



# 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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Sanctuary in Moneenroe Church at Farewell Eucharist  
20 candles representing the 20 HF Sisters who served in the Parish were placed on the stand to the left of the altar

## EDITORIAL

**W**hen a religious community leaves a place after years of dedicated service, the reason can be that their work is done and it is time to move on. In Ireland today, however, it is (almost) always because there are no younger members to take on the work. Have we become wearily resigned to the fact that there are no vocations and wonder why young people do not want the commitment that religious life entails?

That young people still respond enthusiastically to calls on their generosity, and willingly give time and energy working gratuitously in development projects, fundraising for all sorts of good causes, at home and abroad, is undeniable. That there are so many opportunities for them to give freely of their services in various worthy organisations does not explain why they may not wish to do it in institutes of religious life, as has been claimed.

This would be to equate religious life simply with service. Religious life does indeed imply service but it is something more. That 'something more' is what we seem unable to communicate to our youth today, to fire their imagination in ways that caused religious orders and congregations to flourish in the past.

Ronald Rolheiser, in an article you can [read here](#) if you are reading this on your computer, says we need to revive the old "romantic ideal" of religious life, as "something that inflames the romantic imagination", for the priesthood and religious life today.



## Message from Sr. Gemma (Unit Leader)



### BE LIKE THE TREE

“Be like a tree and let the dead leaves drop.” (Rumi)

During this season of autumn, Mother Nature treats us to a truly spectacular display. The leaves of the trees gradually change from green to gold, red, brown, yellow and black. There is a dramatic explosion of colour just before the trees surrender their leaves altogether letting them fall to the ground in what seems like the grand finale of death.

Yet we know that during the stillness of winter these dead leaves, as they lie on the ground, are quietly seeding new life. By letting the leaves fall, the trees create fertile ground below for other plants and creatures to grow and thrive within. Their annual dying process is actually a gift of life to themselves and the world around them. Without this death there would be no rebirth in the spring.

Autumn brings us to a deeper awareness that we too live in a continual cycle of dying and rising. When we let go of everything that no longer serves us, we make space inside of ourselves for newness to be born. Our faith tells us that dying is not the end; it is a bridge to new life. Like compost turned to rich and seed-ready soil, dying prepares us for a new phase of living.

Autumn trees teach us to let go. Meister Eckhart, a thirteenth mystic, speaks of letting go as the ability to accept things as they are in their uncertainty and mystery. It is an essential attitude for contemplation. In coming to prayer, we let go of our image of ourselves and of God, our ideas, our thoughts, our expectations, in order to sit in emptiness before God so that God can reveal God’s self to us and transform us into what God wants us to be.

As we gradually learn to let go, we learn how to rest in the eternal now, in a peaceful acceptance of what is now. We don’t need to change ourselves or manipulate the present in order to encounter God in prayer. We just need to be empty and open to being filled by God. Meister Eckhart says: “To be full of things is to be empty of God. To be empty of things is to be full of God... God is not found in the soul by adding anything, but by a process of subtraction.” Letting go makes space for God who wishes to transform us into God’s image and likeness.



Rumi tells us “Let the dead leaves drop”.

Jesus tells us: “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” (John 12:24).





## EU Anti-Trafficking Day

18 October

The EU Anti-Trafficking Day was established in 2007 following a recommendation of the European Parliament, and a proposal of the Commission. Ever since, 18 October is marked with events across the EU, bringing together all relevant actors working for eradicating trafficking in human beings.

Trafficking in human beings, as we all know, is a violation of fundamental rights, and is explicitly prohibited under the *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union*. It is also listed as a crime in Article 83 of the *Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union*.

An *EU Anti-Trafficking Directive* put forward in 2011 and the *EU Strategy on Trafficking in human beings 2012-2016* both stress a victim-centred approach, putting the protection and rights of the victims at the forefront. Victims of human trafficking who are found to be involved in criminal activities should not be convicted of a crime they are forced to commit, something that has happened in the case of men forced to work in cannabis growhouses in Northern Ireland and in the Republic.




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### A Lesson from the Parable of the Importunate Widow (Lk 18:1-8) for Anti-Trafficking Day

Reference to the widow throughout the Scriptures lays a claim on us to protect the widow. This widow in the parable, even though she knows the Judge is unjust, continues to pester him to give her justice. This took great courage and fortitude. This is a “can do” gospel. If we persist, then will not God give us justice?

I want to put this in the context of what I am going to speak to you about today. That is, the evil of trafficking in human persons. Trafficking is the world’s fastest growing crime today. The profits in trafficking in persons for organised crime are high, the risks are low. This modern slavery is based on lies, deception, coercion and betrayal. People are trafficked for sexual exploitation, forced labour, their organs, etc.

Imagine for a moment that you are a young person like Adina. Your family are poor; you work hard at school because you want a better life. Your dream of a job that will help you and your family. Then you are offered what seems like your dream job, usually by someone you know or, indeed, you think loves you.

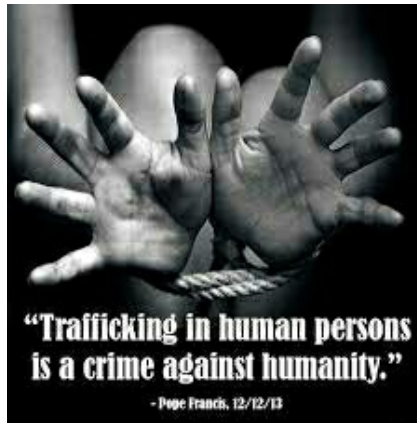
You do not know that this is all lies. You go with this person, maybe to a country far away or, as we know from the UK, it can be from within your own country. Suddenly you are trapped in a life that is horrendous. In her own words Adina says: “Two years ago everything changed. I was trafficked by a man who said he loved me. The tragedy is, I believed him. I was forced to work as a prostitute on the streets. If I refused I was beaten. I became very frightened. I was terrified he would kill me. Death often felt the only way to escape. People are products for sale and I was one of them. But I am a survivor”.

Because this crime is so awful we can struggle to admit it exists. Victims stay invisible, powerless, exploited and enslaved. Currently there are an estimated 21 million people in slavery in our world today.

Why am I telling you this?

I am telling you because Modern Slavery affects us all. We belong to a Christian Community that affirms

the dignity of the human person and it has to stop. Pope Francis says “Human trafficking is an open wound on the body of contemporary society. A scourge on the body of Christ. Things have a price and can be for sale but people have a human dignity that is priceless. It is the poorest who suffer the worst.”



Does that mean that our community here has the power to stop human trafficking? Yes. Church communities were instrumental in stopping the slave trade 200 years ago.

We can stop this horrendous crime together. How? By working together with government and business, sharing knowledge and information that will disrupt and ultimately stop the traffickers. I belong to two groups who firmly believe this, TRAC (Trafficking Awareness and Campaigning) and RENATE (Religious in Europe Networking against Trafficking and Exploitation).

We believe that “demand” is the key, a very basic economic tenet - that of demand and supply. No demand, no supply. To stop the demand for trafficking in people (women, men and boys) for sexual exploitation, we are working to get legislation enacted

here to criminalise the buyers of sex and decriminalising those caught up in prostitution, while offering them ways out of that life. Sweden first introduced the law in 1999 and was quickly followed by Norway and Iceland. It is known as the Nordic Model. Northern Ireland passed the law last year; France has also passed a similar law. In the Republic of Ireland, the law has passed the Seanad and is now before the Dáil’. It

has wide cross-party support but is meeting opposition from the SWAI (Sex Workers Alliance of Ireland) and its supporters in government.

In the next month or so we will be printing cards for you to sign and we will get them to your MP asking them to support this change in legislation. That way we can stop trafficking or at least make the buying and use of the people who are exploited a criminal offence.

As we understand from the gospel today persistence will pay off in the end. “Now will not God see justice done to his chosen who cry to him day and night”. So pray for an end to this evil of trafficking in human persons.

*Talk given by Sr. Marie Power at all Masses in Quex Road, Kilburn on Sunday 16 October*



Even before his concern for the environment and migration became evident, there was another social issue at the top of Pope Francis’s agenda: human trafficking and modern-day slavery, all of which he sees as interconnected.

The Santa Marta Group was born in 2014, following initiatives by the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales. It is an international alliance of police chiefs and prelates endorsed by Francis, which takes its name from the hotel within the Vatican grounds where the the Pope has lived since his election back in 2013.

It first met in Rome and, in the presence of Francis, signed a declaration committing themselves to work together to end this illegal industry.



SMG meeting in Vatican

The group's fourth gathering took place in Rome from 26-27 October. Cardinal Vincent Nichols, of Westminster, presented the meeting in a Vatican news conference. Among other issues, during the meeting members discussed a report, two years in the making, offering a broad overview of the dynamics of today's trade in human beings.

This year's SMG conference will include a call for every Bishops' Conference to ensure:

- there is a named Bishop in their Conference to meet and engage with law enforcement officials;
- a call to accompany all victims of trafficking through the law enforcement process;
- a call for the Church to engage with vulnerable communities and to provide a safe space for people to report suspected trafficking and for victims to come forward;
- a challenge to exploitative industries - not just the sex trade, but mainstream goods and services;
- guidance on the indicators of trafficking so people can more easily identify when exploitation is occurring.

Speakers included three survivors of human trafficking, law enforcement officials from around the world and a senior UK minister.



Cardinal Nichols flanked by two victims of human trafficking

**For further information go to:**

[www.santamartagroup.com](http://www.santamartagroup.com)

For Cardinal Nichols's address to the Pope, [click here](#)

For the Pope's address to the SMG, [click here](#)

Bishop Denis Brennan of Ferns Diocese says: "Every family, village and town in Ireland has a role to play to stop this scourge, (of human trafficking)." [Read more](#)

## BREAKING NEWS!

**The Sexual Offences Bill Returns to Leinster House this week for second reading debates on Wednesday 2 November 5.05 - 8 pm and Thursday 3 November 12:30 - 3:30.**

The Sexual Offences Bill will:

- Help to protect our most vulnerable children and adults from sexual exploitation.
- Tackle child sexual exploitation, through strengthening the laws combating child pornography and online grooming.
- Help to end prostitution and sex trafficking in Ireland by criminalising the purchase of sex and decriminalising the sale of sex.
- Impose stiffer penalties on the perpetrators of rape and sexual abuse.



*"It is crucial that we have a strong presence in the Gallery of Leinster House from all partners of the Turn Off the Red Light Campaign (which includes APT). At a recent meeting, the Tánaiste commented on how positive it is to see our support in the gallery."*

L. Minister for Justice launching the Second National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Trafficking in Ireland



## World meeting of Families comes to Ireland 22-26 August 2018

### Theme: 'The Gospel of the Family: Joy for the World'

The launch of "The Joy of Love, *Amoris Laetitia*, and the World Meeting of Families in Ireland 2018, took place in St Patrick's College, Drumcondra on 22 October. Srs. Catherine Moran, Colette Keegan, Eileen Ryan, Bernadette Deegan and Lay associate Esther Keogh, attended it. Our priest members, Frs. Willie Purcell and Brian Kavanagh, were also there as part of the organising group.

The programme was packed, and the atmosphere energetic and loving with so many couples and organisations represented there. The facilitators were Ms Kate Liffey, National Director for Catechetics and Wendy Grace, journalist and broadcaster on "Spirit Radio".

Archbishop Diarmuid Martin spoke of the three-fold task of:

- How to respond to the gift and challenge of having the World meeting of Families in Ireland
- How to support and help the renewal of marriage and families in Ireland
- How to reflect on the deeper meaning of some complex issues in "Amoris Laetitia".



Archbishop Diarmuid Martin launches WFM

As regards the latter, Diarmuid Martin encouraged a creative pastoral approach, to think and act outside of the conventional box and reach out to young people and families. The main thread running through all of Pope Francis' writings is the emphasis on mercy, and 'sin' is the failure to be merciful. Also, he said that there can be no 'definition of family' nowadays as the world cultures are so diversified.

There were very moving presentations on many subjects. A video testimony of a Catholic Syrian Refugee Family in Belfast was most informative, highlighting how the church organisations and schools had helped them settle. Anxiety about relatives still in Syria, and the fact that the mother has not been able to practise as a dentist, is ongoing.

A young homeless mother of one spoke about her loneliness when she goes back to her emergency accommodation and closes the door. She gave some figures and said that most families are homeless for the first time – many through relationship breakup. Figures given were that 80 families in Ireland are losing their homes each month. There are 2,600 homeless children. Apart from the basic needs, she wanted people to listen to the fears, sense of guilt/shame, mental health, and concerns of homeless people, and to try to change attitudes towards them.



Pope Francis at WMOF in USA

A young man who had an accident had been told he would never work again. As a result, he felt totally useless but told his story of how a priest had encouraged him to get involved in the local community and his life changed. He is now raising awareness on addictions and substance abuse, by going into primary schools, and transition year classes. This is through the Irish Bishops' Drug Initiative.

In the afternoon, Archbishop Eamon Martin encouraged families and parishes to celebrate special moments, and help people to be connected, especially young couples preparing for marriage. "The church is good for the family and the family is good for the church". There was emphasis also on catechesis, support and prayer.

There were banners and leaflets from hundreds of organisations on display in the corridors and conference areas. Many organisations such as Accord, Catholic grandparents, Nazareth Family Community, Cana Love is for Life, Couples for Christ and Retrouvaille, gave presentations on their work to support the family. A young couple who spoke of their painful journey and who were on the brink of breaking up gave a profound presentation and the help received through Retrouvaille. The video presentations of couples talking about their lives were amazing and it was clear that there had been a rediscovery of love and respect for each other.

Moving to what happens next, Fr Tim Bartlett, Clonliffe College, outlined the preparation for WMOF2018. In March 2017, there will be the launch

of a Catechetical Programme with themes from *Amoris Laetitia* such as:

- what is love,
- our dream for children,
- how does the Gospel message support us in crisis,
- and, above all, Joy.

Fr. Tim mentioned a quote from Pope Francis that "time is more important than space, real more important than ideal". One message that came across loud and clear was that there is no perfect family. Opportunities will be abundant as to how to be involved with volunteers needed. The use of modern communications media - Facebook, Instagram, Twitter - was highlighted and all participants were encouraged to:

- help in any way possible,
- become proclaimers of the Gospel of the Family with joy,
- prayer support,
- set up reflection groups.

There will be competitions for the logo and hymn. An Icon will be painted based on the family as a "living icon of the Blessed Trinity".

Website: <http://www.worldmeeting2018.ie/>

Facebook: World Meeting of Families 2018

Srs Eileen Ryan and Bernadette Deegan



Archbishop Martin at Pontifical Council in Rome discussing the WMOF in Dublin 2018

## GOINGS-ON IN NEWBRIDGE

### A DAY AT THE CURRAGH RACES



Life in Newbridge is usually quiet and gentle, welcoming and warm. However, in mid-September, the pace changed, when a friend of the Community invited us to the Races in the Curragh, home of the Classics.

On Sunday, 9 October 2016, a convoy of cars complete with three rollators, a nurse, a carer and nine of the Community dressed to kill, set off. Racing began at 2.05 p.m. and the seventh and last race at 5.25 p.m.

On arrival, we were greeted by our host and hostess, Annie and Jason Norris, who escorted us to the Orby Suite, overlooking the paddocks and finishing post. They are both from Sussex but live here with their four children. Jason

is Racing Director of Ireland. The suite was laid out for afternoon high tea which was served mid-afternoon. In the meantime, all set to study form, and place bets. Jason, the perfect host, collected these and after some races brought us our considerable winnings!



Welcome briefing

In between times, we were introduced to the celebrities of the racing world of Ireland, A. P. O'Brien, J. P. Murtagh and his wife, J. S. Bolger and his daughter, internationally known horse trainers. Paul Hensey, Head of Catering and grandnephew of the late Dominica Walsh. They were all lovely people, so welcoming and friendly. Paul Hensey recalled holidays in Draperstown and the trips they took at the height of the marching season with Auntie Nun in the front of the car!



Studying form

Towards the end of the afternoon we were invited to the paddock to choose the best-groomed horse for the last race. This event, mentioning the *Holy Family* sisters, was announced over the tanoy, and created its own excitement in the crowd. When a party of American tourists heard the announcement, one of them jumped for joy. She was a niece of the late

Sr. Mark Dillon. Elizabeth's biggest hug was for Eileen Fitzpatrick who used to welcome her to Magherafelt as a child. What a surprise, what a climax to end a wonderful day.



A delicious spread for afternoon tea

I hope this has captured a little of what all agreed was an experience of a lifetime. Roll on Ascot! is the mantra of one of the racegoers who celebrates her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2017!

Newbridge Community Correspondent



## EXHIBITION and SALE OF ART

The days, October 3 – 7, 2016, saw the culmination of hours, days, months of the work of human hands. The hands were those of Sr. Paul Gravin, moving quickly into her 99<sup>th</sup> year; the work, a huge selection of paintings of nature, especially birds in all their splendour. Her portfolios were a feast for all who sat in wonder at her artistic gifts.

Earlier this year, Paul expressed a wish to exhibit and sell these works of art for the *Holy Family* Missions, especially Pakistan. Remote preparation was the framing and presentation of her pictures here in the Convent. They aroused great admiration from Community and visitors, followed by a number of sales. This led to the possibility of a local exhibition venue, which was booked in the Parish Centre in Newbridge.

Flyers were made and distributed. The Parish Bulletin, News and Views, and a local paper advertised, the latter doing an interview and sending a photographer. It really pays to advertise!

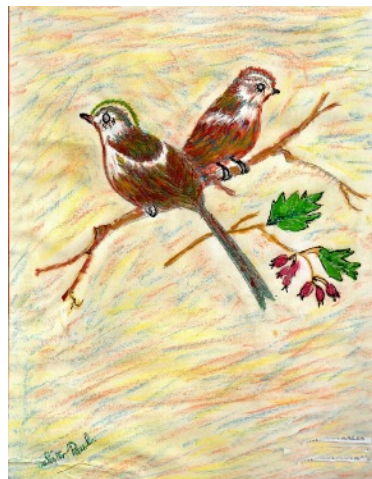
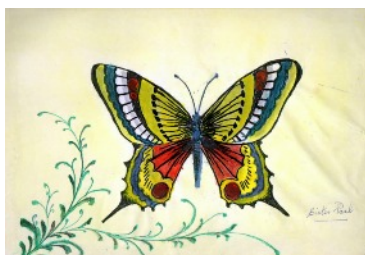


Sr. Paul and Brother Paddy



The week of the exhibition was a great success, attracting artists and non-artists alike, all marvelling at Paul's gift and the cause, which touched so many of them.

The experience was very positive. The Community support was magnificent. However, the highlight of the week was Paul's visit to the exhibition accompanied by her 95-year-old brother Paddy, a Christian Brother, who travelled from Callan, Co. Kilkenny for the event. Moments like these are treasures and so special; they will live on like art forever.



Sr. Esther Delaney

## JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS

Platinum, Diamond and Gold - precious jewels are such fitting titles when it comes to celebrations whatever the context, be it weddings, religious professions, ordinations. Here in Newbridge the Community saw the climax of the preparations for these precious moments in the lives of eight *Holy Family* Sisters living in Ireland. All, including their communities, were invited to a joint celebration on 17 September.



Srs. Maureen, Columba, Rose, Eileen, Lil, Síle

After a lovely morning coffee welcome, we settled in the Community Chapel for the Eucharistic celebration of thanksgiving. It was beautifully prepared by Síle McGowan and Lil Meagher. Paul Dempsey, our new Parish Priest, was delighted to be invited to preside and entered fully into the spirit of the day. Síle's reflection after the Gospel was just beautiful, profound is the word that I think captured it.



Sr. Catherine welcomes the congregation

Next stop was our newly extended Dining Room and the jubilee celebration was a fitting occasion to officially mark it's opening. What a joy to be able to seat thirty-six comfortably, with ample space to serve the six-course banquet. The staff were fantastic, leading up to the day with the making and decorating of the three-tiered jubilee cake, the



Sr. Columba has first cut of the cake

How lucky are some ninety year olds!

tasteful decoration of the tables around a fresh sunflower, individual gift bags and a mouth-watering six-course menu. With little or no disturbance for the less able the celebration moved into cake cutting, toasts, speeches, music, dance and songs, not to mention shared memories. One of the latter and a quite recent memory was post that Columba Donnelly shared. It was a congratulations card for the special day from none other than Daniel O'Donnell, the well-known Irish folk singer! How lucky are some ninety year olds!

With grateful hearts we closed the day with Mary's Magnificat echoing our thanks:

The Almighty works marvels for me  
Holy is His Name  
And has brought us through to our  
Golden, Diamond and Platinum years  
May He Be Glorified Forever.



Singalong

Newbridge Community Correspondent

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF COR (Conference of Religious in Britain)

**O**n 26 October Gemma attended the Annual General Meeting for religious held in Heythrop College. It was a very large gathering.

The two main speakers were Dr. Anna Rowlands, lecturer in Catholic Studies in the Department of Theology and Religion at Durham University and Sara Teather, director of Jesuit Refugee Service U.K. Dr. Rowlands spoke on how the Catholic Church can respond to the refugee crisis, which she describes as the defining issue of our time. It is the biggest challenge faced by our Church in generations and we will be judged on our response to it.

Since the beginning of the conflicts in the Middle East and elsewhere, hundreds of thousands of people have travelled to Europe hoping for a better life. Pushed by civil war and terror and pulled by the promise of a better life, huge numbers of people have fled the Middle East and Africa, risking their lives along the way. More than a million migrants and refugees crossed into Europe in 2015, compared with just 280,000 the year before. The scale of the crisis continues, with more than 135,000 people arriving in the first two months of 2016.

Among the forces driving people to make the dangerous journey are the conflicts in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. The vast majority - more than 80% - of those who reached Europe by boat in 2015 came from those three countries.

Poverty, human rights abuses and deteriorating security are also prompting people to set out from countries such as Eritrea, Pakistan, Morocco, Iran and Somalia in the hope of a new life in somewhere like Germany, Sweden or the UK.

What is our response? It is woefully inadequate according to Dr Rowland. The response in many European countries is marked by hostility and rejection.

When we reflect on Scripture, we can see that how welcoming the stranger is the central theme of biblical hospitality. It is an inclusive hospitality that always makes room for the stranger. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph became asylum seekers in Egypt. Without travel documents, they crossed the border, looking for safety and sanctuary. Although they were strangers, someone took them in. Someone welcomed them and protected them.

Dr Rowlands went on to speak of the many resources in Catholic social teaching that help us to reflect on the plight of immigrants and to respond to the needs of these our sisters and brothers who are obliged to be on the move.

Immigrants and refugees remind us that we too are a pilgrim people; they call us out of our unawareness to a conversion of mind and heart through which we are able to offer a warm, genuine welcome to people seeking refuge in our country. They call us to solidarity; to share together as brothers and sisters at the same table, and to work side by side to improve the quality of life for society's marginalised members.

Sara Teather spoke of the work of the Jesuit Refugee Service. She asked if there were any Sisters of the *Holy Family* of Bordeaux present at the meeting and when I identified myself, she asked me to speak about our experience of hosting refugees in the London area.

Dr Rowlands' talk will be made available on the COR website in due course.

Gemma Corbett

## Come, share my home and be with me

### Refugees enjoy weekend of Action-Packed activities in Bentham

On 7 - 9 October, the Bentham community invited the Red Cross staff, volunteers and the Red Cross refugees from all over the world to enjoy the weekend break. Bentham is a village in Dales and the invitation came through Maggie, a Red Cross volunteer who has formed a small group that supports refugees.

The purpose of this weekend was to help the local community to be in solidarity and to understand the constant struggles and pains these refugees, who have lost everything - their families, friends, and homes because of war, persecution and conflict - go through. Most of these people and many others around the world are being persecuted because of their religious belief, political views or ethnic backgrounds. There are



many people who are ready to welcome the asylum seekers and refugees but there are others who see them as a threat to their own way of thinking.

So this weekend was specially organised to know and to be in solidarity with the refugees and to share some of their experiences.

“My humanity is bound up in yours for we can only be human together”. (Desmond Tutu)

The refugees, who are all users of the Red Cross Destitution centre in Bradford, stayed with the host families in the Bentham area during the visit. We were 19 people in all, including 10 children.

We were all welcomed by the local community, and were treated to a number of activities and events, including a welcome meal at the *Looking Well* in Bentham, a visit to the farm, a walk which took in the



famous White scare caves and a visit to the Bentham pottery with a demonstration. There was also a ceilidh in Burton-in- Lonsdale village hall for the visitors and the host families.

Another main event was a gathering at the Thornton church to show solidarity and support. Three refugees from different countries shared the harrowing experiences which resulted in them coming to this country leaving behind some of their families members because they were too weak to travel, or there was not enough money to pay for their passage; some even got lost or died on the way. After listening to the stories, many people were moved emotionally and wished to give some kind of help to share the burden of these refugees.

I was very touched by the welcoming spirit of the host families who opened their hearts, homes to welcome us strangers and give us all place to sleep and food to eat and made us feel at home. All the activities and the events were very much appreciated and enjoyed by everyone, both hosts and visitors. It was amazing to see the refugees with their children dancing, playing and eating at the social evening.

We left the Bentham community with hearts full of gratitude and appreciation and with good memories to cherish.

“We need a world without torture, conflict, war, hunger and fear. A world where Hope is real. That world starts here and now with us standing together in solidarity”.

Nasreen Nazir, Bradford

## MONEENROE'S FAREWELL TO THE *HOLY FAMILY*

We are accustomed to seeing in our Catholic newspapers photographs and one-line captions about a community of nuns or priests leaving a parish after years of devoted service. In some cases it would have been foreseen; in others, the news may be greeted with shock, disbelief, and even resistance. So it was when the parishioners of Moneenroe heard that the *Holy Family* sisters were to withdraw from the parish after 45 years.

The sisters had been invited to the parish by the pastorally-minded Bishop Birch at a time when the people were in dire economic straits occasioned by the closure of the coal mines in the area and very much in need of the comforting presence and pastoral care the sisters were able to give.

Twenty sisters succeeded one another over the years, in small groups of three or four, each one bringing her own special gifts to continue and build upon the tasks already begun - all the ministries usually performed by pastoral workers and which they adapted to changing times.

The sisters, by word and presence, communicated the *Holy Family* spirit and charism so that a group of



committed *Holy Family* Lay Associates was formed. They will ensure that the charism remains alive after the departure of the sisters.

All this and more, but especially the warmth and dedication displayed by the sisters, was mentioned by the different people who spoke at the closing Eucharist on Saturday 29 October. Celebrated in a packed church, which included Monsignor John Ryan, the Vicar General of the diocese, the local TD, and Ministers of other Christian denominations, it

was a moving testimony to the deep faith of the parishioners themselves. There was a feeling of peace, tinged with sadness, but acceptance that this was part of the movement of life.

The symbolism of the opening procession was poignant. Twenty people, including the three members of the departing community, Srs. Anne, Frances and Lil, carried candles representing the 20 sisters who had worked in the parish, as their names were called out. The candles were placed, for the duration of the Mass, on a special stand erected in the sanctuary and were carried out at the end, indicating that the light had been passed on.

The first words to the parishioners came from Gemma. She expressed her understanding of their upset at the departure of the sisters but explained the inevitability of the step. She thanked them for their deep appreciation of the sisters expressed in their letters to her. It was an opportunity, too, to express the gratitude of the *Holy Family* to the people of Moneenroe, past and present, for the warm welcome they always gave to the sisters.

"Goodbyes hurt," Gemma went on to say, but she stressed the human need to say 'goodbye'. The word is a contraction of the blessing, "God be with you", so,



*Holy Family* Sisters and Lay Associates in a packed Church

when we say the word we are conferring a blessing on one another and promising to remain close in prayer and keep fond memories in our hearts.

In his homily, Fr. Tobin referred in vivid terms to the movement of the earth around the sun as an illustration of the constant movement in life, all our lives.

He took a phrase from each of the three Readings (the 31<sup>st</sup> Sunday) to illustrate what the presence of the sisters had been. Paul's prayer in Thessalonians that God will make us worthy of (God's) call, inspired his prayer that God would reward the *Holy Family* sisters for their answer to Bishop Birch's call for a new heaven and a new earth in the locality. "Lover of life" in the book of Wisdom was reminiscent of the love they brought to each person, their being part of all life. Zacchaeus, the small man in the Gospel, represents all those 'little' people on whose side the sisters always were. They leave, having enriched many lives.

The final word after Communion, was left to Ann who expressed her own thanks to the people and left them with a blessing.

As a final tribute, Ann, Frances and Lil were presented with gifts.

The congregation then followed the procession out to the parish hall where everyone continued to share



A *Holy Family* cake specially made for the occasion was cut by Ann, Lil and Frances.



The festivities were prolonged into the late hours.

It remains to say a heartfelt thanks and congratulations to the parishioners for this beautiful, imaginative liturgy, for the abundance of delicious food, the warm, welcoming atmosphere in church and parish centre.

None of this could have been achieved without the mutual collaboration and united efforts of all the parish groups, among whom the *Holy Family* Lay Associates were conspicuous.

We pray that the communion of heart and mind evidenced in this farewell ceremony may grow and flourish in the parish.

Síle McGowan



companionship with food, lovingly prepared by the parishioners. It was a time for joyous reunions with old friends as so many of the sisters who had worked in Moneenroe were able to be there.

## THE *HOLY FAMILY* SECULAR VOCATION

All of us are very familiar with the fact that there are five Vocations in the Family of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles. However, although we are very familiar with Lay Associate, Priest and Religious Vocations, we do not seem to have the same awareness of the Secular Vocation. Perhaps in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, when vocations to Religious Life are in decline, the age of the Secular Vocation has dawned.

As Apostolic Religious of the *Holy Family*, we have a pastoral role in the Association to make all the Vocations known. We do not want to “recruit vocations” but the Secular Vocation is so little known by people in general that it might be good to get to know a bit more about it ourselves in order to spread the good news. It could be that there are many

single women searching for a way to deepen and enrich their lives without having any attraction for community life. It would be a shame if they were deprived of this because we did not think of talking to them about our Secular Institute.

In order to be a member of the Secular Institute, a woman must be single – either unmarried or a widow. There is no lower age limit but it is not a vocation for very young women. Rather, it is for women who have decided that neither religious nor married life is for them but who still want to live a deep, meaningful and committed Christian life. There is no higher age limit either but the person entering must be flexible enough to change her lifestyle to a certain degree, to travel and to take part in occasional meetings.

Members of the Secular Institute make three vows of obedience, chastity and poverty. These vows are public in the sense that they are recognised by the Church but private in the sense that they are not made, for example, at a public Mass. They

are also lived in a very different way from the way Sisters live them. Members live in their own homes, usually alone, support themselves financially and make provision for their own future. They contribute to a general fund and pay for meeting expenses such as travel, accommodation etc. They make their vow of obedience in accordance with their



own Constitutions and live their vow of chastity as single women.

Their vocation is to promote and witness to Christian values quietly without being any different outwardly from anyone else – to be a leaven in society. Externally, their lives change very little when they make their commitment. There will be meetings they will have to attend from time to time. They have the great advantage, which many single women lack, of belonging to a group and having the support of others. Even when it is not physically possible to meet, they are in contact in various ways and are supported by having common reflections etc. and by being able to contact other members by phone and the social media.

When a woman is interested, she will have a contact period with a member of the Institute or a Sister who understands the Secular vocation, can explain it to her and help her to reflect on it in order to see if it for her. If she decides that she would like to join the Institute, she will have some years of formation according to her own

needs. Then she will make temporary vows for at least five years. Members of the Secular Institute do not make perpetual vows. When they are admitted definitively into the Institute, they receive permission to make vows that are “perpetually renewable”. This means that, although they always make vows for one year only, they do not have to request permission to do this every year. They just inform the General Leader that they have done so.

Probably one of the reasons we know so little about our Secular members is that, in the past, they could never tell anyone that they were members of an Institute or talk about their way of life. That “rule of discretion” has changed now and they are free to tell anyone they want about their commitment, or to keep it quiet if that is what they prefer. However, that is a personal decision for each Secular member and nobody else has the right to give out that information.

So, if you know anybody, or have any friends who you think would be interested in this way of life, please tell them about it. It is not a question of recruiting but of letting people know about the Vocation so that, at least, they have another option. If you would like more information, please do not hesitate to get in touch with either of us. Also, we both have some leaflets that you might like to have. They do not give a lot of information but just might awaken people’s interest and make them aware that such a Vocation exists.

At the moment, there are just over eighty members in the Institute worldwide. There are three members in Ireland and two in England. They would love to have more companions!

*Áine Hayde and Margaret Bradley*

[Holy Family Web link](#)

## BRIEF NEWS

**Tribute to Doreen Welsh, by her nephew, Alan, sent to Áine Hayde**

These words taken directly from his message sum it all up.

"My three cousins, Doreen's big brother Joe's daughters, Joan, Shirley and Louise said: "For as long as we can remember, Auntie Doreen has always been there. She was a constant figure in the Welsh family. Friendships came and went, people travelled far and wide ... but Auntie Doreen was always there. She was a warm and loving presence in our family. She was interesting, interested, articulate and could always be relied upon to tell us family stories which brought a smile to our faces or tears to our eyes. We wish we could have spent more time with her and shared our lives more with her."

Alan also expresses his gratitude to the Holy Family I these words:

"Finally, I must say thank you to all the Sisters of the *Holy Family* of Bordeaux for their warmth and hospitality on my many visits to different convents and, especially, I want to thank on behalf of the family the Sisters and the nursing staff here at Rock Ferry for the dignified and calm way in which they lovingly cared for Doreen in her final days, ensuring that she was comfortable and free from pain."

**NEW PRESIDENT OF THE LAY ASSOCIATES OF BRITAIN**

Margaret Ramsey (Rock Ferry Group)

7 Nelson Drive, Pensby, Wirrel

CH61 5UL

Tel: 0151 648 0183

Mobile: 07990600469

Email: [margyramsey@sky.com](mailto:margyramsey@sky.com)



## THE SACRAMENT OF LETTING GO

Slowly

She celebrated the sacrament of letting go...

First she surrendered her Green

Then the Orange, yellow, and Red...

Finally she let go of her Brown...

Shedding her last leaf

She stood empty and silent, stripped bare.

Leaning against the sky she began her vigil of trust...

Shedding her last leaf

She watched its journey to the ground...

She stood in silence,

Wearing the colour of emptiness

Her branches wondering:

How do you give shade, with so much gone?

And then, the sacrament of waiting began

The sunrise and sunset watched with

Tenderness, clothing her with silhouettes

They kept her hope alive.

They helped her understand that

her vulnerability

her dependence and need

her emptiness

her readiness to receive

were giving her a new kind of beauty.

Every morning and every evening she stood in silence

and celebrated

the sacrament of waiting.

Macrina Wiederkehr



Submitted by Gemma

## UPCOMING EVENTS

November 2016						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 All Saints Day	2 All Souls Day	3	4	5
6 *RENATE Assembly, Rome	7	8	9	10	11	12 End of RENATE Assembly
13	14	15 **Roots Team & God Alone Team meet in Rome	16 International Day for Tolerance	17	18	19
20 Universal Children's Day	21	22	23	24 Feast of St. Theophane Venard, Priest and prayer friend of the HF Team Meetings in Rome end	25 International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women	26
27	28	29	30			

### Participants from Britain and Ireland

\*RENATE: Marie Power, Síle McGowan

\*\*TEAMS Rome: Margaret Muldoon, Claire McGrath, Áine Hayde, Síle McGowan