



# Family Links

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

September 2019

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## In this issue

- 1 Editorial
- 2 Inter-Vocational Team message
- 3 A Parting Message
- 4 A Landmark Event
- 8 Sharing Experiences
- 9 News from Bradford
- 11 Retreat for Asylum Seekers
- 13 The Willow Tree
- 15 Book Review
- 16 Upcoming Events



President Michael Higgins and his wife Sabina, visited HFSS on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee. Seen here with Ms Sarah Allen (Principal), School Captain, Sr. Catherine Moran (first Principal of HFSS), Staff Members and Students

## Editorial

The dictum, *"If you talk the talk, be prepared to walk the walk"*, was what young people around the world have been putting into practice for some time now by skipping school on Fridays to march in protest at the failure of governments to take stronger action on climate change. The September protests leading up to and following the UN climate summit were truly historic global events inspired, as we all know, by the Swedish teenager and activist, Greta Thunberg.



One of the banners carried in the Dublin march

Nor was it only young people who were on the streets. Many adults, including parents, teachers, and school principals, joined the march because, as one woman said: *"This is not a single-generation job. It's humanity's job. Let's all join together, with your neighbours, co-workers, friends, family and go out on to the streets to make your voices heard and make this a turning point in our history"*.

Ongoing street protests and making our voices heard in a desperate attempt to make governments wake up to the urgency of the crisis are important. People power has been shown to work. It is also imperative for all of us to examine our lifestyles and do what each one can to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. Collective action by businesses, banks, parishes, schools, religious communities, every group to "walk the walk" in practical, demonstrative ways is also urgently needed to save our common home.

There is food for thought, too, in how a young person on the autism spectrum has been able to galvanise her peers and even adults into more determined action to save our common home, to shame those in power for their inaction, and be able to respond with calm, and even humour, to those who would ridicule her.

## Message from the Inter-Vocational Team

### APPRECIATING YOUR GIFTEDNESS



**W**e are all gifted in some way. We need to acknowledge this. To fail to do so is to refuse to give God the glory for the good that we achieve through our giftedness. So what is your gift? Have you ever sat with it and praised the Almighty for the wonders you have managed to achieve through the effective use of this blessing?

How did your special gift come to you? Did it come naturally or was it something you just developed over the years and came to recognise as 'gift'? How did you discover that you were a great gardener, a skilled craftsman, a proficient pianist, an excellent cook, a shrewd politician, an outstanding teacher?

What or who helped you to develop or practice what you felt called to? Think about it. And bless all those involved in your search journey.

I picked up a book recently on the life and work of the Dutch painter, Vincent van Gogh, by Dieter Beaujean. It is a fascinating story of the artist's desperate search for a meaning to life. He was an art dealer in The Hague, London, and Paris, a supply teacher in Ramsgate and a Methodist minister's assistant in Middlesex, England. He worked as a bookseller in Dordrecht, embarked on theological studies in Amsterdam and was subsequently a preacher in La Borinage in Belgium for nearly two years. There, among the miners, he began to draw.

His missionary zeal had given way to an interest in the everyday affairs of people and he recorded his observations in drawings. The former art dealer and preacher had gradually found a sense of direction. "The systematic attention to drawing was a foretaste of his decade as an artist."

Fr. Noailles, like Vincent van Gogh, tried out different things like law and medicine and then discovered through trial, disappointment and even rejection, what it was that he really wanted to give his energies to. Providence led him to priesthood. He was filled with enthusiasm to create a 'new society' in the aftermath of the French Revolution. This 'new

society' would be based on love, joy, justice and peace. And the Association of the Holy Family of Bordeaux was born in 1820.

Vincent van Gogh decided that his mission would be to bring consolation to people through art. He wrote to his brother Theo: *"What I want to aim at is this. I want to do drawings that touch people. I want to progress so far that people will say of my work: 'he feels deeply; he feels tenderly'. What am I in most people's eyes? A nonentity, somebody who has no position in society and never will have. Very well then I should want my work to show what is in the heart of a nobody. This is my ambition which, in spite of everything, is founded less on anger than on love."*

He succeeded in his ambition to show the world what was in the heart of a nobody. Through his art he ministered to untold numbers of people throughout the world. He discovered his gift. He used it well for others and in spite of rejection and numerous disappointments throughout his short life he kept on developing his gift to the end. *"If I could only express what I feel,"* he wrote to his brother and again, to his parents, he wrote, *"Only if I set about drawing thoroughly and seriously and try to reproduce reality will I get anywhere...."*

He was so determined, so committed, so anxious to give of his best, so driven to pursue his dream. And yet the financial limitations of his work situation and inadequate support from family and friends often left him feeling that he was being treated *"like a large shaggy dog with dirty paws"*.

He saw the ideal artist as a producer of pictures, *"which should not remain reserved for the elite public in expensive exhibitions but which, in the awareness of social obligation, should serve as a basis for reproductions that would bring some light into the houses of the poor"*. In his paintings we notice that *"even the dirtiest corner of life has a ray of light."*

Although van Gogh worked as an artist for only ten years, of which six must be regarded as years of



apprenticeship, he is to-day one of the most popular artists of all. In his own lifetime, he sold only one picture, *The Red Vineyard of 1890*. Nowadays his works, such as his *Fourteen Sunflowers in a Vase*, fetch ever greater sums in the auction rooms of the world.

What have you done with your special gift?

If you have discovered it and used it for others, rejoice! Praise God; keep on developing it and be amazed at the ray of sunshine you can create in the dirtiest, darkest corner of another's life.

Margaret Bradley



Red Vineyards at Arles, by Vincent van Gogh

## A PARTING MESSAGE

It's not a good bye. It's a new experience. It's a new beginning. It's a new story.

It has been an incredible experience. Our purpose of being in Ireland was to improve our knowledge of English. When I evaluate myself today before I leave this beautiful island; I have improved my use of English in many different ways. I'm confident to communicate in English now than before.

When I looked back on the past ten months, I have gained a lot. It was not only English. This experience has contributed a lot for my personal growth as a committed person in the Holy Family. "Travelling broadens the mind" became a reality indeed. During this period I met different people from Europe, Eastern Europe, Latin America, Africa, and Asia. They were Priests, Religious, Lay, Young, Old, Gay (Men and Women). I experienced varieties of cultures, traditions, beliefs and life styles. It was the most enriching exposure that I ever had in my life. The things that I saw, heard and took part in spoke to me and moved me step by step in my inner journey.



Besides all these the most important thing was our community life at Griffith Downs. We were from two different small islands; different stages of growth with different experiences. But we had a beautiful experience in our community. It has been an excellent experience and definitely the outcome of this will journey with us forever. My limited words are incapable of expressing my unlimited gratitude to Sile and Clare.

I'm grateful to the two leadership teams who took initiatives and made them a reality. We appreciate all the sisters in the province, especially Sisters in Newbridge, Clane and all whom we met and had contact with. We felt your love and kindness to the last day of our stay.

As I mentioned this is not a good bye. Let us keep in touch. Therefore:

Slán go fóil.  
Go raibh maith agaibh.

Charitha Thandalge

## A LANDMARK EVENT



*Monday, 7 September 1959, is a landmark date in the history of education in Newbridge. On that date, the town's first secondary school for girls opened its doors. As it happened, they were old, familiar doors - the same which had welcome the first pupils of the Holy Family Sisters almost one hundred years earlier... A new phase of educational endeavour and achievement, under the guidance of the daughters of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles, had begun... The secondary school for girls was a major educational legacy from the Holy Family Sisters to the people of Newbridge.*

(The Holy Family Sisters in Newbridge, 1875-2000, by Máire Ryan, p. 104)

Only a stranger in Newbridge would have been unaware of the reason for an underlying sense of celebration in the town during the month of September and into October. Holy Family Secondary School (HFSS) is celebrating the diamond jubilee of its existence. Sixty years in the life of any flourishing institution is cause for celebration and HFSS is indeed flourishing. This undeniable fact has been chronicled in the local media and in the many speeches, tributes, homilies pronounced at events and liturgies held to commemorate that day in 1959.

welcomed during these years. A Holy Family Parents Association was inaugurated in 1977 and, ever since, parents have provided tremendous support in all manner of ways to the school. A Board of Management was also set up.

More important, however, is the tribute from Mrs. Sarah Allen (present Principal), who said at the Mass for past pupils and past staff of the school on 6<sup>th</sup> September:

*"From its foundation, a close-knit, family atmosphere became a defining characteristic of the school, and throughout the school's subsequent growth and development, this esprit-de-corps has always been carefully fostered in a holistic approach to education and school-life."*

In 1991, the Holy Family sisters, due to decreasing numbers, were obliged to withdraw from the school. It was decided to hand over the patronage of HFSS to the Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin. Managing the transition with the Board of Management and the Parents Association was Sr. Catherine's final act of service to the school. She and these two bodies met with diocesan representatives and expressed their desire for the ongoing development of the school which, basically, was that it continue in the same direction.

Sr. Catherine retired in 1992, handing the school over to lay leadership. That the school's core ethos, embodied in its motto, *To be and to build family*, is upheld was enthusiastically attested to recently by the Bishop's representative charged with visiting the schools that are under his patronage.



Teresa Brophy, Chairperson, Board of Management, Mrs. Sarah Cullen, Principal, Sr Catherine Moran, First Principal of HFSS

Sr Catherine Moran became the first Principal, after having taught without remuneration for four years in the "Secondary Top" - classes added to the girls Primary school to provide the secondary education unavailable to girls in the town. She continued in this role until 1992, with a gap of five years when she served on the Unit leadership team. During her time, numbers increased, the curriculum expanded and diversified, extra-curricular activities multiplied. The support of the local community was also sought and



## ONGOING LINKS

The links with the Holy Family community did not end with the withdrawal of the sisters from the school. The convent has always had an open-door policy welcoming all and sundry. When Sr. Kate Cuskelly was appointed school chaplain this was strengthened. Visits from the students became more frequent. They come to entertain the sisters with their music and singing, to hear from them about their life experiences spanning more years than some of them could imagine. The convent is also the favoured place for prayer meetings and talks at times of retreat.

One recent innovation in the school, coinciding with the Jubilee is the setting aside of a room for an oratory.



School Oratory & Eucharistic celebration for Lay Members AGM  
Sr. Kate has also set up a Holy Family Youth group whose expressed aim is to:

**LIVE MY LIFE THROUGH POSITIVE ACTION**  
**SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS**  
**BE FAMILY AND BUILD FAMILY**

They are present as enthusiastic guides and helpers wherever their commitment invites them, in school or Holy Family gatherings. Personal prayer, reflection



HFY Group with Fr Paul PP & Sr Kate

and evaluation are an important part of their lives for which the convent provides a quiet space.

## TOWARDS THE FUTURE

In a foreword to the Máire Ryan's book mentioned above, written in 2000, Sr. Catherine wrote:

*"Under new management and leadership and with an ever dedicated lay staff who have always been one of the main strengths of the school, I trust that Holy Family Secondary School will always have within it the resilience and ability to adapt perspectives while never abandoning the sound principles which have defined the ethos of the school and which, over the years, have helped it to meet with courage the challenges of a changing world."*

It is left to posterity to judge if her prayer continues to be heard.



Holy Family Convent and School today

## JUBILEE EVENTS TO DATE

### Monday, 2 September

#### A school Day

Start of School Year – Mass was celebrated for the school community, with Bishop Denis Nulty of Kildare and Leighlin, presiding.



### Friday, 6 September

**A** Celebration Mass at 7:30 pm brought together past pupils and staff, some travelling from as far afield as America. Bishop Nulty again presided with the parish clergy.



The bishop's homily and the hauntingly beautiful singing of the choir of past pupils lifted hearts and minds, reminding all of what the Eucharist truly is - THANKSGIVING.

After Mass all were invited to visit, or re-visit, the school where refreshments were served. It was an opportunity for old friends to meet, or a time to renew friendships of long ago and admire the changes and developments in the school itself.





## Tuesday, 10 September

President Michael D. Higgins with his wife, Sabina, visited the school to meet and address the student body. No record of his words is available now, but we can be sure they displayed the depth of thought and eloquence for which he is noted.

He also visited parts of the school and observed the students at work.



**President and Sabina Higgins with HFSS students**



**School captain thanking President**



**Admiring one of the school's trophies (?)**



**In the Art room**



**Be entertained by the school orchestra**



**Greeting support staff**

**Other events will follow as the year unfolds.**

## SHARING EXPERIENCES

### *If you don't dare now, then when?*

**T**hese words inspired me to make my desire to be a missionary a reality. When I look back on my life's journey here, I see God's footprints behind me, around me and in nature. I am grateful for God's presence that everywhere fills this Earth, and makes everything belong to one family. I feel that I am part of this creation, so I would like to share my experience through the symbol of nature.



Sharmila with co-volunteers

I was like a small plant left in its own soil and comfortable surroundings and then taking root in a new place, a new weather. Energy from the Creator, warmth, love and concern of the sisters, helped me to grow. Eventually I realised that I belong to the Universe, not just one place.

Once somewhat accustomed to the new culture, I started to work with homeless people. Who are these homeless people? The homeless are like strong birds that built their own nests in a big tree and lived happily with their families. But suddenly a cyclone of war, or other problems, came into their home and destroyed everything. The trees are fallen down. Family members are missing or killed. They come to seek refuge with much woundedness. Homeless people are normal people like everyone of us. Suddenly, disaster came and changed their lives totally.

Charity organisations all over the UK help the homeless to get the basic needs of a human being, that is, food, clothing and shelter, but still, thousands of people live on the streets. Some organisations

give holistic care – physical, mental, spiritual, social - and also health care, counselling, providing a faith room open to all religions and respecting all religions, giving training in skills such as drawing, baking, handcrafts. However, many don't take any interest because of distress due to not having the right to stay or work in the country.



I am doing voluntary work in one of these Charity Organisations called 'The Passage'. As part of a team I help the homeless to get food and also medicine by directing them to doctors or helping them to see the nurse. I feel happy that I am taking part in helping in one of the current global crises. This ministry is also challenging since the homeless people are from different countries so the way of seeing things and thinking is also different. Many times I feel that I need to be full of positive energy to work among them.

Sometimes it is painful to see their situation. For example, I had been visiting a young homeless person who was dying with cirrhosis of the liver. He wanted to live even though he lived on the street and had no hope of recovery. Life is precious for the dying and the desire to live on this beautiful Earth is remains strong.



We are seen by homeless people as fortunate to live in our own houses with proper food that we take for granted. Working with the homeless made me realise that life is short and can change at any time. So, let us live it happily and help others to live happy. The world is full of positive energy as well as negative energy. Choose positive energy always and spread it among people because Earth is longing for peace. Always have a thankful heart.

**Sharmila Mennesa**  
St. Gabriel's Road



## NEWS FROM BRADFORD COMMUNITY

### Climate Change March

June 26<sup>th</sup> saw thousands of Climate Change supporters gathered in front of the steps of the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square. I was present among and was very happy to witness the presence of high-ranking officials from many different religious denominations stand together, professing their solidarity and support as ONE BODY. The leader of the gathering was the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams.

As the procession wended its way from Trafalgar Square to Parliament it kept to the pavement and maintained an orderly momentum. From time to time the rallying cry of 'The time is Now' could be heard from the various groups, many of whom were teenagers and young adults. It was heartening to witness old and young together marching to lobby Parliament to take swift action.

The final marching venue was wonderfully arranged so that each constituency from the four corners of the UK could have its own designated spot, where a meeting with the specific MP of that Constituency was to take place that afternoon.



I was happy to find my own spot, Yorkshire and Humber. I was given a placard denoting my Bradford West area and joined others already gathered from Bradford south and East. Two of my own group in Bradford finally joined me, namely Mollie and David Somerville, two very active members of our local Global Justice Group, which we were representing.

Naz Shah, our MP for Bradford West, was unavoidably detained and instead of the allotted time of 1.30pm she informed Mollie she would come by 3.30pm. Meanwhile I met the MP for Kirklees, Tracy Brabin, and introduced myself as a person from Birstall, who has worked in

Batley as a teacher. She was very happy to meet me and took a selfie. We also had a group photo taken of the representatives from Yorkshire and Humber with her. You can view it on:

<http://twitter.com/tracybrabin>

Finally at 3.30pm we had our own 'tete a tete' with Naz Shah. David took the initiative in guiding the interview. Naz promised to take up the issues we asked for at her next meeting.

Many of the participants were happy just to stay around, lazing on the grass, 'til late in the evening.

Let us hope that some action will accrue from this day.

## Stop Corporate courts

Later in July, members of our Global Justice Team manned stalls at two Gala days, the purpose of which was to obtain signatures from the public to protest against Corporate Courts. Both days were very successful and we obtained many signatures. At least more people are being conscientised and becoming aware of injustice.

### Climate Change v Bradford Council

On July 24<sup>th</sup> Teresa and I attended a sitting of the Bradford District Council which were to discuss the problem of climate change. Members of the Friends of the Earth made their points known and lobbied for action to be taken quickly.

#### Three points put to the Council by the Team

1. Please inform yourselves of the science. The facts are out there, and each year the measurements on which predictions are made become clearer and show previous predictions to have underestimated the seriousness of climate change.
2. Please inform yourselves of what is being predicted – everyone north and south globally is and will be affected: disruption of normal climate patterns, drought, floods, wholesale failure of crops, increased conflict and unprecedented migration.
3. Bradford council must act now to decarbonise the local economy and ensure this is the basis of ALL council decisions. This is NOT a party political issue but will need citizen's assembly for it to become legitimate and to protect its' citizens against the worst effects of climate breakdown.

Sheila Griffiths, Bradford



## ASYLUM SEEKERS - RED CROSS PARTY

On 18 June, we the Red Cross Bradford Team, organised a party for all our clients - the most destitute and marginalised people. We had delicious food to share with all of them. After the meal we played Bingo and we made sure that each person got a gift.

This was a time of meeting our vulnerable service users in a most friendly environment. It was a time of socialising, laughter and fun! We all enjoyed the food, Bingo game, sharing of our gifts as well as each other's company.

On Saturday, 22 June, we had a big celebration in Peel Park Bradford to mark the closing of Refugee Week. We prepared lots of food for sharing which

everyone enjoyed. We had prepared over 1000 portions like samosas, spring rolls, potato balls and Vodah (Sri Lankan food like onion Bhaji). As soon as we displayed the food the people lined up within seconds!

There were also different activities which were organised in the Park such as Face Painting, Hand Painting and making creative things and singing songs.

There were lots of families with children and it was good to see them enjoying the food and activities. It was a very enjoyable day.

Nasreen Nazir, Bradford



## ASYLUM SEEKERS RETREAT IN GRANGE-OVER-SANDS

A group of asylum seekers from the JRS centre in London were delighted to be offered a stay, free of charge, with the Canonesses of St Augustine in Boarbank Hall, Grange-over-Sands. It was decided that the most regular participants of the women's prayer group which I lead every Tuesday, and the men's group led by Fr Harry SJ, should be given the opportunity. Four women and three men took up the offer, as well as 4 staff/volunteers including myself, who accompanied them.

The sisters were most welcoming and Sr Margaret Atkins was at our disposal throughout our 3-night stay, seeing to our every need, accompanying us to the Lake District, providing packed lunches and arranging an afternoon tea with some residents of their nursing care home. Our friends were really moved by the whole experience. I will let them speak for themselves (helped by interviews with Fr Harry before leaving, and a translator where necessary). I have changed the names.

**Karen** (Congo). *After the usual anxious time of having to sign in, not knowing what my future would be, but buoyed up by the hope of coming here on Wednesday, I was so relieved to be here. I was given a sense of peace and release from my worries. I felt brought into a family and this softened the sense of isolation I have to live with. Here I felt a togetherness and I experienced a sense of release.*

**John** (W Africa): *I didn't know what to expect but felt the need of a break. The welcome I received and the quiet surroundings immediately made me feel relaxed. I could meditate easily and reflect on my life. I could sleep better without the constant*

*noise of traffic where I live. I enjoyed one another's company here. I was touched by the personal attention to my welfare. Seeing hills was a novel experience for me as I had always been accustomed to flat surfaces. It was the first time I visited an English village and I was really impressed. I was inspired by my visit to the nursing home - I was chatting to a blind lady, a nurse, who was forced into a prisoner of war camp. On my return, I want to do whatever I can to help others. Before leaving I put in a fresh claim for asylum but I have heard nothing. Now I feel prepared to accept whatever comes. When I return, I plan to put aside time each day for prayer.*

**Destiny** (Ivory Coast): *While praying before the Blessed Sacrament during Exposition, I was shocked to feel as if a baby was on my lap, and from him a voice which I took to be my grandson calling out, 'Grandma, Grandma'. I felt acutely the pain of separation from my grandson. I resolved to make another attempt to see him but to be forgiving if I was not successful. I felt joy in my heart and the pain there being eased. I gained a lot from sharing with others in the group.*

**Peter** (Georgia): *I usually have broken sleep, no more than three to four hours. Here I had an unbroken full night's sleep. I felt more relaxed mentally and physically. While on walks, I greatly appreciated the conversation and the fresh air. On my return, I resolve to increase my efforts to learn English, to take more exercise and to spend more time in meditation.*

**Miriam** (Congo): *I greatly value the care and attention I received here. The peace and quiet around enabled me to manage a full night's*



Welcome to Boarbank Hall



About to cross Lake Windermere

sleep instead of my usual three to four hours. I have no family, but now I will return with fond memories of being loved. When I visited the nursing home my heart was filled with compassion. I shall be returning with hope, joy and patience.

**Ken (China):** *I am so grateful to God for the beauty I have seen over the past few days. It is like a glimpse of heaven and it has focused my mind on the things that are important in life. In our excursions, I was thrilled to be so near the lakes and the sea. I am grateful for the generosity of this community of sisters. For me their willingness to invite a stranger like myself is a sign of the resurrection. I loved sharing their joy of being in religious life and their strong faith in God.*

**Sherine (Congo):** *I enjoyed enormously the change from London. Having a bad leg, I am stuck at home without any certainty of staying in this country and am unable to fix a date for the operation the doctor sees as necessary. In the course of my prayer here, I*



First visit to an English village

*found hope and a willingness to wait with patience. I really appreciated my own room here. I normally am expected to clean the house in which I am given a room. Here I had the peace and quiet that I love. I can return with courage and confidence.*

For my part, I felt the privilege of accompanying these women and men from JRS and having time to relax with them and share on a more personal level. Their delight in what I often take for granted - the hills, sheep

grazing in the fields, having a room and space of one's own, peace and quiet - was for them a precious gift. They were amazed and moved that some of the sisters who had met them only briefly, called each of them by name. What an important tribute to them, when in so much of their lives as asylum seekers each one feels they are a number.

**Kathleen Diamond,**  
**Aberdare community**



Meal with the Canonesses of St Augustine



## THE WILLOW TREE

OH, WEEPING WILLOW  
 YOU STAND AND SWAY  
 SO SLENDER IS YOUR BODY  
 IT MOVES AND BENDS  
 WITH ITS FALLING ARMS  
 OF BRANCHES,  
 GRACEFULLY FLOWING  
 UP AND DOWN  
 IN THE LIGHT WIND  
     IN THE SUMMER SUN,  
 DANCING TO THE MUSIC  
 OF THE WIND,  
 THEN SUDDENLY STANDING  
 STILL AND CURTSEY  
 AT TIMES  
     LIKE A BALLERINA  
     CLOTHED IN GREEN  
 DANCING IN THE MEADOW GREEN.  
 THE SKY ABOVE  
     THE SHINING SUN,  
 REFLECTS THE COLOUR  
     OF ITS GREEN,  
 ITS SPARKLING DIAMONDS  
 OF THE SUNS SHEEN  
 UPON THE GLORIOUS WILLOW TREE  
  
 IT MOVES ME SO  
     WITH ITS GRACEFUL FLOW  
 AS I STAND AND STARE  
 WITH THE TREE SO NEAR  
 WITH A TEAR IN MY EYES  
 SUCH BEAUTY PREVAILS  
 OF THE WILLOW TREE  
 THE DANCING BALLERINA  
 THE WILLOW TREE.

**Mary McKenzie**  
**Skelmersdale Lay Associates**



### The Legend of the Weeping Willow

Why does the weeping willow bend its branches and leaves downward?

According to one legend, the tree "weeps" because it was the tree upon which Judas hanged himself.

Another legend says its branches were used by the soldiers to whip the imprisoned Jesus.

Even earlier people had viewed the weeping willow as a grieving tree because of Psalm 37: "By the rivers of Babylon we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion. There on the willow trees we hung up our harps."

## FAMILY LINKS IN BLAIRGOWRIE

As part of the family of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles we are all familiar with "Family Links" which keeps us in touch with each other. My family is scattered around Ayrshire in the West of Scotland, Livingston in the East, and Dunstable in the south of England. Our links are strong although we don't often get the chance to meet up together.

However, this year was special in that my younger sister, Susan, reached 60 in June. My brother John, RIP, would have been 70 in July and my older sister, Eileen, was 80 in August.

We started planning a pamper weekend for the two birthday girls but, like Topsy, "it just grew" which is why nine of us found ourselves meeting up in an AirBnB in Bridge of Cally near Blairgowrie.



Eileen's two daughters, one granddaughter and one great granddaughter, John's oldest daughter, Susan, and her daughter, and I all arrived from our various homes and spent from 26th to 29th of July having a fabulous time with lots of laughs, reminiscences, good food and wine as we reinforced the links that bind us together as family.

Tentative plans were made to do the same in 2021 when, God willing, we will have a second new 60-year-old and a new 80-year-old in our family.

The photo is of us sharing a meal at the Blairgowrie Hotel on John's Birthday. Eileen is third from front on the right and Susan is opposite her.

*Florence Oakes*

### THANK YOU

*Dear Sisters,*

*Just a line to thank you for your prayers, good wishes and welcome on the occasion of my return to the Unit of Britain and Ireland.*

*It was very kind of you to write and to send me such lovely cards. I am still in the process of getting used to the change of place and climate and also the change of rhythm of life.*

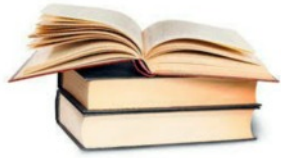
*Many of you, if not all, at some stage or other have had similar experiences and have survived them so you know how it feels.*

*I was very glad to have participated in the recent meeting in Crewe. It was lovely to see so many familiar faces. Thank you again.*

*Please keep me in your prayers as I will keep you all in mine.*

*Lots of love  
Mary*





## BOOK REVIEWS

### The Quiet Revolution of Pope Francis

by Gerry O'Hanlon SJ

**F**or some time now people have been speaking of a Church in crisis both in Ireland and beyond. There is no doubt that immense challenges face the Church and for many there is a loss of hope. Fr. Gerry O'Hanlon accepts this is a reality but, in his book, "The Quiet Revolution of Pope Francis", he presents a way forward and offers a very practical theology that could offer some hope for these difficult times.

While he focuses mainly on the Church in Ireland his critique and analysis apply to the universal Church. He outlines the vision of Vatican II, which is the vision of Pope Francis, one that is capable of dialogue and where a constant renewal of structures is demanded. Quoting Pope Francis he writes "*I am convinced of one thing: the great changes in history were realised when reality was seen not from the centre but rather from the periphery*". The author suggests that therein lies the opposition and the disquiet for this change coming from certain sectors of the Church. Those who challenge Francis's vision are often those who hold the power and settled positions in the organization.

In the early section of the book the author outlines how the Church evolved from being a synodal,

collegial Church to one of absolute, monarchical power. He quotes Pope Pius XI who in 1939 speaking to a group of seminarians: "*I want you to take this message away with you. The Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, has become a monstrosity. The head is very large but the body is shrunken.*"

As a way forward, Francis is proposing a synodal model of Church, a process and a way of being Church which he believes, is consistent with the Christian tradition and is better attuned to the signs of our times. This way forward has a name: "the missionary transformation of the Church".

For this to occur, good leadership at local level is required – by bishops, first of all, but also by laity, priests and religious. He says "We have a right to demand no less of one another".

This book is well worth reading as it is an honest and open assessment of what is happening in the Church, the resistances to change, where they are coming from but it also offers a vision and a way forward for those who care about the Church and its future.

**Claire Mc Grath (Integrated Spirituality Team)**

## UPCOMING EVENTS

October 2019						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 World Habitat Day	2 International Day of	3	4 Feast of St Francis of Assisi Creation Time ends	5
6 Amazon Bishops Synod opens	7	8 Day for Life in Ireland, England, Scotland, Wales	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 World Mission Day* Click below for Pope's message	21	22	23	24	25	26
27 Amazon Synod ends Birthday of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles	28	29 Unit Assembly opens in Emmaus Ireland International Internet Day	30	31		

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS FRANCIS  
FOR WORLD MISSION DAY 2019