



The Holy Family of Bordeaux

in Britain and Ireland

Glory to God alone in Jesus Christ through Mary and Saint Joseph

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Participants at Provincial Chapter 2014

Editorial

Thirty one days ago we were wishing one another a happy New Year. We are starting a new month; a new season is almost upon us. But, is newness new? Or, is what comes initially to our mind as 'new' simply our moment of connection with what is already there?

"There is nothing new under the sun", Ecclesiastes 1, 9 tells us, but the Bible has hundreds of references proclaiming newness. Because we are finite, time-bound creatures, our experience unfolds gradually. The dawn of each new year, every new season, any untoward event is an experience that allows the newness within to evolve. Each moment is fresh, alive with possibilities and an invitation to see with new eyes. Everything has changed since yesterday, including ourselves, all of creation, the Universe.

In a homily for Pentecost 2013, Pope Francis reflected on three words: newness, harmony and mission. He asked: *"Do we have the courage to strike out along the new paths which God's newness sets before us..., or do we resist, barricaded in transient structures which have lost their capacity for openness to what is new..., are we open to the harmony of the Holy Spirit, overcoming every form of exclusivity..., do we tend to stay closed in on ourselves, our group..., or do we let the Holy Spirit open us to mission?"*

We faced similar questions during our Provincial Chapter in 2014 when we took up the challenge of our General Chapter to "dare now". What newness are we discovering and sharing?

Sr. Síle McGowan



Message from Sr. Gemma (Unit Leader)



This year is dedicated to “Consecrated Life”. What do we mean when we say that we are consecrated? Evidently the dictionary definitions – to be declared sacred; set apart – are no longer meaningful within a worldview where everything is sacred and all creation is infused with the Divine. There is no separation between the sacred and profane; all is sacred; all is holy.

Taking vows therefore can no longer be interpreted in terms of making more sacred what already is sacred. Our vowed life is our particular way of living out our baptismal consecration and the different vocations within our Family are complementary calls to bear witness to God Alone who invites us to commit ourselves to the Divine mission. In our Family, there are no hierarchies; we are a Family of equals where members live out their baptismal consecration in fidelity to their particular vocation.

So, consecration by vows involves neither separation nor superiority. In our Founder’s words: “You have not separated yourselves from those who live under the common law.... you follow them... you share with them as far as you can all the fatigues, trials and dangers of the journey” (Preface 1851)

During this year the Pope urges us to “*remember the past with gratitude, live the present with passion and look to the future with hope*”.

Remembering our past helps us deepen our sense of belonging to our Family; to take courage from those who have gone before us and whose lives can inspire us and give us hope for the future.

Pope Francis challenges us to live the present with passion. Like our Founder and first members, are we close to people to the point of sharing their joys and sorrows? Living the present with passion means becoming “experts in communion”, architects of God’s Divine plan that all be one.

Third, we look to the future with hope – a hope that is not based on statistics or accomplishments, but on the One in whom we have put our trust and for whom “nothing is impossible” This is the hope which does not disappoint; it is the hope which enables consecrated life to keep writing its great history well into the future. It is to that future that we must always look, conscious that the Holy Spirit spurs us on so that God can still do great things with us.

Vatican Logo for the Year of Consecrated Life



For an explanation of the logo, click on the image above.

Other countries and groups have designed their own specific logos.

How are we going to live this Year of Consecrated Life?

A year ago, Pope Francis, in an address to general superiors, called on consecrated men and women to

“wake up the world”.

At the opening of the Year of Consecrated Life he renewed the challenge calling on them to lives of courage, communion and joy, telling them that their “shining witness of life well be as a lamp” placed where it can “give light and warmth to all God’s people”.

We can do this through the various events and activities we will participate in over the coming months.

Let us share with one another what is organised in our different communities, parishes, dioceses.

When I was hungry...



That there is a world food crisis no one can deny. The UN World Food Programme and other organisations tell us that there is enough food in the world to feed everyone without the need for any scientific breakthrough. Today's knowledge, tools and policies can solve the problem if there is the political will.

That there is a food crisis in our own countries is also undeniable and shocking. We blame the 'recession' as if it were something out there and not made by human beings. Admitting our mistakes will ensure that it will not happen again. In the meantime, short-term relief is offered to those unable to feed themselves by Food Banks which have proliferated in Britain and Ireland. *Holy Family* Sisters and Lay Associates in both countries are involved in this work of mercy.

Share Food in Newbridge, Co Kildare is one.

This parish food bank was begun in February 2014 with Sr. Eileen Murphy and parishioners, Gaye White and Máiréad Ryan, as coordinators.

What is striking about this venture is that it seems the whole town has taken it to heart. About 60 volunteers are involved in collecting, transporting, bagging and distributing food parcels. Support and facilities to operate the project were unstintingly provided by the Parish Team. The townspeople's generosity and that of local businesses in donating food has contributed to it's success. About 100 families are depending on the assistance of *Share Food* every week.

The work of *Share Food* was recognised when the co-ordinators received a Kildare *People of the Year* award.

NB. If you read *The Irish Catholic* you will find a full account of this venture on pages 23 and 25 of this week's (29 January) edition. You can also click on or paste this link to your browser to read it online: <http://irishcatholic.ie/article/community-spirit-action>



Sr. Eileen Murphy, 2nd from R, with Volunteers

Food for thought

ABOUT 700 MILLION FEWER PEOPLE LIVED IN CONDITIONS OF EXTREME POVERTY IN 2010 THAN IN 1990. HOWEVER, 1 IN 8 PEOPLE IN OUR WORLD WILL GO HUNGRY TODAY'

WOMEN DO 66% OF THE WORLD'S WORK, PRODUCE 50% OF THE WORLD'S FOOD BUT ONLY EARN 10% OF THE WORLD'S INCOME AND OWN 1% OF THE WORLD'S PROPERTY... AND 60% OF THE WORLD'S HUNGRY ARE WOMEN.

AN ESTIMATED 7% OF CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF FIVE ARE NOW OVERWEIGHT, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME, NEARLY ONE IN SIX CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF FIVE ARE UNDERWEIGHT; ONE IN FOUR HAVE STUNTED GROWTH

ALMOST HALF OF ALL DEATHS IN CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF FIVE IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES ARE LINKED TO UNDER-NUTRITION.

A CHILD DIES EVERY 12 SECONDS FROM HUNGER-RELATED DISEASES.

The Global Food Gap - what's eaten in a week in various countries



Chad - \$1.23



Germany - \$253.29



US - \$242



Ecuador - \$31.55

An experience remembered

With our focus now on Exodus and displaced people, memories have come back to me of a profound experience in 2009 when on sabbatical in Berkeley, and recorded in Voices at that time.

It was Ash Wednesday, and our group had an 'immersion' experience in the Tenderloin Area with the homeless. It was a very cold and wet day when we walked into St Boniface Church, and the first impression was the darkness and the dampness. There was a stench of odours. Gradually as one's eyes adjusted, the awareness grew of 'mounds' on benches and then the stark reality that these were breathing, human beings! Some had their socks and coats drying on the radiators. It felt to me like a 'living tomb' and this has stayed with me over the years.



The parishioners had taken on the project, opening the Church in the early mornings so that the homeless could have a rest, as they don't sleep on the streets – it is far too dangerous at night. Some back and neck massage therapies were also provided as well as welfare advice and clothing.

We then took our place in the queue for the free lunch. Over 1200 were served each day. As we talked to people, we discovered that some were migrant workers (in between jobs); others were the chronologically gifted (seniors) who had to sell their houses in order to pay for medical expenses and couldn't find affordable housing; still others were veterans, and there were those with mental health problems.

At the Tenderloin Centre we met four men who had managed to turn their lives around after being homeless. They took us on a tour of the streets where they had spent many years – all located right behind the main business and recreational area. They still had many friends living on the streets, and the sense of camaraderie was evident.



Nearer home, Brother Kevin and others provide over 500 dinners daily for people in Dublin who are in need of food - some of whom are homeless as well. There are the physical and practical needs around homelessness, but what about the spiritual and psychological needs of those who are 'homeless at heart'? People living alone with only neighbours to visit them, those in our nursing homes, migrants and refugees? Or perhaps those beside us who have no one to share their deepest longings?

Sr. Bernadette Deegan -

Sri Lanka 10 Years Later

The images that filled television screens 26 December 2014 captured the attention of the world resulting in a massive response to the plight of the thousands who were affected by the Tsunami.

In Portlaoise, we too felt we had to do something. We went to the Gardaí to ask permission to do street collections. They told us to go and do whatever we could, without having to wait for the usual week for such a request to be processed. The Parish Priest, Fr. J. Byrne, asked me to speak after Mass to ask for volunteers.

The response – a packed sacristy. Money rolled in – thousands of Euro a day. Our house was a hive of activity each evening as the helpers came to count the money. Neighbours supplied food etc. each day for the helpers.

Srs. Anne Marie Glynn and Ellen Butler kept busy sending receipts to all organisations and individuals who gave donations.

A businessman said he would pay the fares for 4 of us to go out with the money collected.

Being with the people in Sri Lanka was an unforgettable experience. We visited the camps by day and spent time in the afternoons with the children who were orphaned as a result of the Tsunami. The Sisters were wonderful and very creative in the ways they provided for the children. Their faith in the face of disaster, their selflessness in their concern for others was truly inspiring. All of us, who went out to help, felt we got so much from the experience. So, when the time came to return home, we felt we had to continue helping in some way.

Before leaving Sri Lanka, we got the details of some of the children with a view to helping them with their studies. We continued to fundraise in various ways, raffles; bag-packing; walking the mini

marathon;

sale of work and, in Newbridge, Sr. Pauline organised an art exhibition of her paintings. Holy Family School, the Primary school in Newbridge, as well as the primary school in Ballyfin, Laois, gave very generous contributions. Many other organisations and individuals donated funds. We also asked people at home if they would sponsor a child. The uptake was great. This has continued for the past ten years. In December we asked the Provincial in Sri Lanka to give us news of these children. Many of them are now married. One has entered the convent. A couple went missing during the unrest in the country (we asked that the money meant for them must be given to other needy children.)



Only the arms remained of the image on this Cross, kept as a reminder



Child survivor in Galle, Sri Lanka





All of this information we gave to the sponsors in December 2014. We told them that we were now stopping the sponsorship of the children. Most of them said that they would like to continue putting the money into the account for any charity that we wish to support. (The account is a registered charity.) We are so grateful to them for this generosity.

As a result we were able to send money to Sierra Leona for Ebola victims; to the Good Shepherd Centre in Kilkenny for Homeless people and to the Simon Community in Dublin.

A big thank you to all, including all Holy Family Convents, for the money that was sent through us to Sri Lanka.

Sr. Lil Meagher

Working to make a Difference

When the tsunami struck Sri Lanka ten years ago (26 Dec. 2004) there was total devastation with huge loss of life, loss of property, loss of livelihood, trauma and chaos everywhere. The 'Pearl of the Indian Ocean' lay in ruins, stripped of its richness and beauty- no more now than a vast wilderness of debris.



In August of that same year I made a visit to Sri Lanka, where the majority of our Holy Family Sisters live and work. The idea was to be in solidarity with them and to offer support and help wherever possible. This experience brought me so close to the people of that country who had endured, and were still enduring so much suffering, that when I returned to England a month later, I was determined to help from afar, in whatever way I could.

So, I began to fundraise! Through the use of my God-given talent for knitting, painting, crocheting, sewing, baking, poetry-writing and publishing, and all kinds of everything creative, the money began to 'drip' in. Others, who got to know what I was trying to do, became involved. Some offered to knit; some helped to sell the goods that were knitted. Others donated wool or provided knitting/crochet patterns; others gave money and yet another donated choc eggs to fill the knitted Easter chicks!

A group of pupils in one of the local Secondary schools learned how to knit and with our help produced a very colourful blanket which was then raffled, raising £290! This small 'industry' began to grow and £1000s have already been raised and sent to the Sisters in Jaffna, Sri Lanka, towards a new-building.



Our Sisters in Jaffna Province, Sri Lanka, are hoping that this new-building will be completed by February 2015. It will provide secure accommodation for twenty young girls who lost their near and dear ones and all their possessions to the tsunami and the on-going civil unrest. "In the new-build they will have peace of mind to continue their studies and not fall prey to unscrupulous and immoral situations."

It is most life-giving to be engaged in a creative activity, which benefits some of the most vulnerable. Together, I believe that this effort (which may seem small) can help to make a difference. And I wish to offer my sincere thanks to all those who have supported me in this work for the homeless.

Sr. Margaret Bradley
mgtbradley@btinternet.com

Lay Associate News

Celebrating Commitment

On an extremely foggy night late last November three men and five women made a commitment to live as Lay Associates within the Family of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles, the Holy Family of Bordeaux. The event took place during a Mass celebrated in Newbridge Convent by Fr. Brian Kavanagh, a well-known priest in the locality because of his work with Almas. What may not be so well-known is that Fr. Brian has for sometime been in formation to become a Priest Associate of the Holy Family and has over the years celebrated many important events with us.



For the eight who made their commitment, the evening of 24 November was the culmination of a journey that began some years ago. They were part of a group of people who responded to an invitation to deepen their faith life through a better understanding of Scripture. For several years this group, led by Sr. Catherine Moran, has been meeting in Newbridge convent twice a month. Some time ago Sr. Catherine invited members of that group to consider becoming Lay Associates of the Holy Family. Those who felt a call to live the spirituality of the Family of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles were given special formation by Sr. Catherine and so their journey began. After a suitable period of discernment they, with Sr. Catherine's guidance, made their commitment to become Lay Associates.

We congratulate Jimmy Crudden, Aileen Geraghty, Deirdre Gleeson, Irene Kavanagh, Ray O'Brien, Patricia O'Callaghan, Joyce Seoighe and Thomas Sweeney and we hope that they will find our spirituality of Communion a way of life that will bring them fulfilment.

We particularly thank Sr. Catherine for her work with the group and for the atmosphere of welcome and the beautiful spread she and her sisters in Newbridge provided for the occasion.

Rose Sullivan (Lay Associate)

UPCOMING EVENTS - February 2015

- 2 World Day of Consecrated Life
- 2 – 8 UN World Interfaith Harmony Week
- 3 Commemoration of the Miraculous Benediction granted to the Holy Family in 1822
- 4 – 7 Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Culture meeting on the theme: 'Catholic Women's Cultures'. As part of the opening event, at the meeting of **cardinals and bishops**, the organisers plan to show a film presentation of Catholic women's voices from around the world. To read more go to this website;
<http://www.catholicireland.net/prayers-trafficking-victims-feast-st-josephine-bakhita/>
- 8 Anniversary of the death of our Founder, Pierre Bienvenu Noailles
Feast of Saint Josephine Bakhita - World Day of Prayer against Human Trafficking
For a full account visit this site:
<http://www.catholicireland.net/prayers-trafficking-victims-feast-st-josephine-bakhita/>
- 11 *Holy Family* Sisters celebrate 125 Year in the Parish of Magherafelt
World Day of the Sick
- 18 Ash Wednesday