

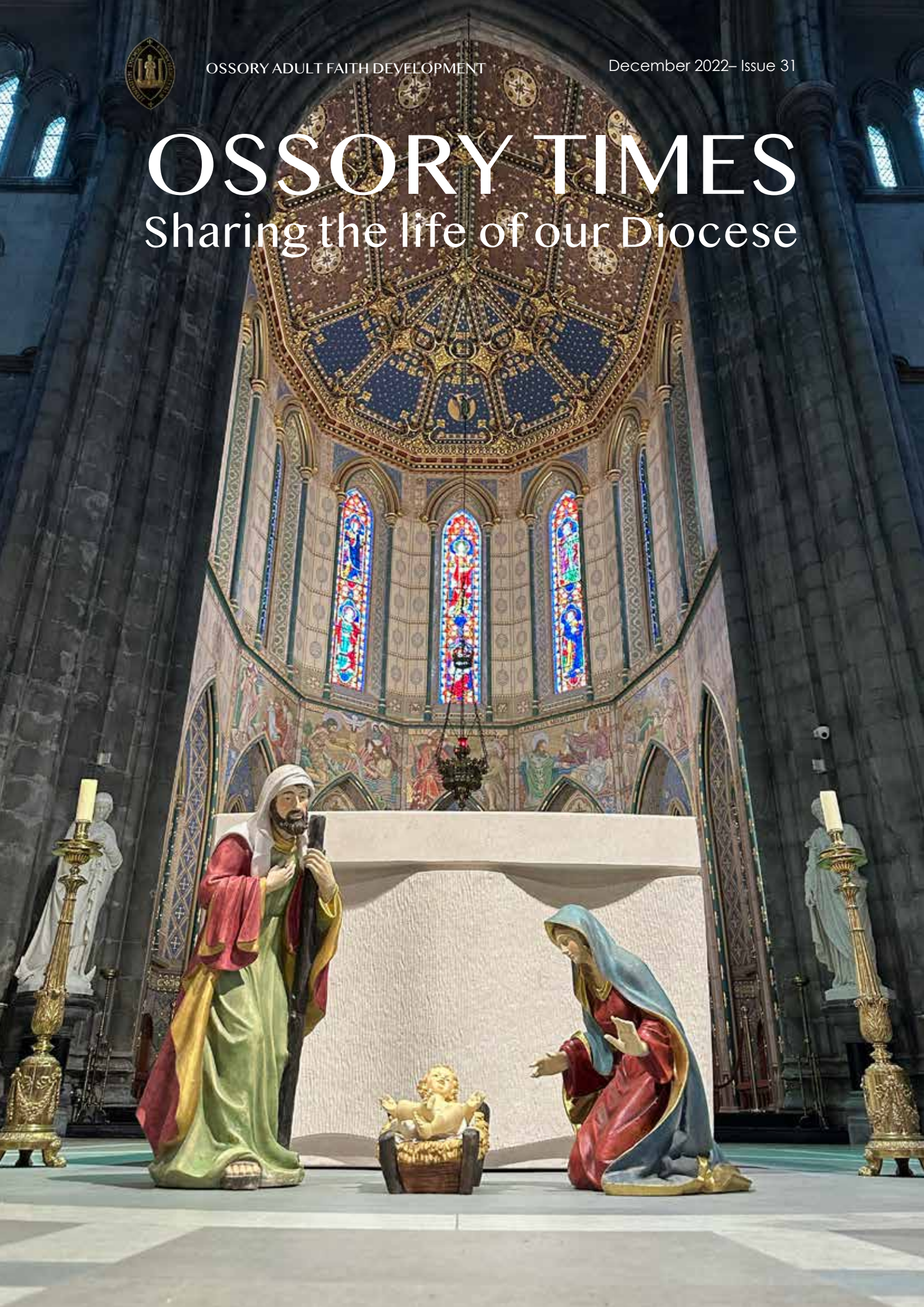


OSSORY ADULT FAITH DEVELOPMENT

December 2022– Issue 31

OSSORY TIMES

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Editorial

They will call him Emmanuel a name which means God is with us...

It is easy for us to see that God was with Mary, Joseph, Elizabeth, the innkeeper, the shepherds and all those other people who populate that first Christmas. From our vantage point we can easily identify how God was close to those in the first Christmas days... He planned them, he shaped them and he guided them. But from where Mary and Joseph stood I wonder did they feel that God was with them - at all times? Surely in those chaotic days they had occasion to doubt, to be afraid or to wonder. They might not have felt God's presence at every moment.

It is an interesting thought - we can, then, experience chaos and fear and God can still be with us or equally God can be with us and we can still experience chaos and fear. No matter how we are, where we are, or what is going on the message of Christmas is that God is very much with us - and that he remains with us at all times.

This edition of the *Ossory Times* documents for us the life of faith here in Ossory, the presence of God with us. The variety of these pages show the many ways that he is close to us. God is with us: as we give thanks for the presence of the Sisters of Mercy in Ossory for the past 150 years, we see God's hand; as we celebrate the announcement by Pope Francis that Fr Niall Coll is to be Ordained as the next Bishop of Ossory, we see God's presence; as we retell our christian story to the next generation of children, we can feel God beside us; when we pray with those who are sick, we invite God into that moment too. Each of these, and the other articles in this *Ossory Times*, offer us, then, glimpses of God in our midst. This Christmas may we continue to make God welcome - in all the moments of our lives.

I am delighted then to welcome you 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
Announcement of the next Bishop of Ossory	2
Welcome of Fr Niall Coll	4
Church Matters	8
Sacraments Matter	12
Ballyhale Parish Pilgrimage to Knock	14
Morality Matters	16
The Carmelites in Knocktopher.....	18
Sisters of Mercy, Ossory 1872-2022.....	22
Godly Play.....	28
Review of Child Safeguarding Practice	30
Quiz Pages	43



Announcement of the next Bishop of Ossory

Feast of St Simon & Jude, Apostles

On the morning of 28th October last in Saint Mary's Cathedral Monsignor Julien Kaboré, Chargé d'Affaires of the Apostolic Nunciature in Ireland announced that his Holiness Pope Francis has appointed Father Niall Coll, as the new Bishop of the Diocese of Ossory.



Luke's Gospel names the twelve disciples and it is here that we find the names of Simon listed tenth, and Jude listed eleventh, the two whose feastday is celebrated this day. And what an historic day this is, as Pope Francis has just named Fr. Niall Coll, as the 96th successor to St Kieran here in Ossory.

I, along with the people, priests and religious of Ossory, very warmly welcome

this announcement and assure Fr Niall of our support, our prayers and our encouragement. I thank Msgr Julien Kaboré, the Chargé d'Affaires at the Apostolic Nunciature who represents Pope Francis this day. And what a great message Msgr Julien has brought us from the Holy Father. I thank all of you for being present at such short notice, representing every aspect of the life of this great diocese.

In the footsteps of St Kieran and St Canice, Fr Niall too comes a journey to the people of Ossory - as Kieran once came from Cape Clear and Canice from Dungiven in Ulster - Fr Niall now comes from the Donegal Town in Raphoe Diocese. Fr Niall, I know you will be warmly welcomed here. You have been called by the Lord to this new ministry as the apostles Simon and Jude were once called too. Interestingly they are commemorated together, companions in the mission of gospel proclamation, a mission which cost them their lives.

As Bishops we need more than ever to be companions on the journey, companions with one another and those we work alongside.

I have known Niall since our student days together in Maynooth in the 1980's and as such, understand full well his immense abilities, his deep faith and his great energy for theology, pastoral ministry and lay faith formation. Having journeyed with the people of Ossory as Apostolic Administrator I know how wonderfully Bishop Elect Niall will settle here. This is a good home. I know also that Fr Niall is known to many in this Diocese, as he mentioned himself, some he has taught in his years lecturing in systematic theology, many others he has encountered in various settings throughout his ministry.

Our paths in life bring us together - the Lords hand in every encounter.

Over the past 20 months it is been my joy to serve as Apostolic Administrator and in that time great work has been carried out by the many various groups and people in the Diocese. I have enjoyed the opportunities to visit all of the Pastoral Areas in Ossory; to witness the transition from the lay deanery structure to these new means of our working together. We have gathered for many happy occasions and some sad - but in each of these moments the Lord has been present with us; we have been truly blessed. Ossory is a Diocese with a very rich history and with an ever more promising future.

Niall, as we move into the weeks ahead, and as we plan for your Ordination as the next Bishop of Ossory, we will continue to hold you in our prayers. That the Lord who has called you to this new ministry will support you as your undertake it. I know the fulsome support that the priests, religious and lay faithful of Ossory will give you not only in these weeks as you prepare, but in the many years to come as your paths now continue together.

May St Canice support you, may St Kieran guide you and may St Fergal bring you the assurance of God's presence and blessing in your new ministry as shepherd of Ossory.



Welcome of Fr Niall Coll, appointed Bishop of Ossory



Please know that I am as surprised as you that I find myself standing before you this morning as the future bishop of Ossory. A telephone call from the apostolic nunciature on a recent Sunday evening asking me to come to Dublin for a meeting began a process that brings me here today to what is the beginning of a new life and ministry for me, and a new chapter for the Ossory diocese. Monsignor Julien Kabore, Charge d'Affaires, was kindness itself in how he broke the news and firm in his resolve that I accept the appointment. An Ulsterman in deepest Leinster? A bishop who had spent most of his ministry in the world of education? But here I am! Truly, I am feeling daunted by the prospect and know that it will only be by God's grace and your welcome and ongoing support that I will be able to minister fruitfully here.

Pondering the long journey from Donegal to Kilkenny, from the northwest extremity of Ulster to the southern extremes of Leinster, I draw courage from the memory of St Canice, patron of Kilkenny City and secondary patron of Ossory. He was also an Ulsterman, hailing from Dungiven in Co. Derry, not too far from my native heath, who also found himself called to minister in Ireland's sunny southeast. As an interested history student in Maynooth College in the early 1980s, I recall History Society excursions to both Aghaboe and St Canice's Church of Ireland Cathedral

where I was delighted to learn about the reach of that great man of faith from the north. But I wasn't completely provincial in outlook at the time and was thus able to duly acknowledge the contribution of both the local Gael and Norman to the faith, history and architecture of this region in the shape of such delights as Jerpoint Abbey, Black Friar's Church and Kilkenny Castle. In addition, I also recall trips to St Kieran's College to visit fellow Raphoe students who were pursuing their studies for the priesthood there.

Coming as I do from the mainly soccer culture of east Donegal, my knowledge of hurling, that game so close to Kilkenny and Laois hearts, will test very few of you. But I have always been fascinated by the skill and dance of the game. My knowledge of this part of the world, of Ossory, comes mostly in the shape of the sons and daughter of the diocese whom I have encountered over the years. I think right away of the untiring and much respected Sr Canice (Maura Drea) who was principal of the neighbouring Loreto Convent School in Letterkenny when I was a student at St Eunan's College. She died here in Kilkenny last year at an advanced age. May she rest in peace. I think of Frs Tom Norris and Willie Dalton, priests of this diocese, who taught me theology and canon law respectively at Maynooth College. Both were passionate and insightful lecturers. I think also of the





Ossory students I studied with both in Maynooth and Rome, and particularly those Ossory students, now seasoned priests of this diocese, I taught in Carlow College during my three-year sojourn there in the 1990s. And I mustn't forget to mention those Ossory priests who pursued further theological studies in Carlow at the same time. It's a relief for me to know that I arrive here not a total stranger to all!

But arriving as something of a stranger in new places to work and minister has been, I must admit, a sustained pattern in my life. After Carlow and three years in both school and parish in beautiful Dungloe in Raphoe diocese's northwest, I found myself out of the diocese again teaching student teachers, both primary and post primary, and post-graduates in St Mary's University College, Belfast. The partition of this island is probably at its deepest in the world of education: different paymasters and different curricula, meant that I had to acquaint myself with a quite different northern system (of Catholic education) and its wonderful personnel. After nearly two decades there I returned home, at the height of the pandemic, to the Raphoe diocese and parish life, first in Ballintra, then Donegal Town and Clar. Covid 19 has been hard on people and parishes and, as you know, recovery from it has been slow and we don't yet have clarity on its full effects. It is likely to cast a long shadow well into the future. I am heartbroken to be leaving the parish of Donegal and Clar and want to thank the people there for the welcome and support they offered me over my brief sojourn of less than a

year and a half among them. I would also like to thank Bishop Alan McGuckian, the priests and so many other lay faithful of the Raphoe diocese for their support and kindness.

I come to Ossory at a time of great challenge to faith, a time when Irish society is increasingly secular and individualistic. The four-century and more long dominance of the Tridentine pattern has left Catholics almost everywhere unfamiliar with and thus unskilled in discerning and negotiating possibilities for change in church life. But, trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit, discern and change we must, in line with Pope Francis' emphasis on the need for 'synodality'. I look forward to working with the priests, people and Religious of the diocese of Ossory to enhance the work already underway here to develop a sustaining theological and pastoral vision, one able to invite, inform and enthuse a new generation of Christian witnesses.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Monsignor Julien Kabore for his kindness and assistance and Bishop Denis Nulty, the Apostolic Administer, for his kindness and encouragement to me since he learned of my appointment. Finally, a word of thanks to Fr Richard Scriven Adm and all here present this morning ... most especially the Cathedral parishioners and the pupils and students of ...

Téimis ar aghaidh le chéile agus muid lán le muinín. A Mhuire, a Mháthair na hEaglaise, guigh orainne. A Chiarán, A Cheannach agus A Bhríd, guigí orainn.





Our pastoral strategy today
centre on promoting an
enhanced role for ministry
based on the sacrament of
baptism and ever-increasing
co-operation between
parish communities.



The experience of working together as part of a pastoral area can ease the transition towards amalgamation as people build bonds and friendships.



CHURCH MATTERS

Community of communities

Albert McDonnell

Radharc na nOileán Pastoral Area

Our traditional model of ministry and parish structures has its origins in an age when ordinations were abundant and active involvement in our faith communities was almost universal. These realities have long faded but our structures are only now catching up with the changed situation.

Church structures are at the service of pastoral care. The *raison d'être* of parishes, pastoral areas and dioceses is the promotion and living of the gospel and the celebration of the sacraments so that Christ may find a dwelling place in our hearts. These arrangements are not part of divine law. They are a strategy, a choice the Church has

made as part of its mission to live the Gospel and to make Christ known and loved.

Our faith communities are organised around the parish. Our churches are storehouses of memories, sanctuaries of the soul where the ordinary and extraordinary moments of our lives are

celebrated and made sacred. These sacred moments extend from Sunday Mass, to popping in to utter a prayer or light a candle, to baptisms, weddings and funerals. Each moment of intimacy with the Lord binds us to the family of believers and renews our sense of the light that each of us carry in our hearts.

John O'Donohue left us a beautiful reflection on what our local Church means to us:

"The place you have entered is called 'teach an phobail', the house of the people, the place where a community gathers. People have come into this house with burdens of heart that could find healing nowhere else in the world. They have come here for shelter when storms have unravelled every stitch of meaning from their lives. They have come too to give thanks for blessings and gifts received that they could never have earned."

The way we organise ourselves as communities of faith largely determines the future of our parishes and churches. The churches that will survive are the churches that are needed, that are used, that are cared for and that serve a purpose. People sometimes think of the Catholic Church as an enormous, impersonal, international institution of over a billion members. There are elements of truth in that perception, but the beating heart of our Church is the communities of people across the world that gather in prayer each Sunday. Each praying community is a light that illuminates the darkness by providing encouragement, hope and support. It is a blessing to form part of a praying community where people treasure their faith and their church and are generous with their time, talents and resources.

Pope Francis reminds us that we are living through a time of fundamental change. In his words it is not an epoch of change that we are experiencing but

a change of epoch. If we wish to have the flame of faith continue to burn in our hearts and communities we need to reflect, discern and act together. The structures that we created in an era of almost 100% engagement in the life of the Church, numerous vocations to the priesthood and religious life and minimal state regulation no longer serve our needs today. We need to ask which pastoral structures help us to live our faith and which hinder us.

The Vatican II vision of Church requires a large number of people playing active roles if a parish is to be alive and vibrant. Prayerful liturgies require the voice of the priest, where one is available, to be supplemented by many other voices. People are needed to serve on pastoral and finance councils, safeguarding, liturgy, bereavement, music ministry, sacramental preparation groups, sacristy and so on. The pool of available people to fulfil the various roles is often tiny. Attempting to keep all our existing dioceses and parishes afloat is likely to result in many of them becoming hollow structures depending on a small group of dedicated people. The same individuals fulfil multiple roles endangering the maintenance of appropriate standards and risking burn-out.

The recent report prepared by the archdiocese of Dublin contains the following insight:

[We] have choices to make: we can continue on the current path, seeking to maintain existing structures and practices, until a reducing number of priests and an accelerating burden of cost produce increasing gaps, and an accumulation of unplanned changes results in a collapse.

Change is unstoppable. However, we can influence the form that it will take and thereby avoid collapse. Reform that is born of prayer, dialogue and reflection contributes towards

revitalising our Church. We shouldn't be surprised that change and restructuring is needed. Reform is a normal part of the life of any institution, community or indeed person. Christians from the very beginning have identified issues in their life of faith and sought to address them. Oftentimes, there is no obvious way forward, but the prayer and discernment of the community allowed a pathway to be identified. Our response to the new reality, the new epoch that confronts us needs to be inspired by hope rather than regret.

Pouring our diminishing energy into the near impossible task of seeking to preserve all our existing dioceses, parishes, churches and catholic schools is futile. Many but moribund needs to give way to fewer but vibrant. Genuine pastoral conversations are essential if the re-structuring of our parishes is to result in refreshed faith communities. The section of the code of canon law which deals with the restructuring of parishes envisages a great deal of dialogue. A synodal Church treasures the voice and insight of everyone. Many Irish Catholics quickly grow tired of what they perceive as excessive consultation and long for concrete decisions. Nevertheless, just as families discuss issues and reach consensus, so also our faith communities can find the delicate balance needed between process, discernment, decision and action.

Restructuring is complex. Fidelity to the mission given by Christ to his Church and the good of the people are always the most important considerations. In Church law the reasons for the alteration of the boundaries of a particular parish must be specific to that parish. While a bishop is always conscious of the situation pertaining to the whole diocese, he cannot choose parishes at random and decide to amalgamate them. Parishes which are on the cusp of being unable to maintain

normal pastoral structures and comply with civil and canonical requirements are likely to meet the requirements for amalgamation envisaged by Church law.

Pastoral areas may serve as stepping stones towards the necessary reduction in the number of parishes. The experience of working together as part of a pastoral area can ease the transition towards amalgamation as people build bonds and friendships. Nevertheless, the transition from pastoral area to unified parish is no small thing.

The restructuring of our parishes is an opportunity to implement Pope Francis' synodal and missionary vision. Pastoral and finance councils are central to the life of a synodal parish and need to be representative of each community that was formerly an individual parish. The pooling of resources facilitates enhanced standards in the delivery of pastoral care, liturgy, sacramental preparation, governance and compliance. People with a flair for liturgy or sacred music from all the constituent communities could form a central group that would support the celebration of the liturgy in each church. The same could be done for safeguarding and other matters of common interest. Sacramental preparation, particularly for the sacraments of initiation, is usually best provided for in a central location. This will become ever more important as sacramental preparation moves from school to parish.

As our faith draws us ever closer to each other, our Church will evolve and grow as a community of communities.

It reassures us all of God's sustaining presence in times of suffering and pain.



SACRAMENTS MATTER

From 'Last Rites' to a Sacrament of Healing

Monsignor Liam Bergin

Theology Department, Boston College

Healing the sick is central to the ministry of Jesus. The first two chapters of Mark's Gospel alone catalogue the cure of Simon Peter's mother-in-law, the healing of many who were suffering from diseases, the cleansing of a leper, and the raising up a paralytic. Jesus' contemporaries understood illness as a punishment for sin and evil, and they associated sickness with the devil.

Matthew reminds us that Jesus "went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people" (4: 32). Jesus's miraculous cures assure us that God's power and compassion are boundless and that we are all called to have life to the full.

To continue his saving ministry, Jesus gave power and authority to his disciples to cast out unclean spirits and to heal those who were sick by anointing them with oil (Mk 6: 13). The Letter of James describes the early Christian community's outreach to the sick: "Is anyone among you sick?"

He should summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven" (5:14-15). These texts lay the foundation of the Church's care for the sick for its celebration of the Sacrament of the Sick.

Following the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) the texts of all seven sacraments were revised to more faithfully reflect the ministry of Jesus. The new rite of the Sacrament of the Sick made a number of changes. Significantly, the name of the sacrament was changed. Before the Council this sacrament was referred to as "Extreme Unction" or "Last Rites." These names suggested that this was a sacrament given those who were about to die. Instead of joyfully announcing the healing presence of God to the sick person and to his or her family, the sacrament was administered to the moribund with fear and trepidation. Family members frequently delayed the

sacrament until the last possible moment and, on occasion, time ran out and the loved ones died before it was possible to celebrate it. This often compounded the grief and guilt of the family.

Anyone with a serious illness, physical or psychological, is a candidate for the Sacrament of the Sick. This includes those who are weak because of age. The sacrament can also be celebrated with those who are preparing for non-elective surgery. The prayer recognizes the persons' appeal for health in body and soul. It asks that their faith and hope will bring comfort to them and that they, in turn, will be examples to others both of patient suffering and of confidence in God's loving care.

The sacrament should be celebrated as soon as possible at the onset of the weakness or illness so that the healing power of God can sustain the person throughout. The priests of your parish are happy to celebrate this sacrament with you. The celebration can also be a support and consolation to other family members who care for and worry about the sick person. That is why the rite suggests that, when possible, it be celebrated in the prayerful presence of family members and carers. The sacrament can also be received a second time if the persons health deteriorates significantly.

The Sacrament of the Sick is administered by a priest who anoints the person with oil that has been blessed by the bishop at the Chrism Mass during Holy Week. The priest anoints the forehead of the person saying: "Through this anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit. Amen." He then anoints the hands of the person saying, "May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up. Amen." As circumstances allow, the anointing may be preceded by the Sacrament of Penance and a short reading from scripture. It may be followed by the reception of Holy Communion by the sick person and by others who are present.

The Sacrament of the Sick remits sin, including serious sin when the person is unconscious or unable to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance

The sacrament can also be celebrated as a communal service where a number of candidates are individually anointed with holy oil by the priests. In some parishes this happens at a special Mass during Advent or Lent, or around the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, Patroness of the Sick (February 11). These celebrations acknowledge the sick and infirm as members of the church who witness to the power and strength of God in weakness and ill-health.

When a person is in danger of death, the proper sacrament to receive is Holy Communion, received as a small particle of the host as the situation permits. This is called "viaticum", a word that means "provision for the journey." While the phrase "last rites" remains common, it has not been used in any official church document in the past 60 years. Many think that they need a priest to administer last rites when a loved one is dying. They actually need any minister of Holy Communion at a time early enough that the person may receive viaticum. Those who have died are not eligible for the anointing of the sick. The Church has other more appropriate and beautiful prayers for the dead which may be led by anybody, lay or ordained. In the hospital setting, chaplains are prepared to exercise this ministry of commending the dead person to God and of consoling the bereaved.

The Sacrament of the Sick does not always confer a cure but it continually holds out the promise of healing for the person who receives it and for the family who cares for him or her. It reassures us all of God's sustaining presence in times of suffering and pain. It reminds us that we are all called to share the fullness of God's life forever.

... we remembered those who travelled
with us on our last pilgrimage ...

Ballyhale Parish Pilgrimage to Knock

16th-17th July 2022

Frank Aylward

Ballyhale Parish Council Member

Down through the years the parishioners of Ballyhale travelled to Knock on the special pilgrimage day for Carmelites. Although Ballyhale is no longer a Carmelite parish, this tradition has been upheld.

Prior to Covid, we travelled on our first overnight pilgrimage, expertly organised by Frank and Mary Aylward. Due to parishioner interest and its success, we were delighted to return to Knock this year on the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

On a beautiful sunny morning, our pilgrimage started with an early pick up in Ballyhale before continuing onto Knocktopher, collecting our pilgrims from Dunnamaggin, Aghaviller, Mullinavat, Thomastown, Abbeyleix and Ballyragget. A special wheelchair bus driven by our volunteer driver Ellen also travelled, thanks to the generosity of Frank & Mary Aylward. The itinerary for the weekend was distributed, along with name tags, prayer and hymn leaflets. We were also supplied with water and soft drinks to keep us hydrated on the journey.

All were welcomed by the leader of the pilgrimage, Fr. Seán O'Connor P.P. Ballyhale. During our Rosary and prayers on the journey, we remembered those who travelled with us on our last pilgrimage but have since gone to their eternal rest. We also prayed for two Ballyhale parishioners, Bobby and Mary, who had passed away a few days previously.

We stopped in the Bridge House Hotel, Tullamore to enjoy a buffet breakfast and with a two hour journey to Knock still to complete, some of us had a nap on the bus! As we approached Knock, we continued with prayers and finishing with a special prayer to Our Lady.

Arriving slightly behind schedule at the Knockhouse Hotel, we were kindly met by hotel staff and assigned our rooms followed by a lovely light lunch. We were then free to do our own personal pilgrimage before regrouping at the Apparition Church where Fr. O'Connor celebrated Mass. The readings were read by Helen and the prayers read by Kay and Lily. John assisted as Eucharistic



Ballyhale, Knocktopher and Knockmoylan Pilgrimage to Knock Shrine, 16th July 2022. Celebrants Fr Sean O'Connor and Fr Robert McCabe.

Minister and the choir was led by Susan and John. Afterwards, group photos were taken and we then convened for dinner with those having a little energy left afterwards, partaking in some music and dancing.

Following breakfast the next morning, we scattered in different directions to visit the various churches; pray at the Apparition Wall; receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation; pray the Stations of the Cross and not forgetting to obtain Mass Cards for our Sick and Deceased relatives and friends.

Our main Mass took place at 3 p.m. in the Basilica, with the blessing of the sick beforehand. We were honoured to have Gloria Kolodziej, a young parishioner read

the Second Reading. Mass concluded with a procession.

Many of us then rushed back to the hotel to see the second half of the All-Ireland but unfortunately we didn't get the desired result! We boarded the buses for the long journey home stopping in Tullamore where a lovely dinner was had.

We arrived back in Ballyhale having had a lovely quiet and spiritual weekend. We look forward greatly please God to our 2023 pilgrimage.

A very special thank you to Fr. O'Connor, Frank and Mary Aylward, our bus drivers and our local businesses who sponsored the successful weekend.

To be Christian is to live modestly – and, as it happens, such a life will also save our common home.

Give me a crash course in ... Climate Change and COP 27



MORALITY MATTERS

Michael Shortall

Christmas is here again. It comes around so quickly.

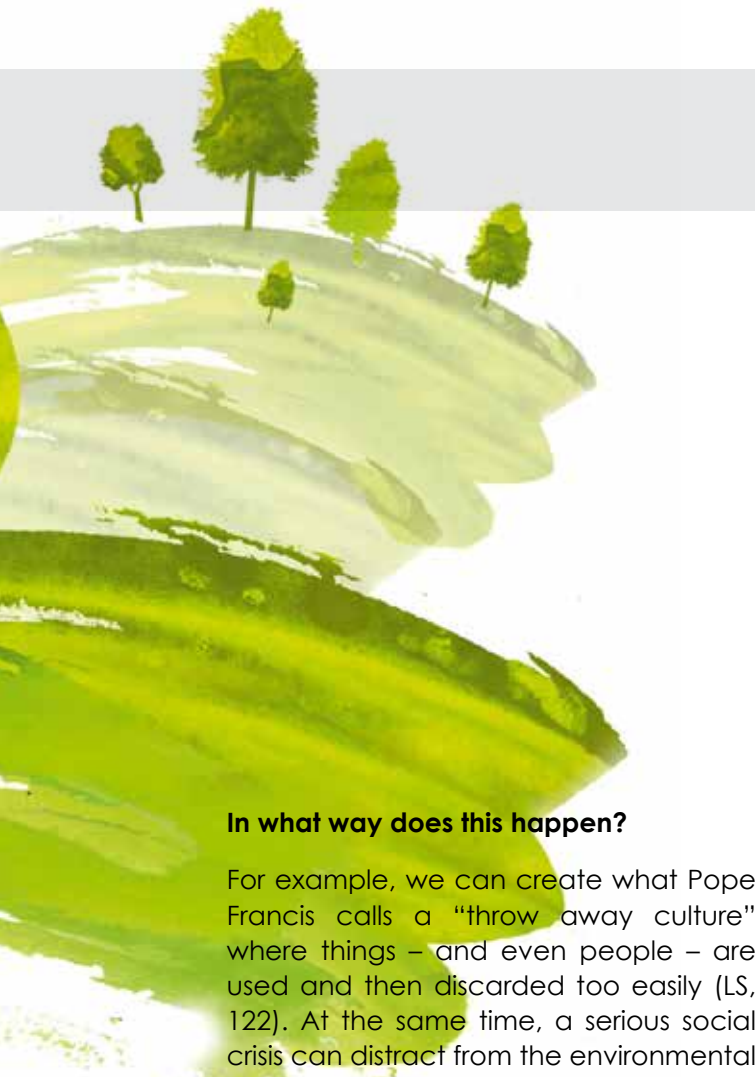
There is much to enjoy at this time of year: family and friends, free time, and a chance to reflect.

I wonder if we will get a white Christmas this year.

It would be nice to have a little cover of snow. Yet, many will be hoping that winter this year is not too harsh. Energy costs are pushing up the price of everything. Understandably, many people are worried about their home heating bills.

After a global pandemic, we now have the effects of war in Ukraine. And in the background is the continuing crisis of climate change.

Pope Francis says that they are all interlinked. In 2015, he wrote a letter to and for the world, called *Laudato Si*, which means 'Praise be'. It is about caring for our common home. Reflecting on all our challenges he wrote, "We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental." (LS, 139)



In what way does this happen?

For example, we can create what Pope Francis calls a “throw away culture” where things – and even people – are used and then discarded too easily (LS, 122). At the same time, a serious social crisis can distract from the environmental problems. For instance, the urgent crisis of war can steal our attention from longer term problems that future generations will have to face.

But wasn't there an important conference on climate change earlier this year?

Yes, in Egypt. It was called COP 27. It is a regular ‘conference of the parties’ who have signed up to a United Nations deal on climate change.

What came out of it?

Well, the results were mixed. On one hand, progress was made on creating a ‘loss and damage’ fund for poorer countries who must face consequences of climate change, like flooding, drought, and erosion. On the other hand, very little progress was made on how to cut the emissions and pollutants that are causing the extremes in the weather.

What can we do?

Part of the answer is at governmental level. For example, we need to change the sources of our energy from fossil fuels to sustainable sources. Not only will it cut pollution, but it will also mean more control on our heating bills that are so easily affected by social crises like the war in Ukraine. The other part of the answer is what we can do as individuals, families, and communities.

Such as?

In the end, it is a matter of our lifestyle. As Pope Francis also said “Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience.” (LS, 217) Each of us has a responsibility to look to look to what we buy, and eat, and use, so that our actions are more friendly to the environment.

I said Pope Francis wrote a letter called *Laudato Si*. It is worth reading. But perhaps you might prefer a short film instead. It is called ‘The Letter’. It tells the story of a journey to Rome of frontline leaders to discuss *Laudato Si* with Pope Francis. The conversation with the Pope, included in the film, offers a revealing insight into the personal history of Pope Francis and stories never seen since he became the Bishop of Rome. You can see it for free by going to the website: <https://www.theletterfilm.org/watch/> It is very much worth watching.

Sounds like a plan for the Christmas.

At Christmas, we celebrate the birth of Jesus, who is Emmanuel, or God is with us. In Jesus, God became human in a setting that could not be more humble. By choosing a stable, God gives value to simplicity. To be Christian is to live modestly – and, as it happens, such a life will also save our common home.

Happy Christmas to all the readers of the *Ossory Times*.



The farewell has been made, but the thanksgiving endures.

The Carmelites in Knocktopher

Geraldine Carey

Prayers said and fast broken, the friars stood and gazed at the valley below them. It had taken them days to walk over the hills from their ship in New Ross, to Kiltorcan, where they now stood in the early morning light. Looking down upon that fertile valley, they saw the glint of water in the sunlight, wisps of smoke from the dwellings of tenant farmers preparing for their day, heard the birds singing and the bells of Jerpoint Abbey ringing out, and decided that here was where they would stay.

Thus began, in the early 1300's, a relationship that was to endure, for nearly 700 years. How the Carmelite Friars chose their site at Knocktopher Abbey, how their life of prayer and community became rooted in the locality, how their number expanded in those early years, is not documented. By 1356, however, they had become sufficiently integrated for

James, 2nd Earl of Ormond, to grant the establishment of St. Saviour's Convent at Knocktopher. The wedding of James's daughter, Johanna, to Lord Kerry, took place there in 1374, so, by then, it was clearly a place of prestige, as well as an integral part of the lives of the local community.

The Carmelites had dispersed, around the time of the Crusades, from their original hermitage on Mount Carmel in Palestine,

where they had shared a life of prayer. The ministry of Jesus is the ministry of love and the Order has, over the centuries and all over the world, worked with, and for, the people, in love and in prayer. They ministered to their spiritual needs, shared their griefs and joys through the sacraments and rituals, also ministered to the sick, and worked in schools and universities. This was so in Knocktopher, uninterrupted for nearly 200 years and barely interrupted - and perhaps reinforced - by the dispossession of the Abbey under Henry VIII's

Suppression Acts of 1540. The friars then became homeless, but maintained a presence in the environs of Knocktopher, amongst their people, evidenced by this Mass Rock, now in the grounds of the Friary in Knocktopher. It came from Roman's Valley, a natural amphitheatre in the countryside between, as it states, Carrickshock and Hugginstown.

The Irish Province Historical Collection includes a chalice dated 1571, the inscription reading that it was used "by the fathers to say Mass in the Caves and Mountains".

An attempt, in 1645, to reoccupy the Abbey - then being used as an alehouse - was brutally repelled. An appeal to Papal Nuncio Rinuccini, under the Confederation of Kilkenny, was negated by the invasion of Oliver Cromwell in 1649,

dashing any hopes of returning to St. Saviour's Convent.

Tradition states that, in the late 1600's, the Friars managed to keep a small chapel and house at Rathlugh. They eventually moved back to the village in 1740 and remained there for a further 277 years, starting with a small chapel and house to the front of the current church.

They ministered to the dead and dying after the Battle of Carrickshock in 1831. Daniel O'Connell is believed to have stayed in the Friary during the weeks following the skirmish, while preparing his case for the defence of the accused.

In 1843 the new church was dedicated, said to have been built several years earlier by the people, with stone quarried and drawn to Knocktopher in a single day.

The College of the Immaculate Conception was established in 1852 and, such was the academic standard achieved there, in 1875 it became affiliated to the Catholic University of Ireland. Latin, Greek, English and French were taught, with a further paid option for music and singing. Some of the first pupils were antecedents of families still living in Knocktopher. The college closed in 1899, replaced by institutions such as St. Kieran's College, but the building later became known by the community as the "old hall."

During the 1930's, the Very Reverend Fr. Elias O'Dwyer introduced vocational classes for men and women in the old hall. Fond memories abound of the Fife and Drum Band that practiced there, of whist drives, bingo, table tennis, dances, as well as Irish dancing lessons for the schoolchildren. Under the benign Friars, this was a genuine community hall, having a book borrowing facility, enabled by local volunteers, as well as one of the earliest television sets in the area, with the stove lit in early winter afternoons.

The new hall, built to act as a temporary church while the church was being renovated, replaced the old hall in the

1950's.. The first dance took place there on the 1st of January 1959, with music provided by Billy Dwyer and his band. It took Knocktopher into the modern world of show bands, cinema- amateur and regular - Maxi, Dick and Twink and Ireland's earliest "music festival," in June 1972, when Horslips played to a large crowd that packed the hall, escaping inside from the rain.

The annual summer fête regularly saw crowds swarming to the village for hurling matches, dances, soccer five-asides, the spinner, swinging-boats, chip vans and myriad stalls and attractions. Young and old came from far and near, to participate in the various events, or help out organising, stewarding, or buttering bread for sandwiches, to feed the hungry.

The church, renovated during the 1950's, continued as the spiritual focal point for the people of Knocktopher. Daily and weekly masses, the solemn rituals of Christmas and Easter, funeral and wedding masses, all filled the church with the local faithful. It was a meeting place, a sanctuary, a place of celebration of life and the focus that drew and held the community together. In 1934, on the 16th of July, the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, celebrations were held to commemorate the centenary of the building of the church.

A general holiday was declared in December 1935, when the Carmelite Prior General visited Knocktopher.

The 16th of July was an important day in Knocktopher and every year the people gathered and a solemn and devout procession was held through the garden, led by the prior and the fathers, halting to pray at each shrine.

From Henry Brown in 1365 to Fr. Bene O'Callaghan in 2017, the personalities and preferences of individual priors were reflected in the atmosphere and activities of the community. Consider William of St. Patrick, the prior who did his heroic best to recover possession of Knocktopher Abbey

in 1645; the prior who supervised, in 1907, the brief transfer of the Carmelite novitiate from Terenure College to Knocktopher; the prior who began vocational classes; Fr. Hehir, whose peacock woke the neighbours on a summer morning, much earlier than they appreciated; the prior who set up youth clubs and drama groups; the prior who took over parish duties in the 1970's; the prior who facilitated the young men in the village to organise what, effectively, was a rock concert; Fr. O'Gara, who brought the Charismatic movement to the parish; Fr. Keogh, who presided over the reception, in Knocktopher, of the relics of St. Thérèse - there is not room here to remember them as they deserve to be remembered, as with the many individual priests who lived there over the centuries and left the community with unforgettable memories, of a sacred as well as of a social nature. They were men of piety and great learning, sometimes stern or austere, but also kind, good-humoured, living their daily lives with the people, members of the entire extended family.

One prior in particular, Fr. Anthony Heaslip, deserves special mention. While he shared the best attributes of all the other priors, he had the distinction of being the first prior to take over the duties of Parish Priest. He was also a Knocktopher man, born and bred in the

village. He travelled the parish to the furthest corners, in borrowed blue Volkswagen or grey Cortina, and brought young people in to the youth club, discos, to paint the hall in Ballyhale. He also brought older people, to plays and films and the annual fête, as well as to events further afield. He was a member of the Heaslip family, cornerstones of Knocktopher and its hinterland for generations. His sister had been the district midwife, his brother, Denis, had hurred for Kilkenny and the family shop in Knocktopher was a unique institution, as much a place for social gathering and debate as it was for local commerce and where you could buy anything, from a newspaper and a bar of

chocolate, to a tin of paint, a pair of wellies or, even, a replacement fluorescent light-bulb at 11.30 p.m. on Christmas Eve.

Fr. Anthony's energy and enthusiasm were infectious and he galvanised the entire parish, to the benefit of every parishioner, creating a living community in a way that no other prior could have done, carrying his faith and his smiling good-humour with him everywhere he went.

Times change and, over the years, dwindling numbers of vocations, as well as the health and age profile of the priests, led to the sad announcement, in 2017, of the departure of the Carmelites from Knocktopher. The last three friars, Fr. Lar Lynch, Fr. Philip Brennan and, the last prior of Knocktopher and last Carmelite Parish Priest of Ballyhale Parish, Fr. Bene O'Callaghan, prepared to say farewell.

It was a shock. A relationship begun over six and a half centuries previously, the enduring backdrop to the lives of the people of Knocktopher, as well as to those of the people of the parish and hinterland, was to suddenly and unexpectedly come to an end.

After the shock came grief, genuine upset, expressions of affection and the gathering of mental strength for the departure. The decision had been well considered, was resolute.

The Mass of Thanksgiving and Farewell was celebrated on November 26th 2017, with great love and great sadness. The farewell has been made, but the thanksgiving endures. The story of the Carmelites will always be inextricably interwoven with the story of Knocktopher and its people.

I wish to acknowledge the invaluable support of David Rice, who supplied the research notes and read and critiqued the various drafts. I wish also to acknowledge and thank Laura Magnier, archivist at the Carmelite Archive at Gort Muire, Dundrum, Dublin 14.



We can glorify the past and worry about the future but we can only live in the present and leave the rest to a loving God.

Sisters of Mercy, Ossory 1872-2022

Maria Comerford



On December 3rd the Sisters of Mercy celebrated 150 years in the Diocese of Ossory. The Sisters came to Callan from Convent of Mercy, Athy, in November 1872 at the invitation of Bishop Patrick Moran. A few months later, in February 1873, another group of Sisters of Mercy came to Borris-in-Ossory from Alton, in the diocese of Birmingham. During the intervening 150 years they have ministered in many towns throughout the diocese and beyond.

At the time of the arrival of the sisters Callan parish was in turmoil. A dispute had arisen between the parish priest, Fr Robert O'Keeffe, and Bishop Edward Walsh concerning, among other things, the provision of education in the town. Parishioners took sides resulting in great bitterness and eventually the parish was placed under interdict. Into this turmoil the Sisters of Mercy arrived in 1872, equally welcomed and unwelcomed by the parishioners. They immediately set about visiting the homes of the poor, sick

and elderly and were invited to minister in the Callan Workhouse.

In January 1873 the sisters took charge of the female and infant school in the town and set up St. Anne's Pay School – the fees from St. Anne's to support the infant school. From these small beginnings education in Callan grew through primary school to secondary top (primary schools which taught subjects to secondary level) to secondary school until present times when the town has a coeducational primary school, Bunscoil McAuleyRice, and a coeducational secondary school, Colaiste Abhainn Ri, both built on the endeavours of the Christian Brothers and the Sisters of Mercy and now in the capable hands of schools trust bodies, ERST and CEIST. The sisters in Borris-in-Ossory taught to Leaving Cert level until 1991.

The first foray out of Callan was to the Kilkenny Workhouse in 1875. The workhouse eventually evolved into St. Luke's Hospital where the sisters served officially until 2008. A convent was established in Thomastown in 1891 and in Ballyragget in 1909. Both of these communities established primary schools which in time incorporated secondary tops. When the sisters in Ballyragget vacated the original convent for a smaller building in 1997 the convent became the location of the newly established Aislinn Adolescent Treatment Centre.

As with most religious congregations established in Ireland in the 18th and 19th Centuries the primary objective of the Sisters of Mercy was care for people in need and in all the foundations that has been a priority. The establishment of Ossory Social Services by Bishop Peter Birch in the 1960s provided a framework for many of the activities of the sisters such as home visitation, adoption services, homeless services and many other ministries within the diocese.

A unique project was the setting up of a "Missionary School" in 1884. The purpose

of the school was the preparation of young women for entry to different religious orders all over the, mostly, English-speaking world. By the time the school closed in 1959 it had been attended by almost 2000 candidates. The building then evolved into St. Brigid's Boarding School.

In 1884 Bishop Moran was appointed Archbishop of Sydney and soon after his arrival in Australia asked the sisters in Callan to send a foundation to join him there. The Callan community had now grown to 24 and nine sisters were selected to form the new community. After six weeks travel aboard The Cuzco they arrived in Sydney and set down roots in Parramatta in November 1888 where they serve to this day.

In the mid 1950s a new call arrived. Bishop Fergus O'Grady OMI had been appointed to the new diocese of Prince George in British Columbia and made an appeal for sisters to join him on the mission there. Five sisters formed the pioneer group and over the following 40 years 48 sisters served for varying lengths of time in Prince George diocese. Stories of snow and black bears filled the folks at home with a mixture of envy and relief!

One hundred and fifty years have passed. Our numbers have decreased and our average age has increased. Sincere thanks to all who have befriended us, collaborated with us, supported us, laughed and cried with us over those years. We can glorify the past and worry about the future but we can only live in the present and leave the rest to a loving God.



Homily of Bishop Denis Nulty, Apostolic Administrator of Ossory

Celebration of 150 years of the Mercy Sisters in Ossory

Convent of Mercy, Callan ,3rd December 2022

The historian Eamon Duffy reminds us "every human community needs to recall its beginnings, to memorialize the ancestors, to celebrate its achievements".² Any celebration of a Mercy community, a Mercy foundation, a Mercy presence needs to start at the very beginning with Catherine McAuley. She was declared Venerable in 1990 by Pope John Paul II. The Irish State depicted her image on the £5 note. She was a contemporary of Charles Dickens and the Brontes and of course the founder of a very large religious congregation.

Catherine was born into a wealthy Catholic family in the Dublin of 1778, it was from her dad that the young Catherine was nourished with a love for the poor and a desire that they should receive some instruction, some education. By the age of twenty, both her parents were dead, her older siblings not practicing, she went to live with a Protestant couple, the Callaghan's, whom she cared for right up to their deaths. Inspired by her example they both converted just before they died. Through these years her own vocation was being quietly nurtured. When the Callaghan's died, their estate passed onto her, and she used that money to build Baggot Street, becoming a home for young women and orphans. She received permission to found a Religious Order from the Archbishop of Dublin, she was anxious that the work in Baggot Street would continue.

And the 'Sisters of Mercy' were born, emphasising how the works of mercy

would become the distinctive charism of this new congregation. Catherine understood that this new congregation needed structures and governance and in order to attain same, she with two friends entered the formation programme of the Presentation Sisters to formally prepare for their life as women religious.

I appreciate that this is a very potted incomplete history of the foundation that ultimately led here to Callan, and a year later to Borris-in-Ossory and later to Kilkenny (St. Luke's), to Thomastown, to Ballyragget, to Parramatta and to British Columbia. Catherine McAuley would have been dead thirty-one years before those pioneering sisters arrived here to Callan from Athy. Such were the exertions and demands of those early years on Catherine that she died at the age of 63 from tuberculosis in 1841 but leaving behind a legacy on which the Mercy Congregation today stands and indeed it's what brings us here this afternoon.

St. John's Gospel reminds us we have been chosen and commissioned to bear fruit, fruit that will last. Essentially it is an invitation to love: "love one another, as I have loved you"³. Pope Francis reminds us God's name is Mercy, mercy is showing others the face of God. He reminds us that mercy is a culture of encounter. People today continue to call out for that quality of 'mercy'. We don't just need hand-outs, we need to meet people face to face, to encounter one another and in doing so to meet Christ. We need a caring society that is characterised by a loving and

caring people who embrace the other not just in his or her gifts or talents but in their vulnerabilities, in their brokenness and in their pain.

And so to that moment those visionary pioneering sisters first set foot in Callan. Did they know where their foot was landing? Bishop Moran was still only a few months ordained Bishop of Ossory. It was the young Bishops attempt to heal the hurts and divisions caused by the suspended Parish Priest of the day, Fr. O'Keeffe, hurts and divisions that were becoming more acrimonious every passing day.

Moran's connections with the Mercy Sisters were pivotal in seeing his request acceded to in Athy. While O'Keeffe had hoped to attract Sisters from the South of France for the same education project, this plan failed because of the tensions between himself and Moran's predecessor Bishop Walsh. So the Sisters I imagine would have been uncertain of the welcome they might get in Callan as they took up residence in Callan Lodge, but the welcome in the main was there and in time all things heal, even the most public of ecclesiastical and clerical spats that found their way to Congregations in Rome.

While the Mercy contribution to the work in education across Ossory is well known and appreciated, the Sisters did not confine their ministry to the classroom. Their work was woven into the very fabric of society, into areas forgotten or neglected by the State and its welfare system. I speak of orphanages, social work, prison outreach, environmental awareness and parish ministry to mention but a few. Basically see a need and respond to it. Sr. Assumpta reminds us Mother Michaels reliance on God's goodness and providence seemed to keep their momentum up, despite numerous setbacks, those words that "God will provide"⁴. And He has provided allowing His face of Mercy to be seen by countless and for this all of us in Ossory and in Callan this afternoon are most grateful.

I finish with the prayer associated with Saint Oscar Romero, it perhaps best captures the Mercy charism:

"It helps, now and then, to step back and take the long view.

The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts; it is even beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.

Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying that the kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said. No prayer fully expresses our faith. No confession brings perfection. No pastoral visit brings wholeness. No program accomplishes the church's mission. No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about.

We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water the 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.

We cannot do everything and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something and to do it well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.

We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.

We are prophets of a future not our own".⁵

2 Duffy, Eamon: 'Walking to Emmaus', Burnes & Oates, 2006, pg. 26

3 Jn.13:34

4 Saunders, Sr. Assumpta: 'Weaving a Thread through the First Fifty Years 1872-1922', Sisters of Mercy, Callan, 2021, pg. 239.

5 This prayer while called the Oscar Romero Prayer was composed by Bishop Ken Untener for Cardinal Dearden for a homily in 1979.

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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In Godly Play we use beautiful materials to tell the story of God from creation all the way to the Old Testament stories through to the birth of Jesus and Jesus's life.

Gemma Mulligan

Godly Play is a form of spiritual guidance for children. It uses storytelling to allow children to explore their own spirituality and wonder about the mysterious presence of God in their lives. During these past months every few weeks the families that gathered for Sunday Mass in St Fiacre's Church Loughboy had an opportunity to experience Godly Play.

Godly Play ... I wonder?



Almost a year ago a group of interested adults began meeting to explore ways to involve families more and especially children in the Sunday liturgy.

These liturgies are a little more child centred and music and songs familiar to children is used encouraging to participate. During the Liturgy of the Word, all the children are invited to gather for a Godly Play story in a prepared space outside of the main body of the church.

They have come in huge numbers during the past few months to hear about



Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca and the Great Family, Noah and The Great Flood and the Advent story where we all journeyed to Bethlehem with the Prophets, the Holy Family, The Shepherds and the Magi to come close to the Mystery of Christmas.

In Godly Play we use beautiful materials to tell the story of God from creation all the way to the Old Testament stories through to the birth of Jesus and Jesus's life. Godly Play also uses materials to tell the story of the church and how we worship. The children are greeted at the door and

then enter in to the space where the gather in a circle, which helps to build community. The story teller is simply one person in the circle with the children. We all come closer to the mystery of God together.

After the story the children wonder about it with their thoughts and words, then create things during their response time. There is a 'feast' and we pray together. On the Sunday mornings in the parish we don't have enough time for the whole experience of Godly Play to happen but the children are experiencing the stories and there is some time to wonder. The children are able to put themselves in the stories and develop a language of faith and hopefully over time make new friends in their Godly Play community.

The small group of volunteers in the Parish with Fr. Peter have worked hard to invite and welcome children and their families to an experience of Sunday Mass that is focused on the children's participation and aims to give them an experience of liturgy where they have a role to play. After mass they gather again with their parents and grandparents for some hospitality provided again by the parish and by volunteers.

Godly Play was originally intended for Parishes but it can and does happen in many different settings with not only children but with adults also. Throughout the country Godly Play is told in primary schools, in parishes after school or on Sundays as well as in nursing homes and other parish groups of adults such as baptism teams and parents of children preparing for sacraments. It has also happened on line when during the lockdowns families were able to gather to hear the story of God from their own homes. Some stories are available on www.ossory.ie. If you are interested in bringing Godly Play to your parish or school or would like to know more about Godly Play contact Gemmamulligan@ossory.ie

[we] welcomed this review as a tool not only to evaluate but also to support the great commitment to safeguarding that exists in Ossory

Diocese of Ossory Review of Child Safeguarding Practice undertaken by the NBSCCCI

Dermot Ryan



THE NATIONAL BOARD FOR
SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN
IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN IRELAND

Over the past months here in the Diocese of Ossory we have undergone an independent review of our safeguarding practices in the Parishes and Diocese. This independent review was undertaken at our request so as to ensure that we are doing over very best with regard to safeguarding practices in the Diocese. The review, in its entirety, is now being made available for all in the Diocese to read.

We thank those many volunteers involved during this review, those on the Safeguarding Committee in the Diocese and our Director of Safeguarding for the manner in which they welcomed this review as a tool not only to evaluate but also to support the great commitment to safeguarding that exists in Ossory - work that ensures all are safe in our parishes and church communities.

The following is the full review.

Background

The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (National Board) was established in 2006

- To provide advice, services and assistance in furtherance of the development of the safeguarding of children within the Roman Catholic Church on the Island of Ireland;
- To monitor compliance with legislation, policy and best practice; and
- To report on these activities as is comprehensively set out in the Memorandum of Association of the Company.

Church authorities who have entered into an agreement with the National Board through signing a Memorandum of Understanding have committed to following Safeguarding Children - Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016.

In order to assess compliance with the 2016 Standards, the Apostolic Administrator of Ossory Diocese, Bishop Denis Nulty invited the National Board to undertake a review of child safeguarding practice in 2022. The diocese was previously reviewed in June 2013 under the Safeguarding Children - Standards and Guidance for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2008. The report of the first Review can be found on the Ossory Diocese website www.ossory.ie and on the National Board's website, www.safeguarding.ie/publications

The recommendations from this first Review are available on the diocesan website at <https://ossory.ie/safeguarding-audits/>, along with statements about their implementation.

Recommendation 1:

The safeguarding committee should consider in their next revision of diocesan policy and procedures, a template which follows the seven safeguarding standards and which sets out how the diocese manages those who pose a risk to children.

Revision of the diocesan policy and procedures document is currently underway and will be ready for publication by Spring 2015.

Recommendation 2:

Bishop Freeman must ensure that old case management files are reorganised using a chronological system. The practice of using the NBSCCCI case file template should continue for all new cases.

A person has been assigned to this task and secure office space has been allocated in order to carry out reorganisation of old case management files.

Recommendation 3:

Bishop Freeman, having reviewed the case referred by the reviewers must now ensure that the recommendations of the National Case Management Reference Group (NCMRG) have been followed.

Work Completed

Recommendation 4:

Prior to issuing certificates and/or letters of good standing for priests from the diocese, but not ministering in the diocese, Bishop Freeman should read all relevant records and make appropriate enquiries from the Church authority of where the priest is ministering to ensure that there are no matters of concern relating to priests of his diocese.

This recommendation has been taken and will be adhered to at all times.

Recommendation 5:

As part of restructuring of old files into chronological order, Bishop Freeman should ask his designated person to detail all information relating to named victims and ensure that all these details are passed to the civil authorities for their investigations.

This is currently a work in progress (See recommendation 2)

Recommendation 6:

Bishop Freeman should consider appointing a part time layperson to the role of designated person and case manager to ensure there is no conflict of interest and to deal with cases from start to finish.

Two new Designated Liaison persons have been recently appointed. They will receive training from the NBSCCCI early in 2015.

Recommendation 7:

The safeguarding coordinator must review all procedures within the diocese to ensure they set out how each aspect of Standard 3 is met.

Parish audits have been conducted throughout the diocese and compliance to diocesan policy and procedures has been found to be good.

A review audit will be conducted in Spring / Summer 2015.

Recommendation 8:

The safeguarding coordinator should continue to meet all safeguarding representatives and parish priests on a regular basis to provide them with a written role description for the safeguarding representative and offer support for their role as safeguarding representatives.

This is an ongoing procedure in the Diocese.

Recommendation 9:

The chair of the safeguarding committee should, alongside all committee members draft a committee constitution and annual work plan for presentation to Bishop Freeman.

A safeguarding committee constitution has been drawn up.

Recommendation 10:

The safeguarding coordinator, in consultation with Bishop Freeman and the safeguarding committee should develop a communications plan stating how safeguarding will be promoted throughout the diocese. Consideration should be given to having a safeguarding newsletter, identifying one Sunday in the year to highlight the importance of Safeguarding in the Church, and by issuing regular pastoral letters.

New safeguarding literature for children/young people, parents and the general public has been produced and was circulated to all parishes for Safeguarding Sunday, which took place on 1st Sunday in Advent, 30th November 2014.

Child friendly posters for sacristies have also been produced. Information has been provided for inclusion in Parish Newsletters.

Recommendation 11:

Bishop Freeman in consultation with his designated persons should clarify role descriptions for those involved in the management of allegations and the subsequent safety plans.

See Diocesan Structures

The purpose of this second round of Reviews is to assess child-safeguarding practice against the Catholic Church in Ireland's current standards as detailed in Safeguarding Children - Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016. The Review seeks a level and quality of evidence to provide:

- Public confidence that the Church body is safe for children.
- Affirmation to child safeguarding personnel that they are doing the right things well.
- Confirmation to the Church authority that what they want to be done is in fact being done.
- Independent verification of Self-Audit – or correction and/or improvement of Self-Audit.
- Opportunities for learning.

Introduction

The Diocese of Ossory is in the ecclesiastical province of Dublin. The diocese covers an area of approximately 935 square kilometres (361 Square Miles), comprising the county of Kilkenny, and portions of County Laois and County Offaly. The diocese has approximately 86,115 Catholic residents across 42 parishes. Bishop Denis Nulty of Kildare and Leighlin Diocese was appointed as Apostolic Administrator in February 2021, following the elevation of his predecessor to become the Archbishop of Dublin.

A detailed history of the Diocese of Ossory can be accessed at <https://ossory.ie/history-of-the-diocese/>

The diocese has fifty-seven (57) incardinated priests, of whom thirteen (13) are retired. One (1) priest is living and working outside the diocese; and one (1) priest is out of ministry.

There are eight (8) congregations of Religious Sisters based within the diocese, and five (5) male Religious Orders.

The period covered by this Review is from July 2013 to March 2022, and so it has considered all child protection cases reported to the diocese during this time-period, as well as cases reported earlier and still being managed at the time of the Review.

Child safeguarding practice is assessed against Safeguarding Children 2016, which is accessible at <https://www.safeguarding.ie/guidance>.

Strand 6 of the current Ossory Diocese Pastoral Plan states that one goal of the plan is

To provide support for the area of Child Safeguarding at Diocesan level by continuing to develop the area of child safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure best practice in this area.

Process of Review

The Ossory Diocese Review was commenced and undertaken during a time when some government restrictions in relation to Covid-19 continued to be in place. Nevertheless, the co-operation of all concerned ensured the reviewers obtained a comprehensive picture of safeguarding practice in the diocese. The fieldwork was conducted on March 21 and 22, 2022. The following is a list of those with whom the reviewers came into contact during the course of this Review:

- Apostolic Administrator of Diocese
- Priest Secretary to the Apostolic Administrator
- Director of Safeguarding/Designated Person
- Vetting Administrator / Trainer / former Director of Safeguarding
- Diocesan Secretary
- Diocesan Safeguarding Committee
- Diocesan Youth Ministry
- Ossory Diocesan Pastoral Council Coordinator
- Safeguarding Trainers
- Lourdes Youth Pilgrimage Organisers
- A respondent priest
- Priest Advisor
- A complainant
- Complainant Support Person
- Parish Priests
- Parish Organiser of Children's Liturgy
- Parish Safeguarding Representatives
- Altar Servers
- Youth choir members
- Sacristans
- Parish Administrator

The reviewers appreciated the warm welcome and hospitality extended to them by diocesan personnel and noted the extensive preparation and organisation undertaken in advance of this review.

STANDARDS

This section provides the findings of the Review. The template employed to present the findings are the seven standards, set down and described in the Church guidance, Safeguarding Children: Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016. Ossory diocese agreed to adopt Safeguarding Children 2016 as its child safeguarding policy through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in 2016.

The review concentrated on safeguarding arrangements and practice through evaluating written records, meetings with Church personnel, and communication with young people, statutory agencies, a complainant and a priest advisor.

An assessment of practice under each standard is set out below.

Standard 1 - Creating and Maintaining Safe Environments

Church bodies provide an environment for children that are welcoming, nurturing and safe. They provide access to good role models whom the children can trust, who respect, protect and enhance their spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual and social development.

The Diocese of Ossory has a Safeguarding Statement on its website at <https://ossory.ie/safeguarding-documents/> and displayed in parish churches, as required by Children First, 2015.

The Diocese has procedures in place for safe recruitment of both paid staff and volunteers. A recruitment checklist is completed for all recruitment exercises. An application process for volunteers is in place, including references and vetting, together with safeguarding training. One parish visited has developed an excellent support pack for volunteers, which included an informative Safeguarding Booklet.

Vetting is completed every three years. This information is held on a central database, updated by a diocesan vetting administrator. Vetting of all relevant personnel is up to date. The database was seen as part of the fieldwork. Parishes have up to date details of staff and volunteers, including vetting/training completed, which was evidenced during parish site visits.

Garda Vetting Statistics

Year	Clergy	Parishes	Schools	Lourdes	Diocesan
2016-17	62	164	818	28	5
2018	5	178	470	12	6
2019	2	153	539	7	10
2020	58	79	466	-	-
2021	8	14	414	-	3
2022	1	2	110	-	-

The Diocese of Ossory has an excellent up to date Safeguarding Children Parish Handbook, which is available on the website, supplemented by hard copies in parish offices. The handbook covers the procedural and practice areas required by the National Board Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016.

Good examples of 'Codes of Behaviour & Conduct' for altar servers and choirs were shared with the reviewers. The young people themselves completed a code of behaviour for young people attending the choir.

Parishes visited had clearly displayed posters and leaflets about safeguarding at church entrances and in sacristies. These included particularly child-friendly material, which was clear and accessible. All material seen displayed up-to-date contact details of the relevant named person. Privacy and web-cam notices were displayed at church entrances.

The Safeguarding Children Parish Handbook has a Record Keeping and Safe Storage section, (1.17). All case management files are in locked storage. The vetting administrator securely stores vetting information.

There was evidence of completed registration forms for altar servers in the sacristies of the churches visited.

The reviewers had an opportunity to meet with a group of experienced Sacristans who were aware of their safeguarding responsibilities. They also understood their supervision role with children and young people, importantly including personal care arrangements.

The Sacristans reported that they worked as a team and received support in their role from the local safeguarding representative, the Parish Priests and the Director of Safeguarding. Their vetting and training was up to date, and the Sacristans understood and shared the importance of refresher training in keeping up-to-date with safeguarding requirements and practice. The Sacristans are to be commended for their support and care to children and young people. They also provided an excellent example of the Church community's embrace of a proactive and positive culture of safeguarding.

Supervision arrangements are in place for altar servers and in other youth activities, including choir and pantomime rehearsals. Adult volunteers are vetted, and they receive safeguarding training. Registration forms and incident reports are completed as required.

During the Review, reviewers met with three young people who confirmed their knowledge of safeguarding arrangements. The young people shared that they felt safe attending Church activities and they knew whom they could talk to about any safeguarding concerns, including bullying. They looked forward to the altar server role being restarted. One young person had attended the choir the previous day for the first time since the start of Covid-19 in March 2020.

During parish site visits evidence of completed hazard risk assessments, (section 1.15 Ossory Safeguarding Children Parish Handbook), and incident reports, (section 1.6), were available to the reviewers. These related to children's activities such as alter service, choir and pantomime. A Complaints Policy is in place. There were no current active complaints, (section 1.4 Ossory Safeguarding Children Parish Handbook).

There were no whistleblowing reports since the last review, (section 1.3 Ossory Safeguarding Children Parish Handbook).

The Safeguarding Children Parish Handbook includes a section (1.16) on the Use of Technology. This guidance is applied for all children's activities including use of photography, social media, mobile phones, texts and emails. This was evidenced in pre-planning preparation for trips/retreats and a parish pantomime. In addition, CCTV notices are widely displayed where this is in use.

Trips and residential retreats are pre-planned and arrangements include parental consent forms, codes of behaviour, supervision arrangements, an appropriate ratio of adults to children and young people, and emergency contacts.

Because of the ongoing pandemic and related Covid-19 issues, the annual Lourdes Diocesan Pilgrimage has not been held since 2019. A meeting with two of the pilgrimage organisers indicated that there was a high level of consciousness regarding safeguarding issues and relevant vetting procedures. Circumstances permitting, a pilgrimage may be undertaken in 2023.

Arrangements for external bodies to use Church buildings are in place. There was limited use of Church buildings in parishes during the past two years due to Covid-19, but evidence was provided of previously completed applications and requirement for insurance and safeguarding arrangements to be in place.

Children and young people with specific needs involved in trips and activities are considered on an individual basis; and obtaining parental consent and having an identified suitable adult to undertake personal care, (section 1.10 Ossory Policy Safeguarding Handbook) are both required.

The reviewers had an opportunity to meet Parish Priests and local Safeguarding Representatives from two parishes. Their knowledge of child safeguarding, their understanding of roles and responsibilities, and their commitment to care for and safeguard children were all evident in these meetings. They reported that safeguarding is a priority and a safeguarding culture is embedded in the parishes, and so is not viewed as something that has to be done. It was clear from the discussion that there is good communication and support provided to the parishes by the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee, including the Director of Safeguarding, Vetting Co-ordinator and accredited trainer. The Parish Priests and Safeguarding Representatives advised that they worked together as a team, and this was evident to the reviewers throughout.

Ten priests from outside Ossory Diocese were granted faculties to minister in the diocese between 2017 and 2021. The diocese has a strict procedure in place for processing applications from external priests for faculties. The priest seeking faculties has to apply to the Bishop of Ossory, completing a Declaration of Good Standing form.

Their Ordinary then has to supply a Confirmation of Good Standing form. The Diocesan Office retains all applications along with supportive documentation in a dedicated file. Three of the ten priests who have applied over the five years mentioned were priests returning to act as supply priests to cover summer holidays for diocesan priests. The Parish Priest requesting cover from a supply priest has to make their request to their bishop on a Request for Summer Supply in the Diocese of Ossory form.

The reviewers are satisfied that robust procedures are in place to support arrangements to safe guard children in the Diocese. All those in the Diocese who have direct contact with children have clear knowledge of their role and responsibilities to safeguard children involved in church activities.

This standard is met.

Standard 2 - Procedures for Responding to Child Protection Suspicions, Concerns, Knowledge or Allegations

Church Bodies have clear procedures and guidance on what to do when suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations arise regarding a child's safety or welfare that will ensure there is a prompt response. They also enable the Church to meet all national and international legal and practice requirements and guidance.

Ossory Diocese employs a Director of Safeguarding, (DLP) on a part-time basis, and there are two volunteer deputy DLPs. We note that Bishop Nulty maintains an active involvement in respect of decision-making and pastoral response to both complainants and respondents.

Ossory Diocese uses the services of the National Board's Case Management Committee (NMC) for guidance and advice.

The Director of Safeguarding, the Priest Secretary and Bishop Nulty meet regularly to discuss cases, share information and agree actions.

An inter-agency group was established in 2011, and this has met annually since then to discuss the effectiveness of case management arrangements, involving representatives from Ossory Diocese, Gardai and Tusla. The reviewers liaised directly with representatives from the Gardai and Tusla, and we received positive feedback from both agencies about working relationships with the diocese and information-sharing arrangements in place throughout the case management process.

The review of case management files evidenced notifications of complaints to statutory agencies and good communication arrangements between the DLP and statutory agencies. Risk management plans were in place and monitored by the DLP. Notifications have been made to the National Board as appropriate, and actions from reviews with the National Case Management Committee had been progressed by the DLP.

Table 1 –Allegations reported to the Diocese of Ossory since July 2013.

	Cleric	Number of allegations	Gardai notified	Tusla notified	The National Board notified
Appropriate and timely canonical action taken					
1	1	Yes - Next day	Yes – next day	Yes – Next day	N/A (Left priesthood)
2	1	Yes: Within 3 weeks	Yes: Within 3 weeks	Yes: Within 3 weeks	Not possible^
3	1	Gardai notified diocese	Yes – within 4 days	Yes – within 4 days	Yes
4	1	Yes - Within 1 week	Yes - Within 1week	Yes - Within 1 week	Yes
	1	Yes: Same day	Yes: Same day	Yes: Same day	Yes
5	1	Yes*	Yes*	Yes*	N/A
6	1	Gardai had notified Tusla	Tusla notified diocese	Same day	N/A
7	1	Yes – a year and a half	Yes – a year and a half	No	N/A
8	1	Yes – Next day	Yes – Next day	Yes – Next day	N/A
Total allegations			9		
^ Details provided below			*Dates not recorded on the case file		

All notifications required of the diocese since the previous Review were made.

In two cases, there were delays in making the notifications. One priest had ministered in another diocese for a number of years, and the complainant made their complaint to that diocese, but did not provide any specific details of these allegations. The two dioceses were in communication once the complaint was made, and Ossory Diocese requested the other diocese to provide the complainant with the contact details for the Gardai and Ossory safeguarding personnel. However, the complainant has not subsequently made contact.

When conducting a review of all case management files, the previous bishop decided to make notifications to the statutory agencies as he considered these should have been made when the report of allegations were received in 2017. 'He made the statutory notifications in early 2019'.

The allegation made against a second priest was of physical abuse in a school setting.

Notifications were made once the complainant was interviewed, and could provide the required information.

In a further case, the case file does not have a record of the dates on which notifications were made. 'The file does contain correspondence from the Diocesan Administrator stating that he had notified the Gardai, Tusla and the National Board, but there are no copies of written notifications on the case management file'.

The reviewers received an explanation for the delays in notifications in respect of the two cases. The diocese was without a bishop between August 2016 and January 2018. During this interregnum, there were also a number of DLPs in post for short periods. The combination of these factors led to an absence of consistency in case management. The timing of notifications has improved in recent years. In early 2021, the diocese employed a DLP and more consistency in case management has been evident following this investment of resources.

All of the allegations of abuse are retrospective. The abuses alleged were said to have occurred between 1963 and 1996.

Overall, the reviewers are satisfied that cases are now responded to and managed appropriately. There is good collaboration between diocesan safeguarding staff and statutory agencies and this was corroborated by feedback from safeguarding personnel in Tusla and the Gardai.

The period of review for Case Management Standards 2, 3 and 4 is from July 2013, and so practices over the full nine years since have to be evaluated. While these have improved and best practice is now the norm, unfortunately due to past delays in notifications and poor case management recording, this standard is not met.

Standard 3 - Care and Support for the Complainant

Complainants who have suffered abuse as children receive a compassionate response when they disclose their abuse. They, and their families, are offered appropriate support, advice and pastoral care.

The diocese has two dedicated Support Persons, a male and a female.

The Support Person interviewed as part of the Review was clear about their role and the need for good communication with the Director of Safeguarding. The Support Person has availed of training delivered by the National Board, and their safeguarding training was up to date.

Guidance and support to the Support Person is available from the Director of Safeguarding. The need for gender balance of Support Persons was highlighted to us, as was the need to explore the possibility of using Support Persons from other dioceses, especially if complainants have moved to addresses outside of the diocese.

The Support Person was aware of services available from other organisations and of the importance of a co-operative 'working together' approach.

Records of contact between the Support Person and the complainant she works with were up to date, as evidenced on the case management file. The complainant had agreed to be interviewed as part of the Review. Bishop Nulty had previously met with the complainant. The complainant reported that during the meeting with Bishop Nulty and the Priest Secretary, they felt heard. They were assured that action would be taken to follow up their complaint of abuse. Following that meeting the complainant said that a "weight had been lifted" from their shoulders. The complainant receives counselling support; and they are kept informed of the progress of the investigation. The complainant wanted to emphasise the importance of their voice being heard.

In the case of a priest about whom an allegation was made in a solicitor's letter, the diocese in their solicitor's reply offered the complainant the Towards Healing and Towards Peace services. No further contact has been made with the diocese since that letter. The complainant was contacted by an independent person who had been appointed to conduct a preliminary canonical investigation, inviting them to participate in that process, but they did not respond.

A further complainant did not maintain contact with that diocese having made their complaint. In another case, the then bishop met with the complainant. He also arranged an independent mediator to meet with the priest and the complainant. They were offered the services of Towards Healing.

In a case where the complainant stated that they did not wish to pursue the matter, once they had made their complaint, they had been offered a meeting with Ossory safeguarding personnel, as well as counselling through Towards Healing.

In another case examined, the complainant was offered the services of Towards Healing, as well as other supports.

In a further case in which there are two complainants, they each received appropriate support from the dedicated support person and received updates about the progress of the case. The bishop met with the complainants.

The evidence collected by the reviewers supports that complainants received a caring and supportive response from the Diocese and received appropriate advice and updates about the progress of the investigation from safeguarding personnel. Support services are accessible and were put in place as appropriate. This is to be commended.

Standard 3 is met.

Standard 4 - Care and Management of the Respondent

The Church Authority has in place a fair process for investigating and managing child safeguarding concerns. When the threshold for reporting has been reached, a system of support and monitoring for respondents is provided.

Four (4) of the eight (8) priests whose situations were described under Standard 2 above were deceased by the time the fieldwork for this Review was undertaken.

One case had been presented to the National Case Management Committee of the National Board. It was being dealt with by the statutory agencies. The priest was provided with a Priest Advisor.

In the case of a second deceased priest, the complainant was encouraged to contact Ossory Diocese, but they have not done so.

A third deceased priest had died many years before the complaint about him was made. Statutory notifications were made by Ossory Diocese.

The fourth deceased priest had been laicised, and he was no longer living in Ossory Diocese's administrative area when the complaint against him was made. The diocese, as in all of the cases reviewed, cooperated with the statutory agencies in this matter.

'One priest against whom an allegation was made is elderly and has been retired for many years. The then bishop decided as Church authority not to initiate a preliminary canonical investigation; and he has written a memorandum on the case management file explaining his decision'.

One priest moved abroad and left the priesthood. The allegation made against him related to a time before he had been ordained. The complainant did not want to pursue the matter once they had made their complaint. In the case of a third priest, the reviewers are satisfied that all civil and canonical processes were correctly followed to conclusion'.

The other living priest is in ministry. The allegation against him was made through a solicitor's

letter, but the details of the complaint were not clear. A preliminary canonical investigation followed the Garda investigation, and led to a decision that there was no case to answer.

One of the reviewers met with the Priest Advisor to a respondent. He was keen to offer support to a fellow-priest. He suggested there was a need for more training for advisors, and that more liaison with colleagues in the same roles in other dioceses could be beneficial.

The reviewers are satisfied that cases are managed appropriately based on risk assessment and ongoing management and review of respondents subject to management plans.

This standard is met.

Standard 5 - Training and Support for Keeping Children Safe

Church personnel are trained and supported in all aspects of safeguarding relevant to their role, in order to develop and maintain the necessary knowledge, attitudes and skills to safeguard and protect children.

The Diocese has one accredited safeguarding Trainer, along with two who are awaiting registration following their completion of National Board training in November 2021.

A Training Plan is in place for 2022/23, together with a training calendar - signed off by the Safeguarding Committee. The reviewers examined this and they consider it appropriate. It indicates that there will be a blend of in-person and Zoom facilitated training during the year for the Safeguarding Committee, clergy, parish employees (e.g. sacristans), and safeguarding volunteers.

The Safeguarding Committee and parishes value the support of training provided by the National Board. Members and Parish Safeguarding Representatives fed back to reviewers that training builds the confidence of participants and "refreshes how we see things." Training, they said, provides an opportunity to learn, develop and improve practice, and to network with others.

Safeguarding Training 2017 - 2020

Date	Full Day	No	Information	No	Refresher	No	Total
13/03/17					SG Reps	7	7
13/03/17					SG Reps	5	5
10/05/17			Lourdes Group	7			7
23/09/17	New SG Reps	10					10
14/10/17	New SG Reps	5					5
16/05/18			Lourdes Group	3			3
05/06/18					Parish clergy	33	33
19/06/18					SG Reps	12	12
20/06/18					SG Reps (29) + Parish clergy (4)	33	33
21/06/18					SG Reps (15) + Parish clergy (5)	20	20
16/07/18			Medjugorje group	18	Volunteers (17) + priest (1)	18	36
10/09/18					SG Reps	14	14
11/09/18			Parish volunteers	18	Parish volunteers (16) + priests (2)	18	36
12/09/18			Parish volunteers	79			79
17/09/18			Parish volunteers	75			75
18/09/18			Parish volunteers	65			65
19/09/18			Parish volunteers	56			56
25/09/18			Parish volunteers	71			71
26/09/18			Parish volunteers	60			60
27/09/18			Parish volunteers	82			82
02/10/18			Parish volunteers	59			59
13/05/19					SG Reps (15) + Parish clergy (6)	21	21
14/05/19					SG (31) + Parish clergy (8)	39	39
20/05/19					SG Reps (15) + Parish clergy (5)	20	20
01/02/20	SG Reps	29					29
Totals		44		593		240	877

Reports on training have been submitted to the National Board. It was acknowledged that the impact of Covid-19 has affected the provision of training, but despite this, safeguarding training for mandatory reporters has been delivered via Zoom. The diocese is commended for the ongoing commitment to training in very challenging circumstances.

Members of the Safeguarding Committee and local Safeguarding Representatives advised that face-to-face training is their preference, and they described the benefits of role-play based on different safeguarding scenarios.

This standard is met.

Standard 6 - Communicating the Church's Safeguarding Message

Church Bodies appropriately communicate the Church's child safeguarding message

The National Board's Safeguarding Review was advertised on the diocesan website and parish newsletters.

The Ossory Diocese website has a dedicated section for Safeguarding. This website is easily navigated. The safeguarding information, which includes clear guidance on how to report, is very comprehensive. Of particular assistance is the page on Safeguarding Documents at <https://ossory.ie/safeguarding-documents/>. The diocese is encouraged to keep this up to date as personnel change.

A Communication Plan is in place for 2022/23 – signed off by the Safeguarding Committee. This is a detailed and well-considered document, and it contains a review date a year out from approval. It is published on the diocesan website.

A Diocesan Safeguarding newsletter has been produced annually since 2014. The weekly parish newsletter in one of the parishes visited has a standing section on Safeguarding, including contact details for the DLP and statutory authorities, and it is available online.

A Safeguarding Sunday had been taking place each year in the parishes to promote the safeguarding message, and this continued despite the pandemic restrictions of the last two years.

Churches in Ossory Diocese have dedicated information points – directly observed during the reviewers' visits to three parishes. This information includes the diocesan Safeguarding Statement with contact details for the DLP and relevant authorities. In all sites visited, child friendly posters were on display, and leaflets were available to be taken away. Young people involved in Church activities were involved in the development of materials. Safeguarding information is available in Polish. There may well be a need for translation into another language, for example, Ukrainian, and the diocese will keep this under review.

This standard is met.

Standard 7 - Quality Assuring Compliance with the Standards

The Church Body develops a plan of action to quality assure compliance with the safeguarding standards. This action plan is reviewed annually. The Church body only has responsibility to monitor, evaluate and report on compliance with the indicators under each standard that apply to it, depending on its ministry.

Between 2020 and 2022, ministry with children and young people has been significantly reduced due to Covid-19. Altar servers, choirs and other youth activities were suspended in parishes across the diocese, in compliance with government requirements. There are plans to re-introduce altar-servers, and the Safeguarding Committee is finalising arrangements to progress this, including developing a support pack.

The Ossory Diocese Safeguarding Committee is appropriately constituted in accordance with the National Board Safeguarding Policy and Standards, 2016. A written Constitution is in place. All members have appropriate experience, up-to-date vetting, and safeguarding training completed. There is a set schedule of meetings with agendas including parish updates, training, review of the work plan, and communications.

Minutes of meetings are completed, and these were provided to the reviewers for our information. These reflect the ongoing work to progress the actions of the three-year

Children's Safeguarding Plan. Diocese safeguarding meetings took place via Zoom during Covid-19 but have now returned to include face to face. A hybrid approach of Zoom and face-to-face meetings can be used in the future to facilitate attendance of members.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Committee produced an Annual Safeguarding Report for 2021, which was informed by self-audits completed by local Safeguarding Representatives and parish priests for all 42 parishes.

A three year Diocesan Safeguarding Plan (2022 to 2025) was developed based on the self-audit returns and on a training needs analysis, completed December 2021. This plan includes objectives and actions in the areas of safe recruitment, codes of behaviour and conduct, case management, communication, risk assessments of Church based activities and the safe use of Church property by external bodies. The Diocese Safeguarding Committee signed this off in February 2022, as did Bishop Nulty, the Apostolic Administrator. It will be subject to annual review by the Safeguarding Committee, and progress will be monitored by completion and analysis of annual parish self-audits. The five-pages in the plan that follow an introductory statement are set out under each of the seven standards. The template used is arranged as follows:

Standard	Specific objectives	Responsibility of	Implementation date	Review date
----------	---------------------	-------------------	---------------------	-------------

It provides a clear agenda for the further development of safeguarding in the diocese, and it is commended. It echoes the goal for safeguarding that is set out in the Pastoral Plan for the diocese.

The Diocesan Pastoral Council Co-ordinator was appointed in 2016; they have responsibility to co-ordinate the implementation of the Diocesan Pastoral Care Plan, and they work with the Director of Safeguarding regarding the safeguarding strand of that plan. The Director of Safeguarding attends meetings as and when required, and local Safeguarding Representatives are members of Parish Pastoral Councils. Currently, there is a review of the plan in train, and it is positive that safeguarding is a priority within this.

Annual Safeguarding and Training reports have been submitted to the National Board as required.

Members of the Diocese Safeguarding Committee shared with reviewers that there is a good connection and a good flow of information between the Safeguarding Committee and parishes. All Safeguarding Committee members reported that safeguarding is prioritised and is part of the culture across the diocese. There is a team approach to safeguarding and it is "everyone's business" rather than being the result of a top down approach. This was evidenced to reviewers during parish visits, and in the feedback received from Parish Priests, local Safeguarding Representatives and Sacristans.

Positive feedback was received during meetings about the support received from the Director of Safeguarding and their visibility and accessibility across the parishes of the Diocese.

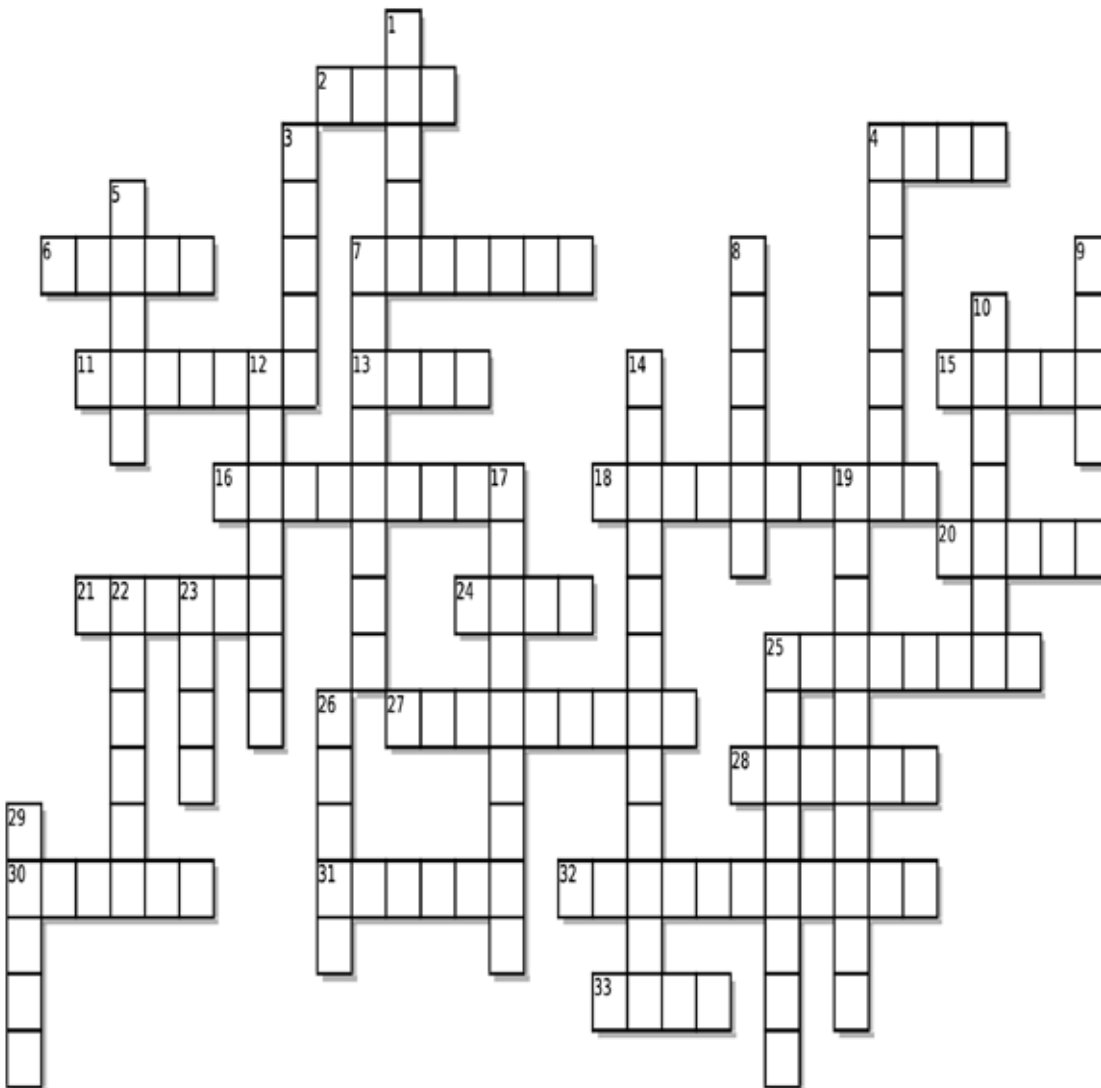
This standard is met.

Conclusion

The reviewers were assured regarding the Diocese of Ossory's compliance with the Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016. The reviewers' examination of documentation and engagement with a range of safeguarding personnel - including meeting with the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee - and meetings with local Parish Representatives evidenced clearly that there are good relationships at different levels across the Diocese, along with a commitment to listen, learn and support each other to safeguard children and young people. The Diocesan Safeguarding Committee has been in place since before the previous Review, and it has worked proactively and effectively in strengthening child safeguarding. The reviewers commend the development of a culture of child safeguarding in the diocese.

Safeguarding practices have continued to improve over the years with increasing consistency in case management. The current DLP, deputy DLPs, others who have responsibility for the delivery of safeguarding service, and the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee are all to be commended for their dedicated work in bringing about the progress detailed in this Review Report. The leadership of the previous and current Church authorities has been an important positive influence on this noted advancement.

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 2 "...the greatest of these is ____"
- 4 Next Bishop of Ossory
- 6 The branch a dove brought back to Noah
- 7 22nd of this month we gather to Ordain the next Bishop of Ossory
- 11 He told Mary
- 13 Catholic actress of "Cheaper by the Dozen" fame
- 15 Infallibility
- 16 This season has a name
- 18 New Bishop was PP here
- 20 The king ordered Daniel to be cast to this den (Dan 6:17)
- 21 St Nicholas is their patron saint
- 24 God in ancient Rome
- 25 From the French for the Feast of the Birth of Jesus
- 27 This McAuley founded the Sisters of Mercy
- 28 Translated the Bible into Latin
- 30 This was the wait
- 31 Biblical hunter

- 32 The period of office of a Pope
- 33 St Philip

DOWN

- 1 Home of St Teresa
- 3 St Christopher, for example
- 4 ____ of Trent
- 5 This Mount a peak in Exodus
- 7 Home parish of new Bishop
- 8 Ossory Home to the Sisters of Mercy
- 9 River Moses turned to blood
- 10 This John spoke of his arrival
- 12 First of the seven churches listed in Revelation
- 14 One of the gifts given to Jesus
- 17 They were watching the animals
- 19 Book containing the readings for Mass
- 22 Home diocese of new Bishop
- 23 "Te ____"
- 25 The least of our brothers
- 26 Holy one
- 29 This law guides the Church

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 16th March 2023 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 30 competitions:*

Adult Crossword:
Molly Smith

**Children's Wordsearch,
age 8-13:**
Rachel Nathon

**Children's Colouring,
age 5-8:**
Joseph and Hannah
Hennessy

Colouring Competition



Wordsearch Competition



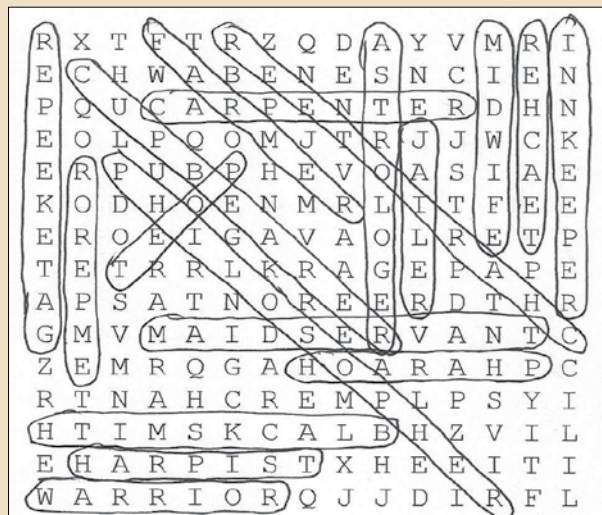
Nativity Word Search

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

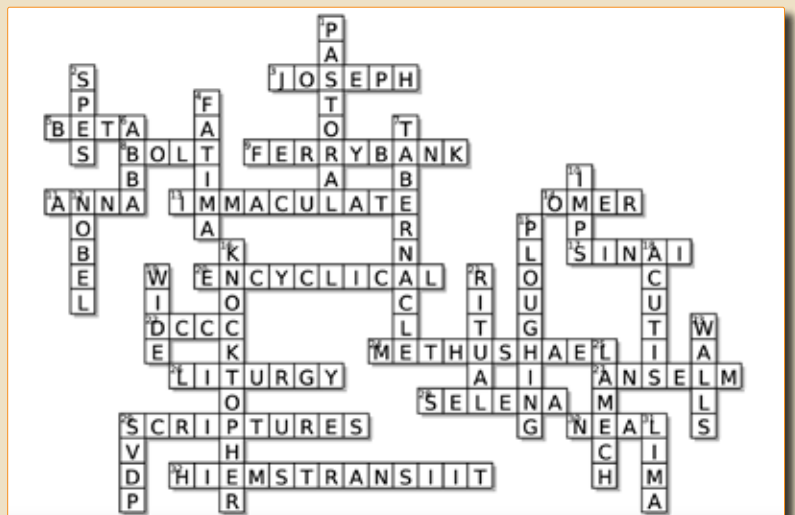


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 nativity
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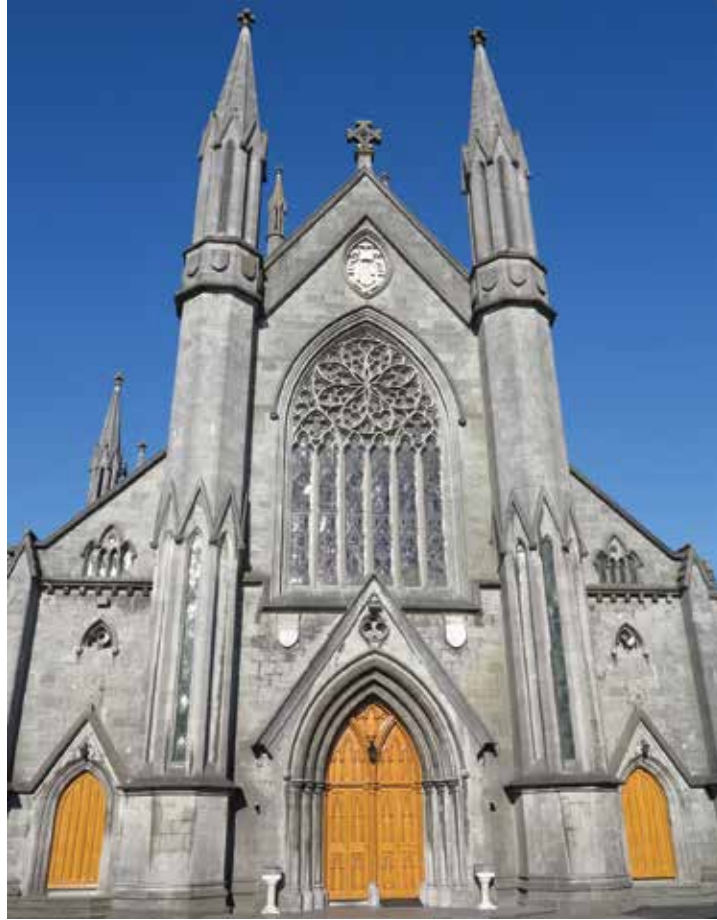
Answers to Ossory Times Issue 30



Answers to Ossory Times Issue 30



ST MARY'S CATHEDRAL RESTORATION FUND DRAW 2022/2023



12 MONTHLY DRAWS

September 2022 to August 2023

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

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March 9th – 14th 2023,

€710 p.p.sharing



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

BOOKING CONTACT:

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HOW TO BOOK:

We can take your booking over the phone by debit card. (€300 non-refundable deposit, plus single room supplement and insurance premium if applicable). Alternatively, you can pay by cheque or direct bank transfer. Please call us or email us for more information.



Michelangelo's
Pietà

Caravaggio in
St Augustine Church

Ecstasy of
St Teresa by Bernini

1st Christian mosaic in
St Pudenziana