



# Family Links

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Early morning sun rising behind Newbridge convent

## Foreword

**A** Happy New Year!

We can say these words joyfully and wholeheartedly to one another, even as 2022 begins in a world still overwhelmed by a pandemic that shows no signs of abating. We say it because of our hope and belief that nothing can “separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:39). Christian hope is not just wishful thinking, a vague feeling that everything will eventually be all right. Rather, it is a confident expectation, based on our own personal experience of God’s love and faithfulness. that good will certainly come



The Holy Family, like all organisations, had to adapt with creativity and ingenuity to the new situation created by restrictions on movement during the past two years. We can look back with gratitude on how, as a body, we became more connected through our various unit and inter-unit Zoom meetings, in a way we would not have imagined without the pandemic.

The General Chapter of the Religious Institute, using the same online method, followed a synodal path that gave every sister the opportunity to participate in an unprecedented way. All this brings us to a greater realisation that, though hope is God’s gift to us, we all have a part to play and a contribution to make in bringing about the change and newness we desire in so many areas of life.

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in your faith, so that in the power of the Holy Spirit you may be rich in hope.” (Rom. 15:13)

## MESSAGE FROM ICT

### Reflections on a General Chapter



The 20th General Chapter (a meeting held every six years for the apostolic and contemplative Sisters) concluded on 20 December 2021. The original date was May 2020, but COVID 19 pandemic forced a postponement. The General Chapter was in two main parts 20 days in February/March and 16 days in November/December via Zoom. A very different experience but one that allowed a level of connection and participation of all the Sisters never witnessed before. Since February 2021 we gathered each month for Prayer and Inter Unit Conversations on various topics related to living fully our charism of communion.

One topic that spoke loudly to me was that of Interculturality. Culture provides us with the sense of identity, cohesion, inclusion, and protection that all of us need as human beings. Culture also divides into “us” and “them”. Interculturality looks at our expression of walking alongside those who were not born into my native culture. Cultural differences should not separate us from each other, but rather cultural diversity brings a collective strength that can benefit all of humanity. It is how we “minister to the other person” regardless of the circumstances in which we meet them. Pope Francis speaks of the reaction in today’s world to those we meet who are different from us.

*“No one will ever openly deny that they are human beings, yet in practice, by our decisions and the way we treat them, we can show that we consider them less worthy, less important, less human. For Christians, this way of thinking and*

*acting is unacceptable, since it sets certain political preferences above deep convictions of our faith: the inalienable dignity of each human person regardless of origin, race or religion, and the supreme law of fraternal love.”*

As members of the PBN Family we are called to share our gift of communion with the world where there can only be expressions of “we”. My reflections over the past few months have challenged me to examine the language I use or more importantly hide behind. I am aware of my own prejudices.

As a Holy Family Sister, I read the following phrases in our literature “Standing against discrimination among ourselves”, “Mission of Communion”, “Unity in Diversity”, “Interrelatedness”, “Interdependence”, “In solidarity and complementarity”, “Loving, seeking and desiring God alone in all things like Jesus, Mary and Joseph”, and “Being one with”

What do these really mean for me in today’s world? If I dare to risk integrating some of the above into how I live surely this can make a difference for the whole earth community. It means that I must tackle head-on my biases otherwise I am living a life, counter to the one I committed to 28 years ago.

The term that has repeatedly come to mind recently is “zero tolerance on inequality”. This has taken me wider than the issue of interculturality. I am challenged to look at my responses within a society that provides us daily with a long list of inequalities. To see difference in a positive and constructive light. Pope Francis reminds us that “we must walk united with our differences: there is no other way to become one”.



It is a known fact that I *may not* remember what you did for me, but I *will* remember how you made me feel.

As the family of PBN, we take care of one another. The welfare of each one is the concern for all. Who is the other? In this family, we are all sisters and brothers, each with our specific vocation. We are different; to take care of the other who is different from me, with her/his needs and ways, means to be interested in what s/he feels, and to welcome strengths as well as imperfections. To accept each other with our own vulnerabilities. As a Charismatic Family,

we are open to the whole community of life with whom we form one great family.

Each member of the PBN Family is called to promote communion through a quality of presence as Family within the Universe Family.

I invite you to think about the phrase “zero tolerance on inequality” what would the impact be in your life and all those you meet daily if you considered adopting this attitude and created awareness.

*Sr. Catherine Lavery, Unit Leader*

Bradford Climate Emergency Walk

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iyp7SQBfyWM>

Clicking on the above link will bring you to a “lovely, sunny 2-minute film” about the walk that calls on the Bradford Council to speed up the divestment of the West Yorkshire Pension Fund from fossil fuels.

See if you recognise anyone?

## The three Meetings

Recently we have all been involved with three aspects of our lives that will affect us forever. These have been COP 26, the Synod, and our General Chapter as Sisters of the Holy Family. It struck me how closely related are some of the themes and expectations of these meetings.

Firstly, the quality of our lives as sisters and as members of the one planet have circulated around the findings and decisions made during COP 26 in Glasgow. This gathering strove to eliminate fossil fuels, deforestation, water wastage, carbon emissions, and the inequality of food distribution around the world by different means. Through better use of electricity, wind turbines, and control and promotion of natural habitats for wildlife, it was hoped to bring harmony and balance back into Nature, and protect the environment.

Our Synod too, due to take place shortly, seeks to restore the balance between the power structure of the Church as we have known it, and the Laity who make up the most of it. It seeks to find ways to “work and walk together in the power of the Spirit”, to bring a new world order among our members where minorities get “listened to”, and changes happen which help those without status - except for their membership - to be catered for and have their needs met whether pastoral or personal.

Our third group, which is the most important for us as Holy Family Sisters, involves the General Chapter which will have issues that are perhaps unprecedented. Besides the above issues already named, there is a call to service of communion with the poor in the most deprived areas. Sisters from other cultures too will enable the group to move forward, as we face declining numbers in previously more prolific nations from Europe.

There will be cross-cultural exchanges that will demand a lot of give and take as sisters tackle the problems presented in our 3<sup>rd</sup> century. Can we

make the necessary changes and adaptations to our lifestyle, as we listen to the calls of the Chapter?

What links these three groups is a concern for the future: for sustainable life after climate Change, for effective faith which will live after the Synod, and in the case of our Chapter for vibrancy in our own spiritual and community life, and the lives of others. Concern is strong for the future of the young and the future members of our Institute.

In every case or group, much depends on the quality of leadership. Each of the 3 major meetings is made up of very committed people with high ideals who want the best outcome from their work. The use of technology via virtual media has played a greater part in online meetings, due to the serious Covid impact. This has called for greater expertise in the use of the Internet. A factor that is common to all three international meetings has been the reversal of the Pyramid structure of discussion and decision making. Very often, as in the case of COP26, the most noise and clamour for change came from outside the meeting hall, and from the rank-and-file participators who demanded progress.

Stalwart parishioners similarly are engaged in a battle to make their voices heard in the coming Synod, much to the surprise but not the delight of “conservative” bishops!

For ourselves as sisters, we have been invited to participate in all the events, prayers, meetings, consultations and reflections leading up to the Chapter. Never was so much done by so few in what was initially a short time but became prolonged due to circumstances. In the time that is left, we hope and pray that the outcomes of our three meetings will rise to our expectations, and will justify the efforts of so many people.

*Sr. Sandra Harrington,  
Rock Ferry community*

## A DREAM

A Reflection by John Quinn\*

And then one day  
The fog of fear lifted  
Gently  
The night of anxiety passed quietly  
And the pain of sickness and death eased  
Palpably.  
The seeds of faith  
Found nourishment  
In a warming sun  
The shoots of faith  
Broke through  
A frozen earth  
And tender buds of love  
Burst wildly open  
On every branch  
The birds sang  
With wild abandon  
People laughed and danced  
As was their right  
And children played  
Again



Enmity and division  
Were no more  
And begrudgery withered away  
For on that bright and balmy morn  
Faith wore its coat of many colours  
Hope sang with the purest voice  
And Love as always conquered all.

*Submitted by Sr Kate Cuskelly*

**This reflection is taken from a book entitled: I AM WITH YOU STILL Faith Reflections from a Covid-19 Word**

\*John Quinn is a writer and former RTÉ broadcaster

## Holy Family Secondary School Community Outreach

Despite the inconvenience of Covid-19 restrictions, pupils and staff from Holy Family Secondary School participated in a number of projects in the run-up to Christmas reaching out to people in the local area.

One such venture was the sharing of individual gifts with residents in three local nursing homes; Willowbrook, Curragh Lawn, and our own Holy Family Convent. For a second year, this was organized by the Transition Year pupils in collaboration with the school Chaplaincy Team. There was great enthusiasm for this project and very generous sharing on the part of the girls who took great care and pride in buying and wrapping their gifts for distribution.

In pre-Covid times it would have been possible for the girls to visit the residents. For now, when such visits are not possible, it is hoped that this outreach ensures a sense of care is extended to people who might otherwise have little or no contact with young people. The girls, for their part, spoke of their delight at being involved in sharing with the more senior members of the community and many expressed the desire to keep up the contact in the New Year, perhaps by email or letter, for those who wish to do so.

Every year for Christmas, the Holy Family School community organizes a fundraising event for some local charity. This year's chosen project was Teach Tearmainn in Kildare Town. This is a place offering refuge and a variety of support



services to women and children who have to flee their homes because of violence or abuse. Members of our school Chaplaincy team researched how best we could offer some material assistance to the service users of this refuge. One request was for children's toys. Our Holy Family Youth Group (HFY) willingly took on the task of involving our school in responding to this need. The HFY girls spoke to each class requesting new toys.

The response was amazing. A vast array of new toys was brought to school and sorted into different age categories. School staff also came on board providing toiletries, women's gift sets, nightwear, etc. Again, the response was really generous. It was also decided to donate the proceeds of an earlier school fundraising event to this project; a sum of almost €1,000 was presented.

It is envisaged that as a school we will keep in contact with Teach Tearmainn into the future offering what support we can and learning more about the service it is providing especially at this time of heightened need in many homes. It is a sad fact that domestic violence has intensified across the world during the Pandemic, due in no small measure to the pressure caused by lockdowns. If we can lighten the burden and offer even a glimmer of hope through a gesture



**Photos showing Sr Kate (Chaplaincy Team) with HF girls all ready to deliver Christmas gifts.**



**Donation delivered to Teach Tearnann**

of kindness then our efforts will be worthwhile.

The Teach Tearnainn project is all the more special to us now that we have discovered that it was set up in 2012 largely through the efforts of a past pupil of Holy Family School, something we had not known when we started out on this venture.

*Kate Cuskelly  
Sonas Christ community*

Although it is quite a few years since the Holy Family Sisters withdrew from the Secondary School, there remains a close and warm rapport between the school and the community.

The presence of Sr. Kate on the chaplaincy team facilitates contact all the more, while the formation of an enthusiastic Holy Family Youth group has created an additional bond.

During the week before Christmas, groups of students came to present their gifts to the sisters, an individual gift for each one, and to entertain them with carols



It wasn't just the Secondary school students who came to wish the sisters a Happy Christmas.

A contingent from the Primary school, accompanied by their teacher came to offer their best wishes on cards made by themselves in their Art class.



### Newbridge "Yarn Queens" knit to help at Christmas

This year, two new knitters joined the Newbridge communities, Sr. Lil in St. Conleth's and Sr. Margaret in Sonas Chríost. Both contributed to items to the annual private Christmas raffles organised to help charities in the town.

The Newbridge raffle raised €1,335 for the charity *Meals on Wheels*



Edel Mulligan, Leader of Sonas Chríost lay group has this to say.

I was delighted to be able to hand over €525 to Sr. Eileen and Mairead Ryan of *Share Food Newbridge*. This was all possible through the kindness of Sr. Margaret Bradley who recently moved to Sonas Chríost in Newbridge from Magherafelt where I'm sure she is really missed.

Sr. Margaret made calendars and notelets and knitted the cutest hedgehogs and monkeys for sale. The lay members of Sonas Chríost and school friends from the Class of '76 (my class) bought and sold the items. I want to finish by saying many thanks to all involved especially to Sr. Margaret.



## Farewell to Sharmila

On Sunday 26 December Feast of the Holy Family the communities of Aberdare Gardens, St Gabriel's Road and Clapham gathered to say farewell to Sharmila with a time of prayer and a meal together. During a time of prayer, we acknowledged with gratitude Sharmila's contribution to the Unit since 2018, her work with the clients of the Passage Homeless Centre and the friendships she built up with the staff and volunteers, her artistic creativity, her love of gardening and cooking.

We reflected together on the following quote from the Document on Mission Rome 2018:

*Mission today requires that we be seekers, pilgrims on a journey, open to new ways and new*

*ideas wherever they come from, willing to discern the signs of the times and the work of the Spirit within them, to be "mystics" with "open eyes" and open hearts. It invites us to be open to the wonder, beauty and mystery of the journey.*

*It invites us to a daily, ever deepening yes to the Spirit of God as our purpose in life. It is never a fixed or static path as the Spirit is always "doing a new thing" and can be found in surprising places, alluring us into more Love, more Life and Creativity.*

On behalf of all the Sisters in the Unit, we prayed the following Blessing by Monica Brown



*Sharmila*

*We thank our God, for your gracious service  
We thank our God, for your faith and love  
And now we pray with joy and thanksgiving, God's blessing on you*

*We have been blessed by your loving presence  
You will remain deep within our hearts  
And now we pray with hearts overflowing, God's blessing on you*

*May the Lord bless you and keep you  
May the face of the Lord shine on you and be gracious to you  
May the Lord look with kindness upon you  
And give you peace*

We wish Sharmila many blessings as she returns to the Indian Unit.

*Aberdare Gardens Community*

## UPCOMING EVENTS

<b>JANUARY 2022</b>	
Saturday, 1 <sup>st</sup>	New Year's Day, Mary, Mother of God World Day of Prayer for Peace
Monday, 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Death of Mother Aloysia Noailles (1884)
Thursday, 6 <sup>th</sup>	Epiphany
Saturday, 8 <sup>th</sup>	Foundation Day when Zoe de Raquine spoke to our Found of her desire to be a Religious in 1820 Foundation of the Sisters of St Martha in 1857
Sunday, 9 <sup>th</sup>	The Finding in the Temple
Tuesday, 11 <sup>th</sup>	Affiliation with the Oblates 1858
Sunday, 23 <sup>rd</sup>	The Betrothal of Mary and Joseph
Thursday, 27 <sup>th</sup>	International Day in commemoration of Victims of the Holocaust
Monday, 31 <sup>st</sup>	World Leprosy Day