



# Family Links

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

May 2019

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## Editorial

In another week we shall be resuming Ordinary Time in the Church's liturgical cycle. Because we tend to associate the word "ordinary" with what is often dull and mostly unexciting, this way of putting it may give the impression we are settling into a more routine way of living our spiritual life. But we know that after the "extra-ordinary" events that took place in Holy Week and Eastertide, nothing is ordinary in that sense any more.

Special celebrations in the Church Year, like Christmas and Easter, draw us more deeply into the mystery of the Incarnation and remind us that Jesus is, as he stressed to his disciples, always with us in unconditional love. He is incarnate in ordinary life - in community, family, parish, workplace, shared existence - and that is where we find and experience him. It is how we live these everyday situations and relationships that God's love flows through us.

We are also part of a global community where the *extra-ordinary* is almost the *ordinary* now, or is it the other way round? The climate emergency requiring concerted global action comes instantly to mind. The rise of religious intolerance and persecution is another and dare we mention the B-word, the elephant in the room of our islands? To the ocean of remedies needed to solve these problems, we also bring our little drops.

But, because "human kind cannot bear very much reality" (T.S.Eliot), we do need to step aside occasionally from the daily round and enjoy peak moments of celebration, spiritually and temporally, just as Jesus did in his nights of communion in prayer with the One who sent him and his communion in table companionship with all and sundry.



## Message from the Inter-Vocational Team

### Mary, our Faith Guide

**T**raditionally, in the month of May, Mary, Our Mother, comes into focus. Given our Founder's devotion to her, we reflect on her "Yes". Imagine a world where the Incarnation has not happened. How different would our 'faith' be or, would we have any 'faith'? In such a world, what would give meaning to our lives? Perhaps we might be less caught up in traditions, or needing to maintain and support the structures of the hierarchical church, and would that be good?

Continuing from Catherine Lavery's previous article, and the challenge of our Founder "to strengthen and extend faith in all milieus, to revive the witness of the first Christians who had but one heart and one mind", we might reflect on how the seeds of that faith are lived out today. For the month of May, we ponder over our story so far, especially as we near our Bicentenary celebrations.

Beginning with our family of origin and our baptism into the community of believers, we have all discerned the path forward which has brought us into our respective *Holy Family* vocations. How do we deepen and live out that faith today? We look to Jesus, Mary, Joseph and John the Evangelist to help us.

At the Annunciation, Mary in her uncertainty still answered the Angel and gave her "yes". In her trials and tribulations, something of the reassurance by the Angel that "nothing is impossible to God" must have carried her through. We look also to St Joseph who, in his type of refugee status, trusted so much, used his skills as he set up home in Egypt, and trusted in God's Providence to enable him to provide for his special family. At the Last Supper, St John the Evangelist was the one who leaned on Jesus' breast and, after the Resurrection, wrote such a beautiful Gospel. The Word of God is 'still alive and active today' but where?

In Ladauto Si, where Pope Francis is writing on the Eucharist, he quotes the theologian Dietrich von Balthasar who wrote: "the cosmos is the monsterness

of God" and goes on to say that nature is not simply an outer frame for the sacred, but is itself sacred and reveals the Divine. Fr Brian Grogan SJ, in his little book *"Finding God in the Leaf"* then emphasises one of Pope Francis's daring statements: "Jesus comes not from above, but from within (LS236), thus highlighting the interconnectedness of everything, and we have a reality of a great web, a womb, or a balloon, rather than the old image of the world: "heaven above, hell below and earth in the middle" (p.27).

As you know, there are wonderful people trying to promote climate change and care of the earth. A recent event was a day in Knock for 2,800 young 16-18-year olds in commemoration of Donal Walsh's efforts to prevent suicide, before he died of cancer. The SMA priests have a programme for secondary schools on climate change, and this was part of the day's programme, given by young people, which inspired hope for the future.

Whatever may be said about the lack of 'faith' today, there is hope, and I see the changes in people's lives in Knock. Many say, Knock is one of the few places where one can be "Catholic" today in all the shades and nuances associated with that. The 1.5 million people who visit Knock and participate on some level in their searching, pain, sorrows, and vulnerabilities, are "fed with spiritual food for their spiritual soul". Sometimes, however, this may be only in the form of the peace they experience.

When we look at the Apparition of 1879 with eyes of faith, we see the proof that in death "life is changed but not ended" with the appearance of Joseph and John the Evangelist. This hopefully strengthens our belief in the Resurrection. During the Apparition not a word was spoken. Why was this? It may be that each person may receive their own special word of consolation and healing from Jesus, Mary and Joseph. The 'silence' surely speaks



to people who are broken and very vulnerable in their suffering, and brings about healing in knowing that Jesus, Mary and Joseph stand with them in their pain. This is not just in a 'spiritual' form, but practical help is given in the myriad of services provided from the liturgical, reconciliation and anointing, faith renewal events, Scripture courses, youth ministry, prayer guidance, counselling, drop-in listening service, etc.

Given the fascination with angels nowadays, the Angels in the Apparition may reassure us once again of God's great love for us through protective angels. The Light that shone round the Apparition, surely

can give us consolation in our faith, that there is a Light – Jesus (John 12:46) – to guide us on our pilgrim journey through life. "Like the Eucharist itself, the Apparition is all about sacrifice, communion and presence" (Woollen, p. 114). In this month of May, may we, like our dear Founder, Pierre Bienvenu Noailles, place ourselves at the feet of Mary, our Mother, and sow the seeds of faith and love wherever we are. Let's "speak, write and act" as we move forward together towards the Bicentenary.

**Bernadette Deegan**  
(Inter-Vocational Team)



**Representation of the apparition at Knock**



## Origins of *Holy Family* Lay Members in Livingston St Philip's - Autumn 1991

The *Holy Family* Sisters came to Livingston in August 1976. Holy Family Lay Members began after the arrival of Sr Patricia O'Hara, who joined the Livingston Community in Scotland in 1991, having spent many happy years in Wrexham. There, she had built up a very enthusiastic group of Lay Members, whom she was sad to leave. However, arriving in Livingston, one of the 1960s/70s New Towns, she did her best to adjust to her new *Holy Family* community, as well as the local community.

It was no small task tuning in to Scottish accents, having just left the Welsh. Patricia did this with a good sense of humour, we recall. She saw an opportunity by way of our local St Philip's Parish, Lanthorn Community Centre, which is the hub of the wider community in that area of Livingston.

To Patricia's great disappointment, there were no *Holy Family* Lay Members in Livingston. Having endeared herself to Lynette Buchan, then Chief Cook and problem solver at The Lanthorn, there evolved a way forward. Because of her centrally located position, Lynette knew everyone who came through the front door. In what seemed like a very short time, she invited a number of us round to her home one Friday evening for some eats and to meet Sr Patricia. Patricia presented her outlined diagrams and basic information on P.B. Noailles and the *Holy Family* of Bordeaux structure and charism. We all looked and listened and had a jolly nice evening as photos show. Patricia then invited any of us who might be interested in hearing more to come along to the Convent at a later date.

Those who felt drawn did attend and from then on looked forward to monthly meetings in Formation

at the Convent, with Sr Patricia as our Leader. The other sisters used to join us in the sitting room for the closing prayer and a cuppa, which all appreciated then. While some in formation discontinued, others joined us as the years went on.

We were introduced to our first British Annual Assembly in a venue in Yorkshire to give us a feeling of being part of the bigger picture. This trip, which meant leaving by mini bus at 5 a.m. and returning same evening, was not ideal, but it did achieve its goals. After a

couple of years, Sr Patricia was replaced by Sr Louis Marie, then Sr Josephine Kemp. It was all very cosy meeting in the Sisters home, but years later, all that changed when the Sisters circumstances changed and they moved out of Livingston. We met for a short time in one another's homes. It then became clear that booking a room in The Lanthorn Community Centre each month would be the best way forward. This arrangement works well, so we continue to meet there happily to the present time.

Over the years we have lost members to their change of location, to their eternal reward and a few to lack of interest in the earlier years. Our group has always been very interactive both in discussion, sharing ideas and enthusiasm and, as far as fitness allows, to attending the Biennial Assembly. There has always been a great love of P. B. Noailles. One deceased member used to say, "I have great devotion to Pierre Bienvenu and I love going to Martillac". He is not alone in this view.



Lay Associates from Livingston and Leith in Martillac

Anne Connolly, (Livingston Lay Associates Group)



## St Matthew's Primary School celebrate 50 Years of Catholic Education

On Thursday, 2 May 2019, St. Matthew's School hosted a celebration of 50 years of Catholic education in Allerton. It was a wonderful event with all the children from Nursery to Year 6 presenting a history of the school and its times.

As a past Headteacher of St. Matthew's School, I found it moving and a highly enjoyable experience. Using music, story and song, the children told about the life of the school over the decades. The finale was a wonderful song involving the whole school and incorporated signing and actions to deliver a poignant message full of joy, hope and inclusivity.

Over the years, Holy Family Sisters and Lay Associates have made significant contributions to the life of the school. Sr. Josephine Kemp was the first Sister to teach at the school. Sr. Carmel Bateson was appointed in 1984 as Deputy Head at the same time as I took up the post of Headteacher and we worked together in the school for twenty years.

Many of the sisters from the convent have been voluntary helpers in the school and so have added the extra support and sense of community which is so important for schools. Currently Sr. Teresa Edwards and Sr. Maria Crowley visit and support the school regularly. Sr. Maria is also one of the governors at St. Matthew's.



Sr. Maria greeted by pupils of St Matthew's on her Golden Jubilee



St Matthew's Primary School

As the Lay Associates group came into being and developed, some members of staff became Associates, including the Caretaker, Mr. Steven Albrow, who worked at the school for 40 years and who retired last year. Elizabeth Grogan, who is the current leader of our Associates group and representative at regional meetings, also taught there. My own life as an Associate included a time of being a National Leader which allowed me the honour to serve with several hard-working and committed delegates.

The Chair of Governors, Mrs. Suzanne Howarth, a long-serving past teacher and an Associate, delivered a heartfelt vote of thanks to the children and staff, praising them for their wonderful presentation to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the school.

It was a testament to the continued hard work and effort of the staff over the years that so many of the parents attending on the day were themselves past pupils. The sense of community was strong and the impact of the Holy Family Sisters and Associates over the years was, and is, vibrant and alive.

**Reg Stichbury**  
**Bradford Lay Associates group**





St. Conleth 1500  
(519 - 2019)

## Remembering St. Conleth First Bishop of Kildare

This year, Newbridge parish and townland celebrate the fifteen hundredth anniversary of the death of St Conleth, their patrons saint who died on 3 May 519 AD. As an old man, he wanted to

fulfil a desire to go on pilgrimage to Rome. Because of his age, St. Brigid, whose co-worker he was in the Diocese of Kildare, feared for him going on this journey and tried in vain to dissuade him. Somewhere on the journey, Conleth was attacked and killed by wolves; at that time packs of them roamed the woods and mountains of Leinster.\*



Conleth is believed to have come from Wicklow but it is not known for certain where he was born or who his parents were. Some snippets about him can be gleaned from the writings of a monk named Cogitosus, who wrote a *Life of St Brigid* (c. 650). Conleth was a skilled metal-worker in gold and silver who lived as a hermit at Old Connell on the Liffey, near Newbridge. He had the reputation of being a very holy man with the gift of prophecy.

Tradition has it that Brigid invited him, not only to make sacred vessels for her foundation, but also to be pastor of the people nearby and abbot of the monks of Kildare. And so, Conleth is regarded as the first bishop of Kildare appointed around 490. Cogitosus says that Brigid and he governed the

church at Kildare "by means of a mutually happy alliance". \*\*

After his death, the tradition in Kildare holds that he was buried\*\*\* on the left side of the altar in what is now the Church of Ireland Cathedral in Kildare town, with Saint Brigid being buried on the right. The tradition in Newbridge holds that he was buried in the Old Connell graveyard. As there is no sign of a grave today, an alternative explanation is that his relics were carried off by the Danish invaders in 835. Be that as it may, a local historian is preparing a new history of the area which will be published shortly and may throw some light on the matter.

Every year, on the Sunday after St. Conleth's Day, a pilgrimage takes place from the parish church in Newbridge to Old Connell, a few kilometres outside the town. This year, the pilgrimage took place on 5 May. Led by the Parish Priest, a group of parishioners which included sisters of the *Holy Family* community living in what was originally known as St. Conleth's Abbey, set out from the Parish Church at 3 p.m.

The Old Connell cemetery is situated in the grounds of a Stud Farm, and is only open to the public by request on such special occasions. Few of the tombstones are still standing and the writing on them is barely decipherable; most are lying on, or half buried in, the ground. Nevertheless, it is approached with reverence and there is a sense of a timeless presence. After some words about the history of the



The Parish Priest leads the prayer service in Old Connell cemetery



place, a prayer service was held and the graves were blessed.

The crowd aroused the curiosity of the horses in the Stud. They gathered at the fence and vied with one another for the attention of those who approached them.

The pilgrimage ended where it began - in the grounds of the parish church – where a final prayer and blessing took place around a statue of St. Conleth.



Statue of St. Conleth in the grounds of Newbridge Church, with a child on his shoulder holding a St. Brigid's cross

## Anecdotal

\*When the story was told in the Church in Newbridge, and the narrator said that if Conleth had listened to Brigid he wouldn't have died then, there was a round of applause.

\*\*It is reported that, speaking to the Synod of Bishops in Rome in October 1987, Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich, then archbishop of Armagh, drew attention to this alternative form of governance in the Church where Brigid (the woman) took the initiative and held the primacy or an authoritative role, while Conleth (the man) took a more secondary, executive and liturgical role.

\*\*\*Having heard how Conleth died, a little boy, quite understandably, asked how he could have been buried if he was eaten by wolves!



## Theme of World Communications Day 2019

*«We are members one of another» (Eph 4,25). From network community to human communities.*

**T**he theme underlines the importance of giving back to communication a broad perspective, based on the person, and emphasizes the value of interaction always understood as dialogue and as an opportunity to meet with others.

This calls for a reflection on the current state and nature of relationships on the Internet, starting from the idea of community as a network between people in their wholeness. Some of the prevailing trends of the so-called social networks ask us a fundamental question: to what extent can we speak of a real community in the face of the logic that characterizes some communities on social media? The metaphor of the web as a community of solidarity implies the construction of an “us”, based on listening to the

other, on dialogue and consequently on the responsible use of language.

In his first Message for World Communications Day in 2014, the Holy Father called for the Internet to be “an environment rich in humanity, a network not of wires but of people”.

The choice of the theme for the 2019 Message confirms Pope Francis’ attention to the new communications environment and for social networks, especially, where he is present in the first person with his @Pontifex account on Twitter and @Franciscus on Instagram.

[Full text](#)

### A Prayer for Communications Sunday

O God, whose word is truth  
and in whose light we see light,  
guide those who tell the story of our times through word and image.  
Make them seekers after truth and advocates of human dignity.  
Grant discernment to all who rely on their labours,  
and, as we confront the pain and promise of this world,  
awaken in us a sense of wonder at your presence  
and of longing for your peace.

### World Communications Day

was established by Pope Paul VI in 1967 as an annual celebration that encourages us to reflect on the opportunities and challenges that the modern means of social communication (the press, motions pictures, radio, television and the Internet) afford the Church to communicate the gospel message.

It is held on the Sunday before Pentecost or the Sunday after the Ascension. It would be interesting to know if anyone has ever heard it mentioned in churches on that day.





## BOOK REVIEWS

### Praying with the Women Mystics

by Mary T. Malone

This is a great little book for reflection and inspiration. It is compiled and interpreted by Malone who has already authored 3 volumes on *Woman and Christianity* and *The Elephant in the Church*.

Malone begins with a short historical background, plus a number of brief biographical details on the Mystics quoted, ranging from Macrina in the 4th century to modern day Brid Murphy. She then presents the prayers/poems in themes.

She highlights the fact that these women mystics wrote in the vernacular thus being accessible to all addressed God in gender terms: Lady love, Woman Spirit, using feminine as well as masculine, for example:

*"Deep in my being I know a God who is more, more than Father. I now know my God as Mother."*  
*Mechtilde of Magdeburg.*

These women had to find their own language to express their experience of God. Up until then, the masculine image and experience of God was presented, as well as the masculine thinking around women. Women Mystic's writings were also didactic, helping women to see themselves in a different light. For example, Hrotswith of Gandersheim studied the story of women presented by men. She says:

*"He wrote of womanly wiles. I will change that and write of women I know, their strength, holiness, goodness, courage, hospitality and, above all, their ability to face themselves, to remake their lives, to know the truth of themselves, created and ever-loved by (God) you."*

We have been told so often that we are nothing. I want women to know it is not so. We are made for great things. I want all women to say without excuse:

*Ego clamor Validus*

Malone stresses that women today are challenged *"to find our own appropriate form of inner discourse so that we can pray with full integrity in words that express the quality and nature of our relationship as women with God,"* as well as sitting *"in silence, wordlessness and unsaying"*.

Reading this book, it struck me how these women already spoke of God in terms that we are still struggling with today - God alive in Nature, in the universe, everywhere. As Hildegard of Bingen writes,

*"I am the secret fire in everything.... I flame out intense Godly life over the shining fields of corn, I glow in the shimmer of the fire's embers. I burn in the sun, the moon and the stars",* and God in everyone, as Margurite Porete says: *"the real me is God"*.

These women were inserted in everyday reality and had fears and struggles like we do today. Listen to Mechtilde of Magdeburg voicing one of her fears:

*The Magnet*

God, I still have a great fear  
 As to the way my soul  
 Will pass from my body.  
 Then the Lord said to me:  
 'It shall be thus:  
 I will draw my breath  
 And your soul shall come to me  
 As a needle to a magnet'.

The wisdom, insight and awareness in these pages demonstrate the great loss not only to women but to our entire Christian heritage. All of it could have enriched our tradition if women had not been silenced!

Pauline Harney (Integrated Spirituality Team)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

June 2019						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 Foundation of Contemplative Sisters 1859
2 Final Profession of the three Foundresses 1822  World Communi - cations Day	3	4 The first 3 Foundresses made their Act of Consecration 1822	5 Ordination of PBN Eve of Trinity Sunday 1819 World Environment Day	6 PBN celebrates his first Mass  Trinity Sunday 1819	7	8  World Oceans Day
9	10	11	12 Feast of Our Lady of All Graces World Day against Child Labour	13	14	15
16 Trinity Sunday 1820 Foundation of the first Community - Sisters of Loreto	17 World Day to combat Desertification & Drought	18	19	20  World Refugee Day	21	22
23	24	25	26 International Day in support of Victims of Tirture	27	28	29 "Feast day" of our Founder and his brotherAmand
30						