The NET

Sharing fruits of faith in Derry Diocese

ISSUE 106. APRIL 2025

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Palm Sunday Procession – Long Tower

Lenten Prayer – Maghera

St Columba's PS 50th – Kilrea

"This Easter let us immerse ourselves fully in the transformative power of Divine Mercy"

- Fr Sean O'Donnell (see p24)

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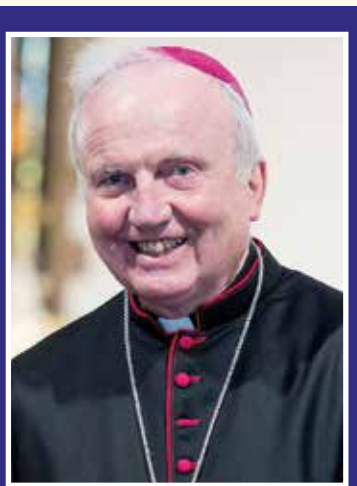

Most Rev Donal McKeown – Bishop of Derry

Sr Clare Crockett – Long Tower

Rory Harron – Burt

Also featuring: Young Writers' section; St Eugene's Choral Scheme; Draperstown Lourdes Youth Fundraiser; St Brigid's PS Carnhill perform Easter story; Claudy pupils present Stations of the Cross; Tattysallagh PS Mass Rock Pilgrimage; Children's Catechism Club; Sr Clare Retreat, Long Tower; City Walk the Cross; Cathedral & Buncrana Palm Sunday Processions; Maghera Lenten Prayer; Creggan & Claudy Divine Mercy ceremonies; Castlederg SVP seniors' social; Principals' Gatherings; Omagh & Cathedral Prayer for Pope Francis; Features; Parish Post-its; Diary Dates; Quiz… and much more…

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The NET
Sharing the fruits of the faith in the Derry Diocese

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Fr Malachy Gallagher *reflects on the Pope's prayer intention for April…"Let us pray that the use of the new technologies will not replace human relationships, will respect the dignity of the person, and will help us face the crises of our times."*

We must approach AI with hope and humility, acknowledging potential benefits while grounded in our understanding of what it means to be human

WE stand at a crossroads, profoundly impacted by the accelerating development of artificial intelligence (AI). Fundamentally, AI is the endeavour to imbue machines with the capacity to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence – learning, reasoning, problem-solving, and even mimic human creativity. This technology is rapidly reshaping our world, presenting both unprecedented opportunities and profound social, moral, and spiritual challenges.

We are created (Imago Dei) in the image and likeness of God. This doctrine affirms the inherent worth and dignity of every human being, not as a measure of their productivity or usefulness, but simply because they are created by a loving God. This divine imprint sets us apart, signifying that we are relational beings, created for communion with God and with one another. Humans have a capacity for love, empathy, understanding, genuine connection, and, crucially, through our possession of an immortal soul we have an eternal destiny.

Amid so much hyperbole surrounding the development of AI, it is incumbent upon us to distinguish between the 'intelligence' of AI and true human intelligence. AI, lacking an immortal soul, cannot replicate the fullness of the human being. While AI excels at processing information, identifying patterns, and executing tasks based on pre-programmed algorithms, it fundamentally lacks the lived experience, emotional depth, moral compass, and spiritual awareness that shape human consciousness.

Human intelligence is far more expansive. It encompasses our capacity for seeking truth, appreciating beauty, striving for goodness, engaging in moral reasoning in light of Divine Revelation (through Scripture and Tradition) and our conscience and forming authentic relationships. It includes our ability to learn from mistakes, experience joy and sorrow, exercise free will, and discern meaning and purpose. We are capable of creative and intuitive thought, leaps of insight that go beyond mere logical deduction. AI can only mimic human intelligence; it cannot truly understand the world in the same way that we do.

Therefore, fostering genuine human 'encounter' remains paramount. We must be vigilant against allowing interactions with AI to supplant or diminish the quality of our relationships with one another. The significant hype surrounding AI often leads to overestimating its capabilities and underestimating the irreplaceable value of human connection. This hype risks fostering a 'technocratic paradigm', where technology is prioritized above all else, at the expense of human well-being and our relationship with God and His created order.

A related danger is the anthropomorphizing of AI – treating these systems as if they possess human qualities they simply do not have. This can distort our understanding of what it means to be human, especially in the formative years of children. Overexposure to AI could distort their understanding of authentic human relationships, potentially leading them to view others as mere tools or resources, akin to a chatbot. Authentic relationships, in contrast, are built upon empathy and mutual respect.

We, as Catholics, are tasked with navigating the digital age with discernment and critical thinking. We must be more vigilant than ever in separating fact from fiction, truth from falsehood, precisely because AI has the capacity to generate incredibly convincing, yet entirely fabricated, content. This goes beyond simply identifying 'deepfakes'; it requires a deeper understanding of how information is produced, disseminated, and potentially manipulated. But the challenge is not solely external. As human beings, we are prone to pride and self-deception – tendencies rooted in original sin. We are susceptible to confirmation bias that is seeking out information that confirms our existing beliefs and dismissing that which challenges them. AI-powered systems, designed to personalize our experiences and feed us information tailored to our preferences, can exacerbate this inherent vulnerability. We must consciously exercise self-discipline in our use of AI, guarding against the technology's potential to reinforce narcissistic tendencies and create echo chambers that insulate us from truth itself and truth Himself. The cultivation of intellectual humility and a commitment to seeking truth from reliable sources become essential virtues in the age of AI.

Fr Malachy Gallagher

We are stewards of God's creation, and that stewardship extends to the realm of technology. We must approach AI with both hope and humility, acknowledging its potential benefits while remaining firmly grounded in our understanding of what it means to be human: created in God's image, possessing an immortal soul, and called to live in relationship with Him and with one another. Only then can we truly harness the power of AI in a way that glorifies God and promotes the common good.

Eucharistic Adoration in the Diocese

Aghyaran: Thursdays, 10.30am–12 noon.
Ardstraw West & Castlederg: Fridays, 10.30am–12 noon, St Patrick's Church.
Badoney Lower: Tuesdays, after 12.30 pm Mass until 5 pm, St Patrick's Gortin.
Badoney Upper: Wednesdays, after 7.30 pm evening Mass until 9 pm, St Patrick's Cranagh.
Ballinascreen: First Mondays, from 12 noon-7.30 pm, in Holy Rosary Church, Draperstown.
Banagher: Thursdays, 10.30-11.30 am, St Mary's Church, Altinure, and Fridays, 10–11am, St Joseph's Church, Fincairn.
Bellaghy: Every Friday, from 10 am until recitation of Rosary at 7.30 pm, in St Mary's Church.
Buncrana: Mondays, Tuesdays & Wednesdays, 6am-10pm, Fridays, 6 am-10 pm and Sundays, 2-10 pm, St Mary's Oratory.
Cappagh: Wednesdays, 8-9pm, concluding with Night Prayer, and Sundays, 3.30-6.30 pm, in Christ the King, Strathroy.
Claudy: Tuesdays, after 10 am Mass until 8 pm, St Patrick's Church, Claudy, and Wednesdays, after 10 Mass until 8 pm, St Joseph's Church, Craigbane.
Clonmany: Tuesdays, 7.30-8.30 pm, the Oratory of the Assumption, Ballyliffin; Wednesdays, 3-4 pm, St Columbcille Village, Cleagh; Fridays, 3-6 pm (Rosary at 5.40 pm), St Michael's Church, Urris.
Coleraine: Wednesdays, in St John's Church, 2-4 pm, with Rosary at 3:45 pm.
Creggan: Sundays 1.30 pm-6 pm; Mondays 10.30 am - 7 pm; Tue - Sat 10.30 am - 12 pm, Divine Mercy Chapel.
Donagheady: First Fridays after Mass until 12 noon, St Mary's Church, Aughabrack.
Donaghmore: Tuesdays, 10.30 am-7.30 pm, St Mary's Church, Sessiaghoneill; Thursdays, after 9.15 am Mass, St Patrick's Church, Crossroads.
Drumquin: Wednesdays, 6 pm until Mass at 7.30 pm.
Drumragh: Wednesdays, following morning Mass, Sacred Heart Church until 5.30 pm.
Dungiven: Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays, 9 am-6 pm, and Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9 am-8 pm, in Adoration Chapel.
Errigal: Mondays, after the 10 am Mass until 2.30 pm, St Mary's Church, Ballerin.
Fahan: Fridays after 10 am Mass, St Mura's Parish Church.
Greencastle (Tyrone): Thursdays, 6-10 pm, St Patrick's Church.
Greenlough: Thursdays, 9am–5 pm, St Oliver Plunkett's Church.
Iskaheen: Tuesdays, from after 10 am Mass until 2 pm, St Patrick's Church.
Kilrea: Mondays, 12 noon - 7pm, St Mary's Drumagarner. Concludes with Benediction.
Lavey: Fridays, after 9.30 am Mass until 5 pm.
Leckpatrick: Wednesdays from 8.15 am–5 pm.
Lifford (Murlog): 9.30 am - 12.30 pm
Limavady: Sundays from 3-5 pm in Christ the King (with Confessions).
Magilligan: Wednesdays, 3-7 pm; First Sundays, 3-6 pm, St Aidan's Church.
Melmount: Mondays, after 10 am Mass until 6 pm.
Moville: Mondays, 2-9 pm, and Wednesdays, 6-9 pm, St Pius X Church.
Newtownstewart: Thursdays, 6.30-7.30 pm, Oratory of Mary, Mother of God.
Sion Mills: Adoration takes place in the side chapel (Oratory) and will be available every day during the Church's opening hours, moving to the main body.of the chapel on Fridays, from 11am-6.50 pm, ending with Benediction before 7 pm Mass.
Steelstown: Mondays, from after 10 am Mass until 6.50pm.
Strabane (Camus): Every day from 10.30 am-1 pm in the Adoration Chapel (Oasis of Peace), at the back of the Church.
St Columba's Long Tower: Wednesdays, after 10 am Mass until 7.30 pm Mass.
St Eugene's Cathedral: Sundays, 3-6 pm, and Tuesdays, 10.30 am-7.20 pm.
Three Patrons: Tuesdays from 11 am-7 pm in Our Lady's Chapel, St Joseph's Church, Galliagh; Wednesdays from 10.30 am-7 pm, in St Patrick's Church, Pennyburn, and seven days a week in the Adoration Room in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, from 8 am until 8 pm.
Urney & Castlefin: Tuesdays, 12 noon-8 pm, St Anthony's Chapel.
Waterside: Mondays, 11.30 am-12.30 pm, St Oliver Plunkett, Strathfoyle; Thursdays, 1-6 pm, Immaculate Conception Church; Fridays, 1-6 pm, St Columb's Church.

Please send any additions/amendments via: editorthenet15@gmail.com or 07809292852.

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.

St Eugene's Choral Scholars' Scheme *by Rosemary Finan*

THE St Eugene's Choral Scholar Scheme, now in its third year, encourages students over 16 and in full-time education (including mature students) to participate in choir rehearsals and church services in the beautiful acoustic of the Cathedral, in return for a monthly stipend based on attendance.

This is an excellent opportunity for budding musicians of all genres to develop their musical skills – sight-reading, working as a member of a musical ensemble, singing technique, solo performances – as well as meeting others of all ages!

Asked why they had applied to join the scheme, the current cohort of students, aged 16 to 20 years, offered a variety of reasons. Holly, currently doing her Pope John Paul II Award, felt that participating in the church choir would enhance and enrich that experience. The enjoyment of singing was important for all the students, and some highlighted the lack of opportunity to participate in a choir in school, because of academic pressures or other constraints.

For one student, it was nice to be able to enjoy singing primarily as a weekend activity. Others commented that they had not previously had the chance to sing in a four-part choir. Occasionally, the prompt to join the scheme came from family members or from singing/ music teachers. Not every student would have been a regular Sunday Mass attender prior to joining the choir, but clearly this commitment is essential for participation in the scheme. One of the current choristers said that for her this was an added attraction in applying to join: "I wanted to be closer to God, and I find that music helps me with this."

The musical repertoire of a church choir is distinctly different from what they may be used singing along to. Asked if this was off-putting, the answer was a resounding "No!" For Ellen, the experience helped with her 'A' level music, since the study of sacred music was one element of her modules. Jack, who is a band member in his free time, was also attracted by the idea of experiencing a different genre of music, and found that it developed his singing skills, since it requires a different voice technique. More than one student commented on the beauty of the music, particularly in its proper sacred setting; one even admitted to having some of the pieces learnt this year on her playlist!

All of the students found the volume and breadth of music covered each week a challenge initially, especially compared to the amount of time typically spent on learning pieces in other choral groups. However, all were unanimous that their sight-reading skills and capacity to master new pieces have come on immeasurably, helped by the assurance of being surrounded by more experienced choir members, who know many of the pieces intimately – and the mix of generations was seen as an added bonus for some of the choristers too.

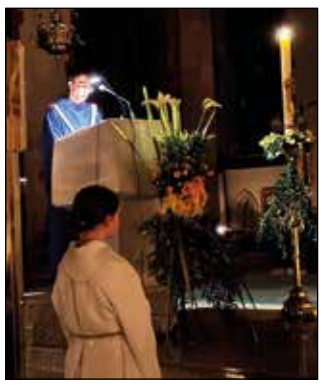
Singing solo or in small ensembles at major liturgical events, such as the Holy Week ceremonies, has added to the choristers' confidence. "I'm better at singing this year" said one student, who says that the discipline and consistency of being part of this choir has definitely developed their singing skills.

As the Scheme continues to expand, so too do the opportunities available to the students. There are currently two bursaries available to students, each worth £250. One is given for commitment, the other to facilitate further study or experience of choral music. Two of this year's cohort will be travelling to Warsaw in July 2025 on an expenses-paid trip to participate in an international choral conference on liturgical music. Keyla and Ellen are thrilled and excited at the prospect of spending a week in this beautiful city and taking part in workshops and performances with an international group of singers and musical directors.

Applications are now open for the next cohort of students to join the scheme from September. Potential new members are invited to submit applications: applications from tenors and basses are particularly welcome. The closing date for forms is May 12, after which auditions will be held. To apply email: maghnusmonaghan@hotmail.com or collect a form from your school.

Adults, particularly males, interested in joining the choir on a voluntary basis are also welcome to contact the choirmaster, either by email or after 12.30 pm Mass on Sundays.

The scheme is also interested in attracting financial support from individuals or businesses who would be interested in supporting the formation of our young people. Any donation, however small, is welcome. Currently, as well as church support, a number of standing orders from individual choir members provide the main source of income for the scheme, but expansion of the support base is essential to provide long–term security. Anyone interested in providing sponsorship or other forms of support, please email the above address also.



Big buzz at St Colm's Draperstown Lourdes fundraiser

St Columba's PS Kilrea 50th anniversary Mass a joyous occasion

THE 50th Anniversary Mass for St Columba's PS in St Anne's Oratory, Kilrea, was very much a joyful occasion, with the school choir setting the tone with its sweet sound and uplifting hymns.

Greeted by the enthusiastic singing of 'My God will be with me wherever I go…' as he processed up the aisle at the beginning of the ceremony, Bishop Donal commended the choir "for the wonderful start."

The main celebrant of the anniversary Mass, the bishop was joined on the altar by Fr Brendan Crowley Adm, Fr Christopher McDermott CC, and Kilrea native, Fr Ciaran Hegarty, with former parish priest, Fr Brendan Doherty also in attendance.

The pupils were very much involved throughout and, before Mass began, a number of them presented a variety of symbols reflective of their school, including a Bible, a plaque of St Columba, a book of knowledge, a hurl and ball, a piece of artwork, a violin, a circle of friends, and some oak leaves.

Beginning the celebration of Mass, Bishop Donal told those gathered: "We want to celebrate the past. We have been through very difficult times and we face the future with confidence."

In his homily, he reflected on what St Columba might say to them as they celebrated their ancestors who had the vision and determination 50 years ago to build a church and a house, as well as raise 15% of the building costs of the school.

"The people who built here 50 years ago," he remarked, "knew that education was going to be central if the community in Kilrea was going to help our young people thrive."

He went on to point out: "The real sign of success for St Columba's is not merely how many past pupils have made lots of money for themselves, but how the school has inspired people to improve the world for others. Catholic education has inspired much generosity and solidarity in this community. For that vision of a world renewed, we give thanks today."

Referring to the question many people ask about whether Catholic education has any role in society, Bishop Donal quoted from church document 'The Catholic School' (vatican.va) para 8, that the Catholic school exists as "a centre in which a specific concept of the world, of the human person, and of history is developed and conveyed."

Acknowledging that this is "quite a challenge" to do in 2025, Bishop Donal gave thanks for what St Columba's "has done to inspire love, hope of eternal life, and generosity in the pupils who chose to attend it," adding: "Be proud of all that has been achieved. We all know that the school had to function during many very painful years in this community. We now face offering Catholic education in this community in the face of many new challenges. But we face the future with hope because we trust that Jesus is with us all days, until the end of the world."

Encouraging the school community to be proud of its mission to inspire faith, hope and love, he concluded: "God can bless the world if you aim, throughout your life, to be the best that you can be. Keep building a community that appreciates everyone's talents. Learn and grow together."

In a closing reflection, the principal, Mrs Ciara Henry invited those gathered to "take a moment to reflect on the countless blessings we have received", saying: "This milestone is a testament to the enduring faith, dedication, and vibrant community spirit that lies at the heart of our school.

"We give thanks to God for the visionaries who founded St. Columba's, for all those who have worked in the school imparting their knowledge and values over the past 50 years with unwavering service, and for the hundreds of students who have walked its halls, each leaving their own unique mark. We remember with gratitude the support from our parents, our Boards of Governors, our school community, and the spiritual guidance of all our priests throughout the years. We also take a moment to remember those members of our school community who are no longer with us."

She added: "Looking back on the past 50 years, we see a tapestry woven with many wonderful moments of joy, challenges overcome, and lives transformed. We celebrate the achievements of the hundreds of past pupils, who carry the lessons learned in St Columba's into the wider world, living out the Gospel values in their daily lives.

"We look forward, as a school community, to the future with hope and trust in God's providence. May St Columba's Primary School continue to be a beacon of light, nurturing the minds and hearts of future generations. May we always strive to be instruments of God's love and peace and may the next 50 years be filled with even greater accomplishments and a deeper faith."

All were invited back to the school afterwards for refreshments and an opportunity to view the many displays of photographs and memorabilia.

Reflecting on life as a teacher, St Columba's PS principal, Mrs Ciara Henry sees…

Catholic education more about modelling faith and encouraging children to be best they can

Mrs Ciara Henry

THE principal of St Columba's PS, Kilrea, Mrs Ciara Henry has many fond memories of the school, having joined the staff in 1998, just a year after graduating from St Mary's University College in Belfast.

And, like the school community, she has been celebrating her own half-century landmark, having turned 50 last August. Feeling honoured to be principal during the school's 50th anniversary celebrations, Ciara told 'The Net': "It was an opportunity to celebrate 50 years of St Columba's PS serving its local community. It was also a memorable occasion which allowed us to take a trip down memory lane with many former pupils, staff and Board of Governor members.

"We thought it very important to celebrate our 50 years with a Mass in which the children were actively involved in a variety of ways, so that they could foster a deeper connection to the heritage of St Columba's PS as well as their faith. One of the most powerful ways to celebrate our faith is through song, and our beautiful school choir played an important role during the Mass."

A talented pianist and fiddler, Ciara played the fiddle during the anniversary Mass, while thankful to have handed over the role of choir director to Miss Coyle. She remarked: "I enjoy staying connected with the choir and hymns because, as a child, I was always part of a fabulous choir in Ballinascreen, under Mrs Anne McAllister. Having been in choirs from a young age, I have found that the singing of hymns allows for a greater connection with faith and community."

A native of the Parish of Ballinascreen, where she grew up with her five siblings under the guidance of her parents, John and Brenda McGuigan, who continue to be a wonderful example to her in their elderly years, aged 91 and 88 respectively, Ciara now lives in Desertmartin with her husband, Sean and four children.

Her own schooling evolved very much under the patronage of Our Lady, having attended St Mary's PS in Draperstown, where her mother taught, followed by St Patrick's College, Maghera, St Mary's Grammar School, Magherafelt, and then on to St Mary's University in Belfast, in September 1993, for her teacher training.

Following a teaching career was a natural path for her to take, said Ciara: "Teaching was in my family. My mother was a teacher, and so were two of her sisters and her brother, so it was definitely in my genes."

"I have always enjoyed working with children and so becoming a teacher felt like a natural pathway for me to follow. I loved every aspect of my own schooling, so staying in a dynamic school environment was a perfect fit. Working with children is incredibly rewarding; it really keeps you feeling young, alive and in touch with the world."

After graduating in the summer of 1997, she got a one-year post in St Canice's PS, Dungiven, teaching P3.

"Right from the start, I loved it," she recalled, "I play a lot of music and led the school choir for liturgical and sacramental celebrations."

She continued: "The Summer after that, I was fortunate to secure a permanent post in St Columba's PS Kilrea and I have been there ever since. I started in St Columba's as a P2 teacher in September 1998, and then after six years went to P5, and then P6."

Before being appointed principal in September 2022, Ciara was vice-principal for a period that included the Covid lockdowns.

"I was a teaching vice-principal, so my priority was teaching my class through challenging times," she recalled, adding: "We worked hard to create interesting remote learning opportunities to ensure our pupils remained engaged and continued learning, while consistently prioritising their well-being."

Christian values

Reflecting on the role of Catholic education, she remarked: "There is the element of Catholic faith development through prayer and religious instruction but, for me, it is more about modelling faith, demonstrating by example how to live like Jesus, encouraging children to be the best they can be, to love each other and uphold their Christian values.

"As a teacher, it is a unique privilege to nourish and support the spiritual development of your students. The ideal scenario is when all three partners – parents, school and parish – can work together to develop the faith of children."

Highlighting the strong link between the three partners in the Kilrea community, Ciara went on to say: "I am really honoured to be principal of a school with such a strong Catholic ethos. We constantly strive to foster spiritual growth of our students and weave it into the fabric of our daily school activities, nurturing a deep sense of moral values within them.

"We are fortunate to have two wonderful priests, Fr Christopher McDermott and Fr Brendan Crowley, who regularly visit the school to engage with the children. Their efforts extend beyond preparing the children for sacraments; they are examples of both faith and community for the children, which is important for children at a young age."

She added: "Our liturgical calendar is packed with meaningful events. We begin each school year with Mass, have numerous class assemblies, a Carol Service, Nativity shows and an Easter Passion Play. We recently revitalised our wildflower garden and established the Stations of the Cross within this serene setting. This allowed the children to participate in the Stations of the Cross outdoors during Holy Week.

"We have weekly assembly that is prayer-led and celebrates the achievements and talents of our school community. On all other days, the children say the morning prayer in every classroom, as well as prayers before and after meals, and a home-time prayer before leaving school each day.

"We also have preparation for the sacraments and hold a special Leavers Mass at the end of each year, and every Thursday, classes from P4 to P7 take turns to attend morning Mass in St. Anne's Oratory, Kilrea."

"Catholic Schools Week is particularly eventful," continued Ciara, "and always proves to be one of the most wonderful weeks for our school community, during which we invite grandparents to visit the school.

"We take great inspiration from the work of the Diocesan Catechetical Centre advisors and enjoy the meditations, reflections and online workshops that they provide. I attend the Principals' Gatherings organised by the Centre and find these to be invaluable. It is good to take time out, to put everything into perspective, and to recall the importance of our role as leaders in Catholic schools."

Having recently refreshed the school's vision, she remarked: "Our key focus is to provide a safe, happy and stimulating environment where each child is valued and respected. The commitment of our staff is to prepare our young people for the future. Our new motto, 'Learn and Grow Together', encompasses the holistic development we aim to nurture – spiritually, intellectually, morally, socially, emotionally and physically. Our vision is to support and inspire each child to reach their full and unique potential, and to develop responsible citizens.

"We are committed to encouraging students to support a range of charities such as SVP and Trocaire. We have a strong link with the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council's Zomba Action Project (ZAP), involving Zomba City Council in Malawi. Supporting both local and the global charities teaches children empathy, social responsibility, global awareness and gratitude."

Appreciating the benefits of the Catholic faith in her own life, Ciara said: "My Catholic faith has guided me through good times and challenging times, offering hope and strength. The Church's teachings have instilled in me values of compassion, honesty, persistence and love, which I strive to embody in my daily interactions both personally and in my work as a leader in a Catholic school."

Catechetical Centre-led principal gatherings a time of prayer, reflection and spiritual formation

IN 'Proclaiming the Mission: The Distinctive Philosophy and Values of Catholic Education, The Catholic Bishops of Northern Ireland', it states:"The ultimate aim of Catholic Education is the full growth of the individual, a fully alive person for self and others, in communion with Christ." (2001:7)

As the schools in the Diocese strive to do this, the Derry Diocesan Catechetical Centre acknowledges that our schools are often a source of 'new life' and they provide new areas of focus for the Centre's work. Through consultation with principals and staff in schools in the Diocese, it has become evident that they would like further opportunities for prayer, reflection and spiritual formation.

Each year, the Centre facilitates a day of reflection for principals, days for Religious Education Coordinators, as well as facilitating staff and/or whole school Catholic Ethos Days in the school setting. This year saw a new development of the annual day of prayer and reflection for principals in the Autumn Term, with the offer of a further day in the Spring Term. Principals had indicated how much they valued the opportunity to step back for a while from the busyness of the school day, to chat to colleagues about how things were going, and to reflect and pray together on the gift of their calling to be spiritual leaders in schools. These Spring days were made possible with the support of the Diocesan-based Colmcille Educational Trust.

Autumn Term

At the Autumn Term gathering this year, Fr Paul Farren, Director of the Derry Diocesan Catechetical Centre, spoke to principals about the importance of personal prayer as they live their vocation as leaders in Catholic schools. He reflected on how, when we open ourselves up to God through prayer as children of God, we acknowledge our need to be loved, and we begin to see through the eyes of God. Mindful of the great responsibility leadership in a school brings, he said that "it is then, we give the responsibility to God and His Holy Spirit leads us and guides us."

Fr Paul suggested that one way principals may wish to pray was before an Icon of the Face of Jesus, saying: "A very powerful way for you to pray is to have an Icon of the Face of Jesus in your office. As often as you need every day, take time to sit before the icon and just open your hands and look at the Face of Jesus looking at you. He is looking at you and He sees you as His beloved. It is so important at the start of the prayer to allow yourself to be present to the gaze of Jesus – to allow yourself to be aware that you are loved…Then you meet people in a different way. You see them in a different way, and you love them in a different way. It is not magic. It is peace – a peace that comes from allowing yourself to be loved."

Principals were offered the gift of an Icon of the Face of Jesus and many of them now have these in their offices.

Spring Term

Paragraph 146 of the Final Synod Document references the "frontline" place "Catholic-inspired formation centres", such as Catholic schools, play in the Mission of the Church. It states: "Inspired by the practices of synodality, they (schools) can become fertile contexts for friendly and participative relationships. They become contexts that give witness to life; in them, the skills and organisation are, above all, lay-led, and the contribution of families is prioritised."

Paragraph 146 also emphasises the key role schools play in offering children and young people an alternative world view: "In particular, Catholic schools and universities play an important role in the dialogue between faith and culture and in providing moral education on values, offering a formation oriented towards Christ, the icon of life in its fullness. Thus, they become capable of promoting an alternative to the dominant models that are often driven by individualism and competition, thereby also playing a prophetic role."

With this in mind, Most Rev Donal McKeown, Bishop of Derry, was invited - as the keynote speaker at the Spring meetings - to invite principals to think about 'The vital role of the Catholic School and its leader in witnessing to a more Synodal Church'.

A former teacher and principal, Bishop Donal remarked: "Teaching is always changing – and yet, at its heart it doesn't change."

Highlighting that the core of Catholic education doesn't change, he noted: "We don't teach subjects, we teach pupils," adding: "Education is what remains after people have forgotten everything that they were taught. What is remembered is how you made them feel. Our focus is on formation for transformation."

Bishop Donal also spoke on the importance of community in schools, saying: "The school community is part of the teaching resources of the school. Where it works, it is great for pupils, staff and parents. There is a sense of belonging, journeying together, and support for all in time of trials."

Community

He continued: "Because of this ecclesial identity of the Catholic school, the pupils', teachers' and parents' experience of such a school is essentially an ecclesial experience. The whole is incarnated in the specific. For many young people who are Catholic, and for others who do not belong to that community, what they see in school will make tangible what the Catholic community is. The experience that people have of a school is itself an education. The educational community of a school is itself a school, for learning is a social experience rather than a solitary one.

"The research into the role of social capital in affecting learning outcomes simply reflects this reality, taking into account community links, sense of history, and shared language codes. Thus, a school that is precious about itself communicates much about the insignificant value of relationships with others outside the invisible walls of the school community. A school that is clearly part of the Church and its mission gives a very different message about Christian and human solidarity."

Bishop Donal went on to comment on synodality as a community building technique through spiritual conversations, helping to build community "in a fragmenting world of angry sub-cultures" and "modelling a different way of being human and of looking at the world, at success and at failure."

In "an age of so much fragmentation, anger and aggression", the bishop highlighted the need to celebrate diversity and the range of gifts, asking: "Can we be community builders in the face of polarisation? Is the school a place of welcome, relationship and a sense of direction?"

Synodality

Referring to the final document of the Synod on Synodality (para 146) – "Catholic formation centres…become capable of promoting an alternative to the dominant models that are often driven by individualism and competition, thereby also playing a prophetic role. In some contexts, they are the only settings where children and young people come into contact with the Church" – he spoke to the principals about building community through talking and listening to discern the way forward, and making space for divergent voices.

"Learn how to help one another to make good decisions – together," he said, through "listening, seeking the widest possible consensus, and differentiated co-responsibility."

Noting that the key words of synodality were transparency, accountability and evaluation, Bishop Donal pointed out that this was "all part of a learning organisation/community", and that school self-evaluation should not just focus on exam results but also on faithfulness to principles.

"We have a rich tradition on which to nourish ourselves and our pupils," he said, adding: "We have been at our best as Catholic schools in the past when we built communities."

In this Jubilee Year, as pilgrims of hope, Bishop Donal encouraged the development of spiritual intelligence and building hope "in an increasingly fear-filled society".

Steelstown PS, Saint Aengus NS, Holy Cross College and St Patrick's and St Brigid's College were hosts for the gatherings and they provided a great welcome and wonderful hospitality. Each session began with a time of quiet prayer before the Icon of the Face of Jesus, followed by Bishop Donal's address to the principals and an opportunity for them to engage with the bishop around what he had spoken about. Principals were able to highlight the concerns and challenges facing schools today, as well as sharing the great joy and privilege it is to be a leader in a Catholic school.

The session finished with each principal receiving a candle to take back to their office and Bishop Donal prayed a prayer of blessing for their hands to strengthen them in their vocation, to "lead as Jesus led" (Fr Ronald Nuzzi).

At the session in Claudy Pastoral Centre, hosted by St Patrick's & St Brigid's College, Bishop Donal was presented with a creatively decorated cake to mark his 75th birthday and celebrate his leadership.

Reflections

Reflecting on the Gatherings, Mrs Caroline McLaughlin, principal of St Columb's College, Derry, and Mr Jack Logue, principal of Our Lady of Fatima PS, Faughanvale, shared their thoughts.

Mrs McLaughlin found the Principals' Day that she attended, with Bishop Donal as guest speaker, was "an opportunity for personal reflection on our roles as Catholic leaders."

She added: "Bishop Donal spoke with care and compassion. His educational background, coupled with his spiritual leadership, inspired principals with his understanding and his enthusiasm. His inspiring message was one of relevance and importance, highlighting the value of our roles and direction which is much needed for our young people today."

For Mr Logue, "spending time in the company of fellow principals in Claudy's Pastoral centre was both inspiring and invigorating."

"The gathering provided a unique opportunity to share experiences, challenges, and successes in our roles as educational leaders," he said, adding: "The camaraderie and mutual support among us highlighted the strength and resilience that we collectively bring to our schools and communities."

He continued: "A particularly uplifting moment was the positive message delivered by Bishop McKeown. His words resonated deeply, acknowledging the dedication and hard work we invest in serving our communities, especially during these challenging times. Bishop McKeown's encouragement reminded us of the significant impact we have on shaping the future and nurturing the growth of our students.

"As leaders in education, we face numerous obstacles, from resource constraints to the evolving needs of our students. Yet, the Bishop's message reinforced the importance of our mission and the value of our contributions. It was a powerful reminder that, despite the difficulties, our efforts are recognised and appreciated. This day of reflection and contemplation was a testament to the great work being implemented by the dedicated team in our Catechetical Centre."

St Brigid's pupils perform Easter story for Carnhill community

THE Primary 5 children from St Brigid's Primary and Nursery School, Carnhill, performed their retelling of the Easter Story on Thursday, April 10, in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, for the school and parish community.

City Walk of the Cross a deeply moving experience

ON the night of Good Friday, around 60 people walked the Solemn Way of the Cross along a 10 km route through Derry City.

Led by Fr Ignacy Saniuta, CC Creggan and chaplain to the Polish Community, who was assisted by Fr Antonio Maria Diez de Medina CFR, they left from St Columba's Church, Long Tower, at 9 pm and walked around the City, via the Peace Bridge and Foyle Bridge back to the Long Tower, finishing at 1 am with the Divine Mercy Chaplet.

Undeterred by the stormy weather, the pilgrims had travelled from various parts of the Diocese to take part, including from Omagh, Co Tyrone, and Buncrana, Co Donegal.

The pilgrims, many of whom were from the Polish community, took turns at carrying the wooden cross on their shoulder, while all walked in silence between each stop for the Stations of the Cross.

The experience was a deeply moving one for many of those who took part, who found their discomfort from the lashing rain and cold wind nothing compared to what Jesus had suffered for the salvation of their souls and all of humanity.

Claudy pupils present Jesus' final journey through Stations of Cross

AS Lent drew to a close, the Year 8, 9 and 10 pupils of St Patrick's & St Brigid's, Claudy, remembered Jesus' final journey through the Stations of the Cross in the nearby St Patrick's Church.

They were joined by Bishop Donal and Fr David O'Kane PP, who led all in prayer.

Paying tribute to all involved, the principal, Mr Philip McCullagh thanked the choir members, instrumentalists and readers, under the direction of Mr Doherty and Mrs Loughrey, for a wonderful service.

Unveiling Fr Hegarty statue Papal Nuncio highlighted power of love to erase violence and hatred

THE ceremony to celebrate the unveiling of the striking statue in memory of Friar Séamus (James) Hegarty OP, at the spot where he was martyred on the Buncrana coastline, a short distance from Ned's Point, was a far cry from the scene in Penal times when the Moville-born Dominican was hunted and beheaded in 1711.

Believed to be the last priest killed under Penal Laws, Friar Hegarty's legacy has been kept alive in Inishowen down the centuries, and so it was with great gratitude and joy that the sight was greeted by the faithful today of Bishop Donal freely walking along the Fr Hegarty walkway, with His Excellency Archbishop Luis Mariano Montemayor, Apostolic Nuncio and Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, and other invited guests for the unveiling and blessing of the statue, dressed in his cerise soutane and white surplice.

En route the platform-bound party stopped at Porthaw Holy Well for the Apostolic Nuncio to collect some water for the blessing, and at the beach to meet the Scoil Iosagain pupils who were lined out in the sunshine, joyfully waving little Papal flags in greeting. Indeed, Papal flags were the order of the day, with four of them standing on tall flag-poles alongside the Tri-colour, at the entrance to the seaside town, as well as flying from homes and gardens along the route to Ned's Point car park.

A large number of people gathered for the ceremony on Friday, April 4, a couple of weeks before Holy Week in the Church's calendar, with two golf caddy cruisers on hand at Ned's Point for those who would appreciate a lift along the coastal pathway.

Amongst those taking part in the ceremony were members of the Scoil Naomh Iósaf Community Choir, led by Ms Andrea Long. The set-up on the edge of a grassy outcrop looked like something out of a film, with the Lough Swilly lifeboat bobbing up and down in the water behind the choir as they sang and Andrea played the piano that had been transported there for the ceremony. The musical contribution hit a metaphorical crescendo with the sounds of a harp played by renowned musician, Tracey McCrory, and pipe by Uillean Piper, Chris McMullan.

Following the singing of 'Lead, Kindly Light', various guests were called upon to speak, including Bishop Donal, who remarked: "This island has known many conflicts where religious identities, among other things, have been used, and allowed themselves to be used, in confrontations between powerful people.

"In this country, we have had to learn to look on the past not to fuel fires of resentment but to nourish hope for the future. And the encouragement comes from remembering generous figures in the middle of the mess and murder of conflict. It is important to remember not mainly those who shed the blood of others, but those who were prepared to shed their own blood

"The killing of the Dominican Friar, Fr Séamus Hegarty, at this place in 1711 certainly falls into that category. What happened here and in so many other places, the losses incurred by God's people on whichever side of the struggle that was taking place at the time, and even the losses inflicted by both sides too, serve only to remind us today of the strength and determination needed by the followers of Christ, in fulfilling the call to be Disciples of Hope in the world in which we live. Hope will always outlive hatred, light outshine darkness, and life outwit death; hope does not disappoint.

Shared future

"Fr Hegarty asks us to find ways of talking about a divided past that will enable our young people to look forward to a more shared future."

After the statue was unveiled by the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Montemayor, and the Minister of State for Sport & Policy, Charlie McConalogue TD, it was blessed by Bishop Donal, and later a laurel wreath, the symbol of martyrdom, was laid at the foot of it by Dominican, Fr Damian Polly OP, Prior of the Black Abbey, Kilkenny, who was joined by local school children, Sarah McLaughlin and PJ McDaid, from Scoil Naomh Iósaf, the Illies, and Andrew Porter, from Scoil Íosagáin in Buncrana. Fr Damian also read a passage from the Sermon on the Mount, listing The Eight Beatitudes.

Speaking to the gathering, the Papal Nuncio said: "It is history that brings us here and it is history that invites us to look to a brighter and better tomorrow."

He added: "It is true that memory sometimes breed bitterness and the desire for retribution. This, however, can poison a human life entirely and make it sterile. It is when we look to the past with forgiveness in our hearts that we find the exhilarating energy to move beyond it and build together a new and better world."

Archbishop Montemayor went on to remark: "The landscape around us has not changed very greatly, we can suppose, since the days of Fr Séamus. It remains largely immutable. What has changed, I am confident, is the inner landscape of our hearts and minds. Even as Fr Séamus closed his eyes in dying agony to this world, his vision, which was that of a man of strong faith in the Risen Christ, was set on that new and better world to which we are invited, and not just in the afterlife but beginning in this life as well."

"Commit yourselves," he encouraged, "to a better future for our families, our loved ones, and commit yourself to love others and get rid of violence and hatred. That is the message that Fr Seamus Hegarty can give us today, and may this love make it possible in our time."

Other speakers included Bryan Cannon, director for the Inishowen Municipal District, Donegal County Council, who was Master of Ceremonies, Charlie McConalogue TD, Cllr Jack Murray, Cathaoirleach of the Inishowen Municipal District, and Fr Francis Bradley, parish priest. Also on the platform were Mgr Kevin Gillespie, Diocesan Administrator in the neighbouring Diocese of Raphoe, and Superintendent Shaun Grant of the local district of An Garda Síochána.

The statue, created by talented Burt artist, Rory Harron, was part of a €80,000 project delivered through Donegal County Council's Community Development and Planning directorate, working with Buncrana Tidy Towns, and was funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development under the Community Recognition Fund. The project also included the restoration of Porthaw Holy Well, refurbishment of Fr Hegarty's Memorial, and the installation of seating, picnic benches and interpretation panels.

Appreciation

Once unveiled, the striking Fr Hegarty statue drew much admiration and appreciation of the recognition of the friar's witness to the faith. Ordained in 1672 by Oliver Plunkett, who was later hung, drawn and quartered, Friar Hegarty was parish priest of Upper & Lower Fahan from 1704 until his death in 1711. In Penal times, under the reign of Queen Anne, an Oath of Abjuration was required by Catholic clergy, under the penalty of deportation or death, to apostatize and reject Transubstantiation, Sacrifice of Mass and Adoration of Mother Mary and any of the saints.

His cave hideaway being revealed by his brother-in-law, the Dominican fled on a white horse and, at the spot known today as Fr Hegarty's Rock, jumped into Lough Swilly with the hope of swimming to safety on the far side. However, the British Red Coats giving chase persuaded him to come back to shore, telling him that he would come to no harm, but they then beheaded him…with his head said to have bounced several times leaving an imprint on the ground. They buried his body near a rocky outcrop, but some local historians believe that the people exhumed his body a day or so later and reburied it in the hills of Fahan, a mound known today by locals as the Friar's Grave.

Among those attending the ceremony were John O'Donnell and Mickey P McLaughlin, who, along with the late Peter Gorry, had taken steps in 2009 to preserve Fr Hegarty's grave at the same spot, and Porthaw Holy Well.

Speaking to 'The Net' afterwards, John recalled noticing on his daily runs out past Fr Hegarty's Rock that the writing on the old white headstone, on the Dominican's grave, had greatly faded.

"Strangers going out there wouldn't have a clue what it was about," he said. Deciding to remedy the situation, the local businessman organised for a new inscribed headstone to be put on the grave, and was joined in the venture by Mickey. The headstone was provided free-of-charge by Bridge End Memorials.

"Within two years later," added John, "a Mass was celebrated at the Rock by Bishop Seamus Hegarty for the 300th anniversary of Fr Hegarty's death."

Adding that he and Mickey also got the area of the Holy Well at Porthaw cleaned up, which at one point was almost completely obscured from view, and built a new wall, he said; "There is an old cross on the stone of that Well that is reckoned to be over 900 years old. It was a shame to think that these things were going to be lost and no-one would know what they were about. So, it is great to see the fabulous work that has been done now. The statue is fantastic and will be a great asset to the town and in keeping Fr Hegarty's story alive."









Burt artist Rory Harron shares inspiration for striking Friar Hegarty sculpture

THE recently unveiled bronze statue at Fr Hegarty's Rock, on the Buncrana coastline in Co Donegal, of the Dominican friar who was beheaded there in the 1700s, is a striking sight with its 'Lake of Shadows' backdrop, and is stirring interest in the story of this martyr for the faith amongst locals and visitors alike.

The seven feet high figure was sculpted by the very talented, Rory Harron in his family bronze studio at Burt, Co Donegal, and he has shared the inspiration behind various aspects of the sculpture with 'The Net'.

"In my initial drawing of the statue, I had Fr Hegarty's head looking forward and arms outstretched, welcoming people," he recalled, but following communication with the Dominicans about how to draw the 12th century friar, and others, Rory then wanted him to be more reflective.

He added: "Pauline Ross, founder of the Playhouse in Derry, said that she walked out to Fr Hegarty's Rock sometimes saying her prayers, and that it was quite common for people to go there to ask Fr Hegarty to pray for them. So, the more I thought about it, I felt having his arms outstretched was too dramatic.

"When I got shortlisted, I made the maquette – the small model - with his head bowed in deep prayer rather than looking outwards. And, when I was interviewed about it, I retold the story of people going there to pray often and that I wanted something that was reflective of that. I wanted to create a holy figure. A praying model frozen in time just works.

"I took inspiration from ancient Celtic Christianity. He is holding a Penal Cross close to him, like he is cherishing it as a connection with God, and it is giving him solace. Penal crosses were designed so that they could be easily hid it up the sleeve if need-be. As a hunted man of faith, living in a cave, I saw this cross as probably one of the few objects that he had."

"As a Dominican friar," continued Rory, "his attire is that of a Dominican, with Rosary beads and belt. Dominicans would have shaved their heads but during penal times they would have been crazy to do that, so I gave him hair and also a beard, which would have been common enough over 300 years ago, and evokes wisdom. I wanted the texture of the cloak to be very rough and thick, so I slapped on layers. I presumed that he would have slept there during the winter and probably would have slept in his cloak."

Commenting on the location, Rory said: "The statue is facing towards Fahan and Inch, where he had been parish priest. The location is stunning; I don't think I could have got a better one, even in winter, that connected the figure with nature and with Christianity. I think it is best seen from a distance, with the water in the background."

"Work on the sculpture took six months," he recalled, "I started it last September and finished it at the end of March. I work alone, so I was doing everything mostly myself, except for my brother, Simon helping me to pour the bronze, Paddy Monaghan welding the sculpture, and my dad's cousin, Ger McLaughlin and his son, Ger putting in the foundation and installing the figure and making the small plinth. I thank them for their help, including Gerry Browne, my dad's friend from Roscommon, who posed for me in the Dominican habit and was the model for the sculpture."

The sculpture was commissioned by Donegal County Council, and Rory expressed appreciation for the opportunity and the welcome he had received from all involved there, including Fiona Doherty, Development Officer. He also thanked Fr Francis Bradley, Buncrana parish priest, for sharing his knowledge of Fr Hegarty and the Dominican dress wear.

Granny

Saying that his granny, Mary Harron (nee McLaughlin), was a Clonmany woman, Rory remarked that the unveiling ceremony had been a great day out in Inishowen for his family.

Born in Sligo, where his father was a teacher, Rory moved to Derry with his family when he was 11 and spent his teenage years there. His father is the acclaimed artist and sculptor, Maurice Harron, known for his public art throughout Ireland, the UK and America, which includes the bronze 'Hands across the Divide' sculpture at Derry's Carlisle Square and the stainless steel and bronze 'Let the Dance Begin' figures in Strabane. His mother, Dympna, formerly McGee from Co Armagh, was an English and Drama teacher, and from her came his interest in studying English and Politics at university in Belfast.

Commenting on his own pathway into art, Rory said: "After I finished in Belfast, I set to work as an assistant to my dad in our studio and bronze foundry in Burt, nearly 25 years ago.

From that, I started doing my own art, while helping him with big projects.

"I did a Masters in Fine Art in Manchester. I ended up mixing the English and Politics with Art and did a PhD in Glasgow School of Art, in the Forum for Critical Enquiry – that was the name of the department where discussion took place on history, politics and philosophy around art and you were encouraged to write an essay relating to this.

"After that, I came back to Derry. I was working with some local art galleries and community art projects in the Gasyard, and then started working more as my father's assistant. He totally retired three or four years ago, so I am applying for commissions now."

Amongst Rory's other commissioned artworks to date is a sculpture of United Irishman, Tom Dunn, in Rostrevor, Co Down, which was unveiled by former Irish President, Mary McAleese.

He commented: "The Presbyterians and Catholics in Tom Dunn's time were working together trying to achieve equality. This was seen as a threat to the King, so he was hunted down. He was a school teacher who taught Catholics and Protestants and was a local leading United Irishman along with other Catholics and Protestants striving for a united Ireland. He was captured by Crown forces and asked to tell who the United Irishmen were, but he wouldn't betray them and he was murdered in the square. In the sculpture, he is holding the Bible and a book called 'The Rights of Man' by Thomas Paine, a famous English revolutionary writer."

Rory also does private commissions, one being a five-foot bronze heart for NI Organ Donors, to celebrate all those who have donated their organs to help those in need, and another being a six-foot 'Tree of Life' symbol for a business man in Tullamore, Offaly. He is also hoping to make a sculpture of factory girls for a Derry businessman's new apartments located in a former shirt factory building.


Rory Harron

Shortly after the unveiling of his Fr Hegarty statue in Buncrana, he handed over a 12-inch sculpture of the late Fr Kevin Mullan for presentation at the end of this year's Feis Dhoire Cholmcille. The Fr Mullan Perpetual Memorial Award goes to the winner of the 'Champion of Champions' competition in honour of Fr Mullan, who had been secretary and chair of the Feis.

With creative talent oozing out of him, Rory hopes to do a graphic novel at some stage, mixing his writing and art, and he also enjoys doing puppetry.

Anyone wishing to make contact with Rory can email him at: roryjharron@gmail.com.

Palm Sunday processions…

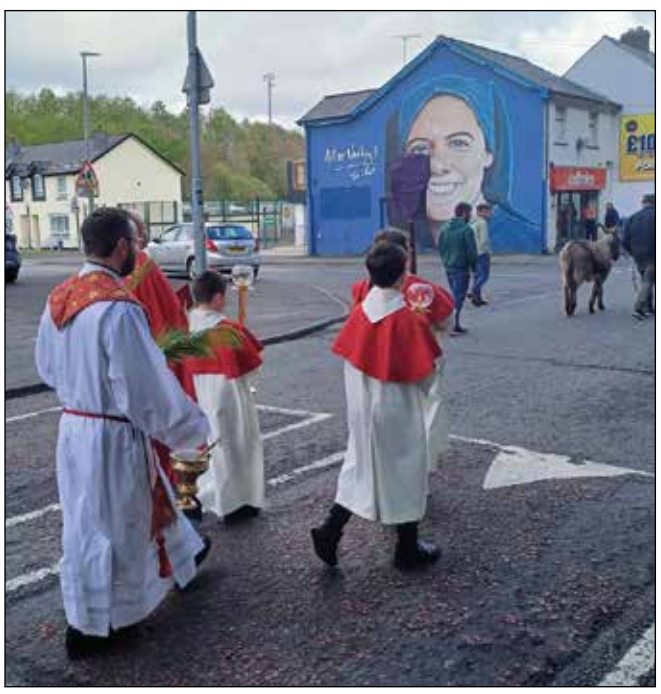
Long Tower faithful gather for Palm Sunday Procession

THE Long Tower faith community had a special start to their Holy Week journey with a Palm Sunday procession.

After gathering at Brandywell Grotto, they processed to St Columba's Church, led by Fr Gerard Mongan, Fr Stephen Ward, 'Thomas' the donkey and a lone piper from the St Colmcille Pipe Band.

(Photographs by Stephen Latimer & Patsy McCallion)

Cathedral Choir led Palm Sunday Procession



Palm Sunday processions…

Scenic setting for Buncrana Ecumenical Palm Sunday procession

THIS year, instead of being through the streets, the traditional Ecumenical Palm Sunday Procession in Buncrana took place on the coastal walk from Ned's Point to Fr Hegarty's Rock.

Around 200 people joined the reflective walk, which took in the new Friar Séamus Hegarty Statue that was recently unveiled by Minister Charlie McConalogue TD and His Excellency the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Luis Mariano Montemayor.

The 14 scriptural reflections used as Stations of the Cross were those written by Pope St John Paul II at the turn of the Millennium. Like the original journey along the Via Dolorosa, the crowd included members of many different faith traditions and a great number of passers-by, who decided not to pass the opportunity by.

During the procession, Tony Tinney, a local celebrated for his knowledge of the area and his daily walk to Fr Hegarty's Rock, carried The White Palm of Elche, a Spanish Ornamental Palm Branch, traditional to the Alicante area for Holy Week.

"A lovely connection with Spain and the history of the Armada, whose events took place off our western coast around 1588AD," remarked the parish priest, Fr Francis Bradley.

Commenting on the walk, he added: "It was a lovely prayerful experience; something to be repeated again."

(Photographs by Martin Moloney & The Net)

Young Writers share thoughts...

THIS month, we welcome 16-year-old Harry Mason to the Young Writers' Team. A parishioner of Holy Family, Ballymagroarty, Harry attends St Patrick's & St Brigid's, Claudy, and for his first article he reflects on the legacy of the late Pope Francis.

Greatly saddened by the death of Pope Francis, James also writes about his papacy and how blessed he feels to be "a product of the Francis era".

Evan shares his love for St Pio, finding him to be a saint with a message for every generation, while Cara-Leigh reflects on what true love truly is and how following Jesus reveals the answer.

Niamh writes about her discovery, as a young Catholic trying to live out her faith, that the Bible is one of the most powerful and important tools that we have in helping us grow closer to God and navigate the challenges we face in life.

Luke and Sean also focus on the lessons and treasures of the Bible, with Luke reflecting on the passage about the woman who committed adultery and the danger of condemning others, while Sean shares his current interest in Matthew's chapters on the signs of the end times and the importance of being prepared for this, as we do not know the day or the hour.

Cara-leigh Doherty - Derry City Deanery

Bronagh Doherty, Co Derry Deanery

Peter Grant, Inishowen Deanery.

John Agustine Joseph, Derry City Deanery.

James Tourish, Derry City Deanery.

Erin Whoriskey, Derry City Deanery

Bláthnaid McMenamin - Co Tyrone Deanery

Shea Doherty, Derry City Deanery

Evan Curran, Derry City Deanery

Seán McLaughlin, Co Tyrone Deanery

Niamh Sharkey, Derry City Deanery.

Harry Mason, Derry City Deanery

Luke Doherty, Inishowen Deanery

Pope Francis' legacy *by Harry*

JORGE Mario Bergoglio, as the white smoke erupted and the chapel bells rang out their joy, was elected the new Roman Pontiff on March 13, 2013. A surprise! A Latin American Pope, and to mark his mission for the papacy he took the name Francis, after the Church's beloved St Francis of Assisi.

Let's outline a few main themes of his pontificate. Firstly, his First Encyclical was 'Lumen Fidei' (The Light of Faith), highlighting the importance of the virtue of faith and "capable of illuminating every aspect of life".

Secondly, stemming from his pontifical name, Pope Francis had a deep love for the poor and said: "If we see someone who needs help, do we stop? There is so much suffering and poverty and a great need for good Samaritans."

Additionally, he was a Pope of hope, primarily during Covid-19, a time of despair for the whole world, and he exhorted the faithful to "radiate hope". He also inaugurated the Jubilee Year of Hope for 2025.

Lastly, he was a man of striking humility. He didn't wear posh papal garments or sleep in the majestic apostolic palace, a symbol of spiritual authority and splendour, and he even washed the feet of non-Christians!

We are deeply indebted to Pope Francis for his 12-year pontificate and may we follow his example. Sadly, Pope Francis passed away on April 21 at 7.35 am in Casa Santa Marta.

Requiescat in pace (rest in peace), Pope Francis, and may we keep these words in mind: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His faithful" (Psalm 116:15).

Pope Francis…a Pope of the People *by James*

Miserando atque eligendo, by having mercy, choosing him.

THE papal motto of Pope Francis was fitting for the man that he was. It comes from St Bede's homily on the vocation of Matthew, from Matthew's Gospel. Referring specifically to Chapter 9 of Matthew's Gospel, the passage reads:

As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. [11] When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" [12] On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. [13] But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.'[a] For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

The motto taken from St Bede's homily was on the salient point that Jesus chose Matthew as one of His apostles not in spite of him being a sinner but because he was one. Reflecting more deeply upon this, it was one of Jesus' many examples of pure humility, the King of Kings and God on earth, choosing a sinner and tax collector to be one of His closest and dearest companions.

Pope Francis was a man of humility. Even his Papal name reflected that, taking the name of St Francis of Assisi, a beggar and man of simplicity. As Archbishop of Buenos Aires, he rejected living in the official aristocratic residence of which he was entitled to, opting instead to live in a small apartment next to the curia. While others in similar positions to Cardinal Bergoglio may have enjoyed the lavish treatment of being driven around in luxury European cars, the future-pontiff preferred to use the bus and the subway. His life was marked by simplicity. Waking up early in the morning to pray as Archbishop, he would have a light breakfast and read the papers, close to the landline telephone; a number that every priest in the diocese knew the number of, so too, did all of the priests know that they could call that number and speak to Cardinal Bergoglio himself, to discuss any problem they had or an issue that needed resolved.

As a Jesuit, he knew of the obligations he had, not only to himself, but to his people and, of course, God. His focus remained especially on the poor and the needy, he was known as the 'villero bishop', translated at the slum bishop, due to his initiative to increase the Church's presence in the shantytown areas of Buenos Aires.

Even as Pope, the Supreme Pontiff of the Catholic Church, Vicar of Christ and leader of 1.2 billion Catholics worldwide, not much changed in his outlook on life. Upon his election to the role after the conclave, he chose to ride the minibus back to the hotel with the Cardinals, rather than by the dazzling white, Mercedes Papal car. Flash and loud were just not his style, he is well known for his choice of residence in a modest suite in the Vatican guest house, rather than live in the Apostolic Palace.

Breaking custom

He was a man that didn't mind breaking custom at times. After less than a month of being Pope, as the story goes, he went to bed one night passing a saluting Swiss guard. The following morning, he awoke from his apartment at Domus Marta to find the same Swiss Guard, outside his door, standing at attention. "And what are you doing here? Were you awake all night?" asked the Pontiff. "Yes," answered the Swiss Guard, who had been standing there all night, with only a brief break when a colleague had relieved him. Surprised upon hearing this, the Pope asked if the man was tired, to which the guard simply replied: "It's my duty Your Holiness, for Your safety." Upon hearing this, Pope Francis would leave to go back into his apartment, shortly emerging with a chair in his hand. "At least sit down and rest!" exclaimed the pontiff. "Forgive me, but I can't, the rules don't allow it!" responded the guard, explaining his Captain's orders and the strict procedures around the Papal security. "Oh, is that so? Well, I'm the Pope and I am asking you to sit down," he responded. The two men would sit down and share a light meal together, some bread and thinly spread jam, a Jesuit delight.

Pope Francis would make reform a prominent theme of his papal reign. From tightening regulations on safeguarding and ensuring cases of clerical abuse were effectively dealt with, as well as apologising for the mistakes of the past, he sought to promote a new face of the Church. The pontiff was doctrinally, a traditionalist. It is inaccurate to portray Pope Francis as a man who radically reshaped Catholic teaching, and many of the Pontiff's decisions were indeed either mischaracterised by the media, or just downright taken out of context.

Doctrinally, he remained steadfast in his support for tradition, however, what should be noted is his approach to dealing with sensitive topics and his general conciliatory tone. His remark of "who am I to judge", when referring to LGBTQ individuals, made headlines around the world, but for Francis, it was nothing out of the ordinary; we are all sinners and have our own struggles, why should a group be demonised for theirs?

At writing, I am 19 years old. Born in October 2005, I was too late to witness the

remarkable reign of St John Paul II as Pope, and really too young to truly experience the Papacy of the great theologian Joseph Ratzinger, Pope Benedict XVI. Like many young Catholics, it has been Pope Francis that I have known for most of my life. He has been the glowing face of the Church in my lifetime, and the more I read and research about this man, the happier I become that, in the most formative years of my journey in this world as a young Catholic, I can say I am a product of the Francis era, and his example has been the one I am most acquainted with. For me that is a true delight.

There is so much more I could write about such a great man, but I realise that I don't have to. Pope Francis is a man that history will remember fondly, and his works and legacy shall be detailed much more extensively in years yet to come. I look forward to reading about him and hopefully, honouring his legacy.

His final remarks, from his spiritual testament dated 2022, "May the Lord grant a fitting reward to all those who have loved me and who continue to pray for me. The suffering that has marked the final part of my life, I offer to the Lord, for peace in the world and for fraternity among peoples.

Thank you for everything Pope Francis, you shall never be forgotten and we shall always miss you.

What is true love? *by Cara-Leigh*

RECENTLY, at my prayer group, 77, we have been going through the new Youth Alpha series, and in the second week the topic was 'What does real love look like?' It led me to think about what love truly means.

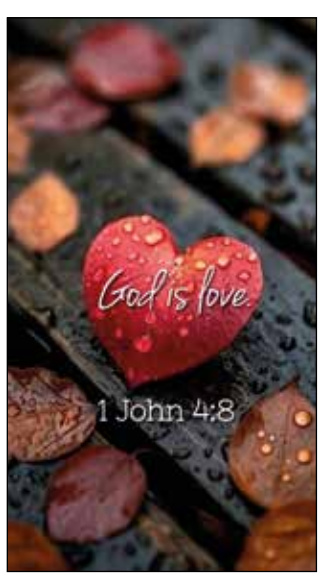
Often, in our world today, love is portrayed to be about what someone else can do for you and what makes us feel good. True love is wanting the good for the other person, even if that is not what makes us the happiest. A perfect example of this love is Jesus' Passion. He took on the weight of sin and died so that we could spend eternity in Heaven. Max Lucado, Christian author and speaker, said: "Nails didn't keep him there, love did".

Often, in our secular society, God is left out of relationships, which we have seen has a negative impact. Venerable Fulton Sheen said: "It takes three to make love, not two: you, your spouse, and God," emphasising the importance of a couple having a relationship with God and walking together in faith. This is because God is love, as it says in 1 John 4:8 - "He who does not love does not know God, for God is love."

It is vitally important that, as Christians, we don't fall into self-giving love but strive to always wish the good of others, even if it isn't in our best interests. We must be reminded that, like Jesus, we must put others first and ourselves last. That is true love.

We must learn to serve other people, whether that be doing the housework without being asked or volunteering to help clean up after a group meeting. These acts may not be our favourite thing to do, but they allow us to serve another person while putting our needs aside.

I came to the conclusion that by following Jesus we can learn what true love is, and be able to put this love into practice with those in our lives.



Young Writers share thoughts...

We do not know the day or the hour *by Seán*

I have recently acquired a specific interest in coming to a greater understanding of chapters 24 and 25 of Matthew's Gospel, which are based around the signs of the end of the age and the famous parables which instruct how we should do our very best to be readily prepared for that time. "Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour," (Matthew 25:13) and we can only anticipate His coming.

At this time of the year, with my final A-level examinations approaching swiftly, I have become inclined to compare this to studying – preparation for an important trial. The difference with an educational examination is that we know the date and time. When Christ returns, we will have minimal forewarning, which is laid out in strangely unclear and symbolic terms in the Book of Revelations at the end of the Bible, and they lay out the prophesies of the end times, which our limited human minds often fail to fully comprehend or undoubtedly identify with ease.

The parables of Jesus that Matthew recorded in these chapters of his Gospel analogise the importance of being prepared for the Second Coming of Our Lord. The first of these is the parable of the 10 virgins – who acted as lamp holders at a wedding. Five had oil to maintain the flame of their lamp, but the foolish five had no oil for their own upkeep as they awaited the arrival of the bridegroom. They ask for a share of the others' oil, who refused and told them to buy their own. The foolish five left to buy more, but it was while they were away that the bridegroom arrived. Upon their return they were refused entry to the banquet, due to their failure to be properly prepared. The bridegroom told the foolish five, "I tell you the truth, I don't know you" (Matthew 25:12). We should always be in a state of readiness for our Lord.

Perhaps, one of my favourite allegories of the Bible is the parable of the talents. It does not literally refer to personal talent, but a unit of measurement used to compartmentalise the worth of silver, gold, or copper. Its relative simplicity meant it was commonplace at that time. In this parable, the master of the house gives three servants talents to manage while he is away. One receives five, one two, and the other one. When the master had returned, the first had gained five more, the second two more, but the third none, for he had buried it in the ground. The master praised the others and rewarded them, but ridiculed the third man and revoked his talent and gave it to the first man because he was competent. He said, "For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away" (Matthew 25:29).

The parable teaches that we have God-given abilities and, therefore, we should use it to please Him, as a way of thanks for these gifts. Then, when that hour comes, we will be ready to see His face.

The third analogy of Jesus that Matthew laid out in chapter five is the parable of the sheep and the goats. It is, undoubtedly, the most symbolic and existential of this trilogy of parables, laying out how at the end of earthly time He will separate the sinful goats from the sheep who have lived righteously. The King in the parable, who represents Christ, tells the sheep, "Come, you are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world" (Matthew 25:34).

This parable is based around how the sheep love one another and aid one another in their time of need, but the goats are selfish and do not care for each other when they are in need of help. This parable is a reminder of how we must uphold our Christian generosity in preparation for our Lord. Countless times, Christians have strayed from the path of love and acceptance of those around us who are in need of care.

Watch out

We should be careful, therefore, whose words we trust. The aforementioned parables explain how to prepare for judgement, but we must also avoid the words of those who would lead us away from Christian love. There are many signs and symbols that people point out and make claims over, but who are we to determine truth as spontaneous doctrines? Jesus said in Matthew 24:4-5 - "Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many."

In several of the Gospels and books that followed, their authors mirror this prediction that corrupted minds will preach falsity to defile you. Many people have claimed divine insight and status in the centuries that followed Christ. An example of such a prediction is in 2 Peter 2:1-2, which reads: "But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them – bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute." Be careful that warped and devilish doctrines do not hold sway over your mind.

Fearmongering has been a common theme throughout human history, since it has proven to be such an effective means of psychological control. Unrest and tension group people together like a shocked flock of sheep, while the wolves prowl closely, but out of sight – these fears often never take tangible form, only when it suits. This method can take both deontological and teleological form, and I cite this because enforcing rules and not enforcing rules have a similar end, one being control and the other providing illusory freedom.

Deontology is the ethical theory of duty-based rules, but when authority grows too extreme it violates liberty. Teleological theories of ethics have no set rules and encourage full exercise of freedom to live life to the greatest happiness you can achieve. With such relativism, it sets in motion the common sensation that morality is like sand rather than concrete, totally pliable, a flexible construct which can be warped and twisted to suit a person's desires.

This form of ethics was promoted by the controversial German elitist philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, who stated that there are "no eternal facts, because there is no absolute truths." This is an utterly dangerous outlook on morality. This form of relativism is commonly known as emotivism, the belief that all moral values are of equal value and correctness, determined by culture, time, and personal desire.

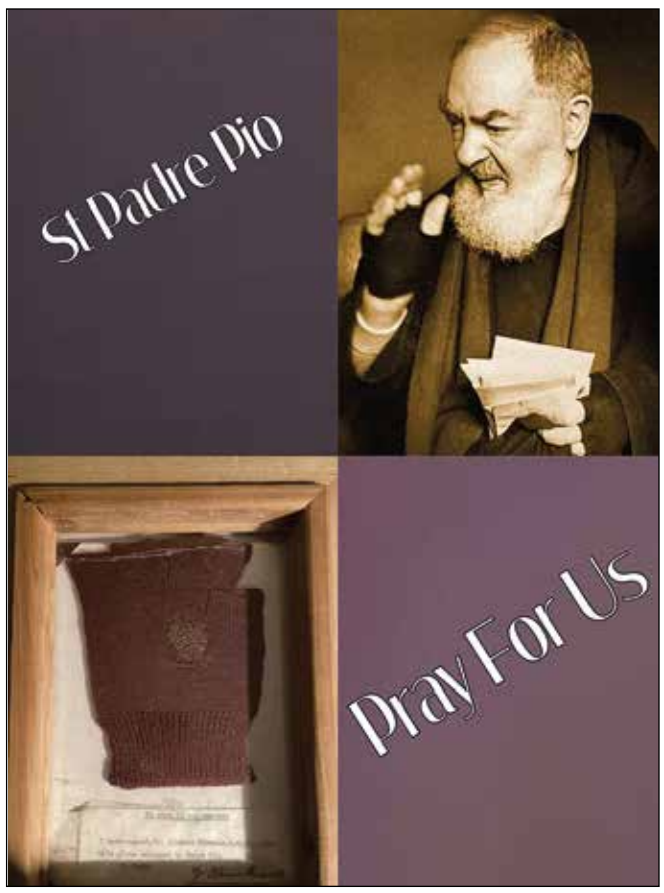
It is upsetting to see so many people straying from righteousness for their own gratification and satisfaction – the unknown hour will be difficult for them, but they have been warned enough times. In Hebrews 10:26-27 it is written, "If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sin is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgement and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God."

I believe that morality is provided by God through the example of Christ and His scriptures, but we are not enforced to follow it. It is a strange thing to say, but I prefer not having my actions prewritten and enforced upon me. I can choose to do what I like within the confines of my conscience, but I choose to remain within the conscience that I have constructed. We can always choose to better ourselves in preparation for our Lord – "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17).

The many parables of the Bible are one of the key features of Jesus' mission. He taught us as a Man, putting heavenly truth into understandable human terms. This way, we can learn righteousness in Christ, for it is not something we have a predisposition for.

What is the greatest and most pious of these two feats – to be born morally impeccable, or to overcome your imperfect nature through the greatest of efforts?

St Pio has a message for every generation *by Evan*



ST Pio's baptismal name was Francesco Forgione. He was born on May 25, 1887, in Pietrelcina, to a poor, farming family who were very devout Catholics. It was there that he was brought up with his six siblings.

St Pio's childhood was rich in faith and he had a strong desire to serve and devote himself to Christ at the young age of five. He was that deeply enriched by his faith that he even reported apparitions from his Guardian Angel.

Although the young boy had some schooling, the Italian saint didn't really have much to stand by him as the majority of his time was spent assisting on the family farm. This back-fired on him, with his first application to the Capuchin's being rejected. It was then that his father sought work in America to fund his private tutoring, allowing him to progress, with him eventually being accepted into the order, taking on the name Friar Pio, at the young age of 15!

Padre Pio was no stranger to illness, as during his life he experienced migraines and bronchitis, not to mention the great spiritual warfare he faced when tempted and insulted by demons. During WWI, the young friar even offered himself as a sacrifice to God, so that the war may come to an end.

St Pio was a light sleeper, only sleeping a few hours at night, and was constantly deep in prayer, reciting his Rosary, which was his only consolation in times of great despair and fear.

Early in the morning of September 20, 1918, at the age of 31, Francesco Forgione, known to the world as Padre Pio, received the Stigmata of Christ, just like the Father of his Order, St Francis had. At this unseen grace, he was horrified and begged the Lord to reconsider. Each morning in the month to follow, Padre Pio awoke with the hope that the wounds would be gone. Such a gift from our Blessed Lord really illustrated the writings of St Paul, when he wrote: "From now on, let no one make troubles for me; for I bear the marks of Jesus on my body."

Many travelled from all over so that they could confess their sins to him and receive great spiritual advice. It has also been said that, when in the confessional, he would sometimes lose his temper. Indeed, it is recorded that it was one of his greatest weaknesses during his time on earth.

St Pio was no stranger to abuse and allegations, with many even accusing him of burning his hands with acid. He bled from his hands, feet and sides every day for 50 years. Shortly before his death, the wounds and any trace of scar disappeared. It is said that he lost about a cup of blood every day and that his wounds smelt like a mixture between tobacco and fresh flowers.

I truly believe that our beloved Padre Pio is a saint who has a message for every generation; a message that will bring us closer to Christ, allowing us to share and hand over our sufferings to God, as well as taking the gentle hand of our Blessed Mother Mary, whom he loved. He had a great devotion to the words: "You must remember that you have in Heaven, not only a Father but also a Mother...Let us then have recourse to Mary. She is all sweetness, mercy, goodness and love for us because she is our Mother."

Although we face great challenges and pain in this modern world, we must remember that with Jesus and His blessed Mother everything is possible. No matter our past, present or future, we are always loved by them and are always welcome to return to them at any time.

So in a world torn by strife, greed, abuse, scandal and much more, let us remember what this great Saint said: "Pray, hope, and don't worry. Worry is useless. God is merciful and will hear your prayer."

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be world without end. Amen

St Pio - priest, spiritual guide, father confessor and lover of Christ and His mother, pray for us!

Young Writers share thoughts...

"Whoever hasn't sinned should throw the first stone" *by Luke*

JOHN 8 is a chapter in the New Testament of the Bible that has been on my mind since it was read at Mass a few weeks ago. It feels like it is one of the most well-known of the chapters, and for good reason. It is a short and relatively simple story, but when one moves past the tendency to assume we understand these chapters that we have heard many times, we can begin to grasp profound implications that are easily applicable to the modern world.

The most memorable line of the chapter is the second half of John 8:7 - "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." This was Jesus' response to an angry crowd of people who seemed desperate to stone a woman accused of adultery.

This statement from Jesus seemed perfectly designed to defuse the situation, as it caused this mob to break up as everyone reflected on themselves and realised how little ground they had to stand on, starting with the oldest.

Once He is alone with this woman, the chapter concludes with the verses John 8:10-11, "Jesus straightened up and asked her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?' 'No one, sir,' she said. 'Then neither do I condemn you,' Jesus declared. 'Go now and leave your life of sin'."

The primary messages are seemingly obvious. We have no right to condemn others, as we too are sinners, every one of us. Only God can judge people and He is endlessly forgiving.

I feel that this message is so important because it is easy to fall into the trap of believing that because we go to Mass, or are kind to others, or any number of undeniably good things, that that makes us above another person. The idea of sitting on a moral high horse is an illusion. Yes, the magnitude of our sin may differ but, in the end, we are all sinners, and it is God's place, not ours, to judge.

It is also worth noting that a part of this is that, as humans, our judgement would inherently be imperfect. We can see this subtly told to us through the chapter

above. Why was only one woman taken by this mob? Adultery is not exactly a sin one can commit alone, yet only one person was being threatened with stoning by this mob.

We do not know anything at all about what happened, who the other person was, or why they suffered no repercussions that we know of. Was it misogyny on the part of the mob that led to them only targeting the woman? Was the other person wealthier or somehow holding higher social status? All this is speculation that we will never be able to answer, but it highlights that condemning others will be affected by our biases, and as such it cannot be fair if done by humans.

Jesus forgave the woman, and though we know little about her, I find it hard to believe that after such an experience she would ignore the lifeline Jesus offered her and leave her life of sin. If not for Him, she would be dead by the hand of a violent mob, instead of being able to continue her life anew thanks to the mercy of God.

The Bible is a guide that helps us grow closer to God and navigate challenges we face *by Niamh*

AS a young person trying to live out my Catholic faith, I've come to realize that one of the most powerful and important tools that we have is the Bible. It is more than just a book we hear readings from at Mass. It is actually a guide that helps us grow closer to God, understand His will for our lives, and navigate the challenges we face every day. It is God's Word; unchanging, eternal, and full of truth. And when we take time to read it, we are not just learning about God, we are spending time with God.

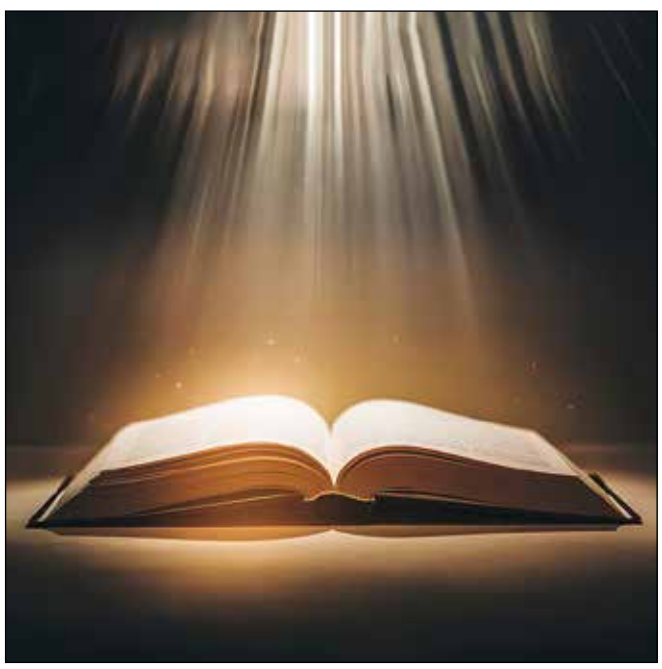
One of the biggest reasons the Bible is important is because it tells us the story of God's love for us. From the very beginning, in Genesis, to the final pages of Revelation, we see how much God loves humanity and how far He is willing to go to bring us back to Him.

The Old Testament shows us God's faithfulness to His people, even when they mess up. And the New Testament reveals the heart of that love through Jesus; His life, death, and resurrection. If we ever doubt our worth or feel lost, Scripture reminds us of who we are: children of God, deeply loved and never forgotten.

A reason we should read the Bible often is because it teaches us how to live. Jesus didn't just come to save us, He came to show us how to live a full, meaningful life. His words in the Gospels are packed with wisdom, compassion, and challenge. When we read His teachings, like the Sermon on the Mount or the parables, we learn how to love others, forgive our enemies, and trust God in every situation.

Reading the Bible also strengthens our faith. Sometimes it's hard to believe, especially when things are tough or when prayers seem unanswered. But Scripture is full of stories of people who struggled too; they faced fear, doubt, suffering, and loss, but they held on to God. Their stories remind us that we are not alone and that faith is a journey, not a straight path. The more we read the Bible, the more we realize that God is with us in everything.

As Catholics, we are especially blessed because the Bible is at the heart of our faith. Every Mass is filled with Scripture like



readings from the Old and New Testaments, Psalms, and the Gospel. But hearing the Word once a week isn't enough. We need to make it a part of our daily lives. Even just five or ten minutes a day can make a big difference. There are apps, and reading plans that make it easy to get started

Finally, reading the Bible often helps us grow in our relationship with God. Just like any relationship, it takes time and effort. When we read His Word, we learn to hear His voice more clearly. We begin to recognize how He's speaking to us, guiding us, and loving us in the ordinary moments of our day.

Coleraine Parish Pilgrim Day to mark Jubilee Year of Hope

by Pilgrim of Hope

OUR Pilgrim Journey for the Jubilee Year of Hope was to bring us to the birthplace of St Brigid at Faughart, Co Louth, and to Slane, Co Meath, the birthplace of Christianity in Ireland which St Patrick initiated. Both saints, Patrons of Hope gifted to our people centuries ago.

The date set for the Pilgrim Journey was Saturday, April 5 – the Feast Day of St Patrick's first convert to Christianity. The next day, Sunday, April 6, was the Feast Day of St Patrick's ordination. An appropriate weekend Saturday to arrive at the Hill of Slane. In addition, the year our Pilgrim journey was undertaken, on April 5, 2025, was the 1500th anniversary year of the death of St Brigid, 525. Such a suitable weekend and year to travel on our Pilgrim Journey to both Faughart and Hill of Slane.

Our Pilgrim Journey began with an 8.30 am start from Coleraine. The 49 pilgrims who came on the journey were upbeat, with the spirit of the day that would unfold and the beautiful clear sky day that we were graced with. En route to Faughart, the birthplace of St Brigid, the recitation of the Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary were recited.

Fr Neil Farren gave a brief summary of St Brigid, born in 451, who along with St Patrick and St Columba are patron saints of Ireland. St Brigid established a monastery in Co Kildare. She employed the help of seven other women and built two more monasteries, one for men and one for women. She established a school of art, which included illumination and metalwork She died in the year 525. St Brigid was buried in Kildare, but her remains were later re-interred at Downpatrick, Co Down, in 1185, where the tombs of St Patrick and Columba are also located today, at Down Cathedral.

The site of St Brigid's Shrine at Faughart, near Dundalk, was chosen by Cardinal MacRory as the National Shrine of St Brigid for the whole of Ireland in 1934. Upon arrival at the St Brigid's Shrine, we entered the oratory for the celebration of the Mass of St Brigid. A parishioner from Faughart made available to us the Relic of St Brigid, received from Lisbon in Portugal, where the head of St Brigid was relocated to the Jesuit Church there. We were blessed with the relic and a Penal Cross.

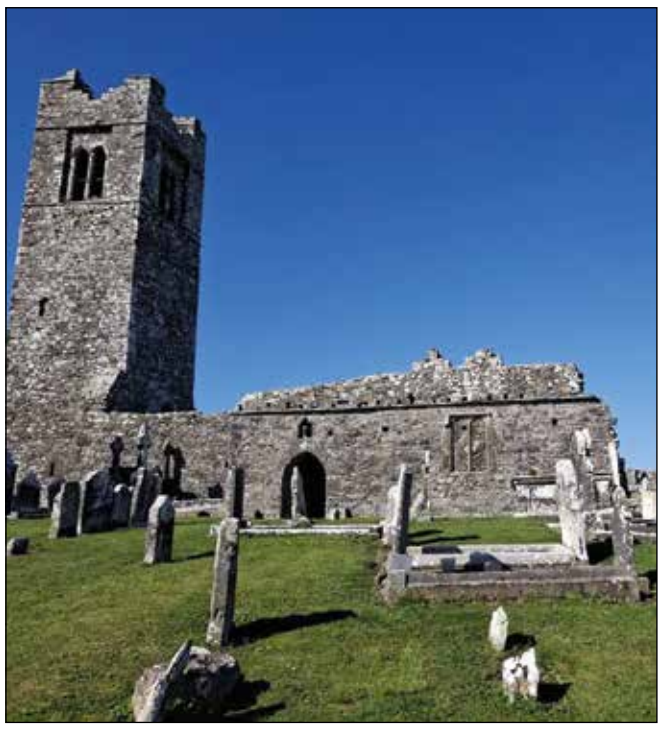
The Faughart site is a tranquil space surrounded by beech trees and a stream flowing through the site. Stations of the Cross are set along this beautiful landscape. In the main, the Pilgrims were truly blessed also by the gem of this sacred Faughart Shrine location, which was unknown to them till now.

Then our journey took us to the Hill of Slane, a place of yesteryears which was a great school of learning and piety. St Patrick was first to erect a monastery there. It was here, upon his arrival, that St Patrick lit the first Easter Fire that declared Christianity had arrived on the Emerald Isle. The monastery was destroyed by the Anglo-Norman Invasion in the 1170s. The present ruined buildings of a college and church was built in the 1300s for educational and worship purposes.

Upon our arrival, there was just the short walk up the grassy hill, thankfully dry, that led us to the 13th century Church and College, which now are in ruins. There we had a short prayer service, with the recitation of the Breastplate Prayer of St Patrick. Our youngest pilgrim lit the Candle that would be used for our Parish Easter Liturgy.

After Slane, our journey brought us to the Belmont House Hotel in Banbridge, where we were treated to a superb meal that kept everybody in good spirits until it was time to head back to the Coleraine Parish.

It was a Pilgrim Day much appreciated by all of us, to tranquil places previously unexplored, spiritually uplifting and to be recommended for others to journey there for a Pilgrim Day in this Jubilee Year.



Maghera faithful encouraged and inspired by Lenten prayer meetings *by Julie Zeoli*

IN the parish of Glen, Maghera, we had the joy throughout Lent to attend weekly prayer meetings which were based on Lectio Divina, that is, shared prayer and reflection on the Sunday Gospel passages and also on the viewing of videos showing the life and witness of our Irish Saints.

Each week, we read and shared understanding of the previous Sunday's Gospel. It was an uplifting source of joy when it became so clear that these passages focus primarily on the loving mercy of God towards us, and on His patience and longing for the sinner to return to the paths of grace. This was highlighted as we reflected on the parables of the Fig Tree, the Prodigal Son and the account of the woman taken in adultery.

We always read the Gospel passage twice - apart from the last week, when it was the longer account of the Passion of the Lord, taken from St Luke's Gospel, and so we listened to this once.

At the beginning of each meeting, to encourage and develop the atmosphere of loving prayer, we also listened to a special song (a different one each week) with background scenic images shown on the large screen, installed for that purpose on the back wall of the upper room of the Pastoral Centre.

At our last meeting, when we reflected specifically on the Passion of Our Lord, the images on the screen were very vivid and striking sculptures of the Stations of the Cross, and the background hymn was: "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" The first line of the verse changed with each station of the cross, eg "Were you there when he fell upon the ground?" This was all very moving.

For the Lectio Divina, we formed into two groups, with seven or eight in each group and we followed the synodal method of discussion when, first of all, each member of the group speaks of the points which touched them the most, then, in the second round, each member comments on what most moved them in the contribution of another member and, thirdly, each gives their thoughts in answer to the question: "From our reflection on this passage, what do you think the Holy Spirit is calling us towards, now in our own times?"

We then watched a video presentation, each lasting 10 to 15 minutes, on the life and background of one of our Irish Saints. Throughout the six weeks we were encouraged and inspired by the witness given by St Patrick, St Brigid, St Columba, St Kevin of Glendalough, St Abigail and St Oliver Plunkett. We were reminded and deeply encouraged, by viewing the accounts of their lives, that God is calling each one of us, no matter our circumstances, to give witness to Him, to spread knowledge and love of the faith in our own times.

Many of us had never heard of St Abigail - with the exception of one parishioner who had lived in Cork for a while, in an area where there is a strong devotion to her. St Abigail lived in the sixth century and was a woman of faith, known for her deep prayer life, healing gifts and commitment to peace and justice. She is the patron saint of beekeepers, as she kept bees and used their honey for healing!

We are grateful to have had this chance to be together and to deepen our prayer life during the season of Lent. We thank our parish priest, Fr Paddy Doherty for all the encouragement and go-ahead given by him, and to our parish secretary, Mona O'Kane, for printing the material needed.

Access to this material we used was forwarded to us by 'Pathways to the Future', the main office of Down and Connor diocese. To all their workers there, we are also very grateful. May the Lord bless us all deeply this Easter with a renewed and deepened understanding of that love for us which led to the cross, to the resurrection and the gift of His Spirit of Love.

Prayers of the Diocese offered for Pope Francis

PEOPLE around the Diocese have been taking time to reflect on the pontificate of Pope Francis I and to pray for the repose of his soul, with some parishes celebrating Masses for the late Holy Father and prominently placing his photograph in churches in memoriam.

Many felt moved to travel from various parts of the Diocese to attend the Diocesan Mass for Pope Francis, celebrated by Bishop Donal in St Eugene's Cathedral on Friday, April 25, the day before the Pope's funeral. The bishop was joined by around 30 priests.

The congregation heard Bishop Donal recall how Pope Francis had spoken "an uncomplicated language that addressed peace, the destruction of the earth's resources and the effect on the poor – and challenged vested interests in economics and in the church."

Commenting on the large crowds gathered at Rome to pay their last respects to the pontiff, he said: "The crowds of people from every walk of life suggest that there is a hunger for the message that Peter and John preached to the rulers, elders and scribes in Jerusalem 2,000 years ago. Resurrection means that bad news and poor role models, brutality and hard-heartedness are not the best we can expect, nor will they have the final say. In the crowds, I hear a cry for grace and new life to overcome the reality of sin and exploitation."

He went on to say: "Jesus' message on the shores of the Sea of Galilee is one that the church always needs to hear. The life of Pope Francis suggested that one great danger to church comes not from outside enemies of the Word but from those in church who think that an abundant catch is not possible.

"Peter and his companions go against their best instinct as experienced fishermen – and are astounded by huge catch of fish. This is the sort of conversions that are needed if the church is to be renewed.

"Synodality is not about tinkering with structures or teachings to suit somebody's human agenda. Synodality is about listening together for what the Lord is saying – and leadership is about having the courage to put out the nets, despite everything that is saying that this would be a waste of time."

Referring to the Gospel passage that had been read, Bishop Donal said: "It is worth noting that, as the apostles come ashore with a haul of fish, Jesus already has a fire lit with fish cooking on it. But He still asks the apostles to bring some of the fish that they have just caught. Though He can provide everything, He still wants everyone to be able to make their contribution to the shared table. A Eucharistic community sits down together where everyone has a contribution to make.

"Resurrection changes not only what has happened. It changes what can happen. It involves a resurrection of our imagination and of what we dream for the mission of the church. Renewal comes not merely from believing the truth but from living the truth in reviewing how we structure our community of missionary disciples."

Commending the soul of Pope Francis to God, he added: "In life, He constantly asked people to pray for him. He knew, like the first Peter did, that of all the names in the world, the name of Jesus is the only one by which we can be saved. and we accompany him with our prayers as he comes before the one who says that, as often as we reached out to the least of His brothers and sisters, we did it to Him.

"Because we can look back on the last years with gratitude for the one who began his ministry with the words 'Good evening' and who finished his ministry by saying 'Happy Easter', we can face the future with trust that God will continue be be at work in His church. All we have to do is act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with our God - and be amazed at the abundant catch that comes through those who put out into the deep and allow God to bring Resurrection into the mess of our Calvaries."

Comments

A number of those who gathered at the Cathedral for the Mass shared their thoughts at this time with 'The Net'.

Fionnuala Gillan, of the Cathedral Parish, said: "He was a great Pope. Very humble and a people's person. His compassion for the elderly and the poor stands out for me. He was a great example for the Catholic Church."

Bernadette O Mianain, from the Parish of Banagher, commented: "I am just in shock still. I was watching him on the television on Sunday and then the news came on the Monday morning that he was gone. It is hard to believe. His humility stood out for me, seeing him wash people's feet, etc. He was all about the people and everyone was the same to him."

Angela McCallion, Cathedral Parish, remarked: "He was very special and just one of us. You just felt comfortable with him because he was so down to earth."

Ballinascreen parishioner, Ann Costello said: "He was very humble and a man for the poor. He also spent a lot time working with the youth. He will be greatly missed. I hope our next Pope will follow the ethos he had for the Catholic Church."

Mary Law, who travelled in from Ballinascreen with Ann, and shares the same birthday, but not year, with Pope Francis, commented: "He was a humble man loved by many."

Catherine Hughes, of the Long Tower, said: "You never know what you have got until it is gone, and that is what I was thinking about earlier. We are so fortunate to have a record of what he said and, more importantly, what he did. His example is so important to others; his love, compassion, humility and love towards others. He was a true example of God's Mercy on earth."

Sheila Dunne, of St Eugene's, remarked: "I thought he was a brilliant Pope. He cared about everybody and was an example to us all."

Cathedral parishioner, Anna Peake, said: "When Pope Benedict retired, I felt very sad, so I wasn't very open-minded about Pope Francis. But I prayed to the Lord and asked Him to help me to understand Pope Francis. I realised that I was hearing a lot of contradictions between the Vatican and others on the internet, so I left it for a while. Then, when I went back online later to check up on Pope Francis, he was talking all about love. I learned from him how to share in little ways. He put everything that he spoke about into practice."

Mary Law and Ann Costello, Ballinascreen Parish.

Bernadette O Mianáin, Banagher Parish

Fionnuala Gillan, Cathedral Parish

Anna McPeake, St Eugene's

Sheila Dunne, St Eugene's

Catherine Hughes, Long Tower

Angela McCallion, Cathedral Parish.

Omagh celebration for life of Pope Francis

DRUMRAGH parishioners were joined at a Mass to celebrate the life of the late Pope Francis by members of Omagh Churches Forum, as well as the Duke of Abercorn and Mr Robert Scott, Lord Lieutenant of Tyrone.

The Mass was celebrated in Sacred Heart Church, Omagh, by parish priest, Fr Eugene Hasson.

(Photographs by Ed Winters)

Reflecting on his life on reaching his 75th birthday, Bishop Donal writes…

"In all things, give thanks" *(1 Thessalonians 5:18)*

BIRTHDAYS are a chance to be grateful. I remember a couple who lost two children to the same complaint in the first year of their little lives. But I was with them at an enormous celebration when their next child could celebrate her first birthday.

And in reaching the end of my 75th year, I can look back with gratitude firstly, for living this long and, secondly, for having been blessed in so many ways.

I grew up in Randalstown, the first of five children, though one died at birth. There was nothing exceptional in our environment. An outside toilet and no running water were not abnormal. Education in the local primary school, serving Mass in the parish church that had been built in 1784, sporting and cultural activities at our local GAA club, and children's games with our predominantly Protestant neighbours – these were staple parts of who we were.

And then there was our big family circle. With dad being one of 13 children and my mother one of eight, I had no shortage of cousins! Belonging and believing were intimately linked.

Education as a boarder at St MacNissi's College, with great, mainly priest teachers, reinforced those ways of looking at the world. So, when the careers teacher asked me if I had ever considered being a priest, I muttered that I had thought about it. That led to me leaving school and going to study at Queen's University, while living in what was called the Clerical Students' Wing of St Malachy's College.

My studies in German and Italian gave me the opportunity/excuse to spend two summers in Italy and a year in Germany. Those five years for my BA were followed by five years in Rome studying theology, while living in the Irish College.

I suppose having teachable subjects made it almost inevitable that I would be asked to teach in diocesan colleges. That meant five years in St Patrick's College in East Belfast, four years in St MacNissi's College and then 14 in St Malachy's College – the final six of those as principal. In parallel, I was also asked to be Diocesan Pilgrimage Director and Dean of my former seminary, the Wing. Organizing diocesan pilgrimages to Lourdes, teaching full-time, plus running a seminary of 30+ seminarians took plenty of energy and enthusiasm, and lots of prayer!

Teaching was a great experience of working in the building of educational communities with adults and young people. And what kept me going was lots of prayer plus plenty of exercise, including five-a-side football, training for two Belfast marathons and completing the Belfast to Dublin Mara-cycle. As with faith, you don't have to be good at sport to take part in it!

And then one morning in February 2001, I got a call out of the blue from the Apostolic Nuncio in Dublin. Could I come and see him? The journey to Dublin a few days later was not easy. Was I in big trouble? The Nuncio came to the point and told me that Pope John Paul had appointed me as Auxiliary Bishop in my home diocese of Down and Connor. Would I accept? After a little time in the Nuncio's oratory, I wrote a little note of acceptance and signed it.

The night before the official announcement was made, I drove to see my mother. When I told her, her immediate response was "Could hey not get somebody else?" I was never allowed to get a swelled head!

Being a bishop meant that there were many national committees, and I ended up being on some bodies that were involved with education, vocations to priesthood and young people. And that opened doors to meetings in various parts of Europe and a wider experience of the Universal Church. Having some languages was not a drawback!

Derry

And then in 2014, there was Derry! As with every other job that I was asked to take on, I have tried to see such request as the will of God – despite the inevitable challenges. If God is in charge, it is not about my qualifications or abilities.

One of my clerical colleagues was very insightful; "Derry is good fit for you," he kindly said. What he meant was that the diocese is big enough to have a vibrant cultural life, lots of tourism, a university, good inter-church relations and its own Radio Foyle – and still be homely and close-knit.

And Derry is a diocese with a remarkably vibrant faith family. Novenas and missions draw big crowds. We have many excellent and very hard-working priests. Large numbers of women and men are actively involved in the public life of the church. Consecrated religious and others – the Carmelites in Termonbacca, the Friars of the Renewal in Galliagh, the Home of the Mother Sisters in Killygordon, as well as the long-established Sisters of Mercy, the Good Shepherd Sisters and the Loreto Sisters – make vital contributions to the life of parishes and of the Diocese. I have been privileged to ordain seven priests for Derry and one for the Pallottine Fathers. We have others in formation or planning to apply for seminary.

And Derry people are great for going on pilgrimage – to Knock, Lough Derg, Fatima, Medjugorje, Lourdes and elsewhere. And no matter where they go, 'Lady of Knock', composed by Derry girl, Dana, appears to be our national anthem!

We also have to deal with the effects of sin and abuses within our own church family. That involves a lot of humility and prayer. There is much need for renewal if we are to preach the Gospel.

Pope Francis is right in saying that we must discern God's way forward together. The Church is in God's hands. He is still calling us to constant conversion. It is not our job to plan as if we were developing a business plan to grow our market share or restructuring to manage decline. Our task is to seek to discern - together and in prayer – where God is asking us to go and where the signs of new life are already bearing fruit through the Holy Spirit. The key question is not 'Where do we think we should go?', but 'Where is God quietly calling us to go?'

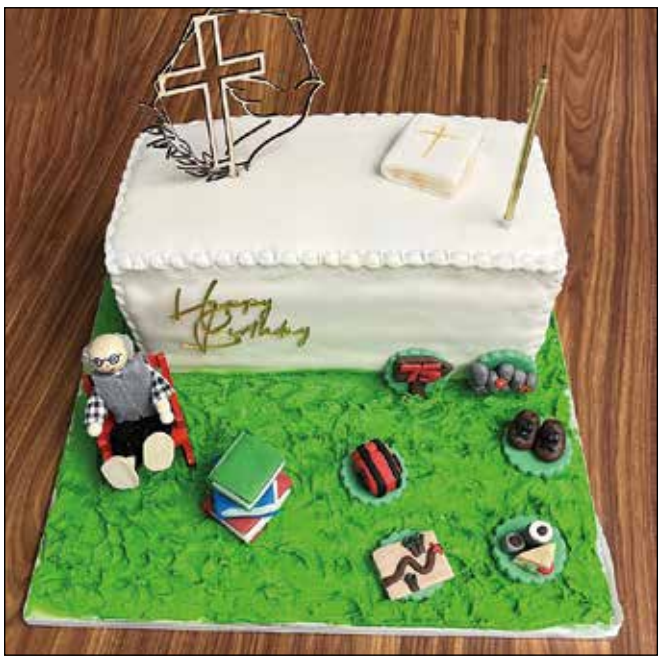
Bishop Donal receiving gift of a cross from Pope Francis during Irish bishops' Ad Limina visit to Rome in 2017.

Now that I have offered my resignation, I have no idea what the future holds. Nor do I need to know. I am grateful for many blessings in the past and present. And I know that the Diocese of Derry has so many great people of faith – lay, religious and ordained. They will be well fit to face the next stage of the journey together.

In this Jubilee of Hope, it is important that we focus on letting grace fill us with hope for the uncertain future – and to focus on bringing hope to so many who cry out for healing and wholeness. Our message is never about us, it is always about Christ, the face of the Father's mercy. Together we are a church made up of 'pilgrims of hope'

The Gospel story is one of death and Resurrection. I have been blessed to know both in my own journey. And I thank God every day for the stages on the journey from birth in the Holy Year of 1950 to this Jubilee of Hope.

The motto of one college where I taught was 'in all things, give thanks' (1 Thessalonians 5:18). This Easter, I can do nothing better than echo those words of St Paul – thanks to God and thanks for the blessing of walking with many holy people.



Pope Francis inspired and encouraged right up to the end…

Keep going…keep going!

WHEN Pope Francis' condition critically worsened to the point that he almost died during his last stay in hospital for double pneumonia, complicated by bronchiectasis and asthmatic bronchitis, it is reported that his doctor asked him, "Will we keep going?", to which the Holy Father replied, "Keep going…keep going."

And later, when he had returned to the Vatican and wanted again to be with the people, considering moving amongst them on Easter Sunday, he is said to have asked his private nurse: "Do you think I really can do it?" To the delight of everyone gathered in St Peter's Square, after his final blessing and the reading of his Urbi et Orbi address by Archbishop Diego Ravelli, he appeared in the popemobile, raising his arm to bless those gathered in the sunshine. Afterwards, he reportedly said to his nurse: "Thank you for taking me back to the Square."

These words were recalled by a commentator during the televised coverage of Pope Francis' funeral, on Saturday, April 26, as an example of the great spirit and determination of the 88-year-old pontiff in carrying out his mission despite his health issues, and will surely serve as very inspirational to all who struggle in various ways.

In his Easter Sunday homily, the day before he died, we sense his 'keep going' attitude when he focused on the word 'running' in commenting on Peter and John 'running together' to the tomb, after being told that the stone across the entrance had been rolled away. Remarking that the haste of Mary Magdalene, Peter and John "expresses the desire, the yearning of the heart, the inner attitude of those who set out to search for Jesus,", the Holy Father pointed out that this was the message of Easter: "We must look for Him elsewhere. Christ is risen, He is alive!...Look for Him in life, look for Him in the faces of our brothers and sisters, look for Him in everyday business, look for Him everywhere except in the tomb." (See back page for full homily)

During his 12-year papacy, Pope Francis always made a point of travelling to the furthest away and staying close to people of all ages, encouraging the young through to the elderly, and reaching out to the sick, imprisoned, persecuted and those suffering from the ravages of war and environmental disasters.

And it was somewhat fitting that in the silence that befell St Peter's Square during meditative moments in the liturgy for his Requiem Mass, the sound of seagulls could be heard…a sound heard by thousands of migrants on crossing the sea in small boats in desperation of finding a better life, with many of them failing to reach shore. Their cause was heartfully championed during his pontificate.

It was also fitting that Pope Francis' funeral was on the eve of Divine Mercy Sunday, as he strove to have mercy shown not only to migrants but to everyone in need of it. During his homily as the chief celebrant of the Requiem Mass, 91-year-old Italian Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, Dean of the College of Cardinals, noted that two key words of Pope Francis were 'mercy' and 'joy'.

No-one is perfect, nor will we reach perfection in this life. As Pope Francis remarked on occasions: "Who am I to judge." Commentary over the days since his passing has highlighted him as a shepherd of God's people, who tried to do as he felt Jesus would. Who are we to judge?

In his last testament, written on June 29, 2022, he concluded: "The suffering that marked the final part of my life, I offer to the Lord, for peace in the world and brotherhood among peoples." May he intercede for us now that his race is run, that we may be able to live together in peace and harmony, starting within our own homes and communities.

During this time of waiting on the election of our next Holy Father of the Church on Earth, may we be guided in our prayer for the cardinals who will take part in the Conclave, and may all be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

On occasions like this, when Catholics around the globe are united in prayer, our Church is at its strongest, and so it is an opportune time to be witnesses of hope to people of all nations and faiths drawn to watch and listen, as is evident from media coverage and comments on social media platforms.

May the 267th successor to St Peter be the one that God sees the world needing in these times, to lead with the strong conviction of the Holy Spirit, to be merciful as the Father is merciful, and to love unconditionally like our God, who is Love.

Great sense of new energy in Iskaheen from Vincentian Mission

by Rhonda McColgan

WE were very blessed in our Parish of Iskaheen & Upper Moville to have a three-day Parish Mission organised by our parish priest, Fr John Farren and the Parish Council in early April.

Fr Paschal, Fr Joseph and Fr Padraig, from the Vincentian Order based in Dublin, came to deliver the retreat. It began with a very enthusiastic congregation arriving early for the 6.30 am Mass. Fr Joseph began by jokingly expressing his surprise at the eager crowd, as Fr Farren had said there may only be five or six people out at that time of the morning. A gentle laugh was heard all around, including that of Fr Farren!

To me, this shows that we are a hungry people. I immediately thought of the scripture in Mark's Gospel, "Then Jesus called His disciples to Him and said 'I feel compassion for the crowd." (Mk 8:1) The people had been following Jesus around for three days without food, and Jesus wanted the disciples to feed them. Yes, we are a hungry people, hungry for food that will last in this ever-changing secular world.

The theme of the Parish mission was 'Hope'. As we moved through the three days we reflected upon the up-coming Easter Triduum. Going from the difficult events of Good Friday to the joy of the Resurrection on Easter Sunday.

It was suggested that, perhaps, we might just prefer to turn up for Easter Sunday without having to deal with the events of Good Friday, with the apparent contradiction of those two days. However, it is important to recognise that the Cross will overshadow our lives eventually through, perhaps, illness, difficult family situations, accidents, things that we never saw coming, and even persecution. It was noted that from an official UN report that Christians were the most persecuted in the world.

We moved on to day two, whilst reflecting upon the gradual thickening of the clouds over Easter Week. Some believed that Jesus was the Messiah, whilst others denied it. The wise and learned men commented about location: "Can any good come from Gallilee?"

Location, education and place of importance in society was a basis to judge. We were reminded how Nicodemus, a Pharisee, was able to recognise something in Jesus. He knew that we are sinners in need of a saviour. This finished with a challenge for us to reflect upon the fact that if we don't understand that we are sinners, then how can we understand that we need a saviour. This is Christianity.

We then had a day of celebrating our children from Scoil Naomh Brid and Scoil Naomh Fionan, followed by Mass for our Youth of the Parish.

This was followed by a healing service. Fr Joseph gave a reflection on the commandment, Honor thy Father and thy Mother. He explained that in those times, as people were moving, an elderly person may become too weak. Quite often, they were just left behind with some food and some water. The caravan must move on! The Israelites would have begun to understand that really this is not good enough. God is always about the dignity of the human person. The right to be cared for. We reflected upon human dignity.

Finally, we reached the last day, when we heard the Gospel explaining how the woman was caught in adultery (Jn 8:3-11). Again, we heard a powerful homily. The question was asked, "Who is God to you?" "What is your image of God?"

We often have this image of an angry God waiting in the long grass, a revengeful, angry God. This Gospel story totally blows that out of the water. We heard about how Jesus knelt at the woman's feet as He wrote in the sand. We were asked to think about that. Jesus, knelt at the woman's feet. She standing over Him and Him looking up to her. Again, in this beautiful moment, we not only hear but see how Jesus is restoring her dignity, maybe even in spite of herself. He honoured her. Jesus' vision of us is human dignity. This is Resurrection!

As the retreat came to a conclusion, we all gathered in St Mary's Hall for tea and refreshments provided by the Parish Council. The beautiful weather reflected the great sense of joy and renewal of the mission. There was a great sense of Parish unity and, in the days since, it has brought a new energy and understanding. "Has anyone condemned you?" "No one sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared, "Go and sin no more."

SVP St Patrick's Castlederg host seniors' social










Dominican Mission a prayerful and fruitful time for Limavady parishioners

BUILDING on the excellent mission experience with the Dominican Friars two years ago, the Parish of Limavady invited them back in the lead up to Holy Week and were blessed with a special time of prayer and reflection in preparation for Easter.

Delighted with the response of the people to the Mission programme and the great feedback, the parish priest, Mgr Bryan McCanny said that it was a wonderful way of celebrating the Holy Year of Hope as a parish community, and was especially appreciated by him on a personal level with his 75th birthday approaching in January 2026.

The timing of Easter this year was another factor in having the mission at this time, said Mgr Bryan: "When Easter is late, it means that we can have a Mission quite close to Holy Week, with the weather much kinder and brighter mornings for the early Mass."

Running from April 5-12, the Mission programme included the usual Parish Lenten Mass at 7 am, then a 10 am Mass and Evening Devotions from Monday-Friday, as well as the usual Parish First Sunday Confessions and Eucharistic Adoration, closing with Mass for the Sick. In addition, they visited the sick in the area of St Finlough's and the parish schools, speaking at the Monday morning assembly in St Mary's School, leading a P7 retreat in Termoncanice PS, and calling into St Finlough's PS too. They also heard the Confessions of the Year 5, 6 and 7 pupils of Termoncanice PS, and talked about the Catholic Church to St Mary's School community.

The three Friars, Fr Damian Polly OP, Fr Maurice Colgan OP, and Fr Blazej Bialek OP briefly shared their vocation stories when visiting the schools. Ordained in 2016, Dubliner Fr Damian, is the Prior of the Dominican Community in Kilkenny. He also holds the position of Director of Preaching for the Irish Dominican Province, and organises and delivers parish missions throughout the country.

Fellow Dubliner, Fr Maurice was ordained in 2011, and had previously worked in Social Care. He was based in St Mary's in Cork City for 12 years, and moved recently to the Dominican Priory in Dublin to take up his new role in online ministry, and family and youth apostolates.

Fr Blazej, from Carlow, was ordained in 2024. Before entering the Dominican Order, he had been training to become a solicitor. He is in ministry in St Mary's Church, Cork City, where he is involved in teaching and youth ministries.

As well as delivering powerful sermons, Mgr Bryan noted that hearing Confessions was a specialty of the Dominican Friars, saying: "They offered the opportunity for Confession after every Mass and in the evenings throughout the Mission week, and it seemed to be a very productive time."

Expressing appreciation to the trio "for a very prayerful, engaging and fruitful mission", Mgr Bryan said: "We are particularly thankful to them for their words of wisdom and giving us an insight into the gentleness and mercy of God."

Tattysallagh School undertook Holy Week Mass Rock pilgrimage

THE staff and pupils from All Saints Primary School, Tattysallagh, in the Parish of Drumragh, Omagh, completed their own pilgrimage to Corradinna Mass Rock on Monday, April 14, to mark the start of Holy Week.

Before they set out, Mrs Daly explained the significance of the Mass Rock and how our ancestors fought to keep their faith in very difficult Penal times. She reminded pupils that this is the Year of Hope and we are 'Pilgrims of Hope'.

Pupils walked from school to the Mass Rock, where Fr Joseph said a short prayer. The children led intercessory prayers, during which Pope Francis was remembered in a special way. They also prayed for bishops, priests, teachers, parents and everyone who leads us in our faith journey.

Then everyone walked back downhill and back to school, carrying blessed psalms. It was a memorable and holy occasion for everyone.

Sr Clare Retreat...

Large numbers travelled from far and near - including many young people - as…

Dynamic Sr Clare Retreat deepens devotion in celebrating what God is doing through famous Derry nun

The late Sr Clare.

ONCE again, the annual Sr Clare Retreat was a great time of prayer, teaching and reflection on the life of the Derry-born Servant of God, and how her story is impacting on people's lives.

Large numbers gathered in St Columba's Church, Long Tower, for the seven-day retreat, from March 31 to April 6, with the pews almost packed to capacity for the mid-week Healing Service, with Anointing of the Sick.

Amongst the guest speakers and celebrants who spoke on this year's theme, 'The Eucharist as the summit and source of the Church', was the Primate of All Ireland, Archbishop Eamon Martin, also a native of Derry.

During his talk, Archbishop Eamon quoted Pope St John Paul II, from a General Audience in April 8, 1992, as saying: "The Eucharist is the summit of the whole Christian life because the faithful bring to it all their prayers and good works, their joys and sufferings.

"These modest offerings are united to the perfect sacrifice of Christ. Thus, they are completely sanctified and lifted up to God in an act of perfect worship which brings the faithful into the divine intimacy (cf. Jn 6:56-57)."

Noting that Sr Clare had "loved to experience this divine intimacy", he added: "She once 'opened her heart' to Jesus in the Blessed sacrament, saying, 'I want to give you my life, my heart, my body, my soul, my words, my sight, my actions, my songs, my thoughts - everything! I want to empty myself, and I have to empty myself, but you know it's so painful because I have so much pride, vanity, impurity, laziness, insincerity, falsity. I'm like 'a crazy sheep', still seeking consolation and happiness in things that aren't you. Help me to empty myself, so I can fill myself with you, with your goodness, your sincerity, your kindness, your patience, your Charity'. (Chapter 9 AWCA)"

"The more Sr Clare fixed her gaze on the Eucharist," he remarked, "the closer she came to understanding the Paschal mystery of the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ. The more intimate she became with Christ in the Eucharist, the more she understood that, just as Christ humbly knelt down to wash the feet of His disciples and emptied Himself still further the next day to suffer and die on the cross for us, so also she, Clare, had to empty herself in humility in order to make God her first love; to give her 'all' and to follow God fully and completely.

"Friends, that magnetic draw of the Eucharist is for everyone; it attracts all sorts of people, including you and me; the bread of angels is the bread for all humankind, 'pauper, servus et humilis'."

Body of the Lord

Archbishop Eamon went on to recall two questions Pope Francis had asked Catholics to ponder, during the Angelus on August 18, 2024, "When I receive the Eucharist, which is the miracle of mercy, do I stand in awe before the Body of the Lord, who died and rose again for us? Do I hunger and thirst for salvation, not just for myself, but for all my brothers and sisters?"

"Sr Clare spent many hours adoring Christ in the Blessed Sacrament," he noted, "to purify her love for the Lord. She had first fallen deeply in love with Jesus one Good Friday. When she kissed the feet of the Crucifix, she was overwhelmed with an awareness of how much Christ had suffered for her and for all of us. 'He died for me; He loves me. I had to do something for Him who had given his life for me'.

"Over the years, she returned again and again to the Eucharist - the summit and source of her holiness - finding there the strength to confront what she described as her superficiality, her mediocrity, her vanity; those Eucharistic encounters taught her humility urging her to make many sacrifices, to give herself entirely to God and to conform herself more and more completely to Christ, her spouse.

"And in her appointments as a religious sister, Clare, by radiating her sense of inner joy in Christ, always wanted to bring others, especially little children, and young people, to that same realisation that the Eucharist is both summit and source of their lives, the bread of angels, the promise of eternal life."

Archbishop Eamon concluded with a couple of quotes, first from Sr Clare: "We have to be saints! It's all or nothing! We can't remain in mediocrity. We have to fight with all our strength against the obstacles that impede us from growing," and then Pope St John Paul II (Holy Thursday, April 17, 2003): "From this moment on, live the Eucharist fully; be persons for whom the Holy Mass, Communion and Eucharistic Adoration are the center and summit of (your) whole life."

Celebrating the closing Mass, Bishop Donal also spoke in his homily about how Sr Clare had come "to recognise the Eucharist as the sacrament, the sign, of what Jesus achieved on the Cross."

He said: "Clare and other great saints knew that the Blessed Sacrament is food for the journey of making disciples of all nations. We share in the mystery of Christ's self-giving, not by hoarding what we have received as gift but by giving it away."

Guest speakers

Other guest speakers during the retreat included: Sr Clare's sister, Megan Nicell; Sr Kirsten Gardiner's father, Michael; Danielle Magennis, Belfast; Fr Liam Finnerty ocd; Fr Michael McGoldrick ocd; and Fr Rodrigo Miranda, who gave testimony at the opening of Sr Clare's cause in Madrid, in January, about how she inspired him to persevere in his vocation as a priest after his experiences in the Middle East. Their talks will feature as a series in future editions.

Feeling blessed to be part of the Sr Clare Retreat, Fr Gerard Mongan, Adm Long Tower, thanked all who had been involved, including the children and young people from the Parish schools, and all who attended either in person or online.

He added: "May we cherish the graces we have received from the Lord and stay close to Him in the beautiful gift of His very Self in the Eucharist, as Sr Clare did."

Fr Stephen Quinn ocd, who celebrates monthly Masses for Sr Clare's cause in Termonbacca and is involved with the Sr Clare Committee in organising the annual retreat, noted a further increase in the numbers attending it this year.

Thankful that the Church has begun the process of investigation into the life of Sr Clare with the opening of her cause for beatification, Fr Stephen highlighted the need for the retreat to remain Christocentric.

"People don't become saints because of what they did or achieved, or how they lived, but rather because they allowed Christ to be at work in their lives; they were a reflection of His light," he said, adding: "Sr Clare always pointed beyond herself. Her life is simply a means by which the Holy Spirit helps us to see Jesus.

"The retreat did that very

Sr Clare Retreat...

continued from page 20

successfully, and we will keep that our priority into the future. The Lord has made possible what has already happened, so He will make possible the next stages too."

"The critical point," remarked Fr Stephen, "is that the devotion is dynamic, and expands and grows. I think there was a sense of that during the retreat."

With Sr Clare's cause now officially opened, and her declared a Servant of God, this year's retreat was a particularly emotional one for Myra McLaughlin, of the Sr Clare Committee.

"I was thinking about how everything has moved on in the time since our first Sr Clare retreat, and how lovely it was to see people coming from all over the country, and to see many young people there, even at the early morning Masses, when there were students there in their uniforms," said Myra.

Peace

She added: "I was very moved by the talks as well, and how much people have been impacted by her. I also sensed a lovely peace at this year's retreat. I just feel that God is doing wonderful things through Sr Clare.

"When welcoming people at the door, I heard some heartwarming stories. A woman, who travelled up from Monaghan, told me that she wouldn't miss it because of what Sr Clare had done for her. She had been diagnosed with breast cancer when she had just turned 50 and was devastated, thinking that she was going to die. However, someone told her to "start praying to that wee saint from Derry" and gave her a Sr Clare prayer card, which she put inside her clothing. She hadn't heard of Sr Clare but looked her up on the internet and watched her film. She had been told that she would need surgery, but when the results of her biopsy came through the doctor couldn't understand why there was no cancer to be found, so she put that down to Sr Clare's intercession and said that she tells everyone about this."

"I was also talking to people from Dublin, Co Down, Belfast, and Armagh," recalled Myra, "I thought it was amazing that people travelled that far for the retreat. Some people took days off work, saying that they wouldn't miss it for the world.

"It is just a beautiful experience for us in our time. Before Sr Clare, I only ever prayed to St Bernadette for her intercession, and watched her film hundreds of times, but now, with Sr Clare and Blessed Carlo Acutis, we have people on the path to sainthood that we can relate more to."

The 2026 retreat will mark the 10th anniversary of Sr Clare's death during an earthquake in Ecuador, when the Home of the Mother building she was in collapsed. It will run from April 13-19.

Meanwhile, the 79th Mass in memory of Sr Clare will be celebrated in Termonbacca on Sunday, May 11, at 7 pm. It can also be viewed online via the Termonbacca YouTube channel.

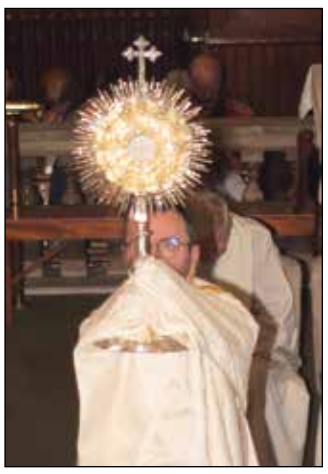
Earlier this year, Derry City & Strabane District Council members approved a motion to support the ongoing cause for Sr Clare's sainthood, in recognition of the impact of her life, and the significance of this process to her family, friends, and the wider community in Derry and beyond.

(Photographs by Gerry Temple)












Reflecting on a vocation that started out with family prayer, altar serving, a Superser heater, Tayto crisps and processions, Fr Gerard Mongan shares his pathway to priesthood on hearing…

"Your greatest peace in life will be as a priest"

Fr Gerard Mongan

DELIGHTED to be back ministering amongst the Long Tower community, especially at this time when one of their own has been declared a Servant of God, Fr Gerard Mongan reflects on how Sr Clare Crockett's story has impacted his priesthood as he shares the story of his own vocation, which was evident from his childhood.

The eldest of four children born to Mary and the late Lawrence Mongan, the Omagh native celebrated a landmark birthday back in November when he turned 50, and this July he will be 22 years ordained.

Family prayer, attending Sunday Mass and serving on the altar after making his First Holy Communion helped form him in his faith from a young age, he recalled: "Praying the Rosary each night was vital in influencing me to be someone who prayed. It was prayed in my family home and when I stayed with my grandparents, Pat and Agnes Begley, every summer, the Rosary was prayed there too.

"When we prayed the Rosary at home, daddy would ask me to lead it, but nine times out of 10 we would be playing with the cat trying to catch the Rosary beads hanging over the chair. When I got older, I found praying the Rosary annoying, but when I got down on my knees I felt a great peace, so that kept me going."

Fr Gerard went on to recall "playing Mass" with his family: "We all met on Sundays in my grandparents' house, so I played Mass with my brother, Paul, sisters, Agnes and Bernadette, and my cousins, who sang in the choir for it. I used the Superser heater as an altar and Tayto crisps for Holy Communion. I had a procession from the bathroom, with all of us dressed up, and we had candles. This was all much to the amusement of my parents and grandparents, who would say, 'Aw, it's Gerard saying Mass again.' So, it was no surprise that I was off to Maynooth in 1997."

Having met a lot of priests during his time as an altar server, he highlighted in particular the late Fr Martin Rooney, who had been parish priest of Drumragh, in Omagh, saying: "He was a very holy and saintly man, very quiet. I was impressed by his gentleness, faithful ministry and the way he said Mass."

He added: "When I was growing up in Omagh, there were about four priests, including curates, Fr Eugene Hasson, who is now parish priest of Drumragh, and the late Fr John Cargan, whose powerful sermons I remember.

"I also remember the sacristan at the time, the late Joe Given. He was of the old school and wore a soutane. He ran the place like a minor seminary and many young fellas who served on the altar became priests, such as Fr Eamon Graham and Fr Joe Gormley, as well as Fr Damian Bresnahan and two Monaghan brothers who became SMA priests. There was a tradition of Diocesan and SMA priests who had their vocation from being altar servers in Sacred Heart Church, Omagh."

"I was always attracted to the Church," remarked Fr Gerard, saying: "After I left the altar, when I was around 14-years-old, I was asked to help Joe as sacristan, locking up the church and doing various activities in the sacristy, and I enjoyed it. I helped him each night after Mass until I was about 18, and would have filled in for him when he was holidays, so I was very used to the church."

Recalling nudges regarding priesthood, he said: "When I was studying for my A' levels, I thought more seriously about what to do with my life. I felt this niggling in my heart towards priesthood, but at 18 I wanted it to go away. I wasn't ready, but it was very strong. I applied to do a degree in History at Queens and I made up my mind that if the niggling was still there after that, I would go for it.

Peace

"When I finished my degree in 1996, I wondered what was I going to do. The notion of priesthood was still there. After doing my last exam, I went down to the chapel in Queens University Chaplaincy, on Elmwood Avenue. I was the only person in the place and I asked Jesus: 'What do you want me to do?' Immediately, I felt this inner voice saying: 'Your greatest peace in life will be as a priest.' It definitely is to this day, though there are ups and downs. I don't think that there is anything else I could do that would bring me more peace than this."

He continued: "I got in touch with Fr Eamon Graham, who always knew that I was going to be a priest, and he put me in contact with Bishop Seamus Hegarty. I asked the bishop if I could have another year and I applied to Queens for a Masters in Scholastic Philosophy. I remember Bishop Hegarty writing to me during that year to encourage me that I was still in the loop. I finished my post grad diploma and met the bishop again, but I hadn't finished the thesis for my Masters. Bishop Hegarty said for me to go on to Maynooth and finish it there. So, I was doing seminary study as well as trying to finish off my thesis on 'Language about God – How can we talk meaningfully about God in our ordinary language?' I was attending two universities at the one time! I entered Maynooth in 1997 and graduated from my Masters at Christmas 1997, from Queens."

Commenting on his seminary experience, Fr Gerard said: "I really enjoyed my time in Maynooth. There were 32 of us at the start, and this went down to 12; we were the smallest class ever at that time. I called us the 12 Apostles.

"In discerning my vocation to the priesthood while in the seminary, there was one period where I can remember having some doubts about the real presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and I wondered if I was being called at all, was I just drifting into something, and would I be fit for this?

"I remember reading everything that I could on the Eucharist, including Thomas Aquinas and the early Doctors of the Church, which said that this was the real presence of Christ. Christ meant what He said. It wasn't a symbol. Patristics was one of my favourite modules in Theology, the study of the Fathers of the Church and their writings; that is where most converts to Catholicism have been influenced, like Scott Hahn.

"Those doubts helped me go deeper and bolstered my faith. It was almost like a spiritual attack and I talked about it to my spiritual director. It was a period of self-doubt about a major aspect of our faith. I remember praying very intensely during a retreat and asking the Lord to confirm to me that He was there."

He continued: "I was ordained a deacon in 2001. In the Derry Diocese at that time, a deacon had to go out on placement for a year in a parish. Bishop Hegarty sent me to Galliagh and I was there until the following June, 2002. It was the best year, where I first cut my teeth. Mgr Bryan McCanny was the parish priest, Fr Frank Bradley was the Diocesan Secretary at the time and was living in 'the garage', and Fr John Irwin was living in Steelstown but helped out in Galliagh. I remember it being a great year and a total eye-opener.

"My first experience of parish life in Galliagh was a total contrast to being in Maynooth, and I thought this is where real is, and not in the 'bubble' of university life. I assisted as deacon at Mass and met some lovely people who had tough lives. The stories they told me were the seed-bed of my first experience of ministry. I knew that it was what I really wanted."

Rome

Recalling Bishop Hegarty sending him to Rome at the end of that year, Fr Gerard said: "It broke my heart as I was homesick in a faraway country, where I didn't know the language. I was plunged into an Italian course in Assisi for the first month, and then did an STL – a license in Sacred Theology in Marriage and Family Studies at the John Paul II Institute, which was in the Lateran University. I only got to love Rome after the last exam and I was there two-and-a-half years! I go back there often. My time in Rome was the makings of me. Bishop Hegarty's words to me were: 'It is time you flapped your wings'.

"In 2003, I came home to be ordained in St Eugene's Cathedral on July 6, by Bishop Hegarty, along with Fr John McDevitt. So, most of the planning for my ordination was done from Rome for me, through John.

"It was a great occasion. I had my reception in Galliagh, where I had been deacon, as they offered to host it. I was happy to have it there, where I had so many friends. There was an after party there too and the place was packed. The people of Galliagh were so generous and kind in hosting that reception. I will always appreciate what they did for me. To this day, I have good friends in Galliagh. It was definitely my first home in ministry."

Immediately after his ordination, he helped out in Newtownstewart before returning to Rome, where he stayed until March 2004, when he was appointed to Steelstown. In 2006, he was moved to the Cathedral for a year and then ministered as curate in Long Tower from 2007 until 2013. After that, he was appointed to the Dungiven Parish, moving to Three Patrons in 2016 and, in 2022, he became Administrator for Long Tower.

"I have enjoyed my time in every parish and have met the best of people," said Fr Gerard, adding: "I feel I have been very blessed since coming back to Long Tower. Bishop McKeown asked me to make it the spiritual home of Sr Clare. There is new movement here with Sr Clare becoming a Servant of God; I can sense a shift. I have evidence of people who have come back to their faith because of Sr Clare, or at least taking an interest. I am very privileged to be accompanying her two sisters, Shauna and Megan on this very exciting journey – a local Derry girl hopefully being raised to the altar.

"I have a good rapport with Shauna and Megan. They are still grieving for their sister, whom they lost twice; once when she left home to be a nun and then when she died, and now they are sharing her with the world. It has changed their whole lives and is overwhelming for them. I feel privileged to be there in a supportive role for them and would love to see it through.

"Sr Clare's death was so tragic, but she is doing more now than she did on Earth, with the legacy of her infectious joy and courage of her convictions, and her perseverance right to the last moment of her life in serving the Lord in the furthest corners of the Earth. She is the famous nun that she wanted to be. Sr Clare's example has inspired me to be more faithful as a priest. She has done that for countless priests and religious throughout the world, reigniting their own spark for the Lord."

Blessed

He continued: "I feel totally blessed to be back again in Long Tower. I notice a huge change in the congregation. The majority of the people that I knew as curate have gone to God. They were a great link to the older generation in Long Tower, but attendance is very good and I am seeing a lot of new faces.

"Schools of the parish are still as excellent as ever and it is great to see their involvement throughout the year. We are very blessed with the teachers we have and the staff around the parochial house. The parish operates almost like clockwork, no matter who is here. There is a good system that keeps the place going and that is down particularly to the late Fr Aidan Mullan, who was widely revered and brought a sense of stability.

"Long Tower has never lost its love of the tradition of Columba, which is shared in Aras Colmcille. I am hoping to develop the museum more to include Sr Clare's story. We also have the Cloisters café recently opened, during the Sr Clare retreat, under Pat Kennedy, who owns City Chippy on Bishop Street. He also runs a 'Meet & Bite' group on Tuesdays from 4-6 pm, within the café space in Aras Colmcille, where people who are struggling can get something to eat."

"The Long Tower is a hive of activity," remarked Fr Gerard, noting other events on the calendar apart from the Sr Clare Retreat, such as the nine Sundays Novena in the lead up to Christmas, Lectio Divina during Lent and Advent, and the Purple Hearts social group, with plans to run the Alpha course after Easter with a pilot group."

Fr Gerard's musical talent on the accordion has also been adding to some of the parish social gatherings, on such occasions as Christmas and St Patrick's Day. In the early 90s, during his student days, he would have played alongside his brother, Paul, at the Derry Feis for Irish dancers, and at Irish traditional music sessions across the island, as well as with the Emerald Ceili Band for a number of years, touring Ireland and abroad for ceili and set dancing.

Commenting on what priesthood means to him, he highlighted: "It is being with people in their lowest and saddest moments and their most happy moments; being able to walk with them and bring Christ to them. To bring Christ's healing to people who are grieving and being with them in their grief, and to be with them for joyful occasions, such as baptism, weddings, confirmations, and Holy Communions.

"It is a privilege to be with people so intimately in their walk of life. You feel somehow that you are being Christ, in persona Christi, accompanying people on the pilgrimage of life to Heaven. I am very conscious that people have a harder life than I will ever have, in what they put up with and have to sacrifice. I have a very comfortable life compared to some people whose life is just one long worry after another. The priesthood has its own problems and worries, but I am conscious that some people have much harder lives. I always admire their strength, courage and bravery in facing difficult situations, especially parents and families."

Eucharist

Celebrating Mass is another highlight and witnessing people's love for the Eucharist. "During the Consecration," he remarked: "I am effectively lending my mouth to Christ. They are not my words; I am lending the Lord my voice at that moment: 'This is My Body…This is My Blood'. He is present through the Mass and in the bread and wine par excellence.

"Sometimes you could be distracted and just be going through the motions in celebrating Mass. I find that the people remind the priest what they are and ought to be. During the Covid lockdowns, it came back to me the importance of what it means to be a priest and what a priest actually is. Celebrating Mass with the restrictions and empty pews, I was conscious of thousands of people looking through their screens and the priest there alone on the altar.

"The experience helped me to reflect more on how awesome this gift is that I have been given. I remember seeing it in people's desire to receive Holy Communion when they were not getting to Mass. On the Palm Sunday of the first lockdown, I went around the estates that I would usually go around. I contacted three or four people in Carnhill to say that I would be around to give a blessing. When people came out and knelt on their door steps in tears that brought home to me how essential the Eucharist is for many people, and I realized the people's love for the Eucharist. I was very moved by that."

Chaplain to the Diocesan Eucharistic Adoration Committee, Fr Gerard highly recommends time spent with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, whether exposed in the Monstrance or hidden in the Tabernacle, and referred to the late Pope Francis' love for spending time in Eucharistic Adoration, where he found the greatest strength for his priesthood and ministry.

He noted that there was

Ruach…Breath of the Spirit

Through His bruises we have been healed - "Jesus, I Trust in You"

IN pondering and giving thanks for Jesus' ultimate act of love in laying down His life for us, it is worth noting that we are all capable of great love because we are the creation of God the Father, who is Love.

Unconditional love is at the core of all creation - it has been breathed into us, it sustains us, it forgives us and redeems us. So, from the cradle, through the Cross, we too can rise to great heights of love by following Jesus' lead in staying in close communion with Our Heavenly Father, and in striving to get back up when we fall short, time after time.

Through His Passion and death on the Cross, Jesus has already lifted us up in taking on our sins, we just have to open our hearts and minds to that truth and accept His extended hand, as in the Divine Mercy Image, telling Him: "Jesus, I Trust in You."

We read in Isaiah 53:4-5 – "Yet ours were the sufferings He was bearing, ours the sorrows He was carrying, while we thought of Him as someone being punished and struck with affliction by God; whereas He was being wounded for our rebellions, crushed because of our guilt."

And, in 1 Peter 2:24 we read that in His suffering, Jesus "was bearing our sins in His own Body on the Cross, so that we might die to our sins and live for uprightness; through His bruises we have been healed."

In 2 Corinthians 5:21, Paul talks of how God, "For our sake, made the sinless one a victim for sin, so that in Him we might become the uprightness of God", and in the first chapter of his Gospel, Matthew records the Angel of The Lord saying to Joseph about Mary, "She will give birth to a son and you must name him 'Jesus', because He is the One who is to save His people from their sins."

Every wound Jesus suffered from the crown of thorns, lashes of the whip and the weight of the Cross, were inflicted according to the sins of humanity through all time, from venial sins nicking His flesh to mortal sins ripping deeply through to the bone. However, each of the three times that Jesus fell from the pain of these wounds and the weight of the Cross of Salvation, He lifted all up with Him when He rose through the strength of The Father's Love and Mercy.

Whether we are in the depths of despair, weighed down by life's trials, or deeply ashamed of sins that we feel couldn't or shouldn't be forgiven, how powerful it is to visualise the eyes of the suffering Jesus looking deep into our souls, with Mercy and Love, and taking our hand to raise us up with Him, as He takes on our sin and our pain so that we can be free of our burden in surrendering all to Him.

The young Clare Crockett, from the Brandywell in Derry City, experienced this when she kissed the cross during the Good Friday ceremony that led to her conversion, during a Holy Week Retreat with the Home of the Mother in Spain, in the Jubilee Year 2000. The realisation that God loved her unconditionally despite her sinfulness, that Jesus had suffered and died for her, changed the fledgling actress so much that the Church has opened her cause for beatification.

Redemption

There are many examples amongst the saints of people who experienced a great conversion in their lives. As well as Sr Clare's striking story, there is that of St Paul the Apostle, whose conversion on the road to Damascus changed him from a fierce persecutor of Christians to becoming a great missionary in the Early Church. Surely a wonderful example of redemption being possible for everyone.

Other examples are St Dismas, the 'good thief' who was crucified alongside Jesus on Calvary, whose recognition of his wrong-doing after a life of sin and of Jesus' innocence led to the Saviour promising him Paradise at His side, and St Augustine, who had led a life of vice and sin and, after his conversion, went on to become a distinguished philosopher, bishop and theologian, as well as a Father of The Church.

St Camillus de Lellis was a gambling-addicted outlaw, who frequented taverns and brothels, and following his conversion founded the Camillians and is Patron Saint of the Sick, while St Mary Magdalene, described as a prostitute from whom Jesus cast out seven demons (Luke 8:2), became a devout disciple of Jesus.

Conversion is not easy, but Sr Clare's writings reveal the important role in her faith journey of the Holy Spirit; the Great Communicator between God and His children. When she received the habit of the Servant Sisters of the Home of The Mother on July 16, 2003, the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Sr Clare would pray for an hour every morning before the Blessed Sacrament. Within days of entering the novitiate, she noted in her prayer journal that she was struggling with distractions during these times with the Lord, and when she spoke to Jesus about this, she heard Him tell her to write a prayer to the Holy Spirit and to say it with all her heart.

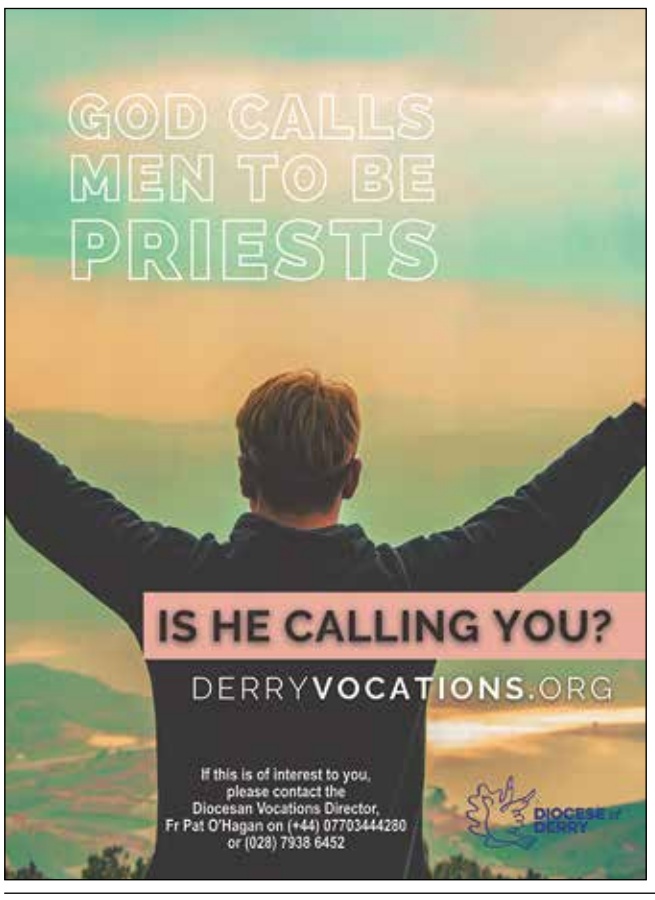
Her story goes on to show how the Holy Spirit guided her in drawing closer to Jesus, transforming her heart and making her aware of the constant presence of The Holy Trinity in her soul. She believed that the Holy Spirit provided the strength to overcome challenges and live a life dedicated to God.

This Eastertime, as we journey towards Pentecost, is the perfect time for us to focus on praying more to the Holy Spirit to guide and help us draw closer to Jesus, and become more aware of the conversion that we need to undergo in our own lives so that we, too, can set out on the path to sainthood that we are called to.

A good preparation for Pentecost Sunday, which falls on June 8 this year, is the Pentecost Novena, which starts nine days beforehand, on the Solemnity of The Ascension of Jesus from Earth to Heaven. This Novena includes the invocation: "Come Holy Spirit, in your power and might, to renew the face of the Earth."

Just as Sr Clare heard Jesus tell her to say her Holy Spirit prayer with all her heart, we too can strive to pray our Holy Spirit prayers with all our hearts, trusting that the Third Person of the Holy Trinity will not only come upon us to renew us, but to also renew the entire face of the Earth.

Come Holy Spirit…May this Pentecost bring a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit to encourage us as Pilgrims of Hope.



Is God calling you to be a priest of the Diocese of Derry?

by Fr Pat O'Hagan

AT this time of year, when secondary and third-level students are preparing for exams and making decisions about the future direction of their lives, it is very good for me, as Vocations Director for the Diocese, to be in a position to report that four men, from Derry City, Co Derry, Co Tyrone, and Co Donegal, have applied to begin their formal seminary studies with a view to being ordained as priests for the Diocese of Derry.

At present, we have two students in Rome, one of whom will, please God, be ordained a deacon at the end of June. We also have a seminarian in Maynooth, and two men who will soon complete their propaedeutic year in Salamanca, Spain.

I invite you to pray for all of them, please, and for all those who are currently discerning their vocation.

In every parish in our diocese there are some very fine men who would be ideal candidates for the priesthood. Perhaps, they can't see that for themselves. In that case, they need someone, they are waiting for someone, to encourage them to consider priesthood as a way of living their faith and sharing their faith with God's people in the parishes of our diocese.

So, as well as praying for vocations throughout the diocese, please be proactive in encouraging vocations in your local area.

Anyone aged 18 or over, interested in discerning a vocation to the diocesan priesthood, please contact me at: pgoh2111@gmail.com, or speak with your local priest, who will offer you guidance and direction while you continue discovering the Lord's holy will for you.

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Eucharistic Adoration in St Columba's Church, Long Tower, every Wednesday and a mini-Adoration Vigil until midnight on the first Thursday of each month, following the 7.30 pm Mass for Mental Health.

"This vigil," he explained, "is in honour of St Columba's devotion to the Eucharist. The Annals record that he beheld angels, particularly around the tabernacle, and was said to have 'gone to Heaven' every Thursday, when he increased his time in Eucharistic Adoration as the Eucharist was instituted on this day."

Highlighting the importance of prayer time in his priestly life, Fr Gerard said: "I plan to do an hour of prayer in Adoration every day, and that time with the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, especially in the morning in my oratory, is where I am most at peace and happiest. If I do that, then I am totally focused on what I am doing during Mass. I think that it is vital for a priest to spend time with the Lord, and in reading and praying with the Scriptures.

"I find it so important to pray the Divine Office and daily Rosary. If I don't get that, my life is upside down and is not anchored. There is many a day you just get caught up with the work of The Lord, such as various appointments and sick calls out of the blue, but time management is the key. Going off to a place apart is vital for any person who wants to follow Jesus – it gives you strength to face challenges."

This Easter let us immerse ourselves fully in the transformative power of Divine Mercy – *Fr Sean O'Donnell*

Kazimirowski Eugeniusz, Divine Mercy, 1934

DIVINE Mercy ceremonies were held in parishes in various parts of the Diocese at the 3 pm Hour of Mercy on the Second Sunday of Easter, including Buncrana, Creggan, Carnhill, Claudy, Maghera and Killyclogher, where the Chaplet of Divine Mercy was sung by the Youth Choir.

Pope St John Paul II established the Feast Day on April 30, 2000, at the canonization of St Faustina, through whom the Lord called for a special feast to be celebrated on the Sunday after Easter Sunday.

Sr Maria Faustina Kowalska recorded a series of revelations to her by the Lord in the 1930s, such as this entry in her Diary (699): "My daughter, tell the whole world about My inconceivable mercy. I desire that the Feast of Mercy be a refuge and a shelter for all souls, and especially for poor sinners. On that day the very depths of My tender mercy are open. I pour out a whole ocean of graces upon those souls who approach the fount of My mercy.

"The soul that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment. On that day are opened all the divine floodgates through which graces flow. Let no soul fear to draw near to Me, even though its sins be as scarlet. My mercy is so great that no mind, be it of man or of angel, will be able to fathom it throughout all eternity.

"Everything that exists has come from the very depths of My most tender mercy. Every soul in its relation to Me will contemplate My love and mercy throughout eternity. The Feast of Mercy emerged from My very depths of tenderness. It is My desire that it be solemnly celebrated on the first Sunday after Easter. Mankind will not have peace until it turns to the Fount of My mercy."

The response to this message of Mercy was greatly embraced by many amongst the large congregation in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, in the Three Patrons Parish, with two priests, and at times three priests, hearing Confessions before, during and after the Divine Mercy ceremony there. And a big number of those desiring complete forgiveness of their sins were young people in their teens, 20s and 30s.

The ceremony was celebrated by Fr Sean O'Donnell, assisted by young people from Youth of Acutis and Spark in sharing the Divine Mercy message. The Blessed Sacrament was exposed for Adoration and the Divine Mercy Image was there for veneration. After leading the praying of the Divine Mercy Chaplet, Fr Sean read the Gospel of the day and gave a talk on Divine Mercy.

Referring to the Gospel passage, where disbelieving Thomas seeks proof that Jesus has risen from the dead, Fr Sean spoke of how Thomas' initial disbelief "serves as a poignant reminder of the need to purge doubt and fear, allowing us to fully embrace the mercy and healing power of the resurrected Christ in both body and soul."

"In a world often shadowed by scepticism, mockery and even lukewarm faith among some Catholic," he added, "our steadfast commitment to the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and to God's all-powerful providence becomes a radiant testament to hope."

Using the Paschal Candle as "a powerful symbol of Jesus as the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end," he remarked: "Its light calls us to transition from fear and confusion to a vibrant, active faith in the risen Christ; we have an opportunity to reflect on this during this Jubilee Year of Hope.

"Such faith empowers us to become bold witnesses, like the apostles, expressing the essence of our Catholic Faith, God's merciful love, so profoundly conveyed in St Faustina's 'Diary'. Her message, anchored in trust, declares that mercy is the sole vessel through which divine graces flow abundantly into our lives and the world."

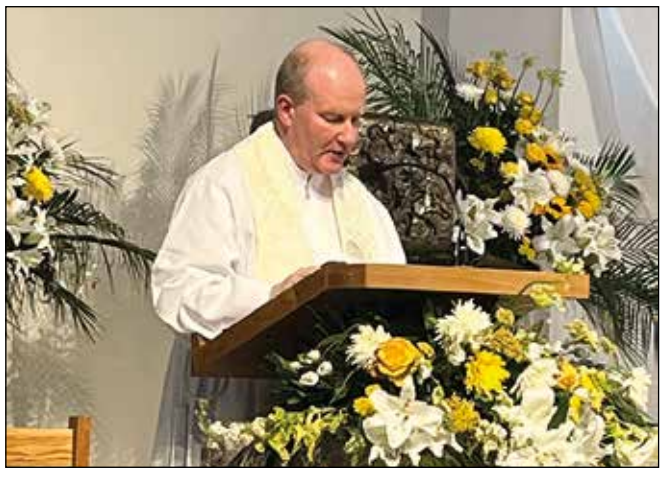
He continued: "In this Year of Hope, Divine Mercy equips us to confront the sufferings and uncertainties of our time with an unwavering confidence in Christ's already secured victory. Embracing this Mercy demands trust, surrender and belief – qualities that not only transform our lives but also inspire others to place their trust in Jesus."

Highlighting that the Eucharist "becomes the wellspring of hope that sustains us, calling us to be beacons of God's love in a world gripped by fear and division," Fr Sean concluded: "This Easter, let us immerse ourselves fully in the transformative power of Divine Mercy. May it shape our thoughts, words and actions, making us living testament to the boundless love and compassion of God.

"In the Year of Hope, may we carry the light of the Paschal Candle into our homes, communities and beyond, proclaiming with our lives that Christ is risen, His mercy endures forever, and His hope never fails."

A period of reflection was followed by prayers offered by young people, Benediction with the Divine Mercy praises and response – "Jesus, I Trust in You."

Creggan Divine Mercy Sunday with Bishop Donal



Claudy children take part in Mercy ceremony

Penitential sites in the Derry Diocese *by Dr Seán Beattie*

THE season of Lent has brought our attention to the subject of penance. Fasting as a form of penance features in some of the great religions and in the Christian world, it predominates in the weeks of Lent. One of the Great Fathers of the Church, St Augustine, in Letter 36 written in AD 396, laid down some of the ground rules, when he wrote: "Fasting and almsgiving are the wings of prayer". In the Columban rule, daily fasting was encouraged but not to excess.

A Landscape of Penance

Penance is also integrated into our landscape. One of the best-known penitential sites in Ireland is in the Diocese of Clogher and is based at Lough Derg. Pilgrims must observe a fast from midnight of the day of arrival, until the pilgrimage ends on the third day. (There is a small concession: dry toast and black tea/coffee are permitted once daily).

In the Archdiocece of Tuam, Croagh Patrick, also known as 'the Reek', is regarded as our 'holy mountain', which is traditionally climbed by pilgrims on the last Sunday of July. It was there that St Patrick highlighted the importance of penance, where he fasted for 40 days as part of his mission to bring Christianity to our land.

In the Diocese of Raphoe, Glencolmcille has its pilgrim stations, although the rigours of fasting are not to be found there.

The Ordnance Survey 1825

This year marks the bicentenary of the Ordnance Survey (OS) and there are locations in the Diocese of Derry where the first steps in mapping Ireland were undertaken. At Dunree, Buncrana, site of a military museum today, artists mapped a small hill as a template. Along the eastern shores of Lough Foyle, in Co Derry, engineers established a base line to be used for mapping Ireland. Measurements were taken between the base mile and Drung Hill across the Foyle, in Co Donegal. In the heart of the Inishowen peninsula, Sliabh Sneacht was used as a base from which to measure long distances. In fact, hill walkers have found the ruins of the original huts used by the surveyors.

It may seem unusual to introduce the history of the Ordnance Survey in an article on fasting and penance. In short, we are deeply indebted to the surveyors for their diligent work, because among the vast collection of data, maps recorded a whole series of religious sites, from High Crosses, Holy Wells, curative stones, sacred trees and, not least, penitential stations. Such sites can be seen on six-inch maps now online. From folklore and other sources, religious practices associated with such places have survived in the written and oral tradition.

A precursory examination of any six-inch OS map will reveal such details in all areas of the Diocese and beyond. Every holy site has its own ritual, prayers to be recited, tokens to be left behind, or fasting, if any, to be observed. Some of the sites were also well known to have curative powers. The OS is regarded by historians as primarily a taxation and military exercise, but it was obviously more than that because of its respect for holy places.

Friday Fasts

There is an interesting association between fasting and the Irish language. In Gaelic, the word for 'fasting' is 'aoine' and Friday is also known as 'Aoine', thus 'ar an Aoine' means 'on Friday', or 'Dia hAoine' means 'on Friday'.

Until modern times, sermons during Lent emphasized strongly the importance of fasting during Lent, especially the importance of refraining from meat on Fridays. In coastal areas, meat was seldom on the menu. Fish was plentiful and consequently, the restriction on meat was not as burdensome as it seems.

The secondary school curriculum features a poem by the Monaghan poet, Patrick Kavanagh, called 'Advent'. Although the title refers to the pre-Christmas season, when Christians prepare for the birth of Christ, the language reminds us of the rigors of fasting in days gone by:

(The) dry black bread and sugarless tea
Of penance will charm back the luxury
Of a child's soul.

Regular fasting

Kavanagh was not a deeply religious person but he respected the rules of the Catholic Church. His words are an eloquent testimony in favour of the purification effects of fasting on the soul. In his era, fasting was obligatory before Holy Communion from midnight the night before. Masses were said earlier throughout the countryside and in rural areas no public transport was available. Mass goers often walked for several miles on an empty stomach in order to be eligible to receive the sacrament. Thus, fasting was part of the routine of Sunday worship, and people were perhaps better adjusted to accept the rigours associated with the Lenten fast.

The Dance Ban

In his Lenten Pastoral Letter in 1941, Bishop Neil Farren reminded everyone of the Law of Fast: for those aged between 21 and 50, it amounted to one full meal a day, with a small quantity in the morning and evening. "This is a really difficult penance", he commented, "and the fact that the church imposes it under pain of sin should make us realise what effort is expected during this time".

Due to the outbreak of the Second World War, he relaxed the rules and limited the strict fast to certain days of Lent only. He was concerned, however, about the "dancing craze" that had gripped the Diocese. He suggested that dance halls should close and all other forms of entertainment, such as concerts and plays, should be deferred until after Easter. His recommendations were strictly observed in parochial halls over which the Church had control but, in general, his request was respected by most sections of the population. As a result of the embargo on entertainment, dance bands found themselves out of work. Consequently, the advent of Lent coincided with the exodus of dance bands to England and Scotland, where similar restrictions did not apply.

Church of St Muirdhealach, Malin Head. In Early Christian times, it was a penitential station, associated with the saint. Later it became a bustling pilgrimage site. Boats sailed from here to Inishtrahull island, another penitential site, where a small cross can be seen etched on the rocks behind the old school house.

Let's Dance!

The return of the bands was eagerly awaited by dancers everywhere, and their re-appearance on the home front gave an enormous boost when normal life resumed on Easter Sunday and the dance halls were packed to the rafters once again, both in the small parochial halls and the commercial venues, much to the joy of promoters from all walks of life.

Eucharistic Flame of Love continues to spread *by Barry Mallet*

AFTER a phenomenal Eucharistic procession through the streets of Derry on the Feast of St Brigid, February 1, Derry is now launching the Flame of Love weekly prayer group for the North of Ireland, aided by the Legion of Mary.

The Eucharistic procession truly was a very significant event, which has sparked joy in the hearts of the faithful, coupled with igniting a newly found desire in the hearts of non-practising Christians to seek first the Kingdom of God. With Athlone following suit, this Eucharistic revival is engulfing the whole land, and the fruits and joys are continuing to spread.

The Flame of Love movement is a very well-known worldwide devotion, with many very credible, well-loved and trusted priests onboard, such as Exorcist priest, Fr Jim Blount.

Every Monday night in the Carmelite Monastery, Termonbacca, starting on Monday, May 12, from 7 pm, everyone is invited to join in person or online from home with the family. Let Our Lady bring peace into your home.

The Monday night prayer cenacle is intended to fortify every aspect of Christian life. It is a movement of grace, ultimately to save souls.

Then on May 24, we are having a full day retreat in Termonbacca from 9 am-5pm, when there will be Eucharistic Adoration, Holy Mass, and special guest speakers, including Fr Antonio Maria Diez de Medina CFR. It will be a day of information, questions, talks and prayer, for all the family.

The flame continues to spread, fanning the prophecy of St Patrick that a flame would spark from the North of Ireland and spread throughout the whole land. Come and join in and be part of the Flame of Love as it continues to grow, as it continues to melt hearts of stone into hearts of burning flesh.

Flame of Love - North of Ireland

Launching Monday 12th May (7pm)

Weekly Cenacles - Monday @ 7pm

Venue

Termonbacca

Carmelite Retreat Centre,

Derry City, BT48 9AH

Available also to join online - Jitsi

https://meet.jit.si/folirlcar23

Facebook Page: Flame of Love Ireland
WhatsApp: +44 (0) 77 4607 5335 - Geraldine
Website: www.flameoflove.ie

Pope's monthly intention

The Holy Father has asked for prayer during April for:

The Use of the New Technologies

Let us pray that the use of the new technologies will not replace human relationships, will respect the dignity of the person, and will help us face the crises of our times.

Prayer for Priests

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

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

Give them the grace they need to respond generously to you, and the courage to proclaim your Word of justice, love and truth. Bless, in a special way, Your servant Father, Send your Spirit upon him So that he may always walk in the path of faith, hope and love, in the footsteps of Christ, the eternal priest, who offered Himself on the cross for the life of the world. Amen.

Remember in prayer:

Fr Michael McCaul (April 1st)
Fr Con McLaughlin (2nd)
All Priests (3rd)
All Priests (4th)
Fr Peter McLaughlin (5th)
Fr Kevin Mulhern (6th)
All Priests (7th)
Fr Peter Madden (8th)
Fr Anthony Mailey (9th)
Archbishop Eamon Martin (10th)
Fr Gerard Mongan (11th)
All Priests (12th)
All Priests (13th)
All Priests (14th)
All Priests (15th)
All Priests (16th)
All Priests (17th)
Fr Sean O'Donnell (18th)
All Priests (19th)
All Priests (20th)
Fr Colm O'Doherty (21st)
Fr Kieran O'Doherty (22nd)

All Priests (23rd)
Fr Francis P O'Hagan (24th)
Fr Patrick O'Hagan (25th)
Fr David O'Kane (26th)
All Priests (27th)
Fr Peter O'Kane (28th)
All priests (29th)
Fr Arthur O'Reilly (30th)

Statement from Bishop Donal

THE Diocese of Derry is aware that Fr Edward Gallagher has appeared in court in relation to serious charges of a sexual nature in relation to attempted sexual communication with a child.

The diocese takes such matters very seriously and as such has, in addition, commenced its own internal investigation, which will only take place in a manner which does not impede the criminal investigation. Fr Gallagher is suspended from ministry.

As charges are now before a court, it would not be appropriate for the diocese to comment further until the completion of the criminal proceedings. If anyone has any allegations or concerns regarding child abuse, they should contact the PSNI and Social Services in Northern Ireland, or An Garda Síochána and Tusla in the Republic of Ireland.

In addition, contact for diocesan safeguarding can be found on the diocesan website (derrydiocese.org/safeguarding) or on posters in churches within the diocese.

Parish *Post-its*

Aghyaran

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

Weekend Mass Times: 7.30 pm Vigil, and 11 am.

Ardstraw East (Newtownstewart)

Zoom Catechism: All are welcome to join Catechism by Zoom on Mondays, from 7.30-8.15 pm. Email: ardstraweast@derrydiocese.org to get the link. Learn how to answer hard questions.

Pope John Paul II Award – Sessions for Pope John Paul II Award participants take place on Thursdays at 6.30 pm, in the Oratory of Mary, Mother of God.

Holy Hour: 6.30 pm, Thursdays, Oratory of Mary, Mother of God.

Weekend Mass Times: 11:30 am, St Eugene's Glenock.

Badoney Lower (Gortin-Rouskey)

Adoration: Adoration takes places in St Patrick's Gortin, after the 12.30 pm Mass until 5 pm on Tuesdays, and in St Mary's, Rouskey, after 7.30 pm Mass on Wednesdays.

Weekend Mass Times: 7.30 pm Vigil, St Patrick's, Gortin; 10 am, St Mary's, Rouskey.

Badoney Upper (Plumbridge-Cranagh)

Adoration & Confession: Adoration and Confessions take place in St Patrick's Cranagh after the 7.30 pm Wednesday evening Mass, until 9 pm, and after the 12 noon Mass on Saturdays in Plumbridge.

Weekend Mass Times: 7.30 pm Vigil, St Patrick's Cranagh; 10 am, Sacred Heart Plumbridge.

Ballinascreen

Parish Mission: The Vincentian Fathers will conduct a four-day Parish Mission for both Ballinascreen and Desertmartin parishes from Thursday, May 29 to Sunday, June 1. Further details later.

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.

Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration takes place in Holy Rosary Church on the First Mondays from 12 noon until 7.30 pm.

Confessions: Holy Rosary Church every Saturday at 5.30 pm, before the Vigil Mass.

Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil, Holy Rosary; 9 am in St Columba's Straw; 11 am in St Patrick's, Sixtowns; 12 noon in St Eugene's, Moneyneena.

Ballymagroarty

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

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

Confessions: Saturdays from 10.30-11.30 am & 5.15-5.50 pm; Tues & Thurs 6.45–7.10 pm.

Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil; and 9.30 am, 11 am, and 12.30 pm on Sunday.

Banagher

Adoration & Chaplet: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and Divine Mercy Chaplet take place in St Mary's Church, Altinure, Thursdays, 10.30-11.30 am; St Joseph's Church, Fincairn, on Fridays, 10–11 am.

Confessions: St Mary's Church, Altinure, Thursday 10.30 am; St Joseph's Church, Fincairn, Friday 10 am & Saturday 6.30 pm.

Weekend Mass Times: 7 pm Vigil in St Joseph's Church, Fincairn, 10.30 am in St Mary's Church, Altinure, and 12 noon in St Peter's & St Paul's Church, Foreglen.

Bellaghy

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

Adoration: Fridays from 10 am-8 pm (Rosary at 7.30 pm). Weekend Mass Times: 7 pm Vigil in Bellaghy, 10 am in Ballyscullion, and 11 am in Bellaghy.

Cemetery Sunday: Blessing of the graves will be in Ballyscullion on June 8 at 10.45 am, and then in Bellaghy at 3 pm.

Buncrana

May Rosary: The Rosary will be prayed every Sunday evening at 5 pm, at the Grotto in Cockhill, during the month of May. All welcome.

Holy Year of Hope events: At parish level, the Holy Year of Hope will be marked with times of prayer, participation and pilgrimage. The first of these initiatives is entitled 'Come away from your nets for a moment', and involves gathering special interest groups of people from the parish for a special Mass and ceremony of blessing, each third Wednesday of the month (except in July & August).

Adoration: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament now takes place in St Mary's Oratory every Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday, 6 am-10 pm, Fridays, 6am-10 pm, and on Sundays 2-10 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.

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

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

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

Weekend Mass Times: St Mary's Oratory – Vigil 4.30 pm, 9 am and 12.30 pm; St Mary's Cockhill – Vigil 6 pm, and 11am; Star of the Sea, Desertegney – 10 am.

Burt, Inch & Fahan

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

Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil, 10.15 am, St Aengus' Burt; 9 am, Our Lady of Lourdes, Inch; 7.15 pm Vigil, 11.30 am, St Mura's, Fahan.

Cappagh (Killyclogher)

Padre Pio Prayer Group: Cappagh Padre Pio Prayer Group Pilgrimage 2025 will take place from September 10-17, visting the shrines of Assisi, Giovanni Rotondo and St Michael's cave. Cost: £1,135 pps. For information contact: Marie on 07799112224 or Clare on 07778025587.

Eucharistic Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration takes place on Wednesday from 8-9 pm in Christ the King, Strathroy, concluding with Night Prayer, and on Sunday from 6-7 pm, in Christ the King, with Devotions and Benediction.

Rosary: The Rosary is prayed in St Mary's Church, Killyclogher, Monday-Saturday at 9.15 am, and in Corpus Christi, Mountfield every Thursday evening at 8 pm.

Legion of Mary: Legion of Mary meets every Monday after 10 am Mass in St Mary's Church, Killyclogher. New members always welcome. Anyone wishing to welcome the Pilgrim Statute of Our Lady into your home and pray the Rosary is asked to contact Rosaleen on 07917421119 to make arrangements with the Legion of Mary, Cappagh Group.

St Pio Novena Devotions: Novena devotions through the intercession of St Padre Pio take place on the first Wednesday of the month in Christ the King Church, Strathroy. Rosary at 7 pm, followed by Mass as 7.30 pm. Veneration and blessing with relic will be available after Mass.

Stations of the Cross: The Stations are prayed on Fridays at 3 pm in St Mary's Killyclogher.

Confessions: Confessions are heard on Saturdays after 10 am Mass in St Mary's Killyclogher, and from 5.45-6.25 pm in Christ The King, Strathroy.

Polish Mass: Mass is celebrated in Polish in the Church of Christ The King, Strathroy, Omagh, on the first and third Sunday's of each month at 10 am.

Weekend Mass Times: 6.30 pm Vigil, 12 noon, Christ The King, Strathroy; 9 & 11 am, St Mary's, Killyclogher.

Carndonagh

Weekend Mass Times: Vigil 7 pm; Sunday 9 am & 11 am.

Castlederg & Ardstraw West

May Rosary: The Rosary will be prayed for the month of May at Castlederg on Tuesdays, at 2 pm, led by the Legion of Mary, and at Our Lady's Grotto in Dregish on Wednesdays, at 11 am, followed by a short Bluebell walk, if weather permits, with an option of a chat in the hall and a cup of tea.

Concert: The Michael English Concert will now be held on Thursday, June 5, starting at 8 pm. Current tickets will be valid for the new date and tickets can still be purchased from the same outlets in advance of the concert - Dinny's and Taggart's shops, O'Donnell's Killeter and the Parochial House; also available on Eventbrite.

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

Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil and 11 am, Castlederg; 9.30 am Dregish; and 12.30 pm Drumnabey.

Claudy

Grotto Rosary: The Rosary will be prayed at the Grotto, within St Patrick's Church cemetery, on Saturday, May 10, at 1 pm.

Vocations Prayer: On Vocations Sunday, May 11, there will be a Day of Prayer for new vocations to the Priesthood & Religious Life in St Patrick's Church, starting after 11.30 am Mass with Eucharistic Adoration and ending at 6 pm, with the Rosary. All are welcome.

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

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.

Rosary: The Rosary is prayed on the Parish webcam from St Patrick's Church, Monday-Thursday, at 6 pm.

Divine Office & Chaplet: The Divine Office (Mid-day Prayer of the Church) and the Divine Mercy Chaplet are prayed on the Parish webcam, from St Patrick's Church, Monday-Friday, at 3 pm.

Holy Face Devotions: Holy Face Devotions will be prayed on the Parish webcam in St Patrick's Church, Claudy, every Friday, beginning with Divine Office (Evening Prayer) at 6 pm. All welcome to join.

Society of St Joseph: The Vocation Society of St Joseph prayer meeting, in support of religious vocations, takes place on the first Thursday of each month, at 6.30 pm, in the Upper Room, St Patrick's Church.

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.

Weekend Mass Times: 6.30 pm Vigil, St Patrick's; 10 am, St Joseph's; 11.30 am St Patrick's.

Clonleigh (Lifford)

Weekend Mass Times: 6.30 pm Vigil, 11 am.

Clonmany

Parish Pilgrimage: A Parish Pilgrimage to Lourdes will take place from June 10-14, 2025. Staying at Hotel Padoue, the cost will be 760 Euro per person sharing, full board. Enquiries to the Parish Office.

Exposition: Exposition of The Blessed Sacrament in St Michael's Church, Urris, on Fridays, 3-6 pm (Rosary at 5.40 pm); in the Oratory of the Assumption, Ballyliffin, on Tuesdays, 7.30-8.30 pm; and in St Columbcille Village, Cleagh, on Wednesdays, 3-4 pm.

Weekend Mass Times: St Mary's Church, Clonmany, Vigil 6.30 pm (Rosary at 6.10 pm);
Sunday 11:30 am; St Michael's Church, Urris, Sunday, 10 am

Coleraine

'The Seven Joys of Mary': Continuing on until Pentecost Sunday, you are invited to gather at Our Lady's statue at the front of St John's Church after the 11am Sunday Mass, at Our Lady's Grotto after the Dunboe 7.30 pm Vigil Mass, and after the 9.45 am Sunday Mass, Aghadowey, at Our Lady's Side Altar in the Church, for a short series of meditations on the Seven Joy's of Mary and a decade of the Rosary.

Society of St Joseph: The Society of St Joseph for the support of religious vocations 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.

Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil, 11 am, St John's; 7.30 pm Vigil, St Mary's Dunboe; 9.45 am, Our Lady of the Assumption, Aghadowey.

Creggan

YOUCAT: The YOUCAT Programme is underway in the Parochial House Conference Room on Wednesdays at 7 pm. All welcome.

Adoration: Exposition of Blessed Sacrament takes place in the Divine Mercy Chapel on Sundays from 1.30 pm - 6 pm, Mondays from 10.30 am - 7 pm, and Tuesday – Saturday from 10.30 am - 12 pm.

Bereavement Support: Parish Pastoral Bereavement Support. The Parish Pastoral Bereavement Support Group meets on the second Sunday of each month at 3 pm in the Parochial House community room. All are welcome to share a cup of tea, have a chat, remember and talk about their loved one and find support with others experiencing similar feelings. In addition to the group, there is an ongoing opportunity to speak on a one-to-one basis with an experienced grief counsellor . The contact number for more information on the group or to arrange one to one support is 07907085178.

Polish Mass: Mass for the Polish community will be celebrated at 4 pm every second and fourth Sunday of the month in the Divine Mercy Chapel, at St Mary's Church.

Confession: Monday - Friday 5-5.30 pm, Saturday 10.30 am & 5.30-6.20 pm.

Parish *Post-its*

Weekend Mass Times: 6.30 pm Vigil; 10.30 am; 12.15 pm.

Culdaff

Good as New Shop: St Mary's Church Bocan Re-decorating Committee has the 'Good as New Shop' now open in Carndonagh. All proceeds are for the Re-decorating Fund.
Weekend Mass Times: 8 pm Vigil; 10 am Sunday.

Desertmartin

Parish Mission: The Vincentian Fathers will conduct a four-day Parish Mission for both Desertmartin & Ballinascreen parishes from Thursday, May 29 to Sunday, June 1. Further details later.
Knit & Natter: Knit & Natter classes take place in Knocknagin Hall on Tuesdays at 7.30 pm. Bring your own project or you can help with knitting for local charities.
Weekend Mass Times: 7.30 pm Vigil in St Patrick's, Keenaught; and 10 am in St Mary's, Coolcalm.
Confessions: Saturday evenings in St Patrick's, Keenaught, from 6.30–7.10 pm.

Donagheady (Aughabrack & Dunamanagh)

Cemetery Blessing: The Blessing of the Graves will take place in Killenagh on Saturday, June 21 after 6.30 pm Mass, and in Aughabrack on Sunday, June 22, after 10.30 am Mass.
Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration takes place in St Mary's, Aughabrack, on First Fridays, after 10 am Mass until 12 noon.
Weekend Mass Times: 6.30 pm Vigil, St Patrick's, and 10.30 am, St Mary's.

Donaghmore (Killygordon)

Holy Hour: Prayerful reading of the Scriptures & Rosary with the Home of the Mother, Servant Sisters every Tuesday from 6.30-7.30 pm at St Mary's Church, Sessiaghoneill, Ballybofey, and every Thursday from 7-8 pm at St. Patrick's.
Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration takes place on Tuesdays, 10.30 am-7.30 pm, St Mary's Church, Sessiaghoneill; Thursdays, after 9.15 am Mass, St Patrick's Church, Crossroads.
Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil, 10 am, St Patrick's; 8 pm Vigil, 9 am & 11 am, St Mary's Sessiaghoneill.

Drumquin

Rosary: The Rosary is prayed each Tuesday morning at 10 am in St Patrick's Church, Drumquin.
Eucharistic Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration takes place on Wednesdays from 6 pm – Mass at 7.30 pm.
Weekend Mass Times: Vigil 6.30 pm, and 11 am.

Drumragh (Omagh)

May Devotions: May Devotions at the Lourdes Grotto at 6 pm.
Prayer Group: The Charismatic Prayer Group meetings take place in The Pastoral Centre on Thursday evenings, with Rosary at 7.30 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 10 am 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.
Stations of Cross: The Stations are prayed after 10 am Mass in Sacred Heart Church.
Confessions: Confession take place on Saturdays after 10 am Mass and after 6 pm Mass in Sacred Heart Church.
Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil, 9 am and 12 noon, Sacred Heart Church; 10.30 am, St Mary's Drumragh.

Dungiven

Prayer Group: The St Canice's Charismatic Prayer Group meets each Thursday at 7 pm, in the Conference Room, and invites anyone who wishes to deepen their faith through shared Scripture, Prayer and Praise.
St Pio Healing Mass: A St Pio Healing Mass is celebrated monthly, on the first Tuesday, in St Patrick's Church at 7 pm.
Society of St Joseph: The Society of St Joseph's for the support of religious vocations meets on the second Tuesdays of the month in the Committee Room, after 10 am Mass in St Patrick's Church.
Children's Liturgy: Children's liturgy recommences on Sunday, October 20 and will continue every third Sunday of the month at 11.30 am Mass. Children from P2-P4 are invited to participate.
Stations of the Cross: The Stations of the Cross will be prayed after the 10 am Mass on Fridays, in St Patrick's Church.
Rosary: The Rosary is prayed on Mondays, Tuesday, Wednesdays and Fridays, at 9.35 am, in St Patrick's Church.
Adoration: Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays, 9 am-6 pm, and Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9 am-8 pm, in Adoration Chapel.
Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil, 9 am and 11.30 am, St Patrick's; 10.15 am, St Matthew's; and 4.30 pm, Immaculate Conception.
Confession: Confession is available in St Patrick's Church at 11 am on Saturdays.

Errigal

Cemetery Blessing: The Blessing of Graves will take place at St Mary's Ballerin on Sunday, June 1 at 2 pm, and at St Joseph's Church, Glenullin, on Sunday, June 8 at 12.30 pm.
Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration takes place on Mondays after 10 am Mass in St Mary's Church, Ballerin, until 2.30 pm.
Rosary & Chaplet: The Rosary and Divine Mercy Chaplet are prayed in St Joseph's Church, Glenullin, every Wednesday evening at 6.30 pm.
Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil, St Joseph's Church, Glenullin, and St Mary's Church, 10 am, St Mary's, Ballerin, and 11.30 am in St Joseph's, Glenullin.

Faughanvale

Rosary: The Rosary is prayed every Friday at 7 pm in Star of the Sea Church.
Weekend Mass Times: 5 pm Vigil, 12 noon, Star of the Sea; 6.30 pm Vigil, 10 am, St Mary's.

Granaghan (Swatragh)

Graves' Blessing: The Blessing of the Graves will take place on Sunday, May 25, at 3 pm.
Weekend Mass Times: 12 noon & 7 pm Vigils; 10.30 am.

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 on Thursdays, 6-10 pm.
Stations of the Cross: The Stations of the Cross are prayed after 7.30 pm Mass on Fridays in St Patrick's, Greencastle.
Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil, St Patrick's, and 11.30 am, Our Lady of Wayside, Broughderg.

Greenlough

Parish Pilgrimage: A Parish Pilgrimage to the Clonard Novena is in planning for Tuesday, June 24, for the 11.30 am Mass. A bus is being organised at a cost of £5 per person, with pick-ups at Clady Church Carpark/ Lavey Church Carpark. To book, contact Paddi in the Parish Office by Tuesday, May 27. Tel: 02825821190 E: greenloughparish@gmail.com
Rosary: Tuesday Night Rosary is prayed at 7.30 pm in the Church.
Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration takes place in St Oliver Plunkett's Church from 9 am-5 pm on Thursdays.
Weekend Mass Times: 5.30 pm Vigil, and 9 am.
Cemetery Sunday: Blessing of the graves will take place on July 6, at 3 pm.

Iskaheen, Drung & Muff

Adoration: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place on Tuesdays after 10 am Eucharistic Service, until 2 pm, 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 on the first Friday of each month, alternating between the three churches.
Confessions: Confessions are available in Iskaheen on Saturdays, 9.45-10 am, and in Muff on Saturdays, 6 pm, and after 6,30 pmVigil Mass
Weekend Mass Times: 6.30 pm Vigil, 11.30 am, Sacred Heart Church, Muff; 8 pm Vigil, 10.15 am, St Columba's, Drung; 9 am, St Patrick's, Iskaheen.

Kilrea

Big Breakfast fundraiser: The first in a series of fundraisers for restoration work on the Marian Hall, a central point for local community activities, is taking place on Sunday, May 18, from 8 am -12 noon. If you would like to contribute or sponsor, please email marianhallkilrea@outlook.com or phone/text 07968390347.
Eucharistic Adoration: Mondays, from 12 noon - 7pm, at St Mary's Drumagarner. Concludes with Public Prayers.
Stations of the Cross: The Stations of the Cross are prayed on Sundays in St Anne's Oratory at 7 pm, with Confessions beforehand from 6.30-6.50 pm.
SVP: The St Vincent de Paul Thrift Shop is open on Saturdays from 10 am -1pm.
Confession: Confession is available immediately after the 7 pm Vigil Mass in St Anne's Oratory each Saturday. Alternatively, feel free to request the sacrament before or after any weekday Mass.
Weekend Mass Times: 7 pm, Vigil, St Anne's Oratory; 10am St Mary's, Drumagarner; 12 noon, St Mary's, Craigavole.

Lavey

Graves' Blessing: Cemetery Sunday takes place on Sunday, June 29, at 11 am.
Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration takes place on Fridays from 9.30 am until 5 pm.
Confession: Confessions are heard from 5.15–5.45 pm on Saturdays.
Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil, 9 am and 11 am.

Leckpatrick

Intercession for Dead: Services of Intercession will take place in cemeteries at: St Joseph's Church, Glenmornan on May 30 at 7 pm; Sacred Heart Church, Derry Road on June 1 at 3 pm; and St Mary's Church, Cloughcor on June 1 at 7 pm.
Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration takes place on Wednesdays from 8.30 am Mass until 5.30 pm.
Weekend Mass Times: 5 pm Vigil, St Mary's Church, Cloughcor; 9.45 am St Joseph's Church, Glenmornan; 11.15 am, Sacred Heart Church, Derry Road.

Lifford (Murlog)

Intercession for Dead: A services of Intercession for the Dead will take place at St Patrick's Church, Murlog on May 23, at 7 pm.
Stations of the Cross: The Stations of the Cross are recited publicly each Friday after 9.30 am Mass in St Patrick's Church, Murlog.
Jubilee of Hope: Each Wednesday, at 7 pm Mass in St Patrick's Church, Murlog, a little reflection on the theme of hope will be given by an invited speaker.
Adoration: 9.30 am-12.30 pm.
Confessions: Saturday, 6-6.15 pm
Weekend Mass Times: 6.30 pm Vigil; 11 am.

Limavady

Adoration: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place on Sundays in Christ the King (with Confessions) from 3-5 pm.
Children's Prayer: A Children's Prayer Group is held in the Drummond Hotel, Ballykelly, on the First Saturday of every month, from 2.30-3.30 pm. All welcome. Contact: Kathy on 07538749627.
Weekend Mass Times: 4.30 pm Vigil, 9 am, 12 noon, Christ the King Church; 6 pm Vigil, St Finlough's Church; 10.30 am, St Mary's Church.

Maghera

May Rosary: The Rosary will be recited in St Mary's Church grounds, outside Our Lady's Statue, at 4 pm on Saturday, May 10 at 4 pm.
May Devotions: May Devotions will take place in St Mary's Church at 6 pm.
Parish Mission: The Dominican Order will be conducting a Mission for the Jubilee Year of Hope in St Patrick's Parish, Maghera, commencing Saturday, May 10, until Saturday, May 17. Fr Columba Mary Toman OP and Fr Patrick Desmond OP, Dominican Fathers. The Mission will commence on Saturday, May 10 at 6.30 pm in St Mary's Church and close with 9.30 am Mass on Saturday, May 17, in St Patrick's Church. There will be Mass in St Patrick's, Glen, each morning at 9.30 am, and Devotions on Tuesday and Friday evening at 7.30 pm. In St Mary's Church, there will be Mass each morning during the week at 6.30 am, with Devotions on Monday, Wednesday and Friday evening at 7.30 pm.
Cemetery Sunday: Blessing of the graves will take place on Sunday, May 18, at 3 pm.
Knock Pilgrimage: A pilgrimage to Knock Shrine will take place on Sunday, June 15. Further details will be available in the coming weeks.
Holy Face of Jesus: The Holy Face of Jesus prayers take place every Tuesday after the 9.30 am Mass and Divine Mercy.
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.
Confession: Daily after morning Mass (except Sunday and Holydays), and St Mary's at 7 pm on Wednesdays (before evening Mass) and Saturdays at 11am/12noon and 5.30pm/6.15pm
Weekend Mass Times: 6.30 pm Vigil and 11.30 am, St Mary's; 9.30 am, St Patrick's.

Magilligan

Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration takes place in St Aidan's Church on Wednesdays, from 3-7 pm, and on the First Sundays from 3-6 pm.

Malin

Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil, and 10.30 am, St Patrick's Church; Vigil 8 pm, Star of the Sea Church; 9 am, St. Mary's Church.

Melmount

May Rosary: During the month of May, the Holy Rosary to the Blessed Virgin Mary will be recited at approximately 5.30 pm each Monday, remembering Pope Francis, World Peace and Our Lady of Fatima.
Blessing of Graves: The annual Ceremony of the Blessing of Graves will take place on Sunday, May 25, at 4 pm.
Exposition: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in the church on Mondays after 10 am Mass until 6 pm. The Rosary will be recited prior to closure of Adoration at approximately 5.40 pm. Everyone is welcome.
Weekend Mass Times: 7 pm Vigil, 10.30 am and 12.30 pm.

Moville

Stations of the Cross: The Stations of the Cross are prayed after 10 am Mass on Fridays.
Graves Blessing: Blessing of the Graves will take place in Ballybrack on Sunday, July 6 and in Ballinacrae on Sunday, July 13. A collection for the upkeep of the graveyards will be taken up at these services.
Rosary Rally: As part of the All-Ireland Rosary Rally, the Rosary will be prayed in front of St Pius X Church on Saturday, May 10, at 4pm.
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.
Confessions: Confessions will be heard in St Pius X Church on Saturdays from 5.45-6.15 pm.
Weekend Mass Times: 6.30 pm Vigil, 10 am, St Pius X Church. 11.30 am on alternate Sundays in St Mary's Ballybrack, and St Columba's Ballinacrae.

Parish *Post-its*

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Sion Mills

Blessing of Graves: The annual Ceremony of the Blessing of Graves will take place on Sunday, May 18, at 3 pm.

Adoration: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place on Fridays, from 11 am-6.50 pm, ending with Benediction before 7 pm Mass.

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.

Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil; 9 am & 11 am.

Steelstown & Culmore

May Rosary: Rosary at the Grotto, outside the main door of the Church, on Wednesday evenings during the month of May, at 7 pm. All are welcome.

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: Mondays after 10 am Mass until 6.50 pm.

Stations of the Cross: Come along to reflect on the Way of the Cross on Fridays at 7.30 pm.

Weekend Mass Times: 6.30 pm Vigil; 9 am, 11 am, and 12:15 pm.

Strabane (Camus)

Intercession for Dead: The service of Intercession for the Dead takes place at Strabane Cemetery & Camus on June 8 at 3 pm.

Stations of Cross: Stations of the Cross are recited publicly each Friday after 10 am Mass in Immaculate Conception Church.

Adoration: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place every day, from 10.30 am-1 pm, 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.

Society of St Joseph: The St John Vianney branch of the Society of St Joseph (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 is welcome.

Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil, 9.45 am & 12.15 pm.

Templemore – St Eugene's

Little Way Novena: The annual Little Way Novena in honour of St Therese of Lisieux will take place in the Cathedral from May 10-18. The Novena begins with a Mass with the Anointing of the sick at 7.30 pm on Saturday, May 10. Sunday, May 11, at 6pm, there will be Devotions and a talk by Bishop Donal. Monday-Friday (May 12-16), Novena Masses will be celebrated at 6.30 am and10 am, and there will be an evening service with a guest speaker at 7.30 pm.

The speakers each evening are: Monday - Colin Bell, father of Kevin Bell and founder of the Kevin Bell Repatriation Trust; Tuesday - Archdeacon Robert Miller; Wednesday - Sile Quinlan, spokeswoman for LoveBoth, an organisation which promotes the protection of mother and baby in pregnancy; Thursday - Sr Rosa Goretti, from the Sisters for Life founded by Cardinal John O Conor in New York in 1991; and Friday - Fr John Joe Duffy, a Priest from the Parish of Creeslough, Co Donegal.

On Saturday, May 17, the 10 am Mass will be offered up for those who have died. The Novena will close on Sunday, May 18 at 3 pm, with the blessing of roses and candles. St Thérèse candles and Mass Bouquets will be on sale at the back of the Cathedral. At the statue of St Therese, there is a petition box to place your petitions for this Novena.

Parish Trip: St Eugene's Cathedral are organising a trip to Knock and Co Mayo from June 15-17, as part of the Derry Diocesan Pilgrimage to Knock Shrine. The cost of £280 includes transport, two nights B&B, and excursion to Cong and Westport. For further information ring the Parish Office on 028 71262894 or email Anne Marie Hickey, Pastoral Coordinator on amhickey@derrydiocese.org.

Eucharistic Adoration: Every Sunday, there is Eucharistic Adoration from 3-6 pm and every Tuesday from 10.30 am until 7.20 pm.

Matt Talbott 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.

St Dymphna Mass: The St Dympna Mass with Anointing of the Sick takes place on the third Tuesday of each month at 7.30pm. This Mass is to give thanks to God for positive mental health and to pray for those who are struggling with mental health issues and those who care for them.

Cathedral Club: The Cathedral Club meets after the 10 am Mass each Thursday in the Cathedral Hall. Everyone is welcome to this parish social group. Refreshments will be served.

Weekend Mass Times: 6.15 pm & 7.30 pm Vigils; 9.30 am, 11 am, 12.30 pm & 7 pm.

Templemore – Long Tower

Long Tower Camino: The Parish is organising a 'Columban Camino' in Derry and Donegal between June 5-7. Participants will walk from Derry to Buncrana, from Rathmullan to Milford and from there on to Gartan, with overnight stays in the Inishowen Gateway and Mulroy Woods Hotel. All sponsorship raised will go to Children in Crossfire. Anyone interested in finding out more should contact aishling.cunningham@childrenincrossfire.org or call Aishling on 028 7127 8955

Mental Health Mass: A monthly Mass for Mental Health, and a mini-Vigil to midnight, takes place on the first Thursdays at 7.30 pm. This Mass is to give thanks to God for positive mental health, and to pray for those struggling with mental health issues and those who care for them. After Mass, Adoration will follow until midnight.

Purple Hearts: The Purple Hearts group gathers every Tuesday in Aras Cholmcille after 10 am Mass in Long Tower, for a cuppa, conversation, and some activities such as dancing, knitting, bingo and organising day trips. All welcome.

Long Tower & Brandywell Memories: A collection of old cine film transferred to DVD, taken from1950's onward. The pack contains a double DVD with many clips of Derry in the 50s up to 80s. Much of the footage was filmed in the Brandywell area and the Long Tower School. Cost £10, available from Parish Office and Aras Cholmcille.

Children's Rosary: Children's Rosary takes place in the Long Tower on the First Friday of every month, at 3.30 pm.

Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil, 10 am & 12 noon.

Síopa Cholmcille: St Columba's Gift Shop in Aras Cholmcille has a variety of Confirmation/First Holy Communion gifts & cards, candles, Rosary beads, books, occasion cards and other gifts & mementos available. The shop is open after 10am morning Mass during the week. For enquiries please contact Sheila Doyle/ Jim Doherty via (parish office 028-7126230 or Sacristy 028-71261946) who will be happy to help.

Cloisters Café: Cloisters Café in Aras Cholmcille (Wee Nuns building), in the grounds of Long Tower Church, is a cosy place to relax and have a bite to eat or a cuppa and a cake! The café is open Tuesday – Saturday, from 10 am to 3 pm.

Three Patrons

LIFE Summer Camp: The Parish is hosting summer camps for children who attend a school in the parish and who have completed P4-P7 in June 2025. The camps will be held in St Columb's College on July 14-18 and July 21-25, costing £40 per week. Registration details are on the Parish Facebook page.

Children's Rosary: Children's Rosary takes place in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, on the second Saturday of the month, at 2 pm.

Legion of Mary: The Legion of Mary meets on Mondays, from 1-3 pm in the Meeting Room at St Joseph's Church, Galliagh.

Folk Group: The Carnhill Folk Group meets on Mondays from 7-8.30 pm in St Brigid's Church.

St Brigid's Choir: The 10.30 am St Brigid's Choir meets on Thursdays from 5-5.30 pm in St Brigid's Church.

Bible Study: Bible Study takes place on Tuesdays after 11 am Mass in the Meeting Room, St Joseph's Church, Galliagh.

Men's Bible Study: Men's Bible Study takes place in the Upper Room in St Brigid's Chapel, Carnhill, on Tuesdays from 7.30-8.30 pm.

Women's Bible Study: Women's Bible Study takes place on Wednesdays from 7-8 pm, in the Upper Room, St Brigid's Church, Carnhill.

God Club: God Club is an opportunity for teenaghers to learn together about their faith. It takes place in the Kildare Room, Carnhill, on Saturdays from 11.30 am until 12.30 pm.

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 8.15-10 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 Tuesdays from 11 am until 7 pm. It also takes place seven days a week in the Adoration Room in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, from 8 am until 8 pm, and in St Patrick's Church, Pennyburn, on Wednesdays from 10.30 am – 7 pm.

Youth Prayer Group: A Youth Prayer Group takes place on Thursdays, from 7.30-8.30 pm, in St Pio Centre, Galliagh.

First Saturday: On the First Saturday of each month, after 11 am Mass in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, there is Adoration and Rosary, ending with Divine Mercy and Benediction at 3 pm.

Living Disciples: Living Disciples meet on Tuesdays at 7.30-8.30 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, from 7-10 pm, in St Joseph's Church, Galliagh. Everyone welcome.

Holy Souls Prayer: Under The Gaze of Our Lady of Montligeon, the Holy Souls of Purgatory Prayer Meeting takes place on Mondays after 11 am Mass in Our Lady's Chapel, within St Joseph's Church, Galliagh, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. The next monthly meeting for the intercession of Priests takes place on Tuesday, December 10, at 12.30 pm in Termonbacca.

Vocations Society: The Vocations Society of St Joseph hold monthly meetings on First Fridays after 10 am Mass, in the Emmaus Room, Pennyburn. New members welcome.

Women's Laugh & Craft: The Women's Laugh & Craft Group meets every Monday from 7-9 pm in the Kildare Room, St Brigid's, Carnhill. £3 per class. Spaces limited.

St Pio Café: St Pio's Café, in the St Pio Centre, Galliagh, is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 11.30 am-2.30 pm.

Confessions: Confessions takes place in St Joseph's Church, Galliagh, on Tuesdays from 6.15-6.45 pm and Sundays from 5.30-6 pm; in St Patrick's Church, Pennyburn, on Wednesdays from 6.15-6.45 pm, and Saturdays from 5.15-5.45 pm; and in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, on Thursdays from 6.15-6.45 pm, and Saturdays after 11 am Mass and from 4-4.30 pm.

Weekend Mass Times: 6.15 pm Vigil & 9.45 am, St Patrick's, Pennyburn; 5 pm Vigil, 10.30 am &12.30 pm St Brigid's, Carnhill; 11 am, 12.30 pm (An tAifreann Naofa), and 6.30 pm Youth Mass, St Joseph's Galliagh.

Urney & Castlefinn

Grave Blessings: The Blessing of the Graves will take place in Castlefinn on Tuesday, June 3, after 7 pm Mass in St Mary's, Church, and in Doneyloop on Thursday, June 5, after 7 pm Mass in St Columba's Church. Families are asked to bring Holy Water with them.

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.

Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil, St Columba's, Doneyloop; 10.30 am, St Mary's Castlefinn.

Waterside & Strathfoyle

Lectio Divina: Reflect on the Scriptures with Lectio Divina in the side chapel in St Columb's Church, Chapel Road, on Thursday nights, starting at 8.15 pm – after evening Mass.

Eucharistic Adoration: There is Eucharistic Adoration in St Oliver Plunkett Church, Strathfoyle, on Mondays, 11.30 am-12.30 pm; in Immaculate Conception Church on Thursdays, 1-6 pm; and in St Columb's Church on Fridays, 1-6 pm.

Confessions: St Columb's – Saturday after 10 am Mass, Monday–Friday at 7 pm, before evening Mass; Immaculate Conception, after 11 am Mass every Saturday and at 5.30 pm before evening Mass on a Saturday; St Oliver Plunkett, Every Saturday 5.30 pm, before the Vigil Mass.

Weekend Mass Times: 7 pm Vigil, St Columb's; 6 pm Vigil, 10.15 am & 12.15 pm, Immaculate Conception; 11.15 am, St Oliver Plunkett.

Diocesan *Diary*

Cemetery Sunday: The annual Service of Intercession for the Dead will take place in the City Cemetery on Sunday, June 22, at 3 pm.

Fatima Youth Pilgrimage: The Derry Diocesan Youth Team invites young people aged 16+ to join them on pilgrimage to Fatima for four nights from July 14-18. This will be a unique experience for young people and an opportunity to engage with their peers from around the world in a faith context. Cost is £700 and there will be a budget plan to help with this. Names and deposit of £100 are required as soon as possible to secure a place. For more information or to book in please contact lizzie.rea@derrydiocese.org 00 44 2871264087.

...*other* Diary *Dates*

Sr Clare Mass: The 79th Mass in Memory of Sr Clare Crockett will be celebrated in Termonbacca on May 11, at 7 pm. All are welcome and it will also be livestreamed via the Termonbacca YouTube channel.

Youth Retreat: 'Called', a Young Residential Retreat will take place at Termonbacca, from May 16-19. This retreat is for 18-35-year-olds on their journey of Christian faith entitled: "How am I called to love and serve." Price 325 Euro per person sharing. To book call or email: marcus@loughderg.org or 00353 (0)719861518.

Ladies Retreat: Encounters with the Heart of Jesus Retreat for ladies, led by the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Waterford, will run in Termonbacca from May 16-18. The price of the weekend is £90, which includes accommodation and meals. For queries or booking please get in touch – termonbaccaderry@gmail.com.

Donagh Choir: The Donagh Choir will be performing in An Grianán Theatre on Thursday, May 8, at 7 pm, as part of the Sound! Film Music Festival. Tickets available at the box office or www.angrianan.com.

Cemetery Sunday: Sunday 8th June - The annual service of intercession for the dead takes place on Sunday, June 8, in Ardmore, 6 pm, and at Altnagelvin and Ballyoan cemeteries at 3 pm.

Sacred Heart Crusade: The Sacred Heart Crusade – of hope and love - Jubilee 2025 will take place at Knock Shrine on June 22, from 9 am until 5 pm. This historic event will culminate in Mass celebrated by Archbishop Eamon Martin, during which Ireland will be consecrated to the Sacred Heart for the first time in over 150 years. With talks from Fr Bernard McGuckian SJ and Fr John S. Hogan, this event aims to foster a deeper devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and encourage a renewed spiritual commitment. For the full programme details and information on pilgrim statue visitations, visit www.sacredheartcrusade.ie or email info@sacredheartcrusade.ie.

LIFE Camp 2025: Living – In – Faith – Everywhere…LIFE Camp is a voluntary organisation staffed by teachers, students and experienced volunteers. It takes place in St Mary's College, Northland Road, Derry. We are calling all pupils currently in P3 – P7. Week 1: Tuesday 1st – Friday 4th July and Week 2: Monday 7th July – Friday 11th July. Cost for Week 1 is £35. Cost for Week 2 is £40. To register go to www.klubfunder.com/Clubs/Life%20Summer%20Camp

SMA Knock Pilgrimage: Annual SMA Trip to Knock on Saturday, May 24. Bus going through the following parishes: Cookstown, Kildress, Carrickmore/Loughmacrory, Greencastle, Killyclogher, Omagh and Dromore. Bus Fare: £20 Meals (optional); €40 To book. Contact: Mona – 02886737954; Una – 07743575969.

Ladies' Bible Study: Ladies interested in coming to a deeper understanding of scripture are welcome to come along to the Ladies' Bible Study in Termonbacca, Derry, every Tuesday evening from 8:30-9:30 pm. It is led by Fr Stephen Quinn ocd, who is currently working through the Gospel of Mark, which is the Gospel for Mass for this year. This Bible Study is open to all women who are interested in coming along. There is no need to book, you can simply show up. For further information contact Termonbacca on 028 71 262512.

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.

Holy Souls Prayer: Under The Gaze of Our Lady of Montligeon, the Holy Souls of Purgatory Prayer Meeting takes place on Mondays after 11 am Mass in Our Lady's Chapel, within St Joseph's Church, Galliagh, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. The Group will also meet in Termonbacca on the following Wednesdays from 12.30-1.30 pm – May 28 & June 25.

Polish Mass: Mass for the Polish community is celebrated in the Church of Christ The King, Strathroy, Omagh, on the first and third Sunday's of each month at 10 am, and at 9.30 am every second and fourth Sunday 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 3 pm, and at Benone Strand on the third Sunday of every month, at 3 pm.

Men's Rosary: The Men's Rosary takes place on the first Saturday of every month at Market Street, Omagh (opposite Primark) and at the side of O'Neill's Sports Store, near Guildhall Square, at 1 pm. All Welcome!

Sr Clare Mass: Mass in honour of Sr Clare Crockett is celebrated on the second Sunday of each month, at 7 pm, in Termonbacca. All welcome. The Mass is streamed live via Termonbacca YouTube channel.

Reading with the Carmelites: The Carmelite Fathers at Termonbacca hold a monthly session of 'Reading with the Carmelite Saints', to explore learning friendship with Christ through the example of the Carmelite Saints. It takes place on the third Thursday of the month at 7.30 pm.

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

Sr Clare Rosary: The Sr Clare Rosary continues every Monday night, at 8.30 pm, in St Joseph's Room, at the Carmelite Retreat Centre, Termonbacca.

Matt Talbot Society: The Matt Talbot Society Mass, praying for those suffering from addiction, is offered for those enrolled on the first Monday of every month in St Eugene's Cathedral, at 7.30 pm.

DDS Daily Masses *2024-2025*

St Eugene's
17 Jan, 9 Mar, 29 Apr, 19 Jun, 9 Aug, 29 Sep, 19 Nov

St Columba's
18 Jan, 10 Mar, 30 Apr , 20 Jun, 10 Aug, 30 Sep, 20 Nov

The Three Patrons
19 Jan, 11 Mar, 1 May, 21 Jun, 11 Aug, 1 Oct, 21 Nov

St Mary's, Creggan
20 Jan, 12 Mar, 2 May, 22 Jun, 12 Aug, 2 Oct, 22 Nov

Our Lady of Lourdes
1 Dec 2024, 21 Jan, 13 Mar, 3 May, 23 Jun, 13 Aug, 3 Oct, 23 Nov

Holy Family
2 Dec, 2024, 22 Jan, 14 Mar, 4 May, 24 Jun, 14 Aug, 4 Oct, 24 Nov

Culmore
3 Dec 2024, 23 Jan, 15 Mar, 5 May, 25 Jun, 15 Aug, 5 Oct, 25 Nov

Glendermott
4 Dec 2024, 24 Jan, 16 Mar, 6 May, 26 Jun, 16 Aug, 6 Oct, 26 Nov

Donagheady
5 Dec 2024, 25 Jan, 17 Mar, 7 May, 27 Jun, 17 Aug, 7 Oct, 27 Nov

Leckpatrick
6 Dec 2024, 26 Jan, 18 Mar, 8 May, 28 Jun, 18 Aug, 8 Oct, 28 Nov

Ardmore
7 Dec 2024, 27 Jan, 19 Mar, 9 May, 29 Jun, 19 Aug, 9 Oct, 29 Nov

Strathfoyle
8 Dec 2024, 28 Jan, 20 Mar, 10 May, 30 Jun, 20 Aug, 10 Oct

Camus
9 Dec 2024, 29 Jan, 21 Mar, 11 May, 1 Jul, 21 Aug, 11 Oct

Urney & Castlefin
10 Dec 2024, 30 Jan, 22 Mar, 12 May, 2 Jul, 22 Aug, 12 Oct

Mourne
11 Dec 2024, 31 Jan, 23 Mar, 13 May, 3 Jul, 23 Aug, 13 Oct

Donaghmore
12 Dec 2024, 1 Feb, 24 Mar, 14 May,4 Jul, 24 Aug, 14 Oct

Termonamongan
13 Dec 2024, 2 Feb, 25 Mar, 15 May, 5 Jul, 25 Aug, 15 Oct,

Langfield
14 Dec 2024, 3 Feb, 26 Mar, 16 May, 6 Jul, 26 Aug, 16 Oct,

Sion Mills
15 Dec 2024, 4 Feb, 27 Mar, 17 May, 7 Jul, 27 Aug, 17 Oct,

Ardstraw East
16 Dec 2024, 5 Feb, 28 Mar, 18 May, 8 Jul, 28 Aug, 18 Oct,

Ardstraw W & C'derg
17 Dec 2024, 6 Feb, 29 Mar, 19 May,9 Jul, 29 Aug, 19 Oct

Clonleigh
18 Dec 2024, 7 Feb, 30 Mar, 20 May, 10 Jul, 30 Aug, 20 Oct

Drumragh
19 Dec 2024, 8 Feb, 31 Mar, 21 May, 11 Jul, 31 Aug, 21 Oct

Cappagh
20 Dec 2024, 9 Feb, 1 Apr, 22 May, 12 Jul, 1 Sep, 22 Oct

Greencastle
21 Dec 2024, 10 Feb, 2 Apr, 23 May, 13 Jul, 2 Sep, 23 Oct

Badoney Lower
22 Dec 2024, 11 Feb, 3 Apr, 24 May, 14 Jul, 3 Sep, 24 Oct

Badoney Upper
23 Dec 2024, 12 Feb, 4 Apr, 25 May, 15 Jul, 4 Sep, 25 Oct

Maghera
24 Dec 2024, 13 Feb, 5 Apr, 26 May, 16 Jul, 5 Sep, 26 Oct

Desertmartin
25 Dec 2024, 14 Feb, 6 Apr, 27 May, 17 Jul ,6 Sep, 27 Oct

Faughanvale
26 Dec 2024, 15 Feb, 7 Apr, 28 May, 18 Jul, 7 Sep, 28 Oct

Claudy
27 Dec 2024, 16 Feb, 8 Apr, 29 May19 Jul, 8 Sep, 29 Oct

Banagher
28 Dec 2024, 17 Feb, 9 Apr, 30 May 20 Jul, 9 Sep, 30 Oct

Ballinascreen
29 Dec 2024, 18 Feb 10 Apr, 31 May 21 Jul, 10 Sep, 31 Oct

Dungiven
30 Dec 2024, 19 Feb, 11 Apr, 1 Jun, 22 Jul, 11 Sep, 1 Nov

Limavady
31 Dec 2024, 20 Feb, 12 Apr, 2 Jun, 23 Jul, 12 Sep, 2 Nov

Magilligan
1 Jan, 21 Feb, 13 Apr, 3 Jun, 24 Jul, 13 Sep, 3 Nov

Coleraine
2 Jan, 22 Feb, 14 Apr, 4 Jun, 25 Jul, 14 Sep, 4 Nov

Garvagh
3 Jan, 23 Feb, 15 Apr, 5 Jun, 26 Jul, 15 Sep, 5 Nov

Kilrea
4 Jan, 24 Feb, 16 Apr, 6 Jun, 27 Jul, 16 Sep, 6 Nov

Greenlough
5 Jan, 25 Feb, 7 Jun, 28 Jul, 17 Sep, 7 Nov

Bellaghy
6 Jan, 26 Feb, 8 Jun, 29 Jul, 18 Sep, 8 Nov

Lavey
7 Jan, 27 Feb, 9 Jun, 30 Jul, 19 Sep, 9 Nov

Moville
8 Jan, 28 Feb, 20 Apr, 10 Jun, 31 Jul, 20 Sep, 10 Nov

Granaghan
9 Jan, 1 Mar, 21 Apr, 11 Jun, 1 Aug, 21 Sep, 11 Nov

Buncrana
10 Jan, 2 Mar, 22 Apr, 12 Jun, 2 Aug, 22 Sep, 12 Nov

Fahan
11 Jan, 3 Mar, 23 Apr, 13 Jun, 3 Aug, 23 Sep, 13 Nov

Clonmany
12 Jan, 4 Mar, 24 Apr, 14 Jun, 4 Aug, 24 Sep, 14 Nov

Carndonagh13 Jan, 5 Mar, 25 Apr, 15 Jun, 5 Aug, 25 Sep, 15 Nov

Malin
14 Jan, 6 Mar, 26 Apr, 16 Jun, 6 Aug, 26 Sep, 16 Nov

Iskaheen
15 Jan, 7 Mar, 27 Apr, 17 Jun, 7 Aug, 27 Sep, 17 Nov

Culdaff
16 Jan, 8 Mar, 28 Apr 18 Jun, 8 Aug, 28 Sep, 18 Nov

1ST FRIDAY MASS FOR LIVING MEMBERS 2024 / 2025

Ballinascreen
06/12/2024

Banagher
03/01/2025

Bellaghy
07/02/2025

Coleraine
07/03/2025

Desertmartin
04/04/2025

Dungiven
02/05/2025

Errigal
06/06/2025

Greenlough
04/07/2025

Kilrea
01/08/2025

Lavey
05/09/2025

Limavady
03/10/2025

Maghera
07/11/2025

Forty Hours - 2025

Sun 6 April	St Mary's, Rouskey	Badoney Lower (Gortin)
Sun 6 April	St Joseph's, Glenmornan	Leckpatrick
Sun 6 April	St Patrick's, Glen	Maghera
Sun 4 May	St Patrick's	Iskaheen
Sun 4 May	St Patrick's	Drumquin
Sun 4 May	St Joseph's, Galliagh	Three Patrons, Derry
Sun 11 May	St Mary's, Craigavole	Kilrea
Sun 11 May	Star of the Sea	Faughanvale
Sun 18 May	St Mary's, Ballerin	Garvagh
Sun 8 May	St Patrick's	Greencastle
Sun 18 May	St Mary's, Dunboe	Coleraine
Sun 18 May	St Francis of Assisi, Drumnabey	Ardstraw West & Castlederg
Sun 25 May	Corpus Christi, Mountfield	Cappagh
Sun 25 May	St Mary's, Altinure	Banagher
Sun 25 May	St Mary's, Cloughcor	Leckpatrick

Forgiveness and Reconciliation *Fr Johnny Doherty CSsR*

Fr. Johnny Doherty CSsR

SOME years ago the film, 'Love Story' took the world by storm. A lot of the adulation was due to a single statement: "Love means never having to say sorry." This was treated like the long-lost word of life had at last been discovered. It was quoted and re-quoted and over-quoted. It was almost drooled over as if it was the greatest thing that was ever said!

Unfortunately, it is not true. In fact, the opposite is the truth. Love means having to say sorry constantly! The very nature of relationships is that the closer we get to one another the easier it is to hurt each other – by the things we say, or by the things we do not say; by the things we do, or the things we do not do.

This is true in all of our relationships of marriage, of family life, of community with one another. It is also true in our relationships with one another in different communities and between nations. And, of course, it is true too in our relationship with God.

The Gospels

The Gospel passage that introduces the month of April for us this year is from St Luke's Gospel, Chapter 15, verses 1-3; 11-32. We heard this on the Fourth Sunday of Lent, which was on March 30.

The main part of this passage is the story of The Prodigal Son, a story of the Gospels which almost everyone is familiar with. However, this story is introduced by St Luke as told by Jesus to the Pharisees, a group of good people who wanted to get rid of Jesus, saying about Him: "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." They thought that this was about the worst thing you could say about anyone, especially anyone who considered himself to be a friend of God's.

Our problem

One of the great dangers with religion is that we can think of it as only being for good, holy people. One of the really lovely aspects of Christianity, especially as experienced within our Catholic tradition, is that it is for sinners. No one is excluded.

Certainly, holiness is our call. However, sinner is our condition! The amazing revelation that Jesus brings to us is that God loves each of us with an infinite love just as we are. It is God's love that helps us to move from being sinners to being saints. That movement is happening with each one, whether we know it or not.

It can be difficult for us to accept this about ourselves. It can be even more difficult to accept it about many others that we know. We can so easily find ourselves standing in judgement on others and even condemning them for how they are living their lives. Criticism of one another and judging each other has no place in our following of Christ, whether in our homes and families and other relationships, or in our faith community.

Forgiveness

Now, to get back again to 'Love Story' – and to the story of the Prodigal Son! Constantly saying sorry is an essential part of a love relationship. Saying sorry though is never enough for the growth of a strong relationship of love. Sorry is about how you are. And it is good to express that. The next step is to ask for forgiveness. That is what includes the other person or the other party. They have the power to forgive.

It is now up to that other person whether the relationship will continue and flourish. If forgiveness is given then the relationship begins fresh again and can even be better than before. If, however, forgiveness is withheld, the relationship is at a standstill.

Prodigal Son story

In the Prodigal Son story from St Luke's Gospel, we have the scene of a father who had two sons. One, the younger one, left home with his inheritance and wanted nothing more to do with his father or brother. However, he fell on bad times. He had no hope for the future. He felt sorry for himself and decided to go back home where, at least, he would have something to eat. But he was not sure that he would be accepted.

What he discovered, and what we also can discover, is that his father had already forgiven him. In fact, his father had forgiven him from the moment he left. His father's only wish was that his son would one day come back so that he could hold him in his arms and show how much he loved him.

The second son, the elder one, had never left home. He worked hard every day. But he did so with a lot of resentment and bad feeling. When he heard that his younger brother had come back home and was being welcomed with a party by his father, he blew up! All his anger, not only at his brother but also at his father, came flowing out of him and he refused to go into the house.

The father forgave this son also. He forgave him not only for what he was doing at this moment in rejecting his own brother, but his father had been forgiving him all over the years for the ways he was treating his father with disrespect and dishonour by being sullen, angry, resentful and so on. He never considered that he needed forgiveness because he was so self-righteous. And he still did not think that he needed forgiveness for how he was acting towards his brother and his father at this special moment of new life for their family.

God's forgiveness

This story is told to the Pharisees, a group of very good living people. They would have judged the likes of the younger son and condemned him for his evil life. They would have judged the likes of the older son and praised him for his good living.

Jesus shows the father – and consequently God – forgiving both sons because of his love for each of them. He just longed for each of them to come home and be a full part of their family home. He went out of the home twice. The first time was when he saw his younger son "a long way off". He had been watching that corner of the road for years with a broken heart, hoping and praying for this moment. He rushed out and immediately declared a feast. A party.

The second time the father went out was when the older son was fuming with anger and refusing to go in because he had heard that "this son of yours" has come home. He had long since stopped thinking of him as his brother. This time the father could not throw his arms around this son because he was like ice.

Wonderful truth

The most wonderful truth that Christ has brought to the world and to us is that God loves each one of us with an infinite love. Nothing ever diminishes that love. And, consequently, God constantly forgives each one of us our sins. God forgives us long before we ever ask for forgiveness. God forgives us as soon as we sin. God's only desire is that we would keep coming back to the warmth and beauty of total forgiveness.

Sacrament of Reconciliation

One of the greatest privileges that I experience as a priest is what we call 'hearing Confessions'. Most people only recognise what you are talking about when you use that phrase! But this Sacrament is much more than that. It is wonderful to be part of the joy and gladness and peace of person after person as they return to the full embrace of God's love.

Many people practice this Sacrament frequently. It is a joy to be part of their journey into a deeper and more lasting commitment to being people of God's infinite love.

Many people come to this Sacrament doubtful if they can ever be forgiven fully. It is such a great grace as a priest to be part of the freedom of spirit and the deep peace that they experience in letting all their sins go into the forgiveness of God.

Still others

There are still many other people who continue to shy away from God and refuse to approach this font of life. This may be because they do not think they have any need of God in the first place, or they do not see that they have anything for which they need forgiveness. The only time when we can say that we do not need forgiveness is when we can honestly say that we love God with our whole heart, our whole soul, our whole mind and our whole strength. And that we love our neighbour as ourselves. That will not be on this side of eternity!

Unfortunately, there are still also many people who see themselves as beyond God's forgiveness. That is never true. God forgives each one all the time. It is just necessary to come back and place ourselves in God's loving hands, so that we can accept that forgiveness and be at one with God and with one another.

Reconciliation

Forgiveness granted and forgiveness accepted is what is called reconciliation. This month, which includes Holy Week and Easter, is the great time for us to enter into this renewed and spirit-filled relationship with God and with one another. It is a time when in most, if not all, parishes and faith communities, this Sacrament is celebrated in special ways, inviting each of us personally to take the step in faith and be part of the celebration of our faith in the salvation of the world through the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ to the glory of God. All are most welcome.

Happy Easter!

What is Love? *by Sinéad Strong*

A question asked by many over the years, from philosophers and great thinkers to poets and musicians is – What is Love? There are many debates, ideas, poems and songs as to what love is. One thing that is clear these days is that there is much confusion as to what exactly love is, the true meaning of love has been lost to some degree by many.

Love is essential for all relationships, including marriage, family, and friendships, and is the foundation for a community of faith. For some, love means supporting each other in their life choices no matter what. If you don't give them your full support in whatever they do, then you don't love them. There is no room for personal opinions that go against what is popular.

For others, it is telling you the truth at all times, whether you're in a place to hear it or not. This is a trap that many people of faith can fall into. There is a sense of duty to ensure that all people they come into contact with know what the commandments teach us and that this should be pointed out to them. There is no discernment for where a person is on their journey through life. They may have been deeply hurt by life and their hearts aren't ready to hear these truths. This attitude can cause serious damage to a person building a relationship with Christ and could put them off the faith altogether.

There are many definitions from saints and the Bible. The famous verses from Corinthians so popular at weddings: "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." and John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life," all show us simply that God is Love and the source of what true love is.

But what does this look like in our everyday relationships? Aristotle said that people love those who have treated them well, or who, they believe, wish to do so, and also those who love the ones that they love. It is easy to love those who love us and treat us well, but as Catholics we are called to love all, regardless of how they treat us. Love is not just a feeling, but a choice to freely give oneself to another, even when it is difficult. We need to see others as God sees them, fearfully and wonderfully made, in His image and likeness.

St Thomas defines it simply as Love is 'willing the good of the other', it emphasises the selfless nature of true love. Love is a selfless act that puts others before self, known in theology as 'agape'. This is the kind of love that Jesus revealed to us and commanded us to have for each other.

As Catholics, we believe that love is not merely a human emotion or feeling, but a divine gift. It is a reflection of God's own nature, and a call to imitate Christ's love for humanity. What this all boils down to is charity. Charity as a theological virtue means to properly orient ourselves to God and have God as our foundation. Through this, we can show love to those in our lives and those we meet. Through charity we can know when to correct someone on the wrong path or when they aren't ready to hear the truth. Through prayer and proper discernment, we can show the love of Christ to those who don't know it.

So many are suffering in this world for lack of love and the mistaken belief that they are unlovable. Be the light of compassion and understanding to show that we are loved, we are worthy, and we are made for more than this world has to offer.

If you are interested in finding out more about Catholic Mothers Ireland, please visit www.catholicmothers.ie.

Children's Catechism Club - C3

by Veronica Harley

HELLO children. Welcome to the month of April. This month is dedicated to the Holy Eucharist. During this month, Lent comes to an end with the wonderful celebration of Easter in the Church. Easter is not simply one feast among others, but the 'Feast of feasts' (CCC 1169). We also celebrate a special feast called 'Divine Mercy Sunday', in which the great gift of God's mercy is given to all who come to Him with a sincere heart.

Easter

This year we celebrate Easter Sunday on April 20. The celebration of Easter is the highest and holiest day for all creation. Easter is the celebration of Christ's resurrection from the dead *(CCC 1166)*. It is celebrated on a Sunday, and marks the end of Lent, the end of Holy Week and of the Easter Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday). It is the beginning of the Easter season of the liturgical year.

The Gospels tell us that Jesus Christ rose from the dead on the third day following his crucifixion, which would be Sunday *(Matthew 28:1-10, John 20:1-18)*. His resurrection marks the triumph of good over evil, sin and death. Jesus' resurrection is a remarkable event which proves that those who trust in God and accept Christ will be raised from the dead.

Eucharistic Adoration

The Catholic Church has also developed the beautiful practice of Eucharistic Adoration. This practice is centuries old, dating back to the Apostles, when the Eucharist was carried in to the homes of those people who could not attend Mass. Eucharistic Adoration is a sign of devotion and worship of Jesus, who is truly present – Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity – in the Eucharist.

The Holy Eucharist is placed in a very special vessel called a monstrance. This is made of a precious metal and is shaped like the sun to symbolise the resurrection of Jesus. The centre of the monstrance has a round glass through which the sacred Host can be seen. Behind the glass is a little semi-circular bracket made of metal called a lunette. The lunette holds the host securely in place. When the Host is not in the monstrance for adoration, it is kept safely in its lunette within a strong container known as a pyx in the Tabernacle.

When the monstrance contains the sacred Host, the priest will not touch the vessel with his bare hands. Out of respect for the Eucharist, the priest holds the monstrance with a humeral veil, a wide band of cloth that covers his shoulders (humera) and has pleats on the inside, in which he places his hands. A humeral veil is a liturgical vestment normally made of silk or gold cloth and is used by priests during Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

We are invited to come and spend time with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. When we spend time with Jesus in adoration, we praise and adore Him. We thank Him for all the wonderful things in our lives and the many gifts which He has given us.

When the angel appeared to the children at Fatima, he showed them how they should worship Jesus in the Eucharist. He bent low in worship until his forehead touched the ground. He taught the children a beautiful prayer to say to Jesus.

Please try to visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and spend some precious time with him.

Prayers of Fatima

"My God, I believe, I adore, and I love You! I beg pardon of You for those who do not believe, do not adore, do not hope and do not love You!"

"Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, I adore You profoundly and offer You the most Precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, present in all the tabernacles of the earth, in reparation for the outrages, sacrileges, and indifference with which He Himself is offended. And through the infinite merits of His Most Sacred Heart and of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I beg of You the conversion of poor sinners."

Saints of the Month

St Vincent Ferrer – April 5
St George, martyr – April 23
St Mark the Evangelist – April 25
St Catherine of Siena – April 29

Divine Mercy – St Faustina

St Faustina was born in Poland on August 25, 1905. She was the third of 10 children. When she was almost 20, she entered the convent and joined the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, who devoted themselves to the care of troubled young women.

On February 22, 1931, Sr Faustina received from Jesus a message of mercy that she was told to spread throughout the world. She was asked to become the apostle of God's mercy, to be a model of how to be merciful to others. The message was that God loves us, all of us, no matter how great our sins may be. God wants us to know that His mercy is greater than our sins, therefore, we should always call on Him with trust, receive His mercy and let it flow through us to others, so that all will come to share his joy.

Jesus showed Faustina an image of Himself which He wanted painted so that all could see the abundant mercy which flows from His heart. Under the image, He told her to write, "Jesus I Trust in You".

Faustina lived her entire life in imitation of Christ's, always making sacrifice as Jesus did for others. At the request of Jesus, she willingly offered her personal sufferings with Jesus to atone for the sins of others; in her daily life she became a doer of mercy, bringing joy and peace to others. She wrote about God's mercy and encouraged others to trust in God and prepare the world for His coming again.

During her life, Faustina wrote and suffered in secret, without many knowing that anything special was taking place in her life. After her death from tuberculosis in 1938, even her closest friends were amazed to discover what great sufferings and mystical experiences she had received. She had listened carefully to God's Gospel command to "be merciful even as your heavenly Father is merciful". The message of mercy that Sr Faustina received has been spread throughout the world.

Jesus asked Faustina that a special Feast Day be set aside to celebrate God's wonderful gift of mercy to the world. This feast is called Mercy Sunday, and it falls on the Sunday after Easter. On this day God pours out His mercy on all those who come to Him. The novena prayers which we say for nine days prior to Mercy Sunday are the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, with its daily intentions. We say these prayers to ask God's mercy to come upon us.

The Virtue of Hope

A virtue is a good quality or habit that helps to make someone a better person, like being honest or kind, and helps us to make good choices.

One of the virtues that we receive at Baptism is hope. Hope is about believing in God and knowing that He will always be there for us. It helps us to keep trying and not to give up. Hope brings us joy and courage allowing us to face difficulties. The virtue of hope is a gift from God that helps us to trust in His love and care.

This little girl is called Luce, which means 'light' in Italian. She is here during the Pilgrim Year of Hope to help guide young pilgrims towards hope and faith.

She is wearing a yellow sailor raincoat to represent the yellow Vatican flag, and her coat also reminds us that we will meet many storms as we journey through life.

She is wearing Rosary beads to show us that our daily lives should be filled with prayer. She is holding a walking stick as she journeys towards God, and her muddy green boots represent humility and hope.

In 2025, as Pilgrims of Hope for this Jubilee Year, may we continue to trust in God's presence as we journey towards Him.

Holy Week Quiz

1.Where did the Agony in the Garden take place?
2. Who betrayed Jesus?
3. Who denied Jesus three times?
4. Who ordered Jesus to be scourged?
5. What criminal was released instead of Jesus?
6. How many Stations of the Cross are there?
7. How many times does Jesus fall on the way to Calvary?
8. Who helped Jesus to carry His cross?
9. Who wiped the face of Jesus?
10. What does the sign on the cross say?
11. Who made the arrangements for the burial of Jesus?
12. Who was the first to discover that Jesus had risen?

Answers:1. Gethsemane, 2. Judas, 3. Peter, 4. Pontius Pilate, 5. Barabbas, 6. Fourteen 7. Three times, 8. Simon of Cyrene, 9. Veronica, 10. King of the Jews, 11. Joseph of Arimathea, 12. Mary Magdalene

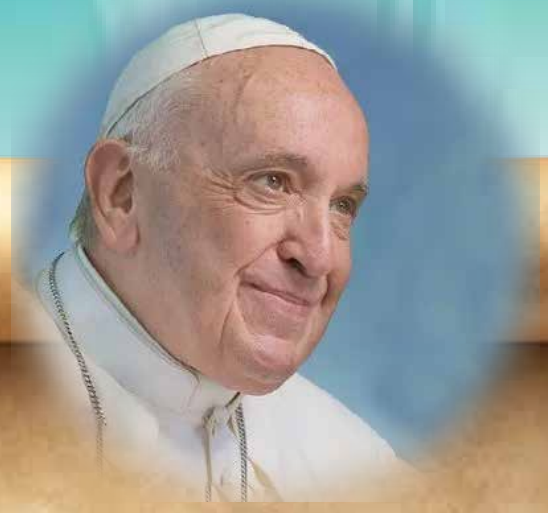
Quiz Time *with Lawrence*

1. In transportation, what do the letters 'HGV' stand for?
2. Made famous by the iconic World War II film, in which country would you find 'the bridge over the river Kwai'?
3. To the nearest whole number, how many litres are there in a gallon?
4. With what sport would you associate Englishman, Tommy Fleetwood?
5. The city of Lincoln is the capital of which US State?
6. 1970's reggae band, 'Boney M' enjoyed their greatest success with a 'Double A' sided single featuring 'Rivers of Babylon' and what other song?
7. According to Greek mythology, who was 'God of the Sea'?
8. Who played 'Agent Scully' in the TV series 'The X- Files'?
9. In which Irish county is the town of Bray located?
10. In what year was the 'Euro' introduced as a single currency?
11. How many strings are there on a standard violin?
12. Who knocked Real Madrid out of this year's Champions League competition?
13. Which is the largest of Spain's popular tourist Balearic Islands?
14. At what fictional school was comic strip character 'Billy Bunter' a pupil?
15. What colour is the 'stop' light on Australian traffic signals?
16. Who played 'Lieutenant Columbo' in the TV detective series of the same name?
17. What type of food is referred to in the USA as 'Baloney'?
18. What sporting event is contested each year in London over a distance of exactly four miles and 374 yards?
19. What former head of state's final words are famously said to have been: "I'm bored with it all"?
20. What was the screen name of the youngest member of the Walmington-on-Sea home guard - otherwise known as Dad's Army?
21. Which European country's flag is a tricolour of blue, black and white?
22. What is the fictional Christian name of TV's Grampa Simpson?
23. Who won this year's Rugby Six Nations championship?
24. What alcohol-based beverage is flavoured by the juniper berry?
25. What colour is a polar bear's skin?

Quiz Answers: *1, Heavy Goods Vehicle; 2, Thailand; 3, Four; 4, Golf; 5, Nebraska; 6, 'Brown Girl in the Ring'; 7, Poseidon; 8, Gillian Anderson; 9, Wicklow; 10, 1999; 11, Four; 12, Arsenal; 13, Majorca; 14, Greyfriars; 15, Red; 16, Peter Falk; 17, Sausage meat; 18, The University Boat Race; 19, Winston Churchill; 20, Private Pike; 21, Estonia; 22, Abe; 23, France; 24, Gin; 25, Black.*

Aghyaran, Ardmore, Ardstraw West &Castlederg, Ballinascreen, Ballymagroarty, Banagher, Bellaghy, Buncrana, Carndonagh, Claudy, Clonmany, Coleraine,Creggan, Culdaff, Culmore, Desertmartin, Donnyloop, Drumquin, Dunamanagh, Dungiven, Fahan, Faughanvale, Garvagh, Gortin, Greencastle, Moville, Newtownstewart, Omagh, Plumbridge, Sion Mills, Steelestown, Strabane, Swatragh, Templemore - Long Tower and St Eugene's, Three Patrons, Waterside

Let Your Light Shine!



Easter Sunday Homily of Pope Francis

"MARY Magdalene, seeing that the stone of the tomb had been rolled away, ran to tell Peter and John. After receiving the shocking news, the two disciples also went out and — as the Gospel says — "the two were running together" (Jn 20:4). The main figures of the Easter narratives all ran! On the one hand, "running" could express the concern that the Lord's body had been taken away; but, on the other hand, the haste of Mary Magdalene, Peter and John expresses the desire, the yearning of the heart, the inner attitude of those who set out to search for Jesus. He, in fact, has risen from the dead and therefore is no longer in the tomb. We must look for Him elsewhere.

This is the message of Easter: We must look for Him elsewhere. Christ is risen, He is alive! He is no longer a prisoner of death, He is no longer wrapped in the shroud, and therefore we cannot confine Him to a fairy tale, we cannot make Him a hero of the ancient world, or think of Him as a statue in a museum! On the contrary, we must look for Him and this is why we cannot remain stationary. We must take action, set out to look for Him: look for Him in life, look for Him in the faces of our brothers and sisters, look for Him in everyday business, look for Him everywhere except in the tomb.

We must look for Him without ceasing. Because if He has risen from the dead, then He is present everywhere, He dwells among us, He hides himself and reveals Himself even today in the sisters and brothers we meet along the way, in the most ordinary and unpredictable situations of our lives. He is alive and is with us always, shedding the tears of those who suffer and adding to the beauty of life through the small acts of love carried out by each of us.

For this reason, our Easter faith, which opens us to the encounter with the risen Lord and prepares us to welcome Him into our lives, is anything but a complacent settling into some sort of "religious reassurance." On the contrary, Easter spurs us to action, to run like Mary Magdalene and the disciples; it invites us to have eyes that can "see beyond," to perceive Jesus, the one who lives, as the God who reveals Himself and makes Himself present even today, who speaks to us, goes before us, surprises us. Like Mary Magdalene, every day we can experience losing the Lord, but every day we can also run to look for Him again, with the certainty that He will allow Himself to be found and will fill us with the light of His resurrection.

Brothers and sisters, this is the greatest hope of our life: we can live this poor, fragile and wounded existence clinging to Christ, because He has conquered death, He conquers our darkness and He will conquer the shadows of the world, to make us live with Him in joy, forever. This is the goal towards which we press on, as the Apostle Paul says, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead (cf. Phil 3:12-14). Like Mary Magdalene, Peter and John, we hasten to meet Christ.

The Jubilee invites us to renew the gift of hope within us, to surrender our sufferings and our concerns to hope, to share it with those whom we meet along our journey and to entrust to hope the future of our lives and the destiny of the human family. And so, we cannot settle for the fleeting things of this world or give in to sadness; we must run, filled with joy. Let us run towards Jesus, let us rediscover the inestimable grace of being His friends. Let us allow His Word of life and truth to shine in our life. As the great theologian Henri de Lubac said, "It should be enough to understand this: Christianity is Christ. No, truly, there is nothing else but this. In Christ we have everything" (Les responsabilités doctrinales des catholiques dans le monde d'aujourd'hui, Paris 2010, 276).

And this "everything" that is the risen Christ opens our life to hope. He is alive, He still wants to renew our life today. To Him, conqueror of sin and death, we want to say:

"Lord, on this feast day we ask you for this gift: that we too may be made new, so as to experience this eternal newness. Cleanse us, O God, from the sad dust of habit, tiredness and indifference; give us the joy of waking every morning with wonder, with eyes ready to see the new colours of this morning, unique and unlike any other. […] Everything is new, Lord, and nothing is the same, nothing is old" (A. Zarri, Quasi una preghiera).

Sisters, brothers, in the wonder of the Easter faith, carrying in our hearts every expectation of peace and liberation, we can say: with You, O Lord, everything is new. With you, everything begins again."

Easter Sunday Homily of His Holiness Pope Francis
Read by Cardinal Angelo Comastri
St Peter's Square
April 20, 2025

In memoriam | 1936 - 2025

Francis

"Having mercy he called him"

Greenlough, Iskaheen, Killyclogher, Killygordon, Kilrea, Lavey, Leckpatrick, Lifford, Limavady, Maghera, Magilligan, Malin, Melmount,