



Perhaps it is propitious that the General Chapter of the Religious Institute is taking place during Advent. At this time, all of us, but the Capitulants in a special way, are called to walk with Mary and Joseph on their journey towards Bethlehem. Both had many things to ponder in their hearts, each of them having had an annunciation in the previous months and realised they were about to take part in something sacred, something that would be life-changing for them and for humanity, though they could not even envisage to what extent at that time.

We, too, have been pondering many things over the past two years and more, asking ourselves if we can still live our purpose today. Now, it is for the Capitulants to discern where the Spirit is leading us and for all of us to live the commitment we have been making in our prayer for the Chapter:

Spirit of wisdom and discernment,  
open our minds, our hearts and our wills  
so that we may commit ourselves with faith  
and boldness  
to bring to life the responses you will give us  
at the Chapter  
as we listen to your calls in the needs  
of the people of our time  
and respond through our mission of Communion.  
Amen

## *Prayer at the Chapter opening*

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*In your Spirit,  
gather us,*

*In your Spirit open  
our hearts,*

*In your Spirit, O  
God,*

*Guide and direct  
our path.*

## Advent Reflection

**This Advent Scripture reflection is by Sr. Kate Cuskelly, and one of four that will appear in the Kildare and Leighlin Diocesan website, [www.kandle.ie](http://www.kandle.ie), on the Sundays of Advent**

The story of the Visitation is one that is familiar to many of us. If saying the family Rosary was part of your growing up, then this second Joyful Mystery is somewhere in your memory. It was indeed through the Rosary that many of us were first introduced to the Gospel stories. There is something very homely and ordinary about the visit of Mary to her cousin Elizabeth but there are layers of deeper meaning in this story too. There are calls and challenges for us today when we allow this word of God to touch our hearts.

Contemplate these two women for a moment. Both received a special message from God. No doubt neither felt equal to what was being asked of them. Mary, was a young unmarried girl.

Elizabeth, was past the age of child bearing. Yet these two women were called to be messengers, the bearers of God's intimate communication with all of humankind. Mary and Elizabeth through their deep trust in our loving God and their openness to the power of the Spirit bear living witness to the words of Jesus "for God everything is possible" Mt.19;26.

Pope Francis, in a homily in Rome on the Feast of the Annunciation 2016 pointed to Mary's encounter with Elizabeth as a lesson in service and joy in the Christian life. Mary sets out without hesitation to be with her cousin at this very important moment in both

their lives. This is the first of Mary's journeys as related in the scriptures, it will be the first of many. She will journey from Galilee to Bethlehem, she will go down to Egypt, she will go every year for the Passover to Jerusalem and ultimately she will

follow Jesus to Calvary. These journeys all have one thing in common; they were never easy. Each different road required much courage and self-sacrifice. Mary knows what it is like to be fearful, to be weary and to wonder and worry about what lies ahead. Mary is indeed our mother who reaches out her hand to hold us and guide us in the most perilous twists and turns in our own life's journey.



The meeting of Mary and Elizabeth speaks of new life and joy and promises of

future blessings. In this encounter the younger and older woman meet and embrace in a life enhancing way each bringing out the best in the other. Mary and Elizabeth recognized the power of God at work in each of them. They look to each other for affirmation and support in saying their "YES". Mary's response to Elizabeth's greeting gives expression to the nature of the God in whom they both trust. A God of the poor, one who raises up the lowly and fills the hungry with good things.

This is a God who causes them to celebrate with joy and gratitude "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my savior".



The mass drowning in the English Channel on Wednesday, 24<sup>th</sup> November has served as a reminder that the migrants trying to make the perilous journey to the UK are people with hopes and dreams, desperate to find a place they can call home. The stories of those who died inspired the author Michael Morpurgo to write a piece for BBC Radio 4's Today program. in which he imagines the experience of a child rescued from a dinghy shipwreck. You can read the story below or, if you are reading this online, listen to it [here](#).

## Michael Morpurgo imagines Migrant Story

*Be not inhospitable to strangers, lest they be angels in disguise.*

**“T**he seawater burns my throat. Every time I open my mouth to breathe, the sea washes in. I tell my hands to hold on but I know they will not be able to hold on for much longer. I hang here in the cold, grey sea that heaves all me. I shout for a boat. There is nothing. No one. The others are all gone. Mama with them. The last thing she told me was not to let go, to give her love to Uncle when I get to Manchester, that God is good and would look after me.

‘Believe that,’ she said, ‘be strong. Remember the story because it is true. Everything you have to look forward to is in my story. All you have to do is remember and keep going. Never give up.’

Then she was gone, just not there. I can see my fingers moving. I cannot feel them. They will hold on. I will make them hold on. I will not give up; it’s what Mama told me often. I will remember Mama’s story, hear her often, hear her voice in my head again and again. Listen to her till a boat comes.

‘It is a fine and beautiful country we are going to. Uncle has told us it is the best place on earth to be; there is no war. He says everyone lives in peace. You will go to a good school and learn all you can. You will have many friends to play with. There are houses for everyone, food for everyone. Hospitals and doctors and nurses to look after you. You will be warm in winter.

There are parks and hills and mountains where you can walk. There is the seaside where you can swim. There are cinemas and theatres and cricket grounds. It will be our new home and I know how much you love your cricket. I know how fast you bowl, how far you can hit the ball, you can play all you like. Uncle says the people are kind to strangers and generous.



**Most of them. No country is perfect.**

**But in this UK country, you can go to the Mosque or the Church or the Temple. No one minds which. People can think and say and write and believe what they want. If they do not like their government, they can change it. Peacefully. You cannot believe how wonderful it will be when we get there. How welcoming they will be. So, we must keep going and never give up. You hear me. Never give up. Never let go.'**

**I'm trying, Mama. I'm trying, I tell her. When I listen for her voice again, it is not there. I need to hear her. I call her again. And again. "Mama, Mama". She does not answer. The seawater is in my mouth, choking me, burning my throat. My fingers will not hold, the sea comes over my head. Then another voice. A man's voice. A strong hand holding me. I am lifted up. There is a boat. I will live. I am coming, Uncle, coming home."**

## *All ready for the annual pre-Christmas raffle*

For the past month we, in Newbridge, have been admiring this display of items.



As usual, Sr. Margaret and, this year Sr. Lil, have used their creative knitting talents to provide toys and a crib. Other donated items add to the tantalising exhibition.

We are very grateful to them and to all who have bought tickets for the raffle, the proceeds of which will be donated to charity.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

DECEMBER	
<b>Wednesday 1st</b>	<b>World AIDS Day</b>
<b>Sunday, 5th</b>	<b>International Volunteering Day</b>
<b>Friday, 10<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Our Lady of Loreto</b>
<b>Saturday, 18<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Our Lady of Hope - Approval of our Constitutions 1903 &amp; 1988</b>
<b>Monday, 20<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>International Human Rights Day</b>
<b>Saturday, 25<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Christmas Day</b>
<b>Sunday, 26<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph</b>

**When Sr. Margaret Bradley, of Sonas Chríost community knitted these hedgehogs, she had little idea how popular they would be.**

**Order came in rapidly raising funds for the homeless and giving pleasure to young and, even, old.**

