

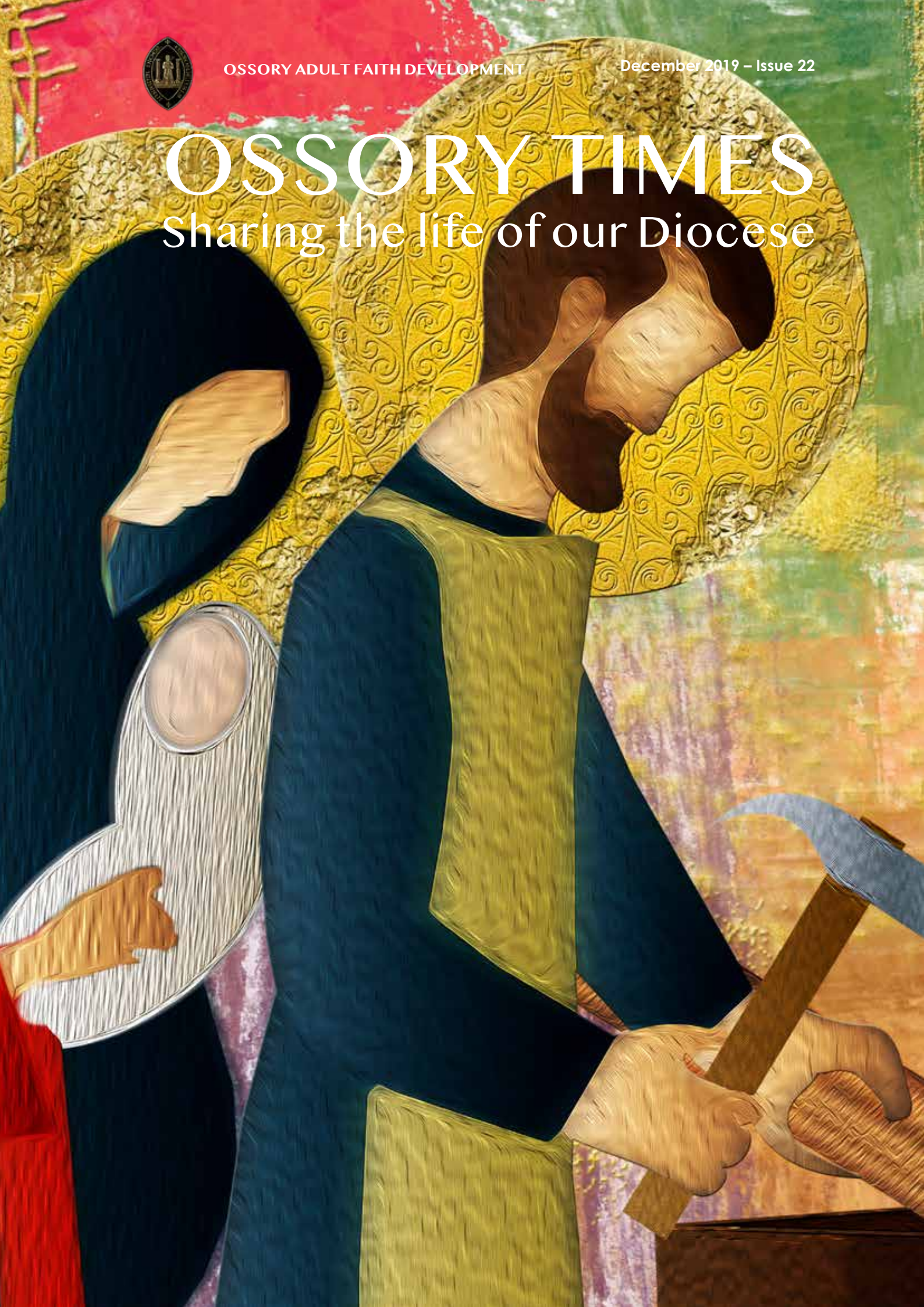


OSSORY ADULT FAITH DEVELOPMENT

December 2019 – Issue 22

OSSORY TIMES

Sharing the life of our Diocese



AIM HIGH

Diocese of Ossory

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DEAR YOUNG PEOPLE,
THE CHURCH EXPECTS
GREAT THINGS
OF YOU AND YOUR
GENEROSITY,
DON'T BE AFRAID TO
AIM HIGH

Pope Francis

Editorial

I like Christmas. It might not be surprising given that I am a person of faith and Christmas is such a seminal moment of that faith. However, more important than this obvious reason for why it interests me is the fact that I am fascinated with the many aspects of what it can teach us. One thing, among many, that strikes me is how the greatness of God was willing to be humble enough to become the littleness of an infant and, conversely, how the littleness of this infant then had then the capacity to become the greatness of God. Not a bad realisation for us as a people of faith today. We too walk humbly with that faith, we are all too well aware of our own personal and collective limitations as a people of faith and a church community; but equally we walk confidently knowing that with that faith, and with God at our side, our potential is endless.

This edition of the *Ossory Times*, as normal, offers an insight into some various elements of the life of our Diocese. Alone, or individually, they are but human and humble attempts to find expression for our faith but collectively they are the life story of our Diocese - a vibrant community, that helps each other on the journey towards God. How wonderful it is to see all, then, that we can do together. It is the story between the pages of the training for choirs, our reflecting on the possibilities of pastoral areas, our taking local pilgrimages, our thinking about *Laudato Si'*, our reflecting on history, Pope Francis' reflecting on the crib or Bishop Dermot's Christmas message and so much more, that is the wonderful life of our faith - the Good News that we believe and humbly put flesh on. In our collective littleness, then, we can see glimpses of the greatness that is possible.

Welcome to the latest edition of the *Ossory Times*. As always I hope you enjoy this publication. Comments, suggestions and contributions are most welcome for future editions. Articles or advertisements for upcoming events or of recent events, can be sent to:

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Christmas: No Refuge from Reality

Bishop Dermot Farrell
A Christmas Message 2019

The Birth of Jesus is Not Charming Folktale
“The birth of Jesus is not a fairy tale!” (Pope Francis). Listen to the precision with which Saint Luke tells the story of a real event which happened in Bethlehem over two thousand years ago: “Caesar Augustus issued a decree for a census of the whole world to be taken. This census—the first—took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria, and everyone went to his own town to be registered” (Lk 2:1). Saint Luke is recounting real history, not telling a charming children’s story. We sing “Joy to the World” because of the Good News of Christmas first announced by angels to shepherds who were going about their normal work: “I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people. Today in the town of David a saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord” (Lk 2:10-11). The simple joy of Christmas captures the meaning of Christmas.

God’s Grace Can Work Even with People like Us

Because Jesus, the eternal Son of God, truly and quietly entered our world as a

simple child in a small, forgotten outpost of the Roman Empire, then God had, not only a mother, but also a grandmother, cousins, great-aunts, and some in his family tree were caught up in the perennial passions of sex and politics. In Christ Jesus, God has become like us in all things, but sin. We are reminded that he was part of a family that, like most, was somewhat dysfunctional, a mix of the good and bad, the saintly and the sinful, the glorious and the not so glorious. And what good news this is for us! It ought to give us encouragement and hope about our destiny and importance. It means that God can bring the Christ to birth even in people like us.

God So Loved You and Me He Sent His Only Son

What the first Christians sensed in the baby Jesus, his words, his life, and his death was God communicating to them how much they were loved. St John’s Gospel distils the meaning into one sentence: “God so loved the world that he sent his only Son.” Christmas says, “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8, 16). “O Holy Night” has it right:

our times, our lives of repetitious nights and days can be 'holy,' too, because God will never allow us or the world he recreated that night to fall from his love and grace. The third Preface at the Mass for Christmas expresses it thus, "when our frailty is assumed by your Word not only does human mortality receive unending honour but by this wondrous union, we, too, are made eternal." God assumed our human nature in order to give us his divine nature (see 2 Pet 1:4). The meaning of Christmas is God among us in Jesus Christ who shows us at same time, what we should look like in the presence of God. We are saved by being lifted up to a share in the divine life, not by raising ourselves. Nobody saves themselves. Not even Jesus.

Christ is no Longer a Romanticised Child

The Christmas crib does well to remind us of the birth of the baby Jesus. But Christmas will be somewhat deceptive if it fails to tell you that Christ is no longer a child, that Bethlehem was a prelude to Calvary and Easter. The Christ of the first Christmas is no longer a child; he has grown up; he has risen from the dead. But his place is taken, the manger is filled, by other Christs. What will I see when I kneel before the Christmas crib? It is no longer the romanticised Bethlehem's Child that is enfolded in Mary's arms. Is it an infant with a life-limiting condition who will never really grow up; is it a child trafficked and abused; a teenager trapped in the nightmare of emergency accommodation for the homeless; a face of a tormented Christ abandoned in a refugee camp; a coloured Christ bloated from hunger, eyes empty of hope. Perhaps the crib is empty, because an unborn child was not allowed to reach it. The Good News is that, because of God's intervention, there is hope for all of them. The need continues for all believers to bring hope in the midst of despair for the hurt and bewildered. We have a need to find God and be found by our God in the realities and sufferings that make our human lives.

Does what I have said about the true meaning of Christmas disturb us more than console us? Only if Christmas is a refuge from reality. The Christmas story is neither comfortable nor cosy. The birth of Jesus "does not provide us with a ladder by which to escape the ambiguities of life and scale the heights of heaven. Rather it enables us to burrow deep into the heart of planet Earth and find it shimmering with divinity" (Cardinal Avery Dulles). How do we link together this challenging mission with the meek and gentle Jesus, born a baby in Nazareth? Or the angels on Christmas morning who announced Jesus as the prince of peace? When the Word of God took on our human condition, it was for the good of a universal human community.

Our Life is a Landscape Where God is Seen

Christmas calls for conversion, a fresh turning to God not simply from the age-old list of sins that stamp us as children of Eve and Adam, but from the blindness and lack awareness that keep us from seeing the image of God in each person — in each refugee, in the helpless stranger in our midst, as well as neighbours and the people who share our homes. The God who takes flesh in Jesus comes to "save his people from their sins" (see Matt 1:21). Concretely put: salvation is more than knowledge and more than forgiveness and compassion, as magnificent as these great gifts are. To be saved is to live like God and love like God. It is not enough to say the right things. It is our actions that make God real in our world today; and we do this in particular today, when we bring the light of Christ into the dark places of homelessness and poverty, racism, intolerance, discrimination and violence which are unacceptable and an affront to the Gospel. May we be Emmanuel, God-with-us, in the values we hold, the generosity we exhibit by opening our lives, our hearts, our communities and our economies to strangers fleeing persecution and war. Our world, our society, our local place needs an

ongoing engagement—an engagement beyond the comfortable associations of our language, culture and social class. As Jesus reminded his disciples in vivid language we must go beyond loyalties to family and friends (see Mark 3:31-35; Matt 12:46-50 and Luke 8:19-21). In our times, if we only think of family and local community loyalties, we are back in the world of fear and suspicion, fear of the other, fear of the stranger. “Our lives are a landscape in which God is seen” (see, Cardinal José Tolentino Mendonça, *The Hidden Treasure*, Chapter 6) — the God whose love unlocks ours and casts out all fear. May the coming Prince of Light drive away all darkness this Christmas, may he melt the hardness of hearts, and fill our lives with his hope.

Christmas Challenges Us

Martin Luther King Jr. summed up his life’s purpose during the famous “I Have a Dream” speech in 1963. We too should have a dream. Is it too much to ask that between now and the end

of the Christmas season each of us will look into the eyes of one child, a single child abused or neglected, homeless or hungry, unloved or unwanted, be moved to anguish at the experience, and resolve to change that child’s life, give him or her a tiny but real hope that tomorrow will be different, worth living for, worth waiting for. One child. But in that one child... always the Christ Child.

In this holy season of Christmas, let our hearts, filled with gratitude, also be filled with generosity and love, particularly for those among us who are forsaken and vulnerable. Let us share with others the joy of the Gospel that we have received, and in doing so, cast the radiant light of Christ into the shadows of this world, announcing to all the grace and peace that comes with the revelation of the true and only King.

May the blessings brought into the world by the Christ Child be with you today and throughout the New Year.



Adult Faith Development

Ministers of the Word Evenings

Fr Jim Murphy leads an evening of reflection, on 4th December, on the importance of scripture to our lives of faith with Ministers of the Word from our parishes.



ever think of priesthood



?



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contact Fr Kieran O' Shea 086 8272828 / vocations@ossory.ie

"there are no four ways nor is there any one way"

Pastoral areas - the possibilities

Dermot Ryan



For the past number of years we have been reflecting in Ossory on how best we can continue to serve each other and the Gospel in the context in which we now find ourselves. There has been a growing awareness that the current model of church was not sustainable. In recent months this awareness, and these reflections, have intensified. Bishop Dermot traveled to all the parishes and in dialogue with the people and priests and with the particular help of the Ossory Diocesan Pastoral Council and the Council of Priests Ossory has now moved to embrace pastoral areas. We have, then, grouped our forty two parishes into smaller clusters of three or four parishes to work together, bringing us to the new reality of thirteen such pastoral groupings in our diocese. This was good work, and the fruit of much dialogue, but there is an awareness that this was only the beginning. Simply putting parishes together is of itself of no advantage; it is

only when these new units see themselves collaborating together in the service of the Gospel that the fruits of this work will be seen.

On October 26th, then, the Adult Faith Development Group held a morning in St Kieran's College for people from all of our parishes and as such these new pastoral areas. It was an opportunity to come together to continue the dialogue but, now, also to frame that dialogue in a new way - to focus on what we can do together. The morning "Pastoral Areas - the Possibilities" offered us exactly that opportunity. Bishop Dermot welcomed everyone to the College Chapel and noted that "today is another step or stage on the faith journey of the Diocese.... We are a pilgrim people walking together, trying to find a way by communal discernment. Our priorities will inform our policy goals", he noted, "there are no four ways nor is there any one way. Pastoral



areas are about working together in a flexible way". In doing so Bishop Dermot set the tone for the gathering which saw Fr Albert McDonnell, Ms Maureen Kelly and Fr Ger Nash of Killaloe Diocese and Ms Frances Rowland of Kerry Diocese share their experiences of pastoral areas.

Their diocese are, without question, further along this road and their ability to share reflections on what has worked, and what has not, was most interesting. Each of them, from their own perspective, reflected on the journey they have taken and the possibilities that they have explored. Their pastoral areas have tried so many different ways of working together: funeral ministry led by lay people; many other lay led liturgies; training for ministry; training for catechists; baptismal teams, marriage teams, uniting parishes for some special liturgical celebrations, pilgrimages and so much more. It was, then, quickly evident

that Bishop Dermot's opening remark "there are no four ways nor is there any one way" was especially true. Each of the speakers, time and time again, noted that theirs was an experience of trial and error - some things worked and others died off. But all of the speakers shared the same enthusiasm for the merits of this work - a work which has seen many green shoots of new life in their diocese; new beginnings and a new energy for working together to bring the faith to life.

This was an important gathering in that all who attended the College had a real sense of what might now be possible in our new pastoral areas. By no means were there answers to every question, in fact there were not many questions - but rather a growing realisation that our coming together is just the beginning. It is now that the real fun begins.



Speaking notes of Bishop Dermot Farrell at the Conference on Pastoral Areas the Possibilities

26th October 2019

INTRODUCTION

My first words are one of gratitude for the gathering here this morning to further our discernment about the newly created pastoral areas. Today is another step or stage on the faith journey of the Diocese. There are as many approaches to the pastoral challenges we are confronting, as there are situations. We are a pilgrim people walking together, trying to find a way by communal discernment. Our priorities will inform our policy goals. There are no four ways nor is there any one way. Pastoral areas are about working together in a flexible way.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

We need to make necessary changes for the present time which will strengthen our parishes and diocese for future generations. Adjustment and change is required to meet the continuing needs and challenges of a changing cultural

and religious situation of the present-day Diocese of Ossory. I have often used the image of pruning for growth. If the rose is not pruned in the spring, we will get a very poor return of blossoms in the summer. We have to organise the priests and people in the best way possible for the good of the faith life of our Diocese. For now, it is a sustainable plan. As circumstances change, however, we must be ready to adapt to them as we are doing now.

We have to look at the whole diocese as a single Church rather than a parochial approach, if we are to continue to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ into every human situation and continue to teach people to pray. We can no longer restrict our decisions to individual parishes. We have to use our God-given gifts to evangelise people, rather than being narrowly focused on territorial boundaries or individual parish buildings.

It is important that we now understand that when the priest in a parish retires, or dies, he may not be replaced by a resident priest. It will not be possible to maintain the status quo. The Pastoral areas allow for planning and preparation for the future. By having a plan, we will at least know what is intended to happen as circumstances change.

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

We need to go beyond the mind that we have. How our minds are conditioned by the past! How our expectations are shaped, stunted by what has gone before. If we live in that sort of enclosed environment we suffocate the work of the Spirit who is at work in the church. The 'world' of last 60 or 70 years has shaped our religious imagination. It's time for a new mind, a new set of eyes, a new kind of expectation. God is acting in our world! We need to heed the voice of the Spirit of God so as to hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church. The Church cannot worry itself to death about the survival of its structures rather than aspiring to announce the Christian message with greater impact and freshness always and everywhere and notwithstanding anything. This is what Pope Francis means when he says we need to be a missionary Church. If our only concern is to maintain structures which have existed for hundreds of years, the situation is tragic. Furthermore, plugging the holes by 'importing' priests from abroad will never solve the fundamental problem we face in the Church. Every baptised person needs to live the experience of faith in our parishes.

PASTORAL OPTIMISM

Sometimes parishes need overcome the temptation of any self-referential enclosure, or a self-absorbed group made up of a chosen few. Furthermore, we need to rid ourselves of any form of pastoral pessimism, in order to open ourselves to the joyful novelty of the Gospel. We should not be pessimistic because, in general, there is a vibrant

appreciation of the religious dimension of human life, which extends to the life of faith. This is confirmed most particularly in the local Church by extraordinary commitment to ordinary parish life, and most generally in those Catholics who reside on the borderlands of the Church, with no institutional identification, as an appreciation of 'spirituality,' understood as openness to religious values and even experience. Here one thinks of Pope Francis polyhedral approach to the universality of the Church. He writes in *Evangelii Gaudium*, "here our model is... the polyhedron, which reflects the convergence of all its parts, each of which preserves its distinctiveness.. it is the sum total of person within a society which pursues the common good, which truly has a place for everyone" (no. 236). There is much that witnesses to an active, engaged, and creative life of faith in every parish of this Diocese. This is reflected, for example, in real engagement in parish communities, in activity directed at overcoming social inequality and injustice, and in generous responses to charitable causes on a local and global scale.

We definitely have less priests than heretofore, but there is also a clear diminution in the numbers, who regularly attend the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist, coupled with a not inconsiderable decline in the numbers, who seek baptism, marriage, and ordination, and we have inherited too many churches for our current needs.

PARTICIPATION OF THE LAITY

A central task in this new situation is enabling the increased participation of lay people in the active mission of the Church. The lay faithful receive their mission in the Church from Christ, through the Sacrament of Baptism, not by delegation from the ordained. The presence and action of the laity in some contexts and circumstances is irreplaceable which is comes to evangelisation. Consequently, priests

are to recognise this reality and promote the specific role of the lay faithful, thus ensuring that the faithful feel themselves part of the communion of the Church and that they are actively involved in the life and mission of the Parish.

Last Sunday was Mission Sunday. Mission is vital for the life of the Church. It reminded us that every baptised man and woman is a mission. These words are challenging. But they are true. The heightened awareness since Vatican II of the inherent dignity and responsibility of all the baptised means that ordained ministry can be exercised increasingly in a collaborative spirit that enables all members of the Christian community to take their proper place in the life of the Church.

When speaking to the Pastoral Convention of the Diocese of Rome, Pope Benedict XVI said, "It is necessary to improve pastoral structures in such a way that the co-responsibility of all the members of the people of God in their entirety is gradually promoted.... This demands a change in mind-set particularly concerning lay

people. Lay people are no longer to be viewed as collaborators of the clergy but truly recognised as co-responsible for the Church's being and action."

LISTEN TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

Reading the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the gospel is an essential task for the Church in any Diocese at any particular time (*Gaudium et spes*, no 4). Listening to the people is a conviction that the Holy Spirit is at work. It is not theory or PR. We are meant to look at the world with clear eyes, to see what is happening, to be attentive. God is present in nature, in history and in human affairs. These are the things of God and it is there we will see signs of his presence if we are attentive. We also require patience as the pastoral situation unfolds, waiting for God to come. Finally, we do need to recognize the deep crisis of faith we find ourselves in at this point in the long history of our Diocese.

Today is about the next steps in the process.



Adult Faith Development

Ministers of the Word Evenings

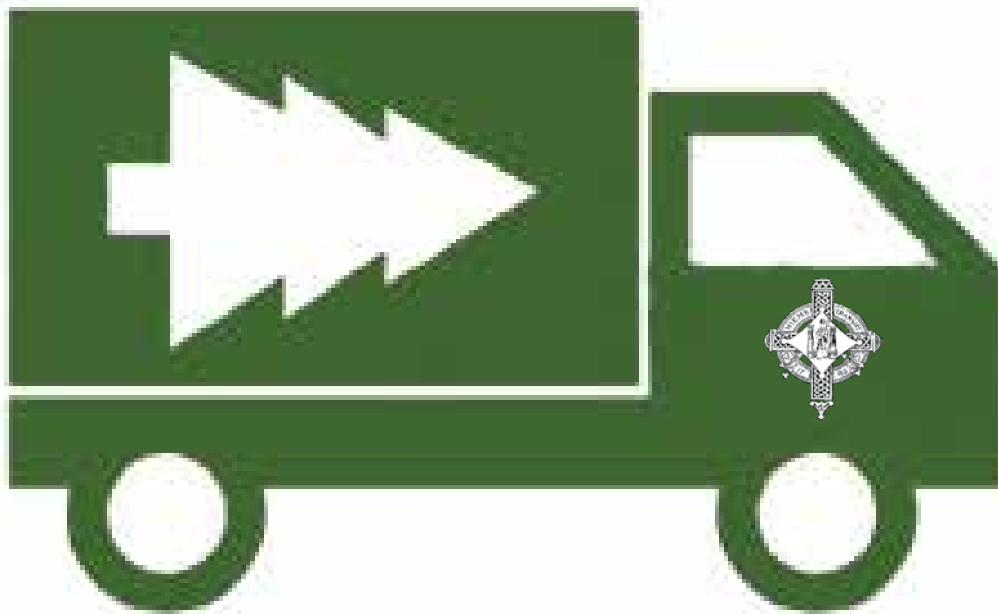
Fr Billy Swan of Ferns Diocese helps Ministers of the Word reflect on the importance of their ministry as a service to others on Wednesday 11th December at St Kieran's College.

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110 years and still standing...

Richard Scriven





He was consecrated Bishop in St Mary's Cathedral, Kilkenny ... on December 14, 1884 nine days before his 48th birthday.

The statue of St Patrick standing in the grounds of the cathedral is 110 years old this week.... It was erected to commemorate the silver jubilee of Dr Abraham Brownrigg as bishop of Ossory on 14 December 1909.

Abraham Brownrigg was born in the parish of Clonegal, Co Carlow on 23 December 1836, the son of Isaac and Eliza Brownrigg. His uncle on his father's side, Rev. Abraham Brownrigg, was PP of Cloughbawn, Co. Wexford. On his mother's side he had three uncles: Rev. James Canon Roche, PP Wexford, the Rev. Thomas Roche, PP Our Lady's Island and Archdeacon of Ferns, and the Rev. John J Roche, OSF Wexford.

He received his early education locally and later attended Tullow Monastery, The Classical School in Dublin and St Peter's College, Wexford. He entered Maynooth in 1856 and was ordained priest on April 21, 1861. He was principal of St Aidan's Academy in Enniscorthy and later appointed professor in St Peter's College in Wexford. He became a member of the House of Missions in Enniscorthy and took charge of this mission in 1876 when Dr Warren was appointed Bishop of Ferns. Meanwhile in Ossory Dr Moran was appointed Archbishop of Sydney in 1884.

In April 1884 35 parish priests of the diocese of Ossory met in St Mary's Cathedral to nominate a successor to Bishop Moran. The result of the vote was: Rev. Michael J Murphy, President, Carlow College, 18 votes; Rev Edward McDonald, DD, PP, St Canices and Vicar Capitular, 14 votes; Rev. Thomas Hennessy, PP Inistioge, 3 votes. The result of this election was later set aside in Rome and Dr Brownrigg was appointed to fill the position on 28 October 1884.

He was consecrated Bishop in St Mary's Cathedral, Kilkenny, assisted by Rev. James Lynch Coadjutor Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin and Rev. James Brown, Bishop of Ferns, on December 14, 1884 nine days before his 48th birthday.

Within three years of his arrival in Ossory Dr Brownrigg begun extensive work at St Mary's Cathedral. The foundation stone for a new sacristy was laid by Dr Patrick Ryan, Archbishop of Philadelphia in 1887 (Ryan had been a student with Brownrigg in the Classical School in Dublin). William Hague from Dublin was the architect (Hague was also architect of St John's Church in Kilkenny – it's foundation stone laid by Dr Brownrigg in 1897).

A meeting of a representative group of clergy and leading citizens of the town took place in the Chapter house in 1893 and the report by Fr Tobias Walsh, Adm of St Mary's, lists works already completed

and works yet to be done. Completed was the erection of the new sacristy, two inner porches and the remodelling of the centre doorway and organ gallery, installation of a heating system, the lengthening of the altar rails, the erection of the Sacred Heart Altar (the work of James Pearse, father of Padraig Pearse) and the purchase of statues in white marble of the Sacred Heart, St Joseph and the Divine Child, and, the Window of the Sacred Heart in the south transept (this window had been destroyed in a severe storm of 1886 and the replacement window is the work of the renowned glass artists Mayer and Co, Munich). Works to be done included: overhauling of the roof, furnishing the sanctuary, painting and cleaning the church, an altar of St Joseph, a Baptistry, laying out the cathedral grounds, a new pulpit and new seating. The meeting of 1893 approved this work and six years later, on 9 April 1899, the reconstructed and refurnished cathedral was opened in the presence of Cardinal Logue, Archbishop of Armagh.

In 1909 Dr Brownrigg celebrated his silver jubilee as bishop and a statue of St Patrick was erected in the cathedral grounds; the statue was made by Smith of Dublin and the inscription beneath reads:

This statue of St Patrick was erected by the parishioners of the four city churches to commemorate the episcopal silver jubilee of the Most Rev. Abraham Brownrigg, D.D., Lord Bishop of Ossory and to mark their recognition of his Lordship's arduous labours for the welfare of the church in this diocese and his unfailing attention to the spiritual temporal needs of his people. 14th October 1909.

Bishop Abraham Brownrigg died aged 92, 67 years after his ordination and 44 years after his consecration as a Bishop. He is buried in St Patrick's Church.



APOSTOLIC LETTER
Admirabile signum
OF THE HOLY FATHER
FRANCIS
ON THE MEANING AND
IMPORTANCE OF THE
NATIVITY SCENE





1. The enchanting image of the Christmas crèche, so dear to the Christian people, never ceases to arouse amazement and wonder. The depiction of Jesus' birth is itself a simple and joyful proclamation of the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God. The nativity scene is like a living Gospel rising up from the pages of sacred Scripture. As we contemplate the Christmas story, we are invited to set out on a spiritual journey, drawn by the humility of the God who became man in order to encounter every man and woman. We come to realize that so great is his love for us that he became one of us, so that we in turn might become one with him.

With this Letter, I wish to encourage the beautiful family tradition of preparing the nativity scene in the days before Christmas, but also the custom of setting it up in the workplace, in schools, hospitals, prisons and town squares. Great imagination and creativity is always shown in employing the most diverse materials to create small masterpieces of beauty. As children, we learn from our parents and grandparents to carry on this joyful tradition, which encapsulates a wealth of popular piety. It is my hope that this custom will never be lost and that, wherever it has fallen into disuse, it can be rediscovered and revived.

2. The origin of the Christmas crèche is found above all in certain details of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, as related in the Gospels. The evangelist Luke says simply that Mary "gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn" (2:7). Because Jesus was laid in a manger, the nativity scene is known in Italian as a presepe, from the Latin word praesepe, meaning "manger".

Coming into this world, the Son of God was laid in the place where animals feed. Hay became the first bed of the One who would reveal himself as "the bread come down from heaven" (Jn 6:41). Saint Augustine, with other Church Fathers, was impressed by this symbolism: "Laid in a manger, he became our food" (Sermon 189, 4). Indeed, the nativity scene evokes a number of the mysteries of Jesus' life and brings them close to our own daily lives.

But let us go back to the origins of the Christmas crèche so familiar to us. We need to imagine ourselves in the little Italian town of Greccio, near Rieti. Saint Francis stopped there, most likely on his way back from Rome where on 29 November 1223 he had received the confirmation of his Rule from Pope Honorius III. Francis had earlier visited the Holy Land, and the caves in Greccio reminded him of the countryside of Bethlehem. It may also be that the "Poor Man of Assisi" had been struck by the mosaics in the Roman Basilica of Saint Mary Major depicting the birth of Jesus, close to the place where, according to an ancient tradition, the wooden panels of the manger are preserved.

The Franciscan Sources describe in detail what then took place in Greccio. Fifteen days before Christmas, Francis asked a local man named John to help him realize his desire "to bring to life the memory of that babe born in Bethlehem, to see as much as possible with my own bodily eyes the discomfort of his infant needs, how he lay in a manger, and how, with an ox and an ass standing by, he was laid upon a bed of hay".[1] At this, his faithful friend went immediately to prepare all that the Saint had asked. On 25 December, friars came to Greccio from various parts, together with people from



the farmsteads in the area, who brought flowers and torches to light up that holy night. When Francis arrived, he found a manger full of hay, an ox and a donkey. All those present experienced a new and indescribable joy in the presence of the Christmas scene. The priest then solemnly celebrated the Eucharist over the manger, showing the bond between the Incarnation of the Son of God and the Eucharist. At Greccio there were no statues; the nativity scene was enacted and experienced by all who were present.[2]

This is how our tradition began: with everyone gathered in joy around the cave, with no distance between the original event and those sharing in its mystery.

Thomas of Celano, the first biographer of Saint Francis, notes that this simple and moving scene was accompanied by the gift of a marvellous vision: one of those present saw the Baby Jesus himself lying in the manger. From the nativity scene of that Christmas in 1223, "everyone went home with joy".[3]

3. With the simplicity of that sign, Saint Francis carried out a great work of evangelization. His teaching touched the hearts of Christians and continues today to offer a simple yet authentic means of portraying the beauty of our faith. Indeed, the place where this first nativity scene was enacted expresses and evokes these sentiments. Greccio has become a refuge for the soul, a mountain fastness wrapped in silence.

Why does the Christmas crèche arouse such wonder and move us so deeply? First, because it shows God's tender love: the Creator of the universe lowered himself to take up our littleness. The gift

of life, in all its mystery, becomes all the more wondrous as we realize that the Son of Mary is the source and sustenance of all life. In Jesus, the Father has given us a brother who comes to seek us out whenever we are confused or lost, a loyal friend ever at our side. He gave us his Son who forgives us and frees us from our sins.

Setting up the Christmas crèche in our homes helps us to relive the history of what took place in Bethlehem. Naturally, the Gospels remain our source for understanding and reflecting on that event. At the same time, its portrayal in the crèche helps us to imagine the scene. It touches our hearts and makes us enter into salvation history as contemporaries of an event that is living and real in a broad gamut of historical and cultural contexts.

In a particular way, from the time of its Franciscan origins, the nativity scene has invited us to "feel" and "touch" the poverty that God's Son took upon himself in the Incarnation. Implicitly, it summons us to follow him along the path of humility, poverty and self-denial that leads from the manger of Bethlehem to the cross. It asks us to meet him and serve him by showing mercy to those of our brothers and sisters in greatest need (cf. Mt 25:31-46).

4. I would like now to reflect on the various elements of the nativity scene in order to appreciate their deeper meaning. First, there is the background of a starry sky wrapped in the darkness and silence of night. We represent this not only out of fidelity to the Gospel accounts, but also for its symbolic value. We can think of all those times in our lives when we have experienced the darkness of night. Yet even then, God does not abandon us, but is there to answer our crucial



questions about the meaning of life. Who am I? Where do I come from? Why was I born at this time in history? Why do I love? Why do I suffer? Why will I die? It was to answer these questions that God became man. His closeness brings light where there is darkness and shows the way to those dwelling in the shadow of suffering (cf. Lk 1:79).

The landscapes that are part of the nativity scene also deserve some mention. Frequently they include the ruins of ancient houses or buildings, which in some instances replace the cave of Bethlehem and become a home for the Holy Family. These ruins appear to be inspired by the thirteenth-century Golden Legend of the Dominican Jacobus de Varagine, which relates a pagan belief that the Temple of Peace in Rome would collapse when a Virgin gave birth. More than anything, the ruins are the visible sign of fallen humanity, of everything that inevitably falls into ruin, decays and disappoints. This scenic setting tells us that Jesus is newness in the midst of an aging world, that he has come to heal and rebuild, to restore the world and our lives to their original splendour.

5. With what emotion should we arrange the mountains, streams, sheep and shepherds in the nativity scene! As we do so, we are reminded that, as the prophets had foretold, all creation rejoices in the coming of the Messiah. The angels and the guiding star are a sign that we too are called to set out for the cave and to worship the Lord.

"Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us" (Lk 2:15). So the shepherds tell one another after the proclamation of the angels. A beautiful lesson emerges from these simple words.

Unlike so many other people, busy about many things, the shepherds become the first to see the most essential thing of all: the gift of salvation. It is the humble and the poor who greet the event of the Incarnation. The shepherds respond to God who comes to meet us in the Infant Jesus by setting out to meet him with love, gratitude and awe. Thanks to Jesus, this encounter between God and his children gives birth to our religion and accounts for its unique beauty, so wonderfully evident in the nativity scene.

6. It is customary to add many symbolic figures to our nativity scenes. First, there are the beggars and the others who know only the wealth of the heart. They too have every right to draw near to the Infant Jesus; no one can evict them or send them away from a crib so makeshift that the poor seem entirely at home. Indeed, the poor are a privileged part of this mystery; often they are the first to recognize God's presence in our midst.

The presence of the poor and the lowly in the nativity scene remind us that God became man for the sake of those who feel most in need of his love and who ask him to draw near to them. Jesus, "gentle and humble in heart" (Mt 11:29), was born in poverty and led a simple life in order to teach us to recognize what is essential and to act accordingly. The nativity scene clearly teaches that we cannot let ourselves be fooled by wealth and fleeting promises of happiness. We see Herod's palace in the background, closed and deaf to the tidings of joy. By being born in a manger, God himself launches the only true revolution that can give hope and dignity to the disinherited and the outcast: the revolution of love, the revolution of tenderness. From the manger, Jesus proclaims, in a meek yet powerful way, the need for sharing with



the poor as the path to a more human and fraternal world in which no one is excluded or marginalized.

Children – but adults too! – often love to add to the nativity scene other figures that have no apparent connection with the Gospel accounts. Yet, each in its own way, these fanciful additions show that in the new world inaugurated by Jesus there is room for whatever is truly human and for all God's creatures. From the shepherd to the blacksmith, from the baker to the musicians, from the women carrying jugs of water to the children at play: all this speaks of the everyday holiness, the joy of doing ordinary things in an extraordinary way, born whenever Jesus shares his divine life with us.

7. Gradually, we come to the cave, where we find the figures of Mary and Joseph. Mary is a mother who contemplates her child and shows him to every visitor. The figure of Mary makes us reflect on the great mystery that surrounded this young woman when God knocked on the door of her immaculate heart. Mary responded in complete obedience to the message of the angel who asked her to become the Mother of God. Her words, "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38), show all of us how to abandon ourselves in faith to God's will. By her "fiat", Mary became the mother of God's Son, not losing but, thanks to him, consecrating her virginity. In her, we see the Mother of God who does not keep her Son only to herself, but invites everyone to obey his word and to put it into practice (cf. Jn 2:5).

At Mary's side, shown protecting the Child and his Mother, stands Saint Joseph. He is usually depicted with staff in hand, or holding up a lamp. Saint Joseph plays

an important role in the life of Jesus and Mary. He is the guardian who tirelessly protects his family. When God warned him of Herod's threat, he did not hesitate to set out and flee to Egypt (cf. Mt 2:13-15). And once the danger had passed, he brought the family back to Nazareth, where he was to be the first teacher of Jesus as a boy and then as a young man. Joseph treasured in his heart the great mystery surrounding Jesus and Mary his spouse; as a just man, he entrusted himself always to God's will, and put it into practice.

8. When, at Christmas, we place the statue of the Infant Jesus in the manger, the nativity scene suddenly comes alive. God appears as a child, for us to take into our arms. Beneath weakness and frailty, he conceals his power that creates and transforms all things. It seems impossible, yet it is true: in Jesus, God was a child, and in this way he wished to reveal the greatness of his love: by smiling and opening his arms to all.

The birth of a child awakens joy and wonder; it sets before us the great mystery of life. Seeing the bright eyes of a young couple gazing at their newborn child, we can understand the feelings of Mary and Joseph who, as they looked at the Infant Jesus, sensed God's presence in their lives.

"Life was made manifest" (1 Jn 1:2). In these words, the Apostle John sums up the mystery of the Incarnation. The crèche allows us to see and touch this unique and unparalleled event that changed the course of history, so that time would thereafter be reckoned either before or after the birth of Christ.

God's ways are astonishing, for it seems impossible that he should forsake his

glory to become a man like us. To our astonishment, we see God acting exactly as we do: he sleeps, takes milk from his mother, cries and plays like every other child! As always, God baffles us. He is unpredictable, constantly doing what we least expect. The nativity scene shows God as he came into our world, but it also makes us reflect on how our life is part of God's own life. It invites us to become his disciples if we want to attain ultimate meaning in life.

9. As the feast of Epiphany approaches, we place the statues of the Three Kings in the Christmas crèche. Observing the star, those wise men from the East set out for Bethlehem, in order to find Jesus and to offer him their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. These costly gifts have an allegorical meaning: gold honours Jesus' kingship, incense his divinity, myrrh his sacred humanity that was to experience death and burial.

As we contemplate this aspect of the nativity scene, we are called to reflect on the responsibility of every Christian to spread the Gospel. Each of us is called to bear glad tidings to all, testifying by our practical works of mercy to the joy of knowing Jesus and his love.

The Magi teach us that people can come to Christ by a very long route. Men of wealth, sages from afar, athirst for the infinite, they set out on the long and perilous journey that would lead them to Bethlehem (cf. Mt 2:1-12). Great joy comes over them in the presence of the Infant King. They are not scandalized by the poor surroundings, but immediately fall to their knees to worship him. Kneeling before him, they understand that the God who with sovereign wisdom guides the course of the stars also guides the course of history, casting down the mighty and raising up the lowly. Upon their return home, they would certainly have told others of this amazing encounter with the Messiah, thus initiating the spread of the Gospel among the nations.

10. Standing before the Christmas crèche, we are reminded of the time when we were children, eagerly waiting to set it up. These memories make us all the more conscious of the precious gift received from those who passed on the faith to us. At the same time, they remind us of our duty to share this same experience with our children and our grandchildren. It does not matter how the nativity scene is arranged: it can always be the same or it can change from year to year. What matters is that it speaks to our lives. Wherever it is, and whatever form it takes, the Christmas crèche speaks to us of the love of God, the God who became a child in order to make us know how close he is to every man, woman and child, regardless of their condition.

Dear brothers and sisters, the Christmas crèche is part of the precious yet demanding process of passing on the faith. Beginning in childhood, and at every stage of our lives, it teaches us to contemplate Jesus, to experience God's love for us, to feel and believe that God is with us and that we are with him, his children, brothers and sisters all, thanks to that Child who is the Son of God and the Son of the Virgin Mary. And to realize that in that knowledge we find true happiness. Like Saint Francis, may we open our hearts to this simple grace, so that from our wonderment a humble prayer may arise: a prayer of thanksgiving to God, who wished to share with us his all, and thus never to leave us alone.

Given in Greccio, at the Shrine of the Nativity, on 1 December in the year 2019, the seventh of my Pontificate.

FRANCIS

[1] Cf. Thomas of Celano, *First Life*, 84; *Franciscan Sources*, 469.

[2] *Ibid.*, 85; *Franciscan Sources*, 469.

[3] *Ibid.*, 86; *Franciscan Sources*, 470.

[01938-EN.01] [Original text: Italian]

Our prayer going forward, is that the Church will continue to grow as a place of welcome and inclusiveness.

Prayer Guidance in our Community

Clogh/Moneenroe Parish

The members of Clogh/Moneenroe Parish Prayer Guides, are happy to share with you, our introduction to Prayer Guidance, its positive experience on our lives and our desire for continuity of this prayer format within community life.

Companions on the Journey

Many of us grew up on the 'Mammy reminders' to keep in touch with God and say our prayers. While these reminders are to be commended it may sometimes limit our prayer to the ritual of sameness. In today's world religious practice as we knew it is going through a challenging time. We live in a very different Ireland. Many people struggle to find balance between prayer life, family life and work life. Personal and community prayer may help to give balance. Yet, while there are diverse options out there many may not be aware of or feel connected to them. Many have lost confidence in the Church and feel much work needs to be done to make it more inclusive by outreaching to those who feel they do not belong.

Those of us who have been introduced to Praying with Scripture through Guided Prayer feel that we are very blessed that our faith continues to be nurtured by the experience. We gained much learning on how to integrate our faith life into the bits and pieces of our everyday lives. For this new experience we are thankful to all who supported and helped us in any way over the years. It helps us to be aware of our constant need of God; our need to learn how to pray with the heart and feel touched by his Holy Spirit.

We are aware of our need to nurture our spiritual relationship with God and that we can only do this through prayer. All formats of Prayer nurture us when we spend time in the presence of God. It is his guidance that leads us to be

companions with others on the human and spiritual journey of life.

Vision

It was in the beautiful setting and sacred space of Peace in Christ, Kilkenny that some members of our Parish were first introduced to Guided Prayer in 1996. They recall the in-house Training conducted over a three month period under the guidance of Sr Francis Bourke, Sr Peggy, Sr Kathleen and others. There, as members of Clogh Parish Pastoral Council they were introduced to Praying with Scripture and in the process helped to understand its meaning in their daily lives. Twenty three years on, the participants speak appreciatively of the work of those Sisters who had a profound vision of the future needs of the Church. They motivated and encouraged the formation of lay people, enriching their journey in companionship with others and in communion with Christ.

They also recall that on completion of this training, some Parishes hosted three or five day Prayer Retreats. This provided an opportunity for those courageous guides to share their listening skills and prayer guidance in a practical way. Praying with Scripture is, like all other Prayer options, a means to nurture our relationship with God conscious that the Holy Spirit is the real guide.

Encouragement

The Holy Family Sisters came to live in our Parish in 1970. They made a huge contribution to the faith development of very many within our community. Their mission outreached to all people and helped to spread the word of God, through faith in action. They focused on young families, working with children and parents in preparation for the sacraments of Baptism, First Communion and Confirmation and encouraging people to read and share Sacred Scripture. They also worked in

collaboration with the laity to provide support to the bereaved.

Building on this great work, Sr Anne Kearney (who came to our Parish in 1999) together with Sr Francis continued to focus on faith development and introduced Prayer Guidance to the people of the Parish. They provided the support needed to further our mission to put Prayer Guidance into practice in our Parish.

Prayer Guidance in our Community

With the expertise and encouragement of The Holy Family Sisters, additional people were trained in Prayer Guidance. This happened under the spiritual leadership of Fr Dermot Mansfield both at Manresa Jesuit Centre, in Dublin and in our Parish. Places of inspiration and prayer like the Integritas Retreat Centre in Ennisnag and Mount St Ann's Retreat Centre Portarlinton are familiar Sacred Spaces to the group.

The open house welcome by all of the Holy Family Sisters at the Convent in Moneenroe facilitated us with a beautiful venue and sacred space in which to meet and pray. The closure of the Convent in 2017 and the Sisters' ultimate transfers, inspired us to continue to host the Week of Guided Prayer in our Parish. Our resolve to continue was strengthened by the fact that we had some people willing to train as Prayer Guides. This gave us great hope for continuity. However, we had no financial means to make this a reality and by now had no venue!

Continuity – The Challenge

With deep faith and belief in the positive impact of Guided Prayer we decided to take up the challenge to organise a three day guided prayer retreat in Clogh Parish in March 2019. Thanks to all involved, especially the prayer network of people who prayed for us, this spiritual experience was warmly

welcomed and it further confirmed the openness of people to different prayer formats.

Church leaders are also facing the challenge of investment in the generosity and goodwill of lay people. There is a need for training for those willing to give their time and energy to participate in Prayer Guidance. There is also a need for financial support to cover costs. To address those basic needs it is important that the Church listen to its people, hear their voice, understand their concerns and respond with them in a collaborative way.

Many people are open to and familiar with the collaborative process of working in the best interest of the church at parish/community. An inclusive communication strategy to connect people on the ground, those who operate the structures at Parish and diocesan level may enhance collaboration and build trust.

We see a huge need for both spiritual and financial investment at parish level to enable lay people to access training that will help them to mission and minister in their own community. Those of us who participated in Prayer Guidance training did so to help others. It is important that our desire for continuity is heard.

The Role of Pastoral Council

A Pastoral Council in the local Church structure is very important in today's climate. The continuity of the learned experience and its role in our practical application is a huge plus to the ongoing faith development of community/parish life. This needs to be supported and nurtured.

Our prayer going forward, is that the Church will continue to grow as a place of welcome and inclusiveness. A place where structures are welcomed and respected; where those putting

life on the structures are nurtured and encouraged. Most important is that the Church be a place where those who feel hurt, broken, lost, isolated and excluded will find companions on the journey of life who will help them find hope, peace and love - 'In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'

The Role of Guided Prayer

Guided Prayer is a simple way to make a directed Retreat in the midst of daily living. It is Scripture based and it nurtures our relationship with God through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. As brothers and sisters in Christ, all of us, are challenged to gather together with those who are broken, to help nurture and heal each other's Spirit. We are called to "touch pain and brokenness with the nurturing seed of the gifts of the Holy Spirit given to us by Jesus" (Jean Vanier.) We are all called to be witnesses of Christ.

Many good Christian people in our communities are in need of a compassionate listening ear. Praying with scripture through guided prayer helps to put life on faith, on hope and on love. For this reason continuity is of utmost importance as we believe the process helps to nurture people's relationship with God and fosters faith development.

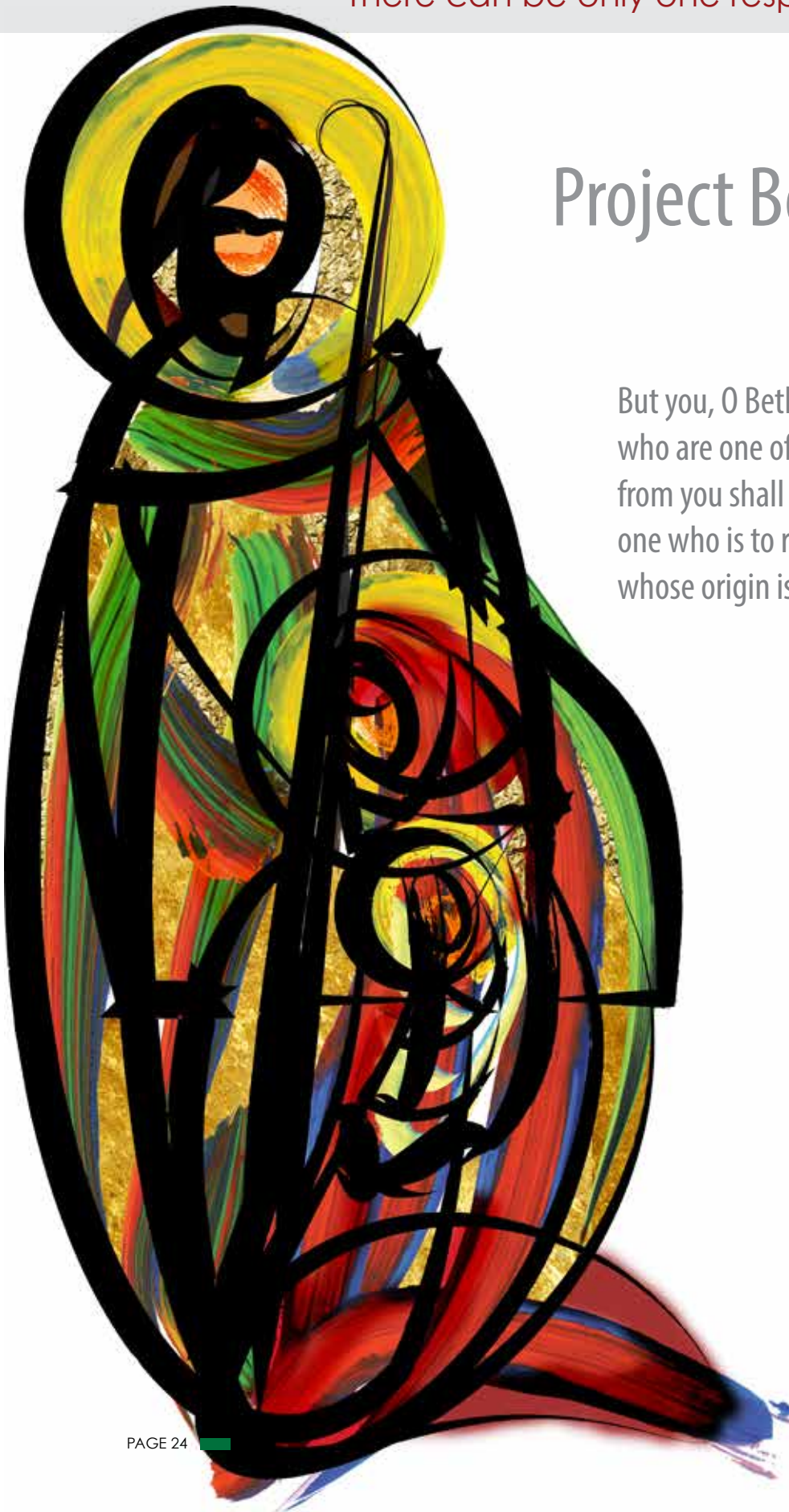
We are aware that the real guide is the Holy Spirit and that we are merely companions on a journey. We are also aware that those little seeds of prayer, grow into flowering buds of faith and nurture the poverty of our soul in times of darkness and doubt. 'Jesus said, Come to me and I will give you rest...'

And what is our response to the Bethlehem Project?
There can be only one response...

Project Bethlehem

Kieran O'Shea

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old, (Micah 5:2)



The annual celebration of the Birth of our Saviour is an invitation to travel back through almost twenty one centuries of time to the town of Bethlehem in the country of Judea. With the aid of images contained in the accounts of Luke and Matthew and reflected in numerous Nativity scenes and artistic interpretations the invitation to allow our imaginations to wander back to first century Bethlehem is always easy to accept.

However the traditional scene that summons us to Bethlehem is never just an exercise of the religious imagination. It is as Pope Francis indicates, an invitation 'to set out on a spiritual journey, drawn by the humility of the God who became man in order to encounter every man and woman.'^[1] In doing so the Pope points out that 'we come to realise that so great is his love for us that he became one of us, so that we in turn might become one with him.'^[2]

He became one of us in a place whose name in Hebrew translates as 'House of Bread', and how appropriate this is because the child whose birth we celebrate is the one who nourishes all who come to him hungry for faith, hope and love. Therefore Bethlehem is never just a stop off on every pilgrimage to the Holy Land or a place that stands still in our minds, viewed through the lens of sentimentality and nostalgia; Bethlehem becomes instead a meeting point, a point of encounter between us and the living God, and where we respond to what we might call 'the Bethlehem Project' - the initiative of the God of Israel to feed and comfort his people. Bethlehem is a point of communion, where we become one with the God who plunged himself into the reality of our human condition.

That Bethlehem Project was never intended as a 33 year experiment. It was the beginning of an irreversible mission, the beginning of a new and eternal relationship with the God of Love and Mercy. God acted first, and the Word

became flesh and lived among us. (Jn 1:14)

And what is our response to the Bethlehem Project?

There can be only one response and that is to give thanks for what God has done, in other words, to continue the mission of Love begun in Bethlehem because it is not yet completed.

We must always realise that Project Bethlehem was launched because God knows that it will succeed. Through the incarnation God has shown that sin and death will never overcome his dream for this world - his dream for you and me. It will take time, there will be challenges, but there is no going back on God's eternal love poured out on the human family.

This Christmas we will once again gaze on that Child lying on an altar of straw in Bethlehem. As we celebrate the Eucharist that same child comes among us again and again albeit on an altar of stone or wood. He comes to send us out from our churches, our Bethlehems our 'houses of bread' - to nourish our brothers and sisters wherever we find them with our love and mercy and friendship. We might be tempted to stay in the Bethlehem of our imaginations, in our comfortable churches, gazing forever at the scene of Christ's birth and enjoying the heavenly music, but that is not what we are about. Like the Shepherds who, after Mary and Joseph, were among the first to be recruited to share the Good News of Project Bethlehem we too have work to do as long as we are on this pilgrims on this earth, our mission is to make the Bethlehem project a reality in our families, parish communities, schools, workplaces and wherever else we encounter one another. May our adoration of the child of Bethlehem this Christmas and the Bread we receive help us to do that with Joy and Hope.

1. Pope Francis, *Apostolic Letter Admirabile Signum*, 1st December 2019, No. 1
2. *ibid*, No 1

Adult Faith Development

Dermot Ryan

Is there an area that is more important in any diocese at this time?

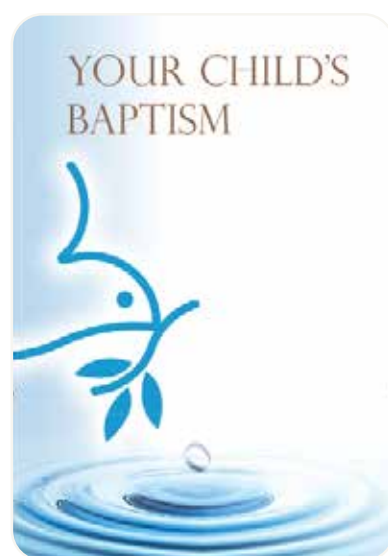
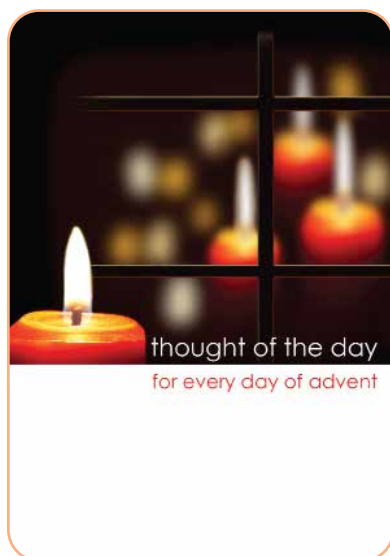
A bold question, but one which might lead to focus, a clarity of thought that is now needed. At a most fundamental level our Church exists as a community to support each other in faith, it helps teach that faith to new generations and it offers occasion for expressions of that faith in the ordinary and extraordinary moments of life.

But in the first instance the key to us having that faith is our having it handed on to us. Our language of faith, our understanding of God, our appreciation for the various elements of faith which find expression in our lives were all first given us by another and then, again through the help of another, allowed and encouraged to grow. Put simply, we need others to bring God to us, and us to God. For many of us this was part and parcel of the community and environment in which we grew, but for all of us now there is an appreciation that that same culture of faith is no longer ubiquitously present in our world today - or at least not in our western world. We have lost the culture of faith, that corporate memory, that ability

to presume people will pick it up by some osmosis.

We must then, if this is important to us - and it should be given the one mandate that our Lord left us with - to look for new ways to encourage others to think of, and think about God. We have to actively, then, search for ways that allow others to see the beauty of a God we know and the great comfort of a faith we have. Deepening peoples faith, helping them understand more about God, providing opportunities for them to encounter and then express that faith in God - is primary work of every parish community. It is what our Lord asked us to do; all these years on, then, we might benefit from a 'stock take' - what are we doing in this area; how do we answer the mandate to bring God to others, what am I doing to pass on the faith to a people who need it and might not yet have heard it. What are we doing for faith development.

Attempting to answer these questions while also providing various resources to assist



parishes, and people, to deepen their understanding of faith is, and has been, the work of the Adult Faith Development (AFD) Group here in Ossory for the past ten years. Through numerous initiatives, ideas, lectures, talks, reflections, retreats, publications, videos and so much more the Faith Development Group have tried to offer ways, as varied as the people we serve, to help others develop their faith. Some initiatives have been extremely successful - if 'success' is measured by popularity, longevity or feedback, and others required a re-visit to boards on which we draw. But in either instance, for many years now the Faith Development Group have tried to support people in their journey of faith: finding, knowing, loving and moving towards a God call who calls upon us. In attempting to do this we have offered various resources for Advent and Lent, Christmas and Easter and all the times in between.

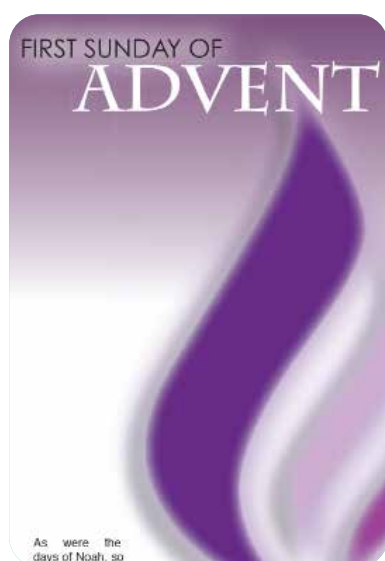
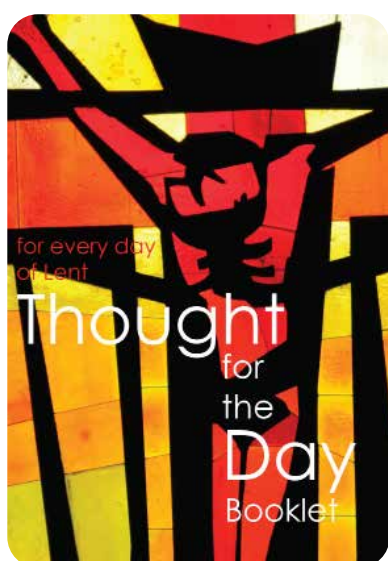
This publication, the *Ossory Times*, is now in the middle of its seventh year. It began with the most simple of questions - do we share the Good News with ourselves... or better still, how are we communicating the good news of all that is happening in the parishes in Ossory to the other parishes in Ossory? From that basic question emerged this publication - a wealth of colour and stories, reflections and ideas, shared from one parish to another that we may learn from each other but also that we may see the life and energy that our faith is giving in every community in our diocese. Ossory is alive, much good work is happening, we are helping each other and these pages remind us of that fact. Our task, after all, is

to be spreading Good News - for this we exist...

For years now the Faith Development Group has trained Ministers of the Eucharist and maintained a database of their length of service, trained Ministers of the Word, assisted choirs with workshops, helped parish secretaries with their work, offered theology lectures and courses to laity and clergy - many of the nearly 100 graduates of our Certificate in Theology offered in association with St Patrick's College, Maynooth are now helping others know more about the God - we have tried to address topical and sometimes difficult issues like the importance of our pro-life beliefs at critical times, had reflections on Catholic Education as questions were being asked, retreats, days of recollection, moments of prayer, pilgrimages, celebrations, festivals of faith, diocesan blitzs, movies, tweets, texts, so many ways to try bring God to people and people to God...

As a faith community in Ossory we do not have all the answers but we have recognised some of the important questions - what are we really doing about developing peoples' faith?

The Ossory Faith development Group are: Fr Dermot Ryan (Director); Ms Olivia Maher, Mr Michael Hogan, Ms Eadaoin Maher, Mr Declan Murphy, Fr Kieran O'Shea and Ms Martina Lawlor. As always we welcome all ideas or suggestions so that we can continue to offer people, and parishes, the support and resources to help develop peoples' faith.



AIM HIGH

Clara Aim High

Noreen Brennan

Clara Aim High are under way again this year with six members signing up to follow the programme from the parish. We held a practise night where the group got to read at the altar in preparation for Sunday Mass. Life is busy however for Transition Year students and their intention is often better than their actual presence! Camogie, football, etc have taken over Sunday mornings and it's difficult to help out at morning Mass. Such is life and we will have to adapt the activities to suit the participants. The church is its people so the Youth church has to reach out to include the players in and out of the building.

Four of the girls helped out at the recent very successful community concert which took place in Clara church. A bookmark is being designed and given out at Sunday Mass. It shows a magical moment in the church during the recent concert. It also depicts the country church from across the fields with oil-seed rape crop in full bloom.

The Crib will be set up after Mass by the group members and all will hopefully help out at Christmas Masses.

Being part of the parish seems to be very important to all the participants and their presence at Mass always adds so much and is not to be underestimated.

I often think of Patrick Kavanagh's poem at this time of the year;

*We have tested and tasted too much, lover-
Through a chink too wide there comes in no wonder.*

*But here in the Advent-darkened room
Where the dry black bread and the sugarless tea
Of penance will charm back the luxury
Of a child's soul, we'll return to Doom
The knowledge we stole but could not use.
And the newness that was in every stale thing
When we looked at it as children: the spirit-shocking*

*Wonder in a black slanting Ulster hill
Or the prophetic astonishment in the tedious talking*

*Of an old fool will awake for us and bring
You and me to the yard gate to watch the whins
And the bog-holes, cart-tracks, old stables where
Time begins.*

O after Christmas we'll have no need to go searching

For the difference that sets an old phrase burning-

We'll hear it in the whispered argument of a churning

Or in the streets where the village boys are lurching.

*And we'll hear it among decent men too
Who barrow dung in gardens under trees,
Wherever life pours ordinary plenty.*

*Won't we be rich, my love and I, and
God we shall not ask for reason's payment,
The why of heart-breaking strangeness in dreeping hedges*

*Nor analyse God's breath in common statement.
We have thrown into the dust-bin the clay-minted wages*

*Of pleasure, knowledge and the conscious hour-
And Christ comes with a January flower.*

*Clara Aim High
Life is taking*

*When the angels
When the stars
When the prince
When the back w
The work o
To
To h
To f
To rel
To re
To bring
To mal*



High 2019
about
part...

the song of the
is stilled,
in the sky is gone,
the kings and the
are home,
the shepherds are
with their flocks,
of Christmas begins:
find the lost,
heal the broken,
feed the hungry,
release the prisoner,
build the nations,
bring peace among people,
make music in the heart.

Clara Aim High 2019

Aim High is a programme
that encourages young people
to become more involved
in the life of their parish.

*Luke, Nick, Grainne,
Rachel, Emma, & Grace.*

Muckalee Aim High

Caoimhe McGuinness

When I first heard about Aim High a feeling of dread came over me. My first thought was how do I get out of this? I only go to Mass because Mam makes me. I have no interest in this sort of thing. That was until I started going to meetings and paying more attention to my faith, I started to question it and put more effort into trying to understand what it meant to me and how I interpreted it. It was through Aim High that I got the chance to become a Minister of the Eucharist which is something I love doing now. I met some great people through the Eucharistic Ministers course, friends I still have today. That was the turning point for me, the catalyst that really put the whole 'who am I in the eyes of God' mission into motion. So I decided to immerse myself in as much Christian culture as I could, looking at You-Tubers who have faith-based channels, taking advice from them. I also talked to as many people as I could in Taizé about who they

AIM HIGH

are and what was their defining moment that made them open their hearts to the Lord. I found my favorite Bible verse on my travels "he who has faith the size of a mustard seed shall move mountains" from the parable of the mustard seed in Luke. This just spoke to me. It was as if that one sentence summed up my whole life so far... having gone through 5th year and just starting into 6th year. All I needed was that small seed of faith. As I learned more, and grew into what I believe in now, it was nurtured through scripture and watered by experiences. However, it was in Taizé that I really became solid in my faith; that I really wanted to be a part of God's family; an active participant in my community and church. It was in Taizé that I began to understand who I am in the eyes of God and who I want to be as a person, what I stand for and what I hope to become. This was all possible through Aim High because without it I wouldn't have gone to Taizé, I wouldn't have listened to worship music, I wouldn't have read any of the Gospels or have been interested in going to Mass. I would recommend Aim High to everyone because it's a group experience yet a personal one at the same time. It's just a really good and pure place to be.



Muckalee Aim High

Laura McDowell

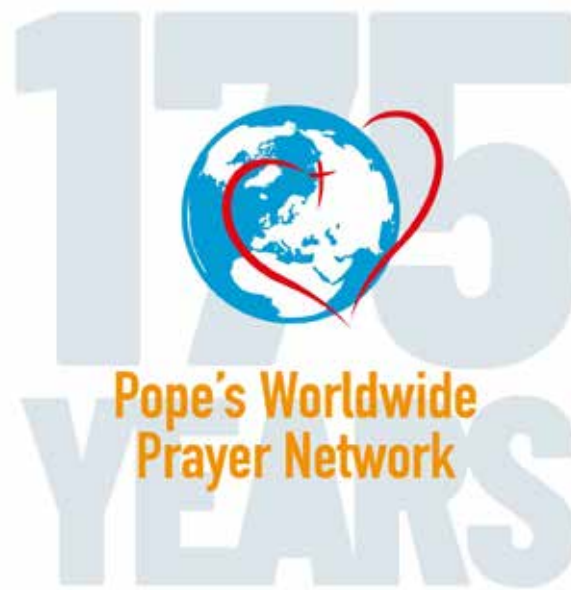
When I first heard about Aim High I didn't know what to think about it. I had always gone to Mass every weekend but I never really thought much about my religion or what I was a part of. Being a part of Aim High really made me embrace my faith and play a bigger part in my community. We started having meetings and at the beginning I was reluctant about going but as we had more meetings I really started getting into them and I really enjoyed going to them. We started out by making posters for the altar for different times in the church year like Lent and Christmas and we started to do readings for those also. I loved every second of Aim High from the meetings with the group to me questioning what my faith meant to me, I feel like Aim High has given me purpose in the community and I understand more now why people go to Mass. Going to Mass isn't a thing I feel like I have to go to anymore - I enjoy going. I would recommend Aim High to anyone who is interested in their faith.



Each month, through the Pope's Intention, the Pope invites us to pray for one specific intention

175 years of the Apostleship of Prayer

Ray Cleere



Founded 175 years ago on December 3rd, 1844, and also known as the Apostleship of Prayer, the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network (PWPN) is the Pope's global prayer network. It responds to the challenges that confront humanity and the Church today. Each month, through the Pope's Intention, the Pope invites us to pray for one specific intention; some months a "Universal Intention" for the whole world, reflecting the challenges that face humanity, and other months an "Evangelisation Intention" for the spread of the Gospel. The network is an ecclesiastical service of the Holy See entrusted to the Society of Jesus. In Ireland the Society has an office at 37 Lower Leeson Street, Dublin 2. Phone: 01-6767491.

The spiritual pathway to the Pope's Worldwide Prayer network is "a way

of the heart", a pathway with Jesus in apostolic readiness that is the fruit of love. It proposes a rhythm of prayer through morning, daytime and night each day.

The Irish division of the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network was founded in 1888, by Fr James A. Cullen S.J., also founded of the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association and "The Sacred Heart Messenger" magazine. The national director is Fr Donal Neary S.J. The official publication is "The Sacred Heart Messenger" which celebrated 130 years of continuous publication in 2018. In the U.K. it was founded by Fr Augustus Dignam S.J., in 1882. In the U.K. the national director is Fr David Stewart S.J., 27 High Street, London N15 6ND.

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MORALITY MATTERS

Give me a crash course in... the right to housing

Happy Christmas!

And many happy returns!

Here we are again. The years can seem to go by so quickly.

These are dark and windy winter days. It's a time of year for staying in out of the cold, with a warm fire in a cosy home.

It certainly is. And it is all the better when it's with family and friends and neighbours can call round.

Christmas is a time for being grateful.

It also reminds me that there are those that

Michael Shortall

are not as fortunate. There are those who are without a home, for example.

Yes. Across the world there are over seventy million people who are forcibly moved from where their homes across the world. Among them nearly twenty-six million are refugees, living in countries not their own. Sadly, half of them are under the age of eighteen.

You don't have to look too far to see that there are many here in Ireland who are without a home.

We are all too aware of the homelessness crisis. According to Focus Ireland there



were 10,514 people homeless at the end of October across Ireland.

It seems that this crisis has been going on a long time.

In fact, that is how the Irish Bishops began a special letter written also in October. They said:

The issue of housing and homelessness in Ireland has not only reached crisis point, but has now been referred to as a crisis for so long that the national conscience may have become numbed to the shocking reality behind this description.

What did the letter say?

At the heart of the letter is the claim too often ignored that:

The dignity which, as Catholics, we recognise in every person, must be reflected in the reality of life in our society and it is our belief that safe, affordable and appropriate housing is a human right.

Why is housing a human right?

There are many reasons that all come together in respecting the dignity of every human person. In short, shelter is a key basic right for everyone because it is a

basic human need, like food and water or medical care. If we take these away from someone or make it very difficult for someone to access them, we are not creating a just society. But housing is also more than just shelter. It is a place that can be called home. It is a place that supports families and the local relationships that are vital if any of us are to live and fare well.

Yet it is, as everyone knows, a very complex issue. The supply of housing is not easy to fix overnight.

It involves many aspects. On one hand, there is trying to build up an appropriate housing stock; on the other hand, services are needed to help those shut out from affordable housing. In many ways, the voluntary sector, including the Church and church associated organisations such as the Peter McVerry Trust, St Vincent de Paul are trying to address it.

That is why it requires really strong government intervention.

Only they have the power to regulate the housing market. The Bishops, for their part, listed a number of measures that should be taken, including fair pricing and security in the private rental sector, vacant sites to be taxed and action to be taken to increase the supply and reduce the price of housing.

If it is a right, should it be in the constitution? It would keep it on every Government's agenda!

The Irish Bishops think so! It could be said, that with so many other so-called rights being proposed to put into the constitution, this is one that the government is shying away from. If it was, it would force them, as you say, to keep housing at the forefront of all they do.

Where can I read that letter?

The letter was called 'A Room at the Inn?' Search for it online. I would encourage everyone to read it. The title reminds us again of the Christmas story, where Mary and Joseph were homeless and forced to use a very basic shelter at the birth of Jesus. In this, God shows solidarity with all who go without a home.

May we be much closer to solving the housing crisis by this time next year!

Happy Christmas to all the readers of the *Ossory Times*. Every blessing to you and your families, wherever they may be.



Being together with other choirs helps us to see that our ministry in our parish communities really does make a difference

Living our Liturgy with Liam Lawton

Michael O' Brien



As a parish Choir who provides music and song for the Liturgy every weekend during the Saturday evening vigil Mass in Ferrybank Parish opportunities to celebrate our ministry, learn new approaches, and upgrade our repertoire are always welcome.

Such an opportunity came along on Monday 2nd December when one of the most renowned composers of contemporary Church music in Ireland, Fr Liam Lawton held a workshop for choirs and musicians in St Kieran's College, Kilkenny as part of the Adult Faith Development groups series of Advent courses

Some members of our choir embarked on the road trip to St Kieran's for what proved to be a very enjoyable and rewarding musical evening. We were welcomed by Fr Dermot Ryan, President of St Kieran's and director of Adult Faith Development in Ossory. In his remarks Fr Dermot praised the commitment of all present for their contribution to the enhancement of Parish Liturgies with music and song. Indeed it is only when you look around the room at an event like this that awareness grows of that commitment which is forthcoming from so many gifted people. Being together with other choirs helps us to see that our ministry in our parish communities really does make a difference and

contributes to the celebration of faith in the community.

Our choir in Ferrybank has been in existence now for longer than we care to remember! We would often be described as a 'folk choir' but I think we are much more than that. We are a group who play music together socially as well as liturgically and this does strengthen the bonds that exist. It also aids us in tailoring our collection of sacred music to the tastes of all generations. There also prevails in our choir an openness to learn to embrace new challenges and to continually refresh our approach. We hoped that attending Fr Liam's workshop would fulfil that particular goal and we were not disappointed. At first it was a little nerve racking to be at a workshop with someone of Fr Liam's calibre. However we need not have worried, our fears were unfounded. Both

Fr Liam and his accompanist, Maria, were very patient and generous with their time and expertise. They provided an informal relaxed environment in which to learn and sing a varied programme. Of course he put us through our musical paces with a wide range of wonderful music, including some newly recorded Christmas material, and he also helped to reassure us that we have what it takes to reenergise our singing and playing, and that our ability to play music and sing is a gift from God who invites us to share it generously with our fellow parishioners and congregations.

After access to some very welcome tea and biscuits at the close of the night we left St Kieran's feeling more resourceful after Fr Liam's workshop, ready to roll out the Christmas hymn sheet and determination to keep on signing and always willing to learn a new tune!

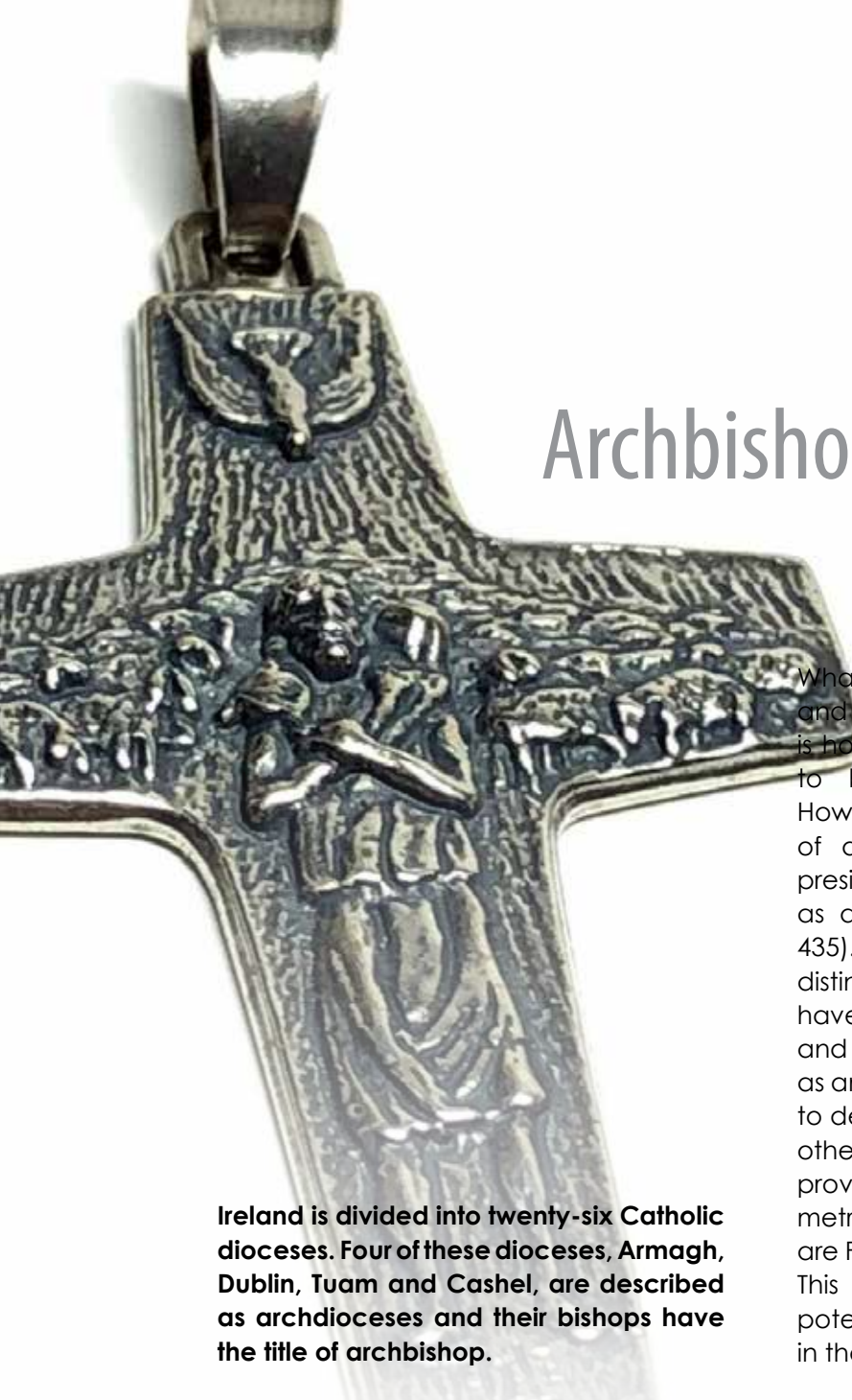




CANON LAW MATTERS

Archbishops and Bishops

Albert McDonnell



Ireland is divided into twenty-six Catholic dioceses. Four of these dioceses, Armagh, Dublin, Tuam and Cashel, are described as archdioceses and their bishops have the title of archbishop.

Why are some bishops given the title of 'archbishop' and some are not? It is usually related to the office which the bishop holds. The bishop of an archdiocese will always have the title 'archbishop'. Certain other office holders are usually ordained bishops and certain of these are given this title. These include papal nuncios, the Pope's diplomatic representatives in countries around the world, and senior office holders in the Roman curia, the secretariat which assists the Pope in his ministry. The title 'archbishop' can also be given to a bishop as a personal honour in recognition of his contribution to the life of the Church.

What is the difference between bishops and archbishops? Part of the answer is honorific – it is an honour for a bishop to be given the title 'archbishop'. However, if the archbishop is bishop of an archdiocese then he normally presides over a group of dioceses known as an 'ecclesiastical province' (canon 435). The term 'metropolitan' is used to distinguish between archbishops who have pastoral responsibility for a province and those who were given the title simply as an honour. The term 'suffragan' is used to describe the dioceses in the province, other than the archdiocese. In the Dublin province, the archbishop of Dublin is the metropolitan and the suffragan dioceses are Ferns, Kildare and Leighlin and Ossory. This gives the Archbishop of Dublin a potentially important, albeit limited, role in the life of these dioceses.

The principal role of a metropolitan archbishop in the suffragan dioceses that constitute his province centres on responding to serious problems in these dioceses, should they arise. If discipline has broken down in any of his suffragan diocese, the metropolitan is required to inform the Pope (canon 436). The Pope can appoint the metropolitan archbishop to conduct an investigation (canonical visitation) into the problems in the suffragan diocese (canon 436§1 3°). Alternatively, the Pope may choose to respond to the problem by appointing someone else to investigate the matter or in some other manner.

The code of canon law does not go into detail regarding the issues which require the metropolitan to contact Rome. However, canon law provides some examples. Canon 394§4 cites the scenario of a bishop being absent from his diocese, without justification, for a period longer than six months. The most recent safeguarding legislation introduced by Pope Francis (*Vos estis lux mundi*) contains another concrete example i.e. certain allegations of crimes regarding the sexual abuse of children or minors.

Another scenario where the metropolitan archbishop plays a role is when one of his suffragan dioceses is vacant and the college of consultors fails to choose somebody to administer the diocese, while they wait for a bishop to be appointed. If this situation endures for over eight days, the metropolitan is to appoint an administrator and inform the Pope (canon 421§2). In rare situations where a suffragan bishop is excluded from the exercise of his ministry due to an ecclesiastical penalty resulting from some crime, the metropolitan archbishop is to inform the Pope (canon 415). This could only arise in situations where the penalty is automatically imposed without any process (e.g. as in the case of heresy, canon 1364).

A metropolitan archbishop, with the consent of the majority of his suffragan bishops, can also convene a provincial council, decide its location, agenda and dates (canon 442§1). He also presides over the council. A provincial council is a gathering of the bishops, clergy, religious and laity of an ecclesiastical province to discuss how best to respond to the pastoral needs of the province (canons 443 and 445).

A metropolitan archbishop wears an additional vestment called a pallium, when he is celebrating Mass within his province. This is a band of white wool decorated with six white crosses and is

worn over the shoulders. Two lambs are presented to the Pope each year on the feast of St Agnes (21 January). Just before Easter, their wool is woven into the pallia. The Pope blesses the pallia on the feast of Saints Peter and Paul (29 June) and presents them to the metropolitan archbishops who were appointed during the previous year, as a symbol of his special role in his ecclesiastical province. The metropolitan archbishop may only wear the pallium within his province, since his role is limited to those dioceses. Metropolitan archbishops can celebrate the liturgy in all the churches in his province. However, if he wishes to celebrate the liturgy in any of the cathedrals, other than his own, within his province he is required to notify the bishop of that diocese (canon 426§3).

Many people enjoy the history and detail of ecclesiastical titles and traditions. Others feel that them as archaic and in need of reform. Perhaps, it is helpful to explore their usefulness symbolism. Critiques of the organisational structure of the Catholic Church often lament the lack of 'middle management'. Every diocesan bishop is answerable to the Pope alone. However, there are over 3,000 Catholic dioceses in the world which makes it challenging for the Pope to stay informed about each of the them. Metropolitan archbishops help in this regard.

Pope Francis shared a reflection on the symbol of the pallium, worn by metropolitan archbishops during the celebration of Mass on the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul in 2019. He said:

'Today we bless the pallia for the Metropolitan Archbishops named in the past year. The pallium recalls the sheep that the shepherd is called to bear on his shoulders. It is a sign that the shepherds do not live for themselves but for the sheep. It is a sign that, in order to possess life, we have to lose it, give it away.'



Homily of Bishop Dermot Farrell on Leadership in Prayer Commissioning Ceremony

Castletown, Co Laois
7th November 2019

The parable we have just heard in an important lesson in prayer (Lk 18: 9-14). Why? The answer is found in the way these two men approach God. The Pharisee comes to God and prays to himself rather than to God, boasting of all that he has done. The entire prayer directs attention to himself and his accomplishments: "I thank you . . . I am not like . . . I fast . . . I give." The Pharisee's prayer reached its destination: HIMSELF.

This a key issue in prayer – is it about God, ourselves, and God in our orbit, OR is it about our lives in the light of God, God's light, and centred upon God. True prayer detaches us from ourselves—from our worries and our concerns, from our selfish and far from pure wishes – and turns us towards God in such a way that the only thing we begin to wish for is the will of God. "Let your will be done, not mine" (Lk 22:42).

The Pharisee thanks God, not for the gifts he has been given, but for not being like all the rest of humanity, which he sees as rapacious, unjust, and adulterous who are above all like that tax collector standing behind him. His comparisons make him haughty, and disconnected from others. Moreover, he appears to have no need of God. If he were to direct his gaze at God, he might arrive at a different kind of comparison. He might see how poorly he embodies divine compassion and connectedness to all other beings.

The tax collector, in contrast, beats his breast and prays simply, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner" - is the whole truth and nothing but the truth. He prays with honesty. As he stands before God, he presents himself as he is. Focusing on God, he prays for openness to divine mercy, which has the power to transform his sinfulness.

The spiritual significance of the turning point in the parable is the attitude of the tax collector, in marked contrast with that of the Pharisee. He directs towards God his entire life, his hang-ups, his tears, his despair. He makes himself utterly dependent on God. Let God do what he will. Let God have mercy. To pray is to present oneself before God without any masks, or veils, or non-existent virtues, or distinctions of any kind. It is to put everything before him, including our inability to pray.

Now don't misunderstand me or the parable. God will not mind if your prayer of thanksgiving sounds in part like the Pharisee's "O God, I thank you for all I am. In IQ I'm 100, in looks a stunner. I never miss Mass on Sunday (despite your boring priests), haven't broken one commandment this year. I work with the poor and the lonely, with the cancerous and the cantankerous. I even support my Parish Priest in the style to which he would like to become accustomed." Not a bad prayer, but useless unless you add, day in and day out, "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner." In your prayer of thanksgiving, thank God for His mercy.

Weakness, Sinfulness and Praying to the God of Truth

Our frailty does not disqualify us from prayer. The falls which leave me feeling ashamed and humbled, the weakness which betrays me into betraying God, and the general slum my inner life seems to be when I survey it in his presence: all these I can directly bring to him. They are his business, because they are part of my poverty and he delights in the poor. He invites me down the shaky ladder of pretence, as Jesus invited Zacchaeus down from his sycamore tree, and—like Zacchaeus—I have everything to gain by accepting the invitation.

The prayer of a sinner with a crushed and broken heart, whose conscience is humbled whenever it reminds the person

of their faults and weaknesses, is better than the prayer of an arrogant righteous person, puffed up whenever they think of themselves, haughtily sitting on his or her high horse, pompous because they imagine themselves to have reached a certain spiritual state. Whenever a sinner becomes aware of their weaknesses and begins to feel contrition, they are righteous. But whenever a righteous person becomes convinced of their own righteousness in conscience, then he/she is a sinner.

Jesus taught his disciples to pray. His teaching on prayer was entirely coherent with his life, his words and his mission. He did not teach prayers, but taught how to live by praying and how to pray by living. When Jesus taught us to pray, he was giving us his own prayer life. For Jesus, prayer was not merely a part of his life, it was his life. He hid nothing from the Father. His joys and sorrows, his hopes and his dark nights were always shared with the Father.

Nobody can learn how to see. For seeing is something we can do by nature. So too with prayer. Authentic prayer can never be learnt from someone else. It has its own instructor within it. Prayer is God's gift to the one who prays.

Only the one who is recollected receives; only in silence is heard the beating of the heart of God.

When we come together to pray, we are sustained and encouraged to be the Body of Christ in and for the world. Prayer is the lifeblood of the Church's ministry. Through prayer, which reaches its high point in the Sunday Mass, our concern and faith flows gently into the communities in which we live and beyond. These are the sources where we get strength to undertake the many important ministries and apostolates that are essential to our lives together, and to our witness to Christ.



'Where two or three gather together in my name, I am there among them'

Celebration of new Leaders of Liturgy and Prayer

Barbara Joyce, Urlingford Parish

A ceremony took place in the Retreat Centre in Castletown, Co Laois on Thursday 7th November 2019, 7.30pm. It was a very special occasion to celebrate the inauguration of ministers who had completed the course for Leadership in Prayer during the summer. The Bishop of Ossory, Bishop Dermot Farrell was present and delivered a beautiful homily on prayer and its many variations.

A representative from each of the 14 parishes of the Northern Deanery was given a coloured candle to place on the altar. Each candle represented a parish. The bearers of the candles processed up the centre aisle in twos and separated at the foot of the altar, one went to the right and one to the left. They placed the candles on the altar and stood back while all 14 candles were incensed. The representatives returned to their pews. The candles lighting provided a wonderful display of colour. The image of all the different coloured candles for me represents the variation of all the

different talents, virtues and gifts that we can share within our own parish and to others within our diocese. Individuals at the ceremony shared their gifts with us – a leader, a reader of scripture, a musician who added to the beauty of the occasion by supporting us in uplifting our voices to God.

In his homily, Bishop Farrell explained to us the essential need for prayer in our lives. He also stated the importance of both public and private prayer. He went on to endorse the need to take the time to pray, to make the time to pray.

Bishop Farrell reminded us that all the great saints were known for their prayer-filled lives. He spoke of the importance of Eucharistic Adoration and taking time to listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. We were reminded of the need to thank and praise God for His goodness to us.

The ceremony concluded with Bishop Farrell congratulating the individuals who had completed the leadership in prayer course and presenting each one



with a certificate. He gave everyone his blessing.

We were invited to chat and socialise over a cup of tea and refreshments afterwards.

This ceremony was prayerful and informative. Bishop Farrell gave us a wonderful homily and plenty of food for thought. I experienced a sense of peace and a sense of joy because God is with us and has promised that He will always be with us, yes, to the end of time.

Alice Burke, Aghaboe Parish

'Where two or three gather together in my name, I am there among them'

St Matthew gospel reminds us of His presence when we meet in His name.

His presence was felt in the Pastoral Centre, Castletown on Thursday evening, 7th November 2019 when 30 people of the Northern Deanery were blessed as Leaders of Prayer. Recognising the challenges facing the Catholic Church, the Northern Deanery Pastoral Council identified initiatives aimed at overcoming

the lack of ordained ministers. Fr Martin Delaney, P.P. Rathdowney Parish outlined the need for lay leaders of prayer and it was agreed by the NDPC to pursue the idea as more and more of our parishes will need prayer to be led by people other than ordained ministers.

Fr Delaney liaised with Ms. Julie Kavanagh, the Pastoral Resource Person for the diocese of Kildare and Leighlin and a programme for the training of people with a desire to be of service was arranged. Those identified were men and women who responded generously to the need for leaders of prayer in all our parishes. Training was scheduled for June 2019 at the De La Salle Centre, Castletown, Co. Laois and was attended by 30 participants.

The Evening Prayer and Blessing for Leaders of Prayer was celebrated at the Pastoral Centre, Castletown and Most Reverend Dermot Farrell, Bishop of Ossory officiated. In attendance were members of the Northern Deanery Pastoral Council along with the 30 participants and their families. Also present was Ms. Gemma Mulligan, Diocesan Pastoral Plan Coordinator and Sr Helen Maher Forum Co ordinator.

The celebration commenced with a candlelit procession. Each of the sixteen parishes of the Northern Deanery was led by Thurifier Ellis Costelloe who carried the ceremonial thurible bowl and incensed the lighted candles as they were placed on the altar – a symbol of the sacred trust being placed in the Leaders of Prayer.

Speaking on the theme of prayer, Bishop Farrell gave the homily and focused on the need to pray humbly for God's mercy. The Rite of Blessing of the Leaders of Prayer commenced with the calling of each participant's name and an invitation to stand and face the entire assembly. The Lay Leaders were formally asked:

Are you resolved to undertake the ministry of leading your brothers and sisters in prayer and worship, and so serve to build up the Church?

The liturgical celebration was uplifted by the choice of Hymns: Be thou my vision; Amazing Grace; and a beautiful rendition of the Magnificat with instrumental music by Mary Cuddy. The ceremony concluded with the Recessional Hymn: Give me Joy in my Heart.

Bishop Farrell presented a Certificate of Participation to each of the Leaders.

Final words of thanks were spoken by Kathleen Maher who thanked all involved from the inception of the project to completion. She thanked Bishop Farrell for his support and attendance at the ceremony. She thanked the members of the NDPC and reminded them of the Sunday pilgrimage between Aghaboe and Seir Kieran back in October 2018. This was intended as a bonding exercise to assist new members of the NDPC to get to know one another. At a deeper level this would facilitate open dialogue and greater participation in the work for the new Council. The inception of Leaders of Prayer was a direct consequence of this dialogue. She registered the thanks of the pilgrims for the hospitality received in Seir Kieran on that October Sunday.

She then went on to thank the De La Salle staff for the courtesy and hospitality received by the lay participants during the training sessions held there and for the hospitality prepared in the Dining Room to which all were invited following the ceremony.

On leaving, there was a distinct feeling that the laity can rise to the challenges ahead and develop gifts to hasten the emergence of a co-responsible Irish Church.

Breda Campion, Johnstown Parish

In June the Northern Deanery Pastoral Group organised three evenings of talks on the subject of leading prayer in the parish. The facilitator was Julie Kavanagh from the diocese of Kildare and the venue was the De La Salle Centre in Castletown. About 30 people attended from most of the parishes in the Northern Deanery. In the present climate of priest numbers declining it will be down to lay people to lead some services in the Church where appropriate.

The course covered aspects of leading prayer services and Eucharistic services... preparation, the service format and the conclusion. There was much discussion in the various groups and this proved very helpful to all in attendance.

In early November we gathered in Castletown again for a service of evening prayer led by Bishop Farrell. This was a lovely evening of hymns, prayers, incense and candles. The leaders were then presented with their certificates by Bishop Farrell. Sincere thanks to Brother Stephen and the staff in Castletown for their warm hospitality.

A prayer for our earth

All-powerful God, you are present in
the whole universe
And in the smallest of your
creatures.

You embrace with your tenderness
all that exists.

Pour out upon us the power of your
love,

That we may protect life and
beauty.

Fill us with peace, that we may live
As brothers and sisters, harming no
one.

O God of the poor,
Help us to rescue the abandoned
and forgotten of this earth,
So precious in your eyes.
Bring healing to our lives,
That we may protect the world and
not prey on it,

That we may sow beauty, not
pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts
Of those who look for gain
At the expense of the poor and the
earth.

Teach us to discover the worth of
each thing,
To be filled with awe and
contemplation,
To recognise that we are profoundly
united with every creature
As we journey towards your infinite
light.

We thank you for being with us each
day.

Encourage us, we pray, in our
struggle

For justice, love and peace.

On March 4th 2020 a *Laudato Si'* regional day is planned for the three dioceses of Ossory, Kildare and Leighlin and Ferns. It will be held in the Dolmen Hotel Carlow. The emphasis of this conference day is on implementing *Laudato Si'* in our parishes and communities. The day will be interactive and supportive and hopefully inspire people to get involved locally.

All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents.

Laudato Si'

Gemma Mulligan

Laudato Si' Praised be, an encyclical letter of Pope Francis on care for our common home was first published in 2015. Next year 2020 marks its 5th year anniversary. The publication looks at what is happening to our common home, pollution, the issue of water, loss of biodiversity, decline in the quality of human life and the breakdown of society. Chapters include the gospel of creation, the human roots of the ecological crisis, integral ecology, lines of approach and action and ecological education and spirituality.

Pope Francis through this document is making an urgent appeal for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all. (LS 14)

Laudato Si' draws on the best climate scientists in the world, philosophers and theologians as well as Pope Francis predecessor Pope Benedict XVI, who said that we are all responsible for the protection and care of the environment, that this responsibility knows no boundaries.

Benedict urged us to realise that creation is harmed where we ourselves have the final word, where everything is simply our property and we use it for ourselves alone. The misuse of creation begins when we

no longer recognise any higher instance than ourselves, when we see nothing else but ourselves (LS 6)

Trocaire's *Laudato Si'* project is working with parishes and dioceses in Ireland over the next two years in particular to help spread the message of *Laudato Si'* and to mobilise parishes in embedding *Laudato Si'* in their various ministries.

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The conference will include inputs from various speakers, discussions, workshops and a marketplace where attendees can explore the various groups and organisations who are working hard to protect our common home. All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents. (LS 14)

Representatives from all pastoral areas in Ossory are invited to attend and places can be reserved in January. More details will follow in the New Year but for now save the date March 4th 2020.



LIFE IN THE SPIRIT SEMINARS 2020

Sacred Heart Church

Moneenroe

Eircode R95 F6XK

Tuesday 4th Feb: Week 1: God's Love
Fr John Regan

Tuesday 11th Feb: Week 2: Salvation
Fr John Mockler

Tuesday 18th Feb: Week 3: New Life
Fr Jamie Twoigh

Tuesday 25th Feb: Week 4: Receiving God's Gift
Fr Tom Corcoran, Eddie Stone

Tuesday 3rd March: Week 5: Baptism in the Spirit
Fr Brendan Walsh

Tuesday 10th March :Week 6: Growth
Fr John Mockler

Thursday 19th March: Week 7:
Transformation Fr John Walsh

Rosary @ 6.50p.m. each night
and Mass at 7.30 p.m.

**All are welcome to this sacred time of music, prayer
and song and joyful celebration of our Faith.**





DIOCESE OF OSSORY

REVISED MASS SCHEDULE

effective since 1st December 2019

AGHABOE - DURROW - RATHDOWNEY

Pastoral Area Co-Ordinator: Very Rev. Martin Delaney, P.P.

Vigil:	Ballacolla	7.00p.m.
	Durrow	7.00p.m.*
	Cullohill	8.00p.m.
	Errill	8.30 p.m.
Sunday:	Clough	10.30a.m.
	Rathdowney	11.00a.m.
	Durrow	11.30 a.m.

** On occasion when the parish of Aghaboe or Rathdowney require a celebrant this Mass will be suspended.*

AGHAVILLER - BALLYHALE - MULLINAVAT

Pastoral Area Co-ordinator: Very Rev. Sean O' Connor, P.P.

Vigil:	Stoneyford	6.30 p.m.
	Bigwood	6.30 p.m.
	Ballyhale	7.30 p.m.
Sunday:	Knockmoylan	9.00 a.m.
	Huggintown	10.00 a.m.
	Mullinavat	10.00 a.m.
	Knocktopher	11.00 a.m.

BALLYCALLAN - FRESHFORD - TULLAROAN

Pastoral Area Co-Ordinator: Rt. Rev. Mgr. Kieron Kennedy P.P.

Vigil:	Kilmanagh	6.30 p.m.
	Tulla	8.00 p.m.
Sunday:	Killaloe	9.00 a.m.
	Ballycallan	10.15 a.m. *
	Tullaroan	10.30 a.m.
	Freshford	12.00 noon

** On occasion when the parish of Freshford or Tullaroan require a celebrant this Mass will be suspended.*

Diocese of Ossory

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BALLYRAGGET - CONAHY - LISDOWNEY

Pastoral Area Co-Ordinator: Very Rev. Patrick O' Farrell, P.P.

Vigil:	Ballyouskill	6.30 p.m.
	Jeninstown	8.00 p.m.
	Lisdowney	8.00 p.m.
Sunday:	Clontubrid	9.00 a.m. (1st, 3rd and 5th Sunday)
	Gathabawn	10.00 a.m. (2nd and 4th Sunday)
	Ballyragget	10.30 a.m.
	Conahy	11.30 a.m.

BORRIS IN OSSORY - CAMROSS - CASTLETOWN - SEIR KIERAN

Pastoral Area Co-ordinator: Very Rev. Jackie Robinson, P.P.

Vigil:	Castletown	7.30 p.m.
	Camross	7.30 p.m.
	Seir Kieran	7.30 p.m.
Sunday:	Killanure	9.00 a.m.
	Killasmeestia	9.30 a.m. (1st and 3rd Sunday)
	Knockaroo	9.30 a.m. (2nd, 4th and 5th Sunday)
	Seir Kieran	10.00 a.m.
	Pike of Rushall	10.30 a.m.
	Camross	11.00 a.m.

Mass schedule in the parish of Camross subject to review

CALLAN - DANESFORT - DUNAMAGGAN - WINDGAP

Pastoral Area Co-Ordinator: Very Rev. Daniel Carroll, P.P.

Vigil:	Callan	6.00 p.m.
	Cuffesgrange	7.30 p.m.
	Windgap	7.30 p.m. (1st 3rd & 5th Saturday)
	Coolagh	7.30 p.m. (1st and 3rd Saturday)
	Kilmoganny	7.30 p.m. (2nd and 4th Saturday)
Sunday:	Callan	8.00 a.m.
	Tullahought	9.30 a.m.
	Danesfort	10.00 a.m.
	Callan	10.00 a.m.
	Dunamaggan	11.00 a.m.
	Kells	11.30 a.m. (1st, 3rd and 5th Sunday)
	Newtown	11.30 a.m. (2nd and 4th Sunday)

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CASTLECOMER - CLOGH - MUCKALEE

Pastoral Area Co-Ordinator: Very Rev. Laurence Wallace, P.P.

Vigil:	Castlecomer	7.00 p.m.
	Moneenroe	7.30 p.m. (1st, 3rd and 5th Saturday)
	Clogh	7.30 p.m. (2nd and 4th Saturday)
	Coon	7.30 p.m.
Sunday:	Castlecomer	8.00 a.m.
	Ballyfoyle	9.45 a.m.
	Moneenroe	10.00 a.m.
	Muckalee	11.00 a.m.
	Clogh	11.00 a.m.
	Castlecomer	11.00 a.m.

CLARA – GOWRAN - TULLAHERIN

Pastoral Area Co-Ordinator: Very Rev. William Purcell, P.P.

Vigil:	Castlewarren	7.00 p.m.
	Tullaheerin	8.00 p.m.
Sunday:	Dungarvan	9.00 a.m.
	Clara	10.30 a.m.
	Bennettsbridge	10.30 a.m.
	Gowran	11.30 a.m.

FERRYBANK - GLENMORE - ROSBERCON - SLIEVERUE

Pastoral Area Co-Ordinator: Very Rev. Kieran O' Shea, P.P.

Vigil:	Slieverue	6.00 p.m.
	Glenmore	7.00 p.m. (1st, 3rd and 5th Saturday)
	Rosbercon	7.00 p.m. (2nd and 4th Saturday)
	Tullogher	7.00 p.m. (1st Saturday)
	Ferrybank	7.30 p.m.
Sunday:	Mullinarrigle	9.30 a.m.
	Ferrybank	10.00 a.m.
	Slieverue	10.00 a.m.
	Glenmore	11.00 a.m.
	Rosbercon	11.00 a.m.
	Ferrybank	11.30 a.m.

GALMOY - JOHNSTOWN - URLINGFORD

Pastoral Area Co-ordinator: Very Rev. Oliver Maher, P.P.

Vigil:	Urlingford	6.30 p.m.
	Johnstown	8.00 p.m.
Sunday:	Crosspatrick	9.00 a.m.
	Galmoy	10.15 a.m.
	Graine	11.30 a.m.

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INISTIOGE - THOMASTOWN

Pastoral Area Co-Ordinator: Very Rev. Daniel Bollard, P.P.

Vigil:	Thomastown	6.00 p.m.
	Rower	7.30 p.m.
Sunday:	Clodiagh	9.30 a.m.
	Thomastown	10.00 a.m.
	St Columba's Hospital	11.30 a.m. (1st, 3rd & 5th Sunday)*
	Chapel Hill	11.30 a.m. (2nd Sunday)*
	Mong	11.30 a.m. (4th Sunday)*
	Inistioge	11.30 a.m.

* Schedule in place while two priests reside in Pastoral Area

KILMACOW – MOONCOIN – TEMPLEORUM

Pastoral Area Co-Ordinator: Very Rev. Martin Tobin, Adm.

Vigil:	Piltown	6.00 p.m.
	Kilmacow	6.00 p.m.
	Mooncoin	7.00 p.m.
Sunday:	Templeorum	9.00 a.m.
	Carrigeen	9.30 a.m. (1st, 3rd and 5th Sunday)
	Kilanaspic	9.30 a.m. (2nd and 4th Sunday)
	Marian Hall, Kilmacow	9.30 a.m.*
	Owning	10.00 a.m.
	Kilmacow	11.00 a.m.
	Mooncoin	11.00 a.m.

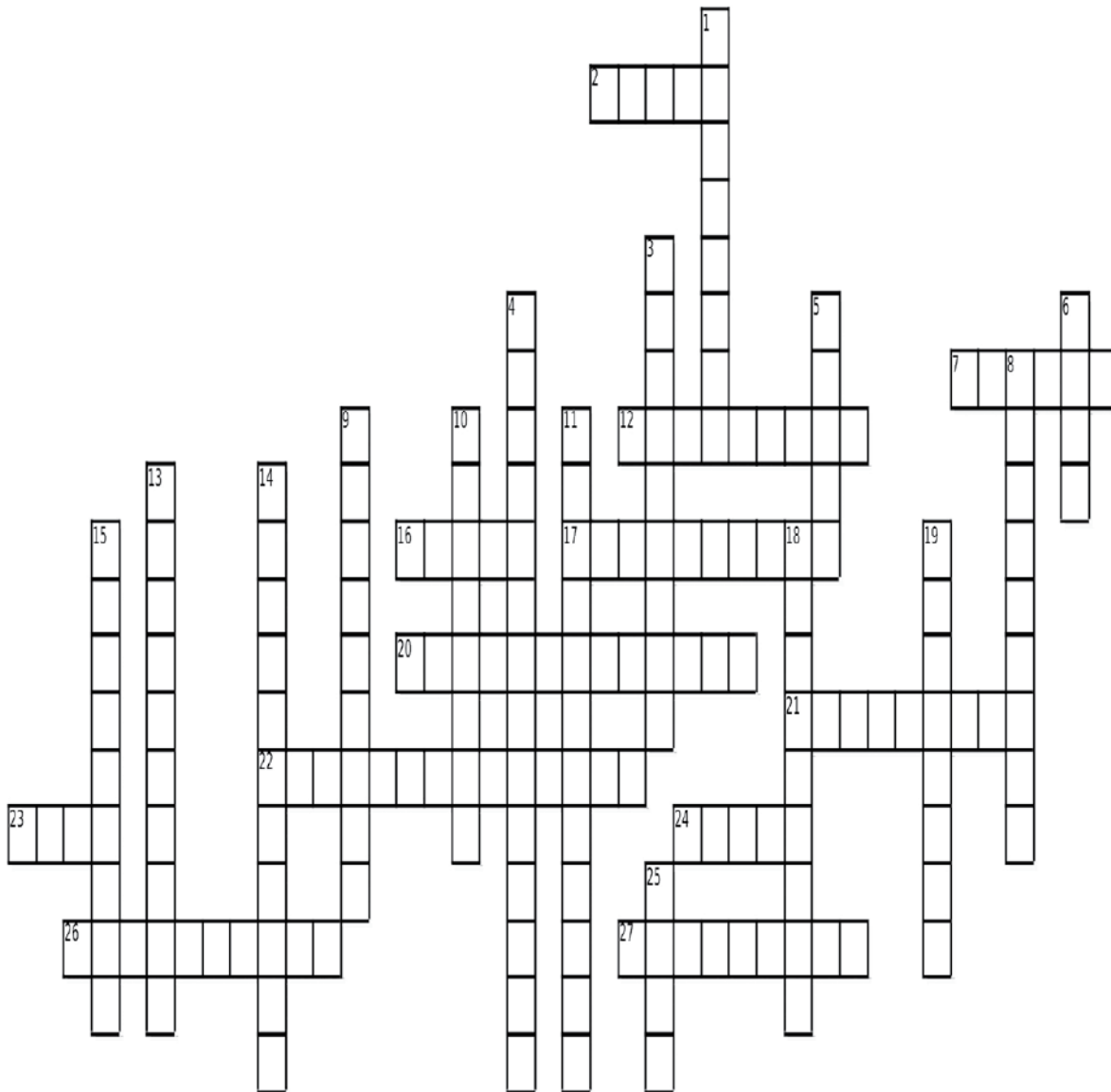
*Mass will cease when one priest resides in the parish of Kilmacow

ST CANICE'S - ST. JOHN'S - ST. MARY'S - ST. PATRICK'S

Pastoral Area Co-Ordinator: Very Rev. Roderick Whearty, Team Leader.

Vigil:	St John's	6.00 p.m.
	St Fiacre's	6.15 p.m.
	St Canice's	7.30 p.m.
Sunday:	St John's	8.00 a.m.
	St Patrick's	9.30 a.m.
	Foulkstown	10.00 a.m.
	St Canice's	10.00 a.m.
	Johnswell	10.00 a.m.
	St Fiacre's	10.30 a.m.
	St Mary's	11.00 a.m.
	Dunmore	11.00 a.m.
	St John's	11.30 a.m.
	St Canice's	11.30 a.m.
	St Fiacre's	12.00 noon
	St Patrick's	12.30 p.m.
	St Mary's	5.30 p.m.
	St John's	7.00 p.m.

CHRISTMAS CROSSWORD 2019



ACROSS

- 2 Greek goddess of the seasons
 7 Reader
 12 Intermediate Champions
 16 Plain or Gregorian
 17 A biblical one
 20 Advent joy
 21 House of bread
 22 An end of the estrangement, caused by sin
 23 Biblical site of the temple of Dagon
 24 Wife of the Prophet Hosea
 26 Ossory Island
 27 Praise be to you, my Lord". In the words of this beautiful canticle... (and so it goes)

DOWN

- 1 A parish council
 3 Declared null and void
 4 Prepare a way for the Lord
 5 Country that produced the most saints
 6 American Catholic athlete known for his malapropisms
 8 Recalling his birth
 9 City one... largely St Canice's Parish
 10 Changes colour with the season
 11 The study of our church
 13 With the full authority of office
 14 Issued by the Pope on his own Initiative
 15 Paul's occupation
 18 Over the Barrow from New Ross
 19 XVI
 25 "Categorical Imperative" philosopher

Send your entries, with your name, address, email and mobile number, to:

"Ossory Times Competition",
 Ossory Adult Faith Development,
 St Kieran's College,
 College Road,
 Kilkenny,

by 20th March 2020, first correct entry from the hat wins!

Prize for age 5-8
Colouring Competition

€20 Voucher
 for Toy Shop

Prize for age 8-13
Wordsearch Competition

€30 Voucher
 for Toy Shop

Prize for Adult
Crossword Competition

€50 Voucher
 for Chapter House Bookshop

Congrats to the winners from the Ossory Times Issue 21 competitions:

Adult Crossword:
 Susan Long

Children's Wordsearch, age 8-13:
 Mary McDonagh

Children's Colouring, age 5-8:
 Aoibheann Bowden

Colouring Competition



For ages 5-8



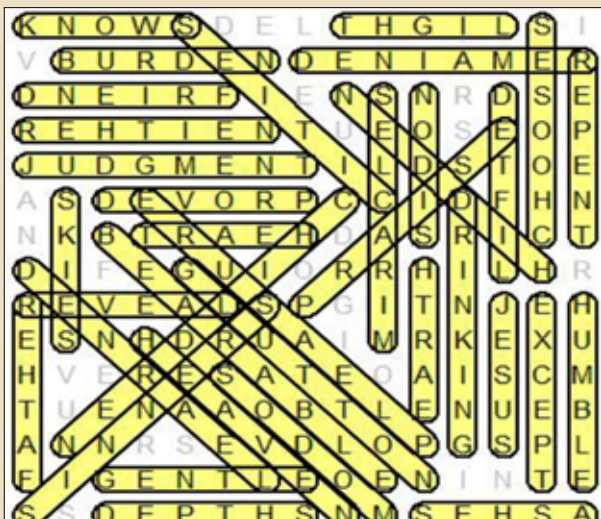
Wordsearch Competition



For ages 8-13

B R E A D R E H P E H S O U L
C R O O S T E R T R U T H E D
M O D G N I K D D R R E T E P
E J F O A T D E R U O P R L R
E T U A O T C L I N R E S I I
D M N D T L N B E A F P S L E
W E N A A H B U Y F I H C A S
W Z V R N S E O O R Y G A G T
A I E I P E S R I M N O T V S
W D L B R R V T N I W L T I E
O S U L E R Y O K R O I E N A
R E U D I D A A C H S V R E T
R E L S O N E A R E I E E T I
O E E B E P G E Y O D S D G N
S N O D S J B E T R A Y E R G

ANEW	ELDERS	PRAY
ARRIVED	HYMN	SHEPHERD
BLOOD	KINGDOM	RISEN
BETRAYER	JESUS	SORROW
BODY	OFFERED	SOUL
COVENANT	JUDAS	SPEAKING
BREAD	POURED	SPIRIT
DECLARED	MOUNT	TROUBLED
EYES	PRIESTS	TRUTH
DISOWN	OLIVES	WILLING
FATHER	ROOSTER	VINE
EATING	PETER	ZEBEDEE
GALILEE	SCATTERED	



Answers to Ossory Times Issue 21



DIOCESE OF OSSORY
ST MARY'S CATHEDRAL
RESTORATION FUND DRAW
2019/2020

12 MONTHLY DRAWS

March 2019 to February 2020

MONTHLY PRIZES

1st Prize	€2,000
2nd Prize	€1,000
3rd Prize	€500
4th Prize	€300
5th Prize	€300
6th Prize	€200
7th Prize	€200
8th Prize	€100
9th Prize	€100
10th Prize	€100

Promoters' Prize

€100 1st Prize Winner Promoter
€100 2nd Prize Winner Promoter

Subscription €10 per month. Draw will be held at 8pm on the last Wednesday of each month in the Chapter Room, St Mary's Cathedral, James's Street, Kilkenny. All are welcome to attend.

For further information contact Ossory Diocesan Office, James's Street, Kilkenny. Tel: 056 7762448

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Ossory Adult Faith Development

Pilgrimage to Rome Aug 24 - 29, 2020

Enlivening our faith through the art treasures of the Eternal City



Tour Organizers: Cultural Connections Ltd. T.A. 0776

PILGRIMAGE TO ROME Aug 24th – 29th, 2020

CHAPLAINS: FR DERMOT RYAN AND FR KIERAN O'SHEA

The Eternal City has a remarkable array of religious works of art – frescoes, paintings, sculptures, mosaics, stuccos. Over the centuries these treasures have inspired, educated and uplifted countless people. Our itinerary will explore the religious and catechetical meaning of some of these masterpieces.

BOOKING CONTACT:

Adult Faith Development, St Kieran's College

Phone: 0567753624 afd@ossory.ie

- Five nights in Rome, B&B
- One four-course restaurant dinner
- One buffet dinner at the College
- Full religious programme
- Coach tour by night

HOW TO BOOK: Fill out booking form, having read Terms & Conditions. Return it with a deposit of €300 p.p. (plus single supplement and insurance premium if applicable). Make cheques payable to: CULTURAL CONNECTIONS LTD.

- Audience with Pope Francis
- St Peter's Basilica
- Trevi fountain and Spanish Steps
- Pantheon and Piazza Navona... and more



Michelangelo's
Pietà



Caravaggio in
St Augustine Church



Ecstasy of
St Teresa by Bernini



1st Christian mosaic in
St Pudenziana