




The NET

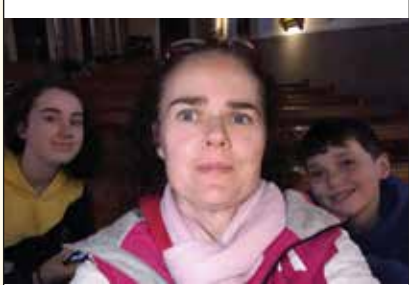
Sharing fruits of faith in Derry Diocese

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See inside...



Youth Holy Hours – Cappagh



Virtual Vigil – Drumragh



RE Advisor – Derry




Shalom Award – Cappagh



Calvary scene at St Columba's Church, Long Tower

St Columba!
St Columba!
Holy Patron
of our
town...



Fr Carlin's 80th – Fahan



Bridin McDermott RIP – Pennyburn




JPIIs Keeping Connected – Greenlough

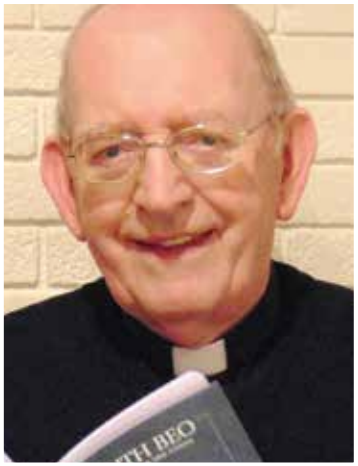
People in focus




Sarah Downey – Three Patrons



Patricia Casey – Kilrea



Fr Oliver Crilly – Castlefin



McCafferty Sisters – Bridget Quigley & Nellie Kerlin – Annagry/Derry



Also featuring: CBS Omagh, Lumen Christi, St Brigid's & St Joseph's keeping the faith on-line, Diocesan on-line youth programme, Newtownstewart First Holy Communion with a difference, Lifford faithful honour Our Lady, Drumagh reflect on new ways to engage in parish life, Consecrated Virgin shares mystical espousal to Christ, Derry's Long Tower, St Columba, Virtual Lough Derg pilgrimage, Irish Page, Children's Catechism and much more...

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Reflecting on the Pope's prayer intention for June, "...that all those who suffer may find their way in life, allowing themselves to be touched by the Heart of Jesus", Sr Mary McCloskey, SSCC, writes about...

The Way of the Heart



Sr Mary McCloskey SSCC

THE month of June is a time, traditionally, when we are invited by the Church to renew our relationship with Jesus and allow ourselves to be transformed by this encounter. Our prayer during this month centres on Devotion to the Sacred Heart. Many Catholics were reared on this devotion, very probably focussed on a

statue or picture or icon that we prayed to, or worshipped for years, without forming a personal relationship.

This devotion has been marketed over the years in a thousand prayers and pictures, and become so familiar that it has, perhaps, lost its impact today.

In contemplating the Heart

of Jesus, we draw close to the central mystery of our faith: a God, who with boundless, infinite love for our world, embraced the limitations of human history and of the human condition. He took on a body and heart so that in the human heart of Jesus, and how He was with people as he moved through the villages and countryside, we might catch a glimpse of this God of compassion who loves us so much, this God of the human condition, this God of the littleness of the human way.

This preferential option of God, for a suffering humanity weighed down by anguish and despair, can be seen through Jesus in the Gospels.

The people who tend to follow Jesus are the "little ones", the ones on the margins: the lame, the poor, the blind, prostitutes, drunkards, tax collectors, and foreigners. He lived in close proximity to, and in solidarity with, the excluded ones in His society; those suffering and in pain.

The way that Jesus reveals in the Bible, is a way of the heart. It is a liberating path of humility, compassion, and nonviolence in the face of oppression that culminates in His death on a cross.

In Jesus, we see God at work in our scattered world, healing

the wounds of our broken humanity, bringing fresh hope. The first and last message of the Gospel is that God loves the world and every person in it. He sent His son Jesus not as a judge, but as a shepherd with a large compassionate heart.

Jesus understood His life's work as setting people free from fear and ignorance, not so much the movement from sinning to not sinning, but a change of heart, a change in how they saw God and how they saw themselves in relation to God. Jesus revealed a new image of God, as Abba, like a father for His children.

The depth of Jesus' relationship with the Father is revealed in His conviction that God is good and absolutely to be trusted, even when hanging on the cross. It teaches us that it is possible to live with the same depths of faith, trust, courage, commitment, fidelity and ultimately surrender in our own lives.

We are also strengthened by His Word and His Promise, that we too will not be abandoned; that He is with us to the end through it all.

When Pope Francis invites us, this month of June, to pray for all those who are suffering that they might find their way and allow themselves to be touched by Jesus, it is precisely

this experience of Jesus in the Gospels that He is asking us to draw close to.

It is hard to believe in God when life is tangled in fear and brokenness. In moments like this, it is hard to hang on in faith. When we are lost and wondering where life is leading, where we are going, how it will all end...we are brought to the realization that life ends where it began, with the Lord.

It is the personal encounter with Jesus that brings hope and meaning. Jesus is "the Alpha and the Omega"; the beginning and the end.

Encouraged by this, and knowing that the heart of Jesus is open in love to all those who are suffering and in need, we too can pray...

"I am Yours, Lord - yesterday, today and forever. I am Yours, Lord forgive my past, bring light and peace to my present and prepare me with a generous heart for the future. I know that you will be there for me, My Lord and My God."

(From the townland of Tereighter, near Park Village, Co Derry, Sr Mary is Superior Delegate of the Europe-Africa Zone in the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary).

Parish Post-its

St Columba

This year, the Mass in honour of St Columba, on his June 9 Feast Day, will be broadcast via the webcam at St Columba's Church, Long Tower. Bishop Donal will celebrate the Mass at 7.30 pm, during which water from St Columba's Well will be blessed and made available to people afterwards.

Life in the Spirit

Dungiven parish priest, Fr Seamus Kelly has been leading Life in the Spirit Seminars from St Patrick's Church, via

webcam, on Tuesday nights at 7.30 pm. The next one is on Tuesday, June 2.

Cappagh Youth

The youth of Cappagh Parish, on the outskirts of Omagh, Co Tyrone, will be leading a Holy Hour on Wednesdays, and are hoping many will join in the evening of adoration, reflective prayer and music.

The time of prayer will begin at 8.15 pm and end with Night Prayer at 9 pm, and will be transmitted live from St Mary's Church, Killyclogher, via the

Cappagh Parish Webcam - www.CappaghParish.com.

Padre Pio Masses

The parish of Drumragh, in Omagh, has introduced a monthly Mass in honour of St Pio. The next one will take place on Tuesday, June 23, at 7.30 pm, with the recitation of the Rosary beforehand at 7 pm, and will be broadcast from Sacred Heart Church.

Petitions can be emailed in advance to epayersdrumragh@outlook.com. These will be printed and placed before the altar.

The webcam can be accessed via <http://www.churchservices.tv/drumraghparish>.

The weekly Padre Pio Mass celebrated in St Columba's Church, Long Tower continues to get an amazing response, with people tuning in from not only across the Diocese, but the world too. The healing Mass is celebrated on Wednesday nights at 7.30 pm and is streamed live on Facebook or can be accessed via the webcam link - <https://www.mcnmedia.tv/camera/st-columbas-church-longtower>.

A Mass in honour of St Pio is also celebrated in St Patrick's Church, Pennyburn, on the first Monday of the month, at 7 pm. It is streamed live via webcam - www.threepatrons.org/webcam or www.mcnmedia.tv.

The Holy Family Padre Pio Prayer Group is live streaming its monthly prayer meetings on the first Tuesday of each month, after Mass at 7.15 pm. Prayers are offered for all those affected during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Cemetery Blessings

The faithful departed will be prayed for by the priests of Greenlough and Lavey parishes in an alternative to the usual Cemetery Sundays. Greenlough Parish Prayers will take place on Sunday, June 14, and on Sunday, June 28, for Lavey. Fr Eamon and Fr Dermot will lead the prayers at 3 pm from each of the churches via the webcams.



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



The NET

Sharing the fruits of the faith in the Derry Diocese

Contacting us:

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

editorthenet15@gmail.com
or ring/text 07809292852

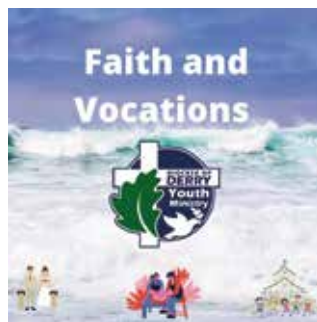
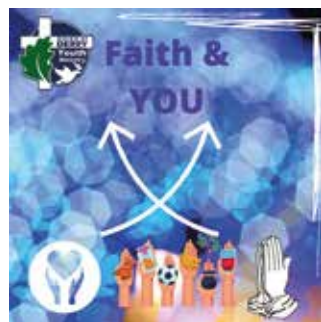
Lifford faithful honour Our Lady

CLONLEIGH parish priest, Fr Colm O'Doherty was delighted to see the parish community honouring Our Lady during the month of

May.

"The parishioners have been faithfully bringing flowers to the May altar at the Church," said Fr Colm.

They have also been leaving their petitions in a box beside the May Altar, which Fr Colm offered up in prayer during the celebration of Mass.



Diocesan on-line youth programme to continue over summer *by Yvonne Rooney*

THE online programme for young people through lockdown has engaged many young people, including students involved in the JPPII award and offering a wide range of themes.

The young people have been sharing their own experiences in these strange times and learning about various charities and aspects of faith.

Themes during May included 'Mary's Meals', which is an

international charity, and 'Mary's May', which focused on a different Marian pilgrimage site each day and included several young people performing a live presentation on Lourdes during that week.

The Week 3 theme was a focus on the JPPII Award, and a number of past participants shared how the award had impacted on them and influenced them even after they had completed it. Current participants also shared how they

are volunteering in their parish and community.

The next theme was 'Faith' and, during that week, there were numerous examples of faith in action, faith and vocations, and faith and sport.

The final theme was 'Fun in Lockdown' and that week involved a review of the highlights and challenges over the last 10 weeks, and there was a live bake off, a quiz night and scavenger hunt.

Those involved in the Derry Youth Programme appear to have enjoyed the online community. Although the programme will change over the summer months, the Diocesan Youth Ministry team are inviting everyone to stay tuned to the social media platforms @derryouth on Instagram and Facebook as new posts, videos and tasks will still be posted on a regularly basis.



Fan the Flame 2020

THE annual Fan the Flame Mass for Year 7/6th Class pupils throughout the Diocese will be celebrated by Bishop Donal on Thursday, June 4, at 10 am, via the St Eugene's Cathedral webcam.

Normally held in Celtic Park, this Mass is a very colourful celebration marking the fact that the children have received the sacrament of Confirmation and are preparing to move to the next stage of their education. The youngsters would

have been supported there by their schools, youth ushers and adult volunteers, priests and post primary representatives.

This year is very different as so many of them have not yet received the sacrament of Confirmation and they can't gather in Celtic Park.

To help the children celebrate this Mass with their families at home, the Diocesan Catechetical Centre has put together a resource

pack of ideas. The children always design T-Shirts to wear at the Mass, so they are encouraged to design a T-Shirt around the Gospel of the Day - the Beatitudes, which as Pope Francis says... "reveal the path to true happiness... they always lead to joy".

The children have also been asked to complete a reflection journal or create a memory bottle, which will help them to be aware of God's presence throughout

their experience of Primary and National School, and in the people they have shared this time with.

Schools have received the pack and are currently working with children to help them engage with the Mass from home.

The resource pack is also available on the Diocesan Catechetical Centre website www.catecheticalcentre.org



DERRY DIOCESAN CATECHETICAL CENTRE

"Fan the Flame"

Diocesan Mass for Year Seven/Sixth Class Pupils

Celebrant: Bishop Donal McKeown
Venue: Webcam-Saint Eugene's Cathedral, Derry
Date: Thursday 4th June 2020
Time: 10.00am

"The Beatitudes Reveal the Path to True Happiness...they Always Lead to Joy"
 (Pope Francis)



Alpha youth film series

A new initiative for young people to get involved in this month is the online Youth Alpha film series. This will run every Sunday night, beginning May 31st at 7 pm, and will be delivered through Zoom.

Alpha Youth Films are designed to help engage young people in a conversation about some of life's most important

questions and it will give teenagers a chance to explore, question and learn about their faith.

Any young people aged 15-17 can sign up by completing an online form through Instagram Derryouth or Facebook @DerryYouth or at www.catecheticalcentre.org



New on-line opportunities for parish leaders

THERE have been some new opportunities on-line for parish leaders to avail off. CYMI, the Catholic Youth Ministry Network, has offered three seminars nationally via zoom for leaders working and volunteering in Youth Ministry.

The first focused on 'Christus Vivit', the post-synodal apostolic exhortation of Pope Francis, written in response to the Synod of Bishops, on young people, faith and vocational discernment.

The second was presented by Dr Jessie Rogers, who spoke about the spiritual nourishment of youth ministry workers in this time of change. Dr Rogers is a lecturer in Sacred Scripture in St Patrick's College, Maynooth.

The third seminar was by Fr Mike Schmitz, who spoke about youth ministry and digital evangelisation. Fr Mike is the Director of Youth Ministry from

the Diocese of Duluth and is an internationally renowned speaker.

Several representatives from the diocese took part in these seminars.

The parish zoom sessions continue regularly for anyone involved in youth ministry in their parish, and recent zooms included prayer, time for sharing and some digital training.

To date there has been an Instagram training input, Zoom training and exploring Microsoft and Google Forms. These sessions are a relaxed way to stay in touch with each other and learn some key skills to engage with our young people in this time of isolation.

The online community is a good source of support and fellowship during these times, and has become an ideal platform for sharing skills and resources among parish leaders and providing training.

Alpha on-line for adults

LEADERS from various parishes will have the opportunity to participate in an on-line Alpha course weekly, beginning on Thursday, June 4, again delivered via Zoom.

This will be an online platform to share and discuss many aspects of our faith in a safe and engaging space. If you are interested in this course an online form can be

found at www.catecheticalcentre.org.

If you are interested in more information on youth ministry in your parish at this time, or in signing up for either the Alpha programme or would like to join the parish leaders zoom meetings, please contact yvonne.rooney@derrydiocese.org



First Holy Communion Day with a difference in Newtownstewart

Photographs by Ashlene Canning



SATURDAY, May16, 2020 was a day with a difference in Newtownstewart. It was First Holy Communion Day without Holy Communion. That is to say, the Mass took place, but the children could not come.

It was, of course, due to the Covid-19 virus, which prevents all public gatherings at present. Still, the ever-creative Parish Pastoral Forum found an alternative way of marking the occasion.

To ease the inevitable disappointment of the Primary Four children, the parish planned a socially distanced celebration. Each child was asked to research the life of a saint and prepare an A4 page for First Communion

Day. On the page, the children wrote their own name, the name of their chosen saint, composed a paragraph on the saint's life and drew a picture of the saint.

St Eugene's Church, at Glenock, is well placed for such a presentation because of its very ornate altar rails, installed in 1949. Accordingly, the 20 pictures were placed in an upright position on the altar rails, recognising the work of the First Communicants and honouring the presence of the Saints in the liturgy.

Before the liturgy began, Fr Roland Colhoun read out the name of each child while the parish cameraman, Martin Kerrigan, carefully focussed the

lens on the picture drawn by that child. Meanwhile, the children and their teachers and families were watching on Facebook Live from their own homes. You can imagine the sense of joy this elicited in each household and throughout the parish.

Next was the celebration of the Mass, with the congregation limited to the two readers, Ashlene Canning and Shauneen Kilpatrick. In the sermon, Fr Colhoun acknowledged the huge disappointment that the postponement caused the children. Waiting until a later day is an enormous challenge for an eight-year old. But he quoted St Peter, from the First Reading, who tried to console the earliest Christians about the delay in the Lord's return: "With the Lord, a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like one day" (II Peter 3:8). In other words, God is not governed by the calendar and He is using the delay to give us more time to pray.

At the end of Mass, Fr Colhoun said that First Communion would take place as soon as possible, but that no one was yet able to give a date. However, he announced that a surprise now awaited the Primary Four children and that it would be revealed within an hour on the parish Facebook page. The children waited with bated breath

to learn of the next chapter of their special day.

The Pastoral Forum proceeded to make a little video of Fr Colhoun outside the Parochial House, surrounded by named gift-bags, one for each P4 child. He invited the families to come without delay to collect the gifts.

When this had been uploaded to Facebook, the people responded with great enthusiasm, dashed off for their little bag and went home to explore the contents. The bag included a specially designed card from the parish, Rosary beads, a Rosary leaflet, a special poem composed for the occasion by Anne McDonnell, and a generous helping of sweets!

The final stage of the day was the individual tea-parties at home. The parents very kindly photographed the children's celebrations and sent the pictures to the parish. These can be seen in a moving collage on the parish Facebook page and form a beautiful tribute to the First Communion class of 2020 in St Patrick's Primary School.

The Covid-19 virus delayed the reception of Holy Communion, but the parish made sure it would not deprive the children of their celebration of God's love. 'O Sacrament Most Holy, O Sacrament Divine, all praise and all thanksgiving, be every moment thine.'



First Holy Communion – It should have been today!

by Anne McDonnell

Saturday, May 16, 2020

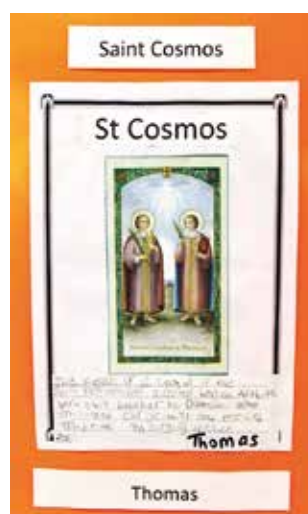
It should have been today at a very special Mass
That you joined all your friends from the P4 class,
And celebrated your First Holy Communion Day
But unfortunately, things cannot be that way.

This scary virus – Covid 19
Has set a very different scene,
No school, no Mass, no playing with friends
We know you can't wait till this all ends.

It's all very different from what you know
Having to speak to older people through a window,
Just to be sure they do not get very sick
But we know sticking to the rules will do the trick.

This gives you time to reflect and pray
About receiving God on First Holy Communion Day,
And be excited to respond to God's special invitation
To speak to Him in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

So make sure you keep saying your prayers to Jesus
That soon this scary virus will be behind us,
Keep being good and helpful and kind and do not forget
You'll have your First Holy Communion Day yet.



Cappagh Parish Youth Holy Hours *by Davog McCaffrey*



SINCE the beginning of May, myself and a small number of Young People from Cappagh Parish have gathered together - appropriately socially distanced of course! - in St Mary's Church, Killyclogher, to lead a 'Holy Hour' on Wednesday evenings at 8 pm.

The Parish has been doing a great deal of online outreach, including Night Prayer at 9 pm each evening, and so we wanted to build something around this. The decision was made by a few of us, with the support of local priests, Fr Kevin McElhennon PP and Fr Declan McGeehan, that in these strange and uncertain times, it is important that there are opportunities for young people to connect and grow in their faith, and what better way than if we open our hearts to God in the presence of Jesus, exposed in the Blessed Sacrament!

Making use of the webcam in St Mary's Church, we have put together a Youth Holy Hour centred on Adoration of Jesus, truly present in the Blessed

Sacrament, which has allowed us and all those watching to gather together and give Praise, Glory and Honour to God.

We were previously involved with the Christ The King Youth Choir based in the parish and, therefore, music ministry has been a central element to the services - after all, as St Augustine said, "To sing is to pray twice!"

We also felt that it was important to offer young people like ourselves some spiritual direction in these challenging times and, each week, one of us has led us in a reflection on something related to our faith. We've had reflections from Benedict on the many graces and blessings we can receive from praying the Divine Office of the Church, perhaps starting off with Morning and Evening Prayer.

In this month of May, Jermy talked to us about the central role of our Mother Mary in our Catholic faith and how, by praying the Rosary, we can ask Mary to intercede on our behalf.

On the first week, I led a

reflection based on Pope Francis' 'Five Finger Prayer'. I was introduced to this 'Prayer' by Monsignor La Flynn whilst working on Lough Derg, and I believe that it is an excellent way to help us all, particularly young people, grow or come back to our prayer life, as this is something that many of us may struggle with.

I will share with you some of that reflection and maybe you would like to use the 'Five Finger Prayer' the next time you pray.

We begin by praying with our Thumb, which is the finger closest to you. We remember those closest to us in our own lives. We think particularly of those from whom we are physically separated at this time - perhaps elderly and vulnerable family and friends. We pray that God may comfort them in their isolation and that our bonds of love and affection may grow even stronger. May God grant all of us strength and perseverance in the knowledge that, although we are physically apart, we are together in Christ.

Our Index Finger points the way. We think now of our priests and all Religious who lead us in faith. May they be Good Shepherds, tending to God's flock now and always. May God bless them with courage and wisdom. We also remember all teachers and educators. May they embrace innovative ways of imparting knowledge upon their students to help them achieve the best of their abilities.

Our Middle Finger is the tallest finger and so we call to mind all of our leaders. At this time, perhaps we should focus on our political leaders and their policy advisors on these islands and globally. May they leave personal political interests aside and focus on protecting society and on the preservation of life. Through

God's guidance, may they make wise and informed decisions.

Maybe you didn't know, but our Ring Finger is the weakest finger of all! We call to mind all those who are weak and sick. Particularly, we remember all those in ICU/ Critical Care Departments. We pray for the healthcare workers who are using their skills to provide the best possible care. May God's healing powers work within them and through them. We remember all those who have died during the pandemic and those who are grieving in these difficult circumstances. May God comfort them in their distress. We also think about prisoners and their families, who may be finding separation particularly difficult at present. May God protect them and may they repent for their sins, seek forgiveness and transform their lives.

Finally, we reach our Baby Finger which is of course, our smallest finger. Pope Francis says this reminds him to pray for himself. After praying using the four other fingers, now you can pray for your own needs (in perspective!)

Through the intercession of Pope St John Paul II, I pray that all young people will have the courage to place their trust in Jesus who is, 'the Way, the Truth and the Life'. I pray that those who have not heard the Good News will one day come to know Christ for themselves. I finally pray for all those, like myself, who are sitting exams or making life-changing decisions at this time. May God grant all of us clarity of mind and help us achieve our goals

The Youth Holy Hour, led by a small number of young people from Cappagh Parish, continues on Wednesday evenings at 8 pm and concludes with Night Prayer and Benediction at 9 pm. We would be delighted if you could join us as we build a praying community together. You can watch live from CappaghParish.com. Further information is available on the Cappagh Parish and Christ The King Youth Choir Facebook Pages.



HOLY HOUR

LED BY A SMALL NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE FROM CAPPAGH PARISH

Wednesday Evenings at 8pm

LIVE FROM ST MARY'S CHURCH, KILLYCLOGHER

Concluding with Night Prayer & Benediction at 9pm

All are welcome to join in this evening of adoration, prayer and reflective music by watching via webcam from:

www.CappaghParish.com

My virtual vigil in Drumragh Parish

MY name is Aisling McGrath, from the Drumragh Parish, in Omagh, and I am 15 years old. Bishop McKeown invited us in the Diocese of Derry to begin and end the month of May 2020 with 24 hours of prayer and penance.

I was a pilgrim on Lough Derg in 2019, so I was aware of the format of the stations and the vigil and, as we would not be allowed to visit the island this year, I wanted to take part in this vigil with local parishioners.

I thought it was a great idea to offer up prayer and penance in solidarity with those who have no choice. We prayed for those who are suffering and for those who have suffered, and we asked

for the grace of the Holy Spirit to guide us through the remainder of lockdown.

Bishop McKeown stated that he was going to hold his vigil in St Eugene's Cathedral, and my mum, my younger brother and I were allowed to hold our vigil in our beautiful Sacred Heart Church, in Omagh.

I would invite as many people as physically able to virtually join us at the end of May on our second vigil before Pentecost.

May is a special month for me as, from a young age, my granny has embedded within me a great devotion to Mary, and I could think of no better way to venerate Our Lady.



Aisling with her mum and brother during their virtual vigil in Sacred Heart Church, Drumragh



CBS Omagh keeping the faith online *by Sonya Darcy*



I have come across a phrase many times over the last few weeks, "the school building is closed but school is not over." This statement rings so true and schools everywhere have had to rethink how they go about their day-to-day business.

The restrictions of lockdown have threatened to take away the heart of every school, and that is the relationships with staff, pupils and the wider community. To the outside world, academia may be our business, but anyone who works in a school can tell you teaching is about so much more.

Our founder, Blessed Edmund Rice is known for educating the hearts and minds of the young and this is very much still evident in our school today. In Christian Brothers' Grammar School, we pride ourselves on our strong links with our parents and those in our wider community.

Our pupils are encouraged to develop their faith but, more importantly, to actively live their faith at home, at school and in their local communities. Our relationships are enriched and embedded through our faith families and, as a school, our CBS family stretches far and wide, with our feeder pupils coming from across three dioceses.

We frequently gather together



as a school community in times of celebration and joy but also in moments of grief, sadness and uncertainty. Through it all, we are always united through our faith in Christ.

In March, when we realised that we may be gathering as a staff for the last time before lockdown, we came together in the Sport's Hall for a final prayer service asking for protection for our friends and family, for healing for those who are sick and to give thanks to those who continue to work so that we may be safe.

It has been a challenge to maintain this community spirit when we are in isolation, but it is no surprise that our staff and students have risen to the challenge in many spectacular ways. We quickly moved our teaching online and, in turn, we began to develop new ways of practising our faith. In December 2019, Pope Francis stated unambiguously that change and reform is in the very nature of a church that is called "to be missionary."

Our online Religious Education lessons naturally allow us to continue with faith development as we follow our usual programme of study, examining the scriptures and growing our faith. A lesson on 'The Calming of the Storm'

allowed the pupils to focus on their fears and we noted that, overall, we all share the same fears of someone getting sick or losing a loved one. In a time where we are all worried about the impact of the virus on young peoples' minds, we practiced using a centring prayer as a method to calm our racing thoughts.

On Palm Sunday, we encouraged the pupils to collect Palm branches and hang them in their window or on their front door. They embraced the opportunity to worship together and shared photos of their Palm leaves. We shared how to bless them with Holy Water and shared the prayers ahead of the online Masses in our local parishes.

During May, we have shared our May Altars and supplied pupils with a prayer card. We encourage the boys to use this as a focal point for prayer with their families to keep up our tradition of morning prayers, where our students and staff would usually gather together in St Brendan's Chapel for Morning Prayer, led by our PJP II students.

During the Easter season, a time when we usually come together in worship, our staff united to create a video montage with a special message for our students; to remind them that although we are apart, they are very much in our thoughts and a valued part of our CBS community.

Tradition

As head of Chaplaincy, I have always encouraged our students to live out the principle of Christian Brothers' Immersion projects of 'Come and be, rather than come and see.' We have a strong tradition of putting our faith into action, supporting social justice

issues through all Key Stages but especially in senior school, where my role involves coordinating the Pope John Paul II Award.

We have maintained contact through Microsoft Teams, where I set weekly challenges to reflect on their faith and direct them to opportunities to practice their faith and complete their hours, such as those provided by the Derry Diocesan Youth Team. We always reinforce the importance that they continue to act as missionaries for the church in ways that comply with current social distancing regulations. Pupils have helped in their parishes by delivering prayers and Holy Water, and collecting food to donate to those who are in need.

The beginning of May was to be the much-anticipated Belfast Marathon for many. Our staff and students had planned to take part with their relay team to raise money for local charities. Instead, they captured the spirit of our school prayer, 'seek to live lives of love and service', and adapted to the current situation by completing the run virtually. They raised over £2,400 and have purchased 15 Tablets, which were donated to our local care homes, so that they could keep in touch with their loved ones.

May also marked the departure of our Year 14 students. We may not have been able to join together physically but, determined to mark this milestone on their journey at CBS, we held an online Mass celebrated by Fr Eugene Hasson in Sacred Heart Church, with Sean Diamond, one of our deputy head boys and his mum taking part in the Mass to represent all the pupils and parents of the Class of 2020.

In his homily, Fr Hasson focused on the theme of service, which is inherent in the tradition of Blessed Edmund Rice and one which we instil in all of our pupils, and has been so evident on our school social media, where we have acknowledged the great acts of service of many of our past pupils, over many generations, who have given so selflessly in their role as key workers.

Most recently, we came together as a school community to mark Mental Health Awareness week with the theme of 'Kindness'. We shared a series of videos from past pupils, staff and friends of CBS, who shared their experiences on the impacts of exercise, diet, and social media on our Mental Health. We tied this together with a Seven-Day Kindness Challenge, encouraging the spirit of charity where pupils shared their many God-given talents, such as music, baking, art and charitable works.

On our final day, Fr Christopher McDermott, our school chaplain,

highlighted that research shows that young adults who pray often are healthier and happier than their peers who do not pray. He reminded us of the words of Pope Francis, who said, "Kindness is the path of choice for the strongest and most courageous people, never weakness." It restores hope to our young and to our old and connects us all; it is the path of solidarity.

As a CBS community, we are united as one through Christ, isolated in our homes but always connected by our faith community through love of Christ and love of one another. Our online presence connects us and helps our staff and students to continue to actively live out our faith.

"Jesus does not ask us to love him as a response to His love for us, rather He asks us to love one another with His own love. He asks us to be like Him, because He has become like us." (Pope Francis, Dec 2019)

The Serenity Prayer

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

Living one day at a time;
enjoying one moment at a time;
accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;
taking, as He did, this sinful world
as it is, not as I would have it;
trusting that He will make all things right
if I surrender to His Will;
that I may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with Him
forever in the next.
Amen.

Lumen family staying connected to each other and the One for whom all things are possible

by Stephen Doherty

MANY challenges have presented themselves to us since this pandemic began. One of the things that was unimaginable several months ago was the thought that we wouldn't be able to go to Mass. Yet, many of us have experienced a new reality in relation to how we express our faith. In fact, many would now consider this to be the new norm. Spiritual communion is special!

One of the ways we, at Lumen Christi College, have been signposting these opportunities is through our Twitter feed (@LumenChristi NI). Many inspirational things have been posted to help our community deal with these 'different' times. It recognises the fact that, maybe for the first time in some of our lives, we find ourselves in situations that are beyond our

control and beyond the control of those who have nourished and protected us throughout our lives. Amidst the many opportunities this slower pace of life affords us, it also throws up many challenges. Through the ages, people have turned to prayer when everything else lets them down. It is important, more so than ever now, to stay connected. Connected to the One for whom all things are still possible.

Science is helping us understand the mechanics of Covid-19, but it is God who brings us into an understanding of the deeper mysteries of life's meaning. Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, asks each one of us to confront the challenge of the pandemic with prayer.

At the beginning of the

lockdown, we responded to Pope Francis' call to pray the Rosary each evening for an end to the pandemic. We created our own tailored reflections on the Rosary and posted it on our website and Twitter feed. Each Sunday, we connect our school community with the Holy Father by bringing his messages and Sunday homily to our Twitter feed.

We post a 'Thought for the Day' each morning at 9 am, often inspired by Scripture, as well as frequent Retweets from @Pontifex. Bishop Donal engages with our students by offering thoughts and messages, and we connect with these through Twitter and our online Pastoral Classrooms. This is the same for Diocesan initiatives created for our school communities. Form Tutors, on a weekly basis, post

messages through the Google Classrooms, designed to support and empower students and staff, and to encourage prayer. A beauty of Catholic education is the opportunity to present Christ in the fabric of our relationships. The online daily interaction with our students and staff affords us the chance to make sure that everyone is looked after, cared for and needs met.

There is nothing more powerful than 'two or three gathered', but for now we strive to make the most of the 'spiritual' opportunities afforded to us as we continue to join with one another in prayer. We, at Lumen Christi College, join with the family of Catholic schools across our Diocese, in wishing everyone God's blessing in the days and weeks ahead.



In times of darkness, faith at St Brigid's College continues to be a beacon of light *by Shauna Sharkey, Head of RE*



Mrs Shauna Sharkey, Head of RE at St Brigid's College, Derry

IN March 2020, Google reported a surge in the number of online searches for 'prayer'. During a time that has been filled with fear and uncertainty for many, we understand now more than ever the importance of our Catholic faith at St Brigid's College.

Mr Ó Mianáin, our school principal, includes prayers in his daily updates to staff. He also encourages us to participate in the spiritual life of the school and, in turn, support the faith development of each of our pupils.

This is also a time when we, as a staff, have been called to be creative in acquiring new ways to deliver the curriculum and stay connected as a community of faith. To address the latter, Heads of Year have initiated an online pastoral forum, which provides an opportunity for pupils to communicate with each other and their teachers.

Each week, Heads of Year lead Assemblies and encourage pupils to recite our school prayer. Form Teachers have been contacting

our families to reassure and support parents and pupils. We have had many reports of families praying together on a daily basis. Mrs Walsh, mother of Ethan Walsh in Yr 10, described how they took time each evening to light a candle and pray together.

Due to our Catholic ethos, prayer plays an essential role in the day-to-day life at St Brigid's College. The theme of Mission Week 2020 was the words of Padre Pio...to "Pray, hope and don't worry". At the end of this fruitful week, each pupil received a Rosary pack which contained a pair of Rosary beads and instructions on how to pray the Rosary. We would often gather together in the school Prayer Room to say the Rosary, especially before our annual pilgrimages to Knock and Medjugorje.

To continue our devotion to the Holy Rosary, during lockdown, Mrs Fitzsimons and members of the school community lead us in a decade of the Rosary. This includes special intentions for a particular group in the community, posted each day on our school Facebook page.

The impact of this has surpassed all expectations, with daily posts reaching thousands of people and an outpouring of positive comments, such as "nothing can beat the power of prayer". As the saying goes... "a school that prays together, stays together".

During the month of May, many pupils and staff have uploaded photographs of their May Altars and sacred spaces. This gives our school community the comfort and reassurance that we are all

one body in prayer and worship.

The RE department has continued to develop faith through their lessons, encouraging pupils to deepen their relationship with God. An example of this is our Yr 9 lessons on the Holy Spirit. The anticipated outcome of these lessons is that pupils will know and understand that the Holy Spirit dwells within us and, therefore, can bring us comfort and support. In one of the lessons pupils are invited to listen to the song, 'Holy Spirit You Are Welcome Here', and share it with someone in their family. Even in these circumstances, we can still follow Jesus' command to preach the Good News.

During these times, when the news and media is dominated with challenges, we want to encourage and remind our students that Christ is always walking with us and showering us with many graces. To this end, our students have been asked to acknowledge and give thanks to God for any graces they have received at this time. This is an opportunity to see the light and joys that, perhaps, during our busy lives, we take for granted.

Fr Columba, our school chaplain, has been very present during this time and has continued his mission to our students and staff. He has produced assemblies on various themes, such as, obedience and responsibility. He has encouraged our pupils to "be their best" and to serve God by helping out around their homes, and loving each other. Throughout the year, he gathers with our 6th

Form students during lunchtime on Tuesdays, along with some members of Youth Initiative. This has continued during lockdown using the ZOOM platform as his way of reaching out.

In the New Testament, St Paul talks about the early Christian community "working together with one heart" and I believe that this is true of St Brigid's College. We continue to support our pupils with the help of community groups, such as Family Works and the local HUB, where families can obtain advice and guidance.

We are a family and, like any family, we celebrate our successes. Our school Facebook page contains many examples of pupil appreciation posts, recognising those from our school who are 'loving their neighbour' by serving on the front line.

Our school motto 'Fide et Fidelitate' (through our faith and through our faithfulness) is a living motto as exemplified by those from our community who are being faithful in serving the needs of others. St Rose of Lima once said: "We must not fail to help our neighbours, because in them we serve Jesus".

Lockdown has not prevented us from staying connected to our faith as a school community; it has simply challenged us to come up with new ways of communicating and connecting. Our faith has been a great source of comfort in what has been a difficult time for many, something which binds us together and provides support. In times of darkness, faith at St Brigid's College continues to be a beacon of light.



Mrs Fitzsimons and her children, Caoimhe and Caolan, praying the Rosary on College Facebook.



Year 8 pupil, Liam Og McGilloway's May Altar.

Head Girl's relationship with God strengthened during lockdown

Cáit Ní Cheallaigh Yr14, St Brigid's College Head Girl, shares her faith experience during the Covid-19 lockdown...

"My relationship with God has continued to grow and has become stronger during lockdown.

I watch Mass with Bishop McKeown every Sunday. My Mammy and I have been saying the Rosary as often as possible with Bishop Alan McGuckian.

I have also led the Rosary for my school community and, on the first Friday of each month, I join the Franciscan Friar's for their Healing Service".



Cáit Ní Cheallaigh, Head Girl at St Brigid's College, Derry

St Joseph's pupils encouraged to engage in daily prayer *by Catherine Lagan*

SINCE the beginning of lockdown in March, St Joseph's has put the safety needs of staff and pupils first. We have ensured that pupils have had an opportunity to engage in academic and spiritual development.

Staff have set up remote learning platforms using both Microsoft teams and Google classroom. Pupils have been assigned tasks daily in relation to their normal school timetable. For those having technical difficulties we have provided learning packs. We have continued to follow our schemes of work and syllabuses. Pupils have uploaded their completed work, which teachers have assessed and provided feedback.

In addition, pupils have been encouraged to engage in daily prayer and to view weekly Sunday Mass via the webcam of their local parishes. Our school has also

acknowledged religious liturgical events via Facebook and Twitter.

Each week, Mr Currie produces a weekly newsletter on sway. The online newsletter opens with our school's morning prayer and principal's address. The newsletter gives us an opportunity to celebrate pupil success during lockdown.

I have also encouraged the Pope John Paul students to link with Lizzie Rea and Charlotte Gormley, from St Eugene's, in order to engage in online youth activities.

It was with great sadness we had to have our leavers' Mass behind closed doors. Fr Lagan celebrated a poignant Mass for our leavers in the school oratory. Mrs Ross and her son Andrew provided beautiful music. The Mass was live streamed through our social media platforms for the pupils to view from the comfort of their

own homes.

Many of our students have also engaged in charitable works by volunteering in their local communities delivering home packs to those most vulnerable.



Year 8 pupil, Luke's May Altar.



Year 9 pupil, Tristan's May Altar.



Year 10 pupil, Adam's May Altar.



Mrs Ross and her son, Andrew provided the beautiful music for the school's Leavers' Mass in the school oratory.

Honoured to be part of Team Gate Lodge, Derry Diocesan Post Primary advisor, Mary O'Boyle writes about her role and how lockdown's redirection to new ways of working brings to mind the words of St Thérèse of Lisieux...

“The smallest happenings of our lives are guided by God”



Mary O'Boyle, Derry Diocesan Post Primary advisor.

TOWARDS the end of August 2016, I arrived at the Gate Lodge. This is a small period building situated in the grounds of St Eugene's Cathedral. It is where the Derry Diocesan Catechetical Centre (DDCC) can be found. I was about to start on a new venture, a new challenge, three years into my 'retirement' from full time teaching. I was the Diocesan Post Primary Advisor for Religious Education!

The journey to the Catechetical Centre has been an interesting one. In 2013, I retired from teaching. I had been a member of staff in St Mary's College, Derry for almost 38 years, interrupted only by a sabbatical of two years, when I taught in a post primary technical college in Cameroon, West Africa.

Then, in June 2016, I was asked if I would consider taking up a part-time, one-year post with the DDCC. I would not be working alone but would be part of a team, which included youth leaders and the primary advisor for the Diocese of Derry.

Today, that team consists of Fr Paul Farren, director, Thérèse (primary advisor), Yvonne and Lizzie (youth team) and Anne Marie, office administrator and, of course, myself. Working collaboratively, the team aims to provide a co-ordinated approach to catechesis, working closely with Bishop McKeown, as we outreach to schools, parishes and families.

My initial year's contract was

extended and this August I finish my fourth year in the centre. The work is varied and challenging, but it is interesting and stimulating. There is never a dull moment! Over the last few years, I have had the opportunity to visit schools, meet principals and staff, and it is clear that schools are places where the 'good soil' abounds and the faith experiences offered, not only by the Religious Education staff, but by the entire school body endeavour to bring young people to a realisation that "Christ is alive and He wants you to be alive!" (Christus Vivit:2019:1)

The heads of department for Religious Education are my main point of contact. There are 20 in total and they do an amazing job, sometimes in very difficult circumstances. (eg Lockdown), They are resourceful, highly qualified and enthusiastic. They share their enthusiasm with their department members and it not unusual to see more than one teacher at annual events such as the Pope John Paul II Award and the annual Fan the Flame Mass. They are quite often accompanied by senior students who have volunteered to help.

As advisor, I assist the schools in their work of providing Religious Education for its students. I do this in a number of ways. I provide pastoral support, information and resources to heads of department in the ever-changing scene that is Post Primary Religious Education. I also provide in-service, designed to meet the needs of the schools.

Over the last four years, heads of department have been able to access academic and spiritual in-service support. Visits from the NI Inspectorate supported the delivery of the new A'Level Religious Education specification, as did the visit of Michael Wee, an Education and Research officer for the Anscombe Bioethics Institute, who presented on the issues and

implications surrounding morality topics in the A'Level syllabus.

In other years, Dame Nuala O'Loan and Fr Paul Farren spoke to the spiritual and religious needs of the teachers. This annual in-service also gives heads of department the opportunity to develop a strong network of relationships, which allow for the sharing of ideas and resources.

I was lucky enough to be able to enhance my own professional development and to work alongside practising teachers and principals, when my application to do the Masters in Catholic School Leadership was accepted. The DDCC works in Partnership with St Mary's University, Twickenham. The course is online, but face-to-face meetings take place four times a year. The support received from the university is wonderful and tutors are always available at the end of a 'phone or an e-mail. I cherished every moment!

I would say that one of the highlights of my work was the setting up of a shared Learning Platform known as FRONTER. It is thanks to IT Microsoft expert, Roisin Rice, that diocesan schools have been able to access this platform to share ideas and resources. It has the added advantage of facilitating the inclusion of diocesan schools in the Republic of Ireland.

My work also involves keeping abreast of educational developments. For example, in the last two years I have been part of an ACCORD team which developed a Northern Ireland Relationships and Sexuality Guidelines document (RSE), under the directive of the Archbishop of Armagh, Eamon Martin.

Development

Recently I was invited to be part of a team aiming to review the 'Fully Alive' textbook. Religious departments across the diocese were invited to be

part of this review, thus giving staff a wonderful opportunity for professional development and the chance to make a difference in the learning experiences of the students they serve.

My work allows me to support schools in a variety of ways. I work with both the National Association of Post Primary Advisors (NAPPDA) and the Northern Pastoral Network (NPN). Being a part of these groups allows me to keep abreast of new understandings surrounding faith and faith related issues. I can also share resources, information, liturgies with the schools, thus fulfilling the vision of the Catechetical Centre... 'to bear fruit in a new life.'

Life in general, and my working life in particular, changed considerably when, in mid- March, the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted daily routine for everyone. Work in the office 'building' came to an end, but not the work of the Catechetical Centre.

Schools closed overnight! School celebrations so important to staff and students were postponed initially, only for them to be cancelled shortly after! Even, the churches closed! There seemed to be no light at the end of the tunnel! However, I have found that, through the creativity and resourcefulness of the Religious Education staff, whole new opportunities have opened up for students - teaching from home, teaching online, and using social media platforms became the new 'normal'.

The dedication of the Religious Education staff knows no limits and so they are able to help their students to meditate on the Word of God, to experience different ways of praying and to celebrate Liturgy online. This is on top of the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum, the carrying out of administrative



work whilst caring for their own families! Truly 'Jesus at the Centre' of all they do.

My daily routine also took a different path - a reminder that the words of St Thérèse of Lisieux are eminently true... 'that the smallest happenings of our lives are guided by God.' Like the religious staff I support, I needed support - how to work effectively from home, how to post on Facebook, how to Tweet, how to ZOOM. Skills which would normally have taken years to learn now had to be learnt in a matter of days and weeks. No longer could I look across at Thérèse and ask "Can you help with this, when you get a chance?" Now I have to turn to Google for answers or turn to Thérèse and my other colleagues on ZOOM for help.

The Catechetical Centre Website (www.catecheticalcentre.org) has provided an exciting platform for resources to be shared, not just with the schools but with parents and the wider faith community. The Centre's Website, recently

updated, has been crucial in this time of 'Lockdown'; introducing all of us to a new way of working!

My journey has been an unusual one since retirement. Who would have thought that a whole new vocation to serve God and others would come from such a simple request put to me in June 2016! All in all, my last four years have been stimulating and fulfilling. I have been blessed and encouraged by the faith and commitment of those I work with and those I meet in my work. I am truly honoured to be a part of Team Gate Lodge.

www.catecheticalcentre.org

www.thepopejohnpaulaward.com

Twitter-The Door of Faith @

derrydiocese.org

[https://www.facebook.com/](https://www.facebook.com/DerryDiocesanCC/)

DerryDiocesanCC/

(References: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Christus Vivit of the Holy Father Francis to Young People and to the Entire People of God. Rome 2019 Vatican Publications)



Gate Lodge at St Eugene's Cathedral, home to the Derry Diocesan Catechetical team

On-line information session coming up for...

Masters in Catholic School Leadership by Therese Ferry

THE Derry Diocesan Catechetical Centre, working in Partnership with St Mary's University, Twickenham, offers the Masters in Catholic School Leadership.

This is a post graduate degree dedicated to the professional development and spiritual formation of Catholic school leaders. It is a great opportunity for those currently in leadership roles and those who aspire to, or have an interest in, leadership roles within the Catholic School system.

The Saturday School sessions are hosted by St Mary's College,

Derry. The programme content includes modules in Catholic Education, Leadership and Management, Spiritual and Theological Foundations and Research Methods and Dissertation.

Bishop McKeown, speaking at last year's graduation in the Chapel of St Mary's University, Twickenham, said that the wealth of local research carried out by students would be of great benefit to Catholic Education, because... "Leadership - in school or elsewhere - is challenging. Understandably many shy away from it. But there is a crying

need for those who will take on leadership positions, not because it brings them glory or power but because leadership is a service that can focus a range of creative energies in an often-fragmenting world. It needs a heart that knows how to build teams and bridges. It means having convictions and being able to bring people with you."

Describing the Masters' Programme as, "personally enriching and professionally enlightening", Masters graduate, Stephen Keown, felt that... "as a school leader, the course provided a confidence, knowledge and

understanding upon how faith-based leadership decisions are made."

To date, 20 people have already completed the Masters Programme, through the Derry Centre, whilst another 39 participants are currently at different stages of study.

The next intake will be Autumn 2020. An online information session, facilitated by the programme director, Dr John Lydon, will take place on June 8. Registration is essential. If you are interested in attending please email tferry@derrydiocese.org.



Graduation at St Mary's University, Twickenham



Mass of Thanksgiving at St Mary's College, Derry.

JPII students looking forward to completing Award...

Greenlough JPII student helping others during COVID-19

MY name is Emma Harkin and I am currently a Year 13 student in St Conor's College, Clady, participating in the Pope John Paul II Award.

For my social hours in this Award, I have been helping out at my local GAA Club with the underage trainings and matches. During school hours, I am also a mentor in the junior school, assisting with things such as quizzes and match days as well and helping to answer any questions the child may have about the senior school.

For my parish hours in St Oliver Plunkett's Church, Greenlough, I try to do as much as I can around the chapel, for example, reading at Mass, cleaning the chapel and children's liturgy.

All of this has been very hard due to the current lockdown situation. However, I am still doing my part to help others by making face masks for the NHS through Block Blinds, in Magherafelt, and doing my granny's shopping weekly.

Hopefully, when the current situation passes, I will be back helping in the local community.



Emma Harkin, Greenlough

St Joseph's JPII student looking forward to completing Award

MY Name is Matthew Devine. I am a student at St Joseph's Boy School, Derry and my parish is St Eugene's Derry.

Before lockdown came, I was reading the Prayer of the Faithful at Mass every Saturday night for my parish hours.

For social hours I had a wide mix of tasks, for example, I volunteered at a Christmas fundraiser for the foodbank, but I was mainly getting hours by helping out at a primary school

every Tuesday.

At the primary school, I was helping with pupils' reading as well as getting involved in other activities, such as Arts and Crafts and ICT.

During lockdown, I participated in an on-line retelling of the story of Lourdes. I have thoroughly enjoyed doing the award and I was really disappointed not to be able to finish all my activities this year. Hopefully, we can get it completed next year.



Matthew Devine, St Joseph's College JPII Award participant.

On-line youth ministry gets thumbs up from Greenlough's Clara

MY name is Clara and I am a sixth form student at St Mary's Grammar School, Magherafelt. I am from the parish of Greenlough and have been a member of the folk group in the chapel for a few years. Every Sunday, I play my flute during the Offertory and sing in the choir.

Since starting the Pope John Paul II Award this year, I have become even more involved in the parish. I read every few Sundays

and have also helped with the children's liturgy.

I am really missing doing these things now! However, I have found lots of things to keep me busy during lockdown.

I have been enjoying the Derry youth page and I'm learning lots about my faith through watching the lives and participating in tasks. I have also been delivering groceries to my aunt and cousin who are shielding.



Greenlough JPII parishioner, Clara.

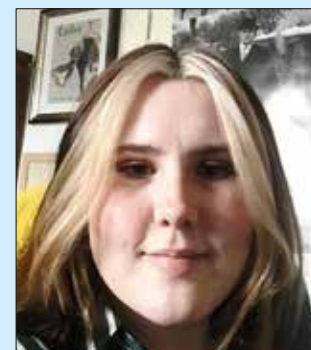
Long Tower JPII parishioner enjoying on-line youth challenges

MY name is Sarah Toland. I am a student at St Cecilia's Secondary School, Derry, and I attend the Long Tower Parish Church.

I am currently doing my Pope John Paul II Award. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, I attended Mass and helped with the Children's Liturgy at the 12 pm Mass on Sundays. I read, occasionally, as well. Due to the Pandemic I am no longer able to do this.

To keep up with my award, I am participating with the online programme run by Derry Youth Ministry. I watch their live videos on Instagram on Monday nights and follow the challenge for that week.

The week that had the theme of Marian pilgrimages, I took part in a live performance of the Story of Lourdes. I am continuing with the programme to achieve my hours for my award.



Sarah Toland, Long Tower

Grandparents and grandchildren encouraged to share their stories



Archbishop Eamon.

IN response to Pope Francis' World Day of Social Communications message, the Primate of All Ireland, Archbishop Eamon Martin has invited grandparents and grandchildren to pray for each other, to share and record their '2020 vision' stories.

Archbishop Eamon extended the invitation after hearing many grandparents mention, during this time of Covid-19 restrictions, "how much they missed the physical company and affection

of their grandchildren - especially their hugs!"

Noting that the relationship between the generations was a favourite theme of Pope Francis, he said: "The Pope often speaks of the bond that exists between younger and older people and for his communications message this year he particular focuses on the importance of sharing stories across the generations".

Encouraged by this, Archbishop Eamon invited grandparents and grandchildren to share their stories of how they were coping during the coronavirus crisis - be that over the 'phone, on social media or video call.

"Perhaps the young people could record and capture this moment for the future," he suggested, adding: "In years to come, when we look back on 2020, we will be sharing with future generations the story of how the world had to pause, to stand still.

"Hopefully we will be able to relate the things that we learned from this pandemic experience. Perhaps we will speak of '2020

vision' in a new way, that 2020 was the year we learned to appreciate more each other - our family, our elderly, our friendships, our front-line workers, our clergy - and all because we had to spend some time apart".

Archbishop Eamon went on to encourage everyone "to read this year's uplifting Communications Day message by Pope Francis, and to reflect on the power of 'the story' in our own journey, and on

those around us, especially during this restricted period".

He concluded: "As Pope Francis says, 'The history of Christ is not a legacy from the past; it is our story, and always timely. It shows us that God was so deeply concerned for mankind, for our flesh and our history, to the point that he became man, flesh and history. It also tells us that no human stories are insignificant or paltry'."



Prayer for Grandparents

by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI

*Lord Jesus,
you were born of the Virgin Mary,
the daughter of Saints Joachim and Anne.
Look with love on grandparents the world over.
Protect them! They are a source of enrichment for families, for the Church and for all of society.
Support them! As they grow older,
may they continue to be for their families strong pillars of Gospel faith, guardian of noble domestic ideals, living treasures of sound religious traditions.
Make them teachers of wisdom and courage, that they may pass on to future generations the fruits of their mature human and spiritual experience.
Lord Jesus,
help families and society
to value the presence and roles of grandparents.
May they never be ignored or excluded,
but always encounter respect and love.
Help them to live serenely and to feel welcomed in all the years of life which you give 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 homeland, where you await all humanity for the great embrace of life without end. Amen!*

In a time of social distancing and virtual celebration of the Mass as the Covid-19 lockdown continues, Long Tower parishioner, Ivor Doherty reflects on...

Celebrating the Feast of St Columba – a Derry tradition since 1897

AS we approach the month of June here in Derry, and Long Tower Parish in particular, we look forward to the annual commemoration of St Columba, June 9, although this year things might be very different. We also remember all the years this commemoration has been taking place since 1897.

It was first initiated by a young priest from Castlederg, affectionately named Fr Willie Doherty. He was appointed in 1890 as Catholic Curate to St Columba's Church, Long Tower, Derry. From the moment he arrived there, he made it his business to familiarise the local people with the story of St Columba, giving lectures using lantern slides in the likes of St Columba's Hall.

The local people were already familiar with the saint but he dedicated himself to giving them a wider knowledge of him. This programme was aimed at making the year 1897, the 1300th anniversary of the death of St Columba, a very important one. Prior to 1897, there was no commemoration of the saint.

There has always been a belief that the Long Tower Church grounds is the location of St Columba's first monastery, but there are others who now believe they have located the spot where St Columba sited his first monastery. This second view, whilst not being in the Long Tower grounds, is very close to them, being in the grounds of the now Lumen Christi College, adjacent to what was believed to have been a 17th century built windmill but now has been scientifically proven, using carbon dating, to be a 12th century monument, namely, the often spoke of real Long Tower.

If one clears away all the buildings between the two sites you are able, in your mind's eye, to imagine the close proximity of the monument to Long Tower Church.

Returning to the commemoration, the early days of June 1897 were a time of great religious fervour. A novena was promoted leading up to the 9th and many arches were constructed in the streets surrounding the church. There were Masses celebrated from five in the morning until noon and during those hours there was a constant stream of communicants, for Fr Willie's intention from the first was to make the celebration Eucharistic.

After the last Mass, the Blessed Sacrament was exposed and enthroned amidst the richest and rarest flowers, and a devotional arrangement of hundreds of candles and ruby lamps as were never before seen within its storied walls. During the entire period, the church was filled with silent adoring crowds and all was hushed stillness.

During the afternoon, there were processions to the Church of all the Catholic school children in the city carrying religious bannerettes, accompanied by their teachers. The pupils of St Columba's Girls' School, during the processional visits to the Blessed Sacrament, sang the rousing centenary hymn to St Columba, written and composed by the organist of the Long Tower, Mr E Conaghan, and a feature of every feast day since. Indeed, that hymn, which permeates to this very day, is now played on other occasions such as Requiem Masses.

Preparations were immediately put in place for the erection of a Calvary monument in the coming year, wherein was to be installed a stone named St Columba's Stone, which lay as an obstruction to the road in St Columba's Wells but was treated with exceptional religious reverence where it lay.

Fr Willie was the guiding light behind all this, so at midnight on June 9, 1897, he, with a group of

earnest, skilled, workmen, began operations for removing the stone from the Wells. The men worked silently and no sound was heard save the clink of the pickaxes. Within a short space of time the boulder was free from the ground and placed on a large hand-barrow. A number of strong, willing young men volunteered their services and immediately proceeded to bear the stone, which is of very considerable weight, to the grounds of Long Tower Church.

This was accomplished after much exertion, especially at the long flight of steps, and as this strange procession entered the chapel yard, Fr Willie proceeded, reciting the Rosary, with a number of people in the grounds and those accompanying the procession of workmen responding. In this way, the vestry was reached and the stone placed within it on the floor, to remain there pending arrangements for insertion in the Calvary Shrine.

Fr Willie then asked those assembled to come into the church and, at about one o'clock in the morning, having again joined in prayer, the Rev gentleman, standing at the altar rails, spoke as follows, "The proceedings of the past week have been a splendid act of faith on the part of Derry, and tonight's work is a most fitting 'Amen' to our novena. You have brought Columba's Stone to the place where he most loved to be himself, and where it is proper that everything belonging to him should be laid - that is, within the shadow of the tabernacle.

"And now the midnight hour has sounded. Thirteen hundred years ago, at this hour last night, Columba lay dying on the altar steps of Iona. 'Raise my hand,' he feebly cried, 'that I may bless you all; higher still, that I may bless my beloved oak groves and those that dwell therein'.



Calvary scene early 60's on June 9. Courtesy of Derry Journal.

"Let us now before we part, turn to the altar and ask Our Lord to let Columba repeat that same blessing tonight. May every annual feast of his be kept in this church as today's has been. That, and that God may reward you all who have helped in these days' work, is my prayer tonight, as it shall be my Mass in the morning".

All were then dismissed with a blessing and the scene at the Long Tower finally closed.

What a privilege it would have been to be present at this event.



Bishop Neil Farren at the St Columba celebration in June 1963



Columban Celebrations June 1963.



June 1964 Columban Novena. Courtesy of Derry Journal.



Tommy Mitchell - Keeper of the well.



Unveiling of the Calvary June 9, 1898



1400th Anniversary Mass of Death of St Columba.



1400th Anniversary Mass in St Columba's Church, Long Tower.



St Columba's Day 2008.



Remains of the original Long Tower.



Remains of Long Tower.



St Columba's Day 2009.



Bishop Donal proceeds to bless St Columba's Well.

Fr Willie Doherty – a biographical snapshot *by Ivor Doherty*

FR Willie Doherty was a native of Castlederg, Co Tyrone. Born in 1861, he was ordained a priest on June 20, 1886 at Maynooth College. After a four year placement as CC at Langfield, he was moved to St Columba's Church, Long Tower, Derry, on April 14, 1890; a move that was to define his life for the next 27 years. He would remain in Derry until 1917, when he would make his last move to Buncrana, until his death on January 25, 1931.

In the report of his death in the 'Derry Journal' of the day, it described him as follows, "In his death the Derry Diocese lost one of its greatest priests - great in whole-souled piety, great in education, great in church building and decoration, great in scholarly attainments, great in his tireless labours for the spiritual welfare of his people, great above all in preaching and promoting at all times and in all places, a living, burning, constant, love for the Blessed Eucharist."

Fr Willie, as he was affectionately known, made a massive impression on the Long Tower Parish. During his first seven years as curate there, he took on the responsibility of organising a great commemoration in the city for the 1300th anniversary of the death of St Columba on the island of Iona.

Up to the year 1890, as one writer put it, "if the name of Columba was familiar, the life and personality of the saint of the Long Tower were as unfamiliar to the great mass of

the people whose privilege it was to worship on the spot where he was wont to pray."

Fr Doherty set himself to change that. With the enthusiasm and singleness of purpose of the pioneers of the great devotions of the past, he began in a way all his own to tell the people of the glorious memories and holy traditions of the Long Tower and to preach devotion to the patriot saint who, over thirteen centuries before, had laid its foundation and consecrated it to God.

To make fuller and closer the people's acquaintance with the life and character of Columba, to arouse a lively religious interest in the sacred associations of the Long Tower, to increase devotion to the Dove of the Tabernacle by spreading devotion to the Dove of the Church...such was Fr Doherty's mission. And to him, it was a mission of love.

Columba was the Saint of the Eucharist, and it was Fr Doherty's wish that Derry's offering to God, in Columba's name and honour, should, through the hands of Mary Immaculate, be Eucharistic also. The realisation of that desire was not long in coming; the success of that mission was speedy and spontaneous.

Evidence for that was the Thirteenth Centenary Celebrations. Those celebrations witnessed in the Long Tower scenes were as leaves plucked from the glorious chapters of its early Christian splendours; the

many Masses, the thousands who received daily Communion, the arched and decorated streets with the altars, the illuminated houses, the magnificent public religious procession, the first that Derry saw since the Penal Days, the Exposition, the open air Gaelic Rosary, and the solemn removal, at the midnight hour of June 9, of St Columba's Stone from the Wells to the Church. It was a splendid culmination of Father Doherty's unwearying labours and unsurpassed gifts of organisation and leadership.

This tireless priest regarded it as but the beginning. Without any flagging of time or effort, he set about the erection of the beautiful Calvary, in which the stone is now enshrined. With warm approval and cooperation of the Bishop, he followed up by demolishing the old Long Tower and raising up on its ruins what Cardinal Logue described as "one of the most beautiful churches in Ireland".

Fr Doherty's labours did not end there. During the winter months of each year he made his people familiar with the history of the church, the lives of our Lord, the Blessed Virgin, and the Saints, and the great Shrines of the Catholic World, through limelight lectures. As a limelight lecturer he had no equal.

At the same time, he took an active interest in education, of which he was a noted exponent, and, in addition to his remarkable work for the children themselves,

was responsible for the magnificent new Boys' School at the Long Tower.

He also had a great love for the poor and infirm, and was responsible for the new wing added to the Nazareth House in Bishop Street.

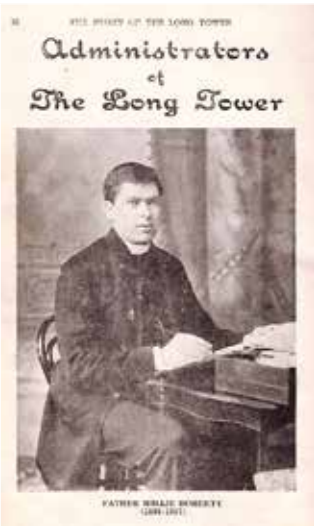
In 1917, with the death of Fr Hugh McMenamin, Fr Doherty was appointed parish priest of Buncrana and here he continued his mission of over a quarter of a century in Derry. He recognised, as did his predecessor, the need for better and larger school accommodation, but the First World War prevented him giving effect to his desires. The moment this obstacle was removed, he threw himself into the work of providing places of education and, to this end, gave Buncrana eight

of the finest schools in Ireland. In fact, there were those who stated that the Buncrana parish was the best schooled parish in the Free State.

No sooner had he completed the schools, when he set about providing what was, indeed, an admitted necessity, the erection of a church in the town. With the willing support of the local population and his bishop, he undertook the erection of what is today St Mary's Oratory, a gem of church art and architecture.

As the years passed and the work increased, as well as the death of his two sisters within a space of six months which he never got over, it all took a toll on his health. Finally, on January 21, 1931, he succumbed to the inevitable. He was buried in Cockhill Graveyard,

in Buncrana, just outside the church doors.



The late Fr Willie Doherty.

Hymn to St Columba...the Long Tower anthem

ONE of the highlights of the annual celebration of St Columba on his Feast Day is the great gusto with which the congregation sing the hymn composed in honour of Derry's patron saint, for the Columban Centenary on June 9, 1897.

The 'Hymn to St Columba' was composed by E Conaghan, who was the Long Tower Church organist on the occasion of the Centenary, and over the years it has become the Long Tower anthem and is one of those hymns that everyone loves singing.

A favourite too of Tyrone-

born, Sr Perpetua McNulty, the Diocesan Director of Music said of it: "Musically, this is a well crafted hymn. Its anacrusis gives it 'a lift' from the very beginning. The melody line of the verse features the rising scale motif, allowing the piece to gather momentum from the outset.

"The chorus retains the opening rhythmic feature making it a great piece to sing and even greater to listen to. It has that gift of building the crescendo and then coming to resolution within a fairly narrow frame. Wonderfully crafted!"

She added: "It became an anthem

associated greatly with the Long Tower where, even to this day, many will wear their oak leaf on the Feast and decorate their houses in honour of St Columba."

Recalling strong memories of the 1997 Columban celebrations and the televised Mass from the Long Tower, Sr Perpetua said: "The people sang that hymn with enormous passion. It is almost in the DNA of the Long Tower people, who have great pride in the claim they have in Columba, and a great pride also in their town, of which Columba is their esteemed patron."

Long Tower nonagenarian prepares to fly flag for fellow Donegal native, St Columba



Bridget Quigley



Nellie Kerlin

THE Feast of St Columba is celebrated in a special way every year in Derry, with people wearing the oak leaf on their lapels in honour of their city's Patron Saint, and the bishop celebrating Mass in the Long Tower Church, before walking in procession down the little Bogside hill to bless the water that flows into St Columba's Well.

This special ceremony of blessing, within an area of housing known as 'The Wells', is a tradition treasured by those who live there, especially Co Donegal born, Mrs Bridget Quigley, who not only welcomes the occasion to proudly display her St Columba flag on the wall of her little home, but to also have a chat in her native Irish tongue with Bishop Donal.

"Tommy Hasson made that flag for me because St Columba and I were both born in Donegal, and I put it up every year on his Feast Day," said the 91-year-old, who was born into a farming family about 30 miles from Gartán, the birthplace of Columba, on the other side of Glenveagh National Park, in the Gaeltacht area of Anagaire (Annagry).

The second youngest of eight, Bridget (nee McCafferty) recalled

that she was only seven years old when her mother died in childbirth: "My father was left to rear the eight of us, three girls and five boys, which wasn't an easy job but, thank God, we got on well. Irish was our first language and we had to learn to pick up the English. It wasn't easy. Even today, I think in Irish first and say my prayers in Irish.

"I left school when I was 14 years old. Daddy died when I was aged about 16. There was nothing there for us when he died, so we immigrated to Scotland. I had several jobs, mostly factory work."

"I remember looking for a job in Scotland," continued Bridget, "and a woman in 'the brew' told me that there was vacancy for making shrouds. I didn't know what that was so I asked her, and she looked at me and said - 'Are you telling me that you don't know what a shroud is?'"

"I asked a neighbour and she said - 'Are you stupid? That's what men wear when they are going out fishing! She was as stupid as I was! I finally found out that it was clothing for the dead when I took the job. I worked at that for about two years and then I went to

America."

Recalling that it was very hard to get jobs at that time, she said: "I was in houses doing domestic work and then worked in factories. Then I met a lovely girl who said to me about getting an office job, so I went to 'the brew' to ask about this and I got a job as a file clerk, which I got on well at. I did that for four years.

"I was in America for about five years. My brother and his wife were in America too, and they said that they were taking a trip back home and asked me to come back with them. So, we went back to Scotland."

She added: "My sister, Nellie, was married to a man called Mickey Kerlin, who came from outside Claudy, in Co Derry, and he wanted to go back to Derry when the Morning Star Bar went up for sale. When he bought it, I went back with them and worked there, and that is where I met my husband, Mickey.

"I never thought I would be living in Derry, but I have no regrets. It's funny that I ended up here as my home townland name is Derrynamansher, which means 'Derry of the oak'. We lived in Long Tower Court first. Mickey was born and reared in St Columba's Wells and when we got this house, he couldn't believe that he was coming back to live in The Wells."

Prayer

A woman of prayer, Bridget likes to keep her Child of Prague statue close to her when sitting in her favourite chair, as it has a special connection with her late husband, who bought her the statue as a gift for one of her birthdays. She also likes to pray to St Therese, whose statue has a special place on her coffee table, and to St Pio.

One of her favourite prayers is the Rosary, which she remembers praying with her family every night



Bridget with Bishop Donal when he visited her home in The Wells last year on the Feast of St Columba

when at home in Derrynamansher, and she has large luminous Rosary beads that she was delighted to receive from Fr Jim Hamilton, who was born in The Wells and went to minister in America after his ordination in 1958. On his return home to Derry, he lived for a while in The Wells before moving to Seven Oaks Care Home.

Bridget misses her good friend, Mary McCallion, another Donegal woman who came from Quigley's Point and had lived a few doors down from her in The Wells

"Mary came to say the Rosary

with me every night," said Bridget, "She died last year and now another neighbour, Bridie Sharkey comes and prays the Rosary with me every day."

Well looked after by her neighbours in The Wells, Bridget also feels blessed to have her sister, Nellie living in Derry as well. Nellie still lives in the Glen Road home she shared with her late husband, Mickey Kerlin. Along with their brother, Phil, who lives in Birmingham, they are the only surviving members of their family. Leaving home for Glasgow as an 18-year-old, after Bridget had made the move, Nellie recalled that she wasn't there long when she met her husband, who came from the townland of Munigh, in the Craighane area of Claudy Parish. After a few months of dating, the pair became engaged and got married the following year, 1951, in Glasgow.

"We came home to Ireland to visit a lot," said Nellie, "and when Mickey's father was getting old, he wanted to come home. I hated to leave Scotland, but we bought the Morning Star Bar, on Waterloo Street, in Derry, and came to live

there. It was a very busy life...we had a lot of lodgers."

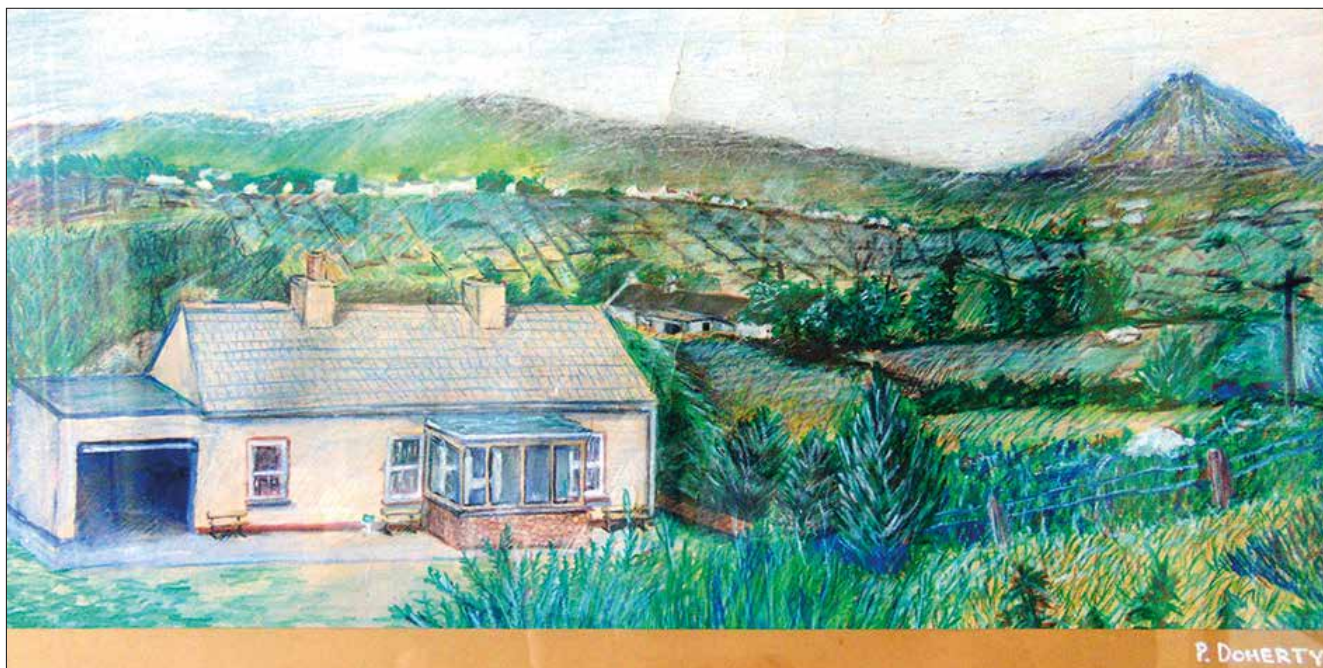
But, no matter how busy they were, Nellie said that the practice of their Catholic faith was always a priority: "Our faith meant a lot to Mickey and me, and he wouldn't open the pub until he had been to Mass. The prayers saved us.

"We were in Lourdes many times, and visited Fatima and Rome a few times too. We went on the Derry Diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes every year and I got to know a lot of priests, who came to visit us often."

While she has a strong devotion to St Jude and St Pio, Nellie's favourite prayer is the Rosary and, like her sister, Bridget, she automatically prays in Irish.

Her love for the Rosary and her Catholic faith goes back to her childhood and the great example of the strong faith of her grandmother, who died at the age of 104 years while praying the Rosary.

"When we were young," she recalled, "granny didn't take it too well if we were late for the Rosary... and if we weren't in for it, we would be as well to emigrate!"



A painting of Bridget and Nellie's home place in Annagry, Co Donegal.

Feast of St Columba 2020

This year, the Mass for the Feast of St Columba, on June 9, will be celebrated virtually by Bishop Donal from St Columba's Church, Long Tower, at 7.30 pm. During

this ceremony, water from St Columba's Well will be blessed and made available to people afterwards.

Cappagh parishioner, Joemon Joseph thanks Bishop Donal and parishes in Diocese as...

Shalom Media wins prestigious award



Joemon Joseph, European event coordinator for Shalom Media.

SHALOM Media has become a growing presence in the world of evangelisation not only in the Derry Diocese and other dioceses in Ireland, but also in other parts of the world, and the impact and quality of its productions have been recognised in its winning of the Gabriel Awards for 2020.

This prestigious Award, recognising the best in film, broadcasting and cross-platform media, is presented by the Catholic Press Association of the United States and Canada, which selected Shalom World as 'the Television Station of the Year' for 2020 from amongst such channels at EWTN, Salt and Light Television, and The Catholic TV Network.

It was also selected for awards in the 'Videos Promoting Attendance in Religious Places' category, with 'The Martyr's Shrine' of 'The Journal', gaining first place, and honourable mentions for its 'Little Douglings', in the 'Children's Narrative-television' category, and for its website, in 'The Best Television Website' category.

The news has delighted Cappagh parishioner, Joemon Joseph, as the Events Coordinator for Shalom Media Europe, who told 'The Net': "With immense gratitude, I thank Lord Almighty for this great achievement. We, in the Shalom World team, are so blessed and joyful for this heavenly approval of our hard work and dedication to be an instrument in helping the Word of God to reach the entire world, through our TV channels within a short span of years".

He continued: "I take this opportunity to thank Bishop Donal McKeown, who was the first to endorse our ministry in Ireland, when we started our productions in 2016. His prayers, blessings and participation in various programs are fondly cherished. On behalf of the entire Shalom World team, I express our sincere gratitude and thank Bishop Donal for all his prayers and support for our works in Ireland".

Within the short period of our works in Ireland", Joemon added:

"I have done many programmes, as programme coordinator, involving parishes of our diocese.

"As part of our association with the Irish Church in organising the World Meeting of Family(WMOF), we did a programme called 'We Are Ready for WMOF', involving parishes in Derry, Omagh and Dungiven.

"We also produced a programme called 'Into the Light', which was a documentary about the Diocesan St Pope John Paul II Award.

"In addition, we encouraged and helped a youth music band to reach millions of people through our TV programs. The 'I AM' band, from Derry, was introduced to us by Bishop Donal and we broadcast their live Christmas concert in 2018".

He went on to note: "With very limited resources, we have carried out major projects like a live telecast of the entire WMOF and we were the official media partner for the World Youth Day in Panama".

Saying that Shalom Media were very much part of, and active in, every diocese of Ireland, Joemon commented: "Our achievements and growth are all by the grace of God Almighty and the support and prayers of many of you".

"Also, through our media ministry", he continued, "we are involved in various other

evangelisation initiatives, like retreats and revival programmes for parishes. Within the past three years, we arranged three-day residential retreats and one-day retreats in various parishes in the diocese. I take this opportunity to thank many parish priests who welcomed us with warm hearts.

"Being part of Cappagh parish, I had full support and encouragement from Fr Kevin McElhannon, and I am so grateful for that.

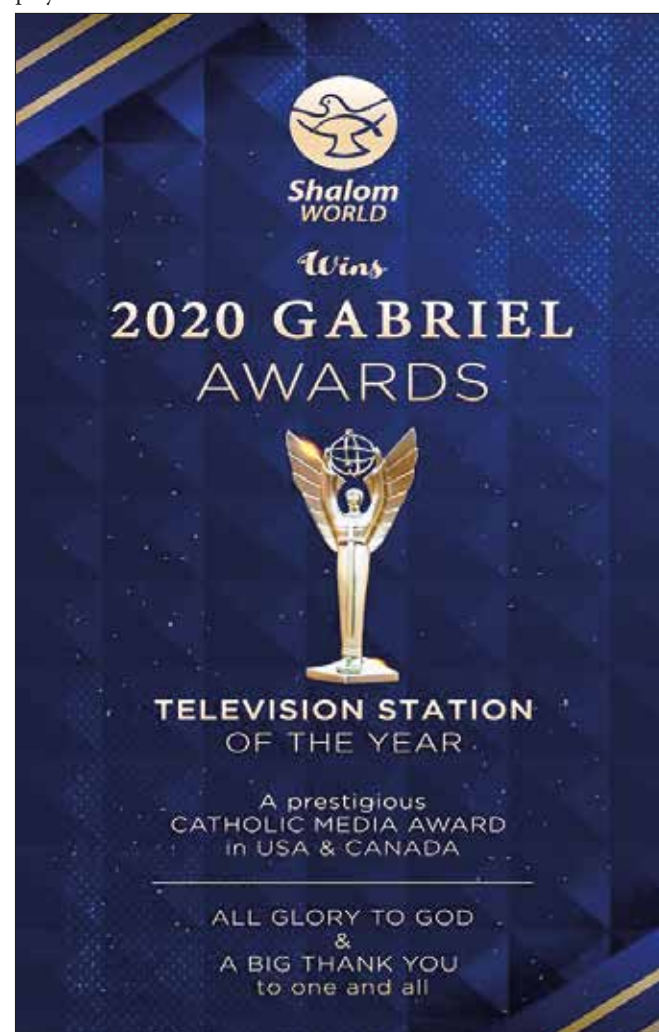
"As part of helping the parishes to enrich their website with thousands of HD quality programmes, we have developed a unique programme called 'Media Gallery', which is already linked to many dioceses and parish websites worldwide. With this link, anyone can visit our programmes through the parish website".

Thrilled to hear that Shalom Media has received a number of awards for the quality of their TV presentation of Catholic news and teaching, Bishop Donal remarked: "I knew them first at a local level through the work of their intrepid Omagh-based team. But only later did I begin to realise just how they have a worldwide role and reputation".

He added: "As we have discovered during lockdown, the media offer great channels for proclaiming the Gospel, bringing good news

stories and offering formation in faith. They are a God-given gift to the Church at this time. I hope and pray that this award will see their

work go from strength to strength, spreading God's Kingdom in a hurting and fragmented world."



Columba Community founder, Fr Neal Carlin, celebrates 80th birthday by Columba Community

THE founder of the Columba Community of Prayer and Reconciliation, Fr Neal Carlin, who established Columba House of Prayer, St Anthony's Retreat Centre, White Oaks Rehabilitation Centre, IOSAS Centre and Celtic Prayer Garden, celebrated his 80th birthday on May 1 and, even amidst the limitations of lockdown, managed a celebration like no other.

Over 40 cars travelled, in convoy, to his home just outside Buncrana, organised by his sister-in-law Catherine to mark such a special occasion in tribute to a man so loved by family, community and friends from near and far.

The socially distanced gathering saw many sing 'Happy Birthday' to a shocked and surprised Fr Neal, who never expected to see so many people, especially this year due to the coronavirus.

In response to witnessing the cars festooned with balloons, Fr Neal said: "I want to give you all a hug but you know that is out of the question. It is great to see you all here. This took some organisation...I was wondering why Brendan cut the lawn the other day."

The sun shone as Fr Neal proceeded to give thanks and bless everyone who attended, before the

cavalcade departed, saying: "Just as it rains with water from Heaven, I will give you all a blessing".

Fr Neal and The Columba Community have been instrumental in their works of prayer, reconciliation and healing in not only Derry and Donegal, but also in the lives they've touched throughout Scotland, Europe and further afield in America, spanning over 40 years.

It was his courage to 'Wait on the Lord' (Isaiah 40:31) that has brought prophetic teaching, blessings and healing to those with whom He ministers to, in building and sustaining Basic Christian Community; a new model for the Church.

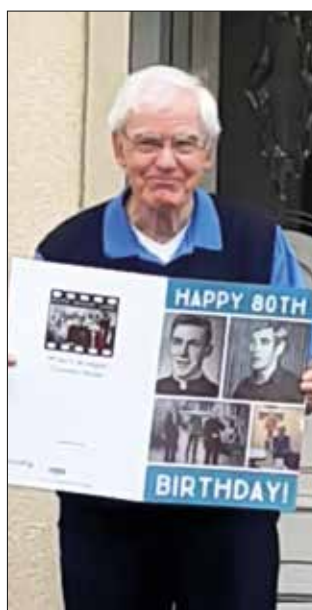
The Columba Community continue "to joyfully come together as a group of individuals believing and celebrating in the power of Jesus Christ for mutual support and to minister to other people", as outlined in their mission statement.

Even amidst lockdown restrictions, all of the centres continue to provide prayerful support and ministry to those who seek Jesus' healing presence in their lives, reaching out to the lonely, marginalised and most vulnerable in society, that they may find peace and solace through

their faithful ministry.

Fr Neal sees this kairos time as an opportunity and an ideal time to accept Jesus' invitation to be refreshed by His Spirit in engaging in private, contemplative prayer, for the Lord says "The Spirit blows where He wills". (John 3:8)

More information on The Columba Community can be found at www.columbacomunity.com and also through the Facebook pages of each of the individual centres.



Fr Neal Carlin on his 80th birthday.



Fr Neal with members of the Columba Community at St Anthony's Retreat Centre, prior to lockdown.



Fr Neal enjoying the birthday wishes of those who took part in drive-by to mark his 80th birthday.

Making a special connection with a St Therese Novena speaker five years ago, a Derry mother shares how...

The power of The Little Flower helps heavy hearts blossom again



Sarah Downey.

A special experience towards the close of the St Therese Novena was shared with 'The Net' by a Derry mother, who has found this a particularly difficult year regarding the anniversary of the death of her eldest son.

Sarah Downey's first-born, Kevin died from a heart attack at 23 years of age, on May 7, 2013. She had gone into his bedroom that morning when he hadn't turned off his alarm clock, and found him lifeless in his bed.

The shock and deep grief that this visited upon her was such that Sarah doubts she would have made it through without the strength that her Catholic faith gives her, and it was this that led to her coming to one of the talks during the St Therese Novena a couple of weeks after Kevin's second anniversary in May 2015, where she again found the loving hand of God at work in her life.

Living out at Skeoge, in Glendale, within the Three Patrons Parish, Sarah heard people talking about the Novena and decided to go along to experience it for herself.

Saying that this visit, five years ago, had been her first time at the Novena, she continued: "The speaker, on the night I went, was Elma Walsh, whose teenage son, Donal, had died from cancer on May 12, 2013, five days after Kevin's death, and she shared her story of grief.

"It was such an emotional night for me and I was crying, though hearing Elma's story really helped me. I remember Bishop McKeown, who had just come to our Diocese the year before, taking me over to meet Elma as I was one of the first out of the Cathedral afterwards. We talked and she gave me such a warm hug. She told me, 'I know that you are not going to lie under your cross; you are going to do things.'

"And she was right, because I have been working on a book of spiritual poetry, which I am getting published this year. I have always written poetry, even as a child. Writing is a brilliant therapy; it gives me a great release.

"My book of poetry is called 'My

Rainbows' and I am dedicating it to my son, Kevin. He would have been 30 last July. He loved writing too. He wrote songs and had an album in SoundCloud the year before he died. He wanted to be Derry's Johnny Cash/Eminem."

In the years that followed, Sarah didn't make it back to the Novena to The Little Flower, but this year, she said: "I really wanted to go to it but we couldn't and I didn't know that it was on-line until it was at the close, when I was telling my friend, Marie Healy about something amazing that had happened.

"A few weeks before, Marie had given me a bunch of yellow roses in a beautiful vase for Mother's Day. I have a yellow Rose bush in my garden that I bought last year and, about four weeks ago, when I was out doing some gardening I noticed one of its branches lying on the ground. It looked dead, but I decided to put it in the vase Marie had given me, thinking 'you never know', while at the same time thinking 'I'm off my head', as it wasn't the time of year to expect it to come back.

"About three weeks later on a Saturday morning, I was chatting to Marie on the phone when I noticed that not one, but two yellow roses had come out on the branch! We started to cry because we have both suffered a lot of loss in our lives and we just thought that this was so special. I could hardly believe what I was seeing.

"Then Marie told me that the St Therese Novena Mass for the Deceased had been on that morning. I had missed it, but Marie mentioning it reminded me of that occasion, five years ago, when I had heard Elma Walsh's talk, and I got an overwhelming feeling to contact her. I couldn't remember her first name, but when I mentioned this to another friend I had messaged to share about the two yellow roses, she reminded that it was Elma and told me that if I Googled the Donal Walsh Foundation, I would get contact details for her. I was so happy to hear this."

Finding the website, Sarah messaged it with her contact number and asked for Elma to ring her, as she had something to share with her.

"I wanted to tell her about the roses," she said, adding: "I explained who I was and that I still had Donal's Memorial Card that she had given me at the Novena in Derry; I have put it on my May altar every year since then. It has got a bit battered, but I still put it up.

"A couple of days later, Elma rang me and we had a lovely talk, and we have been messaging each other since. She said that the two roses was a sign from our two sons; their way of letting us know that they are close. Elma was really amazed at this and told me that she

loves roses, and sent me a picture of her garden full of them."

Saying that she and Elma have arranged to meet in Knock next year, on May 6, for Donal's anniversary Mass, which is now celebrated there every year, Sarah continued: "It is so good to be in contact now with Elma; it just feels like it was meant to be with the way everything happened.

"It has really given me a lift because this has been a very difficult year, especially when the cemetery was closed because of the coronavirus and I couldn't visit Kevin's grave."

In her 48 years on this earth, Sarah has experienced much heartache. Born in the Rossville Flats in the Bogside in 1971, she comes fifth in a family of four girls and three boys.

"I have only one brother left now," she said, recalling: "My other two brothers died by suicide. Liam was 47 years old when he died in June 2013, six weeks after my son, Kevin died, and Paddy died in 1992; he was only 25."

Saying that she could not have coped without her faith to fall back on, Sarah is ever grateful to her mother and grandmother for their example: "My granny, Mary Agnes always had a May Altar. I would have stayed with her quite often at the weekend. She was definitely a very strong faith influence on me. She died when I was about 11 years old."

Rosary

Recalling having convulsions as a baby, she said: "I've been told that I was near death a couple of times, but neighbours brought me round. The thing about this is that I have a memory of being in Our Lady's arms as a baby and I have grown up to have a very strong devotion to Our Lady. I say the Rosary every morning and night, and I also try to say it around 3 pm, but that doesn't always happen. I have a great faith in the power of the Rosary.

"My mother, God rest her soul, brought us up well in the faith. She wouldn't have been a big Mass goer, probably because she didn't have the time with seven wanes, but I remember her taking the Legion of Mary Statue into the house when it was going around, and us saying the Rosary. We had lots of holy pictures in the house as well. I remember our names were all filled in on the Sacred Heart picture."

Another positive influence on Sarah's faith development was a lady called Delia McFarland, who was one of the leaders during her time in the Briginis.

"Delia had a deep faith," said Sarah, "and she instilled a love for it in us too. I think it was through being in the Briginis that I ended up in the junior Legion of Mary in my teenage years. I was in this for about three years, until I was about



Sarah's May Altar in her garden, where she has placed Donal Walsh's Memorial Card every year since his mother gave it to her at the St Therese Novena she spoke at in 2015.

14 years old. I loved going around visiting the old people and helping them; going for their groceries."

She continued: "My faith has kept me going through so much since I was a child. I was pregnant with Kevin when I was 17 years old, and his father was in prison. So, I was on my own as a young mother. Kevin was born in 1989, in the midst of The Troubles, and Patrick was born in 1993.

"Between 1992 and 1995, I lost my brother from suicide, my mammy and my partner, who died in 1995. I had a breakdown after that due to all the losses; I was only 24 years old. When I look back, I probably should have been in hospital but, sadly, I didn't get that help. My mother's brother, Michael Carlin was in the Legion of Mary and he was very good to me after mammy died. He always visited me and was a great help to me. I always had great family support. My eldest sister, Marie was like a mini-mother to us."

Sharing some of the difficulties she had had with her son, Kevin, Sarah said: "He was a lovable rogue but he suffered from addiction, which took us down a lot of not nice paths watching him, God rest him. It was almost like a cancer."

"There were a lot of difficult times," she added, "and I remember having priests over to bless my house, because I wondered what was going on. In 2010, I was attacked and it was horrific. After that, I tried to take my own life. It was a miracle that I survived, but I am glad to be here today. I was in ICU for about 10 days and, since, I have always known that it wasn't my time. I just kept praying. I didn't want to put my family through that again. I should have known the pain that it would cause them because I had experienced it myself when my brothers died by suicide. But I am stronger now, in

my faith and mind. I am a different person and a firm believer in the saying, 'What doesn't kill you, makes you.'"

Sarah went on to talk about how, in 2012, she lost her first grandchild: "The baby was a wee boy, Patrick Shea, who was born asleep on Easter Saturday, and it was a year after that that my son, Kevin passed away. He was a big, handsome fella. He had been drug free at the time and was doing brilliant in his life. He had turned a corner and was back living with me.

"I took comfort from him dying at home and not lying on the street or in prison. I don't think any mother who loses a wane ever gets over it; you just learn to accept it, but life is never the same. Again, it is my faith that gets me through. There's a saying the Carlin family that my mammy always said... 'While I have breath, I have hope'.

But a huge ray of sunshine filled her world when her granddaughter, Emily Louise, was born six months after Kevin died.

"She is Patrick's daughter and she has been a saving grace in my life," smiled Sarah, saying: "I call her 'My Flower'. She was such a great distraction for me. Emily is six years old now and she is just amazing. I love being a grandmother; it's the best experience in the world. There is no love like it."

Another wonderful gift in her life was the opportunity to go on a Cursillo weekend, which she went on in November 2015 and loved.

"I had wanted to go on a Cursillo weekend for years and then, in 2015, a lady I knew, who had had a lot of tragedy in her life, said that she was going on one", recalled Sarah, adding: "I mentioned that that was something I would love to do and she told me that she would get a form from Pat Ramsay, and

that's how it finally happened.

"My weekend was very emotional. I let go off a lot of pain that I had been carrying for years, and got a lot of healing. It was like washing out your soul. There were a lot of laughs too and by the end of the weekend, I didn't want to leave Termonbacca. It was a great weekend. I was exhausted afterwards but in a good way. It was like I had peace. I think it was the only time that I had let myself have peace of mind. I learnt a lot from the sharing of others. I just loved it."

Having the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal living within Galliagh has been a blessing too, noted Sarah: "Fr Columba said the Mass for Kevin's second anniversary in our house and has been amazing. He told my son, Patrick, that he had had only one brother as well, and that he had been knocked down by a drunk driver while out on his bike. He told Patrick that his door would always be open to him, so Patrick always visits him and this has been a great support".

She added: "Fr Columba also gave me my first statue of Our Lady of Fatima, which I love, and now I have it in my May Altar every year."



The yellow roses that, against the odds, bloomed for Sarah on the day of the Mass for the Deceased during the St Therese Novena.

Encouraging the faithful to consider ways of helping the young renew the Church, when he spoke at The Little Way Novena, Bishop Donal asked...

“Can we find ways to till the ground to let new little flowers bloom?”



Bishop Donal with Fr Paul Farren, administrator of St Eugene's, and Fr Patrick Lagan, CC, at the close of the annual St Therese Novena.

AT the close of the 2020 Novena to St Therese of Lisieux, Bishop Donal asked for prayer that “our Church communities will go beyond asking, ‘How can we hand on faith to young people?’ – important though that question may be – and also ask, ‘How can we, of this generation, help our young people to renew the Church?’”

Saying that holiness was a call to

people of all ages, “not just for the end of life”, he highlighted that St Therese had died at the age of 24, while St Bernadette of Lourdes had died at 35, and Derry-born nun, Sr Clare Crockett and St Catherine of Siena both died aged 33.

“These are not plaster cast figures from the past whom we can admire,” remarked Bishop Donal, adding: “They are flesh and blood statements that ordinary people

can do extraordinary things - and that all church renewal ultimately comes from the young, not from the old.

“My generation may have messed up many things as we stammered and stumbled through the end of one way of being Church. We may be a sort of sorbet generation between two strong courses. Or perhaps we are the springtime generation – pulling up the weeds, tilling the ground, sowing seed for a future that we will probably not see. But if we are not courageous workers, trusting in the Lord of the harvest, then we will have failed in our mission. Our job is to hold the ground so that new shoots of God-given renewal can spring up, as they have always done”.

He continued: “Down through history, young people have given all for Christ. We easily think of Columba, Columbanus, Francis, Dominic, Ignatius, Edmund Rice and waves of Irish missionaries in every generation. But while

men may have championed truth and mission, women have been champions of the God of tenderness. Great strong women figures have included Brigid and the Irish women saints, young St Clare of Assisi, St Catherine of Siena, St Therese, and founders of religious families such as Catherine McAuley, who gave us the Sisters of Mercy. Most of the creative and rebellious initiatives in education and health care came from dedicated women whose passion would not allow them to merely serve the past, its assumptions and its structures.”

Referring to Pope Francis’ document to young people of this generation, in which the Holy Father issued a number of strong challenges, Bishop Donal noted: “His words are especially valid now that this pandemic has opened the door to a new way of being society and Church.

“He wrote to young people just over 12 month ago, ‘Avoid

the paralysis of the living dead, who have no life because they are afraid to take risks, to make mistakes or to persevere in their commitments... Don’t go through life anaesthetised or approach the world like tourists.... Please, don’t take early retirement.’ (Christus Vivit 142-3 – Christ is alive)”

“That is what young saints in every generation have always done,” remarked Bishop Donal, adding: “In the ashes of collapsed certainties, they have seen a rich soil for new life. In this pandemic, more space has been created for silence where young people can hear better where their hearts are calling them, where they can be

true to themselves, where they can become who God calls them to be and not merely a copy of someone else. Those great young saints from the church’s history have been able to blend silence and prayer with mission and passion”.

Pointing out that St Therese had known ‘Christ is alive’, he remarked that that was why she had blossomed, “quietly in her own short lifetime and powerfully since her death”.

Concluding, he asked: “Can we find ways to till the ground to let new little flowers bloom in our garden?” That has always been God’s little way. Following it can make saints of us all.”

“The Lord will work wonders for me which will surpass my desires” (St Therese of Lisieux)

Little Saint of Lisieux as close as ever

by Roseann O’Donnell



THIS quotation from “The Story of a Soul” reflects the trust that St Therese had in the goodness and the mercy of God who loved her. It formed the theme for this year’s

Novena to St Therese, held in St Eugene’s Cathedral, Derry

The annual Novena to St Therese is one of the highlights of the parish year at St Eugene’s Cathedral, Derry. Hundreds of people fill the Cathedral each year, to honour the saint, to pray for a multitude of intentions and to benefit from the spiritual nourishment to be found in the daily Eucharist and in the talks given by speakers from home and abroad.

Each year, the guest speakers include priests, religious, Catholic lay people (both married and single), as well as men and women from the other Christian denominations.

In the past, the Novena has featured such well-known

speakers as John McAreavey, (the young widower of the late Michaela Harte; Martina Purdy, the former television news reporter who joined the Adoration Sisters in Belfast, and Nuala O’Loan, formerly the Police Ombudsman for NI.

This year, however, during the Novena, the Cathedral was devoid of pilgrims. The societal norms had changed - at least for now - and the people were compelled to stay at home.

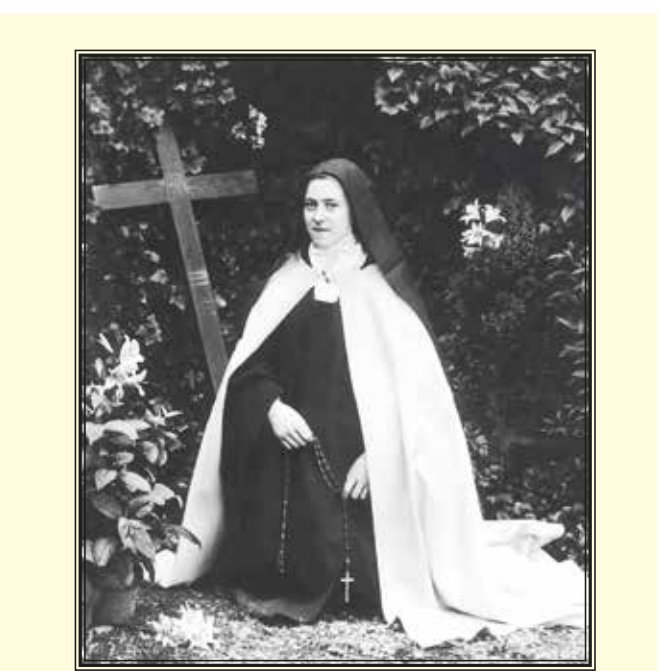
However, the Novena went ahead, led by Bishop Donal and the priests of the Cathedral Parish. Each day began with the Novena Masses at 6.30 and 10 am, followed by the Evening Devotions at 7.30 pm, and included the weekly prayer programme at the

Cathedral being delivered during the Coronavirus.

Each night, Bishop Donal brought us into the gentle presence of Mother Mary and her beloved Son, with the Rosary and a period of Eucharistic Adoration.

On the second weekend, the Mass at 10 am was offered for the beloved dead and, on Sunday, May 17, the closing prayers were offered at 3 pm.

It was a different kind of experience this year, but there can be no doubt that the little Saint of Lisieux was just as close as ever, and that the God of Wonder and Compassion was listening and loving and waiting to surprise us with blessings beyond all our deepest desires



St Therese of Lisieux reflections...

- “I seek the beauty of Heaven. I was ready to become a prisoner in order to give this heavenly beauty to other souls.”
- “I love you, Jesus, and bear in mind the words of St John of the Cross: ‘The least act of pure love is of more value than all the other works put together.’”
- “I am always discovering in [the Gospels] new lights and hidden mysterious meanings. I know and I have experienced that ‘the Kingdom of God is within us.’”
- “He is compassionate and filled with gentleness, slow to punish, and abundant in mercy, for He knows our frailty, He remembers we are only dust.”
- “For me, prayer means launching out from the heart toward God; a cry of grateful love from the crest of joy or the trough of despair; it is a vast supernatural force that opens out my heart and binds me close to Jesus.”
- “The greatest of all is that He has shown me my littleness and how, of myself, I am incapable of anything good.”
- “Our Lord has granted me the grace never to fear the conflict; at all costs I must do my duty.”
- “I am not dying, I am entering into Life...”
- “Each time I needed food for the souls in my charge, I always found my hands filled. Had I relied on my own strength, I should very soon have been forced to surrender.”
- “It is so wonderful to think that God is really just, that God takes into account our weakness and our frailty.”

This Year... A Reader’s reflection on St Therese Novena 2020

THIS year, the Cathedral was almost empty. The seats, normally filled with hungry souls, were bare. The rustle of leaflets, the soft, whispering voices, the shuffle of eager feet on tiles - all were silent.

This year, the people stayed at home. This year, the priest and our Bishop took the place of the people and sent up our prayers to God in our name. But the people of God were praying also. We watched on laptops, we prayed on ‘phones, we listened on iPads. The prayers went up and the prayers were heard.

This year, there was no mountain of prayer to be climbed, casting its

sacred shadow over the foothills of steady, daily devotion. Instead, the Novena quietly took shape around the daily regimen of prayer and worship already in place to sustain the people of God in our various places of refuge. This year, we watched as our priests and our Bishop set out on our behalf, sowing, as they went, comforting words of encouragement and hope.

This year, the Novena was subsumed, without fuss, into the new, gentle rhythm of Cathedral devotion. This year, it seemed to emulate the steady, quiet rhythm

of Carmelite prayer that was lived and loved by the great-little saint whose name it invoked.

Was the Novena less potent, all because we did not put on our coats and go out into the weather and the traffic? Did we lose grace because we stayed in our living rooms and kitchens to watch and pray online?

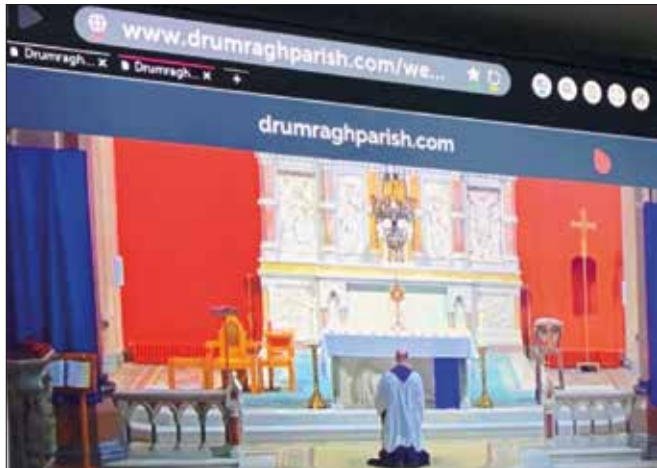
Let us ask St Therese, the little Saint of Lisieux, who knew the God of Wonder, who knew that He surrounded her in the hidden life of Carmel where He sheltered her, carried her as a beloved child and, with powerful generosity,

surpassed her greatest desires. What would she tell us?

If you believe that Therese can hear your prayers, you are compelled to believe in the God who grants her requests on your behalf. You are compelled to believe that God can find you where you are, surround you with love, pick you up, hold you close, hear your prayers, dry your tears and mend your broken heart. You are compelled to believe that, this year and for all the ages, He can do wonders and make you whole, surpassing all your greatest desires.

Drumragh Parish Pastoral Council chair, Dympna Kelly, reflects on how clergy and parishioners have been...

Turning challenge of lockdown into time of finding new ways to engage in parish life



PROVIDING best pastoral care within the limitations imposed by health and government guidelines is the main challenge at this time. This becomes particularly evident when someone dies. For priests, meeting the pastoral needs of the family, I'm sure, is always something of a balancing act as everyone and every family is different, and with that comes different expectations. Now, this has become even trickier.

We experienced this as a family first-hand, at the end of March, when my mother-in-law died. Her funeral took place in Sacred Heart Church, Omagh, on March 29 and there were 10 of us in attendance. The family circle is small but the announcement, two days earlier by the Irish government, introducing the 2 km limitation on travel meant that the sons-in-law and grandchildren in Dublin were unable to attend.

While it then became easier to comply with the regulations around numbers at funerals, even the immediate family support which would ordinarily have been there was absence. At that time, when we were new to lockdown, everyone was being more cautious and adhering strictly to the guidelines. Neighbours and close friends lined the road near the house and the cemetery, but the numbers were small. At recent funerals, these numbers seem to be swelling as people are being more relaxed, maybe even a little complacent.

Meeting the expectations of the family within the ever-changing environment has never been more difficult when even the practicalities of meeting a family require careful orchestration.

The pastoral care of schools has had to be adapted to reflect the current circumstances. The usual parish programme of First Eucharist and Confirmation is on hold and we have had to find other ways of reaching the children and their parents. On May 10, one of the parish Sunday

Masses was especially for P4 First Communicants and their families. The children prepared for this by sending in a drawing representing the sacrament and this created a very colourful addition to our Facebook page at the start of May. A teacher from each of the four parish schools took part in the liturgy and represented the children who could not be there.

For those who should have received the Sacrament of Confirmation at the end of March, we similarly invited them in a special way to the midday Mass on Pentecost, recognising that, not only has their Confirmation ceremony been postponed, but also they have been unable to attend the Fan the Flame Mass in Derry.

In preparation for Pentecost, as a parish we prayed the Spiritans' Holy Spirit Novena, calling for the gifts of the Holy Spirit to fill all of us and the P7 children in a special way. The priests have celebrated year end and leavers' Masses for their schools via the parish webcam, often with representatives from the schools present. They are becoming familiar with, though maybe not comfortable with, sending video messages to the schools and letters to the children preparing for sacraments. The children will be able to look back on these in years to come as hopefully a unique year.

The normal monthly routine of visiting the sick and housebound has also had to change, as they have been highlighted as vulnerable individuals. Telephone calls have had to replace the knock on the door and this is appreciated by those older parishioners and their families.

The closure of the cemeteries was very painful for many individuals who were unable to continue their usual visits to the graves of loved ones but, thankfully, the cemeteries were reopened a number of weeks ago. Even Cemetery Sunday will need to take a virtual slant this year, when the priests will bless the

graves and parishioners will join remotely from their homes.

Technology

All of this would have been so much more difficult without technology. Church webcams allow those who cannot be physically present at funerals to participate from their homes. Of course, this is equally important for weekday and weekend Masses, and other liturgies.

In the Sacred Heart Church, we have also introduced a Polish Mass on Sundays at 1 pm. Now the Polish-speaking community have access to a Diocesan weekly Mass in their own language. Pre-pandemic, there may have been one available at a location close to them only once a month, so they actually have the opportunity to pray together more often in Polish.

The Derry Diocesan youth team has been holding regular meetings with the Pope John Paul II students and suggesting ways in which they can remain involved and build up their hours. Within the parish, we also invited the students to assist with the Rosary in the Church each evening. One of the students, accompanied by a parent, responded to the prayers of the Rosary which was led by one of the priests. Often the student or parent also proclaimed the Reading and Psalm at the Mass which followed. For many of the students and their parents, this was their only opportunity during the lockdown to physically be present at Mass and it was wonderful to be able to offer this to them.

In some ways, there has been no merit in 're-inventing the wheel', so we have tapped into events which other parishes have been doing. For example, we encouraged parishioners to become involved in the Lough Derg Virtual Pilgrimage on May 1, broadcast from St Eugene's. Through the night, one of our parish families remained in the Sacred Heart Church for the pilgrimage and represented all those in our parish praying at home. For the pilgrimage at the end of May, Drumragh Parish again joined the pilgrimage, this time as one of the parishes leading a station. We were delighted to be part of this initiative and we are grateful to our young people who led this.

Many people have found new ways of engaging with the parish. For many of us, our routines, in as much they exist, are very different. The silver lining in this is that parishioners who have been unable to be as involved as they may have liked in the past, are now able to do so. A very practical example of this is in the cleaning

of the Church now that it has reopened. We planned carefully for this and sent out a call for volunteers to help. We had a great response and were able to open the Church as soon as we were given the go-ahead. It is so important to recognise that this wouldn't have been possible without the assistance of parishioners who give willingly of their time.

In some cases, the usual band of volunteers were unavailable as they are still advised to stay at home as much as possible, but

this gives opportunities for others to become involved. Hopefully, this involvement will continue long past the pandemic stage and we will have new blood involved in the daily life of the parish long into the future. The Order of Malta has made many of its volunteers available to us. Their presence provides a reassurance, particularly to those who are venturing out for the first time in weeks, and the volunteers are happy to have a socially distanced chat.

In our busy lives, it is seldom that we have the time or take the time to reassess, to look at what we are doing and why we are doing it. The past couple of months, filled as it has been with challenges, have also presented space to consider our practices. When we eventually emerge, may we hold onto those things we have learned to appreciate once more, both individually and as a parish.

(Dympna is Chair of Drumragh Parish Pastoral Council)



Drumragh Padre Pio evenings

ON May 25, the 133rd anniversary of the birth of Padre Pio of Pietrelcina, the parish of Drumragh, in Omagh, celebrated its inaugural monthly Mass in honour of St Pio, via the webcam.

At the end of Mass in Sacred Heart

Church, Fr Chris McDermott CC gave a blessing with a relic of the revered Capuchin.

The next monthly St Pio Mass will take place on Tuesday, June 23, at 7.30 pm, with the recitation of the Rosary beforehand at 7 pm.

Petitions can be emailed in advance to epayersdrumragh@outlook.com. These will be printed and placed before the altar.

The webcam can be accessed via <http://www.churchservices.tv/drumraghparish>

Eangach

Ár nDúchas

An Spiorad Naomh

Níor imigh an Críost as radharc an tsaoil ar fad nuair a chuaigh corp agus anam sna Flaithis ar ais de rad. Ach thuirling a Spiorad ar phobal a Eaglaise beo le fanacht mar fhuinneamh is mar thuiscint a phobail go deo.

Is é an Spiorad seo a ruaig an eagla ar shiúl is thug misneach is dóchas don bhuíon seo, beag i gciall, le héirí amach os comhair pobail nár chreid go fóill is teachtaireacht Dé a chur rompu mar bhratach sróil.

Thuirling sé orthu agus iad i seomra istigh ag coinneáil comhludair le chéile agus iad uilig ag guí, gur pléascadh an doras ar oscailt os comhair an tsaoil agus d'imigh an Eaglais amach ag insint a scéil.

Níl eagla fágtha i saol na hEaglaise feasta; níl ach maithiúnas ann agus pobal ag iarraidh a bheith sásta, nuair a tharlaíonn sacraimint bheo i lár an lae, go bhfuil an Spiorad dár gceangal le hÍosa Críost é féin.

(Brúitíní Creidimh. Buíochas le Foilseacháin Ábhair Spioradálta.)

Don Tríonóid Naofa

In ainm an Athar a fuair an bua, agus an Mhic a d'fhulaing an Pháis. A Spioraid Naomh, bí dár neartú, is a Mhaighdean ghlórmhar, bí 'nár dtriall.

(Ár bPaidreacha Dúchais 348. Buíochas le Foilseacháin Ábhair Spioradálta.)

Amhráin Dóchais



D'aistrigh Breandán Ó Doibhlin, sagart de chuid Dheoise Dhoire, leabhar Íseáia Fáidh ón Eabhrais go Gaeilge. Nuair a bhí an obair idir lámha aige d'fhoilsigh Veritas dánta as Íseáia 40–55 i leabhrán beag a raibh léaráidí ann le Steven Hope, Geordie óg as Newcastle upon Tyne a bhí ag obair le Veritas. Cuireadh an leabhrán beag amach le blas a thabhairt don léitheoir ar an leabhar iomlán a bhí le teacht. Seo cúlra na ndánta mar a mhínigh Breandán é féin é:

Ní gá ach súil a chaitheamh ar na dánta seo chun aibhléis na fíorfhilíochta a mhothú iontu;

dánta dóchais agus suaircis iad, go stíl álainn a bhfuil dul na reitrice uirthi go minic, atmasfaer lán síochána, agus glór láidir muiníneach an údair ag sonadh tríd ó thús go deireadh. Dia agus daoine is ábhar dá cheol, agus go deimhin is minic a deir sé gurb iad focail Dé féin atá ina bhéal aige.

Tá le tuiscint uaidh gur dream brúite brónach a lucht éisteachta, iad ina sclábhanna i bhfad óna mbaile dúchais féin, agus gur chuige a labhrann sé, dóchas agus meanmain agus muinín a chur iontu arís. Is léir freisin gur dánta iad a bhaineann le cultúr

atá difriúil go maith ón saol agus ón chultúr a bhfuil muid féin cleachtach orthu. Mar sin féin, is dócha go n-aithneoidh gach éinne againn píosaí cainte thall agus abhus a chualamar cheana.

Cnuasach filíochta é seo a cuireadh isteach le scríbhinní Íseáia agus atá le fáil anois ins na caibidlí atá uimhrithe ó 40 go 55 de réir an chórais atá againne inniu. 'Leabhar Shólás Israel' a tugtar go minic ar an chnuasach seo, de thairbhe an ábhair agus an dearcadh dóchasach atá le fáil ann.



Fuascailt Iarúsailéim

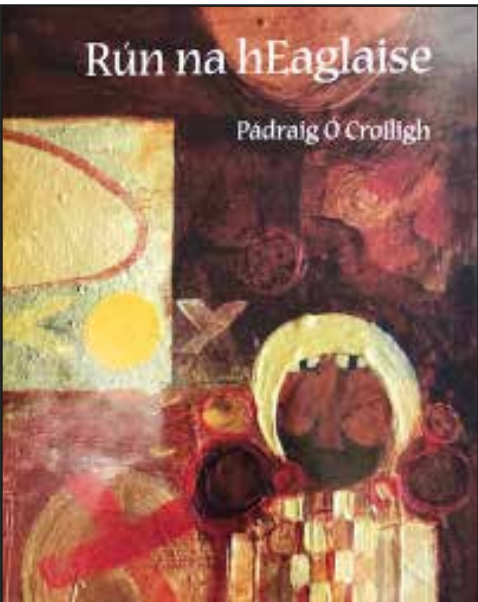
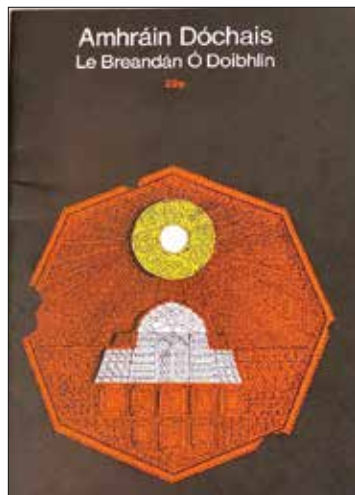
(Íseáia 52: 7–10)

Nach álainn ar na sléibhte cosa an té a bhfuil dea-scéala leis, síocháin á craoladh aige, maitheas á fhógairt aige, fuascailt á craoladh aige, á rá le Síón:
“Tá do Dhia tar éis teacht i réim”.

Éist! Tá do lucht faire ag ardú a nglór, tá siad ag liúirigh le háthas in éindigh, óir is léir dóibh mar bheadh súil le súil an Tiarna ag filleadh ar Shíón.

Scairtígí amach le háthas, a bhallóga Iarúsailéim! mar tá an Tiarna ag tabhairt sólais dá mhuintir, tá sé ag fuascailt Iarúsailéim.

Tá an Tiarna ag nochtaí a láimhe naofa os comhair súile na gcínocha go léir, agus feicfidh críocha uile na talún beart tarrthála ár nDé.



An Eocairist: Rún na hEaglaise

Baineann an Eaglais úsáid as arán agus fíon san Aifreann, giotaí de bhéile coitianta ag aimsir Chríost. An choitiantacht sáraithe ag focail na hEaglaise, ag focail Chríost, go ndéantar dó Críost ina dhuine agus ina Dhia. Léiríonn sé sin an cuireadh atá inár láthair, cuireadh le teachtaireacht agus saol Chríost a chur i bhfeidhm ar choitiantacht an tsaoil i ndomhan s'againn féin. Cuimhnigh gur ag an Suipéar Dheireanach a nigh sé cosa na n-aspal, ag iarraidh orthu grá a bheith acu dá chéile agus cúram a ghlacadh dá chéile. Nach iontach

nár cuireadh an píosa sin den scéal isteach i ngach Aifreann, seachas ar an Déardaoine Naofa amháin? Ach ós rud é go bhfuil Dia i láthair, caithfidh an cuireadh a ghlacadh le hamharc thar an choitiantacht agus thar an réaltacht shimplí go dtí gnúis Dé féin, mar bharr ar achan rud dá bhfuil ar an domhan nó san Eaglais féin.

Ar bhealach tugann searmanas mar Bheannacht na Naomhshacraiminte cuireadh dúinn amharc anonn trasna theorainn na réaltachta agus thar

theorainn na coitiantachta i dtreo nádúr Dé féin, agus é a adhradh, taobh amuigh den taithí daonna atá againn, bíodh sé sin olc, maith nó measartha. Thar gach rud eile, tá cuireadh againn san Eocairist dul ar ár nglúine ní hamháin i láthair a chéile, ach i láthair Íosa Críost, Dia agus duine.

Is cinnte go bhfuil seoid againn san Eocairist, taisce ach é faoi rún na laethanta seo. Is cosúil go bhfuil dearmad déanta ag cuid mhór den phobal ar an tseoid luachmhar, ar an rún seo ó shaol na rún a chuireann muid i dteagmháil le

haighe rúndiamhrach Dé.

Dá mbeimis i dteagmháil leis an rún seo agus meas againn air, bheadh sé furasta go leor againn rún a dhéanamh ár saol a athrú i gcomhfhuintearas lena chéile agus ligean dó spré amach tríd an domhan, mar a bheartaigh Dia i dtosach é. Rún na hEaglaise gan amhras.

(Buíochas le Foilseacháin Ábhair Spioradálta.)



Sewing vestments here, Brídín was always happy to lend a helping hand.

Derry Diocesan president of St Joseph's Young Priests' Society, Christina McLaren remembers how...

The late Brídín McDermott stayed close to the 'Loving Shepherd'

WHEN I first met Brídín McDermott several years ago, I felt here was a person with a gentle and serene countenance. She seemed to glow and had a quiet manner. Years later, I met her in the ward in hospital where her brother was a patient with my dear father. It was then that she asked me if I could set up a branch of St Joseph's Young Priests' Society in our parish. I passed the request to my then parish priest and it was some time before a group was established here.

I met up with Brídín at our quarterly meetings and when I became Diocesan president, she was very supportive. I was training a new group and Brídín came with me and was a great asset. I understand she set up several branches of the society when she was Diocesan president and was well thought of by all who knew her.

Up until her death on Good

Shepherd Sunday, which was Vocation's Day, Brídín was the Branch president of Holy Family Ballymagroarty SJYPS. She will be sadly missed by me and by all her friends in the Society.

I felt that although her passing was sad, it was fitting that The Good Shepherd called her on Vocations Sunday because she worked very hard and prayed for Vocations, and her daughter, Sr Ethna, is a nun with The Good Shepherd Sisters.

We send loving thoughts and prayers to her dear husband Michael and to Sr Ethna and Michael Jun. When I learned of Brídín's death, the words of the hymn 'Loving Shepherd' came to mind...

'Where Thou leanest, May I go Walking in Thy steps below Then before Thy Father's throne Jesus claim me for Thine own'.

May Brídín's gentle soul rest in peace.

Remembering Brídín McDermott

by Vera McFadden

"We seemed to give them back to Thee Lord, Who gavest them to us. But as you did not lose them in the giving, So we do not lose them in their returning.

For Life is eternal and Love is immortal and Death is only a Horizon.

And a Horizon is nothing but the limit of our sight.

Lift us up, strong Son of God, That we may see Thee more clearly. Draw us closer to our loved one, Who is with Thee.

And whilst thou doth prepare a place for us, Prepare us for that place. So that where Thou art, we also may be.

Forevermore. Amen."

We have many people to remember and today I am remembering my cousin, Brídín. My first memories are of her as an infant in the cot, in the pram, or crawling about. She was the new baby girl in my Uncle Joe's house. When she was about four years old, she was sent into our classroom in Rosemount Girls' School to perform for us. She sang 'Christopher Robin is Saying His Prayers' in a light, melodious voice. That song is quite a difficult one for a child of four but she went through it without a hitch.

Brídín was always smiling, was full of fun and enjoyed life greatly. I was very proud of her and I was also proud of my three other young cousins, Pam, Maureen and Martha Gill, who lived next door to her. They were all contemporaries of my own twin sisters, Cathleen and Bernie, and they often enjoyed playing together.

When I was at teacher training college in Belfast, I lost touch with Derry for a while. When I started work I didn't have as much contact with my cousins, as I did in my childhood days. It was when I returned to Derry after living in Belfast, that I met Brídín more frequently again. She had married a young chemist, Michael

McDermott and, at this stage, Michael had his chemist shop on the Strand Road. They had two children around the same age as my three. They now lived on the Culmore Road and when we met occasionally, we exchanged notes on how the children were coming on. She was very proud of her family.

Brídín and her husband were very fond of photography and had developing skills. I was given several historical photographs. The most interesting of these was one of our grandfather, Anthony Johnston when he was a young teenager and I was able to get copies made for the rest of our family.

I knew Brídín to be kind hearted and a deeply spiritual person. Her brother, Tony, who was a teacher, had gone to work in Canada and when her mother, Bella and her other brother, Hugo needed help, they got it from Brídín. She took them into her home to take care of them. Her constant happy smile showed this, like the line of the hymn '...and oh, how his beauty transforms us, the wonder of the presence abiding. Transparent hearts give reflection of Tabor's light within'.

Brídín also worked tirelessly for the church. I remember Brídín working very hard at the making of brown scapulars. She received the pieces from a monastery, sowed them together and sent the completed ones back. She was also resourceful. One time they sent no string, so she bought as many brown shoelaces as she could and found that they were suitable for the work. When Fr Pat McBride, a Salesian priest, was helping in the Holy Family Church, Ballymagroarty, he enrolled many people in the brown scapular and, of course, it was Brídín who supplied these.

Brídín was a woman of prayer. Once I had picked up a few lines of a prayer which spoke strongly to

me but I could not find the entire words anywhere. Of course, Brídín knew it and wrote it out for me...

'Prayer for Generosity' by St Ignatius Loyola

'Lord, teach me to be generous. Teach me to serve you as you deserve; To give and not to count the cost, To fight and not to heed the wounds, To toil and not to seek for rest, To labour and not to ask for reward, Save that of knowing that I do your will'.

This was how Brídín lived. I remember the first talk about the St Joseph's Young Priests' Society, a prayer group for young priests, and thinking that it was going to be a powerful movement. Large numbers from Derry came to the meetings. It kept developing and then my little cousin, Brídín became president and remained so for several years. During that time she was extremely busy going to towns and villages quite a distance

away to set up new prayer groups.

I remember Brídín once talking to me about the Donegal Corra Cainte (idioms). She had learned these from her Gaeltacht mother.

I would have met Brídín and Michael frequently at church or at family gatherings, weddings and funerals. Blue was her favourite colour and it was mine too. Now and again, we were even dressed in the same outfits.

I believe that God gives affirmations or consolations in many ways. Sometimes it can be a special day or date. Brídín went to Heaven on the Feast of The Good Shepherd. Her daughter Ethna is a Good Shepherd nun and she herself had worked tirelessly for the St Joseph's Young Priests' Society, which supports young men who are preparing to be shepherds of His flock. The Chief Shepherd, himself, had been with her all her life – before, behind, above, within, and she had always known that.



Brídín and her husband, Michael, celebrating their 60th wedding anniversary.

Brídín's dedication to promoting vocations bore much fruit

by Ethna Johnston

ANYONE who ever met Brídín McDermott must always have been struck by her quiet, gentle demeanour and her radiant sense of joy during her life. I have many memories of her during my life from meeting her in the Chemist shop on the Strand Road, which she and her husband, Michael, ran, to being a fellow student with her in the Irish classes run in the Culturlann in more recent years.

In her work in the chemist, Brídín always served her customers with great attention and courtesy, and elderly were offered a chair so they could rest while waiting for their script to be filled. She would often have a friendly chat for you too, if there weren't too many customers in the shop.

As a young person, I recall celebratory evenings in my home when her brother, Tony, would come home from Canada. Brídín, Michael, Tony and her other brother, Hugo, would all call and we would have a lovely evening being regaled with stories from Canada, beautiful singing from Hugo, and stories of Fanad from Brídín, about the times she spent in her grandmother's place when she was growing up.

Indeed, some time spent there during the war years, when she was very young, was probably where she got the foundations of her fine-tuned ear for the musicality of the Irish language. On returning to school in Derry, she found she was still answering roll call in Irish for

quite a while. When I decided to go to Irish classes in the Culturlann on my retirement, I was delighted to find Brídín was one of my class mates. You could not find a more helpful fellow student - if you'd missed a day, Brídín would have collected that day's notes for you and would give them to you when you returned, and if you needed a bit of extra help she always obliged. During our tea break, we all used the time like a cioral comhra, and while I was struggling to recall words to mind her fluency was obvious - a fluency that earned her her much prized gold fainne.

Calling on Brídín and Michael was always a real pleasure. You wouldn't be long in their beautiful home before Brídín would have

the kettle on and a plate full of her delicious tea cakes and scones before you. The interesting conversations on world events, local events and, of course, news of family, cousins, friends and ancestors would follow. I owe much of my knowledge of family tree and relations to Brídín.

All her life, Brídín always showed her dedication to her faith and to her religious practice in her dealings with the people she encountered. Her work in promoting vocations was undertaken with total dedication and bore much fruit. May God rest her soul and console her family for her loss. Her quiet, gentle presence will be sadly missed by all of us who knew her.



Michael and Brídín with her brother, Tony, mother Bella, deceased 1988, and brother Hugo, deceased 2002

Rest in peace

WE miss her and mourn her in sorrow unseen, and dwell on the memory of days that have been.

Rest in peace, Brídín.

From Margaret, wife of the late Paddy Johnston and family, Galway.

A mystical espousal to Christ – this is what I had been made for

by Taryn Watkins



Bishop Donal with Taryn Watkins at Knock Shrine last summer.

ON the great Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, I lay prostrate before the altar as the litany of the Saints was chanted. Mary, the Virgin of virgins...all of Heaven, was invoked in the hope that I might follow the Lamb wherever He goes, just as they did. In that moment I laid down my life to Christ in an ancient and new way. I received the consecration to the Order of Virgins at the hands of my bishop in a sacred rite, forever binding me to the Lord in a spousal relationship. I am a bride of Christ. This is a great mystery.

I had been discerning consecrated life for a long time; about 12 years, including more visits to religious communities than I can count, and 1½ years as a Discalced Carmelite. I had assumed that my call was to become a nun; I knew nothing of consecrated virginity for many years. It's a very little known and less understood vocation in the Church. Despite that, it is the

oldest form of consecrated life, existing many centuries before religious life and, in the early Church, the only form.

Though it has many similarities to other forms of consecrated life, this vocation has unique aspects. There is a special relationship to the local bishop; he is a spiritual father and the virgin is obedient to him, she offers her gifts and talents in service to the Church. It is primarily lived in the world, which means the woman works to support herself, and for that reason there isn't a vow of poverty. A woman called to a religious vocation might not have the desire for an explicitly spousal relationship, or may not have the gift of virginity to give the Lord, but these things are essential to this vocation.

In recent years, there has been a renewal in the Rite and the Holy Spirit has been drawing more women to this ancient and new

vocation. To my surprise, I have been one of them.

After I discerned that the Carmelites weren't where God was calling me, I left in the same way I entered, with a deep desire to give Him everything, in simplicity and humility; it required a courage that could only come from Him. I had given Him everything and I asked for nothing back. I still felt called to consecrate myself to Him, but in what form was He asking?

After a long period of prayer and purification, I stumbled upon the Rite of Consecration of a Virgin. Here were expressed the desires of my heart! Here was totality and finality. Becoming a consecrated virgin is to give all of yourself, in an exclusive and definitive way from which there is no turning back! We search for Him as the bride in the Song of Songs. The receptive space of a virginal heart makes consecration, to be set apart for Jesus alone, possible. It is a sign of

purity of body and soul, who hear the voice of the bridegroom, and bind themselves to Him through the Church's hands.

Here was the wound of love... the sacrificial consummation, consecrated virgins and martyrs like St Agnes. Before the blade bit into her body she was already mortally wounded by love, and before she gave her body as a witness in blood, she already gave her body in a virginal gift to the Lord.

The nuptials of Jesus and His bride are consummated in the blood poured out from His side. This mystical union is also the moment of darkness, of abandonment, of violence. The banner of love is the battle standard, the marriage bed is the cross.

Here was the radical call to live now what will be in heaven, the eschatological reality, to live now the wedding feast of the Lamb in a total, irrevocable union for all eternity, here and in the life to come. This vocation, at its heart, is a call to live a contemplative life within the world and to be a sign of the original spousal relationship of which marriage is the wonderful sign.

This is a mystical espousal to Christ, which is the heart of the vocation. Consecration is to be set apart for God, intensely dedicated. It is a receptive action initiated by God, and given through the hands of His bishop, that is total and forever. This is what I had been made for.

After discovering this, I had several years of prayer and discernment, and Bishop Jenky gave his permission and the date was set. Then came the day of consecration...the music began and I walked down the aisle, my eyes only seeing the Tabernacle. I knelt and received the veil and the ring, received His graces...received Him, who is all I ever wanted.

Taryn Watkins is a Consecrated Virgin for the Diocese of Peoria, IL, USA, an artist, and an elementary school teacher.

Please God, Taryn's story can sow some seeds in our Diocese - Bishop Donal

I first met Taryn in 2016 on a dusty path about 60 miles north of Rome. Three of us were walking the last 110 km of the Via Francigena into Rome. But our pride was punctured when she said that she was finishing an 83-day solo walk – the whole length of the Via Francigena from Canterbury to Rome!

We arrived in St Peter's Square, at the end of our four-day walk and of her 12-week marathon,

and she went on her knees and asked me for a blessing. This was clearly a young woman of deep faith and great strength of character.

I had heard nothing from her after her return to the US, until Spring 2019, when she asked what pilgrimages there were in Ireland. I suggested Knock, Croagh Patrick and Lough Derg.

In mid July 2019, she contacted me to say that she had 'done'

Lough Derg and Croagh Patrick and was heading to Knock the following weekend. But that she would not make it to Derry. I was delighted to tell her that I hoped to be arriving in Knock that Sunday with the Cursillo Knock walkers. Thus, we were able to meet at the Mass in Knock.

She told me that she hoped to be admitted as a Consecrated Virgin in her native diocese. This happened last December.

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.

New mentorship programme for discerning religious life

A student-led Vocations Outreach initiative at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, in Ohio, has announced a new mentorship programme to assist young men and women discerning consecrated religious life.

Remarking that discernment can be a difficult and confusing journey, especially if you don't have anyone to guide you through the process, Vocations Outreach founder and team director, Cassidy Roderick went on to say: "The Church so badly needs religious vocations, and to foster them, we have to be able to provide discerning young adults with the tangible resources they need."

Intended for men and women considering joining a religious community, discerners in the Vocations Outreach mentorship programme will receive online formation by watching workshops and completing tasks designed to help them grow in their spiritual lives and deepen their understanding of consecrated religious life.

Workshops will feature talks from a variety of presenters, including religious from four different orders. The topics include: Theology of Religious Life, Monastic Practices, Obstacles to Discernment, Listening to the Holy Spirit, Overcoming Spiritual Discouragement, Personal Vocation, Lectio Divina and more.

Each discerner will be connected with a professed religious,

who will act as a mentor as they go through the formation programme. Mentors will provide feedback on written tasks and will engage in long-distance, one-on-one communication throughout the programme.

Cassidy noted that it is important for young discerners to relate directly with those in religious life: "Religious life isn't like marriage or even the diocesan priesthood - many people don't grow up seeing that vocation actively lived out. In order for people to discern religious life, they need to know what it is, and the best way to help them understand that is through relationships with those already in religious life."

In addition, discerners will be paired with another participant to whom they will talk with throughout the programme. This is meant to give participants a spiritual, supportive friend who is on a similar level as them and to foster a sense of community.

Vocations Outreach uses content produced by the Franciscan University Catechetical Institute, with the online formation workshops hosted on the Catechetical Institute's online learning management system: FranciscanAtHome.com.

This six-month-long programme is free of cost. Vocations Outreach is currently accepting applications. Applicants must be at least 15 years old and actively discerning consecrated religious life.

To learn more or apply, please visit vocationsoutreach.org

Celebrating his 80th birthday in a strange year for the history books that also marks the 55th anniversary of his ordination...

Fr Oliver Crilly reflects on how an unexpected mission enhanced his parish ministry

RETIRED parish priest, Fr Oliver Crilly, is anything but 'retired' as the faithful of Castlefin, in Co Donegal, know very well. The priest-in-residence at St Mary's, within the parish of Urney & Castlefin, approaches his 80th birthday this July having recently published his latest book, 'An Crith Beo'.

Written in Irish, the book's title translates into English as 'The Living Trembling' and is about the Irish writer, Seosamh Mac Grianna, who was born in the Donegal Gaeltacht area of Rannafast in 1900. Highly regarded by Fr Oliver as "a fantastic writer", he wrote short stories and novels, as well as essays, travel and historical works and a substantial autobiography. The 30th anniversary of his death will be on June 11.

An Crith Beo' is dedicated to Fr Frank O'Flaherty, who was Fr Oliver's Irish teacher at St Columb's College, Derry, and the one who introduced him to Seosamh Mac Grianna (Joe Green). The writer had also been educated at St Columb's, before going on to train as a teacher at St Patrick's College, in Dublin; a career he eventually left to pursue his love of writing.

Another gifted writer amongst the St Columb's College alumni, Seamus Heaney, is also held in high esteem by Fr Oliver. Both from small farming families in South Derry, they were very good friends during their time at the College and shared a great love of language and literature.

However, it was his love for the Catholic faith that set the second-born son of Robert and Rosina Crilly, from the parish of Lavey, on a different path. Ordained in June 1965, the thought of priesthood first came to him while praying the family Rosary, in Rocktown, when he was about eight years old.

Describing his parents and extended family as "very faithful Catholic people", Fr Oliver remarked: "We really had the Church in our genes. There were priests in our family, with my mother's brother, Fr Pat Bradley, a priest in the Diocese of Leeds."



Celebrating the Golden Jubilee of his ordination to the priesthood five years ago, on June 21, while serving as parish priest in Greenlough, Fr Oliver said that it was only when he was appointed to that parish that he began to realise "how deeply rooted the vocation to priesthood was, on the Bradley side...where it continues in a younger generation...but also on the Crilly side, associated with the ancient monastery of Tamlaght O'Crilly".

He added: "At eight years old, I thought I was experiencing a purely personal calling, which was true, but that personal calling was also an expression of a heritage of faith handed on via family and community over many centuries".

Apart from his family, Fr Oliver recalled someone else who had been a significant influence with regards to his faith formation: "My brothers and I were altar servers when we were growing up in Lavey, and the parish priest was a most marvellous person, Fr James McGlynn, from Aghayaran. He was very kind. One memory that stands out is of me dropping the Missal one day and he just told my older brother, Tony, to give me a hand.

"As well as family faith influence, I am quite sure that Fr McGlynn influenced my decision, and that of my brother, Pat, regarding entering the priesthood. He would still be that archetypal priest in my mind. I had the great privilege of going to see his birthplace in Aghayaran. I was at a wake in Castlefin and a man said to me that he heard I was asking about Fr McGlynn. It turned out that he was his grand-nephew, Patsy Connolly. He later took me up to see the home place."

Fr Oliver also paid tribute to the further nurturing of his faith by the teachers who had taught him both at primary school in Rocktown and at St Columb's.

"When I went to St Columb's I didn't think a lot about priesthood," he said, adding: "I was thinking about exams and studying. I was more into academia than football, but priesthood would have been there in the background all the way through St Columb's.

"When I was deciding on A-level subjects, I didn't choose them on anything particularly relating to priesthood, but it turned out that what I chose was handy for my vocation – Latin, Irish, Greek and Art. If I have any questions about translations in the Bible, I go back to the Greek text. You always get a better feel for what the emphasis is in the Greek original, which sometimes gets lost in the English translation".

During his first year in the seminary at Maynooth, he studied Latin, Greek and Irish, and then chose to study for a Degree in Celtic Studies. Following his ordination, Fr Oliver was appointed as a teacher at St Patrick's College, Maghera, where he taught Irish, Latin, History and Religious Education.

The 29-year-old priest was teaching in St Pat's for three-and-a-half years, and living at home with his parents, when he was suddenly transported to a very different scene.

He recalled: "I was lifted out of this safe teaching position in a Catholic school at the end of 1969. It was after the Second Vatican Council and there was a lot of confusion among priests. Many left the priesthood at that time and after.

"As a teacher, I was in a safe position. I had a timetable and was ruled by the bell. I was lifted out of this and placed in Dublin, into the potentially unstable world of communications. This could have been a very disturbing world for a priest".

He added: "I was dropped into a job I wasn't trained for in the world of media, as the Director of Veritas Publications! I was learning on the job!"

However, he noted that his knowledge of Irish and Art had stood him in good stead during his 13 years in the role: "We produced publications in English and Irish, so I was editing books in English and Irish. To have the Irish was vital and Art came in handy as well because, while I wasn't doing the graphics, it would have been hard to discuss artwork with graphic designers if I didn't have an eye for it."

Impact

During this period in Dublin, Fr Oliver was introduced to two movements that really made an impact on him. One was the Focolare Movement – an international organisation founded in Italy, in 1943, by Chiara Lubich as a Catholic movement promoting unity and universal brother/sisterhood.

Explaining that Focolare was the Italian word for 'The Hearth', Fr Oliver continued: "It is a nickname – their full title is Opera di Maria (the Works of Mary). They have a great devotion to Our Lady; everything they do, they dedicate to Mary. I found it a very interesting story and it had a big influence on me. I met Chiara Lubich in Rome and found her to be a most fantastic person".

The other movement that influenced him was The Jesus

Caritas Fraternity of Priests. Explaining that this is part of a wider spiritual family that includes the Little Brothers and Little Sisters of Jesus, Fr Oliver said: "It's all based around the spirituality of Charles de Foucauld, a French soldier who had a huge conversion experience. He went to live in the Sahara Desert and was shot by a young Touareg tribesman in 1916.

"He had always wanted to form a small community living in poverty but didn't manage it in his lifetime. However, he had it all written up and Fr René Voillaume later founded the Little Brothers in 1933, on the template he found in his writings, and helped Sr Magdeleine of Jesus found the Little Sisters in 1939, on the same template."

Saying that the Little Sisters of Jesus had been invited into Dublin to work with the Travellers, while he was there, he continued: "I was one of four priests who took turns to say Mass for them and the Travellers. Out of this, I got to know about the priests' fraternity. It didn't exist in Ireland, but it was in England, so contact was made with them and Peter Lemass and Gerry Reynolds formed the first Jesus Caritas priests' fraternity in Ireland.

"So, instead of the move from teaching in Maghera into the world of media in Dublin going very wrong, I found a fantastic group of dedicated priests, who challenged me and raised a whole new idea of community."

Challenged with this spirituality of Charles de Foucauld, Fr Oliver said: "I was learning more about the Scriptures and the whole idea of fraternity. Brother Charles used the word 'desert' in a spiritual sense – going out into the desert to be with God. In the early Irish Church, the Irish word 'deiseart', which appears in names like 'Desertmartin', is a desert without sand, a place where you can go apart and be in the presence of God, such as woods, river, sea, mountain, etc; it's a place where you just be.

"Once we got involved with this, we began to see the parallels with the Early Irish Church and the Céilí Dé movement – a movement of spiritual renewal in Ireland that lasted for over 200 years, and one of the inspirational leaders was St Safan of Urney. The Early Irish Church and Charles de Foucauld shared a lot of insights".

Amongst the group of dedicated priests he met were Frs Joe Dunn and Des Forristal, founders of the Radharc Television Documentary Series broadcast by RTE from 1962 until 1996, as well as Fr



Dermod McCarthy, one of the Radharc (meaning vision) team that produced the films, and Fr Peter Lemass.

Fr Oliver also recalled the great support of Fr Gerry Reynolds CSsR and Fr Jim Lennon, and of Fr Eddie Daly, who was working in RTE at the time.

"Fr Daly was on our executive committee of the Catholic Communications Institute and had listened to all of my reports," he said, "so, when he became Bishop of Derry, he knew the work I was doing was important and asked me to stay on".

He added: "Another good friend was Fr Pat Ahern, who wrote the music for the hymn, 'Rian Phádraig', for which he asked me to write the words.

"Other significant priests around me at that time were Fr Johnny Doherty CSsR and Fr Chuck Gallagher, a big American Jesuit".

After 13 years, Fr Oliver was brought back to minister in the Derry Diocese, with Strabane his first parish appointment, and he believes that his experiences while in Dublin probably affected what he did in parishes thereafter.

He went on to speak about being humbled and delighted that his brother priests elected him as one of the delegates for the National Conference of Priests of Ireland (NCPI) in 1985.

Elected for a three-year term, Fr Oliver recalled the conferences in 1986 and 1987 having a significant impact on his ministry: "We had the same theme for these two annual conferences – 'Collaborative Ministry'. The main speaker for both years was Bro Loughlan Sofield, an American religious. He gave fantastic talks. It was the first time I heard about

parish pastoral councils.

"In 1989, I became parish priest of Melmount. It was my first parish priest post and, in 1990, we set up a Parish Pastoral Council. We had a marvellous learning experience over the next nine years."

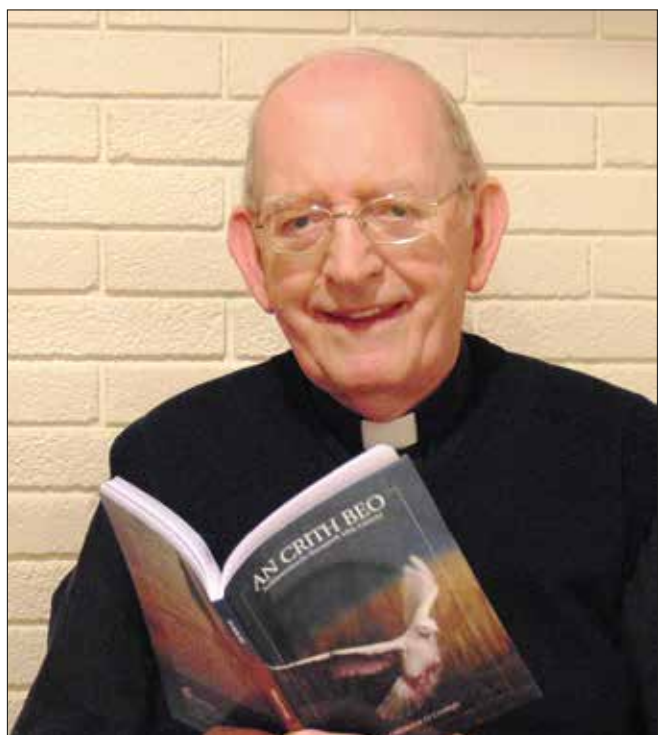
Fr Oliver was then appointed as the parish priest of Ardmore in 1999, and eight years later he was sent as parish priest to Greenlough – Tamlaght O'Crilly, where he ministered until he came to Castlefin, within the parish of Urney and Castlefin, in 2015.

Over the years, he also served a 10-year period on the Western Education and Library Board, and served on the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace, and the Independent Review of Parades and Marches.

Another great experience, he recalled, was being part of the Diocesan Support Group for Parish Pastoral Councils, with Paddy Coyle, his brother, Tony, and good friend, Fr Johnny Doherty CSsR.

'An Crith Beo' can be got from Irish bookshops, including An Carn, Maghera, the bookshop in the Cultúrlann, Falls Road, Belfast ('An Ceathrú Póilí'), and An Siopa Leabhar, Harcourt Street, Dublin.





Leading lives of quiet isolation

by Fr Peter McCawille (SMA)



Fr Peter McCawille SMA, on left.

I couldn't have known then, but I now realise that growing up in Dregish, in West Tyrone, more than 60 years ago was a kind of remote preparation for my response to the present pandemic, as I now spend my time 'cocooning' in Abuja, West Africa.

Long before Covid-19 invaded our busy missionary lives and forced us into exile in our own homes, I was already feeling quite comfortable with my own company. However, for the very gregarious Nigerian people the thought of self-isolation came as a major shock. By forcing them to abandon their livelihoods and self isolate without putting anything in their pockets to sustain them, the government is asking many Nigerians to choose between death by Covid-19 or death by hunger.

As a local newspaper columnist expressed it – "Many people prefer the lottery of infection over the certainty of starvation!" For the average Nigerian the idea of 'cocooning' is for those who live in cloud-cuckoo-land!

President Buhari announced on Sunday, March 29, that Nigeria's two major cities, Lagos and Abuja, would go into lockdown the following day, while repeating the already well-rehearsed admonitions to "keep washing your hands" and maintain "social distance".

I can only imagine that his comments sent shudders through the hearts and minds of millions of the population, especially the many who live in overcrowded conditions where it is impossible to find any space, and for whom a bucket of water from a distant

stream is a cherished treasure.

World Bank figures indicate that about 50% of the population of Nigeria lives in cities and many of them in what are referred to as slums, lacking the basic amenities of light, water and sanitation; facilities that we take for granted in Ireland.

The World Bank also indicates that 85% of the population of Lagos lives in poverty. Ms Debby Ogunshola, a petty trader in Lagos, spoke for millions when she illustrated the stark reality facing many people there by reminding us that "the only virus that I fear is hunger, not Covid-19 and where are we supposed to get the extra water to keep washing our hands?"

Neither is the emphasis on self-isolation an option for Ms Ogunshola. She and her family (and thousands of other families) live in one room in a block of 20, locally called 'Face-me,-I-Face-you' because of their close proximity to each other.

"If I am not able to go out every morning and sell, how will my children survive?" added Ms Ogunshola, who earns her daily bread by selling fruit and vegetables from a little wooden stall by the roadside.

The reality here is that millions of Nigerians live hand-to-mouth, often on less than \$1 (£0.80) per day and so unable to stock up on food or other essentials. Similarly, it's not uncommon for urban Nigerian families to live with older relatives, who also double up as nannies, and the obvious concern is that these older people are at a serious risk if the virus spreads.

Miraculously, the daily figures

indicate that the heartfelt prayers of the people are being answered. As soon as news began to filter through that this contagion was devastating different countries in Europe, the Government belatedly issued a directive that all churches and mosques should be closed with immediate effect. People responded to what they saw as a high handed decision by the government by unleashing an avalanche of prayer and petition. Being a naturally participative people and conscious at all times that God is directing their lives, the thought of not being able to attend daily Mass, sing, dance and receive the Eucharist was the equivalent of losing a limb.

The latest daily reports here about virus victims indicate that out of a population of 200 million people, the number of those who have died is 164. By comparison with figures from other countries in Europe with much smaller populations, these figures are remarkable. No surprise though to the faith-filled people here who interpret them as clear evidence that God is abundantly answering their prayers. They are always confident that God helps those who help themselves. They also derive great comfort from the revealing words of the great African Saint Augustine: "God created us without our consent but God can't save us without our co-operation".

Another key factor in helping them to grapple with the contagion is that, over the years, they have completed the full honours course in learning to cope with adversity (malaria, yellow fever and Ebola spring to mind) and many other forms of malevolence that regularly affect their lives.

In learning to cope with these adversities, they simultaneously develop a natural instinct for

companionship and a close identification with anyone who is suffering. Long before Covid-19 reared its devastating head, they were well used to helping out the less fortunate in their time of need. As soon as the lockdown was announced, members of our worshipping community immediately pulled together to provide a few weeks' supply of food and provisions for their indigent neighbours, all of whom had abruptly been deprived of an income.

The churches may have been closed but their faith continued to flourish in the most admirable and authentic way. "I was hungry, sick, naked, lonely..." (Matthew 25). Flowing through their veins is an instinctive inclination to respond to the needs of the less privileged.

Reflecting in quiet and contented isolation here in Abuja, I frequently find myself searching through the rubble of the destruction wreaked by this contagion to identify some signs of hope. The awfulness of the last six weeks has been a serious test of our faith, especially for all those who have lost loved ones and had to endure the agony of not being with them in their last moments.

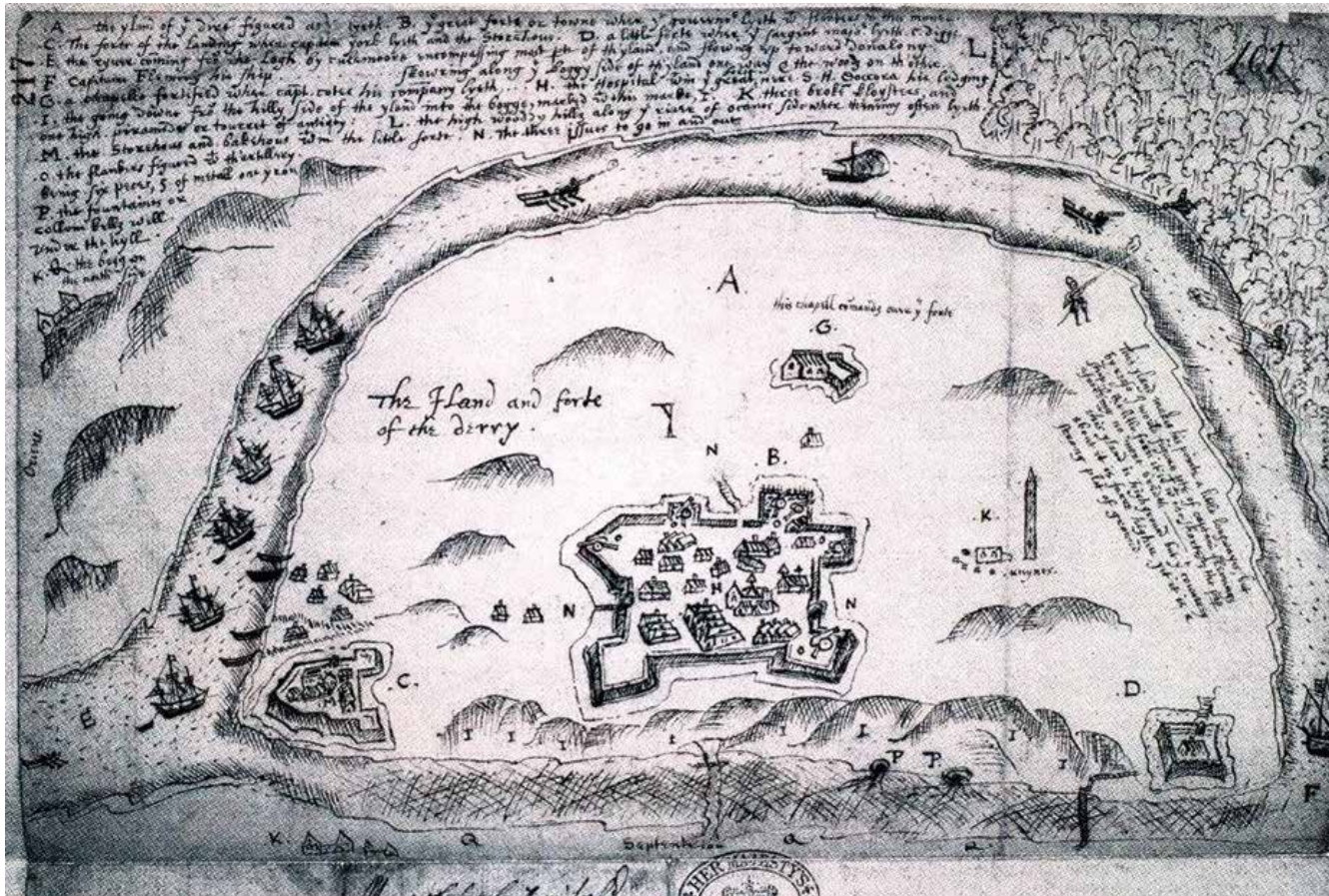
It is still very difficult to accept that the ultimate test of our faith is not how loudly we praise God in the good times, but how deeply we continue to trust him in the bleak times. We take much inspiration from the selfless devotion of those bereaved families and from the courage of the medical and ancillary staff who have led the charge against the virus.

It is my fervent hope that we can also find much comfort and reassurance in the words of St Luke 21:19, who reminds us that "Your endurance will win you your lives".



Husband, wife and children arrive for Mass on Christmas Day.

Ireland has its Round Towers... ...Derry has its Long Tower



STANDING on the horizon that separates Bishop Street from the Bogside, the Long Tower Church is one of Derry's most famous landmarks. But the age-old question of where this iconic church got its historic name has for many years remained unexplained.

However, a group of local historians have scientific proof that the famous Long Tower, from which the church gets its name, is still standing. Not in the grounds of the church, but in the grounds of Lumen Christi College. With the help of archaeologists from Queen's University, of Belfast, and carbon dating testing, the Derry Tower Heritage Group (DTHG) can now prove the historic windmill at Lumen Christi College is the Long Tower. Stephen Doherty, of the DHTG, explains the story so far...

From most of the published histories, it seems as if there really was very little on the island of Derry when Henry Dowcra invaded with a force of 4,000 soldiers in 1600AD. Very little attempt has ever been made to tell the full history of Doire Colmcille, the powerful monastic walled city, Caiseal an Urlair, (Castle on the level ground), and dwelling place of the high kings of Ireland. In fact, it has long been believed that access to any evidence of medieval

Derry has at best become scantily possible through digging and at worst mythologized, and not ever accessible. The Derry Tower Heritage Group has been convinced for some time that this is not the case.

In fact, we have believed that the structure known for centuries as the Windmill, which stands in the grounds of Lumen Christi College, is indeed the Long Tower, and probable site of Columba's 546AD foundation. The question should rightly be asked as to why we are only finding out about this now, in the second decade of the second millennium. The answer is rather straight forward, while at the same time complex. The site where the tower stands has, since the time of Fredrick Augustus Hervey, 4th Earl of Bristol and Church of Ireland Bishop of Derry, been a privately owned one and hidden from view by an impressive wall that stands on its perimeter, coupled with the fact that a major component of the Plantation from the beginning was a cultural 're-branding.'

All traces of Gaelic culture were to be eradicated. This involved the extirpation of all physical objects, artefacts and buildings. All churches, monasteries and abbeys were systematically looted and then destroyed.

A real effort was made to re-tell the story, indicating that English civilisation brought refinement and culture to the wild Irish.

Famous figures like the successor of Colmcille, Flaherty O'Brolahan, High King Murtagh O'Lochlann, Bishop Ruairi UaDomhnaill, and Shane O'Neill, have all been written out of the story of Derry, while Colmcille himself has even been mythologised by some historians. What we can ascertain from the Annals of Ireland, is that Derry

stood as the most prominent ecclesiastical and powerful political settlement, for centuries.

In fact, we could even suggest that the reason the English tried so hard in the 1500s to take Derry, was that the Plantation could never begin in earnest until the most powerful legacy in Ireland was broken, and Derry as it stood, destroyed forever. The exodus, on September 4, 1607, which became known as The Flight of the Earls, when the cream of Irish aristocracy, O'Neill and O'Donnell, left Rathmullan, with 90 plus supporters, to travel to Spain to recruit support, left a vacuum which England filled. They were never to return.

We know from Dowcra's story of his conquest that the one structure he couldn't bring himself to raze or alter, was the huge monastic round tower evident in his crude map of Derry (1600), and shortly after illustrated by the recognised cartographer, Wenceslaus Hollar, in his map of 1661 (reference in the collection given as 1651). Unlike the rest of Ireland, the Bishops of Doire and Raphoe never submitted to the new rule of English Reformation heresy.

In the last years of the 16th century, priests and bishops were hunted men. The three last bishops of Doire were the only native Gaelic clergy to hold out against the English Reformation: Ruairi Ua Domhnaill (1520 – 1551), Eoghan O'Dohertaigh (1554 – 1568) and Bishop

“ The first walled enclosure was built with the support of the then successor of ColumCille, Flaherty O'Brolahan and Murtagh O'Lochlann, High King of Ireland. The walls were called Caiseal an Urlair. This stone enclosure was constructed to comprise the flat lands at the highest part of the island of Doire.

Reamann O'Gallchoir (1569 – 1601), who resisted and was finally caught at the Strabane Road and murdered at Dunalong. “A separation of the houses from the church in Doire was caused by the successor of ColumCille, Flaithbheartach Ua Brolchain, and by Muircheartach Ua Lochlainn, King of Ireland and they removed 80 houses or more from the place where they were and Caiseal-an-Urlair



was erected by the successor of ColumCille who pronounced a curse on any that should come over it.” (Annals of the Four Masters 1630)

The first walled enclosure was built with the support of the then successor of ColumCille, Flaherty O’Brohlan and Murtagh O’Lochlann, High King of Ireland. The walls were called Caiseal an Urlair. This stone enclosure was constructed to comprise the flat lands at the highest part of the island of Doire. The walls extended from present-day Butcher Gate across to the Diamond area and up to and extending over the whole of that area comprising approximately Upper Bishop Street. The main entrance was just above the present-day Diamond which was an open market place at that time. At the highest place in the monastic city, the new cathedral An Teampall Mor, was built and completed in 1166.

Medieval

With the Norman Invasion in 1169, a new wave of medieval Gothic Architecture was to slowly change the landscape of Ireland. We can only surmise that the city of Derry, which retained its Gaelic identity, refusing to fall in line with the diocesan partitioning of Ireland of 1111, was determined to emphasise its superior nature and prominence as the first among the Irish ecclesiastical sites, so at some point in the early medieval monastic period, decided to build a tower, a round tower, the like of which Ireland had never before witnessed.

This was to complement the most impressive church building and put an indelible mark on the monastic landscape. The

Long Tower, at Lumen Christi, was constructed sometime between 1160AD and 1275AD, going by the radio carbon dating results calculated by Gerard Barrett, under the direction of Colm Donnelly, Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queen’s University, Belfast.

For several years the Derry Tower Heritage Group has collated much documentary evidence to support the theory that the Long Tower remains standing but could only ever go public with the support of ‘well behaved’ scientific evidence.

In 1802, the Rev George Sampson concluded that the Long Tower remained standing in the Bishop’s Gardens. He was quickly taken to task by Colonel Thomas Colby, the famous British military surveyor, who in 1837 called Sampson ‘erroneous’ in his claims. Of course, the rebranding was well underway at this stage, and by now the stump of the Tower was universally regarded as a windmill. This windmill was given all the more prominence by its position in relation to two skirmishes during the Siege of Derry.

The Tower has undergone two major renovations that we are aware of, the evidence of which is evident in the structure. One was sometime in the 17th century when, if accounts can be taken as accurate, Samuel Hobson, around 1650, was granted land around Hogg’s Folly on the condition that he built a windmill for the city. On a 1622 map, a portable windmill is shown: the solid structure that came to be known as the famous Windmill was put up sometime before the siege in 1688. It can be ascertained from



the existing structure that the Long Tower was decapitated, the new broken top was levelled, and the trappings of the mill were added.

Another major renovation to

the Tower took place in the second half of the 18th century, when Bishop Hervey, to complement his Casino - a place where he feasted his guests, turned the structure into an ice house and

a dovecote. Again, the evidence of this is clear to see. It is highly probable that the Earl Bishop had the smaller roof like structure added to the side of the Tower to act as a store, not an ice house which was suggested previously,

The Tower itself has a circumference of 19 metres at the new ground level. The range across Ireland was roughly between 14 and 18 metres. One can calculate, based on the depth of the icehouse, that over 20 feet of tower stands below the new ground level, giving some 60 feet of extant building. With the walls approximately a metre thick, one might suggest that the Tower stood somewhere in the region of at least 160 feet. Again, the range across Ireland’s monastic landscape would be in the region of 80 to 120 feet. There is a reason why this structure was called the Long Tower! It is certainly consistent with the maps referred to earlier; an Eiffel Tower like structure to complement the St Peter’s Basilica of its day, An Teampall Mor.

Finally, we have the Long Tower, sitting in still silence surrounded by school life for almost 150 years, before that finding itself put to use for purposes other than why it was constructed. It is a colossus of a structure, impressive in every detail, a huge piece of medieval Derry standing above the ground.

There are many questions that this revelation raises, and the potential domino effect, not least of all, what else of Ireland’s monastic and political jewel are we not seeing on our landscape. Is the Oak Grove of Columba about to rise from the ashes after 400 years of near obliteration?



“ Finally, we have the Long Tower, sitting in still silence surrounded by school life for almost 150 years, before that finding itself put to use for purposes other than why it was constructed. It is a colossus of a structure, impressive in every detail, a huge piece of medieval Derry standing above the ground. ”

and also to allow access to the dovecote where a crude opening was made halfway up the side of the remaining Tower structure.

‘Columba in Song’ by Vera McFadden



THIS is a story about how a single idea or intention can grow, merge with other intentions and develop into something tangible. It started about 35 years ago when I was in my early 50s. I spotted the guitar that my son had left behind him and wondered if I could learn to play it. One of my colleagues agreed to teach me but I found that it was not as easy as I had previously thought. I could not use the plectrum and her nimble fingers plucking at the strings looked impossible to me.

Disillusioned, I wanted to give up trying but she would not let me. “I know it looks very hard now”, she said, “but there will be a breakthrough, you just wait and see. You should keep learning as it will be a lovely hobby for you. When you are sitting in the house on your own on a winter evening, it will be lovely to be able to pick up the guitar and play for a while.” I was teased, “You will be the oldest swinger in town”. Others were encouraging, “Oh that’s lovely, you will be able to sit down and play the guitar.”



So it was when I had arrived at the breakthrough and was sitting practising chords and playing different variations of them, that I said to myself “that sounds good”, and played again. I did so for a while. I was pleased with this combination of chords and decided to set a little song to it – one about St Columba. Other little tunes emerged in the same manner and these were also set to songs about our city’s patron Saint.

Two years later, it was the Columban anniversary year and preparations were being made for a big celebration at Gartan. My friend, Margaret Alcorn, from Gartan Heritage Centre, told me that the teachers were complaining that there were no children’s songs about the Saint. She then told them that I had composed several and they were anxious to get them. Shortly afterwards she told me that none of the songs mentioned Gartan, even though he had been born there. So, I composed two others which included the name ‘Gartan’. One was ‘Eithne’s Dream’. The melody for this one was not one of the little guitar tunes, but an air which had come to me in my kitchen and to which I had set words about the flight into Egypt. The other was a song about the heron which had fallen on the beach in Iona. This, again, was not a guitar tune but an air that I made up on the spot.

After a couple of weeks, I was on a weekend retreat at Rossnowlagh and found that many other schools in Donegal were also looking for songs about Columba. I met a young teacher, from Gortahork, and a Sister of Mercy, from Ballyshannon, that were eager to have them. One of the Brothers, who was a lay brother very gifted in Irish music, said to me, “Don’t let them songs sit”. That evening I wondered how I had had a few promises about putting them on tapes or CDs but it seemed that fulfilment was nowhere in sight. The only way to get them out was on sheet music and that could be done quickly, but I did not have the musical know-how to do so.

As I sat there thinking, I decided that I didn’t like the air that I had previously composed for ‘The Heron’ and I remembered another

little tune. It was one that came into my head from Medjugorje. I hummed it and found that it fitted nicely. These would need to be done on manuscript paper, as the schools would need written copies, so I asked my songwriter brother, Tony to help. He listened to me singing them and picked up the melody on the piano and then noted them in staff notation and solfa. City Print then put the sheet music into book form and copies were sent to various Donegal schools. It was great to hear the children from Termon School singing my songs at the Columban anniversary celebrations.

Later, I got the urge to get a CD of the songs. One of my friends who had a recording studio agreed to help, but when he took an initial recording I was appalled by my own broad Derry accent and decided to forget about it. My niece, Ethna told me “but that can be rectified”. So I practised with my tape recorder in the kitchen, which had good acoustics, and developed a most exaggerated Oxford accent. It certainly helped. Now, I needed musical backing and my two grandchildren agreed to help me. One played the flute and the other the violin. We went to another recording studio but it seemed impossible to achieve a recording with the instruments, though we tried several times. Perhaps they were not suitable or too near a human voice. So I was advised to go to another recording studio and sing without instrumental backing. I decided that a short narration and humming a few lines of ‘The Key of Love’, a Gaelic traditional air, in between each song, would be an effective way to do it. The disc was made gradually over several days. The man who did the recording knew I was overwhelmed, as I had never done anything like this before.

Copies were then done by the first recording studio. I also designed a cover for the CD. Now I could hold it in my hand and play it whenever I wanted. Of course, that would not have been possible without Danny of the Blue Rose Studio, my brother Tony, Ferguson Studio, my two grand-daughters, Catherine and Emma, the owners of the studio, Margaret Alcorn, the Franciscan Brothers at Rossnowlagh, and the teachers in the schools. Not all the compositions on the CD were my own. One was written by my cousin, Tessa Johnston, one by Sr Angela McConville, and another by my brother, Tony. All of these were used with permission. There is also a prayer composed by St Columba on the CD.

Listen to the story of the great Columcille who was a gifted musician and singer. Sometimes his voice could be heard miles away. With the same timbre as those standing near him heard. Eithne, wife of Feilínidh, had a



St Columba Icon in Mexican style by Mary Jane Miller.

strange dream as she sat in the meadow at Glenswilly.

‘Eithne’s Dream’ by Vera McFadden

Once I had a strange dream of a silk veil coming down from Heaven, decked with flowers pale. It was for me. I wanted to see. But to my sorrow it drifted away. Drawn by an angel, away from me.

Now I could not reach it, though I knew ‘twas mine. It floated high above me but it was a sign. The angel then said, ‘no need to dread. This veil’s like your son. Likely and free, a fine missionary working for God.

You will have a baby. He’ll be very blessed. He will journey for God and will lead the rest. Graces like flowers will come in their showers, through your Columba who helps so many. Who’ll help so many to the True God, the Trinity.

And now here in Gartan is my baby son. Patrick told of his coming, he’s a special one. A Saint from our race, a chief who’ll love grace – Columba from Gartan, my little son. Columba from Gartan, the blessed one.

Columba was baptised by Cronaghan, who later fostered him and taught him. He went to some other schools and later became a priest. His cousin, King Ainmire of Aileach Mor, gave him the island of Doire Calgach, where he founded a monastery.

‘On the Island of Doire Calgach’ by Vera McFadden

Chorus: On the Island of Doire Calgach, I go for a walk in the woods.

Walking along in silent prayer, I know angels everywhere are praying with me to my God.

I love my island on the Foyle, which Ainmire gave to me, Its mighty oaks, its little streams, its peace for all to feel. And here we came and built our church, in a clearing in the wood, A fine place for a monastery. We knew that it was good. (Chorus)

And in the space between the trees, we monks built little cells. We come to pray during the day in answer to the bells. Here we work and read and write, and keep the little fasts, God’s spirit guiding all our ways and bringing peace that lasts. At the monastery, the needy got help and alms at a certain hour every day. Our Lord came to show Columba that this was not enough.

‘Whatever We Do’ by Vera McFadden

Chorus: Whatever you do to the least of my brothers, you do to me, you do to me. (x2)

There were so many poor about. They came to our monastery each day. We helped, gave them food, we did all that we could. But sadly one man was turned away. I was copying the scriptures in my cell about the Last Judgement, where Christ says, ‘what you do onto others, you do onto Me’, when the almoner came in as I read. (Chorus)

This fellow was late yesterday and late the day before. Now he said, “tell you Abbot that hunger’s a need that can’t answer a schedule anymore”. I looked down at the words I’d just read. Their message spoke clearly to

my heart, “You read it, now live it and see to this man. You cannot treat people apart.” (Chorus)

I raced out to discover the truth. I overtook him at the gate and oh yes! It was Jesus! I fell on my knees and asked pardon for making him wait. He spoke to me gently for while, showing me the best way to give, To give of our time, to give of our goods, help the poor, sick and needy ones to live. (Chorus)

Once a very sick baby was brought to be baptised but there was no water about.

‘The Mark of a Saint’ (Words by Tessa Johnston, music to ‘A Gartan Mother’s Lullaby’, Trad.)

He blessed the ground and the spring spurted up and drenched the gnarled trees. The frightened birds from their nests took fright, I fell onto my knees. The droplets hung on the tinder dry grass and wetted the lips of the flowers. And the woodlands rang and the mountains sang, acknowledged Columba’s powers.

The saints stepped forth and he cupped his hands, and he filled them up to the brim. He poured the water on baby’s head, baptise my child, bless him. My baby stirred and he opened his eyes, blue as a bright summer’s sky. And the woodlands crooned and the mountains tuned their own sweet lullaby.

I hugged my child, my precious child, and I laughed and cried with joy. Columba smiled as he touched the hands of me and my little boy.

The sun broke through and it haloed his head and rainbowed each flower and each leaf. And the woodlands sighed and the mountains cried, with me in sheer relief.

Once there was a terrible storm and the lightening caused a fire in the village. The people came to the monastery to ask Columba to pray for their safety. He prayed:

‘Noli Pater’ by St Columba

*Father, do not allow thunder and lightning,
Lest we be shattered by its fear and fire.
We fear you, the terrible one, believing there is none like you.
All songs praise you throughout the host of angels.
Let the summits of heaven, too, praise you with roaming lightning,
O most loving Jesus, O righteous King of Kings.
Blessed forever, ruling in right government,
Is John before the Lord, till now in his mother’s womb,
Filled with the grace of God in place of wine and strong drink.
Elizabeth of Zechariah begot a great man:
John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Lord.*

*The Flame of God’s love dwells in my heart,
As a jewel of gold is placed in a silver dish.*

When he was forty-two years old, Columba wanted to go on missionary work and he left Derry and sailed down the Foyle towards Scotland.

**‘Farewell to Derry’
(Words by Sr Mary Angela McConville, music to the ‘Londonderry Air’)**

*Neath sullen skies I glide adown the grey seaway.
Swift is my barque but oh the salt sea spray
Has dimmed my eyes, tear wet with longing great.
How great He knows who forms hearts passionate.*

*In Erin fair the whins are deep in scented gold.
The apple trees, their rosy cups unfold,
And every hawthorn spills its foamy cup of white,
Like spumes of sea in Derry by the Foyle’s bright light.*

*At this same hour, the Derry hills are shimmering,
In opal light and winding glimmering.
All pearl and silver, ruddy in the sunset’s glow.
The Foyle goes singing to far seas, I know.*

*Oh seagull, winging home, at close of day.
Bring my dear love across the waters grey.
Sighing above the cadence of Iona’s sound.*

And the long swell of breakers lapping Erin round.

Columba came to Iona, out of sight of Ireland, here he founded another monastic settlement. He often thought of Derry.

**‘Columba to Derry’
(Words and melody by Tony Johnston)**

*Sweet visions of Erin keep hunting my dreams.
Of its moorlands, its meadows, its silvery streams.
The lilt of the morning when matin bells ring.
Over woodlands and garden, where sweet song birds sing.*

*I can still see my Derry, my pride and my own,
And the moss that grows green on my old kneeling stone,
The twice blessed walls of my monastery fair.
Oh! My poor heart is broken, that I am not there.*

*I can still see my people, so constant, so brave.
And their sweet voices call me from over the wave.
And I sigh for the oak grove, I never shall see,
Where the angels of Heaven would whisper to me.
Where the angels of Heaven would whisper to me.*

Columba often had insight about future events. Once he knew that an exhausted bird would fall on the shore and he asked the brothers to look out for it and take care of it.

‘The Heron’ by Vera McFadden

*A bird came down on the western shore, worn out by its long flight.
It was a heron from my homeland, we have to put it right.
Poor tired bird from Gartán’s banks, rest in Iona now,
We’ll care for you and feed you well, til you are strong again.*

*We kept the heron sheltered here, for three days and three nights.
And then it longed for home again and took off in firm flight.
Fly home bird to Erin fair, to my own Donegal, to my own people.
And I send God’s blessing on them all.*

Again, he had an intuition that Canice’s prayer in church would help them in a dangerous situation.

‘The Storm’ by Vera McFadden

*The waves were high, the sea was rough, the wind blew loud and strong.
The little currach tossed about. They feared they hadn’t long.
“Columba, save us ere we drown. Save us by your prayer!”
“The prayer of Canice, that would save, if he were but aware.”*

Now Canice in the dining room was setting out the food. He sensed the plight of Columba

*and the danger that they stood. And straight within that moment Canice ran to pray
And Columba and the other monks, came home that very day.*

*For Canice came before the Lord, knowing Jesus’ power.
To calm the storm, to still the hearts within in needy hour.
Jesus waits so gently there and welcomes us as friends
And offers us the greatest gift, a love that never ends.*

Columba was filled up with the Holy Spirit and very close to Heaven and the angels. He saw them often.

**‘Columba and the Angels’
(Words by Vera McFadden and melody to ‘The Londonderry Air’)**

*Columba came to kneel in prayer before his God and on the Thursdays he felt Heaven here.
The love from Jesus shining warm into his soul. And his heart filled with peace and joy, so clear.
And there before our Eucharistic King , he saw so many angels in deep worship true
For Heaven and Earth, praise in the presence of their God,
The angels and the saints and all our own friends too.*

*On Cnoc na nAingeal, a hill on Iona fair, the angels came to talk to Columcille.
With arms outstretched he looked up towards the heavens,
And when they came light brightened up the hill.
A brother saw this happen from another height, though it was only meant for Columcille.
The angels knew and stopped the conversation and with great speed they rose up from the Holy hill.*

*In Derry’s wood, he saw the angels in the trees so near the church, praise their eternal King.
He often sent one to the help of friends in need, to save, protect or peace and comfort bring.
And sometimes Colum saw the angels come to earth, to carry up to Heaven, a friends soul.
And oh! The Glory and the joyful music like none on earth, its melodies greatly roll.*

*The angels were no strangers to our Columcille and let’s remember that they are real friends.
We each have one to comfort and to guide us, which also sees the Father without end.
Let’s listen, talk to them, ask help for others. Before the Lord with us their worship’s true,
For Heaven and Earth, praise in the presence of their God,
The angels and the saints and all our own friends too.*

When he was seventy-five years old, Columba went with Dermot around the island to bless it.

**‘Columba’s Last Day’
(Words by Vera McFadden and melody to ‘Buachaill o Eireann’)**

Antiphon: My Last words I commend to you. Have true love among you – and peace.

*One sunny morning Columba and Dermot went round the farm
On Iona to pray and to bless all they found,
The fields and the paths, the kettle, the barn and the grain,
Then Columba told Dermot he never would do this again*

*And on the way home, they stopped on the roadside to rest.
A white horse came up and it nestled its head on his breast
And then with great grief, like human it started to cry.
For God let it know that Columba was going to die.*

*He blessed the island and then he returned to his cell
And worked at the writing of scripture, a work he loved well.
“Those seeking the Lord will lack nothing that is for their good”
But Baithin must finish – Columba had done all he could.*

*After praying the Vespers, Columba lay down for a while.
“My words I commend to you, Dermot”, he said with a smile.
“Have true love among you and if you will act in this way,
God provides all from Heaven and I living with Him, will pray.”*

*And now it was midnight, Columba hurried to pray.
Again in the church at the start of that Pentecost day.
A light came to meet him. The monks saw great joy on his face
As he blessed them and left them, to go to his God of all grace.*

Antiphon: My Last words I commend to you. Have true love among you, and peace.

It took me two years of research before I wrote the book, ‘Songs of Celtic Saints’. Since then, I read an article in ‘Archaeology Ireland’ which was written by a professor from one of the English Universities. It was about the different types of musical instruments that were used in the time of St Columba. These would have been what he learnt to play when he took time off from his studies for the priesthood, to learn music and poetry with the Chief Bard. I want to learn more about these instruments and what they sounded like, perhaps in time I will.

Glory to God who gives the curiosity, the interest and the determination. To Him be glory and praise forever.



Hold on to Holy Spirit and preach again the one message - Jesus is Lord!

by Fr Stephen Quinn OCD

ON Pentecost day, we realise that the Gospel commences with one birth and concludes with another. Our minds are asked to return to that original moment; to that little house in Nazareth, to the young woman who was busy with her chores, and was completely oblivious to the strange and wonderful offer that was about to be made to her. Deep within her womanhood; the sacred chamber of her womb lay silent, inert and empty. So much possibility and so much promise but all was quiet.

Then, she uttered those fateful words, "behold the handmaid of the Lord" and the Holy Spirit came down on her in all His omnipotence. As the Creed rightly declares, the Lord, the giver of life, took humanity from this woman and united it to the Person of the Son of God. The Word was made Flesh inside of Mary, His grace and truth filled the womb of this woman and on Christmas day He came forth. So, as you can see obviously the Gospel begins with a birth!

The second birth is not as simple as the first to pick up on, but it is absolutely as significant.

Now at this concluding moment, at the end of the written Gospel testimony, we are gathered around another chamber. The upper room lies empty and forlorn. I say empty not because it was literally deserted, for it wasn't; in its dark corners, the disciples and a few faithful women cowered. It was empty because the disciple's heads and hearts were empty. They had seen Jesus die, they had experienced His resurrection, and they had witnessed His return to His Father. They had seen all this and yet remained clueless as to what to do now, with all that they had experienced.

They remained huddled

together, while the rest of the world went on with the real business of life. Just take that in for a moment! These men and women had beheld the glory of the Son. They had seen Him with their eyes, heard Him with their ears, and touched Him with their hands and yet they remained 'stuck in the mud' in this upper room. All that they had experienced was threatened with still birth as these disciples could not find it in themselves to do anything about it at all.

“They remained huddled together, while the rest of the world went on with the real business of life. Just take that in for a moment! These men and women had beheld the glory of the Son.”

As you strive to take in the scene of this upper room, it only makes any sense when you take in the power of real fear. Fear enough to make these disciples forget what they had experienced and

what they owed to Christ, and to sit shaking and trembling in the upper room. They had seen at close quarters what this troubled and dubious old world can do when it wants to; coming stealthily at night with sword and cudgel to silence and to destroy. They had seen how it had taken their Lord and dumped Him out of the vineyard to die horribly upon the cross. There was no doubt as to what that world as capable off.

These men and women needed inspiration and they needed it quickly. They got it in spades. The Lord, the giver of life, on that Pentecost day hovered over that empty room, over those empty heads, those empty hearts and, like two great electric prods, he sent life and new birth coursing into that room. The tongues of fire set those hearts ticking to a new and divine life.

Those tongues of fire went down into their empty memories and put that whole three-year experience with Jesus into its proper context. "Oh Goodness", they said to themselves now, "that is what that all meant!" "At last, we can see things for what they are!" Minds that had been empty now woke up to the realisation that this One, who they had been with, was none other than the Son of God. He had saved the World. The fate of the world, the power by which that world can be turned into the sons and daughters of God, was laid at their fingertips.

Power

The tongues of flames licked at their hearts and set them literally on fire for Jesus. Up until that moment their love had been no more than the light and warmth generated by a match, but now with the power of the Spirit their love burnt white hot like the sun, they loved him utterly. Maybe, most of all, they woke up to the awful prospect that, even though they thought that they were safe and sound behind those brick walls, they were profoundly mistaken if they thought for one moment that they had locked out the world.

The fear and despair of the world was firmly locked in with them. They were the world. They were locked in with it. They had to get out! Those walls were, in fact, a prison. The room was literally bursting with Christ's new life but it couldn't get out. It was locked up. It was locked away. The Risen Christ had stepped into that room, but now was the time to let Him step out again, with them placing their foot outside the room, with them now putting themselves on the line for the Risen One, to go



The Annunciation - Carlo Crivelli

to every woman and man with the Son of God and His words to that person.

The Holy Spirit's electric prod to that upper room had brought on a new birth - the birth of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. At this moment, the Church came into the World through the midwifery of the Spirit.

So, the Disciples, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, unlocked the door of that Upper Room that held them and they went forth. They stepped onto the street, preaching in many different languages but saying only one thing - "Jesus is my Lord" to each and all they met. They came with Good News. They said to each one with whom they engaged, "If you let Jesus Christ into your life, you lose nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing of what makes life free, beautiful, and great. Only in friendship with Jesus Christ are the doors of life opened wide.

Only in this friendship is the great potential of human existence truly revealed. Only in this friendship, do we experience beauty and liberation. Christ takes nothing away from you and He will give you everything. Yes, open, open wide the doors of your life to Christ and you will find true life."

They preached this intoxicating message as they took to the highways and by-ways on their journey to the very edges of the world.

After the experience of these last few decades in the life of the Church, we could ever so easily find our hearts and minds becoming empty. It is distressing to see the Church's witness to Christ called into question by the 'filth' of certain priests' and bishops' lives. We have given the world all the tools and weapons that it could ever have wanted. The Catholic Church has become a by-word for secrets, lies and hypocrisy but we, my brothers and sisters, we who

choose again for ourselves Christ and the new life that He offers humanity. We, who choose to be authentic members of Christ's Church, cannot retreat back behind the walls of our Churches and go into a holy huddle and let that world outside pass us by. No matter the hate and derision, we have to get out there!

We ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit, for His inspiration, His energy, His wisdom, and for a new birth of Christ's life in the Church. Holding only on to the Holy Spirit, we must put our foot outside of the upper room of our churches and ecclesiastical computer streams, and preach again the one message - "Jesus is Lord!", in whatever language that will get through to family, to friends, and to neighbours who have long forgotten that under all the chaos there is a message in the Church of eternal life!



Duccio Pentecost.

Journeying with great mysteries of our salvation

BISHOP Donal reflects on the wonderful time of prayer in the Mother Church of the Diocese, and in parishes across the Diocese, during this time of lockdown in Ireland and many parts of the world due to Covid-19. Welcoming the reopening of churches for private prayer, he pays tribute to the powerful witness of the faithful and looks ahead to the various Feast Days and special occasions to be celebrated virtually during the month of June.

Churches now open for private prayer...

"People have been asking when the Churches would be open. But the initial response to the opening of the buildings for private prayer has been gradual. I know that many people have become afraid of leaving their house and have become accustomed to following services on the webcam. There is a bigger picture of how we encourage people to come back to Church – but in controlled numbers. However, I have heard so many saying, 'It is so good to be back'. They just sit and look as if they were coming home after a long absence. And lots of the people are young."

Response to Lough Derg style prayer and penance

"I was delighted with the very wide response to the Lough Derg style Vigil. The idea was to find a way of maintaining a focus on intercessory prayer and penance for the defeat of the virus, and not

just for the strength to cope with the illness. It was very affirming to discover that people from all around Ireland, and much further afield, had participated in at least part of the Vigil. In penance, we empty ourselves to invite the Lord to fill us and use us, especially when we feel we have little or nothing to give. Penance is praying with our bodies and not just our heads. And, we come from a long tradition of Celtic spirituality, marked by a tough demanding commitment to prayer and penance."

Thankful Novena to St Therese went ahead...

"The familiar is very important for many people. And the Annual Novena has been part of life for many people in the City and wider area. We had talked about cancelling it this year, but we decided to go ahead. And, thanks be to God, we did. There was a great level of participation, even at the 6.30 am Mass. We kept the

traditional structure, including the Mass for the Deceased on the Saturday morning and the closing ceremony on Sunday afternoon. Judging by the number of requests for candles to be lit, there was a very substantial following! So, the Novena this year invited people to walk their own Little Way in the simple events of their lockdown life. Grace is found in little things and small places."

A good time to promote young heroic saints...

"This has been a time when we have seen where the real heroes have been working to maintain our public services. And, it is a chance to put young heroic saints before the eyes of our young people. In the past weeks, we have celebrated Saints Therese, Aloysius, Bernadette, Catherine of Siena – and Sr Clare Crockett. They showed that the call to holiness was for young people and not just for the elderly. These saints died young, having dedicated their lives to the love of God. In fact, Pope Francis, in his document to young people, 'Christus Vivit', dedicates a section to 11 young saints (para 49-63)."

Fanning the Flame in 2020...

"This is a difficult time for many young people – in a special way for those who are leaving primary/national schools. Normally, all parishes would have celebrated the Sacrament of Confirmation,

and schools would have end-of-year events. Even our Fan the Flame gathering in Celtic Park is not possible this year. However, we plan to have a virtual Fan the Flame Mass on June 4 from the Cathedral. I know that the Catechetical Centre has put together suggestions so that young people can prepare some of the things that we would normally have had in Celtic Park. And that date comes between important feasts in the Church's year – Pentecost on May 31, The Holy Trinity the following Sunday, and St Columba on June 9. I hope and pray that this year can be memorable in its own strange way!"

Celebrating the Feast of St Columba...

"We have been journeying with great mysteries of our salvation, from the beginning of Lent to Pentecost. Deep down that is all that St Columba preached and would want us to hand on. He did not preach himself, but Christ crucified. So, any lessons that we learn from the saints is how they lived and proclaimed that message that is always the same and always new. He had to find a way to deal with the need for repentance and reconciliation. And he had to preach in a wild area on the West coast of Scotland. He would remind us that we are called to sow the good seed of God's Word. The growth comes from the one

who is the Lord of the harvest and the Lord of the ages. This year, I will celebrate Mass in the Long Tower at 7.30 pm for his Feast Day on June 9 and, during that, water from St Columba's Well will be blessed and made available to people afterwards."

A message for young people in exam year groups...

"I remember my own last weeks in secondary education, with the pressure of exams but also a sense that one chapter of my life was coming to a natural end, with lots of personal support from my teachers. There would normally be celebrations to mark the end of one chapter of school-leavers' lives. But I have every confidence that imaginative young people will find creative and responsible ways to celebrate this year! In that, there is also an important lesson. Life does not always work out the way we wanted it to. But every crisis and challenge is an opportunity to learn new lessons and to grow. As somebody said, 'never waste a crisis!' And this time of quiet and isolation can also be a chance for students to reflect deeply on what their heart is calling them to be and to do. In faith, we call that discernment. And people of faith believe that, by being at peace with the best that a person can be, we discern what God is calling us to become. The new range of heroes that we have met in these weeks may have given our youth fresh

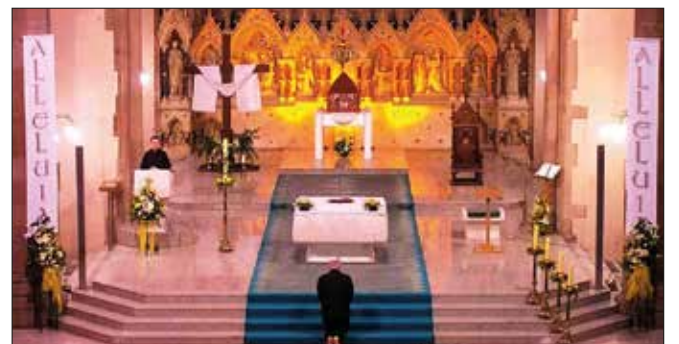
ideas of what they can dream of being."

Journeying through different seasons of Jesus' life...

"During the Church's year, we journey through different seasons of Jesus' life, and of our own heart. The Eucharist has been central to Christian life since The Last Supper. And the gentle love of Jesus has been very strong for some centuries in the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. So, despite the lockdown, there is actually a great chance for us, as Church, to engage with people and share the big picture about the many aspects of the Good News that we have heard and want to share."

Celebrating life...

"The real dramas of the last weeks have had to do with those who fight to save life. It is ironic and tragic that, at the same time, the abortion regulations for NI are being implemented to enable the destruction of precious human life. People of faith can work in two areas. Firstly, there is a need to keep the pro-life message before the eyes of politicians and others, so that any regulations can be affected by the pro-life voice in NI. Secondly, by keeping a strong pro-life culture, we can minimise the number of women who would contemplate abortion. We do our bit – and God works in strange ways that we cannot imagine."



St Eugene's transformed into virtual Lough Derg for time of prayer and penance

by Roseann O'Donnell

IT is no easy matter to be a Bishop! How does a Bishop lead his people to God? How does he set an example of holiness and faith? How does he help the people of his Diocese to know and believe that his words are true and that his faith is founded on a rock?

Well, maybe words are not enough!

In recent years, our Bishop has taken his cue from St Patrick and made his way to Lough Derg, where he led the people of God in prayer and fasting. It is a very good thing to have a spiritual leader who will fast from food and sleep, pray barefoot with his people and humble himself before God, all for the good of souls.

This year, we have to stay at home, but Bishop Donal found a way to bring us in pilgrimage

without leaving our homes. He brought the Lough Derg pilgrimage to Derry. From midnight on Thursday, April 30, until after the 6.30 am Mass on Saturday, May 2, the people of our Diocese were invited to fast (one 'Lough Derg' meal only on the Friday) and to pray.

The Cathedral was transformed into a virtual Lough Derg, with Bishop Donal, Fr Paul, Fr Patrick and seminarian, Willy, each taking turns to lead the prayers. And these prayers were no mere lip service. Bishop Donal took off his shoes and prayed barefoot on the cold marble. He prayed the 'Stations' walking around the Sanctuary, as he would have done on the 'beds' on the little island known as St Patrick's Purgatory.

From 6am on Friday, May 1,

St Eugene's was a hub of prayer, beginning with Morning Prayer of the Church, followed at 6.30 am by Holy Mass. Many people accompanied him online, staying up all night to pray, fasting from food and joining in as many of the prayers as they were able to. Others joined in here and there, as health and duties permitted.

It was a powerful time of prayer, which Bishop Donal called us to again at the end of May, this time inviting parishes around the Diocese to get involved in leading the praying of 'The Stations'. My parish in Moville has taken up this invitation and will lead the prayer for the Fourth Station at 12 midnight on Friday, May 29, from St Pius X Church.

Great stories shared across Diocese to celebrate World Communications Day

TO celebrate World Communications Day 2020, the Derry Diocese took up the storytelling message of Pope Francis and shared some great stories on-line to highlight the many faith initiatives happening in parishes across the Diocese.

As well as Bishop Donal's World Communications Day message, there were messages from Therese Ferry, the Diocesan Advisor of Religious Education for Primary Schools, on prayer space in the home, and from Diocesan Youth Coordinator,

Lizzie Rea, about the Act of Spiritual Communion.

The parish priest of Greencastle, Co Tyrone, Fr Eddie Gallagher talked about his lockdown experience which involved him in Rosary and Eucharistic Blessing Walks around the roads of his parish, and the message from Cait Glass, Derry GAA Ladies Captain 2017-2019, delivered as part of the Diocesan Youth Faith Programme, was also shared.

St Eugene's parishioners, Nicolle and Aine Simpson

shared their experience of the Pope John Paul II Award, as did young Melmount parishioner, Hollie Frystal, while Noel Bradley, Buncrana, shared some thoughts for a prayer walk.

Seminarian, Willie Krause shared the story of his entry into the Catholic faith and his draw to the priesthood to fulfill his desire to share his faith with others, and Fr Patrick Lagan, of the Cathedral, gave advice to anyone considering the vocation.

These stories can be accessed on the Diocesan website.

Urgent appeal of Our Lady of Fatima for the World

by Anne Lench



Anne Lench with the statue of Our Lady of Fatima and the image of The Two Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

ON January 11, 2017, the Jubilee year of the 100th Anniversary of Our Lady of Fatima, two Global Movements came together, the Alliance of the Holy Family

International and Human Life International, and asked Pope Francis to bless six statue images of the Immaculate Heart of Our Lady of Fatima. One for each

continent to re-echo Her urgent appeal in every country to sin no more. I had the privilege to be present in Rome for this great occasion.

The spiritual director, Fr Edgardo Arellano (Fr Bing) of the AHFI movement, requested the covenanted members of the Alliance of Two hearts in Ireland to prepare for visits of the Centennial Pilgrim Image.

Our covenanted members in Ireland approached Archbishop Eamon Martin, Primate of All Ireland, to request his permission for the visit, and he kindly agreed to a welcome ceremony for the Centennial Pilgrim Image of Our Lady of Fatima.

With great haste, all bishops and dioceses in the North were approached, and they agreed to welcome and facilitate this great blessing on their dioceses and parishes. Six cathedrals and 10 parishes were covered over a 10-day period. The Statue of Our Lady was carried on a bier surrounded by roses and brought to the Altar by the Knights of Columbanus and crowned by the main celebrant.

All the churches were packed and the parishioners were full of joy and overwhelmed by the arrival of the Queen of Heaven in her shimmering white veil.

We witnessed, in many churches, both men and women brought to tears as she passed by. It was a very touching moment to behold.

All churches provided hours of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, where families came together to adore and pray the Rosary. It was a very special time of healing. Confessions were made available in some parishes. At each Mass, all attendees received a package with a beautiful Two Hearts image of Jesus and Mary, with the Consecration Prayer on the back, and an explanation of First Friday/Saturday Vigil and the Brown Scapular.

At each Mass a talk was given by a Brother of the AHFI team on the Urgency of the Fatima Message. He spoke clearly on the CARE plan; Confession, Adoration, Rosary and Eucharist. Satan, the Adversary, he said, is out to destroy the family because it is the Heart of the Church and Society. He told us that Prayer and Reparation are the weapons which the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate of Mary give us to win in this Spiritual Battle.

The Celebrant led a Parish Consecration and invited the parishioners to join in and recite the Consecration of the Home and family Prayer. Everyone present was able to avail of the enrolment

in the Brown Scapular, which is part of the Fatima message.

The ATH team truly felt Our Lady's presence and protection during our 10-day pilgrimage throughout the North.

Then, on January 16, 2018, Ireland was blessed once again with the return visit of the ICPI statue of Our Lady of Fatima. On this occasion, visits to different parishes included schools and nursing homes. This was a very special time as the youth and children got to hear about Our Lady's Message to the three little Shepard children in Fatima. They were all Consecrated to the Two Hearts of Jesus and Mary and enrolled by their priest in the Brown Scapular.

During the seven days of this visit, 10 parishes, six schools and a nursing home were Consecrated to the Two Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

We, the Covenanted Members of Two Hearts, felt so privileged and blessed to have participated in this great evangelizing work of promoting devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, through Consecration to their Two Hearts.

The journey of the ICPI statue on Our Lady's Mission around the world can be watched on Youtube: ICPI Our Lady of Fatima.

We pray for all bishops, priests and families...that they will continue with Our Lady's CARE Plan for the world.



The Two Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

A Word of God for your Family Life June - Faith by Fr Johnny Doherty, CSsR

AS we slowly emerge from the serious restrictions of the coronavirus lockdown, there is much speculation about how this will affect the economy, employment, businesses...as they try to open again, education, leisure, etc. And, it is generally accepted that all of these and, indeed, every aspect of human life will have been changed by this pandemic and can never really be the same again.

Along with the speculation, there is also a lot of projection about how the various aspects of life will be changed and affected. One of the most serious projections that I have heard is that when the coronavirus crisis is all over, there will be a significant spike in the divorce rate. This is very tragic if it proves to be true.

How serious are we?

When put side by side with projections of a shattered economy, mass unemployment, many aspects of the lockdown continuing for most of the next year and maybe even longer, the prospect of an increase of divorce may not seem such a primary tragedy. However, it is. This is where the effects of the virus touch the lives of individuals, couples,

families, and communities at the deepest level.

In our Catholic tradition, marriage is one of our seven Sacraments; one of the major ways that Christ is present among us through the committed love of a husband and wife. Marriage is a sacred space and needs our support in every way. It is vital that, at this time, every couple would hear that word of Christ for themselves: "Peace be with you", and use this time to build up their love relationship in every way possible.

It is also our faith conviction that stable and flourishing marriages are essential for the health and wellbeing of society.

A time of faith

When we are very busy, when there are a lot of things to think about and get done, the first casualty very often is prayer. It is amazing how easily we let go of this power at the very time we probably need it most!

However, during this time of the pandemic, when Churches are closed and people cannot go to Mass, there is a huge increase of participation in Mass online. Of course, this is not the same as being able to go and physically

participate. That, however, does not mean that it is not significant and more than worthwhile. Surveys show that people who don't normally practice any religion are searching the web for sources of hope and many of them are finding this in the Eucharist online.

Through prayer we are put in touch with the reality of God and learn to experience God's presence with us. That reality opens us out to see the things that are really important and distinguish them from what is not really important. That is what faith is. It is the power to see things differently and to live that new way in the company of the Lord. It is not really a much spiritualised thing at all.

Some examples

1. Through faith, couples who have committed themselves to each other for the rest of their lives in marriage can see that the single most important thing for them is their unity with one another. When that becomes their aim, then their actions are all directed towards it. They plan together, work together, get over difficult times together. Enjoy their time together. What a difference this makes to their lives.

2. Through faith, parents can see that nothing is as important for their children as their time, attention, affection, and understanding. Parents can wear themselves out providing things for their children and yet not satisfy them because they have not experienced their parents' presence and love.

3. Through faith we can all see the needs of the world around us and not have to hide from these or be destroyed by them. We are opened up to contribute to those in need and be part of the community of the Church, dedicated to making this world a better place for every person because of the presence of the Risen Christ in all human affairs.

4. Through faith we come to know our need for God and His presence with us. We get in touch with that God when we celebrate, especially on the first Sunday of June, the God of love, the God who is Father, Son, and Spirit. And we live with the assurance of His love, an assurance that makes life bright and beautiful, even when it is threatened by darkness and pain.

A time for faith

This month is a time for us all to

actively grow in our life of faith. We can do that by letting the Liturgy of the four weeks of June talk to us and bring us to greater commitment to Christ and to His Church.

a.Week 1, June 7 is the feast of the Most Holy Trinity, celebrating our faith in the true God of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Our family is made in the image of this God and is sacred.

b.Week 2, June 14 is the feast of The Body and Blood of Christ, the family meal that Jesus provides for us in our journey with him. Our family meals, both in our homes and in the Community of faith are vital for our knowledge of the presence of Christ with us always.

c.Week 3, June 21 assures us that, because of this presence of Christ with us we should not be afraid, especially of committing ourselves fully to our marriage, and/or our family, and our faith community. We will find great fulfilment through this commitment. On this Sunday we also celebrate Father's Day. We honour all fathers and thank God for them. But it is also a clarion call for all fathers to renew their commitment to being fully part of building their family life, in so far as this is possible.

d.Week 4, June 28 shows us that

we are the only Scripture that many people will ever read. It is through us that others will come to know and relate to Christ. What a privilege that is. What a wonderful responsibility.

By the end of this month, we will be closer to many of the freedoms that we have been accustomed to. We need to make sure that we are also much closer to one another and to our God who loves us, and lives among us and in us.



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

My faith journey *by Patricia Casey*

I am from Kilrea, Co Antrim. The eldest girl in a family of 11, I have four brothers and four sisters. I was brought up in a traditional Catholic home.

My earliest memories of learning about my faith are of my Granda Ned bringing me to Charismatic Prayer Meetings and daily Mass before I was even of school age. I remember, as we walked to Mass, how he always talked about how glorious Heaven would be and that when we went to Mass, we entered into Heaven.

I also went to Mass every Sunday with my family. My mammy always had me wearing a pretty dress, so I always felt like I was going to a wedding. We were taught to be very reverent at Mass, so when I made my First Holy Communion I was well prepared in knowing that I was receiving the Body of Christ. I truly felt like His little bride.

My daddy and mammy also taught me how to pray the Rosary at a young age, but my personal devotion and love for Our Lady grew after I watched the film, 'The Song of Bernadette'. I was mesmerised by this beautiful Lady appearing with roses on her feet - what little girl who loved Disney princesses wouldn't love this Queen from Heaven!

When I was 13, my mum told us she was planning to go to Medjugorje, where Our Lady was appearing. My immediate thought was - I have to go there too! But I had no money, so I decided to take a paper round job. Working early mornings and after school, I saved my wages and tips

every week for a whole year to pay for the trip.

In Medjugorje, I felt such peace; I felt loved, and I felt 'at home'. A priest there explained that we feel most at home wherever our mother is, and that is so true in Medjugorje.

When it was time to go back home, it broke my heart. I didn't want to leave Medjugorje. I knew I had to go back to school but that thought filled me with dread. At that time, no one knew that I was being seriously bullied at high school. This went on for almost four years, almost every day, and most of the bullying was by boys.

But after I came home from Medjugorje, I learned a new prayer - the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. It was taught to me by Bernadette Smyth, founder of Precious Life, who was a good friend of my mum's. Bernadette spoke so gently and lovingly, and I felt such warm compassion as she explained how we were praying for the conversion of those involved in abortion.

Inspired by what she told me about the power of this prayer, I decided I would also pray for the conversion of those who were bullying me at school. And that bullying did end. Praise Jesus!

In the housing estate where I grew up, I had a friend called Barry Wright, who was a Protestant. Many times he shared his faith with me, always speaking

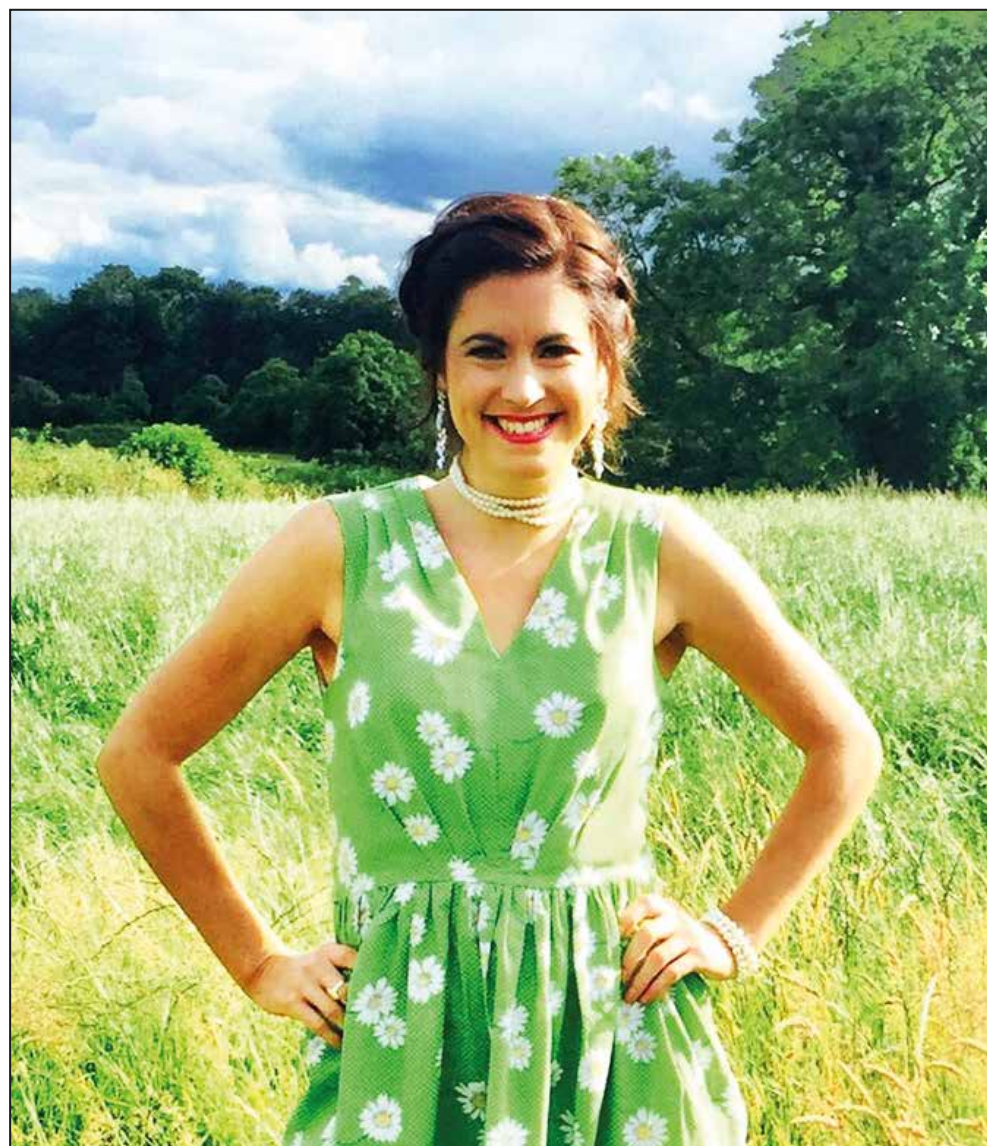
very respectfully, and he was interested in listening to me talk about my faith. As he read verses from his King James Bible to me, I was amazed at his knowledge and I longed for deeper knowledge of God in my Bible.

When I moved to another town, I didn't see him for almost five years. But when we met again, he was really excited to tell me his 'good news' - he had become a Catholic! His conversion story was powerful. He shared with me how his thirst for knowledge of Sacred Scripture had led him to realise the Bible is truly Catholic.

Barry has now set up the 'Catholic Bible Page' on Facebook, with over 70,000 followers. Even Scott Hahn shares his posts! Since meeting him again, Barry has helped me in so many ways to understand the Bible, and how Our Lady is so integral to Sacred Scripture and always leading us to Jesus.

As I've mentioned, my granda always told me amazing stories about what God has in store for us in Heaven, so when a friend bought me a book called 'A Travel Guide to Heaven' I was very touched. After reading the book, I felt a real connection with God, and also with the author - Anthony DeStefano. So I decided to write to tell him how much his book meant to me.

I wasn't expecting a reply from this famous American author, who also appears on EWTN, but to my surprise he did send me a beautiful heartfelt message. He also posted me signed copies his other books, which have now really helped me in my journey of faith as well. Anthony has



Patricia Casey, Kilrea.

become a very good friend and has arranged amazing trips for me to Rome, Assisi and Loreto. Each of these pilgrimages has helped deepen my faith.

I know that only God could have brought such wonderful people

like these into my life. These people have all had a positive impact on my life because of their gentle, tender and loving way of sharing their faith with me.

God is gentle and tender, and God is love, so it was He who was

working through these people - even if they didn't realise it. This has shown me that everything we do to others really matters. I hope that I too can always be gentle, tender and loving. In doing so, I can bring God to others.

Eucharistic Adoration Apostolate reschedules Knock pilgrimage to 2021

THE annual pilgrimage and National Eucharistic Congress for the Apostolate of Eucharistic Adoration, due to take place at Knock Shrine, in Co Mayo, on June 19 and 20, will not now take place.

Announcing the news with a heavy heart, Brendan Cleary, of the National Committee, explained: "Due to Covid-19, it is not possible to have large gatherings and so we are left with no alternative but to cancel this year's ADOREMUS 2020".

"However," he continued: "a virtual ADOREMUS 2020 will take place with a Mass and Rosary in Knock with no congregation. This is the way all pilgrimages are happening in Knock this year."

"It is hoped that our exciting and expansive, planned programme

for Adoremus 2020 can happen in June 2021, when we can all gather at our great Eucharistic and Marian Shrine.

"The most important thing for all of us right now is to continue praying and, when and where possible, to attend Mass and get back to our weekly Adoration. What a joy it will be to get back to Mass, Sacraments and Adoration."

Virtual pilgrimages and online Sunday ceremonies from Knock Shrine can be accessed via - <https://www.knockshrine.ie/sunday-ceremonies-from-knock-basilica>.

The Derry Diocesan Eucharistic Adoration Apostolate, which has already introduced weekly Adoration to around 30 parishes across the Diocese, is hoping to continue its mission as soon as it

is possible.

Chair of the Diocesan committee, Gwen Lagan, said: "Due to the current situation, we are unable to continue to visit the remaining parishes in our diocese. At the start of the year we introduced a Renewal Programme at the request of many parishes and to date have completed two parishes Creggan and Moville".

Explaining that the mission of the Apostolate of Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration is "to sanctify its members to assist parishes with this great gift of prayer", Gwen added: "These are strange and unusual times, and we hope, with God's help, to continue our work as soon as it is made possible".



Pope's monthly intention

The Holy Father has asked for prayer during JUNE for:

The Way of the Heart
We pray that all those who suffer may find their way in life, allowing themselves to be touched by the Heart of Jesus.

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 James Devine (June 1st)
All priests

Msgr Brendan Devlin (3rd)
All priests (4th)
Fr Peter Devlin (5th)
Fr Fintan Diggin (6th)
Fr Brendan Doherty (7th)
All priests (8th)
All priests (9th)
Fr John Doherty (10th)
All priests (11th)
Fr Michael Doherty (12th)
Fr Patrick Doherty (13th)
Mgr Andrew Dolan (14th)
Fr Brian Donnelly (15th)
Msgr Joseph Donnelly (16th)
Fr Liam Donnelly (17th)
All priests (18th)
Fr John Downey (19th)
All priests (20th)
All priests (21st)
Fr Jack Farrell (22nd)
All priests (23rd)
Fr John Farren (24th)
Fr Neil Farren (25th)
Fr Paul Farren (26th)
Fr Christopher Ferguson (27th)
Fr John Forbes (28th)
Fr Eddie Gallagher (29th)
Fr Paul Fraser (30th)

Celebrating World Communications Day on Feast of the Ascension, Bishop Donal highlighted that...

Good News from Heaven has to be made concrete on earth



Bishop Donal.

IN this age of the Church, where the story of the Holy Spirit is still being written, Bishop Donal has highlighted the call “to announce clear the amazing story that we tell about the God who so loved the world”.

And, in his message to the faithful on World Communications Day, he encouraged consideration of the story “which people will tell in the future about how we allowed grace to flow out in these weeks of stress”.

Speaking of this difficult time for many people, Bishop Donal

said: “As a Church we have to work out what story we tell about where God is in all of this.

“At the present time there are many stories circulating, often calling out for our attention. We have all heard conspiracy theories by the bucket load.

“One thing is important when it comes to judging many of these stories and working out our story. The Bible does not come with a heart that keeps asking, ‘Whom do we blame out there for what is happening?’ Jesus calls us to live the truth in our own daily faith journey. Any other wranglings come from politics and power games rather than from prayer. Jesus and the early Church did not blame others for the problems and opposition they faced. They simply sowed the good seed and left the rest to the Lord of the Harvest.

“Thus, our message should never waste too much time on theories that blame the

Chinese, or Bill Gates or repressive governments or a vindictive angry God. Those debates generate heat but no light, they nourish fears and not faith. Our job is to know what story we tell about Jesus and his grace – and to find ways of communicating that story and pouring Christ’s mercy into our hurting world. And we do that because, as St Paul told us... our story has a happy ending, based on our belief that Jesus is far above every power on earth and in heaven”.

Highlighting our task “to proclaim hope rather than helplessness, love rather than lust, grace rather than greed” and the invitation on Ascension Day “to be bearers of good news rather than fearmongers”, Bishop Donal stated: “There is little grace in those who think there is something virtuous in being preoccupied with what makes people frightened and angry”.

He went on to say how World

Communications Day was “a chance to reflect on how many things we have learned about how to communicate during this pandemic”.

Amazed at how so many parishes and clergy have found ways of keeping their parish community alive and their channels of communication open, he remarked: “They have been visible and audible on-line. They have found ways to get missalettes and parish bulletins out through local shops. They have given support and encouragement to people near and far”.

“My task as bishop,” he explained, “is to encourage all that work so that, when it comes to the story that will be told about this diocese during the pandemic lockdown, people will remember the Body of Christ as showing lots of generosity, creativity, courage, gentleness and hope.

“As a local church, we will have failed Jesus and His people

if they remember absence rather than presence. Can we allow Jesus to write an inspiring story through our actions today, as actions of his Body, the Church? The early Church had no excuse for hiding in the upper room, despite all the challenges. Nor do we”.

He continued: “St Paul is clear that our witness is based on the concrete life of Jesus in this world, especially in his death and resurrection. And, as the concrete Body of Christ, we have to continue filling the whole of creation with Christ’s message. That comes through those who offer healing and hope, those who create beauty and businesses that employ, those who promote community rather than exploit confrontation.

“Holiness is working to live saintly lives here with the least of Jesus’ brothers and sisters. We are called to make God’s grace real in the history of this time, this place. It is not about

pious escapism.

“After the Ascension, Jesus may have started ‘working from home’ – but He has promised that He will be with us, His body, until the end of time. He has won the victory over sin and death. This pandemic is our time and place for ministry in Jesus’ name. We cannot put off witnessing until circumstances suit us better. The Apostles would laugh at that idea! They remember that the angel told them not to stand looking up to the sky”.

Stating that Good news comes from heaven but has to be made very concrete on earth, Bishop Donal concluded: “This time and this place are where the mission continues, not a time for pausing the mission received at the Ascension”.

(www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/communications/documents/papa-francesco_20200124_messaggio-comunicazioni-sociali.html)

Fifth anniversary of ‘Laudato Si’ - A reflection by Noel Bradley



The wider world

In the wider world, there are thousands of organisations committed to caring for our planet, although the Paris agreement that showed such hope five years ago, seems to have run out of steam, with the various governments of the world reneging on their commitments. President Trump has withdrawn the United States from their commitments. So, it seems that change is not going to come from ‘the top’.

What about from the ‘bottom up’? We have seen a sign of hope with Greta Thunberg and the movement of young people that she has helped to inspire. What about the Church as a world organisation? We have had the Synod on the Amazon last year in Rome, which focused very much on what was happening to the millions of indigenous people in the vast Amazonian forests, and the destruction of their whole way of life by the accelerated cutting down of trees there in recent years. These forests have been called the ‘lungs of the planet’ because of the millions of trees with the ability to draw in carbon dioxide and, through a wonderful process called photosynthesis, transform it into oxygen.

The final document repeated largely what Pope Francis had already said in the ‘Laudato Si’ letter. ‘Laudato Si’ is the Latin for ‘Praise to You...Lord, taken from St Francis’ prayer of praise: ‘Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains

and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs”.

It is a pity that the media, and thus the public in general, took up the question of celibacy for priests in the Amazon region and thus distracted from the main message of the document. Besides this Synod, I am sure there are various good things done to protect the Earth by various churches and organisations in different countries throughout the world. They never get media attention.

The local church

What about our own diocese and your local church? There is a little ‘Laudato Si’ group in the Diocese, of which I am a member, and we are trying to influence things but, if I have to be honest, it has been an uphill struggle. I am sure there are other individuals and small groups in parishes trying to do various things, for example, using the car less, car pooling, using public transport, turning off unnecessary lights, less use of plastics, tree planting, organic gardening and farming, preserving ‘wet lands’, bee keeping, opening up nature walks for people to deepen their love of nature, separating refuse, restricting their consumer habits and waste of food, incorporating awareness of the Earth into the Eucharist, Confirmation and first Holy Communion, into sermons, promoting zero waste, and objecting to fracking (taking gas out of the rocks and leaving enormous damage to the environment).

But, while there have been many small initiatives, the response to the challenge of the Pope’s letter, I would say, has been on the whole very small. In the last five years, how many times have you heard care of the Earth mentioned in your local church? Or where the local church took some local pro-active initiative?

Here is an important paragraph (217) from the encyclical that is worth pondering: “...the ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion. It must be said that some committed and prayerful Christians, with the excuse of realism and pragmatism, tend to ridicule expressions of concern for the environment. Others are passive; they choose not to change their habits and thus become inconsistent. So what they all need is an ‘ecological conversion’, whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience”.

So, an ecological conversion for us who think of ourselves as ‘committed and prayerful Christians’ is not an optional or secondary aspect of our Christian lives but, in all truth and honesty, I think that 99% of us Christians in the diocese have hardly begun to take the challenge seriously.

COVID-19 - A Kairos Moment

The COVID-19 crisis can be seen

as a ‘kairos’ moment, meaning a moment of grace for us. People are talking about it being a ‘wake up’ call for all of us about how we are living our lives, and what kind of world we are creating if it can all be brought to a stand-still so easily and so quickly.

I am also thinking of this time as a graced time to fall more deeply in love with nature, which is the first step in an ecological conversion. We will not damage what we love. Although there has been understandably a lot of sadness expressed by Catholics about their inability to receive Holy Communion...“the real presence of the Lord has been taken away from us”...and, in Northern Ireland, about not being able to go into a Church for a quiet prayer; in truth, the real presence of the Lord has not been taken away from us.

I was struck by the readings in Church recently when Jesus told his disciples (and us) before he died, “It is for your own good that I am going because unless I go, the Advocate (the Holy Spirit) will not come to you” (John 16.7).

Jesus has gone to the one He called ABBA (Father) and has sent His Spirit, the “Spirit of truth” to be with us forever and “to lead us into the complete truth”. The Spirit is always with us now. In a real sense, however strange to our ears, the Spirit in some sense replaces the Son. The disciples and we, ourselves, are not to be left orphans; they and us receive another Advocate, the Holy Spirit and He is just as real as

Christ, even if it is hard for us to believe that. This time of history, after the historical Christ is the time of the Spirit. We see this so clearly in the Acts of the Apostles.

One of the ways that the Spirit often draws people to God is through the natural world of creation. Over the last two months, I have been walking to Fr Hegarty’s Rock along Lough Swilly, and every day I would meet people who were just enthusing about how beautiful everything was and how grateful they were to be living in such a beautiful place. This can be true of people everywhere.

The Pope says “there is a mystical meaning to be found in leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person’s face. The mystic experiences the intimate connection between God and all things” (233-234).

Have we not all been minor mystics at one time or another, although we would never think of putting that name on it? Here is Patrick Kavanagh talking about our ancestors: “From every second hill a neighbour watches With all the sharpened interest of rivalry. Yet sometimes when the sun comes through a gap These men know God the Father in a tree”. (The Great Hunger)

So, let us stay close to nature at this time and God may draw us in to his presence. “Laudato si’, mi’ Signore”.

(Noel can be contacted via email at noelbradley1512@gmail.com)

Children’s Catechism Club - C3

by Veronica Harley

Hello children. Welcome to the month of June and the lovely summer days. This month is dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This year we celebrate this beautiful feast day on June 19 and, on the following day, we rejoice at the Immaculate Heart of Mary, June 20. God is Love and the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the human sign of God’s love for us. Jesus’ Heart is overflowing with love for all humanity.



Our Lady of Fatima

Sacred Heart of Jesus
Sacred Heart of Jesus, I trust in You.
Sacred Heart of Jesus, I believe in Your love for me.
Sacred Heart of Jesus, Your Kingdom come.

The Immaculate Heart of Mary leads us closer to God and shows us how we should love Him. Mary’s heart is Immaculate. This means that it is pure and without sin (CCC 411) and that She is the only fully human person who can love God in the way that He should be loved. Devotion to Mary’s Immaculate heart allows us to honour Her holiness (CCC 971) and brings us closer to God (CCC 969).

Immaculate Heart of Mary

O Virgin Mary, my Mother, I give to your Immaculate Heart my body and my soul, my thoughts and my actions. I want to be what you want me to be and do just what you want me to do. I am not afraid because you are always with me. Help me to love your Son, Jesus with all my heart and above all things. Take my hand in yours so I can always be with you.



Trinity Sunday

Trinity Sunday is celebrated on the first Sunday after Pentecost. Unlike Lent or Easter, the Feast of the Holy Trinity is but one day, which is symbolic of the unity of the Trinity. On this day we remember the truth that God is three Persons – the Father, the Son (Jesus) and the Holy Spirit. It is a central mystery of our faith (CCC 234). Because it is a mystery, it’s difficult to understand.

But the Bible reveals that there is only one God but three Persons; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). The word we use to describe this is ‘Trinity’. It is made up of the word ‘tri’ which means three and the word ‘unity’ which means one or being unified.



Corpus Christi

The glorious feast of Corpus Christi is celebrated after Trinity Sunday. It usually falls between late May and early June. The name Corpus Christi is the Latin for ‘Body of Christ’ – the feast of the Holy Eucharist. The actual feast day of the Eucharist is Holy Thursday, the Last Supper. But because of the sad events which are recalled in Holy Week, the Eucharist is given its own special day of celebration – Corpus Christi. One practice of devotion which allows us to show great homage to Christ is Eucharistic Adoration.



Eucharistic Adoration

The Catholic Church has developed the beautiful practice of Eucharistic Adoration. This practice is centuries old, dating back to the Apostles, when the Eucharist was carried into the homes of those people who could not attend Mass. Eucharistic Adoration is a sign of devotion and worship of Jesus, who is truly present – Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity – in the Eucharist. The Holy Eucharist is placed in a very special vessel called a monstrance. This is made of a precious metal and is shaped like the sun to symbolise the resurrection of Jesus. The centre of the monstrance has a round glass window through

which the sacred Host can be seen. Behind the glass is a round container called a lunette. The lunette holds the Host securely in place. When the Host is not in the monstrance for adoration, it is kept safely in its lunette within a strong container known as a pyx in the Tabernacle.



When the monstrance contains the sacred Host, the priest will not touch the vessel with his bare hands. Out of respect for the Eucharist, the priest holds the monstrance with a humeral veil, a wide band of cloth that covers his shoulders (humera) and has pleats on the inside, in which he places his hands. A humeral veil is a liturgical vestment normally made of silk or gold cloth and is used by priests during Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

We are invited to come and spend time with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. When we come to spend time with Jesus in the Host, we praise and adore Him. We thank Him for all the wonderful things in our lives and the many gifts He has given us. When the angel appeared to the children at Fatima, He showed them how they should worship Jesus in the Eucharist. He bent low in



worship until His forehead touched the ground. He taught the children a beautiful prayer to say to Jesus. Please try to visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and spend some precious time with Him.



Saints of the Month

St Justin martyr – June 1
St Kevin – June 3
St Columba – June 9
St Irenaeus – June 28

Saints Peter and Paul

During this month, we celebrate the special feast day of two magnificent

saints, Peter and Paul. It falls on the 29th of June every year. These two men were among the first to spread the message of Jesus.

Saint Peter was a fisherman who Jesus called to be one of the Apostles. He followed Jesus, learned from Him and loved Him. This great Apostle’s name was Simon, but Jesus changed it to Peter, which means ‘rock’. “You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church” (Matthew 16:18). Peter is the Prince of the Apostles, the first leader of the Church; the first Pope.

St Paul was a Roman citizen and a Pharisee who never met Jesus during the Lord’s earthly life. In his early days, Paul hated the first Christians and made them suffer for believing in Jesus. Paul was converted to Christianity after he experienced a vision of the resurrected Jesus on the road to Damascus. He became a powerful teacher and preacher, always trusting in God.

We honour these two great apostles: Peter, our leader in the faith, and Paul, its fearless preacher.



Quiz Time with Lawrence

1. Coulrophobia is a fear of what type of character?
2. Which former Manchester United manager spent almost his entire playing career at United’s two biggest rivals, Manchester City and Liverpool?
3. In Roman numerals, what number is represented by the letters XCV?
4. Which two US states are the bookends for America’s famous Route 66?
5. What fictional parish had Fr Ted Crilly’s nemesis, Dick Byrne as its parish priest?
6. The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn was a direct sequel to which Mark Twain novel?
7. Which motor manufacturing company used the advertising slogan, ‘The car in front is a’?
8. What European city first heard Christian preaching?
9. Who is the only US president to have held the title despite never being elected either president or vice president?
10. Name the 1995 fantasy adventure movie about two children playing a board game who stumble on a man trapped in the game?
11. What metal is ‘Fe’ the chemical symbol for?
12. Behind Madrid and Barcelona, which is Spain’s next largest city in population?

13. Which country has Jacinda Ardern as its current prime minister?
14. Who did Alex Higgins beat to win the 1982 World Snooker final?
15. Which country’s international vehicle registration code is the letter ‘D’?
16. Which number is considered unlucky in China and Japan because of its close sounding to their words for ‘death’?
17. Jack Shepherd has played which Coronation Street character for the past 20 years?
18. The Escaut is the longest river in which European country?
19. What role does Siobh  n McSweeney play in the TV series ‘Derry Girls’?
20. In the traditional ‘Burns Night’ dinner, what type of food is ‘Neeps’?
21. The Forint is the national currency of which European country?
22. Which prominent Biblical figure was the grandson of Methuselah?
23. Which famous UK landmark was sold in 1967 and rebuilt in Lake Havasu, in Arizona?
24. In which Irish town was singer/songwriter Paul Brady born?
25. Which TV family lived in the fictional Nelson Mandela House?

Quiz Answers: 1. Clowns, 2. Sir Matt Busby, 3. 95, 4. Illinois and California, 5. Rugged Island, 6. The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, 7. Toyota, 8. Philipp, 9. Hungary, 22. Noah, 23. The original London Bridge, 24. Strabane, 25. The Trotters.

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

Let Your Light Shine!

Celebrating 5th Anniversary of ‘Laudato Si’

Clonmany, Coleraine, Creggan, Culladuff, Culmore, Desertmartin, Donnylough, Drumquin, Dunamaghy, 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



COMMON PRAYER
for the 5th anniversary of
Laudato Si'

Loving God,
Creator of heaven and earth and all that is in them,
You created us in your own image and made us
stewards of all your creation.
You blessed us with the sun, water and bountiful land
so that all might be nourished.

Open our minds and touch our hearts,
so that we may attend to your gift of creation.
Help us to be conscious that our common home
belongs not only to us, but to all of your creatures and to
all future generations, and that it is our responsibility to
preserve it.
May we help each person secure the food and
resources that they need.

Be present to those in need in these trying times,
especially the poorest and those most at risk of being
left behind.
Transform our fear and feelings of isolation into hope
and fraternity so that we may experience a true
conversion of the heart.

Help us to show creative solidarity in addressing the
consequences of this global pandemic.
Make us courageous to embrace the changes that are
needed in search of the common good.
Now more than ever may we feel that we are all
interconnected and interdependent.
Enable us to listen and respond to the cry of the earth
and the cry of the poor.
May the present sufferings be the birth pangs of a more
fraternal and sustainable world.

Under the loving gaze of Mary Help of Christians, we
make this prayer through Christ our Lord.
Amen

LAUDATO SI' WEEK 2020

ENCANTERO PER IL SERVIZIO
DELLO SCELTO UNIVERSITÀ INTERNAZIONALE



(Photography by Delma Boggs)

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