



The NET

Sharing fruits of faith in Derry Diocese

ISSUE 59. NOVEMBER 2020

PRICE - £1.50 /€2.00

See inside...



Icon Blessing – Omagh



Season of Creation – Ballinascreen



Sacramental Booklet Launch – Derry



Mary's Meals – Omagh



Choir Festival - Derry.



JPPII Reflection – Moville



Sponsored Climb – Newtownstewart



“Just as Carlo Acutis was called to be a saint, so are all of us”.
(Charlotte Gormley)



People in focus



Fr Neil Farren - Ardmore.



Gemma Gallagher - Three Patrons.



Patrick Terence McKeever - Carnhill.



Rebecca O'Doherty - St Eugene's.



Fr Columba Jordan, CFR - Galliagh

Also featuring: St Cecilia's pupils let lights shine, Thornhill Mercy Moment Awards, Youth share thoughts on Carlo Acutis beatification, Derry Choir Festival, Allegri keeping music alive, Clonleigh schools celebrate Mission Month, Amazing lockdown works in Magilligan, Children's Catechism Club, Irish Section, Quiz...and much more...

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Roisin Rice, Acting Vice-Principal of St Mary's College, Derry, reflects on the Holy Father's prayer intention for November... "that the progress of Robotics and Artificial Intelligence may always service humankind".

Now is the time to pray that correct opportunities are taken so as to work in synergy with AI and Robotics By Roisin Rice

THE rate of growth of technology in our world today is exceptionally fast paced. What seems like the stuff of science fiction is now a reality and many of us probably do not realise the impact that artificial intelligence and robotics already have on our lives. The proliferation of mobile devices and the ease with which data can be collected, communicated and shared has led to a new term for the era that we live in, 'The RenAIssance'.

In a way we are lucky, blessed to have people with the creativity and genius to envision and make a reality such powerful tools. As Psalm 139:14 so eloquently states: "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful." God has given us many gifts and talents to use for the protection of life, for the betterment of the human race and to protect our common home, the Earth. Progression and growth in this area can do just that.

The development of Robotics, Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning (ML) has immense potential for humanity. The potential for healthcare with data mining, modelling and tracking disease as well as looking at lifestyle choices, the impact of treatments and numerous other scenarios, has life changing implications for all of us.

Pope Francis has kept a keen and watchful eye on these developments. When I think of his interest in this area, I call to mind this verse from Ezekiel 33:6, "But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet and the people are not warned, and a sword comes and takes a person from them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require from the watchman's hand". This is an area that we need to watch, and an area that has huge ethical implications for society.

The Vatican and Pope Francis have faced this head on; an organisation called Optic was set up in 2012 by the Dominican Order. Its main goal is to ensure that emerging technologies respect human dignity and it is led by Father Eric Salobir. The organisation regularly meets with technological giants to discuss the ethical issues that these new and emerging technologies present.

Pope Francis, himself, has met with Microsoft president, Brad Smith, Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg, and Google CEO, Eric Schmidt. In a Papal statement released in June 2014, he said that the internet was a gift from God. During the recent lockdown, what would we have done without the church webcams and the internet that allowed us to communicate with each other and continue to be

connected to our parishes and community?

Just as the internet can be used for the good of evangelisation, communication and connection, it can also be used for sinister purposes as well. AI and Robotics are no different. At a recent conference called, 'The Common Good in the Digital Age', Pope Francis warned: "If mankind's so-called technological progress were to become an enemy of the common good, this would lead to an unfortunate regression to a form of barbarism dictated by the law of the strongest."

It is troubling to think of the potential for barbarism that this type of technology has. At its worst level, terminator type machines controlled by people in bunkers, waging war with little thought for the destruction of life, economy and society.

This isn't really what I fear. My belief in the goodness of people, the structures of democratic society and the power of the United Nations could never, I hope, permit this to happen. What I fear is that we, as a society, walk blindly into a situation where AI and Robotics impinge on our security and civil liberties. I am reminded of a television advertisement from one of the major supermarkets asking customers to download their scan, pay and go app, proudly boasting that it means customers will not have to

interact at a checkout.

The facial recognition software and fingerprint technology that is seemingly integrated into our mobile devices, the algorithms that continually work behind the scenes tracking our movements and harvesting data about our shopping history, likes, personal and medical information, could all have the potential to be used for sinister purposes.

All of this has dramatic consequences for the future of jobs, human interaction, security and privacy. An ethical framework needs to be agreed and this will be an extremely difficult task, after all, never in the history of the Universe has there been one, single ethical framework for anything.

Now is the time that we must pray that the correct opportunities are taken so as to work in synergy with AI and Robotics, to ensure that it is created in a way that it works with human beings at its centre.

As Pope Francis states: "The dangers must not detract from the immense potential that new technologies offer."

The potential is immense, for healthcare, the food chain, safety and security, energy discovery and exploration of the distant and yet uncharted territories of the Earth that human feet cannot tread.

We pray that these six



Roisin Rice.

principles of Optic for AI are upheld: Transparency, Inclusion, Responsibility, Impartiality, Reliability and Security, furthermore that AI and Robotics are used to create a better world for all of us.

Current Acting Vice Principal at St Mary's College, Northland Road, Derry, Roisin has been a teacher for almost 20 years, and joined the staff of St Mary's in 2013. She is a Microsoft Expert Educator and is responsible for leading the highly successful Digital Schoolhouse programme at St Mary's College. Roisin was awarded the coveted title of 'IT Educator of the Year' by the British Computer Society in 2019. She is a regular presenter at BBC Northern Ireland's Teach Meets and co-hosted Microsoft's monthly Global Tweet Meet in June 2020, on the 'Evolution of Remote Learning'. Most recently, Roisin has been asked to speak at TEDxDerryLondon-derryWomen on November 28.

New Sacramental Preparation Booklets launched

NEW Sacramental Preparation Booklets have been launched by the Diocesan Catechetical Centre in response to the current Covid-19 restrictions, on

gathering together parents and families for the usual Sacramental Talks evenings.

One is entitled, 'Friends of Jesus' and covers preparation for the Sacraments of First

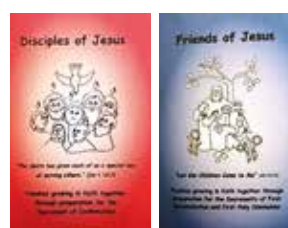
Reconciliation and First Holy Communion, and the other is entitled 'Disciples of Jesus' for those preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Talks for parents can be delivered by the Centre's Sacramental Team either via parish webcams or the Catechetical Centre's webcam, with Talk Packs available. The evening Sacramental Talks will begin with prayer, followed by an activity for the children while the parents listen to a presentation, using the Sacramental Preparation Booklets for families.

Schools or parishes can book a Sacramental Talk by contacting Anne Marie at the Centre by telephone, 00 44 (0)28 7126 4087, or by emailing ddcc@derrydiocese.org. Office hours are 9 am-5 pm, Monday to Friday.



Bishop Donal with Fr Paul Farren and Therese Ferry for the launch of the Diocesan Catechetical Centre's Sacramental Preparation Booklets.



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

DIOCESAN MASS FOR DECEASED CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

Sunday 8th of November 7pm
St. Eugene's Cathedral

If you would like to remember a child or young person in this Mass please email lizzie.rea@derrydiocese.org or message any of our social media pages @derryyouth

Derry teenager's faith and focus on art helped her face long days of lockdown

BUDDING teenage artist, Gemma Gallagher, from the Skeoge area of Derry, created a wonderful piece of religious art for her father during lockdown, and found that it led to the joyous realisation that she just had to keep her focus on God and everything would be alright.

A Three Patrons parishioner, who usually attends Mass in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, with her parents, Martin and Kathleen, and older brother, Dean, Gemma is currently studying for her GCSEs as a fifth year at St Brigid's College and hopes to go on to take Art for A'level.

Sharing her lockdown story with 'The Net', the 16-year-old said that she had found it quite overwhelming at the start: "I am quite a sociable person, so that aspect was taken away from me. I realised during lockdown that my faith was being tested. I was calling out to God, asking why this was happening, but I wasn't getting an answer.

"Then one day, about a month into lockdown, my daddy asked me to paint the 'Last Supper' for him on a big canvas. It turned out that this was a sign for me that Covid-19 was going to end and everything was going to be alright.

"I remember when I was working on the painting that I felt a joy. It was like it was God's way of telling me that all was going to be ok. It really helped me to get up and keep going".

While working on her 'Last Supper' piece, Gemma recalled that she had felt drawn to make Judas stand out: "When I was painting Judas, I coloured his halo a burnt umber. The halo for Jesus was gold and I painted the other halos silver, but I wanted Judas to stand out with the burnt red colour.

"I did that to show that if you put your trust in God, all will be ok, unlike Judas, who always questioned and seemed to struggle, and then turned away from God. It was like a message for me not to turn away from God but to focus on Him.

"This really helped me to focus on the good and brought me back to doing my art, as I hadn't really done anything during lockdown up to that. It helped me to refocus on what I wanted to work towards".

Commenting on her choice of the reddish umber colour for Judas' halo, Gemma explained: "For me, red represents a negative feeling. It is usually linked to messages like red for danger, etc; something that it just not good. It just stood out and everyone who has looked at the finished painting has said that they can pick out Judas because of this colour. I placed him on the bottom right and he looks like he is reaching out to God, but in a way He has fallen away".

Gemma's art teacher, Mr Sandy was highly impressed when he saw her 'Last Supper' painting, saying that he thought it outstanding.

"Our school is really into faith and Christianity, so anything that they can do to encourage us in our faith they do it," remarked Gemma, adding: "We have a school mission every year, for which they bring in friars and nuns, and there is a focus on prayer."

While appreciating the faith aspect of Gemma's lockdown artwork, Mr Sandy obviously sees that she has a real talent for art and is encouraging her to keep the subject on for A'level.

Working towards her GCSE exams, she explained that she did 60 per cent of her art course last year and the other 40 per cent this year.

"My daddy has claimed the 'Last Supper' painting and it is hanging on our kitchen wall. He absolutely loves it," laughed Gemma, adding: "But, I will be using it as part of my GCSE art portfolio and will bring it into school at the end of the year for marking.

"I have loved drawing from a very young age. Art just comes naturally to me and because I love it so much, I become absorbed in it. When I have free time at school, I use it to do artwork and when our art teacher sets us homework, I don't see it as homework. It's my way of relaxing and I would like to do it for the rest of my life! It is something I have always found peace in doing.

"I am hoping to do Double Award Art and Health and Social Care for my A'level subjects. I am doing Child Care this year and I really enjoy the subject, but my heart is in art more than anything else".

Colours

She continued: "My theme is usually street art and that is where the bright colours in the 'Last Supper' painting come from. People describe my art as outlandish and peculiar. Anything bright attracts my eye. The clothes I wear tend to be very funky or bright. I'm always wearing a colour. I really like shape and block colour, so I like to take different shapes and fill them with colour. The 'Last Supper' painting has different shapes that I coloured in. The more I draw the shape, I get the colour.

"The most important colour in my artwork is black. When I finish up with all the colours, I go in with black paint or marker or pencil to

put the final touch. For me, it is to show the boldness of the colour. I feel that black really completes a drawing...you can tell when one part ends. I don't really like art that blends in".

While Gemma would like to go to Art College, she has recently found herself being drawn to tattoo art and has created some tattoo designs.

"I think tattoo art is really cool and really me. I like to express myself and am always making designs, and people who have seen some of them have said that I would be really good at this.

"The more I look at my art style, the more I think that it would look really cool on a person's arm or leg. I've chatted to my teachers about this and they have said that they will help me to get the necessary qualifications for a tattoo artist, which includes a First Aid qualification.

"I need to get in to a tattoo studio as an apprentice, so I will need to get a portfolio together for that. I called into a tattoo studio in Derry to get some advice and was told that if I put a strong portfolio together, they would be open to taking me on".

Commenting on her experience of online learning during lockdown, Gemma said: "I would rather have been in school. Online learning doesn't do it for me as I'm a social person. I love being around people. Our school had the least cases of Covid-19, so they are doing really well with protecting us against it.

"I like being at St Brigid's College. I know some people used to think it was a bit mad, but it is a good school. The teachers are really helpful and want us to get the best grades that we can".

Outside of school, Gemma is a member of the Search Youth Group based in Iona Business Park, on Southway, and she found that this friendship group had also been a great help during lockdown.

"While we couldn't meet in person on Friday nights," she said, "we kept in contact by texting one another. The leaders were a great support too, sending us challenges like making pizzas and shortbread, which we took a photo of and put on the group chat and then they chose a winner".

Reflecting on the two years she has been involved with this popular youth faith group, Gemma said: "I love being in Search. There is something so warming about it. It brings you back to the real world. It



Gemma Gallagher



brings you away from what society makes out life should be and back to what it really should be.

"My faith has grown stronger through being in Search and I am looking forward to going to Medjugorje with them when it is safe to do so. At the start, I didn't know what to expect and the more I went to it, the more I could see myself praying at night and in the morning. I was getting a really good peace. I was able to understand my faith more and how good it was at helping things be ok. Search has taught me that you will never really be alone when you have God".

She added: "Today, for youth, it is harder for us to be accepted. I would be quite a happy-go-lucky person, but many want to look, dress and act in a certain way. I find it very sad to watch other people my age go through that.

"For me, it is great to go to Search as they teach you to be yourself and to see that God created you as a unique human being. You don't have to change just to be accepted by others. Others should accept you for who you are. Just be who you are and you will be accepted.

"I hear people all the time talking

about what others are wearing and asking things like, 'Why are you wearing those shoes?'

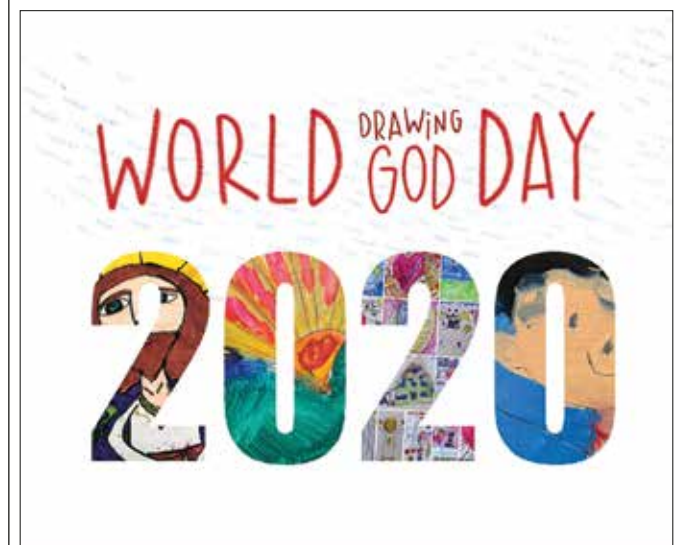
"My motto is, if you have nothing nice to say, you shouldn't say

anything, as it doesn't bring a good light on you. We should try not to do or say anything that would hurt anyone."

World Drawing God Day

Friday, November 6 is World Drawing God day. This initiative follows the publishing of a book for children, called 'Drawing God', by American mother author, Karen

Kiefer, which is an interesting insight into and generating conversation about how people see God, even amongst adults. How do you see God?



As schools re-open following a stressful first term, Carndonagh Community School chaplain, Serena Doherty encourages her colleagues to...

Thank God for our blessings and pray that He will help us meet challenges set before us

THE spread of the coronavirus, Covid-19, has shaken the foundations of our schools. Working collaboratively together, we have made our schools safe for our students to continue learning by following the guidelines set down by the relevant health authorities in our regions.

Principals, deputy principals, teachers, caretakers and administration staff have worked tirelessly since August, ensuring that physical distancing is in place, hand sanitisation can be maintained and that class sizes are within the guidelines set down by the department.

Fear and anxiety about the disease is at times overwhelming and, as the adults in the school community, we have had to put our worries to the back of our minds and put our shoulders bravely to the wheel. Stress, however, lurks in the recesses of our minds and for me, personally, the gift of faith in a God that is

merciful and kind provides a sense of support and safety that gets me through even the most challenging day.

Focusing on the spiritual side of life can help us decrease stress by allowing us to be quiet, still and at peace. In school life today, we spend so much of our time rushing to complete a myriad of tasks before the school bell finally rings to announce the end of another day: preparing for class, marking tests and homework, moving from class to class and sometimes building to building, supervision and substitution duties, not to mention stopping along the way to help a student or colleague out.

It can be challenging for us to find time in all this 'busyness' to stop and take time to appreciate what is around and within us. Accepting that we may not be able to control the things that go on around us enables us to realise that we can, in fact, be responsible

for our reactions to the various stressors in our working day, acknowledging that we, too, can be vulnerable at times.

Our sense of wellbeing is defined by the PDST as feeling good and strong in mind and body and having energy, getting along with others, and helping others, knowing our strengths and feeling content because we are doing our best. Inherent in this definition is the need for us to be continually grateful for what we have and accept ourselves just as we are.

Taking the time to stop and relax allows us to focus on our own mental and physical health. After all, we need to care for ourselves to be able to support others.

At the end of the day can be the most suitable time for some of us to take that time to reflect and think about the events of the day in a meaningful way. Taking that time to feel the sense of the Spirit around us, through reflection,

meditation or prayer, can help us to gain perspective and shrink the obstacles and stresses of the day that, in the moment, seem insurmountable into something more manageable.

St Eugene's Cathedral, in Derry recently posted seven keys to life:

- 1. God first
- 2. Love one another
- 3. Never hate
- 4. Give generously
- 5. Live simply
- 6. Forgive quickly
- 7. Always be kind.

Finally, the best thing that we can do is to continue to thank God for our blessings and pray that He, too, will continue to help us meet the challenges set before us as we reopen our schools for another term.

"God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference".



Serena Doherty, Carndonagh Community School chaplain.

These days won't last forever

CHRISTIAN Brothers' teacher of RE and History, Anna Alice Nugent composed the following poem for all the wonderful teachers, support staff and pupils who are doing their best...

*So we've all returned to school,
But nothing's as it was before,
We arrive every day,
With no idea what's in store.*

*Masks on before you enter,
Remember to sanitise your hands,
But balance the books you're carrying
Who knows where they might land.*

*You go into the staffroom,
A tone of seriousness fills the air,
The work has already begun,
There's so much to prepare.*

*You land into your first classroom,
Where is your remote?
Surely it's not in your bag downstairs,
Or in the pocket of your coat?*

*Why won't this computer work?
Why will the internet not connect?
Little voices in the front row ask,
"Miss are you not ready yet?"*

*You finally teach your lesson,
And the work is all complete,
Now to get it uploaded quickly,
Onto a One Note sheet.*

*"But Miss I have no data"
And "Miss my phone is dead"
"I'm not sure what app we are using,
I've forgotten what you said."*

*Then amongst all the questions,
The bell sounds for you to go,
"Where am I going next?"
Hurry, there's no time to be slow.*

*You gather your belongings,
And hope you have them all,
Mask on, glasses too,
Careful not to fall.*

*You pass your colleagues in the corridors,
Like ships in the night,
Smiles and identities concealed,
Rushing from class to class in flight.*

*You get to your next destination,
And you notice some empty chairs,
Oh no they must be at home,
Who is going to teach them there?*

*I need to set them an assignment,
They can't have nothing to do,
But you're stopped in your tracks by the words,
"Miss, remember we need taught too."*

*You reach the end of the day,
Your last class trickles home,
You finally catch your breathe,
With your thoughts you're now alone.*

*You really are exhausted,
Your head is pounding too,
You think about the evening ahead
And question, if you have it in you.*

*You get home to your safe space,
You can finally rest a while,
You try to ignore the marking,
That's stacked up in a virtual pile.*

*Back to the screen you go,
Lessons must be prepped,
Make sure everything's online,
You must not forget!*

*Then move on to the marking,
There's deadlines to be met,
No - keep going!
It's not your bed time yet.*

*But your eyes become too sleepy,
And that's enough for one day,
So you crawl in to bed
And join your hands to pray.*

Let Your Light Shine! by Bernadette O'Mianain

WE, at St Cecilia's College, Derry, pride ourselves on acknowledging and celebrating all the many gifts and talents of each and every one of our students. Even during this very challenging and difficult time, our students have continued to let their light shine even brighter during these somewhat dark days.

As a whole school community, we are always striving to make a difference in the girls' lives, be it academically or otherwise, and our endeavours were acknowledged this year when the school was awarded 'The Silver Award for Making a Difference – Secondary School of the Year'. We are so proud of the recognition this affords our staff and the wider school community partners.

St Cecilia's College is like a big extended family, whose doors are always open to welcome everyone in the community to be a part of every event throughout the year. The school has a very strong link with the Bogside & Brandywell Health Forum to deliver a number of programmes addressing family support, physical activity, mental health, food and nutrition band alcohol/drug awareness.

It offers pupils Equine personal development programmes and facilitates alternative learning by providing Open College National Qualifications, delivered by community partners.

Students at St Cecilia's are encouraged to recognise the potential they have to affect a positive change in their community. This can be seen through the school Facebook and Twitter streams, which are abundant with celebrations of positivity and kindness which pupils have enacted.

Pupils are regularly awarded the gold C badge for helping others. Two recent recipients were Year 10 pupils, Mia McDaid and Rachel Donaghy, who received the badge for their act of kindness. They had undertaken to assist a member of the community who was self-isolating. As is often the way for the girls who are awarded the C kindness badges, their act was purely altruistic and was reported to the school by a member of the public who became aware of their kind voluntary deed.

Two very gifted young ladies at St Cecilia's College, with a

real talent for football, travelled to Jordanstown to take part in the Northern Ireland football development day – Orlaith Cooper (Year 11) and Ainara Hutcheon (Year 9). These two young ladies are inspirational. They train four times a week, as part of their local teams and also in school. They are currently U16 NI Schools champions, which is a testimony to their continued hard work and dedication to the sport.

Orlaith has been on the U16 Northern Ireland squad since 2018, with Ainara joining in 2019. Both girls would ordinarily train every Sunday at the University of Ulster Jordanstown Campus, starting at 8 am until 10 am, as well as regional excellence training every Tuesday evening.

Orlaith played in an U14 competition in England during the summer of 2019 against a number of teams including: Arsenal, Birmingham, Sunderland and Leicester. We look forward to seeing these young ladies continue to flourish in the future.

Our newly appointed Head Girl, Jeannie Mc Laughlin made her first public appearance

this year when she welcomed our Education Minister, Peter Weir to the school a number of weeks ago. She explained to Mr Weir that it was the continuous encouragement and dedication of the staff at St Cecilia's College that had helped a very timid young girl in Year 8 to have the confidence and ability to stand up and speak at such an important event. She commended every member of the St Cecilia's family for supporting her and assisting her throughout her six years at the school and was very proud of being a St. Cecilia's Head Girl.

As St Cecilia is the Patron Saint of Music, we are frequently amazed at the hidden musical talents of some of our young students. One student in particular who is so giving of her talent, and who shares her music so beautifully through the school Facebook page, is Maeve Coyle (Year 9). Maeve has played some beautiful pieces on her harp throughout the whole of lockdown and shared these through social media, and I have no doubt that she has certainly put a smile on many faces as a result.

I would like to thank all of our beautiful students - Orlaith, Ainara, Jeannie, Mia, Rebecca and Maeve, who have definitely let their light shine in whichever talent God has given them, and we know that many more of our students will continue to discover their own gifts and talents in time, and will go on to let their light shine on others too.



Thornhill recognises pupils' Mercy Moments during lockdown

by Ciara Collins

THE Religious Education Department in Thornhill College awarded Mercy Moments to pupils, during the lockdown in spring, who were inspired by the Mercy ethos of our school and, in particular, the words of our foundress, Catherine McAuley.

Catherine taught "we should be shining lamps, giving light to all around us." The shining light of their actions also exemplified the teaching in the Gospel of Matthew, that faith should be the "light of the world" and a beacon for others to see.

We were delighted to award 12 Mercy Moment awards for pupils who voluntarily gave so generously of their time to help a family member or those in their community who were struggling during the many weeks of isolation. Members of the RE department nominated pupils weekly, for those who had gone over and above and shown unconditional love for others.

Eve Gorman, in Year 9, and Cait Ni Cheallaigh, in Year 14, were each given the Mercy Moment

Award for their thoughtfulness and dedication to their grandparents, who they had been missing during lockdown. Eve drew a beautiful pencil drawing of the Sacred Heart of Jesus for her granny, and Cait played a poignant piece of music on her harp also for her Granny Jean. These gestures touched so deeply their family members, but also reminded us of the importance of our extended families and how vital they are in our lives.

Lucy O'Donnell, in Year 9, and Rosie O'Donnell, in Year 13, both individually looked after their vulnerable and elderly neighbours by taking care of their food shopping weekly. They both gave so freely of their time to ensure that their neighbours would not have the stress or worry about shopping and could shield safely at home.

Lauren Sweeney, in Year 13 also, was given her Mercy Moment Award for her fabulous efforts to make and supply keyworkers with face coverings. Lauren made masks with her mother and these

were gladly received by those who needed them most.

Katey McMenamin, in Year 9, and Beth Bradley, in Year 12, were awarded the Mercy Moment for their random acts of kindness in May. Katey painted two stunning pictures on wood with the slogans: 'Where flowers bloom so does hope', and 'Stars can't shine without darkness.' Katey placed these outstanding paintings in her local area, so that their positive messages would inspire those who saw them on their daily walks. Beth Bradley also painted positive messages on pebbles for her family. The slogans painted by both Katey and Beth were beautifully chosen and reminded us of keeping resolute and to look forward to better times.

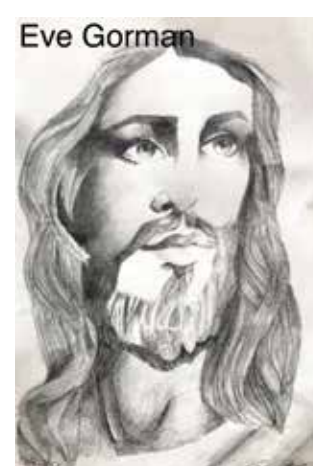
Two Year 10 pupils, Lucia Gallagher and Ava Ward, who were completing their Ambassador of St Paul Award, both lead the Rosary separately in Ardmore Parish. This was a tremendous act of leadership and faith, as they enabled their local community to feel comforted by

God and to know that, although they were apart from one another, they were still very much connected.

Our final three Mercy Moment Awards were given to pupils in Year 12, Aoife Kavanagh, Sinead O'Donnell and Hannah Thompson, for composing their own prayers that were posted on our department Twitter site each morning.

Each pupil was presented with a specially commissioned Mercy Angel, created by local business, Loopy Crafts. The angels were made with the Mercy colours of blue and white and included two quotations on the importance of living out mercy in contemporary society.

These girls were certainly angels to those whom they helped and inspired, and we feel privileged to recognise their selfless actions. Their faith and dedication can be summed up in the words of Pope Francis, who reminds us that "to live by faith means to put our lives in the hands of God especially in our most difficult times."



Codetta chorister shares experience of Derry Choir Festival



Rebecca O'Doherty.

THE City of Derry International Choir Festival went digital this year because of the restrictions due to Covid-19, and managed to present a fantastic programme of online concerts, performances, workshop and podcasts.

The five-day October festival, directed by Donal Doherty, is now established as a major event and had choral music lovers tuned in from many parts of the world, including Argentina, Madagascar and Papua New Guinea.

Amongst the many who enjoy being involved with the festival is Derry teacher, Rebecca O'Doherty, who sings with Codetta.

Sharing her experience of being part of the Choir Festival family, Rebecca told 'The Net' how she started off helping out with the choral trails, meeting with choirs who came to compete and performed around various pop-

up locations in the town.

"I really love the cultural aspect of it," said Rebecca, "it is something really different for Derry - hearing singers from different parts of the world singing contrasting musical genres in a variety of really different venues across the town, from The Sandwich Co, and City Hotel, to the Foyle Centre and the Peace Garden.

"It really is like a trail around the town over the weekend. The shoppers and locals turn into listeners for what become impromptu concerts!"

She added: "I also love speaking to the choristers. You become almost friends with them in the 30-minute slot you spend with them, and are always keen to hear them compete and hope they do well over the course of the festival, keeping an eye out for their name on the social media accounts and the programme".

For Rebecca, the best part of the festival "is that it's essentially staffed by singers", and she recalled that many of the choirs comment on that when they are here.

"It's so special for us, as Codetta, that we get to perform at the festival in our own concerts and with the festival chorus", she said, adding: "The festival chorus is such a brilliant community centred opportunity to sing a famous work with so many groups from the area, with the accompaniment of a professional orchestra on the stage at the Guildhall.

"This year was slightly different but the festival chorus performance of 'Danny Boy' was

particularly special. Although I sat at home with headphones on, singing in my home alone, I felt part of something a lot bigger and I think that's something that perfectly describes the festival. You're part of the Derry Choir Fest family!"

A number of choir members from schools around the North West enjoyed getting involved this year too, including Loreto Grammar School, Omagh, Thornhill College, Foyle College, St Cecilia's College, Scoil Mhuire, Buncrana, Lumen Christi College, St Joseph's Boys' School and Holy Cross College, Strabane.

Loreto Omagh choir conductor, Gerard Bradley told 'The Net' that eight girls from the school's 66-strong senior choir, were involved in the performance of 'Amazing Grace' on the pre-recorded opening night of the

Choir Festival, and thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

"Our choir is currently having to rehearse in year group bubbles because of Covid!" explained Gerard, adding: "It was just nice to get doing anything with them because they have been closed down for seven months now, their last gig was semi-final of the BBC Radio Ulster 'Choir of the Year', which was cancelled at days notice back in March!"

"They made their recordings for the 'Amazing Grace' performance individually, from home, after we had rehearsed a little, and they were then filmed in the Convent grounds".

Work has already started on planning next year's Choir Festival, which is scheduled to take place from October 20-24, 2021.



Derry Youth Online

THE Derry Youth Online Programme got underway again last month with a live event on the Derry Youth Instagram page.

The programme, the first theme of which is 'Mission', will be running throughout the year to help students who are doing their JP II Award receive both parish and social hours.

The Youth Team hope that all young people will get involved with the programme as much as they possibly can.

A Youth Alpha course started on Monday, November 2, and will be running for eight weeks.

Keep an eye on the Derry Youth Instagram, Facebook and Twitter pages for more updates.



YOUTH ALPHA ON ZOOM

- Join other young people around the diocese as we ask the big questions!
- Do I have a purpose?
- Is there more to life than this?
- Build new friendships
- Plan for the future



7:30PM-8:30PM EVERY MONDAY STARTING NOVEMBER 2ND.

Email lizzie.rea@derrydiocese.org or message our social media pages @derryyouth to get a registration form

Pope John Paul II Award has taught me that I can make a difference

by *Hollie Frystal*



by Hollie Frystal

I am a parishioner of St Mary's, Melmount and a student at Holy Cross College, in Strabane. I have completed the Gold Pope John Paul II Award this year. The 14th year of the Award has been a unique one. The Covid-19 pandemic has affected both the Parish and Community aspects of the Award, from volunteering in schools, charities, undertaking programs, etc, to having to engage with the fantastic Derry Diocesan Youth Instagram online channel to complete our Award hours.

I was very fortunate that I was able to gain most of my hours in my parish and community before the current crisis. Regarding parish hours, we had to make the transition from going to Mass to relying solely on the webcams. The adaptations that we had to make have also been both a unique and positive experience for young people and youth ministers. The Church found new and appealing ways to minister, which is fabulous!

Pre-Covid, for my parish hours I read every Sunday at Mass. This

was a great confidence builder and gave me so many opportunities. For example, my parish priest and a Sister in our Parish asked me to join them in a Prayer Service for the interdenominational week. This service consisted of different Christian Churches coming together to pray for peace and unity. This, to me, was very significant, considering the history of our country and its relations. The prayer service was touching, as well as historic and educational.

I also had the great privilege of reading in the beautiful Basilica of Our Lady of Knock. One thing that I will always remember was the advice that my uncle gave me. He told me to read very clearly, very loud and to make sure that the person at the very back of the Chapel could hear what I was saying. He reminded me too of the importance of the responsibility I had been entrusted with, which was to deliver the Word of God and to make sure everyone could hear it. I felt so privileged. I also read at the Christmas Eve Mass and at the Monday night Lent Masses, which were very special and a wonderful experience.

Additionally, I had taken part in the 'Faith Friends' programme, which involved going to a primary school to assist the children in their preparation for their Sacrament of Confirmation. It was a great insight into Religious Education, which I feel was very beneficial towards my vocation. I loved the program, and was delighted and privileged to help those children prepare for a very important Sacrament in their lives.

During lockdown in March, I got hugely involved with the new Derry Youth online Instagram program. It is an amazing program which has helped me enormously in getting through the worst of lockdown. I had taken part in a LIVE Facebook event called 'Prayers around the Cross', which fell on Good Friday. This was an amazing experience which involved prayer and reflection that touched the heart.

Social

For my Social hours, I was involved in various charities, such as St Vincent de Paul, The Three Bridges Cross Community Group, Habitat for Humanity, and the Koram Centre. I undertook numerous tasks like bag-packing, coffee mornings, assisting in the SVP shops, bun/cake sales, etc.

My participation in the community was a great eye-opener to the social injustice that our society is suffering from today. I remember the SVP shop, around Christmas time, being a time of chaos and worry for some people. It was heart-breaking to witness people struggling at Christmas time, when we all know it should be a season of utmost joy. The Pope John Paul II Award has taught me that I can make a difference.

In school, I undertook the FLARE program and Peer tutoring, in relation to the Award. FLARE was a suicide-prevention training course which has broadened my understanding of mental health and equipped me with helping my neighbour. Peer tutoring, like 'Faith Friends', has offered me exceptional experiences which have helped me to clarify and grow in my faith

and vocation.

Another great course that I undertook was Youth Alpha. I understand Alpha as a platform for young people to express their curiosity. This course offered me a brilliant opportunity to make new friends and to listen to other people's opinions on interesting topics.

In the past, a few months before I started the Award, I went on a few Pope John Paul Award pilgrimages, for example to Croagh Patrick and Lough Derg. These pilgrimages are a fantastic opportunity to meet new people, grow in faith and to reflect on life, and where it is that God wants you to be.

During the pandemic, I participated in a virtual Lough Derg pilgrimage with St Eugene's Cathedral. It was a new experience and the 'difficult' element to Lough Derg still remained. I thought it was a wonderful initiative as it united many people across the world in prayer.

In February, I took part in the annual sleep-out at St Eugene's Cathedral. Again, this experience was an education and a great eye-opener to what needs to change in our society.

On an endnote, I highly recommend undertaking the Pope John Paul Award. As you can see, I gained so much experience and skills from it. I have loads of memories and have made new friends across the Diocese. In addition, my relationship with the congregation at Mass and my community has become stronger, and I have decided to continue the Award this year by doing the Papal Cross



JPII Award an amazing opportunity to make new friends and gain new skills

by *Fionnuala de Brún*



Fionnuala de Brún

I am 17 years old and a fifth year student at Moville Community College. I completed my Pope John Paul II Award during transition year. I heard about the Award when Lizzie Rea came to our school and did a presentation on it. My older brother also completed the Award, so I had also heard about it from him.

Overall, the JPII Award was an amazing opportunity to make new friends and gain new skills,

and I am now completing my Papal Cross Award. I did lots of different activities through taking part. For my Parish Involvement, I was a part of the choir in St Columba's, in Drung. On December 24, 2019, I sang 'O Holy Night' in front of hundreds of people. It was so nerve wracking and scary but I was so glad that I did it in the end. Before I did my Award, I would have been quite shy and not very outgoing, but doing these activities helped me to grow personally, as well as grow in faith.

One of the scariest things I did during my Award was, one hundred per cent, going on the radio! I was so nervous when Lizzie contacted me to speak on Radio Maria, but I was so proud of myself that I did it in the end.

Just before lockdown was

enforced in Donegal, I got the chance to do a sleep-out in solidarity with the homeless at St Eugene's Cathedral, in Derry. I had already experienced the sleep-out in 2019 and was really excited to be doing it again. The challenge was that we had to stay awake all through the night, and some hours were spent outside in the cold and rain to show us what it is like to be homeless. Even though it was only for one night, we got a glimpse of how hard it is for these people.

During lockdown, all of the activities to finish off my Award were online. We did Rosaries and online programmes on Zoom, and it was something to look forward to every week. For my social awareness, I volunteered at the Homework Club at my school, where I was always kept busy between making drinks, giving out sandwiches, cleaning and, of course, helping students with their homework. It was an amazing experience.

When schools closed I was quite lost about what I could do because I only had about half of my social hours completed. Then JPII leader, Helen Grant contacted me and said how the ears of nurses and radiographers in Letterkenny Hospital were red raw from wearing the face masks. This gave me inspiration to knit little bands that the elastic could connect to instead of their ears. It was so heart-warming to see how appreciative they were, especially because of how hard they are working during this time of pandemic.

I am so glad that I completed the Pope John Paul II Award as it showed me how important it is to have young people involved in the parish. It also gave me a chance to meet loads of new people and grow closer to members of my parish.

The JPII Award increased my confidence – something I was not expecting!

by *Kate McGorry*



Kate McGorry

I am a pupil at Holy Cross College, Strabane, and have gained so much by participating in the St John Paul II Award. I became a Eucharistic Minister as part of my parish involvement hours in my local parish of St Mary's in Melmount, which enabled me to strengthen my faith as a Catholic.

I also did a few readings from the Gospel for my parish involvement hours which, I found strengthened my confidence, which was something I was not expecting!

For my social awareness hours, I engaged in several different activities, such as volunteering in a local primary school, participating in a charity bag pack and engaging

in peer tutoring in my school. I have currently joined a local Search and Rescue team which contributes to my social awareness hours also.

I have really enjoyed interacting with the community through these activities, as I have developed my social skills and made new friends along the way.

As well as this, I participated in a 'Sleep Out' in Derry for those who are homeless as an Award Top-Up for the JPII Award. This was an incredibly humbling experience. I experienced what it was like for those who are homeless during the night by staying up all night in cold and wet conditions. As a group, we had to make a shelter

for ourselves with very little materials for somewhere for us to sit. It was very difficult due to the conditions.

We also had Mass, Eucharistic Adoration and we said the Rosary, which helped strengthen my faith as a Catholic. This experience humbled me so much and I gained the opportunity to meet people my age who are like-minded.

Unfortunately due to COVID-19, I did not get an opportunity to engage in another Award Top-Up. Although I can say that, as a whole, the JPII Award was an incredible experience that I am glad I participated in and I would definitely recommend it to all of those currently in Year 13.

Taking part in the JPPII Award gave me a place within my Church

by Leanne Delaney

I found the Pope John Paul II Award very innovative. It taught me a lot of new skills and it also made me aware of various responsibilities a young person can have within the Church.

For my parish hours, I got involved in a range of different roles in St Mary's, Cloughcor, in the Leckpatrick Parish, including collecting money baskets, selling our Parish Christmas cards and, after the Covid-19 lockdown, I acted as an usher to help guide people and keep them safe during Mass.

For my social hours, I am involved in peer mentoring and lunch duties as part of my role as

a prefect in Holy Cross College, Strabane.

This award has helped me in many ways. It has helped develop skills including leadership and communication. These skills were very important in my role as an usher, helping me to be able to engage and communicate fully with other people.

Taking part in the Award also gave me a place within my Church. It made me feel like I was helping people and giving people the guidance needed during these very uncertain times. And, it made me feel as though I was giving something back to society.

I feel that all young people can

make a huge contribution within the Church today. They could show their support by taking part in any activities the Church has to offer; this would show great inclusion within the Church as a community.

The JPPII Award can give young people a chance to be part of a welcoming community. It can provide an opportunity for young people through the people we meet and also the opportunities it provides us when completed. It also teaches essential life skills that every young person should acquire.

I am now much more aware of the sense of community present in the Church

by Oran McGrath

MY experience of taking part in the Pope John Paul II Award scheme has been a very rewarding one. I chose to complete my Parish hours by reading the liturgy at one of the weekly Masses in my local parish church, St Mary's, Melmount. My family regularly attended the 7 pm Saturday Mass there and I felt that reading at our Mass would allow me to make a valuable contribution to the liturgy.

I contacted our local parish priest, Fr Michael Doherty and he kindly arranged for me to read either the second reading or the Prayer of the Faithful at the Mass. With another student from my school, Holy Cross College, who was involved with the Pope John Paul Award, we read each Saturday night from late September.

I have found this a highly worthwhile experience. I feel I have taken on a much more prominent role in the weekly church service and played an important role in the spreading of the Word of Jesus. It has awakened in me the realisation that, as a member of Melmount Parish, there is a responsibility on me to actively participate in the service of, and be cognisant of, spreading the Word of Christ. It allowed me to meet and interact with others who contribute to the weekly service and develop practical relationships centred on the praising of God.

I regularly read with older members of the community and it was invaluable for me to see how passionate they are about following the teachings of the Church in a time when regular Mass attendance is diminishing

among the young people in our society. I believe that young people in the Church can learn from these older people, who continue to be devoted followers of God in their day-to-day lives. I am now much more aware of the sense of community that is present in the Church.

I chose to fulfil my social hours by getting involved in coaching youth teams at my local GAA Club, Strabane Sigersons, every Wednesday evening. I coached age groups ranging from U6 to U14. I found these sessions extremely educational. Firstly, I came to appreciate how children behave and adapt to various challenges. Me and my fellow coaches placed their wellbeing at the forefront of every session and treated them with respect and concern, in order to bring out their best ability. This experience also helped me to appreciate that some children struggle with sport and various tasks, and enabled me to develop time management skills and patience, in order to maximise the children's experience.

As with Melmount Parish, there is a deep sense of community in Strabane Sigersons GAA Club.

There is a clear sense that everyone is valued and is important there. It encouraged me to appreciate the importance of the individual and to be aware of the fact that we are all members of God's family.

Some of the children at the training sessions were very shy and wanted to go home, and were reluctant to take an active role in training. I believe that these feelings are not restricted to children as many people of all ages experience these sentiments in a difficult world today. I believe that it has encouraged me to become more empathetic about the needs of others and to try to listen more acutely in my daily life when friends might be going through times of trouble.

My weekly coaching sessions at Strabane have allowed me to witness the various stages of development in the lives of young people, and have affirmed in me the importance of having a strong sense of community.

Taking part in the Pope John Paul Award has opened my eyes to the need, as a young person, to get involved in the wider community and to aim to make a positive contribution to Church life.



My JPPII experience has gifted me with greater sense of community

by Ruby Sturgeon



Ruby Sturgeon

I found the Pope John Paul II Award very innovative. It taught me a lot of new skills and it also made me aware of various responsibilities a young person can have within the Church.

For my parish hours, I got involved in a range of different roles in St Mary's, Cloughcor, in the Leckpatrick Parish, including collecting money baskets, selling our Parish Christmas cards and, after the Covid-19 lockdown, I acted as an usher to help guide people and keep the I am an upper sixth student at Thornhill College, Derry, and am completing the Pope John Paul II Award in the

Claudy Parish. Unfortunately, because of Covid-19, I haven't been involved in many parish activities but I am in the process of completing my hours as a Eucharistic Minister.

However, I was involved with the GIFT (Growing in Faith Together) programme in our parish, which gave me the opportunity to connect with the youth in my area. We discussed the meaning of scripture and how it related to our lives today. This was so essential as we began to feel the first effects of Covid in our community.

From the more experienced parish members, I learned valuable lessons on leadership and communication, but also the importance of faith and sharing it with others.

Above all, I consider my JPPII experience to have gifted me with a greater sense of community, in a year when these aspects have been most challenged.

I decided to do the JPPII Award so that I could give back to those who have been integral in the development of my faith, and open myself up to the new, inspiring opportunities on offer. The numerous benefits I have enjoyed from doing so have also encouraged me to continue my parish involvement.

Without a doubt, I recommend that others avail of the JPPII Award, as it is a valuable part of playing a role in your local parish.

m safe during Mass.

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This award has helped me in many ways. It has helped develop skills including leadership and communication. These skills were very important in my role as an usher, helping me to be able to engage and communicate fully with other people.

Taking part in the Award also gave me a place within my Church. It made me feel like I was helping people and giving people the guidance needed during these very uncertain times. And, it made me feel as though I was giving something back to society.

I feel that all young people can make a huge contribution within the Church today. They could show their support by taking part in any activities the Church has to offer; this would show great inclusion within the Church as a community.

The JPPII Award can give young people a chance to be part of a welcoming community. It can provide an opportunity for young people through the people we meet and also the opportunities it provides us when completed. It also teaches essential life skills that every young person should acquire.

Call to Friday prayer and fasting in November

IN response to the challenging times being experienced with the ongoing threat of Covid-19 and associated restrictions, the National Eucharistic Adoration Apostolate is encouraging Adoration, Prayer and Fasting for the four Fridays in November.

Recalling the night scene in St Peter's Square back in March, when Pope Francis went before the Blessed Sacrament in adoration, bringing with him the pain of the world in prayer, the Apostolate's national committee feels moved to call for more prayer for the Church and the world.

Many parishes in the Diocese offer parishioners the opportunity to spend time in Eucharistic Adoration each week and this has been a source of great comfort to many during this pandemic.

The Apostolate see this time of prayer for "the suppression/ending of the Pandemic and for all who are affected by it", for the Holy Souls and in preparation for

Advent and the celebration of the Birth of Jesus, as an opportunity to "keep the light of Christ burning brightly".

In addition, they suggest offering this time of prayer and fasting before the Blessed Sacrament for the renewal of the Catholic faith in Ireland and in reparation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary.

"Let us hear again the invitation of Jesus to each of us," urged the Apostolate, "Come to Me, all you who labour and are overburdened and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, My yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Mt 11:28-30)

"As people of the Eucharist and people of hope," they added, "let us reflect the wise sentiments of St Theresa of Avila, 'let nothing frighten you. Everything passes; God never changes, patience obtains all. Whoever has God

wants for nothing; God alone is enough'.

"Faith is often renewed and refined through deeply challenging moments in our lives and, as St Augustine so wonderfully said, 'God is closer to us than we are to ourselves', especially during the most difficult times of our lives. We pray that this initiative will deepen our faith and sustain our hope at this time."



THIS month, Hollie, Peter and Oisin, 'The Net' youth contributors from the Co Tyrone, Inishowen and Co Derry Deaneries, have been joined by Zara Schlindwein and Gemma Gallagher, from the Derry City Deanery. Between them they share their thoughts after having watched the ceremony for the Beatification of Italian youth, Carlo Acutis, while Hollie also writes about the recently launched 'Exploring Christus Vivit', which looks at the themes in Pope Francis' 2019 apostolic exhortation 'Christus Vivit' (Christ is Alive), and joins Zara, as members of Derry Youth Scholarship, in writing about their chosen charity, Mary's Meals. Peter, while not a Liverpool fan, is very gracious in paying tribute to The Reds' manager, Jurgen Klopp for his care in responding to a letter from a schoolboy seeking his advice about how to deal with worry.



Hollie Frystal,
Co Tyrone Deanery.



Oisin Mulhern,
Co Derry Deanery.



Peter Grant,
Inishowen Deanery.



Gemma Gallagher,
Derry City Deanery



Zara Schlindwein,
Derry City Deanery.

Carlo's story shows impact God and faith can have in young person's life today *by Gemma Gallagher*

THE story of Carlo Acutis, the Italian schoolboy who loved computer programming and the internet, as well as the Eucharist, is amazing for a young, male teenager.

My family and I talked about this around the dinner table when his beatification was on the news. We were really surprised that he had created his own website, where he documented stories of Eucharistic Miracles from around the world before he died from leukaemia.

There is also a display in the Cathedral, which includes his words, 'Highway to Heaven', and thousands of people have visited it.

Carlo's story has had an impact on people and they have really

recognised his connection and loving nature towards the Eucharist.

As a teenager in today's world, I think lots of people can be pulled away from their faith. Lots of the youth, some may say, have distanced themselves from God.

Carlo's story has opened my eyes to what faith and hope can do to a young person's life and that God is always at the centre of every situation in your life.

I think it is amazing that he is on his way to be declared a saint, as many more teenagers will come to discover, through Carlo's story, the impact that God and your faith can have in a young person's life today.

Blessed Carlo Acutis - A model for young people *by Hollie Frystal*

ON October 10 at 3:30 pm, Carlo Acutis was beatified in the Basilica of St Francis in Assisi. The ceremony was celebrated by Cardinal Agostino Vallini, the Papal Legate. The Italian teenager's beatification was broadcast live across a wide media platform. I watched the ceremony on 'Shalom World', and it is also available on playback on YouTube.

The Holy Mass and the Beatification of Blessed Carlo Acutis began with many bishops forming a procession. Whilst burning incense, they venerated 'the book of the Gospels', displayed on the altar for all to see. The incense represents the solemnity and mystery of the Mass. The visual imagery of the smoke and smell remind us of the transcendence of the Mass, which links Heaven and Earth and allows us to enter into the presence of God. This was to acknowledge Carlo's human nature as well as his divine appointment by God to be declared 'Blessed'.

The Procession was accompanied with an opening hymn, 'Giving praise to the Lord', which reflected the Church coming together with joy and gratitude as one of its children was to be made 'Blessed'.

Carlo's mother, Antonia Acutis had had a dream in which Carlo told her that she was going to have two more children. On the day of his Beatification, we beheld the miracle of his twin brother and sister sitting between Carlo's parents in the Basilica. They were born four years after Carlo's death. I thought this was amazing, however, touching, that Carlo's siblings, whom he never met, expressed their love and connection with their brother and celebrated his next step to sainthood.

After incensing the altar and the Crucifix, Cardinal Vallini opened the Mass, addressing the Beatification of Carlo by proclaiming that, we "admire and recognize the work of the Holy Spirit who made him an authentic witness of the charity of Christ, by nourishing himself on Christ every day in the Holy Eucharist".

As we know, Carlo had a great devotion to the Holy Eucharist. Sr Bernadette, the commentator on the 'Shalom World' broadcast, emphasized that Carlo is "probably the first who, as his legacy, has left a website" which is called "The Eucharistic Miracles". The website documents all the miracles that have occurred concerning the Eucharist.

This was Carlo's own way of evangelizing in the modern-day age, where he put his incredible computer skills to good use. He always said: "Everyone is born as an original, but many die as a photocopy."

He displayed a faithful response

to God's call by using the skills and talents that God had given him. This is a teaching for all young people today to simply be ourselves.

A brief account of Carlo's story was read aloud in public, requesting for him to be declared 'Blessed'. In response, Cardinal Vallini, with staff in hand, read out Pope Francis' Apostolic letter to the Church, delivering the approval and joy of His Holinesses regarding the Beatification. Whilst the Apostolic letter was read, the congregation stood up. The letter contained the Pope's satisfaction of the evidence and the opinion of the Congregation of the Causes of Saints.

It was also announced by the Holy Father, that Carlo Acutis' Feast Day would fall on October 12 – the day in which he was born into Heaven. Following the proclamation, the letter was shown to everyone, who responded with a round of applause. A large image was then revealed of Carlo, with the choir chanting "Amen".

When the image of Carlo was revealed, I felt very emotional to see a young man at the age of 15 being acknowledged and venerated as a special figure in the life of the Church. He is young, therefore, relatable to me. He is an encouragement for all young people, and he demonstrates the importance of the role and responsibility which young people have in the Church today.

Heart

Following the Rite of Beatification, Carlo's parents, Andrea and Antonia Acutis greeted Cardinal Vallini and presented Carlo's heart in a reliquary, which had the inscription, 'The Eucharist is my highway to Heaven'. During this, the choir sang 'The Church of Christ festively greets her young son, O Carlo, Blessed'.

The inscription on the reliquary is a quote of Carlo's, which indicates the high level of his understanding. We know of Carlo's great devotion to the Eucharist and that he also understood the importance of the Eucharist in our lives.

"The more Eucharist we receive, the more we will become like Jesus, so that on Earth we will have a foretaste of Heaven", is another of Carlo's inspiring quotes. This is a wonderful way to recognize Jesus present in the Most Holy Sacrament. Carlo teaches us to be humble, appreciative and to recognize the benefits of the nourishment of the Body and Blood of Christ. He asks us to invite Jesus into our hearts and receive Holy Communion with sincerity, and to acknowledge our hunger and our need for receiving Him.

I found it very touching to watch Carlo's mother and father presenting their son's heart to



the Church as a relic. I could not imagine how they must have been feeling, because not many people have had their family present at their beatification. It was simply amazing!

I try to imagine what Carlo think if he was still here today. What would he make of all of us trying to work the internet during this pandemic?

In the summer of 2006, Carlo asked his mother, "Do you think I should become a priest?" After he died, Carlo's mother said: "He is being a priest from Heaven." Carlo's question showed his desire to give his life to God and serve His people. At 15 years of age, he felt a call by God, therefore, for young people today it is important to realize that God is calling us in every minute in our lives to be with Him. Carlo's life also represents the fact that God has a plan for each and every one of us, and that young people are as important in the present as they are in the future.

Carlo had a great love for St Francis of Assisi. The two of them had similarities in their care and adoration towards the poor and God's creation. As a seal of gratitude, the Church of Assisi, through the Shrine of the Renunciation, where Carlo's body rests and is displayed for veneration, has promoted two charitable initiatives; they will be

providing food to the hungry near the Shrine. The other initiative, which will more in likely occur in the future, aims to be a stimulus for the renewal of the economy. It is called 'The Francis of Assisi and Carlo Acutis International Prize' for a fraternal economy - a small response to the Encyclical of 'Fratelli Tutti'.

The Holy Mass and the Beatification of Carlo Acutis concluded with a hymn inspired by Carlo, called "Not me but God."

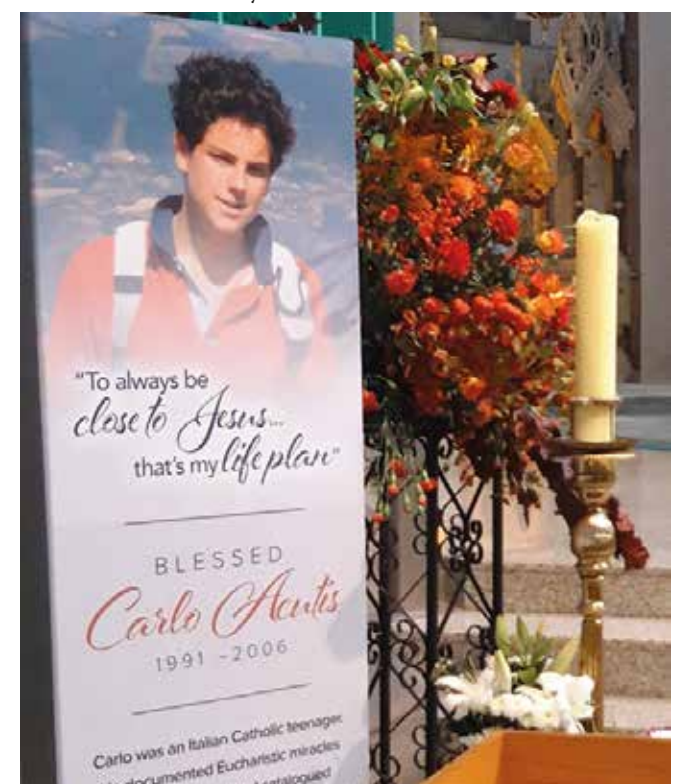
I found his beatification to be a momentous event in the life of the Church. Never has there been a 15-year-old boy beatified with his family present at the ceremony and who has left a website as his legacy. Carlo is an inspiration for all people, particularly the young.

In my school, Holy Cross College in Strabane, my RE teacher showed the class images of Carlo's body displayed for veneration in Assisi and she gave a brief account of his story. They were surprised, although, very interested.

Carlo gives us hope and encourages us to take our place in God's plan. He teaches us to let ourselves be loved by Jesus and to care of our neighbour – as he did, with the poor and downtrodden.

Link for the Carlo Acutis Eucharistic Miracles website:

<https://www.carloacutis.com/en/association/mostra-miracoli-eucaristici>



St Eugene's Cathedral marked the occasion with a special display and provision of prayer cards.



Just as Carlo Acutis was called to be a saint, so are all of us

by Charlotte Gormley

A very inspirational event for young people took place on Saturday, October 10, with the beatification of teenager, Carlo Acutis. This young man is a great witness, role model and inspiration to all people, but particularly to young people of the 21st Century.

Despite his short life, the way in which he lived his life was an extremely powerful one. He dedicated his whole life to God, and he did this by loving God and incorporating his deep faith into all aspects of his life.

Whilst having a deep relationship with God and the Virgin Mary, Carlo was a normal teenage boy. Like many young people in today's world, Carlo loved computers, video games, football and various other activities that teenagers enjoy doing for fun. He is set to become the patron saint of the internet, which is very relevant for the Church today, as we now live in a world where the internet and technology is more important and prominent than ever before. Especially now, when a lot of our church ministries are done online, for example, Masses being streamed on webcams due to the current Covid-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, Carlo has been referred to as someone who could very possibly be the first millennial saint. Being a young adult in the early 21st Century has many challenges, especially when it comes to faith. However, millennials today now have a new inspirational peer and fellow millennial to take example from.

Many people relate to different saints for different reasons, it might be because they grew up praying for the intercession of a particular saint, or because a particular saint is the patron of something close to their heart. However, Carlo Acutis' relevance for young people can be seen even by the simple fact that you can see his body in the tomb wearing jeans, a sports jumper, and trainers. He is relatable for many reasons. The fact that he lived around the same time as young adults today, makes him a very tangible 'saint to be' who experienced the same pressures of the world that young people face

today.

One of my good friends, Naomi Roberts, who is the Digital Design Lead for the Nottingham Diocesan Catholic Youth Service, is greatly inspired by Carlo Acutis. She told me the impact Carlo Acutis has had on her: "Something that inspires me about Carlo is that we were both the same age, both trying to use the digital media to communicate God's love. It's exciting to think that as we carry on that mission here on earth, Carlo is praying with the saints and angels, as a soon to be saint; interceding for us as we carry on what he was part of."

"I also love how in tune with his vocation he seemed! He felt that people should know about something important, in this case Eucharistic miracles, and knew that the internet was a great way for him to be able to communicate that information. So he did it, using his passion combined with his skills set, and has changed the world."

I think that Carlo Acutis is the modern day saint that the Church needs. All aspects of him and his life are very powerful and yet realistic examples, that we as young people can follow within our own day-to-day lives as young Catholics. That in these modern times, using the example of Carlo, the internet can be used for good, and as a platform in which to share the Gospel message, in a time when the internet is so often seen to have many negative connotations.

Just as Carlo Acutis was called to be a saint, so are all of us. And the young people today can take example from Carlo and see that it is completely possible to be a saint in today's world.



Zara Schlindwein sees the beatification of Carlo Acutis as...

A significant step for young people

CARLO Acutis, who was recently beatified, will become known now and forever as a great example to all young Christians around the world.

Carlo, who died of leukaemia in 2006 aged 15, was beatified at a ceremony in the town of Assisi and was moved one step closer to sainthood. The teenager recorded purported miracles online and helped run websites for Catholic organisations. He stepped on the path to sainthood after the Vatican revealed he had miraculously saved another boy's life. The Church claims that he interceded from Heaven, in 2013, to cure a Brazilian boy who was suffering from a rare pancreatic disease.

His beatification is extremely significant for all young people now. In this day and age, it can be difficult for the youth to be taken seriously. We can sometimes feel as if we have no control over the

world in which we live in. We may not know everything, but we do know quite a lot. Especially during this time, when we are all more politically, environmentally, and spiritually aware than ever.

Young people deserve a voice. They deserve a chance to share their ideas and deserve to be listened to and respected. As children, we view the world in a different way. We don't see the world as what it is but as what it could be.

Jesus, Himself, said: "I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me".

The Vatican listened to this message. They saw the incredible work Carlo Acutis carried out throughout his life and death, and they chose to acknowledge his mission and beatify him. By

doing this, they sent hope to the rest of the world. Hope that the next generation will take it upon themselves to change the world and make it a better place. A place where equality exists, hunger and poverty don't, clean air fills our lungs and fear is drained from our minds. That dream is achievable, through the work of the youth and the support from our predecessors. Carlo made his voice heard. He "used the internet in service to the gospel, to reach as many people as possible." His initiative and ambition were met with grace and appreciation, from all around the world.

He is believed to be the youngest contemporary person to be beatified; the last stage before sainthood.

The message sent through Carlo Acutis to us all, is that we can all be saints - we can all live God's Word and strive to fulfil His mission,

but if we are to do that, the youth must work together, to make their voices heard.

I am a member of the newly established Derry Youth Ministry Scholarship, and I feel that this initiative will allow us to do this; to learn and grow in our faith, allowing us to receive the skills and develop the belief in ourselves to greet the world with grace but also be prepared to change it dramatically. I thoroughly enjoy working with the Derry Youth team and greatly appreciate the impact it has on all the young people, like myself, involved.

Hearing the good news about Carlo Acutis and the profound influence he is having on the world, has excited me for the future. It has given me hope that change is imminent and assured me that young people have an important role to play in the dreamed success of our world in the near future.



Oisín Mulhern shares message that he has taken from the inspirational life of Blessed Carlo Acutis...

Faith is personal, faith belongs to you, and faith will get you through

LAST month, I watched the beatification of Carlo Acutis, the Italian boy that I wrote about in a previous issue. Carlo was religious from a young age despite his mother not having been a Mass-goer. He had an unwavering interest in God and the Eucharist, so much so that he created a database that traced the history of Eucharistic miracles. To date, according to the Vatican, this has been used by more than 10,000 parishes worldwide.

Carlo's beatification is a significant event in our lifetime as he could become the first millennial saint of our time. Furthermore, it is believed that he is the youngest contemporary person to be beatified. One miracle has been attributed to Carlo, namely the curing of a young boy in Brazil with a rare disease. As this has been accepted, Carlo has been beatified and can now be called 'Blessed' Carlo

Acutis. If a second miracle is identified and confirmed, Carlo will be canonized as a young saint.

I find this very inspiring for the young people of today, including myself. All of the young saints we are currently familiar with were about a long time ago, often hundreds of years before we were born. We find these Saints hard to relate to due to the fact that they were born in very different times from now. Life during their time was much simpler, less fast paced and materialism was less prominent.

In today's world, we can find it much harder to follow God, with many more influences pulling the young people away from the path of 'light'.

However, the fact that a young man from Italy is on his way to becoming a Saint highlights that faith, prayer and the love of God still exist, we just have to want to find it. Carlo faced many struggles,

just like any of us; the struggle to use our talents for the greater good and the struggle to realise that life is much more meaningful if we have faith.

Material possessions do not fulfil one's life the way God and the Eucharist do. We have to open our hearts to God and ask for help, and then we will find true happiness.

Carlo suffered great pain with Leukemia, which ultimately ended his life. He faced this challenge head on and devoted his suffering to Pope Benedict XVI and the universal church. This is almost hard to believe, that a 15-year-old boy could be so strong. If Carlo could face such pain and accept his impending death with such faith, surely we can see the benefit of having God in our lives. We, too, can call on God for strength.

Carlo also believed we should continuously ask our Guardian Angel for help and take the most Holy Eucharist as often as possible.

He believed that the Eucharist gives us strength to become more like Jesus and that it is a little bit of 'Heaven' on earth.

Many young people would probably see my views as quite unusual, particularly for my age as 'faith' is no longer the 'cool' thing. However, I see it differently. I take Carlo as my inspiration to try my best, open my heart to God and to use my faith to help me get through many of the challenges I face, and will continue to face, in my life.

Carlo was a strong individual, who put his faith at the forefront of his life. He lived his life according to God's ways and he helped those around him and continues to do so.

The message that I have taken from his inspirational life is that, 'faith' is personal, 'faith' belongs to you and 'faith' will get you through.

Class on and off the pitch from a Liverpool Club legend *by Peter Grant*

AN 11-year-old boy called Lewis Balfe, from Maidenhead, Berkshire, in England, was anxious about starting secondary school during the Covid-19 pandemic and sent a letter to Liverpool manager, Jürgen Klopp about his anxiety and the situation he found himself in.

Jürgen Klopp wrote back to Lewis telling him his secret: “I get nervous. To be totally honest, I would be worried if I did not get nervous because when it happens it gives me the chance to turn that energy into something positive.”

Jürgen also stated to young Lewis that you “do not need to worry about bad things happening”. He added: “As you know, I lost more than a few finals and this isn’t a good feeling but with the help of my family and friends I kept going and in the end we were able to enjoy some really good times.”

As soon as Lewis got Jürgen’s letter, he posted a picture of it on social media, which almost broke the internet with so much gratitude and class from the world towards the Reds boss.

This wasn’t the first time Jürgen Klopp had shown his kindness and creativity off the pitch, as a young Man United fan from Co Donegal, Darragh Curley had also written a letter to Jürgen, telling him to stop winning during

Liverpool’s unbelievable Premier League season that they won last year. Jürgen wrote back to him saying that, unfortunately, he couldn’t.

I suppose every teenager or child in our country and elsewhere would also be in Lewis’ shoes whenever they are going back to school, or starting at their new school, during this time of pandemic across the world.

People do naturally be anxious or nervous about things at work or at home, like Jürgen Klopp would feel before a match wondering if he had prepared his players properly, or if he has got his tactics right for the big matches and occasions.

I, especially, feel for kids and teenagers of my age group, and staff and teachers returning back to schools in a different environment and setting for them for their work and education.

Most of the schools in my parish have done excellent work to keep the schools and students safe, when attending school at this tough time.

Schools across the world are also doing a superb job in keeping students safe physically and also mentally, giving them a bit of positivity, like Jürgen turns his anxiety before a match and into positivity.

‘Economy of Francesco’ – a papal call to young people to create fair economy for all

YOUNG economists, entrepreneurs and changemakers from across the globe, and from all religions, have been invited by Pope Francis to make a commitment to the spirit of St Francis of Assisi and, in doing so, commit to making the economy of the future fair, sustainable and inclusive.

To enable conversation to take place, an event, entitled the ‘Economy of Francesco’, has been organised to create a community in which the young people can exchange views on prominent topics regarding the global economy.

This came about when the Holy Father asked economists and young people to consider a different kind of economy to that focused on the gain of material wealth.

The scheduled March launch of the ‘Economy of Francesco’ event in Assisi was postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and has been adapted to take the form of an online event from November 19-21, which has been preceded by months of study, reflection and proposals within a series of Economy of Francesco ‘villages’ set up around the world.

Almost 1,000 young people

have been working in these 12 ‘EoF’ villages since March, each of which has a different theme: Management and Gift, Finance and Humanity, Work and Care, Agriculture and Justice, Energy and Poverty, Business and Peace, Women for Economy, CO2 of Inequalities, Vocation and Profit, Businesses in Transition, Life and Lifestyle, Policies and Happiness.

Around 300 events have been organized in preparation for the ‘Economy of Francesco’, with a series of webinars and online seminars streamed on the organization’s official Youtube channel, which have been translated into four languages. So far, the event has received registrations from 2,000 young people, under 35 years old, and Pope Francis’ ‘virtual’ participation is expected too.

The ‘Economy of Francesco’ has evolved into a movement of young people that is growing around the world, with the desire and creativity to change the current economy to one that will benefit the poorest of the poor, so that no-one is left behind, and that will also safeguard the environment, our common home.

Hollie shares her thoughts on ‘Exploring Christus Vivit’...

“The ‘Promised Land’ is always ahead of us, never behind us” *(Foreword)*

ON October 21, Veritas launched ‘Exploring Christus Vivit’ in Dublin, via Zoom. I was very fortunate to attend the virtual book launch and it was an eye-opening experience. Some of you may have read Pope Francis’ Apostolic Exhortation called ‘Christus Vivit’, published in March 2019. You could say it was one of the fruits of the 2018 Synod on ‘Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment’.

Exploring Christus Vivit consists of a collection of essays brought forth by a range of people who have experience in working with youth and young adult ministry. It is an addition and response to Pope Francis’ Apostolic Exhortation, exploring the key themes and what are the challenges young people face today regarding faith and Church.

The first concern is the challenges that face young people today, and how to bring young people back to the Church and renew it. I think it is fair to say that the Church has experienced a spiritual awakening, where it has been acknowledged that young people are the way forward.

In Chapter 1, ‘The Divine Dinner Party’, it is noted that there are “two heavy weights” which young people bear... “the pressure to be perfect and the desire to do their own thing”. As a 17-year-old, I can totally relate to this. This chapter also comments on the culture in which our generation is growing up in... “Whether material, virtual or sensual, there are many potential distractions that lead to an anesthetized existence”.

Social media is the most popular and contemporary way of communicating, and we also use it as a form of escapism. This can be a danger in many ways, however. Chapter 10, ‘From Online Masses to Online Communities’, reflects on how effective the social media platform has been during the pandemic. I know that in our Diocese, online Masses and online youth programs have been a great success. This modern way of ministering is very much entering into the contemporary world where young people live. We cannot let this new ministry go!

Pope Francis also encourages intergenerational relationships, and that it is very important to listen to the elderly and their great wisdom. However, young people having shared their technological intellect amidst the pandemic, demonstrates that we need both young and old.

This is a brief analysis of the problems that have been assessed in the book. As a young person,

I am extremely impressed with the effort our Church is making to bring young people back, and the emphasis on ‘Synodality’ is encouraging, highlighting as it does that youth will be heard and counted on.

The second point made in ‘Exploring Christus Vivit’ focuses on the influence that surrounds young people, eg parents, teachers, priests, and youth ministers. At World Youth Day 2019, in Panama, Pope Francis reminded young people... “it is impossible to grow unless we have strong roots to support us and to keep us firmly grounded”.

As I mentioned before, our culture can be fascinating as well as overwhelming. We can be so drawn out by idols and trends that we can become very self-centered and, therefore, fail to love our neighbour; in other words, failing to contribute to the community mission of the Church, which involves everyone.

Previously, I mentioned Pope Francis’ encouragement for intergenerational relationships. The book reflects Pope Francis’ emphasis on the importance to stay connected to our elders, a ‘strong root’ – tradition.

Accompaniment

Chapter seven, ‘Re-imagining Ministry with Young People’, highlights the word ‘accompaniment’. It notes that accompaniment consists of listening and walking with young people through challenges and change. Youth must let the older people help, as they can provide experience, guidance, and advice! In other words, co-responsibility. I agree with Pope Francis, that our elderly are greatly needed to assist young people on their faith journey, and that they have so much to offer. Family is sometimes understood as the backbone of society, and our parents as our first teachers. Clergy and youth ministers are relied on to attend to the spiritual needs of a young person and to make themselves available, in any way possible, to support youth. Teachers are also counted on in pastoral care, religious education and in supporting faith development, etc.

The third theme I would like to talk about in ‘Exploring Christus Vivit’ is Vocation and Discernment. Pope Francis understands that young people seek a purpose in life. In Chapter 8, ‘Reflecting on the Path to Vocation’, we learn that “for Christians, our vocational journey begins at the baptismal font”. Hence, we share the same ‘mission’ as a community. In this chapter, vocation is reflected ‘in



terms of holiness, mission, service and authenticity’.

The book demonstrates the Church’s acknowledgement of the anxieties and stresses young people suffer today, and the difficulty they have in making decisions, noting, for example, that vocation often requires an element of risk. The book explores ways to help and assist youth in their vocational journey, and emphasizes the beauty of their calling and that young people must be made aware that they are needed. Discernment, it states, consists of reflection and is the pathway to Vocation. Pope Francis stresses that the presence of youth ministers is crucial, whilst young people are seeking answers to questions about their vocation.

On an endnote, I found ‘Exploring Christus Vivit’ a fantastic guide for youth and those who work with young people. I was extremely impressed with the strong understanding both Pope Francis and youth leaders have regarding young people in the Church.

I am realizing that the Church is renewing its attitude and have come to understand that pre-packaged answers, amongst other problems, are ineffective, and that

we must preach and minister in accordance with young people’s realities.

The foreword states... “there is no future in trying to reconstruct the past. The ‘Promised Land’ is always ahead of us, never behind us.” In other words, youth are a new generation who need to bring their own style. Going backwards is not the answer. The only time we must look back is to cherish our tradition, protect it and learn from our mistakes.

The Church is reminded in the conclusion of ‘Exploring Christus Vivit’ that we are not alone in this journey of renewal, but that the “Holy Spirit who ‘rejuvenates’ the Church” is amongst us and is working naturally to guide us along the right path - if we allow it.

I want to thank all who came together to write this brilliant book, and all who are involved in working hard to support young people in their faith. I am very grateful for the amazing support offered for young people like myself and others. The background to this book and the continuance of this refreshing process, has given me great hope for my generation and for the future of the Church.

a prayer for guidance

Dear Father,
Thank you for being
The Almighty God
who holds the entire world
And yet cradles my heart.
Today I humbly recognize
the need for your guidance.
How I crave your presence to lead me.
Without your light to shine down,
The path is dim and unclear.
Without your voice to order my steps,
The journey is confusing and obscure.
Show me the movements to mirror your will.
Reveal the master blueprint as only you can;
So that I may boast
in your glory and your plan.
Amen.

rachefwojo.com

Derry Youth Scholarship's Hollie Frystal, Zara Schlindwein and Shaciara McCallion have been finding out about Mary's Meals...

The shed that fed a million children

THIS year, the Derry Youth Scholarship has chosen to work with the fantastic charity, Mary's Meals, which was founded in 1992 by brothers, Magnus Fergus MacFarlane-Barrow in Scotland.

In 1983, Magnus and his family made a pilgrimage to Medjugorje, in Bosnia Herzegovina, hence, the origin of the name of the charity which is dedicated to Our Lady. The family's faith was renewed, and Magnus' parents changed their 'guesthouse' into a Retreat Centre; a 'Family House of Prayer'. In 1992, the horrors of the Bosnian War had made the headlines of the news. Whilst Magnus and his brother were talking over a pint one evening, they were struck with the terrors and sadness which they had watched on television.

In relation to Mission month, we acknowledge that even though this situation was shown on the news to everyone, the two brothers felt compelled to undertake the 'mission' in which they were called to. So, the brothers brainstormed ideas on how to support the Bosnian relief effort and they organized a local appeal.

Food, clothing, medicines and donations of money soon arrived at their home. A month later, Magnus and Fergus thought that they had done their bit, however, donations kept flooding in and so they used their parents' shed for storage. This became known as 'The shed that fed a million children'. This is really where it all started for Mary's Meals.

Over the years, Mary's Meals, formally known as Scottish International Relief, has grown into a larger and stronger organization which has been dedicated to building homes for abandoned children in Romania, and has helped returning refugees in Liberia by setting up mobile clinics. They continued to deliver material aid to Croatia and Bosnia – Herzegovina as well as funding many other projects.

Mary's Meals was inspired by a simple but striking response of a young boy named Edward, from Malawi. Whilst being in Malawi providing famine relief, Magnus met a woman called Emma who was dying of AIDS and she was lying on the floor surrounded by her six young children. Emma's biggest prayer was for someone to take care of her children after she died. Magnus asked Emma's son Edward what it was he hoped for in life, and Edward responded, "I want to have enough food to eat and to go to school one day".

This is shocking. No child should ever be denied the right to food and education. We can change this. We know that education is the key to the door of having a good chance to a stable life. Mary's Meals provides food in school, therefore, they are tackling both hunger and striving to support every child in the hope of giving them the best future possible. For example, it only takes £15.90/€18.30 to feed one child for a whole school year.

This is an amazing opportunity to make a difference to someone else's life. Remember, Jesus said, "Love your neighbour" and "do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

According to an advocate of Mary's Meals, "that could have been any one of us". So, we must have gratitude for what we have ourselves and try to help others. The charity is currently operating in 19 countries.

Survive

Around 64 million of the world's hungriest children do not attend school, as they have to work or beg instead. They must do this in order to survive. Hunger still affects the few who make it to the classroom by reducing their ability to learn.

Mary's Meals provides every child with a meal, when they come to school. By doing so, this offers the next generation hope; hope that they can become healthy, educated egalitarians

and strive to make our world a better place. With the promise of a nutritious meal, children are instantly attracted into the classroom. They receive energy, a safe environment and the chance to learn, all while satisfying their hunger and guaranteeing themselves a better future.

The Charity organises school feeding programmes, which are all delivered by community volunteers in the countries where food is provided. There are over 80,000 volunteers in Malawi, who take turns to prepare, cook and serve the daily meal in each school. The meals the children receive help support families struggling to feed their children, whilst boosting the country's wider economy. This allows the system to be more sustainable, offering communities encouragement and skill rather than short term refuge.

When Mary's Meals becomes established in new areas, the first thing they do is set up a school feeding committee, made up of parents, teacher and volunteers. Monitors from Mary's Meals regularly visit schools to ensure the precious ingredients are cooked and served correctly. They work closely with these communities and also offer training to the community volunteers. Advocates from the organisation say that being part of Mary's Meals is like being part of one big family, where everyone is equal and fighting for the same thing; an end to world hunger.

Mary's Meals try to serve locally produced food where possible, in order to support the local community, farmers and the wider community also. This provides work and income for local people, further fighting the war against hunger. Mary's Meals works in 19 countries across Africa, Asia, Latin America, Eastern Europe, and the Caribbean.

Although, Mary's Meals considers their main aim to be finding a solution to world

hunger, they also have always worked to provide emergency relief to vulnerable regions around the world. Since they grew from a response to the Bosnian Conflict in the early 1990's, they have been involved in emergency relief work in countries including Myanmar, Haiti, India, Kenya and Thailand.

At the heart of their emergency relief is their main objective: to feed vulnerable children in a place of education. In many cases, they have been able to extend their work and support to wider communities.

Mary's Meals is a perfect example of a mission. Their volunteers were sent to send a message to everyone through their work. This message is that no child should go without food or an education. Many are joining them in this fight; through fundraising, through volunteering and through prayer.

Its aim is that every child receives one daily meal in their place of education and that all those who have more than they need, share with those who lack the basic things. They aim to keep their administration and fundraising costs very low, so that they can maximise the amount of resources that they put towards those they are helping.

The Charity has a lot of volunteer opportunities. All fundraising events, small or big, make a difference to helping the children. You can fundraise by packing bags at a supermarket, having a bake sale or get sponsored to do something. A great way to volunteer is to participate in Mary's Meals' annual 'Step by Step' walk to Knock.

Mary's Meals has a mission, just like all those that we celebrated in the mission month of October. All those that help with Mary's Meals are completing their mission of helping starving children. They are a great charity to help and that is why we have decided to work with them this year.



Mary's Meals Omagh find new ways to feed and fundraise as... Covid-19 closed one door but prayer opened hearts to raise thousands for hungry children

THIS year, the schools being closed due to the Covid-19 lockdown presented extraordinary difficult circumstances, and new ways had to be found to reach the children who eat Mary's Meals, which is sometimes the only food they receive in a day.

Working with governments, community leaders and trusted partners, Mary's Meals have developed new methods of distribution and are now thankfully reaching virtually all of the children who rely on nutritious meals, with take-home food rations.

The annual Knock 'Step by Step Walk to Feed the Next Hungry Child', from August 7-15 took a different form this year. Some walked the 220 km but more took part in small feeder walks from town to town, circuit walks, 10ks and miles for Mary's Meals; 10 miles from Derry to Fahan, being one of them. Overall, it was a great success as money raised by the Northern Counties alone amounted to an amazing £31,000.

During the month of May, Mary's Meals' founder, Magnus made an appeal for prayer for the work. Fr Eamon Kelly, of the Raphoe Parish, responded by holding a Holy Hour of prayer for the children and the work, each Monday at 8 pm, which was broadcast via the Church webcam from May until October. Other parishes across the UK and Ireland also took part.

In Omagh, prayer was an answer to help with fundraising. While we have not been able to do the normal fundraising activities, so many people have shown many acts of kindness. A large

anonymous donation came from a North West donor, and two little girls, Shauna Rose and Lilly Rose, from the Cappagh Parish set up a Summer Lemonade Stall outside their home.

Helen Quinn, and her family and friends, walked from Derry to Fahan, raising £400, while Greencastle man, Paul McLaughlin and his friend, Raymond Thom, ran the virtual London Marathon and presented a cheque for £800.

In addition, World Porridge Day was celebrated in Omagh, with collections at McCullagh's Spar and McGirr's Spar and free porridge sachets sponsored by Whites Oats, plus online donations amounted to £1,400. To all the regular donors who are so generous and all the shops and premises that have our collection cans, we are sincerely thankful.

Mary's Meals Support Group in Omagh sponsor Mtayanyemba Primary School, Neno Malawi, which has a current enrolment of 693. As it takes £15.90 to feed a child at school for one whole year, the annual cost to feed our school amounts to £11,018. We haven't yet reached our target, but during November, December and January, all donations are doubled. Gift Aid £1=2, so £15.90 will feed two children for a year.

'Love Reaches Everywhere' is a new, inspirational story, filmed in Liberia and Haiti, about Mary's Meals. Starring Hollywood actor, Gerard Butler, it can be viewed on YouTube. The Mary's Meals Family Hour that went out live on YouTube on World Porridge Day, October

Derry Youth to help Mary's Meals Charity

THE Derry Youth Scholarship met for their second meeting on Saturday, October 17. We were blessed with the presence of Bishop Donal McKeown, who led us through our opening prayer and even played a round of Pictionary with us!

Before he left, Bishop Donal spoke to the students and emphasised how each and every one of us are called to be a hero; a hero in our own lives, and what can we do to be a hero to someone else, especially during this month of mission.

The charity that was chosen

for this year is Mary's Meals. The Scholarship will be helping them with their social media accounts as well as helping them to raise funds, especially for their Christmas Appeal. They will be helping them also through the constant need for prayer in their work.

The Scholarship will also be starting their Youthlink course in the next meeting. This meeting took place on Zoom, but we hope that the current restrictions will ease so that in the near future, we may be able to have our events in person.



Bishop Donal welcomed a group at St Eugene's during the summer, who were walking to Knock to raise funds for Mary's Meals.

For children in crossfire...water = life

by Shauna O'Neill



SAFE, clean water is a basic human right. Children in Crossfire have long been committed to addressing the lack of water supplies in communities we support. In Ethiopia, we have built nine community wells over recent years, making life better for many thousands. No longer do people have to drink from dirty rivers.

In 2018, we also built a deep water well at St Luke's Catholic Hospital in Wolisso, guaranteeing year-round supply for a medical team that serves a population of more than one million. By providing water we prevent disease.

Now, we are planning to bring WASH (Water, Sanitation & Hygiene) facilities to 700 primary schools in the Dodoma region of Tanzania. 2020 has reminded us all how important hand washing is for stopping the spread of disease. We plan to install hand washing stations all across schools in Dodoma, supporting up to 80,000 children over the next three years. This is in addition to our pre-school education programme, which will give all these children the start in life every child deserves.

Our pre-school work supports very young children, preparing them for school. Our programme

provides well-trained teachers and properly resourced classrooms. Where schools are overcrowded, we fundraise to build new facilities. We also support nutritious school feeding, ensuring that no child goes home hungry. And now, we are also working to minimise the risk of disease by installing new water stations.

We can only do this work because of our supporters. By donating now you will be helping us to make this positive difference in so many young lives.

If you wish to give, please:

• **Send a cheque to:**
Children in Crossfire,
2 St Joseph's Avenue,
Derry, BT48 6TH

• **Call Sarah on 028 7126 9898**
(Monday – Friday, 9am – 5pm)

• **Go to www.childrenincrossfire.org/donate**

Thank you very much



St Columba's Sixtowns pupils love exploring and caring for creation by Nicole Kelly



AT St Columba's our mission is to work as a team to provide the highest quality learning and teaching in a happy, safe and secure environment, in which our pupils are at the heart of all we do. We believe that every child entrusted in our care is a unique individual, and strive to promote an inclusive and loving ethos in which our pupils are cherished and respected.

In addition, we create an atmosphere which is conducive to learning and which seeks to promote values beliefs and practices of our Catholic faith. We hope our children in turn become ambassadors for their local community and understand the very positive impact that they

can have globally. This is why we embraced an initiative from Pope Francis, 'The Season of Creation'.

Our RE Coordinator created age appropriate tasks for all the different key stages and the children flourished during these lessons and special activities.

Through their learning experiences in St. Columba's, our children are prepared to meet the opportunities and challenges that they may face in a rapidly changing world. We encourage our children to develop a love of learning and experience enjoyment in their journey of holistic development, as they strive to fulfil their potential and to become the best they can be.

Children are naturally curious about the world around them and we strive to give our children the best possible experiences in this subject area... "The teachers connect creatively the children's learning with other aspects of the curriculum and build new concepts meaningfully through active learning tasks." (ETI 2016)

In St Columba's, we encourage our pupils to care for and be responsible for looking after our environment. The Eco-Schools'

programme provides an ideal way for fostering environmental awareness in the entire school in a way that links to many curriculum subjects. They care for vegetables in our garden and then harvest the crops and make soup for the whole school. In 2015 we were first awarded our first Green Flag status. This has gone from strength-to-strength and, in 2017, we were proud to maintain our Green Flag Status as an Eco-School. We have also been recognised as the top school in NI for STEM and received the ENTHUSE Award for STEM in Primary School, in 2018-2019.

We also aim to develop children's awareness and understanding of religion. We follow the NI syllabus for Religion, which focuses on encouraging each child to become informed and inquisitive about their own religious beliefs and practices and those of others. This is so that, over time, they will grow as citizens of a religiously and culturally diverse and global society, aware of similarities and respectful of difference.

To put it simply, love grows brains.

Keeping the music alive for local musicians, Allegri prepares for Christmas extravaganza

LOCAL arts organisation, Allegri continues, like many, to adapt to restrictions relating to Covid-19, so that it can continue delivering rehearsals, workshops and events in this increasingly virtual period.

Having successfully united 1,250 music makers from over 30 choirs in a programme of workshops and choral performances as part of the Every Voice Festival, in August, it is now focusing on producing two virtual Christmas performances which will see Orchestra NorthWest join with Allegri Ladies, Allegri Youth and a choir of community singers. These online concerts will be streamed on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

Allegri is currently inviting

members to register for the community chorus, which will record a virtual performance of the Hallelujah Chorus from Handel's Messiah as part of the Christmas Day programme. They are also welcoming young people between the ages of 8 and 14, which will include the wonderful opportunity of singing virtually with a full symphony orchestra.

While disappointed that the City's Guildhall will not be available after the two sell out shows last year, the musical director of the Allegri choirs and Orchestra NorthWest, Maurice Kelly remarked: "Given the seriousness of the situation we all find ourselves in, it's important that we all play our part to help navigate our way safely through

these troubling times, and right now that means refraining from gathering together in the physical sense.

"Instead, we are using coming together through technology to create opportunities for festive music-making in virtual groups. The result will be a musical Christmas extravaganza. This year, it's time for us to bring the magic to you in what will be a very different Christmas for us all."

As well as these Christmas projects, Allegri's 14-18 years olds are working on a special 2020 pandemic project, 'Living in Lockdown', to offer uplifting music and poetry workshops to reflect on the personal and social impact of Covid-19.

The young people are working

with BAFTA-winning Northern Irish poet, Damian Gorman, to explore their experiences of lockdown and what it means for their lives through the written word. This will culminate in a poem which will be set to music by internationally acclaimed Derry composer, Seán Doherty.

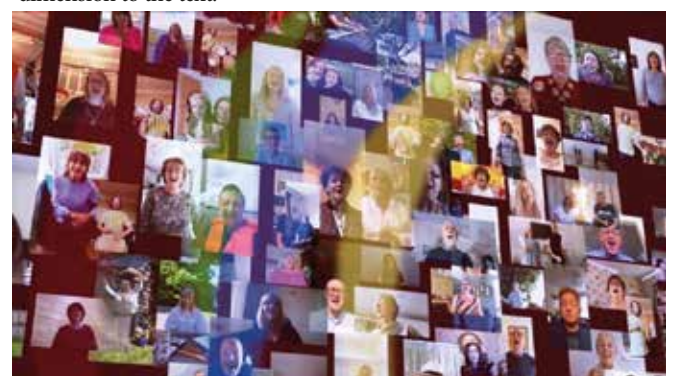
"This is such a special project for us," said Maurice, "and it is very fitting that we began the project on October 10, which was World Mental Health Day. A lot of our members are currently self-isolating but came along to engage in online discussion about how they are coping in 2020."

"At a time when the DCSDC area is recording among the highest number of Covid-19 cases in the UK, and Northern

Ireland currently ranks as second highest in Europe, our hope is that this project will bring creative reassurance to our members during what is a confusing and difficult time for them. And we are hugely excited to be engaging the wonderful composer Seán Doherty to add an extra musical dimension to the text."

Allegri hopes to launch this newly commissioned work for choir and orchestra in February 2021.

Anyone interested in registering to take part in the Hallelujah Chorus is asked to contact Allegri directly on info@allegri.co.uk before November 6.



Greencastle shepherd happy to take Badoney Lower faithful into his flock



HAVING embraced rural life amongst the faithful of Tyrone since his appointment as parish priest of Greencastle five years ago, Fr Eddie Gallagher has now happily welcomed the extension of his role to include the neighbouring parish of Badoney Lower, on the retirement of Fr John Forbes as parish priest after 12 years of ministry there.

Speaking at his Induction Mass, conducted by Bishop Donal, Fr Eddie noted that Greencastle and Badoney Lower, incorporating Gortin and Rouskey, had “very close historical, cultural and familial links, with Greencastle having been formed as a parish of its own in 1892 out of Badoney Lower, having itself been formed out of the greater Badoney Parish a few short years before that”.

Paying tribute to Fr John, whose ministry stretches back some 46 years to his ordination day, Fr Eddie said: “I know you have thoroughly enjoyed your time

here which, thankfully, is not at an end as you have so kindly agreed to stay on here for the foreseeable future and continue your pastoral ministry here as Priest-in-Residence”.

Delighted to have such a fount of local knowledge to call upon, Fr Eddie joked to Fr John: “I am sure your local knowledge of Badoney Lower is better than your golfing local knowledge, which often means, in the words of our late lamented Bishop Francis Lagan, that when looking for your golf ball you spend most of the time ‘futtering around in the rough’”.

He went on to remark that Fr John was not unknown to the Gallagher family, as he had been the priest in their home parish of St Brigid’s, Carnhill, in Derry, when their father died 25 years ago.

Fr Eddie was delighted that his mother, brother, sister, brother-in-law and nephew were in attendance for the induction

ceremony, while other family members were watching from afar on YouTube.

Saying that the present pandemic situation had meant that he had not been able to be out and about amongst the people of Badoney Lower over the past few weeks, as he would have liked, Fr Eddie recalled their paths having crossed many times during the past five years he has been in Greencastle.

“I look forward to the time ahead and the challenges that await us working together,” he

added, before reading a short extract from a piece of research entitled ‘Priests of the Diocese of Derry 1704, pertaining to the local area: “John MacConnolly was parish priest of Badoney in 1704. He was ordained at Dublin in 1660 by Edmond O’Reilly, Primate of all Ireland. In 1704 he was seventy-years old. He resided at Enisgoda and had charge of all the Monterloney district, which was no sinecure for an aged priest of seventy years.”

“The entire Tyrone district of the diocese of Derry was under the spiritual care of ten priests. The parishes of Leck, Donaghadey, Camus and Drumra, seem to have been fairly supplied but, to anyone acquainted with the district, it is quite manifest the poor priests who were located in Monterloney and Termonamongan had more than a usual proportion of labour assigned to them.”

He concluded: “So to the Muintir Lunaigh of 2020, I say it is a privilege to labour as your pastor and may I be labouring here in my 70th year also. God bless and thanks to all for attending both here in the church and virtually at home”.



Beautiful stained glass windows complete Lavey chapel works

THE final touches have been implemented in the renovation project on The Church of Our Lady of Mercy, in Lavey, with the installation of two beautiful stained glass windows.

Parish Priest, Fr Eamon Graham explained that the Lady Chapel within Lavey Church had been renovated as a part of the recent Church renovation.

“As well as the Altar, which was installed in 1886, being removed, cleaned, polished and returned as new”, said Fr Eamon, “the two circular tracery windows have been replaced with stained glass.

“One of the windows depicts the Holy Spirit as a reminder of the Annunciation, as well as the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The second depicts the monogram AM intertwined, representing Ave Maria”.

He continued: “The placing of the windows completes the Church renovation and hopefully

leaves the Church as a legacy for future generations”.

During the dedication ceremony for the windows, Saturday, October 10, the Covid prayer was recited and a candle lit in memory of the Covid victims during the dedication.

“The Candle will remain lit for the duration of the pandemic”, said Fr Eamon, adding: “This complements the exterior spire lighting, which has been blue to honour NHS and frontline carers.”



Clonleigh schools create beautiful Mission Month display

THE three National Schools in the Clonleigh Parish got creative with their focus on Mission Awareness Month, much to the delight of parish priest, Fr Colm O’Doherty.

The fruits of the work of Schoil Noamh Padraig, in Murlog, Schoil Mhuire gan Smal, in Lifford and Schoil Naomh Colmcille, in Cloughfin, were represented in a beautiful display in St Patrick’s

Church, Murlog.

The children of the three schools also participated in the ‘Five Finger Prayer’ as promoted by Pope Francis.



Icon blessing a special occasion for Omagh Polish community

THE Polish community in Omagh gathered in Sacred Heart Church for a special ceremony, when their chaplain, Fr Ignacy, blessed an Icon of Lady of Czestochowa, also known as the Black Madonna of Poland, the Patron of Poland.

Accompanied by parish priest, Fr Eugene Hasson, Fr Ignacy blessed the Icon following the celebration of Mass.

Fr Ignacy, based as curate in the Parish of Drumragh, told ‘The Net’ that the Polish people

have a great devotion to the Black Madonna.

Saying that the Polish community greatly appreciated having Mass celebrated here in their native language, Fr Ignacy added: “This Icon has been contributed by the local Polish community”.

Mass is celebrated in the Polish language every Sunday evening at 5 pm in Sacred Heart Church, Omagh., and Fr Hasson says all are welcome to attend, whether you speak Polish or not!



Leaving for London as he embarks upon a new chapter, Fr Columba Jordan CFR tells 'The Net'...

Ministry in Derry best years of my religious life so far

GLENSHANE Forest was the scenic setting for Fr Columba Jordan's last walk with members of the Living Disciples Bible Study group, which he had founded during his time in Derry, before taking leave of the City of the Oaks and the Emerald Isle this month, to join his community in the big smoke of London.

A Dubliner, Fr Columba has spent almost 10 of his 20 years with the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal Congregation in the Derry Diocese. He joined his fellow friars, who had already settled in the Long Tower Parish, in June 2011, and since then he has grown to love the city and its people.

As he strode along the winding forest paths, in his grey robes and sandaled bare feet, after celebrating Mass at the ancient Mass Rock deep in the forest, Fr Columba spoke to 'The Net' about how he would really miss Derry and the people he had come to know there.

"These have been the best years of my religious life so far," he said, smiling as he recalled the various faith initiatives he had been involved in and the characters he had come to meet and befriend.

The Living Disciples group, he explained, started out as a young adults' group which he had set up about a year after arriving in Derry.

"The members were mostly in their 20s and 30s," he added, "and had been in the Long Tower Youth 2000 group. We met for prayer and went on hikes. As time went on, they really wanted to grow in and learn more about their faith.

"As it happened, I had been wanting to set up a Bible Study group, but I didn't want it to be just because I wanted it, so when they came to me and said that they wanted to learn more about their faith, I felt that this was the go ahead I needed for the Bible Study. That was in 2012 and it has been running weekly since then.

"We studied the Gospels of Luke and Mark, and have just finished John's Gospel. We also did a

quick tour of the Bible, looked at Ephesians and considered St Ignatius' Discernment of Spirits. We actually did lots of study regarding the Holy Spirit."

After the friars moved to live in Galliagh, in the 'Three Patrons' Parish, the group was opened up to teenagers, with pupils from the nearby St Brigid's College wanting to come to a prayer group when they got to know Fr Columba and his fellow friars during their visits to the school. And, eventually, it was opened up to all age groups.

"There is a good momentum within the group, which is great," remarked Fr Columba, hopeful that it will continue after he leaves under the guidance of Fr Charles Reche, who has also been involved with the group since his arrival.

Recalling that there had been 20-30 members of all ages attending the Bible Study nights before Covid, he noted that as well as people from in and around Galliagh, there were members travelling from other parts of the City and beyond as well.

Fr Columba led an hour of worship on Sunday nights too, with young musician, Christy McQuaid, and he hopes that this will restart when lockdown is over.

While he will miss all those he has come to know during his time in Derry, Fr Columba said that it is particularly tough having to leave the community of St Brigid's School: "I was working mostly with sixth years. I told them a few weeks ago that I was leaving for London and so we chatted about that, and I also did a little video for the school to show to the rest of the year groups."

Reflecting on this youth ministry experience, he remarked: "I would love to have done more in leading young people in the school to Jesus. Sometimes you end up leading them to yourself and, while it is important to get to know the young people, the goal is to lead them to Jesus. That's the beginning and end of our reason for being in the school.



Photograph by okmaynes@btopenworld.com

Missionaries

"But it was very successful in that they have a lot more faith. A number of the young people we engaged with have gone on to become missionaries; some went to Net Ministries and some got more involved in their parishes and music ministry."

Although he would love to continue ministering in Derry and had been looking forward to the opening and development of Pio House to meet the needs of the people, Fr Columba is at peace with having to leave.

"I thought in May that I was going to be moved," he said, "when the new servant was named, but when that didn't happen, I

thought that I was staying on with our community in Galliagh. However, that turned out to be a temporary measure to help the new servant, Fr Francesco, settle in.

"I am really at peace about the move; that's where the rubber meets the road of obedience. I joined the Congregation to follow Jesus, and when you are told this is where you are going, that is really important to remember. So, I am glad to be able to follow Jesus. It is an opportunity to trust that He has a beautiful plan. He wants me in London for some reason.

"I have never been stationed in London before, but I think my time there is going to be very

temporary. There are five in the London community and their main ministry is running a soup kitchen for migrant workers and the homeless. It is a beautiful ministry and I am looking forward to being a part of that."

Fr Columba went on to share that he felt "called by the Lord to do media work", recalling a video talk he had watched on YouTube back in 2017: "It highlighted that we should ask God if there is something more that we should be doing for Him. So, I decided to do that.

"Then, in 2019, I was contacted by 'Called to More', an Irish online ministry set up by journalist, Katie Ascough and her husband, which aims to form Catholics in their faith through various social media outlets. They asked if I would like to be involved in giving talks. I said 'no' at that point as I didn't think I would be able to commit to it."

"Once Covid hit," he continued, "we were doing Facebook videos and people started saying that they had been really struck by some of the things I had said and that I should consider recording talks. Mikhail Kennedy, the former Charlton Athletic and Derry City footballer, was one of those who spoke to me about this, suggesting that I put some of my talks into two-minute videos for people, as he had been really struck by what I had said on occasions.

"I wondered if this could be of service to our community and got in touch with guys in New York to see what they thought. We were just gearing up to do these short video talks for our own group, and then to go wider, when lockdown happened.

"Then, one morning I woke up realising that this was what 'Called to More' had been asking me to do. I decided to call Katie but, before I did, she emailed me following up on the initial invitation to ask if I would do something on Zoom about studying the Bible.

"So, I did that. Katie interviewed me on Zoom about how to get into reading and studying the Bible. I love doing things off-the-cuff and decided that I would like to be able to do more of that. I will be providing short talks for 'Called to More' on the basics of the faith, so that people can learn more about their faith and live a rich Catholic life.

"I love that disciple work; taking some of these treasures and making them more readily available. We'll see where that goes....if it is in God's plan."



Photograph by okmaynes@btopenworld.com



Fr Columba came down to the grass roots and walked with us

by Rhonda McColgan

I first met Fr Columba on September 5, 2017. It was a Tuesday evening at a Living Disciples Bible Study Group that he had set up a few years earlier.

My family had been going through a difficult time after the death of my mother. I had just come back from a trip to Medjugorje and it was quite miraculous how I came across this Living Disciples group. To this day, I believe it was a grace received through the intercession of Our Lady.

My heart was getting stirred up as Fr Columba spoke, which drew me back week after week. It reminds me of the Scripture

passage about the Road to Emmaus, when the two followers were met by Jesus, "Were our hearts not filled with ardent yearning when he was talking to us on the road and explaining the scriptures?" (Luke 24:32)

I bought my first Bible after about three weeks in and, my goodness, this beautiful living Word offered a joy deep down in my soul that could never be filled by any other means that the world would ever have to offer.

One day I was reading a scripture in the book of Jeremiah, it was 3:15, "Then I will give you Shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge

and understanding".

I thought, that's it! Fr Columba is that shepherd, he's after the Lord's own Heart. I know here, within the Derry diocese, we have amazing shepherds under the great leadership of Bishop Donal, who also bears great witness to Christ. But here, at Living Disciples, I was getting to witness this up close, as it were.

The thing that I will always take with me is how Fr Columba truly poured himself out, came down to the grass roots and walked with us, the people that the Lord placed in front of him. It was truly amazing to witness how he could draw people of all ages. All of whom have the utmost respect for him.

We would have all night worship vigils. The young worship bands around the city were invited along and encouraged beyond belief. Us older ones were given roles too, according to our gifts and talents. Others came to just soak up the Lord's presence. Something for everyone!

Then there were the First Friday healing nights. He taught us how to pray with our brothers and sisters in Christ. He would say to us, "Just pour love on them".

Fr Columba is true to his mission of catching souls in that great big net called his heart!



Rhonda McColgan with Fr Columba Jordan CFR at St Joseph's, Galliagh

A heart that is truly on fire for the Lord. He taught us how to have a relationship with Jesus, a relationship that is available to us all. Jesus is knocking on our hearts, we just need to understand this and know that we can open that door. This is life transforming.

I used to go to Weight Watchers on a Tuesday night. At that time there was a 'buzz' phrase going around, 'you are what you eat'. Well, I go to a different kind of

'weight watchers' now, it's for the soul. The soul will become what it is fed. If we live by the Lord's Word and follow His ways by coming into communion with Him, we can realise it is not about condemning and judging, but about Mercy and love.

We are all broken vessels. Beautiful vases made by the Lord, for the Lord. It is only God that can fix us and when we allow Him to, He glues us back together with

a cement that transforms us into an even more beautiful mosaic vase. The cement is called 'Love', a transforming love. "Behold I am making all things new" (Rev 21:5)

Fr Columba taught me all these things and because of his 'yes' to the Lord. I will forever be grateful and transformed. London will be blessed to have him on his next mission. I wish him every blessing in Christ.



Photograph by okmaynes@btopenworld.com

Fr Columba passionate about bringing love of Christ alive within our school

by Shauna Fitzsimons

FR Columba came to St Brigid's College, in Derry, as our school chaplain in 2014 and with him came the flame that would light up the hearts of so many of our students and staff. He was passionate from the outset about bringing the love of Christ alive within the school and this could be seen in the many ways he reached out in our community.

On January 26, 2015, St Brigid's College started its, now annual, 'Whole School Mission'. The school mission, which is facilitated by the Franciscan

Friars and Sisters of the Renewal, has been a tremendous success and impacted the lives of many in our community. For some, this has been a first encounter, for others a strengthening, of a loving Father and this is what Fr Columba's service has always championed.

Throughout the past six years, Fr Columba has been a constant presence within our school. He has led all major liturgical celebrations and celebrated Mass every Wednesday morning in our school Prayer Room.

Each Tuesday, he could be found spending time with our students in the canteen, allowing them the opportunity to chat, seek advice or receive prayer. On Wednesdays, after school, he met with our senior students, often giving advice on many of the issues facing the youth of today.

A major impact Fr Columba has had is through the pilgrimages to Medjugorje, which have brought many blessings to our pupils. I have watched him during these pilgrimages giving of himself tirelessly to support and love

the students. These pilgrimages are due to his relentless work and extensive contacts. The experience of Medjugorje and Fr Columba has also brought comfort to families of students who we have lost in tragic circumstances.

Fr Columba has shown pupils that faith and fun can go hand in hand. He is very young-at-heart, which is what has made him so popular among the pupils. Each summer, many of the pupils spent a week at Camp Veritas, a sports and faith camp, with Fr

Columba, growing in their faith.

Personally, witnessing Fr Columba and how he teaches in his being, has been an experience that enriches my own teaching. He has given me the tools to be bolder and braver in teaching Religious Education. Not only has he lit a fire within the students but also within me. Like a pebble thrown into the water, Fr Columba will continue to reach out through all those people who have encountered him.

In many ways, he has been a father figure within the school.

Staff have also benefited greatly from his support and care over the years. Many staff members have reported a deepening of faith and a greater love for God as a result of his ministry.

Although the St Brigid's College community is saddened by his leaving, we will be forever grateful to God for the shepherd that was sent to us in Fr Columba. He has been a blessing to us all and we will pray for him in his new parish. St Brigid pray for Fr Columba.



Roisin Rice pays tribute to her grandfather, who taught her about the wonder of God's Creation and the beauty of the Earth, as...

Former owner of Carlisle Road's 'wee blue shop' enjoys some sweet treats on 100th birthday



LIKE many people, my maternal grandparents have had a massive impact on my life and especially in the formation of my faith. This is more poignant as both were blessed with longevity. My beloved granny, Phyllis McKeever, nee Houston passed away in February 2018, aged 93, and my grandfather, Patrick Terence McKeever celebrated his 100th birthday on October 6. They were married for 72 years.

My brothers, sister and I were very close to my grandparents. My mum, Doreen, was an only child, so they had the luxury of focussing all their attention on us. When we were growing up, they owned a sweet shop in Carlisle Road, known locally as 'the wee blue shop'. They lived above the shop, which sold fruit, vegetables, sweets and ice cream. We went there every single day.

It was my grandfather who taught me about the wonder of God's Creation and the beauty of the Earth. At the weekend, he would take us for a run in his car to the River Faughan, Ness Woods and to the various beaches of Donegal, along with his little Jack Russell dog, called Timmy. He taught us about the wildlife, the plants, trees and hedgerows. Granny and Grandpa were always taking slips of plants to

grow at home. Granny made the most beautiful blackberry jam from one of these slips taken on a countryside excursion. When they moved to Castleview Park after they retired, their garden was their pride and joy.

I often think that grandpa was born before his time. He has a flair for the technical and mechanics. He was, and still is, a person of drive and intelligence. He pushed himself and strove to overcome the limited educational opportunities that were available to a boy from a poor working-class background in early 20th Century Derry. He was born in 31 Eden Place, Derry, to Thomas and Isabella (Bella) McKeever. Later, the family moved to Hamilton Street in the Brandywell and, from there, Grandpa attended the Christian Brothers' School, Brow of Hill.

When he left school, he was extremely lucky to be taken on as an apprentice electrician at Shannon Electrics. He attended night classes in the local technical college and qualified as an electrician. He could fix anything, and he opened a Radio and Television business in the premises next door to the sweet shop. He gave back to his community of the Brandywell by showing motion pictures as a projectionist in the Lourdes Hall. In the latter part of his working life, he became an Electronics Instructor in Springtown Training Centre, teaching a generation of young people his trade. He valued the opportunities that education opened up, and encouraged all of us to strive for a third level education. His patience and kind instruction inspired me to become a teacher.

Tenor

Grandpa has a beautiful singing voice. He taught me to sing my first song, 'Lovely Derry on the Banks



of the Foyle'. Some of my happiest memories are singing with my grandfather. In more recent years, when I would take him out on a Saturday, we would sing together all the old classics in my kitchen, followed by attending 6.15 pm Mass in St Eugene's Cathedral. However, our favourites were the old hymns, 'Sweetheart of Jesus', 'Hail Glorious St Patrick' and the 'Hymn to St Columba'. He still exercises his slightly frailer but beautiful tenor voice daily.

Both my grandparents taught me resilience and to have faith and trust in God. When Grandpa lost his eyesight to macular degeneration, he never let it become a barrier to the things that he loved doing. Instead, he trained my sister, Grainnia, who took care of both my grandparents in their later years, how to be his apprentice. He diligently taught her to do the little jobs that his failing eyesight would no longer let him, passing on his skills and

experience, ever the teacher, instructor and tutor.

I would describe both of my grandparents as hardworking; they made a life out of nothing and limited opportunities through sheer hard work, determination and thriftiness. Grandpa regularly told me that he gained this ethic from his mother, Bella. She worked in the shirt factory by day and then took in extra washing, ironing and sewing at night, so that her children would be well cared for.

Prayer was central to both their lives. Grandpa loves the Rosary and when he was still living at home, even at the grand age of 99, he knelt each night at the side of his bed, below the picture of the Sacred Heart, to pray to this lovely prayer to Our Lady and give thanks for the day spent.

Granny and Grandpa were parishioners of the Long Tower, and when they retired and moved to their new house, they joined the parish of St Brigid's Carnhill; a very special place for both of them. Prayer and the living out of their faith were central to both their lives and I was blessed to have them as role models, as mentors, but most of all as grandparents.

Their care, dedication to their family and their community has had a tremendous effect on me and on the rest of my family.

Such as are the times, only my mum could visit him on the day of his 100th birthday. The rest of us got to stand in the porch to sing him 'Happy Birthday'. All credit to the staff of Greenfield Nursing Home, in Strabane, who made his day so special and who look after him so well for us. We will be eternally grateful to them for all they have done and continue to do for him.



Eangach

Ár nDúchas

Salm na Marbh

Screadaim ort, a Thiarna.
A Thiarna, go dtuga tú aire do mo ghuth.
Nár bhreathnaí tú mo lochtanna,
dá láine iad.
Is gurb agat atá an tsacraimint
dár bhféachaint le do dhlí.

Tá mo ghuth leat, a Thiarna.
Is míle m'anam thú, a Thiarna,
ó éirí mhaidin' go dubh na hoíche.

De bhrí go bhfuil inár d'Tiarna
an trócaire a fhuasclaíos
agus a fhuasclós a chlann i dtráill
as an iomad locht
a thráill sinn faoin uile olc.

Creidim go bhfeicfead do mhaitheas
i dtalamh na mbeo.

(Ár bPaidreacha Dúchais 347.
Buíochas le Foilseacháin Ábhair
Spioradálta.)

Bás Sona

Teachtaire ó Dhia romham,
aingil Dé os mo chionn,
ola Chríost ar mo chorp,
Dia romham agus Dia liom.

(Ár bPaidreacha Dúchais 315.)

Uair na ngrást
ar uair ár mbáis,
an uair is fearr
ar leonú Dé's na Maighdine.

(Ár bPaidreacha Dúchais 320.)

Ceiliúradh na bhFíréan



Dathanna an Fhómhair, le Mary Dunnion

Baineann mothú ar leith
leis an am seo den bhliain, le
haimsir na Samhna. Tá solas
geal an tsamhraidh ar shiúl agus
tá dorchadas an gheimhridh
(dúluachair na bliana) ag druidim
linn. Fiú sa ré réamh-chríostaí
mhothaigh daoine go raibh gá le
ceiliúradh — le cúl a chur ar theacht
an dorchadais. Bhí ceiliúradh na
Samhna ar ócáidí móra na bliana.

Siamsaíocht

Sa lá atá inniu ann bíonn
cineálacha éagsúla ceiliúrtha ann:
sa chéad áit bíonn ceiliúradh ann
nach bhfuil ann ach siamsaíocht
nó caitheamh aimsire. Bíonn ócáid
mhór den chineál seo ann gach
bliain i gcathair Dhoire Oíche
Shamhna. Bíonn cuid mhór daoine
agus culaith bhréige orthu; bíonn
soilse agus taispeántas tinte ealaíne,
agus gach cineál scléipe. Ach sin
a bhfuil ann — níl brí ar bith
níos doimhne ná sin ag baint leis.
Siamsaíocht atá ann, ar mhaithe le
siamsaíocht.

Samhain

Tá daoine ann go fóill a dhéanann

féile na Samhna a cheiliúradh mar
aithris ar an sean-fhéile Ceilteach
a bhí in Éirinn roimh theacht na
Críostaíochta. Rinne an tAthair
Seán Ó Duinn, go ndéana Dia
grásta air, cuid mhór taighde ar
na sean-fhéilte Ceilteacha agus
ar an tionchar a bhí acu ar fhéilte
na Críostaíochta agus an dóigh ar
ceiliúradh iad.



Leac cuimhneacháin na bpáistí, le David Coyle



Ceiliúradh Críostaí

Tá dhá fhéile speisialta i dtús
Mhí na Samhna i bhFéilire na
hEaglaise Caitlicí: Féile na Naomh
Uile agus Féile na bhFíréan Uile
(Cuimhneachán na Marbh). I
Leabhar Aifrin na hÉireann tá
féile ar leith ann do naoimh na
hÉireann: Féile Naomh Uile na
hÉireann.

Shílfeá, b'fhéidir, gur féile áthasach
agus féile bhrónach a bheadh i
gceist — áthas do ghlóir na naomh
agus brón do chuimhneachán na
marbh — ach, ar ndóigh, ní mar
sin atá: i dtuiscint na Críostaíochta
tá dóchas an aiséirí taobh thiar de
chuimhneachán na marbh:

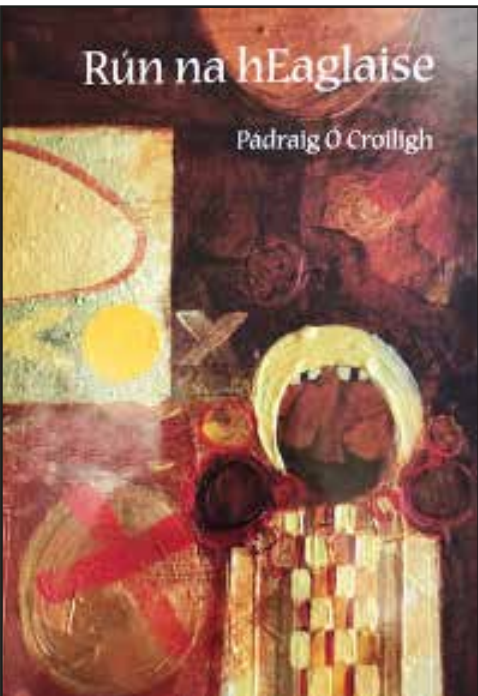
“Óir is trí Chríost ár dTiarna
a ghealaigh dóchas aiséirí
bheannaithe dúinn, i dtreo, iad seo
a gcuireann cinnteacht an bháis
brón orthu, gur ábhar lúcháire
acu gealltanais na beatha síoraí atá
romhainn. Níl sa bhás, a Dhia, do
d'fhíréin ach malaírt bheatha, agus
nuair a leagtar ar lár an t-áras seo
ina gcaitheann siad tamall abhus

ar talamh, cóirítear áit chónaithe
bhuan dóibh ar neamh”.
(*Preafáid na Marbh*, 1.)

Tá brí ar leith le ceiliúradh na
bhFíréan i mbliana — tugann
sé faill dúinn comóradh breise a
dhéanamh ar ár muintir a fuair
bás i mbliana, nuair nach raibh
muid ábalta slán a fhágáil acu le
faire agus le sochraid den chineál a
chleachtaíonn muintir na hÉireann
de ghnáth.



Bláthanna cuimhneacháin



Comhartha Síochána

I mblianta tosaigh na hEaglaise
tharla an tsacraimint seo ag an
am chéanna leis an Bhaisteadh,
mar is iomlánú ar an Bhaisteadh
é. Tarlaíonn sé mar sin go fóill
má tá duine fásta le Baisteadh
agus le fáiltiú isteach san Eaglais.
Déantar é a Chóineartú agus a
Bhaisteadh ag an am amháin. Ach
nuair is páiste atá le Baisteadh,
déantar é a iompar isteach san
Eaglais, ag stopadh cúpla uair
ar an bhealach le fáilte a chur
roimhe ag an doras, le héisteacht
leis an Bhíobla, agus suas go dtí
umar an Bhaiste. Labhraíonn na
tuismitheoirí ar a shon, agus is de
thoil na dtuismitheoirí a Bhaistear
an leanbh, le tacaíocht na gcarasa

Críost. Duine anaithnid a bhí sa
pháiste ag an am sin, gan fhios cén
dóigh a dtiontódh sé amach.

Ach anois, in aois a dhá bhliain
déag nó mar sin, tá a fhios againn
cé hé agus cén sórt é. Tá a fhios
againn cad iad na buanna agus
na deacrachtaí atá aige, agus an
phearsantacht atá aige. Tá saorthoil
aige fán am seo, agus is féidir leis
seasamh suas i láthair a phobail
agus a rá gur mhaith leis a bheith
i bpáirt le Críost san Eaglais, agus
go bhfuil sé sásta gur Baisteadh
é. Ach tá rud le déanamh ag a
thuismitheoirí agus ag an phobal
chomh maith. Tá sé le tuigbheáil,
ag an cheiliúradh seo, go bhfuil an

pobal ag tabhairt aitheantais do na
buanais, agus do na tabhartais agus
don fhéith atá ann, agus go bhfuil
buannaíocht agus glaoch acu mar
Eaglais ar na tabhartais sin. Tá
an duine óg ag rá mar an gcéanna
go bhfuil sé sásta úsáid a bhaint
astu ar mhaithe leis an Eaglais
agus ar mhaithe leis an phobal.
Caithfidh a chéile a neartú, agus
a bheith sásta neart Dé a ghlacadh
chugainn sa Spiorad Naomh.

Sa seanam bhíodh daoine ag caint
ar shaighdiúirí Chríost, amhail is
dá mbeadh orthu a bheith reidh
le troid a dhéanamh ar son a
gcreideamh. Baineadh úsáid as na
focail sin nuair a bhí mise óg agus

mé ag ullmhú don Chóineartú.
Sin an míniú a tugadh ar an
chuid sin den tsearmanas nuair a
tugadh buille beag don pháiste ar
a leiceann, go mbeadh air cur suas
le híde agus go mbeadh air troid ar
son a chreidimh. Nuair a rinneadh
taighde ar scéal an Chóineartaithe,
fuair na scoláirí amach nach é
sin an rud a bhí taobh thiar den
ghníomh sin ar chor ar bith,
ach gurb é a raibh fágtha den
chomhartha síochána a tugadh
i ndiaidh an Chóineartaithe.
Sin an rud a tharlaíonn anois –
comhartha síochána agus na focail
síocháin leat, agus iad á misiúnú.

Lockdown led to amazing cemetery and chapel works in Magilligan



Fr Frank O'Hagan, PP Magilligan.

MAGILLIGAN parish priest, Fr Frank O'Hagan has paid tribute to the many people who volunteered their time and skills during lockdown for an extensive upgrade project on the graveyard, as well as redecorating St Aidan's Church.

Delighted with the result, Fr Frank pointed out that all the work had been done voluntarily by people who had been furloughed during the spring-time Covid-19 lockdown.

"There were about 40 parishioners involved in the three or four months of work on the graveyard and then the inside works on the chapel, as well as some from outside the parish too. With the grounds and outside of the chapel building looking so good, they wanted to redecorate the inside also. The only expense

was for the materials," he noted, adding: "They turned a very negative situation because of Covid-19 into a very positive one for the parish.

"I'm sure that has happened in other parishes too, where parishioners very kindly offered their help and talents. I must say, these parishioners were very generous with their time."

Fr Frank explained that the original plan for the graveyard had been to begin work on developing a new one in the springtime of this year: "The men were going to gather on Saturdays to do the work, but that would have taken a long time for it to be completed. But then lockdown came and they ended up with lots of free time to do it.

"I am very pleased with how it all looks now. They pulled together the sides of both hills beyond where the current graveyard is, to make a nice flat area as a site for the new one, which should see us well into the middle of the century, if not beyond."

"During the digging," he added, "they came upon a large rock and it was thought that it would make a great outdoor altar. Up to this, we had a large wooden altar that we had to transport out every year for Cemetery Sunday, so this unexpected find has given us a



new outdoor altar that will be a permanent feature.

"Quite a bit of landscaping was

carried out as well, with a number of boulders having to be removed and land to be smoothed out. It is an



amazing job and done so quickly, without any disagreements, which wouldn't be easy when you have 30-40 people working together. They were all very positive and contented throughout. "I suppose the social aspect was appreciated, although they were very good about social distancing, wearing masks and sanitising their hands whenever they stopped for lunch."

As well as the work on the new graveyard, the railings were repainted, as were the doors and bottom of the exterior pebble-dashed walls, and new steps were installed leading up to the chapel, and that whole area is covered with new concrete slabs.

"They repainted all the walls inside the chapel, too," said Fr Frank, "and took out all the seats and put down new carpet. When the old carpet was lifted, uncovering the tiled aisle, it was agreed to clean those tiles up and not carpet over them again. The sanctuary has been re-carpeted too in my favourite colour...red! They have done an absolutely beautiful job."

He also highlighted that numerous anonymous and generous donations had been

given towards the project, since the start of the renovations to the end.

A little bit of history...

The quaint little Church of St Aidan's is located on an elevated site of historical interest, next to the ruins of a 13th century church.

It takes its name from St Cadan, a follower of St Patrick who is buried in a grave that lies underneath the gable of the ruins. There is also an ancient holy well which many visit for its curative water.

The current church building was erected in 1826, after the Catholic Emancipation Act was passed, relaxing the Penal laws against the practice of the Catholic faith.

Newtownstewart pilgrims conquer majestic Binevenagh for Church spire fund

by Fr Roland Colhoun



NEWTOWNSTEWART lies between some picturesque hills but none of the local heights were selected for the recent ascent to the two summits. The chosen location was Binevenagh, in Co Derry, on the first Sunday of October.

A group of 18 energetic pilgrims set off from Newtownstewart to ascend the majestic mountain above Magilligan peninsula. The outing was a sponsored climb to fundraise for the repair of St

Eugene's Church, Glenock. The fourth oldest church in Derry Diocese has undergone many restorations since it opened in 1785. Historic buildings need continuous maintenance and this was the third sponsored climb in 13 months.

The parishioners are drawn by the slogan, 'Climb the Mountain to fix the Spire!' And climb we did, to the summit, 385 metres above sea-level. To be truthful, it was

a socially distanced walk rather than a climb. A climb would have entailed passing through a field of cattle with an inhospitable bull! Accordingly, our wise and experienced guide, Brendan McGonagle, led us upwards through the delightful forest paths.

Decked out in waterproof clothing, even the constant rain didn't dampen our spirits. Storm Alex had flexed his muscles throughout the Saturday night,

but the Sunday was calm and mild.

The steep cliffs of Binevenagh extend over six miles and afford panoramic views of Bellarena, Downhill, Castlerock and Benone beach. Casting the eye west to Inishowen and east to Scotland, the pilgrim realises that the breath-taking scenery alone makes the hour and forty minutes on foot worthwhile. Descending is 20 minutes speedier! Eight kilometres in total was the guide's estimate and the pedometer registered just under 20,000 steps.

Of course, the purpose of the hike was social and financial. Each pilgrim was asked to contribute a registration fee of £15, but many of them gave extra and some are collecting sponsorship to increase the figure. The total income will be known in a few weeks' time.

Despite the weary limbs, our pilgrims returned home with joyful hearts, delighted to have reached the famous elongated summit.



THE series of reflections from people in parishes around the Diocese, on their experience of life in lockdown due to Covid-19, concludes this month. The feature began as we emerged from four months of not being able to gather as parish communities, and ends with the faithful in our Donegal parishes once again unable to be present in their churches for the celebration of Mass.

Magilligan...

Much more time and peace for prayer



We are blessed to have Eucharistic Adoration in our parish, in our newly named 'Our Lady's Oratory', at the side of the chapel, on Wednesdays, which is a great source of comfort and strength during this time of Covid-19.

Our parish priest, Fr Frank O'Hagan has also been wonderful. He left prayer booklets and Miraculous Medals in the chapel for people, and he celebrated Mass on Sunday mornings, and Wednesday and Friday nights, with a half-hour of Silent Adoration on Wednesday nights as well, and these were streamed live on the Parish Facebook page.

Fr O'Hagan has given very comforting sermons during Mass, reassuring us and encouraging us to keep positive about things, and he was also available if you wanted to talk to him on the 'phone.

I have prayed a lot more during this time of the virus; indeed, I don't think I have prayed as much

in my life! I felt that I just wanted to pray and people that I spoke to said that they didn't know how they would have managed without their prayers.

Before lockdown, I would have been praying but I was also racing from one thing to another, so this was a much more calm time for prayer. For me and many others, this has been one of the good things to come out of this whole experience.

During lockdown, extension and improvement works were carried out in our graveyard and it is like a work of art now, with landscaping, new paths put in and a big rock placed that can be used as an outside altar. The church was also redecorated, and it was the virus and lockdown that helped to bring this all about, as the men who carried out the work were free to do it.

(Maureen)



Fr Charlie Logue, CC Malin.

Malin (Clonca)...

It was good to have daily Mass to tune into



Fr Peter Devlin, PP Malin.

We prayed more during lockdown, saying extra prayers for anyone suffering from the virus, frontline staff and those bereaved. It has been very difficult at times of wakes and funerals not to be able to attend.

It was good to have daily Mass to tune into, thanks to technology, and I liked the variety of being able to listen to Mass from other parishes, like Iskaheen, St Eugene's, Letterkenny and Knock.

We don't have webcams in our churches, but our parish priest, Fr Peter Devlin kept us informed by making sure that the parish

newsletter was printed and left in the shops and churches each week, and he included in this comment on the Sunday readings.

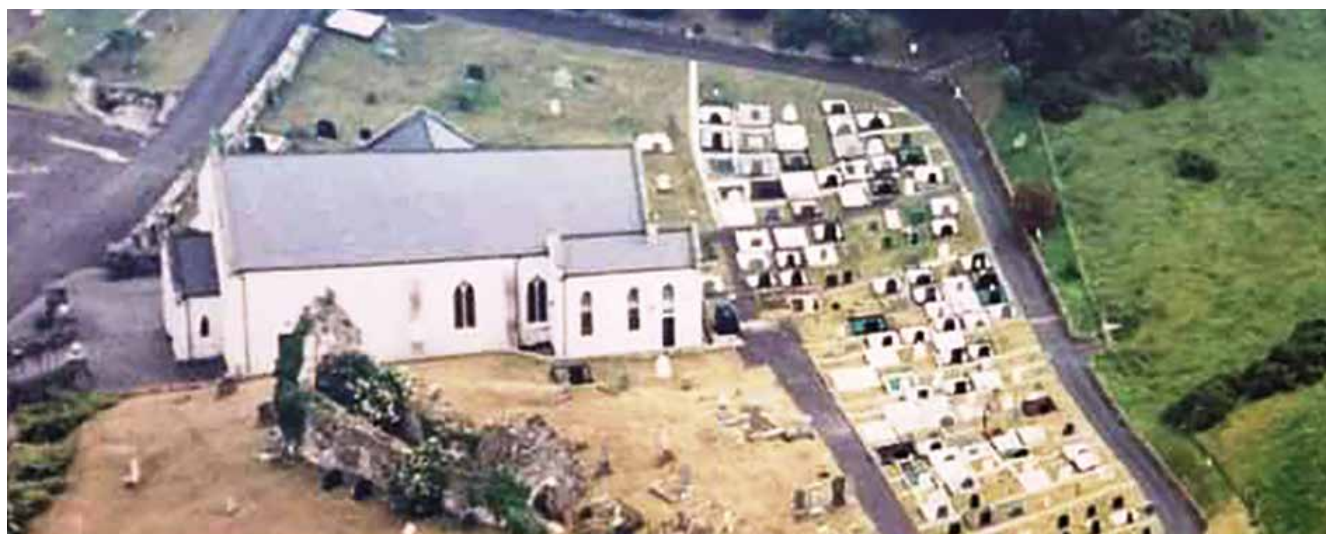
There is an annual Rosary walk to Malin Well on May Day every year in our parish and, while we couldn't do it as a parish community this year, we did the walk as a family and prayed the Rosary, so that was special.

Our priests have been very good keeping in touch with the sick and are available if anyone needs to contact them.

When our churches opened again, Fr Devlin and our curate, Fr Charlie Logue, celebrated a Mass at each end of the parish every day, along with five weekend Masses, so that everyone could have an opportunity to attend Mass.

There was a very good uptake as people had missed not being able to go to Mass and receive Holy Communion, but now we are back in a situation where we can't attend public Mass. I hope that doesn't last long.

(Marie)





Melmount...

People are now more tolerant and more tuned in to the beauty of this world

ASKED to write about my faith journey through Lockdown, I am sitting here in a state of calm, content with myself, at peace with all the world. And I wonder am I mad, or deluded. But no, I am really, really at peace with all the world.

It did not start like this. At the beginning, in March, way back in another place altogether, the world was turbulent. I was easily upset, cranky, ready for a fight; fight or flight syndrome I don't know, but certainly I was a very different and difficult person then. What has happened? Well, a lot.

First off, I was introduced to an American Franciscan, Richard Rohr, by participating now and again in Fr Declan Boland's course on Centring Prayer; a journey to rediscover one of the lost treasures of the Church, Contemplative Prayer. Richard Rohr founded, way back in 1987, in Albuquerque, New Mexico, a group now called Centre for Action and Contemplation. And he produces a daily meditation which is emailed to subscribers.

This is not what I expected, it is populated by the writings and thinking of a myriad of people, male and female, from all religions and none, from this century and from way back, even devoting a whole week to the 'Radically Optimistic Theology' of Julian of Norwich. Look her up. Yes, her. Julian stopped me in my tracks. In her mystical masterwork, 'The Showings', she says: 'If he (God) had left sin out of creation, it seemed to me, all would be well.' But what God-the-Mother (here Julian is referring to the maternal side of God's care) showed Julian, in a near death vision was that all shall be well anyway. Not in spite of our transgressions, but because of them.

And then, we were introduced to Walter Ciszek (1904-1984), a Jesuit priest, accused of being a 'Vatican spy', for which he spent five years in a Moscow jail, and then 15 years in Siberian prison camps.

He wrote: "The simple soul who each day makes a morning offering of 'all the prayers, works, joys, and sufferings of this day,'...

has perceived with an almost childlike faith the profound truth that...the Will of God is revealed in every situation of every day...the challenge lies in learning to accept this truth...it seems too simple...it is there before our noses all the time, while we look elsewhere... the fullest freedom I had ever known, the greatest sense of security, came from abandoning my will to do only the will of God...For what can ultimately trouble the soul that accepts every moment of every day as a gift from the hands of God and strives to do God's will?...Nothing, not even death can separate us from God...Is this too simple, or are we just afraid really to believe it, to accept it fully and in every detail of our lives, to yield ourselves up to it in total commitment? This is the ultimate question of faith, and each one of us must answer it for ourselves in the quiet of our heart and the depth of our soul. But to answer it in the affirmative is to know a peace, to discover a meaning to life, that surpasses all understanding."

Anyone in Fr Walter's situation could not fake such radical faith and trust. I hope one day to get closer to where he was.

Life continued in Melmount during lockdown. We are lucky here in having a wonderful, hard working parish priest, Fr Michael Doherty, to take care of this huge parish of more than 12,000, ably assisted by Fr John Doherty, who, now retired and well into his

80's, is healthy, still smiling and contributing immensely to life here in our Parish.

Between them Mass continued to be celebrated even when our Church was empty, broadcast by webcam; a source of strength and comfort to so many, reaching not only into the homes here in Melmount but into places far and wide across the world, and achieving what we know what miracles of grace, and healing that we will never hear about.

Our schools were closed for a long period, and so the Apostolate of the Children of the Eucharist, only recently so successfully introduced into St Mary's Primary School, had to be suspended. However, Fr Michael got the Monday Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament going again from July. It is for a shorter time and strict social distancing protocols are in place, but Adoration, which has been another source of comfort and strength to so many, is again now taking place.

Although we have all suffered in some way during lockdown, it seems to this parishioner anyway that there has been at least one benefit from it. People are now more tolerant of each other and more tuned in to the beauty of this world we inhabit; better able now to see His Blood upon the Rose, and His Cross in every tree, as Joseph Mary Plunkett wrote in one of his poems.

(Peter)



St Mary's Church.

Moville

Moville parishioners found prayer lives changing



Fr Pat O'Hagan, PP Moville.

LIKE every other parish in the Diocese, Moville did its best to keep the faith alive and active during lockdown. Our priests celebrated the Mass privately, while the people prayed at home.

From the middle of March until early May, many parishioners 'attended' Mass online. The media of choice included a daily livestream via Facebook from Bocan (Culdaff); webcam streaming from Iskaheen, St Eugene's, the Long Tower and further afield (including the Vatican). Others found RTE 921 to be invaluable, and Radio Maria was accessible even to those with

no internet access. However, despite the online abundance, the parish community was delighted to learn that we would soon be able to join in the Eucharistic celebration from our own church.

None of our chapels had a webcam before lockdown, but one was installed in St Pius X Church, Moville in early May. In addition to the daily Mass, Fr Pat, our parish priest, quickly introduced several periods of daily prayer via webcam, including short periods of Eucharistic Adoration, the Rosary, the Chaplet of Divine Mercy and a weekly Taize hour, all of which have been warmly welcomed and much appreciated by the Parish community.

Meantime, the prayer lives of parishioners were changing. One daily Mass-goer told me that she had been praying the Chaplet of Divine Mercy several times a day during lockdown, as well as praying the Rosary more than once a day. Another lady attended Mass, prayed the Chaplet of Divine Mercy at 3 pm and joined in praying the Rosary at 9 pm - all through her TV and in addition to her private prayers.

Daniel, a member of Youth 2000, said that he had begun to really depend upon prayer to get him through. He added that he "really misses confession" and



St Pius X Church, Moville.



continued from p12

expressed the hope that there would be a “re-ignition of the faith” after restrictions had been lifted.

Mary said that it’s not the same attending Mass online because the opportunity to receive the Eucharist is missing. She looks forward, eagerly, to receiving Holy Communion again. However, another parishioner said that, during Mass online, she could listen to the readings more intently. She feels that she is not praying more than previously, but that maybe her prayer is more meaningful now. She misses her weekly prayer and activities with the Legion of Mary.

Another parishioner said that he and his wife had “enjoyed the Mass on the internet” moving to RTE 921 only when their internet signal is not good. Overall, he

was enjoying the quietness and privacy of praying at home, although he missed confession and the Eucharist very much.

Fr Pat also left prayers for people to bring home from visits to the chapel, including a ‘Prayer in time of Pandemic’, ‘Prayers for Protection and Blessing’ (which included Psalm 91), the prayers of the Rosary and ‘Order of Prayer for the Sick and Housebound’. All were protected by plastic pockets.

In addition to the above, we had the blessing of several thoughtful and encouraging videos posted on Facebook by Fr John McLaughlin, a retired Columban and a native of the Parish. At Easter, Fr John streamed a live blessing of palms and, on Easter Sunday, a blessing for Easter Water.

(Nonnie)



Steelstown...

It was so surreal watching Holy Week and Easter ceremonies on Facebook



Fr John McDevitt, PP Steelstown

We have been parishioners in Our Lady of Lourdes, Steelstown since the chapel opened in 1975, and, like everyone else, we were in shock to find that our church had to follow Government guidelines and close, as Covid-19 hit our town.

We were in the middle of our

Parish Mission when we got the news that we were not allowed to have special devotions only Mass. We all started social distancing then as lockdown happened.

At the beginning, our webcam was a mobile phone mounted on a paper cup, but it did the job until we got sorted with a proper webcam. Our parish priest, Fr John McDevitt is very resourceful and he did his best to make sure that we could have daily Mass on Facebook.

It was so surreal during Holy Week and Easter watching all the ceremonies on Facebook. Both Fr McDevitt and Mgr Joseph Donnelly were amazing, carrying on as if we were all present...well, we were...spiritually!

As well as daily Mass, we had the Rosary, Stations of the Cross, and Eucharistic Adoration. There was nothing left out. With just a click, you were virtually there in the chapel.

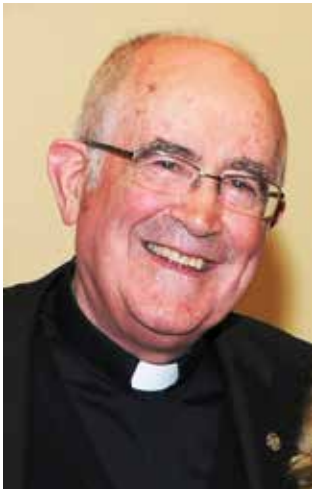
The parish Facebook page was updated throughout the day, so you knew what was happening and could join in.

On a personal note, my mum is housebound and Fr McDevitt visits her on the last Wednesday of the month. But not being able to visit her due to the Covid-19 risk, he has telephoned her to pray and have his usual wee chat with her.

I mean it when I say that it is the most humbling feeling having your priest pray every prayer and blessing, and offer spiritual communion, as if he were there in the room with you, and to watch my mum bless herself, and pray and answer him. I’m so blessed to have experienced this sacred time with her.

Thanks and praise to God that our church has opened for Holy Mass again, with restrictions of social distancing and hand sanitising, etc.

We owe everything to Fr



Mgr Joseph Donnelly.

McDevitt and Mgr Donnelly, and our amazing sacristan, Noreen for everything she does and did for us during this strange time.

To all volunteers who helped to get our church ready and the stewards who are there on a daily basis, I say heartfelt thanks.

(Veronica)



Sion Mills...

Fr Thomas is so positive and gives us hope

During lockdown I missed being able to go to Mass, but I thought it was great that we were able to get it on the webcam.

I found what our priest, Fr Thomas Canning, said in his homilies to be very comforting and we could talk to him at any time. Since he has come to the parish, Fr Thomas has been trying his utmost to get the Pioneers and Legion of Mary set up. He really is so positive and gives us hope, which is something we really need now.

I am 80 years old and just retired this year after 40 years of cleaning

the chapel. I have to take care as I have underlying health problems, so it is good to have the Mass and other prayer on the webcam.

I also join in Mass on the webcam in Melmount chapel and find Fr Doherty very reassuring too. He says the Rosary in the evening as well.

We always say the Rosary in the house every day anyway, but I also join in with Fr Doherty and sometimes with the priests in St Eugene’s Cathedral.

(Sally)



Three Patrons (Pennyburn, Carnhill & Galliagh)...

Working together...we have continued to try to make Jesus known and loved



Fr Chris Ferguson, Priest-in-Residence Three Patrons.

THE Coronavirus lockdown began for the Parish of the Three Patrons, Derry, after 12 o'clock Mass on St Patrick's Day celebrated by Bishop Donal McKeown.

Ours is the largest parish in the diocese of Derry with a population of more than 30,000. This figure is set to increase dramatically within a short period of time, as new housing developments along the Skeoge Road are constructed. Over 1,400 new homes have already been built, are being completed or are about to be started in the area.

We have three churches in the parish - St Patrick's in Pennyburn, St Joseph's in Galliagh, and St Brigid's in Carnhill, served by two priests of the parish, Fr Michael McCaughey, PP, and Fr Gerard Mongan CC, and a priest-in-residence, the Diocesan Vocations Director, Fr Chris Ferguson. In addition, the parish is home to the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal community in Galliagh.



Fr Gerard Mongan, CC Three Patrons.

So, how was this sprawling parish with its burgeoning population, and the multiple demands placed on its priests, going to respond to an unprecedented lock-down?

The first thing that was done was to install a webcam, so that parishioners self-isolating at home could access Mass. This was done just in the nick of time, literally days before the restrictions on public worship were implemented.

With our churches shut, and deprived of the sacraments, the lockdown has been rightly described as a Eucharistic famine for the Faithful. In the early weeks of the pandemic, there was a widespread sense of anxiety and fear among people of what was coming down the road towards us.

For many, even those who may have become disconnected from the practice of the Faith, that fear and anxiety was all the harder to bear because the churches were shut and the sacraments were no

longer accessible.

Mass via the webcam helped get people through this difficult time and we soon had not only locals, but former parishioners now living in England, America and Australia, following our webcam.

Our seminarian, Stephen Baxter, stepped up to the plate when our sacristans had to be furloughed and, as well as doing the Readings for the Masses, he led the Morning Prayer on webcam. He was invaluable to the Parish in many ways.

It would have been of little use having a webcam if no one knew of its existence, so this was posted on the parish website and on our parish Facebook page. And we also had banners ('The Lord is my Shepherd') produced and displayed on major roads in the parish. We are grateful to St Brigid's College Carnhill and to St Paul's Primary School for their immediate and wholehearted support in this.

In addition, because people felt keenly the shutting of their churches, which even psychologically was a depressing sight, the priests of the parish organized for the 'Stations of the Cross' to be erected in the grounds outside each of the three churches, so that people could come and pray individually and safely.

The parish Facebook page, co-ordinated by Aoife Whoriskey, our Youth Worker, was used effectively to reach out to people. During Holy Week, parishioners were invited to create a sacred space in their homes and send in photographs, and over 100 families did so. Primary school

children were involved in on-line art activities for Lent, and, in May, over 100 homes responded to the invitation to submit images of their May altars to our Facebook page. About 25-30 young people continue to attend an on-line Youth Alpha course in the area, and Parish Pastoral council meetings are zoomed live, as are the weekly John Paul II Award prayer meetings.

The partial easing of restrictions on public worship was marked by a Mass celebrated, at 7.30 am on June 29, by Bishop McKeown. It had been a long 104 days since he had been last with us. 'Stewards', 'sanitizers' and 'social distancing' have all entered our vocabulary in that time and become part of a new normal.

We have all been through a hard time, but working together, priests and people, we have continued to try to make Jesus known and loved. We have learned a lot, deepened our commitment to the Faith, and now we look forward to the challenges that lie ahead.

(Eamon)



Fr Michael McCaughey, PP Three Patrons.



Urney & Castlefin (Doneyloop)...

Coping with death and grief has been most difficult for families in this pandemic

LOCKDOWN began for me on Wednesday, March 11, the day my Mum was released from hospital where she spent 10 weeks. On March 12, it was announced that public Masses had been suspended immediately, so our dilemma was how we were going to access our daily Mass.

There were no webcams in St Mary's, Castlefinn, or in St Columba's, Doneyloop. Our own priest-in-residence, Fr Oliver Crilly was cocooning, so he was completely isolated from his parishioners.

Fr Ciaran Hegarty eventually set up a parish radio on our parish website, with the help of John

Byrne, a parishioner. He provided an excellent service with his daily Mass, Divine Mercy Chaplet and 54-day Rosary.

In the meantime, we tuned into the daily 7.30 pm Mass and 8 pm Rosary from St Eugene's Cathedral with Bishop McKeown. We both found this very comforting and we felt really connected with our Diocesan Community. We also tuned into the daily Mass on the RTE 'News Now' Station, from the various Churches nationwide. At weekends, we tuned into Clonleigh, Strabane or Melmount, depending on what time suited us best.

I found the celebration of our

Easter ceremonies a bit of an anticlimax. We usually have so many parishioners involved with the various processions, washing of feet, distribution of the Eucharist under both species etc. I actually found this time very lonely and missed the vibe of our busy church at this time.

There was a terrible void in our Parish. We missed seeing our own priests and the social aspect of meeting everyone at Mass. We seemed to be just drifting along with no clear direction. At least I was able to access Mass online, but I know of several of our parishioners who do not have the internet and were completely

dependent on the Sunday services on the local radio station, Finn FM, being broadcast from St Patrick's Murlog, or Highland Radio or RTE.

Concerns were expressed at our first ever Zoom meeting of our Parish Pastoral Council. As a result of that, and with the expertise of Matt McGranaghan, Martin Harran and John Byrne, who sprang into action, Fr Crilly broadcast his first ever Mass on YouTube on Tuesday, May 11, at 11am, from his Parochial House and has continued saying daily Mass ever since.

see over



Fr Oliver Crilly, Priest-in-Residence Urney & Castlefinn



Fr Ciaran Hegarty, Adm Urney & Castlefinn

continued from p15

Fr Colm O'Doherty, then our Administrator, was instrumental in getting Mass celebrated in St Mary's and celebrated the first Mass on Sunday, May 17, at 9.30 am on Facebook live in St Mary's Church. He continued the Sunday Service on Facebook until the internet was finally sorted in the Church. Our parishioners were delighted and very thankful to see Fr Colm celebrating Mass in our beautiful Church.

Matt, Martin and John worked tirelessly to get a proper internet service in each of our churches, with the result that Masses were finally broadcast from both our churches on YouTube on the weekend of June 28, beginning with the vigil on Saturday evening.

It has been a long journey for our parishioners. In particular, a number of families amongst our parishioners had a bereavement, with only 10 members of the immediate family able to attend the funeral in the church.

Fr Ciaran ministered to the bereaved and celebrated the

funeral services in a dignified and spiritual manner, and was a wonderful support to each family. These services could not be broadcast online due to lack of proper internet service, which was a difficulty for these families.

Guards of honour

For me, coping with death and grief has been the most difficult situation for all families in this pandemic. The fact that the usual community support at this critical time in a family's despair could not happen the way it usually does was very sad, but our community did rally round and had socially distanced guards of honour to show their respect to the families.

Our First Communion and Confirmation ceremonies were all postponed and as the churches began to open on June 29 for public worship, enquiries began to come from anxious parents wondering when the celebrations were to take place.

I am involved with the 'Do This in Memory' programme and greatly missed the monthly meetings with the great team who organise these lovely monthly

Masses.

I love being involved in my Parish but lockdown came and all parish activities stopped with immediate effect, which was very strange for me who was always running around doing things, or on my computer doing minutes of meetings, rotas etc.

Lockdown brought its own blessings in that I had time at home with my mum. We joined together in the online services in various churches. We said our own daily Rosary together. Fr Crilly contacted us both on the First Fridays and did the Prayers for the Sick by 'phone, which was a lovely experience.

We also visited our local Church which, thankfully, remained open for private prayer, and we lit candles and visited the graveyard on a regular basis.

Our Parish Pastoral Council, ably led by Leona Lafferty, chairperson, and Mary Louise McCroary, secretary, was kept busy with arrangements to prepare our churches for public Masses again, with volunteers to be organised to act as cleaners, stewards etc.

2020 began for me with 10 weeks of hospital visits, followed by 15 weeks of lockdown. I never would have dreamed that I wouldn't be at a public Mass for such a long time and really appreciated joining with our community again in St Mary's.

Our celebrations are now online on YouTube and can be accessed all over the world, and we are very grateful to our volunteers who are responsible for this development. Our clergy, Fr Hegarty, and Fr Crilly, along with Fr O'Doherty, have provided spiritual support to us in remarkable times. It hasn't been easy for them either, as they also missed meeting their parishioners and the support that is given to them.

Unfortunately, we are currently back in a situation where we cannot publicly attend the celebration of Mass. I grew up in a house with a very strong faith and, thank God, that faith has sustained me really well in the last months and I pray it will continue to do so.

(Collette)



St Mary's Castlefinn.



Getting St Columba's, Waterside, ready for the resumption of services.

*Waterside (Glendermott & Strathfoyle)...*

Our parish created over 1,200 prayer packs for Derry, Omagh and Fermanagh hospital patients

"Do not abandon yourself to despair. We are the Easter people and hallelujah is our song" (Pope John Paul II)

WITH thoughts of Pope John Paul II's words, the parish of Glendermott and Strathfoyle put

into action a series of initiatives that would ensure continued pastoral support and spiritual comfort to its parishioners and others further afield, during lockdown.

Within weeks of the crisis starting, the churches of St

Columba's and The Immaculate Conception had web cameras installed so that parishioners could continue to be involved, as much as possible, with the Eucharistic celebration.

Daily Mass at 10 am, Saturday vigil and Sunday, 10 am and 12

noon Masses were broadcast through YouTube. Live Adoration is available Monday to Saturday from 1-6 pm, with a Holy Hour starting at 7.30 pm with Rosary and Benediction, also through YouTube.

Adoration attracted not only local people but also people from other countries were signing up, to ensure that someone was always online for Adoration.

The Parish Catechism course continued its weekly meeting online and in conjunction with the parish of Ardstraw East, using WhatsApp with recorded commentary for each week's readings.

A unique effort was made by the priests of the parish to support hospital patients with the aid of the Western Board. Bearing in mind the fact that priests could not visit patients or the dying at the start of the crisis, isolation packs containing Rosary beads, Rosary prayer card, Divine Mercy prayer and essential 'phone numbers, were issued to every ward for Catholic nursing staff to give to patients.

The priests of the parish, Fr Michael Canny, Fr Sean O'Donnell and Fr Malachy Gallagher, with the aid of parishioners, were able to put together over 1,200 of these packs. Apart from hospitals in Derry, these packs reached hospitals in Omagh and Fermanagh.

All the priests of the parish were on call so that hospital patients could contact them for prayers over the 'phone, and the Health Trust provided mobile phones to each priest to enable video prayer and blessings.

Time was also used for essential repairs to the parish churches, with the Immaculate Conception Church especially undergoing repair to its roof, while keeping internal scaffolds out of view of the webcam.

For the priests, it was a challenging time in uncharted waters, but they made tremendous efforts to ensure that the people of the parish were supported as best they could under the circumstances.

(John)



Fr Sean O'Donnell, CC Waterside.



Fr Michael Canny, PP Waterside (Glendermott & Strathfoyle).



Fr Malachy Gallagher, CC Waterside.

Templemore - St Eugene's...

Our Bishop and priests served with humility and leadership in darkest moments of Covid storm

"Do not fear for I am with you; do not be afraid for I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will help you. I will uphold you with my victorious right hand" (Isaiah 41:10)

I would like to take this opportunity to thank whole heartedly our Bishop and priests of St Eugene's Parish for all that they have done throughout the lockdown and this time of Covid-19.

Bishop Donal, Fr Paul and Fr Patrick have provided the parish of St Eugene's with outstanding ministry. They have served their congregation with humility

and leadership in the darkest moments of the Covid storm. They have remained beacons of light guiding us to Jesus and encouraging us to always keep the faith.

Even though the doors of our beautiful Cathedral, the Mother Church of the Diocese, were closed, the work of the Holy Spirit was vibrant in the ministry of our pastors. Daily Mass, Morning and Evening Prayer of the Church, the recitation of the daily Rosary, Divine Mercy Chaplet, praying the Angelus and providing constant spirituality through novenas were tremendous fruits

of the Holy Spirit.

Bishop Donal led the people of God through virtual pilgrimages of Lough Derg, He was our good shepherd walking in front of the flock, our paradigm, a light along the path.

The strong beating heart of St Eugene's Parish transmitted a message of hope via its webcam, reassuring all that Jesus was with us and always would be.

Our priests have shown such care and attention in assisting people to engage in their faith. They have been rocks to lean upon and listening ears whenever someone needed to convey

their worries or anxieties via a telephone call. They have been instruments of Christ helping to gather and nurture people spiritually through times which were prevalent with fear and confusion.

The Covid 19 lockdown was certainly extraordinary times to live through but God always provides and gives us the grace to weather any storm.

Thank you to all the volunteers in St Eugene's Parish who assisted in so many ways, their dedication and generosity of spirit is laudable.

(Veronica)



Templemore...Long Tower

All the online prayer and Masses were very comforting to many

All our priests have been fantastic in doing what they can in these difficult times. I found all the prayer and Mass online very comforting.

Our priest, Fr Aidan Mullan celebrated all the Masses, one in the morning and the other at night. Seminarian, Noel Doherty was there as altar server when he was back from Maynooth because of lockdown and he did great work too, as did our sacristans.

One of our parishioners in the Long Tower led the Divine Mercy Chaplet at 3 pm every day and I never missed joining in for this, and for the Rosary.

Other parishioners were always faithfully on hand to answer the prayers too.

I would like to pay tribute to them and to our priest, Fr Aidan Mullan, because all the prayer was appreciated by many, and also to all those who have been helping with the cleaning of the chapel, so that we feel safe since we have been able to return for Mass.

Thankfully, the praying of the Divine Mercy Chaplet and Rosary continues every day, though at a later time. The Legion of Mary lead the Rosary now.

We are also very blessed to have a weekly Padre Pio Mass

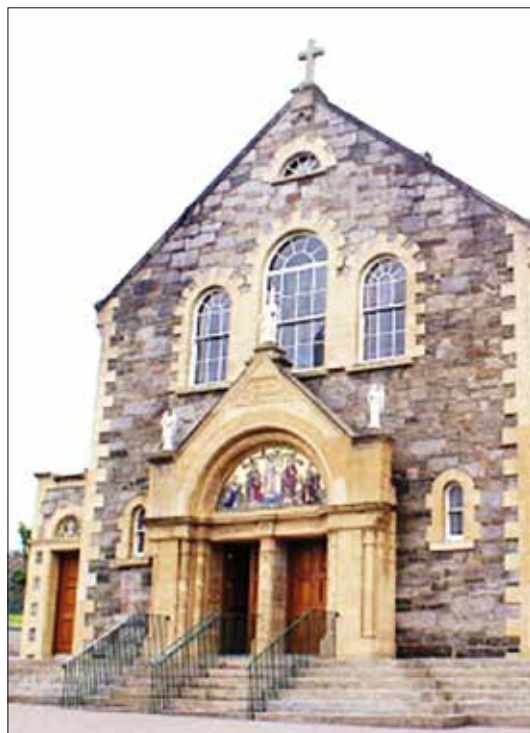
celebrated. It is greatly appreciated by many as there is an opportunity to be blessed with one of his mitts. However, with the virus, Fr Aidan holds up the mitt to give the blessing, instead of individual blessings.

Fr Aidan has been wonderful, keeping in touch with people on the phone, and if anyone wanted him he made himself available. He really was very attentive and encouraging in his homilies, reassuring us that God is with us and will protect us.

(Kathleen)



Fr Aidan Mullan, Adm Long Tower.



St Columba's Church, Long Tower



Bishop Donal sees youth as shining light of hope during dark days of Covid-19

AS life continues with the ongoing risk and restrictions of Covid-19, Bishop Donal reflects on immediate, and future, challenges facing parishes in this month of November, when we remember and pray for our deceased loved ones, and as we then prepare to celebrate Christmas, and comments on the support to be offered by the Diocesan leadership.

Acknowledging the stressful situations facing families, young people and schools, the former teacher and principal highlights the important role being carried out by the Diocesan Catechetical team in helping to keep a focus on God and the importance of prayer, particularly in difficult situations.

He also speaks of the hope the youth give him and the moves to strengthen the domestic church, and of the boost that the life stories of the city's Sr Clare Crockett and the recently beatified Carlo Acutis gives to the message that everyone is called to be a saint.

Living with the continued risk and restrictions of Covid-19...

"The first lockdown in the spring and summer was a shock to the system, but I think there was a feeling that we could put up with it in order to beat the virus. However, I get the impression that the second lockdown is more stressful for people. This time, there is not the confidence that a short, sharp shock will solve the problem. And that is a very unsettling experience for parishes, North and South.

So many parishes did wonderful work early in the year. They coped with open churches and closed churches. They tried to be 'visible' to their parishioners; doing everything that was possible within government regulations. The delayed celebrations of First Holy Communion and Confirmation had to be carried out in new ways, and funerals presented extra challenges.

They now face new questions, especially how they celebrate November, Advent and Christmas. They do not want to be standing at the door of churches on Christmas Eve, turning parents and children away from Christmas Masses. And 2021 looks very uncertain.

During September, I invited priests to reflect on a few questions about both their own ministry and how their Parish Pastoral Councils saw the challenges. I am now in the process of feeding back to them what we might offer in support of the church as it is being lived in

our parishes.

Areas that were often mentioned included: Preparation for First Holy Communion and Confirmation in 2021; Long-term effects of on-line Masses on church attendance; Great levels of support from parishioners; Parish finances into the future; and Pressures on priests in this new world.

At a diocesan leadership level, we are seeking to provide the following: An emphasis on developing 'domestic liturgies', prayer for families to rebuild the role of families in handing on the faith; A prayer programme for November, prepared by all the Northern Ireland dioceses; Youth outreach through the nightly Derry Youth Instagram platform; Resources for schools and families; and Access, at a subsidised fee, for all parishes to the FORMED set of programmes from the Augustine Institute in Denver, Colorado".

Return to school a stressful time...

"This has been a very difficult time for families and for schools. It has placed huge stress on leadership as schools try to adapt to constantly changing situations. Boards of Governors have been asked to make decisions in an uncertain vacuum. And, it has taken its toll on the mental health of many young people.

In a time of stress, the hardest thing is feeling alone or unsupported. The Diocesan Catechetical Centre has been supplying schools with materials

so that they can come to the problems with the eye of faith.

Praying together is an important way to hand on the experience of God to young people, helping them to believe that God is in the middle of the confusion and always working for our good. That ethos is an invaluable asset to school communities at such a difficult time".

Signs of hope...

What I have found most encouraging over these months has been the quality of some of our young people. It is they who give me great hope. They do not ask us to do things for them so much as to enable them to do great things for and with their peers.

I am very grateful that 'The Net' has been able to develop a network of young people who have talents and ideas that they want to share with all of us. This gives us a chance to move away from a model of faith that thought everything had to be done in the Church or in school.

Maybe one of the great graces of this pandemic will be the rediscovery of the family as the first teachers of the ways of faith.

Stories of the late Sr Clare, of Derry, and Italian teenager, Blessed Carlo Acutis, shine a light on young people living their faith and helping make life better for others...and on the Eucharist...

I sometimes think that believing in God is not the most difficult bit of faith. I believe that it is much harder for many to believe in good and to have that sense that we are all called to be saints.

Too often, Catholicism is presented as a list of things that

we can and cannot do. Sr Clare and Carlo Acutis are examples of people who believed in the call to sanctity, which lies at the heart of being a disciple of Jesus.

The interest in Carlo Acutis has been amazing in St Eugene's Cathedral. In the first two weeks after his beatification, 5,000 little prayer cards about him have been distributed. Saints are not just good news about the afterlife. They are signs of God's grace working here and now, with a passion to bring love and mercy into the world.

Young people want to do something beautiful with their lives. They can respond to Jesus' call to be great and holy. I hope that these young saintly figures will inspire other young hearts to believe that they are called to be saints.

Diocesan Youth Scholarship preparing young leaders...

If we want young people to be prepared for leadership roles in the Church, we have to train them. The Diocesan Youth Scholarship scheme sought young people who would be prepared to undergo a training scheme which leads to an OCN Level 1 qualification in youth leadership.

I have been very impressed by the quality of the 11 teenagers from all over the diocese who have begun the scheme on-line. Ideally, they would be able to meet. However, in the present circumstances they are actively engaging via an on-line platform. Most of them have already taken part in the on-line Alpha programme, which had 32 participants.

So, I see this experiment as the Diocese trying to engage with young people wherever they are. Please God, this will bear great fruit.

Celebrating great events of our faith story...



Bishop Donal

The story of the Liturgical Year goes from the advent expectation of the Saviour in the Old Testament, right through to the reconciliation of all things in Christ, the King (November 22 Feast of Christ the King). And, at different stages of the year, we celebrate the great events of our story.

The Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (November 21) is based on an early, but not biblical, Christian tradition that Mary was dedicated as a child to God in the Temple, in preparation for her later role as Mother of Jesus.

The Kingdom of God will come about when we all discover that we are called to dedicate our lives to the Lord. Only then, will God's will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

Vicar General, Mgr Andy Dolan steps down...

The Bishop has a leadership role in the Diocese. A bishop can appoint one or more priests who will be a Vicar General, able to act

in his name. In other words, when a bishop retires or dies they are not VGs, because there is no bishop in whose name they can act.

When I came to the Derry Diocese in 2014, I asked Fr Andy Dolan and Fr Paul McCafferty to take on that role. They both brought great wisdom to the advice they gave to me. Priests knew that they were both very approachable and generous.

I am very grateful that Mgr Andy has been such a support. In the meantime, Fr McCafferty will be alone in the role.



Mgr Andy Dolan, PP Bellaghy.

November extension for Plenary Indulgence for Deceased

THE Vatican has announced that the Plenary Indulgence for the deceased, by those who visit a cemetery, has been extended beyond the normal dates of November 1-8 to avoid large groups from forming where prohibited due to Covid-19 restrictions.

The indulgence can be obtained this year by anyone visiting the cemetery, mentally or physically, on any date during November,

who prays for the faithful departed.

The Plenary Indulgence attached to All Souls' Day can be obtained on any day of the month by devoutly visiting a church or an oratory, and praying the Our Father and the Creed, and the other requirements associated with a Plenary Indulgence.

Those unable to leave their home for whatever reason can also obtain the Plenary Indulgence through

uniting themselves spiritually to other members of the faithful. For this, the condition of being completely detached from sin and the intention of completing the other requirements for obtaining a Plenary Indulgence remain.

The conditions are Confession, Holy Communion and a prayer for the Pope's intentions, before an image of Jesus or the Blessed Virgin Mary, if possible.

Recommended prayers include

prayers for the deceased, Morning or Evening Prayer from the Office of the Dead, the Rosary, Divine Mercy Chaplet, meditation on a Gospel passage proposed for the liturgy of the Dead, or completing a work of mercy by offering to God suffering and discomforts.

Priests are asked to make the Sacrament of Confession available and that they make Holy Communion available to the sick.

What is the reason for the hope that you have? (1 Peter 3:15)

My faith journey

by Fr Neil Farren

IN November 1978, just 42 years ago, Fr John Farren, from Malin, and myself were notified by Bishop Edward Daly that we were to be called out of our Maynooth Seminary training early because of the shortage of priests in the Derry Diocese. Our ordination dates were set for the weekend of March 31/April 1, 1979. I think, the bishop had in mind a good date for my ordination.

Since, I was all of 22 years of age when ordained early, the president of St Patrick's College, Maynooth, Mgr Olden, whilst in Rome that spring of '79, was tasked to seek the necessary dispensation from Pope John Paul II for me to get ordained, due to my being underage. A year later, the necessary age for ordination became 25 years. I heard from some of our Diocesan clergy, in their more humorous moments, that "the new ruling came into effect due to the Pope's shock at hearing of my application for underage ordination".

I was ordained in my home parish of Buncrana. Bishop Daly had asked that the maximum number to attend be 100 guests... that at a time of no pandemic. Amongst those attending was my mother and father, Brian and Breid Farren, my sisters and brothers, Mary, John, Patrick, Brian and Margaret.

Bishop Daly had asked Bishop Farren, my grand-uncle, if he would like to perform the ceremony, but he felt in his retirement years that he would not be as able as in his earlier days, so left the ordination to Bishop Daly. My First Mass on April 2, 1979, was Bishop Farren's last public Mass to attend. He got a stroke two weeks later. For that reason it was good to have been ordained early.

I still remember arriving at my first appointment in the Waterside Parochial House, in Derry, with my father and being welcomed by the then parish priest, Fr Austin

Duffy. My first days there were the beginning of the then great May fortnight retreats in each parish in Derry. Those two-week retreat periods were so memorable, when the city parishes and Waterside were in a spiritual high with overflowing congregations, three times a day.

The retreats were directed by various religious orders. The Waterside parish normally had three retreat priests arrive each year. One was usually elderly, the other middle age, and the other middle age but looked young, to keep everyone happy. In my nine years in the Waterside, those two retreat weeks at the beginning of May each year were the highlight of the Parish Year. They had the powerful effect, I remember, of bringing back many lapsed to the Catholic faith, once again.

It was great to be ordained a priest in that era, when there seemed to be a great spiritual energy in the Church, derived from Vatican II and Pope John Paul II's visit to Ireland in '79. Many parishioners, especially the youth, wanted to take an active role in the life of the parish community.

There were many very active lay movements on the go: Parish Renewal, Parish Councils, Charismatic Renewal, Marriage Encounter, Youth Encounter, Parish Youth Groups, St Vincent de Paul, Legion of Mary, the Church Choirs and Folk Groups were bursting at the seams with membership.

The positive spiritual effects

of that generation, I do believe, are still visible in parish life today. Priesthood, too, had its own spiritual help, with priests meeting monthly to pray together and have a sense of fraternity, as with the Charles de Foucauld movement.

As a young priest, from Donegal, I soon began to experience at first hand the tensions of the Northern Troubles. The Waterside Parish did not escape the tensions, the riots, raids, funerals of that era. The annual visiting of the H-Block and the Maze prisoners was appreciated by their Waterside families. Parish life was certainly different from today's parish scene. A more challenging time it was, but also there was a great spirit amongst the people, as Phil Coulter's song has it: "Their spirit's been bruised, never broken".

Bishop Daly made a vast contribution in his leadership role in that era. At a time of great conflict and pain, he, along with other notable people, was instrumental in bringing about justice and reconciliation, as is enjoyed today.

The 1980s in the Waterside Parish saw also much in the way of Church building and improvements, with the opening of the Church of The Immaculate Conception in 1981, as well as the complete restoration of St Columba's Church in 1985 and the Newbuildings new Church in 1988.

The Good Shepherd Sisters were also active, performing invaluable work for the people in the Top of the Hill area, with the Family Centre operating there.

After nine years in the Waterside, I was Coleraine bound for the following 11 years, from 1988-99. The main thrust there was building up the sense of Parish Community. I have often heard it said that a parish in debt is a parish that pulls together. That was true for the Waterside Parish I had just left and also for the parish I was bound for, Coleraine. Their Parish Church was then to be

completely restored in 1993.

Community

It was a great time of gelling the parish community together. The restoration committee organised many fundraising events that, in the main, were community bonding projects, with Parish Outings, Picnic Days, Barn Dances, Gymkhana Events, Treasure Hunts, Rickety Wheel Events, etc. We had also good outreach with the ministers of the other religious denominations, especially through the Ulster Delaware Project, that brought youth of both denominations from the parish to USA host families in Delaware, helping towards respect.

It was whilst in Coleraine Parish that the paedophile scandals came to light. It was a difficult time hearing of abuse of young people, especially by priests. This, indeed, was the low point of my time as priest. But the victims were the real story of pain.

Omagh Parish was my third appointment, where I was for the next eight years. On my arrival in the last Saturday of August 1999, the townsfolk had just marked two weeks earlier the first anniversary of the Omagh Bomb.

The Saturday evening I arrived saw a large, candle-lit procession pass solemnly through the darkened Omagh streets in memory of the dead and injured. I knew I was coming to a town full of painful grief. I got to know many of those lovely people tragically maimed or bereaved by that awful Omagh bomb. I was also with those same family members in their other days, such as weddings or other family events. These people were, and still are, an inspiration.

One of the highlights in the life of the Omagh parish community was at the Christmas Liturgy, when ministers of the other Religious denominations in the vicinity of Omagh came along, at the end of the Mass, and gave our congregation a Christmas greeting. This was a scene that gave hope for the harmony of its people as a true Christian



Fr Neil Farren, PP Ardmore.

community. This good practice should be carried out in every parish where possible.

Also what gave me great joy in Omagh was seeing the number of parishioners taking an active part in the life of the parish community. It was always wonderful to see people offering their services for the good of the parish, such as the powerful witness of the Prayer Guides, Charismatic Renewal, and the leadership teams that assisted with their para liturgies and bringing various speakers to share their faith witness.

Bishop Hegarty appointed me, in 2007, to be Parish Priest of Ardmore. I was greeted on my arrival by Mgr McQuillan and Sr Teresa. Both were very valued members of the Parish team in Ardmore for many years. Sr Teresa retired in the weeks I arrived and Fr McQuillan was soon to retire also, but never did. He is still keeping well in the retirement home and often talks about his love for the Ardmore people and his desire to say one more Mass in Ardmore Chapel.

We have been, and hopefully are, fortunate to have a vibrant Folk Group and Choir in Ardmore, but they have been one of the casualties of the pandemic, and how the liturgy and the congregation, as well as I, miss their input big time.

There have been many highlights in Ardmore, especially the Year of Faith that brought parishioners to many a 'Turas' Pilgrimage, journeying from Slemish to Croagh Patrick and from the Hill of the Slane to Lough Derg. The

many 'turas' to various Patrician foundations along the Faughan were well journeyed but great memories. The Pastoral Council was active, hosting many events and speakers throughout.

We are fortunate in Ardmore Parish to have a Pastoral Centre that, up to the pandemic, was well used. Still, it is available if there is an overflow of people attending Mass that needs to be accommodated.

The Ardmore Parish is in debt to some very fine lay people that assist at various levels, from the Pastoral Council to the Finance Committee. In this time of pandemic, the Pastoral Council assisted in bringing more people to be involved, be it in the liturgy or assisting in the church at other areas during the time of lockdown, and especially since the re-opening of the Church at the end of June; keeping it a safe place.

The finance committee has also been invaluable, assisting in various projects such as upgrading the church and the church car park, as well as other areas of parish maintenance. My thanks to the parishioners for the support given to the parish religious faith over the years. They are, indeed, an inspiration and shining light of faith witness to many of our younger generation families in the parish. Let's hope and pray that the younger generation will appreciate the religious faith handed down to them from previous generations, often at a price, which the Ardmore Mass Rock testifies to and the faith



Parishioners, and others from neighbouring parishes, with Fr Neil on one of the many 'Turas' pilgrimages to sites connected to St Patrick.



St Mary's Church, Ardmore.

witness of generations gone before them.

In my years at Ardmore Parish, I have also been Hospital Chaplain in Altnagelvin Area Hospitals, working alongside, in the earlier years, Fr Chris Ferguson, with Sr Carmel and Sr Breda assisting. In more recent years, I have been working alongside Fr Sean O'Donnell, Sr Jo and Sr Myriam. Also, in the past number of months, Fr Canny and Fr Gallagher have been involved.

The hospital ministry involved much support from many Eucharistic Ministers from different nearby parishes, invaluable assisting with bringing the Eucharist to patients in hospital wards. This ministry also involved collaborating with ministers of other religious denominations and hosting various annual religious services.

At this November time, I think and pray for all those I have attended over the 12 years of service there, as well as in the Ardmore Parish community. Some in the hospital setting have made good recoveries; others have still to live with the side effects of their ill health, whilst others have

gone to their rest.

Pandemic

Keeping healthy is hard today, especially when Covid-19 can be so easily got, not always the fault of those getting it. This pandemic time, of course, is a much more difficult time for all the front line staff in our hospitals, as well as for the patients and family members who are unable to visit or be visited. By acting together to prevent the spread of Covid-19, we, by our actions, can increase our care for the safety, well-being and health of all NHS/HSE and Care Workers, as well as the patients in hospitals and nursing homes.

In this time of pandemic, we are fortunate, in the North, to have our churches open. The reason they have been kept open, I believe, is that they are safe places to be. Much effort has been put in by parish volunteers, as well as a great financial cost of re-sanitizing to keep the Church a safe place to enter and pray in.

The pastoral aspect of priestly ministry has dramatically changed regarding parishioner contact. With the exception of the Mass/evening Rosary, there is no other

community gathering, meeting place, even sick visitation, and every visitation has been halted due to people shielding and to prevent the spread of Covid-19. Zoom meetings are more the order of the day in these times.

Bishop Donal McKeown still keeps the priests occupied with Deanery Zoom meetings that have priests in different deaneries, be it Derry City, Inishowen, Co Derry, or Co Tyrone deaneries, meeting together via Zoom to assist, through listening and responding, with various means and resources.

This year, 2020, was to be a high point in the Derry Diocese with the Diocesan/Parish Renewal planned for this year and next, leading up to the 1500th anniversary of the death of St Columba, in 2021. The pandemic has put paid to that high point.

Bishop McKeown came to Ardmore to celebrate Mass on Monday, November 2, for the 90th anniversary of the opening of the Church of St Mary.

Priesthood has its varied demands, be it as Celebrant, Confessor, Counsellor, Liturgist, Homilist, Consoler, Chaplain, Visitor, Chairperson, committee Member, Healer, Listener, etc, etc. It is not easy being all to all people all the time. It is good to be a priest. The daily high point for me is the celebration of the weekday/Sunday Mass. It is this spiritual and communal experience that gives the day purpose and meaning.

The priest's life needs to be nourished as well by time spent in the presence of the Divine Master in those other moments, so that the priest, himself, is alive to the Spirit's promptings in the course of his priestly ministry.

Through the 40+ years of ministry there have been high points and low points. Hopefully,

in the years to come, there will be more high points than low points. But then again, 'tis the low points that bring us to our knees.

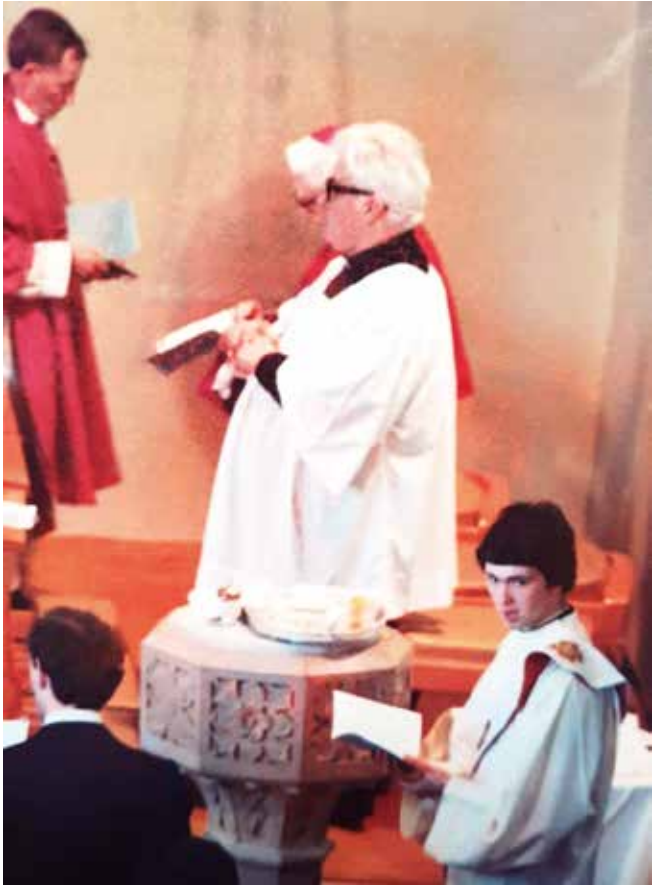
Catholic Schools, over the 41 years of my priesthood, have excelled themselves in fostering a high level of learning for our youth and have been a great assistance in imparting religious faith to the children in their care. These schools are invaluable in imparting a religious faith to the children of the parish community and beyond. Without them, the religious faith of our youth would be in a much poorer state.

I would like also to thank those parents who assist in handing on the faith to our youth through their faith practice in this era, when religious faith development is not always appreciated nor culturally encouraged.

If I was to live life over again, I would still opt to be a priest. Indeed, it is a better time to be priest today, than it was 40 years ago, even though the same vitality is not there as used to be, but still it is a better time to be priest today. Christ continues to invite us to be builders in His kingdom and inspires us to bring His love and His message, the Good News, to all we meet.

We need more youths to consider this call to ordination. This call must be spiritually nurtured by youth themselves, as well as faith supported by others around them if it is to be responded to. It is also important that we should all pray that the Lord of the harvest will send labourers to His harvest, for the harvest is rich but the labourers are few.

To conclude, I have ministered for over 41 years in four parishes, alongside seven parish priests, 13 curates and four bishops, in that space of time.



Fr Neil Farren as his ordination ceremony got underway. From left, Fr Neil's uncle, the late Fr John Farren, his granduncle, the late Bishop Neil Farren, and the late Dr Hugh McGurk, PP Buncrana. His granny, the late Jane Dorrian, had arrived late to the ceremony, causing him to look her way as she entered her seat close to where he stood.



Fr Neil in his soutane on his ordination day.

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.



Himself on the cross for the life of the world. Amen.

Pope's monthly intention

The Holy Father has asked for prayer during November for:

Artificial Intelligence... We pray that the progress of robotics and artificial intelligence may always serve humankind.

Prayer for Priests

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

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

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

Bless, in a special way, Your servant

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

Remember in prayer:

- Fr Neil Farren (Nov 1st)
- Fr Paul Farren (2nd)
- Fr Christopher Ferguson (3rd)
- Fr John Forbes (4th)
- Fr Edward Gallagher (5th)
- Fr Paul Fraser (6th)
- Fr John Gilmore (7th)
- Fr Joseph Gormley (8th)
- Fr Eamon Graham (9th)
- Fr Dermott Harkin (10th)
- Fr Karl Haan (11th)
- Fr Eugene Hasson (12th)
- Fr Malachy Gallagher (13th)
- Fr John Irwin (14th)
- Fr Charles Keaney (15th)
- Fr Stephen Kearney (16th)
- Fr Gerald Hasson (17th)
- Fr Michael Keaveny (18th)
- Fr Seamus Kelly (19th)
- Fr Edward Kilpatrick (20th)
- All priests (21st)
- Fr Charles Logue (22nd)
- Fr Paul McCafferty (23rd)
- Msgr Bryan McCanny (24th)
- Fr Michael McCaughey (25th)
- Fr Andrew McCloskey (26th)
- Fr Patrick Lagan (27th)
- All Priests (28th)
- Fr Noel McDermott (29th)
- Fr Eamon McDevitt (30th)

St Teresa of the Andes – Part III

Life behind the cloister door *by Fr Stephen Quinn OCD*

WHEN Juanita Fernandez Solar stepped through the cloister door as Sr Teresa of Jesus in the Los Andes Carmel on May 7, 1919, one of the first places that she was taken by the Mother Prioress was to her new room, called in religion: the cell. The community took the new Sister Teresa of Jesus to the cell first, precisely because the cell holds such a place of precedence in Discalced Carmelite life.

One of the outstanding features of the ancient rule of St Albert, the rule of life of all Carmelites, is the emphasis that it places on living in solitude in an individual cell. The rule exhorts Discalced Carmelites “to stay in their own cell pondering the Lord’s law, day and night”. The rule sees this time spent in solitude as the real currency of conversion and engagement with the Lord Jesus.

Teresa of Jesus was immediately delighted with the room that the Mother Prioress opened to her. She was struck by its poor simplicity compared to the grandeur that she was used to at home in Santiago. The cell contained a bed of wooden slats with a straw mattress and a hard pillow. Teresa’s mother had sent ahead of her a mattress and pillow more in keeping with the life she had known outside Los Andes; a mattress and pillow full of goose feathers and comfortable materials, but the novice mistress immediately vetoed the use of such luxuries for any prospective candidate to the order.

There was no resentment in Teresa’s heart in response, she had come to live the life authentically and was relieved. All that furnished her new little room was a jug with a basin for washing, a low bench for sitting, a small work basket, and a low table for reading and writing. All that she would ever be able to bring into that room was sewing equipment and cloth for work, one book loaned from the library to read and some paper in order to be able to write letters home.

On the wall was one of the few decorations; a stark black wooden cross and around the pinnacle of the cross was wrapped a crown of thorns. The cross was remarkable in only one way; there was no Christ upon the black wood. It was a statement and a reminder to Teresa, as she inhabited that room, that by the life that she led there, by the love with which she loved, by the surrender of herself to the vows of a nun’s life, she herself could climb onto that cross with her eternally lovable Master. On the cross was written the words of the Mother Foundress of the Discalced Carmelites, St Teresa of Avila, “God alone suffices.” These were words of encouragement from the first Teresa of Jesus to her daughter now living in the Carmel of Los Andes, as to how to live in this cell

in a wholesome manner.

To a modern eye, such a room strikes as being vaguely dangerous. In a contradictory way, the room seems full to the brim with absence, and the very nothingness of it leaves the modern person cold and saying to themselves, “how could anyone do it?” In one place in the letters of Teresa of Jesus’ favourite saint, Elizabeth of the Trinity admits a similar trepidation but encourages everyone to discover a deeper wisdom that underpins that stark little room, “the life of a Carmelite is a communion with God from morning until evening, and from evening until morning. If He did not fill our cells and our cloisters, oh how empty they would be! But through everything, we see Him for we have Him within us and our life is an anticipated heaven. I ask God to teach you all these secrets.” In these sentiments, St Elizabeth prays not only for Teresa, but for all who ponder the meaning of Teresa’s little empty room.

As a modern eye casts around Teresa’s cell, it attempts to spy out the usual accoutrements that we place around our own room, those things that give us so much satisfaction and which we imagine that without those things we could never be happy. We, somehow, give these objects a value out of all proportion, but this Carmelite cell raises the question of us: “Are they really your happiness?”

The room of Teresa of the Andes poses more questions - what type of happiness can you hold in your hand, what happiness can rust, crumble, or break, and, most of all, is there any kind of happiness outside of ourselves? As Teresa of the Andes enters her room for the first time, she is effectively saying to us that there is more to happiness than what we have settled for in modernity. What we have settled for is not happiness at all, but rather our greatest grief. We have made maybe the profoundest error possible; we have mistaken pleasure for happiness, sensation for real joy.

So, the near empty room of Teresa in Los Andes starts to speak to us of its own logic. If you have to use something to elicit sensation, then what you are talking about is not happiness. Happiness is not the same thing as the thrill of excitement that comes with something new. Happiness is not

to be found in something that comes from outside of us. Rather it has been inside of us all the time!

Teresa of the Andes gathers up the information that she has gleaned from her own time spent in the cell - “I am happy dear little sister. I am the happiest creature in the world. I am beginning my life in heaven, of adoration, praise, and unending love. It seems to me as if I am already in eternity because you do not feel time in Carmel. We are immersed in the bosom of the unchanging God.”

From our vantage point of rooms that are choc-a-block with gadgets, gizmos and fashion, you would definitely consider that in a room such as Teresa inhabited, time would definitely lag, you could well imagine a person sitting strumming their fingers begging for something to happen, but Teresa begs to differ, her time only seems to fly when she is occupied with adoration, love and the life of heaven. I want us to go into the detail of this a little further.

Prayer

For Teresa, the room left so starkly empty is a symbol of a further secret room. The empty room opens to another, a room that is altogether more profound. It is an interior room in the soul of each person and, in that room, a constant interaction can occur between the soul and the Son of God. Prayer, therefore, is a key to unlocking the love, the joy, and the life of heaven that Teresa talks about going on in her cell. Teresa wrote to her former spiritual director a few months after she had entered the Carmel of Los Andes. She speaks of her “prayer as growing more and more simple,” meaning that being in her simple room has inspired her to jettison everything that is superfluous and unnecessary, all her devices, distractions, preoccupations, even prayer books and beautifully framed sets of words that she had clung to in order to give herself some method to address God.

Letting go of all this stuff had forced her to centre herself firmly and squarely in something and someone altogether simple; the presence of God. Teresa said that when she gave herself to God, she became wholly intent on love and did not want anything but God Himself. In this prayer she “feels her entire soul immersed in God.” When Teresa closed the door of her little room and began to pray, she encountered a God who is so utterly different, she could not use the normal methods that people deploy in meeting another person. As she sought Him, there was no need for a multitude of words but rather the opposite, a profound stillness and an atmosphere of silence. God had wrapped himself in a dark cloud of mystery, and that place was, indeed, intimidating.

Like us, she knew the temptation to flight but, instead of taking to her heels, she fixed her eyes on the person who dwelt in the silence and existed on the other side of the mystery. She set her will on wanting only Him, and she gave her heart to one expression only: love of Him. This love became like a fiery dart that flies through the dark cloud and strikes the Sacred Heart. He who is an abyss of mercy and love could not help himself but be moved. In that interaction Teresa found “a peace and such a great tranquillity that she could not describe it”; a peace, not that the world knows, but that comes from knowing God Himself.

A problem for so many is that so often we have such an impoverished notion of what it is to pray. Teresa of the Andes will have no truck with our simplistic notions of mouthing words and fingering beads, she wants to share with us something more than a caricature of the real thing.

She wants anyone who comes to her to hear the wisdom that she herself learnt in Discalced Carmel. St Teresa of Avila in her book, ‘The Interior Castle’, openly criticises a great deal of the commonly held views and the advice that is shared with novices to prayer. There are literally reams of material out there about what a person is to do when they go to pray. There are a great deal of guidelines and rules to be followed, and all kinds of things to be avoided. The Great Teresa teaches both Teresa of the Andes and us, in our turn, that all those things centre on paying attention to what we as human beings are doing, but little or no attention is being paid to who is there with us and what this God does for us in prayer. She asks, how can that be at all right? From her own experience, the Saint from Avila teaches that God wants to give all of Himself to us in prayer.

Teresa of Avila advises that her own prayer only progressed when she gave all her attention, intention and energy over to Him. This was an invitation to the Almighty to fill her with His presence. Wherever God is present, then present with Him is all the goodness, beauty, truth, love and, last of all, the joy that He Himself is.

The New Testament abounds with references to the God who brings with Him the fullness of joy. In the life of the Blessed Virgin, when the angel announced that she would be the mother of The Most High, Gabriel told her to rejoice because of the favour. God in His condescension had bent down to her and had placed Himself within her. The experience of the intimacy of God that close must have been overwhelming. In the Presentation, you can almost hear the exhilaration in the heart of Simeon as he speaks those words,



“at last all-powerful master you give leave to your servant to go in peace according to your promise, for my eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared for all nations.”

And St Paul, in his epistles, again and again urges the Christian Church to rejoice. No matter the suffering that was being inflicted upon them, the power of the Cross and Resurrection was overcoming the World. They can afford to laugh, for Christ is their true joy.

All these Scriptural references are not mere coincidence, for what is God after all but eternal joy? God is three eternal persons ever turned toward each other, rejoicing in the company of the other two, and saying to each “my beloved one.” The God, who is a trinity of felicitation, created us in His own image and likeness. We were made in joy and made to know the joy of the divine life.

Restless

St Augustine once famously wrote, “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.” We could rework that line for this present article, and it could be something like, “You have made us for your own joy and our hearts are restless until they rest in your joy.” The little room that Teresa occupied and used for prayer in Los Andes was so empty precisely so that it could be filled to the very brim with the joy of God Himself.

If He was there, what else would Teresa need?

What went on between Teresa and the Blessed Trinity in that room is a secret hidden in the heart of Teresa herself. In some of her letters, she gives her family and friends a privileged place to witness some of it. Teresa wrote to her little brother, Ignaticio: “My soul is always united to yours; the two form one. Now I am already immersed in God. His love is the life of my soul. I want to raise you up to Him. I want to share with you, my brother, a little of the fire that burns in me. I want to warm you in His infinite fire, so that you may have life. I feel wrapped in a divine atmosphere of peace, of love, of light, and of infinite joy.”

In another outstanding letter, she writes to her mother of what is going on behind the cloister of Los Andes and within the sacred precincts of her interior: “I assure you, Madrecita, that I feel an insatiable hunger and thirst that souls may seek God, but that they seek Him not out of fear but out of limitless confidence in Divine Love.” And thus Teresa invited her mother to take a good look into her soul: “Madrecita, I would like to be able to let you read my soul so that you might see all that the Lord has written there these days. He makes me understand, He makes me see things unknown and wonders never seen before. You cannot imagine, Madrecita, the love which



I already feel in myself. He has transformed me. He is opening the veils that have hidden Him. Each time He seems more beautiful to me, more tender, more intense...I do not want to continue writing because when I begin to speak of the Lord, I cannot restrain my pen.”

Anyone can see that for an empty room there is a whole lot going on within! Alone and bored was the very last things that Teresa was. When Teresa went into that cell, the one that we thought that we would be frightened of, she became embroiled in an adventure

of a lifetime. She set course straight to that destination where God dwells in beautiful light. Teresa is not some kind of alien species. The same heart, the same soul, the same power is in her as in you. The only difference is her desire to do something with it. By giving herself totally to this adventure, whole new vistas and experiences open up to her. The vistas and experiences are of God Himself.

Teresa, from her little cell in Los Andes, every moment she spent there, typed out a prophetic message for people of this generation. Faith and Catholic

religion are not the drag, the party pooper, that the World would have us believe. The caricature is that Catholicism is something that takes away all those things that excite and interest people. Catholic faith does not subtract things from human beings and it does not seek to leave us diminished by our encounter with its doctrines, rather it seeks to give us Christ and everything that comes with Him; His beauty, His love, and His joy. Prayer and contemplation are not rigid practices, they are not some straight-jacket of words and methods, but they challenge us to simplify ourselves and our lives in order to enjoy God as He truly is, enjoying Him for his own sake, and enjoying the inner life of one who is complete joy.

Teresa, in her cloistered life, would emphasise that happiness is not some fix of pleasure that you give to yourself in order to get through the trials of life. Happiness is not the subjective electricity of pleasure that you get from objects and experiences from time to time. Teresa wants people to know that happiness is a state of being, a state of well-being, a state of wholeness that comes about by a dynamic connectedness between the soul and God. Not everyone has the luxury of a cell and a Carmelite monastery, but they can, nonetheless, all pray with the room of the heart. Prayer is always about God and once God is truly engaged then that God brings all the capacities and potential of each human life to its zenith.

Happiness is the blessedness of being with God; that was the whole purpose of the cell that she entered on May 7, 1919

Litany of Irish Saints

Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, hear us.
Christ, graciously hear us.

God the Father of Heaven, have mercy on us.
God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy on us.
God the Holy Spirit, have mercy on us.
Holy Trinity one God, have mercy on us.

Holy Mary, pray for us
Holy Mother of God,
Holy Virgin of virgins,
St. Joseph, pray for us.
St. Killian, pray for us
St. Rumold,
St. Livinus,
St. Oliver,
All ye Holy Martyrs, pray for us.

St. Celestine, pray for us.
St. Patrick,
St. Malachy,
St. Macnise,
St. Finnian,
St. Mel
St. Macartan,
St. Eugene,
St. Colman,
St. Felim,
St. Eunan,
St. Laurence,
St. Conleth,
St. Lasearian,
St. Aidan,
St. Kieran,
St. Albert,
St. Ailbe,
St. Colman,
St. Finnbarr,

St. Flannan,
St. Munchin,
St. Fachtna,
St. Otteran,
St. Carthage,
St. Jarlath,
St. Nathy,
St. Asicus,
St. Nicholas,
St. Colman,
St. Muredach,
St. Declan,
St. Virgilius,
St. Senan,
St. Frigidian,
St. Cuthbert,
St. Rupert,
St. Celsus,
St. Cataldus,
St. Donatus,
Blessed Thaddaeus,
All ye Holy Pontiffs and Confessors, pray for us.

St. Columba, pray for us.
St. Kevin,
St. Brendan,
St. Canice,
St. Kieran,
St. Columbanus,
St. Gall,
St. Fursey,
St. Fintan,
St. Comgall,
St. Fiacre,
All ye Holy Monks and Hermits, pray for us.

St. Brigid, pray for us.
St. Ita,
St. Attracta,
St. Dympna,
St. Lelia,
All ye Holy Virgins, pray for us.
All ye Holy Saints of God,

Intercede for us.

Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, Spare us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, Graciously hear us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, Have mercy on us.

V. Pray for us, all you Saints of Ireland.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray
Grant, O Lord, an increase of Thy Grace to us who celebrate the memory of all the Saints of our Island; that as, on earth, we rejoice to be one with them in race, so, in Heaven, we may deserve to share with them an inheritance of bliss. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

(Irish Ecclesiastical Record Vol 18 (1921), 433-435; 532-536.)



A Word of God for your Family Life Resurrection by Fr Johnny Doherty, CSsR



I have always felt very privileged as a Catholic priest. In the course of my ministry, many people brought me close to the joys and sorrows of their lives. I have officiated at countless weddings, not just as an observer but as a friend and confidant. I have had the joy of baptising many babies of family and friends, as well as in parishes. I have had the privilege of working closely with a large number of married couples. I have been made part of so many families at times of celebration and of suffering, and became a friend to them and they to me.

The mystery of death

For the first fifteen years of my

life as a priest, I thought of myself as someone who understood death very well. I was so often in the position of accompanying people in the time of death and being supportive of people in the death of their loved ones. I often cried with people at that last moment, when death is such a final experience.

In 1981, my father died. We had been expecting his death and were waiting with him in Letterkenny Hospital, where he had been for a couple of weeks. I thought I was well prepared. But I discovered that you are never really prepared for the death of someone you deeply love. There was such finality about that moment, as we all began to talk about him in the past tense. Part of me died on that day in May.

In 2005, my mother died in the hospital in Carndonagh. She was ninety-eight years of age. She had good health until a week before her death, when she got a massive stroke from which she could not recover. Even though we were all with her each day through that week, her death was devastating for me to such an extent that I lost my voice and had to get a priest

friend to celebrate her funeral Mass.

Friends tried to comfort and console me by saying things like “she had a long life”, “a good innings”, “you were very lucky to have her for so long and in such good health”, and so on. I knew that all of these things were true but, at that time, they made no difference to me. The grief I felt was so deep that nothing could reach it just then.

Over the years, there have been a number of deaths of very close friends that have affected me deeply. Probably the one that affected me most was the death of a young baby called Sarah. I had a strong friendship with her parents before they got married. I accompanied them through their pregnancy, which had a lot of difficulties. And when Sarah was born, I celebrated with them the wonder of this new life.

Then Sarah got meningitis and was struggling for life for several days. She lost the struggle and died in their arms. For them, it was shattering. I could only guess how heart-broken they were. I felt totally helpless. I could do nothing, could say nothing. All I

could do was be with them in the days ahead and pray with them and cry with them.

November

Each one of us has our own experience of the death of a loved one. And our experience is unique. Even within a family, each member of the family has her or his own way of responding to the same death. That can make it a difficult time for a family.

During this month of November, we intentionally remember our loved ones who have died and get in touch again with ourselves in relation to them. We do this not in some morbid way, but with gratitude and searching for peace for them and for ourselves.

Things to remember

1. Death does not mean the end of the person. In our society today, many people regard death as the end of the person and we can easily get caught into that mentality. Remembering our beloved dead can help us to realise the truth as we reflect on our experiences of love. I certainly am convinced of this as I think of my father and mother, and so many others whom I have loved and continue to love. They certainly

have not disappeared.

2. Death does not mean the end of the relationship. It is different now from what it was when they were here. But, in many ways, it is stronger and more intimate. In letting them go we also enter into something greater with them. I often pray for them, I pray to them, I pray about them, I pray with them.

3. My own death is certain. That can be a scary thought! But it can also become a real impetus for living my life as fully as possible now so that death becomes a real part of my life. That is what preparing for death should mean for us.

4. Christian faith is a great gift. In the Creed we say: “I believe in the Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting”. That is the faith of the Church. It is a faith that we have but also that we need to constantly grow into. November is a month for this growth in faith about ourselves and our loved ones who have died.

5. Catholic practice is very healthy. This is seen in the way that so many people care for the

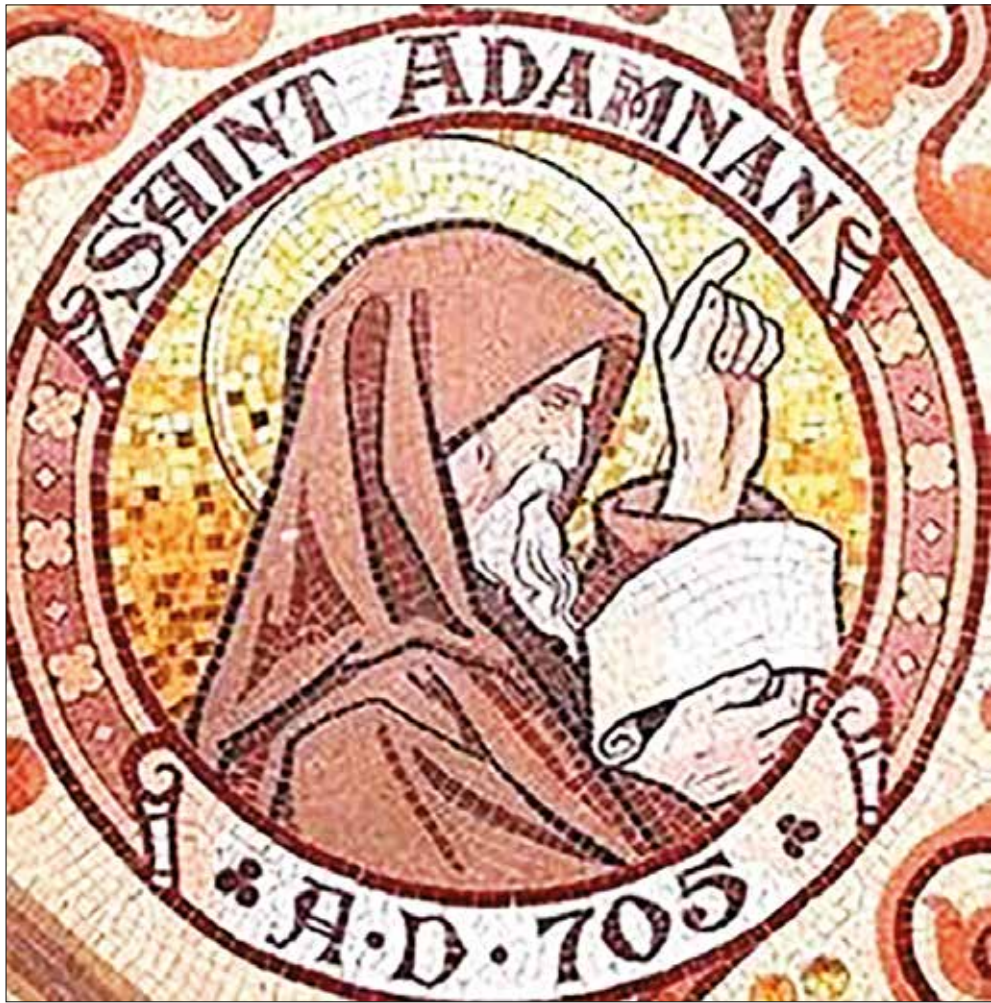
graves of their loved ones and in how we dedicate this month each year to their memory. Their names are engraved on stone for the world to see just as they are engraved on our hearts for us to never forget. These are the shoulders we stand on today. They call on us to proclaim our faith so that the world may believe in Jesus Christ.

A suggestion

- Create a sacred space somewhere in your home, with a crucifix, a picture of Our Lady and a candle
- Place all the Memoriam Cards that you have in that sacred space.
- Dedicate a few minutes each day of November to taking one or two of these cards, talk about the person(s) and your memories of them, and pray the prayer that is on the card.
- Visit the graves together as a family and share your memories with each other.
- Let the Mass of each Sunday of November lead you into a deeper faith in the resurrection of Christ and the promise of our resurrection.

Stations, Turas and Crosses...

Prayers and Reflection *by Vera McFadden*



THE stops along a Turas are called Stations. Recently, I read about two of these. They were quite near each other but I don't know if they are part of a former pilgrimage walk. I have never heard of any special prayers that were said at them, or if the pilgrims walked in their bare feet.

We prayed five Our Fathers, five Hail Marys and five Glorias, as well as walked unshod around each Station at the Gap of Mamore; a pilgrimage that I have done since childhood.

Some local people in the Carrowmore and Cloncha areas may remember these details. The Station at Carrowmore was by a big well known as the Monastery Well. The wall of the Well was made with rounded stones. It was at the top of a field behind Carrowmore School.

Nearby, on the other side of a stream, there is an enclosure, a West cross and an East cross, and some parts of broken crosses and some other stones. The crosses are of the early type, with short arms.

The first time that I came here was on a Donegal Historical Society outing. I was impressed by the natural setting and the ancient crosses. We listened attentively to what our guide was telling us. I have been back several times, sometimes alone, sometimes with others, and prayed at this holy place.

It is believed to be the site of the ancient monastery of Both Chonais. There was a monastic school at this place, and it was here that Maol Iosa O'Brolchain began his studies at the age of six. When I heard that my attention deepened, for Maol Iosa had

written the 'Deus Meus', which we sang quite often in the St Patrick's Church Choir. Our choir leader was very fond of it and so was I. I had not known that the author was a local man. So I decided to learn more about him.

He was born at the beginning of the 11th century. As he was very capable and diligent, he went to some other places to learn more. He wrote songs, poetry and prayers. Armagh and Lismore are two of the places which he visited or where he stayed. He died at Lismore in 1086. People who knew him remembered that he was diligent and had a great sense of humour, and that he was very chaste and constantly prayed for the protection of the angels, especially his guardian angel. In 'Acta Sanctorum Hiberniae', John Colgan, the Franciscan historian

from Carndonagh, tells that he was a man of miracles, of virtue, and of holiness of life.

On the other side of the stream, there is an altar or Mass rock. During the Penal Days, the Holy Mass was often celebrated near the ancient ecclesiastical sites, so that may have happened here.

When I visited an exhibition of Willie Doran's paintings in the Church Hall in Culdaff, I mentioned a portrait of Maol Iosa, and bog oak artist, Mary Doherty said to me that the picture was probably one of several that the artist had painted for her uncle, historian Brian Bonnar. She told me about a legend that she had heard as a local child. It was about a tunnel that connected Both Chonais with Cloncha and how the monks had walked through it. She must have been amazed when one of the Bernician Studies' archaeologists told her that part about the tunnel was true, for they had found it.

Cloncha is the site of two other Stations that I read about. Here, there are the remains of St Mary's Church, which has not been used since the 19th Century. Churches were often built on the site of an ancient early Christian foundation and, indeed, there is a lot of evidence of this here.

Historical

The first time I visited here was on a Donegal Historical Society outing too. I found the place fascinating with its pieces of crosses and informative sculpted stones. I remember a man bending to examine broken engraved parts and wondering if they could ever be put together again. They seemed to be of a later date than the crosses of Carrowmore.

When I occasionally revisited, I always stood in admiration beside a well preserved slab on which a sword, caman and ball are sculpted, as well as the name of the maker and the person who was buried under it. This information is in Scottish Gaelic. Another stone also gives, in old Gaelic, the name of the sculptor and of the person for whom it was made.

Two Stations were at a narrow, well decorated shaft of a cross and at a broken top of a cross and a socket, both of which are lying on the ground. The shaft was called 'St Buadan's Cross'. The broken top and shaft have now been connected together again.

An early Christian bronze clapperless bell, which is in the Parochial House at nearby Bocan, is called 'St Buadan's Bell'. He was our missionary to Scotland and he is the Patron Saint of Culdaff, where a rock in the river is known as 'Buadan's Boat'. This rock is connected with him and a legend. A lady in Culdaff brought me to a bridge where prayer is said while

looking towards the rock. A well near the town is named after him as well.

There is another saint connected with Cloncha; Adamnan (Eunan). He was a relation of St Columba, who had lived several generations before him. He was born about 624 and grew up in Co Donegal. He first studied at a monastery in Drumholm and then he went to one in Co Meath. For several years, he was spiritual adviser to the High King at Tar. He also studied and prayed here at Cloncha. Later, he was to become the Abbott at Iona for many years, and he left us the gift of his 'Life of Columba'.

Before I ever knew that he was in this part of Inishowen, I was led to two other Stations which relate to him. I was near Malin Town and I asked a passer-by which was the best road to Culdaff. I explained that I hoped to discover places connected with St Buadan and that I was interested in the early Christian period. The lady told me to take the nearby road and that there would be a crossroads further along, where I could join the main road to Culdaff. She said that if I asked someone near that crossroads, there was something about the Early Christian period that I could perhaps discover.

I stopped a safe distance away from the crossroads. There was no one about, so I asked the owner of a nearby house. He showed me a well at the back of his lawn and told me that it had been blessed by St Adamnan and that people had come here to pray. It was dried up now. "Was that Adamnan who wrote 'The Life of Columba'?" I asked. "Yes," he replied, and then

he told me that the Saint's Church had been nearby and if I went a little way up the other road, the people there might show me. They did and I was impressed by its peace, antiquity and proximity to the present-day dwelling. It was a small grassy area with stones lying about, and there was a raised circular area with a small stone cross. The back window of the house looked out on it. The area is called Templemoyle.

Now, I wonder about it all. If Adamnan was in the monastery at Cloncha and constructed the Church and blessed the well here, was he in the area at two different periods?

Many years after I visited this little spot, I got a great surprise. I had read the following in one of the ancient annals, "There was a shower of honey at Fahan Mor and a drop of honey at Fahan Beag". I asked about it at a Bernician Studies meeting and a man from Culdaff told me that it was the place at Templemoyle, and that it is called 'Othan Beag' (little sheltered place) on the map.

So many scholarly and holy people have prayed and worked in this little corner of Inishowen, and there are still several dedicated historians and writers in the area, whose constant research often reveals yet more. When the old stories and traditional lore are cherished by people like Mary Doherty, even more emerges.

There is a great sense of wonder in studying the past around us and the beauty of nature as we go along. Both gifts from God are now threatened by irresponsible land-use and pollution. We must protect them.

About St Francis... *by Vera McFadden*

A short time after Francis received the stigma, Brother Leo was very depressed. Francis wrote out a blessing from the Bible for him:

*'The Lord bless thee,
And keep thee,
The Lord make His face to shine upon thee,
And be gracious unto thee.
The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee,
And give thee peace.'*

This piece of writing is still preserved today.

Of course, Francis also wrote the hymn, 'Make Me a Channel of your Peace', which expresses a wish to bring strength and healing to others in difficult situations. That is how St Francis himself lived.

Another hymn that he wrote was 'All Creatures of Our Lord and King'. This short hymn is included in the St Francis Office.

Once some people who lived near the monastery told Francis that they would like to live holy lives like the friars, whilst still living in their own homes and doing their own work. Francis wrote the guidelines for them and they were known as Lay Franciscans.

Of course, these guidelines were like the guidelines of any other lay order which are based on the teachings of Christ. They are still followed today by Franciscan Tertiaries.

Over the centuries, many people from different areas of Ireland were members of the Franciscan Third Order, and there is a group canonically established in Derry.

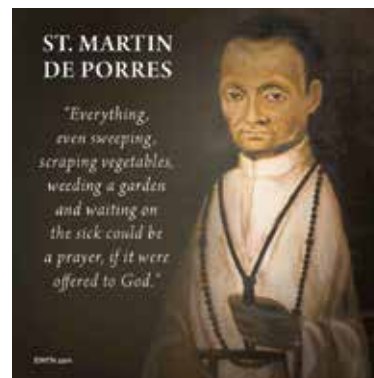
For a copy of Saint Francis' Office or, anyone wanting to gradually study the guidelines, write to Lay Franciscans, Assisi, 65 Whitehouse Park, Ballymagrorty, Derry BT48 0QA.



Children's Catechism Club - C3

by Veronica Harley

Hello children. C3 welcomes you to the month of November. Winter has arrived, so the days are shorter and the nights are longer. Traditionally, this month is dedicated to the Holy Souls in Purgatory. Although November can be dark and cold, we still have many special days to celebrate. We begin November with a splendid feast – All Saints Day!



Martin's life reflected his great love for God and all of God's gifts. He had many extraordinary abilities, including aerial flights, bilocation, instant cures, spiritual knowledge and miraculous knowledge. Martin consistently gave all credit to God for any healing or good that came through his efforts. In one of the few quotes we have from St Martin, he said to a sick person after praying for healing: "I only cure you. It is God who heals you." His life revealed a deep trust and reliance on God. St Martin embodied the words of Acts

17:28 which states, “For in God, we live and move and have our being.” To spend our lives in this deep place of trust in God has the capacity to truly transform us, our circumstances and even our world.

Martin's love was all-embracing, shown equally to humans and animals. Martin helped to establish a hospital and an orphanage. He also welcomed African slaves, who were comforted on their arrival in Lima. Animals loved Martin, so tradition holds that he was able to feed a dog, a cat and a mouse from the same bowl. One of his many duties in the convent was to manage the alms for the poor, and his careful budgeting allowed him to feed and clothe hundreds of needy people in the city.

The life of Martin de Porres was one of humble devotion. He is venerated for his constant unassuming service to the poor and his miraculous cures of the sick. We celebrate his feast day on November 3.

St Martin, pray for us



All Saints' Day

The Feast of All Saints is celebrated on the 1st of November. On this day, we go to Mass to honour all the saints and martyrs, known and unknown, who have died and are now with God in Heaven. Saints are people who have loved God very much and who have dedicated their lives to living God's Will. The Lord calls us all to be saints; to be holy people (CCC 2013). We give thanks to God for the saints and all their good deeds. These are an example for us to live by each day. We, too, can live like the saints and one day join God in Heaven, for we shall be saints.

Saints of the Month

3rd Nov.: St Martin de Porres
11th Nov.: St Martin of Tours
17th Nov.: St Elizabeth of Hungary
30th Nov.: St Andrew the Apostle

All Souls' Day

The Feast of the Holy Souls is the 2nd of November. On this day, we especially remember all those people who have passed from this life to the next. The Holy Souls are the people who have died in the state of God's grace and friendship. These souls are assured of reaching Heaven and eternal salvation. The Holy Souls remain in Purgatory because after their death they still need to be purified of their sins. With this purification, they achieve the holiness needed before entering Heaven (CCC 1030). The word 'purgatory' was originally a Latin adjective meaning 'clean'. This gives us the English word "purge" with the same meaning.

Purgatory is more than a place. It is a process in which we are made holy and pure so we can live with God forever in Heaven (CCC 1054). The Holy Souls are not separated from God while in Purgatory but instead are surrounded by God's love and mercy. We can help to purify the Holy Souls by praying for them. We pray at their graves but the Mass is the greatest prayer for the dead.

By making small sacrifices, we can give an offering to God to ease the suffering of the Holy Souls (CCC 1032). This hastens their arrival in heaven.

*Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon
them. May their souls and the souls
of all the faithful departed, through
the mercy of God, rest in peace.
Amen.*

Feast of Christ the King

Every year on the last Sunday before Advent, we celebrate the Feast of Christ the King (CCC 559). This feast was instituted by Pope Pius XI in 1925. At that time the world was increasingly telling Christians to be completely loyal to the government in power and to forget about God and his existence. Consequently, Pope Pius XI established this Feast to remind Catholics and the world that Jesus Christ is Lord of the Universe.

This wonderful feast day not only marks the end of the Liturgical Year for our Church (CCC 1168), but it is also a day on which we celebrate Christ's royalty and His reign over all of creation.

*Jesus you are my King and my God
and I love you. Help me to be your
good servant.*

Presentation of Mary in the Temple (CCC 721)

The Feast of the Presentation of Mary in the Temple is celebrated on the 21st of November. On this day, we celebrate the tradition that Our Lady's parents brought her to the Temple when she was just three years old. It was here that she came to live for a long period of time and where she unknowingly began to prepare herself to be the Mother of God. In the Temple, because she was exceptionally holy, little Mary entered the service of God. This beautiful Feast stresses an important truth about Mary; from the beginning of her life, she was dedicated to God. She herself became a greater temple than any made by human



Quiz Time *with Lawrence*

1. The original route of the Orient Express saw the train run from Paris to which other city, up until 1977?
2. According to the Old Testament, Enoch was the father of which Biblical figure?
3. In what field is Nadiya Hussain a renowned TV presenter and author?
4. Manama is the capital city of which Middle Eastern Kingdom?
5. What is the actual first name of former England cricketer and occasional TV presenter 'Freddie' Flintoff?
6. How many Irish counties begin with the letter C?
7. John Irving's 1978 novel about the son of a feminist leader is the 'World According to...' whom?
8. On which racecourse is the Irish Grand National traditionally run?
9. In mathematics, what does 5 cubed minus 4 cubed equal?
10. What colour are fire hydrant signs in the UK and Ireland?
11. Which two actors have played the role of Charlie Harper in the US sitcom, 'Two and A Half Men'?
12. In which Irish Church is the head of Oliver Plunkett on display?

13. Augusta is the capital of which US state?
14. The television advertisement for which food product was accompanied by the challenge 'bet you can't eat more than two'?
15. What is the chemical symbol for silver?
16. The original London Bridge was dismantled in 1968 and rebuilt over the next three years in which US state?
17. Which country is the world's largest producer of bananas?
18. What song provided 80s English singer, Billy Idol with his biggest UK chart hit?
19. Who is the only person to have won an Oscar for 'Best -Actor/Actress' on four occasions?
20. Who wrote the poem 'O captain, my captain'?
21. What do Vanessa Redgrave, Stephen Hawking and David Bowie all have in common?
22. What is the American term used to collectively describe the USA's eight elite colleges?
23. What is the highest possible break in snooker without ever potting the black ball?
24. What happened Solomon Grundy on Friday?
25. The Assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand, said to have sparked the 1st World War, happened in which European city?

61. 10, Yellow, 11, Charlie Sheen and Ashton Kutcher, 12, St Peter's, 13, Maine, 14, Shredded Wheat, 15, Ag, 16, Arizona, 17, India, 18, Rebel Yell, 19, Katharine Hepburn, 20, Walt Whitman, 21, They refused to accept knight-hoods, 22, Ivy League, 23, He got worse, 25, Sarajevo.

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

Let Your Light Shine!



Cait Ni Cheallaigh
- Thornhill Mercy Award.



Ainara Hutcheon & Orlaith Cooper
- St Cecilia's - Football.



Tei Chen - St Anne's PS
- Donegal Athletics Awards.



Abbie-Rose McGeady - Holy Family PS
- Ulster Showjumping.

“Fan into a flame the gift of God”. (2 Timothy 1:6)



Gemma Gallagher, St Brigid's College
- Budding Artist.



Rosie O'Donnell
- Thornhill Mercy Award.



Mia McDaid & Rachel Donaghy
- St Cecilia's - Kindness.



Jeannie McLaughlin - St Cecilia's
- Leadership.



Patrick Terence McKeever, Carnhill
- Centenarian.



Conan - St Mary's, Drapers-town
- Cycling Jersey Design



Hollie Frystal, Strabane
- JP11 Papal Award.



Fionnuala de Brun, Moville -
JP11 Award.



Lauren Sweeney
- Thornhill Mercy Award.



Ruby Sturgeon, Claudy
- JP11 Award.



Rebecca O'Doherty,
St Eugene's - Codetta Choir.



Maeve Coyle - St Cecilia's
- Music.



Roisin Rice, St Mary's College
- IT Expert.



Kate McGorry, Strabane
- JP11 Award.



Serena Doherty, Carndonagh Community School - Caring Chaplain.

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

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

Clonmany, Coleraine, Creggan, Cullaff, Culmore, Desertmartin, Donnylough, Drumquin, Dunamaghy, Dungiven, Fahan, Faughanvale, Garvagh, Gortin, Greencastle,