

# The NET

Sharing fruits of faith in Derry Diocese

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See inside...



Youth passion performance – St Eugene’s



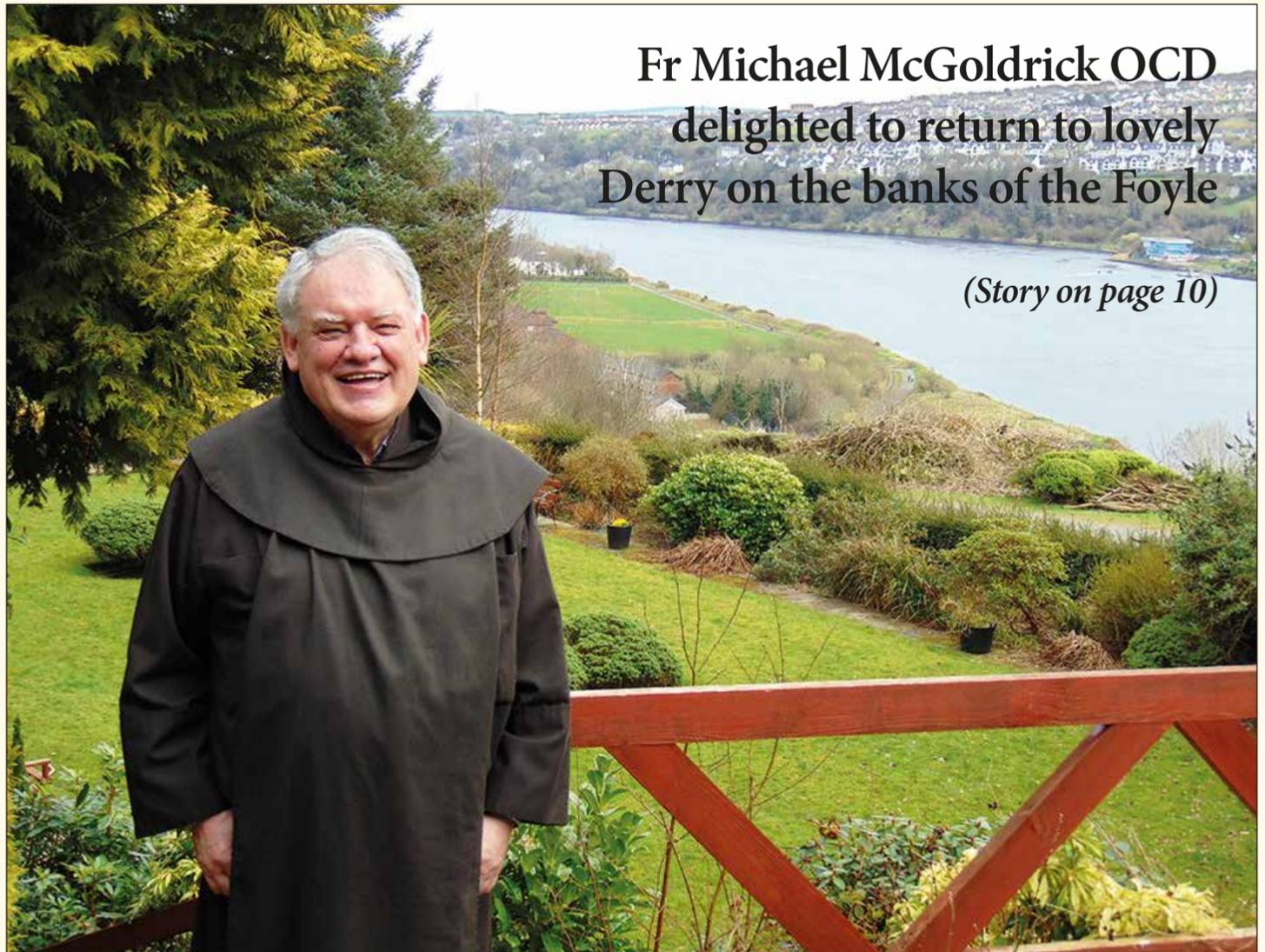
RTE Lough Derg Mass – Cappagh Youth



Church Prayer – St Eugene’s



Mother’s Day Rosary – Long Tower



Fr Michael McGoldrick OCD  
delighted to return to lovely  
Derry on the banks of the Foyle

(Story on page 10)



‘Blessed is She’ – Termonbacca



Remembrance Vigil – St Eugene’s



Palm Sunday – Omagh

## People in focus



.Roisin McCullough – Greenlough



Máire McAteer – Aghyaran



Niamh Fox – Donegal



The late Sean Friel – Waterside



Fr Michael Keaveny – Moville/Faughanvale

Also featuring: Derry Youth April webinars, Great interest in Sr Clare retreat, Young writers feature, Bishop Donal shares thoughts on Synodal Church, Eucharistic Adoration & Divine Mercy feature with comments from around the Diocese, Irish Page, Dunree feature, Children’s Catechism Club, Quiz....and much more...

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Fr Shay Cullen SSC, an Irish missionary and founder of the Philippine human rights social development organization, Preda, reflects on the Pope's prayer intention for the month of April...

# Pope Francis supports human rights' defenders

THE strong words of Pope Francis spoken in solidarity and support for all the human rights defenders, environmental activists, social workers and truth journalists on the front line, and fighters for justice and equality everywhere, has encouraged and inspired millions of people to reach out to help. Prayer is a public way for a Pope to make a social and political statement of great importance.

"We pray for those who risk their lives while fighting for fundamental rights under dictatorships, authoritarian regimes and even in democracies in crisis", he said.

Pope Francis is very aware of the struggle and needs of these dedicated human rights activists fighting for justice and peace and the human dignity. Those standing for racial equality in the 'Black Lives Matter' campaign and those fighting for women and children's rights in the 'Me Too Movement'.

“Pope Francis is very aware of the struggle and needs of these dedicated human rights activists fighting for justice and peace and the human dignity. Those standing for racial equality in the 'Black Lives Matter' campaign and those fighting for women and children's rights in the 'Me Too Movement'.”

He addressed all people. Christians, non-Christians, people of all religious beliefs or those with none at all, but who have dedicated their lives serving humanity and giving unselfish service without seeking reward. They need and deserve our support when we can't help the victims of abuse directly.

They do the vital work for us defending victims of rights violations and courageously give their lives doing it. In the Philippines, 318 human rights workers and activists were killed between July 2016 and 30 June 2020. As many as 110 lawyers were killed from 1972 to the present. Sixty-one of

those killings have taken place since 2016. Also, 86 journalists and reporters have been killed since 1992.

They are accepting serious risks defending victims of abuse and violations of their human dignity and rights. They suffer hardship and abuse, rejection, imprisonment and death because of their work for human rights in supporting the downtrodden and abused victims. They are survivors themselves. They have that most fundamental love of others to uphold the dignity and rights of every human being. Without those rights we are just as the animals are.

#### Sacrifice

We can see this spirit of sacrifice around the world. In Syria, the volunteers and medical workers in hospitals are being bombed by the cruel dictator, Marshal Bashar al-Assad. They risk their lives every day defending and saving the wounded and sick in war torn Syria.

Recently Assad's troops fired mortars on an underground hospital and killed a child and seven people. Assad, with Russian help, has destroyed Syria. He has arrested, murdered and tortured to death thousands of Syrians and has driven 350,000 people into exile, among them courageous human rights workers. The number of dead vary between 388,650 and about 594,000 as of March 2021. On April 23, 2016, the United Nations and Arab League Envoy to Syria put out an estimate of 400,000 that had died in the war. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as many as 5.6 million Syrians have fled the eight years of war and are living in tents in neighbouring countries. There are 6.6 million internally displaced and another 2.98 million besieged and sheltering in remote areas. Many others have escaped to try and reach Europe in search of a new life. Pope Francis has prayed and appealed for European countries to open their borders to welcome the war refugees. Germany and some nations did. Canada has received thousands of refugees and many from Syria in recent years.

However, the anti-asylum people and Neo-Nazis of Europe rose up and opposed any welcome and grew right-

wing political parties to stop it, and largely succeeded. Some Catholic countries slammed shut their doors with dark, compassionless hearts and built fences to keep out the refugees; thousands of them homeless children. If Jesus of Nazareth and His parents had been arrested at the Egyptian border and deported to the cruel baby-killer, King Herod for a death penalty, there would have been no Christianity.

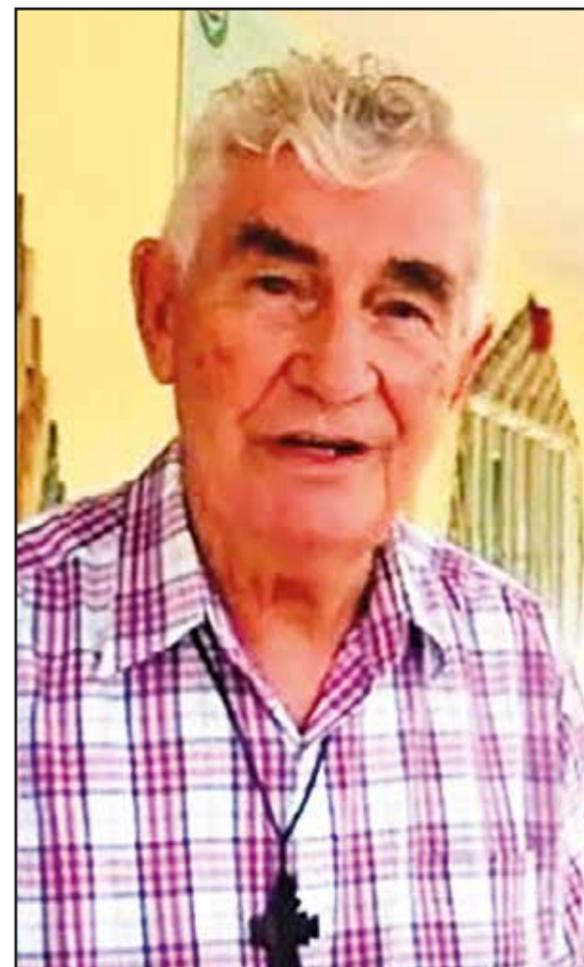
#### Protection

Under international law, a person fleeing persecution seeking asylum has a right to reach the country of destination and choice by any means available, to ask for protection, shelter and asylum. Many hard hearted see them as parasites, pests and vermin to be rejected. The newly proposed UK asylum law is suggesting doing just that, by declaring asylum seekers who reach the UK as "Illegals".

“Under international law, a person fleeing persecution seeking asylum has a right to reach the country of destination and choice by any means available, to ask for protection, shelter and asylum. Many hard hearted see them as parasites, pests and vermin to be rejected.”

There can be no "illegal" entry to a country by an asylum seeker. Many Germans escaping East Germany seeking asylum in the West during the Cold War would have had to be declared illegal entry and returned to the communist East, if such crossing the border seeking asylum was said to be illegal. Such escapes were cheered and encouraged. The proposed law by the UK wants to make illegal what under international law is right and legal and just. To deport an asylum seeker without due process and evaluation would be a violation of that refugee's human rights, according to some UK human rights lawyers.

More dictators and populist



Fr Shay Cullen SSC

autocratic leaders have emerged in recent decades. Pope Francis' prayer is badly needed in Myanmar, as the people have shown courage and bravery in facing down the military that staged a coup six weeks ago. The defiance and resilience of the people and youth is inspiring, and as many as 260 have been killed by the military, with thousands more arrested and detained.

The cries and voices of the oppressed and imprisoned Uyghurs are being heard and supported by the human rights campaigners. They will be encouraged by the prayer and support of Pope Francis, a world-renowned voice for the voiceless and oppressed people. Many are calling for an end to what they call genocide. Millions of Uyghurs are allegedly imprisoned in re-education camps by the communist regime and women forcibly sterilized, raped and killed, according to escaped witnesses interviewed on world media.

In every country where tyrants and dictators arbitrarily arrest and imprison their own people, and kill them with impunity, the voice of protest denouncing the evil deeds can be heard. We are all challenged to join the Prayer of Pope

Francis, and thousands of human rights defenders, to campaign on social media and sign petitions in their support. If ever the tyrant's goons come for us, may we have human rights defenders at our side.

(A member of the Missionary Society of St Columban, Fr Shay founded the charitable People's Recovery Empowerment Development Assistance (PREDA) Foundation in Olongapo City, in the Philippines in 1974. A human rights social development organisation, its mission is to win freedom and new life for children in jails, in brothels, in hunger, on the street, abandoned youth, and those mired in poverty, as well as helping battered women, indigenous people and protecting the environment, and alleviating poverty by micro-credit and fair trade. [www.preda.org](http://www.preda.org))

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

**The NET**

Sharing the fruits of the faith in the Derry Diocese

**Contacting us:**

If you have a story that you would like to share or an event you would like covered by The Net, just drop an email to

**editorthenet15@gmail.com**  
or ring/text 07809292852

# Cappagh youths' musical talents broadcast live on RTE Lough Derg Mass

by Davog McCaffrey

FOR many years my family and I had travelled to Lough Derg's Family Retreats and later completed the traditional Three Day Pilgrimage. When I came of age and the opportunity arose to work on the island, I jumped at the opportunity!

From Summer 2018, I worked in the First Aid Department providing basic medical needs to Pilgrims; everything from some hot Glucose if they were particularly weak during the Night Vigil or cleaning and bandaging wounds they had sustained as they walked barefoot on the Penitential Beds.

I also became involved in the Basilica Team, particularly with the Music Ministry and have been Cantor during the Three Day Pilgrimage and One Day Retreats. To me, this is a really privileged role as you get to journey with pilgrims for the duration of their pilgrimage and you often have the opportunity to connect with them and hear their life stories. Working on Lough Derg is far more than simply a job – it is a prayerful and, indeed, often deeply touching experience.

As many readers will be aware, during the Covid-19 pandemic, like so many other organisations,

Lough Derg has embraced the virtual world and, once again, I was delighted to be involved with the online One Day Retreats and the 'Doing Lough Derg Wherever You Are' Three Day Pilgrimage.

I was also blessed enough to be part of a small group of young people that had the opportunity to be among the very few who got to travel to the island during Summer 2020 for a Youth Retreat, which was a truly wonderful experience drawing together young Catholics from throughout Ireland. In a year of so much sorrow and disappointment, this was certainly one of the highlights for me!

I maintain regular communication with Monsignor La Flynn, the Prior, and Mary McDaid, Pastoral Team Leader from Lough Derg, throughout the year and was delighted to receive a message from Mary shortly before Christmas 2020, inviting me to join with Patrick McCrystal, from the same parish as me, Cappagh, in Co Tyrone, and Catherine McLoughlin, from Enniskillen, in the Clogher Diocese, in providing the Music Ministry for a very special Live Mass from the Lough Derg team to be broadcast in March.

In the midst of all the chaos of the world, we were able to connect virtually and arrange a few



## April webinars with Derry Youth by Niamh McLaughlin

DERRY Youth will be hosting a series of webinars during the month of April. We will be discussing topical issues for young people in our Church today, and each week we will be joined by guest speakers.

The first webinar will discuss vocation and will take place on April 14. The second will discuss the concept of compassion and will take place on April 21.

The third webinar will discuss the following quote from Pope Francis' Exhortation, 'Christus Vivit': "You are the now of God." This webinar will take place on April 28.

The webinars will be broadcast at 7 pm each week onto our Facebook page @derryyouth.

We want to hear from you, the young people, so if anyone has any questions that they would like addressed during these webinars, please send them prior to the talk into the Derry Youth Instagram page, or by emailing Lizzie at lizzie.rea@derrydiocese.org.

The online programme continues and will commence after the Easter holidays on Monday, April 12.

If anyone has any questions or queries, do not hesitate to get in contact either by messaging @derryyouth on our social media platforms, or by emailing Lizzie at the address above. Thank you all for your participation and support.



## Moving journey through The Passion by Derry youth



YOUNG parishioners in the Cathedral Parish gave a moving presentation of the Passion of Christ on Palm Sunday, welcomed by Bishop Donal.

Due to Covid restrictions, St Eugene's was unable to have the usual performance of The Passion. However, under the direction of Mary Murphy, five very talented young people gave a beautiful alternative presentation through Scripture, reflection and song.

'A Man of Sorrows and Acquainted with Grief' was

narrated by Ava and Oran, while Rachel and Niall sang, accompanied by Luke on the organ, under the direction of Maghnus Monaghan.

Commending all involved, Fr Paul Farren, Adm for St Eugene's, said: "This journey through The Passion was like a liturgy, as it was a prayer from beginning to end.

"Last year we couldn't have a presentation of The Passion, so this tonight is a great symbol of hope."

Reflecting on a faith journey that has led to helping bring young people to the heart of the Church through the Eucharist...

## Aghyaran native Máire McAteer shares her love for God and serving Him through Youth 2000

*“We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.” (Romans 8:28)*



Máire with her parents, Felix and Pauline, and brother, Ruairi, on the occasion of her profession in Belfast in 2016

WE often hear that God can turn every situation into a good, we just have to have faith, and this has very much been the experience of Máire McAteer, from the Co Tyrone parish of Aghyaran, who has gone through a few twists and turns in her faith journey before finding herself involved full-time in a mission that has always had a special place in her heart...youth ministry.

Blessed with having experienced life as a Sister with the Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal in New York and with the Adoration Sisters in Belfast, Máire is now development/fundraising officer and national prayer group coordinator for Youth 2000, an international Catholic movement for young people, aged 16-35, which has been active in Ireland since 1993, and she is hoping to help develop it in the Derry Diocese as a way of enabling young people here to lead young people to the heart of the Church.

Recalling that she had first got involved with Youth 2000 as a 19-year-old, Máire remarked: “This youth ministry is going almost 30 years now in Ireland and it is incredible to see the fruits

of it.”

It was through the parish priest of Aghyaran at the time, the late Fr Brendan McGinn, that she was introduced to the youth movement, which was founded by a young Englishman following an inspirational message from Pope John Paul II during World Youth Day in Santiago de Compostela, Spain, in 1989, with the aim of helping young people discover their calling to live the Christian life through rediscovering the Mass, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the Scriptures, the Sacrament of Reconciliation and devotion to Mary, the Mother of God, and the Church’s teaching.

Thankful for the great nurturing she got in her faith growing up from her parents, Pauline and Felix, Máire said: “Our family were very much part of parish life. Mum and dad would have helped out in the parish and encouraged my younger brother, Ruairi and I to get involved too. I remember responding to an announcement by Fr McGinn for volunteers to pray the Rosary. I think I was the only young person who volunteered and I led the Rosary before Mass during the month of

May.

“I loved my faith. I remember hearing about World Youth Day in Paris in 1997 and would love to have gone, but I was too young. Then, in the year 2000, Fr McGinn, who would have seen that I loved God and being part of the parish, came to our door and asked me if I would like to go to World Youth Day in Rome. I said that I would love to, so the parish paid for me to represent it amongst the large group of young people attending WYD from the Derry Diocese.”

It was during one of the monthly preparation meetings in Derry for this that Máire first heard of Youth 2000: “One of the leaders was Clement Kennedy, who was also involved with Youth 2000, and he announced about an up and coming Youth 2000 retreat in Sligo. I tried to get my friends to go but no one wanted to. I was still dying to go, so my parents, bless them, said that they would go for a family break and drop me off at the retreat. So, off I went with my mum, dad, Ruairi and granny.

“The retreat was in St Angela’s College, Sligo, and I found it really exciting and breath-taking. It changed everything for me because I had an experience of a real Confession for the first time. While Confession is always real and God is always there, and I had grown up going to Confession, for me it was the first time I experienced God’s touch and how real He is in Confession.

“During that Confession at the Youth 2000 retreat, I realised that I was able to forgive someone in my life who had hurt me very much. It was a wound from my childhood and it was healed in the confessional. It wasn’t a sin that I had committed, but it was a letting go. I let go of the hate I felt for the person...for what they had done. When I thought of the person’s name, I couldn’t hate them anymore, but instead

was filled with a love for them. I didn’t become best friends with that person, but the hate didn’t consume me anymore. I was able to let go of it.

“Afterwards, during the healing service, the priest was walking around with the Blessed Sacrament and you could reach out and touch the humeral veil. When I touched it, I just knew that God was real...that conviction of how deeply loved I was by God came to me and I have never forgotten.”

Discovering that there was a Youth 2000 prayer group in Omagh, Máire joined it and remains deeply grateful today to the leaders, Clement Kennedy, Siobhan Sweeney, John McSorley and Emmett Murray, who did the music ministry, for their teaching of the Catholic faith and their support.

She recalled: “We met every Thursday evening for Eucharistic Adoration. I couldn’t get enough of being with Jesus. We had a great social time as well and I made so many really good friends.

### Grow

“After the experience of the retreat you need to keep the relationship alive, and so the prayer group is essential to keep the relationship with Jesus going and to grow in your faith, with other young people to support you who are genuine friends.”

Máire had been in her final A level year at Loreto, in Omagh, when she attended her first Youth 2000 retreat, and she was determined to continue the faith experience when she set off to the University of Ulster campus, in Coleraine, to do Irish Studies.

“One of the first things I did was to go straight to the chaplaincy”, she said, “as I wanted to know what they were doing on campus for the faith. With the permission of the campus chaplain, I was able

to start a Youth 2000 prayer group, which kept going during my four years there and continued for a while after I left, but then stopped”.

Reflecting on how Youth 2000 had helped her on her faith journey, Máire said: “In my early childhood I loved God very much and Youth 2000 put flesh on the bones of my faith. Faith went from my heart to my head. It formed me in actual understanding of why I believed in what I did, taught me what the role of the Pope is, etc, and helped me to understand the teaching of the Church in such a contemporary, simple way”.

She added: “Looking back with regards to vocation and call, when I was discerning what God wanted me to do in life, even in childhood I wanted to be a Sister. When I was about four or five years old, I remember my teacher asking me what I wanted to be when I grew up and I said, ‘A nun!’

“During my Youth 2000 time before the Blessed Sacrament and reading Scripture that desire was reignited, so I entered a period of discerning what it was that God wanted me to do. I looked at different religious orders and went to visit The Spiritual Family of the Work of Christ (FSO) in Letterkenny. They are an Austrian Order and were based in Bishop Philip Boyce’s house at that time. They helped me to understand what it was like to be a Sister and what it would entail.

“I became aware of the Order when I met Sr Christiane Fritsch through Youth 2000. Sr Christiane was a group leader during one of the many Youth 2000 retreats I used to go on and she helped me a lot with my discernment about what it was that God wanted for me.”

When Youth 2000 launched a mission team, Máire felt a draw towards that: “I had such a desire to evangelise and tell people about the Eucharist; that was my

passion. I saw the same passion for evangelisation in the Franciscan Friars and Sisters of the Renewal when they were on the Youth 2000 retreat, and I thought that maybe I was to join them. They weren’t based in Ireland at the time, but had come over to do a mission.

“Sr Christiane encouraged me to check out the CFR Sisters, who were based in New York then but now have a house in Drogheda. I went to visit them in New York in the summer of 2004. I remember giving the Lord an ultimatum. I said to Him, ‘I have been thinking about this for so long now, if I like them I will enter but if I don’t, I will join the Youth 2000 Mission Team’.

Falling in love with the life of the Sisters of the Renewal, she entered in 2005: “I was with them for eight years and loved every minute of it. I had an incredible journey with the Lord and received an excellent formation.

“It was how they evangelised about the Eucharist in particular that really attracted me. When I was there, I realised that another part of their mission was with the poor. I worked in a soup kitchen and clothing pantry in their outreach to the homeless in New York City.

“I also took a lot of classes in Theology and the Catechism, etc. It was very similar training to that of a seminarian. A lot of my work in the States was with young people. We were involved with Youth 2000 there and I was struck by how I had gone from being a retreat participant to giving talks at the retreats as a Sister”.

Máire went on to say that while she had spent eight years with the CFR Sisters, she didn’t take final vows with them.

“If you are in God’s Grace, as you are when in the Sacramental life”, she remarked: “then you are always where you are supposed to be. I was in Temporary Vows,



Máire with some of her cousins as a novice with the Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal in 2006.



Máire as a Franciscan Sister of the Renewal in 2011, with her friends, Martina Wilson and Lorraine Simpson.



Máire in her current role, with some members of Youth 2000 in Maynooth.



known as Simple Vows, and while journeying along that road, in prayer and discerning with my spiritual director and the community, it became more obvious that there was a deeper call within me to a more contemplative life.

**Understand**

“This was very difficult, as I was on a path and loved it but then had to change that path and do what God desired me to. It was like what Jesus said to Peter, ‘You do not realise now what I am doing, but later you will understand.’ (John 13:7) These words came to my mind and heart in prayer over time and, with guidance, I began to seek a more contemplative life.

“It was painful leaving the Franciscan Sisters and, because I wasn’t fully professed, I had to start the journey again when I entered the Adoration Sisters in Belfast, on the Falls Road, in 2013. With my experience of religious life, I had no problem settling in. I was very happy and made my vows on August 6, 2016.

“I was with them for six wonderful years, making altar bread, praying and interceding for the needs of the world, and especially for young people and the Church. Unfortunately, due to circumstances outside of anyone’s control, I had to leave the Adoration Sisters without making my final vows. By that time, I had had 14 years of religious life in total”.

Máire was one of four Adoration Sisters in the Belfast Convent who had to leave without making their final vows, two of whom were the high profile former political journalist, Martina Purdy, and former barrister, Elaine Kelly.

Commenting on this, she reflected on Jesus’ call to “Come, follow me” (Matthew 4:19), saying: “The word ‘vocation’ literally means ‘a call’. Someone is calling. Who is calling? The voice that John the Baptist spoke of was obviously God. I have to listen to where the voice is coming from, where it is telling me to go and how I get there. You listen for the still, small voice.

“A vocation is not mine; it is His because Jesus says ‘Come, follow me’. So, I had to follow Him in another direction. Not only have

I loved serving His people and being His Bride, now I get to do the ultimatum that I had given Him previously in working full-time with Youth 2000, which has grown since and continues to expand, drawing more and more people to His Eucharistic Heart. I can draw from the richness of sitting at His feet in the contemplative world, in helping now to bring young people to Him”.

“It is amazing the way the job came up with Youth 2000,” remarked Máire, “As a Sister of Adoration, I was going to be giving the women’s talks at the Youth 2000 summer festival at Clongowes in 2019, but that was the year the Adoration Sisters in Belfast stopped the formation of novices. I see it now as Divine Providence that I was going to be speaking at the event. Youth 2000 is a family that is always there for you. When they heard what was happening, they gave me the offer of the job as someone who knew about the mission of Youth 2000.

“First, I went to a Benedictine Monastery for a month in Holland, where I had great priests helping and directing me, and I just knew in my gut that I was to work with Youth 2000 until I see what God has in store for me next. It is very fulfilling to bring young people to the heart of the church through the Eucharist”.

In her role as development/fundraising officer and national prayer group co-ordinator for almost two years now, Máire said: “My mission is to try to create new prayer groups and assist existing groups. Currently, a parish in Tuam, Co Galway, wants to start Youth 2000 and hopefully there will be one starting in Derry very soon too, with the grace of God.

“I want Youth 2000 to be made known - that is my mission at this time. I have always loved young people and the Eucharist, and now I have this great opportunity. God



is everything for me. God works all things for the good for those who love Him. It is an absolute privilege to serve Him now through Youth 2000.”

She continued: “It is a young person’s movement and so it will always fluctuate. Young people grow up, get jobs, get married etc, and we have to be able to adapt. Youth 2000 is a foundation for them. It has led to very good Catholic marriages and helped people find different apostolates to be involved in, within the church and other charitable works.

“So, while young people grow up and move on, they bring their experience with them. What is beautiful about Youth 2000 is that it always has the same structure. It is always contemporary, with young people of the now involved.

“Youth 2000 is definitely expanding and, while there are two full-time staff now, it is still very much run by volunteers who love young people and have a passion for youth ministry, and want to bring young people to know the love of God in their heart”.

Sharing her favourite Scripture quote, “And so we know and rely on the love God has for us” (1 John 4:16), Máire said: “I have come to know and believe, and I want young people to come to know and believe in the love God has for them, and the only way I can do that is by sharing my experience.

“Youth 2000 is very much of the apostles, when they say ‘Come and see’. We are just instruments in bringing people before the Blessed Sacrament. We say to young people, ‘Come and see’ this beautiful, vibrant community... that Jesus is there for you and in the Eucharist He is food for the journey”.

*Anyone who would like to financially support the mission of Youth 2000 can contact Máire via email - development@youth2000.ie.*



Photographed at a Youth 2000 retreat in Belfast in 2001.

**Great interest in Sr Clare anniversary retreat**



THE ‘Friends of Sr Clare’ group, set up in response to the growing devotion to the Derry-born Home of the Mother Servant Sister following her sudden death as a result of an earthquake in Ecuador, has been amazed at the great interest in the week of prayer organised to mark the fifth anniversary of her death.

Seating in Sr Clare’s home parish Long Tower Church is limited to 200 due to Covid-19 regulations, so tickets were allocated for each night of the retreat to try and accommodate as many of those looking to attend as possible throughout the week, and these were all booked within a short time of the phone lines opening.

April 16 is the anniversary of Sr Clare’s death, which will be marked privately by her family, and the retreat will run from April 19-25, focusing on her life, from her childhood in Derry, friendships, and love for acting, to her vocation and life as a Servant Sister, through short talks by family and friends each evening of the retreat.

Fr Stephen Quinn OCD, who has walked closely with Sr Clare’s family and friends over the past five years, offering a monthly Mass in the Carmelite Priory and Retreat Centre for the opening of her cause for canonisation to be looked upon favourably by the Church, will celebrate Mass in Termonbacca with the Crockett family at 7 pm on Sunday, April

18, the eve of the opening of the week-long retreat. This will be streamed via the Termonbacca YouTube page.

During the week, the retreat will get underway each evening at 7.30 pm in St Columba’s Church, Long Tower, and will be streamed live at <http://longtowerchurch.org/webcam/> and on the Long Tower Facebook page.

Fr Aidan Mullan, Adm Long Tower, will celebrate the Monday evening Mass, when the speaker will be Sr Clare’s sister, Shauna Gill. Fr Joe Gormley, PP Creggan, will be the Tuesday evening celebrant, and the speaker will be Sr Clare’s close friend, Sharon Doran. The Wednesday evening celebrant will be Fr Patrick Lagan, St Eugene’s, and the speaker will be Gretta McTaig, a teacher at St Cecilia’s College, which Sr Clare had attended.

The Thursday evening ceremony will include a healing service celebrated by Fr Michael McGoldrick OCD, and Fr Gerard Mongan will celebrate the Friday evening Mass, when the talk will be given by either one of the Home of the Mother Servant Sisters or Servant Brother, Fr Colum Power.

Over the weekend, Mass will be celebrated in the Long Tower chapel at 3 pm on Saturday, April 24, by Fr Colum, and at 6 pm on Sunday, April 25, by Bishop Donal McKeown, bringing the week of prayer to a close.

Looking back on all that has

happened since the news broke about her sister’s death, aged only 33 years, Shauna Gill remarked: “Those five years have just flown. We lost mammy in the middle of it, which was very hard. We didn’t really get time to think much about mammy’s death as it was all go about Clare.

“It has been fairly non-stop with people contacting us to say that they have had favours granted after asking Clare to intercede, especially about infertility and cancer. People are naming their babies after her! We have heard stories from all over the world and every time we go up to her grave, it is filled with flowers that people have left. Sometimes there are more flowers on the grave than in any florist’s shop!”

As well as being kept busy responding to requests from near and far for the Sr Clare prayer cards and candles, and the book telling the story of her life, ‘Alone with Christ Alone’, Shauna said that there are also many requests from people to have the statue of Our Lady, which had been donated to the Sr Clare Novena Group that had met regularly each Monday night for prayer at the Iona Centre, before the Covid-19 lockdowns and restrictions.

“People miss not being able to go to the prayer group,” said Shauna, “and want to have Our Lady’s Statue in their homes for a few days, especially if there’s something they want to pray about. So, since around June last year, the statue has been going to people’s houses, and many have said that they find a lovely peace in the house when it is there”.

Commenting on the forthcoming retreat, Shauna’s hope is that it will be “a lovely week” when her sister’s life will be remembered and celebrated, and that it will create a great buzz to help lift people’s spirits.

**Colourful celebration of Palm Sunday in Omagh**



Grażyna with her granddaughter, Julia, who live in Omagh, with the beautiful palm they created to celebrate Palm Sunday according to Polish tradition.



THE Polish community in the Diocese added a wonderful and welcome touch of colour to the celebration of Palm Sunday.

Fr Ignacy Saniuta, Omagh curate and chaplain to the Polish community, explained that Palm Sunday is celebrated in many different ways in Poland.

“It depends which part of the country you are from,” added Fr Ignacy, saying: “The most common folk custom is a competition for the tallest, plaited palm.

“The palms can be made of willow canes and decorated with bulrush juniper lingonberry branches. The tops are crowned with a crest of colourful, crepe paper flowers, ribbons and strips”.

He added that, according to tradition, it is believed that the height of the palm reflects the size and wealth of its owner’s estate.

Fr Ignacy was delighted to see that some members of the Polish community living in Omagh were continuing with the tradition of their homeland.

THIS month, Hollie, Peter, Oisin, Gemma, Zara and John, 'The Net' youth contributors from the Co Tyrone, Inishowen, Co Derry and Derry City Deaneries, have reflected on their recent Zoom interview with Sr Nathalie Becquart, of the French Congregation of Xavieres, who has been appointed by Pope Francis as the first female Under-Secretary to the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops in Rome.

Hollie also reports on Pope Francis' historic visit to Iraq and the annual St Patrick's College Maynooth Trócaire lecture given by Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, of the Philippines, who is the Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples, which she attended virtually.

Oisin shares his thoughts on reading Pope Francis' World Water Day message, while Gemma talks about her beautiful painting of The Holy Family that she created to mark this special Year of the Family, and Peter writes about how the youth of his parish, Iskaheen & Upper Merville, continue to lead parish prayers and interview inspiring people, including the Bishop of Argyll and the Isles, Scotland, Bishop Brian McGee.



Hollie Frystal,  
Co Tyrone Deanery.



Oisin Mulhern,  
Co Derry Deanery.



Peter Grant,  
Inishowen Deanery.



Gemma Gallagher, Derry  
City Deanery



John Augustine Joseph,  
Derry City Deanery.



Zara Schlindwein,  
Derry City Deanery.



Zoom interview panel with Sr Nathalie

## Bishop Donal pays tribute to The Net's young writers...

YOUNG people in the Diocese have risen to the challenge of growing in faith together during this pandemic. The six young writers for 'The Net' have shown great dedication and courage in their reflections on various aspects of our faith journey.

It was thus a special gift that our six were, I believe, the first people in Ireland to have had a chance to interview Sr Nathalie Becquart, one of the two undersecretaries to

the Synod of Bishops.

The six budding journalists had framed interesting questions and the 45-minute interview gave a great insight into the faith journey of the first woman to have such a high voting position in the Synod of Bishops.

And she has promised to meet with our Derry Six the first time that they are in Rome! Who knows what God has in store for each of them!

## Some thoughts on synodality from Bishop Donal...



Sr Nathalie Becquart, Under-Secretary to the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops

THERE is an old theological phrase *ecclesia semper reformanda* (the Church always in need of being reformed).

The Church has constantly changed to respond to the needs of the mission. The Church in the early centuries was based on communities who met in homes or even in catacombs. The world of St Columba and the early Irish monasteries was different from the age of the Reformation or the Penal Laws. The activity of the Church in the vast tracts of the Amazon is not the same as the Church in Europe with huge numbers of church buildings.

There was not one unchanged model of Church from St Peter until a few decades ago. The Church has constantly recognised where sin lurked in the human heart, and the ongoing need for reform and renewal.

The question for today's Church is not whether we need to be

remade for today's world, but how God is remaking us, like the potter remakes the jar (cf Jeremiah Ch 18). Any generation that thinks it is not in need of reform has not heard the first message of Jesus, "Repent and believe the Good News."

In 'The Joy of the Gospel', Pope Francis emphasised the need for renewal, not to follow some modern social trends but to make us fit for purpose in our modern technological world.

Thus, it is not a question of us asking how we should change. For people of faith, the question is always, "How is God changing us?"

The current emphasis is on synodality, which means 'walking together'. That is how the early Church discerned God's way forward. St Stephen, the first martyr, was 'prompted by the Spirit in what he said' (Acts 6:10). We find later in the Acts of the Apostles that it was in prayer that St Paul discovered where the Holy Spirit was driving them, firstly to go to Cyprus (Acts 13:2) and then to travel to Greece (Acts 16:7).

In 1975, Pope Paul VI encouraged a new emphasis on evangelisation ('*Evangelii nuntiandi*'). In 2001, Pope John Paul II wrote about the ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue that was needed if we are to have "a joyful proclamation of a gift that is meant for all," and "avoid those wars of religion which have so often bloodied human history." (Novo Millennio Ineunte para 54-56)

Pope Francis is quite clear that synodality does not mean a parliamentary approach, where

power blocks square up to each other to win votes and promote their human agenda or the popular ideas in secular society. Synodality, whether at parish, diocesan or worldwide level – is discerning where the voice of the Holy Spirit is calling us to, not where the call to popularity might be tempting us to go.

The Synod of Bishops on young people promoted the concept of 'missionary synodality'. Unless synodality is focussed on re-energising the mercy mission of Jesus through the Church, it risks becoming a curious talking shop that is going nowhere.

In 'Christus Vivit', Pope Francis is clear that young people want to know that Jesus is alive. In the Derry Diocese, that means seeing where the Holy Spirit is leading us so that we can "proclaim the Gospel to the people of today, who are buoyed up by hope but at the same time often oppressed by fear and distress" (*Evangelii nuntiandi*, 1).

Only with hearts that walk together, open to the Holy Spirit can we let God make us fit for the mission. If we do not, we will be failing the Lord of the harvest and the people of our time.

**Planning to hold a National Synodal Assembly within the next five years, the Bishops of Ireland have announced an initial submission phase of the Synodal Pathway for the Catholic Church here.**

This follows conversations at local, regional and national level, which led to the establishment of a dedicated subgroup of the Irish Bishops' Conference, who have been greatly encouraged by Cardinal Mario Grech and Sr Nathalie Becquart, of the General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops in Rome.

Submissions of no more than 300 words, reflecting on what methods or models to adopt in the next two years of conversations are requested to be submitted by Pentecost Sunday, May 23. It is hoped that the submissions will focus on how to best to go about the initial phase of establishing the conversation, for example,

parish hall meetings, focus groups, questionnaires, deep-listening sessions, written submissions, family-focused gatherings, summary of findings of assemblies that have already taken place across dioceses and/or conferences.

People are invited to visit the Synodal Pathway webpage – [www.catholicbishops.ie/synod](http://www.catholicbishops.ie/synod) – and respond to the following question: What would be your preferred option for engagement in a conversation process about the Synod?

The responses will be considered by the task group, to be put in place by the bishops this summer, to plan and oversee the first steps along the synodal pathway

*Treasuring the memory of interviewing Sr Nathalie Becquart, the first woman appointed as Under-secretary of the Synod of Bishops by Pope Francis, Hollie is looking forward to the synodal Church...*

## Bridging the gap between generations

I first met Sr Nathalie via Zoom at the October 2020 book launch by Veritas of 'Exploring Christus Vivit', which was inspired by Pope Francis' post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation, 'Christus Vivit'.

Published in March 2019, 'Christus Vivit' is a fruit of the 2018 Synod of 'Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment', which Sr Nathalie had attended, and it is a personal favourite of mine.

On February 6, 2021, the Vatican announced Pope Francis' appointment of Sr Nathalie Becquart to the position of Under-Secretary to the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops. Significantly, in the Church's history, never was there before a woman who was called to this position, and on a wider scale, there has never before been

a woman to hold such a high position in the Church.

Additionally, Sr Nathalie's new position grants her full voting rights in the Synod, which is momentous and will have a profound impact on the future of the Church. It is a pivotal point in the Church's mission, and it gives a clear reflection of the Holy Father's intentions to increase the role and involvement of women in the Church, which is both positive and promising.

Following up on the Vatican's announcement, I was speaking about this wonderful news to the editor of 'The Net', who told me that she was going to enquire about the possibility of The Net's young writers getting an opportunity to interview Sr Nathalie. To my astonishment, that actually happened! It was

such an exciting and an amazing opportunity that I will be forever grateful for, and most definitely will never forget. I focused particularly on asking Sr Nathalie a couple of questions regarding youth in a synodal Church, 'walking together' with the older generations.

It was on March 19, the Feast of St Joseph, that The Net's young writers from the four deaneries of the Derry Diocese interviewed Sr Nathalie, accompanied by Bishop Donal McKeown, Mary O'Donnell, the editor of The Net, and Diocesan pastoral co-ordinator, Tony Brennan.

Celebrating the Feast of St Joseph, we opened our interview with a prayer and began our conversation by delving into Sr Nathalie's roots, asking her "What was life like as a teenager



Hollie with her grandmother, Gwendoline Curran, Strabane.

whenever you had to make important decisions and choices in life that could shape your future?" Interestingly, Sr Nathalie shared with us an opportunity she had as a Catholic Girl Guide to help organise a summer camp that would take place in Ireland.

At almost 15 years of age, Sr Nathalie had an obvious interest in travelling and pilgrimage,



**Welcoming Sr Nathalie's appointment as the first female Synod of Bishops' Under-Secretary, Zara is hopeful regarding...**

## The role of women within the Church

DURING our interview with Sr Nathalie Becquart, I asked about her experience as the first woman to hold the role of Under-Secretary to the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops.

Her response provided an insight into the progression of the Church. She highlighted that whilst men and women were created differently, their right to opportunities should be equal.

This idea has already been

applied to many aspects of society, but many are still awaiting evolution.

Sr Nathalie's story gave us hope that we can achieve what we are called to do, as long as we are tenacious.

However, we can only hope that our talents and work ethic determine the decision of success, and that gender will not influence our possibilities.

*continued from page 6*

which mirrors the concept of synodality that she is promoting today in her new role. The seeds of Sr Nathalie's vocation had already been clearly planted and were blossoming.

In relation to her experience of working with young people for over 30 years, Sr Nathalie was asked about her favourite aspect of working in these roles and what she enjoyed most about events like World Youth Day. In her response, she mentioned that "a key point to be with young people is teamwork...we have fostered and implemented a model of co-responsibility."

In addition to this, in reference to 'Christus Vivit', Chapter 6, 'Young People with Roots', I asked Sr Nathalie, "How can we bring the young and old together to discern the way forward? Is there anything we can introduce to our parishes with the aim of encouraging intergenerational relationships?"

Interestingly, she acknowledged that "what is difficult nowadays is that intergenerational dialogue... is mainly like intercultural dialogue." In other words, we have to learn how to understand and communicate with others who are from culturally different backgrounds, in the same way, the young and old must try to understand each other from different eras.

Sr Nathalie added: "I think, to help this intergenerational

dialogue, you need people who can be bridge-builders, who know both generations."

My hope post-interview is that we can try to use Sr Nathalie's advice on 'bridging' the gap between generations by bringing them together on a common project, for example, a history and heritage project where the young and old together reach back to their roots.

Lastly, when asked how she felt on being appointed as Under-Secretary to the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, Sr Nathalie commented that "it was a great surprise" and that she "would never have imagined" that she would be in the position that she is in today.

She spoke of how she has come to learn more about how the Holy Spirit is working in our lives, telling us: "I often tell young people that a very strong important motto is that 'God is always giving you the grace to follow the call you receive.'"

Personally, this interview was an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that I am so grateful to have been part of. Sr Nathalie is a true inspiration and I believe that she will do a brilliant job as the first ever woman Under-secretary of the Synod of Bishops. I look forward to next year's Synod on Synodality, as the theme chosen is "For a synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission", and what is to follow.

**Inspired by what Sr Nathalie had to say about walking together as a synodal Church, Oisin believes...**

## We should all strive to achieve togetherness

ALONG with the other youth writers for 'The Net', I recently got a chance to interview Sr Nathalie Becquart, who has been appointed as an Under-secretary to the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops of the Catholic Church by Pope Francis.

The entire experience was one that I thoroughly enjoyed, despite being quite nervous beforehand. It was actually quite surreal as I had never expected to receive such an honour when I started writing for 'The Net'.

In discussions prior to the interview we agreed what questions each of us would ask, and I was happy to ask about her work with youth ministry. Putting all my attention into what I would ask and discuss with Sr Nathalie, I wrote a long list of questions. Whilst doing this, a feeling of excitement began to come over me and the last of my apprehension relating to the situation disappeared.

All of this led up to the interview itself. With my questions set up next to me, I waited patiently for my turn to speak; as we had decided beforehand the order the questions would be asked in.

When the interview ended I felt a wave of relief, as did the rest of the group. Afterwards, when I had time to think about all that Sr

Nathalie had said, I grew to really appreciate the entire experience.

Sr Nathalie told us what had led her to focus on youth ministry, what had put her on her current path in life, and many other equally important topics, such as Christus Vivit, leaving me much to think about.

An area that especially stood out for me was what she said about her path from a teen to where she is now. She recalled a visit to Ireland as a Catholic girl guide, when she had climbed a mountain in the Kerry area. She likened this experience to having to choose the correct path and roads during life to end up where you want to be. This made me think about the different roads that I may have to take to reach where I want to be in life, especially at this point in my life when I am doing A-levels and choosing universities.

Sr Nathalie also talked at length about both St Ignatius and her work with other young people in Lebanon, which she said had influenced her as well on the journey to where she is now. This resulted in me thinking about the many people who have impacted my faith life, saints or not.

In regards to her focus on youth ministry, which was the first question I posed to her, Sr Nathalie

explained that not only does she simply enjoy working with children, but that she also works in youth ministry to help younger people discern how the Holy Spirit is working through them in their life as well. This led me to think about how God and the Holy Spirit affect me daily through what I do and say.

The Synod and its relation to young people were also discussed. Sr Nathalie described this as a sandbox for discussion between bishops and young people around a variety of issues. This made me think about my relationship with my local clergy and how discussion could be facilitated between different groups.

'Christus Vivit', Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation to Young People, written after the synod on youth, was one of the major talking points during the interview and Sr Nathalie used the time to discuss it in detail. Two years after its release, Sr Nathalie was asked to discuss it in the second chapter of a book called 'Exploring Christus Vivit'. She wrote about 'Jesus, Ever Young' and in our interview she was asked how she would keep the church youthful in the sense that it does not become inaccessible.

She also talked about how the main message of the synod and



'Christus Vivit' is to "serve better the world", which she suggests can be done by promoting togetherness in the world. Sr Nathalie related this back to the church at large, suggesting that society and the church should work as one rather than separate entities.

The final topic that Sr Nathalie discussed with us was that of her appointment as an Under-secretary to the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, making her the first woman in the position. She talked about how well she was welcomed and how men and women should endeavour to fix issues together rather than apart.

She also mentioned noticing many people coming together in sisterhoods, and felt sure that religious life would continue to exist for a very long time. This led me to look at interactions between both genders and how we can endeavour to be more helpful than detrimental to each other.

In my opinion, Sr Nathalie's main theme throughout the entire interview was togetherness, which, as a final thought, is what I believe we should all strive to achieve.

**Interested in seeing where synodality will lead the Church, John highlights Sr Nathalie's view that...**

## Young people want to be protagonists in the Church

LAST month, I was quite honoured and humbled by the opportunity to interview, along with the other youth writers for 'The Net', Sr Nathalie Becquart, who is quite high up in the administration of the Church in her new role as Under-Secretary to the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops.

I asked Sr Nathalie to explain what the 2018 Synod of Bishops on young people was about, and how it related to young people in the church today. She briefly explained her role as an auditor for the 2018 synod and how she worked with young people by listening to their opinions.

She said that "young people spoke frankly about their vision of the church and gave their critiques about it". She also spoke about the need for the church to "accompany young people towards Christ".

I went on to ask Sr Nathalie what she expected future synods to accomplish and what her thoughts were on synodality. She began with the response that the synod on young people was a

"true experience of synodality" and that the 2018 synod had convinced her of the idea that "young people were an engine of synodality".

By this she meant that young people don't want to just be in a hierarchical vertical church that tells them what to do or what not to do. She says that young people want to be "protagonists" and to be involved, and that the only way to do this is to be a synodal church.

Sr Nathalie went on to elaborate that the way to be the church today is by being a synodal church. She referred to this as "a call of God".

Emphasising that the next Synod, which will be on synodality, is to implement synodality in all areas of the church, Sr Nathalie said that to be a missionary church today you need to be a synodal church.

I'm not as well informed as I would like to be on this topic of synodality, however, I am interested in seeing where synodality will lead the church to. I pray that everything may go well.



**Listening to Sr Nathalie speak about her faith, new role and youth, Gemma feels inspired to...**

## Find joy in the little things

LISTENING to Sr Nathalie talk, I got a great sense straight away of how much she loved doing what God has called her to do.

I found our interview with her a great source of guidance with regards to making sure that I am always happy doing what I want to do in life, and to find joy in the little things.

I asked Sr Nathalie about her thoughts on religious life, and from her response I could tell she has a beautiful connection

with God. I noticed as well how it came so naturally for her to speak about her faith.

She also talked about how she loves working with young people and that she prays for them during this hard time. I found this very comforting and it filled me with hope for the future.

I found Sr Nathalie such an inspiration and I will always remember her grace and her love for God.



*Encouraged by the inspiring conversation with the new female under-secretary of the Synod of Bishops in Rome, Peter is confident that...*

## The faith will flourish with more involvement of young people



Peter with Bishop Donal during his parish visit to Iskaheen after the first lockdown.

*Reporting on the St Patrick's College Maynooth annual Trócaire lecture, Hollie writes...*

## We are all called to care for each other and all of God's creation



Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle

ST Patrick's College, Maynooth, held its annual Trócaire Lenten lecture via a webinar for the first time due to the coronavirus pandemic. The theme of the lecture was 'Caring for the Human Family and our Common Home', and the guest speaker was Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, the Prefect of the Evangelization of Peoples since February 2020.

Pope Francis also made Cardinal Tagle a member of the Administration of the Patrimony of the Holy See in 2021. In addition, the Cardinal, who was the 32nd Archbishop of Manila, from 2011 to 2020, serves as the President of Caritas International, of which Trócaire is the Irish branch, and of the Catholic Biblical Federation.

Reflecting on the Holy Father's encyclical's *Laudato Si'*, on care for our common home, and *Fratelli Tutti*, on fraternity and social friendship, Cardinal Tagle opened his lecture by remarking: "It is often said that St Francis of Assisi has been inspiring Pope Francis in the choice of topics for his encyclicals. St Francis' calling to rebuild God's Church is connected to 'Evangelii

Gaudium'; a Church that is missionary, a Church that goes forth."

In keeping with the concept of 'Synodality', the Church must "walk together" to discern the right way forward and to carry out the will of God. Reflecting on our rich Irish missionary roots, the big question we must ask ourselves, in a country that has become poor in its ability to evangelize is: How can we, today, be a missionary Church in the year of Our Lord 2021?

Cardinal Tagle's lecture focused on three great points, the first of which was "the need to get in touch with reality, and the need to develop a culture of personal encounter."

The Cardinal pointed out: "We see how the Covid-19 Pandemic has exposed social, cultural, economic and political weaknesses that have been existing for a long time in our countries and in international relations, but they have remained largely ignored."

The impact of the pandemic, the attitudes and destructive actions of human beings, have sorely affected our neighbours and the environment. Pope Francis expresses his worry and fear in his new book, 'Let us dream: A path to a better future', that the world will not take this opportunity to reconstruct society whilst emerging out of this global crisis! There seems to be an obsession with fame, power, trend, celebrities, etc, the most dangerous being self-idolization. The present day culture, or the 'me' culture, is losing sight of what matters most, and the cries of the poor on the peripheries are

distant to us, therefore, Christ is distant, as He is on the margins with the suffering.

He said: "Personal encounter with the wounded earth, and personal encounter with the wounded poor, who bear the wounds of the earth, should be part of our continuing formation in caring for our common home and in social friendship."

'Personal encounter' does not begin in the comfort of an armchair, dictating and giving orders but, and again I make reference to the idea of 'Synodality', 'personal encounter' requires listening and the ability to leave ourselves open and accessible to the service of others.

Interestingly, Cardinal Tagle described his 'encounter', or witness, of many disasters, such as "earthquakes, typhoons, floods, toxic wastes and wars", as disturbing, awakening and informative. He notes that "these encounters have been occasions of formation, and a change of thinking and priorities".

The second point Cardinal Tagle shared was "the call to conversion to justice". He referred to the prophet Isaiah, whom we heard very often during the Lenten season. The prophet Isaiah describes the people of Israel as "a people laden with wickedness".

Cardinal Tagle asked: "What is the root of this wickedness?" We learn from the prophet that the people suffered from idolizing everything that was not God, and that meant their offerings and sacrifices were worthless. Why? Because the hands that offered these sacrifices were "full of blood!" Adding that the situation

SISTER Nathalie Becquart was recently appointed by the Pope as an Under-Secretary to the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, making her the first woman to hold this post in the Church. I was given the opportunity, along with the other youth writers for 'The Net', to interview her via Zoom about her life and role in the Church.

My first question to Sr Nathalie was, "What was life like as a teenager whenever you had to make important choices in life that could shape your future?" Her response revealed her to have been like any teenager today.

She told us that she had travelled around the world, and shared with us experiences about a visit to Ireland with her friends and going on long cycling trips in the Irish countryside.

Talking about her life as a

teenager in France, where she attended many different schools as her family moved to live in different parts of the country, Sr Nathalie told us that faith was very important in her family whenever she was growing up and as a teen. She was faced with other influences but she remained very loyal to her faith growing up.

I also asked Sr Nathalie to share her thoughts on receiving the Call of God at a young age and how it inspired her to undertake His work. She responded that, initially, it wasn't a call from God but a sign that she must help vulnerable people across the world.

After she graduated from the international business school, HEC Paris in 1992, with a Major in Entrepreneurship, she volunteered in a school in Lebanon for a year, just after the

South Lebanon clashes in the country, and then for two years as a consultant in marketing-communications. She also went on many missions that helped her to come closer to vulnerable people, especially the youth.

Her involvement with young people has led Sr Nathalie to believe that "the youth are the Church's future". I took in a lot of what she said and feel that the youth really are important to the future of the Church, letting the faith flourish through using all kinds of technology to modernise it.

In her new role as an Under-secretary to the Synod of Bishops, I feel sure that Sr Nathalie Becquart will strongly support young people and their actions in the Church today, to help us learn from others and come together to support each other.

## Youth of Iskaheen & Upper Merville continue parish prayer and inspiring interviews by Peter Grant

DURING the Nine Day Novena to St Joseph in March, young people from the Parish of Iskaheen and Upper Merville led their parish in prayer to mark this 'Special year of St Joseph' proclaimed by Pope Francis.

Each of the young people involved said the Prayer to St Joseph every day and reflected on his living and experiences. Many of them have been participating in their Pope John Paul II Award and their Papal Cross Award during these difficult times, and they often help out in the parish through the Parish Facebook page. For example, they have been involved in the weekly interviews with people working on the frontline, and many other inspirational people in and outside of the parish, with the help of modern technology like Zoom, which is looking to be the future of the Church for the next generation.

During their Nine Day Novena to St Joseph, they got the chance to interview Bishop Brian McGee, who is Bishop of Argyll and the Isles in Scotland. Once again, this shows how these young people took advantage of modern technology so that they could interview Bishop McGee during Covid.

They asked Bishop McGee how he was coping during lockdown and they were amazed to hear that he was learning how to play the tin whistle! He also mentioned that he couldn't travel as much to different islands in his parish either, which he felt very strange, and that he felt limited as to what he could do.

When they asked him, "Are there any positives to Covid?", Bishop McGee immediately responded that technology was wonderful tool to help keep in contact with people living in rural areas through weekly prayer and Sunday Mass. He also said that he hoped to keep using this going forward, after Covid, in his rural Diocese.

Another positive Bishop McGee found during Covid was that "it has taught us to trust more in the Holy Spirit, as a lot of good things are happening at the same time in the Church and in the world also, because the Holy Spirit is at work as well."

After the interview, he invited the young people to come visit him in Scotland after Covid and to travel with him across the islands.

The Nine Day Novena to St Joseph got great views through the Parish Facebook page and you can watch them all, including the interview with Bishop McGee, on the Iskaheen, Drung and Muff Parish Facebook page.

The young people are now beginning plans for future events in the parish and are hoping to get everyone involved, from both in and outside the parish



Bishop Brian McGee, Bishop of Argyll and the Isles, Scotland.

## Hollie writes about historic papal visit to Iraq...

# Young people are the hope for renewal and rebirth in the land of Abraham – Pope Francis

POPE Francis embarked on his historic four-day pilgrimage to Iraq on March 5, arriving in Baghdad, the country's capital. The next day, the Holy Father travelled to Najaf, in the South of Iraq, and then voyaged onwards to Nassiriya, home to the ancient city of Ur.

His Holiness then travelled to Erbil in the Kurdistan Region, and from there he travelled by helicopter to Mosul, in Northern Iraq, and then to a Christian city called Qaraqosh. The Holy Father concluded his trip, on March 8, with a farewell ceremony before his departure for Rome.

The papal trip to Iraq was groundbreaking, as there never was before a Pope that set foot on Iraqi soil. Iraq had suffered years of war, persecution, violence and terrorism. Currently, there are at least 13,000 people who have died from the coronavirus throughout the country. So the visit to Iraq was both a difficult and dangerous voyage, considering the current pandemic and the danger of still-existent extremist groups.

On his arrival in Baghdad's International Airport, a 30-year-old Baghdad resident picking up relatives at the airport reflected on the significance of the Holy Father's visit by saying, "It might not change much on the ground, but at least if the Pope visits, people will see our country in a different light, not just bombs and war".

There is a common stereotype regularly used towards native middle-easterns deeming them to be terrorists, which is dehumanizing and discriminative. This native Iraqi hopes that the Pope's visit will shine a light on the good people, who had welcomed His Holiness with open arms, love and peace. A lesson that we can take from this man is that we shouldn't tar everyone with the one brush. We should help our neighbour in need.

On the day of Pope Francis' arrival in Baghdad, he visited the 'Church of Our Lady of Salvation', which had been the scene of a terrorist attack in 2010, where six ISIS suicide bombers killed 58 people including the priest. There were Christian and Muslim victims.

In reference to the 2010 terrorist attack, Pope Francis said: "I also want to remember all the victims of violence and persecution, regardless of the religious group to which they belong." Pope Francis acknowledged victims on both sides as a result of violence perpetrated by extremist groups, and therefore tried to help repair the relationship by building a bridge of peace and trust.

In addition, the Holy Father reflected on the impact of intergenerational relationships saying that, "...together with the elderly, they are the point of the diamond in this country, the richest fruit of the tree." The

young people of Iraq know the hardships that their country has endured, therefore, they are firmly connected to their roots.

In journeying together with the elderly, Pope Francis states in 'Christus Vivit': "If the young had knowledge and the old strength, there would be nothing they could not accomplish." This is a trait that every nation can possess, having both distinct and shared histories.

### 'Our Father'

His Holiness concluded his first day in Iraq, reciting the 'Our Father' in Arabic, whilst wearing a stole that the women of Qaraqosh had made for him.

Significantly, after Pope Francis' meeting on inter religious tolerance and dialogue with Shiite leader, Grand Ayatollah Ali Al Sistani, in Najaf, the Holy Father left there for Nassiriya for an inter religious meeting in the ancient city of Ur, the place we believe was the birthplace of the prophet Abraham. Abraham is a popular figure in the largest monotheistic religions of Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

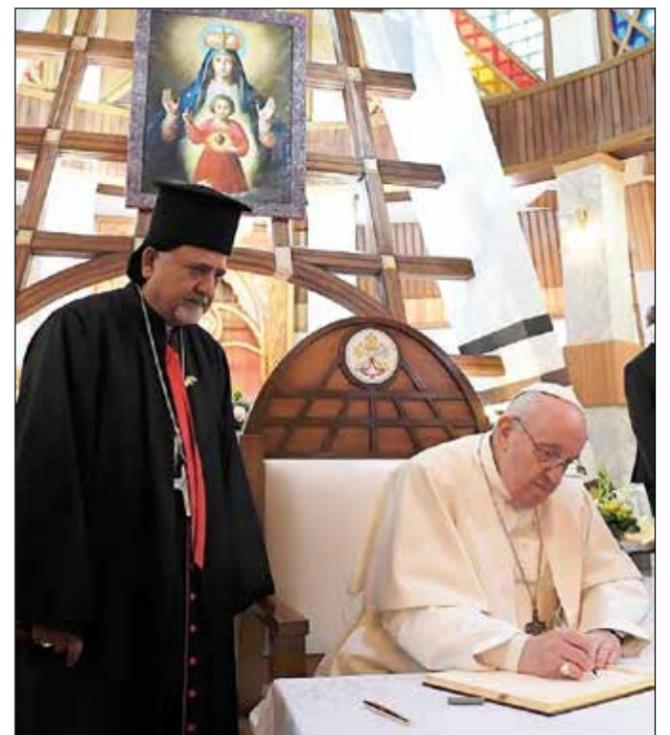
Pope Francis told the religious leaders that it was fitting that they had come together in Ur, "back to our origins, to the sources of God's work, to the birth of our religions". We learn that we share the one and only God, and we share the belief in the prophet Abraham.

Pope Francis demonstrated

connection and unity between religions, with the aim for peace, fraternity, tolerance and dialogue. This reflects Pope Francis' intention for visiting Iraq, as a 'Pilgrim of peace' hoping to repair relations by encouraging the restoration of peace and forgiveness.

Lastly, the Holy Father travelled to Erbil, Mosul and Qaraqosh on the last full day of his pilgrimage. At Mass in the Franso Hariri Stadium, in Erbil, Pope Francis spoke of how he was able to "see firsthand that the Church in Iraq is alive, that Christ is alive and at work in this, his holy and faithful people".

Christ is present with those who are in need and are suffering. Often we find him on the peripheries with the outcast, rejected and marginalized. Pope Francis remembered, prayed and honoured many Christians who were martyred as a result of remaining faithful, who strived to build a better society in Iraq. In the Northern region of Iraq, in a town called Karemlah, in Mosul, Pope Francis stood in the very spot where ISIS promised that they were going to conquer Rome and behead the Pope. The Holy Father recited a prayer for victims and then released a white dove as a sign of peace. In Karemlah, Pope Francis celebrated Mass on the remaining platform of St Adday's Church, which had been set on fire by terrorists in 2016.



Pope Francis in Iraq.

Anyone who watched the Mass, or saw photographs that were taken, will remember a wooden cross standing on the altar. The 10-foot wooden cross was built by a group of worshippers who used the remaining material of St Adday's Church.

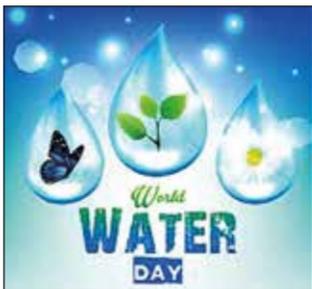
Similarly, Pope Francis visited the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Qaraqosh, which was restored after it had been burnt down and made into a firing range by terrorists in 2014.

Pope Francis' historic papal

visit to Iraq has been both groundbreaking and significant in many ways. The minority of Christians and other faiths in Iraq have expressed their optimism on the impact of the Pontiff's trip. On his way back to Rome, he told journalists, "Fraternity is the way forward." We pray for the innocent men, women and children of Iraq, that they will keep faith, unite in peace and forgiveness, and strive towards a brighter future with help and support.

## Reflecting on Pope Francis' World Water Day message, Oisín writes...

# We must make more effort to properly utilise and value water



POPE Francis recently released a message on World Water Day; a commemoration held on March 22 every year since 1993 to celebrate water and raise awareness of those living without it. In his message, the Holy Father discusses the year's theme of valuing water and what he had to say interested me greatly.

One of the first ideas he brings up in this address is calling for responsibility and care in the use of water, which is a large problem in the modern world. He further explains how access to clean, safe drinking water is not available "within everybody's reach" and how we should hurry "to give a drink to the thirsty".

Discussing the theme of

valuing water, Pope Francis brings up the point on how it is such a fundamental element for the preservation of our planet and how detrimental misusing it in any way, that is, contaminating it, can be. He added that this is sadly already a stark reality.

Throughout my reading this article on the Pope's thoughts, I found myself resonating deeply with what he was discussing and realising how I added to this misuse of water in my own way.

There have been many times where I have taken the resource itself for granted and not used it properly or wasted it, while knowing full well that many far away from me have no, or minimal, access to safe and clean water. This made me realize the social debt that I and many others owe to people living in poorer regions.

Another point that the Pope raised in relation to the event was the effects of climate change on water, particularly through disasters such as floods, droughts etc. He raised, rightly,

the point of how these lower the quality of water, contribute to a 'throw-away' culture in regard to water and the globalisation of indifference on the subject.

Pope Francis goes against this by instead instigating a call to action to us all, telling us to think, as I mentioned previously, about people having no access to water. He further asked us to try and combat issues such as pollution of seas and rivers, through working to a common goal.

When I read this, I immediately related it to my experiences and how perhaps, despite taking measures to avoid this throw-away culture, such as by recycling and trying to use less overall, even donating to charities which help to rectify this issue, there are still many times where I have contributed, and fell into this culture of indifference that the Pope rightly brought up.

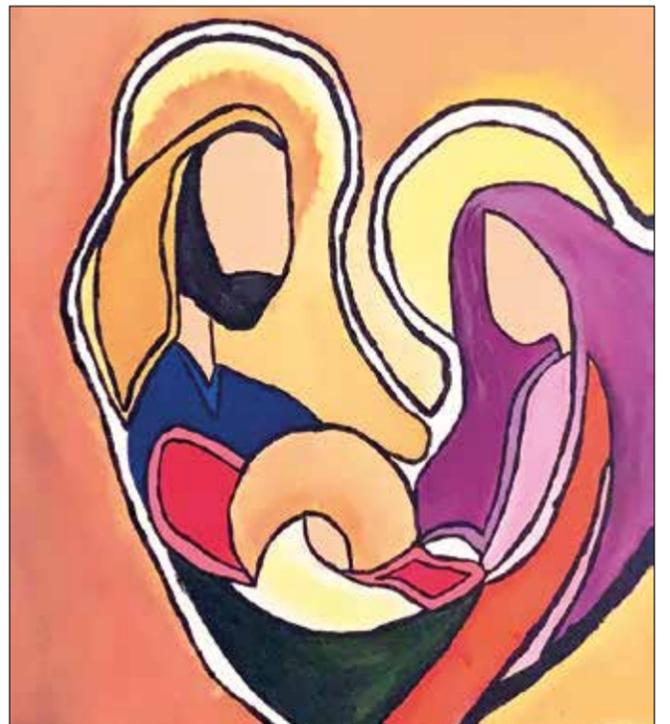
The last point that was brought up by Pope Francis in this address was to change our language used, from 'consumption' to 'use'. He

said that instead of consumption we should refer to it as sensible use; that is, only using it according to our real needs and respecting the needs of others, being in solidarity with them. He noted that this would allow us to protect wetlands, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and enable smallholder irrigation and more.

Furthermore, he connected water quality with food security by explaining that through the theme of 'valuing water', they are intrinsically linked, as water is a part of many food systems.

Pope Francis ended his address by reiterating all his points relating to water and climate, and calling all to action in order to stop the pollution, unruly consumption, etc, of water.

In conclusion, after thinking about what the Pope said in his message, I believe that I and many others must make a further effort in order for us to properly utilise water and follow the theme of World Water Day and value our water as well.



## Gemma's beautiful Holy Family image marks special year

WHEN creating this piece of art featuring The Holy Family, I linked my thoughts and my personal love for The Holy Family through colour and tone.

I decided to do the piece in a way that blended them into each other, to show that they are all one.

The Holy Family is very

important to me as it makes me think of my own family and the love I have for my family.

I think it is so important to stay close to loved ones and family at this time, during the Covid-19 pandemic, and that is what inspired me to do this piece of artwork on The Holy Family.

Returning to the town he loves so well, Fr Michael McGoldrick OCD is delighted to find...

## Derry's volunteering spirit and devotion to faith still strong



THE return of Discalced Carmelite, Fr Michael McGoldrick to Termonbacca has been warmly welcomed by the many whose lives he touched, during his time at the Iona Retreat Centre on the banks of the Foyle, almost 40 years ago.

The Offaly native was nine years ordained when he arrived in Derry as a 34-year-old with his fellow Carmelites in 1982, including the late Fr Gerry Fitzpatrick as prior. The Order had been invited by Bishop Edward Daly to open a priory in Termonbacca and become involved in the faith life of the Diocese.

Such was the wonderful welcome they received from a large gathering of priests and laity in St Columba's Church, Long Tower, that the memory remains a clear one for the now 73-year-old.

"There was a massive welcome for us in the Long Tower from Bishop Daly and about 70 priests, and there were so many people that the Church was chock-a-block. It was a great experience that I will never forget," said Fr Michael.

Fired up by the welcome, he recalled wholeheartedly embracing the opportunity to do retreats in schools and work with the Diocesan Commission: "I was quite heavily involved with the Diocesan Youth and Vocations Commissions, which were both very active at the time.

"We had Diocesan youth gatherings, and I remember a gathering of a few hundred young people from all over the Diocese in Buncrana, for a retreat in the Mercy Convent School there. It was a marvellous experience to see so many young people gathered together.

"I spent three years doing this and then I got depression, probably from overworking. I had to take time out for treatment and, unfortunately, had to leave Derry. It was tough undergoing the treatment but I got a lot out of it and have never really looked back."

Returning to Ireland in 1998, after his treatment finished in

Canada, Fr Michael did retreat work in Dublin until he was transferred to London in 2007, where he spent four years commuting between a parish in London and the Carmelite Retreat House in Boars Hill, near Oxford.

Then, in 2011, he was asked to come back to be prior of the Retreat House in Dublin, where he spent three years before being elected Provincial in 2014. He served in that role for six years, up until last July, and after a few months' break decided to spend the rest of his days amongst the people of Derry who have a special place in his heart.

"I have great memories of Derry," said Fr Michael, "though the City has changed a lot and for the better. It is much more beautiful now, with the Peace Bridge, the Quay and the new shops, and there is no tension like there was when I was first here. It's lovely to see the difference."

While his return has coincided with the more quiet time of lockdowns due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Fr Michael has been particularly struck by the great volunteering spirit in Derry.

"It was there when I was here before and it is still there," he noted, adding: "The help we get from volunteers is amazing. Whenever I tell people about the extent of the volunteering spirit here, they can hardly believe me. I have experienced something a bit similar in Nigeria, at our house there, but I have never seen it in any other part of the world I have been in.

"The financial generosity of people in Derry is really wonderful and we could not have survived here without it. There was £17,000 raised for us through a draw at Christmas, which helped us to pay for lighting and heating, etc, for the winter, so we didn't have to worry about that.

"The goodness and generosity of people is so humbling, especially when you think of the unemployment levels here. I am just amazed by it all."

Thankful that the Carmelites have been very much part of

Church life in Derry now for almost 40 years, Fr Michael commended his fellow friar, Fr Stephen Quinn, who is the new prior in Termonbacca, for the recent wonderful prayer initiatives undertaken, such as the Divine Child Novena in the lead up to Christmas, and the Novena to Sleeping St Joseph, which concluded on his Feast Day.

### Revitalising

"Fr Stephen is revitalising the place now," he said, "and when it is safe to do so, we are looking forward to the various groups coming back to meet here. Fr John Grennan did a great job in getting the place done up during his time here. He was looking to the future.

"Please God there is a great future, one involving lay people a lot more in our retreats, etc. I have heard some great talks delivered to the 'Blessed is She' group during their online Sunday night time together. I believe that is the way forward. That has been a good thing about this Covid time. There has been a lot of time to pray and discern about future initiatives."

The ongoing story of the late Sr Clare Crockett, who was born in the neighbouring Brandywell area, is another source of amazement for Fr Michael: "I was bowled over when Fr John Grennan showed us the video on Sr Clare's life. We just said that this is a saint. I was really amazed that there was film of every stage of her life; that tells me that it was all part of God's plan. I also found her writings to be beautiful and very profound.

"I can see parallels with St Therese of Lisieux with their similar heroism and the interest in Sr Clare. I tell people about her as much as I can and spend a good bit of my time sending out the Sr Clare prayer cards and the book on her life, 'Alone with Christ Alone'. It sells out as quickly as we get it in, and it's the same with the prayer cards and candles. There has been something like 26,000 Sr Clare candles sold. I am just amazed by it all.

"A chaplain in a Birmingham Children's Hospital wrote asking for 50 prayer cards, and 30 copies of the book were ordered by a priest in Dublin. I got 100 of the books and they were gone within a week, so I got another 200 and there is about 100 left. I've said that we will need 500 more but it is out of print at the minute."

"It is lovely to see what is happening," added Fr Michael, "the Friends of Sr Clare Committee has organised a retreat, in association with the Long Tower, from April 18-25, to mark the fifth anniversary of Sr Clare's death.

"When I hear people giving out about what is going wrong, I like to say that there is a lot of good going on too. The mural on the

gable wall in the Brandywell, with Sr Clare's beautiful smile, surely brightens the day for passers-by. So many lives are being touched by Sr Clare's story, even the lives of her two sisters, Meghan and Shauna, have been changed so much. They are both so committed to the cause for her canonisation and I would love to see Sr Clare canonised. I think they will meet an open door in Rome when they become aware of her story."

Looking forward to meeting more people at Termonbacca when it is deemed safe to do so, Fr Michael has been amazed also at the number of people ringing the priory to ask for prayers.

"We wouldn't have anywhere near the same number of prayer requests in our other houses. I just find that precious," he remarked, adding: "I am really struck by the number of people who have been asking me to pray for their children and grandchildren who have drifted away from their faith.

"Groups like Cursillo have an extraordinary outreach to people who have fallen away from the faith. Derry Cursillo held its weekends and meetings here before lockdown, and I have heard so many wonderful stories of people being brought back to their faith through them.

"There is a huge spiritual hunger and it is a question of finding ways of responding to that, as the traditional way doesn't cut it anymore. Please God, the Lord will direct us how to respond in a positive way to this. I feel strongly that we need to involve young people more in the Church. We need to have more faith in our young people."

With light at the end of the tunnel regarding the easing of restrictions and lifting of lockdowns, Fr

Michael is looking forward to the various faith groups returning to Termonbacca for their meetings, and to witnessing a new energy bursting forth in the faith lives of

those who took the opportunity to pray and walk more closely with God during this time of challenge and change that Covid-19 has brought about.



## GRANDPARENTS' FAITH CAFÉ

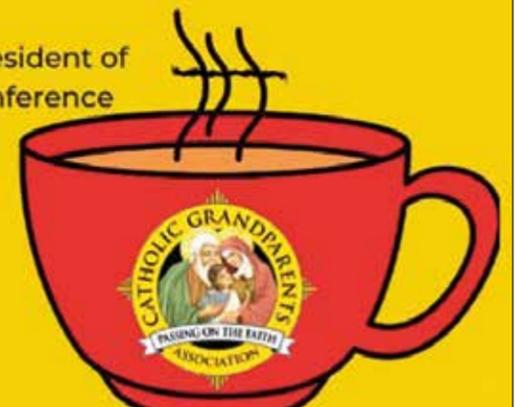
An online social and spiritual space for grandparents

**TUESDAY 13 APRIL 2021 AT 7.30PM V/A ZOOM**

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Register by email: [info@catholicgrandparentsassociation.com](mailto:info@catholicgrandparentsassociation.com)

With special guest  
Archbishop Eamon Martin, President of  
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An initiative of the Catholic Grandparents Association -  
[www.catholicgrandparentsassociation.com](http://www.catholicgrandparentsassociation.com)

*Finding it difficult to be Catholic in today's world, Derry women feel encouraged in coming together to pray through...*

## 'Blessed is She' – a wonderful source of strength and support *by Aoife O'Neill*

'BLESSED is She' is a sisterhood of women who want to grow together in the Catholic faith, that was founded in the Diocese of Phoenix. I had subscribed to its daily devotionals and also welcomed its eight-week sisterhood series of emails, which looked at different elements of sisterhood, for example, competition and support, gossip and communication etc.

I found these emails really useful and, after talking to the other girls in my prayer group, we decided that it would be great to gather some women together to explore these.

Fr Joe Gormley kindly provided a meeting space and we were able to make this a reality. In October 2019, we advertised the group and quickly the 30 available slots were filled. The women who came along enjoyed eight weeks of exploring and discussing these

topics, and how they are essential for Catholic friendships.

Amanda Kelly Young, one of the leaders, said: "I love the opportunity to be able to bring Christ to other like-minded women; to be able to build connections and identify similar struggles throughout all of our lives and support each other."

To complete the series, we arranged a weekend retreat, entitled 'She Walks in Beauty', in Termonbacca Retreat centre. Sr Coleen Mattingly, from the Apostles of The Sacred Heart, was the keynote speaker. This retreat weekend was really special for every woman who came. There is something great when women come together to support one another in faith, and it energised and motivated everyone who attended. We were able to carry this forward into the sisterhood and it gave us all a desire to do

more.

The group were just two weeks into their second programme, looking at Fr Jacques Phillippe's treatise, 'Searching for and Maintaining Peace', when lockdown came due to the coronavirus pandemic. As again 30 women had signed up for this programme, we decided to move online. The group was split into three and, from Sunday, March 22, each group started meeting on Messenger video call to pray the Rosary.

These groups are still continuing today, with video calls every evening to pray the Rosary together.

One member, Sinead Doyle commented: "My Rosary group has been such a gift during lockdown. We have laughed, cried, prayed and grown in authentic relationship with God and with each other. It has been a

wonderful source of strength and support for me throughout the last year."

When restrictions lifted briefly, the group relocated to Termonbacca, as the space was larger to allow for social distancing but, once again, lockdown made continuing with the programme impossible.

After the second lockdown, we began an online prayer evening on the Sunday nights, which were streamed live from Termonbacca. During these, we prayed the St Michael Chaplet followed by Adoration and Benediction, for the protection of everyone during this pandemic.

Michelle McDaid remarked: "It was really important to continue praying the St Michael Chaplet and this was made even more special in front of the Blessed Sacrament, with the addition of Benediction as, personally, I

found it hard being locked down and away from Mass and the Sacraments.

"This has been a way to keep engaged and invoke St Michael to protect us, our families and our whole city and beyond throughout this pandemic. It has truly helped keep us active in our faith life."

With the approach of Lent, we wanted to offer something different so, in collaboration with Fr Stephen Quinn OCD and Fr Michael McGoldrick OCD, we put on a series of talks on the person of Christ and what He reveals to us about God, by examining some of the "I AM" statements. The talks were also streamed live and can be found on the Termonbacca Youtube channel.

It isn't easy being a Catholic woman in today's world. Faith and God are being pushed aside and good support can seem non-existent at times. It is a



'Blessed is She' Derry leaders, Aoife O'Neill, Michelle McDaid and Amanda Kelly Young.

real privilege for us to have the opportunity to come together as women and support one another on the journey of faith.

We look forward to brighter days ahead when, hopefully, we can offer more opportunities and experiences for women to gather together in prayer and community.

## Flourish – helping women grow together through scripture study

*by Niamh Fox*



Niamh Fox

A few years ago, God put an image of a ladies Bible group on my heart; a safe space where women would grow together and support one another. I had forgotten about this image until lockdown started and God started reminding me about it again.

One morning, He woke me up at 6 am, my hands were burning and my heart was racing. He told me now was the time and to start with Matthew. I asked Him for a name and I kept getting an image of beautiful flowers growing perfectly in the right conditions... they were flourishing. So, the name of the Bible group became 'Flourish'.

At the time, I was a regular at a prayer group called 'Living Disciples', which was run by Fr Columba Jordan CFR. I explained to him what had happened and he encouraged me to go for it and gave me his blessing. We had just moved the 'Living Disciples' group online, via Zoom and Facebook,

and you could see that using Zoom meant you could reach far more people, particularly in rural Ireland, but also internationally.

When I started the ladies Bible study, 'Flourish', last May, I expected about three people to join but, on the first week, there were 12 people. The numbers fluctuated through lockdown due to people returning to work and time changes, and at one point we had two girls from Australia.

It's been amazing watching the group grow and getting to know everyone, seeing how God is healing through His Word and giving us revelation each week. The Word is really coming alive as we discuss it. It's been a real place for vulnerability too; as we grow together, we share burdens and pray for each other.

Watching everyone growing in the gifts of the Holy Spirit has been so exciting too; how every gift is so unique to the way God made that person. It's an honour to witness these women growing, many of whom I believe God is calling many into leadership in different areas. It has been a real safe space to grow and encourage each other. We laugh a lot and I love that we can cry too, if things are tough.

It has been such a learning curve for me to be obedient to what God is asking me to do, even if I don't feel ready, qualified or confident enough. This is exactly where God shows up, when we submit ourselves to Him, He does the rest. Everything that He asks us to do will be what is best for us and for those around us. He is such a good Father.

Sharing her experience of Bible study with 'Flourish', Shauna Fitzsimons said:

"When I was invited to join this women's Bible study group, I knew it was something that I was meant to do. The churches had closed and all aspects of life and community had seemed to come to a halt with the lockdown, which left me wanting for something in my life, another way to connect. So I was thrilled at the thought of the Bible study.

"There were women from all over the north, and also the south, who had joined 'Flourish', reminding me of the Scripture quote, 'I was a stranger, and you welcomed me' (Matthew 25:35) Taking part in the first meeting, I was reminded that Our Father has plans for each and every one of us. The sense of belonging and purpose was great and flourished throughout each session.

"Each week, as we studied Matthew's Gospel, it was amazing how the Holy Spirit was working in each one of us. We grew in friendship, community, understanding, and in love of scripture. We prayed together and during the whole experience there was an overpowering sense of joy. We continue to pray as a women's community for the needs of each other and of others. When I think of 'Flourish', there is one quote that springs to mind: 'Where two or more are gathered in my name, there I am also'."

*'Flourish' will be meeting online again after Easter and any woman who would like to join is welcome to email niamhrfox@gmail.com*

## Greenlough one of many parishes benefiting from lockdown's unleashing of talents



Roisin McCullough, Greenlough.

WHILE most activities have been either on hold or greatly restricted over the past year, this strange time of lockdowns has brought the talents of many to the fore, much to the benefit of parishes around the Diocese.

With webcam viewing of Church services having become a regular feature of parish faith life for many, the resultant focus of the faithful is now very much on the sanctuary, which has been a great source of consolation during these challenging months of living with all that the Covid-19 pandemic has brought about.

Realising the importance of that spiritual experience in the lives of the many who could only visit their church virtually, and the need for it to be uplifting as well as comforting, parishioners with a flair for floral displays have stepped forward and enabled their Creator to bring the joy of nature into the sanctuaries of many churches.

And this has been the case in St Oliver Plunkett's Church in the parish of Greenlough, where Roisin McCullough has not only been volunteering her creative talents but generously donating the beautiful flowers she uses for her altar displays.

While Roisin (nee McCann)

now lives with her family in neighbouring Portglenone, she was born and reared in the Greenlough Parish and continues to attend St Oliver Plunkett's Church, where her aunt, Rosemary McCampbell took care of the floral displays for many years, until she retired in January 2020, in her 80th year.

It was through helping her Aunt Rosemary over the years that the 55-year-old practice nurse developed her floral arrangement skills, when she and a friend offered a helping hand on Saturday mornings.

"When my aunt retired, I was approached about doing the floral arrangements, but I was waiting on a hip replacement so I couldn't. After I had the operation and recovered, my mother put my name forward to do it, following a conversation with Fr McGirr, and I said that I would, as I know how much it means to people," said Roisin, who has been taking care of the flower arranging in St Oliver Plunkett's since last July.

Highlighting the invaluable help she gets from her family in the creation of the various beautiful altar displays that have enhanced the sanctuary, particularly during special times in the Church calendar, she said: "I couldn't do it without the help of my father, who loves working with wood. If I need a pot stand, crib or cross, etc, made, I just show him a picture of what I am looking for and he will make it exactly as shown."

As well as appreciating the contributions of her father Peter, of McCann's Clady Carpet and Furnishings, Roisin says that it is very much a family effort, with her mum, Brigid, sister, Maria, and her own grown-up children, amongst

those who help.

Saying that she had a more modern approach to flower arranging than traditional, Roisin is appreciative of the compliments she has received from people, happy that they are getting as much out of looking upon the displays as she does creating them.

For Roisin, it is more than a labour of love...it is like a prayer offering to God and a giving back to the parish in which her faith was nurtured and where she received the Sacraments, and so she has refused offers of payment for the flowers from the parish.

"When I am in the chapel working with the flowers, it is like a different way of praying," she said, adding: "I am very conscious that I am in the sanctuary and, while I may not be saying many prayers when there, I am aware and respectful of where I am.

"It has been a real privilege to be able to do this during lockdown, as it has given me an opportunity to help lift people's spirits and to enhance their experience in visiting the chapel virtually. My hope was that the beautiful flowers would enrich the visual and give some joy."



# 2,040 names of loved ones lost during Covid year remembered at Diocesan vigil



ONE of the greatest heartaches during the Covid-19 pandemic for many has been suffering the loss of loved ones, from not being able to be close to hold their hand to not being able to grieve as a family and a community, and for our priests not to be able to give the love and prayerful support they desire to the sick and dying, and to the bereaved.

Aware of this deep pain, Bishop Donal led a touching Vigil of Remembrance in the mother church of the Diocese, St Eugene's Cathedral, as the first day of the re-opening of churches in the north for public worship came to a close and into the early hours of the eve of Palm Sunday.

With the weather turning wintry again outside, many watched the beautiful ceremony online from the comfort of their homes as Bishop Donal reflected on prayer Stations based on St John Paul II's Scriptural Stations of the Cross, as an act of consolation for the sorrowful hearts afflicted by the Covid-19 coronavirus throughout the Diocese.

Beginning at 9 pm and closing with the celebration of Mass at 4.30 am, the ceremony included the reading out of names of those who died over the past 12 months in each of the Diocese's 51 parishes, as the 14 Stations of the Cross were reflected on and 20 decades of the Rosary prayed.

Fr Paul Farren and Fr Patrick Lagan took it in turn to read out the 2,040 names, parish by parish, starting with the 158 who died in the Cathedral Parish since the first lockdown last March, as Bishop

Donal introduced the First Station – 'The Last Supper'.

During this Station, Bishop Donal reflected on the word 'ordinary'. Noting that the ordinary had "stopped about 12 months ago", he said: "That was cruel and painful. We did not know what was ahead of us, but, at The Last Supper, Christ did know what was ahead of Him. He wanted His friends to join Him, to be close to Him, so He gave them the gift of Himself under the form of bread and wine."

He added: "We pray that we will never take the ordinary for granted."

During the Second Station – 'Jesus, in the Garden of Gethsemane' – those who have died in the Long Tower, Ardmore and Culmore parishes were remembered.

Reflecting on the word 'isolation', Bishop Donal said: "We can't visit because we or our loved ones are isolating. We have to keep our distance. Yes, there are phones and other means of communication, but sometimes we just want to hold each other, but we can't."

"It's terrible in times of bereavement to not be able to be hugged or held while we cry. Jesus cried in Gethsemane. He called out to His Father for His Cup to pass. Every time we ask to be released from this, we too are calling to be free from our Garden of Gethsemane."

He added: "It is so hard to endure pain when we are alone, but we had to isolate. When we are lonely the last thing we want to do is isolate. When bereaved the last

thing we want to be is on our own, but we had to isolate."

The 158 deceased during the past Covid year in the communities of Carnhill, Galliagh and Pennyburn, within the Three Patrons Parish, were remembered during the Third Station – 'Jesus is arrested'.

"It is a deep, deep hurt when people let us down, people whom we had trusted," remarked Bishop Donal, adding: "It can be hard to trust someone again. It can feel like being abused or abandoned. It is when we lose our friends that we need friends most; to be loved for who we are and especially to be loved when we are weak, and that is what we have been called to do in this pandemic."

"Jesus was betrayed in His deepest hour of need by a friend, whom He had trusted. When Jesus was arrested, He lost His freedom. A lot of people during the pandemic lost their freedom. People in homes couldn't get out. People having to stay in their homes to quarantine or isolate."

The Fourth Station – 'Jesus is condemned to death' – was dedicated to those who had died in the parishes of Glendermott, Strathfoyle and Our Lady of Lourdes, Steelstown.

## Journey

"The last thing anyone wants to hear from a doctor are the words, 'We could do no more for him/her,'" said Bishop Donal, adding: "Many people heard that during this past year. Those who died with Covid often only had the wonderful, gentle, caring presence

of NHS staff. They, and all those who died from other illnesses, made the journey to death during the most difficult circumstances."

"Jesus was unjustly condemned to death. It wasn't fair but the mob wanted it. Pilot was too afraid. All our loved ones who died were innocent too, and it wasn't fair, especially during a pandemic. As we remember those who had to face death during this time of restrictions and isolating, we contemplate Jesus being condemned to death."

Parishioners who died in the parishes of Holy Family, Ballymagroarty, and St Mary's Creggan, were remembered by name during the Fifth Station – 'Jesus is scourged and crowned with thorns'.

Reflecting on the increase in domestic violence during lockdown, Bishop Donal spoke of the "horrible reality of the pain some experienced in being beaten up, abused, humiliated and ridiculed, and not being able to escape or defend themselves."

"Jesus was tied to a pillar and scourged," he added, "the pain was intense. He was laughed at, humiliated and mocked for being a 'king'. Every time that we abuse or torture others, we torture Our Lord again."

"Let us pray for those who face violence, who live in fear day and night, especially from domestic violence. Jesus knows what it is to be scourged and mocked."

The deceased from the parishes of Aghyaran, Ballinascreen, Banagher and Bellaghy were remembered during the Sixth

Station – 'Jesus receives His Cross'.

"It was March that we received the cross of Covid-19 lockdown; the fear of illness and death, fear for our loved ones, then anger against everything," said Bishop Donal, adding "How did we react to that cross? In the Stations, when Jesus receives His Cross, He is depicted with his hands held out. There is awareness that this is the way it has to be, to live the cross, to give into the reality of the cross. We extend the reality of the Cross to our lives; the Covid cross and other crosses in our lives."

During the Seventh Station – 'Jesus carries His Cross' – the deceased from the parishes of Buncrana, Carndonagh, Ardstraw West & Castlederg, and Claudy were remembered.

"The Cross has taken so many forms," said Bishop Donal, adding: "One of the biggest is the cross of separation from loved ones when dying. Jesus falls three times. It was just too much for the human body to bear."

"Those who couldn't be with their loved ones when they were dying, or go into the church for the funeral, have had their cross to carry. We think of all those in pain because of the manner of their loved one's death and funeral."

Deceased parishioners from the parishes of Clonmany, Coleraine, Culdaff, Desertmartin, Urney & Castlefinn, and Dunamanagh, were prayed for during the Eighth Station – 'Jesus is helped by Simon of Cyrene'.

Reflecting on this, Bishop Donal recalled the great community spirit that came to the fore at the

beginning of lockdown, how some key workers had to stay away from their families because they had to go to work, and how nobody died without experiencing compassion.

He said: "We think of those who sat by hospital beds and held the hands of those coming to the end of their lives, just like Simon helped Jesus to carry His cross. In His time of great suffering, Simon was there for Jesus. Simon who was a stranger became a friend."

"We think of all the Simons and Veronicas. We think of all those who showed compassion and tenderness."

During the Ninth Station – 'Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem' – the deceased of the parishes of Drumquin, Dungiven, Burt, Inch & Fahan, and Faughanvale were remembered.

## Frightened

"There is always a danger at a time like this to get frightened," said Bishop Donal, "sometimes we think too much about how it affects us and do not think about others. Some think that restrictions are for everyone else and that they can do whatever they want."

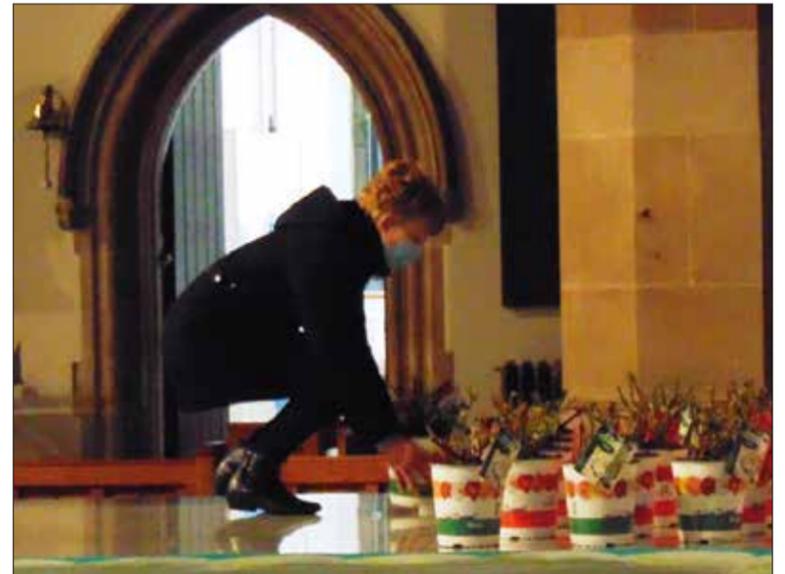
"The Women of Jerusalem were crying for Jesus but He wasn't thinking about Himself. We pray that the Lord's grace will help us to focus on others and their needs, and not on our own."

Deceased from the parishes of Errigal, Gortin, Greencastle, Greenlough, Iskaheen and Kilrea were prayed for during the Tenth Station – 'Jesus is crucified'.

Bishop Donal remarked: "For those in Covid wards waiting to recover it is a long road to Calvary."

During the Eleventh Station – 'Jesus forgives the repentant thief' – the deceased of the parishes of Cappagh, Lavey, Leckpatrick and Clonleigh were remembered.

Commenting on how the two thieves crucified on either side of Jesus had behaved in very different ways towards Jesus, Bishop Donal said: "One of the thieves sees Jesus





defeated in being nailed to the cross, but the other doesn't and asks to be with Jesus when He comes into His Kingdom. Jesus tells him, "Today you will be with me in Paradise." We pray that in our suffering we will be able to focus on Jesus."

Those who died in the parishes of Limavady, Magilligan, Maghera and Malin were remembered during the Twelfth Station – 'Jesus speaks to His Mother from the cross'.

"It was done through FaceTime. It was done through the window. It was done in the weirdest of ways. Children looking at their parents, their grandparents, through a window.

"Parents buried their children. That is so unnatural; children should be burying their parents, not the other way around. Mary stood at the foot of the cross as her son was dying. She could do nothing else. She knows what it is like. We pray for grieving parents."

The deceased parishioners of the parishes of Melmount, Moville, Ardstraw East & Newtownstewart, Plumbridge, Sion Mills and Swatragh, were remembered during the Thirteenth Station – 'Jesus dies on the cross'.

"Our primary purpose during this vigil has been to pray for those who have died over the past year, during this pandemic," said Bishop Donal, adding: "We have 2,040 names of people of all ages; that is 2,040 families all touched by death in a time when they cannot mourn without restrictions. In silence, we entrust those who have died to the Lord".

During the final and Fourteenth Station – 'Jesus is laid in the tomb' – the deceased of the parishes

of Drumragh, Camus and Killygordon were remembered in prayer.

"Sometimes, we think this is never going to end," said Bishop Donal: "We wonder when our city centre will be full of life again. We see closed shops, bars and restaurants. The streets are quiet and eerie. We have hand sanitising and masks. We seem to be entombed in Covid world.

"When Jesus' body was in the tomb for those three long days, everything was quiet and eerie. Everybody was in their homes, afraid. Then Jesus rose, the Spirit came and doors were unlocked. We pray that we will never lose hope and always believe in the power of God. Jesus always has the last word and that word is Eternal Life."

During the ceremony, candles were lit and rose plants were placed beneath the Cross in the Sanctuary to represent each parish, as the names of deceased loved ones were read out. Bishop Donal explained that these would remain in place during the Holy Week ceremonies, with each rose to then be planted in a special Remembrance Garden near to the Lourdes Grotto within the grounds of St Eugene's.



## Let us always be a voice for the voiceless and vulnerable in our society *by Mary McMenamin*



Mary McMenamin

Dáil Éireann has proposed a bill entitled 'Dying with Dignity'; "an act to make provision for assistance in achieving a dignified and peaceful end of life to qualifying persons and related matter". Doesn't this sound compassionate and caring? Let us look a little closer.

It is incredible that the same people who say they want to protect the vulnerable in our society from Covid-19 are the very same people pushing the Assisted Suicide Bill in the Republic of

Ireland. While we have been in lockdown this past year and preoccupied with Covid-19 statistics, some members of Dáil Éireann have been working tirelessly on passing a bill which would make it legal for doctors to help a person who is terminally ill to die by euthanasia. The TD who proposed the legislation states that he wants to assist people who are in unbearable pain and suffering. However, the bill doesn't in fact mention the word pain or suffering.

This bill will make it possible for people to die by suicide if they are terminally ill. If we look at other countries that have legalised euthanasia/assisted suicide, we can see how it has brought a disturbing change in attitudes towards people who are ill or who have profound disability.

I recently watched an interview of a man in Belgium who was out for a walk with his disabled daughter, who was wheelchair bound. He was approached by several people who asked him

why he did not avail of euthanasia or did he even know about it.

Kristina Hodgetts, a Canadian nurse who worked at a large Ontario hospital as well as a rural nursing home, explains in her own words, "I killed people for 20 years". She eventually began to see that what she was doing was wrong and on reflection, she asked herself, "Was I helping people die or making them die?" She said, "We were making them die".

Some 56% of people who were killed by euthanasia said that being a burden on family, friend and care givers was a reason to end their lives, according to a 2017 study in Washington State.

We are talking about giving doctors the legal right to end their patients' lives. A doctor's job is to alleviate their patients suffering and do no harm. No one has the right to decide who lives or dies, only God can decide and we are not God.

What does the Catechism of the Catholic Church teach about

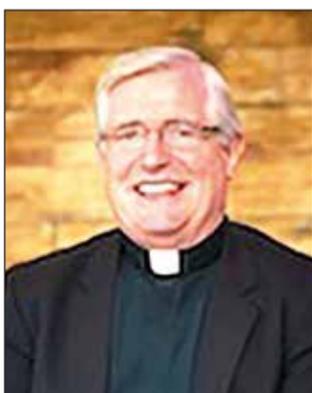
euthanasia? Here is some of what is said:

"Those whose lives are diminished or weakened deserve special respect. Sick or disabled persons should be helped to lead lives as normal as possible. Whatever its motives and means, direct euthanasia consists in putting an end to the lives of disabled, sick or dying persons. It is morally unacceptable. Thus an act or omission which, of itself or by intention causes death in order to eliminate suffering constitutes a murder gravely contrary to the dignity of the human person and to the respect due to the living God and his creation. The error of judgement into which one can fall in good faith does not change the nature of this murderous act which must always be forbidden and excluded".

Let us always be a voice for the voiceless and vulnerable in our society.

*Holy family of Nazareth, pray for us.*

## Palliative care respects totally the sacredness of human life *by Fr Colum Clerkin*



Fr Colum Clerkin

IN January this year, Dr Tom McGinley died in the care of the dedicated medical and nursing staff of Foyle Hospice, in accordance with his express wishes. I remember thinking at the time of his death that there was something quite providential rather than merely coincidental about the fact that Dr McGinley should have chosen to be admitted there shortly before he died, surrounded by his family and in the care of those who had known him and worked with him since the doors of Foyle Hospice opened exactly thirty years ago.

After all, the Hospice and Dr Tom McGinley are really synonymous. It was his original vision and inspiration, and I am sure that it would not have been founded without his energy and

persistence all those years ago.

Dr McGinley often recalled that the impetus to found Foyle Hospice came from the chronic lack of facilities available in his early years as a GP in Derry, when he was treating a young man who was terminally ill at home. He not only saw the need for what we now know as palliative care in these critical circumstances, but Dr Tom personally drove the campaign to raise funds, with the help of so many willing volunteers, to establish the Foyle Hospice which has now cared for many thousands of patients in its In-patient Unit and Day-Care Unit over all those years.

Palliative care aims to provide the best quality of life for patients with a terminal illness, providing welcome pain relief in the final months and weeks of life, together with the medical, nursing and spiritual support they need and deserve at the end of their life's journey. Palliative care also respects totally the sacredness of human life.

Foyle Hospice welcomes patients from all backgrounds and religious beliefs. The image of the Foyle Bridge nearby is the logo for the Hospice, a symbol not just of crossing from this life to the next, but of a bridge between the different communities and

denominations in Ireland, North and South. The Hospice Chaplains from the four main Churches hold joint Services at different seasons of the year, and provide regular pastoral care to the patients and their families, when requested.

The priests from Culmore and Steelstown parishes act as the Catholic Chaplains to the Hospice, visiting the patients regularly during the week. The role of the Chaplain is mainly about listening to people who are often at various stages of a terminal illness, praying with them and for them and offering the Sacraments to those who wish to receive them.

The Sacrament of the Sick, of course, is particularly appropriate for those who are in hospice care, and the holy anointing gives spiritual strength and comfort to those who are terminally ill, not just at the point of death but throughout the course of their illness, whether it is long or short. Many patients who had been accustomed to attending Mass on a weekly, or even daily basis in their home parishes, also look forward to receiving Holy Communion during the week, whenever their medical condition allows.

For many years, there was a

Sunday Mass in Foyle Hospice celebrated by the late Bishop Edward Daly who became full-time Hospice Chaplain after his retirement as Bishop of Derry, and dedicated the rest of his life wholeheartedly to the Foyle Hospice.

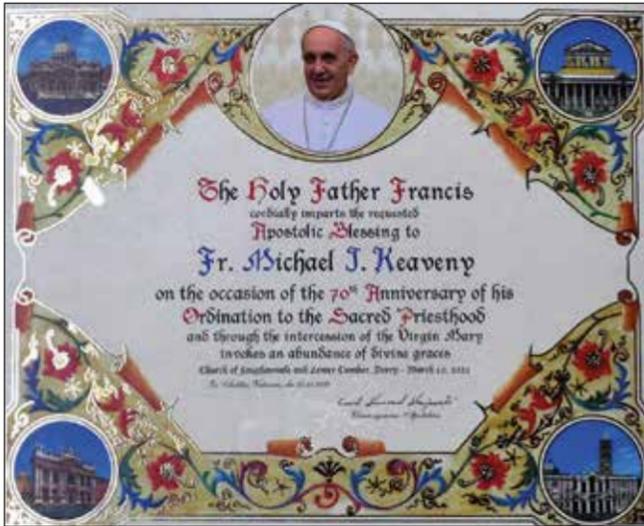
The present COVID pandemic has curtailed normal chaplaincy duties over the last twelve months, and Chaplains are not as free to make their regular visits to the Hospice as usual, but the staff still contact the priests to attend those patients who are critically ill, so that they can receive the Last Rites of the Church.

It is a privilege for the Hospice Chaplains to be with people who are at the end of life's journey, and to accompany them with our pastoral care on their passing from this world into eternal life with God, and in the wonderful care of the dedicated staff of Foyle Hospice.



# Thankful for long priesthood, Fr Keaveny hopes for a few more years to spread God's Word

*Photographs by Jack Logue*



CELEBRATING 70 years of priesthood, Fr Michael Keaveny continues to be an inspiration to many. His steady, determined footsteps as he slowly walked up the aisle of Star of the Sea Church towards the altar to celebrate his Platinum Jubilee Mass reflected his life-long commitment to his vocation, just as the loving attentiveness of the sacristan in aiding him up the steps into the sanctuary reflected the love and respect of the parishioners of Faughanvale for the Donegal-born pastor.

The Mass was celebrated under Covid restrictions, with the church webcam enabling his family members from further afield, fellow priests and the many whose lives have been touched by Fr Michael's ministry over the past 70 years, to join in.

Parish priest, Fr Noel McDermott and retired parish priest, Fr Patrick Mullan concelebrated the Mass with Fr Michael, while Bishop Donal presided, and amongst the few present in the church for the ceremony was his housekeeper of 43 years, Nancy.

As the Mass got underway, Fr Michael expressed his deepest thanks to God "for all the years spent in His service," and hoped that he had done so "without too many faults or failings."

He went on to note: "A man has to be 24 before he is ordained a priest, so that means he has to be 94 before he can have the privilege of celebrating his Platinum Jubilee!"

And he expressed the hope that he will have "a few years yet to

spread God's Word" in whatever way he can.

At the end of the ceremony, Bishop Donal presented Fr Michael with a Papal Blessing parchment and Nancy with a bouquet of flowers.

Congratulating Fr Michael, Bishop Donal remarked that the Merville native's fire had not dimmed in the slightest over the last 70 years, and expressed relief that he had not been in charge of the seminary when Fr Michael was there, with his liveliness.

Thanking him for his priestly service over the years, Bishop Donal also expressed appreciation to Fr Michael for his 'father of the house' sharings during the Diocesan priest conferences, in giving his insights into the Psalms. He told 'The Net': "It was a

privilege to be able to be present as Fr Michael celebrated Mass, exactly 70 years since he was ordained in the Basilica of St John Lateran, the Mother Church of the Catholic world, in Rome. The world has changed immeasurably since he left Merville, in the summer of 1947, to travel across war-ravaged Europe in order to begin four years of studies in Rome.

"But, despite the very different world of 2021, he has retained his sense of joy and vocation down through the years. He was known as a popular teacher for 25 years in St Columb's College. He was a keen sportsman. Diving was one of his interests and he was a member of the sub aqua club which located the La Trinidad Valencera wreck, which had lain in Kinnagoe Bay since 1588.

"Fr Michael brought that energy to his love of scriptures - especially the psalms - and to his commitment to serve God's people as a faithful priest. We have all been blessed by God to have the witness of his faithful and joyful service."

The ceremony came to a close with Fr Michael asking for God's blessing on those joining in via webcam as well as those present in the Church, with a special blessing for his housekeeper, Nancy, about whom he said: "I think a lot of the credit for me still being here in this world goes to Nancy."



## Fr Michael's 70 years of priesthood encouraging for all who have taken vows

*by Fr Noel McDermott, PP Faughanvale*

FATHER Michael Keaveny's Platinum Jubilee of priestly ordination was an occasion to which the parish of Faughanvale and Lower Cumber had been looking forward for some time. True, we were not able to mark it in the public way that we would have liked due to the restrictions imposed by the Covid 19 pandemic. However, as Fr Michael wryly noted in his homily at the Mass in Star of the Sea on the evening of March 10, he was not sure the last time a priest from the Diocese reached his 70th anniversary of ordination, but he was sure that he had not celebrated it via the webcam!

Thankfully, the modern technology enabled many parishioners and friends of Fr Michael to participate in the Mass of thanksgiving. But there is no technology to substitute for the age old taking and keeping of one's promise to God to serve Him faithfully in the sacred priesthood.

Speaking to Religious shortly before his sudden death in 1974, Cardinal Jean Daniélou said this:

"Marriage is final; the priesthood is final; religious life is final. It is one of the worst aberrations of our times to hear said that one can be a priest, a spouse, or a religious, for a time. This is the very denial of the gift. Under such conditions, one would be only lending himself, not giving himself.

"This means one would remain his own owner, since he has reserved the right to himself to take himself back when he wants to. What is definitive in the religious (and the priestly) vow is precisely that, by a definitive commitment, we are expressing this profound desire of being totally in the service of God in regard to all the eventualities of radical doubt, of questioning, and of temptation. It is a way of being sure that whatever may be the troubles that could be experienced, we have truly put our life at the service of the infinite plan of God's love." ("The specific character of Religious Life" - Reprinted from L'Osservatore Romano, 6 June 1974)

Fr Michael's life and the

celebration of his 70th anniversary of priestly ordination puts flesh on the words of Cardinal Daniélou, as well as the encouragement it gives to all people who have taken vows or promises of one kind or another. When one considers the physical and spiritual journey that he has made, one cannot but be impressed and greatly moved by his breadth of experience and his depth of human and spiritual insights. Not to mention the enthusiasm that Fr Michael retains for living, for the priesthood, for others and above all for God and His service.

The words of Psalm 92 come to mind "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age...to show that the Lord is upright; he is my rock and there is no unrighteousness in him." (vv13-15)

As Fr Michael commences the eighth decade of his priestly service, may he long continue to bless us with his presence and his witness of faith and faithfulness.

# Seventy years a priest...

## A reflection by Fr Michael Keaveny



It may seem a long time ago now, but the morning of my ordination is still fairly vivid in my memory. It took place in the Basilica of Saint John Lateran in Rome March 10, 1951, and was performed by Cardinal Micara, the Pope's deputy who was in charge of the actual diocese of Rome.

With me were many others to be ordained, six other students from the Irish College, as well as students from Czechoslovakia, a large number from the Italian seminary and some from Religious Orders. And, as if that wasn't enough, some seminarians were given Minor Orders and there were some given Subdiaconate.

The ceremony started about seven in the morning and didn't finish until near noon. I was fortunate in having my parents at the ceremony, as well as an older brother who was a priest, ordained three years earlier. We were all well ready for the reception held afterwards in the Irish College, just a short walk away from the Basilica.

In the following days, I said Mass in a number of different places, including the Church of Saint Mary Major and in the Catacombs. We also had the privilege, that is, the newly ordained Irish and their relatives,

of a private audience with Pope Pius XII, in the Vatican. This was organised by the College authorities.

However, it was back to class the following week, as I still had to finish my theological studies in the Lateran University. It wasn't until the end of June that I left Rome, and it was early in July before I got my big reception back in my home town in Moville. That was where my journey to the priesthood had started some years before and my ordination was, of course, the culmination of a whole series of events and key moments in my life up to that point.

I was brought up in a very religious family, where prayer was very much part of everyday life. We lived also very close to the local Church, a Convent chapel. In fact, you could see the sanctuary lamp in the chapel from the kitchen window. I and my brothers were altar boys from a very early age. I think I had the idea from that time that I might become a priest.

By virtue of a scholarship, I went as a boarder to St Columb's College in Derry, where I spent four years. Those were the war years and often our sleep was disturbed by air-raid sirens, with a hurried scramble down to the basement. Luckily for us, the only

time a bomb fell on Derry was at Easter time, when we were on our holidays.

In my third year in Saint Columb's, I was appointed assistant sacristan. Shortly after that appointment, the sacristan got ill and had to go home. The result was that I was sacristan for two years. I never heard of anyone else having that privilege. As sacristan, I had close associations with the priest members of the staff. Little did I think that I would be joining them in a few years time.

At that time I was thinking of becoming a priest, though the main intention in my mind was to go as a missionary to Africa. Then I remember one day in class, Dr Eugene O'Doherty, our Latin teacher and later Bishop of Dromore, said: "If any of you boys are thinking of the priesthood you should think of your home diocese first". That started me thinking, with the result that I did what was then known as the Bishop's Exam for priests for the diocese, was accepted and went to Maynooth.

### Rome

It was in Maynooth that I got my Science degree, as well as doing Philosophy and other subjects deemed necessary for a priest. Then, while on holiday after my third year there, I was suddenly told that I was being transferred to the Irish College in Rome. That college had been closed for a number of years because of the war. Now it was re-opening because of the strenuous efforts of the rector, Msgr McDaid, a Derry priest.

Twenty students made their way out to Rome that September, by Channel Ferry and Rail across war-torn Europe. It took us the best part of a week, with stops in London, Paris and Switzerland, until eventually landing in Rome. It was an immense change, from a College with about five hundred students to one of only twenty, and to a life with a new climate, a new language, new food, and so many other differences. Rome itself had been spared the worst of the bombing, but you hadn't to go far outside until you found towns and villages wrecked. The College

was our home for the next four years with students coming and going.

After my ordination and a holiday at home, I was told by my Bishop, Dr Farren, that he was appointing me to the staff of St Columb's. I may have been thinking of going to some parish as a curate, but I soon got used to the routine in the College. I suppose I had to because I eventually spent twenty-five years there. As well as mathematics, I taught Religious Knowledge. Hopefully I was an influence for good on many of my pupils. At that time there were twenty priests teaching in the College. Now there are none, and there is a scarcity of priests in parishes. How things have changed!

It was in 1975 that I moved out of the College to become Administrator of the newly-formed parish of Galliagh. I had had plenty of experience of pastoral work, both at home and abroad, in Scotland and in Florida, during my extended vacations from the College during the summers, so I was no novice, and Galliagh was a great place to start.

Then I went as parish priest to Killygordon, in Donegal. After that, I was ten years as parish priest of Omagh, before retiring and becoming a curate in Faughanvale in 2002. Four years later, I suffered a stroke with the result that I had to completely retire in 2008. Since then I have lived in Faughanvale, but thank God, I have reached seventy years of priesthood.

As I begin to realise today that I have completed seventy years in the priesthood, my first reaction is to thank God from the bottom of my heart for the great privilege that that has been. I know that there must have been many priests who have reached this milestone in other places, but I can't think of any that have done so in recent years in our own diocese. One thing I am certain of is that they haven't celebrated the fact over the webcam!

There certainly was no webcam when I was ordained in the Basilica of Saint John Lateran in Rome on March 10, 1951.



### Derry Diocesan Vocation Prayer



Lord Jesus Christ, gentle shepherd,  
You know your sheep,  
and you know how to reach their hearts.  
Give to the people of the  
Diocese of Derry,  
hearts that are open to the call of the  
Holy Spirit.  
Speak to the hearts of the (young) men  
of our Diocese,  
that they may hear your call to follow you  
and serve your people as priests.  
Awaken in them the courage to answer:  
**'Here I am, Lord, Send me.'**

*St Eugene, pray for us.*  
*St Columba, pray for us.*  
*St John Vianney, pray for us.*



### Pope's monthly intention

*The Holy Father has asked for prayer during April for:*

**Fundamental Rights:**  
We pray for those who risk their lives while fighting for fundamental rights under dictatorships, authoritarian regimes and even in democracies in crisis.

### Prayer for Priests

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

Word of justice, love and truth.  
Bless, in a special way,  
Your servant

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

### Remember in prayer:

- All priests (April 1st)
- Fr Con McLaughlin (2nd)
- Fr George McLaughlin (3rd)
- All priests (4th)
- Fr Peter McLaughlin (5th)
- Fr Kevin Mulhern (6th)
- Msgr Ignatius McQuillan (7th)
- Fr Peter Madden (8th)
- Fr Anthony Mailey (9th)
- Archbishop Eamon Martin (10th)
- Fr Gerard Mongan (11th)
- All Priests (12th)
- All Priests (13th)
- Fr Aidan Mullan (14th)
- Fr Kevin Mullan (15th)
- All Priests (16th)
- Fr Patrick J Mullan (17th)
- Fr Sean O'Donnell (18th)
- Fr Seamus O'Connell (19th)
- Fr Joseph O'Connor (20th)
- Fr Colm O'Doherty (21st)
- Fr Kieran O'Doherty (22nd)
- Fr Brian O'Donnell (23rd)
- Fr Francis P O'Hagan (24th)
- Fr Patrick O'Hagan (25th)
- Fr David O'Kane (26th)
- Fr Patrick O'Kane (27th)
- Fr Peter O'Kane (28th)
- All priests (29th)
- Fr Arthur O'Reilly (30th)

# A tribute to the late Sean Friel

SEAN Friel, a native of the Waterside Parish in Derry, died peacefully at home with his family on March 29. He was a committed family man who had a great involvement in community throughout his life. A man of great faith in God, people, prayer, Church life and parish were important to him.

Sean worked as a teacher and principal in a number of schools in Derry. He was also the organist and choirmaster in St Columb's Church, Waterside.

Born in the Waterside Parish in 1935, he lived there for nearly all of his 85 years. He was married to Celine (nee Mullan), who passed away in 2011, and had two daughters, Anne and Karen, of whom he was very proud. His loving and very close family always came first.

Sean was a man whose life merged all parts of his Christian faith. He had a great respect, belief in and love for the people that were part of his life and did everything that he could to help them to grow to be the best that God intended. We all reached higher and worked harder because he believed in us.

He taught in Rosemount Primary School and St Brean's Secondary School, where he taught Music and Mathematics, and was principal of Glendermott Primary School, Ardmore, and Lenamore Primary School, Galliagh, now known as St Therese's. Sean loved and respected the children that he taught and worked hard to get grants and bring investment into the schools. He encouraged his teachers and all his staff to develop their own educational interests and use these to bring high quality education to pupils.

During his time as principal of Glendermott PS, he worked

closely with Fr Michael Conway, the first Parish Priest of Ardmore, to grow and develop the school, visiting local families personally and encouraging them to send their children there.

As the first principal of Lenamore PS, which opened in 1983, he continued to ensure that there was a strong blend of Church, school and home life for the children under his care. From the start, he worked closely with parents to choose the colour and design of the school uniform, and local parents worked to design and make the new school jumper. He believed in the importance of all families celebrating together with school and Church after the sacraments of First Communion and Confirmation. He ensured that everyone in the community was welcome in the school, including inviting older people to a dedicated school carol service each year and establishing art classes from a local artist for parents. He was respectful of everyone and everyone was equal.

Sean was a kind and caring teacher. He allowed no child to stand outside a class as punishment. Past pupils regularly came up to him to thank him for his teaching and great kindness to them as children.

In the Waterside Parish, he was a member of one of the first Parish Pastoral Councils, set up post-Vatican II in the seventies. He was on the editorial group for the parish magazine along with Lawrence Moore and others. He also sat on the Diocesan Liturgy Group at that time, and he was a lay reader.

A prayerful, thoughtful and conscientious man, Sean attended weekly Eucharistic Adoration in the parish and prayed the Divine

Office each day. He was dedicated to his Parish and Church and gave selflessly of his time and talents.

## Music

Organist and choirmaster at St Columb's Church, Waterside for over 31 years, he formed a new, four-part choir to sing at all of the main liturgies and celebrations over that time. He provided the music at the opening of the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Trench Road, the rededication of St Columb's Church, Chapel Road, and at many ordinations, weddings and funerals. He was a calm presence and one parish priest commented that he never said no to any request. Sean spoke of choir members as his second family and that bond still exists between members today. He was a gifted musician, being able to play and harmonise any piece of music having heard it just once.

He loved music and continually brought new music to the liturgy, including some of his own compositions, arranging music to suit the vocal range of choir members. His own compositions included music to all the psalms of Sunday and Holy Day Masses, a Mass, a setting of Ecce Sacerdos Magnus for the rededication of St Columb's Church by Bishop Daly, in 1986, and a hymn to St Columba in 2012. When he retired as church organist in 2014, our loss was not just one of an organist but of the sense of celebration, the chords, harmonies, history and love that he brought to the liturgy.

As well as his contributions to church music, Sean wrote and presented The Music Makers, a series of half hour programmes on classical music on Radio Foyle in the early 1980s. He linked these programmes to evening

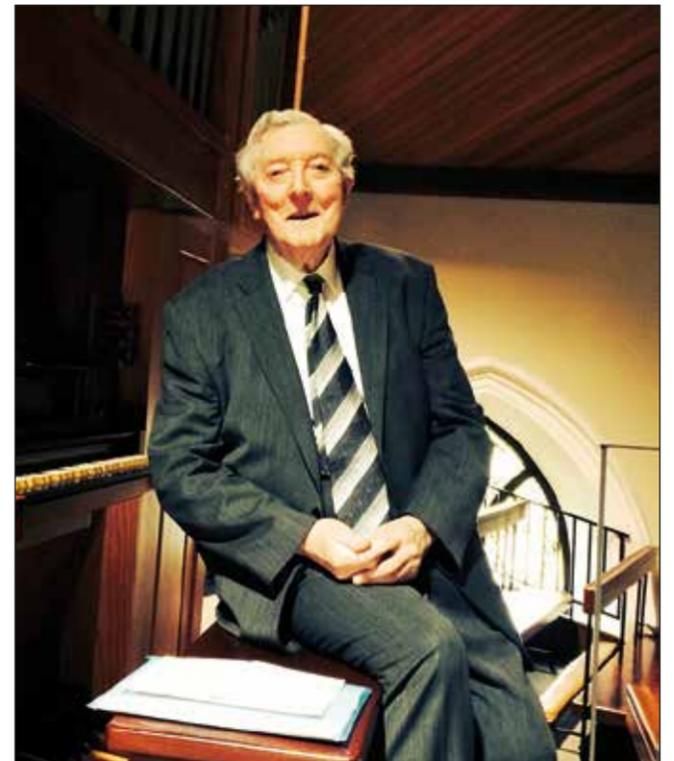
classes on classical music at Magee College. He was a contributor to programmes on religious and classical music on Radio Ulster, working with Reverend Bert Tosh. He also wrote reviews of musical events in Derry for the Belfast Telegraph and adjudicated music competitions at Letterkenny Feis.

He was a man who was interested in everything. He had a love of books, cooking and eating different foods, and gardening. His family home was always filled with music. He enjoyed going to concerts and went to the Edinburgh Festival for a week each year to hear and see famous as well as upcoming orchestras, conductors, singers and choirs. This was a chance to experience once-in-a-lifetime productions, and to chat and compare notes with other concert-goers. It was also an opportunity to eat out and enjoy new tastes!

While Sean had a strong sense of family roots in parish, he also loved to visit Coolaney, in Co Sligo, where his mother was born, and the area around Kilmacrennan, from where his father's family moved to Derry in the early 1900s. He used to fish the River Leannan with his father at weekends as a child.

At his funeral, Parish Priest, Fr Michael Canny said that Sean was, "a great man, a family man...a gentleman in every sense of the word. Individually and collectively as a Parish, our lives have been enhanced by his life. He was a faithful and committed member of our Parish who gave of his time, his talents and of his resources very generously and today in faith, we return him to the Lord".

Sean is survived by his daughters, Anne and Karen, and by his sister, Bernadette



## Colmcille by Sean Friel

*Colmcille, saint of Gartan,  
Silent waters, lonely hills,  
Forests where soft breezes whisper,  
Deep slow rivers flowing still,  
As when there you played your childhood,  
In the years so long ago,  
And in all that land's soft beauty,  
First your God you came to know,  
First your God you came to know.*

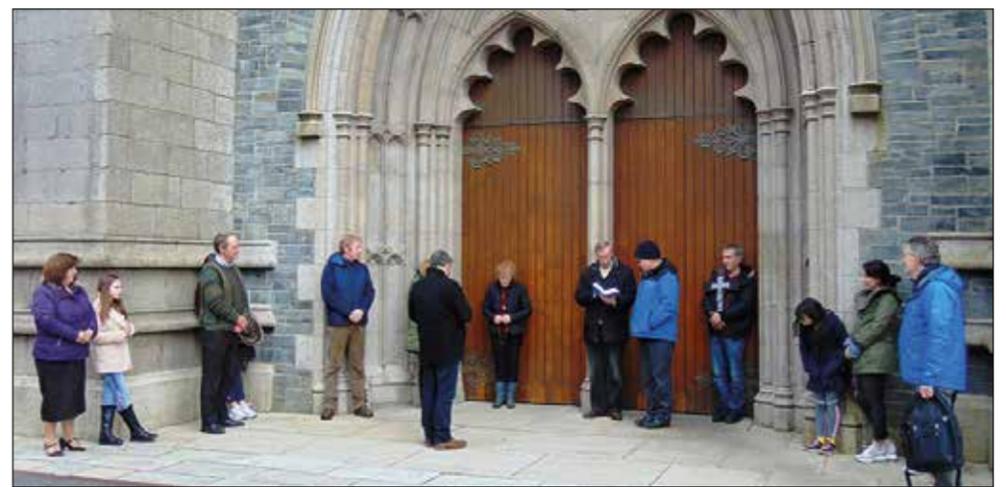
*Colmcille, man of exile,  
Far from home you lived your day,  
Working, striving, all for others,  
By your toil, your God to praise,  
But the silk of Gartan's waters,  
And the Lenan's peaceful flow,  
In your memory held a sadness,  
For the land you used to know,  
For the land you used to know.*



## Long Tower ladies pray Mothers' Day Rosary



On Mothers' Day, ladies of the Long Tower Parish prayed the Rosary at the outside altar in memory all mothers.



A small group of prayer friends who came to pray the Rosary outside St Eugene's Cathedral, Derry, every Sunday morning during Lent.

## Lenten Rosary outside Cathedral

EVERY Sunday during Lent, a small group of prayer friends from Derry City and Inishowen prayed the Rosary together outside St Eugene's Cathedral.

Liam Grant, from Buncrana, told 'The Net' that it was in response to the closure of chapels

to public worship during the latest Covid-19 lockdown.

"We wanted to come and pray the Rosary outside the Cathedral during the mid-day Mass on Sundays during Lent, in support of our Bishop and priests, and for the re-opening of our chapels to

public Mass", said Liam.

He added: "People long to be able to come to Mass and receive the Eucharist in their chapels. It is great that they can do so now in the north and we pray that the day will come soon for the same in the south."

# Eangach

## Ár nDúchas

### Seacht Suáilce na Maighdine Muire

An chéad suáilce a fuair an Mhaighdean ghlórmhar go bhfuair sí a Mac amháin.  
*Loinneog:*

Beannacht Dé 'na timpeall, is ise 'bhí go sólasach, is beannacht Dé do gach aon duine a ghabhas na suáilcín ina honóirse.

An dara suáilce a fuair an Mhaighdean ghlórmhar go bhfuair a Mac an chaint.  
*Loinneog:*

An tríú suáilce a fuair an Mhaighdean ghlórmhar go dteachaigh a Mac a shiúl.  
*Loinneog:*

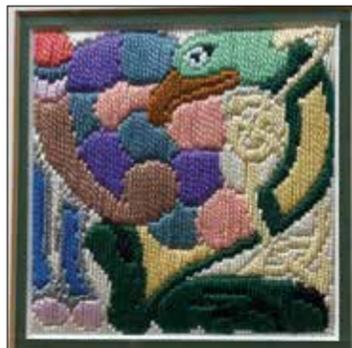
An ceathrú suáilce a fuair an Mhaighdean ghlórmhar gur léigh a Mac an bíobla.  
*Loinneog:*

An cúigiú suáilce a fuair an Mhaighdean ghlórmhar go bhfuair an dall an t-amharc.  
*Loinneog:*

An seisiú suáilce a fuair an Mhaighdean ghlórmhar gur éirigh a Mac ó mhairbh.  
*Loinneog:*

An seachtú suáilce a fuair an Mhaighdean ghlórmhar go dteachaigh sí chun a Mic 'un na bhFlaitheas.  
*Loinneog:*

## Cuimhní Cóivide 3



Dearadh Ceilteach

Bhí orm bheith liom féin go laethúil ag léamh Aifrinn i dtithe pobail a bhí fuar, fann folamh, gan an Chríostaí beo i mo chuideachta, ach 'Mo Thiarna agus Mo Dhia' a bhí liom i sacraimint ró-naofa na haltóra. Bhí cúrsaí mar sin go dtí gur thosaigh mé ar na hAifrinn agus na paidríní faire a chraoladh beo ar na meáin shóisialta. Ag an phointe sin bhí pobal fíorúil creidimh ag cruinniú le chéile, 'go digiteach agus i spiorad' agus muid ar scáth a chéile ach scartha ó chéile san am chéanna.

Cuimhne chinn eile atá agam, tráth a raibh iarsma na bpéindlíthe air, agus mé ag ceiliúradh íobairt ró-naofa an Aifrinn amuigh faoin spéir. Bhí sagart agus pobal cruinnithe le chéile i gcuibhreann, ar láthair bheannaithe íobartha agus adhartha ár sinsear. Bhí muid faoi scáth na gcrann ag carraig chruaidh an Aifrinn, le 'Loch Dhún Lúiche go ciúin sa ghleann ina luí, agus an Eargail ard ina stua os cionn

caor is call' ina chúlhrat againn. Chruinnigh muid i lagrach cnoic mar phobal an Aifrinn ag Éadan na hAltóra ag tabhairt adhradh agus seirbhís do Dhia ár gcruthaitheoir mar a rinne ár muintir romhainn i ré na n-altóirí faoin spéir.

Bhí na daoine go buanseasmhach dá gcreideamh sna laethaibh sin. Bhí a gcreideamh fíor-thábhachtach daofa, mar a bhí dá sliocht, agus do shliocht a sleachta ina ndiaidh. Char dhiúltaigh siadsan don chreideamh, agus muid féin mar an gcéanna, ag ceiliúradh le bród an oidhreacht fhíor, fhiúntach a shín siad anuas chugainn.

Is cuimhneach liom bheith ag freagairt glaonna gutháin ó Árus Ghaoth Dobhair, teach banaltrais an phobail, agus banaltra ag lorg paidreacha chomh maith leis an ola dhéanach d'othair bhochta a bhí ag saothrú an bháis, agus mé ag déanamh ar aghaidh chomh gasta agus a thioctadh liom. San Árus domh, bhí mé clúdaithe ó bhun go barr le trealamh cosanta pearsanta, mar a bheadh radharc as scannán ficsean eolaíochta ann. Is cuimhneach liom bheith ag leagadh cois ar thairseach an Áruis agus ag siúl isteach, agus a bheith idir dhá chomhairle bomáite beag amháin, ach ag gabháil ar aghaidh i bpearsa Chríost a fhad leis an té a bhí go beag de mhaith. Cha ndéanaim dearmad go bhfaca mé i súile lucht cúraim agus leighis agus

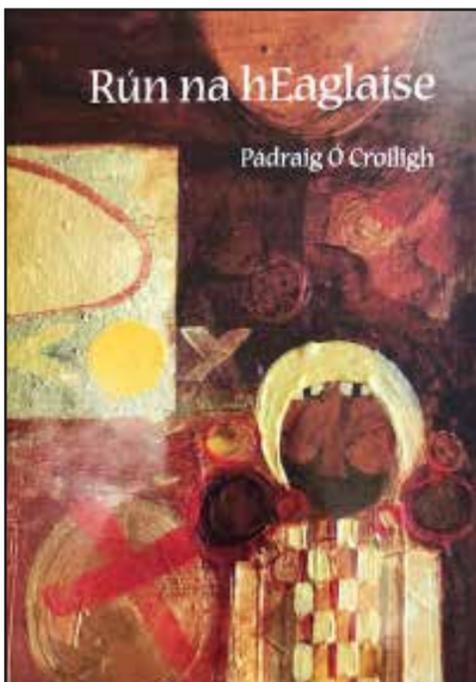


An Sagart Brian Ó Fearraí, Doirí Beaga



Carraig an Aifrinn

sna hoibrithé sin, an Críost céanna a thug aire do dhaoine tinne, ag tabhairt uchtach agus misneach daofa ina laigeacht dhaonna. (Buíochas le *Foilseacháin Abhair Spioradálta*.)



## Bí Linn i do Thinneas

Thug Dara Comhairle na Vatacáine tuiscint nua ar Shacraimint na n-Easlán. Ba léir go dtiocfadh leat an tsacraimint seo a ghlacadh níos mó ná uair amháin, agus nach ullmhúchán don bhás a bhí ann, ach leigheas ón tinneas a iarraidh. Is é an rud atá taobh thiar di, go bhfuil muid ag dul in araicis an duine ina thinneas ionas nach mbeidh sé fágtha leis féin, agus ag tabhairt comhlúadar Chríost dó lena leigheas.

Iarraimid ar an duine tinn a bheith tinn in éineacht linn, mar chuid den phobal. Nuair atá tú tinn, ní

chaitear amach thú, ná ní gá duit d'aghaidh a chur le balla agus do dhroim leis an phobal. Bí linn i do thinneas. Agus ní hamháin go leigheasfar tú le grásta Dé, ach tiocfaidh grásta agus buntáistí chuig an phobal dá thairbhe sin. Nuair a ghlacann tú Sacraimint na n-Easlán tiontaítear na pianta ina urnaithe de chineál eile, agus bíonn tú ag guí tríd an fhulaingt. Ní bhíonn Críostaí ar bith díomhaoín, agus is iontach an neart atá le hurnaí na ndaoine tinne.

Tá éagsúlacht amháin soiléir cheana féin ó thaobh cheiliúradh

Shacraimint na n-Easlán de — ní bhíonn ullmhúchán déanta roimh ré ag an duine atá ag dul í a ghlacadh, agus ní bhíonn ullmhúchán déanta acu siúd atá páirteach leis an othar sa tinneas. Uaireanta is go tubaisteach a tharlaíonn droch-thinneas, agus uaireanta eile tagann an riachtanas gan mórán rabhaidh. Is cóir i gcónaí a insint don othar gurb í seo Sacraimint na nEaslán, agus gurb í seo an urnaí agus an impí is láidre dá bhfuil ag an Eaglais go dtiocfaidh biseach orthu. Ba mhór an trua díspeagadh a dhéanamh ar an tsacraimint agus tú ag iarraidh a

rá nach bhfuil ann ach beannacht, nó go bhfuil an sagart ag dul cúpla paidir a rá. Cuimhnigh go bhfuil an t-othar i gcónaí ag éisteach. Tabhair seans dóibh páirt a ghlacadh sa tsacraimint.

Go minic is iad na daoine muinteartha thart ar an leaba is mó a mbíonn eagla orthu. Ach is féidir páirt mhór a bheith ag na daoine muinteartha chomh maith sa cheiliúradh seo. Is fearr i gcónaí na daoine muinteartha agus na banaltraí a bheith istigh don cheiliúradh. Níl fáth ar bith go n-imeoidís.

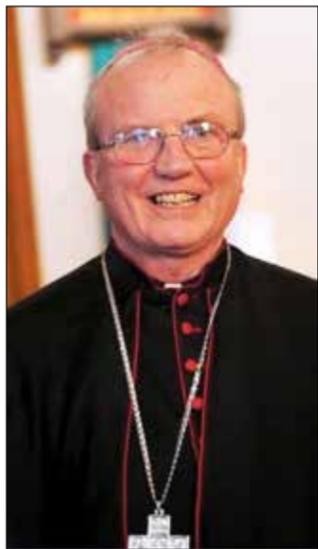
## Reflections on Eucharistic Adoration and Divine Mercy

*FOLLOWING the beautiful ceremony in Knock on the Feast of St Joseph, during which Pope Francis officially elevated the Co Mayo Shrine as an International Sanctuary of Special Eucharistic and Marian Devotion, some members of the Derry Diocesan Eucharistic Adoration Apostolate and Parish Adoration Committees have shared their thoughts on the news and their experience of spending time regularly adoring Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.*

*Others have reflected on the great message of Divine Mercy, to be celebrated on Divine Mercy Sunday, April 11, with some going on to express their thoughts on the 'Dying with Dignity' Bill currently being considered by the Irish Government.*

*Bishop Donal also shares his thoughts on the new status granted to Knock Shrine, and welcomes the growth of Eucharistic Adoration, paying tribute to all those around the Diocese who spend time praying before the Blessed Sacrament.*

## Great growth in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament by Bishop Donal



Pontiff to pray at the Co Mayo Shrine. The Eucharistic focus of Knock re-emphasises the centrality of the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, as we read in St John's Gospel.

The centrality of the Mass is the summit of all Christian worship, for we join with the angels and saints in one unending hymn of praise to the Father, through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Blessed Sacrament is the sacrament of the sacrifice of the cross. Any separation of the Blessed Sacrament from the Cross misunderstands what Jesus did at the Last Supper.

There has been a great growth in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. People silently worship the mystery of the Cross, made present among us. In a very superficial culture, Adoration draws us into the mystery of God and into the mystery of the Lord who gives his life for us.

If we are to be renewed as a national Church, that will not come without loving adoration of the mystery of the Cross. I commend all those Adoration groups around the diocese who come to know Jesus better and who pray for all the many graces that we need.

The recognition of Knock as an international Marian and Eucharistic shrine comes after Pope Francis became the second

## Knock's new status welcomed by growing number of Eucharistic Adorers



ON the Feast of St Joseph, Pope Francis elevated Our Lady of Knock Shrine to an International Sanctuary of Special Eucharistic and Marian Devotion during a special ceremony broadcast from the Apparition Chapel.

The news was especially welcomed by faithful adorers of the Blessed Sacrament in parishes across the island who, before Covid-19 restrictions, travelled in large numbers to Knock for the annual National Eucharistic Adoration Apostolate's Pilgrimage day there, and amongst them many from the Derry Diocese.

The historic occasion saw the Holy Father address the Shrine and the country in a video message during the concelebration of Mass by Archbishop Michael Neary, Archbishop of Tuam and custodian of the Shrine, and Fr Richard Gibbons, parish priest of Knock and rector of the Shrine, on the evening of March 19. The Apostolic Nuncio, His Excellency Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo was also in attendance.

Commending the Irish as "a missionary people", Pope Francis noted that since the Apparition of Our Lady, St Joseph, and St John the Apostle to some villagers at Knock on August 21, 1879, "the Irish people, wherever they have

found themselves, have expressed their faith and devotion to Our Lady of Knock."

He added: "You have been a missionary people. We cannot forget how many priests left their homeland in order to become missionaries of the Gospel. Nor can we forget the many lay people who emigrated to far-away lands but still kept their devotion to Our Lady.

"How many families in the course of almost a century and a half have handed on the faith to their children and gathered their daily labours around the prayer of the Rosary, with the image of Our Lady of Knock at its centre. The arms of the Virgin, outstretched in prayer, continue to show us the importance of prayer as the message of hope which goes out from this Shrine. As you know, in her apparition at Knock, the Virgin says nothing. Yet her silence is a language; indeed, it is the most expressive language we have. The message which comes from Knock is that of the great value of silence for our faith.

"It is this silence in the face of mystery, which does not mean giving up on understanding, but understanding while aided and supported by the love of Jesus who offered himself for all of us as the Lamb sacrificed for the salvation of humanity. It is this silence in the face of the great mystery of a love which cannot be reciprocated unless in trusting abandonment to the will of the merciful Father. And, finally, it is silence which Jesus asks of us when he teaches:

"When you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And



your Father who sees in secret will repay you. In praying, do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask him." (Matthew 6:6-8)

Stating that the elevation of the National Sanctuary of Our Lady of Knock to an International Sanctuary of Special Eucharistic and Marian Devotion was a great responsibility, Pope Francis said: "You accept to always have your arms wide open as a sign of welcome to every pilgrim who may arrive from any part of the world, asking nothing in return but only recognizing him as a brother or a sister who desires to share the same experience of fraternal prayer.

"May this welcome be joined with charity and become an effective witness to a heart which is open to receiving the Word of God and the grace of the Holy Spirit which gives us strength. May the Eucharistic mystery which unites us in communion with the Risen Lord and with one another always be the rock on which to live out faithfully our vocation to be 'missionary disciples', like the

Virgin Mary who made herself a pilgrim of the Gospel of her Son. May she protect us and console us with her merciful countenance."

The designation came two years after the Vatican officially recognised the miraculous healing of Marion Carroll, who had been bedridden for years with multiple sclerosis and was healed during a blessing with a monstrance at the Shrine in 1989.

Archbishop Neary described the announcement as "a momentous event", adding that it was "most fitting that it would be announced and celebrated on the Feast of Saint Joseph in the Year of Saint Joseph, because alongside Our Lady, Saint John the Evangelist and the Lamb of God, Saint Joseph also appeared here on that August evening in 1879".

The Archbishop went on to pray that "pilgrims from all over Ireland and from across the world who come here, carrying their crosses, will 'experience deeply God's closeness, the tenderness of the Virgin Mary and the company of the saints', so as to be encouraged and enabled to return home with a more buoyant faith, with hope in their hearts and a more ardent love for God and neighbour".

## Adoration calms my fears and gives me courage to follow Jesus more closely by Annie Mullan

WE behold the splendour of God, shining on the face of Jesus, on the face of the Son.

Our Holy Father Pope Francis reminded us in the Year of Mercy that Jesus is the face of God's mercy. He said, "We need to understand how tender God is, how He caresses us, He touches our woundedness, He loves us so gently and when we receive that it brings us real joy and peace."

This peace I, personally, receive in Eucharistic Adoration. It is an amazing gift from Jesus. It is a gift which the world cannot give, a calming of my fears, courage to follow Him more closely, and a desire to offer praise and thanksgiving for His awesome love. Jesus loves each of us, but with a personal relationship all at the one time.

When we are in the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, we are in the presence of God; we are in the presence of the Kingdom of Heaven. What a friend we have in Jesus. To what can we compare this wondrous gift?

When we see the children adore Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, their wee faces are radiant. Here we see the building of God's kingdom on earth. The children are so pure, so tuned in, and they desire to hear all about Jesus. When we instil into children the truths of the faith, especially an awareness of the Lord's true presence in the Holy Eucharist, they will grow up with that, they will take that into their adulthood. Even if they fall away, they will remember those precious moments as a child with the Lord.

As we grow older we start

building barriers. Life gets complicated. Hurt, pain, and suffering enter the picture. We are all in need of God's love and healing. With our blessed Mother Mary, St Joseph and all the Angels and Saints, let us trust in Jesus, let us adore reverently so that we can let the rays of the Son of God shine on us and bless us abundantly.

I pray that we may all find our way to Him, truly present and yet hidden, but waiting patiently to share His love and peace with each one of us. He will grant us many graces and bless us with His Divine Mercy.

Come to Jesus and adore Him, He loves us. To God be the glory.

In these days when we can no longer receive Jesus, I watch and pray,



Annie Mullan, Claudy

*I love you and I miss you my Jesus, from the very core of my heart.*

*When I'm in your kingdom in Heaven, we will never again be apart.*

# Silence of Knock Apparition mirrors silence of Eucharistic Adoration

by Catherine Sharkey



Children taking part in the National Eucharistic Adoration Apostolate Pilgrimage procession in Knock Basilica, pre-Covid.

VISITING Knock Shrine has always been a very special occasion for me, so I am very happy with Pope Francis' granting it recognition as an International Sanctuary of Special Eucharistic and Marian Devotion.

I have been going to Knock on pilgrimage since I was eight years old, the first time being the summer I made my First Holy Communion. Now, to visit as an adult on the Apostolate of Eucharistic Adoration's Pilgrimage Day, and to be part of a group of adults and children for this is extra special. We travel together, pray together and sing together.

The Eucharistic Adoration pilgrimage is a day of celebration at Knock for Eucharistic adorers from all over Ireland, where we all come together as one family in Christ.

The children, who adore Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament each month

with the Children of the Eucharist group, love their pilgrimage to Knock. I find that children love spending time adoring Jesus, there are no questions, no expectations and, through their purity, a relationship begins between two friends.

To adore Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament is such a privilege for us all and when given this opportunity to adore Jesus present in the Eucharist you receive consolation and peace, because He is there waiting for us, waiting to distribute His graces to us. He is the Lamb of God, as real today as He was over 2,000 years ago. He loves all of us with an eternal love, with a forgiving love.

Our Jesus is all merciful and He is with us in a very special way in Eucharistic Adoration. To sit in front of Jesus and soak in His rays, I find heals us, renews us and gives us strength to journey on in these

difficult times. We need not say or do anything; just being in His presence is enough.

In this 'Year of St Joseph', it is very fitting for Knock to be given the honour of International Sanctuary of Special Eucharistic and Marian Devotion. No doubt, St Joseph had something to do with this. Our Blessed Mother is calling us to The Lamb. She is showing us

that the way to Him is through the Sacrifice of the Mass.

The silence of the Apparition at Knock mirrors the silence during Eucharistic Adoration, where we listen to Jesus and just be in His presence.

May this year dedicated to St Joseph bring hope to all of us and may St Joseph guide us in our journey home.



Children receiving a blessing after time spent in Eucharistic Adoration at Knock Shrine, Co Mayo, pre-Covid.

## There is a very special connection with God during Eucharistic Adoration

by Gwen Lagan



Gwen Lagan, Maghera

Church, in Maghera, after school to wait for his father to finish work every evening. He would spend over an hour there and it was no bother to him.

Eucharistic Adoration became familiar to us because of this, so when Fr Colum Clerkin mentioned about starting it up during his time in the Ballinascreen Parish, Bernadette Toner and myself said that we would love to be part of that. We then went to a meeting in the Everglades Hotel regarding starting up a Eucharistic Adoration Apostolate in the Diocese, which was attended by many people.

I feel that if God gives you something you should be open to giving something back. So, with God giving us Patrick as a priest, I saw the opportunity to help promote Eucharistic Adoration in

parishes as a way of giving back.

Personally, I get a lot out of Eucharistic Adoration. That hour with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament every week is very special not only to me but to many other people, who really missed not being able to go during lockdown. It has been comforting to be able to join in online, through parish webcams, but it is not the same fulfilling experience.

There is closeness, a very special connection between you and God during Eucharistic Adoration. And there is also a great feeling of unity, knowing that so many other people are also praying in silent Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, in other parts of the Diocese, country and the world. In these times, when we are all experiencing so many problems in our world, it is very comforting

to have God to trust in and seek comfort from.

The Diocesan Eucharistic Adoration Committee has been unable to meet during lockdown and this has also been greatly missed by me and other members. As well as giving you a sense of fulfilment in knowing that Eucharistic Adoration was being introduced to more and more parishes, the monthly meetings in Termonbacca were a lovely social occasion. Hopefully, we will be able to meet again soon.

It is great that Knock has now been elevated to an International Sanctuary of Special Eucharistic and Marian Devotion. I am very fond of Knock and have missed terribly not being able to go there, but I watched this ceremony online and thought it was really lovely.

## Time in Eucharistic Adoration brings peace and consolation

by Siobhan Sweeney



Siobhan Sweeney, Omagh

taking any problems to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. So, when I went through a personal crisis, or knew of anyone else in need of prayer, I would go to Eucharistic Adoration and hand it over to Jesus. You do get peace and consolation from doing this.

Knowing the benefits of Eucharistic Adoration, when I heard about a meeting in Derry to set up a Eucharistic Adoration Apostolate in the Diocese, I knew that I wanted to go to it and went on to become a presenter, talking at Masses in parishes about Eucharistic Adoration.

Personally, I feel that spending time in adoration of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is just what is needed at this time, for the deep peace that it can bring.

I also find it very timely that in this Year of the Family and St Joseph, whom I have long had devotion to as all my prayer intentions offered through his intercession have been answered over the years, that Knock has now been recognised as an International Sanctuary of Special Eucharistic and Marian Devotion. St Joseph was part of the Apparition there and I think that it is fantastic that we have a Eucharistic and Marian Shrine here in Ireland, where the Holy Family appeared. I am really looking forward to making a visit there again when we get out of lockdown.

## Our Lady drew me to Eucharistic Adoration through the Rosary

by Jack McLaughlin

FOR me, Eucharistic Adoration has been an invitation to grow in God's love. I was first drawn to spend time in Eucharistic Adoration after a period of Monday evening prayer with a soul friend.

We were meeting to pray the Rosary and read Scripture in each other's homes, and one night I was looking out the window and saw a big, full moon shining between the trees, which brought to mind the reference in Scripture to the narrow gate. After sharing this with my prayer friend, we decided that we would like to start spending time in Eucharistic Adoration.

There was no regular Adoration in my parish, Moville, or neighbouring Drung at the time, and the only place we could think of was St Anthony's Retreat Centre. With Fr Neil Carlin's approval, we started spending an hour a week in Adoration there, so when I received a letter from my parish priest, Fr O'Hagan, asking me if I would like to attend a meeting in the Everglades Hotel regarding the setting up of a Diocesan Eucharistic Adoration Apostolate, I decided to go. I felt the draw of the Lord really to Adoration.

I found it hard to focus at times, and sometimes I found the time a bit long, but I stuck with it when

the words Jesus spoke to the apostles in Gethsemane came to mind - "Can you not watch one hour with me?"

I was always a spiritual person, particularly from my 20s, and I have come to know God more through Eucharistic Adoration. It is my rock, my anchor, my fortress, and I think many people would benefit from it.

I am delighted that Knock has now been recognised as an International Sanctuary of Special Eucharistic and Marian Devotion. It is a very special place and this news ties in with my own faith experience, because it was Our Lady, through the Rosary, who

drew me to Eucharistic Adoration.



Jack McLaughlin, Moville

## Being in God's presence quietens your spirit

by *Mary Harkin*

EUCCHARISTIC Adoration is such a great gift. Anything that brings you closer to God and more into His presence is a good, and my time in Adoration brings a peace into my heart.

It was because of this that I joined the Diocesan Eucharistic Adoration Committee. It is a lovely Apostolate to be a part of for the good that it brings to people. There is a deep peace that comes from being in God's presence; it quietens your spirit.

During lockdown, we have had not had the Blessed Sacrament exposed for Eucharistic Adoration in my parish and this is something I and others have missed, as it was something we very much



Mary Harkin, Sessiaghoneill

looked forward to each week. You can get it online, but it is not the same. Some people still go along to pray in the chapel for their hour, although the Blessed Sacrament is not exposed. This special time with Jesus means a lot to people.

## I always feel better after Eucharistic Adoration

by *Brendan Glenn*



Knock Basilica during the 2019 National Eucharistic Adoration Apostolate Pilgrimage.

WHEN I discovered Eucharistic Adoration was on in my parish, I found myself returning regularly to pray in the peace and the quiet.

Some days when I go to Eucharistic Adoration, I could sit there all day. I get a great peace of mind and freedom from worries from being in front of the Blessed Sacrament. Every time I go into the chapel for some time in Adoration, I always feel better when I come out from it. There is more to our faith than just going to Mass on a Sunday.

My experience led to me wanting to help promote Adoration so

that others could benefit from it, so I got involved in the Diocesan Eucharistic Adoration Apostolate.

I remember going to Knock to experience the National Eucharistic Adoration Apostolate Day of Pilgrimage, and it was unbelievable how many Adorers where there from other parts of the country. It was great to see and I am delighted that Knock is now known as an International Eucharistic and Marian Shrine. Hopefully, this will draw more people to come there on pilgrimage.

## Adoration is most peaceful and rewarding time

by *Anne McCarter*

THE most peaceful and rewarding time I have is that one hour with the Lord in Eucharistic Adoration. I find that He is never outdone in generosity.

Joining the Diocesan Eucharistic Adoration Committee, and helping to spread weekly Adoration into parishes across the Diocese, has been one of the greatest privileges and blessings in my life.



## 'Speak Lord, your servant is listening'

(1 Samuel 3:10) by *Martin Callaghan*

WHEN I go to Eucharistic Adoration, I think on what Samuel said, "Speak Lord, your servant is listening" (1 Samuel 3:10), and I try to do just that, listen. This is what the Pope has said as well, that we go to Eucharistic Adoration to listen. So, I spend the time listening to get the answers to problems and to give me more strength to work in my parish.

My experience in Eucharistic Adoration is like that of talking to a close friend; it is a conversation with a trusted friend that helps you come to a conclusion about what to do, and I leave more settled and clear in my thinking.

On one occasion, I was reading a book about Eucharistic miracles and around that time I decided to travel solo by motorbike to Portugal. I had no particular plan but everything unfolded the right way. I arrived in Fatima around 10.30 pm with no accommodation booked, so I had nowhere to lay my head. I went to one of the hotels but it was fully booked, however, it had a sister house, a B&B, and there was a room there. When I got up in the morning, I had the lovely surprise of seeing that it was beside the statues of the three children, Jacinta, Francesco and Lucia.

I stayed in Fatima for two days, spending time going to Mass and Eucharistic Adoration. When I was there, I read the story about the Church of St Stephen in Santarem and recalled reading about the Eucharistic Miracle there in the book of Eucharistic Miracles. When I realised that it was only an hour's drive from Fatima, I decided to go there and gaze upon Christ in this Eucharistic Miracle.

After parking my bike in the town car park, I asked a police officer about the Eucharistic Miracle but he didn't know about it. I then went into a cafe for a coffee and I asked someone there, but they didn't know about it either, so I was beginning to wonder if I was in the correct place.

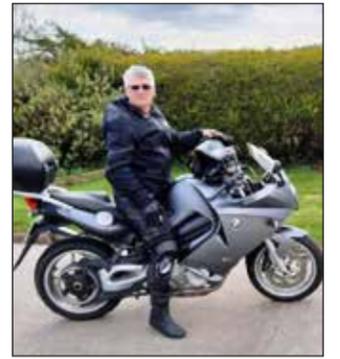
I saw a church building that had been turned into a museum, so I decided to ask there and they were able to direct me to St Stephen's Church, which was just on the next street. When I got there, a woman was just locking the door. The woman was the sacristan and was closing up for lunch. I thought about how close I had been to seeing the Eucharistic Miracle after travelling so far, because I hadn't long to stay if I was going to catch my boat home.

When the woman turned

around and saw me standing there, she asked if I wanted to go in and if I was part of a group. When I told her that it was just me, she unlocked the big door again and led me through the Church towards the sacristy door. Then she led me behind the altar, where there were steps like a stepladder up to a small door in the wall about the size of a picture frame.

So, I climbed the steps and opened the little door and there I saw the red Eucharist; the Body and Blood of Christ. I gazed at it for about one to two seconds and then closed the door again. The sacristan was flabbergasted at this and asked me did I not want to spend longer with it, after the distance I had travelled. I had already believed about Jesus' presence in the Eucharist and so I didn't have to gaze on this Eucharistic Miracle too long. In faith, I feel His presence in the Eucharist in Tabernacles around the world, and that He wants people to come to Him.

I was content when the sacristan said she would open up again for me. It was as if Christ had been guiding me to be there at that certain time, as had I been any later the woman would have been away.



Martin Callaghan, Burt.

I felt the same guiding hand when my parish priest at the time, Fr McGoldrick asked me to represent the parish of Burt, Inch & Fahan at a meeting about setting up a Diocesan Eucharistic Adoration Committee. I was delighted to do this. I believe that God has a plan to bring you to a place where you blossom and then go out into the world, like with Samuel.

The meeting in the Everglades was in 2019 and the first meeting of the Derry Diocesan Eucharistic Adoration Committee was in February 2010 in Termonbacca, with me as chairman. That was such a privilege to be involved in bringing Eucharistic Adoration to more and more parishes around the Diocese.

## The Holy Miracle of Santarem



THE story of the Santarem Eucharistic Miracle begins with that of a woman living in Santarem, Portugal, in 1247, whose husband was unfaithful to her. In despair, she consulted a sorceress, who promised her that all would be resolved if she would bring her a consecrated host.

Reluctantly, the woman decided to commit the sacrilegious act, and, after Confession in St Stephen's Church, she went forward to the altar to receive the Blessed Sacrament. Removing it later from her mouth, she wrapped it in her veil and hurried

to the sorceress' cave, not noticing great drops of Blood falling from her veil.

However, people who met her and saw the blood asked why she was bleeding so profusely. Confused by all of this, she ran home instead and hid the Host in a wooden chest.

That night, they awoke to see the house lit up by mysterious rays of light coming from the chest. Confessing to her husband what she had done, the couple spent the rest of the night on their knees in Adoration. The next day, the parish priest was told and people started coming from near and far to the house to contemplate the miracle.

The Blessed Sacrament was then taken, in procession, to St Stephen's Church and placed in a small case of wax. Later on, when the Tabernacle was opened for Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, another miracle had occurred, with the wax case found broken in pieces and the Holy Sacrament encased in a beautiful crystal pyx.

This pyx was placed in a gold-plated silver monstrance and can still be seen today in St Stephen's Church. In 1997, the Church was consecrated as The Most Holy Miracle Church of Santarem.

## Eucharistic Adoration deepens my relationship with Jesus

by *Maureen Nicholl*

BEING in the presence of the Lord in Eucharistic Adoration brings me a great peace and comfort. It is a quiet time of reflection for me and it deepens my relationship with Jesus.

I find that I need this time in Eucharistic Adoration with Jesus to keep me from the distractions of the world. It is a time when I receive the graces that I know Jesus wants to give me, and I also know the powerful graces that everyone receives in His holy presence.

When I joined the Diocesan Eucharistic Adoration Apostolate, I became more aware of the importance of enabling others to share in the power of Adoration, and receive the graces and blessings that it can bring.

While we are in His presence, Jesus resolves all the problems and different worries we have in our lives.

I love this quotation from the book, 'Jesus, Eucharistic Love' – "The saints, the artists and experts of love were faithful, ardent adorers of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Importantly, Eucharistic Adoration has always been considered the closest likeness we have to Eternal Adoration, in which will consist the whole of our

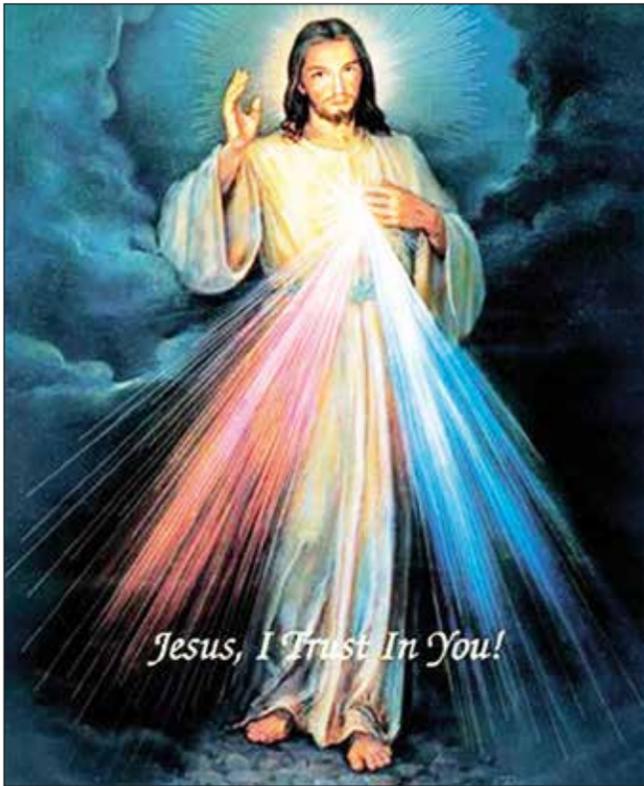
paradise. The difference lies only in the veil that hides the vision of that divine reality, of which faith gives us unwavering certainty."

I think the news about Knock being recognised as an International Eucharistic and Marian Shrine is great. In the Apparition there, Our Lady gave a very powerful message about the importance of adoring her Son in the Eucharist. To me, it seems that Mary is leading us to Jesus in the Eucharist. He waits for us always in this sacrament of His love.



Maureen Nicholl, St Eugene's.

# Divine Mercy Sunday - Dying in dignity *by Veronica Harley*



THE Church on the Second Sunday of Easter celebrates Divine Mercy Sunday. This year, we celebrate Mercy Sunday on April 11. This marvellous Feast is based on the private revelations of St Faustina Kowalska, which recommended a particular devotion to the Divine Mercy.

The Lord expressed His Will with regard to this Feast in His very first revelation to St Faustina. The most comprehensive revelation can be found in her Diary (entry 699):

“My daughter, tell the whole world about My inconceivable mercy. I desire that the Feast of Mercy be a refuge and a shelter for all souls, and especially for poor sinners. On that day the very depths of My tender mercy are open. I pour out a whole ocean of graces upon those souls who approach the fount of My mercy. The soul that will go to Confession

and receive Holy Communion shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment. On that day are opened all the divine floodgates through which graces flow. Let no soul fear to draw near to Me, even though its sins be as scarlet. My mercy is so great that no mind, be it of man or of angel, will be able to fathom it throughout all eternity. Everything that exists has come from the very depths of My most tender mercy. Every soul in its relation to Me will contemplate My love and mercy throughout eternity. The Feast of Mercy emerged from My very depths of tenderness. It is My desire that it be solemnly celebrated on the first Sunday after Easter. Mankind will not have peace until it turns to the Fount of My mercy.”

On this day, Jesus promises to pour out His Divine Mercy upon humanity. This Feast Day

is described as a second baptism as all our sins and temporal punishments are washed clean, provided we have met the conditions necessary for a plenary indulgence. The merciful love and compassion of God the Almighty flows generously on this great Feast Day to heal humanity.

## Mercy

Mercy is an act of kindness and benevolence, which we show towards someone who is seeking forgiveness or pardon. St Thomas Aquinas defined mercy in general as “the compassion in our hearts for another person’s misery, a compassion which drives us to do what we can to help him” (ST II-II.30.1). In Catholic tradition, mercy means much more than just a cancellation of punishment.

Pope St John Paul II, in his encyclical letter ‘Dives in Misericordia’ (Rich in Mercy, 1981), described Divine Mercy as Love’s second name and God’s greatest attribute, Divine Mercy is God’s eternal love which is poured out for us in our time of need and brokenness.

## Corporal works of mercy

We are called to be witnesses of mercy and one of the corporal works of mercy is to visit and care for the sick. People suffering physical and mental illnesses sometimes endure despondency and feelings of isolation. Infirmities can cripple trust and leave questions that crush belief in the very existence of God and make way for dubious pondering on God’s love and mercy. Distress and pain can muddle our reasoning and obscure our end goal in life.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 1501) explains that although suffering can lead to despair and revolt against God, “it can also make a person more mature, helping him discern in his

life what is not essential so that he can turn toward that which is. Very often illness provokes a search for God and a return to him”.

Illness and suffering is among some of the most serious issues that people encounter during their lifetime. Our need for suffering is often questioned when we experience pain and anguish not only in ourselves, but in our loved ones. The question of suffering can often seem incomprehensible and unsolvable, but we can find an answer to this situation when we turn our attention to the Passion of Christ.

Jesus not only embraced suffering during His Passion in an incomparable way, but He also made suffering redemptive. He took all of the human suffering upon Himself and used it in order to accomplish our salvation. Jesus took suffering and placed it in a new dimension, He used for good. His love transformed suffering and turned it into a saving power. This is how we, as Christians, can begin to find a meaning and purpose to suffering.

Our suffering can become part of Christ’s work of salvation. Our sufferings are no longer pointless afflictions but an invitation to share in the Passion of Christ. When we unite our pain with Christ’s suffering and offer it up to God, then God uses this in a mysterious and powerful way for the redemption of the world.

## Dying with Dignity

A new legal Bill has been presented in Ireland for consideration; Dying with Dignity. The Catholic Bishops have described this Bill as a flawed document. The title of this document resonates sentiments of tranquilities. Unfortunately, it carries all the hallmarks of assisted suicide, which is against the inherent dignity of each human

being.

Pope St John Paul II has provided the Church with teaching on suffering, illness and death. He was also a living testimony, a witness of his own faith in the face of suffering, illness and dying. He taught us that we must first understand death with dignity. In order to do this, we have to accept the dignity of life. Human dignity is an undeserved gift that flows directly from the loving action of our Creator.

In the first Letter of St Peter we are told that we have been ransomed not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Everyone’s life is precious and unique, it is beyond price. God’s plan for human beings is that we should “be conformed to the image of his Son” (Romans 8:29), “for God created man for incorruption, and made him in the image of his own eternity” (Wisdom 2:23).

Pope St John Paul II spoke of all those who respected their God given dignity as heralds of a “culture of life”. The world in which we live seems to have cultivated a great confusion about death and dignity. Pope St John Paul II rightly referred to this as a “culture of death”, a total disregard for the sanctity and dignity of life, a misunderstanding of dying. The culture of death perceives life as only valuable to the extent that it is productive and in state of wellbeing. Death is considered senseless if it interrupts a life that is still open to new experiences and possibilities. Indeed, according to this worldly perspective, from the moment a person’s life encounters pain and the prospect of greater suffering, death is “a rightful liberation”. (Evangelium Vitae – “The Gospel of Life”, no. 64).

A culture of life rejects all forms of euthanasia, which is of itself by intention to cause death with the sole purpose of eliminating all suffering. Every human being has been created by God in His likeness and, therefore, does not have the right to take his/her own life or that of another. Euthanasia is a grave violation of the law of God since it is the deliberate and morally unacceptable killing of a human person. Everyone’s life is precious and unique.

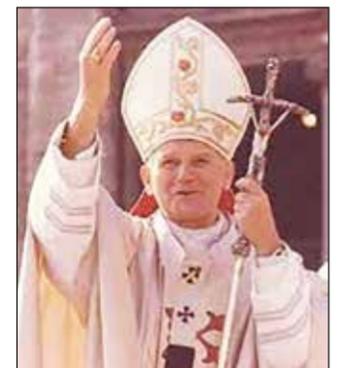
## Catechism

The Catechism explains that ‘Euthanasia whatever its motives or means is morally unacceptable’ (CCC 2277). Our Catholic faith promotes respect for health, bodily integrity and dignity in dying. The CCC speaks clearly of how life and physical health are precious gifts entrusted to us by God, therefore we must take care of them (CCC 2288). It continues by asserting that “the dying should be given attention and care to help them live their last moments in dignity and peace.” (CCC 2299)

Pope St John Paul II, addressing

an International Congress in 2004, directly spoke of how even though euthanasia may be motivated by sentiments of misconstrued compassion or a misunderstanding on the preservation of human dignity, that it actually eliminates the person instead of relieving their suffering. Euthanasia is, indeed, false mercy. True kindness and respect for a person’s dignity leads to caring for the sick and sharing in their pain.

Jesus’ mission reached to every human being and He showed loving compassion when He healed the sick, the suffering and dying. Today, Jesus’ mission continues through the Body of Christ, the Church. The Church is our patient advocate always working to ensure that proper care is administered to the sick and dying, and constantly promoting respect for the dignity of each individual. The Church, like the Good Samaritan, is the physician and nurse caring for the abandoned, and the Innkeeper who provides respite and care in nursing homes and hospices. The Church is the healing hands of Christ who attends to our spiritual infirmities through the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.



Pope St John Paul II constantly turned in prayer to Our Virgin Mother Mary, who stood vigil at the cross of her Son. In his address on World Day of the Sick 2004, he entrusted the world to the most Holy Virgin and prayed ... “may she help every Christian to witness that the only authentic answer to pain, suffering and death is Christ our Lord, who died and rose for us.”

On this Divine Mercy Sunday, may the people of Ireland contemplate the true abundance of Mercy that Jesus lavishes on all of humanity and strive to always promote a culture of life in a world where despondency is often rife.

We are the People of God, the Body of Christ:

“Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which He looks compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which He walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which He blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are His body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.” (St Teresa of Avila.)

Jesus, I Trust in You

# Eucharistic Adoration has the power to bring people back to the faith *by John McSorley*

WHEN I spend time in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament I get a sense of peace. It gives me an opportunity to bring my troubles to Our Lord and also to thank Him.

As Sr Brieghe McKenna once said, if you spend enough time regularly in front of the Son, people will begin to see something different about you.

It is just nice to spend an hour in the week in peace, praying before the Blessed Sacrament, and I find it gives a bit of structured time to pray; otherwise the week could be over before I would remember to spend time in prayer.

When I heard about the setting up of a Diocesan group to promote Eucharistic Adoration throughout the Diocese, I thought it would be

a great work to get involved in.

When St John Vianney arrived as pastor of Ars and found that the people were not practising their faith, he got a small group together for Adoration and to pray for the parish, and our Diocesan Eucharistic Adoration Apostolate is involved in a similar mission. Before lockdown because of Covid-19, we had introduced Eucharistic Adoration to around 30 parishes out of 51.

I think that if enough people were spending time in front of Our Lord in Adoration it really would make a difference not only in our parishes, but in our Diocese, our country, and in the world. I believe many would be brought back to their faith if more people were spending time in Eucharistic



John McSorley, Omagh.

Adoration praying for this.

And so, I welcome the news that Knock has been officially recognised as a Eucharistic as well as a Marian Shrine. Whatever it is about Knock, I find time spent there in Eucharistic Adoration a powerful experience.

Before the Covid restrictions, I would have gone to Knock to spend time in Eucharistic Adoration once a month. Once I had that hour of prayer in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, no matter what was upsetting me, my peace would be restored. I think it was St Francis who, if he lost his peace, would have spent the day in prayer in the chapel to get it back again, and when this happens to me, I try to do the same. I immerse myself in prayer and by the end I get my peace back again.

I’m looking forward to being able to meet again with the Diocesan Eucharistic Adoration Apostolate each month, and continuing this great work in bringing the gift of weekly Adoration to more parishes.

# Divine Mercy and End of Life

by Martin Harran



Martin Harran, Urney & Castlefin.

AS we approach Divine Mercy Sunday, we think about forgiveness and reconciliation, but we should always remember that Divine Mercy is about much more than just that. Jesus told St Faustina that He demands three ways of exercising mercy: the first by deed, the second by word, and the third by prayer.

The Divine Mercy movement does pay attention to all three aspects. As well as publishing extensive material about Divine Mercy and actively encouraging widespread prayer, they undertake charitable work around the world under the theme of 'Saving Lives and Souls'. This encompasses a wide range of activities, including things from building a hospice in Vilnius to working with distressed children in Romania, to feeding the poor in Ecuador.

At the same time, it is too easy to become so caught up with an act of apparent kindness that it is considered as 'mercy' without taking the wider context into consideration. It seems to me that the 'Dying with Dignity' Bill, currently being considered by the Irish Government, is one such example.

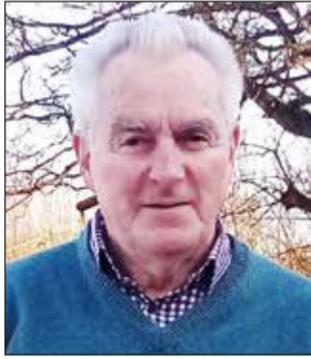
Undoubtedly, the promoters of this Bill are inspired by genuine concern for people who may be

struggling with pain or other discomfort at the end of their life, and they regard it as merciful kindness to offer such people the opportunity to end their suffering. We must remember, however, that not just as Christians but part of human society, we must care about people's lives on a much wider basis than trying to deal with one aspect at the very end of a person's life. That is not to minimise the suffering that some people go through at the end of their life, but we should not just focus on what looks like a simple solution without considering the wider picture.

The Irish Catholic Bishops' submission to the Oireachtas Committee on Justice about the 'Dying with Dignity Bill' makes that point. The bishops point out that the legal framework for making such submissions restricts them to only addressing specific issues with the way the bill is drafted, rather than engaging in a much wider discussion about the whole question of Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide. That is my own fear in regard to this bill, that by addressing just those technical issues, politicians may allow the bill to slip through without a wider debate and discussion.

What particularly concerns me is that most of the momentum on this issue has been created by minority political parties from the comfort of their political offices. There is very little support from people actually working on the frontline - the wonderful nurses and doctors and others who provide so much understanding, comfort and help, in very practical ways, in palliative care for those coming to the end of their lives. They are the people who most understand what is involved here, yet they seem to be the people who are least listened to.

# Christ manifested in remembrance by Noel Bradley



Noel Bradley, Buncrana

'CHRIST' manifested in remembrance' is the title of a sermon by Cardinal Newman. God's presence, he says, is not discerned at the time when it is upon us but, afterwards, if we look back at what has passed, we can see it. You might think on how the two disciples on the journey to Emmaus missed the presence of God in the Passion but saw it later when Jesus spoke with them.

I have been asked to reflect on a journey I may have experienced back to where I call 'home' and how my faith helped me along the way.

## ...Stepping stones

This is a request about my own journey so it is something personal, even maybe very personal. I have only space to talk about a few stepping stones along the way. What comes to mind first is how I always tried to pray but, on reflection, I don't think it was very successful.

I prayed partly because I felt I should pray. This was how it was for years, until I began to pray less and less, and then I awoke one day and realised that the 'well had run dry'. I was left desolate and wondering, 'Is there anybody out there?' And if there is, does he/she/it or they really care about me or anybody?

Looking back, I realise that I did not really have much of what is called a spiritual life but only a longing for one, and maybe that was a kind of prayer - "...for you I long; for you my soul is thirsting. My body pines for you like a dry weary land without water" (Ps 62).

## ...A real breakthrough

While in Rome at the age of 30,

I went to a Charismatic meeting and found it strange, but I kept going back. Over time, I began to try to pray again by going to the Blessed Sacrament, sitting and trying to pray.

On one occasion, while visiting Assisi, I felt a strong nudge to get some long period of time in prayer, so I booked myself into a retreat centre and spent a long period praying for I know not what, but knowing that there was something wrong with me. I happened to meet two charismatic friends and asked them to pray over me, and during that prayer a memory that I had buried in my subconscious for 14 years came back to me. It was an unjustified beating I got on the backside from a priest in boarding school. I was in the wrong place at the wrong time and was too frightened to stand up for myself.

The prayer was for a healing of memories and it was a healing that manifested itself in an unexpected flood of tears and a wonderful grace that released me, removed a blockage and transformed me on to a new level in my spiritual life, a level of feeling and a new freedom.

I can now see it as God partly removing "my heart of stone and giving me a heart of flesh instead" (Ezekiel 36:26), a kind of affective conversion.

## ...Directed retreats and compassion

I continued to try to keep prayer at the centre of my life and, over the years, began to do some short directed retreats and eventually a long one of 30 days. I did it because I was 'drawn' to it. I had come quite a long way from 'shoulds' in my life. I had learned that a person has to be free to pray. Prayer is a free choice that a person can make in his or her life and that God also gives the attraction for it gently in our consciousness. "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all persons to myself" (12:32).

Among the graces of that retreat was the struggle and fierce resistance to being with Christ in His Passion; not so much in trying to imagine Him in His Passion as we read it in the Gospels, but to be with Him in His suffering people, as I had met some of them in my

life. One strong memory was of a friend, a young mother of seven children whom I had prayed fervently for and with. I also mustered all my friends to pray for her and I had accompanied her while sick with cancer. She cried out in pain as she was dying and waiting for the doctor to come and ease her pain with morphine. It seemed to take hours.

I only realised some years later how angry I was over God allowing all that experience to happen and how difficult it was to share and tell Him how angry I was. But I did eventually get it all out directly to Him. I could not repeat the words that I shouted at Him here!

I wanted to leave the retreat house and go home, but went to Mass that evening and deliberately sat at the back, still a bit annoyed and not really with it all. The Gospel was very short: "Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, Mary..." (John 19:25). Tears just flowed and I realised that, after all my anger and complaining, I was just being asked by God at that time to be with my friend who was dying, to be with her, painful or not, like Mary at the foot of the cross with Jesus.

I realised more fully that it was about compassion and I was being introduced to that in a big way, from my experience. "Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate" (Lk 6:36). I realised that loving is not always about doing things for people but about being with people where they are, especially if they are in pain, physically or emotionally or marginalised, discriminated against, exploited, or oppressed in anyway. Of course, there will be times when compassion will want to turn into doing something practical to change the situation. But there is always a time for just being painfully present with people, in compassion with them.

This type of Christian faith/compassion deserves a mention in the debate about assisted suicide going on in Government and Church circles at the moment. There is an undoubted positive

influence on all of us of the prevailing culture of autonomy. "I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul" (WE Henley). I want my freedom and dignity to be protected and I want to protect the freedom and dignity of others as far as possible.

But there is a further question for a Christian. What if "the aim of the Christian life is not the avoidance of pain but the faithful following of One who enters the pain of those who suffer"? (David Begg, *Doctrine and Life*, Dec 2020, p.40).

## ...An inverted pyramid and synodality

My last major stepping stone on the journey 'home' was the influence of humanistic psychology and spiritual direction (eg St Ignatius, C Rogers, A Maslow, C Jung) and liberation theology/option for the poor. This meant a shift from a 'top down' way of relating to a more 'bottom up' approach, with more listening, sharing, dialogue, individual accompaniment, discernment, and group and team work.

I am very excited and hopeful about the new direction and emphasis on synodality from Rome and the Irish bishops. Synodality means walking together/solidarity with each other, more listening, need for openness and dialogue, "what affects all should be discussed by all" (Pope Francis), humility, small groups, decentralising, 'inverted pyramid' (people at the bottom are most important and officials of the Church are there to serve them). Discernment the means and mission as transformation of self, others and the world are the goal.

Whatever 'home' place I or we have reached on our journey, we have not here a lasting home or city. "The woods are lovely, dark and deep, But I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep" (Robert Frost).

Like the Stranger on the road to Emmaus who 'made as if to go further' (Lk 24:28), we, too, have to make as if 'to go further'. Bon Voyage.

# Divine Mercy...God's mysteries are always beyond beautiful by Patricia Casey

THE Sunday after Easter is dedicated to the message of Divine Mercy, as revealed by St Faustina. This is a great gift to humanity.

How do we really experience God's loving mercy? First we recognise that we are sinners and in need of God's mercy. We ask God to forgive our offences and we do this by going to confessions and telling the priest, who represents Jesus, all of the burdens that we carry in our hearts.

Sin weighs us down and makes us miserable, it wounds us and leaves us weak; we become sick and incapable of loving as we are made to love. When we sin we become blind and numb, we lose sight of reality. Of all the deadly

viruses in our world, sin is by far the most deadly; it really wounds right into the depths of our hearts and leaves us sick. We definitely need a divine doctor and thanks be to God for His great unfathomable Divine Mercy.

God sent His only Son to set us free from this dreadful sickness and to free us from our sin. Jesus took our sins to the cross and set us free. Our medicine is asking God for His Mercy; all we need to do is say sorry and go to confessions. I can't count how many times I have been to confessions, but I can say that I have had some of the most powerful and beautiful experiences there.

The priests that I have met in

my life have been so tender, so gentle and so compassionate. At times, it can be a battle going to confessions. You can feel awkward and embarrassed, and so, when a priest does show compassion and is gentle it really helps you to feel the mercy of God.

So what happens after we receive God's mercy? Well, we are completely forgiven and are free. Happy days, but we need to remember that now we are called to show mercy, love compassion and tenderness. It is a good idea to keep in mind that we must show mercy to everyone and, as we have been forgiven, so, too, must we forgive.

I have recently just read a book

by Pope Francis called 'The Name of God is Mercy'. I loved this small section from his book, "Don Luigi Giussani used to quote this example from Bruce Marshall's novel 'To Every Man a Penny'. The protagonist of the novel, the abbot Father Gaston, needs to hear the confession of a young German soldier whom the French partisans are about to sentence to death. The soldier confesses his love of women and the numerous amorous adventures he has had. The abbot explains that he has to repent to obtain forgiveness and absolution. The soldier answers, 'How can I repent? It was something that I enjoyed, and if I had the chance I would do it again, even now. How

can I repent?' Father Gaston, who wants to absolve the man, who has been marked by destiny and who is about to die, has a stroke of inspiration and asks, 'But are you sorry that you are not sorry?' The young man answers impulsively, 'Yes, I am sorry that I am not sorry.' In other words, he apologizes for not repenting. The door was opened just a crack, allowing absolution to come in..."

I have been reminded many times that my sin after having confessed it, because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, isn't only wiped away, and not only am I healed, but an even greater good comes. It is hard to wrap your head around that, let's just say,

God's mysteries are always beyond beautiful. Blessed be God.



Patricia Casey, Kilrea.

# The Gospel - radiant with the glory of Christ's cross - constantly invites us to rejoice *by Deirdre McElholm*



Deirdre McElholm, Derry

WITH the Resurrection, God has given us hope of Eternal Life. One quote that particularly resonates with me during the Easter season is from Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation, 'Evangelii Gaudium'. "There are Christians whose lives seem like Lent without Easter."

Pope Francis succinctly depicted the current situation of many in the world at the minute. To spend a second Easter in the middle of a global pandemic, it can seem as if joy, connections and spontaneity have been eradicated. There is no doubt that Lent is to be a period of sacrifice, denial and discipline in order to prepare us for the glory of the Easter season.

Indeed, one cannot appreciate the wonder of the Resurrection without the sorrow of the Garden of Gethsemane

However, Lent is a temporary season. It is easy to allow the negativity to creep in and give a false illusion that this is our permanent state. We must be cautious not to be like the first disciples living behind a locked door in fear and uncertainty... "It was late that Sunday evening, and the disciples were gathered together behind locked doors, because they were afraid of the Jewish authorities." (Jn 20:19)

The return of school children has once again allowed a cacophony of laughter, joyful noises and a 'buzz' in corridors. It is reminiscent of the glimpse of hope that was prevalent on that Palm Sunday; blazing sun, shouts of laughter and joy with unyielding praise for the King. Hope can persist, even as a glimmer of light, in the midst of a dark despair. Joy changes, spreads and is infectious.

One momentous place that is punctuated with a quiet, yet firm joy and faith in God is Knock Shrine, Ireland. In September 2019, over 100 Year 13 pupils

from St Mary's College travelled to Knock Shrine for the Pope John Paul II pilgrimage. Neither the 6 am start nor the three hour journey could dampen our joy! This was a beautiful opportunity for our pupils to be gathered together in faith, prayer, musicality and reflection.

Additionally, this was a particularly humbling experience where we listened to the poignant words of Donal Walsh's mother, who inspired us on the importance of living life to the fullest. Grief, suffering and pain are undeniable emotions we will all experience in our lives. At times, it may feel as though the pain is outweighing the positive and we feel lost from God. Indeed, since the Apparition in 1879, Knock Shrine has been a place of hope and has given comfort and consolation to people. The completely unique nature of the Apparition scene is something that has fascinated and inspired people for generations.

This invaluable pilgrimage to Knock has allowed a new generation of young people to experience the beauty of the Shrine, and to see all walks of life and ages give their worries,



St Mary's College, Derry, pupils at Knock Shrine.

anxieties and fears to God and to return with contentment.

Twelve months later, we can now see the light through the darkness of the pandemic. The vaccines have provided a reassuring hope for many in our society. The evenings are lighter, flowers have sprung and the Earth once again comes alive before

our eyes. God transforms pain to joy, hopelessness to hope and desolate footpaths to gardens of fruitfulness. We are right to be cautious, to tread carefully and, perhaps, be even fearful. However, many threats still remained for the disciples in those early days after Jesus' death. Jesus' words, "Peace be with you," can still ring

true for us today.

When the sun rose on that Easter Sunday, the disciples embraced life with a new confidence, assured by the joy of the Resurrection. Our hope for new life swells again, even if the threat is not fully diminished.



The Holy Virgin in Old Age (James Tissot 1886-94)

## Mary - Model of Grace *by Oliver Barrett*

ON March 19, Pope Francis honoured Knock Shrine with special status, recognising it as an International Marian and Eucharistic Shrine. The pontiff affirmed what many of the faithful believe.

In total there are 16 apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary recognised as being authentic by the Catholic Church. Some of the lesser known include the apparitions of Our Lady of La Salette in France (1846), and Our Lady of Kibeho in Rwanda (1981). Some of the well known apparitions include those at Fatima, Lourdes, and Knock.

Not everyone is blessed to have a vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the way the children of Fatima, and the men, women and children at Knock had an apparition. I believe, however, we all may see the Blessed Virgin when we read both the Old and the New Testament.

My starting place is the Book of Genesis and The Fall in the Garden of Eden. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, Eve is a virgin. The reason for disharmony in the garden is because of an act of disobedience, as the first humans disrespected the limitations placed on them not to eat the fruit of the tree in the centre of the garden.

Traditionally, Eve is blamed for

tempting Adam to reach out in disobedience and eat, however, ultimately this action is prompted by the 'serpent' (Genesis 3:1). From this moment, humanity is in a fallen state because of their desire to usurp God.

When we read on, all is not lost for in Genesis 3:15 we find what is known as the 'protoevangelium' - the first Gospel. In this passage of Scripture, the figure of a woman emerges, and we are assured that the ancient serpent will not triumph - "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed, he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise your heel" (Gen 3:15). Could this passage be implicitly referring to the Blessed Virgin Mary? We must wait until Revelation Chapter 12 for the identity of the persons in this passage to be revealed.

We first encounter Mary at the beginning of Luke's Gospel. It is here that we see how Mary is a model of grace, for Luke writes chapter one to parallel the life and response to God of two people, Zechariah and Mary.

Zechariah is an elderly priest at the centre of the ritual worship in the Temple in Jerusalem. The Temple complex at this time is the size of 12 football pitches. Zechariah's wife, Elizabeth, is referred to as one of the

'daughters of Aaron' (Lk 1:5). Aaron, of course, is one of the Old Testament priests whose rod is said to be kept in the Ark of the Covenant.

Mary, on the other hand, is a humble Jewish girl living in Nazareth, far from the rituals of the Temple in Jerusalem. Her husband, Joseph is of royal lineage, from the House of David. Luke parallels Mary's childlessness due to her youth with Zechariah and Elizabeth's barrenness due to their old age. In Luke chapter one, an angel appears to both Zechariah and Mary to announce the birth of a child. Zechariah is filled with fear and replies disbelievingly. He is silenced by the angel and becomes mute. Mary is greeted by the angel like no other person in the entire Old and New Testament, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!" (Luke 1:28). This indicates Mary's importance to God's plan of salvation.

Mary is troubled at the message of the angel and does not understand how she, as a virgin, will conceive a child. When the angel explains the conception will be by the power of the Holy Spirit, Mary responds with complete faith and submission to the will of God, "Behold I am the hand maid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word"

(Luke 1:38).

Mary's 'fiat' is followed with the visit to Elizabeth and the most beautiful hymn of praise in the entire Scriptures, the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-56). Mary's Magnificat, full of divine reversals, is paralleled by Luke with Zechariah's lack of faith. Mary's response to God's plan makes her a model of grace. From Mary we learn spontaneity (Lk 1:39) and, as sin and death entered the world through the virgin Eve, justice and salvation entered the world through the Virgin Mary.

Finally, in chapter 12 of the Book of Revelation, the women emerging in the 'protoevangelium' (Genesis 3:15) is revealed. The woman is clothed with the sun, the moon is beneath her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars (Rev 12:1). This is traditionally thought by Catholics to be Mary, the new Eve. Revelation chapter 12 recounts the battle in heaven between a woman with child and the ancient serpent, who is revealed to be the devil, also known as Satan (Rev 12:9). The woman's offspring is Jesus, the Messiah, will crush the head of the ancient serpent (Revelation 12:17).

We ask Mary to give us the grace we need during these times.

*In his third, and final, reflection on God's Mercy as we prepare for the great Feast of Divine Mercy Sunday, Bishop Donal writes about the Ministry of Mercy...*

## Everyone should meet the Father's Mercy in those who claim to follow Jesus



MERCY was at the heart of Jesus' message. In His own words, He came to bring Good News to the poor. Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's mercy.

We have the constant challenge to be sure that everybody meets the Father's mercy in those who claim to be followers of Jesus. And, as we come out of lockdowns, we pray that we will be recognisable as Jesus' followers.

There is much hurt and much need of mercy. On the one side, the lockdown will leave scars that will last for many years. Loneliness and

fear can be traumatic experiences for many, especially those who live on the margins. There will be financial pressures as the economy struggles to recover.

And there is the ongoing need for mercy in public discourse. Politics seems to be laced with harsh words. Confrontation and criticism appear to be the preferred default position. It is very unfortunate when people of faith come across as being angry or dismissive of others.

The first ministry of mercy is the proclamation and celebration of

the mercy of God in the Liturgy. The Mass, the summit of our worship, proclaims the mercy that flows from the Sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross. We are called to go beyond 'saying Mass' or 'going to Mass'.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is a key celebration of Divine Mercy. We are invited to stand under the Cross and to allow the shower of mercy to wash us clean. That is a huge source of God's grace on our pain.

Those in distress need to hear of mercy. Condemnation on its own can often push them further away from hope of salvation.

Secondly, the ministry of mercy has to be seen in how we reach out to those who are hurting most. People of faith do that, not in order to gain attention for ourselves, but to bring healing. Jesus did not break the crushed reed or quench the wavering flame. Poverty and disadvantage can damage how people see their own dignity and value.

The ministry of mercy also involves speaking up for those who are left out by our systems



and structures. Thus, Catholic education has to offer a different way of inspiring young people. If we offer nothing different from what is available in other sectors, why would we exist?

The Novena and Feast of Divine Mercy are not merely a pious practice from 20th century Poland. They emphasise a core element of the Gospel message.

That message is perhaps more needed in 2021 than it ever was.

## Mercy Messages from St Faustina's Diary...



"...the Feast of My Mercy has issued forth from My very depths for the consolation of the whole world". (Diary, 1517)

"I want to grant a complete pardon to the souls that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion on the Feast of My Mercy". (Diary, 1109)

"Souls perish in spite of My bitter Passion. I am giving them the last hope of salvation; that is, the Feast of My Mercy. If they will not adore My Mercy, they will perish for all eternity." (Diary, 965)

"Everything that exists has come forth from the very depths

of My most tender Mercy. Every soul in its relation to Me will contemplate My love and mercy throughout eternity. The Feast of Mercy emerged from My very depths of tenderness. It is My desire that it be solemnly celebrated on the first Sunday after Easter. Mankind will not have peace until it turns to the Fount of My Mercy". (Diary, 699)

"On that day all the divine floodgates through which graces flow are opened. Let no soul fear to draw near to Me, even though its sins be as scarlet. My mercy is so great that no mind, be it of man or of angel, will be able to fathom it throughout all eternity". (Diary, 699)

"I desire that the Feast of Mercy be a refuge and shelter for all souls, and especially for poor sinners. On that day, the very depths of My tender mercy are open. I pour out a whole ocean of graces upon those souls who approach the Fount of My Mercy. The soul that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment". (Diary, 699)

## Bishop Donal to lead Creggan Divine Mercy Devotions



BISHOP Donal will be leading the Divine Mercy Devotions in St Mary's Church, Creggan, on Sunday, April 11, the Feast of Divine Mercy, with Fr Joe Gormley, parish priest, and Fr Daniel McFaul, curate.

Starting at 3 pm, the ceremony can be viewed over the church webcam, and will include the blessing of statues of Pope St John Paul II and St Faustina by Bishop Donal.

The statues of these two saints, who are central to the message of Divine Mercy, fittingly stand in the Divine Mercy Chapel which was completed in 2018 as part of the 60th anniversary celebrations for St Mary's Church.

Fr Joe remarked: "In her visions and allocutions, St Faustina heard Jesus speak to her saying, 'In the Old Covenant I sent prophets wielding thunderbolts to My people. Today I am sending you with my Mercy to the people of the whole world. I do not want to punish aching mankind, but I desire to heal it pressing it to my

merciful heart. Before the day of justice, I am sending the day of mercy'.

"Later in her visions and allocutions, the main message given by Jesus to Faustina is to trust in His mercy. This message is written at the base of every image of the Divine Mercy today. On that image, we read the words 'Jesus I trust in You'.

"Sr Faustina said that we need to be healed of the distorted image we have of God. This distorted image arises as a result of our sins, which causes us to run from Him and not trust Him. That is why Jesus asked Faustina to have this Image painted. In the image, Jesus is love and mercy itself. In the image Jesus is pleading with us to trust Him as He is the love and mercy of God in human form'.

He added: "Sr Faustina tells us in her Diary that she had a certainty that her mission of mercy would continue after her death. She would be used by God to draw doubting souls to God to convince them of His mercy and goodness. Then, they will no longer continue to wound Jesus' heart, but would console His heart by trusting in His love and mercy. The world, by trusting in his love and mercy, would be prepared for the Lord's second coming".

Not allowing His message to disappear after St Faustina's death,

Fr Joe noted that God used the people of her homeland of Poland to bring the message into the light through their petitioning of the young Archbishop of Krakow, Karol Wojtyla.

He continued: "In their petitions, they told of the many graces and blessings they received through the message of Divine Mercy. The message of Divine Mercy was being promoted through the faith of the laity who truly valued it. It is the laity from then until now who are the biggest promoters of the message".

In 1965, Archbishop Wojtyla began Sr Faustina's process for Beatification and Canonisation, and on April 15, 1978, Pope St Paul VI approved the devotion to the Divine Mercy. Just over six months later, the Bishop who had acceded to the requests of the Laity was to become Pope John Paul II in October 1979.

"St John Paul II believed that it was his task to proclaim mercy," remarked Fr Joe, adding: "He spoke of this on his first visit after his convalescence from the attempt on his life on May 13, 1981, the Feast of Our Lady of Fatima. He had undertaken to read the whole diary of St Faustina during his convalescence and spoke these words at the Shrine of Merciful love in Collevallenza, in Italy, on the Feast of Christ the King in that

year, 1981.

"He saw that his pontificate was the means by which the message would go to the whole world, 'Right from the beginning of ministry in St Peter's See in Rome, I considered this message my special task. Providence has assigned it to me in the present situation of Man, the Church and the World. It could be said precisely this situation assigned that message to me as my task before God'."

The first Saint of the new millennium canonised by St John Paul II was St Faustina, in the Great Jubilee of 2000, which was to be a Jubilee Year of Mercy.

Fr Joe noted: "At the canonization of St Faustina on the first Sunday after Easter, which, that year was April 30, 2000, he declared that, from then on, that Sunday was to be called Divine Mercy Sunday. He wanted all people to discover the true face of God which overcomes the distorted image of God, that is, the God of retribution, coming from original and personal sin.

"He wanted to show that the message of God's mercy was addressed above all to those afflicted by a harsh trial. It was for those crushed by the weight of the sins they have committed. It was for those who lose all confidence in life and are tempted to despair. To them, the gentle face of Christ is offered, whose rays from his heart

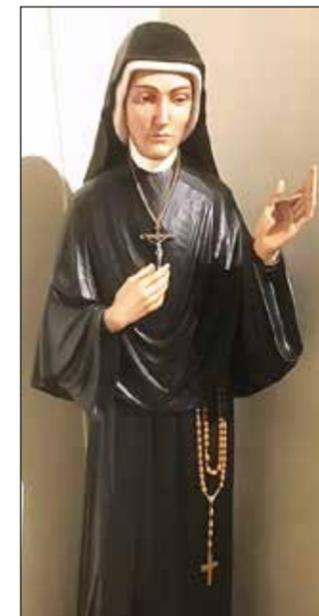
touch them and shine upon them. These rays warm them, show them the way and fill them with hope. The simple act of trust, Jesus I trust in You, dispels the clouds of doubt and despair and allows a light of hope to penetrate every life".

Pope John Paul II providentially died on the Vigil of the Feast of Divine Mercy on April 2, 2005.

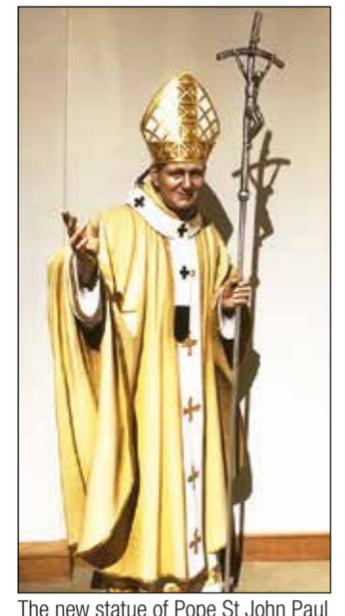
"The message of Divine Mercy is so important for our parish, city, country and our world," remarked Fr Joe, adding: "Our parish was at the epicentre of the political violence and conflict

which lasted over 50 years, from 1969. The message of mercy is so necessary for healing the wounds of this conflict and violence. This message is important for victims and perpetrators.

Living with the pain of the past takes its toll on the physical, psychological, spiritual and emotional lives of many people; victims and perpetrators. It wounds souls. The image, message and Devotion to Divine Mercy have led many in our parish, and world, to rediscover the face of God as loving and merciful".



The new statue of St Faustina in the Divine Mercy Chapel, Creggan.



The new statue of Pope St John Paul II in the Divine Mercy Chapel, within St Mary's Church, Creggan

# Put your trust in Jesus by Rose Ann O'Donnell



Sr Briega McKenna.

THE 30th annual Dublin-based Divine Mercy National Conference was held free online due to the continued Covid-19 restrictions, with some excellent speakers who addressed the theme, 'For yours is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory forever and ever. Amen.' (Mt 6:13)

One of the guest speakers was Sr Briega McKenna, who is well-known in Ireland and throughout the world for her ministry to priests and the gift of healing. The main focus of her talk was on faith and trust in God, no matter the circumstances.

## Divine Faith v Human Faith

Sr Briega opened with reference to the Gospel of St John (Jn 20: 24-29), in which Thomas the Apostle is invited, by Jesus, to place his finger in the wounds of the Risen Christ. Thomas had seen Jesus dead and buried, and he was trying to believe that the Lord was alive. Sr Briega reminded us that "faith is not a feeling" and that we should base our decisions on faith in God ('Divine Faith'), rather than on what we are told by other people ('human faith').

She gave the example of governments which operate by human faith. Of course, every country needs laws to protect its people physically, eg traffic laws. However, God's laws exist to protect our souls, and many countries have laws which are not compatible with those divine laws.

## Fear Nothing

Sr Briega went on to say that the soul is like a Tabernacle where Jesus lives through baptism. The more we grow in Faith and the more we relate to Jesus, the more we allow Him to influence everything that we do. The Diary of St Faustina is full of calls to put your trust in Jesus.

St Faustina had anxieties, but Jesus told her, "Do not fear

anything; I am always with you". Jesus asks everyone to have child-like trust. That is why we have "Jesus I trust in You" as the signature on the Divine Mercy image.

How do we grow in Divine Faith?

Sr Briega asked the question, "How do we grow in Divine Faith?" She said that it is hard to have a living faith in Jesus if we don't know Him.

To answer her own question, she began by addressing parents, saying that they can nurture faith through prayer and Scripture. Children trust so much, she said, and believe in what their parents tell them. She spoke of using stories to get the message of Faith across to children.

Sr Briega then went on to describe some sound and useful ways to grow in faith:

**1. Pray.** Our strength is in our prayer, which opens our souls to the grace of God. We don't need faith in the here-and-now, but in Eternity – "no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him".

Sr Briega used the metaphor of a GPS, to describe the power of the Sacraments to keep us on the route to Heaven. She said that Jesus gives us a spiritual GPS to keep us right - namely, a life of prayer and the Sacraments. Sometimes, though, we get distracted by the world, we get off the route and go around in a circle because we have set aside Jesus and His GPS. People can end up completely confused if they are not guided by prayer and the Sacraments.

Sr Briega also quoted Fr John Harding, who said that we have lost our faith in the Eucharist. She referred to the Diary, in which we read that Jesus told St Faustina, "people treat me like a dead object". Sr Briega encouraged those listening to pray for the gift of faith and for the courage to step out, no matter what.

**2. Sacred Scripture.** Sr Briega used some vivid imagery to describe the power of reading the Word of God in Scripture, or of hearing it spoken.

First, she said that the Word of God is like water and that our eyes are like the windows of our soul. When we look at things that are not wholesome, it leads us into all kinds of sin but, when we read

the Word of God, it is like water flowing into our souls.

Next, she said that the Word of God is alive and active; it is a two-edged sword and very powerful. She said that Fr Kevin Scallon used to pray, "Lord, Your Word is always new - refresh me with it".

She went on to describe an event which occurred while Fr Kevin was speaking about the transformative power of the Word of God. While he was preaching, a blind person stood up and told Fr Kevin and the congregation that he could see.

On another occasion, Fr Kevin forgot his notes. He was bothered about it but, as he got up to preach, he prayed, "Lord, You have to speak through me". Afterwards, a man came to speak to him and told Fr Kevin that God had spoken powerfully through Fr Kevin, so much so that the man went to confession that day for the first time in 30 years.

Sr Briega said that it may be only one line that is needed in order to have a powerful effect. For example, she referred to a priest who, she says, is not a gifted homilist, but who sometimes speaks 'one-liners' through which people are converted.

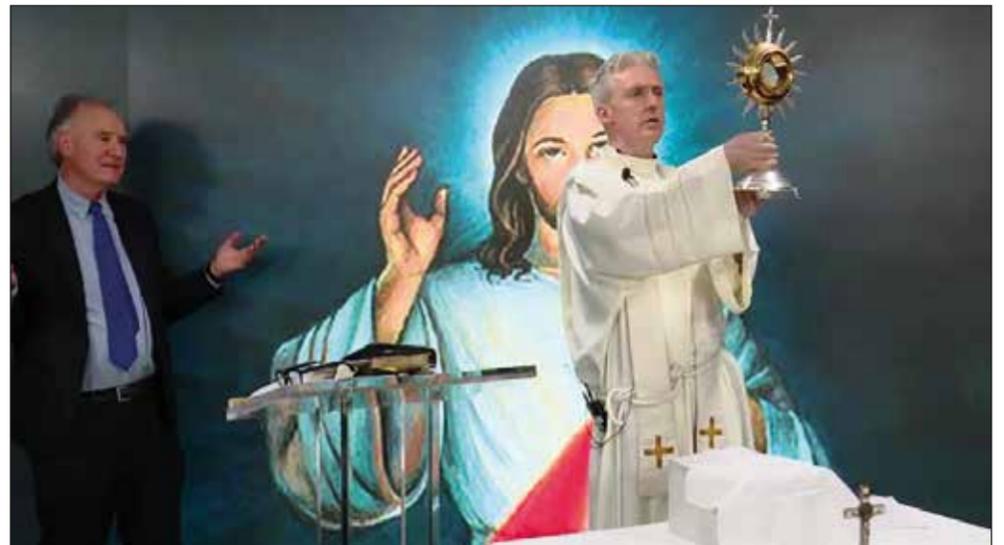
## To be a 'Fool for Christ'

Sr Briega then added two impressive stories about herself, prefacing them with the comment that sometimes we have to be willing to just 'step out'.

## 'How did you know?'

First, she spoke of a visit to South America, during which she was to go from Santiago to another location, to give a talk. A priest was to drive her there. On the morning of the talk, Sr Briega was in the Adoration Chapel when she had a sense that she was to go to another church. She asked the priest, who was to act as her driver that day, to bring her to the other church. The priest said that it was far out of their way, although he was willing to bring her there.

On the way to the other church, Sr Briega was wondering whether she had just imagined it, but she went ahead. She said that sometimes you have to risk being a fool for Jesus: "He never makes a mistake, but a person can get it wrong and, if you don't take the chance, you'll never know". Sr Briega went into the church, which



Fr Brendan Walsh and Deacon Don Devaney during the National Divine Mercy Conference.

was in a large hospital. There was a man in the front pew, and when she went in, he turned around, said, "Sr Briega" and started to cry. He then asked her, "How did you know?"

The man was a priest, an English-speaking missionary, who told Sr Briega that he had written a letter to his Bishop telling him that he was leaving the priesthood. The priest had wanted very much to talk to Sr Briega, but his duties as hospital chaplain had prevented him from going to see her. The previous night, he had come into the chapel and asked the Lord to send Sr Briega to him. He also left his letter by the Tabernacle.

In the morning, Sr Briega had received the prompt to go to the priest's chapel and now she was hearing his story and praying with him. The priest was 'completely transformed'.

Sr Briega related the incident as a way of demonstrating that, sometimes, human wisdom is not the best guide, and that the Lord has His ways of reaching us, even though they sometimes seem unusual and even improbable.

## Pray for wisdom

In another anecdote, Sr Briega said that people will sometimes ask her to go here or there, or to give a talk in one place or another. On one occasion, Cardinal Suenens, and a lady called Veronica O'Brien, asked her to go to Belgium, where they had great plans for a House of Prayer. Sr Briega acknowledged that the idea was a good one, but she prayed to know the Will of God in relation to their invitation. She discerned, very clearly that she

was not called to a house of prayer and she was at peace with her decision to decline the invitation.

Sr Briega used this anecdote to emphasise how important it is to ask for light to know the Will of God and not to rely on human judgement - something which is good in itself might not be in God's plan for you.

She also said that we must not allow other people to influence us in decision-making and she advised that we pray for the gift of knowledge, and for wisdom to be able to make good decisions. She added, almost as an after-thought, that the Belgian house of prayer did not last.

Sr Briega referred to the letter to the Ephesians in which we are exhorted to put on the armour of God. We have to protect ourselves against human wisdom, she said, and if we don't pray faith dies.

She gave thanks to God for the faith of the Irish and spoke of the faith of St Patrick, and of the Founding Fathers of America, and their relationship with Jesus. She said that there must be no false gods.

## Church Unity

Sr Briega described the Church as a ship. She said that Jesus sent the Apostles out in a 'big ship', namely the church, at Pentecost. However, some people were not happy with the ship, so they took rafts and jumped off. There are thousands of little boats in the sea, she said, and that what we, as Catholics, are praying for in Church Unity week is that they all come back to the main ship.

We have had bad bishops, popes,

etc, but the body of the church will last till the end of time. Have faith and trust. All things work together for those who love the Lord.

## 'Trust in My Goodness'

In paragraph 2548 of the Diary of St Faustina, Jesus told Faustina, "My Daughter, your duty will be to trust completely in My Goodness". Sr Briega added that we should pray to the Holy Spirit, who animates and strengthens our faith.

She observed that people are afraid in all situations. "We have the pandemic", she said, by way of example, adding that fear is useless and that it is "satan's tool". She quoted Padre Pio, who famously said, "Pray hope and don't worry", adding a prayer to the Holy Spirit – "Holy Spirit, give me the grace, courage and charisms that I need to counteract satan's tactics".

Sr Briega closed her talk with a prayer for all listening and a reminder not to "over-trust" people, but to place our faith in Jesus.

She also reminded us to go to the Eucharist, and if we can't receive Him spiritually to make an act of Spiritual Communion. Finally, Sr Briega quoted Psalm 27 – "The Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear?"

*Sr Briega can be contacted via her website and the full talk can be viewed on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3A2VIG6mqTE>*

*The other speakers included Fr Columba Jordan CFR, Fr Eunan Mc Donnell, Fr Hayden Williams OFM Cap, and Fr Brendan Walsh.*



# The First Easter Morning *by Fr Stephen Quinn OCD*

ONE can easily picture that early Sunday morning all those many years ago, the whole city is wrapped in silence and the early morning darkness. A sort of stupor lies thick in the air after the great festival of Passover. There is hardly a candle burning in a window at that early hour.

Except for one small house where there are the first stirrings of life. Behind a firmly shut wooden door, some purposeful women are busy about their tasks. One collects linen bandages, garments, and other assorted clothes, while another puts spices into jars, and yet another holds a bucket filled with soap and water. They are about to do for their loved one what millions have sought to do over the years, to give their beloved friend this last measure of their devotion to him, trying to make his body look at least seemly in death as it had not looked in the last few moments of life. Once they had done that task, they could then try to close the door on this chapter of their lives.

They put on long veils and pull them low down over their faces. Then one of them ever so tentatively opens the door, trying not to make the slightest sound so as not to draw any attention to themselves or their purpose. The one who opens the door busily scans the dark street outside, attempting to take in every little detail. Her eyes peeled for the slightest movement, her ears almost on stalks waiting for the faintest sound. Not a creature is stirring in the street, so she quickly beckons her companions out.

One by one they file out into that street. For one moment they take stock of all that they have in their hands and one of them whispers to the others, "Ready?" The group nod their affirmation and, without a further word, they scurry away at a fast rate, keeping close to the walls, going from one shadow to the next.

Their whole-body language and activity screams of anxiety and fear, concerned not to be spotted by some malicious eye and some enemy hand getting in their way. As they go, there is not as much as a whisper between them. The faintest hint of activity brings their journey to a halt and they stand stock still waiting for it to pass. Then they scurry on, by careful footwork they make it all the way to the city gate. There, they are forced to give an explanation for their activity at that hour, their hearts are in their mouths as they expect to be recognised and abused, but the guard simply grunts out his indifference, waving them on, thinking to himself, "What can a few women do after all?" Once they have navigated their way out of the gate, a sad realisation comes to them; they are retracing the steps that their friend had taken three days earlier.

They walk along His way of sorrows as He carried His great weight out of the city to the place of execution. Bits and pieces of His clothing and blood strew the way ahead of them. They quickly come to the place of execution, where the old stump remains standing upright, His blood remains ingrained on it, and the stench of death lies heavy over the whole place.

The women pull their veils further down over their eyes, trying to keep their bitter memories as far away as possible. Pushing on from that place of the skull, they at last come in sight of their destination; a small garden outside the city in which a newly hewn tomb is situated. In that tomb they had hastily placed His body, just before the Passover was to begin.

As they arrive at the garden gate, they stop to take a breath. They have managed to navigate a great deal of the city without too much trouble but now maybe the worst task of all awaits, the cleaning and arranging of a dead body is never a pleasant business even at the best of times, never mind a victim of a crucifixion. They have to wash His body marked so gravely by His suffering, anoint it with their sweet ointments and spices in attempting to hold off decay for as long as possible, and then wrap Him in a bright new linen winding sheet. Once they had those chores carried out, then all that would be left to do would be to close the stone door and weep for what they had lost.

## Garden

As they make their way into the garden, they find nothing as they expected it to be. They had been warned that a troop of guards had been posted, but when they stepped into the garden there was not a sign of anyone. It was as if the posse had been scattered somehow. There was no sign that they had been there at all now. Once they have comprehended that mystery, it dawns on them that their enemy's disappearance has left them at some disadvantage, how on earth are they going to move that great stone door?

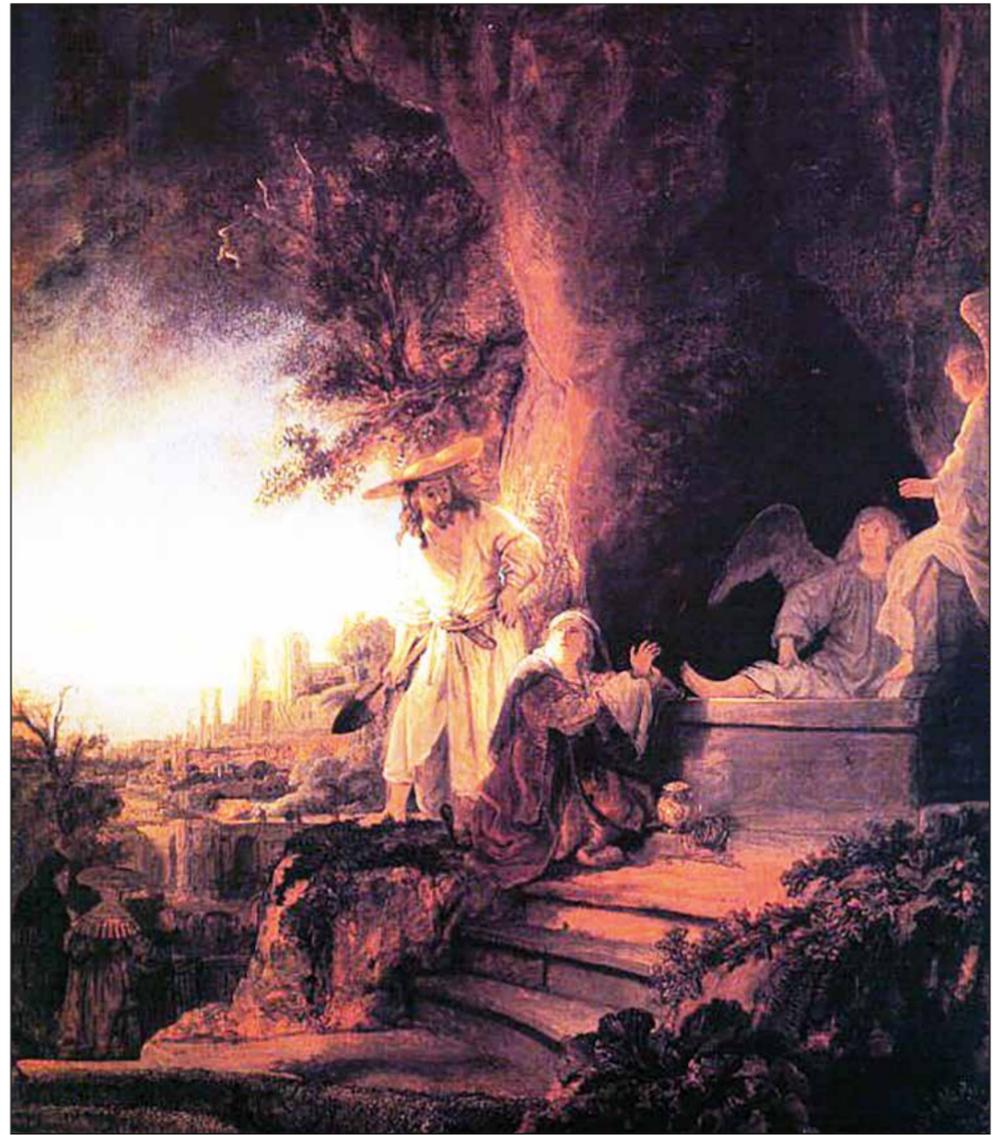
Hardly had that thought entered their heads when they are thunderstruck by what their eyes beheld! The tomb door lay tossed to one side as if some tremendous force had picked it up and threw it out of its way. They rush to the empty doorway and they find only a few rags lying on the floor and a shroud folded up in the

corner. Of the body that they had placed in there so carefully three days before, there was absolutely nothing. It was gone like a puff of smoke and, like a puff of smoke, probably would not be found again.

Their minds naturally turned to the worst possible scenario; an enemy had done this, his unfriendly hand reaching inside and desecrating even the final resting place of their friend, "could they leave him nothing at all even this piece of stone-cold tomb?" Shocked out of all knowing, they face the horror. We can wonder did they, at that moment, feel the first rays of the rising sun as it came up in the east behind them? Did they see the darkness of the world around them being put to flight? Given the trauma of the last few days, it is very unlikely that they saw anything beyond the immediately obvious! They only gradually became aware that somewhere behind them there was something or someone moving around. Given the sounds of life, they probably dismissed it as being a gardener about his business early in the morning. Their immediate priority has not changed: to find the cold dead body of the one who had been forcibly taken from them.

As the 'someone' stepped forward and the step kept coming closer, it is only then that they are forced to take any notice of this someone. The sound of foot falls are only a few paces away from them when they are finally forced to turn and face the oncoming figure. Like most people, their eyesight acclimatised to the person by going from generic detail to specifics. They first of all noticed from his size and physique that he is a man, who seemed to be wrapped in a tunic and clothing of a normal man, and that he had an energetic and vigorous step that kept coming, and yet, all the time, they felt there was something that they recognised.

et, for all this inspiration that they had seen him before, there is something very different about him, something vibrant and not to mention beautiful. They just assume that it is the gardener and thought that it would be a good opportunity to quiz him about the tomb. As they continued to look at him, there is definitely something captivating about this man. It is his face that most strikes them; there is something about it, a beauty that goes beyond skin deep. If they had been on the mountain with the three disciples that time of His transfiguration, they would have had some reference point. There is a human face, but there is more to it than human. The face almost vibrates with life and light. It is as radiant as the rising sun and, as they look, the face increasingly strikes them with awe and wonder. As if they had stepped onto holy ground or



Rembrandt *The Risen Christ Appearing to Mary Magdalen*.

into the sanctuary of the Temple. They had an awareness of the immediacy of the living God.

## Worship

Their growing impression is that they just have to get down on their knees and worship the glory of God on that face. They remain completely mystified as to what is in front of them. It is only when the figure spoke that the flicker of real recognition came over them. The figure of a man spoke one word, a name: "Mary". A familiar voice, a voice they had heard so many times before, a voice that had pronounced the greatest words that they had ever heard, and a voice that they had laughed and joked with on so many intimate occasions. That voice is now speaking to them. But wait a moment that voice couldn't possibly be speaking now. It had been finally silenced with a guttural cry from the cross. That voice was dead and gone. He was dead and gone with it. How could this be happening now? Several of the women feel like pinching themselves to see if this is real. All of a sudden, the light that shone from his face starts to dawn inside of them. All the words that He had spoken about Himself start to come thick and fast.

There were those times in which He had warned that He was destined to be rejected by the people, that He would be put to death and that He would do something mysteriously called

"rising again." There was that whole mysterious episode when He spoke of destroying the temple and, in three days, raising it again. Funny thing about that saying is that this Sunday morning is now the third day since the death. Is the temple that Jesus was actually talking about actually what is now standing in front of them? Is this living Jesus now the new temple, and the new focus of worshipping God?

They, of course, could not forget what had happened in Bethany, when Lazarus came out of the tomb and Jesus' commentary upon it, that Jesus Himself was the Resurrection and the life. Their minds are swimming with every word and little detail. It is a moment of sensory and intellectual overload. It is all too much at once.

The whole Church is mysteriously joined to that moment. We have collectively been trying to grasp that moment ever since. Mary's mind swims with our questions and we swim in her experience. She knew that what is before her very eyes is so much more than a figment of her overactive imagination, the fabrication of the ancients, or religious people getting carried away. What she could see, hear, and almost reach out and touch is something that puts the whole Lazarus experience into a shade. Lazarus had been resuscitated by the Lord's mysterious healing power. Lazarus was going to live

out a normal human life and then, at some stage, he was going to die again. No person or no force upon this troubled planet is ever going to lay its irreverent hands on this Jesus who has come out of the tomb. A new existence is born from the empty tomb of Jesus Christ. The One who has come out of the tomb will never die again.

The normal human rhythm of living and dying, no longer applies to Him at all. He lives another life. In the womb of the virgin, the divine had united itself to humanity in the person of Jesus Christ. On the cross, divinity had loved humanity to wellness, removing the marks that had so deformed human existence from the beginning. Now, in the Resurrection, Christ draws humanity away from its creaturely anchorage in this world to an eternal existence, to a life shared with the Blessed Three Persons of God.

In the Resurrection of Jesus, that life of God is now our life as well, and each of us that believe in what the women saw that morning are called to share it. A whole new future has dawned because of the Risen One. The whole moment is caught very well by the Magdalene, who fell to her knees and adored her "Rabboni" or "Master". What is left for her to do but to surrender to the power of the One who mastered death? What is there left for any of us to do?

## This Easter let us be messengers of hope wherever hope is lost – Bishop Donal

WELCOMING the return of congregations, though still restricted in number, with the re-opening of churches for public worship in Northern Ireland, Bishop Donal highlights the message of hope that Easter brings and offers reassurance to parishioners in Co Donegal that their day to return to public worship will come.

He also reflects on this special Year of St Joseph and the Family and how the life story of one of Derry's daughters is impacting on people around the City, Diocese and world, with her home parish preparing to mark the fifth anniversary of Sr Clare Crockett's death this month with a week-long retreat.

### An Easter Message...

The Easter message is centred on the Resurrection of Jesus. This year, in particular, we are challenged to see what Resurrection means for a society coming out of lockdowns and facing a very uncertain future.

Jesus invites us to believe that death and despair can never have the final say for our world. This Easter asks us to be messengers of hope. I pray that we can all be leaven in our society by bringing Good News wherever others think that hope is lost.

Jesus has risen and Resurrection is offered to those who are not frightened to accept it! That is why we are an Alleluia people.

### Return to public worship, remembering our Donegal parishes...

This has been a very difficult period for both laity and clergy. It may take some time for us to recognise the damage done by the lockdowns in general and the closure of churches in particular.

It was clear from the first public Masses on March 26 that many parishioners were painfully missing access to Mass and the sacraments. The flood of people seeking tickets for the Holy Week and Easter ceremonies showed just

how important public worship is.

Yet many are still very cautious about coming out of their house or gathering. For lots of people, the on-line access is enough at present and it will take a huge pastoral effort to encourage them back to church over the next months.

It was great to be able to celebrate the great events of Holy Week with God's holy people. 'Liturgy' comes from the Greek word 'leitourgia', meaning 'the work of the people'. Liturgy without people loses part of its meaning.

The situation is different in the Co Donegal part of the diocese. I do not accept that there is an anti-Catholic plot going on. Indeed, those who know history would tell us that any attempt at persecution never wins! The situation in Europe in general is very difficult as regards lockdowns.

All I can do is reassure those in our Donegal parishes that their time will come, and that they may be very pleasantly surprised by how many people will want to

come back to parishes.

It has been a lonely period and people will want to gather. It is up to us, during lockdown, to engage with them so that church is one of the places they most want to come back to!

### Year of 'Amoris Laetitia Family' and St Joseph...

Family has meant many things in history. But it has always been central to social stability. One of the problems created by our modern consumerist culture is that family can mean pretty well what someone decides it means for them.

Thus, Pope Francis has encouraged us to celebrate a Year of St Joseph, 150 years after St Joseph was designated as Patron of the Universal Church. In his letter *Patris Corde* (With a father's heart), the Holy Father has underlined the role of Joseph as a beloved, tender obedient father, a creatively courageous father and an example of love.

Pope Francis also stresses the dignity of work and that being a father means accepting responsibility for his children. He underlines that children often seem orphans, lacking fathers. This is an uncomfortable truth for many today.

Similarly, five years after the publication of 'Amoris Laetitia', Pope Francis encourages the church to celebrate love and family. That is a challenge to us in that families need support and young people benefit from knowing the challenge of dreaming of faithful committed Christian love. Marriage is not easy. But it provides a stable context for adults and children to grow in their ability to love generously.

### Remembering Sr Clare Crockett...

The life and death of Sr Clare Crockett has had a huge effect worldwide and especially in her native Derry. Saints can often be gilded by the passage of the years.



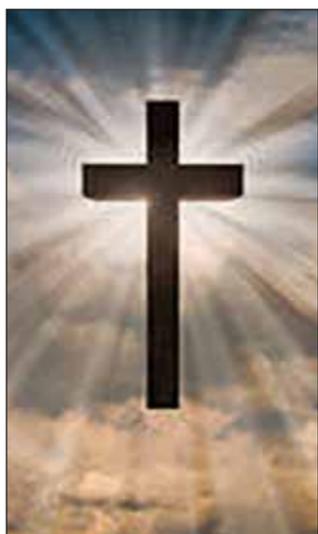
But St Clare's life is well known to many and well documented.

The celebrations surrounding the fifth anniversary of her death will provide an opportunity for many to recall her memory, thank God for her life and witness, and ask for her prayers for this diocese, and especially for its young people.

Sr Clare is seen by many as a courageous example of what God can do, and an inspiration to allow God to do more great things in our day.

## We are the Easter people and Alleluia is our song –

### Bishop Donal



whether we are prepared to let him prune away those attitudes that do not serve his mission of mercy.

"Our first question in Church is not whether we can get back to exercising our rights to worship as we want. The shock of the Resurrection asks whether we are open to being reborn as missionaries of the 21st century. Others need of good news is more important than any desire we might have for spiritual cosiness. A self-obsessed church is not the Church of the Risen Lord".

Bishop Donal went on to say: "We all know that this is a time of huge change for Christ's Church. And there is a theology which arises in times of crisis. It says that we are heading towards an apocalyptic clash between the forces of good and evil. But Easter's message makes me very uncomfortable with that theology.

"It is right to say that every civilisation ultimately dies by suicide. A strong culture becomes fragmented and insipid without shared values that hold community together. Ultimately, western consumerist culture will be its own worst enemy. But the risen Jesus is not so much focused on gloating at the defeat of his enemies as on proclaiming healing for the world. That will be his message to the apostles. They should go and make disciples of all nations including, and perhaps especially, those who opposed him. The whole mission of Jesus was directed towards defeating the Kingdom of Satan. But He wanted to win His opponents for eternal life.

"Jesus wants us to move away from the desire for victory that nailed Him to the Cross and adopt

a theology that will reflect what St Paul said, that Jesus was reconciling the world to Himself. He has given us the message that they are reconciled. We are ambassadors for Christ's reconciliation, not for his vengeance (Cf 2 Cor 5:19-20). It was the loving hearts of women who first encountered the news of the Risen Lord. A church based on too much theological testosterone will be seriously deficient".

### Rebuild

Noting that the message of Resurrection is directed to the whole of society, Bishop Donal continued: "Jesus says that Resurrection is possible from the imposed and self-imposed moves towards isolation. Just because we have got more used to living at a distance from others does not mean that we should prefer to stay prisoners of on-line entertainment and delivery services. Part of our desire to get back to worshipping in church is the conviction that we need to be together if we are to rebuild community and society.

"And we can do better than binging on superficial socialising. For example, many young people are stuck under the oppressive rock that says they should not dream of better than partying and fear of maturing. Their desire for beauty in their lives is squashed by the expectation that throwaway relationships are the best you can expect. It says little for their dignity when the cultural message tells them that human relationships for normal people are based on the law of the jungle. They are not helped by poor example coming from leaders at all levels in society. Bad example of any sort is a sign of bad leadership".

"Young people," he added, "hunger for heroes who will inspire them to engage with fixing real problems. They want to believe that Resurrection is possible for how we structure our society. Do we have civic leaders who will tell them that this is possible? Or do they have to believe that we are stuck with a world where too many of their age group are dying from dope and despair?"

"Jesus proclaims that sin is not the ultimate winner and that divine mercy is available in floods. Christ's message is that there is evil - and that it can be defeated. That struggle will cost. But love changes everything. Politics and economics without resurrection will leave us permanently stuck at Good Friday".

Stating that this Easter we "celebrate our belief that we are not trapped in a dark world of Good Friday betrayal and pain, or of Holy Saturday emptiness", Bishop Donal remarked: "Our community is blessed with people who have known resurrection from addiction, or from bitterness about the past, or from the scars of abuse. Their lives tell us that we are not trapped by yesterday.

"This Easter day, we celebrate Christ's Resurrection and the unimaginable power of God's love to renew the face of the earth. Like the women and apostles, we are asked whether we dare to believe this unimaginable hope. That faith is the Rock on which Jesus will build his Church. That is the Rock on which the Alleluia people stand. Jesus is Risen and His grace enables Resurrection in every generation. That is why we are the Easter people and Alleluia is our song".

## Bishop Donal reflects on priestly ministry role of today in lead up to...

### Good Shepherd Sunday

ON the Fourth Sunday of Easter, we celebrate Vocations Sunday. In this time of great uncertainty, we are challenged to clarify what the role of priestly ministry is in the modern Irish Church. The assumptions have certainly changed since I was ordained in 1977!

The language that we use about priesthood is important. Do we 'recover strong teaching on priesthood'? Or do we allow God to reveal a new strong teaching on priesthood for this generation in Ireland. There may well be different emphases in Africa and Latin America. But Christ wants to speak into the heart of the modern Irish Church.

Jesus was the shepherd of His small band of male and female disciples. He knew them by name, and they followed Him. Jesus, when He looked at the crowd, saw them as sheep without a shepherd

and He set himself to teach them.

That is strong teaching on priesthood. It is important that we do not just look backward in order to discover what Jesus wants from His ordained ministers today. We can learn from the experience of the past, but we can also be open to a developing language, just as the Church has been open in every century.

But it is important that we have a strong teaching on the prophetic ministry of the ordained ministers in a society that is increasingly pickled in the dogmas of secularism. It will not be an easy ministry. But, then, did the Jesus of Calvary call people to a comfortable, conformist model of ministry?

I hope and pray that we can proclaim the call of Jesus to generous discipleship, not just on Good Shepherd Sunday but throughout the year.

## Nine days of prayer for vocations

THE annual time of prayer for vocations in the Diocese will get underway on Saturday, April 17 and conclude on Good Shepherd Sunday, April 25.

This year's theme is based on Pope Francis' recent publication for the Year of St Joseph, 'Patris Corde' ('With a Father's Heart').

People are encouraged to participate in the schedule of daily prayer and Mass, as well as devotional reflections based on the Angelus, Daily Examen and the Mysteries of the Rosary. These resources will be available online at [derrydiocese.org](http://derrydiocese.org) and [derryvocations.org](http://derryvocations.org).

On the evenings of Monday, April 19 to Friday, April 23, Bishop Donal will host a series of interviews with guests from throughout the diocese, discussing how they have answered God's call to vocation. These 20 minute interviews will be broadcast live online at 7 pm, followed by a broadcast of the celebration of the Daily Examen.

At 8 pm, after evening Mass, Bishop Donal will lead the Rosary before concluding with night prayer. The live broadcasts can be viewed at [derrydiocese.org](http://derrydiocese.org) and [derryvocations.org](http://derryvocations.org).

# Exploring Dunree *by Vera McFadden*



DUNREE is in the parish of Desertegney (Disert Eygnigh - Egmeys Hermitage), in Co Donegal. It is called after St Egnay. I wanted to know more about this saint and I got permission to look at an incredibly old martyrology in the library of St Columb's College, Derry. I could only find one Eigheach who was a son of Cucathrach. An archaeologist told me that he could not have been this man's son but, at least, it showed that Eigheach was a real name and not just taken from 'Duice Eigne', which means 'somebody'.

My exploration of Dunree has been continuous since my childhood. As my mother had grown up in the parish, we went there to spend our holidays with our cousins. We always went to the beach at Portban, and there we had a world of discovery, with the little cave in the rock face, the squiggles left by the sand eels, the pink flowers on the shelves on Stuaican Rock, my grandfather's 'boat house', the edible shellfish and dulse, and the fertilising seaweed which our mothers gathered. We were not allowed near the slippery rocks.

One day we met an old lady near a raised area on the green. I remember her saying, "They found bones." I remember coming up the green on the other side of the river

with my mother and she told me that the Danes had once come here, and that they had made wine from heather berries. She pointed over to the Urris Hills above Portban. And, when I was six years old, my parents brought me to the Fort for the 'handover'. We climbed a very long flight of steps.

These three memories were my basic introductions to the history of Dunree. Years later, I decided to make an in depth study of the story of my mother's parish. I got 12 inch ordnance survey maps from Dublin, explored the parish, gathering lore and place names, and researched from books. Once, during my research, I was told to contact a man who lived beside Dunree. He was a genius and knew all about the story of the whole parish. He was eager to pass on this heritage.

I wrote the story of the parish twice; the first time in chronological order, the second time townland by townland. Now I had to decide which was best.

Then I was asked to join the working committee to work out ideas for the new military museum that was about to open. I realised how simple it would be to write a book about the townland of Dunree, including the fort, as the notes were already there. I got permission from the commandant

to take photographs and gather more material, and a retired sergeant assisted me in this work. I already had one very interesting photograph that I had discovered when browsing through the Lawrence collection in Dublin. It showed a Martello tower above a rock face at the edge of the fort. This was no longer there and, even though it would have been built after the 1798 Rebellion, there was no folk memory of it.

The book was in print before the museum opened. It was to prove a source of providence twice. Once I wished to visit Medjugorje, but I had no money to do so. I thought, "If God wants me there, I'll get the money". When I visited the museum, I found that my books had sold so well that I had my fare and accommodation and pocket money.

Another time, I needed someone to put my garden in order. A man was willing but then I realised that I had not enough money to pay him and I could not make an agreement with him until I had. The next morning, the bookshop contacted me to order Derry City books for the O' level class. That provided most of the gardener's wages and I could afford the rest.

Looking back, I realise that the history and folklore of Dunree

stone slabs. The decorated clay pot was an example of one of their skills.

Hugh McGrory found some Bronze Age pins when part of the Dunree sand dunes were eroded. He believed that they worked at Cruineara Buidhe, a high area on Dunree Hill which overlooks the green. These people had come to Ireland to look for copper. They must have found some here. It can be found in quartz crystals. For some reason they considered quartz a special drone and it also was placed in the graves. The Bronze Age people who are buried here may have lived at Port a Crannoige, near Dunree. This crannog was mentioned on maps but no longer exists. There are also Bronze Age burials and signs of their activity in other parts of the parish.

## Burial

Dunree townland has several burial sites. One is marked by a Cairn of stones. It is on 'Barney's Island', a flat area above the bay. Traditionally, this was the grave of a headless seaman.

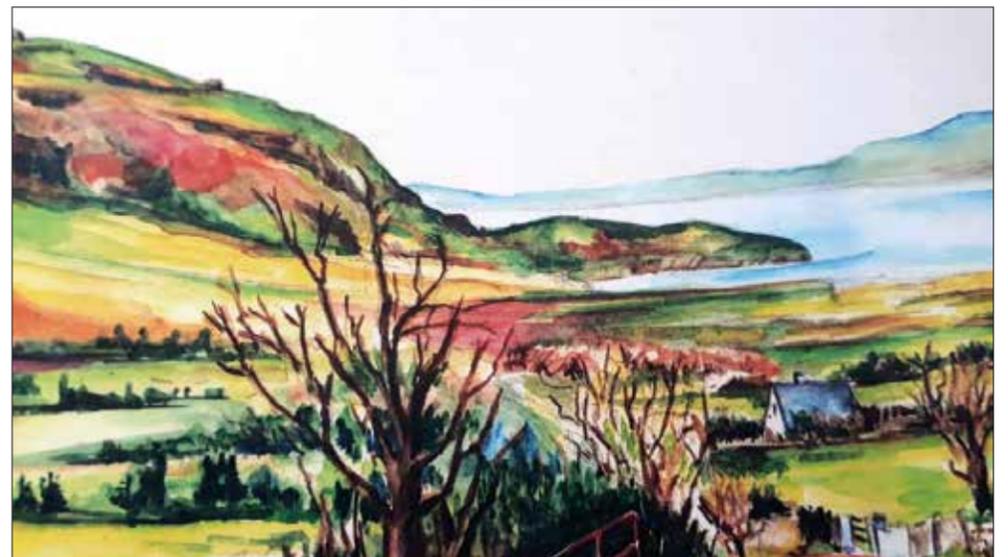
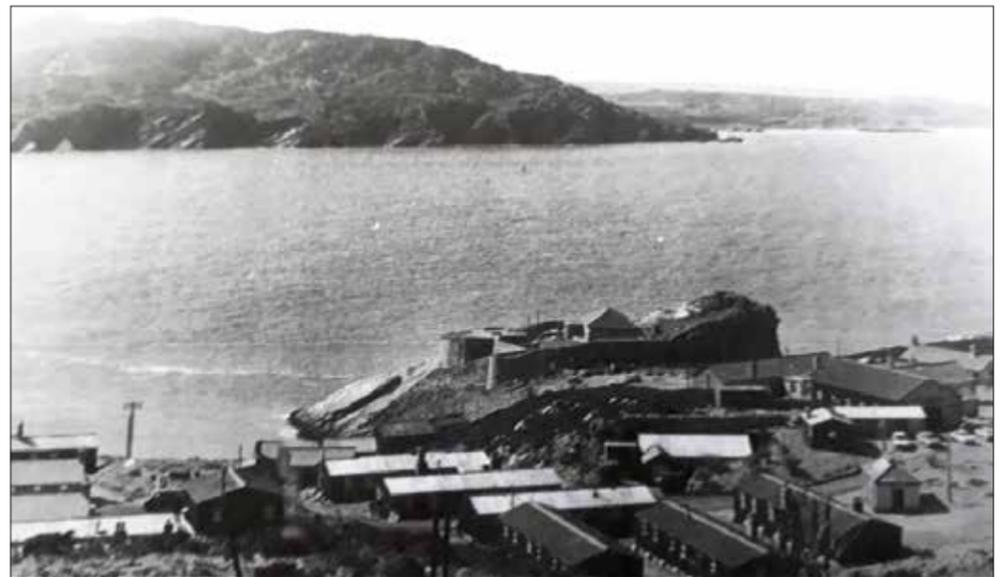
Cill Ard is an ancient church site on the landward side of Dunree. The ground here was consecrated centuries ago and so there would have been burials here. In the unhappy time of doctrinal error, grieving mothers made sure that their stillborn babies were buried in consecrated ground and Cill Ard may have been used as a

ceallurach.

My old friend showed me where my ancestors, whom he called 'gentle giants' had lived, just beside the cill. It had been part of their farm. Generations ago, they had swapped farms with his ancestors. Though he knew the position of the ancient church, he did not know its period. Recently local archaeologist, John Hegarty and the Bernician Studies Group used geophysics and established that it belonged to the fifth century.

That was the time that St Patrick was evangelising, baptising, and ordaining. Sometimes he left priests in charge of a church he had founded; other times they founded their own. One man who had been ordained by Patrick was called Mahee, and he then founded a little church on an island in Strangford Lough. Many years later, a monastery was founded here on the part known as An Aon Druim. It was well-known but its site was entirely forgotten, perhaps because of careless pronunciation, for the initial 'A' was being dropped and it was being called Nendruim. Its story was being included into that of Antrim monastery. Fortunately, its own identity and position were re-established when the stump of a round tower was discovered in the under growth.

So, place names are particularly important, but they can also be confusing if they are not pronounced properly or if they have several meanings. Cill



Ard might seem to mean high church, but these early churches were small, sometimes only big enough for the celebrant and the congregation stood outside. Was the church at Dunree called Cill Art, and perhaps founded by a cleric called Art? A careful study of possible meanings can sometimes be rewarding.

The local folklore is important too. One story tells that the little church was attacked and rebuilt several times and then a little bird began to remove the mortar and fly inland. This bird story is also told about other places where the site of the church was changed. The builders followed its direction and built it on the other site, which was probably Greenhill (Cre an Chill – the soil of the church). This was a monastic church and, when the Celtic era passed, other monks, probably the Augustinians, worked here, and they had a hostelry for people on a journey. The old man showed me the place where the stables had been.

John Hegarty and the Bernician Studies group found evidence of a double bank and decided that there had been something important here, probably a monastic church. There had been one at An Aon Druim and it had been attacked by Vikings. Were the raiders at Dunree the Vikings? When my mother told me about them, she had pointed to the Urris Hills up above Portban.

The old man told me about a possible 'look out' there and we marked it on the map. There was a traditional saying about it

– “There would be a pile of gold on Dunree and a peck of gold at Dun Or a Dhith Orthu”. Does the saying mean that the church treasures were successfully hidden at Dunree and that the Vikings had only a little? Or does it mean that there was a lot of the mineral gold at Dunree and scarcely any at the other site? Gold can be found in quartz. The saying may be in the Annals, for I found several similar sentences in the old Book. One of them compared Fahan Mor and Fahan Beag.

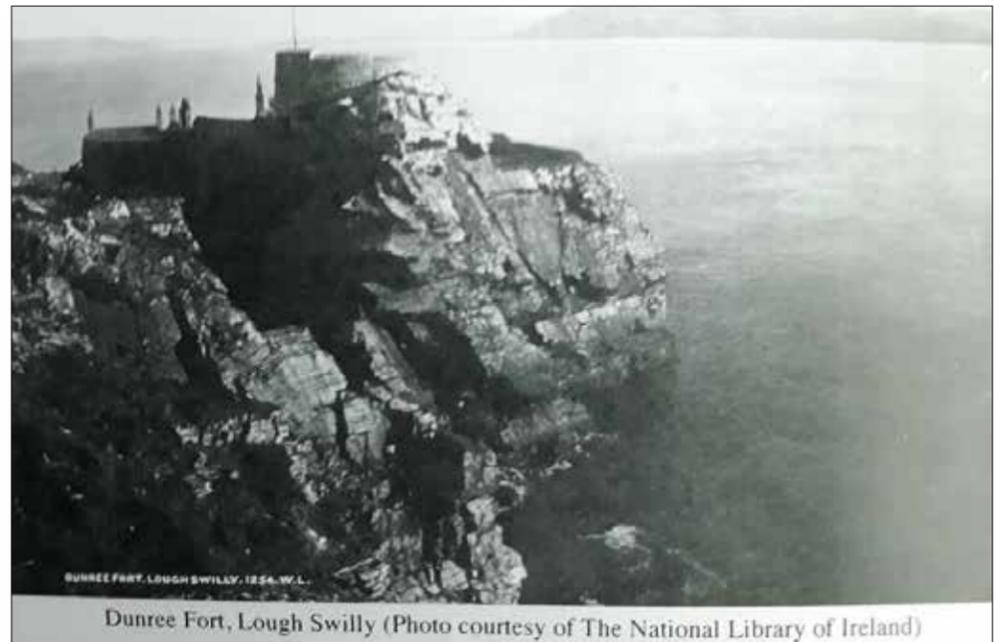
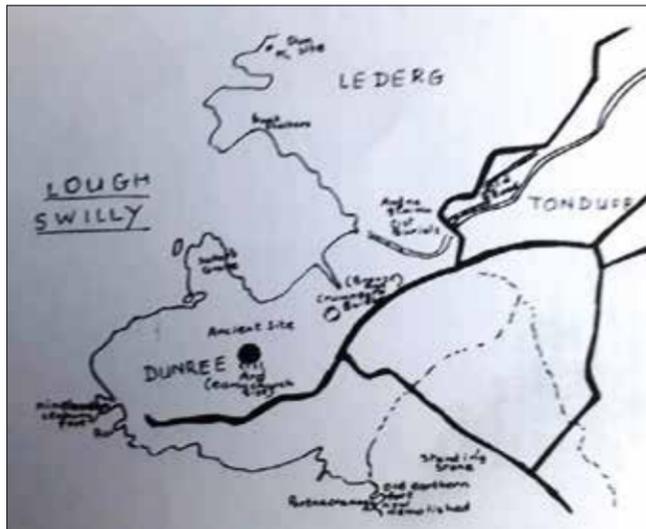
I sometimes wonder about the Vikings. My old friend had called my ancestors 'gentle giants'. Had some of the raiders stayed in the area and become Christians? While the name McLaughlin was that of some Irish chiefs, it can also mean 'Son of the foreigner'.

When I was six years old, we passed Cill Ard on our way through the fort for the 'handover'.

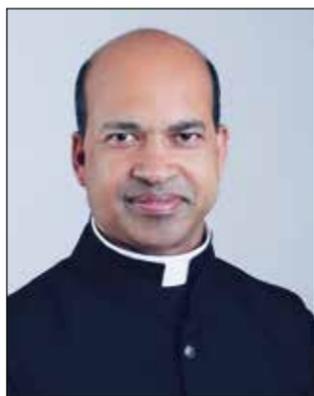
Decades later, I was invited to another handover. This time it was being changed from a military fort to a military museum. Some of the guests of honour were Bishop Edward Daly, Lucius and Kathleen Emerson, and President Hillary, who cut the ribbon for the opening of the museum. There was the military band marching and playing as they went. There were the military exercises and trumpet blasts. There was the tasty dinner in the marquee.

It has been a long time since I was at Dunree or any part of Desertegney. Once, on the Feast of All the Saints of Ireland, I stopped to pray and was very aware that some of my ancestors lie buried there, and others further back at Greenhill.

Star of the Sea guide me and all my Desertegney friends, and everyone, in the Light of Your Son.



## “Do not be afraid” by Fr Joseph Varghese



Fr Joseph Karukayil Varghese.

THE Lord is truly Risen... Alleluia. In such a turbulent time, the need to hear the Easter message has never been greater. Easter is known as the Feast of Feasts. 'Easter' literally means 'the feast of fresh flowers', as it falls in the spring season when nature awakens and flowers bloom again.

As you are all aware, I have been working in the North of Ireland since 2010 and during that time I have become aware of many of the Irish customs and traditions.

In pre-Christian times, it was traditional for druidesses to burn a perpetual fire in Kildare, where one of the most famous Irish goddesses, Bridgit, was worshipped and petitioned to protect their animals and provide

a fruitful harvest.

It seems appropriate then, that there should be a seamless transition from this heathen practice to that of one of our patron saints, St Brigid, who built her monastery and church in Kildare. She continued the custom of keeping the fire alight. For her and her nuns, the fire represented the new light of Christianity, which had been brought to Ireland early in the fifth century. Today, St Brigid's fire is housed in a piece of sculpture in Kildare Town Square. This perpetual flame is a symbol of hope, justice and peace for Ireland and our world.

Another important Irish legend recalls how St Patrick, by lighting the Paschal Fire on Ireland's Royal Hill of Tara, challenged the pagan practice used by the Irish king to be the first to light a pagan fire on this Royal Site at the time of the spring full moon. When St Patrick came to Ireland, he became aware of the state of his soul and converted, finding new life from God. He became a man of deep prayer.

Again, in his Confessions we read: "After I had come to Ireland I daily used to feed cattle, and I prayed frequently during the day; the love of God and the fear of

Him increased more and more, and faith became stronger, and the spirit was stirred; so that in one day I said about a hundred prayers, and in the night nearly the same; so that I used even to remain in the woods and in the mountains; before daylight I used to rise to prayer, through snow, through frost, through rain, and I felt no harm; nor was there any slothfulness in me, as I now perceive, because the spirit was then fervent within me" (Confessions §6).

St John Paull II says: "Do not abandon yourselves to despair. We are the Easter people and hallelujah is our song." As this pandemic hit our world, little more than a year ago, Pope Francis implored us: "Do not be afraid we are all in the same boat."

Jesus has risen! He has truly risen! Death has no power over us anymore. Jesus has redeemed the world.

Stop and think! Evaluate this past year and the turmoil of the situation around us. When we are being attacked by all types of fear, spiritual, emotional and mental, fear of failure, rejection, criticism and pain, we must remember the inspirational words of Pope Francis and that

this is the supreme season of grace. We cannot allow fear and worry to distract us from our Christian mission, but learn how to put our full trust in Christ Jesus, the risen Lord.

Let us all take time to speak with Jesus, tell Him our fears and concerns, and ask Him to help us to know of His presence to all of us personally, through the power of the Holy Spirit. In our fear and weaknesses, Jesus comes to us in ways that we might not normally notice or understand. This is a time to really come to know that He is alive, and He is with each one of us on our journey in these difficult times. He will not desert us. He is our fortress.

Let us consider the first Easter. How did the Apostles and the friends and followers of Jesus feel? Yes, they were confused and afraid, but imagine how overwhelming the feeling of joy and hope must have been for the women who went to the tomb of Jesus, to anoint his body, to be told by the Angels, "He is not here. Why are you looking here?"

The women may well have come to understand the significance of this quicker than the Apostles because when they raced from the tomb to tell them that Jesus had risen, they were not

believed. However, as we know from Sacred Scriptures, many followers encountered Jesus, including His beloved Peter, Mary Magdalene, the disciples on the road to Emmaus and all the disciples apart from Thomas, although he did meet Jesus later. Many of us are like Thomas because we have doubts at times. Thomas would not believe until he saw and actually touched the Sacred Wounds of Jesus. We can learn from Thomas that there is no doubt whatsoever about the word of Our Lord Jesus.

Let us consider the true meaning of Easter. For all Catholics, it is a reminder that Jesus has overcome death and sin. Undoubtedly, this is a victory of good over evil. While that first Easter was one like no other, we should always remember that the words of Jesus are as important and significant today as they were almost 2,000 years ago, "Peace, I am with you. Do not be afraid."

Easter is a feast which gives us fresh hope and encouragement in this world of sadness, pain, sorrows and tears. We are reminded that life is worth living. It is our belief in the Real Presence of the Risen Jesus in our souls, in His Church, in the Blessed Sacrament and in

Heaven, that is our guiding light in both our personal and our communal prayer. It gives us the strength to fight against temptations and frees us from unnecessary worries and fears.

Easter gives us the joyful message that we are a "Resurrection people", so let us live our lives in that light. This means that we are not supposed to lie buried in the tomb of our despair, discouragement, or doubts. Instead, we are expected to live a joyful and peaceful life, constantly experiencing the living presence of the Risen Lord in all the events of our lives.

We can't allow ourselves to be entombed by despair, worry, doubt, pain, tension and strife. In our lives, we need to be aware of the presence of the Risen Lord with us. Our lives should radiate the effect of the Risen Lord upon us. We are called to be transparent Christians, exhibiting to others the love, mercy, compassion and spirit of self-sacrificing service that goes with being a follower of the Risen Jesus. We must share in the power of the Risen Lord as we experience the blessing of the Easter season.

May the Risen Lord bless and protect us all.

## Sundays after Easter **Preparing for the Holy Spirit** by *Fr Johnny Doherty, CSsR*

OVER the past number of years many things have happened that could knock the heart out of us as the Church. There is a great drop in the number of vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Young people seem to reject us more and more. Scandals keep hitting the headlines which make many people embarrassed about being Catholics. Issues have been brought forward in the Church that makes a life of faith difficult for many. It all seems endless, and we can easily end up spiritless and depressed.

### Another reality

These weeks leading up to Pentecost open up for us another reality, that of the Risen Lord living in us and among us and preparing us for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit. With His Spirit in us nothing can ever destroy us. We become like a buoy in the stormy waters of the sea. We keep popping up again with every wave that would seem to destroy us.

There are many ways of thinking about the Holy Spirit. We can think of the Spirit's fruits. We can reflect on the gifts of the Spirit that we share.

The Liturgy during these weeks of April and into May draws us

into what we need to take on in order to be open to being filled again and again with the Spirit of God.

### Easter Sunday: April 4 We rejoice and are glad

People today are very reluctant to get involved with things in the community and in society, especially on a voluntary basis. Yet our following of Christ is about getting involved and not counting the cost. In the Acts of the Apostles today we are told clearly: "We now are those witnesses". That is our call.

We have just come through the journey that Christ travelled to His passion and death, the price of our salvation. Our responsibility is to bring the fruit of that to our world by bringing joy, peace, healing, gladness, freedom, justice, and so on, first of all to those with whom we live and spreading out to those with whom we worship and beyond.

Every aspect of human living needs this more now than ever as we witness a breakdown of marriage and family life; the serious threats to society with growing violence in so many countries around the world; increasing isolation of individuals

in every community; the changes that Covid-19 have imposed on our world and how we live life post the virus. Now is the time to live our Christian faith.

### Easter 2: April 11

#### My Lord and my God

Jesus said: "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so am I sending you." We are all very familiar with the idea of peace processes – here, in the North of Ireland, in the Middle East, and so on. Jesus asks us to constantly engage in a peace process with one another so that we can be His disciples and true witnesses of His resurrection.

We need, first of all, to put away all weapons of mass destruction like criticism of one another, anger, coldness, selfishness, etc. Then we need to replace these with the qualities of God's Spirit, namely: love; joy; peace; patience etc.

This week we should practice these qualities in our homes as wife and husband in marriage; as parents and children as family. We also need to practice them as we build our parish communities to the glory of God.

### Easter 3: April 18

#### Our advocate with the Father

Jesus said: "You are witnesses

of all I have said." Over the past number of years we have become aware of the human frailty of the Church, often to the point of keeping our heads down and hoping that the trauma will go away. And we have every reason for being ashamed and afraid and even, at times, resentful.

But, we also have a great responsibility to witness boldly to Jesus, who has risen from the dead and is alive in us as His Church. We do this, not so much by preaching, as by how we live our lives in joy and hope and love. Our families, our couples, our community and our society badly need the witness of people who are happy, content, forgiving, thoughtful, prayerful and caring.

If we work at it together we can make a difference. That is our call this week again as husbands/wives, parents/children and as a community of faith.

### Easter 4: April 25

#### I am the Good Shepherd

Jesus said: "I am the Good Shepherd. I know my own and my own know me." This week is a very special time of prayer for vocations. What does this mean for you personally, for you as a family, and for you as a parish

community? For many it quite possibly means very little. And yet it has vital significance.

We take it for granted that there will always be priests to serve us with the Eucharist and the other Sacraments; and religious to take the initiative in our social needs. Recent years have provided us with a very different reality and a very new challenge. In our response to Christ the Good Shepherd, we are all called to make our homes places of His presence for the world. We can only do this through the confident ways we make our love for one another shine out and our faith in Him be seen by those around us. And we need to make our faith community, our parish, a place that attracts the attention of those around us. The Lord will then provide what is needed for the Eucharist and for leadership for a better world.

### Conclusion

These four weeks of Easter in April bring us just over halfway in our preparation for Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit. Along with the first three weeks of May, they are like laying a foundation of faith, hope and love on which the Holy Spirit can build the Church for the year ahead.



Fr Johnny Doherty

## This New Life by *Fr John McLaughlin ssc*

*"Long have I waited for your coming home to me, and living, deeply this new life" (Hosea Chapter 3...as per John Michael Talbot)*



Fr John McLaughlin ssc.

A couple of years ago on a visit to my old mission-parish in Santiago, I walked the street market on a Sunday morning after my Mass. It was always a good way to meet the local parishioners and others interested in conversation. Janet appeared before me and a rather different Janet as she smiled at me. Gone was the scar that had disfigured her face and left her rather forlorn and sad, silent on many occasions.

"Do I look different?" she asked me, with a deeper smile than I had ever seen from her. The effects I again noticed when I visited the Soup Kitchens' group later on in the week. Janet was now participative and alive, and she was

a vibrant actor in the group, who of course all shared her new life.

Just down that same street in midweek, I met another Janet also from the parish and a Mass-goer too. She had a 'chispa' (spark) about her always, slugging me about the liqueur chocolates I had brought along on one occasion to an outing of the chapel, and when would they see sweets of that taste ever again. She had appeared at the parish office looking for a small favor: the loan of an alb for her son who was living interned in a drug rehabilitation program run by the Jesuits. She had to take three transports every Sunday to visit him, now in his 50th year and on a big chance. They were doing a

Good Friday Passion Play and he was to be one of the high priests. So I gave her an alba and awaited further news, which she normally shared first with Cathy, the parish secretary.

All had gone well, she was now telling me, for three years, and he held down his responsible job. But, the will had started to yield and she was now facing debts and troubles just as before... "Puesto que Cristo ha resucitado, creemos que el hombre es un proceso ilimitado y que nada de lo que podemos imaginar es demasiado grande para Él," (Given that Christ has risen we believe...that man is part of an unlimited process and that nothing we can imagine is too great for Him.) This is part of a Creed of Easter that in many of the chapels we proclaimed aloud on Easter Sunday, and a moment of joy and faith for all.

In the great Vatican II document, 'Gaudium et Spes', there is made the distinction between 'Having' and 'Being', tener y ser, as we discussed often in the catechetical programs for adults and the RCIA six-month preparation for men and women of all ages.

Again and again, we seem to lose out on the 'Being' aspect, in favour of yet more consumption and acquiring of the latest pieces or artefacts. The modern insights into our deeper 'Being' and destiny hold out many hopes as the

message of religion renews itself and the Risen Christ becomes the Cosmic Christ, already outlined so many years ago by the Jesuit, Tailhard de Chardin. "Risen from the dead, Christ makes clear that salvation does not mean the escape of the human spirit from matter. Rather, our future will bring the transformation of our whole relational body-person-self-dust and breath together into the glory of God." So writes Elizabeth Johnson, following on in that line of Chardin and others like Ilya Delio.

### Vision

In the second last book he wrote, 'An Astonishing Secret', Daniel O'Leary puts that vision within reach of many ecologists and those concerned about the future of our planet. I am inclined to think that maybe, in the repackaging of the Good News for this new generation, this could be the overall vision. It's not going to be 'more of the same' in any case!

In the wake of the William and Meghan drama, I found myself going back to that outstanding homily of Archbishop Michael Curry on the occasion of their marriage. Reading the text and following the address on YouTube, I felt, once again, the Fire and the Divine energy that he proclaimed as the Love they were sharing in. I wondered too, how many of that

vast audience would be attracted to look up or revisit Tailhard, whom he so enthusiastically cited; for me, one of the great transmissions of the Easter Message in all its profundity and yet simplicity.

In a moment of great personal anguish for my family, we accompanied my sister, Anne while she was in the Rehabilitation Centre in Dun Laoire. On the Easter Sunday of that period, I was invited to say Mass in the ward surrounded by patients and staff. Then, and afterwards, I was aware of a great sense of joy all around me. Patients, who like my sister, would be wheelchair-bound for life after car and riding accidents concentrated in that ward, somehow communicated a sense of Joy and Hope that I never quite felt again in many years of Easter Vigils and adult baptisms from the programs culminating on that great Event. That was a 'Kairos moment' for me, and it didn't have to be repeated.

So, in this personal kaleidoscope of the New Life of Easter, I can only go back again and again to the Person of Christ and let His transformative message and relevance come alive – "To live is to change and to be perfect is to change often", as John Donne put it.

In his book, 'Jesus Then and Now', the scripture scholar, N T Wright summarized: "I propose that when

We have the privileged task of continuing to lay this foundation through the Eucharist each week, in which we have the Word of God to call and guide us and the Eucharist to strengthen and compel us forward in hope.

Now that the restrictions are being lifted, it is important to celebrate the Eucharist as a community as much as possible and as a family. Online celebrations have been such a gift through the lockdowns. Now we need to also begin again to gather as the Body of Christ, in ways that are safe for everyone and in so far as possible.



Fr Johnny Doherty

*Rejoice, O earth, in shining splendor,  
radiant in the brightness of your King!  
Christ has conquered! Glory fills you!  
Darkness vanishes forever!*

# Children's Catechism Club - C3

by Veronica Harley

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



## Easter

This year, we celebrate Easter Sunday on April 4. The celebration of Easter is the highest and holiest of days for all creation. Easter is the celebration of Christ's resurrection from the dead (CCC 1166). It is celebrated on a Sunday. Easter Day marks the end of Lent, the end of Holy Week and closes the Easter Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday). It is the beginning of the Easter season of the liturgical year.

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



## The Eucharist

The month of April is dedicated to the Eucharist because Holy Thursday, the day which Catholics celebrate the Institution of the Eucharist, usually falls in the month of April. This year we celebrate Holy Thursday on the first day of April.

On Holy Thursday night, Jesus shared an important meal with His apostles. This meal is called the Last Supper, as it was the final meal Jesus shared with His disciples before He was crucified and died. At the table, Jesus took bread and wine, blessed them, gave them to the apostles and told them that the bread and wine which they were given to eat was now his Body and Blood. At the supper, Jesus instructed His apostles that they should do the same in memory

of Him.

At Mass, the bread and wine offered up by the priest becomes the actual body and blood of Christ. The bread and wine do not change in appearance. However, they are transformed beyond our human understanding into the body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ. This is called Transubstantiation (CCC 1376) and it happens at the celebration of every Holy Mass.

The Eucharist is the most important act of worship. All Catholics are bound to attend Mass every Sunday and are encouraged to receive Holy Communion. Some practising Catholics go to Mass every day to receive the Eucharist.

## Eucharistic Adoration

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

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

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

We are invited to come and spend time with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. When we come to spend time with Jesus in adoration we praise and adore Him. We thank Him for all



the wonderful things in our lives and the many gifts which He has given us. In one of the apparitions at Fatima, the angel showed the children how they should worship Jesus in the Eucharist. The angel bent low in worship until his forehead touched the ground. He taught the children a beautiful prayer to say to Jesus.

Fr Donald Calloway, in his book, 'Consecration to St Joseph', spoke of how St Joseph, who tenderly loved and cared for Jesus throughout his life, was the founder of Adoration chapels. The first Adoration was the visit by the shepherds in the stable on Christmas night. Adoration of Jesus was repeated when the Wise Men came to pay homage to the newborn King. And when Joseph and Mary brought Jesus back to their home in Nazareth, there they adored His divine presence too. Fr Calloway describes this home as a house of Perpetual Adoration and uninterrupted contemplation. Here are beautiful truths to think about in this special year that is dedicated to St Joseph.

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

## Saints of the Month

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

## Divine Mercy – Saint Faustina

Saint Faustina was born in Poland on August 25, 1905. She was the third of 10 children. When she was almost 20, she entered the convent and joined the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, who devoted themselves to the care of troubled young women. On February 22, 1931, Sister Faustina received from Jesus a message of mercy that she was told to spread throughout the world. She was asked to become the apostle of God's mercy; to be a model of how to be merciful to others. The message was that God loves us, all of us, no matter how great our sins may be. God wants us to know that His mercy is greater than our sins, therefore, we should always call on Him with trust, receive His mercy and let it flow through us to others, so that all will come to share His joy. Jesus showed Faustina an image of Himself, which He wanted painted so that all could see the abundant mercy which flows from His heart. Under the image, He told her to write 'Jesus I trust in you'.

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

God and prepare the world for His coming again.

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

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



## Quiz Time with Lawrence

1. What is the Christian name of Meghan Markle's father?
2. Who served as President of the United States immediately before Jimmy Carter?
3. Which two Premier Division football clubs have between them won the FA Cup on 13 occasions since 2000?
4. What staff title is given to a trainee or junior chef in a restaurant?
5. Who directed the original Titanic movie of 1997?
6. What multi-national company bought over Cadbury's chocolate in 2010?
7. Which is the longest river in the USA?
8. What do the letters QVC stand for on the online shopping channel?
9. Name the horseracing jockey who recently made history by becoming the first woman to win the award for most winners at a Cheltenham festival?
10. Who played Shallow Hal in the 2001 film of the same name?
11. Who is the current First Minister for Wales?

12. What Biblical term is given to a sudden turning point in someone's life?
13. Jenny Ryan is better known as which TV quiz personality?
14. Who did Kristin Shepard 'shoot' in 1980?
15. One of the most iconic sports trophies in the world has a gold pineapple on top. Which trophy is it?
16. What is the minimum age requirement to stand for election as US President?
17. What type of animal is Baloo in 'The Jungle Book'?
18. In cooking, what does the term 'Julienne' mean?
19. What is the capital city of Qatar?
20. After Dublin, which is the most densely populated county in Ireland?
21. The Statue of Liberty commemorates the friendship between the US and which other country?
22. In football, the Potteries derby is played between Stoke City and what other team?
23. How many years of marriage are celebrated by an Aluminium Anniversary?
24. Cox's Bazar is, at 93 miles, the longest natural beach in the world. In which country would you find it?
25. Who was Henry VIII's sixth and last wife?

**Quiz Answers:** 1, Thomas. 2, Gerald Ford. 3, Arsenal (7) and Chelsea (6). 4, Commis Chef. 5, James Cameron. 6, Kraft. 7, Missouri. 8, Quality, Value, Convenience. 9, Rachel Blackmore. 10, Jack Black. 11, Mark Drakeford. 12, Road to Damascus. 13, The Vixen (The Chase). 14, JR Ewing. 15, The Wimbledon men's singles cup. 16, 35. 17, A bear. 18, Cut into strips. 19, Doha. 20, Antrim. 21, France. 22, Port Vale. 23, Ten. 24, Bangladesh. 25, Catherine Parr.

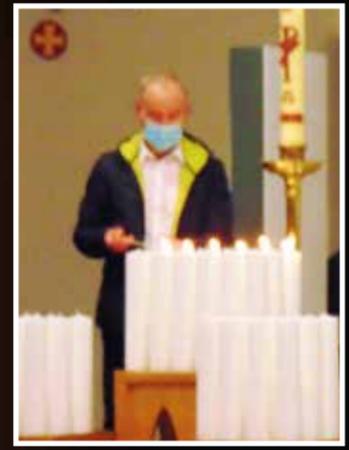
*Aghyaran, Ardmore, Ardstraw West & Castlederg, Ballinascreen, Ballymagroarty, Banagher, Bellaghy, Buncrana, Carndonagh, Claudy,*

*Clonmany, Coleraine, Creggan, Culdaff, Culmore, Desertmartin, Donnyloop, Drumquin, Duramonaugh, Durgisven, Fahan, Faughanvale, Garvagh, Gortin, Greencastle,*

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

# Let Your Light Shine!

# Jesus I Trust in You



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