The NET

Sharing fruits of faith in Derry Diocese

ISSUE 107. MAY 2025

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See inside...

Dominican Mission - Maghera.

St Therese Novena - St Eugene's Cathedral

HOPE Ice-cream Sunday - Claudy

"The invitation to all of us is to renew our devotion to Our Lady and to that beautiful prayer of the Rosary."

- Fr Patsy Arkinson, PP Donaghmore (see p14-15)

Donaghmore Legion of Mary 50th anniversary Mass in St Patrick's Church, Crossroads, Co Donegal.

May Procession - Creggan

Parish Coffee Morning - Urney & Castlefin

Youth Exam Mass - Omagh.

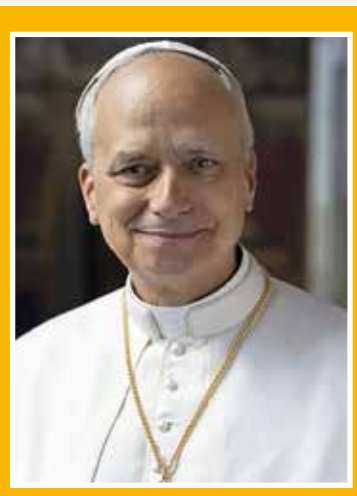
Sr Clare Grotto Mass - Brandywell, Long Tower

People *in focus*

Blessed Carlo Acutis

Danielle Magennis, Belfast

Michael Kelly, Omagh



Pope Leo XIV

Sr Rosa Goretti - Sisters of Life, New York

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Sharing the fruits of the faith in the Derry Diocese

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Bishop Donal reflects on the Pope's May prayer intention for working conditions:
Let us pray that through work, each person might find fulfilment, families might be sustained in dignity, and that society might be humanised.

Work needs to be structured around needs of families and social cohesion

IT is a God-incidence that the first prayer intention under the pontificate of Pope Leo XIV should coincide so neatly with a key priority of Pope Leo XIII – the rights of workers and the dignity of work.

Pope Leo XIII had been elected in 1878, aged almost 68, just a little younger than our new Holy Father. Those last years of the19th century saw the results of the Industrial Revolution. Workers were flocking to work in factories in cities, often crowded into cramped accommodation in smoky streets. The western world was changing from having a rural economy to constructing an industrialised urban society. That brought great profits for some – but came at huge cost to others.

Rerum Novarum - his famous Pastoral letter issued in 1891 - addressed the rights and duties of both employers and employees. Pope Leo XIII advocated for the rights of workers, and he promoted social justice, emphasising fair wages, the right to belong to trade unions, and the moral principes that should guide business owners.

In an age of empires, colonisation and urbanisation, this was a radical call. The Encyclical did not seek to defend Christ, sacraments or the Church. It was aimed at being a prophetic voice that challenged the power imbalances in the economic system. It was a key foundation for what has been described as one of Catholicism's best kept secrets – its large body of social teachings.

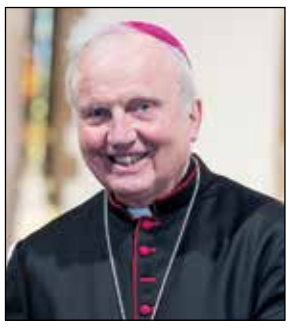
Pope Leo XIV will have been very aware of his illustrious predecessor when he chose his name. And he has already raised the issue of Artificial Intelligence and its profound effects on both work and society.

There are many other social issues that the Gospel can address – homelessness and migration, social injustices and spending on weapons, the vast sums of money controlled by a few individuals and the destruction of the environment.

This month we are asked to pray for the creation of a more just world for all. Work needs to be structured around the needs of families and social cohesion, and not merely around more profit for the strong.

Concern for justice is not a distraction from the Gospel. It is the outworking of a grace-filled world.

As with Jesus, the prophetic voice of the church has to both comfort the afflicted – and afflict the comfortable!


Bishop Donal

Eucharistic Adoration in the Diocese

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

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

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

Supporting us:

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

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

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

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

‘Sing for joy’ youth retreat a great success *by Brian McCaffrey*

A group of young adults aged 18-35 years old gathered on Lough Derg on Saturday, April 26, for a day of prayer and song. Entitled ‘Sing for Joy!’, the day was organised by the Knights of St Columbanus.

Twenty-four young people from across Ireland participated, and the day was led by Msgr Joe McGuinness and Mrs Pauline Devaney. The young people left the busyness of their lives behind as they crossed the lough to the sacred island of St Patrick’s Purgatory.

The group was warmly welcomed by the Lough Derg team and gathered in St Davog’s House. The first part of the day focused on prayerful and reflective music and song.

Msgr Joe encouraged those in attendance to take to heart the words they were singing and appreciate music as a form of heartfelt prayer.

Pauline spoke about how music can allow the Holy Spirit to move our minds and hearts. She also spoke about how singing can calm our minds and bring us into a prayerful place.

Throughout the morning, the group explored a range of songs and chants with a particularly reflective character. Several of these were used at the conclusion of the morning session during a period of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. Participants were invited to write down their petitions and prayer requests, which were placed before the altar.

At the morning break, Msgr Joe took the attendees on a walking tour of the island, explaining some of the significance of this sacred place where pilgrims have been coming to pray for 1,500 years. During the tour, the Lough Derg bell rang at 12 noon and the group paused for the ‘Angelus’.

The afternoon involved preparing music for the celebration of the Eucharist. Here the focus was on Joy and Praise. Friends and family members also attended the Mass, which was celebrated by the Prior of Lough Derg, Msgr La Flynn. Since the event coincided with the funeral of Pope Francis, the Holy Father was remembered in a special way during the Mass.

In his concluding remarks to the participants, Msgr Joe said that he hoped the day’s experience had helped the young people to appreciate more deeply the gift and power of music as a profound means of prayer and worship.

In particular, he suggested that the morning session had illustrated that meaningful and prayerful events can be led by lay people, and that these could help sustain a life of prayer in churches where Mass will be celebrated less frequently in the future.

The feedback from both the leaders and participants of the event have been overwhelmingly positive, and many people commented on how open, engaged and enthusiastic all the young people were.

This is the second Youth Retreat that has been run on the island by the Knights, and they hope that these events may help young people on their journey of faith.

The Knights acknowledge the contributions of Msgr McGuinness and Pauline Devaney. They also very much appreciate the support of Msgr La and the Lough Derg Team in welcoming the event to Lough Derg and, once again, providing such warmth of welcome and hospitality.

Omagh exam students encouraged to create quiet place within that storms of life can’t reach

YOUNG people from the Drumragh and Cappagh Parishes in Omagh took lead roles in the liturgy and music ministry during the celebration of a Youth Mass on May 1, in Christ The King Church, Strathroy, for exam year students.

Students were invited from Loreto Omagh, Christian Brothers Omagh, Sacred Heart Omagh,

St John’s Dromore, Integrated Omagh, St Ciaran’s Ballygawley, and The Dean Carrickmore. Servant Sisters from the Home of the Mother were also in attendance.

In his homily, Fr Kevin McElhennon, PP Cappagh, spoke about dealing with the storms of life, referring to the huge storm that the disciples had found themselves in while out in a boat on the water, and how they panicked while Jesus didn’t.

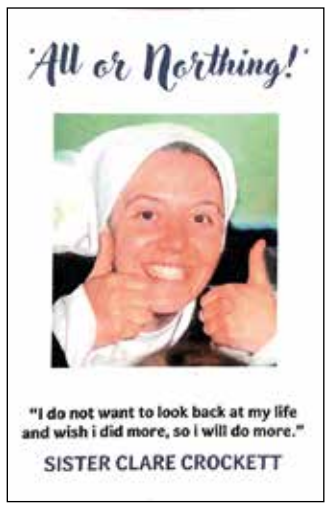
“You and I go through storms as well,” said Fr Kevin to the young people, “maybe not wind and waves, but they are just as real.

“Stress, pressure, worry, anxiety, exams, decisions, expectations. Voices telling you to be more, do better, don’t fail, figure it out, get it right. It’s loud, it’s constant, and it’s exhausting.

“And, if you’re not careful, the storm outside can get inside you; into your head, into your heart. And then you start thinking and believing…I’m not good enough…I’m falling behind…I am a failure…I am my results…I am my mistakes. You let the storm tell you who you are, but it is telling you a lie.”

Fr Kevin went on to highlight to his young listeners the importance of having a quiet place inside themselves that such storms can’t reach: “A place built not on results or marks, on likes or what other people think of you, but built on one truth – God’s voice saying, ‘You are My beloved – I am with you always.

“When Jesus wakes up in the storm, He doesn’t panic. He speaks from that still place in Himself… ‘Quiet now. Be calm.’ And the storm listens and obeys.”



Organised by The Knights of Columbanus in conjunction with Fr Kevin McElhennon, PP Cappagh, and some others, the young people received Sr Clare Crockett ‘All or Nothing’ Prayer Cards.

Inishowen community commended for constant support for Emmanuel and Matt's families as…

Teenage friends laid to rest in Buncrana

THE Buncrana community, which has been in a state of shock and mourning during this month of May since the news broke that two young people, Emmanuel Kolawole Familola and Matt Sanele Sibanda, had tragically drowned near Ned's Point, has gathered with both families in the town's Oratory for the Requiem Masses for the teenage friends.

Playing football with friends on the beach on the afternoon of Saturday, May 10, 16-year-old Emmanuel, originally from Nigeria, and 18-year-old Matt, originally from Zimbabwe, got into difficulty while trying to retrieve the ball when it went into the water. While Matt's body was recovered from Lough Swilly, Emmanuel died later in Letterkenny University Hospital.

Emmanuel

The first of the Requiem Masses was celebrated on Saturday, May 17, by Buncrana Parish Priest, Fr Francis Bradley, for Emmanuel, who had been a Transition Year pupil in the town's Scoil Mhuire. Four of his school friends took part in the Offertory Procession.

Speaking on behalf of the African communities in Derry, Donegal and beyond, and the Familola family, Tony Joel, a neighbour in Nigeria, thanked the Irish people for "the unity and love" and support that they had given to the family.

Following the singing of 'Amazing Grace' by the Safe Haven Choir, the chief celebrant, Fr Bradley, welcomed all gathered, especially Emmanuel's mother, Glory, his younger brothers, Daniel and John, members of his extended family, and his family and friends from The Sailor's Rest and other places, including the Scoil Mhuire community.

Also in attendance were Commandant Joe Glennon, Aide de Camp to An Taoiseach, representing Taoiseach Micheál Martin and Tánaiste Simon Harris, and his Chaplain, Fr Daniel McFaul, who attended both Requiem Masses, as did representatives of the Emergency Services, including An Garda Síochána, The RNLI, The Coastguard, and the Ambulance Service.

As Mass got underway, items representing Emmanuel's life were brought forwarding, including his Bible to symbolise his deep faith.

Fr Francis referred to Emmanuel's faith during his homily, reflecting firstly on the importance of a name. Explaining that, in the Yoruba culture, from which Emmanuel came as a citizen of Nigeria, "names and naming ceremonies hold great significance and are considered an important aspect of a person's identity and social status, influencing their destiny, and shaping their life's journey," he added: "Names are more than mere labels; they reflect the rich cultural heritage and beliefs of the Yoruba people."

Saying that Emmanuel Kolawole Familola was born on April 17, 2009, the eldest of the three boys, he noted: "As it happens, this year his birthday was on Holy Thursday – the day in Holy Week when the Church celebrates the birth of twin Sacraments: Holy Priesthood and Holy Eucharist; the two sacraments given us by God to guide, protect and feed His holy people.

"And how appropriate that was, for his names have great meaning. Emmanuel – the name of God we focus on in the season of Advent, for the prophet Isaiah foresaw how this would be the name of the Christ which would convey the sense of how 'God is with us.' And Kolawole – the name which means, 'he who brings high estate, wealth or good fortune into the house'.

Noble

"This young man of noble bearing was, indeed, someone who brought a sense of God's closeness to his people, who brought a wealth of joy and peace to his mother's and his family's heart; someone who, in a very priestly way, gently but effectively helped to guide, protect, and feed others in their needs.

"Not only was Emmanuel his mother's first-born son, but he was the eldest grandchild in his family circle too. He was precious, but not in the first world sense of being overly sensitive to his own needs or snappy and impolite; in fact, totally to the contrary, for it was he who looked out for other's needs, was endlessly patient and kind, and so respectful; such an attractive personality given the plethora of gifts and talents he possessed, and every one of them carried with gentle ease and good humour."

"Perhaps without even being aware of it," continued Fr Francis, "Emmanuel sought out vulnerable kids in school, or more precisely they sought him out, drawn to his fun-loving heart, his warm smile, his sharp wit, and his great charisma. In Emmanuel, they found the shelter they needed amid the storms of life and living. He will be missed by so very many of his friends and contemporaries. He was a credit to his mother, his brothers, his family and his country – a true ambassador of hope, a witness to how we should never let the harsh experiences of life define us, but rather, that we must allow them to deepen our resolve and refocus our vision on being the person God Himself has called us to be.

"Emmanuel distinguished himself by his devotion of heart, by his courtesy, calmness and sense of gratitude for anything and everything he was given. An excellent student who always gave his best, he had a serene magnetism to him which crossed social, ethnic and cultural boundaries for his warmth and charisma spoke every language, touched every heart.

Comprehend

"All of this has made the tragedy which befell himself and Matt Sibanda, from Zimbabwe, all the more difficult to comprehend, all the more painful for his family, for all of us and especially for his friends who were there and did their best to help. They appear to have been doing what young boys would, playing football and going into the water to retrieve the ball.

"Despite constant warnings, how were they really to know the real power and danger of the water, the destructive currents and forces which lay beneath the otherwise picture-perfect sea on a surreal afternoon; could any of us say we wouldn't go into the water and risk it a little to make sure the fun would continue! None of us can judge the actions which led to such a calamitous tragedy. If hindsight were foresight, we'd all have insight!"

He went on to acknowledge the unbearable difficulty for those who did their best to save Emmanuel and Matt: "The search crews from the RNLI and the coastguard; the flotilla of yachts that combed the lake; and, most especially, Ottman and Mohammed their friends, who spent themselves in doing their very best for them."

Referring to the "very important truths about life and death" as just read from the Scriptures, Fr Francis spoke of the hope this gave: "In the Gospel, Jesus assures us that His sheep listen to His voice, they follow Him, and for that reason He gives them eternal life so that, although they may disappear from our sight, they will never be lost; no one can steal them from the Father for Jesus and the Father are one. This is our rock-solid faith, the bedrock of our hope."

Going on to comment on how Baptism "forges a deep and lasting bond between us and God – a bond which not even death can break, a bond which by God's grace, endures for eternity," Fr Francis said: "Whilst water may have been the cause of Emmanuel's death, bringing us unspeakable pain and sorrow, water too is what brings him and us the unshakable hope that, with the help of our prayers and the promised mercy of the eternal Father's love, he is now with God in heaven.

"Water may have been what took him from us, but water too, in the bond of baptism, is what will bind us to him forever in the Communion of Saints. May we all feel the peace which this hope gives to our souls."

Matt

On Saturday, May 31, the Buncrana community gathered again in The Oratory for the Requiem Mass for Matt Sanele Sibanda, with proceedings getting underway with the playing of the Zimbabwean National Anthem and a welcome by his Uncle Buhle.

Explaining that the name 'Sanele', which Matt was fondly known as, means 'we are content' in English, Buhle added: "We gather in this holy place, with hearts that are heavy with sorrow. The pain of losing him, so suddenly taken from us in the ocean's vast embrace, is something we are still struggling to understand. But even in our grief, we come together in faith, knowing that God walks with us, especially in our suffering."

He went on to describe Matt as "a truly special soul,", saying: "He was a humble young man, never one to seek the spotlight, never one to boast. He moved through life with quiet dignity and deep respect for others. Whether speaking with elders or playing with younger children, he carried himself with grace. You could see his goodness in the way he treated people with kindness, patience, and sincerity.

"He was the kind of person who made others feel seen, heard, and valued. That is a rare gift, and one that touched everyone who knew him. Though his life was far too short, Matt left us with memories and moments that will live on forever. He may no longer walk beside us, but he lives in our hearts in his gentle smile, in his respectful words, in the quiet strength of his presence.

"The ocean, in all its mystery, took him from this world, but we believe that God, in His infinite mercy, received him with open arms. As Catholics, we hold to the hope and promise of eternal life. We trust that Matt is now in the presence of our Lord, where there is no more sorrow, only peace and joy.

"In the days ahead, let us honour his life by living as he did with humility, with respect, and with love. Let us draw close to one another, support one another, and pray for his soul and for all who mourn."

Before Mass began, Fr Bradley, again the main celebrant, welcomed Matt's family, especially his mother, Bonnie, sisters Modest and Sandy, brother Thembalethu, grandmother Josephine, members of his extended family, and his family and friends from The Old HSE Building and other places, including the school community of Crana College, Buncrana.

Heartbroken

During the homily, Fr Francis commented on how, some three weeks later, they all were "struggling still to come to terms with the loss, still speechless at the suddenness of it, still heartbroken at the enormity of it."

"While the world has moved on in some respects," he remarked, "we are nevertheless still numbed by the sadness of what happened. For these reasons and more we feel the need to reach out in hope to one another and to God in a search for peace more than answers, and for the healing consolation which can only ever come from the heart of God alone."

Emmanuel Familola (left) and Matt Sibanda.

Born on April 4, 2007, the third child in his family, Fr Francis remarked that Matt, from his earliest days in Zimbabwe through to his time in Buncrana, "has always been recognised for his quiet but sociable presence, his smiling face and his ability to always listen and respond with a deeply respectful and generous heart."

He added: "In the old HSE Building, which became his home since his arrival here in late 2023, Matt, with his great gifts and talents, particularly the respect he showed to everyone but most especially to his mother, became a natural leader – a first among equals. He was undeniably wise and good beyond his years, with an ability to sit with other children reading, debating and learning with great enthusiasm, always curious to know a little more. His surname, Sibanda, means 'Lion'.

"Our new Pope has taken the name Leo, which also means 'Lion'. Pope Leo and Matt Sibanda shared something important in common – their ability to listen to all sides of the debate, never judging, but helping all sides to reach a better solution. All of this stemmed from his profound respect for his mother. He always listened to her and he never spoke back to her even once throughout his 18 years.

"A man of few words, a good and kind boy, a humble kid who would play with the other children, always looking out for his sister, Sandy. He adored her, and she him. He would watch her when his Mam was working; he taught her to ride a bike; he would play piggy back with her and chase her after school – always kind and happy. He had the perfect balance in life, for he loved food, healthy food, and loved exercising, lifting weights; ironically, he was a powerful swimmer."

Prayerful

Referring to the Book of Numbers mention of a prophet described as "the man with the far-seeing eyes, the one who hears the word of God", Fr Francis said: "In so many ways, Matt Sibanda was a young prophetic figure, for he was respectful of God too; he had a very prayerful soul. His mother tells of how, in the week before his untimely death, he spent more time than ever with her, lying with his head on her shoulder as he did when he was a little child. But there was a difference to him, for while he was with her and Sandy and very present to them, his gaze seemed to be into the distance, beyond the present moment.

"And just two days before his death, he sang from Psalm 22 – He trusts in the Lord; let the Lord rescue him, let Him deliver him, for He delights in him! And on that fateful day, Saturday, May 10, the three of them sat down to enjoy a full breakfast, what would be their last earthly meal together. It is now as if there was a deeper drama going on, something they were unaware of, but very powerful all the same. And isn't that what our eyes of faith give us the ability to see, that deep beneath the appearance of things, there is a powerful movement taking place, in so many ways, the real drama of life."

He added: "Whilst it was a sinister and destructive force of nature which took Matt from us, a tidal current which lay beneath the seemingly tranquil and alluring waters of Lough Swilly, not all hidden realties are bad. For, as was mentioned earlier, behind, beneath and beyond the appearance of what we do here today and what we have been doing of late, it is God who is quietly but effectively soothing our hearts, quietening our minds and calming our souls. The readings remind us of how and why he does this.

"The first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, telling what the early Church did in the immediate aftermath of the death of Christ, how they gathered together, and there was a Matthew there in the midst of them, and Mary was there too, together with other women. They joined in continuous prayer. This is what has been happening here too, since the very first moment: our prayers at the water's edge that evening that Matt would be found; the prayer Vigil led by Bishop McKeown the very next day; the countless Masses and moments of prayer offered in public and in private since then. This is what we do as a believing

Our Lady of Lourdes Steelstown launch Bethany Group

by Marian Gallen

Marian Gallen.

What is it?

It is a voluntary, parish-based service, with six fully trained listeners. The training was professionally facilitated by well-known bereavement counsellors, Dr Anne Tracey and Marjorie Keenan.

What area does it cover?

The support group will serve the needs of the parishioners of Steelstown and Culmore.

Its objective?

Its objective is to support bereaved adults through the grieving process, and its services are totally free of charge and confidential within the law.

Why this name?

The name Bethany is derived from the story of Jesus' friends, Martha and Mary, who lived in a village called Bethany and who grieved over the death of their brother, Lazarus.

Why is there a need for this service?

Death is inevitable and, as such, so is the experience of grief. The death of a loved one brings up in us all new, and sometimes disturbing, emotions, and lots and lots of questions.

There is no timetable for how long we grieve, nor a set path that grieving should follow. We are all different and so our reaction to each loss will be different. The grieving that we do around these emotions is a natural process that is normally helped by the support and understanding of family and friends.

The bereaved sometimes like to and/or need to tell their story many times, as this talking helps soothe the pain of the loss by keeping the memory of the departed alive. But, where that is not available or the person gets stuck in the process, it is useful to talk to an outside, trained person who will listen with understanding and empathy, and accept those suffering from loss just as they are.

How does it work?

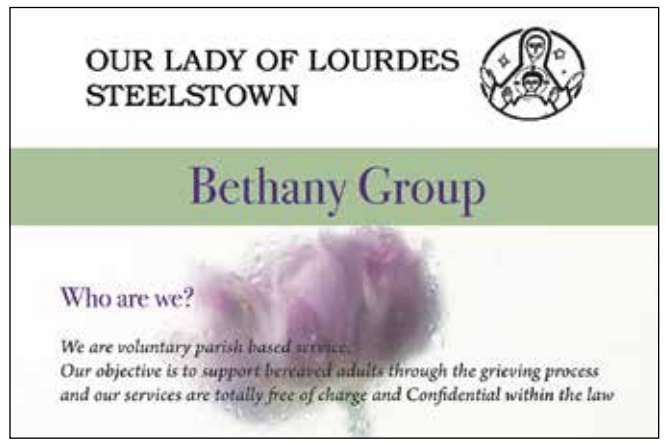
At the back of our beautiful church, just tucked in behind the statue of The Little Flower, is a wall mounted unit containing the Bethany information leaflets. On the reverse of the leaflet is an area where personal details can be completed and a request made for a visit. Then just pop the completed request into the permanently fixed and locked Bethany Box on the same wall, just beside the leaflet holder.

The team administrator will be in touch to arrange a visit to the person who is struggling. We always work in pairs. This is a very valuable service and I would encourage anyone who is struggling to please ask for help.

It is good to talk and it is even better to be listened to.

(Marian is chair of Steelstown Parish Pastoral Council.)

Dr Anne Tracey and Marjorie Keenan.



Search Youth Group prepares to celebrate 40th anniversary

DERRY Search Youth Group celebrates its 40th anniversary this summer.

To mark the occasion, the young people will be leading a Praise & Worship Night in St Mary's Church, Creggan, on Sunday, July 6, at 7.30 pm.

It will also be hosting the popular Mol an Oige Summer Scheme during July at its Unit 5 base in Iona Business Park, Southway.

The scheme will run from July 7-11 and July 14-18, from 10 am to 2 pm.

A few weeks ago, the young people took part in a powerful dramatization of the Stations of the Cross in Holy Family Church, Ballymagroarty, on Good Friday.

Opportunities like this, to take part in public events within a church setting, are examples of the many events and programmes that help to build not only the confidence and skills of the young people, but also to help them grow in their faith.

Continued from p4

people; it is our nature.

"The second reading gives us a view of what is happening on the other side of the veil we call death, in the heaven to which we are called and on the journey to which we naturally travel together in hope."

Crucifixion

Fr Francis ended by drawing attention to the painting in the sanctuary, by the altar, explaining: "It is the image of an African Crucifixion. It was painted during the Race Riots of the late 1960s in Detroit by an American artist called DeVon Cunningham, who worked closely with the famous Fr Ed Farrell. It was a response to those who asked 'Give us a Black Christ.'

"It arrived in this area only three months ago. In the background, it shows Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, tortured souls coming to terms with the pain of The Fall. And then, in the foreground, it shows Christ, the New Adam, hanging dead on the Cross, and to the front again, His Mother Mary sitting at the foot of the Cross, suffering yes, but with a serenity about her as she waits in the sure and certain hope that God is always faithful to his promises. And already, from behind the Cross can be seen the radiant light of the Resurrection.

"It is a powerful summary of what has been happening these past few weeks for us, as it happens for everyone at some time or other in their lives. The pain for loss, the silence of death, the waiting in hope, and the light of eternal life."

He continued: "We must all learn something good, even from the tragedy of loss. On the very day that Matt celebrated his birthday this year, the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Luis Mariano Montemayor helped unveil a beautiful statue of Friar Seamus Hegarty on the shore of Lough Swilly. The statue shows the Friar holding forth the Penal Cross. That is the image which gives us hope today. For behind, beneath and beyond the efforts we make to express our tender love, our prayer and the celebration of the Sacraments, within them and us there is the reality that it is the God of Life who is at work.

"This day three weeks ago, Bonnie and Sandy may have had their last earthly meal with Matt, but in this heavenly banquet which we call Mass, in this sacrificial meal, we encounter one another again as part of the Communion of Saints – for as we know, those who have gone from us have gone no further than God, and God is always near, never nearer than when we celebrate the Holy Eucharist."

Both Matt and Emmanuel have been laid to rest in the cemetery at St Mary's Church, Cockhill.

Invited by Youth of Acutis to give a talk on Bl Carlo Acutis and Bl Pier-Giorgio Frassati, Fr Conor McDonough OP told those gathered…

You have all you need to be great saints…don't limit what God can do in your life

James Tourish, Youth of Acutis founder.

ON the eve of what was to be the canonisation of Blessed Carlo Acutis, the Derry-based Youth of Acutis group organised a talk by Dominican, Fr Conor McDonough OP, on Blessed Carlo and Blessed Pier-Giorgio Frassati, in the Cathedral Hall.

With the funeral Mass for Pope Francis I celebrated earlier in the day, Fr Conor paid tribute to the Holy Father for maintaining the ancient papal tradition of a Year of Jubilee, with this Year's Jubilee of Hope.

He went on to remark: "This weekend [April 26 & 27], Pope Francis intended to gather teenagers in Rome, with the canonization of Bl Carlo Acutis at the centre of it, and Bl Pier-Giorgio Frassati was to be canonized on August 3 during the Jubilee for Youth, for young adults. Both of these were to be new role models for young people among the communion of saints and, in fact, they are already role models for countless people across the world.

"They were born almost exactly 90 years apart – 1901 and 1991 – but they have a great deal in common. They were both Italian and from wealthy families, families which were vaguely Catholic but not very committed to the faith. They both showed great spiritual gifts from a young age and developed particular love for Jesus in the Eucharist. They were both relatively normal characters, they loved life, they were sociable. And they both died young – Carlo at the age of 15 and Pier-Giorgio at the age of 24."

During his talk, Fr Conor considered Bl Pier-Giorgio as a man of charity and Bl Carlo as a man of faith, being two of the theological virtues.

Regarding Pier-Giorgio, he noted that he had been born in Turin in 1901, had one sister, his mother was a painter, and his father the founder and director of La Stampa, an Italian Senator and Ambassador to Germany. His mother, while a practicing Catholic was lukewarm in her faith, and his father was agnostic.

He added: "Upper class, Pier-Giorgio was under immense pressure from his father to be like him, to succeed in worldly terms.

"As a child, he was particularly empathetic and sensitive to the needs of others, and one day when a poor mother with her little boy came begging to his family home, little Pier-Giorgio took off his own shoes and gave them to the boy."

Highlighting that Pier-Giorgio had struggled greatly in his studies, Fr Conor said: "It is really important to note this – he failed a lot of exams and he felt deep shame at his failures. At the age of 12, he failed a Latin exam, which meant that he had to change school to a Jesuit school, where he could repeat the year. At the age of 16, again he failed a Latin exam and had to change schools another time.

"He decided eventually to study engineering, to work in mining, so as, he said, 'to serve Christ among the miners', but in college he struggled too. In fact, he never obtained his degree. The week before he died, he wrote a list of all the exams he needed to pass before he could graduate. However, in 2001, his university passed a resolution granting him the degree posthumously, on the 100th anniversary of his birth."

Committed

With regards to Pier-Giorgio's faith development, Fr Conor explained: "He picked up elements of the Christian faith in the culture around him and became more and more committed to the Christian life, something which grew throughout his teens, often in opposition to his parents, who were happy for him to have 'a little bit of religion', but not too much.

"When he moved to that Jesuit school at the age of 12, for example, he lapped up all the spiritual instruction and spiritual direction, and opportunities for prayer. One Jesuit there wrote later about Pier-Giorgio's desire to receive Holy Communion every day. This wasn't all that normal a thing at the time, but the Jesuits certainly encouraged it. But then this Jesuit met Mrs Frassati, who was not a bit happy and convinced him to limit Pier-Giorgio to receiving once a week. A few weeks later, the same Jesuit heard banging on his door and Pier-Giorgio saying, 'Father, I've won!' What had he won? He had convinced his mother to let him receive daily communion."

He continued: "As he grew, Pier-Giorgio used to spend a lot of time in Adoration of the Eucharist as well. He had big personality and was a bit of a party animal, but his friends describe him becoming totally focused and silent during times of Adoration. One priest remembers seeing Pier-Giorgio sitting under a load of candles, wax dripping on his jacket, and he was completely lost in prayer. He would often stay up late at night in Adoration. And, needless to say, his father knew little of this, and what he did know he didn't like.

"Think about it though. This young man had deep wounds to do with his father and his failures, and in Eucharistic Adoration he was right where he needed to be, in the presence of the healer, showing him those wounds, asking that those wounds might become living and life-giving, rather than foul and festering."

As well as being a man of deep prayer, Fr Conor said Pier-Giorgio was "great fun too, the life and soul of every party, with a big group of friends, especially in his college years."

He added: "He wasn't just a quiet and pious wallflower; he was a prankster. He and his friends, male and female, formed a little society called the 'Tipi Loschi', the Shady Characters, and they used to organize hiking trips, mountain climbing, seaside holidays. One Salesian priest who knew him said, 'He was infused with constant joy, a joy that was sometimes explosive, and he surpassed just about everyone with his bottomless bag of noisy pranks.'

"So, Pier-Giorgio had an infectious joy and a gift for friendship, but he was in no way unserious, and in the midst of all the pranks, he was often calling his friends gently but firmly to live lives of virtue and to give their lives to God. They were loyal to him, he knew that, and he wanted to bring these loyal friends to know the Lord."

Prankster

Fr Conor continued: "He helped found Catholic student societies that campaigned for peace and understanding between nations. Some of the speeches he gave at these student meetings survive to this day. When he was 22, here is what this prankster was saying to his peer-group: 'I urge you with all the strength of my soul to approach the Eucharistic Table as often as possible. Feed on this Bread of the Angels, from which you will draw the strength to fight inner struggles, the struggles against passions and against all adversities, because Jesus Christ has promised to those who feed themselves with the most Holy Eucharist, eternal life and the necessary graces to obtain it.'

"Another time, he spoke to fellow students about three apostolates they should all be engaged in: the apostolate of good example, the apostolate of persuasion, and the apostolate of charity. Young Pier-Giorgio understood that he was called to something more than mere enjoyment. He was called to love God by loving his neighbours, to serve them and care for them, to pour his gifts and talents and energy into that mission."

Adding that another great motivating love of Pier-Giorgio was for the poor, Fr Conor noted: "He used to say every day, God visits me in the Eucharist, and I repay the favour by visiting Him in the poor. His concern for the needy was life-long, but it was heightened at the end of World War I, when he saw lots of servicemen returning home to very difficult circumstances.

"At the age of 17, he joined the St Vincent de Paul Society, and became a dedicated and completely reliable member of the Society, doing his rounds every Friday and staying in touch beyond that with people who needed funds, or a chat, or some medicine. He carried his list of names and addresses in his pocket at all times, and sometimes would even miss part of a family holiday so he would be available to the Vincent de Paul.

"His favourite passage of Scripture was from St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, his 'hymn to charity'. It sums up his whole life and mission: 'Love is patient and kind; it is not jealous or conceited or proud; love is not ill-mannered or selfish or irritable; love does not keep a record of wrongs…These three remain, faith, hope and love, and the greatest of these is love'."

Blessed Carlo

Turning to the story of Blessed Carlo Acutis, Fr Conor noted that he was born in 1991, in London, and was the only child of wealthy parents, neither of whom were particularly devout.

He added: "Some of his earliest influences in the faith were his nannies, older women hired to look after him while his mother was working. It was from them that he first learned to pray, and he used to go to a church to pray with a load of grannies who said the Rosary every day.

"He was a sociable character, like Pier-Giorgio, and was interested in the things of this world as well as the spiritual life. He learned a few programming languages, had a PlayStation, played Pokemon and football, and was an AC Milan fan. He had long conversations on the phone with girls. He was a young man full of love and, in this way, he was like Pier-Giorgio also.

"With some of his earliest savings he bought a sleeping bag for a homeless man he had noticed. Again and again, he would turn his attention to the homeless, organizing events in the parish to fundraise for them, bringing hot drinks to warm them on cold nights. He noticed people who are all too easily ignored. When people were bullied at school, Carlo stood up for them. When his friends used to harass girls, he stopped them."

Sharing that what he loved most about Blessed Carlo was the strength of his faith, Fr Conor remarked: "He was utterly convinced of the truth of the Catholic faith, and he was unafraid to share this life-changing truth with others.

"First of all, he used his knowledge of programming to design a website, which is still online! He was really impressed by the many Eucharistic miracles reported over centuries, all around the world – miracles where the host turned into flesh, or where hosts were miraculously preserved for hundreds of years, and so on – and he gathered up the details of these, beginning at the age of 11, to make an in-person exhibition, which he then turned into an online exhibition on a website he designed. He was passionate about getting all this information out there to strengthen the faith of others.

"He didn't just do this online though – sometimes that can be a temptation, to be a keyboard warrior who doesn't actually share the faith with the people around us – Carlo did share his faith with anyone who was willing to listen. Interestingly, his friends said recently that Carlo wasn't all the time speaking to them about faith; he wasn't constantly at them, he had charm and skill and understanding in how he shared the faith.

"His parents were among those he drew closer to the Lord, so much so, his mother says, that when Carlo died, she was able to let him go, because her faith had grown so much under his influence."

Encourage

Fr Conor went on to express his particular interest in Carlo's live-in babysitter, Rajesh, who was Hindu, saying: "Carlo, who clearly loved Rajesh almost like a family member, used to encourage him to pray to Jesus. He gave him a copy of the Bible, then a Catechism, then lives of the saints.

"Rajesh said later, 'I got baptized a Christian because Carlo communicated to me and electrified me with his faith, his charity and his purity'. Not only that, a friend of Rajesh who used to come to the house sometimes, a man by the name of Seeven, was baptized too through the influence of Carlo.

"Sometimes, you might hear people say that the only way to share our faith is by the example of our lives, but Carlo shows that that is only the starting point – we should be ready also to use words, to answer questions, to listen with love, and to share good resources. You can be sure that if Blessed Carlo were alive today, he would be encouraging the people around him to follow this or that Catholic influencer on TikTok or YouTube, or to watch The Chosen, or to download Hallow. And he would be very excited to hear that Gen Z is considerably more spiritual, less atheistic, and more curious about Christianity than older generations."

Concluding with a comment on the virtue of hope in the lives, and deaths, of both these young saints, Fr Conor said: "If you think this life is all there is, if you don't believe in an immortal soul or eternal life with God, then death is an utterly unbearable tragedy. If you have Christian hope, though, if you know that Christ has defeated death and that the path to everlasting joy and peace lies open before us, then death, while not a good or pleasant thing, is not something that should frighten us, or steal our peace and our purpose.

"Both Carlo and Pier-Giorgio died within a few days of becoming ill – Carlo with leukemia and Pier-Giorgio with polio. Both of them knew that they were dying. In fact, Carlo seems to have had sense that his life would not be a long life.

Continued from p6

"When he was in hospital, Carlo's mum remembers him comforting her, saying, 'Mom, don't be afraid. Since Jesus became a man, death has become the passage towards life, and we don't need to flee it. Let us prepare ourselves to experience something extraordinary in the eternal life.' He was at peace, he remained motivated to love, to believe, to hope, even in the face of death."

Death

Adding that Pier-Giorgio was also prepared for his death, he said: "He actually spent some time in prayer each day preparing for it, long before he became sick. He attended the funeral of a guy his age and it woke him up to this reality. He wrote in a letter to a friend, 'From now on, I will try to make a little preparation for death every day, so that I do not find myself unprepared at the point of death and have to regret spiritually wasting the beautiful years of youth.' He wrote to another, 'I think that the day of my death will be the most beautiful day of my life.' That might seem like a strange idea, but only if we lack the hope that he had, the hope that made clear to him that he had a beautiful onward journey after living his life to the full.

"When he became ill with polio in June 1925, his family hardly noticed, because his grandmother was dying at the same time. However, he fairly quickly understood that he was dying and prepared for death with the help of a priest. The day before his death was a Friday, his St Vincent de Paul day. He asked his sister to take a notebook from his pocket and, with his half-paralysed hand, wrote some instructions for a fellow member of the Society: "Here are the injections for Converso. The pawn ticket is for Sappa. Renew it for him on my behalf.'

"Did death rob Pier-Giorgio of his peace, of his purpose? No. The flame of his love went on burning even in the valley of the shadow of death."

After Pier-Giorgio's death on July 4, 1925, Fr Conor noted that his family had expected a small, dignified funeral with friends and family, but "were stunned when thousands of people from all ranks of society lined the streets of Turin to say goodbye to their faithful friend, their laughing companion, their benefactor, their man of prayer."

Considering how his listeners might be feeling after hearing about the lives and deaths of Bl Pier-Giorgio and Bl Carlo, Fr Conor said: "Maybe you feel inspired to live your best life as they did, or maybe you feel intimidated by the prospect. Maybe you feel that you could never live a life like theirs. If that is how you feel, I am sure these two brothers in Christ would be the first to say that they were nothing special, but they relied on the Grace of God, that they were simply following the Risen Christ, who looks at each one of you and calls you onward, promising to be with you always.

"You have everything you need to be great saints, so don't limit what God can do in your life. Be faithful, with God's help, in the little things – daily prayer, smiling at strangers, listening to friends, making your bed, participating wholeheartedly at Mass, visiting the sick and lonely people in your life – do that day in, day out, making acts of faith, hope and love, and don't be surprised if our God makes saints of you, and makes Derry a city of saints for our time."

Canonisation

The Vatican has not yet announced a new date for Bl Carlo's canonization, though the Church's Jubilee of Youth in late July is expected to include the canonization of Bl Pier Giorgio. However, the Vatican has announced that there will be a Consistory (meeting) on June 13, the Feast of St Anthony of Padua, to vote on the final canonisation dates of eight Blessed individuals, including Carlo. Pope Leo XIV will preside over this special meeting.

(For further information regarding Youth of Acutis, email YouthOfAcutis@gmail.com or message +44 7375528580.)

Fr Conor McDonough OP.

Fabulous community atmosphere at Castlefin Parish Coffee Morning

THE parishioners of Urney & Castlefin enjoyed lots of delicious sweet treats when they turned out in strength to support the Parish Coffee Morning, creating a fabulous community atmosphere.

The fundraiser took place in St Mary's Hall, Castlefin, on Saturday, April 19, and an incredible €4,206 was raised for improvement works in both churches in the parish.

Thanks has been expressed to everyone who supported this event with financial donations for the Easter raffle, which included seven hampers, and the Coffee Morning, and all the generous parishioners who provided beautiful home-bakes and refreshments on the day, and all those who came along in support.

Young Writers share thoughts...

THIS month, we welcome Year 13 Thornhill student, Carragh O'Donnell to the Young Writers' team. In her first article, Carragh writes about the opening of French girl, Anne-Gabrielle Caron's beatification cause, who at the young age of eight became a symbol of how faith in God can help people through even their toughest periods in life.

In the midst of exams, Niamh shares how her faith not only gives her strength during tough times, but also offers practical ways to prepare for exams, while Seán, in his final year at St Columb's, reflects on the chapters of life, what we can learn from them, and how our experiences serve us.

James writes about being open to what God wants for us through prayer, rather than focussing on what we want out of life, and Bláthnaid reflects on the Church's call for the respect of the dignity of every person and to stand up for the protection of all life.

With the papacy in the spotlight these days, we have Evan paying tribute to the late Pope Francis I, particularly his humility and commitment to serving others; Harry inspired by Pope Benedict XVI in learning more about his Catholic faith and discernment about vocation; and Luke impressed by the sudden rise of a hermit to the head of Catholic Church, on reading about Pope Celestine V and his fascinating five months in office.

And, reflecting on the life of St Maria Goretti, Erin highlights her as an example of how to live in holiness, ready to forgive.

Cara-leigh Doherty - Derry City Deanery

Bronagh Doherty, Co Derry Deanery

Peter Grant, Inishowen Deanery.

John Agustine Joseph, Derry City Deanery.

James Tourish, Derry City Deanery.

Erin Whoriskey, Derry City Deanery

Bláthnaid McMenamin - Co Tyrone Deanery

Carragh O'Donnell, Derry City Deanery

Evan Curran, Derry City Deanery

Seán McLaughlin, Co Tyrone Deanery

Niamh Sharkey, Derry City Deanery.

Harry Mason, Derry City Deanery

Luke Doherty, Inishowen Deanery

Beatification cause of Anne-Gabrielle Caron *by Carragh*

THE cause for the beatification of Anne-Gabrielle Caron, born in Toulon, France in 2002, was opened in 2020, following her passing in July 2010.

Anne Gabrielle was 'a tiny little girl with a big love of God', who was diagnosed with cancer at the age of seven. Whilst enduring tremendous suffering, she had relied on her faith in God to help her through.

In an entry in her diary, she wrote: "I sometimes tell myself that the Good Lord gives me a lot […] but I am willing to accept it. I love you, my God."

At the young age of eight, she became a symbol of how faith in God can help people through even their toughest periods in life. As seen in the teachings of Jesus, shown in Romans 5:3-5: "We also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit."

Anne-Gabrielle is seen as "a model of holiness for the sick children and their families," says Bishop Rey, who had met her twice.

In discovering the young girl's life following her death, Pascal Barthélemy, postulator for Anne-Gabrielle Caron's beatification cause, said that he had "an immediate intuition that she was holy, imbued with grace."

Yet, it is still an ongoing decision into whether the symbol of suffering and hope that Anne-Gabrielle Caron promotes will allow her to become the newest saint in France.

St Maria Goretti reminds us our bodies are sacred and purity is a strength *by Erin*

ST Maria Teresa Goretti was an Italian martyr of the Catholic Church, and one of the youngest saints to be canonised. She lived from October 16, 1890 – July 6, 1902 and is the Patron Saint of chastity, purity, forgiveness, and victims of rape.

From St Maria's birth, on October 16, in Corinaldo, Italy, she was taught piety and devotion. Maria was known to be quite serious, kind and obedient from an early age. Her parents, Luigi and Assunta, shared their rich faith with Maria and her six siblings. This meant that, although the family lived in extreme poverty and often suffered from want, they had their deep faith in God to help them persevere. The rural, farming family worked the land to survive, which eventually led to them moving to Ferriere di Conca, near Nettuno, south of Rome. This was located in the Pontines Marshes, where they took residence in a home with another poor farming family, the Serenellis. This family included a man, Giovanni Serenelli, and his son, Allesandro.

When Maria was just nine years old, her father caught malaria, likely due to the disease-infested swamp and unclean working conditions. This was a pivotal moment in her life. The family, who had already been poor, now suffered with dire poverty and Maria was forced to take on the household duties and help care for her younger siblings whilst her mother worked in the fields in attempt to keep the family afloat. While some of her brothers and sisters joined her mother in the fields, Maria spent her days cooking, cleaning, sewing and tending to her siblings. This meant she never learned to read or write.

Maria's mother described her to be a blessing in these times. She commented after her martyrdom that she could not remember a time in which Maria had disobeyed her: "She was always a good girl. I wasn't surprised that people thought she was a saint." Despite all these hardships, Maria remained deeply spiritual and devoted to her faith. She had a devotion to Our Lady, was known to wear a Rosary around her wrist which she made an effort to pray often, and she often talked about God and Heaven with her siblings.

Eucharist

From a very early age, she expressed a strong desire to make her First Communion, longing to be united with Jesus in the Eucharist. Maria reportedly said things like: "Mama, I want Jesus," and she would make an extreme effort to listen carefully when her siblings or other children talked of religion or communion, allowing her to memorise prayers, despite not being able to read. Maria eventually got her wish at age 11, just weeks before her death. This was a profound and joyful moment for her, which she had spent weeks preparing for with fasting, prayer and confession. It is clear that Maria took her First Holy Communion with deep reverence and greater seriousness than most children her age, showing her devotion: "I feel Jesus in my heart. I will never offend Him."

On July 5, 1902, Maria was tending to her baby sister and sewing, when Alessandro returned back to the house from the fields. He had shown violent and harsh behaviour on many instances beforehand, leading Maria to sense danger from him and, therefore, avoid being alone with him. However, on this day he knew she was alone, and ordered her to do as he said. Alessandro threatened her, saying that if she didn't do as he told her, he would kill her. He attempted to rape Maria, attempting to force her to go against the virtue of purity, however she resisted, crying out: "No! No! It is a sin. God does not want it!" In response, he stabbed her 14 times. By the time Maria was discovered and rushed to hospital, little could be done.

Before Maria died, she said the words: "I forgive Alessandro, and I want him with me in Heaven forever." She died praying that God would forgive her murderer, as she already had. Alessandro would later be found guilty and sentenced to 30 years in prison for her murder, leading him to be filled with rage and blame Maria, remaining unrepentant for several years. This was until one night, when St Maria appeared to him in a dream. She was standing in a field of flowers, holding white lilies out to him, which were a symbol of purity. This led him to finally repent, asking for forgiveness from Maria's mother upon his release from prison, which she granted him immediately. That Christmas Eve of 1932, the mother and murderer of St Maria Goretti attended Christmas Mass together and received communion side by side. Eventually, Alessandro even became a brother in a Franciscan Capuchin monastery.

The example of St Maria Goretti remains deeply inspiring and important to us as Catholics today as she embodies important values, such as forgiveness, purity and devotion. Maria died defending her dignity and chastity, a reminder that our bodies are sacred and purity is a strength. Also, St Maria Goretti reminds us to choose grace over hatred, her ultimate forgiveness of her attacker contrasting attitudes of revenge. She lived a life marked by poverty and hardship, but her faith still remained strong throughout it all. She showed wisdom beyond her years; youth did not act as a barrier to her sainthood. We should strive to live out her heroic virtue and deep faith in our own lives, especially as young people, and to live with courage and holiness.

Pope Francis' battered footwear reflect commitment to service *by Evan*

THE late Holy Father, Francis was a true representative of the Gospels living and breathing Christ's message of love in a broken church and world.

He was humble, merciful and welcoming, rebuilding the church and bringing many back. He strengthened the marginalised, he fed the poor and addressed world issues with great compassion and kindness.

The world is a little bit dimmer now that he has passed on to the heavenly places, but his words and legacy will live on forever. RIP Papa Francesco - The People's Pope – 'A man for all seasons.'

I have included an image of the late Holy Father's creased and worn black shoes as he lay in state in St Peter's Basilica. I find it a striking image, which embodies the work and humility of his Papacy.

Pope Francis' worn and wrinkled shoes reflect his humble service and dedication to following Christ, whose wounds symbolize selfless love rather than the power of death. For me, his battered footwear exemplifies the commitment he had to serving others

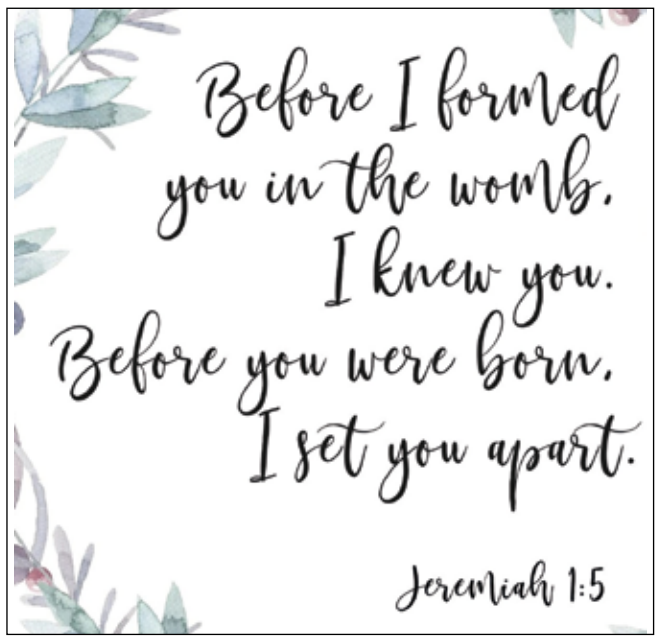
Young Writers share thoughts...

Respecting the dignity of every person *by Bláthnaid*

DURING his audience with members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, Pope Leo XIV stressed the importance of striving "to ensure respect for the dignity of every person, especially the most frail and vulnerable, from the unborn to the elderly, from the sick to the unemployed, citizens and immigrants alike."

After reading this address, and reflecting on the protection of, in particular, the unborn, I was reminded of Jeremiah 1:5, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born, I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations." Here, God's intentional design of each individual human being is highlighted, which reminds us of the irreplaceable value of each precious child inside of the womb. Human life is both created and given by God, meaning it is not right for us to take it.

The world we live in today tries to normalize abortion, proposing it as a way to 'love' the woman, by allowing her to choose whether or not she wants to be a mother, and attempts to justify it by saying it would be 'cruel' to bring an unwanted child into the world. This is a false narrative - it is ethically impossible to argue that it is a loving act to enable a mother to choose to inflict such a violent evil on her child.



The Church has always openly opposed abortion, stressing the importance of upholding the sanctity of life and the importance of our prayers and support for both the unborn, and struggling mothers.

Pope St John Paul II commented on this, saying: "You are called to stand up for life! To respect and defend the mystery of life always and everywhere, including the lives of unborn babies, giving real help and encouragement to mothers in difficult situations. You are called to work and pray against abortion."

During the annunciation, Mother Mary showed great trust in the Lord, when she accepted His Will and said: "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word."

Our Lady of Guadalupe is the Patroness of the Unborn, with her Feast Day being celebrated on December 12, and is great to pray through and ask for her intercession when praying for the protection of unborn children, God's guidance to mothers faced with unplanned pregnancies and, as Pope Leo XIV highlighted, respect for the dignity of every person.

Preparing for exams with pen in one hand and Rosary in other *by Niamh*

EXAMS are a major part of student life, and they often bring with them stress and pressure. As a young Catholic, I have found that my faith not only gives me strength during these tough times, but also offers practical ways to prepare for exams with peace, purpose, and perspective.

One of the biggest lessons that I have learned from Catholicism is the importance of discipline and commitment. Just like Jesus committed Himself fully to His mission, we are called to give our best in all that we do, including our studies.

St Paul reminds us: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord." When I study with this mindset, it becomes more than just preparing for a test, it becomes an act of love and dedication to God, who gave me these opportunities in the first place.

Prayer is another vital part of my exam preparation. It is easy to get overwhelmed with notes and deadlines, but spending just a few minutes each day in prayer centres me. Whether it's the Rosary, a simple 'Our Father', or just speaking from the heart, prayer helps calm my nerves and reminds me that I am not alone in this journey. I often pray to St Joseph of Cupertino, the Patron Saint of students taking exams. His story inspires me because he struggled with learning, yet trusted in God, and was miraculously helped during his exams.

O Great St. Joseph of Cupertino who while on earth did obtain from God the grace to be asked at your examination only the questions you knew, obtain for me a like favour in the examinations for which I am now preparing. In return I promise to make you known and cause you to be invoked. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Before exams, I receive the Eucharist at Mass as it strengthens me spiritually. It is a powerful gift that offers grace and clarity when I need them most. Community is also essential. Studying with friends, or even just sharing encouragement, helps remind me that I am part of something bigger. We often pray for each other and remind one another that our worth isn't found in grades, but in being children of God.

Finally, Catholicism teaches trust in God's will. Sometimes I do my best and still don't get the results I hoped for. That's when I remember Proverbs 3:5: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart…and He will make your paths straight."

Success in God's eyes isn't just about grades, it is about growing in character, faith, and perseverance. So, as I prepare for my exams, I do so with a pen in one hand and a Rosary in the other, knowing that with God, I can face anything.

Lessons from Pope Benedict XVI *by Harry*

JOSEPH Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI is very dear to me, as I can see bits of myself in him, though definitely not as smart. He encourages me, also, to ascend to the greatness of priesthood and of teaching the faith, so I would like to share a bit about him as I think he is very underlooked.

Born Joseph Ratzinger on April 16, 1927, in Bavaria Germany, he was baptised on the same day. He was ordained a priest, with his older brother, Georg Ratzinger, at the age of 24. Very young! He was very quiet and shy, but behind this shy man was a professor of Dogmatic Theology and History of Dogma, at the University of Regensburg.

Joseph had a great friendship as Archbishop of Munich, and later Cardinal, with Pope John Paul II, who later raised him to Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith. This friendship teaches us the importance and greatness of friendship in our day and age, as Thomas Aquinas says: "There is nothing to be more prized on earth than true friendship."

Not long after John Paul II had died and the 'sede vacante' led to the infamous Conclave, Cardinal Ratzinger heard that he was gaining traction and said: "Don't do this to me, Lord", as he had hoped to retire and live a quiet end of his life between the pages of a book, accompanied with prayer. This sounds a bit like Moses, who said that he was "too old" - and so the Lord did to Cardinal Ratzinger as he had done to Moses, and boom, he was Pope Benedict XVI! In this, he displayed obedience, as he hadn't wanted this role, but took it as God's Will and said, "Not my will but Your will" (Luke 22:42); a virtue which we can put to practice in our daily lives and in our vocation.

Additionally, an important topic to him was reason and faith, which was taught by the renowned scholastics, such as Augustine and Bonaventure. Benedict exhorted to the people that "faith and reason are not in conflict but rather in harmony", following his predecessor's famous encyclical 'Fides et ratio'. Faith and reason played a key part in my conversion back to the church, due to scholasticism promoting reason and faith; something that we all need to learn to defend the truth!

Furthermore, Benedict XVI was the first Pope to resign since 1415. His resignation teaches us all a lesson of prioritising the greater good above our own personal desires, as he prioritised the greater good of the church.

Lastly, I want to highlight his first and famous encyclical, 'Deus caritas est' (God is love). This message is very appropriate for the time that we live in, as we need to know the depth of God's love for every one of us. As St Augustine said: "God loves us as if there was only one of us."

Pope Celestine V's fascinating five months in office *by Luke*

WITH Pope Leo XIV's recent appointment, many of us are looking forward, wondering what his papacy will bring us. While we cannot anticipate the future, there is much we can learn from it.

I was recently reading about the papacy of Pope Celestine V. If nothing else, his short five months in office were fascinating.

Unlike our most recent conclave to elect Pope Leo XIV, which lasted a matter of days, the conclave that preceded Pope Celestine's lasted over two years without reaching a conclusion. While this was not the longest conclave in history, that honour going to the one which took place after Pope Clement IV's death, it was still long enough for a particular hermit to write to the Vatican warning them of potential divine repercussions if they delayed any longer.

Despite his voluntary seclusion, the cardinals had heard of Petrio Angelerio, as he was then called, because of his immense dedication to fasting and prayer. They heeded his warning, though not as he expected them to. Instead of electing one of their own, the cardinals chose the one who had warned them, much to his displeasure.

He was reluctant at first, but eventually he was persuaded and became Pope Celestine V, one of only six Popes who were not Cardinals first.

Perhaps, the most notable change that occurred during his papacy was the change that allowed Popes to resign. While the vast majority of Popes choose to continue their role for life, Pope Celestine V gave them the option to retire if they see fit.

It isn't uncommon for Popes to admit that they do not want the role, but instead take it because they feel that they have a duty to God and the Church, rather than being motivated by ambition. Even Pope Francis remarked that he didn't want the job. Pope Celestine had expressed this sentiment since the start, and while he was an undoubtedly pious man, his life as a faithful hermit did not provide him with the typical skills a Pope must have. Put simply, even after becoming Pope, he did not believe he was a suitable candidate. It is for this reason that he changed the rules around choosing a new Pope and availed of his own new policy and stepped down.

You could call this a lesson in humility, or a lesson in the role of a Pope, or many other things. It is most certainly a fascinating piece of religious history. I have no idea if any of this is directly relevant to our new Pope, but there is always something to be learned from those who came before us.

Sources: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/07/pope-francis-never-wanted-job https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03479b.htm

Young Writers share thoughts...

Experiences construct the pillar of our character *by Seán*

ONE of the most fulfilling aspects of our existence is noticing the ending or completion of a chapter of life. Some are much bigger than others, others are smaller and less impactful, but upon the ending of a major period, the mental and emotional fallout is unpredictable, sometimes positive and others negative. I left school two weeks prior to the writing of this article, and I finish my A-level examinations in less than a month.

Last month, in April, I turned 18 years old. In a way, I am glad that my marking of manhood perfectly coincided with the end of my educational journey, the two most major chapters of my life drawing to a close simultaneously, leaving childhood and school behind me both at once. It incited a strange sensation of satisfaction, that I had finally completed that tedious, youthful period, but also a stronger sense of sadness. I am, after all, departing from a comfort zone that I have grown accustomed to over the past seven years. It is somewhat akin to the transfer from primary school into grammar school, but this time the other side, where university awaits, feels remote and far away, almost surreal.

If there is one thing that I have grasped from this chapter of life, it is that experiences are provided to construct the pillar of our character. We are each like a tree, nourished by the many aspects of our life. In Psalm 1:3, it is written, "He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers."

As repellent and unappealing as some experiences can be, often they are for our own good. What is the use in living a perfect life, after all? Having no distinguishment between good and bad would thrust them both out of existence – they both rely on each other for existence, like light cannot exist without shadow.

The philosopher, John Hick once described our world as "the vale of soul-making." This is the concept that the world is made purposely imperfect by God so that we can learn and develop our soul in preparation for judgement. Hick's theory is based on the often overlooked and underrated Irenaean Theodicy, the thesis of the second century Hellenic Bishop of Lugdunum (Lyon), St Irenaeus (125-202 AD). As Irenaeus lived prior to the Edict of Milan, issued in 313AD by Emperor Constantine I and Licinius, the religion of Christianity remained illegal in the Roman Empire and persecutions of Christians were

rampant. Irenaeus was based in the Roman city of Lugdunum, in southern Gallia. Most of the city's Christians were murdered during the 177AD persecution, with Irenaeus fortunate to survive, absent due to being sent on a mission to Rome during the time of this incident. Due to their refusal to offer sacrifice to the gods of the Roman pantheon, the city's Christians were banned from appearing in public, or else they would be beaten by the mob or have their homes vandalised. Eventually, this escalated to full scale violence, with 48 Christians who survived the fighting being tortured until death.

It was likely the personal devastation of his community being utterly wiped out that motivated Irenaeus' theodicy, that we have bad experiences so that our souls are hardened and strong.

The world is imperfect so that we have the opportunity for moral development, that our own freely chosen actions can have consequences – natural evil must exist for this process theology, the construction of a soul that understands right and wrong. However, as that opportunity for development exists, God remains at an epistemic distance so that we are allowed to make our own genuine choices.

Irenaeus stated: "There is no coercion with God, but a good will is present with Him continually." In other words, God reaches out to us, but we are not obliged to reach back. It is one of the symbolic beauties of Michelangelo's' 'The Creation of Adam', with God extending His finger out fully towards Adam, but Adam does not give his full effort in extending his own outwards.

The many chapters of life are all steps on the mountainside streaking upwards towards the glorious summit, and with each one, however big or small, a valuable lesson is learned, assuming that you understand how to correctly interpret it. Irenaeus used the Biblical example of Jonah to present his theory, as he was swallowed by the whale and, surviving, then felt compelled to repent for his sins and turning the people of Nineveh to God.

The saint stated wisely: "For as He patiently suffered Jonah to be swallowed by the whale, not that he should be swallowed up and perish altogether, but that, having been cast out again, he might be the more subject to God, and might glorify Him the more who had conferred upon him such an unhoped-for deliverance, and might bring the Ninevites to a lasting repentance, so that they should be converted to the Lord, who would deliver them from death." This example is poetically akin to that of Job in the Old Testament, the wealthy man of health, family and money, with great faith in God, who had all his wealth taken away. He suffered and wept but remained steadfast in his faith.

The lesson told by these examples is the value of our experiences and what we learn from them. It is a pity that some people drive themselves away from God as a result of their bad experiences, feeling that He should take the blame for them, and that everything should be impeccable. A life of no trouble at all is shallow and weakening. Some people suffer more than others, some that suffer are not deserving of it. Many things here on earth are unfair, unjustified, and disgraceful, but all humans will be judged by the same God and, therefore, any injustice done here left unresolved by mankind is already known to Him.

The chapters of our earthly life will one day come to a close. Some chapters will be bleak and others glowing. The aim is to gather as much knowledge from them as possible, for the more the soul knows the greater it is and draws closer to their salvation in God's heavenly Kingdom, where all is right. The cryptic narrative of Revelations 21:3-4 conveys this feeling best, reading: "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away'."

But what does the Lord want from us? *by James*

WE all have our wants and our needs, can we always actually differentiate what we need, from what we think would be nice for ourselves? Well, you probably already know the answer to that yourself. Of course, we can get caught up in the latest trends, what is popular at any time and the scourge of consumerism, a plight that I am very glad our Bishop has spent much time addressing, as well as from the late Pope Francis too. How I hope that Pope Leo XIV commits the same energy to highlighting such a problem in our market-driven society.

I came across a cartoon last week, probably somewhere on social media…which I spend too much time on, that was somewhat of a satirical commentary on one of these 'modern problems of our generation', although the general theme of the sketch could perhaps be applied to any time of history. Indeed, it showed a rich man in a luxury sports car, flashy, expensive and rare, racing down the high street of a busy market town. Next to him, was a man in an ordinary, common and less exhilarating automobile, who exclaimed "Wow, I'd love to have me one of those!", with his wife reminding him to not be so silly, and that besides, she had seen a lovely new necklace that day. Watching from afar, was a teenage boy riding his bicycle, not particularly lavish, but he was a young lad and the bike did the job. Well, he saw the ordinary car and thought "Wow, wouldn't I just love to have a car, imagine the freedom".

However, sitting alone, a widowed, less well-off man in a wheelchair and of old age, had seen the rich man in his car, the other man in his own car with his wife, and the teenager who was young and fit. What did the old man think? "Lord, what a beautiful day it is today, the sun is out and I'm still here, able to enjoy what I have."

If we do not appreciate what we have, then we ultimately do not deserve what we possess. We are all guilty of it, wanting the latest version of whatever society dictates is in fashion, or yearning for a greater pleasure than those we already avail of. Our young people now grow up with technology in their hands that even those on the Apollo 11 mission wish they had, a capacity to connect to anywhere and anyone on the world, to access information that, in previous decades, only those in the higher echelons of society would have been able to reach. If we spend more time thinking about what we could have, we miss out on appreciating what we do have.

Perhaps this is the beauty of prayer, which, through my own experience and understanding of it, I now see less as activity, but as a state of mind. Sure, it may involve lighting your candle of your favourite Saint, getting on your knees by the bedside, or flicking through the pages a devotional book, but what it fundamentally consists of is allowing yourself to enter into a space in your own mind, in which your thoughts are guided by God, in which you can connect to 'the Man upstairs' and understand what it is that He wants from you. There is no problem making requests and praying for assistance or, indeed, critical help in times of great need, for this only reinforces one's trust in the Lord, that it is in Him who we should trust and look to, not ourselves. As Proverbs 3 saliently tells us: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight."

Prayer allows us to thank God, to be grateful for what we have and to recognise the blessings that God has bestowed upon us. Will

life always be so good that it will be easy to be grateful and cheerful about one's own circumstances? Well, that of course would be foolish! However, we should appreciate what we have when we have, lest we will not always do.

My mind draws me towards the soon-to-be-canonised saint, Bl Carlo Acutis, who, while lying on his death bed, suffering from acute promyelocytic leukaemia at the age of 15, when asked if he was in great pain by his doctors, simply said "there are people who suffer much more than me". In a supreme act of humility and at peace with his fate, Carlo understood that while he was doing terrible, there were those that were worse.

The question most pertinent in our prayer lives, amongst others, perhaps should be: 'But what does God want from me?' It means acknowledging our weaknesses, in humility and trusting in our Lord, and also our strengths, thanking God for what He has done for us, and appreciating what we have. With the knowledge of this, we can understand what we are capable of, and called to do, and with that understanding, we no longer focus on the nicer car, or the better job, but on the Lord's own special and unique path that He has chosen for us.

Let Him steer the boat, and we shall do the rowing.

Fatima pilgrimage for Derry youth

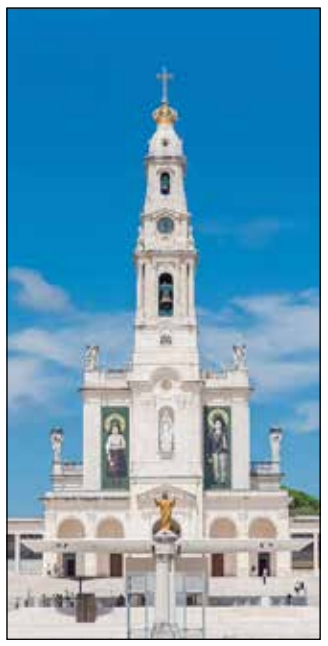
THIS summer's Derry Youth Pilgrimage is to the Shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima, in Portugal, which celebrates the Marian apparitions to three little shepherds, Lúcia dos Santos and her cousins Francisco and Jacinta Marto, from May 13 to October 13, 1917.

Open to those aged 16 and over, the pilgrimage will run from July 14-18. The group of 30 will be have an Anam Cara Travel guide, with Bishop Donal leading the religious programme.

The price of the pilgrimage is £700, which includes flights, accommodation and two meals a day. Flights are direct from Dublin airport and pilgrims are allowed 1 x 20kg bag and 1 x carry-on for luggage.

To secure a place, pilgrims are asked to pay a non-refundable deposit of £100, along with submitting a completed application form.

Further information can be obtained by contacting Lizzie Rea at lizzie.rea@derrydiocese.org or call the Derry Diocesan Catechetical Centre on 028 71 264087.



Closing a wonderful week of Mission in Maghera, Dominicans leave message…

Renewal of Church in Maghera and Ireland is people coming together in worship and prayer

DURING a week of great weather, Maghera parishioners felt tremendously blessed as they gathered for their Parish Mission ceremonies in the churches of St Mary's, in the town, and St Patrick's, Glen, led by Dominicans, Fr Columba Mary Toman OP (Down) and Fr Patrick Desmond OP (Cork).

Marking the 100th anniversary of the laying of the Foundation Stone of St Patrick's Parish and the Jubilee Year of Hope, the time of prayer, talks and reflection came to a close with the celebration of Mass in St Patrick's Church, on the morning of Saturday, May 17, with parish priest, Fr Paddy Doherty and Fr Kieran O'Doherty concelebrating with the Dominican missionaries.

Delivering the homily to the large congregation on what was a glorious May morning, Fr Patrick entrusted his listeners, both in the church and online, with the mission of going out, nourished and bolstered by the fruits of the week of prayer in their personal faith lives, to be a source of encouragement to others who no longer join the parish community in the celebration of the sacraments.

Highlighting how the scriptures record the pagans rejoicing when they heard the 'Good News', he said: "As missionaries, we need to believe that what we bring to people is what they need and are looking for. And, when they hear it delivered with love, they will be more open to receiving it. The world is waiting to hear this message, if only people would tell them."

Speaking about the Blessed Trinity as one of the central mysteries of the Gospel, Fr Patrick explained it as a communion of persons united in love; a community of love.

He added: "What we are proposing to people is to spend eternity in this incomprehensible family of love, with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

"The Second Person in the Trinity has come to us in the flesh in Jesus," he continued, "and this is what the pagans of Maghera are waiting to hear."

Highlighting the importance of prayer and worship for mission, he noted: "Worship and prayer is a witness of what we believe. Mission in the church starts here. The fundamental renewal of the Church in Maghera, and in Ireland, is people coming together in worship and prayer.

Witness

"When those who come to church only for weddings and funerals, they need to be hit in the face with your witness that God is truly present in the Tabernacle, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity, and that the proper recognition of this is to get down on your knees. What we believe about God affects how we live."

Noting that young people in the Parish were receiving their First Holy Communion later that day, Fr Patrick urged: "This can't be their last Holy Communion. As a community of believers, you need to show them. Encourage their families; you all know them."

With the Blessing of the Graves the following day, Fr Patrick remarked: "You will be thinking of the Church Suffering, the Church Triumph. The Church is more than a building, it is the Mystical Body of Christ – the souls of Earth, Purgatory and Heaven. You must be convinced that you are part of something bigger, and that you are worth dying for. Your life must become a new song for the Lord."

Having watched the sun rising at the dawning of the day, Fr Patrick shared his experience: "As I watched the darkness recede and the light start to emerge, suddenly the air was filled with birds chirping and singing in chorus, and the sound of sheep bleating, some with deeper voices than others.

"You must become part of the great triumphant chorus of praise to The Lord in our faith. When you leave Mass, you hear the words, 'Go announce the Gospel of The Lord'; you are being sent out, after being edified by the Body and Blood of Christ, to be missionaries, to tell your lost brothers and sisters about God.

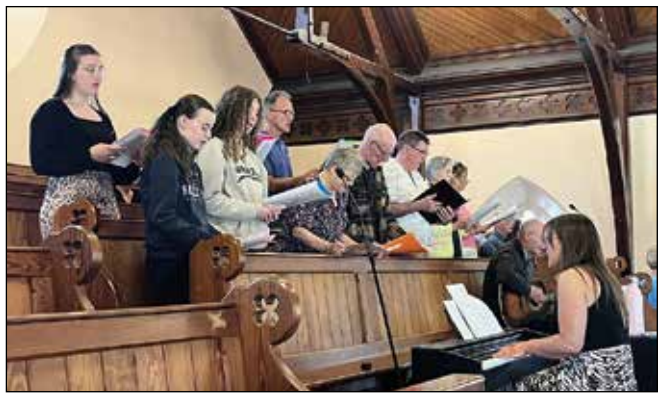
"Be courageous, ask people to come to Church. Just invite people and God will do the rest."

At the end of Mass, as well as the blessing of religious objects, the traditional Dominican Blessing of the Roses was given, with many throughout the church holding up their bouquets of flowers to be sprinkled with Holy Water.

Thanking the Dominicans, as well as all who had helped prepare for the Mission and the parishioners for their great turnout to the ceremonies throughout the week, Fr Paddy Doherty said that he felt privileged to have been a part of it all.

"There were many blessings this week," he remarked, adding: "On Sunday afternoon, I was privileged to be present when the Dominican Fathers administered the Sacrament of the Sick, and I know that there were blessings for mind and body for many from this."

Delighted with the great weather during the Mission Week, Fr Paddy joked: "We allowed it to rain on Monday for the farmers, but we had sun for the rest of the week! It was also a blessing to get to know the Dominican Fathers better, and we thank them for what they have done for us."



Little Way Novena in honour of St Thérèse of Lisieux

by Anne Marie Hickey

THE Little Way Novena in honour of St Thérèse of Lisieux took place in St Eugene's Cathedral from Saturday, May 10 to Sunday, May 18, with the theme 'When I am charitable, it is Jesus alone who acts in me." It was wonderful to have had this Novena between the election of our new Pope and his inaugural Mass, which was celebrated in Rome on the final day of our Novena.

AT the opening Mass, for the Anointing of the Sick, Fr Shaun Doherty spoke about the power of a chimney to catch the attention of the whole world; all watching the Sistine Chapel chimney to see if a Pope had been elected. Really what we were doing all week, was that we were all focused too, but our focus wasn't on anything earthly. For the nine days our focus was heaven.

On Sunday evening, Bishop Donal spoke about a shared listening – hearing God's voice when we listen together with hearts that are pickled with prayer. The bishop went on to say that when the Church steeps itself in silence and prayer, God can do great things. That is what we experienced over the nine days. We were steeped in silence. Silence is so powerful. We were steeped in prayer, which lifts us out of the world to a heavenly reality. It enables us to taste eternity – that place of peace and joy.

On Monday evening, Colin Bell, the father of Kevin Bell, who tragically died in a hit and run accident in New York, told us that people's love carried them through the most difficult time of their lives. The people of their community gathered around him and his wife, and gave them strength and hope. They started 'The Kevin Bell Repatriation Trust' (www.kbrtrust.com) to help others in the same distressing circumstances, and do the most remarkable work. They surrendered their lives for the good of others and out of love for others.

On Tuesday evening, Archdeacon Robert Miller told us what was necessary in order to live the command to love. He explained how we are to be Christians. He talked about making hot chocolate; it is not be lumpy and inconsistent. There is to be a consistency in the texture of it. It is the same for us. Our Christianity is not to be lumpy and inconsistent. It is to be an integral part of our being; present in all parts and times of our lives. We must walk with the community – a walk in communion – helping the weakest and the most vulnerable.

On Wednesday evening, Sile Quinlan spoke to us. Sile was adopted and is now married with four children. She revealed to us why it should be natural for us to love all other people, and to want to do everything we possibly can to help them. Using the Word of God, Sile revealed how sacred and precious every single human being is, from the moment of conception to the moment of natural death. Every human being is a sacred child of God, made in the image and likeness of God. They deserve our respect, our love and our care. Sile is so committed to the sacredness of life that she has given herself to the prolife cause, not asking what cost it is to her, not worrying what the neighbours might think or the abuse she might get. She is driven by love out of her life to care for the most vulnerable in our society.

Rosary

On Thursday evening, Sr. Rosa Goretti came from New York to speak to us about the beauty and the power of the Rosary; the Rosary for peace, the Rosary every day. Her love for Mary, the Mother of God and our Mother too, was so beautiful and obvious. She said that when you give Mary an inch, she'll take a mile, and that when she put the Rosary in her hand, Mary took her hand and led her to Jesus. Regarding her vocation and what attracted her to the Sisters of Life, Sr Rosa said that it was the beauty of Jesus and the beauty of His love that attracted her. I thought she would have said that it was the charism of the Order to protect life - to protect woman in difficult pregnancies, to protect unborn babies - but that is just the living out of the love. It is the beauty of God's love that attracted Sr Rosa and she expresses that love through her work. The depth and energy of her love, and the passion in her love for Jesus was disarming and yet so liberating. She revealed that when we passionately love Jesus, it is overwhelming and everything else becomes secondary. It is all consuming and the way we are called to be.

On Friday evening, when Fr John Joe Duffy spoke to us, he showed the depth of his love for the people of Cresslough in their darkest hour. He gave humble leadership. He walked together with the people and pointed them to the homeland, to heaven. He echoed the voice of God in a dark, dark moment. He gave focus and hope, again, not counting the cost to himself. In his deep humility, Fr John Joe spoke about the power and necessity of prayer for one another. It is not possible to truly live the commandment of love without the power and strength that prayer brings. We should never underestimate the need for and power of prayer for one another.

On Saturday morning, we celebrated Mass for all those who have died; those who handed on the faith to us and to whom we should be most grateful. A faith that needs cared for and worked at each day. We asked Our Lord to take care of them now, until we all meet again one day.

On Sunday, we came together to celebrate the Closing Ceremony of our Novena. Fr Paul Farren told us our world today, our society, is closing in on itself. Pope Francis had led the Church out of itself, out to the margins, out to where there is suffering. Some people in the world today believe that we should love ourselves first and then our families, and then, if we have any love left over, we can love others too. But Jesus tells us to show the greatest love to the one in the greatest need. Often it is fear that keeps us from loving. People create fear so that we don't love. People and groups of people are condemned and labelled as criminals when we don't know them. If we are passionately in love with Jesus, we cannot restrict or contain our love. It will burst out of our lives. It will drive us out of our lives into the life of God, so that what St Thérèse says is true, when I am charitable it is Jesus alone who acts in me.

The fruit of this Novena must be that we allow ourselves to fall madly in love with Jesus; that we allow Jesus to act in us; that we allow Jesus to take over our lives and lead us to where the need is greatest; that we allow Jesus to free us to care for every child of God without exception. We have been blessed and privileged with this sacred space over the nine days. Now, echoing the words of our new Pope Leo: "May we all continue to walk together towards that homeland that God has prepared for us".

Fr Paul gave us the dates of next year's Novena: May 9-17. Save the date! St Thérèse of Lisieux pray for us.

Photography by Stephen Latimer

Bishop Donal's niece, Sr Rosa Goretti Immaculata shared her vocation story during this year's St Therese Novena in St Eugene's Cathedral…

Our vocation is always for our deepest happiness and holiness

I have been in New York with the Sisters of Life for nearly four years now, and before that I had worked as doctor in Antrim and Belfast for a couple of years. I have always desired to be a mother and a bride, but I definitely didn't grow up thinking I would be a Sister.

I am originally from Loughguile, in North Antrim, from a normal farming family, mad about hurling and, thanks be to God, raised practicing the faith. I was blessed to be raised in a home where we went to Mass and family prayer was important, and Mammy made sure that we didn't the leave house without holy water!

Although I knew a lot about Jesus, I didn't really know Him as One who cared and loved me, personally. God was a nice idea somewhere out there, but I was grand where I was, the way I was. On the outside, I checked all the boxes, but in the inside there was no life.

When I was 17, I visited Lourdes for the first time and came home thirsty; thirsting to pray, to know more about the faith, to understand many of the things that I had grown up practicing but didn't know why. That same summer, at a Youth 2000 retreat, for the first time I really began to believe that Jesus was present in the Eucharist, that Holy Communion really was Jesus. Although I had heard that so many times and went to Mass faithfully, I just didn't know. I began to believe because I kept hearing people saying during Adoration, "This is Jesus, this is Jesus, Jesus is here for you." I remember this prayer of my heart, "Jesus, I want to believe what they are saying is true. I want to believe this is You!" I suppose it was a prayer like the man in the Gospel saying, "Lord, help my unbelief."

Rosary

On that same Youth 2000 retreat, there was a man who came to a group of us and asked if we would consider making a promise to Our Lady to pray the Rosary every day. I remember thinking, "This man is so kind, I can't say 'no' to him," and in the same moment thinking, "but Our Lady I can't say 'yes' to him and be telling a lie!" So, there was this tiny crack in my heart, saying "Our Lady I will try, I will do my best." And, as a Mother who gives her children all they need, Our Lady gave me the grace to be faithful.

So, before school, I would get up and pray one or two decades, and then another in the car. I would keep a pair of Rosary beads in my blazer pocket and, just when I could through the day, I would be praying the Hail Marys. I can see clearly that, as I took in my hands the Rosary beads, Our Lady took me by the hand and truly led me to Jesus. I felt like I was learning so much and I was understanding more and more about who Jesus was, simply by spending time with Our Lady.

Every 'Hail Mary' we say, "Mary, the Lord is with You," so every time we go to Our Lady, we are with Jesus. And by this, my love for Jesus, and knowing His love and mercy towards me, was deepening. I was believing more and more that Holy Communion really is Jesus; that He really is in the tabernacle and He really loves it when I come to be with Him and just chat. He wants to be with me when I receive Holy Communion at Mass. Jesus cares so much that He wants the deepest possible intimate relationship with us. He doesn't just want to be near us or beside us.

Do not be afraid

Our Lady was clearly doing a lot in my heart because, six months after beginning to pray the Rosary, a priest in Confession asked me if I had ever considered a religious vocation. In that moment, the true answer was absolutely 'no'. It had never entered my head, and yet, in that very moment something within me was being deeply moved, but much more with fear and panic! In a couple of days, I had my interview for medicine at Queens. It was my 18th birthday soon and I had already begun praying for my husband! This did not seem like the time to consider religious life. To be honest, I hardly even knew what it meant and I definitely hadn't heard of any other 17-year-old girls who had it on their mind! I hadn't ever thought about being a Sister, but there was something very real and strong rising in my heart right then; something about giving myself entirely to Jesus, who I was coming to know and love. So, with panic and fear, I left the confessional and I was met by a huge poster on the wall, "Do not be afraid, only have faith."

Now, I have always wanted to be a mother and a bride, in the deepest sense that I wanted to have someone that I could entirely give my whole life to, my feminine and maternal heart, and in return be received and loved entirely… all that I am, good and bad, a deep and faithful love. This is what we are made for. This is what our hearts long for. To love and be loved. For years, I was praying for my husband, asking Jesus to keep him pure, holy, to prepare his heart for me, that he would wait for me. I would write these prayers down so that, when the day came, I could have them as proof, "Here, I've been praying for you for years! I have been longing to love you this whole time."

Trust

As I kept studying, I was growing in my faith and prayer through the chaplaincy at Queens, and with good friends and priests, who were such an example and support. I was continuing to pray the Rosary and going to Adoration, but was really flipping back and forward between this great desire to be a mother and a wife and also to give my whole life in love for Jesus. By the prayers and example of Our Lady, I was trusting more and more that whatever God's plan was, it was for my good and would make me most happy. I could trust and surrender to His plan, to His will. Jesus doesn't just want our holiness, He wants our happiness too, our deepest peace and fulfilment, far more than we do, but we will only find it in Him and with Him.

So, with Our Lady, I would pray over and over, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done unto me according to Thy Word," and a daily prayer, "Lord, whatever Your Will is for me today, my answer is 'yes'. Conform my heart to Your most perfect Will so that the desires of my heart matches what our plan is for me." With this prayer… "What do You want today, Jesus, let me do Your Will today, one step at a time with Our Lady"…. everything falls into place.

The more I spent time with Jesus in Adoration, in the chapel, those sweet or sorrowful times of prayer, I was coming to know Jesus, to whom no detail of my day or my life was insignificant. My joys made Him happy too, and no sin, weakness or failing was too much for him. He already saw and knew every piece and part of my life, every hurt, every desire, and He understood everything, especially when I couldn't put words to it. I was experiencing total, all-seeing, all-knowing love for me, despite all the baggage I carried. Just total love. I couldn't anymore consider that the deepest part of my heart could love anyone else this much. My heart gradually stopped even seeking someone else because His love satisfied me. I knew He was in love with me. And I had fallen in love with Love Himself.

Discerning

I finished my degree and worked for two years as a doctor, finishing up in the cancer centre in Belfast before entering with the Sisters of Life in New York. One of the best pieces of advice that I got when I was discerning was, "If this call is real, it will not go away." And it never went away! It only grew and grew and grew; my heart only desired more and more to let Jesus love me this way and to give my whole life for Him.

I had never imagined that I would leave home, become a Sister, or live in America. This was not my good idea, but I could never have imagined the joy this life would bring me. I knew, without knowing quite how, that this was it, by a love so compelling in the depths of me that would have me leave Co Antrim for a convent, and hospital scrubs for a habit and veil. I have always desired to be a mother and a bride; I just couldn't have foreseen the plan God had for this deep desire and how He would fulfil it.

I am not happy just because I am doing what I want to do, my cup is full because Jesus is filling it. It is in His plan, in His will that we find our peace. Our vocation is always for our deepest happiness and our holiness. And that doesn't mean it is easy, but neither is being a nurse, or a teacher, or a mammy. What you will do for the one you love, what you will endure for love…and what you will receive in return?

One time when I was home visiting, I was carrying my three-year-old cousin, and she said to me, "Sister, I like your hat!" I said, "Oh, you mean you like my veil? Why's that?" And, she said, "It means you're getting married!" Spot on! We religious wear a veil as a sign that we are married to Jesus! Even a three-year old copped on! When you love someone, you want to be with them and so, as a Sister, as a Bride of Jesus Christ, our first priority and mission is our life of prayer. We have nothing to give unless we have first been filled, especially in Holy Communion, in Confession. This is like what St Therese said: "When I am charitable, it is Jesus alone who acts in me." Anything good we do comes from God; of myself, I can do nothing.

Privilege

In New York with my sisters, I have the privilege of serving women who are pregnant and in vulnerable situations, most especially when being so desperate, they think that abortion is the only option. But we serve as mothers to mothers, accompanying these women, loving them, being with them when no one else is, so that they can choose life both for themselves and for their child.

We also have a mission in which we accompany women who have sadly suffered the experience of abortion, often a very hidden pain, and are on a journey of hope and healing, because nothing is beyond the mercy of God. Your deepest place of pain and shame is where Jesus wants to love you the most. In our work in Manhattan, we see so much pain, so much brokenness and suffering, especially where relationships have not been based on love but rather on use, abuse and pleasure, and truly it leads to so much pain.

On days when I go to prayer feeling bruised by what I have seen, knowing that Jesus grieves over our pain too, I'll be so consoled remembering, "Jesus, You are my spouse, You can never hurt me, You can never leave, You cannot lie to me, You will always love me." This is our God, and these things are true for you too. Jesus will never lie to you, He will never leave you, even if you turn away from Him, and He can't stop loving you.

I'm sure all of us have a memory of some time we were sick as a child, and how mammy or granny looked after you. Any mother is most concerned about her sickest and weakest child. The love in the heart of a mother is fierce. What must it be for Our Lady to us? Far beyond any physical sickness, she wants our souls and our hearts to be well, just as a mammy wants her child to be healthy, but far more, she wants their happiness, peace in their heart. Everything Our Lady is about is to bring us closer to Jesus, and the more we go to this perfect Mother, the more we will discover what God wants of us and for us. It is with and from Our Lady that we receive everything Jesus wants to give us, all the graces and gifts His heart is bursting to give us. Following our Lady, we will discover the plan God has every day for our lives, in the big and the small. Nothing in your life is insignificant or unimportant to your Mother, to Our Lady. Tell Her everything, give Her everything, and let Her remind you that with God all things are possible.

Legion of Mary news...

Beautiful May weather for Donaghmore Legion of Mary Golden Jubilee

IN this month of Mary, the Parish of Donaghmore Legion of Mary celebrated its 50th anniversary on Sunday, May 18, with the celebration of Mass in St Patrick's Church, Crossroads, Killygordon.

The main celebrant was Fr Patsy Arkinson, PP, and he was joined by Fr Thomas Canning, cc Drumquin, who is the spiritual director to the Legion in the Diocese, and Fr Roland Colhoun, spiritual director to the Newtownstewart Praesidium.

Joined by Legion members from neighbouring parishes and the Home of the Mother Servant Sisters, the proceedings got underway with the Legion's Opening Prayers and the Rosary, before the celebration of the Mass.

In his homily, Fr Patsy noted that the Legion had been founded by a Dublin lay-man, Frank Duff in 1921, and was a lay ministry serving to nurture the faith of the Church.

"Our hope," he added, "is that the Legion will continue to flourish and add to the faith of our parish community."

He went on say: "Any movement inspired by God will stand the test of time. Undoubtedly, the Legion of Mary was inspired by God and continues to be.

"Today, it is found not just in parishes in our country but throughout the globe, but it is very hard to get people to join, which may be down to the decline in practice of the faith."

"The beautiful prayer at Legion meetings was the prayer that sustained our faith in the past and in the penal period, when the celebration of Mass was prohibited," remarked Fr Patsy, adding: "There is something about prayer in general and, more importantly, the Rosary, if said in the company of others; you almost become one in mind and heart with those you pray with."

He continued: "It is very heartening to see so many legionaries present in our Church. The invitation to all of us is to renew our devotion to Our Lady and to that beautiful prayer of the Rosary."

Mass was followed by the remaining Legion prayers, led by the president of Our Lady Queen of Peace Praesidium, Kathleen Kelly, and Acting President, Margaret Ewing.

One of the original members, Kathleen thanked Margaret for taking over the lead role during the past year when she was unable to be of any help and for her tremendous work, as well as all involved in preparations for the Golden Jubilee.

Kathleen went on to recall that the first meeting of Our Lady Queen of Peace Praesidium had been held in the Parochial Hall on Wednesday, January 8, 1975, with 10 members present. The parish priest at the time, Dr Marron was the first spiritual director.

While Kathleen was the Praesidium's first president, the vice-president was Annie Callaghan, the treasurer was Alice Kelly, and the secretary was Danny Cullen. They were mentored for the first six weeks by two legionaries from Derry, James Kelly and Jimmy Coyle, who attended the first meeting and are now deceased. Following further mentoring from the Convoy Praesidium, Kathleen recalled: "After that we were on our own, but for the handbook, which is a marvelous book; it is very dear to us and answered all our questions."

She went on to say: "We have to be so thankful the way the Legion has been accepted in our parish. We have had a wonderful reception here and have formed great partnerships and friendships, and our hope is that this will continue.

"The Legion may be faltering a bit here in Ireland, but it is flourishing in other countries."

Expressing deep appreciation for all the great prayer support of friends, Kathleen went on to point out that the Legion would not survive without spiritual directors, the first being Dr Marron, then Fr Keaveney, Fr Grant, Fr Devine and, currently, Fr Arkinson.

Noting that the Legion prayer began with a prayer to the Holy Spirit, Kathleen said: "Frank Duff was especially guided by the Holy Spirit. I ask that we all pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit."

The celebration continued with light refreshments in the CAKE Centre, Killygordon.

Legion of Mary news...

Castlefin Legion of Mary celebrates annual consecration ceremony *by Mary McMenamin*

OUR Lady of Guadalupe Praesidium, Castlefin, held its annual Legion of Mary annual Acies Ceremony and Mass on the Feast of the Annunciation.

Rosary and prayers were followed by Mass celebrated by Fr Ciaran Hegarty Adm, in St Mary's Church.

Taken from the Legion handbook, the Latin word 'Acies', meaning as it does 'an army ranged in battle array', is 'appropriate to a ceremony in which the legionaries, as a body, assemble to renew their fealty to Mary, Queen of the Legion, and from Her to receive strength and blessing for yet another year's battle with the forces of evil'.

The ceremony started with opening prayers, taken from the Legion of Mary Tessera and the Rosary. We were delighted to be joined by Brendan Harte, a legionary for many years from Eskra, who is a member of the Men's Praesidium in Omagh.

Fr Hegarty gave a very inspirational talk on the significance of consecration to Our Lady.

Following this, the members of the Legion, along with the auxiliary members, processed forward, with Fr Hegarty leading. Everyone present placed their hand on the staff of the vexillum, while reciting the words of the consecration: "I am all thine, my queen and my mother and all that I have is thine."

This was followed by the celebration of Holy Mass. During the homily, Fr Hegarty spoke Louis Marie de Montfort's book, 'True Devotion to Mary', and the devotion that Pope St Paul John II had to Our Lady. Pope St John Paul II used the papal motto 'Totus Tuus', which means 'totally yours', to express his complete consecration to Mary.

Fr Hegarty promoted membership of the Legion of Mary, and we are all very grateful to him for his continued support and encouragement.

After the ceremony and Mass, Legion members provided tea and refreshments for everyone present.

Our Praesidium has seven members at moment. New members are always welcome to join their local branch.

All for Jesus, through Mary.

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Sunny Ice-Cream Sunday fundraiser for Claudy-Craigbane HOPE Camp

May processions...

Holy Child PS May procession to Creggan Grotto

THIS year's May Procession from Holy Child Primary School, in the Creggan, to the Grotto at St Mary's Church was led by Bishop Donal, alongside parish priest, Fr Daniel McFaul.

The P4 children, who had made their First Holy Communion, and the recently confirmed P7 pupils were to the fore in the procession, which involved the entire school community praying the Rosary as they walked along.

Some parents joined in the procession, which was warmly received by the local community, with many parishioners lining the route to encourage the children with smiles and waves.

The school choir added to the occasion with the sweet singing of May hymns in honour of Our Lady, as did the closing of the celebration with the handing out of free ice-cream cones to the delight of children and adults alike.

Commenting afterwards, Bishop Donal told 'The Net': "It was a privilege to be part of the Holy Child PS May Procession. It was clearly an event that the school had prepared very carefully.

"It allowed the P4 children, who had just celebrated their First Holy Communion, to walk in their outfits at the head of the procession. The whole school community took part and lots of family members either lined the route or joined in the procession.

"This was a very encouraging example of a Catholic school which is highly valued by its community - and I was honoured to be part of it."

(Photographs by Jim McCafferty.)

Long Tower PS

St Eithne's PS

Eangach

Beannaigh Dia de bharr na beatha,
beannaigh Dia gach tráth den ló,
beannaigh Dia go brách na breithe,
beannaigh Dia go deo.

Beannaigh Dia, a mhámanna sléibhe,
beannaigh Dia, a réite fós,
beannaigh Dia go moch is déanach,
beannaigh Dia thar fóir.

Beannaigh Dia, a ghrian is a réaltaí,
beannaigh Dia, a ré is a róis,
beannaigh Dia gan sos gan staonadh,
beannaigh Dia go fóill.

Beannaigh Dia, a ghaoth 's a ghála,
beannaigh Dia, a shaoil atá beo,
beannaigh Dia, a spéir 's a thalaimh,
beannaigh Dia go deo!

"Tu es Petrus et super hanc petram aedificabo ecclesiam mean et tibi dabo claves regni caelorum"
"Is tusa Peadar (.i. 'Carraig') agus is ar an gcarraig seo a thógfaidh mé m'eaglais, Agus tabharfaidh mé duit eochracha ríocht na bhflaitheas"
(Scríbhínn i mBaisleac Naomh Peadar)

Habemus Papam!
Tá Pápa againn!

Pápa Leon XIV

Ba lá stairiúil, ríthábhachtach é an 8ú lá Bealtaine 2025. Bhí súil ag na mílte i gCearnóg Pheadair le deatach bán a fheiceáil ó shimléar na Vatacáine le 24 uair a chloig. Ní hamháin go raibh an oiread sin ag breathnú ar an tsimléar ins an Chearnóg, ach bhí na milliúin thart ag leanúint cúrsaí ar an teilifís nó ar na meáin shóisialta ar fud an domhain. Cuireann an deatach bán in iúl don tsaol mhór ar ndóigh go bhfuil Coláiste na gCairdinéal i ndiaidh Pápa úr a dhéanamh de cheann acu féin. Ghlac 133 acu páirt i gcomhthionól cairdinéal; próiseas a bhíonn ar siúl faoi rún sa tSéipéal Sistíneach gan teagmháil ar bith acu leis an tsaol mhór lasmuigh. Is annamh agus is iontach an rud é nár ghlac sé ach ceithre bhallóid amháin do Choláiste na gCairdinéal chun cinneadh a dhéanamh. Is léir go raibh an Spiorad Naomh ina measc.

Turas na Sagartachta

Tá an Cardinéal Robert Francis Prevost i ndiaidh bheith ceaptha ina Phápa úr orainn agus is é an 266ú pápa le teacht i gcomharba Naomh Peadar. Roghnaigh sé Leon XIV mar ainm an Phápa. Is é Pápa Leon XIV, 69 bliain d'aois, an chéad Phápa ar as na Stáit Aontaithe. Is léir gur thosaigh sé ar an turas sagartachta nuair a luaigh a dheartháir go ligfeadh Robert air féin gur sagart é nuair a bheadh siad i mbun súgartha ina n-óige. Nuair a chríochnaigh sé an ghnáthscolaíocht, chuaigh sé chuig an chliarscoil agus oirníodh ina shagart é sa bhliain 1982. Bhog sé go Peiriú trí bliana ina dhiaidh sin, ach d'fhillfeadh sé ó am go ham ar na Stáit Aontaithe. Chaith sé 10 mbliain mar thréadaí paróiste agus mar mhúinteoir ag cliarscoil i Trujillo, thiar ó thuaidh in Peiriú. D'oibrigh sé in ord de chuid na nAgaistíneach chomh maith. In 2014, cheap Pápa Próinseas ina Easpag de Chiclayo é, ina ArdEaspag é i 2023 agus ina Chairdinéal é cúpla mí ina dhiaidh sin. Tá aithne maith ag na Cairdinéil air mar Mhaor de chuid Dhiacaistir na nEaspag, ról ríthábhachtach maidir le roghnú na n-easpag agus le breathnú a dhéanamh orthu i rith an ama.

A Chéad Fhocal Mar Phápa

"Síochán libh go léir" a dúirt Pápa Leon XIV ó phríomhbhalcóin Bhaisleac Naomh Peadar. Is léir dom go bhfuil sé ag súil le síocháin eadrainn uilig, idir Chaitlicigh agus dhaoine nach bhfuil den chreideamh; go bhfuil spás ann do gach duine, nár cheart cogadh agus achrainn bheith ann eadrainn ar fad. Lean sé ar aghaidh agus dúirt sé: "Tá grá ag Dia dúinn, dúinn uilig, ní éireoidh leis an olc. Tá Sé de dhíth ar an chine daonna, mar dhroichead a thugann muid chuig grá Dé... ní mór dúinn bealaí a aimsiú le chéile chun a bheith inár nEaglais mhisinéireachta a thógann droichid, a chuireann comhrá ar bun agus a chuireann fáilte chroíúil roimh gach duine."

Cén fáth ar Roghnaigh sé a Ainm Mar Phápa?

Ina chéad chruinniú leis na Cairdinéil, mhínigh Pápa Leon XIV cad tuige ar roghnaigh sé a ainm mar Phápa: bhí fáthanna éagsúla ann ach b'é an príomhfháth ná go raibh an cheist shóisialta i gcomhthéacs an Chéad Réabhlóid Mhór Thionsclaíoch luaite ag Pápa Leon XIII, san imlitir stairiúil 'Rerum Novarum'. Agus sa lá atá inniu ann, cuireann an Eaglais a cuid theagaisc shóisialta ar fáil don domhan mar fhreagra ar Réabhlóid Thionsclaíoch úr eile agus ar na forbairtí maidir le hintleacht shaorga a chruthaíonn dúshláin úra i dtaca le dínit an duine, le cóir agus le hobair.

Ag Tarraingt Achan Duine Isteach

Ní briathra a dhearbhaíonn ach gníomh agus ó ceapadh é ar 8ú Bealtaine, léirigh an Pápa go bhfuil sé tiomanta don chomhrá agus don bhearna idir daoine a dhruidim. Mar shampla, bhí sé in ann deacrachtaí teanga a shárú fríd an teanga chomharthaíochta a fhoghlaim. Bhuail sé leis an tSiúir Veronica Donatello, ceannaire um oifig an mhíchumais Chomhdhálacha Easpag na Iodáilise. Mhúin sí dó an dóigh chun bualadh bos a dhéanamh i dteanga chomharthaíochta. Chuaigh seo i bhfeidhm go mór ar dhaoine ar fud an domhain, nó gur léirigh sé an meon oscailte atá aige i dtaca le foghlaim agus le cothú nasc le daoine eile beag beann ar a gcumas.

Mar a dúirt an tArdEaspag Eamonn Martin, agus é i Lourdes na Fraince, dúirt sé gur "éisteoir measúil agus umhal é" an Pápa Leon XIV. "Is misinéir é ina chroí istigh le réimse leathan taithí idirnáisiúnta nó gur chaith sé seal ar mhinistreacht ar thrí mhór-roinn" Rinne an tArdEaspag tagairt ar phríomhtheachtaireacht an Phápa: "Léiríonn a chéad fhocal faoi a bheith ag tógáil síochána agus droichead go bhfuil sé ag iarraidh bheith ag obair ar son athmhuintearas agus aontú na hEaglaise agus an Domhain."

Tá an umhlaíocht ar a bhfuil an tArdEaspag ag caint le sonrú sna chéad fhocal i seanmóir an Phápa Leon XIV ar lá a oirnithe. "Roghnaíodh mise ar beag is fiú mé, agus tagaim os bhur gcomhair anois ar crith le heagla, mar bhráthair ar mhaith leis a bheith ina shearbhónta ag bhur gcreideamh agus ag bhur ngliondar, le siúl libh ar bhealach ghrá Dé, mar gur mhaith Leis muid a bheith aontaithe in aon teaghlach amháin. Grá agus aontacht: is iad sin an dá ghné den mhisean a d'fhág Íosa faoi chúram Pheadair.

Teachtaireachr a D'fhág sé Dúinn

Robert Prevost mar Easpag Chiclayo

ag Labhairt ag an Searmanas Oirinithe

Ba mhaith liom gurb í an chloch is mó ar ár bpaidrín ná an Eaglais a bheith aontaithe, mar chomhartha na haontachta agus na comaoine, a spreagfaidh athmhuintearas fríd an domhan."

Servant of God, Sr Clare Crockett Retreat Talks series…

Belfast actress, Danielle Magennis shares impact of Sr Clare on her life…

God sent Sr Clare into my life the moment I needed her most

Danielle with Sr Clare's sisters, Shauna and Megan.

I'M deeply humbled and honoured to have this opportunity to speak about Sr Clare Crockett and my faith journey. Truth be told, standing here is something I thought I would never have the courage to do. I'm an actress so that may sound strange to some, but I act because I get to be everyone else but me. Using the stage and characters became a way for me to escape the pain and troubles of my own life, and let's just say that finding Sr Clare has made me face that pain. Through her life, I have learnt true strength comes not from running away but from embracing who we truly are and trusting in God's plan for us.

This has been a journey of self-discovery, about seeing myself the way God sees me instead of listening to the voice in my head, the one that was holding the key to my own prison. Sr Clare made me see myself the way God sees me, not through the voice of fear and doubt, but through the eyes of love and purpose. Her legacy challenged me to stop hiding, to confront the pain I had buried, the dreams I had abandoned, and the wounds I had ignored. Because of her, I no longer wear the mask of another character, I step boldly into my own story, with faith, purpose and courage.

Let me take you back to the beginning, before Sr Clare entered my life so you can truly understand the journey I've been on. I have to take you back to when I was 11. It's here, my world crumbled and the darkness got in. My mummy passed away on March 6, 1998, and the grief felt like an anchor pulling me under. At the time, I knew that my mummy was sick but I didn't know that she was dying. For about two weeks, I hadn't been allowed to visit her, I was told she needed to rest.

Dying

Then came the morning of March 5. I woke up confused, wondering why I wasn't at school. My granny told me that we had slept in. My daddy had just come home from the hospital and went to bed to get a few hours' sleep, then the phone rang. I watched as my granny answered it and ran upstairs to my daddy. In that moment I felt a paralysing fear, a sinking in my stomach, I knew something wasn't right. Seconds later, my daddy came rushing downstairs, tears streaming down his face, saying: "We have to go. Your mummy is dying." The words didn't make sense. My mind refused to accept them. She couldn't be dying, I thought she was getting better.

All I remember is us getting into the car, crying, breaking every red light to get to my mummy. When we got to the hospital, my whole family was there. I was told, before going in to see my mummy, not to cry because she could still hear everything. When I walked into that room my heart sank, she couldn't speak or see that I was there, and I couldn't stop crying so I had to leave the room. I walked through the hospital, crying. Strangers stopped me, asking, "Are you lost? Are you okay?" But how do you explain that your whole world is slipping away?

That's the day I lost myself, I had no closure, no time to tell my mummy how much I loved her or to hear how much she loved me and, as a child, that weighed heavy, it pulled me under. My mummy was our lighthouse and without her, my daddy, my two brothers and me suffered greatly. We were broken, lost in our own pain, unable to handle our emotions and unable to communicate with each other. Each of us retreated into our own vices, these vices brought temporary comfort but, in the end, they led us deeper into despair. We were separated by our grief, instead of being united in it.

In my brokenness, I started to hide, first from my family, then from the world. I wore a mask, pretending everything was fine. Slowly, I withdrew. My room became my safe place but also my decline. Depression crept in and I built walls around myself, walls that not only kept people out but also blocked me from becoming who God intended me to be. Everything felt out of control, and the voice in my head, telling me I wasn't good enough, grew louder. My self-worth hit rock bottom and I developed an eating disorder. I was around six-and-a-half stone.

Anxiety

This was my way of trying to control a life that was so out of control. I was lost, lying to myself and others, "I'm ok", "I feel great", "There's nothing wrong with me"; saying that I was fine, when I was breaking inside. Anxiety gripped me. Simple things like conversations became overwhelming, and alcohol became my crutch. I'd tell myself, "Just one," to face the world, to get on stage, to pretend I was okay. I was performing not just on stage, but in life.

Through it all, one thing that has always mattered to me is my family. I became fixated on fixing us, holding on to the hope that if I could just keep us together, everything would feel better. I spent so much time trying to be the glue, that I forgot to build a life of my own. I used to dream of becoming a mother, that's something I've struggled to admit to myself and to others until now. "I'm free, I don't need anyone," was my way of protecting myself/defence mechanisms. What I've learnt is this, I'm afraid of being loved, of being vulnerable. But I know, Rome wasn't built in a day.

I was lost, disconnected from everything, I remember crying out to God, "I can't do this anymore. I don't know who I am, I don't know where I belong, I'm surrounded by people, yet I feel so alone." When I thought no one could hear me, no one could help or understand me…He did!

"The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit" (Psalm 34:18). I often say that, when I had no one, I had God, It was in those raw moments, alone and crying out in my room, that I encountered Jesus, and it reminds me of Sr Clare's motto, 'Alone with Christ Alone'.

It was during this time that God began to heal me. It happened through words, poetry. In the quiet of my room, I found a way to speak the truths that I couldn't yet say out loud. At first, I saw it as just creative writing, but really, it was my soul crying out, my spirit longing to be heard. Each time I picked up a pen, I went to the deepest parts of myself, pouring my heart onto the page, letting the tears and words flow. It almost felt like I was in a trance. I was allowing God intimate access to my heart, but I didn't fully understand that until Sr Clare came into my life. My art became my therapy, my antidote, but still something was missing.

Waste

As I said, like Sr Clare, I'm an actress and for a long time acting was everything to me. I believed it would bring me happiness, that landing a big role or becoming famous would solve all my problems. I was constantly lost in daydreams, imagining all these scenarios where success and the world's approval were the answers. But God had other plans. He wasn't about to let His work in me go to waste, so who does He send my way? Sr Clare Crockett.

It was December 2022, when my Uncle Emmanuel came running into my house with this urgency, telling me that he was driving down the Springfield Road and it came to him, as clear as day, that he had to tell me about Sr Clare Crockett! I was thinking calm down, who? I had never heard of her. My uncle was a man of great faith and with that came great wisdom but, in my own blindness, I thought he was mad. So, I brushed it off.

Around two weeks later, I was back in my room and Sr Clare came into my head. I typed her name into Google and up pops her documentary, 'All or Nothing'. By the end, I was in absolute tears, feeling something I hadn't felt in a long time. It was as if Sr Clare was speaking to me, saying, there's more Danielle, there's a greater purpose! From that moment, Sr Clare began showing up in my life in ways that I couldn't ignore: pictures; candles; prayer cards; her book. All these things coming to me without me seeking them and without me telling anyone that I had already made the connection. It was clear, God was sending me Sr Clare to ignite the flame of faith, to be my example, and to remind me of what really mattered. Her joy, her humility, and her unwavering faith spoke to a part of me that I had buried.

I found someone who understood me. Sr Clare had run from herself. She, too, had chased fame and excitement, only to find true fulfilment in surrender. Her life became a mirror for me, reflecting back all the parts of myself that I had been trying to hide. I was running from holiness, from God, from who I really was inside, because I cared what the world thought, but God knew my heart and He didn't give up on me, instead He showed me the way!

Enthroned

Next thing I know, I'm having my home enthroned to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, making them the King and Queen of my home. That's where I met Nuala, who noticed the pictures of Sr Clare around my house and asked about them. She told me that she knew people in Derry who could connect me with others who had known Sr Clare, and I eagerly jumped at the opportunity. A week later, she phoned me saying, "Danielle you're never going to believe this. There's a guy called, Alan writing a project about Sr Clare and he would like to meet you, so we're going to Derry this Friday." I had been asking Sr Clare to guide me, to open the right doors, and lead me where God wanted, not where I wanted.

So, I went to Derry, excited to meet Alan, but found out that he couldn't make it that day. However, I was in great company and heading to my favourite place, where I could learn more about Sr Clare. I ended up at Thomas Gallagher's house, with Jim Crossan and Nuala. Though we were strangers, I immediately felt at ease. As Thomas spoke about faith and Sr Clare, I began to cry, not from sadness, but from joy. My heart was on fire, recognizing something deeply familiar in his words.

Before I left, I got Alan's number and was encouraged to reach out. At the time, I was thinking to myself…and say what? But I did. Instead of showing him my acting skills, I shared my heart, my belief system, through poetry and a monologue I had written. To cut a long story short, we became friends. Alan told me that he didn't just see an actress, he saw a writer. He had been praying to Sr Clare just like me, for someone to help him with his project, and when I reached out, he saw it as a sign. As he put it, "A Magennis came along." We've been working on something ever since. I don't know where it will lead, but we pray to the Holy Spirit for guidance and then write. The rest is up to Sr Clare and God.

Danielle Magennis speaking at the Sr Clare Crockett Retreat in Long Tower - Photograph by Gerry Temple

Discern

During all of this, I was praying and trying to discern why everything was happening to me. I couldn't see the bigger picture, and I started to question, "God, are you telling me I'm going to be a nun?" My Uncle Mano, who knew the real me, often said, "Danielle, God is going to use you in a big way." I always turned to him for guidance, but he passed away in October, and his loss left a void. I was really struggling to understand what God was asking of me.

Then, out of the blue, Nuala reached out again. She told me about a Sr Clare retreat in Derry and said that she felt I had to go. At first, I was hesitant; it was the first weekend of December, a busy time of year. But this happened the night before my uncle Mano's month's mind Mass. Nuala handed me an envelope with the money for the retreat and bus, saying "Your uncle Mano would encourage you to go." The moment she said that, something clicked; I knew I had to go.

So, off I went to Termonbacca, and it was on this retreat that I finally received the clarity I had been praying for. In my room, before Mass with Fr Stephen, I asked God, "Are you calling me to be a nun? Is this why Sr Clare has come into my life? I need a clear sign." Then, at Mass, I felt as if God was speaking directly to me. In his homily, Fr Stephen said, "We're not all called to be nuns or priests;

Servant of God, Sr Clare Crockett Retreat Talks series…

Virgin Mary can ask of us what seems absurd in eyes of world

(Photographs by Patsy McCallion)

ON the Feast of the Visitation of Our Lady to Elizabeth, around 200 people gathered in the pouring rain at Brandywell Grotto for the celebration of Mass to pray for the cause of Servant of God, Sr Clare Crockett, for personal petitions and for peace in the Middle East.

Celebrating the Mass, Fr Gerard Mongan, Long Tower Adm, commented on the Visitation account, remarking: "Our Mother isn't a pious and still statue, static and lifeless. She's like a superhero, a woman of action. Someone is in need of help and she flies there instantly. And if she went with haste to help her cousin, will she not come even faster to assist us, her children?"

He added: "Sr Clare knew that. She became very close to Our Lady. After all, she took the religious name of Sr Clare Maria of the Trinity and the Heart of Mary, and took her perpetual vows on September 8, 2010, Our Lady's birthday."

Fr Gerard went on to quote what Sr Clare had said about Mary: "The Virgin Mary is so great! I don't know how to explain how much good it does me to be with Her and just look at Her. She spoils me in a way that leaves me speechless and makes me feel very, very small, because I realize that She is the one who guides my life.

"I asked Her for the grace to be crazy about Her and to always do whatever She asks of me. There are things the Virgin Mary can ask of us that seem absurd in the eyes of the world, but I know I have to be willing to take that step and even 'make a fool of myself' if She asks me to. She asked St Bernadette to drink from the stream. There was no stream there yet. People just saw Bernadette scooping mud to her face. Did She ask something crazy or absurd? No. She knows what She is doing."

Today, Mother Mary, he continued "is asking us all, along with St Elizabeth and Sr Clare, to thank God for the gift of life. We thank God for the many mothers and fathers in our parish and in our country, who struggle so hard to care for their children despite many setbacks and trials. With Elizabeth today, we give a loud cry with any parent who has lost a little one in whatever circumstance and who desperately need healing and peace.

"Today, we cry with any child or vulnerable adult, who have been robbed of their life, who have been harmed and are still hurting. In that meeting of two mothers, Elizabeth and Mary, we are given a glimpse of the joy of new life and how sacred life is."

"We thank God," added Fr Gerard, "for all who peacefully and respectfully pray for the protection of life, who offer life-affirming options, real healthcare that preserves, supports and nurtures every life. May we see in the faces of everyone that there is a life precious to God. We ask Mary to help us cherish the gift of life in all its stages, to live it to the full, so that one day Her greeting will reach our ears in the joy of Heaven."

Thankful that the sun had broke through again half-way through the Mass, Fr Gerard also thanked Kate and Miley for their beautiful singing, Shauna Gill for reading, Margaret McSwine for reading the Prayer of the Faithful, and Kathleen McCallion and her team for organising the preparing the Grotto.

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we're called to be disciples, to spread the Good News." That was the moment the penny dropped. I realized God that wanted me to combine my art and faith to spread the Good News. These were the two pillars in my life that had always kept me standing, but yet felt separate until that moment. Through Sr Clare, my faith was reignited, and I felt like she was telling me that these two parts of my life needed to work together for the Glory of God. That's where my purpose lies. St Catherine of Siena's words came to mind: "Be who God intended you to be, and you will set the world on fire."

Captivated

I thought that the weekend couldn't get any better, and then I met Shauna and Megan. As they shared stories of Sr Clare, the Clare they knew before the world did, I was captivated. Their personalities shone and I could picture Clare right there with them, laughing and joking. I remember thinking, I'd love a night out with these two. When they finished speaking, I wanted to approach them, but I didn't. I ended up being the first to leave the room as everyone gathered around them. As I walked down the corridor, I felt a pull to go back. Nervously, I returned, rambling thanks, unsure of what I was saying really. It was a brief encounter, I thought they probably thought I was crazy.

Then, as we were heading out for a walk as part of the retreat, Shauna and Megan drove by. They were going to stop and ask me something but, at that moment, Alan, the writer who is also a friend of theirs, texted asking, "Did you meet my friend, Danielle?" And that's how they got my number. After my walk, which finished up outside Long Tower, I got a message from Megan: "Hi Danielle, it's Megan. I hope you don't mind me texting. A few weeks ago, Shauna and I decided to gift someone the trip to Madrid with us. As soon as we left today, we knew it was you. There was just something special." I was speechless. Tears of joy again, I couldn't believe it. Looking back, I know Sr Clare brought us together. It was all meant to be: Mano; the gifts; the connections; the retreat; Madrid. Just months ago, we were strangers and now I love them like family.

Then came Madrid, the trip that gave me the title, 'Adopted Derry Girl.' From the moment I arrived, I was overwhelmed by the warmth and kindness of everyone there. Sr Clare and the people of Derry have become such a big part of my story, and I know it's still being written. Home isn't just a place, it's the people. And I've found mine here.

Reconciled

Little by little, I'm realizing that I had to encounter myself before I could truly embrace the woman I was always meant to be, the woman I had lost sight of when I believed I was worthless. In running from myself, I was unknowingly running from God. He was always the missing piece; the hole in my heart was a God-shaped hole. We all have it, even if we don't realize it yet. My truth is this: I love Jesus, and I've seen Him work in my life. Like Peter, I once denied Him out of fear of what the world might think. But now, I don't care who mocks me. I'd rather stand with God and be rejected by the world, than stand with the world and be rejected by God. Sr Clare, our Servant of God, brought the good news to me and to all of us. Christ invites each of us to be reconciled, reminding us that everything in this life is passing, and only God remains.

God sent Sr Clare into my life at the moment I needed her most. She became the mentor I had been longing for, the guiding light and woman I had been lacking. She revealed to me the secret to true happiness: Jesus. When you surrender to Him, you receive a joy that no one and nothing in this world can ever take away.

A few months ago, Bishop Donal McKeown called Sr Clare a modern-day rebel. To be a rebel today is to love Christ. Sr Clare gave Him everything, surrendering daily with a blank cheque, boldly declaring, "It's All or Nothing!" In giving her life completely to God, she found true freedom, that's the freedom I long for! I want the same joy and peace that she found in giving herself fully to Him. I used to be afraid; afraid to stand out, to be different, to be judged. But now I see that there is nothing braver than standing for truth in a world that rejects it, nothing more rebellious than loving Jesus when the world denies Him, and nothing more fulfilling than living for the One who gave everything for me. The love of Christ sets our hearts on fire, and through Him, we find the courage to live boldly. Today, I've found that courage. Through Sister Clare, I have experienced true love and belonging for the first time. Once a lost lamb, I now feel at home in the embrace of God.

Ruach…Breath of the Spirit

Not thinking *by Fr Eamonn Kelly*

The Lord Jesus promised to send a helper to the disciples. This helper would be the Holy Spirit. This helper would enable the disciple to do two major actions. Firstly, the Spirit would help the disciple to 'remember the words and actions of Jesus.' Secondly, the Holy Spirit would help the disciple to do the actions of Jesus. This latter action would make the disciple a more authentic worker for Christ, a co-worker with Jesus. However, for most followers of Jesus, we do not see the actions of the Holy Spirit in life. Today, the Holy Spirit does not seem to have the same impact as in the days of the Early Church. Surely, the Spirit has not weakened, nor has the power of the words of Jesus run out. Therefore, we need to look at the matter a little closer.

Many of us do not believe very much in our own capacity to be a deep, loyal, committed follower of Jesus. It is easier for us to speak about the wonderful follower of Jesus someone else is. It is easier to acknowledge the friendship with Christ of someone else. Even in our prayer, we often tend to say "his" prayers or "her" prayers are stronger, better or more effective. The Lord Jesus did not tell His people to ask certain others to pray, but told all His listeners to go to your private room and pray. We all have the gift of prayer; we all have the promise of Jesus; and we all have the Holy Spirit on our side. To help explain that all of us are invited to use the Holy Spirit in our everyday, ordinary life, I will try and show how I see things.

The following is a little over simplified, but only a little. There are three simple ways to conduct our lives. One is to live in the past and let the people of the past be the most influential people. We hear it often, 'when I was a child, everything had its proper place; when the master spoke you listened and acted in accordance with what he said; we knew the rules; we followed the rules; they were happy and straightforward times.' The stress is on the past and the powerful influence of a few people in authority: the Holy Spirit influenced them, and we live under that influence.

The second way to live life is to take the voices of the past and live under their authority today. 'I would never turn a word from my father's mouth. My mother taught me the prayers, and I still pray that way today. The old days were great, and I wish much of the old ways would come back.' Here the Holy Spirit was used to make others good and if we do as they did then we, too, will be good.

Present

The third way is to live in the here and now, the present moment with all our faults and failings, with all our beauty and wonderfulness, with our imperfections and our sheer brilliance. This is the most alive way of living, but it is not without its pitfalls. Every moment is new. Every minute is difference. We learn from the past but do not live in the past. We let the wonderful help of past generations be with us, but we do not try and reproduce their lives as we live ours. The Holy Spirit is active, alive, used, present, encouraging, influencing, warning, correcting, improving, holding and transmitting love to the soul and through that soul to others.

The Holy Spirit does not take away our liberty but increases it; it allows the soul to reach heights and depths that it would not reach on its own; it takes the spark of love and lets the fire of eternal love live in the heart, even as a person lives life day-to-day on this earth. To allow the Holy Spirit to take up residence in a soul, the soul must invite. To allow the Holy Spirit to work in a soul, the soul must understand what co-operation is and what real teamwork is. Many people think that they want to cooperate with God – but not that many invite the Holy Spirit to begin the process of allowing the soul to be alive with the glory of God.

When Peter stood before the woman in Pilate's courtyard, he said words like, "I do not know the man Jesus" three different times. Only a short while earlier, the same Peter said directly to Jesus, "I am willing to die for you." Peter thought he wanted to be a co-worker of the Lord Jesus, but thoughts are not enough. One needs to desire to be

a co-worker with Jesus and that means letting Him lead, letting Him direct the pace, letting Him do what He desires. The difference between a soul following Jesus and a soul thinking that it wants to follow Jesus is a gap wider than the Grand Canyon. It is no wonder Peter wept bitterly. He saw his own weakness, inability, incapacity, failure and helplessness.

The same Peter stood before the leaders of Israel and declared, "You killed the Saviour. You need to repent of your sin. You need to come to know the truth that Jesus Christ is Lord." What was the change? The Holy Spirit. The One that Jesus had promised had entered the soul of Peter and now Peter no longer thought he wanted to follow Jesus - he was following Him. The Holy Spirit was transforming the denier into the living witness. The Holy Spirit was allowing Peter to live love.

It is about now. We learn from the past, but we live now. We thank God for the splendid examples of past generations, but this is our time, our turn to be the proclaimers that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

The prayer in my pocket *by Kieron Kehoe*

Danny finds powerful St Joseph prayer never fails

THIS month 'Prayer in My Pocket' comes from a member of the Melmount community in Strabane. Danny is a part-time sacristan there. When I spoke with him, he had no hesitation in telling me the prayer for St Joseph's protection was the prayer he would choose.

Danny said this is the prayer that he says every day, especially after the Rosary or in times of need. It was given to him and a lot of other young people around 1970. It was distributed by a lady from Derry during the troubles to protect them from harm. For some reason the prayer stuck with him and, although, he always carried the prayer card with him, he didn't really start praying it right away. But in times of trial, difficulty or danger, he would say it, and he can honestly say that it has never failed him. It is a very powerful prayer that has never known to fail.

He added that he has had some amazing prayers answered. For example, when selling a property during the recession, he was amazed to find that the estate agent had left this same prayer in the property and secured the sale at a time when it was difficult for anyone to sell.

He also says this prayer when taking part in the Peace Walk to Knock. Over 32 years, it has been passed on to everyone on the walk as a prayer card for protection on the road.

When Danny's brother-in-law was ill and dying from Motor Neurone Disease, Danny was asked to say a Rosary and, after saying it, he said the St Joseph's prayer. His nephew told him afterwards that he, too, always said this prayer, especially when driving his lorry. The extraordinary thing was that he was given the prayer by Danny's late uncle, so this St Joseph's prayer has been handed down through the family over many years without anyone realising it.

There are many other examples Danny could give, but the only advice or warning he always passes on to people regarding this prayer is to be sure you really want or need what you pray for, because St Joseph will never fail you.

St Joseph pray for us.

(History: This prayer was found on the 50th year of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In 1505, it was sent from the Pope to Emperor Charles when he was going into battle. Whoever shall read this prayer or hear it or keep it about themselves, shall never die a sudden death or be drowned, nor shall poison take effect on them; neither shall they fall into the hands of the enemy or be burned in a fire or be overpowered in battle. Say for nine mornings for anything you desire. It has never been known to fail.)

Emma's simple daily prayers to help stay in communion with God

The 'prayer in my pocket' can be one that has been given to someone or, as in this case, in their heart. Emma's 'prayer in her pocket' is made up of a few lines from a few different prayers.

Emma has worked in the sacristy in St Joseph's Chapel, Galliagh, for the past seven years. During her time there she has been privileged to meet many beautiful people from all walks of life. She is blessed to be constantly inspired by all these people.

Like many others she likes to give her day to God in the morning, praying Our Lady's words: "This day is yours and not mine, let it be done unto me according to thy word."

When Emma started doing this, she quickly realised what a hypocrite she was, as she didn't accept the small daily trials and challenges as God's opportunities to grow in grace and virtue. Instead, she would complain and grumble. As a remedy to this, she started to pray a simple prayer throughout the day, taken from Our Lord's prayer: "Thy will be done." So, when trials and inconveniences come, as they do to us all, she just finds that praying, "Thy will be done" helps her to focus on God in the moment and thank Him, instead of grumbling and complaining. It just helps with surrender and acceptance and puts a positive slant on things that she used to see as negatives.

She commented on how she is getting on with this commitment personally: "I'm not getting it perfectly yet, but sure, it is a work in progress."

Another simple prayer she likes to try and pray throughout the day is: 'I love you too, Lord.' She explained to me why: "Our beautiful Father in Heaven, who is pure Love, is loving me and us all at every instant through everything and in everyone."

Emma knows that she does not reciprocate this love often enough or perfectly enough, and knows that, on a human level, unreciprocated love is one of the most hurtful things we can experience, so she thinks about the infinite hurt we cause God when we don't love Him back.

So, she makes it her daily prayer to say: 'I love you too, Lord," when she sees a beautiful flower, eats nice food, sees a rainbow and, when in a trial, tries to remember to see these things as an act of God's love and love Him back. Seeing the extraordinary love of God in the ordinary.

These are Emma's three simple little daily prayers that helps her stay in communion with God in her imperfect way. She loves how everyone has their different ways and prayers and that, as the Body of Christ, we have all the bases covered.

Mary, Our Mother, and God, Our Father, hear our prayer.

Diocesan Vocations News…

Live…Love…Laugh…Learn by Fr Pat O'Hagan

Since I became Vocations Director for the Diocese of Derry three-and-a-half years ago, I have met or spoken with a surprisingly large number of men expressing an interest in serving as priests of the diocese. They range in age from teenagers (some as young as 15) to men in their late 50s or early 60s. They come from all over the diocese, from each of our four deaneries (Co Derry, Derry City, Inis Eoghain, and Tyrone). They come from diverse backgrounds and with a huge range of experiences, qualifications, and professions.

The questions I face most regularly are: "How do I go about becoming a priest of the diocese?" "How long does it take?" "What qualifications do I need?"

I introduce them to my 4 Ls – Live, Love, Laugh, Learn, explaining that before they begin formal seminary formation, I would like them to have lived, loved, laughed, and learned.

What do I mean by that?

Well, in my opinion, they will be best placed to serve the Church as priests if they come with faith and a genuine sense that the Lord is calling them to diocesan priesthood; if they have had a range of life experiences, which could be in terms of work or travel; if they have been in relationships and now believe that the kind of marriage they wish to embrace is a commitment to celibacy and service to the Church as priests; if they have a good sense of humour and are personable, approachable, and can relate easily with all kinds of people; and if they have followed a course of study or training in any field at all.

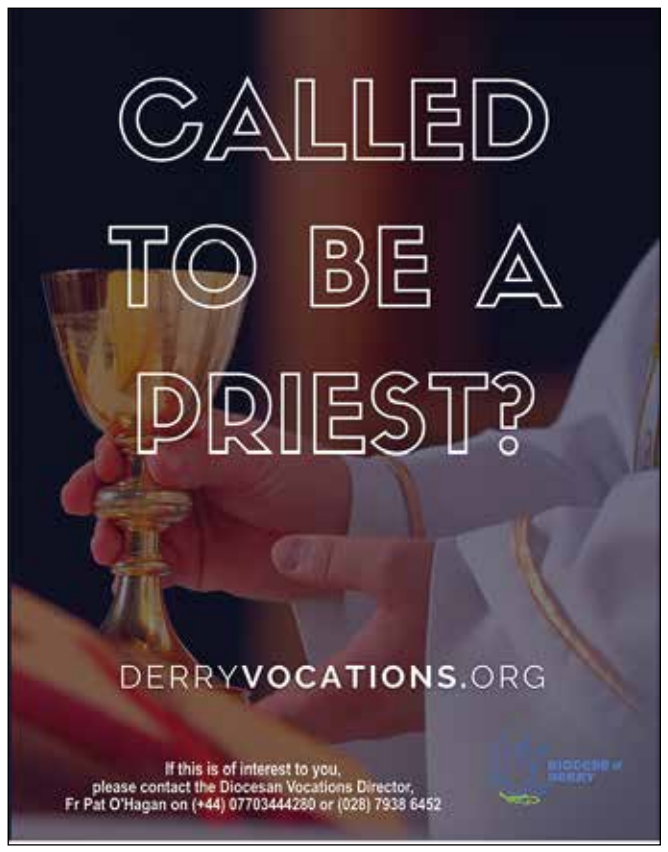
I try to explain that there is no such thing as a 'One size fits all' road to priesthood. Some allowances may be made for age, in the case of older men, or educational qualifications. But everyone must spend time in a seminary receiving the formation they need if they wish to be ordained to the priesthood.

Formation is geared to help candidates develop intellectually, spiritually, pastorally, and personally, and begins with what we call the propaedeutic 'year', a six months' preparatory programme which takes place in the Royal Scots' College in Salamanca, Spain. After this, successful candidates will then undertake a course of study in Maynooth or Rome, spending part of their summer holidays on a pastoral placement in a parish somewhere in the diocese. Ideally, they should experience parish life in a variety of locations, in as many of our deaneries as possible.

Anyone interested in exploring a vocation to the priesthood for the Diocese of Derry should either contact their local priest, or myself, to begin the process of discernment. They will be accompanied by a Spiritual Director, who will help them to understand how and where the Lord might be calling them. There are occasional gatherings for discerners, as well as an annual weekend retreat.

The people of the Diocese are praying for an increase in vocations to our diocesan priesthood, and the Holy Spirit is speaking to the hearts of the men of the Diocese, and I look forward to meeting with them in the near future.

(Fr Pat resides in the Bellaghy Parish as PP and can be contacted by 'phone on (028) 7938 2659 or via email: pgoh2111@gmail.com.



Holy Spirit is driving force behind mission of Jesus and the Church – *Bishop Donal*

WE will allow God to renew us if we are open to be led by the Holy Spirit to bring Good News to the poor. We will let God work when we seek to build communities who discern together what our local priorities are. And we will be open to the Spirit if we develop our parishes as what Pope John Paul II called 'schools of prayer'.

These words were spoken to the priests and laity gathered in St Eugene's Cathedral for the Mass of Chrism, on Holy Thursday, by Bishop Donal during his homily, as he reflected on the Gospel reading, remarking: "At this Chrism Mass, we celebrate not just what Jesus said He was to do – but what we as His Body in 2025 are called to do."

Highlighting that the "driving force behind the mission of Jesus and of the Church is the Holy Spirit," Bishop Donal pointed out: "Our call to bring the good news to the poor is being fulfilled today - if we are prepared to listen. If we – whether clergy or laity – think that we are in charge of the church, we are sadly mistaken. That is the original sin of Adam and Eve – to believe that we have to live out of our own resources and solve the problems that we face in a way that we think best. All sin begins in a loss of confidence in God's promise to provide.

"That recognition is the beginning of our synodal approach, nationally and universally. But, like everything, that process is open to the temptation to serve our own interests rather than to listen for the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit. There are those who see the process as an opportunity to promote their agenda. In that case, the church is reduced to a parliamentary system where loud voices and voting blocs count. The other temptation is to think that only the learned and the clever, or the clerical professionals, know the truth. Both temptations believe that some voices are more powerful than others and that the church is a power game, driven by human egos."

"The synodal idea of conversations in the Spirit, of listening together for the voice of the Lord," he explained, "is an attempt to bring us back to the one driving force of the church, the Holy Spirit who blows where the Spirit wills. As Nicodemus discovered, we do not know where the Spirit is coming from or where it is going. Trust in the Spirit frees us from pride in what we can achieve and from the temptation to love power and to dominate others. We can end up taking convenient shortcuts in the service of convenience or of speed. Jesus did not take shortcuts. He took the long, hard road and asks us to walk that road with Him."

Transcendent

He went on to say: "If we refuse to believe in amazing things that God can do in us as communities of faith, we reduce parish to the limitations of our poor imagination and refuse to enter into the transcendent vision that the scriptures call us to take on board.

"The call of the church to behave transparently, to act accountably and to evaluate honestly how well we are doing – all of this will challenge us to go away beyond our comfort zone. But Jesus always pointed beyond what His listeners thought they could control. Church is not a place for Lone Rangers. It is a place for community builders who can help people to be heard. Those who only hear themselves will not be building on the foundation that is Jesus Christ."

Noting that Jesus had known that the road He was starting out on would be difficult, that He "was called to be a Suffering Servant", Bishop Donal remarked: "Fighting sin is a huge struggle. That is the temptation to what Pope Franis calls 'spiritual worldliness'. That term refers to the temptation for the church to make itself an object of worship when outwardly worshipping God. We can end up focused – like the Pharisees – on our own image. Then we have nothing to offer except our own shallow morality or self-pity rather than the mercy of God.

"Life is tough for many people in these times. Despite our own crosses, Jesus asks us to bind up hearts that are broken and to replace the mourning robe with the oil of gladness. That puts enormous pressure on clergy and on all who have leadership roles in parishes. But Jesus still calls people to take up their cross and follow Him, because it is only the Cross that will save the world."

He continued: "These are tough times for us as a Church. We have to acknowledge the failings of the past. But today, as we gather as a diocesan family in search of renewal, Jesus reminds us of what He was called to be and do – and what we are called to be and do as His Body in our local communities.

"Renewal will not come merely through restructuring how parishes are served by clergy or by adapting teaching to fickle modern trends. It will not come through feeling sorry for ourselves or blaming somebody else or telling a gloomy story about the future or spending our money differently. We are called to a different way of being church, not just to adopting a different marketing strategy."

Pope's monthly intention

The Holy Father has asked for prayer during May for:

The working conditions:
Let us pray that through work, each person might find fulfilment, families might be sustained in dignity, and that society might be humanised.

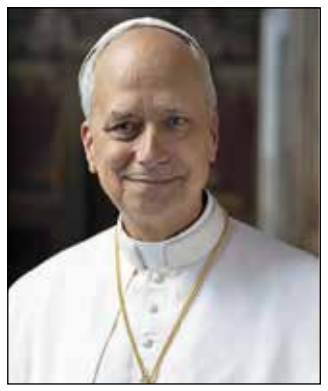
Prayer for Priests

Heavenly Father, I ask you to bless our bishops and priests and to confirm them in their vocation of service.
As they stand before us as ministers of Your Sacraments, may they be channels of the love and compassion of the Good Shepherd, who came not be served but to serve.

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

Remember in prayer:

All Priests (1st May)
All Priests (2nd)
Fr Michael Porter (3rd)
Fr Roni Zacharias (4th)
Fr Ignacy Saniuta (5th)
All Priests (6th)
Fr Gerard Sweeney (7th)
Fr Joshy Parokkaran (8th)
Fr John Walsh (9th)
Fr Alex Anderson (10th)
Fr Patrick Arkinson (11th)
Fr Patrick Baker (12th)
Fr Declan Boland (13th)
Fr Eugene Boland (14th)
Fr Francis Bradley (15th)
Fr Manus Bradley (16th)
All Priests (17th)
Fr Brian Brady (18th)
All Priests (19th)
Fr Thomas Canning (20th)
Fr Michael Canny (21st)
All Priests (22nd)
All Priests (23rd)
All Priests (24th)



Fr Colum Clerkin (25th)
Fr Roland Colhoun (26th)
Fr Michael Collins (27th)
Fr Oliver Crilly (28th)
Fr Patrick Crilly (29th)
Fr Brendan Crowley (30th)
All Priests (31st)

Stories…teachings…and representations of…

The warrior Archangel St Michael *by Grace Carlin*

MY Carlin grandfather, great grandfather, and great-great-great-great grandfather were each baptised Michael after St Michael the Archangel. St Michael isn't just a distant, heavenly figure; his influence permeates cultures, art, and even modern media. From towering Catholic Cathedrals bearing his name, to St Michael's depiction in contemporary films like The Equalizer, his presence is both ancient and strikingly relevant today. In this article, I explore the rich tapestry of stories, teachings, and representations of this warrior Archangel.

Who is St Michael?

Let's start at the beginning. Who exactly is St Michael the Archangel? In Christian tradition, St Michael is known as the leader of the heavenly armies, a protector against the forces of evil, and a guide for souls. His name is derived from the Hebrew phrase 'Mikhaʾel', which poses a rhetorical question: "Who is like God?" This isn't just a name; it's a challenge to the pride and arrogance that led to the fall of Lucifer.

In the Bible, St Michael appears in several key passages. In the Book of Daniel, he is depicted as a protector of Israel, standing against the forces of darkness. The New Testament's Book of Revelation presents him as the commander of heavenly hosts, leading the battle against the dragon - identified as Satan - and casting him and his followers out of heaven.

Catholic tradition assigns St Michael four primary roles:

1. Enemy of Satan and the fallen angels: He defeats Satan and expels him from Paradise.
2. Christian angel of death: He assists souls at the hour of death, offering them a final chance for redemption.
3. Weigher of souls on Judgment Day: He weighs individuals' merits, often depicted holding scales.
4. Guardian of the Church: He serves as the protector of the Church and the faithful.

These roles underscore St Michael's significance as a defender and guide, embodying the virtues of justice, mercy, and protection.

Insights from scholars

To deepen our understanding, let's turn now to insights from esteemed scholars. Prof Eamon Duffy, a historian from the University of Cambridge, emphasizes St Michael's role in the medieval Church as a symbol of divine justice and protection. He notes that devotion to St Michael was widespread, with numerous churches and chapels dedicated to him, reflecting his importance in the spiritual life of the time.

Oxford University scholar, Dr Alixe Bovey has explored artistic representations of St Michael, highlighting how his imagery served to inspire and reassure the faithful. She points out that depictions of St Michael wielding a sword or holding scales were not merely artistic choices, but convey deep theological messages about the battle between good and evil and the ultimate triumph of righteousness.

Papal perspectives

The papacy has also underscored St Michael's significance. Pope Leo XIII, in the late 19th Century, composed the 'Prayer to St Michael,' invoking his protection against the "wickedness and snares of the devil." This prayer is essential in Catholic devotion, especially in times of turmoil.

More recently, St John Paul II reaffirmed the importance of this prayer, encouraging the faithful to seek St Michael's intercession in the ongoing spiritual battles of the modern world. He emphasized that the struggle against evil continues, and that St Michael remains a powerful ally for Christians.

Churches dedicated to St Michael

St Michael's influence is not confined to texts and prayers; it is etched into the very landscape of Christianity through magnificent Cathedrals dedicated to him. Let's explore some of the most notable ones:

1. St Michael's Church, Munich, Germany:
- Capacity: Approximately 2,000 people.
- Highlights: Built between 1583 and 1597 by Duke William V of Bavaria, this Renaissance masterpiece boasts the largest barrel-vaulted roof north of the Alps. It serves as a testament to the Counter-Reformation's spiritual fervour and houses the tombs of several members of the Wittelsbach dynasty.

2. St Michael's Cathedral Basilica, Toronto, Canada:
- Capacity: Around 1,600 people.
- Highlights: Completed in 1848, this Gothic Revival cathedral stands as the mother church of the Archdiocese of Toronto. Its 275-ft spire and stunning stained-glass windows make it a beacon of faith in the heart of the city.

3. Minor Basilica of St Michael the Archangel (Tayabas Basilica), Philippines:
- Capacity: Approximately 3,000 people.
- Highlights: Known locally as 'Susì ng Tayabas' or 'Key of Tayabas', this basilica features a unique key-shaped floor plan. Its 103m-long nave is the longest among Spanish-era churches in the Philippines, symbolizing the enduring legacy of Catholicism in the region.

4. St Michael's Basilica, Miramichi, Canada:
- Capacity: About 1,200 people.
- Highlights: Perched atop a hill overlooking the Miramichi River, this neo-Gothic sandstone basilica was designed by renowned architect, Patrick Keely. Elevated to basilica status in 1989, it stands as a spiritual and architectural landmark in New Brunswick.

5. St Michael's Church, Rochester, New York, USA:
- Capacity: Around 1,100 people.
- Highlights: Completed in 1890, this Gothic Revival church features a towering 246-foot spire, making it one of the tallest structures in Rochester. Its intricate stained-glass windows and historic pipe organ add to its sacred ambiance.

St Michael in modern media

St Michael isn't just a figure of the past, locked in dusty Churches or ancient prayers. He is very much alive in popular media, where he is often portrayed as a powerful symbol of justice, spiritual warfare, and unwavering strength. One recent and fascinating example of this is in the film 'The Equalizer 3', starring Denzel Washington. Set in southern Italy, the film follows the fictional story of Robert McCall, a retired United States Marine and intelligence officer who becomes a vigilante - an equalizer - seeking justice for the voiceless and oppressed. Throughout the film, St Michael appears again and again, often in statues, paintings, or church scenes, as a subtle yet profound visual metaphor.

Why St Michael? Because McCall, like Michael, is a protector. A warrior. A judge. He doesn't just fight for the sake of violence, he fights to restore order, to protect the vulnerable, and to battle evil head-on. In one particularly haunting scene, a statue of St Michael stands overlooking a town plagued by corruption. It is not just symbolic - it's spiritual storytelling.

Critics have pointed out the intentional use of Catholic imagery in 'The Equalizer 3', and St Michael is central to this visual theology. In fact, Denzel Washington, who is known for his Christian faith, said in interviews that he often chooses roles where the fight between good and evil is front and centre, echoing the spiritual warfare themes so central to St Michael's identity. This portrayal isn't just cinematic flair. It connects to a truth: that many people today, especially teenagers and young adults, are drawn to figures of strength who protect, not dominate. St Michael shows us that spiritual strength is not about control, it is about standing up, even when it is hard. It is about being brave, when others are afraid. It is about knowing who you are and who you fight for.

Why does St Michael matter to teenagers today living in a digital world?

Why does St Michael matter to teenagers today living in a digital world, stressing about exams and dramas with friends? What does a heavenly warrior-Archangel have to do with our everyday lives?

St Michael is not just some myth. He's a reminder that the world isn't just physical, it is spiritual too. And that deep down, we are all fighting battles - mental health, identity, loneliness, fear, injustice, and anxiety about the future. St Michael represents the courage to face those battles head-on, not alone, but with divine backup. He's also a sign that the Church needs all kinds of warriors, not the sword-swinging kind, but the truth-telling, love-spreading, justice-fighting kind. Whether you feel broken, doubtful, or just unsure, you have a place in this story.

Remember how St Michael's Churches are scattered all over the world, from Germany to the Philippines, from Canada to the United States? That's because this message is universal. Every time a Church is named after him; it's like a spiritual fortress planted in the ground.

What have we learned?

- That St Michael is more than a figure in scripture, he is a timeless icon of courage and protection.
- That scholars and popes alike see his role as central to the Church's mission.
- That people with disabilities, like the nuns with Down syndrome in France, are just as called to be warriors of love.
- That the churches bearing his name around the world stand as cathedrals of resistance against evil.
- And that even in Hollywood movies, his image continues to challenge, inspire, and speak to a new generation.

This is the upside-down world of God: where the weak are strong, the ignored are chosen, and the heavenly battles are won through love, truth, and light.

We must pray for a change of heart – *Irish Bishops*

IN response to the wars around the world and particularly to the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, Bishops of Ireland have called the faithful to offer prayers during June, the month of the Sacred Heart, "for an outpouring of the compassion of God on a heartless world".

And they urged "all Catholics to make the first Friday, June 6, a day of prayer and fasting in solidarity" with those suffering in the Holy Land.

Meeting in the Columba Centre of St Patrick's College, Maynooth, the members of the Standing Committee of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference offered prayers for peace in the Holy Land, for Ukraine, Sudan and in other troubled parts of the world, and released the following statement regarding the Holy Land:

"From all over Ireland, parishioners are reporting their horror and helplessness on seeing images of death and communal destruction in Gaza. Exhausted mothers can no longer nourish their young, children are dying of malnutrition, while aid lorries full of supplies are being refused entry into the territory, or are not safely arriving at their destination.

"We, in Ireland, must pray for a change of heart. Throughout the month of June – the month of the Sacred Heart of Jesus – we call on everyone to pray for an outpouring of the compassion of God on a heartless world.

"To see the relentless bombardment of civilian areas, the deliberate withholding of food from the starving, as well as the callous holding of hostages, it appears that humanity has lost its heart. In the face of these horrors, we invite everyone to turn to the heart of Jesus throughout the month of June by praying for the renewal of heart that our world so desperately needs. We call on all Catholics to make the first Friday, June 6, a day of prayer and fasting in solidarity with our sisters and brothers who are suffering at this time in the Holy Land.

"We echo Pope Leo XIV's recent appeal to allow into Gaza 'the entry of dignified humanitarian aid and to put an end to the hostilities, whose heartbreaking price is paid by the children, elderly, and the sick."

Elected on anniversary of St Michael Archangel apparition…

Pope Leo XIV extended peace of Risen Christ to all

Pope Leo XIV

AS our new Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV settles into his new way of life, and people form their first impressions, Bishop Donal shares what his thoughts were on hearing the name of the cardinal who had been elected as leader of the world's Catholics.

He recalled: "There was a great degree of formality and tradition when Cardinal Domenico Mamberti, Prefect of the Apostolic Signatura, on May 8 announced in Latin, 'Habemus Papam' – 'We have a Pope'. Millions waited with bated breath but, when it was made public, many did not know who Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost was.

"When the name was clarified, I was delighted for a few reasons. Firstly, there had been a very early consensus among the 13 Cardinals locked away in the Sistine Chapel. That all suggests a great commitment to finding a unity-building Pope.

"Secondly, the choice of the name Leo XIV seems to underline a strong link with continuity and tradition, as well as a commitment to social justice and leadership in a change of times.

"And thirdly, Pope Leo is the first Pope whom I had met prior to his election – and the first Pope to be younger than myself!"

He continued: "So, when and why did I meet Cardinal Prevost?" Last October, I was planning to be in the Rome area for a week with another priest friend. And with my own 75th birthday around the corner, I decided to suggest a meeting with someone in the Dicastery for Bishops. All I wanted to do was share a few thoughts about the next stage of this Diocese. For I knew that I would not be retiring more than once in life!

"And the Prefect of the Dicastery, Cardinal Prevost, kindly offered me a 30-minute meeting. We had a private conversation and I offered a few thoughts about the complexities of a cross-border diocese. And we talked about issues specific to a Northern Ireland based diocese."

Saying that he found Cardinal Prevost to be "very gracious and a good listener," Bishop Donal added: "He spoke softly but had been well briefed in advance. And, happy that I had done what I had planned, we parted company. I then went out into the soft October rain in front of St Peter's Basilica.

"Little did I know that, seven months later, the next time I would see the Cardinal was on the balcony of St Peter's Basilica as the 267th Pope of the Holy Roman Church.

"God bless him richly in his ministry as missionary of Jesus Christ and Pontiff, the Bridge Builder."

Pope Leo XIV's election on May 8 drew comments about it also being the date that the Church commemorates the apparitions of St Michael the Archangel on Mount Gargano, in Italy, in the year 492, and about Pope Leo XIII being the author of the Prayer to St Michael the Archangel.

He wrote the prayer in 1884, after seeing a vision that horrified him, of evil spirits fiercely attacking the Church as they tried to destroy it.

Known as the Protector of the Church, it is interesting to note that there is a line of monasteries and churches from Europe to the Holy Land dedicated to Archangel Michael. Referred to as the St Michael's Line – or Sword of St Michael – the aligned sites include the ancient monastery on Skellig Michael, off the Kerry coast in the southwest of Ireland.

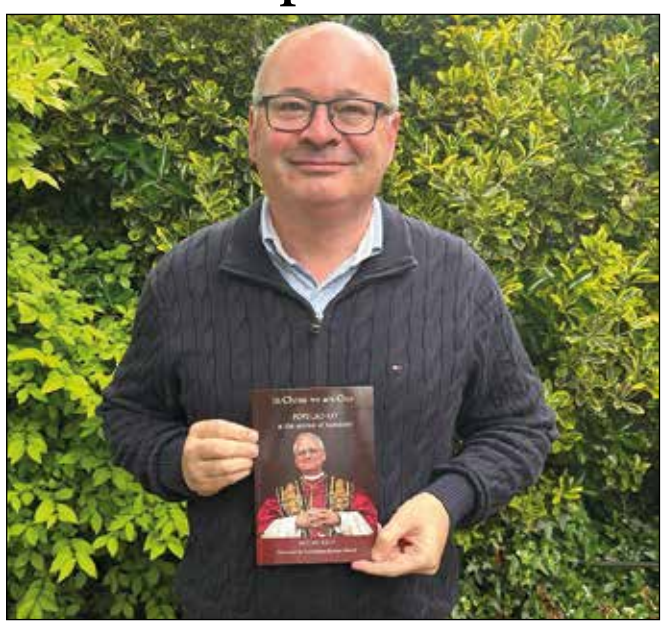
The line stretches from there to St Michael's Mount in Cornwall, and onwards to Mont Saint-Michel in France, then to the Italian abbey of Sacra di San Michele and Chiesa di San Michele Arcangelo, a church on the Isola Maggiore, also in Italy, and then to St Michael of Panormitis in Greece, before ending at the Stella Maris Monastery in Haifa, Israel. While not dedicated to St Michael, Mount Carmel on which this monastery is located is associated with Archangel Michael by the Bible story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18).

In his first address, Pope Leo XIV extended "the peace of the Risen Christ" to all, saying: "God loves us, God loves you all, and evil will not prevail! We are all in God's hands. Therefore, without fear, united hand in hand with God and with one another, let us go forward. We are disciples of Christ. Christ goes before us. The world needs His light. Humanity needs Him as the bridge to be reached by God and His love. Help us - and each other - to build bridges, through dialogue, through encounter, uniting everyone to be one people always in peace."

Prayer to St Michael the Archangel

St Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle.
Be our protection against the wickedness
and snares of the devil.
May God rebuke him, we humbly pray;
and do Thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host,
by the Divine Power of God,
cast into hell, Satan and all the evil spirits,
who roam throughout the world seeking the ruin of souls.

Our new Pope…a man of deep and profound spirituality *by Michael Kelly*



Michael Kelly, Omagh.

POPE Leo really won my heart the moment he appeared on the balcony of St Peter's Basilica shortly after his election on May 8. On the fourth round of voting, the members of the College of Cardinals had elected the man who will lead the Church forward as we continue to mark this Jubilee Year of Hope.

I was in St Peter's Square that evening, and one of the first things that struck me is just how much like a Pope the former Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost looked like. It almost seemed that he had been born for the role, or had been Pope for decades already.

A few hours later, I was approached to see if I would write a book on the new Pope. The result is 'In Christ We Are One: Pope Leo XIV at the Service of Humanity', which is now available priced €7.99/£6.99. I set out to write a gentle introduction to Pope Leo that would help Catholics grow in prayerful love for the Holy Father.

Researching the life of Robert Prevost and assessing the early days of his papacy has been a labour of love. In our new Pope, we have a man of deep and profound spirituality. He is rooted in prayer and the Word of God – and he will need our prayers as he assumes his responsibility to teach, lead and sanctify us.

The challenges facing the Catholic Church are immense. And they are different in the diverse parts of the world. We share the same faith, but the challenges and issues facing Catholics in Derry, are certainly alien to Catholics in Doha. And so on.

And yet, the Pope is a man who must try to speak to a broken world and a Church that is often fractured. Leo comes to the global stage at a time when geopolitics seems shaped by the law of the jungle, where might is seen as right and the one who shouts the loudest tends to be heard.

But there is power in the humility of the papacy. The roots of Christianity are in the birth of a carpenter's son in the humble surroundings of a stable, in a rural backwater of the Roman Empire.

One of the reasons people were slow to accept Jesus is because they were scandalised by his simplicity and lack of love for regard and high places. So, they had to change their idea around leadership.

Soviet tyrant, Joseph Stalin once mocked the Pope's lack of military power when he asked: "The Pope! How many divisions has he got?" Today, the papacy stands almost alone in the world as a global moral leader, at a time when leadership is so lacking.

Many people, particularly the poor and the powerless, look to the Pope to speak for them. They are quicker to get the message of the Gospel than the wealthy and the powerful, many of whom have long since despatched talk of spirituality in favour of seemingly endless consumption and wealth.

In Ireland, a survey just a few weeks ago revealed that our young people are amongst the unhappiest in the developed world. The relative prosperity and freedoms enjoyed by so many of us have brought material well-being, but many people – especially our young people – are not feeling satisfied.

On the balcony overlooking St Peter's on the night of his election, Pope Leo XIV described himself as a "son of Augustine" – a reference to the Fifth Century Saint who wrote: "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you."

If ever our restless hearts needed balm, it is now.

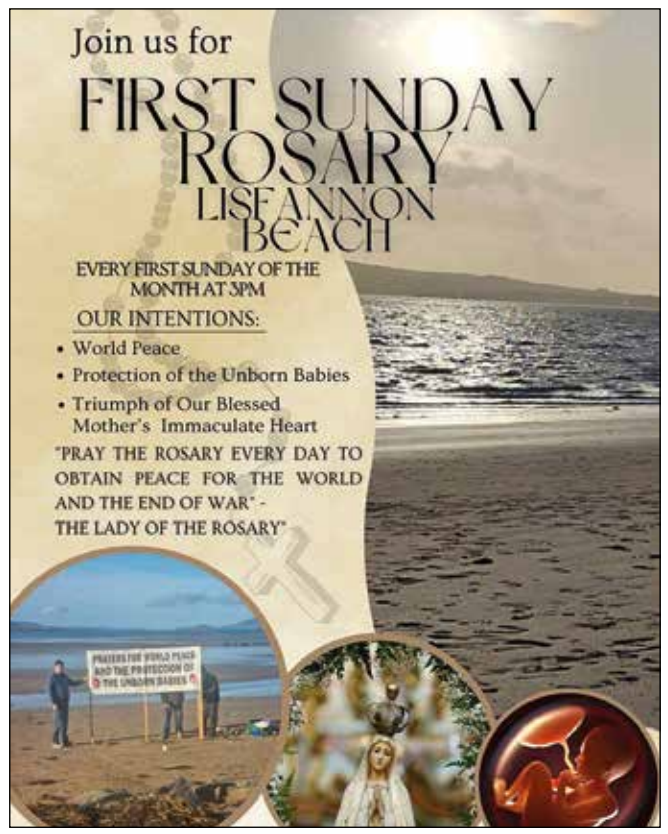
In his early days as Pope, Leo has shown a warmth and charisma that is appealing to many people. He speaks a language that resonates and brings a voice of reason to global affairs that puts people at the centre of discussions.

Leo is bold in his proclamation of the Gospel, and his conviction that the baby born in the stable 2,000 years ago in Bethlehem has transformed history in every generation, and will do so again.

In his opening blessing, he said in a booming voice: "God loves us, God loves you all, and evil will not prevail! All of us are in God's hands. So, let us move forward, without fear, together, hand-in-hand with God and with one another! We are followers of Christ. Christ goes before us. The world needs His light. Humanity needs Him as the bridge that can lead us to God and His love. Help us, one and all, to build bridges through dialogue and encounter, joining together as one people, always at peace."

Leo sees the power of the Gospel and the papacy to build bridges – Pontiff comes from the Latin for bridge, and the Pope is the Supreme Pontiff – in a world dominated by hate and division, that is a powerful antidote. Whatever our faith, we should all wish him a fair wind.

(Michael Kelly is Director of Public Affairs for the papal charity Aid to the Church in Need, Ireland, a long-time Vatican expert and author of the new book 'In Christ we are One: Pope Leo XIV and the future of humanity', which is available online at www.acnchurchresources.ie and at all good bookstores.)



Mary's Meals Omagh celebrates 15 years of fundraising

Mary's Meals Omagh founding members - Rosemary Johnston, Sinead Devlin, Agnes Walsh, Siobhan Sweeney, Jackie Walsh and Gerard Lilly.

Mary's Meals funds presentation by Christ The King PS pupils, Strathroy

MARY'S Meals Omagh is celebrating 15 years of raising money to help give children in need a meal a day at school, which currently costs £19.15 for a whole school year, with at least 93p of every £1 going towards charitable work. Over the years, the group has received over £300,000 for the Charity and is hoping for a great response to its anniversary fundraising raffle.

Formed in May 2010, after a talk by Fr Owen Gorman arranged by Siobhan Sweeney, one of the small number of people who attended, Agnes Walsh recalled: "We were all amazed with this simple charity that a child could get a meal a day at school at the cost of £6.20 for a whole school year.

"We all took home little cardboard collection boxes and leaflets. The following Sunday, we arranged to meet in Omagh Pastoral Centre. Six turned up and we formed a little group. With encouragement from the Mary's Meals Head Office and Dermot Tierney, from the Enniskillen Group, we set about our work at giving boxes to family and friends, and leaving some in shops.

"For our first event in 2011, with not much knowledge or thought, we put a notice in the parish bulletin for a sponsored cycle between local towns. We had 70 riders turn up at St Joseph's Hall and were very relieved when they all arrived back safely and raised £1,200."

Becoming sponsors to Mtayanyeba Primary School in Neno, South Malawi in 2015, the Omagh Group is very grateful to pupils of Christ The King PS, Strathroy, for raising an amazing £1,420 through their fundraising efforts during Lent 2025 under the Children Helping Children programme.

Agnes is also delighted to report that an Afternoon Tea on Divine Mercy Sunday, in Cappagh Parish Hall, raised £2,915, adding: "To date, we have raised £257,000, plus over £65,000 in UK Government & Generous Supporter Gift aid at £1=£2 price match."

She added: "Thanks to all for generous donations over the years; to all shops with boxes; to all the schools that have walked and collected; and to all who help out with street collections and fundraising events. New volunteers are very welcome.

"Today, 2.6 million children are receiving a daily meal in 17 different countries. The meals bring children to the classroom and give them energy to learn and hope for a better future."

To mark the Omagh Group's 15th anniversary, they are holding a fundraising raffle with 15 prizes in total, including an overnight stay in the Redcastle Hotel, Co Donegal. Tickets are available at Top News, Omagh, or contact Pauline 07922868753.

Another fundraiser is the six-mile Derry City 2 Bridges Walk on August 3, which starts at 12 noon at Sainsburys car park, and ends back there at 2 pm.

Mary's Meals giving some of world's poorest children energy to learn

FOUNDED in 2002, the vision of Mary's Meals is that every child receives one daily meal in their place of education and that all those who have more than they need, share with those who lack even the most basic things.

The charity evolved from Scottish International Relief (SIR), which was set up after brothers, Magnus and Fergus MacFarlane-Barrow took aid from their Argyll home, in Scotland, to Medjugorje, Bosnia-Herzegovina, during the 1992 conflict.

As SIR expanded over a decade, it began building homes for abandoned children in Romania, helped returning refugees in Liberia by setting up mobile clinics, and continued to deliver material aid to Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as funding many additional projects. It greatly relied on the generosity of Dalmally villagers, in Argyll, who donated food, blankets and other items of aid, which were then stored in the family shed that still serves as the global headquarters of Mary's Meals.

Mary's Meals was founded following a visit by Magnus to Malawi during a famine, when he met the eldest son of a mother dying from AIDS. When Magnus asked him about his dreams in life, he replied: "I want to have enough food to eat and to go to school one day."

A registered charity, Mary's Meals serves a nutritious daily meal to some of the world's poorest children to attract them into the classroom, where they can gain an education and a brighter future. Mary's Meals gives children the energy to learn so they can become the men and women who will lift their communities out of poverty. A typical school meal consists of a corn and soya blend porridge, fortified with essential minerals and vitamins.

The Mary's Meals Charity currently feeds over one million children in Malawi, which is where its school feeding programme began in 2003. Strongly supported by the Government of Malawi, the programme is delivered alongside a local partner, MCSPA, and is able to reach so many children because of the efforts of tens of thousands of volunteers from local communities, who give their time freely to prepare and serve the nutritious meals.

The Omagh Mary's Meals Group sponsors Mtayanyemba Primary School in Neno District, Malawi, which has an enrolment of 533, with 251 boys and 282 girls.

Diocesan Formation - The Synod of Rathbrasil 1111

by Dr Seán Beattie

IT is a truism to say that we live in a time of great change at all levels in society. The Church is no different. Throughout the Diocese of Derry and in many parishes, the Church faces challenges in the supply of priests and administration. In fact, this is nothing new, as ecclesiastical history is one of continuous reform and innovation.

There are many milestones but one,, in particular stands out in relation to organisation and structure: the Synod of Rathbrasil, 1111 AD. Historians differ on its exact location and several places have laid a claim from Co Armagh to Co Roscommon, but the strongest claim is for Cashel, Co Tipperary.

A Synod is a key element of church administration, being an assembly of bishops and others to discuss important matters of doctrine or administration. In modern times, Rome is usually named as a central location, usually in response to a call from the Pope. A Synod can also take place at national level.

In terms of Church reform in Ireland, the Synod of Rathbrasil stands out. In plain language, it was a watershed moment, a dividing line in time between the old monastic system and the modern diocesan structure as we know it. It also marked the transition of the Early Christian Church from an abbatial organisation to a parochial one, which largely survives today. Rathbrasil was presided over by the Papal Legate.

Monastic Ireland

Pre-Rathbrasil, the monastery with its abbot and community of monks stood as the centre of Christianity in each area, serving the spiritual, educational, and cultural needs of the people. By 800 AD, there was a resurgence in Christian life: the regime of the hermitage, fasting, prayer and meditation became the ideal. By the ninth century, the tranquil world of Christian Ireland was shattered by the arrival of the Vikings. The Diocese of Derry faced its share of destruction with a fierce battle being recorded in Lough Foyle with the Vikings in AD 864. Subsequently, Christianity, however, survived and experienced a resurgence. It was in this period that Ireland became known as 'Insula Sanctorum et Doctorum' (Isle of Saints and Scholars).

The Synod of Rathbrasil established 25 dioceses, 13 in the North under Armagh and 12 in the South under Cashel. Some historians claim that there were in fact 26 dioceses. The boundaries of each Diocese were drafted by reference to places with religious or cultural associations, as mapping was an inexact art.

The main source for this information is Geoffrey Keating's 'History of Ireland'. He is credited with extracting the Acts of the Synod from old Annals, which have now disappeared.

The structure was borrowed from the old Anglo-Saxon Church. While today, Armagh is the Chief See, in the 12th century, Cashel was claiming equal status. The division of Ireland into a northern province and a southern province was based on political divisions at the time.

Diocesan Boundaries

Mapping in Ireland was primitive and to define boundaries, prominent features in the landscape of the rival kingdoms that formed a Diocese were named as markers or bounds. Derry and Raphoe were given the boundaries below:

From Eas Ruaidh to Shruibh Broin

And from Carn Glas to Shruibh Broin.

From Eas Ruaidh (Assaroe, Ballyshannon)

To Shruibh Broin (Shrove, Inishowen)

Most of the places named may not be familiar. Carn Glas is a little-known hill called The Tops, Raphoe. The hill lies close to the present boundary between the modern Dioceses of Derry and Raphoe. The headland called Shruibh Broin lies at the mouth of Lough Foyle, now known as Inishowen Head, with a prominent disused lighthouse, some 20 miles from Derry City.

The latter was a well-known monastic site, and Shrove marked the entrance to the Lough and to the City. The seas and loughs were the great superhighways of the Early Christian world, favoured by missionaries. Colmcille in earlier times stopped close to Shruibh Broin to bid his farewell to Ireland. Today, Malin Head is regarded as extreme north, but it was of no significance in early medieval times. The clerks of the Synod were familiar with Grianán Ailigh also, but to have named Grianán as a boundary would have excluded the peninsula of Inishowen.

Papal Power

The new boundaries and administrative changes were bitterly resented by the abbots, who thus lost a great deal of territorial influence and power. They had many supporters in the Early Church. It was to strengthen their hands against this opposition that the reform party made two moves. They deliberately went out of their way to get the Pope to sanction their actions, thus bringing in his influence where formerly he had less. They also introduced orders of monks, the Augustinians and the Cistercians to Ireland. The latter move resulted in the reduction of the power of the older monastic establishments, of these were dealt with in the which had served the community over a period of centuries and, furthermore, tended to increase the power of the Pope. Malachy, who succeeded Ceallach as Archbishop of Armagh, was a supporter of the Roman Church and it was he who was responsible for both moves, which raised the profile of Rome in the medieval Irish Church.

Malachy had requested the Pope to bestow the pall, a special vestment showing the Pope's official sanction, on the Archbishops of Armagh and Cashel. He died before this could be done.

There were many loose ends to be tied up after Rathbrasil. Some Synod of Kells in AD 1152. Dublin and Tuam were raised to the status of Archbishoprics and four palls were handed over by the Papal Legate, Cardinal John Paparo. The number of Dioceses was also increased to 36.

The Synod of Kells thus marks the end of the reform movement of the 12th century. To sum up, diocesan episcopacy was substituted for monastic rule. The constitution of the Irish church was brought into line with western Europe. Papal approval had been sought and obtained. In general terms, the Synod of Rathbrasil laid down the broad foundations of the modern administration of the Church as we know it today.

Shrove Lighthouse at the mouth of Lough Foyle, in east Inishowen. The entrance to the Lough was a landmark for maritime access to Derry, a major monastic site. For this reason, it was mentioned as one of the boundaries of the Diocese of Derry in the 12th century Synod of Rathbrasil, which designated the territorial boundaries of the new dioceses.

Turas…a pilgrimage of Hope *by Another Pilgrim*

My father's mother was born in Co Donegal in the late 19th Century, a first-generation English language speaker. My Great-grandfather is recorded in the 1911 census of Ireland as a speaker of both English and Irish. As a young student beginning to learn the Irish language, I remember being disappointed that Granny spoke no Irish. However, as a more mature learner I began to hear Irish language idiom in the way she conversed in English. In the Irish language, the devotion of the Stations of the Cross is known as Turas na Croise, or the Journey of the Cross. Granny never talked of 'doing' the Stations, rather she referred to 'travelling' the Stations. This devotion, therefore, was a journey to her and when I think today of a pilgrimage of hope I see it as a journey.

We, Christians, are always on a journey, a journey from birth to death, from Baptism to eternal life in Heaven, hopefully. There is a saying that 'hope springs eternal'. I understand this to mean the hope which motivates us all to go on, to persist against odds, to overcome pitfalls and to survive in the life that God has given us. This is the spirit which drives us, which encourages us and which we miss when we falter and doubt if overcome by adversity, whether natural or unnatural. The hopeful spirit of men and women is seen digging in the wreckage of earthquakes, or persisting with their lives under a hail of bullets and bombs, or fleeing from the impact of climate change, poverty and other forms of oppression.

What is a pilgrim?

As Christians, we are hard-wired to understand that pilgrims are travellers on a journey with a sacred purpose. Indeed, our Patron Columba gave us a profound image of pilgrimage when he undertook his voyage to Iona. This journey turned out to be an exemplary 'peregrinatio pro Christo' when it yielded the evangelisation of the Picts and became the well-spring for the expansion of Celtic Christianity.

In pre-modern times, a pilgrim was seen as a Christian on a journey, often motivated by a penitential impulse. Tradition claims that Columba himself left Ireland to assuage the guilt which he experienced after the slaughter of family, friends and foes at the battle of Cúl Dreimhne. The story goes that Columba had incited a revolt by his Uí Néill clansmen against the High King and that 3,000 were killed in the subsequent battle. It was said that our patron was so stricken by remorse afterwards that he was prompted to self-exile.

Today, we do not require such dramatic circumstances to make us pilgrims. We are called to be pilgrims of hope and if we consider this calling carefully, we may realise that it is part of our human nature to travel and to be hopeful. In Hollywood Westerns, the pilgrim motif is not unusual. This pilgrim is usually one who has travelled from 'back East' and may not be easily disposed to life in the 'wild' West. In our Good Friday liturgy, pilgrims are remembered among those 'in tribulation' ("granting to travellers safety and to pilgrims return"). Through the ages, pilgrimage has been a common theme in literature. Chaucer's 'Canterbury Tales' is an early travelogue about the life of people on their way to the Shrine of St Thomas Beckett. John Bunyan's 'The Pilgrim's Progress' tells of the pilgrim journey of an everyman called Christian through the Valley of Despond to the Celestial City.

Hope anchor

I have been reading 'Journeywork, a creative life' (Nerve Centre, 2024) by Dave Duggan. Duggan is a writer who tells his life's story as a journey working through triumphs, disappointments and challenges. Each element is met with reasonable patience and perseverance, with good humour and a hopeful spirit. Duggan claims no religious inspiration, but I could not avoid interpreting his experience as a pilgrimage of hope. He has won artistic acclaim amid the frustrations of chronic ill-health. The encouragement of colleagues and critics, and the care of medical professionals, steered him through a life always secured by the hope anchor of his creative ambition. Rich metaphor pervades his writing ("an Everest away" and "as she sleuthed her way to a diagnosis") and the hopeful spirit is infectious, bringing a smile to the face of both reader and writer (I suspect).

"Christian hope is much more than human optimism. It is a hope forged in adversity, which offers up the sufferings of each day clinging to the cross of Good Friday with eyes fixed on Easter morning". These recent words of Archbishop Eamon Martin help us to brand our pilgrim endeavours, whether they be on journeys to sacred destinations like Lourdes or Medjugorje, to Knock or to Doon Well, to the Blessing of the Graves or simply around the Way of the Cross in our churches or church grounds. Wherever our turas takes us, I believe that we should be hopeful in our quest, with our aspirations fixed on the events after the 14th Station and with those words of the 14th Leo in our ears, "Peace be with you".

Parish *Post-its*

Aghyaran

Graves' Blessing: The Blessing of the Graves takes place on Saturday, June 21, at 6 pm, with Mass followed by the blessing. Note, there will be no 7.30 pm Mass).

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

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

Ardstraw East (Newtownstewart)

Parish Pilgrimage: On Friday, June 20, there will be a Parish Pilgrimage to Knock Shrine as pilgrims of hope, for an overnight stay, in this Jubilee year. Leaving at 8 am, the group will be staying in St Mary's House, across the road from the Apparition Chapel. The price will be £145, which includes return bus travel, hotel stay, meal on Friday evening, breakfast on Saturday morning and a meal in Tobercurry on the return journey. For those U-16, the cost is £80. Places are limited to 50. To secure the places at St Mary's House, a £50 deposit is needed before Sunday, June 1, with payment in full by Tuesday, June 12. The spiritual director will be Fr James Devine. Contact Maria Bradley, to book a place, on (028) 8164 8357 or WhatsApp 07768 395 038.

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

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

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

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

Badoney Lower (Gortin-Rouskey)

Parish Pilgrimage: On Friday, June 20, there will be a Parish Pilgrimage to Knock Shrine as pilgrims of hope, for an overnight stay, in this Jubilee year. Leaving at 8 am, the group will be staying in St Mary's House, across the road from the Apparition Chapel. The price will be £145, which includes return bus travel, hotel stay, meal on Friday evening, breakfast on Saturday morning and a meal in Tobercurry on the return journey. For those U-16, the cost is £80. Places are limited to 50. To secure the places at St Mary's House, a £50 deposit is needed before Sunday, June 1, with payment in full by Tuesday, June 12. The spiritual director will be Fr James Devine. Contact Maria Bradley, to book a place, on (028) 8164 8357 or WhatsApp 07768 395 038.

Graves' Blessing: The Blessing of the Graves will take place at St Patrick's Gortin on Saturday, June 28, with Mass at 7 pm, and at St Mary's Rouskey on Friday, July 4, at 7 pm (no Mass).

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

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

Badoney Upper (Plumbridge-Cranagh)

Parish Pilgrimage: On Friday, June 20, there will be a Parish Pilgrimage to Knock Shrine as pilgrims of hope, for an overnight stay, in this Jubilee year. Leaving at 8 am, the group will be staying in St Mary's House, across the road from the Apparition Chapel. The price will be £145, which includes return bus travel, hotel stay, meal on Friday evening, breakfast on Saturday morning and a meal in Tobercurry on the return journey. For those U-16, the cost is £80. Places are limited to 50. To secure the places at St Mary's House, a £50 deposit is needed before Sunday, June 1, with payment in full by Tuesday, June 12. The spiritual director will be Fr James Devine. Contact Maria Bradley, to book a place, on (028) 8164 8357 or WhatsApp 07768 395 038.

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

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

Ballinascreen

Parish Pilgrimage: There will be a Parish Pilgrimage to Lough Derg from Thursday, July 10 until Saturday, July 12. This is open to all members of the parish, and a bus may be booked depending on numbers. If interested please contact Fr Michael on 028 79632196 or by Email: desertmartinparish@gmail.com.

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

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

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

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

Ballymagroarty

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

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

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

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

Banagher

Blessing of Graves: Graves will be blessed at St Joseph's Church, Fincairn, on Sunday, June 22, after 11.30 am Mass; at St Peter & St Paul's, Foreglen on Sunday, August 17, after 12 noon Mass; and at St Mary's Church, Altinure, on Sunday, September 7, after 10.30 am Mass.

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

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

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

Bellaghy

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

Adoration: Fridays from 10 am-8 pm (Rosary at 7.30 pm).

Weekend Mass Times: 7 pm Vigil in Bellaghy, 10 am in Ballyscullion, and 11 am in Bellaghy.

Buncrana

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

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

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

Guided Holy Hour: A Guided Holy Hour of Adoration in Honour of the Holy Face of Jesus takes place on Sundays, 6-7 pm in St Mary's Oratory. All welcome.

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

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

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

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

Burt, Inch & Fahan

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

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

Cappagh (Killyclogher)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Carndonagh

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

Castlederg & Ardstraw West

Graves' Blessing: The Blessing of the Graves takes place in Castlederg on Saturday, June 14, at 6 pmwith Mass; in Drumnabey on Sunday, June 15, at 12. 30 pm, with Mass; at Carncorn on Sunday, June 15, at 3 pm; and Dregish on Sunday, June 15, at 5 pm, with Mass (Note – there will be no 9.30 am Mass).

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

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

Claudy

40th Anniversary: Fr David O'Kane is marking 40 years of priesthood with his celebration of the Sunday Masses in St Joseph's Church, Craigbane, at 10 am, and St Patrick's Church, Claudy, at 11.30 am, on June 15.

Cemetery Sunday: The Blessing of the Graves takes place on Sunday, June 29, after 11.30 am Mass in St Patrick's, Claudy, and at 3 pm at St Joseph's Craigbane.

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

Living Word: There is a 'Living Word' gathering in the Upper Room in St Patrick's Church on Thursdays, 7-8.30 pm , for a time of reading and reflection on the Mass readings for the following Sunday. All welcome.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Clonleigh (Lifford)

Weekend Mass Times: 6.30 pm Vigil, 11 am.

Clonmany

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

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

Coleraine

Society of St Joseph: The Society of St Joseph for the support of religious vocations meets on the last Monday of each month at St John's Church Sacristy, after the 10 am morning Mass, and

Parish *Post-its*

is open to everyone. New members are welcome at any of the meetings, which support praying for and assisting to support the vocation to priesthood and the religious life.
Exposition: St John's Church Monday Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place on Wednesdays in St John's Church, from 2-4 pm. with Rosary at 3:45 pm.
Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil, 11 am, St John's; 7.30 pm Vigil, St Mary's Dunboe; 9.45 am, Our Lady of the Assumption, Aghadowey.

Creggan

YOUCAT: The YOUCAT Programme is underway in the Parochial House Conference Room on Wednesdays at 7 pm. All welcome.
Adoration: Exposition of Blessed Sacrament takes place in the Divine Mercy Chapel on Sundays from 1.30 pm - 6 pm, Mondays from 10.30 am - 7 pm, and Tuesday – Saturday from 10.30 am - 12 pm.
Bereavement Support: Parish Pastoral Bereavement Support. The Parish Pastoral Bereavement Support Group meets on the second Sunday of each month at 3 pm in the Parochial House community room. All are welcome to share a cup of tea, have a chat, remember and talk about their loved one and find support with others experiencing similar feelings. In addition to the group, there is an ongoing opportunity to speak on a one-to-one basis with an experienced grief counsellor . The contact number for more information on the group or to arrange one to one support is 07907085178.
Polish Mass: Mass for the Polish community will be celebrated at 4 pm every second and fourth Sunday of the month in the Divine Mercy Chapel, at St Mary's Church.
Confession: Monday - Friday 5-5.30 pm, Saturday 10.30 am & 5.30-6.20 pm.
Weekend Mass Times: 6.30 pm Vigil; 10.30 am; 12.15 pm.

Culdaff

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

Culmore

Prayer: Parishioners in Culmore are invited to a time of prayer to discern parish needs, in Hollybush PS, on June 4, 10 and 17, at 7 pm.

Desertmartin

Parish Pilgrimage: There will be a Parish Pilgrimage to Lough Derg from Thursday, July 10 until Saturday, July 12. This is open to all members of the parish, and a bus may be booked depending on numbers. If interested please contact Fr Michael on 028 79632196 or by Email: desertmartinparish@gmail.com.
Knit & Natter: Knit & Natter classes take place in Knocknagin Hall on Tuesdays at 7.30 pm. Bring your own project or you can help with knitting for local charities.
Weekend Mass Times: 7.30 pm Vigil in St Patrick's, Keenaught; and 10 am in St Mary's, Coolcalm.
Confessions: Saturday evenings in St Patrick's, Keenaught, from 6.30–7.10 pm.

Donagheady (Aughabrack & Dunamanagh)

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

Donaghmore (Killygordon)

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

Drumquin

Pioneer Mass: Mass for all pioneers from the parishes of the Pastoral Area (Aghyaran, Castlederg and Drumquin) will be celebrated on Thursday, June 26, at 7.30 pm, in St Patrick's, Drumquin. It will be the Vigil Mass for the Feast of the Sacred Heart, since devotion to the Sacred Heart is an integral part of the Pioneer Spirituality. All pioneers, families and friends are welcome to come along. If you are entitled to a special Pin, such as 25/50/60 years, contact Fr Thomas on 028 8283 1225 or email drumquin@derrydiocese.org as soon as possible so that pins can be ordered. If you are interested in becoming a pioneer, call with Fr Thomas in the sacristy or the Parochial House.
Graves' Blessing: The Blessing of the Graves will take place in Drumquin on Saturday, June 28, at 6.30 pm, with Mass (Note – there will be no Sunday morning Mass).
Rosary: The Rosary is prayed each Tuesday morning at 10 am in St Patrick's Church, Drumquin.
Eucharistic Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration takes place on Wednesdays from 6 pm – Mass at 7.30 pm.
Weekend Mass Times: Vigil 6.30 pm, and 11 am.

Drumragh (Omagh)

Prayer Group: The Charismatic Prayer Group meetings take place in The Pastoral Centre on Thursday evenings, with Rosary at 7.30 pm and prayer meeting at 8 pm. All welcome to come and pray.
Legion of Mary: The Legion of Mary Men's meetings take place on the first, second and last Monday, and third Tuesday of each month at 7.30 pm, in St Vincent's Hall (beneath Sacred Heart Church Sacristy). Contact: Sean on 07730671370.
Adoration: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in Sacred Heart Church on Wednesdays following 10 am Mass until 5.30 pm.
Rosary of Reparation: On the first Saturday of each month, a Rosary of Reparation will be prayed at 1pm on Main Street, Omagh. All welcome to join.
Stations of Cross: The Stations are prayed after 10 am Mass in Sacred Heart Church.
Confessions: Confession take place on Saturdays after 10 am Mass and after 6 pm Mass in Sacred Heart Church.
Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil, 9 am and 12 noon, Sacred Heart Church; 10.30 am, St Mary's Drumragh.

Dungiven

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

Errigal

Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration takes place on Mondays after 10 am Mass in St Mary's Church, Ballerin, until 2.30 pm.
Rosary & Chaplet: The Rosary and Divine Mercy Chaplet are prayed in St Joseph's Church, Glenullin, every Wednesday evening at 6.30 pm.
Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil, St Joseph's Church, Glenullin, and St Mary's Church, 10 am, St Mary's, Ballerin, and 11.30 am in St Joseph's, Glenullin.

Faughanvale

Rosary: The Rosary is prayed every Friday at 7 pm in Star of the Sea Church.
Vocations Society of St Joseph: The Faughanvale Branch meets in St Mary's Church on the second Monday of the month (not Jan July, August) following morning Mass. They pray for and sponsor vocations to the priesthood. New members are needed. The meeting only takes less than an hour.
Rosary for Priests and for Vocations: A Rosary for priests and vocations is recited each Monday before morning Mass.
Weekend Mass Times: 5 pm Vigil, 12 noon, Star of the Sea; 6.30 pm Vigil, 10 am, St Mary's.

Granaghan (Swatragh)

Weekend Mass Times: 12 noon & 7 pm Vigils; 10.30 am.

Greencastle

Parish Pilgrimage: On Friday, June 20, there will be a Parish Pilgrimage to Knock Shrine as pilgrims of hope, for an overnight stay, in this Jubilee year. Leaving at 8 am, the group will be staying in St Mary's House, across the road from the Apparition Chapel. The price will be £145, which includes return bus travel, hotel stay, meal on Friday evening, breakfast on Saturday morning and a meal in Tobercurry on the return journey. For those U-16, the cost is £80. Places are limited to 50. To secure the places at St Mary's House, a £50 deposit is needed before Sunday, June 1, with payment in full by Tuesday, June 12. The spiritual director will be Fr James Devine. Contact Maria Bradley, to book a place, on (028) 8164 8357 or WhatsApp 07768 395 038.
Divine Mercy: The Divine Mercy Chaplet is prayed on the First Tuesday of every month at 12.15 pm before Mass in St Patrick's Church, Greencastle.
Adoration: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in St Patrick's Church on Thursdays, 6-10 pm.
Stations of the Cross: The Stations of the Cross are prayed after 7.30 pm Mass on Fridays in St Patrick's, Greencastle.
Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil, St Patrick's, and 11.30 am, Our Lady of Wayside, Broughderg.

Greenlough

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

Iskaheen, Drung & Muff

Cemetery Blessings: The blessing of graves will take place at Drung on Sunday, July 27, at 3 pm; Muff on Sunday, August 10, at 3 pm; and Iskaheen on Sunday, August 10, at 5 pm.
Adoration: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place on Tuesdays after 10 am Eucharistic Service, until 2 pm, in St Patrick's Church, Iskaheen.
Divine Mercy: Divine Mercy Devotions take place on Wednesdays after 10 am Mass in Sacred Heart Church, Muff.
St Peregrine: The St Peregrine Novena Prayer and veneration of relic takes place on the first Friday of each month, alternating between the three churches.
Confessions: Confessions are available in Iskaheen on Saturdays, 9.45-10 am, and in Muff on Saturdays, 6 pm, and after 6,30 pmVigil Mass
Weekend Mass Times: 6.30 pm Vigil, 11.30 am, Sacred Heart Church, Muff; 8 pm Vigil, 10.15 am, St Columba's, Drung; 9 am, St Patrick's, Iskaheen.

Kilrea

Eucharistic Adoration: Mondays, from 12 noon - 7pm, at St Mary's Drumagarner. Concludes with Public Prayers.
Stations of the Cross: The Stations of the Cross are prayed on Sundays in St Anne's Oratory at 7 pm, with Confessions beforehand from 6.30-6.50 pm.
SVP: The St Vincent de Paul Thrift Shop is open on Saturdays from 10 am -1pm.
Confession: Confession is available immediately after the 7 pm Vigil Mass in St Anne's Oratory each Saturday. Alternatively, feel free to request the sacrament before or after any weekday Mass.
Weekend Mass Times: 7 pm, Vigil, St Anne's Oratory; 10am St Mary's, Drumagarner; 12 noon, St Mary's, Craigavole.

Lavey

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

Leckpatrick

Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration takes place on Wednesdays from 8.30 am Mass until 5.30 pm.
Weekend Mass Times: 5 pm Vigil, St Mary's Church, Cloughcor; 9.45 am St Joseph's Church, Glenmornan; 11.15 am, Sacred Heart Church, Derry Road.

Lifford (Murlog)

Stations of the Cross: The Stations of the Cross are recited publicly each Friday after 9.30 am Mass in St Patrick's Church, Murlog.
Adoration: 9.30 am-12.30 pm.
Confessions: Saturday, 6-6.15 pm
Weekend Mass Times: 6.30 pm Vigil; 11 am.

Limavady

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

Maghera

Golden Jubilee: Fr Paddy Doherty will be celebrating his Golden Jubilee of Priesthood on Thursday, June 19, in St Mary's Church, Maghera, at 7.30 pm. Afterwards, refreshments will be provided in Glen GAA Club.
Diamond Jubilee: Mass to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Fr Kieran O'Doherty will take place on Tuesday, June 24, in St Patrick's Church, Glen, at 7.30 pm. Afterwards, refreshments will be provided in Fallaghloon Hall.
Holy Face of Jesus: The Holy Face of Jesus prayers take place every Tuesday after the 9.30 am Mass and Divine Mercy.
Pray & Play: The Maghera Parish Pray and Play for Parents, Grandparents & Tots (three years old and younger) meets every Friday, in the Fairhill Youth Centre, after the 10 am Mass. It runs from 10.30 am until 12 noon.
Confession: Daily after morning Mass (except Sunday and Holydays), and

Parish *Post-its*

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St Mary's at 7 pm on Wednesdays (before evening Mass) and Saturdays at 11am/12noon and 5.30pm/6.15pm
Weekend Mass Times: 6.30 pm Vigil and 11.30 am, St Mary's; 9.30 am, St Patrick's.

Magilligan

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

Malin

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

Melmount

Golden Jubilee: Fr Michael Doherty will celebrate the Golden Jubilee of his Ordination with a Mass of Thanksgiving in St Mary's Church on Monday, June 16, at 7.30 pm.
Exposition: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in the church on Mondays after 10 am Mass until 6 pm. The Rosary will be recited prior to closure of Adoration at approximately 5.40 pm. Everyone is welcome.
Weekend Mass Times: 7 pm Vigil, 10.30 am and 12.30 pm.

Moville

Stations of the Cross: The Stations of the Cross are prayed after 10 am Mass on Fridays.
Graves Blessing: Blessing of the Graves will take place in Ballybrack on Sunday, July 6 and in Ballinacrae on Sunday, July 13. A collection for the upkeep of the graveyards will be taken up at these services.
Prayer: The Rosary and Divine Mercy Chaplet will be recited in St Pius X Church, Moville, at 7.30 pm every day, from Sunday – Friday.
Adoration: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place on Mondays, from 2-9 pm, and Wednesdays, 6-9 pm, in St Pius X Church.
Confessions: Confessions will be heard in St Pius X Church on Saturdays from 5.45-6.15 pm.
Weekend Mass Times: 6.30 pm Vigil, 10 am, St Pius X Church. 11.30 am on alternate Sundays in St Mary's Ballybrack, and St Columba's Ballinacrae.

Sion Mills

Adoration: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place on Fridays, from 11 am-6.50 pm, ending with Benediction before 7 pm Mass.
Legion of Mary: The Legion of Mary meets in the Green Room, behind the church, each Monday evening at 7.30 pm. This is open not only to members of the Legion but to anyone interested in joining. Anyone can come along to the start of the meeting for the Rosary.
Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil; 9 am & 11 am.

Steelstown & Culmore

Lectio Divina: Lectio Divina is a way of praying the Scriptures together and takes place every Wednesday after 10 am Mass, in the Parish Conference Room. All welcome.
Adoration: Mondays after 10 am Mass until 6.50 pm.
Stations of the Cross: Come along to reflect on the Way of the Cross on Fridays at 7.30 pm.
Weekend Mass Times: 6.30 pm Vigil; 9 am, 11 am, and 12:15 pm.

Strabane (Camus)

Stations of Cross: Stations of the Cross are recited publicly each Friday after 10 am Mass in Immaculate Conception Church.
Adoration: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place every day, from 10.30 am-1 pm, in the Adoration Chapel (Oasis of Peace), which is situated at the back of the Church.
Prayer Group: The Contemplative Prayer Group meets on Mondays at 8 pm in the Prayer Room in the Parochial House. All welcome. Entry by Parish Priest's front door.
Society of St Joseph: The St John Vianney branch of the Society of St Joseph (the three combined Strabane parishes) meets on the first Tuesday of the month, excluding January, July and August, with Rosary in the church after 10 am Mass and continues in St Patrick's Hall. More people are encouraged to join in this prayer for new students to join the priesthood. The Society assists Irish and overseas student. Please contact Margaret Harte on 028 71 883159.
Padre Pio Mass: The Padre Pio Mass takes place in the Church on the first Wednesday of the month at 7 pm, with Rosary beforehand at 6.40 pm.
Grotto Rosary: The Rosary is recited at the Grotto on the last Sunday of each month. Everyone is welcome.
Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil, 9.45 am & 12.15 pm.

Templemore – St Eugene's

Parish Trip: St Eugene's Cathedral are organising a trip to Knock and Co Mayo from June 15-17, as part of the Derry Diocesan Pilgrimage to Knock Shrine. The cost of £280 includes transport, two nights B&B, and excursion to Cong and Westport. For further information ring the Parish Office on 028 71262894 or email Anne Marie Hickey, Pastoral Coordinator on amhickey@derrydiocese.org.
Eucharistic Adoration: Every Sunday, there is Eucharistic Adoration from 3-6 pm and every Tuesday from 10.30 am until 7.20 pm.
Matt Talbott Mass: The Matt Talbot, Freedom from addiction Mass takes place on the first Monday of each month at 7.30 pm in St Eugene's Cathedral.
St Dymphna Mass: The St Dympna Mass with Anointing of the Sick takes place on the third Tuesday of each month at 7.30pm. This Mass is to give thanks to God for positive mental health and to pray for those who are struggling with mental health issues and those who care for them.
Cathedral Club: The Cathedral Club meets after the 10 am Mass each Thursday in the Cathedral Hall. Everyone is welcome to this parish social group. Refreshments will be served.
Weekend Mass Times: 6.15 pm & 7.30 pm Vigils; 9.30 am, 11 am, 12.30 pm & 7 pm.

Templemore – Long Tower

Evening of Sacred Music: As part of this year's Every Voice Festival, there will be an evening of sacred music, featuring choirs from across the City, on Sunday, June 15, in Long Tower Church at 6 pm.
Mental Health Mass: A monthly Mass for Mental Health, and a mini-Vigil to midnight, takes place on the first Thursdays at 7.30 pm. This Mass is to give thanks to God for positive mental health, and to pray for those struggling with mental health issues and those who care for them. After Mass, Adoration will follow until midnight.
Purple Hearts: The Purple Hearts group gathers every Tuesday in Aras Cholmcille after 10 am Mass in Long Tower, for a cuppa, conversation, and some activities such as dancing, knitting, bingo and organising day trips. All welcome.
Long Tower & Brandywell Memories: A collection of old cine film transferred to DVD, taken from1950's onward. The pack contains a double DVD with many clips of Derry in the 50s up to 80s. Much of the footage was filmed in the Brandywell area and the Long Tower School. Cost £10, available from Parish Office and Aras Cholmcille.
Children's Rosary: Children's Rosary takes place in the Long Tower on the First Friday of every month, at 3.30 pm.
Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil, 10 am & 12 noon.
Síopa Cholmcille: St Columba's Gift Shop in Aras Cholmcille has a variety of Confirmation/First Holy Communion gifts & cards, candles, Rosary beads, books, occasion cards and other gifts & mementos available. The shop is open after 10am morning Mass during the week. For enquiries please contact Sheila Doyle/ Jim Doherty via (parish office 028-7126230 or Sacristy 028-71261946) who will be happy to help.
Cloisters Café: Cloisters Café in Aras Cholmcille (Wee Nuns building), in the grounds of Long Tower Church, is a cosy place to relax and have a bite to eat or a cuppa and a cake! The café is open Tuesday – Saturday, from 10 am to 3 pm.

Three Patrons

LIFE Summer Camp: The Parish is hosting summer camps for children who attend a school in the parish and who have completed P4-P7 in June 2025. The camps will be held in St Columb's College on July 14-18 and July 21-25, costing £40 per week. Registration details are on the Parish Facebook page.
Children's Rosary: Children's Rosary takes place in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, on the second Saturday of the month, at 2 pm.
Legion of Mary: The Legion of Mary meets on Mondays, from 1-3 pm in the Meeting Room at St Joseph's Church, Galliagh.
Folk Group: The Carnhill Folk Group meets on Mondays from 7-8.30 pm in St Brigid's Church.
St Brigid's Choir: The 10.30 am St Brigid's Choir meets on Thursdays from 5-5.30 pm in St Brigid's Church.
Bible Study: Bible Study takes place on Tuesdays after 11 am Mass in the Meeting Room, St Joseph's Church, Galliagh.
Men's Bible Study: Men's Bible Study takes place in the Upper Room in St Brigid's Chapel, Carnhill, on Tuesdays from 7.30-8.30 pm.
Women's Bible Study: Women's Bible Study takes place on Wednesdays from 7-8 pm, in the Upper Room, St Brigid's Church, Carnhill.
God Club: God Club is an opportunity for teenaghers to learn together about their faith. It takes place in the Kildare Room, Carnhill, on Saturdays from 11.30 am until 12.30 pm.
Family/Youth Mass: A Family/ Youth Mass is celebrated every Sunday at 6.30 pm in St Joseph's Church, Galliagh. Everyone is welcome.
Be Still: Be Still is a Men's Prayer and Friendship Group that meets every Thursday night from 8.15-10 pm in Our Lady's Chapel, within St Joseph's Church building, Galliagh. Its mission as a group is to provide a safe place where men can pray and share in a confidential and supportive setting. All men are welcome.
Holy Hour: A Holy Hour for the Unborn & Expectant Mothers takes place on Thursdays at 7 pm in Our Lady's Chapel, St Joseph's Church, Galliagh. All welcome.
Adoration: Eucharistic Adoration takes place in Our Lady's Chapel, St Joseph's Church, Galliagh, on Tuesdays from 11 am until 7 pm. It also takes place seven days a week in the Adoration Room in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, from 8 am until 8 pm, and in St Patrick's Church, Pennyburn, on Wednesdays from 10.30 am – 7 pm.
Youth Prayer Group: A Youth Prayer Group takes place on Thursdays, from 7.30-8.30 pm, in St Pio Centre, Galliagh.
First Saturday: On the First Saturday of each month, after 11 am Mass in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, there is Adoration and Rosary, ending with Divine Mercy and Benediction at 3 pm.
Living Disciples: Living Disciples meet on Tuesdays at 7.30-8.30 pm in St Pio House, St Joseph's Church grounds, for Praise & Worship, friendship and a cup of tea. All welcome.
Holy Face Devotions: Devotions to the Holy Face of Jesus takes place every Tuesday after 11 am Mass in Our Lady's Chapel, St Joseph's Church, Galliagh. All welcome
St Pio Mass: A monthly Mass in honour of St Pio takes place on the first Monday at 7 pm in St Patrick's Church, Pennyburn.
Healing Night: A Healing Night with the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal takes place monthly on the first Friday, from 7-10 pm, in St Joseph's Church, Galliagh. Everyone welcome.
Holy Souls Prayer: Under The Gaze of Our Lady of Montligeon, the Holy Souls of Purgatory Prayer Meeting takes place on Mondays after 11 am Mass in Our Lady's Chapel, within St Joseph's Church, Galliagh, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. The next monthly meeting for the intercession of Priests takes place on Tuesday, December 10, at 12.30 pm in Termonbacca.
Vocations Society: The Vocations Society of St Joseph hold monthly meetings on First Fridays after 10 am Mass, in the Emmaus Room, Pennyburn. New members welcome.
Women's Laugh & Craft: The Women's Laugh & Craft Group meets every Monday from 7-9 pm in the Kildare Room, St Brigid's, Carnhill. £3 per class. Spaces limited.
St Pio Café: St Pio's Café, in the St Pio Centre, Galliagh, is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 11.30 am-2.30 pm.
Confessions: Confessions takes place in St Joseph's Church, Galliagh, on Tuesdays from 6.15-6.45 pm and Sundays from 5.30-6 pm; in St Patrick's Church, Pennyburn, on Wednesdays from 6.15-6.45 pm, and Saturdays from 5.15-5.45 pm; and in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, on Thursdays from 6.15-6.45 pm, and Saturdays after 11 am Mass and from 4-4.30 pm.
Weekend Mass Times: 6.15 pm Vigil & 9.45 am, St Patrick's, Pennyburn; 5 pm Vigil, 10.30 am &12.30 pm St Brigid's, Carnhill; 11 am, 12.30 pm (An tAifreann Naofa), and 6.30 pm Youth Mass, St Joseph's Galliagh.

Urney & Castlefinn

Diamond Jubilee: Fr Oliver Crilly celebrates 60 years of Ordination to the Priesthood on Friday, June 20. A Mass of Thanksgiving will take place on Saturday, June 14, at 12 noon in St Mary's Church, Castlefinn, Co Donegal. Everyone welcome
First Saturdays: The First Saturday Devotion and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament will take place in St Columba's Church, Doneyloop, from 12 noon until 1 pm on the First Saturday of each month.
Adoration: Weekly Eucharistic Adoration takes place in St Anthony's Chapel every Tuesday, from 12 noon until 8 pm.
Cenacle: The Cenacle for Priests takes place every Tuesday in St Anthony's Chapel immediately after the 7 pm Mass.
Weekend Mass Times: 6 pm Vigil, St Columba's, Doneyloop; 10.30 am, St Mary's Castlefinn.

Waterside & Strathfoyle

Lectio Divina: Reflect on the Scriptures with Lectio Divina in the side chapel in St Columb's Church, Chapel Road, on Thursday nights, starting at 8.15 pm – after evening Mass.
Eucharistic Adoration: There is Eucharistic Adoration in St Oliver Plunkett Church, Strathfoyle, on Mondays, 11.30 am-12.30 pm; in Immaculate Conception Church on Thursdays, 1-6 pm; and in St Columb's Church on Fridays, 1-6 pm.
Confessions: St Columb's – Saturday after 10 am Mass, Monday–Friday at 7 pm, before evening Mass; Immaculate Conception, after 11 am Mass every Saturday and at 5.30 pm before evening Mass on a Saturday; St Oliver Plunkett, Every Saturday 5.30 pm, before the Vigil Mass.
Weekend Mass Times: 7 pm Vigil, St Columb's; 6 pm Vigil, 10.15 am & 12.15 pm, Immaculate Conception; 11.15 am, St Oliver Plunkett.

Diocesan *Diary*

Sacred Heart Novena: The Novena to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus will be held on nine consecutive Fridays in different churches across Ireland between Friday, May 2 - Friday, June 27. The seventh Novena Mass will be celebrated by Bishop Donal on Friday, June 13, at 7 pm in the Church of the Sacred Heart, Derry Road, Strabane. Additionally, the relics of St Margaret Mary Alacoque & St Claude la Colombiere from Paray-le-Monial, France, will be present. A period of Adoration and Benediction will follow Mass, with an opportunity to venerate the relics. All are welcome. The relics will remain in the Church until Thursday, June 19. Times of Masses, Veneration and Evening Devotions will be published in due course. For more information, visit https://sacredheartcrusade.ie/

...*other* Diary *Dates*

Knock Youth Day: If you are 18-30 years old, you are welcome to a faith gathering of young adults 'Dare to Hope' that will be held at Knock Shrine Youth Village on June 14, and hosted by the Irish Bishops' Conference in collaboration with Knock Shrine. The programme involves expert speakers and sharing faith experiences, concluding with Mass celebrated by Bishop Fintan Gavin, Bishop of Cork & Ross, at the Basilica of Our Lady. For those attending places can be booked for €20. As places are limited, booking is essential. Please visit EventBrite.ie to reserve your place.

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

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

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

Pilgrimage for Life: The National Pilgrimage for Life, organised by the Council for Life of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, will be celebrated on Saturday, June 21, in Knock Shrine. Mass will be celebrated at 3pm in the Basilica, during which the Anointing of the Sick will take place. Main celebrant and homilist will be Bishop Martin Hayes.

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

Servant Sisters: The Sisters of the Home of the Mother are hosting weekly formation meetings on Tuesdays, at 7.30 pm, in the Parochial House at Cross, Killygordon, (F93PN0X), and the weekly Holy Hours on Thursdays at 7 pm.

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

Polish Mass: Mass for the Polish community is celebrated in the Church of Christ The King, Strathroy, Omagh, on the first and third Sunday's of each month at 10 am, and at 9.30 am every second and fourth Sunday in the Divine Mercy Chapel, at St Mary's Church, Creggan, in Derry City.

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

Novena Mass to welcome Sacred Heart anniversary relics to Diocese

SACRED Heart Church, Derry Road, Strabane, will be hosting the relics of St Margaret Alacoque and St Claude la Columbiere from June 13-19.

The Novena to The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, being held on nine consecutive Fridays in different churches across Ireland between Friday, May 2 – Friday, June 27, will have its seventh Novena Mass celebrated by Bishop Donal on Friday, June 13, at 7 pm in the Church of the Sacred Heart, within the Leckpatrick Parish, marking the arrival of the relics.

A period of Adoration and Benediction will follow the Mass, with an opportunity to venerate the relics, and all are welcome.

Times of Masses, Veneration and Evening Devotions will be published in due course. For more information, visit https://sacredheartcrusade.ie/

In addition, one of the four Pilgrim Sacred Heart Statues blessed by Pope Francis in Rome on January 8, for pilgrimage around Ireland to mark the 2025 Jubilee of Pilgrims of Hope, is going around parishes in the Diocese.

This is part of The Sacred Heart Crusade of Love and Hope, which was launched in January as a renewed and revitalized rally to encourage people to explore a relationship with the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The Crusade is a response to Pope Francis' call in his Encyclical 'Dilexit Nos', which coincides with the 350th Anniversary of the Revelations of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to St Margaret Mary Alacoque in France.

Travelling around each of the four Irish Provinces, the pilgrim statues will travel to Knock's International Eucharistic and Marian Shrine for the celebration of Mass in the Basilica by Archbishop Eamon Martin, on June 22, and will continue to visit dioceses and parishes for the rest of 2025.

On this date, Archbishop Eamon will also be renewing the Consecration of Ireland to the most Sacred Heart of Jesus, a consecration first made over 150 years ago.

DDS Daily Masses *2024-2025*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1ST FRIDAY MASS FOR LIVING MEMBERS 2024 / 2025

Ballinascreen
06/12/2024

Banagher
03/01/2025

Bellaghy
07/02/2025

Coleraine
07/03/2025

Desertmartin
04/04/2025

Dungiven
02/05/2025

Errigal
06/06/2025

Greenlough
04/07/2025

Kilrea
01/08/2025

Lavey
05/09/2025

Limavady
03/10/2025

Maghera
07/11/2025

Forty Hours - 2025

Sun 1 June	Immaculate Conception	Glendermott
Suny 1 June	St Mary's	Ardmore
Sun 1 June (Plumbridge)	Sacred Heart	Badoney Upper
Sun 8 June	St Mary's	Faughanvale
Sun 8 June	St Patrick's	Donagheady
Sun 8 June	St Mary's	Clonmany
Sun 15 June	St Patrick's	Claudy
Sun 15 June	St Patrick's	Badoney Lower (Gortin)
Sun 15 June	St Patrick's, Keenaught	Desertmartin
Sun 15 June	St Mary's, Killyclogher	Cappagh
Sun 22 June	St Patrick's	Aghyaran
Sun 22 June	Oratory of Mary, Mother of God	Newtownstewart
Sun 22 June	St Mary's	Lavey
Sun 22 June	St Mary's, Aughabrack	Donagheady
Sun 29 June	Our Lady of the Assumption, Aghadowey	Coleraine
Sun 29 June	St Columb's	Glendermott
Sun 29 June	St Aengus, Burt	Fahan

Peace be with you *Fr Johnny Doherty CSsR*

Fr. Johnny Doherty CSsR

I live in the house, Clonard Monastery, Belfast, where it can be said that the Peace Process for the North of Ireland was conceived and eventually came to birth. Fr Alec Reid, a Redemptorist priest, originally from Co Tipperary, spent months and years while living here making contact with people on all sides of the divide and gradually putting them in touch with one another. Clonard was where many of them could meet privately and safely, until it was more acceptable that they should be doing this and were able to meet more openly to negotiate peace.

Fr Alec could understand many of the reasons for the ongoing conflict as he met with the leaders. But he was totally convinced that there was no future in war or violence. The only results of these would be more death and destruction as well as the deepening of the enmities between the various communities. His commitment was to work for peace in every way he could find. He had to face opposition of all kinds. He had to risk a lot, even at times at the risk of his life. But he kept going until the Good Friday Agreement was signed – and well beyond that.

Christ's greeting

On Sunday, April 27, we celebrated the Second Sunday of the Easter season, also known as Divine Mercy Sunday. For us, this is like an introduction to the new month of May, giving us an important theme for this month. At the heart of the Gospel passage for this Sunday was the appearance of the risen Christ to His disciples, who were gathered in the Upper Room in Jerusalem. His greeting to them was: "Peace be with you." Then, as the Gospel tells us, "He showed them His hands and His side. The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord, and He said to them again: 'Peace be with you'."

Christ's gift

Peace is not just a greeting from Christ. It is rather a gift that He wants to give His disciples and which He wants them to accept wholeheartedly. They were in the Upper Room because they were afraid of those who had crucified Christ and would be looking for them as His followers. They were also feeling guilty because they had abandoned Christ when He most needed them. And they were unsure about the future because they knew that the boundaries they had set for their following of Christ would not survive in the new dispensation. 'Peace be with you.'

For us and our world

Peace is also the greeting and the gift that Christ gives to us today at this Easter Season of 2025. He gives this to us for ourselves and for the world in which we live. It can seem impossible. It can seem unreal. It can seem far beyond what we can imagine. And yet, this is what stands confronting us at every level of our lives. We need to face the challenges that Christ's gift brings us as followers of His.

The world

The world today is being torn apart by war and violence on a global scale. We are only too aware of what is happening in Ukraine and in Gaza, where bombs are falling day after day; multiple people are being killed and many more seriously injured; thousands of people have to flee, looking elsewhere for asylum; and so on. These wars have been happening for so long now that we may no longer feel the trauma of them for ourselves.

And these wars are only two of the many that are taking place around the world. To speak of peace as the only thing that can bring sense to our world can sound hollow. And yet it is true. Largely, we can have had the heart broken in us. And, with our hearts broken, hope can be lost. When we hear Jesus say, 'Peace be with you', we need to let His word enter into us so that we can long for this for our world; pray for this constantly for our world; work for it in every way we can for our world.

When Fr Alec Reid worked for peace in the North of Ireland, it seemed that it was impossible. He was often told that in no uncertain terms by all sides. But he kept working for it, knowing that eventually it had to come. And it did.

Pope Francis

For the past 12 years, Pope Francis has been a powerful voice for peace in our world. We hear this in so many of his messages and teachings. We see it in so many of his visits around the world. And we can learn it from so many of his actions.

He has been like a conscience for the world as he preached Christ's message of peace and reconciliation. And he continues to be that even though he is now gone from us.

He has shown all of us how we can bring peace into our world through respect for the dignity of every human person. He continues to be that light now as we face the world without him and as we pray for his successor, Pope Leo XIV, as Bishop of Rome and leader of the Catholic Church.

Our challenge

If we are to be loyal to the memory of Pope Francis and to all that he brought us, we must let ourselves be challenged to be people committed to peace as central to the gift of Christ's salvation of the world.

This means to be people who are at peace within ourselves as Pope Francis certainly was. In all his dealings with people that was one of the most striking features of his. There were always so many things threatening his peace – the burden of his office as Pope; his health; the many people who were opposed to him even among his friends; and so on. He continued to be fully at the service of the Church and the world.

He got involved in the search for peace in all the areas of our world in which there is conflict. He addressed the leaders of these places and kept the plea for peace ringing in their ears.

A field hospital

However, his greatest actions for peace were almost hidden but very powerful. These were seen in how he always tried to make each person feel treasured and accepted and loved. This was true in his large audiences as he went around in the Popemobile. The focus was never on him but on the people who were there, and they knew that.

It was also true in the light of the many issues that confronted the teaching of the Church today. He never wavered in his upholding of this teaching. But he also made sure that nothing ever became more important than each individual. One of his favourite images of the Church was as a "field hospital". That meant that each person needs to be dealt with first and given their dignity as they are as individuals. The teaching can then be looked at together. Together is the only way for us to develop the teaching. We need to be at peace with one another for this process to be faithful to Christ.

Conclusion

When Jesus greeted His disciples with His words, "Peace be with you", He knew that the future of His Church and its place in the salvation of the world would depend on His disciples making this a primary focus. It continues to be a major call for us today, as we look to the future without Pope Francis.

Each one of us has a responsibility to let Christ's peace fill our minds and hearts. This means letting go of so much each day that can disturb our peace. In one of his letters, St Paul teaches us: "Do not let the sun go down on your anger". This does not mean that we should never be angry. That would be impossible. What it does mean though is that we have no right to get up today with yesterday's anger. It is the same with so many other things that disturb us. We cannot bring peace to our homes, to our marriages, to our families, to our communities of faith, to our world, if we ourselves are not at peace.

A striking quotation

One of the very many striking quotations from Pope Francis that I have come across is the following – a quotation that shows the peace that he had developed within himself through his prayer and contemplation. It is also a quotation that I can imagine Fr Alec Reid making too, throughout his work for peace and reconciliation.

"Rivers do not drink their own water; trees do not eat their own fruit; the sun does not shine on itself and flowers do not spread their fragrance for themselves. Living for others is a rule of nature. We are all born to help each other. No matter how difficult it is. Life is good when you are happy; but much better when others are happy because of you."

The month of May should be for us a time in which to renew our commitment to Christ by renewing our openness to being people of peace and to being peacemakers.

The role of women in the Church *by Sinéad Strong*

THE issue of women's role in the Church continues to be discussed and debated, particularly within the context of the Synod on Synodality. There is much discussion these days, particularly since the death of Pope Francis and the election of Pope Leo XIV, about the need for women priests. In much of the coverage of these events, there was a lot of calling for women to be ordained but, I have to ask, will this really help the Church? Will women taking up this vocation increase numbers to the priesthood or the pews?

The Catholic Church teaches that men and women are equal in dignity and called to holiness. While the paths and means of following this call may vary, all baptised members are called to contribute to the life of the church.

Women have played a vital role in the Catholic Church for centuries, though their contributions and experiences often were overlooked. The roles of women as mothers and nuns, while not equivalent to the priesthood, are undeniably important and valuable in the Catholic Church. Motherhood is a highly valued role, and nuns dedicate their lives to God and service, contributing significantly to the Church's life.

The priesthood, on the other hand, is a distinct ordained ministry with specific roles and responsibilities. Women are valuable. To say that we need to make women priests in order to acknowledge or confirm the dignity of women would be to completely misunderstand the dignity of human beings and the role of the clergy. Priests are not more important or holier than anyone else. Many mistakenly think that priests, bishops, and cardinals are the roles we should all aspire to, the top positions, so of course it's going to seem like a put-down when the positions aren't open to some people. We need to remember the important roles women have in other areas of the church.

The Catholic Church recognises the special role of mothers, with Mary, Mother God and of us all, the most exalted person in the Church. Mothers play a crucial role in shaping the lives of their children, bringing them up in the faith and, in turn, contributing to the well-being of society. Without mothers there would be no priests. The Church definitely would not be able to survive if all of the priests vanished – how else would we receive the sacraments? How else would we receive Jesus Himself in the Eucharist?

In bearing children, women do what men cannot. Through their maternity, they are partakers in the creative act; God Himself touches a mother when He places another soul inside of her! Mothers grow a human being within their body, it seems so commonplace, yet this is what happens every time a child is conceived. Maybe we should be asking why society is so quick to diminish and belittle this vital and incredibly important role that women play in the Church and in society. Every single woman who is a mother brings a new soul to Jesus.

Archbishop Fulton Sheen said: "When a mother carries the young life within her through a free act of love, she has a different kind of love from what any man has for a neighbour. Most of us love a non-self, or something extrinsic and apart from our inner life; but a mother's love during the time she is a flesh-and-blood ciborium is not for a non-self but for one that is her very self, a perfect example of charity and love which hardly perceives a separation. Motherhood then becomes a kind of priesthood. She brings God to man by preparing the flesh in which the soul will be implanted; she brings man to God in offering the child back again to the Creator."

Women who enter the religious life often do so out of a deep desire to serve God and the Church, and their lives are marked by a strong commitment to prayer, spiritual growth, and service. Many are involved in charitable works, such as running hospitals, schools, and shelters, or providing spiritual guidance and support to those in need. Nuns, who have taken vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, are dedicated to serving God and the Church. Nuns in Ireland have played a significant role in shaping society. They established and ran hospitals, schools, and other vital institutions that served as the backbone of Irish Catholic society. Additionally, they provided social services and educational opportunities, particularly for girls. Even as the number of nuns has decreased, their legacy continues to be felt in Ireland through the institutions they established and the services they provided.

Lord God, we thank you for the beauty and diversity of vocations, and for the unique gifts you have given to each woman. We pray that you will inspire and guide women in discerning their path, whether it be in marriage, consecrated life as a religious sister, or single life. Help them to listen to your voice with clarity and courage, and to respond generously to your call. May they find joy and fulfilment in living out the unique vocation you have for them. We pray for all women who have answered your call, and we thank you for their dedication and service. We ask this through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Children's Catechism Club - C3

by Veronica Harley

HELLO children. Welcome to the month of May. This month is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. We offer up special prayers and devotion to Mary, who always leads us to Jesus. A traditional custom to show our love for the Mother of Jesus is the making of a May Altar. A statue of Our Lady is placed on a table and surrounded by fresh flowers. Another custom is a May Crowning of Mary as the Queen of Heaven by adorning Her statue with flowers.

In May, we honour Mary on two beautiful feast days. On May 13, we celebrate the Feast Day of Our Lady of Fatima, when the Blessed Virgin appeared to three young children and called for prayer and conversion in the world. The Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary is on May 31. On this day, we honour how Mary, while carrying Her Son Jesus within Her womb, went to visit Her cousin, Elizabeth to offer her charitable help and to tell of God's great mercy.

Our Lady of Fatima

The Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, appeared six times to three shepherd children: Lucia; Francisco; and Jacinta. Between May 13 and October 13, 1917, She appeared in the little village of Fatima in Portugal. Our Lady brought a special message from God for everyone to hear. She promised that the world would be at peace and that many souls would go to Heaven if people listened to Her requests and obeyed them. Her three requests were penance, prayer and devotion to Her Immaculate heart.

Our Lady told the three children that a great sign from Heaven would happen so that everyone would believe. This miracle took place in Fatima on October 13, 1917, and was witnessed by 70,000 people. It is called the Miracle of the Sun. Everyone could stare perfectly at the sun without blinking or hurting their eyes. The sun rotated in the sky, became large and small, drew close to the people and then far away from them. Everyone who saw this said that the sun was dancing. It was an extraordinary event that even made unbelievers fall to their knees and beg God for forgiveness.

The message Our Lady brought to Fatima still applies today. She asked that everyone pray the Rosary every day to overcome evil in the world. Centuries earlier, Our Blessed Mother Mary had given us the Rosary, a very powerful weapon, to keep us safe from harm in this world. The Rosary is like the sling-shot of King David that killed the mighty enemy because the power of God was behind it. When we pray the Rosary, we have the power of God in our hands which protects and guards us and leads us to God.

O my Jesus,
forgive us our sins,
save us from the fires of hell,
lead all souls to Heaven,
especially those in most need of Thy mercy.
(Our Lady at Fatima, July 13, 1917)

Saints of the Month

St James & St Philip, Apostles – May 3
St Matthias – May 14
St Philip Neri – May 26
St Augustine of Canterbury – May 27

The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

"My soul proclaims the greatest of the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, because He has looked upon the lowliness of His handmaid. Yes, henceforth all generations will call me blessed." (Luke 1:46-48)

The Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary is May 31. Visitation means 'the visit'. The Angel Gabriel told Mary that Her cousin, Elizabeth was going to have a baby boy, so Mary set off at once to visit Elizabeth.

Mary, too, was expecting a baby, Baby Jesus. When She arrived at Elizabeth's house, the Holy Spirit revealed to Elizabeth that Mary was going to become the Mother of God. Elizabeth greeted Mary with the words: "Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb" (Luke 1:42; CCC 2676). While Elizabeth and Mary greeted each other, the baby boy in Elizabeth's womb leapt for joy. He would later be called John the Baptist.

Elizabeth asked Mary: "Why should I be honoured with a visit from the Mother of my Lord?" Mary responded in humility and spoke of how God had blessed Her richly. "Holy is His name", Mary exclaimed.

During Her visit, the Blessed Virgin Mary brought many graces to Her cousin Elizabeth's house. St John the Baptist, while still hidden in his mother's womb, was cleansed of original sin. His father, Zechariah, who had lost his voice, got his speech back after John was born. St Elizabeth was filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Mary remained at Elizabeth's house for three months before returning to Nazareth.

Habemus Papam – We have a Pope!

'Habemus papam' is a Latin phrase that translates as 'We have a pope'. This phrase is used to announce the election of a new pope in St Peter's Basilica in Rome. This announcement is made after white smoke signals that a new pope has been chosen.

On May 8, 2025, Cardinal Robert Prevost was elected the new Pope. When popes are newly elected, they choose a different name because they are starting a new chapter in their lives. It also honours previous popes or saints. This tradition began around the 10th century and is often seen as a message about the new Pope's intentions. Cardinal Prevost

took the name Pope Leo XIV.

Mary Our Model of Hope

During this Jubilee Year of Hope, we remember how Mary always taught us to place our hope and trust in God. Mary said "Yes" to the Angel Gabriel's announcement that God wanted Her to be the Mother of Jesus. Mary's act of faith showed us how much She hoped and trusted that God's promises would be fulfilled.

We also see great hope when Mary stood at the foot of the cross, watching Jesus suffer. Mary's hope remained firm as She trusted that Jesus' sacrifice would lead to the salvation of all and that suffering is not the end, but will lead us to joy.

The ancient Christian symbol for hope is an anchor. When we have divine hope in our hearts, we are truly anchored to Heaven, even when we struggle through the storms of life on Earth. Hope is that amazing Christian virtue that keeps Heaven before us as we go through the trials of life.

Our Lady of Fatima

Conversion; Fatima; Francisco; Jacinta; Lucia; Mary; Miracle; October; Rosary; Sun;

This puzzle is a word search puzzle that has a hidden message in it. Find all the words in the list. Once you find all the words, copy the unused letters into the blanks, starting in the top left corner, to reveal the hidden message.

Y M Y I M L M A C U L C A T E
H R E A R U T W I L L O T R I
U M A P H C L B Q A M N S K I
T F P S P I N B F M I V C R D
M Y I Q O A U W X W R E A D B
G B T Y L R U F Y Q A R L J J
H N W G F Q Z B D P C S Y L M
D R J F O P K Y J E L I X P Y
D J R A A M I T A F E O N P O
F R A N C I S C O N Z N D E Y
W M B Y H I S Z I U Y H S F Q
Q K C L C G N T G S R T Q Q G
R I A A K J K T J K A Y O W G
R E B O T C O C A L M K P O Y
X Y L D Y W Q C Y L A E R O A

Answer: My Immaculate Heart will Triumph

Quiz Time *with Lawrence*

1. What date marks the exact midway point of the year?
2. In what city was the newly elected Pope Pius XIV born?
3. Which is the USA's southernmost state?
4. From what plant is linseed oil extracted?
5. On what long running children's animation was there a cow named Ermintrude?
6. Which League of Ireland football team plays their home matches at Dalymount Park?
7. What was the screen name of Boycey's wife in the TV show 'Only Fools and Horses'?
8. From what French region do Claret wines originate?
9. What type of creature is the 'Portuguese Man of War'?
10. For what did Zhao Xintong make the headlines at the start of May this year?
11. What number is represented by Roman Numerals CXIX?
12. Of what fictional 1970s TV family did Jean Boht play the matriarchal head?
13. In a restaurant kitchen, who is second in command to the Head Chef?
14. Name the guitarist with Australian rockers AC/DC who celebrated 50 years with the band in 2023?
15. In maths, what is the probability of correctly guessing the outcome of a coin toss, six times in a row?
16. What does the French term 'Carte Blanche' mean literally?
17. How many 'stumps' are used in a regular game of cricket?
18. In what year did Susan Boyle win 'Britain's Got Talent'?
19. Which country shares a land border with France, Austria, Switzerland and Slovenia?
20. Who served as President of France for the 14 years between 1981 and 1995?
21. Which is the largest of New York City's five Boroughs by area size?
22. Which is the only one of the 'Seven Wonders of the World' still standing in its original form?
23. In rugby, what shirt number is traditionally worn by the 'fly half' who is usually also the place kicker?
24. During an unprecedented 2022, no fewer than three different Prime Ministers held office in the UK. Can you name them?
25. What singer/songwriter was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2016?

Quiz Answers: *1, July 2; 2, Chicago; 3, Hawaii; 4, Flax; 5, The Magic Roundabout; 6, Bohemians; 7, Marlene; 8, Bordeaux; 9, Jellyfish; 10, He became World Snooker champion; 11, 119; 12, The Boswells; 13, Sous Chef; 14, Angus Young; 15, 1 in 64; 16, Blank document; 17, Six; 18, 2009; 19, Italy; 20, François Mitterrand; 21, Queens; 22, Great Pyramid of Giza; 23, Number 10; 24, Boris Johnston, Liz Truss, Rishi Sunak; 25, Bob Dylan.*

Aghyaran, Ardmore, Ardstraw West &Castlederg, Ballinascreen, Ballymagroarty, Banagher, Bellaghy, Buncrana, Carndonagh, Claudy,

Let Your Light Shine!

Sacred Heart Church, Leckpatrick

St Patrick's Church, Murlog

St Mary's Church, Cloughcor

St Mary's Church, Buncrana

Christ is Risen and Alleluia is Our Song!

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

Moville, Newtownstewart, Omagh, Plumbridge, Sion Mills, Steelestown, Strabane, Swatragh, Templemore - Long Tower and St Eugene's, Three Patrons, Waterside

Clonmany, Coleraine,Creggan, Culdaff, Culmore, Desertmartin, Donnyloop, Drumahoe, Dunamanagh, Dungiven, Faham, Faughanvale, Garvagh, Gortin, Greencastle,