



# Family Links

October 2021

Newsletter of the Holy Family of Bordeaux in Britain and Ireland

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## FOREWORD

“May you live in interesting times” is said to be a Chinese malediction used ironically to wish a person to live during times of uncertainty, danger and chaos. In that sense, we are certainly living in interesting times now. There seems no end to the Covid-19 pandemic and unless COP26 results in determined action, it's not too much to say the world may face a sixth mass extinction.

But such times can also be seen as a blessing. They can bring forth the creative energy of people more than normal, ordinary times do. We have seen that the real heroes who kept everything going at the start of the pandemic were not the rich and powerful but the usually overworked and underpaid workers. It is obvious from the failure of the Paris Agreement in 2015 that governments need to be constantly reminded of their obligation to implement decisions taken at COP26. Young people have been taking to the streets to demand action. And now, as COP26 starts, a host of different groups have converged on Glasgow to demonstrate their determination to hold governments to account, during and after the Conference, something that requires the participation of each one of us.

The Catholic Church and the *Holy Family* are also living in interesting times, what could be called a Kairos, a special time of challenge which will determine our future direction. Pope Francis has launched a two-year consultation process leading up to the 2023 Synod of Bishops. [“It starts with, and involves, all the faithful at local Churches and across the world, promising to listen to all, especially lay people.”](#) The General Chapter of the Religious Institute begins on 23 November asking the question: “Can we still live our purpose at the beginning of the third centenary? In preparation for this event, the sisters around the world have been listening to one another and to the Spirit, in communion with the Chapter delegates.

If there ever was a time of kairos, surely it is now.



## MESSAGE FROM ICT

### Being LINKED

Once every three months, each one of us taking turns to host the meeting and plan the day with topics for study and discussion, such as the fascinating *New Story of the Universe* and other I was delighted when Sr. Áine asked me to contribute an article for the Unit Newsletter Family Links. During my long years in London and, as one without another priest to associate with in the *Holy Family*, it was the Sisters, especially the ones at Woodford Green, who helped me to keep my identity as a Priest Associate. It is they who made me feel at home in the spirit of the Good Father and kept me updated with new ideas and the emerging trends that would make the apostolate meaningful and relevant. I am therefore, in a way, duty bound to 'report' on how I am faring now here in my home diocese.

It's three years since I returned to Jaffna. I was appointed to the same parish where I had served before going to London three decades ago. The parishioners themselves were evicted from their traditional homes in 1990 by the security forces as the ethnic conflict intensified and were allowed resettlement twenty-eight years after their eviction and nine years after the end of war. Resettlement was never going to be easy.

#### Made welcome

As I took charge of my new mission, I was given a pleasant surprise by the Priest Associates in the diocese. They came together at short notice to welcome me into their fold. There were fourteen of them. They came with a truck load of plants to begin a tree planting campaign as part of one of their projects. I was happy to be part of a team once more.

Before the pandemic, we used to meet current issues related to our ministry.

At national level, we are about fifty Priest Associates

and 'Live-in Sessions' are organised once a year. These sessions help deepen our understanding of our charism and spirituality in the light of the vocation we have received and to review our life and mission in order to make it more fruitful and meaningful. The fifty of us come from the two major ethnic groups that have been at war for so long and yet the friendly atmosphere that is created by the familial spirit is one the *Holy Family* could always be proud of. In our own way, we set the tone for peace and reconciliation and are an example especially among those priests and religious who find it difficult to be open and understanding of each other.

Disappointingly, the attitude of some of the diocesan bishops in the country towards the Association is at best 'tolerance'. They seem to feel that the diocesan priests' spirituality is good enough for our sanctity and ministry and that there is no need for another association which, in their judgement, is a distraction.

The matter was discussed at one of our meetings and the host of the day rightly pointed out what Pope John Paul II had to say about this attitude.



“Other insights or reference to other traditions of spiritual life can contribute to the priest’s journey towards perfection, for these are capable of enriching the lives of individual priests as well as enlivening the priesthood with precious spiritual gifts. Such is the case with many old and new Church associations which welcome priests into their spiritual family”. (Pastores dabi vobis 1992 no. 31).

### **Parish Ministry**

As for my Parish ministry, I have had to deal with two major issues. The first is the resettlement of my parishioners and the second is helping my people cope with the lockdowns and their impact on every aspect of their lives

During the long drawn out war and multiple displacements, these people had lost access to their productive assets. The painful reality is, that returning to what was their traditional area, they still feel ‘displaced’ because there were no land marks left to identify their home places. Their houses, Churches, schools, convents and even cemeteries had been bulldozed and razed to the ground for reasons best known only to the Security Forces.

Headline housing schemes and vocational training centres alone cannot provide solutions to people who have been subjected to brutal violence and displacement. It takes a far more comprehensive approach and a thoughtful strategy to rebuild a war-battered community. It must be one that appreciates the intimate link between the lives of a people and their land and livelihoods, and in keeping with their current realities. But my parishioners have had to and continue to put up with a rather messy resettlement process, counting only on their resilience.

With their harrowing experiences over the years of war and multiple displacements, they had lost all sense of belonging to a community. This has continued to be a serious drawback that needs to be addressed as a matter of utmost importance by pastors like me committed to their cause.

### **The Impact of Covid19**

The restrictions imposed to prevent or minimize the risk of Covid-19 have made matters even worse for my already beleaguered community. Without the means to earn an income during lockdowns many are unable to feed themselves and their families. This could further exacerbate undernutrition and micronutrient deficiency for the poorest and most vulnerable in society.

I have six village communities to look after – around 450 families – all of them struggling to get settled and now to survive through the restrictions imposed as a result of the pandemic. The task is heavy and multifaceted.

People have come to depend on their priest to take up their cause with the authorities in matters of housing and resettlement, of their right to life and livelihood security, facilities for the education and well-being of their children. And now, during the pandemic, they depend on us to seek and provide relief assistance from the State, NGOs and well-wishers.

My little parish house has become a haven for people irrespective of caste and creed where they feel their woes are listened to and, where possible, addressed with sincere devotion.

***Fr. T.E.T. Rajan***  
***(Priest Associate)***

## NOVEMBER

This is the month when we, in the Christian world, remember in a special way “all those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith” - all our beloved dead. For this time I have chosen to do the unexpected! Out of all those billions of “Holy Souls” I have chosen to look at the life of one, a person who is very often quoted by us, but about whose life we may know very little, namely Meister Eckhart. In his post doctoral dissertation John O Donahue has provided us with a pen- picture of this man and his thinking. It is a fascinating read. O’Donohue claims that Eckhart was one of the great minds of the last millennium and that “he had great balance in his life between the most intricate, profound intellectual work and his very fluent, caring and involved pastoral approach”.

Eckhart was an obscure medieval priest and mystic. Born around 1260 in the village of Hochheim, near Erfurt in Germany, Eckhart became a novice at the Dominican house in Erfurt around 1277. In the 1270s he studied arts in Paris. He also studied under Albert the Great, who had taught Thomas Aquinas. In 1294 he became the prior of the Dominican house in Erfurt and also vicar of the Dominican house in Thuringia. In 1302 he was called to the chair of theology in Paris. From 1303 to 1311 he was the provincial of the Dominican order in Germany.

He set about reforming that province and was very active in spiritual direction. In 1311 he was back in Paris as professor of theology, a brilliant mind and much sought after. But Church authorities began to question his work and his teachings. In 1327 he appealed to the pope and made an attempt to defend his teaching at Avignon where the pope was then residing but his appeal fell on deaf ears. He died in 1328. After his death the papal document *In Agro Dominico* condemning him as a heretic, was published.

So, what did he teach and what was his thinking?

Every great thinker is consumed by one major idea. Eckhart’s was the idea of God. For him there is nothing closer to us than God, the God within and this is what made the Church authorities suspicious of him- that he brought God too much down to earth. He believed that everything had its origin in the mind of God; this is where we have come from; this is what holds us together in the world and this is our ultimate destination. According to O’Donohue, Eckhart’s God “is the ultimate welcome and hospitality to everything that is alive within you”. And, in order to come into the presence of this God, Eckhart says, “You must free yourself from the grip of all external things; let things go and become completely detached, for no prayer is more powerful than the prayer of the free mind. If you want real nourishment, you must withdraw and come into the temple of your own soul”.

Finally, according to Eckhart, the most important thing to focus on is how we should be and this is beautifully summed up in a verse by one of his followers, Angelus Silesius:

The rose is without why  
She blooms because she blooms  
She does not care for herself  
Asks not if she is seen.

Praise and thanks for the wealth and the treasure (not just of Eckhart and O’Donohue) but for all those billions of “Holy Souls” who have inspired and nourished our growth and deepened our thinking.

*Margaret Bradley*  
*Sonars Chríost community*



## Climate Emergency in the Spotlight

Many people joined in a Climate Emergency walk from Baildon to Bradford, via Shipley, on October 17<sup>th</sup> to highlight the urgency of tackling Climate Change. All were united in a commitment of love, concern for nature, the planet and humanity.

The walk was backed by Bradford Cathedral, Friends of the Earth, Global Justice Now, Hope Rising United People's Movement, Bradford Trades Council and other groups.

In Baildon about forty individuals began the walk. I, too, was among these participants. As we marched along the road, carrying banners with different slogans, we gathered interest from passersby, some of whom later joined the march in Shipley. This part of the walk was mainly along busy roads but away from the main highways. On arrival in Shipley, we were welcomed by the band at the Kirkgate Centre. Here we were joined by other supporters to swell our ranks to about 80.

On the way from Shipley to Bradford I noticed one small child, accompanied by her parents, collecting any plastic bottles and other garbage thrown away. They then deposited this in a nearby rubbish bin and went on collecting more. What a wonderful example!

Our final part of the journey was along Canal Road as we made our way to City Square in Bradford. It was a joy to see how much interest and awareness was engendered in those who passed by and hooted their car horns to affirm us.

On arrival in City Park, the walkers were greeted once more by the Peace Artistes Band. The crowd was about 150 by this time. All made a circuit of City Hall, led by gigantic Cecil Green Arts puppets, to symbolise the importance of politicians taking a strong action to address the Climate Emergency.

*Sheila Griffiths. (Bradford Community)*



## It's the people who make the place...

To have lived in Bradford is to love Bradford! There's something about the local people together with the many other Nationalities who've settled there over the years. All are welcome even if they're only passing through like the many Asylum Seekers and Refugees who endeared themselves to us in so many ways and whom we tried to help.

We worked with a wonderful group of generous volunteers of other faiths and none and like them we tried to develop universal hearts and learnt to welcome all.

As a community composed of different nationalities, cultures, ages and

backgrounds, we were challenged to accept each other as we were, with openness and kindly understanding. Love and humour oiled the joints and led to many, many happy times together!

And now the time has come to say goodbye and move on – a very sad time indeed! - but we thank God for the privilege of having lived in that community, in that lovely homely house – number 79 and in the city of Bradford. And even when the house is sold, the warm and happy memories will remain forever in our hearts!

*Teresa Edwards, (now in Rock Ferry)*

## The end of an era in Magherafelt

On Monday 7th September, *Holy Family Lay* Members from Magherafelt and Draperstown held their first meeting after the summer break. We were sad as Sr Margaret was leaving Magherafelt and moving to Newbridge, Co Kildare, a few days later. The end of an era as, sadly, with Sr Margaret relocating to Co Kildare, there will be only one nun, Sr. Catriona, in the town.

However, not daunted by the move, Sr Margaret came to the meeting her usual industrial self, this time her mind focussed on helping the homeless. She had made calendars and each member took 10 calendars to sell before the next meeting on 4th October. When the ten members returned to the meeting a total of £214.00 had been raised.

This money was handed to Mrs Geraldine Kielt, President of Magherafelt SVP Conference, by Mrs Marie McLernon.

*Holy Family Lay Members, Magherafelt*



**L to R Geraldine Kielt and Marie McLernon**

## Tribute to Sr. Catherine, first Principal of HFSS

What had been nothing more than a vacant space, open to the skies, between four walls in the Holy Family Secondary School (HFSS), Newbridge, is now a lovely courtyard and garden. A plaque on the wall at the entrance to it indicates that it is dedicated to Sr. Catherine, the school's first Principal. The blessing and inauguration of the courtyard was held on 6<sup>th</sup> October. The following account of the ceremony appeared on the school's Facebook page.

“On Wednesday afternoon we were delighted to welcome Sr Catherine Moran, the very first principal of Holy Family Secondary School, to visit our beautiful courtyard. On September 7th, 1959, Holy Family opened its doors as the first secondary school in Newbridge for girls. 75 students were enrolled with 5 teachers that included Sr Catherine as Principal. Ms. Allen, (present Principal), Ms. Kissane and Ms. O’Brien (Deputy Principals), greeted Sr Catherine and showed her the courtyard that has been dedicated to her in recognition of the many years she has devoted to the Holy Family and the young people of Newbridge. Fr Joe, Fr Eugen and Sr Kate, our school chaplain, accompanied Sr Catherine to bless our courtyard, a new wellbeing space for our students and staff. Mrs. Teresa Brophy, chairperson of the Board of Management, presented Sr Catherine with a gift from the school community as a thank you for her continued support.”

“The kiss of the sun for pardon,  
The song of the birds for mirth,  
One is nearer God's Heart in a garden  
Than anywhere else on earth.”

(Dorothy Frances Gurney 1913)



Entrance to courtyard  
with dedication plaque



Blessing of courtyard



Tea, speeches presentation of bouquet



## Living as One Family of Five Vocations

This was the subject of an Inter-Unit Zoom conversation on 20<sup>th</sup> June this year. Members of the five vocations from each Unit shared their reflections on two questions. Britain and Ireland Unit was represented by Sr. Kate Cuskelly (Apostolic Sister), Edel Mulligan (Lay Member), Charlotte Vard (Holy Family Youth) and Fr Willie Purcell (Priest Member).

Edel was chosen to give the input from our Unit towards the end of the three-hour meeting. She had some trepidation about her connection holding, but all went well.

This is her summary of responses to the two questions posed.

### **How can we move forward as One Family with 5 Vocations?**

- a) To work towards becoming more visible as One Family of 5 vocations among ourselves and the wider community.
- b) To have a Representative from Holy Family Youth on the Inter-vocational Co-ordinators Team (ICT).

### **What are the areas we have to pay special attention to in this regard?**

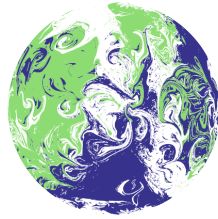
- a) To continue to offer Joint Formation on issues relating to Prayer, Spirituality and . Examples - In 2018 World Meeting of Families held in Ireland all 5 vocations participated  
The use of Zoom in November across the Unit for prayers for Remembrance of our Dead; Renewal of our commitment on December 18th. and the Lay Members Assemblies in Britain and Ireland
- b) To witness as one Family - to “be with” all those we encounter who are obliged to be “on the move” in inhuman conditions, migrants, refugees and displaced persons, those who are marginalised (due to age, race, gender, sexuality) trafficked, deprived of their dignity and in search of meaning in their lives. (Corporate Commitment 2014).
- c) Acknowledge the giftedness and responsibility to one another as an International Family.  
To proactively stand in solidarity as One Family post COVID-19.  
use technology to remain connected into the future across the Family of PBN in four continents.

So many countries were involved it was wonderful to see all the different nationalities linked by our founder PBN. I felt very enriched by all the responses of the other groups and left the meeting with a feeling of hope.

*Edel Mulligan, (Leader, Sonas Chríost, Newbridge)*



## Eco-News



**UN CLIMATE  
CHANGE  
CONFERENCE  
UK 2021**

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ITALY

If you are reading this, you are probably one of those who will not be in Glasgow for COP26.

However, there are several virtual events you can attend and you may already have made your choice. In case you haven't seen this, I'd like to draw your attention to it.

From the 7-10th November 2021, as world leaders meet to discuss our future, the [COP26 Coalition](https://cop26coalition.org) will host the People's Summit for Climate Justice. The Coalition has brought together hundreds of submissions to host interactive workshops, panel discussions, strategy sessions, artistic and cultural events, constituency assemblies, and more. Their website provides a range of information regarding the event. You can join anywhere from around the world.

To register: <https://cop26coalition.org/peoples-summit/>

You will also find a link indicating where a local hub for action is taking place on Saturday, 6<sup>th</sup> November. For Ireland, the only hub seems to be the Garden of Remembrance in Parnell Square, Dublin.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### NOVEMBER 2021

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Monday, 1<sup>st</sup></b>                    | All Saints Day<br><b>Prayer of Gratitude to mark the closure of the communities in Bradford, Selby Road, Woodford Green and Magherafelt, open to all the members of the PBN Family.</b> |
| Saturday, 6 <sup>th</sup> – Wed. 8 <sup>th</sup> | The People's Summit for Climate Justice, hosted by the COP26 Coalition  |
| Tuesday, 10 <sup>th</sup>                        | World Science Day for Peace and Development   |
| <b>Monday, 15</b>                                | <b>Prayer of Remembrance for deceased family members and friends</b>  |
| Tuesday, 16 <sup>th</sup>                        | International Day for Tolerance   |
| Thursday, 18 <sup>th</sup>                       | Inter-Unit Zoom meeting in preparation for the Chapter  |
| <b>Tuesday, 23<sup>rd</sup></b>                  | <b>General Chapter begins in Rome</b>   |
| Wednesday, 24 <sup>th</sup>                      | Feast of St Théophane Vénard (Prayer Associate of the <i>Holy Family</i> )  |
| Thursday, 25 <sup>th</sup>                       | International Day for the elimination of violence against women   |