



OSSORY ADULT FAITH DEVELOPMENT

April 2020 – Issue 23

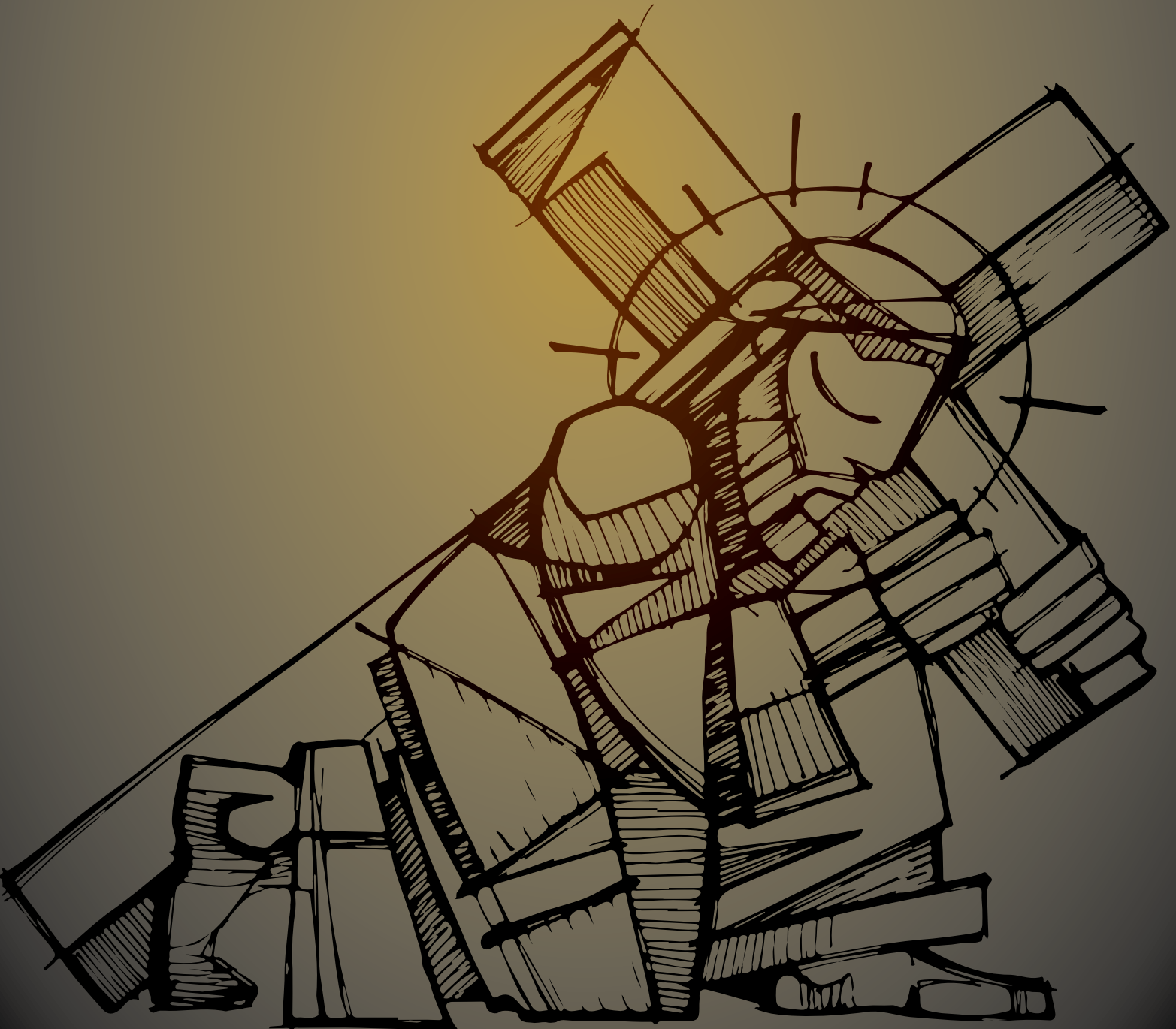
OSSORY TIMES

Sharing the life of our Diocese

- DIGITAL EDITION -

ARCHIVE EDITION

Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic (Covid-19) this edition of the Ossory Times was only published digitally. A small number (10) were printed for archival purposes.



Editorial

Welcome to the latest edition of the *Ossory Times*.

These are strange days... words on everyone's lips as we pass. It is counter-intuitive for our humanity to try to stay apart - we are social beings and the Irish love to come together. But we know the imperative of our respecting the guidance of the Government and the medical community at this time. We know that the power to tackle this virus is in our hands - both literally and figuratively. It has been, then, an unusual Lent. But it has been Lent! During these weeks we have continued to pray together, to journey together, to be Church - and thanks to innovation, and to our helping each other, the message of the Gospel continues to be shared and brought to life.

These pages of the *Ossory Times* then, the first only digital edition, remind us that in the hardest of Lents we remain an Easter people. We are a community of great hope and energy. We are a resurrection people and it is our unwavering belief in the power of that hope that allows us see clearly the shoots of promise in even the darkest of days. The wonderful work of those on the front line: nurses, doctors, care assistants, clergy, guards, paramedics, fire departments, shop attendants, supply chain and logistics people... and so many more who are continuing to be the kind face that we meet, the smile that we need and the hand outstretched to us in difficult moments. These are then the face of a risen Christ in our communities prompting us with the message we need to hear. These are the voice of God reminding us that we are not apart but rather united, for now, in a new way.

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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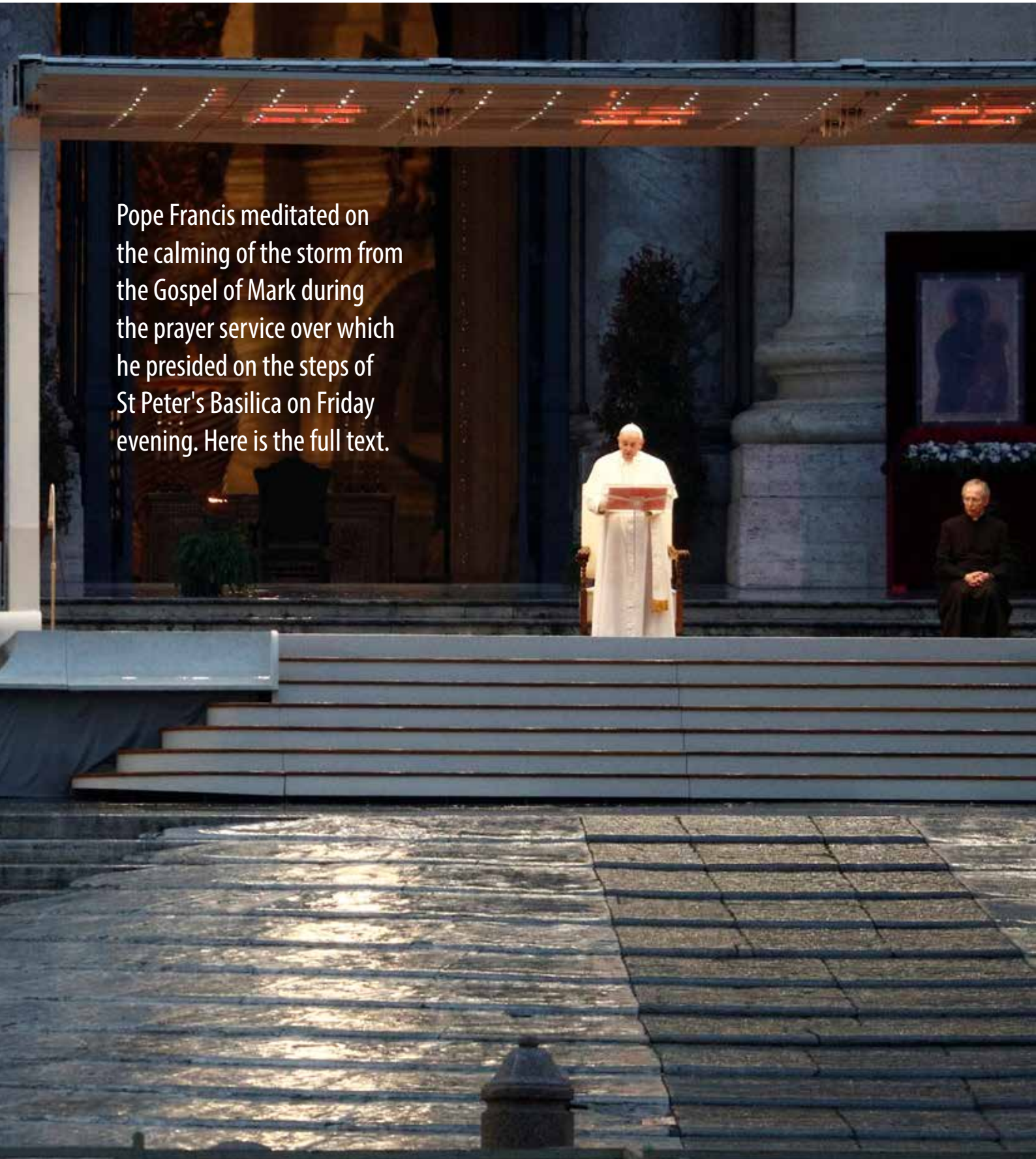
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Pope Francis meditated on the calming of the storm from the Gospel of Mark during the prayer service over which he presided on the steps of St Peter's Basilica on Friday evening. Here is the full text.





In the midst of isolation when we are suffering from a lack of tenderness and chances to meet up, and we experience the loss of so many things, let us once again listen to the proclamation that saves us: he is risen and is living by our side.

Pope Francis

Urbi et orbi

"When evening had come" (Mk 4:35). The Gospel passage we have just heard begins like this. For weeks now it has been evening. Thick darkness has gathered over our squares, our streets and our cities; it has taken over our lives, filling everything with a deafening silence and a distressing void, that stops everything as it passes by; we feel it in the air, we notice in people's gestures, their glances give them away. We find ourselves afraid and lost. Like the disciples in the Gospel we were caught off guard by an unexpected, turbulent storm. We have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, all of us called to row together, each of us in need of comforting the other. On this boat... are all of us. Just like those disciples, who spoke anxiously with one voice, saying "We are perishing" (v. 38), so we too have realized that we cannot go on thinking of ourselves, but only together can we do this.

It is easy to recognize ourselves in this story. What is harder to understand is Jesus' attitude. While his disciples are quite naturally alarmed and desperate, he stands in the stern, in the part of the boat that sinks first. And what does he do? In spite of the tempest, he sleeps on soundly, trusting in the Father; this is the only time in the Gospels we see Jesus sleeping. When he wakes up, after calming the wind and the waters, he turns to the disciples in a reproaching voice: "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" (v. 40).

Let us try to understand. In what does the lack of the disciples' faith consist, as contrasted with Jesus' trust? They had not stopped believing in him; in fact, they called on him. But we see how they call on him: "Teacher, do you not care if we perish?" (v. 38). *Do you not care*: they think that Jesus is not interested in them, does not care about them. One of the things that hurts us and our families most when we hear it said is: "Do you not care about me?" It is a phrase that wounds and unleashes storms in our hearts. It would have shaken Jesus too. Because he, more than anyone, cares about us. Indeed, once they have called on him, he saves his disciples from their discouragement.

The storm exposes our vulnerability and uncovers those false and superfluous certainties around which we have constructed our daily schedules, our projects, our habits and priorities. It shows us how we have allowed to become dull and feeble the very things that nourish, sustain and strengthen our lives and our communities. The tempest lays bare all our prepackaged ideas and forgetfulness of what nourishes our people's souls; all those attempts that anesthetize us with ways of thinking and acting that supposedly "save" us, but instead prove incapable of putting us in touch with our roots and keeping alive the memory of those who have gone before us. We deprive ourselves of the antibodies we need to confront adversity.

In this storm, the façade of those stereotypes with which we camouflaged our egos, always worrying about our image, has fallen away, uncovering once more that (blessed) common belonging, of which we cannot be deprived: our belonging as brothers and sisters.

"Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" Lord, your word this evening strikes us and regards us, all of us. In this world, that you love more than we do, we have gone ahead at breakneck speed, feeling powerful and able to do anything.

Greedy for profit, we let ourselves get caught up in things, and lured away by haste. We did not stop at your reproach to us, we were not shaken awake by wars or injustice across the world, nor did we listen to the cry of the poor or of our ailing planet. We carried on regardless, thinking we would stay healthy in a world that was sick. Now that we are in a stormy sea, we implore you: "Wake up, Lord!"

"Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" Lord, you are calling to us, calling us to faith. Which is not so much believing that you exist, but coming to you and trusting in you. This Lent your call reverberates urgently: "Be converted!", "Return to me with all your heart" (Joel 2:12).

You are calling on us to seize this time of trial as a *time of choosing*. It is not the time of your judgement, but of our judgement: a time to choose what matters and what passes away, a time to separate what is necessary from what is not. It is a time to get our lives back on track with regard to you, Lord, and to others. We can look to so many exemplary companions for the journey, who, even though fearful, have reacted by giving their lives.

This is the force of the Spirit poured out and fashioned in courageous and generous self-denial. It is the life in the Spirit that can redeem, value and demonstrate how our lives are woven together and sustained by ordinary people – often forgotten people – who do not appear in newspaper and magazine headlines nor on the grand catwalks of the latest show, but who without any doubt are in these very days writing the decisive events of our time: doctors, nurses, supermarket employees, cleaners, caregivers, providers of transport, law and order forces, volunteers, priests, religious men and women and so very many others who have understood that no one reaches salvation by themselves. In the face of so much suffering, where the authentic development of our peoples is assessed, we experience the

priestly prayer of Jesus: "That they may all be one" (Jn 17:21). How many people every day are exercising patience and offering hope, taking care to sow not panic but a shared responsibility. How many fathers, mothers, grandparents and teachers are showing our children, in small everyday gestures, how to face up to and navigate a crisis by adjusting their routines, lifting their gaze and fostering prayer. How many are praying, offering and interceding for the good of all. Prayer and quiet service: these are our victorious weapons.

"Why are you afraid? Have you no faith"? Faith begins when we realise we are in need of salvation. We are not self-sufficient; by ourselves we flounder: we need the Lord, like ancient navigators needed the stars. Let us invite Jesus into the boats of our lives. Let us hand over our fears to him so that he can conquer them. Like the disciples, we will experience that with him on board there will be no shipwreck. Because this is God's strength: turning to the good everything that happens to us, even the bad things. He brings serenity into our storms, because with God life never dies.

The Lord asks us and, in the midst of our tempest, invites us to reawaken and put into practice that solidarity and hope capable of giving strength, support and meaning to these hours when everything seems to be floundering. The Lord awakens so as to reawaken and revive our Easter faith. We have an anchor: by his cross we have been saved. We have a rudder: by his cross we have been redeemed. We have a hope: by his cross we have been healed and embraced so that nothing and no one can separate us from his redeeming love.

In the midst of isolation when we are suffering from a lack of tenderness and chances to meet up, and we experience the loss of so many things, let us once again listen to the proclamation that saves us: he is risen and is living by our side. The Lord asks us from his cross to rediscover the life

that awaits us, to look towards those who look to us, to strengthen, recognize and foster the grace that lives within us. Let us not quench the wavering flame (cf. Is 42:3) that never falters, and let us allow hope to be rekindled.

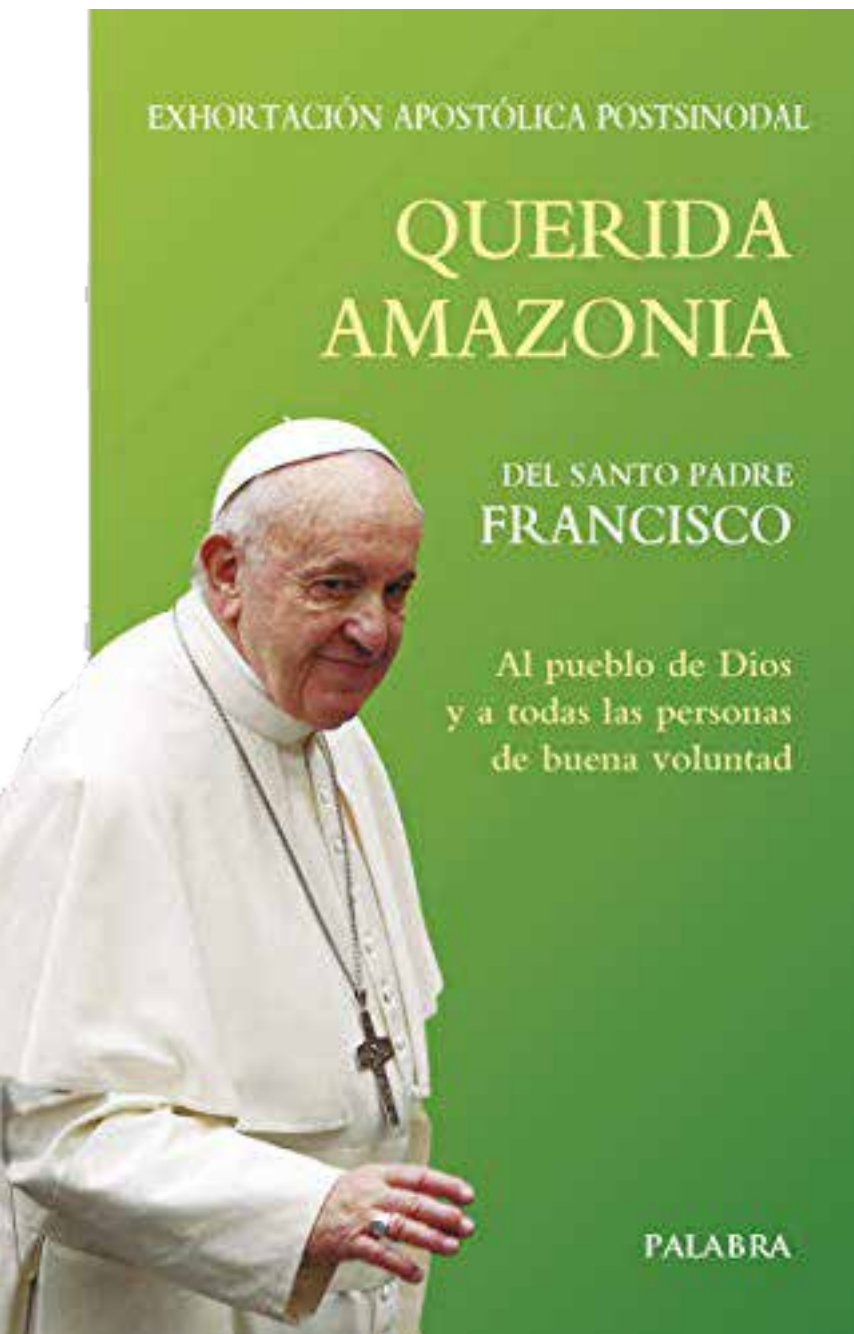
Embracing his cross means finding the courage to embrace all the hardships of the present time, abandoning for a moment our eagerness for power and possessions in order to make room for the creativity that only the Spirit is capable of inspiring. It means finding the courage to create spaces where everyone can recognize that they are called, and to allow new forms of hospitality, fraternity and solidarity. By his cross we have been saved in order to embrace hope and let it strengthen and sustain all measures and all possible avenues for helping us protect ourselves and others. Embracing the Lord in order to embrace hope: that is the strength of faith, which frees us from fear and gives us hope.

"Why are you afraid? Have you no faith"? Dear brothers and sisters, from this place that tells of Peter's rock-solid faith, I would like this evening to entrust all of you to the Lord, through the intercession of Mary, Health of the People and Star of the stormy Sea. From this colonnade that embraces Rome and the whole world, may God's blessing come down upon you as a consoling embrace. Lord, may you bless the world, give health to our bodies and comfort our hearts. You ask us not to be afraid. Yet our faith is weak and we are fearful. But you, Lord, will not leave us at the mercy of the storm. Tell us again: "Do not be afraid" (Mt 28:5). And we, together with Peter, "cast all our anxieties onto you, for you care about us" (cf. 1 Pet 5:7).

Apart from the fundamental fact that we all belong to the same human family, there is much in the Pope's document that can help us all in our life as Christians.

Let us not clip the wings of the Holy Spirit

Albert McDonnell



If the ministry of Pope Francis could be summarised in a single phrase, the expression used in the title of this article would be a strong contender. 'Let us not clip the wings of the Holy Spirit' occurs in paragraph sixth-nine of a document published on 2 February, 2020 by the Pope and addressed to the people of God and all persons of good will. The document is entitled *Querida Amazonia* (Beloved Amazon). It is a post-synodal apostolic exhortation. It is written by the Pope to encourage not only Catholics but all people who try to do the right thing. The document is based in large part on a world-wide gathering (synod) of bishops held in the Vatican during October 2019.

A key part of Pope Francis' ministry is discernment. The Pope is a Jesuit and discernment is central to their spirituality reflecting the writings

of their founder, St Ignatius of Loyola. Decisions take time. They require listening, involvement, consultation, prayer, study and reflection. The process includes being open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, drawing on the wisdom of ages past and learning from the experience of the men and women of our own time.

The Synod of Bishops, which was the primary source for this document, focused on the vast Amazon region which is 7.8 million square kilometres in size and includes parts of Brazil, Bolivia, Perú, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname and French Guyana. From an environmental perspective it is exceptionally important. Twenty percent of the non-frozen fresh water, 34% of the forest, and 30-40% of the flora and fauna of the world are found there. Thirty-three million people live in the region of whom 2.5 million are indigenous belonging to 390 groups, 137 of these peoples do not have contact with the wider world. Two hundred and forty languages are spoken in the region.

The 2019 Synod of Bishops consisted of 184 bishops, of whom 113 came from the Amazon region. In addition, there were 55 lay people, 6 representatives of other Christian churches, 12 special guests and 25 invited experts. Prior to the synod there was a process of consultation with church communities and others in the Amazon involving 87,000 people. The Pope visited the Amazon region in 2018. At the conclusion of 21 days of discussion, the Synod produced a document which identified a way forward for the Church and people of the Amazon.

Some might wonder as to why people from outside the Amazon region should pay attention to this document? Apart from the fundamental fact that we all belong to the same human family, there is much in the Pope's document that can help us all in our life as Christians. All of humanity is faced with largely similar fundamental problems and opportunities.

The Pope does not seek to unravel every problem in this document. He offers a framework for reflection to carry the process forward. Pope Francis 'officially presents' the document that the synod itself produced and encourages everyone to read it. He doesn't address every point that the synod discussed. For example, he omits reference to the ordination to the priesthood of married men. The Amazon region already has numerous married men who are ordained to the diaconate. Many feel that priestly ordination should be extended to include married men. Most of the Eastern rite Churches in communion with Rome already do this and several former Anglican married clergy have been ordained priests in the Catholic church. There is a great need for more priests in the Amazon where many Catholic communities are deprived of the Eucharist for long periods. The synod supported this proposal in its final document. However, many others were strongly opposed to this proposal. The Pope choose not to comment on this issue. A key part of the ministry of the Pope is that of fostering unity and perhaps he felt that expanding priestly ministry to include married men would create deep division. Nevertheless, it is significant that he so warmly endorses the final document from the synod which contained this proposal.

Querida Amazonia is not an abstract, dry document. The Pope presents several interrelated dreams for the Amazon region. He employs the terms 'splendour', 'drama' and 'mystery'. He depicts the Amazon region as a fresco made up of great contrasts between violence and beauty, exploitation and wisdom. The Pope quotes sixteen poets and seeks to invite all people of good will towards contemplation and onwards to dream.

The first dream of Pope Francis is a social dream. He outlines the appalling suffering of the indigenous peoples at the hand of Europeans when the region was colonised. This suffering continues

today as a minority continues to exploit the majority through the plundering of the region's natural resources. This exploitation has driven many indigenous and other poor people into the cities where deprivation and addiction awaits them. The Pope dreams of social dialogue involving all the people of the region so that fellowship may be fostered. Christians have a prophetic voice to offer in this process.

Pope Francis' second dream is cultural. This dream is about caring for roots and diversity. Cultures need to be open to mutual enrichment to be life giving. Every group has its own symbols and customs by means of which a vision for the world is expressed and quality of life grows. The diversity of cultures in the Amazon region (indigenous, African and European) make mutual respect of cultures and openness towards each other especially important and enriching.

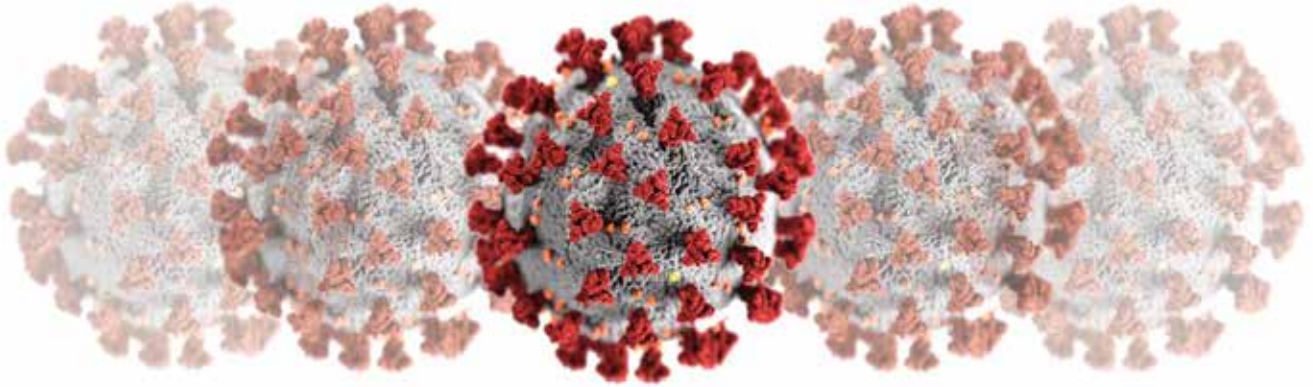
The third dream is ecological. In 2015 Pope Francis wrote perhaps his most important document entitled *Laudato Sí* on care for creation. In many ways *Querida Amazonia* is a concrete application of *Laudato Sí* to a particular region. The importance of the Amazon region from an ecological viewpoint for its inhabitants and the entire world could not be overstated. Equally the level of destruction of its rivers and forests is such as to place human survival at risk. The wellbeing of people and creation are inseparable. There is also the theological dimension as God reveals himself in his creation. The way forward can only emerge from a change in the human heart so that people opt for a different style of life which is serene, respectful and fraternal.

The final dream presented by Pope Francis is an ecclesial dream. The Church is called to walk with the people of the Amazon region. The message of salvation through Christ is destined for all people. The Gospel and the Church will find different expressions in different

cultures. This process of inculturation reflects the fact that the faith is not a museum piece but 'a constantly growing tree'. Therefore, openness to the traditions, history and reality of people's lives is central. The Pope promotes 'holiness with an Amazonian face' rather than an imported, imposed faith. The Eucharist joins heaven and earth as it embraces all creation. There is an acute shortage of priests in the Amazon region. There are areas within the Amazon region which produce more priests to minister in Europe or North America than choose to serve in their areas of origin. Pope Francis speaks of promoting local vocations for the Amazon and inviting additional missionaries from abroad so that the Eucharist may be available to more people. He also encourages 'the stable presence of lay leaders endowed with authority'. The role of women leaders is of particular importance in the Pope's vision of a Synodal Church where each member's role is valued. Pope Francis concludes this section with a discussion of overcoming conflict by means of transcending opposing approaches by finding a better, higher approach which preserves what is best in both opposing visions.

The four overlapping dreams of Pope Francis apply to all people in all places. His social, cultural, ecological and ecclesial visions serve to lift up all humanity and bring every man and woman closer to his/her destiny. In Ireland the gap between culture and faith grows as Church structures and expressions of the faith contract. The proclamation and living of the Gospel of salvation that speaks to and promotes the dignity of all people and the care of our common home is the great challenge facing all Christians. Courageous, imaginative openness to the novelty of the Holy Spirit to create something new with the inexhaustible riches of Jesus Christ is needed (paragraph # 69 *Querida Amazonia*). Let us not clip the wings of the Holy Spirit!

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COVID-19 and a new Church

Jim Maher

I find the utter change we are all seeing locally, and indeed globally, with the onslaught of the Corona Virus to be literally of "biblical proportions" to borrow the phrase. It looks like socially, economically or spiritually nothing will be the same again as we hopefully emerge from this global emergency.

Over the years, as a man of faith, I have tuned into, listened and have been challenged and inspired by the Franciscan Friar Richard Rohr OFM of the New Mexico province. A preacher, teacher, author and founder of the Centre for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque, USA who often mentions the transformative nature of the Gospel and the fact that it is only in "liminal space" that real transformation and growth takes place. The world is certainly standing now at that "threshold" where no-one knows for sure what is round the corner. Rohr has used modern communication and IT very successfully in getting the Gospel message out to the world.

Currently we too are benefiting from this type of communication locally in terms of

Daily and Sunday Liturgies being made available to us all: webcams; parish radios; eBooks; daily tweets and texts. We are seeing leaders from Church and State step up to the plate in these days. I am also aware of the role played by the Adult Faith Development Team in this process here in this Diocese in producing on-line and digital/radio material and when things do eventually settle down they too will play a new vital role in the emerging Church (the People of God). I enjoy the Sunday Mass with our own Bishop Dermot and Bishop Denis of Kildare and Leighlin and I know this has brought people together to pray in great numbers in these worrying times.

I am aware that this is a fearful time for very many among us but deep down I feel things will be okay. It is an opportunity for turning to the Lord in whatever way we know best and have the humility to acknowledge that we are powerless on our own and that we are all in this together bringing our various gifts talents and flaws. Like Rohr we too have now to use modern means to unite us.



CHURCH MATTERS



Change

Dermot Ryan

When we emerge from this, and we will, questions must be asked. What is the life of our parishes? What is the work of our communities of faith? What did we have to stop in these days... and was it missed? If it was, what did we do; and if it wasn't what is that saying?

Have you Zoomed? Many have. I am not even sure it is legitimate to use as a verb the name of a company, which just a number of weeks ago we had not even heard about. But now, just a short time later, to zoom is not only an activity, it is a common one. We have no doubt in parishes invaded that virtual and digital world so as to bring to life our daily activities. We have met in small groups of the Diocese, national groups, held meetings of Boards of Management, met with committees and councils and maybe even met friends in far flung countries in this digital space so that our work, our friendships and our journeys of faith can continue. It is, for now, the 'norm' - that is to say normal even though it is anything but...

This Lent, by reason of chance timing rather than any prophetic design, the Adult Faith Development group had moved into a more virtual space. We had in recent times felt that the more traditional medium of printed material was not reaching new audiences, and as the mandate we are all given "go therefore and make disciples..." involves more than speaking to the already convinced, we moved to a new means of delivery. This Lent we continued the traditional texts, tweets, and short daily website videos but we moved for the first time in a real way to eBooks for our daily lenten reflections and for our Sunday scripture booklets. It was notable that these reached a new audience, in a new way, given the situation we happened to now find ourselves journeying through. A journey that brought new questions of old reliables too.

How could we as a community of faith, come together, in a real way, now that we had to stay apart. Our traditional, and base fundamental form of gathering for the Celebration of Eucharist was, by necessity, taken. But immediately, in response, parishes started to innovate - webcams, that may have been dusty, parish radios and facebook live became

the new way of our being church. Thanks to the generosity of KCLR96fm our Sunday celebrations reached the homes of people all over Kilkenny, Carlow and beyond and Community Radio Kilkenny City afforded another option for those in the city environs. It was reassuring that we - now apart - could come together, support each other, pray and be simply together.

When we emerge from this, and we will, questions must be asked. What is the life of our parishes? What is the work of our communities of faith? What did we have to stop in these days... and was it missed? If it was, what did we do; and if it wasn't what is that saying? What will we have to change - because change is what we've always had to do.

Prompting for innovation, and our seeing with new eyes, in 2012 Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini wondered why has the church often remained 200 years behind the times. "Why has it not been shaken up? Are we afraid? Fear instead of courage? Nevertheless, faith is the foundation of the church. Faith, trust, courage.... Only love", he noted, "conquers tiredness".

Pope Francis too, in addressing the Roman Curia just this past Christmas reminded them not to fear change as it is the nature of the missionary church. Recalling the words of Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, in his book *Il Gattopardo* Pope Francis reminded them that, "Everything needs to change, so everything can stay the same".

We, then, must continue this change, prompted not only by dramatic shifts in the world around us, not only by promptings of the prophets in our midst, but also from a simple desire to bring, ironically, the unchanging message of God in new, engaging and novel ways to a people now listening with different ears.

There can be no doubt that when calmer times return the issue of how we embrace new ways of communicating the message of the Church will be high on the agenda!

"I am with you always"

Breda Lynch, Slieverue

The recent Covid-19 restrictions have closed many doors and our churches have not been exempt. A few short weeks ago who would have foreseen a situation where we would no longer be able to gather physically for Masses and the celebration of Holy Week in our own parish churches.

Despite this scenario as the old hymn reminds us - 'the voice of prayer is never silent, nor dies the strain of praise away'. Some doors may have indeed closed but others have opened, facilitated by means of technological advancements which to date have not always been seen as a blessing by all of us!

Church doors may have closed but the airwaves and the internet have opened up, enabling countless numbers of people in our diocese and throughout the world to continue to be part of the life of the Church. This has been a great source of consolation to those who are restricted to their homes and who otherwise might become more isolated from the community of faith.

Many parishes have webcams, facebook pages, parish radios and other means of communication. National TV & radio along with local radio broadcast Mass daily and at weekends and deserve great credit for doing so. It is interesting to note that the numbers of those 'attending' Mass online and via other media formats has far exceeded the number that we usually see gathered in our churches. It is a reminder that new technologies do offer us an opportunity to enhance our lives of prayer and how

we transmit the Gospel. There can be no doubt that when calmer times return the issue of how we embrace new ways of communicating the message of the Church will be high on the agenda!

Those of us who have grown up with the world wide web and with smart phones and other devices and gadgets attached to us should not forget that the openness of the church to new technologies in its mission of proclaiming the gospel is not altogether new. Listening to Mass celebrated by Bishop Dermot Farrell and broadcast on KCLR radio recently it came to mind that in 1931 the Italian radio pioneer Marconi established Vatican Radio which enabled the church to communicate on a global basis ever since. Radio has also provided an essential means of communication on the mission field and we think also of people like the martyred Archbishop of San Salvador St Oscar Romero who communicated hope to his people via radio during a time of great suffering and injustice.

The Second Vatican Council and every pope has encouraged the church to embrace these new methods and not to be afraid of them. The present crisis shows us and maybe encourages us to be a little bit more open to exploring all the means at our disposal so that the message of God's Love can be broadcast to a wider audience who are continually surfing and turning the dial in the search for meaning hope and love in their lives. The church is still with us in these days. Christ is still with us in these days, He is always with us...even on line!

We were, and still are, facing a very challenging time for schools in which teachers, students and parents would need to work together for the best possible outcomes for students.

When the going gets tough - Catholic schools get going

Ken Maher

Billy Ocean had a famous hit with "When the going gets tough, the tough get going". It's fair to say that in recent times, on a global, national and local scale, the going has certainly gotten tough and in these days, weeks and possibly months ahead the "tough" will need to get going. Many of us may remember hearing about the spread of the Coronavirus in China during our own New Years festivities on 1st January. Since then, it has been a feature of our daily news reports, yet with the distraction of the General Election, we may not have really began to sit up and take notice of the threat of this virus until France announced its first Covid-19 related death on February 14th. Subsequently, we heard of a surge in cases in Italy, cruise ships in quarantine and eventually on 28th February, the first case on the island of Ireland followed by the first confirmed case in the Republic of Ireland on 29th February. By then, we were all listening and the going was about to get very tough. Tough decisions would need to be made.

The next day, a secondary school was closed in the East of the country, after it was confirmed that a male student from the school had the virus. Since then, things have moved rapidly. Schools were under pressure to make contingency plans in the case of possible closures. By 12th March, it seemed almost inevitable that as the numbers of cases arose in Ireland, the Taoiseach, speaking from Washington, officially closed all schools, colleges and childcare facilities. The going was getting tougher.

Schools were suddenly faced with a very uncertain future. Teachers, students and parents were asking the same questions. What about Leaving Cert Oral Examinations due to be carried out at the end of March? What about the many practical subject deadlines due in the coming weeks? Will we return to school before or after Easter? How can we continue to study from home? All valid questions with no easy answers. The continuity of education in this time of crisis was critical. We were, and still are,



Carl Lynch finding new ways to teach students.

facing a very challenging time for schools in which teachers, students and parents would need to work together for the best possible outcomes for students. Teachers would need to use all of their innovative skills to ensure continuity for their students.

I've witnessed first hand, not only in my own school but in all the schools around the City and its environs, the response of our teachers, something that, no doubt, has happened in schools throughout our county, diocese and nation.

Teachers quickly gathered school email addresses of students to establish virtual learning environments. Virtual classrooms were set up quickly through

platforms such as "Google Classroom", "One Note" and others. These platforms provide students with an opportunity to communicate with their teacher on a daily basis and to continue to submit work and receive feedback. Teachers have volunteered to provide free lessons through "Zoom", "zoho.showtime" and other such websites where hundreds of students are logging on each day. Importantly too - Guidance counsellors and chaplains have made themselves available both through online platforms and by email/phone throughout this crisis to offer advice, care and a friendly ear for students who may be worried or struggling in these days - this latter piece



such a part of learning environment of our Catholic schools.

I have witnessed Special Needs Coordinators calling parents of students with additional needs to check in and support them when differentiating work appropriate for their child's learning needs. Schools have kept in close contact with parents to reassure them that teaching and learning is continuing and that guidance, pastoral and additional needs services are still available. During the past month of this outbreak, some commentators have mentioned their new appreciation for the human spirit and community that exists in Ireland; that

spirit of volunteerism, compassion and charity which so often surfaces in Irish people when the going gets tough. Some have mentioned their "faith in humanity" is being restored.

However, when working as a Deputy Principal of a Secondary School, it is very difficult to ever lose one's faith in humanity. On a daily basis, I am blessed to witness the care and compassion that staff have for their students, the voluntary spirit of students, staff, Boards of Management and parents and the living out of our Catholic ethos by all. In recent weeks, it has been a privilege to witness, once again, that same voluntary spirit of teachers in all our schools who are so determined to find ways to continue teaching, helping and caring for their students.

We are reminded of the very essence of what Catholic education is all about - that noble profession of teaching, as exemplified through the vocation of Jesus, in passing on something sacred to His followers; that voluntary spirit of compassion, kindness and care for our young people, in order to ensure their holistic development through the modelling and teaching of Gospel values. This is the very cornerstone on what all of our Catholic Schools were founded upon and, if recent times are anything to go by, it is clear that voluntary teaching, the belief that we are passing on something sacred, the critical important of education and the care and compassion for our young people, remains alive and well in our schools today.

There are still many uncertainties and questions that require answering regarding education during these difficult times. The going is tough, no doubt it will get tougher but the evidence shows that all our Catholic Schools in Ossory are tough enough for the challenge.



“A change is not change; it is what we do”

Jim Maher

I was surprised but pleasantly challenged to get the call to consider submitting my reaction, observations and thoughts on having attended the evening hosted on March 2nd at St Kieran's College titled “A Change is not change; it is what we do”. At the very outset this title attracted me - it sounded like something with a bit of depth. The idea of viewing the recent film “The Two Popes” followed by a discussion sounded somewhat

Personally I found this to be a very significant and exciting moment for all of us, as followers in the world, and we haven't been disappointed.

exciting and as it so happens Mary and I had already seen the film, so I felt the opportunity for a discussion on it might be very informative.

I well recall, the actual evening of the Papal election - Mary and I were returning from a hospital appointment in Dublin and we were listening to the event on the car radio. For close on fifty years I have been fascinated, challenged and inspired by St Francis Of Assisi and by many of his followers but that is a story for another time... When the Papal election was announced, and while we were waiting for to hear the name the new Pope would taking I actually recall saying to Mary "wouldn't it be amazing if he happened to choose the Name Francis" and, of course, the rest is history.

Personally I found this to be a very significant and exciting moment for all of us, as followers in the world, and we haven't been disappointed. We are, I think, all being led and challenged to engage with and act upon the message of Christ in a fresh way since the day of that election. So with that in mind I was keen to partake in this local initiative by the Adult Faith Development team.

I arrived at the venue early and number of other people from various areas of the Diocese were arriving early also. I felt it was wonderful use of technology to bring us together and after a brief welcome from Fr Dermot Ryan the film

commenced with no technical glitches! I was aware that it could be a fairly long night, especially after a full work day, and I hoped that I wouldn't nod off. The seating was very comfortable and I was thankful that didn't happen! There were a few aspects of the film which registered more fully with me on this my second viewing.

When the film ended Fr Dermot introduced the panel (himself, Bishop Dermot and Ms Gemma Mulligan) to us and contextualised the film explaining that it was fictional work based loosely on events and that licence had to be allowed. It was then opened to the floor for questions. While the chat was enjoyable - I felt the opportunity for a real in-depth discussion and dialogue was somewhat hampered as the session developed into type of question and answer session on the life of the church and our diocese today. I had hoped we would look, in light of the "Two Popes", at the differences in both of those men, coming from very differing backgrounds and ideologies, and the real change that has since then ensued.

We didn't get round to addressing "Change" or "what we do " in the way I had anticipated. Perhaps something similar could be arranged for this type of discussion at another time.

Launch of the Diocesan Choir St Mary's Cathedral



Bishop Dermot Farrell

In almost forty years of priesthood, I have never been asked to give a homily on sacred music, although I was born on the Feast of St Cecilia, patron of music. I have given numerous homilies on all sort of topics from Jesus to justice, from economics to ecology to ecumenism, from sin to social justice. But never on sacred music. Why? I don't know, but perhaps because in primary school I was told that I didn't have a note in my head; later in life, an esteemed choir director sheepishly came to me and asked me to stop 'singing' as I was putting his four part harmony choir off their notes even though I was seated in the congregation 30 feet away from them! Notwithstanding those confidence-shattering episodes, I still managed to retain a love for music and its value, especially in the Liturgy.

Today is indeed a day the Lord has made – has made memorable with music as we gather to launch the diocesan choir whose members are active and eager to serve the Church. Because singing is an integral part of the Liturgy, the choir will be a great addition to the sacramental life of this Cathedral and to the liturgical and musical culture of this Diocese. I have no doubt that in the years ahead the choir, drawn from many parishes, will make a truly outstanding contribution to the Liturgy by using their gifts to ensure that sacred music of beauty and quality continues to be learned, shared and performed throughout the Diocese of Ossory to the praise and glory of God.

Music is power and has the power to move people of all ages. Music is universal, powerful, mysterious and awakens; it can speak directly to our memory and emotions. Great music summons us: "sacred music – and music in general – creates bridges, brings people closer, even the most distant;

it knows no barriers of nationality, ethnicity, or skin color, but involves everyone in a higher language, and always manages to bring together people and groups even from very different backgrounds" (Pope Francis, Address to the *Scholae Cantorum* of the Italian Association of Saint Cecilia, 28 September 2019). One of the best ways of preaching the Gospel is through the arts and in particular, music. It gets behind the resistance to the written words about God. Words wear out after a while, but we hear religious words in a new way when we "sing Him a new song that is new, play loudly with all our skill" (Ps 32 [33]). As Saint Bernard put it, we have to sing, if we are to hear and to be heard (*Super cantica canticorum* 1, 11, *S. Bernardi Opera*, Rome, 1957, 8).

Music moves and uplifts the heart. Music touches hearts, whether in the contemplative and reflective moments or in brilliant and rousing notes that open our hearts in worship of the greatness of our God. Music is worship; it cannot be considered as extraneous to the liturgy of the Eucharist. In this context I recall what the Second Vatican Council established with regard to sacred music. In line with an age-old tradition, the Council said it "is a treasure of inestimable value, greater even than that of any other art... Sacred melody united to words... forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy" (*The Constitution in the Liturgy* No 112). This is not new. The signing of the Psalms probably began during the exile of the Israelites in Babylon in the sixth century BC. "By the rivers of Babylon – there we sat down and wept" (Ps 137). Psalm 98 encourages all the earth to break into joyful song. This psalm describes a beautiful scene with the hills singing together and the waves of the sea clapping their hands.

Sacred melody united to words goes back to the very foundation of the Church with St Paul urging the Christians of Colossae and Ephesus to "sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God" (Col 3:16; Eph 5:19). It's no surprise that for 1500 years monks drop whatever they are doing several times a day to sing the Psalms. It goes back to Gregorian chant, its beauty so inexpressible, but expressive to the monks of the Middle Ages. Music is spirituality in disguise, in complementarity to the professor of biophysics at Oxford and Anglican priest, Robert Gilbert's description of science as "spirituality in overalls." Perhaps it is the Holy Spirit whose work happens between not only the words sung and the words heard, but also in the silence between the notes. If you want to hear Him, you must be silent and surrender to the music and allow it to reveal itself and take you to some new place where we will not be impervious to the surprising promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Words alone do not suffice when we praise God. Conversation with God goes beyond the boundaries of human speech. Consequently by their very nature, liturgical celebrations have everywhere called upon the help of music, of singing, and of the lyre and on the ten-stringed harp to sing Him a song that is new. (see Ps 32 [33]). That complex character, King David, God's beloved and a murderer and adulterer, "put all his heart into his songs out of love for his Maker. He placed harps before the altar to make the singing sweeter with their music" (Ecclesiasticus 47: 8-9).

And music too has a moral splendour: David cured Saul of madness with the music of his lyre (1 Samuel 16:14-23); and the Patristic tradition found Christ-like elements in it. "Music", says Pseudo-Justinus, "for the holy becomes a cure for the distress of earthly life" (*Hortatory Address to Greeks*). Listening to good music one can find peace and consolation there.

For behind music lies something wondrous and beautiful that can be touched. Sacred songs break through barriers that divide us from each other. When the German soldiers sang the Christmas carol, *Stille Nacht*, "Silent Night", in the trenches during the First World War, the British soldiers joined in. Shortly thereafter they left their trenches

and met together to sing in harmony and play soccer.

When one thinks of the masterpieces composed by Handel, Mendelsohn, Dvorák and Mozart one comes to the realisation that such music is by no means entertainment; it contains the whole tragedy of human existence. In Mozart's music, for example everything comes to expression: heaven and earth, nature and man, comedy and tragedy, the Virgin Mary and the demons. Faith-inspired music is different and distinct from the mediocre, banal, shallow and superficial lyrics that are used for other purposes. "Making music in the Church is among the most beautiful things for the glory of God. It is a privilege, a gift from God to express the art of music and to assist participation in the divine mysteries. Beautiful and good music is a privileged tool for approaching the transcendent and often helps to understand a message even for those who are distracted" (Pope Francis, *ibid*).

There is an old Irish saying, *Is bocht an Eaglais nach bhfuil ceol aici*: it is a poor church that has no music. The members of our choir are gifted with music and they are generously putting that gift at the disposal of so many people with their singing. I know that your preparation will involve sacrifice in terms of the availability of time to devote to rehearsals, to performances, when there are many other worthy things that you could devote your precious time to.

As gifted cords you will uplift our minds and hearts to God in this Cathedral and throughout the Diocese at many a liturgical celebration and on special occasions. By way of a brief recessional, may I quote St Augustine on true music. It is, he said, a prelude to eternal life. Yes, great music will always take us to the silence of the mystery from which it comes. When we sing as one to the God to whom the sound of music is the voice of love it can lead us gently into a sacred moment where He can speak to our hearts and we can be in deeper communion with God and with one another.

Finally, since those who sing pray twice, I trust that you will also pray for me.

Pope Francis vision of Church invites us all to share responsibility in its mission and that is true also for the care of the earth.

And God saw everything that God made, and behold, it was very good. — Genesis 1:30

Gemma Mulligan

Laudato si' Praised Be, an encyclical letter of Pope Francis on care for our common home was first published in 2015. This year, 2020, marks its fifth year anniversary. 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) 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.

On March 4th 2020 a Laudato si' regional day was held for the three dioceses of Ossory, Kildare and Leighlin and Ferns. The goal of the conference was to help the implement Laudato si' in our parishes and communities. Planning for the Laudato si' conference began in November 2019 and the purpose for the day was clear from the beginning. Those who attended

would leave feeling mobilised to become more active in caring for our common home in their diocese, their parishes and in their own homes. Pope Francis vision of Church invites us all to share responsibility in its mission and that is true also for the care of the earth. 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)

The conference included inputs from Prof. John Sweeney "From Climate Science to Climate Justice" Dr. Lorna Gold "Introduction to Laudato si'", Padraig Fogarty "Biodiversity breakdown in Ireland-how can we respond?" and Fr Dermot Lane, "Ecology and Spirituality in Laudato si'".

The afternoon allowed an opportunity for the 220 participants to attend two workshops where they could explore more deeply ways of implementing Laudato si' practically in their homes and parishes. Those who attended the conference also explored the marketplace where various





groups, organisations and green schools displayed their work and highlighted how they are working hard to protect our common home.

Ferns diocese showed a video of a youth group, Spirit, who clean the beaches in Wexford and a primary school in Kildare & Loughlin, Queen of the Universe School, Bagenalstown showed us their wonderful work in caring for the environment through the many initiatives run in the school. Two second year students from Loreto Kilkenny, Ruby Woods and Medha Trehan, youth activists from Loreto Green schools team spoke of their experience attending the Dail Climate Youth Parliament in November 2019.

Ruby and Medha were part of the 157 young people aged between 10 and 17 years from all over Ireland who came to the Dail last November to discuss the climate crisis and to look at possible solutions. The students shared with us the ten recommendations from the youth assembly as well as a statement issued by the delegates in the Dail.

"We the youth of Ireland, call on our elected representatives and on adults to listen. We put forward our recommendations for action to stop

climate breakdown. We are NOT experts. In our recommendations we offer ideas but we do NOT have answers. It is a starting point for adults and particularly for those elected to protect and progress our society. We call on you to listen to the science, to take on board our recommendations and to work on our behalf to ensure that we and you have a future."

Strand 8 of Ossory Diocesan Pastoral Plan is Outreach. The goal is to develop the Parish's vocation of witness in the wider society of Justice, Peace and Care for the earth. We in Ossory must continue to play our part and "replace consumption with sacrifice, greed with generosity, wastefulness with a spirit of sharing... moving gradually away from what I want to what God's world needs. It is liberation from fear, greed and compulsion." (LS9) Pope Francis reminds us that the climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all. God created the world and entrusted it to us. Our vision for a diocesan plan in Ossory asks us to accept that the future shape of the church in Ossory, in all our hands, Σ so too is the future of our common home.



The Shroud continues to be both intensely studied and controversial.

The Shroud of Turin



Ray Cleere

The Shroud of Turin, stored in a climate-controlled vault at the Cathedral of St John the Baptist in Turin, Italy, will be displayed via livestream on Saturday 11th April, the day before Easter Sunday, Archbishop Cesare Nosiglia of Turin announced. The rarely-seen shroud was last shown in 2018 to a youth group, and was viewed by millions during its last major showing in 2015.

The Shroud is a length of linen cloth bearing the “negative” image of a man. Some believe the image depicts Jesus of Nazareth and the fabric is the burial shroud in which he was wrapped after crucifixion. Historical and scientific evidence points to it being a medieval

creation. The Catholic Church has neither formally endorsed nor rejected the Shroud which is kept in the Cathedral of Turin, but in 1958 Pope Pius XII approved of the image in association with the devotion to the Holy Face of Jesus. Pope John Paul II called the Shroud “a mirror of the Gospel”. Other Christian denominations, such as Anglicans and Methodists, have also shown devotion to the Shroud of Turin.

Diverse arguments have been made in scientific and popular publications claiming to prove, contrary to the scientific census, that the cloth is the authentic burial Shroud of Jesus, based on disciplines ranging from chemistry

to biology and medical forensics to optical image analysis. In 1988, three radiocarbon dating tests dated a corner piece of the Shroud from the Middle Ages, between the years 1260 and 1390. Some Shroud researchers have challenged the dating, and argued that the results were skewed by the introduction of material from the Middle Ages to the portion of the Shroud used for radiocarbon dating. However, all of the hypotheses used to challenge the radiocarbon dating have been scientifically reputed, including the medieval repair hypothesis, the bio-contamination hypothesis, and the carbon monoxide hypothesis. The image on the Shroud is much clearer in black-and-white negative; first observed in 1898, than in its natural colour. A variety of methods have been proposed for the formation of the image, but the actual method used has not yet been conclusively identified. The Shroud continues to be both intensely studied and controversial.

Religious belief about the burial cloths of Jesus have existed for centuries. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke state that Joseph of Arimathea wrapped the body of Jesus in a piece of linen cloth and placed it in a new tomb. The Gospel of John refers to strips of linen used by Joseph of Arimathea and states that the Apostle Peter found multiple pieces of burial cloth after the tomb was found open, strips of linen cloth for the body and a separate cloth for the head. The Gospel of the Hebrews, a 2nd century manuscript, states that Jesus gave the linen cloth to the servant of the priest.

Although pieces said to be the burial cloths of Jesus are held by at least four Churches in France and three in Italy, none has gathered as much religious following as the Shroud of Turin. Although the Shroud image is currently associated with Catholic devotions to the Holy Face of Jesus, the devotions themselves predate Secondo Pia's 1898 photograph. Such devotions had been started in

1844 by the Carmelite Nun Marie of St Peter (based on "pre-crucifixion" images associated with the Veil of Veronica) and promoted by Leo Dupont, also called the Apostle of the Holy Face. In 1851 Dupont formed the "Archconfraternity of the Holy Face" in Tours, France, well before Secondo Pia took the photograph of the Shroud.

Antipope Clement VII refrained from expressing his opinion on the Shroud; however, subsequent Popes from Julius II on took its authenticity for granted. The Vatican newspaper "Osservatore Romano" covered the story of Secondo Pia's photograph of May 28th, 1898 in its edition of June 15th, 1898, but it did so with no comment and thereafter Church officials generally refrained from officially commenting on the photograph for 50 years.

The first official association between the image on the Shroud and the Catholic Church was made in 1940 based on the formal request by Sister Maria Pierina De Micheli to the Curia in Milan to obtain authorisation to produce a medal with the image. The authorisation was granted and the first medal with the image was offered to Pope Pius XII who approved the image in association with the devotion to the Holy Face of Jesus, and declared its feast to be celebrated every year the day before Ash Wednesday. Following the approval of Pope Pius XII, Catholic devotions to the Holy Face of Jesus have been almost exclusively associated with the image of the Shroud.

In 1988 Pope John Paul II stated that: "Since it is not a matter of faith, the Church has no specific competence to pronounce on these questions. She entrusts to scientists the task of continuing to investigate, so that satisfactory answers may be found to the questions with this sheet". Pope John II showed himself to be deeply moved by the image of the Shroud and arranged for public showings in 1998 and in 2000. In his address at the Turin Cathedral on Sunday, May 24th,

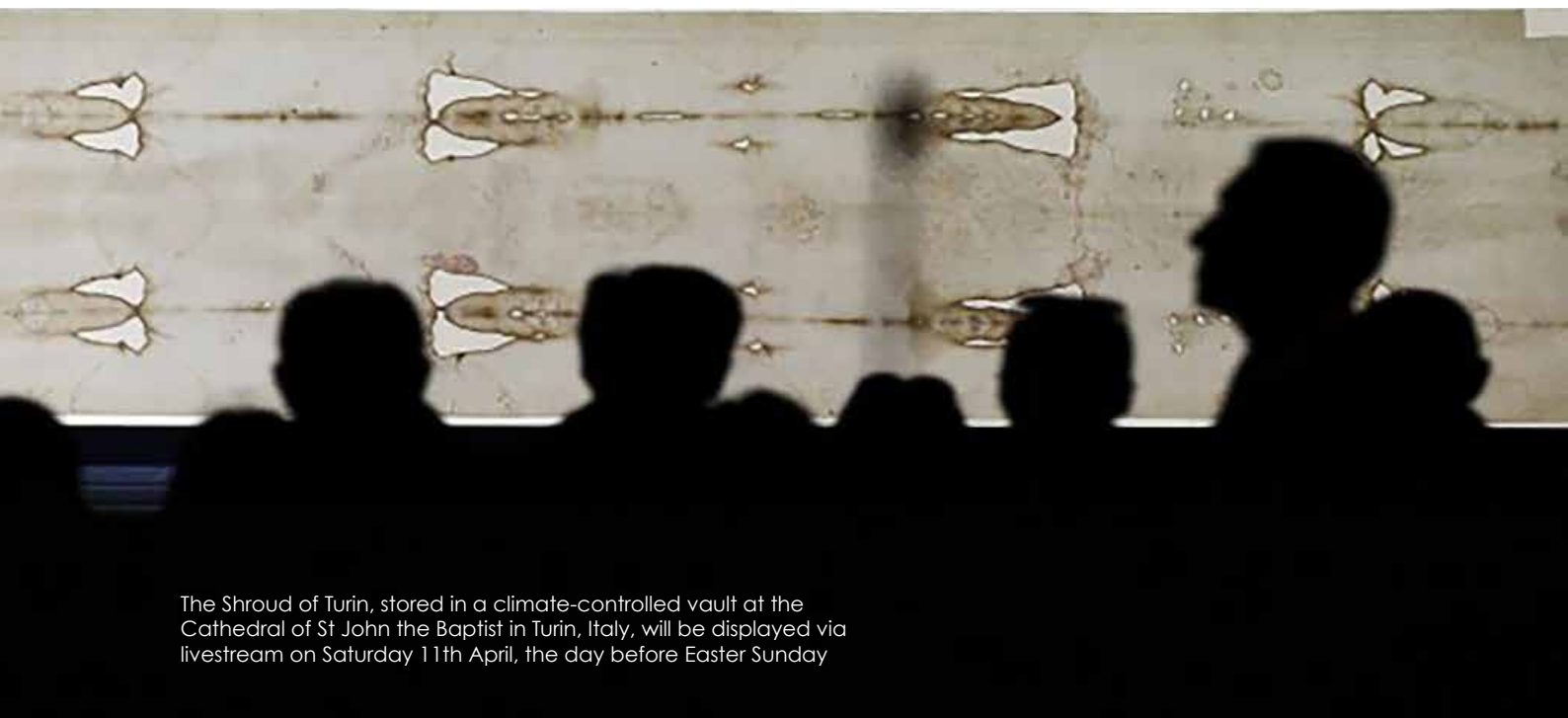
1998 (on the occasion of the 100th year of Secondo Pia's May 24th, 1898 photograph), he said: "The Shroud is an image of God's love as well as of human sin. The imprint left by the tortured body of the Crucified One, which attests to the tremendous human capacity for causing pain and death to one's fellow man, stands as an icon of the suffering of the innocent in every age".

In 2000, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, who later became Pope Benedict XVI, wrote that the Shroud of Turin is "a truly mysterious image, which no human artistry was capable of producing. In some inexplicable way, it appeared imprinted upon the cloth and claimed to show the true face of Christ, the crucified and risen Lord". The Shroud was publicly displayed in the Spring of 2010; Pope Benedict went to Turin to see it along with other pilgrims. He described the Shroud of Turin as an "extraordinary Icon", "the Icon of Holy Saturday corresponding in every way to what the Gospels tell us of Jesus", "an Icon written in blood, the blood of a man who was scourged, crowned with

thorns, crucified and whose right side was pierced". The Pope also said that in the Turin Shroud "we see, as in a mirror, our suffering as in the suffering of Christ". On May 30th, 2010, Pope Benedict beatified Sister Maria Pierina De Micheli who coined the Holy Face Medal, based on Secondo Pia's photograph of the Shroud.

On March 30th, 2013, as part of the Easter celebrations, there was an extraordinary exposition of the Shroud in the Cathedral of Turin. Pope Francis recorded a video message for the occasion, in which he described the image on the Shroud as "this Icon of a man", and stated that "the man of the Shroud invites us to contemplate Jesus of Nazareth". In his carefully worded statement Pope Francis urged the faithful to contemplate the Shroud with any but "stopped firmly short of asserting its authenticity".

Pope Francis went on a pilgrimage to Turin on June 21, 2015, to pray before, venerate the Holy Shroud and honour St John Bosco on the bicentenary of his birth.



The Shroud of Turin, stored in a climate-controlled vault at the Cathedral of St John the Baptist in Turin, Italy, will be displayed via livestream on Saturday 11th April, the day before Easter Sunday

Dioceses are all at different stages in their programmes for lay formation and catechesis and there are various levels of resources and support across the country in each diocese.

Learning from Experience

Gemma Mulligan

Earlier this year in February representatives from 15 dioceses, Trocaire and St Patrick's College, Maynooth gathered in Tullamore for a day entitled: Learning from Experience, Programme of Formation for Lay Pastoral Ministry and Lay Catechesis.

This day was a follow up from two previous gatherings, one in 2017 when the Council for Catechetics and the Council for Pastoral Renewal and Adult Faith Development organised a gathering of bishops, priests, religious, lay pastoral workers, teachers and catechists from all over the country, initiating a new phase in the national conversation on parish catechesis.

A second gathering in October 2018, The Irish Institute for Pastoral Studies organised a gathering entitled Faith Development: learning from Experience. This day offered an opportunity to reflect on experience, taking the stories of three initiatives which sought to connect with, and listen to, people's lives.

The meeting in February in 2020 in Tullamore was designed and facilitated by Martin Kennedy and the aim of the gathering was to share stories on and draw learnings from experiences in dioceses and parishes, of formation for lay ministry and catechesis.

We heard two different experiences from Dublin Diocese and Killaloe Diocese

and were presented with an overview of their current programmes. In Dublin the presentation provided an overview regarding sacraments of initiation and Killaloe presented their current lay formation programme. They both covered the questions arising in regard to lay mission, skills required and training.

Sharing stories and experiences are valuable as we don't have to always reinvent the wheel, we can learn from the experience of others. The dioceses are all at different stages in their programmes for lay formation and catechesis and there are various levels of resources and support across the country in each diocese. This is a time when we are all called to be courageous and to recognise the signs of hope in our dioceses. Pope Francis tells us, "For wherever there is a particular need, he has already poured out the charisms that can meet it. This requires the Church to be open to the Spirit's boldness, to trust in, and concretely to permit, the growth of a specific ecclesial culture that is distinctively lay. We need to promote an encounter with God's word and growth in holiness through various kinds of lay service that calls for a process of education-biblical, doctrinal, spiritual and practical- and a variety of programmes for ongoing formation.

Rights and duties are two sides of the same coin



CANON LAW MATTERS

The Seal of Confession

Albert McDonnell

There has been considerable debate regarding the seal of the sacrament of confession in recent years. Must of this discussion has centred on the crime of the sexual abuse of children. If a person reveals in confession that he/she abused a child or vulnerable adult may the priest share that information with the civil authorities?

Confessional in Bergamo

In 2012, the then Irish minister for Justice and Law Reform stated that Irish law on mandatory reporting of the crime of sex abuse does not exempt information received during the sacrament of confession (Irish Examiner, 27 April 2012). The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Australia which released its final report in 2017 recommended that priests who receive disclosures of child abuse in confession should not be exempted from mandatory reporting to the civil authorities.

The seal of confession is the obligation of the priest/confessor to maintain permanent secrecy regarding information revealed by a penitent during the sacrament of confession. It includes all situations where a person approaches a priest seeking confession included those very rare cases where absolution is not given. Church law enshrines the seal in canon 983§1:

'The sacramental seal is inviolable; therefore, it is absolutely forbidden for a confessor to betray in any way a penitent in words or in any manner and for any reason'.

Canon 1388 §1 imposes the most severe penalty possible on priests

who violate the sacramental seal. They are automatically excluded from the life of the Church. The canon states:

'A confessor who directly violates the sacramental seal incurs a *latae sententiae* excommunication reserved to the Apostolic See; one who does so only indirectly is to be punished according to the gravity of the delict.'

The value these canons seek to safeguard is that without the assurance of absolute confidentiality, the faithful would be deterred from confessing their sins and receiving the grace of the sacrament. In addition, the Church believes that a sacramental confession is made to God and not to the priest. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (#1466) reminds us that in confession the priest 'is not the master of God's forgiveness but its servant'. Therefore, the confessor does not have the right to share what he hears in confession. Nobody, including the Pope, can give the confessor that right.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (#1467) states that a confessor 'can make no use of knowledge that confession gives him about penitent's lives'. Everything disclosed to the priest during the sacrament of confession is subject to the seal. The direct violation of the sacramental seal occurs when the confessor reveals the identity of the sinner and the sin. Indirect violation of the seal refers to situations when the sin and the sinner can be deduced from the words, gestures, actions or omissions of the confessor.

The safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults is of the greatest importance for Christians and for all people of good will. How can the imperative to protect children and vulnerable adults be reconciled with the sanctity of the sacramental seal of confession? This conflict very rarely arises in practise. The practise of confession has declined in recent decades. Confessors

state that it is extremely rare for the crime of sexual abuse to be confessed. The priest does not ask a person in confession to state who they are. In a confession box, the priest will not ordinarily see the penitent and even if he does see the person he might not know or recognise the person. It is also likely that the removal of the seal of confession would result in people ceasing to confess grave crimes and therefore not receiving the advice to report the matter to the civil authorities.

The confessor has options available when a grave crime is confessed. He can invite the penitent to discuss the matter with him outside confession, where the seal does not apply. Within confession, he can seek to impress on the penitent the gravity of the crime and encourage the abuser to go to the police or social services.

The recognition of the privilege of sacramental confession by civil law has had a long and varied history. In England, it was a source of controversy during the trials which followed the Gunpowder plot in 1606. Countries and legal systems vary in how they view the privileged nature of what a priest hears in confession. There are many recorded instances of priests enduring imprisonment, torture and even death rather than betray the seal of confession.

Information received by the priests during sacramental confession is not the only communication that claims legal privilege. Lawyers are not compelled to reveal confidential discussions with clients. In recent decades, there have been calls for legislation to protect journalists and their sources. In 1972 an Irish journalist went to prison rather than breach an undertaking to protect the anonymity of a source for a story.

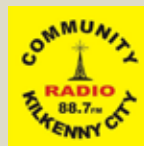
Rights and duties are two sides of the same coin. Society will always have to work hard to resolve the conflicts that inevitably arise between seemingly competing values.

Together we pray...



Mass available online

- **St Mary's Cathedral** www.stmaryscathedral.ie
- **St Canice's Parish** www.stcanicesparish.ie
- **St John's Parish** www.stjohnskilkenny.com
- **Castlecomer** www.castlecomerparish.ie
- **Mooncoin** www.mooncoinparish.ie
- **Templeorum** www.templeorumparish.com
- **Urlingford** www.ossory.ie/urlingford



Each Sunday morning, at 9.30am, a live Mass is celebrated on KCLR96fm broadcast to the people of Kilkenny and Carlow;
and on Community Radio Kilkenny City at 10.00am

Apart But Not Alone: Hope and Strength in a Time of Crisis and Fear

Pastoral Letter 27th March 2020



Bishop Dermot Farrell

*"How will people know that you are my disciples? By your love for one another."
(John 13:35)*



Introduction

We are now living in an Ireland that we could not have imagined a few short days ago. In a very short period of time the ways we move, interact, and live with each other have radically changed. Suddenly, we are conscious of our environment in a way that a few days ago we were not. Our language also reflects this seismic shift, with words and phrases finding, for us, new combinations and a resulting new meaning: social is now about distancing—and our standing together means, in real way, that we must stand apart. But the space we thus create will keep us safe; it is, as it says in

the poem, "the light from the lighthouse that protects as it pushes away." (John Ashbery)

Our Actions Matter for Each Other

We are, then, learning many things in these days. We are learning about the fragility of our lives. We are learning about the depth of our resolve. We are learning about our profound community spirit and, in a real way, we are learning about how we need and depend on each other. We have come to realise that our true strength is our strength to carry the weak, and our true dignity is our capacity to value every person. Solidarity and global action are absolutely crucial

to bringing this pandemic under control. We are seeing the selfless dedication and the immense work of those on the front line. Of course, these women and men not only do this in times of great trial, but in ordinary days as well. We appreciate, anew then, the contribution of so many—the nurses, doctors, paramedics, care staff, clergy, Gardaí, fire personnel and so many more. In the words of the French novelist Georges Bernanos: "Grace is everywhere." It is time for us to support them and to encourage them. As St Paul reminds us we are always to encourage one another and build one another up (1 Thess 5:11). In doing this for the other we are collectively stronger. We see the importance of media, local and national—print, radio and TV—in conveying for us important, life-saving, messages. "All serious and upright human conduct is hope in action" (*Spe salvi*, 35). We are learning, too, of the fragile nature of our economy and of how businesses and those who work in them can suffer. We are learning that our big world is, in fact, quite small, and that small actions, and simple things, are truly life-saving. Ultimately and importantly, we are learning—and learning in new ways—that our actions matter for each other. The safety of each one depends on the safety of all. Safety knows no favourites.

We are heartened, then, to see the actions of those who have stepped up, those on the front line, but also those who in recent days have responded to the call to help - we love with actions and not mere words (1 John 3:18). It is wonderful to hear of the great numbers of people willing to volunteer, to offer their time and talents to help others. Men and women asking what they can do for each other. It is this other and not the self which lies at the heart of our Christian faith. We are, throughout our history, a people for others. In these days then, let us continue to remember the other. Let us continue to remember those who are poorest and weakest in our communities, their plight has not lessened in these troubling

days. We remember our neighbours for whom simple gestures might now matter, remember those who live alone and who might at this time rejoice in a phone call, remember those afraid who might need reassurance, and remember those around us who might need reminding.

Prayer is Hope in Action

Love is the life of the Church. The Church lives to the extent that we love. Love is the life of the Church, and prayer is the lifeblood of that life. As we pray, we express not only our need, but also our care. To pray for someone is to love someone. To pray for our child, a parent, a neighbour, a friend is to express our love for that person. To pray is to love. When we pray together—as couples, as families, as communities—our individual voices come together, and unite us as one, to call on God. But our prayer is not only our prayer; our prayer is also our response to God's promptings, to our trust in his hope, our faith in the Lord's abiding presence. Life teaches us how we depend on each other; our faith shows us how we depend on God. Pope Francis reminds us of the true power of our prayer: "prayer always changes reality...: it either changes things or changes our hearts, but it always changes" (Papal Audience, 9th Jan 2019).

My sisters and brothers, let us all pray anew in these difficult and frightening times. Real prayer comes from the heart; real prayer comes from real life. So let us pray as we can. Pray in your own words, pray in the words of others, pray in the words of the Mass, pray in silence. As our country and our world is convulsed by the COVID-19 pandemic, we know that our lives spill over into others, for better or for worse, and we remain, in these times, united by prayer. So often when we gather to pray together we do so for a specific purpose, intention, occasion or anniversary. In these extraordinary times, when we cannot gather as a faith community to celebrate the Eucharist, our Diocesan Adult Faith Development Group

have arranged that we can continue this basic togetherness of our Christian prayer life. I invite you, then, to email prayer@ossory.ie or text 085-8313100 any prayer intention that you may have in these days. These, then, will be remembered when we come together to celebrate Mass on the radio each Sunday morning. A real coming together of our prayer. We pray because we place our deepest hope in a goodness and in a power that transcends our own capabilities. Prayer is hope in action.

Faith the Wellspring of Hope

The Bible is filled with stories of how women and men found in God a wellspring of hope. Their trust in God and their confidence in him—in other words their faith—became their wellspring of hope. Out of this hope they were able to transform the present. “Faith draws the future into the present” (*Spe salvi*, 7) so that our future is not just something down the line. As the light before the dawn permits us to see, so our faith and its hope permit us to live in new ways. The news about this fast-moving virus is frightening and depressing. In this hour of great need, the real hope our faith gives us, calls us to a new sense of ourselves—to see ourselves as a community sharing hope out of which we live. This may seem farfetched, but that is exactly what we are called to be: people of hope. “We need the greater and lesser hopes that keep us going day by day. But these are not enough without the great hope, which must surpass everything else. This great hope can only be God, who encompasses the whole of reality and who can bestow on us what we, by ourselves, cannot attain” (*Spe salvi*, 31). Our God is a God of hope (see Rom 15:13). Trusting in God calls us to action. Hope gives us the strength to overcome selfishness and indifference. Indeed hope that does not matter to one personally is not true hope. True hope always calls attention not only to life after death, but also to what is essential to life on earth.

The Lights and Light of Hope

In these dark days, I have been helped by an image used by Pope Benedict XVI: he writes that that life is a journey “a voyage on the sea of history, often dark and stormy, a voyage in which we watch for the stars that indicate the route.” (*Spe salvi*, 49). In the night, it was the stars that guided the seafarer. “Certainly,” the Pope continues, “Jesus Christ is the true light, the sun that has risen above all the shadows of history. But to reach him we also need lights close by—people who shine with his light and so guide us along our way.” (*Spe salvi*, 49). Let each of us, then, live for the other now, let us be a star, let Christ's gentle light shine through each of us; let us open the door of our world to God: volunteer, reach out, pray for each other and care. Let us show each other, that though we may be apart, we are not alone: “your love for one another will show to the world that you are my disciples” (John 13:35).

We are stronger when we are together, and though apart in these days, we are with each other now in a new way. May Christ, the one who lived most for the other, support us in that task. Let us pray with St Augustine,

Watch, O Lord, with those who wake this night

or watch, or weep;

give your angels and saints

charge over those who sleep.

Tend your sick ones, O Lord Christ,

rest your weary ones,

bless your dying ones,

soothe your suffering ones,

pity your afflicted ones

shield your joyous ones.

And all for your love's sake.

Amen

This is a free tool to help us grow not
in perfection of a technique but in
relationship with God...

The Prayer Course - How to Pray

Pauline Haughney

“One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him ‘Lord teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.’” Luke 11: 1

The Prayer Course – How to Pray, was devised by Pete Greig a co-founder of the “24-7 Prayer movement”. The movement began as one simple prayer meeting in 1999 and is now an international, interdenominational movement of prayer. The Prayer course is designed to help us maximise the gift we have of prayer. Through the format of the “Our Father” prayer the eight week sessions help us to go deeper and to experience more fruitfulness in prayer as individuals and as a community of faith.

The synonym of P.R.A.Y helps us to apply the “Lord’s Prayer”. We ‘PAUSE’ we allow our scattered senses to re-centre themselves on God’s Presence with us. We ‘REJOICE’, we pray ‘hallowed be your name’, we take time to worship and praise God. We ‘ASK’, we pray ‘give us this day our daily bread’. The ‘daily bread’ is petition for ourselves and for others we intercede. We ‘YIELD’, we pray “forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil”. We surrender to God, we yield and we do this by contemplative prayer and by listening

to his Word. We yield through confession and reconciliation and we yield to his power in spiritual warfare.

The format for one hour and thirty minutes is as follows;

- **P.** Pausing
- **R.** Worship and Praise with prayer
- Watch a twenty minute video on the week’s theme
- **A.** Discussion Questions
- **Y.** Do it - What is God calling me to do from what I have learned tonight?
- Worship and Prayer

Pete speaks of the Lord’s Prayer as a map that Jesus has given us to navigate the journey of our lives. There are times when prayer is urgent and imploring God and there are times when prayer is a journey of exploration where there are wonders to encounter and times of great intimacy. Pete explores the way the Desert Fathers/ Mothers and Saints have found different paths to encounter God. There are nine different paths of prayer emerging from the Lord’s Prayer and they form the themes for the eight weeks;



Stillness, Adoration, Petition, Intercession, Perseverance, Contemplation, Listening, Confession and Spiritual Warfare.

This is a free tool to help us grow not in perfection of a technique but in relationship with God, and in pursuing the Kingdom of God. We followed up on this course with meeting to use *Lectio Divina* (one of the prayer tools on 'Listening') for Advent.

I, and a small number of my neighbours in Coon, used this programme over last summer and continued exploring some of the tools which each session signposted. We found it to be a creative and engaging way to deepen our relationship with God, with others and with our environment. I felt God put on my heart a desire to share this with a wider population particularly those people I had formerly worked with. I approached Fr Dermot Ryan with the proposal to run the course from the Adult Faith Development Centre. This course was supported with prayer from a number of people who were willing to support me in this endeavour.

I experienced a great 'physical' welcome in the warm comfortable room offered for our use (in St Kieran's College Adult Faith Centre) and in addition to this there was a tangible spiritual welcome, some of the participants also made this observation

to me. We were in an environment where others had come and still come to pray and to seek intimacy with God. The Holy Spirit was present with us and welcomed us. As facilitator God provided the help I would need, beautiful pray and worship from Michael and Catherine Armstrong and twenty four people who came to participate through receiving and giving.

The small group, paired discussion and prayer times were most fruitful. The prayer course gave us the very necessary opportunity to share and hear personal testimony of what God means to our lives. For some people they had not experienced this before. We need to ignite one another in a shared faith and this was experienced by the participants and myself, our little flames join to build a much bigger and brighter and powerful fire. Praise God.

If the reader feels a desire to explore this course or opportunities to come together to share our encounters with God and pray, in the joy of the Lord I am willing to be of service.

Pauline Haughney

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He was the first Papal Nuncio to visit Kilkenny in almost 300 years since Archbishop John Battista Rinuccini, Archbishop of Fermo, in 1645, who came as the Papal Representative to the Confederation of Kilkenny.

Ray Cleere

Paschal Robinson was born 150 years ago

Paschal Robinson, O.F.M., was an Irish ecclesiastical diplomat. A journalist and renowned medievalist before he entered diplomatic service, was the Titular Archbishop of Tyana and the first Apostolic Nuncio to Ireland since the 17th century Archbishop Rinuccini. Influential in his position, he served as Nuncio from January 1930 until his death in 1948.

Monsignor Paschal Charles Robinson, O.F.M., was born David Robinson in Dublin 150 years ago on April 26th, 1870, the son of a journalist. Reared in the United States, as a teenager he initiated his career in the same field as his father. Although he briefly considered a career in law, he served as both London correspondent for "The New York Sun" and as associate editor of the "North American Review" before he decided to pursue the Catholic priesthood as a Franciscan.

Robinson studied at the Jesuit College of the Holy Cross (better known as Holy Cross) in Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1895, and the Franciscan St Bonaventure's University, North America, in 1896. He became a Franciscan in August 1896, and was sent by the Franciscans to study in Rome under his new name, Paschal. On December 21st, 1901, he was ordained to the priesthood at St Anthony's International College in Rome.

In 1902, he received the Degree of Doctor of Sacred Theology and began to teach. He also published; his first book was "The Real St Francis", released in 1903. There followed in the next seven years: "Some Pages of Franciscan History" (1905); "The Writings of St Francis" (1906) and "The Life of St Clare" (1910). He was associate editor of the "Archivum Franciscanum Historicum" and contributed to the "Catholic Encyclopaedia". By 1914, the year he was inducted into the Royal Historical Society, he was known at the time as "one of the foremost living historians of the Middle Ages", a speciality he cultivated while at Oxford University.

Named lector general of his Order, he spent months researching the Franciscan archives at Quarrachi and lectured theology at St Bonaventure's Friary in Peterson, New Jersey. In 1913, he was appointed Professor of Medieval History at The Catholic University of America in Washington DC, a position he held from 1913 to 1919. Appointed apostolic visitor to Palestine, he served as consultor on two Roman congregations, first 100 years ago in 1920 to the Custodian of the Holy Land in

Jerusalem, and again in 1925 to the Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem and other areas, including the Eastern Churches in Palestine, Transjordan and Cyprus. Elected Archbishop of the Titular See of Tyana by Pope Pius XI, he received his episcopal consecration on June 24th, 1927, from Cardinal Willem van Rossum C.S.S.R., and on December 3rd, 1929, the Pope appointed Archbishop Paschal Robinson the first Apostolic Nuncio to Ireland in almost 300 years since the 17th century Archbishop Giovanni Battista Rinuccini. On February 11th, 1929, Pope Pius XI and the then Italian Government of Benito Mussolini signed the Lateran Treaty which gave the Vatican City the status of an Independent State.

IN KILKENNY

Tuesday, January 21st, 1930, 90 years ago, was a memorable day in Kilkenny when the then Papal Nuncio, Most Rev. Paschal Robinson, visited the city. He was the first Papal Nuncio to visit Kilkenny in almost 300 years since Archbishop John Battista Rinuccini, Archbishop of Fermo, in 1645, who came as the Papal Representative to the Confederation of Kilkenny. The stirring scenes that were witnessed were without parallel in Kilkenny which rose so nobly to the importance of the unique event in its history. The city prepared as it had never done before to receive a distinguished visitor. He had accepted an invitation from the Corporation to come to Kilkenny and he received the Freedom of the City in the City Hall. It was his first official visit anywhere since he became Papal Nuncio on December 3rd, 1929.

Paschal Robinson was also the first Papal Nuncio to enter St Mary's Cathedral after the foundation of the State. St Mary's Cathedral in Kilkenny was the first church outside Dublin into which Paschal Robinson entered after he became Papal Nuncio. As he arrived at the gates of the Cathedral the military gave a salute. He was accompanied by the Mayor, Councillor J.G. Duggan. As he proceeded to the Cathedral the number one Army Band played the Papal Hymn. At the door he was formally received by the



The Most Rev. Paschal Robinson OFM (1870-1948) - 'The Capuchin Annual' (1943).

Photo: Courtesy of the Capuchin Archives

Bishop of Ossory, Dr. Patrick Collier in Cope and Mitre accompanied by members of the Diocesan Chapter. It was also an historic occasion for Bishop Collier who was one year in office at the time.

On March 15th, 1935, a photographer captured the then German Envoy to Ireland, George Von Dehn, kissing Paschal Robinson's episcopal ring. The photograph was the source of international discussion as the cause of Von Dehn's dismissal from diplomatic service by Adolf Hitler to Nazi Germany.

IN PIAM MEMORIAM

Regarded as an "encyclopaedia of knowledge" and revered as one of the greatest Franciscan apologists of the twentieth century, Paschal Robinson presented St Francis of Assisi to the world through his writings. Exerting tremendous influence in Ireland during his tenure in the enunciator he established good relations between Ireland and the Holy See. It was not only the Franciscan Order that was the poorer following the death on Friday, August 27th, 1948, of the Most Reverend Paschal Robinson, O.F.M., Apostolic Nuncio to Ireland and Titular Archbishop of Tyana. Ireland and the Catholic Church were the poorer, too.

And Ireland's poor especially were the poorer. His Excellency lived at the Apostolic

Enunciator in the Phoenix Park (where he died), remote from the city centre in Dublin, yet it was known at the time to the very poorest of the city that where their lives were in any way affected, by the international situation, for example, and there were few of them whose lives were not so affected during the previous 10 years; the surest and quickest way to a solution of their problems was through a remote house (now the residence of the American Ambassador to Ireland) and a seemingly remote man. Following the celebration of a simple ceremony devoid of pomp and colour, he was laid to rest in the Franciscan plot at Glasnevin Cemetery in Dublin. In accordance with his wishes, he was clothed in the simple habit of a monk of St Francis; instead of scarlet shoes he asked to be buried with bare feet. Having asked for a simple requiem, such a request for simplicity created a complication for the then government who gave the prelate a State funeral. Thus in order to respect his wishes, it was deemed appropriate that Franciscan Friars acted as pallbearers instead of the usual escort of military officers, while a hearse took the place of the gun carriage.

Preaching his farewell-to-Ireland sermon in Galway on February 22nd, 1649, Archbishop Giovanni Battista Rinuccini (Archbishop Robinson's immediate predecessor) declared at the time that it would be many years before another Nuncio was appointed. And it was many long years, almost 300 years, but the long winter passed and there came wine from the Royal Pope: an Irish Nuncio was sent to Ireland. That Irishman, who in the service of the Church had brought peace where there was trouble, came home to his native land and his native city as Apostolic Nuncio and his friends knew that the appointment was, and remained, a source of blessing and happiness to Ireland and the Irish people. When he died, Archbishop Paschal Robinson was 78 years old, a professed Franciscan Friar for 52 years, a priest for 46 years and a bishop for 21 years.

The essential purpose of this group is to advise the bishop of the diocese in matters of pastoral concern.

The Ossory Council of Priests

Martin Delaney

Every diocese in the world has a body known as The Council of Priests. The essential purpose of this group is to advise the bishop of the diocese in matters of pastoral concern. The Council of Priests only exists or has any purpose in relation to the bishop. When a new bishop is appointed in the diocese he is required by the Code of Canon Law to establish a new Council of Priests within twelve months of taking up his arrival. When a bishop resigns, retires or dies in office, The Council of Priests is dissolved.

Each diocese draws up its own set of norms or statutes to govern the makeup of the Council of Priests and how it will function within the diocese. These statutes must be approved by the bishop. While norms or statutes may differ somewhat from place to place, the main role and function of the Council of Priests is similar in each case.

The Purpose and Role of The Council of Priests

1. To provide a forum for the full and free discussion of all issues of pastoral concern in the diocese.
2. To assist the bishop according to the norm of law in his pastoral governance of the diocese.
3. To search for and to propose ways and means for effective pastoral ministry with other consultative bodies and with the bishop.
4. To be representative of the unity, diversity and needs of the priests to the bishop.

Who is part of The Council of Priests?

There is normally a maximum of fifteen priests on the council. Some are elected

by the priests of the diocese, others are part of the council by virtue of another position in the Diocese. In Ossory, the Vicar General, The President of St Kieran's College, the Administrator of the Cathedral and the Dean of the Cathedral Chapter are ex-officio members of the Council of Priests. The majority of members are elected by the priests reflecting a geographical spread across the diocese and also various age groups. The priests of religious orders in the diocese also elect a representative to be on the council. In addition to the ex-officio members and those elected, the bishop reserves the option to appoint other members as he sees appropriate. When the full membership has been assembled the bishop convenes the first meeting of the group. At that initial meeting a chairman and secretary are elected by the council membership. The bishop may reserve the right to appoint a chairman and secretary. The council normally meets about ten times each year but the bishop can convene the council to advise him on particular issues as they may arise.

The recent Ossory Experience

Since Bishop Farrell's appointment early in 2018 he has consulted with the Council of Priests on a number of significant issues of pastoral concern ie Safeguarding concerns, outstanding debts on St Mary's Cathedral etc. However the main issue which has dominated the agenda of the current Council of Priests has been the pastoral reorganisation of the Diocese against the backdrop of a significant fall in the number of priests. This is an issue being addressed by other consultative

bodies in the Diocese also and in particular the Ossory Diocesan Pastoral Council. A sub-group of the Council of Priests and the Diocesan Pastoral Council came together to draw up proposals and principles to address the current pastoral challenges in the diocese. The main recommendation of that sub-group was the establishment of a number of Pastoral areas within the Diocese. The establishment of the pastoral areas and the ongoing resourcing and support of them has become the major focus of

both bodies. There is a growing realisation that while both the Council of Priests and Diocesan Pastoral Council will continue to exist and meet separately they also need to work closely together. To this end the two groups will meet in joint session at least three times a year and these joint meetings replace the regular meetings of both groups. The very fact of these joint meetings reflects the need for priests and people to work together in a co-responsible manner to enhance the life of our local church.

The task of the ODPC is to listen to the experiences of people in parishes, identify pastoral needs and advise...

The Ossory Diocesan Pastoral Council

Ann Daly

The Ossory Diocesan Pastoral Council (ODPC) has its roots in the Ossory Diocesan Forum established by the late Bishop Forristal in 2004. The purpose of the Forum was to give an opportunity to lay people, men and women, to be co-responsible with the priests and the Bishop for the life of the Church in Ossory. Through Parish Pastoral Councils, Deanery Pastoral Councils and the Ossory Diocesan Pastoral Council people have continued to share their experiences, listen and discuss parish and diocesan pastoral issues and be involved in decision-making. The ODPC is the central body of the Forum that provides the structure through which there is two-way communication between parish, deanery and diocese.

As pastoral councils were being established in parishes across the diocese so too were the Deanery Pastoral Councils. The 42 parishes of the Diocese are divided into the Northern, Middle and Southern Deaneries. Deanery Pastoral Councils give an opportunity for nominated members of parish pastoral councils to meet every couple of months to share ideas and support each other. This experience of working together has played an important

role in paving the way for recently formed Pastoral Areas.

The membership of the ODPC is drawn from the Deanery Pastoral Councils, and consists of lay, clergy and religious representatives. In addition, a few members have been co-opted on to the council. The purpose of the ODPC is to discuss and advise the Bishop on Pastoral issues in the diocese. In recent years it undertook to develop a Pastoral Plan for the diocese. The ongoing challenge of implementing this plan is the current focus of the ODPC in addition to supporting the work of developing the Pastoral Areas.

Each year the number of parishes without a resident priest increases. This new reality has necessitated the formation of the Pastoral Areas where increased lay involvement is no longer just a desired model of church but is now essential for the pastoral well-being of our parishes. This transition demands preparation and planning. The task of the ODPC is to listen to the experiences of people in parishes, identify pastoral needs and advise the Bishop as to how the Diocese can respond to these needs.

In our Parish cluster here in Urlingford, Johnstown and Galmoy, we've been trying to look at what we can do to reach out to all our parishioners.



It's been a tremendously difficult time for everyone. We're all focussed on this new Coronavirus, Covid-19. It's brought tremendous grief and hardship and fear to the lives of many people. In the midst of such an experience the natural thing for us human beings to do is to come together and support each other. In times of drought and disease, pestilence and famine that's what people have always done. And we've gathered to pray together in these times too. But this time it's different! The best way for us to support one another now is to observe 'Social Distancing' and 'Cocooning'!

We are still praying; praying for those who have lost their lives to this awful disease; praying for our political leaders that the decisions they make will help to steer us through and out of this; praying particularly for all those who have to work on the front line in our medical facilities; praying for all those who put themselves at risk to ensure that the supply chain is not broken or damaged so that we can receive essential supplies.

In our Parish cluster here in Urlingford, Johnstown and Galmoy, we've been trying to look at what we can do to reach out to all our parishioners. Just recently

we've been able to broadcast our Mass on radio and while the feedback from people was good, others felt that it wasn't the same as being able to 'see' what was happening even though they couldn't be present.

On Monday of Holy Week we were put in touch with 'Star Systems' in Thurles. Declan O'Sullivan called to us on Monday evening to chat about the possibilities of being able to broadcast our Easter Ceremonies via webcam. Having no wifi in Church here in Urlingford we turned to our neighbours directly across the road (Urlingford Library) to see if we could use their wifi to enable us to broadcast. Having made contact with Alicia Dunphy, they were most helpful in assisting us and thought it was a great idea! By Tuesday evening at 7.30pm we were up and running!!

So we look forward to being able to offer this opportunity to our cluster. Even though we may be absent from Church hopefully over these days, thanks to technology, we will once again be present to one another celebrating the Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Sincere thanks to all who helped us out and happy Easter to all. Alleluia!

...there is always an opportunity to minister his presence in days of social isolation as well as social interaction.

Redundancy and Recognition

Kieran O'Shea

When we recognise who the source of our ministry is, then we will never be bereft of opportunities to serve.



Just the other day I was speaking to one of our Eucharistic Ministers and she said 'looks like we will all be redundant for Holy Week Father!' In one sense she was correct but in a more important sense she was not. A Minister of the Church is never redundant. Even though our restricted celebration of Holy Week this year might have engendered a feeling of redundancy it is important for us to understand that ministry in the Church is not just about exercising liturgical function or occupying a particular office or carrying out a particular role, important as these aspects may be, it is essentially

about recognising the source from which the call to ministry comes and recognising that source in each of our sisters and brothers whom we are called to serve. To put it in another way ministry in the Church Community is not always restricted to place, position, time or restricted by lack of opportunity to function. It is of its very nature a recognition of Jesus Christ as the source of the mission entrusted to us and the source of an invitation to offer our lived experience, our giftedness, and our human capacity for empathy in the service of others so that they too will come to know that they are loved by the

God of Jesus Christ through the ministry of the Church.

This understanding of ministry was very much at the centre of the first evening of formation for new and existing ministers of the Eucharist early in March. It was encouraging to see so many people travel from their various parishes to Ballyragget, Mullinavat and St Kieran's College, willing to set out on a road that would lead them to recognise anew the joy of being servants of the Gospel. Among their number were people from a variety of life experiences and different stages on the faith journey; parents, teenagers, grandparents, religious, people with strong faith, some who were searching and questioning. All part of the cohort of disciples of Jesus who are far from redundant in our Diocese.

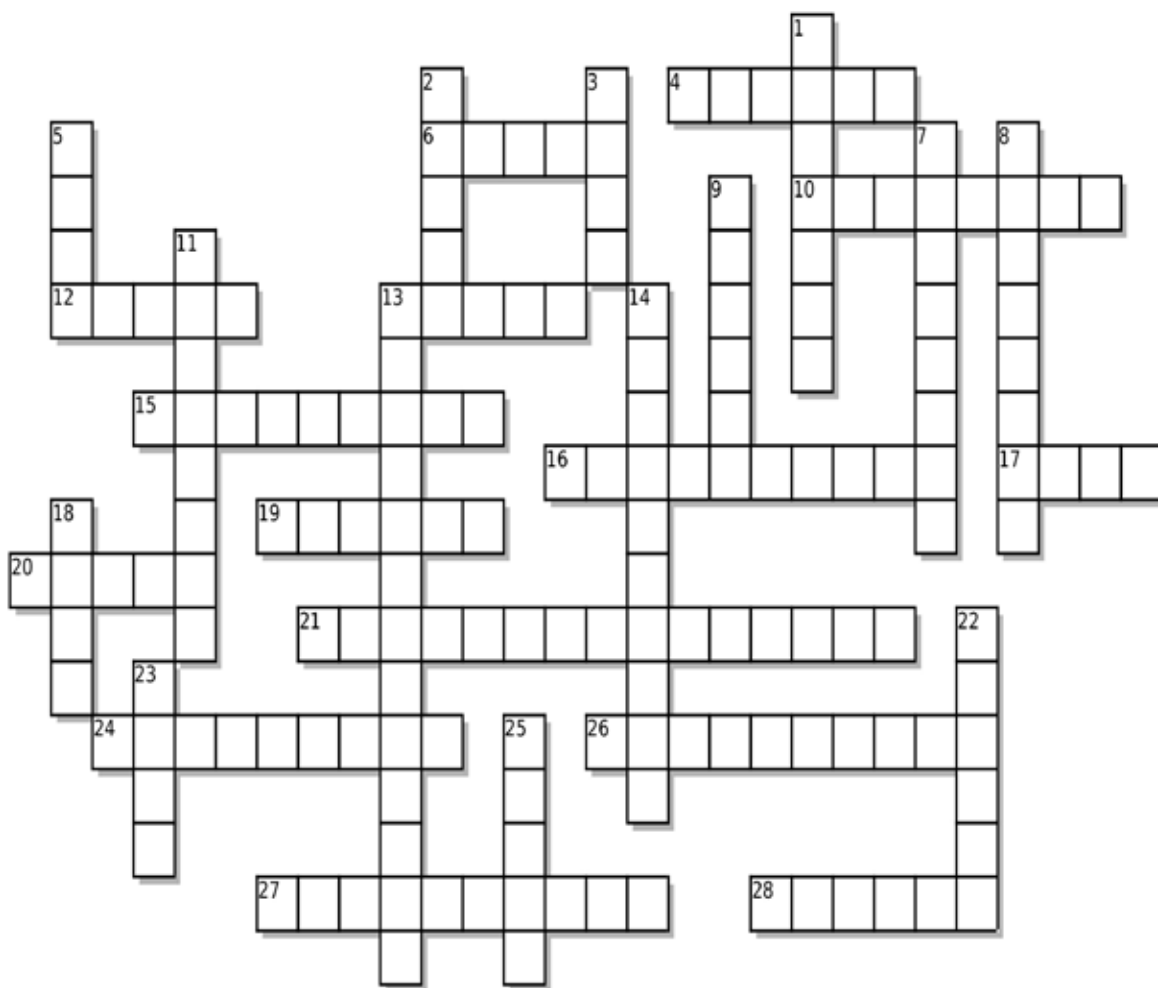
The first evening I led a meditation on the post resurrection account of the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24: 13-35). One of the themes of that story is recognition. The story relates that the eyes of the disciples were kept from recognising Jesus as he walked along with them and then towards the end we hear that their eyes were opened and they recognised him after he had explained the scriptures to them and after he broke and shared the bread with them. Notice that St Luke's account does not say the disciples did not recognise Jesus but that 'their eyes were kept from recognising him'. It is as if they were not allowed to recognise Jesus until they were prepared, until they were nourished. This is so important for all who respond to the call to serve in the Church. We cannot recognise Jesus as the source of our life's mission nor as the source of our call to

ministry without being prepared, without the seed of faith sown in baptism being nourished by formation, by the Word of God, by prayer and by participation in the Liturgy. By these means the Lord prepares to open our eyes so that we can truly become who we are called to be: ministers of recognition, recognising him in the minutiae of our lives and recognising him in the needs of those we encounter each day in the community.

The second evening, led by Fr Dermot Ryan, focused on the importance of our prayer liturgies being real celebrations of the liturgy of life. It is only when these "two worlds" are united as one that our moments of prayer make most sense. Exploring the role of the Minister of the Eucharist this evening demonstrated how it is the involvement of many members of the local community - in various roles and ministries - that bring the two worlds together. We see in the faces of each other the face of Christ and in responding to his invitation to serve that we live out our baptismal calling and, in doing so, help others to do the same. While great numbers gathered for the evenings in Ballyragget and Mullinavat, the evening in Kilkenny and the morning for those in schools and colleges were postponed as a result of the Coronavirus.

When an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion or indeed any of us come to recognise Christ as the source of everything, when our 'sacred' and 'secular' worlds are seen as one, then we will truly know that we are never redundant, there is always an opportunity to minister his presence in days of social isolation as well as social interaction.

EASTER CROSSWORD 2020



ACROSS

- 4 5th March
6 Apart but not... a pastoral letter
10 Collaborator in and maybe with St Patrick
12 Evil New Testament king
13 ____ magna
15 of Vatican II
16 A slow walk on a feast day
17 Latin ____
19 Lectio prayer
20 Canonical hour
21 New papal commission to study this
24 Holy Spirit
26 Ironically social
27 Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
28 A lenten colour

DOWN

- 1 Colleges Cup, Archbishop of Cashel
2 St Pauls shipwreck
3 John tells us that Jesus prepared this after the resurrection
5 Luke tells it was offered to the risen Jesus
7 Garment worn by a minister of the Church
8 Our service in the Church
9 He made them male and Gen 1:27
11 Over 70
13 Sponsors free - many postponed
14 Union of Christ's two natures in one person
18 Church sounder
22 In it falls Alphonsus' Feast
23 Shone at the transfiguration
25 Word of God

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 August 2020, first correct entry from the hat wins!

Prize for age 5-8

Colouring Competition

€20 Voucher
Gift Voucher
for Toy Shop

Prize for age 8-13

Wordsearch Competition

€30 Voucher
Gift Voucher
for Toy Shop

Prize for Adult Crossword Competition

€50 Voucher
Gift Voucher
for Chapter House Bookshop

Congrats to the winners from the Ossory Times Issue 22 competitions:

Adult Crossword:
Mary Lahiff

Children's Wordsearch, age 8-13:
Caoimhe & Mikey Phelan

Children's Colouring, age 5-8:
Edel Malone

DIocese of Ossory AIM HIGH

Diocese of Ossory

PARISH MINISTRY PROGRAMME FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The Aim High Parish Ministry Programme was developed to encourage young people to take an active part in their Church, parish and community.

Aim High is open to all young people, 16 years and over. The Award is flexible, non-competitive and requires an ongoing commitment. The programme is coordinated through the Parish, in conjunction with parish organisations, secondary schools and youth clubs.

AIM HIGH

Contact us 055-3404730
Email aimhigh@ossory.ie



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

AIM HIGH

Pope Francis