

EDITORIAL

As many of us are now *cocooned*, we are finding ourselves with more time and quiet to read, reflect, and catch up all those little jobs we have been putting off. The present spell of lovely weather means we can sit and watch the earth awakening to new life, the buds waiting to burst into bloom on the trees, the spring flowers dancing in the wind, everything in nature doing what it is made to do.

It lifts the heart of those of us who have invited birds to our garden to hear the smaller ones twittering excitedly and watching them flitting from bush to seed container, pushing and jostling each other out of the way playfully, as it seems. It's not quite the same for the larger ones who are unable to feed from the container and have to be content with what the smaller birds scatter on the ground.

Mother Nature, the birds, know nothing of Covid-19, nor did we not so long ago. We cannot ignore it, nor should we even try, neither while it lasts nor when it ends. Now, we act responsibly doing what we are asked to do by the proper authorities. After Covid-19 the world has to be different in every way. How can each of us contribute to bringing this about?

For us, *Holy Family* members, perhaps this is a time to do what our Founder exhorted us to do: "*Go often in spirit to Nazareth*". There, we can find peace and freedom from fear and say confidently with the psalmist:

For God alone my soul waits in silence;
from God comes my salvation.
God alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall never be shaken. (Ps. 62)

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Creative Beginnings

In this season of Resurrection, new life and the celebration of our bi-centenary it seems appropriate to look again at the creative beginnings of our Association. Inspiration for this article has come mainly from a study of Mother Rita (Emmanuel) Bonnat's *'Memories of Martillac.'* 1862. Reflection on this book opened my eyes to the poverty and struggles of our ancestors in the Association. My particular aim is not to list their virtues but to highlight the use they made of their God-given creativity.

Mother Bonnat tells us how the dry, arid soil that surrounded the out-houses and the house proper was used to grow *"very good vegetables and excellent strawberries, peach trees, pear trees and several types of plum trees"* (p 22). With all his creative skill, powers of negotiating and organisation Fr. Noailles gradually added to and restructured the property. He provided his followers with the opportunity to use their initiative and to reach out unstintingly to meet the needs of their time.

This was the original spirit of the Association and Mother Bonnat begged that it might be maintained. *"When the works began"*, she tells us, *"the Sisters had nothing and couldn't hope for anything. They were so deprived of even the necessities of life... they slept little and worked hard but they also knew how to suffer and pray. Their houses were very poor as were their clothes and food"* (p 29). But, through creative new ways they generated their own resources, gathered friends and benefactors around them and really appreciated the smallest gift from Providence.

The Association took root and in the first eleven years it spread rapidly due in part to the zeal and incredible foresight of Fr. Noailles. He knew how to consult and delegate. When it came to carrying out a decision he had the habit of saying to his Sisters, *"This concerns*

you. Do what you think best. I leave it to you" (p 33). He trusted them to use their creative potential responsibly.

In 1831, when the novitiate of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception moved to Martillac, they had no resources. They needed money to meet the needs of the establishment so they set about making brooms from heather, packaging couch grass and selling bundles of firewood. When these ventures didn't succeed long-term, they took on more productive types of agricultural work.



Guided by Fr. Noailles, pine trees were sown, fruit trees planted, vines pruned and land cultivated. *"Four cows were bought and the cows' milk was sold. There was even an attempt to turn this into a kind of business buying milk and selling it on"* (p 42). *Manual and farm work expanded to include classes to form teachers capable of teaching children well"*(p 43).

At the same time Sisters went to work with the poor, the sick and all those in any kind of need; everywhere and anywhere they were reaching out. Their zeal to do good was boundless; their deep faith and healing powers remarkable, leading in some cases to conversions.

"They taught themselves a kind of pharmacology, consisting mainly of medicinal plants, which they gathered around the place." (p 37) And they worked out cures for so many different ills - sore throats, fevers, stomach and lung problems. It was quite amazing what they achieved through the use of herbs and their innate creativity! At the same time they were touching the hearts of the people to whom they ministered. And their ministry was backed up in community by prayer and mortification.

All this time the property itself continued to grow. Reading through the account of his dream (pp 47-50)

one is tempted to say, *was not this a nightmare!* But, with great courage Fr. Noailles was determined to bring this exciting, extraordinary, 'nightmarish' dream, this '*wild impracticable dream*' (p 168) to fruition in spite of intrusive, personal cancer that at times sapped his energy and brought him to the point of death.

In 1833 the old chapel in Saintonge Street was replaced by a new one on the same site "*for Providence had sent some money*" (p 67). In this year too, the cemetery was opened in Martillac and the Mother House in Bordeaux was established in Martillac in September, 1834. Always and everywhere, Fr. Noailles was planning ahead. His ideas were being implemented and he knew how to value and use the ideas of others to effect (pp 153, 156-158).

From the beginning he had the idea of creating a 'leadership team'- the Sisters of God Alone - who would support and help him, (without reservation), to carry out his plans. What was expected of them seemed humanly impossible (pp 96-98) and again(pp 102-105), but these creative women were never to be deterred!

When Fr. Noailles was afraid of the expense and debts that would be incurred to build a chapel on the Island of all Graces, for example, Mother Eugene de Saint Pierre Machet and Mother Emmanuel Bonnat asked if they could pay for the first two bricks! Their combined creativity was surely a stroke of genius.

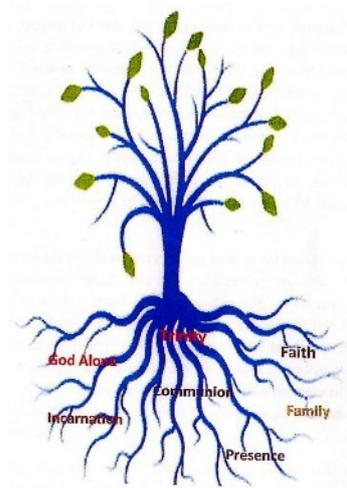
Their manuscripts were sold to the Catholic Library of Lille for the sum of five hundred francs and the building of the little chapel was begun!



Fr. Noailles wanted to honour the Holy Family by means of a special devotion and to celebrate the main events which Jesus, Mary and Joseph were involved in together on this earth. It would be the work of his followers to complete this creative idea. Members of the Association worked together to provide the necessary funding and to-day this 'Pilgrimage' is beautifully completed in ceramics.

When the works were expanding and leadership was required in Spain, Mother Bonnat was sent there. With courage and generosity she set off to plant the *Holy Family* 'seed' in unknown territory. Often too, she would pour out her soul in spontaneous song and verse as in the song for Melanie, (p 163). Indeed, '*Memories of Martillac*' oozes with examples of the creativity of our *Holy Family* ancestors who took the risk to develop a thought, a dream in a new way and bring it to birth. Not only did this require great skill, clear vision, courage, perseverance and belief in oneself but, more especially, trust in the One who has given all.

Margaret Bradley



SOME HISTORY

A Desire Realised

Foundation of the Hope (Nursing) Sisters in Britain and Ireland

When Archbishop Manning of Westminster wanted a religious community to care for the sick in his diocese, letters from Archbishop Donnet of Bordeaux and Archbishop Guibert of Paris, strongly recommended the sisters of the *Holy Family*.

So it was that three sisters from France were welcomed by him to Kilburn, a parish run by the Oblate Fathers. They arrived on 17 November 1877. It was a touching coincidence that their first patient, a small child, arrived on Christmas Eve.

Thereafter, more patients and residents arrived and reinforcements were required.

In 1917, sisters from Kilburn established a similar house in Eastbourne, called *Espérance*. It was wartime and the British government chose it as a nursing home for their wounded army officers. Thereafter, it became a thriving hospital and Nursing Home.

1939 and 1940 saw two other Hope houses founded in Cinderford and Cambridge.



Back view of Eastbourne Nursing Home



In 1945, the *Holy Family* sisters were asked by the Local Council to take over the running of the County Hospital in Portlaoise, Ireland. Under the direction of the *Holy Family* sisters and



First County Hospital, Portlaoise



the Health Service it gradually expanded to become the Midlands Regional Hospital. The last sister to work there, Sr. Lil Meagher, retired in 2011.

From very modest beginnings the sisters gradually built up prestigious hospitals with excellent health care facilities, all imbued with the *Holy Family* ethos.

A DESIRE REALISED FOUNDATIONS OF THE NURSING (HOPE) SISTERS

ENGLAND	KILBURN	1877
	EASTBOURNE (ESPERANCE)	1917
	CINDERFORD	1939
	CAMBRIDGE	1940
IRELAND	PORTLAOISE	1945

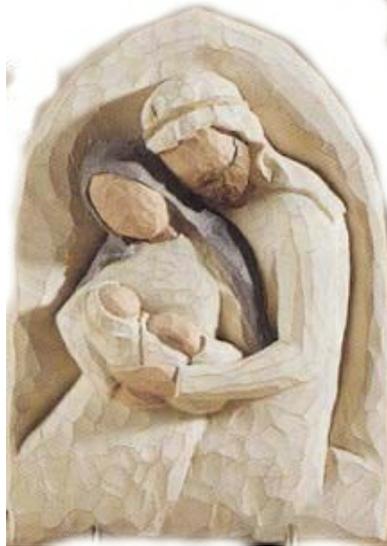
WHY WE CAN STILL CELEBRATE *QUASIMODO* SUNDAY

When we see *Quasimodo* Sunday (the Second Sunday of Easter) on our list of *Holy Family* Feasts, we sometimes wonder why we still consider it a feast. In our Founder's time, *Quasimodo* Sunday was the day on which the feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph was celebrated in the diocese of Bordeaux. However, that is no longer the case and the feast is now normally celebrated on the first Sunday after Christmas Day all over the world.

Our Founder liked to have a scriptural basis or reference for everything. (For example, the scriptural basis for the Spirit of God Alone is, "Seek first the reign of God".) And it was the first part of the Gospel for what was then the Feast of the Holy Family that gave our Founder the scriptural basis for both our foundation and our mission. That same gospel is still read every year on the second Sunday of Easter.

From his homily notes, we see that our Founder read the first part of the Gospel in the light of the Feast of the Holy Family, and saw in it the story of the foundation and the mission of the *Holy Family*. He made the comparison between the apparition of Jesus to the frightened apostles hidden in a room and the Miraculous Benediction when Jesus appeared in the monstrance to a small number of poor and vulnerable women hidden in a humble dwelling

in the first years of the foundation of the *Holy Family*. Jesus blessed the two groups. Both were reassured by the apparitions, and given confidence to move forward through the peace they received. It was a turning point for all of them.



Fr. Noailles saw the mission of the *Holy Family* mirrored in the mission of Jesus and the apostles, "As the Father sent me so I also send you." (and he added a quotation from another Gospel, "Go teach all nations.") He reflected that as Jesus was sent not just for the salvation of a few but for the salvation of everyone, so too, the members of the *Holy Family* are sent not for one particular apostolate but for a variety, and not for any one section of society but for all.

So even though we no longer celebrate the feast of the Holy Family on *Quasimodo* Sunday, perhaps we could re-read the story of our origins on that day, celebrate and give thanks for our foundation and mission and meditate on the Gospel in which our Founder saw them both reflected. It would be especially significant to do that this year as we celebrate our bi-centenary. We could also consider using the relevant part of the Gospel (Jn 20: 19-21) for Mass on whatever day we are having the celebration.

Áine Hayde

First *Holy Family* Lay Members in Skelmersdale

The first parishioners to make their commitment as *Holy Family* Lay Members in Skelmersdale - Dolores, Eileen, Agnes, Jeanette and Delia - recently celebrated 25 years as members. They were presented with their certificates.

There had been nine altogether. Sadly, over the years members have passed away. They are fondly remembered within our group, how they came together when Sr Monica RIP started the group and introduced the family of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles.



There was no going back as the group grew. We have had up to thirty members, all with different talents and skills who have worked through the challenges of change within the Family thanks to Sr Monica RIP who gave us a good grounding and gradually let us take the reins.

Our confidence grew and we like to think of ourselves as a strong progressive group. Even though we have fewer members attending due to illness or age, we keep going within the spirit of the *Holy Family* of PBN.

Marilyn Sutemire, Group Leader Skelmersdale

HOLY FAMILY LAY MEMBERS COMMITTEE MEETING - IRELAND

On March 7th a Lay Members Committee Meeting was held in Clane Convent. All the members were present, including Maria McLernon and Christine Hegarty who travelled the long distance from Draperstown, Co Derry, and those nearer home, Brigid Larkin and Geraldine Tougher from Newbridge, and Rose Sullivan and Bernadette Deegan from Clane. We obviously had our meeting just before the Covid-19 virus took over the hearts and minds of everyone.



Annual Assembly which we hope will take place on 19th September in Newbridge Secondary School. Of course, all our plans now seem to be a little bit surreal as day after day we are faced with the mounting numbers of coronavirus cases. At this stage we can't say if either of these events will take place.

All we can say is that whatever happens we believe and trust that God will protect and take care, in God's own way, of each one of the members of the Family of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles.

Our main topics for discussion were our planned Bicentenary Pilgrimage to Knock on 7th June and our

Bernadette Deegan and Rose Sullivan

CELEBRATING THE 3rd FEBRUARY



Monstrance used on
3 February 1820

"You have seen the Lord..."

said the priest whom Fr. Noailles asked to give Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament to the Holy Family community at Mazarin Street, Bordeaux, France, on 3 February 1822.

In this year of our Bicentenary, we had a very prayerful celebration of the Miraculous Benediction.

In true *Holy Family* style, this beautiful celebration was followed by after-noon tea and a time of joyful sharing.



Groups of Lay Associates from Clane, Portlaoise, Moneenroe, Newbridge gathered with the Clane community. Three people from Straffan, who are not Lay Members, also joined us.



We spent time in silent Adoration interspersed with Hymns, and reflections from the life of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles. At the end of the adoration Fr. Jacob blessed each person with the Blessed Sacrament. It was a touching moment which brought tears of joy and communion.



Sr. Lil Meagher, Clane Community

GO FORWARD

A Re-enactment the Miraculous Benediction 1822

We have always celebrated our monthly meeting in February with a special service. The last few years we have used the white booklet by Sr Claudine Ferrier with the testimonies of those who were there and made it part of our service, I would recommend where possible to try this; if not in February, use it for a meeting but I would like to emphasise how spiritual and meaningful it enhances our benediction.

We start with the exposition of the blessed sacrament and then some readings, possibly of the day, then each member has the opportunity to read a testimonial from the book - members who read say that the testimonials become more meaningful as they read them aloud to the congregation. Our church takes on an aura of the presence.

Paul Rowen, who is our parish master of ceremonies, leads our benediction. It is always a beautiful service and he closes it with the blessing of La Solitude.

This re-enactment is always as fresh as the day it took place. It is a blessing on the *Holy Family* by Jesus himself. It gives an impetus to all the five vocations of the *Holy Family* of Bordeaux to our spirit of God Alone and the spirit of Fr Noailles, the Good Father, is among us. His writings are just as important today as when he first wrote them.

Let us all continue our work in the sure knowledge that the Lord is with us.

***Marilyn Sutemire and Denis Perrin
Skelmersdale Lay Members***



Our Lady

by Mary Coleridge,

(a Victorian descendent of Samuel Taylor Coleridge)

Mother of God! No lady thou
Common woman of common earth
Our Lady ladies call thee now
But Christ was never of gentle birth
A common man of the common earth.

For God's ways are not our ways:
The noblest lady in the land
Would have given up half her days,
Would have cut off her right hand
To bear the child that was God of the land

Never a lady did he choose,
Only a maid of low degree,
So humble she might not refuse
The carpenter of Galilee:
A daughter of the people she.

Out she sang the song of her heart.
Never a lady so had sung.
She knew no letters, had no art;
To all mankind in woman's tongue,
Has Isrealitish Mary sung.

And still for men to come she sings,
Nor shall her singing pass away.
'He hath filled the hungry with good things' –
O listen lords and ladies gay! -
'And the rich he hath sent empty away'



Submitted by Mary Barnes of the Netherfield, Milton Keynes Lay Members group with the comment:
This poem, though not great poetry, seemed to reflect the essence of the Holy Family
in that Jesus, Mary and Joseph were very much an ordinary struggling family like ourselves.

After the notices at the end of Mass, a priest gave these quotes about the coronavirus:

'Stay calm and don't lose your head' - John the Baptist

Wash your hands often' – Pontius Pilate

'Avoid greeting people with a hug and a kiss' – Judas

'This is not the apocalypse' – St John the Evangelist

'Don't touch your eyes nose, mouth or any open wounds' - St Thomas the Apostle

'Pets and other animals cannot spread this disease' – St Francis of Assisi

Also from Mary

REFLECTIONS INSPIRED BY COVID -19

PANDEMIC

What if you thought of it
as the Jews consider the Sabbath—
the most sacred of times?
Cease from travel.
Cease from buying and selling.
Give up, just for now,
on trying to make the world
different than it is.
Sing. Pray. Touch only those
to whom you commit your life.
Center down.

And when your body has become still,
reach out with your heart.
Know that we are connected
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.
(You could hardly deny it now.)
Know that our lives
are in one another's hands.
(Surely, that has come clear.)
Do not reach out your hands.
Reach out your heart.
Reach out your words.
Reach out all the tendrils
of compassion that move, invisibly,
where we cannot touch.

Promise this world your love—
for better or for worse,
in sickness and in health,
so long as we all shall live.

Lynn Ungar
16/3/2020

Submitted by Gemma Corbett

To know more about Lynn Ungar and her poetry, visit her on this
website <https://www.uua.org/offices/people/lynn-ungar>
and her [Facebook](#)

The Challenge of Corona

We were flying to the Moon
 We were finding life on Mars
 We were dropping bombs with drones
 We were getting bigger cars.

We were building finer homes
 Flying out to warmer lands
 We were busy buying clothes
 We were brushing up our tans.

We were throwing out good food
 While we watched the starving poor
 We kept burning fossil fuels
 And our air became less pure.

We were warned by our Pope
 Need to mind our Common Home
 Need to watch our Carbon Footprint
 Try to save our world from doom.

But we didn't want to listen
 And we didn't want to hear
 We just watched TV and Tablets
 Drank our wine and quaffed our beer.

Then Corona chose to visit
 We were all caught unprepared
 This wee microscopic VIRUS
 Has our whole world running scared.

So our hands we keep on washing
 And we're careful when we cough
 We stand six feet from our neighbour
 Cause this virus might jump off.

Now we live in isolation
 While our hearts are full of fear
 And we fill our fridge and cupboards
 Just in case it lasts a year.

Pubs and cafes are forbidden
 And we dare not go to Mass
 Nursing homes we must not visit
 Hospitals we have to pass.

But this enforced isolation
 Gives us lots of time to think
 Time to clean the kitchen cupboards
 Time to make our wardrobes shrink.

Could it be that this Corona
 Is a blessing in disguise
 Makes us think about our lifestyle
 Makes us open wide our eyes.

We thought we were all important
 Greatest beings on this earth
 So we used it and abused it
 As if it were ours from birth.

But Corona is a challenge
 Makes us take a different view
 Helps us see what really matters
 What it is we need to do.

We must watch out for our neighbour
 Doing everything we can
 We are all in this together
 Let us love our fellow man.

God is with us every moment
 Minding us with loving care
 Now we know how much we need Him
 Let us talk to Him in prayer.

So Corona, thanks for coming
 Truth to tell, we needed you
 But don't overstay your welcome
 That, alas, would never do.

Sister Maud Murphy SSL (Knock, Ireland)



Sabbath Space

Wash and Pray!

It's a bit disconcerting for sure, this coronavirus. Some are stocking up with gels, extra food, masks, and strategizing for all sorts of threats. Many are having conversations based on 'what if'. We are rehearsing how to stay a couple of metres away from each other, how to prepare for self-isolating, how to refrain from hugs, handshakes etc. Everyone has their own reaction, but three things seem to be coming through as we chat about it here in our Ruah, Community;

- (1) *No matter how we 'stock up', or armour up, we are connecting with our underlying vulnerability.*
- (2) *We are discovering we are not gods and masters and we cannot control everything.*
- (3) *We all impact on one another, we cannot just look after number one and wash our hands (literally) of everyone else.*

Author, and psychiatrist, Gerald G. May, in his book 'Will and Spirit', tells us that 'we are so intimately joined in Divine Mystery that when a single one of us falls, we are all wounded. And when a single one breathes freely and opens to the exquisitely painful ecstasy of love, we are all nourished'. Whether the one 'that falls' is a human being, an animal or tree, whether we hear it echoing in our neighbourhood, or from a far off place through the newspaper or television, it is part of our family. Our circle of care must extend to all because at the very heart of the universe is the movement of inter-relational energy

Researchers in quantum physics and science agree that the universe is an interconnected system, all part of each other, and all related. It recognizes that essentially we are all one; held together by 'invisible chords'. In Laudato Si we learn 'Everything is related and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures.....

Seeing as washing our hands will be something we do with great care and precision for the next while, perhaps we could introduce this simple prayer, which extends our care and concern for all our brothers and sisters. It will take about the same time as it takes to wash your hands, so perhaps you could place it near the sink somewhere. Also, feel free to pass on to others so we can all send a ripple of healing and blessing, rather than just focusing on stocking up and catastrophizing

*May Nations and Neighbours work together at this time.
May fear be calmed and illness cured.
May the most vulnerable be safe and comforted
May we know we are all one,
connected in the web of life, through love,
Held and Healed through Christ.*

Amen.

AND THE PEOPLE STAYED HOME

And the people stayed home. And read books, and listened, and rested, and exercised, and made art, and played games, and learned new ways of being, and were still. And listened more deeply.

Some meditated, some prayed, some danced. Some met their shadows.

And the people began to think differently. And the people healed.

And, in the absence of people living in ignorant, dangerous, mindless, and heartless ways, the earth began to heal.

And when the danger passed, and the people joined together again, they grieved their losses, and made new choices, and dreamed new images, and created new ways to live and heal the earth fully, as they had been healed.

Kathleen (Kitty) O'Meara (16 March 2020)

For more about Kathleen O'Meara click [here](#)



Sr. Cathy O'Gorman, (Unit of South Africa) celebrated her birthday with the Clane community on Sunday, 29 March.

Congratulations, Cathy!

UPCOMING EVENTS

April 2020						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
				World Autism awareness Day		
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Palm Sunday		World Health Day		Foundation of the Sisters of Hope 1836		
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Easter Sunday	Foundation of the Agricole Sisters 1856					
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Quasimodo Sunday (Seen by our Founder as giving the scriptural basis for our foundation and mission)			Earth Day	St. George Patron of England		
26	27	28	29	30		
				Canonical Erection of the Association 1831		