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*Crib knitted by Sr. Margaret O'Connell, Newbridge*

## FOREWORD

Little did we know, when we were wishing one another a “happy new year” on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020, that the year would become synonymous with Covid-19 and that the pandemic would still be with us as we begin another new year. However, we begin it in hope that the vaccines now available will be successful in stopping the spread of the disease.

While this is still an uncertain time for us, it’s also a chance to reflect on how we want to move forward, positively, once the pandemic is over. In the *Holy Family*, as everywhere, we have been obliged to put things on hold or do them in different ways. The virus has shown us conclusively how interconnected we are, how much we need one another. This may lead to a greater sense of community and solidarity among peoples.

We learned to appreciate how powerful a tool social media is. It has helped us remain connected to each other through Zoom meetings, when we saw and

talked with members we might never have met. Without it, we could not have celebrated our Bicentenary together as a Unit, or linked with the whole PBN Family in preparation for the General Chapter of the Religious Institute, as we will continue doing this year.

Perhaps it was also a blessing we did not have the Chapter as scheduled in 2020. Now, we may read the signs of the times differently.

Most encouragingly, we saw the immediate benefit to our planet’s climate and reduction of air pollution due to the restricted movement and travel of people. This has shown what extreme, determined action, which the planet desperately needs now, could do.

The word of God, spoken by Isaiah, may give us thought:

***Do not remember the former things,  
or consider the things of old.  
I am about to do a new thing;  
now it springs forth, do you not  
perceive it? (Is. 43:18-19)***



## From the Intervocational Coordinators Team

### A REFLECTION ON THE INCARNATION

**A**s I write this article we are coming to the end of Advent and entering the Christmas season. It is a hectic time of hustle and bustle and long queues in the shops made worse this year because of the fear of unexpected lockdowns. For many, Christmas has lost its focus and has become a celebration of consumerism. This is, of course, in complete contrast to the homelessness and squalor experienced by the people involved in that first Christmas. From the very beginning Mary and Joseph and Jesus experienced all the hardships and uncertainties of human life. Yet the birth of this child changed the whole world. It is described by the prophet Isaiah as the wedding of heaven and earth. "You shall be called 'My Delight' and your land 'The Wedded,' for the Lord takes delight in you and your land will have its wedding." (Is.62:1-5) In this child, earth has become the dwelling place of God. "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel, a name which means, 'God-is-with-us' (Matt.1)

This truly came about in that little stable in Bethlehem. Jesus was laid in a manger, the feeding trough of animals, and he became food for the world, food that would lead to eternal life. His earthly life was short but the Risen Lord, the Cosmic Christ, "will be with us till the end of time" (Matt 28:26), "when God will wipe away every tear from our eyes and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning or crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away." (Rev. 21).

In the New Story of the Universe, we are told that creation began with a flaring forth. God's Word took form in the stars and galaxies, the sun, the moon, the whole of the earth,

mountains, rivers, seas, birds, fish, insects, animals and, finally, the Word became flesh in Jesus of Nazareth.



Ilia Delio writes, "because the Word became flesh, the whole physical universe is inhabited by God, everything becomes the locus of God, everything is transformed into Christ." (God, Evolution, and the Power of Love). This is an incarnational worldview, the presence of the divine in everything and everyone. It requires a new way of looking at the world. A new way of seeing Christ at the heart of the universe, in all cultures and religions, in all peoples especially the poor, the homeless, the migrants, the marginalized and in the cry of the earth. To live the gospel life today is to live on "a new level of consciousness, a spacious mind, like Jesus, a deep awareness of oneness with God and neighbour, a consciousness of belonging to a whole" (Ilia Delio, *Making all things New*)

As *Holy Family* members our charism of Communion calls us to live this communion with each other and with the whole universe. The Eucharist is the sacrament of unity and participation in it gives us the strength to take up this challenge. "The Eucharist joins heaven and earth; it embraces and penetrates all creation. The world which came forth from God's hands returns to him in blessed and undivided adoration: in the bread of the Eucharist, 'creation is projected towards divinisation, towards the holy wedding feast, towards unification with the Creator.'" (Laudato Si 236)

The Eucharist has a special place in the life of the *Holy Family* of Bordeaux. The Miraculous Benediction of 1822 was a special blessing for the Association. At the time of the Apparition the small community of young women had undertaken work without a whole lot of funds. They were very troubled by the criticism they were receiving inside and outside the church. The superior, Aimée Noailles, prayed for a sign, "With more fervour than usual, she addressed the Lord on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February, Feast of the

Presentation, begging him to give her a sign of his will. And the sign was soon forthcoming, it was the apparition of Jesus himself in the monstrance, blessing the work" (B. Peyrous). The Founder received verification for his spirituality of God Alone from the words heard by Milady Peychaud, "**I am the One who is and there is only I who am.**"

*Rose Sullivan  
Intervocational Coordinators Team*

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### *ANNUNCIATION*

*IF*

*she had not stilled her own soul  
like a weaned child*

*on the breast of God*

*IF*

*she had not learned  
to touch presence*

*in emptiness*

*IF*

*she had not attuned her inner ear  
to the heartbeat of God*

*or the whir of wings*

*Would she have even noticed the  
angel?*

*by Sheryl Frances Chen OCSO*



## Griffith Downs Together

Since moving to Griffith Downs in 2017 we have gradually come to know our neighbours but it was not until we were invited to join a WhatsApp chat group called “Griffith Downs Together” that we have begun to feel really part of the local community. This keeps us informed about what is happening in the area.

There is a team who organise events during the year and they send out messages inviting us to gather together. It also informs us of those neighbours who are willing to provide help and support if needed. Many of the elderly people were reassured knowing that such support was available, especially during lockdown.

Two examples of the way the neighbours came together in the last few weeks illustrate this sense of community. A message was sent out, via WhatsApp, inviting all who could to take part in a type of sponsored walk to raise money for the local SVP (St. Vincent de Paul Society). Participants would walk a number of kilometres each day and, at the end of the week, each person would send the number of kilometres walked to one of the organisers. In just a month, the amount raised was over €4,000, fantastic achievement for a small, local neighbourhood.

Last week a message was sent inviting us to a Carol Service which was to take place outside the home of Eddy, one of the organisers. Even though it was a cold evening many of the residents came, all observing the governments guidelines - social distancing, etc. The atmosphere was welcoming and friendly; we were encouraged to sing out with full voice.

Many of the houses were lit up with Christmas lights and the part of the cul-de-sac where we gathered looked truly festive. It was a lovely way of bringing people together at this time of the year.



Some of the messages sent next day to the WhatsApp by those who participated read:

*“Thank you one and all for joining us this evening. Your singing was sweet and really good.”*

*“We have great neighbours; you have helped us all through this difficult and horrible year.”*

*“it was an absolutely magical evening for adults and children, thank you.”*

*“Thank you for bringing us together and enriching our lives.”*

So, some good news in these difficult times thanks to the thoughtfulness and kindness of neighbours.

**Claire Mc Grath,  
Griffith Downs Community**



## Youth Ministry News

Given the lockdown and restrictions, it has not been easy keeping our various youth projects going but, thankfully, we are learning new ways of responding to this challenge. Our good relationship with the Holy Family and Patrician Secondary schools provides us with a great link to the young people in our parish and beyond.

Much of this contact now has to be virtual and through Zoom meetings. Before we can engage with under eighteen-year-olds online we have to put in place new Safe Guarding regulations. Just this week I have been involved with our local youth leaders in a training session around this whole topic of online safety.

We are very blessed in this Parish to have a young woman, Charlotte Vard, on the Parish team with special responsibility for promoting and developing youth ministry. Charlotte is a past pupil of Holy Family Secondary school and has come into youth ministry following a number of years as a volunteer in our Parish. In addition to her

interest in youth ministry, she is highly skilled in the area of technology and this is proving to be a real gift at this time when so much of our interaction has

to be online. I am very happy to be able to call on her to resolve my many online queries; no problem is ever too big or too small for her. Of course, remote interaction can never make up for the personal encounter.

The Transition Year girls in Holy Family School came up with a very worthwhile project in preparation for Christmas. This involved them reaching out to residents in three local nursing care homes. Naturally, their first port of call was to their next door neighbours in *Holy Family Convent*. The girls, under the guidance of their teacher, Emer O'Brien, wrote cards and bought a present for each resident - 114 people in all.

These gifts were brought to the Convent and to the other care homes in good time for them to be quarantined before distribution on Christmas day. This particular project was coordinated by girls involved in the Amadeus Youth Group and those participating in the Pope John Paul II award.



Another lovely festive event was the Carol singing for the sisters by girls from 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> year music classes. This, of course, had to be a socially distanced event. The girls, with their music teachers, sang in the Convent courtyard while the sisters joined in from the open dining room door and from the window of the sitting room in the care unit. We were blessed with a



beautiful crisp, sunny morning. At the end of their performance, we could truly say, “It’s beginning to look a lot like Christmas”.



The strong bonds between the Convent and the school is life enhancing for both generations. There is a plan to cement this bond in an even visible tangible way in the New Year. So, as they say in the best books “watch this space”.

**Kate Cuskelly**  
**Sonias Christ Community**

### Newbridge “YARN GODDESS”

**S**r. Margaret O’Connell’s knitting skills, and how she uses them to help a variety of charities, have been mentioned before in the pages of **Family Links**.



Her Christmas collection this year was donated for the benefit of **Meals on Wheels**, a service that provides meals to people in the community



who are unable, due to age, illness or disability, to cook their own meals.



## Significant Birthdays in Newbridge Community



**"I can't believe I'm 90", was Sr. Ellen Butler's exclamation as, on 13 December, community and staff celebrated her special day**



On the 20<sup>th</sup> it was Sr. Catherine Moran's turn



**A blessing from Denis McNulty, Bishop and Friend**



**Past pupils say it with flowers and remembrances**



## Bradford bringing Christmas cheer



Sheila, Maria and other volunteers receive Christmas gifts and prepare food for distribution to the elderly and homeless in Bradford.





## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Pope Francis proclaims “Year of St Joseph

With the Apostolic Letter “Patris corde” (“With a Father’s Heart”), Pope Francis recalls the 150th anniversary of the declaration of Saint Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church. To mark the occasion, the Holy Father has proclaimed a “Year of Saint Joseph” from today, 8 December 2020, to 8 December 2021.

Click to read [Patris corde](#)

JANUARY 2021	
Friday, 1 <sup>st</sup>	New Year’s Day - Mary, Mother of God World Day of Peace
Sunday, 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Death of Mother Aloysia Noailles Noailles (1884)
Wednesday, 6 <sup>th</sup>	Epiphany
Friday, 8 <sup>th</sup>	Foundation Day – the day Zoe de Raquine spoke to our Founder of her desire to be a Religious in 1820 Foundation of the Sisters of St. Martha in 1857
Saturday, 9 <sup>th</sup>	The Finding in the Temple (Day before the Baptism of Our Lord )
Monday, 11 <sup>th</sup>	Affiliation with the Oblates (1858)
Saturday, 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Feast of the Betrothal of Mary and Joseph
Sunday, 24 <sup>th</sup>	International Day of Education*
Wednesday, 27 <sup>th</sup>	International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust
Sunday, 31 <sup>st</sup>	World Leprosy Day