

# The NET

Sharing fruits of faith in Derry Diocese

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See inside...



Gaelscoil Neachtain 10th Anniversary - Dungiven.

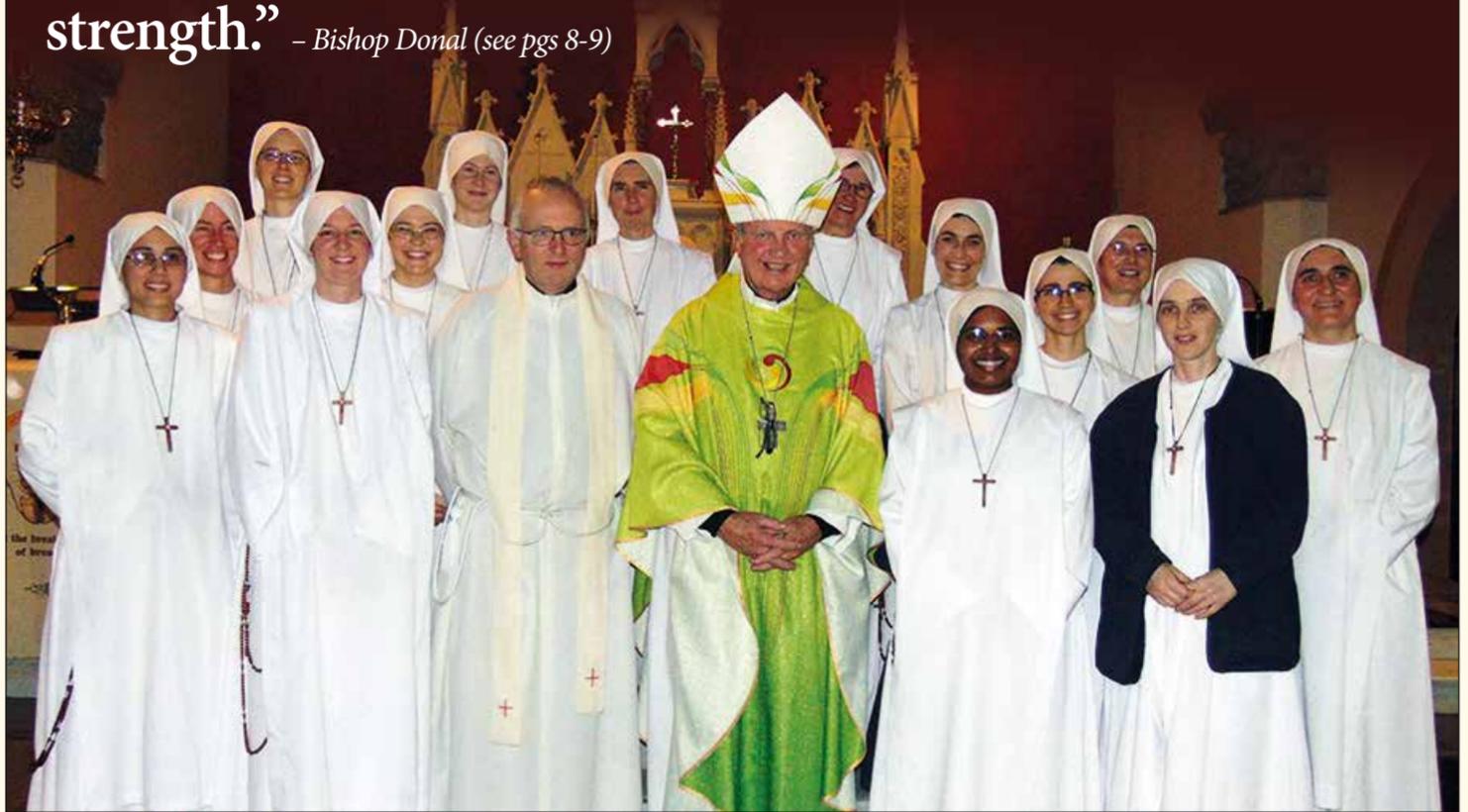


Memorial Tea - Urney & Castlefinn



Hallowe'en Treats - Ballinascreen.

**“We welcome four sisters from the Home of the Mother...By their simplicity of life they point to both Calvary and Resurrection. Their weakness is their strength.”** – Bishop Donal (see pgs 8-9)



Home of the Mother Servant Sisters with Bishop Donal and Fr Patsy Arkinson, PP Sessiaghoneill, at the Foundation Mass for the Order in Crossroads, Killygordon.



Glenock Fundraiser Walk - Newtownstewart.



Mission Rosary Walk - Banagher



Saints Party - Galliagh



Sr Clare Birthday Mass - Long Tower

People in focus



Evan Curran - Waterside.



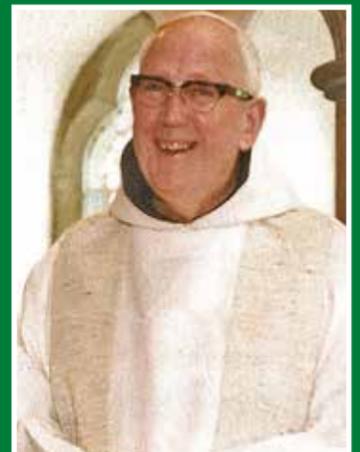
Fr Eddie Gallagher - Greencastle.



Ivor Doherty - Long Tower.



Mgr Andy Dolan & Brian McCallion - Bellaghy.



Fr Martin Dowley RIP - Portglenone

Also featuring: Derry Youth Update; Dungiven welcome 'Do This In Memory' Programme; St Joseph's Boys' Liturgy Team; Young Writers feature; Children's Catechism Club; Long Tower Novena; Camus Parish Church Tours; Clonleigh Mission; Long Tower Book Launch; Teresa of Avila Pilgrimage; Quiz...and much more...

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Mercy Sister, Sr Deirdre Mullan, who is based in New York, reflects on the Holy Father's prayer intention for November... "For children who suffer. We pray for children who are suffering, especially those who are homeless, orphans, and victims of war; may they be guaranteed access to education and the opportunity to experience family affection."

## Keep a laser focus on Pope Francis' intention for child victims by finding out what is happening



Sr Deirdre Mullan, Mercy Sister based in New York.

POPE Francis' intention for this month is so very poignant. Parts of our world are riddled with child victims of war, small babies and infant refugees. Many, too many, are homeless in a world of plenty.

Violence against children takes many forms. It can be physical, emotional or sexual. It happens in all countries and any setting - in a child's home, community, school and online. In some parts of the world, violent discipline is socially accepted and common. And for many girls and boys, violence comes at the hands of the people they trust - their parents or caregivers, teachers, peers and neighbours.

When Pope Francis asks each of us to pray for all children who suffer, especially those

who are refugees, homeless, orphans or victims of war, I know he means us to be proactive and to be people of prayer in action.

Ireland, in recent months, has witnessed untold violence against small children at the hands of people they know. It is shameful and disturbing. How could one inflict suffering on little ones, innocence ones, trusting ones?

### The many faces of violence against children

Violence against children has many faces and forms: physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, domestic violence, emotional abuse and more.

Here are some disturbing statistics:

- Every five minutes a child dies from violence. (The Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children 2016)
- One billion children - over half of all children aged 2 to 17 - are estimated to have experienced emotional, physical and/or sexual violence. (WHO 2019)
- One in 10 girls - 120 million - under the age of 20 has been subjected to forced sexual acts. (UNICEF 2014)
- Nearly one in four children

- an estimated 535 million worldwide - live in a country affected by conflict or disaster. (UNICEF 2016)

### How to put an end to Violence against children

As well as prayer and supporting organizations that are focused on the rights of the child, the following points are proactive ways of ending the suffering of children:

- Supporting and strengthening families to foster stable and positive relationships.
- Empowering communities and raising awareness among national and community stakeholders to create safer environments for children.
- Strengthening support networks to help others respond appropriately to cases of child abuse and risks of violence.
- Providing nurturing environments and quality care to facilitate recovery and resilience of children who have experienced violence.
- Supporting care professionals so they can keep children from harm and help those affected by violence overcome their trauma.
- Child safeguarding through faithful implementation

of the International Child Safeguarding Standards and providing safe ways to report abuse.

Finally, keep a laser focus on Pope Francis' intention for November for child victims, by informing yourself about what is happening.

Readers of 'The Net' might find the statement delivered by Archbishop Caccia, the Ambassador of the Holy See to the United Nations, helpful. At the at 2022 Commission on Social Development (CSSD), Archbishop Caccia called on all of us to look at some key issues which contribute to violence against the child.

Poverty is not just a matter of financial resources. It appears in a variety of forms, including non-monetary deprivations such as a lack of basic resources, including housing, electricity, safe drinking water and sanitation, as well as lack of access to healthcare and education.

Lack of access to education is particularly concerning. Education is "the primary vehicle of integral human development" [6] and provides the necessary tools for the spiritual, moral, and social growth of the

person. Education creates the conditions needed to break the vicious cycle of poverty and lack of opportunity, thus making it possible for the poor "to shape his or her own future." [7]

School closures have hit the poorest, and children in vulnerable situations and their families the hardest. Millions of children who were already in vulnerable situations became victims of social conditions that forced them into child labour and other forms of exploitation, preventing their return to school.[8] Moreover, the disruption of school meal programmes, often the only reliable source of daily meals for many children in the poorest regions of the world, has contributed to an increase in food insecurity and malnutrition.

When we are informed, active and try to contribute to the well-being of all children, we begin by asking questions of our political representatives and how they are implementing and monitoring every aspect of child security; that is prayer in action.

Remember, it is not enough to be compassionate - WE MUST ACT.

## Diary Dates

**Healing Night:** The monthly Healing Night with the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal in St Joseph's Church, Galliagh, in Derry, takes place on Friday, December 2, at 7 pm.

**Steelstown Nativity:** Search Youth Faith Group, Derry,

is presenting the Nativity in Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Steelstown, on Sunday, December 4, from 7-8 pm.

**Crib Festival:** The Tattysallagh Nativity Crib Festival will be held in St Joseph's Hall, Omagh, beside Sacred Heart Church, on December 3 and 4, from 10 am to 7 pm.

**Advent Retreat:** There will be an Advent Retreat for ladies in the Carmelite Retreat Centre, Termonbacca, on Sunday nights at 8 pm.

**Long Tower Novena:** The Annual Solemn Novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help, for the nine Sundays before Christmas, continues in St Columba's Church, Long Tower

on Sundays at 6 pm.

**Scripture Meditation:** Meditation on the Gospels of Advent, using Lectio Divina, takes place in the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Trench Road, Derry, on Thursdays at 8.15 pm

**Holy Hour for the Unborn:** A Holy Hour for the Unborn and

Expectant Mothers takes place on Thursdays in Our Lady's Chapel, within St Joseph's Church, Galliagh, from 7 pm.

**Advent Healing Service:** An Advent Healing Service is taking place each Sunday during Advent in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill at 5 pm, and in St Patrick's Church, Glen, Maghera, at 6 pm

## Divine Child Novena

THE Termonbacca nine-day Novena praying to the Divine Child in preparation for Christmas begins on Wednesday, December 8. This Novena is inspired by the old Carmel tradition dating back to the time of St Teresa of Avila.

In this tradition, the image of the Child Jesus from the crib would spend nine nights moving from cell to cell, and the nun or monk would hold a 24-hour time of prayer, keeping vigil with the Child, reminding themselves of

the whole purpose of the incarnation was 'the word becoming flesh and living among us (John 1:4).

Today, the child Jesus statue from the crib at Termonbacca journeys around the city, spending 24 hours in a different parish before moving on to the next. People walk with the child Jesus, praying as it makes its way from Church to Church, and all are welcome to join in this prayer walk.

Each night there will be reminding themselves of Mass with Novena Prayers.

Parishioners can submit prayer intentions which will be written on a 'straw' strip and placed in the empty manger to prepare a bed for the Child Jesus.

The Novena will conclude on Thursday, December 16, with Mass at 7.30 pm and the child Jesus being placed in the manger.

The route is as follows: Thursday, December 8, leaving Termonbacca at 6.30 pm going to St Mary's Church Creggan for Mass at 7.30 pm; Friday 9, St Columba's Church Long Tower, Mass at 7.30 pm;

Saturday 10, Holy Family Ballymagroarty, Mass at 6 pm; Sunday 11, St Joseph's Galliagh, Mass at 6.30 pm; Monday 12, St Brigid's Carnhill, Mass at 7.30 pm; Tuesday 13, Our Lady of Lourdes Steelstown, Mass at 6.30 pm; Wednesday 14, St Patrick's Pennyburn, Mass at 7 pm; Thursday 15, St Columba's Chapel Road, Mass at 7.30 pm, and Friday 16, Termonbacca, Mass at 7.30 pm.

As many people as possible are welcome to come and join in this time of preparation for Christmas.

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

 **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

# What saint is knocking at your door?



a particular saint keeps coming to your attention, well that saint may be the one who wants to be your friend and help you to get to Heaven, and will intercede for you.”

Referring to the Gospel story of Jesus calling to Zacchaeus up the tree, Fr Francesco said: “When Jesus called to Zacchaeus to hurry down as He was going to stay at his house, the people complained, as they saw Zacchaeus as a selfish man who thought of no-one but himself.

“Jesus wants to spend time with me, the sinner. He didn’t say, get your act together and then we can hang out. If we mess up or make a mistake, God draws closer. It is us who moves away, as we don’t feel worthy.

“Zacchaeus got down out of the tree and Jesus went to his house. He did not let his unworthiness to have this amazing man in his presence get in the way of spending time with this famous preacher that all the crowds were following. Jesus wants to spend time with us not because we have our act together, but because we

YOUNG people from the Youth Prayer Group based in Pio House, in Galliagh, organised a saint-themed party following the celebration of the weekly Youth Mass in St Joseph’s Church on Sunday, October 30.

Celebrating the Mass, Fr Francesco Gavazzi, cfr, spoke about sainthood in his homily, and asked the young people gathered: “What saint is knocking at your door?”

He continued: “Maybe someone gave you a book about a saint or



don’t”.

“Zacchaeus was changed after that day, after all those hours he spent with Jesus,” noted Fr Francesco, adding: “He told Jesus that he was going to give half of his stuff to the poor and if he ripped off anyone, he would give it back. Spending time with Jesus

changes us. We just have to keep our hearts open and pray that Psalm: ‘Of you my heart has said, Seek His face! Your face, Yahweh, I seek; do not turn away from me’ (Psalm 27: 8-9).

“We are here tonight and it is like climbing a tree. We are going to catch a glimpse of Jesus”.



## Dungiven Parish celebrates Enrolment Mass for ‘Do This in Memory’ programme



The Dungiven Parish has celebrated an Enrolment Mass of the ‘Do This in Memory’ programme for the First Holy Communicants. Included are Fr Joseph Varghese, CC, Cora O’Kane, co-ordinator, and volunteers, along with the young boys and girls.

Online Programme  
Continues on Monday  
join us live to find out  
Task and theme!

Join us live 7pm  
@derryyouth

## Derry Youth update by Lizzie Rea

THE Diocesan youth department will be running an online Advent programme starting on November 28 at 7.30 pm and it will run for the four Mondays of Advent.

The programme will be a great way for students who are doing their Pope John Paul II Award to receive hours.

We have some guest speakers who will be reflecting on themes such as waiting and Mary’s ‘Yes’. If you would like to sign up, please email [lizzie.rea@derrydiocese.org](mailto:lizzie.rea@derrydiocese.org).

The Online programme continues and is also another opportunity for Pope John Paul II Award students to receive their hours. The programme is on every Monday at 7pm and the team are joined by Bishop Donal, and we

have a different theme and task each week.

The Scholarship Programme is up and running again for its third year. This year, we have seven young people from across the Diocese who have signed up and will be working with us for the next number of months.

This Programme focuses on four key points. These are: learning & growing in faith; meeting new people; learning valuable life skills; and working closely with a charity, to fundraise for them and raise awareness.

We are delighted that these young people have signed up and we are looking forward to working together with them over this next year.

Advent Online Programme

Sign up to our Online Advent programme  
Great way to get some hours for your Pope John Paul II Award

Starting 28th Nov 7:30PM on Zoom running for the 4 Mondays of Advent use the QR code below to sign up.

OUR THEME IS

## Preparing Our Hearts

@DERRY YOUTH  
Instagram

# Dungiven Gaelscoil community celebrate 10 years of Gaelscoil Neachtain



THE 10th anniversary of Gaelscoil Neachtain, Dungiven, was marked on Wednesday, October 26, with a gathering of the local Gaelscoil community for a wonderful celebration of Mass in Irish by Bishop Donal, which got underway with the lighting of a special anniversary candle that will be lit every morning in the school for everyone's intentions.

Bishop Donal was joined on the altar by Fr Seamus Kelly, PP Dungiven, Fr Joseph Varghese, CC Dungiven, Fr Arthur O'Reilly, PEm Banagher, and Fr Pat O'Hagan, PP Bellaghy-Ballyscullion Parish, for the Eucharistic celebration in the Church of the Immaculate Conception, in Gortnaghy, where the children travelled to by bus as the installation of new seating had not been completed in St Patrick's Church, Dungiven.

Pupils, R1-R7, and staff members were joined by past pupils, parents, grandparents, governors, past and present, and friends of the Gaelscoil down through the years for the Mass of Thanksgiving, with representatives of the school community, including staff, pupils, governors and parents, taking part.

A fluent Irish speaker, Bishop Donal came down from the altar to engage with the children during the homily. Referencing

the Gospel and readings, he told them how they were the "light of the world" – "Is sibhse solas an domhain" – and encouraged them not to be worried about anything – "Ná bígí imníoch faoi rud ar bith..." He also reminded them that God is with them, always – "...tá mise taobh leat."

The celebration was further enhanced by beautiful music during the Mass from Múinteoir Fionnuala and Cór Neachtain, along with Nodlaig Ní Brollaigh and harpists from Scoil Ruairí Dall.

At the end of the ceremony, the principal, Máirín Uí Cheallaigh spoke to those present. After thanking Bishop Donal and the priests who concelebrated the Mass, she thanked the staff, past and present. She went on to thank the parents, past and present, for entrusting their children to the care of Gaelscoil Neachtain and for their support over the years.

She also spoke of the day as a day for reflection, saying, "We remember, with gratitude, all those who worked tirelessly to establish Gaelscoil Neachtain, more than 10 years ago, especially the founding Governors. We remember especially Francie Brolly, who was at the heart of setting up Gaelscoil Neachtain. Ar Dheis Dé go Raibh a Anam.

"We also remember the parents who took a leap of faith 10

years ago and who supported the Gaelscoil no matter how challenging the circumstances. They had great vision and believed that if you do something for the right reasons, good will come from it. And so it has. Go raibh maith agaibh."

An open invitation was extended to all present to return to Gaelscoil Neachtain where the celebrations continued with excellent refreshments being provided by Cairde Neachtain, the Gaelscoil's Parents Association.

Speaking of his delight to be with the school community of Gaelscoil Neachtain to celebrate Mass and give thanks for the growth in the last 10 years, Bishop Donal told 'The Net': "This is a school where faith is an important element in their identity".

He added: "There is a great growth in Irish medium education. When they are invited, it is important that parishes and clergy are supportive of the work being done for the sake of the pupils. I am grateful to the good number of priests who minister to Irish-speaking adults and children across the diocese.

"Thank God for the dedicated staff and others who make Scoil Neachtain such a vibrant school community, which celebrates, learning, culture and faith."



# Tasty treats enjoyed at Ballinascreen Hallowe'en Coffee Morning

THE Hallowe'en Cake Sale and Coffee Morning organised by the Ballinascreen Parish attracted parishioners from all corners of the parish and beyond.

Parish Priest, Fr Peter Madden said that everyone enjoyed a lovely get together at one of the first parish social events held since March 2020.

The event was held in St Colm's GAC on Saturday, October 29, and a mouth-watering display of home bakes were available to enjoy along with a cuppa, as well as to buy for another treat back home, thanks to the many parishioners who offered to bake.

Raffle tickets were also bought for the wonderful array of prizes, which were generously donated by local businesses.



During a weekend of good news for the City and Diocese of Derry, St Columba's Church, Long Tower was the beautiful setting for the...

# 40th Birthday celebration for the late Sr Clare Crockett

IN keeping with her motto, 'All or Nothing', the celebration of the late Sr Clare Crockett's 40th birthday was quite an eventful weekend. As well as a large number of people joining her family in St Columba's Church, Long Tower for a special birthday Mass on the Friday night, November 11, to mark the occasion, there was a big turnout on the Sunday to officially welcome Sr Clare's Order, the Home of the Mother Servant Sisters to the Derry Diocese, at their Foundation Mass across the border in the Killygordon Parish. And there was also great delight that Derry City FC had won the 2022 FAI Cup Final, which many of her family and friends had travelled to Dublin to watch in the Aviva Stadium.

All this in the lead up to Sr Clare's birthday on Monday, November 14, had many agreeing that the 'All or Nothing' nun, whose cause for beatification is awaiting the Nihil Obstat from Rome so that it can be officially opened, is being kept as active as ever with all the prayers from people in many parts of Ireland and the world seeking her intercession.

In the absence of a birthday cake, 40 blue and white candles were lit within the sanctuary, beneath a large framed photograph of the young nun from the Brandywell, who died on April 16, 2016, when the building she was in collapsed during an earthquake in Ecuador. The Mass was concelebrated by Fr Gerard Mongan, Adm Long Tower, and Fr Cajetan Apeh ocd, with Fr Stephen Quinn ocd, who has been celebrating monthly Sr Clare Masses in the Discalced Carmelite Retreat Centre, at Termonbacca, over the years since her death, unable to attend due to illness.

In his homily, Fr Gerard referred to the number 40 having a significant meaning in the Bible: "Think of the 40 days and 40 nights of rain floods with Noah's ark. Moses was on the mountain 40 days and 40 nights before he revealed God's commandments. It took the Hebrew people 40 years to find the Promised Land, and Jesus spent 40 days fasting in

the desert before His crucifixion and was seen on the earth for 40 days after His crucifixion.

"A 40-something time period, whether days, months, or years is always a period of testing, trial and ends with a period of restoration, revival or renewal. At the age of 40, you have earned your place; you have made an identity for yourself. When you look back on your life you might see a reflection of good and bad experiences over all those years. The big 4-0 gives you a place to look back on your life, to reflect on things that you couldn't change and things you could, and to look forward to what is coming next".

### Joy

He added: "We can imagine Sr Clare at 40 tonight. What would she have been like? She would have had some life to look back on! We can just imagine her smiling face, still with the same boundless energy that she always had and full of fun, with an even greater joy in the Lord serving Him in her vocation.

"She certainly would have understood the importance of 40 years and 40 days in the scriptures. For the 33 years of her short life, she lived the biblical 40 of wandering in the desert of the passing things of this world that gave her no peace, of being tried and tested, of turning her life around and living a life restored and renewed in Jesus.

"I've no doubt, if she had been alive in this world tonight, she would have been more determined than ever to keep going in the desert of this testing life to the Promised Land of Heaven. She just got there quicker than the rest of us!"

"Sr Clare is certainly rejoicing with us from Heaven," remarked Fr Gerard, saying: "Her party piece, strumming on her guitar and singing a song of encouragement to cheer us on to keep running in the race to the finish, fight the good fight to the end, and to keep the faith. No matter what age we are in this Church tonight, or watching on webcam at home, Sr Clare remains an inspiration for life.



"Many teachers show 'All or Nothing' to their students in RE class and they love her story. Many of us can say that she often comes powerfully to our minds, and we feel compelled to pray to her, and when we think of her extraordinary life, we may well experience a deep peace which can only be described as transcendent.

"We keep her picture on our windows, we glance with pride on her murals, we visit her resting place, and we light her candles as a flame of our faith in her intercession, imploring her help, even for a miracle. God has answered many a prayer through Sr Clare already."

Like St Columba of Derry, Fr Gerard noted: "Clare was chosen by God to show us the way to God. Clare lived the Gospel we heard tonight. She knew she that what she did to help the stranger, in the sick, in the prisoner, in the hungry, she was doing it to Jesus. In the words of St John,

she 'lived a life of love' with her beautiful heart and spirit full of faith that changed the lives of so many people. In this world of so many 'deceivers' and things that are 'anti-Christ', to use St John's words, what would Clare's birthday wish be for us?"

"I would safely say none other than the words of St John tonight, 'to live a life of love...to love one another...to see and serve Jesus in the weakest and most vulnerable...to keep within the teaching of Christ...keep to what He taught'. Pray for us all Sr Clare and happy birthday to eternal life. Amen."

Later, when the Offertory gifts were being carried to the altar by two of Sr Clare's nieces, the 'Happy Birthday' tune was softly played on the harp.

The 40th birthday celebration was organised by the local Sr Clare Committee, and included refreshments after Mass in the nearby St Columba Heritage Centre.



## Adoration, Search, Sr Clare Prayer Group and St Joseph's School Liturgy Team - Waterside teenager, Evan Curran shares his faith story...

# I will see where God leads me



Evan Curran, Waterside Parish, who attends St Joseph's Boys' School, Derry.

ST Joseph's Boys' School pupil, Evan Curran has grown up with a strong faith and desire to become a priest, and as he continues to discern the possibility of a priestly vocation, he is enjoying being a Minister of the Word in his Waterside Parish and in St Columba's Church, Long Tower, as well as being a member of the recently formed Liturgy Team at his school.

The 14-year-old lives in the Waterside with his parents, Kelley and Gerald Curran, and is the second youngest in a family of three boys and one girl.

Commenting on his parents' good example in practising the Catholic faith, Evan said: "Mammy and daddy are strong in their faith and regularly attend Mass, and they have done Cursillo.

"Growing up, they taught us to pray before going to bed; to ask God to protect us and to pray in thanksgiving for the day, the people we met and the opportunities we got. We were always taught to be thankful".

While he is active in the life of his

own parish in the Waterside, Evan has a special place in his heart for the Long Tower too, explaining: "We used to live in Bishop's Street and so Long Tower was my parish initially, and is where I was christened.

"My daddy was born in 'The Bog' and the Long Tower was his parish growing up. I loved staying there with my granny and granda for sleepovers at weekends and going to Mass with them on the Saturday night in the Long Tower. It is a beautiful church".

He added that the faith of his paternal grandparents, Bridget and Alec Curran, who have been members of Cursillo for many years, was also a source of encouragement for him.

Recalling that he had been about five years old when he first thought of priesthood, Evan said: "It was like a voice in the back of my head telling me, 'You are going to be a priest'. I thought that this may be the voice of God and so I should go with it. It is not something I was forced into by anyone. It was me who said that I wanted to be a priest, and I loved dressing up as a priest and celebrating Mass.

"My family are very supportive and tell me that if that is what I want to do then go with it, but don't feel like I have to. My maternal grandmother tells me that she knows I want to be a priest, as I have always said that, but that I should give it some time to see what happens, as it is a life vocation".

He added: "My three main friends know that I want to be a priest and, while they are not religious, they are supportive, saying that if that is what I want to do, then do it".

He went on to say that there had been a priest in the family before, in his mother's side of the family: "My granny had a cousin a priest, called Fr Cathal McGonagle.

He was born in Stranorlar, Co Donegal, but was a parish priest in Westminster. I always heard about him, but never met him, and he passed away in 2010".

Evan also appreciates the support he has received from the school chaplain at St Joseph's; first Fr Patrick Lagan, who has moved from the Cathedral Parish to minister in the Waterside, and now Fr Roni Zacharias.

He said: "When I was a First Year and told Fr Patrick that I wanted to be a priest, he got me more involved and said I could be sacristan at the 8.30 am school Mass, which was on Thursday mornings then, but is now on Tuesday mornings.

"Our new chaplain now is Fr Roni and he gets me to read at the Tuesday morning Masses in school".

He has also recently begun reading at the Monday, Wednesday and Friday evening Masses in St Columba's Church, Long Tower.

"I was going to Mass every night during the week in the Long Tower and I noticed that the priest, Fr Mongan, had to do the reading himself," remarked Evan, adding: "So, I contacted him to say that I would read as I had experience reading in my parish at the weekends, and he then arranged a rota for readers.

"Fr Mongan is very approachable, quiet and calm. I think he is a great role model for anyone thinking of being a priest".

This past year, Evan has been on the reading rota for the 10.15 am Sunday Mass in Immaculate Conception Church in the Waterside, where his mother sings in the Folk Group.

### Search

And he has just recently experienced his first Search weekend, which was held at the



Evan, right, with some of the newly launched Liturgy Team at St Joseph's Boys' School, Derry.

Disalced Carmelite Retreat Centre, Termonbacca.

Commenting on this experience, Evan said: "My Search weekend was very moving. It gave me time to sit and reflect on what I want to do. It was also an opportunity to come before the Blessed Sacrament and to meet different people. I met some adults there who would be a good influence in life.

"I now go to the Search meetings every Sunday night, from 7-9 pm. We chat, get to know each other, have a cup of tea, do drama and end with prayer. What is lovely is that it is open prayer, where you speak your petition out. I really like it".

Evan and his mother have also started going to the Tuesday night Sr Clare Prayer Group, which his granny has been attending for a while.

"It is a lovely group led by Mickey Doherty, where the Rosary is said and people can speak their petitions," remarked Evan, who, like many, only became aware of Sr Clare after she died.

He added: "I read a lot about Sr Clare on Facebook, and during lockdown I watched the 'All or Nothing' film and now have a bit of a devotion to her. I think she should be canonised a saint. People have had prayers answered through her intercession. My granny loves Sr Clare and prays

to her. She always says if you want anything to go to Sr Clare and she will help.

"My nephew was seriously ill and had to go through an operation, and I prayed constantly to Sr Clare and he is ok now".

While he has a growing devotion to Sr Clare, Evan's primary relationship is with God and loves spending time with Him in Eucharistic Adoration.

Commenting on this, he said: "Adoration is on Fridays from 10 am to 10 pm in St Columba's Church, in the Waterside, and when I was at Chapel Road Primary School, I would have called in for five minutes after I came home from school. Then I changed to Sacred Heart Primary School, and the teachers there were very encouraging when I said that I wanted to be a priest.

"Now, I go to Adoration every fortnight, but not always in St Columba's Church, and for me it is an opportunity to sit in silence and have a conversation with Jesus. People may think that is silly, but I see Jesus as a person and talk to Him. I tell Him how my day has gone and thank Him for things I have received, and I ask forgiveness for things I should not have done.

"I believe that if I have that conversation with Jesus, the following day He will help me to be a better person. So, I see time in

Adoration as helping me to grow to be a better person. Sometimes, I get easily frustrated about things and it helps to be able to turn to God and get the strength to take time to calm down and think things over".

Evan has also found that his time in Adoration has helped him to become a better listener and someone his peers find approachable and easy to talk to.

And so it is easy to see why he was asked to join his School's Liturgy Team, which includes Deacon Michael McCaul, three pupils, staff members from the school pastoral team, and the mother of a pupil.

"I was asked by Mrs McGinley, who was my RE teacher from First to Third Year, if I would be part of the Liturgy Team. I wasn't sure what that involved but I decided to give it a go anyway," remarked Evan.

He added: "At our first meeting, we discussed how to get boys more involved with the Church during Advent. Deacon Michael suggested a Jesse Tree in the main foyer and I suggested regular Confession and Adoration".

As a fourth year, Evan is studying for his GCSEs and hopes to go on to study his favourite subjects, History and Politics at A'level.

"After that," he said, "I will see where God leads me".

## St Joseph's Boys' School launches Liturgy Team to develop faith tradition by Fiona Harrigan-Stewart

ST Joseph's Boy's School has a tradition of nurturing its rich and loving Catholic Ethos.

From the school's entrance to its classrooms, offices and surroundings, we aspire to instil gospel values within our learning community. We value every opportunity to celebrate as servants of Christ in our deeds and words.

In an effort to develop the school's faith tradition, we felt it was crucial, now more than ever, to continue to listen to the voice of our students, their parents, as well as staff and Church, when reimagining ways in which to celebrate our faith in a post-pandemic climate which left so many of us isolated and alone.

We wanted to re-connect and reach out to each other as a community in communion and find new ways to celebrate our Christian faith, and so, our Liturgy Team was born! Comprising of Deacon Michael McCaul, Mrs Warren (parent), Year 12 student, Evan Curran, Year 14 student, Aaron McCafferty, Year 8 student, Caleb Moore, teacher representative, Mr Paul Quigley, liturgies co-ordinator, Mrs Ciara McGinley, and Learning Support Manager, Mrs Fiona Harrigan-Stewart, we committed to joining together to fortify our faith.

The team's aim is to promote and celebrate our school's Catholic vision and beliefs, community and family.

The first meeting was a perfect opportunity to talk about what everyone had missed over the past two years. We discussed the importance of just being together, listening to each other and prayer. Furthermore, we considered how to reinvigorate the approach towards marking significant dates in the liturgical calendar in ways that complement and enhance the practices already in place.

The team's conversation was engaging, lively and forward thinking. In particular, student voice was strong and reinforced the idea that young people enjoy prayer and feel connected to Christ every day, often in quiet moments.

We discussed ways in which

we could celebrate 150 years of the school's parish, St Eugene's Cathedral; a joyous and momentous occasion. We agreed to incorporate the daily reflection exercise, the Examen, and made plans for Advent and the use of the Jesse Tree, as well as Mass attendance, Confession and prayers of petition.

The insights and contributions from the team members were fruitful and inspiring. It was heartening to hear the team's views of ways in which to strengthen connection to Christ, as well as honest discussion about challenges likely to be faced in an, at times, secular society.

The liturgy team is committed to a journey supporting the school

community's faith development, and we are excited to meet again at the end of the month to review

our actions and to plan ahead for the coming liturgical calendar.



St Joseph's Boys' School prayer petition box.

Joy to our world...Home of the Mother has come to Derry Diocese!

# Early Christmas gift with arrival of Servant Sisters

THOSE who have come to know the Servant Sisters of the Home of the Mother through the life story of the late Sr Clare Crockett, the young Derry-born nun who died on April 16, 2016, when an earthquake in Ecuador caused the collapse of the building she was in, will be aware of the infectious joy that they exude.

Joy is one of their charisms, along with unity with each other and selfless love for the Church, and was very evident in Sr Clare, and also in the Sisters who have spent time in Sr Clare's hometown on visits to her grave in the City Cemetery.

And so, in a world that tends to steal the joy of many these days, the news that the Home of the Mother has arrived in the Derry Diocese to set up their ministry, at the invitation of Bishop Donal, is, indeed, "news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people", as the Angel of the Lord said to the shepherds in breaking the good news about the birth of the Saviour (Luke 2:10).

Many of those delighted with the news that four of the Servant Sisters have arrived to set up home in the recently restored Parochial House at Crossroads, Killygordon, in the Sessiaghoneill Parish, Co Donegal, made the journey there on Sunday, November 13, to offer a warm welcome to them at the Foundation Mass celebrated by Bishop Donal in St Patrick's Church.

Servant Sisters, Priests and Brothers from Home of the Mother ministry already established in other Irish dioceses made the journey too, along with the founder of the Order, Fr Rafael Alonso Reymundo, and Mother Ana, who travelled from Spain for the occasion.

The Home of the Mother is an international Public Association of Faithful of the Catholic Church with pontifical approval, and has three missions in the Church: The Defence of the Eucharist; The Defence of the Honour of Our Mother, especially in the privilege of her Virginity; and The Conquest of the Youth for Jesus Christ.

The Servant Sisters live "a spirituality of identification with Jesus Christ and transformation

in Him, from the womb of the Virgin Mary", and also have "a spirituality of sanctuary" which sees them strive to secure their soul as a sanctuary exclusively of God.

They strive to be obedient to the Holy Spirit at all cost, and to live in trust, in abandonment to God and total availability to go wherever He sends them. And so, the Derry Diocese has been blessed by God in His sending the Sisters here to spread their joy and share the fruits of their spirituality.

Joy is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. In his Apostolic Exhortation on Christian Joy in 'Gaudete in Domino' (May 9, 1975), Pope Paul VI stated that it "consists in the human spirit finding repose and a deep satisfaction in the possession of the Triune God, known by faith and loved with the charity that comes from Him."

In this timeless doctrine, Pope Paul also noted that people had to learn again "how to savour in a simple way the many human joys that the Creator places in our path", such as, "the elating joy of existence and of life; the joy of chaste and sanctified love; the peaceful joy of nature and silence; the sometimes austere joy of work well done; the joy and satisfaction of duty performed; the transparent joy of purity, service and sharing; the demanding joy of sacrifice."

He went on to write: "In essence, Christian joy is the spiritual sharing in the unfathomable joy, both divine and human, which is in the heart of Jesus Christ glorified."

### Service

In his Angelus address on January 17, 2021, Pope Francis spoke of how great joy is found in offering a life in service to God's call, saying: "There are different ways of carrying out the plan that God has for each of us, which is always a plan of love...And the greatest joy for every believer is to respond to this call, to offer all of himself at the service of God and his brothers and sisters."

Speaking about joy at Mass in Casa Santa Marta (May 2014), Pope Francis said that when we



Sessiaghoneill Parishioners, June Padmore (right), who has a great devotion to Sr Clare of the Home of the Mother Servant Sisters, and her friend, Teresa Gillespie at the Foundation Mass in Crossroads, Killygordon.

try to buy the happiness, joy of the world, of sin, "in the end, there is a void within us, there is sadness," which he described as "the sadness of the wrong sort of happiness".

Highlighting that Christian joy "is a joy in hope, which comes", he added: "In times of trial we do not see this. It is a joy that is purified by trials, our everyday trials. 'Your sorrow will turn to joy'. But it's hard to go to a sick person who is suffering greatly and say, 'Come on! Come on! Tomorrow you will have joy!' No, you cannot say this! We have to help them feel what Jesus made us feel. When we are in the dark, we do not see anything. 'I know, Lord, that this sorrow will turn to joy. I do not know how, but I know it!' An act of faith in the Lord. An act of faith!"

Pope Francis continued: "Be courageous in suffering and remember that the Lord will come after, joy will come after, and after the dark comes the sun. May the Lord give us all this joy in hope. And the sign that we have this joy in hope is peace. How many sick who are at the end of life, in pain, have that peace of soul...This is the seed of joy, this is the joy of

hope."

Joy is also encouraged by St Paul: "Always be joyful, pray constantly, and for all things give thanks; this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus." (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

Christian joy is very evident in the lives of the saints, especially Our Lady, who is addressed as 'cause of our joy' in the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, and there is great hope amongst devotees of Sr Clare, who have received favours through her intercession, that her cause for canonisation will be opened soon. The latest news on this is that the Home of the Mother is waiting on the Nihil Obstat from Rome to officially open Sr Clare's cause.

As we prepare during Advent to celebrate the Birth of Our Saviour, we recall how St John the Baptist leapt for joy in his mother's womb (Lk 1:44) at the arrival of Mary and her precious child in the womb, prompting Mary to rejoice in God her Saviour (Lk 1:47). May we experience something of that joy in the days and weeks ahead and be open to the Holy Spirit working in us to help our joy grow and spread to others, just as with Sr Clare and the Servant Sisters.



# Servant Sisters come full of love to serve

ONE of our three national Patron Saints, St Patrick, is the patron of the Church in the Co Donegal village of Crossroads, Killygordon, where Bishop Donal celebrated the Foundation Mass to officially welcome the Servant Sisters of the Home of the Mother to the Derry Diocese.

Living in the wonderfully restored Parochial House, just across the road from the Church of St Patrick, the Sisters' mission here will surely flourish with the blessing and intercession of this powerful Celtic Saint.

In another nod to the Saint who made our three-leaf Shamrock famous by using it as a symbol of the Holy Trinity to explain Christianity to pagans, the parish priest happens to be his namesake, Fr Patrick Arkinson, and he and the local parishioners have been making the Servant Sisters very welcome.

The local community were joined by many, who have taken the Servant Sisters into their hearts since coming to know the life-story of the late Sr Clare Crockett, for the Foundation Mass. A number of priests concelebrated the Mass with Bishop Donal, including Home of the Mother founder, Fr Rafael Alonso and three Servant Priests, as well as other priests of the Diocese and priest friends of the Home.

In his homily, Bishop Donal welcomed the four Sisters from the Home of the Mother, saying: "They have felt called to dedicate themselves to living a simple life, witnessing to the love of God, and sharing that faith wherever they go.

"As has happened in every generation, groups of young people choose to live in such a way that makes no sense if God did not exist. They seek to love and follow Jesus by letting their lives become a visible witness to the mystery of God's love.

"By their simplicity of life, they point to both Calvary and Resurrection. Their weakness is their strength. They mirror the Gospel message that growth and maturity come, not through self-indulgence and individualism but through community and service.

"They will be welcomed by many. We pray God's blessing on their ministry and the support of people for their witness."

Very happy that the Order is now in Sr Clare's home diocese, the founder, Fr Rafael recalled accompanying her coffin back to Derry after celebrating Mass around it with the Sisters. He went on to say, through one of the Servant Priests interpreting: "She brought the Sisters to Derry, but not just to Derry, but to evangelise the Irish youth who are far from

God.

"These Sisters come full of love to serve. They love you as much as they love the heart of Christ, and you love them as much as you love Sr Clare. I am entrusting them to you as a community. If they stray away from loving their brothers or sisters, correct them and they will accept that correction. Love them as much as the heart of Christ loves them."

Fr Patsy then extended a warm welcome to all, saying: "It is great for the Parish and the Finn Valley to have the Sisters reside across the way. Some people have been asking, 'What will they do?'"

"The Sisters belong to the sisterhood, the same as priests to the priesthood. It is a calling to a life of prayer and holiness, and hopefully that prayer will help people to find God in their own lives.

"Our hope is that this community of nuns will flourish. Undoubtedly, they will with the goodwill of the people here. The Sisters have been saying already how welcoming the people have been so far, and, indeed, that is the way of the people of Donegal.

"There is a great prayerful congregation here and it is really good that we will have a prayerful presence in our community, across the way."

Bishop Donal thanked Fr Patsy

for his readiness to accommodate the Servant Sisters within the parish and his offer to help in any way.

All were invited to gather after Mass in the local Community Centre for refreshments and an opportunity to meet and chat with the Servant Sisters and Priests.

Speaking afterwards to 'The Net', Bishop Donal commented on the prospect of the Sisters ministering in the northern part of the Diocese: "As a result of Brexit, only British and Irish passport holders have the right to live and/or work in the UK, including Northern Ireland. All other passport holders have to apply for and receive a visa in order to work in Northern Ireland. And, without such a visa, they cannot be vetted to work with young people.

"Thus, only a sister who holds an Irish passport is entitled to work in Northern Ireland. It is illegal for anyone else to work and, specifically, to be involved in ministry with young people. I know that The Home of the Mother would wish to get to a situation where they can be active in Northern Ireland. The Diocese of Derry will do what is possible to support them in getting to that point."



# Banagher folk enjoyed coming together in faith during Parish Mission

by Charlotte Gormley

THE Banagher Parish recently had a very successful week-long mission led by three Dominican priests, Fr Damian, Fr Conor and Fr Patrick. The theme of the week was 'Behold, I am making all things new' (Rev 21:5) – Renewal in Christ.

Each day of the mission also had a specific theme that was the main focus throughout that particular day. The daily themes were: Mercy/Confession, Our Lady – The Rosary and The Family, The Goal of Heaven, Prayer, and Sent as Apostles.

Throughout the week, the people of the parish had the opportunity to attend Mass, Confession, evening talks, the Rosary, Benediction, among many other things.

One of the highlights for the young people of the parish during the mission was when the friars visited their classes. Every class in all three of the parish primary schools were visited by either Fr Damian, Fr Conor or Fr Patrick. These visits were a chance for the children and staff to ask questions and chat to the friars, during which, all classes thoroughly enjoyed themselves and learnt something new.

One of the many highlights of the mission was the 'meet and greet' mornings, which took place in each of the three areas of the parish, Park, Feeny, and Foreglen. This was an enjoyable experience for both the parishioners that attended and the visiting friars. These mornings showed a profound sense of community and joy, as people had a cup of tea

and enjoyed sharing stories with each other and with the friars of the past, of the parish, and of faith.

These conversations continued during the time spent on the Rosary Walk up to Banagher dam. As with all of the various activities and prayer sessions on this mission, there was a fantastic turn out of people for the Rosary Walk. This time spent outside in the beautiful surroundings of our parish was a perfect opportunity to reflect, pray, think and talk about our prayer intentions throughout the mission.

At every aspect of the mission, whether it was the early morning Mass, an evening talk, a simple chat with the friars, or time spent with parish friends, people were brought together by their faith and had the opportunity to deepen their relationship with Christ.

The energy and enthusiasm that was shown by the three friars was an inspiration to all who encountered them throughout the mission week. They were a great and positive example of faith and of Christ to Banagher parish, and the parish has and will continue to bear fruit as a result of the mission.

It will have a long-lasting effect on the parishioners and the parish as a whole, and the hope that the mission will continue to guide and form people in their faith as integral members of Banagher Parish, even after the close of the mission and the departure of the Dominican friars.



Foreglen



Rosary Walk



## St Canice's Primary School family grateful for special Parish time

by Ciara McCloskey

ST Canice's Primary School in Feeny, created a display board for the start of the Banagher Parish Mission in St Joseph's Church, Fincairn.

As a school, we were much involved throughout the week of the Mission. The Primary 4 class, who are preparing for First Holy Communion, took part in the opening Mass by bringing up the gifts, lighting the candles and saying the Prayers of the Faithful.

The children attended the Mission Masses throughout the week and had the pleasure of

having a visit from the Father Damian Polly to their school, alongside Fr Micheal McGavigan, our parish priest.

The children loved listening to and attending the Masses, learning new things and having the opportunity to ask questions. They loved being involved have thoroughly enjoyed the Mission Prayer, which they took great pride in saying daily.

We are very grateful to have been involved in such a special time within our parish.



## Altinure



continued from page 18



**Fincarn**



# Great talks and singing at Long Tower Novena

THE annual Long Tower Novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help is underway and the word from Fr Gerard Mongan, Adm, is that it is "going great, with a huge attendance and everyone singing their hearts out during the congregational hymns".

The Novena in St Columba's Church got underway on Sunday, October 23 and, running for the nine Sundays leading up to Christmas, is on every Sunday night at 6 pm up until December 18, when it closes with a Carol Service.

This year's theme is 'What do I believe? Exploring our faith through the Creed.' So far, Rev Michael McCaul has spoken on our belief in God, the Father Almighty; Gemma Gill, St Brigid's College teacher, has spoken about our belief in the One Lord, Jesus Christ; Martin McLaughlin, Derry Search Youth Group, has spoken on our belief in the Holy Spirit; Oonagh

McAllister, Derry Search Youth Group, has spoken on our belief in the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church; and Michael Kelly, Irish Catholic Newspaper editor, has spoken on our belief in the Communion of Saints.

The remaining guest speakers include Stephen Doherty, Lumen Christi College teacher, who will speak about our belief in the forgiveness of sins on Sunday, November 27; Theresa McDaid, who will speak on our belief in the resurrection of the body on December 4; and Fr Noel McDermott, who will talk about our belief in life everlasting on December 11. The theme for the Carol Service on December 18 will be our belief in Christmas.

Each night of the Novena consists of the praying of the Rosary and Novena Prayer, petitions, a short talk, and a ceremony of healing with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.



# Camus Parish Church tours by Camus Heritage Team

WHEN the National Churches Trust Awards ceremony took place in London on October 24, the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Strabane, in the Camus Parish, was shortlisted and won the Volunteer category.

Parish Priest, Fr Declan Boland was joined by Lorraine Gallen and Roisin Doherty in receiving the Award in London on behalf of the Church Heritage Team.

The team is currently organising tours of our beautiful Church, informing visitors about the history of the building and the Church community over the last 125 years.

The short tours got underway on Thursday morning in October and have continued into November. It starts at the front door of the Church at 11 am sharp and lasts for approximately one hour, and will be followed by a cup of tea/coffee in the Parlour.

If you are interested in finding out more about this beautiful and historic Church, please come along on a Thursday morning. If you have a small group who would be interested (community groups, special interest groups, etc), please contact [mary.bonnar@gmail.com](mailto:mary.bonnar@gmail.com) and arrangements can be made to suit.



**SAINT COLUMBA'S LONG TOWER NOVENA**  
 To Our Lady of Perpetual Help  
**SUNDAY 23<sup>RD</sup> OCTOBER - 18<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2022**  
 -9 Sundays before Christmas at 6pm -

**WHAT DO I BELIEVE? EXPLORING OUR FAITH**

- 23 Oct: In God, The Father Almighty
- 30 Oct: In one Lord Jesus Christ
- 6 Nov: In the Holy Spirit
- 13 Nov: In the Catholic Church
- 20 Nov: In the Communion of Saints
- 27 Nov: In the Forgiveness of Sins
- 4 Dec: In the Resurrection of the Body
- 11 Dec: In Life Everlasting
- 18 Dec: In Christmas

**Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!**  
 Mark 9:24

THIS month 'The Net' welcomes two new young writers, twins, Eimear and Shea Doherty, from Galliagh in the Three Patrons' Parish, within the Derry City Deanery.

In their first articles, Eimear and Shea have both written about their wonderful experience in belonging to the Youth Faith Group, 77, which meets on Sunday nights in Pio House following the 6.30pm Youth Mass in St Joseph's Church, Galliagh.

Reflecting on the sacredness of life, John writes about how our lives have a lot more meaning than we realise, given that God has commissioned each of us with a work that no other can carry out the way He desires us to.

Niamh writes about this month's celebration of World Day of the Poor and Pope Francis' message challenging us to see Jesus in our brothers and sisters, while Jodie shares her personal experience of how loving God "with our whole heart, mind, soul and strength" can significantly benefit us.

Bronagh writes about St Cecilia, the Patron Saint of Musicians, and how music is a vital part of our Christian culture, reinforcing the messages of God in a memorable way.



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



Niamh O'Kane, Co Derry Deanery. John Agustine, Joseph, Derry City Deanery. Zara Schlindwein, Derry City Deanery. Shea Doherty, Derry City Deanery.



## World Day of the Poor challenges us to see Jesus in our brothers and sisters

by Niamh

POPE Francis celebrated Mass in St Peter's Basilica, in Rome, on November 13, with those who are poor and in need of guidance and faith.

The aim of the annual mass is to encourage everyone globally to "go forth" into the supposedly taboo area where so many people struggle with economic and existential problems, and to offer service as "a sign of love, the love shown by Jesus himself."

This enables Christians to demonstrate their faith and compassion at a time of year when it really matters on the approach to Christmas. They are called to display kindness during harsh times, where the homeless will potentially be affected by colder nights, loneliness in not having many friends or a family to spend this time of year with, and envy

towards those who take comfort in their financial and familial stability.

Christians are encouraged to provide patience and love towards their neighbours in harbouring understanding and compassion.

The Vatican has attempted to carry out what Christians have been called to do, through serving lunch to Rome's poor in the Paul VI Hall after the Sunday, Mass as well as several long-term initiatives that aim to support families and individuals in difficulty.

Archbishop Rino Fisichella, of the Dicastery for Evangelization, explained at the inauguration of a mobile health clinic in St Peter's Square, that at the heart of all the initiatives is Pope Francis' reminder that the poor not only are the ones closest

# Not only do our lives have meaning, they are also sacred - God has a path for us!

by John

LIFE is an extremely precious thing. We often only recognise its fragility in the darker moments of our lives. Life is a beautiful thing. It is truly a gift of joy. It brings with it many wonders and delights. Our lives have lot more meaning than we often give to them.

St John Henry Newman wrote a beautiful meditation called the 'The Mission of My Life'. To quote a few words, he said, "God has created me to do Him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission."

The reflection is a statement of trust in God, a profound declaration of faith in His Divine Providence. This is something that is quite lacking in many of our lives today, including mine. It is oft difficult to comprehend that God has His own way of doing things, and it is in hindsight that we discover that the path that he put us through (the path we did not choose, per se) was the path that led us to discover what God wants from us in our life. I am a young man; I do not have the benefit of hindsight. I cannot claim necessarily that this has been the case in my life. But I look to the saints, and I see that they were put through difficult lives that led them to God. They came to appreciate their lives and the lives of others. Above all, they got to truly serve God.

We live in a world today that seems to have no appreciation for life. I take that back. There is an

appreciation, but it is not holistic. It does not often care for the other. It does not love. It does not rejoice. It often shuns beauty.

In Pope John Paul II's encyclical 'Evangelium Vitae', the Holy Father states: "Man is called to a fullness of life which far exceeds the dimensions of his earthly existence, because it consists in sharing the very life of God." The Christian understanding of life revolves around the idea that we are called to be in union with God.

Paraphrasing St Augustine, one is restless until one is in union with God. This concept is not very common in our world today. However, it is based on this concept, as well as using our reason that we Christians conclude that not only do our lives have a meaning, but our lives are also sacred; God, Himself, has a path for us!

The idea that 'life is sacred' is an idea that has been around since the dawn of Christianity, however today, even though many people may agree with the statement on face value, they don't necessarily place their trust with it in their beliefs and actions. In other words, for a lot of people, the idea is not in vogue. People do care about their own live (perhaps the lives of their loved ones as well), but they don't necessarily care in their actions about the lives of others. It is often about my comfort; my livelihood; my pleasure.

In John Paul II's encyclical, 'Evangelium Vitae', he talks about Cain's response to God, when God asked him where his brother was: "Am I my brother's keeper?" I quote: "Cain does not wish to think about his brother and refuses to accept the responsibility which every person has towards others. We cannot but think of today's tendency for people to refuse to accept responsibility for their brothers and sisters."

He lists various examples such as a "lack of solidarity" with those who are poorer; who are physically or mentally weak; who are, in general, very vulnerable. The social responsibility that we have towards one another is something that is often forgotten in our society. We live (in one sense) in a society of Cain's. We only care about ourselves and our needs. It is this context that I believe that has led to modern society to condone what the Second Vatican Council declared as 'whatever is opposed to life'.

One concept that has become condoned in modern society is abortion. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, "abortion willed either



as an end or a means, is gravely contrary to the moral law". The Catechism quotes from Scripture and from the Church Fathers to make the point that this was something that was never condoned. The Catechism also lists among others, capital punishment, intentional homicide and euthanasia. As 'Gaudium et Spes' clearly teaches: these things "poison human society, and they do more harm to those who practise them than to those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are a supreme dishonour to the Creator." Pope Francis even went to compare abortion to "hiring a hitman."

It seems to me that these things taken from the Tradition of the Church, which has been written about above, are not being told

to the people. There are few discussions or dialogues about the sacrality of life and of its beauty. Instead, it is all about utility and hedonism. I am not saying that there aren't people who are pro-life, they do great work all over the world, but rather that this issue is something that is often nowadays kept quiet.

I pray for the day, when people can clearly see, the beauty of life, how important it is, and why it needs to be defended!

*Evangelium Vitae, 8*  
*Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World Gaudium et Spes, 27*  
 CCC 2271  
*Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World Gaudium et Spes, 27*  
<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2022-07/pope-francis-condemns-abortion-like-hiring-a-hit-man.html>



## Loving God “with our whole heart, mind, soul and strength” can benefit us significantly *by Jodie*

THE past two months have been challenging for me academically. All students know how it feels to hit an academic slump when experiencing a tough time at school. More than eight in 10 principals say that their pupils are more stressed about exams this year than pre-pandemic (Child Law Advice).

With it being my last year at school, it’s definitely been the toughest. All these pressures within school have left me with feelings of confusion, frustration and even loss. I have felt that with all these pressures consuming my time, I was losing the things special to me.

However, things changed for me recently on seeing this quote from Mike Pacer’s ‘The Three Comings of Christ’: “If we want Our Lord to come into our lives today we must love. Jesus declared the greatest commandments were to love God with our whole heart, mind, soul, and strength and to our neighbour as ourselves.”

This reminded me how my relationship with God has always helped me out at tough times, and because of the pressures of school consuming my mind I had forgotten this.

Furthermore, through reading this quote I was reminded that God has always been there for me through the big things, like

my examinations, my first job interview. Yet, what makes my relationship with Him even more special to me is that He can be there for the small things too, like when I need support or pacification through my day-to-days.

So, I definitely feel that loving God “with our whole heart, mind, soul, and strength” can benefit us significantly.

All Christians should know that through the big and the small, God is always there for us. As Pacer says: “If we want Our Lord to come into our lives today, we must love.”

Today, we can sometimes find ourselves in a world that lacks love and is filled with hate in terms of what can come up on our social media, newspapers or even day-to-day conversations.

In order to find peace within ourselves, within our faith, we must always try and find love and positivity.

We can see other people benefit from this, like the saints. They lived lives of joy and fulfilment through following God. So, why should we prevent ourselves from experiencing this? You have the opportunity to find peace and happiness when being within the Christian community, take this opportunity.



## Celebrating St Cecilia – Patron Saint of Musicians *by Bronagh*

ON November 22, the Patron Saint of Musicians and Music, St Cecilia is celebrated, every year from as early as 1570.

Music is a vital part of our Christian culture as we use music to reinforce the messages of God and to celebrate good news, such as at Christmas time with singing of Christmas carols. Music also helps our understanding of the stories involved with Christianity as they offer it in a simple, memorable form.

Music and religion go hand-in-hand from a very early age. Most primary schools hold themed assemblies, where each class takes turn to present the readings, prayers and songs associated with a theme, such as Pentecost Day, Easter and Christmas.

Music also brings comfort to people, just like faith and the Word of God, in times of sadness and loss. It is such a pivotal part of funerals, often symbolizing the memories people had, and weddings, symbolizing the memories the new couple will make in the future as they lead a life of faith.

St Cecilia was canonized after being found to be ‘incorrupt’ in the early 16th century. She was made the Patron Saint of Musicians and Music as, according to tradition, she was said to have “sang in her heart to the Lord” and said holy chants while walking up the aisle on her wedding day.

She also preached about good news, using music to help her



and converted over 400 people to Christianity, who were then baptised by Pope Urban (Catholic Faith Store).

St Cecilia is often represented playing an organ or by a harp, and has a namesake chapel reportedly built on the site of her former house. Her remains are buried in Church of Santa Cecilia in

Trastevere.

The novena prayer to St Cecilia is as follows...

“St Cecilia, we ask for your intercession because you generously offered your life for the love of Jesus, who you were devoted to with your heart and soul. Graciously hear our prayers!”

## Youth Prayer Group bringing me closer to God in many ways *by Eimear*

I am part of a youth prayer group for ages 16-35. This group has brought me so much closer to God in many ways.

I became very ill at the start of the year and lost touch with God completely. I was always told to turn to prayer but I had no hope whatsoever and didn’t believe anything could help.

My twin brother, Shea, introduced me to the amazing Franciscan Friars and they helped me with Confessions and prayer at the start. They made me feel so comfortable and I was able to talk to them about everything I had gone through.

I then started going to the Youth Mass in Galliagh and it was such a lovely service every Sunday at 6.30 pm. The people I meet there are so amazing. It’s like having

another family.

After a few Sunday Youth Masses, I started going to the Prayer Group Adoration Hour. During this hour, we offer prayers and thanks and pray the Rosary. You are able to stay behind at the end to have time to yourself and it’s such a lovely thing to do.

This group showed me how to express myself and to give my worries to God and have full trust in Him. If I ever have any questions about anything, they are willing to answer what they can, and I learn something new every time I am with them!

They are helping me through one of the hardest fights of my life and, of course, Our Father is getting me through the toughest times of my journey.



Eimear and one of her friends at the Youth Prayer Group based in Pio House, Galliagh.

### Sharing his experience of the Youth Prayer Group, 77, Shea writes...

## We help one another grow in faith and to see the world in a brighter light

I am going to write about how my faith is growing since joining the Youth Prayer Group in Pio House, in Galliagh.

I first attended the group, 77, after I came back from Camp Veritas and it has helped me so much because of all the amazing people who also go to it.

We help one another grow in faith and to see the world in a brighter light. We do this by talking to one another about our own unique views on various topics. This helps me to think a bit differently and in a better way about such things as Confessions

and the Lord’s forgiveness.

The Prayer Group meets after the 6.30 pm Youth Mass in Galliagh chapel on Sundays, and is a great way to bring younger people, such as myself, into their faith. It is an amazing mission, which I think we, here in Derry, are doing very well in.

Being part of the group helps my growth in faith because I see other young people turning to Our Lord. I think this is great because generally the younger generation don’t seem to be bothered with religion.



Shea with some members of the Youth Prayer Group at the All Saints Night party in Pio House, Galliagh.

# Greencastle bade fond farewell to 'Singing Priest'

AFTER seven years of dedicated ministry in their midst, the people of the parish of Greencastle, in Co Tyrone, gathered to pay tribute to Fr Eddie Gallagher, who has now taken up ministry as parish priest of Moville, in Co Donegal.

The men, women and children of the parish were joined by Fr John Forbes, the former parish priest of Badoney Lower (Gortin and Rouskey), in Greencastle Community Centre for the Farewell Evening for Fr Eddie, during which there was a concert and slide show of his time in the parish.

With his fine singing voice and attentiveness to the needs of his flock, particularly during the difficult periods of the Covid-19 lockdowns, Fr Eddie was greatly appreciated by his parishioners, who were impressed by how well he settled into rural life after leaving the city of Derry.

Leading the tribute to the 'Singing Priest', as the children of the parish called him, Maria Bradley, of Greencastle, thanked him for the great work he had done as parish priest.

She recalled: "As we said farewell to Fr Eugene Hesson in August 2015, we were a bit anxious about the future and wondered how Fr Eddie, coming from Derry City, would fit into country life here in Greencastle.

"However, after he celebrated his first few Masses with us, it was obvious that things were going to liven up a bit! We came to love his singing and almost to expect it at Mass. Indeed, I think if he didn't sing, we just hoped that everything was ok.

As an expert in technology, it wasn't long before 'Spotify' was introduced and, music wise, we were well catered for!"

Highlighting how quickly he had got to know parishioners, both young and old, as he settled into parish life amongst them, Maria remarked: "He was always one step ahead with what was going on and we were somewhat amazed at how much he knew about each of us!"

"Fr Eddie was there for everyone. He shared the good times - the christenings, birthdays, weddings and Station/House Masses - and he was there to comfort and console us in the tough times of sickness and bereavements etc.

"Most importantly, Fr Eddie always seemed to be there when he was needed at any particular time and was only ever a 'phone call away'.

She continued: "Things were going well and then, of course,

Covid struck. I don't need to remind anyone of the nightmare that was, but it didn't faze Fr Eddie. He recognised how difficult it was going to be with the restrictions, but he rose to the challenge right away.

"Firstly, with the help of Niall Devlin, he set up the Parish Facebook page and, later on, YouTube, which allowed him to keep in touch with us when our Churches and cemeteries were closed.

"Fr Eddie was an inspiration to all of us in those dark days. We looked forward to his celebration of Mass and Night Prayer and Rosary from the Oratory, in the Parochial House, and later on, from the Church.

### Inspiring

"We also have to acknowledge here Fr John Forbes for his inspiring Night Prayer and Rosary too, taking turns with Fr Eddie, and his Masses. We watched them both faithfully. While isolated from our families, neighbours and friends, we took great comfort from being connected in Prayer at home and abroad. The messages of gratitude flowed in from all around the world".

Maria added: "As we were unable to go to Mass because our Churches were closed, Fr Eddie decided that he would come to us, which he did, whatever the weather! He began with the Veneration of The Cross at the Crossroads and then began the Rosary Walks; walking the roads of our Parish from one end to the other, praying the Rosary for our protection and intentions, and we have a video of him singing in the rain! Eucharistic Blessing Walks followed, during which Fr Eddie blessed our homes and families.

"We also had a Trocaire Walk, which raised over £21,000, in memory of my husband, Mickey, and a half marathon, on one of the wettest days of that summer."

Recalling how Fr Eddie had worked tirelessly preparing the children for the Sacraments, Maria said: "They looked forward to his visits to the school, where he knew each one by his/her name. And, of course, there were always treats, like ice-cream, after all the hard work was done."

She added: "The sick and housebound looked forward to his monthly visits. He was a tonic for them and they will miss him so much".

Highlighting his work behind the scenes, such as Board of Governors' and Diocesan



meetings, and his work as the Diocesan Trocaire representative, Maria remarked: "Whatever the occasion, Fr Eddie always got it right. We wish him well in his new parish in Moville and hope that he will not be a stranger in our parish".

Presentations were made to Fr Eddie by: the principal, Mrs Amanda Donnelly, and two pupils of Our Lady of Lourdes PS, on behalf of the Parish Community; Martin Conway on behalf of An Caislean Glas agus Soerrin Og.; Erin Donnelly and Aimee Fox on behalf of Camogie Club; Anthony Morris on behalf of the Handball Club; Frankie Bradley on behalf of the Community Association; Sarah Coyle on behalf of Senior Citizens; Anne McDermott on behalf of Greencastle PTAA; Margaret Morris and Paul Tuohy on behalf of Parish Community; and Maria Bradley, on behalf of her family and mother, Josie, in remembrance of the Trocaire Walk for her husband, Mickey

and also in remembrance of all who wanted to join the family and Fr Eddie that day but were unable to because of the Covid Restrictions.

Maria expressed the hope that when Fr Eddie is on the golf course in Moville, or further afield, "he will remember us here and the memories he made up in the hills around Greencastle and Broughderg".

*Photographs courtesy of Colm Devlin and Ulster Herald.*





## Growing in faith together in Clonleigh

THE Parish of Clonleigh was blessed with a wonderful four-day Mission at the start of October, when the guest facilitators, Fr Eamonn Fitzgibbon and Sr Theresa Fitzgerald spoke on the theme 'Growing in Faith Together'.

Eucharistic Adoration in St Patrick's Church, Murlog, was central to each day of the Mission programme, and there was also an opportunity for Confessions, with several priests coming along to help celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Opening on the afternoon of Sunday, October 2, with a period of Eucharistic Adoration,

parishioners were invited along to a workshop in Murlog School before the official opening with Evening Liturgy. Workshops were also held prior to the Evening Liturgy on the Monday and Tuesday.

The programme for the following three days included 6.30 am and 10 am Mass, and an Evening Liturgy, which were very well attended.

The young people of the parish were greatly involved in the Mission, with visits to the parish schools and a special Children's Liturgy at 11.30 am on the Tuesday morning, when their work on saints was displayed.



## Great response to Urney & Castlefinn Parish memorial tea event *by Collette Carlin*

THE Parish of Urney & Castlefinn held its first fundraising event with a Tea/Coffee afternoon in memory of all our Faithful Departed, on Sunday, November 20, from 2-6 pm.

It was lovely to see people filtering into St Mary's Hall for a parish gathering for the first time since Covid.

We had so many bakers and donations that we were able to have a cake sale and a raffle to increase the donations from each table.

This was a huge parish effort,

with plenty of willing volunteers to help out in getting the Hall ready, serving the refreshments and helping in the kitchen

We are, indeed, indebted to all our local community for supporting this event, and Fr Ciarán Hegarty, our Administrator, was delighted with the turnout on the day.

We look forward to making this an annual event and rotating it between Doneyloop Hall and St Mary's. A big thank you to all who donated, to our volunteers, and especially all those who attended on the day.



*Fascinated about everything concerning the Long Tower, former altar boy, Ivor Doherty shares his memories of...*

## Growing in faith in the special setting of St Columba's Church

**HAVING** lived most of his life in the Long Tower Parish, Ivor Doherty has always sensed something very special about St Columba's Church, but couldn't quite put his finger on what that something was.

It wasn't until he started researching his family tree and came upon old books that recorded historical details about the Long Tower and triggered a deep desire to find out more, that he began to realise that the rich history and tradition embedded in its sanctuary, ceilings, walls, floors, furnishings, and even its cemetery, had been seeping into his subconsciousness through all the years of exposure as an altar server, in his childhood, and faithful parishioner, leaving him with a sense of awe and reverence in this sacred place.

Wanting to create something tangible to express this, Ivor has compiled a book entitled 'Casting A Long Shadow - A People's History of Derry's Long Tower', which he co-authored with fellow Derry men, Martin McGeehan and Joseph Martin.

The work has been a labour of love for the 73-year-old; a love story that began when he was born into the family of William and Gertie Doherty, and grew up with his five brothers and three sisters in the family home at 52 Foyle Road, across the road from where the railway would have been.

Reflecting on his faith journey, Ivor said: "My parents were the biggest influence with regards to my faith. While the family Rosary wasn't said every night, it was said

regularly. Any time my father attended a retreat, it sparked him on to say the family Rosary. This lasted for a while and then faded away, until something else would happen and we would start saying it regularly again".

He added: "I remember turning to prayer when my mother had a cancer scare when I was about 14. Everything worked out. She survived it and went on to live for another 21 years, dying in 1988".

Ivor also highlighted the ordination of his cousin, Fr Jimmy Doherty, to the priesthood as leaving a deep impression too, recalling: "I was 17 when Jimmy became a priest in 1967 and I remember it as a big occasion. He took MS and died about 20 years ago, when he was about 48 or 50". Another positive influence on his faith life was his time as an altar boy, which began when Fr McGaughey was the Administrator of Long Tower. He served on the altar from the age of eight up to he was 14 years old.

"I remember Fr McGaughey coming into my class in primary school and choosing a number of boys for altar service, and I was one of them," said Ivor, "We had to learn the Latin responses and were taught these by Master McLaughlin. We had to go into his class for a half-hour each day and were then tested on our ability to answer. After that, we

were trained on movements on the altar".

He went on to recall: "I was on the altar for about one or two years when a young priest came to the Long Tower by the name of Fr George McLaughlin. He made a big impression on me because he was a nice, young and kind man. He would have been about 22, so was about 14 years older than us. It was great when he was there, but he was moved on after a year and a half. Fr McGaughey was a very mild mannered man, but he was older".

"Generally, we knew what to do on the altar", said Ivor, "but the few times a High Mass was to be celebrated, such as on Holy Thursday and Holy Saturday, Fr George gave us training for these occasions to refresh our memories.

### High Mass

"I remember being on the altar for the High Mass to celebrate the 1,400th anniversary, in 1963, of St Columba leaving Derry in 563. It was quite a big show and is a great memory for me to have. The Church of Ireland was involved too, in St Columba's Cathedral.

"Columba's Day was always a big affair and the schools all attended. We were taught the Our Father, Hail Mary and Gloria in Irish every year coming up to June 9, so that we could recite the Rosary at The Calvary".

Ivor also remembers the retreats: "There was a Mission every year. The first week was the Ladies' Mission and the second week was the Men's. During these Bishop Farren would have attended, but we never knew when. He would just turn up. I remember one time the sacristan, Paddy Cleary, saying: 'The Bishop is here tonight so you are in reds!' We always wore black soutanes, with the white over it, but when the Bishop was there we wore red and white, and we had white gloves and a small cloak around our shoulders. It was all hands to the pump when he came. You had to look your best. You always did your best on the altar, but when the Bishop was there you had to look your best too. These days the altar servers wear monks' robes".

He went on to share his memory of serving at three Masses on Christmas Day: "We came out as normal to do one and then stayed out for three in a row, but the three would have been done by 10.50 am. You had to fast from the night before.

"The usual 12 noon Sunday Mass was seen as having a lower attendance at Communion because of the need to be fasting from the night before. People would have eaten by this time in the day and so couldn't go up to receive Holy Communion".

Ivor laughed as he recalled how,



Ivor with his cherished old painting of the former Long Tower altar scene, 'The Resurrection'

on a few occasions, they were sent to the Convent of Mercy to collect the wafers for Communion in big boxes: "We would have eaten some on the way back. They weren't consecrated".

And he cringed at the memory of the annual altar boy excursion: "Around July, we were taken away to Portrush or Portstewart for a day. It was always a terrible ordeal for me because I got bus-sick. I remember them having to stop the bus for me to get out and throw up. There were six teams of seven or eight altar boys, so there would have been 40-50 of us on the day out, along with a couple of priests."

As well as Fr McGaughey and Fr George McLaughlin, Ivor remembers Fr Walter Carolan and an elderly priest called Fr McKenna: "I think Fr McKenna had been a missionary in China. When he came to the Long Tower he was elderly and couldn't hear too well, so a lot of people went to him for Confession. He was a quiet, well-mannered man".

Serving at the Station Masses in people's houses is another stand-out memory for Ivor: "I remember going to serve at a Station Mass in a house in Killea and we got a lot of tips from people who came to that. The Mass was in the morning and there was always a good fry breakfast afterwards for the priest and two altar boys. I remember getting £1.50/£2, which would have been a lot back then. You only got the opportunity to do a Station once because of that, although the odd altar boy managed to get a second. It was a lucrative opportunity to get some money and so, I suppose, they wanted to give everybody a chance of that."

### Special

Commenting on his long-time sense that the Long Tower was special, he said: "It's not like any other Church. You would have to

go to Dublin to get one that has art pieces on the wall like there is in the Long Tower. I couldn't really give a reason why I thought it was special, but I have always felt that.

"There used to be a big painting in the Sacristy that I would look at and think 'that looks very like the Long Tower, but it's not'. In that painting, the altar piece was 'The Crucifixion'. It turned out that before the church was knocked down, the altar scene was 'The Crucifixion', so that is why I thought it wasn't the Long Tower as that piece was then 'The Ascension'. I hadn't known that 50-60 years previous, the Church had been knocked down to build the one that is there today. That picture is gone now and I don't know where it is.

"A friend of mine got a picture from a pawn-broker of the Long Tower in 1852, and the altar scene in it is 'The Resurrection'. We had been friends years ago while working in DuPont but, as a mechanic, I was moved to different areas and hadn't seen him in many years. When I retired, my wife, Kathleen and I went for a break to Dublin. It turned out that my friend had retired at the same time and ended up in the same hotel as us, The Gresham. We got chatting again and he said that he had an old picture of the Long Tower and that he would give it to me. It was damaged and had to be repaired. It is a treasure for me to have this large print of the Long Tower in 1852 by Alexander McFarland, who was a painter in the town at the time. I traced him to Scotland and found his grave".

Apart from living in Farren Park, in Pennyburn, for five years, from 1979-1984, in the early years of their marriage, when the family outgrew the small house they had been living in at Ivy Terrace, Ivor has always lived within the Long Tower Parish. But it was

during this time in Farren Park that he discovered a Rev Bernard Canning, who wrote about 12 books on Church History, both in Scotland and Nelson Street where he was born.

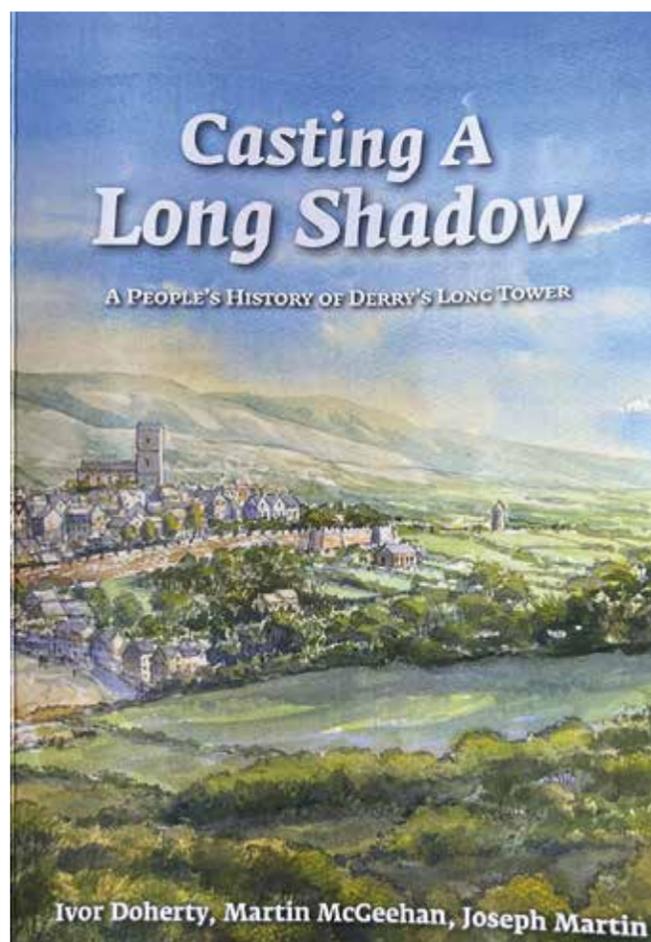
"Rev Canning had published a book about the Long Tower in 1984, 'By Columba's Footsteps', said Ivor, "and it inspired me as it was on the Long Tower, and that was the beginning of my passion about the Long Tower".

He continued: "In 1980, I decided to do my family tree and that was really the beginning of it, as I was led to old books that were out of print but told you about the town 200 years ago. In Magee University in those days, there was a guy called Annesley Malley, who had a class there about how to trace your ancestors. I did it, and went back the next year to do the same course as I was that fascinated by it. He had a trailer on his car filled with old antiquated books. I loved them.

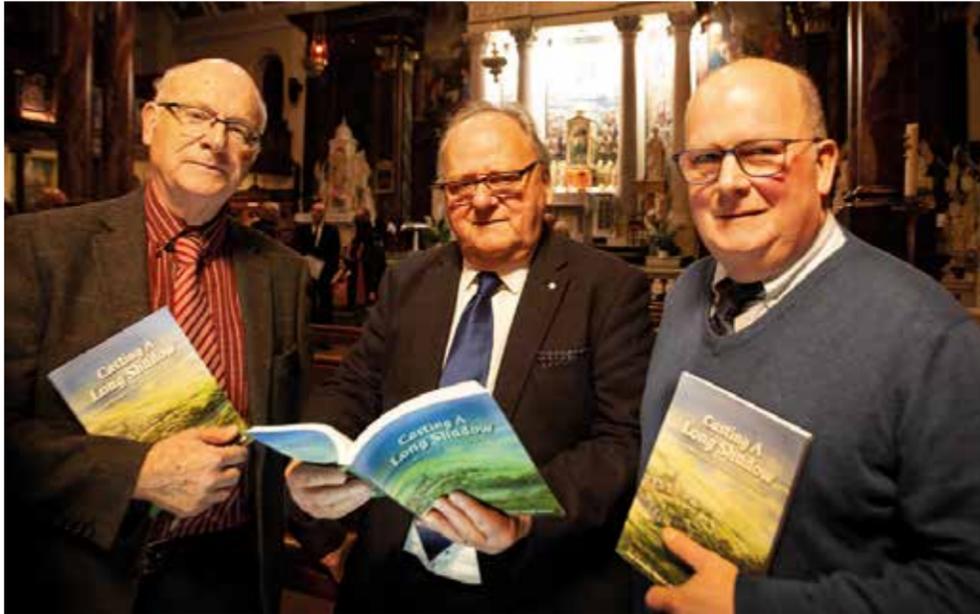
"I was in Galway on holidays one year and found a book from 1909 about the opening of the Long Tower. The author was a PJJ - that was all that was given of the name. It cost me 30 Irish punts but very worth it".

"It has been an interesting journey," remarked Ivor, adding: "There is a great feeling of accomplishment when you discover something. I was fascinated and spent my life collecting old books, certainly anything about Long Tower, and these included 'Derry Colmcille' by Fr Willie Doherty, who built Long Tower Church with aid, the book by PJJ, and Fr Coulter's book, 'The Story of the Long Tower'.

"I will continue to seek information about the Long Tower. I want to know everything about it, such as where did every picture, ciborium and artwork, etc, come from. I just want to know all these things".



# Great interest in recently launched Long Tower book



AN excellent Christmas gift for anyone with a connection or interest in St Columba's Church, Long Tower, is surely the recently launched book that records the people's history of a parish that has close connections to St Columba and the sixth century Columban foundation in the Oak Grove, and lays claim to being the setting for the first Catholic Church to be built in Derry.

'Casting A Long Shadow' was launched in St Columba's Church on Friday, October 28, when the authors, Ivor Doherty, Martin McGeehan, both of the Long Tower Parish, and Joseph Martin shared their experience of the work that covers from the time of Columba to the 21st Century.

They were joined by Garbhan Downey, of Colmcille Press, publishers of the book, and its editors, Erin Hutcheon and Philly Barwise, who spoke of the privilege of being involved in what became a labour of love for them all.

Bishop Donal, who wrote the epilogue for the book, was also present for the launch, and told 'The Net' that it was great to see the creativity and pride which motivated its publication.

He remarked: "History so often

focuses on events and buildings. However, this book is about the people, the Church, who made and make up the parish. That emphasis helps us to see the grace of God at work through, and despite, human activity. I hope that it will be a sign of pride for the parish as it faces the next chapter in its long history".

The late Fr Aidan Mullan wrote the preface for the book before his sad passing, while serving as the Long Tower's Administrator, and in it he commented: "Over the years there have been many publications about the growth of the parish and this latest, 'Casting A Long Shadow: From Columba to the 21st Century - a People's History of Derry's Long Tower', records traditions, celebrates achievement, and heralds a people proud of their culture and their faith 'living still'. The writers have made their contribution to maintaining a proud heritage to be passed on to generations unborn".

Opening the launch night, Garbhan Downey remarked: "I have been involved in publishing most of my life and this is, without doubt, the most historic site I have been in for the launch of a book.

"This is particularly special,

not just because we are in such a magnificent building, which is an exceptional work of art in itself, but the significance of this site, which dates back to the sixth century. It is a site that historians have been writing about for generations."

Paying tribute to the great work of all involved, Garbhan introduced Joseph Martin, who spoke on behalf of the editorial team, saying: "It was a great honour to be invited by Martin and Ivor to assist them in putting this book together, which had existed in Ivor's head for many years.

"Ivor's passion for this subject comes from the historian within him but also from the Long Tower man that he is... People who grew up here are Long Tower people first, Derry people second, and thirdly wherever they happen to live. I can think of numerous events over the years that were driven by the great spirit of people in the Long Tower."

He went on to point out that the book demonstrates that the faith of generations past in the Long Tower was still living, and added that it was great to hear the Long Tower bell ringing again.

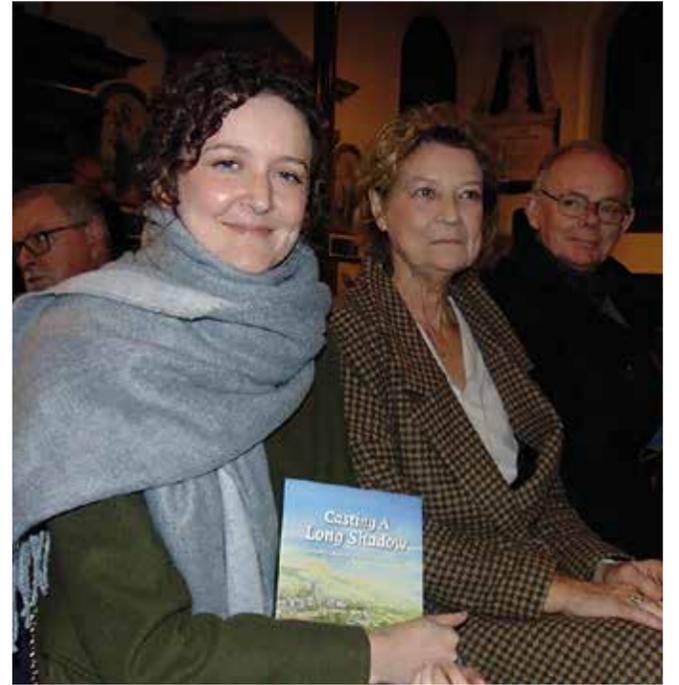
Ivor and Martin both spoke

of how the book came about, with Martin recalling how Ivor had first got him roped in as a volunteer to help clean up the Church grounds, during the time of Mgr McCanny, which led to them uncovering headstones while tidying up the old graveyard, which in turn led to researching the names on them.

"We got some obituary details and set up a database," recalled Martin, "Then we said, we're not going to live forever, so we got it online and there are well over 500 names on it now."

One of the book's editors, Erin Hutcheon, who has a journalism background, is Ivor's daughter and she pointed out that when her father first started the ancestry tracing course in Magee she had been two years old, adding: "So, that is how long this has been going on. I have gone from rolling my eyes up when he was talking about this book to agreeing to edit it... It is a lasting legacy."

The other editor, Philly Barwise, who also grew up in the Long Tower, commented on her great sense of belonging: "I feel that



Long Tower people have a sense of how ancient this site is and a pride in carrying on the Christian faith of our ancestors. And it is a simple faith despite all the grandeur of the church building."

There has been a great response to the sale of the book, which

costs £20, and is available at: Little Acorn Bookshop, Foyle Street; Foyle Books in the Craft Village; the Rathmore Centre; the Sacristy in the Long Tower; and from Ivor.

*Photographs by Jim McCafferty & The Net*



## Seventh 'Walk for Glenock' raises over £4,000



Newtownstewart Parish on its seventh Walk For Glenock. Pictured are parishioners and friends who trod the Barnes area of the Sperrin Mountains with Fr Roland Colhoun, embarking from Plumbridge Church, Co Tyrone on Sunday, November 6. The walk raised £4,300 for the renovation of St Eugene's Church, Glenock.



# Bellaghy double tribute to “true shepherd” and “dedicated sacristan” on retirement

THERE was wonderful celebration in St Mary’s Church, Bellaghy, with the Mass of Thanksgiving for the long and dedicated service of Mgr Andy Dolan, as parish priest for 27 years, and parishioner, Brian McCallion, as sacristan for 29 years.

Bishop Donal presided at the Mass, which Mgr Andy concelebrated with Bellaghy native, Fr Martin McErlean, his good friend, Fr John Forbes, Fr Liam Donnelly, and his successor, Fr Pat O’Hagan, while local Church of Ireland minister, Rev Canon Walsh was amongst the large congregation.

Members of Mgr Andy’s family were also present, including his sisters, Margaret, Carmel and Marion, as were members of Brian’s family, including his wife, Margaret. Welcoming all to the ceremony, Bishop Donal said: “We pray especially for God’s Blessing on Mgr Dolan and Brian McCallion as they start their retirement.

“Monsignor has been a true shepherd, guarding and guiding his flock. Brian has been a dedicated sacristan serving Bellaghy for 29 years. In their retirement, they can rest assured their efforts have left this parish strong, capable and inspired.”

A number symbols were brought forward to the altar which represented Mgr Andy’s time in the parish and reflected some of his many accomplishments. Marie Kilpatrick, chair of the Parish Pastoral Council, explained that the P4 children from St John Bosco PS, Ballynease, brought forward a ‘Memory of Me Candle’ used for Children’s Liturgy, representing the groups and programmes Mgr Andy had initiated in the parish for young people: Baptism; Children’s Liturgy; Memory of Me; GIF; and the Pope John Paul II Award.

P7 children from St Mary’s PS, Bellaghy, brought forward an Altar Server robe and a pair of plim soles, representing the children who assisted Mgr Andy on the altar, guided by Brian over the years. And, Marie said that they also acknowledged Mgr Andy’s introduction of girls to the role of Altar Servers in the parish.

Two long serving Eucharistic Ministers, brought forward a pyx and the Eucharistic Minister Prayer, representing the setting up of Eucharistic Ministers in Mgr Andy’s time in the parish and how they assisted him, especially in bringing Holy Communion to the sick. Representatives of the Church Maintenance & Finance Committees brought forward a trowel and a commemorative plaque, symbolising the renovation of the chapel.

“We are eternally indebted to

Monsignor,” said Marie, “He instigated a fundraising and renovation project to provide our parish with this beautiful Church; a Church for now and future generations.”

Members from the Car Park and Hospitality Committees brought forward a high visibility vest and a teapot, representing a few of the many volunteer groups Mgr Andy established in the parish.

Marie remarked: “The willingness of the parishioners to engage and volunteer their services is testimony to the respect people have for him.”

Two representatives from the Open Door Complex brought forward the complex logo and a plant, representing Mgr Andy’s care for the holistic wellbeing of the parish community.

“The Open Door complex has set the foundations and inspired a vision of our parish community supporting each other and flourishing together,” added Marie.

The celebration was greatly enhanced by the musical contributions of the various parish choirs that filled the gallery, which included a nod to Mgr Andy being a staunch Co Tyrone man, when the tune of ‘Mountains of Pomeroy’ was played during a period of reflection after Communion.

Presentations were made on behalf of the parish to Brian and his wife, Margaret, and to Mgr Andy and his housekeeper of 27 years, Kathleen Duffy.

Paying tribute to Brian, Pastoral Council member, Cormac Diamond commented on how he had been a faithful sacristan in the parish for the last 29 years in his own quiet and unassuming manner.

He added: “His attention to detail was second to none, which was always commented on by visiting bishops and priests. Brian’s family were always very supportive of his role and when the occasion demanded, Margaret was always there to lend a hand. In his role as sacristan, the parish were so lucky to have him for so long and we wish Brian health and happiness in his retirement.”

Going on to pay tribute to Mgr Andy, or ‘Fr Andy’ as he was more affectionately known in the parish, Cormac said: “As in any parish, we had our trials and tribulations, but you have been a guiding light both spiritually and pastorally through it all”.

### Legacy

He continued: “As the spiritual director in the parish over the past 27 years, you have devoted thousands of hours and travelled many more miles to hospitals, wakes and funerals. I know it is



a pastoral duty, but you went far and beyond expectations, and anyone who has experienced this will know the importance of your presence in difficult times. This is a very powerful legacy to be remembered for.

“In your retirement, I’m sure you will not be inactive as your new role will take you around many parishes in the Diocese to celebrate Mass. Everyone wishes you a long, happy and fulfilling retirement, which you rightly deserve. People speak of national treasures, but to the people of Bellaghy Parish, you are our National Treasure”.

Humbled by all that had been said, Mgr Andy felt privileged to have spent 27 of his 51 years in active ministry in the Parish of Ballyscullion (Bellaghy). Ordained on June 5, 1971, after his six years in St Kieran’s Kilkenny, he recalled his first appointment being as Chaplain to the Nazareth House, Bishop Street, in Derry. During his two years there, he taught RE in St Columb’s College part-time for one year, and during the following year he was Chaplain to St Cecilia’s.

His next appointment was to Carndonagh, and during his first year there he was both Curate and Chaplain to the Community School. For the following 11 years, he was full time Chaplain to the School. During his time there, Bishop Edward Daly asked him to establish a Catholic Marriage Advisory Centre in Inishowen, which he found to be a very positive experience in his life.

After Carndonagh, he was assigned as curate to Moville from 1985 to 1989, followed by six years as administrator in St Brigid’s, Carnhill, and then he arrived in Bellaghy in 1995.

Thanking the people of Bellaghy for a very fulfilling 27 years, Mgr Andy told them: “We are always thankful for those who brighten up our lives and you did that for me big time. I take with me very many precious memories. I have been inspired by the way people have coped in difficult and sometimes tragic situations in their lives.”

He continued: “People speak to me about things I have done, etc, in the parish. My response is that I did nothing on my own. People were willing to be involved in many different ways in the parish and that meant a lot of things were possible. You, in fact, challenged me to be the best I could be for the parish and wider community. I can only ask your forgiveness for my failings. I can but reflect on what I have done and what I failed to do.

“I am forever grateful to you for your goodness to me when I was ill, as well as at times of bereavement in my family, when you discovered the way to Aghyaran!”

Thanking Bishop Donal for the confidence he placed in him by appointing him as Vicar General, Mgr Andy said: “No one was more surprised than me. I moved on from that, hoping to devote myself more fully to this parish during my last two years, but Covid thwarted much of that plan.

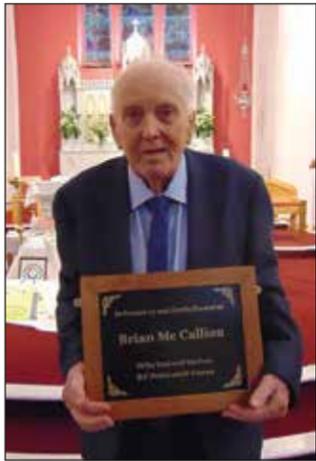
“Having reached the 75 mark it is time to hang up the boots! When I was ordained we had a great number of priests in the diocese and men died in harness. In their later years, they would have had a fairly senior curate who would have overseen the needs of the parish. When we go beyond the magic figure of 75, who will be kind enough to say that we are past the sell by date; if not already arrived there”.

Expressing thanks for the kindness of so many on his departure, and particularly to the Pastoral Council and others who had been involved in preparing the Liturgy and took part in it, Mgr Andy said: “The greatest gift you can give me is to continue the great work that God has begun in you. I wish you, with Fr Pat, every blessing for the years ahead. I appeal to you to respond to Christ’s own words, to pray that the Lord will send labourers into the vineyard.”

The celebration came to a close with refreshments afterwards in the Open Door Complex.



# 80-year-old Bellaghy sacristan retires after 29 years' service



Brian McCallion on his retirement as sacristan of St Mary's Church, Bellaghy.

AFTER 29 years of serving as sacristan in St Mary's Church, Bellaghy, 80-year-old Brian McCallion decided to retire from the role when Mgr Andy Dolan, the parish priest he had served alongside for last 27 years, took his retirement after reaching his 75th birthday.

The pair had worked well together and part company with many good memories to reflect on from their years of serving the people of Bellaghy.

Brian had first served with Fr Michael Flannigan for a couple of years, before he was moved as parish priest to Dungiven, and recalls him being "a real goer".

Before taking on the role of sacristan, he had worked for Magherafelt District Council in refuse collection.

"When I worked as a bin man,"

he said, "I did wee jobs for Fr Flannigan, fixing spouting and cleaning, and I did some things about the house for him."

"The Sacristan who was there at that time, Kevin Boyle, had been there 63 years. He's dead now. When he retired, I got the job so I gave up my work with the Council. I had helped Kevin sometimes, so I had a good idea of what had to be done."

He added: "After Fr Flannigan left, I was with Fr Andy Dolan until he retired and, like Fr Flannigan, he was very good to work with. I have very good memories of helping people out and doing wee jobs for people."

"I met some lovely people around the chapel. Working on the bin lorry I didn't meet people, so it was a great change from that. While working around the chapel I met people I hadn't met before and I enjoyed that very much."

"After a big renovation was carried out on the chapel, leaving it almost completely new, a lot of people came to see it from other areas".

Commenting on the commitment required as a sacristan, Brian said: "You were depended on to do your job, so you had to be there. You had to be on time to open the chapel. I would have been there for 8.15 am to open the chapel and prepare for the 9 am Mass, and there were always people who liked to come early for Mass."

"Being in and around the chapel so much as sacristan helped me very much in my faith. I met some lovely priests, who were very religious. I enjoyed Fr Colm Rafferty when he was here. I drove him around the parish to visit the sick. He was a lovely man. And we have Fr Liam Donnelly, another great man, with us. Priests like that strengthen your faith".

Living in the townland of Tamladuff, about a mile from the chapel, Brian is married to Margaret over 50 years and they have passed on the faith to their family of three.

"Faith," remarked Brian, "keeps you on the straight and narrow. You have to follow your faith; it has stood by me well over the years. When I was growing up at home we said the Rosary and had a strong faith. I feel that young people today still have a strong faith, though they maybe don't

practise it the way we did."

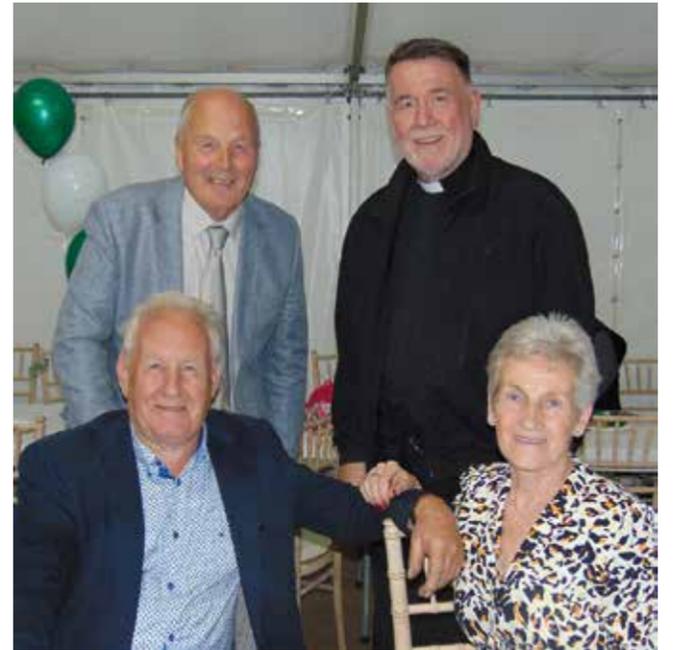
Enjoying taking it a little easier in his retirement, Brian still likes to keep active by gardening and painting around the house "to keep the place in shape."

Commenting on parish life without Mgr Andy, he said: "We miss Fr Andy as we had him for so long, but we have another nice man now, Fr Pat O'Hagan."

"Any of the priests who came to Bellaghy over the years were good, religious priests. There was a Fr Tom McConalogue, a Derry City man, who was parish priest for about 40 years and went around on a bicycle and then a taxi, as he couldn't drive. There were very few cars in those days. He was a lovely man and had cures. My father sent for him for me when I was a week old and had pneumonia, and Fr Tom told him not to worry about that boy...he'll live to a good age!"



Brian McCallion with his wife, Margaret, and family members.





## When I am weak, then I am strong

*HAVING pleaded with the Lord to take away a particular torment, St Paul was told: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."*

*And so, Paul wrote: "That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor 12:10).*

*During November, when we pray especially for our beloved departed and celebrate sainthood, a number of people from across the Diocese have shared how they have been inspired by the life story of a saint and/or a deceased loved one as an example of God's power being "made perfect in weakness".*

## Saintliness comes from being weak enough to let God do great things in us *by Bishop Donal*

MY family has a long connection with Lourdes. In two years' time, I hope to celebrate the centenary of my grandfather's visit to Lourdes with the Second Irish National Pilgrimage.

That family link has always left me fascinated with St Bernadette.

As we all know, she was from a decent family that had fallen on hard times. At 14, she was still illiterate and sickly. The family now lived in a building that was judged to be too dilapidated to serve as the town prison. She certainly had nothing going for her. She was a member of a poor family who was looking for firewood on the edge of the town dump. Weakness – social, financial, educational and health – marked every aspect of her life.

And she recognised that her weakness was the place where God's grace was revealed.

Because of her situation and status in the town, Bernadette knew that she had nothing to boast about. She had only her experience of the Lady at the Grotto. And she was very clear

and resolute in her story, despite attempts by the authorities to browbeat her into withdrawing her claim.

Bernadette's holiness did not come from her being chosen for the 18 apparitions between February and July in 1858. She was a saint because of how she reacted to how God intervened in her life.

Later, while in the convent at Nevers, she was asked why, if she was so special, she had not received any further revelations. Maybe she had just been deluding herself. Her reply was saintly. She said that she was like a brush that God took from the cupboard and used to a purpose. Now He had put her back in the cupboard. And she was at peace with that.

Bernadette is a saint who is the exact opposite of a celebrity culture. She did not want attention. Like Mary, she was able to let God's will be done in and through her. She wanted God's grace to shine through her, whatever the personal cost.

Saintliness comes, not from



St Bernadette.

being strong enough to do great things for God, but from being weak enough to let God do great things in us.

## St Maxmilian Kolbe...hope in the midst of despair *by Edel O'Connor*

*'Winter is a lesson about the fine art of loss and growth.*

*Its lesson is clear; there is only one way out of struggle*

*And that is by going into its darkness,*

*Waiting for the light, and being open to new growth.'*

These words by Sr Joan Chittester helped me to reflect on the great saints and our loved ones who struggled in darkness, waited for the light and opened themselves up to new growth.

During November we pray especially for our beloved departed and celebrate sainthood. There are so many wonderful people who provide us with great examples on how to live our lives. The life story of St Maxmilian Kolbe is one such example.

Maximilian Kolbe was a Catholic priest who was arrested for assisting over 2,000 Jewish refugees during World War II. He was sent to Auschwitz concentration camp. One day, three prisoners disappeared from the camp and the commander decided to pick 10 men at random to starve to death. One of those men, Franciszek Gajowniczek, had a wife and children. Kolbe heard this and volunteered to take the man's place thus sacrificing his life to save another man. Kolbe died on August 14, 1941. Franciszek Gajowniczek died in 1995 in Poland aged 95 and 53 years after Kolbe had saved him. Maximilian Kolbe was canonised

by Pope John Paul II on October 10, 1982, in the presence of Franciszek Gajowniczek and his family.

John O'Donohue reflected that death is not the end, it is a rebirth. In so many ways, the story of Maxmilian Kolbe is a story of darkness, hope and rebirth. Through the harrowing and dark times in the concentration camp, Kolbe brought comfort and healing to those around him. His devotion to Mary gave him the strength and encouragement to minister to others.

When I am teaching the life of Kolbe to my students, I always ask them to imagine the darkness that surrounded the concentration camps. In the midst of the despair and hopelessness, hope broke through. Our brokenness is what breaks us open to the Holy Spirit. The life of Kolbe challenged that darkness and offered hope and courage to the Jewish people.

In the words of the man Kolbe saved: "I understood that a man like him could not have done otherwise. Perhaps he thought that as a priest his place was beside the condemned men to help them keep hope. In fact he was with them to the last".

Kolbe said that "the most deadly poison of our times is indifference." As a Religious educator, I endeavour to teach young people the importance of discernment, to teach the consequences of their choices and decisions.



Edel O'Connor, Coleraine.

Each one is called to shape the future of the world we live in. It is vital that young people don't just see religion as another subject, but are given real opportunities to overcome indifference, risk the road of faith and feel part of the heartbeat of our parish and communities.

During November, our students have remembered loved ones and saints who have proven to be a source of strength, courage and hope for others.

As we enter into the darkness of winter, we pray to God to help us understand that deep in the recesses of our souls, a light shines. The saints have travelled through the darkness and have become lanterns for us so that we may be lanterns for one another.

## God's power made perfect in weakness *by Kathleen Cullivan*

I believe I was blessed in my childhood, as I was surrounded by people who had a very good grasp of life's secrets. If I asked for advice on a particular matter, I would often be told that the difficult thing to do is most likely the right decision.

I very quickly learned that getting what you desire may not be in the best interests of all, and that any decisions I would make would need to reflect the good of all, not just my good.

Most things were informed by prayer and novenas to make the right decision. I believe this gave me a good sense of inclusiveness and a need for reflectiveness.

There were particular saints who were invoked also. I am sure that there are many un-named saints among the people who influenced my life. They knew their dependence on God and made that seem like a strength, not a weakness. Faith was lived and was strong.

While, in youth, I moved away from this with the usual strong will that maybe there was an easier way. I usually found that I was no match for the complications of life, or the confusion I could cause without reflectiveness and dialogue. I found in this that God pursued me by pushing at my will. Not as dramatically as He did with St Paul, but rather with a quiet, subtle tone to it. My way did not always work. To surrender is probably the most difficult thing to do and is a lifetime work.

Various situations which came into my life helped prod me along this road. In my field of work, I have watched so many people have to come to this point of surrender in order to retrieve their life, that it has always kept the importance of surrender before me.

The saint whom I both look to and feel influenced by is St Faustina, within the work of Divine Mercy. It seems to me that she had a complicated journey on the road to surrender, and was constantly reminded of her smallness and need for the Lord in order to achieve His will. Her own plans, which seemed to make good sense, were thwarted by Him as He pulled her towards a total reliance on Him.

I find this work very much for our time. It instilled in me a sense of awe. For not only were we given the passion, crucifixion and resurrection of Our Lord, but His continual desire to reach out to us.

I don't know of any other work which contains in such abundance the words of the Lord. The simplicity of the language for all to understand can only be described as the love of His heart pouring out to us and offering us His mercy. I believe this work, which was selflessly entered into by St Faustina for the sake of others, and dictated by the Lord, helped me to love the Lord more. It created in me a greater sense of conscience and responsibility for



Kathleen Cullivan, Derry.

my actions. I continually return to this book as I feel it could never be absorbed fully.

### Honesty

Reading St Faustina's Diary gives me a desire to want to please the Lord and not just keep His laws. It gives me a better sense of the meaning of His law, which He once described as "love the Lord your God and your neighbour as yourself." Honesty, I believe, is the key to this as we, on our own, are not capable of this kind of love. We naturally warm to love and are inspired by it, as opposed to being told or love being expected.

St Faustina much inspires me as she totally surrendered to what was being asked of her by the Lord and had the massive responsibility of being the Lord's secretary; this in the face of much opposition and delay and much suffering to herself. She teaches

## Saints I have known *by Ann McCay*



Ann McCay, Columba Community.

*“At the core of our being each one of us is a Saint and that is what God sees.” (Fr Neal Carlin, Columba Community founder)*

WHEN God looks at you and at me, He sees the goodness in each one of us. We may not always see it in ourselves; we may not always see it in others, but God does.

When remembering and celebrating sainthood, I cannot overlook my parents and my husband, Tommy's parents, and our aunts and uncles; such saintly people struggling to raise their families in difficult times. Passing on their faith and morals to us in a way that gave us the grounding we needed and, at the same time, coping with day-to-day challenges that raising, educating and protecting a large family presented. Trying to make ends meet, keeping something back to give to the church, to those in need, being a good neighbour, helping the missions. They were never off their knees; their prayers were constant and their faith was strong.

They are reaping their reward now among the Communion of Saints in heaven, and we thank God for their lives and influence. When I need to be reminded of how to live a good and holy life, I look to the example they left us.

As a young child making my Confirmation, I chose 'Bernadette' as my Confirmation name. I read the story of her life, and watched the film 'The Song of Bernadette' on television. I was fascinated by Bernadette's life

story, the apparitions of Our Lady, and the healings and miracles which occurred at Lourdes. I loved to sing 'The Bells of the Angelus' in harmony with my cousin, Julie at evening devotions in St Malachy's, Coleraine. It is still a favourite hymn of mine. St Bernadette faced a lot of opposition and challenges, but persevered and brought Our Lady's message to the world of her time.

In my 20s, I became interested in the life of St Francis, as I'm sure many others did too. His appeal is timeless and his story so compelling. Such was the magnitude of his conversion experience that he turned his life around and changed direction completely. His humility, his love of nature, his lifestyle choices, his prayer life, his desire for peace and reconciliation with the enemy were, and are, very appealing to a young mind.

Some years later, I was delighted to be chosen to play the part of St Clare, opposite Pat McAllister as St Francis, in a musical entitled 'Assisi', about the life of St Francis written by the Patterson family. It was put on by the Parish of Our Lady of Lourdes, Steelstown, and the Parish Hall was packed every night. The music was great, and the show was so popular and well supported that we brought it back again a year later.

St Francis faced a lot of opposition and challenges in his life but persevered and brought God's message to the world of his time.

Over recent years, I have become interested in the life of St Oscar Romero of El Salvador, who spoke out against social injustice and violence in his country. St Oscar faced a lot of opposition and challenges but persevered and brought God's message to the world of his time.

### Fr Neal Carlin

My interest in St Columba and the Celtic Saints of the Golden Age in Ireland over the past 43 years has come through Fr Neal

Carlin. The person who has had the biggest spiritual impact on mine and my husband's lives is Fr Neal Carlin, the late Founder and Spiritual Director of Columba Community and our friend over many years. Fr Neal died on August 6, 2022, the Feast of the Transfiguration. We will never forget him. His was a prophetic ministry of listening prayer, reconciliation, evangelisation and healing. His life, like the lives of the early Celtic Saints, was lived in complete obedience and abandonment to Jesus Christ, His Saviour and Lord. He taught us so much.

We were privileged to witness the way in which Fr Neal used the Word of God as a guide for his ministry and the absolute centrality of the Eucharist in his life. He preached and lived the Gospel message of Christ Crucified and Risen. He worked tirelessly with others to form Basic Christian Community, convinced that this was the answer for the Church in Ireland. Fr Neal had a heart for people, especially the vulnerable and those struggling through all kinds of difficulties in their lives.

Like Columba, Neal was a reconciler; he had a great gift of hospitality to the homeless, the outsider, prisoners, ex-prisoners and their families, those suffering from addiction and their families, and those in need of healing. He saw Christ in others. Many people felt a very deep affection for Neal and gratitude for what he had done for them, quietly, with compassion and humility, and without the expectation of thanks; always pointing away from himself and towards the Lord.

After much praying, searching and waiting, Fr Neal founded the Columba Community in 1980 in response to the need in this part of Ireland at the time. He saw the need for a place of prayer, reconciliation and healing in the midst of the conflict. He invited a few praying people, Tommy and I among them, to join him in the

your heart. Talk to me simply" (Notebook V, page 527).

St Faustina has inspired me to seek a God with so much love, with whom I can totally be myself. She highlights the way God wants complete freedom of our soul. She points out that this can only come about by having no attachments and not engaging in idle chatter, as these things get in the way of the Lord. She makes sense of suffering. She describes it as a treasure because of the way it purifies the soul. In suffering, we learn who our true friend is (page 153). I also learned from St Faustina that for God to act in our soul we must give up acting on our own. Otherwise, God will not carry out His work in it. It becomes our work, our thoughts, our ideas.

The prayer that I find most compelling is: "Lord, hold me, as I don't know what to do." This is my own prayer.

In St Faustina's Diary, the Lord says: "Why are you fearful? Who will dare to touch you when you are with me? Most dear to me is the soul that has complete trust in me. I heap my confidence upon it and give it all that it asks." (Diary entry 453).

I find that I move in and out of the trust the Lord asks. When I achieve it, I find a peace that is not influenced by the happenings in my life. Other times, I get a sense of what I need to do but know it will cost me dearly, then I tell Him I am not strong enough. Because of the trust the Lord asks of us, He can so easily pass us and not be seen.

task. In the shell of the bombed out site that became Columba House, Morning Prayer took place each day at 8 am.

The foundation of the Columba Community was influenced by the Charismatic Renewal Movement, in which Fr Neal was heavily involved, the Basic Christian Communities he had seen first-hand emerging in Central America, the ethos of the Young Christian workers in Japan 'See Judge and Act,' the Life and Ministry of our local St Columba, and a strong desire to develop the role of, and channel the gifts of, lay people in the Church, particularly the charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit; Gifts for Service. He did not want us to become 'a cosy corner of the likeminded', serving others and being alongside people was very important. Our outreach at that time was to prisoners ex-prisoners and their families, to people from other denominations and to anyone suffering as a result of the conflict.

Fr Neal faced a lot of opposition, scepticism and resistance to the work he had been called to do, but he persevered and brought God's message to the world in our day.

"Teach me, like You, to lean into the time and places of pain, as by taking up my cross I know You will make it light. Help me not to run away from the challenge, but to bear it patiently." (Fr Neal Carlin)

### Suffering

Fr Neal had a deep and lasting faith and patient forbearance in suffering. He saw this as the cost of discipleship and emphasised how important it is "to have faith in Christ crucified and risen if we are to remain loving and at peace in times of trial and illness. We see Him in the wounded self and in the wounds of others".

The word which God gave him, again and again and again, as he prayed and listened, sums up his life: "Youth may grow tired and weary, young men may stumble and fall but those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength,

they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not grow weary, walk and not faint." (Isaiah 40:30-31)

### "The Cross

*You marked my days like an icon,*

*a stamp, a seal upon my life.*

*You are the unwelcome guest,*

*who yet demands a welcome.*

*You stand aloof to challenge us to surrender.*

*Yet, you will be a bridge to new horizons,*

*if we but embrace you;*

*even grow to love you*

*as I love the One who died*

*on you - for me - outside the city.*

*For it is He I welcome and embrace.*

*It is He who has given meaning to my emptiness*

*and healing to my wounded heart.*

*Amen"*

*Fr Neal Carlin*

"Healing and the Holy Eucharist. We, as a community, always tie in healing with the Eucharist, and we pray with people for healing after Mass every Monday and Thursday night. When someone asks for healing, we need to remember through whom healing comes. "By His wounds we are healed" was Isaiah's prophecy about the Risen Christ. It is Jesus who heals, not us, and this is something that we need to get into our heads. There is always the danger that we misplace the glory.

"The Eucharist is the source and apex of all spiritual activity. Jesus is present in the Eucharist, and the faith to believe in that is everything. 'Go forth, your faith has made you whole', said Jesus. I have had the experience of people coming for healing and I know they are examples of living faith. The last passage in Mark, 16:15-20, sums up what Jesus wants to leave with us: "...and the sick upon whom they lay hands will recover." The whole purpose of Christ coming, dying and rising, is that He wants to live in an

incarnate way in us. If we believe that the Lord is within us and we lay hands on people, we do so in His name and with His blessing." (Fr Neal Carlin)

The Columba Community has grown and developed over the last 43 years, a testament to the vision of Fr Neal and his ability to see through to the end the work God had given him to do. Each of our four Centres serves God's people and His plan in a different way: Columba House of Prayer and Reconciliation; St Anthony's Retreat Centre; White Oaks Rehabilitation Centre; Iosias Centre, which comprises The Celtic Prayer Garden, Sanctuary Conference Centre and Chalets, White Oaks Organics, Café and Gift Shop.

"The Lord forgave our mistakes and frailty, and did not allow them to spoil His plan. Over the years we waited, we prayed, we built. We also struggled, wept and, indeed, laughed". (Fr Neal)

"We were left to feel like men condemned to death so that we might trust, not in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead. He rescued us from the danger of death and will continue to do so. We have put our hope in Him who will never cease to deliver us. But you must help us with your prayers, so that on our behalf God may be thanked for the gift granted us through the prayers of so many." (2 Corinthians 1:10-11).

We know Fr Neal continues to pray for us as he takes his rightful place among the Communion of Saints in Heaven. He was a treasure and what treasures he shared with those lucky enough to encounter him; we have been so blessed by them all.

I cannot finish without remembering all those who have died who were part of the Columba Community as members, auxiliaries and associates over the years, who, by their constant prayer and good works, made a positive difference to so many lives. We know they are with the Lord watching over and guiding us still.

### Continued from p22

me the importance of trust, patience and the humanness of being real with the Lord, as she allowed her tiredness and frustration to be evident to Him. Patience was something He continually asked of her.

Our Lord knows our nature so well. He didn't push His work but knew our smallness would mean it would have to be slow. St Faustina was always influenced by the pulls and tugs of her own heart and inability to see at times. The beautiful response of Our Lord needs to be quoted. He said to her: "My child, do not be discouraged. I know your trust in me: I know you are aware of my goodness and mercy. Let us talk in detail about everything that weighs so heavily upon

## With God's grace and our faith in Him, we will strive towards perfection

*by Marian Murphy*

MAXIMILIAN Kolbe is a true example of one who was "made perfect in weakness", not his weakness, in this case, his captors.

His life was strongly influenced as a young boy after he had a vision of the Virgin Mary, who offered him two crowns, one to persevere in purity, the other to become a martyr. He accepted them both.

His love for the Virgin Mary and his compassion for the poor and weak was evident in the face of the cruel torture he experienced and witnessed in Auschwitz.

He perfected his own life

by perfecting the lives of the prisoners of this cruel regime, by praying, guiding others to offer their sufferings, and by hearing their confessions before their untimely deaths.

He accepted all his sufferings quietly and stoically for the love of God and Our Lady, The Immaculata as he called her.

He had honoured the two crowns Our Lady had offered to him many years before.

Another Saint I admire is St Monica. Her persistence in prayer and trust in God's goodness resulted in the conversion of her



Kathleen Cullivan, Derry.

# We can choose how we carry our cross

by Rory McGilligan

I have concluded that no matter who or what we are, at some point in our lives we will encounter challenges, difficulties and sufferings. Sufferings can come in so many ways; it may be illness, addiction or loneliness, to name just a few.

At this point, I am mindful that this article could be considered negative, but please bear with me. Whatever suffering we may have in our lives can be considered our cross. We may not be able to choose what suffering we must undertake, but we can choose how we carry our cross.

I believe that when Our Lord was carrying His cross on the Via Dolorosa, each time that He fell He encountered His father. First, in the women of Jerusalem, who were crying and lamenting for the suffering that He was going through; rest assured the Father in Heaven's heart was hurting for His Son. Then, when He encountered Veronica, as she wiped His face from spital blood and sweat, our Father and His Father was there still loving Him through Veronica's tenderness. Lastly, when Simon of Cyrene carried our Lord's cross to Golgotha; here, our loving Father helped again, using Simon of

Cyrene as His instrument to take the weight of the cross off His Son's shoulder for a while.

When we fall in life, we can, if we look, encounter our loving Father, who is there when we are most fragile, most broken and most vulnerable. With His help, He will assist us to carry our cross and move on in life's journey. We can see from Our Lord's example that we must get up when we fall. Our Father is there waiting to help us and, with that help, we can carry on in our life's journey.

So many Saints suffered for the Lord, and willingly so. Some even gave their lives, as they would not deny Christ. What strength! What courage! I sometimes ask would I have this courage, and I am ashamed to say that I doubt it. But, if we keep praying, keep working on forming a more vibrant friendship with Jesus, we can grow in love and courage to defend our love for God, in the knowledge that our Lord speaks to us in the gentlest, most calming, most peaceful of ways.

I often think to be a follower of Jesus, especially a member of the Roman Catholic Church in Europe in the 21st century, we could possibly get laughed at or made fun of. Be brave, stay close

to Jesus, you are bearing witness to Him, and He will defend us as we approach His Kingdom.

I remember a relative, who has long since passed away and bore great witness to Christ. I wish not to mention their name as I believe it will be in keeping with their wishes. This relative had their trials and some adversity through their life, but they were solid in their faith; they never wavered. I remember, in times of mourning the loss of a loved one, their handkerchief in one hand and the Rosary beads in another hand. Their rosary seemed to give them strength; it was part of their staple diet, as was Mass when they could attend.

I remember how letters would have been sent to distant relatives who were in certain religious orders, and I can only think these letters would be filled with prayers and good wishes for the person who was receiving them. I also heard, long since their death, that they would have sent money out to the missions as well as to Mgr Horan in Knock. Nothing of this was made a fuss of; it was just done with a joyful spirit and an open heart.

I learnt from them what a living faith is, not just in good times



Rory McGilligan, Dungiven

but in not so good times as well. I learnt the importance of a strong prayer life and unshakable trust in our Lord. It made a great impact on my life and, hopefully, I can in some way make a similar impact on a loved one's life as well. This person had their trials; they lost loved ones before their time, they bore sufferings, some of a broken heart, others medical, all with dignity and courage through the power of prayer, staying well within our Father in Heaven's loving gaze. I was blessed to know them and to be loved by them, as well as having an excellent example of how to live well.

Continued from p21

son, Augustine.

She persevered for over 30 years and God answered her prayers. He gave her the grace to believe this. The power of God was

made perfect in St Augustine's weakness.

We all struggle with hardships and difficulties in life, but with God's grace and our faith in Him, we will strive towards perfection or as near to it.

## All saints honest about their weaknesses and struggles inspire me

by Patricia Casey

DURING November, we pray especially for our beloved departed and celebrate sainthood. A saint who has inspired me in life is the one who is honest about their weaknesses and struggles, which are all the saints.

One saint in particular that I feel drawn to is St Francis de Sales, who provides a powerful testimony of life and encourages us to deal with the initial feelings of anger.

He writes, in the introduction to the Devout Life: "At the first sign of anger, collect yourself gently and seriously, not hastily or with impetuosity."

He also wrote a prayer to lead us back to gentleness: "O Lord, with your help, I want to practice gentleness in daily encounters and annoyances. As soon as I realize that anger is kindled in me, I will collect myself, not with violence but gently, and I will seek to restore my heart to peace. Knowing that I can do nothing alone, I will take care to call on You for help, as the Apostles did when they were tossed by the raging sea. Teach me to be gentle with all, even with those who offend me or are opposed to me, and even with myself, not burdening myself because of my faults. When I fall, in spite of my efforts, I will gently pick myself up and say: 'Come on, my poor heart, let's get up and leave this pit



Patricia Casey, Killea.

forever. Let's have recourse to the Mercy of God, and He will help us. Amen."

I will finish with Pope Francis' words of wisdom: "Let us read the lives of the saints which narrate in a comprehensible way the style God uses in the lives of people not that different from us since the saints were made of flesh and blood like us. Their deeds dialogue with our own actions, and help us understand what they mean."

Pope Francis also said: "Saints do not come from a 'parallel universe'. They are believers rooted in their daily activities with their families, study, work, social, economic and political life. In all these settings, they fearlessly strive to carry out God's will."

# My Grace is sufficient for you

by Noel Bradley

IF I could only believe that 'My grace is sufficient for you' all would be well with me. Yet, Paul could believe it and tells us about his experience. He had a particular torment that he prayed to God to take from him but the only answer he got was: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness". He even goes on to say: "That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor12:10).

I marvel at how he can say such things. He is so in love with Christ and His way of life, His struggle and suffering, that he is willing and wanting to share in and be with Christ now through his own hardships, weaknesses, insults, difficulties and persecutions. He then discovers that when he acknowledges his weakness, 'then he is strong'. If love is wanting to be with the beloved, to identify with them, then this is it.

### Later Day Saints

Thousands of years later, there are much the same sentiments expressed by St Teresa of Avila in her famous prayer: "Let nothing disturb you, nothing frighten you. All things are passing away... Whoever has God lacks nothing. God alone suffices."

Also, in St Ignatius of Loyola we have "Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty...all that I have and possess. You, Lord, have given all to me. I now give it back to you... Give me your love and your grace, for that is enough for me."

St Therese of Lisieux had the same sentiments: "I felt how weak and imperfect I was and gratitude flooded my soul"; "I am simply resigned to see myself always imperfect and in this I find my joy."

### Fr Pedro Arrupe sj

The saint that inspires me most is my mother, who lived a family life with her husband and seven children and ran a hotel business, and yet lived a patient, simple, prayerful, hidden and holy life.

But there is a more famous person: Fr Pedro Arrupe, elected superior of the Society of Jesus in 1965 and died in 1991 after many achievements, trials and suffering.

He was in Hiroshima in 1945 when the A-bomb was dropped on the unsuspecting city. The recorded death toll is thought to be about 140,000. Pedro used his office desk as an operating theatre, as he had medical skills from studying medicine before he joined the Jesuits.

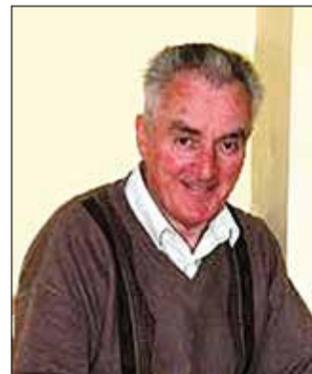
He led the first rescue party into the doomed city, even

though he had been warned by the authorities not to enter the city. They helped cremate 50,000 bodies and to care for at least a few of the 120,000 wounded. He brought home scarred humans, who had been burned, boiled, skinned, deafened, and blinded, and tried to attend to them with the seminarians in his care. This experience gave him an immense and enduring energy to do all that was humanly possible to build a better and more just world.

### His struggle and suffering

In 1965, Pedro was elected the Superior General of the Jesuit Society just as Vatican II ended, and he was faced with the challenge of implementing the renewal that the Council called for. After the synod in 1971, the Jesuit congregation published their statement on the "The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice". Justice was seen to embody God's love for the world. But there was a cost: the loss of friends and support, opposition and death. Between 1973 and 2014, some 53 Jesuits died violently because of their dedication to justice.

After the Council, there was naturally confusion about how to implement the decrees. Pedro suffered a lot from misunderstandings between



Noel Bradley, Buncrana

himself and Pope Paul VI. The issue was resolved with Pedro taking responsibility for the misunderstanding and the Pope being 'much comforted' by 'the good spirit' with which the Jesuits obeyed.

When John Paul II became pope in 1978, he would have inherited the criticisms already made against the Jesuits. Pedro, however, wrote to him a spirited defence of the Society on the matter. The difficulties between them continued and, at one stage, he offered his resignation to the pope, which was not accepted and the dialogue continued.

Arrupe suffered a massive stroke on his return from the Philippines in 1981 and it left him partially paralysed and with impaired speech. For years, he had been going around the world visiting

various Jesuit ministries, trying to encourage Jesuits to implement the new vision of Vatican II. This had taken its toll.

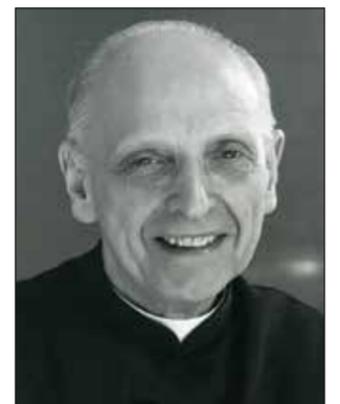
The Pope appointed a new Superior General of his own choosing, one who would act simply according to the mind of the pope. This was a very difficult moment, but Pedro said "God wants it so; may His will be done." The Jesuits followed his example. He spent 10 empty and silent years in the infirmary in Rome. He died on February 5, 1991. His beatification process began on November 14, 2018.

I admire his struggle to implement the vision of Vatican II and his work for a faith that works for justice in the world. His setting up of the Jesuit Refugee Service, which has 1,500 members in 50 countries, was part of this work and his last legacy. I also admire his prayer, trust and faith in God throughout his life.

Perhaps, the message at his formal resignation as superior

reflects the indomitable spirit of a physically broken man, and is a fitting closure:

"More than ever, I find myself in the hands of God. This is what I have wanted all my life from my youth. But now there is a difference: the initiative is entirely with God. It is indeed a profound spiritual experience to know and feel myself so totally in God's hands."



Fr Pedro Arrupe sj

*In celebration of the 400th anniversary of Carmelite Saint, Teresa of Avila, Aoife O'Neill, the retreat facilitator at the Discalced Carmelite Monastery, Termonbacca, joined the prior, Fr Stephen Quinn and friend, Amanda Kelly for a pilgrimage in Avila...*

## In the footsteps of Teresa of Avila *by Aoife O'Neill*

IN the small hours of the morning, myself, Amanda and Fr Stephen set off on the road to Dublin to catch our very early 6.25 am flight to Madrid, where we met up with the rest of our group who had flown from Gatwick. Suffering from the lack of sleep, we boarded our transfer bus to Avila, but the excitement, curiosity and scenery made sleep impossible.

We stayed in the birth-house of St Teresa, the home of the oldest congregation of discalced friars. The Monastery church is built on top of Teresa's paternal home, and our rooms overlooked the courtyard.

Gathered for Sunday Mass, we listened to the Gospel from Luke 18:9-14; it spoke of how the tax collector and not the Pharisee went home justified. Pilgrimage leader, Fr Matt Blake ocd brought our attention to how, at the root of it, the parable was speaking of prayer and maturity in the faith. Both the publican and the Pharisee came to God, seeking a relationship with Him, but each with a very different type of prayer, which revealed where each one was in their faith. The publican, though in outer appearance seemed the weaker of the two was, in fact, the one whose prayer revealed a mature faith. The Pharisee's prayer revealed how he still had a lot to learn and growth to go through.

Fr Matt pointed out that St Teresa reminds us that a mature faith is one rooted in self-knowledge, which allows the type of mature prayer that we witness in the publican. St Teresa paints a very clear picture of how self-knowledge is key to prayer and a mature faith. She uses the image of bread. In Spain, all meals are accompanied by bread and it is common to hear that a meal without bread is not a meal. In the same way, self-knowledge is the bread of the spiritual life, which can only come from our relationship with God and is key to a mature faith.

After Mass, Fr Matt noted St Teresa had said that once a Mass had been celebrated, those who had shared in it became a new community. So now that we had shared Mass, we were a community who would be together for the next week. We had shared in the mystical encounter that is the Mass and that had bound us to each other in a way that only God can.

We ended our first day in expectation of what was to come, aware that we were travelling together through whatever the Holy Spirit had prepared for us.

The next morning we set off on foot to visit St Joseph's Monastery, just outside the medieval walls

of Avila. There, in the primitive chapel, we had Mass together. Fr Matt spoke of the conversion experience of St Teresa. It felt so surreal to be sitting in this place that St Teresa had been the driving force behind.

### Conversion

After lunch, we set out to walk to the Monastery of the Incarnation where St Teresa lived for 30 years of her life, and where she had her conversion. For St Teresa, friendship was fundamental to the spiritual life because our relationship with God is a deep friendship that gives birth to all of our human friendships. The friendship with God is one of profound love and this love then radiates out to others.

God is Love itself and St Teresa experienced how God's Love is beyond all human description. Love spurs us in efforts that we possibly never thought we would undertake. It spurred St Teresa on to reform her Order so as to live ever closer to God.

St John Paul II commented on the fruits of this Love when he visited the Monastery of the Incarnation. He said that there at the Incarnation, where Teresa had had her conversion and experienced total consecration to Christ, has been a place that had irradiated new monastic foundations and had been the seedbed for the contemplative life.

At the Monastery of the Incarnation, we visited the Chapel with the Blessed Sacrament which has been built over St Teresa's cell, where she experienced the transverberation. This moment in her life has been made especially famous by Bernini's sculpture in the Santa Maria Vittoria in Rome. Fr Matt pointed out that the sculpture picks up an important point, that the experience of God that Teresa had, had become part of her consciousness after she had experienced it. The angel in the sculpture is holding the arrow after it has pierced her heart.

Teresa wrote about this experience after it had happened, and this is the only way that any of us can be conscious of our experience of God. The direct experience of God is not something we are aware of at the time, much less are we able to articulate it into words. We become conscious of it afterwards as it bears fruits, and it is only in these fruits that some words can be used.

St Teresa made it clear in her writing that God's love was something that went beyond human comprehension and language. Human language is very limited and it really cannot express an experience of God - it

will always fall short, but it can find an expression in how we love one another.

In the museum there, we saw the original drawing of Christ Crucified by St John of the Cross. The sketch is preserved in a simple reliquary of gilded wood and I was amazed to see how small it was, roughly 2.25 in by 1.9 in). The mystical and artistic greatness of St John of the Cross' drawing captivated Salvador Dalí, who, in 1951, painted his world-renowned work 'Christ of Saint John of the Cross'.

### Hermitage

On Tuesday, we took the bus to Segovia, to the Monastery of St John of the Cross. His body rests there in a beautiful tomb and it is one of the few houses remaining where he lived. It also, quite beautifully, contains a hermitage he built in the garden of the monastery. A steep climb up the hill of the garden and we were able to soak in the beautiful scenery and peaceful tranquillity of this spot.

We then gathered inside the monastery Church, where Fr Stephen celebrated Mass at the tomb. Following this, we were free to explore the city and eat lunch. The centre of Segovia was extremely busy, bustling with people and with orchestras performing, and a festive atmosphere. We soon discovered the cause of the festivities was the Feast of their Patron Saint, Fructus.

We visited the 16th century Gothic style Cathedral. Once again, we were struck by the beauty of the art and altars inside. We met with the group at the end of the day by the impressive Roman Aqueduct to get the bus back to Avila.

Wednesday was a busier schedule. We set off after breakfast to visit Alba de Tormes. St Teresa died in the convent she founded here on October 4, 1582. Following Mass in the Basilica of St Teresa, we visited the amazing museum of Spanish Catholicism and were able to spend time in prayer at the tomb of St Teresa. At her tomb are her heart and left arm, displayed in visible reliquaries.

Following this, we made the trip to Salamanca, where we had free time to explore the city. Having previously seen an advertisement for an exhibition in the Cathedral of Salamanca, we headed straight there. It is an exhibition of the hyper realistic and volumetric artwork entitled 'The Mystery Man', which is the result of an assiduous study of the Holy Shroud, known as the Shroud of Turin. The effort took more than 15 years and was carried out by

Spanish artists. It fills four rooms that narrate the passion and death of Christ. There was no English translation available but we were able to grasp the general idea through the images there. The final room contained a real life model of what the body of Jesus of Nazareth could have looked like, according to historical and scientific data offered by the Shroud.

It was impossible not to be moved standing next to this model. To see the bruising, the lumps of flesh lifted, and realise He did this for me! I couldn't help but imagine how it must have been for Mary, to be handed her child in this awful state must have been totally heart wrenching. This was one of the highlights of the pilgrimage for me and I look forward to it coming to Ireland.

### Imprisoned

On day five, we travelled two hours to the city of Toledo, which had played a role in St Teresa's work and St John's life. It was a place not without difficulties and is most associated with the town in which John of the Cross was imprisoned. It is also where St Teresa began writing her Interior Castle.

Through the maze of small medieval streets, Fr Matt guided us to the Friar's Monastery, where we had Mass and then were able to walk around the garden. The views from it are impressive, overlooking the river that runs alongside Toledo and its suburbs. During our free time, we visited the amazing Toledo Cathedral. Inside this amazing building there is so much to see, including nine chapels and the Archbishops' Sacristy, which contains beautiful paintings by famous Spanish painter, El Greco, including the 'El Expolio' (The Disrobing of Christ). It would have been easy to get lost here for a week with so much to take in but, sadly, we had to leave and meet up with the group.

Fr Matt then led us through some of the places associated with John of the Cross. We saw the spot where he jumped to freedom when he escaped from his imprisonment, the convent of nuns who helped him and the hospital where he was given treatment in secret.

On Friday, we visited the final location of San Jose Convent in Medina del Campo. Medina was the place in which Teresa met John of the Cross. It was also St Teresa's first foundation outside of Avila, a test to the question of whether the charisma would 'travel' to another location. When St Teresa and her sisters who had travelled with her to the new foundation arrived, they found



Arriving in Avila.

that there wasn't a house but a rather dilapidated building that they would have to repair. They said the first Mass in a room, which would later become the parlour, with only half a roof on it. It was in this room that St John of the Cross and St Teresa first met. We were allowed to sit in the chair where St John sat when he spoke to St Teresa.

At the convent, which we had been allowed to enter as a special favour, as they only usually allow visitors on Saturdays, we met Jose Antonio. He volunteers for the museum for them, and shows people around on Saturdays. He is very passionate about the convent and the history found in it. He enthusiastically took us around, showing us what the nuns' rooms looked like when they first moved to Medina, but also St Teresa's room, which was turned a century later into a small chapel. When looking at the humble origins, the opposition faced, at the clear struggle Teresa faced, a phrase of hers came to mind: "Nothing happens, save by the will of God".

In the case of St Teresa, it meant that what she was doing would happen because God willed it. She believed this even when faced with fierce opposition. This did not, however, mean remaining inert or doing nothing. Once she arrived in Medina, a Mass was celebrated as soon as it was possible and this was quickly followed by the signing of documents with a notary to establish the convent before the civil authorities. She acted conscious that, though there was opposition and clearly much needed to be done to make the village house into a convent, as God willed for it to happen, her efforts would be fruitful because He was behind them.

### Trust

We can learn much from this. Often in our lives, we find that a task lies before us that seems impossible. Or we dream big

about a project in our personal and professional lives but they seem so unreachable. Maybe it seems like something we do not have the physical, intellectual, or spiritual strength to do. Or maybe it requires resources that we do not have. The obstacles seem insurmountable, looming before us, telling us to stop and focus on what can be done. It is in those moments when discerning if God is behind that idea or desire is crucial. If God is with us, then nothing is impossible, because He meets us there where our resources, strengths, and capacities end, so that all He wills comes to fruition. What He desires of us is openness to His plans and trust that He will make the seemingly impossible possible.

On Friday evening, back in Avila, we gathered for a beautiful evening reflection: The Four Waters of St Teresa in Song, Words and Image. On Saturday, we enjoyed a free day in Avila. We used the time to walk the section of the city's historic walls and take in some of the views there. We then went for some shopping before gathering once more with the group for a time called 'gathering the fruits of the pilgrimage'. This was a beautiful time when everyone could share their highlights and what they had found during their time.

Pilgrimage is about transformation. It's about making us more like Jesus Christ. This is what both St Teresa and St John of the Cross set out to do in their writings, such as Teresa's 'Way of Perfection' and John's 'Living Flame of Love'.

Indeed, there's no more powerful way to understanding their life transforming teaching than by experiencing their world first-hand. The privilege of walking in the footsteps of St Teresa is one that will remain with me always and I know that this week has been of tremendous spiritual benefit for me.

# Remembering Fr Martin of Portglenone Abbey...the saintly monk whose warm smile and wise counsel touched generation after generation of families

THE death of Fr Martin Dowley, of the Cistercian Order at Our Lady of Bethlehem Abbey, in Portglenone, on August 10, greatly saddened the many people who had come to know and love him over the years, and who had been blessed by his prayers and wise counsel.

A native of Ballyknock in Co Waterford, near Carrick on Suir, the 96-year-old monk had spent over seven decades of his religious life in Portglenone, and was Prior and Novice Master for many years. He enjoyed good health all his life, until the last couple of years, when he needed care in the Abbey.

Paying tribute to Fr Martin, the Bethlehem Abbey Superior, Fr Celsus Kelly commented on how he had been "known far and wide for his compassionate attitude" and was "a sought after confessor available to everyone, everyday".

He often received calls from people living abroad seeking his counsel, which was deeply appreciated by people of various religious and political backgrounds, including IRA prisoners in H Block, Long Kesh, whom he had been chaplain to during the Republican hunger strikes, celebrating Mass with them, listening to their confessions and counselling them. These prisoners became his friends and presented him with a beautiful hand-carved Celtic Cross, with each of their names signed beneath the base.

Fr Celsus noted that Fr Martin had come from a family blessed with many priests and religious over the generations, including three of his sisters becoming Mercy nuns and himself entering the monastic community of Cistercian monks in Mount Melleray Abbey, located in the Knockmealdown Mountains in Co Waterford, in 1944, from where he was sent to the new foundation in Portglenone in 1948.

Born on August 25, 1925 into the family of Ellen and John Dowley, he was christened Philip Martin and was the youngest of six. He grew up in the parish of Clonea-Power, where he attended national school and the church of St Coan and Brogán, which was erected by his great granduncle, Rev Timothy Dowley, PP, in 1850.

Fr Martin always wanted to be a priest but his father wasn't too happy as they had a farm and he was the only boy. However, when he was 19, after spending a year working on the farm, his father gave him his blessing if he wanted to join the religious life and so, off he went to Mount Melleray to enter the Cistercian Order.

Fr Martin was ordained on February 25, 1951. That this was his true destiny was confirmed through a story relayed by Fr Martin's mother about a visit to Mount Melleray Cistercian Abbey when she was carrying him in her

womb. After asking the monk to pray that she would have a baby boy to take on the family farm, he told her: "You will have a boy, but he will not stay with you".

When he moved up North, to Portglenone, Co Antrim, where he completed his training for the priesthood of the Cistercian Order, Fr Martin found himself back in the farming scene, with the Cistercians buying the farm that the monastery was on, which was a big, stately house. Later, in the early 60s, they built the existing monastery.

The big house became home in the mid-70s to the Portglenone Charismatic Prayer Group, which Fr Martin was involved in setting up, along with Fr Seamus Kelly, now the parish priest of Dungiven, and the late Frank Forte, from Belfast. The three of them met together to pray initially and the Charismatic prayer group was born out of that.

One of the leaders of the Prayer Group, Mrs Bridie Quinn recalled becoming involved in it in 1980: "I went to the Portglenone Prayer Group first really to pray for my husband who was very ill at that time. I got a feeling of the presence of the Holy Spirit with me and that was my motivation for continuing to go to it.

"There were big crowds of people attending the prayer group at that time, and Fr Martin was a constant presence from then up until it closed for two years with the lockdown. The Prayer Group is open again now on Tuesday nights, but Fr Martin wasn't back after that as he was ill".

## Gentle

She continued: "Sometimes, during our Prayer Group, we would think that he was sleeping, as his eyes were closed, but if anyone came out with anything that was contrary to Church teaching, he would always be sure to speak to correct it in a very gentle way. He was a great spiritual director to all of us. The members of the group came to him privately during the week and talked to him about anything that they needed clarification on.

"Fr Martin was in touch with many people, and so had many contacts and was always getting us speakers. We never knew if it would be a bishop, priest or lay person. We had some great talks because of that, some of which were given by Fr Martin himself and, amongst others, Fr Colm Rafferty, Fr Jim McNally, Fr Neal Carlin and Fr Jack McArdle, who are all dead now, and also from Fr Paddy Doherty, PP Maghera".

Bridie spoke about how Fr Martin became her dear friend over the years: "He was so easy to get on with and was the best friend I ever had. His death leaves a big gap but he told me that he will be with me.

"You could have talked to him about anything. He listened so intently and always gave wise advice. He was a very simple person but a very clever man, and was very well respected by everybody who knew him. If he thought he was right in doing something, he did it, and if the rap came, he just took it with a smile".

She added: "For years, people came to see Fr Martin regularly, and their families, generation after generation, were still coming to see him up until he became ill. He brought people a lot of peace and comfort.

"And he loved young people, and loved helping them and following their sports, particularly football. If clubs were in finals, he wanted to know who was going to win. He was very young at heart. Fr Martin was unlike a lot of people of his age. He was able to accept change and adapt to it".

"I believe that he is a saint and a lot of people say the same thing", remarked Bridie, saying: "He was completely devoted to prayer and not just community hours of prayer. They pray the Divine Office seven times a day and he never missed that. He loved the Mass. When he was sick and wasn't able to attend Mass in the Community chapel, he said Mass in his own bedroom, and Madge Slevin and I would have helped him set up. It was just a blessing and privilege to be there. It really was lovely.

"During his last six months, Fr Martin would have been in bed most of the time, though he got out to sit a couple of hours every day. He would have lain in bed with his eyes closed and you would think he was sleeping, but he was just contemplating".

Bridie recalled that when she found out Fr Martin was from Ballyknock, in Waterford, she told him about the Ballyknock in Maghera, and when his relatives were next up, he wanted to go and see it with them.

"He loved going to his homeplace", she added, "and, on his 90th birthday, my daughter and I took him down and he said Mass. He had grandnieces living around there and he visited them all during that week we were there. He was very proud of that area and he wanted us to see it all. He loved showing off Waterford".

## Family

Fr Martin's family loved visiting him, and did so regularly, and he loved to see them coming. His niece, Madge Scanlon, who lives in Dublin and whose mother was Anna, shared some fond memories of her 'Uncle Phil', which his family fondly called him.

"I have wonderful memories of Uncle Phil", said Madge, "When we were very small, I was probably six or seven, we were taken to Dublin for what was my first meeting with him, in The Clarence Hotel. He

was down at a conference.

"He was amazing. No matter how rushed he was for time, when you were with him you were the only one that was there. He was so present to you all the time. And that was the same for even our children. I have two daughters and they have fond childhood memories of him too. He used to call them 'Child of Grace', when he saw them, and always showed great interest in what they did in life and the same with my grandchildren. He always had some treat for them.

"We would get such a warm welcome when we went up to visit him. He would come out with us for a drive, especially in later years as initially they were enclosed, and my children remember him saying something like, take a right turn now for a mysterious reason, and we would end up in some place that he liked or in someone's house, where we would get a very warm welcome. It would be like a mystery tour".

She added: "My late husband, Martin, was very fond of him. He was an engineer and Fr Martin would always enquire about various things to do with engineering. He had an interest in everything and knowing how everything worked. He was equally interested in farming down in his old home and all the pursuits of his family.

"He just exuded warmth and welcome and was always loving and caring. No matter what problems were in the family, we could ring Uncle Phil. He gave us a sense of security in that we felt if we asked him for something it was in God's Hands, so to speak. He would tell us that even if he died, he would always be with us and that he would look after us".

Fr Martin was the last surviving member of his family, including his older sisters, Anna (Power), Sr Perpetua (Madge), Sr Agnes (May), Eily, and Sr Cecilia, who had grown up very aware of their younger brother's unwavering desire "to know God" and be a priest.

Madge recalled that the death of Sr Cecilia two years ago had particularly saddened Fr Martin. As the two youngest in the family, they were very close and would have talked every night on the telephone, until his declining health and hearing left him unable to do so as much. Concelebrating at Sr Cecilia's Requiem Mass on New Year's Day 2020 was the last time he was out. He carried out his priestly duties up to the age of 95, and passed away 15 days before his 97th birthday.

Fr Martin's family were joined by many of the people whose lives he had touched in a special way over the years for his Requiem Mass in the Abbey, and burial afterwards in the cemetery there. May he rest in peace.



# Synod 2021-2024 – Vatican II for slow learners

by Fr Peter McCawille SMA



Fr Peter McCawille, SMA, Dregish, Co Tyrone



IT was Seamus Mallon, former deputy first minister of Northern Ireland, who humorously referred to the 1998 Good Friday Agreement as ‘Sunningdale for slow learners’. Twenty-five years earlier, the 1973 Sunningdale Agreement was an attempt to establish a power-sharing Northern Ireland Executive and a cross-border Council of Ireland. The aim of the Good Friday (or Belfast) Agreement was to establish a new, devolved government for Northern Ireland in which nationalists and unionists would share power. The Sunningdale Agreement was a short-lived one and was brought to an end in 1974 by a crippling general strike organised by Protestant trade unionists. The Good Friday Agreement was the result of renewed and painstaking negotiations which seemed to herald the promise of a new dawn. Twenty-four years later it still remains, in theory if not always in practice, the cornerstone of a long-term commitment to peace and stability.

In October 2021, Pope Francis launched a two-year global consultation which will lead up to the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops beginning in Rome in October, 2023, dedicated to the theme, ‘For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission’. During the past year, in parishes all over the world, parishioners have been encouraged to listen to each other (not to use the opportunity to offload personal grievances or to make ill-informed demands) and talk about how they see their role as active members of the Church. It was former US vice-president, Senator Hubert Humphries who memorably stated on one occasion that “the right to be listened to does not always include the right to be taken seriously!”

While many people predictably remain less than enthusiastic about ‘all this Synod talk’, seeing it as a tedious and unnecessary intrusion into their uncomplicated Catholic lives, there is still an appreciable level of enthusiasm among interested worshippers in having a deeper, more active involvement in Church life for both adults and

young people, especially at these times of great confusion, confrontation and controversy in almost every sphere of daily life.

Reflecting upon the welter of opinions, comments and suggestions presented during the ‘listening sessions’ by the participants in the different parish groups, one might be forgiven for thinking that the Synod exercise points to disturbing comparisons with Seamus Mallon’s comments at the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. One is tempted to re-echo his words by saying that in many instances ‘Synod 21/24 is Vatican II for slow learners’.

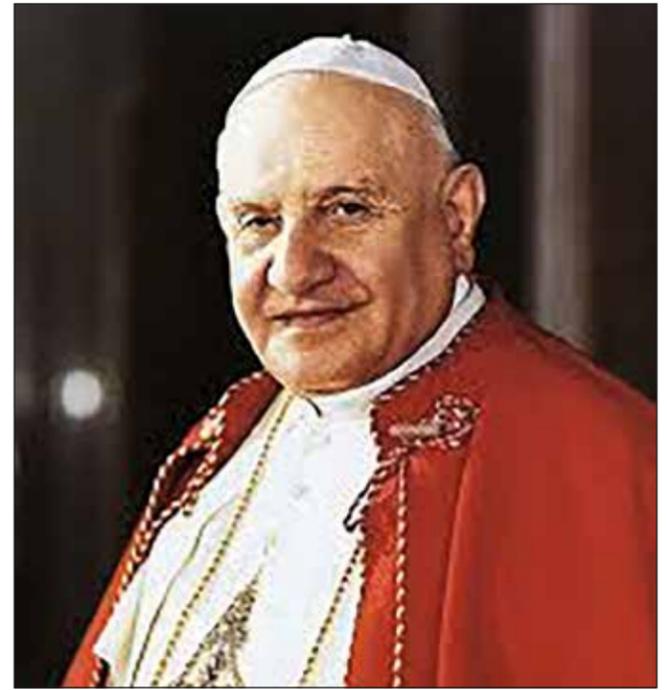
Since Vatican II finished nearly 57 years ago, it may be helpful to briefly recall the events that led up to the Council and some of its mostly sparsely-implemented resolutions, echoes of which were heard during the Synodal ‘listening sessions’ and are even more relevant and applicable today as the agenda for Synod 23/24 is taking shape.

The process of Synodality is ultimately about checking whether we are in fact following Christ as we claim to be or we are not, not just as individuals but as parish communities. A reality that was clearly misunderstood when it appeared as a facile recent Irish Times headline that stated ‘Irish Catholics demand big changes in Church!’

### Significant

For the benefit of those who are too young to remember Vatican II and are not ‘slow learners’, I present a brief summary of its origins and decisions. The Second Vatican Council was the 21st Ecumenical Council of the Catholic Church. It was convened by Pope John XXIII, who felt that the Church was in need of spiritual change or updating (referred to as ‘aggiornamento’) in an increasingly secularised world, in addition to providing an opportunity for Christians separated from Rome to join in a search for Christian unity. After three years of preparation, the Council lasted for four periods (or sessions) in the autumn of each of the four years from it began on October 11, 1962, until it concluded on December 8, 1965. While John XXIII was present for the opening session, he died on June 3, 1963 and his successor, Pope Paul VI, was present for the remaining three sessions. It produced a series of 16 documents which proposed significant developments in doctrine, and practice and reform of the liturgy. It was hoped these proposed developments would help to direct the life of the Church in the 20th century and beyond.

In a public session at St Peter’s Basilica on 11 October 11, 1962, Pope John XXIII delivered his



Pope John XXIII

opening address, ‘Gaudet Mater Ecclesia’ (‘Mother Church Rejoices’), in which he criticised the “prophets of doom who are always forecasting disaster” for the Church or the world. He spoke not only of the advantage of separation of Church and State but also the challenge to integrate faith with public life – “What is needed at the present time is a new enthusiasm, a new joy and serenity of mind in the unreserved acceptance by all of the entire Christian faith. What is needed, and what everyone imbued with a truly Christian, Catholic and apostolic spirit craves today, is that this doctrine shall be more widely known, more deeply understood, and more penetrating in its effects on people’s moral lives.”

As we reflect today on the impact of Vatican II on the Church in Ireland, and how it has taken so long for significant change to have taken place, it

may also be noteworthy to recall the famous remarks attributed to the influential Archbishop John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin, on his return to Dublin from Rome at the end of the Council: “You may have been worried by much talk of changes to come. Allow me to reassure you. No change will worry the tranquillity of your Christian lives”. It seems that high hopes of much-needed reform in the Church in Ireland may well have perished on that rock of episcopal intransigence.

In future articles in ‘The Net’, we will take a fresh look at some of the more important resolutions contained in some of the 16 documents of Vatican II and connect them with what the Holy Spirit may be saying across the more salient comments and suggestions emerging from the recent Synodal process here in Ireland.

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*'You have given me a short span of days; my life is as nothing in your sight. A mere breath, the man who stood so firm, a mere shadow, the man passing by; a mere breath the riches he hoards, not knowing who will have them.' (Psalm 38)*

## The years roll by! *by Fr John McLaughlin ssc*

THERE are sentences or remarks that stick, being honest about it...and others that could be eliminated from my hard disk.

"Juan, you are my best friend, it will be hard to lose you!" (Ana at 86+, with whom I had shared many moments of joy and sadness.)

"The people are glad that you are coming back, but not them all!" (One of the CM family, who had been in charge of the parish for about 11 years, giving it to me straight.)

"If there is love, then there must be forgiveness." (Anita, who had learned it the hard way!)

"But I have my conscience clear." (A moment of madness on my part, in the presence of military General in the time of Pinochet... leaving my audience looking at the floor!)

"Fr, you haven't a clue about it. Have you?" (Tommy, an altar boy, who had me sussed out as a football referee...and he didn't even get a yellow card or a warning from me!)

And there are many more, starting maybe with the weekend Gospel, the Pharisee and the Publican, where Fr James Martin SJ, in his Friday Facebook presentation of the Gospel, insists, that we are all hypocrites! Which is a good start!

After a desperate search on Google, etc, for the Letter from Pope John Paul to the Elderly, amongst his Letters, Messages, Exhortations, Encyclicals over so many years, I resorted to 'Alexa' by voice, and after slowing down the northern voice, very quickly the full text of the Letter/Message in 1999, came on the screen! There, indeed, I had found wisdom in my Spanish copy. Psalm 99 was at the centre of it: "All our days pass away in your anger - our life is like a sigh - our span is seventy years - or eighty for those who are strong - and most of these are emptiness and pain - they pass swiftly and are gone - make us know the shortness of our life - that we may gain wisdom of heart." It is a very sincere, short, personal and encouragingly pastoral Letter, which I would recommend.

In one of my earlier periods in the Parish of San Columbano in Santiago, in Chile, we had a great wealth of wisdom and support in the 14 Clubs of 'The Third Age', with a coordinator, Señora Guacolda, and a team of Voluntario/as present at their weekly meetings, celebrations, workshops and retreats. I was often with them on their yearly holidays in the Diocesan Centre of Punta de Tralca, on the coast. Sr Gloria Escolar, OP, another of my life-heroes and friends, often lead them in an afternoon seminar of reflection and prayer. I can recall in one of those seminars (talleres) that the topic for consideration was their own priority as to time and recreation. The group work was displayed on brown paper sheets stuck to the surrounding walls with Blue Tac. The majority seemed to justify their personal value by the help and the time they gave to their children and grandchildren. So, the exhortation was made that they should also be looking after themselves and had earned that. It was a hard sell!

I can recall also the very direct manner and independence of Señora Guacolda, who was from the neighbouring parish and had been nominated by the Deanery as the coordinator of the clubs in those parishes, of which there were many at that time. She had a gravelly voice but a gentle humour, which the voluntarios knew how to loosen out.

Those people of the Third Age, from the seven chapels, were often still active in the Masses and Readings, assemblies, and processions, and were present at many of the house-funerals (velorios) and vigils. Many had great singing voices and some also had sharp tongues, which kept me on my toes!

In another and earlier parish, I often dropped into the Club/Prayer Group meeting on a Tuesday afternoon, with a volunteer coordinator from the Capilla of Jesus Resucitado. At some stage, there was an intervention in the charismatic prayer from Señora Berta Lagos

and it provoked smiles and humour, every time. Sra Berta could break in to narrate to the group the event of being collected in the night time to visit a sick person, or an animal. She had the reputation of 'having the cure' and she took no glory out of it. She would look at me and those around her, asking them what did they think, and did she do the right thing, in a self-effacing but spirited manner. Even for that alone, I always made an effort to get into that meeting on a Tuesday afternoon.

The same lady would be the first to arrive for a fiesta or a dance, low sized and plump, or a solidarity meal of a night in the chapel, and the last to leave, having been the first on the floor in the local dance, the 'cumbia'. I used to find it convenient, and perhaps more prudent, to start my night dancing with Berta, who was more or less the mascot of the community. Some years later, when I had moved on to another parish, I got a call from the chapel to tell me that she had died and would I go over for the funeral Mass in the early evening of Wednesday in Easter Week. That was a privilege and the members of the chapel/community were there in force.

### Veteran

In the Columban Parish of St Thomas More, formerly called The Diaconias, because the chapels had been organized largely on the initiatives of groups of laity, I had other experiences with the elderly. Amongst them was the parish priest, Padre Carlos Müller, a French/German veteran who had stories to tell, while being a very prolific writer on the History of the Church in Latin America and some excellent catechetical books for adults. This, as well as being an authority on Church music. He had been a prisoner/priest during the German Occupation in France, and endured tough moments of hardship and daily routines, about which there were some books written in later years.

Padre Carlos, a late night student, was no arid academic,

making himself present at every event in the chapels, leaving terror in the hearts of those whom he persuaded to take a lift in his old Citroen, whether visiting an event for youth or pastoral agents. Occasionally, this involved a journey down to the coast for a retreat or workshop, and getting him to keep his eyes on the road troubled the passengers the length of the journey; some choosing to come back by other means! I accompanied him on some occasions, rather like an altar boy, as he prepared adults for the Sacrament of Confirmation, with impressive materials and insights. On one of those occasions, we were led through the Missionary Journeys of St Paul following his well drawn maps and with litanies (like the Acathist hymn) that I had never heard of.

Once again, down the years, I was amongst those from the Eastern Zone of the Diocese who attended his funeral in Nuñoa. Stories flowed from many about his appealing eccentricities and irritability, and whose qualities of sanctity we all recognized. Some wondered would they grow old like that!

In one of those years back in college days, with the Holy Ghost Fathers, now known as The Spiritans, I lifted a book prize with Essays of Fr Stephen Brown SJ and, being a reader, went through them all. Especially the one on Old Age, which seemed to grip my interest, and the Text stayed with me as I read the Prayer of the Church, where it also shows up: Ecclesiastes 11:9-12:8 - Remember your creator in the days of your youth...

*"Rejoice in your youth, you who are young; let your heart give you joy in your young days. Follow the promptings of your heart and the desires of your eyes.*

*But this you must know: for all these things God will bring you to judgment.*

*Cast worry from your heart, shield your flesh from pain.*

*Yet youth, the age of dark hair, is vanity. And remember your creator in the days of your youth, before evil days come and the years approach when you say, 'These give me no pleasure', before sun and light and moon and stars grow dark, and the clouds return after the rain;*

*the day when those who keep the house tremble*



My friend Paddy Lynch. A great present!

*and strong men are bowed;  
when the women grind no longer  
at the mill,  
because day is darkening at the  
windows  
and the street doors are shut;  
when the sound of the mill is faint,  
when the voice of the bird is  
silenced,  
and song notes are stilled,  
when to go uphill is an ordeal  
and a walk is something to dread.*

*Yet the almond tree is in flower,  
the grasshopper is heavy with food  
and the caper bush bears its fruit,*

*while man goes to his everlasting  
home. And the mourners are  
already walking to and fro in the  
street*

*before the silver cord has snapped,  
or the golden lamp been broken,  
or the pitcher shattered at the  
spring,  
or the pulley cracked at the well,*

*or before the dust returns to the  
earth as it once came from it, and  
the breath to God who gave it.*

*Vanity of vanities, the Preacher  
says. All is vanity."*

I read and meditate on it nowadays, saying, "I am there!" I amaze myself by the sense of gratitude that, for me, accompanies the text

Of course, there were the more difficult ones in these groups and they could cause me little ripples of annoyance. Rafael and his friend Aegideo (Egidio, maybe) were in the generation that considered themselves as the founders of the chapel or community, the poderes facticos, as I used to think! So, there was a stand-off as I introduced new, young and elected coordinators. Words were uttered and glances were thrown in some of those moments!

Installed in my living room, here in Moville, is my recently acquired framed photo of Paddy Lynch, a friend and great layman in my time in Arklow Parish. In tough pastoral times for me, he put himself at my disposition as a friend and counsellor, so that when his niece and sister arrived at my door some months past, they really did bring me the present to beat all presents. I had also the great pleasure of holidaying on four occasions with



May and Paddy Lynch, Arklow, great friends and supporters to have enjoyed.



Columban Lay Missionaries.



The passing years. Sra Ana Hein. My great friend!

May, his wife and he. Priests have and need lay-friends and I hit the jackpot with these two. It was a sad but treasured moment to assist at their funerals over a difference of many years, as Paddy was taken early by pancreatic cancer and left me another testimony in his manner of dying as well as living.

#### Leonardo Boff

Always a reader, one of my favourites in Latin American times was Leonardo Boff, whom I subsequently heard speak in public in Puerto Alegre, in Brazil, at the World Social Forum before

an audience of about 60,000; mostly young people. His little book, 'La Vida Más Allá de la Muerte', provides many little images of Heaven and the life hereafter, using biblical images such as the Banquet, the Beatific Vision, and giving good concrete images of what are 'Apocalyptic' and 'Eschatology' (the future in function of the present - the present in function of the future), and the Book of Revelations. It is very readable and stimulating, as that subject should be! One little challenge for me is to keep that well-worn copy from falling apart before I do!

In recent days, I have been working my way through the very excellent book on 'The Spirit of Catholicism' by Vivian Boland OP. It is ideal for a modern view of Ecclesiology and is full of what we all need most in these days: Hope. He quotes liberally from one of those three great Encyclicals of Pope Benedict on Faith-Hope-Charity. The first was, I think, completed in the time of Pope Francis, 'Spes Salutis', on Hope. I have read and quoted in Spanish, and admired also the two very pastoral appendixes on Prayer and Last Judgment. As it is one of the Three Theological Virtues from our Baptism and, therefore, of concern to all Laity and more than relevant during Advent, I feel that this paragraph from Boland gives a good summary:

"Pope Benedict XVI issued a series of encyclical letters on the theological virtues of faith, hope and love. His encyclical on hope was published in 2007 and was entitled 'Spe salvi', 'saved in hope', a phrase we find in Romans 8.24. He began his letter by distinguishing the attitude of hope from related concepts that might seem to be practically equivalent: progress, evolution and history itself. Although we can talk about progress and evolution in relation to the Church, and the Church is obviously a community in history, the attitude of hope is not simply identical with any of these.

The shocks of the 20th century undermined the confidence in the inevitability of progress with which the century began. So 'progress' is not enough. The concept of evolution is now central in many fields of thought, but, when applied to human relationships and institutions, it seems to leave no room for freedom, understanding the development of those relationships and institutions as the product of forces and laws over which human beings themselves have little or no influence. So 'evolution' is not enough.

The 'end of history' was famously proclaimed in 1989, with the fall of the Berlin Wall. It seemed that the great ideological stand-off between communism and capitalism had been resolved in

favour of the latter and the threat of 'mutually assured destruction' through nuclear annihilation was lifted. Subsequent events, however, such as the attacks on the United States in September 2001, the deepening consensus about climate change and the precarious health of the planet, the persistence of wars and the challenges of migration in many parts of the world, a worldwide pandemic wreaking havoc - all of these things serve to make it clear that history is, in fact, continuing. While it does leave room for human freedom, of itself history does not necessarily support hope for the future. Hope is distinct, then, from progress, evolution and history. What makes it distinct is that it regards the human being as essentially a pilgrim or wayfarer, on a journey towards a destination that is good, and supported in the course of that journey by one who is also the journey's destination.

Any hope has this double object, the good for which we hope and the one to whom we look for help if we are to attain that good. When it is theological hope, this double object becomes one: the good we seek is God and the one to whom we look for the help we need is also God.

Hope can be quickly dismissed. For the French poet, Charles Péguy (1873-1914), hope is a little girl and little girls can be easily overlooked. This little girl, however, is not

offering us 'pie in the sky when we die' but the strength to face and accept the difficulties that attend the journey toward the realization of our hope. It is the virtue that surprises God, Péguy says: Faith and love are exactly what God would expect from us, but hope is unexpected and it brings creativity and spontaneity, a certain kind of freedom and joy in responding to God's gifts.

Thomas Aquinas frequently speaks of the human being as a viator, a pilgrim or wayfarer. For him also, hope is a youthful virtue, a confidence that there is plenty of time and space ahead of us, there is potential yet to be realized, goals still to be achieved. We can say it is, indeed, the secret of eternal youth!" (The Spirit of Catholicism by Vivian Boland OP).

Beat that! As the man says! The Spanish American saying, 'Lo Comido y lo Bailado', stiffens my own resolve in these years: "What you have eaten and danced...no one can take away."

Finally, and not just because it is in our native tongue, I would like to propose a phrase that has accompanied me in these 'autumn years', and contemplating eternal life. From 'Lón Anama', and the poem 'Cursa Spioradalta', by Aine Ni Gearailt: "Ni radh todhchai ann nà stair - Ni raibh ann ach an laithreach - Sa laithreach seo bhi an uille ni - Is an uille ni cinealta."

## Interactive digital Advent Calendar launched

THE 2022 interactive digital Advent Calendar has been launched by Archbishop Eamon Martin. Now in its ninth year, the calendar went live on catholicbishops.ie on the First Sunday of Advent.

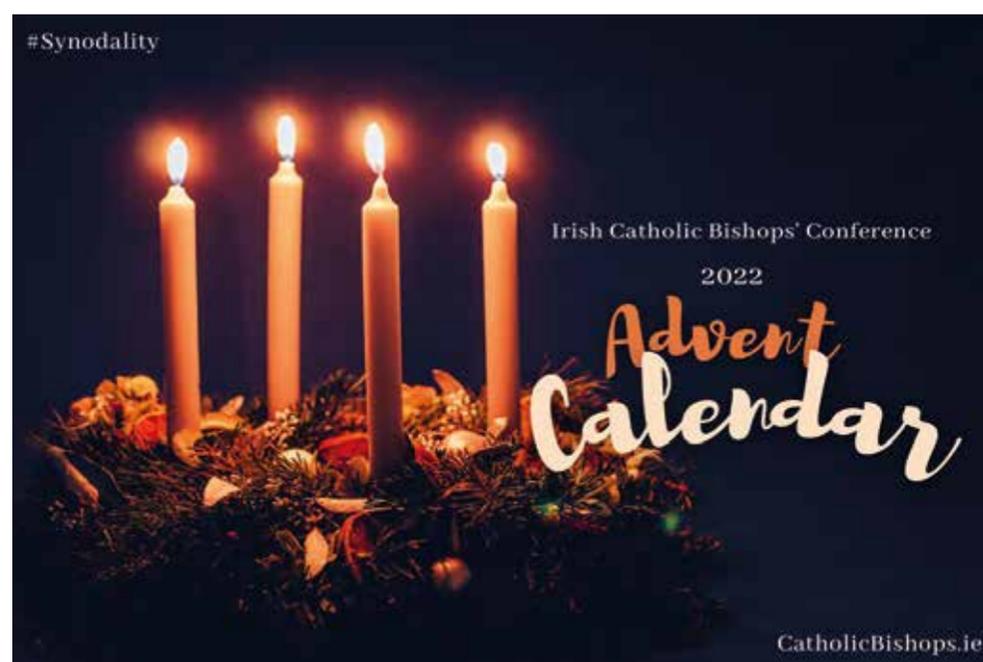
Featuring 28 virtual doors, it offers resources for schools, parishes and the home, with short inspirational video messages, some seasonal crafts for children and prayers to help keep Christ at the centre of Christmas preparations.

In a first, this year's digital calendar will appear each day during Advent on the new @CatholicBishops TikTok account.

Commenting on the calendar, Archbishop Eamon remarked: "Advent is often described as a journey. Some of the major themes of Advent are: waiting and preparation; darkness and light; and the promise of comfort and hope.

"Over the next four weeks, we will journey towards Christmas while reflecting on the big themes and personalities of the Advent season, such as John the Baptist, the Magi and, of course, Mary Our Blessed Mother, who embraced God's will completely and made a special place for God in her life."

He went on to note: "The digital Advent calendar invites each of us to make space for God in our lives every day over the next four



weeks. Despite the hectic rushing around, getting the decorations and tree up, visiting and shopping, we are encouraged to travel the Advent journey, pausing each day for a few moments to pray, reflect, and take some practical steps to enrich our experience of Christmas."

Acknowledging that 2022 has been a tough year for many, the All Ireland Primate said: "The people of Ukraine are going into Christmas with the continued threats to life, of violence and the destruction of war. At home, many are struggling with the pressures of the increased cost of

living and energy crisis. Perhaps this year, more than ever, we need an Advent journey filled with hope, promise and peace and, of course, the message of the Christmas angels: Do not be afraid!"

Thanking all the content contributors, he said: "This year's theme of Synodality nicely complements our Advent journey, as the word 'synod' conjures up the image of walking or journeying together as a Church.

"For Advent 2022, I encourage all to set out, as the Magi did, and grow closer and closer to that moment when we experience

the joy of beholding Christ our Saviour, born for us on Christmas Day. During this holy season, we also journey inwards to prepare in our hearts, as Mary did, for the light of Christ.

"The Synodal journey, and the Advent journey, remind us that we are all pilgrims on a lifelong pathway. So, over the next four weeks, let us walk together with family, friends and community so that everyone can experience the good news of this forthcoming celebration, and in particular those less fortunate than ourselves."



### Pope's monthly intention

The Holy Father has asked for prayer during November for:

#### Children who suffer:

We pray for children who are suffering, especially those who are homeless, orphans, and victims of war; may they be guaranteed access to education and the opportunity to experience family affection.

### Prayer for Priests

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

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

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

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

### Remember in prayer:

- Fr Neil Farren (Nov 1st)
- Fr Paul Farren (2nd)
- Fr Christopher Ferguson (3rd)
- Fr John Forbes (4th)
- Fr Edward Gallagher (5th)
- Fr Paul Fraser (6th)
- Fr John Gilmore (7th)
- Fr Joseph Gormley (8th)
- Fr Eamon Graham (9th)
- Fr Dermott Harkin (10th)
- Fr Karl Haan (11th)
- Fr Eugene Hasson (12th)
- Fr Malachy Gallagher (13th)
- Fr John Irwin (14th)
- Fr Charles Keaney (15th)
- All Priests (16th)
- Fr Gerald Hasson (17th)
- Fr Michael Keaveny (18th)
- Fr Seamus Kelly (19th)
- Fr Edward Kilpatrick (20th)
- All priests (21st)
- Fr Charles Logue (22nd)
- Fr Paul McCafferty (23rd)
- Msgr Bryan McCanny (24th)
- Fr Michael McCaughey (25th)
- Fr Andrew McCloskey (26th)
- Fr Patrick Lagan (27th)
- All Priests (28th)
- Fr Noel McDermott (29th)
- Fr Eamon McDevitt (30th)

# Saints we celebrate in November *by Fr Michael McGoldrick ocd*



St Malachy

## St Malachy

Malachy was born in Armagh in 1094. He was ordained priest in 1119. For the next year, or two, it was Malachy's duty to administer the Diocese of Armagh. He then spent three years studying at Lismore. In 1124, Malachy became Abbot of Bangor Abbey and was made bishop. In 1132, he was appointed Archbishop of Armagh.

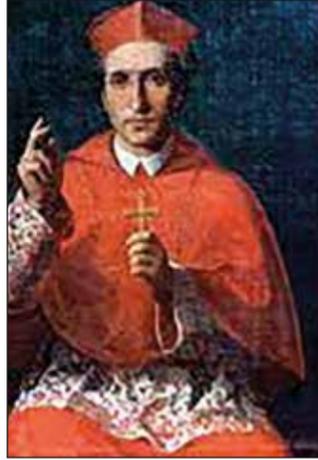
During three years at Armagh, Bernard of Clairvaux writes, Malachy restored the discipline of the church, and had the Roman Liturgy adopted. He worked zealously to restore ecclesiastical discipline, restored marriage, renewed the practices of confession and confirmation, and introduced Roman chants in the liturgy. He was also known for his care to the needy.

Malachy resigned the Sees of Armagh and Connor in 1136 or 1137, but continued as Bishop of Down. Early in 1139, he journeyed to Rome via Clairvaux, and was appointed legate for Ireland. On his return visit to Clairvaux, he obtained five monks to set up the Cistercian Abbey of Mellifont in 1142.

Malachy set out on a second journey to Rome in 1148 but, on arriving at Clairvaux, he fell sick and died on November 2, 1148. His feast day is November 3.

## St Charles Borromeo

The third child in a family of six, Charles was born in the castle of Arona, on Lake Maggiore, on October 2, 1538. He attended the University of Pavia. He studied civil and canon law and, in 1559, he was awarded a doctorate. On December 25, 1559, Borromeo's uncle, Cardinal Medici was elected Pope Pius IV. The new pope made



St Charles Borromeo

Charles a cardinal on January 31, 1560.

Borromeo organized the third and last session of the Council of Trent, in 1562–63. He was appointed an administrator of the Archdiocese of Milan on February 7, 1560, though not yet a priest. He was ordained priest on September 4, 1563, and bishop on December 7 of that year. He was formally appointed archbishop of Milan on May 12, 1564, and devoted himself to the reformation of his diocese.

He established seminaries for the education of candidates for priesthood. In 1576, there was famine at Milan due to crop failures, and later an outbreak of the plague. Many fled the city, but Charles remained to care for those affected and to minister to the dying.

Together with Ignatius of Loyola and Philip Neri, Charles was a leading figure of the Counter-Reformation. In 1584, during his annual retreat at Monte Varallo, he fell ill. He died on November 3 at the age of 46.

## St Martin de Porres

Martin was born in Lima, Peru, on December 9, 1579. He was the illegitimate son of a Spanish nobleman, Don Juan de Porras y de la Peña, and Ana Velázquez, a freed slave of African and Native descent. The father abandoned the family and Martin grew up in poverty.

Under Peruvian law, descendants of Africans and Native Americans were barred from becoming full members of religious orders. He, therefore, became a Dominican volunteer, performing menial tasks in the monastery in return for the privilege of wearing the habit and living with the religious community.



St Martin de Porres

After eight years, impressed by his holiness, the prior permitted Martin to take his vows as a member of the Third Order of Saint Dominic. When Martin was 24, he was allowed to profess religious vows as a Dominican lay brother. Martin was deeply attached to the Blessed Sacrament and spent many hours in adoration.

He was known for his care of the sick. When he was 34, he was assigned to the infirmary, where he was placed in charge and would remain in service until his death at the age of 59.

When an epidemic struck Lima, Martin begged for alms to feed the poor. He also founded a residence for orphans and abandoned children in Lima.

By his death on November 3, 1639, he had won the affection and respect of many of his fellow Dominicans, as well as many people outside the priory. His feast day is November 3.

## St Elizabeth of the Trinity

Elizabeth Catez was born on July 18, 1880, at the military base at Avord, in Cher, the first child of Captain Joseph Catez and Marie Rolland. Elizabeth's father died unexpectedly on October 2, 1887, and, as a result, the family moved to Dijon. Elizabeth had a terrible temper as a child. After receiving her First Communion in 1891, she gained more self-control and had a deeper understanding of God. She also gained a profound understanding of the Trinity.

Elizabeth visited the sick, sang in the church choir and taught religion to children who worked in factories. She was also a gifted pianist.

Despite opposition from her mother, Elizabeth entered Dijon Carmel on August 2, 1901. She



St Elizabeth of the Trinity

lived in Carmel for just over five years, and during that time developed a very profound understanding of and devotion to the Blessed Trinity. Towards the end of her life, she wrote: "I think that in Heaven my mission will be to draw souls by helping them to go out of themselves in order to cling to God by a wholly simple and loving movement, and to keep them in this great silence which will allow God to communicate Himself to them and to transform them into Himself".

Elizabeth died at the age of 26 of Addison's disease. Though her death was painful, she accepted her suffering as a gift from God. Her last words were: "I am going to Light, to Love, to Life!" She died on November 9, 1906. Her feast day is November 9.

## St Leo the Great

Saint Leo was born into a Roman aristocratic family. He became a deacon in 431, serving the church under the pontificate of Pope Celestine I. He was widely respected for his love for the Lord, intelligence and persuasive nature. He was also gifted in bringing reconciliation between disputing groups of Christians.

Leo was unanimously elected pope to succeed Pope Sixtus III in 440. During his reign, he tirelessly fought to preserve the unity of the Church and its faith; and to ensure the safety of his people against invasions from armies which sought to destroy the Church.

His response to the call of the Lord transformed him into one of the greatest popes of Christian history. He was the first pope to be given the title 'the Great'. St Leo died on November 10, 461 and his feast day is November 10.



St Leo the Great

## St Martin of Tours

St Martin was born in what is today Hungary, in the early part of the fourth century. His father, a Roman army officer, was sent to Northern Italy and the family moved there. Martin's parents were pagans, but at the age of 10 he chose to become a Christian. His mother would later convert to Christianity.

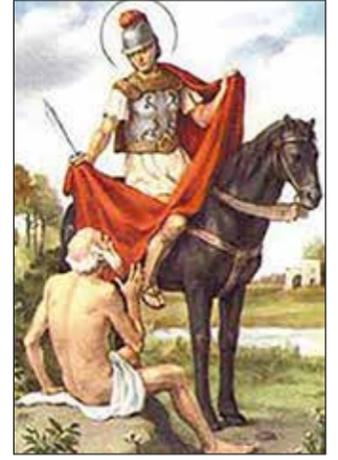
Martin followed his father's footsteps into the Roman army. As a young soldier, he encountered a beggar in Amiens. The beggar was unclothed, and it was very cold. Martin removed his cloak and with his sword, he cut it in half. He gave this half to the beggar and dressed himself in the remnant. That night, Martin had a vision in which Christ appeared to him.

Martin established the Benedictine monastery of Liguge in 361. In his abbey, he worked tirelessly to bring people to faith in Jesus Christ. In 371, Tours needed a new bishop and Martin was chosen, against his own wishes. He was a dedicated bishop but longed for more prayer and wanted to pursue a monastic life.

In the year 372, Martin established an abbey at Marmoutier so he could retreat there and live as a monk with the many disciples he had attracted. He died in Candes-Saint-Martin, France, in 397. His feast day is November 11.

## St Lawrence O'Toole

Lorcán Ua Tuathail, known in English as Laurence O'Toole, was born about the year 1125. When only 10 years old, his father delivered him up as a hostage to Dermot MacMurrough, King of Leinster, who treated him with great inhumanity, until his



St Martin of Tours

father obliged Dermot to put him in the hands of the Bishop of Glendalough, Co. Wicklow.

On the death of the bishop, who was also abbot of the monastery, Lawrence was chosen abbot in 1150, though he was only 25 years old. He began a spiritual renewal programme amongst the monks of the Abbey. He invited the Canons of St Augustine to come and assist in the reform of the Abbey and he became a member of the Augustinian Order himself.

In 1161, St Lawrence was unanimously chosen to fill the new metropolitan See of Dublin. He played a prominent part in the Irish Church Reform Movement of the 12th century, as well as rebuilding several parish churches and emphasising the use of Gregorian chant. There was appalling poverty in the city at the time and, each day, Laurence fed the poor of the city in his home. He also established care centres for the children who had been abandoned by their parents or who were orphaned in the city.

Laurence died at Eu, Normandy on November 14, 1180, and was buried there. His feast day is November 14.

## St Albert the Great

Albert was born sometime before the year 1200, probably in Bavaria. He attended the University of Padua, where he learned about Aristotle and his writings. Sometime around the year 1223, he experienced an encounter with the Blessed Virgin Mary, which led him to become a member of the Dominican Order.

In 1245, Albert became a Master of Theology. He was the first German Dominican to achieve the title. He later went on to teach theology at the University of Paris,



St Lawrence O'Toole



St Albert the Great



St Gertrude



St Elizabeth of Hungary



St Columban



St Andrew Apostle

**Continued from p28**

where one of his students was Thomas Aquinas, who would also become a doctor of the Church and a saint.

Albert was very interested in Aristotle, and he made commentary on nearly all of his works. He also studied the teachings of several Muslim scholars. At this time, the Islamic world led Europe in terms of scholarship, science, and medicine.

In 1260, Pope Alexander IV appointed Albert as bishop of Regensburg. The life of a bishop did not agree with Albert, and he resigned from his post in 1263. In his later years, he became renowned as a mediator. He mediated disputes between individuals, as well as resolving a dispute between the people of Cologne and their bishop. He also founded Germany's oldest university in that city.

Albert died on November 15, 1280. His feast day is November 15.

**St Gertrude**

St Gertrude was born on January 6, 1256, in Germany. Although little is known about Gertrude's childhood, it is widely accepted that at just four-years-old, she was enrolled in the Cistercian monastery school of Helfta in Saxony. She eventually chose to become a Benedictine nun at Helfta. She devoted herself to her studies and became fluent in Latin and very familiar with scripture and the works from the Fathers of the Church.

In 1281, 25-year-old Gertrude experienced her first series of visions that would continue until the day she passed away. She went on to become one of the great mystics of the 13th century.

She wrote: "Until the age of 25, I was a blind and insane woman... but you, Jesus, deigned to grant me the priceless familiarity of your friendship by opening to me in every way that most noble casket of your divinity, which is your divine Heart, and offering me in great abundance all your treasures contained in it."

Gertrude passed away on November 17, 1301. Although she was never formally canonized, the Holy See approved a liturgical office of prayer and readings in her honour. To separate her from Abbess Gertrude of Hackeborn, Pope Benedict XIV gave her the title, 'the Great', making her the only woman saint to be called, 'the Great'. Her feast day is celebrated on November 16.

**St Elizabeth of Hungary**

St Elizabeth was born in Hungary on July 7, 1207, to the Hungarian King Andrew II and Gertrude of Merania. Elizabeth's mother was murdered when Elizabeth was just six years old. Happiness was returned to her life when, in 1221, she married Ludwig, whom she deeply loved. Together the couple had three children, two of whom became members of nobility and the third

entered the religious life.

In 1223, Franciscan friars arrived in Thuringia and taught Elizabeth all about Francis of Assisi's ideals. She then forth decided to live her life mirroring his. She wore simple clothing and set aside time every day to take bread to hundreds of poor people in her land.

When Ludwig died in 1227, Elizabeth vowed to never remarry and to live a life like a nun. In 1228, she joined the Third Order of St Francis. She founded a hospital in honour of St Francis, where she personally attended to the ill. She passed away at the age of 24, on November 17, 1231. Her feast day is celebrated on November 17.

**St Columban**

Columbanus (the Latinised form of Columbán, meaning the white dove) was born in Leinster, Ireland, in 543. He was first educated under Abbot Sinell of Cluaninis, whose monastery was on an island of the river Erne, in Co Fermanagh.

Under Sinell's instruction, Columbanus composed a commentary on the Psalms. Columbanus then moved to Bangor Abbey where he studied to become a teacher of the Bible. He stayed at Bangor until c. 590, when Comgall reluctantly gave him permission to travel to the continent.

He founded several monasteries, most notably Luxeuil Abbey in France and Bobbio Abbey in Italy. Columbanus taught an Irish monastic rule and penitential practices for those repenting of sins, which emphasised private confession to a priest, followed by penances levied by the priest in reparation for the sins.

Columbanus died at Bobbio on November 21, 615 and is buried there. His feast day is celebrated on November 23.

**St Andrew Apostle**

Andrew was born in the village of Bethsaida on the Sea of Galilee. He was a fisherman. The Gospels have varying descriptions of his call to be an apostle. In the Gospel of Matthew, it is said Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee and saw Andrew and Simon Peter fishing. It is then that He asked the two to become disciples.

However, the Gospel of John tells a separate story, stating Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist. When Jesus walked by one day, John the Baptist stated, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" It is then that Andrew and another made the decision to follow Jesus.

Little else is said about Andrew in the Gospels, but it is believed he was one of the closer disciples to Jesus. It was he who told Jesus about the boy with the loaves and fishes, according to John 6:8.

According to Christian tradition, Andrew went on to preach the Good News around the shores of the Black Sea and throughout what is now Greece and Turkey. He was martyred by crucifixion in Patras and his feast day is celebrated on November 30.

# The Portiuncula by Vera McFadden

THE first time I ever heard the word 'Portiuncula' was when I was researching the history and traditions of the parish of Desertegney. An old man was telling me about his boyhood memories of the Maginn Memorial Church when he mentioned it. When I asked him what it meant, he told me about a yearly two-day retreat which had a plenary indulgence attached to it. It was conducted by a visiting Franciscan Friar. He had always been impressed by the friar's talks and said that the retreats were always well attended, and that the people had found them very spiritually fulfilling.

Many years later, I took part in a pilgrimage to Assisi and Padua. One of the places that our guide told us about was the Basilica of Mary of the Angels. She told us about the Portiuncula. When we were brought on a visit, we saw the tiny church and near it the place where St Francis had died. Then we left the church by a door which led to a corridor. Along that corridor there was a statue of St Francis with words around his head and on his shoulders. Then, after that, there was a big window and behind that there was an area with rose bushes.

We were told this remarkable story. St Francis came to the Portiuncula to pray. One day he had a distracting thought and wondered what it would be like to have a family. Then immediately he rejected that thought, for he wished to follow in the way that he felt God was calling him – to live as a preaching, mendicant friar. So, to overcome what he considered a temptation, he threw himself into a bramble hedge. When he got scratched, it is said, the brambles lost their leaves and beautiful red roses suddenly appeared. Francis lay there, praying to God for understanding. A moment later, there was a bright light at the altar and he saw Our Lord and Our Lady and Angels there. Our Lord asked him what he would most like at this moment. Francis was still aware of his recent repentance, and he asked that everyone who came to the Portiuncula to pray and repent of their sins would be granted a lifelong pardon. Our Lord agreed to this and told him to go to the Pope.

At that time, the Pope was staying in Perugia, a town not far from Assisi. Francis went there, taking a bunch of the red roses with him. The Pope agreed to his request, asking him what length of indulgence he desired. Francis told him that he was not thinking about time, but about saving souls. Then, the Pope realised that Francis was asking for the great indulgence of the Holy Land to be granted to penitents at the Portiuncula. He agreed, but limited it to one day only, the second of August. As Francis set off, delighted, the Pope called him back. He had forgotten the documents. Francis

told him that he did not need any documents as Jesus had already agreed to his request.

For several years, I was a member of the voluntary workers at St Joseph's, Termonbacca. One day, when I was hoovering in the hall, the lady in charge of delegating the work came along and asked me if I would like some cards from the late Fr Joseph's room. He had been a saintly man and I accepted the offer.

It was a fascinating collection. In the box, there were Christmas cards, birthday cards, beautiful decorated calligraphic work with Scripture passages, and hand-painted flowers and leaves and ferns. I hung two of these on my sitting room wall. These were the work of Carmelite sisters. There were other types of cards, and among them there were two relics – a third class relic of St Columba Mannion and a third-class relic of St Francis of Assisi. This one was very unusual. The paper was quite old. There was a picture of a kneeling, penitent monk and his standing confessor, who was also a friar. There was some writing in between them and below them, and Our Lady and the Angels were above them. On the side of the paper relic, there was a bishop's stamped seal and two lines of handwriting below that. Under the seal, there was what looked like a woollen thread from Francis' clothing, or a single piece of a stem from a rose bush.

**Language**

I wanted to know what that writing was about, but I could not read it. It was not Latin, Italian, German or French, and it certainly was not English or Irish. My niece was a language teacher and she told me that it was not Greek, Spanish or Portuguese. We went to the languages section in the library and looked through all the books, but this language was not in any of them.

Then, one day, I heard that Franciscan friars from Assisi were coming to St Columba's Church, Long Tower. Brother Alessandro was one of them. He was the friar whose wonderful singing was earning so much for the relief of poverty. I have his CD and I listen to it a lot. I thought how the little relic came from the Portiuncula in Assisi and that these friars came from Assisi too, and so that would surely know what the writing is about. The music during the Mass, and afterwards, was absolutely inspiring, and Friar Alessandro's deep spirituality was evident. When I got an opportunity to speak to them outside the church, I found that they could not recognise the language on the relic, but they blessed themselves with it. Bishop Martin came along, and he blessed himself with it too, but he also did not recognise the language. So, I still do not know what it says, perhaps it is a confirmation that someone gained

the plenary indulgence.

Six years ago, my friend Josie and I decided to go to Assisi. It was a very special year; 800 years since the Pope had given the plenary indulgence to St Francis. Over the years since then, there had been occasional changes, like changing the giving of the indulgence not just at the Portiuncula, but at any Franciscan Church, and later at any church worldwide, which was why my friend remembered it in Desertegney.

Now, there were special pilgrimages for an extended time, from July 24 to August 10. My friend, Josie and I looked to go on one of these. Then, my eyesight began to deteriorate rapidly. I wanted to cancel my booking, but everyone told me to go. The insurance was not going to permit me, but my doctor told them that though I had multiple conditions, they were all under control.

Everything worked out fine. Everyone was very friendly, but the courier was a Spartan. She told us on the bus that we were people who liked to climb hills to see the other side; this is despite my handicap with my eyes and foot, and another lady who had a delicate frame and a man who had a defibrillator in his heart!

However, it was a lovely pilgrimage, with lots of unusual experiences. We found that our hotel was set in its own grounds, with a lovely garden. A little concrete path led across to a narrow track. This, in turn, led to a turnstile. On the other side of that were the grounds of St Mary of the Angels! And on the other side, at the time of our visit, there was a checkpoint with two or three soldiers who examined our handbags and asked us our nationality. When we told them, 'Irish', they waved us on. It was the time that there were bombing attacks in different parts of the world. There was a high fence around St Mary of the Angels.

Going to the nearby Portiuncula was one thing that I could do, and I went several times each day. It was lovely sitting in the tiny ancient church, in which there were only about 10 or eight places, and saying the Rosary each time, as well as gaining a plenary indulgence.

There were a few unexpected enjoyable events to add to the lovely pilgrimage. In the middle of the week, we were told that there was to be an open-air concert in the grounds of San Damiano and that Brother Alessandro was singing. The taxis were all high and I had to be hoisted into one. When we got to the lane which led to San Damiano, the taxi had to leave us at the bottom as traffic was not allowed there. It was steep and I was feeling the surface with my stick to make sure there were no potholes. Then Mary, the priest's sister, and her husband took an arm each and guided me up the steep lane. When we arrived at San Damiano, there were seats which

had been kept for us.

**Relic**

The performance was great and afterwards everybody got a chance to speak to Brother Alessandro. He remembered the visit to St Columba's Church and the relic from the Portiuncula. I told him that I still did not understand what the writing meant.

We went on visits to other places by bus, and sometimes we stayed in the low part of a town while the exercisers went up sometimes almost perpendicular hills! We went to a different church every day, and I always sang 'St Francis' Blessing' that I had learnt in the Church choir at Pennyburn, where we had sung it in four parts in the mixed-voice choir. It was a blessing that St Francis had written out for Brother Leo when he was depressed. I have a photograph of it, which I found in a magazine.

One day, we attended Mass at the right-hand side of a church. Christina was playing the organ, which was parallel to the wall, about half-way along our group. A lady who sang the Franciscan tertiary hymn was at the front and I was near the back. After Holy Communion, I began to sing and then I wanted to stop, but continued with the hymn. I heard the last few words of St Francis' blessing being echoed into the distance. This happened every time I finished a line. It went like this...The Lord bless thee, bless thee, bless thee etc, The Lord keep thee, keep thee etc, Make His face to shine upon thee, upon thee etc, And be gracious onto thee, onto thee etc, The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, upon thee etc, And give thee peace, give thee peace, give thee peace etc.

Of course, all the words must have been echoing but I only heard it when I took a breath at the end of each line. It must have happened because of where I was standing, for there were no echoes where Christina or the lady from Dublin sang, or when Christina played the organ. It was startling at the beginning but, in retrospect, I consider it to be quite meaningful. St Francis had wanted blessing and healing for Brother Leo. He had also wanted blessing and forgiveness for penitents at the Portiuncula. He wished God's blessing on the whole of creation, and he also wanted the whole of creation to continually praise God.

It was as if the blessing was sounding across the years into the distant future, and also as if it were sounding back across the years to the time of Francis, and, indeed, even further, to the time of Moses for, of course, the blessing is to be found in the book of Numbers.

We were to get another surprise when we left the church. We were told to go back in by the door on the other side. So, we went in and walked to the other end. When we went into a seat, we could see a stone coffin up at the rafters. It was St Francis' coffin, and there were little glass-fronted cases

**Continued on p30**

# Say thanks *by Fr Johnny Doherty, CSsR*



Fr Johnny Doherty CSsR

“WHAT do you say?” is a favourite question of parents to their little children as they train them to say, “thank you” and so help them to be grateful for what they have. If only the adults would practice what they preach, what a wonderful world we would have.

## Why say thanks

Listen to the radio any day of the week and you are put in touch with so much pain in people's lives all over the country. Nothing seems to be right. There is a lot of injustice in our society. There is a lot of pain in people's lives from broken relationships. There is a lot of betrayal from people who should be trustworthy. All these things need to be attended to. But there is also a lot more in life that can be lost sight of when our attention is taken over by what is wrong.

## Reasons for thankfulness

**The gift of life:** One of the many lessons that children teach us is to rejoice in the wonder of being alive. A simple experience of this is to lift a child and throw that child in the air. Every child says the same thing, “Do it again!” And they can keep asking you to do it again until you are sorry you ever started it!

How many of us wake up in a morning and say, either verbally or by our attitude: “O God, not again. Another day to be got through”. It is not that we want to be dead. It is rather that we do not want to be alive either!

What a difference it would make if we practiced saying thanks to God for the gift of life first thing in the morning. We would learn to appreciate the adventure of life again and be able to look forward to each new day with all its possibilities.

**The gift of nature:** The world we live in is an absolute wonder in its variety of sights and sounds and smells. So many of us are too busy to even notice. Just take a few

minutes today to do nothing but look, listen, and enjoy the place you are in. Even in the heart of the city there is so much that we can be thankful for in God's creation for us.

**The gift of people:** Most of us live our lives in a family setting. When people are that close to you day after day they can get on your nerves, they can hurt you, they can alienate you. The result is so much criticism of one another in family life. Or you can get so used to someone who lives close to you that you take her/him for granted. This is even worse than criticism.

The fact is that each person we are close to has so much goodness and beauty that remains unacknowledged. What a difference it would make in family life especially if we practiced saying thanks to one another. Our homes would glow with joy.

**The gift of the Church – God's people:** The Church is full of sinners. That is who it is for! And yet we always seem shocked when someone is found out. The Church has given us one of the most precious gifts of life, the gift of faith. Through this gift we come to honour Christ living in us and among us. Because of this gift we become familiar with Mary and with the saints.

Through the Church, we have the Eucharist as the food of life and we have the forgiveness of sins as the freedom to look ahead. There is so much wrong with the Church and there always will be. But there is so much beauty and goodness that we can, and should, be thankful for.

**The gift of our faith community:** In every parish, and other faith communities, there are wonderful people who give their time and energy to the service of God and of those in need. From the way we talk you would not think that this is true. The single most important force for renewing any parish is to develop a spirit of thankfulness in which everyone, the priests included, are constantly acknowledged and confirmed in their goodness.

## Conclusion

As we come to the end of this Liturgical Year, with the Feast of Christ the King, the four weeks of November offer us an opportunity to gather all the goodness of God to us as we reflect on God's Word week-by-week. It is also a time to renew our appreciation of the

goodness of those we live with, in our homes and families, and to commit to being people of thanksgiving and praise.

## The Sunday Liturgy week-by-week

**Week 1. October 30 - November 5**

### The Lord of compassion

*They all complained when they saw what was happening. “He (Jesus) has gone to stay at a sinner's house,” they said.*

One of the lovely features of the Gospels is that Jesus had no problem with what we would call sinners. He didn't condone what they did, but he had great compassion for them. The other side of that feature was that he had a lot of difficulty with good people. And he still has! He found it almost impossible to break through to them with the Good News of God's unconditional love for every person because, if they were God, they would not be like that. So, as we struggle to live out our faith through the various relationships of our lives, we need to be ready for failure and be gentle with ourselves. But we also need to be very gentle with one another and become a source of encouragement for one another rather than putting one another down through criticism.

**Week 2. November 6 – 12**

### Our Source of Hope

*Jesus said: “He is God, not of the dead, but of the living for to him all are in fact alive.”*

One of the really beautiful aspects of our faith is our knowledge that our loved ones who have died are alive with God and that we are in communion with them. We celebrate this during the month of November in special ways. The above statement from Christ is a very powerful revelation of this faith. However, this statement is also a call to us today to come alive in our faith. So much of Christian life can be spiritless, where we are doing our duty to God and to one another rather than an enthusiastic response to the extraordinary love that God has for us and that he shows to us every day. We need to practice eternal life now by entering into our lives with joy and gladness in our homes

and in our parish community. Otherwise, we are living a denial of what Christ says: “He is God, not of the dead, but of the living.”

**Week 3. November 13 – 19**

### The Triumph of God

*Jesus said to His disciples: “When you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be frightened.”*

Every now and again someone comes up with the scare about the end of the world. And there are always people to believe them. But that is not our way as followers of Christ. Our task is to transform the world through the power of love. There are many situations in our world that we cannot directly affect, except through prayer and through exercising our power of voting in favour of peace and the rights of people. But there are situations in the world that we do affect directly, and it is there particularly that we live out our faith in Christ. The intimate relationships of marriage and family life need to be as good as we can make them and that is within our control. And the faith community to which we belong is a place in which we can make a difference by getting involved in the needs of the world around us.

**Week 4. November 20 – 26**

### Christ the King

*“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” “Indeed, I promise you, today you will be with me in paradise.”*

This beautiful exchange between Jesus and the man dying on the cross beside Him is one of the sources of hope and inspiration for people of all times. When we call Him ‘king’, we are not talking about someone who lords it over us but rather of someone who brings us into the fullness of life.

Even in the depths of His own suffering He has compassion for the man beside Him. His kingdom can only be built on that same compassion. As His followers, we are called to forgive one another as He has forgiven us.

At the end of this Liturgical Year, we owe it to ourselves to let the past go in so far as it holds us back from being people of great love. And we owe it to one another to build each other up in love in our homes and in our faith community. Then the world will believe in Jesus Christ.

# Peace has a name

– by Aoife O'Neill

LADIES, this Advent you are invited to rest in God's peace, preparing your heart for the Prince of Peace to be born at Christmas time there.

The world cannot give us peace, nor can we find it in ourselves without the gift of God's grace. Would you like to enter into the Christmas season restored and ready?

If so, the ladies at ‘Blessed Is She Derry’ would like to invite you to join them for the four Sunday's of Advent, journeying through Lectio Divina and Visio Divina towards a peaceful Christmas.

The theme of each week is as follows:

Week 1- What we think peace is...

Week 2- Where we seek out peace...

Week 3- Who or what steals our peace...

Week 4- Why God alone brings peace...

We will meet each Sunday at 8 pm and finish with a cup of tea at 9 pm. All ladies are welcome to come along and join with us in this prayerful preparation for Christmas.

For further information please contact Aoife at Termonbacca on 028 71262512 or email [termonbaccaderry@gmail.com](mailto:termonbaccaderry@gmail.com).

## Advent Retreat at Termonbacca

THE Iona Retreat Centre at Termonbacca will host an Advent retreat from Friday, December 2 to Sunday, December 4 led by Fr Jerome Ituah OCD.

The theme of the retreat is ‘Advent Journey with the Prodigal Son: An invitation to heal the relationship between the Father and His Children’, and is

open to all.

This can be either residential or not, and is a beautiful opportunity for reflection and preparation for Christmas using the scriptures.

For further information please contact Aoife on 028 71262512 or email [termonbaccaderry@gmail.com](mailto:termonbaccaderry@gmail.com).

## Continued from p29

with lights in front of it. In them were first class relics of some of Francis' companions. We prayed reverently in front of them.

That was my last continental pilgrimage and one of the most memorable. There is something very special about this story of the little man from Assisi. I am a Franciscan tertiary and I follow the rule which Francis wrote for

the lay people who wished to live like the friars. I suppose you could think that in a way it was part of the Franciscan family. But then, St Francis wanted to live as Jesus taught. So, he regarded everyone as a brother or sister, in fact, he regarded the whole of creation as one and talked about Brother Sun and Sister Moon. He only wanted to serve God by helping those around him and being an instrument of God's peace.

# Children's Catechism Club - C3

by Veronica Harley

HELLO children. C3 welcomes you to the month of November. Winter has arrived, so the days are shorter and the nights are longer. Traditionally, this month is dedicated to the Holy Souls in Purgatory. Although November can be dark and cold, we still have many special days to celebrate. We begin November with a splendid feast – All Saints Day!



- 6. Blessed Virgin Mary
- 7. St Joseph
- 8. St Bernadette
- 9. St Cecilia
- 10. St Helen

### Saints of the Month:

- November 3: St Martin de Porres
- November 11: St Martin of Tours
- November 17: St Elizabeth of Hungary
- November 30: St Andrew the Apostle

### All Saints' Day

The Feast of All Saints is celebrated on November 1. On this day, we go to Mass to honour all the saints and martyrs, known and unknown, who have died and are now with God in heaven. Saints are people who have loved God very much and who have dedicated their lives to living God's will. The Lord calls us all to be saints, to be holy people (CCC 2013). We give thanks to God for the saints and all their good deeds. These are an example for us to live by each day. We too can live like the saints and one day join God in Heaven, for we shall be saints.



### All Saints Scavenger Hunt

1. My nickname was 'The Dumb Ox.'
2. I led an army when I was only 13.
3. My name means 'Who is like God?'
4. My 'Little Way' means love and trust in God.
5. I died defending my purity.
6. All generations shall call me blessed.
7. One of my titles is 'Terror of Demons.'
8. Our Lady appeared to me in Lourdes, France, asking for prayer and penance for the conversion of sinners.
9. I am the patroness of Musicians.
10. I found the relics of the true cross

### Answers

1. St Thomas Aquinas
2. St Joan of Arc
3. St Michael the Archangel
4. St Therese of Lisieux
5. St Maria Goretti

### All Souls' Day

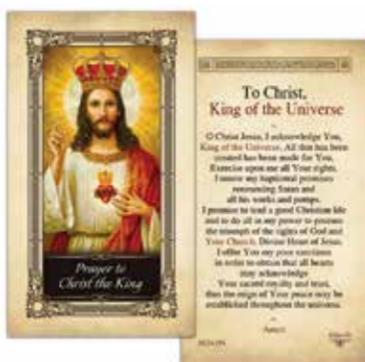
The Feast of the Holy Souls is November 2. On this day, we especially remember all those people who have passed from this life to the next. The Holy Souls are the people who have died in the state of God's grace and friendship. These souls are assured of reaching Heaven and eternal salvation. The Holy Souls remain in Purgatory because, after their death, they still need to be purified of their sins. With this purification, they achieve the holiness needed before entering Heaven (CCC 1030). The word 'purgatory' was originally a Latin adjective meaning 'clean'. This gives us the English word 'purge' with the same meaning.

Purgatory is more than a place. It is a process in which we are made holy and pure so we can live with God forever in Heaven (CCC 1054). The Holy Souls are not separated from God while in Purgatory but, instead, are surrounded by God's love and mercy. We can help to purify the Holy Souls by praying for them. We pray at their graves, but the Mass is the greatest prayer for the dead. By making small sacrifices, we can make an offering to God to ease the suffering of the Holy Souls (CCC 1032).

*Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.*

### Feast of Christ the King

Every year, on the last Sunday before Advent, we celebrate the Feast of Christ the King (CCC 559). This feast was instituted by Pope Pius XI in 1925. At that time, the world was increasingly telling Christians to be completely loyal to the government in power and to forget about God and His existence. Consequently, Pope Pius XI established this Feast to remind Catholics and the world that Jesus Christ is Lord of the Universe.



This wonderful feast day not only marks the end of the Liturgical Year for our Church (CCC 1168), but it is also a day on which we celebrate Christ's royalty and His reign over all of creation.

*Jesus you are my King and my God and I love you. Help me to be your good servant.*



### The Season of Advent

"Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight His paths" (Matthew 3:3).

The beginning of our Church year is marked with the season of Advent. The first Sunday of Advent this year is on November 27. The word 'Advent'

comes from the Latin word 'adventus', which means 'arrival' or 'coming'. It begins four Sundays before Christmas and ends on Christmas Eve. Advent is a season of preparation for Christmas.

It is a time of reflection and hope as we keep in mind both 'advents' of Christ, the first in Bethlehem and the second at the end of time.

## Fill in the Blanks: The Lord is Coming!



Use the words in the list at the bottom to fill in the blanks in today's Gospel reading. Use the letters in the boxes to fill in the blanks at the end.

As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

In those days  \_\_\_\_\_ the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day that Noah

\_\_\_\_\_ the ark.

They did not know until the flood came and  \_\_\_\_\_ them all away.

So will it be also at the coming of the Son of Man.

Two  \_\_\_\_\_ will be out in the field; one will be  \_\_\_\_\_, and one will be left.

Two women will be

\_\_\_\_\_ at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left.

Therefore,  \_\_\_\_\_ awake!

For you do not know on which day your Lord will come.

\_\_\_\_\_!

STAY ENTERED MEN BEFORE GRINDING TAKEN CARRIED



## Quiz Time with Lawrence

1. In the Disney movie, what were the names of Cinderella's step-sisters?
2. In which country is the global company Samsung based?
3. Who were the winners of the first ever Football World Cup tournament (1930)?
4. In which English town was the sitcom 'Fawlty Towers' set?
5. What is the capital city of Cuba?
6. Who painted 'Salvator Mundi', the most expensive artwork ever sold?
7. Which fictional movie character finally married Mark Darcey?
8. Of which country was Hamlet a Prince?
9. From what song does the lyrics 'When evening falls so hard, I will comfort you, I'll take your part' come?
10. What is the only part of the human body that is fully grown at birth?
11. When does Thanksgiving fall in the USA?
12. In which country would you find the city of Marrakesh?
13. What does the 'D' stand for in Michael D Higgins?
14. How many times has Ronnie O'Sullivan been World Snooker Champion?
15. What is the name given to Indian food cooked over charcoal in a clay oven?
16. What global event was held this month in Sharm El Sheikh in Egypt?
17. Who is the current presenter of Channel 4's 'Countdown'?
18. What would you be served if you ordered 'Helado' in Spain?
19. According to the Bible, how many children did Adam and Eve have together?
20. What is the longest bridge in Europe?
21. Name the three English club teams that Kevin Keegan managed?
22. Which of the Bronte sisters wrote Wuthering Heights?
23. Which species of fish produces eggs for Caviar?
24. Which Christian Feast Day is celebrated 40 days after Easter Sunday?
25. What is the only US State beginning with the letter 'D'?

**Quiz Answers:** 1, Anastasia and Drizella. 2, South Korea. 3, Uruguay. 4, Torquay. 5, Havana. 6, Leonardo Da Vinci. 7, Bridget Jones. 8, Denmark. 9, Bridge Over Troubled Water. 10, The eyes. 11, The fourth Thursday in November. 12, Morocco. 13, Daniel. 14, Seven. 15, Tandoori. 16, COP 27. 17, Colin Murray. 18, Ice cream. 19, Three. 20, Vasco Da Gama (Portugal). 21, Newcastle United, Fulham and Manchester City. 22, Emily. 23, Sturgeon. 24, The Ascension. 25, Delaware.

Aghyaran, Ardmore, Ardstraw West & Castlederg, Ballinascreen, Ballymagroarty, Banagher, Bellaghy, Buncrana, Carndonagh, Claudy,

# Let Your Light Shine!

Moville, Newtownstewart, Omagh, Plumbridge, Sion Mills, Steelestown, Strabane, Swatragh, Templemore - Long Tower and St Eugene's, Three Patrons, Waterside

Clonmany, Coleraine, Creggan, Culladuff, Culmore, Desertmartin, Donnyloop, Drumquin, Duramannagh, Durngiver, Fahan, Faughanvale, Garvagh, Gortin, Greencastle,



**FAREWELL  
FROM  
BALLYSCULLION**  
Monsignor  
Dolan  
**AND**  
Brian



Greenlough, Iskaheen, Killyclogher, Killygordon, Kilrea, Lavey, Leckpatrick, Lifford, Limavady, Maghera, Magilligan, Malin, Melmount,