



FOREWORD

*"I am the resurrection and the life.
Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live..."* Jn.11:25

What did the Resurrection, and those fifty days of Eastertide just ended, mean for us in this our Bicentenary year, one fraught with disaster and uncertainty?

The answer is deep in the heart of each one.

But we do know, as *Holy Family* members, for whom *Communion* is our gift for one another and the world, that *we are all in this together*.

During this traumatic, troubling time, like everyone, we have discovered what it is to be more closely together in our homes and communities, to be in virtual contact with our families, friends, colleagues in work or ministry.

Those of us who have suffered the loss of family members and have felt the pain of not being able to visit them in their last days, or not being able to attend their funerals, have experienced this loving, sympathetic communion, creating among us ever deeper empathy with all who are in agony now.

As we hear our Founder exhorting us to ***Go forward*** together into the unknown future of our third century may our strength be in **God Alone**.

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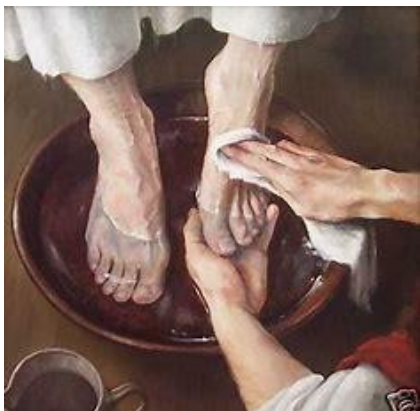
“I WILL NOT LEAVE YOU ORPHANS”

At our last meeting in March, before Lockdown, it was suggested that one of our members write an article for Family Links. This was taken up. The writer of this article is one of our long-standing members, very faithful and committed. She gives her own thoughts and experiences of lockdown during these past two months.

Sr. Sheila Griffiths (Bradford)

Spring has been quite different this year. Beginning towards the end of February, we started with an air of expectancy but the Lockdown, due to Coronavirus, brought us to a virtual standstill. Lent and Easter have been celebrated, but we are still in the same situation, more or less.

The timings of the first Lent were not exact. When did the Passion of Jesus begin? Long before Holy Week! For the apostles it was exact, namely, one Thursday evening with Jesus on his knees, a towel wrapped around his waist, and a basin of water.



For us, Lent has a deep meaning in which we see three kinds of instruments used:

- those used by the persecutors of Jesus,
- those used by Jesus,
- those which are unique to our Lent.

This year, as usual, there are bread and wine, washing of the feet with water, Jesus on his knees, thirty pieces of silver, the potter's field, a crown, a cross and death. However, due to the

Coronavirus, this year there are also ambulances, hospital beds, queues, carrier bags, twelve-hour

shifts, no shifts at all, nurses at the bedsides of the sick, deaths. The accompanying emotions do not differ so much: desolation, anger, loneliness, relief, compassion, certainty, uncertainty, and gratitude.

To be an orphan is to know absence, to have no memory of feet being washed, dried, and kissed; not to know who made and loved you. Thanks to the wise mind of the person who wrote Genesis, we do know where we come from. We were conceived in the rich, fertile land watered by the Tigris and the Euphrates, a homeland for the Israelites. God knelt in the soft mud and fashioned a people, breathing his own life into them, making them in his own image and likeness so that they could recognise him. God found them very good, because in and among them, God saw the image of Jesus, his Son.

That goodness comes from the life of the Trinity, life distilled to us through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The same Jesus, who knelt on the floor on Thursday and fell on those same knees on the way to Calvary where he breathed his last on a Cross. The loss of that breath is the source of our new life.

When the Father looks for pieces of that cross, God does not look in reliquaries, but in the face masks, nurses bending over patients in beds, doctors working night and day to relieve the suffering, scientists toiling over microscopes looking

for vaccines, cleaners endlessly sanitising, delivery drivers working long days as also the refuse workers going about their daily work to make sure our streets are clean. These are the ones on their knees this Lent, performing their acts of service and love.

We, too, have been hurt, having to endure feelings of distress, loss, absence of close friends and relatives. This Lent has been hard especially if it has meant the death of someone dear to us. Many people have died alone without the ministry of the priest or the presence of loved ones.



We were not able to be there holding their hand, praying with and for them as they breathed their dying breath. The hurt is deep, and time makes it all the more profound. However sometimes we have to step aside and give Jesus space and time to be priest and saviour for those for whom he died. Faith can be a heavy cross, but we need to hold tight because the Eucharist is the eternal bond in which we will be re-united. Jesus is with us always. This we know as believers in the Resurrection. We are Easter people.

Let us look at two people who have gone through this same agony, Thomas and Peter.

Thomas expresses the depth of his hurt in the defiant words, 'I will not believe.' He had believed in the wonder of Jesus, but it had all amounted to nothing. They were honest, even brave words. He was not going to pretend Jesus was alive. Easter came to Thomas in the Upper room. You can almost hear the slap of his knees on the floor as he said, 'My Lord and my God', hear his astonished awe as he said, 'MY Lord', not a stranger but the Lord he knew and loved. That same Lord who was showing him the true meaning of his crucified body. His 'My Lord' was a pledge to accept the wounds he would endure in order to be faithful in serving his Lord and God.

Peter was a different person. He endured a different situation. If Thomas felt orphaned, Peter had orphaned himself. Peter needed to be rescued in another way and he was. When Peter scrambled out of the boat, stumbling towards his Lord, it was towards the same Lord who had washed his feet, been nailed to the Cross and who was now busy preparing breakfast. The Lord who did not say, 'Are you sorry?' but 'Do you love me?' Peter had experienced and accepted the difference between worldly and divine values which is why he was the perfect bedrock on which Jesus could build his church – a church which washed, fed, and welcomed back the beloved sinner. He also knew that the most effective way to do this was on his knees.

This virus has pushed us to revalue our place in a money-driven society. Consider what thirty pieces of silver could do? They were the price of a slave, the measure Judas used to value himself; they were also the price of our redemption.

The virus will pass, the church doors will re-open, we will resume our weekly pilgrimage and meet with our fellow pilgrims. We will sit in our old places with most of our friends exchanging news and good wishes. But will we be the same? Surely new life will come through all of this, that is sure. The Resurrection is on-going, a sign of newness. We see this in the resurgence of life, in creation:

- pollution is less,
- oceans are cleaner,
- birds can be heard singing more clearly.

Let us believe in the words of Scripture:

“Behold, I am making all things new.”



Lay Member (Bradford)

Holy Family Youth News

With our school closed and with me having to cocoon I have had to find new ways of keeping in touch with our Holy Family Youth Group. I am fortunate to be in regular phone contact with Charlotte Vard who is a member of our Parish Team with special responsibility for developing Youth Ministry. Charlotte, herself a Holy Family Past Pupil is very well versed in all areas of social media, so with her assistance we are doing our best to adapt to this new situation and keep the lines of communication open.

One way we have done this is by encouraging our young people to follow our recent Parish Novena online and send in some comments. This invitation received a positive response and in the April edition of Family Links you will read the reflection of Sarah McGrane, a HFY member.

Our Holy Family Youth Group members are involved in many aspects of life in our school.

Being the senior age group, many have leadership responsibilities, advocacy roles, membership of Student Council, Environmental Green Team etc.



Front row: Fr. Oaul Lawlor O.P., Sr. Kate, Award Recipients, Clodagh Cummins, Charlotte Vard, Fr. Paul Dempsey
Back row: Family members of Recipients

Most have received the Pope John Paul II Award in recognition of their involvement and volunteering in our Parish and local community. Having completed this award some opt to continue volunteering and participate in the higher level known as The Papal Cross Award. The emphasis at this level is more specifically leadership and taking initiative in inviting others to become more active in living their Faith in more visible ways. A number of our HFY girls are completing the Papal Cross Award at present. For Lent they undertook to lead a morning prayer service in our school Oratory three mornings a week. This time of prayer took place before classes began and was completely voluntary. It was very inspiring to witness the enthusiastic way in which the girls led this prayer time and actively encouraged others to come along. Unfortunately, due to Covid-19 school had to close and our Lenten prayers were cut short!

It is encouraging to note that these opportunities to engage in leadership do not end when the girls finish in Holy Family School. Amadeus Youth Group and Choir were founded by Charlotte Vard and Clodagh Cummins both of whom are Papal Cross recipients, while Amy Kinsella and Kelly Webster, both now at University, were active HFY members while in school and now continue sharing their gifts as leaders in this Faith based parish youth group.

During the current lockdown I have been introduced to ZOOM! After a few failed attempts and with step by step instructions over the phone from Charlotte and Clodagh I have succeeded in taking part in a Quiz night with over 20 members of our Amadeus Youth Group. As one of our young people said, "meeting online is not as enjoyable as meeting face to face but for now it's the best we can do".



We are extremely fortunate in having a lovely Oratory in our school. It is large enough to accommodate a full year group (120 girls) for special times of prayer and reflection focusing on different seasons and Liturgical Celebrations. We have also introduced Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and had a day of prayer for our whole school community recently with Exposition throughout the day.

This initiative was very well received by staff and pupils. Our HFY group were very much involved and I feel this form of quiet prayer is something we will encourage and develop further when we eventually return to school.

Kate Cuskelly, Sonas Chríost Community

FAITH IS PERSONAL but NOT PRIVATE

I date my personal faith journey back to 2010. I was a 4th Year student in the Holy Family Secondary school, Newbridge, where Sr Kate was and still is the chaplain. I don't recall exactly the first time I met Sr Kate Cuskelly but, from 4th year to this very day, I share incredibly fond memories with her, so much so that myself and a few friends now fondly call her 'granny'. She even proudly displays her 'granny' mug that we bought her for Christmas!

Kate would find me in the corridors of the Holy Family wanting me to do a job for her or trying to get me to join the local Parish youth group. I would be on my way from one class to another; some days I would be hoping she was looking for me just so I would be late for Irish or Maths and other days I would swiftly find another way to get to my next class so as to avoid her invitations; thankfully we laugh about that now.

With Kate's persistent nature she eventually won, and I and a few others joined Newbridge Parish Youth group, a group that my own brother was a founding member of but, as I was his younger sister, he banned me from joining. Kate had other ideas and two weeks later I was sitting in the Holy Family Convent with twenty or so other young people talking about Jesus, our Parish, and what we could do within it. I sat there blankly for months but strangely enough something, or perhaps someone, kept bringing me back. I began to love everything about the youth group. I loved the people, the conversations and slowly began to love

the religious aspect, learning about this faith that I was born into but knew so little about. Being Catholic is so much more than what we learn in our textbooks. It is personal - that part I loved the most; that's the part I still love the most.

In fifth year, myself and four others were asked to work in the Holy Family Convent, which is situated just beside the school, one evening a week

to simply answer the phone and door. I loved when the sisters would come into the office and chat. Two sisters, in particular, would come in nearly every week and tell me their life stories, stories which amazed me. As a shy 16-year-old I received this unique opportunity to speak with these incredible women who just happened to follow a different way of life. It was a highlight for me and something I will always look back on fondly.

When I graduated from the Holy Family, I honestly thought that was it. I'd say goodbye to Kate and move on with my life, still go to Mass, yes, but the youth group aspect had to go at some point, right? Wrong, so very wrong. I became a leader for three years and loved it. I watched people join hesitantly and quickly flourish. It was a privilege to be a small part of that. For a variety of reasons, the group disbanded but I struggled to let it go and spent the following year considering ways to create something new. Throughout that year I grew deeper and deeper into my faith and at 23 myself and Clodagh, another

former member of the Newbridge Parish Youth Group, decided that we wanted to give back. We wanted to give teenagers that option of leaning into faith, the option that we had, and so Amadeus Youth Group was born.



AMADEUS Choir sing in St. Conleth's Church, Newbridge

Our parish priest, Fr Paul Dempsey thankfully gave us the go ahead and the first person we called on for reassurance that we could actually start this group was Sr Kate. We needed her positivity and guidance.

That first year of Amadeus was far from perfect or what we had set it out to be. A few nights we had just two people, other nights maybe six but each Friday while cleaning up afterwards we stayed positive. For me, it was this positivity that I knew could do something, this Catholic group could help someone, perhaps just as I was helped. Clodagh had that same belief, as did Kate so we kept going.

The following years have brought many ups and downs, but I can proudly say with certainty that it has changed people's lives. Hearing that from parents and from the kids themselves but perhaps more importantly witnessing it for ourselves is inspiring beyond belief.

It's been far more impactful to me as a person than I could ever fathom; it's humbling for all of us.

Two years ago, and two years into the youth group, I rang Sr Kate with this idea, Amadeus Youth Ministry as an umbrella to hold over the youth group and perhaps a choir. Again, with her encouragement, involvement and mentoring, the Amadeus Youth Choir was born.

Since November last, I have very excitedly and proudly been employed as a member of the Parish Team in the Parish that I love and in the faith that I adore. I get to experience all these different aspects of Pastoral Ministry and learn every day from those around me.

Over the years I've stood in front of thousands of children talking about the various aspects of Catholicism and it's in those moments where I find that connection. Where those hands jolt up and questions come flooding. Questions that require me to look at my own faith. They ask questions about my own life and I share because that can be impactful. It was impactful to me when I was their age and still is to this day, from my conversations with Sr Kate, the sisters in the convent, the priests in the Parish, to my own brother who is now a curate in Portlaoise Parish and to those I work with in the Parish - it's all impactful and it has all shaped me to some degree.

Faith is personal but was never meant to be private. There's a beauty in that and an empowerment. Faith should be lived boldly and without fear no matter one's age.

Charlotte Vard

Youth Ministry & Assistant Pastoral Minister

LAUDATO SI ANNIVERSARY

On the fifth Anniversary of the Papal Encyclical "On Care for Our Common Home" our Rock Ferry Community reflected on extracts from Laudato Si' for our daily Community Prayer from 17th-23rd May. The main focus was on awareness and interconnectedness with all creation.

During "Lockdown" we have been blessed with exceptionally good weather, when our beautiful garden blossomed in all its glory, urging us to open our eyes and ears to birdsong and Mother Earth "who produces coloured flowers and herbs"(Canticle of St. Francis).

For our final Service OF THE Word and Communion, on Saturday each Sister was invited to bring a symbol of her connectedness with Creation during the past week.



In conclusion a brief extract from the poem:

Trees

by Joyce Kilmer

"A tree whose hungry mouth is pressed
against the earth's sweet flowing breast.

A tree who looks at God all day
and lifts her leafy arms to pray,

A tree that may in Summer wear
a nest of Robins in her hair.

But only God could make a tree!

Rock Ferry Community

Our appreciation and gratitude to all our staff
for their help with art and symbols



These symbols placed before the altar portraying a varied and colourful depiction of contemplation on Laudato Si – reflections on trees, birds in flight, stillness, people, water, seeds petals and artwork. The choice of each symbol was briefly explained and mutually enriching revealing the prayerful insights of each one.

A PAGE OF POETRY

Gathering Spuds

The rounded prongs of the Massey Harris
Fling a shower of dark soil, dead stalks
And dirty blue-skinned spuds
Into the air.
As the tractor crawls along the neat drill
We children rush in behind
To gather spuds.
Hands thick with clinging soil
Scoop up the spoil.

Hands

Resting at last
They are gently clasped
Those hands once so active and
strong
From digging and draining
And wielding the scythe
To trimming the hedgerows
And stacking the rye;
Milking and mowing,
Ploughing and sowing,
Forever at rest now- at peace!

The Widow's Lament

Outside the sun is
shining in a blue sky.
Lambs are skipping
through the flaming
grass.
Butterflies flit from plant
to plant,
And the swift dips low
near the farmyard fence.
Then, news reaches me.
They tell me there has
been an accident.
A knife twists in the gut;
My heartbeat quickens.
"Sorry, so sorry!" cuts
across my screams.
The one I love is dead.

*Sr. Margaret Bradley
Magherafelt Community*

*Reflection by Sr. Patrice Colletti
(Sisters of the Divine Saviour)*

In these sensitive times
when it seems as if
all our world is
waiting, wounded or worried,
it can be easy to forget -
this is a time of Resurrection.

Rebirth, renewal, the melting of Winter and perhaps also
the melting of icy hearts –

Those happen, even when
unnoticed or un-celebrated
as we compare numbers on the nightly news,
hesitantly venture out in public,
thank those who serve,
or mourn those who have already moved on.

This is,
again and still,
our Easter
and we, safer@home,
are the People of Easter
in every sort of way.

We must allow Resurrection.
We must name it
claim it
welcome its transformation
embrace its promise
accept its invitations.
Yes. Yes
The Sacred
is in our midst.

Emmanuel,
God-is-with-us,
Yeshua,
who delivers,
who rescues,
is
No longer on a cross.
With stone rolled back,
He
waits for us to recognise Him.

UPCOMING EVENTS

31 MAY	Trinity Sunday Mass will be livestreamed from Knock at 3 pm at which there will be a mention of our <i>HOLY FAMILY</i> Bicentenary.
1 June	Foundation of the Contemplative Sisters (1859) the Contemplative Sisters
2 June	Final Profession of the Three Foundresses (1822)
4 June	The first Three Foundresses made their Act of Consecration (1820)
5 June	Ordination of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles (Eve of Trinity Sunday) (1819)
6 June	Fr. Noailles' First Mass (Trinity Sunday 1820)
7 June	Foundation of the first community- Sisters of Loreto (Trinity Sunday 1820)
8 June	World Oceans Day
12 June	Our Lady of All Graces
17 June	World Day to combat Desertification and Drought
20 June	World Refugee Day
26 June	International Day to support Victims of Torture

A Few Thoughts from the mystics

"We are all enclosed in God and God is enclosed in all of us." Julian of Norwich

"The creativity of the universe dances in every life form." Brian Swimme

"The secret turning in your heart is the entire universe turning." Rumi

"We are one in the community of life, kin to all that exists." E.Tolle

"I would like to live as the river flows and be surprised by my own unfolding." J. O'Donohue

"We need to surrender our egos and fears, our prejudices and agendas and then free fall into love." J. Canato

Margaret Bradley