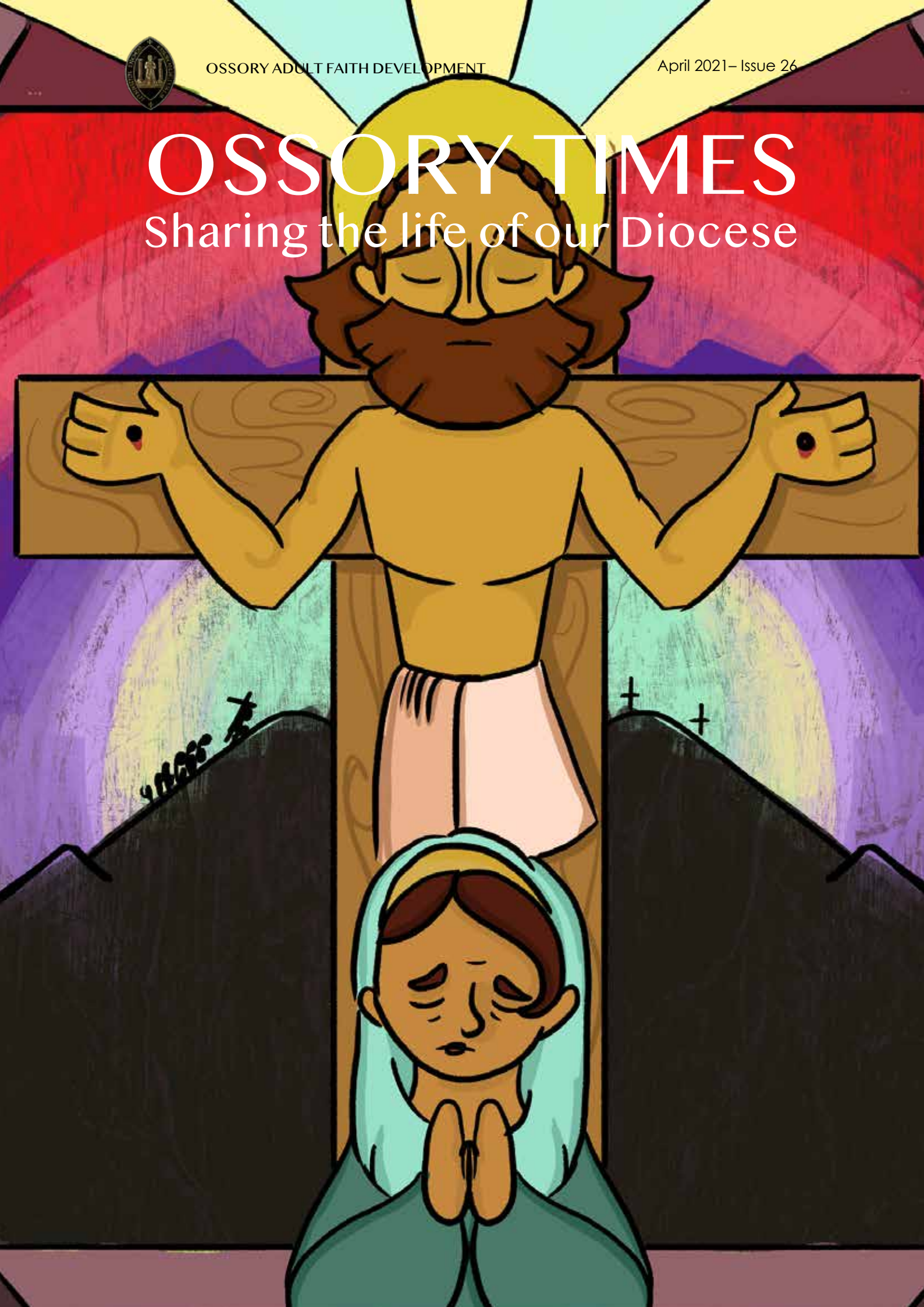




OSSORY TIMES

Sharing the life of our Diocese



Vocations in Ossory

How do I take a first step on
the road of discovery?

How do I know what life path
I should take?

take a first step
on the journey of
discovery...



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Editorial

As I sit to write this editorial it is the evening of Palm Sunday. We know well the week ahead. We have made this journey before. It is tempting then to move from today - the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem when the people praised and worshiped him - and to skip one week, this coming week, to start to draw our focus to next Sunday, Easter Sunday. It is our destination, so why not go there? Why do we need the days in between? We know the anticipation and excitement of the start line and we know, too, the relief and joy of the finish line - but why run and endure all those miles in between?

We do it because we know that it is the pain of the effort that makes the finish so sweet. It is the long difficult miles each one passed, one at a time, that makes crossing that final line such a relief.

It is, then, the rough arrest of one so innocent, it is loneliness of the agony in the garden on one who gathered so many, it is the unjust nature and brutality of the crucifixion on one so gentle, it is the horror of seeing him dead - he the giver of life - these are the elements that make the resurrection so wonderful. It is the journey that often makes the destination so memorable.

In this ongoing pandemic time it is good for us to journey closely with a God, who in every way - as this week shows - journeyed so closely with us in our human condition.

The day to day life of our Diocese is important, then, in shaping how we will experience our faith-led destination. Once again the *Ossory Times* tries to capture some of that wonderful life of faith in our parishes. Since the last edition Bishop Dermot Farrell has been translated to Dublin as its Archbishop and Bishop Denis Nulty has been appointed Apostolic Administrator of Ossory, while continuing his work as Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin. He is most welcome as he journeys with us as we await the appointment of a new Bishop, and we wish Archbishop Dermot every blessing in his new ministry.

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

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On 2nd February 2021 Bishop Dermot was appointed as Archbishop of Dublin - on that day he wrote to the priests and people of Ossory.



Today my appointment as Bishop of the Archdiocese of Dublin by Pope Francis will be announced publicly at 11.00 am. I am anxious that, as your Bishop, you would first hear this announcement from me, rather than from elsewhere. I did not seek out this new pastoral assignment, but allowed myself to be called, and accompanied. Notwithstanding that, I have had a few sleepless nights since I learned of the appointment from the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Okolo.

For the last three years I have been Bishop of Ossory, and I have been exceedingly happy and fulfilled among you, my brothers in the priesthood, and among the people of Ossory. I came as a 'stranger' among you, and I remember the warmth of your welcome and that of the people. The anxieties I had about moving from Meath quickly melted away. You offered your support in so many ways, overlooked my mistakes and limitations, and always assured me of your kindness and carried me and my ministry in your prayer. I thank you and, through you I thank the people. In consequence, I will leave a part of my heart here in Ossory whose pastoral care was entrusted to me.

I have always been impressed by the unity of and fraternity among the priests in the Diocese. There is an Old Testament story which is pertinent: it tells us of the battle between Joshua and Amalek (Exodus 17:8-16). The Amalekites had come up against the Moses. As Joshua fought the Amalekites, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill with Moses. When Moses held up his hands, the Israelites would prevail, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites prevailed. When Moses's hands grew tired, Aaron and Hur took a stone and put it under Moses and he sat on

it and then Aaron and Hur held up Moses's hands so Israel would prevail. There were times when you held up my arms when I grew tired. As you know, there are times in ministry when we cannot do without the support of others. A fortiori, in a time of great cultural and societal change we need the support of our communal life. It offers a vision of how a community can work together despite the understandable differences that can exist (see 1 Cor 11:19); then what we do-our work-is not only for the Church, but our service is for the wider communities among whom we are called to labour.

There is a second point in the story of Joshua and Amalek which is truly relevant for my pastoral ministry, namely persistence, and especially persistence in prayer. As long as Moses intercedes for the people, Israel is victorious. The diocese has faced many issues down the years. None more so than this year which has been one of epic proportions. I know it has been incredibly stressful for priests and people. Our persistence in prayer together is vital to overcoming this crisis.

Our diocese, in common with every diocese in Western Europe, has been-for years now-facing deep and lasting change. That situation is not going to change, and it cannot be wished away. However, we are not helpless in the face of the future. I am confident that the Church will provide a good shepherd, and that you may not have to wait as long as you did before I was named. I pray that as I embrace this new mission, I will have your blessing. I assure you of an enduring place in my prayer. I humbly and sincerely ask for a place in yours.

With kind regards,



Following the appointment of Archbishop Dermot Farrell to Dublin, Pope Francis has appointed Bishop Denis Nulty as Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Ossory. Bishop Nulty is, along with his duties as Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, to shepherd the faithful in Ossory until a new Bishop is appointed.

In accepting the appointment Bishop Nulty noted "Humbly and happily I have accepted this role. In my years as a neighbour in the Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin I have witnessed the many initiatives and activities of, and for, the faith which have been undertaken by people, religious, and priests of this great Diocese. It is my pleasure, then, to walk with the people of Ossory for this period of time as a new Bishop is found. As Archbishop Dermot begins in Dublin I know you will join with me in a prayer of thanksgiving for his time in Ossory and we pray too that the Spirit will continue to guide him in his work now in Dublin"

On the evening of 2nd February at 7.00pm, an evening prayer on the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord was streamed from St Mary's Cathedral, led by Bishop Denis - his welcome to the Diocese of Ossory.



Reflections at the Celebration of Evening Prayer

St Mary's Cathedral, Kilkenny, 2nd February 2021

We gather for Evening Prayer on this, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord. I welcome the many who join through the Cathedral webcam. Earlier today your former Bishop Dermot was installed as Archbishop of Dublin. He was ordained Bishop here on March 11th 2018 and in those short three years he has made a huge impression on the faith life of this diocese, which has been called 'Ireland's oldest bishopric'. I am humbled to be invited by Pope Francis to serve as your Apostolic Administrator as you await the appointment of a new Bishop. As a neighbour and as a friend, I look forward to walking with you and to help in every way I can in this period of *sede vacante*.

Today religious life is celebrated throughout the Church. The religious traditions in this diocese speak volumes. I think of Edmund Ignatius Rice, a native of Westcourt, Callan, the founder of the Christian Brothers and the Presentation

Brothers. I think of Margaret Aylward, a native of Mullinavat, foundress of the Sisters of the Holy Faith and of Bishop Daniel Delany, native of Paddock in Castletown, founder of the Brigidine Sisters and Patrician Brothers and co-founder of St Patrick's College, Carlow.

The religious play a huge role in the life of any diocese, as I witness every day in Kildare & Leighlin - Ossory is no exception. There is a temptation to talk about 'the religious' in the past tense as if that contribution, their day in the sun, had passed. I disagree. The demographic may be older but their presence, their commitment, their influence remains as fervent as ever. I pay tribute to the priests, religious and lay faithful of Ossory who have kept the flame of faith burning in these parts since the twelfth century and indeed long before that.

Today especially I recall Bishop William Kinsella, a native of Ballon, County Carlow who was

Bishop of Ossory from 1829-1845. He was the Bishop who oversaw the new building to house St Kieran's College, which lays claim to be the oldest Catholic college in the country. Before his death he witnessed the building of the early phase of this splendid Cathedral, standing on the highest point in the city, one of the finest examples of pure Gothic design on this island.

In the scripture reading this evening the Letter to the Hebrews speaks of a 'high priest' but one who is not removed from the weaknesses of those around him. The difference between 'the mercy seat' of the Old Testament and 'the throne of grace' in this Letter is the approach. In the Old Testament 'the mercy seat' was only approached by the high priest and it was approached in fear and trembling. All are invited to approach the throne of grace and to do so with confidence.

In a time of pandemic we need to approach this throne of grace, more than ever reassured that the Lord walks with us and remains with us at all times. We are never on our own and we need this reassurance above all right now. Our buildings may be closed to public worship but they all remain open for personal prayer. This latest 'lockdown' is bookended by the patrons of both our dioceses, St Brigid of Kildare on February 1st and St Kieran of Ossory on March 5th. On this feastday of the Presentation of the Lord when we customarily bless candles, let us keep those candles burning as we intercede through the intercession of all the saints to protect us and those we love from the effect of this virus. We also begin this evening our prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the discernment of a new bishop for Ossory.

It is only through the prayerful and practical support of the priests, religious and laity of both Ossory and my own Kildare & Leighlin, that I take on today this added responsibility and I ask all of you to keep me in your prayers.

St Kieran, pray for us.
 St Canice, pray for us.
 St Fergal, pray for us.
 St Fiacre, pray for us.
 St Brigid, pray for us.



- Denis Nulty was born in Slane, County Meath on 7 June 1963 to parents Den Nulty and Nan Balfe. He is the youngest of five children, with two brothers and two sisters. The family farm was the home where Denis and his siblings were reared.
- He attended Primary School at Saint Patrick's National School, Slane and Secondary School at Saint Patrick's Classical School, Navan, completing the Leaving Certificate exam in 1981.
- Denis entered the seminary at Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth in September 1981, completing a BA in 1984 and a BD in 1987.
- He was ordained a Priest for the Diocese of Meath in Saint Patrick's Church, Slane on 12 June 1988 by Bishop Michael Smith in the presence of Bishop John McCormack.
- In September 1988 Bishop Smith appointed Father Denis as Curate in the Cathedral Parish at Mullingar where he served for ten years until 1998. In August 1998 Bishop Smith appointed Father Denis as Parish Priest of Saint Mary's, Drogheda where he remained up until his Episcopal appointment to Kildare & Leighlin (August 2013)
- In 2006 Father Denis followed a course of study in All Hallows College, Dublin, leading to an MA in Management for the Pastoral and Voluntary Services being awarded by DCU.
- In September 2006 Bishop Smith appointed Father Denis as Vicar Forane for the Duleek Deanery which comprises seven parishes. Father Denis was Chairperson of the Council of Priests in the Diocese of Meath for past eight years prior to his appointment as Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin.
- Bishop Denis Nulty was ordained Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin on 4th August 2013 in Carlow Cathedral and has served there since

At a meeting of all of the priests of the Diocese, Bishop Denis gave the following reflection on the post-pandemic parish.

1 The value of the virtual – webcam / FaceBook / livestreaming – proven a winner in pandemic times will still have a huge role beyond the pandemic – a parish without a virtual presence will struggle post pandemic. During 'lockdown' on one weekday there were 1.8M devices tuned into Masses (phones, ipads, mini-ipads, desktops). The internet is no substitute for the nourishment of physical presence and interaction, but it's place in the future is assured. Some may never return because they can 'get' Mass anywhere, anytime and anyplace. The Iona Institute Poll found recently that 30% were watching religious services online, an increase of 3% since the first lockdown.

2 Our experience of social distancing and the digital, necessary as they are, leave us hungering for the incarnational, for human contact, touch, for the tactile, for the tangible, for the gathering (of parishioners) – private prayer doesn't do it; public worship does – the need for the resumption of Masses will lift all of us: "the virus ... has also taken away the daily interaction (of priests) with their parishioners, which was a vital source of energy and connection" (IT, Breda O'Brien, 06.02.21). At the heart of our Catholic faith is a God who in Jesus Christ joined our world, walked among us and had skin in our game. Pope Francis says in 'Let Us Dream – the Plan to a Better Future': "social distancing is a necessary response to a pandemic, but it cannot last without eroding our humanity. We were born not just for connection but for contact. Touch is the only sense that technology has yet to supplant." (pg. 23)

3 The days of the 'lone ranger', the 'solo operator' have passed – the pandemic has taught us that parish

boundaries are porous. While every parish is different and a 'one size fits all' approach is not helpful, we have got to share and support one another with ideas, advice and resources. We have developed a modern mindset of individualism, consuming for our personal selves and families, wondering how we can get back to 'normal' so that we can resume our individual habits, the same habits that made possible a global pandemic. If the self-sacrifice of those serving on our 'frontlines' has taught us anything, it is that this behaviour is the very opposite, the very antidote to individualism and self-centredness. A message from Pope Francis in 'Let Us Dream – the Plan to a Better Future': "unless we accept the principle of solidarity among the peoples, we will not come out of this crisis better." (pg. 110)

4 A new understanding of Communion, the Body of Christ, to be the Body of Christ, in the words of St Teresa of Avila: "Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now but yours." "I cannot possess Christ just for myself; I can belong to him only in union with all those who have become, or who will become his own. Communion draws me out of myself towards him and also towards unity with all Christians" (Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, par. 14) In this vision, love of God and love of neighbour cannot be separated. Being present together for the Eucharistic meal helps to nourish our

relationships with each other, so that we can truly be united with God (Dr. Aoife McGrath, SPCM). We need to be weary of pandering to nourishing individuals hunger for Eucharist and losing nourishing the full Body of Christ.

5 The post pandemic parish will need to be resilient to opening up and closing down, as has often been said the easiest thing is to close the schools, businesses, pubs, churches, the hardest thing is opening them up again. The document last July 'The pastoral conversion of the parish community in the service of the evangelizing mission of the church' speaks about the flexibility of parish. A parish is not a business but a missionary community, in which everyone contributes his or her part according to their vocation, availability and abilities.

6 The groups that kept going during lockdown (Finance Committee, Liturgy Group, Baptism Team, Youth Group, Parish Pastoral Council etc) will have a larger presence/role post lockdown. How we value them now speaks volumes to how we will work together into the future.

7 A deeper understanding and value for the Domestic Church – the Family. What kind of ministry to families have we in our parishes and might we imagine in our parishes? And what is the effect of the ministry families are currently doing to us and how will that shape our future? Is it as Cardinal Mario Grech suggests "a new ecclesiology, perhaps even a new theology, and a new ministry ... if the domestic Church fails, the Church cannot exist. If there is no domestic Church, the Church has no future".

8 Our sacramental celebrations? Baptism, First Penance, First Eucharist, Confirmation. The experience of the past year has been very favourably commented upon. How do we build on these experiences? How do we prepare in an uncertain time?

9 The vulnerability of our Church, our Parish, ourselves – the Church as 'Field Hospital', a much loved image of Pope Francis. The Czech Tomas Halik suggests for our communities to become 'field hospitals' they must assume three roles: diagnostic, preventive and convalescent. Diagnostic wherein they identify the signs of the times, name the moment in a prophetic way and this takes courage. Preventive where the community creates an immune system in a world torn asunder by many viruses. We are all parts of a single body, one part gets sick/infected, we are all affected. And finally the convalescent role where communities become sanctuaries of forgiveness. We may feel as believers vulnerable, small, perhaps old, weak. God does His best work when we are too weak to get in the way. When we feel small, old, weak and pathetic, we have nothing to boast of but our faith "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1) We must seize the moment, rather than hanker for a past, where all wasn't so wonderful either.

10 "I am with you always until the end of time" (Mt.28:20) To return to normal is to miss an important God-given invitation to turn our lives, our parishes in a completely new direction, a direction that is sensitive to creation, compassion, peace and forgiveness. We shouldn't go back to normal, because normal was the problem in the first place. I suggest we are challenged to reimagine evangelisation, mission, ministry. The world is not ours to control or manipulate, rather we are to be conscious that we are part of something much greater. Our fragility and helplessness in facing the pandemic is a reminder that we are not all-powerful, and we all need God in our lives, our parishioners need God in their lives.

At a speed few could have imagined the walls of our own Jerichos were breached and we have been exposed to a new reality

Kieran O'Shea

'There is No Sovereignty in Solitude' Embracing New Models of Priestly Ministry



In the course of an address to the Italian Senate on Ash Wednesday (17th February) the newly appointed Prime Minister of Italy, Mario Draghi, remarked that 'there is no sovereignty in solitude'. This statement was a defence of Italy's place within the European Union and

also a clear indication that Italy's sense of nationhood could be enhanced by a deepening of that relationship. Quite apart from Italian and European politics Mario Draghi's words at this juncture can also challenge us as ordained priests to reflect on the model of ministry we are

emerging from and what model we need to embrace to deal with the outcome of the present pandemic and the tsunami of change that was already underway all around us and will continue apace in the years ahead.

In the not too distant past we as priests tended to defend the sovereignty of our presbyteral patches with every fibre of our being. It was an easy model to maintain because priests were plentiful and people could only say their prayers. Apart from an occasional missive from the Bishop all matters could be controlled locally.

There was no need to delegate any responsibility or to cede control of the Administrative, Liturgical, or Pastoral life of the Parish to anyone inside or outside a clearly defined territory.

Presbyteral and Parochial sovereignty was guaranteed through a rigorously maintained wall of ecclesiastical solitude. However as is often the case the strongest fortifications come tumbling down. At a speed few could have imagined the walls of our own Jerichos were breached and we have been exposed to a new reality.

This new reality has been challenging for many priests. It is always hard to let go of the reins, to believe that sharing 'sovereignty' will augment our ministry, will enrich the faith lives of the people we are called to serve, will reinvigorate our parishes. Yet the writing is on the wall, on that last little bit of wall standing between us and a land we now call co-responsibility.

The message is clear and it reads something like what Cardinal Mario Grech, the newly appointed Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops said in a recent interview (*La Civiltà Cattolica*: 23 October 2020)

'We have discovered a new ecclesiology, perhaps even a new theology, and a new ministry. This

therefore indicates that it is time to make the necessary choices to build on this new model of ministry. It will be suicide if, after the pandemic, we return to the same pastoral models that we have practiced until now. We spend enormous energy trying to convert secular society, but it is more important to convert ourselves to achieve the pastoral conversion of which Pope Francis often speaks.'

The writing on the wall, that clear message, calls us to a conversion that welcomes a model of ministry that reflects the vision of the second Vatican Council and the direction in which Pope Francis is leading the Church. It calls us to a new trust in the Lord who assures us that he is with us until the end, that the Church has a future, that the Spirit is still active through us and through the Priesthood of the Baptised. You may say our age profile as priests, our decreased morale or level of enthusiasm for mission, the deficit of vocations, our dwindling congregations thwart any hope of embracing this new model.

To accept that premise is to return to that solitude which will lead us to become more isolated in a world longing for Good News. Fear of leaving the safety and comfort of our own interior castle can blind us to the new lands that lie beyond our breached walls, the land of co-responsibility already mentioned, the land of synodality yet to be explored. A new ecclesiology, a new theology, a new ministry emerging from the rubble of the past is nothing to fear. In fact it may be the vaccine to stem the spread of the virus of irrelevance that threatens us.

When, as Pope Francis states in *Evangelium Gaudii* (No 20), we obey the Lord's call to 'go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the peripheries in need of the light of the Gospel' we discover there is no sovereignty in solitude and that far away hills can indeed be green.

...the Forum, which provides for pastoral councils at parish, deanery and diocesan level, is the essential pastoral framework in our diocese

Evaluating the Forum in 2021

Helen Maher

OSSORY DIOCESAN FORUM



CONSTITUTION
2017

When the Diocesan Pastoral Council came together after the summer break last October we were aware that an evaluation of the Forum was due in the coming year. When previous evaluations were done they were carried out by a series of carefully prepared, facilitated meetings of the various groups. Given the Covid-19 restrictions in place, even last October, it was clear that it wouldn't be possible to do the evaluation in the same way this time. The temptation was to say "we'll have to postpone this until we're in a better place".

But as Bishop Farrell said at the January meeting of the ODPC, the pastoral life of the diocese can't be put on hold while we're waiting for the appointment of a new bishop or while we're limited by the Covid restrictions.

Life goes on and we must attend, as best we can, to what is essential. And the Forum, which provides for pastoral councils at parish, deanery and diocesan level, is the essential pastoral framework in our diocese.

These pastoral councils are designed to make it possible for the priests and people of the diocese to walk together to build an effective, collaborative church.

Previous evaluations in 2007, 2013 and 2017 led to consensus about significant adjustments that needed to be made to the structures and influenced the priorities that were adopted for each new term in the light of experience and changing circumstances. Each time an evaluation was done, while always recognising weaknesses in how our structures were operating, the basic value of having such a framework for communication and dialogue was strongly affirmed.

So, convinced of the importance of the four-yearly evaluation, and in spite of the current restrictions, the Diocesan Pastoral Council launched the evaluation process in February this year. The initial phase was addressed by the Deanery Pastoral Councils. These groups rose magnificently to the occasion by hosting their meetings on zoom and subsequently submitting their responses in writing. It was really heartening to see how well the zoom meetings worked and encouraging that the possibility of coming together in this way is open to us as we continue to adapt to the limitations Covid imposes on us.

At the DPC zoom meetings members were asked, in the light of their own experience, to offer their insights into how they felt the forum structures could be improved and adapted as we move forward.

A significant development in the diocese towards the end of 2019 had been the grouping of parishes into Pastoral Areas. This had led to the setting up of Pastoral Area Councils. Some members of parish and deanery councils had expressed the view that there were now too many levels causing duplication and multiplying meetings unnecessarily. Deanery members were now asked specifically if they considered that Deanery Pastoral

Councils should be replaced by Area Pastoral Councils.

The quality of the responses across the three groups was rich indeed and indicated the great commitment of Deanery Pastoral Council members to the ideal that all of us, priests, religious and lay people can work together to bring about a more participative Church. Their commitment, over the last four years and in the years before, has ensured that the Deanery Pastoral Councils continue to have the potential to help to build the kind of synodal Church that Pope Francis is constantly calling us to create locally

Considering the responses, a very central consideration for each of the three groups was the fact that the Pastoral Areas had not had time to become well established when the Covid restrictions were imposed. There was consensus that the Pastoral Areas are the way forward for the diocese and that they need to be supported and developed before a decision is taken to change the Forum structures.

In the light of this feedback the Ossory Diocesan Pastoral Council decided:

- That we will continue to hold the present structures, e.g. Parish Pastoral Councils, Deanery Pastoral Councils and Diocesan Pastoral Council for a further year.
- That we will consider what can be done to develop Pastoral Areas at this time.

So, the invitation to the Deanery Pastoral Councils for the coming year is to consider how they can best support the parishes in their Deaneries to find creative ways to remain in touch with parishioners and sustain their faith while the freedom they usually enjoy in doing this remains restricted.



The stained glass windows of St Mary's have told the story for over 150 years.

Stained Glass Windows St Mary's Cathedral

Richard Scriven

A picture tells a thousand words! And so it is, that the windows of our churches throughout the diocese tell the Christian story. The stained glass windows of St Mary's have told the story for over 150 years.

Five groupings of windows can be made, grouped together by their age and the workshops from where they came:

1. The Sanctuary Windows (1857)
2. The great Window over the front door (1857);
3. The Windows in the Upper Section of the Sanctuary and the Assumption;
4. The Window of the Sacred Heart (after 1877);
5. Blessed Felix Dulany (2014).

Records indicate that the windows in the sanctuary and over the main entrance door were in place when the church was consecrated in 1857. A depiction of the Crucifixion, Our Lady, St John, and our local saints of Kieran and Canice are on

the lower level. The three windows of the upper level depict the Risen Christ and those who witnessed the Christ after the Resurrection.

The window over the main entrance (the East façade) is described in the Kilkenny Journal in 1857: "the glory of the Cathedral, after the tower, is the grand windows over the main principal entrance at the front gable, which is flanked by majestic towers. This window is divided into six compartments by stone mullions, the compartments enclosing panels of stained glass representing the stage of the Passion of Our Divine Redeemer. The cutting of the upper or rose portion of this window is incomparably beautiful". All the qualities of this window -the density of the glass, the intensity of the colour, the decorative borders and the subject matter – suggest that this window are like the windows in the Sanctuary and are possible the work of French artisans.

In the upper level of the sanctuary there are six windows. Bishop Edward Walsh, in whose time as bishop the Cathedral



was completed and opened, gifted the cathedral these windows of the Patriarchs and significant people of the Old Testament: Joshua and Noah, Abraham and Gideon, Moses and Solomon, David and Daniel, Ezekiel and Isaiah, Judas Maccabeus and Jeremiah. These windows are the work of Earley and Powell of Dublin and can be dated to the 1870s. It is easy to see the difference in workmanship, style and colour density when compared with the earlier windows of 1857.

From the same studio of Earley and Powell is the window of the Assumption. This is the gift of the Cullen family and is over the vault that contains the remains of the donor: Daniel Cullen. In the centre panel Our Blessed Lady is represented ascending into heaven surrounded below by the apostles and above by the angels of the heavenly court. A detailed account of the new window is given in the *Kilkenny Journal* of March 23, 1867, written by the journalist who visited the workshop of Earley and Powell in Dublin.

In the south transept is the beautiful window of the Sacred Heart. The window that we see is the second window to be placed in this corner of the Cathedral and is dated sometime after 1877.

The first window was the gift of the Byran family of Jeninstown and it was destroyed in a storm of 1886. The replacement window, in honour of the Sacred Heart, is the work of Mayer of Munich and cost £300.

St Margaret Alocque, a French mystic who promoted the devotion to the Sacred Heart, is represented. A variety of saints are also depicted: St Francis (in the Franciscan habit), St Peter (holding the Keys) and Paul (with a sword), St Joseph (with a lily) and St Catherine of Alexandria (beside the wheel).





The two side chapels of Our Lady and St Joseph also have stained glass windows. The Kilkenny Journal of 1857 mentions these two side chapels but there is no reference to the windows. Both sets of windows are likely from the workshop of Earley and Powell. The windows in St Joseph's Chapel were gifted by Mrs Dunne (née Buggy).

The final and newest window is that of Blessed Felix Dulany in the nave. O'Dulany was a native of Upper Ossory and he established the monastery of Jerpoint. In 1178 he became Bishop of Ossory and was the bishop who oversaw the transfer of the See of Ossory from Aghaboe to Kilkenny city. He died in 1202 and is buried in Jerpoint. This window is the work of Joe Sheridan. Joe, a native of Kells, like his father before him has worked on many of the windows of our Cathedral. We continue to rely upon his skill to maintain and safeguard the windows that we enjoy in our generation.

The wonderful windows of the Cathedral tell the Christian story of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection; in a church dedicated to Our Lady her Assumption has a prominent place; local saints of Kieran and Canice have pride of place beside Peter and Paul.

Here is the richness of our faith and the faith of the generations before us. They continue to illuminate the parishioner and visitor alike and through their rich spectrum of colour highlight the rich mouldings and carvings of our cathedral. The craftsmanship of Dubliners Earley and Powell, the artisans of Munich and the skills of the French allow us to compare and contrast the developing art of telling the story through glass.

These windows are the gift that keeps on giving in our times and will do so for generations to come.

Friends of St Mary's

Rita Neary



Through the small contribution of many we can do great thing together...

In January an initiative to seek 1000 friends for St Mary's Cathedral was launched. Stretching back decades many have supported the work of the Cathedral; the FRIENDS are now invited to go the extra mile...

We are looking for 1000 friends and more: parishioners, those who were baptised in St Mary's, past pupils of our parish schools who celebrated First Communion and Confirmation, couples who walked the aisle on the day of their wedding, priests who were ordained and went to bring the Good News to the ends of the earth. All are invited – near and far - to become a FRIEND of ST MARY'S and together make a difference.

Each FRIEND is asked to commit a minimum of €5 per month to the Cathedral. With this commitment and the support of the FRIENDS it is planned

- to develop the Cathedral for those who come to pray and those who come to dwell in the peace of this sacred space;
- to enhance the experience of tourist and pilgrims by designing information boards, display cabinets and exhibition panels;
- to restore the Cathedral Crib;

- to clean and repair the chapels of Our Lady and St Joseph;
- to embrace technology and social media to display the beauty of our Cathedral.

The support of the Friends will be vital to this work: financially it will give us the freedom to do this work but also, and perhaps more importantly, the interest and affirmation of the Friends will ensure that the future of the Cathedral will be secure for the next generation.

While major works in St Mary's may be required in the future, today we can make a difference. By tackling manageable and focused projects we will make a difference. In this year of St Joseph the FRIENDS will make the chapel of Joseph an important space within our Cathedral. In a church dedicated to Our Lady the FRIENDS will restore the Chapel of Our Lady to its former glory.

St Mary's is at the heart of the diocese and is a jewel in the centre of the city of Canice; it needs your help and support. By becoming a FRIEND of the CATHEDRAL you will become part of its story. You will contribute significantly to maintaining and preserving St Mary's for generations to come.

Log onto www.stmarycathedral.ie/friends where options for individual, family and corporate support is given. You can also help through a Standing Order to the Friends of St Mary's Cathedral account:

Name: Friends of St Mary's Cathedral

IBAN: IE33 BOFI 9060 6443 6990 18

BIC: BOFIE2D

Branch: Bank of Ireland, Kilkenny.

Please contact Fr Scriven for further information.

...things are changing and will have to change if the Church is to remain relevant in today's world...

The church in pandemic times - my experience

Cathal Cullen

When I lie in bed on a Sunday morning listening to the Mass being broadcast on KCLR I wonder, wonder at the huge changes which have occurred and continue to happen in our world. In normal times we would be in Foulkstown church celebrating our faith and our community. Our Sunday morning experience now is equally positive. We are involved in the Mass in a very different way now. We listen and allow ourselves to be moved in a way very different from our usual level of involvement when we are physically present in the church.

Recently I watched a programme - 'The Confessors' - on RTE television. It addressed the role of the confessional in our lives and how various priests are dealing with the pandemic in their own communities. I found it exciting and so positive. It underlined how things are changing and will have to change if the Church is to remain relevant in today's world.

As I listen to the Mass on radio I reflect on why I do not tend to watch it on TV .. It is as if I am watching a spectacle, a show. I am distracted by the grandiose trappings of most Irish churches - big altars, numerous statues, ornate fixtures. The core element of the Mass is missing - celebration - a community gathering together to celebrate the presence of God in their lives.

Many years ago I was asked by Bishop Forristal to address a meeting of priests in the Deanery. suggested that each of them should be allowed to work to

their strengths - one might be good at looking after the local national school, another at organising the work which had to be done on the buildings in the parish, another's forte might be relating to the emotionally deprived in their community, another's strength might be in delivering meaningful homilies to the congregations. The list of possibilities is endless. The priest should not have to be all things to all men.

The point I'm making at this time is that the old ways are no longer effective if the Church is to engage with the wider community. And the challenge is getting more and more difficult. The number of priests is declining dramatically; hence the role of the priest has to change equally dramatically. Each of us is limited in what we can do. Why should the priest exclusively have to give the homily at Mass? Perhaps there are other people in the congregation who could help people to focus on the presence of God in their lives? Why have homilies at all? Surely the efforts at communication should be addressed towards the people in the wider community rather than the ones who are already committed? And, perhaps, some homilies are too long and so become ineffective?

My faith is hugely important to me. It is the bedrock on which I have lived my life and it has helped me to understand the huge blessing of being loved by God. The pandemic has caused me to reflect on how I belong to the Church and if the Church, as it is presently structured, belongs to me?

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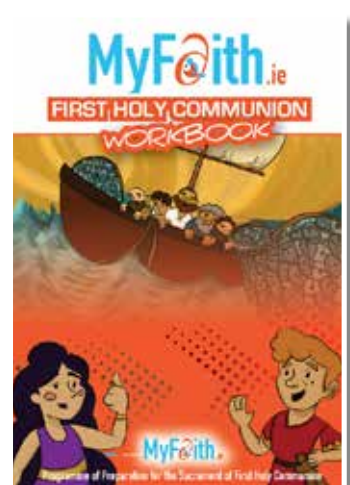
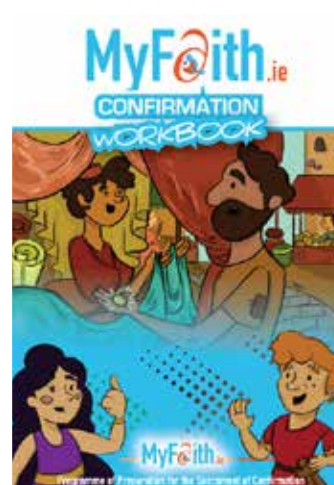
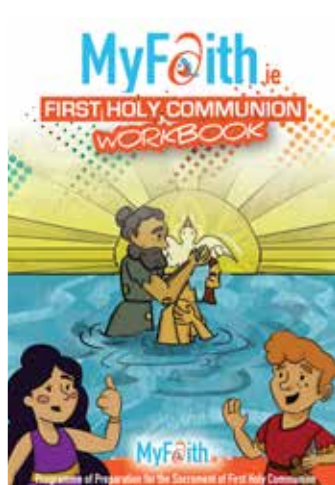


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Are the missing priests missed?

Albert McDonnell

Radharc na nOileán Pastoral Area.

'There are very few young priests anymore.'

I was recently talking to a tradesman about doing a bit of work in my house. We discussed the job and as tends to happen our chat wandered. He told me that very few young fellas were interested in learning trades nowadays. I said that was a great pity since there the work done by tilers, block-layers, carpenters and so on was essential and fulfilling. He thought for a second and agreed with me. He added 'sure the same is true for yourselves. There are very few young priests anymore and sure we need them too.'

The Government recently established a programme called 'Generation Apprenticeship' to encourage interest in the trades. The programme offers financial supports, accreditation and other incentives with a particular focus on female participation.

The Irish Bishops have taken various initiatives to encourage interest in the priesthood and

religious life. They established a vocations office which provides resources on its website (www.vocations.ie) ranging from the testimony of priests regarding what attracted them to ministry to prayers and reflections for those discerning a religious vocation. Dioceses have appointed vocations directors and committees. We have an annual day of prayer for vocations and there are branches of St Joseph's Young Priests Society across all dioceses.

So far, these efforts have produced little tangible fruit. The tradesman is right 'There are very few young priests anymore'. Writing in the Irish Catholic, the seminary rector in Maynooth referred to the decline in family and community support for vocations. He wrote about the difficulty in hearing the call of the Lord 'amidst the cacophony of voices that clamour for attention in our busy and noisy world'. This decline of interest in things of the Spirit is accompanied by the six state



reports regarding the dark side of the story of our church and country, in particular the outrageous abuse of children and women. These revelations transformed indifference into anger.

In 2018, when welcoming Pope Francis to Ireland, the then Taoiseach told him "religion is no longer at the centre of our society, but ... still has an important place". There are people in today's Ireland whose faith is at the centre of their lives, just as there are people without faith or hostile to the notion. However, the Taoiseach's assertion that religion is in decline rings true. In pre-pandemic days, looking around our Churches one saw extremely few potential candidates for the priesthood. The number coming to Mass drops each year by upwards of 1% of the overall population. Of the few young or middle-aged men active in Church, the overwhelming majority have already made other commitments in life, mostly through marriage. In many mainland European counties vocations tend to come from organised associations of young Catholics. These movements have never really taken off in Ireland, on the contrary existing Catholic lay groups like the Legion of

Mary have declined steeply. Many people do not experience Church as welcoming.

As the tradesman said priests are needed. At my ordination in Kilmaley in 1985, Bishop Harty spoke of the decline in vocations and his fear that we would not have Sunday Mass in all our churches for much longer. History has proven him right. The network of priests across communities is already a thing of the past. Are the missing priests missed? People who value the sacraments miss them. Some miss having the priest involved in the community through sport, drama and so. Still, these activities continue without priests. Communities miss having their 'own' priest who knew them well and could be especially supportive in difficult moments such as bereavement.

What of the future? Virtually nobody expects and even fewer want a return to the past. Too many priests crowd out the baptised and distorts the family of faith. On the other hand, priests are needed to celebrate the Eucharist, fan our faith into a flame, proclaim God's word. Many priests wonder why the witness of their life and ministry isn't attractive anymore. Morale among priests is low and the lack of new candidates reduces self-esteem even further.

Maybe our vocations programmes begin with the wrong sacrament. Perhaps the focus should be on the many rather than the few. Baptism is key. The reshaping of our Church which Pope Francis is leading will, in time, prove transformative. Inclusive faith communities where everyone is respected nourish all forms of discipleship without exalting one to the detriment of others. Words inspired by the martyred Archbishop Oscar Romero point towards a way forward:

We plant a seed that will one day grow.
We water seeds already planted,
knowing that they hold future promise.
We lay foundations
that will need further development.
We provide yeast that produces effects
far beyond our capabilities.

"Love one another"
is a very basic message...

Peter Seaver



In the wake of the death of a cousin of mine in 1974, I read the draft of an autobiography entitled *Posthumous Postscript* by George Seaver. He had been the Dean of St Canice's Cathedral in Kilkenny for several years.

Contained within the autobiography was a passage featuring the Roman Catholic, Monsignor Cavanagh probably better known to most as Dean Cavanagh. I felt that as a very strong advocate of ecumenism, that I would like to share

it with readers to illustrate the marked impression Dean Cavanagh made.

I quote verbatim:

"One of our first callers was the elderly Dean of the Roman Catholic, Cathedral Monsignor Cavanagh. On returning his call I was shown by his elderly housekeeper into a study, bare of ornament save for a portrait of a priest on the mantle shelf. He soon came in and we had some pleasant conversation

and on getting up to depart I remarked "That is a wonderful countenance. May I ask who it is?" He replied The Cure d'Ards I have his biography. Would you care to read it? I took it, and read every word and I was enthralled. Here was an untutored humble man of God, who living in obscurity on earth had daily and nightly intercourse with visitants both celestial and demonic. I was immensely impressed and on returning the book to its owner a few days later told him so. His reply was take care now, take care! We will be making a holy Roman of you yet. Our subsequent meetings were few enough but always very friendly and engaging and when after eleven years later we bade farewell there were tears in his eyes (and probably also in mine) as he said "I will never forget you)".

This occurred during the 1950s when some turbulence existed between the Protestant denominations and the Roman Church particularly over perceived interpretations of the controversial *ne temere* decree. (Indeed it was a difficulty my own immediate family had to deal with). Thank God interchurch relationships have progressed beyond recognition since. But I think not far enough!

I was present at a wonderful ceremony in St Canice's Cathedral when the new RC Bishop Dermot Farrell was invited by the Church of Ireland Bishop Michael Burrows to preach at a service and subsequently he was invited to sit in the Chair of St Kieran which is situated in that church. The gesture was greeted with great applause. I am sure that there have been many reciprocal acts. However it appears to me that the main body of the Christian churches (that is laity and middle clergy) have not yet been bold enough and have been rather timid in our ecumenical activities. I remain to be corrected if this is not the case!

Maybe as ordinary Christians we should be praying more often together and examining tenants of faith that cause controversy in an attempt "from the

bottom" to understand differences. Indeed I would go further and encourage an informed knowledge of other faiths in the Judaic tradition including Muslims so that we can better understand our religious heritage and speak with some informed knowledge about others rather in many cases making assumptions.

"Love one another" is a very basic message It can be done on a one to one basis or there are ecumenical organisations that encourage this inter faith prayer and dialogue .In many cases of course this is happening already.

St Paul emphasised in his letter to the Ephesians that all people are parts of the same body and share the same inheritance and the same promise has been made to them in Jesus Christ through the Gospel

Enough preaching!

Finally I would like to wish Bishop Dermot all the best as Archbishop of the Dublin Diocese. He did a lot of important work in Ossory in a relatively short and difficult period of time. A man of vision!

An eminent priest of St Kieran's College Canon Brennan once said in a homily at St Patrick's in Kilkenny "ecumenism is not an option, it is an imperative". Canon Brennan was an internationally renowned philatelist so it was said with a stamp of approval!

A Daily Prayer for Christian Unity

Lord Jesus,
who prayed that we might all be one,
we pray to You for the unity of Christians,
according to Your will, according to Your means.
May Your Spirit enable us
to experience the suffering caused by division,
to see our sin,
and to hope beyond all hope. Amen.

*This text, adapted from a prayer by Abbé Paul Couturier,
is said in all offices celebrated in the Community Chemin Neuf.*

We have lost and we have gained and we are still learning but surely we can't go back to how it was?

Still living with Covid 19

Gemma Mulligan

The coronavirus disease reached Ireland in February 2020 and within three weeks cases were confirmed all over the country. The government closed all schools, colleges, childcare facilities and cultural institutions on 12th March. On the 24th March almost all businesses, venues and facilities were shut, including Churches and places of worship. We were all asked to stay at home and only leave for essential reasons such as food or medical. We were banned from having contact with people outside of our own home including our family. Those with certain health conditions and the elderly were asked to cocoon. It was a most extraordinary time.

We are still living with Covid 19 and are only at the beginning of the vaccination rollout, yet a year on, we live very differently and we have learned so much.

At the beginning people felt so much fear, fear for themselves and their loved ones and also fear of the unknown. Over the past year there has perhaps been more of a general acceptance of the unknown and this was an important learning for us all. Accepting that we do not have all the answers and cannot predict what will happen next has forced

us to live more in the present moment and this present day.

When the churches closed last year people were devastated and some still are. The challenges facing everyone seemed even more difficult for some as they were unable to gather as a community in prayer and worship and unable to receive the Eucharist which always gave them comfort and strength.

Pope Francis spoke of how coronavirus is 'testing our whole human family' and the images we saw from St Peter's Basilica of him saying Mass with only a few gathered, while outside a normally crowded square of worshippers which can hold up to 70,000, was empty, certainly confirmed that.

Francis addressing the world on Easter 2020 also spoke of the 'contagion of hope', and that is what we slowly began to see everywhere. People stopped being afraid and realised the possibilities. Instead of believing it couldn't be done, people asked the question 'What can we do?' In communities all around the world, in our country and in our towns and villages we saw amazing generosity and creativity.



The hope that Pope Francis spoke of became very real for us.

In our parishes in Ossory and in dioceses all across the country similar stories emerged. While initially there was a huge challenge in maintaining a sense of connection and belonging for parishioners and in some places the celebration of liturgy all but stopped, there soon came some very successful endeavours. Parishes exploited technology to its maximum to connect with parishioners and those beyond the parish lines. Local radio mass allowed those who do not have internet access in particular participate in Sunday worship from their own homes. The use of technology was a new development for many parishes reaching out through live streaming, websites and social media. Parish texts, What's App groups and Parish face book pages are now all part of how parishes communicate. Parish Newsletters no longer left on church pews made their way to local shops and post offices for all. Priests and Parish Pastoral Councils went to great lengths this past year to reach out especially to those who were preparing for sacraments that had to be postponed. Sacramental preparation continues online and through Myfaith.ie as well as locally via Zoom

meetings. Advent and Lenten resources are available to everyone through local parish or diocesan websites. Last year on Palm Sunday we went to our parish churches to collect the blessed palm, we collected ashes on Ash Wednesday and made the sign of the cross with the ash on each of our family members at home. In our domestic churches we have made Advent wreaths, gathered around the crib, placed flowers on our May altar, created a sacred space for lent and lit candles for Easter as we blessed ourselves with the Easter water. We come to the kitchen table to pray and worship as God's word and his presence literally streams into our homes via webcam, television or radio.

A little over a year ago the world as we knew it started to change; our understanding of what normal is has also changed. The way we have had to be as community has changed and how we practice and live our faith has changed too. We don't know what is yet to emerge over the coming months and we don't know what it will look like. We have lost and we have gained and we are still learning but surely we can't go back to how it was?



Give me a crash course in ... Euthanasia

Michael Shortall

It's been a long year. Do you remember our first Easter under lockdown?

The sun was shining during a beautiful spring. At the same time, there was fear in the air. We were all so uncertain. Not many of us thought that we would still be in the same situation a year later.

These are challenging times, for sure. It requires sacrifices of so many people.

There is light at the end of the tunnel. Vaccines have been created at a record speed. It is an extraordinary example of human ingenuity. There are still challenges in trying to roll them out to everyone.

And yet, with all this going on, I also read of major decisions being made. For example, Spain has just passed a law to allow for euthanasia.

Yes. It is the fifth country to do so. Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Canada and Colombia are the only other countries in which euthanasia is currently legal.

I thought there were more countries. I read about people travelling to Switzerland.

Other countries allow for assisted suicide

only. There is a difference between assisted suicide and Euthanasia. The new Spanish law allows for both. It permits two voluntary means of allowing a person to end their own life: euthanasia and assisted suicide. Euthanasia is the act of intentionally ending a life to relieve suffering – for example a lethal injection administered by a doctor. In cases of assisted suicide, the act is undertaken by the person themselves with help – for example, self-dosing on lethal medication provided by or overseen by a medical practitioner.

And what about Ireland?

There is currently a Bill before the Oireachtas. It is called the Dying with Dignity Bill. You can look it up online. It has completed the second stage.

And what does it say?

Interestingly it neither uses the words assisted suicide or euthanasia. Let me give you a bit. Section 11.5 says that the doctor may:

“(a) prepare that substance or substances for self-administration by that person,

(b) prepare a device which will enable

Euthanasia is the act of intentionally ending a life to relieve suffering...

that person to self-administer the medicine,

(c) assist that person to ingest or otherwise self-administer the substance or substances, and

(d) in the event that the qualifying person cannot self-administer the substance or substances may administer the substance or substances ..."

Let me see if I have got that right. According to the definitions you gave earlier, (a), (b) and (c) are examples of medical help in the act of self-dosing to end a life. It is then assisted suicide.

Yes.

But the last one, says that the doctor can do it! That is Euthanasia!

Yes, it is! The Bill is hiding what it is doing, with slights of hand. It is wide-ranging and, for that reason, very dangerous. The bill says that it can only be done on the decision of the person asking. It is what is called voluntary Euthanasia. It is different from involuntary Euthanasia, where the decision is made by the person administering the lethal dose. Either way, euthanasia and assisted suicide is seriously immoral. In the words of the Catechism, it is "gravely contrary to the dignity of the human person and to the respect due to the living God, his Creator (no 2277)."

So who and when can make the decision?

To be allowed make the decision, a person must be terminally ill, have a clear intention to end his or her own life, over 18 and a resident on the island of Ireland for more than a year (Section 7). The decision can only be made if a person is terminally ill, which according to the Bill is a diagnosis of an "an incurable and progressive illness which cannot be reversed by treatment, and the person

is likely to die as a result of that illness or complications" (Section 8).

But that says nothing about death being imminent or that the patient is a lot of pain.

Again, you are right. These are the contexts people often think of. But the Bill is far far wider than that. You can already think of so many illnesses that at a certain point in life in old age are incurable and progressive.

That means there are no protections.

In short, it leaves a lot of people very vulnerable, including the medical profession itself. There are a lot of people who are seriously concerned about this Bill. For example: Dr Sarah McLean, consultant in palliative medicine, says the Bill is "deeply flawed" and lacks adequate safeguards. Without these protections, society's most vulnerable risk being pressurised into seeking assisted suicide.

Ordinary citizens then need to be aware and make their worries and opposition known their politicians.

I agree. There are also deeper Christian reasons for believing in the dignity of all, especially the most vulnerable who are terminally ill, in pain, dependent, and feel abandoned. Every Easter, we remember that Jesus on the cross went through the very same out of love for all of us. It is an act of solidarity with all of us when we feel we have no dignity. It means that God in Jesus is in that very experience. Being Christian is to reach out all in faithful solidarity, recognising in the vulnerable a deeper dignity based on knowledge that we are loved. To take life as this Bill permits is to betray that call.

Happy Easter to all the readers of the Ossory Times.

His presence enfolded me, and I knew to the very core of my being
that God was there.



'That's a new year you'll never forget', quipped a friend of mine when I got home. The truth is however, I will only remember it because of my lack of memory of it. A strange few weeks best describes the weeks after Christmas. Feeling tired Christmas night is nothing new, especially after a midnight mass on Christmas Eve. But this tiredness was different. I couldn't sleep and each day I was beginning to feel bit more miserable, flu like symptoms, shivery, and achy. By Sunday I was tested for Covid and bloods and X-rays were taken. Positive - you have Covid. Three words that are sure to stick you to the ground. Then the awful thought what if I have given it to anyone else; my family I was with on Christmas Day, to any parishioner who helped out at Christmas Masses. Thank God none of my close contacts got Covid.

On the Sunday as I left the hospital, with bloods and X-ray clear, I thought, ok, not too bad I'm probably past the worst, a few days rest and I will begin to feel better.

Not to be, though, a fever had started and oxygen levels had dropped and by Tuesday I was, as the doctor put it, a very sick man. With the intervention of some parishioners who weren't convinced of my protestations that I was grand, I got the medical attention I needed. To them I will be forever grateful.

The next week is sketchy, I remember it a bit differently from those who were in contact with the hospital. I knew I was in good hands in the Covid Critical Care Ward and SMU in St Luke's Hospital and I was going to be fine. By Wednesday I'm on a high level of Oxygen. Those who hear this always ask; 'it must have been very frightening'. However, I felt safe, the hospital staff, doctors, nurses, physios, cleaning staff and catering staff, were professional, caring and optimistic. This gave me hope and trust in their care - I knew was in good hands.

There was one moment however that brought the deepest peace. The door

Mark Condon

A Covid Experience - An Experience of the Power of Prayer

opened, and as with every staff member, a person entered in full PPE, and a familiar voice greeted me, Fr Paddy Carey, the hospital Chaplain. Together we prayed and he administered the Sacrament of the Sick. I have often been on the other side of this Sacrament, and it is always a privilege to be part of God's powerful healing ministry, but this day, in this room, surrounded by medical machines, everything faded and it was just Fr Paddy, the Lord and myself. I knew I had to be active in this sacrament, not just receive it, but to reach out, open my heart and body to God's healing presence. And He responded.

During that night, in the darkness and the background beep and pulse of medical devices, His presence enfolded me, and I knew to the very core of my being that God was there. Not just because of me, but because of the many prayers been offered for me during those days, by family and friends, parishioners past and present, and as I learnt after, the prayers

of many strangers who heard I needed prayer, and let family and friends know that 'they're storming Heaven'. And Heaven answered. God, through the giftedness of the staff of St Luke's and the prayers of so many, bought me through the sickness. At no time was I afraid, or anxious, because God gave me peace and calmness throughout the ordeal.

Reflecting on this time I am reminded of a line of Julian of Norwich, a medieval mystic, who in the midst of a life threatening illness was focusing on the cross of Christ and wrote; "All shall be well, and all shall be well and all manner of things shall be well."

With the outstanding work and commitment of our front line workers, all shall be well. With the generous prayer of so many, all shall be well. With God's care and love for us, all manner of things shall be well.

New Parish Websites in Ossory

Welcome to Ballyhale Parish



Ballyhale Parish launches new Parish Website

Sean O'Connor

In the COVID era, technology has added another dimension to how people come together and experience Mass and communicate with one another. More and more people who did not engage with technology have the past year become very adaptable to social media. Before COVID live streaming Masses were only an option, but since the onset of the pandemic, live streaming has become very important.

Churches are using live-streaming services such as Facebook which we have been doing here in our parish. For me personally it has been so difficult not

to be able to celebrate Mass publicly, as I am sure for people not to be able to attend public Mass. Engagement online is a vehicle to communicate, nothing can compare to the personal encounter – hopefully in the near future we will be back to worship together as a community. However, going forward our Parish Website is also an excellent way for communicating and connecting with the faithful post pandemic and beyond.

It is my hope to make this parish website an interesting and worthwhile location for both parishioners and visitors to keep up to date with what's happening in our

parish community. I think it very important that this website is easy to use so that all ages, all technological abilities, will be able to use it. I can say, that my knowledge of technology is an ongoing challenge but I am getting there. As my teachers would say "could do better" (in my school reports)!!! I had been thinking about this project for some time, and made enquiries about making the first step. I was given a recommendation and after initial phone calls etc., I was happy to proceed with the task. To be honest it was much easier than I thought and the person who put the site together was very professional and he had already completed other parish websites so he knew exactly what was needed and I am very happy with the end product.

Whilst this is a parish website it is my hope that it will also be a community website – I will still need help from many sources within the parish and further afield to enhance and build up my confidence in navigating the website and getting the best out of it. Therefore, I hope those who will visit our website, will find it "a user friendly experience". I look forward to hearing your comments and suggestions. It is intended to be a new point of contact with parishioners, at home and abroad, and also a way of sharing our faith. Please save the site to your desktop and visit it regularly! The website is new so it is still a work in progress as I wanted

the site to be live for Holy Week and the Easter Ceremonies. Our Parish Facebook page is integrated into the Website so you don't need to have a personal Facebook to gain access – all you need to do connect to the website and you will see the Facebook section displayed.

Mass and the Holy Week ceremonies can be accessed on the website and the Facebook page. It has the current and back issues of our Parish Newsletters. It will also contain a News Section giving the latest news from our parish. The website has a quick link button to the Mass readings of the day and of the upcoming Sunday, a useful tool for Ministers of the Word. There is also a link explaining all the sacraments and guidelines to help with organising Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals.

There are links to many other websites in the Community and the Diocese which I invite you to explore. This gives a small snippet of what is on our Website. If there are organisations in the parish and you would like to be included please contact me directly and I would be delighted to include these details and a link to your organisation or club. In the coming weeks and months it is our hope to develop the site further that will benefit our parish community and also those who will visit it. I hope you'll find our website interesting and helpful. The link to our website is: www.ballyhaleparish.ie

Installing a Webcam in Rosbercon Church

Dan Cavanagh

We need to keep in touch with one another. Communication is the life blood of a relationship. To maintain good relationships in the parish, parishioners need to keep in touch with one another. The weekend Mass, Sacramental gatherings and Funeral celebrations enable this to happen as part of parish life.

Then in March 2020 all this came to an end with the restrictions imposed by

the Covid Pandemic. Initially, in a state of shock, priests and people were at a loss as to what to do in the early days of lockdown.

Then, we heard that certain forward-looking parishes had installed Webcams. Other parishes were livestreaming Mass and interacting with parishioners on Facebook. I remember thinking that all this is fine for priests who are good at technology and who are already on



Facebook with hundreds of friends! I thought to myself that I am no good at this technology. But inevitably we had to do something for people who wanted to watch and be part of their own parish Mass.

Our first attempt was a relative success. Our small Blessed Sacrament Chapel, formerly the Morgue, was like a little TV Studio and we successfully live streamed Masses on Facebook from the end of April last year to March this year.

However, we felt cramped in our small Blessed Sacrament chapel. The quality of the sound varied and many parishioners do not have Facebook facilities.

Webcams were operating in local parishes with great success. When Bishop Nulty assured us, that Webcams were here to stay, we took the plunge. After many enquiries we installed a webcam in mid-March this year. The quality of the sound and picture is very good and the great advantage is that with the

Webcam in place, it is simply a matter of switching it on and off.

Another problem faced by parishes is a serious loss of income. Most parishes rely heavily on the Offertory Collection. With the lockdown the Offertory Collection is no more.

Parishes who are surviving financially are those who use envelope and electronic online fundraising. With this in mind, we invested in a new Parish Website with a 'Donate' button facility.

It has become clear that live streaming of services, once an option, is now essential for our survival. Rather than have communities in Church we have community on line. The Webcam is becoming the new normal for Mass, Weddings, Funerals, and other family celebrations such as anniversaries. Through the Webcam people have the opportunity to be with their loved ones in their time of need, 'together but apart'.

The beginnings of our website - parishesbcl.ie

Eamon O'Gorman

The beginnings of our website started with the development of Conahy Parish website – conahyparish.ie some two years in the making. There was a lot of work put into that website thanks to Nickey Brennan, The Liturgy and Pastoral Committees of Conahy parish and Ciaran Stone, Square Root Solutions. This gave to our new website parishesbcl.ie a wonderful foundation on which to build. Choosing a name was important and we had an initial one of “An Trionoid”, which is still the name of our Pastoral Area. It was felt that using this title would be difficult and so we went for the first initials of our parishes in alphabetical order “b” “c” “l” – parishesbcl.ie

Why did we go for a pastoral area website rather than an individual one for each parish? The reasoning behind this is that there would be a lot of duplication and the maintenance and cost of three different websites. Working, as we do, well together we are conscious of promoting our pastoral area while still holding on to our individuality. We hope to have the development of the history of our parishes

while at the same time holding on to what is common. Newsletters will come from each parish while there will be a common thread that will be applicable to all. It is the way forward, I believe, especially in these pandemic times. We have in all our parishes people who have much experience in IT and are too willing to lend a helping hand. The person who built and continues to advise in the maintenance of parishesbcl.ie is a parishioner, Matthew Palmer – tazmineltd@gmail.com, from Ballyragget parish.

Finally, the website is a tool for the three parishes, forming into a pastoral area that deals with the proclamation of the Good News and an aid to promoting ideas with the Gospel at the centre of our endeavours. We work together, sharing ideas and adapting them to suit each individual parish. Our website, parishesbcl.ie, has enabled each of the parishes during this Lenten Journey towards Easter to share and promote the different expressions of creative prayer and spirituality.



The atmosphere and harmonious spirit to be found in each classroom fills my heart with joy.

My Faith and St Canice's Parish

Jim Murphy

I visited many classes in St Canice's coeducational school today. I was distributing the workbooks for the First Communion and Confirmation programmes. The children are really enjoying the programmes. I had to confess that I was a little behind and that I would catch up over the Easter break. There were several scholars in the same boat,

Yes, this is definitely the way to go in religious education, involving the Parents at home complementing the work being done in school. The teachers on the programme, Shannon and Cormac, are great. They admit they don't know everything and even the know all fish Ichthus gets things wrong from time to time. It is a very pleasant positive approach and I love the use of the words excellent and thank you so often. The graphics or animations or cartoons are superb and there is a lovely humorous approach at work. I love the puzzles and the games. I think it would be great to be back at school. The atmosphere and harmonious spirit to be found in each classroom fills my heart with joy. This is the most suitable ambience for the transmission of the joy of the gospel. We are indebted to the team of people who have produced this series My Faith. I have seen Dermot Ryan master the camera work and the teachers coming in on cue. There must be many others behind the scene - editors, graphic artists. Hats off to you all,

I am looking forward to great animated discussions in Second and Sixth classes after the Easter break. If you haven't had an opportunity to see the programme I suggest you look in online. Congratulations to everyone involved who have helped make our classroom visiting so much more entertaining and enriching.

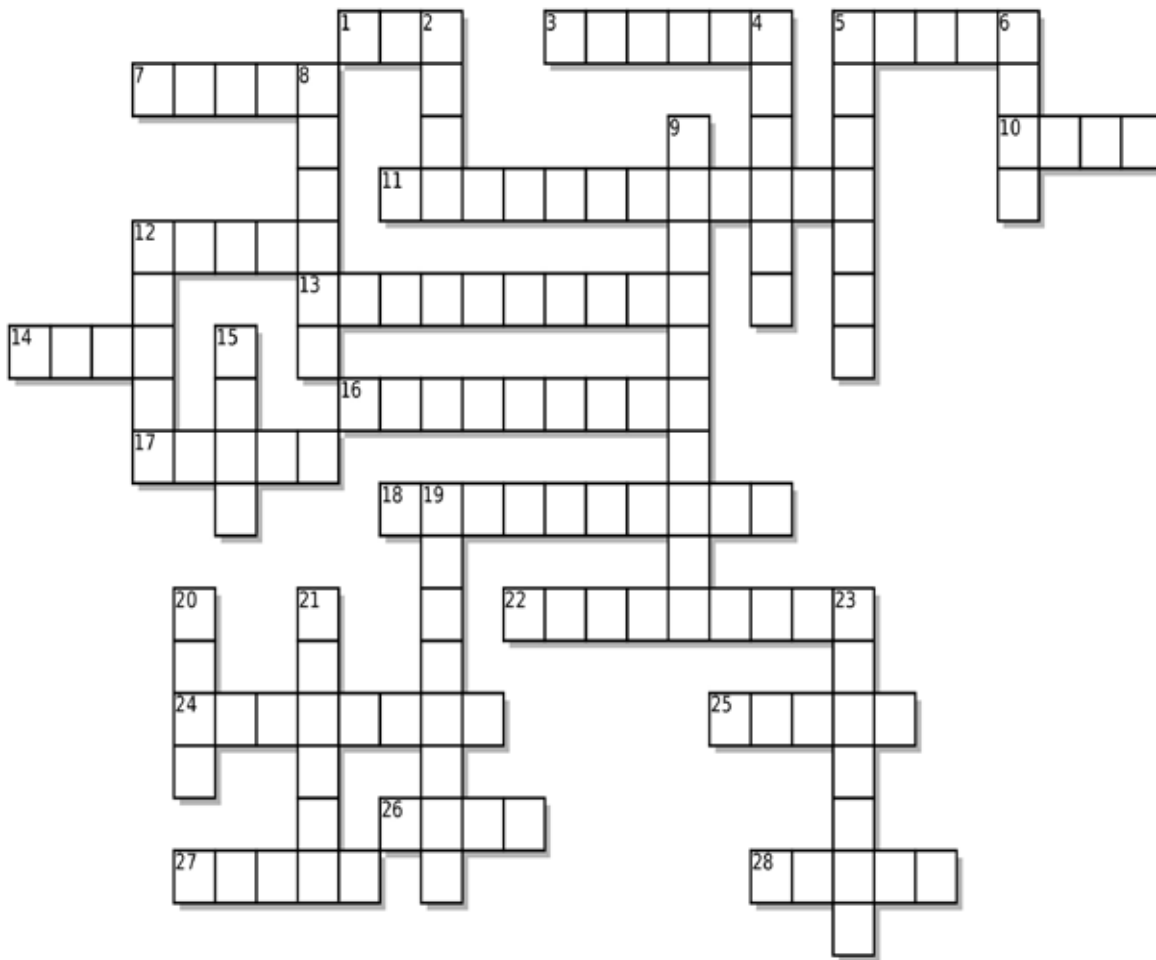


My name is Olive Mullally, I am a group leader with the current first holy communion children in St Canice's School Kilkenny.

My daughter and I have done a lot of the programme together online which has been lovely, but then I forget to access my own account as a group leader to catch up on my side. The programme is quite easy to navigate for my daughter and she certainly enjoys the games and word searches at the end of the modules. As a group leader I was very conscious not to put parents under pressure with the programme during lockdown as it was a very stressful time for all with remote learning from home and I as a mother of three school going children I was very mindful of that.

Now that the children are back in school the teachers are talking about the First Holy Communion with the children and it has made a huge difference. They are being reminded by their teachers to complete their modules at home over the Easter holidays, so I expect a great push on the programme from all the children over the Easter period for all to catch up.

EASTER CROSSWORD 2021



ACROSS

- 1 The Dead or Red
 3 Season before Christmas
 5 Sainly brother of Gregory
 7 Adjective for the Bishop of Rome
 10 Poverty, Chastity and Obedience
 11 25th March
 12 Laying on of _____
 13 St John the
 14 Follower of Hosea
 16 Office to help find/support future Priests
 17 Apostolic Administrator
 18 Adjective for God
 22 New Parish Website
 24 The _____ Church (family)
 25 Son of Jacob
 26 Hemingway, convert to Catholicism, as know to his friends

- 27 St Catherine's town
 28 Lent Markers

DOWN

- 2 To end a prayer
 4 Catholic Author Wolff
 5 Patron of Mountain Climbers
 6 Members of this tribe of Israel carried the Ark
 8 A Catholic who has ceased to practice their faith
 9 Small separate building or part of the Church
 12 Patron saint of Archeologists
 15 Sunday 9.30 in lockdown
 19 _____ Body of Christ
 20 Sydney's first Archbishop, John _____ Polding
 21 5th March
 23 Diocese in an Eastern Rite

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 15th July 2021 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 25 competitions:

Adult Crossword:
 Margaret O'Gorman

Children's Wordsearch, age 8-13:
 Pat Smith

Children's Colouring, age 5-8:
 Jenny Lyons

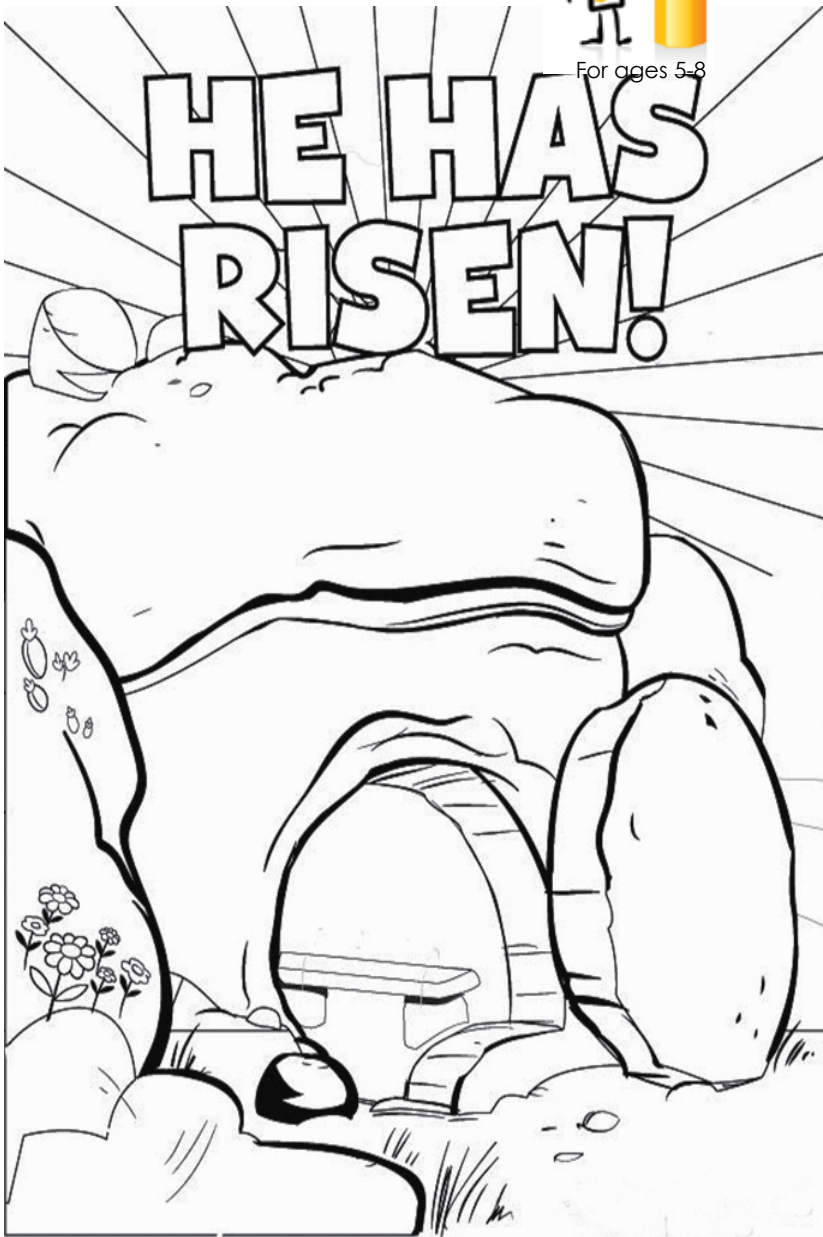
Colouring Competition



For ages 5-8

For ages 5-8

HE HAS RISEN!



Wordsearch Competition



For ages 8-13

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

APOSTLES

BETRAYAL

CAVE

CHURCH

CROSS

CROWN

CRUCIFIZION

DICIPLES

FAITH

GOOD FRIDAY

JESUS CHRIST

JUDAS

LAMB

LAST SUPPER

LENT

MARY

MIRACLE

PASSORVER

PENANCE

PENTECOST

PRAYER

REDEMPTION

REJOICE

RESURRECTION

RISEN

RISEN
SAVIOR

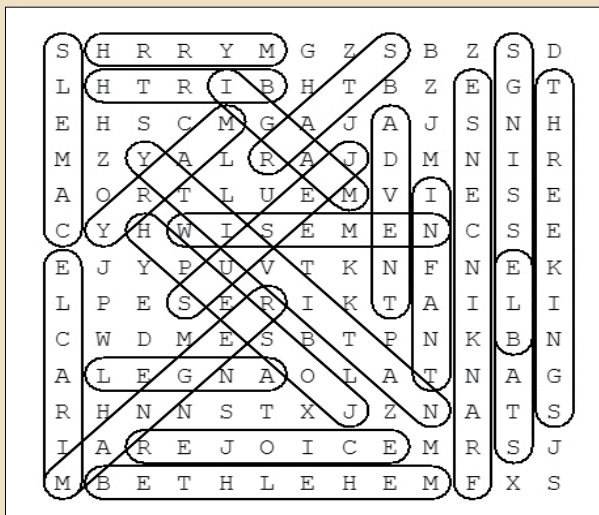
SAVIOR

SON

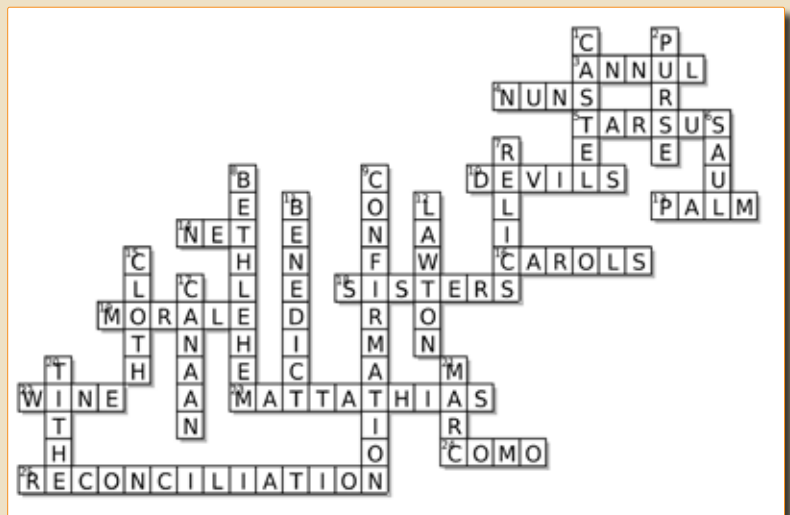
THORNS

TOMB

Answers to Ossory Times Issue 25



Answers to Ossory Times Issue 25



DIOCESE OF OSSORY
ST MARY'S CATHEDRAL
RESTORATION FUND DRAW
2020/2021

12 MONTHLY DRAWS

March 2020 to February 2021

MONTHLY PRIZES

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

Promoters' Prize

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

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

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

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

PARISH-BASED PROGRAMME OF PREPARATION

Reconciliation

First Holy Communion

Confirmation

This parish-based programme will offer **module-by-module preparation** on the journey towards the celebration of the Sacraments

- Teacher-led online interactive classes with Ich Thus, your animated companion for learning
- Build module-by-module online – a new module every 2 weeks on the journey to being fully prepared in the company of your family
- Age appropriate online interactive games/challenges/quizzes for each module to reinforce learning
- Moments of Prayer on each module
- Log out/Log in and pick up from where you left off
- Downloadable worksheets
- Certificate of completion at the end of the Course

Join with **ICH THUS** as you navigate the **Programme of Preparation for the Sacraments of Communion & Confirmation**



Register your Parish online at MyFaith.ie