



Family Links

Glory to God Alone in Jesus Christ, through Mary and Saint Joseph

December 2018

Volume 4 Issue 10

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New Leadership Team: Srs. Lucilla, Catherine, Margaret, Claire, Maria

Editorial

From *Here to Where?* was the theme of the 2018 Social Justice Ireland Annual Conference which explored ways of “negotiating a better and fairer future” for all. Speakers showed how this is possible when the common good is the focus of governments and all public and private bodies, as well as individuals. As we cross the threshold of 2018 and move through the doorway of 2019, we might well ask ourselves the same question, living as we are in dramatic and troubling times.



As Christians and *Holy Family* members, where do we look for our answer? In his **Christmas message**, Pope Francis stressed the word, **fraternity**, praying that “*all of us receive peace and consolation from the birth of the Savior and, in the knowledge that we are loved by the one heavenly Father, realize anew that we are brothers and sisters and come to live as such!*”

The word “fraternity” has connotations of kinship, friendship, companionship, mutual support, solidarity, community, union, togetherness, all of which are implied in the word “communion”. Though we do not know where the road may be leading us, we do know how we are to travel - in communion with one another, with all those who cross our paths, and with all creation.

As our journey towards the bicentenary of our foundation nears completion, may our happiness this year, 2019, may we be ever more deeply penetrated with an understanding of what we are called to be as *Holy Family* members.

With this hope, let us say: **“A Happy New Year!”**

Leader's Message

MY FAITH JOURNEY

Earlier this year I was fortunate enough to be invited to the Retreat centre in Crewe for the beginning of the 'Roots' talks which gave me a personal opportunity to gain a better perspective of how far my own roots in Faith have come over the years.

I was born in the North of England, Baptised and attended the Church of England Sunday school regularly. The local vicar, Rev. Vasey, would tell us the stories of Jesus' love for us All. As the middle child of five and growing up during some very difficult times within our family 'love' was not shown a lot. Quite a few of my friends attended the local Catholic Church & school and I always felt that I should be going with them!



Many years passed. I left home and moved to the North West of England, got married and had 2 children. In 1985 both my parents died within weeks of each other and my marriage was at a crossroads. However, I felt a real inner strength to overcome the difficulties being thrown at me, an inner voice reassuring me. I persevered for some years (I think out of sheer stubbornness), until I felt a real urge to move forward with this 'inner feeling'.

A good friend of mine invited me to go to Lourdes, and although it was a lovely experience, the 'void' was still there. Later that same year I went to Medugorje and had what can only be described as an 'awakening experience' – I can't really put it into words. I did return however with a real 'hunger' for the Eucharist and the Catholic faith, so on my return home I went to the local Catholic Church to ask the local priest about becoming a Catholic. I was initially told that he had no-one else taking instruction at that time, so while I was to go away and think seriously about it he took my phone number and would be in touch. A few weeks later prayers were answered and thankfully, the priest rang and said that another lady

had also made a request for instruction and could I attend the following week? I looked upwards and said "Thank you Lord"!



Margaret Ramsey

I'd like to say that during my faith journey I have always been drawn to 3 Saints and include their prayers each day:

St. Augustine – "I beg You, My God, let me know You and love You so that I may be happy in You".

St. Ignatius – "Teach me to serve You as You deserve".

St. Alphonsus – "I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist".

It was 6th April 1996 - the Easter vigil when I took my first communion of the Eucharist as a convert to the Catholic Faith. The Reading for the mass was 'Ephesians 3 v14-21 "Paul's Prayer" - another convert! My family attended for that service and although they have remained Protestants and non-churchgoers they All support me in my service to the church and the Holy Family Association (my husband actually gives me the collection money each week for mass, as well 20p's for candles!).

It was also in 1996 that I was introduced to the Holy Family Association in Rock Ferry and under the guidance of Sr. Eileen Coyne and with the assistance of Monica Maher, over the course of 2 years took instruction and then, along with 5 new friends, made my commitment to the Holy Family Association in 1998 (my husband once again attending the service in the Convent chapel at Rock Ferry – I know there's hope for him in the Lord's time!).

Today I feel very Blessed and thankful for Pierre Bienvenu Noailles bringing together the 5 vocations of the Holy Family Association, as we support each

other with our spirituality, guidance and friendships. The gatherings we share are proof that we have a strong affiliation but we still have room to grow not only in numbers but within ourselves. The Faith talks have certainly been an inspiration for me and opened my mind more to things happening all around me and being grateful for everyday living – sights, sounds, nature, people and reaching out to possibly make a difference in someone else’s life each day.

Although my faith journey has had a lot of ups and downs, my faith is extremely important to me today. I really appreciate the ‘inner voice’ that urged me forward when it did. The friends I have had on the

paths I have taken on my journey over recent years are truly friends for life and even though we don’t see each other regularly, I know and trust that their thoughts and prayers are given and returned unconditionally.

Every day on waking, before getting out of bed, my prayer is - “Dear Lord, I thank you for the gift of this day and I pray that You’ll be with me as I work, rest and play”. Today my Faith journey is thankfully being continued with a good support network of Family and Friends in the Holy Family Association.

**Margaret Ramsey, National President,
British Lay Members**

CHRISTMAS IN IRELAND

It was the 27th October, our Good Father’s birthday, and the day that the clocks turned back one hour to mark the beginning of winter. The two of us, from an Island in south Asia where there are no seasons, came to an Island where sometimes you get four seasons within a day. It has been an amazing experience so far.

We are very grateful to the two Unit Leadership teams (Sri Lanka and Britain and Ireland) who have given us this opportunity to improve our knowledge of English here in Ireland.

It is a great opportunity, not only to improve our knowledge of English, but to deepen and broaden our capacity for communion as *Holy Family* sisters in different cultures. We treasure our stay at Griffith Downs with Síle and Claire, our visits to New bridge and Clane, where we experienced the richness of our Family and the warmth of welcome.

This was our first Christmas away from our own country. We had many new experiences. We feel Ireland, being a European country, is able to keep its own valuable traditions. Though the traditions seem to be very simple they show the thoughtfulness, family bonds, love, solidarity of people towards each other as a preparation for the big celebration of family-CHRISTMAS.

We saw how open the people of Ireland are. They sang on the streets in Dublin to collect money for the



children in Syria, Sudan, and Zambia. They gave their time and talents for the common good. We saw how generous they are when they prepared hampers for the poor and distributed them just before Christmas so that they, too, might have a celebration.

We saw how thoughtful and sensitive they are, when they offer the Sunday collection to the Homeless and work hard to find places for them. Christmas reminds us of the homelessness of Mary & Joseph before the birth of Jesus. We feel that, by helping the homeless and the poor, people here really enter into the meaning of Christmas and to the true Christian call in the 21st century.

So, “Christmas in Ireland” inspired us a lot. It was a real enrichment for us. It was an opportunity to know the richness of another culture. It helps us to broaden our thoughts and attitudes on the way to Oneness, to Communion.

Sr. Charitha and Priyanka

INAUGURATION DAY

Almost 30 sisters from Britain and Ireland gathered at Provincial House, Aberdare, on 1 December, 2018, for the inauguration of the new Leadership Team consisting of Sr. Catherine Lavery (Unit Leader), Srs. Claire McGrath, Margaret Muldoon, Lucilla Bonaventhor and Maria Crowley.

Service, Relationships, Mission, Thanksgiving were recurring themes in the deeply meaningful prayer-reflection that preceded the reading of the Ordinance installing the new Team. We prayed that the quality of their relationships with God, the source of all goodness and mercy, with one another and with all creation would inspire and guide them in the challenges that would inevitably lie before them. We prayed that, as a Unit, our hearts would be open to the wonder that life sets before us confident that, with God's guidance, we would embrace the journey before us as a great adventure.



Gemma read the Ordinance from the GLT. Then, Jesus' mandate to his disciples, *"As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you... Go, make disciples of all nations... and remember I will be with you always till the end of time"*, served, not only as a reminder of Jesus' abiding presence, but also as a reflection on the meaning of mission. It is a journey with others on a basis of equality and respect for all who travel the same road, a journey into the unknown but undertaken in hope as people called to bring life and promote communion to all.

At the conclusion of the prayer, Catherine thanked Gemma for her vision and service as Leader over the past six years done with the help and dedication of the outgoing Team, members of which had served for three, six and twelve years.



The time for **table companionship** arrived. The food offered was Michelin star quality. Heartfelt thanks and praise are due to the hard work of the members of both the outgoing and incoming teams who worked for the best part of Friday preparing all the ingredients for a delicious meal to be cooked on Saturday morning under the direction of the chief chefs. Special mention has to be made of Kathleen's



chicken and Lucilla's rice and the trifles, but there were lots more to savour and enjoy. The Oblate priests from the parish and vicinity came to join us, as and when their duties allowed, adding to the conviviality.

By late afternoon many who had long train journeys to take, had left and others were beginning to depart. The day had been a lovely and, may we say auspicious, beginning to a journey that, with God, will be a great adventure.

Síle McGowan

A journey can become a sacred thing; make sure before you go, to take the time to bless your going forth, to free your heart of ballast so that the compass of your soul might direct you towards the territories here you will discover your hidden life, and the urgencies that deserve to claim you.

(However Long the Night)

The Intervocational Coordinating Team

A meeting of the Intervocational Coordinating Team took place in Rock Ferry Convent in early November. The Team comprises the leaders of the various Vocations: Sr. Gemma (Apostolic Sisters outgoing), Sr. Áine and Margaret Ramsey (National Leader and President of the Lay Associate Members in Britain) Sr. Bernadette and Rose Sullivan (National Leader and President of the Lay Associate Members in Ireland) and Sr. Margaret Bradley representing the Consecrated Seculars and the Priest Associates.



L to R: Srs. Margaret, Gemma, Bernadette and Áine, Margaret Ramsey and Rose Sullivan

The team meets every three or four months to evaluate and reflect on how we could function better as a Family, rather than see ourselves as separate Vocations.

Newsletters are sent to each Vocational member after each meeting and we are open to responses as to how Members feel regarding moving forward with our spirituality, communications and commitment to the Holy Family of Bordeaux.

Our next meeting is on 18 February 2019. If anyone has any ideas or suggestions to put forward, please contact one of the team.

Pictured above are the members of the ICT meeting at Rock Ferry.

Margaret Ramsey
Lay Associate, Rock Ferry

“Francis, rebuild my Church”

We’ve all heard the story. One day in 1204 AD, Francesco Bernadone, a restless young man unable to find his calling, came to the little church of San Damiano, which was in serious need of repair. There he heard Jesus calling to him from the cross, “*Francis, rebuild my Church which is falling down.*” Francis did as requested, rebuilt the little church and several others around his native Assisi. It took him a little time, however, to realise that his vocation was to rebuild the human institution of the church which was dangerously close to falling apart! Then, as now, the call of the cross remains the challenge of our time.

At World Youth Day in Rio, Pope Francis took up this story, telling two million young people “...you are called to build a more beautiful Church and a better world. In the Church of Jesus, we ourselves are the living stones. Jesus is asking us to build up his Church,

but not as a little chapel which holds only a small group of persons. He asks us to make his living Church so large that it can hold all of humanity, that it can be a home for everyone”. Indeed our Church is in need of rebuilding. Many lay people have been alienated from the Church as a result of the many scandals that have taken place, in particular the abuse of children, physical and sexual that have occurred at the hands of priests and in religious run institutions. This has been exacerbated by cover-ups and serious mishandling. There is, however a grave danger that we may “throw out the baby with the bath water”. Criticism is certainly warranted, but if we want to bring about change, we must work from within the organisation, not stand outside and lament what’s going on. This is *our* Church. Being a lay person is as much a vocation in it as that of any clergy.

Angela Hanley, writing in the “Irish Times” last March, said “a small quiet revolution is taking place right now in the Catholic Church... people who have

been totally alienated from the Roman Imperial model of Church are seeking to express their Catholic Faith within community, because this is the most authentic place for faith practice.” Their Precedent is the early Church. The first Christians met in each other’s houses, listened to God’s word and received the Holy Spirit in Baptism. They shared everything and “nobody was in want”. People are finding this community, which may or may not include priests, not in the formal structure of the church but in homes... this is the root from which our church grew initially.

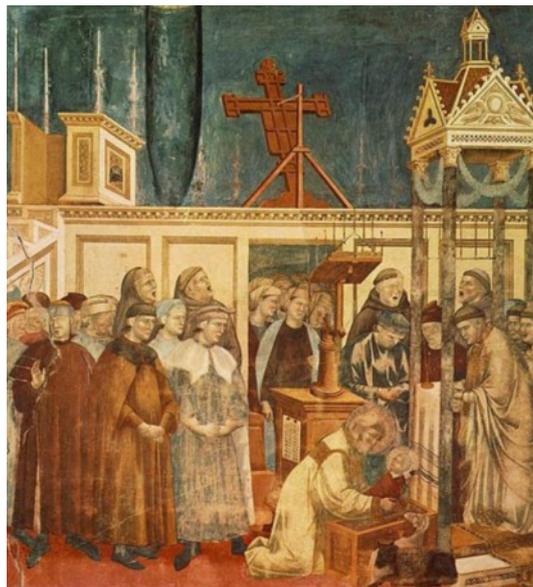
As Baptised Catholics, we are called to spread the Gospel. Pope Francis tells us that “we must get up, approach others and proclaim Gods word... a couch potato evangelisation doesn’t exist”. This pontificate reflects a change in direction that has been taking place in the Church at grassroots level for several decades – Francis is both a product and a champion of this root and branch

reinvigoration of Catholicism. As he tries to nurture a renewed Catholicism of tenderness and mercy, he is battling with an ancient and unwieldy Roman Curia which is difficult to overhaul.

The Anglican poet and author, Malcolm Guite has written a sonnet in honour of the great Saint Francis and as a reflection on the Pope who has taken his name, the last four lines are as follows:

“You woke to Christ, and Christ awoke in you
And set to work through all your love and skill
To make our ruin good, to bless and heal
To wake the Christ in us and make us whole.”

Let us be glad of new awakenings and look forward to a new culture which welcomes and encourages the total involvement of the Laity in every aspect of our Church. The late Cardinal Thomas O’Fiach called the Laity “the sleeping Giant”. I think we’ve woken up! We are already witnessing many positive initiatives in our diocese, led by Bishop Nulty.



St. Francis and crib by Giotto

Formation in the Faith for our youth is treated as an urgent priority. Great work is being done in our primary schools in the area of sacramental preparation. There are also faith-based youth programmes in place, e.g. the Pope John Paul 11 awards and the Amadeus group. It is very heartening to see this witness being given by our young people! In our Parish we have many

initiatives, like the “share food” programme and “Accord” taking place in our vibrant Parish Centre, and several Scripture study and prayer groups. Advent is a time of hope, and we have much to be hopeful about!

Brigid Larkin, Holy Family Lay Member

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE 52nd WORLD DAY OF PEACE
1 JANUARY 2019

Good politics is at the service of peace

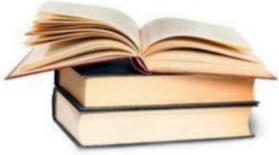
1. “Peace be to this house!”

In sending his disciples forth on mission, Jesus told them: “Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house!’ And if a son of peace is there, your peace shall rest upon him; but if not, it shall return to you” (Lk 10:5-6).

Bringing peace is central to the mission of Christ’s disciples. That peace is offered to all those men and women who long for peace amid the tragedies and violence that mark human history.[1]The “house” of which Jesus speaks is every family, community, country and continent, in all their diversity and history. It is first and foremost each individual person, without distinction or discrimination. But it is also our “common home”: the world in which God has placed us and which we are called to care for and cultivate.

So let this be my greeting at the beginning of the New Year: “Peace be to this house!”

For full text, click [here](#)



BOOK REVIEWS

AN ASTONISHING SECRET

The first sentence in the foreword of this book took my breath away. While I am well used to equating God with Divine Energy, equating God with life itself is so simple and obvious that it gave me “a delightful new glimpse into my old faith”, to adapt the author’s words. And the surprises continued right to the end of the book.

An Astonishing Secret consists of forty-nine chapters based on extracts from *Laudato sí* and *Evangelii gaudium*. The chapters are short and need not be read in sequence so it can be dipped into during odd free moments. On the other hand, it is well worth spending time with it and reflecting on it in depth.

In short, it is ideal for both busy days and more leisurely times.

It is not a book that I could not put down. Rather, it is a book that I had to put down frequently so that I could absorb the impact of what I was reading. It calls for heart-understanding rather than head-understanding which is a radical departure from our traditional – and perhaps current – approach to anything in the theological sphere.

An Astonishing Secret is an astonishing book. It is truly beautiful and inspirational – a joy to read.

Áine Hayde (Integrated Spirituality Team)

This book is by Daniel O’Leary and is published by Columba Press (2017). It is available in Paperback in Catholic Bookshops and from amazon.co.uk

UPCOMING EVENTS

January 2019						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1 World Day of Peace Feast of Mary, Mother of God	2	3 Death of Mother Aloysia Noailles 1884	4	5
6 Fast of the Epiphany	7	8 Foundation Day The day Zoe de Raquine spoke to him of her desire to be a Religious in 1820 Foundation of the Sisters of t. Martha 1857	9 The Finding in the Temple	10	11 Affiliation with the Oblates 1858	12
13	14	15	16	17	18 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity begins	19
20	21	22	23 Feat of the Betrothal of Mary and Joseph	24	25 WPCU ends	26
27 International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust	28	29	30	31		