



# Family Links

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

September 2018

Volume 4 Issue 7

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Holy Family Youth (HFY) members who provided support at the AGM

## Editorial

Cataclysm, as described by Sharon Zayak O.P. (Speaker on Spirituality and the new Universe Story at An Táirseach), is ***“systematic destruction in order to create the new ... and is essential to life on this planet and essential to an evolving Universe”***. It is easy, by surfing the Internet, to find examples to show that, rather than being destructive, extinction can help to increase biodiversity by allowing new species to evolve into the niches left by creatures that die out. The demise of the dinosaurs, 66 million years ago, which meant that mammals and birds and, eventually, humans came to dominate the planet is one of the most striking.

Sharon said we must “identify with the power of Cataclysm, embrace the power of what is tearing apart what we have known” and ask how we might consciously participate in this power and help “to midwife” a better future. Human beings have also been the cause, either directly or indirectly, of countless extinctions. Industrialisation has led to major artificial changes to our climate changing the course of evolution. Many ancient religions and belief systems have also known extinction.

While it is not an exaggeration to say that the Catholic Church is presently going through a cataclysmic moment, we are in no doubt that it will endure. How this is to be, and what type of Church emerges, will depend on how we, who are Church, embrace the moment. For us in Ireland, the aftermath of the papal visit would seem to be the propitious moment.



## Leader's Message

### CHANGE THROUGH CONVERSATION



Sr. Gemma  
Apostolic Sisters

For the rest of this year and next, we continue the process of deepening our identity as disciples of Jesus and members of the Family of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles. Through the *Holy Family* retreats and gatherings, we continue to reflect deeply on our charism in the light of the new cosmology. The last Enlarged General Council urged us to deepen our reflections and to keep asking ourselves the challenging questions that can enable us to be agents of transformation in the world. *What fruits are we already producing in our lives as Holy Family and how can we build on these and develop them further so that we can produce even more fruit?*

Peter Block in a book entitled, *“Community: the structure of belonging”*, offers some insights about community that can be helpful to us as we gather to share on our life together. First of all, Block states that change in any organization doesn't come about through leadership, through edicts from “on high”; but rather transformation is best initiated in small groups. For Block, the community is the unit of transformation; it is where change takes place and the future is created. *“Every community is that place where context can be shifted, relatedness, trust and intimacy can be built and new life-giving conversations can be introduced”* (p. 138). It is in community and through our conversations with each other, that we create the experience of belonging and we are thus able to talk freely about the future that we want to create together.

Block goes on to stress the importance of our conversations in community. We need new conversations, not conversations that centre on the limitations within the group or, worse still, recriminations of one another, but rather conversations that focus on the gifts within the group and the possibilities of the group to create something new together. Our conversations should be such that the chance of creating something new increases and a quality of aliveness is generated which leads to enthusiasm and commitment to the community project.

We create space for conversations that are characterized by generative listening. In listening to one another we suspend our own judgements so as to be fully open to what is being said – not only to the content but also to the feelings and the non verbal cues that often say as much as the words expressed. Acceptance of difference is an important value; diversity of opinion and dissent are given space and the gifts of each person and our community are acknowledged and celebrated.

The questions we ask ourselves at this time have power to make a difference – questions that open up dialogue and lead to action and commitment. Block suggests a few: *“What is the story you keep telling yourself about the problems of the community? What is **your** contribution to the very thing you complain about? What are the gifts you hold that have not been brought fully into community? What are we being called to create together that would make a difference? How can we help one another in the creation of the new that is waiting to be born and to take responsibility for the whole?”*

Block asserts that questions are more transformative than answers because *“questions create the space for something new to emerge... and powerful questions evoke a choice for accountability and commitment”* (p. 151.) To be sure, answers can feel more satisfying than questions. They help us feel less powerless – we feel that we can actually do something to ameliorate our situation. But as humans, questioning ourselves has to be an on-going process if we are to grow and change. And the questions change over time.

One last inspiring and challenging quote from Block: *“The future is created one {community} meeting at a time. Each meeting must become an example of the future we want to create. This means the small community is where transformation takes place”.*

# WORLD MEETING of FAMILIES 2018 DUBLIN



Icon at Knock Shrine  
where Pope Francis "held 45,000 people in prayer"

**B**efore, during, and after the WMOF2018 we in Ireland and, no doubt, people elsewhere, constantly heard it said that Ireland today is a vastly different country today from that visited by Pope John Paul II in 1979. Although 78.3% of Irish people declared themselves Catholic in the 2016 census, much fewer "practise their faith" which usually means going to Sunday Mass. The fact that people still maintain contact with the church - even if only for baptism, marriage, funerals, Christmas and Easter - could mean the church, as a community of people, is healthier. There are fewer "cultural" Catholics. People profess their faith because they choose to do so, not because of societal pressure.

This was brought home to those of us who followed the programme for the week. We could not but be impressed by the sense of joy and enthusiasm of the crowds in the RDS (Royal Dublin Society) for the

three-day Congress, at the Festival of Families in Croke Park, at Knock Shrine and, finally, at the Papal Mass in Phoenix Park. As one person said, it was lovely to be part of a sea of people from over 100 countries flowing from the various events, all in good spirits talking to one another, no longer strangers. Another who was part of the crowd at Knock Shrine said, in reference to the media comments about a dying Irish Catholic Church, "It is a very healthy-looking corpse."

Throughout the week, each day reflected on the theme "The Gospel of the Family: Joy for the World". At the indoor exhibition in the RDS there were over 300 stands. It was an opportunity for faith-based organisations (such as the *Holy Family* of Bordeaux), charities, those working to support faith development, as well as Irish culture, crafts and tourism providers to reach a huge international



Panoramic view of the RDS exhibition hall



audience of interested people. There was also a rich programme of keynote speakers for adults, workshops, talks, testimonies. There was a teen village and a children's space to cater for their special needs.

In the Prayer Space, a large marquee divided into sections, there were opportunities for *Lectio*, shared prayer, and perpetual adoration. It was always full of worshippers. Needless to say the Eucharist, celebrated in the large arena, was a daily highlight.



**Pope Francis arriving in Croke Park**

The Festival of Families, held in the presence of Pope Francis, was one of the highlights of the week.. The line-up included a cast of thousands. The selection of themes and artists featured in the event reflect many of the priorities in the ministry of Pope Francis, including homelessness and those on the margins, migrants and refugees, care for our common home and the importance of the family.



**One of several Youth bands entertaining the crowds**

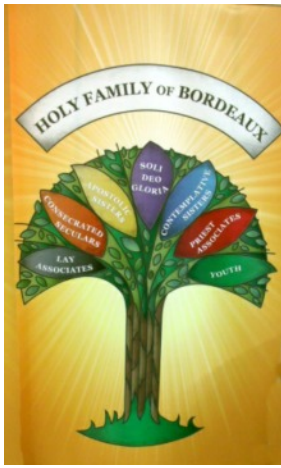
Five families - from Ireland, Canada, India, Iraq and Africa - shared their stories with Pope Francis. The themes of the family testimonies focused on: forgiveness in family, strength in family, hope in family life, the intergenerational nature of families today and the impact of technology and addiction on family life. Pope Francis met each of these families and heard their stories.

On Sunday, 26 August, between 200,000 and 300,00 people of all ages and sizes gathered in the rain at Phoenix Park (the largest park in Europe) for the papal Mass. There would have been many more had it not been for security arrangements prohibiting transport anywhere near the park, warnings of 10 km walks, hours of standing unless you had a light camp stool. The same sense of joy and peace that had been evident during the week prevailed. People were there because they wanted to be part of a Church that Pope Francis represents.

Knowing the challenges the Catholic Church is facing, not only in Ireland but worldwide, we ask ourselves what will be the aftermath of this historic visit? The conversation has to begin now.

Pope Francis prayed for forgiveness at the Mass in Phoenix Park for the the abuses committed by the those in authority in the Church. [Click here for a video](#) of his words.





## THE HOLY FAMILY PRESENCE AT THE WMOF



It is not often that all five vocations of the Family of PBN are offered the opportunity to co-operate and work together on a common project. In August this year, the World Meeting of Families allowed us such an opportunity. And, to do it at a major International event was an amazing experience.

For the three days at the RDS in Dublin, alongside many other organizations, we had a stand. Three specially designed banners proclaimed to all who passed by "Who we Are" - a Family of Five Vocations. But more importantly, each day during the event, all members of the Family, plus some of our *Holy Family* youth, took turns to be present at the stand engaging with people from all over the world who passed by and spoke with us.



Teresa McElhone was there representing the Contemplatives, members of the Secular and Lay Associates were very generous in sharing their time. Fr Willie Purcell, a priest associate also made his presence known.

It was very encouraging to see our *Holy Family* Youth from Newbridge play their part at the event.



Eithne Hughes represented the General Leadership Team and it was wonderful to see the joy of the participants from the Philippines when they discovered that Eithne could speak to them in their own native Tagalog Language.

When participants from France saw on the banners, "Holy Family of Bordeaux" there was a lot of interest and questions from them. The whole event was both International and intercultural and we felt that, as members of the *Holy Family*, we reflected something of that diversity which was very evident at the larger gathering.



The experience of the WMOF has left me with much to reflect on, but what has remained with me is the fact that we are really, truly "*Holy Family*" when we

understand, live and witness to the diversity of our Vocations within the Church.

Claire McGrath





## With Refugees and Asylum Seekers in our Unit of Ireland and Britain

In our General Chapter Decrees 2014 we are invited to commit ourselves to a “state of exodus” so that we are obliged to be not only in touch with migrants, refugees and displaced persons but to move out of our comfort zones to enable us to be with them.

In our Unit we have taken this seriously and invited people who have been refused Asylum in the UK to share our homes. The situation in Ireland is different in that our sisters are committed to working with those in “Direct Provision”.

In this short article I want to look at the definitions of those who are forced to move for various reasons. After the first and second World Wars there was vast displacement of peoples until in 1951 the United Nations brought forward a Declaration on the treatment of Refugees and Asylum Seekers. This was ratified by over one hundred countries which means today we are obliged to give Refugees the right of protection.

According to the United Nations High Commission of Refugees (UNHCR), “Asylum Seekers are people who move across borders in search of protection but who may not fulfil the strict criteria laid down by the Convention of 1951. They have applied for protection as a refugee and are awaiting the determination of their status”. Definitions of Asylum Seekers may vary from country to country but in most countries the term Asylum/Refugee differs only in regard to the individual who is asking for protection. Asylum Seekers ask for protection when arriving in the host country whereas a refugee may



apply outside the country and is granted protection on arrival.

According to the 1951 Convention a refugee is someone who flees because of the “*well founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, members of particular social groups or political opinion and is unable because of such fear to return to their country of origin*”.

Economic migrants are people who choose to travel in search of a better life and as such do not fulfil the criteria of the Convention. So technically, those who try to come to Europe for a better life as such are judged as Economic migrants and as not entitled to our protection. This of course begs the whole question of poverty in the global south.



Direct Provision Centre in Ireland

In our Unit we are working differently in the UK and Ireland. In Ireland technically those who come as Asylum are supposed to be housed and cared for under International Law. This means that the Government are meant to provide “accommodation free of charge and a living allowance. Asylum Seekers are usually entitled to free medical care and children must have access to mainstream education”. All very laudable but the reality is very different as our sisters attest. Direct provision was only meant to be for 6 months when it often takes years for the system to

work for the Asylum Seekers. The “living allowance” is laughable and way too small for any quality of life. Life in the hotels provided can be very unpleasant and not conducive to family life.

In the UK, on the other hand, we have a situation whereby people who ask for asylum are initially given accommodation usually away from the Capital. They are entitled to free legal advice but once their claim is refused they are entitled to a judicial review which is very costly and not paid for under legal aid. This means that those who have been refused have to find new evidence to support their claim which is often

impossible to find. This leaves the thousands of people here who are not allowed to work or claim any benefits in total destitution. These are some of the people we share our homes with. Of course, it is not even the tip of the iceberg but we also take part in campaigns to address the causes.

I think it is fair to say that, for those of us in the Unit who come into contact with these desperate situations, the amazing resilience of the human person has been a privilege and a source of wonder.

**Marie Power (on behalf of the Exodus Team)**

## TWO YOUNG MEN WHO SURVIVED TO TELL THE TALE OF THEIR DIFFICULTIES

**Y**esterday I was in college as a volunteer helper, as usual, and was asked by the teacher to interview the new students in the ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) class. Among these were two 17-year-old young men, one from Kurdistan (Iraq) and one from Afghanistan.

Both witnessed the death of their parents by terrorists and as a result started to escape. They were both looking after sheep in the high mountains of their countries. One started off with an older brother, the other with an older sister. Both have been separated from their sibling and don't know where they are!

The young man from Kurdistan is 17 has already passed through 17 countries. He is badly traumatised as you can imagine. The other young man from Afghanistan has travelled through approximately 10 countries.

One of them travelled to England inside a huge lorry that was transporting frozen chickens at a temperature of -27 degrees. Another hideaway died in the lorry on the way.

These young men now live in Bradford on their own and are so relieved to be living in a country where there is no war and where they are respected. They are working hard and are good students.

### Singing in the rain for Global Divestment

**R**ecently on Global Divestment Day, 8th September, a group of us from Global Justice Bradford held one of our demos against West Yorkshire Pension Fund asking them to STOP investing in Fossil Fuels and, instead, to INVEST in RENEWABLE ENERGY.

We've also planned to meet with our local Councillor to ask her to sign the Divestment Request. 12 other Councillors have already signed.



Teresa, L. Holding banner

**Teresa Edwards, Bradford Community**



## “MEETING IN FAITH AND FRIENDSHIP” at the Lay Associates 2018 AGM

This was how a participant described the Irish Lay Associates meeting that took place, for the second year running, in the **Holy Family Secondary School**, Newbridge. Several of those present, Associates and Sisters, were past pupils/teachers of the school so it was particularly heart-warming for them to revisit the school where the *Holy Family* ethos is preserved.

The school Principal, also a past pupil, who has only recently taken up office, came to add her words of welcome during lunch in the school dining room. In addition, a group of the school's students, who belong to the Holy Family Youth group, were there throughout the day to act as ushers and assist those unfamiliar with the place in every way possible.

As well as the usual business of an AGM, there was input from three speakers whose words were greatly appreciated by the group.



▪ Claire Smith, a native of Magherafelt, was “discovered” by Sr. Margaret Bradley when they were both on a mission of mercy. This is not the place to go into details of their meeting or to mention all the ministries Claire is involved in. However, this fortuitous meeting resulted in Claire reading *A Prophet for today*. So impressed was she that Margaret invited her to speak at the AGM. This totally fresh

outlook on Fr. Noailles’ project from someone who had not had any prior connection with the *Holy Family* was truly inspiring.



▪ Claire McGrath spoke on *Faith* inviting interaction from her audience. This they did, sharing deeply and convincingly their

personal faith experience. Particularly moving and appreciated was the contribution of the British Lay Associates President, Margaret Ramsey who had travelled from England with Maureen for the meeting.



▪ *The Role of the Lay Associate* was the subject of a talk by Sr. Áine Hayde, published below and which will be put on our Website.



▪ Priest Associate, Fr. Willie Purcell, presided at the Eucharistic celebration.



**Margaret Ramsey addressing the assembly**

## THE ROLE OF THE LAY ASSOCIATE

When I was first asked to reflect with you on the role or vocation of the *Holy Family* Lay Associate today, my first reaction was to say “No”. The reason is that I think it is something that should be done by a Lay Associate. But anyway, in the end I agreed. But I would like to warn you, you are not going to hear anything new! However, perhaps your memory will be jogged about something you had forgotten or you may suddenly see something in a new light.

So what is a Lay Associate of the *Holy Family*? First of all, as you have heard a hundred times, the word “Associate” in our context means “member”. All of us, Sisters, Consecrated Seculars, Priests and yourselves are Associates – full members of the *Holy Family*. It would be better perhaps to forget the word “Associate” and use the word “Member”. This would avoid the confusion of thinking that Lay Members are just associated with the Sisters – a kind of lower level in the hierarchy! I wonder if you really believe that you are full members just as the Sisters are?

So, what are the implications of being a full member? As I think you will have said on the day of your Commitment, you promise to live the spirituality and mission of the *Holy Family*.

The spirituality of every member of the *Holy Family* consists of imitating Jesus, Mary and Joseph whose lives were centred on God Alone. Our Founder took two spiritual trends that were very popular in France from the 17<sup>th</sup> century – God Alone and The Holy Family – and joined them together to give us our way of life. These two focal points of our spirituality are inseparable and therein lies its originality. Fr. Noailles could be said to have summarised this spirituality as, “Jesus, Mary and Joseph loved, sought and desired God alone in all things”; and, in fact,

everything we are called to live is contained in that very brief statement and flows from it.

All the different Vocations live this spirituality according to their own specific Constitutions or Statutes as well as more up-to-date documents that we receive from time to time. You have beautifully-written Statutes and they merit being read and reflected on constantly. They are not something that you can read once and for all. By reflecting on them you will be able to discover how you personally are called to live for God Alone in the footsteps of the Holy Family.



We all do this in different ways. So it would be worth taking some time to reflect on how you personally live this, and perhaps put it in writing for yourself. Then you can review it from time to time. When we read the Founder’s life or writings, we see how he lived

this spirituality. However, we must remember that he was a man of his time and the details of the spirituality that he recommended to his Family were suited to people living in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Our challenge today is to translate his teaching so that it is relevant for people who are living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in a kind of world that would have been totally unimaginable for someone living 200 years ago. We are called to allow our spirituality to unfold within the context of a faith which is evolving from something that was bound in doctrines and dogmas about a God in the distant realms of heaven into a constant awareness of the Divine Presence permeating the universe and finding human expression in Jesus of Nazareth. In the power-point that Claire will show you, you will get some ideas about an evolving faith. Remember if something is not evolving and growing, it is dying.



For the past ten years we have been invited to “unlearn” lots of things that we took for granted. One of those things is that there is a deposit of faith that is unchangeable and cannot be touched or questioned. But why should we continue to express our faith in terms that are suited to the Middle Ages and, as someone said recently, which no sane person would believe in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

As members of the *Holy Family*, it is our responsibility to reflect deeply on this, to read as much as we can and to spread the good news. Sometimes people say “But why is the Church not telling us this?” People who say this usually equate the Church with the priest who says Mass on Sunday. But the priests and bishops are not the Church.

We have allowed the Church to become clericalised and according to Pope Francis that is the cause of the criminal behaviour that is rife today. The Church is made up of all baptised people – and most of those are Lay People. So we all have a responsibility for the Church and for making it relevant for people of our time. It is time for us to take on our own authority and to play our role in a responsible and courageous way.

And what about our common mission – that is the mission that all of us have? One of the ways our Founder spoke of this was “to spread and strengthen the faith”. The faith meant something very different to him from what it means for us today. He was trying to build up the Church after the destruction of the French Revolution. What are we trying to do today? What kind of faith are we spreading and strengthening today? Is it something static or is it alive and active?

Another way of expressing our mission is “To be and create Family”. What would that Family look like? What does that phrase really mean? We are all aware of the debate on the various kinds of family

that exist today. What kind of family are we? What characterises us? What kind of family are we trying to create? Where, among whom, are we trying to create it?

And the most recent way we have of expressing our mission is “To promote communion”. This, of course is very much in keeping with the thought of Pope Francis in his encyclical *Laudato si*. We are becoming more and more aware that we are part of a whole and that the human race is not the pinnacle of creation but is very dependent on everything else for its very existence. This has many serious implications for us – something else that merits reflection.

So we have lots of challenges, invitations and calls if we are to play our part in the evolution of the Church responsibly. It would probably be profitable to reflect on these and discuss them during your meetings. Remember your meetings are not prayer groups or Scripture study groups even though prayer and Scripture reading may be part of them. They are reflection and support groups which help us to live our spirituality and mission and take up our responsibility for the development and evolution of the *Holy Family* and the Church. So let us ask ourselves if we are taking these challenges seriously, or are we content to remain in the false security of our spiritual comfort zone. If we are, we will become increasingly irrelevant in a very fast-moving world. In this world, as you know, more and more people, especially younger people, are finding deep meaning for their lives beyond what we thought were the “absolute certainties” of the past. These so-called absolute certainties no longer sustain or nourish thinking and reflective people. So let us reflect seriously on how we can unlearn and move out of old patterns – how we can re-work our tradition and spread the good news.

**Áine Hayde**  
***Irish Assembly, September 2018***



## BOOK REVIEWS

### *Galileo's Daughter: A Drama of Science, Faith and Love* by Dava Sobel

If you have an interest in history, especially the struggle in the Church between faith and science, this is the book for you. It also offers some fascinating glimpses into Religious life in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) was the foremost scientist of his day; he was also a man of deep faith who was devoted to the church. Yet, in 1633 Galileo was tried and threatened with torture by the Holy Office of the Inquisition for claiming that the Earth actually moves around the Sun.

His telescopes allowed him to reveal this new reality but members of the Inquisition believed answers to these questions were to be found in Holy Scripture,

not in science and were therefore not to be questioned or contradicted.

This fascinating book is not just about Galileo's struggle with the Church. It is a very human story. His daughter Virginia became a cloistered nun where she took the name Sr. Marie Celeste. They corresponded frequently and the story is brought to life through their voices and those of others who touched their lives. Galileo said that her intelligence and support proved to be his greatest strength through his most difficult years.

This is a fairly lengthy book but It speaks not just to the world of the 16<sup>th</sup> century but to many aspects of our struggle within the Church of today.

Claire McGrath

Published in Great Britain, 1999, by Fourth Estate Ltd.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

October 2018						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 World Habitat Day	2 International Day of Non Violence	3 Synod on Young People begins in Rome	4 Feast of St. Francis of Assisi - Creation time ends	5	6
7	8 Day for LIFE*	9	10	11 International Day of the Girl Child	12	13
14	15	16 World Food Day	17 International Day for the Eradication of Poverty	18 EU Anti Human Trafficking Day	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27 Birthday of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles
28 End of Synod on Young People	29 International Internet Day	30	31			

\*Day for LIFE is celebrated yearly by the Catholic Church in Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales. It is a day dedicated to raising awareness about the meaning and value of human life at every stage and in every condition. We encourage you to deepen your understanding of Catholic Social Teaching on this important question by exploring the material we have made available on

[www.chooselife2018.ie/Day4Life/](http://www.chooselife2018.ie/Day4Life/)

Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference