

The NET

Sharing fruits of faith in Derry Diocese

ISSUE 87. JULY / AUGUST 2023

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See inside...



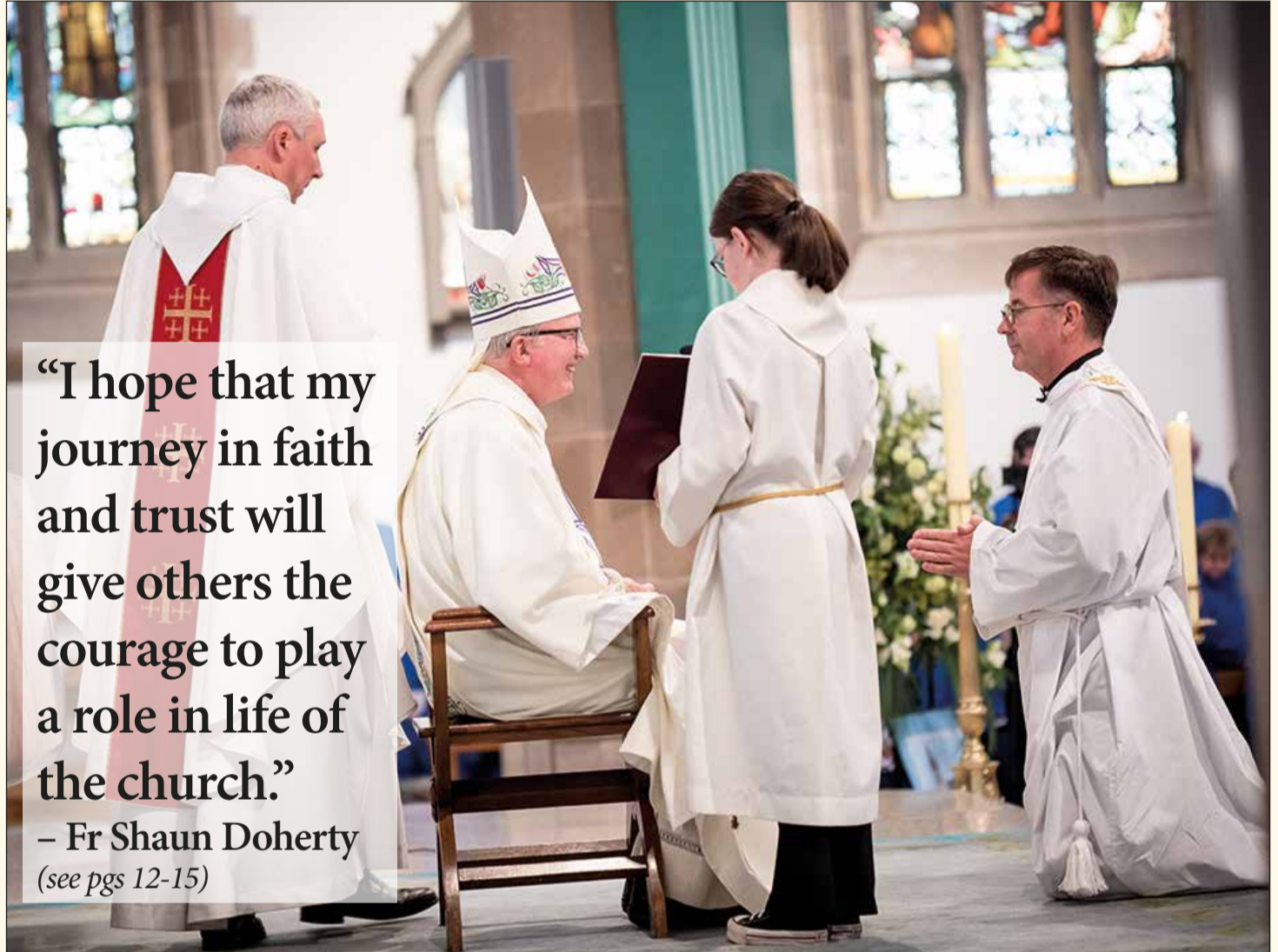
Gathering of Gatherings - Plumbridge



Irish Mass Rock Celebration - Swatragh



Mol an Oige Summer Camp - Derry.



“I hope that my journey in faith and trust will give others the courage to play a role in life of the church.”
– Fr Shaun Doherty
(see pgs 12-15)

Ordination of Fr Shaun Doherty in St Eugene's Cathedral, Derry.



Mystery Walk for Glenock - Newtownstewart.



P7 End-of Year Mass - Three Patrons.



St Canice's PS celebrate 50th - Dungiven.



St Colmcille's PS Golden Jubilee - Claudy.

People in focus



Fr Brian Donnelly, Plumbridge.



Fr Con McLaughlin, Carndonagh.



Fr John Walsh, Buncrana.



Fr Kevin Mulhern, Ballymagroarty.



Fr Shaun Doherty, Derry.

Also featuring: St Mary's College, Derry, at US Leadership Conference; Net Ministries Training in Termonbacca; Diocese to host RE Conference; Sisterbucks with Servant Sisters; Children's Catechism Club – C3; Tarsus Scripture School; Young Writers section; Slane 'Light the Fire'; Aghyaran, Castlederg & Melmourt pilgrimage to Knock; Tributes to the late Vera McFadden; Walk to Knock; Irish section, Quiz... and much more...

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Bishop Donal reflects on the Pope's prayer intentions for July and August...

A Eucharistic Life...

DURING July, Pope Francis has asked for prayer that "Catholics may place the celebration of the Eucharist at the heart of their lives, transforming human relationships in a very deep way and opening to the encounter with God and all their brothers and sisters."

Since the earliest days of the young church, what the apostles called 'the breaking of bread' (Acts of the Apostles 2:46) has been central to our life and identity. The earliest Christians went to the Temple for prayers - but they gathered in their houses for what was different about their prayer life. The breaking of bread was at the heart of their lives.

That centrality of the Eucharist has remained in the Church down through the centuries and in very different situations. It was central in early Jerusalem, in the catacombs of Rome, in

medieval Europe, in Ireland under persecution.

In 2001, St John Paul II quoted the Second Vatican which had written that the liturgy is "the summit towards which the Church's action tends and at the same time the source from which comes all her strength". (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10. quoted in *Novo Millennio Ineunte* 35)

But St John Paul was not just concerned about the Eucharist as an important teaching, as the sacrament of Christ's sacrifice on Calvary. The Mass is not an event where individuals go and have their private devotions. He insists that Catholics need to share the Eucharist which should be at the heart of Sunday, "not just in order to observe a precept but as something felt as essential to a truly informed and consistent Christian life".

Obviously, the Sunday Eucharist is focused on

celebrating Christ's offering of Himself to the Father. We join the angels and the saints in their unending hymn of praise. It is never about what we can do to impress God. It is simply joining in with what He has done for us on Calvary. What we have to boast about is never our beautiful liturgy or wonderful singing or fine vestments or buildings - but what God is continuing to do in our time through the sacrament of Calvary's sacrifice

The wise St John Paul also recognized that the 21st century is an age of fragmentation and diversity. In an individualist age, Christ wants to gather his people "together as God's family round the table of the Word and the Bread of Life". The Sunday Eucharist aims to build community and unity. As a Eucharist-centred community, the Church "can effectively exercise her role as

the sacrament of unity".

He thus warns against any excessive individualisation of our relationship with Jesus. As we share in the one Bread and the one Cup, we become more fully the Body of Christ which can be broken to nourish the world's hunger for grace and redemption. That was at the heart of the theme for the 40th International Eucharist Congress held in Dublin in 2012 - "The Eucharist, Communion with Christ and with one another". The Eucharist reflects the Cross - reaching outwards and upwards.

Thus, Pope Francis asks us to pray for a deepening of our understanding of this double dimension of the Eucharist. It unites us around Christ on Calvary and binds us together in all our diversity. Like the Cross, the Eucharist is a sacrament of mission. Jesus had no purpose other than to save the world.



Bishop Donal

Our synodal pathway might usefully ensure that we focus on becoming a community with the Eucharist at the heart of our lives, "transforming human relationships in a very deep way and opening to the encounter with God and all their brothers and sisters". That is what Jesus wanted to do. We can have no other mission.

World Youth Day...



And the theme this year comes from St Luke's Gospel - "Mary rose and went with haste" (Lk 1:39). The official website explains why. This biblical phrase 'opens the account of the Visitation (Mary's visit to her cousin Elizabeth), a biblical episode following the Annunciation (the angel's announcement to Mary that she would be the mother of the Son of God)'...

The Pope's prayer intention for August focuses on World Youth Day, asking for prayer that this event in Lisbon "will help young people to live and witness the Gospel in their own lives".

It was in 1987 that Pope John Paul II instituted the first World Youth Day. Every two or three years since then, the Pope has invited young people from all over the world to gather in one place for a festival of faith.

And this year, Pope Francis has called people to spend five days together in Lisbon, the capital of Portugal. The Diocese of Derry plans to be represented by 24 young people and a few adult leaders.



WYD group setting off from Derry Diocese.

"During their conversation of the Annunciation, the angel also tells Mary that her older cousin, thought to be sterile, is pregnant. After affirming to the angel 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word' (Lk 1:38), it is then that Mary sets out for Ain Karim, a village near Jerusalem where Elizabeth lived and was awaiting the birth of John, who would become Saint John the Baptist.

"Mary of Nazareth is the great figure of the Christian journey. She teaches us to say yes to God. She was the protagonist of the last edition of WYD and will be so once again in Lisbon.

"In the biblical episode of the Visitation, the action of

standing up presents Mary as both a woman of charity and a missionary woman. Leaving in haste represents the attitude depicted in Pope Francis' indications for WYD Lisbon 2023: «may young people's evangelization be active and missionary, for this is how they will recognize and witness the presence of the living Christ».

"Addressing young people in particular, and challenging them to be courageous missionaries, the following was written by the Pope (Francis) in the Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*: «Where does Jesus send us? There are no borders, no limits: He

sends us everywhere. The Gospel is for everyone, not just for some» (CV 177).

For some people, a World Youth Day may be a place for great fun and good memories. But the Popes have always wanted it to be a both a celebration of our faith and an outreach to those have not yet encountered Jesus.

The Derry Diocesan group will spend the first six days in a parish not far from Porto. There we will get to know the life of a local community and join in their life. Then the final days, with a visit to Fatima en route to Lisbon, will be a huge gathering

with daily catechesis and Mass, the opportunity for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, a massive display area with chances to meet people from around the world, the Stations of the Cross in a public park and an overnight sleep-out in the 'Field of Grace', where the final Mass will be celebrated by Pope Francis.

Pope Francis wants the Church to pray that this will be a time of grace for many young people, so that they can know Jesus and go with haste to share his love with their contemporaries.

Sharing the fruits of the faith in the Derry Diocese

Contacting us:

If you have a story that you would like to share or an event you would like covered by The Net, just drop an email to editorthenet15@gmail.com or ring/text 07809292852

Sharing the fruits of the faith in the Derry Diocese

Supporting us:

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

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

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

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The ministry of

The NET

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

Mol an Oige youngsters told...

You are The Miracle by Clare Wilkinson

WE were blessed this year in being able to deliver faith ministry during Mol an Oige 2023 to 50 young people aged between 4-11 years of age. Through our theme, 'You are the Miracle', we focused on letting every child know that they are a miracle created by God and that, as one of God's children, they are blessed.

We had a wide range of activities including, cooking, art, messy play, Lego club, outdoor play and a wee trip to the Farm. We also took 20 minutes every day to deliver teachings to the young people. We looked at Jesus as our superhero, and we explored the real meaning of the rainbow, which our young people delivered themselves. It was an amazing to see young people deliver faith ministry to young people their own age and younger.

Our other teaching included believing in yourself, making good choices and listening to God's plan.

Our teachings are all done



through dance, drama and some videos, and we finished every day by praising the Lord through songs and dance, which seemed to be the young people's favourite part of each day.

We had a very successful summer scheme this year and look forward to doing it bigger and better next year.

I am blessed to be able to do this type of work with the young

people of our City. I love my job and being able to tell young people every day how much they are loved by God is a gift that can never be measured. I am so grateful for Derry Search Youth Group and all the opportunities it has given me over the years. Being able to work for them and do this ministry work has made a difference in my life, and I will continue to work as hard as I can

to keep delivering that message to the young people of our city.

Don Bosco once said, "It not enough to tell the youth they are loved, you have to show them", and that's what Search does, that is what this Summer scheme has done for each and every child that came through our doors this year.

(Clare Wilkinson is the Leader in Charge at Derry Search Youth Group)



Termonbacca Derry Summer Fun

Faith Prayer
Art & Crafts Games
HELLO Summer
Friendship Ages 8-14 Adventures

Monday 31st July- Friday 4th August 2023
12pm- 4pm

£15

For further info/booking email termonbaccaderry@gmail.com

Bishop Donal talks to Three Patrons' Year 7s about being...

Salt of the Earth and Light of the World!

AS the school year came to a close, Bishop Donal celebrated Mass in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, especially for the Year 7 pupils in the primary schools within the Three Patrons' Parish.

Following a short introductory talk by Fr Sean O'Donnell, who told the youngsters that all were gathered in thanksgiving for them and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, a respectful silence fell upon the congregation that was so notable Bishop Donal commented on how he had heard "not a peep" when he arrived in the chapel building that was filled with "big P7s".

Welcoming the young people and school staff, with a special word for the members of the Ardnashee School community, Bishop Donal was delighted to receive the beautiful artwork presented at the opening of the ceremony, which

had been completed by each of the schools to represent the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Walking through the aisles to interact with the young people during his homily, the Bishop said to them that there were two words that he wanted to leave with them, in contemplating the Holy Spirit, 'salt' and 'light'.

He remarked: "When Jesus spoke to His followers, He told them that they were 'the salt of the earth and the light of the world'. He didn't say go out and build a big organisation. Sometimes we can think that we do not have anything particular to contribute, but He meant this for everyone."

Asking what they thought Jesus had meant about 'salt of the earth' and 'light of the world', Bishop Donal welcomed suggestions from the young people, telling them:

"Jesus wasn't saying this to the Pope or important people; He is saying to you that you are the salt of the earth and the light of the world."

He went on to talk with the young people about the causes of darkness in people's lives, such as sickness, bullying at school, not having enough food to eat, or situations like war.

"You are at a stage in your life," he added, "when you have to ask, 'Do I want to spend my life being salt to the earth and light to the world?'"

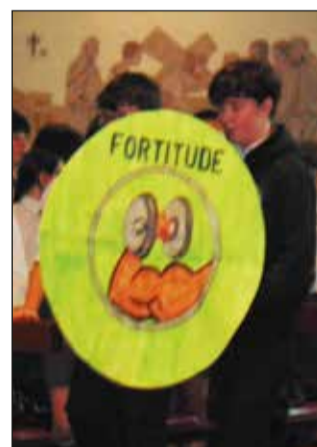
"When you were baptised, you had no say in the matter, but now you are 11 years old and you have to choose what is important. You will hear people saying, 'Come on, everyone is doing this.' Say 'No', you want to be salt of the earth and light of the world. You will have to make decisions; do you want to be

kind, generous and helpful, or be a buck eejit?"

Bishop Donal later prayed: "Can we all believe that we have special gifts that no-one else has...have good role models...and expect great things from ourselves and others."

He concluded by encouraging them to come along to Saturday night or Sunday Mass, to join "other people who want to be salt to the earth and light to the world".

The parish priest, Fr Michael McCaughey, thanked all involved in the preparations for the ceremony and those who took part, adding thanks to the young people, school staff and parents for their prayerful support and great work over the years, as well as paying tribute to the parish workers and volunteers, and asking God's blessing upon all.



Celebrating St Canice's PS Dungiven Golden Jubilee Mass, Bishop Donal urged school community to continue to...

Promote God's dream for the whole world

by Fr Joseph Varghese Photographs by Danny O'Kane



ST Canice's PS Dungiven have been celebrating the Golden Jubilee of the dedication of their newly built school all those years ago. The school had actually partially opened in September 1970 with the introduction of only two classes, but the following year saw the arrival of 350 pupils and 12 teachers.

The highlight of their great variety of celebrations was the Thanksgiving Mass, with the chief celebrant being Bishop Donal McKeown. Fr Seamus Kelly, PP and Fr Joseph Varghese were concelebrants of this Ascension Sunday Mass, in the presence of a congregation, fittingly filled to overflowing as past pupils returned to pay tribute to all who had contributed to their wonderful educational experience down the decades.

Bishop Donal, in his wonderful homily, drew comparisons between the thoughts and concerns of the disciples at the time of the Ascension as they struggled with the loss of their leader, Jesus, and what we, as a Church Community, are having to cope with in such changing, challenging and uncertain circumstances today. While God may not always send us what we want, we can be sure He will send us what we need.

While many of the followers of Jesus at the time of His Ascension, expected Him to be a political leader, an earthly King, that had never been God's plan as the

Kingdom mentioned was the heavenly Kingdom where Jesus would sit at His right hand.

To help the followers to come to terms with the new circumstances, He sent us the Holy Spirit, providing them with strength, understanding and hope. This was the beginning of God opening the eyes of the world to the bigger picture, the need to help others and be less selfish, to go to the ends of the earth to spread the Good News, to have a complete change of heart in many ways.

Bishop Donal pointed to the fact that the School's patron, Saint Canice, took up the challenge and gave us a perfect example of how we can overcome all obstacles if we trust in God, how we all have the capacity to become saints, and how having a caring, committed and effective Catholic education service will allow children to realise their full potential for academic, religious and human development.

Bishop Donal then drew attention to the readings and how the angels told the followers of Jesus not to waste time as there is work to be done. The Gospel called the followers to go out and make disciples of all nations. Faith is calling us all to play our parts in changing the world for the better and is as valid today as it's ever been. Over the last almost 2,000 years, many people have answered that call as religious and lay missionaries,

as nurses, teachers, engineers and ever willing, committed and generous volunteers, all seeking to bring good news to all suffering injustice and deprivation.

The Bishop highlighted the strong correlation between those who have suffered a lot being really committed to helping others. He encouraged all to draw on the amazing example of Jesus suffering for us all on Calvary and, while acknowledging the academic and financial success of many past pupils, he heralded how Catholic education had inspired such generosity and solidarity in the community as the school's most laudable achievement.

Finally, the Bishop recalled an old Church document which stated 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."

While it may seem folly to maintain this noble aspiration in the world of 2023, where in society there is a reluctance to even refer to God, where sin and forgiveness and right and wrong are rarely mentioned, and where the sacredness of the human body is ignored lest someone may be made feel uncomfortable, but we can take heart from the words of our Holy Father, Francis, in a publication some years ago when declaring, "If Catholic Schools do not actively offer a different vision to that of the dominant ideologies, then we are wasting

our time."

He lamented the fact that those viewing life from a faith perspective may well be identified as modern heretics who should be prevented from infecting young people with their unreasonable beliefs. It seems like this secular world demands the removal of all traces of Catholic education and that is a reality we will have to compete with.

Bishop Donal concluded by thanking St Canice's for being an oasis of respite and calm, of education and encouragement, and a constant inspiration towards the belief and hope of eternal life during one of the most difficult eras of our country's history. He encouraged the continued trust that Jesus is with us with us every step of the way until the end of the world, and urged St Canice's to continue to promote God's dream for the whole world, with justice and mercy, forgiveness and reconciliation at its core. He insisted that only these values can allow the human spirit to flourish and foster pride in the mission of inspiring faith hope and love.

All past staff and pupils who have already gone to their eternal reward were very fondly remembered in prayer during the Mass.

Other events celebrating this auspicious achievement included a very well attended dinner dance and a very special fun day at the school for all current pupils.



Celebrating Mass for the Golden Jubilee of St Colmcille's PS, Claudy, Bishop Donal told those gathered...

Catholic education is community based – where young people can live to learn and learn to live



THE St Colmcille's PS community in the village of Claudy has marked the Golden Jubilee of the school with an open evening, an anniversary dinner and the celebration of Mass in St Patrick's Church.

Bishop Donal was joined for the celebration of the Eucharist by the parish priest, Fr David O'Kane, as well as Fr Michael McCaughey and Fr Noel McDermott, who previously ministered in the parish, while the excellent School choir led the singing with great energy.

Remarking that "looking back with gratitude helps all of us to face forward with hope and confidence", the Bishop said that the 50th anniversary was "a chance to look back to the early 1970s, when terrible things happened in Claudy and all around Northern Ireland – and to be grateful for all that the school community did through many dark days and all the things that have happened in the meantime."

He went on to note: "Nowadays young people face all sorts of new opportunities and challenges that were unknown in 1973. Then computers and mobile phones were science fiction. Travel opportunities were limited to a few people. But, on the other hand, communities did not have to live with the tsunami of drugs

and the violence that pervades much social media. It is not surprising that young people have to deal with huge levels of stress and worry as we hear about war, poverty and environmental damage.

"That is the context in which a Catholic school like St Colmcille's has to chart its way forward and to find its place. And that context is also loaded with those – including local political parties – who want to get rid of Catholic education from NI, portraying St Colmcille's as a relic of the past with nothing to offer to the future. We are discovering that the new secular ideology is as intolerant of diversity and dissent as the worst of church leaders may have been in the past."

Commenting on what St Colmcille's has to offer into the future, in building on what has been achieved over the last 50 years, Bishop Donal spoke of the importance of helping young people have a sense of their own dignity and of hope for the future.

He stated: "The Bible is, as Pope Benedict wrote, a love story between God and humanity. We hear many other narratives that portray life as a constant battle over everything from education to power. We are told that human beings should measure their importance by what they have

and how much they earn. But the Bible tells us that each person is made in God's image and likeness and that our mistakes can be forgiven by the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. We also hear that our bodies are Temples of the Holy Spirit, not merely toys to be played with.

"The Bible wants young people in an angry world to believe that there is a loving God who guarantees our identity and that we don't have to give meaning to our lives without any guidelines other than 'I'm worth it.'"

He went on to highlight that the Catholic school is "not merely a teaching machine where children come into P1 and get filled up for seven years with skills and information", saying: "You believe that the most important job that anyone can do in life is to be a good human being. And thus you build community in the school and situate the school into a living community."

Communities

"It is communities that educate. Where the messages that are communicated in school are reinforced in family, sports clubs and workplaces, a coherent message can be passed on. But in a fragmented world where nothing has agreed meaning, there is the temptation now to expect the solution to all social problems in schools, who have to teach so many things that society

is failing to communicate. And then the school gets blamed for not solving the problems that the free choice society says it has the right to create.

"Catholic education is a model of education that is community based, where young people can live to learn and learn to live. In a community like Claudy that takes responsibility for the future of all of its children, great things are possible. When communities dump their problems on schools, children are the losers."

Bishop Donal concluded by giving thanks to God "for the great people who have made St Colmcille's such an important part of this community for 50 years and who have blessed this community."

"Families and individuals face many problems in 2023," he remarked, "but tonight, we celebrate our belief that faith in God and the guidance of the Bible will help the next generation to navigate the choppy waters that may lie ahead."

"We believe in a God who believes in people and wants us all to flourish, whatever our talents and whatever our challenges. Jesus tells us that He wants us to have life and to have it to the full. He calls us to love one another just as God has loved us. That is a message for every generation. Never be ashamed of it or water down the worldview that has nourished and inspired people for centuries.

"Thank you for all that has been achieved. And thank God for those who want to help our young people to face the past with faith, hope and love. You are doing something of eternal beauty and value."

Finishing his time as principal in this Golden Jubilee year, Mr Michael O'Kane spoke highly of the St Colmcille



continued from page 6

school community, remarking: "Testament to the community that you have here is the number of children in our choir, particularly with GAA activities on."

Highlighting that he loved the example of Jesus in how He assembled a team of people and developed a way of life for each to live, and an example to follow, Mr O'Kane said that this reminded him of former principal, Mrs Brieghe O'Neill, whom he had succeeded.

Mrs O'Neill had been the third principal of the school, with the late Mr Jim Stone being the first, and the late Mrs Marcella Grant being the second.

"We have 40 staff," continued Mr O'Kane, "and words cannot describe what they do for the children of St Colmcille's; the love and attention they give. The same goes for staff over the past 50 years."

He added: "When I walk into the school, everything is done; from Marie in the office, James behind the scenes, and all the staff. I think our whole community know that that comes from what Mrs O'Neill and previous principals and staff members achieved over the last 50 years. I thank you all so much."

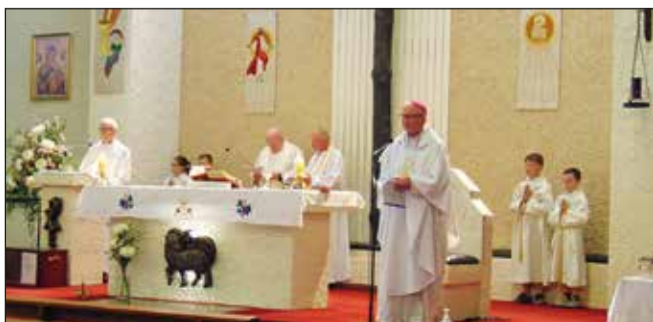
Mr O'Kane gave special

mention to Mrs Mary Gormley, a PI teacher when the school opened under the name of Claudy Central PS, welcoming her to the Golden Jubilee celebration, and to Mrs O'Kane on her retirement, paying tribute to how she had got the children ready for life: "I can't think of a better thing anyone could do than to prepare children for life."

Praising the children and parents, he said: "I haven't had any bother since I have been here, and I thank you very much for that."

He concluded by saying: "A lot of other communities from near and far could come and take a look at the strength of the Claudy community, working with Fr O'Kane and the GAC, and other organisations, in the school, including the Parish Eucharistic Adoration Team and the parish pastoral co-ordinator, Charlotte."

All were invited to the school afterwards for refreshments and an opportunity to view the photographic displays.



Derry Diocese to host Religious Education Conference



International speaker, teacher, catechist and author, David Wells, is the keynote speaker at the Diocesan RE Conference.



St Mary's College, Derry, principal, Brendan McGinn, who is one of the RE Conference speakers

'GO make disciples of all nations' (Mt 28:19) is the theme for a Religious Education Conference for staff of primary and post primary schools across the Diocese, to be held on August 29 & 30.

Jesus, before ascending to His Father in Heaven, entrusted the Apostles with their mission to proclaim the Good News to everyone. As Pope Francis said, at the Regina Caeli, May 24, 2020, "The contents of the mission entrusted to the Apostles are the following: to proclaim, baptise, teach and walk the path traced by the Master, that is, the living Gospel."

This is the call for each one of us today, to help people of all ages to

know Jesus, to proclaim the Gospel and be a witness to God's love through our words and actions.

The RE Conference will be the second to be hosted by the Derry Diocese, in St Columb's College, on the Buncrana Road, in Derry.

We are delighted that our keynote speakers are David Wells, public speaker, teacher, catechist, and author, and Brendan McGinn, teacher, school principal.

David is an internationally renowned speaker with a background in education. The focus of his talk is, 'Catholic Schools as essential places of evangelisation.'

Brendan McGinn is principal of St Mary's College, Derry, and brings a wealth of knowledge

and experience from his time in education both as a teacher and now principal of a large post primary school. His talk will focus on 'Building Communities of Dialogue and Forgiveness.'

Delegates will also be able to choose from 20 workshops, and the Eucharist will be celebrated on both days by Bishop Donal McKeown.

David and Brendan are giving presentations as well in the evening of Tuesday, August 29, at 7 pm. Parishioners and parish leaders from parishes across the Diocese are invited to a talk by David on 'Building Parish Life', to be inspired with his wonderful ability to share his knowledge, experience and many stories from a lifetime of dedicated work in the Catholic Church.

David invites us to be witnesses to the Gospel and to encourage others on their journey of faith,

and in the context of taking up opportunities, ministries and responsibilities at local parish level and, in doing so, living out the Joy of God's Word.

On the evening of Wednesday, August 30, at 7 pm all members of Boards of Governors and Management, in the Diocese of Derry, have been invited by Bishop McKeown to attend a presentation by Brendan to look at their role in supporting schools as they strive to be the face of Jesus in their communities and build communities of dialogue and forgiveness. There will be a panel discussion after the presentation.

Bishop McKeown will finish the evening with a prayer and blessing for those attending as they begin a new school year.

For further information please contact tferry@derrydiocese.org or telephone the Derry Diocesan Catechetical Centre 028 7126 4087.



Delegates at the first Diocesan Religious Education Conference in 2019.

Reflecting on 2019 Diocesan Religious Education Conference, St Columb's College principal, FJM Madden expresses hope of...

RE Conference 2023 potential for educators to build upon great work already done



St Columb's College, Derry principal, FJM Madden.

I have very positive memories of the inaugural Derry Diocesan Religious Education Conference; indeed, it is difficult to believe that it took place four years ago! Looking back, I remember it as being one of the last 'normal' things we collectively enjoyed as an educational community before we were hit by the horrors of Covid-19 and its associated lockdowns. Remembering that sense of collegiality, I am looking forward to a great celebration of 'normality' in a few weeks' time.

Over the course of two days,

over 900 teachers (primary and post-primary), alongside other educators, governors administrators and support staff gathered to hear insightful and, indeed, inspirational addresses from Bishop Donal McKeown, Professor Francis Campbell (then Vice-Chancellor, St Mary's University Twickenham) and Fr Adrian Porter SJ, Director, Jesuit Institute of Education, London.

I recall that the Conference provided fantastic opportunities for delegates to hear, reflect, discuss and question. A wide variety of workshops allowed those attending to deepen their understanding of the special vocation that we all embrace as educators. Equally important, the more informal 'break-out' times allowed attendees to engage more fully with colleagues from across the broader educational sector.

Addressing our guests at the start of each day, I mentioned that an unknown guru once opined: "Teaching is the one profession that creates all other professions."

Whilst this was, and is, undoubtedly true on a very

practical level, I think that those in attendance were well aware that the vocation that we pursue is so much more. I suggested to them that the Conference would reinforce just what that 'more' is. I think that it did, in a variety of ways.

I recall that, reflecting upon the Conference in advance of its beginning, Bishop Donal McKeown rightly spoke of "the many challenges that face schools, families and young people", and identified the importance of "reflect[ing] on the distinctive contribution of Catholic education to the Common Good." Concluding his remarks, Bishop McKeown stated that "Our family of Catholic schools do exceptional work."

When addressing the delegates, I suggested that there were two important points within the Bishop's final sentence: firstly, his reference to the family of Catholic schools, a family that is both 'alive and active' in the city of Derry and right throughout the Diocese; a family that seeks to create the foundations of faith and fraternity

- essentials that might otherwise crumble against the vagaries of modern society. Reflecting now on these two days, I think that the Conference helped reinforce the bonds that indissolubly link our family of schools.

Secondly, I suggested that there was an important message within Bishop McKeown's reference to the work that we all do as Catholic educators. I suggested that the conference was providing those in attendance with the opportunity to take a little time out from 'the fever of life' - to paraphrase Blessed John Henry Newman - to reflect on the foundations and outworkings of our vocation and to prepare ourselves spiritually for the year ahead. I believe that this 'time out' was one of the most important aspects of those two days and is one element that will prove just as beneficial this time round.

A few weeks before the 2019 Conference met, its venue - our Sports Centre - had been blessed and officially opened by Mgr Andy Dolan and Alumnus Illustrius, Mr Martin

Building Parish Life

Diocese of Derry RE Conference

An evening gathering for parishes focussing on our call to offer God's grace to a hurting and broken world.

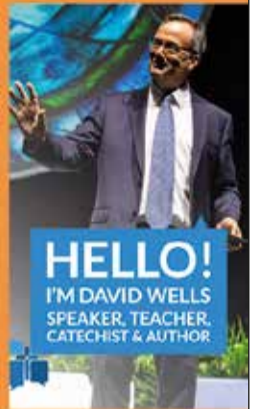
Tuesday, 29th August 2023 at 7:00pm

St Columb's College, Buncrana Road, Derry

Parishioners, parish leaders and clergy are invited to an inspiring talk on Building Parish Life by international speaker, catechist and author Mr David Wells.

David invites us to be witnesses to the Gospel and to encourage others on their journey of faith, in the context of taking up opportunities, ministries and responsibilities at local parish level.

David will share his knowledge, experience and many stories from a lifetime of dedicated work in the Catholic Church.



Offering God's grace to a broken and hurting world

THE Diocese of Derry is delighted to welcome keynote speaker, Mr David Wells to St Columb's College, Derry, to give a talk on 'Building Parish Life'. A gathering for parishioners, parish leaders and clergy, it will focus on our call to offer God's grace to a hurting and broken world.

International speaker, teacher, catechist and author, David Wells has worked with parishes and dioceses internationally, encouraging and inspiring people to share the Joy of the Gospel, through the lens of building parish life.

David invites us to witness to the Gospel and to encourage others on their journey of faith, in the context of taking up opportunities, ministries and responsibilities at local parish level and, in doing so, living out the Joy of God's Word.

You are warmly invited to join other parishioners and parish leaders from parishes across the Diocese to this event, to be inspired by David, with his wonderful

ability to share his knowledge, experience and many stories from a lifetime of dedicated work in the Catholic Church.

This is a free event. There is no need to book. It will start at 7 pm sharp and conclude at 8:30 pm.

As the summer draws to a close, this event offers us an opportunity to gather together to be renewed, inspired, connected, and equipped for the work of building parish and discerning the way forward in changing times in our parishes.

The Church exists to bring people to know and love Jesus. Your parish exists to bring people to know and love Jesus. The mission of the church requires all who are baptised to journey together, with each member playing his or her crucial role.

For more information on the August 29 event, contact Tony Brennan, Diocesan Pastoral Development Coordinator, on 028 7126 2302 or email tony.brennan@derrydiocese.org

O'Neill. Speaking to delegates, I suggested that whilst the physical existence of this new building was important, it was nothing in comparison with the real work of 'building' that we - as Catholic educators - must be about. Reflecting now on the Conference, I think that that sentiment holds just as good today; as educators we are forming intellect, of course, but, more importantly, we are building foundations of faith and character, of morality, service and charity.

Finally, looking forward to the 2023 Conference, I am reminded that those fortunate enough to visit the admittedly rather ordinary tomb of Sir Christopher Wren, located in the crypt of St Paul's Cathedral in London,

can read the dedication 'Lector - si monumentum requiris, circumspece' - 'Reader, if you seek his monument, look around you'. I believe that this inscription can equally be our aspiration as we prepare to meet again in August 2023; our monuments are our pupils, and this second conference will, I hope, provide our educators with ample opportunity to build upon the great work already done, and that still to be undertaken.

I know, however, that this hope brings its own challenges; in meeting these challenges I recall the Breton Fisherman's Prayer which supplicates...

Protect me, O God. For thy sea is so great and my boat is so small.

It is my expectation that the 2023 Conference will help make that boat just a little larger.

St Mary's College, Derry, represented at Mercy Girl Leadership Conference in Philadelphia, on theme...

Supplying an education through Mercy *by Roisin Rice*



I had the great privilege of attending the Mercy Girl Global Leadership Conference this year as part of a group of teachers and young people to represent Ireland. The Irish delegation consisted of Sarah, Kate, Zara and I, from St Mary's College Derry, Ava McGinn, past pupil of Thornhill College, Derry, Blaithin, Molly and Sister Yvonne Hanna from Our Lady's Grammar School in Newry.

Sr Deirdre Mullan RSM invited us to attend the Mercy Girl Effect Global Leadership Conference in Philadelphia in June 2023. As a school community we were delighted not only to get the opportunity to join over 100 young students on this exciting trip, but to have the opportunity to collaborate, network and share with others on how we can help build a world fit for all.

The theme of the conference was 'Supplying an education through Mercy'. The concept of the Mercy Girl Effect was conceived by Sr Maureen Christi, Sr Deirdre Mullan and Mrs Eileen Killeen as a response to worldwide issues effecting girls.

Each year, the conference gathers young female leaders who attend Mercy secondary schools. The girls work together on a specific education project that is aimed at helping the life chances of young people in the developing world. Throughout the conference the young leaders

are encouraged to reflect on the life of Catherine McAuley, foundress of the Sisters of Mercy.

The conference was extremely inspirational, and we spent a lot of time reflecting on the issues that girls worldwide were experiencing and how we, in the Western world, with access to so much should act to try and bring about some change in the world. We were challenged to think about how, based on our knowledge of Catherine McAuley, she would respond.

It was very interesting to hear about the different projects that the students from the United States had participated in and the innovative ways in which they fundraised for the Mercy Girl Effect causes.

Ava McGinn, a past pupil of Thornhill College who is currently studying Psychology at university, gave the keynote address. Her talk was outstanding. She very clearly articulated what it was like to be the recipient of a Mercy education and, as fellow Mercy educated girls from Derry, we were able to recognise these benefits in our own lives too.

The girls also received leadership training. This helped them to look at their own unique skills and talents, so that they could be part of the Mercy Girl Effect movement and inspire and lead their peers in this challenge on their return to school.

We were very honoured to listen

to Sr Deirdre Mullan talk about the work that has been carried out so far, including building schools, libraries, houses and kitchens, and providing scholarships for people in the developing world.

Sr Deirdre also gave us a sneak preview of a new video that she has commissioned for this year's challenge, which will be released on Mercy Day, September 24, 2023.

We were so well treated by everyone we met. I would like to pay special tribute to Sr Deirdre Mullan and Mrs Eileen Killeen for their generosity and kindness to us before, during and after the conference. We learnt so much and are looking forward to sharing our experiences with our school community in September.

In the words of a motto that is at the heart of Sr Deirdre's work, "it is not enough to be compassionate – we must act."

To date, the Mercy Girl Effect has provided significant funding for small school builds (seven schools in total), scholarships, provision of uniforms and clinics in Sudan, Zambia, Nigeria, Cambodia, and Kenya.

St Mary's College, Derry, was founded by the Sisters of Mercy, opening its doors on September 14, 1959. While the Sisters of Mercy had opened other schools in Derry, St Mary's was the first Catholic all girl secondary intermediate school, this meant that every girl in the City had the opportunity to gain a second level education.

Throughout the long history of the College, St Mary's has been steeped in the Mercy tradition, and its current and previous principals have been custodians of these values, handing them on to generations of young women from the City.



Net Ministries to hold youth missionary training in Termonbacca

THIS summer, NET Ministries will be training new missionaries for its youth work in Ireland, which will take place in Discaled Carmelite Retreat Centre, Termonbacca, in Derry, from mid-August through to mid-September.

Speakers have been invited from all over the world, including Ireland, as well as missionaries from home and abroad.

The 30 missionaries will be accompanied by around 15 staff members, who will carry out the

training and supervision.

Commenting on the training, Net Ministries executive director, Tony Foy explained: "The first 14 days involves making sure people are in right relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

"We have a day focusing exclusively on our relationship with Mary, as Mother of Missionaries. Then, we separate the men and women out into groups to work on how best to relate to their own gender, that is, men or women.

Following this, we have a couple of days on how to relate to the opposite gender in a respectful and dignified way.

"We work on discipleship next, that is, how to be a disciple and then how to disciple other young people."

He added: "There will be loads of fun and loads of work on drama, skits, games and such, which will help in relating the story of Jesus' life to where young people are at. We then put them into teams where

they work on leadership material.

"Please God, at the end of that they will be commissioned by a Bishop, before going to their respective parishes and schools to tell young people about Jesus and His saving love for them!"

Any unmarried, young Catholic, aged 18-30, interested in training as a missionary with Net Ministries can find out more by making contact via recruiter@netministries.ie or by calling 00353 74 9190606.



IN this summer edition, John, Peter and Sean reflect on the might and powerful love and mercy of God, and the power of prayer and the Sacraments to bring peace of mind, especially when we learn to trust Our Heavenly Father, and the hunger that people have for a relationship like this.

Bronagh shares her excitement in the countdown to World Youth Day in Lisbon, which she is attending along with other young people from the Diocese and Bishop Donal, while James highlights concerns for Catholic Churches raised by the Safe Access Zones Bill.

Other youth features include one by Niamh Kehoe on a 'Sisterbucks' night with other young people of faith, led by the Home of the Mother Servant Sisters in their Crossroads home, in Killygordon, Co Donegal, and a promotion of the Tarsus Scripture School by Christopher Donnelly, highlighting its great resources to help understanding of the role of the Bible in a life of faith.



Hollie Frystal, Co Tyrone Deanery. Bronagh Derry, Co Derry Deanery. Peter Grant, Inishowen Deanery. Jodie Kennedy, Derry City Deanery. James Tourish, Co Derry Deanery.



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

Nothing is impossible for God *by John*



IT is said that 'Nothing is impossible for God' (Luke 1:37). However, when many people talk about the Church or the future of the faith in Ireland, or even around the world, these words spoken by the Angel Gabriel to Our Lady often ring hollow.

It is said that there is a crisis of faith, that young people are leaving the Church, that the Church is becoming irrelevant in the culture. One might expect these things to have been said by those who aren't Catholics, however, it is often Catholics who say these things amongst themselves.

If I have learnt anything in the past couple of years, it is that these fears are unfounded. For, if we believe in Christ, who humbled Himself by becoming a man and who rose from the dead to redeem us from our sins, we ought not to be despaired by fear but, instead, we should proclaim that the faith in Him shall prevail. And it will prevail.

A few weeks ago, I was

attending a retreat for Irish Catholic university students on St Thomas Aquinas, run by the Thomistic Institute. One of the speakers, before the start of his lecture, asked us to present the faith in Ireland in a different light; that we are hungry for the Faith, that we want the Faith and that we want to love the Lord.

These words are quite different from the phrases "crisis of faith" or "the Church is becoming irrelevant". However, to me, the words of the speaker made more sense than the pessimism that I have heard about the faith in Ireland or even espoused myself.

I have met many people, especially in the last two years, who are on fire for the faith and who want to be witnesses for Christ, despite the difficulties. I have met priests and nuns (old and young) who want to live out their vocations so that they can bring Christ to all those around them. I have met young people who are willing to put Christ before everything else in their

Talking to God through prayer is powerful...it reinvigorates my endurance *by Seán*

I find that in times of confusion and distress, talking to God is one of the most reassuring and beneficial methods of seeing clearly once more. For me, prayer provides motivation. It reinvigorates my endurance and pushes me to achieve my aim.

For everyone, prayer can provide a clear conscience when it is needed. Often in prayer, what we receive is far from what we expected. The delivery can be subtle and simple, but often the simplest solution is the best.

Prayer can be used in many situations. When a loved one is sick, when you, yourself, are disoriented and in need of aid and a reminder that God loves you, or perhaps you simply want to ask something of God, a request for success.

For a few months just passed, I found myself in a very pressured predicament with my final block of GCSE examinations approaching. I have to admit that I was far from confident with a few of them as the weeks before them approached. I was doing plenty of work for the exams, but just doing 'plenty of work' is not enough. Having knowledge is no good if you have no understanding. The same concept applies in life. You may know many things, but do you understand them?

I looked to prayer to solve my problem, specifically, through St Joseph of Cupertino. In his prayer, I was specifically drawn to the phrase, "Grant that the work we produce for the examination will reflect the best work we have done and the best of the teaching we have received."

At the end of the day that is all we can rely on. Having a strong faith in God, and allowing yourself to trust Him as you prepare for anything in life, is the best way to work through something hard. I am aware that doing exams is far from any hardship that other people go through, but it makes a good example of tests we have to face in life, because that's what life is; a test to build our soul.

Without hardship, we would never learn to develop, never learn to work towards a light at the end of each tunnel we are forced through. Without hardship, we would never know what any joy or reward feels like. If we had everything handed to us without working for it ourselves, it would leave us completely dissatisfied. To have real feelings of reward or joy, you have to go through pain and work first.

Having a strong faith and trust in God throughout your life, and talking to Him through prayer,

is the most superior way of reminding yourself throughout a predicament that you are not alone, that you are loved, and there is some light at the end of everything you come through. That light and reward may not be exactly what you expect.

Now on the other side of my exams, I can see that I was right to place my trust in God. He allowed me to maintain concentration and endurance throughout them, and now that they are finished, I am regaining my life, and that is my reward. I can do the simple things that I enjoy again. I have come out of the experience with a stronger character, grateful to God that I have people around me and a strong mind that allows me to work through things.

In Psalm 66, it is stated in verses 17 to 19, "I cried out to Him with my mouth, His praise was on my tongue. If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; but surely God has listened and heard my voice in prayer."

This means that we must all see the wrong we have done in the form of sin before God can provide us with the aid or reassurance we deserve. It doesn't mean that we have to be sinless, because no human being can be so. We just have to see

the sins we have committed and know that they are wrong, and God will forgive us.

Prayer is a powerful thing, a personal thing, between a person and God. Jesus Christ prayed for hours in the Garden of Gethsemane for Himself and His disciples, knowing that they would all go through much grief and pain in the coming time, and that He Himself would die a painful death. But in His heavenly counterpart He placed His trust and, after all His pain and suffering, He achieved His light at the end of the tunnel.

As God's creation, we must look to His representative as how to live as humans. God came here as a human to suffer, because that is what humans must do. We are here to be tested and built, to attain endurance, and to trust in God through prayer.



Safe Access Zones Bill raises concerns for Catholic Churches *by James*

POLITICAL and religious figures in Ireland have voiced their concerns over the Irish Government's new Health (Termination of Pregnancy Services) (Safe Access Zones) Bill, especially in regard to its impact on religious freedoms and the freedom of expression.

The Bill seeks to criminalise everything from pro-life demonstrations to the display and distribution of material "that is likely to influence the decision of another person in relation to availing of, or providing termination of pregnancy services" within 100 metres of any healthcare premises.

Section 3 (2) of the Bill states

decisions and in their lives. I have met elderly people whose prayers are just for us young people (and not for them). And I have met married couples who are bringing up their children in the faith, despite all the constraints that modern life may place on our faith.

Moreover, I saw all that in this island of just about five million people and I know that there are more people like this, because

that nothing in the proposed legislation "shall prohibit a person from engaging in lawful conduct that occurs inside a place of religious worship", however, the Bill later asserts that this right does not extend to 'the grounds or other land associated with the building'.

It is this section that has produced issues for Churches and laypeople alike in particular, as in practice, if a Church's premises were to fall within this 100m exclusion zone and if it were to display any information or 'material' that would be in line with the Catholic Church's teaching on the topic of abortion, then it would be deemed illegal

and the door would be open for prosecution.

Invariably, questions will arise in relation to the legality of activity from pro-life groups within Church grounds, and the impact that the legislation could have on these gatherings.

Critics of the Bill have called it unconstitutional and, in 2019, the Garda Commissioner, Drew Harris said that existing measures were 'adequate', claiming that safe access zones were not needed to deal with the issue.

There has also been condemnation from Senators Rónán Mullen and Sharon Keogan, who have both voiced

their dismay at the legislation and the effects that it will have upon the religious and pro-life communities, with Senator Mullen stating that "restricting the right to protest is always a dangerous step in a democracy".



for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give

you a future and a hope" (Jer. 29:11).



Derry Diocese Youth Pilgrimage to Portugal for World Youth Day

by Bronagh

WORLD Youth Day is held every 2-3 years in a different host country. It is an event for young people in the Catholic Church that Pope John Paul II began in 1985.

This year WYD takes place in Lisbon, Portugal, from August 1-6, with a closing ceremony led by Pope Francis on the morning of August 6. There are expected to be in excess of 1.5 million people attending this event (Nine Student Living Feb-2023).

The Pope has said that the desire of these young people to travel to the Portuguese capital fills him with joy (Vatican News June-2023). Pope Francis is expected to arrive on the Wednesday and has confirmed that he is definitely attending, despite recent health concerns.

I am lucky to be one of the 40 people traveling as a group from the Derry and Clogher Dioceses to WYD this year. We are spending two weeks as a group in Porto, Fatima and Lisbon. I believe this will be an immersive,

once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I am excited to go and meet new friends, explore a different culture and learn more about how countries around the world express their faith.

There are more than 290 scheduled concerts taking place across Lisbon, multiple museums, and activities organised for us. The people of Lisbon and Porto are opening their hearts to young people from all around the world by letting them stay in their homes, showing them around their beautiful cities and putting on a spectacular event for everyone to enjoy.

We will also get the opportunity to visit Fatima for one day, the site where Virgin Mary appeared to three children.

I am really privileged to be attending this event with three of my friends and I am sure that this will be a memory we will treasure forever. I'm also sure there will be a much longer article when I return!



Love with God and others

by Peter

ST Therese of Lisieux said: "Lord, if you tell me to love them, then you must love them, then you must love them in me and through me."

The first thing that comes to mind when showing love and honesty with one another is confession. Reflecting back to times I received the Sacrament of Confession, it gave me and my friends the opportunity and gateway into talking to God, and understanding Him more too; expressing our honesty and love with one another.

Confession isn't just about having that relationship with God, but it helps us learn from our mistakes, especially whenever you're a teenager like me and my peers in today's world, making choices and not knowing the outcome of them, and which may affect our future too.

The opportunity you have with the Sacrament of Confession is that you can always start off on a clean slate. At times, Confession can also give you a sense of peace and relaxation after letting go of your wrong actions that keep reminding you of it.

In life, many people find it very hard to say 'sorry' to the face of the person they may have hurt physically or mentally, but

Confession gives you a sense of comfort in sharing your wrong actions to your local priest. I do feel that, for me, it was always easy to say 'sorry' whenever I was at Confession with my local priest and God, because I, and many others, know that we are part of God's house and that we will always be part of it, even whenever we do something wrong or make mistakes.

Another thing that comes to mind whenever I think about the Sacrament of Confession is a famous parable amongst Jesus' teachings, 'The Lost Sheep'. I remember at my primary school that my teacher often read about 'the lost sheep' and how the shepherd of his flock never gave up on his lost sheep, but searched the whole day looking for it. That symbolises what God would do for us even if we sin against Him; we are "the sheep of His flock" and He will always look out for us and many others too.

Confession may be hard thing to do if you feel that you really do feel sorry for your wrong actions but don't show it, but God will always express His love for every single one of us and reach out to us, which we must do with others too and open our hearts to others that need to be reached out to.

Sisterbucks with the Servant Sisters

by Niamh Kehoe



MY first introduction to a Sisterbucks evening with the Home of the Mother Servant Sisters came about after I received a text message telling me what was involved and inviting me along. It sounded good but there was going to be a meal and I wasn't sure if my stomach was ready to digest a full meal yet, as I had just returned from Lough Derg the previous day and had just finished the fasting at midnight.

Guided by the Holy Spirit

I asked my friend, Emma if she had heard about Sisterbucks and she told me that she said she was going, which made my decision

to go that bit easier. We met in Strabane and I travelled with Emma from there to Killygordon.

Food glorious food

On arriving, we received a warm welcome as usual. Emma and I went into the Sisters' chapel to say 'hello' to Jesus. When settled, we caught up on how things were with each other since we were last together. The Sisters shared with us beautiful stories about our friends' progress on their Camino walk, who were not present with us.

We then helped with the dinner preparations, while still catching up on each other's news. There

was a good selection to choose from, including various Spanish foods which were surprisingly very tasty. We then had dessert, which was very pleasing to the eye and stomach, as I required some sugar and fatty foods as part of my recovery from Lough Derg!

After dinner had settled, the Sisters' led us in prayer formation, for which they chose a topic and we discussed how the ideologies mentioned impacted our Catholic lives. On this night, they chose music. By way of example, we discussed how the melody, harmony and rhythm can control how we are feeling, and what mood we are in. We compared rock music to church music, and even focused on different forms of church music, for example, traditional, praise and worship. A lot of questions came to the fore about suitability for various liturgical occasions. It was a very interesting discussion.

Thanksgiving

We ended the night with individual prayer in front of the Blessed Sacrament in the Sisters' chapel. Sr Mary asked for a suitable hymn to sing at the beginning that we would all know. I realised that it was still

the month of June and suggested 'Sweet Heart of Jesus', and that is what we sang.

Emma and I left after spending time with Jesus. I appreciated getting time away from the very busy last week of work. It was a bit of a travel to Killygordon, but it was worth it to spend time with faith friends.



Tarsus Scripture School...

Understanding the role of the Bible in our life of faith

by Christopher Donnelly

IN today's ever-changing world, people can sometimes find it difficult to engage with the Bible. It might be that it is puzzling to see how the text might be relevant for one's context, or more simply that it feels overwhelming and leaves one asking, "Where do I begin to read?" or even "How do I begin to read?"

It was on this basis that Tarsus Scripture School recently held a five-day summer scripture course, from June 12-16, in St Patrick's Pontifical University (SPPU), Maynooth. The course, entitled 'Unlocking the Bible: Keys for Understanding Today,' sought to offer 'keys' to help people feel confident in their reading and interpreting of the Sacred Scriptures for life, change, personal prayer, and discipleship.

This summer scripture course was not a new initiative, but had a long history dating back to the late 90s. The first iteration began with Kieran O'Mahony OSA, Seán Goan, and the late Sr Carmel McCarthy, in 1997 at the Orlagh Retreat Centre, under the title 'Orlagh Bible Week.' They enjoyed many successful years here, and Jessie Rogers succeeded Carmel upon her retirement.

The course then moved to Clonliffe College in 2015, when the Orlagh Retreat Centre

closed. Here the course became the 'Summer Scripture School' and was supported by the Office for Evangelisation & Ecumenism under the umbrella of the Archdiocese of Dublin. With the closure of Clonliffe in 2020, and against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, a final change took place and Tarsus Scripture School was founded with the support of SPPU. The Scripture Summer School course continued under this new iteration, taking place online in 2020 through recorded presentations and live webinars, where it flourished with enormous interest. It was also followed by two additional online courses at Advent and Easter, with all three of these courses now taking place annually.

However, this year's Scripture Summer School was an important milestone as it marked the first occasion since the pandemic where it could take place in-person as well as online. Over the first four days of the course, 12 presentations were given, four from each of the three speakers.

Seán provided an overview of how the Bible came to be, from the earliest scribes to how scripture was understood and interpreted in the Church over the last 50 years. Focusing on the

letters of St Paul, Kieran looked at the contexts which informed the apostle's writing and theology, as well as outlining what is involved in the art of first-century letter composition. Finally, Jessie explored the Bible as literature, noting the importance of the social worlds behind the text, the need to appreciate the different literary genres, and the overarching theme of covenant which sweeps the entire biblical narrative. All three speakers grounded their topics by concluding with a note on how we might read the Word of God in our context of today.

The course concluded on the morning of Friday, June 16, with a 'Lectio Divina' session on Matthew 11:25-30, facilitated by Séamus O'Connell, Professor of Sacred Scripture at SPPU. This was followed by an official 'relaunch' of Tarsus Scripture School by Archbishop of Dublin, Dermot Farrell, commemorating the first in-person event since its founding and its recent incorporation as part of the Centre for Mission & Ministries in SPPU.

The 'relaunch' was also an occasion to showcase a newly designed Tarsus Scripture School website, where all of the content from each course since 2020 has



been archived and made easily accessible. There are currently 108 video presentations available across 11 courses, each of which are accompanied by handouts, reading suggestions and other useful material. Every course also features one or more videos responding to questions or offering guided meditations based on the theme.

This year's Summer Scripture School, Easter, and Advent courses are still open for registration on the website, while courses older than a year are accessible for free forever. If you want to keep updated on the very latest from Tarsus Scripture School, you are invited to sign-up for their newsletter on the website (www.tarsusscriptureschool.ie), or follow them on social media through Facebook and Instagram (@tarsusscripture).

Newly ordained Fr Shaun Doherty hopes his journey in faith and trust will give others courage to play role in life of Church



THERE was great joy in and around St Eugene's Cathedral, in Derry, on the afternoon of Sunday, July 2, when family, friends and former work colleagues of Deacon Shaun Doherty joined parishioners and clergy of the Diocese for the ordination of the award winning Highland Radio presenter who gave it all up in response to God's call to help win hearts and minds for Him through the ministry of His priesthood.

Still feeling the warmth of that joy in the weeks following his ordination, Fr Shaun reflected on the highlight of his life to date, telling 'The Net' that he felt deep gratitude to God for allowing him to be His priest.

He added: "I am so thankful to the Diocese of Derry, the Columba Community and everyone who helped me to celebrate my ordination day and first Mass, and for the enormous generosity that was afforded me through Mass

intentions, gifts and support.

"It was wonderful to see so many people at the various ceremonies. There was a genuine joy that was infectious. There were people there from all walks of life, various faiths and none, and all seemed to be touched by the sacredness of the moment."

Looking forward to serving the people of the Diocese in the months and years ahead, Fr Shaun said: "I hope that my journey in faith and trust will give others the courage to play a role in the life of the church. We are all called to serve in different ways; each of us has our own story.

"We are made in the image and likeness of God and are loved unconditionally. When we begin to appreciate that truth more fully, we will be able to reach out to others who feel marginalised and unloved.

"We are called to be the person God created us to be.

Understanding who that is can involve a lifelong journey of conversion. In a sense, we are always converting, learning about ourselves and our relationship with God. The wonderful truth is that, if we step forward in faith, the Lord will open the doors. It involves joy and pain, as all growth does."

Highlighting that it was important "not to fall into the trap of despair and fear", he said: "We are children of the resurrection."

Shaun's belief in the unconditional and never-ceasing love of God, the Good Shepherd, is reflected in the image he chose for the front of his ordination prayer card – that of the shepherd reaching out to the lost sheep – and the scripture quote on the reverse side, 'Seek first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things will be added to you' (Mt 6:33).

Speaking also of having had the privilege of visiting the sick at

home and in hospital as a deacon, and witnessing first-hand the faith of women and men who were approaching the end of their earthly lives, Fr Shaun remarked: "Ministering at this precious time is a very humbling experience. It is also a time when your faith can be deeply nourished."

He went on to speak of the privilege of also being able to partake in the joy of celebrating Baptisms, weddings and other Sacraments of the Church.

Recalling having felt particularly held in prayer throughout his discernment and ordination, Fr Shaun added: "I look forward to taking up my new role and wish to thank Bishop Donal, brother Priests, religious and other members of the faithful in the City and beyond for the ongoing prayerful support. I will offer Mass in gratitude. Our Lady, Queen of Peace, St Columba, St Eugene and all the Saints pray for us."

During his ordination ceremony, Fr Shaun heard Bishop Donal, in his homily, quoting a line from the Gospel just read, "Anyone who does not take their cross and follow in my footsteps is not worthy of me", and saying to him: "...today you say that you want to take as your model, Jesus Christ the High Priest who took up His cross and was nailed to it on Calvary."

Remarking that he was presented for priestly ordination at a time of much discussion about the future of the Church in Ireland, Bishop Donal told him: "There is a temptation in some quarters to be drawn by thoughts of how we might compete for a larger audience share in the crowded market of religious-themed entertainment. We might soften church teaching to conform more

to modern Western tastes or alter who can get ordained or play leadership roles. But any such approach is built on sand because it focuses on marketing ourselves, our brand, our reputation.

"Jesus uses strong words today. If we think that we have to be driven by what the dominant ideology demands, then we need to hear other words of Jesus, 'Anyone who finds their life will lose it; anyone who loses their life for my sake will find it.' Today's Gospel calls us to decide whether we are a church that proclaims Jesus and the folly of the Cross, or a church that builds on the shaky foundations of our self-promotion."

Grace

He continued: "The mission of the church is all about Jesus and His grace. As Pope Benedict XVI famously wrote, 'Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction' (Deus Caritas Est 1).

"You are called today to be a minister of the one who gives your life a new horizon and a decisive direction. Make the Cross the focus of all that you do. It is never about us."

Noting that St Paul, in the second reading, had said that baptism and following Jesus means dying to ourselves, Bishop Donal commented on how that "sounds crazy to the 'I'm worth it/obey your thirst' culture," saying: "Jesus elsewhere talks about being born again of water and the Spirit. That may sound a negative image to use. But it lies at the hope that Jesus offers us. We are not doomed, trapped in an

endless cycle of violence and lack of meaning. We are not trapped as victims of somebody else who has scarred our lives. We are not imprisoned by the things that we did or the person that we were. Jesus journeyed through Calvary to Resurrection.

"Shaun, you have travelled quite a journey in your life. You know the challenges that we all face in dying to part of ourselves so that Christ's risen life can be made visible in us. Know and share your story because Jesus walked with you on the all the stages of the journey, turning everything to your good. St Paul talks of us all as being God's work of art (Eph 2:10) Give thanks for where the master craftsman has brought forth new life in you. It is never about us."

He went to tell Fr Shaun that, as an ordained minister of Jesus Christ, at the heart of all that he will do will be the person of Jesus and His ongoing work: "You will have to proclaim His sometimes very unwelcome Good News of hope, helping people to hear it in their own lives and then to grow in understanding of it. You will lead the celebrations of the Church's sacramental life where people are initiated into membership of Christ's Body, the Church.

"You will be a minister of God's mercy to people who are weighed down by the reality of sin that clings to us. You will anoint the bodies of the sick and celebrate love with couples who are called to be a sign or sacrament of Christ's love for the Church. And you will celebrate the sacrament of the altar, where Christ's death on Calvary is made present, re-presented for us. You will lead God's holy people to join with the angels and the saints in their unending hymn of praise



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to God.

“All of this is never a celebration of how nice we seem to God – but a celebration of all that God is doing in our midst. Again, it is all and only God’s work that we proclaim, and never our skills or piety. It is never about us.”

“As you step forward for ordination,” continued Bishop Donal, “some people may say that you are crazy. They are correct. You could have chosen a much easier path for the next chapter of your life. But you believe that Jesus has chosen you for this ministry at this time in this place. He has a special job for you that He has for no-one else.

“All of your life up until today has been a part of your formation. The next years will not be easy. The dominant culture has no time for any belief system that does not bend the knee before its constantly changing and often rootless priorities. The Irish church will have to die to much of its way of being in order to know resurrection. An excessively priest-centred model of service-provider church will have to rediscover the range of Spirit-given gifts in the Body of Christ.

“There is much healing to be done because of power that was abused in the past. In the face of all that, be like Elisha in the first

reading, known for being a holy man of God. As the couple who befriended Elisha discovered, God can do extraordinary things with the very ordinary bits and pieces of our lives. By a life of prayer and generosity, of courage and honesty, you can be a great advertisement for Jesus. Expect great things from the Jesus who calls you into His service. It is always about God, never about us.”

Buoyed by the prayerful support of many, including his cousin, Fr Daniel Doherty, who travelled from Scotland to be with him on his special day, and vested him as a new priest, Fr Shaun joyfully received the hugs and good wishes of many as they left the Cathedral and made their way to the beautiful setting of the Iosas Centre of Peace & Reconciliation, on the Derry-Muff border, where his Columba Community family had prepared a celebratory meal.

The following evening, he celebrated his first Mass in St Columba’s Church, in the Waterside, where he had been serving as Deacon, and this was followed with the celebration of Mass in St Michael’s Church, Urris, in Clonmany, Co Donegal, which was the home parish of his late father, George, and later in St Eugene’s Cathedral, the home parish of his late mother, Mary.

Photography by Stephen Latimer.



Fr Shaun's Columba Community family share their thoughts...

What a grace-filled time we are experiencing as we celebrate our first Community ordination.

Fr Shaun's openness in answering God's call encourages us to listen more deeply to the voice of the Lord in our own lives and to respond positively in trust that He will always lead and guide us as we wait on Him. The picture Fr Shaun chose for his ordination card shows the Good Shepherd's reckless love as he reaches out to save the lost sheep. I pray for Fr Shaun that the Lord will bless him and use him to reach out to those who feel lost and abandoned, bringing them hope in the One who always welcomes us, embracing us with unconditional love and mercy. *Marguerite Hamilton*

When I woke on the morning of Shaun's ordination, the reading from Philippians 1:6 came to my mind, 'I am certain that He who began a good work in you will see that it is finished when the day of Jesus comes'. What a blessing and privilege it was to be part of such a sacred occasion for our dear friend, Fr Shaun. It was a truly humbling experience to witness God in all His majesty shining His light on someone we hold so dear, helping him to reach out to those he will bring closer to Jesus through his ministry. It was a particularly emotional day for all of our Columba Community family. I felt goose bumps during the laying on of hands as I watched, with tears in my eyes, all the holy men of God bless and pray together in the fire of the Spirit - I knew our beloved Fr Neal was present through it all. I couldn't help but notice beside the priests on the altar an empty seat and I could picture Fr Neal sitting there watching with delight. It came as no surprise that when Fr Shaun's formal ordination was complete, he sat on that very chair. Fr Shaun's chair was always waiting, always being warmed and those who had nurtured and guided him were saying, 'it's your turn now.' Thank you, God, for allowing us to be part of this inspirational journey of faith, hope and unending love of the Lord. *Jacklyn Roberts*

I was asked to write a Congratulations Banner to be put up at Iosas Centre for Shaun. While spending time contemplating in Columba House about what to write, I came across the following scripture text which I felt was just right for the occasion: "Sing a new song unto the Lord, let your song be sung from mountains high" (Psalm 98). For me, it summed up everything he was being called to do and the manner in which he should do it. At Fr Shaun's first Mass, I felt that he spoke with a fresh strength, confidence, commitment and power. He believed firmly in what he was

saying and this conviction was coming across. Long may he continue to feel and use that power to spread the Word. *Tommy McCay*

The lead-up to Shaun's ordination was filled with excitement and joy - the Columba Community, family and friends came together as one to prepare and pray for his special day. You couldn't help but notice the outpouring of love that was streaming into our Centres; constantly we would hear from many strangers, "I'm praying for Shaun". It was very uplifting. The Iosas Centre became the heart of our excitement as we frantically prepared the space for the meal and celebrations after the ordination. For me, it was such a privilege to have been invited to St Eugene's to witness the celebration of this Sacrament for the first time. I observed and listened with childlike awe throughout the ceremony. I didn't want to miss a single moment of this beautiful union. The laying on of hands by Bishop McKeown, and then the priests, impacted me most. Witnessing the slow, silent process of each priest coming forward, one-by-one, was so beautiful, each gently laying his hands on Shaun's head and becoming a channel for God's love to flow. The silence spoke volumes. I couldn't help but realise the enormity of what I was witnessing - this great outpouring of the Holy Spirit. I felt an overwhelming appreciation for each one of those men who stood on the altar; men who had given up everything to follow Christ, on a journey that would hold many challenges, but also many rewards. And now our dear friend, Shaun has given his life over to the Father in complete trust and faith. I feel blessed to have witnessed it. *Karen McMonagle*

For me, there were two moments in which I felt moved more than at any other time over the past few days. The first one was when Bishop Donal embraced Shaun, welcoming him into the priesthood. The second was his first Mass. I was sitting in the perfect position, looking right across the altar, and was again moved as he placed his hands over the bread and wine and the Holy Spirit transformed them into the Body and Blood of Jesus. I could have sat in that moment for the longest time. Jesus transformed the man into the image of Himself in Holy Mass for us to see. *John Cooper*

When Fr Shaun was kneeling and all the priests were laying their hands on his head blessing him, I found it so moving. The Mass was very special. Shaun will be a light that shines in the darkness, bringing hope and joy

to all he meets; of that I have no doubt. It was a joy for me to see him celebrate his first Mass for our Community and Auxiliary members at Saint Anthony's. *Margaret Cooper*

Fr Shaun's Ordination Day was a truly blessed and privileged day for all of us in Columba Community. It was one of those rare and special occasions when you could really experience the communion of saints - that meeting of faithful friends and loved ones in Heaven and earth. The Cathedral was filled, not only with Fr Shaun's family, Community, friends, fellow priests, and people from several parishes, but you could also feel the presence of God, Our Blessed Lady, and all the angels, saints, and all those we have loved who have gone before us. This is, indeed, a sacred time in the history of our Community and the local Church, and a sign of great hope for the Church in the future. It was a real joy and privilege to be part of Fr Shaun's journey in Columba Community, and to celebrate this great day with him. May God bless him abundantly as he begins this sacred ministry. *Kathleen Devlin*

For me, it was the high moment of the Mass when the Bishop announced that the whole ordination was about journeying with Jesus, and all of our journeys were to be offered up to Him. I'm sure this was also a high moment for Fr Shaun. *Kevin Heaney*

I think with Shaun being a late vocation that God has a plan for each and every one of us, and He never gives up on us. We give up on ourselves before God gives up on us. God loves us so much and He reveals certain things at certain times in all our lives, when we are ready for it. I will continue to pray for Shaun on his priestly journey and may God bless him in all things. *Martina McFeely*

My memory of Sunday was of absolute joy. When all of the priests came on to the altar, I felt that every angel from Heaven was hovering over them. I also thought when Bishop McKeown embraced Fr Shaun that it was with pure love and joy, like a father hugging a son. Such a beautiful, Spirit-filled day. His first Mass in St Columba's, Chapel Road, was beautiful. The music was amazing; what a beautiful voice Margaret McCay has. Shaun will make a wonderful priest, so humble and kind and understanding. *Annette Heaney*

The most striking thing for me was Fr Shaun's peace and calm on the altar during his first Mass. He was one with God, so present. I felt this to be a great time for rejoicing. God has gifted

our Community once more. *Joe Carlin*

The journey that brought our dear friend, Fr Shaun into priesthood has been a beautiful experience to see. It's wonderful to witness firsthand how the joy and excitement of being active in our church community can bear such magnificent fruit that will change the lives of so many. It's made even more special because of the journey that we've shared together so far in the Columba Community family, and we all look forward to supporting Fr Shaun in his ministry in the journey ahead. *Martin McKeever*

I was ordained 62 years too early. The ceremony in St Eugene's Cathedral was so beautiful. You could feel the happiness of every single person in the church. I thought the Bishop's sermon enhanced the occasion. Just right. Congratulations Shaun. The ordination ceremony and the first Mass were as good as a week's retreat for all present. Both ceremonies were so enjoyable. *Fr Michael Sweeney*

To me, it was all about love, the love of God for Shaun and Shaun's love for God. Everything else will fade, will pass away. It is all gifted from the God of Love: '...and now these three remain Faith, Hope and Love but the greatest of these is Love.' (2 Corinthians 13:13). *Betty Gallagher*

There was a lovely atmosphere in St Eugene's Cathedral, a sense of quiet anticipation as we waited for the Ceremony to begin. I am always interested in the music, which was beautifully done and very fitting. Bishop Donal said something quite unusual in his homily which stayed with me, "People will think you are crazy and I agree with them. You are crazy." It's not every day you hear those words spoken by a Bishop. He was right though about the way the world sees things. Looking at Shaun's choice to take this path and to follow Jesus, people might ask why would he do that? He must be crazy. The same could have been said about the actions of the Apostles who, when they heard Christ's call put down their nets, gave up their careers, everything they were familiar with, to follow Him. When we respond to God's love and surrender to Him it makes us do seemingly crazy things from a human point of view, but for those who choose to follow in Christ's footsteps and be guided by His Spirit in serving others, it all makes perfect sense. Fr Shaun's Ordination in the place where his mother came to worship as a child, held a special significance for him because of this family connection. He acknowledged the help he received from the parish Community in St Columba's

Chapel Waterside by celebrating his first Mass there. He honoured the role of Fr Neal Carlin and Columba Community in his life by celebrating his first Mass for Members and Auxiliaries in the beautiful little Oratory at St Anthony's Retreat Centre. He also remembered where his father came from and was laid to rest, along with so many of his relations, by celebrating his first Mass in the idyllic setting of St Michael's, Urris. These were the places where Shaun wanted to mark the beginning of his priesthood. The atmosphere,

Shaun's attitude and words, the scriptures of the day, the beautiful music, the congregational singing, the prayers, the moment of consecration, the breaking of the bread, the first blessing in each place, the hospitality afterwards, all blended together to make each celebration equally memorable. Three words sum it all up for me: gratitude; appreciation; and happiness. I pray 'the deep peace of Christ with its accompanying interior joy' will remain with Shaun throughout his ministry. *Ann McCay*



Columba Community members and auxiliary members.



Marguerite Hamilton, Columba Community leader, right, with Dermot and Marion Carlin.



Joe Carlin, Columba Community, with his sister, Barbara



Soprano Margaret McCay and organist, Marcus Michel



Jacklyn Roberts and Marguerite Hamilton



James McMonagle and his daughter, Sinead

Celebrating First Masses in places close to his heart, Fr Shaun hears and speaks about the need to...

Be a signpost for others so they know they are loved

IN the days following his ordination to the priesthood, Fr Shaun Doherty expressed great gratitude for his religious vocation, and for those who helped form him in his faith during his 58 years of life and supported him along the way, by celebrating Masses of Thanksgiving in St Columb's Church, Waterside, where he had served as deacon, St Michael's Church in Urris, Clonmany, his late father's home place, and St Eugene's Cathedral, his late mother's home parish.

The celebration of his First Mass took place on the Feast of St Thomas, the Apostle, July 3, in St Columb's Church. Delivering the homily, Fr Michael Canny, PP Glendermott & Strathfoyle, focused on St Thomas, remarking that he was "an interesting person that we can all identify with".

Highlighting Thomas' reaction to the news that Jesus was going back to Judea, where people wanted to arrest him, when he said to his fellow disciples, "Let us go, that we may die with Him", Fr Michael noted that it was "typical of a newly ordained priest", with their "great energy and enthusiasm just wanting to get on with it and save the world, to do anything for Christ".

However, referring to what

Thomas is recorded as saying at the Last Supper about not knowing where Jesus was going, so how could they know the way, Fr Michael went on to comment on how "life and experience can rob even the best people of their enthusiasm and energy".

Commenting on the progression in Thomas' life and faith from doubt and uncertainty to a profession of faith, and how the wounds of Jesus became life-giving for him, Fr Michael noted the importance of the witness the apostles gave to Jesus, leading and pointing people to the Risen Christ.

He went on to tell Fr Shaun: "From now on, your focus must be, not how many people listen to Highland but rather how many people you can try to signpost to Jesus Christ."

"Going forward," he added, "I remind you of the words of St Theresa of Calcutta, who said, 'If you believe you will pray, if you pray you will love, if you love you will serve, and if you serve you will build community'."

At the end of Mass, Fr Shaun happily gave his blessing to the many that came forward, before mixing with all those who came along for refreshments in An Chroi Community Hub, on Trench Road.

He then ended his first week of priesthood with the celebration of Mass in the quaint Church of St Michael, set in the scenic Co Donegal townland of Urris, within the Clonmany Parish. He offered the Mass as one of thanksgiving for his late father, George, who was from the area, which he recalled visiting for the first time with his mum, Mary, when he was about 15 years old.

"I used to be intrigued coming here and looking at all the gravestones with my surname on them," recalled Fr Shaun, "It told me something about family and who we were. I saw for the first time my grandparents' grave and my father's grave. He lost his mother when he was very young, but the people here came together and helped. In times of need, that is when we see our people and our faith at its best."

"When I came to live in Derry, people there talked about the faith of the people in this area. When I take people here, I always take them around the graveyard and tell them of the strong faith of the people here."

He continued: "We need to be constantly reminded of the sacrifice of the people who went before us, particularly at this time, when people are looking for answers in technology, etc. The

people before us lived in a much more peaceful environment, where there was always time and peace to pray.

"The image of the Sacred Heart over the range stays with me. It was a very strong sign of the faith. God's light never goes out; it still shines. The faith of the people in this area is renowned and I think we need always remind ourselves of the goodness of the people who went before us."

"Like us, they heard about the mercy of God and they clearly got it, because they came to this chapel day after day, week after week, and they prayed the Rosary. We need to be people who leave a legacy for others. There is always an opportunity to turn back on to the right path. We can be the signpost for others, to let them know that they are loved."

Clonmany PP, Fr Brian Brady was one of the concelebrants of the Mass, and he spoke on behalf of the parishioners to say that it was an honour to have him with them in the first week of his priesthood.

At the end of the ceremony, Fr Shaun again gave his blessing to all who came forward, and all were invited to the local school for refreshments.

Waterside



Urris



Fr Shaun and his cousin, Fr Daniel Doherty at the celebration in Urris, Co Donegal.



A painting by local artist was presented to Fr Shaun on behalf of St Michael's Urris parishioners



With two priests to minister to the parishes of Ardstraw East, Badoney Lower, Badoney Upper and Greencastle, parishioners have been gathering to pray, reflect and discuss about the way forward...

Challenging but blessed time discerning the Lord's call to live as His disciples with courage and trust *by Paula Kennedy*



BISHOP Donal published his Pastoral letter, 'God has plans for His people', in January of this year. In it, he outlined the challenges facing our Church and Diocese in the present time, with the lack of faith, falling numbers attending Mass and the shortage of priests.

We can be tempted, he said, to believe that all is lost. However, we have the conviction that Christ is with His Church until the end of time and the message of the scriptures is always one of hope. Faith means believing that God is at work, even at difficult times.

Bishop Donal encourages us to take the first steps in moving from a Church of maintenance to one of mission. These challenges, he said, will involve letting go of some of the familiar.

Gathering of the Parishes

In this period of transition for the Diocese, all local parishes were invited to have prayerful discussions to explore and review our way of being Church. With this in mind, our four parishes of Ardstraw East, Badoney Lower, Badoney Upper and Greencastle gathered to discuss the Bishop's pastoral letter and discern a way forward.

Fr Peter McCawille, SMA, who spent 35 years in Nigeria, spoke to us about his experience of Church there, where there were only a few priests to minister to large numbers of people, and having to cover a large geographical area. He spoke about the role of lay people who carried out their mission by leading prayer

services, as catechists, performing Baptisms and burials.

His experience, unfamiliar to us as a Church in Ireland, gave us great encouragement and hope that this model of Church is necessary and, perhaps, a more authentic one, in which clergy and lay people work together to carry out the mission of the Church, to make Jesus known and loved.

We discussed the questions set out by Bishop Donal regarding the role of lay people in Church ministry. We gathered as individual parishes and jointly a number of times, and we identified training we would require to begin lay ministry in the area of Liturgy. Liturgy was chosen as it is a good starting point which should easily encourage participation and provide confidence to all involved. Importantly, it is the starting point which will centre our endeavours on prayer, for "if the Lord does not build, we will labour in vain".

Leading God's People in Prayer

Tony Brennan, Pastoral Development Coordinator for the Diocese, designed a programme of training for our four parishes, 'Leading God's People in Prayer'. In the first of these sessions, Fr Paul McCafferty gave a presentation outlining the role of the lay person in the context of Canon Law. He explained the structure of the Church, diocese and parish, in particular the responsibilities of the Bishop, the Parish Priest and the people of God.

He focused on Liturgy. In

relation to the liturgy with the distribution of Holy Communion in the absence of a priest, he explained that when the reception of Holy Communion is separated from the complete Eucharistic action in Mass, and where such liturgies are frequent, confusion can arise and the Eucharist as sacrificial is lost.

He referred to a letter by Bishop Donal in 2021, which states that "The Reception of Holy Communion should not normally be separated from the rest of the Liturgy – or seen as 'something' that can be received on its own. The distribution of Holy Communion should normally take place only within the context of Mass". He encourages parishes to gather for prayer in the absence of a priest, with the prayer of the Church, the Liturgy of the Hours, having a 'privileged place'.

Fr Paul also referred to the history of the Church in the Derry Diocese, highlighting that the situation we find ourselves in now is not unique. The Church has undergone change in the past. We are challenged to respond to the changes necessary in this time, but he reminded us that we are not alone, that God is with us in change and that the Holy Spirit guides us today as He did at the first Pentecost.

Praying Evening Prayer of the Church

Fr Peter O'Kane presented the next two lay ministry training sessions. In the first, Fr Peter led us in an understanding of what prayer and liturgy are. He explained the difference between Liturgical and devotional prayer.

Liturgical prayer is the public work of the Church manifested in the liturgy of the Eucharist, the celebration of the other Sacraments, and in the public prayer of the Church. It is the prayer of Christ, not ours. It is not only for the Church but also for the world.

Devotional prayer or non-liturgical prayer, for example, the Rosary and novenas whether celebrated publicly or privately is always private and ultimately aims at personal intimacy with God. Reciting the Liturgy of

Hours then has an important place in the Church and is an appropriate starting point in leading God's people in prayer.

Following from this, in our second session with Fr Peter, Tony Brennan led us in praying the Evening Prayer of the Church. We reflected on the experience of saying evening prayer. Many were familiar with the format and it was a very worthwhile experience. It is hoped that Evening Prayer of the Church regularly will be a first step in beginning lay ministry in the four parishes.

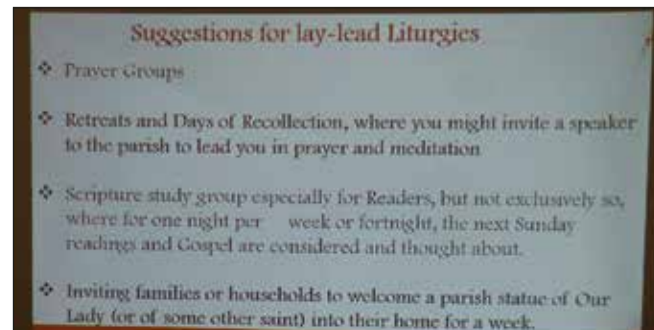
Evangelization of Today's World

Pope Francis states in Evangelium Gaudium, that he dreams of a 'missionary Church, that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the 'evangelization' of today's world rather than for her 'self-preservation'.

In the mission of the Church, the Pope states that "the need to enhance the role of the laity is not based on some theological novelty, or due to the shortage of priests, much less a desire to make up for their neglect in the past. Rather, it is grounded in a correct vision of the Church, which is the People of God, of which the laity, together with the ordained ministers, are fully a part". (Address to the participants of Dicastery for Faith and Family Life, February 2023).

Fr Peter, in his concluding remarks, reiterated this call, encouraging us as lay people to carry out our mission to be disciples, helping others to know and love God.

The process of discernment which we have begun is ongoing, and will evolve and change as we grow in confidence and prayer, open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. It is a time of change for the Church. It is a challenging but blessed time for us as we discern how the Lord is calling us live out our call as His disciples with courage and trust.



Eangach

Ár nDúchas

An Phaidir Íosa

Paidir mór dtraidisiún an Oirthir, athráite arís is arís eile
A Thiarna Íosa, a Mhic Dé,
déan trócaire orm, peacach.

Paidir do Naomh Déaglán

Féile ar 24ú Iúil

A Dhéaglán a bheannaigh i mbailte na nDéise,
Is in Aird Mhór a shocraigh ionad d'aiséirí,
Le sampla do bheatha is le teagasc do bhéil ghil,
Do tharraingís sluaite i ród a saortha.
Páistí maithe ba taitneamh gach lae leat;
Thugtá dóibh teagasc i dteanga na Gaeilge,
Guímid thú a Dhéaglán, a ghrianán gléineach,
Teanga ár sean go gcosa ar Éirinn.



Athair an Mhanachais agus Patrún na hEorpa

Ar 11ú Iúil, chéiliúraigh an eaglais féile i gcomóradh ar cheann de na naoimh ba shuntasáí ina stair, a chuaigh sa bhearna bhaoil san am sin, thug cúl leis an domhain, agus mar thoradh ar a iarrachtaí cróga, chuaigh sé i bhfeidhm ar mhór-roinn na hEorpa agus ar an Eaglais ó shin. Bendedict ab ainm dó.

Rugadh é in Nursia na hIodáile in 480AD mac le huaslathaithe Rómhánacha, i dtréimhse chorrach. Bhí an Impireacht faoi shíorionsaithe ag treibheanna Gearmánacha agus bhí siad á scriosadh. Mar aon leis sin bhí an cultúr ag titim as a chéile thart air, rinneadh trácht ar an mhóráltacht a bhíodh ann a bheith ag meath fosta. Agus díomá air faoin sochaí arb as dó, thréig Benedict an saol a bhí aige agus chuaigh sé amach faoi na coillte le cónaí ansin mar dhíthreabhach. Ba san fhásach seo a fuair sé a dhíseart agus ba anseo a mhair sé ar slí crua, ag guí agus ag dul i mbun cogaióchta in aghaidh an diabhair. Leathnaigh scéalta faoina chráifeacht ar fud na tuaithe maguaird, agus de réir a chéile, tháinig manaigh chuige dá bharr sin. Bhí siad ag iarraidh foghlaim uaidh agus cónaí leis, le maireachtáil de réir an slí a bhí

aige.

Ar dtús báire, thug Benedict rabhadh do na manaigh nua seo, agus dúirt go mbeadh an saol ródhian. D'ainneoin sin, dhiúltaigh manaigh imeacht agus chónaigh siad leis. Níos moille áfach, nuair a fuair siad amach gurbh fhíor don rud a dúirt Benedict, rinne siad iarracht é a mharú agus chuir siad nimh ina chupán fíona. Ar thógáil an chupáin do Bhenedict, bheannaigh sé é agus briseadh an cupán. D'imigh na manaigh sin, bhí sé leis féin arís. I ndiaidh tamaill eile, tháinig lucht leanúna úr, a bhí níos dáiríre. Bhí go maith. Chónaigh na manaigh seo le Benedict agus tosaíodh gluaiseacht. Bhunaigh siad 12 mainistreacha. Ní go dtí gur bhunaigh sé mainistir ag Monte Cassino a shocraigh Benedict go buan. Ba anseo a scríobh sé sraith phrionsabal – An Rial – a leanadh a manaigh, ag tarraingt ar eispearas na mblianta s'aige.

Is mór an éifeacht a bhí aige seo ar an Eaglais. Bunaíodh ord na mBeinidictéach, agus leathnaigh a n-ord agus an slí bheatha bunaithe ar An Rial, a bhí mar bhunchloch ar shaol



Naomh Benedict, patrún na hEorpa



"A nathair, ól do nimh féin": Tá cros Bhenedict láidir in éadan an diabhair.

reiligiúnach agus ar shochaí na hEorpa ón am sin ar aghaidh. Ón bhunchloch seo a atógadh an Eoraip ó léirscrios na Róimhe. Leagadh síos bunús sibhialtacht na hEorpa.

Domhnach na Cruaiche

Ar 30ú Iúil, beidh oilithreacht speisialta ar siúl i gceantar iargúlta de Cho. Mhaigh Eon ach bhfuil mórán dá mhacasamhail ann ar fiud an domhain. Tarlaíonn seo ar an Domhnach deireannach de gach mí Iúil. Ar Dhomhnach na Cruaiche – nó Reek Sunday i mBéarla – bíonn na mílte daoine ag dreapadh go mullach Chruach Phádraig. Tá seo in onór Naoimh Pádraig, a chaith seal ag urnaí agus ag troscadh ar an sliabh. Siúlóid dhian ar chnoc creagach, agus ar bharr an tsléibhe, bíonn aifrinn ráite ar son na hoilithrigh a dhéanann an turas.

Go traidisiúnta, bíonn Easpag Thuaim chun tosaigh ar an slua nuair a thosaíonn siad an dreapadh, agus na hoilithrigh as gach cearn den tír ina dhiaidh. Cleachtas seanbhunaithe atá anseo a bhfuil fréamhacha doimnhe aige ag dul siar i stair na Críostaíochta i measc na nGael. Tá an tagairt is luaithe air le fáil in

Anála Uladh, nuair a rinne daoine oilithreacht sa bhliain 1113. Gan amhras, tá an oilithreacht níos sine ná sin, fiú. Go traidisiúnta, rinneadh oilithreachtaí anseo ar laethnta eile chomh maith – Lá Fhéile Pádraig, Lá Mhuire ar 15ú Lúnasa ina measc.

Is minic a fheictear idir óg agus aosta ag dreapadh, b'fhéidir le bata nó crúca. Fiú, bíonn daoine ann ag streachailt go barr an chnoic, costarnocht! Bealach iontach dúchasach atá i gceist, faoin spéir, ag ofráil na guí, i lár na seacht sian. Gan dabht, tá seo ina shárshampla de ghné láidir an aithrí i dtraidisiún Críostaí na hÉireann, atá le feiceáil go láidir i bPurgadóir Naoimh Pádraig .i. Loch Dearg chomh maith. B'fhéidir, i ndomhan nua-aimseartha, i dtír ar a tháinig athrú mór le linn na nglúnta deireannacha, gur chóir filleadh ar ár bhfréamhacha, uaireanta, de réir mar a rinne ár sinsir romhainn.



Oilithrigh ar Chruach Phádraig



Cruach Phádraig, Co. Mhaigh Eo

Joyous Carndonagh celebration for Fr Con McLaughlin's Golden Jubilee



THE Church of the Sacred Heart in Carndonagh was filled with the sound of music as the Co Donegal town's Brass Band led parish priest, Fr Con McLaughlin, Bishop Donal, fellow priests and a large number of altar servers up the aisle for the celebration of Mass to mark Fr Con's 50 years of priesthood, on Saturday, June 10.

The singing during the ceremony was led by the well-established Donagh Choir and was greatly appreciated by the many parishioners, as well as Fr Con's family members and friends from parishes he had previously served.

Natives, Fr Charlie Coyle and Fr Johnny Doherty travelled home to concelebrate at Fr Con's Golden

Jubilee Mass, and were joined by Fr Edward Kilpatrick, who helps out in the parish since his retirement to the neighbouring parish of Culdaff, and Fr Gerard Mongan, Adm Long Tower, where Fr Con had previously ministered for 28 years.

Speaking after the Gospel, Fr Con, a native of Greencastle, recalled having "no idea of what priesthood would be like" when he was ordained from the seminary by Bishop Neil Farren on Pentecost Sunday, June 10, 1973, in St Pius X Church, Moville, along with Fr Declan Boland and the late Fr Paddy O'Kane.

"I had to learn quickly on my feet," he added, "I was blessed

with very many faithful people and nice advisors."

Remembering especially Fr Michael Collins, who had been unable to attend, and others who have passed on to their eternal reward, Fr Con said: "This is a night for me to say 'thanks' to those who helped form me into the man I am today."

He continued: "All in all, life has been pretty good to me and I thank God for that, and the many people who have been a great support to me. I am well aware of my weaknesses and if I ever seemed to have behaved in a non-caring way, I apologise for that.

"I feel very privileged to have ministered in the parishes that I did, and I consider it a great privilege to have ministered here, and I hope you will tolerate me a while longer."

Saying that it was an emotional occasion for him, Fr Con recalled making his way as a youth up the hill from school, now Colgan Hall, to the chapel to pray during exam time: "I never thought in years to come I would be back here as a priest. I am honoured to be back here with you and a special word of thanks for all that you do for me."

During the Offertory Procession reminders of our

Christian heritage were brought forward. Commenting on these and referring to the Donagh Cross located nearby, as a reminder that St Patrick had visited the area, parishioner, Margaret O'Kane said: "In remembrance of this, a scroll containing an extract from his Breastplate is being unfurled in the sanctuary by two members of the Carndonagh Scouts. Other members carry small replicas of the famous Donagh Cross in thanksgiving to God for continuing faith and commitment of our people young and old."

Referring also to the recent celebrations for St Eugene's Cathedral 150th anniversary, Margaret said: "To mark the occasion each parish in the Diocese was presented with an Oak Sapling. Celia McLaughlin, one of our Sacristans, brings the sapling she collected on that occasion to the altar. After our celebration this evening it will be planted near the main entrance to the Church."

A basket with contributions, to represent the generous subscriptions of parishioners to the work of the running of the parish, was brought forward to the altar by Bridgeen O'Connor, while Yelena Tchibor Porter, a



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prominent British/Irish artist, who taught Art in the University of Oxford and has had numerous exhibitions worldwide, brought forward an icon she had painted at the beginning of the pandemic to protect the local community from death by the Corona virus. Doing charity work restoring paintings and sculptures, and painting the Icons for the Sacred heart Church for the last six years, Yelana presented her icon of St Pantaleon, a miracle worker and healing Saint who is worshipped in both Catholic and Orthodox Churches. While still little known in the western world, St Pantaleon is one of the most honoured saints in the Orthodox Church.



Fr Con when he was transferred from the Long Tower in 2003. It was composed by the late Bridie Canning, a parishioner who had lived at Foyle Road, Derry.

Margaret continued: "In 1975, Fr Con was presented with a stole from the McConnell family in the Long Tower, Derry. Today that stole is being brought to the altar by Monica, a retired social worker and now his housekeeper.

The Donagh Choir followed with the singing of the hymn, 'Alone with None but Thee', with music composed by John McLachlan, husband of director of music, Helen Haughey, for a competition held in 2013 by the then Fr Eamon Martin, for the prayer of St Columba to be set to music, which he won. John had dedicated it to Fr Con when he was celebrating his 40th Anniversary.



"In recognition and appreciation of Fr Con's enduring and tireless dedication to restoring St Columba's Hall in Derry, Charmaine Wade presents an original etching of the hall, together with an original letter of appeal by Fr Hugh McMenamin, the then Adm of Derry on July 30, 1886, for the building of the Hall."

Having ministered in the Long Tower for 28 years and Bunrana for four-and-a-half years, Fr Con has been serving in the Parish of Carndonagh since 2008.



The Bread and Wine were then brought forward to the altar by Fr Con's sisters, Hannah and Jean, who both live in Dublin.

After Mass, everyone gathered at the main entrance to the church grounds for the planting of the Oak sapling, followed by refreshments in Colgan Hall.



With Corpus Christi Feast, 'Do This in Memory' and Ice-Cream Sunday making it a memorable occasion...

Buncrana Parish applaud Golden Jubilarian, Fr John Walsh



THE Feast of Corpus Christi on Sunday, June 11, was also the occasion when the people of Buncrana joined their retired Parish Priest, Fr John Walsh in marking 50 years of priesthood with the celebration of morning Mass in St Mary's Church, Cockhill.

Amongst the congregation were members of Fr John's family, as well as former pupils of St Columb's College, in Derry, where he had been principal from 1990 to 1999.

As a former educator of young

people, it was fitting that the Golden Jubilarian's anniversary celebration was also the parish 'Do This In Memory of Me' Mass, with pupils from a number of local schools taking part, and the singing led by the Scoil Naomh Iosaf Community Choir, from the Illies.

Concelebrating the Mass, the parish priest, Fr Frank Bradley delivered the homily, remarking that Fr John's late parents, Eoin and Patricia, sisters, Ita and Mary, and brother, Louis were "undoubtedly amongst the sources of his inspiration to become a priest", not to mention that his grand-uncle Richard had been the parish priest of Dungiven.

He also referred to a serious car accident that Fr John had been involved in just five months before his ordination, which left him with a deep scar on one of his forearms, recalling: "It happened as four clerical students were returning to Maynooth after attending the wake of Brendan Dolan in Aghyaran. Fr Walsh, though seriously injured, was

the least seriously injured of the four. Colm P Mullan, the driver, himself just short of ordination, received life-changing injuries. A GAA All-Star, he was confined to a wheel-chair for the rest of his days. He continued to become a leader in his own field - the other three became priests shortly thereafter.

"As with many other life experiences, Fr Walsh bears this episode stoically with great calmness and profound thanksgiving. Other episodes in his life, not least his tussle with serious illness well over 10 years ago, he approaches in the same calm way. Whilst he would never have seen himself as a GAA All-Star, he has laid a carefully arranged pathway of understated sanctity which, when followed by those of us who happen to discover it, leads all the way to heaven. That is his style, his manner and his gift; it is wonderful that we benefit from it here in this Parish."

Fr John's first appointment was to Glenullin, in the Errigal Parish, in Co Derry, where he

ministered for three years before being appointed to St Columb's College, where he spent 19 years, the last 10 of which as President. After this, in 1999, he was appointed as parish priest of Desertegney and Lower Fahan.

"An example of his humility is surely the way in which he passed on the gauntlet of Parish Priest to me in 2014, seldom correcting but always supportive," remarked Fr Frank, adding, "I knew that I was on a winner with him when I discovered from those who were his students that he never ever slapped."

He continued: "Having retired as parish priest, we were all delighted when he agreed to stay on as curate, and now that he has reached the golden years of his age and wisdom, it is a further delight that, insofar as age and health allows, he will remain here ministering with me to you. He is a blessing, and we are the blessed."

Fr Frank went on to say that Fr John's pastoral ministry has not only been in the parish and the classroom, with his writings



Fr John Richard Walsh with his nephew, Richard John.

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surely having reached many whom he will never meet but who know of him.

He noted: "As a historian, he co-authored a History of the Irish Church 400-700AD, and it was part of the syllabus for every history student in the North for years. Equally, he has written an introduction to the parishes of the Diocese of Derry, giving little historical notes on each. He must have been a most able teacher of RE too - for, as a boy, he taught the subject to the present Metropolitan, Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh.

Laughter

"He recalls many of those to whom he has ministered and alongside whom he has ministered, not least Fr Raffo Janusewski, now ministering in Cuba. A great mark of his humanity and his priesthood is that he retains his friends and acquaintances - if we are out, say for a bite to eat, often men now in middle age will come forward a little sheepishly at first and enquire if he is Father Walsh - and when he says he is, they immediately relax and regale him with funny stories from their classes with him many moons ago.

"It is a great mark of the man that none I have seen winced or challenged him, there are only ever lovely memories and comical recollections, often followed by uproarious laughter and the exchange of email or telephone numbers with the promise to keep in touch. It is a privilege to witness this."

Commenting also on the celebration of the Feast of Corpus Christi, Fr Frank said: "It is our privilege each day as priests to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and, in word and sacrament, in action and thought, to present holy things to holy people. The Eucharistic Host we receive seems so fragile, so weak. And it is. As priests and people it should remind us that, as a Jesuit theologian reminds us, 'the strength of our priesthood lies in the weakness that seems to threaten it'.

"If we are to have more priests who will celebrate, as we do with Fr Walsh, such a wonderful milestone, today's throw-away world, today's field-hospital Church, today's society, that seems to have no place really for hardship or struggle, needs to learn how it is in the broken bits

and pieces of life, the parts healed and held together by the precious golden glue of Christ's redeeming love and mercy, that heaven's light breaks through."

He continued: "As a historian by training, Fr Walsh is well used to going back to the sources. As a priest by nature, each day he goes back to the source too - this Eucharistic Sacrament of broken bread and wine that has been poured out for us on the cross. It is from here that we draw our life as Catholic Christians."

Thanking Fr John for his ministry, Fr Frank added: "We thank God for blessing you, and through you, for blessing us. St Thomas Aquinas put it very beautifully many years ago when he said of this Eucharistic Sacrament: 'O noble Christian, your mystery is placed on the table of the Lord; receive this mystery. Believe what you see and receive who you are'.

"We receive the Body of Christ to become the Body of Christ. As we receive the living bread which is Christ from your hands, we know that becoming the body of Christ doesn't happen in an instant - it's like a plant which has to be attended to - we must be fed at the roots of our lives so that, with the passage of time, the living presence of Christ can be seen in the shoots of our life."

Fr John then expressed his love of being a Christian and a priest, and expressed sorrow for the wrongs he had done as both over the years.

"For the things I failed to do, I ask God's forgiveness and yours," he added, saying that he was thankful to his parents, siblings, relatives, teachers, friends, pupils, parishioners and colleagues."

Recalling serving as an altar boy, aged 10 years old, at the first Mass celebrated by his late cousin, Fr Neil Collins, a priest in Australia who was ordained in 1958, he said: "It was at that stage that I decided to become a priest".

As he thanked Fr Frank and everyone for being there, and for the great kindness that had been shown to him on the occasion of his Golden Jubilee, the congregation broke into a lengthy applause of appreciation.

At the end of Mass, Fr Frank announced that it was 'Ice-cream Sunday' too, with a free ice-cream for all outside. There were also refreshments served in the nearby school.



Ruby Jubilee celebration for Fr Brian Donnelly in Plumbridge

by Paula Kennedy



A Mass of Thanksgiving was celebrated to mark the Ruby Jubilee of the Ordination of our Parish Priest, Fr Brian Donnelly on June 16, in Sacred Heart Church, Plumbridge. Fr Brian was joined by his family and friends, brother priests, and parishioners from the four parishes of his pastorate, Ardstraw East, Badoney Lower and Upper, and Greencastle, as well as previous parishes he served.

Ordained on June 19, 1983, in St Patrick's Church, Keenaught, Desertmartin, by Bishop Edward Daly, Fr Brian has served over 10 parishes in his 40 years of ministry. Serving as curate in: Cappagh from 1983–1988; Carnhill, Derry, from 1988–1989; Clonleigh 1989–1995; Drumragh 1995–2000; Long Tower, Derry, 2000–2003; Carndonagh 2003–2005; Dungiven 2005–2009; and Parish Priest of Castleterg & Ardstraw West from 2009–2011.

Fr Brian then arrived in the parish of Badoney Upper in 2011. He became Parish Priest of Ardstraw East in 2015 and is currently Administrator of Badoney Lower and Greencastle.

At the beginning of Mass, Fr Brian thanked everyone for their presence with him to mark this important milestone in his life. He emphasised that during the course of the Mass we were giving thanks for the gift of priesthood, not just for his but by reflecting on priesthood, to realise how important it is and to celebrate the need of priesthood in the Christian life, particularly in the life of the Church.

He said: "We will draw in prayer and reflection and ask God for an increase of vocations to the priesthood. We thank God for the gift that has been given to us in this diocese of Derry and in these parishes, and pray that the Lord will strengthen the faith of the people, because it is through your testimony and witnessing to the faith that the priesthood is brought alive and given significance and meaning."

Delivering the homily, Fr Malachy Gallagher commented how fitting it was that Fr Brian's celebration of 40 years of priesthood coincided with the Feast of the Sacred Heart. He reminded us of

the words of St John Vianney that priesthood 'is the love of the heart of Jesus'.

He said: "Priests have been given to us out of Christ's infinite love for His Church, and we priests are in turn called to reflect that same love in all we do. We are called to model our own hearts after the Sacred Heart of Jesus; loving, compassionate, merciful and burning with zeal for the salvation of souls."

Fr Malachy said that it was fitting to take time to ponder that Divine call which is at the heart of our sacred vocation.

He went on to say: "Christ, who ascended to the Cross with open arms in the gesture of the eternal priest, depends on us, who are but men, to distribute the fruits of His redemption to all people. When we laud priesthood we are not glorifying the men who have answered the call, but rather the One who issued it, God himself. We are extolling the extraordinary deeds that God chooses to accomplish through His priests and we must always remember that the call to priesthood doesn't originate with us, but from God himself."

He continued to say that, as priests, their most significant ministry is offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and that Jesus had promised to be with us until the end of time. He realised this promise, added Fr Malachy, through the gift of the Holy Spirit in the sacred ministry of His priests.

On the altar, he pointed out, the miracle of Christ's real presence unfolds, a manifestation of His enduring promise.

Persona Christi

He added: "In the Eucharist and in the Sacrament of reconciliation, the priest serves in 'Persona Christi', that is, in the person of Christ. It is not the priest's own identity that takes centre stage, the priest points beyond himself to Christ. He steps into the role of Christ, not as a mere impersonator but as a sacred vessel through which Christ's saving work is made present and effective. To serve the person of Christ is a sacred responsibility that should fill every priest with awe and

reverence."

Fr Malachy offered a prayer for Fr Brian, saying: "As you celebrate this remarkable milestone, may the Lord continue to bless you, guide you and fill your heart with His peace. Thank you for your 'yes' to His call. Thank you for your unwavering faith and thank you for these years 40 enriching years of devoted service. Your priesthood

is a testament to Christ's unending love made manifest through your enduring commitment.

"On this, the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we pray that your heart continues to emulate His, brimming with love and compassion and an unyielding desire to shepherd His people. In the end, the priesthood is a call to love, a call to serve, a call to die to



Pope's monthly intention

The Holy Father has asked for prayer during July and August for:

A Eucharistic Life (July): We pray that Catholics may place the celebration of the Eucharist at the heart of their lives, transforming human relationships in a very deep way and opening to the encounter with God and all their brothers and sisters.

World Youth Day (August): We pray that the World Youth Day in Lisbon will help young

people to live and witness the Gospel in their life.

Prayer for Priests

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

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

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

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

Remember in prayer during June:

Fr John Gilmore (July 1st)

self that others may have life. In this, it is not our work, but Christ's work in us, to Him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever."

At the conclusion of Mass, Fr Brian referred to the image used on the front cover of the Mass booklet. A photograph of Slieve Gallion, which dominates the landscape of his home parish of Desertmartin, he explained that the mountain is a potent image in Scripture, and in drawing us to God, the mountain represents the urge to pray, 'I lift up my eyes to the mountains; from where shall come my help? My help shall come from the Lord, who made heaven and earth'.

He also explained the importance of memory, time or place, the place which connects us to God, and the importance of using images which pastorally creates a sense of faith in people, to be able to see God in the secular. He reflected how the image stirs our imaginations and how, as a child, Slieve Gallion was where the

Transfiguration took place!

Fr Brian also reflected on the poem in the Mass booklet, "Those Winter Sundays," by Robert Hayden. A reflection on the gift of remembering, it is a lesson about Christian love, a Father's love for his son, the son's ingratitude for his Father's love recognised now with age. He reflected on the cold culture which exists in the Church in Ireland and how important it is to 'light the fire' of faith, of hope, warmth and love.

He went on to give thanks for the people in his life whose love and example influenced his life; the many people who 'polished his shoes', as described in a line of the poem.

He concluded by referencing another poem by Robert Frost, Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening, that on this evening "we can linger in memory and sentimentality, but not for long... as I have 'miles to go before I sleep, miles to go before I sleep'."

Fr Joseph Gormley (2nd)

Fr Eamon Graham (3rd)

Fr Dermott Harkin (4th)

Fr Karl Haan (5th)

Fr Eugene Hasson (6th)

All Priests (7th)

Fr John Irwin (8th)

Fr Charles Keaney (9th)

All Priests (10th)

Fr Gerald Hasson (11th)

Fr Michael Keaveny (12th)

Fr Seamus Kelly (13th)

Fr Edward Kilpatrick (14th)

All Priests (15th)

Fr Charles Logue (16th)

Fr Paul McCafferty (17th)

Msgr Bryan McCanny (18th)

Fr Michael McCaughey (19th)

Fr Andrew McCloskey (20th)

Fr Patrick Lagan (21st)

Fr Francis Lynch (22nd)

Fr Noel McDermott (23rd)

Fr Eamon McDevitt (24th)

Fr John McDevitt (25th)

Fr Christopher McDermott (26th)

Fr Kevin McElhennon (27th)

Fr Declan McGeehan (28th)

Fr Dermot McGirr (29th)

All priests (30th)

Fr Brian McGoldrick (31st)

Fr Neil McGoldrick (Aug 1st)

All Priests (2nd)

Fr James McGonagle (3rd)

Dr James McGrory (4th)

Fr Daniel McFaul (5th)

Fr Edward McGuinness (6th)

Fr Micheal McGavigan (7th)

Bishop Donal McKeown (8th)

Fr Con McLaughlin (9th)

Fr George McLaughlin (10th)

All priests (11th)

Fr Peter McLaughlin (12th)

All priests (13th)

All priests (14th)

Fr Peter Madden (15th)

Fr Anthony Mailey (16th)

Archbishop Eamon Martin (17th)

Fr Gerard Mongan (18th)

All Priests (19th)

Fr Sean O'Donnell (20th)

All priests (21st)

All priests (22nd)

All Priests (23rd)

All Priests (24th)

All Priests (25th)

Fr Seamus O'Connell (26th)

All Priests (27th)

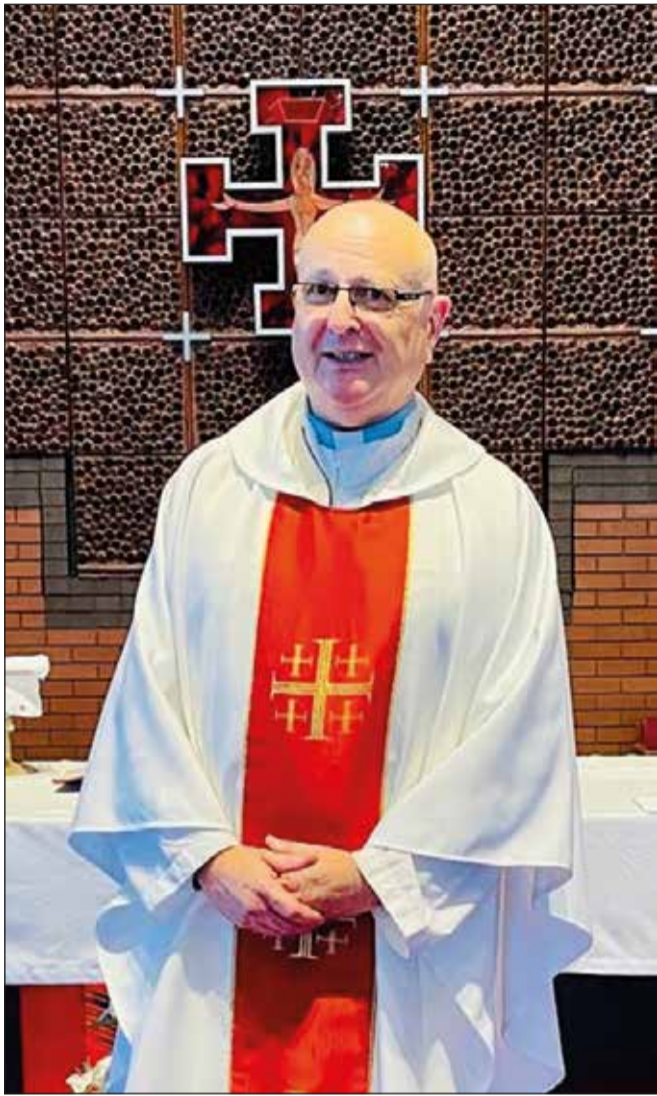
Fr Colm O'Doherty (28th)

Fr Kieran O'Doherty (29th)

All Priests (30th)

Fr Francis P O'Hagan (31st)

Holy Family gathering celebrates Fr Kevin Mulhern's Silver Jubilee



Fr Kevin Mulhern celebrates 25 years in the priesthood.

FR Kevin Mulhern SMA had a warm welcome for all who gathered around the table of the Lord in Holy Family Church, Ballymagroarty, to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of his ordination.

As well as being chaplain to Magilligan Prison, Fr Kevin assists Holy Family parish priest, Fr Joe Gormley, who encouraged him to celebrate the milestone, and they were joined on the altar by Fr Dan McCauley SMA, ordained 53 years ago, and Fr Gerry White, ordained 62 years ago.

Thanking Fr Joe for organising the celebration, Fr Kevin greatly appreciated having family and friends gathered for the Thanksgiving Mass,

and remarked that it was his second celebration of 25 years of priesthood, having celebrated it with the SMA Fathers in Dromantine the previous week.

In his homily, Fr Joe gave thanks to God for calling Fr Kevin to the priesthood on June 20, 1998, and for Fr Kevin responding with a 'yes' to God's plan.

Addressing Fr Kevin, Fr Joe went on to say: "Like everyone who says 'yes' to God, you didn't know what the following 25 years would entail. But, I know from speaking to you that you are grateful to God for all that has happened, and all that He has done in and through and with you."

He explained that he had known Fr Kevin for over 30 years, first

meeting him in Maynooth where he was studying for the Society of African Missions (SMA), a Society which he had almost joined himself as an 18-year-old.

Delighted to have got to know Fr Kevin better, particularly over the past year with his coming to Holy Family Parish, Fr Joe said: "I am always enthralled when you share your calling with me over dinner."

He added: "We first must be aware that a vocation is only possible from the witness of people who have said 'yes' to God's calling to them. So, tonight, we think of the 'yes' that your birth mother, Margaret, said, and how God, in His wisdom and providence allowed that 'yes' to be followed by a series of 'yesses' to sacrifices by your adoptive parents, Agnes and Matt Mulhern.

"You have spoken to me of these three so often with gratitude to God that I would love to have met every single one of them. Matt, unfortunately, was not able to be with you on your ordination day, dying shortly beforehand, but Margaret and Agnes were there. And now, 25 years on, we are confident that the three of them are rejoicing on this occasion in Heaven. We thank God for the formation that you received from them, in them, and through them, which is the foundation of your vocation.

"We give thanks to God for all who encouraged you on that road, and for the formation you received from the SMA Fathers, which enabled you to spend many years as a priest in Zambia, as a witness to help those you ministered to see that God had a plan for each of them."

Remarking that the Society of African Missions, and other missionary orders, have been very fruitful in God's work, Fr Joe noted: "The faith is growing in Africa, so much so that countries you ministered in, and other African countries, are full of indigenous clergy and laity,

so that many of those who left these lands have returned home to preach the Gospel in our own land, and to do so as witnesses.

"After serving in Zambia for many years, Fr Kevin returned to the home house of the SMA Fathers in Dromantine; a place that is very close to my own heart as it played a big part in my own vocation, through the SMA Fathers who helped me to become a priest."

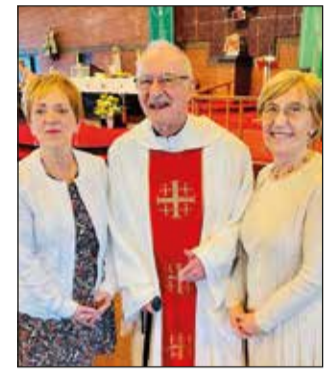
Fr Joe went on to mention that not only had Fr Kevin been in charge of the SMA Summer Camp in Dromantine on his return, a huge task each year, but was also involved in establishing the Friends of Africa programme.

"In the summer camp," he said, "Fr Kevin saw the need to create a means of service to help the young people broaden their horizons and so sought to set up the Friends of Africa programme for this."

Fr Joe spoke of his amazement that Fr Kevin always knew somebody in whatever county they happened to be talking about, either through his involvement with the SMA Summer Camp or the Friends of Africa programme: "I am constantly amazed at how God has used you to be a connection between so many people; like a link in a chain."

Noting that Fr Kevin had been ministering in the Derry Diocese for a number of years, in Three Patrons, then Fahan, and now Holy Family, and as a chaplain to Magilligan Prison, he added: "In all these settings, Fr Kevin has always wanted to reach out to others, so that they see their worth in God's sight. Particularly in his prison ministry, God has used him to help all whom He sends to see that their worth is not measured by God in terms of what they have or haven't done, but for who they are in God's sight."

At the end of the ceremony, Fr Kevin thanked all involved in the organisation and welcomed everyone to join him in the nearby Molly Malones for refreshments.



Slane 'Light the Fire' linking with World Youth Day

ALL-IRELAND Primate, Archbishop Eamon Martin is to celebrate Mass on World Youth Day at Slane, in a 'Light the Fire of Faith' service featuring Sr Briega McKenna and Eurovision's Dana.

In the Spirit of World Youth Day, pilgrims from across Ireland are invited to join Patrick's successor at the Hill of Slane, in Co Meath on August 6 for Rosary, Mass, and Healing Service.

One of Ireland's most famous singer-songwriters, Dana will sing her new song, 'Light the Fire', an anthem inspired by St Patrick, who famously lit the Easter fire at Slane in 433AD in defiance of King Laoire.

The Paschal candle will also be lit as part of the ceremony on the Feast of the Transfiguration, as pilgrims pray for a renewal of faith in Ireland.

Archbishop Eamon recalled St Patrick's own experience as he prepared for this event: "Sometimes we forget that St Patrick came first to Ireland as a

frightened teenager, forced into slavery. He knew he was a sinner, but he grew to know and love God through prayer and sacrifice.

"The light of faith will be kept alive and spread and renewed in Ireland in families that pray and from young person to young person - as Dana's new song puts it: lighting the flame of faith in their own hearts and in the hearts of others!

"I look forward very much to celebrating the Eucharist on the Hill of Slane on World Youth Day, and praying for the young people of Ireland, that they may kindle in their hearts a love for Jesus Christ and become ambassadors for Christ all around the island of Ireland."

Poor Clare, Sr Briega McKenna, who is famous for her ministry to priests and her healing ministry, will be accompanied by Fr Pablo Escriva de Romani. Fr Pablo has ministered in numerous countries, including pro-life and youth work and retreats in war

zones. He now also works with Sr Briega in their worldwide ministry of Intercession for Priests. They will speak and conduct the Eucharistic Healing Service.

During their recent Parish Mission in St Patrick's Cathedral in New York, Sr Briega described Dana's song, Light the Fire, as a gift of the Holy Spirit to light the flame of faith in everyone's hearts.

And Sr Briega added that one of the fastest ways to light that flame, to learn how to pray and to grow holiness, was through the Eucharist.

The initiative has been welcomed by parish priest at Slane, Fr Richard Matthews: "The Hill of Slane is a significant and dare I say foundational place, which we are so fortunate to have in our parish."

Dana said: "Buses are already filling up and I hope every diocese in Ireland will send parishioners to pray for a blessing for Ireland, and that the flame of faith, lit by St

Patrick so long ago, will continue to burn brightly again in our hearts and minds.

"This new song, inspired by St Patrick, came about after encouragement from my brother-in-law, Fr Kevin Scallon, who founded the Intercession for Priests in Ireland in the mid-1970s and who, with Sr Briega McKenna, ministered to priests throughout the world for more than 45 years, until his death in 2014."

She added: "The song was launched in Downpatrick on St Patrick's Day, but it is a song for all year round and for all people everywhere who yearn for God's light, the light of faith in a darkness."

Contact organisers via email on hillofslaneaugust6@gmail.com if you wish to help organise a bus, put up a poster, or promote on social media or book an media interview.

Light the Fire
August 6th Hill of Slane

Sr. Briega McKenna, Fr. Pablo Escriva de Romani, Archbishop Eamon Martin, Dana

12.15 Praise & Worship

1pm Gathering

1.15pm Rosary
Dana & Music Ministry will sing Light the Fire

2pm Mass
• Talks • Eucharistic Healing Service

4.30pm Depart for home
• Please bring a fold up stool •

In the spirit of
WYD LEBOM 2023
Mary arose and went with haste.

Tributes to the late Vera McFadden...

Thankful for loving and supportive family home

Mary Thompson



The Late Vera McFadden

MY mother Vera McFadden (Helen Veronica) passed away peacefully on May 26 of this year in Altnagelvin Hospital, surrounded by her family and friends after a short illness; her health having been ailing in the previous year.

She grew up in Marlborough Avenue, sixth child of the Johnston family. Her father, Patrick worked as a post man and her late mother was Ellen McLaughlin, who came to Derry to work in the shirt factories from Dunree, in Inishowen.

Mammy's stories were full of a sense of adventure and joy. From a young age, she aspired to writing. Considering a career in journalism, she was successful in obtaining a scholarship to Queens University, but instead opted to train in St Mary's Teacher Training College, Belfast, as a teacher.

She joined many of her siblings in the education profession and taught in schools both in Belfast, St Teresa's, and Pennyburn Girls' School, in Derry.

In early 30s, she found herself in the position of having a young family, which she had to parent alone. In Ireland in the 60s, this was not an easy task, but she carried it out with resilience; a resilience which she continued to have throughout her life. We are thankful to her for this dedication to our care, creating a loving and supportive family home.

She encouraged her children, and grandchildren, on their pathway and life's journey, as she did with all her pupils.

After teaching for 40 years, she returned more vigorously to writing in local newspapers, such as The Derry Journal and her own publications, including research and documentation of local history, early Christian history, archaeology, poetry, singing and art.

Her research allowed many to tell and document their stories and, through adult learning and creative writing, she helped provide a social outlet for herself, friends and others.

All monies that she, and they, raised from her publications and concerts were given to charities for the homeless and those in need, such as the Peter McVerry Trust, Concern, Trocaire, Capuchin Trust, and others.

She was a member of the lay order of St Francis and got great

joy in attending holidays to Lourdes, Fatima, Rome, and local retreats with her friends. She celebrated her 80th birthday by travelling to Paris with her school friend, Josie.

Aside from this, my mother was a grandmother and great grandmother; a role which she totally embraced, and we were thankful for the babysitting in its day.

In later years, health issues caused my mother to become partially sighted. As an avid reader, this was difficult to carry and also caused restrictions in mobility, etc. She used voice activated equipment and cctv magnification, and continued to engage in her writing vocation up until her passing at the age of 91 years.

She enjoyed writing for the Derry Diocesan publication, 'The Net', and as a family member I would like to thank the editor, Mary, for her comprehensive inclusion of all ages in this journal.

In her journey of aging, the carers in our society are also to be thanked for their supportive role, especially those who work in enablement. The voice of seniors in our society is overlooked. It is an unheard resource which is so valuable, and we need to advocate for.

Many of my mother's family and friends passed before her. This brought a sadness and loneliness that she had to carry, but they have left behind a wealth of love,

care, prayer and knowledge for us all.

*Facets reflected in time,
Shores clothed by a ring of hills,
On one I stand, horizon's mist
to see.*

*And watch your passing currents
sift.*

*Our lifetimes gone,
And toss them to the outreach of
your shores,*

*An island, a person, a stance once
taken,*

*Silhouetted in the sunset of your
lullaby,*

*Decipherable in the moment,
In our hearts forever,*

*In peace and love with Our Lord
Jesus, Our Lady and the saints
(MT)*

*O Divine master,
Grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,*

*To be understood, as to
understand,*

*To be loved, as to love,
For it is in giving that we receive,*

*It is in pardoning that we are
pardoned,*

*And it is in dying that we are born
to eternal life.*

Amen. (Prayer of St Francis)

We would like to thank all of those who have joined with us to mark her passing at the Requiem Mass and Month's Mind Mass, Fr Mongan, and other clergy members, the musicians for their help, Bradley's Undertakers, and Sr Ethna for her help with the Mass leaflet, and all her friends.



Granny Vera

Sarah Thompson

MY granny, Vera Mc Fadden was an inspirational lady who made an impact on anyone she crossed paths with. Granny played multiple roles in her life, including being a mentor, educator, mother, grandmother, friend, writer, and a devoted member of the church.

She was a lady of great faith and was always keen to share and pass on her knowledge to both the young and old. Granny's insight and ability to implement her beliefs was reflected in her actions throughout her life, with her continuous need to help people who were less fortunate than her.

She shared a particular passion for supporting the homeless community, and believed in giving and supporting with no judgment. As her granddaughter, I would have been regularly involved in her book sales across Derry and Donegal, from which all money made would have been given to support this important

cause to her.

Over the years Granny's sight and physical health deteriorated, which significantly impacted on her quality of life, however, despite all these obstacles she continued to believe, do, and give. At 91, she was still actively writing for 'The Net' journal, completing her books and planning her next venture.

As a member of the younger generation, she has taught me the significance of caring for others, which can often be forgotten in the hecticness of life. She also taught me the power of resilience, even when life can become tough.

I have written this article as a way of expressing respect and thanking my grandmother for everything she has taught and shared. She is greatly missed by all her family. We would like to thank 'The Net' journal, as it allowed my granny to still have a voice and engage in the community.

The art of celebrating *by Fr John McLaughlin ssc*



IN these months I have been celebrating! A Diamond Jubilee, Onomástico (June 24 in Latin America), letters and visits and cards, EMs, Tweets...and a grand Party in the Shed in Moville! 'Humos por la cabeza' (going to my head?) or just being deeply grateful. In all, I felt it was good for the soul! And the Party was more than just amazing, to coin a phrase! It was entrañable, or heartwarming, in ever so many aspects.

On reflection, I feel that my whole life has been a celebration in ever so many ways, and that puts it in a safer context.

A few years ago, in the Parish of San Columban, in Chile, it so happened that in a period of three months I was asked to help in the celebration of a Golden Wedding on three different occasions, each of them heart-warming and a moment of grace for me. And coming home for a vacation, I had the privilege of celebrating the

wedding of my oldest nephew in the parish of Ardagh, in Longford.

Fr Alvaro Gonzales, a personal friend to many of us in Santiago, was for more than 40 years an accomplished and passionate leader of CENFA, the marriage advisory and counselling diocesan service. On holiday occasionally with him, and in his presence as well as in his publications, he would stress the 'learning process' of the married couples. A learning to Trust, to Forgive, to Celebrate. And that would be often the basis of my homilies when assisting at many ceremonies in the parish of Corazon de Maria, in Santiago, which was a cited venue for weddings and generally with a rather distracted attendance.

Apart from the formalities and the courses, being addressed in their own parish of origin, we had little acquaintance of the couples at personal level. So I took it on myself to speak more to the assembled family and guests along those lines of Fr Alvaro, hoping to stir up some sense of challenge in them about their own relationships. 'Celebration' of their own marriage was the big one, as the romance, in many, might have worn off.

In the national catechetical programme, originating in the complete overhaul of the pastoral activity of the Church after the second Vatican Council, there is an obligatory assistance at a weekly meeting for the parents

of the children and young adults in the First Communion (CFIVE, or Family program for initiation into the life of the Eucharist), and some of the young adults in the Confirmation programmes.

During those months, there are a series of Celebrations (Celebraciones) in which attention is given to: The Our Father; The Beatitudes; The Promises made at Baptism; The Creed; The Scheme of the Eucharist. This is generally accompanied by the presentation of a small triptyque.

With a little bit of preparation and animation from the presiding priest or deacon, these can be moments for a renewal of faith and wonder for parents and children. For example, when called upon to preside over the presentation of the triptyque of the 'Our Father', I took it on myself to use the hand gestures that accompany the phrases in the Irish catechetical presentations and children's Masses. I would have them listen to the same prayer sung in Irish and German, and have them sing it in Spanish, as at regular Sunday Eucharistic celebrations. To me, it was never less than a moment of grace and a challenge, to preside at these celebraciones!

The wonderful Exhortation of Pope Benedict on the Eucharist, 'Sacramentum Caritatis', contains a scheme centered around Three Themes, or Challenges: The Mystery to be Believed; The Mystery to be Celebrated; The Mystery to be Lived. They are, of

course, mutually interlinked and reactive; each leads on to the next and 'believing' does advance to 'celebrating' and 'living', and then in cyclical interaction.

In the section, which is worth reflecting upon for any serious Catholic, consideration is given to the central Risen Christ, to the Art of Celebration, music, art, the signs, homily, Sign of Peace, active participation, small group and dialogue Masses, reverence and devotion, Adoration, the Sick, Prisoners, and what is called the 'Mystagogical' celebration of which I have been reading recently (The Spiritual Meaning of the Liturgy, Goffredo Boselli) and would recommend as a challenge and source of spiritual benefit, at least to the Mass-goer. Patrick Kavanagh had a much-cited phrase, "through a chink too wide, there comes no wonder

I feel that we need to recover our sense of wonder in the celebration of the Eucharist. I believe that 'Wonder' leads to a deeper 'Celebration' and that, in turn, increases the sense of 'Wonder'. This recalls for me the years in which I applied myself to the reading of Karl Rahner and the huge insights, and wonder, that he brought to his meditations. And, in those years of the last century, I did note his remark that "the Christians of the twenty-first century, would be mystics...or nothing at all"...or words to that effect! Hence, the importance of Celebrations of life, faith, Creed



12 June 2023: Tomás O'Murchadha; Eddie Moore; Jim McGonagle; Tony King; Tom Ryan; John McLoughlin; Barney Brennan; John Kirby; Gerry Dolan; Jim Finan; Johnnie Cusack; Éanna Condon & Tony Pierce.

etc.

In the same corner, we are challenged now by Pope Francis in 'Laudato Si', to wonder at... our Common Home, our inter-relatedness with Nature, and hopefully, Celebration and Gratitude with St Francis as we apply ourselves to Conservation and Climate Change issues. Daniel chapter 3 continues to inspire me in the Prayer of the Church. So also do the Canticles of the Magnificat, the Benedictus and that of Simeon in Compline.

Finally, on our recent Maynooth and the Jubilee celebrations (The Constitution of Maynooth Union, June 23, 1896), "Old friends will be brought together and memories of College days revived and questions of interest will be discussed". All of which did occur, in spades, on those days in June, and Celebration took many forms during our re-encounters, and re-living some of those

moments and people - priests and classmates - who are no longer alive, or who could not make the journey.

I stick with one moment. When classmate Fr Johnnie Cusack, of Kilmore Diocese, young in mind and body as ever (the oldest Diocesan vocation director in Ireland, someone said recently, commenting upon his charisma), and I found ourselves outside St Joseph's Oratory as we prepared to retire on the Monday night. We decided to enter and look it over once more. As had occurred during my celebration of our Golden Jubilee 10 years earlier, and with friend and classmate, Dublin Diocesan Mgr Dermot Clarke, we took out our iPhones and celebrated Evening Prayer and Compline aloud, in the empty chapel. For both of us, I feel sure there was a lot of Celebrating in that moment!

Mystery Walk for Glenock visits Ardstraw Monastery *by Fr Roland Colhoun*

NEWTOWNSTEWART Parish embarked on another fund-raising walk on Sunday, July 2. St Eugene's Church at Glenock is in need of major repair and the sponsored 'Walk for Glenock' is a regular initiative. This time the destination was the remains of Ardstraw Monastery, within the parish itself, at the western edge.

The outing had been advertised as a 'mystery' walk, so that the subject and route could be revealed to the participants as they walked. Part of the attraction is that it was also a 'history' walk, an opportunity to learn something of the extraordinary story of the parish. This proved popular and 30 walkers turned up.

A mile outside Newtown Stewart, in the townland of Magheracolton, lies Ardstraw New Cemetery. The sizeable carpark was an ideal starting point for gathering to hear the history of the area. To make sense of the monastic remnant that lay ahead of us, I gave an overview of the Ulster Plantation by King James I (1610-) and the circumstances that led to it. This included the previous Tudor plantations of Queen Mary I (1556-1557) and Queen Elizabeth I (1558-1603), the Nine Years' War (1594-1603), the Battle of Kinsale (1601), the Treaty of

Mellifont (1603), the Flight of the Earls (1607) and the mapping out of Ulster for resettlement (1609).

Having explored these events cursorily, the group was ready to stroll the rural roads to Ardstraw Village. The village flanks the River Derg and here we admired the sturdy, mediaeval bridge with its six arches, at the periphery of the ancient monastery.

Ardstraw Monastery

According to the seventh century historian Bishop Tírechán, St Patrick, after establishing seven churches in the Faughan Valley, visited Ardstraw, ordained Mac Erca Bishop and placed him in charge of the local church. 'Ard Sratha' ('high holm'), the original Irish name for Ardstraw, was attractive because of its fertile land. It was geographically significant due to its location on the River Derg, which flows out of Lough Derg some 25 miles south-west. The Derg gives eastward access to the River Mourne, then northward access to the River Foyle and ultimately enters the Atlantic Ocean.

A century after St Patrick, around 550AD, St Eugene travelled north, probably from Leinster, and established his monastery on the same location,

the banks of the River Derg. Fr John Walsh, Diocesan historian, says it is certain that in the late sixth and early seventh centuries, the original Diocesan church at Ardstraw was superseded by a monastic church founded by St Eugene. The foundation was the commencement of over a thousand years of religious life at this significant place.

St Eugene

The title given to Eugene in the genealogies is almost always in the Irish words, 'Easpag Eoghan', 'Bishop Eugene'. Early Christian Ireland was a rustic society, and the basic unit of Church administration was not an urban bishopric but a rural monastery. Monastic abbots rather than diocesan bishops were the principal figures of ecclesiastical authority. Eugene of Ardstraw was both abbot and bishop. Therefore, Ardstraw had a cathedral long before the diocesan boundaries were established in the twelfth century.

The great church overlooking the Derg was the cathedral for the See of Ardstraw, the forerunner to the Diocese of Derry. St Eugene, Abbot of the monastery, died in Ardstraw on August 23, 618AD. His successor Bishops lived in Ardstraw for the next

five centuries and his successor Abbots for the next millennium.

Demise of Ardstraw

The Ulster Plantation and the dissolution of the monasteries by the Crown sounded the death-knell for Ardstraw. By decree of a 1609 commission in Dungannon, Ardstraw's extensive lands (16 balliboes: 1280 acres) became the property of George Montgomery, Anglican Bishop of Derry, and the monks had to depart.

Like most of the dissolved monasteries, the grounds of Ardstraw evolved into a cemetery for the people of the locality, Catholic and Protestant. The building of the Urbarreagh Road, probably in the early 1800s, crudely dissected the hallowed ground and obliterated any sign of the cathedral and the grave of St Eugene. By the mid-twentieth century, the graveyard was deemed to have reached its capacity and the new Ardstraw Cemetery became the Council's burial ground for the locality.

Significance of Ardstraw

The people of Newtown Stewart and its district can be proud that this parish was a renowned monastic community, which gave St Eugene as Patron to the Derry Diocese. Even his contemporary Abbot, the great St Columba of

Long Tower, was not given this status, simply because St Eugene was both Abbot and Bishop. Ardstraw's celebrated position in history is due to the influence of St Eugene, his significant monastery and cathedral church.

Fundraising

Exploring these historic matters was the purpose of our heritage walk on the first Sunday of July. It proved to be a splendid outing with the sunshine interrupted only by a few gentle showers. Family pets came along free of charge, three dogs called Beau, Coco and another Coco! Participants were asked to donate £20 each or £30 per family, but many gave extra, and multiple other donations were submitted. By Sunday evening, the Walk for Glenock had raised over £3,000 for St Eugene's Church!

Historical Sources:

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St Ignatius Loyola and the Mission of the Christian

by Fr Stephen Quinn ocd

THE Church labours under a grievous misconception that has debilitated her response to the 20th and 21st Centuries. The misconception is about mission and missionaries; what it is and who they are? In the minds of the Church's children, mission remains the preserve of a certain category of 'holy' people, going about certain 'holy' activities attempting to give the Church a foothold in far flung destinations around the globe, and with specialised skills to do so.

The implication of this misconception is that missionaries always remain someone 'other', doing 'other' things, things that seem to have no connection to our ordinary lives, and so comes the sense that mission is something alien or extrinsic to the lives of ordinary Christians.

There is profound danger in mission not being seen as something that is part of the very make up of a Christian, and in mission being left to others to do, the danger being that the Church's mission just never gets done. The whole Church must wake up to the urgent need of mission. If it is to bring rejuvenation and life to our Church, then mission cannot remain something extrinsic to Christian people, but rather intrinsic, constitutive, part of the very building blocks of being a Christian; mission is something Christians are, rather than something they do.

If you seek to know the veracity of such an idea, you need look no further than the Lord's own existence. The Scriptures bear emphatic witness to Christ's identity. St Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, writes: "God dealt with sin by sending his own Son in a body as physical as any sinful body, and in that body, God condemned sin." In Galatians: "...but when the appointed time came God sent his Son, born of a woman, born a subject to the law to redeem the subjects of the law and to enable us to be adopted as sons." In the Gospel of Matthew: "Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me; those who welcome me, welcome the one who sent me." And outstandingly in the Gospel of John: "My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to complete His work."

These Scriptural lines bear united testimony that Christ's identity and His mission merge into unity; Jesus Christ is none other than the Son who is sent by the Father. Positively everything in the Lord's life is imprinted with this being sent, his birth and infancy; an entering into the human condition by the divine, the baptism, in which, he dives head first into the depths of the alienation that separates humanity from God.

His missionary journey takes Him all the way to Calvary, turning Him into a sacrificial lamb, taking all the darkness of human god-forsakenness upon himself. Yet, His missionary journey from the Father only terminates in hell, where He seeks out those most lost inmates, and He rises out of the tomb, leaving sin and death as rags on its floor, and guiding humanity from this earthly anchorage to the heavenly home.

As the Swiss theologian, Hans Urs Von Balthasar observes: "The task given Him by the Father, that is, of expressing God's Fatherhood through His entire being, through His life and death in and for the world, totally occupies His self-consciousness and fills it to the very brim. He sees Himself as totally 'coming from the Father' to humankind, as 'making known' the Father, as the 'word from the Father', that there is neither room nor time for any detached reflection of the 'who am I' kind."

St Ignatius Loyola lived the early years of his life emulating a cavalier and hidalgo out of a novel. And that was no accident, for he was almost addicted to trashy, romantic novels about knights, damsels in distress, and romantic adventures. He basically attempted to turn the fantasies that he read on the pages of his novels into the reality of his life. With the idea of becoming a romantic hero, in 1521 he joined the Spanish forces defending the city of Pamplona from the joint forces of France and Navarre, in the siege of the city.

Ignatius literally stood in the breach in the wall, holding off the besiegers, almost singlehanded, until he was felled by a cannonball that shattered his right leg. He fought with such distinction that he was carried from the field of battle and received the best doctoring that could be practiced at the time. He was then permitted to return home to his family's castle at Loyola to convalesce.

His period of rest hit one snag. When he asked for his romantic novels, his nurses returned with a 'Life of Christ' and a 'Lives of the Saints'. One can imagine his eyes rolling back in his head in disappointment but, given the fact that he had no alternatives, he began to read. He was shocked to find that in all the events and words that he read, that by enigmatic means he was being addressed. He was filled with the insight that Christ chose to do everything that He did, as if Ignatius was the only one it was done for. As Ignatius went face-to-face with the reality of Jesus' choice, as he encountered Christ's incarnation, His birth, the Lord's hidden life, His public ministry, His passion, and His resurrection,

he began to feel the full weight of Christ's choice of him.

Come and see

When that weight hit home, then something akin to what occurred on the bank of the Jordan replayed in Ignatius's life. As Jesus was passing by, John looked at Him and said, "Behold the Lamb of God". The two disciples heard what He said and followed Jesus. But Jesus turned around and seeing them following Him, asked them, "What are you seeking?" When they asked, "Rabbi, where are you staying?", He answered, "Come and see."

The "come and see" that Jesus invites the disciples to, is more than just a superficial investigation of Jesus' living quarters; it is, rather, to see at close quarters the depths out of which Christ chooses them, to experience the depths out of which the choice is made. It dawns on those fortunate disciples that it all comes from a divine and incalculable form of loving.

Ignatius writes, "How much God Our Lord has given me of what He possesses and so much, as far as He can, the same Lord desires to give Himself to me according to His divine decrees."

The Son's choosing, the Son's coming, even the Son's mission is a giving of Himself in love. He shares in freedom and distributes Himself without holding anything back. Christ seeks only one thing, to draw love out of the one to whom He makes His address, those first two disciples, Ignatius Loyola, and each and every member of the Church.

Little did that downed soldier, Ignatius, realise that the spiritual insight that he received on his bed of pain would lead to a spiritual revolution within the Church. For over a thousand years, the Church's reflection on holiness and spirituality had been dominated by a late antiquity school of philosophy called Neoplatonism; a system of thought that saw the mystical, the spiritual or the soul as having to free itself of matter if it ever sought to encounter God, that pictured the journey of the spirit as an ascent from the least to the most perfect. Ignatius, initially during his recuperation but then in the year that he spent on retreat at Manresa between 1522 and 1523, began to rethink the whole of his spirituality in the light of the definitive divine choice.

From his sick bed conversion, as he wrestled with how others in the past had responded to their own personal address from the Lord, the likes of St Francis and St Dominic, he began with conventional ideas of embracing extravagant forms of penance, then he was struck with the idea of making the long and

hazardous pilgrimage to visit the shrines of the Holy Land. Another thought that crossed his mind was to embrace the life of an itinerant preacher, taking permanently to the road and preaching to every person he happened upon. Another was the idea of going to the land of the Muslim Moors and laying down his life in witness, and lastly came the inspiration to enter monastic life and live a 'white' martyrdom in the almost permanent silence of a Carthusian Charterhouse.

Each of these possibilities lay open before Ignatius, each entailed its very own life that would have been lived out in very different ways, and each would have marked and shaped Ignatius in very different manners. Ignatius sought to draw out the full implications of his unique insight. As he pondered the idea that out of his infinite wisdom and with divine love, Christ had chosen to be sent and to come, and He had done it in such a manner that it would have been done as if Ignatius was the only one it was done for.

Ignatius writes: "The soul must strive to gain a familiarity with the eternal incarnate Word, it must accompany the Word on its way, hear it, render it service, and embrace it as its Lord, its elder brother, and its one and only treasure."

From the previous, it is manifest that Ignatius believes that there is far more going on in "coming and seeing" than familiarising yourself with the Sent Son, that looking into His choice and into His mission becomes, in a mysterious way, a mirror-like experience, in which the person sees their own participation in his choice, the service that they can render to Him, what Christ thinks of their life and about their very self. As Ignatius considers the divine choice and then how the choice plays out in individual lives, he jettisons all talk of ascent and perfection, and he leaves the initiative and the primacy to Christ.

Christ chooses the path and mission of each Christian, and His choice remains the most outstanding choice for each. His choice for the Christian is the basic building block on which that life is built. The mission that He gives is constructive of the person to whom it is spoken. His word is within them, and it wants to come out. The only measurement that matters to Ignatius is the intensity with which the person cooperates and gives themselves to their mission.

Formation

When he gave up ideas of penances and pilgrimages, another choice began to percolate through to him. In earlier life,



St Ignatius Loyola.

Ignatius had been too busy drilling and duelling, preparing to be one of the heroes in his novels, to give any serious time to studies. So, in order to realise his desire to become a priest, he returned to the classroom and, as a 32-year-old, did primary school Latin in Barcelona. One can well imagine his humiliation sitting at desks that he could barely fit into. The step was absolutely necessary, if he was ever going to meet the demands of priestly formation.

Once he completed brushing up on his rudimentary education, he set off to the greatest academic institution in Europe. He matriculated for the College de Montaigu at the University of Paris, where he completed a master's degree in theology. At the University, he gathered a group of friends, Alfonso Salmeron, Diego Laynez, Nicholas Bobadilla, Simon Rodriguez, Peter Faber and the famous Francis Xavier.

The group of friends became the first living cell of a brand-new form of religious life, whose priority was not penance or monastic living, but rather every expression of Jesuit life was devoted to the mission of the Church and the evangelisation of peoples. Each member was formed in the spiritual insights that had formed St Ignatius' life and that he had written down in the form of a 30-day retreat that he called his Spiritual Exercises.

In the retreat, each of the friends were invited, in their own right, to go face to face, nose to nose, toe to toe with Christ and His mission for them. The Spiritual

Exercises enveloped these men in the mysteries of Christ's life and choice of them, and that enveloping drew out of them their very own choice to participate in Christ's saving mission. The retreat allowed them to hear that word that God had spoken in them and His idea for their life.

These seven companions claimed the title 'Company of Jesus', or 'Society of Jesus', for their new community. To the ears of other religious communities that had been labouring in the Church for centuries, the title seemed vaguely arrogant and presumptuous; these new boys claiming to be the intimate companions of the Lord, but to Ignatius and his friends it was a humble acclamation of whose mission they were participating in and who had spoken their mission to each.

At one level, it could be superfluous to examine the life and mission of a man who is separated from us by 500 years, even though that man may have become a saint. All of us could ask, what is that to me? In these days in which there are so many people speaking of lay people taking on a greater responsibility in and for the Church, where the Church is working on various forms of new ministry, and we are considering how Catholic communities are to be sustained without the presence of a priest.

Before the Church wastes energy on superficial job creation and upon architecture of structures without substance, let us raise our voices and share with each

The Divine Mercy Image explained...

Darkness and light by Sr Benedetta Hutnikiewicz ZSJM, Sisters of Merciful Jesus, Letterkenny

LAST month I wrote about the healing that God wants to grant us through the image of the Merciful Jesus, especially the healing of our image of God the Father. From now on, in the next few articles, I would like to focus on different parts of the Image and see what they teach us about Divine Mercy. To start off, we shall be looking at darkness and light in the Image.

Strange? It might look odd, since the darkness and the light are not what first jumps out at us when we look at the Divine Mercy Image. But they are very important. In fact, even indispensable. They provide a context that we can't do without.

Darkness, the physical darkness of night or a dark room or place, in itself is part of God's creation. It's created by Him, and henceforth,

it is good. In the beginning God separates darkness from light and calls it night (cf Gen 1:1-5). But, there's much more to darkness than its literal meaning.

In the language of the Bible, life is closely connected with light. To come into light means to be born – when we are born we come to see the light! Job for instance, cries out: "Why was I not as a hidden stillborn child, as infants who never see the light?" (Job 3:16). To be healed in the biblical language is to come back to light; to live is to walk in the light.

God is light: "This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5); "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of

my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1); "In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:4-5).

What then is darkness? Not physical darkness, like night, which is created by God and as such is good. But spiritually, symbolically – what is darkness? Why do we have darkness in the Divine Mercy Image?

Darkness is sin. Darkness is death. Yes, sin brings death. We rarely think about it in these categories but that's the reality. And that death is more dangerous than physical death is. To live in grace is to carry eternal life within ourselves. To live in sin is to be dead already.

"Therefore justice is far from us, and righteousness does not overtake us; we hope for light, and behold, darkness, and for brightness, but we walk in gloom. We grope for the wall like the blind; we grope like those who have no eyes; we stumble at noon as in the twilight, among those in full vigour we are like dead men" (Is 59:9-10).

If we don't have sanctifying grace within us, we are spiritually dead. And that's more serious than being physically dead, because if we die in that state we can go to hell. In other words: spend our whole eternity away from God, love, light, in a permanent darkness of hatred and evil.

We all know the story of how Judas betrayed Jesus. St John the Evangelist describing that moment wrote some very significant words. Jesus gave Judas a morsel of bread. "So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night" (John 13:30). That night is what's going on in the heart of Judas. It's the night of sin, night of being at enmity with God, being cut off from His light. (That doesn't determine whether Judas went to hell when he died, by the way. The Church has never pronounced that about anyone.)

Of course, sin is the worst

darkness we can find ourselves in (though we rarely acknowledge it), but there are other 'dark' moments in our lives too: bereavement; depression; loss of a job; loneliness; sickness.

Do you know that darkness is not a colour? It's a mixture of colours. Our darkness can be a mixture of different things. It can result in the feelings of confusion, being lost, not understanding what's happening.

This sounds pretty gloomy. But wait; there is a lot of good news coming! God in His Mercy does not leave us alone in our dark night of sin. He sends Jesus, His only Son, to save us. "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined" (Is 9:1).

Jesus comes into this world as the light of the world. The Divine Mercy Image shows that very clearly. If we took Jesus out of the image it would be all dark. He is the source of light in the painting. But more importantly, He is the light of the world.

"Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'" (John 8:12) "I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness" (John 12:46).

Jesus is not afraid of our darkness. In fact, He wants us to invite Him right into it, because only then can He transform it, filling it with light. The darkest places are those that attract Him. Not because He delights in darkness, but because He loves us so much that He wants to bring us into light. Those dark corners can become, by His grace, a privileged place of encountering Him. That takes place especially in Confession. If, in that great Sacrament, we lay our darkness open before Him, He can do miracles and wonders. He can even bring good things out of our sins. Truly, only God can do that!

We tend to present a best version of ourselves, both to other people and to God. But He is more



Kazimirowski Eugeniusz, Divine Mercy, 1934.

Irish Mass celebrated at Granaghan Mass Rock

THERE was a good attendance at the Granaghan Mass Rock on July 4, when Mass was celebrated in Irish by Fr Paddy Doherty, PP Maghera, and concelebrated by Fr Charles Keane, PP Granaghan.

Those gathered enjoyed favourable weather despite it being a showery day, with no rain before, during or after the celebration of Mass.



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other the importance of mission, and particularly the notion of mission that Ignatius teaches in his doctrine. Before we do anything at all, St Ignatius points us definitively to look into the face of the Saviour. He challenges the Church to know in a new and profound way the meaning of the Sent Son of God. He asks us to know it in such a way that it transforms our minds, hearts, and souls. St Ignatius knows by constantly looking into the face of the Son of God, we will see ourselves and the mission He has given to us. Christ is the Alpha and the Omega of mission. Christ is the Alpha and Omega of the renewal of the Church.

It does not matter what mission He has given to each of us, what matters is that He has chosen it for us, it doesn't matter how big or small the mission is. St Ignatius teaches rather what is of key significance is that I give myself, so that the Church can live and rejuvenate itself in these

days. God knows us in the most intimate and personal way, He knows the things that He has put into us, and He knows that the word that He has spoken only to us will make both our life and the life of our Church flower.

The significant point to comprehend is that we have to choose it for ourselves. We have to choose to be missionaries. He needs a full throated 'Yes', the type of 'Yes' that we back up with energy, effort, sacrifice, putting ourselves on the line, giving ourselves, and a surrender of self so that Christ's Body may have our life.

Before we propose to do anything, let us begin with the prayer of St Ignatius Loyola, "Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all that I have and possess, you have given all to me. To you Lord I return it. All is yours, dispose of it wholly according to your will, give me only your love and grace, that is sufficient for me."

interested in those things we try to hide. He wants to be present in everything that is in our lives, not only the good and beautiful things. He knows that that is where we need Him most, even if we're unaware of it. That's why in the Image Jesus is walking into the darkness and conquering it with His light.

So, if today you find yourself in any kind of darkness, whether it's

the greatest darkness of all, which is sin, or any other darkness, that of grief, loss of someone dear to you, illness, mental health problems (you name it!), know that He has come to be the light in that darkness. Just open your heart to receive Him. Invite His light into your heart by going to Confession and later receiving Him in the Eucharist. He can't wait to fill you with light!



Aghyaran, Castlederg & Melmount pilgrims at Knock for World Day for Grandparents & Elderly.

Parish Post-its

Aghyran

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

Ardstraw East

40 Hours: There will be 40 Hours of Adoration in Newtownstewart Oratory from 3 pm on Friday, August 4 to 9 am on Sunday, August 6. All welcome.

Badoney Lower (Gortin-Rouskey)

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

Ballinascreen/Desertmartin

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

Ballymagroarty

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

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

Banagher

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

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

Cemetery Blessing: The Blessing of the Graves will take place at St Mary's Church, Altinure, on Sunday, September 3, at 10.30 am.

Bellaghy

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

Buncrana

Cemetery Sunday: The annual Graveyard Masses take place on Sunday, July 31, at 3pm, in St Mary's, Cockhill, and on Sunday, August 6, at 3 pm in Star of the Sea, Desertegney.

Garden Fête: The Garden Fete will return this year, on Sunday, August 27, in the grounds of Scoil Mhuire, from 3-6 pm.

Adoration: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place daily in St Mary's Oratory after Mass until 1 pm (Monday-Friday),

11 am - 5 pm (Saturday), 1.30-7 pm (Sunday).

Rosary: The Rosary is prayed each weekday at 9.30 am in St Mary's Oratory, prior to 10 am Mass.

Guided Holy Hour: The Guided Holy Hour of Adoration in Honour of the Holy Face of Jesus will continue on Sundays, 6-7 pm in St Mary's Oratory. All welcome. Rosary for Priests: Three Rosaries are prayed each Tuesday, between 1-2 pm, in the Oratory for vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

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

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

Burt, Inch & Fahan

Anniversary Mass: Bishop Donal is to celebrate Mass to mark the 100th anniversary of Our Lady of Lourdes Church, on Sunday, August 20.

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

Cappagh

Summer Scheme: Knockmoyle Summer Scheme will run the week beginning August 7 and 14 August. Contact 07749147908 for further information.

Graves' Blessing: A Service of Blessing with Rosary will take place in Killyclogher graveyard on Sunday, September 3, at 1 pm (No Mass). Graves will be blessed at Knockmoyle Sunday, September 10, directly after 10 am Mass, and at Mountfield on Sunday, September 3, directly after 10 am Mass.

Castleberg & Ardstraw West

Knock Day Trip: Those interested in participating in a day trip to Knock Shrine on Saturday, August 5, contact Claire Sheerin at: mariesheerin@btinternet.com or call 7139 8932 or 078 5494 8120. There will be a pick-up in Castleberg at 8.30 am, returning at 9 pm.

Prayer: The Rosary and Angelus are prayed in St Patrick's Church, Castleberg on Tuesdays at 2 pm. Adoration: Adoration takes place following 10 am Mass in St Patrick's Church on Fridays, until 12 noon.

Claudy

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

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, Craighbane.

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

Clonleigh (Lifford)

Knock Pilgrimage: The second annual Parish Pilgrimage to Knock Shrine will take place on Saturday, August 12, with the coach leaving the Church Car Park at 7.30 am. Fr Colm will celebrate Mass in the Apparition Chapel at 12.30 pm. To book a seat contact James on 085 8767999 or Louise on 0860567455. Cost £25 includes bus and evening meal.

Coleraine

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

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

Creggan

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

Polish Mass: Mass for the Polish community will be celebrated at 9.30 am every second and fourth Sunday of the month in the Divine Mercy Chapel, at St Mary's Church.

Dunamanagh

Knock: There will be a pilgrimage to Knock on Saturday, August 5, with a bus leaving Aughabrack at 8 am. For further information and to register interest contact Claire Sheerin at mariesheerin@btinternet.com or telephone 028 71 398932, 07854948120.

Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration takes place in St Patrick's Church after 10 am Mass on Saturdays, until 12 noon, and on Mondays from 7-8 pm.

Drumragh (Omagh)

Prayer Group: The Charismatic Prayer Group meetings take place in The Pastoral Centre on Thursday evenings, with Rosary at 7.40 pm and prayer meeting at 8 pm. All welcome to come and pray. Legion of Mary: The Legion of Mary Men's meetings take place on the first, second and last Monday, and third Tuesday, of each month, in St Vincent's Hall (beneath Sacred Heart Church Sacristy).

Adoration: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in Sacred Heart Church on Wednesdays following morning Mass until 6 pm.

Dungiven

HOPE Camp: HOPE Camp



Dungiven will run from July 31 until August 4.

Healing Mass: A St Pio Healing Mass takes place on the first Tuesday of each month at 7 pm in St Patrick's. Note - This Mass will next take place in September.

Rosary: The Rosary is prayed at 9.35 am in St Patrick's Church from Monday-Friday.

Lectio Divina: The Lectio Divina Group meet on Wednesdays, from 7.30 - 9.00 pm, in the Committee Room.

Prayer Group: The St Canice's Prayer Group meets each Thursday in the Conference Room at 7 pm, and invites anyone who wishes to deepen their faith through shared Scripture, Prayer and Praise.

Errigal

Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration takes place on Mondays after the morning Mass in St Mary's Church, Ballerin, until 2.30 pm.

Rosary & Chaplet: The Rosary and Divine Mercy Chaplet are prayed in St Joseph's Church, Glenullin, every Wednesday evening at 6.30 pm.

Social Gathering: Tea and scones are available in Glenullin Social Club after the Wednesday morning Mass, offering an opportunity to have 'a cuppa and a natter' after the prayers are said! Everyone welcome.

Fahan

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

Faughanvale

Memorial Cycle: The annual Fr Jack Gallagher Memorial Cycle will take place on Sunday, August 6. Registration will be in St Anne's Hall from 9.15 am, and the cycle will leave at 10 am for The Drift Inn, Buncrana, where refreshments will be available, along with music and a ticket raffle. All proceeds go to Foyle Hospice. For further information contact Andrew Barr on 07791760237.

Rosary: The Rosary is prayed every Friday at 7 pm in Star of the Sea Church.

Greencastle

Divine Mercy: The Divine Mercy Chaplet is prayed on the First Tuesday of every month at 12.15 pm before Mass in St Patrick's Church, Greencastle.

Adoration: Adoration of the

Blessed Sacrament takes place in St Patrick's Church after 12.30 pm Mass on Tuesdays until 5 pm.

Iskaheen, Drung & Muff

Graves' Blessing: The Blessing of Graves will take place in Drung on Sunday, July 30 at 3 pm, in Muff on Sunday, August 13 at 3 pm, and in Iskaheen on Sunday, August 13 at 5 pm.

Adoration: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place on Tuesdays after 10 am Mass in St Patrick's Church, Iskaheen.

Divine Mercy: Divine Mercy Devotions take place on Wednesdays after 10 am Mass in Sacred Heart Church, Muff.

St Peregrine: The St Peregrine Novena Prayer and veneration of relic takes place in St Columba's Church, Drung, after the 10.15 am Mass on the first Sunday of each month.

Lavey

Parish BBQ: A Parish Steak BBQ will take place on Saturday, August 12, in Lavey Termonkeeney Centre. Food will be served from 8-10 pm, followed by entertainment until midnight. Tickets £20 each.

150th Anniversary: The 150th anniversary of the opening of St Mary's Church, Lavey, will be celebrated on Friday, September 8, at 7.30 pm.

Youth 2000: Youth 2000 Prayer Group, for 16-35 year olds, meets in Lavey Parochial House, opposite the chapel, on Friday evenings at 7.30 pm.

Leckpatrick

Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration takes place on Wednesdays after 10 am Mass until 5.30 pm.

Limavady

Hope Camp: Hope Camp Limavady, closing Mass is on Sunday, July 30, at 12 noon in Christ the King Church.

Children's Liturgy: Children's Liturgy for children in P1-P3 takes place every Sunday at the 12 noon Mass in Christ the King Church.

Maghera

Pray & Play: The Maghera Parish Play and Play for Parents, Grandparents & Tots (three years old and younger) meets every Friday, in the Fairhill Youth Centre, after the 10 am Mass. It runs from 10.30 am until 12 noon.

Malin

Graves' Blessing: The Blessing of the Graves will take place on Sunday, August 13.

Sports' Day: The annual Malin Head Sports' Day will take place on Sunday, August 20.

Ruby Jubilee: The Parish will be celebrating Fr Peter Devlin's Ruby Jubilee on Friday, August 25, with Mass followed by a dinner dance in the Ballyliffin Lodge Hotel.

Moville

Prayer: The Rosary and Divine Mercy Chaplet will be recited in St Pius X Church, Moville, at 7.30 pm every day, from Sunday - Friday.

Adoration: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place on Mondays, from 2-9 pm, and Wednesdays, 6-9 pm, in St Pius X Church.

Sion Mills

Legion of Mary: The Legion of Mary meets in the Green Room, behind the church, each Monday evening at 7.30 pm. This is open not only to members of the Legion but to anyone interested in joining. Anyone can come along to the start of the meeting for the Rosary.

Steelstown

Lectio Divina: Lectio Divina is a way of praying the Scriptures together and takes place every Wednesday after 10 am Mass, in the Parish Conference Room. All welcome.

Adoration: Spend some quiet time before the Lord Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament each Friday after 10 am Mass to 6.50 pm.

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

Strabane (Camus)

Adoration: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place all day in the Adoration Chapel (Oasis of Peace), which is situated at the back of the Church.

Prayer Group: The Contemplative Prayer Group meets on Mondays at 8 pm in the Prayer Room in the Parochial House. All welcome. Entry by Parish Priest's front door. SJYP Society: The St John Vianney branch of the St Joseph's Young Priests' Society (the three combined Strabane parishes) meets on the first Tuesday of the month, excluding January, July

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Diocesan clerical changes 2023

THE 2023 clerical changes for the Diocese, effective from August 26, have been announced as follows:

- Rev John Farren, PP Iskaheen, to be, in addition, Vicar Forane for the Inishowen Deanery
- Right Rev Mgr Bryan McCanny, PP Limavady, to be, in addition, PP Magilligan
- Rev Paul Fraser, PP Ardstraw West & Castleberg and PP Termonamongan, to be, in addition, PP Langfield
- Rev Eugene Hasson, PP Drumragh and Adm Langfield, to remain PP Drumragh
- Rev Kevin Doherty, on loan from Archdiocese of Dublin, to be Adm Clonmany and Adm Culdaff
- Rev Dermott Harkin, CC Limavady, to be, in addition, CC Magilligan
- Rev Thomas Canning, CC Melmount and CC Sion Mills, to be in CC Ardstraw West & Castleberg, CC Termonamongan and CC Langfield, residing at Drumquin
- Rev Peter O'Kane, CC Drumragh and CC Langfield, and Judicial Vicar of the National Marriage Appeals Tribunal for Ireland, to cease as Curate and in addition to his role as Judicial Vicar undertake a diocesan role as Training in Evangelisation and Adult Faith Formator
- Rev James Devine, returning from leave of absence, to be CC Badoney Lower, CC Badoney Upper, CC Ardstraw East and CC Greencastle, residing at Greencastle

- Rev Roni Zacharias, CC (Templemore) St Eugene's Cathedral, to be CC Three Patrons
- Rev Malachy Gallagher, CC Melmount and CC Sion Mills, to reside at Sion Mills
- Rev Michael McCaul, CC Drumragh and CC Langfield, to remain CC Drumragh
- Rev Shaun Doherty, recently ordained, to be CC (Templemore) St Eugene's Cathedral

- Rev Frank O'Hagan, PP Magilligan and Chaplain HMP Magilligan, to be Priest-in-Residence Magilligan and remain Chaplain HMP Magilligan
- Very Rev Brian Brady, PP Clonmany and PP Culdaff and Vicar Forane for the Inishowen Deanery, to retire
- Rev Gerard Hasson, CC Coleraine, to retire
- Rev Tony Mailey, CC Iskaheen, to retire.



and August, with Rosary in the church after 10 am Mass and continues in St Patrick's Hall. More people are encouraged to join in this prayer for new students to join the priesthood. The Society assists Irish and overseas student. Please contact Margaret Harte on 028 71 883159.

Padre Pio Mass: The Padre Pio Mass takes place in the Church on the first Wednesday of the month at 7 pm, with Rosary beforehand at 6.40 pm.

Grotto Rosary: The Rosary is recited at the Grotto on the last Sunday of each month. Everyone welcome.

Templemore – Long Tower God Club: Young people wanting to learn about their Catholic faith are welcome to come along to the 'God Club' in Aras Colmcille, in the grounds of Long Tower Church, on Saturdays, starting at 10.30 am.

Padre Pio Mass: A Padre Pio Mass for healing in mind and body takes place on the first Monday of each month at 7.30 pm, in Long Tower Church. It is hoped at the end of each Mass to give a Blessing using a First Class Relic of Padre Pio. The Mass will be streamed via the parish website: www.longtowerchurch.org then click on the link for the webcam or alternatively by logging on to www.churchmedia.tv. The next Padre Pio Mass will take place

on Monday, September 4.

PATH Mass: The next PATH Mass (Parish Action Towards Health) will take place in the Long Tower on Thursday, September 7, at 7.30 pm, followed by Adoration until midnight.

Templemore – St Eugene's

Matt Talbot Mass: The Matt Talbot, Freedom from addiction Mass takes place on the first Monday of each month at 7.30 pm in St Eugene's Cathedral.

Cathedral Voices: Cathedral Voices is a singing group for people living with dementia and older members of the community. The singing club takes place every Thursday from 1.30-3 pm. A great chance to socialise, listen to music, have a cup of tea and a chat and a bit of craic. If you are interested in attending, please contact the parish office on 028 71262894.

Three Patrons

Be Still: Be Still is a Men's Prayer and Friendship Group that meets every Thursday night from 8-9.15 pm in Our Lady's Chapel, within St Joseph's Church building, Galliagh. Its mission as a group is to provide a safe place where men can pray and share in a confidential and supportive setting. All men are welcome.

Holy Hour: A Holy Hour for the Unborn & Expectant Mothers

takes place on Thursdays at 7 pm in Our Lady's Chapel, St Joseph's Church, Galliagh. All welcome.

Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration takes place in Our Lady's Chapel, St Joseph's Church, Galliagh, on Mondays after 11 am Mass, concluding with a Youth 2000 Holy Hour from 7-8 pm.

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.

Urney & Castlefinn

First Saturdays: The First Saturday Devotion and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament will take place in St Columba's Church, Doneyloop, from 12 noon until 1 pm on the First Saturday of each month.

Adoration: Weekly Eucharistic Adoration takes place in St Anthony's Chapel every Tuesday, from 12 noon until 8 pm.

Cenacle: The Cenacle for Priests takes place every Tuesday in St Anthony's Chapel immediately after the 7 pm Mass.

Waterside & Strathfoyle

Lectio Divina: Reflect on the Scriptures with Lectio Divina in the Church of the Immaculate Conception on Thursday nights, starting at 8.15 pm.

Other Diary Dates

Light the Fire Novena: Archbishop Eamon Martin is leading a Novena of Prayer for the renewal of faith, hope and love in Ireland, from July 28 to Saturday, August 5, in preparation for the afternoon of prayer on the Hill of Slane on Sunday, August 6. Archbishop Eamon will be celebrating Mass at Slane during the Light the Fire ceremony, and Dana will be singing her new song, 'Light the Fire', which she launched on the Feast of St Patrick, March 17.

Catholic Mothers' Group: The Catholic Mothers' is having a gathering for families on Monday, August 7, from 11.30 am until 2.30 pm in Workspace Recreation Centre, Draperstown. All welcome.

Holy Souls Prayer: Under The Gaze of Our Lady of Montligeon, the Holy Souls of Purgatory Prayer Meeting takes place every Monday night in Termonbacca, from 7.30-8.30 pm sharp.

Termonbacca Summer Scheme: A Summer Scheme for those aged 8-14 years will take place at Termonbacca from Monday, July 31 until Friday, August 4, from 12 noon - 4 pm. To register visit Termonbacca Facebook page.

Young Adult Catholic

Conference: The Legion of Mary are holding a Young Adult Catholic Conference on Saturday, August 19 and Sunday, August 20, with the theme, 'Under Mary's Mantle'. This is a conference on faith and culture for young adults (18-35) with talks, prayer, Mass, Confession, workshops, food and social in the historic All Hallows campus, DCU, Dublin, and is a chance to build faith in friendship with young men and women from across the country.

Keynote speakers include poet and convert, Sally Read, a one-time radical feminist who embraced the Faith, Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan, Cistercian Fr Aelred McGee, Marian theologian Professor William A Thomas, and many more. The talks and workshops range widely from poetry to reading the Bible, vocations and Mary in the Liturgical Year! Mass and Confessions take place both days.

Two day ticket (Saturday & Sunday) - €60. Day rates - Saturday €40, Sunday €30. Students get a 10% discount

- contact deusetpatria@gmail.com for discount code. There is a limited amount of accommodation available in DCU, contact deusetpatria@gmail.com or call 085 144 2423 for rates and more information.

Youth 2000 Festival: The Youth 2000 Summer Festival for young people, aged 16-35, is taking place in Clongowes Wood College, Clane, Co Kildare, from August 10-13. The festival includes inspiring talks, music, prayer, concert, workshops, dramas, share groups, reconciliation and healing service and Mass. Donation only and there will be buses going from all over Ireland. Book online on: youth2000.ie/retreats/upcoming-retreats/ or telephone 003531 6753 690.

Lough Derg Pilgrimage Season: The Three Day Pilgrimage runs until Monday, August 15 (last day to begin Sunday, August 13). Admission €80. Booking advised. One Day Retreat: August 19, 22, 27, and September 2, 6, 9, 12, 16, 17, 23, 24. Admissions €45. Booking essential. For booking and more information see www.loughderg.org or telephone 00353 719861518.

Mary's Meals Walk: A six-mile walk over the Foyle and Peace bridges in Derry, for Mary's Meals, will take place on Sunday, August 6. Starting and finishing in Sainsbury's car park. It will begin at 12 noon. Mary's Meals Charity feeds two million children per day in some of the world's poorest countries. For more information, ring or text Helen on 0044 7814441701.

Eucharistic Conference: Abide Eucharistic Conference '23 will take place in St Anne's, Cranmore Road, Sligo, on Saturday, September 16, at 10.30 am. The theme will be - 'As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love' (Jn 15:9). The guest speakers will be Bishop Kevin Doran, Mother Adela Galindo, Archbishop Domenico Sorrentino, and Fr Barry Braum. This will be followed by a nine-day Eucharistic revival mission around Ireland.

Maynooth Courses: Courses in Pastoral Liturgy and Theology are on offer at St Patrick's, Maynooth. Postgraduate Programme application deadline at the

Pontifical University is August 14. Visit sppu.ie for further details.

Polish Mass: Mass for the Polish community will be celebrated at 9.30 am every second and fourth Sunday of the month in the Divine Mercy Chapel, at St Mary's Church, Creggan, in Derry City.

Stations of Cross: On the First Friday of each month, after 10 am Mass in St Eugene's, there is a silent procession from the Cathedral to St Columba's Church, Long Tower, meditating on the Stations of the Cross.

Coastal Rosary: Rosary on the Coast for world peace and the protection of unborn babies takes place at Lisfannon Beach, Buncrana, on the first Sunday of every month at 3 pm, and at Benone Strand on the third Sunday of every month, at 3 pm.

Men's Rosary: The Men's Rosary takes place on the first Saturday of every month in Market Street, Omagh (opposite Primark) at 1 pm. All Welcome!

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.

Vocations Holy Hour: A Holy Hour for Vocations takes place in St Eugene's Cathedral, Derry, at 8 pm on the second Friday of each month.

World Youth Day: Derry Diocesan Youth is leading a group of over 18s on Pilgrimage to World Youth Day in Lisbon, from July 25 to August 7.

Diocesan Diary

Education Conference: A Catholic Schools Diocesan Education Conference will be held in St Columba's College, Derry, on August 29 for Post Primary and August 30 for Primary, with the theme: 'Go Make Disciples of all Nations'. The keynote speaker will be David Wells, an

internationally renowned speaker with a background in Education, and there will be a number of workshops and a session looking at how, as Catholic schools, rooted in Jesus, a culture of dialogue and forgiveness is encouraged in all our relationships.

Fr Johnny Doherty CSsR writes...

You are the Christ, the Son of the living God



Fr Johnny Doherty CSsR

THERE are many ways of looking at these months of July and August. For a lot of people they are the holiday months, when they go places they do not normally go to and do things that they do not normally do.

For other people, these are months when their children are off school for weeks on end and keeping them active is a full time job.

When I was thinking about these two months in relation to writing for 'The Net', the thought that kept coming back to me was that they are sandwiched between two readings of the same Gospel passage at Mass. It is from the Gospel of St Matthew, Chapter 16, verses 13-19. This passage was read on June 29, for the Feast of Sts Peter and Paul. It will be read again on August 27 for the Twenty First Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Two questions

The important thing about this passage, and its repetition, is that it contains two of the most important questions that Jesus asked His disciples as He led them to faith in the true God: "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" and "Who do you say I am?" Those are the two questions that He asks of His followers of every generation. To have them asked of us at this particular time is significant!

Who do people say the Son of Man is?

For generations before Christ, the Jewish people looked for and looked forward to the coming of the Messiah, the one who would deliver them from their bondage. It was a religious question that kept God's people filled with hope for their future. That is why the response of Christ's disciples was: "Some say he is John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

How relevant is this question for us today?

This is no longer a religious question for us today. I have never heard anyone ask that question. So, is it irrelevant for us? Far from it! In fact, that is the question that everyone is asking but in different ways.

Where do people today look for their hope, their happiness, their future, their fulfilment? Everyone is looking for those qualities of life, often in strange places.

1. Many people look for their

fulfilment in positions of power. The objective of their lives becomes to get to the top of the ladder, whatever their particular ladder happens to be. Of course, this touches into a very important need that all of us have, namely, to get on as well as possible in life and to use the gifts that we have to the full.

However, when this becomes the objective of life it is never truly fulfilling. By the time we get there, if we get there at all, it is nearly time to come back down again!

We live in a celebrity culture where only the famous, those who have made it to the top in sport, in entertainment, in politics, in business would seem to have life to the full. Everyone else is left regretting their lot. But even the celebrities are quickly replaced with new ones and people are soon forgotten!

2. Another place that so many people put their hopes in is possessions, especially wealth. If you can only be rich enough then you will be happy. Again, this touches into a very important aspect of life for all of us. But when it becomes the source of hope for our lives we are always going to be disappointed, because the vast majority of us will never be among the wealthy.

3. A third source of hope for happiness for so many people is pleasure. If you can enjoy yourself all the time then you will be happy. It is so important that we can get pleasure out of living. But when this is the prerequisite for happiness it is going to let us down, as it does so many of our young people, especially today. Suffering is also a normal part of human life. We need to develop the resources for dealing with this part of life, as well as the ability to enjoy the good things of life.

Who do you say I am?

It is into this struggle for happiness that Jesus asks us the second question that He asked His disciples in the Gospel: "Who do you say I am?"

In the Gospel passage, Peter says to Him: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And in reply, Jesus says to him: "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church."

It is on that one sentence of Peter's that the Church is built, that our faith is fully expressed. It is the faith that we are all called to if we are ever to find hope and happiness and fulfilment in our lives.

What does it mean?

1. First of all, it means that we believe that Jesus is the only one who can reveal to us the true God. And He tells us of God as one who loves us passionately and unconditionally. He tells us that God is like a father or mother who never gives up on us. We are always on God's mind and in God's heart. God only sees the good in us and forgives and overlooks the wrong

that we do. God's only desire is to hold us and speak love into our hearts.

2. Secondly, we believe that Christ is the only one who can tell us about true human living. He tells us that we are made in the image of God and so destined to live eternally. He tells us that we are temples of God's Holy Spirit and so are filled with grace. He tells us that we are members of His Body, bringing joy and peace to the world in which we live.

3. And He tells us that the only

way to true human living and real happiness is the way of love – love of God with our whole hearts, our whole souls, out whole minds and our whole strength; and to love our neighbour as ourselves – or, even more importantly, to love one another as He has loved us. I wrote about the implications of this way of life in 'The Net' last month.

July/August

Holidays can be seen as a time to get 'away from' one another and the normal humdrum of life, and

especially family life and faith life. And there is some sense in this.

But it is more important to think of the holiday months as a time to get 'away from' one another and the real priorities of life, when we can take time to relish the beauty of what we have and who we are.

Whether you go somewhere for a break or stay at home during these months, you can use this time to grow in your love for one another as husband and wife, as parents with your children. The choices you make can either be for what the world tells you will bring you happiness or what you know will bring you the greatest happiness, namely your time spent together and your fun time with

one another. It is also a time when you can deepen your faith by making the extra effort to find where you can celebrate Mass when you are away, and where you can do so as a family. Unfortunately, many people today so easily leave God out of their holiday time because it is inconvenient for them to do otherwise.

If our faith in Jesus Christ is to be real, it has to affect how we live our lives during this time as through the rest of the year. Only His way of life of love can bring us the real joy and happiness of life, by bringing us closer to one another and to our God.

Happy holidays!

The enduring power of Grandparents and Grandchildren by Fr Joseph Varghese



Fr Joseph Varghese, who ministers in the Dungiven Parish

THE relationship between grandparents and grandchildren is a treasure trove of immeasurable benefits for both parties involved. Widely recognised by social experts, the physical, spiritual, and emotional advantages gained from this special bond are undeniable. Grandparents play a pivotal role in providing their grandchildren with a vital connection to the past, instilling within them a deep sense of history, heritage, and identity. While children greatly benefit from hearing family traditions and life stories in the present, their appreciation for these tales only grows with time.

Having personally witnessed the immense contribution grandparents make to their grandchildren's lives, I can attest to the privilege bestowed upon them. Grandparents frequently step in to care for their grandchildren's temporal needs, offering support when parents are occupied with work or other commitments, tending to them when they fall ill, and attending school and sports events to cheer them on.

Moreover, grandparents play an invaluable role in nurturing their grandchildren's spiritual well-being, actively participating in their sacramental events, such as baptism, marriage, ordination, or profession to religious life.

On a daily basis, I have the opportunity to engage with grandparents who devote themselves to prayer on behalf of their grandchildren. Lighting candles and offering prayers for their well-being during times of health issues, exams, job applications, or other specific needs, grandparents demonstrate their deep involvement in their

grandchildren's lives. They provide exceptional support to parents in fostering their children's spiritual development, often viewed as more understanding and experienced in matters of faith. In particular, grandparents have an essential role in passing down their faith to future generations.

Given the significance of this relationship, it comes as no surprise that Pope Francis wholeheartedly supports the idea of a World Grandparents Day. Throughout his pontificate, he has been an ardent advocate for marginalised groups, and in many cases, grandparents are marginalised due to age or infirmity. Pope Francis' desire to "restore dignity to those cast aside" is a central theme underlying his support for grandparents. His memorable 2014 meeting with the elderly stands as one of his most cherished moments, further inspiring his efforts to establish a dedicated World Day to honour and recognise grandparents' immense value.

Under the theme, 'His mercy is from age to age,' Pope Francis will celebrate Mass in St Peter's Square on July 23, marking the third commemoration of World Grandparents Day. The chosen theme, derived from Luke's Gospel, establishes a strong connection between the event and World Youth Day, which will be celebrated in Lisbon from August 1-6. The proximity of these two events provides an opportunity for intergenerational dialogue, encouraging both groups to consider each other's needs, opinions, and sentiments.

Dialogue

St Luke's Gospel contains numerous passages showcasing important dialogues between people of different generations. For instance, the journey of Mary to meet her much older cousin, Elizabeth, despite the advanced years, exemplifies the importance of dialogue and the trust and acceptance they shared in God's will.

Pope Francis has long sought to foster similar dialogues between grandparents and grandchildren,

recognising the mutual benefits that can be gained by both parties. While he openly encourages the younger generation to learn from the wisdom and experiences of their elderly relatives, he also hopes that they will realise the depth of their indebtedness and consider ways to make the lives of the elderly easier and more comfortable. Expressing appreciation and recognition for all that grandparents have done, and ensuring they never feel like burdens on their families or society as a whole, is a primary goal.

Two fundamental aspects indicate the advancement and humanity of a society: how it cares for its elderly and how it honours its dead. Both demand absolute respect and appreciation, and it is our duty to hold governments accountable in ensuring these principles are upheld, if we are to be considered a truly civilised society.

To summarise Pope Francis' fervent promotion of Grandparents and Elderly Day, it is essential that we reject the prevailing 'throwaway culture' that deems human life expendable when no longer deemed useful. We must strive to ensure that our countries make tangible commitments to respect and promote the dignity of the elderly. Within our parishes and dioceses, we must unite to ensure that the elderly do not experience feelings of hopelessness or uselessness.

Let us all commit to placing our

elderly at the forefront of our minds as we explore ways to make them integral to our society, prioritising their dignity and welfare. Such an outcome would undoubtedly be pleasing to God.

Children possess an innate love for hearing the history and stories of their families. Parents, in turn, must recognise that children also grieve and require reassurance that their grandparents will always be close to them, saying a prayer for them at night and recounting happy or sad times, just as they did when they were alive. These memories hold immense value and continue to shape their lives. Naturally, grandparents pass on their faith, and it is vital for parents to value and support them in this role while keeping prayer at the heart of family life.

In the intricate tapestry of life, the bond between grandparents and grandchildren emerges as a timeless and cherished thread. Its significance extends far beyond the passing of knowledge and traditions; it embodies the celebration of heritage, the nurturing of faith, and the profound love that transcends generations.

Let us cherish and honour this invaluable relationship, recognising its immeasurable impact on both individual lives and society as a whole.

May the following prayer help all of our families:

Pope Benedict XVI's Prayer for Grandparents (Written at the request of the CGA in 2008.)

Lord Jesus, you were born of the Virgin Mary, the daughter of Saints Joachim and Anne. Look with love on grandparents the world over.

Protect them! They are a source of enrichment for families, for the Church and for all of society. Support them! As they grow older, may they continue to be for their families strong pillars of Gospel faith, guardians of noble domestic ideals, living treasures of sound religious traditions. Make them teachers of wisdom and courage, that they may pass on to future generations the fruits of their mature human and spiritual experience. Lord Jesus, help families and society to value the presence and role of grandparents. May they never be ignored or excluded, but always encounter respect and love. Help them to live serenely and to feel welcomed in all the years of life which you give them.

Mary, Mother of all the living, keep grandparents constantly in your care, accompany them on their earthly pilgrimage, and by your prayers, grant that all families may one day be reunited in our heavenly homeland, where you await all humanity for the great embrace of life without end. Amen!

Children's Catechism Club - C3

by Veronica Harley

HELLO children. Welcome to the months of July and August. Summertime has arrived. These are fantastic months filled with fun and plenty of things to keep you amused.



Precious Blood of Jesus – July

The month of July is dedicated to the Precious Blood of Jesus. We all have blood in our bodies, which helps us to live and stay healthy, therefore, we know how important and precious blood is. The Church and the sacraments, which we receive, have all come about through the precious Blood of Christ, which was poured out on the Cross when Jesus suffered and died for us.

Saints of the Month

St Thomas the Apostle - July 3
St Benedict - July 11
St Mary Magdalene - July 22
St Bridget of Sweden - July 23



Maria Goretti - Feast Day July 6

Maria was born at Corinaldo, Ancona, in Italy, into a poor but loving family; she was one of six children. She was baptised the day after she was born. Her father, Luigi was a farmer and her mother, Assunta, was a poor orphan girl who did not know how to read or write. Maria's parents loved God, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and each other.

Maria's father died when she was only 12, so she helped her mother on the farm and with the younger children. Although they were very poor, Maria never complained and was always a comfort to her mother. She went to Mass every day, and taught her younger brothers and sister their prayers and told them

stories from the bible.

A boy named Alexander, aged 16, also worked on the same farm as Maria's family. He began to notice how pretty Maria was and wanted to be close to her, but she refused as she wanted to remain pure like Our Lady. It was on a summer afternoon that Maria was at home alone mending clothes when Alexander asked her to come to him. When she refused, he dragged her into a room and would not listen to her. She begged him to leave her alone because it would offend God and he would go to hell. Maria struggled and screamed, so Alexander angrily stabbed her several times with a dagger and then ran off.

When Maria was found she was taken straight to hospital, but she died about 24 hours later. During her last hours, Maria received Jesus in Holy Communion and told the priest that she forgave Alexander with her whole heart and hoped that God would forgive him too. Alexander went to prison for 30 years, but for a long time he did not feel sorry for what he had done. Until one night, Maria appeared to him in a dream walking in a garden and offering him a bunch of lilies. She told him that she hoped he would come to heaven one day and, from that moment, he changed his life. He wrote a letter to the bishop asking for forgiveness for the awful sin he had committed. When he was released from prison, he spent the rest of his life working as a gardener in different monasteries.

Maria was declared a saint in 1950 by Pope Pius XII, who called her a 'Martyr of Holy Purity'. We pray to St Maria Goretti to help all children to remain pure and holy (CCC 2518).

CHAPLET OF PURITY

- ❖ To pray for the gift of a pure heart
- ❖ For all vocations and walks of life
- ❖ In response to Pope Benedict XVI's call for reparation in the Church
- ❖ To be prayed on Rosary beads

Sign of the Cross

On the Crucifix
Apostles Creed: I believe...

On the first bead
Our Father...

On each of the next three beads
Hail Mary...

On the fifth bead
Glory be...

Five Decades for the Virtue of Purity

On the Our Father bead
V. Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness. In your compassion, blot out my offence.
R. O wash me more and more from my guilt and cleanse me from my sin.
(Psalm 50:1-2) (Misereere)

On each of the ten Hail Mary beads
V. Blessed are the pure in heart.
R. For they shall see God.
(Matthew 5:8) (6th Beatitude)



On the final Glory Be bead,
Infant Jesus, meek and mild,
look on me, a little child.
Pity mine and pity me,
suffer me to come to thee.
Heart of Jesus, I adore thee,
Heart of Mary, I implore thee,
Heart of Joseph, pure and just,
in these three hearts I place my trust.
Help me, Jesus, in my strife
ever to lead a pure and blameless life.
Amen.

On each of the next three beads
V. A pure heart create for me, O God.
R. Put a steadfast spirit within me.
(Psalm 50:10)

On the final bead before the Crucifix
V. Saint Maria Goretti, martyr of purity
R. Pray for us
Sign of the Cross



Saint Maria Goretti
Died 6th July 1902
Aged 11 years
Canonized 1950

Compiled by Rev. Roland Colboun, CC
Diocese of Derry, Ireland
Feast of Saint Maria Goretti, 6th July 2012
110th Anniversary of her Death



The Blessed Sacrament - August

The month of August is dedicated to the Blessed Sacrament. The Blessed Sacrament is the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. Special times are set aside in our Churches called 'Adoration', where we can

come and worship Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, the Eucharist (CCC 1178). The Blessed Sacrament reminds us that even when Mass is not celebrated, Jesus in the Eucharist, is still present in the Church.

O Sacrament most Holy,
O Sacrament Divine
All praise and all thanksgiving
Be every moment Thine



The Transfiguration

The Feast of the Transfiguration is August 6. On this special day, we celebrate how Jesus showed himself to be truly divine to the three Apostles who accompanied Him to the top of Mount Tabor.

In the Gospels, we hear how Jesus took with Him, Peter, James and John, and went up the mountain to pray. While the disciples were there with Jesus, Elijah and Moses appeared to speak with Him. Then before their eyes, Jesus was transfigured, completely changed; His face and clothes becoming dazzlingly white!

The feast of the Transfiguration helps us to see, as the Apostles saw, that Jesus is really and truly God (CCC 554-555). This same Gospel story is heard during the second Sunday of Lent every year. It is part of the Lenten readings to remind us that the Apostles were given great hope at seeing Jesus in His glory before He was put to death and crucified. Likewise, we can reflect during Lent on the glory and joy which we will celebrate in the Easter story which will follow.

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The beautiful Feast of the Assumption of Mary into Heaven is celebrated on August 15. The Assumption of Mary means that She was taken up into Heaven, body and soul. Mary's body was always pure; She gave birth to the Son of God, therefore, God rewarded Her by taking Her pure, immaculate body into Heaven (CCC 966).

Mary now reigns as Queen of Heaven and Earth. She is our Mother who listens to our prayers and asks Jesus for special graces for us. On the Last Day, in the General Resurrection, we too hope to enter Heaven with our newly glorified bodies. Our resurrected bodies will



not suffer any illness nor need food or drink, but instead will be splendid and eternally beautiful.

If we use our bodies for doing good while we are alive, we will share the heavenly reward. On this great Feast, we ask the Blessed Mother of God to guide, protect and care for us.

Quiz Time with Lawrence

1. Which city will host next year Olympic games?
2. In what TV series did Leonard Rossiter play the role of landlord 'Rigsby'?
3. What number is directly opposite 4 on a dice?
4. In which US state did Barak Obama serve as a Senator before becoming President?
5. What iconic world landmark is situated on Corcovado Mountain?
6. Who was the lead singer of 70s and 80s band 'Roxy Music'?
7. In what month is horse racing's Aintree Grand National traditionally staged?
8. What TV series was set in the fictional village of Walmington-on-sea?
9. What is the world's most northerly capital city?
10. How many numbered playing cards are there in a regular deck?
11. What fictional street does cartoon family, 'The Simpsons' live on?
12. Who is the current deputy leader of the UK Labour Party?
13. In what century did Joan of Arc die?
14. What English football club plays their home games at Meadow Lane?
15. Which planet in our solar system is twice the size of all the rest put together?
16. The advertising campaign for the drink, 'Irn Bru', claimed it was made in Scotland from what?
17. What is the US State capital of Mississippi?
18. In which country does the Dalai Lama currently reside?
19. What is the UK's longest river?
20. How many keys are there on a regular piano?
21. Who was the regular presenter of the 1980s TV show, 'Bullseye'?
22. In US currency, how many nickels are there in a dime?
23. What did Solomon Grundy do on Tuesday?
24. How many lanes are there in an Olympic swimming pool?
25. What is the capital city of the Faroe Islands?

Quiz Answers: 1, Paris; 2, Rising Damp; 3, Three; 4, Illinois; 5, The Statue of Christ the Redeemer in Brazil; 6, Bryan Ferry; 7, April; 8, Dad's Army; 9, Reykjavic; 10, 36; 11, Evergreen Terrace; 12, Angela Rayner; 13, Fifteenth; 14, Notts County; 15, Jupiter; 16, Girders; 17, Jackson; 18, India; 19, The Severn; 20, 88; 21, Jim Bowen; 22, Two; 23, Got Christened; 24, Ten; 25, Torshavn.

Aghyaran, Ardmore, Ardstraw West & Castlederg, Ballinascreen, Ballymagroarty, Banagher, Bellaghy, Buncrana, Carndonagh, Claudy,

Let Your Light Shine!

Moville, Newtownstewart, Omagh, Plumbridge, Sion Mills, Steelestown, Strabane, Swatragh, Templemore - Long Tower and St Eugene's, Three Patrons, Waterside

Clonmany, Coleraine, Creggan, Culladuff, Culmore, Desertmartin, Derryloop, Drumquin, Duramannagh, Durngaven, Fahan, Faughanvale, Garvagh, Gortin, Greencastle,



The late Mandy Bradley, a dedicated member of Derry Cursillo over the past eight years, who passed away in Altnagelvin Hospital on the morning of Sunday, July 23, as some of her fellow Cursillistas were walking the last leg of their Walk to Knock. May she rest in peace.



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