

The Holy Family of Bordeaux

in Britain and Ireland

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

November 2015

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Reporting to the Assembly

Editorial

Friday, 13 November 2015, is one of those dates when people will remember where they were and what they were doing in the evening of that day. The pictures of the deadly massacre in Paris that were brought into our homes, our living rooms, were unequivocally horrifying and nothing can justify the actions of the perpetrators. The initial reaction, to carry out an immediate bombing raid on ISIS-held territory in Syria, is understandable. France, President Hollande has declared, is at war and world leaders are struggling with how to deal with ISIS, many supporting increased bombing attacks.

But now, two weeks on, other voices are being heard advocating a serious discussion about what gave rise to ISIS in the first place and the possible role western policies played in it. Equally important is the need being felt to understand what ISIS really is, what it believes and wants (cf. *What ISIS Really Wants*, by Graeme Wood). It is being acknowledged that ISIS cannot be tackled in isolation. It will require the co-ordination of multiple agencies and agents, not just politicians and military chiefs, but thoughtful people from all professions, persuasions and walks of life.

None of us, I imagine, will have any direct influence on how world leaders decide to act. So, what are we to do? In these situations I think of the morphogenetic field. Our slightest thoughts, words, and actions are contributing to the energy in the universe. At one pole there is the energy of forces like ISIS, Al Qaeda, Boko Haram; at the other end there is the energy released by the power of the Resurrection. Into which field is our energy consistently going? The answer will determine which one is going to prevail.



May those who died violently in Paris rest in peace.

Message from Sr. Gemma (Unit Leader)



The synod on the Family is over. Those who had been hoping for spectacular changes in Church doctrine or practice will surely be disappointed. It would seem from reading the final report from the Synod that no great changes have taken place. There has been no definitive ruling on whether divorced and remarried Catholics can receive Communion. Despite Canadian Bishop Durocher's proposal that women be admitted as deacons, nothing much has changed with regard to women's participation in the various forms of leadership and ministry within the Church. We can only hope that it won't be long before women's gifts are fully acknowledged and used for the furtherance of God's mission in our Church

So, let's not despair. There has been a significant forward movement. The Pope calls for a "healthy decentralization" of power in the Church including a greater role for the laity and more decision-making authority for Bishops' conferences. At the Synod he encouraged open and frank dialogue among the participants. The important issues are now out there to be reflected on in depth at a later date, and it is to be hoped that serious reflection will lead to change. A door has been opened to allow divorced and remarried Catholics to receive communion by following a path of accompaniment and discernment with a priest enabling them to reach a deeper understanding of Church teaching, to pray about their situation and consult their conscience before making a decision. This is not a change in teaching but a reminder that an informed conscience is, as the Church has always taught, the final moral arbiter. God can and does speak to us directly when we open our hearts to God in prayer.

Perhaps one of the biggest changes coming from the synod is a change of language. The expressions "disordered", "living in sin" and "intrinsically evil", have been dropped, giving way to more caring and less judgemental language. As Church, we are being challenged to listen more, to respect people in their struggles and to respond with mercy and compassion.

At one point, the final document quotes Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* where he calls for a more inclusive Church: "The Church is called on to be the house of the Father, with doors always wide open ... where there is a place for everyone, with all their problems and to move towards those who feel the need to take up again their path of faith."

This change of tone was set by Pope Francis from the very beginning of his pontificate when he calls on the Church to practice mercy toward struggling and broken families and to avoid using church doctrine as "stones to be hurled at others".

In his address at the closure of the Synod he says: "The church's first duty is not to hand down condemnations or anathemas, but to proclaim God's mercy, to call to conversion, and to lead all men and women to salvation in the Lord."

The synod has just begun.

Pope Francis announces the Holy Year of Mercy



"Dear brothers and sisters, I have often thought of how the Church may render more clear her mission to be a witness to mercy; and we have to make this journey.

It is a journey which begins with spiritual conversion. Therefore, I have decided to announce an *Extraordinary Jubilee* which has at its centre the mercy of God.

It will be a *Holy Year of Mercy*. We want to live in the light of the word of the Lord: "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (cf. Lk 6:36). And this especially applies to confessors! So much mercy!"

Extract from Announcement on Friday, March 13, 2015 - St Peter Basilica

Vatican website for the Year of Mercy: <http://www.im.va/content/gdm/en.html>

Towards CO-RESPONSIBILITY IN AN INTERCONNECTED WORLD

Committed to our vowed life for mission, we will explore changes of structure and language in our 'membership-leadership relationship' that will enable a more integrated and prophetic contribution to mission. (General Chapter 2014)

This statement from the General Chapter is more than a simple recommendation and was seen as such by the Leadership Team in Britain and Ireland. Over the past year, a series of workshops has been held in the Unit to explore, in depth, the meaning and implications of co-responsibility, collaboration, and accountability among members and leaders. Understanding is growing that, through interrelatedness in this way, our efforts for the common mission can be truly at the service of communion.

Then came the second step.

Meeting of the Extended Leadership Team

The title is expressive of *a new language*. The meeting took place in Crewe (England) from 20 – 22 November. At it were the Unit Leadership Team and the other Teams of Participation. The aim of this meeting, planned at the Unit Chapter a year ago, was “to review the work of the teams since then and, if necessary, to revise our mandates and reformulate strategies in order to achieve our aims”.

We have already read Gemma’s letter to the Unit in which she gives an account of this meeting. For those readers who have not had the opportunity to read it, we repeat her account here.

The meeting began with a time of prayer and the presentation. The story, entitled “Our iceberg is penguins living in the Antarctic. One particular bird, devoted to the study of his environment and Gradually he notices that their home, where they grave danger of melting. He brings his fears to the concerns and call a meeting to inform everyone search for a safer home and eventually the whole being settled and always returning to the same moving frequently from one iceberg to another



Fred

telling of a story by means of a PowerPoint melting”, is about a colony of giant penguin called Fred is a very contemplative always on the lookout for danger. have lived happily for many years is in leaders of the colony. They listen to his of the danger. Scouts are sent out to culture of the colony changes. Instead of place to breed, they become nomadic, as soon as they realise they are in danger.

The story is about change. As we know change is happening all around us at an unprecedented speed. Unless we are open to change there is a danger of us being happily settled in our closed little world and thus becoming totally irrelevant. We need to be willing to move out of our comfort zones and reach out to those who call to us for help.

The story, based on a book by John Kotter, a change management consultant from Harvard University, outlines eight steps to needed change:

1. Develop a sense of URGENCY. Suffering can't wait until we feel we are ready. Now is the time to act; tomorrow may be too late.
2. Assemble TEAMS who will work together to achieve our goals.
3. What motivates us is our VISION. In our case it is the vision of Jesus – the Kindom of God; God’s dream of gathering all into the one Family of brothers and sisters.
4. We must relentlessly COMMUNICATE the vision so that all our members are totally committed and working together.
5. We need to EMPOWER one another to work for change by delegating and removing obstacles.
6. We need to celebrate SHORT TERM VICTORIES but not be tempted to sink back into complacency.
7. We need to keep up the momentum. DON'T STOP.
8. Do everything we can to integrate the changes into our CULTURE.

Although this model is mainly for businesses, we felt it had something to say to us. Fred the brave penguin taught us a few valuable lessons:

- spend time in contemplation so as to be aware of the needs around us and offer an effective response;
- speak out our truth and gather support from all our members;
- never go it alone.

We need each other as, guided by our vision and by God Alone, we move out of our comfort zones to build that new society spoken of by our Founder. We also talked about how this model could be seen in the life of Jesus and how he set about realising his mission to establish the reign of God on earth.



Fred proved to be a favourite with all



Safeguarding Team reporting

The second day of the meeting was taken up with reports from all the teams; work in small mixed groups and then in our teams to revisit our mandates and revise them where necessary. The meeting ended with a prayer of re-commitment.

We are now more acutely aware that we are all responsible for leadership within the unit and therefore we regard the teams as an extension of the unit leadership team.



An attentive audience

A participant's comment on the weekend

Worthwhile, plenty of energy around, enthusiasm, good atmosphere, willingness to listen, good to feel trusted and responsible for leadership (extended leadership team member); important to hear what other team members are doing; hopeful; strengthened and encouraged by the whole team effort.

TEENAGE REFLECTIONS

Every year at this time I am involved in helping sixteen / seventeen year old girls in Holy Family School write their reflections on completing the Pope John Paul II Project. As many of you know the J.P. II Award is an initiative recognizing the contribution made by young people who volunteer to participate in activities in their local parish and wider community. (For more information on J.P. II awards, [click here](#))



Having completed various tasks the young people do a written reflection on the following:

- A description of the various activities undertaken outlining the learning points, the challenges, the skills used and the feedback they received.
- *An answer to the question; "What does it mean to be a baptised member of the Church?"*
- *A reflection on how the teaching of Jesus is relevant to their chosen activities.*
- *Comment on the contribution that young people can make within society and within the Church today.*

Given that this age group is, for the most part, almost totally absent from our liturgical celebrations, I find their reflections to be most inspiring, encouraging and challenging.

I have come across so many examples of deep faith among the young people, a deep desire to follow Jesus and a love for meditation and prayer, they particularly enjoy writing prayers of petition, thanks etc. Their experience of organised religion is much less positive and the words "boring" and "out of touch" are the usual comments.

Many of the girls will come to me and say; *"Now, Sr. Kate, I'm not very holy and I don't go to Mass too often but I do pray and I want to be involved in projects that help other people."* I encourage participation in the J. P. II Awards as I feel it gives a great opportunity to present the idea of "living our faith through positive action" and also helping young people discover the presence of God in their everyday lives.

With the permission of the girls I quote from a few of their reflections:

- "I feel very fortunate to be a baptised member of the Church. I feel we are very privileged that our school is so close to our Parish Church, I feel welcome there, a sense of peace there."
- "Helping children with special needs has made me more aware of my health and my talents – I thank God for this."
- "Helping make posters and collecting for "Share Food" helped me realise that each of us can make a difference in our world."
- "Making little cards with an inspiring thought on them and leaving them in my Church for people to take is my way of spreading the good news of Jesus."
- "When a few of us, teenagers, were helping in the Church I felt that people began to see us in a different way – not as "rebellious youth" but as young people wanting to be involved in parish and community."
- "Jesus was gentle and compassionate to everyone; while I was helping the children in the home work club, I tried to remember this and be more patient."
- "I began to look forward to going to Sunday Mass because older people in the Church came to me and said they were delighted to see me there helping – all I did was hand out the books but I felt welcome and involved."

These are just a flavour of the comments from the young people.

I cannot finish this article without a special mention for one activity which is very popular – namely going to the Convent to visit the Sisters and playing bingo with them. The girls just love it!

Their comments include remarks like:

- “They are wise women who have worked so hard and lived in different countries,”
- “Some of them taught my Granny!”
- “I love the way they all help each other,”
- “The Nuns are lovely and so are the staff; they always seem delighted to see us.”
- “Sometimes we prayed with the Nuns...”

I could go on and on sharing from their very rich reflections. Many of the girls who complete the Pope John Paul II Award have gone on to join in Holy Family Youth and so the connections are not lost but can be built on.



Sr. Vincent with blank board, Sr. Ellen doing better

I am convinced that many of our young people are deeply spiritual and have a strong belief in Jesus and all he stands for. Their way of expressing their faith is different from ours and this is only to be expected. My prayer is that we can walk with this generation, listening to them, being interested in them and awakening in them a sense of our loving God who lives within them and all of creation – rather than striving to “graft” them on to an out dated sense of God and Church – but this is a topic for another day!

I will conclude with this quotation from Pope Francis speaking at World Youth Day 2013:



“Young people, I want you to make yourselves heard – I want the noise to go out onto the streets. I want us to resist everything worldly, everything static, everything comfortable, everything that might make us closed in on ourselves.”



Bingo Time in Holy Family Care Unit - Newbridge



Sr. Maria and advisers



Sr. Christina advising?



Srs. Paul and Evelyn getting lucky?



Srs. Columba and Benignus prefer to chat with friend.





WORLD YOUTH DAY 2016

As many of you know **WORLD YOUTH DAY** will take place in Krakow, Poland in July 2016.

WYD is a great opportunity to experience the worldwide Church. Young people from every nationality will be present. There will be youth events, music, prayer and fun and, of course, the highlight of the event will be the presence of Pope Francis.

So, even if we feel a little outside the age range 16—35 years, we can still support this great Festival of Faith, by finding out what is happening in our local parishes and lend our support. We can encourage young people to get involved and we can also give a donation to the many fund raising events which will be organised to help keep costs down. Our young people need our support!

When there is more information available on the number of young people going from our different parishes perhaps we can share ideas on how we can be part of their journey towards Krakow 2016 and beyond.

Official website: <http://www.krakow2016.com/en/>

Kate Cuskelly, Sonas Chríost.

TABLE COMPANIONSHIP

WELCOMING ASYLUM SEEKERS FOR A MEAL

At one of our recent community meetings we decided to invite one family a week to join us for a meal and share their story with us.



Abraham entertaining Angels unawares

Two weeks ago we started with a lovely lady from Iraq who first invited Teresa to see her flat. This lady is a professional who had to flee Iraq because of the war and move to Oman where she found work. After 10 years she became unemployed, so could no longer stay there. It was then she came to seek asylum in the UK but the area where she lives, the cramped living space which has to be shared and the fact that she is not allowed to work is very hard to accept. No wonder she is depressed.

We shared a lot over a simple meal and will continue to support her.

Last week we invited a lovely couple from Sri Lanka to join us for a meal. Maria picked them up in Town and later we took them back to their very simple little home. Their story is so painful too. After the meal we played a simple board game which was fun and we all enjoyed the evening. We hope to do this again and build up the friendship.

Both of these families, like all the asylum seekers we know are living a kind of mental agony every day of their lives, never knowing how long their insecurity will last. Some have waited 13 years before receiving permission to stay in this country while others have been deported after waiting 8 years!

Maria and Teresa
Bradford Community

HOLY FAMILY CELEBRATIONS

Silver Jubilee in Arran Road - 31 October

On 28 March, 1990, the Arran Road Community moved into the house at No 11. Srs. Sheila Roberts, Helen O'Connor and Eileen Murphy were the original members. Over the past 25 years, the house has seen visitors from around the Province passing through for a night or two, or for a few weeks' holiday. The list of Sisters from other Units around the world who came for short-term courses in All Hallows, Mountjoy Square, or long-term ones in IMU and Loreto House totalled more than 50 Sisters. At least 25 sisters came from abroad within the last 5 years.



Preparing for Mass

Our Founder's emphasis on 'Providence' was lived out once again with the unexpected early arrival of Rose and Margaret at 9.15 am on Saturday morning. Thanks to both for helping out. Even the fact that Fr Patrick Sweeney (who lives just round the corner in his old family home) had offered to celebrate Mass was providential. When all nineteen sisters had gathered, Fr. Pat began the liturgy, interspersed with humorous interventions and reminiscences from the Sisters.

There was a wonderful atmosphere, relaxed and prayerful. Fr Pat's homily was spectacular (with no notes) drawing on all three readings – 1 Corinthians 13:4-13 about love, Psalm 24 and Luke 14:17 about places of honour at the table (which was the reading for the day). He talked about love in action, and the need to keep faith in today's world and support each other. 'Places of honour at the table' in Arran Road are impossible, and all sisters and others are grateful to have a welcome, food on the table, a roof over their heads and much love and support over the years. Fr Pat mentioned that if the 'walls could talk' what struggles, joys, hopes, fears, disbelief, faith, pain, healing, and much more, they would express!

After the spiritual food, it was time to move to some temporal nourishment. With the usual self-service system in Arran Road, all tucked in to a hot meal, and circulated around. This was followed by an array of desserts. The sense of joy, and peace was palpable, and the sisters were happy to relax and spend time together. It was marvellous that no one was rushing off anywhere, even though it was Hallowe'en. The fine weather was another blessing.



As most of the sisters prepared to leave, comments such as "a really homely atmosphere", "great to celebrate in the house and not have to go out anywhere", "...fantastic Mass and homily", "really relaxed day" were made.

We are grateful for all the wonderful greeting cards, good wishes, help on the day, and the joy that each sister brought into the house. Above all, the peace and strength that was gained through gathering around the Eucharistic Table, and allowing the Lord to bless each one of us, and those for whom we care.

Colette, Aneta, Angelina, Stella and Bernadette

A Double Celebration for Sr. Margaret McCabe

On a bright spring morning, the Sisters in Wrexham, Sr. Rita McCabe (Rock Ferry community) and Sheila Sumner, a close friend of the community, gathered to celebrate Sr. Margaret's Diamond Jubilee. Bishop Peter Brignall led the Eucharistic Celebration prepared by Margaret. It was a truly joyous occasion, with greetings from communities within the Province, family and friends, giving thanks for Margaret's 60 years of mission as a Holy Family Sister and her untiring dedication to enable children to access the school curriculum.

Our celebrations continued with a delicious meal in the community dining room followed by the cutting of the cake and a champagne toast wishing Margaret health and happiness.

As the warm and golden colours of autumn filled our vision, another celebration loomed - Sr. Margaret's 80th Birthday. We were joined by Fr. Owen Hardwick who launched our celebrations with the Eucharist.

We wish Margaret continued blessings in the years ahead.

Wrexham Community



Sr. Margaret cutting the cake

News from Rock Ferry

During the days October 27 - 30 we had the privilege of having a retreat in the Community. Our reflections were presented by Sr. Catherine Lavery on The joy of Consecrated Life – a call to embody the Good News. Fr. Martin OMI joined us each day to celebrate Mass.



Sr. Aidan and family members

We all felt a great sense of peace, joy and prayerfulness

during these days and it was wonderful that all the Sisters were able to be present. We were also very conscious that Sr. Mary Loughran was not with us and we remembered Mary, her sister Teresa and the family daily in our prayers.

It was with great joy and happiness on the 30th that we celebrated Sr. Aidan's 103rd birthday. Our Sisters from Wrexham joined us for Mass and a celebration dinner. On the days before her Birthday Aidan had visits from her nephews and their families. Her family expressed their

appreciation and thanks for the care given to Aidan and the welcome they always receive during their visits.

We also welcomed Sr. Anne Marie to our Community on 26 October. We hope she will be very happy with us and we pray that her work in the parish will bring many blessings on us.



Srs. Catherine and Aidan



THE WORLD CLIMATE MEETING HAS BEGUN

“Architects of our own destruction” is one of the expressions used to describe the situation we are in because of our heedless misuse of the Earth’s resources. Hundreds of thousands of people all over the world have been meeting and marching over the weekend to urge our leaders to take the necessary steps to prevent further destruction.

These steps may have to be drastic. Only time will tell whether we are all prepared to make the changes in our lifestyle that these measures will demand.

There was no lack of conviction and determination, however, among the 50 or so people who gathered in the town library in Newbridge on Saturday, 28 November for an event organised by Shamrockspring. Among them were Holy Family sisters from the Newbridge ‘convent’ and the Clane community. The invitation to all was:



Climate change meeting in the Library, Newbridge

Be empowered, refreshed and inspired.

It did happen, thanks to the enthusiasm of the organisers, two enthusiastic young women, Fiona Tutty and Deirdre Lane, the latter a past pupil of Holy Family Secondary School. The event started with the reading of a message from the French ambassador to Ireland.

The programme included a film on climate change, reinforcing, if it were needed, what all in the room were aware of. More important was the input, by means of video clips, outlining local efforts already underway and how to get involved. The meeting was totally interactive and participants asked questions, raised issues not being dealt with, and gave examples of what they were doing. A few local Councillors were present, from the town, and from Kildare and Clane and were able to outline some of the plans for the county.

Altogether, it was a great learning experience and contacts were made which will enable us to keep in touch with one another for further action in the future.

We look forward to getting news of events in other parts of the Unit.

To watch a video by students at Mount Temple School, Dublin, U2s former school

[Click here](#)

TRAINING for AWARENESS of HUMAN TRAFFICKING

On Saturday 21 November, ten people joined APT members Srs Rita Minehan, Mary Ryan and Catherine Dunne, in the lovely setting of Solas Bhride to follow the training for diocesan representatives in awareness raising of Human Trafficking.

The session began at 10.00 am and the group followed the presentation in the [Tool Kit](#).

The presentation included discussions and suggestions from the group and the response was extremely positive. Each person could see ways of sharing their knowledge and interest with others.

There was a strong enthusiasm to support the work of APT in each one's particular way, be it in small or big groups whatever their circumstances and contacts.

All the members were from teaching backgrounds, parents, faith development work, youth work, parish pastoral work and more. The day was very encouraging for the APT members and they in turn will keep in contact to support in any way which can help.



Sr. Esther Delaney, seated, 6th L to R.



UPCOMING EVENTS

December 2015						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2 International Day for the Abolition of Slavery	3	4	5 International Volunteers Day
6 Foundation of Sisters of the Immaculate Conception 1829	7	8 Holy Year of Mercy begins	9	10 Our Lady of Loreto Human Rights Day	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18 Our Lady of Hope Approval of HF Constitutions 1903 & 1988 International Migrants Day	19
20 International Human Solidarity Day	21	22	23	24	25 Nativity of Jesus, the Christ	26
27 Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph	28	29	30	31		