



The NET

Sharing fruits of faith in Derry Diocese

ISSUE 90. NOVEMBER 2023

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See inside...



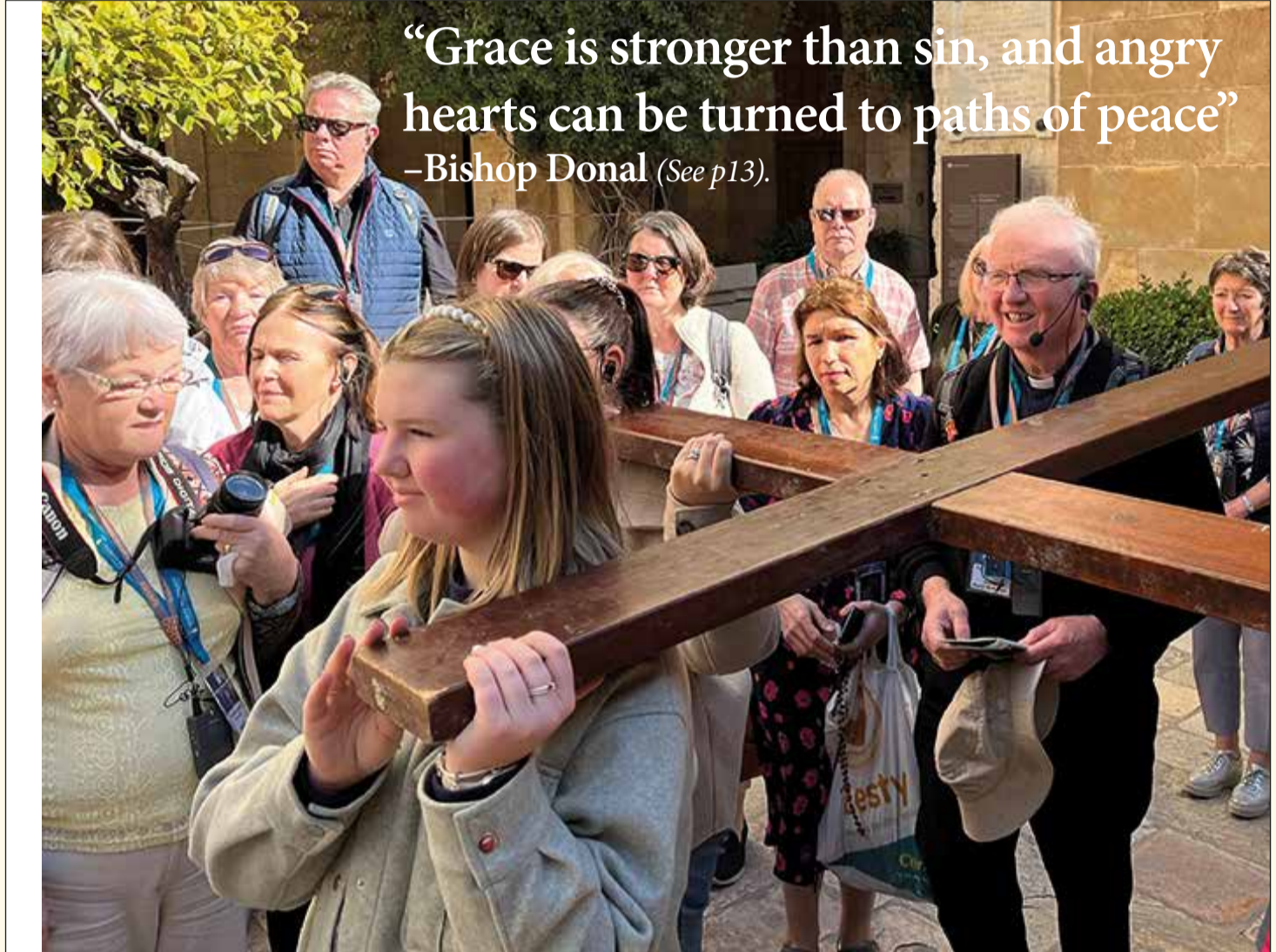
All Saints Pageant - Long Tower



Building Community - Steelstown & Culmore



New PP Induction - Drumquin



“Grace is stronger than sin, and angry hearts can be turned to paths of peace”
– Bishop Donal (See p13).

Bishop Donal on pilgrimage in the Holy Land in February, when he was joined by many from around the Diocese and other parts of Ireland.



Reflection Day - Three Patrons



Pope St John Paul II Novena - Buncrana



St Conor's PS 50th - Omagh



Y8 Retreat - Banagher



Barry Mulhern - Castlederg.



Fr Kevin Doherty
- Adm Clonmany & Culdaff.



Fr Paul Fraser - Derry.



Fr Peter O'Kane - Strabane.



Fr Ruaidhri Grieve OP
- Dungiven.

People in focus

Also featuring: Anam Og family day out; Diocesan Mass for Deceased Young People; WYD reunion; All Saints parties in Long Tower & Killyclogher; Young Writers section; Children's Catechism Club; Cathedral pilgrimage for 150th; Creggan Divine Mercy relics; Long Tower Novena; Dungiven celebrate first Dominican priest; Eucharistic blessing for Galliagh & Carnhill; Maghera completes Seven Joys of Mary; 'The Chosen' Limavady viewing; Coleraine Taize prayer; Touching tribute to late Fr Kevin Mullan; Remembering Greysteel victims; Holy Souls prayer; Irish Section; Features; Quiz; Diary Dates... and much more...

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Bishop Donal reflects on the Pope's prayer intention for November...

"For the Pope: We pray for the Holy Father; as he fulfils his mission, may he continue to accompany the flock entrusted to him, with the help of the Holy Spirit."

A challenge for all Catholics to reflect on how we understand the Church as revealed in Scriptures

LET'S be honest. There are some Catholics who will find it hard to pray for Pope Francis.

Some fear that he is being 'soft' on core Catholic principles and that the synodal pathway is leading to disaster. Some cardinals and bishops have been explicit about these fears.

Others think that he is being too cautious about much needed change.

Thus, this prayer intention is a challenge for all Catholics to reflect on how we understand the Church as revealed in the scriptures.

The document of the Second Vatican Council on the Church (Lumen Gentium LG) set out a clear understanding of the identity and purpose that Christ

had for the Church which He founded on the rock of Peter's faith.

First, the Church is at the service of God's mysterious mission to reconcile all things in Christ. We are established by God's grace to announce and build God's Kingdom. It belongs to God and not to us.

Second, the dominant image for the Church is that we are the pilgrim People of God, led by the Holy Spirit and nourished by Word and Sacrament through Christ our High Priest. We have a fundamental unity in Christ, whatever our different gifts may be.

Third, Christ willed that the visible Church should have a hierarchical structure – laity,

clergy and Pope - which serves the mission of Christ to be a "sacrament or sign of intimate union with God and of the unity of all humankind". (LG1)

Fourth, the laity "are gathered together in the People of God and make up the Body of Christ under one Head" (LG35). The hierarchical structure serves that unity.

Fifth, in the People of God, there is "the call of the whole church to holiness" (LG 39). Individually and together, we have a vocation to be holy, whatever our state in life, our position in the Church and our intellectual maturity.

Sixth, the document speaks about the unique mission in the Church of men and women who

live consecrated lives as nuns and monks.

Seventh, the whole Church is on a journey and, in this world, bears all the signs of human frailty and blindness. But we are on our way, waiting in joyful hope for the coming of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Finally, 'Lumen Gentium' dedicated a chapter to the role of Mary in the mystery of Christ and the Church.

It is clear that the Church belongs to Christ. It is His Body. It is not our religious organisation over whose development which we argue. If Jesus had asked the apostles for advice, or taken a vote on His ministry, He would never have died on the Cross!

Our prayer for the Holy Father



Bishop Donal

is that he will lead us, as Chief Shepherd, to discern the very often uncomfortable path that the Church must walk if we are to be true to the Good Shepherd and not just to the changing spirit of our age.

Support those with least this Christmas by Shauna O'Neill



IT is hard to believe that Christmas is fast approaching once again. As we all associate this special time of year with compassion for others, Children in Crossfire are asking you to support a special new programme we are organising in inner-city Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

With a population of more than 5.5 million people, Dar es Salaam is one of the fastest growing cities in the world. Nearly three-quarters of its citizens live in 'informal settlements', which essentially

means tin huts. There are 800,000 children under the age of five, and only 15% of them are in any sort of education. Poverty is widespread and it is extremely deep.

In life, we all have two choices: either we decide to accept situations we believe we cannot change or we determine to change situations we believe we must not accept. Children in Crossfire will not accept what we have seen in Dar es Salaam. With your support, we will address the profound poverty there, and tackle the problems that poverty

brings.

Working with day-care centres, similar to nurseries here, we aim to ensure an initial 5,500 children receive:

- Nutritious food;
- Good health provision;
- Safe care in their local community; and
- High-quality education.

That's children like Ikram and Hamza (pictured), who are too young to understand the adversity into which they have been born. Ikram's mother, Amina, has to try to get by on as little as 65p per day. Hamza, who lives with his 73-year-old grandfather, was orphaned at a very early age and has HIV.

Children in Crossfire exist to support the most vulnerable children; those who would otherwise be left behind. Alongside being there for Ikram and Hamza, our goal is to seek out and support the children whose stories are not currently being told:

- Orphans living on the streets with no regular food and at risk

of falling victim to the worst

people in society;

- Children with disabilities who rarely get to leave their homes because the support they need simply doesn't exist;
- Girls denied the same opportunities in education as boys.

We want to give them all hope and a future. Your solidarity with the children we support will be greatly appreciated. We are only able to make a difference because of the kindness of so many who share a deep sense of humanity, including readers of 'The Net'. It is in our hands now to change the world for thousands of children in Dar es Salaam, and tens of thousands more in the years ahead. A kind donation from you this Christmas will help us to achieve that aim. Together, we will make a major difference.

To donate:

- Send a cheque, made payable to Children in Crossfire, to 2 St Joseph's Avenue, Derry, BT48 6TH.



- Call us on 028/048 7126 9898.
 - Go to www.childrenincrossfire.org/donate-advent.
 - Scan the QR code.
- Thank you for your kind support!



Sharing the fruits of the faith in the Derry Diocese

Supporting us:

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

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

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

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The ministry of

The NET

was dedicated to Our

Lady, through the

intercession of

St Maximilian Kolbe, in

a ceremony celebrated

by Bishop Donal

McKeown

on August 14, 2019.


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

Derry Diocesan Youth Ministry team offering young people pilgrimage to...

Medjugorje Youth Festival - an opportunity to celebrate and renew faith



THE Derry Diocesan Youth Ministry team is hoping to lead a group of young people on pilgrimage to Medjugorje from July 30 until August 8, 2024, for the annual Youth Festival that attracts thousands of pilgrims from all over the world to the Parish of St James the Apostle.

Located in the Herzegovina region of Bosnia and Herzegovina, near to the border of Croatia, Medjugorje's annual Youth Festival will be in its 35th year next summer.

Pope Francis formally authorised pilgrimages there in May 2019 and sends a message to the youth that gather for the Festival, which sees large numbers gather for the celebration of Mass, Confession and Eucharistic Adoration.

The following is the Holy Father's message to the participants of the 2023 Festival...

"Beloved!

With joy I address all of you who are participating in the Youth Festival in Medjugorje, which is

an opportunity to celebrate and renew your faith. It is my desire that you may live these days as a spiritual pilgrimage which will lead you to an encounter with the Lord in the Eucharist, in Adoration, in Confession, in biblical catechesis, in the silent prayer of the Rosary, but also through the testimonies.

"The theme proposed for your reflection this year is: 'Here are my mother and my brothers' (Mt 12:49). The evangelist Matthew recounts that while Jesus was speaking to the crowd, He is told that His mother and brothers were standing outside and were looking for Him. Jesus answers with the question: 'Who is my mother and who are my brothers?' (Mt 12:48). Then, stretching His hand towards His disciples, He said: 'Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother' (Mt 12:49-50).

"We are deeply struck by the gesture and words of Jesus, because at first sight they seem to show

a lack of respect for His Mother and relatives. In fact, with this affirmation, He wanted to show us that submitting to the will of the Father, strengthening oneself in union with Him, is a stronger bond than the closest blood relation.

"Dear young people, God's will is a priceless treasure! For this reason, the Virgin Mary establishes a kinship with Jesus even before giving birth to Him. She becomes a disciple and a mother of her Son at the moment when she accepts the angel's words by replying: 'Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord: may it be done to me according to your word' (Lk 1:38). From that moment on, her entire life was a continuous carrying out of God's will.

"Nonetheless, we often find ourselves in conflict with this will: sometimes it is difficult for us to understand it and accept it, we would like to have a different life, without challenges, without suffering; we would like ourselves to be different, perhaps more intelligent, richer in instilled talents and gifts. However, there is no better will for us than that of the Father, which is the plan of love for us in view of the perspective of His Kingdom and our full happiness. We are often afraid of this will, because we fear that God might impose something on us by pure chance, and not for our good; we fear that accepting His will would mean to renounce our freedom.

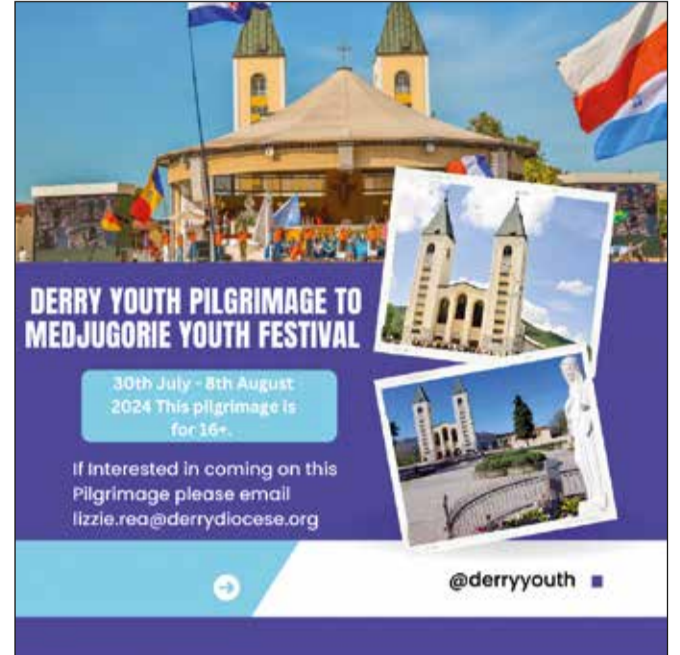
"Instead, we must seek diligently

to ask God the Father to grant us to come to know His will and to ask for it be fulfilled in us. It is Jesus who shows us the greatest reason to desire it: carrying out the Father's will makes us His children, brothers, sisters, mothers - and we grow in love for Him and for others.

"Dear young people, God has a plan of love for each one of you. Do not be afraid of His will, but put all your trust in His grace. For Him, you are truly precious, you are important to Him, because you are the work of His hands (cf. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*, 115). Only He knows your heart and your deepest desires.

"Only He, who loves you with complete love, is capable of fulfilling your longings. No one except God can give you true happiness. Following Mary's example, know how to give Him your unconditional 'yes'. May there be no room for egoism or laziness in your life. Take advantage of your youth to build, together with the Lord, the foundations of your existence, because your personal, professional and social future will depend on the decisions you take in these years.

"On this journey, beloved young people, may the Most Holy Mother Mary accompany you and teach you to discern and accept the will of the Heavenly Father in your life. Imprint with your youth a sign of hope and enthusiasm in the present moment.



Be enthusiastic missionaries of the new evangelization! Bring to those who suffer, to those who are searching, the joy that Jesus wants to give. Bring it to your families, to your schools and colleges, to your workplaces and to your friends wherever you live. If you let God's grace work in you, if you are generous and persevering in your daily work, you will make this world a better place for everyone.

"I bless you with all my heart. Please pray for me."

Rome, at San Giovanni Laterano, Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul the Apostles, June 29th, 2023

Young people, aged 16+,

interested in joining the Derry Youth Pilgrimage to next year's Medjugorje Festival are asked to email lizzie.rea@derrydiocese.org. For those participating in the Pope John Paul II Award, the pilgrimage offers an opportunity to gain 'top up' hours. The cost is £800.



Bishop Donal reflects on the General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops – October 2023...

A Synodal Church in Mission

2022 was a busy time in many parishes as gatherings took place to prepare the diocesan and national submissions for the Synod of Bishops on the theme of 'Communion, Participation and Mission'.

Those conversations revealed a passion on the part of many people for the future of the church.

Some people insisted that any gathering had to immediately 'modernise' the church, settling issues such as the ordination of women and an explicit celebration of sexual diversity. Others were afraid of the process, worried that it might end up with specific issues dominating and wrecking the church.

It is interesting that the 'Synthesis Report', agreed on by the ordained and lay members, has received little criticism from either wing. I found it a very balanced and energizing document.

What does the report do?

Catholic means 'universal' and the Catholic Church is made up of several different churches and rites such as the Syro-Malabar Church, and the Maronite and Greek Catholic churches (which

have married priests as the norm). And Catholicism - under the Pope - exists in many different circumstances

It tries honestly to summarise how they faced the diversity of experiences regarding matters that were discussed during the month-long 'conversations'. The process tried to offer a venue 'where different cultures, languages, rites, ways of thinking and realities can engage together and fruitfully search for the Spirit's guidance' (1c). And 'Substantial agreement emerged that, with the necessary clarification, synodality represents the future of the Church' (1i).

Not only was synodality a useful tool but it was part of evangelisation, but 'synodal practice plays an important part in the Church's prophetic response to an individualism that causes people to turn in on themselves, a populism that divides, and a globalisation that homogenises and flattens. Although not solving these problems, it nonetheless provides an alternative way of being and acting for our times, integrating a diversity of perspectives' (1i), and members were clear that 'If spiritual depth is lacking, synodality remains

cosmetic' (2c). Because members sought to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit, 'conversion is at play in conversation' (2d).

The synthesis report then goes on to look at two areas, namely:

- Relationships within the church between the 'many' (we are all baptised), the 'some' (the ordained and consecrated have particular roles) and the 'one' (the role of the papacy); and

- The church's mission to and relationship with those outside the Catholic Church.

In dealing with these areas, the report has an interesting way of dealing with the 20 themes that are enumerated.

Firstly, under each theme, they state the 'convergences', what was widely agreed. The agreement in some cases was just that the issue was acknowledged as a matter of concern. Secondly, they point out 'matters for consideration'. This includes issues that need further clarification and prayerful reflection.

Thirdly, each section makes proposals for work that should be started, or steps that be taken in

preparation for the next gathering in October 2024.

The introduction points out that Pope Francis 'encouraged us to be audacious in our mission' (Intro para 3).

A few themes struck me.

1. The dominant image of Communion in the church is as the People of God. We all share a radical equality in our common baptism. Synodality is not about taking power away from a clerical elite and giving it to a new lay elite!

2. Co-responsibility and Participation in the church involves accountability. Thus...

a. 'We ask local churches to identify processes and structures that allow for a regular audit of how priest and deacons are carrying out the responsibilities of their mission' (11k)

b. There should be 'Structures and processes for regular review of the bishop's performance, with reference to the style of his authority, the economic administration of the diocese's assets, and the functioning of participatory bodies and safeguarding against all possible kinds of abuse' (11j)

3. Everything is focused on



Mission, bringing Good News to the world and living as a Gospel-based, Spirit-led People of God. We have a 'common mission of evangelisation' (1a). 'The church's synodal journey is orientated towards the Kingdom' (2b).

And what did the Assembly see as the next steps in this synodal process?

- Their report is 'not a final document, but an instrument at the service of ongoing discernment'.

- They call members to 'return to our churches to hand over the fruits of our work and continue the

journey together' p3; and - 2024 Assembly will complete its work, offering it to the Holy Father

Thus, I encourage clergy and laity to read this exciting document. Just use a search engine to find 'A Synodal Church in mission'. There is no sympathy for a depressing story about how hard things will be. This is a time to be audacious and holy!

Omagh celebration for St Conor's PS Golden Anniversary



St Conor's PS & Nursery Unit principal, Mrs Katrina McGettigan.

St Conor's PS, in Omagh, has marked its Golden anniversary with Mass celebrated in Sacred Heart Church, when the current school community was joined by former pupils and staff, as well as parishioners, in giving thanks to God for the memories and achievements of the last 50 years.

The chief celebrant was Bishop Donal, who was joined on the altar by the Drumragh PP and St Conor's chaplain, Fr Eugene Hasson, and curate, Fr Michael McCaul, as well as Mgr Joseph Donnelly, Mgr Bryan McCanny, Fr John Gilmore, Fr John Forbes, Fr Neil Farren, Fr Thomas Canning, and Fr Gerard Mongan, a former St Conor's pupil.

Welcoming all gathered, the principal, Mrs Katrina McGettigan said: "We give thanks to God for the special gift that St Conor's has been to the local community, for the many good times experienced, for the difficult times, the happy times, the sad times, and for the light of Christ that has shone throughout the past 50 years, and we include in our thoughts those who are no longer with us and who contributed so much to the life of the school.

"We give thanks also for those who have shared this journey with us: the children; their families; all those staff who have worked in St Conor's; the priests; and the parish community; all who have given generously of their gifts and talents in so many ways."

She added: "The Principals, along with each member of staff - teaching and non-teaching - together have been the light of Christ for the many young people

who have passed through our doors over the past 50 years - guiding, supporting, loving and encouraging.

"Through the dedication of all, so many have learned what it truly means to be a child of God, to be an active member of a loving and caring community, to realise that they are precious in the eyes of God, made in His image and likeness.

"And most importantly, we give thanks for the children of St Conor's, past and present, who through their joy, enthusiasm for life and innocence continue to draw us closer into friendship with Christ."

Delighted to see so many gather for the 50th anniversary celebration for St Conor's PS & Nursery Unit, Bishop Donal also extended a welcome to all, "from the smallest in the Nursery Unit to perhaps some who were in P1 in 1973".

The ceremony got underway with Mrs McGettigan joined by former principals, or their representatives, in lighting a display of candles at the front of the sanctuary symbolising the light of Christ that has led the school for the last half century and guided the leadership. Colm MacRory, son of the late Colm MacRory, who was principal from 1973-1984, lit the first candle, followed by Oliver O'Kane (1984-2003), and Neil Barbour (2003-2007), and then Mrs McGettigan, who took over the role of principal in 2007.

A number of symbols were then presented, with Fr Gerard Mongan, a past pupil, carrying forward a statue of St Conor to the altar, along with Noah, the oldest pupil currently attending the school, who carried a crucifix.

Vice-Principal, Gary McCrory explained that these symbols represented the Catholic ethos of the school and the importance of faith development for all pupils: "They remind us of our commitment to developing the whole child in the image and likeness of God."

School caretaker, Chris McGuigan, carried forward the keys to the school, and P4 pupil, Joe, carried an open book, while Mr McCrory noted: "The

keys that open the school every day remind us of the builders' craftsmanship and hard work in bringing our school to life, as well as symbolising the unlocking of opportunities for all our children. We acknowledge the cleaning, canteen and patrol staff who have served our school for the past 50 years."

Old Register

Youngest P1 pupil in 1973, Michael Drumm, who is the current chair of the Board of Governors, carried forward an old register, while Isla, the youngest P1 pupil currently attending, carried a school bell.

"The register unlocks stories of the past, while the bell chimes for exciting chapters yet to unfold," said Mr McCrory.

Former classroom assistant in the Hearing-Impaired Unit, Sheila Meyler, together with past pupil, Maeve, carried a heart to the altar, while Mr McCrory explained: "The heart symbolises the love which is at the centre of our school; love that is underpinned by inclusion and commitment to removing barriers to learning and meeting the needs of others."

Joe McMahon, past pupil and Tyrone footballer, carried forward the school jersey, while School Choir member, Ciara carried the winning trophy from last year's West Tyrone Feis. Mr McCrory said that these represented the extra-curricular dimension to St Conor's and its focus on the holistic development of the child.

He added: "Past achievements reflect our emphasis on promoting dedication and resilience. May we always remember the importance of fair-play, participation and using our talents to the best of our ability."

Parent and PTFA member, Julie Corry carried forward a globe, while her son, Pascal, currently a P6 pupil, carried a plant, symbolising nurture, strength and sustainability, reflecting the School's growth and development over the past five decades, while also serving as a reminder of the responsibility to care for God's world.

Longest serving teacher, Anne McDonagh, carried forward a

compass, and was accompanied by P3 pupil, Max, carrying a reading book, and P2 pupil, Maria, carrying a pencil case, acknowledging the work of past and present staff in providing the guidance and direction which has shaped generations of children, and enabled them to become life-long learners, able to contribute positively to society.

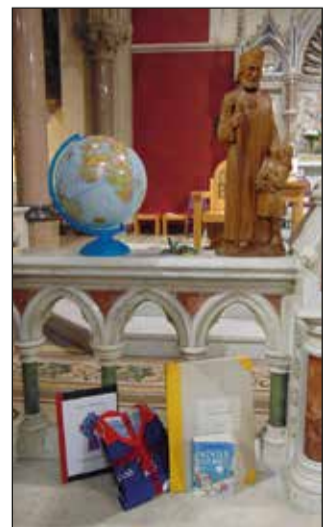
Lastly, long-serving governor, John O'Neill, carried forward the Minutes from a Board of Governors' meeting, while P3 pupil, James carried a copy of the Student Council Minutes, with Mr McCrory saying: "These important documents remind us of our untiring endeavours to achieve the best possible outcomes for our pupils and the strong emphasis we place on fostering a pupil voice within our school community."

In his homily, Bishop Donal remarked that the celebration was "a chance to look back over the years when terrible things happened in Omagh and all around Northern Ireland, and to be grateful for all that the school community did through many dark days and all that happened in the meantime. Looking back with gratitude helps all of us to face forward with hope and confidence."

Encouraging St Conor's to continue to build on what has been achieved over the last 50 years, he said: "Tonight, in this parish church, we give thanks to God for the great people who have made St Conor's such an important part of this community for 50 years and who have blessed this community.

"Families and individuals face many problems in 2023. But tonight, we celebrate our belief that faith in God and the guidance of the Bible will help the next generation to navigate the choppy waters that may lie ahead. We believe in a God who believes in people and wants us all to flourish, whatever our talents and what our challenges."

The celebration of Mass was enhanced by the singing of the St Conor's School Choir, directed by Derick Weir, and was followed by refreshments in the neighbouring St Joseph's Hall.



Reflecting on his primary school years, Fr Gerard Mongan's heart burst with pride singing school anthem to celebrate 50th anniversary...

We are the children of St Conor's



Fr Gerard Mongan.

WHEN I was given the privilege of joining in procession with the oldest pupil at St Conor's 50th Anniversary Mass, each of us holding high the statue of St Conor and the cross of Christ respectively, my years at this most prestigious of primary school between 1979 and 1986 flashed before me!

Memories of a more simple and innocent world (at least I thought it was) long gone, faces of classmates and teachers with whom I spent the most formative years of my life appeared one-by-one in my mind's eye. It was a night of nostalgia, thinking back to a totally different era of education, remembering with sadness the ones who are no longer with us but a heart bursting with pride in singing the school anthem: 'We are the children of St Conor's'.

A nervous and scared child I was in Mrs Ward's P1 class of 1979. I could never get the 'Pop goes the weasel' game for PE, but preferred the more sedate singing of the other nursery rhyme, 'There was a princess long ago!' Listening to 'The laughing police man' on the record player,

or keeping time on the Triangle with the class band were a few of the highlights of a Friday, or even a nature walk out beyond Lammy Crossroads, picking bluebells for the May Altar.

However, on accidentally smashing a bottle in the 'Wendy house', I got a few slaps from a cellotaped cane and fast forward to P7, I still managed to meet the ire of poor Mrs Ward after being blamed for emptying tadpoles down the sink! Seventeen years later, she was the first person to ask me for a blessing, after my family, at my first Mass! God rest her soul and reward her for her years of dedicated service.

Discipline was indeed different then. In today's 'child centred' and 'all inclusive' approach to education, the classroom of the 80s holds little or no resemblance. But discipline in those years was a deterrent because you definitely did not repeat the offending action again! If you were sent 'up to the front' (of the oil tank above the playground) during break-time for walking in the muck or messing, it almost inadvertently meant an encounter on the hand with Master McCrory's 'friend':

'black beauty'! I loved him at school assemblies, when he would shake hands with all the P1s standing at the front and then ask us with his distinctive voice, "Do you want the good news or the bad news?" The 'good news' was always something we didn't like, for example, no after school club. The 'bad news' was something we all cheered at, like having a day off! In those years, who could forget the big TV on the trolley wheeled out for the whole school to watch the visit of Pope John Paul II to Ireland (I was in P1!) or 'The Boy from Space' and 'Dark Towers'. They still scare the life out of me! Or Mrs Connolly getting us to 'shout out' the words of 'Colours of Day' and 'Walk in the Light' as she harmoniously hammered the life of that little blue keyboard! She had our full attention and she ensured we were skilled in voice projection for life! I did glow like a tomato when I accidentally called her 'mummy'!

Miss Townsend prepared me with great patience for First Confession and Holy Communion. My abiding memory is that I kept messing up Confession practice, with her acting a very patient priest! I continuously proceeded to say my penance while in the mock confessional instead of outside. After some time, I eventually got it!

I certainly got the then school chaplain, Fr Convery's crash course on the 'Four Last Things' (Death, Judgement, Heaven and Hell) in a P5 class, which has stayed with me ever since! In the same way as having the privilege of serving the Mass that marked the opening of the new school extension, and accompanying Bishop Daly to bless each brand new classroom. I can still hear all of us children singing, 'On this

house your blessing, Lord' as we shared in the joyous excitement of St Conor's growing and expanding for a new era in the life of the school.

Another abiding memory is of Mrs Quinn taking us for classes in cursive handwriting; we with our pencil on paper attempting to write 'the quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog', and pen on knuckles if we didn't get it right! I can only thank Mrs Quinn for instilling in me a love of handwriting that is sadly cast to the past.

I thank Mr O'Kane, Miss Townsend, Mrs Connolly, Mr Maguire and Mr Davies, who each in their own way made an impact on all of us, especially instilling a love of learning and broadening our knowledge and understanding of our faith and the world around us.

That world that we thought modern at the time has certainly changed since those distant days of life in the 80s, when I was at St Conor's. Things were a lot simpler then - not a computer, cell phone or laptop in sight. They were carefree days for us and we were innocent compared to what children face today. Slaps and slips along the way didn't do me any harm. It was all part of toughening up for the different slaps and slips that life outside would bring.

We all travelled different roads and very few of us have actually met each other since. But St Conor's, Culmore shaped the class of '86 and countless other classes for the people we are today. I was proud to hold high the statue of St Conor for the school's Golden Jubilee. And I hold those teachers, past and present, fellow classmates and good memories of those years equally high. St Conor's forevermore!



To “protect the young against the sadness and despair that has crushed too many lives too early”, Bishop Donal urged those gathered for Diocesan Mass for Deceased Young People...

Inspire our young people to have faith, to be able to hope and to believe in love



IN his Gospel reflection on the ‘Parable of the Ten Virgins’ during the Diocesan Mass for Deceased Young People and Children, Bishop Donal told those gathered in St Eugene’s Cathedral that Jesus’ warning to “stay awake, because you do not know either the day or the hour” (Mt 25:13) was for every generation.

He stated: “So many of us experienced years of conflict, when we feared death from bomb and bullet; it is tragic that, in this alleged age of peace, we have become our own worst enemies. We need to encourage our young people to have great plans and dreams. But they also need to learn that none of us is master of how long we live –

and that we have to live responsibly. It is a sobering but honest teaching that we do not know the day nor the hour.”

At the beginning of the ceremony, organised by the Diocesan Youth Ministry team and involving young participants in the Pope John Paul II Award, Bishop Donal received a basket of names of deceased loved ones from two young people, which he placed before the altar for the celebration of Mass.

Welcoming all gathered to “remember with love the children and young people who have died,” he acknowledged the pain of that, especially because of the circumstances in which some died.

“Parents have had to bury not just

their children,” he said, “but their hopes and dreams in the cold earth of the cemetery.”

He stated: “Teach our young people to be great in the present, so that they can face the future and not be crushed by the thought of it. Teach them, despite all the sadness and loss, to gather with others to celebrate our belief that God’s grace is stronger than every sin.

“Inspire our young people to have faith, to be able to hope and to believe in love. That will protect them, more than anything else, against the sadness and despair that has crushed too many lives too early.

“And for those whom we have lost too early, can we let them go in peace and commend them to the mercy of God. And we ask for God’s peace on the broken hearts of those who are here tonight.”

During his homily, the Bishop also referred to phrases used by many religious cultures in placing plans in God’s hands – God willing/please God, before noting that “a secular culture does not see the world through that lens.”

“There is a widespread assumption,” he added, “that

something should happen because I want it to happen – and that I can get annoyed if my plans don’t work out. I am master of my future and God plays no part. I have a right to get what I want. No wonder many get angry.”

“But it is patently obvious from daily reports of accidents and tragedies,” he continued, “that life is fragile, and that tragedy can strike in the twinkling of an eye. We all hear stories, not just of sad accidents and very well publicised deaths, but also of so many people found dead from problems associated with addiction.

Suicide

“There is, rightly, much public concern about the fact that suicide is the biggest single killer of men under 50. But we quietly lose too many whose sad and needless deaths are scarcely mentioned.”

Bishop Donal went on to explain: “Faith is not just a matter of believing that there may be a God somewhere, but living our lives in such a way that shows we believe that here is not as good as it gets. That is not meant to be a sad message. It is one that gives meaning to all that we do and that

calls us to be holy here so that we can enjoy holiness with God hereafter.

“We are not called merely to believe that God exists – or does not exist. The call to faith is also whether we are able to live our lives in the context of eternity, and not just in view of the next party or holiday. The market says enjoy yourself because, other than that, there is nothing. Faith invites us to believe that, if we seek to live with integrity and generosity, we will inherit everything.”

Acknowledging that life is tough for many young people and families, he posed the questions: “How do we offer our young people a positive way of life that will help them have oil for the journey? How do we help to prepare them to be able to thrive despite the pressures on their mental health? How do we help them be wise and have oil for their lamps, even it seems to be night all around?”

“The current message that they are getting,” he went on to note, “is that life is just a bit of a joke. Get as much fun as you can because there is nothing much else. Nothing is really right or wrong as long as you

feel ok about it”

Highlighting that we are all called to greatness despite life being tough, Bishop Donal said: “Jesus says that there is good and bad, that a fresh start is always possible, no matter how badly we have gone wrong. So many of the saints were able to drag themselves out of the mess they found themselves in and escape from the prison of their past. But that journey takes honesty and hard work if they are to combat bad influences.

“However, schools are now being told by many of our own politicians that we must teach the new infallible truth that nothing is true or good or beautiful, that intimacy is pretty much just a bit of fun, that we should just do whatever we feel like – even though that message is deadly for too many young people, even though it is killing their sense of their own dignity and beauty.

“Parents, don’t be afraid to show your children what it means to be great and don’t be afraid to ask your schools to help your children stand for something. Too many are falling for anything, and you know how that affects them and you.”

More special memories made for Anam Og families on Downpatrick day out by Aoife O’Neill



IT is so important for young people to be given opportunities to learn about faith while having fun. Also, families raising young people in faith can often feel lonely and so, as part of the Anam Óg programme, we try to take as many opportunities as possible for families to gather together in fun, faith and friendship.

Through past family days, many of the adults made connections with one another and now can share with one another about raising a family in the faith. The home is the primary place where young people can be grounded and supported in growing in faith; therefore, a vital part of our youth work is aimed at the entire family. Without the family support, it

would be virtually impossible for the work we do with young people to bear fruit.

So, on Sunday, October 22, we enjoyed our most recent family day out with some of the members of Anam Óg and their families. Seventeen of us boarded a minibus early in the morning and we left Derry for Downpatrick. When we arrived, we visited St Patrick’s Church, where Canon John Murray gave us a tour of the beautiful Church building. Stained glass windows and mosaics tell the story of the life of St Patrick, and the young people loved hearing about how God called this young man and how he went on to convert Ireland to Christianity.

In the Church, the young people loved that they had a prayer whiteboard, where people could add their prayer intentions and pray for others’ intentions, and we quickly added Anam Óg to the list. The visit to the Church was finished by Canon John presenting the children with prayer cards and a comic book telling the story of the Saints of Ireland.

From St Patrick’s, we walked the short distance to visit the grave of St Patrick. The young people were fascinated to hear the story

about Down Cathedral and learn some of the differences between Catholic churches and other Christian churches.

Following this, we went to the Church at Saul – the site of the first Church founded by St Patrick. Fr Stephen Quinno, Termonbacca, spoke to the young people there about the paschal flame lit by St Patrick at Slane. He reminded them that that flame has not gone out and about the importance of their role in keeping that flame of faith burning in Ireland.

We stopped for lunch then and quickly bundled back onto the bus and made the journey to Holy Cross Abbey, at Rostrevor. There we joined the community for the singing of the Divine Office. This time of prayer was beautiful. You could have heard a pin drop in the small chapel, as everyone there was totally immersed in the heavenly atmosphere.

When prayer ended, Bro Thierry spent a short time with the group. He spoke about the life of a Benedictine and gave an overview of their typical day. He then spoke to the children about prayer. The young people were interested to hear more on Lectio Divina and Bro Thierry shared his insight with them on how God



speaks to us through His Word. We visited the shop there and saw some beautiful craftsmanship in the hand-made candles and other items the community make.

Once again, we journeyed by bus to our final spot of the day. We went to St John’s Church in Hilltown, Newry for the first profession of vows of Sr Muire Banrion na hEireann into the Servant Sisters of the Lord and the Virgin of Matara. The Mass and ceremony were beautiful and it was a great privilege for the group to be there and witness, for the first time, a young woman dedicate herself to Jesus Christ in spousal love. Some of the young people were excited to see the familiar face of Sr Merciful Love from the community and loved catching up with her.

After Mass, we went along to the GAA Club where a meal and reception was held. The young



people remarked that it was just like a wedding, when we saw the beautifully decorated hall and watched the new Sister cut her cake. Just after the Sisters gathered to sing and kick off the entertainment, we sadly had to leave to begin the long journey home again.

Coming back to Derry, everyone agreed that being able to experience the very often hidden side of life in the Catholic Church

was a fantastic experience, which gave everyone a sense of appreciation for the gift of belonging to the Catholic Church. I know that the memory of this day spent together will be one I will cherish, and I am sure that it will be the same for the young people and their families.

The group is always open to new members and more information can be found by contacting me on 028 71 262512 or emailing termonbaccaderry@gmail.com.

A pilgrimage of thanksgiving and finding peace *by Niamh Kehoe*



Statue of St Francisco



Niamh with Sr Michael, who is from Derry

Banagher Retreat gave Y8s time to catch-up & share stories of new schools *by Charlotte Gormley*

BANAGHER Parish Year 8 Retreat took place on Saturday, November 18. It was a half-day on which all the past P7 children from the local primary schools, who have moved on to secondary school, had the opportunity to gather together for a reunion.

The retreat aimed to be a light hearted and fun time for the Year 8 students to reconnect with old primary school friends, share their

experiences of secondary school so far, and have a chance to reflect.

During their first few months in a new secondary school, they will have experienced new things, made new friends, missed old friends, have had to adapt to 'big school', and lots of other things that come with the transition from primary school to secondary school.

On the Retreat, they had opportunities throughout the

day to spend time being creative, playing games and reflecting on their time in primary school and the first three months they have spent in their new secondary schools.

They loved catching up with old primary school friends who haven't gone to the same secondary school as them. And they enjoyed telling stories of the time they have spent in their new schools so far!



MY parents and I began to think of travelling to Fatima on pilgrimage on March 25, 2022, when Pope Francis consecrated Russia and the whole world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, which was one of many requests of Our Lady of the Rosary. The three of us have travelled to Lourdes many times but we knew we would miss it because, throughout the booking period, my Dad was waiting on cancer treatment. When I saw the advertisement to go to Fatima this year, I mentioned it to my parents immediately and, with the grace of God, they were booked for the pilgrimage soon after.

As I was already to travel to the World Youth Day (WYD) with the Diocese for two weeks that summer, I was pleased that they would also be getting away. However, during the St Thérèse of Lisieux Novena in May, I heard a voice in my head to pray about Fatima. I then had the courage to ask my parents if I could go to Fatima too. Before this, I had been reluctant to ask as it was their trip away. With surprise, my parents were delighted that I was interested. I was put on a waiting list and, after waiting in suspense for a while, I got a place due to extra seats being provided for our group.

Reflecting on this pilgrimage, the three main experiences that stood out for me were, amongst others, Peace, Companionship and Organisation.

Peace

As soon as you get off the bus in Fatima, you immediately sense an aura of peace. As a result of the apparitions being in various locations in the surrounding area, I believe this spread peace throughout Fatima and beyond! These include: Capelinha; Valinhos; Sr Lucia's garden; the bedroom of Francisco; and in the family's parish church.

When we made a visit to the parish church, the tabernacle on the altar was the same one that St Francisco had prayed in front of during his time in Adoration in 1917. He would have spent a lot of time in the church because there was no point in him going to school to learn to read and write, as Our Lady had told the three shepherd children that he and his sister, Jacintha would be taken into Heaven shortly.

I think it very admirable that a boy of that age spent a lot of time in front of the Blessed Sacrament, and obviously trusted and found peace in Our Lady's plans for him and his family. Any time I see statues of Sts

Francisco and Jacintha, I think of the pupils I taught last year and that Our Lady appeared to children who were of that age. I felt very inspired by the lives of the saints on this pilgrimage and hope to try and live my life as they did.

A special connection

There is one apparition that now resonates with me, as I found out that I have a connection with St Francisco. This would be the second of the three apparitions the Angel of Peace made to the three shepherd children at the well at the back of Lucia's home, asking them to "Pray, Pray very much...offer prayers and sacrifices to the Most High".

After telling us that Francisco played the flute, our guide then said, "We have our own Francisco with us". With encouragement, I took out my flute and played 'Ag Criost an Siol'. This was a very special and inspiring moment for me.

Other privileges

On Saturday, October 7, the Feast Day of Our Lady of the Rosary, we had a full day tour to Coimbra. A couple of privileges included playing 'Lady of Knock' in the Carmelite Convent of Sr Lucia, and playing 'Make Me a Channel of Your Peace' in the Monastery of St Anthony of the Olives. I felt Our Lady surrounding me with her love on this feast day. It meant a lot to me that I was playing at the Monastery of St Anthony of the Olives because my Mum had prayed to St Anthony when I was in hospital as a baby. St Anthony is a saint for lost things. On this pilgrimage, I found peace within myself, as I had felt insecure for a while before this pilgrimage, comparing myself to other young people.

Sacrifice and blessings

Our Lady had asked Sr Lucia and her cousins, the three shepherd children, "to make many sacrifices as acts of reparation for the sins of the world, so that sinners may convert and therefore save their souls."

Shortly after the apparitions, when Sr Lucia's mum was ill, Sr Lucia told Our Lady that she and her sisters would make an act of thanksgiving if their mum got better; crawling on their knees from the top of the field to the holm-oak tree for nine consecutive days. The holm-oak tree is the location of where Our Lady appeared. Towards the end of the pilgrimage, a few of us decided to make this same act of thanksgiving, or to offer it up as a sacrifice. Today this route involves travelling 182 meters from the Basilica of the Most Holy Trinity



Niamh's father, Kieron reading at Mass for the first time in 10 years, after having three eye operations

to the Capelinha, and then circle around the Capelinha three times. The Capelinha is the name given to the Chapel of the Apparitions, which is the exact location where the apparitions took place. There were others in our group who stayed down at the Capelinha for support, which was very thoughtful of them. We were blessed with such a wonderful group, who encouraged and supported each other.

Companionship

Our spiritual directors on the pilgrimage, Fr Seán O'Donnell and Fr Malachy Gallagher were inclusive. They made sure everyone was involved in the Liturgy and the Stations of the Cross. They had time for everyone. They sat with a different group of people at each meal, spoke with pilgrims regarding any questions they had on biblical studies, and they even treated us to an ice-cream or coffee after our last pilgrimage group Mass.

Organisation

On our bus route from Derry to the airport, Fr Seán gave us out a booklet with our Itinerary. I thought this was very inclusive to share this with us especially in paper form because, although I am a young adult who is used to technology, some of us still prefer the traditional paper format for many reasons; accessibility and inclusiveness to mention a few. We also had yellow scarfs for identification in the off-chance that someone got lost, or if a few pilgrims were meeting up later, they could identify the group easier seeing the yellow scarfs.

This point brings me to a quote by Tony Dungy: "A good leadership is all about making the lives of the team members or workers better". In this case, making the pilgrims feel at ease and this is what our leaders did so well.

Final note

I would recommend to anyone who has not been to Fatima to go there on pilgrimage and see the many prominent sites associated with Our Lady's apparitions to the three shepherd children.

Lisbon WYD pilgrims enjoy reunion in Termonbacca



THIS month we welcome some new writers to the team: Niamh Sharkey, a Year 13 pupil at Lumen Christi College, who lives in the Craighane area of Claudy Parish; Erin Whoriskey, a Year 12 pupil at Thornhill College, who lives in Derry City; Luke Doherty, in Transition Year at Merville Community College, who lives in Merville; and Cadhla Shivers, a Year 13 pupil at St Colm's, Draperstown, who lives in the Ballinascreen Parish.

Reflecting on a St Pio quote, Erin shares how a crisis in her life helped her to grow in her faith, while Niamh writes about the importance of prayer, and Luke comments on stewardship in the modern day.

As we draw towards the end of the Liturgical Year, John reflects on this period as a time of reflection, a time to dedicate ourselves to God, while Bronagh writes about the month of November being an important time when we especially remember and pray for dearly departed, and Shea shares a special experience during his involvement in a Eucharistic Procession and All Saints Party in Galliagh, in the lead up to Halloween.

Impacted on reading a message delivered by Pope John Paul II at World Youth Day in Madrid, James writes about how young people are called to be builders of a better world, and Seán reflects on how we are called to not worry about our lives, but to trust the Lord to take care of us.



Hollie Frystal, Co Tyrone Deanery. Bronagh Doherty, Co Derry Deanery. Peter Grant, Inishowen Deanery. John Augustine Joseph, Derry City Deanery. James Tourish, Derry City Deanery. Erin Whoriskey, Derry City Deanery.



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

Galliagh blessed with Eucharistic Walk in lead up to Halloween

by Shea



THIS month I will be sharing about the Eucharistic processional walk that happened from the area of the White Chapel, in Galliagh, on Saturday,

October 28.

To start off the day, we had Mass as usual, and afterwards we got ready for the walk. A couple of my friends and I had

Young people...the builders of a better world

by James

IN these current times, filled with difficulty and hardship throughout the world, but particularly in the Holy Land, some may begin to accept prejudice, bitterness and perhaps even hatred, as feelings that can be justified and tolerated in regard to the violence. We see thousands die on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and our innate response can be to instantly take a side, dig our heels in and seek no compromise or willingness to learn. However, in my article this month, I would like to share an excerpt from a speech I came across that St Pope John Paul II gave to young people in Madrid, 2003...

"Beloved young people, you know well how concerned I am for peace in the world. The spiral of violence, terrorism and war still causes hatred and death, even in our day. Peace, as we know, is first of all a gift from on High for which we must constantly ask and which, furthermore, we must all build together by means of a profound inner conversion. Consequently, today I want to exhort you to work to build peace and be artisans of peace. Respond to blind violence and inhuman hatred with the fascinating power of love. Overcome enmity with the force of forgiveness. Keep far away from any form of exasperated nationalism, racism and intolerance.

Witness with your life that ideas are not imposed but proposed. Never let yourselves be discouraged by evil! For this you will need the help of prayer and the consolation that is born from an intimate friendship with Christ. Only in this way, living the experience of God's love and radiating Gospel fellowship, will you be able to be the builders of a better world, genuine peaceful and peacemaking men and women."

Of course, in 2003, the Middle East was no stranger to war, with the Iraq War raging on in full force; it would cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of people.

There are many parallels that can be drawn from Pope John Paul II's speech to reflect on the modern state of the world, partly due to the unfortunate reality

to hold candles for Fr Francesco, of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, who was holding the monstrance.

Others were holding a statue of Our Lady, and some people were holding a canopy over the Monstrance.

This was a great start because it was a chance for people to serve their church in such a special way

that violence will always exist on this planet until Christ's return. Nonetheless, I'd like to delve into some of the issues and topics that the Pope alluded to and raised in his speech, and apply it to a modern context, to truly see what we can learn and take from it to help our grasp of what is necessary for us to do to prevent conflict, promote peace, and to seek justice for all who suffer tragedy.

In the Papal Speech, we are called to 'build peace and be artisans of peace', and as anyone knows, building is a long and arduous process. In our daily lives, it does not mean to put on a full suit of armour, buy the sharpest sword you can find and ride a horse like a 14th century crusader to protect our local communities. But rather, we must examine the things we do every day, however small they may seem, because over spans of years and even decades, the little things we do every day add up, and so these things are truly the ones we want to get right.

This concept fits in rather nicely with the parable that our Lord Christ gave during the Sermon on the Mount, as it reads: "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. 26 And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it." (Matthew 7:24-27)

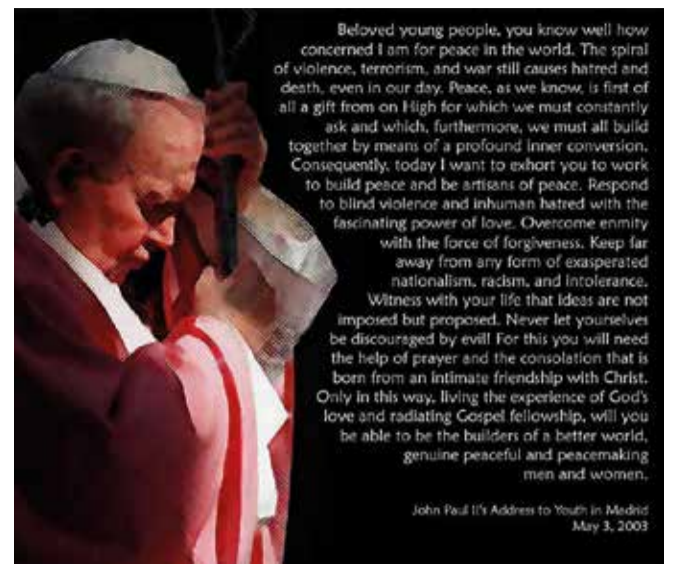
Strong foundations

We must build our lives on strong foundations, the ways we talk with each other, viewing each other as fellow human beings instead of ideological enemies or 'weird' if they hold interests dissimilar to our own. We should always make an effort to understand, to learn and to cooperate with each other, making the effort to see the similarities between us

and, ultimately, serve the Lord, which is always great!

The purpose of the walk was to bless the community as Halloween approached. We all know that this can be a particularly strange time of year, especially here in Derry, where it's celebrated so massively.

At the beginning of the walk, we stopped at a mural for a girl



Beloved young people, you know well how concerned I am for peace in the world. The spiral of violence, terrorism, and war still causes hatred and death, even in our day. Peace, as we know, is first of all a gift from on High for which we must constantly ask and which, furthermore, we must all build together by means of a profound inner conversion. Consequently, today I want to exhort you to work to build peace and be artisans of peace. Respond to blind violence and inhuman hatred with the fascinating power of love. Overcome enmity with the force of forgiveness. Keep far away from any form of exasperated nationalism, racism, and intolerance. Witness with your life that ideas are not imposed but proposed. Never let yourselves be discouraged by evil! For this you will need the help of prayer and the consolation that is born from an intimate friendship with Christ. Only in this way, living the experience of God's love and radiating Gospel fellowship, will you be able to be the builders of a better world, genuine peaceful and peacemaking men and women.

John Paul II's Address to Youth in Madrid, May 3, 2003

and others, before we consider the differences, with all of this being possible through our love of Christ, our adherence to God's commandments and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

It's too easy to think of ourselves as the missing jigsaw piece of the puzzle, that if allowed to be fit into our place everything would be perfect and we would solve everything, but we should be humble. How could one dream to solve the conflict in the Middle East, where thousands of people are dying and the use of nuclear arms is being threatened, when they can't even make their own bed or organise their room.

Start from the bottom, build up and, with experience and pure determination, let the greatness and peace in your life be so great that it transpires to new levels that helps others do the same, and over time, there will be true and positive differences made.

Pope St John Paul II also tells us to "Respond to blind violence and inhuman hatred with the fascinating power of love", and to "Overcome enmity with the force of forgiveness". The teachings of love and forgiveness from Christ were true 2,000 years ago, for the 2,000 years since and for all of eternity. The fundamental basis of Christianity is love and forgiveness, the ability to act contrary to our intrinsic sinful desires to be harsh and abrasive is a symbol of strength, not weakness. 'An eye for an eye, makes the world go blind'.

Live out the virtues that Christ left with us, and the results can be so infinitely great that comprehension of them is totally unimaginable.

"Never let yourselves be discouraged by evil!" While atheists and sceptics may see the existence of evil as an argument against God's existence, we, as Catholics, should see it as a

challenge. Will we allow the sacrifices of our fallen martyrs of the past to be in vain, will we be complicit in the fight against evil and sin in our world, or will we remember the beatitudes and all of Christ's teachings, not advising us, but commanding us to do good, to be steadfast in our intolerance to sin and to truly love our neighbour as we do ourself.

We, in our lives, particularly amongst the youth, may be mocked, insulted and, in extreme instances, persecuted for our actions in defending the teachings of Christ and living them out in our daily lives. However, we should never forget the words of Christ Himself: "If the world hates you, just remember that it has hated me first. 19 If you belonged to the world, then the world would love you as its own. But I chose you from this world, and you do not belong to it; that is why the world hates you."

Finally, St Pope John Paul II would say "living the experience of God's love and radiating Gospel fellowship, will you be able to be the builders of a better world, genuine peaceful and peacemaking men and women".

It is through our belief in Christ, living our life according to His will, and our persistent perseverance to do what is right, will we ever achieve a better world for all, with greater opportunities for prosperity and peace. Things are not guaranteed to become better when we commit ourselves more to Christ and His teachings, there will always be times that are difficult, and it may seem drastically unlikely that changes in our own lives will cause major change in this world, but with all that being said, I shall end with this verse from the Bible for faith, for belief and for hope - Jesus replied, "What is impossible with man is possible with God" (Luke 18:27).

After the walk, we returned to St Josep's Chapel, where we had Adoration for a while. Then the Blessed Sacrament was reposed.

Following this, there was an All Saints' party thrown in St Pio House, where served fantastic food was served. The party was a lot of fun, and I got to speak to lots of great people, overall having a good time.

named Caitlin, who had passed away a few months previously. We paused there, and Fr Antonio blessed the mural with Holy salt. We also said some prayers before continuing on procession.

Throughout the walk, there was continuous prayer. We started with the Rosary, but some other prayers were said as well. People also sang, which was really fun.

The crisis that made me grow by Erin

St Pio of Pietrelcina: "Blessed is the crisis that made you grow, the fall that made you gaze up to Heaven, the problem that made you look for God!"

I am writing about what this quote means to me, and what I believe is the crisis that made me grow.

From 2019 until 2022, I was in a group of friends in my secondary school. I felt pretty comfortable and secure in this group of girls, and they were my closest friends throughout these years. In our third year of school, the group began to have more conflicts, judgement, and negative comments. Eventually, after around three-and-a-half years of having these girls as my closest friends, I became excluded and targeted by them. They began to bully me. At the time I didn't know it, but this would bring me so much closer to God.

I realised that our friendship group had changed and become a negative influence in my life. Due to social media and more new friends, we became a circle of girls who tried to keep ourselves separate from our peers. We did

what we could to stand out; we really wanted to be different. I was a follower; I did what I could to fit in with my friends. I denied my faith for years with these people.

I knew that I would never be accepted or understood by them, and as a 12-year-old girl I was going by what society told me I should think. This meant that I didn't want to try and learn more about my faith, I didn't want to be closer to God. This caused me to spiral into an identity crisis and mental health struggles.

When I was excluded and pushed out of this group, I felt like my whole world had fallen apart. I can't even explain how much this affected me emotionally. I had told these people everything for years. My best friends had turned on me and I was really struggling. Not only did I miss them, but my school environment was so negative that I began staying off every day. When I did go to school, I usually went home early. I could no longer enjoy social media as they used that to mock and attack me. My mental health was so bad at this time that I rarely even left my house.

It was around this time when my youth worker invited me to Camp Veritas. As I wasn't on the best terms with my faith, one benefit was getting the last week off school, meaning I could avoid the bullying. I also wanted to spend more time with the small number of friends I still had. I was really nervous leading up to it, but also excited as I knew some people who had already been, and I had some other friends who hadn't been before.

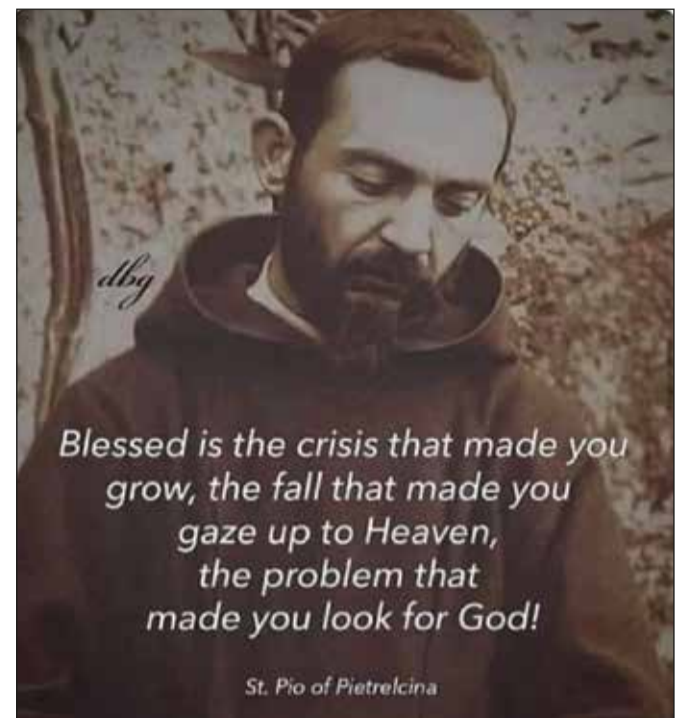
This week was full of Adoration, prayer, a healing service and other faith experiences, along with other fun things like sport and a talent show. I believe my week at Camp Veritas truly reawakened me to my faith and helped me rekindle my relationship with God. It mainly helped me to see that there are people my age who share my faith, which reassured me and helped me feel so much more comfortable. I met some of the most amazing people ever.

This was such a special week, and I really connected with others, including the people I had come with. I was so happy that there was a group of people my age

from Derry who shared my faith. I would never have gone to Camp Veritas if I had still been in my old group of friends, I wouldn't have even thought about it.

That summer, my mental health slowly went uphill. I made true friends and got to really explore my faith with them. There were so many faith opportunities that year for people my age in Derry. For example, the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal started a Youth Mass, which helped remind me that there are always people out there who will accept me and my faith and share it with me. We have a small faith group called the 77, who really uplift me every week and I greatly enjoy the Lectio Divina. I don't think there has been one week that I have left this group without feeling like I had learned something new about my faith, or had a new outlook on a piece of Scripture.

Since that week at Veritas, and especially leaving that group of friends, my relationship with God has continued to strengthen. I really believe it made me the best version of myself to get out of that situation. I no longer tell myself



St. Pio of Pietrelcina

that my identity is entirely my choice; I know that it comes from God. I don't feel the need to be different, and I don't need to be judgemental to other girls. I just try to love everyone around me as best I can and pray for my own insecurities.

I really believe that losing that group of friends was, as said by Padre Pio, the crisis that made me

grow, the fall that made me gaze up to Heaven, and the problem that brought me closer to God. I am not ashamed about my faith and I do not doubt anymore. I will not change myself because of others, and I really am so grateful for all of my new amazing and faithful friends, who I get to experience my faith journey with.

Do not worry about your life by Seán



THE rhythm of our life is unstable and constantly shifting, and not always to our will or preferred path. That is why every person requires a plan, a firm aim to work towards. Not every turn that our life is going is going to take is unavoidable, and it won't always be a beneficial thing, so that is why we require a picture in our minds to always return to when we are diverted. Jesus knew His eventual fate at the hands of the Romans for His teachings being contradictory to that of Judaism.

To emphasize the shifting, unstable rhythm of life, I must admit that in the 16 years that I have lived thus far, I have been diverted many times from my goal and have had to find my way back to my original road. Not every turn is unavoidable, but we can learn to deal with it.

The course of our life is not

something that we should spend our life worrying about. Yes, we should plan for the future, but while worrying about our life it passes by before our eyes, and we may have only dented the surface of our plans.

The turns in my own life can come in the form of events and through people and their ideals. The opposition can come in the form of faith and just normal life choices. For example, in today's secular society, I had to adapt to express my faith in a way that would not offend others. I cannot allow myself to overly worry about the course of my life, because then it will be wasted.

We only have one chance here on earth and we should use it for a more righteous cause than thinking about how it can go wrong. It is put exceptionally clearly in Matthew 6:25-27: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?"

What Matthew describes is the worthlessness of worrying your life away. Creatures as simple as 'birds of the air' are taken care of by God, they are provided with what they need to survive. Matthew continues to say that humans are God's favourite creation, because He made us in

His 'image and likeness'. We are described as 'much more valuable than they', so we have no need to worry about how our life will play out, we have God to look over us. We are provided with advice if we bother to look for it, like how the birds are provided with the food that they need to survive.

I personally feel well gifted by God, provided for like He provides for the birds in Matthew's analogy. I was given an excellent family, a great home, a small group of friends – all that I need at this early stage of my life to develop without too much worry. But in the areas of my life where I have worried, I have come to identify the uselessness of over worrying – it will not solve the issue.

We are provided with subtle advice if we need it, thorough advice if we are blessed with it, and the ability to plan through structured thought. This I have discovered through choices about my own future. Five years ago, when I was eleven years old, I never would have guessed the stage that I would be at now, more confident in myself and less anxious about what I will do with my life.

Composure

About having a plan, in life we will encounter many things that we both like and do not like. But what matters is how we respond to them. As Christians, it is vital to maintain composure in the face of great sin, knowing that people who are lost may not be brought into the light, but will see their wrong eventually. I see many

things in the world that are far from being beneficial, but there is nothing that I can do to stop them – what can an ordinary person do about conflicts in the world and divides in society? For me it is unsatisfactory to view such a divided world, but it something that has always been, and I have to accept it and reject the worry that can land on your shoulders if you allow it to.

Not even the most notable and powerful people throughout history could ever truly achieve their aim, for example, many extremist ideologies still exist today. Many went quite far along the way to try and unite people in appreciation for each other, like Jesus intends for us. We are to 'love our neighbour.' But a human can never truly complete something. I've found that there will always be someone that opposes the right and kind way to life. But we can change how we react to them; it's something that I've learned to do.

It is a pity, however, that many will see their wrong when it is too late, and they face a judgement that is far mightier than that of an angry humanity. In Psalm 37:5-9, it says: "Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him and He will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun. Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him, do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret – it leads only to evil. For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land."

It is harsh to accept, but those

who renounce the Lord or use Him as a cover to commit evil are hard to turn around. It is possible, but they will be judged eventually if they failed to see their wrong on earth. Know in our mind who is wrong, but do not make it a priority to judge them.

In our lives, we will meet many blockades and turns in the road, and our road might change. What matters is that we don't spend our life solely and entirely worrying about our future and the affairs of others, however bad they are.

Change is inevitable, but if it contradicts the way that Jesus died so that we could live with hope, we must reject it. We must always have that picture to aim towards when the changes in the world divert us away from it.

I hope that over the course of my life I will continue to remember the words of Matthew, and consult them in times when I must make a decision in the unpredictable, and uncertain up and downs that life will offer me.



The importance of prayer *by Niamh*

IT is important for our well-being that we develop connections and communicate with other people. We can do this in a variety of ways, for example, by talking to them and spending time with them. If you spend quality time with a person this can help you become more comfortable in their presence, and can lead to a better understanding of them.

This is similar to how we should approach a relationship with God. If we wish to really know God and feel at peace in His presence, then it is imperative that we spend time with Him.

There are a variety of ways that a young person can develop a closer connection with God, for example, prayer, meditation and receiving the Eucharist at Mass.

Mother Teresa, in the book 'Love: A Fruit Always in Season', says: "Prayer will give you a clean heart, and a clean heart will be able to see God." She is telling us that through our prayers we will become pure in heart, and it is in this state that we will be more able to see God.

Mother Teresa finishes this quote with: "And if you see God in each other, you will love one another." This tells us that by praying we open our hearts to God and to the belief that He dwells in each of us. This will, hopefully, lead us to become more empathetic to others, after all, the same God dwells in us all.

Through prayer, we humble ourselves before God and we offer ourselves to God in exchange for

God's guidance and comfort. The more we seek out God's guidance, the easier it is to recognise His words and message in the world around us.

Jesus told His disciples: "Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us" (Luke 11:4, NIV). Through our prayers, like the Our Father, we reinforce and repeat God's teachings.

St Maximilian Kolbe said "prayer is the most effective way to re-establish peace in our souls because it allows us to get ever closer to God's love."

As Christians, our main aim is to become closer to God, and there are many forms of prayer. A personal favourite of mine is The Rosary. The purpose of Rosary beads is not only just to keep

count of how many prayers you have said, but to focus on what you are actually saying to God. Rosary beads are a treasured symbol of the Catholic faith, and the Rosary beads that I received from Medjugorje are the most treasured gift that I have ever received.

Throughout time, the leaders of our Church have clearly expressed the importance of the Rosary. Pope Benedict XVI prayed the Rosary every day, and Pope Francis prays the Rosary and visits the image of Mary before travelling. Pope Pius XI is quoted as saying: "The Rosary is a powerful weapon to put the demons to flight."

I feel that describing the Rosary as a weapon shows us just how



powerful it can be in our lives, because the Rosary beads are not what you would usually imagine when you think of a weapon, yet Pope Pius XI deemed them just as powerful as any sword.

As a young person of faith, I feel that prayer is an important aspect

of my daily life. Prayer provides me with strength and comfort, and I firmly believe that young people, in today's increasingly secular world, would benefit immensely from including prayer in their daily routine.



Syro Malabar Qurbana – Corpus Christi Maiden Lane; London. Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/catholicism/52148717178>

Let us dedicate ourselves to God *by John*

AS we draw nearer to the end of the year, many of us may contemplate what we could have done differently to what we did this year. Perhaps, it could be a time to reflect on future decisions, and maybe on any new changes made at the start of the year that we are finally getting adjusted to.

In the East Syriac tradition, this time of the year would be the season of the Dedication of the Church (Qudash-Etha). This four-week season is the final season of the liturgical year, before the Season of the Annunciation, and it begins with the Feast of the Dedication of the Church.

The imagery that is often used to describe this season relates to the marriage of Christ to the Church, the bride. Therefore, it is said that Christ the bridegroom leads his bride, the Church, to the heavenly bride chamber and offers her to the Father, thus giving her the fullness of the heavenly bliss.

Ultimately, this season is a time of reflection for the Church as a whole and after this reflection to submit and consecrate itself in an analogical sense to God (which She already is).

Through this season, the faithful are also reminded of their own personal consecration to God and that the reason they are in the world is the same as the reason for the establishment of the church, that is, to witness Christ to the world.

The seasons of the church are there to help us to understand how Christ "emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant... became a complete man... subjected Himself to the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law" (Anaphora of Mar Addai and Mari). They remind us of the unending grace that He bestows upon us and how we all are called to

"commend ourselves and one another, and our whole life to Christ our God" (Byzantine Liturgy).

Stewardship in the Modern Day *by Luke*

STEWARDSHIP is a concept primarily rooted in the Old Testament of the Bible that I feel is particularly important to consider in the modern day. Stewardship is the belief that it is our duty as Christians to care for the Earth and everything in it, as it was created by God and is, therefore, holy.

Stewardship comes from the knowledge that everything created by God is ultimately His property, not ours. We do not own this planet, God graciously allows us to use it as we will, but that does not mean that it is ours.

This can be seen in numerous quotes from the Bible, but I feel that Leviticus 25:23 explains it well: "The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants." We, as Christians, can be seen as tenants, and it is our responsibility not to destroy the home that we are being allowed to live in.

Stewardship is becoming more and more prevalent as we find ourselves in a worsening climate crisis. In the modern day, stewardship is often inseparable from environmentalism. Pollution, deforestation and the extinction of numerous species are just some of the ways that humans are showing a lack of respect for God's miraculous creation. As we exploit natural resources, taking for granted that there will always be more, we forget that this world is a miracle and that it should be treated as such.

Causing untold destruction to His creation, frequently in the name of wealth, could be seen as precisely what Matthew 6:24 warns us about: "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money." By destroying the Earth that He

created in the pursuit of a false idol, we are scorning everything that God has done for us.

Environmentalism is something that is linked to religion, as I hope the above demonstrates. We can also see this in the actions of Pope Francis, who has spoken on the topic of climate change and the responsibility of Christians to help tackle this issue at length. For example, he plans to attend the UN Climate Change Conference at the end of November. In addition, the second of the Pope's encyclicals, titled "Laudato Si'" has a heavy focus on protecting what he refers to as "our common home".

Climate change is a matter that affects everyone, and it is a problem that everyone needs to help solve, however, as Christians, our faith is another clear reason why we must care for this planet.

Pope Francis has many moving quotes on this topic, but one of my favourites is the following: "A



Christian who doesn't safeguard creation, who doesn't make it flourish, is a Christian who isn't concerned with God's work, that work born of God's love for us." (https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/cotidie/2015/documents/papa-francesco-cotidie_20150209_working-with-god.html Paragraph 6, third and fourth line.)

Remembering the Dead in November *by Bronagh*

NOVEMBER 2 is celebrated annually as 'All Souls Day', a day to remember our faithful departed. This comes directly after 'All Saint's Day', celebrated on November 1; two celebrations in the church's calendar.

All Souls Day has been observed on this day since the 11th century, established by Abbot Odilo, who was the Benedictine Abbot of Cluny, France, for 54 years before his death (Aletia, 2019).

People are encouraged to attend Mass on these days, to celebrate the saints in the Church, and people in our families and lives that have gone before us.

On All Souls Day, families remember their loved ones in Heaven and pray a prayer of eternal rest to them, "Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace. Amen. Dear God of Mercy, I

pray this day for all souls, both known and unknown to me, who, although touched by death, have not yet entered Your Heavenly Kingdom".

It brings comfort to people grieving the loss of a loved one that All Souls' Day is a reminder that death is not the end. As Christians, we believe that eternal life and our earthly death is just the beginning of an eternal journey (Phil Star, Nov 2023).

All Saints Day, a feast day since the seventh century, was declared by Pope Boniface IV. Although now celebrated on November 1, it hasn't always been. It was originally thought to be celebrated on May 13, when Pope Boniface IV dedicated the Pantheon in Rome as a church in honour of the Virgin Mary and all other martyrs (CNN, 2021).

All Saints' Day is a day to honour all saints of the Church



in Heaven and celebrate the life, death, and strong faith of martyrs and saints, especially those who do not have a designated feast day in the Roman Catholic calendar (Federal Land 2018). All Saints' Day is a holy day of obligation, a day when Catholics are urged to attend Mass.

November is a busy month in the liturgical calendar, beginning

with All Saints and All Souls, including the dedication to St Peter and Paul on the 18th, and finishing on November 30 with the Feast of St Andrew.

November is often marked as the end of the Liturgical Year, and the build-up to the season of Advent. The first Sunday in Advent marks the beginning of a new Liturgical Year.

Celebrating Cathedral's 150th anniversary in San Giovanni and Rome *by Anne Marie Hickey*

ON September 25, 51 people gathered in Dublin Airport to travel together on pilgrimage to San Giovanni and Rome to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of St Eugene's Cathedral. The pilgrimage was lead by Bishop Donal and Fr Paul Farren, Adm.

Arriving in Naples Airport, we met the tour guide from Marian Pilgrimages, Alberto, who travelled with us by coach along the beautiful Italian countryside to Pietrelcina, the birthplace of Padre Pio. We learned about the early years of Francesco Forgione and visited his family home.

Our Opening Mass was celebrated by Fr Paul in the Church of the Holy Family in Piana Romana. From there we drove east, arriving in San Giovanni Rotondo, home to Padre Pio for over 50 years.

On Day 2 of our pilgrimage, we began with Mass in the Church of Our Lady of Grace, where Padre Pio had celebrated Mass many times and heard Confessions also. We had the wonderful opportunity of receiving a blessing with the glove and crucifix used by the Capuchin Friar. We visited the cell where he lived and died, and were taken through the museum that has a lot of information and photos depicting his life. It felt very humbling to experience it all.

Our day finished in the Church of St Pio of Pietrelcina, where we had time for private prayer before the remains of the great Saint. It was such a blessing to be there and pray at this sacred place.

On the third day of our pilgrimage we drove to the town of Monte Sant'Angelo, where we heard of the apparitions of St Michael the Archangel. Fr Paul celebrated Mass at the Church of St Michael the Archangel and, in the afternoon, we walked the Way of the Cross back in San Giovanni Rotondo.

On the fourth day, early in the morning we left San Giovanni Rotondo and drove to Manoppello, where we visited the Basilica of the Holy Face. We venerated the relic, 'The Cloth of Manoppello - Santo Sudarium' - which is carefully preserved above the altar. After this precious time, we continued our journey to Rome.

On the fifth day of our pilgrimage we celebrated Mass at dawn in St Peter's Basilica, in the Chapel of Our Lady - Queen of the Hungarians, in the Vatican Grottos. Bishop Donal celebrated Mass in this intimate setting and, afterwards, we were given a tour of St Peter's Basilica, where we prayed before the tomb of St John Paul II and St John XXIII, and saw the amazing work of Michelangelo, The Pietà.

The morning was so special for the entire group, some of whom had never been to Rome or visited these special places. It was unforgettable.

In the afternoon, we visited the Basilica of St John Lateran, 'Mother Church of all Churches' and seat of the Bishop of Rome, Pope Francis. We visited the Pontifical Sanctuary of the Holy



Stairs, which houses the Sancta Sanctorum, recognised at the first private Papal chapel. The Sanctuary gets its name from the 28 marble steps of the Holy Stairs, which, according to an ancient Christian tradition, St Helena, mother of Constantine, had transported from Pontius Pilate's palace in Jerusalem to Rome and are believed to be the stairs that Jesus climbed the day He was sentenced to death.

On the final day, our Closing Mass was celebrated by Bishop Donal in Chiesa Sant'Agnese in Agone, Piazza Navona. After Mass, we walked the ancient, cobbled streets of Rome and enjoyed free time together, sampling, of course, the fine cuisine and gelato! It was a beautiful way to celebrate together as a parish and a Diocese.

There were many parishes represented on our pilgrimage, not just St Eugene's Cathedral, but as far as Clonmany and right up to Ballinascreen, from Drumquin through Strabane, and not forgetting Dungiven too. And we had the joy of celebrating the birthday of pilgrim, Jim Barr, who travelled with his two daughters, Fiona and Margaret.

It was a wonderful group of people who I enjoyed spending the week with, praying, learning, laughing and, of course, singing along with. We formed a pilgrim choir and made sure our Irish music and hymns were sung in the various Churches. We brought a little bit of Ireland to beautiful Italy. It was an enjoyable and fruitful time for us all and we thank God for the experience.

St Pio of Pietrelcina pray for us.



Very successful 'Life in the Spirit' seminars another step in... Steelstown building community in helping people recognise their gifts

OUR Lady of Lourdes Church in Steelstown was the setting for a very successful series of 'Life in the Spirit' seminars led by the Columba Community.

Organised by the Parish Pastoral Council, the five-week programme ran on Wednesday nights from September 20 through to October 18, and attracted 50-60 people each week, with some from the Steelstown and Culmore areas, and others from various surrounding parishes.

Delighted with the response, Parish Priest, Fr John McDevitt PP admitted he had been taken aback that so many had turned up in the first place, never mind returning each week, and he paid tribute to the hard working and creative members of the Parish Pastoral Council.

"This is all the work of our Pastoral Council," he stressed, "who have been planning, leading and implementing events such as these Life in the Spirit seminars, and this is what needs to be happening in our parishes."

Fr John also had great praise for the Columba Community in leading the seminars, saying: "The Columba Community is a lay community and is an important model to have in our

Diocese of lay people taking responsibility, praying together and building up community. Many people are beginning to take on responsibilities in parishes. Our Pastoral Council is instrumental in that here, through their work, views and leadership, and I am very happy to support them in that."

Saying that the Life in the Spirit seminars had been "magnificent", he added: "Those who attended really benefitted. There was a great energy and sense of community."

Chair of the Parish Pastoral Council, Marian Gallen remarked that they had been overwhelmed by the response to the seminars: "It was so rewarding to see so many people, from not only the Steelstown and Culmore Parish but from further afield, avail of this programme. From feedback, we found that many were grateful to have had the opportunity to do the 'Life in The Spirit' course, and saw it almost like a mini-retreat."

"They found it a deeply spiritual experience because it was good to revisit the Sacrament of Confirmation and re-acquaint themselves with the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit, which we were all given at Confirmation. We

all need to avail of the different sources of strengths we possess to get us through life's emotional, spiritual and physical challenges. "In today's Church, the need for more active parishioner involvement should be prominent in all our minds," added Marian, "so this series was an opportunity for us to look at what gifts we could use to become more committed parishioners on a very basic simple level."

Full of praise for the Columba Community, she said: "The seminars and the way they were led by the Columba Community were exceptional; they were just so good that I think every parish should be encouraged to avail of this resource."

"In our Diocese, we are truly blessed to have both the Columba Community and Thornhill Ministries, to name just a few, that we can avail of."

A member of the Parish Pastoral Council for many years, and now Chairperson, Marian went on to comment on some of the work that it does in the Parish, saying: "Every six weeks we try to present a seminar or programme by the laity for the laity, such as the 'Life in the Spirit' seminars, and the series of Stories of Hope that we ran during Lent."

"During November, we had a talk on Loss and Grief, which was an evening of reflection and conversation with Dr Anne Tracey and Marjorie Keenan. Their presentations were of a spiritual, reassuring, and curative nature. We talked about the struggles we all have in talking about grief and how to approach others who are grieving."

"The road of grief is walked alone because that is how it is, it is our journey, but we can ease that pain by talking about our feelings and we can all learn to become better listeners. It is good to talk and it is real good to listen."

Marian paid tribute to the very strong and effective Steelstown/Culmore ECO Group, which works hand-in-hand with the Pastoral Council in all that it does, and welcomed the recent appointment of Stephen Deighan as Youth Ministry Coordinator, to help reach out to the young people of the area and address their needs.

She added: "I am so fortunate to have such a dedicated, enthusiastic team of fellow members on the Pastoral Council, to whom I am indebted, and it's a privilege and a pleasure to work alongside Fr John."



The Parish of St Patrick's Glen, Maghera reflection on...

The Seven Joys of Mary by Julie Zeoli

WITH reflection, sharing and following the booklets given to us on the Seven Joys of Mary, on October 30 our prayer group gathered for our final meeting in this series, with consideration of the Church's understanding of Our Lady's Assumption and Coronation as Queen of Heaven.

This included a sharing of the praise, devotion and love we owe to Our Lady due to her faith, courage, trust and complete self-giving to the will of God, and a humble consideration of the joy of her Assumption and Coronation.

We were also drawn to renew our faith in the promise of our own resurrection, assured for us by her beloved Son's victory over sin and death as He died on the Cross for us.

At the end of the meeting, we gathered out thoughts together by listening to a musical rendition of Schubert's 'Ave Maria'.

Our series of meetings have been a prime example of the active power of The Communion

of Saints, the doctrine of faith in the Apostles Creed, which highlights the union of love and understanding which faith here on earth brings to those who share that faith, but also emphasises the union between ourselves and the saints in Heaven, whose example inspires us and whose prayers strengthen and support us.

Last but not least, we remembered our desire and call to pray for the beloved Souls in Purgatory - all of this was very appropriate as we approached the feasts of All Saints and All Souls on November 1 and 2.

We thank God and Our Lady (and all those in the Diocese of Down and Connor who prepared the booklets!) for the opportunity to have shared these prayer meetings.

The accompanying photograph, taken after our final prayer meeting, shows those who took part along with our beloved priest and pastor, Fr Paddy Doherty.



Great response to Limavady viewing of 'The Chosen'

LIMAVADY parishioners have been enjoying gathering together in Bethany Community Centre to watch the highly-rated, multi-season series, 'The Chosen'.

Having finished watching the first series, which is based on the life and ministry of Jesus in Galilee, they are looking forward to watching the second series in

the New Year. Mgr Bryan McCanny PP has been enjoying watching it too and commented: "All the reactions of people are very positive and encouraging."

Everyone is welcome to sit down with a cuppa and the evening closes with some discussion and a final prayer.



Limavady parishioners enjoying watching 'The Chosen' together

Coleraine Taize prayer



St John's Choir members who sang the chants for the recent Taize evening of prayer.



Joined by thousands in Cathedral Holy Hour for Peace, Bishop Donal remarked... Grace is stronger than sin and angry hearts can be turned to paths of peace

THE Holy Hour for Peace led by Bishop Donal in St Eugene's Cathedral on Monday, November 20, was a potent time of prayer and reflection for the many who filled the pews of the Mother Church of the Diocese and the 3,000 who joined in on-line.

Bishop Donal was joined by Fr Paul Farren and Fr Shaun Doherty for the ceremony, during which the Blessed Sacrament was

exposed, the Rosary was prayed and Scriptures read and reflected on, finishing with Benediction and Night Prayer of the Church. And all was enhanced by the beautiful singing of Anne Marie Hickey.

Speaking to 'The Net' afterwards, Bishop Donal remarked that it had been "most encouraging to see so many people of all ages gathered in the

Cathedral for an Hour of Prayer and Scriptures read and reflected on.

He added: "War and conflict have constantly scarred the face of the world. Sometimes on television, we can see the brutality in all its horror. Very often, thousands die in unreported battles.

"People of faith still want to gather with Mary at the foot of the Cross, feeling helpless as violence

seems to have the upper hand. But we also know that grace is stronger than sin and that angry hearts can be turned to paths of peace."

"Church is at its best," he concluded, "when we pray for peace, protest against injustice and support those who help the injured and the little ones."



Some on-line feedback...

I feel blessed taking part in this beautiful hour of prayer from Glasgow.

Thank you Bishop Donal and Father's for a beautiful and emotional Peace Service and Reflection .Thank you Ann Marie for beautiful singing Sacred Heart of Jesus I place all my trust in you Amen



Fr Daniel McFaul reflects on newly installed relics in Creggan Divine Mercy Chapel... St John Paul II & St Faustina... disciples of Divine Mercy message



Buncrana Novena throwing open the doors to Christ!

THROWING Open the Doors to Christ, the nine-Sunday Novena underway in the Parish of Buncrana is being warmly welcomed as a time of beautiful prayer and inspiring talks.

In honour of Pope St John Paul II for a renewal of faith, each week there are Scripture readings, a guest speaker, praying of the Rosary and Novena prayer, followed by a Eucharistic Healing Service and Benediction.

Opening on Sunday, October 22, at 7 pm, with guest speaker the recently ordained Fr Shaun Doherty, curate at St Eugene's Cathedral, in Derry, the other speakers have so far included young Buncrana parishioners, Eoin Mulhern and Euan O'Brien, Fr John Joe Duffy, Dunfanaghy & Creeslough, Fr Paul Fraser, PP Castledearg, Aghyaran & Drumquin, and Mgr Bryan McCanny, PP Limavady.

The youth of the Parish are very much involved in the Novena each Sunday, with the Pope John Paul II participants on hand to welcome people arriving and assisting in the Eucharistic Healing Service and Benediction. And the parishioners showed their appreciation of youth involvement particularly after guest speakers, Eoin and Euan gave their talks sharing their experiences of attending Lisbon for the World Youth Day events, as part of the group that travelled there with Bishop Donal.

Both also commented on their experiences of taking part in the Pope John Paul II Award, with Eoin, who went on to undertake the Papal Cross Award after achieving his Gold, saying that it was a challenge he thoroughly enjoyed, giving him an opportunity to develop his faith. He added: "I particularly

enjoyed the parish involvement side of the Award, which helped me get more involved in parish life."

Appreciating that Pope St John Paul II had been "a proud supporter of young people", Euan, who has also completed his Award, remarked that participating in it had provided him with a better understanding of his faith and community.

He remarked: "Sometimes, I think there is fear surrounding young people participating in parish life, however, this experience has proved to me that young people are alive and active in the Church.

"There are still problems with the future of the Church. However, if anybody says that young people today do not have as strong a faith as past generations, let the 1.5 million young people who attended the vigil in Lisbon

in 40 degree heat, in August, prove them wrong."

"I think Pope St John Paul II believed in young people when he initiated the first World Youth Day in 1985," added Euan, saying: "I also believe that some young people who may be listening may attend the Jubilee of Youth in Rome in 2025, or even World Youth Day in Seoul, South Korea, in 2027!"

On Sunday, November 26, the Novena guest speaker will be Geraldine Mullan, of The Mullan Hope Centre in Moville, who will be followed by Patricia Friel, Mary's Meals, on December 3, and Sr Mary of the Home of the Mother Servant Sisters, based at Crossroads, Killygordon, on December 10.

The Novena will come to a close on Sunday, December 17, with the main speaker being the Parish Priest, Fr Francis Bradley.



Euan O'Brien and Eoin Mulhern with Fr Bradley, Fr Baker and Maire Gormley, Faith coordinator.



WE are very blessed in our Parish to receive a first-class relic of St Faustina - Prophet of Divine Mercy, and a first-class relic of St John Paul II, the great Mercy Pope. These relics are permanently in the Divine Mercy Chapel for veneration, having been installed there by Bishop Donal McKeown on Sunday, October 22, the Feast Day of St John Paul II.

St John Paul II, during his pontificate, promoted the importance of God's mercy. He made the message of God's mercy a central teaching in his pontificate and believed that it was the answer to the tragedies and evils of the world. He saw the message of Divine Mercy as a source of hope for humanity and urged the faithful to witness to it.

God chose St Faustina Kowalska, a humble religious sister, as a prophetic messenger of Divine Mercy. She received visions and messages from Jesus, who revealed the depths of His mercy and instructed her to spread His message of Mercy to the world. St Faustina's diary, which recorded her experiences and teachings, became a powerful tool in promoting the message of Divine Mercy.

In the Jubilee Year, April 30, 2000, the Holy Father, St John Paul II canonised Sr Faustina; the first saint to be canonised in the third millennium. In doing so, he emphasised the importance of the message of Divine Mercy for

our time. At the canonisation, he declared that the second Sunday of Easter would be known as Divine Mercy Sunday.

In 2002, he entrusted the whole world to Divine Mercy when he consecrated the International Shrine of The Divine Mercy in Lagiewniki, a suburb of Krakow in Poland. This is where St Faustina's mortal remains are interred, and this place has become a centre for spreading the message of God's mercy throughout the world.

St John Paul II encouraged priests to be dispensers of Divine Mercy, reminding them of the power of their words in softening hardened sinners.

Jesus I Trust In You.

Commenting on the installation of the Divine Mercy relics, Bishop Donal said: "Since its opening, the Divine Mercy Chapel in St Mary's Church, in Creggan has become a focus of prayer for many who see to pray for God's mercy on the world. It is a blessing to have relics of the Apostle of Divine Mercy, St Faustina, and of the saintly Pope John Paul II who did so much to promote the message entrusted to Sr Faustina.

"There is a strong community of faith in the parish, which cherishes the Divine Mercy Chapel. These relics will be a further encouragement to them to become a school of prayer and a centre of evangelisation for the wider community."

Highlighting the need to leave room for the Holy Spirit in reflecting on his priesthood and the current challenges facing the Church, Fr Paul Fraser, now parish priest for three parishes in West Tyrone, is optimistic for the future...

We are committed to the mission of the Church...God will surprise us!

THE Parish of Drumquin is the latest addition to the cluster of parishes under the lead ministry of Fr Paul Fraser, known as the Parishes of the West Tyrone Pastoral Area; the others being Aghyaran, and Ardstraw West & Castledearg.

As Parish Priest of such a vast area, Fr Paul is delighted to now have Fr Thomas Canning on board, who resides as curate in Drumquin, and the support of Fr John Gilmore, retired parish priest of Aghyaran, and Fr Peter McCawille, retired SMA missionary priest, as well as a growing number of parishioners within the Pastoral Area willing to get involved in parish ministry.

Heartened by greater stirrings of interest from the laity in how they can play a more significant role in their parish faith community, Fr Paul and his flock are seeing the synodal process underway in the Church becoming more relevant at local parish level.

Reflecting on his own faith journey that led him to priesthood, Fr Paul shares how the many experiences he has had in life so far has helped prepare him for this time of change in the Church, and the reason for the hope that he has that keeps him striving to help build for these times and the future.

While he was born in Scotland, the 64-year-old spent most of his young life growing up in Derry, the hometown of his mother, Bridie (nee Mooney), where she had met and fell in love with English sailor, Bill Fraser, who was originally from Berwick-upon-Tweed, in the north of England.

"My father was in the navy and my mother went wherever he went, until I started school, and then we came to live in Derry," said Fr Paul, who has a sister, Lorraine.

Recalling some of those who helped form him in the Catholic faith, a clear memory is that of his primary school teacher, Miss Gallagher, now Mrs Gemma Duffy: "She prepared me for my First Holy Communion and Confirmation, and had a big impact on my faith.

"I received both of these sacraments in St Eugene's Cathedral, where I was an altar boy and where the priests generally were also very significant in my life, such as Fr Deane, who in time left the priesthood, Fr Benny O'Neill, Fr Anthony Mulvey and, of course, Fr Edward Daly.

"My grandparents also had a positive influence, particularly my Granny Mooney, who was a very devout lady. We had a

normal Catholic home life; Mass and Confessions every weekend and my parents doing whatever was required in association with the school."

Aware of the priesthood as a vocation through his serving at ordinations in St Eugene's, he hadn't actually considered it himself until the late Fr Patrick McIntyre, a friend of his mum who had been on Mission in Ecuador, asked him as a 12-year-old if he had ever thought of being a priest.

"I hadn't," said Fr Paul, going on to recall his first serious conversation about the possibility of becoming a priest being with a Holy Ghost Father during a Sixth Form retreat at St Columba's College, where Fr Joey Donnelly (now Msgr) was chaplain.

"Fr Sean Casey CSSP, who died quite recently, was the first person I had a conversation with in which I seriously thought about priesthood, and that was consolidated with conversations with Fr Donnelly. The feeling was to just try it."

So, in 1978, he entered St Malachy's Seminary in Belfast, while studying for a Psychology Degree at Queens.

"I spent four years studying at Queens and living in St Malachy's with fellow Derry man, Eugene O'Hagan, who was for the Down & Connor Diocese," said Fr Paul, "and we got the opportunity to go to Maynooth Seminary for the visit of Pope John Paul II in 1979."

Commenting on his seminary experience, he recalled: "I got my eyes open to the reach of the church in Ireland; some people there were very traditional and others were very much into social justice.

"My great love in seminary was Scripture; that was my most loved bit of Theology. A significant person there for me in this was the late Fr Paddy McGoldrick, who had such sound knowledge of Sacramental Theology.

"Another significant person for me in Maynooth was Fr Ronan Drury, who was the Professor of Sacred Eloquence (preaching). He was so kind, positive, constructive and very encouraging. I suppose I could see in Paddy and Ronan the importance of Scripture coming together.

"Another formative figure was Fr Michael Neary, now Archbishop of Tuam, who taught Old Testament. I was particularly taken by his slant on Scripture."

Fr Paul also greatly appreciated the encouragement of the priests of the Diocese while he was in training, such as the late Fr Kevin Mullan, in particular, Fr Paddy Doherty and Fr John Forbes,

amongst many others.

Ordained in St Patrick's Church, Pennyburn, on June 1, 1986, by Bishop Edward Daly, Fr Paul was first appointed to Buncrana, where he ministered until 1989.

Commenting on the experience, he said: "Your first parish is always very significant and special. It's like the finishing school for seminarians, where things start to make sense. Formation was very different then. In 1985, I had spent a month in Omagh. Nobody died in that month, so in all that time there I never had the experience of a wake or funeral, although I did baptisms and attended weddings. So, it was in Buncrana that I came down to earth.

"At that time, in the 80s, the local church provided the chaplains to community schools, so part of my job in Buncrana was chaplain to the Community School and Scoil Mhuire, where I taught RE. On the back of that, Bishop Daly asked me to do teacher training in St Mary's, Strawberry Hill. I absolutely loved that."

Technology

Following this, Fr Paul was successfully interviewed for a post in St Columba's College, where he became a teacher of RE, Maths and Science in the junior school at Bishop's Street. Always interested in technology, he took over as librarian there and introduced things like CD Roms, which you can't get now but were very advanced for that time.

He was then asked to go to the senior school at Buncrana Road, in 1994, to set up a Psychology Department, and he continued in this role until 1999. During that period, because he had been involved with library work, he also got involved with ICT delivery. The development of the senior school included the introduction of an advanced structured cabling approach, and so Fr Paul trained as a network administrator and worked with staff on the use of IT in Education in the classroom.

Free at weekends, he acted as supply and got to go to parishes all over the Diocese. He recalled that his only time in Dregish before being appointed to Ardstraw West & Castledearg, had been as a supply: "Fr Manus Bradley, who is now in Canada, was the priest there at the time, but I was mostly helping Fr Laurence Keaveny in Iskaheen."

Fr Paul also recalled that, during summer holidays, priests not appointed to a particular parish typically went to America.

"During my time in my first parish in Buncrana," he said, "I met Fr Michael Kelly, who was home from his parish in Northern

California. When I was teaching, I would go out every summer to minister in Arcata, in the Diocese of Santa Rosa, and let him come home for a holiday. I did that for 10 years."

In 1999, Fr Paul went to the Jesuit University in Los Angeles, Loyola Marymount, to study for a Masters in Theology and Education Technology. While he was there, he taught High School Theology and Computers in Marymount High School, on Sunset Boulevard, and lived in the Good Shepherd Parish in Beverly Hills.

He recalled: "I used to work with the Jesuits in gangland parts of Los Angeles, so I was working with the gangs and then teaching in Beverly Hills. It was a very interesting time, during which I worked alongside an amazing Irish priest, Fr Colm Ryan, from Waterford."

On his return to the Derry Diocese, Fr Paul spent a year ministering in the Waterside before going to work in the Diocese of Arundel & Brighton, with Bishop Hegarty's blessing.

Commenting on this experience, he said: "I worked in St Teresa's School, in Surrey, where I taught Psychology and ICT. After four years I went to work in a sixth form college, where I set up a Psychology Department. That was a wonderful time. During that period, I was a priest of the Parish of Frimley, where I worked with Fr John O'Sullivan, another Irish man."

He continued: "I spent 12 years in England, during which time my father had died, and when my mother became ill, I just wanted to come home. So, in 2015, I came to Creggan and worked with Fr Joe Gormley, who was parish priest.

"I was in Creggan for the wonderful opportunity to be part of the refurbishment of St Mary's Church. Fr Joe was a terrific mentor. The four years I spent there prepared me for the busyness of ministry in Castledearg and Aghyaran. The busyness was different, in Creggan there were lots of people, but here there is a smaller community spread over a very large area."

Appointed parish priest of Ardstraw West & Castledearg and Aghyaran four years ago, in September 2019, Fr Paul was the first priest in the Diocese to manage two parishes without a curate.

He recalled: "Very sadly, I had to start cutting down Masses as I couldn't possibly be in two places at the one time. That is my biggest regret, particularly for Aghyaran, as Fr Gilmore was in



Fr Paul and his sister, Lorraine after his induction as Drumquin Parish Priest.



complete retirement at that time. They lost their weekly Sunday Mass, though they had one every second weekend, and the week-day Masses were time about. So, I had to have difficult conversations about that in the parishes.”

Some seven months after taking up his new appointment, the arrival of Covid-19 brought society into lockdown in March 2020, leaving all dependent on online communication. With his knowledge of technology, Fr Paul readily embraced the introduction of webcams.

“We initially put webcams in the two main churches,” he said, “but then found that we really needed to put them in the other churches too. We got grants from different groups to buy equipment and that helped us to communicate Mass from all four churches.”

There is a saying, ‘Every cloud has a silver lining’, and with regards to the Covid-19 cloud, the silver lining for Fr Paul was “the number of great people who stepped up to the mark and helped to open up the churches again, through stewarding, sanitising, etc.”

“In any of the four churches that I had,” he said, “we weren’t left wanting, and that kick-started the awareness of sharing responsibility. We had a group of people who had shown themselves committed to the faith community as well as to the wider community. In the midst of that, I had people approach me to set up Children’s Liturgy and a Children’s Choir, and we have those going now in a couple of the chapels. That only happened because a few people put their heads above the parapet and came to me, and that gave me great hope.”

Fr Paul added: “At that time, I talked to the communities of the four churches of the need for local leadership and how effective that was in sharing the burden of responsibility, particularly with my growing workload and getting older.”

Synodality

“The experience of living through Covid and seeing the changes made them aware too. A lot of people were a bit wary, as they had heard about collaborative ministry for so long but all fell back on to the priest. However, I said that that can’t happen anymore. One priest can’t cope. But the other side is that we can’t allow collaboration to count as the answer to the problem. Everybody needs to play a role because it is the right thing to do, not out of need, and then in the midst of that comes synodality. So it just seemed to me that everything was pulling together.”

Focusing first on Aghyaran, as it just has one church and so was more straightforward, Fr Paul recalled going into a meeting where he had no idea what would happen: “It was at this meeting that people said parishioners needed to be more aware and share responsibility, and that generated what turned out to be a very successful Mission, where members of the community taught and led. People in Derry City would be used to that kind of Mission, but this was a first for Aghyaran and they responded wonderfully.”

“Now, we are at the stage of establishing a leadership team. We are not there yet, but testing the ground. Thankfully, I have the energy to do that now. We are recognising that we have to do things differently in Castlederg because it is a parish with three churches, particularly in Dregish, which has a very unique identity of its own. You have to make sure to respect the local culture as well.”

Highlighting the need for a nourishing faith experience in the parish, liturgy up to standard and opportunities for Catechesis seized on, Fr Paul remarked: “I have always been up for adult faith formation and it was one of my roles in Creggan, but my time is taken up now and I can’t continue it. We had launched a programme before Covid but had

to stop it because of that.

“What we need in our parishes are properly trained catechists, who can deliver these courses with credibility. I think the time has come to stop investing in buildings and start investing in people, as we have been doing everything on the cheap up to this point. If we want properly trained catechists, we are going to have to invest in their training.”

He added: “When I was asked to incorporate Drumquin, another enormous area, it was wonderful to get a second priest in Fr Thomas, and I also depend heavily on Fr Gilmore and Fr McCawille. In Castlederg and Aghyaran, we have trained lay leaders who are Eucharistic Ministers and Lectors (Readers), and each Wednesday when there is no Mass in the parish they lead a prayer service, including the Liturgy of the Word and the Rite of Communion.

“The whole purpose of this is to prepare them for, hopefully, the unlikely eventuality if I was sick and there was no priest to cover for me. Those leaders could step up and lead the community in a Liturgy of the Word and then distribute Holy Communion. I think it is important that they get experience of doing that on a small scale on Wednesdays, so if they have to step out in front of a fuller church on a Saturday night, or Sunday morning, it wouldn’t be as daunting.”

“In the absence of deacons in our Diocese, a lay lector and Minister of the Eucharist can do this. It is not meant to become the norm, which is why some people don’t want me doing it on a Wednesday, but the teacher in me is saying that the only way of becoming confident in doing this on a Saturday evening/Sunday morning is to do this as practice on a Wednesday, and then they are more ready for the Saturday/Sunday in an emergency. For example, an hour-and-a-half before I went to my induction ceremony in Drumquin, Fr Gilmore couldn’t cover as he was

sick. Fortunately, I got another priest to cover, but if I hadn’t then I would have had to call in the lay leadership.”

Fr Peter O’Kane, the newly appointed Leader of Faith Formation & Evangelisation in the Diocese, has attended evenings for Readers and Eucharistic Ministers in St Patrick’s Hall, Castlederg, to provide support and training for the development of these lay ministries at Mass in the three parishes.

Commenting on the clustering of parishes under the title of the West Tyrone Pastoral Area, Fr Paul said: “The challenge we have is to bring the community together without losing individual parish identity. People are frightened of that. There are only about 30 priests in the Diocese younger than me. Fast forward 10 years, we might only have 30 priests serving in the Diocese. So, we need to sow the seed now.”

“We need to come up with a structure where I don’t spend my time going to meetings. I think we will be very lay-administrated. I have meetings with architects and regarding finance, etc, and any lay person could probably do a better job of that than me.”

“We have surveyed people and are in the process of setting up leadership teams. By 2024, I hope to have parish pastoral councils in all three parishes, with one in Castlederg that will represent the three churches there.”

Optimistic in the midst of all the challenges, Fr Paul remarked: “In the mix of all the confusion, I enjoy it. It is wonderful that we don’t know where we are going to go next, but we are going to go together. We are committed to the mission of the Church. God will surprise us.”

“The challenges provide us with opportunities and give us an incentive as well. In the midst of it all, it is important that we are not too rigid in what the structure is going to look like. We need to leave room for the Holy Spirit.”



Fr Peter O’Kane, Leader of Faith Formation and Evangelisation in the Diocese, leading a lay ministry training session



Long Tower Novena drawing large crowds for Vocation reflections



GREAT crowds of people are making their way to Long Tower every Sunday evening at 6 pm for the annual Solemn Novena in Honour of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, reports a thankful Fr Gerard Mongan, Adm of St Columba's in the Templemore Parish.

The Novena runs for the nine Sundays before Christmas and this year's theme focuses on the Year of Vocations to Diocesan Priesthood, 'Take the Risk for Christ'. It was officially launched by Bishop Phonsie Cullinan, chair of the Irish Bishops' Council for the Year of Vocations.

"Bishop Phonsie gave an encouraging message on the need for good and faithful priests after

the heart of Christ, and praised the response of 11 men from Derry Diocese who will attend a 'Come and See' weekend in Maynooth," said Fr Gerard.

Reflecting on the message of other guests that have already spoken at the Novena, which ends on December 17, he noted: "Martina Purdy and Elaine Kelly gave powerful and rousing speeches on rekindling the flame of faith that St Patrick brought to Ireland as he responded to the 'voice of the Irish' calling him to 'walk among us once more'.

"Aoife O'Neill who leads Anam Óg, a faith formation group for young people in Termonbacca, said that there 'isn't a vocations

crisis, there is a faith crisis!' and that 'God hasn't slacked up in the call'...we need open hearts to respond to that call and we can nurture those seeds by teaching our young people to pray, a responsibility we all have as members of the One Body of Christ.

"Then we had Fr John Joe Duffy, based in Creeslough, who shared his thoughts on 'priests serving people'. So far, each night has been a powerful peaceful and prayerful hour of reflection and healing."

Fr Gerard continued: "Seánán Zaltron (née Cregan) who is part of the 'Seven Sisters Apostolate' shared her experience of praying for priests. A group of the Apostolate is made up of at least seven women, where each member commits to a Holy

Hour on a distinct day of the week, thus covering a complete week. The prayers of the group are for a specific Priest and his intentions, and the commitment of prayer is for at least a year, but is usually continued onwards where possible. She also spoke on the vows a priest takes at his ordination, working for the Salvation of all in the name of Christ and their need of our prayer to help them live those vows."

Speakers for the remaining Sundays are: Dana Rosemary Scallon will speak on 'Light the Fire' of Vocations on November 26, and sing her new song; Fr Pat O'Hagan, Derry Diocesan Vocations Director, will speak on 'To the future - vocations in Derry Diocese' on December 3; and Fr Stephen Ward, CC Long Tower, will speak on 'The Journey to Priesthood' on December 10.

The Novena closes on December 17 with a 'Mary, Mother of Priests' Christmas Reflection, with Carols by Candlelight.

Each night comprises of the Rosary, Novena prayer and petitions, a talk, and Eucharistic Healing ceremony, with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

(Photographs by Patsy McCallion)



Galliagh & Carnhill blessed with Eucharistic Procession

IN the lead up to Halloween in Derry, the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal led a Marian and Eucharistic Procession on Saturday, October 28, from St Joseph's Church, in Galliagh, following the celebration of morning Mass.

Holding up the Monstrance with the Blessed Sacrament as the procession made its way around the areas of Galliagh and Carnhill, Fr Francesco Gavazzi CFR told 'The Net' afterwards: "As I walked, holding the monstrance with Jesus in the Most Holy Eucharist, I glanced around me and thought to myself: 'Who else transforms people's lives like Jesus? Who else brings together people - all so different - like Jesus? Who else turns us sinners into people who want to be saints



like Jesus?" "Only Jesus can do all this. He is still doing this right here in Derry. And that procession was evidence."

A statue of Our Lady was also carried in the procession.

Afterwards, there was an All Saints Party in St Pio House, followed by the praying of the Rosary with the friars.



All Saints pageant and party went down a treat at Long Tower

THERE was a special celebration of the great Feast Days of All Saints and All Souls in St Columba's Church, Long Tower, when children and families were invited to take part in a pageant around the grounds, before enjoying some treats in the nearby Áras café.

On the afternoon of November 3, many children responded to the invitation to dress up as their favourite saint for the pageant, in a Christian-themed alternative to the Halloween festivities.

To add to the excitement, prizes were awarded for the best homemade costumes in three categories: Best Irish Saint; Best

Ancient Saint; and 'My Favourite Saint'.

The children were encouraged to either say a little prayer relating to the Saint they had chosen, or share an interesting 'fact' about why they had chosen their particular saint.

The celebration included storytelling, singing and take-home activity packs, and ended with a prayer in St Columba's Long Tower Church for the Holy Souls and for world peace.

Thanks to a dedicated group of women from the Parish, a selection of cakes and treats were available, served with hot chocolate, tea and coffee.



Plenty of fun at Catholic Mothers' All Saints Party

THE annual 'All Saints Party' organised by The Catholic Mothers' Group in Killyclogher Hall, on Saturday, October 28, was thoroughly enjoyed by all the families who came along.

Some of the parents enjoyed dressing up as their favourite

Saint as much as the youngsters, who had a fun time playing games and eating loads of treats.

The gathering began across the road, with the celebration of Mass by Fr Declan McGeehan in St Mary's Church.



Eangach

Ráitis de Chuid Naomh Pio

“A Thiarna, go raibh do thrócaire ar atá caite de mo shaol, go raibh do ghrá i mo shaol atá i láthair anois, agus do dheonú ina bhfuil le teacht.”

“Guígh, bíodh dóchas agat agus ná bí buartha.”

“Dá mb’fhéidir liom, thógfainn teach óir dóibh.”

Naomh Pio, guígh ar ár son!



Muire na nGrásta. Pictiúr ó eaglais na gCaipisíneach in San Giovanni

Sagart agus Íospartach

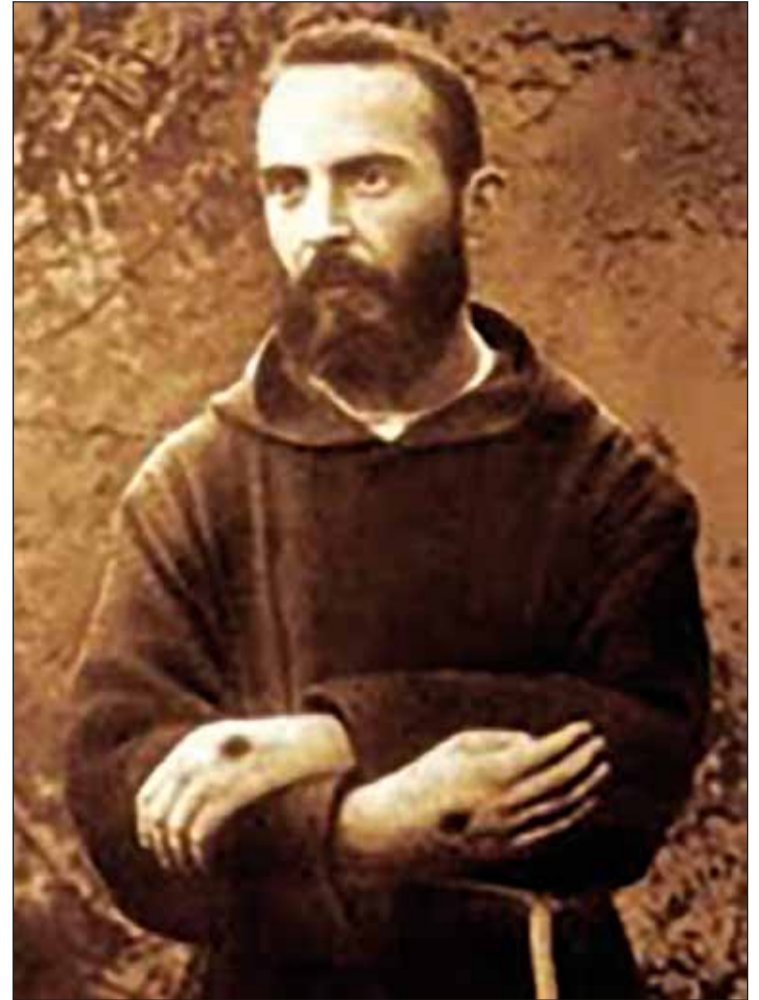
A bhuí le Dia, bhí sé de phribhléid ag an scríbhneoir cuairt a thabhairt ar San Giovanni Rotondo san Iodáil, ar na malluibh, mar chuid d’oilithreachta a thug cuairt ar an áit ar chónaigh an sagart clúiteach atá anois ina naomh mór le rá, Padre Pio. Bhí deis againn dul ar cuairt chuig ionaid shuntasacha eile a bhaineann lena shaol; Pietrelcina, an sráidbhaile inar tógadh é agus Piana Romana, an áit ar chéadtugadh dó an Stiogmata. Tabharfaidh me spleachadh ar an duine speisialta seo.

Ba in 1887 a rugadh Francesco Forgione, mac le Grazio agus Maria Guiseppa a bhí ina bhfeirmeoirí bochta, sa baile beag tuaithe i mórcheantar Napoli ar a dtugtar Pietrelcina. Tógadh é, d’oibrigh sé agus fuair sé scolaíocht. Tá naofacht agus gné osnádúrtha le sonrú cheana féin ina óige, bhí grá aige do Dhia, agus d’fheicfeadh sé Dia, naoimh, aingle, chomh maith leis na deamhain. Rinne sé an cinneadh gur mhaith leis a bheith ina shagart. Chuaigh a athair, agus a dheartháir Michele go Meiriceá le hairgead a shaothrú dá oiliúint mar shagart. Rinneadh sagart dó in ord Caipisíneach na bProinsiasach de réir a chéile agus sa deireadh, bogadh go

mainistir in San Giovanni é. Ba anseo a chaith sé a shaol a bhí lán de mhíorúiltí, agus a chuaigh sé i bhfeidhm go mór ar an saol go mór.

Is dócha gurb é ceann de na rudaí is iontaí faoi, agus faoina shaol ná an Stiogmata a bhí aige. Is é sin le rá ná go raibh créachtaí Chríost aige ina chorp féin, poill na dtairní trína dhá lámh agus a dhá chos, chomh maith le créacht an sleá ina thaobh, agus créacht na croise ar a ghualainn. Ba mhór an fhulaingt a bhí aige. Fuair sé seo ar dtús in Piana Romana, ach d’iarr sé ar Dhia an marc a thabhairt ar shiúl (ach an pian a fhágáil, níor mhaith leis aird a tharraingt air féin). Níos moille ina shaol, thug Dia na marcanna fisiceacha dó. Is suntasach a lua gurb eisean an t-aon sagart riamh a raibh an Stiogmata bronnta air. Ba idir shagart agus íospartach é, ar nós Íosa. Léiríonn sé dúinne gur féidir linn ár bhfulaingt féin a thabairt d’Íosa agus a bheith rannpháirteach ar bhealach ina Pháis, a athnuaíonn.

Níor mhaith le Padre Pio a fhulaingt ‘a chur amú’ riamh óir ba luachmhar an deis a bhí aige a bheith níos cóngaraí do Dhia. Ach mar bharr air sin, bhí croí ollmhór aige dóibh siúd a



Pictiúr a tógadh de Padre Pio agus an Stiogmata, i ngan fhios dó ag an am.

fhulaingíonn. Is léir an fhianaise air seo na an t-ospidéal a thóg sé in aice leis an mhainistir atá chun cinn ag tabhairt faoi staidéar ar chneasú tinnis. Feidhmníonn an t-ospidéal de réir eitice nach ndiúltaítear d’aon duine a bhfuil cuidiú de dhíth orthu

agus déantar iarracht speisialta go mbíonn barr chúraim ar fáil. Nuair a cáineadh Padre Pio faoin ospidéal a bheith ‘róshómasach’ (róchompordach saibhir), d’fhreagair sé: ‘Róshómasach? Dá mb’fhéidir liom, thógfainn teach óir dóibh’.

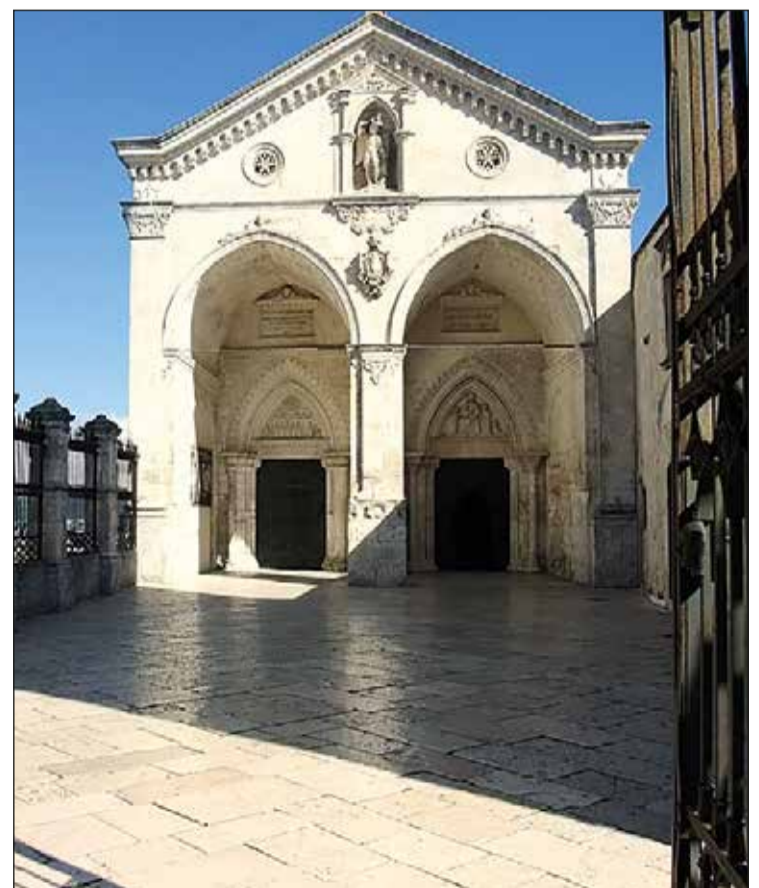
Monte Sant’Angelo

Bhí deis eile iontach againn mar oilithrigh, nuair a thug muid cuairt ar Sanctóir Naoimh Mhíchil, scrín atá suite ar bharr sléibhe i gceantar iargúlta de Puglia, ní i bhfad ar shiúl ó San Giovanni Rotondo. Tá suntas agus naofacht ag baint leis an suíomh seo, atá ina ionad oilithreachta atá seanbhunaithe sa stair Críostaí, a dtagann Pápaí chuige sa lá atá inniu ann, i measc mórán eile.

Ba sa 5ú céad a ndeachaigh bó feirmeora ar seachrán agus a d’éirigh greammaithe in uaimh. Ar a fheiceáil sin don fheirmeoir, rinne sé iarracht an bó a scaoileadh le saighdead óna bhogha. Bhí iontas air nuair a stop an saighthead san aer, thiontaigh sé, agus tháinig ar ais ina threo féin. Chuaigh an fear scanraithe chuig a easpag áitiúil le rá leis. De réir a chéile, thaispeáin Naomh

Mícheál é féin don easpag agus d’iarr sé air scrín a thógáil ina onóir san áit. Nuair a bhí sé sin críochnaithe, chuaigh an t-easpag leis an scrín a choisreacadh agus thaispeáin Naomh Mícheál é féin dó in athuair, ag iarraidh air gan é a dhéanamh, mar go raibh sé coisricthe aige-san cheana. Dá bharr sin, is í an scrín in Monte Sant’Angelo an t-aon cheann san Eaglais nár choisric easpag í.

D’fhág Naomh Mícheál rian a chos in áit ar thaispeán sé é féin, agus tógadh altóir ansin. Inniu, tá altóir ann go fóill, chomh maith le heaglais álainn faoin talamh, san uaimh. Thiocfadh oilithrigh chuig an áit seo leis na céadta, atá speisialta ar leith, agus mar atá ráite, fiú Pápaí na hEaglaise. Cuirtear i gcuimhne dúinn an dóigh a mbíonn Naomh Mícheál linn, dár gcosaint.



Newly appointed Diocesan Trainer in Evangelisation & Adult Faith Formation, Fr Peter O'Kane shares his faith story and hopes in supporting clergy, parish leaders and faithful in this time of change...

Humbly walking with others as brothers and sisters



Fr Peter O'Kane

"I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you" are the words addressed by St Paul to St Timothy at the beginning of his letter. The story of responding to Christ's call to follow Him is a reminder that God invites every person to the life of faith and virtue, so that, having experienced His love and mercy in a personal encounter, there will be a desire to share the story with others.

Reflecting on the journey of vocational discernment that has brought me to my present ministry in the Diocese of Derry, the foundations are strongly located in my family, especially the example given by my parents and grandparents, among many other influences. Born in 1980 in Strabane, Co Tyrone, I was surrounded by living witnesses of faith, both in terms of religious practice and charitable action.

My parents have always been wonderful in their support for my sister, Roisin, and brother, Patrick, and myself. My father, Eddie animates our lives with his gentleness and direction, being inspirational by his example. My mother, Catherine is exceptional in her generosity towards others and has a desire for people to be happy. Together, they give a realistic committed witness to the vocation of marriage.

It is through my parents that I was first formed in the faith and grew in my relationship with God. Prayer has always been important in our family home and active participation in the local parish has been central. Both of them are people of committed faith, prayer and charity. My parents have always been affirming in a balanced way. They encourage growth in gifts and talents so that we may find fulfilment in a wholly positive way. Having instilled in us many good values, especially honesty, generosity, gratitude, commitment, morals and work ethic, I have sought to live a grounded, virtuous life.

I was greatly blessed with the love and influence of my Grandparents, especially my two grannies. Always living fairly close, we would visit them regularly, even as a young boy growing up, going to Granny McGranaghan most days after school. Out of this experience my vocation to priesthood was born, because I was inspired by women who were totally in union with the Incarnate Word of God, who could see the traces of God at work in every person and situation, every flower and thistle; really grounded women of faith who showed us how to follow steps well. Prayers, conversations, television programmes and the promise of chocolate after the Rosary, all contributed to an unveiling of God's presence and His plan for my life.

I was educated at Evish Primary School and St Mary's Boys Primary School, Strabane, then onwards to Christian Brothers Grammar School, Omagh, and St Columb's (Diocesan) College, Derry, completing 'A'-level studies in History, Music and Religious Studies in summer 1998. Gifts and talents were encouraged, in particular in the field of music; I play the piano, organ and clarinet, having been a member of the Western Education and Library Board Wind Band, the local Church choir and the Irish Youth Choir.

Twenty-five years ago, after 'A'-level examinations, I became a seminarian for the Diocese of Derry and went to St Patrick's College, Maynooth. I undertook an Arts degree in Music and Philosophy at the National University of Ireland Maynooth, followed by a degree in Divinity at St Patrick's College. I was 18 years of age when I went to Maynooth and my experience was on the whole positive.

In 2004, after completing the Baccalaureate in Divinity and ordained as a deacon, I was assigned to St Mary's Parish, Creggan, Derry City for a year's placement. Supported by the parish team, the pastoral year gave me an opportunity to be active in the ministry of a deacon, especially through preaching, charitable works and celebrating the sacrament of baptism. At the end of this year, I was ordained to the priesthood in St Eugene's Cathedral on 24 July 2005.

My first appointment was as curate in the Parishes of Glendermott and Strathfoyle, and member of the chaplaincy team of Altnagelvin, Gransha and Waterside Hospitals. This was an exciting and challenging appointment. Being one of four priests working in a parish with many pastoral experiences, I

had the opportunity to minister in many different ways as well as being encouraged to take responsibility for adult faith formation and liturgical formation in the parish. One of the highlights was the development of a parish visitation team which gave me the opportunity to visit family homes.

On a diocesan level, I taught on adult faith formation courses with Thornhill Ministries alongside Sr Perpetua McNulty and Sr Marie Wylie, as well as being involved in Diocesan youth ministry. Being a hospital chaplain, I worked closely with other clergy and two Good Shepherd sisters. I was involved in the education of nursing students and actively engaged in ecumenical initiatives. Being a member of the Northern Ireland Healthcare Chaplains Association, I participated in a part-time unit of Clinical Pastoral Education from November 2006 until May 2007.

Such a busy first appointment made many demands, so the challenge was how to be attentive to growing in the spiritual life, celebrating daily Mass and praying the breviary as well as the Rosary and Adoration. In terms of recreation, I continued to enjoy walking and cycling, as well as taking the opportunity to develop my interest in music by undertaking a Masters Degree in Music on a part-time basis, from 2007 until 2009, at the University of Ulster in Derry.

Universality

In August 2009, I was assigned to the Irish College, Rome to pursue postgraduate studies in Canon Law (JCL) at the Pontifical Gregorian University. Returning to full-time study offered a renewed opportunity to grow and develop in an academic and communal setting, encouraging a renewed sense of authentically living out of priestly vocation. Being back in a community setting, I found that the natural rhythm of the Irish College gave structure, particularly in terms of prayer, liturgy and study. Being in Rome gave me a new understanding of the universality of the Church, while being aware of the local Church from which I had come. I encountered people who had responded to God's call in various ways as priests, consecrated persons and lay people.

Having completed postgraduate studies, I returned to the Diocese and took up appointment primarily in a role that encompassed various canonical roles, including Judicial Vicar and full-time Canonist, as well as being Director of the Diocesan Pastoral Centre and Diocesan

Master of Ceremonies, while assisting in parish ministry at weekends. I continued to be involved in the work of Thornhill Ministries, as well as co-ordinating music and liturgy at the Annual Time for Priests in the Irish College Rome over the last number of years. These years of ministry unveiled moments of God's healing power at work in the midst of the challenges, wounds and pains experienced by His people – and it was a great privilege to walk this path.

In 2016, with the support of Bishop Donal, I undertook a time of discernment with the Irish Province of the Dominicans (Order of Preachers). I spent a year in the novitiate community at St Mary's Priory Cork, followed by a time of first vows in St Saviour's Priory, Dublin and St Mary's Priory, Tallaght. During this time, I experienced the beauty of religious life lived according to the evangelical counsels of chastity, obedience and poverty.

In many ways, this time with the Dominicans was an opportunity to delve more deeply into the search to imitate Christ in the perfection of charity. Specifically for those who live the consecrated life, this desire manifests itself through the free and deliberate profession of the evangelical counsels. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church notes, "the perfection of charity, to which all the faithful are called, entails for those who freely follow the call to consecrated life the obligation of practicing chastity in celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom, poverty and obedience. It is the profession of these counsels, within a permanent state of life recognised by the Church, that characterizes the life consecrated to God". (Pope John Paul II, Catechism of Catholic Church, n.915)

Along with four brothers, I journeyed the novitiate year with excitement, commitment and openness, living the Dominican way of life in a formation community that comprised of brothers ranging from the age of 32 through to 95. A life centred on contemplation, study and apostolic activity, we experienced wonderful prayerful support from the regular congregation at the liturgies of the public church. Supported by the guidance and prudential wisdom of Fr Stephen Hutchinson, the Master of Novices, I made first vows on September 15, 2017.

Moving to St Saviour's Priory, we joined the rest of the student brothers, sharing regular life with professors and others members of the community. In this place, I saw first-hand where the dedication to study and prayer found its active expression in moments of





Wonderful time of reflection and prayer for Three Patrons ministries

THREE Patrons Parish was delighted to welcome Fr Peter O'Kane, as the recently appointed trainer in Evangelisation & Adult Faith Formation, to lead its Day of Reflection & Prayer for those involved in ministry in St Patrick's, Pennyburn, St Brigid's Carnhill, and St Joseph's Galliagh.

Amongst those who responded to the invitation to gather first in St Joseph's Church for Mass, and then in St Pio House for some time of reflection, were Readers, Eucharistic Ministers, Music Ministry, Sacristans, Collectors, Counters, Pastoral Workers, Cleaners, and members of the Altar Society, Adoration Committee, Finance Committee, Draw Committee, Baptism Teams, SPRED, Legion of Mary, SVDP, SJYP, DTIM Team, Welcoming

the Spirit Team, Prayer Groups, Laudato Si' Project Group, and School Trustee Boards...etc.

Concelebrating Mass with Parish curates, Fr Sean O'Donnell and Fr Roni Zacharias, during his homily, Fr Peter extended an invitation to those gathered to consider what gifts and talents the Lord had bestowed on them, and how they used them to build up God's Kingdom, saying: "God has blessed many hands."

Later, in welcoming everyone to the time of prayer, reflection and formation, in St Pio House, he told them: "It is very important that you are here, not just for you but for the people around you."

The theme for the day was 'Called to serve, not to be served', and Fr Peter was assisted by Kathryn Ellis, the Parish Pastoral

& Youth Worker, and Tony Brennan, the Diocesan Pastoral Coordinator, in encouraging those gathered to reflect on such questions as why they were doing what they were doing, and what difference does it make.

Going on to consider that "the life of the Church does not revolve around the priest, but all the people of God," Fr Peter highlighted that those involved in various ministries in the Parish were amongst the faithful who "make up the Body of Christ" there.

He also pointed out that the ministry of each was "not just about doing a job", but getting others and themselves to Heaven.

"Ministry," he stated, "tries to unite the Body of Christ and show that Christ is alive and at the

centre of our lives".

Fr Peter also highlighted the need for prayer, saying: "Regardless of what ministry we are involved in, we should be close to God in His Word and in the Eucharist."

At the end, Parish Priest, Fr Michael McCaughey expressed deep appreciation for people giving up their time to attend and for using their talents in whatever their ministry was in the Parish: "It is very much appreciated by us as priests. We are all journeying together. Everything comes from God. Christ is the cornerstone. It is all about the journey together."

A 'Thank You' bag was given to everyone and there was an opportunity to chat together further over a light lunch.



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services in daily community life and the engagement in various apostolates in the parish, Dublin city and beyond with different groups, making real one of the mottos of the Dominican Order: 'Contemplare et contemplata alius tradere', that is 'to contemplate and share with others the fruits of contemplation'.

This experience was to grow when I joined the community at Tallaght for three years. This community is made up mostly of older friars who have been on the mission at home and abroad for many years, and now play an active role in the life of the local parish and community. A life made up of Divine Office celebrated regularly each day, the importance of community moments at meals and recreation, I was assigned to the apostolate associated with the Priory Institute, a place of academic and intellectual formation for lay people in the Irish Church.

Alongside opportunities in St Patrick's College, Maynooth, I was engaged in teaching, directing and administering various courses. The Priory Institute has been a leader in providing 'blended' (or 'distance') learning over its 20 years, by which students have a different experience of university education, made up

of a mixture of contact days and online learning. My involvement in third level education provides great opportunities to see where faith intersects with reason, as people seek to find language to articulate their faith, engage in conversations and questions, and discover ways to share their findings with others.

Covid-19 had its impact on many people, communities and religious families, yet the regular life of the Tallaght Dominicans provided an already-constructed structure to support challenges and trials that came our way. Daily Eucharist continued to be celebrated alongside the recitation of the Divine Office, friars were available to those who sought our counsel or the Sacrament of Confession, and the presence of the brethren at meals allowed opportunities for conversation and fraternity.

Discernment

My experience with the Order of Preachers was highly affirmative, with a disciplined experience of daily structure in terms of prayer, ministry and rest. Reflection and prayer, conversation and study, apostolate and community life helped discernment that saw my return to diocesan life in September 2021. While attentive to the many blessings I received during my time with the Order,

there was the call from the land that formed me in the faith to return. With the support of the bishop and the Irish Provincial, I returned to the diocese, being appointed to the Parish of Drumragh and, in turn, as Judicial Vicar of the National Marriage Appeal Tribunal of Ireland, based in Maynooth, while continuing to teach some courses at the Pontifical University.

The seventh century Irish poet, Padraigin Haicead penned "throughout my journey I did not meet another county like the land of O'Neill. The variegated hillsides bright with day, the sunny smooth meadows crossed by roads." This is certainly true of the parish of Drumragh. Returning to the well-known streets from my secondary school days, alongside Fr Eugene Hasson and Fr Michael McCaul, I lived a ministry encompassing daily liturgies, the celebration of the Eucharist, celebration of the sacraments, school chaplaincy and youth ministry. From the moments of welcoming children into God's family at Baptism, to the privilege of walking with families in the face of death, pain, loss and confusion, who grieved for loved ones, the moments of officiating at the Sacrament of Marriage to the times of broken unions, imperfect relationships, uncertain love or challenging new directions, the hours in the

confession box and poignancy of anointing and healing in journeys of sickness and ill health, the devotion to the Eucharist with firm faith or faltering steps, the meetings at the church door, in the parish hall, at the side of a football pitch or at school events, with the opportunity to reflect on all this through further studies in Catechetics – all reminders that God is at work somehow and in some way, as laughter and tears, joy and sorrow, pleasures and challenges are known as blessings from God.

All of this was preparation for the invitation given to me by Bishop Donal in August 2023, to undertake responsibility for Evangelisation and Adult Faith Formation in the Diocese. This role hopes to support our clergy, parish leaders and faithful with the knowledge and skills needed to carry out the Church's mission effectively in this time of change. This ministry will support priests and parish leadership teams as they identify the specific needs of their own parishes, as well as designing, coordinating, and conducting retreats, training programmes, and workshops that focus on evangelisation, adult faith formation, and the formation of lay ministries and roles in our parishes, with the hope to develop links between the various apostolates,

organisations, and faith formators within the Diocese, enabling us to share ideas, best practices, and to coordinate our evangelisation efforts. This work will engage many people throughout the diocese and beyond, especially in collaboration with Tony Brennan, Diocesan Pastoral Coordinator.

All this being said, this can only but be rooted in God and His invitation to say "yes" to the call He offers. There is a beautiful line from a reading at the Easter Vigil where the prophet, Baruch writes: "God sends the light – and it goes, He recalls it – and trembling it obeys; the stars shine joyfully at their set times: when He calls them, they answer, 'Here we are'; they gladly shine for their creator." In living priesthood, my experience of prayer and discernment has called me to respond to the moments when God sends and recalls, where He has invited me to obey, shine and answer "Here I am".

Throughout ministry, there have been many moments – high, low, clarity – that have called me to delve more deeply into my relationship with God and my response to His call, because all this reminds me that God has a plan – often different from what I might intend – but a plan that involves my efforts, my decisions and my discernment, as well as His providence, His goodness,

His mercy and His love.

Priesthood is not about any achievement of our own or a desire for popularity or praise. It is about being on the road, humbly walking with others as brothers and sisters so that Christ will transform many lives from fear to courage, weakness to strength, worry to confidence, even in the smallest of ways. The Gospels tell us that Jesus walked and sat with the people, those who liked Him and those who didn't, those who agreed with Him and those who didn't! The invitation today to priests is to do the same: to walk, sit, talk with others, so that the Holy Spirit will inspire our conversations, our responses and our commitment.

As a priest who is a member of a family, rooted in where I come from and surrounded by good friends and colleagues, I thank God for the people who show us how to live and embrace all things so that, rooted in the yesterdays, we may sow seeds today for the harvest of tomorrow. This is a reminder beautifully penned by an anonymous writer: "You never stop growing. A new future is always possible. Even on the other side of death, a new existence waits for you in the fullness of that glory which God has prepared for you from the beginning" (A Rule for a New Brother, 92).

Blessed with a number of religious vocations down the years...

Dungiven parishioners thankful for ordination of Fr Ruaidhrí Grieve OP



THE Dungiven Parish has been blessed in having a number of sons and daughters enter the priesthood and religious life over the years, and on the Feast of St Thérèse of Lisieux, Sunday, October 1, it was blessed with its first Dominican when parishioner, Ruaidhrí Grieve was ordained by fellow Derry man and successor of St Patrick, Archbishop Eamon Martin, in St Catherine's Dominican Church, Newry.

In thanksgiving for the newly ordained, Fr Ruaidhrí OP, who is to be based in Newry, the parishioners came out in large numbers to join his mother, Mary, a member of Dungiven St Joseph's Young Priest Society, and family members at the celebration of his first Mass in the parish Church of St Patrick.

The 45-year-old was joined on the altar by his Provincial, Fr John Harris OP and other Dominican Brothers and Deacon Chris, including Fr Peter O'Kane, who had spent a period of discernment with the Dominicans regarding his own vocation, before returning to minister in the Derry Diocese.

Welcoming Fr Ruaidhrí on behalf of Dungiven Parish Priest, Fr Seamus Kelly, the parish community and himself, Fr Joseph Varghese, curate, thanked him for responding positively to God's Call.

Highlighting the gift of priesthood, "the gift of the

Eucharist", Fr Joseph quoted Pope Benedict XVI: "The priest is a gift from the heart of Christ, a gift for the Church and for the world. From the heart of the Son of God, overflowing with love, all the goods of the Church spring forth."

Expressing personal appreciation for the advice and guidance received from Fr Ruaidhrí during his doctoral studies, Fr Joseph remarked: "Fr Ruaidhrí always has an endearing smile, and his simple nature, and above all his prayerfulness, will be an asset to his priestly ministry."

In a special moment before beginning the celebration of his first Mass, Fr Ruaidhrí's three young nephews came forward to present him with a bouquet of flowers.

The Dominican Provincial, Fr John Harris OP thanked all for the warm welcome, saying: "It is great for us Dominicans to see the soil where Ruaidhrí was raised. Thank you for your prayers offered for vocations to the priesthood."

Delivering the homily, Fr John recalled the story of the Cure d'Ars arriving in Ars and asking a young boy he met how to get to the church, telling him that if helped him get to the church, he would help him get to Heaven.

He continued: "As we celebrate the first Mass of Fr Ruaidhrí on the Feast of the Guardian Angels, it is an important reminder to us all that the priest is in some ways like a guardian angel to all those

he is to minister to. His main job is never about himself, he is always in service, but a particular service; one of helping us all to get to Heaven and keeping us on the path to Heaven.

"The special gift that God has given us in the super abundance of his love in our own personal Guardian Angel, is not simply to keep us safe on the roads, but to guide and help us on the journey through life to Heaven. The Guardian Angel is our closest associate on this spiritual journey."

Love

Reflecting on the many similarities of the priest and guardian angel, Fr John noted: "The priesthood is first and foremost a gift of God's super abundant love for us. I know that Fr Ruaidhrí knows this in the depth of his soul...The story of his life and ordination is always one of God's super abundance of love and care, not just for Ruaidhrí but also His love for us and for the Church, for the priest is never for himself.

"This generosity of God towards Ruaidhrí is seen in his kindness and generosity to others. Anyone who knows Fr Ruaidhrí, knows him to be a very generous and self-giving man. This is the result of the love he was shown at home, and added to by grace over the years of his interesting journey from Dungiven to Queens, from science to teaching, to St Malachy's to the Dominicans, to hospital chaplaincy, to Tralee and now to Newry."

Commenting on another very important aspect of the life of a priest, he said: "We live by faith. We are guided by sacred revelation. Our lives are on the supernatural level not just the natural level. This belief in the supernatural is central to the mystery of the sacred priesthood and to the ministry of the priesthood.

"You can't understand the priesthood simply on the level of social goods and positive engagement with the community. It has a meaning deeply rooted in the mystery of God as He reaches down to us in the life, death, resurrection and ascension of

Christ, and raises us up.

"I think if there is one grave source of concern for us in the church today, it is the loss of the supernatural way of looking at reality. We tend to see things only on the horizontal level and not on the vertical level. This will become central to Fr Ruaidhrí's life, to help people to see things on a different level, the level of the Angels; the invisible and glorified life that we are called to."

"In the years ahead," continued Fr John, "Fr Ruaidhrí will have to dig deeply into the sources of revelation and the life of supernatural grace, as he is called to serve as a priest in the Church, in a secularised atmosphere, where the supernatural is at best ignored if not scorned and ridiculed.

"The Guardian Angel is most concerned about getting us to Heaven. That also must be the central concern of the priest. He is called in many various ways to help people, to listen and to encourage, to forgive and understand, but always the presence of Heaven and the desire to help people to get there, we become, as St Paul says, all things to all men and women."

Saying that the natural qualities that God had blessed Fr Ruaidhrí with will help him in his life of service, as will the supernatural gifts, Fr John added: "Therefore, as we celebrate...let us also promise to be people of faith and prayer, who will assist this new priest with our prayers and sacrifices as he gives his over in Christ to us as he serves."

He concluded: "When the Cure died, the next person to die in the village was that young man, now an old man. He led him to Heaven. The priest not only points the way but by his way of life leads his people to Christ in Glory."

At the end of Mass, Fr Ruaidhrí had a special word of thanks for Fr Seamus Kelly, who was unable to attend, for his great support, and to Fr Joseph and Annie-Jo, the sacristan, for their kindness to him, and to all who had helped in anyway on his pathway to priesthood.

All were welcomed to come forward to receive Fr Ruaidhrí's first blessing.



Thankful for all who encouraged him in his vocation...

Prayer of newly ordained Fr Ruaidhrí Grieve is to be a faithful priest



AFTER celebrating his first Mass in his home parish of Dungiven, newly ordained Dominican, Fr Ruaidhrí Grieve OP was delighted to return to the home Church of his parents, when he was invited to celebrate Mass in St Joseph's, Craighbane, within the Claudy Parish, on the Sunday following his ordination.

The occasion was not only special in remembering too his late grandparents, Pat and Mary Devine of Carnareagh, and Patrick and Kathleen Grieve of Stranagalwilly, but also because this Church of St Joseph is where he and his brothers, Fionnbharr and Cathal, were baptised as the triplet sons born to Mary and Christy Grieve.

Thankful for the great faith passed down the generations that supported him on his pathway to priesthood, Fr Ruaidhrí took time out from his busy life of ministry with the Dominican community in Newry to reflect on the reality that he is now a priest, a role he had been increasingly preparing for since his ordination to the Diaconate last November, by Bishop Eamonn Walsh, retired Auxiliary Bishop of Dublin.

As a deacon, he was assigned first of all to the Dominican community at Holy Cross Priory, in Tralee, where he worked briefly in Bon Secours Hospital.

"Most of the time I was working in the Church, preaching and helping the Prior, then I started in Bon Secours two days a week," recalled Fr Ruaidhrí, adding that he hadn't been in Tralee long when he received a call from the Provincial reassigning him to Newry.

"That was a bit of a shock," he remarked, "but I said, 'Of course!' The Bursar in Newry was being moved and a replacement was needed, so I moved there on April 25, 2023. As bursar, I assist in aspects of running the house on behalf of the Prior.

"We are part of the Cathedral Parish there, which is dedicated to The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and St Catherine of Siena, and is referred to by most people as St Catherine's. However, some call it the Dominican Church and the people who attend it are known as Dominican Catholics."

Prior to his ordination to priesthood, he got the opportunity to be part of the Dominican teams

that led Missions in Limavady, in March while he was still with the Tralee community, and Dungiven in May, after just arriving in Newry, and then in the Faughanvale Parish. He also got to baptise three children.

Commenting on his ordination, Fr Ruaidhrí said: "It was a long time coming, in the sense that it took me a while to get there. Joining the Dominican Order was always in the back of my mind.

"I had been a seminarian for the Derry Diocese, and got to know Fr Peter O'Kane briefly then, as he had been a seminarian when I was applying for the Diocese. He and Fr Columba (Gary Toman), of the Down & Connor Diocese, then joined the Dominicans at the same time as me and were a great help and support, and both were with me on my ordination day."

Highlighting his prostration before the altar during the Litany of the Saints as the most powerful experience for him during the ordination ceremony, he added: "I am very thankful to God and to Archbishop Eamon Martin, who gave a great sermon. His kind words were challenging and moving."

Noting, in his sermon, how apt the Feast of St Therese of Lisieux, a Doctor of the Church and Patroness of the Missions, was for an ordination, Archbishop Eamon had also found it significant that Ruaidhrí was beginning "his ministerial priesthood as a special assembly of the synod of bishops" began in Rome, "called by Pope Francis to prayerfully discern what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church of our time."

While remarking that being a priest nowadays was a tremendously fulfilling and rewarding vocation but not without its challenges, "as more people seem to be living their lives with little or no reference to God or to the Church, and some are rejecting the Church outright," he told Ruaidhrí that he would also find "many wonderful and supportive people who have a profound faith and friendship with Christ", and that it would be his mission to minister to all.

Saying that despite his personal weaknesses, God would work through him, Archbishop Eamon urged Ruaidhrí to remember: "We are only the earthenware jars that hold this treasure."

Participate

He added: "This is something that St Therese of the Child Jesus, the Little Flower, was well aware of. Her so-called 'little way' of spiritual childhood, of complete confidence and trust in the Lord, is an inspiration for all of the baptised, and especially for us priests. She recognised that we can all participate in the mission of the Church; every day we are given countless opportunities to do acts of love, to make little sacrifices, to be light for the world, salt for the earth.

"Therese knew that, in spite of her littleness..., she shared in the vocation of the Apostles, to bring the name of Jesus to the whole world. And Ruaidhrí, she promised always to pray for priests, so stay close to St Therese because she undertook to spend her Heaven doing good on earth!"

Saying that it was "a very challenging, but exciting time for the faith in Ireland and indeed around the world", Archbishop Eamon spoke of the spiritual conversations at the Synod in Rome to take place during October and how they were "likely to stir up a whole variety of issues facing us," before assuring Ruaidhrí: "If you stay close to Christ, and to the truth of the Gospel that has been handed down to us in this one, Holy, Catholic, and apostolic church, then there is nothing for you to fear."

He stated: "For some time now the Catholic Church in Ireland has been in a new space where our values and teaching is increasingly questioned and marginalised in public debate. But let us not forget that we hold a treasure, the precious gift of faith in Christ which is perhaps needed today, more than ever. That is why we must never 'water down' the Word of God; we must remain: a Church that is outward looking, confident and prophetic in the dialogue and encounter between faith and culture; a Church which proclaims with conviction the Good News of salvation in Christ; a Church which chooses and protects life; a Church which cares for the beauty and wonder of God's creation while always pointing beyond this world and enkindling a longing for eternal life; a Church which brings to our troubled world and its many lonely and wounded people, the message that 'Christ is alive', 'Christ is our hope!'"

"In all of this, however, you must remember, Ruaidhrí...that we are a Church inspired by the Son of Man, who came not to be served but to serve...The Church should therefore always witness to communion rather than division and schism; to participation of all the baptised, rather than exclusion or narrow clericalism, to

mission rather than maintenance; to movements rather than monuments."

Describing his ordination as "a humbling experience" that he is very grateful for, Fr Ruaidhrí added: "Please God, I will be a faithful priest...that was the challenge Archbishop Eamon gave me."

He added: "It was very supportive to have my community and the Dominican Catholics of Newry there at my ordination, along with my family members, some of whom I hadn't seen in quite a while, so it was great to see them.

"I reflected on how I got to ordination and gave thanks for all who encouraged me on my journey, some of whom are dead, like my grandparents and other family members. It was a very moving experience to have some of those who had impacted my life and faith, with me on my ordination day."

Commenting on the celebration of his first Mass, Fr Ruaidhrí said: "I felt very nervous. I was thinking about the book, which was slightly different from what I had practiced on, and I was conscious of the need to slow down when talking, to speak clearly and reverently, and just be aware of what was going on and yet be aware of others."

He added: "In celebrating the Mass, I am praying and worshipping with the congregation. I am so grateful that the Church has given me the privilege of being a priest. I am eager to serve as a priest, and hope that I do not become overactive with bursary duties. The Dominicans are into study, so I realise that I will also need to read more for my homilies. It will be a balancing act to ensure that I have time for personal prayer too."

Settling in well with the Dominican community in Newry, which includes 82-year-old Fr Noel McKeown, from Derry, Fr Ruaidhrí is happy to be closer to home and hopeful of being able to visit more, much to the delight of his parents.

(Ordination photographs by Br Sean Blackwell OP)



Fr Ruaidhrí at the font where he was baptised in St Joseph's Church, Craighbane.



Moville native, Fr Kevin Doherty, on loan from the Archdiocese of Dublin, is the Administrator for the parishes of Clonmany and Culdaff on the retirement of Fr Brian Brady, and reflects here on the vocation journey that has taken him to Dublin and now back to his home County of Donegal...

A journey to God knows where



A movie came out a number of years ago called 'Sliding Doors'. It starts with a lady running for a train on the London Underground. The movie then tells the story of how her life unfolds if she manages to catch the train — and also, parallel to that, how her life unfolds (in a different way) if she misses the train. Now that I have come to minister at this time in the Diocese of Derry, I got to thinking about that movie.

By the early 1980s, I had left my home town of Moville and was working in Dublin. It was around that time also that the quite odd idea, I felt, of perhaps becoming a priest was footerin' around in my life. Eventually, having to do something about it, and not knowing how these things work, I got in touch with the Derry Diocese, with a lot of encouraging help from Fr Andy Dolan. From that, I was asked to attend a 'Vocations Weekend' in Termonbacca, which of course was fine. The downside is that, living in Dublin, it was quite a journey to make, especially in those days, without actually travelling further, home to Moville.

Just before the weekend in Termonbacca was scheduled, a priest in Dublin approached me after Mass one evening, informing me that there was a 'Vocations Weekend' scheduled for Clonliffe College, the Dublin Seminary, and wondered if I'd be interested in going along. Well, seeing that it might be a solution to the travelling conundrum, and having been assured that both weekends were "basically the

same", I attended the Vocations Weekend in Clonliffe, which is where the plot for the 'Sliding Doors' movie comes in!

Like the lady running for a train on the London Underground, it was as if I had been running for the train to Derry, but missed it, and now my life story evolved in a different way. The different way was that I entered the Seminary at Clonliffe and was ordained on Pentecost Sunday 1992, in Moville, for the Archdiocese of Dublin. Lest, though, there was any confusion as to where my loyalties were, I soon got the chance to put down a marker, as three months later I was in Croke Park for the All-Ireland final between Dublin and Donegal, which we won!

Lead thou me on

Sometimes things only make sense looking back. I'm thinking about some lines I put on my ordination card, because at the time I thought they were nice. However, as each year passes, it is as if those lines have found the rich soil that Jesus speaks of and are now bearing the most wonderful harvest. The fruit of this harvest I call 'a journey to God knows where', for such it is, literally. The old saying is that 'We make plans, and God laughs!' But it is never God laughing at us, only laughing with us. The 'plans' we make are usually about following a pathway that seems very clear and obvious to us, because we know where we are going. And yet, how often do we find that the pathway is not how we imagined it, and, indeed, often is unknown to us?

And so, we can flounder and dither and footer our way through situations, often giving the impression that we know more than we do! And then, like the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus, we come to realise that the journey itself, and those we have walked it with, is abundantly graced, for truly, "Earth's crammed with heaven, And every common bush afire with God" (Elizabeth Barrett Browning).

The overwhelming sense of 'agape', sourced in this 'abundantly graced' journey, prompts us to the realisation that our pathway in life is never about empowering ourselves, it is only about surrendering ourselves. We have become like Peter who, when literally out of his depth and desperate for rescuing (Mt 14:30), came to realise that his plans amount to nothing until he accepts the invitation of his Rescuer: "You have so little faith,"

Jesus said, "why did you doubt?" (Mt 14:31)

And so it is I think about the blossoming lines on my ordination card that, I believe now, act as a sat-nav to where the journey is supposed to bring me, and, indeed, any of us. They are from the poem 'Lead, Kindly Light' by John Henry Newman. His are desperate words of surrender to God, asking the Holy Spirit to guide him in the mission entrusted to him:

*Lead Thou me on.
Keep Thou my feet;
I do not ask to see the distant scene;
one step enough for me.*

Along my journey of priesthood I have found these to be wise words on many, and increasing, occasions. I'm not really sure how the date on my ordination card is now over 30 years old, but I do know that every day of that journey has been an extraordinary privilege. Mine has been the privilege of many priests that of being invited into the lives of communities and families and individuals, often at times of celebration, often at fragile times in their lives. I have shared in these lives during parish appointments across Dublin city, as well as in Wicklow and Kildare. Perhaps, though, along the way, the nine years I spent as chaplain in the newly opened Hospital at Tallaght (TUH) stand out.

Hospital life, as many of us know personally, is an encounter with an honesty that is raw, and where no hiding place is either sought or possible. Our Pastoral Care Team, invited consistently into this intimacy of families, understood our role in that invitation would often be this: "Don't just do something, stand there!" It reminds us never to underestimate the gift we bring to another through the discipleship of presence.

Also, with experience, and necessity, came the most beautiful reminder of the 'presence' we bring as Missionary Disciples (as Pope Francis reminds us we are): "I have neither silver nor gold, but I will give you what I have: in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene" (Acts 3:6). When the on-call bleep sounds, especially at night, it will be a summons to some kind of trauma, to the very essence of what is raw and honest. The prayer on the journey to this summons became always this: "Lord, I do not know what to say, and I do not know what to do, but you know the way. Let my words

be your words, let my presence be your presence. Lead Thou me on". And so it was. We got to call this mantra of surrender in our ministry 'The journey to God knows where'.

Homecoming

Of course, this journey that God knows is not hidden from us. It is St Augustine who puts it most famously: "You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in You." Our journey is about Homecoming. Here is a story about homecoming.

In one of my parishes, a member of our young adult group decided she would like to train as a primary school teacher. However, after applying for this, and having heard nothing back from the college, she instead went to study engineering, which her parents actually wanted her to do. It didn't go well. Consistently, she failed her end-of-year exams, managing to pass them in the repeats. College life was drudgery for her, yet she was trapped in it, until, that is, she decided to do something about it. In the fourth year of her course, she applied again to train as a teacher. The response from the college informed her she had been offered a place four years previously but had turned it down. It seems her parents had decided that she was to be an engineer, not a teacher, and so had rejected the offer on her behalf! Interesting daughter/parents conversations apart, she was again offered a place in the college, and, not unlike the 'Sliding Doors', her life changed, utterly. It turns out she was a born teacher, flying through college and becoming a much-loved and wonderful teacher.

Her experience reminds us that, left to its natural state, the river will always flow to where it is to go, and so it is in our lives with the journey to God knows where. It is a call that is innately part of who we are. It is a grace-filled yearning, shown to us by the insatiable tension and pervading restlessness that lies at the very core of our being. And, whether we use holy words or not, we spend our entire lives seeking to satisfy this eternal thirst that lies within us. This is why we are, each one of us, like the woman at the well (John 4). It is why we are intrigued and moved and challenged and loved by the invitation of our Lord 'Rescuer', to her:

No one who drinks the water that I shall give will ever be thirsty again:



Warm Culdaff welcome for Fr Kevin



the water that I shall give will become a spring of water within, welling up for eternal life. (John 4:14)

This invitation is mind-blowing, and it is the claim that the call to 'homecoming' has on us. It is the call to the source of who we are, to our roots, and our everyday journey is about finding our pathway there.

The next adventure on my journey to God knows where has brought me again to the Diocese of Derry. That, in itself, for me anyway, reflects the call of where we were formed and taught, and where the roots are deep. Yet, for all of us, this call to our roots is only a pale echo of the claim in our lives that is infinitely greater, the call to an eternally more wonderful 'Homecoming'. For, at the heart of everything, at the very centre of our lives, there is

the Divine fire. In the end, all yearning, longing, and aching, every desire we have, is driven by this fire.

For such is the journey of our soul. It is that fire of burning longing, incessant hunger, insatiable restlessness and crying dissatisfaction at our very core. And it begins always with desire, the desire that permeates the very first question Jesus asks us: "What are you looking for?" (John 1:38). Yet, when it comes to answering that question, it is not as if we do not already know what we are looking for. We know well about the living water our soul cries out for. We know this because wise people, and the saints, and experience, and Grace have taught us that we are created for Communion with GOD.

There's an ancient tradition in our Church which tells that story of restlessness this way. It is said

that the last thing GOD does before putting a soul into the body is to kiss the soul. The soul then goes through life always dimly remembering that kiss, a kiss of perfect love. And the soul measures all of life's loves and kisses against that primal perfect kiss. The Canadian philosopher and Jesuit priest, Bernard Lonergan, takes up that story and puts it this way. He says that, in this life, we don't learn truth, we recognise it; we don't learn goodness, we recognise it; we don't learn love, we recognise it. We recognise these because we already possess them at the very core of our soul. We recognise them because we unconsciously remember the kiss of GOD before we were born, and this is the source of the aching thirst of our soul. It is, as Jesus tells it, the call of the prodigal son, the call to Homecoming.

Signposts

By the end of the 'Sliding Doors' movie, having walked the two different pathways of life, caused by either getting or missing the train, the lady's life journey is reconciled and becomes one journey again. Not unlike the flow of two rivers, the Finn and the Mourne, that act as tributaries to bring about the single River Foyle, so her honest choices have returned her to a fundamental direction in life. This is how it is when we, too, honestly respond to the call of the Spirit in our lives. This is how it is when we, too, find ourselves falling in love with the One who has loved us first (1 John 4:19). In holy words, we call this the graced orientation of our human condition.

From the very outset of the Church, our spiritual tradition

is awash with those who give testimony to this cry of our soul, and the journey of the soul into communion with GOD. And so they have created for us 'signposts' marking out the kind of journey that is involved. Here is one of those signposts.

Many years ago, as I was starting out in the learning of theology, a good and wise and loving religious sister spoke helpful words to us. Reflecting on the well walked journey of her life, she asked us to remember the essential element in every journey, namely "It's not the speed you're going at that matters, it's the direction you're travelling in!" Of course, whatever direction we fundamentally choose in our lives will bring us somewhere, and away from somewhere.

Ultimately, however, life's adventures reveal to us that our

choice of direction is not between restlessness and restfulness, but between two kinds of restlessness: "The only hope, or else despair, Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre - To be redeemed from fire by fire." (T.S. Eliot from 'Four Quartets'). Our destiny is to be consumed by one kind of fire or another, but the flames of each are very different - God's flames or those of our own choosing.

Two thousand years ago St Paul spoke this same message. Wherever he went, he kept insisting, "Anastasis, Anastasis". Resurrection, Resurrection. The aching hunger of our soul is to encounter 'Anastasis', to come to that place of living water where every thirst is quenched, every hunger is nourished, every longing is satisfied...to love and be loved. This is what it is to come Home.

Touching tribute to late Fr Kevin Mullan during induction of new Drumquin PP



Barry Mulhern with his painting of the late Fr Kevin Mullan

struck and they found themselves confined to home instead.

"We had both studied Art at GCSE and A'level and so we decided to practice it during the lockdown," recalled Barry, adding: "In school, I had never really painted portraits, so I wanted to practice doing these. I did one of my Great Aunt, who was from Drumquin, and a Tyrone All-Ireland one, with three Tyrone players inside the Sam Maguire Cup.

"Some people focus on celebrity portraits, but I am always thinking of people I know to paint and when Fr Kevin Mullan died, who was a celebrity in his own right, I decided to do his. We had gone to his wake and funeral, and I thought it would be nice to paint his portrait because he had been very supportive to our mother at the time our father died, when we were three years old.

"We had been living in Drumquin at that time, and Fr Kevin would have celebrated our First Holy Communion and helped prepare us for Confirmation. When we moved to live in Castlederg, he came to visit and always asked our Aunt how Barry and Brad were getting on. So, I wanted to paint Fr Kevin in appreciation of all that."

Explaining that he had referred to different photographs of Fr Kevin to aid the painting of his portrait, Barry said: "One of the main photographs that I used was of him standing outside the chapel wearing a green robe. I wanted to paint him standing in front of the centre of the altar looking down the chapel. A pink altar cloth had been used on the altar for his funeral, which someone said was an Easter cloth, and so that is the one I decided to include in the painting. I also included his dog, Misty, that died a few years ago, at his feet, and painted Fr Kevin wearing his sandals."

While it still had to be varnished, Barry decided to take the painting along to Drumquin Chapel for

the induction of Fr Fraser as the new parish priest.

"I thought it was a good time to present it as Fr Kevin had been the parish priest there for so long. When I walked into the sacristy, the first people to see it were Fr Fraser and Fr Canning, and Fr Fraser told me that he had just been saying that there was no picture of Fr Kevin in the sacristy and that it would be nice to have one.

"So, I left the painting with them and then Fr Fraser took it around the chapel to show people, before leaving it against the altar. Afterwards, I took it home to varnish it and then left it on the table at the back of chapel, so people can think of him when they pick up their Mass leaflets."

Setting up a Facebook page during Covid to promote their artwork, the twins started out creating plywood signs and are now focusing on Fine Art, and are taking commissions for portraits. Their work can be viewed on Facebook and Instagram under mulhernbrothers (fine arts and gifts), and they can also be contacted on 07596958004.



Burt Inch & Fahan Calendar 2024

THE 2024 edition of the eagerly awaited Burt Inch & Fahan Calendar is now available in all the local shops in the parish. Costing €7, the proceeds will go to the Donegal Hospice and Parish funds. "This calendar," said one of the organisers, Kathleen Grant,

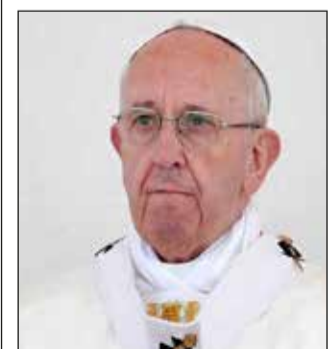
"is a unique way of keeping our diaspora in touch with home. We can post your order."

Kathleen would like to sincerely thank Malachy Harrigan, the local shops, sponsors, and the photographers, amateur and professional, who allowed the

use of their photos, and the local media.

Contact: E: kathleengrantburt@gmail.com; 'phone Malachy on (00353) 087 2787308 or Kathleen on (00353) 0863931426.

"We wish you a Happy and Healthy 2024," added Kathleen.



Pope's monthly intention

The Holy Father has asked for prayer during November for:

The Pope:
We pray for the Holy Father; as he fulfils his mission, may

he continue to accompany the flock entrusted to him, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

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 during November:

- Fr Neil Farren (Nov 1st)
- Fr Paul Farren (2nd)
- All priests (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)
- Fr Michael McCaul (28th)
- Fr Noel McDermott (29th)
- Fr Eamon McDevitt (30th)

Our Lady of Montligeon Prayer Groups a fruit of Derry devotion to praying for Holy Souls *by Mena Brennan*

THE Fraternity of Our Lady of Montligeon was set up in 1893 by Pope Leo XIII, who recognised the need to pray for the Holy Souls in Purgatory, particularly the Souls that have no-one left alive to pray for them.

The idea is to become a member of Our Lady of Montligeon (OLM) Prayer Group to pray for, and engage others to pray for, the deceased and others who have been recommended for prayer.

The spiritual fraternity of OLM prayer groups is present on all continents, with over 1,200 prayer groups registered with the head office in France.

Our local OLM prayer groups, in Termonbacca and St Joseph's Carnhill, Derry, came about during a weekend in May this year which focused on praying for the Holy Souls in Purgatory, at the request of Fr Stephen Quinn ocd. Fr Axel and Fr Paul, from the Fraternity in France, led the very informative and interesting day-and-a-half retreat.

During this well-attended weekend retreat, it was discovered by myself and Donna O'Neill, amongst other attendees, that although the Fraternity was widespread throughout the world, it was not active either in Ireland or Britain.

Donna and I took up the challenge, promising each other and some other interested parties, that we would bring OLM Holy Souls in Purgatory Prayer Meeting alive in Derry and further afield.

Our first meeting took place in mid-July at Termonbacca. Donna's husband, Kieran, kindly made up and printed the leaflets to use during our prayer meetings.

Like most Derry Catholics, I was brought up to remember the Holy Souls in Purgatory in my prayers. Furthermore, any little



The shrine of Our Lady of deliverance of the poor souls, also known as Our Lady of Montligeon.

annoyances during the day were not to be complained about, but offered up for the Holy Souls in Purgatory.

On completion of the retreat, I personally realised how limited my knowledge was about how powerful our intercession is for the release of the Holy Souls from Purgatory.

On my re-introduction to the subject of the Holy Souls, since childhood, I learned how helpful they can be to us, as they can also intercede for us and help bring about a spiritual aspect to the solution of our daily trials/prayers.

Being involved with the Holy Souls Prayer Meeting has opened a new dimension to my personal prayer life and to the voluntary work that I am involved in. Now, everything that happens during my day, every day, is centred around the Holy Souls, whether it be Mass, the Rosary, private prayer, Adoration, or healing services. Even washing the dishes in St Pio House is offered up for the Holy Souls. I absolutely love doing everything for them.

Sr Clare Crockett referred to the ways in which she could forget about herself during her working day; for her it was through art, music, etc. My way of forgetting about myself is being in the service

of the Holy Souls in Purgatory. My life is so much more fulfilled and enjoyable as a result.

I am involved with like-minded people, such as Sean Hoey, who recently travelled from Newry one Friday morning to give a very powerful talk on the Holy Souls, and Liam Stewart, who liaised between Sean and I. Sean was the first person to give me a book on the Holy Souls, which was written by a monk and took over 20 years to write. My hunger for reading about the Holy Souls is insatiable.

It was important for us to get our Bishop's blessing, so we approached his office secretary to explain what we were doing. Within a few weeks, Bishop Donal McKeown made a surprise visit to our meeting in Termonbacca and gave us his blessing, which meant so much to all of us, particularly when we knew he had taken time out of his busy schedule to do this.

Since setting up, we have also been part of a Holy Souls group that went to Knock Shrine on November 4. It certainly was a very spiritual pilgrimage, steeped in prayer, with the Rosary, other prayers, hymns, intercessions, candle-lit procession and Mass. It was a joy to hear the innocent voices of the children present, as they prayed and sang their hearts out on the journey home.

Delighted with the Holy Souls Prayer Group as a fruit of the Termonbacca Retreat, Donna commented: "We are supposed to pray for the Holy Souls all the time, not just during November. They need our on-going prayers. I have prayed for the Holy Souls since I was inspired by Padre Pio years ago. I love praying for them and it is so important that we do."

Margaret, an attendee of the Holy Souls Prayer Group, commented: "From my own personal perspective, I was so delighted that a Prayer Group for the Holy Souls was starting. I have been praying for the Holy Souls and asking for their intercession for many, many years.

"I am totally dedicated to this Prayer Group now and will promote it as much as I can. Thanks to Mena and Donna for bringing it about."

Our Lady of Montligeon Prayer Group for the Holy Souls meets in Termonbacca, Derry, on the third Monday of every month at 7.30 pm sharp. This prayer meeting is for the souls of deceased clergy and religious.

The Prayer Group also meets every Wednesday morning after 9.15 am Mass in the Kildare Room, attached to the Parochial House at St Brigid's, Carnhill, Derry. All are welcome.



Prayer to Our Lady of Montligeon

Our Lady of Deliverance,
Have compassion on all our departed,
Especially those who are most in need of the Lord's mercy.
Intercede for all those who have gone before us
And may the purifying love of God lead them to full deliverance.
May our prayer, united with the prayer of the whole Church,
Obtain for them joy beyond all their desires,
And bring consolation and relief to our loved ones in their suffering and distress.
Mother of the Church, help us, pilgrims on earth,
to be better in living each day of our journey towards the Resurrection.
Heal the wounds of heart and soul.
Help us to become witnesses of the Unseen God,
Seeking already what the eye cannot see.
Grant us the grace to become apostles of hope like those who keep vigil awaiting the dawn.
Refuge of sinners and Queen of all Saints,
Gather us all together one day,
in our Father's House,
For the eternal Easter,
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
In the unity of the Holy Spirit,
Amen. Our Lady of Montligeon, pray for the Souls in Purgatory.

(Imprimatur Msgr J.-C. Boulanger – 31 May 2007)

Archbishop Eamon gives blessing to spread of Our Lady of Montlegion Fraternity



THE two priests from the Shrine of Montlegion, in Normandy, France, known as Our Lady of Deliverance of the Poor Souls and a world centre of prayer for the deceased, who spoke at Termonbacca about the Holy Souls and their Fraternity, also received a warm welcome to Ireland from Archbishop Eamon Martin in Armagh.

The French Roman Catholic Shrine, in the Diocese of Seez, some 90 miles from Paris, is the sole shrine in the world

that is dedicated to praying for the deceased, and delivers the message 'Life wins over death, hope over grief' to the thousands of pilgrims and visitors who come there each year to find consolation and hope, or to entrust their dearly departed to Our Lady of Deliverance.

Fr Paul Denizot, Rector, and Fr Axel, of the Community of St Martin that has been entrusted with the Shrine's spiritual facilitation, were delighted to receive help from Archbishop

Eamon in promoting the Shrine and the Fraternity of Our Lady of Montligeon, which has millions of members today, with over 1,250 Our Lady Of Montligeon prayer groups meeting at least on a monthly basis to pray the Rosary for the members of the Fraternity.

The priests had with them a register of enrolled members, and Archbishop Eamon was amazed to discover that, from as far back as 1893, many people from Ireland had enrolled as members of the Fraternity of Our Lady of Montligeon.

"We don't really hear much about it today, but clearly there was a huge interest here in Ireland," he remarked, wondering how that might have come about.

Fr Axel explained that the founder of the Shrine, Msgr Paul Buguet (1843-1918) had travelled to Ireland, with other priests, to speak at conferences

about the Holy Souls, adding: "I think devotion to the Holy Souls was very strong in Ireland and so many people were interested and enrolled in this Fraternity, because it was a big thing. Masses were offered for the Holy Souls around the world."

Archbishop Eamon confirmed that there was still a very strong devotion in Ireland to praying for the Holy Souls, "particularly during the month of November and when people gather for Graveyard Sundays around the country, every year, to remember their loved ones who have died".

Concluding, he expressed the hope that the visit of Fr Paul and Fr Axel to promote the Shrine of Our Lady of Montlegion "will spark a revival of interest in this amazing confraternity."

People enrolled in the Fraternity of Our Lady of Montligeon benefit from the daily perpetual Mass

celebrated for their intention at the Shrine, and in various places worldwide through its associate members.

This spiritual Fraternity is described as being like "a small family encompassed in the vast family of the communion of Saints". Those enrolled are petitioned for during the Shrine's daily prayers, particularly in the Mass celebrated every day of the year for all members of the Fraternity, whether deceased or still living, at 8:00 am on week days, and at 11 am on Sundays and Feast days.

Daily, five Masses are celebrated for those enrolled at the Shrine, and at the Trappists Abbey of Soligny, France, at the Lazarist Monastery of Panningen, Netherlands, in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo, as well as at St Michael's Abbey in Farnborough, United Kingdom, and in



Guatemala. They also benefit from the prayer of 30,000 associates, committed to praying for the members of the Fraternity, and the prayer of the 1,250 Our Lady of Montligeon Prayer Groups.

Holy Souls need prayer and intergenerational healing

by Dr Sandra Doherty

SEPTEMBER 20 was the 435th anniversary of forgotten souls massacred on the outskirts of Derry...the 1588 brutal massacre of more than 300 sailors and soldiers somewhere between Elagh Castle and a few miles down the road at Burt.

The late Dr Kenneth McAll, a remarkable and deeply spiritual psychiatrist, medical doctor, Associate Member of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, and Missionary, and friend of my good friend, the late Fr Neal Carlin, Columba Community, in his book, 'Healing the Family Tree' (pp. 59,61, 1982,86), believed that he had found the answer and mystery to the Bermuda Triangle, that is, prayer and the Eucharist.

Dr McAll commended the Catholic Church for its belief in Purgatory and for praying for deceased souls, especially in war situations and tragedies, who are awaiting our prayers.

Kenneth and his wife, a missionary too, decided to take the Slave Trade route on a boat from the USA to West Africa. During their trip, the boat's engines stopped suddenly, when they both were deeply in prayer and realised that they were in the area where missing boats and planes had never been found.

They kept praying from their hearts and, sometime later, the engine started up again. It was then that Kenneth went up on board from his cabin to ask why the engine had stopped, but the Captain had no answers. When they got to their destination in West Africa, they held the Eucharist with a Catholic Bishop for all lost souls who went missing.

On return to the USA, they held another Eucharist for the souls of the people who were thrown overboard; many who had died, and some who were dying and who were put in the lower deck

and then thrown overboard being of no financial value (this had been revealed in prayer). Such evil. Since then, there have been no cases of missing boats or aeroplanes to date.

Benefits of Praying for the Holy Souls

Many authors and priests, for example, Fr Paul Sullivan, remind us that "we are given a great grace that these souls, obtain for their helpers - a short and easy Purgatory, or possibly complete remission".

So, in helping them, as our Blessed Mother Mary and Jesus wish us to do, we are helping ourselves too. To quote St John Vianney: "What souls we can convert by our prayers. The one who saves a soul from hell, saves this soul and his own as well".

My mum and I, since the mid-1980s, made a promise together to do the Divine Mercy Chaplet (Sr Faustina) every day at 3 pm for the Holy Souls. Later this beautiful Chaplet was resurrected again by Pope John Paul II, around the Year 2000. As the great Mercy Pope, he wrote an encyclical on Divine Mercy. We were delighted to hear this as it gave us more confirmation that we were called to do this.

We never failed to keep up this daily practice, no matter where we were. Even when in the car, we both got a nudge at 3 pm and pulled in and prayed the Divine Mercy for our loved ones and those deceased in our family, parish, and all Holy Souls.

My own experience of Divine Mercy at 3 pm

In July 1994, aged 85, my mum took quite ill. I had been looking after her for years at that point, so she was taken into hospital. Then I was told she had cancer of the oesophagus. I was there each day for hours but she wanted home. I asked the consultants, but they



were not too keen on the idea because she could regurgitate congenital blood and choke to death, and asked me if I could manage it. This only happened once and I was astounded how much the baby (me) in the family had grown up.

I agreed to this and got her home the next day. She was happier there and so was I. A few weeks later, after Sunday Mass, I was alone in the bedroom with her and, at 3 pm, I whispered in her ear, "We are going to say the Divine Mercy mum." She was unconscious and breathing deeply, but I knew that she could hear me. I got a sense that she had started to die at 3pm. When I had finished the Chaplet, my husband, Shaun walked into the room and I asked him to bring a mirror, as I thought mum had gone to the Lord around 3pm. This was confirmed.

I was sad, but I knew in my heart that it was her time to go and at 3pm, the Hour of Great Mercy when Christ died on the Cross. The fourth promise regarding the praying of the Chaplet is: "Whoever will recite it will receive great mercy at the hour of death". The room was filled with a great sense of peace.

About a week later, thinking of the whole experience, I recalled Jesus requesting Sr Faustina to

write down the following, "When they say this Chaplet in the presence of the dying, I will stand between my Father and the dying person, not as a just judge but as the Merciful Saviour"; powerful words. To think that while I was praying in my mother's ear, Jesus was there with the Father showering her with Mercy.

Later, I learned that when someone is devoted to the Divine Mercy and praying for the Holy Souls, and dies at three o'clock, they will go straight to Heaven. I'm not sure if that is true but I could believe it as Fr Paul Sullivan states, "the benefits of helping/praying for the Holy Souls will lessen our Purgatory and possible complete remission".

In conclusion, let us all continue to offer the Eucharist and continuous prayers for all our deceased loved ones, for tragedies all over the world and the deaths of the survivors of La Trinidad Valencia, who were murdered in Ireland by the irregular militia of Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, who was at this point loyal to Queen Elizabeth 1st. The soldiers and sailors were massacred on the outskirts of Derry, near Burt. There are no winners in any war.

Finally, I thank Shaun for his contribution and history on La Trinidad Valencia.

Remembering Greysteel victims... 'May their sacrifice be our path to peace'

STAR of the Sea Church, Faughanvale, was the setting for the Mass marking the 30th anniversary of the shocking attack on the local Greysteel community during The Troubles, when seven people were killed in a spray of bullets unleashed by a loyalist gang who burst into the Rising Sun Bar on October 30, 1993.

The families of 19-year-old Karen Thompson, 20-year-old Stephen Mullan, 50-year-old John Moyne, 54-year-old John Burns, 59-year-old Moira Duddy, 60-year-old Joseph McDermott, 81-year-old James Moore, and 76-year-old Samuel Montgomery, who died six months later from his injuries, and others who had been injured during the shooting were amongst the congregation gathered to commemorate the victims.

Welcoming the families and parishioners, parish priest, Fr Noel McDermott also extended a warm welcome to Rev Lindsay Blair and members of his congregation from Faughanvale Presbyterian Church, along with members of St Canice's Church of Ireland congregation.

During the ceremony, family members brought forward candles to the altar as the names of the eight victims were read out.

Concelebrating the Mass, the former parish priest of Bellaghy now residing in the Faughanvale Parish, Mgr Andy Dolan remarked in his homily that the "dark cloud of murder and mayhem that was inflicted on this community still hangs over it", especially for those



who lost loved ones and suffered horrific, life-changing injuries.

However, he went on to comment on how the unified response of the families of the victims – six Catholic and two Protestant – had demonstrated that "such evil, whatever the motivation...could not break your spirits, whatever about breaking hearts."

"Above all," he added, "it demonstrates the futility of violence of any kind, and certainly the futility of such extreme violence. Retaliation has never eased anybody's pain. Thankfully, in this case it began, among other things, to turn minds towards something better rather than continuing down a vortex of further violence."

Reflecting on the message on the Rising Sun Memorial, 'May their sacrifice be our path to peace', Mgr Andy addressed the younger generation gathered, saying: "The best memorial to those who have lost their lives, to those who still carry the scars and pain of injury as well as the loss of loved ones, is how you live and move."

Lifford



Sacred Prayer Space for November in St Patrick's Church, Murlough, Lifford.

Coleraine



November Memorial Mass on All Souls evening at St John's Church, Coleraine

November prayer for Holy Souls around Diocese

Greenlough



Greenlough parishioners gathered in St Oliver Plunkett Church to remember and pray for deceased



“On Earth as it is in Heaven” by Fr John McLaughlin ssc

FR Alberto Hurtado has been a fixture in the lives of many people in Chile, almost since the day of his death from cancer while still in his prime, as a witness to the situation of the poor, Catholic Action for men and youth, the power of the Press, and the basic message of the Gospel for all ages. So that when his Beatification was being celebrated many of the chapels in the country celebrated with him, in November of 1992.

In the Parish of San Columbano, our Mass was a call to all the seven chapels to come together and give witness to the testimonies of many active pastoral agents in lieu of a formal sermon. So there were presentations from: the Solidarity group; from the Soup Kitchens; the free Legal Aid, with Miguel showing his passion for Justice; from the AA grouping, where a Brazilian was a natural leader; the Catechists; and the Youth. The auditorium was full to capacity and the large image of Padre Hurtado presided over the whole celebration, confirming many in his vision and sanctity.

It had taken very little to convince the Pastoral Council that we should celebrate the occasion in this manner, and my own role as celebrant was largely that of rounding-up and joining together what we had just heard, as a further commitment to the centrality of Solidaridad in the pastoral planning of the Parish.

On other occasions, we had celebrated the Feast of St Joseph the Worker with a special Mass and instruments of work displayed at the beginning and at the Offertory, with on one occasion, a further event in the afternoon of the holiday, dedicated to sharing the details of the rights of the worker (Plan Laboral) in an entertaining quiz and with small prizes for knowledge of the statutes on workers' rights.

For the occasion of the Municipal elections we invited all the political parties to come in and join in an open forum. In the event, there was an immediate take-up of the invitation from the UDI and RN on the right of the spectrum, to the PC and PS etc on the left. Only the DC - the Christian Democrats, largely Catholic - chose to abstain and complain that the Church had “no place in promoting politics”! This, for a country emerging from a harsh dictatorship, was a welcome return to the democratic process, where the Church had been active for many years in demanding the restoration of just that!

My own involvement with the social went away back to University days, to Pax Christi in UCD and studying Politics in the BA degree. One of the memories of those sessions in the Aula was when Professor, later Bishop, Fr James Kavanagh, in a light and humorous comment, would welcome the arrival of the then celebrated Tony O'Reilly, rugby hero to many, when he chose to

attend the lectures!

Later, as a priest in the Parish of Arklow, it fell to me to welcome and promote the talks given by the Catholic Sociology Institute in Eccles Street, in Dublin. So, on a couple of occasions, I decided that it might be best to chair the meeting myself when the subject (around 1970) was on the State and Civil War politics, where there were strong feelings and passions on the floor in the Royal Hotel and about 80 present and engaged. One of those presenters that I can recall was Maurice Manning, who went on to be a leading political figure, Senator and commentator.

On another occasion, the subject was the New Education, and feelings also ran high as comments from the floor were forthright. I usually wrote an account and posted it for publication in the Wicklow People of the following week, and that had to be done well, as the public held me to account!

My own formation in the matters of the social, owed a lot in those days to my participation in the Vincent de Paul Conferences in places like Rialto and in Arklow, where ‘the Brothers’, instructing me really, were aware of all the situations, being kind and good humoured in every way. And, of course, involvement in Tenants' Associations, still new at the time (NATO), and Itinerant Settlement committees, which had been inspired at a national level by people like Victor Bewley and Fr Tom Fehilly.

One of my great friends and mentors was Paddy Lynch in Arklow, and I recall with gratitude the lively times spent together in the company of May, his wife. And, indeed, I remember his own special sense of humour and commitment, as we holidayed together on a couple of occasions. I can always recall his narrative of being the bearer of the brown envelope some weeks before Christmas and facing his own contemporaries in the name of a local contractor, as the Christmas bonus was in that act removed from their projected income. And the memory of the anguish of that occasion never left him!

In my early years on Mission in Chile, the shadow of the dictatorship presided over everything and I recall promoting the Social Doctrine of the Church, a group called INDISO which held Monday night meetings in the parish of San Luis, which was in the care of the Columbans. One of the joys was to welcome the young and not so young, who presented themselves at the door seeking copies of the documents like ‘Rerum Novarum’, or the more recent pastoral letter from Pope John Paul on Work and the rights of unions and the just wage, ‘Laborem Exercens’, or the documents of the Latin American Church, Celam, from Puebla and Medellin (much later on it was the celebrated Tony O'Reilly, rugby hero to many, when he chose to

of Buenos Aires, surely put his mark).

During the catechetical formation for the parents of the ‘C Five’ for the Communion reception, I often included that document on Work and the rights of the worker and the unions in the ending of the two-year formation.

United

During those years of the Dictatorship, the united Churches featured strongly through the Vicaria de la Solidaridad and also through the Workers Apostolate, with its summer schools in which I was present often as a participant, notably in the folklore sessions there for the senior citizens and where dance and song lifted my heart (and my legs!) for two weeks in hot summer, January afternoons. The Vicaria provided us with valuable material monthly in its free bulletin and what was really occurring in the way of torture, arrests, and with the solidarity groups and workshops operating amongst us.

That world received a mighty shake when news came through one Saturday night of the torture and strangulation of three of its leaders by a right-wing group from the ranks of the ‘Investigations section’ of the army. The horror and the fear stay with me, and I recall the unanimous revulsion and rejection from all the churches, even though the three activists and teachers were signed-on members of the Communist party. The funeral was a manifestation of ecumenism at its very best and strongest, as I wrote at the time in a letter to my then Archbishop of Dublin, Kevin McNamara.

It was not unusual on occasions such as this to have groups like the solidarity groups in the chapels taking on protests on the streets, and hunger vigils, in some of which I felt drawn to take part. One of those occasions was the so-called martyrs of Corpus Christi, where four communist activists had been shot down on betrayal, though they came out with their hands up. Naturally some of those protestors would invoke the names of people like Bobby Sands and would be seeking information from me on that demonstration of commitment! The challenge was, of course, to have practising members of the Christian and Catholic groups from the chapels involved and bringing out their vision, amongst the more strident young communists.

There were phrases in the language of the Church at the time which would not always find a welcome amongst the more traditional members, such as ‘The Preferential Option for the Poor’, from the CLAR document from Puebla, and the very word ‘Solidaridad’ was often avoided in favour of ‘Social Action or Social and Fraternal Help’ (~Ayuda Fraternal), as sounding less revolutionary to some social

groupings. In the monthly meeting of the Workers Pastoral, many of these issues would surface in a safe environment and, occasionally, with the presence of political figures and trade unionists of known and acclaimed witness.

A little digression, as I acknowledge the mission and deeper reflection contained in the autobiography of a British Labour MP for Birkenhead that I have been reading in recent months, Frank Field (Politics, Poverty and Belief), and the place in which biblical concepts played in his inspiration and commitment; the Old Testament celebration and restoration in Jubilee Years, the New Testament example of the Yeast, The Light on the Hill, a Covenanted Society. The sense of a Kingdom being revealed, the ‘Lux Mundi grouping’, the messages of Christmas and Easter, all once part of Christian Socialism, as he says. It brings to mind in my early days as a priest, reading the monthly publication, ‘Christian (Social?) Order’, and being enriched by it. Maybe not so distant from the Irish Catholic priest group of ‘Christus Re’, in which Fr, and later Cardinal, Cathal Daly played a leading part (for 25 years), with Peter McKeivitt and Cornelius Lucy, amongst many others.

Anyway, back to Chile, another feature of the commitment of some priests there was that of the ‘Worker Priests’, whose profile was often standout. My own Jesuit spiritual director, Pepe Correa, had been active with other members of the Society on that front and bore great testimony to those within the labour force, and to others like myself. From without the Diocesan priest, Mariano Puga was a legend to many of us, being also an active member and later world-Responsible, of the ‘Jesus Caritas movement’. My position alone on one of the hills of Valparaiso and doing my own thing, appealed strongly to Mariano in some conversations I had with him.

In the diocese of Valparaiso, there was another valiant worker-priest, Pepe (Beppo), who advised me on the occasion of the building of one of my chapels and the image of the Holy Family mosaic, that I aspired to have on its facade. Instead of a rather bland, carved image in wood, which I offered, he procured for me the services of Maria Martner, a friend of Pablo Neruda and an artist of street murals. So, she insisted on the active participation of the community in the selection of the coloured stones, not mosaic, on which was produced a very notable and working-class image of The Holy Family. On the occasion of the unveiling of the front piece, the Auxiliary Bishop did not seem too animated when I had Jacquelinlae, from the young community, read from the words of Neruda - a Communist and Nobel winner - to the same Maria



Martner, just before the blessing.

So, we were all a little more radical from the witness and activities of these priests in our meetings and retreats. I came across, recently, an older photo of the Columban group (around 1981-2) being led in retreat by Sacred Heart legend, Fr Esteban Gumucio, and author of many poems, dramas, eulogies of the worker, and director of retreats for marriage couples. Somewhere, I have a book of his writings and testimonies, and readings from members of his congregation (SSCC) of a growing movement and formal process under way, towards beatification and possible sanctity.

In that group photo of the early eighties, as we all looked so young and immersed in the cause of liberation, there was Fr Brendan Forde, an Irish Franciscan whose death and obituary (Irish Times, Sat Sept 9, 2023...“I accompanied the people”) has appeared in recent months. Brendan had later been active and present in El Salvador, Guatemala and Columbia, with the Farc, always way out on the frontiers, where he always felt the Church should be present. In Chile before expulsion, I remember joining him as he immersed himself in the Festival and musical week in Castro, of the Island of Chiloe in the south, where many of us took holidays in the month of February, and where he set about learning some new songs on the guitar to bring back to his communities in Santiago.

Hope

In one of those years, the film ‘Gandhi’ was showing in the city and many of us drew hope and emotion from it, as the country and its radios and newspapers were being muzzled (embargoed) by a strong censorship, some of it

self-imposed. I can well remember meeting fellow-priests, and some sisters and lay people, as we emerged emotionally charged, from that film!

So, with a background like that, many Columbans of my time carry stories and write articles and give interviews for a world where such situations and conditions seems so alien. Though just a little look at what is happening in Nicaragua gives many of us food for alarm, as Daniel Ortega, a former figure of the Liberation and leader of the Contras, has now swung one hundred and eighty per cent, become a dictator and is doing what never occurred in Chile, as he strips their nationality from priests and lay witnesses and expels them from their own country. I was a visitor to that country during that period, and remain underwhelmed by the events of recent months.

At one of the summer schools in Glenties a few years ago, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin was an invited speaker. His chosen subject, as I read at the time, was the Social and Pastoral Letter of Pope Benedict, ‘Caritas en Veritate’. Having read most of those documents in Spanish, I was interested in what he would present to an Irish group of activists and politicians, for many of whom it would have been not been bedtime-reading. In the recent scourge of the Covid, many of the themes of that document would finally come into the common conversation: ‘International Solidarity’ and ‘care for the weaker nations, The Common Good’, and looking at the world beyond us a must in the present moment. I still wonder have we learned anything from that world-wide epidemic and pondered it during the funeral of that great Pope.





Finally, and on the occasion of once again having the Parable of the Good Samaritan amongst the readings for the day, I became excited at the presentation in 'Fratelli Tutti', of Pope Francis, of that same parable and its challenge for the world into which we might present the Plan of God and Architect of our world.

Starting anew

"77. Each day offers us a new opportunity, a new possibility. We should not expect everything

from those who govern us, for that would be childish. We have the space we need for co-responsibility in creating and putting into place new processes and changes. Let us take an active part in renewing and supporting our troubled societies. Today we have a great opportunity to express our innate sense of fraternity, to be Good Samaritans who bear the pain of other people's troubles rather than fomenting greater hatred and resentment. Like the chance traveller in the

parable, we need only have a pure and simple desire to be a people, a community, constant and tireless in the effort to include, integrate and lift up the fallen. We may often find ourselves succumbing to the mentality of the violent, the blindly ambitious, those who spread mistrust and lies. Others may continue to view politics or the economy as an arena for their own power plays. For our part, let us foster what is good and place ourselves at its service.

78. We can start from below and, case by case, act at the most concrete and local levels, and then expand to the farthest reaches of our countries and our world, with the same care and concern that the Samaritan showed for each of the wounded man's injuries. Let us seek out others and embrace the world as it is, without fear of pain or a sense of inadequacy, because there we will discover all the goodness that God has planted in human hearts. Difficulties that seem overwhelming are opportunities for growth, not excuses for a glum resignation that can lead only to acquiescence. Yet let us not do this alone, as individuals. The Samaritan discovered an innkeeper who would care for the man; we too are called to unite as a family that is stronger than the sum of small individual members. For "the whole is greater than the part, but it is also greater than the sum of its parts". [60] Let us renounce the pettiness and

resentment of useless in-fighting and constant confrontation. Let us stop feeling sorry for ourselves and acknowledge our crimes, our apathy, our lies. Reparation and reconciliation will give us new life and set us all free from fear.

79. The Samaritan who stopped along the way departed without expecting any recognition or gratitude. His effort to assist

another person gave him great satisfaction in life and before his God, and thus became a duty. All of us have a responsibility for the wounded, those of our own people and all the peoples of the earth. Let us care for the needs of every man and woman, young and old, with the same fraternal spirit of care and closeness that marked the Good Samaritan.



The Divine Mercy Image explained... The Rays (Part 2)

by Sr Benedetta Hutnikiewicz ZSJM, Sisters of Merciful Jesus, Letterkenny

THE Lord once said to St. Faustina: "My mercy has passed into souls through the divine-human Heart of Jesus as a ray from the sun passes through crystal" (Diary 528). We can encounter God in His Mercy only through the Merciful Heart of God the Son. That Mercy comes to us like a ray of sunshine.

Last month, we spent some time reflecting upon the meaning of the rays in the Divine Mercy Image as a symbol of the Sacraments. But there's more to say about the rays, so let's dive deeper.

We've already mentioned that the rays are a shelter and a shield. In times of anxiety, restlessness, and suffering, as well as in moments of battle, this is our place to hide. On our own we cannot do a single thing, it's only the grace of God that can sustain us on the journey. Jesus said: "apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

I had a Confessor (God rest his soul!) who really wanted to instill that in my heart. He wanted me to see how without God I am helpless and I need to totally rely on His goodness and mercy.

St Faustina writes about it too: "My Jesus, my strength, my peace, my repose; my soul bathes daily in the rays of Your mercy. There is not a moment in my life when I do not experience Your mercy, O God. I count on nothing in my whole life, but only on Your infinite mercy. It is the guiding thread of my life, O Lord. My soul is filled with God's mercy" (Diary 697).

I think each of us is invited to this attitude of total dependence on God and the rays in the Image are a powerful reminder to place all our hope in God alone.

What I personally love about the rays is that to me they look like a river. And since the source

of this 'river' is the Sacred Heart of Jesus, I can be sure that it will never dry out. God's Mercy never ends and never fails. It is always overflowing.

Jesus said to St Faustina: "My Heart overflows with great mercy for souls, and especially for poor sinners. If only they could understand that I am the best of Fathers to them and that it is for them that the Blood and Water flowed from My Heart as from a fount overflowing with mercy. For them I dwell in the tabernacle as King of Mercy. I desire to bestow My graces upon souls, but they do not want to accept them. You, at least, come to Me as often as possible and take these graces they do not want to accept. In this way you will console My Heart. Oh, how indifferent are souls to so much goodness, to so many proofs of love! My Heart drinks only of the ingratitude and forgetfulness of souls living in the world. They have time for everything, but they have no time to come to Me for graces" (Diary 367).

Therefore, the rays are also an invitation to constantly come to the Lord and receive His blessings.

I find it very interesting that Jesus says that His Mercy is like flames: it burns Him! "The flames of mercy are burning Me - clamouring to be spent; I want to keep pouring them out upon souls; souls just don't want to believe in My goodness" (Diary 177; see also Diary 1074). We're talking about Blood and Water, so while the flames burn, Jesus wants to pour them out! He finds it painful that so many are not receiving the fruit of His Passion: His tender Mercy and compassion.

Since the rays are at the same time like flames, they can warm even the coldest hearts. St.

Faustina gives testimony to this. She writes: "[One] day, when I was in church waiting for confession, I saw the same rays issuing from the monstrance and spreading throughout the church. This lasted all through the service. After the Benediction [the rays shone out] to both sides and returned again to the monstrance. Their appearance was bright and transparent like crystal. I asked Jesus that He deign to light the fire of His love in all souls that were cold. Beneath these rays a heart will grow warm even if it were like a block of ice; even if it were hard as a rock, it will crumble into dust" (Diary, 370).

If you look at the rays you will also notice that they look a bit like a tent. We can find shelter in them, they can be our home. God wants to be your home! If we live apart from Him we are restless, anxious. There is no one else in the world that will understand us and receive us as He does. Jesus says: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love" (John 15:9). Only in Him can we find our home and He longs for us to come to Him.

Grace

God's grace comes to us by means of His Church. The Church is a family of believers, God's own family, so to speak. The rays encourage us to love this family more and more. In the Church, God invites us to have a special bond with one another that is born of His grace, and which is different than ties of blood, culture, nationality. I don't know if you've ever had this experience when you're somewhere abroad, in a foreign country, and you come into a Catholic Church, maybe get to participate in Mass there. Even if you don't understand the language, even if

some things are slightly different than in your parish church, you participate in the very same Mass. And you can see, maybe more than when you go to your local church, how universal the Church is. It broadens not only our mind, but also expands our heart, to pray for our brothers and sisters in faith throughout the world. Maybe especially for those who are suffering persecution because they believe in Jesus.

The Church is the Bride of Christ. Is she perfect? Yes and no. She is perfect with God's own perfection, holy with His own holiness. But at the same time she's built of fragile, sinful human beings, just like you and me. We hear a lot about the scandals in the Church and we can't ignore them, but should really take them to heart. They should hurt us, because of our love for the Church. They are an invitation for us to conversion of our own hearts, but also to prayer and penance for those who have hurt others, and prayers and sacrifices for those who have been hurt. Many people draw away from the Church because of them. They too need our prayers.

But if we look at the other side, we can see the Church differently. She's a place of everyday miracles, growth, love and care. She's a place of everyday fidelity of countless people, trying to live out the message of the Gospel as best they can. Now, that rarely makes the headlines! The Church, like a mother, gives us the sacraments. It's only within the Church that we can become one with Christ in the Eucharist, be pardoned of our offences in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Think of the beauty of all the Saints of the Church, starting with Our Blessed Mother. Consider what gift it is to have God's holy

word, which we too receive from and through the Church. It's the Church that has passed on to us Christ's teaching. And there's so much more: ages of care for the sick and the poor; taking care of education; inspiring and promoting art, architecture, music etc. If you're exhausted and worn out with listening to all that is wrong with the Church, turn your eyes towards its beauty. Turn your eyes towards Christ himself and come to receive His Mercy, flowing from His heart: it flows within the Church, but also for the Church.

St Faustina was privileged to see the rays of Mercy many times and on various occasions (see for example Diary 344, 414, 420, 648, 657, 1046, 1559, 1796). Let us recall here the time it happened when the Divine Mercy Image was for the first time venerated in public.

Here are her own words: "[April] 26. On Friday, when I was at Ostra Brama to attend the ceremony during which the image was displayed, I heard a sermon given by my confessor [Father Sopocho]. This sermon about Divine Mercy was the first of the things that Jesus had asked for so very long ago. When he began to speak about the great mercy of the Lord, the image came alive and the rays pierced the hearts of the people gathered there, but not all to the same degree. Some received more, some less. Great joy filled my soul to see the grace of God. Then I heard the words, You are a witness of My mercy. You shall stand before My throne forever as a living witness to My mercy" (Diary 417).

As an apostle of Divine Mercy, Sr Faustina was called to help others receive the graces from the Lord's open Heart. Jesus told her: "These rays of mercy will pass



through you, just as they have passed through this Host, and they will go out through all the world" (Diary 441).

She was faithful to that mission. She wrote: "O most sweet Jesus, who have deigned to allow miserable me to gain a knowledge of Your unfathomable mercy; O most sweet Jesus, who have graciously demanded that I tell the whole world of Your incomprehensible mercy, this day I take into my hands the two rays that spring from Your merciful Heart; that is, the Blood and the Water; and I scatter them all over the globe so that each soul may receive Your mercy and, having received it, may glorify it for endless ages" (Diary 836).

She continues that mission now in eternity. So if you need help to come closer to God's Mercy, to receive it, or you know someone who needs it, don't hesitate to ask for her help.

Parish Post-its

Aghyaran

Quiz Night: 'Loreto to Lusaka' Quiz Night will take place in Aghyaran GAA Centre on Friday, December 1 at 8 pm. Loreto Grammar School, Omagh, in partnership with the Spirit of Paul McGirr Charity. Funds in aid of Tyrone Secondary School Lusaka, Zambia. Suggested donation of £20 per team of 4. (Organised by Dearbaile O'Shea Byrne.) Parish Magazine: 'The Aghyaran Parish Magazine' No 23, will be on sale on the weekend of December 2-3. Price £5.

Trocaire Gifts: Bernie McGuire and her team will be available at the back of the Church after Mass on the weekends of December 2-3 and 16-17, with the Trocaire Global Gifts, which can be purchased at a cost from £7 upwards. The Bucket Collection will also take place and this money will go towards the purchase of water for villages. Your continued support would be greatly appreciated. You may contact Bernie directly on 8167 0122.

Adoration: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place on Thursdays after 9.15 am Mass, and finishes at 12 noon.

Ardstraw East (Newtownstewart)

YOUCAT Study: A one-hour interactive YOUCAT programme, for those aged 16+ years, takes place on Thursdays in the Oratory, at 7 Main Street, Newtownstewart, starting at 6.30 pm. For further information contact 028 81661445 or email ardstraweast@derrydiocese.org. This may be of particular interest to those undertaking the Pope John Paul II Award.

Badoney Lower (Gortin-Rouskey)

Adoration: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place on Tuesdays in St Patrick's Church, Gortin, following 12.30 pm Mass, with Benediction at 5 pm.

Ballinascreen

Carol Service: The annual Parish Christmas Carol Service will take place in Holy Rosary Church at 6 pm on Sunday, December 17. Live Crib: The Live Crib will take place on Saturday, December 30, marking the 800th anniversary of the first Crib created by St Francis. More details to follow.

St Pio Mass: Mass in honour of St Pio of Pietrelcina is celebrated on the first Monday of each month at

7.30 pm, in Holy Rosary Church. The Novena prayers and Rosary are recited at 7.10 pm.

Ballymagroarty

Christmas Hampers: Fr Mulhern, Prison Chaplain, is seeking help in providing Christmas hampers for families of prisoners. The appeal runs up until December 3, and anything no matter how small will be greatly appreciated. Mainly tinned and dried foods, sweets, selection boxes etc. Money donations are used to help buy toys for the children of the prisoners' families.

Parish Novena: The Parish Novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help takes place on Tuesdays, at 7.15 pm, in preparation for Christmas.

Fr Paddy Poetry: A small number of 'In Sunshine and In Shadow', a book of poetry written by the late Fr Paddy O'Kane, have been reprinted and are available at the parish office any morning, Monday-Friday. Cost £10. All proceeds will go to the Foyle Hospice.

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

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

Banagher

Trocaire Gifts: Trócaire Christmas Gifts of Change will be on sale at weekend Masses on December 2-3 and 16-17, in St Joseph's Fincairn, and December 10 & 17 in St Mary's, Altinure.

Parish Pilgrimage: The Parish Pilgrimage to Fatima takes place May 17-24, 2024. Direct flights from Dublin to Lisbon, seven nights' full board, central Fatima Hotel, full religious programme, including three afternoon excursions: £760 pps. See Fr Micheál for further details.

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

Bellaghy

Community Café: The Open Door Community Café is open on the last

Sunday of each month, from 11.30 am until 1 pm.

Buncrana

Parish Novena: The nine-Sundays Parish Novena in St Mary's Church, Cockhill, with the theme 'Throwing open the doors to Christ', continues on Sundays at 7 pm. The novena is in honour of Pope St John Paul II for a renewal of faith and has guest speakers each evening.

Adoration: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament now takes place in St Mary's Oratory every Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday, beginning at 6 am and closing at 10 pm.

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

Guided Holy Hour: A Guided Holy Hour of Adoration in Honour of the Holy Face of Jesus takes place on Sundays, 6-7 pm in St Mary's Oratory. All welcome. **Prayer:** Prayers, including the Rosary, and reading of the Sunday Gospel, with reflection time, will take place in St Patrick's Hall, Castlederg, on Friday, November 24, at 8 pm. Refreshments will be served afterwards. Everyone welcome.

Adoration: Adoration takes place following 10 am Mass in St Patrick's Church on

Fridays, until 12 noon.

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

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

Burt, Inch & Fahan

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

Cappagh

Carol Service: The 200th Anniversary Killyclogher Carol Service takes place on Sunday, December 17, at 6 pm.

Fundraising Market: Killyclogher Artisan Market takes place on Sunday, November 26, in the Cappagh Parish Centre, Killyclogher, from 12-5 pm, with a great range of homemade crafts and artisan foods and a special visit from Father Christmas. This is a fundraiser for SVP and the Parish Development Fund.

Rosary: The Rosary is prayed in St Mary's Church, Killyclogher every Monday-Sunday after 10 am Mass, and in Corpus Christi, Mountfield every Thursday evening at 8 pm.

Carndonagh

Ecumenical Carol Service: The annual Ecumenical Carol Service will be held in the Church of the Sacred Heart, Carndonagh on Friday, December 22, at 8 pm.

Castlederg & Ardstraw West

Christmas Bazaar: The Christmas Bazaar will be held on Tuesday, December 19, at 7.30 pm, after the Parish Carol Service, with funds going towards the many projects in pipeline, including repair of St Patrick's Church Tower and development of the former St Eugene's site. Sponsorship of prizes will be most welcome.

Prayer: Prayers, including the Rosary, and reading of the Sunday Gospel, with reflection time, will take place in St Patrick's Hall, Castlederg, on Friday, November 24, at 8 pm. Refreshments will be served afterwards. Everyone welcome.

Adoration: Adoration takes place following 10 am Mass in St Patrick's Church on

Fridays, until 12 noon.

Claudy

College Anniversary: St Patrick's & St Brigid's College will be celebrating its 60th anniversary with Mass in St Patrick's Church at 7 pm on Thursday, May 2, 2024, followed by further celebrations in the College, until 9.30 pm.

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

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

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

Coleraine

SJYP Meet: St Joseph's Young Priests' Society meets on the last Monday of each month at St John's Church Sacristy, after the 10 am morning Mass, and is open to everyone. New members are welcome at any of the meetings, which support praying for and assisting to support the vocation to priesthood and the religious life.

Exposition: St John's Church Monday Exposition of the

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

Creggan

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

Polish Mass: Mass for the Polish community will be celebrated at 9.30 am every second and fourth Sunday of the month in the Divine Mercy Chapel, at St Mary's Church.

Desertmartin

Golden Jubilee: The 50th anniversary of the opening of St Patrick's Church, Keenaught, will be marked with the celebration of Mass by Bishop Donal on Sunday, December 3, at 12 noon.

Dunamanagh

Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration takes place in St Patrick's Church after 10 am Mass on Saturdays, until 12 noon, and on Mondays from 7-8 pm.

Drumragh (Omagh)

Prayer Group: The Charismatic Prayer Group meetings take place in The Pastoral Centre on Thursday evenings, with Rosary at 7.40 pm and prayer meeting at 8 pm. All welcome to come and pray.

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

Adoration: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in Sacred Heart Church on Wednesdays following morning Mass until 5.30 pm. Rosary of Reparation: On the first Saturday of each month, a Rosary of Reparation will be prayed at 1pm on Main Street, Omagh. All welcome to join.

Drumquin

Grotto Rosary: The Rosary is recited at Our Lady's Grotto at St Patrick's Church, Drumquin, on Monday evenings, at 8 pm.

Dungiven

Healing Mass: A St Pio Healing Mass takes place on the first Tuesday of each month at 7 pm in St Patrick's. Rosary: The Rosary is prayed at 9.35 am in St Patrick's Church from Monday-Friday.

Lectio Divina: The Lectio Divina Group meet on Wednesdays, from 7.30 - 9.00 pm, in the Committee

Room.

Prayer Group: The St Canice's Prayer Group meets each Thursday in the Conference Room at 7 pm, and invites anyone who wishes to deepen their faith through shared Scripture, Prayer and Praise.

Errigal

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

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

Social Gathering: Tea and scones are available in Glenuillin Social Club after the Wednesday morning Mass, offering an opportunity to have 'a cuppa and a natter' after the prayers are said! Everyone welcome.

Fahan

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

Faughanvale

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

Greencastle

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

Adoration: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in St Patrick's Church after 12.30 pm Mass on Tuesdays until 5 pm.

Iskaheen, Drung & Muff

Adoration: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place on Tuesdays after 10 am Mass in St Patrick's Church, Iskaheen.

Divine Mercy: Divine Mercy Devotions take place on Wednesdays after 10 am Mass in Sacred Heart Church, Muff.

St Peregrine: The St Peregrine Novena Prayer and veneration of relic takes place in St Columba's Church, Drung, after the 10.15 am Mass on the first Sunday of each month.

Lavey

Youth 2000: Youth 2000 Prayer Group, for 16-35 year olds, meets in Lavey Parochial House, opposite the chapel, on Friday evenings at 7.30 pm.

Leckpatrick

Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration takes place on Wednesdays after 10 am

Mass until 5.30 pm.

Limavady

Coffee Morning: St Finlough's Coffee Morning will take place on Saturday, November 25, from 10 am - 12 noon. Santa will be there. All proceeds to St Finlough's Refurbishment Programme.

Advent Talks: Fr Peter O'Kane is delivering a series of three talks in St Mary's Church, starting at 6 pm on Sunday, November 26, the Feast of Christ The King, and continuing for the first two Sundays of Advent. They will be given as part of a Eucharistic Healing Service.

Ecumenical Carols: The traditional Ecumenical Walking Carol Service will be held on Monday, December 11, starting in St Mary's at 7 pm.

Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration will take place in St Mary's Church on Thursday, December 14.

Children's Liturgy: Children's Liturgy for children in P1-P3 takes place every Sunday at the 12 noon Mass in Christ the King Church.

Maghera

Parish Novena: The Novena to Our Lady Untier of Knots is underway in the Parish, taking place on Wednesday nights at 7.30pm Mass in St Mary's Church. The Novena is a personal and powerful one-to-one conversation with Our Lady, which opens the path of acceptance and of understanding the importance of letting go and forgiving. The Novena is linked with the daily Rosary, the Rose of all devotions to Our Lady. Bring to her each day for nine days - one sorrow one worry that troubles you, one 'knot' in your life that keeps God's grace from flowing fully into your soul.

Pray & Play: The Maghera Parish Pray and Play for Parents, Grandparents & Tots (three years old and younger) meets every Friday, in the Fairhill Youth Centre, after the 10 am Mass. It runs from 10.30 am until 12 noon.

Melmount

Strabane Chorale: John Rutter's 'Gloria' will be performed by Strabane Chorale, with guest singers and musicians, on Sunday, December 3, at 4 pm in St. Mary's Church, Melmount. With additional concert pieces, this promises to be an extravaganza of music and singing to suit all tastes, conducted by Gerard Bradley. There will be a retiring collection for local charities and Choir funds.

Exposition: Exposition of

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the Blessed Sacrament takes place in the church on Mondays after 10 am Mass until 6 pm.

Moville

Musical Nativity: The Ceolan School of Music will present their musical Nativity story in St. Pius X Church on Tuesday, December 19.

Leavers' Mass: Sixth Class Leavers' Mass will take place on Thursday, June 20, at 10 am in St Pius X Church.

Cemetery Sunday: Cemetery Sunday will take place on July 7 at 12 noon in St Mary's, Ballybrack, and on July 14 at 12 noon in St Columba's, Ballinacrae.

Prayer: The Rosary and Divine Mercy Chaplet will be recited in St Pius X Church, Moville, at 7.30 pm every day, from Sunday - Friday.

Adoration: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place on Mondays, from 2-9 pm, and Wednesdays, 6-9 pm, in St Pius X Church.

Sion Mills

Legion of Mary: The Legion of Mary meets in the Green Room, behind the church, each Monday evening at 7.30 pm. This is open not only to members of the Legion but to anyone interested in joining. Anyone can come along to the start of the meeting for the Rosary.

Steelstown & Culmore

Lectio Divina: Lectio Divina is a way of praying the Scriptures together and takes place every Wednesday after 10 am Mass, in the Parish Conference Room. All welcome.

Adoration: Spend some quiet time before the Lord Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament each Friday after 10 am Mass to 6.50 pm.

Stations of the Cross: Come along to reflect on the Way of the Cross on Fridays at 7.30 pm.

Strabane (Camus)

Graves' Blessing 2024: The annual ceremony of the blessing of graves for the parish will be held on Sunday, May 26, 2024, at 3 pm.

Adoration: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place all day in the Adoration Chapel (Oasis of Peace), which is situated at the back of the Church.

Prayer Group: The Contemplative Prayer Group meets on Mondays at 8 pm in the Prayer Room in the Parochial House. All welcome. Entry by Parish Priest's front door.

SJYP Society: The St John Vianney branch of the St Joseph's Young Priests' Society (the three combined Strabane parishes) meets on the first Tuesday of the month, excluding January, July and August, with Rosary in the church after 10 am Mass and

continues in St Patrick's Hall. More people are encouraged to join in this prayer for new students to join the priesthood. The Society assists Irish and overseas student. Please contact Margaret Harte on 028 71 883159.

Padre Pio Mass: The Padre Pio Mass takes place in the Church on the first Wednesday of the month at 7 pm, with Rosary beforehand at 6.40 pm.

Grotto Rosary: The Rosary is recited at the Grotto on the last Sunday of each month. Everyone welcome.

Templemore - Long

Tower

Mother of Perpetual Help Novena: The Long Tower annual Novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Mother of Priests, on the nine Sundays before Christmas, runs until Sunday, December 17, starting at 6 pm. This year's theme is that of the Year of Vocations to Diocesan Priesthood, "Take the Risk for Christ." Each night will comprise of the Rosary, Novena prayer and petitions, a talk, and Eucharistic Healing ceremony, with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

Padre Pio Mass: A Padre Pio Mass for healing in mind and body takes place on the first Monday of each month at 7.30 pm, in Long Tower Church. It is hoped at the end of each Mass to give a Blessing using a First Class Relic of Padre Pio. The Mass will be streamed via the parish website: www.longtowerchurch.org then click on the link for the webcam or alternatively by logging on to www.churchmedia.tv.

Templemore - St

Eugene's

Our Lady Untier of Knots Novena: Our Lady Untier of Knots Novena is taking place after 7.30 pm Mass on Thursdays at St Eugene's Cathedral, and finishes on November 30.

Christmas Tea: Join Anne Marie Hickey and friends for an Afternoon Tea, with music and verse, on Saturday, December 2, at 1 pm, in the Cathedral Hall. Entry £25 - Pre booking only. Call into Parish Office or Tel: 71262894 or email cathedral@derrydiocese.org.

Parish Advent Pilgrimage: There will be a Parish Advent Pilgrimage on Tuesday, December 12. Bus leaves Cathedral at 9.30 am and returning around 4 pm. Price £40 includes transport, morning tea & lunch. For more information or to book call into the Parish Office or call 71262894 or email cathedral@derrydiocese.org.

Matt Talbot Mass: The Matt Talbot, Freedom from addiction Mass takes place on the first Monday of each month at 7.30 pm in St Eugene's Cathedral.

Exploring Poetry: Exploring

Poetry with Mary Murphy continues on Fridays at 11 am in the Cathedral Hall. You are most welcome to join via the online platforms or in person.

Cathedral Voices: Cathedral Voices is a singing group for people living with dementia and older members of the community. The singing club takes place every Thursday from 1.30-3 pm, and is a great chance to socialise, listen to music, have a cup of tea and a chat and a bit of craic. If you are interested in attending, please contact the parish office on 028 71262894.

Three Patrons

Festive Fun: A Little Festive DIY Fun with the help of local florist, John Paul, will take place on Tuesday, November 28, from 12 noon - 2 pm, Wednesday, November 29, from 7-9 pm and Thursday, November 30, from 7-9 pm. Materials will be provided to make your own stunning wreath (if you wish, you can bring your own decorations to make it a masterpiece of your own). Cost £15. To attend, please leave your name and tel no at the sacristy or parish office.

Novena: A Novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help for nine Mondays in preparation for Christmas is underway in St Joseph's Church, Galliagh, ending with a Penitential Service on December 18. The theme is 'Our Lady's Fiat', with reflections on the Seven Sorrows, candlelit Rosary, Adoration, Benediction and speakers. Everyone welcome.

God Club: God Club is an opportunity for 16-30 year olds to learn together about their faith. It takes place in St Pio House, in the grounds of St Joseph's Church, Galliagh, on Sundays from 7.30-9 pm on Sundays.

Family/Youth Mass: A Family/Youth Mass is celebrated every Sunday at 6.30 pm in St Joseph's Church, Galliagh. Everyone is welcome.

Be Still: Be Still is a Men's Prayer and Friendship Group that meets every Thursday night from 8-9.15 pm in Our Lady's Chapel, within St Joseph's Church building, Galliagh. Its mission as a group is to provide a safe place where men can pray and share in a confidential and supportive setting. All men are welcome.

Holy Hour: A Holy Hour for the Unborn & Expectant Mothers takes place on Thursdays at 7 pm in Our Lady's Chapel, St Joseph's Church, Galliagh. All welcome.

Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration takes place in Our Lady's Chapel, St Joseph's Church, Galliagh, on Mondays after 11 am Mass, concluding with a Youth 2000 Holy Hour from 7-8 pm. It also takes place seven days a week in the Adoration Room in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, from 8 am

until 6 pm, and in St Patrick's Church, Pennyburn, on Wednesdays from 10.45 am - 6.45 pm.

First Saturday: On the First Saturday of each month, after 11 am Mass in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, there is Adoration and Rosary, ending with Divine Mercy and Benediction at 3 pm.

Living Disciples: Living Disciples meet on Tuesdays at 7.30 pm in St Pio House, St Joseph's Church grounds, for Praise & Worship, friendship and a cup of tea. All welcome.

Holy Face Devotions: Devotions to the Holy Face of Jesus takes place every Tuesday after 11 am Mass in Our Lady's Chapel, St Joseph's Church, Galliagh. All welcome

St Pio Mass: A monthly Mass in honour of St Pio takes place on the first Monday at 7 pm in St Patrick's Church, Pennyburn. **Healing Night:** A Healing Night with the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal takes place monthly on the first Friday, at 7 pm in St Joseph's Church, Galliagh. Everyone welcome.

Holy Souls Prayer: Praying for the Holy Souls, Our Lady of Montligeon Prayer Group meets on Wednesdays after 9.15 am Mass in the room adjacent to St Brigid's Parochial House, Carnhill, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

Urney & Castlefinn

Nativity Reflection: There will be a presentation of 'A Parish Reflection on the Nativity', based on a little book from Pope Francis: 'The Meaning and Importance of the Nativity Scene'. This will take place in St Mary's Church, Castlefinn, on Sunday, December 17, at 6 pm. There will be a live Adult Nativity Scene, with narrators telling the Story. Everyone is welcome to come along.

First Saturdays: The First Saturday Devotion and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament will take place in St Columba's Church, Doneyloop, from 12 noon until 1 pm on the First Saturday of each month.

Adoration: Weekly Eucharistic Adoration takes place in St Anthony's Chapel every Tuesday, from 12 noon until 8 pm.

Cenacle: The Cenacle for Priests takes place every Tuesday in St Anthony's Chapel immediately after the 7 pm Mass.

Waterside & Strathfoyle

Reflection Time: The Liturgy Team has organised a morning of prayer and reflection for Readers and Eucharistic Ministers on Saturday, November 25, in the Parish Hall, Malvern Terrace after 10 am Mass. Guest speaker will be Fr Peter O'Kane.

Lectio Divina: Reflect on the Scriptures with Lectio Divina in St Columba's Church, Chapel Road, on Thursday nights, starting at 8.15 pm.

...Other Diary Dates

Men's Day of Prayer:

The organisers of the very successful 500 Men's Day of Prayer in the Long Tower are now calling for 2,000 men to answer the call to prayer and Adoration in St Columba's Church on November 25, from 2-5 pm. Dana will be present to sing her new song, 'Light the Fire'.

Friars Healing Night:

The Franciscan Friars of the Renewal will be holding their next First Friday Healing Night on December 1, in St Joseph's Church, Galliagh, at 7 pm, when the guest speaker will be Terry Quinn.

Healing of the Four Ruptures:

'Healing of the Four Ruptures' from St John Paul II's teaching on Theology of the Body, will be led by Fr David Marsden SCJ in Termonbacca Retreat Centre, Derry, from December 1-3. This retreat will focus on small group discussion/sharing and will include an extended period of silence on the Saturday. Two nights dinner, B&B, costing £110 per person (limited availability). For further information/booking email - tobderry@outlook.com or 'phone/WhatsApp Charlene on 07596534641.

Knock Vigil: Bus to all night Knock vigil for The Feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 7-8. Bus en route from Cookstown. If interested please contact Una 07743575969 or Mona 02886737954 as soon as possible. The bus will only run if they get the required numbers.

Ladies Advent

Retreat: This Advent, Termonbacca Derry invites all women to come along to a day of prayer, reflection and preparation for Christmas. On Sunday, December 10, from 10am-3pm, there will be a chance to gather with other women and enjoy talks, Mass, Adoration and prayer time. This will be a beautiful opportunity to step away from the hustle and bustle of the season and spend time in peaceful, prayerful preparation. The day will include a light lunch and will cost £15. For queries/booking please contact Aoife on 02871262512 or email termonbaccaderry@gmail.com.

Termonbacca Faith

Talks: The Carmelite Retreat Centre in Derry is hosting monthly talks on different elements of the faith, with the aim of leading participants towards personal development through meditative prayer and convivial discussions of the Church doctrines. The talks are held on Thursdays, from 7.30-8.30 pm, with the last on December 14, 'God wants everyone to saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth' - The relationship between truth

Radio Maria Fundraiser:

There will be a Christmas Banquet Fundraiser in aid of Radio Maria Ulster in The Drummond Hotel, December 14, from 6-11 pm. To book contact 00353 1 4123456 or visit the website - www.radiomaria.ie/donations/

Servant Sisters: The Servant Sisters will be running an Advent Get-Together for secondary age girls, at Crossroads, Killygordon, Co Donegal, from December 15-17. Post primary teen girls are welcome to join the Sisters for a weekend get-together to prepare for Christmas. There will be a variety of activities as well as faith formation. Please write to Sr Mary: hmactivitiesireland@gmail.com if you'd like to sign your daughter up. More details to follow soon!

Irish Pilgrimage Trust:

The Irish Pilgrimage Trust Group 190 of Irish Pilgrimage Trust are looking for Male carers, around age of 18 up to 45, to travel to Lourdes at Easter from March 31 until April 6, 2024. All Carers are to pay their own fare, which is as follows: €495 for 3rd Level Students; €750 for any other persons. If anyone is interested in volunteering, or if you know of a child or young person who would like to go on the pilgrimage, please contact Margaret Rose Gormley on 07922237986.

Servant Sisters:

The Sisters of the Home of the Mother are hosting weekly formation meetings on Tuesdays, at 7.30 pm, in the Parochial House at Cross, Killygordon, (F93PN0X), and the weekly Holy Hours on Thursdays at 7 pm.

Termonbacca Faith

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and salvation (1 Tim 2:4). More information can be obtained by contacting Fr Cajetan on 0044 (0)28 7126 2512 or 0044 (0)79 3312 3633.

Holy Souls Prayer:

Under The Gaze of Our Lady of Montligeon, the Holy Souls of Purgatory Prayer Meeting takes place on Wednesdays after 9.15 am Mass in the room adjacent to St Brigid's Parochial House, Carnhill, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. It also takes place on the third Monday of each month in Termonbacca, with prayers especially for deceased priests and religious. All welcome.

Polish Mass:

Mass for the Polish community will be celebrated at 9.30 am every second and fourth Sunday of the month in the Divine Mercy Chapel, at St Mary's Church, Creggan, in Derry City.

Stations of Cross:

On the First Friday of each month, after 10 am Mass in St Eugene's, there is a silent procession from the Cathedral to St Columba's Church, Long Tower, meditating on the Stations of the Cross.

Coastal Rosary:

Rosary on the Coast for world peace and the protection of unborn babies takes place at Lisfannon Beach, Buncrana, on the first Sunday of every month at 3pm, and at Benone Strand on the third Sunday of every month, at 3pm.

Men's Rosary:

The Men's Rosary takes place on the first Saturday of every month in Market Street, Omagh (opposite Primark) at 1pm. All Welcome!

Sr Clare Mass:

Mass in honour of Sr Clare Crockett is celebrated on the second Sunday of each month, at 7pm, in Termonbacca. All welcome. The Mass is streamed live via Termonbacca YouTube channel.

Reading with the Carmelites:

The Carmelite Fathers at Termonbacca hold a monthly session of 'Reading with the Carmelite Saints', to explore learning friendship with Christ through the example of the Carmelite Saints. It takes place on the 3rd Thursday of the month at 7.30 pm.

Eternal Echoes... Timeless Truth for today's hearts by Regina Deighan

The Gift of Purgatory

THE changing of the seasons really lends itself to considering our own mortality and eternal destination, a time to naturally meditate on the Four Last Things. As the leaves wither and fall and the temperatures drop, it is logical to consider death; something we will all experience just as nature does. The timing is appropriate, especially as we approach Advent, because the readings during Mass urge us to consider the state of our souls, to recollect to ourselves our approaching personal judgement when we die, and to hope for the glorious Second Coming of Christ at the end of time (as we state in the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds).

Culturally, Ireland possesses a profound understanding of what it means to remember our beloved dead, as the Church calls us to do in a more ardent way during the month of November. Among Ireland's rich traditions surrounding the dead, there are 'month's mind' Masses, Rosaries for the Holy Souls, remembrance of the dead during parish Masses, regular visits to graves, and graveyard Masses. This imperative to pray for the dead is not only a Spiritual

Work of Mercy, but also a necessary ministry of the whole communion of saints. As a family in Christ, we have a responsibility to care for one another, especially through our intercessory prayers, and most especially for the poor souls in Purgatory who can no longer avail themselves of graced works.

The Communion of Saints consists of all of the members of Christ's Church in Heaven, Purgatory, and on Earth. We are connected to one another through Christ, our Head. (cf. Col. 1:18) The souls in Heaven are known as the 'Church Triumphant' - they have received the crown of faithfulness and stand at the Throne worshipping our Lord (cf. 2 Tim. 4:7-8, Rev. 5:7-10). They also bring our needs to the Lord through their prayers. When we ask saints to pray for us, we are asking that they petition the Lord on our behalf, since they are beholding Him with their wills completely oriented to His.

We, on earth, are the Church Militant - fighting the good fight against sin, evangelizing peoples, and working on advancing toward the reward of the Kingdom. While on earth, we can pray for our

brothers and sisters who are with us, but also those who have died.

The Church Suffering are the souls in Purgatory, who are enduring their final purgation of the temporal punishment due to sin in order to be able to enjoy the glories of Heaven. Our prayers can assist those in Purgatory, moving them to Heaven 'faster', so to speak. Even if we don't personally know anyone who has died, we must view the other members of the Communion of Saints as our family, for who we have the duty to pray.

It is also of utmost importance that we pray for priests and bishops in Purgatory. Too often, we write off those in Holy Orders as not needing our prayers. In fact, they need them even more! The responsibility of shepherding other souls is massive, and we must not forget that our clergy are sinners and in need of prayers too. They are also not as likely to have families who regularly remember them. Living or dead, always pray for our priests and bishops!

Memento mori

While the month's devotion is to the Holy Souls in Purgatory, it is

also a time to consider the state of our own souls. The old Latin adage so often invoked in November devotions, "Memento mori," reminds us that we too shall die. As Shakespeare rightly notes in 'King Lear', "men must endear their going hence."

If the Lord were to come today in our death or His Second Coming, in this very moment, would we be ready to meet Him? Would we be ready for our particular judgment? Have we availed ourselves enough of the life-changing grace of the Eucharist and the sacrament of Confession? Have we made an effort to mend broken relationships, forgiving others who have hurt us and apologizing to those whom we have hurt? Have we frequently and unbegrudgingly engaged in the corporal and spiritual works of mercy pertinent to our state in life? Have we contributed joyfully to the building up of Christ's Church through our time, talent, and treasure, and through works of evangelization? This is a time to 'clean house' in our own hearts and souls, so that we might be ready to meet the Lord. We do not know the day, nor the hour, after all!



We should also consider what a gift Purgatory is to all who must be availed of it. The Lord provides for our salvation in every step of our spiritual lives whenever we might fall short. His grace is always there to fill in the gaps. This is especially true of Purgatory. Rather than banishing all sinful souls to Hell, those who fundamentally love God at the moment of their death, but are in need of more purification to be holy as He is holy (cf. 1 Pet. 1:16), have Purgatory. That period of suffering and waiting allows souls to enter Heaven in a state of perfect holiness. This should give us great hope; that we too, despite our personal sinfulness, are able to receive the crown of Heaven through the pathway of Purgatory. We should do our utmost to avail ourselves of the sacrament of confession as well as live truly moral lives in the Gospel, but also take comfort in the fact that the Lord knows our hearts,

our struggles, and our intentions. He created Purgatory out of love because He desires that all souls, perfected by grace, join Him in Glory.

In this month and season of change, let us call to mind the words of the beloved St Therese of Lisieux: "The world is thy ship and not thy home." We are pilgrims on a journey toward Heaven. We must help each other through our prayers and intercessions. We must trust in the Lord and seek His gifts of grace in our lives, especially the sacraments, through the instrument of Holy Mother Church.

Let us pray for those who have died: the Holy Souls awaiting that moment of everlasting joy. Let us pray especially for priests and bishops who await union with the Lord in Purgatory. And finally, let us examine our own souls that we might be ready to answer when He knocks.

Practice what you preach Fr Johnny Doherty CSsR



Fr Johnny Doherty CSsR

A classic example

There is a classic example of this in the Gospel passage that is read at the Masses on the first Sunday of November, the 31st Sunday in Ordinary Time. That is the reason that I chose this topic for 'The Net' November edition. During this story Jesus made the statement, "they do not practice what they preach".

Jesus wants to impress on the people and on His disciples that He has come to bring a new way of living to humanity. His message is: "The greatest among you must be your servant"; and "Those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted". But before He delivers this message, which He knows will be very difficult for them to accept, He talks about something that they are familiar with, the posturing that they could often see in their leaders!

He acknowledges that they need to listen to what their leaders say, but He warns them not to be guided by what their leaders do. And then He goes on to describe some of these behaviours. They lay burdens on people's shoulders; they do everything to attract attention by how they dress, how they look for places of honour, how they demand to be called by their titles, and so on.

Having caught their attention by highlighting things that His audience are only too familiar with; Jesus then gives them His recipe for true human living - service of one another and humility of life in which we are all equal.

What has this to do with us?

A scene like this one in the Gospels is there not only to tell us about what Jesus said and did. It is there also to reveal what is happening among us and in us today because Christ is living among us.

We are all in danger of living like the Pharisees and Scribes of His day. And the Church is constantly in danger of living like the people of two thousand years ago. The Church is always in need of renewal and of conversion to the way of Christ.

What do we mean when we say, 'the Church'?

1. The Universal Church:

As Catholics we accept and acknowledge the importance of the Bishop of Rome, the Pope, as the symbol of unity for the Universal Church. He, along with the Bishops and other leaders of the Church, formulate for us our beliefs in faith and morals. This is a constant, ongoing, task for them.

We look to them to guide us in our working through the great questions confronting the world of today - questions of sexuality, gender, the sacredness of human life, violence and war, and so on. We, of course, will have our own ideas about all these questions from many other sources. But we have a responsibility to listen and be formed by their teaching so that we can live in unity with one another around the world.

Pope Francis:

Over the past number of years, one of the constant themes of Pope Francis' pronouncements has been the danger of the sin of clericalism. Because the leadership of the Church is almost exclusively male

and clerical, he acknowledges that the teaching and language of the Church can be the same.

He has introduced a number of changes at the heart of the Church, in Rome, where people, other than bishops and priests, are now in leadership roles. And a good number of these are women. It is a good start. But it is only a start.

The Synod:

In 2021, Pope Francis called for a Synod of the Universal Church to look at the question of how people look at the Church today. He asked every parish throughout the world to work on a questionnaire that would help the voices of each one to be heard.

In spite of the Covid pandemic, many parishes did this but the uptake from parishioners was small enough. I read somewhere that only 9% of Catholics in Ireland responded.

All the responses worldwide were eventually collated. It was these that were under consideration last month as the Synod met from October 4-28. Another session of this Synod will be held in October 2024.

If we are going to practice what we preach about us being the Church, and about our love for and loyalty to Pope Francis, then we have to face up to our responsibility to be interested in what has already taken place in the Synod. And we need to prepare ourselves to take our place in the implementation of whatever decisions are made at the Synod session next year.

2. The Local Church:

The second level of the Church is

the Diocese, referred to in official documents as the Local Church. Every Diocese has its own history and its own life. The Bishop of the Diocese is the focus of unity within the parishes of the Diocese. And he is also the principal pastor and teacher of the faith in the Diocese.

Each Diocese is in communion with the Pope, the Bishop of Rome. And each Diocese is made of various parishes, which in their turn are in communion with the Bishop of the Diocese.

It is in the setting of the parish that the faith which we share is lived out and handed on. Today though parishes are experiencing a real crisis, especially from the shortage of priestly vocations, which is being experienced everywhere in the Western world.

It is urgent that the laity of the Church would step up and take their rightful place so that the parishes would not collapse, but rather take on new shapes and combinations.

The Synod will show us how our parishes and Dioceses and the Universal Church can best face into the future as faithful followers of Christ - as servants of one another and as people who humbly acknowledge the dignity of every human person and of all creation.

3. The Domestic Church:

In our Catholic tradition, the home and family are seen as the third level of the Church. 'Third' might seem less important than 'first' and 'second'! But that is not the case. This is by far the most important reality of the Church. It is here that the Church is at its best and sometimes also at its worst.

The Sacrament of Marriage:
The Sacrament of marriage is

central to our understanding of the Domestic Church. This is the marriage of a woman and man, at least one of whom has been baptised in the Catholic Church, who commit themselves to a life-long and faithful, exclusive love as husband and wife.

We recognise this as one of the Sacraments of the Church and, as such, one of the major ways that Christ is made present in the world as saviour of the world. This is an amazing and wonderful feature of our faith!

Family:

We also recognise the reality that not all families are based on the Sacrament of Marriage. But we believe that all families are sacred as their love also makes Christ present as our Lord and Saviour.

Renewal of Marriage and Family:

The constant renewal of Marriage and of Family Life - the Domestic Church - is based on the call to all to renew their commitment of love for one another every day; every week; every month; every year.

This is obviously not about how we feel but how we live. Feelings keep changing from day to day, and so on. But we are in control of how we live our lives in service of one another - as the marriage vows put it: 'for better or worse; for richer or poorer; in sickness or in health all the days of our lives'.

It is in each home that love needs to primarily be worked on. From there it opens out to the community of the parish; from there to the Local Church of the Diocese; and from there to the universal Church and beyond to all of humanity and all of creation.

This is what practicing what we preach must mean, so that we can be truly called the People of God.

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!



All Saints' Day

The Feast of All Saints is celebrated on the 1st of November. 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.



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 Souls' Day

The Feast of the Holy Souls is the 2nd of November. 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.

Presentation of Mary in the Temple (CCC 721)



The Feast of the Presentation of Mary in the Temple is celebrated on the 21st of November. On this day, we celebrate the fact that Our Lady's parents brought her to the Temple when she was just three years old. It was here that she came to live for a long period of time and where she unknowingly began to prepare herself to be the Mother of God.

In the Temple, because she was exceptionally holy, Our Lady entered the service of God. This beautiful Feast stresses an important truth about Mary; from the beginning of her life, she was dedicated to God. She herself became a greater temple than any made by human hands. God came to dwell in her in a glorious manner and sanctified her for the unique role she would have in God's saving work.



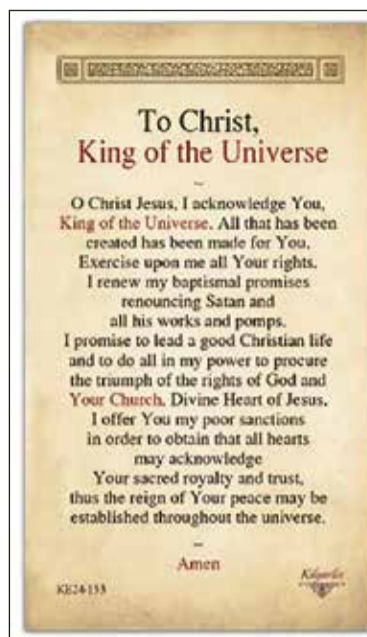
On this tremendous day, we turn to Mary and ask her to assist us in our own task of sanctification, as the Holy Spirit did with her in the Temple in Jerusalem. This helps us to remember that we, too, are temples of God who are sanctified so we might share in God's saving work.

"We celebrate that dedication of herself which Mary made to God from her very childhood under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit who filled her with grace". (Liturgy of the Hours)



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.

Christ the King

Use the words in the word bank to fill in the blank spaces to read about Christ the King.



Jesus _____ is a good King who loves His people so much. He is the _____ witness, the firstborn of the _____ and ruler of the kings of the _____. Jesus died so that we would be _____ from our _____ and be able to go to _____.

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord"
 (Psalm 118:26)

Word Bank:

Christ, faithful, sins, dead, freed, heaven, earth

Quiz Time with Lawrence

- Who played the role of Lennie Godber in the TV comedy series 'Porridge'?
- In which English county is the town of Swindon located?
- Burrata, Grana Padano and Oaxaca are all types of what?
- Following his recent Ballon d'or win, how many times has Lionel Messi now been named World Footballer of the Year?
- Portugal shares a land border with just one other country, but which one?
- What Irish ballad did singer, Rod Stewart adopt for his album 'Blood Red Roses'?
- Whose lives were protected by the Praetorian Guards?
- How many pedals are there on a regular piano?
- Which actor, who died in 1984, also starred in the film '1984'?
- In what country is Mount Kilimanjaro situated?
- Michael Smith is the current World Champion of what?
- What is the only part of the human body that is fully grown from birth?
- What legendary rock guitarist is also a noted Astrophysicist?
- Friar Miller is a character from which movie and pantomime?
- Name the 40th President of the USA, who died in June 2004?
- Who was lead singer with British/American rock band Fleetwood Mac?
- In what month is horse racing's high profile Cheltenham Festival traditionally held?
- How many time zones are there in China?
- Which is the hottest planet in our solar system?
- Who is the current presenter of TV gameshow, 'Countdown'?
- To within a year either way, in what year did the Channel Tunnel open?
- What river flows through the Grand Canyon?
- What London tourist attraction is docked in the Greenwich Village area of the city?
- The 'Barmy Army' follows the England national team all over the world, but in what sport?
- Madison is the capital city of which US state?

Quiz Answers: 1, Richard Beckinsale; 2, Wiltshire; 3, Cheese; 4, Eight; 5, Spain; 6, Grace; 7, Roman Emperors; 8, Three; 9, Richard Burton; 10, Tanzania; 11, Darts; 12, The eyes; 13, Brian May; 14, Puss In Boots; 15, Ronald Reagan; 16, Stevie Nicks; 17, March; 18, One; 19, Venus; 20, Colin Murray; 21, 1994; 22, The Colorado River; 23, The Cutty Sark; 24, Cricket; 25, Wisconsin.

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, Donnylough, Drumquin, Dunamnanagh, Dungiven, Fahan, Faughanvale, Garvagh, Gortin, Greencastle,



*Called to serve
and not to be
served...*

— Reflection
Day for Three
Patrons Parish
Ministries



Greenlough, Iskaheen, Killyclogher, Killygordon, Kilrea, Lavey, Leckpatrick, Lifford, Limavady, Maghera, Magilligan, Malin, Melmount,