special occasion.

**Knock Pilgrimage:** The second annual Parish Pilgrimage to Knock Shrine will take place on Saturday, August 12.

## Coleraine

**Celebrating Baptisms:** There will be a Celebration of Baptised Babies on Trinity Sunday, June 4, at 3 pm, in St John's Church. Families of babies baptised in the Parish since last Pentecost Sunday are invited to attend with their babies.

**Cemetery Sunday:** The Blessing of the Graves will take place on June 11, at 3 pm, at Dunboe and Aghadowey Cemeteries, and on Sunday, June 25, at 3 pm at St John's Cemetery.

**Mass of Sick & Infirm:** A Mass of the Sick and the Infirm will be celebrated on the Feast of the Sacred Heart, Friday, June 16, at 7 pm in St John's Church.

**Parish Picnic:** There will be a Parish Family Event on Sunday, August 20, from 2 pm in the grounds of Chapelfield House. Families are to bring their own rug and picnic.

**Parish Walk:** There will be a Parish Pilgrim Walk on Saturday, June 10. All are to gather at the Car Park at Old Dunboe Church, which is associated with St Columba and St Comghall, from where pilgrims will walk to St Mary's, Dunboe, through Downhill Forest for a short service, and then return via Springbank Road, with a coffee stop, and then through to Downhill Forest, Serpentine Lake, and then return to cars.

**Exposition:** St John's Church Monday Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place on Wednesdays in St John's Church, from 2-4 pm, with Rosary at 3:45pm.

## Creggan

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

## Donagheady (Aughabrack & Dunamanagh)

**May Altar:** Parishioners are encouraged to celebrate the month of May by honouring Our Lady with May Altars in their homes.

**Celebrating Volunteers:** Volunteers in the Parish are invited to a 'Thank-you Supper' in Aughabrack Hall on Saturday, May 20, at 7.30pm, for 8pm.

## Donaghmore (Killygordon & Sessiaghoneill)

**Pentecost Vigil:** The Home of the Mother Servant Sisters will be leading a Pentecost Holy Hours and Vigil in St Patrick's Church, Killygordon, on Saturday, May 27, starting at 7.30 pm.

**Family Day:** The Servant Sisters will also be hosting a Family Encounter Day on Sunday, May 28, from 11 am until 6 pm, and it will include the

celebration of Mass, activities and a picnic.

**Corpus Christi Vigil:** There will be a Corpus Christi Holy Hour and Vigil led by the Servant Sisters in St Patrick's Church, Killygordon, on Saturday, June 10, starting at 7.30pm.

## Drumragh (Omagh)

**May Devotions:** May Devotions will take place on Sundays at 6 pm in Sacred Heart Church.

**Fr Mullan RIP:** Mass will be celebrated in Sacred Heart Church for the late Fr Kevin Mullan on Monday, June 5, at 7.30 pm.

**Prayer Group:** The Charismatic Prayer Group meetings take place in The Pastoral Centre on Thursday evenings, with Rosary at 7.40 pm and prayer meeting at 8 pm. All welcome to come and pray.

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

**SMA Pilgrimage:** The annual SMA Pilgrimage to Knock takes place on Saturday, May 27. A bus will be leaving Omagh bus station, or Crevanagh park & ride, around 8.15 am/8.30 am. Fare £15 and Meals €35 euro. For more information or to book contact Una 07743575969 or Mona on 02886737954.

## Dungiven

**St Canice's 50th:** The 50th anniversary Mass for St Canice's PS will be celebrated by Bishop Donal in St Patrick's Church on Sunday, May 21, at 2 pm.

**Cemetery Blessing:** Blessing of the Graves will take place for Immaculate Conception Church on Saturday, June 10, after 4.30 pm Mass, and for St Matthew's on Sunday, June 11, after 10.15 am Mass, and at St Patrick's on Sunday, June 11 at 3 pm.

**Healing Mass:** A St Pio Healing Mass takes place on the first Tuesday of each month at 7 pm in St Patrick's.

**Rosary:** The Rosary is prayed at 9.35 am in St Patrick's Church from Monday-Friday.

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

## Errigal

**Cemetery Sunday:** The Blessing of the Graves will take place at St Mary's, Ballerin, on Sunday, June 4, at 2 pm, and at St Joseph's on Sunday, June 11, at 12.30 pm.

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

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

**Social Gathering:** Tea and scones are available in Glenullin Social Club after the Wednesday morning Mass, offering an opportunity to have 'a cuppa and a natter' after the prayers are said! Everyone welcome.

## Fahan

**Adoration:** Adoration takes place in

St Mura's Parish Church each Friday after the 10 am Mass.

## Faughanvale

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

## Granaghan (Swatragh)

**Cemetery Blessing:** The Blessing of the Graves will take place on Sunday, June 4, at 3 pm.

## Greencastle

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

**Adoration:** Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in St Patrick's Church after 12.30 pm Mass on Tuesdays until 5 pm.

## Greenlough

**Cemetery Sunday:** The Blessing of the Graves will take place on Sunday, June 11, at 3 pm.

## Iskaheen

**May Rosary:** During May, the Rosary is prayed at the Grotto in Muff on Wednesdays at 7 pm.

**St Peregrine:** The St Peregrine Novena Prayer and veneration of relic takes place in St Columba's Church, Drung, after the 10.15 am Mass on the first Sunday of each month.

## Kilrea

**Cemetery Sunday:** The Blessing of Graves will take place at St Mary's Church, Craigavole, on Sunday, June 18, at 1 pm (after Mass), and at St Mary's Church, Drumagarnier, at 2.30 pm.

## Lavey

**Clonard Novena:** The Clonard Novena takes place June 14-22, and the Parish is planning to run a bus to it this year for the 11.30 am Mass on Thursday, June 15. Those interested in going are to contact Paddi or Patrick by Tuesday, June 6. Pick up Points: Lavey Church Car Park at 9.30 am sharp and Clady Church Car Park at 9.45 am sharp. Cost will be £5 Return. Patrick: 028 7964 2458 or Email: laveyparish@btinternet.com Paddi: 028 2582 1190 or Email: greenloughparish@gmail.com

**150th Anniversary:** The 150th anniversary of the opening of St Mary's Church, Lavey, will be celebrated on Friday, September 8, at 7.30 pm.

**Youth 2000:** Youth 2000 Prayer Group, for 16-35 year olds, meets in Lavey Parochial House, opposite the chapel, on Friday evenings at 7.30pm.

## Leckpatrick

**Adoration:** Eucharistic Adoration takes place on Wednesdays after 10 am Mass until 5.30 pm.

**Cloughcor 200th:** The Bi-Centennial Mass for St Mary's Church, Cloughcor, will be celebrated by Bishop Donal on Sunday, May 28, at 3pm, with refreshments afterwards in St Mary's PS.

**Cemetery Blessings:** Blessing of the Graves will take place in Leckpatrick Parish as follows: St Joseph's Cemetery, Glenmornan, Sunday, May 7 after the 10 am Mass; St Mary's Cemetery, Cloughcor,



Saturday, May 20 after the 6 pm Mass; and Sacred Heart Cemetery, Derry Road, Sunday, May 21 after the 11.30 am Mass.

### Limavady

**Children's Liturgy:** Children's Liturgy for children in P1-P3 takes place every Sunday at the 12 noon Mass in Christ the King Church.

**Children's Rosary:** During May, a Children's Rosary will be prayed in St Mary's Church after school finishes at 3 pm.

**May Rosary:** During the month of May, the Rosary will be prayed daily at the Grotto at St Mary's Church at 7 pm.

**Knock Rosary Rally:** A bus will be leaving from St Mary's Church at 8 am on Saturday, June 3, for the All Ireland Rosary Rally at Knock Shrine. To book, contact the Parish Office on 028 777 62522 or Mairead - 07743264331.

### Maghera

**Cemetery Sunday:** The Blessing of the Graves will take place on Sunday, May 21, at 3 pm.

**May Meditation:** During May, Meditating with Mary prayer meetings take place on Monday evenings at 7.30 pm. All welcome.

**Pray & Play:** The Maghera Parish Pray and Play for Parents, Grandparents & Tots (three years old and younger) meets every Friday, in the Fairhill Youth Centre, after the 10 am Mass. It runs from 10.30 am until 12 noon.

### Malin

**Charity Shop:** Malin Parish Charity Shop will be upstairs in G & S Supermarket, Carndonagh, from

Monday, May 15 for six weeks. Items for the shop and staff volunteers are needed. Contact Martin on 086 8606 890.

### Moville

**Prayer:** The Rosary and Divine Mercy Chaplet will be recited in St Pius X Church, Moville, at 7.30 pm every day, from Sunday – Friday.

**Adoration:** Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place on Mondays, from 2-9 pm, and Wednesdays, 6-9 pm, in St Pius X Church.

### Sion Mills

**Cemetery Blessing:** The annual Ceremony of the Blessing of the Graves will take place in Sion Mills on Sunday, June 4, at 3 pm.

**Legion of Mary:** The Legion of Mary meets in the Green Room, behind the church, each Monday evening at 7.30pm. This is open not only to members of the Legion but to anyone interested in joining. Anyone can come along to the start of the meeting for the Rosary.

### Steelstown

**Parish Pilgrimage:** Our Lady of Lourdes Parish and Steelstown Brian Ogs GAC are planning a joint pilgrimage to Lough Derg. Leaving on Thursday, June 29, at 11 am, and returning at 11am on Saturday, July 1. Pilgrims must be at least 16 years old. Children aged 16 or 17 years must be accompanied by an adult. The cost is E80, bursaries of £50 available for anyone who would need financial help to enable them to go. Contact Lee Casey at leecasey@gmail.com if you want to go or want more information.

**Lectio Divina:** Lectio Divina is

a way of praying the Scriptures together and takes place every Wednesday after 10 am Mass, in the Parish Conference Room. All welcome.

**Adoration:** Spend some quiet time before the Lord Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament each Sunday 6-7 pm. Adoration also continues each Friday after 10 am Mass to 6.50 pm. **Stations of the Cross:** Come along to reflect on the Way of the Cross on Fridays at 7.30 pm.

### Strabane (Camus)

**Adoration:** Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place all day in the Adoration Chapel (Oasis of Peace), which is situated at the back of the Church.

**Prayer Group:** The Contemplative Prayer Group meets on Mondays at 8 pm in the Prayer Room in the Parochial House. All welcome. Entry by Parish Priest's front door. SJYP Society: The St John Vianney branch of the St Joseph's Young Priests' Society (the three combined Strabane parishes) meets on the first Tuesday of the month, excluding January, July and August, with Rosary in the church after 10 am Mass and continues in St Patrick's Hall. More people are encouraged to join in this prayer for new students to join the priesthood. The Society assists Irish and overseas student. Please contact Margaret Harte on 028 71 883159.

**Padre Pio Mass:** The Padre Pio Mass takes place in the Church on the first Wednesday of the month at 7 pm, with Rosary beforehand at 6.40 pm.

**Grotto Rosary:** The Rosary is recited at the Grotto on the last

Sunday of each month. Everyone welcome.

**Cemetery Blessing:** The annual ceremony of the blessing of graves will be held on Sunday, June 4, at 3 pm.

### Templemore – Long Tower

**God Club:** Young people wanting to learn about their Catholic faith are welcome to come along to the 'God Club' in Aras Colmcille, in the grounds of Long Tower Church, on Saturdays, starting at 10.30 am.

**Padre Pio Mass:** A Padre Pio Mass for healing in mind and body takes place on the first Monday of each month at 7.30 pm, in Long Tower Church. It is hoped at the end of each Mass to give a Blessing using a First Class Relic of Padre Pio. The Mass will be streamed via the parish website: [www.longtowerchurch.org](http://www.longtowerchurch.org) then click on the link for the webcam or alternatively by logging on to [www.churchmedia.tv](http://www.churchmedia.tv) Everyone is welcome to attend and the next one will be Monday, May 1.

### Templemore – St Eugene's

**Anniversary Concert:** A 150th Anniversary Celebration Concert will be held in the Cathedral on Sunday, May 21, at 8.30 pm, and will include the Cathedral Choir and Altnagelvin Hospital Choir. All are welcome.

**Laudato Si':** Laudato Si' Week 2023 will be celebrated globally from May 21-28 with the film 'The Letter – A Message for Our Earth', marking the eighth anniversary of Pope Francis' landmark encyclical, Laudato Si', addressed to all of us, on Care for Creation. This year's theme, 'Hope for the Earth. Hope for Humanity,' focuses on the connectedness of all

things and the need for a renewed commitment to environmental justice. A showing of the film, 'The Letter' will take place on Tuesday, May 23, at 7 pm, in St Eugene's Cathedral Hall, Infirmery Road, Derry. Pre-book by calling the Cathedral Parish Office on (+4428) 71262894, as spaces are limited.

**Knitting Jesus:** Knitting Jesus for Children to mark the 150th anniversary of the Cathedral. Are you a knitter? Have you any spare odds and ends of wool? We would like children coming to Mass in St Eugene's Cathedral to receive the gift of a little Jesus to take home with them, to bring to Mass, to help them come to know Jesus better, to pray each day to Him and to stay close to Him. We don't mind what colour of wool used. You may have your own patterns, but we can also provide one. If you think you can help with this project, please contact [tferry@derrydiocese.org](mailto:tferry@derrydiocese.org)/02871264087.

**Matt Talbot Mass:** The Matt Talbot, Freedom from addiction Mass takes place on the first Monday of each month at 7.30 pm in St Eugene's Cathedral.

**Cathedral Voices:** Cathedral Voices is a singing group for people living with dementia and older members of the community. The singing club takes place every Thursday from 1.30-3 pm. A great chance to socialise, listen to music, have a cup of tea and a chat and a bit of craic. If you are interested in attending, please contact the parish office on 028 71262894.

### Three Patrons

**Be Still:** Be Still is a Men's Prayer and Friendship Group that meets

every Thursday night from 8-9.15 pm in Our Lady's Chapel, within St Joseph's Church building, Galliagh. Its mission as a group is to provide a safe place where men can pray and share in a confidential and supportive setting. All men are welcome.

**Holy Hour:** A Holy Hour for the Unborn & Expectant Mothers takes place on Thursdays at 7 pm in Our Lady's Chapel, St Joseph's Church, Galliagh. All welcome.

**Adoration:** Eucharistic Adoration takes place on Mondays after 11 am Mass, until 11 pm, in St Joseph's Church, Galliagh.

**First Saturday:** On the First Saturday of each month, after 11 am Mass in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, there is Adoration and Rosary, ending with Divine Mercy and Benediction at 3 pm.

**Irish Mass:** Irish Mass will be celebrated on Sunday, May 21, at 12.30 pm in St Joseph's Church, Galliagh.

### Waterside & Strathfoyle

**Sick Blessing:** Mass for Blessing of Sick will take place on the Feast of the Sacred Heart, Friday, June 16, at 7.30 pm, in St Columba's Church.

**Lectio Divina:** Reflect on the Scriptures with Lectio Divina in the Church of the Immaculate Conception on Thursday nights, starting at 8.15 pm.

**Cemetery Sunday:** The annual services of intercession for the dead will be held on June 4. The service in Altnagelvin and Ballyoan cemeteries will be held at 3 pm on June 4, and at 6 pm in Ardmore cemeteries on the same day.

## Diary Dates

**Grotto Rosaries:** The 'Rosary at the Grottos' will be running this year for the month of May. Each evening at 8 pm, or a time that suits, people are encouraged to gather at grottos all over the island to pray the Rosary for Ireland.

**Life Novena:** The Pray for Life Novena ([prayforlife.ie](http://prayforlife.ie)) is an invitation to people across Ireland, and the world, to pray for the protection of human life. An initiative of the Council for Life of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, the Novena begins on May 23 and ends on May 31, the Feast of the Visitation of Our Lady to her cousin, Elizabeth.

**Healing Mass:** The Columba Community's next Healing Mass at Columba House, 11 Queen St, Derry, will be celebrated on Thursday, May 25, at 7.30 pm, by Fr Michael Sweeney. It will be followed by individual prayer for healing with blessed oil. All are welcome.

**Irish Mass:** Irish Mass will be celebrated on Sunday, May 21, at 12.30 pm in St Joseph's Church, Galliagh.

**Laudato Si':** Laudato Si' Week 2023 will be celebrated globally from May 21-28 with the film 'The Letter – A Message for Our Earth', marking the eighth anniversary of

Pope Francis' landmark encyclical, Laudato Si', addressed to all of us, on Care for Creation. This year's theme, 'Hope for the Earth. Hope for Humanity,' focuses on the connectedness of all things and the need for a renewed commitment to environmental justice. A showing of the film, 'The Letter' will take place on Tuesday, May 23, at 7 pm, in St Eugene's Cathedral Hall, Infirmery Road, Derry. Pre-book by calling the Cathedral Parish Office on (+4428) 71262894, as spaces are limited. The film will also be shown in St Mary's Hall, Buncrana, on May 23, at 12.30 pm, and in The Exchange, Buncrana, on May 26, at 7.45 pm, to celebrate Laudato Si Week. All welcome.

**Flower Festival:** Spark to a Flame Flower Festival takes place in Christ Church, Buncrana, from Friday, May 26 - Sunday, May 28. The festival will feature over 30 unique and creative floral displays, both inside and outside Christ Church, created by international Master Florists and local designers, who will hold floral demonstrations at various times over the three-day festival.

**Rally for Life:** The Rally for Life 2023 will assemble at 2 pm on Saturday, July 1, at the Garden of Remembrance on Parnell Square in Dublin city centre.

**Summer Concert:** Margaret Keys and Fr Eugene O'Hagan are headlining a Gala Concert, entitled 'Music for a Summer's Evening', in Christ Church, Derry, on Saturday, June 17, at 7.30 pm. Tickets are available via [www.eventbrite.co.uk](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk)

**Education Conference:** A Catholic Schools Diocesan Education Conference will be held in St Columba's College, Derry, on August 29 for Post Primary and August 30 for Primary, with the theme: 'Go Make Disciples of all Nations'. The keynote speaker will be David Wells, an internationally renowned speaker with a background in Education, and there will be a number of workshops and a session looking at how, as Catholic schools, rooted in Jesus, a culture of dialogue and forgiveness is encouraged in all our relationships. A full programme of events, with booking forms will be issued in the coming months.

**Stations of Cross:** On the First Friday of each month, after 10 am Mass in St Eugene's, there is a silent procession from the Cathedral to St Columba's Church, Long Tower, meditating on the Stations of the Cross.

**Coastal Rosary:** Rosary on the Coast for world peace and the protection of unborn babies takes place at Lisfannon Beach,

Buncrana, on the first Sunday of every month at 3 pm, and at Benone Strand on the third Sunday of every month, at 3 pm.

**Men's Rosary:** The Men's Rosary takes place on the first Saturday of every month in Market Street, Omagh (opposite Primark) at 1 pm. All Welcome!

**Rosary Rally:** The All Ireland Rosary Rally takes place in Knock on Saturday, June 3, from 1 pm. As well as praying of the Stations of the Cross and the Rosary, there will be a Rosary talk in the Basilica, at 1 pm, by Bishop Oliver Doeme, of Nigeria, who has a powerful personal testimony about the Rosary to share, and Mass will

be celebrated by the Primate of All Ireland, Archbishop Eamon Martin.

**Sr Clare Mass:** Mass in honour of Sr Clare Crockett is celebrated on the second Sunday of each month, at 7 pm, in Termonbacca. All welcome. The Mass is streamed live via Termonbacca YouTube channel.

**Reading with the Carmelites:** The Carmelite Fathers at Termonbacca hold a monthly session of 'Reading with the Carmelite Saints', to explore learning friendship with Christ through the example of the Carmelite Saints. It takes place on the third Thursday of the month at 7.30 pm.

## Diocesan Diary

**Vocations Holy Hour:** A Holy Hour for Vocations takes place in St Eugene's Cathedral, Derry, at 8 pm on the second Friday of each month.

The next Holy Hour will be on June 9, the Feast of St Columba, and will be the annual Mass celebrated by Bishop Donal in St Columba's Church, Long Tower, at 7.30 pm. The ceremony will begin with the praying of the Rosary in Irish at the outdoor Calvary scene.

After Mass, there will be a procession to St Columba's Well, which will be led by the Colmcille Pipe Band. This will be followed

with refreshments and music in lower Long Tower School, and all are welcome.

**World Youth Day:** Derry Diocesan Youth is taking a group of over 18s on Pilgrimage to World Youth Day in Lisbon, from July 25 to August 7. Still some places available. To register or find out more information contact Lizzie Rea on [lizzie.rea@derrydiocese.org](mailto:lizzie.rea@derrydiocese.org).

**ACCORD:** Accord Derry Marriage Preparation Workshops will take place on the weekend of

May 22-23, June 12-13, and July 3-4. These virtual courses can be booked at [www.accordni.com](http://www.accordni.com).

Accord NI Catholic Marriage Care Service is recruiting Marriage Education Facilitators to provide Sacramental Marriage Preparation for couples in the Diocese. For further details and an application form, please contact Brenda at 028 9023 3002 or email [info@accordni.com](mailto:info@accordni.com)

**City Cemetery Sunday:** The Annual Service of Intercession for the Dead will take place in the City Cemetery on Sunday, June 25, at 3 pm.



# Fr Johnny Doherty CSsR writes... Life to the full



Fr Johnny Doherty CSsR

FOR many people, Easter is now just a vague memory. They have moved on to other things, other concerns, other experiences. However, for us as Christians the Easter Season continues until the end of May. During this time we reflect on the core truth of our faith: "Jesus Christ is risen from the dead". In one of his letters, St Paul tells us clearly and starkly: "If Christ is not risen then our faith is in vain." We need to use this time to grow in our knowledge of what Christ's Resurrection means and to a commitment to what this means to us individually and as a community of faith in our families and parishes.

## Life to the full

Sunday Mass has been a very strong tradition in the Catholic Church, much weakened in more recent times in this part of the world. It is vitally important, however, if we are to grow in our knowledge of and commitment to Christ. Week by week, we have the opportunity of listening to God's Word in the Scripture and tradition. It is also a time when we are nourished in our relationship with Christ and with one another as His Body the Church through the Eucharist.

On Sunday April 30, we celebrated the Fourth Sunday of Eastertide. In the Gospel passage that day we heard the words of Jesus: "I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full." You could not get a clearer statement of intent and desire than that from anyone.

Living the Christian faith is about making that desire of Jesus a reality for everyone. Because Christ is risen from the dead He lives among us and His love is for every human person. The Church is the community of faith whose task is to bring that good news to everyone and show them the way to reach for the fullness of life.

## What does full life mean?

In our society today there is a statement that goes like this: 'You can be whatever you want to be.' It sounds attractive; it sounds right and true. But it is the most misleading and false statement imaginable.

Fullness of life means being the best of who you are. Each of us is born unique. A most amazing truth is that, in the history of the world, no two people have ever been the same. Cloning may bring that sameness about. Nature never does.

Much of our uniqueness is determined by our DNA; our family background and what we inherit from that; our opportunities; our particular gifts and talents etc. The rest depends so much on how we experience ourselves being loved; being believed in; the opportunities we need to develop our gifts and talents, whatever they happen to be. That is what equalises life for everyone and it is there that inequalities happen.

## False hopes

Our society has a lot to say about fulfilment but very little advice on how to achieve it. I suggest that there are three particular approaches that are important but flawed.

**Success:** It is very important that everyone be able to achieve a level of success in their lives. This gives a sense of achievement, of importance, of dignity. However, many people do not experience that.

When society talks about success, they usually hold up celebrities as the examples. Sometimes, these are people who had to overcome social or personal disabilities but were able to make it to the top. What we forget, or overlook, is that these people are few and far between.

There is little or no mechanism for the average, ordinary person to be successful or even noticeable, except maybe at their funeral!

**Possessions:** There is a real conviction in society that if we can be rich enough we will be fulfilled. Of course, this touches into a very important aspect of human living – the need and the right that everyone has to have enough of this world's resources to live a good life.

The fact is that countless people continue to live in poverty; countless people worldwide die of starvation; countless people spend their days and nights in anxiety about tomorrow. All of this, while others live in luxury and a lifestyle of opulence.

**Pleasure:** Pleasure is a very important part of human life. Every person has a need and a right to be able to enjoy living at

all levels of life: physical, spiritual, mental, emotional. But when pleasure becomes the purpose of life it destroys us. This can happen so easily in our world today when there is so much emphasis on doing what you feel like. There are no boundaries accepted in our freedom of action or our freedom of speech.

Living like this is a main source of the very many addictions that cripple countless people today and lead to so much suffering and hardship, especially among our young people.

A real part of human life is also pain and disappointment. We all need to be able to cope with this but there is very little, if any, provision for this in life or in relationships.

## Faith hopes

When Christ tells us that He has come that people may have life and have it to the full, He also gives us the way to achieve this. He tells us that the only way to full human life and happiness is the way of love – "to love God with your whole heart, your whole soul, your whole mind and your whole strength; and to love your neighbour as yourself." That is some loving!

This brings us into the most real parts of our human lives. It also opens up for us a wonderful and exciting vision for human life – that we are not just for here in this world but that our whole lives are leading us towards eternal life and eternal love.

## Facts of life

**Family:** The most important fact of all of our lives is that we have come into this world through a family, grew up in a family, and

have lived all our lives to this point in a family. As President Joe Biden said in his last address in Ballina recently: "Family is the beginning, the middle, and the end."

There is no such thing as a perfect family. The one you or I grew up in was imperfect but it was what has formed us into who we are. Because of this, parents especially have the greatest responsibility to not just to give physical life to their children, but full life also. And parents need the support of all of us in their wonderful task. Parenting is not about what parents give to their children as much as what they help their children to become as individuals.

In our Catholic tradition, the family is named as the Domestic Church, the Church of the home. It is there, especially, that the way of Christ is lived and taught – the way of love.

**Marriage:** It is a fact of life that not all parents are married. Some are living together; others are lone parents; there are today what are called blended families; there are families where the parents are a same sex couple and so on. We have to honour all families and make room for them in our hearts and minds.

However, in our Catholic tradition, a very special place is made for married couples. It is seen as the most appropriate way of living sexually and of bringing children into the world and rearing them.

In the marriage relationship, there is not just love but there is also life-long commitment to live a faithful love. In our society today, this commitment is greatly missing and it is a terrible loss for

human life.

In marriage, you commit yourself to the person you love. Through marriage you keep learning to love the person you married, even when it is difficult – and difficulties will arise! Marriage is the great school for human commitment. And commitment is one of the most important elements for a full and fulfilled human life.

**Community:** In our Catholic tradition, the parish is the community to which we belong. Again, there is no such thing as a perfect parish. The parish is described as a family of families. It is there that we get support for each family and each individual. It is also there that we bring support to each family and individual. That is why it is so important that everyone brings their own gifts and talents to be at the service of others, so that everyone can reach towards the fullness of life.

## Conclusion

A vital fact of life that comes from our faith in Jesus Christ is that the fullness of life can only be fully accomplished in eternal life. Our life here on earth is part of this. And the task of life here is, basically, to prepare for the wonder of eternal life with God and with one another. We can only prepare well for that by living in love now with all that demands of us and all the joy that this promises us.

Through this month of May, it is important to think about all of this and learn to see the beauty and wonder of life lived in love and in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

# The hunger for holiness hasn't gone away

by Fr Peter McCawille SMA



Fr Peter McCawille SMA

FOR the past 40 years, I have been very fortunate in being able to spend Easter week on a private retreat, for many years at the Benedictine monastery in Mid-West Nigeria and this year at Ards Friary, near Creeslough. Though I had participated actively in the Easter Triduum, I was feeling a bit like the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, not downcast

or disappointed but certainly looking forward to spending a few days with the Risen Lord as He made His presence felt in the serene surroundings of the Friary.

For those few days, we listened to our Capuchin companions open up the scriptures for us during the morning Mass and lead us closer, during the rest of the day, to the restful waters that greatly helped to revive our drooping spirits.

For the past 35 years, I felt very much at home living in various parts of Nigeria. Not surprisingly, during the past year it has taken me a fair while to adjust to the less populated landscape back here in Ireland. Through my years in Africa, the one dominant feature that helped the people there to cope with the hardships of daily life (vastly more challenging than anything we experience here in Ireland)

was their sense of humour. Their hunger for holiness was greatly facilitated and enhanced by an effortless instinct for humour that invariably helped to ease them through many a demanding moment. I soon became aware that a smile rather than a smirk is never far from an African face.

While my active missionary life in Nigeria had come to an unexpectedly premature end, due to a stroke, another 'door to the sheepfold', so to speak, happily opened up for me and I was so delighted to be able to respond to various requests to help out in different local parishes/sheepfolds. In those early days back in Tyrone, I found myself making favourable comparisons with the joyous moments I often experienced while engaging with the parishioners throughout my years in West Africa.

I thankfully soon became aware

that the feelings of gloom and doom which often dominate the airwaves here certainly don't always reflect the lived experiences of the faith-filled parishioners, who feel a great sense of belonging to their local parish communities as they try to live out their faith in their daily lives. Their sense of belonging is most evident in their active involvement in parish activities; in liturgical life within the church building and their participation in a whole range of church-related events.

In the Easter Season, we celebrate that in His life, death and resurrection, Christ by his example encourages us to be confident that we, too, can put the fragmented pieces of our lives together again. While Christ's suffering touches the lives of many people who may feel lonely, rejected, despised or

ignored, Christ's resurrection proves that He can help them to gather together the broken pieces and make some sense of their disappointment. The Risen Christ shows us that there is life beyond the pain and disappointment, that there is light at the end of the tunnel.

In leaving behind an empty tomb, Christ gives hope and reassurance to the many people whose lives are often overwhelmed with pain and sadness: an alcoholic, abusive husband or wife; a harsh or uncaring parent; an ungrateful son or daughter; an insensitive and arrogant boss. Christ's resurrection helps us to acknowledge and accept that in God's time, and with the active co-operation of family and friends, everything can be turned to good, love triumphs over hatred, peace replaces chaos and compassion conquers cynicism.

All wounds can be healed and all sins can be forgiven,

A few days spent in the tranquil surroundings of the Ards Friary was my road to an Emmaus experience which helped me to appreciate the comfort of the Resurrection and the company of the Risen Christ on the road. Not for the first time, I realised that it is only faith in the Risen Christ which can help us to gather together the fragmented pieces of our fractured lives.

A daily deluge of drearily negative comment on the airwaves can do nothing to diminish people's solid faith in goodness and kindness. While the institutional Church has lost much credibility, there is increasing evidence of renewed hope and energy in the minds and hearts of people within each parish. The hunger for holiness hasn't gone away, you know!



# Children's Catechism Club - C3

by Veronica Harley

**HELLO children. Welcome to the month of May. This month is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. We offer up special prayers and devotion to Mary who always leads us to Jesus. Some traditional customs to show our love for Mary is the making of a May Altar, where a statue of Mary is placed on a table and surrounded by fresh flowers, or by taking part in a May Crowning of Mary as the Queen of Heaven by crowning a statue of Mary with flowers.**

We also honour Mary on two beautiful feast days during May. On May 13, we celebrate the feast day of Our Lady of Fatima, when the Blessed Virgin appeared to three young children and called for prayer and conversion in the world. The feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary is on May 31. On this day, we remember how Mary, while carrying her Son Jesus within her, went to visit her cousin, Elizabeth to offer her charitable assistance and to tell of God's great mercy.

We continue to celebrate the Easter season and, with spring upon us blossoming forth new life, we wait eagerly for the marvellous feast of Pentecost; the descent of the Holy Spirit and the beginning of the Church. During this month, we will also celebrate the Ascension of Jesus into Heaven and Trinity Sunday. The month of May is bursting with Christian joy.



## The Ascension of Jesus (CCC 659)

"Then He took them out as far as the outskirts of Bethany, and raising His hands He blessed them. Now, as He blessed them, He withdrew from them and was carried up to heaven." (Lk 29:50)

The Ascension of Jesus is a mystery of faith. It always falls 40 days after Easter, which is a Thursday, but most parishes now celebrate this important feast on the following Sunday. The word 'Ascension' means to go up and, on this day, we remember how the earthly body of Jesus went up into Heaven. Jesus was with His disciples on the Mount of Olives, outside Jerusalem, and told them that soon they would receive the power of the Holy Spirit, and to go to preach the Good News of His Resurrection to the whole world. After Jesus ascended, an angel appeared and promised that one

day Jesus would return.



## Pentecost

Pentecost is celebrated 50 days, or the seventh Sunday, after the Resurrection of Jesus and concludes the Easter season. The word 'Pentecost' means fifty and marks the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles. For this reason, it is often called 'the birthday of the Church' (CCC 1076).

At Pentecost, Mary, accompanied by a couple of other women, and the disciples were in an upper room in a house in Jerusalem. While they prayed together, a strong wind came up with a loud noise, and flames of fire came to rest above the heads of the apostles. Immediately they were inspired and filled with courage and strength to go and spread the Word of God. On that first Pentecost Sunday, over 3,000 people were converted and baptised.

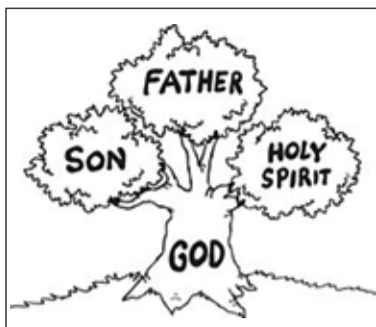


## Saints of the Month

St James and St Philip, Apostles - May 3  
 St Matthias - May 14  
 St. Philip Neri - May 26  
 St Augustine of Canterbury - May 27

## Trinity Sunday

Trinity Sunday is celebrated on the first Sunday after Pentecost and lasts only one day, which is symbolic of the unity of the Trinity. On this



day we remember the truth that God is made up of the Father, the Son (Jesus) and the Holy Spirit. It is a central mystery of our faith (CCC 234) and a little difficult to understand that there can be one God, yet three persons to God. The Bible reveals that there is only one God but that this God is made up of three parts, The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The word we use to describe this 3-in-1 God is 'Trinity'. This word is made up of the word 'Tri' which means three and the word 'unity' which means one, or being unified together.

## Our Lady of Fatima

The Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, appeared six times to three shepherd children, Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta. Between May 13 and October 13, 1917, She came to the little village of Fatima in Portugal. Our Lady brought a special message from God for everyone to hear. She promised that the world would be at peace and many souls would go to Heaven, if people listened to Her requests and obeyed them. Her three requests were penance, prayer and devotion to Her Immaculate heart.

Our Lady told the three children that a great sign from Heaven would happen so that everyone would believe. This miracle took place in Fatima on October 13, 1917, and

was witnessed by 70,000 people. It is called the 'Miracle of the Sun'. Everyone could stare perfectly at the sun without blinking or hurting their eyes. The sun rotated in the sky, became large and small, drew close to the people and then far away from them. Everyone who saw this said that the sun was dancing. It was an extraordinary event that even made unbelievers fall to their knees and beg God for forgiveness.

The message Our Lady brought to Fatima still applies today. She asked that everyone should pray the Rosary every day to overcome evil in the world. Centuries earlier, Our Blessed Mother Mary had given us the Rosary, a very powerful weapon, to keep us safe from harm in this world.

The Rosary is like the sling-shot of King David that killed the mighty enemy because the power of God was behind it. When we pray the Rosary, we have the power of God in our hands, which protects and guards us and leads us to God.

*O my Jesus,  
 forgive us our sins,  
 save us from the fires of hell,  
 lead all souls to heaven,  
 especially those in most need of Thy mercy.*

(Our Lady at Fatima, July 13, 1917)

## The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

'My soul proclaims the greatest of the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, because he has looked upon the lowliness of his servant, yes from now onwards all generations will call me blessed' (Luke 1:46-48).

The Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary is May 31. Visitation means 'to visit'. The Angel Gabriel told Mary that Her cousin Elizabeth was going to have a baby

boy, so Mary set off at once to visit Elizabeth.

Mary, too, was expecting a baby; Baby Jesus. When She arrived at Elizabeth's house, the Holy Spirit revealed to Elizabeth that Mary was going to become the Mother of God. Elizabeth greeted Mary with the words 'Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb' (Luke 1:42; CCC 2676).

While Elizabeth and Mary greeted each other, the baby boy in Elizabeth's womb leapt for joy. He would later be called John the Baptist.

Elizabeth asked Mary, "Why should I be honoured with a visit from the Mother of my Lord?" Mary responded in humility and spoke of how God had blessed Her so richly. "Holy is His name," Mary exclaimed.

During Her visit, the Blessed Virgin Mary brought many graces to Her cousin Elizabeth's house. St John the Baptist, while still hidden in his mother's womb, was cleansed of original sin. His father, Zechariah who had lost his voice, got his speech back after John was born. Saint Elizabeth was filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Mary remained at Elizabeth's house for three months before returning to Nazareth.



## Quiz Time with Lawrence

- Which is the smallest planet in our solar system?
- Of all the countries in the world, which has the most islands?
- In which city is the US Masters golf tournament played?
- In what year did EastEnders first air on the BBC?
- Alphabetically, who is the first of the five Brontë sisters?
- What Stephen King novel is set mainly in 'The Overlook Hotel'?
- What monumental discovery was made by Alexander Fleming?
- How many matches make up cricket's 'Ashes' series?
- What is the capital city of Vietnam?
- What colour are the seats in the UK House of Commons?
- Who recorded the theme song for the Bond film 'GoldenEye'?
- What body of water makes up approximately 20% of the earth's surface?
- Which Irish city is known as "The city of the Tribes"?
- Who was the last Irishman to be crowned World Snooker champion?
- Made in Scotland - Caboc, Crowdie and Dunlop are brands of what type of food?
- What is the difference between a pelican crossing and a pedestrian crossing?
- According to the novel set in New York in the 1880s, by what title did Cedric Errol come to be known?
- In which country would you find the headquarters and main production factory for Porsche cars?
- What actor played the role of landlord 'Rigsby' in the sitcom 'Rising Damp'?
- In which city was the current Pope, Francis born?
- Which famous singer/songwriter is backed by the E-Street Band?
- What is the Christian name of President Joe Biden's wife; the current First Lady of the US?
- Who is the Patron Saint of Musicians?
- Footballer, Nicolas Anelka played for six different English clubs, but can you name the only of them for whom he made over 100 appearances?
- Which city is served by Orly airport?

**Quiz Answers:** 1, Mercury; 2, Sweden; 3, Augusta; 4, 1985; 5, Anne; 6, The Shining; 7, Penicillin; 8, Best of Five; 9, Hanoi; 10, Green; 11, Tina Turner; 12, The Atlantic Ocean; 13, Galway; 14, Ken Doherty in 1997; 15, Cheese; 16, Pedestrian crossing is controlled by traffic lights; 17, Little Lord Fauntleroy; 18, Germany; 19, Leonard Rossiter; 20, Buenos Aires; 21, Bruce Springsteen; 22, Jill; 23, St Cecilia; 24, Chelsea; 25, Paris.



Aghyaran, Ardmore, Ardstraw West & Castlederg, Ballinascreen, Ballymagroarty, Banagher, Bellaghy, Buncrana, Carndonagh, Claudy,

# Let Your Light Shine!

Clonmany, Coleraine, Creggan, Culladuff, Culmore, Desertmartin, Donnyloop, Drumquin, Dunamansha, Dungiven, Fahan, Faughanvale, Garvagh, Gortin, Greencastle,

Moville, Newtownstewart, Omagh, Plumbridge, Strabane, Swatragh, Templemore - Long Tower and St Eugene's, Three Patrons, Waterside



"The Eucharist is the highway to heaven."



"It is important to go to confession often."



"To always be close to Jesus, that's my life plan".



"Find God and you will find the meaning of your life."



"When we face the sun we get a tan... but when we stand before Jesus in the Eucharist we become saints."



"It is very important to pray that Jesus Christ be loved and known by all peoples throughout the world."



"What really counts in life is the nobility of the soul or the manner in which we love God and neighbour...all men and women are created by God."



"Continuously ask your guardian angel for help. Your guardian angel has to become your best friend."

## Blessed Carlo Acutis inspiring youth during Cathedral 150th celebration



"We are all likely to fall short because as soon as someone says something we don't like, we instantly grow angry."



"[I cannot understand] why many people are so concerned with the beauty of their bodies rather than spending time on the beauty of their souls."



"The more Eucharist we receive, the more we will become like Jesus, so that on this earth we will have a foretaste of heaven".



"I am happy to die because I have lived my life without wasting a minute on those things which do not please God."



"All people are born as originals but many die as photocopies"



"Sadness is looking at ourselves, happiness is looking towards God."



"The more we learn to love, the more we will enjoy eternal blessedness with God"



"The only thing we have to ask God for, in prayer, is the desire to be holy."



"I love to talk with Jesus about everything I am experiencing and feeling."

Greenlough, Iskaheen, Killyclogher, Killygordon, Kilrea, Lavey, Leckpatrick, Lifford, Limavady, Maghera, Magilligan, Malin, Melmount,