



# Family Links

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

March 2018

Volume 4 Issue 3

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Snowed tunnel of trees on secondary road outside Newbridge

## Editorial

**“A** snowflake is one of God's most fragile creatures, but look at what they can do when they stick together.” This caption appeared on a local Irish newspaper with a photo of a recent winter snow scene. It surely needs no comment, except to add that each snowflake in itself is exquisitely designed.\* Is this why the first sight of the snow-covered earth fills us with awe and a sense of stillness that seems to whisper, 'GOD'?

But the snow can be harsh to the homeless, the housebound, the elderly, the sick..., as we saw during March. We also saw the dedicated efforts of the public services and the many volunteers who rallied to the support of neighbours and any one in need. This is what gives us hope for the future of humankind and the world.

When the evening news speaks of death and terror and rumblings of war and the horror of avoidable disasters like school shootings and blazing infernos, darkness seems to be covering the earth again as it did on that Good Friday when the Christ died. Jesus must have known complete hopelessness as He hung, broken and bleeding, between two thieves. But hopelessness was not the end of the story. In his glorious resurrection, Christ shows us that hope is eternal as He is.

And so, we can say with deep conviction this Easter and always, “Blessed be God the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ who, in his great mercy, has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...” (1 Pet. 1:3)



\*To view videos showing the design of snowflakes under a microscope, click [here](#) and [here](#).

## Leader's Message

### STRONG ROOTS - GOOD FRUITS

**W**e continue our preparations for the bicentenary and together we journey on a path of renewal of our life as members of the Family of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles. Our Founder used an image from nature to describe the Family he founded. He envisaged our Family as a tree with deep roots in the Gospel of Jesus, with spreading branches offering shelter to weary travellers and bearing fruits and flowers of every kind. We are that tree and at the recent meeting of the Enlarged General Council in Rome, we asked ourselves: what is the condition of our tree? What are the branches that do not bear fruit and need to be pruned if the whole tree is to grow and flourish? What must we be and do in order to grow and evolve and give sustenance and hope to our world that is so much in need of the saving message of the Gospel? This year and next year too is dedicated to a deep spiritual renewal within our Family. With the help of the "Roots" team, we will be reflecting on our roots – on that which gives us our identity, our purpose and the strength we need to continue God's mission in the world.

As we know so well from the natural world, roots are a vital part of any tree. We may tend not to think so much of roots when we contemplate trees. Perhaps we concentrate more on what is above ground - the branches, the foliage or the fruit, forgetting that without roots there would be no fruit; indeed there would be no tree – it would have withered and died. The greater and the most important part of the tree is invisible, below ground. It is the roots burrowing deep into the soil that give the tree resilience to withstand storms and winds. Without strong roots the tree will be at the mercy of the elements. We saw the destruction caused by recent hurricanes and storms. Only the strongest trees, those with deep roots remained standing. It is the roots that suck water and nutrients up out of the soil and into the tree feeding it and giving it strength to grow and produce fruit. Our roots are our spiritual and emotional sustenance.



**Sr. Gemma,  
Apostolic Sisters**

*"Without deep roots our busyness {our mission} is often ineffective... When we consecrate a time to listen to the still, small voices, we remember the root of inner wisdom that makes our work fruitful. We remember from where we are most deeply nourished, and we see more clearly the shape and texture of the people and things before us" (Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in Our Busy Lives).*

The Bible often uses the image of a tree to describe the virtuous person. *"Blessed are those whose delight is in the law of the Lord.....they are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in season and whose leaves do not wither. Whatever they do prospers".* Psalm 1.

Paul's prayer for the Ephesians emphasises the importance of being deeply rooted in the love of Christ. *"I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power together with all the saints to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ".* Ephesians 3:17.

In the letter to the Colossians, we are urged to root ourselves in Christ himself. *"Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness".* Colossians 2:7

**In the parable of the sower, Jesus invites us to make this journey downward and inward and to ask ourselves about our soil, our receptivity to God's word and our ability to deepen our roots so that we can produce abundant fruit.**

*"A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came*

*up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. Whoever has ears, let them hear. (Matthew 13).*

In this parable we see the consequences for the one who has no roots. As soon as harsh weather comes in force, then those who have no roots in God's love, end up withering and dying. So this year we could ask ourselves: Do we give sufficient attention to our

roots? Do we take time to look at what keeps us grounded, and what enables us to bear fruit and carry out God's mission of drawing all into the one family of God?

Or are we more concerned with what is above ground, our outer life, our many important activities, our plans, our successes..?

**May we use this year to make this downward journey, to really deepen our roots as disciples of Jesus and sons and daughters of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles.**

## CELEBRATING 3 FEBRUARY IN SKELMERSDALE



Monstrance used on  
3 February 1820

On Tuesday, 6 February 2018, we, the Lay Associates of Skelmersdale, celebrated the *Holy Family* feast day of the Miraculous Benediction of 3 February 1822. *Holy Family* Lay Associates and parishioners gathered in the Church of St. Francis of Assisi, Skelmersdale. The

celebrant was Paul Rowan, Eucharistic Minister in the Parish of St. Richard's in Skelmersdale.

During exposition of the Blessed Sacrament we reflected on the miracle. Marillyn Sutemire, (Group Leader) welcomed everyone. As an introduction Denis gave a short account of the life of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles. Sue opened with a prayer, followed by other Lay Associates doing selected readings. All joined in singing the hymns.

There was a strong presence of Christ in the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and a sense of love, light and unity among all who were present.

It was also the 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sr. Monica Feehan's death. She was much loved and respected in our parish and we always keep her in our prayers.

I was invited to do the closing prayer and was surprised when Marilyn



Marilyn and Mary

congratulated and presented me with a certificate in honour of my 20 years in the *Holy Family*. I was overwhelmed, as it was unexpected, and I could not help but think of my two deceased *Holy Family* Lay Associates, Julie Morrow and Rose Codling who made their commitment at the same time on 3 February 1998, and also of Fr. Ken Earlam and Sr. Monica who were present at that time.

Thank you everyone, and God bless.

Mary McKenzie,  
Lay Associate, Skelmersdale

## A TRIBUTE TO Máire Ryan A TRUE DAUGHTER OF PIERRE BIENVENU NOAILLES

On 22 February our *Holy Family* in Newbridge said a final goodbye to Lay Associate, Máire Ryan, and her husband Gerry. They had been married for 65 years and died on the same day just hours apart.

The 93-year-olds were born one day apart in 1924 in Clonmel and began dating at 17 while attending school together. The event was so extraordinary that it drew media attention with pieces about them in the *Irish Mirror* and the *Irish Independent*.

Mass for Máire and Gerry was celebrated by Fr. Paul Dempsey in St. Conleth's Church. At the beginning of the Mass the book of our Statutes, *A Way of Life*, was placed on Máire's coffin because she had truly lived her life immersed in Holy Family spirituality. In his homily Fr. Paul described Máire and Gerry's relationship as "a beautiful love story," a phrase that was later used by the *Irish Mirror* in its headline about them.

The choir of the *Holy Family* Secondary school, where Máire had been Vice-Principal, sang beautifully, as did the lead singer, another member of the *Holy Family*. The *Holy Family* Sisters, together with the families, prepared a beautiful booklet for the Mass. Sisters and Lay Associates of the *Holy Family* were very much in evidence in the church and some took part as Funeral Ministers, Eucharistic Ministers and Readers.

Sr. Catherine Moran who had been Principal during most of Máire's career at the Holy Family Secondary school, gave a moving account of her lifelong friendship with Máire. It was a beautiful celebration and a very

fitting tribute to a woman who did so much for the Holy Family and for her husband who was obviously the "rock of her life."

Máire will always be remembered as one of the founding members of the Lay Associates. She was part of St. Conleth's Group started by Sr. Catherine. After the Second Vatican Council the *Holy Family* Association, like all other religious institutions, began to go back to its origins. The research took about 20 years and one of the results was the re-establishment of the vocation of Lay Associates as part of the Family of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles. In the 1980's, wherever there were *Holy Family* Communities, lay people were invited by the Sisters to form groups.

Máire with her usual enthusiasm and love for the *Holy Family* became a leading light in the initial and ongoing growth and development not only of her own group but of the National Association of Lay Associates. She made her commitment in 1991 and attended the 1992 Congress in Martillac.

During her years as president Máire attended many meetings at home and abroad. These meetings helped clarify the role and mission of the Lay Associate in the *Holy Family* Association (as the Founder designated it), in the Church and in the world. Strengthened by the memory of her commitment and dedication to the Family of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles, we joyfully go forward to the next phase in our Spiritual Family life, knowing that she will be praying for us.

Rose Sullivan, Lay Associate

## MILLION WOMEN RISE

### “Together we can end male violence against women and girls”

This year marked the 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Million Women Rise* (MWR) march. MWR believes that male violence against women and children is a global pandemic. Violence devastates the lives of women, our families, and our communities. It also threatens to undermine efforts to bring about sustainable development. Therefore our campaign to end violence against women is an international struggle for female emancipation and liberty.

It is one of the biggest women’s marches in Europe. Usually held near International Women’s Day, this year’s *Million Women Rise* march took place on the 10 March on the streets of central London. Thousands of women and young girls marched through Oxford Circus chanting some of these slogans:

**“The time is Now! The power is You!”**

**“Together we can end all forms of male violence!”**

**Whatever I wear, wherever I go,  
Yes means Yes and No means No!**

The women were asked to wear Red, which symbolises their solidarity with women’s struggle globally - red the colour of blood, the blood of our sisters who have been abused, murdered and raped throughout the world in the hands of males.

Red is also the colour of women’s power, strength, rebellion and determination as well as passion, fire and love.

Women from all walks of life participated in this march. A number of high profile women shared their stories of victimisation and abuse by men. The demand was to come together to work for change and to put an end to the silence around different issues such as immigration, detention and cuts to



Nasreen and Friend

vital services. Violence affects the lives of women, families and our communities.

So this campaign is to end violence against women around the world, from genital mutilation to harassment at work.

Nasreen Nazir, Bradford

## SYNOD ON:

# "Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment"

OCTOBER 2018

In his Angelus address on the first Sunday of Lent, Pope Francis invited young people everywhere to help prepare the upcoming synod "On Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment," through the use of social media.



Young Participants at Pre-Synodal Meeting

He also said: *"In a month, from 19-24 March, some 300 young people from all over the world will come to Rome for a meeting in preparation for the October Synod. However, it is my ardent wish that all young people may be actively involved in this preparation. Therefore, they will be able to participate on line through linguistic groups moderated by other young people. The contribution of the "online groups" will join that of the meeting in Rome. Dear young people, you can find the information on the [website of the Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops](#). I thank you for your contribution in journeying together!"*

The meeting, which was opened in the presence of Pope Francis, took place from 19 - 24 March and a document produced at it has been presented in the Vatican. Presenting the [document](#) during a briefing at the Vatican Press Office, Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri, Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops, explained it is one of the sources that will contribute to the preparation of the Instrumentum Laboris for the Synod itself.

The document is divided into three parts, preceded by an introduction:

- the first part deals with the challenges and opportunities of young people in today's world;
- the second on faith and vocation, on discernment and on accompaniment of young people;
- the third on the Church's formative and pastoral activities.

Approximately 15,300 young people from the five continents took part in the meeting - physically or virtually - representing their peers all over the world. The document was presented to the Pope on Palm Sunday. For more information visit the website for the [Synod on Youth](#)

To involve young people in preparations for the Synod of Bishops on Youth in 2018, the Vatican has released an online questionnaire to better understand the lives, attitudes and concerns of 16 to 29 year-olds around the world. The questionnaire — available in English, Spanish, French ...

How many of the parishes where we work have brought it to the attention of their young people and involved them in answering it?

## Dublin Pro-Life Rally - 10 March



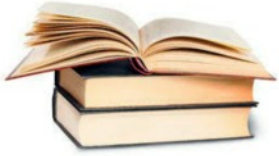
ON 25 MAY

According to the organisers, a hundred thousand people attended the March for Life held in Dublin on 10 March. It certainly looked like that as the crowd snaked along the quays and crossed the river Liffey up to the rallying point at Merrion Square.



Young and old came out in defence of life.





## BOOK REVIEWS

### In Memory of Jesus,

by Michael Morwood. (2014)

**T**his book is easy to read. It is thought provoking and challenging in its approach to traditional beliefs relating to God, Faith and theology.

The focus in the beginning, is about helping us to bring God down to earth and into our everyday lives in a concrete, relational way - to see Jesus as a friend. Morwood does this in a novel way, through imaginary conversations between Jesus and various people, giving a brief Historical Context and sharing his own journey of discovery, struggle and growth around his faith, the evolutionary story and his relationship with Jesus.

Some ideas that stood out for me were, seeing Jesus as a friend who had his own journey of discovery, focussing on the meaning of Jesus' Life as opposed to only focussing on redemption, Jesus' message about the "*here and now God*" who lives in us and among us in a very personal and neighbourly way. Morwood emphasizes that Life is a "*journey with God not to God*".

It seems that Christianity is more concerned with praying to, and worshipping, a heavenly God than affirming God's presence with people.

He also refers to a priestly caste, that developed, instead of leaders who would create community and serve people by their lifestyle, who are answerable to the community and who are capable of engaging religious faith with the contemporary worldview.

Through his ministry in Adult Faith Formation, Morwood encountered the dilemma teachers and thinking adults had with the traditional, dogmatic, prescientific teaching of the Church and the new emerging scientific knowledge on the origins of the universe..., "they were looking for an articulation of the faith that did not rely on assumptions and assertions that flatly contradicted scientific knowledge and common sense."

Is the lack of openness in, and leadership from, the hierarchy in this area due to fear of the consequences for themselves "if people take seriously God's presence as a universal reality accessible to everyone" and not only available through the hierarchical Church?

As Gregory of Nyass, a 4<sup>th</sup> Century said:

"Who could be so simple-minded as not to believe that the Divine is present in everything, pervading, embracing and penetrating it?"

This book not only invites us to a deeper relationship with Jesus but raises legitimate questions for us today. Michael Morwood's quest to know "Jesus as a friend" led him to the deeper question of the Church's place and ultimately our own in the Evolutionary Story.

Well worth the read.

Pauline Harney (Integrated Spirituality Team)



## UPCOMING EVENTS

April 2018						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Easter Sunday	2 World Autism awareness Day	3	4 HF Focus Team meeting in Woodford	5	6	7 World Health Day
8 Quasimodo Sunday (Formerly, Feast of the Holy Family) Divine Mercy Sunday	9 Foundation of the Sisters of Hope (1836)	10	11	12	13 Foundation of the Agricole Sisters (1856)	14
15 2 <sup>nd</sup> HF Roots Retreat begins in Emmaus Retreat Centre, Ireland	16	17	18	19	20	21
22 Feast of the Good Shepherd (whom our Founder saw as the personification of Divine Providence.) Earth Day - End plastic Pollution	23 Feast of St. George Patron of England  English and Spanish Language Day!	24	25	26	27	28
29	30 Canonical Erection of the Association (1831)					