



# Family Links

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Newsletter of the Holy Family of Bordeaux in Britain and Ireland

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## FOREWORD

“If you can dream it, you can do it”, the saying goes. We all dream by night and most, if not all of us, dream by day. Biblical dreamers seem to have dreamt, or had their inspirations, mostly by night and rose up to put them into practice by day.

Dreamers have big visions, often for a world radically different from the one they see around them, and they set about fulfilling their dreams, frequently at great personal cost. History provides us with numerous examples of people who, by following their dreams, changed the world for better or worse.

Pope Francis gives us a wonderful example of what it is to dream in his book, *Let us dream*, where he traces out a path to a better future for all. He describes the process: “To come out of this crisis better, we have to **see** clearly, **choose** well and **act** right. Let’s talk about **how**.”

As we, in the Religious Institute of the *Holy Family*, prepare for our General Chapter, we are mindful of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles’ dream, aware that it is always in the process of coming to fruition in new ways for new times. Our ongoing process of discernment, involving the whole Institute, is our call to dream and act.

The quote below describes succinctly how to make dreams a reality.

“A dream written down with a date becomes a goal.

A goal broken down into steps becomes a plan.

A plan backed by action makes your dream come true.”

Greg S. Reid

## Thoughts on St. Joseph

In preparation for our March meeting Jacqueline, Patricia and I read Pope Francis's letter on St Joseph and we watched the YouTube presentation:

*Franciscan University presents St Joseph.* I was astonished to learn that there is a *theology* of St Joseph. At first, I thought it was a very strange idea but after our reading and discussions I found myself with a different understanding of St Joseph.

Growing up in a family that prayed to St Joseph every evening after our rosary, I saw him simply as the protector of the Holy Family, looking after their safety and making sure their physical needs were met.

Many of the adjectives used by Pope Francis to describe St Joseph were familiar, but some were new to me. I knew he was just and God-fearing and that God spoke to him in dreams. The parish of my youth was dedicated to St Joseph the Worker so I knew about the work ethic. The significance of Joseph's role in the emotional and spiritual upbringing of Jesus passed me by. As far as I was concerned, Mary took care of all of this.

It was the YouTube discussion that made a deep impression on me with its focus on the relationship between Mary and Joseph (a chaste man, free from possessiveness). It is described as one of mutual love and respect for each other and how the responsibility for caring and teaching of Jesus was shared between them in accordance with the norms of their time. Joseph would have been there as Jesus learned to walk, picking him up when he fell over, and drying his tears. He would have listened to Jesus' baby talk and taught him the meaning of words and the

importance of work. It would have been Joseph who mentored Jesus and took him to the synagogue and who taught him how to live as a good Jew.



St Joseph 'named' Jesus; therefore, he was regarded by the society in which they lived as the father of Jesus. This is illustrated in the bible (Mt 15:55) when people referred to Jesus as the carpenter's son. No one knew about the conception of Jesus. Joseph the leader of the household had a deep love for Mary his spouse. He knew that he was called to make God the Father present in the life of his little family. He was Jesus' earthly spiritual guide; he was a

virginal father and husband and he recognised his wife, Mary, as a sacred gift. He heard the voice of God and responded to it. He ensured the safety of Jesus and Mary and he protected them like a veil creating an earthly Trinity.

St Theresa of the Child Jesus turned to St Joseph. After the death of her birth father, she regarded him as her father. When I look back on my life and the lives of my children and of those of the many I love, there are large gaps in our fatherhood experiences. In some cases, this could be due to the World Wars, to culture, to violence or to a lack of understanding of the importance of fatherhood. I am now adopting St Joseph as my own personal intercessor. I am asking him to be for me, my family and for those I love, a Spiritual Father, one who can walk back into our pasts to guide us to see those areas in need of regeneration. I believe that he can fill the gaps in our fathering and help us become the people God created us to be.

## Prayer for Healing

Dear St Joseph, foster us as you fostered Jesus your son  
Walk with us back into our childhoods.  
Heal the hidden pains and disappointments of our youth  
When absent, busy or inadequate fathers robbed us of  
The love and guidance necessary for our healthy growth.  
Fill the fathering gaps, heal the pain and revive our broken spirits.  
Embrace us, guide us, direct and cherish us so that we  
Can become the people God created us to be, with the capacity to  
Embrace with confidence and joy his plan for our lives. Amen.

Jo Doherty, Central Milton Keynes Lay Group

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## Snowdrop and the frail

I have seen it - it looks like a thin blade of  
grass,  
but no, it is a new beginning.  
It's early January, keep an eye out now,  
there will be more.  
Th thin stem swells towards the tip.  
It remains strong and upright,  
unlike us – we are fragile.

The swell becomes a tiny head,  
a hint of white atop the green.  
Now comers the frost, the wind, the snow.  
The little head bends in the breeze,  
emerges from the frost and snow.  
It remains strong and upright,  
unlike us – we are fragile.

February, Candlemas, Purification.  
More and more appear  
on the verges, in the woods, in our gardens.  
Yes, it is the snowdrop!  
they are strong, but we are fragile.  
We need love, support.  
encouragement, compassion, empathy.  
We need that steadiness that comes from Jesus,  
Then we too can be strong.

**By Elizabeth Roberts, Lay Member**



## The Great Realisation by Tania Sheko

Eileen Burgess (Milton Keynes Lay Member) sends us this poem, that a Priest in Milton Keynes shared with his congregation one Sunday:

“The poem shows that positives can be gained from every situation, no matter how bad; everywhere God’s hand is at work. Even in this time of Pandemic. It doesn’t mention God by name, but it really struck a chord with me; perhaps it will with you.”

- Tell me the one about the virus again, then I’ll go to bed.

But my boy, you are growing weary, sleepy thoughts about your head.

-Please, that one’s my favourite, I promise just once more.

OK. Snuggle down my boy, though I know you know full well  
The story starts before then, in a world I once would dwell.

It was a world of waste and wonder, of poverty and plenty  
Back before we understood why hindsight’s “Twenty Twenty”.

You see, the people came up with companies, to trade across all lands  
But they swelled and got much bigger than we ever could have planned.

We’d always had our wants, but now it got so quick.  
You could have anything you dreamed of, in a day and with a click.

We noticed families had stopped talking, that’s not to say they never spoke,  
But the meaning must have melted and the work-life balance broke.

And the children’s eyes grew squarer and every toddler had a phone.  
They filtered out the imperfections but amidst the noise they felt alone.

And every day the skies grew thicker, till you couldn’t see the stars,  
So we flew in planes to find them, while down below we filled our cars.

We drove around all day in circles, we’d forgotten how to run.  
We swapped the grass for tarmac, shrunk the parks till there were none.

We filled the sea with plastic because our waste was never capped.  
Until each day when you went fishing, you’d pull them out already wrapped.

And while we drank and smoked and gambled, our leaders taught us why:  
it’s best to not upset the lobbies, more convenient to die.

But then in Twenty Twenty a new virus came our way.  
The governments reacted and told us all to hide away.

While we all were hidden, amidst the fear and all the while.  
The people dusted off their instincts, they remembered how to smile.

They started clapping to say "Thank you", and calling up their mums,  
And while the car keys gathered dust, they would look forward to their runs.

And with the skies less full of voyagers, the Earth began to breathe  
and the beaches bore new wildlife that scuttled off into the seas.

Some people started dancing, some were singing, some were baking.  
We'd grown so used to bad news, but some good news was in the making.

And so when we found the cure and were allowed to go outside,  
We all preferred the world we found, to the one we'd left behind.

Old habits became extinct, and they made way for the new,  
And every simple act of kindness was now given it's due.

- But why did it take a virus to bring the people back together?  
Well, sometimes you got to get sick, my boy, before you start feeling better.

Now, lie down, and dream of tomorrow, and all the things that we can do.  
And who knows, if you dream hard enough, maybe some of them will come true.

We now call it "The Great Realisation"  
And yes, since then there have been many.

But that's the story of how it started,  
And why hindsight's "Twenty Twenty".



## Ministry in Covid-19

“Growth of a mustard seed”: A reflective looking back of working with members of the Family of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles, and others, during the Pandemic.



The ways of God are very mysterious! One can lose hope, faith and energy in knocking on doors that seem very unyielding as regards ministry in the local area. Some time ago I explored the possibilities of having weeks of guided prayer in the Celbridge/ Straffan and Clane Parishes. While open to the idea, a small group of parishioners met and thought the parishes were not quite ready for one-to-one spiritual accompaniment.

Instead, we decided to put on reflective evenings for Advent and Lent. The members of the team were Charlie Flynn, Terri Coonan (two of our *Holy Family* members), John Farrelly, a Clane parishioner, and myself.

When Covid-19 struck in March, we finished the Lenten reflections via Livestream in an empty church. Up to a point we had lots of people attending.

In the ‘new normal’ times, we needed to think of what we would do about the weekly Centering Prayer Group since we could not meet in person. John Farrelly, who is a wizard in technology used his skills, and the group of 12-16 members from Clane, Maynooth, Westmeath and Dublin continue to meet each week on Zoom. It is open to anyone to join.

So far, we have facilitated three retreats. One took place in Clongowes Wood College before Covid-19, and the other two were online with people attending from a wider radius on Zoom.

Moving out from the Parish, “Silence@Six” has emerged. This takes place daily at 6pm (Irish time) on a virtual Meditation Chapel site (<https://meditationchapel.org/wisdom-chapel/>).

Between 50-80 people meet every evening for input followed by silent meditation. Those attending come from Clane, different parts of Ireland, UK, Canada, Iceland, Australia and United States. We now have a team of 11 facilitators, including Sr Anne Kearney.

One can imagine how supportive this daily meeting is to everyone and has introduced many people to meditation and contemplation in a new way. We have become a world-wide community. For many it is a life-line, especially for those with physical impairments. It is a profound experience and gives a great feeling of solidarity.

For Advent, a retreat took place over a weekend. On each Sunday, a Special Candle was lit by a representative from each continent. In Lent, there is an extended session once a week with some facilitators highlighting creation.

Our “Silence@Six” has now extended to a “Silentium Spiritual Practice Group” which meets on Zoom every Thursday night, and a “Silentium Contemplative Sabbath Liturgy” weekly.

Before the Pandemic, a Labyrinth beside the Church in Clane was created and has proved to be a source of great benefit to parishioners. A real joy for families who used it throughout the summer and, in lock-down times, it was another way of introducing children to different ways of praying.

We had ‘great plans’ to hold rituals and highlight care of the earth, but that was pared down to a Creation Ritual last September (with social distancing and masks) that took place outside our house in Clane, spearheaded by Sr Anne Kearney. Stones were beautifully painted that day and later placed on the labyrinth.

However, more important was the prayer, raising of awareness, and being together. The energy and joy in the group as they participated was a delight. It is hoped that this group, mostly from the centering prayer, could form the nucleus for working on climate change locally in the future.

*Bernadette Deegan, Clane Community*



### *Puns to tickle your senses*

- Venison for dinner again? Oh deer!
- How does Moses make tea? Hebrews it, of-course.
- England has no kidney bank, but it does have a Liverpool.
- I tried to catch some fog, but I mist
- They told me I had type-A blood, but it was a Typo.
- I changed my iPod's name to Titanic. It's syncing now.
- Jokes about German sausage are the wurst.
- I know a guy who's addicted to brake fluid, but he says he can stop any time.
- I stayed up all night to see where the sun went, and then it dawned on me.
- This girl said she recognized me from the vegetarian club, but I'd never met herbivore.
- When chemists die, they barium.
- I'm reading a book about anti-gravity. I just can't put it down.
- I did a theatrical performance about puns. It was a play on words.

## BOOK REVIEW

*“Are you There God? It’s Me Ellen”*  
by Ellen Coyne

Recently I came across this book, it was not the title that drew me in but the author. Ellen Coyne is a correspondent for the *Irish Times* and among the many events she covered in recent years in Ireland was the Marriage Equality Referendum and the repeal of the Eight Amendment. (the right for women to choose abortion). She was well known for her outspoken support for reform on both topics. So, it was with some surprise that I saw the title of this book given her critical stance towards the Church on many issues.

Ellen is a young woman in her late twenties and, typical of many people of her age, abandoned the Church and her faith in her teens thinking that she would not return. Now however, in this book she acknowledges that she has a hunger for God and for good things in the Church which she says is her “spiritual and cultural home”. The book is a search for answers to the question, “Is it possible for a person to be young and hold progressive ideas in the Roman Catholic Church or, do we leave the Church to those who resist change and hold back reform? She maintains that faith is a gift that allows us to have a relationship with God and to know that life holds a deeper meaning. The writer maintains that by rejecting it and the Church we can also let go, as she puts it, “of the good bits” i.e., the rituals, sense of belonging to a community, etc.

The book is a sincere and thoughtful search for a way forward. The author shares her struggle with many others who desire to find a home in a Church which they experience as both misogynistic and homophobic. She poses the question whether leaving it is the answer or, is there a possibility to help bring about change from within?

This book will be of interest to anyone who wants to understand the mindset of the many young people who have abandoned the Church in droves. Ellen claims that since the publication of the book many people of her generation have contacted her to say they feel the same and are asking similar questions.

You may not agree with her stance on many issues but let’s hope that her voice and many others like her can be heard as we struggle to move forward in a synodal Church.

It’s a conversation the Church needs to have.

*Claire McGrath*  
(Member of the Integrated Spirituality Team)

*Published by Gill Books 2020*



## EcoNews



### HF Climate Action Group

Last October, 2020, an invitation was sent out to tune in to a talk on Climate Change given by Fr. Martin Newell C.P. His presentation was an invitation to Religious Congregations to work together on climate change.

Here in Bradford, the three of us followed this, as did three other members. After this, Sr. Catherine Lavery invited us to a Zoom meeting with her to take it a step further, by forming a Climate Action group within our own Unit.

We agreed to this and Sr. Sheila G. accepted to be responsible for the group. She wrote to all the communities to invite interested persons to

join. Fourteen sisters showed an interest and so the group was formed, holding their first meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2020. The group have continued to meet via zoom every month to try and find ways in which the Holy Family can be actively involved in promoting whatever efforts are needed to halt the devastating effects of climate change.

At our last meeting in March, we finally agreed on the statement below to initiate a conversation within the Unit and to our ongoing reflection.

We are all in it together!



#### Mission Statement

Aware of the environmental crisis facing our planet, we wish to respond to Pope Francis's appeal, expressed in *Laudato Si*, to "care for our common home".

We will try to do this by:

- \* constantly reviewing our own lifestyle, as individuals and as communities, sharing ideas and activities in this regard within the Unit;
- \* joining local groups dedicated to combatting change.
- \* keeping up to date on what is being done globally, and monitoring our own governments to ensure their legislation is fully in accord with the decisions of the UN Climate Conferences (UNFCCC).



As we know, the UK will host the 26th UN *Climate Change Conference* of the Parties (COP26) in *Glasgow* on 1 – 12 November 2021. The COP26 *summit* will bring parties together to accelerate action towards the goals of the *Paris Agreement* and the UN Framework *Convention on Climate Change*.

This is one to watch.

## WE REMEMBER THEM



### Kevin Leneghan RIP

from Maureen Bowsley, Lay Member, Rock Ferry

It was with deep sadness that we heard of Kevin's death on 7th February 2021.

Kevin made his commitment on 1st December 2002 at Rock Ferry convent. He was a dedicated member and attended our monthly meetings regularly. He was a very welcome presence inside the convent door and greeted everyone warmly in his Irish lilt. He contributed to our discussions and participated actively when at our annual/biannual meetings and at celebrations at the convent.

He went to Bordeaux with Cathy and a group from the Northwest in 2011, thoroughly enjoyed it and was very much part of the fun and laughter. As the years passed Kevin's health deteriorated and, unfortunately, he was not always able to attend our monthly meetings.

Kevin was always a very welcome visitor at the convent. The Sisters always enjoyed it when he appeared at the door. He was instrumental in getting the fish tank full of a variety of fish from which the Sisters have had many hours of pleasure. He was very generous with his time and was known to have driven members of the community to the House of Retreat in Wales.

Kevin was a gentleman. As Fr. Bernard said at his requiem "Kevin was like St. Joseph, a silent faithful servant. "He loved Cathy and his family and worked very hard to look after them. Kevin will be sadly missed.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.  
May he rest in peace in the presence of God.

## Ritual to remember and give thanks

Because most of the Sisters in Newbridge were in lockdown and some were in isolation in January – February, they could not attend the funerals of the seven who had died, due to Covid-19, or fittingly remember them in any way. To remedy this, the community came together on Friday, 19 March, to remember, give thanks and celebrate their lives.

A ritual to remember each sister formed part of the prayer service. An empty vase stood on a table in the centre of the chapel. Around it there were photographs of the seven sisters, and seven candles.



As each sister was named, a flower was placed in the vase. Then time was taken to share

precious memories of her. At the end, there was a beautiful bouquet in the vase symbolising the richness and beauty of lives lived. Hilda, from the Rock Ferry community was also remembered.



Finally, all the sisters of the Institute who had died of Covid-19 were remembered in prayer, as well as the thousands throughout the world who had succumbed to it.

As the community left the chapel to go to tea, there was a feeling of peace, a sense that coming together in this way had brought healing and acceptance of what had been a painful and traumatic time.



Sr. Claire McGrath, Griffith Downs

## Memories of Sister Marie Thérèse Mallon

During the month of February, we lay members in England were keeping the community at Newbridge in or thoughts and prayers as they were coping with an outbreak of Covid. Through the wonders of modern technology many of us were able to join in the funeral masses that ensued. These masses were so personal that I felt as if I knew these sisters that I had never met. They were full of joy and hope and were so uplifting.

Finally came the last funeral, that of Sister Marie Thérèse and I suddenly realised that I knew her. Sister Marie Thérèse had taught at Rock Ferry Convent Prep school when I was a pupil. She didn't teach me but taught my younger sister, who absolutely loved her. So much so, that when she moved to London, the next time we were visiting my aunt there my sister insisted that we found the convent and visited her.

At that time there was no Catholic school where we lived and the sisters used to come to the parish on Sunday afternoons to give Religious Instruction. Sister Marie Thérèse took the younger children. My father used to come and pick us up from Sunday School and he said to me, 'See that little nun; she is a marvellous teacher. Do you see what she does?' I didn't know what he was talking about and he said, 'Just watch; she makes the sign of the cross with her left hand because she's facing the children so, when they copy her, they make it with their right hand. She's a wonderful teacher because she can see things from the child's point of view.'

I'm not sure whether her example and my Father's wisdom in pointing it out to me is the reason why I became a teacher who always tried to see things from the child's point of view, and my sister became an Early Years teacher trainer.

*Thank you Sister Marie Thérèse  
Maureen Bowsley, Rock Ferry Lay Member*

## UPCOMING EVENTS

| April                      |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| Thursday, 1 <sup>st</sup>  | Holy Thursday  |
| Friday, 2 <sup>nd</sup>    | Good Friday  |
| Saturday, 3 <sup>rd</sup>  | Easter Vigil, World Autism Day   |
| Sunday, 4 <sup>th</sup>    | Easter Sunday  |
| Wednesday, 7 <sup>th</sup> | World Health Day   |
| Friday, 9 <sup>th</sup>    | Foundation of the Sisters of Hope, 1836<br>Birthday of Sr Hilary, Rock Ferry Community, born on 9 April 1921. Happy 100dth birthday, Hilary! |
| Tuesday, 13 <sup>th</sup>  | Foundation of the Agricole Sisters, 1856   |
| Thursday, 22 <sup>nd</sup> | Earth Day  |
| Friday, 23 <sup>rd</sup>   | St George, Patron of England   |
| Friday, 30 <sup>th</sup>   | Canonical Erection of the Association, 1831  |