



Family Links

Glory to God Alone in Jesus Christ, through Mary and Saint Joseph

January 2018

Volume 4 Issue 1

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Maria Crowley and friend at Abigail Housing, Bradford

Editorial

In a matter of months thousands of people will be making their way in one direction, towards Dublin, to the World Meeting of Families. They will come alone or together as families, from different places, taking different routes. What matters only is that they will arrive at the same place to celebrate the same event. The *Holy Family* will be present to share our charism of communion, as a spiritual family in the Church embracing all vocations. Lay Associates, women, men, youth, married or single have a unique contribution to make.

In the same way, all the members of the *Holy Family* Association are on a spiritual journey towards the bicentenary of our foundation which is, in reality, only a particularly significant stage in our ongoing journey. It is a time for us to charge again the spiritual current of our charism that powers everything we do. And because a charism is a living thing that is never complete, but grows and adapts with every new generation, a work of renewal is going on. Statutes and Constitutions are being reviewed or revised; reflection has been done on the basic elements, the 'roots', of our spirituality to give them new life in a new language for our time.

Such efforts will bear fruit in the *Family* to the extent that they are shared, because each vocation has only a part of the truth. It is only when we are able to listen to one another, to learn, know, and welcome the gift the other has to offer that we will be truly embedded in our *Holy Family* charism and be able to share it enthusiastically with the whole Christian community and, indeed, the world at large. Can our joint Newsletter be one channel for this?



Leader's Message

PRINCE OF PEACE IN A VIOLENT WORLD

On the first January this year, Pope Francis delivered his usual message of peace to the world. He urged us to remember the 250 million migrants worldwide of whom 22.5 million are refugees – men and women, young and elderly – people who are fleeing war and violence and searching for somewhere to live in peace. Peace, the Pope says, is a profound aspiration that we all share and yet as we know, world peace seems to forever elude us. We have celebrated the birth of Jesus, he who is called the Prince of Peace, he who promised us: “peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you” (John 14:27). Where do we find peace in our world today?

One of the most damning accusations made against organized religion is, that far from bringing peace, religion is one of the main causes of war and division in our world today. In reflecting on history we cannot help but think that, indeed, there seems to be some element of truth in that statement. The Crusades, the Spanish Inquisition, the wars of religion between Catholics and Protestants that went on in Europe for hundreds of years, the extermination of Native Americans by the Christian *conquistadores* bringing the Gospel of Jesus to the newly “discovered” America... all seem to prove the point that, indeed, religion has, in many instances, been associated with violence.

And today, as we know, war is still being waged and atrocities are still being committed in the name of religion. Religion is being politicised and used to justify violence. Karen Armstrong points out in her book: “*Fields of Blood, Religion and the History of Violence*” that wars were and are generally politically motivated. She says: “*The Crusades, though inspired*

by religious passion, were also deeply political: Pope Urban II wished to extend the power of the church eastwards and create a papal monarchy that would control Christian Europe; the Spanish inquisition was a deeply flawed attempt to secure the internal order of Spain after a divisive civil war. Similarly, the European wars of religion and the thirty years war were certainly exacerbated by the sectarian quarrels of Protestants and Catholics, but their violence reflected the birth pangs of the modern nation state”. (Penguin 2014)

And as we know, fundamentalist regimes, such as atheistic communism have been responsible for great suffering and the extermination of people opposed to the regime. Today North Korea’s repression and brutality against its own citizens are well known. A recent report from a special commission of the United Nations accuses North Korea’s atheist government of crimes against humanity. “The gravity, scale and nature of these violations reveal a state that does not have any parallel in the contemporary world,” the commission said.

Violence seems to be part of our human condition. In his excellent book, “*Virtues for Another Possible World*”. (Orbis Books. 2011), Leonard Boff analyses the various ways that peace is shattered by the many forms of violence in everyday life. Violence is all around us and within us. He cites the violence of the patriarchal system where women and minorities are treated as less; the violence of the will to power and domination and the ever present violence of injustice and poverty where half of the world’s wealth is in the hands of 1% of the population. Boff also makes the point

that we came into being in the original violence of the cosmos and so we carry violence

within ourselves. We are simultaneously *homo sapiens* and *homo demens* and this is due to our evolutionary constitution. We are beings of intelligence and wisdom, capable of great generosity, love and forgiveness. But at the same time, we can also be capable of great cruelty, impulses of aggression and death (ibid:245.)

How are we to reconcile these two dimensions within us? Boff tells us to face up to what is, to embrace the polarity *sapiens/demens* as belonging to the structure of the universe. In other words, accept that we too have a darker side to our nature. But we must not be passive in our acceptance and acknowledgement of our darker selves. We should make every effort to strengthen the luminous side of these opposing forces. We need to remember that the peace we long for has already been given to us. “*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.*”(John 14:27).

One of the best definitions of peace that I have come across is that given by the Earth Charter, that affirms: “*peace is the plenitude that results from correct relationships with oneself, with other persons, other cultures, other forms of life, with the Earth and with the Whole of which we form a part*” (1V: 16, f). Peace is the result of right relationships with the different realities that surround us. Without these correct relationships we will never enjoy peace. During this coming year let us never forget that we have the power of peace within us because Jesus is with us and in us. In fact he is our peace.



**Sr. Gemma,
Apostolic Sisters**

WELCOMING THE STRANGER IN BRADFORD

Abigail Housing

Abigail Housing was started in 2007 by a Bradford couple, John and Anne Hebden, who were shocked at the system's cruelties. It now has five donated or leased houses for 19 people. In Leeds it has a further 60 rooms in 15 houses for vulnerable refugees. The destitution project, funded entirely from donations and charitable grants provides a room in one of the shared houses, food that can be collected on a Monday, and £15 per week.

It is estimated that there are several hundred men and women in Leeds and Bradford who have been made destitute because they have been refused asylum. Many of these individuals cannot reasonably return to their country of origin because of persecution and insecurity.

They are stuck in the UK without the right to work or access to any state funding. Many of these people are forced to work illegally and often in dangerous situations and are homeless.

Each Monday up to 20 or so asylum seekers attend the drop-in session to collect food and their weekly allowance of £15. Abigail Housing provides a room in a shared house for these destitute asylum seekers which protects them from homelessness and the poverty that they are condemned to. The project offers the residents emotional, physical and spiritual support and allows them the stability they need to appeal against the negative decision or to consider other options.

Listening to the individual stories is heart rending. They have all fled horrors at home, endured dreadful journeys and then suffered hardship in the UK.

Destitution comes as a result of the Home Office refusing their asylum claims, mostly because their stories are not believed. This is due to a lack of understanding in questioning, a lack of English or because they have provided muddled information to the Home Office due to re-telling a story which was a harrowing experience for them.

Refused asylum seekers have a legal right to appeal, but the government sheds any responsibility for their safety or even survival. They are prohibited from working and are also ineligible for benefits or social housing. All they have are the very basics, pulled together by Abigail Housing.

One of the residents says she worked as a fashion designer in Congo and had two children but was imprisoned after protesting against the government. Rape and other atrocities were just



part of prison routine.

After she was released she fled to Angola, then took a flight to London where she claimed asylum. She was moved to accommodation in Wakefield, but the Home Office refused her claim. She appealed, which took her back into the system, enabling her to be housed as an asylum seeker and receive the statutory £36.95 weekly allowance, but she was refused again.

She has moved accommodation 13 times since arriving in the UK and, although she is appealing again, she dreads another move from the Abigail Housing room she shares with three other women.

She is bewildered by the UK system, which she feels is a trap, weighted against accepting asylum claims. Those who claim here, and are refused, are barred from making another claim in a more welcoming.

“It is so hard” she says, I am so tired. They are treating me as if I am an enemy. Why?” “If I do not stay strong, I could think I will sell my body to get some money.”

Another resident told me “I really appreciate Abigail Housing, it is very helpful. I am 34. I fled my home in Guinea, leaving my wife and daughter, following a military coup in 2012 when soldiers attacked and burned my shop. There is no security in my country. I can’t go back,”

This resident was put in detention when he arrived in Manchester, and has since suffered racism, homelessness and relentless poverty. “My hair is falling out as a result of the stress” It is agony for him that the Home Office did not believe his story, telling him he had come here on holiday.

“My heart is broken from that word, the pain will never go away,” he says. “I had a business, a family. I had no plans even to travel. Until today I am asking myself, Is this real?”

I have been a volunteer with Abigail Housing for the past 6 years fulfilling various roles. I am currently organizing the drop-in on Mondays. It’s a challenge to respond to their dietary needs bearing in mind their culture and religion. They have no meat or fresh vegetables or fruit but we manage and I am most impressed with their thoughtfulness where each one takes only what they need. It is also very humbling, handing them their £15 which is always received with a smile and gratitude.

Most of the food and toiletries for the residents are donated by monthly collections at St Matthew’s Church in Allerton. Elizabeth Grogan, one of our Lay Associates circulates a regular updated food list to parishioners via the church bulletin. Recently we put out a request for boots, trainers and warm coats. Most of the residents are slim young people with a small shoe size and with an eye to fashion. Looking good goes a long way towards helping to feel good despite the deep stress and anxiety.

Maria Crowley, Bradford

The Homeless Jesus



“**T**he Son of God came into this world as a homeless person. The Son of God knew what it was to be a homeless person, what it was to start life without a roof over his head,” Pope Francis said.

“We can imagine what Joseph must have been thinking. “How is it that the Son of God has no home? Why are we homeless, why don’t we have housing?”

“These are questions which many of you may ask daily,” the Pope continued. “Like St Joseph, you may ask: ‘Why are we homeless, without a place to live?’”

The Curry Project and "Inn Churches" helping the Homeless

This was at the heart of the challenges we faced daily as we prepared for Christmas at the Curry Project. This is a multi-faith, multi-cultural charity in which all the major faiths of Bradford work together to provide food on a weekly basis to the homeless and those in need. Maria became aware of the need for shoes when one wet Saturday night some of the guests turned up wet and barefooted and we had nothing to offer. Without delay she began raising awareness for the need for footwear, shoes and trainers. As a result, the Bradford car boot was never empty! With the generosity of our parishioners and many others, the following week we distributed more than 50 pairs of shoes to the homeless people attending the Curry Project.

We are all aware of the vast increase in homelessness nationally, and this creates many challenges. Here in Bradford, all the churches known as "Inn Churches" work together to address some of the homeless issue, during the severe cold months, by opening the Church Hall, Mosque, or Gurdwarah (a Sikh place of worship) to the homeless a week at a time. On arrival at each Church, Mosque, Gurdwarah, the guests are offered a bed for the

night and given a healthy meal. There is an opportunity for rest to see a medical doctor, have a haircut or just relax. (Maria spent several hours one night playing Ludo with 4 guests from Poland.) Before departure on the following morning, they are given a good hot cooked breakfast.

"Inn Churches" provides shelter and practical support to people who are homeless or vulnerably housed. We also work to tackle food poverty through intercepting, storing and distributing surplus food and turning it into healthy delicious meals."

Our community celebrations for Christmas and the New Year also included homeless and lonely people. Yamundow, our guest, who is Muslim, was happy to join us, as were some of our Lay Associates and those on their own. Bradford celebrations are never complete without the presence of our Parish Priest, Fr. Canice. We had fun also as we played pass the parcel, and a variety of table top games. This may sound traditional but it was a wonderful way to engage with others of different language and culture.

What people say about us

"People in this place are doing an amazing job for homeless people. These people, I tell you, have a big heart, big patience, honestly big heart." (MP)

"When I lost my job I had no money to pay my rent... The first time I came I found everyone really friendly. They asked me if I was hungry and gave me something to drink. I've had a bed every night since 3 Jan. Without the project I would have been hungry, cold and very ill. They have been very gentle and helped me in many ways. Having people around me gives me good spirit. If it were not for *Inn Churches* I still would have been sleeping in the blue bin outside Nat West."

Srs. Maria, Nasreen and Teresa
Bradford Community

OUR GUEST TELLS HER STORY

My name is Yamundow Sowe. I am from the Gambia, West Africa. I came to the UK on 17 December 2010. I came here to seek asylum and now I am an asylum seeker still waiting for my status.

I sought asylum in November 2011 and was under NASS support (National Asylum Support Services) from November 2011 to June 2012. I was then asked to leave the NASS house because I got a refusal from the Home Office.

I then left Middlesbrough to find support in Leeds where I met a Gambian Family. They decided to keep me and help me out but in 2013 they told me that they couldn't help me anymore because their son was coming to live with them.

I then went to PAFRAS (Positive Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers) in Leeds to find support. They helped me and kept me at St. Monica's house in Leeds from 2013 to 2014. I then had to move again, this time it was to "ABIGAIL HOUSING" in Bradford for 4 months. Then I got my Section 4 accommo-

ation (Home Office accommodation) provided by NASS support again and I was moved back to Leeds until February 2016.

My solicitor neglected my case for 18 months until the Home Office sent me a letter of refusal and told me to leave their house.

I was living in BEACON housing (Bradford Ecumenical Asylum Concern Hosting Project) since 2016 and, at the moment, I am living in a house of the *Holy Family* Sisters in Bradford where I feel I am living with my family. Since I came to this house I have peace and love in this house.

I am expressing my gratitude and appreciation for the wonderful caring Sr. Maria, Sr. Teresa and Sr. Nasreen are giving me with lots of smiles and love. They are so amazing. I am saying a big thank you to you all and the priest. May Allah bless you all and bless your family.

Yamundow Sowe

*Yamundow, Thank you for your kind words. We love having you here and we feel you are a big blessing for us.
Maria, Nasreen and Teresa)*

"Bradford, an open House of Hospitality"

This is how another guest of the Bradford community over the Christmas period described it as she expressed in sincerely heartfelt terms her appreciation of the wonderful welcome she received into their "home". This word, with all its connotations of warmth and love, was repeated several times. In her note of thanks, she wrote: ". It makes me feel that *Holy Family* are modelling a way of being in touch with the suffering people of today's world."

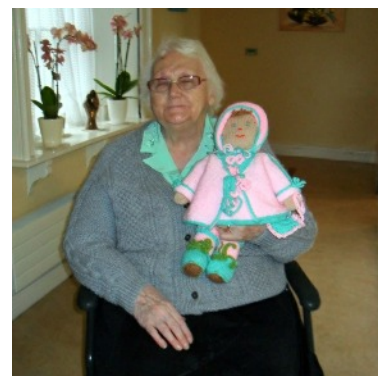
Happy Christmas Raffle

We have a big number of charities here in Newbridge, most of which depend on the generosity of the public. For many, the pre-Christmas appeal is the main source of income. Knowing the good work which our local branch of *Meals on Wheels* does, our Community planned to do something during Advent to raise funds on their behalf.

And what could be better than running a pre-Christmas Raffle? Of course the first thing we had to do was to find good prizes. And this is where I think our raffle was very special. Our prizes were all provided by the gifted hands of Sr. Margaret O'Connell. Realising that a crib would be an ideal gift at Christmas, Margaret had already knitted one crib complete with figures, including animals. It wasn't long before five more prizes were ready, all hand knitted.

We put the prizes on display at the beginning of Advent and Bridie Byrne, one of our carers, took over the responsibility of selling tickets to Sisters, staff and visitors alike! The beautiful crib of course attracted great attention, but people also set their eye on the

lovely hand knitted dolls, the wedding couple and the Moses Basket with blankets. For some who had a baby in the family, the black and white bunny rabbit was the main attraction.

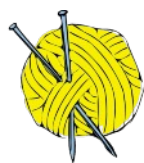


Sr. Margaret with one of her dolls

The raffle was held on the third Sunday of Advent, Gaudete Sunday. It was certainly a day of rejoicing, not only for the lucky winners, but for all of us when we heard that our Christmas Raffle had raised the wonderful sum of €700 to help *Meals on Wheels*.

A few days later Sr. Margaret had the added joy of handing over the money to Mary Canty, the local representative for *Meals on Wheels*. As you can imagine, it was deeply appreciated.

Frances Darragh
For Newbridge Community



In the October issue of 2017 we reported on the contribution the sister-knitters in Newbridge were making towards breaking the record for the world's largest knitted blanket.

All involved in the project, countrywide and beyond, are nearly there. Volunteers (none of them the sisters) are shown here joining the squares to assemble the blanket.



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER AND AWARENESS AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING



The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and the International Union of Superiors General have designated February 8 as an annual day of prayer and awareness against human trafficking.

February 8 is the feast day of St. Josephine Bakhita, who was kidnapped as a child and sold into slavery in Sudan and Italy. Once Josephine was freed, she became a Canossian nun

and dedicated her life to sharing her testament of deliverance from slavery and comforting the poor and suffering. She was declared a Saint in 2000.

On February 8, Catholics all over the world are encouraged to host or attend prayer services to create greater awareness about this crime that Pope Francis called a “crime against humanity, a grave violation of human rights, an atrocious scourge, ... all the more to be condemned when it takes place against children”.

Through prayer, we not only reflect on the experiences of those that have suffered through this affront to human dignity, but also comfort, strengthen, and help empower survivors.



Set My People Free

**Inter-Church Service on the occasion of the
World Day of Prayer, Reflection and Action Against
Human Trafficking.**

Thursday, 8 February, 2018 @ 19.30-20.30
St. Paul's Church, Arran Quay, Dublin (enter via side door).

All are welcome.

Through prayerful reflection, interactive drama and personal sharing, we will learn about Human Trafficking and call to mind all those who endure this crime against humanity.

Luas stop: Smithfield.

Bus stop 7453: Buses 25/a/b/d/x, 26, 37, 39/a, 51d, 51x, 66/a/b/x, 67/x, 69, 70, 79/a and 145.

Limited parking at St. Paul's Church. Additional Parking: Smithfield

Reflections from a Lay Associate

Having made my commitment as a *Holy Family Lay Associate* only a year ago, it may seem somewhat premature to be expressing my personal understanding and appreciation of the *Holy Family* way of life for a lay person. However, bearing in mind that our European leader, Pedro Avila, has invited all groups of Lay Associates to reflect on our Statutes with a view to revising them, if necessary, I am regarding this as an opportunity to revisit our Founder's vision for the Association which he founded in 1820.

The Church is constantly drawing us towards renewal. In the words of Ven. P. B. Noailles, *"rarely do the needs and responses to them at the end of a century correspond with those at the beginning of the next century."* We are living in challenging times. Circumstances around us challenge us to examine our relevance in the world today. How can we best respond to the needs of our society?



Ven. P. B. Noailles,
Founder of the *Holy Family* Association

Our task is to continue to keep before us the *overall aim** of our *Holy Family* Association. To begin with, there are various expressions of 'family'. A photograph in a recent newspaper caught my eye – a smiling Syrian man, wearing a shirt with 'Ballaghadereen Cricket Club' written on it. Torn from his home, his country, his livelihood and possibly from his family too, he finds himself in the West of Ireland. There, with the local community, a new 'family' is being formed. At our recent monthly meeting we looked again at different presentations and interpretations of our Founder's charism in light of an evolving story. The vision of Pierre Bienvenu was inclusive. Grounded in his love

of and service to God, he was able to reach out to the poorest in society at the time. I would like to include here a short quotation from an article by Máire Ryan, a Lay Associate of the *Holy Family* and a former teacher at Holy Family Secondary School.

She wrote: *"We, Lay Associates of the Holy Family, seek to grow in awareness of God as the centre of our lives, as He was in the home of Nazareth and to regain the faithfulness, simplicity and mutual support as lived by the early Christian communities."*

While the overall aim of the *Holy Family* Association is the same for all its members – Religious, Laity and Priests – how we express it will be different. We need to be constantly revisiting our story to ensure that we are endeavouring to live it in the context of a changing and evolving universe.

The forthcoming celebration of the World Meeting of Families (WMOF) is a further challenge and an opportunity to re-visit our story and see our charism as relevant for motivating us to address today's family issues. May the WMOF inspire us all to reclaim the vision of family and take up the Ven. P.B. Noailles' inspiring words to *"have but one heart and one soul, to make Our Lord loved and to win all hearts to Him."*

In her recent book, *"Holy Families, Shadows of the Trinity"* Megan McKenna writes: *"In every city or tiny village there is a family that is a trace of the Holy Family, The Trinity."*

Anne Doyle, Lay Associate
Newbridge Holy Family Convent Group

*Holy Family of Nazareth, grant that our families too may be places of communion and prayer...make us once more mindful of the sacredness and inviolability of the family and its beauty in God's plan. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, graciously hear our prayer.
Amen.*

*The aim of the Association is to spread and strengthen the faith in all milieus, to revive the witness of the first Christians who had *but one heart and one mind*. (Constitutions, art. 2)



BOOK REVIEWS

The Last Week

Like “*The First Christmas*” written by the same two authors, this fascinating book is not an easy read. Following the Gospel of Mark, we are led day by day through the last week of Jesus’ life. We see him as a faithful Jew challenging the dominant social order and theology with an anti-temple dimension in a way that leads inevitably to his death.

On Palm Sunday two processions enter Jerusalem from opposite directions – the triumphal procession of imperial power and Jesus’ procession proclaiming an alternative kingdom. The confrontation between these two kingdoms continues right throughout the week.

From Monday to Wednesday, we discover the real meaning of what we mistakenly call “The cleansing of the Temple”. (And how could the Temple be called “A house of prayer for all nations”?)

The authorities challenge Jesus publicly and try to trap him. He takes up the challenge. There are several confrontations between the two sides and the authors throw new light on how to interpret these. We see Jesus in Simon’s house in Bethany. Our attention is drawn to details we may not have noticed before about the unnamed woman’s anointing of Jesus and the beginning of Judas’s process of betrayal.

As the authors deal with Thursday, Friday and Saturday, we see how events continue to unfold as the week moves towards its climax. On Thursday our attention is drawn to the very different accounts of this day given by Mark and John. And the

explanation of the Last Supper will surely enrich our understanding of the Mass and deepen our ability to participate in it. On Friday, the commentary on the traditional understanding of Jesus’ death as being sacrificial and redemptive gives us much food for thought. Although Mark is silent about Saturday, the authors draw from many other sources to provide us with much information and reflection material about the day.

On Easter Sunday our “preunderstanding” of the Resurrection is challenged. We are invited to ponder such questions as, “What kind of stories are the Easter stories?” What kind of language are they told in?” “Are they intended as historical reports or do they use the language of parable and metaphor to express truths that are much more than factual?”

Writing seventy or so years after the event, Mark brought the story of the last week of Jesus’ life up to date and made it relevant for the people of his time. Borg and Crossan have now told it in a way that has meaning for us today. As with *The First Christmas*, we realise what a wealth of background knowledge is needed if we are not to read Scripture in a superficial way and ascribe a false meaning to the events we find portrayed there. We are shown that there is much more to Scripture than meets the eye or is contained even in the prestigious *Jerome Biblical Commentary*.

There is a very helpful reading and discussion guide at the end of the book and it is ideal reading for the Lenten season.

Áine Hayde (Integrated Spirituality Team)

UPCOMING EVENTS

February 2018						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 St. Brigid Secondary Patron of Ireland	2 World Day for Consecrated Life World Wetlands Day	3 The Miraculous Benediction 1822
4 World Cancer Day	5	6	7	8 Death of our Founder 1861 St. Josephine Bakhita, Patron of trafficked people	9	10
11 World Day of the Sick Founder's funeral 1861	12	13	14 Ash Wednesday	15	16	17 Feast of the Flight into Egypt
18	19	20 World Day of Social Justice	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28			