



Family Links

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

October 2018

Volume 4 Issue 8

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Rock Ferry Sisters and Carers enjoy a day out at Ness Gardens

Editorial

Many people are ambivalent about canonisation. The huge cost and the fact that the strict rules governing the process are sometimes waived on tenuous grounds are reasons cited. But there is something deeper: only God can see into the human heart.

October saw seven new names added to the litany of saints in the Catholic Church. Oscar Romero has been universally venerated ever since his murder. Pope Paul VI will always be remembered as the pope who had the onerous task of completing and implementing Vatican II after Pope John XXIII, though he may be best remembered for his encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*.

What of the other five? Three of them were founders of religious Institutes. Another was a parish priest. Then there was an Italian teenager included, it has been said, because of the Synod on Youth. Apart from those who, convinced of their sanctity, promoted their cause, how many people in the universal Church will remember their names? But does it matter?

Psychologists say we all need role models, people we admire, who inspire, help and encourage us to be the best we can be. People aspiring to excellence in a particular field often look to, and emulate, someone who has achieved what they hope to. Those who aspire to holiness may find inspiration from a particular canonised saint. However, it is often those whom Pope Francis calls THE SAINTS 'NEXT DOOR' (Gaudete et Exsultate, #6) who inspire and influence us the most - a family member, a neighbour, a teacher.... And, "because of the complex fabric of interpersonal relationships in a human community" (GE, #9) the power of one can be far-reaching.

What of our own PBN? The cause for his beatification is being re-visited. Whatever the outcome, his sanctity is not in question. His legacy lives on and will continue to do so, to the extent that we, his *Holy Family*, go ever deeper into the roots of our spirituality, finding therein the newness each age has to offer.



Leader's Message

ENVISIONING THE FUTURE

It is said that Religious Life is at a cross roads. Dearth of vocations, fewer members in active ministry and an increasing age profile lead us to ask: is there a future for religious life? It would seem that religious are experiencing a real crisis and while some might despair at such news, others remember that the key tenet of the Christian message is not the Crucifixion, but the Resurrection! Historically, religious life has been through several periods of decline in the 2000 years of Christianity, and it has always resurrected in creative new forms to meet the needs of the people of God at each historical moment.

We need only remember post-revolution France when many congregations, including our own, were founded to meet the new urgent needs of the time. There are those who believe that religious life will certainly survive. *"A glance across history makes it seem reasonable that religious life will last as long as the Church."* (Cada: *Shaping the Coming Age of Religious Life* 1989). But inevitably, as we know, there will be some religious institutes that were founded for specific pastoral needs of the time but who now face an uncertain future - even extinction - because these needs are mostly being met by government sponsored institutions.

What about the *Holy Family* in Britain and Ireland? During the Enlarged Council meeting which took place in Rome last February, we looked at the reality of our Institute. We used the image of the tree. We are that tree that our Founder dreamed of. We asked ourselves: What is growing? What is not growing and needs pruning? What is impeding the vital sap from flowing through the tree? What is holding us back from being all we can be and fulfilling God's mission? Difficult questions to answer because it calls on us to be fundamentally honest and to be clear sighted about what we see as obstacles hindering us from creating a "future full of hope". It is also a call to us to imagine, and to dream and to act.

Some writers on religious life see the answer to decline in re-founding; that is, going back to the

original vision of our Founder to capture once again that dream, that vision that inspired him and to embrace the pioneering spirit that sent him out to create a new society. Today we are being asked to set out on a groundbreaking path and envision a future that we have not yet seen but can only intuit. How are we to rethink, re-imagine our *Holy Family* life in a globalised and increasingly secular world? Walking a new revolutionary path will demand sacrifices, letting go of past models of religious life and being open to the God of surprises who makes all things new.

I read somewhere that the future is **not some place we are going to but one we are creating now in this present moment**. So, undertaking the journey towards the future means living now as we would wish to be living in the future. Gandhi claimed: *"The future depends on what we do today"*. And again, he said that we must be "the change that we want to see in the world" around us. All our dreams and aspirations can only become a reality if we do something about them now.

Can we say that we are creating the future by the way we live now - striving to be people living in close communion with one another, respectful of and delighting in, the diversity of vocations among us? We can create the future by living with wholehearted commitment to the mission of God drawing all people into the one family of God. And we can create the future by striving to live as people whose lives are characterized by an ongoing quest for God and who, from the still place where we meet God daily in prayer; we go out and touch all whom we meet with hope and compassion.

We must also never lose heart but remember Jesus' words: *"Do not be afraid little flock for your Father is pleased to give you the Kingdom"* (Luke 12:32.) And, little flock though we may be, we take inspiration also from the words of Gandhi: *"A small body of determined spirits, fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history"*



Sr. Gemma
Apostolic Sisters

At Home

The JRS UK hosting scheme offering destitute refugees respite accommodation

As a member of one of the hosting communities, Sr. Margaret Muldoon HFB offered this reflection which appears on <https://www.jrsuk.net/blog/>.

'The opportunity to open our hearts and our homes'

As members of an international congregation of women Religious we have committed ourselves to "be with" people who are on the margins; migrants, refugees, those who are marginalised, trafficked, ignored and deprived of their dignity. We do this according to the diversity of our situations and the opportunities available to us. When our community in London came across the At Home hosting programme organised by the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) we welcomed the opportunity to open our hearts and our homes to women refugees accompanied by JRS.

"Every stranger who knocks at our door is an opportunity for an encounter with Jesus Christ, who identifies with the welcomed and rejected strangers of every age." (Pope Francis, Message for the World Day for Migrants and Refugees 2018)



Beginning something new can be a challenge. Questions, insecurities, fears may arise. Becoming involved through the [At Home](#) programme made taking that first, and subsequent, step very easy. We are grateful for the fact that there is a clear agreement between us, as a host community, and JRS, especially the friendly support and accompaniment from the [At Home](#) Coordinator who is always available, if and when needed. So far, we have hosted 5 guests, each for a period of 3-4 months and will soon open our home to our next guest.

Each time we welcome a new guest into our home, they each bring something different and make their own unique contribution to our lives. Through each of their placements, there are many common, life-giving aspects that have had an impact on us – a community of four sisters.

"I encourage you to welcome refugees into your homes and communities, so that their first experience of Europe is not the traumatic experience of sleeping cold on the streets, but one of warm human welcome. Remember that authentic hospitality is a profound

gospel value that nurtures love..." (Pope Francis speaking to Jesuit students in Rome, 2016)

Firstly, we would like to say that we consider it a privilege to have this opportunity of sharing our home with women who are living in destitution, often alone and uncared for, longing for that "warm

human welcome" that Pope Francis speaks of. Our current guest, Helen, very quickly made herself at home. She is a gentle presence in the community and is free to come and go as she pleases. She is totally trustworthy and accountable. Our only request is that she informs us if she is going to be late coming in to ensure that the door is left unlocked for her.

Sometimes she shares meals with us; at other times she cooks for herself according to her own preferences. She engages in conversation and shows interest in each one. We listen with respect to

whatever she chooses to share with us while ensuring that we do not intrude into her life and that she has her own space and privacy.

Through our interaction with her we come in touch with destitution, with someone who has nothing and no rights, who is totally dependent on charity. In this way we are brought close and remain open to, aware of, moved and challenged by a reality that is the lot of millions of people in our world today.

"To the maternal intercession (of Mary) we entrust the hopes of all the world's migrants and refugees and the aspirations of the communities which welcome them, so that, responding to the Lord's supreme commandment, we may all learn to love the

other, the stranger, as ourselves." (Pope Francis, Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2018)

Helen has suffered much in her life, gone through experiences we can't even imagine and has already spent over 12 years in the country without any support from the government. Despite all that, she shows remarkable strength, courage and compassion. Her way of living this very challenging situation is an inspiration to us. It helps us to relativise our own difficulties and invites us to grow in openness, compassion and hospitality. Opening our home has given us the opportunity to make a difference and, in a small way, be a counter culture to the separation, discrimination, inequality and injustice that is prevalent in society today.

AT KNOCK FOR POPE FRANCIS'S VISIT

In preparation for the Pope's visit on the morning of Sunday, 26 August, the town was draped in yellow and white, with flags and bunting flying from every lamppost, shop and house. The Shrine itself looked splendid with the flowers glistening in the sunshine. From 6 p.m. on Saturday there was no access to the Shrine Grounds.

On Sunday morning all the ushers had a briefing session at 4.30 am. The weather had completely changed. We got soaked just crossing over to the Basilica for the briefing. People started to arrive just as there was a glimmer of light in the sky, but the rain still poured down. Despite long journeys for many, especially children and grandparents, there was a wonderful sense of occasion and respect.

The ceremonies began at 8.30 am with reflections, songs and music; ending with the powerful song, "I Arise Today". All was shown on large screens around the grounds and on the side of the Basilica. There was some speculation among the crowds that the Pope's plane might not be able to land at Knock Airport and then, out of the mist we saw it touching down. A poignant moment. As soon as Pope Francis

arrived in Knock town, the rain stopped. People waved their flags as the popemobile moved rather quickly as more time than expected had been spent at the airport greeting all the children and people.



When the bells sounded a great silence fell as Pope Francis prayed in the Apparition Chapel for Ireland, families of the world, those who had suffered abuse, and for peace, healing, and the journey of God's faithful people. He addressed the crowd afterwards and prayed the

Angelus in Latin. He gifted the Shrine with a golden rosary knowing how important the tradition of the rosary has been in Ireland.

All too soon, we waved goodbye to Pope Francis as he was whisked back to the airport to fly to Dublin and the celebration of the Eucharist in the Phoenix Park. The people remained on for the Mass in the Shrine. It was a wonderful celebration of thanksgiving for the Pope's visit. Afterwards, it was so special to be able to sit in the Apparition Chapel and still experience the peace, love and blessings which Pope Francis had brought through his presence.

Bernadette Deegan



Theme: Coming together with those furthest behind to build an inclusive world of universal respect for human rights and dignity

HOW IT STARTED

On 17 October 1987, in the presence of 100,000 activists, Fr. Joseph Wresinski, founder of the international movement, All Together in Dignity (ATD) Fourth World, unveiled a Commemorative Stone on the Trocadero Human Rights Plaza in Paris. On this marble, Wresinski's call is engraved:

"Wherever men and women are condemned to live in poverty, human rights are violated. To come together to ensure that these rights are respected is our solemn duty."

Since 1987, many replicas of the Commemorative Stone have been inaugurated around the world. Initiatives to observe this day have been increasing and the Stone has become a rallying point for people from all walks of life. In 1992, the 17th of October was declared "International Day for the Eradication of Poverty" by the United Nations.

On 17 October 2008, a Commemorative Stone was



unveiled near the Famine Memorial in the Dublin docklands. This year marks the 10th anniversary of the unveiling. As in the past ten years, Irish

people, in union with people around the world, came together in friendship and solidarity with those who face chronic and severe poverty, honouring their struggles and renewing their determination to work

for a world where everyone's human rights and dignity are respected.

It was my first time to be present at this annual gathering. The experience was such that I am determined not to miss it as long as I am able to attend.



There was a varied programme of speeches, testimonies, and entertainment provide by groups of youthful musician and singers of songs such as *We Are Humanity* and *We Shall Overcome*. After the welcome address by the Lord Mayor of Dublin stones, prepared by ten groups involved in supporting those marginalised by poverty, were placed on the ground at the centre of the Stone.

To mention a few: Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre, SAOL Project, Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI), Concern, ATD Ireland, Focus... Five very



moving testimonies from people who had known destitution and were helped by individuals and these groups made me feel ashamed but also gave hope that poverty can be eradicated if we all have the humanity, compassion and will to see and to act.

gathered to read Fr. Wresinski's *I Bear Witness* address (p. 7) Finally, there was a powerful reading of the message on the Stone in Irish, French, Chinese, Polish and English by representatives from these countries.



Key guests, including an attaché from the French Embassy, Dublin City Council, CEO of the MRCI...,

Symbol on Commemorative Stone



“You see people reaching from the darkness towards the light to catch, to hold on to the bird which symbolises hope, love, brother(sister)hood, as well as joy and freedom. The circle shows that everything takes place within a community, a sense of solidarity. The whole of humanity lunges forward, constantly reaching towards the horizon.”

Joseph Wresinski in 1987

To see list of replicas of the Commemorative Stone around the world [click here](#).



Fr. Joseph Wresinski's Address
October 17, 1987
Human rights Plaza, Paris

I BEAR WITNESS TO YOU...

I bear witness to you.

You, the millions and millions
of children, women and fathers
who have died from misery and hunger and whose
legacy we hold.

It is not your death that I evoke,
today on this Plaza of Human Rights
and Liberties.

I bear witness to your lives.

I bear witness to you, the mothers,
whose children are cast aside in this world,
condemned as they are to sheer misery.

I bear witness to your children,
twisted by the pains of hunger,
no longer able to smile,
yet still yearning to love.

I bear witness to the millions of young people who
have no reason to _ believe or even to exist,
and who vainly search for a future in this senseless
world.

I bear witness to you, the poor of all times,
still poor today, forever on the road,
fleeing from place to place,
despised and disgraced.
Labourers without a trade,
ever crushed by their toil.

Labourers whose hands, today,
are no longer useful.

Millions of men, women, and children
whose hearts are still pounding strong
to the beat of the struggle,
whose minds rise in revolt
against the unjust fate imposed upon them,
whose courage demands the right
to priceless dignity.

I bear witness to you,
children, women and men,
who do not want to condemn,
but to love, to pray, to work, and to unite,
so that a world of solidarity may be born.
A world, our world, in which all people
would have given the best of themselves before
dying.

I bear witness to you,
men, women and children.
Your renown is henceforth engraved
by heart, hand and tool,
in the marble of this Plaza of Human Rights and
Liberties.

I bear witness to you, so that humanity
may at last fulfil its true destiny,
refusing forever that misery prevail.

INTERESTING TIMES AT ROCK FERRY

GROWING OLD GRATEFULLY

On the 16th August the community celebrated the 90th birthday of Sr. Margaret Doherty. The day began with Mass at 11 am with Father Brian presiding and with members of Margaret's family present for the occasion.



This was followed by a beautiful meal for all. Margaret and her family were very happy with the day and grateful to the Sisters and staff for the joyful memories they will now have.



With the assistance and help of our staff many activities have taken place for the Sisters during the past months.

Flower arranging



Visit to Blue Planet in Ellesmere Port



Visit to Ness Gardens in Neston



“BE NOT AFRAID”



This was the theme of the annual National Safeguarding Conference of the NBSCCI that took place on the 26th and 27th October in Kilkenny. Sr. Margaret Bradley who participated in place of Sr. Claire, McGrath who was unable to attend, gives her impressions of the Conference.

The Conference opened on Friday evening with Mass in St. Patrick's Church, Kilkenny at 5.00 p.m. The chief celebrant was Bishop Farrell (new Bishop of Ossary). Bishop Duffy from the diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise, the Parish Priest of St. Patrick's and a Franciscan Priest con-celebrated. The Homily was given by Bishop Farrell and it was truly inspiring. He spoke of our need to acknowledge our mistakes and to continue to work with enthusiasm and hope towards a brighter future for all. "Be not afraid" was the theme of the conference and the homily and the liturgy was built around this theme.

About eighty people were present for this Mass. A meal was provided for all in the Ormonde hotel at 7.00 p.m., giving the Conference participants an opportunity to meet one another. Among those who welcomed us was Teresa Devlin (our own past pupil from St. Mary's Grammar School, Magherafelt). Teresa is a member of the National Committee for Safeguarding in Ireland. She was delighted that we had come. After the meal, we went back to the St. John of God House, where we had booked in for the night and where we were given a warm welcome.

At 9.00 a.m. next morning we were at the Ormonde Hotel where the Conference was being held. Tereesa welcomed all and facilitated the day. Mr. John Morgan, Chair if the National Committee, gave the opening address always coming back to the theme, 'Be not Afraid'. He reminded us of the progress that had been made but urged us all to go forward with hope and courage.

Colette from the Diocese of Ferns gave a really wonderful presentation demonstrating how, from

the darkness of evil and chaos which they had experienced there, they had very slowly and painfully risen from the ashes as it were, and were now on the road again, driving forward with confidence, hope and courage. They had formed a special 'Spirit' Group for Youth and it was not only popular but also, and more importantly, proving to be very effective. Colette took us step by step through the process. So much work and effort had gone into the planning and trialling of this programme for youth. It is, or soon will be, available on the web.

Archbishop Diarmuid Martin's input was most inspiring. Again, he spoke of the need to acknowledge our darkness. He reminded us that Pope Francis had asked for prayer, penance and fasting. "When one is hurt, all are hurting". "When one suffers all are suffering." We need to hope. We need to have courage. We need to shed our fears and trust. We are not alone. God is with the Church in the darkness and the mess and God will always be with us.

'Patricia' was the pseudo name given to the lady who spoke of the devastating affect her priest brother's imprisonment (for sexual abuse crimes) had had on her family and how the family members had felt so isolated and so alone with no support from the Church or from anywhere. This was a harrowing story told with great sensitivity and great courage. 'Patricia' hopes to set up a group that will support families in similar situations.

Fr. Joe Mc Donald, who had been abused as an eight-year-old altar boy, spoke of the devastating affect his experience of abuse at the hands of a priest had

had on his life. "This experience" he said, "never goes away". "It shouldn't have happened," he kept repeating. And the one question that has never been asked is: "Why did it happen"? Why? His delivery was quite emotional. And although he met with his perpetrator and offered forgiveness there are moments when he feels angry and full of hate and resentment towards his abuser.

Fr. Joe was close to his mother. He felt angry at times towards her too for not spotting what was going on when he was a child. But coming towards her end and with full knowledge now about what had gone on she asked him, "De ye think he's in hell"? "No, Ma, he's not." was Fr. Joe's reply. "Well then, if he's not in hell, God help him when I get to heaven!" she said. Fr. Joe had to pick up the pieces and try to move on like so many others who had suffered abuse. He was a brother and a teacher for twenty five years. He was ordained priest twelve years ago. He still struggles with "what should never have happened"

John Carr, an expert in technology, living in London but with his roots in Co. Cavan, outlined the myths that are attached to the use of technology. All these new technology gadgets are the lifeline for young people today. They are central to their lives. We have to trust, not act as police hanging over their shoulder, inhibiting their freedom. Set standards. Give example. And yes, offer advice. There are apps which will control what can be accessed.

Suzie Duffy a Loretto Sister spoke of her work counselling those who have been abused and the struggle/dilemma she experiences when clients request to stay on with her, when in fact they should be moving to another support source. Finally, Brendan from Clonard Monastery, Belfast, showed

a video of the work done in Youth Ministry there. The excellent work being done by priests, volunteers and young people is truly amazing. Three of the young people who are engaged in youth ministry spoke of how they had become involved and what a change the experience had made in their lives and how their own faith had developed as a result.

The Programme that the youth are offered at Clonard enables them to gain qualifications, go on to University and become youth leaders in ministry and other fields. Aidan, the twenty-three-year-old who shared his experience of youth ministry at Clonard, has recently graduated from university with first class honours in Youth Ministry.

Being present at this conference and listening to what was being said and shared by so many has helped me to appreciate the enormous amount of great work that is currently being done within the Church and to value the progress that has been made over the last ten years. We have no need to fear. Safeguarding is part of who we are and what we do. We just need to continue to be compassionate towards complainants. Their pain never goes away. It lives on for as long as they live. Families, where a member is accused of abuse, need to be cared for. Priests who are accused of abuse need some form of support, too. "When one member suffers all members suffer."

The conference provided a very full programme. The content throughout was excellent, thoroughly prepared and very well presented. I am indeed grateful to have been there with the members of the Safeguarding Team for our Unit namely Maria Crowley, Sheila Roberts and Colette Keegan and I am thankful to Claire for offering me the space!





BOOK REVIEWS

The Elephant in the Church

by Mary T. Malone

This is a delightful easy to read book on the history of women in Christianity, especially in the Roman Catholic Church, written by an Irish woman who lived and taught in Toronto, in a Seminary, a University and a Catholic College for 40 years. She is now living in Wexford.

In this book Mary Malone focuses on the role/non role, the creative efforts to participate and the exclusion of woman, (other than “the elephant in the room”) within the Church throughout the ages from Biblical times to date. Choosing to write from women’s own understanding, own experience, she presents us with rich pickings from Monasticism, Medieval women mystics, the Beguines and the women missionaries.

“These Women from the beginning have built their lives around the following of Jesus, the living out of the *imago dei*, the public exercise of compassion and the unique sense of themselves as Godward and God-bearing people” (p 70).

Mary highlights how women are different from men in their approach to, their expression of, and their experience of the Divine and the Church. She

demonstrates how women pose a ‘problem’ for the male dominated church and how the hierarchy try to blame us, control us, ignore us, silence us, persecute us and “plámás” us... and yet, as the Gospel of Mark (15:40) points out right at the beginning, “there were women there”. In spite of exclusion, devaluation and burning at the stake we are still here!

Although the writings and excerpts quoted, are in the language and understanding of the specific time and culture, there is a quality about them that draws one in and fits in so well with the new approach to the Universe story and to God. It is easy to experience a resonance with the words and inner experience that the writer is sharing, and to feel joy at how women have in creative ways continued to stay true to their inner knowing.

Quoting the medieval mystic, *Maguerite Poerete*, Mary writes: “as men struggle with their rational approach to God... women felt themselves as mingling in divinity, boundless in their being and easier to be part of God as their natural habitat” (p80). I will finish with one of *Mechtilde of Magdeburg* poems.

Lie down in the fire

What, you ask, does it mean
To live a Godly life?
It means this one thing:
Only there, at the fiery heart,
Will you find her.
Only there will you see and taste and know
The flowing being of God
She in you and you in Her
Lie down in the fire,
Make it your home
Flow with its flowing
Burn in its burning
Then molded together
Fire in fire, Love in love
You will be God with God

UPCOMING EVENTS

November 2018						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 All Saints Day	2 Commemoration of all the Faithful departed	3
4	5	6 Meeting of the Holy Family Intervocational Committee	7	8	9	10 World Science Day for Peace and Development
11	12	13	14	15	16 International Day for Tolerance	17
18	19 World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victim	20	21	22	23	24 Feast of St. Theophane Venard (Prayer associate of the Holy Family)
25 International Day for the elimination of violence against women	26	27	28	29	30	

