



The Holy Family of Bordeaux in Britain and Ireland

Family Links

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

December 2019

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EDITORIAL

We stand at the gate of a new year and a new decade. We shall be hearing the greeting, “a happy new year”, many times these days. Reactions to it have to be different but does it not always tend to lift the soul and stir hope in the human heart?

Uncertainty, even fear, may reign in the hearts of many; we call to mind asylum seekers who have been waiting years for their situation to be resolved, the homeless who have been on housing lists for months if not years, the sick waiting for urgent interventions. Perhaps, as they as they gaze through the gate of their future, they see little reason to hope but still cling to it because of the kindness of nameless individuals.

Others may see exciting new possibilities opening before them and reach out in anticipation and a degree of certainty. And there are those who know, or those who love them know, they will not end of the year in time, but in eternity.

We, in the *Holy Family* Association, stand at the gate of a new century, on the cusp of something that is still dormant as we allow ourselves to be questioned and challenged by the changing time we live in, prepared to adapt with courage to whatever new way opens to us.

So, as we pass through the gate of the new year, we realise that no one but God can know what it will bring. We remember that God is our only true hope who will lead and direct our steps as we enter into the new year.

“May the God of hope fill (us) with all joy and peace in (our) faith, so that in the power of the Holy Spirit (we) may be rich in hope.” (Rom. 15:13)



Message from the Intervocational Team

Another year over



Over the past few weeks, I have found my attention been caught by a phrase from a Christmas Song playing in the shops and on the radio “another year over and new one just begun”. I think it is a

common phrase that most of us will utter in these days probably with the addition and “it has gone so quickly”. Just another fast thought among the many that cross our consciousness.

This phrase “another year over” has stayed with me and provided me with an opportunity to reflect on the past year – my lived experience – some filled with gratitude, others highlighting areas of challenge and others the moments of growth. I was reminded of a quote from PBN “*build on fresh ground, and to choose with discretion, among the old edifices, only those stones that are suitable for the new structure (i)*. I found myself thinking about the attitudes and good practice that I have selected this year and can build on in the future. I invite you now to pause and think of an attitude that you developed this year, which led to good practice; how can you build on this in the coming months?

The year that is just beginning, 2020, sees the Family of PBN celebrate our bicentenary, we are mindful of all those who have gone before us and convinced of the relevance of our charism of communion and the diversity of our Vocations. Our charism of communion connects us to God, one another and all of creation. Pope Francis in his writings offers us the inspiration to take up our rightful place as missionary disciples. I share some extracts with you.

“The year that is just beginning, 2020, sees the Family of PBN celebrate our bicentenary, we are mindful of all those who have gone before us and convinced of the relevance of our charism of communion and the diversity of our Vocations. Our charism of communion connects us to God, one another and all of creation.”

In *Laudato Si* – care of our common home - he reminds us As Christians, *we are also called “to accept the world as a sacrament of communion, as a way of sharing with God and our neighbours on a global scale. It is our humble conviction that the divine and the human meet in the slightest detail in the seamless garment of God’s creation, in the last speck of dust of our planet”⁽ⁱⁱ⁾. A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern.⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ We are not disconnected from the rest of creatures but joined in a splendid universal communion. This requires us to*

approach life with serene attentiveness, which is capable of being fully present to someone without thinking of what comes next, which accepts each moment as a gift from God to be lived to the full. Jesus taught us this attitude when he invited us to contemplate the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, or when seeing the rich young man and knowing his restlessness, ‘he looked at him with love’ (Mk 10:21). He was completely present to everyone and to everything.^(iv) Each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary”^(v).

In *Gaudete et Exultate* – Call to Holiness - we are encouraged *to embrace that unique plan that God willed for each of us,^(vi) and accept that God wants to speak to the world by your life.^(vii) We are consciously aware that our God is near, Emmanuel, God with us.*

In *Evangelii Gaudium* - Joy of the Gospels - we read, *the joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. With Christ joy is constantly born anew^(viii) and, further on, Pope Francis invites all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask*

all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since "no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord". (ix)

In our relationships with one another and in particular those whom society forces to stoop low, Pope Francis poses this challenge *We need to let ourselves be evangelised by them. We are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them.(x) We do this through loving attentiveness.(xi)*

I have found these quotes a source for my own personal reflection. They have provided encouragement and also a gentle nudge to realign my actions and attitudes. Within the chosen extracts there is the continual invitation to remain connected to God, to one another and all of creation. In a world

where *disconnect* takes priority, I feel that as the family of PBN we have a vital role to play in ensuring *connection* within our own locality and the people we encounter on a daily basis.

What better time to start than right now, as we stand on the threshold of 2020. As members of the Family of PBN, may we ensure that all our actions generate communion.

Catherine Lavery (Unit leader)

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- i Preface 1851 General Rule
 - li LS #9,
 - iii LS#92
 - iv LS#226
 - v LS#65
 - vi GE#13
 - Vii GE#24
 - vii EG#1
 - viii EG#3
 - ix EG#198
 - x EG#199
 - xi EG#199

**God sleeps in the stones,
Dreams in the plants,
Stirs in the animals,
Sings in the birds,
And awakes in the human.**

Source unknown

Wrexham Associates look back

In July we set off for our annual summer trip. Travelling in style in a mini-bus, the group set off from the Holy Family Convent in Sontley Road. We were a mixed group - Associates, Sisters, a visitor from Ireland, two parishioners and a long-suffering husband keeping an eye on his wife, Christine, driving the mini-bus.

Our first stop was at the Church of the Blessed Sacrament in Connah's Quay. We had Mass there with our friend, Canon Joe Stewart, who then accompanied us to the village of Pantasaph. Pantasaph is a Franciscan Church and, in the recent past, ran an excellent Retreat Centre. It is a lovely old church with its own graveyard and a very peaceful Padre Pio garden and shrine. Some of us walked the Way of the Cross up the hillside, then descended to a Lourdes-style grotto in the old quarry.

One of the highlights of the day was our lunch at the excellent cafe. It was such a warm day that we ate in the courtyard. A few of us paid a visit to the



shop/repository. Finally, we said prayers in the Church before getting back on the mini-bus, having had a lovely day out.

Elizabeth Roberts, Wrexham Associates.

Remembering Philomena Hogan: 22nd May 1931 - 18th Nov 2019

Philomena came into this world on 22nd May 1931. She was born in County Sligo and was very happily brought up by Catholic Sisters in an orphanage. As a young girl, she was a bit of a tomboy and fell from a tree. This resulted in a disability that necessitated the wearing of a caliper and boot which she coped with for the rest of her life.

When Phil was old enough to work, the Sisters found her a lovely job as a "mother's help" with a family in the town of Sligo. It was a job made for her; the children loved her and kept in touch with her all through her life.

She met her husband, Michael, through being a penfriend. They came over to Britain with his job, which was mainly outdoor work and they married in England. Often there was work for Philomena wherever her husband worked. Eventually, they had a son, Martin, and they came to live and work in Bala where they would have been active members of the small Catholic community. In the town, there was a small sewing factory and Phil found work there, pressing the clothes ready for sale.

After some years in Bala, Phil and Michael moved to their final home in Llangollen. The people of the town remember the slightly built, lame lady with a splendid head of auburn hair. She was well-liked in Llangollen and in her Parish of Holy Cross Church. She met and became great friends with Mary Doyle, an Associate of the Holy Family. Mary brought Phil with her to an Associates' meeting in Sontley Road, Wrexham. Phil loved the Convent and the Sisters and, after a time of preparation, made her commitment in the presence of May and Bert Suffield - a very special occasion.

Phil lost her husband, Michael, and lived alone for a few years in her flat before moving to Abbey Dingle Care Home, where she was always having visitors - Sisters, friends and Associates. She spent some weeks in hospital and then in a nursing home in Wrexham. She passed away peacefully on the 18th of November 2019. At our meetings, Philomena always remembered to pray for those Holy Souls who had no-one else to pray for them. She was an example to us all and we loved her.

Philomena, rest in God's peace and love.

THE GATE OF THE YEAR

'God Knows'

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:

"Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown."

And he replied:

"Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.

That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way."

So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night.

And (God) led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.

So heart be still:

What need our little life

Our human life to know,

If God hath comprehension?

In all the dizzy strife

Of things both high and low,

God hideth (God's) intention.

God knows. (God's) will

Is best. The stretch of years

Which wind ahead, so dim

To our imperfect vision,

Are clear to God. Our fears

Are premature; In (God),

All time hath full provision.

Then rest: until

God moves to lift the veil

From our impatient eyes,

When, as the sweeter features

Of Life's stern face we hail,

Fair beyond all surmise

God's thought around (God's) creatures

Our mind shall fill.

Minnie Louise Haskins

Homily of Rev. Professor Michael Mullaney,
President NUI Maynooth,
at the annual Christmas Carol Service in Saint Patrick's College,
Maynooth, December 2019

Preparing for Christmas is more than a safe, private, familial enterprise, but embraces the great public issues of our time, including the value and dignity of every human person.

In the city of Philadelphia, there is a poignant and imposing monument to the Irish famine. It is an Irish famine ship: on one side, life-size figures of emaciated and despairing emigrants embark leaving home; on the other side, smiling and hope-filled faces disembark. A fresh start in a new world.

Recently, there has been a heightened awareness of the arrival to our country of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, knocking on our door in search of protection, security and a better future. People who have lost or given everything, in some cases even their lives, in a desperate attempt to escape the devastating effects of climate change, war, persecution and poverty.

We have been horrified by the harrowing stories of migrants found hiding and, more shockingly, dead in truck containers – modern coffin ships. We are wrestling with the complex issues around housing and integrating migrants in asylum centres. More worrying is the emerging fear of ‘the other’, the foreigner, the stranger. To some extent, the fear is legitimate because the preparation for this encounter is lacking. Some parish communities’ traditional tranquillity seem to be threatened. The problem is not that we have doubts and fears, but when they condition our way of thinking and acting to the point of making us intolerant, closed and perhaps – without realizing it – even racist.

Most of us would balk at the idea that we are racist because we understand racism on an individual rather than structural level. Many of us can point to friends of different colour, religion, ethnic group and believe we are open, unbiased and tolerant to the ‘other’. However, a recent EU Report highlighted worrying patterns of racist behaviour in Ireland. Surprisingly, figures of harassment, discrimination and racism were significantly higher in Ireland than in many other



European countries. A new language of racism, mostly opportunistic, understated, but no less toxic, has emerged in our public and political discourse, stoking hostility towards the ‘other’ and testing our own sense of hospitality for the first time.

Ultimately, none of us can escape bearing a resemblance, warts and all, to the sense of cultural and economic entitlement and privilege, even superiority, that raises and forms us in the western world, including Ireland. It takes a lot of critical thinking and intentional unlearning to change that.

Even Jesus had to confront his ingrained prejudices; indeed, even racism. The Gospels recount his stunning and unique encounter with a Syro-Phoenician woman desperately seeking a cure for her sick daughter. The disciples dismiss her as she was considered racially inferior. Surprisingly, Jesus sharply rejects her appeal. His mission is to the Jews only; his tribe; the children of God. When the woman insists, Jesus dismisses her again – calling her shockingly a ‘dog’ – a racial slur. The woman doesn’t challenge his insult. Like so many victims in history, she has internalised her inferiority. But her repartee: “Even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs” is the only recorded encounter that left Jesus speechless. If we truly celebrate the mystery of the Incarnation, of God who takes human flesh, it should not surprise us that Jesus could not have avoided the effects of the prejudices that had shaped his human and cultural identity from childhood.

We do not know what Jesus thought in that moment. But the Syro-Phoenician woman dislocates Jesus from his narrow tribal suppositions and prejudices about the 'other' represented by her. She ceases to be an 'outsider'. God's heart could not be closed to her. She too is one of the children of God. Physical healing is given not only to her daughter, but ultimately the deeper wounds of isolation, marginalization and discrimination become central to Jesus' healing and liberating ministry in the Gospel. In this transformative encounter Jesus demonstrates that regardless of how unwittingly and unknowingly we are part of the problem, we can choose to reject racism and hostility to the 'other', the stranger, in ourselves and in our world, committing ourselves to the slow, hard work of transformation.

The season of Advent that prepares for the Nativity of the Lord comes from the Latin word 'advenae' which means the 'one who comes', the 'other who comes', the stranger, the foreigner who comes to our threshold unexpectedly.

Isaiah – the great Advent figure – speaks to us this evening of the hospitality for all peoples on the mountain of the Lord. Saint Paul exhorts us to welcome each other as we would welcome Christ, especially the Gentile – the foreigner, the stranger.

The readings from Genesis and Luke which bookend our carols this evening, recount Abraham and Mary's and encounter with strangers. Only after breaking bread with the stranger under the Mamre tree does Abraham recognize his guests as visitors from God. And Mary, although fearful of the sacred Stranger, tends carefully to the reassuring voice of love that whispers, "Do not be afraid!" Mary chooses openness over fear; Abraham chooses hospitality over hostility.

Through the prism of Advent, we can see the stories of many strangers, refugees, asylum seekers, hidden in the story of a child whose expectant parents travelled far from home in search of hospitality in an unwelcome place. In a shed in the backyard of a crowded inn, the revolutionary spark of God's solidarity and hospitality for the stranger was kindled. In Bethlehem, a small chink opens up for those who have lost their land, their country, their dreams. Mary and Joseph, for whom there was no room, are the first

to embrace the child who gives all of us our document of citizenship as the Children of God and who lovingly embraces all of us equally regardless of country, colour or creed.

Friends, preparing for Christmas is more than a safe, private, familial enterprise, but embraces the great public issues of our time, including the value and dignity of every human person. It impels us to choose openness over fear; hospitality over hostility. To see that the stranger or the foreigner is not a threat but a treasure who can become a source of new grace for our communities. In our preparing for hospitality, in our being open to new forms of relationships and friendships to those who come to seek a fresh start in our cities, towns, villages and islands, we welcome, we see and we encounter God who comes anew.

Máirtín Ó Direáin, the great Irish poet from Inis Mór, captures the heart of Christmas hospitality in a short poem, *Cuireadh do Mhuire / A Christmas Invitation to Our Lady*. (A copy of the poem was placed on each of your seats.) Ó Direáin penned this beautiful and gentle verse during Christmas of 1942, when Europe was engulfed by war. His little island, perched on the edge of the vast Atlantic, was helpless to influence the world's powers in any way, save to offer hospitality to the displaced, of whom there were many millions.

Do you know, Mother Mary,
where you'll go this Christmas
and you seeking a roof

for the Holy Child,
when every door
is closed against Him

with the hate and conceit
of humankind?

Would you ever take up
an invite from myself here
to a sea-girt island

far away in the West?
There'll be candles shining,

lit in every window,
and turf fire blazing

on every hearth.

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

29 December 2019

by Carol J. Dempsey

Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14

Psalm 128

Colossians 3:12-21

Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

Family relationships are often complex, complicated and ever-changing. Some families are extended, interracial, multicultural and multilingual. Some parents within the family unit are heterosexual, same-sex or single parents. Some families are native to a country; others are immigrants or naturalized citizens.

Whatever the case may be, families today are diverse. Power relations within families are also diverse. Some families are matriarchal, some are patriarchal, and some enjoy shared power. Families differ from culture to culture, from country to country, from region to region.

In the Bible, particular in the Old Testament with the New Testament being no exception, we see families that are patriarchal, a model shaped by androcentric attitudes. Fathers are "over" their children; wives derive their security from their husbands; women are to bear children and be subservient to their husbands.

This last Sunday of the calendar year celebrates the feast of the Holy Family. The liturgical readings portray marriage as heteronormative and the family unit as patriarchal.

The first reading from Ben Sirach outlines the various responsibilities that children have toward their parents. Here, the family unit is intricately linked together through the actions of the child. Sons are charged with taking care of their fathers in old age, especially when a father's health begins to fail. The focus of the reading is the father. Nothing is said about care for the mother in her old age.

For young and adult "children" who have suffered abuse or traumas at the hands of their parents, this reading is hard to hear and certainly not welcomed as

"the word of God." For those who are unable to honour their parents for one reason or another, this passage calls into question divine love and beneficence. Is it unconditional or conditional? This biblical account would have one understand that divine love and beneficence

The responsorial psalm begins on an inclusive note: Everyone who loves God and walks in God's ways will be blessed and favoured. The term "Lord" coupled with the male pronoun "his" is a kyriarchal portrait of the divine. This male deity who is to be loved by all is "over" all and "superior" to all as the term "Lord" admits.

The inclusive language of the psalm changes quickly in the second stanza. The one addressed is now a male husband whose family will flourish because of the husband's love for God. The two similes derived from the natural world reflect an agrarian culture.

In the third stanza, the man has become a model citizen who is wished even more blessings. The family thrives only because of the posture and actions of the male head of household. Kyriarchy and patriarchy intersect; women and children are not favoured by the divine independent of the male husband. The family unit is patriarchal.

The reading from Colossians picks up on the theme of love introduced in the responsorial psalm. All the virtues flow from love and are held together in unity by love. A life rooted in Christ's peace and word assures ongoing communal unity in "one body." The community of believers is called to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus and to give thanks to God the Father through him.

Here the kyriarchal term "Lord" describes Jesus, and God is called "Father." The community cannot give thanks to God directly; they are to go through Jesus. The descriptions for the divine are once again male, patriarchal and hierarchal.

This tone comes to the fore again in the family unit where wives are told to be subordinate to their husbands "as is proper to the Lord," and children are to be obedient to their parents. Thus, women are to be subordinate to God, Jesus and their husbands. The last part of this reading reflects and sanctions hegemonic masculinity, and when proclaimed as "the word of the Lord," hegemonic masculinity becomes divinely sanctioned.

The Gospel focuses on the Holy Family. The story is part of the infancy narrative. In two dreams, Joseph receives two sets of divine instructions aimed at keeping his family safe. Again, a male is given preferential treatment. Joseph, not Mary, has the dreams. Joseph is the head of the household.

Of interest is the point that the feast is the "Holy Family" and yet, the language of the account keeps

Joseph at a distance from the child. Joseph is a "stepfather" and as such, is marginalised, a sentiment communicated by such phrases as "the child and his mother."

In sum, through these readings for the feast of the Holy Family, we see how cultural attitudes and norms have not only shaped the portrait of the family unit and the divine but also influenced our understanding of both. What does "the holy family" look like in this 21st century?

[Carol J. Dempsey is a Dominican Sister of Caldwell, New Jersey, and professor of biblical studies at the University of Portland, Oregon.]

Source

Those of us who subscribe to the NCR may have seen this, but it is worth sharing with all. Ed.

Thought for the New Year – sent in by Bernadette Deegan

The Power of Words

The tongue is one of the smallest parts of the body (only about 60 grams), but also perhaps the most powerful. It's small, but it can be the biggest troublemaker in the world. It possesses unspeakable power.

Words can be powerful. They give us the power to heal or to hurt; to give hope or to discourage; to build up or tear down.

Avoid the careless, cruel, brutal and bitter word, gossip, the angry outbursts, and cutting remarks. Instead embrace the gracious, loving, encouraging word, the kind that strengthen and builds up.

Always honour the absent.

A loose tongue can sink ships. This applies not only to battleships, but also to friendship and relationships.

Once the words pass from our lips, they take on a life of their own, and we can no longer control where they go or what they do.

The less said, the better.

Reckless words can hurt, but words of kindness can heal.

The tongue has no bones but is strong enough to break a heart.

Reflections by Fr Terence Harrington, Capuchin Friary, Church Street, Dublin 7.

Email: tharr@eircom.net for further reflections

UPCOMING EVENTS

January 2020						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 Day of Prayer for Peace Feast of Mary Mother of God	2	3 Death of Mother Aloysia Noailles 1884	4
5	6 Feast of the Epiphany	7	8 FOUNDATION DAY 1820 The day Zoé de Raquine spoke to the Founder of her desire to be a religious. Foundation of the Srs. of St. Martha 1857	9	10	11 The Finding in the Temple (Day before the Baptism of Jesus)
12	13	14	15	16	17	18 Week of prayer for Christian Unity begins *
19	20	21	22	23 Feast of the Betrothal of Mary and Joseph	24	25 WPCU ends
26	27 Holocaust Memorial Day	28	29	30	31	

For more information and resources for celebrating the week, click [here](#).