



# The NET

Sharing fruits of faith in Derry Diocese

ISSUE 88. SEPTEMBER 2023

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See inside...



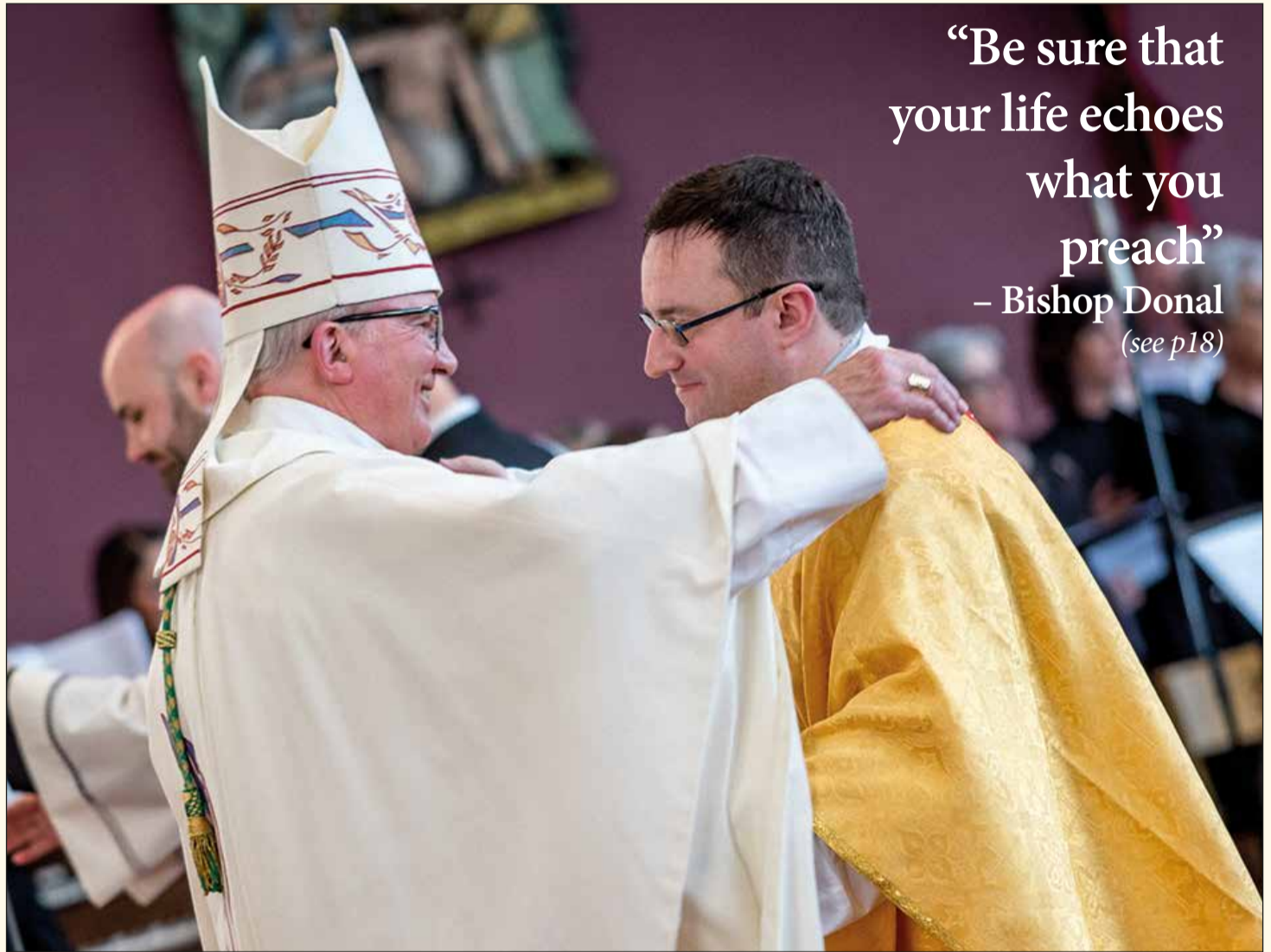
Fr Stephen Kearney Award – Newtownstewart



50 Golden Years of St Brigid's PS – Lavey



Doon Well & Ards Pilgrimage – St Eugene's



“Be sure that your life echoes what you preach”  
– Bishop Donal  
(see p18)

Fr Stephen Ward was ordained by Bishop Donal McKeown, in Church of Christ The King, Cappagh Parish, Omagh.



Family Fun to Celebrate 240th – Long Tower



Parish Picnic - Coleraine



Fete Fun – Buncrana



New Icon Blessing – Gortnaghey, Dungiven

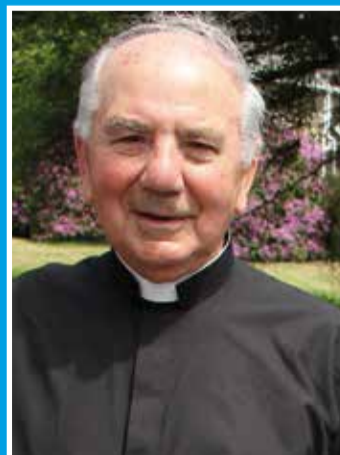
People in focus



Archbishop Eamon Martin  
- Primate All Ireland



Bob Shepard  
- Steelstown



Fr Carlo Centra RIP  
- Buncrana



Fr Peter Madden  
- Ballinascreen & Desertmartin



Fr Stephen Ward  
- Killyclogher, Omagh

Also featuring: Young Writers; Termonbacca summer scheme & Anam Og fun; Great year for St Patrick's College, Dungiven; Fr Peter Madden's Ruby Jubilee celebration; Long Tower Audio launch; Greenlough's St John's Eve bonfire; Syro-Malabar community picnic; Knock Rosary Rally; Lighting the Fire on Slane; Child Safeguarding Training update; Children's Catechism Club; Diary Dates, Quiz... and much more...

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Sr Deirdre Mullan, Sisters of Mercy, Northern Province, reflects on the Pope's prayer intention for September - "For people living on the margins: We pray for those persons living on the margins of society, in inhumane life conditions; may they not be overlooked by institutions and never considered of lesser importance"...

## A ray of hope in a world too often plunged into despair

POPE Francis' intention for September comes at a time in human history when many of our brothers and sisters are considered less than human! I think about migrants forced from their homelands because of war, the climate crisis, food insecurity and a host of other devastating circumstances that causes people to uproot from all that is familiar and travel to places where, too often, they are not welcome.

The Pope mentions and prays that no one is considered of lesser importance, and I thought of the recent search to find the Titanic sub. This was a collective

effort involving British, USA and Canadian navies, among other experts. The five people on board paid \$250k each to be part of the adventure.

No effort was spared to find these five people in a race against time. Around the same time, another group of people also disappeared. Approximately 500, mainly women and children, escaping terror and totalitarianism are now somewhere at the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea, but sadly there was not the urgency or collective effort to find and save these precious human beings.

The moral dilemma is that age-old question: Are some human beings more precious and more valuable than others? And to that age-old moral dilemma, are some human beings more precious than others?

I, thankfully, had the privilege to be part of a group helping a young man from the 'untouchable caste' in India, to get a visa and scholarship, which will be life-changing for him and, hopefully, his family.

As I looked at this vulnerable 18-year-old, and the stigma endured by being an untouchable, I learned that the

young man is from a family of seven. They share ONE bed. Can you imagine? The young fella is very, very bright, and, through networks and various people, we have managed to get him a place at a Mercy University near here. When he saw the dorm room where he would live, he asked what time he was scheduled to use the bed?

And so, in the midst of much evil and inhumanity, how a group of people came together to help young Adithya, is a ray of hope in a world too often plunged into despair!



Sr Deirdre Mullan, Sister of Mercy, Northern Province.

## Youth urged to be witnesses and keep WYD memories alive

MANY people doubted the hunger for a post-Covid World Youth Day. Instead, 1.5 million young people crammed the streets and parks of Lisbon to accompany Pope Francis on his journey.

This comment was made by Bishop Donal on his return from the two-week youth pilgrimage he led to Portugal for World Youth Day, with the Diocesan Youth leaders, which attracted the largest number of countries in its history, with around 1,400 attending from Ireland.

"Our group of 24 from Derry Diocese really did us proud," he told 'The Net': "They engaged with all the events and faced the challenges of heat and tiredness with unflinching good humour.

"Such a pilgrimage is not merely a few days of fun and celebration for the universal church. I trust that the time together will have helped our young people on their own faith journey - and bonded them together as they hand on faith to their peers back home."

He went on to recall: "At the final Mass on the Sunday of the Transfiguration, Pope Francis left us with three ideas from the Gospel - shine, listen and do not be afraid. That message will stay with me as we face the challenge of enabling young people to meet Jesus and to see His face, the face of the Father's mercy."

Meanwhile, Pope Francis has been on social media encouraging the young people who attended WYD to reflect on their experience, saying: "It is a memory that is not to be packed away or left alone in photo albums; it should be a living memory and you have to keep it alive.

"And, how do you keep something alive? By passing it on, by giving it to others. A family is kept alive through the children, who carry on the family, and the parents who then become grandparents. But it remains alive.

"Keep alive this memory that you have lived at World Youth Day, do not 'anesthetize' it or put it in the album of past

memories. Alive. Tell others about it: at university, at school, at work. Tell them about what you experienced and of that crowd of more than a million-and-a-half who were there, and, above all, about what you felt."

The Pope went on to ask the young people to "be missionaries, sowers and witnesses of what you have lived"; and he thanked them for the witness which they bore, saying: "It is your turn to be witnesses."

He concluded with the blessing: "May God bless you; may Our Lady watch over you. And do not forget to pray for me. Thank you."

During his time in Lisbon with the young people of the world, the Holy Father delivered the message: "There is no future in a world without God."

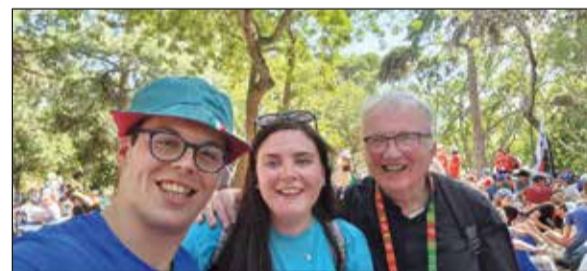
He encouraged them to embrace their faith, to take risks to change the world, promoting human fraternity across the board, and to give credibility to their faith through the choices they make in life.

"Unless faith gives rise to convincing lifestyles, it will not be a 'leaven' in the world," remarked Pope Francis, adding that it was not enough for Christians to be convinced, "We must also be convincing."

And he stressed that Christianity "cannot be lived as a fortress surrounded by high walls, one that rises the

ramparts against the world." The young people also heard the Holy Father invite them to reflect on how beautiful it was that God loved them.

"God loves us as we are," he said, "not as we would like to be or as society would like us to be...Don't be afraid, have courage, go forward knowing that we are loved."



**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](mailto:editorthenet15@gmail.com) or ring/text 07809292852

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

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

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

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

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

# Exploring the Parables through games, arts, cookery and discussion... Termonbacca Summer Scheme a great week of fun and faith development *by Aoife O'Neill*



THE faith-based summer scheme at Termonbacca Carmelite Retreat Centre, Derry, was a fantastic week for the 20 young people, aged from 8-14 years, who came along to explore the parables of Jesus through fun games, arts, cookery and discussion.

On the Monday, we looked at the Parable of the Sower and the young people had a lot of fun decorating cupcakes and playing seed themed games. On Tuesday, we explored the Lost Sheep and

the Lost Coin parables. We were joined by Aoife O'Hagan, from Youth Initiatives, who came along to share with the young people how she tries to spread the Gospel in her own life and encourage them with ways they can also. Afterwards, a wealth of creative talent came to life as each young person got to paint their own candle holder.

On Wednesday, the Good Samaritan parable came to life as Sean Gallagher and Natalie Melaugh from St Vincent de

Paul came in to speak about their mission. The young people also spent time in the Oratory, learning all about the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist and praying for the work of St Vincent's, and all those who help others.

The air was soon filled with the sound of bouncing beads as we all made our own Rosary beads. These were then blessed by Fr Stephen Quinn and the young people were delighted to be taking home their handmade rosaries.

The Prodigal Son was next, on Thursday, and Fr Stephen gave a teaching on the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The young people made the most of the opportunity to discuss and ask questions they had about Confession and Heaven and Hell.

'Hide and Seek' became a firm favourite, as the group loved having such a vast area of possible hiding places. We were also joined by Mattie and Claire from the Association of Iconographers

of Ireland, who taught the young people about the language of icons. Laughter filled the air as they had the chance to dress up and play 'Guess the type of Saint'.

On the final day, we looked at the treasure in a field and great banquet parables. Fr Stephen spoke on vocation and what it means to live a full and happy life, when we take the time to discover what God wants of us.

Together, we had a party to celebrate the week and we had the final round of our Mario Kart tournament, which had been running all week. Making the most of one of the only dry days, we enjoyed outdoor games, including Capture the Flag and a water fight. Much to the delight of the children, they finally succeeded in their attempts to catch Fr Stephen and gave him a good soaking.

All-in-all, it was a very fun-filled week and we hope all the young people who came along will reap fruit from all that we did together.



# Anam Og enjoy Magilligan outdoor Mass and Benone Family Fun Day *by Aoife O'Neill*



ON Sunday, August 6, the members of Anam Og and their families gathered at the Mass Rock in the graveyard of St Aidan's Church, Magilligan, to celebrate Mass together.

Anam Og is a faith based group of young people aged 10-14 years, who meet in Termonbacca Carmelite Retreat Centre in Derry.

The day was beautiful, as the sun shone allowing all those gathered to enjoy the beautiful scenery from the hilltop location.

Fr Stephen Quinn celebrated the Mass and the young people read the Readings and led the Prayer of the Faithful. Father

took the opportunity to deliver a teaching about Mass and explained what is happening when we are at Mass.

He said that during the Mass, as the priest sets out the altar with what he will use during it, the cross is being assembled and that this is Calvary being made ready, where the Lord will come and once more pay it all for us upon the Cross.

Fr Stephen went on to explain that during the Mass, the veil between Heaven and Earth is very thin. He commented on how people go off seeking signs and wonders, remarking that we need no sign other than the Eucharist.

He added that, at Mass, Jesus Christ is fully present, and that not only does He transform the bread and wine, but we can consume Him, as He wants to go right inside us and change us also.

After Mass, the families all travelled to Benone beach, where they enjoyed a picnic and games together. Days like this are so important, as they allow families to connect with other families trying to live out their Catholic faith. The

adults can share conversation and encourage one another through the difficulties of raising children in the faith.

The weather held out and we were delighted that we had the full day with only a few spits of rain.

The youth group has now resumed after the summer break and new members are welcome. It takes place on the first and third Sunday of each month, and runs from 6-7.15 pm.



# St Patrick's College Dungiven start new school year on a high

WHAT a fantastic year 2023 has been for St Patrick's College, Dungiven. They started the year with record breaking results in both GCSE and A level, with 100% - A\*-C and 91% - A\*-B at A level, and 75% 5 A\* - C including English and Maths, and 97% A\*-C-5 A\*-C at GSCE level.

Last September their student, Dearbhaile Brady won 'Inspirational Young Person of the Year' in the Derry People Awards.

Then, during November and December all the hard work and preparation went into producing our fabulous school production of 'Annie', which saw the students and staff performing to a packed out audience each night.

Personal highlights for St

Patrick's College in sport during the 2022-23 academic year was the school reaching four Ulster Finals. St Patrick's are currently Ulster Champions in U13 and 15 Hurling. They were runner-up in U14 Camogie and U15 boys Gaelic.

St Patricks reached two NI School Boys Cup Finals, and are U13 champions and U15 runners up.

Recently, the school was short-listed and won 'Co Derry School of the Year 2023' and Mr Kelly received two awards: Special Recognition GEM Award 'Going the Extra Mile' and Highly Commended 'Co Derry Teacher of the Year 2023'.



## Fr Stephen Kearney Award for young Sunday Mass readers

Photograph by Ashlene Canning.



THERE were five P7 recipients of the Fr Stephen Kearney Award this year in Newtownstewart: Cobhlaith McNamee, Jamie-Lei McCormick, Darcey Canning, Grace McIvor and Meghan Patton. In honour of the late Fr Kearney, the Award acknowledges the St Patrick's School children's contribution to the liturgical life of the parish during their P7 year. The five girls are faithful readers at Sunday Mass and are pictured here at St Eugene's Church, Glenock, with Fr Roland Colhoun.



## Tech and talk unite in celebration of St Columba's Long Tower



A new multi-lingual audio tour of the Long Tower brings the rich treasury of this beloved Church and its holy setting to a new generation of tourists, visitors and locals alike.

Vividly narrated by Bishop Donal, the self-guided audio and video experience weds tech and talk in an engrossing 20 minutes.

Narrated in Irish, English and Italian, the audio tour provides step-by-step directions inviting you to linger over the paintings, artwork, architectural features and curiosities in this holy precinct.

Priced at just £2 per use, it is a very affordable way to deepen your appreciation of St Columba's Long Tower and the fascinating history of the ancient monastic grounds that encircle it.

Bishop Donal said: "I am

delighted that this project is brought to this stage. St Columba's Church is perhaps the most ornate Catholic place of worship in the city. It is situated on an ancient historical site and bears witness to the long history of Christianity in Doire Cholmcille.

"I hope that this audio guide will enable many visitors to appreciate the quality of the art and the craftsmanship in the Church - and to get a sense of the living faith community that worships here. They are proud of their past and can face the future with confidence."

The audio-visual tour was officially launched on in July by Long Tower Adm, Fr Gerard Mongan, who said: "This audio guide celebrates the rich inheritance of faith here, from the

time of St Columba down through the centuries. The heart of that faith has always been the celebration of the Mass on this sacred site.

"The audio guide provides tourists, visitors and local people with a wonderful opportunity to deepen their appreciation of this beautiful Church and its history. Everyone who has listened to it so far has been impressed with the depth and significance of the content. I would like to thank Bishop Donal for his evocative narration, those involved in the translation and delivery of the script in Irish and Italian, as well as Emmet Thompson and Kieran Griffiths for bringing this project to completion."

Welcoming the new audio guide, Mayor of Derry and Strabane, Councillor Patricia Logue, said: "This will be a fantastic resource for the Long Tower which is one of the city's most historic and much-loved buildings. As well as having the opportunity to take in the beauty of the building itself, visitors can find out more about its rich history and the important

role this sacred space has had in shaping local worship, culture and heritage over the centuries."

### Áras Cholmcille: St Columba Heritage Centre

St Columba's Long Tower has recently partnered with ÁrasCholmcille to create a new religious and cultural offering within the grounds of the church. The interactive museum and interpretative centre is committed to developing religious, cultural, ecumenical and educational opportunities within a community and parish setting.

The building, known locally as the 'wee nuns', was generously restored by the Heritage Lottery Fund in 2014. It is included in Derry City and Strabane District Council's heritage development buildings.

The centre is committed celebrating the shared history of the city's founding saint.

Contact: Darinagh Boyle, Tourism Engagement Officer, ÁrasCholmcille. M:07789850793 Darinaghboyle15@gmail.com



# 50 Golden years of St Brigid's PS Mayogall



Today, the school has 11 classrooms, although the majority of these are Mobiles (modular buildings), three playgrounds, an outdoor learning area and risky play area. The school has experienced success over the past 50 years academically, in sport, music, drama, quizzes and in cross-country running.

On Thursday, June 29, at a special anniversary Mass celebrated in Our Lady of Mercy Church by Lavey PP, Fr Eamon Graham and concelebrated by Fr Paddy Doherty PP Glen, a capacity congregation joined in this celebration of education.

ST Brigid's PS in the Parish of Lavey opened on September 1, 1972, with five classrooms, a multi-purpose Hall, one office, and a large playground. Parish records indicate that the building of this new school, under the Trusteeship of Fr Maguire, cost a total of £51,990 at a time when a pint of milk cost only 3p and a white loaf 10p.

Staff, past and present, participated in the Mass, with very appropriate readings, prayers and gifts being brought forward. The thoughtful liturgy was greatly enhanced by the stunning music liturgy from the school choir, under the leadership of Sean Scullion.

This fantastic choir has had a very successful year as part of the Golden Anniversary celebrations, including an invitation to The Church of the Redeemer at Clonard Monastery as part of the Clonard Novena June 2023. It also sang at 11.30 am Mass on June 15 to a capacity congregation. Following their performance, they received cards, letters, and emails from across the world, complimenting the children on their singing, their reverence and respect within the church.

At the end of Mass, school principal, Mrs Mary O Kane, acknowledged the support of all those who had helped St Brigid's PS on the path to success, including the input of those no longer with us.

Mrs O'Kane spoke of the great contributions of the Lavey community towards the school, especially in enhancing the school estate. She highlighted the need

for a new school building or, at the very least, the reinstatement of the School Enhancement Programme. Currently, all capital works to improve school buildings has been halted and St Brigid's PS had been in line for a new £4m extension.

Mrs O'Kane thanked Lavey Parish, the GAA community at Erin's Own and the people of Lavey for their support over the past 50 years and posed the question, what will the school be like in 2072 - she expressed the hope that it would be a new school on a large site, but that it would always be the happy, brilliant school that it is.

Following Mass, everyone visited the school for a tour of the premises and refreshments in the school canteen, where they had a chance to view memorabilia from the past 50 years - a golden evening to mark the 50th anniversary of St Brigid's PS Mayogall.



# Buncrana Fete fun shines through rain *Photographs by Liam Grant.*



## St John's Eve bonfire tradition kept lit in Greenlough Parish

THERE is a long standing tradition of the lighting of bonfires on St John's Eve, June 23. Sadly, the tradition has died away in many places, but not in the Parish of Greenlough, in Co Derry.

Bonfires have been lit at Den's Hill for many years, and the site is marked by an impressive white Cross which bears commemorative plaques for the Holy Year 1950, and for the Millennium Year 2000.

This past June 23 a crowd of about 50 people gathered in the

field, which is reckoned to be the highest point in the parish. Fr Pat O'Hagan was there for the first time, following his appointment as Administrator of the parish at the end of August last year.

The ceremony began with a Scripture reading followed by a prayer of blessing over the bonfire, which was lit by an American cousin of the McPeake family, on whose land the Cross stands.

As the bonfire blazed, slowly at first, Fr Pat led the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary. By the

time the Rosary had ended and a final blessing given, the bonfire was a beacon of light - the light of Christ - which could be seen for miles around.

Despite the earlier heavy downpours of rain, the weather held and the people stood or sat around for some time afterwards, catching up with relations, neighbours, fellow parishioners and with others who had come from outside the parish to attend this annual event. Long may it continue!



# Cathedral parishioners enjoy trip to Doon Well and Ards Friary *by Niamh Kehoe*

THERE was not one person from the Derry Diocesan World Youth Day pilgrimage group in Portugal who did not know that I was going on the one-day pilgrimage to Doon Well and Ards Friary. Before leaving Portugal, I was constantly saying in one way or another that I hoped we would not get delayed six hours, so that I could go on this day trip. I was delighted when the aircraft took off two hours from the scheduled time of 5.25 pm from Lisbon airport. I arrived home at about 2 am on the Tuesday morning, leaving me with six hours' sleep before my morning routine, to leave the house and to arrive at St Eugene's Cathedral for the bus.

Six hours in my own bed, after spending seven nights in a hard bed in Portugal, six nights on

an air mattress and one night in a sleeping bag in a field, was delightful! I felt that this trip was the perfect way to gradually bring myself down from the hype that was World Youth Day.

On arrival in the grounds of St Eugene's Cathedral, our parish priest and pastoral coordinator were very welcoming, and were intrigued as to how I had got on at World Youth Day. After the warm welcomes, we were given a lanyard with our name and pilgrimage, and had our group photograph taken. On the bus, they had left us a pack that included a bookmark with a prayer on it, heart shaped sweets and a bottle of water.

My mum, dad and I knew some others on the pilgrimage, which was a lovely surprise. We made our way together to the

Clanree Hotel, in Letterkenny, for morning tea. We were served tea and scones, with butter, jam and cream. Biscuits were also served, just in case we wanted to keep up the sugar intake!

Next we went on to Doon Well. The pastoral coordinator gave us an insight into the background of it. We extracted water from the well to take home with us and got a group photograph.

At Doon Well there are two pathways on either side of the area. We walked up one of them as far as the statue of Our Lady. On the way down, Lauren and Bethany Doherty played and sang beautiful music. They sang the hymn 'As I kneel before you'. This was the first time I had shed tears on hearing this hymn, which hopefully gives you some

idea of the beautiful, prayerful and spiritual atmosphere surrounding us. While some of us stood singing, a few walked around the well reciting prayers, on their bare feet.

We then made our way to Ards Friary on the bus. On the way, as we were approaching Creeslough, we prayed a decade of the Rosary for those who had died in the tragic incident at the petrol station a year ago. When we arrived at Ards Friary, we had 45 minutes' free time for a walk or to go to the shop, before we had Mass at 1 pm.

The Pastoral Coordinator had a hymn booklet entitled 'Saint Eugene's Cathedral Parish Pilgrimage to Doon Well and Ards Friary', with the date on it. It was the small things like those that made the pilgrimage so special.

Fr Paul Farren celebrated the Mass, with Lauren and Bethany providing the music. Afterwards, we were unexpectedly privileged by a blessing with St Padre Pio's mit.

During the Mass, I noticed that the only saint statue in the location where we had Mass was that of St Colmcille. This warmed my heart, as Bunscoil Cholmcille is the name of the school that I had been teaching in for the last year. So, I had to get a photo at the statue for a memoir.

We then made our way to the Shandon Hotel for a two-course lunch and said 'Grace before Meals' with our parish priest. After dinner, we had an hour of free time either to stay and listen to the entertainment or to take a stroll around the hotel and

surrounding outdoor area. As we travelled home on the bus we had a sing song. Everyone was in splendid form after spending a beautiful, sunny day in Donegal with pilgrims much like ourselves. When we arrived at St Eugene's Cathedral, we said our goodbyes and thanked our pastoral coordinator for organising such a wonderful pilgrimage. We were named 'The Cathedral Club.' As a few of us were making our way across the grounds to our own transport, we stopped at our beautiful grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes, praying in thanksgiving whilst listening to the sound of the running water flowing from the grotto, and being embraced by a warm welcome home from our own Bishop Dónal McKeown.



## Coleraine Parish picnic a lovely community gathering



# Fabulous day of family fun to celebrate Long Tower 240th

AS part of the Long Tower's 240th anniversary celebrations of the church's humble beginnings in 1783, a family fun day was held on a scorching hot Saturday, June 24, in the grounds of the Long Tower Primary School.

All proceeds went to helping the youth initiatives within the parish, for which funding has been drastically cut.

A great afternoon was had by all, and Parish Administrator, Fr Gerard Mongan has expressed thanks to all who helped make the Parish Family Fete a great success, including all who provided activities on the day and to the many loyal parishioners who came along in such great numbers to support it.



# Syro Malabar Community enjoy Ness picnic

by John Augustine Joseph

OVER the summer, the Syro Malabar Community in Derry had a picnic at Ness Country Park.

It was an opportunity for members of the community to get together and know each other, especially as new members had joined the community over the past year.

As we are members of the Body of Christ, it is important that we get to know and love each other

as Scripture commands us to do many times. The picnic at Ness Country Park was a way of doing that.

And so, we walked around and saw the waterfalls and enjoyed the surrounding beauty. A 'potluck' was also held and many of the community members brought south Indian food to share amongst themselves. The community's chaplain, Fr Joshy came along too.





# Echoes of Devotion: Reviving the Glenshane Mass Rock legacy

by Fr Joseph Varghese



FEW traditions within the Catholic Church in Ireland stand as uniquely significant as that of the Mass Rocks. During the tumultuous 16th to 18th centuries, Irish Catholics faced severe persecution under the oppressive Penal Laws, designed to eradicate the practice of the Catholic Faith. Attending Mass was considered a criminal offence, with priests and congregants risking imprisonment and even death. Yet, the denial of this fundamental right led to extraordinary measures to worship discreetly.

Chosen meticulously, Mass Rocks occupied prominent locations offering concealment, allowing worshippers to practice their faith without fear. These sacred sites are a poignant link to Ireland's profound heritage, not

just historically but ritualistically and as countercultural markers.

Amidst these challenges, clandestine Masses emerged, conducted on massive boulders that transformed into makeshift outdoor altars, famously termed Mass Rocks. One such site is in Glenshane Forest, known as 'An Buachail Breige' in Irish, or 'Lying Boy' in English. According to local lore, this Mass Rock received its name from a young lookout who, with his falsehood, diverted English soldiers away from the Rock's location.

In Alice Milligan's evocative poem, 'The Brown Friar', she paints a vivid scene:

*'In the mountain glen behold a secret muster,  
Round an altar sheltered deep among the rocks;  
And the faithful friar has come*

*from far to tend them,  
Fearless shepherd of the scattered flock.'*

Understanding this history, it was an immense honour for me to retrace the steps of those intrepid clergy who risked their lives to fulfil their congregants' spiritual needs. I had the privilege of celebrating Holy Mass on August 20 at the Mass Rock, 'An Buachail Breige'.

The weather's inclement nature didn't deter the local community from attending this outdoor Mass in Glenshane Forest, near Dungiven. This commitment speaks volumes about the gratitude this generation holds for its forebears, who endured tremendous hardships to safeguard the faith. The same rugged terrain that confronted their ancestors was willingly traversed by attendees, a testament to the integral role faith played in their lives.

Though my origins differ, I can empathise with the hurdles the Irish surmounted, enabling us to freely express our religious beliefs today. During the Mass, I drew upon Pope Pius XI's words during the 1932 Eucharistic Congress in Ireland. He aspired that the memory of the Mass Rocks would

foster a steadfast devotion to the Holy Eucharist as a defence against errors.

"Arouse their spirits, so that, never forgetful of the 'Mass Rock,' they shall faithfully cherish devotion to the Holy Eucharist as a standard of their faith and a defence against errors." I captured this from a Eucharistic Congress portrait.

In my homily, I found parallels between the challenges faced by Christ's followers and our own struggles. Crises often pave the way for growth, as God's constant presence supports us. Our prayers, mirroring our ancestors' resilience, become a source of strength. A parallel can be drawn to the Canaanite woman in the Gospel, whose unyielding faith resulted in the healing of her daughter. Just as her persistence was rewarded, so was the Irish people's.

In the quiet embrace of Glenshane's Mass Rock, a resilient testament to the steadfast faith of generations past, we find a profound connection to our roots. As we tread the path they once walked, we are reminded that the challenges we face today are not insurmountable. Just as they weathered storms of persecution,



we too can draw strength from their enduring commitment.

One of the most heartening aspects of Sundays 'mountain Mass' was the fact that the congregation was representative of all ages. Our hope and prayer is that, whatever the problems confronting us are, we will have the faith and the resilience to remain faithful to the traditions of our ancestors in those penal

times. May the light that flickered amidst the rocks of Glenshane continue to kindle in our hearts. Let us pray that the echoes of devotion we find here ripple through time, inspiring us to carry on our traditions, to embrace our faith unyieldingly, and to ensure that the torch of our ancestors burns brightly in the years to come.

## Blessing of new icon in Gortnaghey

Photographs by Danny O'Kane

BISHOP Donal officiated at a special Mass on the Feast of the Assumption of Our Blessed Mother on August 15, in the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Gortnaghey.

At the end of the Mass, Bishop Donal blessed a beautiful stained glass icon of Our Lady on the outside wall of the Church.

Fr Seamus Kelly PP and Fr Joseph Varghese were co-celebrants and the parishioners of Dungiven and the neighbouring parishioners attended the celebration.

The beautiful icon of the Immaculate Conception was designed by Art Class Derry, with the help of Dungiven parishioner and iconographer, Patrick

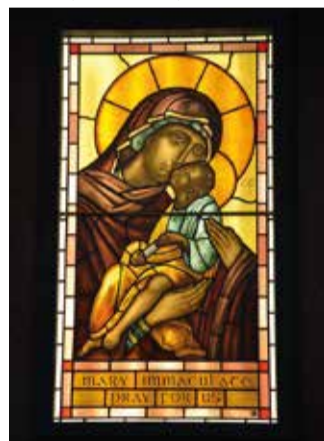
McMacken.

In his homily, Bishop Donal spoke about the 20 Mysteries of the Rosary reflecting on the life and work of Jesus for our salvation, through the eyes of Mary who loved Him most, and how they were all Gospel based.

He noted that the Early Church had seen Mary as the one who bore the Body of Christ, and as a model for the Church who bears Christ to the world. He added that the Early Church had also seen Mary as the first to be saved through the merits of Christ, remarking that Our Lady is a model for what we are also called to be.

Bishop Donal went on to point out that the Assumption was

part of our story also, which, he concluded, is why it is one of the mysteries of salvation that we are invited to mediate upon each time we pray the Rosary.



## New Cruet Veil unveiled at St Mary's Rouskey

## Special Greencastle gift for Our Lady



Sacristan, Patsy McCrory and Fr Roland Colhoun, at St Mary's Church, Rouskey, Gortin, in Co Tyrone, at the unveiling of the new Cruet Veil. The gauze veil protects the wine cruet from flies. It was designed and made by Charlotte Anne Devine of Victoria Bridge.



Brigid Conway, seamstress, who made a new chasuble for the Feast of the Assumption 2023, with Fr Roland Colhoun in St Patrick's Church, Greencastle, Co Tyrone. Photograph by Maria Bradley.

## Co Tyrone seamstress presents new veil for Greencastle Monstrance

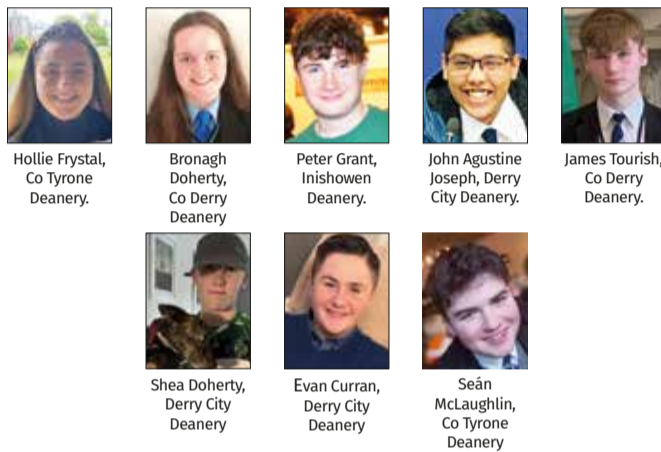


St Patrick's Church, Greencastle, Co Tyrone, sacristan, Alice Keenan, who commissioned a new veil for the Monstrance, with seamstress, Brigid Conway, who happily made it. Photograph by Fr Roland Colhoun.

*DURING the summer, some of the Young Writers had an amazing pilgrimage to Lisbon, in Portugal, with the Derry Diocese for World Youth Day. Peter, Hollie and Bronagh, along with Niamh Kehoe of the Cathedral Parish, have shared their experience in their writings this month.*

*Sean writes about his family holiday in Rom, reflecting on some of the many wonderful sights he managed to visit and how they impacted him, while James writes about his very informative visit to the exhibitions in Aras Cholmcille, at the Long Tower, that highlight the legacy of St Columba and the growth of the Catholic faith in Ireland, and John shares the great tradition of fasting within the Syro Malabar community.*

*Having gone through the anxious wait for exam results, Ella shares how her faith helped her through, not just in prayer but in the loving support of God reaching out to her through family and friends.*



# To every cow its calf, to every book its copy

by James

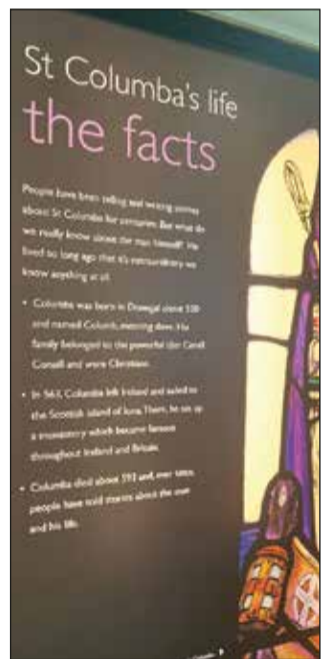
IMAGINE this, you are a monk in Ireland living in the sixth century and you have just secretly copied a manuscript belonging to your monastic teacher. This leads to a dispute over your right to keep the copy and the High King is asked to intervene. 'Every cow its calf, to every book its copy', is his judgment, and the result of this ruling? A battle with thousands killed and the self-imposed exile of St Columba.

The St Columba Heritage Centre ~ Aras Cholmcille, seeks to tell the story of Columba's legacy and offers a unique insight into the City's ancient monastic roots, as well as its Christian heritage.

The centre was opened in June 2014 and is housed in a former infants' school, colloquially known as 'The Wee Nuns', with the building located within the grounds of the nearby St Columba's Long Tower Church, close to the city's historic walls which provide majestic views overlooking the City.

St Columba's story is synonymous with the county/city that bears his name, Derry, Doire Cholmcille, and this is reflected upon to a great extent in the centre.

Within Aras Cholmcille, you will find everything from ancient relics to interactive screens, which represents how the legacy



of St Columba has endured for such a long time.

Ireland's early monastic foundations are explored, with a collection of exhibits, manuscripts, art and religious items, including a facsimile copy of the Book of Kells on display, there is much to see and learn about the monastic way of life.

So, why not come and have a look yourself, immerse yourself in the history of one of Ireland's Patron Saints and learn more about how the faith in Ireland developed throughout the centuries.

# My experience at World Youth Day 2023 - Lisbon by Bronagh

I was lucky enough to be one of the 36 people who travelled from the Derry and Clogher Dioceses to Portugal on July 25. What a whirlwind 14 days it was!

We began our two-week pilgrimage in Porto, in a parish called Sande. This is when we met our host families. We were truly blessed by our families, who looked after us so well and showed us the most beautiful parts of their country, and we soon became fully immersed in their parish life.

We began our first full day, Wednesday, July 26, with a tour of the local area with our host family, Natividade and Jose. Then we had a Mass in the evening in the local church, Igreja de Sande. Mass was said in Portuguese and celebrated by Bishop Donal McKeown in English. This was a visual reminder of how our cultures would unite in the coming days.

Then we got a chance to mix with the locals through a BBQ dinner and dancing. We showed the Portuguese our finest dances, from Irish Ceili dancing to everyone's favourite 'Rock the Boat'. This night gave me a taster and I knew I was in for a treat!

On Thursday and Friday, we got the train from Marco De Canaveses to Porto city centre. This gave us a chance to explore the beautiful city and

its wonderful buildings. We visited the Cathedral and the Episcopal Palace, the Bishop's house. These buildings were truly breathtaking! We were then treated by the locals of Sande to a music festival in a woody area called Casteldelinho.

On Friday night, we had a candlelight procession to honour Santa Maria, Our Mother Mary, who this WYD was based around. This was a beautiful night of prayer under the stars in Sande, a place we will hold close to our hearts forever.

Saturday was a day of meeting the international pilgrims, who had travelled from around the world and took part in 'Days in The Diocese' at an international Mass held in Porto. Around 70,000 people attended this Mass from different countries, and we were able to exchange Celtic Cross pins with them for souvenirs from their own countries.

Sunday was our last day in Sande Parish. We ended with a Mass in Igreja de Sande, thanking God for the fantastic time we had and for the caring families who had taken us in and welcomed us with open arms. We finished with our host family by taking a boat cruise on the River Douro, seeing the beautiful Porto from a different perspective whilst cooling off from the sun.

On Monday we said goodbye

to our host families and set off for Fatima. We attended International Mass at the Fatima sanctuary. This was a very prayerful time and set the tone for the next week, in which we would attend a Mass celebrated by Pope Francis.

We then arrived in Lisbon to prepare for a week making memories and experiences to last a lifetime. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, we spent the mornings in Irish catechesis, singing and praying alongside the other Irish pilgrims from Armagh Archdiocese, Cork and Ross, Tuam in Galway, and many more, in a beautiful chapel. On Thursday, we attended the welcoming ceremony for Pope Francis, and on Friday we watched the Stations of the Cross from the beautiful Parque de Eduardo VII.

On Saturday, we began to journey from our accommodation to Campo de Graca for the vigil and closing ceremony. We walked alongside the other 1.5 million pilgrims. Seeing the Irish flag flying amongst the flags of the countries around the world was a truly proud moment, knowing that I was there as part of the Irish Catholic Church. We set up our camp ready for the night under the stars.

Saturday experienced temperatures as hot as 40 degrees

just before Pope Francis, or Papa Francesco as the Portuguese call him, made his journey to the altar. He gave an inspiring speech about walking in hope, not giving up and not forgetting our roots. It was full of messages that we can all choose to live by. This was followed by a magical drone light show that displayed key messages of World Youth Day, 'Follow me' and 'Rise Up' in the main languages.

We then slept under the stars and rose early to celebrate the closing Mass of World Youth Day, the main event which was broadcast on TV. To be there in person, was an experience I will never forget!

We then began our journey home on Monday, after spending two weeks immersed in Portuguese culture, which is so different from our culture at home, but connected by one common aspect, our faith.

World Youth Day has been one of the most eye-opening and magical experiences of my life. I had so much fun, made so many new friends and learnt so much thanks to our wonderful leaders, Niamh and Lizzie, Bishop Donal McKeown, and Fr Declan, and everyone who made it possible, including my own home parish, Ballinascreen and Fr Madden.



# WYD Lisbon 2023...an amazing and eye-opening experience *by Peter*

MY first ever World Youth Day in Lisbon this year was an amazing and eye-opening experience in my life. From those two weeks away, not only did I take in the atmosphere of happiness and unity of other people from different nationalities and their traditions of spreading the Word of God, but I also learned that the future of the church is in the safe hands of the youth.

Great hope for the future was highlighted at this international gathering in Lisbon, praying alongside Pope Francis. Our Diocese set off on pilgrimage on July 25, alongside Clogher Diocese, to Dublin airport, and flew into the city of Porto that night.

Only knowing most people from our Diocese, the bus journey and flight was quite quiet through shyness for me and most others too, as it was the first time the pilgrims from both dioceses had met in person together. But this quickly changed when you had a few pastel de nata breaks with Clogher youth leader James!

Once we arrived with our host families at the Sandes Parish, north of Porto, in the countryside, we were welcomed with open arms and treated to wonderful Portuguese cuisine, as well as a few bottles of their port wine and homemade wine from their vineyards too.

Throughout our week in the Sandes Parish, we spent most of our time in the city of Porto, touring the wonderful buildings and tourist attractions, not just the very posh McDonalds, but the Cathedral and Bishop's house.

Both the Cathedral and Bishop's house were beautiful buildings, where people could come to pray and reflect with others from across the globe, with the Rosary prayed in many different languages.

Throughout the streets and markets in the city of Porto, our whole group met many different people from nationalities across the globe; exchanging tokens and gifts from their own diocese and country, learning a few phrases in the other's language, and teaching others the Irish language and Irish phrases.

In our host parish, we celebrated their patron saint throughout the week, from the vigil at night to the festivities, during which both Irish and Portuguese cultures were expressed, from 'Rock the Boat' outside the chapel to singing Irish songs, and joining in Portuguese traditions too.

On our last day with our host families and in the Sandes Parish, we had to say goodbye to the most heartwarming people and community we could ever have hoped to meet during our stay in Porto. Expecting people to take in some strangers from Ireland would be a huge ask from anyone, but this community was a

resemblance of what Jesus did for those who felt lost and abandoned by others. In our host home, we gifted the family with an Irish signpost fridge magnet that said 'Derry' and 'Donegal' in Irish, and a typical Irish tea towel, as a token of thanksgiving for their wonderful hospitality throughout our week, including cooking amazing Portuguese food and allowing us to have a nice relaxing dip in their own pool!

Once we said farewell to our host families, we made the two-hour trip to Fátima to celebrate Mass to commence the World Youth Day celebrations in Lisbon. A huge crowd, nearing 300,000 attended the Mass and it was celebrated in about six different languages. In Fátima, we got to see the famous grotto where the three children witnessed the angel and a piece of the Berlin Wall on display.

I found out on social media that day that a miracle had happened on that very day, when a Spanish teenager, who was blind and had attended the Mass, was healed and could finally see again, showing the true power of prayer! During that same time, when I was praying quietly to myself, a white dove in a tree caught my eye. It stood out from the rest of the birds and I believed it was a sign from someone whom I had known in my life, who had passed away, that they were looking down on me that day, which was a heart-warming thing I witnessed!

### Tough

After rushing to get back to the bus, we set off on our journey to Lisbon, where we were met with very hot temperatures reaching 40°C, and where we slept in a sports hall throughout the week. Clogher were lucky enough to get a hostel within the city centre but, as Bishop Donal said on our pilgrimage, it was going to be a tough journey as Jesus experienced in the desert for 40 days and 40 nights, but we would only have to suffer for seven. Thanks to our pilgrimage leaders, Niamh and Lizzie, we were provided with air mattresses to sleep on at night, and we felt like first class citizens in the sports hall compared to others who slept on the hard floor.

For the first five days of our pilgrimage, every morning we attended catechesis, during which a guest priest or bishop would express the true meaning of the journey to Lisbon for World Youth Day, as we were all like Mary who "rose and went with haste". Guest speakers such as the Archbishop of Texas, Archbishop of Melbourne and the Archbishop of Cardiff, all spoke on the themes of prayer, mercy and the hope that would come into our own lives for the future of the church for the youth to take on. Memorable personal life stories were shared by each of

them, showing the true meaning of these themes in our lives and for World Youth Day.

Throughout the afternoon, we met many more people from different nationalities and, like in Porto, we exchanged tokens, got photographs taken with them and exchanged contacts in the hope of becoming lifelong friends and pen pals. And like any group of Irish people abroad, we made sure that we stood out from the crowd flying the tricolour in the air and we were the hotspot of people from across the world for taking photos with them with the flag.

Huge crowds lined the streets of Belém for the Popes' arrival, and we got a front seat row to witness Pope Francis and, of course, I waved my Donegal jersey hoping that he blessed it for the county to win the All-Ireland. On the Tuesday evening, all the Irish parish and diocesan groups in Lisbon came together to pray, celebrating and expressing our faith on this journey in Porto, and it was a wonderful ceremony to be a part of. During our evenings, we survived on McDonalds for the whole week, and everyone on the pilgrimaged agree that we would never set foot in a McDonalds for a while!

Towards the end of the week, we celebrated the Passion of the Cross and the vigil on the Friday and Saturday. On the Saturday of the vigil, we slept outside on the solid, hard ground, and it was a reality call knowing that the homeless are forced to sleep outside on the ground, with only a sleeping bag to keep them warm.

On the Sunday, I never would have thought in my entire life that I would be wakened by a DJ priest on the decks at seven in the

morning, waking up all the people present for the ceremony!

Pope Francis gave a wonderful sermon on how we, young people, should guide those who are lost or abandoned because of their background or race to the life that Jesus wants us to live, in harmony and in togetherness.

The following day, we made our way to the airport in Lisbon, assembling with Clogher Diocese once more, and enjoying having an 'Xs and Os' competition on the plane home and sharing great memories. But as they say, good things must always come to an end. As we dropped those from the Clogher Diocese off, a few tears were shed and hugs exchanged, but the memories and friendships will live on. The final stop was at the Cathedral, where our journey concluded as we congratulated ourselves on overcoming the hard and long journey of prayer and making lifelong memories.

Reflecting back on my pilgrimage to World Youth Day, in Lisbon, and my time in Porto, I made so many friends and learned many different ways of prayer and teaching from others around the world, and taught others our own, just like Jesus wants us to do, to not only become closer with each other, but with God, and to find the lost sheep and show him or her the life Jesus wants for us. We are to welcome everybody into the Kingdom of God, no matter their background and, like what Mary did, we are to go with haste in spreading the teachings of Jesus in whatever way possible, even through social media, like what I and many of our groups have done with others across the globe, and become united as one with God.



# My trip to Rome...a spiritual experience *by Seán*



ON July 18 I departed from Dublin Airport for Rome, Italy's ancient capital. Within it is the capital of our Catholic Church – Vatican City. Within three hours, I transferred from the lashing landscape of Ireland to the hazy heat of the Italian coastal region of Lazio – with temperatures peaking at around 40 degrees during July. At home here, we believe 23 degrees to be roasting. This was like nothing I'd ever witnessed before.

From the airport outside the city itself, my family and I travelled into the city. I was amazed to discover that the apartment where we were staying for the duration of the trip was just across the street from the large, looming walls of the Vatican. The massive, pillared doors to the Vatican Museum were directly across the street, the ancient stone statues above them casting their shadow on the cobbled street. Thousands and thousands of people passed through those doors every day, and I couldn't wait to be one.

We had arrived in the afternoon, so by the time we had settled into the apartment there was no time for any massive expedition that day. We got dinner quickly in a restaurant just down the sloping street, and then went for a stroll around the Vatican's shady walls.

Eventually, we came into view of the white marble pillars that formed St Peter's Square. There were many Swiss Guards posted around the entrance. This was the Vatican City itself. The square, which is more of a circle, has a huge pillar in its centre, with two fountains on either

side. Enclosed on both sides by pillars, and open at the bottom to reveal the thoroughfare to Castel Sant'Angelo, and at the top sits the Vatican's golden centrepiece – St Peter's Basilica. This massive domed church is situated on the west side of the River Tiber that runs through Rome, and was built during the Italian Renaissance, with construction beginning on April 18, 1506, and finishing on November 18, 1626.

The sun began to set while we surveyed the square, casting a glow on the grey cobbles, smoothed by the millions of feet that had used them over the last few centuries. This was architecture built to endure and preserve the love that people had for God, unlike the simplistic and temporary architecture that we have today. The basilica is said to be the burial place of St Peter, chief amongst the disciples of Jesus Christ and the first Bishop of Rome – that also being the first Pope.

It felt surreal standing in the place where so much history had unfolded. This was the city where Christianity had taken hold in the minds of people, people who recognised Jesus' love for them so clearly that they would maintain their beliefs despite the persecution they received from the authorities of the Roman Empire, for Christianity was not legal in the empire until the year 313 AD, when the Emperor Constantine legalized it and eventually declared it the official religion of the Empire, replacing the long-standing Roman polytheism.

But for over two centuries before this, Jesus' prediction of Christian suffering was proven, and maybe is being proven again now. Jesus said that for loving God we would be punished.

In Acts, I found a suitable example of how Christians were punished in the Roman Empire, and yet still managed to prevail in their faith. From Acts 8:1-4, it is said, "On that day great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.

Godly men buried Stephen (who was stoned to death for his faith) and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison. Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went."

It is that last sentence, in particular, that stands out for me. After all the persecution that the early Christians faced from the Roman authorities, there were those who were willing to keep spreading the Word of God. It is for this reason that now, in this modern age, we have buildings as beautiful, grand, and enduring as St Peter's Basilica. Building a beautiful building to worship God in is the very least He deserves. Remember, those who are ill-treated and frowned upon on earth for their love for God will be treated the best in Heaven.

We spent the next few days walking around the city and visiting landmarks like Castel Sant Angelo, the Roman site, which was later transformed into a castle, the Vittoriano Monument, the Trevi Fountain, Julius Caesar's death place, and a few museums. One that stuck out was on July 20, the day we visited the Pantheon. The current building was constructed between 113 and 125 AD, commissioned during the reign of Augustus to be "a temple to all the gods" – that being the Roman gods. In 607 AD, it was repurposed as a Christian Church. It is very large and noticeably older than any of the other buildings around it.

## The Pantheon

Its massive concrete dome remains the largest in the world, and its strength and endurance still cannot be replicated. Modern concrete only lasts around 400 years, and yet the Romans managed this great feat. There is a circular hole at the height of the dome – the Romans somehow also calculated that this was necessary to prevent the dome from falling in, and that the dome would have to be 25 feet in diameter – they built it with 30 feet, leaving room for error. Its foundations were designed with an unusual looseness that allows it to shift rather than simply crumble and break. As a result, it had shrugged off four major earthquakes since its construction. It was fascinating, walking into the ancient Roman temple, seeing its irregular circular shape – it is unusual for a Christian church, because it wasn't to begin with. Within the Pantheon was the tomb of two more modern Italian kings, and one queen. It was quite a surreal experience, actually being there after years of seeing the ancient building only in photos.

The following day, we gained our entry to St Peter's Basilica itself. We queued for around an

hour, had our bags searched, and then finally walked up the marble steps to the doors. It was packed full of visitors and tourists, and I was slightly spiritually disappointed. Not as a result of the interior design itself, but due to the atmosphere. For one of the most notable and important places in the Catholic Church, it was not peaceful or serene as I was expecting.

It was an impressive building, massive and imposing, the ceilings so high, littered with paintings and mosaics, Latin lettering, gold ledges.

After some exploration, we moved to the roof and the dome. There was a lift onto the lower roof, but from there you had to wind up spiral staircases and cramped passages with sloping walls. But the view from the top of the lead dome was worth it. If you walked the whole way round the caged viewing area, you had the view of Rome all the way round, including St Peter's Square. The hundreds of people that flocked around the circular area were nothing more than small dots.

That evening of the 21st, we visited the Vatican museum. We browsed through rooms of ancient Egyptian artefacts and halls filled with the most notable marble Roman statues. It was the most amazing museum I have ever visited. At the end, we went through the Sistine Chapel itself. The experience was somewhat dulled due to the speed of the crowd being moved through the exit at the far side, but the hasty view of the roof and walls that I did get was magnificent. Seeing Michelangelo's paintings for myself was just something else.

On the Saturday night, July 22, we went to Mass in the San Andrea Basilica, a quieter basilica on the other side of the Tiber from the Vatican. It was in Italian, but I was able to follow it due to the similarity of Mass at home. It did hold something more meaningful than usual though. I'm not sure if it's because it was in a more lovely language or if it was because I was in Rome. Either way, it was a wonderful and necessary experience while I was there.

The following day was a Sunday. That meant that Pope Francis would be conducting the Angelus overlooking St Peter's Square from his library window in the Vatican at 12 noon. Unlike other times, we were searched by security before entering the square, and then we found a spot where we would be able to see the window. A red banner hung out from the windowsill on the top floor, the second window from the right. The Pope was nothing more than a small white dot in the window as he began to speak. It happened to be during the build up to World Youth Day, and that was what he based his speech on, talking about how young people

have to spend more time with their grandparents.

I may not have been able to see the Pope clearly from down in the crowded square, but knowing that he was that close, standing up in that window, his voice amplified around the square through the speakers – it was unbelievable.

We then made the trek down along the Tiber on its western banks and crossed to the east side when we got to Tiber Island. At the Vittoriano Monument, we joined a tour group that brought us to the Roman Forum, where Capitoline and Palatine Hill are. This was the place of the ancient Roman government, where the emperors met the Senate and made decisions. I saw the building where Christianity was legalized. The area was much too large to explore in any detail in the allotted hour that we had, and then we had to move away from the ancient marble and stone buildings to the famous Coliseum, where we spent the remainder of the afternoon.

Our last full day before travelling home was Monday, 24th. We took an open bus out to the countryside

to visit the San Callisto Catacombs, a network of tunnels stretching for about 20 kilometres underground, an active burial site during the third century before the Germanic barbarians sacked Rome and ended the Western empire. During the tour we only got to visit one percent of these musty tunnels, but it was the best of these tunnels. I saw an underground chapel, the tombs of nine different popes, and the grave of St Cecilia. It was perhaps the most fascinating visit during the trip.

My trip to Rome was a quite spiritual experience. Seeing so much of the Church's history in front of me, all around me, was unreal. Being able to see with my own eyes so many historical and religious landmarks, artefacts, sculptures and paintings was far beyond what I'd even expected before I departed. It is a city I hope to return to many times later in my life and rediscover again and again, because it is worth it, even in the scorching heat that I experienced it in.



## Exam Results...How the Word of God helps us in times of need *by Ella*

EDUCATION is a concept encouraged and nurtured by the Bible, as seen in Proverbs (16:16): "How much better to get wisdom than gold! To get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver." God's gift of knowledge is one which is most commonly doubted, as many teenagers down-play their intelligence as they await the dreaded slip of paper handed to them at the end of August.

A new group of individuals each year, yet the same fear and dread follows them throughout their summer holidays as a consequence of their final exams.

I, myself, am guilty of second-guessing my own abilities, as I feared the worst the night before my results day, and I know that many of my peers shared this anxiety. However, turning to God and His wisdom can help us in these situations, to ease our minds and encourage positive thinking and increase morale.

Turning to God can be achieved in many ways, not only in prayer.

He can be found within the support of our friends and family members, and their wise words.

"For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control." (2 Timothy 1:7)

Through turning to those nearest and dearest to us for support, we are taking control of our fears and worries just as God intended. Speaking to my friends the night before our results, and supporting each other when discovering the other's grades, helped to ease our anxieties and allowed us to fully enjoy this momentous moment in our lives.

I am forever grateful for my support system and my unshakable faith in the Lord, for helping to guide me through my GCSEs and AS Level journey, and I know it will continue to help me in my A2 exams.

The Word of God is always there for us in our time of need, and He will forever support and guide us to our end goal, no matter how big or small it may be.





Hollie with her host family

## The challenges and highlights of WYD 2023 by Niamh Kehoe

LOURDES 2022 was when I signed myself up to go to World Youth Day 2023, with the encouragement of Bishop Dónal McKeown during this pilgrimage. I participated at World Youth Day in 2016, also led by Bishop Dónal, which took place in Krakow, Poland. Reflecting on this experience whilst in Lourdes gave me the confidence to know that I could encourage others to come along by sharing my experience.

My two experiences at World Youth Day in Krakow and World Youth Day in Lisbon were very different. I was much younger in the first one and accepted any opportunities that were given to me, for example evangelising with strangers in a new country. The second experience was more about being in the moment and listening to God's call.

As Easter 2023 was approaching, I was organising my bonus ball fundraiser. Various businesses donated vouchers and I thank them very much. The businesses that donated were Culturlann, Zolero, Ciara Nails, Bron, Solo Hair and Beauty, The Old Docks, The Gate Lodge, The Red Barrell, Specsavers and Dreenan Medical. I thank everyone who bought a ticket. Without their help and support it would not have been possible to go on the pilgrimage.

There were challenges and highlights of this pilgrimage, which made it what it was. Here are just a few...

### Meeting other cultures

One of the things I remember from being at WYD before was the item exchanges that we made with people from other countries. Therefore, I brought three balls of wool in my hand luggage: green, white and orange. I shared strips out for us to make bracelets to share or even to keep on our luggage for identification. We continued to make bracelets throughout the trip, as well as exchanging Celtic crosses that were given to us by the Clogher

Diocese. We met people from Canada, one side of the world, to South Korea, the other side of the world and many more.

### Friendships

We were all put into a specific group for a reason, perhaps to challenge us, guide us, learn something about ourselves or to teach us something. The many things that make a friendship can be from similar interests, similar vocations, or sharing travelling experiences. On the first night with the families, we had time to socialise with our group.

As I have so many friends that went through the seminary, I was able to easily chat and make new friends with our seminarian and a priest from the Clogher Diocese. I became friends with some others in the same Diocese, because Bishop Dónal likes to bring people together if he finds connections. In this case, the Irish language was the connection. This led on to finding out that we shared not just the Irish language but music and teaching as well. I stayed within this group throughout the pilgrimage because I saw humbleness in them, which was later evident in their care and kindness, checking in on me one day when I was not feeling well.

### Fatima

It was a privilege to get to Fatima for a short while. Although we only got to see the Basilica from a distance, I felt a sense of peace. I knew it was a special place to be. I have been reading about the events of the many apparitions of Our Lady of Fatima to three young children. Throughout the pilgrimage, but particularly at Fatima, I thought especially of the Irish language Catholic primary school community that I belonged to in the last year. Bishop Dónal, who is a connection of the school, and I got our photo taken and we shared it with the school community to let them

## Hollie reflects on her World Youth Day experience...

### 'Há Pressa no Ar' (WYD 2023 theme song)

ACCORDING to Luke the Evangelist, "Mary rose up and went with haste". Luke highlights the immediacy of Mary's 'Yes to A Yes' described by theologian Paul Tillich, which became the theme for the 37th World Youth Day.

In the same way, like Mary and as a pilgrim people, we are invited to arise and proclaim our 'Yes' both as individuals and as a community. The theme, repeatedly highlighted throughout our pilgrimage, began in Porto, continued through Fatima and concluded in Lisbon.

Firstly, the theme song titled 'Há Pressa no Ar', which translates as 'There's a rush in the air', recalls the events of The Annunciation and The Visitation of Our Lady. Mary, without hesitation, accepts the Angel's message and goes to tell her cousin, Elizabeth. In one way, Mary can be considered one of

the first proclaimers of the Good News, and we are encouraged to follow her example.

So, what Good News did we have to bring back to Ireland? Well, the most obvious would be our witness to the presence of 1.5 million young people of different nationalities, cultures, race, ministries, social backgrounds, etc, who gathered together in faith and celebration.

Unfortunately, there is often an anxiety attached to the topic of young participation in Church, mainly concerning their so called 'absence', and the young WYD pilgrims now have the responsibility of changing that narrative.

Portugal proved that there is an energy existing in the Irish Church that the Holy Spirit has continued to keep aflame. Young people are there and are present!

Lastly, and briefly, my experience of World Youth Day was incredible! The first week



involved living with Portuguese families within the Parish of Sande, within Marco de Canaveses, outside the city of Porto.

The World Youth Day liturgies and events in Lisbon occupied the second week, which consisted of Masses, Confessions, Catechesis, workshops, etc. The two weeks of faith formation, prayer and friendship were

educative, enriching and fruitful - memories that will last a lifetime.

On August 6, at the concluding Mass, Pope Francis announced that the next World Youth Day will be held in South Korea in 2027. I encourage anyone who has not been to a World Youth Day before, to arise and say yes! I look forward to seeing you there!

## Syro Malabar faithful fast for Feast of Our Lady's Nativity by John

IN the East, it is typical to find various seasons of fasting throughout the liturgical year. These are also times of increased prayer and almsgiving. Amongst the St Thomas Christians of India (of which the Syro-Malabar church is part of), one prominent fasting period is the Eight-Day Lent which takes place this month, from September 1, and culminates on the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lady, September 8.

This is the second period of fasting in the Syro Malabar Church, and in the other churches to which the St Thomas Christians belong to, after the Fifteen-Day Lent, August 1-15, that is in preparation for a Marian Feast.

The St Thomas Christians (for those who don't know who or what they are) are those who trace their faith lineage back to

St Thomas the apostle. It is said that he came to India in the First century and converted many to the faith through his witness. By the third century they were connected with the East Syrian church in Mesopotamia. It is in this context that the establishment and practice of the Eight-Day Lent came to be amongst the St Thomas Christians.

The main emphasis of the fast is in preparation for the Nativity of Our Lady. If you look into the feasts of the Catholic Church, it becomes very obvious that most feasts are celebrated in memory of Saints and, most of the time, these memorials are celebrated on the day of the death of these Saints.

However, three feasts of the church celebrate the nativity of three figures that are paramount to salvation history, these being the Nativity of Our Lord, the

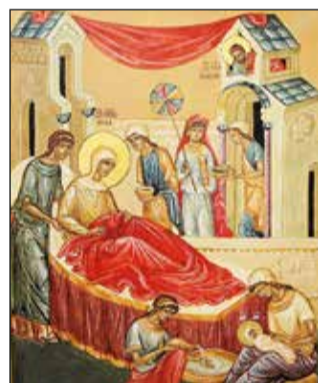
Nativity of John the Baptist and the Nativity of Our Lady (which is the basis of this article).

As is common throughout all the Christian traditions, the Nativity of Our Lord is preceded by a preparation period, of various lengths in the many traditions. In a similar way, in the Syro Malabar Church, there is a tradition of preparing for the Nativity of Our Lady, by fasting eight days before the Feast.

The idea of preparing for feasts and various other celebrations throughout the liturgical year by prayer, fasting and almsgiving is something that is common to both the Western and Eastern Church.

St Bernard of Clairvaux said: "The authority of the Fathers has ordained that the feasts of the saints be preceded by prayerful fasting."

Furthermore, St Thomas



Aquinas in his Summa Theologica gave three reasons why fasting is important for continuing conversion: First, because fasting increases the virtue of chastity; second, to aid in contemplative prayer; and third, to make reparation for sins.

Ultimately, the prayer, fasting and almsgiving helps to dispose our thoughts and our actions towards celebrating the nativity of Our Lady. As Pope Paul VI wrote in his exhortation Marialis Cultus, the nativity of Our Lady should be a joyous occasion as it is "the hope of the entire world and the dawn of salvation".

know that we were praying for them. I am very lucky and I am looking forward to traveling on pilgrimage to Fatima in October.

### Adoration with 1.5 million people

Although the walk to the vigil in the exhausting heat, with approximately four bags to carry each, was challenging and tiring, it was worth it to be in the moment when 1.5 million young Catholics and clergy were silent for adoration. There was a display that night with the use of drones designing the words to this year's theme, which were: 'Rise up'. The words 'Follow me' were also displayed. This was translated

into different languages. These words were a reminder to follow Jesus and to trust in the plan that his Father has for us. We need to take that leap of faith that Mary took when she said 'Yes' to bearing God's child, to bring His Son Jesus into the world so that we can live and live it to the full.

### Challenges

A personal test for me was being placed into a group with such amazing strong characters. Although, over the duration of the trip a beautiful reflection occurred, where I realised that we are all unique beings made in God's own image and likeness, with our own gifts and talents. I

also felt that I received a special grace of strength and confidence to be my true self, focusing on the Lord and His love for me even if it meant not being the centre of attention and just remaining modest. This simple reflection reminded me that the Lord loves me even if I appear much quieter than others. The first two commandments are to 'Love Your Neighbour as yourself and Love God'. This reflection helped me to respect the differences of others and to see the positive aspects in their traits.

### Reflection

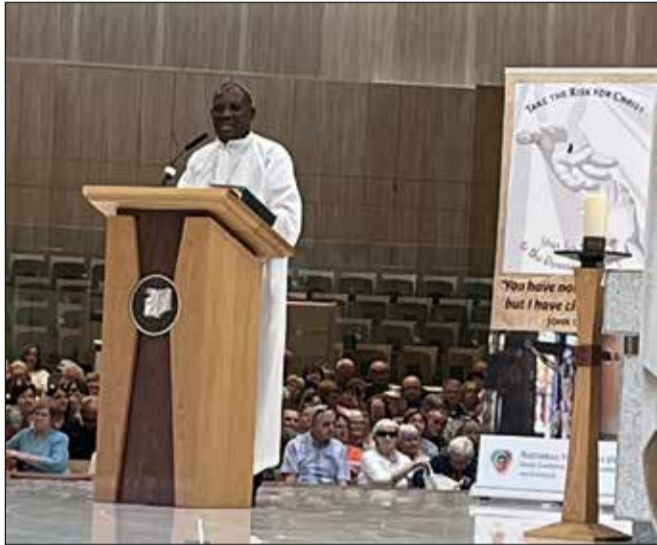
The kindness of everyone throughout this trip was evident,

particularly during struggling times. The walking in Portugal was not easy. There was a lot of inclines to walk and for long distances. Well done to everyone who overcame their challenges.



*Speaking at the National Rosary Rally in Knock, Bishop Oliver Doeme of Nigeria told those gathered...*

**“I want to assure you that with Mother Mary, victory is ours!”**



Bishop Oliver Doeme, Nigeria

THERE was a great turnout for the annual National Rosary Rally at the Eucharistic and Marian Shrine of Knock on June 3, the anniversary of the Co Mayo born ‘Rosary Priest’, Venerable Patrick Peyton, with around 70 bus loads arriving from all over Ireland and amongst them were pilgrims from the Derry Diocese.

The Rosary Rally has been a feature in the Shrine’s calendar for around 35 years now, and this year the guest speaker was Most Rev Dr Oliver Doeme Dashe, Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Maiduguri, in the northern part of Nigeria, with the Primate of All Ireland, Archbishop Eamon Martin the main celebrant of the Mass in the Basilica.

The theme of Bishop Oliver’s talk was ‘Devotion to Our Mother Mary; the solution to our modern challenges’. Sharing what Our Lady is doing in the life of the Church in his Diocese, his main message was that, with the Virgin Mary on our side, victory is ours!

Stating that his Diocese has been the epicentre of the Boko Haram insurgency, as its members started their activities in Maiduguri City, he explained: “The group teaches and practices the strict application of Sharia; using force to compel people to practice it. Of course, right from the beginning of the crisis, Christians have been the targets of their attacks. And so, from 2009, when the Boko Haram crisis started, the members focused mainly on eliminating Christianity from the north-eastern part of the country and beyond.

“The Church in the Catholic Diocese of Maiduguri has suffered grievously in the hands of these terrorists. The Jihadists have destroyed over 200 church structures. Two hospitals manned by religious nuns were completely destroyed. The Convents of the sisters in Shuwa and Mubi were also burnt down. In 2014, we experienced the worst attacks

from Boko Haram. This was the year the terrorists took over almost the entire areas covered by our Diocese.

“As a result of this, over 25 priests were displaced from their places of ministry. Over 40 religious nuns fled from their areas of apostolate. Similarly, more than 200 catechists were forced to leave their ancestral homes to safer places within Nigeria and Republic of Cameroon. In addition, more than 100,000 Catholics were displaced. When many of our people came back to the diocese from the places they were staying as internally Displaced persons or refugees, they were faced with a huge humanitarian crisis...They were devastated, traumatized and in anguish. The church made several efforts to cater for their spiritual and physical needs.”

However, Bishop Oliver went on to say that, while over 1,000 Catholics have been killed, there has been a great improvement regarding security throughout the Diocese and that, despite the crisis, the faith of the people remained “unshakeable”, which drew a spontaneous applause from those gathered in the Basilica.

“Our people have continued to manifest their faith publicly,” he added, “Like the early disciples, our people are happy that they have the privilege to suffer for the sake of Christ.”

The Bishop went on to share the many ways in which the Church in his Diocese is, indeed, growing, with one being an increase in the reception of the Sacraments. As well as seeing a steady increase amongst children and adults preparing for First Holy Communion, he recently confirmed over 500 candidates, and many couples not married in the Church have had their marriages solemnised.

**Slumber**

Saying that his Diocese is also experiencing an increase in its

Catholic population, with it being more now than before the Boko Haram crisis, he remarked: “One may wonder why this is so, since we have over 1,000 Catholics who have been killed during this crisis and many, especially non-indigenes, have fled to major cities and to safer places within and outside the country. The major reason for this increase is the fact that many of our Catholic members who were ‘sleeping’ spiritually have woken up from slumber.”

There is also an increase in Vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life, with Bishop Oliver noting: “In less than 10 years of my episcopacy, I have ordained over 50 young men to the priesthood, not including those who have joined different male religious congregations. The number of young girls from this diocese who have entered the convents and have become Reverend Sisters within these years is very encouraging.”

Commenting on the source of their strength as a family of God at this challenging time in his Diocese, he highlighted the Eucharist as the main source: “Since many of our people participate in the Sunday and weekday Masses celebrated by our priests, they receive the food of their souls which enables them to remain strong and focus in their faith despite the crisis being experienced.”

Adoration of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, he said, was the next important source and could not be over emphasised: “In the life of the church, the Eucharist is the centre of adoration; it is the recognition of God, the recognition that everything comes from Him. In this moment of strong secularization - when people tend to forget God, to maintain that He is not important in human life - it is necessary to reaffirm that adoration comes first, in other words, that God comes first.”

And another important source that he shared was devotions to the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the form of Rosary processions, acquiring a site for a Marian Shrine, a Novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help, a Diocesan celebration of the Solemnity of the

Assumption, the re-consecration of the Diocese to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Saturday Masses in memory of Our Lady and the First Five Saturdays Devotion.

Bishop Oliver shared a vision that he had in 2014, during very severe Boko Haram attacks: “I was devastated, traumatised, in pain and in anguish. I was in the chapel in my house, where the Blessed Sacrament is exposed and every morning, afternoon and evening, I am there to say prayers. I started praying the Rosary. When I raised my head, on the right side of the altar I saw Jesus standing with a very big sword. I said what is this? Jesus did not say anything. He started to come close to me and when He came close He stretched out His hand and handed me the sword. As soon as I took it into my hand it turned into a Rosary. Jesus said, ‘Boko Haram gone’ three times and then He disappeared. That vision is not about me. I am the greatest sinner. It is about Jesus and His Mother.”

Saying that the fulfilment of this is already taking place in his Diocese, he noted that no priests have been killed, with one having escaped from Boko Haram captivity on the fifth day of the Diocese praying a Novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help for him, and that he, himself, has not been attacked: “There is no nook and cranny of the diocese that I have not gone to pray for and with my people. To the glory of God, I have never encountered Boko Haram all these years.”

“I want to assure you that with Mother Mary, victory is ours!” said Bishop Oliver, adding: “All she wants is faithful devotion to her. We should be very devoted to our Mother Mary. One of the devotions is the First Five Saturdays. I encourage this. You have your own challenges. Go to Mother Mary for an increase in vocations in your country, for an increase in marriages and other Christian activities. Go to Mother Mary.

“Ireland is known as a great Catholic nation. Ireland evangelised the world. Let us pray to Mother Mary so that you will have this rise again in the faith. Our Mother Mary is alive and she will never let you down.”



# “Be carriers of Christ everywhere you go”

– Archbishop Eamon Martin

EVERY moment we spend in adoration, prayer or meditation, every session of Lectio Divina, every recitation of the Rosary, should inspire us to get up afterwards, as quickly as we can, to share the Good News as countless Saints, martyrs and other witnesses have done down through the centuries of Christianity.

This message was delivered by Archbishop Eamon Martin, Primate of All Ireland, in his homily to the pilgrims who filled the Basilica at Knock Shrine for the National Rosary Rally in June.

Recalling a recent pilgrimage to Lourdes, during which he carried the Blessed Sacrament in a Monstrance in procession with pilgrims there, including many sick in wheelchairs, Archbishop said: “It was a great privilege for me to be a Christ bearer, literally carrying Jesus, the Bread of Life, so close to my heart. It was very special to witness the amazing reverence shown towards His real presence in the host. I could see that many people were visibly moved, people bowed or genuflected, or simply fixed a wide-eyed gaze of faith on the monstrance that I carried.”

He went on to refer to the Feast of the Visitation celebrated some days before the Knock Rosary Rally, recalling how Pope Benedict XVI had once described Mary, heading off to visit her

cousin Elizabeth and carrying the unborn child Jesus in her womb, as being like a living tabernacle, and had likened Mary’s travels in the hill country of Judah to a first Eucharistic procession.

Delighted to gather with the pilgrims at Knock, “in the hill country of Mayo”, where Mary had visited in 1879, the Archbishop said: “Our visit here reminds us that each of us is called to be a Christ bearer, who like Mary, gets up in haste as soon as we hear the good news in order to share it with someone else.

“Let us think for a moment of how we might carry the Lord to others - we are believers! Let me ask you: Do other people see Christ in you? Do they hear Christ in you when you speak to them? When they are sick, or struggling, do they feel that you are bringing the compassion of Christ to them? Do they see in your eyes, the loving gaze of Christ upon them? Are you a Christ bearer?”

“That’s the real challenge of being a Christian today. To be able to accompany people where they are at and touch their hearts and their lives with the mercy encouragement and hope that Christ brings. That’s what Mary did when she came to Ireland - without even opening her mouth, her very presence with the struggling and suffering people from this tiny village was enough to lift them up, give them



a new sense of purpose, rekindle their faith and hope, and ignite within them a desire to respond in gratitude and joy.”

Highlighting the great need for Christ bearers in Ireland, he remarked: “Life is extremely complicated today, and many of our family members, friends and colleagues are struggling to cope. We only have to look at the high levels of anxiety, mental health problems, breakdown of relationships, and communication, and very sadly, the increasing levels of addiction, confusion, despair and suicide, especially among our dear young people.

“Today, more than ever, the people of Ireland, need Christ bearers. How are we to do this unless our hearts are like the hearts of Jesus and Mary?...I love to contemplate how those two hearts were never closer than

when Mary, the living tabernacle, bore Jesus in her womb, the child’s tiny heart beating so close to the mother’s.”

Noting that the reverse side of a miraculous medal has the Heart symbols of Jesus and Mary alongside one another, Archbishop Eamon said: “Pope St John Paul II spoke about an ‘admirable Alliance’ of these two Hearts of Jesus and Mary, which are linked so intimately in the mystery of our Redemption, and he pointed to that moment at the foot of the cross when the Hearts of Jesus and Mary were so united in love for the world - when Mary stood at the foot of His cross.

“The best way for us to ensure that we are Christ bearers is to do everything we can to keep our heart close to the hearts of Jesus and Mary. Here, at Ireland’s Marian and Eucharist Shrine, we are shown the way. Pray the



Rosary every day, meditating with Jesus and Mary, on the joyful, sorrowful, glorious and luminous mysteries of our salvation. Try to go to Mass as often as possible, and spend time visiting the Lord’s real Eucharistic presence in the tabernacle of churches. In these time honoured ways, our human hearts can be filled with the presence of God, and we, and

others, will notice the difference.” He concluded by encouraging the pilgrims to be inspired by their pilgrimage and Rosary Rally to continue their personal mission from God, carrying the Lord in their hearts, saying: “By the love you show, the concrete actions you take, the message on your lips, the joy on your faces; be carriers of Christ everywhere you go.”



Archbishop Eamon visiting the stalls exhibiting during the National Rosary Rally in Knock

## Children’s Rosary spreading across Ireland

WITH Children’s Rosary groups spreading to more parishes around Ireland, the organisers of the National Rosary Rally at Knock this year welcomed some of the young members of these to lead it during the pilgrimage Rosary Procession.

The Children’s Rosary group in the Claudy Parish was the first to set up in the Derry Diocese and one of the first to be established in Ireland, and young Lee Moore, who helps to lead the monthly Children’s Rosary on the First Saturday of each month in St Patrick’s Church there, readily accepted the invitation to lead the first decade of the Rosary during the Knock pilgrimage.

Impressed by these Children’s Groups and how confidently the children had led their respective decades of the Rosary from the altar in the Basilica, while the procession made its way around the Shrine grounds, the guest speaker for the Rally, Bishop Oliver Doeme, of Nigeria, made a point of telling all gathered for his talk that it was something he would very much encourage.

He was later delighted to be photographed with representatives of some of the Irish Children’s Rosary Groups outside the Basilica, along with Archbishop Eamon Martin, Primate of All Ireland, who had been the main celebrant of the pilgrimage Mass and had met the Children’s Rosary founder, Blythe Kaufman, at the World Meeting of Families in Rome last year.

A lay prayer group movement for children founded in America 12 years ago, Children’s Rosary is composed of and led by children generally aged 4-14 years old, though facilitated by adult leaders.

Dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the Children’s Rosary is now in parishes in over 40 countries throughout the world, as well as in schools and orphanages.

Anyone interested in finding out more or starting a Children’s Rosary Group can contact Blythe by email: [blythe@ChildrensRosary.org](mailto:blythe@ChildrensRosary.org).



Children of the Rosary leader in the Claudy Parish, Annie Mullan in Knock, with two children from her prayer group.

## Impact of Mayo-born Rosary Priest on Derry family felt across three generations as...

# Steelstown man moved to tears at grandson leading Knock Rosary on Fr Peyton anniversary

THE National Rosary Rally at Knock on Sunday, June 3, the 31st anniversary of the death of the world renowned Rosary priest, Fr Patrick Peyton, was a very special time for Derry pilgrim, Bob Shepard, whose young grandson had been asked to help lead the Rosary prayers during the pilgrimage procession.

The honour that had been bestowed on 11-year-old Lee was all the more touching for Bob, as he and his late wife, Peggy, and family had been blessed to have Fr Peyton in their Dunluce Court home, in Ballymagroarty, during a visit to Derry in the late 1980s.

Recalling the visit and subsequent relationship they developed with the Co Mayo native who had been ordained to the priesthood in America, having emigrated there with his older brother in the 1920s, the 76-year-old shares here the story of his faith journey, that led him back into the arms of God and instilled a strong faith in his children...and now his grandchildren.

Born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1946, the eldest of a family of three girls and four boys, Bob found himself going to live with his grandparents at 12 years of age, when his mother and father separated.

"My grandmother dragged me to Mass every morning," he recalled, "but when I joined the Navy at 19, while I didn't lose my faith, I left God for a while. I was in the American Navy for 10 years and I had no interest in God during that time.

"I was stationed in the American Naval Base in the Waterside, Derry, from 1969-71, and met Peggy Curran at a Fourth of July dance in 1970 on the base. The American Navy Band was playing. It was love at first sight and we were married in December that same year by Fr George McLaughlin, in the Creggan.

"I was sent to Scotland with the Navy for a year-and-a-half, and Peggy came with me, but she couldn't get used to it; she was a home bird. So, I came back to the Derry base and was there until March 1975, when I was discharged after 10 years in the Navy."

In the early years of their marriage, Bob and Peggy lived in the Creggan with Peggy's parents. When their family grew to four, with the births of Bobby, Kisell, Dawn and Gerry, the couple moved to live in their own home elsewhere in the Creggan estate, where they welcomed two more girls, Maria and Shelaine. They later moved to live in Ballymagroarty, in 1983, and then to Our Lady of Lourdes Parish,

Steelstown, where Bob still lives.

"Peggy was into her faith and going to prayer meetings, and I was babysitting," said Bob, adding: "She was going out the door one night and I asked if she was going to another prayer meeting, and she said, 'Of course', and threw a book at me, telling me to read it, that it would do a lot for me. It was called 'Ok, Lord. Take over!' by Italian priest, Fr George DePrizio CSC, who had gone through the seminary with Fr Peyton.

"I read the book and that is how I came back to God again. The title hit me. I had it read and a letter written to Fr DePrizio by the time Peggy came back. I wrote to tell him what I had got out of the book. I told him that my religion had gone to pot when I was in the American Navy, but that through his book I had found God again.

"Peggy couldn't believe that I had read the whole book, it had about 200 pages, and when I showed her the letter that I had written, she couldn't believe that either."

Bob explained that Fr George had been a hospital chaplain in New York and had helped Fr Peyton with the Rosary Crusade there.

"Fr George introduced us to Fr Pat through the letters we wrote to him," remarked Bob, adding that their friendship with Fr George had grown when he and Brother Bill Murphy, all of the same Holy Cross Order as Fr Peyton, visited Derry in 1979.

He recalled: "They came to visit us and said Mass in our home, and the house was full of neighbours and friends. They came back to visit in 1983 and again in 1985.

### Family of prayer

"Fr George told Fr Pat about us. I wasn't working and Peggy had no work as she was looking after the children. We were living off the Government, on the brew, but we were a family of prayer. We prayed the Rosary every night and if anyone came around for our children at that time, they had to come in and say the Rosary with us first.

"When Fr George went back to America after his first visit with us, a woman had left money to the Rosary Crusade that she wanted shared out to Irish families. Fr George thought of us right away and said to Fr Pat, and they agreed to send us money from this. We then started writing to Fr Pat from 1980."

By now a member of Cursillo, it was through the 10th anniversary of the Derry Cursillo in July 1987 that Bob and Peggy first met Fr Peyton.

"Billy Doherty was the Cursillo president at the time," said Bob,

"and he came to our house and asked Peggy and me about who we could get to speak at the anniversary Mass. We said to leave it with us and we phoned Fr George in New York to ask if Fr Pat was coming to Knock. He said to leave it with him and two hours later he rang back to tell us that Fr Pat would love to come to Derry, not just to speak to Cursillo but all the Derry people.

"We went to Bishop Daly and asked if we could have the Cathedral for him to speak in, and he told us to take him to the Long Tower, as there was more history there. We made arrangements for him to stay in a hotel but he wanted to stay with the Nazareth Nuns in Pump Street, and had already made arrangements with them."

He continued: "We went down to get Fr Pat in Dublin, where he was staying in The Gresham, and when we walked in at 8.30 am he was in the lounge praying. I walked up to him and he just said, 'Bob Shepard'. There were two other fellas with me at the time, Liam O Coimine and Seamus Harkin, also Cursillistas, but he knew me right away.

"We took him to our house, in Dunluce Court, as he wanted to meet Peggy, and he was there for about four hours. We had all the children at that time."

"Fr Pat spoke in the Long Tower on the Sunday," he added, "and on the Monday, when he was going back to Knock, Sr Catherine phoned from the Convent to say that he wanted to see Peggy and me before he left. We went along and he prayed with us. I had no work at the time and he said to me that I would get a job before he got the plane back to New York. And I did...I got a job as a caretaker in Holy Family Primary School. Fr George McLaughlin's brother, Paddy was the principal at the time and I worked there for 10 years, until retirement.

"Fr Pat also told Peggy that she would do good things for the Rosary and she did. She started with Rosary groups around Derry, then the Drummond Hotel, in Ballykelly, which was attended by people from Limavady, and then Buncrana.

"We were very blessed in knowing Fr Pat. He wrote to us when he returned to New York, and we kept in touch by letter for a while after that. He died on June 3, 1992, and Peggy died in February 2015, aged 75."

Married for 45 years, Peggy and Bob have 12 grandchildren; 10 living. Amongst them is 11-year-old Lee, born to Bob's daughter, Shelaine and her husband, Carl Moore, who live in Claudy, a few

miles from the City.

When a Children's Rosary Group was started in the Claudy Parish, Shelaine and Carl were delighted to support it by encouraging Lee, and his older brothers, Jason (15) and Gareth (14), and younger sister, Jessica (6) to get involved.

The Children's Rosary is prayed on the first Saturday of each month in St Patrick's Church, in the village of Claudy, starting at 2 pm, and Lee and his brothers have enjoyed taking their turn in leading a decade, while Jessica happily helps to carry up the roses laid at the foot of Our Lady's statue between decades.

### Knock

During preparations for the National Rosary Rally in Knock, on June 3, it was decided to include the Children's Rosary, and the Claudy Children's Rosary Group was asked if one of its children would like to lead a decade of the Rosary from the altar in the Basilica, as pilgrims processed around the grounds of the Shrine, behind the statue of Our Lady.

With Lee's family planning to attend the Rosary Rally, as they had done in previous years, the confident Year 7 St Colmcille's PS pupil and Parish altar server readily accepted the invitation to represent the Claudy Children's Rosary Group and ended up leading the prayers for the first decade of the Rosary on the day.

Recalling his reaction to the invitation, Bob said: "When I heard that Lee was asked to say a decade of the Rosary in Knock, I cried, I was so proud. It was wonderful that the rally was held on the anniversary of Fr Peyton's death.

"Lee told us afterwards that he had intentionally said 11 Hail Mary's when he was on the altar and that the 11th one was for a special priest friend. He was so full of joy at being able to pray that decade of the Rosary in the Basilica at Knock, and never stopped talking about it afterwards. He was so confident in what he was doing and said that he hadn't felt nervous."

Having grown up with a strong faith, Lee's parents are doing their best to pass it on to their children, and greatly appreciate the blessing they feel has been bestowed on their family through involvement with their parish Children's Rosary Group, and Lee receiving the honour of leading a decade of the Rosary in Knock Basilica, on the anniversary of Fr Peyton's death.

With some memory of Fr Peyton in their family home as a child, Shelaine has always felt a close connection to the Rosary priest:



Bob's grandson, Lee Moore leading the first decade of the Rosary during the National Rosary Rally at Knock Shrine

"I think I was about six or seven years old when Fr Peyton visited our home. I remember a tall man, dressed in black and wearing a white collar. I don't remember what he said, but I have always felt a special connection to him.

"Carl and I got married 17 years ago on June 3, but I hadn't realised at the time that it was the anniversary of Fr Peyton's death. For our anniversary this year, we had booked to go away to celebrate it, but when Lee was asked to lead a decade of the Rosary in the Basilica in Knock on that date, June 3, I cancelled our anniversary night away, thinking we can go another time. Lee loves saying his prayers and looks forward every month to the Children's Rosary in our chapel. It was such a privilege for him to be asked to do this, and it being the anniversary of Fr Peyton's death made it all the more special.

"It was an amazing day in every way. I stood at the foot of the altar when Lee was praying his decade of the Rosary, and felt so moved. It was unreal; an unbelievable privilege. My faith is everything to me."

As well as enjoying visits to

Knock Shrine, Shelaine said that she also loves visiting the Fr Peyton Memorial Centre in Attymass, Ballina, Co Mayo: "The connection I feel to Fr Peyton draws me to visit the Centre at least once a year. It is so beautiful there, with a lovely little chapel where Mass is celebrated, a beautiful garden to walk around and to pray the Rosary along with the recording of Fr Peyton leading it, which is broadcast outside.

"When I am at home, I love saying my Rosary while listening to his Rosary recordings on YouTube. There is just something very special about the way he prays it.

"I feel that Fr Peyton needs to be recognised more, with the amount of stories within my own family about favours granted through his intercession, never mind the many that are recorded by visitors to the Memorial Centre."

Going into First Year at St Patrick's & St Brigid's College, in Claudy, in September, Lee said that he had a great time in Knock: "It felt special to be up on the altar in the Basilica praying, and I wasn't nervous at all."



Bob with his daughter and son-in-law, Shelaine and Carl, and their children, including Lee (third from left) at Knock Shrine.



Bob and his late wife, Peggy, with Fr Peyton and some of their children.



# Child Safeguarding training update *by Briege O'Neill*

THE Derry Diocese Safeguarding Committee has developed an effective training strategy as this is a vital component of effective child safeguarding.

The training schedule for Autumn 2023 was emailed to all parishes at the end of June. Training can be booked directly with the Safeguarding Office either via email - [safeguarding@derrydiocese.org](mailto:safeguarding@derrydiocese.org) or 'phone - 02871362475.

Current basic child safeguarding training is offered in five different programme types. These programmes have been written to meet the learning objectives outlined in statutory guidance in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

### The five programmes

1. Full-day training: This training lasts five hours and covers the following four areas: • What and how we safeguard • Creating and maintaining safe environments • Recognising, responding, recording and reporting.

2. Information sessions: These sessions are shorter in length (two hours), and cover topics including the reporting procedures required under Standard 2.

3. Refresher sessions: These are shorter in length (two hours) and cover the topics listed in the full day training for those who have already attended the full day training previously.

4. Mandated Persons Training: This is a short one-and-a-half hour session specifically for those who are defined as mandated persons in the Republic of Ireland. The content can be delivered as part of the other sessions above.

5. Training for Young Leaders: This is a one-and-a-half hour session and covers the same content as the information



sessions, but has been designed for young people who are taking on a leadership role with other children or young people. Eg, HOPE Camp/LIFE Camp volunteers.

Mandated Persons by law must have attended the mandated persons' session every three years (this content can be delivered as part of the full day, refresher or mandated persons training)

- Those that are young leaders should attend the young leaders training every three years. However attending annually is recommended.

Regardless of the level of training required, all Church personnel are required to abide by good child safeguarding practice.

### When should personnel be retrained?

Since the establishment of the National Board, training has developed as a core function. The National Board develops a comprehensive training strategy that outlines the plan for the dissemination of training and retraining across target groups at an all-island level every three years. This training strategy can be accessed via [www.safeguarding.ie](http://www.safeguarding.ie).

**\*The date for the next Full-Day Training in the Derry Diocese is Saturday, September 30 in An Grainan Hotel, Burt, 10am - 3pm.\***

### Who should attend and when?

The following guidance should be used as a minimum requirement:

- For each Church activity that involves children, at least one leader/coordinator must attend the full-day training programme once, thereafter they can attend a refresher session;

- All clergy/religious who are in active ministry with children must attend the full-day training programme once, thereafter they can attend a refresher session;

- Any personnel with a key position of responsibility for child safeguarding must attend a full-day training programme (eg. DLP, advisor, support person, child safeguarding committee member, advisory panel member, local safeguarding representative) once, thereafter they can attend a refresher session;

- All other Church personnel must be given the opportunity to attend an information session every three years.

- Those that are designated as



*(Pictured are participants who attended recent Full Day Training sessions.)*



# Ordaining Deacon Stephen Ward to the Diocesan priesthood, Bishop Donal told the Omagh native...

## Be sure that your life echoes what you preach

Photography by Stephen Latimer



THE heavens opened and sent down a deluge of rain amidst a powerful thunder and lightning storm shortly after the ceremony for the ordination of Fr Stephen Ward in the Church of Christ the King, Strathroy, in Omagh, on Sunday, September 10, perhaps signalling not only a change in the weather but a change for the Church in the Derry Diocese in just having celebrated its third ordination to the priesthood in the space of eight months.

Prior to the storm, it had been a lovely day, as the family, friends and priests of the Diocese, as well as visiting clergy, gathered in the home parish of Deacon Stephen to share in the joy of his ordination ceremony, and mingled outside afterwards to congratulate and wish him well in his ministry.

Cappagh Parish Priest, Fr Kevin McElhennon, who was one of the key people who encouraged the 37-year-old to consider a priestly vocation, welcomed everyone on what he described as "a blessed day for Stephen and his family, and our parish and Diocese".

During the ceremony, Bishop Donal McKeown reflected on how the Scripture Readings for the day, clearly spoke to some aspects of priestly ministry in the Diocese at this time, saying: "Firstly, Jesus is clear that He is not just a meek and mild big brother. He has come to battle evil in all its forms. That covers everything from leprosy and demonic possession to untruth and oppression of the little ones.

That remains the purpose of the church. The church is Christ's vehicle for healing the broken heart of the world that is fractured by sin and its consequences – and bringing us to share the divine life."

Noting the need to proclaim the Creed and core convictions about the Trinity, the death and resurrection of Jesus, and the role of the Church, Bishop Donal stated: "But these Christian teachings are not merely dogmas to be believed, even when some people struggle to accept them. Rationality is not the core of who we are as people. Jesus wants us to lift our eyes from being oppressed by the world and its cares – and view the world through a new liberating grace-filled lens."

"What you teach about God," he told Rev Stephen, "is a call to look above the greyness of life and see an eternal context for our lives. Jesus wants us to have life and to have it to the full – and the Church communicates a message that speaks against all those who would come in the night to steal that life away from people.

"Be sure that your ministry is not afraid to challenge those who would try to stop the little ones having life and having it to the full."

He continued: "Jesus knows that His followers will be judged, not by what they say but by what they do...Stephen, you are taking on the task of proclaiming the Gospel. Be sure that your life echoes what you preach. In other

words, make sure that you have heard the Word of God before you try to insist that others hear it.

"That sort of authenticity involves being prepared to reprimand both self and others. But both can be done with a divine graciousness and strength. Chastising can be an act of love. But when it is an abuse of power or an act of arrogance, it is not of God. Speaking the truth in love is how St Paul puts it. And that is not easy."

### Integrity

Bishop Donal went on to speak about how sin in church damages integrity as Christ's servants, saying: "Blindness to sin in our own midst can be a great temptation. But that blindness and silence in the past means that our present church is paying the price for what was once hidden. Bringing the truth to light is always painful but necessary if we are to be seen as people of integrity in Christ's name."

Highlighting the emphasis of St Paul that love is indispensable in all that we do, and the answer to every one of the commandments, he said: "Love chooses to love even when it hurts. Jesus showed that in His ministry and on the Cross. Love needs a good will and a strong will. It is sometimes a feeling – but it often has to be a decision.

"It seems clear from our experience that we must have love from others and must give love to others if we are to thrive in our humanity. But we live in a very antagonistic and often blame-centred culture."

"Part of the core message that you will have to proclaim and celebrate," he told Rev Stephen, "is the love and mercy of God for those who feel unloved and unforgiveable. At the heart of the message of Jesus is the conviction that God's mercy can be abundantly poured on the world.

"That does not mean that we play down sin and wrongdoing. But a church that majors on guilt

trips is not reflecting Jesus, who is the face of the Father's mercy. Celebrate the loving Sacrament of Reconciliation often and well. Know what it means to be forgiven so that you can share that joy. Love helps us all to look on our own lives with compassion and forgiveness. We cannot reverse things that happened to us, but Divine Mercy can enable us to reverse our reactions to what happened. Help people to know the love of God for them, especially in the mess where so many find themselves."

Taking up ministry in challenging times for both church and society, Rev Stephen heard Bishop Donal tell him that personal integrity does not come cheap.

"Creating Christian hope in the midst of betrayal, tragedy and death is always an uphill struggle," said the Bishop, adding: "Creating a culture of love will be resisted by those who thrive on anger. But that is what Jesus is calling you to take on today. Stay close to Jesus in prayer, trust in His love and mercy and do not be afraid of your own wounds, for it is in the desert of our lives that God will make beautiful flowers bloom."

Bishop Donal was joined on the altar by concelebrating priests, Fr Kevin McElhennon PP Cappagh, Fr Michael Canny PP VG, Fr Pat O'Hagan PP, Diocesan Vocations' Director, Fr Declan McGeehan CC Cappagh, and Fr Chris Hayden, St Patrick's College, Maynooth, and the Deacon assisting at the ceremony was Rev Gregory McGuigan, of Down & Connor Diocese. The servers were Stephen Baxter, Oran Gartland, Stuart McGovern, Conor Quinn and Cian Hennessy. The cantor was Fr Malachy Gallagher, and Fr Christopher McDermott was Master of Ceremonies.

The ceremony was greatly enhanced with the singing of the combined Cappagh Parish Choirs, directed by Bernie Devlin and Damien Conway.



# Continue to pray for more vocations... because God hears our prayers

EIGHT months after his ordination to the diaconate, on the Feast of the Epiphany, Rev Stephen Ward has been ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Donal. In the lead-up to his special day, the 37-year-old told 'The Net' of his great sense of contentment that this was what God was calling him to and that he was "raring to go".

Having felt very much reaffirmed in the call to a priestly vocation during his time of ministry as a deacon in the Waterside Parish, he recalled learning on the job as he went along and is now looking forward to serving in the full ministry of the priesthood.

He said: "I experienced an increasing and constant awareness of God's grace and how He has gifted me the grace involved in situations where I wouldn't normally have placed myself, or even felt able to handle. For example, helping out at the hospital is where the rubber has hit the road. In a lot of ways, the tougher situations tend to be in the hospital.

"I am even more raring to go from my experience as a deacon. I very much have a sense of contentment, while also aware that it is not the end of the story, simply the beginning. I just have this great awareness and

acceptance that God is calling me to priesthood and I can't wait to get going."

Saying that his diaconate had been a constant reinforcement that priesthood was for him, he added: "This is what God is calling and inviting me to do. I am very much at peace with it. I'm loving and relishing it. I can really see that when we follow God's call for our lives, we don't just find our peace and joy, we also become the best version of ourselves."

Reflecting on his diaconate experience of preaching, baptisms and hospital ministry, etc, he said: "In preparing for the various elements of my ministry, I found that it is not that I am the originator of the work, but that it is ultimately a participation in God's work. It is Him both allowing and giving me the ability to do it; helping couples prepare for marriage, tending to the sick, and generally being with the people of God in their joys and sorrows, in the bits and pieces of each day."

He continued: "I found the people that helped me most in my formation in the seminary were my fellow seminarians and, since working in parishes, I have found the greatest example and witness, but also support from fellow priests and parishioners to follow my ministry in the way

God is calling me to do it.

"Everyone has different approaches to things and that diversity bears fruit. I realised that I am not called to be another Fr Michael Canny or Fr Patrick Lagan, but that I am called to be me, Stephen Ward, and having both the freedom and acceptance to be able to do that was a very fruitful experience. It really helped me to prepare for priesthood."

Looking forward to his time ahead as a priest, he remarked: "I am very at peace and just looking forward to it, while also being acutely aware of my weaknesses and sinfulness. However, I know that that is not the end of my story, but that it is in my brokenness and vulnerability where God reaches out to me and me to Him. It is through this that He builds me up and calls me to some form of service."

There was great excitement amongst family and friends in the countdown to his special day, when his mother, Patricia, sister Nicole and her husband, Niall McCarron, and the wider family circle of the Wards, McMahons and McCarrons, were joined by the parishioners of Cappagh and those parishes where he served during his time as a seminarian and deacon.

Fr Stephen celebrated his first

Mass and gave his blessing in his home parish church of St Mary's, Killyclogher, on Monday, September 11, followed by his celebration of Mass on Tuesday, September 12, in St Columba's Church, Chapel Road, in the Waterside Parish where he served as deacon, then on Wednesday, September 13, in St Patrick's Church, Pennyburn, where spent his pastoral year, and on Thursday, September 14, in St Columba's Church, Long Tower, and Friday, September 15, in St Mary's Church, Creggan, where he had summer placements.

In this Year of Vocations in the Irish Church, with the theme 'Take the Risk for Christ', Fr Stephen also saw the week of Masses as a way of shining a light on vocations.

"God is calling men from each parish in the Diocese of Derry to the priesthood," he said, "and it is good to foster and encourage that. Primarily though, my reason for celebrating Mass in these parishes was because I was once in them as a student and some may be wondering what happened to me. So, this was a way of letting them see that whatever prayers or acts of kindness they had done for me had borne fruit. Hopefully, they will continue to pray for me and for more vocations, because God hears our prayers."



# Ruby Jubilee celebrations for Fr Madden in Ballinascreen & Desertmartin



THE 40th anniversary of Fr Peter Madden's ordination to the priesthood by Bishop Edward Daly on July 3, 1983, was celebrated along with his parishioners in the neighbouring parishes of Ballinascreen and Desertmartin.

to mark his Ruby Jubilee in Holy Rosary Church, Draperstown, and St Mary's Church, Desertmartin, Fr Peter enjoyed a lovely time with family, friends and parishioners, during which their great appreciation of his ministry was shared.

After the celebration of Masses





## Fr Madden is a true spiritual leader in our community *by Jacqui Conway*

FR Peter Madden is the cornerstone of the Ballinascreen and Desertmartin communities. The commitment, pastoral outreach and spiritual guidance offered to all members of the community is a true testament to his dedication and love for his parishes.

Through his thought-provoking sermons and his personal homilies, Fr Madden seeks to inspire and to embody the value of compassion without judgement. He is a true spiritual leader in our community.

As our parish priest, he has always been an invaluable source of moral guidance; offering young people a solid ethical framework

in which to navigate the challenges of life. As Head of the Religious Studies Department in St Colm's High school, I have witnessed many occasions where he has nurtured the minds of our young people, captivating them with stories but always circling back to the main moral message to guide and inspire them in their daily lives.

By dedicating his time to the young, he has helped to instill strong values which the children of our community can carry with them throughout their lives.

On a personal note, Fr Madden has always been an honest, supportive spiritual guide and

friend. During my late mother's illness, he was always on hand to offer support and encouragement, bringing great comfort to my mother and our family, in her final days.

His homily during her funeral captured the very essence of her personality, her strength, her commitment to her family and her faith. In his masterful way, Fr Madden was able to create a measured balance of sadness at our loss but also the joy of being blessed with such a good mother. The comfort he offered my family in this time of all consuming sadness is something I will never forget.

The impact Fr Madden has made in our community, our schools and our personal lives is difficult to quantify. He is a beacon of compassion and strength. The parishes of Desertmartin and Ballinascreen are all the better for being blessed with such a hardworking, committed Parish Priest.



### Pope's monthly intention

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

**People living on the margins:**  
We pray for those persons

**living on the margins of society in inhumane life conditions; may they not be overlooked by institutions and never considered of lesser importance.**

#### Prayer for Priests

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

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

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

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

#### Remember in prayer during June:

- Fr Pat O'Hagan (Sept 1st)
- Fr David O'Kane (2nd)
- All Priests (3rd)
- Fr Peter O'Kane (4th)
- All priests (5th)
- Fr Arthur O'Reilly (6th)
- All priests (7th)
- All priests (8th)
- Fr Michael Porter (9th)
- All priests (10th)

- Fr Ignacy Saniuta (11th)
- All Priests (12th)
- Fr Gerard Sweeney (13th)
- Fr Joseph Varghese (14th)
- Fr John Walsh (15th)
- Fr Alex Anderson (16th)
- Fr Patrick Arkinson (17th)
- Fr Patrick Baker (18th)
- Fr Declan Boland (19th)
- Fr Eugene Boland (20th)
- Fr Francis Bradley (21st)
- Fr Manus Bradley (22nd)
- All priests (23rd)
- Fr Brian Brady (24th)
- All priests (25th)
- Fr Thomas Canning (26th)
- Fr Michael Canny (27th)
- All Priests (28th)
- All priests (29th)
- All priests (30th)

# Remembering the late Fr Carlo Centra - gentleman pastor, good shepherd and innovator



THE sad passing of Inishowen-born Fr Carlo Alberto Centra, on July 1, was mourned not only by his family and friends here, but also by the many whose lives he had deeply touched during his 50 years of ministry in the Archdiocese of Glasgow.

Amongst the mourners at his Requiem Mass in St Mary's Church, Cockhill, were members of the Neo-Catechumenal Way communities he had been instrumental in setting up in the Parish of St Thomas the Apostle, Riddrie, during his 20 years there as parish priest.

Such was Fr Carlo's love for the Neo-Catechumenate, and the love of the St Thomas community members for him, that the music for the Requiem Mass was led by some of those who had travelled from Scotland to Donegal to pay their last respects to the 97-year-old.

The main celebrant of the Mass was his good friend, Fr John Campbell, the parish priest of Sacred Heart Parish, Cumbernauld, Glasgow, who represented the Archbishop of Glasgow, William Nolan, along with Fr Stephen Hannah and Fr Alex Mpagi. They were joined by a number of clergy from the Derry Diocese, including Fr Francis Bradley, PP Bunrana and Fahan, who was Master of Ceremonies as well as adding to the music with his flute playing during the ceremony, and Fr Michael Canny, VG.

Recalling having first met Fr Carlo in 1987, in St Ninian's, Knightswood, Fr John described him as being outgoing and confident, very willing to give new things a go, and very open-minded, adding that he had "a big effect on people in all sorts of ways, and that effect, in many ways, is lasting."

Fr John went on to highlight how he had encouraged the use of the Office of the Dead when receiving the mortal remains of parishioners into the church the evening before their funeral, saying: "This was a practice he pioneered in St Thomas in Riddrie, a practice we adopted in St Ninian's Knightswood, a practice I introduced to St Paul's in Shettleston, and which we now use in Sacred Heart and St Lucy's in

Cumbernauld."

Remarking that Fr Carlo's story had many chapters, Fr John noted: "He came to Glasgow as one of the many Irish, or was it Italian, priests that we needed so much then. We could never work out if he was an Irish Italian or an Italian Irish."

Born on Easter Sunday, April 4, 1926, Fr John said that Fr Carlo would have loved that he had been born on the most important day of the year – the Day of the Resurrection.

"For Carlo," he said, "faith was very much a Resurrection faith. He knew that we live in the age of the Spirit, and the Spirit filled Carlo to the brim. His spirituality was fed by his love of scripture and his involvement with the Neo-Catechumenate, which he loved and inspired every fibre of his being."

The youngest of a family of seven, he had attended National School in Bunrana and then St Columba's College in Derry, before going to St Patrick's College, Carlow, as a seminarian.

Having grown up by the seaside, Fr John spoke about how Fr Carlo had been "very fond of the beach, swimming in the sea, and searching through the rock pools looking for shrimp", and how he had fished in the Crana River and off the rocks at Dunree Strand, loved outdoor activity and was totally enthralled with the natural world and life around him.

He added: "It is to here that we can trace his love of fishing, of gardening, of horticulture and, of course, his love for cooking, especially the things he grew himself."

He went on to paint a picture of Fr Carlo as a young boy tasked with milking the family cow that was used to make ice-cream for the family shop, saying: "He cycled home with the milk, carefully balancing the canisters on the handlebars. He was also sent to other farms to collect milk and, very often, someone had to come to look for him as he spent so much time stopping en route, admiring all around him."

Fr John also mentioned Fr Carlo's love of sacred music and his vocal talent, which had come

to light when he was asked, as a seminarian, to act as cantor during his time there.

"From a young age," said Fr John, "he was so taken and uplifted by sacred music; he realised that this could only come from a divine source."

## First Class

"You really gave us a first-class priest for Glasgow," he continued, "and a great friend to all of us. He is still very fondly remembered in St Paul's Shettleston, where he worked for a long time after a short appointment in Our Lady of Lourdes, Cardonald. It was there he returned often in retirement and went out visiting every evening, as he would say, 'all the people he had grown up with'."

"I used to have to hide and put the light out the night there was a programme on the radio about philosophy, or he would have had me up all night talking about Descartes or Phenomenology or such like. He really was an erudite wee man, open minded and keen never to stop learning. He loved company, debating and the cut and thrust of differing opinions."

From St Paul's, Fr Carlo was sent to St Patrick's Dumbarton to be the curate, and from there he moved to St Thomas, Riddrie, where, Fr John said, "he was ever the gentleman pastor, the good shepherd, the innovator, and took on re-ordering St Thomas' after the design of the Neo-Catechumenal Way."

He added: "He took very seriously the words addressed to Kiko and Carmen on the presentation of the statues of 'The Way', by St John Paul: 'You priests have an indispensable role in the communities you care for by sanctifying, teaching and pastoral guidance'."

"These he did generously, seriously and effectively, as we can witness by the members of 'The Way' who are leading the music today and who hold Carlo in very high esteem."

Saying that it had been a shock for Fr Carlo to be then asked to move from St Thomas' to St Gregory's in Wynford, Fr John went on to note: "But again, his love for people, which was the very point of his priesthood, meant that he threw himself in to deepening the spirituality and liturgical life of parishes, and also their social life, which he knew only too well is central to building community and preventing a parish being simply a Mass station."

"He worked hard all his days at building parishes as evangelising communities of faith, rooted in Baptism and full of vitality. He enjoyed a well-earned rest from Glasgow when he came home here to retire 23 years ago. But I know he helped out in parishes, he celebrated Mass in Bunrana Community Hospital and in the

Nazareth House, at Fahan, and joined Scripture sharing groups, and a philosophy group. He thought priestly company was vitally important and so he helped keep a group of retired priests from all over the world together by sharing a weekly meal.

"So, his was a very active retirement, as he continued to exercise his share in Christ's priesthood and as he gardened, fished and spent valuable and quality time with his family and friends."

The Centra family's connection with Inishowen began when Fr Carlo's parents decided to settle there, having got married in St Mary's Church, Cockhill, around 1915. His father, Antonio Centra, had left Italy to go to America, while his mother, Leonilde Battisti had left Italy with her family to live in Derry. Having known each other before they left Italy, love brought Antonio from America to meet Leonilde in Ireland. Antonio's plan was for them to go back to America after they got married, but his new wife put it to him that they were far enough from home in Ireland and would be even further if they went to America. So they settled in Bunrana and had a family of seven.

Fr Carlo's nephew, Bernard Farren, whose mother was Rosa, enjoyed opportunities to spend more time with him during his retirement.

Recalling his uncle's visits home during his time as a priest in Scotland, Bernard said that they had looked forward to him arriving back for a week in February and for longer in the month of July each year. As well as returning for family funerals, Fr Carlo happily came back for the celebration of the weddings of his nephews and nieces.

"His family really missed him," said Bernard, "In those days, there wasn't the transport and travel that there is now. He missed home and family too, but he was a priest and was very loyal and faithful to his priesthood."

## Neo-Catechumenate

Commenting on the great energy Fr Carlo had put into his parish work, he remarked: "The Neo-Catechumenate was something that he was very interested in, with regards to church renewal and



reordering some churches that he ministered in, to tell Christ's story. This involved for example having the baptismal font at the front of the church, so that when you enter the Christian tradition, baptism is your entry point, and bringing the altar down more to the congregation and arranging seats around it, so bringing the celebration closer to the people."

Recalling his late uncle's great interest in symbolism used within the Church, Bernard said: "I

remember being in the Cathedral in Galway with him many years ago and the Bible was closed on top of a coffin there, and he said that the book should be open; that it is an open book not a closed book."

He went on to comment on the symbols that Fr Carlo had added to the headstone of the family grave in Bunrana where he is now buried: "One symbol has a shaft of wheat, referring to Jesus saying that unless a grain of wheat dies, it remains only a single seed (John 12:24),



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and a dove, the Holy Spirit, and a combination of the cross and the sword of the Spirit as the word of God which cuts and penetrates with the Petrine 'P' (Peter's Cross), and the other symbol has the Paschal candle, the light of Christ, bearing the Alpha and Omega symbols.

"This is the kind of symbolism that he loved about the church; to be able to relay the story through this kind of art, making it easier to pass on the faith and to remember it."

"Fr Carlo loved the priesthood and was fully committed to that," remarked Bernard, "and he was also very much open to the potential of the Neo-Catechumenal Way as a means to renewal within the Church, to give it a new impetus, and that is what it did for each of those who came for his funeral from Glasgow some 40 odd years after it all started.

He added: "It was this Neo-Catechumenal outlook that helped people to understand their faith better from heartfelt love. It really meant something in their lives, it gave them a new life experience and a totally new direction to follow. They believed that they would have had much more difficulty in dealing with life's challenges, and the resulting consequences, but for this Neo-Catechumenal Way that Fr Carlo had introduced into their lives.

"This was a loving, caring and practical way of really showing what the Church was about. As opposed to just going to Mass and nothing else happening, this was a new involvement and led to new interest that people picked up on. It really saved them. It was a new way of drawing people in and showing what the teachings were about in that community atmosphere.

"The symbolism of sharing a meal together, as often mentioned in scripture, was something that was very dear to Fr Carlo's heart. He was very much into breaking bread with others. Right up to his last months, he regularly made a pot of soup from scratch and invited some friends to his home to share lunch with him and have conversation and an afternoon together."

Buried in Cockhill Cemetery, Fr Carlo is survived by his 12 nieces and nephews and their families. May he rest in peace.

"Now I am making the whole of creation new." (Revelation 21:5)

## Fr Carlo's Scottish friends thankful for fruits of Neo-Catechumenal Way in their lives

THE Neo-Catechumenate is a way of faith formation in the Catholic Church, which was embraced by the late Fr Carlo Centra when he was ministering in St Thomas Apostle Parish in Riddrie, Glasgow. Shortly before he passed away, two members of that community travelled to Buncrana to spend some time reminiscing with him.

During their stay, Anne Bell and her friend, Frances McBride welcomed the opportunity to share with 'The Net' their experience of the Neo-Catechumenate and its fruits, thanks to the openness of Fr Carlo in welcoming the first itinerants of the Way into their parish some 40 years ago.

An 11-year-old primary school pupil when Fr Carlo first arrived in her parish, Anne recalled the 49-year-old priest being brought into her school and introduced to them: "I remember he had dark, curly hair and was wearing a soutane. He seemed kind, nice."

A member of one of the Neo-Catechumenate communities set up in her parish for 35 years now, Anne is very grateful that he had welcomed two itinerants of the Way, with Pope John Paul II having given his blessing for them to go to areas of Europe that needed evangelising.

She recalled: "These itinerants had been welcomed into Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Dalmarnock by an old priest friend of Fr Carlo, who then 'phoned Fr Carlo to say that he thought he would be happy with them too. These men were sent out by Pope (Saint) John Paul II in twos to be missionaries.

"At that time, Archbishop Thomas Winning welcomed them, as there was the sense of need for some type of renewal in the Archdiocese, and they were allowed to present the way in parishes and in a talk in second level schools, including mine. One was from Spain and the other was from Italy and, while their English wasn't great, they spoke to all the upper school students, so there were about 300-400 in the school hall.

"They were sent out in twos, just like the Apostles, with nothing; no money, just the Bible and a return ticket. I remember one of them asking a wee girl 'what is the meaning of your life?' If he had

asked me, I would have been very negative; I was angry at God that my father had died.

"They also did a series of catechetical talks (catechesis) in our parish over eight weeks, two nights a week. After this, those who attended were invited on a weekend retreat and a community was formed of those who wanted to continue."

Explaining that the Neo-Catechumenate was "a way of Christian initiation post-Baptism", Anne said: "We are baptised as babies, but we have no faith. It is understood that the parents bring the child up in the faith, however, in the 20th century, parents became more secular than before.

"My mum's family wasn't Catholic, but she went through the process of becoming one after she married dad. We had a lovely, free childhood. Then dad died aged 50 and that changed everything - from being a very happy family to sadness, and being poor, and mum having to go to work. We lost our dad, but God provided, and through the Way we came to see Him as our real Father, along with gaining the hope of being reunited with our dad in eternal life."

She continued: "People who came to the Post-Baptismal catechesis were looking for the meaning of life. We got an answer. And it was Fr Carlo who introduced that to St Thomas the Apostle Parish.

"The Neocatechumenal Way helps you to see yourself for who you are, and it helps in marriage. We learn that we are created to be gift to one another, that we can only be happy through gift of self; what spoils all our relationships is selfishness.

"When I first went into the Way, I was never happy because I had lost my dad and didn't have the faith to understand that. I was also extremely shy; crippled by that. I went to the catechesis a couple of times and left when they started asking questions! But, eventually I kept going. They said you are loved by God. I realised that what makes you unhappy is your own sins."

### Witness

Bill and Barbara Doherty, of the first community, who have been married for 51 years and have five children, are happy to give their

witness to what God has done for their marriage: "Through the Holy Spirit inspiring Fr Carlo to say 'yes' to the introduction of the Neo-Catechumenal Way in our parish, we entered a community and our lives and marriage changed. We had been married for nine years and were on the verge of separating, when I (Barbara) entered the Way. Bill followed six years later and, through being in a community of brothers and sisters where we could be ourselves, little by little, through the Word of God, and the sacraments, our marriage was being healed.

"We learned most of all that God loves us the way we are, with our many sins, and that in experiencing this unconditional love, there is an alternative way to live. God constantly gives us graces through this way, within the Church, to lead Christian lives according to His will. In doing this, God does not limit us in any way but helps us to lead life to the full.

"We are being helped to look beyond the sufferings of this life and towards our future lives in Heaven. We are discovering our baptism, as children of God, and our mission as vessels to tell others of God's immense love for them, through our own experiences. With God in the centre of our marriage, everything is possible."

Another community member, Andy Watson, also gave his witness, saying: "In 1979, I was in my 30s and had been away from the Church. I went to back to Mass one night with my Mum, and met Father Carlo afterwards. He invited me to attend a series of talks being given by two itinerant catechists of the Neo-Catechumenal Way. I went with my Mum for eight weeks, and at the weekend retreat the first community of St Thomas' was born, in November 1979.

"I became very friendly with Fr Carlo. I started helping out in the Church gardens and ended up being the Church gardener for 44 years, just finishing up in October last year, as I am now in my 70s! After I joined the Way, God called me to be married, and Carlo married me and Sheena, and we had one son. I am now widowed. In Fr Carlo, God blessed me with a great friend and mentor, and I miss him so much."

Anne also shared her brother,



Charles' experience after joining the first Neo-Catechumenate community set up in their parish: "He went through university and became a physics teacher, and then he volunteered to be an itinerant with the Neo-Catechumenate Way. He gave up his job and was sent to Pakistan with a team, to evangelise there.

"The year after that, 1986, in Rome, the Neo-Catechumenate opened the first Redemptoris Mater Seminary. At a meeting held every year, they asked if there was any man who felt called to go to a seminary, and Charles went to this first Redemptoris Mater seminary. He went to the Gregorian University and was ordained for the Diocese of Rome, in San Giovanni, in Laterano, in 1992.

"My brother's ordination was a fruit of Fr Carlo's ministry. He was in Rome for a few years and then was sent with a team to the islands in the Caribbean. He is now in Jamaica and Grenada, and there is now a Redemptoris Mater Seminary in Jamaica, thanks again to Fr Carlo."

Within her own family, following her brother becoming a member of the first Neo-Catechumenate community in their parish, Anne's mother became a member of the second community set up, and she, and two of her four sisters eventually also joined the Way.

"Today, we have three very strong communities in St Thomas, with 40 members in the first and

second communities, and 25 in the third," said Anne, adding: "The youngest member of the first community is now 43 and the oldest is in their 80s. The second and third communities are made up of the children of those in the first community and others who came along to listen the catechesis in the parish.

"A big part of the Catechumenal Way is that you walk with the same people over the years, like a caravan of people, and they are not the people you would have picked. Over the years, you start to see people changing and they will see you changing. Fr Carlo said that we are like Liquorice Allsorts. We are all different. Fr Carlo was a father to many, who loved him."

She also told of the experience of Fr Pierino Pino, an Xaverian priest, who attended the Neo-Catechumenate catechism in St Thomas' during a time of crisis in his life and ended up staying.

"Fr Pino wanted to be an itinerant of the Way," said Anne, adding: "It was a big decision for him. The Xaverians had been his home since the age of seven and he had to ask to be freed to evangelise with the Neo-Catechumenate. He was sent to the north of Ireland in a team, and one of the fruits of the mission has been the Redemptoris Mater Seminary in Dundalk, which is an institution of the Armagh Archdiocese. We now have communities in Belfast, Cork, Drogheda and Dublin."



# Missionary heart needed for Irish Church already beating in Redemptoris Mater Seminary – Archbishop Eamon Martin

THE Redemptoris Mater Seminary was established in Dundalk, Co Louth, in 2012, to form both diocesan and missionary priests for the New Evangelisation, and while its vocations come through Neo-Catechumenal families, the seminary is an institution of the Archdiocese of Armagh. When ordained, the priests are incardinated into the Archdiocese of Armagh and serve in the parishes of the Archdiocese. At the discretion of the Archbishop, they may also serve as missionaries, both in other parts of Ireland and internationally.

Since its foundation, five priests have been ordained and are serving in Magherafelt, Lurgan, Newry, Dundalk and Ardee. As part of their formation, the seminarians attend a local Neo-Catechumenal community, which consists of families, young people and older people. Currently, there are 15 seminarians in formation, with

two deacons to be ordained in St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh, on October 8.

In a 2019 video recording about the Dundalk seminary, Archbishop Eamon Martin remarked: "One of the issues for us here, in Ireland, than in other parts of the West, is that we have people who are baptised, maybe, indeed, some of them are practising, but who do not really have a personal understanding of the faith. That is where the Neo-Catechumenal Way has come in, because all of the candidates who are attending the Redemptoris Mater Seminary have come through the Neo-Catechumenal Way experience, which gives them a more mature understanding of their baptism and the fact that they are called to bring the Good News to others."

Following a renovation in 2016, the seminary building has required further renovation for extension because of the sustained growth

of vocations, and on February 12, last year, Archbishop Eamon presided over the ceremony for the laying of the foundation stone for these works, which included the provision of additional bedrooms, increased dining and living areas, as well as an Oratory. The work is expected to be completed by the end of 2023. The marble foundation stone had been blessed by Pope Francis in 2018, when in Ireland for the World Meeting of Families, and is engraved with a symbol of Jesus Christ.

In his homily, Archbishop Eamon spoke about the Church in Ireland coming to the end of a particular chapter, saying: "How the Church has changed a lot and people's attitude to the Church has changed a lot. Things are changing in the Church in Ireland. We know that. The bishops of Ireland have, therefore, asked for a synodal pathway, that this decade, the decade of the 2020s, would be used

as a special time for reflection, and for getting a new vision for the Church in Ireland."

Suggesting that the most important need is "a missionary heart once more for the Church in Ireland"; a heart for the new Evangelization, Archbishop Eamon said: "I sincerely believe that that heart has already begun to beat, and it is already beating softly here in Dundalk. And I am hopeful for the future. I believe that the Lord is at work, not just ourselves, but the Lord, and the Holy Spirit is blowing through this place...to breathe into the Church in Ireland some new life!

"We have to be humble, but also hopeful for the future. And I am very pleased at what we've achieved already here in the Redemptoris Mater Seminary. And my hopes for the future are that it will continue to be a place where mission can be nourished and developed. Ireland has had a tremendous missionary



outreach down through the centuries. So, one of the ingredients of the Redemptoris Mater Seminary that is so important to me is this missionary dimension. It is really a seminary for the New Evangelization. We're not quite sure what that's going to look like in Ireland.

"I'm hoping that the synodal pathway that we have begun will help us to chart together a future in which faith, hope and love will continue to grow. And I'm hopeful that the young men who are being

formed here in Dundalk will be able to bring that missionary spirit into their priesthood here in the Archdiocese, and also beyond. Our commitment is that the seminarians who study here and who will be ordained, please God, as priests, will spend time here in the Archdiocese of Armagh, but will also go out from here to other places, and indeed to other countries, and then return to bring that missionary endeavour, afresh and anew to our shores."

## From humble beginnings to over 75,000 Neo-Catechumenate youth at WYD 2023

THE youth of the Neo-Catechumenal Way travelled in their thousands to Portugal, to be part of the 37th World Youth Day in August, which attracted almost two million youth. Over 75,000 of them from all across the globe filled many cities and squares with their joy and hope as they made their way to Lisbon.

From the very first WYD in Rome in 1986, founders of the Way, Kiko and Carmen had an appreciation of the great opportunity it offered their young community members, not only with the prayer and

listening involved, but also with the opportunity to proclaim the Gospel in the cities they passed through.

The Neo-Catechumenal Way originated in shanty towns near Madrid, in Spain, in 1964, when Francisco José Gómez Argüello (Kiko), a Spanish painter, with training as a catechist, who went through a crisis that led him to abandon all to live amongst the poor in Palomeras, Altas, and Carmen Hernández, a Spanish graduate in Chemistry and Theology who spent time studying at the Institute of Missionaries of Jesus Christ and

had a desire to form a missionary group to evangelise, started a process of Christian initiation reflecting the catechumenate of the Early Church.

The Word of God, Liturgy and Community are central to the Neo-Catechumenal Way, which was inspired by Vatican II, and the founders were encouraged by the Archbishop of Madrid to spread it in parishes where requested, and from there it spread to other Spanish dioceses and then to Rome in 1968, and other nations over the years.

In 1974, Pope Paul VI recognized the Way as a fruit of the Second Vatican Council, and successive Popes since that have all confirmed it as inspired by the Holy Spirit for the good of the Church.

In 1986, Pope St John Paul II opened and blessed the first Redemptoris Mater Seminary in Rome, and two years later, he sent out the first 100 families to evangelize various parts of the world, and promoted the Statutes of the Neo-Catechumenal Way from 1997.

During Pope Benedict's

pontificate, these Statutes were definitively approved by the Pontifical Council for the Laity, in 2008, and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith gave its doctrinal approval to the Catechetical Directory in 2010.

Pope Francis also gave the Way his blessing, saying during an audience with the founders and community members on March 6, 2015: "I always say that the Neo-Catechumenal Way does great good for the Church."

The Neo-Catechumenal Way offers rediscovery of baptism and

ongoing formation in the faith. It is lived in parishes, in small communities made up of people from different age and social groups, and gradually leads the faithful to intimacy with Jesus Christ, transforming them into active members in the Church and witnesses of the Good News.

Currently there are over 20,000 Neo-Catechumenate communities across 135 nations, and 121 Redemptoris Mater Seminaries.

## Bishop Donal hopeful of Derry becoming a ministry-rich Diocese

HAVING celebrated another ordination to the priesthood, Bishop Donal has commented on this blessing for the Diocese of Derry.

"This year," he said, "we have been blessed to celebrate three priestly ordinations for the Diocese of Derry. The ordinations of Fr Michael McCaul, Fr Shaun Doherty and Fr Stephen Ward were occasions that generated a lot of positivity. We have a number of other men who are actively discerning a call to

priesthood.

"I hope and pray that we will have other men and women who will be open to God's call to become male and female religious, consecrated virgins and Diocesan Catechists. Along with the future introduction of Permanent Deacons, we can again become a ministry-rich diocese, able to hand on the faith in a very uncertain time. There remains a huge need for God's mercy and healing in the midst of much violence and fear."



Bishop Donal ordaining Stephen Ward to the diaconate earlier in the year

## Prayers for Vocations bearing fruit by Fr Pat O'Hagan, Vocations' Director

THE Diocese of Derry has celebrated its third priestly ordination this year with the ordination of Rev Stephen Ward by Bishop McKeown in the Church of Christ the King, Omagh.

Please pray for Fr Stephen as he

begins a life of service to God's people as a priest of the Diocese of Derry. Please pray also for Lexie Morrison and David Stott as they continue their seminary studies in Maynooth and Rome respectively.

A number of men have applied

to the Diocese, hoping to begin their propaedeutic year of study and prayer in Salamanca, Spain, in January 2024. Please pray for them and for those involved in their vocational discernment.

The prayers of God's people - you, the readers of "The Net",

and people throughout the Diocese and the country - are bearing fruit, especially during this Year of Prayer for Vocations to the Diocesan Priesthood. Please continue to pray for this intention.

## Bro Ruaidhri Grieve ordination

REMEMBER in prayer, Bro Ruaidhri Grieve OP, from the Dungiven Parish, who is to be ordained to the priesthood by Archbishop Eamon Martin in St

Catherine's Dominican Church, Newry, for the Dominicans, on Sunday, October 1, the Feast of St Thérèse of Lisieux, at 3 pm.

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If this is of interest to you, please contact the Diocesan Vocations Director, Fr Pat O'Hagan on (+44) 07703444280 or (028) 7938 6452

DIocese of Derry



Supporting their city's beloved Dana and Archbishop Eamon...

# Derry pilgrims stood atop Hill of Slane for rekindling of St Patrick's flame of faith *by Martina Purdy*

ALMOST 1600 years after St Patrick lit the Easter fire, thousands gathered as his Derry-born successor, Archbishop Eamon Martin rekindled that flame at the Hill of Slane.

More than 3,000 pilgrims, among them Fr Paul Farren from St Eugene's Cathedral and Fr Joseph Varghese, CC Dungiven, came to celebrate and pray for a renewal of the Catholic faith in Ireland.

And it was Derry's own Dana whose new song for Patrick, 'Light the Fire' helped inspire the event. 'Light the Fire' recalls how St Patrick himself, in 433AD, went to the Hill of Slane and with great courage lit the flame, a privilege reserved for the High King of Tara.

Dana, who came to international attention when she won the Eurovision song contest in 1970, launched the song in Downpatrick in time for St Patrick's Day this year. But it was during a prayer mission with the song in St Patrick's New York that the seeds of the Slane event took root.

There was a mixture of sunshine and showers but Dana joked that the rain didn't matter. "Because our God reigns."

Dana said her husband, Damien was inspired to have a 'Light the Fire' event at Slane so that the message of faith, hope and love could once again be heard and seen very clearly. Before long, Sr Brieghe McKenna, Louth-born Poor Clare who led the St Patrick's mission in New York, and Fr Pablo Escriva de Romani, who works with her internationally, were on board, along with the Archbishop and a team of volunteers which included among others, Slane Parish, The Apostles of Love, and St Patrick's Pilgrim Way in Downpatrick.

"Faith, hope and love forever will remain, so light the flame in our hearts, once again," Dana sang, her voice richer than ever, as men, women and children gathered on the ancient hill to hear a message of hope and joy.

The five-hour event marked both the Feast of the

Transfiguration and World Youth Day, and it included praise and worship, Rosary, Mass and a Eucharistic Adoration and Healing Service.

Archbishop Eamon Martin lit a large fire in a special ceremony, during which four candles were also lit to symbolise the four provinces and Archdioceses in Ireland.

The Archbishop said it was wonderful to be at Slane "where Patrick lit the paschal fire to proclaim the risen Lord and the coming of Christianity to this land."

He recalled how St Patrick came to the ancient hill to pray, to witness to the Risen Lord and to share the life and joy of the Gospel. "And similarly, God has called us to Slane today to give us new life in the Holy Spirit, and to send us out from here carrying the torch of faith with courage and conviction."

He urged everyone to imitate Patrick, and to proclaim the faith and be ambassadors for Christ.

Archbishop Eamon told the crowd that Saint Patrick had experienced God's mercy as a slave in Ireland, and having come to know God, could not keep quiet about what the Lord had done for him, lifting him into salvation and true freedom. "Brothers and sisters, we cannot be silent. We have work to do! The work of God. The work of salvation."

Calling for a new evangelisation in Ireland, the Archbishop acknowledged that the Gospel of faith, hope and love preached by Saint Patrick had been obscured by the "terrible sins and crimes" of past abuse which had so many tragic consequences for victims.

He acknowledged that this was a testing time, and a "purifying time" for the Church in Ireland. "Our need is great," he said. "Sadly many sons and daughters of Ireland are drifting away from the faith. Some may even have abandoned God. How much our land needs the uplifting power of faith, hope and love today more than ever!"

He said that the challenges were great, even compared to

times when there was religious persecution in Ireland: "So this must be a purifying time for the Church in Ireland, a humbling time which brings us to our knees in prayer, and to beg forgiveness for an awful betrayal of a sacred trust in the past."

### Consecration

Archbishop Eamon led the pilgrims in a prayer of consecration of Ireland to the Holy Trinity through the intercession of St Patrick, St Brigid and St Colmcille.

The Archbishop prayed that St Patrick would once again inspire the Irish to bear witness to Christ and that many missionaries would be raised up to spread the faith: "Today I call out once more from this historical and holy hill of Slane, St Patrick intercede for Ireland. Come and walk once more among us. Inspire our dream for a renewal of faith, hope and love."

He added: "My dear friends, we are not here by chance. God has brought us here and it is now our turn to shout aloud the message of salvation and tell others about the difference that faith makes to our lives and the value it brings us."

The Archbishop declared with great joy and zeal: "It is, indeed, wonderful for us to be here and to give thanks today, thanks for the generations of faithful people who, since the time of Patrick, have lived the joy of Christianity and passed onto us the flame of faith in spite of dungeon, fire and sword."

He spoke of the importance of standing up for faith and convincing others without engaging in pointless polemics: "Yes, we must stand up for faith and, yes, we must confront falsehood and evils like St Patrick did. The Gospel cannot be imposed. We must propose it with conviction and with joy. The way to win souls these days will be heart to heart, by speaking the truth with love and by attracting others to God by the example of our lives.

"Those who meet us must see our lives as if transfigured by



faith, hope and love and then they will be inspired to inquire what is that treasure you have, you believer?"

He said that Christians must show compassion to all and spread peace and radiate hope through their prayers and actions, so others will say: "We want what you have. Wouldn't it be wonderful if people said that about us, as believers."

It is hoped that the song will continue to inspire events on hillsides associated with St Patrick in the months and years ahead, places such as Croagh Patrick, Co Mayo, Slieve Patrick in Downpatrick, and Slemish in Co Antrim.

The Archbishop declared: "And as we go away from the Hill of Slane today, may we be inspired by the words of Dana's new song - to Light the Flame in our hearts once again, and the fire will burn in the darkness, as on this ancient hill, the embers burning still."

Dana, reflecting afterwards on the event, said it had been a truly joyful celebration of our Catholic faith: "To watch the successor of Patrick light the fire again on the Hill was deeply moving. So many people said how this day had lifted their hearts. Men, women and children of all ages were praying and praising God together. We lit the fire! Our faith is alive and we will pass it on."

Padraig O'Rourke, who travelled from Cork and met Dana, afterward said it was "a brilliant experience." "There are no words!" he said.

Pilgrims who came on the bus from Derry included Mary Devlin and her daughter, Bronagh. "A great day!" said Mary.

Elaine Kelly, a pilgrim guide on St Patrick's Way: "I think we all shared the joy of the Archbishop when he said, 'it is wonderful for us to be here,' echoing the words of St Peter on Mount Tabor when Jesus was transfigured. The glow of the experience at Slane was on everyone's face, as we left with grateful hearts, grateful to God for all He has done for us."

# Confession...maybe one of the most significant spiritual insights a person can have?

by Fr Stephen Quinn ocd

WITHOUT doubt, one of the most significant insights I ever had in my life happened in the unlikeliest of places. It happened looking into a shop window in Dublin! A few steps from our monastery in Clarendon Street, in the centre of Dublin, there is one of those up-market beauty salons. I passed by the window very often and what went on inside seemed to always catch my attention. There would be women having their hair designed with great ornamentation, their nails painted, feet manicured and, at times, some were having their faces literally painted on with brushes, paints, and pens. It was almost as if they were having a mask placed over their very faces.

Right there, outside that shop, I had an epiphany. The painting of the face spoke to me of every single person's desire to conceal the negative and to present a certain, bright, beautified, manipulated face to the world. A manicured, dressed up, concocted, and a made-up mask used to disguise the vulnerable, lacking confidence, uncertain, struggling, frightened real person underneath. I wondered, as I stood outside that shop window, about my own mask and worried had I become so comfortable with the mask, that I did not even know I had put it on that morning?

Another thought followed quickly on my considerations. At some point, had I fallen into the error of believing that the mask was who I really was? One thing was certain to me, in so many ways I would rather die than allow anyone get a sneak peak of what lies underneath. My meditations ran on from there; a danger flashed across my mind, a possibility arose that my life could have been strangled by pretending to be someone else and by striving to 'keep up appearances'. I felt the power of my questions in the fact that I immediately did not want to come up with any answers. The answers would only be unpacked with experience and time.

It was daunting to stand on the edge of such an insight. It cast light over a whole undiscovered country that I had been barely aware of for most of my life. It was no longer an accident that the notion of truth was treated with such suspicion in the world around me; that world, including myself, is profoundly insecure and clings, like grim death, to its own mask. Truth is perceived as a threat. Following

from that, the Sacrament of truth, the Sacrament of change through truth, the sacrament of the medicine of the truth, the Sacrament of Confession lies abandoned or kept at arm's length by the people in the pews.

In no way do I want to deny the real difficulties of Confession for us all. In fact, it is important to confess that the opposite is the case; confession is going to be maybe the most challenging thing we are ever going to attempt. The very challenging nature of the Sacrament does not tell us that there is something going wrong, rather that there is something going right. The Lord had promised a narrow gate and a cross to His followers, so sometimes when we experience discomfiture, then we are following close behind Him.

At one level, it is just good enough to get ourselves and others through the door of the Confessional. The Sacrament works on our good intention and has its very own power! Given all the insight that came to me outside that shop window in Dublin, there remains a whole further world to explore that my primary school teacher did not even hint was there. If I am ever to draw full life from Confession, then I am going to have to push myself a little more than simply walking into a confessional.

If we are ever to push ourselves towards a deeper practice of Confession, then we have to confront the power of our own masks. If we watch closely in our practice of Confession, then if our masks are at work, there will be symptoms of its presence. When we go into Confession and are intimidated by the priest, who he is, what he might be thinking, or worse, what he will say about us when he hears the real story, then

we are hiding behind the mask.

## Trivial

The second symptom is when we notice that when we start to speak, we are reaching for a type of shopping list that only records quite minor faults and trivial exterior experiences. Have you ever noticed how easily a shopping list can form itself over time into a kind of nursery rhyme that we repeat and repeat, and by which we never say what we mean?

Another symptom, one of our Nigerian fathers observed as a particular feature of Irish confessions, is that if the sixth and ninth commandments were taken out of the Divine precepts, the Irish would have no confessions to make. A slight exaggeration by my friend, but there is enough truth to it to tell us that we are refusing to look at the whole picture of our lives.

And worst of all, some come to Confession after absences of weeks, months, and years, and can only come up with lines like, "I haven't done anything," "I haven't done much," "I am a good person really," or "I haven't killed anyone"; each a damning indictment of how little we have examined ourselves, how little we have troubled ourselves, and how little we have moved the mask. Each line begs the protest of Queen Gertrude in Hamlet, "the lady doth protest too much, me thinks!" They are lines to cover up a purposeful and wilful effort to turn a blind eye to reality from behind the mask. All of these various responses are symptoms of a refusal to get real, a refusal of the truth, a refusal to dispose of the mask.

I want us to see the implications of a firm decision to no longer go to Confession with our masks on. It is a statement that God has little to no interest in a rhyme of minor and trivial problems, God has no interest in prevarication and, most definitely, He will have no dealings with the masks that we want to put on and who it is that we want to pretend to be.

St Teresa of Avila argues that all prayer and spirituality begins with a grain of self-knowledge. Self-knowledge is the discovery of who we truly are in the face of God. God will have no play acting; He will only ever interact with the truth of who we are. He is fascinated with each person. He never takes His eyes away from us, and stands over us in a protective pose.

Our masks, our fallacy, our fear is a force field around us that grace, to a large extent, keeps bouncing off. It means that we are constantly at cross purposes with God's Mercy. The Almighty's ear

cranes to hear the truth when we come to the Sacrament. He wants to know who we really are; He wants to know what only we know about ourselves. In the Sacrament, He desires for us to tell Him our story; the story of our lives, the ups, the downs, and everything in-between.

In Confession, God desires that we tell Him the wounds that have been inflicted on our person by others' carelessness or malevolence, the effects of which are still with us and simmer away at the back of everything. Tell Him the sins that have come to lure us, that constantly trouble us, that throw all our good intentions up in the air, that we compromise ourselves for, and that we repeat and repeat with predictable frequency. Tell Him how they damage our life. Tell of the deals that we made with ourselves for things that just were not worth it. Tell Him of the fears that paralyse us, that make us believe that we cannot cope, that we are worthless. Tell Him everything that holds us back from real friendship and possible union with the Blessed Three.

It will do His heart good to hear it, for as He said Himself, "For this brother of yours was dead and has come back to life, he was lost and is found." Confession gives Him the joy of seeing the authentic features of a person who has been hidden all this time.

## Truth

You might well say that this is a very demanding and exacting notion of Confession and, to a certain extent, you would be right, but there is a proviso to my challenging language and daunting images. All that truth we are asked for will only draw out of our Heavenly Father what is best in Him, Mercy and Love. When we come in truth to Confession, we will find Him running down the road to meet us, picking us up from the dust into which we have fallen, and drawing us into a great bear hug of reconciliation. Jesus will come to us in Confession in a very particular manner that has obviously been forgotten by the people who live behind masks.

The early Christians had an insight into the Christ who we meet in Confession. In the works of St Augustine, he speaks of Christ as the Divine Physician to humanity. In a homily explaining the dialogue with Nicodemus, the saintly bishop of Hippo wrote that the "Lord made clear in His engagement with Nicodemus that He had come not to condemn the world, but that through Him all could be saved. Surely, behind those words, we



The Confession, Giuseppe Molteni

can hear an invitation in which you will meet goodness and generosity that has no end. Jesus is that goodness and generosity in the flesh."

The great theologian continues his profound meditation on Christ by saying that Christ's goodness and generosity did not just come as a good shepherd to humanity, but even more as a Good Physician. "Through the Apostle Paul, we know that Christ came into the World to save sinners. For nothing else had He in mind but for our saving. He came to take away diseases, to take away blindness and deafness, and to take our wounds so that we will not need any further doses (of medicine). If such a great physician has come from heaven, does that not point to how great the disease that had left the patient lying on his bed of pain. The malady lies across the whole compass of the World. The sick are the entire human race. Jesus told us that He had come to seek out and save the lost.

"The whole World was lost through the sin of one. One came without sin to save the whole from sin. But such was the state of humanity that even though poisoned with illness, in their pride they considered themselves in a sound state of health. This made the situation all the more dangerous. There is no more dangerous illness than the person who is sick with fever and has lost their mind. In their sickness, fever and losing of their minds they struck out at the one who had come to heal them.

"Not only did they strike Him, they killed Him, but even as they killed Him, He was their

physician, He was beaten while caring for them, He endured their frenzy, yet He did not desert them, He was seized, was bound, was struck, received strokes, was derided, insulted, brought to judgement, condemned, hung upon the tree, they raged around Him on all sides, yet He remained the physician. When we recognise that we are a frenzied, fevered people, then we have to recognise the physician too. Jesus said 'Father, forgive them they know not what they do.' In response to His words, they in their madness were raging and were shedding the physician's blood but even in that moment, He was making medicines of His blood. Medicine for the sick."

St Augustine's commentary on the Good Physician is a clarion call to the whole Church as to who it is that a person meets in the confessional box. Not merely a frenzied and fevered person like themselves in the priest but, through the ministry of that priest, the Divine physician Himself, still at work in His Church, in and through the sacraments.

We measure this God by our own littleness; we judge and understand His love by our own small measures. God is so infinitely removed from all these. His Majesty, His joy, His beauty, His love, and His life consist in the gift of Himself; the giving of His whole self, for He is Love. The weaker, the emptier, the more helpless, the more imperfect we are, the greater is our capacity to receive Him. This is the good news at the heart of the Sacrament. Good enough for us to even take off our masks!

# The Divine Mercy Image explained... The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

by Sr Benedetta Hutnikiewicz ZSJM, Sisters of Merciful Jesus, Letterkenny

"FROM all my wounds, like from streams, mercy flows for souls, but the wound in My Heart is the fountain of unfathomable mercy. From this fountain spring all graces for souls. The flames of compassion burn Me. I desire greatly to pour them out upon souls. Speak to the whole world about My mercy" (Diary 1190).

These words of Jesus set a theme for us today. In the last few articles I have explored the history of the Divine Mercy Image, written about how it is meant to heal our image of God the Father, and developed on one of the parts of the image: that is the darkness and the light. This time, I would like to focus on the Heart.

We cannot see the Heart itself in the Image, but Jesus' left hand points towards it. Jesus unfolds His garments at the level of His heart. Right there, we see the brightest point in the whole image. And from that point come the rays (we will devote a separate article to them).

This takes us to the scene we find in the Gospel of John: "Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away.

So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus and

saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness - his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth - that you also may believe. For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: "Not one of His bones will be broken." And again another Scripture says, "They will look on Him whom they have pierced" (John 19:31-37).

Isn't it a powerful image? After all the sufferings Christ went through for our sake, even His Heart is torn open! As if it all wasn't enough, as if He wanted to say once more how much He loves us. Why was His Heart pierced? Pope Pius XII wrote that "we cannot reach the Heart of God, save through the Heart of Christ." Jesus allowed His Heart to be pierced, so we can have access to the Heart of the Father!

His open Heart reminds us of the greatness of His love and Mercy. That Heart has been opened once and remains open, welcoming us, inviting us. The love of that Heart is all our own hearts long for. Ultimately, when we look at our efforts and goals, what are we trying to achieve? We're all searching for happiness.

And we cannot find happiness anywhere else but in being loved and loving others. Our hearts are like broken cisterns that crave for

love, all the time. They can't be filled with human love, no matter how great it is. Only an infinite Love can quench our thirst for love. Jesus knows that, that's why He points us to His Heart.

When we experience suffering our natural tendency is to shut our hearts out from the world. We hurt and we don't want to be hurt again. So we think that if we close up our hearts we can avoid the pain. We imagine that if we never give our heart again, not to anyone, we can keep it safe. Jesus does the opposite. Wounded, He gives more and more of Himself. He is totally self-giving. Instead of closing His heart, He allows it to be torn right open, and to remain such, forever.

The Lord has not only opened His Heart for you, but He also wants to intimately know your heart. These are His words to St Faustina: "I am concerned about every beat of your heart. Every stirring of your love is reflected in My Heart. I thirst for your love" (Diary, 1542). He means it!

## Love

I have had many experiences of His love and care for what's going on in my heart, but let me share just one of them. It was after one of the numerous lockdowns we have had in Covid. Our ministry had moved to online meetings and recording talks during that time; we had very limited interaction with people. When the lockdown

was lifted people were still very afraid to come to retreats and gatherings.

I had a crisis. I was worn out by this enforced enclosure; I couldn't see any sense in what we were doing. I hit a wall. And I had a lot of questions. I kept bringing them to the Lord in honest prayer, telling Him what I was going through, just the way I was feeling. Sometimes I argued with Him. Sometimes I cried. Sometimes I just sat in front of the Blessed Sacrament discouraged and low.

One day, in the very middle of that experience, a man came to our door. He called up and said he would like to talk to me. I was rather surprised as I had met him only once. But he specifically wanted to chat to me. We sat in our library downstairs. After an exchange of pleasantries and telling him vaguely how things are going for us, I noticed something unusual going on. He started answering all the questions I had been putting before the Lord! Completely unaware of the fact, he took them out one by one and dismantled every single one of them. I couldn't believe it. This guy, almost a stranger, was like an angel sent by God. At the end of our encounter, he prayed for me and off he went! It was June, the month of the Sacred Heart.

When he left (and we had spent more than an hour talking), I felt as if it had all been a dream. How was it possible that he knew the

questions I had? How did he know the answers? I now know He was truly God's messenger, sent to me to let me know how much His Heart is concerned about mine. He was sent to show me that God was attentive to every single word I said, to every single ache I felt.

This is a story of a miracle. But we have little miracles like that on a daily basis. The kindness we meet with on a difficult day, the smile on someone's face, the gentle breeze of God's grace, the inspirations of the Holy Spirit that are given to us when we don't know what to do. Yes, His Heart is concerned about every single beat of our heart.

"Today, the Lord said to me, My daughter, look into My Merciful Heart and reflect its compassion in your own heart and in your deeds, so that you, who proclaim My Mercy to the world, may yourself be aflame with it" (Diary, 1688).

The Lord opens up His heart to us, so that we, in our turn, will resemble Him in His Mercy and compassion. We are only able to do that, if we have experienced the flame of His love for us. Let us hear these words of Jesus as coming directly to us: "You are engraved as a deep wound in My Heart" (Diary, 1485). He cannot forget us, He won't abandon us. His love is more tender than the love of the most tender of mothers. His Mercy will throw our sins into the depths of the sea. He carries us



in the depths of His Heart.

Jesus said to St Faustina: "My mercy is greater than your sins and those of the entire world. Who can measure the extent of my goodness? For you I descended from heaven to earth; for you I allowed myself to be nailed to the cross; for you I let my Sacred Heart be pierced with a lance, thus opening wide the source of mercy for you. Come, then, with trust to draw graces from this fountain" (Diary, 1485).

Our Lord not only shows us His Heart, but also wants us to draw graces from it. We console His Heart when we receive His graces. He wants to pour them out on everyone, but not everyone is willing to receive them. That's why He's calling us, as He called St Faustina, to receive His graces not only for ourselves, but also for others.

## Listening and hearing and learning by Fr John McLaughlin ssc



"AH, sure it will do!" That is a long-remembered phrase of my college dean, a Holy Ghost priest who tried to get us, privileged pupils, to aim just a little higher, and it keeps coming up from my inner brain!

Another one, heard only once in the cinema, is the phrase "I hate mediocrity" in the film Amadeus. That can still spark off a reaction from me as I set about a task, like this! The word 'nice' is a sort of weasel word, and I recall Sister Evelyn saying dramatically, "If anyone calls me a NICE NUN again. I will just scream." There are others gathered into the memory control box, which shows that I must have been a good listener from way back!

It has always interested me to see and hear the slogans when a group of protesters get on the street. Some are imaginative and catchy: "What do we want...Where do we go...When do we want it?"

And I wonder who is going to be the scapegoat on this occasion. Even from the tone of voice there is much to be learnt!

I like to read some times of what Dickens says. As a young boy, I was sent off to the theatre to hear the great Emlyn Williams speak from behind his desk, as the great writer did on public occasions. It was music to my ears to hear about Mr Pickwick in his own words, and his trials with the aspiring widow, Mrs Bardell, and a whole host of other figures (Sam Weller, Uriah Heep) that I had come to know from early teenage reading. So that his remarks on 'facts' strike me as apposite in this modern age of communication.

On Mission, I found it imperative to listen to intonations and to catch words and 'modismos' and sayings in meetings and encounters of all kinds, and then to compare notes with others that I knew to be good listeners, as the meeting closed.

The great Chilean writer and lecturer, Segundo Galilea talked to us about Insercion and it was always a challenge, as I suspected that some were talking just for the sake of it, and it was 'all wool', as Maynooth professor, Mgr Patrick Corish used to dramatically proclaim as he commented upon the History papers submitted by many of us!

It was important to pick up the buzzwords and decipher what was the theme: 'Cada loco con su tema' was a starting key in the analysis... 'everyone has their own agenda'. 'Reverse-Mission' is also a catch-phrase that can be overused! 'Contemplata aliis tradere' might still be the task of the good listener, in a world of many sounds and voices! I liked the interview with the ever-defiant deputy Rees Mogg, where he stressed his basic Catholic Faith as "centered in the truth of the Risen Christ".

"But you don't talk like us", a young Merville boy remarked as I told him that I had grown up in the town! Children are not fooled so easily as adults, when it comes to saying it out; and 'not faking' understanding, as I often found with my halting or over-wrapped Spanish on the hills of Valparaiso, where they were not accustomed

to foreigners massacring their language!

The Message that I often try to get at Christmas is the voice of John Betjeman, where he intones, "and is it true and is it true, the most tremendous tale of all, the maker of the sky and sea, came down to earth for me?"

Getting at Truth nowadays sometimes involves a bit of flexibility and firmness. The Synodal Process in the Church is already showing signs of stress in the 'Listening' part, with even a whole national hierarchy like Germany caught up in many voices and seemingly strident at times!

Tony de Mello has in one of his stories the frustrated preacher, finding at the end of his days that he now has the task of converting just himself! That surely involves deep listening! One of my pastoral practices at parish level was to get out and listen to the people on the streets and how they say it. That I did in the parish of San Columbano in the Saturday Feria, and my drafted Sunday-sermon often took on a new emphasis as I sensed what would or would not go down in the chapel the following day!

Nowadays, there is an increased emphasis in 'listening' as the

Podcasts multiply. One of my early morning favourites is 'Rezando Voy', in Spanish, and with a great take on the Gospel of the day ('Pray as you go', in the English form). Another of the many on offer is 'A mucky business', which offers reflections and interviews on political life in Britain from a Christian perspective.

Chilean Catholics will know phrases like 'What would Christ do in my place?', or 'Give until it hurts', from St Alberto Hurtado, and some will remember forever the words of Pope John Paul, 'Do not be afraid' or 'The Poor cannot wait!' And the phrases from Pope Francis are now installing themselves, 'The smell of the sheep' and 'The Field Hospital'.

These days, the Church is hearing again the Parables in the readings, and I recall the advice of Fr Fidel Onoro, from the Oratorians, who stressed that we can hear them with our inward voices and, as in chewing a carmel, let them speak what each one hears as his own, since there is no absolute meaning to any of them!

Reading in recent liturgies about the prophet Micah and Ahab, in one of their stand-offs (being given the message they want to hear!), I recall Michael Novak, a more modern prophet who always seemed to be responding to the Capitalist music when Liberation Theology came into the issues.

They all seemed to have the sounds of apologists for the cause!

In my early days in Chile on mission, I gathered that when you asked someone... "How is it going?"...you had to listen when they answered, "Bien/mas o menos/regular/muy mal". The last two, at the least, required the question, "What's happened?" Otherwise, you showed yourself as a complete novice! Or when someone responded to the invitation to a meeting or a task, "voy a hacer todo lo posible", I learned that the chances were not great at all of cooperation!

These days, I am reading "The Mindful Father", by Fr Tom Casey SJ (Messenger Publications) and the world of sounds that is 'within us', even more than without. Referring to what he calls 'persecution by thought', 'as the constant flow of random thoughts that flow through our minds many of them unwanted and disturbing', he encourages us to recognise that they are not really our thoughts and we never wanted them. And he invites us to "remind the Lord...that you are more lasting than my feelings and mightier than my thoughts...to unchain me from this merry-go-round from this vicious circle...bring peace upon my stormy interior". It's a book to be recommended by all who pray the 'Our Father' heartily.

# Parish Post-its

## Aghyaran

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

## Ardstraw East (Newtownstewart)

**YOUCAT Study:** A one-hour interactive YOUCAT programme, for those aged 16+ years, takes place on Thursdays in the Oratory, at 7 Main Street, Newtownstewart, starting at 6.30 pm. For further information contact 028 81661445 or email ardstraweast@derrydiocese.org. This may be of particular interest to those undertaking the Pope John Paul II Award.

## Badoney Lower (Gortin-Rouskey)

**Gathering of Gatherings:** The next 'Gathering of Gatherings' will take place on Tuesday, 19th September 19 at 7.30 pm in Plumbridge Hall. A further presentation will be given by Fr James Devine on the Liturgy of the Hours, particularly Morning Prayer (Matins). The Prayer of the Church will be explored as a form of liturgical and personal prayer.

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

## Ballinascreen/Desertmartin

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

## Ballymagroarty

**Parish Retreat:** Celebrating 40 years since the opening of Holy Family Church, there is a Parish Retreat from Sunday, September 24 to Saturday, September 30, with the theme 'We belong to God's Family'. The Retreat will start on Sunday, September 24, at 6 pm, and will take place each evening from Monday -Friday, September 25-29, at 7.30 pm, with the closing session taking place on Saturday, September 30, at 3 pm. There will be early morning Masses at 7 am and mid-morning Mass at 10 am.

During the week, each night there will be a different theme focusing on belonging to God's family, and the first speaker will be Fr Pat Collins CM, who preached the first Retreat in Holy Family 40 years ago. The other speakers

include Fr La Flynn, Prior of Lough Derg and PP Pettigo, Fr Shaun Doherty, CC St Eugene's, Fr Stephen Quinn ocd, Derry Disalced Carmelite Prior, Marguerite Hamilton, Columba Community leader, and Joe Culby, Omagh musician and songwriter, who will lead the Youth Night on Friday, September 29.

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

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

## Banagher

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

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

## Bellaghy

**Day of Reflection:** There will be a day of Reflection and Renewal for anyone involved in any aspect of the life of the parish, on Saturday, October 14, from 10am - 1pm. Anyone interested in volunteering to serve the parish in any capacity is welcome to come along.

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

## Buncrana

**Season of Creation:** The Season of Creation is marked throughout the Christian world from September 1 to October 4 (Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi) and celebrates the joy of creation, as well as encouraging awareness-raising initiatives to protect the natural environment. This year's theme is 'Let Justice and Peace Flow', taking inspiration from the Prophet Amos who declares: "Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" (Amos 5: 24). Marking this season, Ecological Stations of the Cross will be displayed

in St Mary's Oratory, underneath the traditional Stations around the walls of the church.

**Lough Derg:** The Parish is running a one-day pilgrimage to Lough Derg on Saturday, September 23. The bus will leave The Oratory at 7.30 am, for arrival at the island at 9.30 am. Cost for the day, including return bus, boat fare, day pilgrimage and meal on way home, is €70, returning home around 8.30 pm. For more information and booking contact the Parish Office.

**Adoration:** Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place daily in St Mary's Oratory after Mass until 1 pm (Monday-Friday), 11 am - 5 pm (Saturday), 1.30-7 pm (Sunday).

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

**Guided Holy Hour:** The Guided Holy Hour of Adoration in Honour of the Holy Face of Jesus will continue on Sundays, 6-7 pm in St Mary's Oratory. All welcome.

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

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

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

## Burt, Inch & Fahan

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

## Cappagh

**Padre Pio Novena:** The Padre Pio Novena will be on Monday, September 18, in Christ The King Church, Strathroy, Omagh, with Rosary & Confessions at 7 pm, and Mass celebrated by Fr Bryan Shortall OFC at 7.30 pm. A blessing with relic will be available after Mass. Everyone is very welcome.

## Castleberg & Ardstraw West

**Ministry Evenings:** Readers' Evening: "I'm a Reader at Mass." But what does that

mean? This meeting will take place on Tuesday, October 3, at 7.30pm.

**Eucharistic Ministers' Evening:** "I'm a Eucharistic Minister." A deeper look at our understanding of this ministry. This meeting will take place on Tuesday, October 10 at 7.30pm.

The meetings will take place in St Patrick's Hall, Castleberg, and is open not only to current or potential Ministers of the Word and the Eucharist but anyone interested within the parishes of the newly established West Tyrone Pastoral Areas of Aghyaran, Ardstraw West & Castleberg, and Drumquin.

**Prayer:** The Rosary and Angelus are prayed in St Patrick's Church, Castleberg on Tuesdays at 2 pm.

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

## Claudy

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

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

## Clonmany

**Pet Blessing:** Fr Kevin Doherty will be blessing animals in an outdoor ceremony in the village of Clonmany on Sunday, October 1, after 11.30 am Mass.

## Coleraine

**SVP Seniors Event:** The SVP is holding a Senior Citizen Night Out for St John's Parish in the Lodge Hotel on Monday, October 2, at 6.15 pm. The evening will start with a two-course evening meal, followed by a free draw and music by 'Nostalgia'. Numbers will be limited, so booking with a £5 fee is essential to reserve a place either through the sacristy at St John's or contact Anne on 07789306587. September 25 will be final booking date.

**SJYP Meet:** St Joseph's Young Priests' Society meets on the last Monday of each month at St John's Church Sacristy, after the 10 am morning Mass, and is open to everyone. New members are welcome at any of the meetings, which support praying for and assisting to support the vocation to priesthood and the religious life.

**Exposition:** St John's Church Monday Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place on Wednesdays in St

John's Church, from 2-4 pm with Rosary at 3:45 pm.

## Creggan

**Novena:** The Parish Novena of Healing to St Pio of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio) runs from Friday, September 15, the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, until Saturday, September 23, the Feast of St Pio. On weekdays, Mass will be celebrated at 7 am and 10 am, with Confessions at 5 pm and after the 7.30 pm Devotions. On Saturday, Mass will be at 10 am, with Confessions at 10.30 am and 5.30 pm, and the Vigil Mass at 6.30 pm. On Sunday, Mass will be at 10 am and 12.15 pm, with the Chaplet of Divine Mercy at 3 pm and Devotions at 6.30 pm

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

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

## Dunamanagh

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

## Drumragh (Omagh)

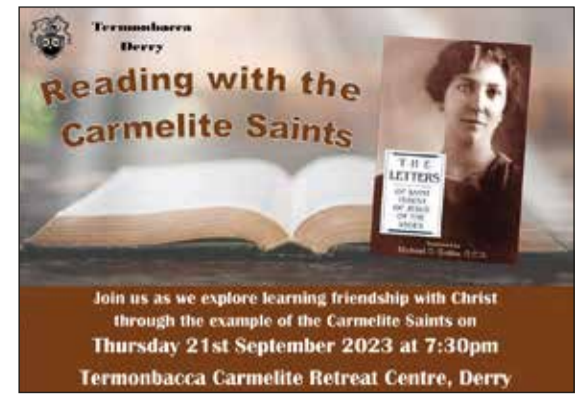
**Life in Spirit:** Life changing 'Life in the Spirit' seminars will take place on the weekend of September 16 & 17 in St Joseph's Hall, Omagh. Led by The Apostles of Love, a re-ignite missionary team, registration will take place at 10 am, with the seminars running from 11 am until 4 pm on the Saturday, and from 10 am until 4.30 pm on the Sunday. Mass will also be celebrated by Bishop Michael Router. Donations are welcome towards costs.

**Prayer Group:** The Charismatic Prayer Group meetings take place in The Pastoral Centre on Thursday evenings, with Rosary at 7.40 pm and prayer meeting at 8 pm. All welcome to come and pray.

**Legion of Mary:** The Legion of Mary Men's meetings take place on Mondays at 7.30 pm, and the Ladies' group meet on Friday mornings at 10.45am, in St Vincent's Hall (beneath Sacred Heart Church Sacristy).

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

**Rosary of Reparation:** On the first Saturday of each month, a Rosary of Reparation will be prayed at



1pm on Main Street, Omagh. All welcome to join.

## Dungiven

**Healing Mass:** A St Pio Healing Mass takes place on the first Tuesday of each month at 7 pm in St Patrick's.

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

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

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

## Errigal

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

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

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

## Fahan

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

## Faughanvale

**Parish Mission:** The Parish Mission runs from September 16-23 in both Star of the Sea and St Mary's Churches, with the theme: 'Behold, I am making all things new' (Rev 21:5). It will open with an invitation to Freedom in Christ with at the Saturday Vigil and Sunday Masses (5 pm and 12 noon, Star of the Sea, and 6.30 pm and 10 am, St Mary's). During the week, Monday-Friday, Masses in both churches will be at 6.30 am and 10 am, and the evening services will be at 7.30 pm. The themes for the talks are: Mercy; Our Lady

and the Rosary; Witnesses for Christ; Healing, Sacrament of the Sick; and Death, Eucharist and the Goal of Heaven. The Mission will end on Saturday, September 23, with 10 am Mass in both churches, followed by Blessing of the Graves.

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

## Greencastle

**Gathering of Gatherings:** The next 'Gathering of Gatherings' will take place on Tuesday, 19th September 19 at 7.30 pm in Plumbridge Hall. A further presentation will be given by Fr James Devine on the Liturgy of the Hours, particularly Morning Prayer (Matins). The Prayer of the Church will be explored as a form of liturgical and personal prayer.

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

**Adoration:** Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in St Patrick's Church after 12.30 pm Mass on Tuesdays until 5 pm.

## Iskaheen, Drung & Muff

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

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

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

## Lavey

**Ice-Cream Sunday:** The popular Ice-Cream Sunday takes place on Saturday, September 16 and Sunday, September 17, with all proceeds in aid of the Parish Building Fund. The ice-creams and desserts will be on sale for £5 after the weekend Masses (6 pm and 11 am), which will be celebrated on this weekend

Continued on p29



in the Lavey/Termonee Centre. All welcome.

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

#### Leckpatrick

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

#### Limavady

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

#### Maghera

**Lough Derg:** The Parish One-Day Lough Derg Pilgrimage takes place on Sunday, September 17, departing at 7.30 am from St Patrick's Church, Glen. Cost: £55, which should be left in Pastoral Centre. For details contact Angela Lagan on 028 796 43061

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

#### Melmount

**Remembrance Service:** The Annual Service in remembrance of deceased members of families and parish will take place on Sunday, November 5, at 6 pm. Families who have suffered a bereavement since November 2022 are asked to nominate a representative to carry a candle to the altar in commemoration of their dead. (Candles will be provided)

#### Moville

**Prayer:** The Rosary and

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

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

#### Sion Mills

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

#### Steelstown & Culmore

**Life in the Spirit:** The Columba Community is leading a five-week programme of prayer, teaching and reflection in Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Steelstown, from September 20 to October 18, at 7.30 pm. The themes to be covered include: God's Love and Salvation; New Life in the Spirit; Receiving God's Gifts; Baptised in the Spirit; and Growth and Transformation.

**Parish Eco Group:** The ECO group is organising a recycling sale of surplus goods for Trocaire. Leave any nearly new or unused items as donations in the porch inside Our Lady of Lourdes Church from Sunday, September 17 to Friday, September 22. The sale of all donated items will take place on Sunday, September 24, after 11 am and 12.15 pm Masses. Any money raised from the sale of items will be donated to Trocaire.

**Lectio Divina:** Lectio Divina is a way of praying the Scriptures together and takes place every

Wednesday after 10 am Mass, in the Parish Conference Room. All welcome.

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

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

#### Strabane (Camus)

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

**Prayer Group:** The Contemplative Prayer Group meets on Mondays at 8 pm in the Prayer Room in the Parochial House. All welcome. Entry by Parish Priest's front door.

**SJYP Society:** The St John Vianney branch of the St Joseph's Young Priests' Society (the three combined Strabane parishes) meets on the first Tuesday of the month, excluding January, July and August, with Rosary in the church after 10 am Mass and continues in St Patrick's Hall. More people are encouraged to join in this prayer for new students to join the priesthood. The Society assists Irish and overseas student. Please contact Margaret Harte on 028 71 883159.

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

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

#### Templemore - Long Tower

**St Michael Mass:** On the Feast of St Michael the Archangel, Friday, September 29, Fr Peter Prusakiewicz, from the Congregation of St Michael the Archangel, will celebrate Mass and a Healing Service (Holy Hour) in St Columba's Church, Long Tower, at 7.30 pm, with Veneration of the first class relic of St Faustina & Investiture of the scapular of St Michael.

**Padre Pio Mass:** A Padre Pio Mass for healing in mind and body takes place on the first Monday of each month at 7.30 pm, in Long Tower Church. It is hoped at the end of each

Mass to give a Blessing using a First Class Relic of Padre Pio. The Mass will be streamed via the parish website: www.longtowerchurch.org then click on the link for the webcam or alternatively by logging on to www.churchmedia.tv. The next Padre Pio Mass will take place on Monday, September 4.

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

#### Templemore - St Eugene's

**Anniversary Pilgrimage:** Bishop Donal is leading a pilgrimage to San Giovanni and Rome from September 25-30, as part of the 150th anniversary celebrations of St Eugene's Cathedral.

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

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

#### Three Patrons

**God Club:** The Saturday morning God Club is an opportunity for 16-30 year olds to learn together about their faith. It will take place in the Kildare Room at 11.30 am, following the 11 am Mass in St Brigid's, Chapel, Carnhill.

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

**Holy Hour:** A Holy Hour for the Unborn & Expectant Mothers takes place on Thursdays at 7 pm in Our Lady's Chapel, St Joseph's Church, Galliagh. All welcome.

**Adoration:** Eucharistic

Adoration takes place in Our Lady's Chapel, St Joseph's Church, Galliagh, on Mondays after 11 am Mass, concluding with a Youth 2000 Holy Hour from 7-8 pm. It also takes place seven days a week in the Adoration Room in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, from 8 am until 6 pm, and in St Patrick's Church, Pennyburn, on Wednesdays from 10.45 am - 6.45 pm.

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

**Living Disciples:** Living Disciples meet on Tuesdays at 7.30 pm in St Pio House, St Joseph's Church grounds, for Praise & Worship, friendship and a cup of

tea. All welcome.

#### Urney & Castlefinn

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

**Adoration:** Weekly Eucharistic Adoration takes place in St Anthony's Chapel every Tuesday,

from 12 noon until 8 pm. Cenacle: The Cenacle for Priests takes place every Tuesday in St Anthony's Chapel immediately after the 7 pm Mass.

#### Waterside & Strathfoyle

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

## Other Diary Dates

**Termonbacca Faith Talks:** The Carmelite Retreat Centre in Derry is hosting monthly talks on different elements of the faith, with the aim of leading participants towards personal development through meditative prayer and convivial discussions of the Church doctrines. The talks will be held on Thursdays, from 7.30-8.30 pm, as follows: September 14, 'I Am Who I Am' - Understanding the human vocation in God's Revelation of Himself (Ex 3: 1-22); October 19, 'God, One and Triune - The source of human communion and companionship' (Jn 17:20-26); November 16, 'I came that they may have Life and have it in full' - Understanding God's providence in the world (Jn 10:10); December 14, 'God wants everyone to saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth' - The relationship between a truth and salvation (1 Tim 2:4).

Led by Fr Cajetan Ikedi Apeh ocd, these talks are open to everyone aged 18 and above who has an interest in growing more in their personal faith development. Fr Cajetan is very passionate for the faith-maturity of Christians by guiding them through the rich spirituality of the Disalced Carmelite Order and the Doctrines of the Church. He received his formation in Philosophy at the Dominican Institute Ibadan, Nigeria, and then his theology formation at Institut Catholique de Toulouse, France. Who are these faith talks for: More information can be obtained by contacting Fr Cajetan on 0044 (0)28 7126 2512 or 0044 (0)79 3312 3633.

**Omagh Life in the Spirit:** Life in the Spirit Seminars will be led by the Apostles of Love Missionary Team in St Joseph's Hall, Omagh, on Saturday and Sunday, September 16 & 17. Registration at 10 am. Saturday 11am - 4pm, Sunday 10am - 4.30pm, with Mass celebrated by Bishop Michael Router. Enquiries & Booking: Tel 07876411435 or 0759660904. Cost: Donation only. Open to adults and to children age 12+.

**Bike Blessing:** All bikers are very welcome to the annual blessing of motorbikes and scooters on Sunday, September 17, at St Aengus' Church, Burt, Co Donegal, at 1 pm. There will be a short service followed by the blessing of the bikes. During the service, prayers will be said for all our biker friends who have died since this time last year. Names can be emailed to gerardsweeney@ymail.com. A collection will be taken up for the RNLI. After the blessing, there will be a run to the RNLI Station at Ned's Point, Buncrana. Light refreshments will be available for all. A Mass will also be celebrated at the Sacred Heart Church, Derry Road, Strabane at 11.30 am, on the same day, in remembrance of all deceased bikers. Bikers will leave immediately after Mass to go to St

Aengus, Burt.

**St Therese Triduum:** From Friday, September 29 until Sunday, October 1, Termonbacca Retreat Centre, Derry, will celebrate a triduum of Masses in honour of St Therese of Lisieux. Therese of Lisieux OCD, also known as St Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, was a French Catholic Disalced Carmelite nun who is widely venerated in modern times. She is popularly known in English as the Little Flower of Jesus, or simply the Little Flower.

Mass will be celebrated each evening at 7.30 pm and each will have a different focus. On Friday, the Mass will be offered with prayers for healing. There will be a special blessing of children during Mass on the Saturday. The Triduum will end with Mass on the Feast Day, during which there will be the traditional blessing of Roses. This Triduum will be led by Fr Cajetan Apeh OCD, and is open to all to come and join in prayer.

**St Michael Retreat:** Termonbacca is hosting a Feast of St Michael Retreat Day on Friday, September 29, from 10 am until 3.30 pm. It will be led by Fr Peter Prusakiewicz CSMA, whose main expertise is on St Michael the Archangel and the Holy Angels, and he has been an international speaker on these and on Divine Mercy for over 20 years. The Retreat will include Mass, a Eucharistic Healing Service, Veneration of a First Class Relic of St Faustina, investiture of the scapular of Archangel Michael, and talks on

'Dangers of New Age' and 'The Love and Power of St Michael the Archangel. Donation only, and bring own packed lunch.

**Search Prayer Night:** Derry Search Youth Group welcomes all ages to a Prayer Night on Sunday, October 1, at 7 pm in its premises at Iona Business Park, Southway. Tea and snacks on arrival.

**Derry Life in the Spirit:** The Apostles of Love Ireland will be back in Termonbacca Retreat Centre, Derry, on the weekend of October 7 & 8 to lead Life in the Spirit seminars. This event is open to all to come and receive an outpouring of the Spirit. Registration will begin at 9.30 am. Tea and light snacks will be provided. Bring a packed lunch if suitable.

**Praise & Worship:** There will be a night of Praise & Worship, for renewal of the Holy Spirit, in St Pio House, Galliagh, on Friday, September 29, starting at 7 pm.

**Youth 2000 Retreat:** The next Youth 2000 Ulster Regional Retreat takes place on Lough Derg from September 29 to October 1, with excellent speakers and inspiring talks and workshops, as well as fantastic music, group activities, Youth Masses, Adoration, Reconciliation, prayer, drama, games and chill time. Only those aged 16-35 years will be able to stay over. Note that it will not be the typical Lough Derg event. Accommodation for the island costs 40 Euro. Contact email - office@youth2000.ie

Cathedral, Derry, at 8 pm on the second Friday of each month.

**Marriage Preparation:** ACCORD Derry will be facilitating Marriage Preparation Workshops via Zoom, between 6.30-

9.30 pm, on Monday and Tuesday September 25 and 26, October 16 and 17, November 6 and 7, and 27 and 28, and December 11 and 12. Couples should book online at www.accordni.com

## Diocesan Diary

**Safeguarding Training:** There will be a full day of Safe-Guarding Training for the Diocese in An Grainan Hotel, Burt, on Saturday, September 30, from 10 am until 3 pm.

**Vocations Holy Hour:** A Holy Hour for Vocations takes place in St Eugene's

For further information email safeguarding@derrydiocese.org.

takes place in St Eugene's

## Eternal Echoes... Timeless Truth for today's hearts by Regina Deighan

# Catechesis and the Deposit of Faith

A few weeks ago, I took my 15-month-old son up to the chapel for a visit. He has yet to say many recognisable words; he is still finding his voice. The chapel was empty and I knelt with him to pray. Amidst the silence, he decided to test his voice. He let out a "baa" sound and when he realized it echoed off the walls of the empty church, he continued to repeat the sound, giggling to himself. An echo is a funny phenomenon. It recalls our words and sounds back to us, without changing them. My son's repetitive testing of this phenomenon is likely not uncommon. Echoes are fascinating! And just as my son was mesmerized by his own echo in the chapel, our Faith echoes too.

The word 'catechesis' is liberally used in church conversation. In order to catechize properly and effectively, however, we must be aware of what catechesis truly means. Generally speaking, this term refers to religious instruction. Yet, from the Greek original, the word signifies an 'echo' or 'resounding sound'. At first glance, the use of this particular term to signify religious education might seem strange, but if we examine the definitive aim of catechesis and the means by which we achieve it, we

will find that our forefathers aptly named this important task.

Consider the way an echo works: a sound reverberates, repeating on and on past the original noise. Each successive echo bears the exact sonic imprint of the sound before. Similarly, in the field of catechesis, we are tasked with passing on the Truths of our faith throughout the centuries, without altering it; faithfully echoing what was passed on through the generations before us.

But what does the echo of our Catholic faith sound like? Practically, it sounds like the quiet prayers of the faithful mumbled at any desperate moment, or the gentle clink of the beads of a rosary fingered by a trusting soul, or the ring of bells drawing our attention towards the Lord's Real Presence in the Eucharist, or the chants of a monk flooding a cavernous church.

Along with the tangible, though, there is also the echo of the Lord's teaching and self-revelation of Himself to us. We find this in the 'Deposit of Faith'. Imagine the Deposit of Faith as a treasure chest, and within are two large, sparkling gems: one labeled 'Scripture' and one labeled 'Tradition'. These two elements are essential and contain

the whole of the revealed Truth of the Catholic Faith.

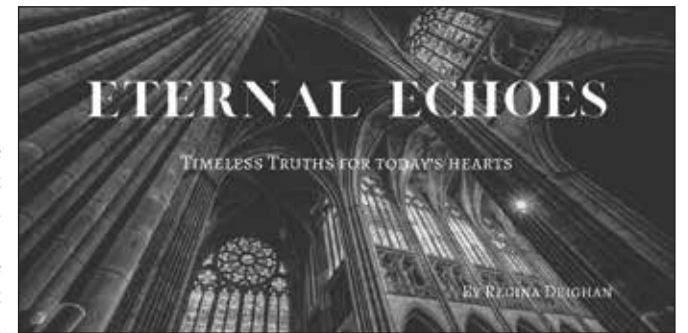
Sacred Scripture is the inerrant, written Word of God, more colloquially known as the Bible. The 73 inspired books contain stories and teachings of God's revelation throughout salvation history, leading us to the founding of the Church. Sacred Tradition consists of the essential teachings and practices of the Catholic faith, as passed down through the apostles and their successors (the bishops) per Jesus' instructions (see Mt 28:19-20).

Both Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition are essential in order to fully understand our Catholic faith; they cannot be separated from one another. In fact, Sacred Scripture is derived from the matrix of Sacred Tradition! The Magisterium - the living, teaching office of the Church consisting of the pope united with the bishops - helps the faithful to understand and interpret the Deposit of Faith. It is their solemn task and grave responsibility to ensure that the Deposit of Faith is echoed throughout time without any change or error. It is not the task of the Magisterium to change these fundamental teachings of the Church - they are what Christ revealed them to be. From bishops

to the average lay catechist, we are merely stewards of a treasure that must be shared accurately and lovingly among all the faithful.

The Church teaches us that the purpose of catechesis is to put people in communion, intimacy, and relationship with Jesus Christ (Catechesi tradendae 5). For this echoing of our faith to accomplish this intended task, it must be Christocentric, or Christ-centered. This is the ultimate purpose. When we refer to the Word of God, we refer to Scripture, certainly, as well as those essential apostolic teachings, but it also refers to Jesus. Jesus is the 'Logos', or the Word of God (Jn 1). The Word spoken into the world so that we might know the love of the Father. Our transmission of the faith, our echoing of divine truths is not something stagnant, but alive and organic. We are echoing a Person with Whom we can have a relationship. To share the Word of God with others is to share all aspects of our faith, most importantly the person of Jesus Christ.

Some people have the title and specific profession of 'catechist' - one who passes on the teachings of the faith to others. As a former religion teacher, this was the heart of my job. To a certain extent, we



all have a task of catechesis, most especially parents. Parents are the primary instructors of the faith to their children, so it is of utmost importance that parents teach their children about the treasures of the Deposit of Faith as they introduce their children to the person of Jesus Christ. Catechesis can take place in your conversations with family or friends; you don't have to be in a classroom. It is so important that we as faithful Catholics educate ourselves in the doctrine of our faith so that we are equipped to witness to others.

In his first letter to St Timothy (an early bishop), St Paul exhorts him: "O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you" (1 Tm 6:20). This command is something that remains true today for our hierarchy, as well as lay people. We have been entrusted with echoing these Truths of the Deposit of Faith. The purpose of this new column, 'Eternal Echoes', is to provide the reader with nuggets of practical and inspiring

catechesis. My hope is that reading these pieces will encourage you in your understanding of your faith, and be driven to share it with others, most especially those to whom you can act as catechist, echoing back the beauty of the Truth of our Faith.

May we possess a holy boldness to participate in the great task of catechesis in the world around us. First and foremost, may we start with ourselves allowing these echoes to ring in our hearts and call us deeper into relationship with Christ. (Regina Deighan is originally from Florida. Before moving to Co Derry with her husband and two children, she taught for eight years in a Catholic school. She has her BA and MA in Theology from Franciscan University of Steubenville. She loves reading and writing and is very excited to be authoring this new catechetical column for The Net. For more information, questions, or to request topics, please email: eternalechoesderry@gmail.com.)

## Come Follow Me A year of prayer for vocations Fr Johnny Doherty CSsR

THIS year has been dedicated in a special way by the Catholic Church in Ireland as a year of prayer for vocations to the Diocesan Priesthood. This is a very urgent issue that calls for everyone to get involved in. We are all conscious of the crisis of the shortage of priests because of so many parishes now being without a resident priest, and so many priests having to look after several parishes.

### One vocation

For us as Christians, there is only one vocation, and this comes through our Baptism. The vocation of each of us is to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. "Come follow me" is the invitation issued by Christ to each person who is baptised. Then we have to be tuned into where Christ is leading us.

This one vocation is expressed and lived differently because of the different circumstances and commitments of our lives. The Catholic Church lives at various levels in the world...

### Sacrament of Marriage

The first level of the Church is called The Domestic Church. Many people live their vocation in marriage, by living as a disciple of Christ in a relationship of love with one other person as a Sacramental couple in service of their children, of the Church and of the world in which they live.

Marriage was the first call God made to the people He was creating. God created them male and female in His own image. God commissioned them to be one with one another and to fill the earth and conquer it.

All down the ages, marriage between a woman and a man has been a vital part of our concept of God's will for humanity. Marriage has changed and developed over the centuries. It was never perfect because of our imperfect humanity. But it has been a rock for society.

We are in great danger of losing this treasure in our society today. So many couples are choosing to live together and have their families. Some then get married at a later date. But many do not, often resulting in so many lone parents left to bring up their children in difficult conditions.

A real challenge for us today is to restore heterosexual marriage to its proper place by helping our young people to develop a sense of the wonder of this vocation, and to help them to have the generosity of love to commit themselves to one another in this sacrament. We can and must do this, while attending to the many challenges of our world around the questions of same sex relationships and the gender issues.

### Diocesan Priesthood

The second level of the Church's life is the Church of the Diocese, known as the Local Church, with the Bishop as the visible head. He has the fullness of the priesthood of Christ. This Sacramental Priesthood is shared with those who are ordained priests and deacons. They are not ordained as general practitioners but rather as members of the fraternity of the priesthood. Their vocation is to make the Bishop present throughout the Diocese as leaders of faith in the Parish Communities.

This is much more than an organisational arrangement. It is a Sacramental order of presence, so that everyone is drawn into the one Body of Christ and enabled to live with the life of Christ in their everyday lives.

This is why this Year of Prayer for Vocations to the Diocesan Priesthood is so important for all of us.

### Universal Church

Then there is the third level of the Church's life, the Universal Church, sharing the life of Christ throughout the world, with the Pope as the visible head. Pope Francis is a wonderful example of this in action.

Last month, we had the phenomenon of upwards of two million young people from around the world gathering in Lisbon, in Portugal, for World Youth Day - a day that lasted four days! They must have learned that from Donegal!

Pope Francis was there. His message was clear. They are the Church. They are called to make a difference in the world by their fidelity to Christ. They are the hope of the present and for the future.

And that is his constant message in all his travels and in everything he does in Rome. He is always commissioning people to live their Baptism in their everyday lives and so make Christ present as Saviour of the world. For me, Pope Francis is amazing and wonderful because he is never about anything other than Jesus Christ.

### Religious Life

Religious women and men live as disciples of Christ in community with one another for the service of

God's people, especially the poor and those who have no one to be advocates for them.

Throughout the centuries of the Church, Religious Community Life has been a very important feature. This was very evident even in our own time. Now it has changed.

There has been a sharp decline of vocations to Religious life in recent years, especially in the countries of the West. But this still remains a very important vocation for the life of the Church.

It is significant that the Contemplative Communities are the ones that seem to be doing best at present here. Maybe that is because prayer and contemplation may be one of the greatest needs in our modern society.

I have no doubt that this vocation will play an important part in the future as it has in the past. There are more needs than ever in the world today. Religious Communities have been born in response to these needs, needs that no one else can or will get involved with.

### Single Life

Single people live as disciples of Christ in the ordinary circumstances of their lives, using their gifts to bring peace and healing and hope to those around them.

Good models for single people are Saints Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, whose feast day is July 29. They were two sisters and a brother who lived together in Bethany, near Jerusalem. Jesus was a frequent visitor to their home and often received hospitality at their table.

Putting this reflection on the vocation of Single Life at the

end of this article could give the impression that this is the least important of the vocations in the Church. Indeed, that is how many people would think about it. Some would even wonder if it is a vocation at all!

I have placed it here because I believe that, in many ways, this is the most important one. It is where we have all come from. And it is where all vocations in the future will come from.

Think about this next short section and all those you know who are living in each part of life. Ask yourself how you are called to live your vocation ever more fully, so that the Church may be built up to shine out to the world. And ask how you can help others to live their vocations more fully so that Christ's joy may be in us and our joy may be complete.

There are many expressions of the vocation of the single person:

- The newly baptised baby brings joy and hope to everyone just by being present. There is no greater argument against the horror of abortion than a young baby filled with life.

- Children, especially after they have been anointed with the Sacrament of Confirmation, are called to positively contribute to the joy and well-being of their parents, family, and home, so that it becomes truly the Church of the home. They also have so much to bring to their school and their parish community by using their gifts to bring joy and goodness to others.

- Young people have so much to bring to other young people

in today's world by helping them to come to know the goodness of following Christ. They also have great gifts to bring hope and freshness to their parents and other people in the parish. But no one asks them anymore!!

- Older single people have gifts that are badly needed in today's world. They are often the people who look after a sick or elderly parent or sibling. Unfortunately, they can be taken for granted by the rest of the family and the care for a parent or sibling is left mostly to them.

Many older single people also are very generous with their time and energy in the various groups and organisations of the parish community. These look after the ordinary running of the parish. They also often are caring for the needy and neglected of the parish.

- People living on their own are also called to be disciples of Christ by making their home a place of Christ's presence and a source of his peace.

"The single lay person carries out his or her apostolate by virtue of his or her special vocational status, growing in intimate union with the Divine Spouse, Our Lord." (Apostolic Exhortation: Christifideles Laici)

### Conclusion

It is important to continue to pray for vocations to the Diocesan Priesthood. May this prayer be answered for the Derry Diocese. As part of that answer, may all of us work at living our own vocation more fully so that Christ may shine to the world around us and heal the world of all its ills.

# Children's Catechism Club - C3

by Veronica Harley

**HELLO children. Welcome to the month of September. The summer holidays are over and we are all ready to begin the new school year. This month is dedicated to the Seven Sorrows (or Dolours) of Mary. The Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, which is celebrated on September 15, recognises the sadness experienced by Mary, the Mother of Jesus.**



### The Seven Sorrows are:

- 1) The Prophecy of Simeon
- 2) The Flight into Egypt
- 3) Jesus Lost in the Temple
- 4) Meeting Jesus on His way to the Cross
- 5) Standing at the foot of the Cross
- 6) Jesus being taken down from the Cross
- 7) The Burial of Jesus

### Mary's Birthday

We celebrate Our Lady's Birthday on the 8th day of September. Mary was born without Original Sin and full of grace (CCC 491). She was chosen to be the Mother of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, the spiritual Mother for all of us. She is the holiest of all God's creatures. We rejoice and celebrate this wonderful feast, for on this day the dawning of redemption for the world came about through Mary's birth.

*Father of Mercy, give your people help and strength from Heaven. The birth of the Virgin Mary's Son was the dawn of our salvation. May this celebration of her birthday bring us closer to lasting peace. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.*

### Saints of the Month

St Mother Theresa – September 5



St Matthew – September 21  
St Pio – September 23  
St Jerome – September 30



### Feast of the Holy Cross

The Feast of the Holy Cross is celebrated on September 15. This Feast recalls three historical events: (1) The finding of the True Cross by Saint Helena, who was the mother of the Emperor Constantine; (2) The dedication of the churches built by the Emperor Constantine on the site of the Holy Sepulchre and Mount Calvary; (3) The restoration of the True Cross to Jerusalem by the emperor Heraclius II.

Although this Feast recalls these historical events, we also celebrate the True Cross as the means of our salvation.

Jesus suffered death on a cross to save us from our sins. Crucifixion was the Roman death penalty, given as a punishment to the most dangerous criminals. The Cross is important for us because, on the Cross, Jesus silently suffered a horrific death for our sins in order to win our salvation.

Jesus tells us in Scripture that anyone who wants to follow Him must take up his cross daily and follow Him (Luke 9:23, CCC 1435). This means more than simply giving something up. It means uniting ourselves to the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. Sometimes things happen in our lives which make us feel sad and cause us great hurt. We should offer up the pain we experience with the sufferings that Jesus endured on the Cross for the sins of the world, and remember that in God we place our trust.

### Traditions

Feast of the Archangels or Michaelmas – September 29. The days between the Feast day of the Archangels and October 2 (Feast of the Guardian Angels) are known by children as 'the angel days'.

'Angels are servants and messengers of God' (CCC 329). Angels are signs of God's care and love and they remind us of how God knows each one of us. God loves us so much that He gave each one of

us our own Guardian Angel as 'a protector and shepherd' (CCC 336) to watch over us.

The Archangels: There are nine choirs (classes) of angels and the archangels are one of them. The Bible names three of them, which we celebrate on September 29 – Michael, Gabriel and Raphael.

The Archangel Gabriel: The word angel means 'messenger' and Gabriel is the archangel who brought very important news from God. We first hear about Gabriel in the Old Testament in the Book of Daniel, but it is in the New Testament that we learn most about him. Gabriel came to Zechariah to tell him about the arrival of John the Baptist, and to Mary for Her consent to become the Mother of God. Tradition has it that Gabriel will sound the trumpet on the day of Judgement, calling all people. His name means 'God is my strength'.

The Archangel Raphael: Raphael appears in one book only, in the Old Testament – the Book of Tobit. This is a beautiful story of guidance, healing and love. Tradition claims that in the Gospel of John, where Jesus healed the man at the pool, it was Raphael who stirred the healing waters.

The Archangel Michael: In the Old Testament, Michael is described as standing guard with God's people. In the New Testament, the Book of Revelation tells how Michael cast the



fallen angels out of heaven. These are the angels who thought they were like God. Michael's name means 'who is like God'. He is thought of as the great protector. Michael is often shown dressed in armour and fighting Satan who is the head of the 'fallen' angels

### Ember Days

The month of September is part of the harvest season. As Christians, we give thanks to God and pray for protection of the crops, so that He will give a good yield. The Church calendar reflects the four seasons of the year.

For this reason, over many centuries, Catholics have celebrated Ember days. Four times a year, roughly three months apart, near the beginning of each season, the Church sets aside three days (Wednesday, Friday and Saturday) to ask God's blessing on creation, especially the rhythm of nature.

The Church thanks God for the gifts of nature which are used in the sacraments. Olives are used for the holy oils, wheat is used to give bread for Holy Communion, and grapes provide wine to be transformed miraculously into the Blood of Christ.

Ember days are dedicated to praying for priests, especially those about to be ordained. These days are little spiritual check-ups four times a year. Ember days are not connected to Ash Wednesday and the name does not come from embers or ashes. The word 'Ember' originates in the Latin name 'Quatuor anni Tempora', meaning four times a year. It was

originally known as 'Jejunia Quatuor Temporum', reminding Catholics to mark each season with fasting.

Fasting: Up until the Second Vatican Council (192-1965), the Church asked Catholics to fast on all Ember days. Fasting meant eating one full meal and two partial meals in the day and avoiding meat on Ember Fridays. Regular fasting seems like a burden because it brings hunger. But fasting brings us strength because it makes us strong in the face of sin. If we train our bodies to do with less food, even for a day, we train our souls to avoid sin.

Themes: The specific themes for each Ember Week are:

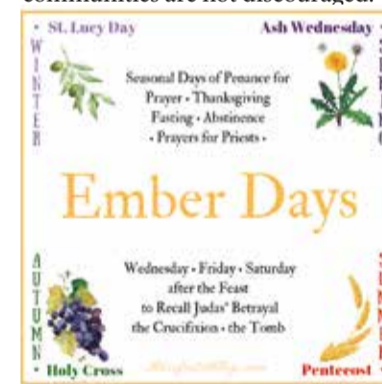
1. In spring, during the first week of Lent, we give thanks for the rebirth of nature and for the gift of light. Usually flowers are offered during this week.

2. In summer, within the octave of Pentecost Day, to give thanks for the crop of wheat.

3. In autumn, after the third Sunday of September, near the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September 14), to give thanks for the grape harvest.

4. In winter, within the week following the Feast of St Lucy (December 13), during the third week of Advent, to give thanks for the olive crop.

Although Ember days are no longer universally marked on the General Roman Calendar as a whole community worship, personal observance at home or in small communities are not discouraged.



## Quiz Time with Lawrence

1. Of which country is Alain Berset the current President?
2. For how many consecutive days does the temperature need to reach 25 degrees Celsius in order to constitute a heat wave?
3. What actor stars as 'Ken' in this year's 'Barbie' movie?
4. In what year did the Falklands War break out between Argentina and Britain?
5. Which golfer will captain the European team in this month's Ryder Cup?
6. What French expression is used in the English language to describe the process of letting things run their own course without interference?
7. In the Republic of Ireland, the letters TN at the start of a car registration denotes a vehicle registered in which county?
8. What name did renowned singer/songwriter Willie Nelson give to his trusted guitar?
9. The flag of what country features vertical blocks of orange, white and green in that order?
10. How many points are awarded for a 'touchdown' in

American football?

11. Which TV detectives were played by Sharon Gless and Tyne Daly?
12. What song was written for Captain von Trapp to convey his sadness at having to leave Austria?
13. Which county is known as the Garden of Ireland?
14. With what 1970/80s band was Jeff Lynne the original lead singer?
15. What country celebrates its National Day on July 1?
16. In which Italian city is Shakespeare's Romeo & Juliet set?
17. What is the highest possible break in snooker without potting the black ball at any stage?
18. What is the name of Bart's school teacher in 'The Simpsons'?
19. Through how many countries does the River Danube flow?
20. Cynophobia is the fear of what?
21. In the Highway Code, what shape are 'Stop' signs?
22. Which English football team plays its home games at Sixfields Stadium?
23. St James' Gate is associated with what Dublin landmark?
24. What is the world's southernmost capital city?
25. How many chambers are there in the human heart?

**Quiz Answers:** 1, Switzerland. 2, Three. 3, Ryan Gosling. 4, 1982. 5, Luke Donald. 6, Laissez-faire. 7, Tipperary North. 8, Trigger. 9, Ivory Coast. 10, Six. 11, Cagney and Lacey. 12, Edelweiss. 13, Wicklow. 14, Electric Light Orchestra. 15, Canada. 16, Verona. 17, 125. 18, Mrs Crabapple. 19, Ten. 20, Dogs. 21, Octagonal. 22, Northampton Town. 23, The Guinness Brewery. 24, Wellington, New Zealand. 25, Four.

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

# Let Your Light Shine!

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

Clonmany, Coleraine, Creggan, Culladuff, Culmore, Desertmartin, Donnyloop, Drumquin, Duramannagh, Dungiven, Fahan, Faughanvale, Garvagh, Gortin, Greencastle,



*Derry Diocese celebrates ordination of Fr Stephen Ward in Christ The King Church, Cappagh, Omagh.*

*Photographs by Stephen Latimer*

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