

Editorial

Recalling our childhood Christmases, it is not the gifts received that now make us smile, it is not the dinners had, nor the music sung that makes us happy, it is the memories of how we felt, it is the memories of love, of laughter and of happiness that cause us to smile. It is the little things, the simple things - often unsaid - but keenly felt that we recall warmly.

Christmas is then not about the big gestures, the flashy gifts or the expensive toys - it is about the little things - things that can't be bought. Christmas is about making memories.

In fact, it is these small things that made Christmas possible: It was Mary's 'yes' that began it; it was Joseph's supporting presence that enabled it; it was Elizabeth's warm welcome and encouraging word that supported it; it was warmth found in a stable, and not an inn, that made life possible. It was the welcome of shepherds, not soldiers, that made him known. It was a warm motherly embrace that first welcomed him; a fatherly look of complete love which made him, the Christ child, knew he was at home.

We have in these past weeks, in spite of the ongoing pandemic, journeyed towards this Christmas. Eagerly awaiting the arrival of our infant Lord who, in the most simple of gestures - open arms - calls to us, invites us, embraces us. It is this littleness, this helpless child, who will transform our world.

Generations have followed him and the hope that he brought. Our Diocese, and its daily life, shows how that little faith impacts our world today: moments of prayer; pilgrimages to holy places, social gatherings, our work with the younger generations; our care of those older; all documented in these pages are occasions born in that same faith. In these little ways our faith finds expression ensuring that it remains alive not only for us today, but generations yet to come, yet to believe, yet to find that Christ child waiting. This Christmas, then, we pray too that we will find him anew in those we love, in the memories we make, in those moments we spend together.

Welcome then 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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inthisissue

Editorial.....	1
Christmas Message from Bishop Denis Nulty.....	2
School Days in December.....	3
Archbishop Dermot Farrell returns to Ossory.....	4
November Remembrance Mass Homily.....	6
Evening of Prayer for Religious.....	7
"New Wine, New Wine Skins".....	8
Bethlehem Found.....	10
Laudato Si and You!.....	12
St Jospheh as a model for all.....	15
Morality Matters.....	16
Celebrating fifty years of Errill Church.....	18
CPSMA.....	22
Calming our Spirits.....	24
Sede Vacante.....	26
Returning to College.....	29
A busy year for Ossory Youth.....	30
Celebrating the St John of God.....	34
Quiz Pages.....	35





Christmas Message from Bishop Denis Nulty

Apostolic Administrator of Ossory

Christmas introduces us to strange places like Bethlehem. And into peculiar buildings like stables, sheds, outhouses. The prophet Micah pinpoints with precise accuracy *"and you Bethlehem Ephrathah, the least of the clans of Judah, out of you will be born for me the one who is to rule over Israel"*. Scripture scholars remind us that Ephrathah is also called Bethlehem. Bethlehem means 'house of bread'. Pope Emeritus Benedict in his beautiful work *'The Infancy Narratives'* reminds us from the moment of his birth, Jesus belongs outside the realm of what is important and powerful in worldly terms. It is this unimportant and powerless child that proves to be the truly powerful one, the one on whom ultimately everything depends.

We forget that too easily. The very birth of Christ helps to realign our values, our priorities, our concerns. Maybe the Covid pandemic has also helped us somewhat to readjust our lives, living in a huge time of uncertainty. The pandemic has robbed us of loved ones whom we have lost in death; it has robbed us of the usual gatherings and encounters that are so life giving and it has robbed us of normality, of having some sense of control on what's happening around us. We are living indeed in times of profound change and uncertainty. And this change and uncertainty were also part of the world that Christ was born into 2,000 years ago.

And today it's into this uncertainty that God becomes man and is born in our stables, sheds and outhouses. But we must make room for him and not lose sight of what Christmas is really about.

The pandemic has made us experts at using devices like Facetime, lets take time to look on the face of Christ. In that face we see a reflection of ourselves, our world, our insecurities, our uncertainties. Christmas is not about sending cards, receiving presents, visiting friends and yes we will do all three; essentially Christmas is looking on the face of Christ, and allowing that face to profoundly change us. Let us go to be nourished in the 'house of bread', in Bethlehem.

I conclude with the translated version of Mairtín O'Direáin's poem 'Cuireadh do Mhuire':

"Do you know Mary
Where you'll go this year
To look for shelter
For your Holy Child
While every door
Is shut in His face
By the hatred and pride
Of the human race?
Deign to accept our invitation
To this island by the sea
In the ancient West.
Bright candles will be
Lit in our church windows
And turf fires kindled
On the snowy heath".

I pray that each of you will be blessed and enriched as you look on the face Jesus at Bethlehem and that 2022 will bring you abundant blessings.

In December Bishop Denis, as Apostolic Administrator of Ossory, posted a Pastoral Letter to the all the children of our diocesan primary schools. Teachers enjoyed discussing its contents with the children as Advent began.

Pastoral Letter December 2021



Bishop Denis Nulty Apostolic Administrator of Ossory School Days in December



When I wrote in September I wrote about how special our school days are: the friends we make; the lessons we learn; the ways that we grow; and the fun that we have. December days are even more special! These are the most enjoyable of school days. These are exciting days to be with your friends getting ready and making plans.

The excitement is starting to build. By now we have lit candles on our Advent Wreaths in our churches - maybe you have a wreath in your school or classroom too. We light these candles to mark the weeks between now and Christmas - special weeks when we get ready for the arrival of someone really special: He comes with his arms outstretched ready to offer us so much; He comes with gifts; He comes to teach us the importance of giving; He comes to teach us about love; He is the reason we celebrate this time of year. He is the reason that St Nicholas - Santa - gives gifts to us at this time - to remind us that this is a special birthday. It is the birthday of Jesus.

He comes to us at Christmas. He came to the world at that first Christmas, in a stable welcomed only by shepherds and yet we celebrate his arrival every year since that first Christmas night.

How are you getting ready? What will you do in the weeks ahead? What traditions has your family for this time of year? What are you doing in school to get ready? What gifts do you think Jesus wants to bring us? Why are his arms outstretched? What does he want to tell us?

In the weeks ahead: ask questions; have fun; sing songs; tells stories; make memories. Get ready for Christmas. Make it so that Jesus is welcomed in your school and at home in your house.

+Denis Nulty, Apostolic Administrator of Ossory

It was a chance, finally, to wish Archbishop Dermot well in the challenges of his new Ministry in Dublin.

Archbishop Dermot Farrell returns to Ossory



On the evening of Tuesday 9th November the priests of the Diocese gathered, safely in accordance with the then recommended guidelines, to hold their General Conference of Priests - a normally bi-annual gathering. As a body, the priests had not met like this since the pandemic started and it was, then, good for them to come together. As is usual at such gatherings there was work to be done - with the AGM's of some of the bodies of the Diocese needing to be had. But there was sense, even as we gathered, that this was a welcome regrouping of the priests of the Diocese of Ossory and a special occasion: we were gathering, too, to formally mark the translation of Bishop Dermot Farrell to Dublin as its Archbishop. When that translation actually took place on 2nd February we were not, given the pandemic, able to

mark his leaving Ossory and, as such, a proper celebration of his time in Ossory was not had. It was good then to be able to do this on this November day. In fact doing so was the catalyst for bringing the priests together on this afternoon.

Archbishop Dermot, then, joined with Bishop Denis and the priests of the Diocese at about 5pm and spent sometime in conversation. This time allowed for gifts to be presented by the priests of the Diocese to Archbishop Dermot in recognition of their esteem for him as their former Bishop and friend.

The priests of Ossory presented Archbishop Farrell with gifts to mark his time in Ossory: The Dictionary of Irish Biography. This is an eleven volume set published by The Royal Irish Academy and features articles on thousands of significant figures from

Irish life going back many centuries. The volumes were presented in a mahogany inlaid revolving bookcase handcrafted in Kilkenny by Liam Roberts. The book case also featured a glass top made by Joe Sheridan and incorporated an inscription to Archbishop Farrell set into a logo depicting the names of the forty two parishes of the Diocese of Ossory.

The presentation also included two other volumes on the history of Archbishops of Dublin. The subject matter was of obvious interest to the new Archbishop but so were the authors. Laurence F Ranehan, a priest of Cashel diocese who had been educated in Freshford, like Archbishop Dermot had also been President of St Patrick's College Maynooth. The second volume was written by Patrick Francis Moran who also shared much in common with Archbishop Farrell as both had served on the staff of the Irish College in Rome, both served as bishops of Ossory and both went on to be Archbishops. Moran became the Cardinal Archbishop of Sydney in Australia and Bishop Farrell was translated to Dublin. The final volume in the presentation was translated by the other Dr Farrell, Fergus of Windgap it is the work of the Pontifical Biblical Commission - on a Biblical Anthropology, *What is Man*.

Speaking on behalf of the Priests as they gathered to welcome Archbishop Dermot back, Mgr Dan Cavanagh noted that "every bishop comes with a promise and the promise that comes with a new bishop is that he will engage us, uplift us and strengthen us for the challenges that are part and parcel of a diocesan priest's life". In recognising the very many ways that this was achieved in Archbishop Dermot's short years in Ossory, Mgr Dan said "Maybe the best stories in life begin with an interruption. Dermot's life was interrupted. As pastor of Dunboyne Parish in his native Diocese of Meath, he was asked to make a new beginning that he did not choose. So, Dermot came to us in the middle of his story and he met us in the middle of ours. The new story of

Ossory under Dermot's leadership flowed seamlessly into the story of the Diocese under his predecessors. He embraced our history, our feasts and our culture. Dermot entered our world, joined our journey, and made himself available to the people of the Diocese" In fact he observed "here, Dermot, you gave the Diocese your total commitment... calling Kilkenny home from day one", "you took on the challenges we faced with courage and thoughtful planning. You were not afraid to do the heavy lifting, and that defined your ministry". But most of all he recalled "we are most grateful that you became our friend. You visited us at home. We ate at your table. In your presence we relaxed together. Joy and laughter was a part of priests meeting together".

Following the presentation the priests had dinner with Archbishop Dermot before an evening prayer in St Patrick's Parish for which a great number of people attended from around the Diocese many of whom had worked closely with Archbishop Dermot during his time in Ossory. It was a chance for all to give thanks, to celebrate friendships and share stories. It was a chance, finally, to wish Archbishop Dermot well in the challenges of his new Ministry in Dublin.

In thanking those who gathered Archbishop Dermot noted that he was "especially indebted to the priests who were my co-workers... the achievements [of those years] are not the product of one person. All of what has been achieved belongs rightfully to the priests and lay faithful who, in combination, and sometimes in juxtaposition, make the Diocese of Ossory the vibrant and dynamic faith community that it is today."

The evening ended by all who attended gathering back in St Kieran's College for refreshments and more importantly a relaxed opportunity to spend time together in conversation, laughter and in recalling such good memories.

**Homily of Bishop Denis Nulty
Apostolic Administrator of Ossory**



**November Remembrance Mass
Pastoral Area of Mullinavat, Ballyhale, Aghaviller
St. Beacon's Church, Mullinavat 26th November 2021, 7.00pm**

Composing the death notice, writing an obituary, choosing the Memorial Card are all stages on a journey of bereavement. You all have walked this journey. Each of you in this Pastoral Area have solid reason to be here this evening.

The death notice defines the next of kin, it lists them usually in order of age; the only debate surrounds do we name the grandchildren one by one or just settle for the plural. Every word costs money and newspapers know that, how many of us were reared in a generation that only bought the *Indo* for the deaths inside the back page. A bit like the Property supplement that inflated press profits in the distant days of the tiger economy; the death columns are a very pale reminder of those halcyon days where the only way you knew someone was dead, was to read it on the back page of the *Indo*.

The number of deaths in the *Indo* or indeed in any paper is much fewer than the past. Not that less are dying - local radio and none better than our very own KCLR and the website *rip.ie* have put paid to press profiteering from the deaths of loved ones in recent years.

I think of my mother's death, it was totally unexpected. It was the morning the Icelandic ash grounded all planes, long before we ever heard of Covid or a pandemic. She slipped off at around 10am in the morning, as the lads had come in for their breakfast after the morning milking routine was over. It was very different to my dad's, who will be dead 15 years this December. In many ways he was close to death for four years after being floored by a stroke. A stroke that impaired movement and swallow. We minded him at home for those years. And only those who are bereaved will understand this, we were called many times, "*that this was it*", and he would make a recovery. So much so we stopped telling our friends that he was low, because in truth none of us really know the day or the hour.

Our Christian understanding of death and Catholic ritual and liturgy around dying and death is powerful? The revised translation

of the Missal has phrases such as "those saddened by the certainty of dying might be consoled by the promise of immortality to come".¹ And from Eucharistic Prayer II "all who have died in your mercy: welcome them into the light of your face."² An even richer line from the third Eucharistic Prayer: "to all who were pleasing to you at their passing from this life, give kind admittance to your kingdom."³ And finally that line tucked into the 'Prayer over the Gifts' at many funeral Masses over the past twelve months, the period of the new revised translation: "that he (she) who did not doubt your Son to be a loving Saviour, might find in him a merciful Judge"⁴. There's room for Martha when we talk of not doubting Jesus, her line in John's gospel tonight: "If you had been here, my brother would not have died, but I know that, even now, whatever you ask, of God, he will grant you"⁵.

How many of those we have lit candles for this evening did not doubt Our Lord to be a loving saviour? How many of them at their moment of death, perhaps tragic, perhaps unexpected, perhaps alone because of the pandemic, maybe surrounded by family were consoled by that promise of immortality to come?

The Death Notice, the obituary, the Memorial Card. I must say I resent getting the package of Memorial Cards in the post, some crowd in Enfield, their timing is never right. They always come too quickly after your loved one has died. You are not in the headspace to think clearly.

May the faith we gleaned from the Gospel assure us our loved ones from this Pastoral Area of Mullinavat, Aghaviller and Ballyhale are at peace. Amen.

1 PREFACE 1 FOR THE DEAD, CTS Daily Missal, 2012, pg. 1019.

2 EUCHARISTIC PRAYER II, CTS Daily Missal, 2012, pg. 1045.

3 EUCHARISTIC PRAYER III, CTS Daily Missal, 2012, pg. 1051.

4 MASSES FOR THE DEAD – Outside Easter Time, CTS Daily Missal, 2012, pg. 3385.

5 Jn. 11: 21-22

What is God asking of Religious today?

Evening of Prayer for Religious

Anna Corcoran

Following an invitation from Bishop Denis Nulty to join with him for the celebration of Evening Prayer of the Church on Friday 12 November 2021 the Religious of the Diocese gathered at St Kieran's College and were welcomed to the College by Rev Fr Dermot Ryan President of St Kieran's College.

In his homily Bishop Denis spoke about the Religious traditions here in the Diocese of Ossory and mentioned the religious founders and foundresses of the various orders who were natives of the diocese. He mentioned Edmund Ignatius Rice a native of Callan, founder of the Christian Brothers and the Presentation Brothers, Brigid Clancy, a native of Ballyousskill, Ballyragget foundress of the Sisters of St John of God, Margaret Aylward a native of Mullinavat, foundress of the Sisters of the Holy Faith and Bishop Daniel Delaney, a native of Castletown founder of the Brigidine Sisters and the Patrician Brothers.

The Scripture reading for the ceremony was taken from Mark 2.22 "New wine fresh skins". It formed the theme for the guidelines published by the Holy See around consecrated life and its ongoing challenges since Vatican II. These guidelines were the fruit of much reflection particularly during the year of Consecrated Life. One of the phrases Pope Francis uses from the document "evangelical discernment" is letting the Spirit speak. We will hear it many times in discussions around the synod and what synodality might entail. Discerning, Reflecting and Praying.

He asked the question What is the message for Religious life today? He

stated it is always good to go back to the charisms of our founders and foundresses. They were the leaders of their day. They educated the poor; they provided healthcare to the sick; they sheltered the homeless and they spoke for those with no voice. He stated each one of us know our own and not to be afraid to return to that charism. It's a question religious may ask. What is our role, our mandate, our mission today? We know what we were founded for, but what are we supposed to be doing?

He also stated that religious have and are modelling how to care for the sick aging and dying and he urged us not to be silent as this country embarks soon on an emotionally charged campaign to legalize euthanasia, labelling it 'dying with dignity'.

Finally as we continue the early steps of the Universal Synod and the Irish Synodal pathway a good question for Religious to focus on might be;

- What is God asking of Religious today?
- Are there groups no longer being ministered to?
- Are there charisms we have yet to uncover?

Following the prayer and thoughtful presentation by Bishop Nulty we enjoyed hospitality and fellowship with the sisters and brothers whom Covid circumstances prevented us from meeting over the last 18 months.

Sincere thanks to all involved in organizing the evening enjoyed by all.

Words at Evening Prayer for Religious of Bishop Denis Nulty**Apostolic Administrator of Ossory****St Kieran's College, 12th November 2021, 5pm****“New wine, fresh skins”¹**

It's a great joy for me to welcome all of you, religious of the Diocese, to St. Kieran's College Chapel for our celebration of Evening Prayer this November evening. Ten months ago we gathered in St. Mary's Cathedral for another celebration of Evening Prayer. It was the feast of the Presentation of the Lord, World Day for Consecrated Life. Some hours earlier Archbishop Dermot had been installed as the new Archbishop of Dublin vacating the episcopal seat in Ossory – *sede vacante*. I spoke that evening about the importance of the religious tradition here in Ossory. For me it was then an academic knowledge, the fruit of research; ten months later I am witnessing at first hand the gift and blessing each one of you are to this ancient See.

A diocese of huge religious traditions. I immediately think of Edmund Ignatius Rice, a native of Westcourt, Callan, the founder of the Christian Brothers and the Presentation Brothers. I think of Brigid Clancy, a native of Durrow who would in the neighbouring Diocese of Ferns become the foundress of the St. John of God Sisters. 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, with a huge presence in my own Kildare & Leighlin.

The short scripture reading chosen for this ceremony comes from Mark and it formed the theme for the guidelines published by the Holy See around consecrated life and its ongoing challenges since Vatican II. These guidelines were the fruit of much reflection on consecrated life, particularly during the year of Consecrated Life in 2015. One of the phrases Pope Francis uses and which is repeated in that document is “*evangelical discernment*”². It is letting the Spirit speak. And we will hear it many times in discussions around the synod and what synodality might entail. Discerning, reflecting, praying – you religious are the masters of these crafts.

You don't need to be a connoisseur of fine wines to understand Mark's text this evening. I remember when *Blue Nun* and *Le Piat D'or* were the only labels available. Thankfully our taste buds have developed somewhat since. The wineskins parable is not unique to Mark. It is also found in Matthew³ and Luke⁴. The wineskin referred to in scripture is an ancient container made from goat or sheep skin. They were used to transport or store wine.

So what might be wrong with old wineskins? Apparently sediment would always remain in the older wineskin, and when the new wine was added, it fermented and burst the skins. Maybe we

are no different when someone might offer us a fresh glass for a different bottle of wine, again the sediment of the earlier wine might affect the aroma of the next glass. It's the same principle around a fresh cup of tea. *"I'll throw it out, and make you a fresh drop"*.

So what is the message for religious life this November evening? I think it's always good to go back to your founders and foundresses. They were the leaders of their day. They educated the poor; they provided healthcare to the sick; they sheltered the homeless and they spoke for those without a voice. And sometimes they used words but often it was a language of personal integrity. Schools talk about ethos, the ethos of St. Kieran's College was so evident at today's heart-breaking funeral Mass and burial of Harry Byrne in Gowran. While schools talk about ethos, congregations talk about charisms. Each of you know your own, but don't be afraid to return to that charism.

Religious have an understanding and appreciation of community that has sadly long been lost to the diocesan priesthood. We live on our own and that can at times lead to a silo mentality; many of you live community and for those who don't your understanding of community is deeply engrained. I think of my visit to the Presentation Sisters here in the city, enjoying hospitality with the Capuchins and Dominican communities, visiting the Christian Brothers out at Callan and the Mercy Sisters also in Callan, and dropping in to see the Little Sisters of the Poor and the Sisters of the Sacred Heart both in Ferrybank. Your care of your older colleagues is particularly evident. I know that St. John of Gods are currently celebrating 150 years of their congregation, a congregation with roots deeply embedded in this college and across this diocese.

At recent meetings of priests a number have commented on how the priesthood they were ordained for is very different today. Another shared about a recent

funeral of a young soccer coach. The parish had completely come to a standstill. This was a man who coached underage soccer, most likely on a Sunday morning. The grief of parents and children was palpable at that funeral. Was the coach doing what the priest or religious did in the past? Was there a sense that the priest may need to reinvent his purpose, his role, his place in the community. And I imagine it's a question religious too may ask. What is our role, our mandate, our mission today? We know what we were founded for, but what are we now supposed to be doing?

*"New wine, fresh skins"*⁵ suggests to me there is still a lot of runway to go. It is you the religious who show us how to care for the aging and dying, don't be silent as this country embarks soon on an emotionally charged campaign to legalise euthanasia, labelling it as 'dying with dignity'. It is you the religious who give us the example of community, of *meitheál*, an example so much needed in a time when too many live alone. It is you the religious who teach us generosity, always conscious of the weaker student before ever department assessments were heard of. And finally it is you the religious who model for us holiness, mastering and sharing the finely honed crafts of discernment, reflection and prayer. As we continue these early steps of the Universal Synod and the Irish Synodal pathway, a good question for religious to focus on might be 'What is God asking of the religious today?' 'Are there groups no longer ministered to?' 'Are there charisms we have yet to uncover?' Absolutely *"new wine, fresh skins!"*⁶.

1 Mk.2:22

2 Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, November 24, 2013, ¶ 154

3 Mt.9:14-17

4 Lk.5:33-39

5 Mk.2:22

6 *ibid*

Bethlehem Found

Kieran O'Shea



Recently I unearthed a photo of the 2018 Ossory Pilgrimage to the Holy Land taken in the Square outside the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. It brought back memories of that journey and once again I noted the surprisingly small entrance to the Church where tradition tells us Jesus was born. Almost everyone has to bow down to enter through the doorway. It is said that kings & Emperors had to get down off their high horses, and even the great and the good pilgrims and visitors of today have to do the same. Interestingly the only ones who don't are children and those bent over with pain.

Having bowed low to get through that small doorway you join other pilgrims - you get in line - you stand & walk together - you endure the heat, the discomfort - like everyone else you get impatient & edgy - even tempers can flare in many different languages! - then you have to descend a flight of stairs - all to reach that spot marked by a silver star. You can of course avoid all of the above by taking the short cut facilitated by local entrepreneurs. But remember every short cut has a high price.

When you do finally get to the hallowed spot you fall to your knees and like

When the seeds of a 'revolution of tenderness' are sown and wherever 'a culture of encounter' (Pope Francis) is fostered there he will be found.



Star of the Nativity, Bethlehem

generations of people of every race, religion and way of life who have gone before you - you kiss that piece of rock under the marble Altar where heaven and earth became one.

There on your knees before the manger of Bethlehem you have only seconds to absorb the great mystery of the Incarnation until you are speedily shoved on! In those few seconds you suddenly realise that the Baby of Bethlehem is not to be found beneath the silver star anymore. You know that you won't find this Saviour on a high horse either, or in the sky, or looking down on us, or out

there somewhere, but you will find him in the stardust that constitutes our lives. Whenever the poor are fed and the sick are cared for there you will find him. When the seeds of a 'revolution of tenderness' are sown and wherever 'a culture of encounter' (Pope Francis) is fostered there he will be found. You will find him when a Mass is celebrated, or a prayer hurriedly offered in a moment of danger or trouble, when marriage vows are exchanged, when the water is poured on a child at Baptism and as oil is rubbed on weathered hands as life ebbs away. You will find him in the Baptised who generously show leadership in the service of their Sisters and Brothers in the community that is the Church. You will find him where women and men proclaim the Gospel with Love as Consecrated Persons and Priests. You will find him when the light of his face is recognised in the faces of every person. You will find him where parents struggle to do their best for their children and teach them about the love of God and pass on to them values that will endure. You will find him when sins are forgiven and hurts are healed. You will find him, as Patrick Kavanagh wrote, when you see the 'newness in every stale thing'...and 'wherever life pours ordinary plenty'. (Patrick Kavanagh: Advent).

Ultimately when you believe that you are not just a piece of straw blowing in the wind but deeply loved by the Word made Flesh, when you get down of your high horse, bow down in humility and enter the doorway to peoples hearts, walk with them on their journey and descend into the mystery that is the beauty and complexity of their lives... you have found Him. You have found Bethlehem.



Replacing the Ordination Tree which stood at St Kieran's College for over 130 years.



Students planting a new Lime tree on Birchfield, part of the programme of replanting trees, in the College grounds.

The question to be posed is what we as individuals can do to assist in caring for and restoring the world around us so that it continues to provide for humanity into the future.

Laudato Si and You!

Sean Hickey

Saint Francis is the patron saint of the environment and in his life he demonstrated a unique appreciation for all living creatures as well as the inanimate elements, understanding all as being created by God and working in unison to enable the world to function. In his Canticle of the Creatures, Francis recites 'praised be you my Lord, with all Your creatures' and he speaks of brother sun and sister moon. He personifies all that has been created as brother and sister and, in so doing, comes to a deeper understanding of the importance of a relationship built on respect and care for all that exists. It is appropriate indeed that Pope Francis entitled his 2015 Encyclical '*Laudato Si*' – praised be you. Both the Saint and the Pope understand the essentiality of praising God through sincere care for His creation.

The question to be posed is what we as individuals can do to assist in caring for and restoring the world around us so that it continues to provide for humanity into the future. To begin, we must reflect upon and question our own individual existence, our way of life and the manner in which we contribute to the care of others and the care of the world around us. As Christians, we believe that all we

possess is a free gift from God. We must respect and cherish these gifts and share them equitably; we must utilise them in a sustainable fashion so as not to undermine the delicate, co-existent balance of the environment around us. A balance must be struck between what we consume and what we give back in order to counteract the detrimental effect our consumption has, as individuals, on our planet. We must once more become symbiotic creatures and not parasites that think of the now and leave the future to chance.

The Pope's encyclical '*Laudato Si*' addresses a broad range of topics and regards the world and its complex systems as a shared common good. He delves into the problems we face as a result of pollution, the loss of biodiversity and accelerating climate change and the injurious effects these factors have on the quality of life for all human beings, not least those on the margins. Having outlined the problems confronting us, the Encyclical offers a solution with the words: 'many things have to change course, but it is we as human beings above all who need to change' (Pope Francis, 2015, p. 104). Through reducing our consumption of unnecessary goods and reinvesting our

energy into a lifestyle that is self-sufficient, or at least communally efficient, and by redirecting our energy into projects that contribute to the preservation and restoration of 'mother earth', we as individuals can change and improve the world's prospects by doing our 'small bit' for the greater good.

There are various methods and means by which a contribution can be made at local level which would have consequences on a global scale if each local community participated in projects that seek to 'balance the books' between over-consumption and replenishing the environment within which we live. The local Tidy Towns Committee, Keep Kilkenny Beautiful, is a case in point and is currently undertaking a tree cover master plan for Kilkenny City. This project is no small feat and will result in an integrated plan for the city that will see all passive areas of land within the urban core and suburban hinterland planted with trees. Tree planting has many and varied benefits: through tree planting initiatives such as these, habitats are recreated or restored resulting in an increase in biodiversity and natural amenities. Trees sequester carbon and thus contribute to averting climate change. They bring humanity closer to nature and thus closer to God. Through the creation of habitats and natural landscapes and the planting of trees, hedges, and shrubs substantial benefits accrue to people in the area of health and wellbeing. Exercising in areas rich in biodiversity and natural landscape promote positive mental health as people contemplate their surroundings and absorb the natural aesthetic.

There are also benefits of a spiritual nature in pursuing such initiatives. The projects themselves allow people to engage in community activism and volunteerism, thus creating a sense of purpose and belonging to a community of like-minded individuals. The resulting habitat creation appeals to each person's attraction to beauty which is innate within the human

person, combined with a renewed sense of wonder and awe for creation and the intrinsic relationship we as individuals have with our environment. At present, the Tidy Towns Committee is in the planning phase of this project and it is envisaged that planting will commence in the early part of 2022. The Committee is currently engaged with various other stakeholders and voluntary groups in identifying suitable locations for the planting of saplings and standard trees. The Committee is part-funding the purchase of standard trees for community-owned land and voluntary groups including church land, residential areas, schools, sports fields, and other areas where land is under-utilised or is passive in nature. The breadth of this project creates potential for the individual to contribute positively to the fight against the degradation of the world around us through identifying potential areas to be planted, contributing toward financing the project, or the hands-on approach of the planting of the trees. This month brings an enlightened and positive development as St Kieran's College plants ten standard trees to maintain the beauty of the College Park for future generations, whilst also playing its part in following in the footsteps of Francis the Pope, and Francis the Saint. 'The gravity of the ecological crisis demands that we all look to the common good, embarking on a path of dialogue which demands patience, self-discipline and generosity, always keeping in mind that realities are greater than ideas' (Pope Francis, 2015, p. 102). It is now time to act in averting any further damage to our planet and to restore it to its natural state in so far as possible, for actions speak louder than words.

1. Pope Francis (2015) *Laudato Si*, Praised Be, Encyclical Letter of the Holy Father Francis on Care for Our Common Home. Dublin: Veritas.

Excerpt of a homily given by Bishop Denis to a gathering of young people on the recent Feast of Immaculate Conception - citing St Joseph as a model for all gathered.



**Feast of the Immaculate Conception
8th December 2021**

Pope Francis has a huge love for St. Joseph. He introduced us to the simple devotion of 'The Sleeping St. Joseph'. The little statue can be by your bedside and underneath the head of Joseph you can put all your worries. I have one of those statues on my own bedside locker.

Pope Francis also inserted Joseph's name into the Eucharistic Prayer we pray at every Mass. And he also gave us this year, this special year. I don't think the year has been near long enough! Too much is happening these days with the pandemic, with restrictions, with curtailments for us to unpack and understand the dreams of St. Joseph and more importantly the key role he has played in salvation history, in our story of salvation.

You might wonder why all this talk of Joseph and this the feast of the Immaculate Conception? He doesn't even get a mention in our holyday gospel. Well today's feast brings us back to Mary and her readiness from conception to be the mother of Jesus. Handmade, made by God's own hand. There is a very real sense that Joseph too is made by God's hand, the rough translation of José (Joseph) is "God will look after you".

So, what might be the characteristics of Joseph's life that speak to a young person... In no particular order I suggest ...

... Joseph could be depended upon. He stood by Mary as the words of today's Gospel took effect in her life. Joseph could be relied upon. He was a man of his word. He was solid, dependable, reliable. Wonderful words for any of our young people when they look for a character reference. The employer may be less interested in the points you get in your Leaving Cert, but more interested in what kind of character is sitting before them, applying for a job. Things like 'reliability', 'dependability', 'solid' speaks volumes in a job interview.

... Joseph had a skill, he had mastered carpentry. Next time you are in the Cathedral, look at the John Hogan sculpture of the Holy Family. It conveys a most beautiful image of Joseph the carpenter. What's your skill? Perhaps it's sport – football, hurling, rugby, soccer, athletics, show-jumping, golf? Is it something else – music, art, rowing, gaming, computer programming, skate boarding, martial arts? Everyone has a skill. Find yours! Your years in Post Primary School offers you the tools to hone and master a skill.

... Joseph knows what it was like to lose someone. The twelve-year-old Jesus went missing on a visit to Jerusalem for Passover. Panic, consternation set in, until steps were retraced and the young man was found in the temple teaching the elders. There may be moments in your own life that someone may be lost to you or indeed you to them, always know there is room in God's house for you, no matter what road you have taken. The church door never closes. It always remains off the latch.

... Joseph was a man of faith. In his life he teaches us to know Jesus and share our life with him. Joseph reminds us we are in a family but we are part of a much greater family, God's. The late Seamus Mallon often quoted an old Greek proverb that is apt about family and faith: 'a society grows great when old men (and women) plant trees in whose shade they know they will never sit'.

The prayer-intention of Pope Francis for this month is a reminder that at the heart of both science and ethics is human dignity



Give me a crash course in . . . Bioethics

Michael Shortall

The challenge of this ongoing pandemic has certainly delivered the world a un-stabling blow. It is not, however, alone in so doing. Sometimes, I think of a cartoon I once saw: Planet Earth is in a boxing ring. It has its gloves on and is in the middle of match-up with Covid-19. Earth has landed a punch. It looks like it might win but it is sore and bruised. And just outside the ropes, waiting its turn, is a much bigger opponent, and its name is climate-change.

'Bio' comes from the Greek word for 'life'. Threats to life are always with us. Science and medicine are ways which humans have used their God-given gifts to respond, and sometimes overcome them.

"Follow The Science." It's a feel-good and common message. The soundbite is popular among politicians and on social media. Of course, science is important



MORALITY MATTERS

in making good decisions. It provides information and, often times, answers to our problems. It can tell us what will work or not, or at least, what might work better over what might not.

But science, on its own, cannot tell us what we should do. There is much to be taken into account. Good decisions should also be ethical decisions. They should be informed by values. Values are what we consider to be most important or worthwhile. Another word for worth is dignity. When we speak of human dignity we mean that the human person is the most important of all, so important that all our decisions must be guided by respect for the human person. It is then then the basis of ethics.

Bio-ethics therefore is the cross-over between the challenges to life and the decision-making of ethics. The challenges to life are not just global, like the pandemic

and climate change. Some are personal and social: for example, defending the life and dignity of the unborn child or the very vulnerable who are close to death.

To respect the dignity of the human person is not just an attitude. Rather, there are concrete things that make life worthwhile, and so give a human person real dignity. These too are values. The most basic value is life itself. There are others too, like peace and security, health and shelter, recognition and freedom, religion, among so many others. We owe these to each other or, at very least, we should never take them from each other. This we call justice.

Guaranteeing all these values at the same time is what makes ethical decision making difficult. We can see this during these challenging times: rights to free movement and association are being restricted in order to protect other rights like access to health and the protection of life. But no matter what the challenges, there are also certain basics, which we must give to others by right, if we are to maintain the dignity of all and always. Threats to human life when it is at its most vulnerable in abortion and physician assisted suicide are examples.

Science is vital. We celebrate and enjoy its achievements. Science is able to tell us what can happen. But, it is for individuals, leaders and society to make ethical decisions about what should happen.

The prayer-intention of Pope Francis for this month is a reminder that at the heart of both science and ethics is human dignity. He suggests that the dignity or worth of every person be defended in prayer and action. Action is a matter of justice or doing what is right. Right action is best sustained by prayer because prayer is rooted in the source of human dignity: God. Christians believe that each and all are valuable because God finds each and all of us deeply valuable, so much so that he sent his only Son (John 3:16) – A timely Christmas reminder.

Name

Ainm, nomen, name.
 Life is antonym not synonym,
 Beneath the name anonymous,
 In nomen tuum.
 Protagonist and puppet,
 Who pulls the strings, no strings attached,
 The strings determine nothing,
 It is the one who pulls them,
 The one that acts.
 Am I dead, or am I living,
 Although alive, I am not really living.
 Hope desires for something else,
 There is always something other.
 Homo sapiens, human beings,
 Wise man indeed, contradictory being,
 Visible and invisible, Saint and Sinner,
 Beneath the name, a contradictory being.
 Protagonist or Puppet,
 Creators or culminations of desires,
 Created or accidents of worldly longings,
 Controllers or controlled, extant or non-existent,
 Created beings in obscurity.
 Puppet not protagonist,
 Faith or fate, no doubt one if not the other.

Sean Hickey





Each of the four stages were inspired by the routes and locations associated with the faith history of our community during the three centuries leading up to the building of the church in Errill village in 1971

Celebrating fifty years of Errill Church 1971-2021

Martin Delaney

Throughout the autumn months of 2021 the community of Errill in the Parish of Rathdowney celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the opening and dedication of Our Lady Queen of the Universe Church in the village. To mark this Jubilee celebration, we planned a number of events leading up to what was to be the concluding celebration on Saturday November 20th. Sadly, like so many other events we had to put that occasion on hold because of fears around covid infection. However, we were able to go ahead with the centrepiece of our celebrations which was a Camino or walking pilgrimage over four stages. Each of the four stages were inspired by the routes and locations associated with the faith history of our community during the three centuries leading up to the building of the church in Errill village in 1971.

The First Stage of The Camino: Errill to The Little Derries Sunday 19th September 2021, 3pm

Carrigan's History of The Diocese of Ossory states: "During the Cromwellian

oppression of Irish Catholics in the mid-17th century the celebration of Mass would have ceased altogether in the parish of Rathdowney were it not for some zealous priest, who braving all danger, took his stand in what may well be called 'his last ditch' and celebrated Mass for his people in the Little Derry, a small bog island very close to the bounds of Co. Tipperary. There was a small wooden structure set up here, but it's use was merely to shelter the rude altar."

Our pilgrimage walk began at 3pm in the grounds of Errill church and progressed on the two mile route on the Templemore road and then turning right at The Lea Bridge we traveled through the bog to the little island site where mass was celebrated all those years ago. A small and simple wooden cross was passed from one to another as we walked and while each pilgrim had it in their hands, they remembered their own ancestors who had risked and sacrificed so much in a previous generation in order that they could gather to celebrate Eucharist. On arrival at The Little Derries we celebrated Mass. This was the first mass celebrated in the Little Derries in living memory and



hundreds of locals turned out on what was a beautiful sunny afternoon. Before returning to Errill village for refreshments all those who took part had their Camino passport stamped.

The Second Stage of The Camino: Graigueavallagh to Errill Sunday 3rd October 2021, 7am

Carrigan's History continues: "When the persecution abated, the woodwork and



altar were removed from the Little Derry and set up in a more central place, in the townland of Graigueavallagh. Tradition hands down that the work of removal was effected by staunch men named Maher, ancestors of the present Mahers of Coolkerry. The 'Chapel Pit' in Graigueavallagh, an old disused sandpit, then became the great Mass-Station for all of Rathdowney parish and continued as such for about a hundred years. Its title Chapel Pit may be regarded as a misnomer, in as much as the so-called

"Chapel" can have been nothing more, at best of times, than a miserable shed."

The 7am start did not deter the hardy pilgrims turning out in their droves for the second stage of the Camino. We had a gathering ritual and prayer at the site of the Chapel Pit in Graigueavallagh before setting out through Kylemalawn and Borahan Lane, pausing for prayer at the monastic ruins of St. Kieran and the local cemetery. There was a penitential aspect to this stage of the Camino and as each pilgrim passed the rough wooden to each other they were invited to reflect on what they would like to let go of and be forgiven for. We arrived at Errill Church for a short service of Reconciliation and healing, and this concluded the second stage of the Camino.

The Third Stage of The Camino: Graigueavallagh to Grogan: Sunday October 10th, 9.30am

Carrigan's History continues: *"At length came the dawn of better days. Mr. John Burke O'Flaherty, a Catholic gentleman, having acquired the fee-simple of the townland of Barney and Mount Oliver, made a free grant of an acre of land, in the latter, for the site of a chapel. This was about 1775. Fr. James Butler, the P.P. at once set about erecting a small temporary chapel on the new site. When the walls were built and roofing material could not be readily procured, the difficulty was solved by a number of strong men lifting off the roof of the 'chapel' in the Chapel Pit, bearing it bodily and intact on their shoulders, and placing it again in the same condition, on the bare walls of the new chapel. Such is the history of the foundation and completion of the first chapel in Grogan. This chapel was thrown down and another built on its foundations in 1791 by Father Purcell PP*

The present chapel, the third on the same site, was built by Fr. Tracey PP in 1826, around and over its predecessor,

which was only taken down when the new edifice had been roofed in."

The church built at Grogan in 1826 remained in use until 1971. In November 1971 the new church dedicated to Our Lady Queen of the Universe was opened in Errill village. The beautiful stained glass windows from Grogan are now to be found in two churches in County Kilkenny, The Rower and Glenmore. Two of the Grogan windows remain in the parish, one depicting St. Colmcille which is over the altar in Errill and another window dedicated to St. Vigilus (Fergal) is erected in the Religious Studies room of St. Fergal's College, Rathdowney.

We returned to the site of the Mass Pit in Graigueavallagh for the beginning of the third stage of the Camino. The route to Grogan brought us up the Mass Path which many older parishioners can still recall using as children as they walked to Sunday morning mass in Grogan. The third stage of the Camino concluded with a prayer service in the grounds of Grogan church.

The Fourth stage of the Camino. Grogan to Errill. Saturday 20th November, 12 noon.

For our fourth and final stage of the Camino we gathered for a short prayer in the grounds of Grogan church at 12 noon and then walked to Errill Church. This stage of the Camino took the form of a Eucharist procession being led by The Blessed Sacrament. Along the way different pilgrims came forward to carry the monstrance. When we reached Errill church there was a service of benediction.

When fears around Covid infection subside we hope to conclude the celebrations with Mass celebrated by Bishop Nulty in the early Spring of 2022.

Catholic education is education that brings out the best of a child in every sense: academically, spiritually, emotionally and physically.

Catholic Primary School Management Association (CPSMA)

Conor O'Higgins



The life of a diocese is made up not merely of its people but also of the many groups which help that people be church. Ossory is no different. We are fortunate to have so many structures in the Diocese to help us live out our belief in the Gospel in various ways. We have deaneries, Pastoral areas, Councils, Finance Committees, Council of Priests, the Forum, Ministry groups and obviously parishes. With all of these groups in dialogue on a constant basis we are already then, in many ways, living that synodal church about which we talk.

One of these many groups is the Diocesan CPSMA group - or more fully the Diocesan Catholic Primary School Management Association. This Diocesan group works locally to provide advice and support for Chairpersons and Principals and through them to Boards of Management in our 89 Catholic primary schools in Ossory.

Schools are complex realities dealing as they do with students, their families,

teachers, Special Needs Assistants, Ancillary staff and on occasion the wider parish community. Their day-to-day operation, serving so wonderfully the students who attend them, involve a lot of decisions and the CPSMA group is there to assist.

The Diocesan CPSMA group provides services such as

- Training locally in Ossory for new

members of Board of Management, who then in turn manage each individual school.

- Provide more specific training for Treasurers, Board Secretaries, and Chairpersons to help each of them fulfil their specific role within their Board of Management. Ensuring that each person understands and fulfils the duties necessary for their role: things such as filing accounts at year end in the appropriate manner by treasurers or supporting principals and chairpersons in interview techniques and structures to enable our schools to find the best of staff.
- Provides training and support for the many independent assessors that are used in interviews throughout the diocese ensuring that we have in our schools the fairest possible employment practices for all.
- The CPSMA group reads legalisation and watches regular updates from the Department of Education and Skills ensuring that all of our schools comply with best practice.

As chairperson of the Ossory CPSMA I have been involved also at a regional level, ensuring that the local group is linked in with others in Leinster and, beyond that, nationally to ensure that all our Catholic Schools work in the best way possible to educate and care for the children who attend them. As part of CPSMA group we have a Diocesan Education Secretary, Fr Dermot Ryan, President St Kieran's College. The Education Secretary is always on hand to answer specific questions or concerns from any chairperson or principal in the diocese and he is particularly busy during the summer months when teachers panels are in operation ensuring those teachers employed in our schools are kept in employment in various schools as needs shift. Fr Dermot, since summer 2020, follows in the footsteps of Fr Pat Dalton who stepped down from this

role after giving over 30 years of sterling service to our primary sector.

As school needs shift, as communities grow and change so too do our schools. Occasionally, two or more smaller schools amalgamate to form a larger single school, even if on two campuses. Such amalgamations involve much negotiations as singular identities become one united school and the CPSMA group may, at the request of the Patron - the Bishop - help in this process.

When parents choose a catholic school in their parish they do so confident that they are going to get the best possible education for their child. Catholic education is education that brings out the best of a child in every sense: academically, spiritually, emotionally and physically. In Ossory we can proudly boast that our schools do that - in working closely with our principals and chairpersons we see just how dedicated each and every one of them are. Doing all that they can, tirelessly, to ensure their schools are happy healthy places. We in the CPSMA are, then, happy merely to help this process.

Our CPSMA Committee in Ossory consists of members currently involved in Primary schools as principals and members of Boards of Management, with one goal in mind, to enhance the school community through the good offices of the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association. The CPSMA Committee - Chairperson Conor O'Higgins, Fr Dermot Ryan, Diocesan Education Secretary, Committee Secretary, Mary Mc Carthy, Carmel Weymess, Eilish Costello, Eileen Ross, Denis Doheny, Kathleen Maher. Ms Frances Lennon attends meetings as Diocesan Secretary who in that capacity works ceaselessly to support the Patron's schools throughout the Diocese.

There are as many ways to pray as there are people. We pray through thoughts, words, actions, symbols or silence



Calming our spirits

Albert McDonnell

In just twelve words, the Gospel reading at Mass one Sunday during the summer painted a beautiful picture of Jesus reaching out to a sick woman.

'He went to her, took her by the hand and helped her.'

We are not told the woman's name. Perhaps, she represents all those who are sick in every time and place. For us today, she represents all the people across the world who are suffering due to COVID-19 or other illnesses.

Earlier this year, I listened to an interview on radio with a former politician and writer who had come through COVID-19. The experience petrified her. She told us

that she was frequently in tears. However, the familiar prayers from her childhood helped her greatly. For her the rosary and many other traditional prayers are lyrical and poetic. Reciting these comforting words creates another level for her, allowing her to find space and gives her a voice. The words of the Memorare are especially precious and calm her spirit. That is what Jesus did when he held the hand of the woman in the Gospel. He calmed her spirit. The woman on the radio draws strength not just from those around her now, important as they are but also from the communion of saints, those who had gone before her in faith.

In this time of pandemic, we can't

physically take each other by the hand as Jesus did. However, we can pray. We express and nourish our love for ourselves and for each other through prayer. We are so much more than flesh and blood, we are also soul and spirit. When we pray, we are never truly alone. We are in communion with the Lord and every praying person across the world and down the generations. We bond with women and men of goodwill everywhere. We join all who have gone before us in faith, our ancestors, Our Lady and the whole communion of saints. Prayer is a mystical network which unites us to people that we have never met or even seen but who share a link to the loving God. These months of staying apart are teaching us how to bond in deeper, more spiritual ways.

There are as many ways to pray as there are people. We pray through thoughts, words, actions, symbols or silence. Many like to gently sit or kneel before the Blessed Sacrament, spending quiet time in the presence of the Lord so as to feel the soothing embrace of his peace reviving our spirit. We light candles. The warmth heals us, the flame becomes our prayer rising up to the Lord. The glow embodies our hopes and dreams and our love for ourselves and each other. The light drives back the darkness of fear and doubt. Every embrace with beauty is prayer. Music revitalises our bond with the God of love and mystery. Poetry, art, drama and the miraculous world of nature takes us to new and better places. The sight of newborn lambs in the field, daffodils, light refracted through stained-glass, the rising or setting sun, the waxing or waning moon are all calming and life-giving. Sharing or receiving a kind word, a generous act, a sacrifice, a moment of patience, the laughter of children, the contentment of old age, people doing the best they can or starting over are all sacred moments.

Like the woman on radio many of us draw life from familiar prayers. There are times when we simply speak to God as we do to

a friend. At other moments, the words of scripture, perhaps taken from the Sunday readings on our parish newsletter, bring us closer to the Lord as we place ourselves in the story of his love for his people.

We pray so that we can become truly ourselves. Almost two thousand years ago St Irenaeus wrote 'The glory of God is man fully alive'. We are so much more than our actions. We pray to give thanks, to unload the burdens of the past, to ask help, to seek comfort, to find a way forward, to nourish our friendship with God. Beginning each day with a moment of calm helps us to live that day in peace. Spending a little time before sleep searching for the moments when God held us by the hand and helped us, calms our spirit. The tenderness, goodness, kindness, forgiveness present in each day is to be treasured and celebrated.

If this terrible pandemic is teaching us anything, it is surely that we are not in control of the world. We need each other. We need God's Spirit living within us.

Remember,

O most gracious Virgin Mary,

that never was it known that anyone
who fled to thy protection,

implored thy help,

or sought thy intercession was left
unaided.

Inspired with this confidence,

I fly to thee,

O Virgin of virgins, my Mother;

to thee do I come;

before thee I stand,

sinful and sorrowful.

O Mother of the Word Incarnate,

despise not my petitions,

but in thy mercy hear and answer me.

Amen.



The *cathedra* is now placed in the centre of the sanctuary behind the altar – a position that affords the bishop the best view of the gathered congregation

Sede Vacante

Richard Scriven

There have been five bishops in my lifetime! I was born at the end of the episcopacy of Bishop Collier, confirmed by Bishop Birch, ordained by Bishop Forristal, appointed a parish priest by Bishop Freeman and brought back to Kilkenny by Bishop Farrell. Five bishops and five *interregna*!

As I write we are awaiting the appointment of a new bishop to replace Bishop Farrell following his translation to Dublin as Archbishop in February of this year. We are in a time of *interregnum*. We have a *sede vacante* – a vacant see, or more precisely and literally, a 'Vacant Seat'.

The very name of St Mary's as a cathedral takes its name from the seat of the bishop: the *Cathedra*. *Cathedra* is the Latin word for seat, and not so far from the Irish word *Cathaóir*. And so, we await the installation of a new shepherd in our diocese when he will take his seat in the cathedral.

What of the seat, the *Cathedra*? The *cathedra* of the cathedral was made in 1867. The chair is the work of Messrs Earley and Powell of Camden Street in Dublin and was commissioned by Bishop Walsh. Walsh became bishop in 1845 taking over from Bishop Kinsella who had begun the building of St Mary's in 1842. Kinsella, who had become bishop in 1829, laid the foundation stone on August 18th, 1842 and upon his death in 1845 the walls were seven feet high. Bishop Edward Walsh brought the building work to completion in 1857.

Ten years later we have details of further work of Bishop Walsh: the installation of the windows in the North Transept and the commissioning of the Bishop's Chair, the *Cathedra*.

Earley and Powell opened their workshop in Camden Street in 1864 and within a few short years produced magnificent stained-glass windows and ecclesiastical furniture for churches in Ireland. The *Dublin*

Builder (1868) gives an account of some of their work in Dublin: in Clarendon Street and St Michael's Church, North Anne Street. In an advertisement in *Bassett's Guide and Directory of Kilkenny City and County* (1884) the reader is referred to their work in St Mary's Cathedral (six windows in the apse and the Window of the Assumption in the North Transept) and their work in the Black Abbey.

The *Cathedra* is described in the *Freeman Journal* of 1867:

The seat or cathedra is designed in the 15th century Gothic. It consists of four flank octagonal pilasters, which form the framework and support of the arms of the seat. There are richly carved capitals on the top of each pilaster, the spaces between being divided in a series of geometrical panels filled in with most elaborate carving. The seat and arms are covered with rich green silk velvet, and edges with gold and green fringe.

The chair was in the apse of the cathedral, to the left of the altar. The *Freeman Journal* continues in its description of the canopy over the chair:

Immediately over the throne rises a magnificent projecting canopy supported by columns and buttresses. This portion of the work consist of a series of gablets, pinnacles and flying buttresses, all most elaborately carved, and rising to the height of twenty-three feet above the seat; the whole is surmounted by a wrought metal cross, elegantly gilt. On the panel at the back of the throne are emblazoned the arms of the diocese with the name of the Lord Bishop written underneath. There are also two seats provided for the assistants at the throne, and one for the assistant priest. These seats are, as the rest of the work is, of the best selected oak. This splendid work is, we believe, unique in this country and is carried out strictly in all its details after the manner which prevailed through Europe during the fifteenth century (18th April 1868).

Over the years the bishop's chair has had different locations within the cathedral.

Until the renovations of Bishop Birch in the 1970s the chair was in the left-hand side of the apse, up close to the high altar. The mosaic overhead in this archway gives a hint of this location. The mosaic comprises of the green *galero* or pilgrim's hat which is the heraldic emblem for prelates and priests of the church. For the rank of bishop, both residential and titular, the pilgrim's hat is always in deep green, the colour of the office of bishop. For this rank and office there are six tassels suspended on either side of the hat in a pyramidal style.

In the re-ordering of the 1970s the *cathedra* was placed in the main aisle, in front of the pillar on the left-hand side. This *cathedra* was of Kilkenny black marble, similar in design and material to the altar and ambo of that re-ordering.

In Bishop Freeman's time Walsh's *cathedra* was reinstated and placed on the left-hand side of the sanctuary as you look up the centre aisle of the cathedral.

The *cathedra* is now placed in the centre of the sanctuary behind the altar – a position that affords the bishop the best view of the gathered congregation and allows him to preside over liturgies in his cathedral.

And so, Walsh's *cathedra* has been the seat of Walsh, Moran, Brownrigg, Collier, Birch, Forristal, Freeman and Farrell. We await a new shepherd in this time of *Sede Vacante*.

Returning to College

Gemma Mulligan



Pope Francis in *Gaudete et Exsultate* reminds us that the Lord speaks to us in a variety of ways, at work, through others and at every moment.¹ This does however, require on our part an openness and a readiness to listen. It also involves the silence of prolonged prayer, which enables us to better perceive God's language, to interpret the real meaning of the inspirations we believe we have received.² In other words by following this way of discernment we can be sure that what we hear and understand through our prayer is not just thoughts and ideas but the Spirit working in us, leading us and guiding us.

Similarly, when making decisions or looking for answers, Henri Nouwen the Dutch theologian said that we should look to the signs all around us. During the lockdowns of 2020 life for most of us began to look very different and opportunities for reflection arose. Looking at the signs all around me I began to consider more seriously returning to study on a part time basis. After much discernment, the decision was made, I took a step and in September 2021 began my postgraduate studies in St Patrick's Pontifical University Maynooth.

Returning to college as a mature student certainly meant I was apprehensive on my way to Maynooth on my first day of orientation week but I need not have been. Many of the postgraduate students in Maynooth have come straight from undergraduate but there are students like me who also work and

have families to take care of. There are students from all over the world as well as Ireland, students of all different ages and backgrounds, making daily encounters and conversations very interesting. The deans and the course directors as well as the administration staff work extremely hard to ensure students have everything they need to begin their academic year as smoothly as possible and are always available for advice or to answer any questions or concerns. Building the postgraduate community in St Patrick's is given much consideration and gatherings are planned to facilitate this. Some students are only on campus once a week so keeping connected and building relationships is an important part of postgraduate college life.

As Christmas approaches I have completed my first semester lectures and will be submitting essays in the next few weeks. I have enjoyed my first few months far more than I could have imagined and I am certain I made the right decision. If you have considering returning to study and are interested in deepening your understanding of your faith by studying theology or pastoral ministry I would encourage you to take that first step. Pay attention to the signs all around you. Pope Francis reminds us "when we are open and prepared to listen, it can lead us to accepting a call that can shatter our security, but lead us to a better life".³

¹ Pope Francis: Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate* 2018, p.76

² Ibid p. 76

³ Ibid p.77



Peer Pals: Six-week leadership programme with young people becoming peer mentors in their schools and communities



Mission Transition: Programme supports young people who are moving from primary to secondary school and is available to all primary schools in the Diocese.



Pop-Up Youth Club: Youth Clubs are a tried and tested way of connecting young people to their community.

Ossory Youth is about community, and it is made up of the young people and families who use the service...

A busy year for Ossory Youth

Mary Mescal



Ossory Youth Services was established in 1985 by a small cohort of local clergy and lay people led by the late Bishop Laurence Forristal. Its mission then was "to listen to, encourage and help young people to grow and contribute to the life of the community" Since 1985 Ossory Youth has become a Company Limited by Guarantee and is managed by a voluntary board of directors. While the legal structure has changed, our mission statement in 2021 remains the same "supporting young people to connect, experience, learn and grow."

Over 41 years, the work of our local youth service has grown and diversified with a current staff team of 16 and over 50 volunteers. Approximately 1700 young people access the service annually and this number continues to rise year on year.

There have been significant local, national and global developments in that time that have presented considerable

challenges for young people and parents. The onslaught of technology, the inflated demand for academic and non-academic achievement, and the loss of family time are just a few developments that has placed a large burden on our young people to develop at a pace that is too fast and competitive and in a way that does not account for individuality and diversity. Globally, the destruction of the environment and more recently that impact of the pandemic have contributed to a growing fear for what the future holds. As a result, we see more and more young people struggling with internalising disorders such as anxiety and depression, a loss in family cohesion as well as an increase in reliance on substances and the use of antidepressants – signals that our significant proportion of young people are seeking alternative ways to cope.

The services of Ossory Youth have expanded to adapt to the current support



Outdoor Education: Young People taking the plunge. Youth work is about experiential learning and Ossory Youth use the great outdoors to develop skills in confidence, communication, teamwork, overcoming fears and having fun with friends.



Switch Off to Switch On: Young people switched off their devices and switched on to the world around them experiencing nature and tapping into their creativity through music, drama and art.



New Communities: Welcoming and supporting young people and their families from new communities is a big part of our work. A cup of tea and a game of cards is a great way to start!

needs of young people and their families with our work being person centred and committed to genuine connections with young people and their families through empathy, listening, kindness, acceptance and fun. We are also firmly committed to the role that community plays in the lives of young people and know from our long history that volunteer youth leaders and mentors have made a positive contribution to the lives of young people and the communities they live in.

Within Ossory Youth, there are youth groups for young people with additional needs in the areas of mental health, personal development, disability, sexual identity and ethnicity. The Connections Programme offers individualised support and guidance for parents and young people supported by a small, dedicated team of volunteer mentors and our youth information service reaches hundreds of young people in school with workshops

around healthy relationships and how to transition from primary to secondary school to name just a few. The Garda Youth Diversion Project supports young people to make better decisions in their lives and reach their potential while the Community-based Drug's Initiative provides supports for young people and adults coping with problematic drug use and addiction. The Counselling Service is a therapeutic support for children, young people and parents.

Each week, Monday to Saturday, sees young people coming through the doors of Ossory Youth headquarters in Desart Hall, New Street, Kilkenny to participate in programmes and activities. However, staff also work with young people throughout the diocese in places such as Graiguenamanagh, Callan, Goresbridge, Thomastown and in many secondary schools. For decades, volunteer led local youth clubs have been

at the heart of Ossory Youth with places such as Johnswell, Kilmacow, Mooncoin, Slieverue, Ballyragget, Urlingford, Borris-in-Ossory, Rathdowney and The Swan being synonymous with youth clubs. Youth clubs are a wonderful addition to any parish being a place where young people meet their friends in a safe environment, have fun, and take part in a wide range of activities. Youth clubs are for young people and run by young people in partnership with the adult volunteers. The youth club encourages participation and fosters a sense of belonging for young people where they have people who believe in them, and where they can form positive relationships with adults.

The summer of 2021 has seen a great emphasis on outdoor activities such as kayaking, hill walking, stand up paddleboarding and forest skills while the creative needs of young people are catered for with music and arts programmes throughout the year. The spiritual needs of young people are not overlooked with the Taizé pilgrimage each summer taking 30 young people supported by staff and volunteers to the Taizé Community in France for a never to be forgotten week spent with young people from throughout the world.

Experience shows us that when young people, adults and families are met

with kindness, empathy and absence of judgement, they can unlock an extraordinary inner determination for self-growth. And although the world can be a hard place to live sometimes, we are encouraged by the remarkable resilience and strength of young people when their needs are met. And often, that is part of our work – to focus on the strengths of service users and what they have to contribute to make their own lives and the lives of others better.

Ossory Youth is about community, and it is made up of the young people and families who use the service, the volunteers and staff who make sure the work happens, and our funders and supporters who share in our mission "supporting young people to connect, experience, learn and grow"

This article presents a snapshot of the work of the Ossory Youth, but a comprehensive outline of all services offered by the youth service can be found on www.ossoryyouth.com. To access services in order to support a young person who may be finding the journey of negotiating adolescence challenging in any way, or alternatively, to enquire about volunteering with Ossory Youth or setting up a youth group or youth club in your area, contact Ossory Youth at (056) 7761200.



Taizé: Oxygen for the soul. A week spent in the Taizé Community in France was according to one of the group 'unexplainable, peaceful, inspirational, amazing, eye-opening

...the sisters of St John of God have worked to enrich and bless the lives of the people with whom they ministered.

Celebrating the St John of God

Brigid Clancy, was born in Ballyouskill, Durrow, Co. Laois in 1842. She was to enter religious life, and in 1861 she entered the Sisters of Bon Secours in Paris. But that however was not to set the destination of her life. It was a meeting with the then Bishop of Ferns, Thomas Furlong, that was to set the destination of her life and, through it, to impact upon the lives of countless other people too.

At that time Bishop Furlong was acutely aware of the plight of the sick and poor in his diocese following the famine. He was particularly concerned about the faith of the people who were living in great poverty either in their homes or as residents of the Workhouses of that time. Apart from human concern for the sick, he had a strong sense that the faith of the people was in danger in the Workhouses because they were not treated with dignity, respect or compassion. Sr Visitation Clancy was home nursing a patient in Wexford when she first met Bishop Furlong. He was impressed by the dedication of the Bon Secours Sisters to those who were sick and he invited her and some of her companions into the diocese to care for those worst affected by the famine.

At his invitation, then, Mother Visitation, as she was to become known, along with just a few companions headed to Wexford to begin a religious community of sisters who would care primarily for the sick and the poor. On October 7th, 1871, four Sisters of Bon Secours of Paris arrived in Wexford from Dublin. By October 1872 a further three Sisters had joined them. These Sisters became the founding members of the new Congregation, The Sisters of St John of God. From this very small beginning the congregation of the St John of God Sisters was started.

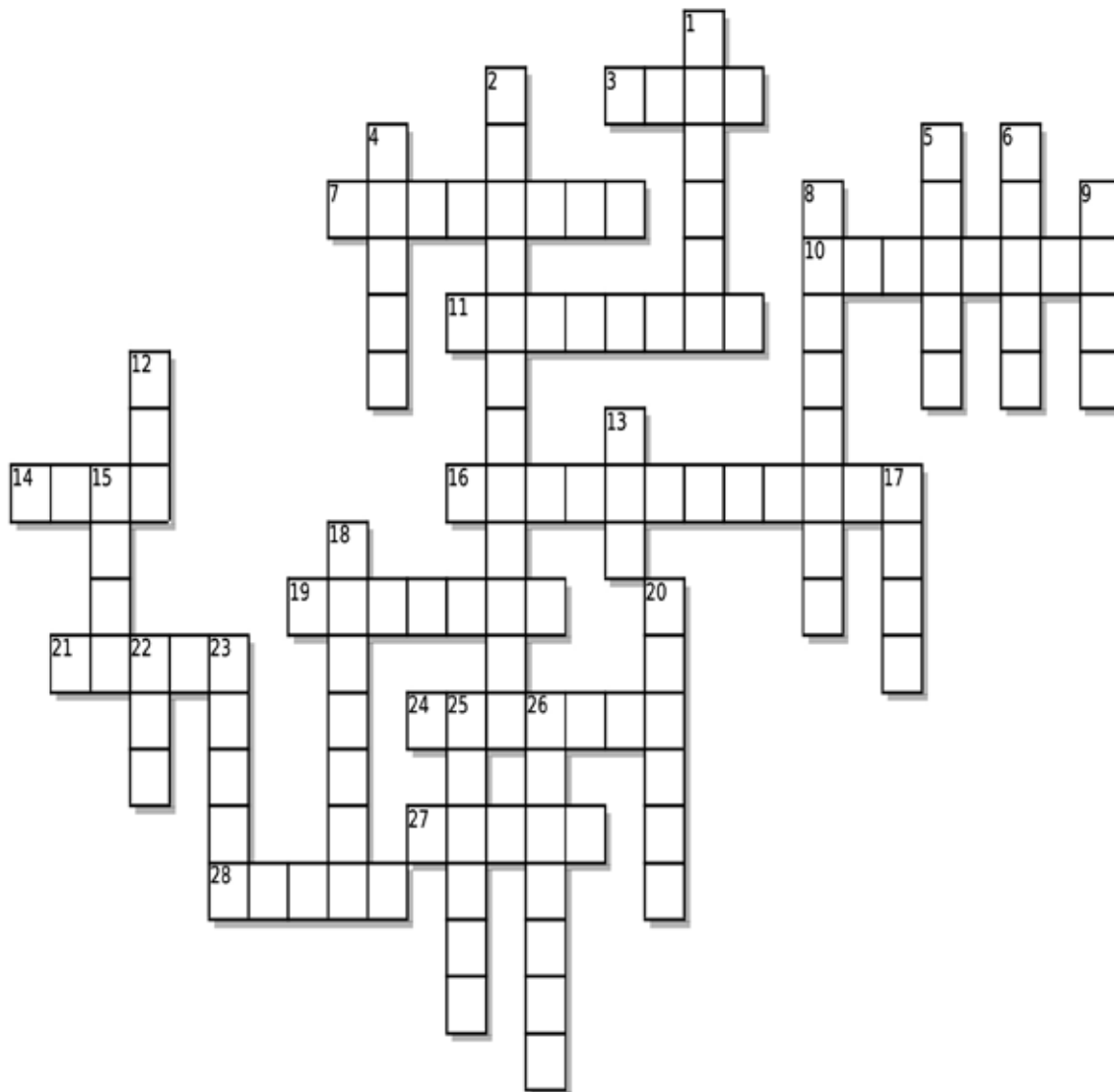
Their origins were, then, rooted in the difficult post famine decades of Ireland; an Ireland that was stricken by poverty and deprivation; an Ireland in need of the compassion and

care so now synonymous with the Sisters of St John of God. In the years that followed, and as the congregation grew ministries in caring for the sick, education and social work and spiritual formation brought with them, no doubt, new challenges and certainly to new places - over the years the Sisters responded to invitations to bring their ministry of Healthcare and Education to Australia, New Zealand, England, Wales, Rome, Nigeria, Cameroon, South Africa and Pakistan. These new challenges the sisters were happy to meet. The St John of God Sisters live in religious community and seek to centre their lives on God through 'living contemplatively in attitude and action' (Constitutions:53). In their various ministries, they aim to give concrete expression to God's compassionate care for all people and the whole of creation.

Over the last 150 years more than 1,200 women have followed in those early footsteps. Throughout Ireland and then the world the sisters of St John of God have worked to enrich and bless the lives of the people with whom they ministered. In Ossory the sisters of St John of God have such close ties with education through their work in so many schools, and in care of those who are sick and years of collaboration in the formation of Clergy through their work in St Kieran's College, and the Irish College in Rome.

The Diocese of Ossory has issued an invitation to the Sisters of St John of God to allow the Diocese to celebrate and give thanks for the many years of dedicated service of the sisters in Ossory but also to celebrate the many excellent collaborations, and friendships, which many in the Diocese formed with the St John of God Sisters. An initiative of the Council of Priests, Bishop Denis has invited the Sisters to come together on March 10th at 5pm with further details to be announced in the New Year.

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 3 12th month of the Jewish calendar
 7 Fruit of the Holy Spirit
 10 Kildare and
 11 Eucharistic
 14 Thou shalt not
 16 Fruit of the Holy Spirit
 19 The Temple one split in two when Jesus died
 21 Sign of
 24 Element of the Sacrament of Reconciliation
 27 Rod of
 28 He had John the Baptist excluded

DOWN

- 1 Priest in a parish

- 2 Sacrament of Initiation
 4 Days and nights of the great flood
 5 When someone strikes you on your _____ Mt 5:39
 6 Basilica of St Paul Outside the
 8 The apostle James' father
 9 E Pluribus
 12 NT book
 13 Christian insignia
 15 A theological virtue
 17 Society of men and women willing to undertake charitable works (abbr)
 18 Catholic opera singer Pavarotti
 20 According to the Psalms this type of person stirs up strife
 22 Tunic like vestment
 23 Isaiah spoke of a new one
 25 Number of Apostles after Judas died
 26 Taken body and soul into heaven

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 February 2022 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 27 competitions:*

Adult Crossword:
 Jennifer Murphy

**Children's Wordsearch,
 age 8-13:**
 Katie Maher

**Children's Colouring,
 age 5-8:**
 Megan Comerford

Colouring Competition



For ages 5-8



Wordsearch Competition

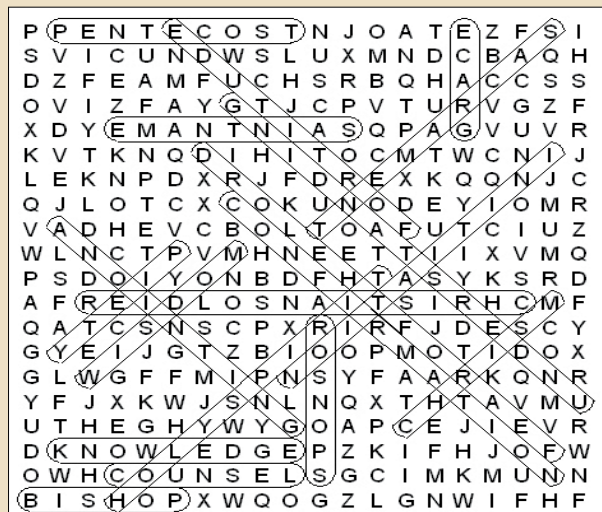


For ages 8-13

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

NATIVITY	SHEPHERD	GOLD
DONKEY	MYRRH	GIFT
BETHLEHEM	STAR	INN
WISE MEN	MANGER	JOSEPH
SON	STRAW	GOD
SHEEP	ANIMALS	STABLE
JESUS	MARY	

Answers to Ossory Times Issue 27



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