



# The NET

Sharing fruits of faith in Derry Diocese

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Celebrating 51 years of priesthood - Aghyaran.



Celebrating St Columba - Long Tower.



Corpus Christi - Carnhill.



Diaconate ordination for Diocese - Rome.



Corpus Christi procession at St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, Derry.

“Pray that we be Eucharistic people, giving and sharing the little we have with others”

- Fr Gerard Mongan (see p3)



Fan the Flame - Celtic Park.



Sr Clare Retreat - Creggan.



St John's PS Golden Jubilee - Creggan.

People in focus



Bella Nociarova-Russell,  
St Cecilia's Derry.



Kelly Barr, Derry.



Niamh Devlin,  
St Mura's Burnfoot.



Rev Shaun Doherty,  
Derry



The late Fr Patrick McGoldrick,  
Buncrana.

Also featuring: Young Writers share thoughts; Children's Catechism Club; Communion reflections from across the Diocese; Features and Quiz...



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*Fr Cajetan Ikedi Apeh ocd reflects on Pope Francis' prayer intention for June - "Let us pray for Christian families around the world. May each and every family embody and experience unconditional love and advance in holiness in their daily lives."*

# Secret of survival and flourishing of Christian homes is awareness of presence of God

THE Holy Father in his video message released on June 2, 2022, announced that his prayer intention for the month of June was for the families. The choice of this intention, as is phrased above, is quite important and appropriate as the Church hosts the World Meeting of Families scheduled for June 22-26. But on the other hand, the prayer intention re-echoes the central focus of the pontificate of Francis: The renewal of the Church through the family as is observable in his 'Amoris Laetitia'.

The forthcoming WMF meeting will be the 10th in the series, since the first one held in 1994. On May 17, 2019, the Holy Father announced the theme of the upcoming meeting as: "Family love: a vocation and a path to holiness." It is then obvious that the June Prayer intention and the theme of the meeting invite us, as Christians, to reflect on the role of the family in the spiritual growth and the authentic witnessing to the Gospel in society, and what is required for each family to live up to its mission.

## The Family: School of Virtues

There is an African adage that says "Before you marry a woman you should first 'marry' her mother". This simply means that people are often the product of a family, such that to know whether a young woman would make a good wife one simply has to observe whether her mother is one, since it is believed traditionally that most girls learn how to be wives from their mothers.

Most of the things we do as adults and our general approach to things were first shaped by family. A good family most often raises good children both for the Church and the society. This is why Pope Francis affirmed that "the welfare of the family is decisive for the future of the world and that of the Church" (Amoris Laetitia, 31).

It would be frivolous of anyone to wish to address the ill bedeviling our society without first improving the efficacy of parenting in the modern time. This is because, to some extent, the problems of our society are caused by the voluntary or involuntary undermining of the influence of the family on their children. A number

of things contributed to this laziness: some government work policies, individualism and, in the recent years, social media. All these have made the family wanting in its duty to educate as a school of virtues by alienating the members of the family from one another; the children from their parents and vice versa.

Besides being a school of virtues, the family is equally a school of communion. One of the terms used by some Church documents to describe the family is "domestic church", and rightly so. The Church, herself, is described in 'Lumen Gentium' as "the sacrament of communion with God and of unity among all men" (LG 1), likewise, the family as a "domestic church" ought to be a place where tolerance is practiced or inculcated in the young ones to ensure harmony in our society. Now, there is a relationship between love and tolerance: Love, we can say, engenders tolerance. Again, the lack of this tolerance in the family has led to the division and break-up among couples, leading to a rise in the number of recomposed families (one in which one or both couples had been in another marriage), and the negative effects this can have on the upbringing of children.

When the Pope invites us to pray for families, that each may embody and experience unconditional love, he implies a love that tolerates the imperfection in the beloved but, at the same time, presenting or exposing the latter to the grace of God; the only force that truly transforms a person. Human beings have imperfections and since the family is the association of persons, it is likewise imperfect. The Pope, himself, affirmed this in his speech, "there is no such thing as a perfect family. There are always 'buts.' There is always the need for growth in every family.

## The Family: Path to Holiness

It is said that "there is more to the west than the absence of an east." Holiness is not simply an absence of sin; it is rather a state where an individual allows all the aspects of his or her daily life to be penetrated and tailored by friendship with God and a consciousness of His abiding presence. This is why the more holy someone

becomes the more unworthy one feels, as we have observed in the lives of the saints.

The family as a domestic church should guide its members on the path of continual reconciliation with God and among its members, just as the Holy Father noted: "The family is the place where we learn to live with one another, to live with young people and with those who are older. And by being united in our differences - young people, the elderly, adults, children - we evangelize with our example of life."

We evangelize by our family by living in harmony, and this requires that the members practice forgiveness because there will always be infractions, but a family's growth towards perfection is judged by how these misunderstandings are handled.

The growth in holiness often manifests itself in the unconditional love of neighbor, which often implies self-denial. The family naturally creates the opportunity for the practice of charity, as it is a place of mutual dependence. In a healthy Christian home nobody is self-sufficient; our joy comes as gift from others, either through their reassuring companionship, loving attention or constructive criticism.

For instance, in the family, parents get their fulfilment in their being able to cater for their children, and the children are most fulfilled if, at the long run, they have not wasted the family resources. This analogy applies equally to the day-to-day life in the family where in ensuring the happiness of others, even to the point of self-sacrifice, we come out genuinely fulfilled. This mutual dependence can be raised to the state of virtue and, therefore, a path to holiness when God is put at its centre. If I work for the welfare of the people of my family not because they reciprocate it, but because it pleases God, then I am on the journey to holiness and the family is the path of that holiness. The prayer of Pope Francis is that the family may become a source of holiness for its members.

## Conclusion

As we have seen above, the prayer intention of the Holy Father is rooted in his



Fr Cajetan Apeh ocd, Termonbacca.

understanding of the true vocation of the Christian family as a place for the experience of unconditional love, and a path to holiness of life for its members.

Now, every family, Christian or non-Christian, is supposedly built and sustained by love, which is a human trait. However, the Christian family is different because of the consciousness of the presence of God as part of the family. This has a far-reaching implication. For any Christian family to really live up to its duty towards its members, it must leverage on this presence of God. This is the secret of the survival and flourishing of

Christian homes.

It is this presence of God that Pope Francis reassures the Christians of in his message: "He remains with us at all times in the swaying of the boat tossed by the sea: when we argue, when we suffer, when we're joyful, the Lord is there and accompanies us, and corrects us."

It is, therefore, our prayer too that our families may never forget this Presence, especially at difficult times.

(Fr Cajetan is the latest addition to the Carmelite Community based at Termonbacca, Derry)

## Diary Dates

**Carnhill Holy Hour:** The Abraham Community lead an hour of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament for the National Synodal Pathway in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, on the last Saturday of each month, following the 6 pm Vigil Mass.

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

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

**Sr Clare Rosary:** The Sr Clare Rosary continues every Monday night, at 8.30 pm, in St Joseph's Room, at the Carmelite Retreat Centre, Termonbacca.

**Matt Talbott Society:** The Matt Talbott Society Mass, praying for those suffering from addiction, is offered for those

enrolled on the first Monday of every month in St Eugene's Cathedral, at 7.30 pm.

**Bishop Daly Exhibition:** Plans are underway for an exhibition on the life of Bishop Edward Daly in St Eugene's Cathedral in August. Anyone with photographs of Bishop Daly's time in ministry that could be used in the exhibition is asked to contact Emmet Thompson on 028 71 262894 or email: emmet.thompson@derrydiocese.org

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

**The NET**

Sharing the fruits of the faith in the Derry Diocese

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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



*Encouraging his congregation to bring all their hungers and need for healing to Jesus during the Carnhill Corpus Christi procession, Fr Gerard Mongan, CC, also spoke of the need to...*

## Pray we be Eucharistic people, giving and sharing the little we have...to be bread broken for others



THE sun shone down upon the annual Corpus Christi Procession in the Three Patrons Parish on the Feast of the Body and Bloody of Christ, as Fr Gerard Mongan CC carried the Blessed Sacrament around the grounds of St Brigid's Church, in Carnhill, accompanied by children who recently made their First Holy Communion, their families and others who attended the beautiful ceremony.

Earlier, in his Sunday homily for this very special Feast Day in the calendar of the Church, Fr Gerard began by sharing a story that a tour guide at St Peter's Basilica in Rome had told him about an occasion when he led a group of Japanese tourists who knew absolutely nothing of the Catholic Faith.

"With particular care, he explained the great masterpieces of art, sculpture and architecture. He finally concluded at the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, trying his best to explain quickly what it was," recalled Fr Gerard.

He continued: "As the group dispersed, an elderly man, who had been particularly attentive stayed behind, and said, 'Pardon me. Would you explain again this 'Blessed Sacrament?'" The tour guide did, after which the man exclaimed, 'Ah, if this is so, what is in this chapel is a greater work of art than anything else in this basilica.'

Fr Gerard went on to tell the congregation: "Today's Feast of Corpus Christi is intended to make us value and appreciate the worth of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist."

"One young man who did value and appreciate it was Carlo Acutis, beatified in 2020 and on the road to canonisation. He was a computer whiz kid, played video games, dressed up as Spiderman and hung out with his teenage friends."

"But it wasn't just how he died that made him holy, offering his leukaemia for the Pope and the Church, it was

how he lived. And it's not like he was some bizarre miracle child who always prayed and did everything that his parents asked.

"Carlo Acutis is going to be a saint because he loved the Eucharist. In fact, he loved it so much that, at 11 years old, he started to research over 136 Eucharistic miracles that occurred over the centuries in different parts of the world, which have been acknowledged by the Church, and he collected them into a virtual museum."

"Every once in a while," he added, "God performs a visible miracle to remind us about the invisible one that happens at every Mass. In the various Eucharistic miracles of bleeding hosts, there's a common pattern: 1. The blood is human. It's type AB which is the most uncommon blood type. 2. The blood and tissue fibres are from the heart. 3. It's from a tortured dying man."

"There are dozens of examples, some of them with thorough scientific evidence saying, 'This is impossible, we can't explain it'."

"Carlo Acutis, loving the Eucharist and his Catholic faith, compiled these miracles so that you and I can read about them on his website and value the very summit of our faith, the real presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, greater than any work of art or architecture."

### Life

Remarking that while these accounts are astounding, we did not have to use them as the basis of our faith, Fr Gerard said: "We have Jesus' word for it in the Gospel of John Chapter 6. He says: 'I am the living bread, which has come down from heaven...the bread that I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world'; and 'If you do not eat my flesh and drink my blood, you will not have life in you...anyone who eats my flesh...has eternal life'."

"And just to really bring it home, Jesus says: 'My flesh is real food, and my blood is real drink'."

"Christ's words are astonishing! What Christ said, He meant! In every Mass, He welcomes us, talks to us about the Kingdom of God and offers us healing, just as He did with the five thousand. As for them, so He does for us: He takes, blesses, breaks and hands out, not loaves or fishes but the bread and wine offered by Melchizedek of old, changed into His Body and Blood, to feed our hungry souls."

"And so, the miracle of Jesus feeding five thousand points to the greatest miracle of all in the history of the world. Jesus wants to give us so much more. He wants to give us Himself in every Mass."

"In return," suggested Fr Gerard, "we can offer the little we have, our own five loaves and two fish. Jesus will do the rest. We can offer our broken and bruised lives, the little faith we have, our quiet prayer."

"Today we will show our love and respect for Jesus in our Blessed Sacrament Procession. He will pass by us just as He did on the roads of Palestine. It is Jesus Himself. We can bring to Him today all our hungers, our need for healing. As we walk with Jesus in procession, we thank Him for everything, we humbly ask for anything we need, we ask Him to bless all our loved ones and especially the sick."

"We pray that we be Eucharistic people, giving and sharing the little we have with others, to be that bread broken for others. And we ask Him to watch over the boys and girls who will lead the procession and all of us who walk with Him today, so that close to Him in this world, we may be happy forever with Him in Heaven."

"With reverence and respect, like the Japanese tourist, like Carlo, we marvel at the miracle in our midst'."





# Confirmation-year children sang St Columba's praises on return of 'Fan the Flame' to Celtic Park

AFTER two years of Confirmation-year children not being able to gather to celebrate the annual 'Fan the Flame' ceremony together, due to Covid-19 concerns, the Diocesan Catechetical team and volunteers were delighted to once again see over 3,000 happy youngsters singing and waving their specially made flags in Celtic Park, as the 2022 ceremony got underway.

In the lead-up to the gathering, which also marked the end of their primary education, the children had designed their own 'Fan the Flame' t-shirts based on the theme for this year's ceremony, 'Blessed are the Peacemakers', and completed a Reflective Journal.

Taking place on Thursday, June 9, the Feast of St Columba, the Long Tower Folk Group honoured Derry's Patron Saint by leading the gathering of Year 7/Sixth Class pupils from schools across the Diocese in singing the Hymn to St Columba.

And while the children sang his praises, St Columba was surely looking down upon them from his heavenly home and interceding for a change to the wet weather forecast, for while a strong wind blew, the rain stayed away for the duration of the fanning the flame of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The joyous occasion got underway with a procession of pupils holding aloft their school banners, while others carried banners highlighting the gifts of the Holy Spirit - Understanding, Wisdom, Courage, Right Judgement, Knowledge, Peace, and Self-Control - as the Folk Group led everyone in singing 'Shine Jesus Shine'.

Bishop Donal was accompanied by a number of priests and the Diocese's newly ordained deacon, Rev Michael McCaul, as the procession led them to the altar, where they were joined by a 'special guest'.

Welcoming everyone to Celtic Park earlier, Derry GAA chairperson, John Keenan, of Castledawson, said that while the children were the real special guests for the occasion, he was delighted to announce "another special visitor that had not been

here for 24 years"...the Anglo-Celt Cup, which Derry had won as the 2022 Ulster Senior Football Champions.

And so, before the 16th annual 'Fan the Flame' Mass got underway, two pupils, representing the Steelstown and Doire Trasna Gaelic Clubs, had the honour of carrying the Cup across the Celtic Park pitch to the altar.

Giving a shout out to the pupils and staff gathered from schools throughout the Diocese, including counties Derry, Donegal and Tyrone, Bishop Donal had a special welcome for those from schools with St Columba as their patron. He also welcomed the newly elected Mayor, Sandra Duffy.

Inviting everyone to prayer, asking God to help them "fan into a flame the faith He has given us", Bishop Donal went on to note that it was the second anniversary of the death of Bishop Francis Lagan, recalling: "Only 10 people were allowed at his funeral. Those were difficult times".

During his homily, the Bishop spoke about how difficult the past couple of years had been for the school children, with schools closed, having to do their school work from home, and not being with their friends.

He added: "I hope you look back over the last couple of years and see that your schools offer so much that you can't do alone, such as music, sports, drama, trips together, etc."

There was loud applause when the Bishop thanked everyone who had helped to keep the schools going during such a difficult period, and he highlighted the importance of reflecting on that experience.

"Some people can look back and complain, but those who mainly see things to complain about have little to offer to young people," remarked Bishop Donal, adding: "The Holy Spirit wants you to look back and be honest about difficult times, but to also think of what was positive; good times, what you learned, what you have come to appreciate."

"The Holy Spirit wants to encourage you to have the attitude of gratitude. Those who

have the attitude of gratitude can dream of great things in the future, and can feel able to face whatever the future may throw at you. When you believe in a God who was with you in the hard times, you can trust that God will still walk with you".

"Those who teach you to be angry and resentful have nothing to offer," continued Bishop Donal, "Jesus says, 'Blessed are the peacemakers'. It's not easy to make peace. It's easy to be angry, but in this community of Derry we have great peacemakers and we thank God for them."

"The world needs peacemakers. Peacemakers are children of God and a great blessing on everybody. Be peacemakers".

Unlike the past two years, when the 'Fan the Flame' Mass was celebrated in St Eugene's Cathedral and the schools tuned in online, the young people were very much involved in the Liturgy, with a pupil from St Joseph's PS, in Drumquin, doing the First Reading and a Long Tower PS pupil singing the Psalm, while pupils from St John's PS, Dernaflaw, Dungiven, St Patrick's PS, Newtownstewart, and Faughanvale PS, read the Prayer of the Faithful.

Children from Bunscoil Colmcille, Steelstown, St Joseph's NS, Illies, Buncrana, and St Mary's PS, Maghera, took part in the Offertory Procession, and children from schools within the Three Patrons Parish animated the final hymn, 'He's got the whole world in His hands'.

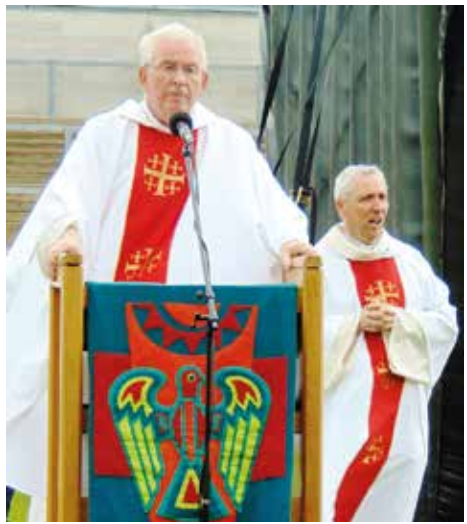
A number of Pope John Paul II Award pupils also assisted as flag bearers and Communion coordinators.

As another successful Fan the Flame ceremony came to a close, the words of the St Columba Hymn seemed very appropriate...

*When Columba speaks of Jesus, when his lips pronounce His name, every word with love is burning and his hearers catch the flame. St Columba, Holy Father, hear our praises, grant our prayer, make us love our Jesus better and in Heaven His glory share.*







# Fanning the Flame of the Holy Spirit

by Niamh Devlin

I am in 6th class at St Mura's NS, Tooban. I am in the final few days of my joyous and slightly hectic journey through primary school. This year has certainly been an exciting one; between preparing for secondary school and Confirmation, I feel that I have grown so much as a young person.

I celebrated my Confirmation on June 4 in St Mura's Church, Fahan, and I was lucky enough to celebrate it with all of my family and friends. I was eager to welcome the Holy Spirit into my life and I hope to put its gifts to good use.

We prepared eagerly for Confirmation, learning lots of valuable lessons. A few lessons that stand out for me were learning about morality, the parables that Jesus told us, the

Beatitudes and learning about people such as Fr Peter McVerry and John Hume.

I attended the 'Fan The Flame' Mass with my classmates and pupils from other schools in our Diocese. I found the Mass to be a very uplifting and enlightening experience. We learned a lot about our Diocese this year, so it was nice to see all the other candidates in the Diocese. The atmosphere was warm and friendly, and we even got to meet Bishop McKeown.

I feel very excited and a bit nervous about secondary school, but I am more than ready for the next adventure that it will bring.

I hope to use the Holy Spirit in the next few years to help me to become a responsible young adult and to live just as God wishes. I understand now that I

am a young adult in the eyes of the Church and I am very willing to take on the responsibility of being a valued member of my community.



Niamh Devlin is a 6th Class pupil at St Mura's National School, Tooban, in the Parish of Burt, Inch and Fahan, Derry Diocese.



# Creggan celebrates 50 years of St John's PS...where children continue to grow and learn in love and confidence

St John's Primary School, in the Creggan, is celebrating over 50 years of educating and inspiring thousands of young people to achieve their goals since its doors opened on September 2, 1971.

Welcoming those gathered in St Mary's Church for the Anniversary Mass of Thanksgiving on June 10, the principal, Mrs Geraldine O'Connor reflected on how the school has "shone as a beacon of hope within the Creggan community" through the darkest days of the troubles, in which Stephen McConomy died in 1982, the terrible tragedy in 1997 in which they lost Aaron and Ryan McCauley, until the more recent COVID-19 pandemic.

She went on to note that progressive teacher professional learning and continued success in sport, STEM, music, ICT innovation and Eco events throughout the past 50 years had all helped to establish St John's "as a school of excellence and prominence in the city".

Highlighting that the school's success was mainly down to its "visionary and conscientious Board of Governors", Mrs O'Connor said: "Originally guided by the late Mr Patsy McChrystal and now led by our current chairperson, Mrs Kathleen McCallion, the voluntary endeavours of the Board of Governors, coupled with our school chaplaincy, currently Fr Gormley and Fr McFaul, continue to guide and shape our vision for excellence in all that we do as a Catholic school of faith, hope and love".

She continued: "The foundations laid by former principals Mr Hugh Kelly, Ms Catherine Bradley and Mrs Patricia Ferry, coupled with the support of our colleagues at the Education Authority, CCMS, the

Derry Catechetical Centre, the Creggan Forum, and our Shared Education Partner School, Lisnagelvin Primary School, have ensured that a culture of academic excellence, pastoral care and inclusion underpins all that we do for our children and their families.

"Over the years, our parents and carers, as primary educators, have endeavoured also to work in partnership with staff to achieve the best possible outcomes for our children".

However, Mrs O'Connor pointed out that it was the school staff that deserved recognition "for creating the happy school that is St John's, where children continue to grow and learn in love and confidence every day".

She recalled: "Amidst the adversity and fear that accompanied the recent pandemic, our staff turned up every day to provide on-site academic and pastoral provision for over 150 of our most vulnerable children.

"Live daily remote learning sessions, up to three times a day, including the 360 socially distanced visits to children's homes, proved a lifeline for our children and often their parents, during this very frightening period.

"Challenging as this was, the selfless dedication and resilience of all staff allowed us to navigate our school family through unprecedented times to this dawning of a new age, where we move bravely forward with hopeful hearts and minds as we 'Learn Together and Grow Together'."

## Happiness

And singing together seems to be another source of happiness for the St John's Primary School community, with the sweet singing of Mrs Cassidy's Year

5 class and the Staff Choir, accompanied by other musically gifted staff members, greatly enhancing the liturgy for the

Anniversary Mass, which was concelebrated by Bishop Donal, Fr Joe Gormley, PP Creggan, and Fr Daniel McFaul, curate.

Noting that St John's PS was situated "in the heart of an area that has a proud history going back 75 years", Bishop Donal remarked: "You have been such a part of the life of this community for half a century and have lived through difficult times. This anniversary gives us much to reflect on and for which to be grateful".

He continued: "In a time of great change, St John's Primary School has played a huge and consistent role in the community. Catholic schools like this were set up by parish communities to serve their community and its children. Catholic schools will continue to be available where parents wish them to exist and to be welcoming to children from all cultural and faith backgrounds".

Reflecting on the school's patron, St John, the Evangelist, Bishop Donal said: "He was a young follower of Jesus who wrote a beautiful Gospel about Jesus and about God who is love. Those who set up this school, and who have continued its work, want to hand on that message. That good news about love and forgiveness, about hope and belonging, is much needed in our world that often offers poor role models and little for young people to dream of becoming.

"Do not be afraid to be proud of what you stand for. There are those who present a caricature of the Catholic school as a narrow and sectarian invention that has no place in a modern society. Some will want to remove any voice from schools that speaks of God or sacrifice. The culture

wants to promote the message that the most important values are to 'obey your thirst, and 'let's feel good'. St John said that generosity and community are what helps people to blossom. Be proud of that message".

The Bishop went on to note that schools such as St John's face other challenges as they seek to prepare young people for adult life, saying: "Your school offers, not merely excellent teaching of subject content, but an integrated way of looking at the world. You offer high expectations for all pupils and a belief that they are all made in God's image and likeness...and you open your doors to others who struggle with division.

"I know that you recently welcomed a delegation of 37 educationists from Jewish and Arab schools in Jerusalem. Catholic schools open you up to the wonders of the world. You offer your experience of conflict and healing to those who still struggle with conflict. You can offer your message of hope to those who think there is no way forward".

He concluded: "As you look back on the last half century, you can give thanks for great leaders, wonderful staff and a supportive community. When you can look back with gratitude to God, you can face the future with confidence because you believe in a God who is leading you.

"An honest evaluation of the past enables you to learn from what has happened and to believe that the collective wisdom in the family of Catholic schools will support you in facing the future".

Following the Mass, guests joined the school community for lunch and entertainment by the pupils back in St John's, where displays of photographs and memorabilia from the last 50 years could be viewed.



St John's PS principal, Mrs Geraldine O'Connor.





# St John PS community reflects...



AS part of the Golden Jubilee celebrations for St John's Primary School, a number of symbols were brought forward during a period of reflection at the start of the Anniversary Mass.

These included a photograph of the school to show that it is at the heart of the Creggan and St Mary's Parish communities, which was brought forward by Mrs Kathleen McCallion, chairperson of the Board of Governors.

A picture of the School's Patron Saint, St John the Evangelist, also known as John the Teacher, was presented by Miss Katherine Woods.

The new school prayer adopted by St John's to mark its 50th anniversary was brought forward by Mrs Brenda Doherty.

School pupil, Caolan presented a lego representation of the St John's School crest, which he had created.

A number of symbols were then presented that explained

the meaning of the School's crest and the child-centred ethos of the School community.

Mrs Siobhan Gallagher presented a Bible as a symbol of the Schools' Catholic faith.

Mr Neil Carlin, Mr Alan Nash and Mr Sean Mullan presented sporting jerseys as symbols of the School's sporting endeavours.

Mrs Rachel Doherty presented a violin as a symbol of musical talents and gifts.

Mr Niall McCourt presented an atlas as a symbol of the learning journey.

Mrs Claire Sheerin presented oak leaves as symbols of the wisdom, strength and resilience drawn from St Columba, Patron Saint of Derry.

The final symbol brought forward, by Mrs Karen Carlin, was a Book of Remembrance to commemorate the deceased members of the school community from whose legacy all at the school continue to learn and grow in love each day.





*Praying for a new generation of witnesses who will “live in such a way that one’s life would make no sense if God did not exist”, Bishop Donal spoke on the Feast of St Columba about how...*

## Young people want to be inspired by how Christians live

CELEBRATING Mass in St Columba’s Church, Long Tower, to mark the Feast of St Columba, Bishop Donal prayed that young people will be open to live with the generosity of Derry’s Patron Saint, and “for a new generation of witnesses who will ‘live in such a way that one’s life would make no sense if God did not exist’.”

The Mass followed the praying of the Rosary, in Irish, at the outdoor Calvary scene, and amongst the congregation were the newly elected Deputy Mayor of Derry City & Strabane District Council, Cllr Angela Dobbins, and a number of children from the parish who had made their First Holy Communion this year.

During his homily, the Bishop quoted Cardinal Emmanuel Suhard, who had been the Archbishop of Paris from 1940-49 and had written: “To be a witness does not consist in engaging in propaganda or even in stirring people up, but in being a living mystery. It means to live in such a way that one’s life would make no sense if God did not exist.”

Remarking that this was something that “all the saints have known, each in their own different way”, Bishop Donal continued: “They knew that teaching people about Jesus was important. But they were very conscious that words don’t count for much, unless they are spoken by someone whose life says more than their lips speak.

“Right from the time of Jesus, His followers have always felt called to a way of life that would make no sense if God did not exist. Any temptation to water down the Christian message of the Cross so as to be seen as sensible by the contemporary world is doomed to failure. No one will be inspired by a message that offers little more than watery piety and religious themed entertainment”.

He went on to point out: “St Columba was one who felt this call to a radical way of life. He came from a reasonably wealthy and settled family. He could have chosen any of the powerful roads that life offered him. Instead, he chose to live in a monastery with

a community, to follow a strict timetable in a community with others and to season his life with repeated times of prayer. That did not limit his life. Rather, the discipline enabled him to grow and mature in freedom.

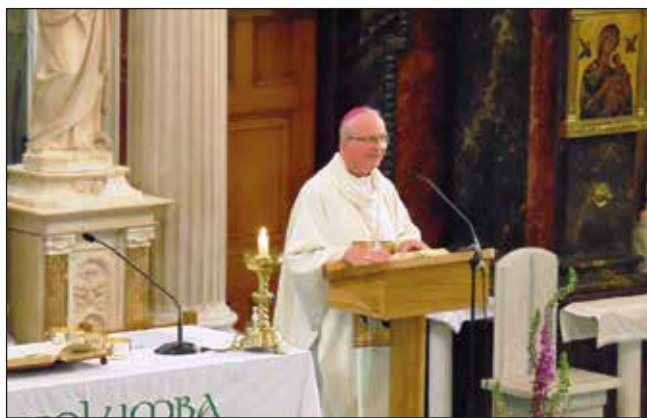
“Then, for whatever reason, within his community here in Derry, he heard the call to leave behind his home territory and to sail beyond the horizon where he could no longer see his native land. There he lived on a windy island and taught a new way of life to the Scots. He lived in a way that makes no sense if God did not exist”.

Referring to the journey underway as church in Ireland known as the Synodal Pathway, Bishop Donal explained that it was based on two simple assumptions: “Firstly, our current way of being church is not making new disciples for Jesus nor bringing Christ’s grace to those parts of the world that most need it. So, it has to change. Secondly, the early church tells us that we find the way forward only by listening to one another and discerning that path together”.

### Community

Considering what could be learnt from St Columba today, Bishop Donal noted, firstly, that church is about building communities: “We are not merely an institution that offers religious services and sacraments to those who choose to come along. It is never easy to live in a community, as Columba knew. We like our own space and to be with people who do not challenge us. But community means making space for different sorts of people – and living with difference.

“There is no great grace or achievement in living in small echo chambers of like-minded people. A graced community makes space for those on the margins, just as Jesus did. If we only compete in offering nice religious ceremonies to occasional visitors, then we are not actively building communities where the lonely can find space and friendship. Jesus said that it is in the least of His brothers and



sisters that we find Him”.

Going on to suggest that Columba would tell us that “following Jesus will always take us beyond our comfort zone”, the Bishop remarked that young people want to be inspired by how Christians live.

“Sometimes they see us as tame and frightened people,” he said, adding: “Columba inspired his contemporaries by letting Jesus drag him far away from where he felt cosy. Columba knew that prayer opened him up to hear Christ’s voice. Prayer was not merely about trying to get God to see things our way.

“The scriptures are full of people who were called to leave behind security and go far from where they wanted to be. We think of Moses and Mary, of the early apostles and so many who left these shores to bring good news into impoverished parts of the world.

“There is no grace in a church that merely asks how we can adopt everything that changing society puts before us, in order to stand on nobody’s toes. That is not the Church that Jesus founded, and that Columba knew”.

Concluding that much of the spirit of Columba was still alive in the City of Derry, Bishop

Donal recalled how the Diocese had shown huge generosity in response to the Ukraine Appeal: “Almost without any major organisation, we received over £400k, all of which has gone straight to Lviv to support work with refugees.

“This community has suffered much over the decades...and it has not become bitter. Rather, solidarity and generosity have been the rich fruit of people who know compassion and who desire a better future for their children”.

At the end of the ceremony, the children who had recently made their First Holy Communion were invited to lead the traditional procession down the hill to St Columba’s Well for the annual blessing and distribution of Holy Water.

On the return walk up the hill, many stopped to enjoy an outdoor pageant on the life of St Columba, entitled ‘An Turas – The Journey’. Presented by the North West Carnival Initiative, in conjunction with In Your Space and Greater Shantallow Community Arts, the pageant was commissioned by Derry City and Strabane District Council and Donegal County Council, and funded by the North West Development Fund.







Mgr Andy Dolan gives thanks for 51 years of priesthood.



Mgr Andy Dolan, PP Bellaghy, celebrated Mass in St Patrick's Church, Aghyaran, on Pentecost Sunday, where he was ordained 51 years ago on June 5

St Columb's men will be distinctive if they take life and witness of patron saint as model - Archbishop Eamon Martin

THE 15th centenary year of St Columba's birth has been a natural time to look back with pride and thanksgiving, Archbishop Eamon Martin remarked during the celebration of Mass in St Columb's College, Derry, to mark the Feast of St Columba, however, he warned that the "friends of St Columba's" should never immerse themselves totally in the past, but be "completely open to what God is asking" today.

The College's former principal and pupil said that, to be true to their patron, "St Columb's must always be on the look out to embrace change and a new future, with fresh possibilities and opportunities to serve, just as it has done throughout its great history".

"We know that Saint Columba's men have made a huge difference to this city, this country," he continued, "We thank God for all that has been achieved but we also we pray for an openness to the Holy Spirit and to whatever plans the Lord might yet have in store for us.

"Who knows what the current generation of Saint Columba's boys will bring to the world? Who knows where the Lord will lead them and what a difference they will be able to make to society and to Church".

Noting that the challenges facing current pupils were immense, Archbishop Eamon said: "Our world has in many ways become a confused, mixed up and troubled place. You have experienced first-hand the impact of a pandemic on education, future plans, health and well being of our young people.

"Then there are the threats to peace and to prosperity, the ongoing uncertainty regarding our political institutions and the future of relationships on this island and between these islands; the serious challenges that face planet Earth itself - our common home.

"All these could appear as insurmountable obstacles or barriers to future success and fulfilment - but to think that way wouldn't be the way of St Columba".

He then quoted words from an ancient hymn which, he noted, "speak of St Columba as someone who never failed to trust in God"...

"Alone with none but thee, my God, I journey on my way: what need I fear when thou art near, O King of night and day?

more safe am I within thy hand than if a host should round me stand".

Adding that the College motto also challenged them to "continually trust in God and to seek new possibilities for establishing the kingdom of God", Archbishop Eamon highlighted that the ethos of St Columb's College "has always been about much more than simply academic excellence and qualifications, important though they remain".

He continued: "St Columb's is called to reflect and keep its focus on the values that it helps to instil in the young people it serves, knowing that Columba's men will be distinctive if they can model themselves on the life and witness of our patron saint.

"Of course, they can be men of scholarship as St Columba was; they can be men who love faith and learning as Colmcille did. But at the same time, they can be men who reach out in compassion and charity to those less fortunate and stay close to the beauty and wonders of creation - not exploiting it selfishly but insuring that its benefits are there for generations to come.

Vision

"If they are to be like Columba, Saint Columba's men will above all be people of hope and vision, always looking out for new and as yet undiscovered possibilities - never getting stuck in the past or too comfortable in the present, but always being open to the unfolding and creation of a new and brighter future for themselves, their families and all".

Saying that Pope Francis often reminds young people "to dream great things, to seek vast horizons, to aim higher, to take on the world", to accept challenges and to offer the best of themselves to the building of something better, Archbishop Eamon remarked: "Those words could easily have been spoken by St Colmcille".

Encouraging the young and "not so young" gathered for the celebration of the Eucharist, in the College, to reflect on their dreams and hopes, for themselves, for the world and for others, he urged: "Do not settle for mediocrity but seek to achieve your very best in everything... Remember you have been given great gifts and talents, but as the bible says, to those who are given much, much will be expected! So be people of vision - dream dreams, and do not be afraid to make them happen!



"You may have already excelled academically, for commitment, attendance, sporting or other achievements, but remember that there are many other personal qualities that can make a huge difference to the world and for which we rarely win prizes on earth - like kindness and generosity, friendship, compassion and tolerance, love and understanding, mutual understanding, charity and peace. These are the characteristics of St Columba and these are the qualities that can make the world a better place for yourself, your family and others. Cultivate these gifts too".

The All Ireland Primate concluded by sharing some words written a few years ago by Pope Francis from his letter to the young people of the world: "Dear young people, make the most of these years of your youth. Don't observe life from a balcony. Don't confuse happiness with an armchair, or live your life behind

a screen. Whatever you do, do not become the sorry sight of an abandoned vehicle! Don't be parked cars, but dream freely and make good decisions. Take risks, even if it means making mistakes. Don't go through life anaesthetized or approach the world like tourists. Make a ruckus! Cast out the fears that paralyze you, so that you don't become young mummies. Live! Give yourselves over to the best of life! Open the door of the cage, go out and fly! Please, don't take early retirement".

Saying that, for him, those words "sum up the spirit of St Columba who set out down the River Foyle in a tiny currach, and on out into the waves not looking back, but sailing out to embrace a new and exciting future", Archbishop Eamon prayed: "May that spirit always abide in the corridors of St Columb's, and in the hearts and minds of its pupils, parents, staff and all who visit this great College".



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)

Pope's monthly intention

The Holy Father has asked for prayer during June for:

Families:

We pray for Christian families around the world; may they embody and experience unconditional love and advance in holiness in their daily lives.

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.



*THIS month, three of the young writers have reflected on Pope Francis' comments on the importance of research and discoveries of historians.*

*Bronagh shares her thoughts on comments by the Pope regarding prayer bringing peace in the darkest times, and Peter writes about how he has found the annual Mass in his parish for those doing examinations to be a great support to young people at a challenging time for them.*

*Reflecting on the Feasts celebrated in the Church during the month of June, John writes about how they serve as a reminder to us of our daily responsibility to be the light and salt of the world.*

*And Hollie reflects on her experience as a young writer for 'The Net' over the past two years, as she moves from being a regular contributor to an occasional one to accommodate her busy university schedule.*



Hollie Frystal,  
Co Tyrone  
Deanery.



Bronagh  
Doherty,  
Co Derry  
Deanery



Peter Grant,  
Inishowen  
Deanery.



Jodie Kennedy,  
Derry City  
Deanery.



Lorcan  
McGonagle,  
Inishowen  
Deanery



Niamh O'Kane  
- Co Derry  
Deanery



Gemma  
Gallagher,  
Derry City  
Deanery



John Augustine  
Joseph, Derry  
City Deanery.



Zara  
Schlindwein,  
Derry City  
Deanery.

## Research and discoveries of historians are rich in lessons that can be shared by Jodie

TOWARDS the end of May, Pope Francis met in Rome with the members of the Pontifical Committee for Historical Sciences for their Plenary Session.

With his great interest in highlighting the significance of studying history, especially within the Church, Pope Pius XII established the Committee in 1954. Members come from three continents and 14 countries, therefore getting a diverse collaboration of historians and academic institutions studying the history of the Church.

Historians are essential in giving importance to firmly documented realities. Especially with social media, nowadays any story is given the time of day and sometimes people's firm belief. Things that circulate here can, a lot of the time, cause disputes and bad turns of events.

A lot of bad turns of events have been taking place in our world recently, with the likes of Covid-19 and the war on Ukraine taking place this year. So historians are definitely needed when searching for concrete and peaceful solutions to resolve disagreements. Too many false negatives circulate. We need to focus on what historians know to take the sense of community in humanity to the next level.

Pope Francis said that he hoped historians will contribute with their research to give courageous impetus to study and sharing of

the concrete history of peoples and States.

He noted that, unfortunately, the situation in Eastern Europe has halted temporarily the possibility to meet with fellow historians as done in recent decades and involving collaboration with both the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow and historians of the Moscow Orthodox Patriarchate. However, he is hopeful that they will find the right opportunity to resume this joint work and collaboration, which offers a valuable contribution aimed at fostering peace.

This Committee does a great job at promoting the use of ecclesiastical archives for historical research and fostering cooperation with ecclesiastical and extra-ecclesial institutions and associations, particularly at the international level. It is useful in promoting accurate historical accounts from trusted historians, and, as the Pope said, the research and discoveries of historians are rich in lessons that can be shared.



## Reflecting on her experience and highlights in the writing for The NET, Hollie writes...

# "The NET has served as one of many fruits that have encouraged young people to journey together"

THIS month, I have chosen to write my final article, as a regular contributor from the Tyrone Deanery, reflecting on my experience and highlights in writing monthly for the 'Youth Section' in 'The NET', including our past NET conversations and exclusive interview!

In his message for World Communications Day in 2022, Pope Francis states that "listening is the first indispensable ingredient of dialogue and good communication".

Coinciding with the Synod, I believe that "The NET" has served as one of many fruits that have encouraged our young people to journey together. Enabling them to follow up on various stories, news, events, etc, and encouraging them to listen and dialogue over them with fellow journalists from other deaneries and with our Bishop. My experience has been both rich and fruitful in opportunity and in 'Synodality'.

On June 22, 2020, I was asked to be part of a new project, becoming involved in a youth writing team for 'The NET'. Prior to June 2020, I had written a couple of articles on the topics of Lough Derg and the Pope John Paul II Award, however, this new initiative would require a regular commitment. I became the youth writer for the Tyrone Deanery

and, now concluding two years later, I have so many memories to look back on, in particular there are a number of articles/topics that stand out.

My experience of writing for 'The NET' within the Tyrone Deanery all occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic. Recently, I re-read the youth team's previous articles and it was particularly interesting how each of us reflected and highlighted the many beautiful examples of faith that were expressed in such a time of crisis.

Furthermore, it will give future generations an insight to this period, enabling them to delve back and read about the journey and development our Diocese underwent. The articles will provide a reader with some taste of what the pandemic was like in the context of Church and faith, consisting of a record of the gradual journey from darkness into light.

Recalling the fitting words of Pope Francis, in his book 'Let Us Dream', the Holy Father reminds us that very rarely one goes through such a crisis or 'situation' as big and comes out the other end the same! One is either better or worse, but not the same.

In terms of faith, it was inevitable that the pandemic had both a positive and negative impact on Church, and that was so well



recorded in our young people's articles in 'The NET'.

When emerging out of the pandemic, 'The NET' youth team was very fortunate to attend monthly socially-distant conversations that involved listening and discussion over the various articles that had been written, with Bishop Donal. It was such a wonderful and youthful example of a Synodal Church.

One of the main topics of discussion surrounded the youthful and inspiring figures of Sr Clare Crockett and Blessed Carlo Acutis. For example, in October of 2020, the youth writers jumped at the opportunity to write about a young man called Carlo Acutis who was beatified. The tech whiz had somewhat struck a chord with the young people in the sense that he was basically a 'Saint of today'. He was relatable and the first known to be engaged with technology. If it were not for the editor of 'The NET' to ask me, and my fellow youth writers, to follow up on Blessed Carlo Acutis' story, then I might not have come across his

wonderful example of faith.

My primary highlight of 'The NET' was most definitely the exciting opportunity to interview the first female undersecretary of the Synod of Bishops, Sr Nathalie Becquart. 'The NET' youth team interviewed Sr Nathalie on the Feast of St. Joseph. We spoke of various topics such as Synodality, Women in the Church, Christus Vivit, etc.

In particular, Sr Nathalie spoke of the importance of the generational aspect in striving towards a Synodal Church, in that the Church needs "Bridge-builders" between the young and old, in bringing about or restoring a healthy co-responsibility. The interview can still be viewed on YouTube.

Finally, I totally loved my experience in writing for 'The NET', and I would like to extend a massive thank you to Mary, our editor, for asking me to represent the Tyrone Deanery, and to all those who have read my articles and have been so complimentary and encouraging.

## Prayers can bring peace in the darkest times by Bronagh

AS war and conflict continues to tear through countries causing the unimaginable, Pope Francis offers a glimmer of hope in his peace prayer sermon in the Basilica of St Mary Major, in Rome, on May 31, 2022, the last day of the month of May; the Marian month of the Queen of Peace.

The Pope held a prayer service with various individuals representing the different experiences in the world of peace and conflict, including a Ukrainian family to represent the families ravaged by war.

Also present were chaplains, representing those who offer a glimmer of hope and contentment to those affected, with the men and women on the front line represented by a male and female volunteer, showing those who face

their own fears and save others selflessly, day in day out.

With war also leading to migration and fleeing of countries, refugees were present to show that once people and families flee conflict they then face another fight in trying to rebuild their lives shattered by the conflict in their own countries.

Members of the Vatican Gendarmerie Corps and the Pontifical Swiss Guard were also present.

Pope Francis prayed for all the above and for the medical workers and other frontline staff also involved in war, saying: "On this same day, we join in prayer with shrines and families around the world in praying the Holy Rosary for peace"

Pope Francis prayed that "no one



may suffer unjustly".

Prayer can heal the deepest of wounds and bring people together at the toughest times, and Pope Francis referred to this, saying: "We are confident that with the weapons of prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and the gift of your grace, the hearts of men and the

fortunes of the whole world can be changed".

People across the world will continue to join Pope Francis in prayer for the end of conflict and suffering in war torn countries across the globe.

(Vatican News - 26/05/22)



# The Light and Salt of the World *by John*

AS we celebrate the Feast of Pentecost and the Feast of the Holy Trinity this month, we are reminded of the presence of God amongst us and the eternal love between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

This month is also dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which should remind us, again, of the love that our Lord has for us and how much He suffered for on Calvary for our sake.

Dear Friends, this month, another month in the church's calendar, is a month full of feasts which remind us of our daily responsibility to be the light and salt of the world. We can see this much better in the Gospel of Matthew (5:13-16), where Jesus

clearly says to us that "your light must shine in people's sight, so that, seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in heaven".

A few years ago, the Holy Father in a homily about these words said, "Christians must be salt and light, but never self-serving: salt must add flavour and light must illuminate the other".

More importantly, he stated, "there are many things one can do, many works of charity, many great things for the Church – a Catholic University, a college, a hospital – you may even be rewarded as a benefactor of the Church with a monument, but if you do not pray, it will be dark and dimly lit".

As I have mentioned in some of my other articles, it is very important to live out our faith to our friends and to our families. If we do not witness out faith to others, who else will? It is in the spirit that I believe that we should be the salt of the earth. I repeat what countless saints have said. Salt preserves food. It keeps it from going off. It keeps the food edible and gives it taste. We must be in like manner, preserving that which is good. Like salt, we should be those who (in one sense) preserve the grace of God in the world.

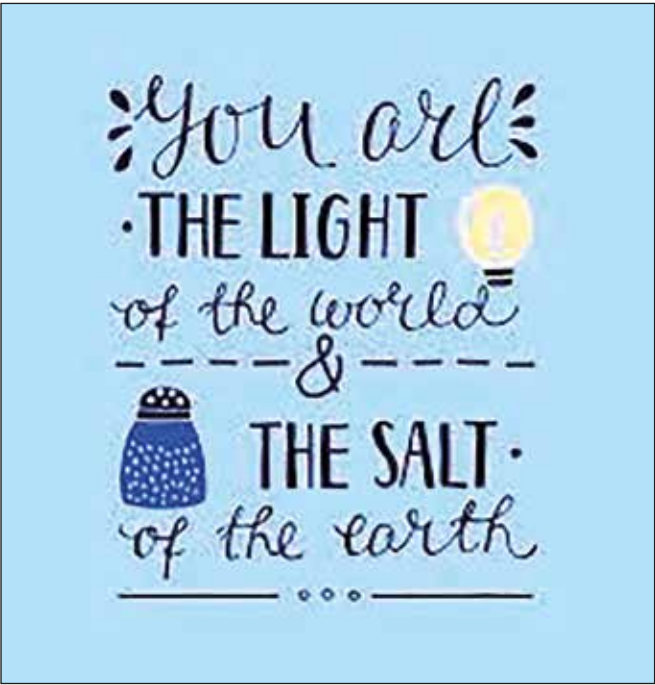
We are also called to be the light of the world. In the scriptures, we often see Jesus portrayed as the light of the world. He is the One

who shines light on the darkness of the world.

Many of our churches are built facing the east (as it is from there that the Sun rises) as a symbol of Christ – the light of the world – coming to let His light shine on the world.

We, as baptised members of the Body of Christ, by the virtues of the sacraments we have received, are bearers of the light of Christ and we are called to bring that light to the world. For without light, how can one see and direct himself.

In the end, all that we do should be for the praise and glory of the most Holy Trinity.



# History can offer methods of restoring peace *by Niamh*

POPE Francis constantly encourages members of the public to strive for peace and kindness in our everyday lives. In a meeting with members of the Pontifical Committee, the Holy Father paid tribute to the valuable contribution they provide through demonstrating how Christianity and world history are intertwined.

He highlighted the utter need for historians to grasp "the richness of the different historical realities down through the centuries where the gospel has been lived and experienced."

Pope Francis also acknowledged how the war in Ukraine, and the crisis surrounding this world wide, has halted temporarily the possibility to meet with fellow

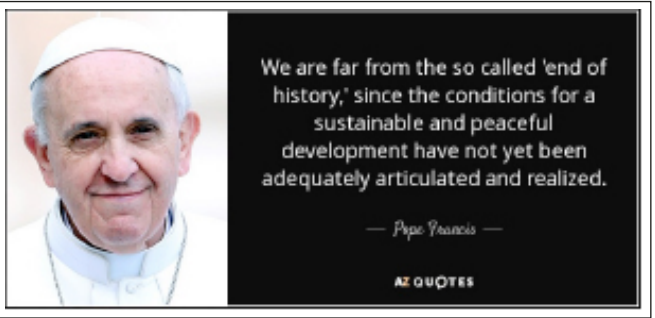
historians as done in recent years, involving collaboration with the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow and the Moscow Orthodox Patriarchate.

He has encouraged members of the Catholic faith to always be open to the horizon of salvation history within the scope and methodology of their work.

The Pope stated that this

horizon is like the atmosphere in which human affairs "breathe," catching the light, revealing a broader meaning: that which comes from Christ, "who is the Lord of the Church and Lord of man's history on account of the mystery of the Redemption."

(Pope John Paul II 1979) [www.vaticannews.com](http://www.vaticannews.com)



# The relationship between world history and history of Christianity *by Zara*

POPE Francis met with Members of the Pontifical Committee for Historical Sciences gathered in Rome. The committee was founded by Pope Pius XII with the purpose of promoting the study of history, especially regarding the Church. Members hail from 14 countries and three continents, expressing a multicultural, international and multidisciplinary dynamic.

During the meeting, the Holy Father paid tribute to the valuable contribution they provide, especially through dialoguing and collaborating with historians and academic institutions, resulting in numerous studies that reveal how Christianity and world history are intertwined.

He described the history of the Church as a place of encounter and deliberation, in which the dialogue between God and humanity develops.

While history is often marked by wars and conflicts, the study of history could also be considered like bridge engineering, said the Pope, if one focuses on the elements and events that make possible fruitful relationships between people, no matter what barriers may stand in their way.

This idea is exhibited in every aspect of history, as many of the lessons and ideologies of Christianity have been echoed in different decisions and conflict resolutions throughout our current history.

The Pope hopes this initiative will encourage current and future world leaders to reflect upon the Church's history and the morals that are associated with it, so that world affairs can align with the teachings of Christianity and result in a better future for us all.

# Annual parish exam Mass great support in tough time for young people *by Peter*

IN our parish of Iskaheen and Upper Moville, the young people organize the annual exam Mass every year for people who are undergoing, or about to take, exams that may shape their future.

I have been involved in helping to organise these exam Masses even if I wasn't doing any exams that year, as I wanted to support the young people during possibly the toughest time in their life, which we all go through at some point in our lives, and which I recently did.

The way I see exams is that not only do they test you on your knowledge of the topics, but they prepare you for what is to come in the future too and how to solve problems whenever you are faced with them.

Jesus always put His disciples to the test as to whether they believed in His teachings and were true followers of God. Jesus was a teacher to His followers in many ways, through words and also through actions, such as His actions at the Last Supper, where he taught the disciples how to spread the word of God and to never be afraid of what you believe.

Not only do teachers in today's world teach the subject they are

qualified in, they also teach how to prepare for what lies ahead coming from their experiences and, like what Jesus did, they teach it through their words and actions.

The final exam for the disciples after Jesus' resurrection from the dead and the opening of the gates of Heaven, was to spread this good news across the globe from what they had learned through Jesus' teachings, which makes up our faith in today's world. We could say that they passed with flying colours and achieved what Jesus and God wanted them to do, which we admire for their bravery and passion of achieving the goal.

The young people undertaking exams are like the disciples in using what they have learned from their teachers to shape their future, and to be the best that they can be.

During my Leaving Cert this year, not only did I feel that my friends and family were backing me during those couple of weeks I had exams, with my granny lighting a candle every day, but I also felt that Jesus was there with me too, giving me the courage to give it my all in each question, even if I had no clue what to do!

Having the annual exam Mass



in our parish is to give support and courage to the young people in exam years to give their 110% at each exam they do, just as Jesus desired for his disciples

and followers in spreading His teachings to benefit them and others they encountered on life's journey.





# Sr Clare Retreat drew many seeking healing and hope



THE second annual Sr Clare Retreat was a week-long of healing prayer, inspirational talks, and celebrations of the Eucharist and Reconciliation, with St Mary's Church, in the Creggan, welcoming impressive numbers for the 7 am and 10 am Masses, as well as the large turnouts for the evening services.

It was, indeed, a blessed week for all involved and, no doubt, for the many from our City and Diocese, and beyond, who came along in person or tuned in online, with many moved to return to the Sacrament of Confession, some after 20 years, and experiencing a sense of hope and peace afterwards, and a stirring of belief that the call to holiness really is for all.

There was great appreciation for the ministry of the Discalced Carmelite Fathers, of Termonbacca, during the week, with Fr Stephen Quinn, Fr Michael McGoldrick, Fr Michael Spain and Fr Cajetan Apeh, along with Fr Joe Gormley, PP Creggan, and his curate, Fr Daniel McFaul, giving their all.

During the retreat, the Carmelite Fathers responded to requests regarding the Brown Scapular, which Sr Clare had encouraged children to wear, and they brought along scapulars for everyone in the congregation and had an enrolment ceremony.

Running from April 25 to May 1, the retreat theme was 'The Universal Call to Holiness', celebrating how Sr Clare Crockett, from the Brandywell, in Derry, had responded to God's call to holiness, with the talks highlighting the Home of the Mother Servant Sister's example.

The Home of the Mother Servant Sisters and Brothers opened the retreat, with evening service talks by Fr Luke Demasi and Sr Kirsten

Gardner, and beautiful music ministry was also provided by the Servant Sisters.

The second night was led by Fr Joe Gormley, PP Creggan, with Rev David Latimer, retired minister of First Derry Presbyterian Church, the guest speaker. On the Wednesday evening, Fr John Grennan ocd led a healing service, while Fr Gerard Mongan, Three Patrons curate, led the Thursday evening ceremony, during which a testimony was given by Kelly Barr, who puts the recovery of her husband from a long and life-threatening battle with Covid down to the power of prayer and intercession of Sr Clare.

The Friday evening service was led by Fr Patrick Lagan, St Eugene's curate, and Bella Nociarova-Russell, a Year 9 pupil of St Cecilia's College, where Sr Clare had been a pupil, gave the talk. Fr Stephen Quinn ocd and Sr Mary Crowe, a Carmelite Sister who ministers in Dublin, were the main speakers at the Saturday afternoon service, and the closing Mass was celebrated by Bishop Donal on the Sunday afternoon.

Commenting on the theme of the week of prayer, the universal call to holiness, Bishop Donal said: "We are all called to be saints. And in the first weeks of the Easter Season, we have heard about encounters between Jesus and his followers. They are all conversion stories. Jesus has been changed by the Resurrection – and these stories deal with His disciples having to see who Jesus is through the lens of the Resurrection. He is no longer the good friend and teacher. He is the Risen Lord. There is no discovery of the amazing call to holiness without conversion".

Pointing out that conversion means moving from low

expectations to divine dreams, the Bishop noted: "Clare Crockett wanted to be a film star. But it took her conversion to make her a star in a way that she would never have imagined".

He went on to say: "At the present time in our church, there is the temptation from some sides to lower our expectations of what can happen and then not be disappointed. Jesus wants us to move beyond standing in tears at the foot of the Cross or as the stone is rolled over the mouth of the tomb.

## Holy Spirit

"That is what Pope Francis means when he says that the synodal process in Ireland will mean conversion for everybody. We are called to move from a preoccupation with our own limited imagination and our pet issues, to encountering the Risen Lord and allowing Him to tell us about His outrageous dream for the Church. Easter is a time of preparing for the Holy Spirit to push out into very deep waters and choppy seas".

He continued: "All ministry in the church has to be driven by a passion for Jesus and a desire to give all in service of Him. The church has to be a body of people who can answer 'yes' when Jesus asks us 'do you love me?' If we are only a religious institution that stands for certain ideas, then we offer only a philosophy or a political agenda. That sort of religious body risks offering nothing but a battle over teaching and laws. That is what happened to the Pharisees.

"A Church that is powered by love of Jesus and of those to whom He ministered – that is the sort of church which will draw followers to Christ. A church that is not renewed daily through love of

the Risen Jesus is not offering what Jesus came to reveal. That is another area where conversion is needed when we encounter the Risen Christ".

"Just as happened to Jesus, the church has to be ready to speak uncomfortable truths to ourselves – and to others," added Bishop Donal: "That will probably elicit opposition from the powerful who prefer to portray themselves as the new fountainheads of wisdom and who react negatively to Christ's awkward values. If the church dares to stand for values that are not popular in powerful circles, then Christ's followers can expect to be criticised. Indeed, a church that is too close to political power, too well thought of, may well feel comfortable and secure – but it loses its prophetic voice. Jesus was not prepared to trade truth for popularity".

Saying that if we are to become a missionary church again in the 21st century, "we need to reflect on and pray about these encounters with the Risen Lord", Bishop Donal continued: "Jesus still meets us when we have lost our dreams but still dare to hope. Jesus is still calling people to be inspired and healed – and He still calls people to feed His lambs and His sheep by dedicating their whole lives to His service.

"As we celebrate around the altar the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, we open our hearts to be surprised by God's love in the forgiving smile of the Risen Christ. In every generation, His first words are 'Peace be with you. Do not be afraid, it is I.' And our best reply is simply the words of Clare Crockett, for Christ it is 'All or nothing'."

Speaking to 'The Net' afterwards on the success of the retreat, Fr Stephen Quinn ocd, who has been a great supporter of the cause for Sr Clare's canonisation to be opened, celebrating monthly Masses for this intention in the Carmelite Retreat Centre, Termonbacca, remarked that there had been a genuine prayerful atmosphere, with people praying for Sr Clare's canonisation and trying to comprehend the message that her life spoke.

"During the week, we were



trying to emphasise the significant impact Sr Clare has had on others through her own life. Many of the talks revolved around that. She points us in the direction of Christ. Her holiness is not as important as people recognising their own call by Christ to be holy as He is holy".

He went on to note that the large turnout for the retreat, with people lined up along the walls of the church as there were not enough seats for them all, showed "just how much people wanted to encounter the Christ and to be healed".

Thanking the Sr Clare Committee for organising the retreat, and Fr Joe Gormley, Creggan PP, for hosting it and for his encouragement, Fr Stephen

paid particular tribute to Fr Joe for the introduction of the two morning Masses and for having the parish pray especially for the success of the retreat in the weeks leading up to it.

Feeling the benefits of the week of prayer himself, Fr Stephen is looking forward to the next one in 2023.

*Sympathy is extended to the Crockett family on the sudden death of Sr Clare's father, Gerald, on June 14, especially to his daughters, Shauna and Megan, who lost their mother following months of illness on September 1, 2019, just three years after their sister, Clare, had died in a devastating earthquake in Ecuador.*





# Sr Clare is an inspiration to be who God created you to be

*Bella Nociarova-Russell*



Bella with her parents and little brother.

Sr Clare was a past pupil of St Cecilia's College, in the Creggan area, and one of the speakers at this year's retreat was a Year 9 pupil from the college, Bella Nociarova-Russell, who gave an outstanding testimony about how the now famous Servant Sister was inspiring her and other young people.

In turn, Bella inspired the many who were listening as she reflected on Sr Clare's impact on her life in various ways: "Sr Clare never waited to do anything. She just did it. I procrastinate a lot, especially whenever it comes to homework, so remembering that Sr Clare acted whether it was an enjoyable task or not, inspires me to do the same. It is helping me a lot because I try to do my homework when I come in from school instead of leaving it until later. I am under less stress and my parents do not have to deal with me staying up late to finish schoolwork."

Noting that Sr Clare was "always

positive and never worried", Bella said: "She let God resolve her problems. The Bible says, 'Faith without work is dead.' Everyone stresses out over things, big and small, but sometimes it's good to relax a bit. I'm certainly not perfect but I'm trying to apply the 'glass half full' attitude to my life with God's help, just like Sr Clare did. She was always so joyful and I want to be the same and not complain about silly things. I try now to live with a grateful heart and count my blessings."

Bella has also been inspired by how Sr Clare always helped people, even if it interfered with her own plans: "She was humble, selfless and the best version of herself. My parents are very busy and give their all to me and my younger brother. Sr Clare helped me realise that I should repay them by helping out at home whenever I can. Seeing how much she did for others made me understand just how selfish I can be. I'm finding being selfless difficult. I try to help out more and I am praying to Sr Clare to help me with it."

Saying that, like most people her age, she was trying to figure out what career she wanted to pursue in the future, Bella remarked: "Sr Clare showed me that you can be a 'modern disciple'. She showed me that being a nun isn't a job left in the past. Sr Clare is someone for me and other girls to look up to, instead of celebrities, money, make-up and technology."

"She wanted to be famous when she was young. She has completed her dream, however, instead of becoming another false idol or generic actor advertising products, she has made an impact by pointing others to God and His goodness."

"She has shown me that a good life is a life led by God and guided by the Holy Spirit. In a world that tells me fame, power and money are all that matters, Sr Clare is an inspiration to be who God created you to be and to please God in all that you say and do."

## Grow

Pointing out that Sr Clare had to learn Spanish "from scratch" when she went to Spain to become a nun, Bella spoke about how this had shown her that it was "important to grow as a person and have new challenges to make life interesting."

"I learn Spanish on my own," she added, "and at times of low motivation while learning the language, I try to complete at least one more lesson for Sr Clare."

Struck by Sr Clare's motto, 'All or Nothing', Bella remarked: "I do not want to look back on my life and wish I did more. So, I will do more. I'll give my all in everything, whether it's praying, having fun, studying or helping others."

She has also been inspired by Sr Clare's tendency to always be kind and loving: "I've been trying to think about what I say before I speak, and to be more patient with people. I'm trying to help when people need it. Mrs Mulhern, our school principal's motto is to 'be kind in what you say, what you do, what you write and what you post'. This is a constant reminder to me that kindness is an important quality and it must be practiced so it can grow in your heart."

Saying that as a St Cecilia's girl, Sr Clare is "a treasure" to her school, Bella continued: "She inspires me to do the best I can in school, to put my head down and focus, to be kinder to teachers and

students, to give my heart and soul in work, and to be proud of the school I represent. We believe in St Cecilia's that Sr Clare is always looking after us, praying for us and guiding us on the right path towards Jesus."

She spoke, too, about how Sr Clare had dedicated her life to Jesus and to drawing young people to Him, noting that she had run summer camps, organised pilgrimages, spoke at chapels, and went to various countries to teach children about Jesus.

"Sr Clare has left a legacy that won't be forgotten," she remarked, "A lot of her influence is online and her teachings and accomplishments are documented. Many young people nowadays are on the internet and so they could find Sr Clare. It would be the nudge that some people need to bring them closer to God and, perhaps, affect them and the outcome of their lives."

"Sr Clare is a positive role model, who can still inspire young people to change for the better through her selflessness. I pray to Sr Clare for guidance on my faith journey. In the Sr Clare documentary, it says that she had a great zeal for exposing lies sold to Christian young people. I want to avoid as many of these traps as possible."

Bella ended her talk with a quote from a letter Sr Clare had written to a young person: "I've said this to you many times: 'It's all or nothing, kiddo'. Of course you can't do this by yourself, ask Him for help, and don't say that you can't pray, believe, or whatever, when in reality the fact of the matter is you're too afraid or too lazy. You know you need Truth, you know you need God".



St Cecilia's pupil, Bella Nociarova-Russell, with former St Cecilia's pupils, sisters Lauren and Bethany Doherty and Sr Clare's sisters, Shauna and Meghan.



# We need Catholics who are in love with Christ

*- Fr Luke Demasi SHM*



Fr Luke Demasi SHM.

Sr Clare is "changing a lot of people's lives", with at least six million having viewed the video on her life, entitled 'All or Nothing', Home of the Mother Servant Brother, Fr Luke Demasi told those gathered in St Mary's Creggan for the first evening of the retreat.

"She was madly in love with Jesus Christ. He changes your heart," he remarked, adding: "This is a place of a lot of suffering...mental health issues, addiction, oppression etc. You can't live this life of suffering alone. Jesus is going to deliver you from this but you have to ask Him".

Commenting on the mottos attributed to Sr Clare - 'All or Nothing' and 'Alone With Christ Alone', Fr Luke said: "You can't have the 'All or Nothing' Sr Clare without the 'Alone With Christ Alone' Sr Clare".

Suggesting the Sacrament of Confession as a way of being alone with Christ, he added: "People do not know what to confess or how to confess. If you Google detailed Catholic examination of conscience you will have enough material for a really good confession."

"When you have that moment with Christ in confession, and you are absolved from your sin, afterwards Christ is in your heart. He is more powerful than anything that suppresses you. Go all in...all or nothing. We have Christ amongst us."

Going on to talk about the power of the Rosary, Fr Luke said: "Our Blessed Mother will bring you to God. If you are not saying the Rosary in your family homes, you need to say it. Evil is spinning out of control because Our Blessed Mother is coming. So, why not let Her triumph in your home first."

"Praying the Rosary, going to Confession and sitting in Adoration are all very powerful ways of drawing closer to Jesus. Do not become worldly. We need Catholics who are in love with Christ."





# Sr Clare knew that she needed Christ and allowed Him to change her – Fr Joe Gormley

WE become like Christ when we become holy, was the message Fr Joe Gormley, delivered during his Sr Clare retreat talk, when he highlighted the need for us to focus our lives on Christ “as the source of all holiness”.

Pointing out “one of the greatest misconceptions” that Christians have, particularly Catholics, is that we can achieve holiness, the Creggan parish priest said: “Holiness is not about achieving but receiving the fullness of God’s Grace revealed to us through Jesus Christ.”

Warning against the risk of seeing our lives in becoming holy as a celebrity, Fr Joe added: “We do not see our saints like great sportsmen or women or like actors/actresses. You have to have a particular set of skills for acting, but everyone is called to holiness.”

“It is not about having a skill or achieving things. It is about receiving the most important gift God has given us; His Son. He comes into our hearts with His whole being and changes us.”

“It is important that we ask the saints to pray for us, but it is more important to imitate the way in which they received Christ.”

Commenting on how talent shows put people up against one another to compare them, Fr Joe emphasised that there are no comparisons where God is concerned: “There is only one of you and me. We are created in the image of God; we are not to compare ourselves to others. We are to ask the Lord to help us become the person God created us to be. We do not do it alone.”

He continued: “Sometimes, as Catholics, we think that we have to prove ourselves to the Lord by saying many prayers. Prayer is important, but prayer is about receiving Christ in our heart, mind and soul. Pope John Paul II was adamant about this. We need to know Christ. He stands at the door our hearts and knocks”.

Going on to highlight that

every human being, from the moment of conception, “is a gift from God, no matter how they are conceived”, Fr Joe warned of “the danger of an enemy who is jealous of how much we are loved by God”.

“The Devil exists”, he stressed, “and he wants us to think that we are not a gift but a burden if we are not economically productive. If you can’t do this or that you are worthless, and that is the lie. Our worth and value do not depend on what we do, it is because of who we are. Jesus Christ died on the cross for us. In trying to prove ourselves as being better than someone else, we sin, because we are looking for worth and value”.

He went on to say: “Jesus Christ is the one centre of holiness that we must refer to at all times. We all go through stages in our lives when we know that we need His saving grace. Christ does not condemn us. He comes with His grace and we need Him. The world today does not say we need you Jesus.”

Remarking that after celebrating 25 years of priesthood last year, he was only now realising that what mattered was allowing Christ to come into him, Fr Joe continued: “We can only do that if we know that we need Him; knowing our need of Jesus Christ as our saviour.”

“In a one-off moment, we will have a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, but we must work to have that every day. Holiness is knowing our need of Christ and Sr Clare knew that. She knew she needed Christ. When she had the world open to her, she knew that she needed Christ and she allowed Him to come in and change her.”

“Jesus says, Come to me all who are overburdened and I will give you rest”.

During a period of Adoration, Fr Joe encouraged all to lay down the yokes that we place upon ourselves, and allow ourselves to receive Christ into our hearts, minds and souls.



Sr Clare’s sisters, Shauna and Meghan.



## God’s total transformation of Sr Clare fills me with such hope

– Sr Kirsten Gardner SHMf

SHARING her experience of the way Sr Clare lived, Sr Kirsten Gardner, SHM, who was involved in the making of the Home of the Mother documentary, ‘All or Nothing’, and the writing of the book, ‘Alone With Christ Alone’, said that it had been “a great grace to read all Sr Clare’s writings in intimacy of prayer with the Lord”, which she never would have thought anybody would be reading one day.

She remarked: “I never would have imagined the great depth of her relationship with the Lord, especially when I first knew her and she seemed so superficial. It was striking to see how much she was in love with Christ and how much she wanted to love Him more and to serve Him.”

“Sr Clare was always very sure of herself,” recalled Sr Kirsten, “but, to be able to get to know God, she had to break down this wall of self-confidence so that God could see who she really was, and she could see who she really was. She realised that she was nothing before God, and God was everything. She wanted to let God take off her masks.”

“It’s very difficult to realise that God is the only one who can fill our hearts and cure our wounds.

In the midst of our sins, we have to recognise that is who we are without Him. Sr Clare came to know God and that He wanted to cure her.

“I think this tied in with the experience she had on that Good Friday, when she kissed His feet and felt the burning pain of nailing Him to the cross, and felt that she had to give her life to Him to make up for it in some way.”

“When I look at Sr Clare’s life now,” she continued, “it fills me with such hope. How God totally transformed her. The Sr Clare I knew in those last days in Ecuador was totally changed from wanting to be the centre of attention to wanting to hide and put the focus on God.”

“The total transformation that God did to Sr Clare, He wants to do to us. God can do this but we have to recognise our nothingness. Like Sr Clare’s all or nothing, if we give all to God. He will transform us”.

Recalling a discussion on purgatory about a month before Sr Clare died, Sr Kirsten shared what Sr Clare had said: “She told her group that we should not strive for purgatory but for Heaven.”

“We have to live each day to the full. Live in the present moment that God is asking of us. Sr Clare

did not do great things, she just lived each day trying to do what God asked of her.”

In an update on the Cause of Canonisation regarding Sr Clare, Sr Kirsten said that they had asked for the process to be moved from Ecuador to Spain, as many of the witnesses are now living in Spain.

She explained the Cause of Canonisation as an ecclesiastical process where the Church studies the life of the person to see if they were a person of heroic virtue or a martyr for the cause, to find if they would be a model for all Christian people.

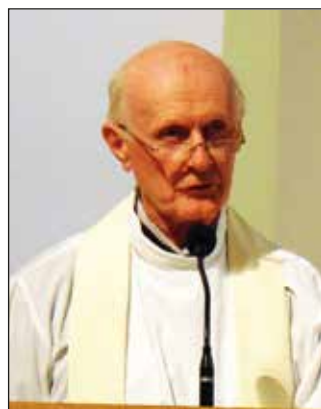
She added: “It is a process that will take years, asking for God’s approval through miracles. We have presented a series of favours that people have received and a commission has been opened that will gather all the documents. The cause can’t begin until all the information is presented to Rome.”

“Please let me know of any favours that you have received through Sr Clare’s intervention, no matter how small. If you leave a ‘Thank you’ at her grave, please leave your contact details because that can be used for the beatification”.

The official email address to send these to is: [sisterclare@homeofthemothor.org](mailto:sisterclare@homeofthemothor.org).



# Jesus listened to and obeyed the Father as the model for us to listen to the Father and do what He says – *Fr John Grennan ocd*



Fr John Grennan ocd

CARMELITE Provincial, Fr John Grennan spoke of Christ as the healer of souls during the retreat healing service.

Considering the sin of disobedience, the sin of our first parents, Fr John said: "One man's disobedience is the root cause of not just spiritual but also physical disorder."

Asking what can be done about this condition, he remarked: "Clearly, there are many remedies in this world, but if we want radical

healing, we want to have obedient faith."

He added: "When I was first introduced to Sr Clare through watching her video, what struck me was her wholehearted obedience."

Commenting on her Good Friday experience, when the young Clare Crockett suddenly found herself alone with Christ alone and realised how He loved her, and had died for her, Fr John said: "She received a deep healing that touched her spiritually and emotionally, and her physical well-being must have been also improved."

"At the wedding in Cana, Mary said, 'Do whatever He tells you.' This is the same conclusion that Clare came to, and she wrote – 'The only way to fill that emptiness was to do everything He asked me to. Obedience was not a problem for Clare. It was the solution.'"

He went on to speak about Jesus' deep relationship with His Heavenly Father and how He liked to spend time alone with Him,

especially early in the morning before anyone else got up: "It was there He communed with the Father. It was there that He heard what God wanted Him to do. He said that only does what He sees the Father doing. Doing the Father's Will is what satisfied His deepest hunger."

"At the outset of His ministry, He was tempted by the devil, but He strongly asserted that 'man does not live on bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Saying that Jesus listened to and obeyed the Father as the model for us to listen to the Father and do what He says, Fr John noted: "Sr Clare was a great listener. She listened to her superiors, she listened to the promptings of the Spirit in her own heart, she listened to those she ministered to...the children, sick, dying, elderly...and she responded with love; the same love as she had for the One she had fallen in love with, the One who had stolen her heart."

Commenting on what Sr Clare had written about her experience of renewing her vows in Our Lady's house in Nazareth, along with other Sisters, during a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in October 2012, Fr John quoted from her writings: "This was immense to be able to say 'yes' where Our Lady said 'yes.'"

He added: "When Mary asked, how this can be, she was told that nothing is impossible to God. If that was translated literally, it would be, 'no word of God is without power'. If you do what God asks, you will be blessed."

With regards to Jesus telling His followers, before He ascended into Heaven, to wait to receive a gift from God, Fr John said: "The Holy Spirit is God's gift to those who obey Him...It was the obedience of the disciples in the upper room that allowed Pentecost to happen. Every 'yes' was accompanied by God's power, God's Holy Spirit, and that same Spirit can work in us as it did in Mary and the disciples in the Early Church."



## If you need to be recycled, reconditioned or remodelled, God is the One to do it - *Rev David Latimer*

DELIGHTED at being asked to speak at the Sr Clare retreat, Rev David Latimer, a retired minister of First Derry Presbyterian Church, gave his witness to Christ as a source of holiness in his life.

Highlighting the importance of having Christ in our lives, Rev Latimer said: "In a farewell comment to His disciples, Jesus cut right to the chase when He said, without me you can do nothing."

Going on to say that some may wonder what hope there is for them, he added: "It is ok to think like that. Our backgrounds can be against us. Sometimes our

gender, age or disability can make us feel unable to have anything to offer, but these are the things that make you the very candidate to be used by God to do something wonderful, and so He gets the glory. God uses the most unlikely to do the most amazing things."

"If you need to be recycled, reconditioned or remodelled, God is the one to do it. The people He chooses may appear the most unlikely to us, but they are never the wrong people, and that is how it was with a wee girl growing up in Derry's Brandywell. Through Clare Crockett, God was able to grow His



Church."

Finishing his talk by playing the guitar and singing a song written by an American, based on some words from Revelation, Rev Latimer spoke of how he loved photographs of Sr Clare either

strumming her guitar or with it slung over her shoulder.

He remarked: "The guitar is the instrument Sr Clare used to help make her message about the One whom she served more attractive."



# Let's cling to the One who transformed Clare...who called her to a new life in the Eucharist – *Fr Gerard Mongan*



Fr Gerard Mongan.

WHO or what totally transformed a teenager who once had the habit of peeking in through the door at Long Tower church to see who was the priest on Mass, grabbing the bulletin and then heading up to Billy's shop to spend the £2 for the collection? Who or what brought the same Derry girl to arrive home in August 2009 in a different habit, to spend time in prayer in Long Tower with some other sisters while her group of American girls were taken on a tour of the walls?

In answer to these questions he posed at the start of his homily during the Sr Clare Retreat in St Mary's Church, Creggan, Fr Gerard Mongan, cc Three Patrons, said: "Sr Clare discovered, to quote Pope Benedict's words to young people in Cologne at World Youth Day, that the happiness she was seeking 'has a name and a face, Jesus of Nazareth hidden in the Eucharist'. That's who transformed and totally changed Clare Crockett".

Commenting on the Holy Week encounter during the Home of the Mother retreat in Spain that led to her conversion, Fr Gerard noted that the first question Clare had asked was during a group discussion regarding the Eucharist on Holy Thursday, and it was: "But what's the Eucharist?"

He continued: "As we know, the grace Clare received the next day, Good Friday, during the veneration of the cross was the grace that changed her life. She couldn't stop repeating in her unique accent, 'I love Him; I love Him' to someone outside the church. She wasn't acting; she was speaking from her heart".

"Holy Communion," he explained, is the Lord's "flesh and blood under the appearance of bread and wine. The One who calls us in our vocations to holiness is the One who has left Himself as food in the Eucharist – who wants His flesh and blood to be totally one with the very tissues and bones

of our bodies.

"Jesus gave His 'all', His very life, His body and blood, so that we can draw life from Him...so that He can live in us, and we can live in Him. A life that He promises will last forever, in eternal life. So the Mass, the Eucharist, union with Jesus in prayer before the tabernacle or in Adoration, is essential for the strength to live our vocations, our call to holiness".

He went on to read a quote from Sr Clare's writings regarding her experience before the Eucharist: "Every time I am before the Eucharist, I know with certainty that the Lord is redeeming me... nothing else exists at that moment... After I receive Communion, I simply rest my forehead on the heart of Jesus, like in the drawing the sisters gave me when I made my perpetual vows...I long to love God with all my heart...I want Him to be everything to me...I experience that by just looking at Him in the Eucharist".

"Clare's belief in Jesus' words inspired the way she prepared countless children for their first Holy Communion," remarked Fr Gerard, "They really knew who they were receiving. One day when she was carrying Holy Communion to visit a sick person, she accidentally dropped the pyx and all the hosts scattered in the dirt. Deeply upset and annoyed, Sr Clare knelt down, her eyes full of tears and she kissed the ground where the hosts had fallen, covering her mouth with dirt. She didn't care; she recovered each host with great affection for, again, she believed Christ is present in each little host. In the end, Clare gave her body and blood for her spouse, the crucified and Risen One whom she kissed that Good Friday, 16 years before".

## Virtues

Noting that Sr Clare had also known that the Eucharist was not just about her and Jesus, Fr Gerard said: "In that email she wrote to Fr Rafael, she said: 'Please pray for me, because like St Teresa of Avila said, 'love is shown through deeds'. I know that all these experiences mean nothing if I don't live the virtues".

Asking his listeners if they remembered what Jesus did on that first Holy Thursday night, Fr Gerard said: "As well as giving us the Eucharist, the priesthood, He also taught us how to live the Mass, with a basin and towel, washing each other's feet...love shown through deeds.

"To have the attitude of getting on our knees to help others - not as dramatic as looking at people's corns and bunions but a word of forgiveness...a gesture of welcome...a sign of caring. Going out of our way to do something nice for a spouse or friend that we would rather not do, to put them first, as an act of love...offering the least enjoyable task of our day to the Lord as a prayer for someone who is sick or suffering, to control our temper and be patient with someone who is driving us crazy, to encourage or praise someone... we can wash people's feet without taking their shoes off at all".

Remarking that the Son of God in the Eucharist was "the same Lord who went on His knees to wash feet, the most demeaning job that only unpaid slaves did in ancient Palestine", he added: "It's in Confession that Our Lord washes the soiled feet of our souls over and over again. Like our feet, our hearts are often smelly, malformed, curled up, corned, hardened. Our feet often represent what are the most unsightly things about us... as we grow older, our feet might represent the things we are most embarrassed about.

"Jesus sees all that we are ashamed of, all that we hide, all that humiliates us. But He doesn't care how deformed and diseased we are, because He loves us...in fact, He doesn't even see our sinfulness because He loves us.

"Here was a young woman who replaced drinking, smoking, and partying with selfless, loving service to young souls in the name of Jesus. She replaced the lure of Hollywood with the promise of eternal joy in Christ that we are all called to spread to those who God places before us. Sr Clare is living proof that we all have the makings of sainthood. All we need to do, like Sr Clare is to let Him save us, let Him wash us".

"Our lives and our world have changed and are continuing to change," said Fr Gerard, adding: "Amid the sickness and sadness, Sr Clare is leading us to what really matters. Like she did, every day we give the Lord our blank cheque and let Him decide where our efforts should go. Let's cling to the One who transformed Clare, who called her to a new life in the Eucharist; who calls us to live who we receive, with a basin and towel and stoop before others to wash their feet in our little acts of love, which Clare did right up to the last minute of her life".





# Whatever you are going through, keep praying and remember Sr Clare is great with Jesus and can intercede - Kelly Barr



Kelly Barr

GALLIAGH parishioner, Kelly Barr gave a powerful testimony during the Sr Clare retreat of how she believed the Servant Sister had interceded to help her family through a very difficult time in their lives, when her husband, Michael almost died after contracting Covid in 2020.

Remarking that there are times in our lives when we fall on our knees, Kelly went on to talk about how, within three weeks of their marriage in September 2020, Michael took ill with Covid and ended up spending 113 days in hospital.

“Seventy of those hours were in ICU and, at one point, he was given hours to live,” she said, adding that Michael lost four

members of his family during that time, two of them to Covid.

Saying that they got married five years to the day after they had first met, Kelly recalled: “We had to change our wedding plans so many times because of the Covid situation. Our wedding day was lovely and we were looking forward to a lifetime together. We received Sr Clare candles and prayer cards amongst our wedding gifts.

“Then, on October 4, Michael’s brother passed away from a chronic illness, and on October 9, a second brother passed away. During these days, Michael, his mum and I contracted Covid, and Michael had to be hospitalised.”

She recalled: “His mum, Kathleen did not seem to be too bad, but I was concerned for her because of coping with losing two sons, and so I told the paramedic. I prayed the Sr Clare prayer that Kathleen would be admitted, and the paramedics decided to take her too when, out of the blue, she started coughing. They were both admitted on October 19 and, on October 22, Kathleen died after rapidly deteriorating. A few hours later, Michael got worse and three days later was ventilated.

“On November 7, I got a message from the doctor to say that

Michael had a few hours to live. I talked to Michael on the phone. My friend stayed with me in the days following and advised me to pray, to ask Sr Clare to intercede, and to visit her grave, which I did.

“I was on my knees praying for Michael’s life. I was aware that Michael needed to be seen by a priest in case God called him home that night, but I was also aware of the Covid restrictions. I came upon Fr Sean O’Donnell’s ordination photograph in a draw, and later I asked Fr Gerard Mongan if he could get a chaplain to go to Michael. It was Fr Sean who went. A nurse acted as Michael’s hands, making the Sign of the Cross on his head and chest.

“Sr Clare’s sister brought me the Sr Clare Prayer Group statue of Our Lady, which had been with a family that had just been through Covid. I thought it would be a small statue, so I had prepared a small table for it, but it was large! So that was tying in with Sr Clare’s ‘All or Nothing’. Ongoing prayer then began, with people calling in at all times to pray for Michael before the statue. We also managed to get a Sr Clare card attached to Michael’s bed in the hospital. He was still in a place where he could have died at any moment, but God was pouring

out His graces”.

“At one stage,” added Kelly, “with the statue of Our Lady in my sitting room and the Sr Clare prayer card in my hand, I remembered the words of ‘The Memorare’. While thinking of Our Lady, I thought about her ‘yes’ and Sr Clare’s ‘yes’. I prayed that she would intercede for Michael’s healing.

**Miracle**

“In the morning, I received a call from the doctor that everything was ok and that he couldn’t believe that ‘the big man’ was still there, that it was a miracle and to keep doing whatever it was that I was doing. I told him about Sr Clare and he could sense my positivity, and encouraged me to continue.”

Appreciating the prayer of so many people for them at that time, at Knock and other places of pilgrimage, Kelly said that even Eddie Stones and Sr Brieghe McKenna, as well as a group of people in Italy, had been praying for Michael.

She added: “People who had lapsed in their faith and people not of our faith, and Cursillo were all praying for him. And I asked people, including the Servant Sisters when they visited Sr Clare’s grave, to also pray for Michael’s

brother in London, who had Covid as well.

“As the days went on, sometimes Michael’s stats were good and sometimes not. Every day was different, but it eventually got to a stage where a trachea could be fitted and that was a very positive step forward. On that same day, November 24, Michael’s brother in London lost his fight with Covid and passed away. Michael did not know this”.

Describing every day “as a battle”, Kelly recalled getting a phone call as she was getting ready for Mass on Christmas Eve: “It was the hospital and I was told that Michael wanted to speak to me, which I thought was strange as Michael couldn’t talk, but then I heard him say, ‘What’s the craic, wife?’ I couldn’t believe it.

“Michael’s strength gradually built up and on February 9 we had a party on the street to welcome him home, and UTV were there to cover it. February 11 was my birthday and Fr Gerard brought Jesus to our home in the Eucharist. He blessed our home as a newly married couple and he also had a Papal blessing for us”.

She added: “Why did Michael live when he shouldn’t have? Why was there so much tragedy in his family? I don’t know. His doctor

said that Michael had been the sickest patient in Altnagelvin and, despite that, he survived. There was a tremendous amount of prayer offered for him. One wee lady of a different faith, who has since died, lit a candle every day and prayed the Sr Clare prayer for him because someone had asked her to. God was giving out His graces. How could He not, with so many people praying for Michael. Many people asked Sr Clare to intercede for him. Her name is known throughout Derry and beyond.

“A woman from Monaghan was told to tell her family that her husband wasn’t going to survive Covid. She didn’t know Sr Clare but her prayer card had made its way to her through her sister, who got it from someone who had got one from my home. She read up about this wee nun from Derry. Her husband lived and is home with no additional oxygen. Isn’t God good?

“You can see the ripple effect; people saying ‘yes’ to offer prayer and then passing the request on to someone else. Whatever you are going through, just keep praying and hand everything over to Jesus, and trust Him, and remember that Sr Clare is great with Him and can intercede.”





# Pray for us, Sr Clare, to keep strong and to keep the faith alive - Sr Mary Crowe



Sr Mary Crowe.

LATE vocation, Sr Mary Crowe of the Carmelite Sisters for the Aged and Infirm, in Dublin, spoke at the retreat about how the Sr Clare film, 'All or Nothing' had inspired her.

Saying that she had entered the convent late, Sr Mary explained that she had worked as a microbiologist first in The City Hospital, in Belfast, and then back home in Dublin.

"I was thrilled to be home after 10 years away, but I became restless," she recalled: "I kept thinking of Mary Magdalene washing the feet of Jesus with great love, great sorrow for her sins, courage, wanting to give her all to Him and to His greater glory."

"I wanted to do this, to step forward with courage, no more mediocrity, to give my all for Him, for God...All or Nothing. Sr Clare epitomised this for me; no more mediocrity. She wanted to get out there for the Lord. She wanted to be authentic".

Saying that during her first

years with the Carmelites, she had hidden behind many masks and titles, Sr Mary added: "But since First Profession in 2010, and in particular since Perpetual Profession in 2017, I have felt Our Lord pulling each of these masks off me, so my Sisters, my family, friends and those I work with gradually see me as God sees and knows me."

"I am a frail, human instrument but I do my best. I can sometimes feel The Lord using me. 'You promised Me your all and I am taking you at your word, so get going', He says to me. Sometimes I feel very stretched, but when I look back I see that everything worked out ok."

"You have to be patient with people. You can't shout at someone because their hearing aid is not in or not cleaned. Sometimes people

are very crabby and then they turn around and say 'thank you'."

"I have seen Sr Clare's joyful abandonment. It wasn't easy, there were many difficulties, but hers was a force for good, for joy in the simple things of life, genuine interest and respect for the other."

"Sr Clare just had to get out and share her friendship and love for God, particularly with the young people around her. It was contagious! She loved God and lived to high ideals. She loved life and was very proud of her family and where she came from, and she loved her Sisters."

"Sr Clare gave all for God; her talents, her joy, her energy, her Faith. I want to do the same for Him and for Our Lady. Sr Clare, please pray for us to keep strong and to keep the faith alive here."



## Like all the saints our story has a future full of promise and hope - Fr Patrick Lagan



Fr Patrick Lagan.

ST Eugene's curate, Fr Patrick Lagan described Sr Clare as "a beautiful soul who has lit a great burning hope in the lives of so many throughout this city and the world", helping us to dare to believe that the great call to holiness is also possible for us.

"Like all the great heroes of our faith", he remarked, "there normally comes a moment where they discover that, as wonderful as life truly is, as joyful and as much as life can give, it counts for nothing when you discover the grace of God, the grace of discipleship".

He noted that the opening prologue of the Catechism puts it very simply but powerfully: "God infinitely perfect, and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created us to make us share in own blessed life. Thus we are made for this blessed life; we are designed for this communion, this relationship, this great harmony of the Creator and creation coming together".

Saying that for many, the Novena was a grace-filled time "as they wrestled with the complexity and the needs, the hurts and sorrows, joys, ups and downs of life", Fr Patrick continued: "There is a sense of God calling people to come from wherever they are to pray and to worship...We are called to come and be inspired by the witness and example this little girl with gigantic ideas".

He went on to recall Pope Emeritus Benedict visiting Cologne for World Youth Day shortly after his election in 2005 and telling the world's youth that they were made for greatness: "More than that, he talked very eloquently that each of us are willed by God. God in his great love, even before He made the universe, the sea and the stars,

willed each and every single person, loved and unloved, hurt and bruised. He willed every sinner, every saint, he willed every person rejected by loved ones, unforgiven by peers. He willed and He loved".

"The great modern day mystic, Ronald Rolheiser speaks often about divine encounters in the lives of great saints," said Fr Patrick: "Before we are born, before we come into this world, God places a kiss upon the soul. Strangely enough, we struggle with our senses, emotions and even our intelligence to fully understand this, but we know and can feel this 'Kiss' at various moments; the birth of a child, the death of a loved one, the deeper more meaningful moments of life where we are aware of the presence of something not of this world. We just can't quite put our finger on it".

Remarking that there were many reasons why we should doubt that universal call to holiness, that radical call to be a saint, he said: "Mostly, like it was for our Lady, we simply ask how? Sr Clare is remarkably popular. There is something contained within the simplicity of her life

that sometimes is mistaken for some form of jolly spirituality, just all smiles and good deeds. Often, she can be mistaken as nothing more than something sweet and wholesome, but if you study what she says, you begin to notice that holiness changes us, we never remain the same. Sr Clare changed, she was transformed".

Noting that one of the first things Sr Clare did was to simply open her heart to God, Fr Patrick added: "She dared, on that trip to World Youth Day in 2000, to believe that she could be called, chosen and sent on mission. She created a home for God to dwell within her, to live and move and use her, and we know that single gesture was the beginning of a great adventure."

"When St John Vianney found a young boy in the chapel night after night, he asked him what he was doing, what he was saying. The young boy remarked, I say nothing, I just love him."

Fr Patrick concluded by encouraging people to follow the "ever inspirational example of Sr Clare", saying that, like all the saints, whatever our story is, it has "a future full of promise and hope".





# Second deacon ordained for Derry Diocese in joyous celebration in Rome

WEDNESDAY June 15 was a beautiful morning in Rome. The sun was shining as the congregation gathered at the Papal Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls for the ordination of eight men to the diaconate, the final stage before priesthood. One of the eight was Shaun Doherty, the former Highland Radio presenter who, four years ago, became a seminarian for the diocese of Derry.

Having completed a propaedeutic programme in Salamanca, Spain, Shaun began a course of studies in Theology at the Pontifical Beda College in Rome. He completed those studies this year and was approved for ordination as deacon with his seven classmates, from the dioceses of Killala, Down and Connor, Westminster, Shrewsbury, Leeds, Southwark and Stockholm.

The ceremony began at 10.30 am, and was conducted by the Bishop of Shrewsbury, Mark Davies, with over 30 concelebrating priests. The inspiring music and singing were provided by students from the Beda, beginning with the stirring 'For all the saints' as the procession of the Master of

Ceremonies, servers, ordinands, concelebrants and Bishop Davies made its way to the sanctuary.

After the liturgy of the Word, the candidates were called forward by Canon Philip Gillespie, the College Rector, and presented themselves for ordination. The Rector assured the bishop that they had all been found worthy to be ordained, and then Bishop Davies addressed them on the ministry and responsibilities of a deacon, telling them, among other things, that the mark of a good deacon, or priest or bishop, isn't in having a full diary, but rather in being a man of faith who is open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, who has a heart full of love for God's people and who wishes to spread the Good News of God's love.

The deacons-elect then committed themselves to a life of celibacy, made their vows, and promised obedience to their bishop and his successors. As the candidates prostrated themselves on the floor of the sanctuary, the Litany of Saints was sung, asking the intercession of many of the Church's saints, including St Patrick and St Columba, and praying God's blessing on Shaun Doherty and his classmates.

The bishop then laid hands on each one of them, invoking the power of the Holy Spirit, and prayed the Prayer of Consecration over them. At this point, they were now deacons, and were dressed in the stole and dalmatic, the vestments proper to a deacon. They then approached the bishop again, and he presented them with the Book of the Gospels, challenging them to believe what they would read there, teach according to those beliefs and practise what they would preach. The bishop then offered them the Kiss of Peace, after which the Mass continued as normal.

After Mass, the procession left the Basilica and moved towards the Cloister, where congratulations were offered to the newly-ordained and photographs were taken, in an atmosphere of great rejoicing and thanksgiving to Almighty God for the gift of eight new deacons for the Church. That sense of celebration continued in the Basilica a short while afterwards, as the families and friends of the deacons waited to meet and greet them, and for more photos to be taken.

Among those present were two

of Shaun's sisters, a niece and nephew of his, and a number of his friends from Letterkenny and from parts of the diocese of Derry, including members of the Columba Community, of which Shaun has been a member for a number of years, and the Diocesan Vocations Director, Fr Pat O'Hagan, Parish Priest of Moville.

Everyone then walked the short distance to the Beda College where they enjoyed an outdoor reception, shaded from the sun, of course, including a cake prepared especially for the occasion. In fact, there were nine cakes, one for each of the deacons, bearing the Coat of Arms of their diocese or of their bishop, and one with the Coat of Arms of the College.

Deacon Shaun Doherty will be spending the summer in the diocese of Derry, before returning to Rome to complete his studies. May God bless him, as well as our other deacon, Michael McCaul, all our seminarians, and all those contemplating a vocation to the priesthood for our diocese. May God's Holy Spirit guide them to serve the Church and God's people according to the gifts God has given to them.



Bishop Mark Davies with the newly-ordained deacons, Shaun Doherty second from left, and members of staff at the Beda College, Rome.



Shaun with Danny Kelly.



Shaun with his good friend, Mary Duffy.



Deacon Shaun Doherty, Bishop Mark Davies, Fr Pat O'Hagan.

## Columba Community thankful for journey with Rev Shaun Doherty in discerning vocation by Marguerite Hamilton

IT was such a wonderful day for us in the Columba Community when Bishop McKeown accepted community member, Shaun Doherty as a student for the priesthood. Having journeyed in prayer with Shaun as he discerned his vocation and witnessed his love for God and openness to people, we believed that he was "taking the next peaceful step" in realising the call to service that God had given him.

Shaun would always pay tribute to the support and prayer he received from Fr Neal, our late founder and director whose encouragement, example and wisdom over many, many years was a source of strength and challenge to him.

As we sat in the Papal Basilica of St Paul's Outside the Walls, family, community, friends and Fr Pat O'Hagan, Vocations Director for the Derry Diocese, there was a palpable air of celebration and great joy that the Lord had led Shaun to this point.

When the stirring music began and Shaun, and the seven deacons-elect, processed with college staff, visiting priests and Bishop Mark Davies of Shrewsbury to the altar, we had a sense of the life of generous giving upon which these men were embarking. They were freely saying "yes".

The liturgy of the Word (Acts 6, Psalm 115 and Matthew 20: 25-28) was a clear reminder of the attitude of the Lord to service and the centrality of prayer in the life of the deacon and, indeed, in all our lives.

When the Bishop received the assurance from the Rector of the College that these men were worthy of ordination he outlined their responsibilities, highlighting that they needed to be men of faith and prayer, men who were open to the Holy Spirit and who would preach the Good News to God's people. Their service would come from their deep and faithful love of God.

It was at once exhilarating and humbling to witness each one, in turn, come and kneel before the Bishop taking their vows, prostrating themselves before the Altar as a sign of their total dependence on God. The congregation was then invited "to pray to the Church in heaven" with the Litany of the Saints. We listened out for our own St Columba and St Anthony!

The moment of the laying on of hands and invoking the power of the Holy Spirit followed, a movement carried out in total silence, which allowed us a glimpse into mystery and sacred solemnity.

The deacons were then dressed



Marguerite Hamilton and Shaun's sister, Ellie presenting his robes.

in their dalmatic and stole and approached the Bishop, who placed the Book of the Gospels in their hands. This part of the service concluded with Bishop Davies giving the sign of peace to each of the newly ordained deacons, welcoming them as co-workers. What a privilege it was to see this unselfish giving!

When the Mass finished, and all congratulations were offered and many photographs were taken, we had a relaxing, enjoyable reception where we met people Shaun had spoken about, who had been his friends in Rome.

We were busy sending photographs home to the Community and the diocese

as the afternoon progressed, conscious of the many, many people who were interested in Shaun's journey and who were wishing him well.

As I reflect today, I am reminded of the homily Bishop Seamus Hegarty gave at the canonical recognition of the Community in St Eugene's Cathedral in 1995. He believed that the Community would be called to "accompany" those discerning their vocation. It was a wonderful experience to see this realised in Shaun's life. May the Lord continue to guide Shaun, his companions and all discerning the call to serve in our Church today.

## New deacons a blessing for the Diocese – Bishop Donal

WELCOMING the ordination of Shaun Doherty to the diaconate as "a blessing" for the Derry Diocese and "a great sign of encouragement for all of us in these challenging times", Bishop Donal noted the many people who were delighted to hear that the well-known radio personality had "discerned a call from Jesus to dedicate his life to spreading the Gospel".

He added: "A healthy diocesan church has to be able to call forth many ministries and vocations to support our own needs and to benefit other parts of the world where the Gospel needs to be preached.

"I hope and pray that Shaun and Michael [McCaul], our two new deacons, will encourage other men and women to be open to God's call. Our current difficulties are a time for generosity and heroism. That is where Church renewal will be nourished".

Reflecting on his journey so far, Shaun told 'The Net' that he was "grateful to the Lord of Loving Kindness for His great mercy".

"Our Blessed Mother, The Queen of Peace, leads always to her son and I know she has smiled over me," he remarked, adding: "I am privileged beyond words and deeply grateful to Bishop Donal and all who have supported me



on this journey. Mention must be made of Fr Neal Carlin, RIP, who was such an inspiring figure in my life.

"There are so many people who have helped me on my journey. The Columba Community, with its new leader Marguerite Hamilton, have given so generously of their love and prayerful support. My wonderful family and many friends have been so encouraging to me and I am humbled by everyone's incredible goodwill.

"I greatly appreciate those, including Fr Pat O'Hagan, who travelled to Rome for the Ordination. Please keep me in your prayers as I continue to do my best through God's Grace to serve the Lord and His people. May we all continue to know more deeply the Love of God in our lives".



## “Eternal life must begin here on earth through Holy Communion”

*DURING the month of June, to celebrate the Divine gift of ‘The Body and Blood of Christ’ a number of people from across the Diocese have been reflecting on quotes relating to the experience of two Saints of Jesus and the Eucharist.*

*In the Diary of St Faustina Kowalska of the Blessed Sacrament, whose apparitions of Jesus inspired devotion to the Divine Mercy, Jesus is quoted as saying to her, “I want to tell you that eternal life must begin here on earth through Holy Communion. Each Communion makes you more capable of communing with God throughout eternity” (Diary, 1811).*

*The second quote is that of St Therese of Lisieux, The Little Flower of Jesus, who said: “I shall always remember my First Communion Day as one of unclouded happiness”.*

*Invited to recall their First Holy Communion and their experience of being in communion with God in the times they have received the Eucharist since, the following are the stories shared...*



## Communion is means to sharing life with the Lord

*by Stephen Ward*

UNFORTUNATELY, unlike St Therese, I do not remember my First Communion Day let alone whether it was one of unclouded happiness! In fact, there are even photographs of the occasion with me frowning! I’m not sure whether this is as a result of camera shyness, or if there were other games and fun to be had which I missed out on as a result of having to sit still in a chair as various family members came up to sit beside me.

Then again, it was in 1993 and I was seven years of age. At that stage, the faith was practiced but I genuinely had little understanding of what the Real Presence is about, let alone what it means to be in Communion with Christ, and ultimately with the Trinity.

It is only in going away from the practice of the faith, to being lukewarm, to coming back and to the process now of discerning a call to priesthood, that I genuinely

## I received a great childhood formation in Eucharistic amazement *by Bishop Donal*

MY only memory of my First Holy Communion Day is a photograph of three of us from school, standing outside our old 1784 Church in Randalstown.

We are all dressed up for the occasion. But for some reason, we had all been unable to receive our First Holy Communion with our classmates, and had a quieter ceremony at a later stage. Not being like the Little Flower means that I have no memories of the day!

But I received a great childhood formation in Eucharistic amazement. The image of Christ, Emmanuel, God-with-us is deeply connected with the visible

Tabernacle and the flickering sanctuary lamp. Those simple signs give me huge reassurance that Christ is with us, humbly and intimately, all days until the end of the world.

And I have come to believe that Jesús is not just with us, waiting whenever we choose to call. He continues to be actively with us as the Lord who offers us access to the power of His Death and Resurrection.

The Last Supper was celebrated under the shadow of Calvary’s apparent disaster. And that is the context of hope in darkness that we celebrate. Christ’s death is the triumph of weakness over



strength, of love over brutality.

In these challenging times for everyone, the weakness of Jesus is so much more powerful than

human strength.

Come to me, all who labour and are overburdened.

## Breaking bread and sharing life *by Edel O’Connor*

*“We are companions on the journey, breaking bread and sharing life; and in the love we bear is the hope we share for we believe in the love of our God”.*

WHENEVER I hear the words of the song “We are Companions on a Journey”, I am transported back to my First Holy Communion Day. As a class, we learned that song and sung it with such joy and pride on our special day. We were, indeed, companions, breaking bread and sharing a special moment in our lives for the love of our God.

Faith is not something solitary but it is a gift to be shared with others. The sacraments, in particular the sacrament of Eucharist, nourish our faith and facilitate our growth in discipleship as we journey together as Christian companions. Christianity is built on and rooted in relationships.

People still associate the Church and Christianity as part of their identity, particularly during key moments in their lives. At threshold moments, the theologian Charles Taylor noted that people still seek those moments of fusion, which wrench us out of the everyday and put us in touch with something beyond ourselves. The heartbeat of the

Church is people gathered for these celebrations. Through the Eucharist, the Church is making secular time sacred and the sacraments facilitate people to make the highlights of their lives sanctified.

The sacraments and their rituals, in particular the Eucharist, remain signals of hope in the Church and they offer people sustenance for life’s journey.

Fr Dermot Lane stated that it is the celebration of the Eucharist that keeps hope alive within the Christian community and the world. The Eucharist is an act of memory of the concord between the past, present and future Jesus Christ.

Before we can receive Holy Communion, we are, firstly, immersed in the Scriptures. These stories are the roots of our faith and remind us of the Kingdom of God. The story of Emmaus is a key Gospel story which reflects our own lives, while highlighting the importance of Eucharist.

At times, we are disappointed and weary like the travellers in the story. We need to hear the word of God, encounter others and share meals. Upon receiving the Eucharist, may our hearts burn like the disciples on the road to Emmaus. The Eucharist reaches into the hunger in our souls. As St Augustine noted, people eat

the Body of Christ to become the Body of Christ.

Jesus invited people to a critical consciousness, to reflect upon and question their own reality and to imagine how to live more faithfully as people of God. Each Holy Communion we receive is an opportunity to reflect on living our lives more faithfully.

The Eucharist offers the faithful a sense of belonging and nourishment for their journeys, but it also challenges each of its members to reach into the depths of their own interiority. In the Gospels, Jesus never advocated a life which is confined behind safe and complacent walls, but challenged people to reach beyond the known.

Faith is always a leap into the unknown and a challenge to go beyond one’s own limits. Faith is strengthened when it is shared. Faith and hope are inseparable companions. The Eucharist is an act of memory and hope in which God becomes immanent in sacramental signs.

Fr Michael Drumm, an Irish theologian and author of many books concerning sacramental theology, believes that in the broken, messy world that we inhabit, celebrating Christian ritual is like erecting a sign that speaks of memory and hope.

In the Christian tradition, rituals



Edel O’Connor, Coleraine.

and, in particular, the sacrament of Eucharist embody belonging, memory, imagination and hope. Hope confronts suffering and darkness but doesn’t eliminate it. For me, the Eucharist offers me the hope and nourishment needed to live a faithful life.

In unison with others, we break bread and share life and commit to living the life Jesus calls us to. Eucharist is that constant never-ending glimmer of hope in our broken world.

Brendan Kennelly noted, “though we live in a world that dreams of ending, that always seems about to give in, something that will not acknowledge conclusion insists that we forever begin”. The Eucharist enables my faith to be forever beginning.

appreciate the profound moment that was that day in the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Ballygawley.

Little did I realise it at the time, that the Lord, even before I was a thought or had a thought, knew me, that He knit me together in my mother’s womb, that He had a vision, a dream for me. Even before I really knew about Him, He knew all about me and desired to share His life with me. Communion is literally the

means to this!

What happened one day in 1993 was really the first time I encountered eternity. It is only in deliberately deciding to return to eternity again and again that I have truly become to appreciate what happened 29 years ago for the first time.

Although I cannot recall much about what happened on the day, I can now finally say that it was a day of unclouded happiness. The unclouding happened over

time and happened when I began to realise that it is one thing to receive Jesus in His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity, but it is quite another thing to be able to receive the abundant graces received and to attempt to live a life of virtue, so that I may be more capable of letting God be God, and that I may be less of an obstacle to His grace and allow others to grow in communion with the Lord.



Stephen Ward, Cappagh Parish, Omagh



# After ‘Baptism in the Spirit’ the Eucharist became more real for me *by Ann McKay*

WHEN I was a child we made our first Holy Communion in Primary Three, so we were aged around six or seven. We were quite young. I don’t remember a lot about the day itself, except that my family was very happy for me and it was a special day for them too.

I recall mammy reminding me to smile for my photos, but to keep my lips together as I did so. This was to hide the big gaps in my teeth as, unfortunately, Holy Communion time was also the time our first teeth began to fall out but the new ones hadn’t quite made it through yet.

The memory which stands out most for me at the time is the Feast of Corpus Christi, which was celebrated shortly after we made our First Communion. Everyone was gathered together in the Chapel, and Fr Close or Fr McDevitt processed slowly around the aisles under the canopy, carrying the beautiful monstrance containing the Blessed Sacrament. Four men from the parish were chosen to hold the poles which kept the canopy up. They wore pure white gloves.

Everyone processed behind the priest as we made our way outside, down the steps of St Malachy’s Chapel and right round the outside of the building through the grounds. The children who

had just received First Holy Communion got to lead the procession, donning once more our special outfits for the special occasion. We were so happy to be in the procession. It was lovely to be outside in the fresh air on a nice summer evening, breathing in the smell of freshly cut grass and everyone praying and singing hymns together.

There was an altar set up outside and we had Benediction. I have always loved Devotions and Benediction and, perhaps, this is why. The whole occasion was made even more special by being outside in creation. There was a freedom about it all. All of this seen through the eyes of a child and with a child’s understanding, I can still picture in my mind’s eye.

As I grew up, my parents ensured that I continued going to Mass. Being in the Parish choir was part of what kept me coming back to Mass each week. Then, in my late teens and early 20s, I lost my way somehow. Mass and the Sacraments became something I did without giving any thought to what was happening, or sometimes I didn’t bother going at all.

That all changed when I came to Derry as a young teacher and a friend brought me to my first Charismatic Prayer Meeting. I really had no idea what was

happening but, before I knew it, I was enrolled for the ‘Life in the Spirit’ seminars and six weeks later was prayed with for ‘Baptism in the Spirit’.

## Real

After ‘Baptism in the Spirit’, the Eucharist became more real for me. I was no longer a bystander, an onlooker. I now wanted to attend Mass and looked forward to being there. It wasn’t just a duty. I felt a deeper connection with God and more in communion with Christ. Receiving Communion meant more to me; it was a deeper experience.

After communion, I would sit for quite a long time in silent prayer, contemplating the mystery of Christ’s presence within me and my response to Him. There was a warm and loving feeling. I knew that Jesus loved me and had given His life for me. I realised that the Eucharist is our daily bread and Scripture is our daily nourishment, too. We are fed and nourished by the Lord with His precious Body and Blood, and we are nourished when we hear His Word in scripture and respond to it.

In 1980, Fr Neal Carlin, who led the prayer meeting I attended, asked Tommy and I to help form a Basic Christian Community to be named Columba Community after our local patron saint. It

was a privilege attending Mass in Columba House listening to Fr Neal sharing on the scripture of the day. We came together in an upstairs room, gathered around the altar, and were able to experience the consecration up close. Communion was always a special moment, and I remember Fr Neal’s reflections after communion were very powerful and led the listener into contemplative prayer.

The Blessed Sacrament Chapel in Columba House was a Godsend; an oasis of peace for many in troubled times, a place where many prayers were answered and many a worried parent or family member found consolation there. People came in quietly to the Chapel, spent time in silent prayer, perhaps left a petition before the Blessed Sacrament, and God alone knew and heard their prayer for healing. This sacred space is still available to all who wish to avail of it and the Lord continues to answer the prayers of those who come quietly and sit before Him in silence each day.

More recently, during the pandemic when all the familiar ways of practicing our faith were taken away, it was good to find our local parishes providing services online. To discover Knock International Eucharistic and Marian Shrine was an added



Ann McKay, of the Columba Community, on her First Holy Communion Day with her older sister.

bonus. These beautiful and heartwarming experiences were a much-needed focus in the midst of uncertainty, fear and suffering.

As I look back, I appreciate the early grounding I received in my faith at home, at school and in my

church. And I still have my little prayer card from my First Holy Communion in my memory box to this day. A little girl kneeling at the altar rails receiving Communion from Jesus Himself.

# God touches us at a very deep level with the Body and Blood of His Son *by Kathleen Cullivan*

I believe I had a long preparation for receiving First Communion. I was always aware of the Eucharist being a part of life from I was able to perceive what was going on around me. My earliest memories are of tremendous importance being attached to receiving the Eucharist, within my family. Mass was attended on a regular basis. My mother frequently took me to the Miraculous Medal Devotions.

As a small child, I looked forward to going to Church. I loved to walk around the different statues and kneel on the red leather kneelers at the altar. Church was a part of life. Prayer was a natural occurrence in the house I lived in with my family. My grandmother sat continually with the Rosary in her hand and had a list of prayers she would say quietly. I would sit close to her to look at the pictures.

Also, at this stage, the priest was coming once a month to give my grandmother Communion, as she could no longer go out. The coming of the Eucharist into our home was prepared for in

advance. Everything was made ready for the Lord’s entrance. I believe faith and a sense of God entered my heart at this time. In the midst of this, normal life went on. We were not immune to problems and people worked hard.

When I spent time with my father’s family, Rosary was always said at approximately 7 pm. At this stage, everyone was in from the fields and available to join in. Mass was given precedence over everything else, and all would come to a halt on Sunday morning to attend Mass. The Sunday dinner and Sunday Mass held a warmth and strong feeling of family.

I attended the school of the Dominican nuns and what I had learned at home was enhanced at school. The Bible stories were broken down into children’s books and to me were as exciting as any other story I learned to read. The Dominican nuns were teaching nuns and I learned straight from them, and I grew to love being taught by them. They often gave us out scapulars and

Miraculous Medals; treasures to a small child. The story attached to the items received was told in great and simplistic detail.

When I came to the age of seven, I was ready to make my First Confession and First Communion. Great preparation was put into both by the nuns. I was very excited and looked forward to it. I remember I wanted to prepare for it well. That was important to me. I was to receive Christ for the first time, as I had watched everyone in my family do continually. In some kind of a way I understood the importance and significance of this at that age.

I don’t think I understood Confession very well at this stage. That would come later when I began to understand guilt and why it was there; also, when I grew to have a stronger sense of right and wrong.

I received a lot of money on the day. This didn’t seem to matter to me as I gave it all to my grandmother. I wanted her to have it, but I can’t explain why. What I did enjoy was having my

own veil, because that meant I didn’t have to wear a piece of net curtain if there were any processions on, which often happened.

I believe a change took place in me after I first received the Eucharist, although I was not aware of this as a child. I wanted to go back as often as I could. This has remained with me throughout my life.

There were times as a teenager that I turned away and became quite rebellious, but I couldn’t handle the emptiness I felt inside if I didn’t receive the Eucharist. Although I tried hard at times, I could never overcome that emptiness. This did not entail any kind of guilt or conditioning. It was a sheer longing and then a joy when I succumbed to receiving.

As I grew, life inevitably became more complicated and no longer had the simple answers of childhood. My grandmother died when I was 10 years old. As everyone else in the house, both male and female, was working, I found her absence crushing. I was now old enough to go to Church



Kathleen Cullivan, Carnhill.

myself and I attended Mass every day before I went to school.

## Stillness

Adoration of the Blessed

Sacrament had also grown in my heart, and I liked to attend when possible. I walked very closely to God at this time. On Sundays, I often went to Mass with my



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friends. If they were talkative or giddy in Church, I would not call for them to go again. I didn't like anything to interfere with my time there and I still value the silence and stillness of time spent in Church, especially in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

Through many twists and turns in my life, there were times in the complications of it that I just didn't know if God was there at all. He certainly felt far away and very distant. In looking back at those times now, what I do see is a God that is very possessive and somehow seeks you out, especially when you stop trying or turn away. I would know no peace without that relationship. I can only describe it as an internal fight, where I was pursuing a certain direction and God seemed to be creating a civil war inside me. Some might call that the devil, but I don't understand it that way. God is not always easy to deal with. He will torture you until He gets that personal relationship with you. I believe this to be true of every human being.

There is a sacred relationship that is individual. I probably understood this better when I had my own children, which included two miscarriages. I couldn't bear to lose one of them. Just like any other parent. Where I understood God better was in the loss of two children, through miscarriage, because I cried for the faces I would never see. I experienced the same emptiness and desolation that I experienced when I lost my grandmother.

Women work very closely with the human body; taking care of the body through touch, attending to its needs and comforting children etc. God gives us the body of His Son in the Holy Eucharist. We have a need of the Body of Christ, which I believe gives me a strong sense of the spiritual.

Addressing the needs of the human body brings me close to God also. I believe Mother Theresa understood this well. She constantly attended to the human body and seen this as bringing her closer to the Body of Christ. With this comes a deeper

understanding of the God I fight with one day and love the next.

As men have moved more into caring for their children at this level, I see them become more at ease with their own sensitivity, and parts of their personality that they were never allowed to develop at one time begin to flourish. That quiet time of attending to the body, even if only a small child sleeping on your knee, brings peace and a sense of closeness to God.

I understand God to be a God of touch. He touches us at a very deep level with the Body and Blood of His Son. I am continually aware of a loneliness inside me that only finds solace in the Eucharist and stillness at adoration. When I am in communion with God, I am at peace, but inevitably I will have to go back to living my life again and facing problems and challenges as they come. Here, there are alternating times of fight and acceptance.

I believe if we get to understand that loneliness, we will see that God won't allow us to become totally attached to this life because He will want us back. That's what that loneliness is about, that separation from God that we misunderstand and think it is something missing in life. Any wonder people get lost in words, distraction, addiction or suicide.

I think that it is possible to drown out that sense of loneliness with business etc. Then we will feel less and less the need for silent adoration and the Eucharist. If we keep busy we will also become more afraid of silence.

We are spiritual, intellectual and physical beings, with all the love, the joyful times and complications that goes with that. I used to hear my mother say, may God help us. This was often said in a joke and in serious times. I understand now what that meant.

I only experience God in a soft whisper or gentle breeze, not through big miracles or signs. The Eucharist is the closest I feel I come to God. I also feel that closeness through the soft touch of a baby or small child. To touch humanity is also to touch God.

## St Therese remembered her First Communion Day as one of “unclouded happiness”... Well, I can say the same! *by Anne McNamee*

I received my First Holy Communion in May 1970, aged 7. We had spent the previous three months in school preparing and practicing for our big day. We always went to Sunday Mass and sat together as a family.

The church was packed in those days. The congregation kept to the same seats. We sat on the 'Blessed Virgin' Gallery, along the front, looking down on the altar. I could see all that happened on the altar and hear the congregation answering Fr Magowan PP, RIP.

I always watched the older people with their hands joined in prayer, queuing every Sunday morning at Mass, waiting to receive the Body of Christ. I wondered what were they

thinking, will they feel any different? They all looked so holy.

On the day, mum dressed me in a knee-length white lace dress and veil, which my older sister had worn a few years before. No new clothes then, all were handed down through sisters and cousins. I did get new white socks and black shoes, called 'Golden Dollies'; the only style of shoes for pre-teens.

It was a Saturday morning, we all set off to St Eugene's Church, in the Parish of Ardstraw East, Newtownstewart, where my big event was going to take place. Oh the excitement! It's all coming back to me now as I write.

When my turn came to join the queue and proceed to the altar rails, I felt 10 feet tall, privileged

and happy. All the practising and training had been worthwhile. I queued up with my hands joined in anticipation; I know I was smiling, hopefully just inside.

I knelt at the altar rails and the priest came and placed the Holy Communion on my tongue, saying "Corpus Christi". I replied "Amen". Oh what a feeling, I had finally received the Body of Christ. I felt so thrilled, perfect and happy.

I returned to my seat, knelt down and recited the prayer my teacher had taught us with my eyes closed. Nothing was going to distract me from my First Holy Communion Prayer: "Jesus, I thank you for coming into my heart and my soul. Take my heart and bless it, that nothing evil may



Anne McNamee, Newtownstewart.

possess it..."

St Therese of Lisieux, the Little Flower of Jesus, said: "I shall always remember my First Communion Day as one of unclouded happiness".

Well, I can say the same!

## Ever since my First Communion I desire to receive the Eucharist and spend time in Adoration *by Patricia Casey*

THE day of my First Holy Communion was so exciting but, before I write about my excitement, I want to share an experience that was unique for my whole class and one that I will never forget.

In the housing estate where I lived, I had a lovely friend who played skipping with me. She also went to the same primary school as I did. She had beautiful snow-white skin and long wavy red hair that I always admired. You might wonder why her skin and hair are relevant, but as you read on you will see why.

My friend and I played most days out the back of my home. I had a skipping rope, so we shared it and every day we would skip together trying to get to 100 without stopping. But our skipping together as friends came to an end the day I heard that my friend had been in an awful incident.

Our teacher announced to the whole class that my friend had been in a terrible fire. The whole house had gone up in flames and was burned to the ground. Tragically, she lost her mother in the fire but, miraculously, my friend was saved by a brave man (my dad's friend) who entered her house to rescue her. My friend's whole body was severely burnt

and she would now be spending a lot of time recovering in hospital. Our teacher asked us to pray for the healing of this little girl, and we did.

She never came back to our school, and I never saw her in our housing estate again.

As the months went by, our teacher began preparing my class for our First Holy Communion. I remember how excited I was for all the rehearsals. The teachers always reminded us that on the day of our Holy Communion we would receive the True Presence of Jesus. I thought to myself, "What will it be like to receive God in my heart?" This made my longing to receive Him even more strongly felt.

I remember how we had to practice reverence at the rehearsals by respectfully approaching the altar, joining our hands as we received bread on the tongue, and walking slowly back to our pews.

Our teacher taught us a prayer so that we would know to do this on the day of our First Communion. I was counting down the days to receive Our Lord in the Eucharist; I could hardly wait.

Ever since I had started going to Sunday Mass as a child, my mammy always dressed my

sisters and I in beautiful dresses, pure white socks, and bows in our freshly washed hair. So I knew Mass was something very special. My parents always taught us to be reverent in God's house. I'm so grateful to my parents for teaching me and my siblings the faith at such an early age. Praying the Rosary on our knees each evening at home was a daily practice as a family. I can see now that Our Lady was preparing me in a special way for receiving Her Divine Son in the Eucharist.

With First Holy Communion Day quickly approaching, I was so excited when my mammy took me to the bridal shop to try on a dress. Oh, how I remember the beautiful the dress and veil that she and I chose. It was pure white and sat out with layers of frills. Mammy sewed small diamantés on to the dress so that there would be little sparkles when the light hit them. I imagined I would look like a princess from the fairy tales I read with my mammy.

### Excitement

The evening before my First Holy Communion Day, mammy took me to the hairdresser. I excitedly sat in the chair getting foam curlers in my hair, and then I had to go home and sleep with them in so that, the next

day, ringlet curls would form in my very long, thick hair. I couldn't wait to see them. And when I returned to the salon the following morning, the ringlet curls turned out beautiful. I went back home to put on my lovely white dress and veil. Well! I was definitely feeling like a princess then. I had butterflies in my stomach with excitement as we drove to the chapel.

When we arrived, the teacher told us that the little girl who had been in the house fire would also be there to make her First Holy Communion along with the rest of our class. We were all asked to be respectful by not staring at her.

As we all lined up to walk up the aisle to our seats, I happened to look around for my other friend, only to see my little friend who I had once skipped with. She looked so different now, hardly recognisable. She had a plastic white shield over her face. The skin on her face was badly scarred. Her hair was so short and thin, barely even there.

It was so hard for me to take it all in, with so much happening around us. She wore a simple white dress which covered her arms, and a veil covering the little bit of hair that she had. I felt like crying. But my heart was touched



Patricia Casey, Kilrea.



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just to see her there. I knew it was a miracle she had survived the fire, and a miracle that she was even there to make her First Holy Communion with us.

My heart felt heavy as I walked to my pew listening to the hymn 'Christ Beside Me' sung by the school choir. To this day, that hymn reminds me of the moment of seeing my little friend again for the first time since our last skipping day.

The Eucharist is one of the central mysteries of Christianity. Each Eucharist is transformative to our souls. Jesus suffered during His Passion, His body was scarred and disfigured, left unrecognisable. My wee friend that day was uniquely united to Jesus' suffering. I know that in a very special way, God was so close to her. She would have been comforted, strengthened and interiorly healed by Our Lord after receiving Him in the Eucharist on her First Holy Communion Day.

For me, having received Our Lord for the first time, I knew I had met my King and I cherished Him in my first ever Eucharist. My

First Holy Communion Day had a very strong impact on my life. Ever since, I have always desired to receive the Eucharist and spend time in Adoration, growing in my relationship with God.

Seeing my friend that day helped me see the reality of suffering, but also the beauty of our faith. In my heart, I knew she was going to be ok; God would never abandon her or forget her. He had a special plan for her. I, too, haven't forgotten about her and I never will. I haven't seen her again since that day, but maybe one day God will bring our paths to meet. I certainly hope so.

I'm so thankful to God that my friend was there with me on my First Holy Communion Day. She was as beautiful as the rest of all the other girls there. And to this day, she helps me to remember what is most important to God - our hearts. Christ in the Eucharist helps us to see others as He sees them, to love others as He loves them, to walk with others as He walks with them.

Christ our King, thy Kingdom come.



Rhonda on her First Holy Communion Day.

## Eucharistic miracles have left me in no doubt that it is Jesus I receive in Holy Communion *by Rhonda McColgan*

HOW lovely and appropriate to be thinking back on my First Holy Communion in this month of June, during which we celebrate Corpus Christi.

St Therese of Lisieux said: "I shall always remember my First Communion Day as one of unclouded happiness".

At only six years of age, I was the youngest in my class when I made my First Holy Communion. Unlike St Therese, however, I can honestly say that I did not understand that I was receiving the Body of Jesus, and that Jesus is fully present in the Blessed Sacrament.

Moreover, I would even go as far as to say that, unfortunately, this was most likely the case for many Catholics of my age, and not that of St Therese's experience.

Of course, I'm not blaming anyone for this, but unless teachers that are responsible for preparing us for Holy Communion have had an encounter with Jesus themselves, it may be difficult to pass on the fullness of our faith.

I'm quite sure that there was all the head knowledge in the world passed on to me, but if the Holy Spirit is not part of that delivery, the outcome will just speak for itself. Those on fire with the Holy Spirit speak the word and the Holy Spirit pours out. So we must pray for all those who teach.

We did have a lovely teacher and she placed a lot of emphasis on how we should behave in the chapel. We were told not to look around at our family or fidget in our seats. Yes, good instruction for young children, but I don't remember hearing that I was receiving Jesus. It is quite possible that I did hear it but, with being six at the time, didn't take in very much anyway, and I was also a bit of a day dreamer.

However, it was most definitely

a day that I was looking forward to, and I can recall the excitement of shopping for my dress, shoes and accessories. A young girl's delight!

I was also looking forward to receiving Holy Communion because it meant that I could now go up during this part of the Mass just like everyone else, and it made me feel more grown up!

My own encounter with Jesus came much later on, but I do recognise now upon looking back how Jesus was always calling me to come closer, to "come and see". I did respond at times to His beckoning but without proper guidance it never really came to much.

Of course, I know that Jesus never stopped pursuing me. He was always standing at the door of my heart knocking and waiting for that door to open.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door I will come in to him and eat with him and he with me" (Rev 3:20).

We need help to understand these things. I now realise that it was the way I was living my life that prevented me from hearing that knock or His voice in that gentle breeze.

"After the earthquake a fire but the Lord was not in the fire and after the fire a still small voice" (1 Kings 19:12).

### Clouded

There was too much noise in my life for me to hear His soft voice. This reminds me of Psalm 66:18... "If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened". To me, this emphasises how sin and worldly attachment becomes a block for us to hear the Lord's gentle voice. I believe that the Lord hears it all, but it is sin and worldliness that causes our vision to be clouded,

the opposite to St Therese's "uncloudy happiness".

However, during a time of struggle in my life, this yearning for something more was getting stronger. Again, I didn't fully understand but I started to attend daily Mass as much as I could. Despite not being able to hold back tears at Mass, it gave me much comfort.

My conversion led me to a Bible Study run by the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal in Derry. There I learned how to have a relationship with the living Jesus. Something I never heard of before and the rest is history.

I remember hearing a teaching on John 6:51, "I am the living bread from heaven, whoever eats of this bread will live forever, The bread I shall give is my flesh and I will give it for the life of the world".

Wow, I thought! The Eucharist is actually a biblical teaching, by Jesus Himself!

It was interesting to hear that Jesus lost a lot of followers that day. You can understand that in a sense, as it doesn't sound appropriate to hear someone telling you to eat their flesh and drink their blood.

Jesus doesn't back down, he doesn't back track to keep the people sweet. No, He emphasises this point again in John 6:53, "Truly, truly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you have no life in you".

It is interesting that even today this teaching is not accepted among all Christians. Even many Catholics themselves believe that the Eucharist is only a symbol, thus still causing division and confusion; two of the Enemy's specialities! Jesus didn't change or soften the truth to gain popularity or 'likes'.

Blessed Carlos Acutis had



Rhonda on her First Holy Communion Day.

the right idea in highlighting Eucharistic miracles. These stories further increased my faith and have left me with no doubt that it is Jesus that I receive in Holy Communion, not a symbol, not a piece of wafer. It's Jesus truly present under the appearance of bread and wine.

When you finally receive the grace to believe this from your heart, you will never approach the altar in the same way again. Now, I imagine Our Lady preparing my heart just like when she prepared the manger to receive Jesus.

Jesus told St Faustina (Diary 1811) that eternal life must begin here on earth through Holy Communion.

So, let us always pray for the faith to believe and ask Jesus to help our unbelief in an aching world that can be so easily fixed, if only every knee should bow...

## My First Communion helped me see God was welcoming me to come closer to Him *by Rory McGilligan*

EXPERTS say that you are the average of the people that you associate most with. Hence, if you associate with positive, happy people you are more likely to have those traits in your personality. The same can be said if you associate with people that see the glass half-empty and struggle to see the good in things. Over the last few weeks, I am pleased to say that I have been keeping very good

company and I really do think it has given me a boost.

A few weeks ago some of us got a mini-bus and went to Knock for the day. The prayers, laughs and craic that we had was really medicine for the soul. The full day felt like a day of praise to Jesus and Mary without it being overwhelming. I was in the company of people who embraced life and are shining lights despite what difficulties

they have come through.

I also recently attended the St Columb's College Gala Dinner. I was lucky to get sitting at the same table as Mickey Harte. I found him to be a very spiritual and holy man, who was also a very humble man. He was easy conversation. He liked talking about the importance of God in his life and what he does to keep his relationship with Jesus a vibrant one. I've got to say

that our table that night was a blessing. We had a mix of clergy and young people, all of us on life's journey and all appreciating the gifts that God has given us.

As a seven-year-old boy making my first Holy Communion in 1982 (author gives away his age!) I had been blessed with great people around me. Our teacher had prepared my class so well for this sacrament. We knew that it was significant, but we hadn't

sensed the immense gravity of importance that we would soon participate in.

It could have got lost on me except for God's intervention. He filled my life with parents, grandparents and other relations that reinforced the importance of the sacrament of the Eucharist; people filled with faith, hope and charity, living a Christ-centred life. None of the above held a degree in Theology,

but what they did do was ask questions such as: Was I looking forward to making my First Holy Communion? What date was it on? Could I go to their house that day and get photos? They told me that I was growing up and that this was a very important moment in my life.

All this made me realise that I was about to participate in something very special. I still have to this day a first Holy



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Communion card from my grandparents. It had a beautiful gold crucifix in the corner. I cherished it at the time and still do. I also received a prayer book and Rosary beads. In my eyes, I was no longer an observer at Mass but an active participant that God was welcoming to come closer to Him.

On the idea of surrounding ourselves with good company, our Lord has surrounded us with very important saints in the last number of years. He has given us St Faustina Kowalska and St Therese of Lisieux, who are known as the Mercy saints.

As our society seems to be moving in a direction away from God and towards self and sin, God has given us these beautiful souls. I do believe He wants us to keep good company with them, learn from them, and grow closer to Him through their example.

St Therese often pondered how she could ever become a saint. She believed that she was not able to be like the great saints. She felt that she would not get the chance to carry out great works of charity or help bring countless souls to Christ. She believed that she was just a nun of no great significance.

St Therese yearned to be a saint, not out of pride or vanity, but only that she would always remain close to God. Over the years, she realised with the help of God that, by consistently doing the daily small things with great love, we grow close to Him and stay close to Him. Her Little Way is, in fact, a great way.

### Motions

Mickey Harte talked to us about reciting the daily family Rosary, going to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, as well as going to Mass and receiving The Eucharist. As Catholics, we at times can be guilty of going through the motions and not engaging. Subconsciously, we are putting self-interest above God's love. Maybe if we follow what St Therese did, and do more of what Mickey Harte mentioned, but do them with great love, we may see the fruits in our spiritual life and we can grow closer to God.

I was told recently that when we adore the Blessed Sacrament with an open Heart, it is like God doing surgery on our hearts; He removes the hardness and fills it with humbleness, purity and love.

St Faustina Kowalska has come to prominence in recent years with Devotion to the Divine Mercy. In fact, at the moment, I am listening to St Faustina's Diary via a podcast by the Marian Fathers. Each podcast only lasts for seven minutes so, even if you have a busy schedule, it is still quite easy to spare that time to listen to it.

Fr Joe Roesch is the narrator. It is a lovely resource through which you really get to know

St Faustina. From the podcast, I have learned how she, too, wanted to grow into closer union with Jesus. She neither felt worthy or able for what God was asking her to do, that is, start and spread Devotion of God's Mercy through the Divine Mercy.

As mentioned earlier in other articles I have written, when St Faustina made her first Holy Communion and was walking back to school with her teacher and class mates, she fell a few paces behind the others. When the teacher inquired to see if she was okay and why she was walking by herself, her response was, "I am not alone now, I have Jesus with me".

St Faustina spent much time in front of the Blessed Sacrament. There she grew to love God more and more. She wanted to console Jesus' heart. She knew it was hurting, as mankind had chosen sin over God. On another occasion, before she took her final vows, St Faustina was at Mass. When receiving the Eucharist, another sacred Host fell onto her hands. As she waited at the altar to return the fallen Host to the priest, it changed to flesh; surely the heart of Christ. When the priest approached St Faustina again, the Host returned to its original form. Here was a clear sign from God of how much He loved her; that He, in fact, was giving His heart to her and us.

St Faustina was given the message to tell the whole world that Jesus died for us. We, ourselves, are not worthy of heaven, but only by God the Father's mercy. Through His Son giving of His Body and Blood, the same Body and Blood we receive at Holy Communion, will we get into Heaven.

When we accept that God the Father has poured out so many graces, shown us the means to gain eternal life, maybe it is time we keep that good company of the Mercy saints that God has given us.

Last year, my daughter made her first Holy Communion in the same chapel as I did. Thank goodness, she, too, was blessed with good people around her; my parents giving her a prayer book and Rosary beads, letting her know what an important day it was in her life, as well as ourselves and the school preparing her.

I, also, have chatted to her on many occasions about the importance of the Eucharist. I told my daughter about St Francesco of Fatima; how he would go to the chapel during the day just to be with "the hidden Jesus" in the Eucharist. She seemed to connect with this concept. My hope for the future is that she will pass on what faith we have given her; that she, too will learn about the Mercy saints and always know the importance of the Eucharist.

# My 'Second' First Holy Communion!

by Sheila Fullerton

JUST a little over a decade ago, I was fortunate enough to be present, in both mind and body, as the late Fr Colm Rafferty (RIP) gave a homily on the gift of the Holy Eucharist present in the sacrifice of the Mass. And, despite having made my First Holy Communion more than two (or three!) decades before, at the tender age of seven, it was during this very ordinary Sunday, if I am honest, that I had my first real encounter with Christ, of being truly in communion with Him, as I received the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist during that Mass.

It goes without saying that I will be forever grateful to Fr Rafferty for sharing, with all present that day, his profoundly spiritual understanding of the Eucharist and his deep, deep love of and for Christ present in the Eucharist and in the Mass.

And, as I reflect on these two momentous occasions: my First Holy Communion and my 'second' First Holy Communion, that is, my first real encounter with Christ present in the gift of the Eucharist, I can't help but recall my mother's favourite saying that "God moves in mysterious ways".

Indeed, the wisdom rooted in these words sown throughout my lifetime has flourished and grown with me, and so, I can say with confidence, certainty and assurity, that on that special day in May 1980-something, as I received the great gift of the Risen Christ for the first time, that it was the beginning of a journey of personal and private revelation between God and I; a journey which brought me to that beautiful chapel on that momentous day to hear those enlightening words. A journey that led me to a specific place and space in time where I was now ready to be enlightened, now ready to realise and understand the magnitude of the gift God has bestowed upon each one of us in the Eucharist. A journey that is still ongoing and continues to infuse me with love, joy, hope and faith. A journey that has begun to awaken a small modicum of understanding of the nature of His love. A love of such magnificence and magnitude that we cannot possibly even begin to measure or fully understand it!

And I can't even begin to share with you how on that day, and on each occasion since when I am able to receive Christ in the Eucharist, that the little seven-year-old girl still present within, the same little girl who once presented herself for the first time - resplendent in her white dress - to receive Christ, rejoiced, and continues to rejoice each time I unite myself in Holy Communion with Him,

each time I am present at the foot of His Cross during the Consecration of the Mass, and each time I receive Him into my soul, so that He may nourish and sustain my spirit.

Now, I know that this journey of revelation is not unique to me, as God, in His infinite wisdom and mercy, reveals Himself to each one of us at a time when we are ready and able to understand. Albeit, clearly, I am a work in progress as the process took a little longer for me!

Yet the 'mysterious workings' I referred to earlier becomes increasingly apparent as I peruse the many twists, turns, ups, downs, and plateaus I've encountered during my life journey, up to and after my first and 'second' First Holy Communion. Workings that have provided a steep, and much needed, learning curve reminding me that time is irrelevant; it is merely a concept for human beings like you and I, to measure change in our surroundings from a particular viewpoint.

Ergo, time is a concept solely for us, as our Creator, does not need nor conform to such a mundane entity! He transcends all things: time, space and place; something clearly evident when Christ said: "Know that I am with you until the end of time". I must confess, this fundamental realisation, combined with His reassuring words, makes me feel marginally better about being the aforementioned work-in-progress!

### Understanding

Indeed, if I may be grave for a moment, it is this renewed understanding that enables me to cope with the immense shame I feel when I think about the hurt and wounds I have, undoubtedly, inflicted upon Him, each time I encountered Him in the Eucharist so casually, or was in-absentia in the ways that matter despite being physically present during Mass.

Now, each time I am present at the Consecration of the Eucharist, I remain increasingly conscious of His pain, a pain which He revealed to St Faustina: "Oh, how painful it is to Me that souls so seldom unite themselves to Me in Holy Communion. I wait for souls and they are indifferent toward me. I love them tenderly and sincerely and they distrust me. I want to lavish My graces on them, and they do not want to accept them. They treat Me as a dead object, whereas my Heart is full of love and mercy..." (Diary 745.)

And so, the out-workings of Fr Rafferty's homily, spoken over a decade ago, has manifested within me a profound sense



Sheila Fullerton, Bellaghy.

of humility, together with a renewed reverence for Christ present in the Eucharist. His words humbled me, powerfully reminding me of the love God has for us, a love which enables us to unite ourselves with His salvific plan when we participate in the Sacrament of the Most Holy Eucharist. The potency of his words, just like my mother's words from childhood, have taken root in my psyche, living on long after he has been called home from his earthly service.

Consequently, I have been and remain humbled by the love God has for me. I am humbled to know He waited for more than three decades for me! And given the parameters of time already discussed in this article, I am sure you will agree that this is not an insignificant period within a human lifespan.

As a result of what I now refer to as 'My Second First Holy Communion', I have developed an increased sense of our universal responsibility as committed, practising Roman Catholics, to use our platform, irrespective of our vocation - clergy, religious, laity alike - to be courageous, just as Fr Rafferty was, in utilising the power of the spoken word, each from our respective vantage points, to proclaim 'The Word' and His very real Presence in the Eucharist. It is my experience that, just as with the Eucharist, God resides within these words too.

And so, in a world which at best actively seeks to cloak and, at worst, to universally erase and deny the presence of

Christ, we must strive to shatter the embarrassed silence that seeks to shackle and stifle us from speaking aloud with quiet passion and conviction, of our love of and for Christ present in the Eucharist!

Unbeknownst to Fr Rafferty, his words have enabled me to rekindle the sense of 'unclouded happiness' St Therese of Lisieux spoke of in relation to her own First Holy Communion. However, unlike the Little Flower, I am, and will always remain, a work-in-progress, and so must persist in my efforts to drown out the distractions and noise of the world, which can at times threaten to overwhelm the spirit, to work at being consciously present as I receive the Eucharist, so that I may remain in communion with God each time I receive the Eucharist. And, if I am honest, some days this is easier than others!

Undoubtedly, in making our First Holy Communion and being able to receive the Holy Eucharist on each occasion afterwards, provides much needed spiritual nourishment and food for the soul. And if I may, I would like to finish with some words which may proffer some food for thought:

Isn't it wonderful to know that because of the gift of Christ present in the Eucharist that God is never in-absentia from us?

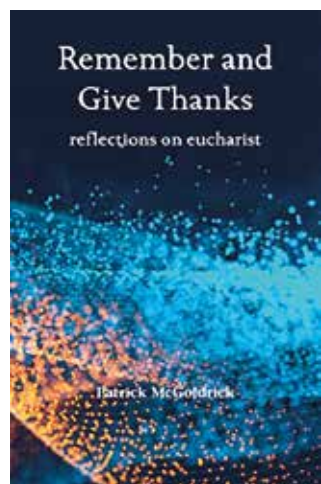
Isn't it reassuring that He never gets tired of waiting for us?

And isn't it awe-inspiring that He is always willing to unite Himself to us, even when we don't necessarily deserve it?!



Fr Peter O’Kane reviews reflections on the Eucharist by the late Fr Patrick McGoldrick...

# ‘Remember and Give Thanks’



IN this month of June, with the Church’s particular focus on the The Body and Blood of Christ, Fr Peter O’Kane has shared his thoughts on Eucharistic reflections by the late Fr Patrick McGoldrick in a book published by Veritas, entitled ‘Remember and Give Thanks’.

Fr Patrick passed away on December 16, 2020, and in his homily during the Requiem Mass in St Pius X Church, Moville, where the Buncrana-born priest had faithfully served as curate for 22 years after spending the first 36 years of his priesthood studying and teaching, Fr Pat O’Hagan, the parish priest of Moville, spoke about a series of articles Fr Patrick had written on the Eucharist.

Having had the privilege to read these, Fr Pat described the writings as “the most marvellous teaching on the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and what it means for God’s people, for the Church”, and expressed the hope that they would be published.

A couple of days before the first anniversary of Fr Patrick’s death, on December 14, 2021, Bishop Francis Duffy, of the Diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise, who is the chair of the Council for Liturgy, performed the on-line launch of the publication of these writings.

In reviewing ‘Remember and Give Thanks’, Fr Peter O’Kane, who serves as curate in the Parish of Drumragh, in Omagh, referred to a comment made by Pope Francis in his address last month to the teachers and students of the Pontifical Liturgical Institute at San Anselmo, in Rome, to mark the 60th anniversary of its foundation.

“Pope Francis commented that ‘three dimensions clearly emerge from the conciliar spirit of renewal of the liturgical life. The first is active and fruitful participation in the liturgy; the second is ecclesial communion inspired by the celebration of the Eucharist and the Sacraments of the Church; and the third is the impetus to the evangelizing mission, starting out from the liturgical life that involves all baptized persons,’” wrote Fr

Peter, adding: “This quote aptly should be considered a summary of the recently published book ‘Remember and Give Thanks’, a compilation of the theological and liturgical reflections of the revered Fr Patrick McGoldrick, priest of the Diocese of Derry and former professor of Liturgy at the Pontifical University, Saint Patrick’s College, Maynooth”.

Fr Peter’s review continues as follows...

Highly respected and praised in the academic world of liturgy and theology for more than 50 years, loved and cherished among the people of the Parish of Moville for 22 years as their curate, and dearly loved by his family, known to some as Fr Patrick, to others as Fr Paddy, and, again, to others as Fr McGoldrick, all these relationships signify the beauty of the Christian life in the synopsis offered in the priest’s own words: “Here in this world and in death too, the state of all creation and the state of God’s children are intimately intertwined. By God’s design they belong together” (p.33).

This worldview and, more importantly, the author’s vision of faith are the foundations on which Fr Paddy’s reflections, now published in book form, are solidly built, echoing the words of St Peter: “as you come to Him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:4-5).

Reflections penned during the recent time of pandemic and its associated lockdowns, restrictions and challenges, these 19 essayettes reflect on themes associated with the celebration of the Eucharist, focussing on the key themes promoted by the Second Vatican Council’s ‘Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy’ (Sacrosanctum Concilium).

They are arranged in four sections, reflecting the Church’s theology of the Eucharist with its principal elements of mystery, remembrance, celebration and eschatology. The first and last chapters signify the goal of Fr Paddy’s life of service and ministry as a priest – whether in the lecture hall among seminarians or with fellow academics at conferences or with the people of the parish or in the midst of family gatherings – to “always and everywhere give thanks [to God] through Christ our Lord. Amen”.

The book gives literary form to the animated sounds of living faith, firmly rooted in Sacred Scripture, rich in theological

vocabulary and technical language, yet always directed towards a practical, realistic and hope-filled experience of God in the reality of everyday Christian life, which is sustained and nourished in the Eucharist as its source and summit.

Be it in the normality and ordinary moments of daily life or in the face of sorrow and suffering, the believer’s participation in the Eucharist is a call to “give thanks for all that Christ’s passion and death achieved for us...By his endurance of his own suffering Christ has made this possible for us and he has given us an example to follow” (pp.22-23).

“If we are Christ’s body through the Eucharist, then we must struggle to achieve that unity when we go out from the church at the end of Mass, struggling at the different levels of our community and family and personal lives”

The author speaks of the call given by the Council for renewal of the liturgy and sacramental life of the Church, and he attests to the history of the early Church’s life rooted in the gathering together to recount the words of Christ and to fulfil His command of celebrating in memory of Him. Appealing to the writings of the Church fathers and attending to a consideration of the theology of the Eastern Church and reformed traditions, there is a firm foundation for a reflecting on how the ecclesial community reflects the gift given in the Eucharist.

“If we are Christ’s body through the Eucharist, then we must struggle to achieve that unity when we go out from the church at the end of Mass, struggling at the different levels of our community and family and personal lives” (p.87).

## Active

This has implications for the actual celebration of the Eucharist when believers gather together, on which the author reflects regarding the integral relationship between Word and Sacrament, the various ministerial roles and the unity of the gathered people. All of this contributes to an understanding of the presence of Christ in the liturgical act, offering an enhanced comprehension of the Church’s

belief that the sacraments and the liturgy are the active work of God at work among his people.

“To accomplish so great a work, Christ is always present in His Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass, not only in the person of His minister...but especially under the Eucharistic species. By His power He is present in the sacraments...He is present in His word, since it is He Himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in the Church. He is present, lastly, when the Church prays and sings” (Sacrosanctum Concilium §7).

The author does not shy away from the importance of theological vocabulary and imagery, despite the challenges that these have caused in the midst of debate and division, as well as the need for terms associated with the Eucharist to be comprehended by either the one who is in the role of ministry or the person in the pew.

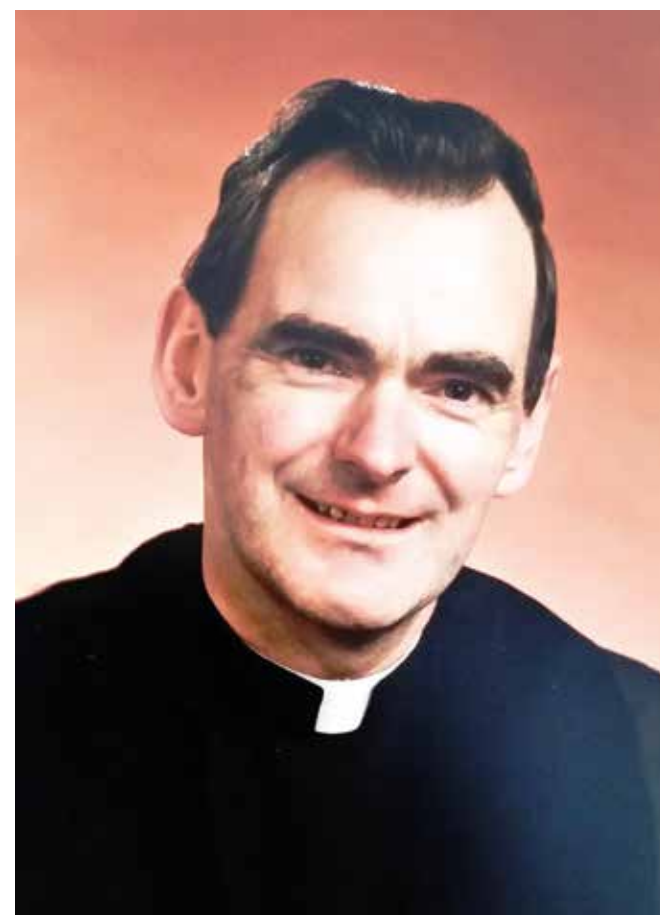
It is acknowledged that often in past debates, responses to these questions “tended to be contrived and unconvincing” (p.40), the author offers a renewed yet rooted understanding of theological terms such as ‘sacrifice’, ‘presence’ and ‘transubstantiation’.

This discussion of theological vocabulary, the explanation of the structure of the Mass, and the call of the participant to full, active and conscious participation are always grounded in the Paschal Mystery of Christ, the power of the Cross and the glory of the Resurrection; because it is only the Paschal Mystery that offers life and promise to the believer.

There is an emphasis placed on the “present moment”, in that the reader ought to be aware of their relationship with the communion of saints as well as the Church and world in which they live (p.140ff), a kindly reminder that “in a culture of narrow and reductive individualism, the doctrine of the communion of saints together with the celebration of the Eucharist has a lot to teach us and lot to do for us” (p.142).

The author attends to local particularities, such as the permission for the Irish Church to use a specific Memorial Acclamation after the consecration in the Eucharistic Prayer. Whether fact, folklore, tradition or popular piety regarding the concession for the Irish to proclaim “My Lord and my God”, the author contextualises this acclamation in terms of faith: “if we use Thomas’ words in the Eucharist, it is in this context of the paschal mystery in all its fullness that we should understand them” (p.110).

A final word is due to Fr Paddy



The late Fr Patrick McGoldrick.

Jones and his collaborators in their endeavour to collate and organise Fr McGoldrick’s reflections and fashion them into this structured and organised offering. When editors receive an unedited scholarly manuscript, there is a particular gift of crafting it into a flowing piece of work. A greater challenge is posed when the author is deceased. Yet the friendship and shared experience between the editor and the author is evident, as Fr Paddy Jones has faithfully yet ingeniously presented the reflections of the author. This means that whether as a first time engagement with the author or being transported as if back in time to the lecture hall in Maynooth, the reader is renewed by an ever open vision for the future, firmly rooted in the past, aware that the present moment will also come to pass (cf. p.147).

This book is to be commended to priests, who are at the helm of parish life, as an opportunity to be renewed in their theological understanding of the Eucharist at this rather appropriate moment as the pastoral landscape of the Church is rapidly changing. It would also offer a fitting resource to pastoral councils and liturgical commissions at Diocesan and Parish levels, since it provides a firm Eucharistic theology that paves the way for renewal of how communities celebrate and live the Eucharist as the eternal gift of God’s love, especially in the aftermath of Covid-19 and in response to the synodal pathway.

As Professor Liam Tracey writes in the ‘Afterword’, “the

renewal of the liturgy is not just an archaeological exercise as it has often been accused of being, but an ever-deeper immersion in the best of the Christian tradition. Part of coming to a knowledge of that tradition is an ever-greater appreciation of the role of the history and theology of the liturgy itself” (169-170).

The book offers challenge and direction, hope and life, but most profoundly the need to understand the Church’s rich tradition in how the Eucharist is celebrated by the faithful through the ages.

Writing about the Eucharist as the Sacrament of Charity, Pope Benedict XVI penned: “we cannot approach the Eucharistic table without being drawn into the mission which, beginning in the very heart of God, is meant to reach all people. Missionary outreach is thus an essential part of the Eucharistic form of the Christian life” (SacCar 84).

This publication has immortalised in printed word the scholarly and pastoral reflections of a believer whose life was ever at the service of thanksgiving, at the altar and the ambo, in the Church and the lecture hall, at home with the family and among the people of God. A Christian life shared with others, truly “a life in which the love of God is present, a life inspired by Christ and rooted in him” (p156). Yet, more profoundly, is that the author would direct us beyond this book to the greater immortal promise, the Word of Life who is carved on our hearts.



# “Praise the Lord all you peoples” (Ps 66; Daniel ch 3)

by Fr John McLaughlin ssc

## Pippa's Song

Robert Browning (1812–1889)

*The year's at the spring,  
And day's at the morn;  
Morning's at seven;  
The hill-side's dew-pearl'd;  
The lark's on the wing;  
The snail's on the thorn;  
God's in His heaven—  
All's right with the world!*

READING once again through the texts of the Pope's great Letter on Creation, Laudato Si, I have been struck by the sheer challenge that it presents to our world of convenience and uniformity lived at such a superficial level, of recovering wonder and praise as our only escape into reality. We are connected up to the world of Nature and Creation and therein lies our true glory.

Having lived so much of my priesthood under Pope John Paul II, I came to appreciate, mostly in the Spanish texts while on Mission in South America, the clarity of his thought. So I like the quote that Pope Francis takes from his phrase: “to see no other meaning in their natural environment than what serves for immediate use and consumption”, which is a danger of today and the challenge that the Climate Crisis places before us. So also, his references to Pope Benedict and his awareness of the crisis, easily forgotten as the world moves on from sound-bite to sound-bite: “the book of nature is one and indivisible”.

A couple of further quotes might awaken the interest and the faith of some readers:

66. “The creation accounts in the book of Genesis contain, in their own symbolic and narrative language, profound teachings about human existence and its historical reality. They suggest that human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbour and with the earth itself. According to the Bible, these three vital relationships have been broken, both outwardly and within us. This rupture is sin. The harmony between the Creator, humanity and creation as a whole was disrupted by our presuming to take the place of God and refusing to acknowledge our creaturely limitations”.

68. “This responsibility for God's earth means that human beings, endowed with intelligence, must respect the laws of nature and the delicate equilibria existing between the creatures of this world, for ‘he commanded and they were created; and he established them forever and ever; he fixed their bounds and he set a law which cannot pass away’ (Ps 148:5b-6). The laws found in the Bible dwell on relationships, not only among individuals but also with other living beings”.

“We see this in the story of

Noah, where God threatens to do away with humanity because of its constant failure to fulfil the requirements of justice and peace: “I have determined to make an end of all flesh; for the earth is filled with violence through them” (Gen 6:13). These ancient stories, full of symbolism, bear witness to a conviction which we today share, that everything is interconnected, and that genuine care for our own lives and our relationships with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice and faithfulness to others”.

76. “In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, the word ‘creation’ has a broader meaning than ‘nature’, for it has to do with God's loving plan in which every creature has its own value and significance. Nature is usually seen as a system which can be studied, understood and controlled, whereas creation can only be understood as a gift from the outstretched hand of the Father of all, and as a reality illuminated by the love which calls us together into universal communion”

And...to return to the Praise motivation: 72. “The Psalms frequently exhort us to praise God the Creator, ‘who spread out the earth on the waters, for his steadfast love endures for ever’ (Ps 136:6). They also invite other creatures to join us in this praise: ‘Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars! Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens! Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created’ (Ps 148:3-5). We do not only exist by God's mighty power; we also live with him and beside him. This is why we adore him”.

And finally, trying to control my own enthusiasm with this great Laudato: 83. “The ultimate destiny of the universe is in the fullness of God, which has already been attained by the risen Christ, the measure of the maturity of all things.[53] Here we can add yet another argument for rejecting every tyrannical and irresponsible domination of human beings over other creatures. The ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us. Rather, all creatures are moving forward with us and through us towards a common point of arrival, which is God, in that transcendent fullness where the risen Christ embraces and illumines all things. Human beings, endowed with intelligence and love, and drawn by the fullness of Christ, are called to lead all creatures back to their Creator”.

## Celebrate

During these years of retirement in Moville, I have been gifted with the use of a lovely garden and view of the Foyle. In the mornings, as an entry into Laudes, my steps outside are punctuated by the Psalm in Daniel Chapter 3...and Sky and

Sea, Trees, Grass, Stars, Lightening, Sun, Moon, Plants...interchange with Holy and Humble of Heart, Priests, The Blessed of Heaven, Souls and spirits of the Pure....Rain and Showers (I seldom miss out on that one!). Winds of all shapes... Frost and Cold, Ice and Cold, Seas and Springs...and each forms a picture of person, place or event in a long life. It is the harmonizing of another day that is gifted to me to celebrate.

Of course, it is a good deal more splendid than the little garden in Santiago, in the ‘poblacion’ where the same elements were there to be celebrated in those Laudes or Morning Prayer moments. Or, indeed, in the six years in ‘Corcolen’ on Placeres Hill in Valparaiso, outside there, early on, the parking space in the quebrada and reviewing the palm trees that had survived so many onslaughts of humans and of Nature.

‘Bloom where you are planted’ was the title of a card sent by a friend from Marino, in those early days on Mission!

I do recall a visit many years ago to Assisi with two Dublin priest-friends and allowing these words to enchant us once more:

*“Praised be you, my Lord, with all your creatures, especially Sir Brother Sun, who is the day and through whom you give us light. And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour; and bears a likeness of you, Most High. Praised be you, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars, in heaven you formed them clear and precious and beautiful. Praised be you, my Lord, through Brother Wind, and through the air, cloudy and serene, and every kind of weather through whom you give sustenance to your creatures. Praised be you, my Lord, through Sister Water, who is very useful and humble and precious and chaste. Praised be you, my Lord, through Brother Fire, through whom you light the night, and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong”.[64]*

Surely this and many of the Psalms offer to believers and searchers a wonderful escape from a pragmatic and mechanistic world in these days! For free, amongst the Apps on your iPad, you could not do better than download the more up-to-date, Terra Santa Breviary (Prayer of the Church) that I have used in Spanish in former years.

As a young priest in Booterstown, Dublin, I vividly recall making the decision to drop in to the Catholic Communication Centre there on the Stillorgan Road, to allow myself to be challenged in my posture at Liturgical celebrations. So, a small group of around 10 was



formed for each day's program. We gently critiqued each other on our preaching, and our bodily and facial postures, and gestures with the presenters, lay and clerical, organizing it all gently.

In the evening of one of the days, we were asked to share our comments on the Church Document on Music in the Liturgy. Even today, many years later, I wonder have we really been able to convey the sense of Praise in these celebrations. For instance there, under the late Fr Colm Kilcoyne (well-known at the time for his wise columns in one of the Sunday papers) the emphasis on the Acclamations in the music of the Eucharist was highlighted for us. And, on the occasions where I was involved with parish choirs and folk groups here and on mission, that was always one of my priorities. How many times can we leave the Church after Mass feeling that we have really joined in the Praise of God and His Creation, and been enriched by our celebration?

In his book on ‘Le Roi Soleil’, King Louis XIV, Vincent Cronin gave a great picture of the splendour of Versailles and the Royal Court. Somewhere in his narration, he included the comment of the Great King on his eminent chaplains and preachers. “When I listen to the Cardinals ‘Mauriac’, ‘Racine’, ‘Montalembert’ and the others preach, I think to myself, ‘how great preachers they are’. But when I listen to His Eminence Cardinal...preach, I think to myself...how great is God!” How could I forget a sentence like that?

## Rhythm

During an extended course in the Holy Land, I was with the group one Friday evening as we attended what would be classed as a more modern-style

synagogue. There was an easy and relaxed atmosphere and a certain informality in the welcome of new people. So, I found myself joining in for the worship and praise amongst the men, while the women in the group joined at the other side of the Table. At first, I felt strange as I tried to get into the bodily rhythm of those around me; but gradually I relaxed and let myself be taken up with the flow of the hands and the inclinations of the shoulders and the slight stooping as the words and the psalms became part of the head and ran through the body towards the feet, only to move upwards once more to be-shroud the whole frame, as it seemed to me. There was a calmness and a serene sense of praise and worship which seemed to run through the men of all ages and many nationalities that surrounded me. And afterwards I reflected that seldom had I prayed the Psalms in such an integrated (holistic?) manner. Certainly not ‘hunched up’ in a bench in church or chapel, during a Responsorial Psalm!

On the occasion of his visit to South America, Archbishop Dermot Ryan of Dublin carried gifts for some in those many mission countries and for prophetic figures – like Gustavo Gutierrez and Leonardo Boff etc, whom he would meet. I suspect that they all got the same parchment and illuminated copies of a page of the Book of Kells...Ours, in the parish of San Luis de Huechuraba in Santiago, we set about getting mounted and installed in the living room where they provoked much comment. For they surely do, in their exuberant and minute coloring, represent much that is great the Catholic Praise of God in his Gospel.

This, I again experienced in a visit to the Museum of St Gall, in Switzerland, with the little

workshops that function there, showing that miniscule attention to detail, as well as the reverence and praise surrounding these Celtic manuscripts.

Recently with a small group of the Legion of Mary, I took the trouble to make copies in large black text, of the ‘Te Deum’, being the traditional hymn of the Catholic Church. I had assisted on a number of occasions in the Cathedral of Santiago when the National Feast of September 18-19, brought together members of the major religions and leaders of Government, Judiciary, Army etc, for a solemn review of the year and a thanksgiving. It was always inspiring to stand while the combined choirs, under Jose Carter, sang the Te Deum to the Lord of Creation and the Patria. So, whether in Spanish or in English, I find a solemnity and a conviction in the phrases whenever they come up in the Prayer of the Church.

In the traditions of Maynooth, at a time when there were numbers present there from every diocese in the country, there was a jargon and a lore that is now probably forgotten. I wonder how many kept a copy of and treasure ‘I remember Maynooth’ from Neil Kevin! Praise was given for academic and sporting achievement, although sometimes sparsely enough on occasion, and with a certain loaded ambivalence in tone. The words of encomendation “Well-Over” or “You bored a vicious hole!” might be pronounced to take-down as well as to build-up a young aspirant preacher on his trial setting, or his efforts on football or hurling field. To be seen to have too much of a spried or a bull-merchant attitude, or a breeze for the occasion, could have arose damning words or faint praise on the young aspirant!

And yet, I have found over the years and working in parish



# Why were the Disciples sitting around doing nothing on Pentecost Day?

by Fr Stephen Quinn ocd

ON Pentecost day, we realise that the Gospel begins with one birth and ends with another. When we hear the word 'birth', our minds naturally turn back 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.

In her lay so much possibility and so much promise, but all was quiet. After Gabriel had laid bare all that God had planned to do and Mary had uttered her fateful response; the Holy Spirit came down on her in all His omnipotence, took humanity from this woman and united it to the Person of the Son. Mary's womb teemed with life and grace as the Word of God became a tiny cell.

Now on Pentecost day, at the very end of the Gospel, we can draw some lines of congruity with what originally occurred at Nazareth, in the Scriptures of the day we are gathered around another chamber. That upper room that they originally organised for the Last Supper again takes centre stage! That room now lies shaded, in half darkness, nothing seems to stir in there, and it appears to be utterly empty and forlorn. I use the word 'empty' carefully, because it was not literally deserted. In its dark

corners, hidden by the shadows, the disciples and a few faithful women cowered.

We can only apply the word 'empty' with caution because it best describes the disciple's response to all that they had encountered in the previous 50 or so days. Each of them had seen Him, heard Him, even reached out and touched Him, and yet for all that they had encountered, the disciple's heads and hearts remained absolutely empty of ideas; tight shut to anything of any value. They had seen Jesus die, they had experienced His resurrection, and they had witnessed His return to His Father. They had seen all in high definition and yet had not one idea as to what to do next about any of it.

On the Mount of Olives, after their Lord had ascended into Heaven, they stood around looking into the sky, and the angels challenged them as to what they were wasting their precious time upon. A week later, issues had not progressed any further forward. They had maybe given up staring up into the sky, to the last spot that they had seen Jesus, but now they just sat around huddled together doing nothing, while the rest of the world went on with the business of life.

All around them, just on the outside of the walls of their room, Jerusalem and humanity is hard at it, getting on with life, doing the deals and works of the day,

and yet it all goes on without one single clue that, because of Jesus, life could never be the same again. If that were to continue for much longer, all that the disciples had seen, all that they had heard would be threatened with failure.

It does not matter the motivation for this sitting around, whether it was that they were daunted by the prospect of what was being asked of them, that they were frightened by a world that they knew could turn really nasty at the drop of a hat, or that they expected to be laughed out of town because of their "tall tale." They could, I am sure, come up with many plausible excuses for their inaction, but the danger remained that the Gospel could end in a stillbirth.

Before this perilous situation is permitted by the disciples to go too far, the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, intervenes with His very own brand of activity. His activity almost comes as an electric shock to the posterior of these people as they sit almost glued to the spot. A Greek Orthodox hymn for the Feast of Pentecost outlines, for us, the role and the powers of this nondescript Third Person of God.

The hymn speaks of the powers of the Spirit. He is, for the hymn, the true giver of all good things. From Him flows a stream of prophecy that constantly leads humanity into deeper intimacy with God. The Spirit consecrates all those ministers who will serve the sacraments, He teaches wisdom to people labouring in illiteracy, even making out of these unlikely fishermen the first theologians, and most of all He gives life to the Church. At exactly this juncture, we have the point of congruence between the Annunciation and Pentecost, the Spirit is the power that gives new life and vibrancy.

On Pentecost day, just as He had on the day of Annunciation, the Holy Spirit hovered over that empty upper room, over those empty heads and those empty hearts, and He moved into that room with unimaginable power. We can attempt to imagine that power of the Holy Spirit. The moment is rather like a defibrillation.

The Holy Spirit, with 'two strong hands', places 'two electric paddles' upon the motionless and unanimated heart of the Church that the Lord had put together during His earthly ministry and that was gathered into that upper room. Those 'electric paddles' that send Divine Trinitarian life and love coursing through the body of the disciples and the heart of the Church, was all of a sudden ticking with new life. We can, therefore, understand the tongues of fire as the sparks



Duccio Pentecost.

of new life entering the inert community of the disciples.

## Sparks

The sparks of those tongues of fire had a profound personal effect on each of the members of the Church in that room, men and woman alike. What had been dormant, inert and latent, suddenly glowed with intensity and effervescence. Up until this point, over and over again, those very disciples had seen everything that the Lord was, they had heard every word that had fallen from His lips, experienced all the miraculous signs that He had worked. They had even looked into His face when it shone like the sun on Tabor's height and yet, every time they misunderstood, misinterpreted, or went down a 'rabbit hole' of errors.

Their cluelessness was so complete that the Lord turned to them in high dudgeon and said, "Have I been with you all this time and still you do not know me?" The Holy Spirit, the sparks of His inspiration, went down into those memories of three years together and began a process of clarity, in which they began to recognise Jesus for maybe the first time. The Spirit crystalised those empty heads and put that whole three-year experience with Jesus together in its proper order and with real insight.

"Oh Goodness, that is what that meant" was exclaimed loudly in that upper room over and over again! "At last, we can see," followed in its wake. Minds that had been empty, now woke up to the realisation that this person, who they had been with, was none other than the Son of God. His death and resurrection had turned the World on its head. This was the Good News that every person in the World needed to know.

The tongues of flame did not cease working on empty wits, they went further still and licked at those disciples' empty hearts.

The flames kindled their hearts and set those disciples on fire for Jesus with a purpose. Jesus became the necessary motivation for these disciples to get off their posteriors and do something with all this information that they had received. With such an intense motivation, scales fell from their eyes, and they saw all at once that they may well be safe and sound behind these brick walls, but they had managed not to lock the World out but only themselves in, and they could not get out.

Those walls were, in fact, a prison; a prison in which the Good News of a God who came and was with humanity was swirling around, desperate to find some avenue of escape. 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, to go to every woman and man with Him.

The Holy Spirit's prod brought on the second birth of the Gospel, the birth of One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. At this moment, the Church was born into the World. 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 only one thing - "Jesus is my Lord" to each and all they met.

When those disciples preached Jesus as Lord, they were saying that when you surrender to Jesus' lordship you lose nothing, absolutely nothing of what makes life free, beautiful, and great. Only in the Lordship of Jesus Christ are the doors of life opened wide. Only in this Lordship is the great potential of human existence truly revealed. Only in this Lordship, do we experience beauty and liberation.

Christ takes nothing away from us and He will give us everything. They preached this intoxicating message as they took to the highways and the by-ways,

as they went to the very edges of the World as the first Church.

The disciples were correct about just one thing, the World is always going to be hostile to the Lordship of Christ. Those dominated by the World are never going to appreciate the beauty, goodness, and truth that are intrinsic elements of that Lordship. The World does not want its convenience, its ignorance, its monopoly, and its power disturbed. It will turn without warning on anything that remains permanently out of step with its claims.

In so many ways, the World in the last few years has been conspiring to put the Lordship of Christ and His Church back into that upper room, to lock up the Good News behind the walls of our Churches and monasteries so that it will not disturb anyone.

The chief crime in the sight of the World seems to be to say anything that could be interpreted as offensive to anyone; you cannot say anything that might challenge them to more than earthly measurements, that would shake a person out of their ease, or that would ask people to be changed.

The Lordship of Christ is offensive. We, as disciples, better get used to that fact, for it knows no other measure other than Jesus. It will not compromise with us, it will not be diluted. It wants every person. It wants the whole of that person.

My brothers and sisters, we cannot be manoeuvred back into the failures of the first disciples. We cannot retreat back behind the walls of our Churches and go into a holy huddle and let that world outside pass us by. Today we ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit, for His inspiration, His energy, and His wisdom. Holding only to Jesus Christ, we must go out - to family, to friends, and to neighbours, so as to give them Good News.

## Continued from p26

pastoral settings, that some well-judged praise and approval is essential and obligatory. Nothing gets the attention and rewards as much as a spontaneously expressed eulogy on the efforts and loyalty of a parish catechist, youth leader etc! On the use of humour on such occasions, seminarians of my generation in Maynooth will recall the warning that Dr McGarry gave in the words of a French homilist, "You are there to feed the sheep, not to amuse the goats!"

There is one great word that comes up often in the life of the praying and praising believer: 'Alleluia!' Whether as a solemn acclamation for the Gospel, or the exultant Easter Vigil, or in the Prayer of the Church, or in a spontaneous moment of praise before the shimmering wonder of Nature, it has always opened me up to an existence in and beyond the present one. So that when it comes around each year to welcome the coming of Advent, the Office of Readings orchestrates the occasion, in the Sermon of St Augustine...

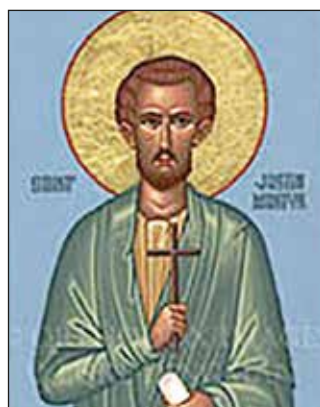
"Let us sing alleluia here on earth, while we are still anxious and worrying, so that we may

one day be able to sing it there in heaven, without any worry or care...Even here, among the dangers, among the trials and temptations of this life, both by others and by ourselves let alleluia be sung...O! what a happy alleluia there, how carefree, how safe from all opposition, where nobody will be an enemy, where no-one will ever cease to be a friend! God's praises sung there, sung here - here, by the anxious; there, by the carefree - here, by those who will die; there, by those who will live forever - here, in hope; there, in reality - here, on our journey; there, in our homeland.

"So now, my brethren, let us sing, not to delight our leisure, but to ease our toil. In the way that travellers are in the habit of singing, sing, but keep on walking. What does it mean, 'keep on walking'? Go onward always - but go onward in goodness, for there are, according to the Apostle, some people who go ever onward from bad to worse. If you are going onward, you are walking; but always go onward in goodness, onward in the right faith, onward in good habits and behaviour. Sing, and walk" Laudetur Jesus Christus - Alleluia!



# Saints we celebrate in June *by Fr Michael McGoldrick ocd*



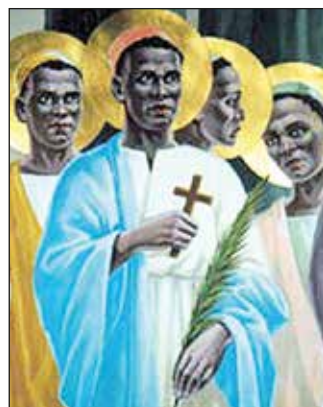
St Justin

## St Justin

St Justin was born of Greek pagan parents in 100 AD at Nablus, in what is today known as the West Bank Israel area. As a young man, he was principally attracted to the school of Plato. This led him to study the works of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. However, he found that the Christian religion answered the great questions about life and existence better than the philosophers. After he became a Catholic, he devoted his philosophical talents to showing the basis in reason for acceptance of the Christian faith. Justin is the most important Christian Apologist of the second century and the first of whom we have written works. While teaching in a school in Rome, he was arrested and ordered to sacrifice to the gods. Justin refused and for his adherence to the Christian religion he was beheaded in 165 AD. His feast day is June 1.

## St Charles Lwanga and Companions

Charles Lwanga was born on January 1, 1860, in the Kingdom of Buganda, in modern Uganda. He served as chief of the royal pages in the court of King Mwanga II of Buganda. While a catechumen, he entered the royal household as assistant to Joseph Mukaso, head of the court pages. On the night of Mukaso's martyrdom for encouraging the African youths to resist Mwanga, Charles requested and received baptism. He protected his fellow pages, aged 13 to 30, from the homosexual demands of Mwanga, and encouraged and instructed them in the Catholic faith during their imprisonment for refusing the ruler's demands. For his own unwillingness to submit to the immoral acts and his efforts to safeguard the faith



St Charles Lwanga and Companions

of his friends, Charles was burned to death at Namugongo on June 3, 1886, by Mwanga's order. Pope Paul VI canonized Charles and 21 other Ugandan martyrs on October 18, 1964. Their feast is June 4.

## St Boniface

Boniface was born around 675 in Wessex, England. He became a Benedictine monk who, rather than accept election as abbot of his monastery, chose to devote his life to the conversion of the Germanic tribes. On his first missionary journey in 719, at the request of Pope Gregory II, he found that paganism was rife. The clergy were largely uneducated and lax. The Holy Father instructed him to reform the German Church. He ordained him as a missionary bishop and authorized him to organize the whole German Church. He was eminently successful. He established many Benedictine monasteries as houses of prayer. He introduced the Benedictine nuns to the active apostolate of education. During a final mission to the Frisians, Boniface and 53 companions were massacred. His feast day is June 5.

## St Kevin

According to tradition, St Kevin was born into a royal family in Leinster in 498. He was baptized by St Cronan and educated by St Petroc of Cornwall who had to come to Leinster in 492. Kevin was ordained and became a hermit at Glendalough. In 544, Kevin went to the Hill of Uisneach, in Co Westmeath, to visit the holy abbots there. He then proceeded to Clonmacnoise, where St Cieran had died a short time beforehand. Having firmly established his community there, Kevin retired into solitude for four years. He



St Boniface

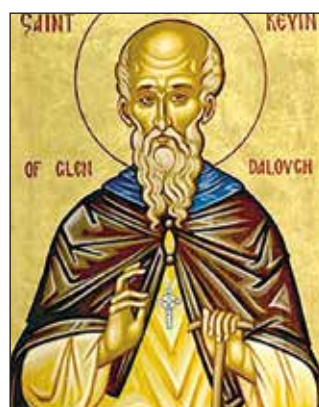
only returned to Glendalough at the earnest entreaty of his monks. He made a pilgrimage to Rome, bringing back many relics for his foundation at Glendalough. Many miracles were attributed to Kevin even during his life. He is believed to have died in 618. His feast day is June 3.

## St Jarlath

St Jarlath is regarded as the founder and principle patron of the Archdiocese of Tuam. He belonged to the Conmaicne family, one of the most important and powerful families in Galway during that period. Little is known about his life. According to tradition, Jarlath was trained by a holy monk and ordained a priest along with his cousin. He then founded the monastery of Cluain Fois, just outside Tuam, and presided over that monastery as abbot-bishop. Later, Jarlath opened a school attached to the monastery, one which soon became known as a great centre of learning. St Brendan of Clonfert and St Colman of Cloyne were among his pupils. St Jarlath died around 540 AD. His feast day is June 6.

## St Ephrem the Syrian

Born in c.306 in Nisibis, the modern Turkish town of Nusaybin, Ephrem was baptized as a young man and later became famous as a teacher in his native city. When the Christian emperor had to cede Nisibis to the Persians, Ephrem fled as a refugee to Edessa (modern Sanli Urf). He was ordained a deacon but declined becoming a priest. Although he was not a man of great scholarship, his works reflect deep insight and knowledge of the Scriptures. Poet, teacher, orator, and defender of the faith, Ephrem is the only Syriac Christian recognized as



St Kevin

a doctor of the Church. Ephrem lived a simple, austere life in a small cave overlooking the city of Edessa. It was here that he died around 373. His feast day is June 9.

## St Columba

St Columba (Columcille) was born in Gartán, Co Donegal, in 521. He studied at Moville under St Finnian, and at the monastery of Clonard under another St Finnian. He was ordained before he was 25 and spent the next 15 years preaching and setting up foundations at Derry, Durrow, and Kells. Possibly because of a family feud, which resulted in the death of 3,000 and for which he considered himself partly responsible, he left Ireland at 42 and landed on the island of Iona, off the coast of Scotland. There he built the monastery which was to become world famous. He also developed a monastic rule which many followed until the introduction of the Rule of St Benedict. He died on Iona in 597. His feast day is June 9.

## St Barnabas

Barnabas was according to tradition an early Christian; one of the prominent disciples in Jerusalem. According to Acts 4:36, Barnabas was a Cypriot Jew. That text also explains his name as meaning 'son of encouragement'. Named an apostle in Acts 14:14, he and St Paul undertook missionary journeys together and defended Gentile converts against the Judaizers. They participated in the Council of Jerusalem (c.49). Christian tradition holds that Barnabas was martyred at Salamis, Cyprus. The feast day is June 11.

## St Anthony of Padua

St Anthony was born Fernando Martins in Lisbon, Portugal. As a



St Jarlath

teenager, he asked to be sent to the Abbey of Santa Cruz in Coimbra, where he learned theology and Latin. When Franciscan friars settled in a small hermitage outside Coimbra, Fernando felt a longing to join them. He eventually received permission to join them and changed his name to Anthony. He travelled to Morocco to spread the gospel, but became extremely sick and was sent back to Portugal to recover. The return voyage was blown off-course and the party arrived in Sicily, from which they travelled to Tuscany. Anthony was assigned to the hermitage of San Paolo in Padua. There he became a well-known preacher and news of his eloquence reached Francis of Assisi. In 1224, Francis entrusted his friars' pursuits of studies to Anthony. Anthony occasionally taught at the universities of Montpellier and Toulouse, but he performed best in the role of a preacher. He was only 35 years old when he died and was canonized less than one year afterward by Pope Gregory IX. St Anthony is venerated all over the world as the Patron Saint for lost articles. His feast day is June 13.

## St Aloysius Gonzaga

St Aloysius was born in 1568 in Castiglione, Italy. He was destined for the military by his father but, by the age of nine, Aloysius had decided on a religious life and made a vow of perpetual virginity. St Charles Borromeo gave him his first Holy Communion. A kidney disease prevented St Aloysius from a full social life for a while, so he spent his time in prayer and reading the lives of the saints. Although he was appointed a page in Spain, St Aloysius was resolved to become a Jesuit. His family eventually moved back to Italy,



St Ephrem the Syrian

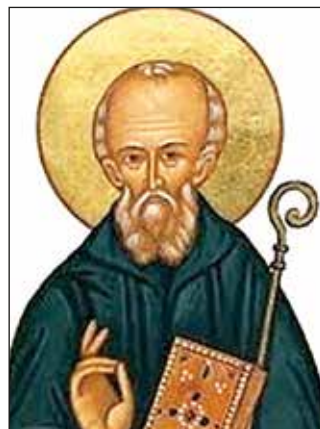
where he taught catechism to the poor. When he was 18, he joined the Jesuits, after finally bringing his father around to the idea. He served in a hospital during the plague of 1587 in Milan. He died in 1591 at the age of 23 because of the plague and after receiving the last rites from St Robert Bellarmine. His feast day is June 21.

## St John Baptist

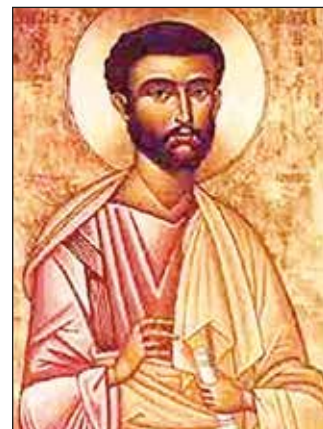
John the Baptist was born to Zachariah and Elizabeth in their old age. John began public ministry around 30 AD and was known for attracting large crowds across the province of Judea and around the Jordan River. He baptized Jesus in the Jordan. Following his baptism of Christ, John's popularity grew so much that he alarmed King Herod. Herod ordered him arrested and imprisoned. John was sentenced to death and subsequently beheaded by Herod, after John rebuked him for divorcing his wife Phasaelis and then unlawfully wedding Herodias, the wife of his brother, Herod Philip I. John the Baptist's feast day is June 2.

## St Irenaeus

Irenaeus was born to Greek parents in Proconsular Asia in the first half of the second century. While still very young, Irenaeus saw and heard the holy Bishop Polycarp (d.155) at Smyrna, the last living connection with the apostles. During the persecution of Marcus Aurelius, Irenaeus was a priest of the Church of Lyons. Irenaeus succeeded the martyr, St Pothinus as Bishop of Lyons. The new bishop divided his activities between the duties of a pastor and of a missionary and his writings. Almost all his writings were directed against Gnosticism, the heresy then spreading in Gaul



St Columba



St Barnabas



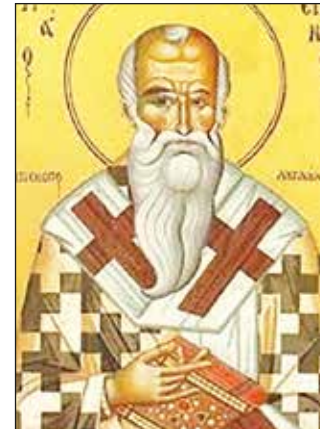
St Anthony of Padua



St Aloysius Gonzaga



St John Baptist



St Irenaeus





Continued from p28



Sts Peter and Paul

and elsewhere. The most famous of his writings is ‘Adversus haereses’ (Against Heresies). He is believed to have died around 200 A.D. Pope Francis declared Irenaeus the 37th Doctor of the Church on January 21, 2022. His feast is celebrated on June 28.

Sts Peter and Paul

Peter, who was named Simon, was a fisherman of Galilee and was introduced to Jesus by his brother Andrew. Jesus gave him the name Cephas (Petrus in Latin), which means ‘Rock.’ He was the first to recognize that Jesus was ‘the Messiah, the Son of the living God’. He would later betray

Jesus on the night of His passion. Despite his human weaknesses, Peter was chosen to shepherd God’s flock. St Peter spent his last years in Rome, leading the Church through persecution and eventually being martyred in the year 64. He was crucified upside-down at his own request because he claimed he was not worthy to die as his Lord. He was buried on Vatican hill, and St Peter’s Basilica is built over his tomb.

St Paul, originally called Saul, was a Jewish pharisee who zealously persecuted Christians. Scripture records that Saul was present at the martyrdom of St Stephen. Saul was converted following an experience of meeting Jesus while on the way to Damascus. Saul continued to Damascus, where he was baptized. He took the name Paul and spent the remainder of his life preaching the Gospel tirelessly to the Gentiles of the Mediterranean world. Paul was imprisoned and taken to Rome, where he was beheaded in the year 67. He is buried in Rome in the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls.

The feast day of Sts Peter & Paul is June 29.

# St Columba’s Wells *by Vera McFadden*

THEY called the district ‘The Wells’ when I was young, many moons ago. It was a very historic place, with very small, terraced houses in narrow streets. While these little homes were very old, the area has a history going back to the early Christian period.

Its actual name was ‘St Columba’s Wells’. There were three springs near each other, but the sites of the other two are now forgotten. However, a friend told me that there is a spring which continually gushes from the bank. This must be one of them.

They were called St Martin’s Well and St. Adamnan’s Well. St Adamnan was the Abbot of Derry at one stage, so he could have blessed that well himself. St Columba had great devotion to St Martin of Tours. He had gone to the examination of St Patrick’s grave and then taken three relics – the bell that he gave to Armagh, the chalice that he gave to Down, and St Martin’s Gospel, which he brought to Derry. There was a special shrine made for it beside the well known St Martin’s Well.

There was a story about the origin of St Columba’s Well. Here it is, in a little song which my late cousin, Mary Teresa Johnston, wrote for the children in her class. She called it “The mark of a saint”...

*He blessed the ground and a spring  
spurted up and drenched the  
gnarled trees.*

*The frightened birds from their  
nests took flight and I fell onto my  
knees.*

*The droplets hung on the tinder  
dry grass.*

*They wetted the lips of the  
beautiful flowers  
and the woodlands rang, and the  
mountains sang,  
and acknowledged Columba’s  
powers.*

*The monk stepped forth and he  
cupped his hands  
and filled them up to the brim,  
he poured the water on baby’s  
head,  
baptised my child, blessed him.*

*My baby stirred and he opens his  
eyes, blue as a bright summer 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 crooned, and  
the mountains tuned with me in  
sheer relief.*

Near the well there was a bullaun stone, which is a grinding stone with one or two hollows. In

these, ears of corn where ground into flour. There is a tradition that sometimes these stones were used by the Celtic monks for penitential exercises, when they knelt painfully on them.

This stone hampered the movement of traffic and so it was moved up to the Calvary scene, in the grounds of St Columba’s Church. The little-known street is no longer there and now there is a terrace of bungalows beside the Holy Well, which now has a pump. Each year, after Mass on the Saint’s Feast Day, there is a procession to the well and everyone gets a chance to collect some of the blessed water.

A friend told me that rubbish was being thrown into her front garden, but when she sprinkled some water from the Saint’s well, the dumping stopped. The prayer walk from the church on St Columba’s day for the blessing of the Well is inspiring. So is the prayer walk from the Cathedral to the Well.

As I wanted to give the children in my class a sense of heritage, a visit to St Columba’s Church and Well was always one of our school outings. It is surely no coincidence, some people call them ‘God-incidences’, that the Columba Community blessed this Well, and all the other holy wells, about the same time as the traditional site of St Columba’s cell on the island of Iona was proved to be correct.

Another familiar Columba’s Well is along the shore walk at Moville. A shelter has been built over the Well. Some people from the locality now come here for drinking water for their homes and they say it is better than the water in their taps at home. There is a tradition that when St Columba was leaving Ireland, he came ashore here for a drink and then he blessed the well.

I believe that there is something special about it because I have witnessed a small cure that occurred there. A friend and I were going to visit Moville. She was taking the lead from the dog’s collar and she got a deep cut on her finger, perhaps because the dog moved. We went for a walk along the shore, and we stopped at the well, blessed ourselves with the water and prayed. On the way back, she showed me her finger and the deep cut had disappeared.

Drink

When St Columba was leaving Ireland, he stopped for a while before he left Lough Foyle. He came ashore and may have taken a drink from the well near the beach. It is said that he prayed for a while on shore and then climbed up the steep bank to look back towards Derry; for once they left the Lough they were leaving Ireland behind.

There is now a yearly pilgrimage

to that place. I attended a few times. The pilgrims gather on the road above the beach where Columba came ashore. The Rosary is recited and then those who are able make their way down the steep bank to St Columba’s former landing place, pray at the Cairns and the well, and go back up to the top to join the others, who, like myself, have no head for heights.

St Columba’s Well at Garton is one of the stops on the traditional pilgrimage. During one anniversary year, Margaret Alcorn had copies made of the turas stops and prayers. It was a very inspiring journey, as many of the stops were in the ancient graveyard with its broken stones. I took some water away with me.

During the Troubles, people from different denominations were doing prayer walks on Derry’s Walls. Some were sprinkling holy water, and on the last prayer journey, one group used holy water from St Columba’s Well at Garton.

A charismatic religious sister from America had received inspiration that the Walls should be prayed over and she came to tell us, but we were already doing it before she came.

A mystic from Dublin had received guidance from the Eucharist that if there was adoration of the Blessed Eucharist in every chapel, there would be no

“When St Columba was leaving Ireland, he stopped for a while before he left Lough Foyle. He came ashore and may have taken a drink from the well near the beach. It is said that he prayed for a while on shore and then climbed up the steep bank to look back towards Derry; for once they left the Lough they were leaving Ireland behind.”

trouble. There was, and no trouble occurred. That was the beginning of the peace.

In the Gortahork and Falcarragh areas, there are many traditional stories about St Columba and St Finian from

when they spent time there. My late brother-in-law showed me a Holy well which was dedicated to St Columba. It is in the Ardsbeg district of Gortahork. It is in a peaceful low-lying area which is sheltered by several trees.

There is a well dedicated to St Columba in Kells, where he founded a Monastery. I have only been in that town a few times and I found it very interesting.

Of course, there are other wells in Scotland and Ireland which are named after Derry’s patron saint. When I visited the island of Iona, I was unable to go to the well from which Columba had his first drink and which he blessed. Of course, with my disabled foot, I could not walk on the uneven surface.

I have never been to Lough Ness, but I would love to visit the legendary area where, it is said, St Columba banished the monster from the lake. They say that it is still around and that sometimes the disobedient creature takes an occasional swim in the lake, leaving great waves on the surface of the waters. Some people claim to have had glimpses of it.

What made the sea monster leave? Tradition tells us that Columba had a very strong voice, and that sometimes when He was singing in church, his voice could be heard miles away. It is written that once the young boy Columba was chanting the Psalms with Cronaghan, as they walked along. Then Cronaghan collapsed and died. Columba continued chanting the Psalms. Two religious sisters heard the chanting from a long distance away and they came to discover its source. They saw the old priest lifeless on the road, but then the young saint told him to get up and he did.

And now, back to the question – why did the monster leave the lough? There is a St Columba’s Well on the top of a hill near Lough Ness. Is this what happened? Columba blessed the well and then sprinkled some of its water in the direction of the lake as he ordered the monster to leave. The phenomena occurred and his strong voice could be heard miles away. Its strength left the prehistoric but still existing monster in awe and terror, and it straightaway tried to get as far away as it could. Of course, it did not even know what it was being told to do, because it did not understand the Gaelic. It was just the power of the saint’s voice and the supernatural powers that chased Nessie.

That is a story for the eviction of the Lough Ness monster. I have never heard the actual story of the well. All wells have their own story, but the one I like the best and the well I like the best is, of course, St Columba’s Well in Derry. It must be unique for a city to have a holy well near its centre.



# Who is our God? *by Fr Johnny Doherty, CSsR*



Fr Johnny Doherty

AFTER the last few months of Lent, Easter, Preparing for Pentecost and all the special feasts of the Church that we have had, this month we enter into what is called Ordinary Time. The temptation is to regard this as meaning back to 'business as usual'. We can give a great sigh of relief that all the intensity of faith is over for another few months, at least!

If we think about this next section of the Church's Liturgical Year, we see clearly that it is no time to free-wheel. During these past few months, we have been put in touch with the vast resources that are at our disposal, especially the new life of Christ risen from the dead and God's own Holy Spirit, whom we celebrate on the first Sunday of June this year.

In the weeks ahead, we are opened up to where Christ wants us to go – into a deeper knowledge of the true God and towards an ever-greater love for one another. Christ's central message is that the only way to true human life is to love God with our whole heart, our whole soul, our whole mind, and our whole strength, and to love our neighbour as He, Christ, loves us. That is some loving!

## Who is our God?

On the Sunday after Pentecost, we always celebrate the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity. This is a truly amazing revelation of Christ. He doesn't just tell us that there is a God. He reveals to us that God is a Trinity of Persons; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

This demands of us a total act of faith because our reason cannot reach anywhere near it. All we can do is submit ourselves in awe to this God, who, though totally complete, is weak with love for us. We have to simply let this knowledge take us over and let ourselves be pursued by this wonderful lover and find ourselves lifted out of our own tiny little worlds into the vast world of the love of our God.

## Our God has come very close

On the Sunday after the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity, we

celebrate the Feast of the great mystery of the Body and Blood of Christ – known to us as Corpus Christi.

Because we are so familiar with Mass, we can very easily fail to be caught up in the wonder of this gift of Christ to us. In the Eucharist, God who is so completely beyond us, comes right into the heart of our human lives and unites us totally with Himself through the Body and Blood of Christ His Son.

This is why Mass is so very special for us as Catholics. We can easily think of the Mass as something we do for God and so fulfil some kind of obligation. The Mass, the Eucharist, is the high point of what God is doing for us.

The Feast of Corpus Christi is a call to us to renew our faith in Christ's real presence with us and our commitment to celebrate this every Sunday, so that we can constantly be caught up in the love of God and spread that love to the ends of the earth.

## Week 1: June 5–11 Pentecost

Jesus said to His disciples: "I shall ask the Father and He will give you another Advocate to be with you forever."

As we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Church, it is good to ask the questions: How

do we let the Spirit be actively present? How do we exclude the Spirit?

We should ask these questions in the two contexts of our homes and our faith community.

The Spirit is present when we are at peace with one another; the Spirit is absent when we are divided. The Spirit is present when we are living in joy; the Spirit is absent when we are settling for dullness. The Spirit is present when we are being creative and changing; the Spirit is absent when we are trying to keep things the way they always were.

The Spirit is present especially when we are building relationships of love in our homes and parish.

## Week 2: June 12–18 The Most Holy Trinity

Jesus said to His disciples: "When the Spirit of truth comes, He will lead you to the complete truth".

The most profound truth of all is about the nature of the true God, a Trinity of Persons; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This truth is far beyond our understanding but is implanted close into our hearts by God's Spirit.

The second profound truth is that we are made in God's image. This truth is also far beyond our understanding, but is capable

of being lived out by us through the power of the same Spirit living in us. It is in the intimate relationships of marriage and family that we especially share in the intimate life of the true God. But we need to learn to live there with an ever-greater reverence and love.

We also live in God through our community with one another as Christians. This needs to be characterised by energy and enthusiasm for the world as the kingdom of God.

## Week 3: June 19–25

### The Body and Blood of Christ

"They all ate as much as they wanted, and when the scraps remaining were collected, they filled twelve baskets."

The miracle of the five loaves and two fish distributed among so many people is given to us as a symbol of the greatest gift and miracle of all, the Eucharist.

As God's people, we are so privileged to be fed with the Body and Blood of Christ week after week, so much so that we can even take it for granted. We have a responsibility to keep the wonder of this gift alive in us.

We also have the responsibility to live this miracle through our love for one another in our homes and communities. Through the power of Christ, there was more

left over after thousands of people had been fed than when they started. That is what the same Jesus wants to happen among us today as a result of the Eucharist we celebrate.

## Week 4: June 26–July 2 The Lord we serve

Jesus said: "Once the hand is laid on the plough, no one who looks back is fit for the kingdom of God".

We live in a world in which people are finding it increasingly difficult to make a full commitment to anything or anybody. This is probably the single most important reason for many of the social ills of our society. Jesus tells us that commitment is essential to human fulfilment, the kingdom of God.

When a couple gets married, they are looking ahead but tend quickly to look back to what each had and so set limits to their relationship. When a couple conceive a child, they look forward to the birth. Then they begin to look back to the freedom they had beforehand and try to reclaim as much of that as possible.

And, in parish life, many people want a full part in the future of the Church but are often unwilling to commit themselves to the work involved in ensuring its success.

*Ladies...a special retreat this summer...*

# Captivating...The Beauty of a Woman *by Aoife O'Neill*

JOIN us for this event at Termonbacca Carmelite Retreat Centre, Derry, as we journey together into the deep mysteries of our feminine souls. This experience is hosted in a setting of beauty and tranquillity and is designed to recapture your heart.

Through teaching sessions, prayer time, and guided periods of reflection, we discover together that the 'more' that women have been longing for in life is available! This is more than a retreat – it is an expedition of the heart. This is a weekend full of

love and acceptance by the God of the universe who loves each of you with a passion!

This experience is based on the book 'Captivating', by John & Stasi Eldredge. At the heart of every woman are three core desires: a desire for romance; a desire to play an irreplaceable role in a grand adventure; and a desire to unveil her own unique beauty.

Through an atmosphere of beauty, teaching sessions, films, music and reflection, our prayer is that the Lord will draw you near to His heart, revealing to you the

desires and dreams He has placed in you, healing every wound, and letting you see yourself as the captivating woman He created you to be.

The cost for the weekend is £90, which includes accommodation and nine meals. The weekend begins at 7 pm on Friday, August 12, and will conclude with lunch on Sunday, August 14.

For further information or booking please contact Aoife at Termonbacca on 028 71 262512 or by emailing: [termonbaccaderry@gmail.com](mailto:termonbaccaderry@gmail.com).

**Reading with the Carmelite Saints**

Join us as we explore learning friendship with Christ through the example of the Carmelite Saints on **Thursday 7th July 2022 at 7:30pm**  
**Termonbacca Carmelite Retreat Centre, Derry**

**Captivating  
Beauty of a Woman**

**Ladies Retreat**  
**12th– 14th August 2022**  
**Termonbacca Derry**

**For further information or booking  
 please contact Aoife on 02871262512 or  
[termonbaccaderry@gmail.com](mailto:termonbaccaderry@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 24, and on the following day we rejoice at the Immaculate Heart of Mary, on June 25. God is Love and the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the human sign of God’s love for us. Jesus’ Sacred Heart is overflowing with love for all humanity.



**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 unites 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.*

We continue to celebrate the Easter season and, with summer upon us, we wait eagerly for the marvellous feast of Pentecost, the descent of the Holy Spirit and the beginning of the Church. During this month we will also celebrate Trinity Sunday and the fantastic feast of Corpus Christi. The month of June is bursting with Christian joy.

**Pentecost**  
*Use the words from the list to fill in  
the blanks in the story of Pentecost*  
When 1\_\_\_ day came round, they had all met in 2\_\_\_ room, when suddenly they heard what sounded like a powerful wind from 3\_\_\_, the noise of which filled the entire 4\_\_\_ in which they were 5\_\_\_; and something appeared to them that seemed like 6\_\_\_ of fire. These 7\_\_\_

and came to rest on the head of each of them. They were all filled with the Holy 8\_\_\_ and 9\_\_\_ to 10\_\_\_ foreign 11\_\_\_, 12\_\_\_ the Spirit gave them the gift of speech. Now there were devout men living in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven and at this sound they all assembled each one bewildered to hear these men speaking his own language. They were 13\_\_\_ and astonished. “Surely” they said “all these men speaking are Galileans? How 14\_\_\_ it happen that each of 15\_\_\_ hears them in 16\_\_\_ own native language?”

**Word List:** Does, Amazed, As, Separated, One, Began, Tongues, Languages, Spirit, Sitting, Heaven, Speak, His, House, Us, Pentecost



**Answers:** 1-Pentecost, 2- One, 3- Heaven, 4-House, 5-Sitting, 6-Tongues, 7-Separated, 8-Spirit, 9-Began 10-Speak, 11-Languages, 12-As, 13-Amazed, 14-Does, 15-Us, 16-His



**Trinity Sunday**  
Trinity Sunday is celebrated on the first Sunday after Pentecost and lasts only one day, which is symbolic of the unity of the Trinity. On this day, we remember the truth that God is made up of the Father, the Son (Jesus) and the Holy Spirit. It is a central mystery of our faith (CCC 234) and a little difficult to understand that there can be one God yet three persons to God. The bible reveals that there is only one God but that this God is made up of three parts, The Father, the Son and



the Holy Spirit. The word we use to describe this 3-in-1 God is ‘Trinity’. This word is made up of the word ‘Tri’, which means 3, and the word ‘unity’, which means one or being unified together.



**Corpus Christi**  
The glorious feast of Corpus Christi is celebrated after Trinity Sunday. It usually falls between late May and 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 to celebrate – 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 June 29 every year. These two men were among the first to spread the message of Jesus.  
St Peter was a fisherman who Jesus called to be one of His 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. 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. Of which US State is Montgomery the capital city?
2. Who played Vincent Vega in the film ‘Pulp Fiction’?
3. What is the English translation of the surname ‘Singh’?
4. For which Formula 1 team does Lando Norris drive?
5. How many keys are there on a regular piano?
6. Who had a 1990 hit with the song ‘Blaze of Glory’?
7. Which is the smallest county in Ireland by population?
8. Who is the current captain of the England football team?
9. Sun crisp and Braeburn are varieties of what?
10. In what 1972 movie does Gene Hackman play the role of Reverend Frank Scott?
11. The Straits of Magellan, which create a passage between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, are in which country?
12. Which fictional radio presenter and therapist lived at Elliott Bay Towers in Seattle?
13. With what song did Lou Bega have a smash hit in

- 1999?
14. What football team plays its home games at Diego Armando Maradona Stadium?
  15. For which US President did Walter Mondale serve as deputy?
  16. Who was the very first presenter to appear on Channel 4?
  17. Which Irish river, noted for its salmon fishing, flows through counties Kerry, Cork and Waterford?
  18. In children’s TV, where did Mr Spoon fly to every day?
  19. What US Supergroup featured Willie Nelson, Kris Kristofferson, Waylon Jennings and Johnny Cash?
  20. In the film ‘The Great Escape’, what name did the POWs give to the three escape tunnels?
  21. In what sport was Basil D’Oliveira a renowned figure?
  22. What artist specialised in drawing soup cans?
  23. Including Joe Biden, how many US Presidents have there been to date?
  24. Jenny Joseph is the iconic ‘Lady with the torch’ in the logo for what major Entertainment franchise?
  25. Which popular supermarket chain has its home in Essen, Germany?

**Quiz Answers:** 1. Alabama. 2. John Travolta. 3. Lion. 4. McLaren. 5. 88. 6. John Bon Jovi. 7. Leitrim. 8. Harry Kane. 9. Apple. 10. The Poseidon Adventure. 11. Chile. 12. Dr Frasier Crane. 13. Mambo No.5. 14. Napoli. 15. Jimmy Carter. 16. Richard Whitely. 17. Blackwater. 18. Button Moon. 19. The Highwaymen. 20. Tom, Dick and Harry. 21. Cricket. 22. Andy Warhol. 23. 46. 24. Colombia Pictures. 25. Aldi.



Aghyaran, Ardmore, Ardstraw West & Castlederg, Ballinascreen, Ballymagroarty, Banagher, Bellaghy, Buncrana, Carndonagh, Claudy,

# Let Your Light Shine!



“Let’s Fan the Flame,  
and keep God’s name,  
ever and ever  
in our heart.”

*(From the ‘Fan the Flame’ anthem written by Brendan McGinn)*



Greenlough, Iskaheen, Killyclogher, Killygordon, Kilrea, Lavey, Leckpatrick, Lifford, Limavady, Maghera, Magilligan, Malin, Melmount,

Moville, Newtownstewart, Omagh, Plumbridge, Sion Mills, Steelestown, Strabane, Swatragh, Templemore - Long Tower and St Eugene's, Three Patrons, Waterside

Clonmany, Coleraine, Creggan, Culladuff, Culmore, Desertmartin, Donnyloop, Drumquin, Dunamagagh, Dungiven, Fahan, Faughanvale, Garvagh, Gortin, Greencastle,