



The Holy Family of Bordeaux

in Britain and Ireland

Glory to God alone in Jesus Christ through Mary and Saint Joseph

March 2017

Volume 3 Issue 3

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Members of APT and other activists with Minister Frances Fitzgerald at City Hall, Dublin

Editorial

The atmosphere in City Hall, Dublin, on 8 March, International Women's Day, was euphoric. It was appropriate that, on this day, member organisations of TORL (Turn Off the Red Light) had gathered to celebrate the enactment in the Dáil in February of the Sexual Offences Bill, which, among other measures, criminalises the purchaser of sexual services rather than the seller. The Republic of Ireland has adopted this pioneering approach, implemented almost twenty years ago by Sweden, and followed by Norway, Iceland, France, and, more recently, Northern Ireland.

It came as a result of a major campaign, extending over eight years, by a movement called TORL (Turn Off the Red Light). TORL consists of more than seventy agencies, including trade unions, associations of doctors and of nurses, academics, women's and men's associations, and organisations known for their work in combatting human trafficking such as APT, Ruhama and the ICI. Its efforts can be wound down now but it will continue to monitor the implementation of the Bill.

The Minister for Justice, Frances Fitzgerald, whose unflagging energy saw the bill through, referred to the importance of providing exit strategies for women who wish to leave prostitution and said the Bill would be reviewed after three years. She received a standing ovation from the participants.

The legislation is seen as a major breakthrough in the effort to tackle trafficking in women and children for sexual exploitation. But, however important legislation is as a deterrent, nothing will change until there is a real change of attitude in the way men and women relate to one another. Only education from an early age will accomplish this.



Message from Sr. Gemma (Unit Leader)

JUBILEE

We are half way into the first year of our Jubilee celebration. Jubilee is a word we commonly use to denote the celebration of any occasion of significance in our lives – the anniversary of a marriage or a religious profession, for example. And it is an opportunity for us to give thanks and rejoice.

Jubilee, of course, has deeper meaning and is a recurring theme in Scripture. In the Hebrew Bible, we read that every seventh year, the Law of Moses called on the people of Israel to observe a Sabbath for the land. This meant that the land was to rest, to lie fallow for a year. It was not to be cultivated. The people, too, were to rest from their labours and to trust in God's providence to provide food. Food that grew naturally – a sign of God's providence - could be eaten. "Whatever the land yields during the Sabbath year will be food for you and your household" (Lev. 25: 6).

Then, every fiftieth year, following a cycle of seven Sabbatical years, on the Day of Atonement, a trumpet sounded throughout the land announcing the Year of Jubilee. This was a time of social renewal when all debts were forgiven, slaves were set free, and every dispossessed family returned to their ancestral lands, which may have been sold or lost over the decades. (Leviticus: 25). People may have lost their land, their freedom, their stake in civil society for many reasons— whether through natural calamity, parental mismanagement, oppressive government, or moral failure—it did not matter. The good news of Jubilee was that a new generation was to get a stake in life, an opportunity to start afresh. All is graciously restored in the year of Jubilee.

The Jubilee Year was rooted in a memory of Israel's bondage and liberation by God from slavery in Egypt. It was recognition of the fact that the land belongs to God and is only lent to God's people on the condition

that they practice justice. The Jubilee was a God-given way of overturning an unjust economic system, where wealth and power become concentrated over the years in the hands of fewer and fewer families, resulting in poverty, alienation, desperation, violence and war. The Jubilee vision recognizes that charity alone will not suffice to heal a society's ills, but that capital and the means of production (which land represents) must periodically be equalized to restore peace and justice.

Some Biblical scholars argue that the Jubilee Year was never actually carried out in practice by the people of Israel. However, it still remained an ideal to be aspired to; a call from God to practice justice. The Old



Blowing the shofar

Testament prophets repeatedly denounced those who were unjust towards widows and orphans, taking over lands and houses until there were no free people left in the land. When the children of Israel lost their land and were living in Babylonian exile they pondered their calamity and, with the help of prophets like Jeremiah and Isaiah, they understood that idolatry and injustice were the cause of their disaster.

One of the Prophets who denounced injustice was Isaiah, and Jesus, at the beginning of his ministry in the Synagogue of Nazareth, quoted Isaiah's words,

making them his own and applying them to his own mission of liberation.

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me for he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s Favour...” Then he began to speak to them, ‘This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen.’” (Luke 4:18-19).

Jesus here is clearly referring to the Jubilee Year and he proclaims that he is bringing the Law of Moses to fulfilment. *“I have not come to abolish the law but to fulfil it”*. Jesus is proclaiming a jubilee and during his ministry he practised an ongoing Jubilee celebration. He went about forgiving sins, freeing people from suffering and misery and proclaiming liberty for all.

He taught his disciples to pray: *“Forgive us our debts as we forgive those who are indebted to us”*.

He inaugurated a new way. Jubilee is no longer merely a celebration held every 50 years. It is an ongoing way of life that overflows in forgiveness of sins, a re-distribution of goods and social renewal rooted in the good news of Jesus present among his gathered people. The periodic practice of Jubilee has been turned into a perpetual Jubilee by those who follow Jesus in the way of peace.

Our Jubilee celebration in preparation for the bi-centenary of our Foundation is a precious time – a time to renew our commitment to practice jubilee spirituality, to follow Jesus in the *Holy Family*; to take up the challenge to build communion among ourselves and with all those with whom we are in contact; a time above all to rejoice and celebrate.

Catholic Women Preach Raising women's voices in the Church

Looking for inspiration for a Holy Week or Easter homily? Searching for a woman's perspective on these central events of our Christian faith? Look no further, as a group of Catholic women has launched an innovative website offering regular theological reflections on the readings of the day by leading female scholars and others engaged in many different ministries in countries around the world.

The project is designed to address some of the pressing challenges facing the Church today by responding to Pope Francis' call for broader and more active engagement of all the baptized in the preaching mission of the Church.



The organisers say the reflections highlight "women traditionally omitted or misrepresented" in the lectionary and "open the Scripture texts to deepen our understanding of God's saving presence in the world".

The site is coordinated by Elizabeth Donnelly (Pictured), a trustee of a US-based Catholic family foundation, she's also part of a group of female leaders who have met frequently with top Vatican officials to discuss the role of women in the Church.

See Catholic Women Preach here: www.catholicwomenpreach.org

Bi-Centenary Celebrations begin in Bradford

When preparing for this event we decided to invite people that are so much part of our lives here in Bradford. We were also inspired by the challenge to open our doors and hearts to Refugees and Asylum Seekers and to experience and be touched by their deep faith. We invited two



case workers from the Red Cross - one family from Eritrea and one from the D. R. Congo. Both of these families have their refugee status. We also invited a family from Sri Lanka, Asylum Seekers whose application had been refused several times. Our Lay Associates and some friends also shared in the celebrations. We were all very impressed by the children who took full part in the prayer and were happy to read and pray for their countries of origin.

During our prayer we reflected on the life of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles, the miraculous Benediction and our own journey today. We also lit candles for the intentions of the families of all, especially those living in conflict situations. This was a very moving experience and we listened to the deep faith of prayers expressed, especially for the current situation in the Congo. The Family from Sri Lanka left us feeling very supported by so many friends of faith.

We were delighted to have created a prayer space not only for ourselves but for refugees and asylum seekers.

We were also happy for all to experience our "One Global Family Spirituality" and the challenge of this.

We discovered afterwards that for some of our Lay Associates and friends this was their first time to have direct contact with asylum seekers and refugees and to listen to their stories.

Below is a taste of the event from a Lay Associate and from one of our friends.

"I was invited to share in an evening to celebrate the Bi-Centenary of the foundation of the Association of the Holy Family. We were joined by two refugee families and there was an asylum seeker family from Sri Lanka. The latter are still going through their application process. The PowerPoint presentation on the life of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles was very inspiring and all of us, including the children, were very engaged and proactive.

The Lighting of the Candles as an invitation to prayer helped people to relax and gave them the courage to articulate what was in of their hearts; I was very moved by their prayers and I felt privileged to be part of this and to experience the depth of their spirituality. I was reminded that the refugees have much to share with us too."

(Lay Associate)

"As we shared food, sampling a variety of dishes and listened to each other's stories it seemed to me like the Eucharist in this sacred space.

What will be with me for a long time was the faith and courage of the family still waiting for a decision on their asylum process and also the resilience of the families who are now residents. Their positive attitude and cheerfulness in spite of past struggles and their trust in God was a shining light in the darkness. I am so grateful to have been given this opportunity, it was a truly a life-giving experience."

(Breda, friend of the Sisters)

"On Friday evening, 3 February, at the invitation of Sisters Maria, Teresa and Nasreen, a diverse group of people met at Grange Road to share prayer, reflection and food. The group was truly international – people from Ireland, Pakistan, Eritrea, Congo, Sri Lanka and England; spanned the age groups from 4 years to those of us in our 70's; and included many different life experiences.

After a brief period of shyness we all relaxed and enjoyed being in one another's company and sharing some of our experiences. By the end of the evening we felt that we had made new friends and were privileged to have listened to the stories. We enjoyed a shared supper – sampling excellent food from around the world- and of course having the opportunity to find out more about one another.

It was a great evening – and thanks to everyone's generosity we were all able to remember our new friends the next day as we remembered them in our prayers and finished off the leftovers! Thank you especially to our Holy Family Sisters who welcomed us into their home and gave us all an opportunity to meet new people and learn more about each other".

Suzanne (Lay Associate) and Roy

May we always find ways to continue to open our hearts and homes to those in a state of Exodus. To



accompany them on the various stages of their journey and to learn from their deep faith and ultimate trust in God.

Maria Crowley Bradford

Two Holy Family occasions remembered on 3 February

February 3, the feast of the Miraculous Benediction was truly a family day here in Rock Ferry. Fr. Bernard celebrated Mass for us in the Convent chapel at 11 a.m. Many parishioners, Lay Associates and our Secular member, Eileen, were present.

In the afternoon we had a Holy Hour mainly organised by Fr. Bernard. Once again our chapel was nearly full and there was a wonderful feeling that this was a really happy Family day, not only for us, but also for the parishioners that joined us.

As we had the bicentennial prayer, many asked if they could take it to say daily. Who knows what blessings on occasions like this may be showered upon us through our parishioners prayers.

Joan Farrell, Rock Ferry

St. Patrick's Day in Rock Ferry

We were blessed on St. Patrick's Day as Fr. Brian O.M.I., from Crewe, celebrated Mass for us. Brian's homily began with the question, *Who was St. Patrick?* Whatever impressions we get from all the marches and celebrations on St. Patrick's Day, we have the firm conviction that Patrick was a man of prayer from his "Confessions". His whole life was Christ centred.

Patrick's faith was of such importance to him that he wanted to share it with the Irish. His experience of exile and separation from loved ones did not prevent him from returning to share what he cherished most – his faith - with those who had kidnapped him in his youth.



Fr. Brian and Sr. Hilary

During his missionary work, Patrick showed how close he was to nature as we pray his *Breastplate*. His gentleness, appreciation of nature and profound prayer life characterise the true heritage he has left us as a nation.

After Mass, Fr. Brian joined us in the Community room for coffee.

In the afternoon, we were entertained to a medley of Irish songs by a group of fourteen "Ukulele musicians". It was delightful to hear not only the band, but so many Sisters singing in full voice. This was enjoyed by all as it took us down memory lane once again. We are very grateful to this group for the time they give us and we always look forward to their visits.

Sr. Anne-Marie



Ukulele Musicians



Accompanying life to its fullness

At the International Session in Martillac, *Accompanying life to its fullness*, there were present twenty seven Sisters from ten different countries, comprising three language groups, French, Spanish and English. In the English-speaking group we were twelve - from Sri Lanka, Lesotho, Poland, India, and Britain and Ireland. Srs. Sophia, Colette and Joan were the British and Irish representatives. We were so fortunate to have the Superiors of the Contemplative Sisters in both Martillac and Negoda (Sri Lanka). We worked mainly in language groups and ours was facilitated by Sisters Mary Slaven and Jeevom.

Since our session was in Martillac, a place so dear to our Founder, we tried to imbibe the spirit of our Founder, by studying the Spirit of God Alone and the writings of our Founder.

We were fortunate that the weather was dry and mild and we had ample time to visit the island, the Hermitage and walk in the steps of our Founder in Bordeaux.

Sr. Margaret Bradley, who forms part of the team for each session, is wonderfully creative and her posters

each day in the different languages, on the various themes, invited each one of us to reflect deeper. She also held workshops for the groups and we all were most appreciative of her input.



Time was also spent looking at our own inner journey because this is the source from which all our life; our caring, compassion and care for others especially Community members flow. It was a great privilege for us to be able to share daily the Eucharist, Adoration, the Divine Office and an evening with the Contemplative community.

No stay in Martillac would be complete without a trip to Lourdes. We were fortunate to have a Mass in English by an Oblate priest Fr. Linus, a chaplain in Lourdes. We afterwards picnicked in warm sunshine in the square.

A sincere thank you to Sister Ana Marie and the General team, and our Provincial Unit team, for proposing the theme and the opportunity for us to attend the session.



Sr. Joan Farrell, Rock Ferry

NO MORE TRAFFIK

This was the call on the horsebox that transported the UN GIFT Box around Ireland in March. It travelled from Belfast to Drogheda, Dublin, Limerick, Carlow, Tralee, Galway, Athlone, Maynooth, and finally to Dundalk before returning to its base in Belfast.

The organisers, the Loreto Sisters and the faith-based group, APT (Act to Prevent Trafficking), though supported wholeheartedly by the Ministry for Justice and the Garda, only fully grasped the enormity of what they were undertaking when they started the project. As they had to rely mainly on volunteers for every aspect of the work, not all of the problems could have been foreseen and the actual implementation left the anchor people in the various towns exhausted.



5th Year student volunteers from Maynooth Sec. School

The first step involved recruiting and training volunteers who would be available in rotas to hand out leaflets, speak to people, answer questions, bring them into the box to show the graphic details of what happens to people who are deceived into believing they are going to a better life beyond their own frontiers.

Volunteers were senior secondary school pupils, members of the religious congregations associated with APT, friends and interested people. All of the organisers had already built up core groups of such people through previous awareness raising activities, so this was not the most difficult aspect.

In each town, a suitable location in a public space had to be found to set up the Box. This was done in conjunction, naturally, with the local Civic and Church authorities. They were, uniformly, friendly and cooperative. We were supplied with a letter from the AHTU (Anti Human Trafficking Unit) of the Justice Ministry asking them to assist us. Locations chosen were public squares (e.g. outside the Central Bank in Dame St. Dublin), shopping centres, outside Churches or in Church grounds, a University campus (Maynooth, Limerick).



Travelling horsebox

The GIFT Box is made of metal and had to be erected in each location. But, first of all it had to be transported from town to town. The anchor person in each town had to find volunteers with tow bars on their cars who would undertake to drive it on to the next place. This proved to be extremely difficult and, in one or two cases, drivers and cars had to be hired. In a couple of instances the help of an Equestrian Centre or School in the area was sought. They were



Gift Box set up on Maynooth Campus by Celbridge Men's Shed

well equipped for towing horseboxes and came to our assistance free of charge.

Most difficult was the task of finding a place where the horsebox could be kept overnight. Building sites that had security men agreed to let it stay with them; in one case a Tesco parking lot was given and the management arranged for the security camera to be turned on the box.

A group of four or five men was required in each place to assemble and dismantle the box. Somehow, they were found in each location, friends of the organisers and their friends. For the Maynooth event, the idea of asking the gentlemen of the Celbridge Men's Shed occurred to me. Their president was well aware of the issue of human trafficking and readily agreed to get the men to help. They did it magnificently, even though they were not too popular at home when they were asked to erect it on the afternoon of Sunday, 26 March, which was Mother's Day.



Reading the reality of human trafficking inside the Box

the campus and walking around the streets of Maynooth, with a young student for companion, approaching people and urging them to read the leaflet if they had no time to stop and talk.

It was interesting to discover how many people were well aware of the issue, were willing to engage with it and wanted to know what they could do, and how many had some idea but were not interested in knowing more. There were also those who were not interested in knowing. We are all accustomed to being accosted on the streets by people from various charities and this experience has made me assess my own reactions to them

What has this effort achieved? We will not really know but we can hope, and there is reason to believe, that many people are more aware of this awful crime and human rights abuse, and have some idea of how to recognise the signs as well as information about how to report any suspicions they may have.

At our next APT meeting we will be pooling experiences and sharing anecdotes and looking at what lessons are to be learned.

Síle McGowan, Clane



Mary Ryan RSM, Síle McGowan HFB and helpers at the end of the day with Horsebox packed and ready to depart for Dundalk early Monday morning

A video had been made when it was erected for the first time in Drogheda and this was viewed by successive teams, greatly facilitating the work for them.

In each town, volunteers worked in shifts of about 2 to 3 hours inviting people into the box, distributing leaflets, engaging people in conversation on the topic. I spent a full day on Monday, 27 March, on my feet on

UPCOMING EVENTS

April 2017						
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
					1	2 World Autism awareness Day
3	4	5	6	7 World Health Day	8	9 Palm Sunday Foundation of the Sisters of Hope 1836
10	11	12	13 Holy Thursday Foundation of the Agricole Sisters 1856	14 Good Friday	15 Easter Vigil	16 Easter Sunday
17	18	19	20	21	22 Earth Day	23 Divine Mercy Sunday (Quasimodo) St. George's Day
24	25	26	27	28	29	30 Canonical Erection of the H.F. Association in Bordeaux 1831