



The NET

Sharing fruits of faith in Derry Diocese

ISSUE 57. SEPTEMBER 2020

PRICE - £1.50 /€2.00



Sr Clare Prayer – Brandywell Grotto



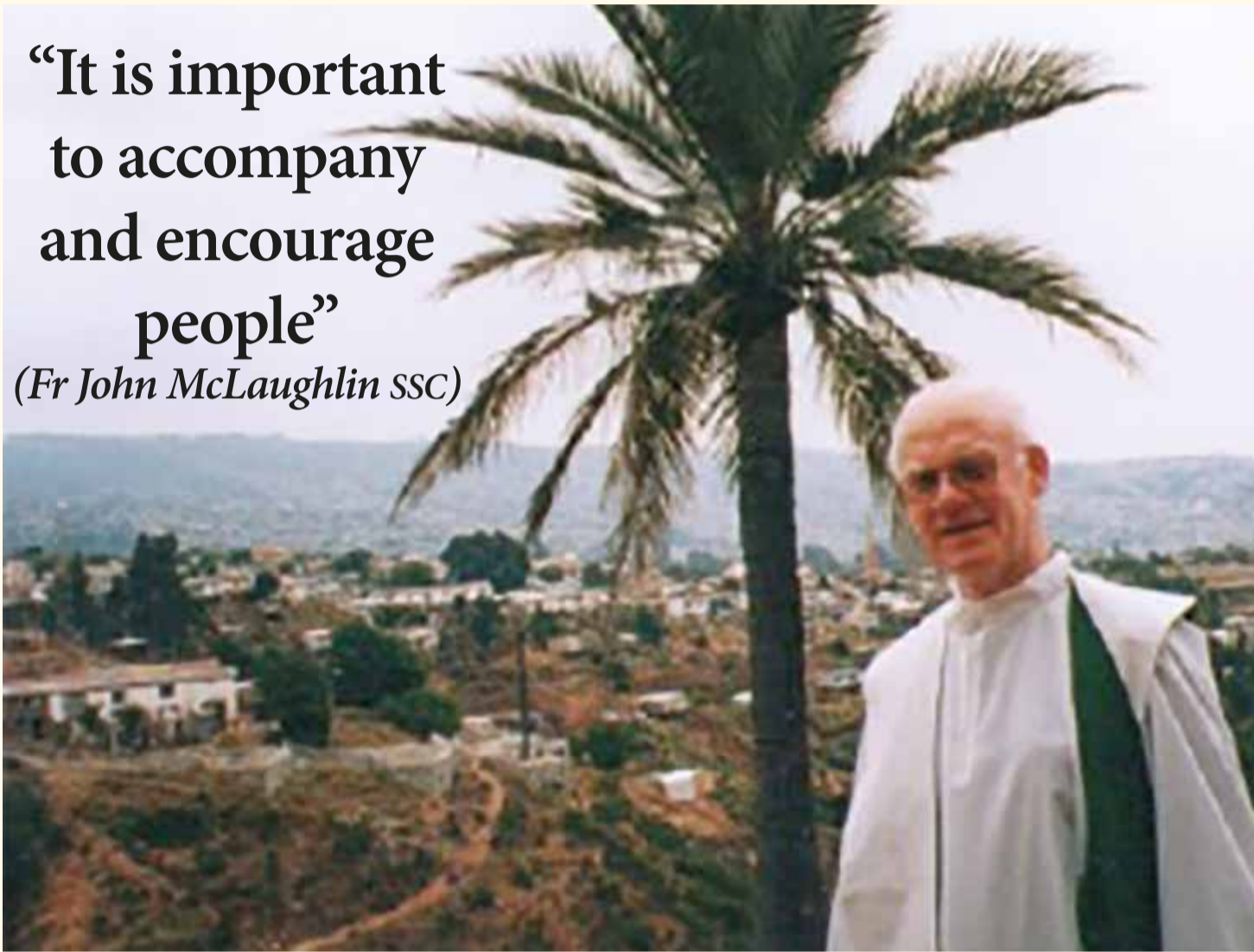
Syro Malabar Video – Waterside



Memorial Walk – Greencastle



Fr Crilly's 80th – Castlefin



Covid Cross Blessing – Cranagh



Grotto Blessing – Creggan



JPII Reflection – Ballinascreen

People in focus



Marie Lindsay – Iskaheen



Fr John McLaughlin SSC – Moville



Stella McGinley – Sion Mills



Bishop Francis Lagan RIP



John Hume RIP

Also featuring: Youth News & Features, JPII Reflections, Loreto Coleraine reviews strangest academic year, Excellence award for St Finlough's teaching assistant, 125 years of St Joseph's Young Priests' Society, Parish Feature Part II, Children's Catechism Club, Irish Page and Quiz.

Contents

Parish deliveries

Copies of 'The Net' will be available in parishes again after restrictions, as a result of Covid-19, are lifted.

Respect for the planet's resources – A reflection by Sr Nellie McLaughlin RSM.....	p2
Ballinascreen children enjoy celebrating Season of Creation	p2
Pandemic reflection.....	p2
Rosary on the Coast.....	p2
Derry mural of smiling nun, Sr Clare, warming hearts near and far	p3
Youth reflect on Pope John Paul II Award.....	p4-5
Grandparents – our first teachers by Hollie Frystal	p6
Virtual Knock pilgrimage for grandparents.....	p6
Great response to Youth Ministry Scholarship.....	p6
Check out DYC for faith-based gap year	p6
Youth team back with more online fun	p6
Remembering John Hume – a good friend by Peter Grant	p7
Pope Francis entrusts young to Our Lady's intercession The Virgin Mary by Oisín Mulhern.....	p8
Youth 2000 Festival online success by Hollie Frystal	p9
Engaging young people in their faith by Tony Brennan	p9
Loreto Coleraine reviews strangest academic year by Brenda Sweeney	p10
Back to school! by Mary O'Boyle.....	p11
Excellence award for St Finlough's teaching assistant Warm welcome at Queen's within Columbanus community by Michael Ward	p11
St Mary's College tribute to outstanding leader – Marie Lindsay.....	p12
Greencastle walk raises £21,000 for Trocaire by Maria Bradley.....	p13
Lockdown surprise for Fr Crilly.....	p13
Remembering Bishop Francis Lagan.....	p14
Creggan grotto and prayer stone blessed in memory of Bishop Lagan by Fr Joe Gormley.....	p15
God's Friends – lost in translation by Fr Oliver Crilly.....	p16
Ministering in times of tragedy	p16
Foclóir Nua Irish Section by Fr Oliver Crilly.....	p17
A man of peace and strong faith – John Hume RIP	p18
Credit Union tribute to John Hume by Delma Boggs.....	p19
Pray for courage to be and share Good News – Bishop Donal.....	p20
Cranagh Covid Cross blessed	p20
The real challenge for parishes	p21
Parish Feature – Part II	p22-25
The Life of St Teresa of Jesus of Los Andes – The Lay Life – by Fr Stephen Quinn OCD	p26
Pictures from Heaven by Vera McFadden	p27
A few thoughts on the Eucharist by Vera McFadden	p27
My faith journey by Fr John McLaughlin SSC.....	p28
125 years of St Joseph's Young Priests by Christine McLaren.....	p29
Derry Diocesan Vocations Prayer	p29
Prayer for Priests.....	p29
Pope's prayer intention.....	p29
Diocesan clerical appointments.....	p29
A Word of God for Your Family Life Love – by Fr Johnny Doherty CSSR	p30
Church cleaning a labour of love for Sion Mills great grandmother.....	p30
Children's Catechism Club – C3 by Veronica Harley	p31
Quiz Time with Lawrence.....	p31

Sr Nellie McLaughlin RSM reflects on Pope Francis' prayer intention for...

Respect for the planet's resources

"I have come that you may have life, life in abundance." (John 10:10)

IN outlining the universal prayer intention for September 2020, Pope Francis challenges us to pray that 'the planet's resources will not be plundered, but shared in a just and respectful manner'.

Our Common Home is richly endowed for the good of the whole community of creation. These resources, while abundant, are finite, and therefore require responsible stewardship in co-operation with Earth's processes. 'Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God' (LS. 84).

Planet Earth's living systems: the air we breathe; the water we drink; the food we eat; and the sunlight that nurtures and sustains us, and all beings, ultimately relies on biodiversity. I like to think of biodiversity as the sacred leaven in God's creative extravagance – that stunning variety of life on earth in all its forms, species and ecosystems in the oceans, on land, in the skies and sub-surface bacteria.

It is sobering to realise that we humans comprise 0.01% of the totality of life on Earth, yet our collective ecological footprint is enormous. Earth Overshoot

Day marks the date when we (humanity) have used more from nature than our planet can renew in the entire year. In 1969 that crucial date was December 27.

Since then, especially in the last 30 years, through overfishing, overharvesting of forests and the alarming rise of CO2 in the atmosphere, our ecological budget 2019 was spent by July 29. We are currently using 1.7 earths as we dig ever deeper into our planet's reserves built over millennia. We urgently need to move from fossil fuels to sustainable energy sources. The Covid-19 pandemic offers a brief breathing space for Earth to regenerate, with Overshoot Day 2020 estimated as August 22.

Fundamental to responsible stewardship and equitable sharing of resources is the realisation that the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor are one and the same cry. Indigenous wisdom reminds us that what we do to the earth we do to ourselves. When we humans put short-term profits ahead of long-term needs and priorities of flourishing life for all, we

create a dilemma. We cannot live without fresh air, clean water, fertile soil, sunshine or the companionship of others in the community of life. Yet many are prepared to cut down the rainforests, the very lungs of the earth, to deplete the soil through the overuse of harmful chemicals, to pollute the water beyond safe consumption and consign millions of people and species to poverty and homelessness for monetary gain.

Our Common Home is struggling while 'being squeezed dry beyond every limit' (LS 106). Current estimates indicate that less than 20% of people own and control over 80% of the Earth's resources and generate over 80% of the planet's waste. Earth has enough for the needs of all but not for the greed of the few, whether individuals or multi-national corporations.

As in Laudato Si', Pope Francis is calling us to conversion, to re-connect with our deepest roots in the community of creation: the renewal and re-connection we seek 'entails a loving awareness that we are not disconnected from the rest of creatures, but

joined in a splendid universal communion' (LS 220). This disconnection, the systemic cause of so much devastation and suffering in our world, continues to have serious consequences for planet and people: 'What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?' (LS 160)

Let this be a wake up moment for us worldwide as Covid-19 re-enforces what we already suspect, namely, we must protect the more vulnerable among us: planet, people, species and all vital resources. The prayer intention is timely in reminding us of what many of us simply take for granted. Key advice in these pandemic times is the insistence on hand washing and staying apart as core preventative measures. The alarming reality is that over two billion people do not have water to drink or for food preparation, not to mention hand washing, neither do countless millions have homes in which to remain safe and well!

During this Season of Creation and mindful of the 75th anniversary of the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and



Sr Nellie McLaughlin RSM.

Nagasaki, let us commit anew to respect for our common home and more equitable sharing of its resources. I suggest that we make this practical by choosing a specific key resource, for example, sun, water, air, soil, microorganisms, earthworms, insects, bees, birds, animals, oceans, coral reefs, forests, wetlands, web of life.

Looking to the future with hope, may our chosen vital resource inspire us and others to make the necessary life-style changes to enable its preservation and dynamism in the dance of life for the abiding health and wellbeing of the entire community of creation.

'All it takes is one good person to restore hope'. (LS.71).

Pandemic by Lynn Ungar (11-03-2020)

What if you thought of it
as the Jews consider the Sabbath
—
the most sacred of times?
Cease from travel.
Cease from buying and selling.
Give up, just for now,
on trying to make the world
different than it is.
Sing. Pray. Touch only those
to whom you commit your life.
Center down.

And when your body has

become still,
reach out with your heart.
Know that we are connected
in ways that are terrifying and
beautiful.
(You could hardly deny it now.)
Know that our lives
are in one another's hands.
(Surely, that has come clear.)

Do not reach out your hands.
Reach out your heart.
Reach out your words.
Reach out all the tendrils

of compassion that move,
invisibly,
where we cannot touch.

Promise this world your love —
for better or for worse,
in sickness and in health,
so long as we all shall live.

(This Pandemic reflection was
read at the first public Masses in
Castlenn, Co Donegal, on the
weekend of July 4th and 5th).

Coastal Rosary for Life & Faith

THE Rosary on the Coast for Life & Faith will take place this year on Sunday, October 11, at 2.30 pm, when people around the globe will be united in this prayer.

October 11 is the traditional feast of the Maternity of Mary, and the faithful are invited to join in the praying of the Rosary from wherever is convenient, such as grottos, churches, homes etc, while observing social distancing and regulations regarding gatherings.

Many have been praying 15 decades of the Rosary every

day since August 15, the Feast of Our Lady's Assumption into Heaven, as part of the 54 Day Rosary Novena for Life & Faith, which comes to an end on October 7, the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary.

Another upcoming Marian event is 'The Hail Holy Queen Conference', which will be broadcast on Radio Maria Live on Saturday, October 10 and will feature Fr Ruairi O'Domhnaill, Dana, Fr Damien Polly, Marino Restrepo and Fr Marius O'Reilly.

For more information

regarding the Coastal Rosary the next day, October 11, and to register a Rosary location, visit www.coastalrosaryireland.ie.

Ballinascreen children enjoy celebrating Season of Creation

The P3 pupils at St Columba's PS, Straw, in the parish of Ballinascreen, enjoying learning about God's creation during the Season of Creation, which runs from September 1 until October 4. See the Diocesan website for resources for home and parish for celebrating the joy of creation



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

Contacting us:

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

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.

Derry mural of smiling nun, Sr Clare, warming hearts near and far



Sr Clare Crockett's sisters, Shauna and Megan, at the unveiling of her mural in the Brandywell.

THERE is an 'energy' in the air around the Brandywell area of Derry these days, other than that generated on the hallowed turf of the City of Derry football club's home ground. It all seemed to kick off when the idea was mooted about having a mural of the late Sr Clare Crockett painted on a gable wall in the Brandywell neighbourhood she had grown up in.

Only 33 years old when she was killed in 2016 during an earthquake in Ecuador, where she was living and ministering to young people as one of the community of Sisters with the Home of the Mother Order, Sr Clare was in the prime of her life and full of the joy that is associated with the Servant Sisters.

Such was the joy overflowing from the heart of Sr Clare in life that it seems fitting the finished mural has her image smiling so brightly upon the many people who come from near and far to view it, as if to warm their hearts and brighten their day.

The mural was painted by Derry artists, Ray Bonner and Karl Porter, of UV Arts, which was established to encourage people to use graffiti in a constructive way. A youth worker in the City, Ray told 'The Net' that while he had heard of Sr Clare before he had been asked to paint her mural, he hadn't known much about her story until those he encountered while working on the mural told him that the film on her life was a must see.

"I went home and watched it,"

said the 29-year-old, "and I was struck by how much she gave. She had a great work ethic and certainly lived up to her motto, 'All or Nothing'."

"I also noted that she had done the same work as we do as youth workers, and it was good to see how much the young people appreciated Sr Clare. There is always the hope that we help the young people who come through our doors as best we can. If I was to die tomorrow and young people were to say the same thing about me as was said about Sr Clare, I would be very happy."

Devotion has been growing to the young Derry-born nun, whose amazing conversion story has touched many, with her sisters, Shauna and Meghan hearing more and more stories about prayers answered through her intercession. Many of these are told to them by people they meet while visiting the neighbouring graves of their sister and mother in the City Cemetery.

Indeed, so many people were having difficulty finding Sr Clare's grave in the large cemetery that overlooks the Brandywell, that signs have now been erected to guide visitors, and since news of the beautiful mural spread further afield, even more people are making a point of coming to pray at her grave.

A special unveiling and blessing ceremony was held at the site of the Deanery Street mural, on Sunday, August 16, when many gathered to show their love and appreciation for the Derry girl

who they believe is interceding for them, and to join in the prayers led by Fr Stephen Quinn, OCD.

Speaking before the blessing, Fr Stephen told those gathered: "We celebrate history with murals in Ireland, and with this mural of Sr Clare Crockett, we celebrate the future."

Afterwards, they walked in a candle-light procession to the nearby Grotto dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes, praying the Rosary and holding the special Sr Clare candles that have been selling in their thousands from shops across the City, to raise money to pay for the mural and much sought after Sr Clare Prayer Cards.

Fr Stephen has been celebrating a monthly Mass in Termonbacca Retreat Centre in honour of Sr Clare, which has been broadcast via YouTube and the Termonbacca Facebook page during the Covid-19 pandemic, and he followed the blessing of the mural with the celebration of Mass at the Grotto, which has been beautifully developed and maintained by the local community.

Grotto

Kathleen McCallion, who lives a few doors down from the Grotto, explained that it had been built in 1945 after the community had gathered, on what was then a green area, to pray the Rosary after a bomb had gone off in Pennyburn. A plaque, unveiled during the centenary of the Long Tower, notes that the grotto was erected near to a World War II air-raid shelter.

"The people continued to gather there to pray," said Kathleen, "and this led to the building of a grotto, for which a statue of Our Lady of Lourdes was brought down from Belfast, and that is the same statue there today."

"We have developed the grotto over the years and built an altar in 2008 because we had two Masses celebrated there every year – on May 31, the Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and August 15, the Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady into Heaven."

She added: "The Rosary has been prayed at the Grotto every night since, but with the virus we have had to shield and so we are saying it in our own homes now. A lot of people go into the Grotto to pray when they are passing by, and many ask for the Rosary to be offered up for their special intentions."

Kathleen was delighted to see so many gather at the Grotto for



the Rosary and Mass, for which Fr Stephen was joined on the altar by Fr Joseph, a fellow Carmelite from Nigeria who has just recently arrived at Termonbacca, and Fr Francis Ferry, from Mount Charles, Co Donegal.

During his homily, Fr Stephen spoke about Sr Clare's bright smile as depicted on the mural, saying: "She is wearing the habit of a nun and yet upon her face is the brightest of smiles. What has she got to be happy about being a nun, some might wonder. Many young and not so young people see the Catholic Church as an organisation that is harsh and old fashioned, out to extinguish their joy...and yet, there is Sr Clare smiling on us."

"Had she entered into some other kind of Catholicism, something completely different? She had thrown off the primary school religion long ago, the one that we pay lip service to all too often. If you want to know the meaning of that smile, you have to go to that moment in 2000, when she went on a pilgrimage for the first time. This girl, who didn't want to be on pilgrimage but sunbathing, smoking and partying, and who only desired to be famous, experienced something pass between her and Christ when she bent down and kissed the feet of His figure on the Cross."

"The force of that woke her up from her stupor to realise the truth; that what she thought was so significant had turned to dust when she met this Christ. She went on to speak of the power, wisdom and beauty of God, who made her feel like she was the only one in the entire universe. The Good News that put that smile on Sr Clare's face was that He had willed her into existence and loved her to the point of dying for her on the Cross, and that is why she left her kith and kin for Spain and went through the rigors of becoming a nun. And it is why she went to Ecuador and could face that earthquake with tremendous courage. She knew that she was



Unable to attend the blessing of Sr Clare's mural, Bishop Donal enjoyed hearing all about it from three generations of a local family, Ann, Oonagh, Katie and Miley.



willed and loved by God."

Unable to attend the blessing of Sr Clare's mural, Bishop Donal, who spoke of the young Derry nun in his Sunday homily, told 'The Net' that it was "wonderful to see the local energy and pride that has been generated by the amazing story of Sr Clare Crockett".

He added: "She is a model of someone who did not want to leave heroism and sanctity till later in life - and who found great joy in channelling all her energies in the service of Christ. Love of God and acceptance of the divine calling did not limit her life but channelled her talents to journey with others."

"She became an original Clare Crockett - not a photocopy of someone else. So the challenge to

the younger generation is not to follow her - but to follow God's call and to allow God's grace to form them for sanctity".

The 10th anniversary of Sr Clare's final profession was on Tuesday, September 8, the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and this will be marked at the monthly Mass to be celebrated for her in Termonbacca on Sunday, September 13. The 7 pm Mass will be streamed live on the Termonbacca Facebook page and YouTube channel.

A dedicated Facebook page, SisterClare Crockett, has just recently been set up for people to learn more about Sr Clare and share stories of how they have been helped through her intercession, and it already has over 3,000 friends.

I feel a lot closer to God having helped out more in my parish



MY name is Aimee Mc Auliffe and I live in Moville. I am 16 years old and am completing my Pope John Paul II Award this year.

I had heard about the Award throughout my years at secondary school and was given the opportunity in Transition Year to undertake it. As I have always

been a practising Catholic, I thought it would be beneficial to take the time this year to take my faith journey to the next level.

To take part in the award, you have to complete 20 hours of volunteering in your parish, and 20 hours in your community. For my parish hours, I read at Mass and counted the collection money frequently.

Due to the current pandemic, I had to then continue my hours by partaking in the 'Derry Youth' online programme. This involved a lot of different faith based activities, like watching videos, answering questions and sending in different tasks. I actively participated in this when the lockdown measures were strict. When the churches were allowed to reopen, I had the opportunity to read at Mass, once again, for

those who were watching on the parish webcam in their homes.

I also took part in the Youth Alpha programme on Zoom, which went on for eight weeks. I thoroughly enjoyed this experience. We watched a faith-based video each week and then answered questions based on the video in smaller groups.

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, I attended a youth day in Knock and also took part in the Sleep-Out in solidarity with the homeless. I was due to go to Medjugorje in the summer for the youth festival there as a part of my award, but this was cancelled.

For my community hours, I volunteered in my school's breakfast club. I helped by setting up the room, making sandwiches, and cleaning up, as well as helping with general supervision. I really

enjoyed this experience as I found it rewarding that I could have been helping a child who may not have had breakfast at home. Due to the school closures, I could not finish these hours in school.

For my final two hours, I shopped for an elderly neighbour who was cocooned. I had to leave the shopping at her doorstep and talk to her through the window. I also made sure I was washing my hands often and obeying the guidelines.

I am now finished all of my hours for the Award, and I will hopefully be receiving the Gold Award at the beginning of next year.

I feel as though I am a lot closer to God now that I have helped out more in my parish. I am definitely going to continue to read at Mass now that I am finished.



The beauty of the JPPII Award is giving back to people and thinking of others



MY name is Ciara Barnett and I am just finished Transition Year at Scoil Mhuire, Buncrana. The main aim of the Pope John Paul II Award is to enable participants to take an active part in the life of their Church – in the life of their community and society. It enables young people to become more aware of the teaching and role of the Catholic Church in the world and to engage at a deep level with Christ.

I decided to sign up for the Award this year because I felt that this would be the perfect opportunity for me to learn more about the church and bring me closer to God. I am doing the Gold Award. In order for me to achieve this Award, I was required to get involved in my parish and socially involve myself for one hour per week for 20 weeks.

For my parish involvement, I attended a meeting once a month for faith development, arts and crafts and, most importantly, pizza, along with all the other students doing the Award in my local parish. This was led by Maire Gormley, our Parish Catechist. Each week, I went to the Adoration Chapel to pray. I

really enjoyed this time as I got to take time out of my day to relax and fully embrace the special time with God.

For my social involvement I got involved with the local St Vincent de Paul Charity Shop, in Buncrana. Every Friday after school, I went to the shop to help my local community. I met so many people from the local area and I learned so much about them. I was very interested in my job and I really admire the staff that work there every day. The work that the SVP do is incredible.

In doing all this, I feel the Pope John Paul II Award has helped me to step out of my comfort zone and become more of a selfless person to the people around me. This Award has taught me so much about myself and my religion. Through the Award, I was able to go to Knock Shrine, which was an experience that I will never forget. I could not recommend this Award highly enough to anyone who is thinking about taking part.

To conclude, one bit of advice that I would give is to get involved in all the opportunities that come your way, keep yourself busy and just enjoy every minute of this Award. It will be so worth it in the end. You feel great because the beauty of the Pope John Paul II Award is you are giving back to the people and thinking of others, and this Award brought out a side in me which I am remarkably proud of.

"But sometimes it is necessary to do that which is too much" (Pope John Paul II)

My parish involvement has truly made me appreciate my Catholic upbringing



MY name is Aisling Mortimer and I decided to do the Pope John Paul II Award as I knew it would allow me to become much more involved in my local parish and community. Having been baptized, made my Holy Communion and received the

Sacrament of Confirmation here, in the Cumber Upper & Learmount Parish, I felt it was important to give something back.

By completing this Award, I have taken part in a multitude of activities within the parish. Firstly, I helped out with the GIFT (growing in faith together) project, during which Year 8 pupils practised their faith by playing games and learning new prayers. This was very beneficial to me as it allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of my faith, while helping out with the Year 8 pupils.

I also was involved in a St Brigid's cross making event, after weekend Mass to celebrate St Brigid's Day. This event lasted a few hours and was to help people to learn about St Brigid and the history behind

her. On this day, I showed people how to make the crosses and we organized refreshments to be available, and Irish traditional music was played.

I have also taken up the job of reading at Mass. This is important as it is relative to God's instruction "to spread the good news." This has been extremely beneficial as it has increased my confidence and has brought me closer to God, and it has also brought me closer to the local parishioners.

I have become a member of the Altar Society too and clean the chapel on two Saturdays in a month. This involved a couple of hours cleaning to ensure that the chapel was prepared for Mass the next day.

Due to the current crisis, some planned activities didn't take

place, such as the HOPE summer camp. However, I have helped to allow Mass to continue during the pandemic by helping rearrange the chapel and ensure everyone sanitizes their hands before entering the chapel, in order to stop the spread.

I have thoroughly enjoyed all my parish involvement as it has truly made me appreciate my Catholic upbringing and has shaped my moral character. I have developed a variety of skills throughout my involvement, for example it has improved my communication skills, given me a higher sense of both independence and responsibility, enabled me to take initiative and improve my leadership skills, and has allowed me to be a positive role model to others.

Completing my Award during lockdown involved my family and kept me busy



MY name is Niamh Donaghy. I am 17 years old and am from St Joseph's Craighane, in the Claudy parish.

Completing the Pope John Paul II Award has been very rewarding and has given me the opportunity to give something back to the parish and my local community.

I completed many activities in my parish for the Award, for example cleaning my local church twice a month. Myself and the other volunteers from my parish met up and we cleaned for an hour.

We also had the opportunity in my school, Thornhill College, to complete a 'Faith friends' programme, which involved giving guidance to Primary 4 pupils to prepare them for their First Communion. We met once a week

Due to the lockdown, I have had to complete my hours at home on a weekly basis, for example, by making a May altar, watching Lenten services with my family and baking for relatives.

I participated in a range of social activities for the Award, both in school and in my own community. In school, I helped with a bun sale for 'Trips Abroad', to raise money for students to go out and help make a lasting impact by building schools in Tanzania. I also volunteered in the 'Follow the Star' scheme. This is a Christmas event for families, where they are guided around a trail, listen to Christmas

stories and take part in activities. I helped in the arts and crafts section with the children. I had to make sure everything was organised and had to show them what to do.

In my own community, I took part in flagship events to collect money for Columba House, which is a peace and reconciliation centre in Derry. I helped out at an annual Christmas bazaar. I also volunteered at my local youth club once a week and found it very rewarding. I helped with children of all age groups by organising different games and activities, and just getting to know them.

When the lockdown restrictions

were lifted, I helped with other volunteers in cleaning and setting up the chapel so there was safe social distancing. This took a lot of organising and working with others to get weekly services up and running again. I also took part in sanitising people's hands when they came to Mass on Sunday mornings.

Completing the Pope John Paul Award during the coronavirus pandemic has been different, as I had planned to complete some of my hours through the HOPE camp and collecting for St Vincent de Paul. However, it has still been enjoyable to do tasks

during lockdown. It gave me the opportunity to involve my family and kept me busy.

The Pope John Paul Award has helped me develop the skills of Christian leadership, and it also has helped me to develop in other areas too, for example, working with others, independence, communicating with others through talking to new people from other schools in my parish, and being a positive role model to others in the parish. Hopefully, this will encourage other people to step up and be involved in the parish also.

My JPPII Award experience added something special to my Sixth Form journey



MY name is Eleanoir Gray, and I am a student at St Colm's High School, Draperstown, in the Ballinascreen Parish.

My Pope John Paul II Award experience was very enjoyable and added something special to

my sixth form journey. I learnt a lot through my experience by volunteering for my community, school and parish.

For my parish volunteering, I sang in my local parish choir and, through this, developed new friendships and bonds with people I probably wouldn't have interacted with, if I hadn't been in the choir.

I also read a few times in my chapel; one significant time was the Carol Service at Christmas in 2019. It seemed very daunting at the time but, when I look back on it, I found it very rewarding that I was able to stand up in front of my parish and read a small prayer. It was something I never thought I'd be able to do.

For my community volunteering

I assisted at my local music group. I helped young children, who were perhaps struggling or behind the class, to get to the same standard as the others. Through this experience, I got to bond with the children and learn how to gain their trust. It was very rewarding to see them satisfied when they could play their instrument along with the other children.

In school, I contributed to a lot of the music for services there and I also played a role in our musical 'Oliver'. I thoroughly enjoyed this experience as I made so many new friends and got closer to a lot more pupils in the school.

Also in school, I read at assemblies. This was a very scary experience at first, but I proved to myself that I am capable of

reading in front of a large crowd. I wouldn't have learnt this without completing the Pope John Paul II Award.

As part of my Award, I was planning to join a pilgrimage to Lourdes in the summer, which was sadly cancelled due to Covid-19. We had started organising a fundraiser, which involved a lot of planning regarding tickets, raffle prizes etc. It also required teamwork within our group. It was very rewarding knowing that we were giving back to the community.

Overall, my Award experience was very rewarding as I got to experience many different things and meet so many new people, which is the most important thing to me.



I met new friends and helped some of most vulnerable in our Diocese



MY name is Caoimhe Connolly and I am a student at St Colm's High School, Draperstown. For my Pope John Paul II award, I volunteered at a range of organisations to complete my parish and social hours.

One of the activities I did to complete hours for parish involvement was helping to clean Holy Rosary Chapel and St Eugene's Chapel within the parish of Ballinascreen. Additionally, every month in my parish there was a 'Do This in Memory of Me' Mass for the children preparing for their first Holy Communion, and I volunteered at a number of these Masses, helping the children light their candles and showing them to their seat.

Another activity I completed was carrying up the gifts at the Lenten Masses in my school on a Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday morning. I also carried the Offertory gifts up at the Padre Pio Masses which took place once a month, on a Monday night.

I also collected hours for my Award through the Derry Youth

Group, which held various events and courses, for example, the annual Sleep Out in February at St Eugene's Cathedral, in aid of homelessness. At this event, I welcomed people on arrival and showed them where to go and where to sign in.

To complete hours for Social involvement, I volunteered at the Cornstore Youth Club in Draperstown, where I completed a variety of tasks. I also volunteered frequently with the Sixtowns Community Centre at fundraising events. At these events, I helped set up before and clear up when it had finished.

Within school, I completed some of my social hours by helping at the homework club, where some younger children needed extra help with homework. The annual coffee morning in aid of STEPS and Macmillan Cancer Support was another event that I volunteered at. Leading up to the coffee morning, I distributed leaflets advertising it and, on the day of the fundraiser, I helped out at the raffle.

I really enjoyed my experience of the Pope John Paul II Award. I made new friendships and got to know more people within the Diocese through courses and events I attended to complete my hours.

Another reason why my experience with the Pope John Paul Award was beneficial to me was being able to give back to my community and help some of the most vulnerable within the Derry Diocese.

JPPII Award has given me special memories and experiences I will never forget



MY name is Rose McGuigan and I am a student at St Colm's High School, Draperstown, where I decided to the Pope John Paul II Award.

While completing this Award, I took part in a range of social and parish activities which I thoroughly enjoyed. Amazing memories were made and I also grew in confidence, while

developing vital skills and qualities for the future.

For social hours, I enjoyed volunteering at my local Youth Club every Tuesday night. I organised games and activities, while engaging with the young people, which greatly developed my communication skills. I also thoroughly enjoyed watching the young people grow and develop enthusiasm for teamwork and helping one another out.

In addition, I organised a movie night for the primary school children in order to raise money for the Lourdes pilgrimage, which greatly enhanced my organisational skills.

I had the opportunity, too, of taking part in a youth ministry/leadership course, through which I met other JPPII Award participants. We shared our experiences while also developing communication and leadership skills, through completion of

games and workshops.

However, my most fond memory is, undoubtedly, the sleep out. This was an event centred around solidarity with the homeless, where young people from across Derry came together to sleep out and stay awake all night long in St Eugene's Cathedral, Derry, in order to raise money and awareness for charities like the Simon Community. This event truly opened my eyes to those less fortunate in our society and the life they lead, making me extremely grateful for the smaller things in life that often are taken for granted.

I also completed many social hours within school, for example, helping teachers out with displays and photocopying, and also within the community, by giving a helping hand at big breakfasts, primary school discos and coffee mornings.

As for parish hours, I helped

clean my local chapel and also volunteered to collect St Vincent de Paul money. Through completing these activities, I truly gained a sense of pride and achievement as I felt I was giving something back to my parish.

In addition, I helped the primary four children of my parish prepare for Holy Communion through lending a helping hand for their 'Do This in Memory' Mass, and organising the candle ceremonies.

Furthermore, I gained confidence through practicing public speaking at my school assemblies, which left me with a sense of achievement.

By taking part in the JPPII Award, I have undoubtedly grown in faith. Through truly becoming an active member of my parish and community, I have made special memories, developed skills and qualities, and had experiences that I will never forget.

I really enjoyed giving back to my community through the JPPII Award



MY name is Sara Louise Lagan and I attend St Colm's High School, in Draperstown. Throughout my experience as a Pope John Paul II student, I took part in a variety of volunteering opportunities within my community and school. I spent hours coaching underage players in my local club, Ballinascreen GAA.

Throughout this experience, I developed leadership skills and

my confidence improved, opening doors for future opportunities to help out within the GAA community again.

I also worked with my local Youth Club, taking responsibility to provide younger children with fun games and activities to improve their social skills and other key qualities.

Within my Parish community, I helped out in maintaining

the upkeep of my chapel and volunteered at the Parish office. I took part in setting up and helping out at numerous school Masses throughout the year also. This included Christmas and Lenten services.

I was able to take part in a three-day OCN leadership course as well, where I met and worked with other Pope John Paul Award students to learn and develop

essential and unique skills and qualities that will definitely be useful in the future.

I was able to spend a lot of time within school helping out teachers and staff through various activities. For example, once a week, I helped out at the Homework Club, where Key Stage 3 & 4 pupils were able to stay afterschool for any extra support with their learning.

A big event I took part in was

organising a fundraiser event for a trip to Lourdes with a number of other students. I was able to develop team-work and communication skills throughout this experience.

I really enjoyed being able to give back to my community, especially when it involved school and my GAA club, because they are the people who shaped me into the person I am today.

THIS month, Hollie, Peter and Oisin, 'The Net' youth contributors from the Co Tyrone, Inishowen and Co Derry Deaneries, bring the fruits of their work over the summer. As well as reporting on what she heard while tuned in to Youth 2000's summer festival, which went virtual this year with the Covid-19 restrictions, Hollie, from Strabane, also shares her thoughts on grandparents being amongst our first teachers of the faith and what Pope Francis said to young people – "each elderly person is your grandparent". Impressed by all the tributes regarding the late John Hume, Peter, from Muff, reports on that and interviews he had with various people within his parish of Iskaheen & Upper Moville about their memories of John. And, Oisin shares his love for Our Lady, in response to a message from Pope Francis over the summer to young people to use Mary as an example in their daily lives.



Hollie Frystal,
Co Tyrone Deanery.



Oisin Mulhern,
Co Derry Deanery.



Peter Grant,
Inishowen Deanery.

Virtual Knock pilgrimage for grandparents this year

THE annual National Grandparents Pilgrimage to Knock Shrine, on Sunday, September 13, will be an online event this year, due to the Covid-19 restrictions.

Catholic Grandparents' Association founder, Catherine Wiley recalled the thousands who had gathered at the Co Mayo Shrine last year for the celebration of grandparents, and the difficult months people, particularly the elderly, have experienced with the pandemic.

"It has been physically challenging and mentally and emotionally distressing to watch

the numbers of those ill rising", said Catherine, "and to know that we have lost many wonderful family members and friends to the virus".

She added: "As we gather virtually for this year's pilgrimage, we will be praying for all grandparents – that God will keep them safe and well. We will also be remembering all those who have passed away since last year's pilgrimage".

The link to access the pilgrimage is: knockshrine.ie/watch. Further information can be obtained by emailing info@catholicgrandparentsassociation.com.

National Grandparents Pilgrimage
Sunday 13th September 2020
BROADCAST LIVE 3PM
KNOCK BASILICA

Children's Prayer Appeal
We invite all children to send a prayer and a hug to their Grandparents

Grandparents National Pilgrimage 2020
Taking place virtually at 3pm, Sunday 13th September at Knock Basilica

This year due to COVID-19 restrictions, Capacity will be very limited in the Basilica

We invite Grandparents and their families everywhere to join in praying for, and with, each other.

PLEASE JOIN US ONLINE AT
www.knockshrine.ie/watch

Email: info@catholicgrandparentsassociation.com
Web: www.catholicgrandparentsassociation.ie Tel: 081 8704722

Pope Benedict XVI
PRAYER FOR GRANDPARENTS

Lord Jesus, you were born of the virgin Mary, the daughter of Saint Joseph, and Anne. Look with love on grandparents, the world over. Protect them. They are a treasure of the Church and for all of society.

Support them! As they grow older, they continue to be for their families, strong pillars of Gospel faith, grandmothers of noble character, steady, living bearers of sound religious traditions. Make them teachers of wisdom and courage, that they may grow on to future generations the fruits of their mature human and spiritual experience.

Lord Jesus, help families and society to value the grace and wisdom of grandparents. May they never be ignored or excluded, but always respected and loved. Help them to live actively and to feel welcomed in all areas of the society you love them.

Mary, Mother of all the living, keep grandparents constantly in your care, accompany them on their earthly pilgrimage, and by your prayers, grant that all families may one day be reunited in our heavenly Fatherland, where you dwell all eternally in the great embrace of his infinite and eternal love.

Prayer by Pope Benedict XVI

Composed for the Jubilee Year 2008

Our first teachers – by Hollie Frystal

"Each elderly person is your grandparent" (Pope Francis)

ON Sunday, July 26, the Church celebrated the feast of St Joachim and St Anne – Jesus' grandparents. They are the Patron Saints of all grandparents and the elderly. We first heard of St Anne in the account of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who was to later conceive and give birth to Jesus.

Like St Joachim and St Anne, we, too, have our own grandparents who have also played a massive part in our lives. Furthermore, our grandparents and other elderly friends/relations have helped to shape our personalities, characters and opinions. We learn from their wisdom.

In St Peter's Square, Rome, on July 26, after praying the Angelus, Pope Francis commemorated the Feast of St Joachim and St Anne. In relation to the present pandemic, we have had to communicate in different ways with our grandparents and our elderly neighbours, for example, 'phone calls, video calls and social distancing in the gardens or through a window. It was time for us, young people, to teach what we know best – technology! In ways this new, however, temporary form of communication became very useful and special, because we were able to share our knowledge with the older generation in return for their inspiring wisdom that they provide for us all the time.

Pope Francis then told young people that "each elderly person is your grandparent." We are all responsible for the wellbeing of

the older generation to some degree, because we owe a lot to them in terms of a surviving planet, social justice/equal rights accomplishments, health, education and simply the fact that they brought us up to be who we are today.

Faith, particularly, is one of the most precious gifts I have received from the older generation, and I could not be more grateful for the care and guidance I have received in relation to that.

As St Francis of Assisi said: "Preach always, sometimes use words". This means that we must put our faith into action to let others see. Faith is not meant to be kept but shared, and this to me is very well presented by the older generation, for example, going to Mass, works of charity, supporting their children and grandchildren, etc. We learn to not be shy and embarrassed when it comes to faith, but instead to be confident, guided and welcomed. Therefore, this responsibility had been taught and given to us, so we can keep the Church alive in today's world and pass it on to the next generations.

Pope Francis continued to say, "an uprooted tree does not grow or bear flowers or fruit." Pope Francis was saying that we must stay connected to our elders, for the young need the old and the old need the young. When we stay connected to our elders, then we stay connected to our roots of who we are and where we came from.

Remember when Jesus said to St Peter, "...upon this rock I will

build my Church..." In other words, faith depends on the sharing of one generation to the next and so we must listen to the older generation and learn from them.

In my own personal experience, I feel that both 'grandparents' and the 'elderly' are the rock in the family and the backbone to society, where they are so experienced and usually well equipped to give advice.

Unfortunately, some people never met their grandparents, but like Pope Francis said, "each elderly person is your grandparent", therefore, we all can relate to the older generation.

Rebekah, who is 16 years old from Strabane, commented on what she has learnt from the older generation: "I think things like faith were more appreciated back then and that is something we have to work on now."

In other words, do not take

things for granted and focus on the things that really matter.

Sophie, who is 23 years old and also from Strabane, said, in regard to the older generation: "I have learnt that you don't need materialistic items and social media to live a happy life, and their old stories show how they have great memories of spending time with their family and friends."

In other words, we look back with the older generation to a time where natural things were more appreciated, and they demonstrate a stronger love for life through the memories they cherish and tell.

We, too, hope to grow old and make this world the best possible place for generations to come. We pray for the old so that they will continue to share their wisdom with us, and we also pray for the young, so that we will receive the grace to open our ears and listen to them.



Hollie with her grandmother, Gwendoline Curran, from Strabane.

Check out DYC for faith-based gap year

YOUNG adults interested in a faith-based Gap Year opportunity are invited to get in touch with the Diocesan Youth Team to find out more about the Derry Youth Community (DYC).

The DYC offers the experience of living in community and developing in faith while being involved in youth ministry in

parishes around the Diocese.

If you are interested in a Gap Year where accompaniment, community and encounter are central, and are aged between 18 and 25 years, then be sure to check out the DYC.

For further information and application just email dyc@derrydiocese.org

Great response to Youth Ministry Scholarship by Lizzie Rea

THE youth department of the Diocese is delighted with the response to the new Derry Youth Ministry Scholarship.

We had 12 applicants apply to be part of the scholarship from all round the Diocese. The interviews have been a great success and we hope to have our scholarship start in early September.

It is a very exciting time for the team to be able to work closely with this group of young people for a whole year. We have lots of exciting projects for the students

taking part in the scholarship.

The Youth Team are currently gathering lots of content for the online programme, which will start up again at the beginning of October. The online programme will also include more Youth Alpha programmes delivered online.

If you would like to know more about getting involved with youth ministry in the Derry Diocese, please follow our social media @ [derrydiocesanyouth](https://www.facebook.com/derrydiocesanyouth), or email lizzie.rea@derrydiocese.org.



Youth team back with more online fun

RELAXED after their summer break, the Derry Diocesan Youth team has been busy putting together more fun activities for its online youth programmes.

The many young people who took part in the Youth Team's lockdown initiatives thoroughly enjoyed the online interaction and carrying out the activities.

Now, the team is back full of more great ideas and the various programmes can be accessed via the Derry Diocesan Youth Facebook page or Instagram.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/DerryDiocesanYouth/>
Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/derryyouth/>

Remembering John Hume – a good friend – by Peter Grant



BELOVED Derry man, John Hume died at the start of August at the age of 83. He would be more known for bringing peace to Northern Ireland after almost 40 years of destruction and fighting between Unionists and Nationalists. He also played a massive role in signing the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, winning the Noble Peace Prize in

the same year for his work. But the people of Derry and Donegal saw John as a close friend, a man who backed the community, and a man who showed that he was proud of where he came from.

John Hume was born in Derry on January 18, 1937. He attended St Columb's College in his teenage years, during the same time period as some well known people from today, such as Seamus Heaney and Phil Coulter. He then went to Maynooth College to study for the priesthood. He didn't complete his clerical studies but obtained an MA degree. John returned to Derry, where he became a teacher and later a founding member of the Credit Union that still exists to this day. He became its youngest president at the age of 27.

John and his wife, Pat got married in December 1961 after meeting

each other in the Borderland dance hall in Muff, Co Donegal, and they raised five children. Even though John was a predominate figure in the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Movement, achieving peace in Northern Ireland, he always put his family and religion first. He was a regular attendee at St Eugene's Cathedral, where he socialised with the good people of Derry.

John also spent time in Greencastle, in Donegal, where he would take time off from politics and clear his head. He always supported the community of Greencastle and the neighbouring town of Moville. He would often go for a walk down to the shore, where he would relax and have time to himself.

He also had a great friendship with former president of the USA,

Bill Clinton. This led to a massive boost in the economy of Northern Ireland. After many years leading the Social Democratic and Labour Party that he had founded, John announced his retirement from politics and resigned his place as SDLP leader on February 4, 2004. But he kept supporting his home city and community in need, and represented Derry whenever he went across the globe to America and also across Europe.

Most Derry City football fans will remember John Hume for bringing the famous Barcelona team to the Brandywell in 2003 and, in 2005, he became the Club president. During his final years John suffered from dementia.

His remains were brought to the family holiday home in Greencastle, and then to St Eugene's Cathedral, with everyone



across the country lighting a candle at nine o'clock in their homes for John, during the uncertain times we are facing. John's funeral took place the next day and was broadcast on RTE.

Fr John Farren led the ceremony and described John as "a good friend" in relation to the parable of the Good Samaritan. The funeral was kept private for family, close friends, and political party leaders, as well as the Secretary of State

for Northern Ireland, Brandon Lewis and the President of Ireland, Michael D Higgins, due to government guidelines. But there was a huge gathering of people outside the Cathedral grounds and, as John's remains were leaving the cathedral, there was massive applause for him, for all the work he had done to achieve peace in Northern Ireland. His burial was private to his family in the City Cemetery.

Peter interviewed some people about John Hume's life story as a peacemaker and beloved friend of Derry.

Kayleigh Sweeny, who is 17 years old and is currently doing her Pope John Paul II Award in Drug, within the parish of Iskaheen and Upper Moville.

Where did you first come across of the name John Hume?

"I heard John Hume's name first from my parents when they recalled their childhood memories of him. He was very active whenever they were younger, so they were always hearing about him on the news."

What do you think Northern Ireland was like in the past whenever you were younger, before you even heard about the Troubles?

"I just thought Northern Ireland was a normal place, like any other place today, but as soon as I got older I heard the stories of my parents. They experienced things that would've scared us a lot, but that was just everyday life for them."

What kind of role model today would be similar to John Hume, with all that he achieved?

"I honestly think no one would be able to top John Hume. He was just a one of a kind; there's nobody else like him. But there are young people, who are not necessarily advocates for peace, but, like Greta Thunberg, who are young and try to make the world a better place. It's really inspiring to see that from someone like her."

Maire Lindsay, former principal St Mary's College, Derry, who lives in the parish of Iskaheen and Upper Moville.

Where did you come across the name John Hume?

"I first heard of John Hume whenever he spoke on television, and once he was on, everybody in my family stopped whatever they were doing, like washing the



What was the reaction towards John during the Civil Rights Movement at the time?

"Every working class person, not just Catholics but people from other denominations, were all in support of him. The Civil Rights Movement in Northern Ireland mirrored civil rights campaigns in the US and across the world, so this was the voice of the people John was backing up and that was a huge support for John too."

What was your reaction to the 1998 Good Friday Agreement?

"There was hope, belief and a deep sense of gratitude across the island of Ireland. At the time, I was rearing my family and all I wanted was for them to have a better life than what I, and my generation, had to live through. Our generation experienced some of the horrors of the Troubles, so, the idea that there could be a peaceful settlement though not perfect, but a way forward in the right direction, was just such a relief and so welcome. I had a deep, deep sense of gratitude towards everybody who had been involved in the Good Friday Agreement, which included John Hume."



Fr Michael Keaveny, a past teacher in St Columb's College, Derry, and priest of the Derry Diocese.



Have you any memories of John at St Columb's?

"He was in the same class as my brother, Vincent. John was one of the first students of the old 'Eleven Plus' that had been introduced in 1944. He came to St Columb's College around 1950. After leaving the College, he went to the seminary in Maynooth to study for the priesthood and he undertook a degree in French. Among his teachers was the future Tomás Cardinal Ó Fiaich, a future Primate of All Ireland."

When did you next hear of John Hume after he left the College?

"He left Maynooth with a degree in French and, in those days, that qualified you to teach. He then took up a teaching post in St Columb's for about five years. During this time he started the Credit Union and also got into politics. We met every day at lunch time outside the book shop and, of course, John would quite often speak about politics.

I remember John had a theory about the way politics should proceed. I used to get him talking about his philosophy and he would say everything can be done in a constitutional manner. He believed the way of violent actions by both

sides of the divide was wrong and it could be done in a peaceful and constitutional way."

What was your reaction to the 1998 Good Friday Agreement?

"This was a tremendous achievement and it was John Hume's suggestion there should be a referendum North and South. Unfortunately, today's political parties don't have John's determination."

Martin Brennan, a past history



teacher at Notre Dame High School, in Greenock, Scotland, and currently Provost of Inverclyde, shared these few words on the life of John Hume, whom he had held in great esteem...

"Earth received an honoured guest; the great John Hume is laid to rest. For 30 years he lived his life in the shadow of a gunman yet never once did he waver. His goal was for Irish people to live in harmony and peace – to live for Ireland not to die for it."



Pointing to Mary as “the Church’s great model of a youthful heart ready to follow Christ with freshness and docility”...

Pope Francis entrusts young people to the intercession of Our Lady



IN a message to young people gathered in Medjugorje for the annual International Youth Festival in August, Pope Francis, told them that the church needed their momentum, intuitions and faith, and highlighted Our Lady as an example of what happens when one abandons themselves into God’s hands.

While the Holy Father approved pilgrimages to Medjugorje in May 2019, he has not made a deliberation regarding the authenticity of reports about Our Lady allegedly appearing there since June 1981, when six children claimed she appeared to them with a message of peace and a call to prayer, fasting and conversion.

A document was submitted for analysis to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 2014, following almost four years of investigation by a Vatican commission into the doctrinal and disciplinary aspects of the

apparitions, and a final decision is expected by the Pope when the Commission’s findings are submitted to him.

The annual Medjugorje Youth Festival of prayer, Eucharistic Adoration, testimonies and music, usually attracts over 50,000 young people and around 500 priests. While thousands made the journey this year despite the world-wide pandemic, many were unable to attend due to the Covid-19 restrictions. However, the Festival was live-streamed and most of the programme was sent out via electronic media to enable people to tune in from afar. Video recordings of the 2020 Festival are available on the mladifest.com website.

The Papal Nuncio in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Archbishop Luigi Pezzuto delivered the Holy Father’s message to the young people, which read...

“Dear young friends!

The annual youth meeting in Medjugorje is a time rich in prayer, catechesis and fraternity. It offers all of you the opportunity to encounter the living Jesus Christ, especially in the Eucharist where he is praised and adored, and in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. And in this way he helps you to discover another way of living, different from the one offered by our ephemeral culture, according to which nothing can be definitive and the only thing that matters is enjoying the present moment. In this climate of relativism, in which it is difficult to find true and certain answers, the guiding words of the Festival, “Come and see” (Jn 1:39), addressed by Jesus to the disciples, are a blessing. To you too, Jesus directs his gaze and invites you to go and be with him.

Do not be afraid! Christ is alive and desires that each of you live. He is the true beauty and youth of this world. Everything he touches becomes young, becomes new, full of life and meaning (cf. Apost. Exhort. *Christus Vivit*, 1). We see it precisely in that Gospel scene when the Lord asks the two disciples who are following him “What do you seek?”. And they answer: “Rabbi, where are

you staying?”. And Jesus says: “Come and see” (cf. Jn 1:35-39). And they go, see, and stay. In those disciples’ memory the experience of the encounter with Jesus was so ingrained that one of them even recorded the time: “It was about the tenth hour” (v. 39).

The Gospel tells us that after staying at the Lord’s house, the two disciples became “mediators” who allowed others to encounter him, to know him and to follow him. Andrew went immediately to tell his brother Simon about him, and led him to Jesus. When he saw Simon, the Teacher immediately gave him a nickname: “Cephas”, which means “rock” [in Aramaic], and will become the name Peter (cf. Jn 1:40-42). This shows that in encountering Jesus we become a new person, and we receive the mission to transmit this experience to others, while always keeping our eyes fixed on him, the Lord.

Beloved young people, have you encountered this gaze of Jesus who asks you: “What do you seek”? Have you heard his voice which tells you: “Come and see”? Have you felt that impulse to set out on a journey? Take time to be with Jesus, to be filled with his Spirit and to be ready for the fascinating adventure of life. Go

to encounter him; stay with him in prayer; entrust yourselves to him who is the expert on the human heart.

This most beautiful invitation from the Lord: “Come and see”, made by Christ’s young and beloved disciple, is also addressed to future disciples. Jesus invites you to encounter him and this Festival becomes an opportunity to be able “to come and to see”. The word “come”, in addition to indicating a physical movement, has a deeper, spiritual meaning. It points to an itinerary of faith whose aim is “to see”, that is, to experience the Lord and, thanks to him, to see the full and definitive meaning of our existence.

The Church’s great model, of a youthful heart, ready to follow Christ with freshness and docility, is always the Virgin Mary. The power of her ‘yes’ and of that “let it be to me” that she said to the angel always strikes us. Her ‘yes’ means being involved and taking risks, with no other guarantee but the certainty of being the bearer of a promise. Her “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord” (Lk 1:38) is the most beautiful example that tells us what happens when a person, in her freedom, abandons herself into God’s hands. May this example

fascinate you and guide you! Mary is the Mother who “watches over us, her children, on our journey through life, often weary and in need, anxious that the light of hope not fail. For that is our desire: that the light of hope never fail. Mary our Mother looks to this pilgrim people: a youthful people whom she loves, and who seek her in the silence of their hearts amid all the noise, the chatter and the distractions of the journey” (*Christus Vivit*, 48).

Dear young people, “keep running, attracted by the face of Christ, whom we love so much, whom we adore in the Holy Eucharist and acknowledge in the flesh of our suffering brothers and sisters. May the Holy Spirit urge you on as you run this race. The Church needs your momentum, your intuitions, your faith” (*ibid.*, 299). On your route through the Gospel, also enlivened by this Festival, I entrust all of you to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, invoking light and strength from the Spirit so that you may be true witnesses to Christ. I pray for this and I bless you, and I ask that you, too, pray for me”.

The Virgin Mary by Oisin Mulhern

THE Pope, not very long ago, requested people my age to use Mary as an example in our daily lives, and this made me question myself about not only how Mary inspires me but also about my relationship with her in my daily life.

When I delve into my relationship with Mary, the first thing which always comes to mind is the many times I have prayed to her. From an early age, I was taught the ‘Hail Mary’; it was and still is the prayer of choice during my night-time prayer routine.

Throughout my life, my grandparents, who have a great devotion to Mary, have instilled this appreciation in me. My

grandparents taught me about Mary in numerous ways, such as praying the Rosary, taking me to visit Knock and by creating an altar dedicated to Mary annually, during the month of May.

They have encouraged me to pray to Mary if I was worried or in need of help, as Mary would intercede for me and help in the way she felt was best. This has helped in many situations where I have gotten annoyed about many things and worried about the next steps in my life, such as during major tests in school, like my GCSEs. Sometimes, a simple prayer to Mary has helped calm me and put me at ease.

During lockdown, I tuned into St Eugene’s Cathedral and

prayed the Rosary every evening along with Bishop McKeown. We had an altar set up, with Mary’s statue, flowers and our Rosary beads. This helped me deal with the anxiety caused by the global pandemic in the early days.

I also became more familiar with other great prayers to Mary, such as ‘Hail Holy Queen’ and the ‘Memorare’. I took particular solace from the line ‘that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection, implored your help, or sought your intercession was left unaided.’ This line further highlighted what my grandparents had taught me, that Mary will always help.

Not only did I learn about and become inspired by Mary at Mass

and home, but school has also taught me a great deal about Mary through the many lessons about her and about the Gospels.

Through the Gospel, we learn that Mary is kind, caring and trusting. She trusted God and followed His plans without question. She bore His son ‘Jesus’, loved Him dearly and watched Him die on the cross.

All this time, she remained faithful and did not question why she or her son had to suffer in such a way. She suffered great trials and grief, therefore, she knows firsthand how people suffer daily and wants us to rely on her for help.

Mary was a humble person, filled with humility. She cared deeply for those around her and

cares deeply for each and every one of us today.

She has many names, one of my favorites being ‘Mary the Queen of Peace’, as this is her ultimate

goal for the modern world.

Today, I believe all people should follow Mary’s virtuous example and, if they did, the world would be a much more peaceful place.



Engaging young people in their faith...

...School and Parish Partnerships – by Tony Brennan

A question I am always asked is: How does a parish reach out and engage with young people?

To engage young people in their faith, there is no silver bullet. It takes a lot of commitment and investment in work, planning and forming partnerships. Fortunately, we have some great examples from dioceses and parishes around Ireland where this investment pays dividend; where school and parish partnerships are meeting their young parishioners where they are at in their faith today.

Over the last number of years in the Diocese of Kildare & Leighlin, they have focused on building parish and school partnerships by developing relationships with each parish leader, parish priest, school RE and TY teacher. They use this relationship to connect the parish and its young people at the start of each academic year.

The parish of Staplestown, in that Diocese (Facebook search: Staplestown Cooleragh JP2) is one such example where this model of partnership has enabled the parish leader to mobilise the young people in the parish. This has been really visible since reopening after lockdown. The young people in the parish have been involved in the parish upkeep of the church grounds, including painting, gardening, litter picks and May Altars.

By engaging this way, the parish

has created a young community that is part of and involved in the bigger parish story, where birthdays are celebrated, faith is explored and experienced, and where friendships are developed within the parish. It is safe to say these memories and experiences are going to stay with these young people forever. When they are older and there are opportunities for them to help in a parish, there is every chance they will be the first to step forward, as they've done it before and they will know what to do.

Another great example of this model of engagement has been in the parish of Ardmore here, in the Diocese of Derry. During the Covid lockdown and church closure, young people in the parish were engaged in daily readings, the Rosary and other liturgical services in the church, which was broadcast online. This engagement was coordinated by the parish priest and the parish pastoral council.

Other dioceses that I am aware of, who have successfully seen the benefits of this partnership model, are 'The Spirit' programme in the Diocese of Ferns, the Living Church in the Diocese of Down and Connor, the Diocese of Dromore Youth programme, and the VAKS programme at Knock Shrine. Here, too, in the Diocese of Derry, this model is being adopted.

Due to the Covid-19 lockdown, this model of course was not possible. However, Covid has forced into play what those in Youth Ministry in Ireland have been trying to do for many years – have fruitful engagement with our young people online. In March, when schools closed, our Diocesan Youth Ministry Team stepped up to do just that.

At the start of lockdown, the team created a seven-day online programme of prayer, projects of faith discovery, readings, music, discussion and creativity. It ran for 12 weeks, engaging approximately 30-50 young people, aged 16 to 18 years, from across the Diocese. These young people used the time engaged in the programme towards their Pope John Paul II Award social and parish activities.

As part of this weekly programme, 'Scripture Saturday with Bishop Donal' was created; a weekly online broadcast of lessons in scripture by Bishop Donal McKeown (derrydiocese.org/scripture-saturday). In each lesson, Bishop Donal explained the Gospel that was coming up the next day and the relevance of that Gospel reading in today's society. As Bishop Donal's lessons were broadcast online, a wider audience soon discovered it and began to tune in each week. This just shows the benefits of online faith development.



Tony Brennan, Pastoral Development, Derry Diocese.

Following on from this and the experience gained, the Youth Ministry Team created an online Youth Alpha programme, which they ran on Sunday evenings at 7 pm for one hour, through Zoom. The programme was a mix of prayer, lessons, music and discussion following the Alpha template. Participants had the opportunity to lead part of the

programme. For the eight weeks, 32 young people engaged each week.

Both these online programmes created by the Derry Youth Ministry Team have been assessed and approved by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in Maynooth, and are now being used as best practice models throughout Ireland. I hope these

examples inspire your parish to have a look at what you can offer to your parish youth. If you need guidance and are up for the challenge, please get in touch with our youth ministry team at: ddcc@derrydiocese.org or myself at: tony.brennan@derrydiocese.org

(Tony is the Pastoral Development Coordinator for the Diocese of Derry)

Youth 2000 Summer E-Festival – Ireland 2020...

Youth leading youth to the heart of the Church

by Hollie Frystal



ON August 14-16, Ireland had its annual Youth 2000 Summer E-Festival, with young people from all over the country having signed up to be part of a 'virtual' retreat. Youth 2000 is a Catholic Youth organization which hosts festivals, retreats, prayer groups and other events throughout Ireland for young people. It was founded in the UK by Ernest Williams in response to Pope Saint John Paul II's call for a "new evangelization".

Youth 2000 began in Ireland in

1993 and now has spread to 25 other countries across the world. Uniquely, this year's Youth 2000 was virtual and broadcasted online due to the present pandemic. The Youth 2000 Summer E-festival was launched on August 14 at 6:30 pm, when Laura O'Keefe and Conor McNamee went LIVE as the hosts.

Laura reminded us of Youth 2000's motto, which is: "Youth leading youth to the heart of the Church." This motto rests at the core of the organization and what it is all about. The sense of a youth community is expressed wholeheartedly through the activities and reflections undertaken at the youth festivals.

There were inspirational talks given by influential people that add to the whole atmosphere of the youth festival. One of these is Fr John Harris (OP), who is a well-known participant in the

Youth 2000 festivals and has been involved for the past 20 years. He began the first talk by telling us everywhere he has been with Youth 2000, and he said that being in front of the camera was "the strangest" place out of them all.

He went on to say, "the Christian religion is not virtual, it is real". Even though we are very engaged with the virtual world, we must understand that it is a tool of communication when real life is put on hold or cannot be had, for example, the pandemic, during which we needed the media to stay in touch with each other. Fr John invited us "to get real" with our faith and to take courage and pray, even when we cannot be together.

I watched Fr Harris' first talk about Jesus truly present in the Eucharist and I found it inspiring, eye-opening, and simply brilliant. He spoke with such passion and

simplicity that made it so engaging and understandable. Fr Harris was one of many guests who came and spoke at the festival.

There are two aspects to the Youth Summer E-festival, which is the prayerful part and the practical part. The prayerful part consists of Mass, Confessions, Eucharistic Adoration, the Rosary, reflections/testimonies, and music. Eucharistic Adoration involved keeping vigil.

This course of prayer has a real connection at this present time, where in some areas Holy Communion can still not be received due to the pandemic and instead an act of Spiritual Communion is made. Also, the power of prayer has united a dispersed congregation as a whole – together.

The practical aspect involves music, workshops, sports, etc. In previous years, these were

opportunities to make friends and have interesting conversations about faith, however, due to the present pandemic this could not happen.

This year, time was taken to reflect and be creative in ways such as crafting, painting, building, etc, or instead doing something we enjoy and finding God in our talents and skills. For example, St James said: "Faith without good works is dead" (James 2:17). In other words, prayer and action go hand-in-hand. Therefore, we must learn how to live out our faith and we discover this through our interests, talents, and skills. The practical side is just as important as the prayerful side.



The Youth 2000 summer e-festival concluded with Mass celebrated by the local bishop, with a virtual congregation of thousands of people from around the globe, spreading from Ireland to India, Malaysia, Pakistan, Australia, etc. This reflects the huge popularity of the annual festival and the participants always speak of it with great joy and craic.

I encourage you to research the recordings of this event, as there are many inspiring testimonies by different people. It is available on playback via Facebook, YouTube, and the Youth 2000 Ireland website. It is worth a watch and I am positive that you will learn something from them.



Looking back on 2019-2020 academic year as strangest in living memory, Head of RE, Brenda Sweeney celebrates how...

Loreto Coleraine kept school ethos alive during lockdown



NOBODY could ever have predicted that we would have to close our school indefinitely a few weeks before the Easter holidays. We were looking forward to the Easter break; our senior students were busy preparing for their modules, GCSEs, AS levels and A levels; our Year 14s and some Year 12s were getting ready to say goodbye to Loreto and we were looking forward to celebrating with them.

Then Coronavirus happened.

Teachers were replaced with computer screens. The titles Sir/Miss were replaced with the title GC (Google Classroom), and the traditional school hours of 9 am - 3.15 pm were slightly altered for some!

Through all of this, the emotional, mental and spiritual well-being of the pupils at Loreto College was paramount. And although GC was an excellent form of communication for both teachers and pupils, it was the school's Facebook page (Friends of Loreto), under the direction of Mrs Little (SLT/Head of English), that kept our school 'virtually open' and, more importantly, kept our school ethos alive.

Just as we would have done in school, we started each day with a virtual prayer at 9 am.

The Facebook page allowed all subject teachers, pupils and parents to communicate and live the school's ethos with the scroll of a finger!

We have had:

* Acts of kindness: From pupils giving out Easter packages to their neighbours or cooking for local charities, to students creating entertainment evenings for their families.

* Acts of charity – From Conor

McColgan, in year 10, who raised money for the Cottage Care Home, Coleraine, by shaving his head, to a number of staff and pupils creating much needed PPE for members of the NHS.

* Many pupils wrote and shared their pandemic journals, detailing how they were coping and what they missed most.

* Every Thursday, our Facebook page was flooded with thanks and rainbows as we clapped for our wonderful NHS.

The RE Department ensured that Holy Week and Easter remained the most important liturgical service in the school's calendar. Many pupils created posters and reflections depicting the events during Jesus' final days. Reflections and videos on the 'Stations of the Cross' were shared, and pupils were encouraged to light a candle in their homes on Holy Saturday night to remember that, during the darkness, we must look for the light and hope promised in the resurrection.

As May approached, students and staff were encouraged to create May Altars in their homes and share their photos. The response was so great that they were collated as a video and shared with the school community.

Rite of passage

The annual Leavers' Mass for Year 14 students, with parents and family members present, is a rite of passage which is always one of the high points of the year at Loreto College; a Mass is also always held for Year 12 students, some of whom may not return to take up sixth form studies in the new school year. The Loreto Senior Leadership Team and Religious Education department came up

with the idea of a Mass celebrated in isolation and streamed live online to the students and their families, including some farewell speeches and tributes to wish the students well.

Following much hard work by senior teacher, Mrs Siobhan McCarry and her colleagues in the RE Department, the idea became reality on Thursday, May 14. Loreto College collaborated with popular Facebook page, 'Catholic Minute', and Fr Raymond McCullagh was kind enough to agree to be the celebrant. The theme for the Mass was 'Over the Rainbow'.

Staff and pupils alike contributed remotely to the many prayers, reflections and music provided on the day. The Loreto ethos was truly brought to the students at home, when a video was played in which each member of staff helped to recite our beautiful Loreto Prayer. It was wonderful to see so many students sign on live as the Mass was streamed. College principal, Mr Michael James concluded the Mass with a speech centred around the 'Over The Rainbow' theme, in which he paid tribute to everyone involved with the event and wished the students every success and happiness.

After the Mass, the College's 'Friends of Loreto' Facebook page remained buzzing with activity, at previously recorded messages from staff members and memorable, heartfelt speeches by the Heads of Year 12 and 14, and the Head Boy and Head Girl. To conclude the celebrations, a video created by the staff in an affectionate tribute to the 'fun and games' usually enjoyed by the Loreto Leavers went live: 'Pass on the Rainbows'. The traditional prayer card given to leavers was the Serenity Prayer, which was very appropriate for the year that it had been.

Finally, the academic year 2019-2020 drew to a close at Loreto College with the celebration of an online 'End of Year' Mass via the school's social media platforms. The College was once again very grateful to Fr Raymond McCullagh, who celebrated the

Mass in the Convent Chapel. Fr Raymond has been a tremendous support to the College, with his words (often quoting the Liverpool anthem 'You'll Never Walk Alone'), and presence bringing continued support during these difficult times.

The theme of the final Mass was 'New Horizons'. The Religious Education Department worked together to ensure that Loreto could still have its traditional close to the year, even in lockdown. The RE Department paid tribute to all the students and staff who contributed from their homes, either by reading or through the beautiful instrumental music and singing arranged by Mr Brendan McCann, Head of Music.

The academic year 2019-2020 may have been the strangest in living memory, but Loreto College has done everything possible to keep its school community together. Whether this took the form of daily posts on the school's Facebook page, tireless interactions on Google Classroom or rapidly populating email inboxes, members of the school community have kept together, though apart. The online Mass was a very fitting way to bring the school year to a close.

As we begin our new school year, we will endeavour to live by the key values of our founder, Mary Ward; truth, sincerity, justice, joy and freedom. These values are the foundation of all that we do at Loreto College, Coleraine.



Back to school...where faith, hope and love remains despite all the logistics!

by Mary O'Boyle

BACK to school! There was time when these three words would have caused some students and staff to shudder at the thought of the long year ahead with the relentless timetable of homework, coursework, teaching schedules and meetings in the dark of the winter evenings. Memories of the long, carefree summer days receded with just these three words. But not this year! The Coronavirus pandemic has changed all that.

This September, the words 'Back to School' have been greeted with excitement and gratitude, usually reserved for the appearance of a celebrity. In an unprecedented development, staff returned to school in mid-August. In 38 years' teaching I had never experienced the like! The early start to the school year gave staff time to prepare their premises for the influx of young people – with the appearance of sanitising stations, temperature checking areas, and re-structured classrooms becoming very quickly the 'new normal' school environment.

Staff chat, at this time of year, would have centred on stories and anecdotes about summer adventures with family and friends, but not this year. Light-hearted memories have been replaced by talk of 'bubbles' and whether 'to mask or not to mask'.

Everything has changed. School life as we once experienced it, is no more. The hustle and bustle of students and staff moving around the school building is for many a relic of past times. The sound of choirs, the joy of school shows, large assembly gatherings of young people are, for the moment

– gone. Everything, it would seem, has changed.

Yet, nothing has changed. Catholic schools remain communities of faith, hope, love and profound joy, concerned with being attentive to the whole person – spiritual, moral, intellectual, physical and practical. They are family communities concerned that each student feels welcomed, nurtured, and safe in school. Yes, nothing has changed.

Schools will continue to educate, to nourish the minds and the souls of the young. They will continue to do what they have always done – help their students to grow in love of Jesus and of one another. Nothing has changed!

When a school celebrates together, albeit in small isolated 'bubbles' or on Zoom, it will be with a joy that is rooted in Jesus. Students and staff will remember in their prayers those who are suffering, those who feel overwhelmed by this pandemic, and those who are grieving. Nothing has changed!

Schools will continue to be places where faith lives, where Jesus walks alongside all therein, for he says, "I am with you always; yes, to the end of time." (Matthew 28:20) Nothing has changed!

Schools will continue to be places where hope lives, not a hope that is 'wishful thinking' but a hope stemming from a deep faith in God's love for each one of us, for he says, "I have plans in mind for you, plans for peace, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope." (Jeremiah 28:11) Nothing has changed!

Schools will continue to be places where love lives, not the



selfish type of love presented by some media outlets, but a love which recognises the dignity of every human being; a love which is selfless. Schools will continue to reach out and respond to not

just the needs of their students, but to the needs of their local communities and to the needs of the international communities. Nothing has changed!



The new school year got off to a special start for St John's PS, Creggan, when Fr Daniel McFaul, CC Creggan, celebrated a beautiful Mass and a renewal of vocation for school staff and governors, in St Mary's Church.

St Finlough's teaching assistant awarded certificate of excellence



Sadie Duffy, St Finlough's PS

THE principal of St Finlough's PS, Ballykelly, Mrs Suzann McCafferty, has paid tribute to learning support assistant, Sadie Duffy, on being recognised by the Pearson National Teaching Awards.

Extending a "massive congratulations to our wonderful learning support assistant", Mrs McCafferty explained that Sadie had been awarded a certificate of

excellence for the 2020 Teaching Assistant of the Year, and a handwritten note from author, Michael Morpurgo.

She added: "Under normal circumstances, we would have celebrated this achievement with an assembly."

"Thank you Sadie for all that you do, this is a wonderful achievement".

Warm welcome at Queen's within St Columbanus community by Michael Ward



THE Order of the Knights of St Columbanus was founded by Canon James K O'Neill in Belfast, in 1915. Initially set up as a mutual benefit society for working class Catholics, it has developed into a fraternal benefit society providing charitable services to all areas of the Irish church and community. It is fitting that the vision of Canon O'Neill continues in Belfast to this day, at Queen's University. In November 2019, the Council 19 of

the Order was initiated, becoming a full council of Knights. Council 19 is significant in that we are the only university council of knights throughout Ireland.

Council 19 has from the outset been affiliated with, and operates from, the Catholic Chaplaincy at Queen's University, long renowned for its support to Catholic students from across Northern Ireland. Therefore, our membership is diverse and is truly a student-led council, in contrast to other councils.

Currently, we have a membership of between 12-15 'knights', with members from Derry, Armagh, Dromore, Down & Connor and Clogher dioceses. The age profile of our council ranges from first year students at 18 to postgraduate students at 25. Leadership is divided into offices including Grand Knight, who is responsible

for setting an agenda and chairing the meeting, Secretary, and Chancellor.

Meetings take place fortnightly at the Chaplaincy, where each meeting starts with a faith development session or catechesis led by our Chaplain, Fr Dominic McGrattan, followed by a discussion. Informed by this discussion, we then discuss potential apostolic projects/initiatives. Through meetings, the Knights continue to provide a safe space for men to talk about their faith on an increasingly secular campus. We can, therefore, support each other by offering friendship and an opportunity to discuss matters with like-minded individuals.

Buoyed by our aims of charity, unity and fraternity, we support others by feeding the homeless with stew throughout Belfast

city centre, and annually support Mary's Meals' backpack scheme by sending packed backpacks to children who do not have school equipment. We also organise talks by key Christian speakers for the University community. In February 2019, we had a panel discussion on the future of the pro-life movement in Northern Ireland. Panellists included Dawn McAvoy, Andrew Cupples, Patrick Gallagher, Kate Meenagh and Sarah Haire. We raised over £700 for pro-life charities, with those in attendance encouraged to intensify their efforts to contribute to a life enriching culture.

We have also raised funds for the homeless with a 'sleepout' in aid of Shelter NI. Other apostolic initiatives organised included street evangelisation, Holyland clean-up post St Patrick's Day, and maintenance and additions to the

Chaplaincy building. Brothers from the council also assist the Chaplaincy by lecturing at Mass and fulfilling the role of sacristan.

Traditionally, the Council organises an annual retreat and held one at Ards Friary in 2019. In spite of Covid-19, we forged links with the Knights of St Columba at Glasgow University to deliver a virtual retreat on Zoom, led by Frs Brendan O'Connor and Donncha O'hAodha, priests of Opus Dei. The retreat, delivered over three days, consisted of Holy Mass and a series of meditations and doctrinal talks. We concluded each evening with Adoration, Benediction and Compline. The doctrinal talks and meditations encouraged reflection on our daily lives and the extent to which we identify with Christ in our studies, work and recreation. The retreat concluded with a doctrinal talk and follow-

up discussion on the evangelical dimension of our apostolate as committed Catholic students on campus.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, brothers from CK19 assisted local parishes, for example, lecturing at Holy Mass, assisting in the sacristy, and helping local parishes to find new ways to stream online via webcam. Some of the Knights have also helped with ushering and cleaning pews.

With term time fast approaching, we are keen to expand our reach and gain new members. We want to help produce articulate young men. If faith plays a part in your life as a young Catholic male and you are coming to university in Belfast, then contact Michael at council19. qub@gmail.com and check out our social media at facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/KSCQueens> & Instagram - @kscqueens

A tribute to an outstanding leader - Marie Lindsay

by St Mary's Derry School Community

THE word guardian in the context of an angel is thought to protect and guide a person, group or nation. How many times have we asked our guardian angel to look after such and such or stay close to so and so? It was and remains a source of great comfort for many to have that presence around them, especially in times of real need.

At St Mary's College, it is arguably the most commonly said word daily at our assemblies, as it is found in the Angel of God prayer and our beautiful school prayer. But why begin with this theme in the context of our recently announced retired principal, Mrs Marie Lindsay? The school community has struggled, certainly in terms of words, to capture the impact she had on our school.

Much has been written about Mrs Lindsay's outstanding pastoral care for each and every one of us; her determined effort to ensure every child got the same chance; and her focus on academic excellence for everyone. All this and much more is unequivocally true. However, when you distil all of this; when you reflect on what she has brought to the school in so many ways; when you see for yourself the impact she has

the ethos of the Sisters of Mercy has been fostered naturally and evidently within the school and Marie's legacy is that this ethos is left in safe hands. Protecting and guiding our pupils, staff and parents remain at the heart of St Mary's College and the guardian of this ethos in recent years has been Mrs Lindsay. She, of course, will be the last to recognise this.

Marie began her teaching career in 1985, joining the staff of St Mary's College as a Science teacher. She was appointed principal in 2006, having secured Specialist School status for Science, one of two schools in Northern Ireland. This led to a dramatic increase in the number of girls following STEM pathways and accessing a range of courses allied to the medical profession.

In 2010, Marie oversaw the relocation of St Mary's to a 'State of the Art - High Tech' campus. In 2014, St Mary's was honoured to be recognised as a Microsoft Showcase School and, in 2018, became a Digital Schoolhouse in recognition of the school's engagement in digital transformation. Over the past 14 years, Marie's leadership is evident in the excellent examination performance that her students have achieved. St Mary's is widely

concerned with wider society and its impact on young people, Marie embraced the Shared Education programme aimed at overcoming religious and cultural divisions in Northern Ireland. This was an extension to Marie's caring, pastoral ethos.

Marie values every single child, recognising that everyone has unique skills and talents. She worked endlessly to ensure that they received the best quality education. This did not go unnoticed by the wider educational community. Bishop of Derry, Donal McKeown acknowledges that Marie has been "a superb role model for young women earning the school the reputation for outstanding pastoral and academic achievements." Former colleague, friend and current principal of St Cecilia's College Derry, Mrs Martine Mulhern recognises that Marie has a special gift, "The gift to nurture talent, whether it is that of a child or an adult, to enable them to reach their full potential".

Strong faith

There is no doubt that Marie's strong faith, guided by Christian principles, inspired her to involve the young people of our city in Shared Education programmes



Mrs Lindsay surrounded by her pupils and staff after winning 'Principal of the Year, Foyle Blackboard Awards'.

school does." This influence extends across the Atlantic Ocean, as Victoria Graff, Loyola Marymount University, LA recognised that "Marie was at the forefront of cross community relations and shared Education programmes in the North."

Marie's indisputable track record of success in both turning strategy into action and bringing about continuous improvement, won her the title of Principal of the

giving them a chance to make a real difference to themselves, their families and their communities.

As a visionary educator, Marie has inspired generations of young women in the City of Derry and beyond. She dedicated her teaching career to raising standards and removing the barriers that girls faced in education and employment. When the news broke of Marie's retirement, the people closest to Marie's heart, the people she was a guardian to, her precious students shared their tributes and words of gratitude to their principal Mrs Lindsay.

Catriona Walsh, Deputy Head Girl 2019-2020, shares her educational experience: "I could never have imagined the opportunities that would come my way as I entered St Mary's as a shy Year 8 pupil. I have featured on BBC Newsnight and had an article published in the Guardian about Brexit. I wrote a blog about challenging the divide and poverty affecting girls, and from this I was invited to an interview on BBC Newsline and Radio 4. In January 2018, I was appointed by INTO Film London as a young reporter. I was fortunate to give a TED X Women talk. My talk was about 'Learning to be a 'Girl' and also a Talk like TED talk on the topic of Dyslexia. All of this is down to the support and encouragement from Mrs Lindsay and all my teachers."

The parent community trusted Marie with their daughters'

education and, in the words of one parent: "Marie Lindsay provided many opportunities for my daughter, Lauren during her time at St Mary's College. Lauren availed of St Mary's unique 'Music Promise', a program that provides free musical tuition for students who show talent in that area. This access to a musical instrument enabled Lauren to join the over 100 strong school orchestra that is unique compared to other secondary schools in the City.

"Marie led a staff that had high expectations for Lauren and she thrived at St Mary's. She is currently studying Biomedical Engineering at the University of Ulster. Mrs Lindsay is a kind and compassionate leader, who nurtures each one of her students. She and her staff empowered Lauren to believe in herself and follow her dreams."

It is with great sadness that we say farewell to Mrs Lindsay as our principal, but we are confident in the knowledge that she will always be supporting and praying for our school community. Marie and her husband, Collie, were overjoyed when they became first time grandparents during lockdown to four adorable babies, two sets of twins, born to their daughters, Sarah and Kate.

As a school community, we wish Marie and her family many blessings in the years ahead. Our Lady, Guardian of St Mary's, pray and keep safe our amazing principal and her family".



Mrs Lindsay photographed after her induction.

had on the school community, only one word remains and it is, indeed, guardian.

Mrs Lindsay has been the personification of a guardian as leader of our school. While we prayed daily for our guardian to look after us, she was our guardian living amongst us. As part of the Mercy Tradition, the sisters were rightly regarded as guardians, serving and protecting the most vulnerable. They were mother-like figures, unselfishly devoting their time to assist anyone in need. Through the work of Mrs Lindsay,

recognised as one of the most successful all ability schools in the region.

The school has been the focus of numerous best practice studies by the UK Department of Education and also by cross-border 'all island' studies, most notable the 2015 study of St Mary's approach to improving Literacy. This outstanding journey of success is underpinned by the innovative ways in which Marie engaged pupils, involved parents and empowered staff in driving continuous improvement. Always



Mrs Lindsay presenting wards to pupils at St Mary's Senior Prize giving.

that were designed to narrow the cultural divide and reach mutual understanding of respect and tolerance. In this work Marie collaborated very closely with Tony Gallagher, Professor of Education, Queen's University, Belfast, who paid tribute to this inspiring guardian by noting that "In the most challenging of circumstances, Marie has built an enormous strong and resilient school community. With a clear sense of purpose and direction, and an ethos which sets a moral compass at the heart of all the

Year 2016 at the Foyle Blackboard Awards. Her application of applying business models to education has led to many Quality Assurance Awards, culminating in Marie's enrolment into the EFQM Business Excellence Hall of Fame in 2018.

Over the years, she has gained the trust and respect of her colleagues, peers, pupils and their parents. But, more importantly, she has made an outstanding contribution to the community, unlocking the potential in thousands of young women and



Mrs Marie Lindsay with former St Mary's College principal's, Sister Assumpta and Dame Geraldine Keegan.

Greencastle's Mickey Bradley Memorial Walk raises £21,000 for Trocaire *by Maria Bradley*



The late Mickey Bradley, Greencastle, Co Tyrone.

LIKE many families affected by cancer, our lives were turned upside down when Mickey was diagnosed as being terminally ill. Unfortunately, his time was very limited and as we look back on those few short weeks between his diagnosis and his death on September 14, 2018, we never cease to be amazed at his faith and the courage and dignity with which he bore his illness and resigned himself to God's Will.

A devoted husband, father and grandfather, Mickey's life first and foremost centred around

his family. He was the love of my life and we had just celebrated our 40th wedding anniversary. We had many plans to mark this milestone in our lives with family, neighbours and friends but, sadly, this was not to be as God had other plans.

Mickey was a very well known and respected farmer and sheep shearer, who was renowned for his great humour and art of storytelling. His presence could always bring a smile to people's faces and his positive attitude to life often gave encouragement to others.

His sudden passing devastated not only us, his family, but everyone who knew him. While we struggled to come to terms with his loss, we realised that he would want the memories of him to be happy ones, filled with the love and laughter of the many good times which we were blessed to be able to share with so many people.

Because of the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 regulations, we were very limited in what we could do to celebrate

Mickey's wonderful life and the amazing legacy he had left behind. As he was always quietly very generous to those in need and, as we had been planning to visit an underdeveloped country, we eventually decided to organise a fundraising walk in his memory and in aid of Trocaire.

We were very honoured that our parish priest and Diocesan Trocaire representative, Fr Eddie Gallagher agreed to undertake the 12-mile sponsored Memorial Walk which was held on Sunday, June 28, and which raised almost £21,000. Fr Eddie was accompanied by family members on the route, starting off at St Patrick's Church, Greencastle, and going via our home to Our Lady Of The Wayside Church, Broughderg, and then back to Greencastle.

Despite the stormy conditions on the day of the walk, the spirits of those taking part, and all who came out to support them, were not dampened. We are very grateful to you all and extend our thanks to the Greencastle Scor Ballad Group, Greencastle Scor

Instrumental Group, and Sinead Donnelly and Ciara Fox, who braved the inclement weather to provide some beautiful singing and music at various stages of the walk.

We would also like to express our sincere thanks to Fr Eddie for undertaking the challenge of the walk and for making it possible, with everyone's support, to honour Mickey's life during this very difficult time. We have been overwhelmed by people's generosity and wish to thank each and every one of you for your contributions in memory of Mickey and in aid of Trocaire.

All the money raised will help Trocaire to continue its life saving work of providing basic necessities for those in developing countries. So many people have said that Trocaire has taken on an extra special meaning for them because, as well as what it stands for, it also brings to mind the many fond and happy memories they have of Mickey and, of course, the Memorial Walk. Your kindness and generosity will never be forgotten.



Photograph courtesy of The Ulster Herald.



Photograph courtesy of The Ulster Herald.



Lovely lockdown surprise for Fr Crilly as parishioners mark his 80th birthday

THE parishioners of Castlefinn, in Co Donegal, had a lovely surprise for their much-loved and appreciated priest, Fr Oliver Crilly on the occasion of his 80th birthday.

After celebrating the Sunday morning Mass in St Mary's Church, Fr Oliver emerged from the sacristy to find family members and friends waiting for him outside, and parishioners, Matt McGranagh and Liam Harkin playing 'Happy Birthday'.

During the Mass, Colette Carlin, of the Parish Pastoral Council, took the opportunity when she was on the altar reading a post Communion reflection about the pandemic, to also read a reflection she had penned about Fr Oliver's time in Castlefinn.

Recalling the news, back in September 2015, that a retired priest was coming to St Mary's, Castlefinn, Colette remarked: "Fr Oliver Crilly arrived and he was everything but retired. He immersed himself in the life of our parish, all but the office work and the administration. He recently celebrated 55 years in the

priesthood on June 20.

"He has guided, directed and instructed us in all things spiritual, but we quickly realised his expertise in other areas as an author and proof reader, an Irish Scholar, his computer skills and how 'Google' was a great friend of his!"

Commenting on how Fr Oliver carries out his duties as a priest "with such humility, kindness and generosity", Colette added: "He always preaches a wee, and sometimes not so wee, sermon (the honours course!) and he usually relates his own experience of places he has visited, books he has read and translations that have not been edited correctly in his opinion, as he interprets the readings of the day.

"His huge interest in ancient Irish Crosses and especially the Maghera Crucifixion get a wee mention regularly. His sermons make us more aware of our responsibility for our actions and decisions to follow God's teachings in our everyday living and we always go away refreshed after each Mass that he celebrates."

Commenting on the cessation of the celebration of public Mass on Friday, March 13, due to the pandemic, Colette said: "Fr Crilly, with his many health issues, was in the vulnerable category and hasn't celebrated a public Mass until last night. Now I must say, I was quite surprised at how well he cocooned during this time, but I know some parishioners kept in contact with him on a daily basis and, of course, Larry and Margaret were a great support to him during this time even though they could not enter his house.

"Unfortunately, he was unable to apply himself to his and David's favourite pastime of stone carving during this time, but we are delighted that just before the lockdown he presented one of his stone carvings to the Church here and it is placed on left hand side, just inside St Anthony's Chapel".

She added: "We are all well acquainted with Fr Crilly's skills in the publishing world, with his numerous books and, indeed, his monthly contribution to the Irish page in 'The Net', the Diocesan newspaper."

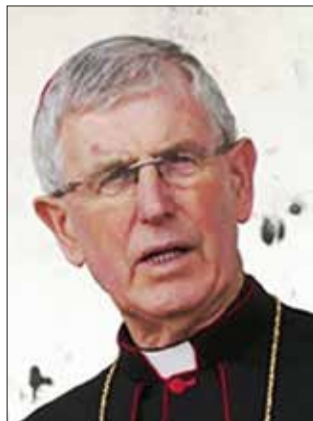
Colette went on to note that, for the six weeks prior, Fr Oliver, with the help of a few parishioners, had been able to celebrate his daily Mass at 11am on the St Mary's Castlefinn Youtube channel from the Parochial House.

"This expanded his online presence to a whole new congregation that he hadn't foreseen when he began working in the publishing world in Veritas many years ago," remarked Colette, concluding with a prayer for the birthday boy, "May happiness and love encircle this day, and every blessing from heaven come your way. May the warmth of your loved ones lift your heart, and your cup overflows with the love they impart. May fond memories bring you great joy and peace, and hope fill your sails with the promise you seek. But most of all, may you truly know how you're treasured and loved wherever you go"

Young parishioner, Adam Doherty had the honour of presenting Fr Oliver with a card wishing him a special time on his 80th birthday, on behalf of the parish.



Remembering Bishop Francis Lagan and his warm, gentle spirit



The Late Bishop Francis Lagan

WHEN word spread around about the death of Bishop Francis Lagan, retired Auxiliary Bishop of Derry, in the early hours of June 9, the main memory that people recalled of the Maghera native was his warm, gentle spirit, and this has been especially reflected in tributes paid to him by his family and schools he had been involved with over the years.

While he loved talking to people of all ages, he had a particular interest in young people and greatly enjoyed his time teaching, firstly in St Columb's College, Derry, where he taught French and Religious Education for three years after his ordination to the priesthood in June 1960, and then at Carndonagh College, which later became known as Carndonagh Community School.

Paying tribute to his first French teacher, the current principal of Carndonagh Community College, Paul Fiorentini said: "I remember him very fondly as he was always friendly and considerate, and I must have been inspired by him as I did end up as a French teacher."

He went on to recall that Bishop Lagan had always kept in touch with the school and maintained contact with those he had worked with, noting that he brought all

the qualities he had demonstrated in the school to his role as bishop.

"He remembered his days in Carndonagh warmly and was always welcomed back to Inishowen when he returned for Confirmation in the parishes," added Mr Fiorentini, expressing appreciation for his service to the school and his pastoral work in the Diocese.

The principal of Holy Cross College, in Melmount, Strabane, Mrs Clare Bradley, highlighted his great interest and involvement in the development of the new Holy Cross building: "Before a stone was laid in the ground of the new Holy Cross building, Bishop Francis was actively involved as Chair of the Board of Governors in driving the project forward. He met with architects, contractors, ministers etc, all in an effort to ensure that the building stayed on track."

She added that he had been "a fervent supporter of equality for all and was delighted when the new building opened as an all-ability school in 2010".

Mrs Bradley went on to point out that even after he retired as Chair, Bishop Francis was a loyal, pastoral supporter of Holy Cross and, before his illness, regularly visited and took an interest in how the College was progressing.

"He attended prize-givings and was genuinely pleased to see the children doing well. He liked to mix with staff and students, and was always good humoured and kind," she said, adding that he will be remembered as "a deeply spiritual friend of Holy Cross, and a warm and gentle man".

And, when he travelled to Maynooth for meetings of the Bishops' Conference, he was known to enjoy sitting with the seminarians to eat and have a chat, such was his interest in the younger generation.

Described by his family as "very much a people-person", who loved young people and always kept up-to-date regarding his nephews and nieces, as well as great nephews and nieces, Bishop Francis knew the youngest as well as the eldest and he was equally appreciated by them. This was reflected in their staying with him 24/7 during his last days, when his health deteriorated further as a result of throat cancer diagnosed three years ago.

His warm, friendly nature endeared him to many over the years, and while restrictions due to Covid-19 prevented large gatherings of people from turning out to pay their last respects at the removal of his remains from his Strabane home to the Church of the Immaculate Conception, and his Requiem Mass the following day, many turned out to stand in tribute to him as the funeral cortege made its way from Strabane to his final resting place back home in Glen, Maghera.

As they travelled behind the hearse for his last journey over the Glenshane, Bishop Francis' surviving siblings, Brian, Mary (Cassidy) and Tillie (McVey) recalled the days he had helped to work the turf on this scenic mountain, as well as gather potatoes and do other chores on the family farm.

The family were touched by the large turnout of friends and neighbours who awaited their arrival on the other side of the Glenshane, where the cortege turned off to follow the route to St Patrick's Church via Fivemile Straight and stopped for a short time at the top of the lane leading to the Lagan homestead, where Bishop Francis had grown up.

Born in 1934, he was the second youngest in a family of four boys and three girls born to Frank and Roisin (nee McKaigue), who



passed on their strong Catholic faith to their children.

Sharing their memories with 'The Net', Bishop Francis' brother, Brian and sister, Mary, recalled that the Rosary was always said in their home when they were growing up, with Brian particularly recalling his father's great devotion to prayer: "After a day working on the farm, he would go out the back and sit and pray the Rosary".

The Lagan children went to the local Lisnamuck Primary School, with John, Brian and Francis going on to board at St Columb's College, where they shared the one room, returning home for Easter, Christmas and the summer months.

Brian recalled Francis being very active and a good footballer, winning a medal in an intermediate championship game.

Nurturing

Reflecting on his brother's decision to enter the seminary at Maynooth as an 18-year-old, Brian said that as well as the nurturing of his faith in their prayerful home, Bishop Francis had often spoke of the wonderful example of Mgr Lawrence Hegarty, who had been their parish priest.

He started at St Patrick's College, Maynooth in September 1953, along with Fr Seamus O'Connell, Fr John Doherty and Fr Michael Collins. He had a love of languages and studied French while in the seminary, and enjoyed a wonderful summer practising speaking the language amongst the Basque people.

Following his ordination on June 19, 1960, he went on to share his love for the French language with the students he taught in Derry and Carndonagh, before being appointed to minister as curate

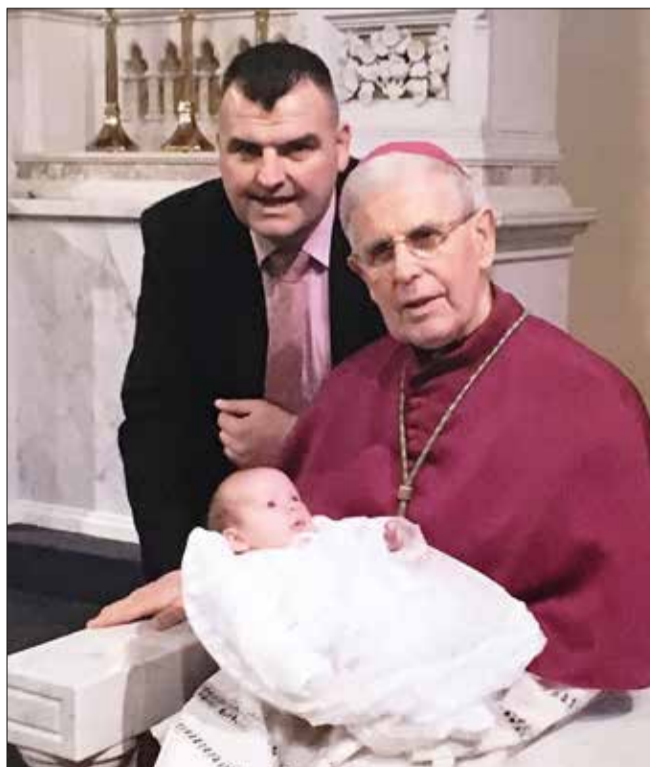
in Strabane in 1977. In 1982, he became the Administrator of St Mary's, Creggan, and six years later he was appointed Auxiliary Bishop in the Derry Diocese; a post he held until his retirement in May 2010.

While Bishop Francis loved the areas and the people he served over the years, there was nowhere quite like home and he returned regularly to visit family and neighbours.

"He was a home bird and loved visiting people," said his sister, Mary, who recalled that it was their Aunt Josephine who bought him his first car.

She added: "He loved taking people out for drives in his wee red car, especially our mother. He was very close to her. He never lost touch with home and made a point of visiting people who had experienced deaths or tragedies in their family."

He also enjoyed travels further



Bishop Francis with his nephew, Francis Lagan and great-nephew, Frank Lagan, the fourth, on his christening day.



afield, especially visiting family in America and going to Rome.

"On one of the occasions he met Pope John Paul II in Rome, he received a pair of Rosary beads which were very dear to him," recalled Mary.

Family was also very dear to Bishop Lagan. He was delighted to be the celebrant at special Masses within the family, such as weddings and anniversaries, and loved bringing gifts to celebrate the birth of new arrivals. The last baptism he celebrated within the family was that of baby Frank Lagan the fourth, who was born to his nephew, Francis and wife, Louise on October 31, 2018...which happened to be his birthday as well!

Sorry that they didn't get to celebrate the 60th anniversary of his priesthood with him, on June 19, Bishop Lagan's family comfort themselves in knowing that having his Requiem Mass celebrated during the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions, would have "suited him to a tee," as he was a "no-fuss person".

This was confirmed by Bishop Donal McKeown, during his homily at the Requiem Mass, when he shared that Bishop Francis' wish was to "Keep the Mass simple".

"For Bishop Francis, the restrictions imposed by Covid have been ideal in enabling him to be buried with little fuss," said Bishop Donal, adding: "In life and in death, he was a simple man".

Noting that Bishop Francis had been approaching his 60th anniversary of priesthood, Bishop Donal remarked: "That generation had entered Maynooth when the Church was shaped in a particular mould. He was part of a world where entering seminaries, monasteries and convents was widely accepted and encouraged. We see in his classmates just how many of the best young people heard Christ's call to minister in his name. And in the intervening

years, he had to cope with many changes and challenges.

"Maynooth could not know in advance about the effects of the Second Vatican Council or the terrible reality of the Troubles or the many sad stories that would emerge about the Church, locally and internationally. We have all had to cope with the reality that we stumbled through the difficulties, often making mistakes, misreading situations, acting or failing to act appropriately. Though he did not talk to me about that, I do know that he was a conscientious man who would have acknowledged his mistakes and humbly asked for forgiveness".

Bishop Donal went on to recall turning to Bishop Francis for guidance and advice when he first came to the Derry Diocese in 1982: "Suffice to say that he was wise and insightful. He was always kindly and appreciative, never intrusive".

He added: "He was a pastoral man who wore his office lightly. He was aware that all he could do was his best – and leave the rest to God. It is no surprise that the Episcopal motto which he chose in 1988 was 'Jesus Christus Spes Nostra' (Jesus Christ our Hope)".

Highlighting that Bishop Francis had died in the early hours of the Feast of St Columba and was being buried on the Feast of St Barnabas, whose name means 'son of encouragement', Bishop Donal remarked: "Bishop Francis was a man who could claim to be a descendant of both".

He added: "He wished to have this funeral Mass in Strabane, where he had lived for over 35 years. But he wanted to be buried in his native soil of Maghera. He was deeply rooted in the life of that community and of its strong cultural traditions. Those who know their roots are well equipped to spread their wings".



Creggan grotto and prayer stone blessed in memory of Bishop Francis

by Fr Joe Gormley, PP Creggan

BISHOP Francis Lagan served in the parish of St Mary's Creggan as administrator from 1982-1988. It was from here that he was called to be Auxiliary Bishop of this Diocese. The then Fr Francis served in the Creggan during difficult times, as 'The Troubles' were at their height.

He had a simple but deep vision for the church and grounds, which was to make it a place where people could come and pray. The church was to be an oasis where people could find Jesus, our hope, in midst of pain and trial.

The beautiful stain glass window in the church of 'The Mother and Child' was installed in Fr Lagan's time serving in

this parish. In addition, he had a grotto built in honour of Our Lady of Lourdes, which, since 1988, has been a place where parishioners would come to pray. It was important, he believed, to create a prayer space in Creggan where people could encounter God's love by hope in Jesus, through the intercession of Mary, Our Lady and Mother.

Fr Daniel McPaul, who is currently serving in the parish, served here briefly in the summer of 2014, and set about the renewal of the grotto and its surrounds through cleaning, landscaping and gardening.

During the Covid-19 lockdown, the grotto began to look like it needed another renewal. So, Fr

Daniel, who returned here for a longer term appointment in September 2019, together with a group of incredible volunteers, began to refresh the grotto anew. This was achieved with new flowers, lighting, cleaning and repairing the fountain.

When the first renewal work was completed six years ago, Fr Daniel had asked Bishop Francis to rededicate and bless the grotto on August 15, 2014, which he was delighted to do. So, it was felt that it would surely be appropriate to rededicate the grotto on August 15, 2020, remembering Bishop Francis.

This rededication took place after the Sunday Vigil Mass on Saturday evening, August 15.

The parishioners who gathered were particularly delighted to welcome members of the Lagan family, who had travelled from South Derry and beyond.

Fr Daniel blessed the grotto and a prayer stone, which bears a request to pray for Bishop Francis. That would have been Bishop Francis' own request of us. It also contains his Episcopal Coat of Arms and motto "Christus Jesus Spes Nostra" (Jesus Christ Our Hope).

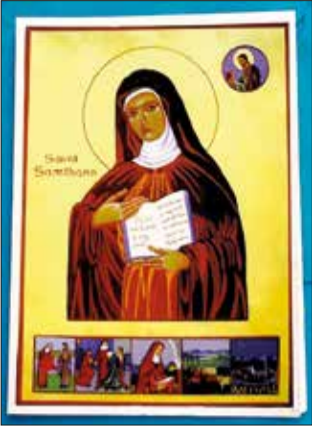
May Fr Francis, who strove to bring hope in Jesus to the people of Creggan, now experience the fullness of that hope through the grace and mercy of Jesus in Heaven.



Lagan family 1955 - back l-r, Brian, James, Tillie, Francis and John, and front l-r, Roisin (mother), Sr Maria Goretti, Frank (father) and Mary



God’s Friends — *lost in translation* — by Fr Oliver Crilly



Icon of St Safan, by Donegal artist, Rosemary McCarron.

FR Ciarán Devlin, author of *The Making of Medieval Derry*, researched the saints associated with each parish in the Diocese. In Urney and Castlefinn, he drew attention to St Safan of Urney, a saint of national significance, whose name Fr Willie Rafferty then gave to a new school, St Safan’s, just a bit up the road from the Doneyloop church. St Safan was one of the inspirational leaders of a movement of spiritual renewal in the Irish Church. Strangely, in recent centuries, this extraordinary movement, the Céilí Dé, like St Safan herself, had fallen below the radar as if it had never existed.

The Céilí Dé

For nearly two centuries, from halfway through the eighth century into the first quarter of the

tenth century, a great movement of spiritual renewal — the Céilí Dé movement — surged through the Irish Church, accompanied by an energy and a creativity which left its mark in liturgy, in poetry, in great manuscript illumination, in scholarship and in amazing sculptured scripture crosses. The name of that renewal movement is the Céilí Dé movement. Yet the majority of Irish people, even the most dedicated and devout Irish people, are not really aware of that movement. Why is it that the name Céilí Dé does not bring to mind resonances of spiritual insight or of creative energy?

I think part of the fault lies with translation. As with many of our place names and even family names, the reality of what was expressed in the Irish language didn’t travel well into English. The early translators of ‘Céilí Dé’ did grievous bodily harm to that great spiritual tradition by coining an Anglicization: they referred to the Céilí Dé as ‘Culdees’, which of course had no meaning and gave the impression that they were referring to some weird sect.

It is not easy to find an English translation which will convey the meaning of Céilí Dé and retain some of the rhythm and succinctness of the original. ‘Spouses’ captures the commitment suggested by the Irish, but in terms of familiar usage it is only marginally

less off-putting than ‘Culdees’. ‘Companions of God’ is close in meaning though without the sense of total commitment. I thought of the words of St Thomas More at his execution: ‘I die the king’s good servant, but God’s first’. ‘God’s First’ might have had a resonance before Donald Trump, but I’m afraid ‘America First’ has stolen a march. I wondered about ‘God’s Own’, but it sounded more like the name of a football club than of a spiritual fraternity.

So, I’m open to suggestions for a short punchy translation for ‘Céilí Dé’ which might combine meaning with rhythm and character. In the meantime, I’m using ‘God’s Friends’, as a kind of standby.

Finding our roots

The Céilí Dé sought to renew the spirituality of the early Irish Church, to reach back and re-connect with the central themes of that spirituality. That could be a description of our search this coming year, as we reach back over 1500 years to connect with the legacy of St Columba.

The Céilí Dé didn’t invent this spirituality. They inherited it. It was the spirituality of the early Irish Church, going back to Patrick, Brigid and Columba. The achievement of the Céilí Dé was to reclaim that heritage of spirituality, to renew it, and to put words on it.

The themes of the Céilí Dé were not peripheral devotions, but represented a renewed commitment to the core elements of the Church’s life, particularly as exemplified in the early Irish Church:

1. The Eucharist

The Mass is central to the life of the Church. It is interesting that in the Stowe Missal, from St Maelruain’s monastery in Tallaght, we find an essay, in the vernacular — in Old Irish — on the Mass and the Eucharist. One striking phrase describes the Mass as ‘coinne na hEaglaise neamhaí agus talúnda’ — the meeting place of the heavenly and earthly Church.

2. Scripture

The love of the Scriptures stands out as one of the marks of the early Irish Church, and of the Céilí Dé renewal. It was expressed in scholarship, in the liturgy, and uniquely in the great illuminated manuscripts, like the Book of Durrow and the Book of Kells, and in the great Scripture Crosses.

3. Prayer

Prayer has always been central to every movement of spiritual renewal in the Church, and it was central to the life of the Céilí Dé. There was a renewal of prayer in the monasteries, both in the Céilí Dé monasteries like Tallaght,



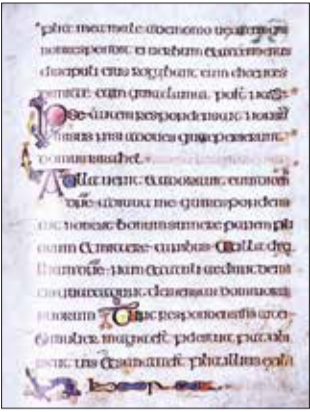
Paddy McElroy's Monstrance.

Díseart Diarmada (Castledermot, Co Kildare), and also in other monasteries which came under their influence, including Clonmacnois and the Columban monasteries of Moone and Iona.

4. Díseart

The term Díseart appears in place names all over Ireland, like Díseart Diarmada, and Díseart Mhártain (Desertmartin, South Derry). It comes from the Latin ‘desertum’ and refers to a deserted place, rather than a sandy desert. It means a remote place, by a river, in the forest, on the mountain or on a deserted shore, where a person can withdraw to be in communion with God in the setting of nature.

The awareness of nature, and God’s presence in creation, overflowed for the Céilí Dé into extraordinary poetry. Poems like *The Scribe in the Woods* (translated into an English poem by Seamus Heaney), *The*



A page from the Book of Kells.

Blackbird over Belfast Lough, and *Me and Pangur Bán my Cat*, are internationally known.

5. Community

The Céilí Dé liked to live in a small, closely knit community: ‘oentú Maelruain’ for example (the Unity or Fraternity of Maelruain) referred to St Maelruain and his original 12 disciples. The sense of the Church as community is evident in the works of art.

6. The Saints

The Céilí Dé had a great sense of the Communion of Saints — the unity of the heavenly and earthly Church. People were aware of gathering among the angels and saints when they came to celebrate Mass. They would have a litany of the saints, or of the apostles, early on in the Mass. There are litanies like this e.g. in the Stowe Missal and in the Martyrology of Oengus, which include the name of St Safan of Urney.

Ministering in times of tragedy

IN the aftermath of the terrible tragedy that unfolded for Moville wife and mother, Geraldine Mullan, as the summer of 2020 drew to a close with the heart-breaking loss of her husband and children, Bishop Donal reflects on ministering to such an unspeakable anguish as that felt by the families and friends of John and young Tomás and Amelia.

“The terrible loss of John, Tomás and Amelia Mullan, and the anguish of Geraldine touched everybody,” he said, recalling how “the hush over Moville on the day of the funeral reflected the fact that most people are lost for words in the face of such an unimaginable tragedy. In a matter of a few seconds, someone’s life can be changed forever. And everyone can feel the fragility of their own lives”.

He added: “As we have seen so often, communities come together to provide support and love to a bereaved family. And that loyalty, that ‘social capital’ is an invaluable treasure. But there is huge pressure on the priest to say something, to speak some Gospel message into the mass of pain. It is not the job of the doctor or the paramedic to play that role. It is the priest who will be the official speaker at the funeral service and his words can play an important role”.

Going on to note that a priest

knows that he must “avoid glib words or phrases”, Bishop Donal said: “The first thing that the bereaved need is a sense that their pain is being taken seriously. And an outsider can never know what mixture of feelings and thoughts are running through a person’s mind. When the pain is acknowledged, it is then possible to help the family to pick scripture readings that speak to them and to their situation. And the Gospels are rich in words that address pain and loss.

“Secondly, the Liturgy has an integrity of its own. There is a wide selection of prayers and a set of familiar gestures that have their own power. The Liturgy is the fruit of distilled wisdom over the course of centuries. Our use of words can be very powerful – but, in the depths of a tragedy, there are some things that words alone cannot express. And in the face of terrible loss, silence can speak powerfully.

“Thirdly, Jesus does not explain away any tragedy. But the Cross speaks into the loss. The message at the foot of the Cross on Good Friday was not that the death of Jesus was not real and horrible. The message was that, behind every awful loss, there is One who can make sense of the very real pain.

“For the secular world, death mocks our plans. But Jesus’ Cross

and Resurrection says that life is not without meaning or value. And that Jesus hangs on our Cross with us – even when we feel like saying, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’”

In his homily at the Requiem Mass for John, Tomás and Amelia, Moville parish priest, Fr Pat O’Hagan, drew attention to the readings that had been “carefully chosen, to reflect at least some of the things that are uppermost in our minds and hearts today – family life and love; faith, particularly in the face of tragedy, and some of the questions we all have in the aftermath of ...events that have overwhelmed us and left us reeling with a sense of shock and disbelief, and with a sadness and grief that’s palpable here in this parish community, and nowhere more so than in the heart of Geraldine Mullan”.

Confident of Jesus’ presence amongst them, Fr Pat said: “He wants us to reflect for a moment on the importance of family life – the joys and sorrows, the ups and downs, the times when we need to forgive or ask for forgiveness.

“But, above all, today, He wants us to think about the love we find only within the circle of our own family – the love of a husband and wife, the love of parents and children, and the love of siblings for one another – the things we’ve seen and know to have been part

and parcel of the family life of the Mullans.

“He wants us to ask ourselves: are we the people St Paul had in mind – people who are certain, unlike those ‘who have no hope’- people who believe in Jesus as our risen Lord and Saviour, and who believe in our own resurrection from the dead into everlasting life in Heaven?”

“He wants us to reflect on the value and importance of faith – how valuable and important it is to us each and every day, and particularly at a time like this. How faith shapes and influences everything we say and do, especially our interactions with one another, at work and at play, in the home and outside of it. He wants us to be certain, and to use our faith to ‘comfort one another.”

“The Connaughtons and the Mullans are families of faith, coming from places of faith, homes of faith and prayer,” noted Fr Pat, mentioning how John, Tomás, Amelia and Geraldine had worshipped regularly together at Mass in Moville’s St Pius X Church.

Commenting that many have drifted away from faith nowadays, Fr Pat referred to those who “come to God only when they need His presence or help in their lives”, to those who would “want to use an occasion like this to tell us that there is no God; or, if there



The Mullan Family

is, that God is cruel, heartless and unfeeling”, Fr Pat remarked: “That’s not the God I believe in”.

He added: “I believe in the God of love and mercy. I believe in a God who cares for each and every one of us. I believe that, as St Paul tells us, nothing can come between us and the love of God for us. I believe that God loves the poor and the needy, the sick and the sorrowful, the bereaved and the broken hearted. I believe in God!

“I believe in Jesus Christ as my risen Lord and Saviour. I believe that He loves me. And He loves you too...I believe that, when He would wipe away His tears, and our tears too, He might say,

simply, as He said on so many occasions, ‘Do not be afraid. Only have faith’.

“I believe in the Holy Spirit...I believe that the Holy Spirit comes to help us in our weakness; prays in and through us when we cannot pray for ourselves, or cannot find the words to express how we’re feeling”.

“St Paul tells us in the first Letter to the Corinthians that there are three things that last – faith, hope and love,” concluded Fr Pat, saying: “We need all three today. Geraldine and her family will need them all as times goes on. And so, we ask Almighty God to mend the hearts that are broken...”

Eangach

Ár nDúchas

Cóineartú

Leagan na lámh ar chloigeann na n-óg, urnaí an Easpaig os a gcionn. Greim ag an Eaglais dúinn ar a mbuanna, is dóchas as an am atá romhainn.

Baisteadh na páistí in aineolas orthu. Comhneartaítear iad ina mbaill stuama den Eaglais a mbeidh siad freagrach aisti sna blianta níos faide anonn.

Bradán feasa na hEaglaise thú feasta, agus tú ag snámh in aghaidh an easa, ag filleadh ar fhoinsí do eagna is an Spiorad mar eala ar do linn ag snámh.

(Brúitíní Creidimh.
Buíochas le Foilseacháin Ábhair Spioradálta.)

Is Binn lem Chuimhne

Is binn le m' chuimhne d'ainm án, Is ait le m' chroí do dhíograis ghrá, ach mil liom foilsíú d'eadain bhreá, a Thiarna ghrámhair íosa.

Thar binneas glóir is binne ceol, thar áilleacht rois is áille snó, thar uaisleacht seoid is uaisle lógh, is áil liom d'ainm, a íosa.

Is tú ár mian, is tú ár só, ár gcuid den saol thar acmhainn óir. Is tú ár n-aoibhneas thall go deo, a Phéarla ghléigil, íosa.

(Ár bPaidreacha Dúchais 420.
Buíochas le Foilseacháin Ábhair Spioradálta.)

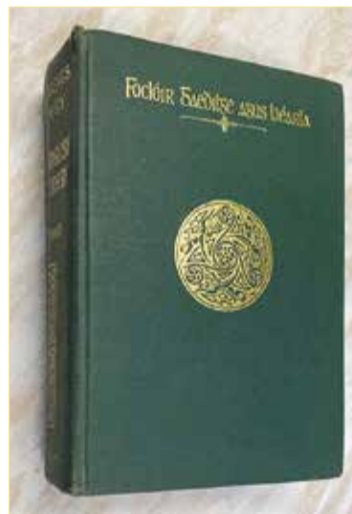
Foclóir Nua



Foilsíodh foclóir nua Béarla-Gaeilge an mhí seo: 'Concise English-Irish Dictionary', an foclóir oifigiúil is déanaí atá foilsithe i bhfoirm leabhair — seachas ar líne. Foilsíodh Foclóir De Bhaldraithe sa bhliain 1959, os cionn 60 bliain ó shin. Tá éacht oibre déanta le blianta beaga anuas, agus is iontach go bhfuil a thoradh le feiceáil anois againn. Dála an scéil, is iomaí téarma nua-aoiseach a tháinig chun cinn i rith na mblianta sin!

Tá an nós ann foclóir nua a ainmniú as an príomh-eagarthóir. Le blianta bhí 'Dinneen' in aice láimhe againn: 'Foclóir Gaedhilge-Béarla' leis an Athair Pádraig Ó Duinnín (An Duinníneach). Tá 'Ó Dónaill' in aice linn anois: 'Foclóir Gaeilge-Béarla' in eagar ag Niall Ó Dónaill — áis riachtanach ag

léitheoirí na Gaeilge. Beidh spéis ar leith ag muintir na Deoise seo san fhoclóir nua atá díreach i ndiaidh a theacht amach, nó is sloinneadh de chuid na Deoise seo atá ar an chlúdach. Pádraig Ó Mianáin an



Dinneen

Príomh-eagarthóir.

Rugadh agus tógadh Pádraig i nDoire. Chaith an teaghlach cuid mhór ama fá Ghaeltacht Thír Chonaill. Tá Pádraig, a bhean Susan, agus a gclann ina gcónaí anois i gceantar Shliocht Néill i nDeisceart Dhoire. Tá baint acu leis an fhoireann cáiliúil camógaíochta, le Féile Charn Tóchair, agus leis na scoileanna Gaeilge: Tír Chiana agus Gaelcholáiste Dhoire.

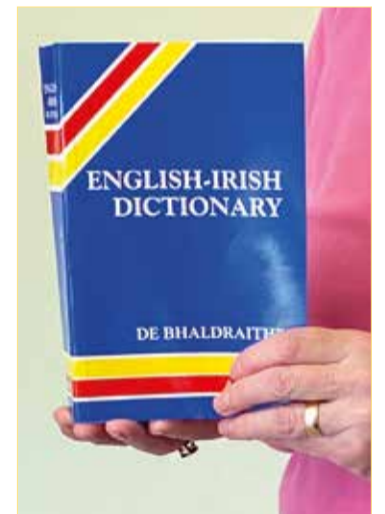
Rud amháin fá mhuintir Uí Mhianáin: tá fuinneamh iontu! Bhí sin a dhíth ar Phádraig nuair a chuaigh sé i mbun na foclóireachta. Luaigh Seosamh Mac Grianna 'briseadh sléibhe' mar íomha ag tagairt dá shaothar litríochta agus é ag cruthú teanga liteartha as canúint líofa Thír Chonaill. Briseadh sléibhe atá i saothar an Fhoclóra. Ghlac sé 70 bliain an

chéad eagrán den fhoclóir cáiliúil Béarla, 'The Oxford English Dictionary', a chríochnú, agus bhí slua ag obair air, idir eagarthóirí agus na céadta cúntóirí. Rinne Pádraig Ó Duinnín éacht nach bhfuil tuigheáil air nuair a chuir sé a fhoclóir mór le chéile. Nuair a foilsíodh é in 1927 ag an Irish Texts Society, b'iad Douglas Hyde, Robin Flower, Eleanor Hull agus T.D. Fitzgerald a shínigh an focal buíochais i dtús an leabhair.

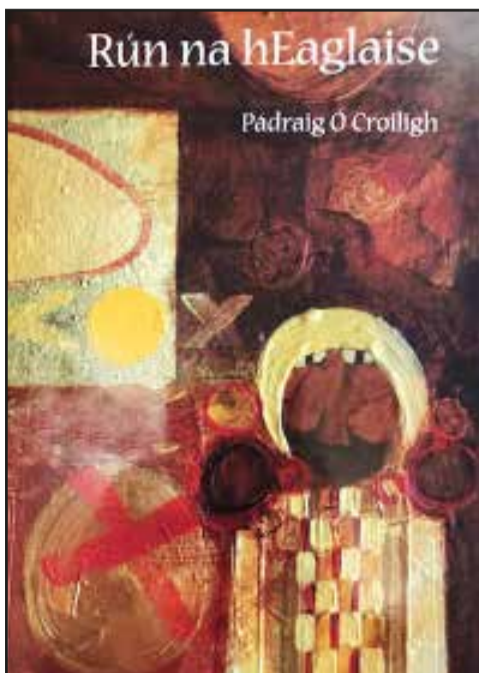
Cé go bhfuil áiseanna ag foireann an Fhoclóra anois, ó thaobh na teicneolaíochta de go háirithe, nach raibh ar fáil ag na glúnta a chuaigh rompu, mar sin féin tá comhghairdeas ó chroí tuille ag Pádraig agus ag a chomhoibrithe as an éacht atá déanta acu agus iad ag cur an Fhoclóra le chéile — Foclóir Uí Mhianáin.



Ó Dónaill



De Bhaldraithe



Baisteadh Easpaig

Dáiríre, tá na sacraimintí uile bunaithe ar phobal a dhéanamh. Tá siad ag brath ar mhuintearas a chur ag fás i measc daoine san Eaglais. Ní féidir sacraimint a cheiliúradh i d'aonar, de réir theagasc na hEaglaise. Ní féidir le duine a rá nach de ghnó duine ar bith eile é. Rud ar bith a bhaineann le sacraimint, is de ghnó an phobail é san Eaglais. Sin é an fáth go bhfuil oiread sin ag brath ar an Easpag mar chomhartha ar aontacht an phobail sa deoise agus mar cheangal leis an Eaglais uile.

Sa Chóineartú, ag tús na ndéag, iarrann an duine óg ar a phobal a

bheith páirteach leo, agus iarrtar orthu siúd a dhul i bpáirtíocht leis ionas go neartóidh siad a chéile. Comh-neartú. Tá neart úr de dhíth ar an duine óg anois go bhfuil sé ag glacadh iomláine an Bhaiste air féin. Sin é an fáth go dtugtar Baisteadh Easpaig uaireanta ar an Chóineartú. Sin é an fáth go n-iarrann an tEaspag ar na daoine óga gealltanais a mBaiste a athnuachan agus an creideamh a fhógairt mar a rinneadh ar a son lá a mBaiste. An tEaspag a bhronnann iomláine an Bhaiste orthu agus tugann sé dóibh, in ainm na hEaglaise uile, beatha an Spioraid Naoimh, Spiorad na

Tríonóide, beatha na hEaglaise arb í Corp Chríost í, ach a bheadh ina marbhán gan beatha an Spioraid Naoimh agus Críost aiséirithe mar cheann uirthi.

Fáiltimid roimh na daoine óga agus fáiltimid roimh a mbuanna agus a gcuid tabhartas, agus bronntar orthu beatha agus tabhartais an Spioraid Naoimh. Aithníonn an pobal, i bpearsa an Easpaig agus pobal an pharóiste, go bhfuil buanna agus cáilíochtaí ag na daoine óga seo, agus fógraíonn siad go bhfuil buannaíocht agus glaoch ag an phobal orthu mar Eaglais.

Fógraíonn na daoine óga go bhfuil buanna acu, agus go bhfuil siad sásta úsáid a bhaint astu i saol na hEaglaise ar mhaithe leis an phobal. Ar bhealach is í dúshraith na gairme diaga atá againn anseo nuair a chluineann an t-ógánach glór an Spioraid Naoimh á tharraingt níos doimhne isteach san Eaglais agus ag cur i gcuimhne dó go mbeidh freagracht air dá bhri sin.

(Buíochas le Foilseacháin Ábhair Spioradálta.)

A man of peace and strong faith who preferred the simple things in life – John Hume RIP

“A country in revolt throws up many leaders: with one person wise and experienced, you have stability” (Proverbs 28:2)



WHEN the simple, wicker coffin of the late John Hume was placed before the altar of St Eugene's Cathedral, in his beloved city of Derry, the Bible containing the Word of God was left open on top of it. For those who cast an eye over the verses on the two open pages of the Book of Proverbs, it was verse two of Chapter 28 that stood out like a Divine confirmation of all the tributes that have been paid to this Nobel Peace prize winner, who had helped to bring stability back to his troubled homeland as the leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) he co-founded 50 years ago.

Indeed, as was noted during his Requiem Mass by Fr Paul Farren, administrator of St Eugene's, John is the only person to have received three major peace awards; as well as the Nobel Peace Prize in 1998, along with the then Ulster Unionist Party leader, David Trimble, he was awarded the Martin Luther King Peace Award in 1999, and the International Gandhi Peace Prize in 2001.

In addition, he was made a Knight Commander of the Papal

Order of St Gregory the Great, one of five orders of knighthood of the Holy See, by Pope Benedict XVI in 2012, two years after he had been nominated 'Ireland's Greatest' in a public poll conducted by RTE to find the greatest person in Ireland's history.

Great though he was in the eyes of many in Ireland and beyond, John preferred the simple things in life, as confirmed by his daughter, Mo, who remarked that the family had wanted to keep his funeral simple to reflect that.

Paying tribute to her 83-year-old father, who died in the early hours of August 3, the youngest of the five Hume siblings told 'The Net': "He wasn't into airs and graces, so for us the funeral was more about dad than John Hume, the public figure. While sustainability was important to us in choosing dad's coffin, wicker was the right choice for him too, because he didn't like fancy stuff much".

"Dad was a Derry man and he was proud of that," said Mo, adding: "Being from Derry was a badge of honour for him, and he was hugely proud when he was

awarded 'Freedom of the City of Derry', in 2000".

With restrictions still in place due to Covid-19, the family asked people to protect each other by not gathering to pay their respects as the cortege made its way through Moville to St Eugene's the evening before the Requiem Mass, but instead to simply light a candle for peace in their homes. The response was shared over social media, with many posting photographs of their lit candles placed on window sills; a comforting sight for the Hume family as they passed by.

After receiving John's remains at the Cathedral, where he had attended many religious ceremonies down the years, Bishop Donal McKeown led the prayers, which included a special celebration of light for peace. He asked those present in St Eugene's, as well as the many watching the ceremony on-line via the webcam, to pray for peace in hearts, homes and society, not just in Derry but in other parts of the world too.

"John knew that peace was not something done for us, but by us," noted Bishop Donal, adding: "We are called, wherever we are, to work and pray for peace. John spent his life with that call that we each do what we can."

Taking a light from the Paschal Candle that had been blessed at Easter, John's wife, Pat lit a candle for peace in his memory, before everyone was invited to join in saying the Prayer of St Francis... "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace, Where there is hatred, let me sow love, Where there is injury, pardon, Where there is doubt, faith, Where there is despair, hope, Where there is darkness, light, And where there is sadness, joy..."

Presiding at the funeral Mass the next morning, along with All Ireland Primate and Derry native, Archbishop Eamon

Martin, Bishop Donal welcomed all present, including local and national dignitaries, and those tuned in from around the world.

He said: "We gather, as the family has underlined, in a spirit of prayer that God's grace, which blessed us through John's life, will continue to flow abundantly on the people of this island. He did not just dream of peace. His life's vocation was to be peacemaker for the good of others. Because of his past we can face the future".

Bishop Donal also shared messages of sympathy from the Vatican's Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin on behalf of Pope Francis, the Dalai Lama and Bono of U2.

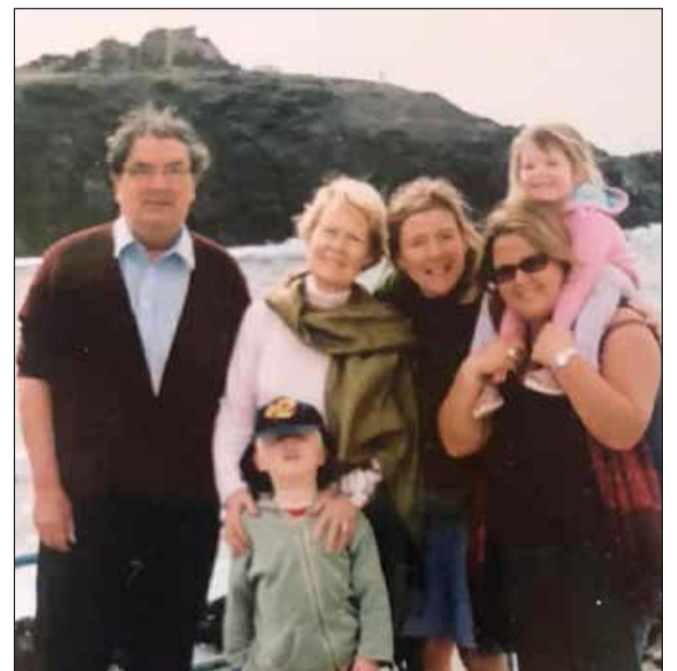
The Mass was concelebrated by Fr Paul Farren and Fr Dinny McGettigan, a cousin of John's wife, Pat. Preaching the homily, Fr Paul spoke about how John had "never lost faith in peace" and "never lost faith in his ability to convince others that peace was the only way".

Acknowledging John's "incredible achievements", Fr Paul went on to share that his fondest memory of this great son of Derry was, after attending Mass in the Cathedral every day that his health enabled him to during retirement, he returned in the evening to sit at the back praying quietly.

"In all the houses he was in, White houses and houses of parliaments and many others, it was in this house, the house of God, that he found greatest peace," noted Fr Paul, adding: "It was in this house that John recognised the presence of God and his need for God, for His mercy, for His love. Here, before his God, the humility of John was plain to be seen".

Good Samaritan

He continued: "John lived his faith in the most practical way.



John receiving the Freedom of the City of Derry.



His favourite gospel was the Good Samaritan. It was the Gospel of Jesus Christ and Catholic Social teaching that shaped his work for peace.”

And it also shaped his parenting, with Pat, of their five children, Thérèse, Áine, Aidan, John and Mo, with Mo telling ‘The Net’: “Dad was a big figure in our lives, and really protected and looked after us. He had a very strong faith, but he allowed us to question and find our own way, guiding us by his actions rather than by reciting dogma. It was a quiet faith, which he practised more in later life in terms of going to Mass regularly and just popping into the church to say a prayer. I suppose that was because he had more time on his hands.”

Recalling her parents encouraging her and her siblings unconditionally, Mo said: “For them, it was really important that we were true to what we wanted to do, and they encouraged us to find our own path. We’ve ended up doing such different things; Therese is a lecturer in Sligo, Aine is a GP in Derry, Aidan lives in Boston and works in a bank, John owns a communications company in Dublin, and I live in Glasgow and teach and research conflict and violence in Latin America.”

Very like her father, Mo spoke of her great interest in how conflict works and how peace is a hard journey, saying: “I work very closely with a Catholic diocese in Colombia and see the great challenges that they have to foster peace and the multiple injustices

that they face. In our home, we grew up with an interest in that. We met lots of people who came through the house and, no matter who they were, we were taught at a young age to respect everyone.

“It was a privilege to grow up in Derry and to have lots of different local people come through the house, as well as some people from other parts of the world. Dad encouraged us to come and speak to everyone. It wasn’t a case of them being in one room and us in another. We were encouraged to come in and say ‘hello’ and that was a real gift to us as children; to see mum and dad’s respect for different people.”

During the Prayer of the Faithful, Mo had read a poem written for their father by her brother, Aidan, who lives in America with his wife and five children, and had been unable to travel home due to coronavirus restrictions.

A lovely tribute to his father, Aidan wrote in the last verse of the poem: “I don’t think I ever said aloud how you have made us all so incredibly proud. All you ever wanted was to make the world a better place and in that goal you found your ace”.

Her brother, John, read an appreciation of his father before the start of Mass, in which he reflected on what his father would have said, in the fullness of his health, about the current tensions in the world.

“He’d talk about our common humanity,” said John Jnr, “the need to respect diversity and difference, to protect and deepen democracy,

to value education, and to place nonviolence at the absolute centre. He might also stress the right to a living wage and a roof over your head, to decent healthcare and education.”

He continued: “At this time of planetary fragility, more than ever, he would be urging that we move beyond our flag-based identities and recognise the need to protect our common home.

“Central to dad’s work was his deep appreciation of human interdependency. We all need one another; we all have a role to play, and all our roles are of equal importance.”

He went on to remark that while, in the last years of his life, his father’s physical and mental health had become more visibly vulnerable, they as a family had witnessed in those recent years, more than ever, “the absolute importance” of his core ethos, “of building community based on respect and love”.

He noted that just as his father had loved his home town and its people, the people of Derry and of his adopted Donegal home, had shown great kindness to him over the years, stopping to talk to him in the street, guiding him to protect his independence, and receiving him with gentleness if he was agitated.

John also paid tribute to the love shown to his father by carers, residents and their families, in Owen Mor Nursing Home, where he had resided during the past two years, saying that the experience “will remain a lesson to us for the

rest of our lives”.

“During the long weeks of lockdown,” he said, “when we as a family were unable to be with him, we knew that, despite the major difficulties, the care and nursing staff in unit one were doing their absolute best to care deeply for him, and for all his fellow residents.”

He added: “If he were here, he would urge us to look at those young carers and the incredible and heroic daily work they do as a model for future leadership – their ethos of deep respect, a respect for everyone regardless of where they come from or stage of life.

“These are the foundation stones that are critical to all communities. The Reverend ML King might describe it as the politics of love. Dad would urge us to listen, so that in spite of it all, we shall overcome.”

With the leadership of this man of peace for a period of over 20 years, the people of Derry have already overcome much hardship, and as fellow Derry man, Phil Coulter played the tune of John’s favourite song, ‘The Town I Loved So Well’ at the end of the Mass, they lined the route from St Eugene’s to the City Cemetery, applauding in respect and thanksgiving for the hope that he had given them to carry on, set their hearts on peace, and “pray for a bright, brand new day”.

*Funeral photographs by
stephenlatimer@me.com*



Taken by stephenlatimer@me.com



Candle-light tribute to John Hume at entrance to Moville.



Peace candle



John’s compassion for social justice and peace was aligned with his dedication to Credit Union principles *by Delma Boggs*

JOHN Hume was one of the six founder members of Derry Credit Union, the community-based credit union recognised nationally and internationally as a model of what can be achieved when people work together for the betterment of one another and their community.

On October 16, 1960, these six young individuals, all of whom were in their twenties, held the initial meeting of Derry Credit Union, thereby staking their names and reputations on what

was, at the time, a new concept in Ireland. They could not possibly have predicted or appreciated the life-enhancing impact that Derry Credit Union would have on generations over the subsequent decades.

Without doubt, John Hume was the most recognised ambassador of Derry Credit Union. His natural public speaking skills and experience as a teacher dovetailed into his role as an advocate for our local credit union and, eventually, his

position as youngest President of the Irish League of Credit Unions. One could argue that these experiences further honed his skills, expanded his awareness of the needs of ordinary people, and paved the way for his latter career as a politician and internationally recognised statesman.

But, despite all of the international accolades he received, John was at heart a Derry man and treated as one. The warmth, compassion and commitment to social justice and

peace so evident in his manner and speeches, were aligned with his dedication to the Credit Union movement’s 10 Operating Principles, particularly the principle of Social Responsibility and On-Going Education, which commits credit unions to seek to bring about human and social development.

For all of his achievements, John was most proud of his role in the formation of the Credit Union in Derry.

May he rest in peace.



We pray for the courage to be and to share Good News!

AS September gets underway, during which the Church celebrates the Feast Days of the Archangels, including St Michael the Protector, and of St Pio, who is known for his encouragement to “pray, hope and don’t worry”, Bishop Donal reflects on his visits to parishes around the Diocese to pray with people in celebrating Mass, and pays tribute to the great efforts of parishes to try and keep people safe while gathered in our churches. Commenting on the way forward for the Diocesan Pastoral Plan in the current situation, with Covid-19 restrictions continuing, he highlights the continued need for community, formation and mission, and the importance of youth ministry.

Parish visits a chance to be present with priests and people...

“During lockdown, I had encouraged priests to be ‘visible’ in their parishes, either on-line or in person. But I stayed in Derry for the entire period, though I had meetings with priests from each Deanery, either on Zoom or face-to-face. As travel restrictions were eased, I wanted to be out visiting parishes to see how priests were, to experience the many good ideas that parishes have undertaken and to be seen all around the Diocese. It is clear that these have been very difficult times for everybody, and that the future is very uncertain. But, we walk in faith and believe that God is teaching us many things about Church...if only we have ears to hear!”

Mask wearing encouraged so people feel safe while gathering in church...

“The leaders from the four main Churches together encouraged all congregations to wear masks in churches, as long as they did not have a particular medical or other reason. I know that the parishes of this Diocese have found ways to maximise the numbers of people who can gather, depending on the size of the buildings. But numbers are also limited by the reluctance of many people to come to church. Mask wearing is part of that strategy of encouraging people to believe that they will be safe while gathering in church. We want to maximise numbers and maximise the sense of safety. This is an evolving situation and we have had to keep an eye on constant changes in government regulations.”

Covid impact on clerical changes...

“Thankfully, there are no pressures this summer to make substantial changes. Furthermore, it is not an easy time for a priest

to move to a new appointment. Under current regulations, it would be challenging for a new parish priest to get to know his parishioners.”

Hearing Christ’s call for new heroes to witness to the Gospel...

“We currently have six seminarians, with a number of men hoping to enter over the next years. I hope and pray that more young people will recognise the lack of inspiring role models in popular culture – and hear Christ’s call for new heroes to witness to the Gospel. I am clearer than ever that it is young people who can best evangelise their peers. The Cathedral’s lockdown audience on-line has been heavily dominated by women in the 40-55 age bracket, from all over the Diocese and far beyond. I hope that we can also support them in sharing the Gospel with their children. The attention paid to Sr Clare Crocket, who is also a local ‘hero’, lets people see that holiness is a call to all of us.”

Strange times, but core themes of Diocesan Pastoral Plan still valid...

“We have had a couple of Zoom meetings of the Diocesan Pastoral Council, mainly with the purpose of asking for their insights on how we were coping as a Diocese. We were agreed that the three core themes of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan are still valid, but that we have to find ways of focusing on them in strange circumstances. We still need community, formation and mission. There has been a new emphasis on finding ways to reach and gather people on-line and via social media.

The centenary of St Columba’s birth will still be celebrated in 2021, but it is unclear whether we will be able to have a Diocesan Assembly. But, as ever, we walk with trust in God’s guiding hand;

believing that He is leading us. We do our best and leave the rest to God’s grace.

It is becoming clearer and clearer that modern culture has left many people with little idea of what faith is. That makes it very difficult for faith to be transmitted, even with the best of parents and good teaching in many schools. So, we have to do many things to change that culture – develop groups of people of all ages who support one another in faith, form people who can engage on media with Catholic ideas, and build on what our Catholic schools do.

Our idea of marriage and sexuality, our sense of a world outside this earth, our belief in good and evil outside my feelings – all of these seem strange to many of our contemporaries. But, we know that the modern ‘culture of death’ is its own worst enemy, and we pray for the courage to be and share Good News to our often mixed-up contemporaries. The Church of Jesus has to engage, not hide behind high walls of fear or angry condemnation!”

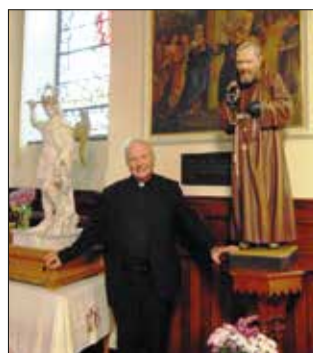
Youth ministering to youth in 2020-2021...

“It is unclear if we will have a Derry Youth Community with the current situation. On the one hand, there may be young people who are taking a gap year before going to university or into work. But many are finding it difficult to make any plans, like those who were waiting for A’level results. It seems unlikely that anyone will come from abroad. Furthermore, the DYC work may have to change. School retreats and gatherings of young people may well not be possible for some time. On the other hand, there will be a need for those who have excellent social media ideas and experience.”

Great response to new Diocesan Youth Ministry Scholarship...

“We have to be seeking ways to equip young people to engage with their peers. Formation in faith and in ministry skills does not take place unless it is planned. So, this Youth Ministry Scholarship is part of a medium to longer term strategy to create youth ministers, just like the MA in Catholic School Leadership is aimed at developing knowledge and skills for the next generation of school principals.”

Diocesan Youth Ambassadors



Bishop Donal prayed for the intercession of the Archangel Michael and St Pio during a visit to St Columba’s Church, Long Tower.

programme a way of engaging with young people on their personal faith journeys...

“The purpose of the Youth Ambassadors structure was to engage selected senior students in each post-primary school, so that they could contribute to our Diocesan Youth Ministry strategy and learn from one another as to what they could offer in their own school communities. Of course, it has been reviewed, but I believe that it is important to engage with young people during their school days, and not just to work with teachers. There are so many wonderful young people and this is one more way to engage with them on their personal faith journeys.”

Back to school message...

“Fear and uncertainty have affected many people during lockdown. Young people have been accustomed to spending lots of time with their peers. Many have had little access to education for over five months. And, it has been stressful for many parents. It is important that our schools focus on the needs of the most disadvantaged and not merely on the wishes of the stronger families. But, so many of our saints faced difficult times – and kept believing that God was in the middle of even persecution, war or illness. A young Italian schoolboy who died of cancer aged 15, in 2006, is due to be beatified on October 10. Carlo Acutis was deeply devoted to the Eucharist and to using the computer to reach his peers. He may be a new saint for our day. So, God’s grace works at its best in times of difficulty. Carlo is a sign that we can thrive in the face of problems and not be crushed by them. That is the message of Calvary!”



Banagher.



Claudy



Carnhill, Three Patrons

Cranagh Covid Cross blessed by Bishop Donal by A Parishioner

BISHOP Donal celebrated Wednesday evening Mass for the parish of Upper Badoney in Cranagh on August 6, as part of his unofficial visits to parishes around the Diocese.

Afterwards, he kindly blessed the cross which was erected in the grounds of the church during the lockdown period, for the outside ceremony of the Veneration of the Cross last Good Friday.

It stands now as a permanent reminder of these current times and the call to greater faith and trust in God’s protection amid the fear and worry of this pandemic. We know that our faith can be shaken by deeply challenging moments in our lives; times of difficulty, sickness, suffering and loss.

The cross symbolises, for the

people of the parish, God’s love for us. Jesus took upon Himself our human nature. He shares our suffering and draws near to those in anguish, with the reassuring words, “I am with you even to the end of time”. In these challenging times, God desires for us to draw near to him and to use this time as an opportunity for our faith to be strengthened and renewed.

The sun shone as Bishop Donal blessed the Covid cross; reminding us of the hope we hold in our hearts that God is ever present with us. May we venerate always the cross of Christ as a sure sign of God’s love and mercy, and that whether in sickness, loneliness, fear, pestilence or death, nothing can ever separate us from the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus



Bishop Donal with parish priest, Fr Brian Donnelly, and parishioners during his visit to Cranagh, Co Tyrone.



Ballerin, Errigal.



Cappagh

Bishop Donal encourages consideration of...

The real challenge for parishes in this critical time for Church

IN his homily for the 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time, back on Sunday, July 26, Bishop Donal spoke about how we are now “at a critical time for our church” and about the “real challenge for parishes” with regards to it going to be quite some time before people can gather safely in large numbers in churches because of the ongoing coronavirus situation.

He posed the question, “How do we celebrate our sacramental unity in the Body of Christ without coming together as much?” He went on to remark that “limitation in church attendance means that the domestic church has to take on a greater part of handing on the rich treasure of faith”.

Following up on this, a number of people have reflected on Bishop Donal’s comments and shared their thoughts, which will feature here in ‘The Net’ as a way of encouraging conversation about where we are at and the way forward. Firstly, Bishop Donal revisits his comments to consider them further...

“For 2,000 years, Christians have turned to the scriptures to find out what it means to be a disciple of Jesus and how we are to be Church. And the Covid19 realities have been asking us to seek Jesus’ guidance as we try to be a Jesus-faithful Church in our current circumstances.

“There have been many positive sides to the recent months. We have all been amazed at the numbers of people who are following multiple Masses and

other church services on radio, TV and on-line. At a time of crisis, we have had a wonderful opportunity to reach out with Christ’s hope to so many homes. My guess is that many have had their first real opportunity to see the wealth of Catholic spiritual traditions. And, at the heart of so many of them – Mysteries of the Rosary, Stations of the Cross, Angelus, Divine Mercy message – lies the Gospel that we share with all Christians.

“And I have been encouraged

by how many families have taken time to pray together.

“For some people, this has all created a new focus on parents as ‘the first teachers of their children in the ways of faith’ (Rite of Baptism). The Second Vatican Council talked about the family as ‘the domestic church’ (Lumen Gentium 11). Praying with their children offers formation in faith and a chance for parents to lead by example. Whatever else is done outside the family home, the family is where its members first learn to pray and to make little sacrifices out of love for God. It is at home that faith can best be caught, long before it is taught.

“In those circumstances, the parish that gathers on Sunday can be seen as a family of families. Where there has been little faith formation or prayer at home there is a very limited amount that can be undertaken by the Sunday homily or schools. For too many young people, faith is just something that you refer to at special times in school. A rediscovery of

the ‘domestic church’ is a real possibility in this current situation.

“But there have also been challenges.

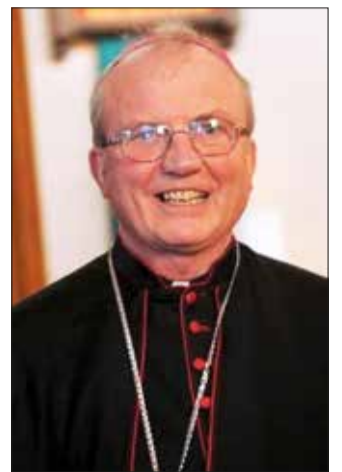
“Catholics emphasise the presence of Christ in many forms – in the Word and in the Sacraments (especially the Eucharist), in the Minister and where ‘two or three are gathered’ in his name. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, para 1088). The lockdown prevented so many people from accessing Christ in the Blessed Sacrament – for Adoration and for the reception of Holy Communion.

“Some have come back for private prayer and for Mass, while others are still afraid or cautious. My concern is for those who have become accustomed to prayer in their ‘domestic church’ in the comfort of their own home – and who risk playing down the Body of Christ in the Eucharist and in the community of believers which St Paul also describes as the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27). The early Church in Jerusalem ‘remained

faithful to the teaching of the Apostles, to the community, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers.’ (Acts of the Apostles 2:42) Faithfulness to Jesus means being faithful to all of these elements.

“Furthermore, Catholicism has a rich treasury of sacramentals – Holy Water, Stations of the Cross, pilgrimages, Rosary etc. Jesus touched the whole person in the Gospel. We know how important symbols and gestures are in every relationship. Jesus did not just feed people’s heads with ideas and prayers. He spoke to mind, body and spirit. He really took on physical form. He still engages with us in physical forms.

“A form of Christianity without engagements with the sacraments is not Catholicism. Sitting at home and praying are a vitally important part of our faith tradition – but not all of it. It is missing a key part of the incarnate nature of Jesus’ ministry in the Church today. We are not Church without gathering and sharing the sacraments together.



Bishop Donal McKeown

“Thus, we face a real challenge of how we can be true to the key themes of our Diocesan Pastoral Plan, while we do not have opportunities to gather people in substantial numbers. But we have learned much over the last months about using social media – and I have every confidence that, with missionary hearts, we will be led into new ways to proclaim that ‘God is Love’ into a society that needs good news”.

A debate for us as a church which must involve not alone clergy but laity too

by Mgr Andy Dolan, VG & PP Bellaghy

“A simple response to these comments in Bishop Donal’s homily says, ‘I couldn’t agree more’. However, there is a challenge there in those words and an opening up of a debate for us as a church which must involve not alone clergy but laity too. I would not care to predict who might have the more to offer.

“We, as a church, are not living in isolation. People’s reluctance about gathering in church reflects people’s feelings of concern about entering a supermarket, their place of work or meeting in any kind of groups. As I write this article, people’s fears are heightened by the various clusters wherein outbreaks are arising. Many of our people are feeling insecure about their jobs; will they be there for them after furlough? For others, will my business survive?

“Our first duty is to ensure that our Churches are safe places to enter and thus give people the confidence to come to Mass. How we conform or do not conform to regulations will be quickly picked up and, where we fail, people will react accordingly.

“The people who are returning to Mass are our best evangelisers. While they express their gratefulness for being able to connect with the Mass via webcam/Facebook, they are also expressing their delight to be back...I didn’t realise how

important other people were to me while at Mass; ‘I’m realising now just how much Mass means to me, especially being able to receive the Eucharist again’.

“We, as priests, might also have learned just how important our congregations are to us, we feed off each other. It demanded an effort on our part as priests to reach out beyond the empty pews to our invisible congregation and convey the message with conviction and enthusiasm.

“Last month’s edition of ‘The Net’ carried pieces from various parishioners around the diocese expressing their appreciation for the effort made by priests to connect with their people at home. This applied not only to getting Mass but connecting to other services like the Rosary, Evening or Night Prayer of the Church, Reflections and so. Even people who have not been regular church goers for some time admit to benefitting from what was available into their homes. Many people also admitted to the realisation of the importance of prayer to them. All of us, if we are honest, could say that prayer began to get its rightful place in our day.

“Hearing all of this makes me more optimistic about the future. Hopefully, we can use the resources at our disposal in an imaginative way into the future.

The Domestic Church was being given new experiences and I will return to that a little further on.

“Covid 19 and what future affect it will have on our ministry remains to be seen. Our prayer is that what we now experience will not be a long-term phenomenon.

“While we wonder about Mass attendance, we would be foolhardy to think only of the Covid factor and ignore that our Mass attendance has been steadily decreasing for quite some time. Bishop Donal speaks of the challenge presented to us – this one will continue to demand action.

“Our Diocesan Pastoral Plan, ‘God is Love’, puts a pathway in front of us. Our present situation highlights the need to get going. For some it will be new and demand a lot of effort to involve our parishioners in making this plan a living reality.

“Build welcoming and inclusive communities. We must strive to build parishes that are places of welcome and hospitality to all, reaching out in particular to the vulnerable, those in need and those who feel excluded.

“Be disciples of Jesus Christ, growing in faith together. When we allow God’s love into our hearts, we can be inspired to answer Jesus’ call to follow him, to deepen our understanding of our faith and to play a more active role

in our parish community.

“Work to make Jesus known and loved. Through the Gospel we experience the love of the Father, forgiveness in the Son and the power of the Spirit. As Christians, we are all called to be part of the work of making this relevant in our own lives within today’s society.

“In the present circumstances, the Diocesan Plan, as well as developments in parishes, is not where we had hoped. Despite all that is or rather is not happening, hopefully we can return to our roadmap soon. There will be the challenge to get priests and people re-energised and enthusiastic.

“Apart from focussing on Mass attendance, other important parish activities are on hold. The St Vincent de Paul Society, probably needed now more than ever, is unable to function to any great degree because of circumstances. This is true for various apostolic groups.

Children’s liturgy, In Memory, Confirmation Programme, Pope John Paul Groups are activities which are suspended and leave a vacuum in faith formation. Maybe people at parish/diocesan level might come up with ideas which can be used via webcam and other outlets to help in faith formation.

“I alluded earlier to the Domestic Church and it is where people normally first receive the faith as stated in the Document Lumen Gentium (‘light of the Nations’); the Constitution of the Church. I question if we can make the presumptions today that were around during the era of the Council. Society’s goal posts may have shifted slightly. Anyhow, here is what the document states: ‘From the wedlock of Christians

there comes the family, in which new citizens of human society are born, who by the grace of the Holy Spirit received in baptism are made children of God, thus perpetuating the people of God through the centuries’ (Lumen Gentium, 11).

“You may have heard it said that families are the fundamental ‘building block’ of society; similarly, families provide a foundation for the continuation and strength of the Church among the lay faithful.

“Lumen Gentium goes on to explain that this domestic Church has a particular role and responsibility in leading souls to heaven: ‘In it, parents should, by their word and example, be the first preachers of the faith to their children; they should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each of them, fostering with special care vocation to a sacred state’. The Council Fathers intended to emphasize that Christ is the Light of the Nations, and that, as the Church, we each have a responsibility to bring the Light of Christ to others. Within the domestic Church, this means that parents are to cultivate a family life that is centred on Christ.

“Some of the recommendations about how this might be done are very much at the devotional level. During the lockdown, people did appreciate being led in prayer through the Rosary, Prayer of the Church, Virtual Pilgrimages, Reflections, along with Mass and other Services.

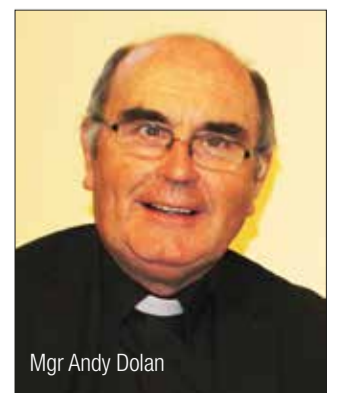
“Maybe we need to look how we can sustain this on an ongoing basis. The domestic Church which is to reflect the life of Christ needs to be a place of love, of care, of support, forgiveness, compassion,

nourishment, reflecting the Christ who comes to us in Word and Sacrament as we rub shoulders with each other. ‘Parents are the first teachers of their child in the ways of faith; may they also be the best of teachers in the things they say and do.’ (Rite of Baptism). How well are we helping parents to fulfil that instruction?

“Our faith is a precious gift, a treasure not to be hidden but to be shared. I’ll close with some of the final words of Bishop Donal’s homily, ‘Pray that we as Church can discern how we will best celebrate and share that treasure we hold in earthenware jars’.

Foot Note. “It also leaves us thinking about how we minister now and how it will be into the future. Maybe when we are doing this or that, the question might be, whose needs am I serving, my own or those of the people of God?

“On a lighter note, people would say ‘Fr X down in Cork preaches a great sermon’; ‘Your wee man in Armagh, he’s right and speedy’; ‘Those boys in Lurgan could dance’, and ‘the priest in Dublin is a great singer’...I was asking myself, ‘am I getting a message here?’ It revealed how much being connected to the Mass meant to our people”.



Mgr Andy Dolan

THE series of reflections from people in parishes around the Dioceses, on their experience of life in lockdown due to Covid-19 continues, alphabetically, this month, with more to follow in the next edition of 'The Net'.



St Mary's Church, Bocan, Culdaff.

Culdaff (Bocan)...

We are thankful to our priest as not easy saying Mass in empty chapel

WE are very fortunate that Fr Karl Haan, our curate, and Caroline Catterson, parish secretary, have been working endlessly during the lockdown to ensure we are connected online.

Fr Karl is very good with technology and streams live masses daily to his parishioners in Bocan and to friends all over the world via his Facebook page.

The times are Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday at 7.30 pm, Wednesday 10 am, Saturday 11 am and, weekend Masses, Saturday 8 pm and Sunday 11 am...all subject to a strong enough internet signal.

If you want to tune in, you can find him on Facebook Karl Haan and there have only been a few small glitches with coverage to date.

Mary Doherty, the sacristan, also keeps the church in great shape, and preparations for the opening of the chapel for Masses in July included a clean with a vaporising mechanism. Strict social distancing guidelines will be adhered to, which will,

unfortunately, limit the numbers.

The principals, parents, children and staff in both schools in the parish – St Boden's NS, Culdaff and Scoil Mhuire, Gleneely – were delighted when Fr Karl had a special Mass on the days that would have been the children's First Holy Communion, on May 16, and the Graduation, which would have been on June 15.

A beautiful Mass was streamed live on both occasions, with the children's names being read out. It was a nice way to let them know that they are not forgotten about in these tough times.

The words of our principal, Nicola Humphries, sum up the thoughts of our parishioners nicely: "It was just lovely and so nice for the children to know they were being prayed for today. It's so sad to see the chapel so empty and it can't be easy saying Mass in that way, but we are all here and thankful to you for delivering Mass in this way."

(Rosalie)

Creggan...

Our priests and bishop have been fantastic

OUR priests and bishop have been just fantastic during this lockdown. Bishop Donal has been so thoughtful and very creative in the prayer times he has come up with to put on-line, such as the virtual Lough Derg time of prayer and penance. I really enjoyed this. I didn't do it barefoot and I can no longer kneel, but I did the fasting and prayers for all of the Stations.

Fr Joe Gormley, our parish priest, and Fr Daniel McFaul, our curate, have both been fantastic. As well as having Mass on-line, we had the Angelus, the Divine Mercy and Holy Souls Chaplets, the Rosary and Adoration, and Fr Joe led a couple of retreats.

It has been a difficult time for our priests too, but Fr Joe and Fr Daniel were there for everybody. Thank God that they have each other for support especially during this time, and they were very supportive of everybody in the parish as well. They were there at the end of the 'phone if anyone wanted to talk to them.

Fr Daniel is very musical and he does a lot of singing, which helps when there is no choir singing in the church now. We all thought it was a lovely touch at Easter, when he went and got potted plants to put around the altar.

Both Fr Daniel and Fr Joe have really stepped up to the challenge of lockdown; they went above and beyond for us as a parish. I think they have probably worked harder during lockdown; it's been non-stop for them. We were delighted when they visited each street to pray a decade of the Rosary during May. Fr Joe did Upper Creggan and Fr Daniel did Lower Creggan, while a few men

carried around a statue of Our Lady.

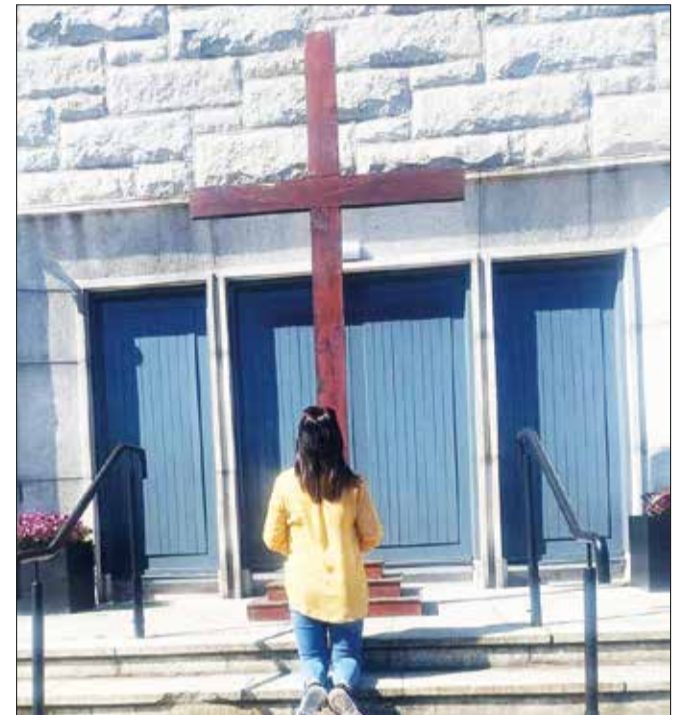
People have been greatly supported by all the prayers. When the chapels were closed, it wasn't the same experience watching on the webcam, but it was great to at least be able to hear and see Mass being celebrated. As well as joining with Fr Joe saying the Rosary earlier in the night, I loved tuning into the Bishop's Rosary from the Cathedral. We were certainly well catered for with regards to prayer ministry.

For me, it was absolutely brilliant when our priests offered the opportunity again for Confessions in the Divine Mercy Chapel. I really appreciated being able to receive this Sacrament again as I had missed that so much. When you go to Confession you receive a grace, and I missed that.

When our chapels re-opened for private prayer, quite a few people called in to pray during the day. We are also blessed to have a great team come together to clean the chapel. We place a card wherever we have sat and someone will clean that area down after we leave.

God has looked after our church very well.

(Teresa)



Carndonagh...

We had more time to pray



AT first we didn't have access through social media to the celebration of Mass in our parish when public worship was stopped because of the virus, until the Carndonagh Traders set up a recording on Facebook. Then we got a webcam installed, which has been great.

So, before this happened I was tuning into St Eugene's Cathedral services during Lent, which were wonderful. I also enjoyed praying the Rosary at night along with Bishop Donal.

When our webcam was installed, it was lovely to be able to watch Fr Con celebrating morning Mass during the week and at the weekend. Our chapel was always open for private prayer during the day, which many took comfort from.

Fr Con has done a great job for someone who is over 70, and so needed to cocoon. It wasn't easy for him.

For me, the hardest thing during lockdown was not being able to physically go to Mass on a Sunday morning. There just was no start or end to the week and I found every day the same.

I am over 70, so I had to cocoon as well, but it didn't bother me. However, I would say that anyone who didn't have internet and access to social media to be able to get the Masses, etc, would have found it very difficult. But, at least, they could get Mass on television on a Sunday morning, or on the radio. It just has been a very difficult time for people.

I would have prayed the Rosary every night anyway, but I found

myself praying more during the day, as many people did, and that was probably because we had more time to pray. Whenever I heard of anyone who had the virus, I prayed for them.

It has been a time when people who wouldn't have been regularly going to Mass, found themselves watching the Mass on-line, so you never know what could come out of this whole experience, that 2020 will long be remembered for.

I found it particularly hard when there were funerals not being able to hug the family, especially if it was someone I knew very well. I missed that terribly. It's just very strange not being able to give somebody a hug but, hopefully, we will come back to those days again.

(Esther)

Culmore...

I honestly don't think I would have made it without the Church



LOCKDOWN for me was horrendous as everything I cherished was taken from me. I was a Eucharistic Minister and an active member of the Church, but I was unable to continue in lockdown, and I also missed the physical contact with my family. I can't explain the pain of that.

I am in our parish Liturgy Group and, before Covid, I had recorded a programme in our parish on The Examen and had sent the video to our parish pastoral worker, Julz, who had asked me to do it, just before lockdown.

For the first week, when there was no streaming of Mass from our church, I tuned into the services at St Eugene's for the morning Mass, the Divine Mercy Chaplet at 3 pm, and then Mass with our Bishop, the Rosary, Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and Night Prayer. When Mass was available from our church at Thornhill, I tuned in for morning Mass there and then switched over to the Cathedral for the rest of the day. I honestly don't think I would have made it without the Church; it was all of

this that kept me sane.

Our priests have been absolutely amazing and I hope that they get the appreciation that they deserve for everything. One of our parishioners did a wonderful job keeping our community together through her Rosary time and wee stories on Facebook, which was greatly appreciated.

We also got the opportunity to do Lectio Divina on Zoom, with Thornhill and Steelstown, which was led by Sr Margaret McConnelogue every Wednesday. We even had a couple of people from England join us, and hearing their version of the Gospel and spirituality was so different. It was great and I learnt a lot from it. Before Covid and lockdown, we were doing Lectio Divina week about, between Culmore and Steelstown, so it was great to be able to continue it on Zoom and still have at least some contact that way.

Julz had also asked different people in the parish to come up with an idea for a prayer, or choose a Gospel reading, and record it, and this was put up on our parish Facebook page.

Eventually, I was able to form a bubble with my son and his family; they were able to come in to my house and I was able to go into theirs. It was wonderful to be able to hug my son and grandchildren again.

Up to that, my son would have come and spoke to me from the garden, and then one day he came into the conservatory and gave me a hug, saying that it had just been announced that we were allowed to have a bubble. I cried that much out of sheer relief.

It is not until the carpet is wiped from under your feet and you are left with nothing that you realise that you take things for granted.

I would still be nervous about going out, but it is great to be back at Mass. I couldn't wait to see our priest physically and not just through a screen, and to be able to receive Holy Communion.

Fr Clerkin, our parish priest, has been working very hard, trying to keep the congregation together and to keep people's spirits up. He and Fr Peter McLaughlin just kept the whole thing going.

(Carmel)

Donaghedy (Dunamanagh & Aughabrack)...

One of the things I really missed was the wee chats after Mass

I found that I prayed more during lockdown, as it was a particularly worrying time. I am praying Novenas now, some of which I didn't know existed before this.

We didn't have a webcam in our Church so I tuned into the Claudy services. It wasn't an easy time for our priests saying Mass without a congregation.

When we got a Facebook page for the parish, our Mass was on that, and our priest, Fr Eamon McDevitt also prayed the Stations

of the Cross and had Benediction as well. It was great to see him.

Our parish First Holy Communion was to be on the first Sunday in June, so Fr McDevitt got someone to record Mass that Sunday to mark the occasion in some way.

I never missed any of the Easter ceremonies because I was able to get them online, and was always able to tune in for Sunday Mass. It is just wonderful that technology enables us to do that and there were plenty of options

regarding services provided by our churches.

It was lovely to be able to listen to Mass in the comfort of my own home. I found I was able to focus better on what the priest was saying, but it is also great to be back in our church again to receive Holy Communion and to meet other people again. One of the things I really missed was the wee chats after Mass, and I think that would be especially so for older people.

(Marie)



The beautiful flower box made by children last year at the parish HOPE Camp was replanted to welcome parishioners returning to public Mass



Volunteers preparing St Patrick's Church, Claudy, for re-opening for the celebration of public Mass.

Cumber Upper & Learmount (Claudy)...

Hearing our priest's amazing homilies gave us hope

THE Covid-19 virus and lockdown has changed everyone's lives in one way or the other; the young, the old, the sick and the healthy...no one has escaped its touch.

In our parish, in Claudy, it has brought out a great kindness in people and a sense of community, both practically and in our faith, with online prayer groups and delivery of food parcels. People have been stepping outside their comfort zone for the benefit of others.

New ways of supporting each other in our faith and struggles have been invented from a great sense of how can I give, how can I help.

Our parish priest, Fr David O'Kane has embraced technology with online Masses and prayers like the Rosary and Divine Mercy Chaplet each day; a firstly strange but then comforting part of life in lockdown.

Families and communities have been given a chance to pause and spend time with each other and, once again, see the beauty in God, family and community. (Tony)

The months of lockdown were painful for those who know the importance of Holy Mass and Confession, and not forgetting Eucharistic Adoration. Who ever thought that our Church would be like a desert? That we wouldn't be present at the holy sacrifice of the Mass? That we would no



Fr David O'Kane delighted to see the McCloskey children weeding the flowerbed outside St Patrick's Church, Claudy, in preparation for the return of parishioners to public Mass.

longer be able to receive Jesus in our hearts; the bread of life, the real presence, the Holy Eucharist?

We were hurting because there is one, and only one, Holy Sacrifice of the Eucharist and it's in the Catholic Church. Our priests, who bring us Jesus, were unable to give us the precious Body of Christ.

Our parish is blessed to have Fr O'Kane. He has done everything possible to reach out with faith to his parishioners, who've felt so isolated. He had a webcam installed in our church so we could be united with him at Mass online and receive spiritual communion, and hearing his amazing homilies gave us hope.

We will be eternally grateful to him for his untiring work and to all who helped prepare our churches in Claudy and Craighane for re-opening again.

I, personally, hungered for Jesus and was counting the days to when I could receive Him again, but I had confidence and hope in the Risen Christ, who is alive among us.

Let us follow Mary, our Blessed Mother, if we want to travel, without fear, the path of her Son. There we will meet the God of Mercy. (Annie)



Fr Eamon McDevitt





Fr Frank Lynch OP CC celebrating Mass in St Patrick's Church, Crossroads.

Donaghmore (Killygordon & Sessiaghoneill)...

A sense of peace and closeness to God felt by many

WHEN we were informed that Masses from St Patrick's Day on were to be cancelled until further notice, there was a collective sense of anxiety and feeling of uncertainty about how we would be able to deal with the unprecedented situation. Not being able to attend Mass, and not having the important contact with our fellow parishioners, may have proved to be overwhelming if not for the variety of social media tools at our fingertips; the only problem was learning how to use it!

However, where there is a will, there is a way and we soon had it worked out. The often maligned social media soon became a blessing for us. Where previously a sense of impending loneliness was feared, the new sense of camaraderie we gained from our online contact actually served to bring us closer together.

A group of us set up a WhatsApp video group which we named 'Divine Mercy', where we would all be online for 9 am for the Rosary, Divine Mercy and prayers for those who requested them. These online gatherings were a great source of support and were a powerful start to our day.

Other online formats included streaming of Masses from Facebook and YouTube, which introduced us to parishes and priests from all parts of the globe! RTE must be commended for the services it has provided also.

There were also some other wonderful examples of community spirit that emerged, such as the 'Meals on Wheels' service that was extended to the most vulnerable in our parish, who were forced to 'cocoon'. Dozens of volunteers offered their services to deliver not only a hot meal, but a caring word and listening ear also.

Of course, some of the most difficult moments came from local bereavements, when we were unable to express our condolences in a way that we would have liked. The parish priest, Fr Patsy Arkinson was very much appreciated during these difficult times. The power of a heartfelt handshake or a gentle embrace cannot be measured and it was difficult to know how best to express ourselves. Yet, here again, people found a way of making the best of a difficult situation, be that standing 'socially distanced' along a roadside as a cortege passed by, or offering sympathies to bereaved friends and neighbours from pathways outside a house.

Fr Frank Lynch, in the Crossroads end of the parish, celebrated Mass every morning which people could watch on Facebook and, after Mass on Thursday mornings, he prayed the Rosary and had an hour of Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. People found this very comforting, and people from abroad, who tuned in, loved it too.

People were praying more in their homes. During May, people living in the housing estate in Killygordon came out on to the green every Tuesday evening, at 8 pm, and said the Rosary together, though socially distanced. The intention was for protection from the virus.

The whole experience really seemed to strengthen people's faith. We are so busy ordinarily, but we now had more time on our hands and many filled it with prayer. People talked about how they were praying more than they ever did in their lives, and now that our churches are open again, people are so appreciative to be back receiving the Eucharist, although it is a strange experience with all the restrictions.

Finally, a word of thanks must be reserved for the glorious springtime weather that we were blessed with over those difficult first couple of months. A sense of peace and closeness to God was felt by so many as we were forced to slow down the pace of our lives. Less traffic on the roads meant that bird songs could be better heard. Each evening seemed to deliver a sky more beautiful than the last. Gardens were tended, paint was freshened and minds were focussed more on the simple, and most important, things in life.

As St Paul tells us, 'God is strongest when we are weakest'.
(Mary & Margaret)



Drumquin...

We are so grateful to Fr Kevin for all his kindness



Fr Kevin Mullan.

I went from working a lot before lockdown to nothing and found that very difficult. When the churches closed I realised that we were in real problems; they never closed during wars etc. I have always found going to the chapel very comforting, so, for my own sanity, I started walking every morning and evening. I say my Rosary while I walk and find this very comforting. I feel God is watching over me.

I really felt for our parish priest, Fr Kevin Mullan; for such a holy man and a powerful parish priest to not be able to publicly celebrate Mass, or any other sacrament during this period, must have been very difficult. He puts everyone else first. We are so grateful to Fr Kevin for all the kindness he has shown to our sick relatives. The whole parish would be a lot worse off without him. (Patrick)

Fr Mullan has been wonderful through it all; always there at the other end of the 'phone when you ring. He went over and above the

call of duty. For me, personally, the fact that I knew Fr Kevin was at end of the 'phone if I needed to speak to him, and that I could go down to talk to him, from a social distance, really helped me as I was going through a cancer diagnosis.

He said Mass in the Parochial House and, for a few weeks, celebrated Sunday morning Mass in the garden for a few parishioners, who kept socially distanced on their fold-up chairs. Some people who lived on their own were anxious and felt that they should go to Mass, so he did this for them.

We don't have a webcam or Facebook page but parish notices were included on the 'Drumquin Through The Years' Facebook page. I watched Mass on RTE, or whatever Sunday Service was on at 11 am. I thought RTE provided a great service; it was inclusive of all. I definitely prayed more during lockdown.

I am a very social person and before Covid would have visited quite a few elderly people and people who live on their own, so, during lockdown, I chatted to them over the 'phone instead, and

sometimes we said some prayers together. For some, there would have been a great deal of anxiety about how they were going to cope and was this lockdown and virus ever going to end. But, by the end of our conversation we would be laughing at something. It's not all doom and gloom. If we can look outside ourselves and see what we can do for others around us that helps distract you from your own concerns.

I think this experience has created a great deal of strong friendships that weren't there before. People may have been acquaintances before but now have strong friendships because of the extra time on our hands to make time for other people. I believe that there is a very strong bond in our community now. People have been very good in looking out for each other, especially those living on their own. Neighbours have become more important, whereas before you may not have seen some from one end of a year to another. It's like what the countryside was like about 50 years ago, when I was a child running about. (Deirdre)



Drumragh (Omagh)...

Great lockdown weather and beautiful sunsets were God's gift to us all

REFLECTING on my time in lockdown, I believe the great weather and beautiful evening sunsets were God's gift to us all during this time. Generally for me, if the sun's out, I'm in a good mood and if it's pouring with rain, well, I'm down in the dumps!

I was also very blessed to have had my daughter, who usually works in Dublin, return home to work online. It was nice to have a homemade 'smoothie' waiting for me in the morning and to sample some new vegan food and, of course, someone to have

a little chat with at the end of the day. This made me think about anyone who was alone during lockdown and I always ensured I remembered them in my evening prayers.

I felt very privileged to be asked to do the flower arrangements at the Sacred Heart Church during lockdown. I was able to put together lovely arrangements all from the grounds of the parochial house. Our parish priest, Fr Eugene Hassan was admiring them one day and when he asked me where I got them, he was quite

surprised that they had come from his own garden!

While arranging the flowers, this provided me with the opportunity for quiet times in the church alone, as well as partaking in Sunday Mass as a reader.

When speaking to the priests of the parish, I realised how frustrating it was for them not to be able to engage in their ministry as they would like. I was able to tell them how important the online Mass was to any parishioners I had met, and how they found so much strength in the spiritual



Patrick McCance

communion.

I hope that this time will help me slow down and take time for what is important in life and, of course, to be thankful for the simple things and God's forever presence.

From conversations with others, I have found that many appreciated the time to think and pray more that lockdown brought, while they found being socially isolated and not being able to go to the church for Mass most difficult.

Fr Hasson celebrated his 40th



Marie Campbell, who provided the music during lockdown.

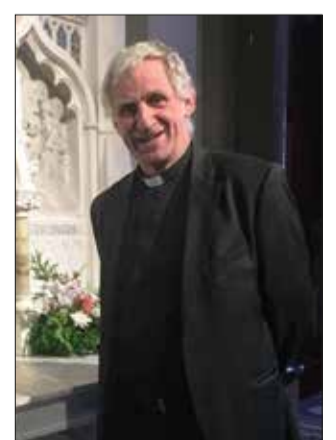
anniversary of priesthood during lockdown and the parishioners surprised him with a guard of honour when he came out after saying morning Mass, which he really appreciated as one of the most difficult things for him during lockdown was celebrating Mass without a congregation.

All of our priests have been great in keeping us all going and parishioners have been wonderful in helping out in whatever way they can.

(Berni)



Ciara McCaul



Fr Eugene Hasson, PP Drumragh.



Desertmartin... Light came when churches installed webcams and brought Mass into our homes



Fr Dermot McGirr.

COVID-19 came to us like a shot in the dark. It was a very worrying time for all of us, especially the older and more vulnerable people in society and our Health Service workers.

Then there was worse to come; lockdown, which robbed us all of our social life and our family connections. The biggest blow came when we could no longer take comfort in visiting our chapels or the graves of our loved ones.

For me, it was the most dreadful time of my life. The news on the TV was so depressing, with multiple deaths every day. There seemed to be no escape from this terrible virus. Our only consolation was our faith in God,

with daily Rosaries that this most terrible virus would pass quickly.

Light came when our churches installed webcams and brought the Mass into our homes. We were able to access Holy Week and Easter ceremonies, which was a great lift to both our spiritual and mental well-being.

I missed the actual receiving of Holy Communion, but the spiritual prayer recited at Mass was of some consolation.

With all the restrictions imposed on us, it certainly rocked my Catholic faith, but I have now moved on in the new normal, and pass on my thanks to those all over the Diocese who worked so hard to keep the practice of our faith alive with the new technology.

And, a special thanks to Fr McGirr and Fr Madden, who helped keep our faith alive in the Desertmartin Parish. As we emerge from lockdown, recognition has to be given to all the volunteers who are helping to reopen our churches as, without them, we would not have the opportunity to attend Mass in person. (Olive)

The Masses in our parish over the past few months have

reminded us that, although we were separated from our families and friends, we were never alone.

While we were being continually reminded of the news about the changes to our daily lives, we were reassured during Mass about the one thing that would never change and that is God's love for us.

My thanks to Fr McGirr, Fr Madden and key workers of God. (Nicola)

The world took a deep breath and slowed down and I joined in. With the quieter pace of life, came a realisation of what was important in my life and a deep gratitude to God for the essentials.

The new pace allowed more time for organised prayer and the availability of so many online masses meant that there was almost always a suitable time for daily Mass.

Although no substitute for Holy Communion, the spiritual communion prayer was very meaningful. The absence of Communion increased my longing to receive the sacrament and increased my awareness of how much I had taken for granted. (Catherine)

Errigal – Ballerin... Challenging times but we gelled as a community

SURREAL. That is probably the best word to describe it. Of course, it had been trailed but we didn't think it would happen to us. There we were sitting at Mass for St Patrick's Day Vigil and then lockdown. Of course, we did not really know what was in store. Nobody did.

The Ballerin half of the Errigal Parish was hit immediately by the death of a much-loved young parishioner and the first funeral where we could not gather in the chapel to support the grieving family.

It was tough and we had a few more deaths, young and not so young, come in the following weeks. It was hard not to be able to offer condolences in the normal way. But, as a community, we did what we could and, in many ways, became stronger

as we came together to support each other and to put networks in place to support the vulnerable.

For the first few days, the chapel remained open and many gravitated towards it in the evenings after work, not knowing whether we could talk to each other! The candelabrum was glowing with lit candles; offerings to get us through.

Fr Crowley, our parish priest, moved quickly and, with the help of Robert McIntyre, had our Masses live on Facebook for the Easter Ceremonies, and soon a webcam followed.

Proud that my son, John, did the readings on Holy Saturday, another parishioner, Carol Ann and I did Easter Sunday. The Masses got so many views, both from the community and from former parishioners!

The sense of community was strong. All played a part – chapel cleaners, readers, sacristan, the GAA in both parts of the parish, the SVP; so many did so much. We had a wonderful weekend as 'wombles,' as people lifted the litter in their immediate streets.

And we lost Mark, who did so much to support parish activity. May he rest in peace.

Challenging times, but we gelled as a community, and Fr Crowley has been wonderful in helping us to do that! (Eamon)

Glenullin is the other half of the Errigal Parish and a wonderful report, and photographs, on life in lockdown there will feature in next month's edition.

Dungiven... Many have returned to a prayerful life



Fr Joseph Varghese, CC Dungiven.

IT'S an ill wind that blows nobody any good, as they say; Covid-19, being that 'ill wind' but, indirectly, the lockdown gave much welcome time for us to reflect, and the good that came from it has strengthened many people of all ages on their spiritual journey.

We, like many parishes, have been very fortunate to have had daily Mass and other devotional practises beamed into our homes, via the church webcam thanks to our priests, Fr Kelly and Fr Varghese.

St Patrick's Day had been the last time people assembled in our local church for Mass but, thankfully, the Northern Ireland Executive announced that public worship would resume on June 29 for limited numbers, while respecting safety guidelines. This throws up even more challenges for priests but I'm sure they will be able to overcome them, as in previous situations.

Like many people in the parish and throughout the Diocese, we are all very grateful to our priests and Bishop, who have continued to bring all the usual services to our homes; daily Mass, Rosaries, Divine Mercy Chaplet,

and the Stations of the Cross. As the pandemic continued, and churches closed, our parish priest, Fr Kelly offered additional spiritual devotion in the form of holy hours during Lent, and Life in the Spirit seminars. I have spoken to many people who had engaged with this latter devotion and their comments on the content of the weekly seminars, and the respectful delivery of each, has encouraged them during these unprecedented times. I know many of them are looking forward to a future repeat of this devotion.

I'm sure I speak for everyone in the parish in saying we are all very grateful to Martina O'Neill, Fr Kelly's housekeeper, who has supported our priests daily at Mass with responses, and added to the service with her beautiful singing. Many others have contributed their time by helping with choir and prayerful devotion.

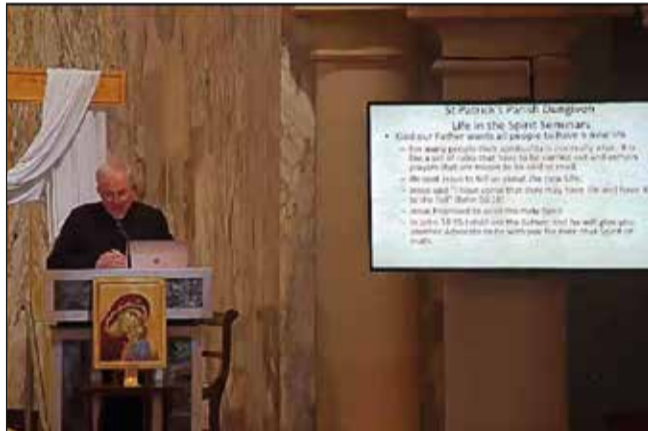
The loss of a loved one is a sad experience at any time for a family, but during the pandemic, the priests have celebrated all

funerals with great sensitivity and respect. Mourners cannot assemble in the normal way, but thanks to our webcam, they can be involved in the service to pay their respects.

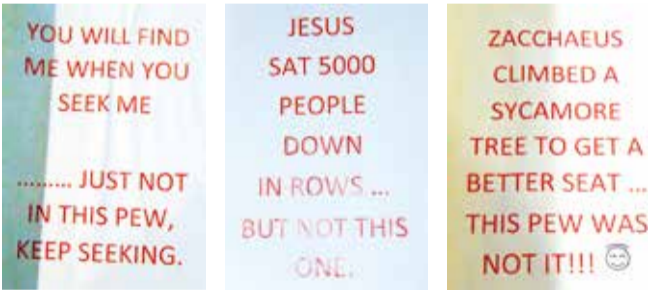
Covid-19 may have altered our day-to-day lifestyles in many ways but, as stated earlier, many have returned to a prayerful life. Fr Kelly mentioned in one of the seminars that before Covid, four per cent of people prayed, but since Covid, 40% are now praying! The Lord works in wonderful ways!

To conclude, I would like to mention the young people of the parish who are currently engaged in the Pope John Paul II group. Thanks to the coordinators in the Derry Catechetical Centre's Youth Ministry etc, the young people have been able to participate on-line with the various activities and move towards completing their Gold Award. They have been very grateful for this facility. Life can't stop just because there's a lockdown, it just takes an alternative route!

(Marian)



Fr Seamus Kelly leading the Life in the Spirit seminars in St Patrick's Church, Dungiven.



The Life of St Teresa of Jesus of Los Andes:

The Lay Life *by Fr Stephen Quinn OCD*

THE Holy Rule of St Albert, the rule of life for all Carmelites, has at regular intervals produced extraordinary individuals who have been utterly transformed in Christ. Some of those individuals have become household names, such as Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, and Therese of Lisieux. There are others who, as yet, remain largely unrecognised and unknown but who, in their own way, are every bit as extraordinary as these others.

In the next few editions of 'The Net', I desire to share with the readership one of these most majestic of people. Teresa of the Andes is the first Discalced Carmelite Saint from the New World. She was baptised as Juanita Fernandez Solar. She was a native of the city of Santiago, in the South American country of Chile. She was born on July 13, 1900; the very dawn of the 20th century, a child of modernity.

Juanita's parents were named Miguel Fernandez Jarequemada and Lucia Solar Armstrong. Juanita was the pair's fourth child; one sister and two brothers older, and one sister and one brother younger. Juanita said of her family that "Jesus did not desire me to be born poor like Himself. I was born in the midst of riches, spoilt by all."

Juanita's maternal grandfather was an unbelievably successful man of business. By means of agriculture and commerce, he had created an almost aristocratic affluence for his entire family. An affluence that they took for granted and had become accustomed to. Juanita's parents created with that wealth a stable and affectionate home for both Juanita and her siblings.

It was a house in which the Catholic faith was held with intense reverence. Both parents possessed a genuine spirit of faith and they encouraged each of the children to imbibe of this faith. As in so many cases, as good a job as the parents did, it was not a picture-perfect family. They had their difficulties.

When Juanita was a child, her grandfather, who had created all the wealth, died. Juanita's father took over management of the family's finances. Miguel was not a competent man of business and the family began to haemorrhage money, which called for constant retrenching of the funds and a gradual sell-off of the assets of the family. This failure initiated a great deal of tension between husband and wife; the wife resented the new austerities that the mismanagement forced on her. The tension led to Miguel spending more and more time away from the family trying to stave off bankruptcy and escaping the ire of his wife. The tension between her parents deeply wounded Juanita's consciousness.

Given her parents' devotion, it is not surprising that Juanita's own religious commitment sparked at an early age. She tells us in her spiritual diary that, from the age of six, "Jesus took my heart to be His own." It is, indeed, an extra large claim for one so small but there was a simple explanation for it. Like so many others, Juanita's mother began to take her to Mass with her every morning from the age of six. It is, indeed, amazing how almost insignificant steps lead to outsized events. We must remember that at this stage in the early 20th century, Pius X had still not dropped the age of those who could attend communion to the age of reason.

Every day, Juanita would beg her mother to let her approach the altar to receive the Sacrament. Her constant entreaties were met with a persistent negative, "you are too young." She was, of course, disappointed, but she did not become despondent. She determined to prepare herself for that red-letter day when she would finally be able to receive.

Even though Christ had taken her heart, she was not some plaster caste statue of a person. She had the same heart, soul, and spirit as everyone else. In her was the same potential strength, at the same time the same profound brokenness burnt away in her heart; the permanent crisis that every human being endures.

In Juanita's case, she had the proverbial fiery temper of a Latin and was very subject to outbursts of temper. Other children, particularly her own family, could see that there was more to this girl than met the eye, and they made it their business to put this child to the test. They would deliberately go out of their way to provoke her and to get her to react. They knew exactly the buttons to press and she would turn into a towering inferno of rage. She would lash out with sharp words and flying fists.

In order to have a heart worthy to receive the Eucharistic Lord, she came up with her own scheme to counteract this aggression. Though so young, she came to the same conclusion as St Ignatius of Loyola, self-awareness is the true friend of real change in Christ. She obtained a notebook and into that notebook she recorded every act of virtue by which she counteracted her fierce temper. She worked so hard at it and achieved so much self-control that it even impressed her own mother, who said of her, "She outdid herself in everything. It brought tears to our eyes, she seemed like an angel."

Communion

In response to Juanita's wholehearted efforts, her mother finally gave permission to receive her first Communion and the date was set for September 11, 1910. As

with every first communion, there were all the external trappings – the ornate dresses, the pews covered in white cloth, and the processions of children.

The fact that Juanita wrote down in her spiritual diary what the celebrating priest had said during his homily, showed the true object of her attention. Juanita recorded the priest as saying, "look at the angels of the altar, dear little girls. Look at them, they envy you. All Heaven is present in you." The words of the priest were in sympathy with the experience that unfolded as the Liturgy continued.

Juanita describes for us her experience of the Eucharistic Lord in her soul: "It is impossible to describe what took place between my soul and Jesus. I asked Him a thousand times that He would take me, and I heard His dear voice for the first time. Oh, Jesus I love you! I adore you! I prayed to Him for everybody. And I felt the Virgin near to me. Oh, how my heart expanded! For the first time, I experienced a delicious peace."

When Juanita is speaking of hearing the Lord's voice here, she is not talking in metaphor and simile, she is speaking in spiritual truth, the actual voice of the Lord spoke to her soul's ears. The very human voice that was joined to The Divine Word spoke with her. Juanita became so familiar with that voice that she was able to distinguish it in a crowd of swirling voices.

Spiritual authorities such as St Teresa of Avila and St Ignatius Loyola describe this phenomenon as locution. The voice of the Lord made such a distinct impression upon Juanita, that, in childlike innocence, she assumed that this kind of thing happened to everyone who received Communion. She only realised that there was anything exceptional about it when she saw her mother's arched brow and then alarmed look, and from that moment grew sheepish and silent about a phenomenon that continued with every Communion she received there-after.

In deep silence and honour, she held these words as only ever meant to pass from the Lord to her and back again. A lesson that all who receive religious experience must learn! Only in letters to her spiritual director, Fr Falgueras, does Juanita expand at all on her experience of the Lord speaking directly to her. To Fr Falgueras, she writes, "from the time of my First Communion, our Lord spoke to me after Communion and told me things I'd never suspected, and ever when I asked him, He would tell me things that were going to happen, and then they really did occur."

In the same letter, Juanita speaks of the experience of the Lord's voice; she wisely observes that the phenomenon is simply an

expression of God's overwhelming desire to communicate directly with His children. Christ was doing the difficult aspect of this phenomenon; He was jumping over the vast difference between the divine and human, and it only took on her part a certain innocence and openness in order to listen. The Lord speaking to her in His human voice is simply an intensification of what occurs at every single Communion that a person receives in a state of grace. Each Communion is, as the priest who preached at Juanita's First Communion wisely observed, an action of the most "intimate union of our souls with Jesus Christ."

The Lord comes into His true temple, the throne at the centre of every human soul, and He takes up His reign. From that throne not made by human hands, the Lord starts to transform the person from inside out. As good as Juanita had been in preparation for the Blessed Sacrament, it was as nothing as to what she was like with Christ in her, so much so, even her brothers (and brothers are never too quick on the uptake but especially on spiritual matters) noticed the difference.

Juanita was emphatic as to the significance of her First Communion. She measured her life by her Communion; she measured her existence as being Before Communion and After Communion. She said of it, "from the first embrace Jesus did not let me go but took me to Himself."

Juanita's brother, Luis reported his sister was first and foremost in his memory a woman of prayer. One of his enduring memories was of him knocking at her room door and, on getting no answer, opening it and invariably finding his sister on her knees, motionless in prayerful adoration, and of her being so absorbed in what she was doing that she did not even realise that he was calling her. Although she had turned into an athletic and vital young woman, whenever she closed the door of her room, she could slip into that aspect of herself that held a deep silence and an intense serenity. In some letters to her friends, we have the privilege to discover what went on behind the closed door of her room and, even deeper still, within the room of her soul.

Prayer

She shared with Ines Salas Pereira that prayer was not a matter of thinking nice thoughts about God. It is rather a matter of simply loving God a great deal. Love is the key ingredient in praying; it transforms what could appear as just the empty recitation of words and formulas into a genuine expression of intimacy between the soul and the Son of God. When we are using love as a means of communication then



Juanita Fernandez Solar

it draws out of God what is best, namely Himself. God will show Himself to the soul in response to the expression of our genuine love.

Juanita believes that God, in response to this prayer, will lift up the veil that separates the soul from God. God will show His beauty, His sweetness, His infinite goodness, and His love.

In another letter, this time to her spiritual director, she shares a little of her own experience of the interior room. She tells him that an "intimate conversation" strikes up between herself and her Lord. As this conversation begins, she follows exactly the model that St Teresa of Avila, her mother in the religious life, teaches her. She would look to the intimate moments in the Gospel, when privileged individuals got to share a moment with Jesus. In Juanita's case, she loved that moment in Bethany when Mary sat at the Lord's feet and was so intensely preoccupied with Him that not even her sister's disapproval could side-track her. All she did was to look well, to listen intently and not let any distraction come between herself and Jesus.

In the same letter, Juanita comes to the same conclusion as St Teresa in her book the Way of Perfection; prayer simply was looking at Jesus.

Another friend, Elisa Valdes Ossa, had obviously written complaining to Juanita about how difficult she was finding prayer and did not know what to do. Juanita encouraged her not to become disheartened. She told Elisa that she, herself, had many times run out of things to say in prayer. She challenges her friend to recognise the reality of prayer, "who would know what to say to the Word, the eternal Word, the divine and uncreated Wisdom?"

Juanita confided in her friend that running out of words was no bad thing. She reminded Elisa that the goal of prayer was not what set of words to say, but that the soul be "kindled" in the love of God. When loving is involved, then the simple look is enough!

"When we are there in his presence, just gazing at him is enough to make us love him, and if we are so captivated by his beauty that we can't say anything but that we love him, why, little sister should we be upset? Gaze at him tirelessly - gaze at him in your little heaven."

Juanita implored her friend not to give up but to change the model of prayer out of which she worked. Prayer is not ever something that comes out of us, rather it originates in another, in Christ, and comes into the person filling them with the presence of this Other. If we make room for this Other, something dramatic will occur as this Other reigns in us.

Juanita advises, "God deigns to take possession of my being, giving himself entirely to me. I, this moment, am lost in his infinite being. He Loves me with an infinite love! What a sweet thing it is for the soul to live this way with the divine being compenetrated, united with him in love."

This is what her brother Luis was so deeply impressed by, that his sister was a person totally penetrated by the presence of God. What is so significant to this witness of Juanita is that she is not an enclosed nun at this stage, but rather is a teenage lay person living out the fullest relationship of prayer with Christ. And so, if she can do it at an early age and in lay life, who cannot follow her example?

This has been a short introduction into the young life of Juanita Fernandez Solar, and what is outstanding about those years is her complete openness to God. It is an outstanding openness that is almost astonishing to us who live in the opening decades of the 21st Century. Somehow, over the century separating us from Juanita we have managed to damage that openness to God that comes naturally to every human being. If this openness was not a divinely inscribed feature of human life, then the Lord would not have said "let the little children come to me."

At some profound level, we have spoiled ourselves. We have given into every trend and fashion. We have filled our hearts with every kind of material good and stuffed it into the sanctuary of God, and we have anesthetised ourselves to the consequences with various substances.

Let us use this saint of Carmel, a sister on the journey to the Heavenly Jerusalem, to rediscover what lies within each and every human heart. There is a room there that only Christ can fill.

Juanita Fernandez Solar, help us to open wide the doors of our hearts to Christ!

Pictures from Heaven

by Vera McFadden



DURING lockdown, now and again we thought of ways to pass the time. One of the ideas was to write about Easter and the members of our families became very interested in exchanging their efforts on social media.

Two of my haiku read:

1. Sighted eyes open,
A short burst of gentle power,
Resurrection hour.

2. Science can't explain
the clear image on the shroud,
the face on the veil.



The line, “a short burst of gentle power” was in a book which I read many years ago. It was “The Shroud of Turin” by Ian Wilson. It was full of information and I found it fascinating. It made me want to go to see it, though I do not think that was possible at the time. Turin was also the location of Don Bosco’s shrine. I looked longingly at maps, but I did not know of any pilgrimages with that destination.

Thirty years later I got my opportunity. The Holy Shroud would be displayed every fifth year and Marian Pilgrimages were organising visits. Because of my slight handicap, I was brought in a wheelchair, and so were several other elderly people. We got the best viewing place of all – at the front, just beside the Shroud. We sat there, gazing at the details in those moments that we will never forget. Heaven has left this miraculous image.

Peter and John found the two

cloths when they came into the tomb on the first Easter Sunday. The shroud was lying on the ground, and the veil was folded up neatly. The Bible does not tell us that there were images left on them, but that was probably kept a secret for their safekeeping.

Ian Wilson tells how it had once been saved from fire, and some scorch marks remain on it. His book mentions all scientific exploration and states that the best explanation they could give was “a short burst of gentle power.” Grains on the cloth were carbon dated to Palestine at the time of our Lord.

The words, “a short burst”, suggest that this image came instantly – perhaps, just at the moment before Jesus opened his eyes?

At my baptism, I was given the name ‘Helen Veronica’ after my mother and my godmother, Vera Given, who lived next door. Of course, they did not know that there were huge statues of each of my patron saints on each side of the main altar at St Peter’s, in Rome.

St Helena found the relic of the true cross. St Veronica is shown with a cloth. Traditionally, she met Jesus as He carried His Cross and offered him a towel, on which the image of his face appeared. The story is not mentioned in Scripture. Veronica’s name means, ‘true image’. It comes from the imprint on the cloth. Was the story an effort to explain such an image? Were there several?

I learned of one in a book called ‘The True Icon’, which was written by Paul Badde. This is believed to be the veil that covered Jesus’ face. The features are the same as those on the Holy Shroud. Like the shroud, it was moved from place to place for protection. It is now in a Monastery in a remote area about 60 miles from Rome. Again, scientists cannot explain how the image was put on the cloth.

They also cannot explain the picture of Mary on the cactus tilma at Guadalupe. When investigation showed the figures in our Lady’s pupil, surely that would indicate that the picture appeared instantly at the moment the roses were falling out of the tilma, and it tells that she was looking at the Bishop and the two other people. It also marks the date, as the number of stars on her cloak was the number of main stars in the sky that night. The fact that the cactus fibre has lasted for hundreds of years is also remarkable.

Some pictures were commissioned by Heaven. At Paray le Monial, Jesus appeared to St Margaret Mary and told her that He wished the spread of devotion to His Sacred Heart. He gave her 12 promises. The first of



which was, “I will bless the house where the image of my Sacred Heart is exposed and honoured.”

At the church in the Rue de Bac, in Paris, Our Lady appeared several times to Catherine Laboure. On one of these occasions, she showed her the design of a medal and asked that copies would be made and distributed, promising great graces. When this was done, because the spiritual director was unsure of the authenticity of the apparitions, Our Lady repeated her request. When the Bishop was shown the pattern for the medal, he was impressed and decided to have copies made anyway. Miracles followed and, eventually, millions of these medals were being sent all over the world.

Jesus came to Sr Faustina and chose her to promote devotion to His Divine Mercy. He gave her the design for the picture. When Faustina remarked that no artist would be able to do the painting properly, Jesus replied, “it will not be by the artist’s skill, but by my power...”

The miracles and blessings that followed the response to these three requests from Heaven indicated their authenticity.

Scientists continue to research and discover, sometimes for our benefit and often to the detriment of our universe. Surely the shroud, the veil and the tilma from Guadalupe will never be forgotten in this progressive and technological age.

Many years ago I wrote a poem. It began, “Science robs the universe, and yet unexplained on earth, a piece of cloth, image laden”.

In these strange times, when people all over the world are trying to cope with this virus, and science researches for cures and methods of retainment, it is good to remember that the Man who rose from the dead is still with us, and in Him we move and walk and have our being.

“I live, no, not I, but Christ liveth in me.” It was good to wonder at the miraculous instant pictures that Heaven gave to us.



Veil of Manoppello.



Shroud of Turin.

A few thoughts on the Eucharist

by Vera McFadden

AT the Last Supper, Jesus took the bread, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying, “Take and eat you all of this, for this is My Body which will be given up for you.”

There were no Eucharistic ministers when I was a child. However, there was a very long

time before that.

St Tarcisus is a Patron Saint of Eucharistic Ministers. He lived in the third century AD. When he was 12 years old, he was bringing Holy Communion to some Christians when he was attacked by youths and a man because he was Christian. He died from his

wounds, but managed to prevent any desecration of the Holy Eucharist.

An ancient piece of writing explains how to receive Holy Communion, it begins “Make a throne for the Lord’s Body by placing your left hand on your right hand...”

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

My faith journey *by Fr John McLaughlin SSC*

LIVING in Moville now after spending almost 60 years of my priesthood between the Dublin Diocese and Chile, I feel I have come full circle, because it is here that I was born and bred, received my childhood sacraments, served as an altar boy and was nurtured in my faith by my family and community.

My father was Charlie McLaughlin, from Brockagh, Glenfin, Co Donegal. He arrived in Moville in the 30s and became the local pharmacist. My mother was Maureen McFeeley, from Ballybofey and also a pharmacist. For a while she had a pharmacy in Carn. We were a very Catholic family, I suppose. My younger sister, Anne and brother, Tony, and I joined in praying the Rosary every night, and I was involved in our church as an altar boy.

I received my primary schooling in Moville and then moved to Dublin, as a 13-year-old, to attend the Holy Ghost Fathers' College in Blackrock. It was common then for boys to go to college in Dublin, and there were many from Donegal in Blackrock during my time there. It wasn't a seminary but a lot of priests came out of Blackrock College in those years.

I returned to Moville often on visits, as my father didn't sell his pharmacy business until 10 years after that. He opened another pharmacy in Glasnevin, in Dublin, from where I went on to attend Clonliffe College Seminary when I was 18 years old. I also did a BA in Philosophy at UCD and had an interesting time there, as I met some of my contemporaries from Moville.

I suppose thoughts of priesthood were always there. I was surrounded by priests, both in my family and as an altar boy. My mother's brother was the late Bishop Anthony McFeeley of the Raphoe Diocese, and she also had uncles and great uncles who were priests. My father also had a brother a priest in the Raphoe Diocese, Fr James McLaughlin, who was a good commentator and writer in his day. I would have spent holidays in Glenfin with Fr James McLaughlin's brother, Jack, and that is where I served my first Mass, in Glenfin chapel. I was very nervous as a young fella and can remember the embarrassment of putting the incense in the thurible and spilling a good bit of it!

As an altar boy in Moville I served at the ordinations, in Ballybrack, of Fr Larry Keaveney and Fr Willie McElhinney, by Bishop Neil Farren. These were big events: to see priests ordained in those days in your parish church and they left an impression.

I was ordained in Clonliffe, in

June 1963, right on the Pentecost weekend when Pope John XXIII died. It was for the Dublin Diocese and about 14 others were ordained along with me. Those were the days of numbers. We had a big class, so five of us were sent to Maynooth for four years of Theology. Maynooth had about 600 students in the seminary from all over Ireland. Fr Jim McGonagle, who also lives in Moville now, was in my class in Maynooth, and I met other seminarians from the Derry Diocese, such as Fr Joe O'Connor and Fr Liam Donnelly, who was in the year below me.

In all, I spent about 14 years ministering in Dublin, in parishes such as Arklow, Rialto with Fatima Mansions and Dolphin House, and Booterstown. Quite a number of my contemporaries went to work for a couple of years in Peru or Chile, as volunteers with the Columban Associates or St Patrick's Kiltegan. Archbishop John Charles McQuaid took an interest in this and Dublin priests, as with other Diocesan priests, were selected to work in England at the service of emigrants. I wasn't chosen for this, so I pushed to get to South America. Others, before me, had gone to Chile and, from the Maynooth Class, to Brazil. I would have known some of the Armagh and Elphin priests who were working with the Columbans in Peru and Chile as Associate priests. Some of them were my contemporaries in Maynooth. Fr Tony Conroy from Elphin Diocese is still serving in Sao Paulo in Brazil.

I was released for a few weeks from my Dublin Diocese, in 1976, to go on a trip to Brazil. This was organised by the Irish Missionary Union, and it was the Kiltegan Fathers, St Patrick's Missionary Society, who were the hosts at the time. There were hugely interesting trips to places like Rio, Recife, where the famous Bishop Helder Camara ministered, Fortaleza and Sao Paulo.

On my return, I wanted to go back there and the Kiltegan Fathers were happy to take me. Archbishop Dermot Ryan was the Bishop of Dublin, so I got an audience with him. He didn't seem too surprised when I told him that I wanted to go back to

Brazil, probably, in later hindsight, because of an enthusiastic article I had written in the Diocesan bulletin about my experience there. He asked me to come back to him in a month. He was going to send me to Chile, not Brazil, as a Diocesan volunteer priest. Fr Jim Tormey was coming back to the Diocese and I was to go out and replace him the following year. That was 1978. I would have been 41 years old.

Thanksgiving

I went to Santiago, in Chile then in August to work with the Columbans. After language school in Bolivia, I was back in Chile in 1979 and raring to go. But after a short couple of months during Lent in the San Louis parish, I became sick with typhoid and it took about a year-and-a-half to recover fully from it. I got so much care and support from the Columbans at that time, it made me want to stay with them in appreciation.

It was tough at the beginning. I had no great problem with the Spanish language as I had been well prepared in Bolivia and continued with interesting local classes in Santiago. I also spent a lot of time later on living with families during holidays, so I got a good instinct for the soul of the place and the culture of the country. It was a whole new way of life, especially in those poorer areas, and there was a much wider range of pastoral activities than I was used to back home. There was also the whole political scene under the dictatorship of the military and General Pinochet. It was a time of cautious opposition and strong witness to the Social Doctrine of the Church. Not dull at all! With seven chapels in San Luis, in the northern zone of Santiago, it was a most interesting place to start off, and I was warmly received by Fathers Pat Egan and Michael Hoban.

I was on a contract for six years from the Dublin Diocese and after that I had to come back. It came to the stage of the 5th or 6th year and there was interesting pastoral stuff happening in the parish that I was involved in, and so I wanted to stay on.

Archbishop Ryan had died very suddenly, so I wrote to his successor, Archbishop Kevin McNamara, requesting an extension and gave two or three reasons. He gave me another year and after that I came back to the Dublin Diocese...and almost immediately started to think how I could get back again to Chile! You had to be home two years before you could reapply, which I did, so I got out again after that. I suppose I was on my way to becoming a permanent member of the Columbans.

After my first period in Chile, I got the opportunity to do a Clinical and Pastoral Education course in a hospital outside Boston. That was a great experience and a good way of getting yourself in order and finding out what kind of person you are. It was a God-send...a moment of grace... as within a couple of years, in 1988, my sister was struck down with Meningitis, which left her partially blind, more than slightly brain damaged and bed-ridden for about 14 years before she died. I came back home for a couple of years and spent time with her and the families, going to hospital appointments etc. So, the course I did on hospital ministry helped me during this.

My parents, who were in their 90s, were still alive at that time and residing in a home. Sisters are a great support for a priest. After their mother dies, a priest relies often on his sister or sisters, if he has any.

During these two years, I worked in St Mark's Parish, in Tallaght, before I returned to Chile. I continued with this spirit of missionary and joined the Columbans as a permanent member in 1992. I took a sabbatical year and went on a 30-day retreat in Manresa, as well as a Faith and Mission course in Dalgan.

I was in Santiago for a few years and then 11 years in Valparaíso on the hills and starting new communities. I had another sabbatical year in 2006. I went to Jerusalem for three months and had a great learning experience at the Tantur Ecumenical Institute, which was founded by Pope Paul VI. I learnt about the different religions, visited Biblical sites and experienced the liturgies. It was a wonderful gift.

In all, I spent about 33 years in Chile. I came back to Ireland about five years ago, after retiring as parish priest in Santiago repeating in the San Columbano parish where I had been pastor twelve years earlier. It was a very strong Columban parish and had solidarity programmes, catechetical groups, senior citizen groups, formation of young people for Confirmation, and AA. This was all done at parish level. There was an abundance of very gifted people, and a lot of formation opportunities for lay people. There was a great group of Spanish Dominican Sisters who were hugely supportive and involved in parish leadership, and the Columbans also worked with married deacons.

There are more priests there than many parishes now have here at home, but lay people practically ran the parish and the church, and did all the interviews



Fr John McLaughlin SSC.

and paperwork for marriages and baptisms etc, which freed the priests up to concentrate on their pastoral ministry. I did have some administration to do, but I was blessed to have very good involvement by lay people, who did a lot of formation work and all types of renewal courses. We had retreats and seminars for parish volunteers and people were actively encouraged to go on retreat. Some of those were with the Conversion Retreat Movement, and some with the Jesuits. Some groups met in each other's homes, rotating weekly, and they found this a great blessing for their home too. It was mightily impressive.

Prayer

Columbans are people of great prayer. I found that the people of the parish convert you as you convert them. In one parish that I visited from Ireland last October, I found that amongst members of the parish council in northern Chile's Iquique, a number prayed the Divine Office daily. Their prayer would often help to bring on your own prayer. We had catastrophes too; earthquakes and tsunamis. Those were tough moments for the people, a real physical shake-up, and you had to react quickly to have something for them. For example, following the assassination attempt on Pope John Paul II in 1981, there was an extraordinary level of anguish amongst the people in the parish. We had alcoholics who would come looking for bread or tea, but on that occasion they came crying

about the Pope, asking if he was going to die and what we were going to do. We said that we were having Mass at 7 pm but they said that they couldn't wait until then, so we had a liturgy at 4 pm. This was the poorest of the poor and they saw the Pope as their father. There were many moments when you were touched to the core.

Quite a lot of people didn't go to Mass. We had house-to-house collections, the CALI, and at one point, we had 1,400 people contributing to that. A group of lay-people looked after these collections as parish visitors, and they kept an eye on what was going on in the area they were collecting in; who was sick and in need of a priest, etc. People grew in their pastoral instincts and they grew as believers. All the First Communion and Confirmation and Marriage programs were run from the parishes, so there was a constant pool of very enthusiastic people around the chapels. Youths and adults constantly sought out formation programs, whether in the parish or the deaneries or the Summer Schools in the Diocesan Zones.

It is important to accompany and encourage people and, through encounter opportunities like funerals and baptisms, they can become interested in formation. Once people start on this journey they look for more; it breeds faith.

When you get young people involved, there is a huge energy. However, if you want to encourage the youth, you have to

My Faith Story... cont.

create the climate. We had young people leading the formation for young people preparing for Confirmation, and there was an adult Catechumenate program for those who had missed out. We tried to help people be more missionary and more outward looking. Some young people from our parishes went on to join as Lay Associates with the Society in Fiji, and the Philippines. We involved senior citizens as

catechists too, and there was a sense of fulfilment for them in this. Catechesis in the home was encouraged, as was attendance at Sunday Mass and involvement in the liturgy. This brings more life to a parish. It's about widening the net, I suppose. I retired in 2015 and came back to the Columban Centre at Dalgan. I was over 75 years old and just after celebrating the 50th anniversary of my ordination. I felt that I was too old to continue working as parish priest, with the

stress and strain involved. I had a couple of friends who were in parish work in Dublin and they suggested that I come to help out there, but I didn't want the hassle. I was advised to wait to see what would happen. I mentioned that I would really like to have somewhere to live outside Dalgan, if I could, and that I was interested in coming to Donegal. So, I was told that a house in Moville had been left to the Columbans and they wanted someone to live in it. I was only too delighted to go and

was told that I could stay as long as I wanted to! I am 82 years old now and have been living in Moville for the last five years and say the odd Mass in the parish. I am also involved with the Legion of Mary and the Men's Shed, which has been meeting via Zoom because of Covid-19. There are some great musicians amongst them and we enjoy singing together. It's good to be back. With the land and the sea, you are never bored in Moville!



125 years of St Joseph's Young Priests' Society by Christina McLaren

ST Joseph's Young Priests Society exists to help students on their journey to priesthood. The Society fosters vocations to the priesthood and religious life; assists students for the priesthood both financially and by prayer; promotes the vocation of the laity and fosters a greater understanding and love for the Eucharist and Mass. The Society was founded by Olivia Mary Taffé in 1895, with the help of Fr Darlington SJ and Fr Browne SJ in France, where she had become a member of the confraternity of St Joseph, Protector of the Holy Souls. Olivia had approval from the Archbishops of Armagh and Tuam, and support from the Jesuits, two of whom helped her found the magazine, St Joseph's Sheaf, where she inserted an appeal for funds to support a young altar boy from a family of slender means, who wanted to become a priest. The appeal was successful and as a result, at the end of the second year the readers were contributing to the support of 10 students for the priesthood. Thus began the work of St Joseph's Young Priests'

Society. Mrs Taffé had one son, named George Robert. She had hoped that one day he would become a priest, however he had poor health and died aged 23 years – the year after his father. She and her husband had great devotion to St Joseph and in her local church, in Ballypousta near Ardee, Co Louth, she set up a shrine in honour of St Joseph. For Corpus Christi, with the help of the priests and other parishioners, she organized a public procession of The Blessed Sacrament with some children dressed up as saints and others enacting scenes from the life of Christ. In the year 2018-19, the Society assisted 65 Irish students and 563 overseas students, and has received numerous thank you letters from bishops and priests around the world. Here, in Ireland, it costs up to £24,000 per year for the students' formation fees. The Diocese contributes towards this, as do SJYP, and the student's family is expected to give a contribution. If anyone can subscribe £10 per year, or even £6, this will go a long way in helping SJYP continue

their financial support. Never let it be said that a young man could not continue his studies due to lack of funds. At present there are six young men from the Diocese who are in formation and another student in the USA. In 2018-19, there were 390 branches of the Society in Ireland. In the Derry Diocese there are 24 active groups and this is becoming increasingly difficult due to ageing and deaths. Every parish would welcome more people to join a branch. If you are interested please contact your parish priest, who will refer you to the Branch President. If you wish to set up a new group (there are 26 parishes where there is no branch of SJYP), please let your parish priest know and he will refer you to me, Christina McLaren, Derry Diocesan President (christinamclaren44@gmail.com) and, with the parish priest's permission, I will come and talk with you and will arrange training. Tribute has to be paid to members in local branches who collect subscriptions every year for the Society. They also welcome donations and for

people to remember SJYP in their will. When someone dies, a donation in lieu of flowers can be given to the Society via the funeral director. At branch level, the group meets once a month (except January, July and August) for only one hour, where they pray for vocations and for benefactors and they plan events to help raise funds, which are sent to HQ, who pays the seminary where the young men are studying. When becoming a member, you recite every day the short prayer for vocations and you can gain a Plenary Indulgence under the usual conditions on Pentecost, Feast of Christ the King, Feast of St Joseph, Feast of St John the Baptist, and on the National Pilgrimage to Knock, usually the last Sunday in June. All benefactors of the Society partake in a daily Mass, as do deceased members. Pope St John Paul II said that if we have no priest we have no Mass, with no Mass we have no church, so you can see how important your prayers are. There is nothing more important than the Mass since the Last Supper



Christina McLaren, President of SJYP Society in Derry Diocese, Kathleen Doherty, secretary, and Fr Daniel McFaul, spiritual director at a meeting earlier in the year. Branches have not been able to meet or fundraise these past few months. It is anticipated that SJYP will be hard hit as a result of this; however we look forward to the day when normality returns. It is hoped that people, in thanksgiving for remaining safe from the virus, will join a church group, including SJYP. One of the means of comforting the Holy Souls in purgatory is charity, 'The harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest'. (Matthew 9:37-38).

Pope's monthly intention

The Holy Father has asked for prayer during September for:

Respect for the Planet's Resources:
We pray that the planet's resources will not be plundered, but shared in a just and respectful manner.

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:

- Fr Pat O'Hagan (Sept 1st)
- Fr David O'Kane (2nd)
- Fr Patrick O'Kane (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)
- Fr John Ryder (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)
- Fr John Cargan (28th)
- Fr Neal Carlin (29th)
- All priests (30th)

Diocesan clerical appointments

CLERICAL appointments in the Derry Diocese, effective September 11, are as follows:

- Rev Edward Gallagher, PP Greencastle, to be, in addition, PP Badoney Lower.
- Rev Ciaran Hegarty, on loan from the Diocese of Down & Connor, currently CC Urney & Castlefin, to be Adm Urney & Castlefin.
- Rev Daniel McFaul, CC Creggan, to be, in addition, nominated as Chaplain to the Altnagelvin Group of Hospitals.
- Rev John P Forbes, Adm Badoney Lower, to be Priest-in-Residence Badoney Lower.
- Rev Art O'Reilly, CC Banagher, to retire.
- Rev Patrick McGoldrick, CC Moville, to retire.

Derry Diocesan Vocation Prayer

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

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

A Word of God for your Family Life **LOVE** by Fr Johnny Doherty, CSsR

SEPTEMBER is usually the month when everything begins to get back to normal – back to work, back to school, back to the humdrum of daily living. However, there is nothing usual about this September! Covid-19 has made so many things uncertain including school and work and the months, maybe even years ahead.

The love of God and of one another as our core way of life needs to inspire us no matter what is taking place. This section of the Church's year draws us into the very heart of everything that is happening in our lives – love. Like everything else, love can also become humdrum, even a burden. It can lose its sparkle. This month is a time to especially renew that sparkle and to bring your love alive.

Enemies of love

- The most obvious and extreme enemy of love is hatred – a deep loathing of someone else. That is one that most of us don't have to do battle with. But there are many others that we do have to confront.
- Cynicism is probably the greatest of these. This can come from hurt, from disappointment,

from being let down. It is expressed in a kind of hard, cold approach to life and especially to people who are close to us. A person can be very hard-working and dutiful, but sour. This is most often found in men but can also be present in women.

- The most common enemy of love is taking each other for granted. People get used to each other and then fail to see and to acknowledge the beauty, the goodness, and the generosity of one another. Love gets covered over with a cloud of despondency. There is very little place for joy and gladness. Gentleness and peace go missing. And each one becomes unsettled in their own home.

• And then, there is indifference. Very often people are so preoccupied with their own lives, their own concerns, that they are indifferent to what is happening to their spouse or children. If asked, they will help. But they don't notice the needs of those they love. Most often those needs are as simple as giving time to listen to one another; to have fun together; to be able to relax in each other's company. How all of that affects the quality of life together!

- Unforgiveness is like a cancer in any relationship of love. The old

film 'Love Story' had the famous statement in it: "Love means never having to say sorry". The truth is just the opposite. Love means constantly having to say sorry. There is so much to forgive each other for when people are living close to each other. When that forgiveness is not being given freely it eats away at the ability and even the desire to love.

Developing love

There are many different love relationships to be worked at and developed in life. This month of September is a good time to work on these.

1. Firstly, there is the sexual love of husbands and wives. This obviously is about much more than having sexual intercourse. It is about gaining and developing a good freedom with one another physically, emotionally, and personally. The great opportunity of marriage is for a man to really know what it is like to be a woman and yet to be even more a man; for a woman to know what it is like to be a man and so grow in her femininity. But not just any woman, any man – to know what it is like to be this woman, this man. This leads into great

acceptance of one's own body/sexuality and freedom with each other's sexuality. It is a love that needs to be enjoyed.

2. Secondly, there is the affectionate love of parents with their children. We are becoming more aware of the terrible evil of child sex abuse, where children are used as objects of sexual pleasure, even at times by their parents. Children do need a lot of affection from their parents, to grow up in an atmosphere where they can be relaxed, a relationship where they can be held and reassured, where they can laugh and cry. Parents need to take the initiative in this.

3. Thirdly, there is friendship love, where we bring joy and happiness to those who are part of our lives as friends and family. This is built up through being in touch, being hospitable, being sensitive of the needs of each other and affirming of the goodness of those we love.

4. Fourthly, there is the respectful love that is shown to the stranger, the casual acquaintance, the neighbour who is not necessarily a friend. This is developed by not interfering but always having a word of greeting, a smile, a helping hand ready for them.

5. Fifthly, there is the all-

pervading love of God that needs us to open ourselves to receive it and to return that love in all that we do. This love is developed especially through prayer in which we listen for all the wonderful things God has done for us and through which we commit ourselves to loving God with our whole heart, our whole soul, our whole mind and our whole strength.

Most of the prayers proper to the Sundays of this month are asking for a greater openness to God's love and a real commitment to our love for one another. Let that be the centre of your prayer through this month.

We can get great inspiration for our lives from the Word of God for each of the Sundays for September:

Week 1: Jesus said: "What will you gain if you win the whole world and ruin your life?" This is a time to put our priorities into proper order, with God and each other in marriage and/or family life at the centre of our concerns

Week 2: Jesus said: "Where two or three of you meet in my name, I shall be there with you". The deepest truth about our family home is that it is the Church of the home. We make Christ present by

our love.

Week 3: Jesus said: (Forgive each other) "Not seven times but seventy-seven times." Forgiveness is about living fully in the present by letting go of the past hurts and disappointments. The past means anytime other than this present moment.

Week 4: Jesus said: "Why be envious because I am generous." This is a month for counting our blessings and being aware of the wonderful gifts that are in our marriage and family life, and the faith that bonds us to one another and to the Community of faith.



Church cleaning during Covid-19 a labour of love for Sion Mills great grandmother

WHEN Sion Mills parish volunteer, Stella McGinley got the opportunity to clean her parish church of St Theresa during the Covid-19 pandemic, she felt truly blessed.

"During lockdown, you were allowed to go a certain distance in the car, so I always went over to the Church," recalled Stella, "and when I was asked if I would like to clean it, I went over every day to do so.

"I was so happy to be able to do that. My family were worried that I would get Covid, but I told them that God would protect me".

It was just the distraction that she needed during such a worrying time, but it was more than that, being so close to Jesus in the Tabernacle filled her with a reassuring peace as well as with more ideas on how to use her creative talents to enhance the celebration of special feast days in the chapel.

Formerly McHugh from Castlederg, Stella left there over 60 years ago when she got married at 18, and over the years she has loved making clothes for her children, as well as wedding and bridesmaid dresses.

Then one Easter her former parish priest, Fr Peter McLaughlin asked if she would like to make a gold cloth for the altar. She found it to be a labour of love which, when Fr Thomas Canning moved into the parish as curate, led to her making

different coloured cloths to dress the altar at special times in the church calendar.

"When Fr Thomas came he wanted to carry on what Fr Peter had started," said Stella, "so I made a red altar cloth for Pentecost, a purple one for Advent, and green one for St Patrick's Day, etc.

"I think it is good to have the altar look special for the various feasts we celebrate and I am so happy to do it. I love it and now find myself looking out for things that I think would look lovely on the altar. I love arranging flowers for the Tabernacle as well, but not big floral displays, I leave that to someone else. I had a stroke about 10 years ago, so I don't want to overdo it!"

Reflecting while cleaning the chapel over the summer months, Stella felt drawn to do a special display to mark the Feast of Our Lady's Assumption into Heaven, which is celebrated on August 15.

"Every year on this date," she said, "our sacristan puts out a statue of Our Lady to mark the occasion. I was thinking of the great displays we have, for example, at Christmas and wanted to do something special for Mary on the Feast of her Assumption. So, I took out the blue cloth I had made for the altar and borrowed the Legion of Mary's lovely, big statue of Our Lady, and we put together a special display for that weekend".

She added: "I have had a great

devotion to Our Lady and the Sacred Heart for a long time. I always take my Rosary beads with me no matter where I am going. If I am travelling by bus anywhere, I love to pray the Rosary, and do the same if I wake up during the night.

"I try to go to Mass and pray the Rosary every day, and like to have my morning prayers said long before I leave the house. I just think it is so important to pray, and as well as the Rosary, I pray for the protection of St Michael the Archangel, and say prayers to Our Lady from my St Anthony's Treasures prayer book."

The 78-year-old's venture into volunteering more in her local parish began a year after Fr Thomas' arrival there.

"Our sacristan had been unwell," recalled Stella, "and Fr Thomas asked me to help out... that was almost three years ago. It keeps me busy looking after the vestments and purifiers".

Her cleaning duties during lockdown continued when the churches were opened again for public worship, and she now cleans the chapel after morning Mass with the help of another lady, and again before the chapel closes at 5 pm.

"We clean the church at least twice a day," she said, "as we would hate for anyone to get Covid."

As well as spending time in the chapel, Stella loves being in her garden and remarked: "They say

that you are near to God when you are in your garden, as you are surrounded by all the nature He has created. I don't understand how people cannot believe in God...man didn't create nature!"

Family time is also very special to Stella, who has five children, eight grandchildren and 10 great grandchildren.

"I missed being with them during lockdown," she said, "but they live nearby and came to visit me and stood outside".

While Covid-19 continues to be a risk to health, Stella is happy to be able to continue to play her part in trying to keep people safe during their visits to St Theresa's Church, and having close contact restored with her family and the spiritual nourishment she needs through her prayer-life, she finds her energy and desire renewed each day to do so.



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 – September

Saint Mother Theresa – September 5
Saint Matthew – September 21
Saint Pio – September 23
Saint 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.



The Transfiguration

September 29 – Feast of the Archangels or Michaelmas

The days between the feast day of the Archangels and October 2nd (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

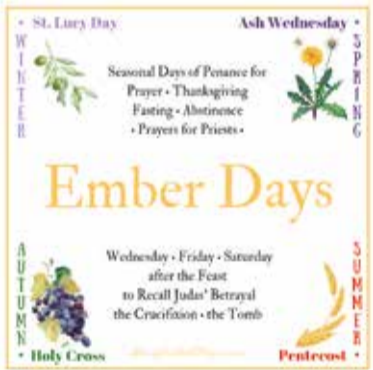
The month of September is part of the harvest season and, as Christians, we recall God's protection and we give thanks for the year's harvest. The Church's liturgy and feasts reflect the four seasons of the year and so, among many Catholics, it is a custom to observe Ember Days. Four times a year, approximately three months apart, near the beginning of each season, the Church sets aside three days (Wednesday, Friday and Saturday), a total of twelve days a year in order to invoke God's Blessing on His people and to pray in thanksgiving for the blessings of nature. The Church prays for the gifts of nature which are used in her liturgy, such as olives, grapes and wheat. This is also a special time set apart to thank God for the sacraments and pray for priests, particularly for those who are being ordained. These days are like little spiritual checkups

four times a year. Ember days are not related to Ash Wednesday, nor do they mean embers or ashes. The word 'ember' comes from the Latin phrase 'Quatuor Tempora', meaning four times.

The specific themes for each Ember Week of the year:

1. In spring, during the first week of Lent, to give thanks for the rebirth of nature and for the gift of light (usually flowers are offered at this time).
2. In summer, within the octave of Pentecost, to give thanks for the wheat crop.
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. We can still observe Ember Days by thanking God for His creation and constant protection. These days gives us the opportunity to bring our focus back to God through prayer and penance and they help us to set aside time to pray for our precious priests and vocations.



Quiz Time with Lawrence

1. Jeff Bezos, believed to be the world's richest man, is the founder and CEO of which global sales and technology company?

2. What is the capital city of Finland?

3. Who won last year's BBC Sports Personality of the Year?

4. What was the name of Ronnie Barker's character in the TV series 'Open All Hours'?

5. In which US state would you find Yosemite National Park?

6. Who has Joe Biden named as his running mate for the forthcoming US Presidential Election?

7. Name the talking snowman in the film 'Frozen'?

8. What colour is Grenadine syrup?

9. Who were the last team to win the old English First Division before it became the Premier League?

10. In which Irish county is the town of Ennis?

11. Which Hollywood actor came out of retirement to play a 90-year old drug runner in the 2018 film 'The Mule'?

12. Which Scottish singer, now living in Ireland, had a 1967 hit with 'Catch the wind'?
13. Which city is set to become UK City of Culture from 1 January 2021?

14. Who played the role of Stan Laurel in the 2018 film 'Stan & Ollie'?

15. US 'supergroup' The American Outlaws featured Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings, Johnny Cash and which other iconic singer/songwriter?

16. In what year did the BBC change the time of their main evening news programme from 9 pm to 10 pm? Was it a) 2000, b) 2004, c) 2008 or d) 2012?

17. In which European country is the city of Vilnius?

18. How many numbers are there to choose from in the UK national lottery main draw?

19. Which two seas are connected by the Suez Canal?

20. Who was the last of Henry VIII's six wives?

21. According to the well-known song by the Dubliners, who was 'the heart of the rowl'?

22. Who currently holds the record for most World Snooker Championship wins?

23. What type of fish is an elver?

24. According to the advertising slogan, what make of car is the car in front?

25. In what musical did Doris Day sing 'The Black Hills of Dakota'?
- Quiz Answers: 1. Amazon, 2. Heislinski, 3. Ben Stokes (cricket), 4. Arkwright, 5. California, 6. Kamala Harris, 7. Olaf, 8. Red, 9. Mediterranean and Red Sea, 10. Clare, 11. Clint Eastwood, 12. Donovan, 13. Coventry, 14. Steve Coogan, 15. Kris Kristofferson, 16. a) 2000, 17. Lithuania, 18. 59, 19. Yosemite National Park, 20. Catherine Parr, 21. Dicey, 22. Stephen Hendry (7), 23. A young eel, 24. A Toyota, 25. Calamity Jane.

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

Clonmany, Coleraine, Creggan, Culladuff, Culmore, Desertmartin, Donnylough, Drumquin, Dumananagh, Dungiven, Fahan, Faughanvale, Garvagh, Gortin, Greencastle,

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

Let Your Light Shine!



“PRAY, HOPE and DON’T WORRY” (St. Pio)



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