



Family Links

February 2022

Newsletter of the *Holy Family* of Bordeaux in Britain and Ireland

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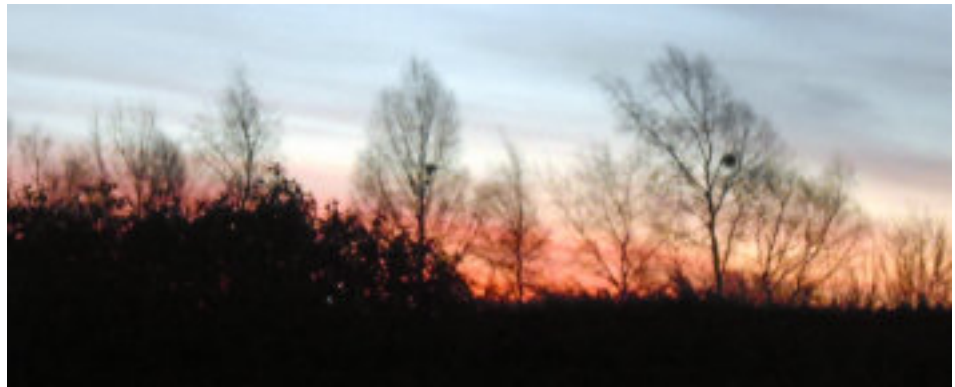
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Sun rising over Newbridge convent

Foreword

Is virtual community real community? Members of the Religious Institute who have had the opportunity of experiencing a virtual General Chapter have to be inclined to agree, though perhaps with some reservations. Social media gave us the opportunity to see and be seen, to know and be known, to be in and part of our worldwide community. It is something we now value and hope will continue while we look forward to meeting *in real life*.

Because of social media, the traditional idea of a community as a spatially defined entity, such as a town, village, a special interest group whose members are geographically circumscribed, has changed. There are many online communities now that provide the support, information, friendship and acceptance that real life communities do.

During the Covid-19 restrictions our parishes became virtual communities and we began to shop around for Mass online. Events such as spiritual retreats and courses were conducted online and reports indicate that attendance increased. As we continue, or begin, our synodal journey the role of online communities of faith will come into focus.

Pope Francis, in his message for the 48th World Communications Day (June 2014), wrote: “Let us boldly become citizens of the digital world. The Church needs to be concerned for, and present in, the word of communications, in order to dialogue with people today and to help them encounter Christ. She needs to be a Church at the side of others, capable of accompanying everyone along the way. The revolution taking place in communications media and in information technologies represents a great and thrilling challenge; may we respond to that challenge with fresh energy and imagination as we seek to share with others the beauty of God.”

MESSAGE FROM ICT

“To every thing there is a season,
and a time to every purpose under the heaven:” (Ecclesiastes: 3:1)

We are coming into Spring, in the garden there are a few brave daffodils flowering in the shelter of larger plants. Trees are beginning to bud and we can see green shoots everywhere. The nights become lighter, the darkness of winter is fading, and everything around us is a sign of hope. As the poet Christina Rossetti says: “There is no time like Spring, When life’s alive in everything,” We are surrounded by new life, crocus, snowdrops, daffodils, baby lambs in the fields. Gerard Manley Hopkins said “What is all this juice and all this joy? A strain of the earth’s sweet being in the beginning In Eden Garden.”

Into this season of hope and promise comes Lent. Does this seem odd? The word *Lent* itself comes from from the Anglo-Saxon words *lencten*, meaning "Spring," and *lenctentid*, which literally means not only "Springtide" but also was the word for "March," the month in which the majority of Lent falls. So, if Lent means Spring does this help us to understand? Well, I suppose it depends how you see Lent and what it means.

So often our understanding of Lent is based on the idea that it is about us and what we do, so that we can get to the end and pat ourselves on the back for: giving up chocolate, saying an extra rosary, going to an extra mass, giving extra money to charity. Then we can sit back and say “haven’t I done well”.

Meister Eckhart writing on true penance said “Many people think that they are achieving great things in external works such as fasting, going barefoot, and other such practices which are called penances. But true penance, consists in turning fully and completely towards our

beloved God in an unshakeable love.” This love does not start with us, as the writer of the first epistle of John says, “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son” (*1John 4:10.*)

Pope Francis in his Lenten message for 2021 called Lent “*A Time for Renewing Faith, Hope and Love*”. Perhaps the most difficult thing for us to believe is that we are truly loved just as we are: to believe that we are actually part of God’s wonderful plan and that we are precious. The more we are able to recognize the presence of God in ourselves and in the whole universe, a presence of loving creation, the more we can live in hope. This is not a hope based on platitudes but a hope based on the certain belief in our loving creator.

When we recognize more fully God’s love for us then we see our brothers and sisters as the beloved of God as well, as Pope Francis said “Only a gaze transformed by charity can enable the dignity of others to be recognized and, as a consequence, the poor to be acknowledged and valued in their dignity, respected in their identity and culture, and thus truly integrated into society” (*Fratelli Tutti*, 187).

When we see Lent as as journey to see more of the Lover who first loved us, then it is a springtime in our lives, a time of growth and blossom which affects those around us. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin said: “Christianity does not ask us to live in the shadow of the cross, but in the fire of its creative action.” May this Lent be a time of Joy and new life for each one of us.

Maureen Bowsley. (President , UK Lay Members)

REFLECTION

Even if your surroundings seem bleak
You do not despair.
Your singular beauty splashes gold
Into the forefront of briar and bramble
And you look out in hope.
Your presence brings sunshine,
Richness, colour, wonder
And a sense of life and vitality.
You gather your strength from Earth's Centre
And open yourself to the gift of light;
Light that empowers your succulent stems,
Your healthy leaves and pretty flowers
To draw attention.
You confirm that development and growth
Are possible in a chaotic world.



Sr. Margaret Bradley
Sonas Christ Community



What we have touched

Article by a Consecrated Secular taken from AGAPE 1997,
dedicated to the 75th Anniversary of the Miraculous Benediction



It is not easy for me to express all that comes to my mind when I read the first letter of St. John that so beautifully proclaims to us the Word of Life. At the same time, it introduces us to the great themes of the Christian faith, presenting Christ and his commandment of love as an undeniable summary of the gospel.

It would be more difficult, however, to attempt to express in a few words all the intimate experiences that, throughout my life, have been centred on the Word of Life. It is so fascinating a theme that it is good to read the gospel quietly and, with a fresh look, an attentive ear, an open spirit, welcome God's continual call through creation and the events and wonders that mark the history of humanity.

At the beginning of his gospel, John repeats that God's Word resounds with the news of eternal life, that the light shines so that the world will not remain in darkness. "The Word was the real light gives light to everyone" (Jn. 1,9). Imploring the help of grace, we humbly try to discover the resonance of the Word of life that is diffused and interwoven in all that surrounds us.



First of all, let us fix our attention on the cosmos. Which of us, on a quiet night, has not contemplated

with curiosity and admiration those mysterious constellations of stars, that stretch across the skies? Who has not gone into ecstasies at sight of a sunset, a raging sea, a snow-covered landscape? Many times, we have captured the delicacy and perfection of a flower, the tremulous fluttering of a bird, the blossoming beauty in the universe.

Is it not true that the whole of nature is transformed into an open book that gathers

together echoes of the Word?

"The heavens proclaim the glory of God; the firmament declares the works of his hands. (Ps. 1, 2)

The creative presence of God is also felt in human history. The whole bible is an unfolding of God's intervention in our life and a proclamation of God's mystery of love. It brings together the deepest experiences of human existence. It is a creative Word, always relevant, a Word that questions and challenges. It is the story of those who seek and hope.

We have all experienced in our life this invisible Presence that wells up from the depths of our being and leads us throughout our history. We have often perceived this voice that whispers to us, comforts and inspires us, making use of the most trivial events of daily life. Let us remain vigilant and learn to recognise the Lord's footsteps in this "gentle breeze" of which the Prophet Elijah speaks.

We could also consider our present history, that which it is our lot to live. The panorama presented by our world is not very hopeful. Wars, violence, economic, social and political problems, natural catastrophes, ecological disasters, the struggle for supremacy..., all this causes anxiety and concern. We must also say, though, that there is a growing universal consciousness among us so that, more or less successfully, an attempt is being made to seek a solution to all the conflicts of our era. Society is showing a greater sensitivity to human problems. Acts of solidarity are springing up everywhere.

A good proof of this is the proliferation of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), the Women's Liberation Movement, the struggle



against drugs, the defence of the environment, humanitarian aid of all kinds on individual and collective levels. A new type of youth, committed to bringing about a better world, is tentatively beginning to arise. Even governments, in their various ways, are trying to ameliorate social conditions and achieve a stable and lasting peace in the different countries.

We have to know how to discover in all these signs the creative power of the Spirit acting in the world by means of human action, to elevate and divinise it. We may hope that one day, we will see a better and more human world.

The culminating point in John's text is the Incarnate Word by which God is manifested and made known. The gentle breeze, God's Whisper, God's Spirit, becomes Word. The different ways by which God has revealed God's self to the world are unified and have their fullness in Christ.

"At many moments in the past and by many means, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; but in our time, the final days, God has

spoken to us in the person of his son whom he appointed heir of all things." (Heb. 1, 1-3)

St. John tells us that the Word became life. Christ is God living among us. I do not want to enter into theological considerations for which I am not competent, but I could share a personal confidence, something that others have also certainly experienced. In contemplating the life of Jesus of Nazareth, I have consistently met with the same response for all the vital situations of my life. He can always be defined as the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Let us turn with faith to this Jesus who became food for our journey in the Eucharist. Let us plunge ourselves in the contemplation of the Word of Life. In the depths of our heart, we will be able to contemplate him with the eyes of faith. It is 175 years since he allowed himself to be seen and heard by the first members of our Family. In that humble chapel of Mazarin Street, Bordeaux, the Word of God appeared miraculously in the Eucharist. We can say, in truth, that we proclaim what we have touched of the Word of Life because life manifested itself on that day.



Wrexham - Moving On

by Sheila Griffiths

October 18th, 2021 saw us, Maria, Gemma, Maureen, Celine and Sheila, the new Community members come together in Sontley Road, Wrexham, after experiencing the closure of our three former Communities of Woodford, Leeds and Bradford. Now, 4 months later, I am writing about some of my experiences.

For me, it has been an enriching experience in many ways, having witnessed myself inserting into a newly formed community, learning to cope with enforced inactivity as opposed to a life of involvement in outreach and finding my way around the area. All of which took place during COVID restrictions.

The house itself was not fully renovated on our arrival but over the past 4 months it has become a 'home' where I can find myself settling in. I recall the 'letting go' in Bradford, sorting out what we could take with us and what we needed to dispose of, as well as trying to downsize my own personal belongings, and then on arrival, arranging these in the space allocated in my bedroom. I am happy to say that I am not 'over-cluttered' and have a very comfortable living space. Still there are things to be seen to, but all in good time.

Our garden suffered greatly during the recent storms and some of our trees toppled. Branches were also broken off strewing the lawns with debris. Our expert gardener, Alec, has done marvels over the past two months, trimming the trees along the outside walls. Now from my bedroom window I can view the terrain outside our garden. Different species of birds already inhabit our garden and hopefully in the future we can entice more to come in and live here.

The squirrels are very busy and signs of new life are evident as I sighted some baby squirrels jumping and frisking on the grass recently, searching for nuts and berries. Maria, our expert gardener, has already been very busy in the garden, planting new bulbs and flowers, as well as placing plant pots outside to add colour and variety. My heart rejoices as I meet them on entering the house.

Outreach is another aspect which has taught me patience. We have been in contact with a few organizations for Hosting and are at present on a Training Session for three weeks, one day a week, with one of the groups. Due to COVID restrictions, many groups have been only active ONLINE but hopefully the future will bring us into contact on a face-to-face encounter. Patience, waiting for the right moment, has been a guiding force during these times. Listening to the 'whispers of the future' has reinforced the beauty of this waiting time.

We belong to the Cathedral parish, but for the first 3 months here, we continued to tune in to the Mass online. Over the past month we have started attending the Sunday Mass in the Cathedral regularly. The parish is served by two African priests belonging to the Religious Order, The Apostles of Jesus. Their main Centre is in Birmingham. I am not involved in parish activities but have attended one or two Synodal meetings.



L to R Front & back of house

Our recent Cluster meeting in Rock Ferry emphasized the urgency to take 'audacious steps.' Let us see what the future will bring and where the Spirit will lead us.

In touch with the senses



Holy One, you are an exquisite perfume,
enchanting the nose.

You are a melodious song,
intoxicating the ears.

You are all the colours of the rainbow,
delighting the eye.

You are a passionate dance,
lifting the heart.

Ps. 45



Sr. Sheila Griffiths, Wrexham

CONGRATULATIONS and JUBILATIONS: in Rock Ferry and Newbridge on the 8th of February

Sr Rita Mc Cabe celebrates her Platinum Jubilee in Rock Ferry

The tone was set for the day when the 8th dawned bright and sunny! We were happy, too, that since Covid restrictions were lifted we could welcome the new Wrexham Community to join us.

The Jubilee Mass was celebrated by a good friend, Fr. John McManus. In his talk he mentioned how in the Old Testament Eli the priest was the one who introduced the boy Samuel to the Lord when he told him to say, "Speak Lord, your servant is listening", and in the New Testament where Andrew met Jesus and then immediately brought his brother Peter to Him. Fr. John then went on to say he's sure that in Rita's long and varied life she too has brought many people to God by just being herself. After Mass some photos were taken in the chapel near her lovely gift of flowers.

We then all gathered in the community room for drinks and nibbles and to wish Rita a very Happy Platinum Jubilee – 70 years as a Holy Family Sister! From there we went to the dining room which had been beautifully decorated as always by our wonderful staff. Rita loved particularly the gold coloured Moon and Stars table



decoration and was very moved by all the cards she received. Margaret and herself enjoyed going through them later.

Towards the end of the meal, she asked for the little bell and to be moved in her wheelchair to where she could see everyone! She gave a great talk with

a lot of humour. We learnt of the many places where she'd lived and served starting with Rock Ferry, Mount St Mary's - Leeds, Livingston in Scotland, London – Irish Centre with Fr. Hackett and back to Rock Ferry. Rita also took this opportunity to thank Sr. Carmel and all who'd helped to make this day very special.

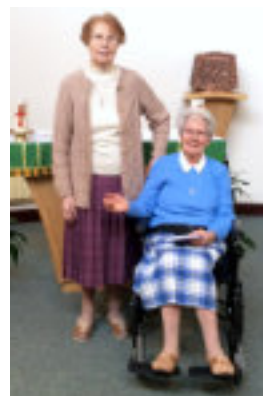
After the siesta the celebrations continued with the cutting of the lovely Jubilee Cake and then a great sing-a-long started by Rita and Margaret with the lovely old song "Count your blessings one by one". This was followed by some Irish songs and then, when the staff put on "Is this the way to Amarillo? this got many of us out of our chairs! At one stage Rita was pushed in her wheelchair around the room followed by the rest of us doing a few variations of the Conga!

Sr. Teresa Edwards

**Rita
and
Fr John**

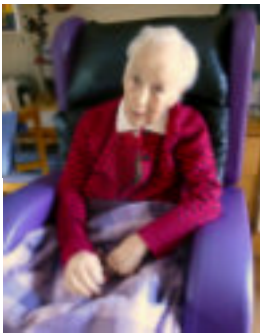


**Sisters Rita
and
Margaret**

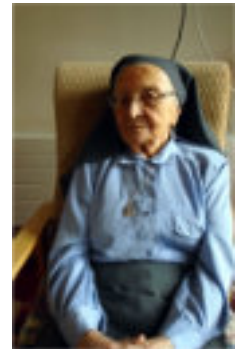


Newbridge Community

Srs. Roseanne Power and Vincent Whelan celebrate 75 years of Religious Life



Two old friends, from before their novitiate days, celebrated 75 years of religious life together in Newbridge on 8th February. Nursing was their chosen field of ministry, Vincent in Britain and Ireland while Roseanne spent many years in South Africa. Despite the diminishment of time, there is still a certain feistiness about them, Roseanne's love of music will surface whenever she hears the piano played and she will readily join in a singalong. In spite of her impaired sight, Vincent constantly notes and remarks on the sartorial elegance of her companions and has always a ready or witty comeback.



Both Jubilarians entered joyfully into the celebrations which began with a special prayer on the evening of Monday the 7th. It was an opportunity for us to connect with, and give thanks for all that had been in their lives, is now, and to reach out in hope to all that is yet to be.



A special card from sisters in South Africa extolling Roseanne's sterling work there, reconnected her to that period of her life and gave joy to us all.

On the following morning, Fr. Joe Mc Dermot, an old friend of the community, presided at the Eucharist. His words during Mass demonstrated his great appreciation of, and respect for the many years of dedicated service being celebrated.

The Eucharistic meal was followed by the usual lavish festive meal in our beautifully arranged dining room, but without the presence of Roseanne for whom it would have been too taxing. For this reason, the cutting of the cake was postponed until later in the afternoon when she had had time to have a rest.



In the meantime, however, efforts were being made by Lil to connect with South Africa where Roseanne was fondly remembered.

So it was that some of the sisters in South Africa were able to speak to her and sing their congratulations. It was obvious she realised to whom she was speaking and it gave her great joy.

The final act of the day was to bring Vincent and Rosanne together with the community for the ceremonial cutting of the cake and singing our congratulations one once more. Roseanne's love of singing always manifests itself whenever there is a sound of music, She will join in as best she can.



As places like ours had been put under new alert because of a rise in infections, we were not able to welcome the sisters from the other communities for the occasion. We were however, happy to have Claire with us which did, to some extent compensate for the absence of so many others.

Thank you!

We cannot omit a special word of thanks to ALL our devoted staff members whose efforts and creativity in so many ways made this celebration such an enjoyable and memorable one.

While their labour is always of a very high standard, on such occasions they excel themselves going beyond the call of duty and also offering their own tokens of appreciation in the form of flowers, so we feel theirs is a labour of love.

As you know, Vincent is now mourning the death of her sister, Teresa. As we pray with her for the eternal repose of Teresa, we are glad to be with her in this hour of need for comfort and understanding.

A Significant Birthday

It was Colette's turn to be feted on the 23 February
as she reached her 80th year.

We gathered together on the evening of the 22nd to pray
and give thanks for the gift of life to Colette
and for the gift that she is for us and the Holy Family.
It was also a time for reminiscing.



The festive meal for Colette was held on Sunday, the 27th .

**Once again, the staff showed their appreciation of all she does
to support and collaborate with them
by presenting her with a magnificent bouquet of flowers**



IN MEMORIAM

Agnes Heywood R.I.P.

14/07/1932 to 29/01/22



L. to R. Dolores Flaherty, Agnes Russell, Agnes Heywood
receiving their 25year certificates of Membership as Holy Family Lay Members.

It is with great sadness we have to announce that one of our founder members of the
Holy Family Lay Members, Skelmersdale Group, has passed away.

Agnes was a lovely lady with a great devotion to the Holy Family of Bordeaux.

It was always a pleasure to be in her company; she had a great sense of humour and
our meetings will be all the poorer without her presence.

Agnes is a great loss to Norman, her husband of 60 years,

and all her family and friends.

May she Rest in Peace.

Marilyn Sutemire (Leader Skelmersdale Group)

UPCOMING EVENTS

MARCH 2022

Tuesday, 1 st	St. David (Patron of Wales), Shrove Tuesday
Wednesday, 2 nd	Ash Wednesday
Thursday, 3 rd	World Life Day, World Hearing Day
Friday, 4 th	Women's World Day of Prayer
Tuesday, 8 th	International Women's Day
Thursday, 17 th	St. Patrick, Patron of Ireland
Saturday, 19 th	St. Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church
Monday, 21 st	World Day for the Elimination of Discrimination
Tuesday, 22 nd	World Day for Water
Wednesday, 23 rd	Death of Mother Trinity Noailles
Friday, 25 th	Feast of the Annunciation Reception of the first Lay Associates of the Secular Institute, 1824