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April 2021

Newsletter of the Holy Family of Bordeaux in Britain and Ireland

Issue 4 Volume 7

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Srs. Sheila and Maria (Bradford) presenting the proceeds from their walk for water

FOREWORD

The words synod and synodality are trending in our Church at present. We are familiar with the almost biennial Synods of Bishops that have taken place since 1967 and know they have a consultative role offering, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, information and counsel to the Pope on ecclesial matters concerning the universal Church, or even a particular region such as the Amazon Synod in .

We are less familiar with national synods called by a country's bishops. Pope Francis has called on the Italian Bishops to hold a synod. There is one underway in Germany which appears to be causing some concern in the Vatican. The Irish Church is to have a synod in five years' time and the Bishops Conference has outlined the Synod pathway. If we have looked at the IBC website, we will have seen that before embarking on the initial phase, bishops are inviting submissions to reflect on what methods to adopt during that period of conversations. Replies have to be submitted by Pentecost Sunday. As churches have been closed and the only mention of a synod has been in some Catholic news media, we may assume the invitation is addressed to a limited number.

If the Synod itself is to be truly inclusive and representative of the Irish Church, we must all take part in the process – individuals, parishes, members of religious congregations and organisation, secular society and those who, in conscience, cannot accept every aspect of Church teaching. A book worth reading in this regard would be Irish journalist Elleen Coyne's, *Are You There, God? It's Me, Ellen*.

MESSAGE FROM THE ICT

LIVING HOPE



Most of us are familiar with the saying, “I do not know what is going to happen; but I hope something good will happen.” Certainly, our journey of life is built on hope. As we face

the uncertainties, anxieties and fears of the unknown future, especially during this Covid pandemic period, we need to activate and keep burning the flame of hope in our lives. Hope is an indispensable element that helps us to live with peace and serenity each day as it presents itself to us. It is hope that impels us to move forward through difficult times. Hope becomes a striving force within enabling us to step courageously the unknown future and to embrace it peacefully. Hope is often present in unexpected places and situations. The following is a true story of a mother that could inspire us on our own journey of life.

In a war-torn area in Sri Lanka, there was a mother with four children living in a small hut. Each one of them was differently able. All those who passed that way stopped to see them. She welcomed every one with the smile on her face. Whenever someone asked her, “How do you live here alone with these children?” she narrated her story in all simplicity: “Yes, all my children are differently able. Knowing the difficulties, we had to face, my husband went away leaving me alone. I was also rejected from the camp because I was not able to look after the children as people expected. Unable to face all these hardships alone, I decided to put an end to my life and that of my children. I bought a bottle of poison and kept it safely out of the reach of the children.

One day, when I felt I could go no further, I took the bottle in my hand. The four little ones saw it, and immediately stretched out their hands towards me thinking that I was going to give them some chocolate. I felt my heart breaking and tears flooding my eyes. And ... a thought gripped me: “The One who created us will surely take care of us!” It lighted up my inner being... a change came within me... and I began to walk full of hope in the goodness the One we call Father!

Like this mother, we too may have something to say of our personal experience of hope that gave us new courage to go forward... when we were moved to pray with the Psalmist, ***“For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust”*** (Psalm 71:5); ***“My hope comes from You. You alone are my rock and my salvation, my fortress! I will not be shaken.”***

“Where there is hope, there is life. It fills us with fresh courage and makes us strong again” Anne Frank. The capacity to hope is an indispensable human quality even in times of crisis; when confidence and trust have been broken, hope sustains us.

Easter is about moving from the darkness of death to the light of life. Jesus’ victory over sin and death is the ever living, never failing source of hope and courage to us who believe.

Because He lives, I can face tomorrow

Because He lives, all fear is gone

Because I know He holds the future

And life is worth living just because He lives!

Rishmala Michael, Contemplative Sister, Nagoda

Life of St. Joseph

If we were to write a story of a “Mystery Man”, it might well be sub-titled “The Life of St. Joseph”. Not much is known about him, yet he played a pivotal role in the life of Jesus and Mary. He was the original “Quiet Man”, for not a word of his is recorded in the Gospel. Even the devil was not sure of his identity!

We meet St. Joseph in the early stages of St. Luke’s Gospel in which we learn that Mary was engaged to a man named Joseph, of the “house of David “. (Luke 1:27). In the dialogue also, Mary’s virginity is referred to. Only possibly months afterwards, when Mary’s impending motherhood becomes visible, does Joseph step out of the shadows, and into the limelight. He being a man of honour wishes to protect Mary by secretly repudiating the marriage contract. His anxiety must have been tremendous, because it provokes a first-class revelation by God in the form of an angel who commands Joseph to do the right thing by her and take her to his home. (Mt. 1:20.)

After this, follows the Exodus from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem in Judea, from where Joseph’s family originated in order to be included in the Census. This certainly took longer than doing everything online as is the case today! Joseph is again embarrassed at the lack of provision and hospitality forthcoming from his “family tree” – how many times has this happened to some of us? But Joseph was resourceful, - he recalls a place where he probably hung out with his friends as a boy, and duly guides Mary there to a nearby cave, where she gives birth to Jesus. The next episode saw the welcoming of the 3 Kings and shepherds. (Lk. 2:8) Again, Joseph is warned in a dream to remove himself and the

Family to safer lodgings, (Lk. 2: 13), while king Herod scours the countryside for the Child, causing mayhem in between.

During this time of the Infancy, Joseph and Mary went to the Temple where they receive a blessing and prophecy from Simeon and Anna: (Lk. 2 :21) This brings a new perspective into the life of the Holy Family: He would be a Light for All Nations, for young and old, men and women. The Benedictus, recited by Simeon, is classed as the most beautiful of Biblical prayers, ranked only after the Our Father and the Magnificat. This prayer is a call to listen to Jesus; to attend to his vocational call to all, young and old, rich and poor.

After which, with Jesus, Mary and Joseph plan to return to their origins, to Nazareth. But all is still not well. A dream awakes Joseph to bring all to a safer clime where the child will stay safely until the Lord calls Joseph to go back. Like Moses in the O T., he travels on foot to Egypt, where they will all stay until the right time to return is shown.

In this year dedicated to St. Joseph, we remember particularly the refugees—their place in society, and lack of importance/value given by that society. It is important to honour St. Joseph and pray to him for the welfare of these people. As head of Holy Family, both mothers and fathers need to ask him for his special help at this time of life. Also, as patron of consecrated life, we as religious need to pray to him also, especially during this year dedicated to him.

Sr. Sandra Harrington, Rock Ferry Community

We rejoice with our Centenarian, Sr. Hilary

Truly, the 9th April was an “amazing” birthday for our Community – a day of joyful celebration as we rejoiced with Sr. Hilary on her 100th Birthday. The postman had been very busy during the previous week as so many letters addressed to Sr.

Hilary arrived in our letter box from her family, our Sisters and her many friends.

Sr. Hilary, who had survived Covid-19, now enjoyed her role centre stage, a role she performed admirably well as we prepared for this extraordinary milestone! Floral tributes adorned our chapel, dining room and corridors! Our Matron and caring staff had been busy that morning in their creative way, adding colour and variety to the joyful atmosphere. At 11am Fr. Bernard, our P.P. celebrated Mass for her intentions and presented Hilary with the blessing from our General Leadership Team in Rome.

We then repaired to the dining room for a celebratory lunch. At 3pm, as we gathered to cut the Birthday Cake, some Lay Members joined us

- following Covid restrictions, outdoors – to sing “Happy Birthday” and enjoy tea and cake too! It had been arranged that Sylvia, a former Carer, was to come along to join in the celebrations and be presented with gifts

on her retirement. As a picture says more than a thousand words, the photos of this memorable day should convey much more than any script.



Our Community prayer in thanksgiving to God was a fitting conclusion to an outstanding experience of Easter joy. Thank you to Matron and all our staff who in so many ways made this a very special occasion, not only for Hilary, but for all the Sisters.

*Thank you, Sr. Hilary,
and
Ad Multos Annos.*

Rock Ferry Community

**Sr. Hilary with letter and cheque
received from the
President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins**



UACHTARÁN NA hÉIREANN
PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

06 April 2021

Sr. Hilary Fitzgerald
Holy Family Convent
26 Highfield Road
Rockferry
Birkenhead
Wirral CH42 2BY

Dear Sr. Fitzgerald,

I have learned with great pleasure that you will celebrate on 9 April, 2021 the hundredth anniversary of your birth.

What a wonderful occasion for you, your extended family and friends as you reminisce and celebrate a life great in years, and I have no doubt, rich in accomplishments. I join with your family and friends in wishing you a very happy birthday.

You have lived through remarkable times in the history of Ireland and the world. You have witnessed remarkable changes, in lifestyles and technological developments, unimaginable at the time of your birth in 1921.

May you be surrounded today by the warmth of happy memories and secure in the knowledge that you continue to make this world a better place for all who love you. I am delighted to send my warmest personal congratulations and most sincere good wishes, along with the enclosed centenarian payment.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michael D. Higgins". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a faint, rectangular stamp that appears to be a seal or a watermark.

Michael D. Higgins
Uachtarán na hÉireann
President of Ireland

“Take Care”

In the journey to the light,
the dark moments
should not threaten.
Belief
requires
that you hold steady.
Bend, if you will,
with the wind.
The tree is your teacher,
roots at once
more firm
from experience
in the soil
made fragile.
Your gentle dew will come
and a stirring
of power
to go on
towards the space
of sharing.
In the misery of the I,
in rage,
it is easy to cry out
against all others
but to weaken
is to die
in the misery of knowing
the journey abandoned
towards the sharing
of all human hope
and cries
is the loss
of all we know
of the divine
reclaimed
for our shared
humanity.
Hold firm.
Take care.
Come home
together.

‘Season of Fire’, 1993
MDH

This poem by President of Ireland,
Michael D. Higgins, although written
27 years ago, resonates with what we
are all enduring as Covid-19 spreads
across the globe leaving death and
desolation in its wake.



Calling Lay Members in Britain

As a group leader I was invited to join our National Committee to discuss the Bicentenary celebrations. It was great to see everyone on Zoom and to realise how much our committee does for us. Very exciting plans!

A date, 26 June, was agreed for our Biennial celebrations; they will be on Zoom. Groups will be encouraged to possibly gather and share using only 1 computer which can then be viewed on a TV screen - with the proper cable.

Life is looking up and we're looking back at the 3 most important things the *Holy Family* has given us as individuals.

Perhaps You, yes YOU, YOU, when you've read my contribution could put pen to paper and write of your experiences, many of which no doubt go

back 50 or more years. I'd like to read of the early days of how your group was formed. How did it feel? How has being a part of your group changed you? How has the group changed?

So, reach for your pen and paper, draft a few lines and email them to myself (jodoherty1945@gmail.com), or Margaret Ramsey (margyramsey@sky.com).

We have to understand our past to enable us to plan our future.

May God Bless you as you ponder and write

Jo Doherty
Central Milton Keynes - Lay Member

Remembering Waterford Road

In January 1998, I was invited by Sr Bernadette Scanlon, along with six other parishioners, of St Michael and All Angels, Woodchurch, Wirral, to join the *Holy Family* Association Lay Members group.

We started our Formation with Sr Bernadette, but following an accident in the Convent, she could no longer continue. We then had Sr Marie from Wrexham, followed finally by Sr Catherine Evers. We made our Commitment, in the Chapel in June 1999.

What very happy memories I have, of all the Sisters I met over the years - Sisters Margaret Doherty and Margaret Bradley, Hilda and Theresa of Bradford (now in Rock Ferry). I also met Sr Áine for the first time. Never having been familiar with the *Holy Family* Sisters I can only

say what a joy and privilege it has been to be part of the *Holy Family* Association.

I also have happy memories of AGMs at Hope University with Bert as our President, and May with all the ladies doing the raffle that was always the 'Highlight' of the afternoon.

Sadly, Waterford Road closed. We did continue to meet for some time afterwards, but falling numbers, through ill health, meant the group had to close. However, I have been fortunate, with help from Margaret Ramsey to become, I know, a very welcome Member in Rock Ferry. Hopefully it won't be too much longer before we can meet again in person.

Margaret Murray
Rock Ferry, Lay Member

LIFE AFTER COVID-19

So we think we can settle back into routine after Covid? Not really! Because those of us who have met the plague head-on have become bitten by something greater than themselves. Only the power of prayer, plus the guiding hand of NHS staff and warriors have turned the tide for us. For non-believers all was concentrated on medics and their surpassing generosity of time, spirit and expertise. For those who believe, all was a mixture of care, patience and altruism to a heroic degree.

Have we met the like of this before? Some have likened it to being in a war zone; others have likened it to flu/ polio/ or typhoid epidemics of the last Century. When one ex-veteran of war experiences was questioned re the impact of Covid, she replied that the latter was worse, “because in a war zone you can see your enemy! “

The impact on lives has been before us night and day on TV. Some younger people (and some from caring professions), but mostly older people, have been badly affected. Constant interaction between families through telephone and zoom has lessened the feelings of isolation experienced by those in lockdown or those being “sheltered”.

The worst effects, apart from the sad bereavements, have yet to be discovered in the hearts and minds of the young and not so young, and in families who have experienced mental disorders, isolation and protracted disturbances. These results will need an army of medics to try and heal the long-term effects of the Covid, but mostly the isolation experienced by many. Few, even the most introverted of people will have escaped these effects.

So how will our lives shape up after Covid? Those given a second chance to continue on the straight and narrow, are aware of a need for gratitude to an ever-loving God and Saviour, who preserved us and still sustains us. How do we express our thanks to this Creator God who has done so much for us?

We are invited to reflect and contemplate the truths and beauties of Nature by a hidden life of Prayer, from Pope Francis in “Fratelli Tutti”, and “Let Us Dream”. Here, too, he sets a vision for the future in which the Poor will no longer be the disadvantaged, but the starting point of a New Creation and a new world order. This is not just pious talk, but has its origins in re-claiming the world, so that “we live simply, act justly, and love tenderly”, - an attitude encapsulated in the “Be-Attitudes”. (Matt: 5)

Sometimes we can be daunted by the task in front of us: it’s too much to ask. We are not involved in commerce or business; we do not set the agenda for the multi-nationals who run or ruin the world. Nor are we so techno-minded that we can influence people with our expertise in promoting a new world order through the internet.

But all have a part to play and can do so willingly. Again, there is a need to be guided by the Spirit -- to do what one can to make others happy; to practise whatever we preach, in small ways so as to keep the peace, balance and harmony in family or community life. To continue to think globally, but to act locally so as to eradicate injustice, loneliness and deprivation.

Sr Sandra, Rock Ferry Community

It's April! Eastertide! Springtime! New Life!

Trees and Flowers blossoming and blooming
AND 'Lockdown' is easing!

Although still feeling a little cautious about venturing out in public places, after having the 2nd Jab of vaccine it does give hope that some sort of normality can begin again and visits with family can physically resume.

I'm looking forward to travelling North to visit my three sisters and families over the coming weeks. Even if we only have 'virtual hugs' or 'elbow bumps', it will just be so good to see them in the flesh and catch up on the news you don't get to share on Zoom, WhatsApp or phone calls.

The timing couldn't have been better to see 'the light at the end of the tunnel' with the knowledge of the Resurrection of our Lord.

It feels as if a 'shadow' has been lifted and although we have lost so many, who will be remembered in continued Masses and prayers, we have the opportunity to shine and move forward with each other, especially with our own families and *Holy Family* Associates.

So throw back the curtains and enjoy sharing your days out and about in the new 'normal way' giving special thanks to those who have helped us to move forward!

Margaret Ramsey, Rock Ferry Lay Member

Now is the time to dig

It was not yesterday when Eden bloomed,
Small birds sang and children played their way to God.
It was not yesterday when winter came,
Birds fled, stripped trees shivered in the cold.

It was not yesterday when Joseph found a way
Straight, love lit, fit for Mary's feet.
She ministering to Joseph and her child
Gives solace to the lost, joy to those in pain.

It was not yesterday when Joseph found new ground.
He watered it with sweat and made it ripe
For Mary's hand to plant a richer seed.
It fed a child growing tall in wisdom's care.

It was not yesterday when Covid came
To slow a dizzy world and give it time
So hand could feel for hand and find love's warmth
For eyes to open and ears become unblocked.

It was not yesterday and we can look,
For Joseph's tools left ready for our use,
For Mary's seed preserved in salty joy
A Holy Family can be more than three.

Now is the time to dig.

EcoNews

Restore our Earth

This was the theme of the 51st Earth Day, (or [International Mother Earth Day](#) as the UN names it) celebrated on 22 April 2021. Most years, events take place around the world ranging from simple things like litter pick-ups, river clean-ups, tree planting, composting, to more ambitious projects like starting a community garden and removal of invasive plants. This year, with social distancing still in place for many of us, Earth Day went digital. Virtual events, such as environmental lectures, webinars and films, took place.

While the following article, submitted by group members, Brigid and Maria, may not have had Earth Day in mind, they provide useful information about composting, so we include it here.

QUIZ GROUP ON ZOOM

Over the past year many initiatives have been taken to keep people connected. For us, the idea of having a quiz group on zoom took root in January of this year as we had not been able to meet up for the usual get-togethers at Christmas.

Sheila Griffiths set the ball rolling on general knowledge, which proved to be very interesting. We decided on a monthly meeting, with different members choosing the topic and hosting the meeting.

Following on from there we have had, geography, animals and our latest - **composting**. For this, some displayed materials that can be recycled. Prizes await the winners after lockdown.

Google is a great source of information for quizzers! In the process we have learned a bit more about hosting a zoom meeting.

See the following page for composting Quiz questions

Composting Quiz

1. Name 3 materials that can be composted.
(agricultural waste, garden trimmings, leaves, paper, cardboard, wood chips, others).
2. Name 3 benefits of compost.
(enriches the soil, increases biodiversity, neutralises the soil, reduces erosion, reduces landfill, others).
3. Name 2 organisms found in compost.
(Worms, fungi, microorganisms)
4. Can you compost paper and eggshells?
(Yes)
5. How long does it take on average to make compost, 6 weeks, 6 month's, 6 years?
(6months)
6. Name 2 plants that you can make compost tea from.
(nettles, comfrey)
7. Name 4 equally important ingredients necessary for composting to happen. (oxygen, water, carbon, nitrogen)
8. What temperature is required in the compost heap for materials to breakdown, 30-40 c, 54-71c, 85-95c?
(54-71c)
9. Should you put meat in the compost Y/N.
(No)
10. What would you use compost tea for: A to kill weeds or B as a liquid fertilizer?
(B)
11. Name two creatures might you find in a compost heap?
(slow worm, hedgehog, insects)
12. How much household waste is eligible for composting: 30% 50% 90%?
(30%)
13. Can you put lawn cuttings into the compost Yes/ no
(Yes)
14. What causes waste to break down Oxygen? Methane.
(Oxygen)
15. Does composting reduce carbon footprint?? Yes/No
(Yes)
16. How much waste do we generate per annum per person: one ton, half ton. 2 tons?
(One ton)
17. Composting should be a combination of Greens and Browns
(A) What element does Green contain? (Nitrogen)
(B) What element does browns contain? (Carbon)
18. Name brown waste suitable for compost.
Autumn leaves, egg shells, old plants. Hedge trimmings shredded, woodchip, straw
Name the green waste.
Uncooked kitchen waste, grass cuttings. soft leafy plants
19. How do you know when compost is ready for use: sweet smelling, sticky, dark brown, lumpy?
Which are incorrect? (Sticky and Lumpy)
20. Can you put citrus fruits in compost: Yes/No
(No)

WALK FOR WATER

The CAFOD challenge for Lent, 2021, WALK FOR WATER, was an inspiration for many people in the UK. We, Maria and Sheila in the Bradford community, decided to do it as a Team, with Maria taking the lion's share of the 10,000 steps a day. Teresa Edwards and Nasreen also took part in their own way

It certainly was a challenge, not knowing how the weather would be. Committing ourselves to be out walking was a transforming process, knowing we were helping Abdella and his family in Northern Ethiopia to have access to clean water and other essentials, sowing seeds of hope, opportunity and joy. At present he has to walk 10 hours daily, over hostile and rocky terrain to access water pools from which he collects water for the daily needs of his family.

The people of our Parish area, as well as many friends, sponsored us. A group of friends in Leeds, following a weekly reflection during Lent, decided to donate to this cause. They were inspired following their reflection of Jesus's conversation with the woman at the well. Some of their grandchildren also took up the challenge

and donated their pocket money. The children became very concerned about the distance Abdella had to walk for water and wondered how their contribution had helped

The full amount collected was £1,514.00 for walking 400,000 steps. We truly hope this will enable Abdella and his family to have the life-giving well so badly needed in the dry, barren land of Ethiopia.

We are all aware of how precious and necessary water is for all of life. Perhaps there are ways we can continue to save and reuse it, especially in our gardens.

“Water poverty especially affects Africa where large sectors of the population have no access to safe drinking water or experience droughts which impede agricultural production. ‘Access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights.’ (Pope Francis: *Laudato Si*).

Srs. Maria, Sheila. (Bradford community)



Online quiz to raise funds for Ethiopia

An online quiz is being held on the last day of each month to raise money for Mary's Meals' in Ethiopia. To take part the charity asks that you donate a €5 entry fee, or more, and provide your name and email address when signing up online.

The next quiz takes place on Friday April 30 at 8 pm. Those interested can enter by following this link: <https://www.marysmeals.ie/fundraising/project/online-quiz/online-quiz-for-marys-meals> or contact: 0872596159

(The Irish Catholic, April 22, page 5)

WE REMEMBER



Doris Kelly

19th April 1921 – 10th April 2021

It is with deep sadness that the Sisters and Lay Members at Selby Road, Leeds announce the death of a dear friend and committed Lay Member, Mrs Doris Kelly.

I am sure that many of you will remember the article 5 years ago when we celebrated with Doris and her husband Leslie, her 95th birthday and their 75th wedding anniversary with a special Mass, where the celebrant was Fr Peter Johnson, followed by a party at the convent.

Doris made her commitment in 1984 and was very active in the Group that met at the Holy Family Convent on Ings Road. As numbers declined, the Ings Road and Selby Road combined and we were one happy family. Doris continued to attend our meetings as often as she could.

In recent years her health declined and as she needed more care than was possible at home, she became a resident at a Home in Darlington. She went to her heavenly reward on Monday 19th April, surrounded by her family just 9 days short of her 100th birthday.

UPCOMING EVENTS

MAY 2021

Saturday, 1st	International Labour Day
Thursday, 6 th	St. Francis Laval (1623-1708), the first Bishop of Quebec and the first bishop to celebrate a feast of the Holy Family in his diocese.
Saturday, 15 th	International Day of Families
Sunday, 16 th	Ascension Day
Monday, 17 th	World Telecommunications Day
Tuesday, 18 th	Blessing of the Association and the Councillors Crossed by Pope Pius X (1851)
Saturday, 22 nd	International Day for Biodiversity
Sunday, 23 rd	Pentecost Sunday
Friday, 18 th	Actual Foundation Date, Trinity Sunday, 1820
Sunday, 30 th	Trinity Sunday