

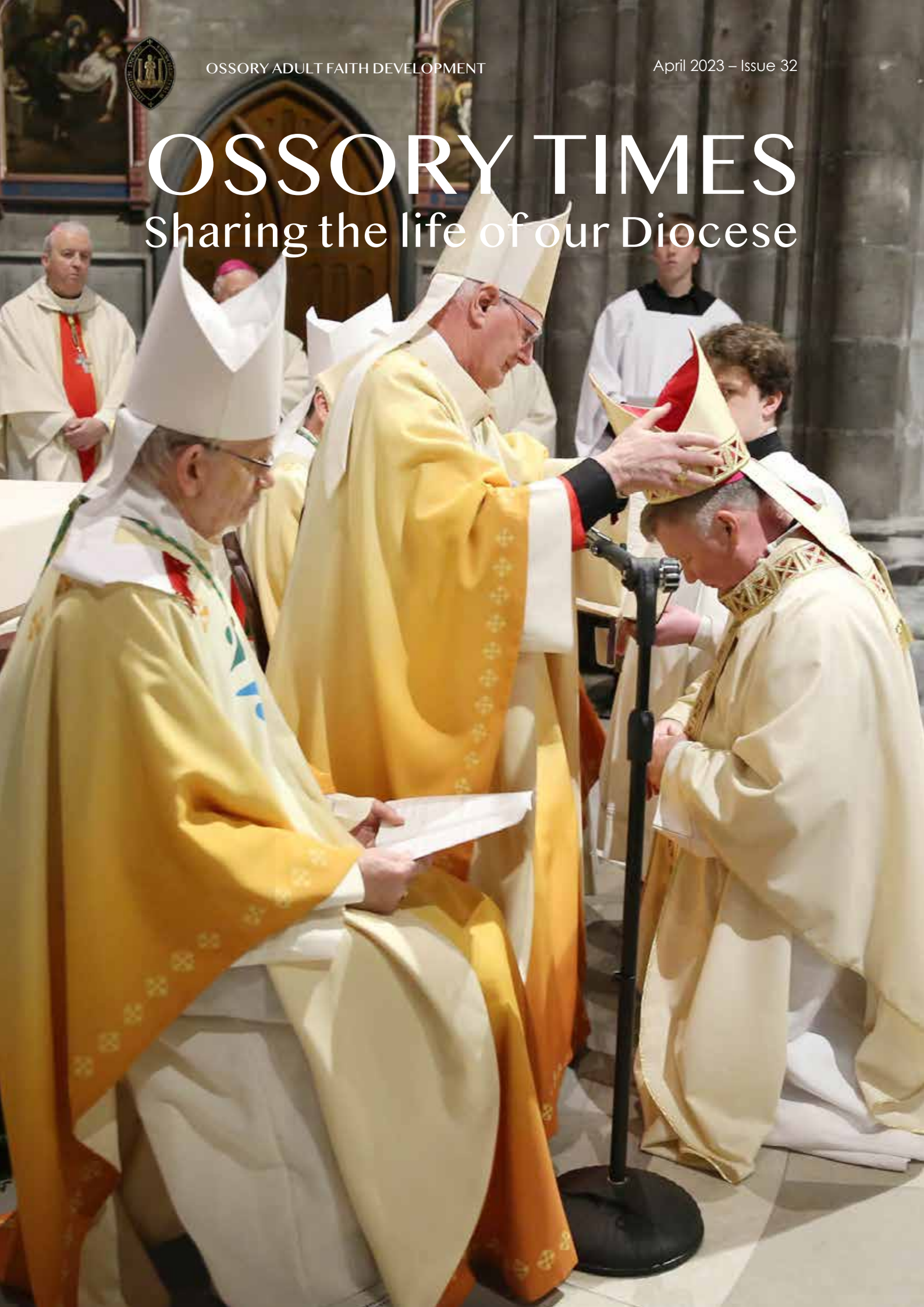


OSSORY ADULT FAITH DEVELOPMENT

April 2023 – Issue 32

OSSORY TIMES

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Editorial

It is only a short few months back that we welcomed the Christ child into our world in those Christmas days, and now we reflect on his death and resurrection in these Easter days. It is fitting, if we can borrow a phrase from Aquinas, that these days remain linked because each speaks to the other; framing, as they do, our access to a Christian faith; inviting, as the do, us ever deeper into that mystery.

The Easter days, which we now live, remind us of the great hope that our faith brings. Because of these days we know nothing is impossible, and we see that our world is, in them, changed forever. In our days, then, we try to live that hope in small and gentle ways as, together, we nourish, nurture and live our faith in this Diocese. The pages document how it is that this happens.

Ossory has awaited a new Bishop since the announcement of the translation of Archbishop Dermot to Dublin on 29th December 2020. In that interregnum we were delighted to have Bishop Denis come to us to lead us as Apostolic Administrator - his energy for mission and his deep kindness was greatly appreciated by all he encountered in those short years with our Diocese. Our neighbours, the good people of Kildare & Leighlin, are, as we have always know, blessed. Bishop Denis also understood our delight when on October 28th last we received the news of a new Bishop of Ossory. Bishop Niall came among us and Ordained as the 96th Bishop of Ossory on 22nd January 2023 in what was a wonderful moment of celebration for the Diocese. These pages document that transition - in thanking Bishop Denis and in welcoming Bishop Niall.

These pages contain so much more too as our Diocese continues to live the hope we profess - pilgrimages to Rome and Lourdes, visits to Seir Kieran and Freshford, a reflection on where it all begins for us all - in Baptism; 10 years of Pope Francis; the winning essays from our schools competition on the importance of the voice of all in our church; Safeguarding trainings nights; children's liturgies; Synodality and so much more.

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:

Rev. Dr Dermot Ryan
Ossory Adult Faith Development
St Kieran's College, College Road, Kilkenny
Tel 056 7753624
Email afd@ossory.ie
Web www.ossory.ie



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Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Niall Coll, 96th Bishop of Ossory

On Sunday, 22nd January 2023, the people, priests and religious of Ossory gathered for the Ordination of Bishop Niall Coll as the 96th Bishop of Ossory. Bishop Niall made the move from his home in Donegal to his new home the south east of Ireland here in Ossory

The Ordination ceremony was led by Archbishop Dermot Farrell and he was assisted by Bishop Denis Nulty formally Apostolic Administrator of Ossory and Bishop Alan McGuckian of Raphoe, Bishop Niall's home Diocese.

The people, priests and religious of Ossory were joined for this celebration by many of Bishop Niall's friends and his family.

May Saint Canice support Bishop Niall, may Saint Kieran guide him and may Saint Fergal bring him the assurance of God's presence and blessing in his new ministry as shepherd of Ossory.



Episcopal Ordination of Niall Coll, Ossory

Words of Welcome of Archbishop Dermot Farrell

St Mary's Cathedral, Kilkenny, 22nd January 2023

It is a great honour for me, in the name of Saint Laurance O'Toole and St Kevin, to come here this afternoon to ordain Father Niall Coll as Bishop of Ossory, the next successor of Saint Kieran. I welcome Cllr David Fitzgerald, the Lord Mayor of Kilkenny City, Cllr Pat Fitzpatrick, Ceatharlach Kilkenny County Council, and Cllr P J Kelly, Leas Ceatharlach, Laois County Council, the representatives of the people, priests and religious from across the Diocese of Ossory. I am delighted to welcome Niall's parents, Willie and Kathleen, other family members and close friends, my co-consecrators, Bishop Denis Nulty and Bishop Alan McGuckian. Unfortunately, the President of the Bishops' Conference, Archbishop Eamon Martin, would like to have been present, but today he is marking the centenary of the Irish Council of Churches and the fiftieth anniversary of the Ballymascanlon Peace Talks.

I welcome Monsignor Julien Kaboré, Chargé d'affaires a.i. at the Apostolic Nunciature, my brother bishops, the priests who will concelebrate this Eucharist, as well as those who are joining us online. I welcome Bishop Adrian Wilkinson, Church of Ireland, and the leaders of other Christian denominations and other Faiths. Most of all, I welcome the laity of Ossory, present here, on this important day in the life of the Church in this diocese, in this place which is your home. You are the flock of the Lord and today you receive a new shepherd and guide. Together, with Christ the Head, you are the Body of Christ which is the sacrament of his presence in the world, our common home.

Today, in the Cathedral, in this church of the Shepherd's chair, the Church in

Ossory is particularly itself. Every family has its highpoints, and today, the Family of God in Ossory—the Church, lives a highpoint: you welcome your new bishop, you witness to his ordination, the formal beginning of his ministry. You give thanks, and put flesh on your faith and your hope. Today your cathedral is most truly what it was built for: the first Church of the diocese, its true centre.

We come to invoke the Holy Spirit on this priest, Niall Coll, called to the office of Bishop in the service of the Church of Ossory, to be a pastor in the midst of the people. Through the laying on of hands and the Prayer of Consecration the grace of the Holy Spirit will be bestowed on him so that he may carry forward the mission of Christ himself as teacher, shepherd and high priest, and can act in the person of Christ in a special way. Niall, the call is to love the people you serve, sanctify them, teach them, shepherd them.

We come to pray for Niall, who today begins a common journey with the people and priests and religious of Ossory. We value the prayer of the people asking a blessing for their bishop. I would like to thank on this day Bishop Denis Nulty for the manner in which he has led this diocese as Apostolic Administrator over the past two years, as well as the priests, religious and lay leaders who share in the mission of the Church.

The role of a bishop is to be a father to his people, a brother to his priests, and a witness of Jesus Christ to the world. The ministry of the Bishop is priestly ministry. At its heart is moving forward together, responding together to the call of Christ—the call we hear again in today's Gospel (see Matt 4:21–22). Together, we



embrace the future God offers us. Priests and people as one, young and old together, we put flesh on the Lord who is present with us. (See Matt 1:23).

At the heart of Christianity lies not an idea, not a system of thought, not a plan of action. No, the heart of Christianity is a person: Jesus Christ. It is "Christ who is our life" (Col 3:4)—a person who is alive, who is with us, who is within us, and among us. Niall, your mission as a Bishop is not just administration, but to devote time to listening attentively to the people, priests and religious, to listen attentively to the Word of God, and to witness to others of what your own encounter with Christ brings to you, and to share that experience with others, especially the young people, and those for whom life has become a cold, difficult place.

Pope Francis has clearly articulated the mission of the Church, the mission of the Bishop: "We cannot keep ourselves cloistered in some parish, in our communities, in our institutions ... when so many people are waiting for the gospel! We have to go out as one's sent. It is not enough simply to open the door in

welcome because they come, but we must go out through that door to seek and meet the people! ... beginning on the margins, with those who are farthest away, with those who have little to do with your parish" (Pope Francis, World Youth Day Homily, Cathedral of San Sebastian, Rio de Janeiro, July 27, 2013). The heart of the Church is the heart of Christ: a heart that is open, a heart filled with compassion (see Luke 10:33), a pastoral heart.

My prayer for you, Niall, in the days and years to come, is that you will discover ever more deeply the joy that comes from sharing with others the life and hope Christ brings to you, and discover ever more deeply the peace and consolation that come from being a member of the community of believers, the Church. If you are even half as blessed as I was in my ministry here, you will be blessed indeed.

Now, as one, let us renew our commitment to the life we received in our baptism, and with deep humility and gratitude welcome God's tender mercy.





Episcopal Ordination of Niall Coll, Ossory

Homily of Fr Kieran O'Shea

St Mary's Cathedral, Kilkenny, 22nd January 2023

Today's happy occasion brings to mind a childhood memory of my late mother playing the accordion and singing that popular ballad *The Homes of Donegal* - it was, as we might say, her party piece! Coincidentally, the lyrics of that song were composed in 1955 by a certain Seán Mac Giolla Bhríde (Seán McBride) from The Rosses who was the principal of St Baithin's National School in a place called St Johnston in East Donegal and who had the privilege of teaching the father and son here before us today, Bishop-elect Niall and his Dad.

Unlike my mother, unfortunately, I have not been blessed with charisms of a musical kind, so I have no intention of singing the said ballad. Let's leave that for a different setting or occasion and to those competent in matters of song!

Anyhow, from one of those homes of Donegal, the Holy Father, Pope Francis has sent us a new Bishop in succession to Archbishop Dermot and, of course, to relieve Bishop Denis of his extraterritorial responsibilities which he has carried out with extraordinary dedication and relentless energy during the past two years. It is with great gratitude that we return him to the people of Kildare & Leighlin - hopefully intact - and it is with immense joy that we greet Bishop-elect Niall, along with his parents, Kathleen and Willie, his sisters, brother, extended family members, Bishop McGuckian and priests of the Diocese of Raphoe, and many friends from near and far - you are all heartily welcome.

Niall, we genuinely hope that the sentiments expressed in the first line of that song long-associated with your native county will not come to pass: 'I

just called in to see you all. I'll only stay a while'. On the contrary, we hope that you will remain with us indefinitely, and that before too long the words of *The Moon Behind The Hill*, *The Rose of Mooncoin*, *Lovely Laois*, and *The Offaly Rover* will flow from your lips as melodiously as the *Homes of Donegal*. The second line of that song - 'I want to see how you're getting on, I want to see you smile' - is indeed in keeping with our

celebration today. It expresses sentiments of care and longing to see joy on people's faces. A saintly lyricist, of nearly two millennia ago, articulated it in another way in writing to a fledgling community of believers: 'I want you to be happy, always happy in the Lord; I repeat, what I want is your happiness.' (Philippians 4:4)

From the homes of Donegal to your new home of Ossory, you have travelled your own pilgrim path. Welcomed into the family of the Church at Baptism, marinated in the faith by your parents, formed by your local St Johnston community, your teachers at St Baithin's and St Eunan's, your formators in Maynooth and Rome, you come among us, soon to be 'empowered with the governing Spirit to be poured out upon you'. (Rite of Episcopal Ordination: Prayer of Consecration) Along the pilgrimage of your life as son, brother, student, deacon, priest, educator, theologian and pastor, you have, in a myriad of ways and places, made a home in your heart for the Word of God, knowing full well how essential and necessary it is for those of us called to ministry in the Church to have Christ abide in us, always ready to open the



door of our hearts as soon as he comes and knocks (Luke 12: 36), particularly when he knocks disguised as one of our sisters and brothers who will look to you to be a loving father, a courageous and, yet, gentle Shepherd.

T.S. Eliot wrote that 'Home is where one starts from'. (Four Quartets "East Coker" pt. 5 (1940)). The Gospel passage from Matthew (Mt. 4:12-23) of this Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, more recently designated by Pope Francis as Sunday of the Word of God, tells us that, after hearing the traumatic news that John had been arrested, Jesus went back home for a while. You could be forgiven for missing the reference to that homecoming. It is mentioned in passing, almost reluctantly as a throwaway remark with embarrassed tones: 'Jesus went back to Galilee, and leaving Nazareth he went and settled in Capernaum'. (Mt. 4:12) We should never underestimate the influence of Nazareth on Jesus. His Nazareth experience, along with his testing time spent in the Desert and his Baptism in the River Jordan, form a trilogy of seminal experiences which prepared him for his mission of proclaiming the Reign of God. With solid assurance, he would start from home, and no better place for the divine to encounter humanity. It was there he was carried in Mary's arms, there he went with her to bring water from the well, there he played, went to school, learned the Psalms and was brought to the Synagogue; there he learned from Joseph the value of work

and mingled with his neighbours, sharing their daily struggles, their joys, hopes and aspirations. Nazareth was far from being a centre of power or wealth or a place that would make the front cover of the holiday brochures of the time. It was what we might call a melting pot, part of the Galilee region never considered a locus of religious purity. How can we forget the insulting

remark of Nathaniel - 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' (John 1:46)

Obscure and mundane Nazareth, once described by St Charles de Foucauld as 'the lowest place', was not only the hometown of the Son of God, the Son of Mary and Joseph, it was the place that gave him his earthly identity. He was, and is, Jesus of Nazareth, 'Christ in Eternity and Time'. (Rev. Dr Niall Coll: Four Courts Press 2001) Nazareth is everywhere, it is every marketplace, city, town and village, every hospital and nursing home, every school, college and workplace; it is every parish and every diocese, it is wherever Jesus makes his home and walks into the lives of people and laughs and cries with them, anointing them with love and compassion; it is where he takes the lowest place, and bends down to raise up sinners and writes with his finger "God does not condemn you" on their dusty hearts. Nazareth is where the ordinariness of everyday life is sanctified.

Niall, in a few moments you will resolve to sustain and guide the People of God with the priests and deacons who share your ministry and to pray for them without ceasing. You will resolve to show kindness and compassion to the poor and to strangers and all in need. You will resolve to seek out the sheep who stray and gather them into the fold. (Rite of Episcopal Ordination: Examination of the Candidate). So, let Ossory, our Nazareth, be your home and your starting point. As priests and bishops, it is when we walk with our sisters and brothers, encouraging them to persevere amidst the signs of the times, when we enter the places they call home, when we carry the Cross with them and rejoice with them as at harvest time (Is 9:3), we unveil the Reign of God that is already at hand.

As we acknowledge the formative role played by Nazareth in the life of Jesus, we must also come face to face with

the darker side of the story: his rejection by the place he called home, the brow of the hill of that town foreshadowing the Hill of Calvary. Today, as in Jesus' time, there is always the spectre of rejection. There are many challenges to be faced. For centuries, Ireland was a land that embraced the Gospel enthusiastically and, indeed, the mission of the Church. Your part of the country, and ours, once overflowed with saints like Adomnán (Eunan) and Baithin, Colmcille and Canice, Feargal and Fiacre, Kieran and Killian, and more recently, Blessed Edmund Rice, and this overflow spilled onto the shores of other lands. It is not so straightforward now. The light that shone so brightly in the Zebulun's and Naphtali's of Ireland has been flickering dimly for some time, and buffeted by the winds of change, has altered profoundly the relationship between God's people and their priests and bishops. There are many well-rehearsed reasons for this - some we have inflicted on ourselves - and for which we can only ask forgiveness and proactively repent; some as a result of secularism and the erosion of values that accompany the growth of materialism. Today's Second Reading from Paul to the Corinthians reminds us that this situation is not unique; the Church has always encountered difficulties and, from time to time, has been a landscape blighted by bitter disagreements. Sometimes Christ has been parcelled out (1 Corinthians 1:10-13,17) and when this happens, there is a vacuum which we tend to fill with the good news about ourselves which never really works out too well.

Coming face to face with these inherent frailties let us not be overwhelmed or disheartened. Let Christ Jesus be our Hope.

Jesus' experience of rejection did not inhibit or deter him from carrying out the mission entrusted to him by the Father. Rather, his previously mentioned days

in the desert, his Baptism, his Nazareth years became the springboard from which he launched Project Repentance in the Galilee region and from where he called Apostles to accompany him and to share in his mission. Jesus' mission was not to be carried out alone: the Cross was not to be carried alone, the road to Calvary or the foot of the Cross were not devoid of at least a few offering comfort and consolation. Niall, you must never walk alone. I hope that we, the Baptised People of God, through our various vocations, will live up to our call to support you, to encourage you and carry you in your ministry. We hope that you will sustain us, with the gifts you have received from the Lord who has called you. Together, let us journey in Communion with Christ and one another, participating together in the life of the Church of Ossory, renewing our commitment to be people of Mission who go out to share the Joy of the Gospel with everyone we meet. (The theme of the Synod - For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission) May the Apostles and Saints, whom we will invoke shortly, accompany you and all of us as we embark on this new voyage.

Let me return to repentance and the Apostles for a moment. Today, this man whom God has chosen to provide for the needs of the Church of Ossory, has become one of the youngest brothers of Peter, Andrew, James and John who, despite their obvious human weaknesses, said 'yes' to the Lord's invitation to follow him. Their 'yes' to the 'call' would enable Jesus to begin work on one of the great makeover jobs in history. Their 'yes to the call' was an enormous and significant act of repentance.

John the Baptist's message was clearly about the kind of repentance that washed away sin. Jesus, on the other hand, gave a little added value to how we understand repentance.

When He called Peter, Andrew, James and John and subsequently, the other Apostles, it meant changing direction for them and setting out on a new adventure, embracing God's dream, leaving behind the security of family and friends, living the simplicity of Nazareth, falling short and being loved into getting back up again, trusting and hoping. And so we can say that true repentance means 'not waiting until we are perfect to bear witness, but saying 'yes' now by witnessing to the beauty of the love that has looked upon us and lifted us up'. (Pope Francis Wednesday Audience 11.01.2023) When we abandon ourselves to him with a feeble yes, he will provide us with the necessary makeover and mould us into who he calls us to be.

Dear friends, please don't go out of this Cathedral this evening and announce that the fellow who was preaching said that the new Bishop requires a makeover and needs to repent!! - I could come to the same end as our friend John the Baptist! By saying yes, willingly and consistently throughout his life, and now to being an Apostle, our soon-to-be new Bishop has already embarked on a pilgrimage of trust and hope and we pray earnestly that God, who has begun the good work in him, will bring it to fulfilment. (Rite of Episcopal Ordination: Examination of the Candidate)

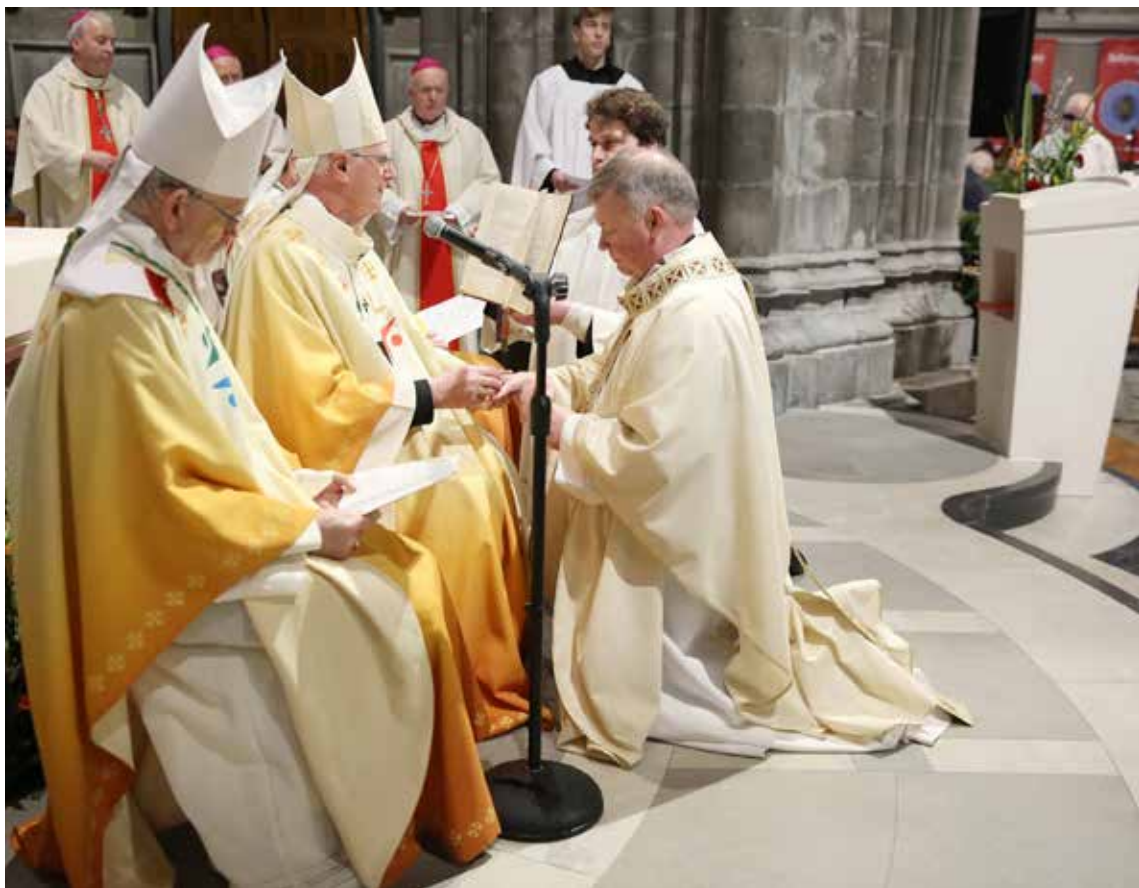
The final part of today's Gospel indicates that Jesus' proclamation of the Reign of God involved teaching and proclaiming which were always accompanied by signs of God's love. Niall, in the forty-two parishes of this Diocese, in the People of God gathered here today, in the People of God gathered in Croke Park today from Ballyhale and further afield, in the People of God from the peripheries to the centre, you will find signs that the Reign of God is present. Wherever faith is lived and handed on, wherever hope is shared and

wherever the price of love is paid, you will find signs of God's Reign. Wherever people's faith has weakened, and yet the pilot light of faith has not been totally extinguished, God still Reigns. You will find other signs in the energy and giftedness of young people and in their searching for truth. They especially will need your encouragement to make a commitment, to take a chance on Jesus of Nazareth who can do wonderful makeovers and shape them into a new generation of witnesses for him. The challenges and opportunities which lie ahead of you are formidable and exciting. Encounter Jesus of Nazareth each day in your prayer, in the Eucharist and in his Body, this local Church.

Listen carefully to his Word and to the voices of all the people, all the priests and all religious of your new home and, with the help of the Holy Spirit, discern the way forward.

I conclude with words spoken about a fellow county man of yours, called to follow Christ and to grow the reign of God many, many centuries ago - another one from the homes of Donegal - Colmcille. May they say of you as they said of him: 'During his life..... he could not let even one hour pass that was not given to prayer or reading or writing or some other good work. Night and day he so unwearyingly gave himself to fasts and vigils that the burden of each single work seemed beyond the strength of man. Yet through all, he was loving to everyone, his holy face was always cheerful, and in his inmost heart he was happy with the joy of the Holy Spirit'. (Office of Readings for the Feast of St Colmcille: From the Life of Columba, by Adomnán).

Niall, as you begin your service as Bishop of Ossory, may your heart be like the mountains in the homes of Donegal!



Episcopal Ordination of Niall Coll, Ossory

Words of thanks Bishop Niall Coll

St Mary's Cathedral, Kilkenny, 22nd January 2023

At the end of this beautiful ordination liturgy, I am afforded an opportunity to offer some words of thanks and a thought, a word of encouragement to all gathered here this afternoon ... especially the people, religious and priests of the diocese of Ossory representing our 42 parishes and 13 pastoral areas. I also salute people of goodwill everywhere, not least those who are joining with us through the webcam in Ossory, Donegal and elsewhere.

Let me begin by thanking all present, most particularly my mother and father, my brother, sisters, brother-in-law and wider family of aunts, uncles, cousins. Also my friends, seminary classmates and contemporaries, former colleagues especially from my Belfast days, and priests and people from Raphoe diocese and everywhere, especially parishioners from Tawnawilly and Drumholm parishes. A particular warm welcome to the new Church of Ireland bishop here, Adrian Wilkinson. Similarly, a warm welcome to the representatives of the other Christian traditions and other faiths here present So many have travelled a great distance to be here. Thank you.

I would like to thank so many of the people of the diocese for the warm welcome they have extended to me already, the 96th bishop of Ossory and the first Ulsterman - a diocesan historian has reliably informed me - to serve in that office. Thankfully, that great Ulsterman, St Canice, from Limavady, Co. Derry, not far from my native heath in Donegal, never the bishop here however, indisputably blazed a trail in the diocese. The lasting legacy of a cathedral, many churches and schools under his patronage demonstrate that

fact. My northern footprint here will be smaller, but I come too, whatever my own limitations and with so much to learn, with a great heart for the people and terrain of Ossory!

I would like to welcome Archbishop Farrell back to Ossory and to thank him for being principal consecrator today. Thanks too to the two co-consecrators, my Maynooth classmate, Bishop Denis Nulty and the bishop of Raphoe, Alan McGuckian. A word of gratitude to all the other bishops present. Thanks to all who made this act of worship today so magnificent: the Ordination Organising Committee and the Diocesan Office staff who worked so hard behind the scenes. Thanks too to the musicians and singers, the sacristans and altar servers, the young people here present from local primary and secondary schools, the stewards and greeters, those who designed today's Mass booklet, and the many others who assist in the Cathedral. A special word of thanks is due to Sr Helen Maher Forum Coordinator and Ms Gemma Mulligan our Diocesan Pastoral Coordinator for the wonderful occasion of prayer as we gathered here on Friday evening and to our homilist today, Fr Kieran O'Shea, the Cathedral Administrator, Fr Richard Scriven and today's Master of Ceremonies, Fr Roderick Whearty.

So much has already been said at this Liturgy, so much more could be said, but to keep things within bounds I will confine my comments now to introducing you to my new crest, my Coat of Arms as Bishop of Ossory. You can find it just now on the back page of your Mass booklet.



A word to set the context. There's a long tradition in the Church that each new bishop picks a motto, normally chosen from Scripture, which seeks to encapsulate his thoughts, prayers and priorities as he begins his new ministry.

The motto I have chosen - 'Christ Jesus our hope', 'Críost Íosa ár ndóchas', 'Christus Jesus Spes Nostra' - is emblazoned on the crest. It is taken from the opening salutation of the First Letter of St Paul to Timothy.

In the heraldic tradition of the Catholic Church, the bishop's motto is further expressed through the use of symbols on the crest. You know well the expression: 'a picture paints a thousand words ...!'

The symbols I have chosen: To begin, both the transcendent and imminent dimensions of life, heaven and earth, are acknowledged, following the ancient practice of Christian iconography, by the presence of the colours blue and red respectively. And these two realms are seen to be united by the presence and action of the Holy Spirit, represented on the crest in the form of a dove.

Interestingly, if you turn your eyes upwards now and glance at the sanctuary ceiling of this cathedral, you may be able to see the striking depiction of the Holy Spirit as a dove. And it is this dove which is represented on the crest. Note, too, that on the crest the dove is seen to hover over an image of the County Kilkenny ninth-century Killamery High Cross, a National Monument. It is used here to represent the Christian faith and its deep roots planted in the soil, and by extension in the hearts of the people of Ossory across some 15 centuries. Of course, the same can be said with similar gratitude of my own native Raphoe diocese in the hills of Donegal.

The symbol of the dove is intended to remind us that it is by the power of the Holy Spirit that we are united to Christ, to his death and resurrection and that that same Spirit continues to pour out

grace and blessings upon us. So, we are empowered as God 's holy people, a pilgrim people, to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, called to build his Kingdom in the Church and in the world.

Also found on the crest is an image of the sun, at the centre of which is the symbol ☩ (an ancient sign for Christ), which is also designed to direct our attentions to Jesus Christ, the Light of the World (Jn 8:12). It seeks to remind us that the light of Christ accompanies us and illuminates our path on the journey of life. Truly, we, as members of Christ's body the Church, are called to reflect this light by loving both God and neighbour, especially the poor and marginalised. But we can't do this on our own steam, we need to be strengthened, empowered by the Word of God (represented on the crest by the open Bible). We must ponder it in our hearts, allow it to fire our imaginations and live it by means of both the sacramental and social justice dimensions of faith and life. Afterall, faith is communicated by the people who live it as a dynamic in their lives ...

In an era marked by strong currents of secularisation, materialism and individualism, when many people have pushed God to the margins of life, if they haven't forgotten about Him entirely, Christians can be tempted to lose hope and retreat into a holy huddle. And this is exacerbated for many by the concrete problems of life today as we try to recover from the restrictions on life visited by the Covid-19 pandemic. Then there's the current war in Ukraine and civil conflicts raging elsewhere in such places as Ethiopia, Congo, Yemen which rarely get reported in the West. And there are economic difficulties, especially for young people, rising prices, climate change and social unrest especially in relation to the family. In the midst of such rapid change, some may be tempted to lose heart.

But to despair would be a response that would fly in the face of the Gospel. Christian hope speaks into these difficult

contexts. Christ, as the crest also reminds us, drawing on the Letter to the Hebrews, is our beginning and our end, the Alpha (A) and the Omega (Ω) in whom we place our joys and sorrows, our fears and hopes.

Because we know and love Christ, because we serve him our Lord and Saviour, we are called - to put it in a nutshell - to be people in the world characterised by faith, hope and love. Returning in particular to the emphasis on hope that is highlighted in my motto, might it be enough to say now that by hope is meant faith as we go forward into the future. Hope is the looking forward in faith to the future in God that Christ makes possible. Hope clings to that future, assured of God's faithfulness. Thus Pope Francis has spoken of Jesus as 'the wellspring of our hope'.

We, the followers of Jesus, are a community of faith who believe in the continual and ongoing presence of the God of Jesus Christ in our lives. Those lines from the Psalm sung in this Mass encapsulate this succinctly when they entreat us to 'Hope in Him, hold firm and take heart/Hope in the Lord.'

The importance of hope, hope in our hearts for ourselves and our families, hope for the Church at this time of great challenge and change, a painful time of pruning and renewal, especially in light of the abuse crisis, is urgently needed. Pope Benedict had a deep understanding of Europe and the West today and the intensity of the challenge which people of faith face. He poignantly encouraged us to know that people 'who live by hope live differently' because they have 'been granted the gift of a New Life'. It is in Christ Jesus our hope that we find this new life and the courage to persevere on our pilgrim journey of faith. It is in this hope that I, with my own share of qualities and weaknesses, can summon up courage in the Lord, in his grace and mercy, and come among you as bishop.

I would like to take this opportunity at the beginning of Catholic Schools Week 2023

to ask God's blessing on our schools and their good work of sharing that hope and meaning with our young people.

And I hope my Antrim friends here present aren't too discommoded if the hurlers of Ballyhale were held in our prayers this day as they battled with Dunloy!

Finally, I would like to thank Mgr Julien Kabore, Chargé d'Affaires at the Apostolic Nunciature in Dublin, for his help and kindness before and since my appointment as bishop. And Bishop Nulty, too, for his kind and unflinching attention to the diocese of Ossory during his time as Apostolic Administrator and for his care and support for me personally. 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.

Truth be told, committed Irish Catholics already know full well that we need to build up from the ground a new way of being church, one which will seek to blend the old faith and, where possible, the new ground of contemporary Irish society in a new organic synthesis. That is the work of the process of Synodality, of journeying together as disciples, so precious to the heart of Pope Francis, and I would like to commend the discussions, reflections and actions which are already underway in Ossory as part of the beginnings of this process of renewal in the life of the diocese.

As we look to the future, we know that we will face many challenges together. We find courage for the work that lies ahead because Christ Jesus is truly the way, the truth and the life. He is our hope. Amen

Téimis ar aghaidh le chéile agus muid lán le muinín. A Mhuire, a Mháthair na hEaglaise, guigh orainne.

A Chiarán, a Cheannach, a Adhamhnain, a Bhríd, a Cholmcille, guigí orainn.

...exploring ways to make their child's experience of the Gospel more accessible...



Children's Liturgy in St Patrick's Parish

Eileen Costigan

In early 2022, Fr Peter Muldowney (St Patrick's Parish) gathered a group of lay people together to discuss potential volunteer opportunities in the Parish. During the meeting it became evident that a small group of parents were interested in a Children's Liturgy and they hoped to explore ways to make their child's experience of the Gospel more accessible.

As a result, a new committee - a Children's Liturgy Committee - of four volunteers was formed. We consulted with Gemma Mulligan, the Diocesan Pastoral Coordinator, who in addition to providing advice also very kindly agreed to lead a Godly Play* at the first official Children's Mass, held in St Fiachre's Church in June. After this first gathering and a summer break, the Mass resumed in the autumn and has continued since on a monthly basis.

So how does it work: The Children's Liturgy Committee meet on a monthly basis to prepare for the Mass. Then the Parish schools are informed in advance of the Children's Mass and they notify parents. A theme is chosen for each monthly Mass and a suitable prayer is provided for each family to take home (organised by one of the volunteers). Child-friendly hymns are played at each ceremony. Before the readings commence, the children move to

the Parish Centre under the supervision of volunteers (all of whom are Garda vetted and have attended safeguarding course as is required by the Diocese). Younger children are frequently accompanied by a parent/guardian. Gemma Mulligan then greets the children and the Godly Play commences. The children return to the Mass after approximately 15 minutes, thus rejoining before the consecration. A small treat is provided for children at the end of Mass.

Overall this experience has proved very rewarding for all involved and stands testament to Fr Peter's vision, and that of the parish. The monthly Children's Mass is a very inclusive celebration for a, thankfully, now increasing number of children. There is a keen appetite for the occasion, and parents/guardians have expressed an appreciation for the effort involved.

*Godly Play is a form of spiritual accompaniment for children. It uses a unique method of story-telling which allows children to explore their own spirituality. Godly Play invites children to wonder about the mysterious presence of God in their lives. The children connect with Parables, Sacred stories and Liturgical action through story, play and silence (godlyplayireland.com).

He was always the first to arrive and often the last to leave - ensuring that he had time with, and a word for, everyone present.



Saying thanks to Bishop Denis Nulty

On Tuesday 28th March the priests of Ossory, in the company of Bishop Niall, gathered to express, in some small way, thanks to Bishop Denis Nulty for his time among us as Apostolic Administrator. In his assuming that responsibility, in addition to his existing ministry as Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin, the people of Ossory got the first glimpse into the energy that Bishop Denis had - an energy that has served our Diocese so well for the past two years. Bishop Denis continually made nothing of repeated trips from Carlow to any part of Ossory, and for any occasion. He was always the first to arrive and often the last to leave - ensuring that he had time with, and a word for, everyone present. As we gathered in the Chapel of St Kieran's College, Bishop Niall welcomed the priests and Bishop Denis and, in so doing, reflected how the Denis he first met in seminary was marked with that same energy, ability and depth of kindness as the one who had shepherded Ossory during its interregnum.

Fr Martin Delaney, as the former Chair of the Council of Priests, a group that worked

close with Bishop Denis throughout his time in Ossory, spoke on behalf of the priests of the Diocese and all those gathered. Fr Martin noted that it was through three areas that he wanted to reflect the great impact Bishop Denis had during his time leading our Diocese: Bishop's work with the Ossory Planning group; his work with the Council of Priests and our Pastoral Areas; and Bishop Denis' deep kindness for all.

Of the first of these Fr Martin noted the expressed desire of Bishop Denis, during his time in Ossory, to continue to collaborate both the Ossory Diocesan Pastoral Council and the former Council of Priests and how it was that from the working of these groups that there emerged a desire to explore the needs of the Diocese at this time of transition. This desire, then, gave rise to the Ossory Planning Group - a collaboration where in each of these groups nominated four members and they were then joined by six other individuals who were invited to participate. The work of this group was facilitated by Fr Eamon Fitzgibbon of Limerick Diocese, and in its meetings it

modelled a synodal process as it prayed, discussed and attempted to discern the pastoral needs of the Diocese, and how these needs might best be responded to, at this time. Fr Martin thanked Bishop Denis for his deep commitment to this group and its work and highlighted how attentive and present Bishop Denis was to each of its meetings. This work, and the energy of Bishop Denis for it, had allowed the group to distill a significant number of areas and ideas to help in our Diocese the report of which Fr Martin noted, was now with Bishop Niall.

If care for clergy was a defining characteristic of Bishop Denis' time in Ossory, and as Fr Martin noted it was, the realisation of the employment of a Diocesan Nurse was, he said, a concrete manifestation of this fact. Bishop Denis enthusiastically pursued this from the moment he came to Ossory and, in spite of some difficulties which he willingly navigated, it was Bishop Denis' resolve to see it happen that ensured the work begun by Bishop Dermot in employing a nurse was brought to fruition. Fr Martin noted the legacy of care that this gives to the Diocese as that nurse has already made a real difference to the lives of, and our ability to care for, each other in Ossory.

Finally, Fr Martin reflected on the manner in which Bishop Denis', through many simple, but thought-through, gestures had

expressed his deep care for, and kindness to, the priests and people of Ossory. In thanking Bishop Denis for the simple phone call each priest would receive on the day of the anniversary of their Ordination, Fr Martin noted that this was an indication of the manner in which Bishop Denis remained so attentive to the care of the clergy of our Diocese; a care, he noted, that Bishop Denis extended so easily also to the people of the Diocese too in so many ways. Concluding his remarks Fr Martin reflected on the fact that sadly Bishop Denis had presided over, or attended to, the funerals of Bishop Seamus and nine other clergy of the Diocese during his time with us and he again noted that in so doing Bishop Denis' attention to Ossory and deep care of its priests was continually fully manifest.

On behalf of the priests of the Diocese, and noting Bishop Denis' obvious love for St Mary's Cathedral and the work he had carried out therein, Fr Martin presented a painting of Bishop Denis standing in front of the Cathedral by the artist Laura Cronin - a token of appreciation and, he hoped, a memory of time well spent in Ossory.

Bishop Denis, who noted that he is far more comfortable out working than receiving thanks, welcomed the gift and happily stayed, once more with no rush, in the heart of Ossory for time in relaxed conversation with all those who had gathered.



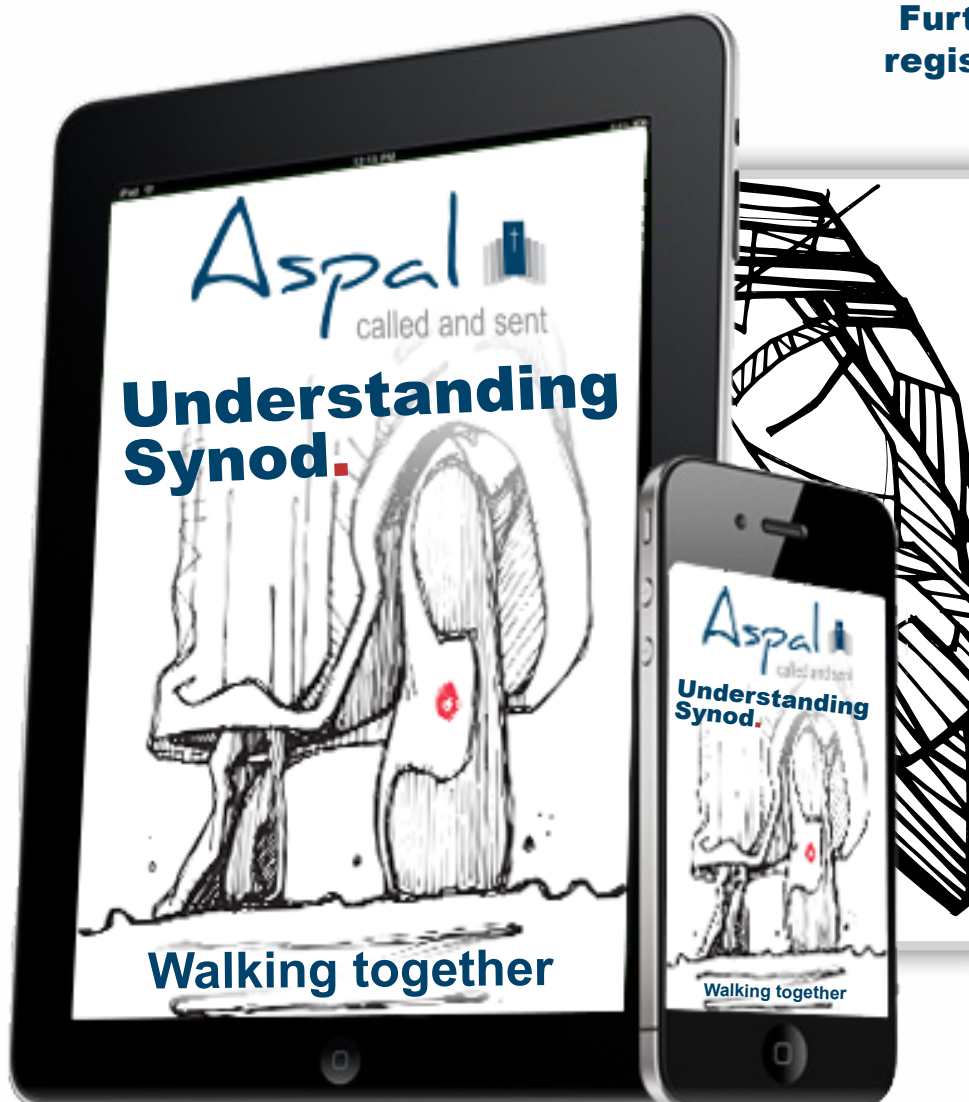


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The choir then is just one, fun, aspect of this working together.

Adrian O'Keeffe

Cois Nore Choir at St Kieran's



Every Monday night the Cois Nore Choir meet at St Kieran's College for an evening of song, laughter, support and friendship. Cois Nore is an organisation serving the Kilkenny area which provides free confidential support and both professional and voluntary services to people of all ages affected by cancer and their families to enable them to live well with their diagnosis. The choir then is just one, fun, aspect of this working together.

On Monday 6th March they came together in music and prayer for a celebration of Mass in the College chapel, a chance to pray with, and for, each other, to remember those who had died, and to celebrate in prayer the gift of friendship on our respective journeys. Fr Dermot Ryan, in welcoming us to the College, celebrated the Mass before hosting an evening of hospitality and chat for all who gathered.

The Choir meet every Monday and new friends and singers are always welcome!



"the masterpieces of religious art that surround us in the Vatican and in all of Rome reflect the conviction that, in Jesus Christ, God himself became a pilgrim in this world as a result of his love for our human family...." [Pope Francis]

Dermot Ryan

Ossory Adult Faith Development Rome Pilgrimage 2023

On the afternoon of Thursday 9th March a group of nearly 50 people from the Diocese, with a few neighbouring friends, boarded an Aer Lingus flight from Dublin to Fiumicino to take part in the Ossory Adult Faith Development Diocesan Pilgrimage to Rome. As people arrived they were greeted by Kieron Troy of Myriam Travel who was our wonderful guide for these days in the eternal city. Spirits were good and all looked forward to the days ahead.

This pilgrimage was an opportunity for those who travelled to deepen their understanding of God, their knowledge of the faith, by means of an exploration of some of the many wonderful works of art easily found throughout the city. The pace of the days was "easy" although it was amazing to reflect on all that the group managed to explore.

The first point of departure for the pilgrimage was the church of San Pietro in Vincoli (St Peter in Chains) where, along with seeing the relic of the chains that bound Saint Peter when he was imprisoned in Jerusalem, we had the opportunity to stand before Michelangelo's wonderful statue of Moses (1513-1515) which now forms a central part of the tomb of Pope Julius

II. We marvelled at the manner in which the stone of this statue seemed to turn to flesh and human hair under the amazing craftsmanship of the great artist. Before leaving the church, Fr Larry Wallace led the celebration of the Mass and Fr Dermot Ryan welcomed the group and reminded all who travelled that no art experts were needed in these days for us to, each in our own way, let these wonderful statues, churches, icons, paintings and so much more speak to us of our faith. From there the group travelled by foot to the Trevi Fountain before breaking for lunch and then regrouping to continue in the direction of the Spanish Steps. During that same evening we visited Santa Cecilia in Trastevere where the tomb of patroness of music was to be seen along with the wonderful ancient mosaics that adorn the walls of this beautiful church. We had hoped to visit San Benedetto in Piscinula (the original home of St Benedict which is now a beautiful church) but as there was prayer underway we could not enter. Undeterred the group moved onto a wonderful evening meal in Trastevere - with some stopping to see the first church in Rome dedicated to Mary, the mother of Jesus, Santa Maria in Trastevere.

On Saturday some of the group took advantage of a free morning to visit



St Peter's Basilica and more of the group headed to the Vatican Museums to explore what is one of the finest collections of art anywhere in the world, before leaving after lunch to see the famous Bernini sculpture of St Theresa in Ecstasy in Santa Maria della Vittoria. It was here that Fr Dan Cavanagh led the celebration of Mass, before we then travelled to view what is possibly the earliest Christian mosaic of all, in the church of Santa Pudenziana. This wonderful mosaic is from around the end of the 4th century - dating to either the pontificate of Pope Siricius (384–399) or that of Pope Innocent I (401–417). From there the group travelled the short steps to the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore and took time there to explore the beauty of this famous Basilica and marvel at the famous Byzantine icon of the Salus Populi Romani (salvation, of the Roman People). It is this icon to which the Pope travels before he undertakes any papal



trips and before which he prays when he returns.

On Sunday we arose early to make the short journey from our hotel to St Peter's Basilica for the celebration of Mass at the tomb of St Peter led by Fr Dermot. As a special moment on this morning, during the celebration, we witnessed the renewal of the wedding vows of two of our pilgrims - Dick and Mary Curtin - as they celebrated with us 50 years of marriage. Having taken time to gently explore the wonderful Basilica and the crypt with the tombs of the Popes many skipped out for a late breakfast before returning to pray the Angelus with Pope Francis. In the afternoon we had the opportunity to visit the stunning gallery of Galleria Borghese which today houses a substantial part of the Borghese Collection of paintings, sculpture and antiquities, begun by Cardinal Scipione Borghese, the nephew of Pope Paul V (1605–1621). Among the

beautiful pieces of work that we saw were Titian's Sacred and Profane Love (c 1514); the Abduction of Proserpina by Bernini (1621/22) and also his Apollo and Daphne; Caravaggio's David with the Head of Goliath and several other works by this artist such as the Boy with a Basket of Fruit and his work on St Jerome. The group were able to slowly work its way through the museum, each having the opportunity to pause at any particular piece that caught their eye - among them works by Titan, Raphel, Rubens and so many more. It was wonderful to see some pilgrimage go find friends to share a work they stumbled upon - to marvel at its beauty together.

On Monday we had the opportunity to visit the Basilica of St John Lateran and in it many of its wonderful works of art. We marvelled at the statues therein of the twelve apostles and explored the stories from the Old and New Testaments depicted in the stucco reliefs that were designed by Alessandro Algardi in 1650. We slowly walked through the Basilica, stopping also to take in the Giotto's fresco depicting Bonifacio VIII declaring

the Jubilee of 1300. Before leaving Fr Kieran O'Shea led us in the celebration of the Mass in the choir chapel. Some free time was taken by the group at this point with some taking the opportunity to visit the nearby Scala Sancta which according to tradition, were the steps leading up to the praetorium of Pontius Pilate in Jerusalem and as such on which Jesus Christ would have walked on his way to trial during his Passion. These stairs, it is believed, were brought to Rome by Saint Helena in the fourth century hoping to see the conversion of her son, the Emperor Constantine. Later in the day we gathered for a trip to Piazza del Popolo to explore there the Caravaggio masterpieces in Madonna del Popolo - the Crucifixion of St Peter and the Conversion of St Paul, before walking to San Luigi dei Francesi where we had the opportunity to see three more of his works - The Calling of St Matthew, the Martyrdom of Saint Matthew and the Inspiration of St Matthew. Following this we travelled to the famous Piazza Navona located on the site of the Stadium of Domitian, from the 1st century AD, noting as we stood there that the piazza still follows the form





of the open space of the stadium as it first was created. While there we took time to take in the wonderful Fontana dei Quattro Fiumi (Fountain of the Four Rivers) which was designed in 1651 by Bernini for Pope Innocent X whose family palace, the Palazzo Pamphili, faced onto the piazza as did the church of Sant'Agnese in Agone of which Innocent was its sponsor. Following this many took time to explore the works of the local artists and take in the wonderful unique atmosphere before heading for dinner in one of the many nearby restaurants.

On the final day as we got ready to return we took a free morning before departing for Lake Albano and an intended trip to Castlegandolfo - the latter plan had to be abandoned due to rain but in so doing we had time to relax over an easy lunch. Tired but delighting in the few days the group departed for the airport and a return to home.

Pope Francis who was obviously made aware of this little pilgrimage observed, on March 16th, only days after we had departed, that:

“the masterpieces of religious art that surround us in the Vatican and in all of Rome reflect the conviction that, in Jesus Christ, God himself became a pilgrim in this world as a result of his love for our human family. For Christians, God who became one of us in the humanity of Jesus continues to lead us on a pilgrimage of holiness through which we recover and grow in our likeness to him and thus become, in the words of St Peter, “partakers in the divine nature””.

In a real sense, and in concrete ways, those who travelled had the opportunity to experience that, together in this pilgrimage of art and faith.

'Synodality' is the catch-all phrase that the Pope uses to express Vatican's II comprehensive vision of the Church.

Synodality

+ Niall Coll

St John Henry Newman famously observed that 'there has seldom been a Council without great confusion after it.' The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) was no exception. Hence the often-fractious discourse between traditionalists and progressives - perhaps more noticed in the United States and on the Continent than in Ireland - concerning its meaning and implementation in the decades since. Whatever the merits or otherwise of their respective arguments, the pontificate of Francis, now in its eleventh year, is about inviting the Church into a new phase in the reception of Vatican II. Even if Pope Francis did not participate in the Council, it is the backdrop to all he says. The various emphases of his pontificate - a listening church, a church that is poor, a merciful church, a missionary church, etc - are attempts to encapsulate vital aspects of the Council's vision.

Pope Francis and Synodality

'Synodality' is the catch-all phrase that the Pope uses to express Vatican's II comprehensive vision of the Church. While the Council itself did not use this precise term it has taken on a great resonance in Francis's writings and preaching. He speaks repeatedly of 'a listening church, a synodal church' as he seeks to promote a more participatory and dialogical style of church life universally. A synodal church will therefore be mindful of the medieval maxim, "what affects all must be addressed by all". Pope Francis has gone on to envisage a synodal church as a kind of "inverted pyramid" in which "the top is located beneath the base". Consequently, those who exercise authority in the church are called 'ministers,' because, in the original meaning of the word, they are the least of all. "It is in serving the people of God that each bishop becomes, for that portion of the flock entrusted to him, vicarius Christi . . ." A synodal church is one that listens, it is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn -

the faithful people, the college of bishops, the Bishop of Rome - all listening to each other, all listening to the Holy Spirit, the 'Spirit of truth,' in order to know what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

The Synodal Pathway

On 10 March 2021, the Irish Catholic Bishops Conference announced a Synodal Pathway for the Catholic Church in Ireland in preparation for a National Synodal Assembly or Assemblies within the next five years. It is part of a wider global consultation process which Pope Francis has launched in preparation for the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Bishops dedicated to the theme, 'For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission' that is due to take place in Rome in October 2024. Already a process of widespread consultations has taken place over recent months in the parishes and dioceses of Ireland, including here in Ossory, regarding the Synodal Pathway for the Irish Church. This led to the writing of individual reports for each Irish diocese, including Ossory, and these were then redacted to form a single Irish report on synodality which was submitted to and discussed at the meeting of the European Continental Assembly in Prague in February.

It is my great hope now as the new Bishop, that together with the people and clergy of the diocese, that we will build on the work already underway in the pastoral areas and parishes of the Diocese. One can only lament the slow pace of ecclesial and pastoral reform in Ireland since the Council. Hopefully, the diocesan synods and assemblies planned for Ireland over the next few years, including here in Ossory, will be the beginning of a process which will herald new life as the second wave of Vatican II reforms so close to Pope Francis' heart are encouraged to take firm root in our country.

As we grow and mature we make our own
the gift of faith that we have received...



CHURCH MATTERS

The Gift that Burns Brightly

Albert McDonnell

Radharc na nOileán Pastoral Area, Diocese of Killaloe.

The sacrament of baptism is among the most beautiful moments that we celebrate in church. The eyes of parents sparkle with love and pride as their little baby becomes a sister or brother of Christ, a child of God the Father, a member of the family of hope, goodness and faith that is the believing community.

Baptism is a big step taken by tiny feet carried forward by an outpouring of love. It is a wonderful moment of blessing, joy, congratulations, celebration, hope and welcome.

The ceremony is rich and beautiful. It contains a great many signs, symbols and expressions of love, faith and hope. The celebration begins with a word of welcome which reminds us that we are valued. Next the priest or deacon asks the parents what name they have chosen for their child. Picking a name is a big decision. The newborn will identify with that name for all their days on this earth and beyond. The celebrant then asks the parents 'What do you want from God's church for your child?' This question is a reminder that bringing your child for baptism is a decision, a choice, a commitment. When the parents reply 'baptism' the priest or deacon welcomes the child with great joy on behalf of the believing community by tracing the sign

of the cross on the baby's forehead and inviting the parents and godparents to do the same.

It is a great honour to be invited to be a godparent. It is an invitation to join with the parents as part of the circle of love and care that surrounds the little baby and will nourish her/his faith and wellbeing.

The next element of the liturgy is a short reading from the word of God followed by the litany of the saints. The baby is joining a family of faith that goes back through the generations to the women and men who walked the roads of Palestine with Jesus. Reflecting the shape of the cross, our Church extends outwards in space to include people of every race and nation and onwards in time to embrace all generation.

Next comes the first anointing. The baby's breast is anointed with the oil of catechumens as we pray that she/he may be protected from anything which is harmful in our world. This sacred oil was blessed by the bishop during holy week. We rely on the Holy Spirit to keep us safe. We then profess our faith. Baptism is the sacrament of faith. We share our faith which we treasure with our children whom we love.



Jude O'Sullivan with his parents Anne-Marie and Aidan on his baptism day.

The water which will be used to baptise the child is blessed. Water is a symbol of growth and life. It purifies and nourishes just as Christ does in baptism. We reach the heart of the celebration as water is poured three times over the head of the infant in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The newly baptised child is then anointed on the head with the oil of chrism. The word 'Christ' means 'anointed one'. In baptism, we become Christians 'anointed ones' so that we may live and proclaim the kingdom of God. The oil of chrism is a mixture of olive oil and perfumed balsam blessed by the bishop. It penetrates our skin, our very being, and represents our dignity as daughters and sons of God.

The newly baptised is clothed with a white garment. Many families use a christening shawl handed down through the generations. Some mothers remodel their wedding dress to become a christening shawl. A candle is lit from the Easter Candle and entrusted to the parents and godparents. The flame, like the child, may be small and delicate but

like the faith of the child it can be fanned into a flame to illuminate her/his steps in life. A prayer is offered over the child's ears and mouth.

The celebrant then invokes baptism as the gateway to the other sacraments:

Dear friends, this child has been christened and is now called a child of God. It is the beginning of the journey of life. Please God you will have the joy of being with your child on First Communion day and see your child take on mature Christian living on Confirmation day, when the fullness of God's Holy Spirit is given.

The baptism is recorded in the parish baptism register.

In baptism we are washed in the waters of redemption, clothed in Christ and anointed with chrism so that we may partake in the wonders of the life of faith. As we grow and mature we make our own the gift of faith that we have received as we witness to the love and hope that only Christ can offer.



Ossory Diocese School Essay Winning Entries

Every Voice Makes The Parish – The Church On A Journey Where Every Voice Counts

ROHAN VARGAS
5TH YEAR, CBS KILKENNY

"Diversity is a richness, never a reason for exclusion", stated by Pope Francis at the 50th anniversary of the founding of Foi et Lumière, which strive to create trusting, meaningful bonds based on Jesus' fellowship. It is one of many multi-denominational movements which foster friendship and involvement in the Church, ensuring the marginalised, those on the periphery of society, are included. Through associations such as L'Arche, Trócaire and CAFOD, Christians can be a voice for people on their ecumenical journeys.

The Ossory Diocese and St Canice's parish, represent a place of safety, a sanctuary from everyday life. People from all walks of life can engage in dialogue about their experiences with the Christian faith, pursuing a common goal of working together for the better of the community – by the inclusion of all 85,000 people within the diocese, standing as a united church, on a journey

towards fulfilment with God. "Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts forms one body, so it is with Christ." (Corinthians 12:12-14)

Youth involvement is an integral part of our church; however, more needs to be done. It is imperative that the Church endeavours to find the missing puzzle piece to encourage greater youth involvement amidst an increasingly secularistic, materialistic, and individualistically driven society. As true Catholics, we have responsibilities to fulfil the vision of Jesus Christ. "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." (Mark 10:13-16).

A plethora of activities are available for young people such as altar-serving, youth ministry, and events that encourage faithful citizenship and positive shared experiences:

I was involved in the ordination of Bishop Niall Coll, as a cross-bearer. The culmination of students, laypeople and volunteers who aided in the event,

heralded the theme of Catholic Schools Week: walking together in faith and love. The diocese kindles in students a willingness to connect with God. Ossory Youth and Loreto Secondary School organise annual pilgrimages to Taizé; Joe Malone visited CBS Kilkenny to discuss the Medjugorje and Camino de Santiago Youth Pilgrimage. The CBS has had avid participation in the past years in Lourdes. Fr Peter McVerry was the guest speaker at our CBS Kilkenny Awards Night in 2019. Students see their faith as a shared journey; everyone is equal in the eyes of God. Students garner a responsibility to look out for others in the community – the elderly, those with disabilities – acting as their beacon of hope and guidance. Thus, the Church greatly promotes solidarity and inclusivity among all people in our diocese.

"We are empowered as God's holy people; to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, called to build his Kingdom in the Church and in the world." (Words of Thanks of Bishop Niall Coll, the 96th Bishop of Ossory)

Another successful initiative is the Aim High Parish Ministry Programme, which caters for youths aged 16 and over across the diocese. The programme bridges the gap between Catholicism and a new generation of youths who will inherit a more modern Kingdom of God. The Adult Faith Development group is based in St Kieran's College. In collaboration with St Patrick's Pontifical University, the group launched Aspal, which offers courses in parish administration. Both new participants and active parishioners can avail of the digital platform's opportunities for faith formation. Aspal endorses synodality – collaboration as the People of God. Aspal – Irish for "Apostle" – guarantees that people from all faith backgrounds can find their footing in their discipleship journey.

The aforementioned initiatives are laudable; however, we must be prudent to avoid rendering them tokenistic. The Church must revamp their efforts

in making strategies more accessible to those economically or socially underrepresented in church leadership. Many youths are dissuaded from ministry simply due to rules set out by canon law e.g., male-exclusive priesthood, as well as clerical celibacy, which has been in effect since 1139. The Church should contemplate reforming its regulations and this may stimulate a new pool of ordination that appeals to more youths today. More than 21% of Ireland's entire population of parish priests – both serving and retired – have died in just three years. Former Manchester United star Phil Mulryne, now an ordained priest in the Dominican Order, is a clear illustration of how vocation can provide purpose and meaning in an individual's life.

According to the "Finding Faith in Ireland" study by Christ in Youth and Barna, Irish youth are undergoing a faith crisis:

"63% of those qualify as Christians in name only. One in four Irish youths are currently going through a crisis of faith. 81 percent of young people at least partially agree with the statement, 'I think the Church's teachings on sexuality and homosexuality are wrong.'. 29% and 18% of youths worry about the church's views on unwanted pregnancy and going to hell, respectively."

As a student from the international dimension, I feel our diocese goes the extra mile in adapting to the ever-evolving, multicultural identity of Ireland. During the Typhoon Haiyan crisis in the Philippines in 2013, the parish were stalwart supporters of my Filipino-Irish community. The diocese is cognizant and is appreciative of its international and pluralist representation; the Kilkenny Indian Church community, the Kilkenny Presbyterian Church, the Kilkenny Methodist Church, the Capuchin Friars, the Christian Brothers, the I.B.V.M., the P.B.V.M. et al.

This harmonic coexistence is promoted through events such as World Youth Day

2023, held in Lisbon. WYD is a celebration of youth, an expression of a universal Church and a symbol of evangelisation for the youth world. "Although its Catholic identity is clearly evident, WYD opens its doors to everyone, no matter how close to or distant from the Church they are.". In 2013, over 3 million youths gathered in Rio de Janeiro where Pope Francis proclaimed the theme; "Go and make disciples of all nations".

Youth 2000 are an international spiritual initiative, rooting their mission in the dream of St John Bosco, the patron saint of youth: "Our objective is to see young people set on fire with the Holy Spirit". The organisation arranges retreats, student networks and coordinates large-scale events such as Flame Congress 2023, the largest gathering of young Catholics across the UK.

Many youths are deterred from the Church due to its negative portrayal in the media (e.g., the broadcasting of the Troubles, the Mother and Baby scandals). This is not a true reflection of the Christian church, more needs to be done to highlight positive events in the media such as WYD and Youth 2000. The Church should encourage laypeople to study theology at third level with more of an emphasis on social justice and lay-involvement, rather than a disproportionate focus on literacy, dogma, creed, and doctrine. In doing so, the Church could provide outlets for all those in the Church hierarchy to have their say in pressing issues.

A successful example of this is the conjunctive effort of Tearfund Ireland and Christian Aid. The two organisations inspire young students to assume dynamic roles in the Church through active participation in stewardship – amalgamating ministry and environmental issues. Societal inaction can often cause decreased levels of church involvement: "Burning Down The House", a joint study by Youthscape and Tearfund, outlined that 9 out of 10 young people are concerned about the climate crisis but only 1 out of

10 think their churches are doing enough about it.

The Church should advocate Christian events among today's youths, the same study by Barna reveals a positive correlation between Christian-event attendance and frequency of Christian practices. Increased funding and scholarships (e.g., the SVP Education and Training bursaries) should be pursued for students and youths who don't have the economic or logistical means to attend such events:

"If a Christian has attended a Christian event, they are significantly more likely than those who have not attended one to report a personal prayer life (53% vs. 25%), to attend church monthly (53% vs. 22%) and to say that Jesus has deeply transformed his or her life (25% vs. 11%)."

"Young people want the church to listen and act now. Churches must use their platforms to listen to their young people and the most vulnerable in the world"

(Dr Ruth Valerio, Director of Global Advocacy and Influencing at Tearfund)

As young believers, we need to become more actively involved in the Church as we will be the Church of the future, an all-encompassing Church of innovators, thinkers, and pioneers where every voice counts – A Church more accommodating to the needs of today, promising the continuation of Christ's vision. We cannot deny that secularisation, anti-clericism and the advancement of movements such as naturalism and humanism in worldly affairs have advanced society tenfold. However, we must remain conscious of the power faith holds in rebuilding communities after periods of breakdown and intolerance, and the congruence it welds in our often-divided societies.

"Dream and live, be free and authentic, be the critical conscience of society." (Pope Francis, homily during the feast of Christ the King).

Rory Farrell

6th Year, St Kieran's College

"We extend a special welcome to those who are single, married, divorced, gay, confused, filthy rich, comfortable, dirt poor and you". This welcome stands proudly on the door of St Luke's Anglican church, Howard Davis Park, Jersey. I know this because my family and I have holidayed there for as long as I can remember. I doubt this notice would have been acceptable even ten short years ago. Perhaps not all Christian faiths are as open minded as the clergy in this particular church but one can't help but feel that all denominations are even more eager to interact with their congregations. Pope Francis wants everyone involved in a church of motion and emotion. Some might argue that they grew up in the church with the rule of - pray, pay and obey, where church was only a matter of obligation. My parents lived through the transition from Latin only masses to Latin and English and finally English alone. To finally have mass in a language that could be understood was a transformation.

Whilst the church will always encourage weekly attendance, they will nonetheless welcome those whose attendance are far less frequent, even if this is only at Christmas. In our Parish, Christmas Eve mass is a bright spectacle. The altar is decorated with cherry red poinsettias and every family is represented with their very own candle. The ancient crib sits neatly in the corner adorned with ivy picked from the adjacent graveyard. Children dress as the Holy Family and perform their little Nativity Play. It is the only day of the year that the church is crowded. Families sit in the same seats they sit in every year. Readings, prayers of the faithful and the reflection one all shared out and are festive and meaningful. Carols are sung and the joy of Christmas is celebrated by young and old. None of this would happen without the church: "every voice makes the parish".

St Pius X called Holy Communion "the shortest and surest way to heaven". Children are prepared for the sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation not just in their classrooms but in their local church too. Attendance at mass once a month is encouraged and the children and their parents play a big part in the preparation of these ceremonies. Where once young people were spoken at - they are now listened to. Children become aware that they have an obligation of service to the church and to their communities. Participation in church ceremonies is encouraged,

With the drop in vocations, parishioners and lay people must and are taking a more active part. There are now more than 100 ordained deacons in Ireland with many more preparing to become one. Their responsibilities vary from presiding at funerals to visiting prisoners, promoting awareness of the social teaching of the church is a vital role and it is here that often unheard voices are unleashed. The ministry of the deacon includes visiting prisoners. There they get an insight into life behind bars in our penal institutions. Dealing with addictions, mental health issues and homelessness, deacons must deal and help with the healing in criminal behaviour. Many prisoners say the first thing you lose when incarcerated is your voice, and that is why the deacon plays a vital role in their lives - giving them a voice to be heard which is listened to with compassion. "Mine is not a religion of the prison-house. It has room for the least among God's creation". - Mahatma Gandhi

The church at last has greater tolerance for what it is to be Catholic. The family unit comes in all forms now and the church understands this and is showing a willingness to engage with it. LGBT people are now shown respect and compassion. They are no longer discriminated against. This journey where every voice counts is progressing. Pope Francis has expressed a desire that the church be a "home for

all people " and for church leaders to focus on being pastors rather than rule enforcers. This is a clear statement that the church is all the people of god. The Pope's words give courage and hope to the Catholic Faithful who have been doing this work for many decades, but who have often received penalties and discouragements from church leaders who did not share the Pope's broad vision. This message signals a new day for a Catholic church that is welcoming to all.

Now that we have opened our homes and hearts to our new friends from war torn countries such as Ukraine, it is fitting that they are valued and welcome to attend our churches. Who would have thought a few years ago that mass would be said in Polish, by a Polish Priest for Polish mass attendees!

The Catholic Church has shown a willingness to admit mistakes of the past. Recent tribunals for historical child abuse cases within the catholic church have given a voice to those who suffered this horrific abuse. The pope has issued a pastoral letter of apology and new guidelines for safeguarding of children have been implemented. Thankfully the old fashioned manner of "brushing these things under the carpet" has been replaced with openness and awareness.

The poet Mary Oliver says to journey is "to continue persevering in your own transformation". These will be obstacles, it will feel scary, but in the end, you will learn to hear and trust your own voice and your own path. The church is on a journey where every voice counts. Mine included.



Safeguarding in Ossory

Kathleen Sherry

Tuesday 21st March saw 75 people attend St Mary's Parish Hall in Slieverue for information and refresher training on Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults. Despite the wind and rain Eucharistic Ministers, Readers, Sacristans, Choir Members, Church Cleaners, Envelope Distributors and members of the pastoral council among others were present following invitation by the local safeguarding representatives, parish secretaries and Fr Kieran O'Shea.

The attendees were brought through why we safeguard and reminded that within our church based community that safeguarding has a wide remit which includes ensuring

keeping children, vulnerable adults and those working with them safe, working in partnership with parents/guardians and that as a church we value and encourage the participation of children in all activities that enhance their spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual and social development. The training went through the practical steps of safeguarding and reminded participants what to do if they had a concern.

If parishes would like a bespoke information or training session for their parish, please contact Kathleen Sherry on safeguarding@ossory.ie or 085 8061233.

The visit of the Shrine of St Lachtain's Arm to Freshford in June 2023 will be another milestone on this road of celebration and commemoration

In the footsteps of St Lachtain (Part 2)

Ned Kennedy



A depiction of the Shrine of St Lachtain's Arm by local artist Gemma Fullam.

During 2022 the people of Freshford came together to commemorate the 1400th anniversary of the death of their patron St Lachtain.

The community also celebrated more than 1400 years of worship in the parish and, in particular, on the site of St Lachtain's Church of Ireland. Because there is a service in St Lachtain's every Sunday morning, this means it is one of the longest surviving active church sites in Ireland, if not the longest. Our researchers are currently investigating this issue before cementing this claim to fame.

Lachtain was born c. 540 A.D., in the Barony of Muscraí, Co. Cork, son of Toirbin and Senecha. Local historians suggest he was actually born in the parish of Kilnamartra.

It is said his family was descended from Conor, the High King of Ireland. From an early age he was destined for the church. Legends tell of many miracles he wrought during his boyhood. He studied under Comhgall in Bangor on the shores of Belfast Lough. In time he went forth to preach God's word.

Lachtain's chief foundation, c. 570, was amongst his own kinsmen in Achadh Úr, now Freshford, Co. Kilkenny. These were the descendants of the Ui Duach, also from Muscraí, who had conquered north Kilkenny around 400 A.D. Their influence stretched all over the area and into Laois. Today many place names still carry that influence such as Odagh (Uí Duach), Three Castles (Bán Ua nDuach) and Durrow (Darmhach Ua nDuach).

Lachtain was styled bishop in some martyrologies and is counted on the list of Bishops of Ossory in St Mary's Cathedral, Kilkenny. There is a strong presumption that Freshford was an ancient Episcopal See, having a small diocese attached to it and that it was subsumed into the Diocese of Ossory at the Synod of Rathbrasil.

In time Lachtain returned to his own people and, c. 580, founded churches in Kilnamartra and Donoughmore, Co. Cork where he is also acknowledged as patron saint. The Annals of the Four Masters record his death on March 19, 622 A.D.

Kilnamartra (Cill na Martra) translates as the Church of the Relics. Lachtain's relics, supposedly those of his right arm through which medium he wrought his later miracles, were preserved there until a bronze shrine or reliquary was manufactured in the early twelfth century. Following the Reformation the reliquary of St Lachtain's Arm had a chequered history before finally coming to rest at the National Museum in Dublin where today it is admired in the Treasures of Ireland exhibition.

Close to Freshford is Tobar Lachtaín or St Lachtain's Well, long the site of a pattern and reputedly the source for a cure for ailments of the eye.

Féile Lachtain was inaugurated last year to promote St Lachtain's Church as a heritage site and as a visitor centre. A crafts shop and local museum were added to the church annexe before Covid struck in 2020. The centre was rebranded as Ionad Lachtain Church, Arts and Heritage Centre before opening again in 2022 when Covid restrictions were lifted. Ionad Lachtain hosted a number of lectures, exhibitions and performances for Féile Lachtain 2022.

Undoubtedly the highlight of this year's Féile will be the visit to Freshford by the Shrine of St Lachtain's Arm on a one day loan from the National Museum. It was hoped to have the shrine in Freshford for the 1400th anniversary celebrations last year but it was not to be; however, the adoption of a Loans Policy by the Museum authorities now allows for the displaying of this national treasure outside the capital city. Great credit is due to the National Museum for adopting this new approach. The shrine will be displayed at Ionad Lachtain on Saturday, June 17.

The official opening of the exhibition by Ms. Lynn Scarff, director of the National Museum, will take place c. 11.00 a.m. on June 17. This will be followed by an ecumenical welcome with the clergy of both churches Monsignor Kieron Kennedy, P.P., Dean Stephen Farrell, Dean of Ossory and Canon Richard Marsh of the Union of Kilkenny Parishes. Dr. Griffin Murray, from UCC, is a renowned expert on the history of the shrine and he will give a short talk at 12.00 noon. There will be a variety of music recitals in the background at the exhibition during the day. It is hoped as many people as possible will visit Freshford on June 17 to see this historic event - St Lachtain's Arm in St Lachtain's Church.

As we exit the Decade of Centenaries built around commemorating events



St Lachtain's Church of Ireland, Freshford.

which helped to form the state between the years 1913 and 1923, Freshford's celebration of its patron saint in 2022 may have inadvertently kicked off a new Decade of Centenaries as we build towards the Millennium Sescentensimus Centenary (1600th anniversary) of the coming of St Patrick which will be celebrated in 2032, le cúnamh Dé.

During the approaching decade, 2022-2032, the 1500th anniversary of the death of St Brigid of Kildare and St Aidan of Ferns will be marked in 2025; St Fiacre's journey to Meaux in France, recorded in 628 A.D. will be recalled in 2028. Unfortunately, because of Covid 19, the 1500th anniversary of the birth of

Colmcille was recalled at a distance in 2021. These are some of the events which helped in the evolution of the term "Island of Saints and Scholars" after the dawn of Christianity following the work of Kieran, Lachtain, Brigid and so many others. The bi-centenary of Catholic Emancipation will be celebrated in 2029.

The visit of the Shrine of St Lachtain's Arm to Freshford in June 2023 will be another milestone on this road of celebration and commemoration. Looking forward to seeing you all there!

See www.ionadlachtain.com Follow us at Ionad Lachtain on Facebook and Instagram.

Our Lenten Journey

Eadaoin Maher

As we come to the end of our Lenten journey for 2023, and as we embrace the hope of Easter, we give thanks for the moments that marks our journey to this day.

We had penitential services in our parishes, the occasion to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation in many of our parishes, the Chrism Mass as Bishop Niall's first among us, and so many moments as a Diocese on that journey too. We thank all that made these moments so special - Rev Dr Michael Shortall and Dr Tobias Winright who reflected on "The Ethics of War in this Time of Conflict"; Dr Jessie Rogers who explored "Women in the Church some Biblical Perspectives"; Rev Dr Billy Swan who reflected on "What St Patrick might say to us today"; Bishop Niall who reflected with the Priests, Religious and people of our Diocese on "What Pope Francis Intends by Calling us to be a Synodal Church" and Dr Marie Griffin, Prof Dáire Kehoe, Mr John Curtis and Bishop Niall explored in conversation "The Future of Catholic Education in Ireland"; our online presence in Ossory, our daily thought for the day on Twitter, and so much more.

May the journey of faith continue to bring us together; may the hope of Easter inspire us.





MORALITY MATTERS

Michael Shortall

Give me a crash course in ... Two Popes: a death and an anniversary

It's hard to believe it's ten years since the Pope Benedict XVI resigned.

Do you remember the day you heard the news?

It was in the last day of February 2013. It surprised us all. It was the first time in over seven hundred years since a Pope voluntarily resigned.

Joseph Ratzinger had served as the 265th Pope of the Catholic Church from 2005 to 2013. He was a well-renowned

theologian, writing some very influential books, before becoming Bishop of Munich. One important book is called an *Introduction to Christianity* (1968). For many years he was the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. We could call him the Pope's chief theologian.

Perhaps it was that long service to the previous Pope that led to his election.

That may be true. He took the name Benedict, after two people. He said: "why

I chose the name Benedict. Firstly, Pope Benedict XV, that courageous prophet of peace, [and] Saint Benedict of Nursia, co-patron of Europe, [...]to help us all to hold firm to the centrality of Christ in our Christian life ..." (27 April 2005)

He had a lot of challenges through his time.

Benedict XVI wrote on love (*Deus Caritas Est*, 2005), hope (*Spe Salvi*, 2007), and justice (*Caritas in Veritate*, 2009). He worked to strengthen the Church's relationship with other faiths, including Islam and Judaism. One of his most famous speeches was at the University of Regensburg in Germany, where he discussed the relationship between faith and reason. He is known for his intellectual rigor, his commitment to traditional Catholic teachings. While his legacy has been somewhat overshadowed by the scandals that have rocked the Catholic Church in recent years, his contributions to theology and his leadership during a difficult period in the Church's history should not be overlooked.

And yet perhaps he might be remembered most for his resignation, because of advanced age and declining health.

That may be so for many. But I think in time, it will be his theology that will continue to be influential.

And then within a couple of weeks, there was the election of Pope Francis.

On the night of his election (March 13th, 2023), Jorge Mario Bergoglio said that the cardinals had looked to "ends of the earth." He was echoing the Acts of the Apostles where Jesus Christ prophesies to his apostles at his ascension, "... you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

From the beginning he was a pope of firsts. He is the first pope from the Americas and the first Jesuit pope, he immediately

captured the world's attention.

He chose the name Francis in honour of St Francis of Assisi, a beloved figure in Catholicism known for his simplicity and love for nature. Since then his papacy has been marked by a commitment to social justice (*Laudato Si*, 2015), interfaith dialogue (*Fratelli Tutti*, 2020), and a deep pastoral sense (*Amoris Laetitia*, 2016).

He has also been a vocal advocate for greater transparency and accountability within the Church, particularly in relation to the sexual abuse and financial corruption. During his trip to Ireland he said: "It is my hope that the gravity of the abuse scandals, which have cast light on the failings of many, will serve to emphasize the importance of the protection of minors and vulnerable adults on the part of society as a whole." (August 25, 2018)

I don't think I will forget the image of Pope Francis during the Pandemic. It was poignant, standing alone in a deserted St Peter's Square with a steady rain falling.

That evening, he prayed: "you are calling on us to seize this time of trial as a time of choosing ... It is a time to get our lives back on track with regard to you, Lord, and to others." (March 27, 2020)

Despite suffering with ill-health, he continues to be dynamic, inviting the universal church on a path of synodality. It is a challenging journey, formally culminating in 2024. In his encouraging words: "let us experience this moment of encounter, listening and reflection as a season of grace that, in the joy of the Gospel ..." (October 9, 2021)

After this ten years, the two Popes will undoubtedly continue to inspire the church and the world. Happy Easter to all the readers of the Ossory Times.

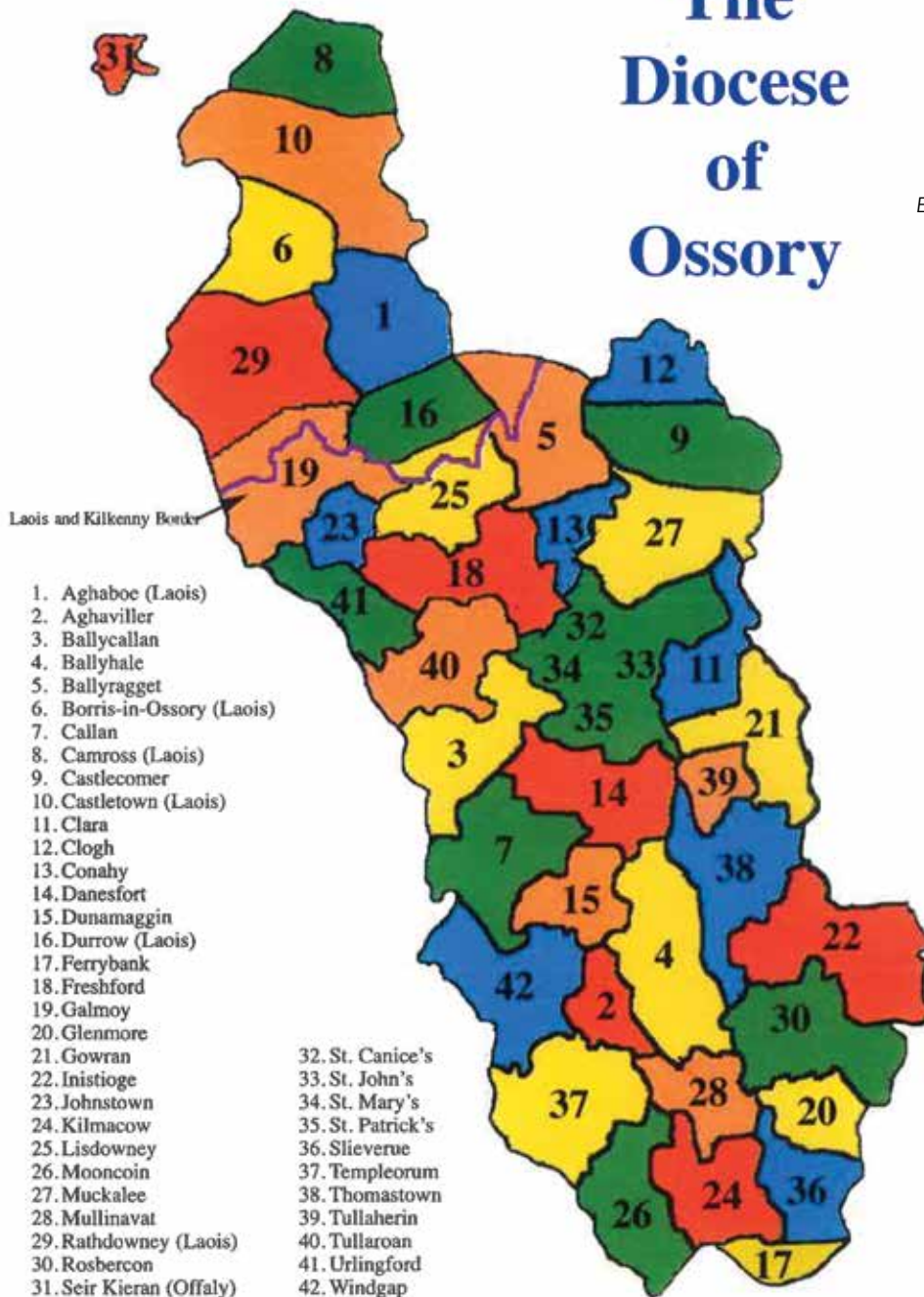
Tracing the story and meaning of Saighir Chiaráin involves tradition, belief, history, archaeology...

Seir Kieran Bringing the Past into the Future

The Diocese of Ossory

Muiris O'Sullivan

*Emeritus Professor of Archaeology
UCD School of Archaeology*



The parish of Seir Kieran revolves around the rural village of Clareen on the road from Roscrea to Kinnitty. The village is the location of Saighir Chiaráin, the monastic cradle in which the spiritual identity of Ossory first emerged, as indicated by the choice of this site as the burial place of the kings of Ossory during the kingdom's most prominent centuries towards the end of the first millennium.

The monastery was a place of spirituality and scholarship and pilgrimage. Its greatest treasure was a manuscript, *Imirce Chiaráin*, which is now lost. It's sustaining belief was the tradition that Kieran himself lay at rest at the heart of the monastic site.

The original wooden buildings of Kieran's foundation were superseded during the pre-Norman era by stone structures of which the bases of a round tower and decorated high cross are still visible today. When the Diocese of Ossory was established in the 12th century, with the bishop located in Kilkenny, Saighir Chiaráin retained its special status – as it still does today despite raids, neglect and deliberate destruction at various times in its history. The enduring history of the site is reflected in traces of later medieval settlement and an ongoing ecclesiastical presence.

Most strikingly, there is an irreplaceable continuity of spiritual tradition associated with St Kieran. The founding saint lives not just in legends but in the local community. His traces are everywhere – the holy well, St Kieran's Bush, Bell Hill, and above all the traditional beliefs and practices associated with these sites. Built into the conserved round tower is a bullaun stone, a type of artefact that turns up at sites associated with medieval pilgrimage.

The pilgrimage tradition has lived down to the present at Saighir Chiaráin. When, at the turn of the 20th century, a new church was constructed for the Catholic community of the parish, it was situated at the foot of Bell Hill, a stone's throw from the ancient monastic site. In 1997, a sandstone cross-slab from the ancient monastery was found built into the granite fabric of the early-20th century church – in a discreet location behind some downpipes. No folklore or official record has come down to explain this insertion, a low-key but eloquent expression of everything the saint and the monastic site mean locally!

The annual St Kieran's Day celebrations are woven into the very fabric of the parish, reflecting a tradition going back through medieval times to the early days of the monastery (as indicated by mention of St Kieran's Day, 5th March, in the Martyrology of Oengus c. 800 AD. The origins of Saighir Chiaráin are shrouded in mystery and mythology. Even the name Saighir has escaped a definitive explanation.

Tracing the story and meaning of Saighir Chiaráin involves tradition, belief, history, archaeology and any other disciplines that are helpful. About thirty years ago, a seminal parish history was published locally.¹ A few years later, in 1997, a team from UCD was invited to conduct an archaeological survey of the monastic complex. This was combined with a series of lectures and the first geophysical survey of the site, leading to the production of a guide book² and later an information panel for visitors. Parallel with the study of the ancient site, an invaluable history of the famous Seir Kieran hurling club, which doubles as a social history of the parish through the 20th century, appeared in 2006³. In addition, John Feehan has taken an interest in the plants and biodiversity of the parish. The study of the monastic complex at Saighir Chiaráin has more recently been taken up with renewed vigour by Denis Shine and associates. Continuing the tradition of working closely with the local community, university specialist and key stakeholders such as the County Heritage Office, Denis is bringing the study of the site into a new era.

1. Troy, K. et al. *Approach the Fountain – A History of Seir Kieran*, Clareen ICA Guild.

2. O'Sullivan, M. 1997 *An Illustrated Guide to Seir Kieran*, County Offaly, Seir Kieran Project, Clareen.

3. Blake, J. 2006 *The Music of the Ash – A History of the Seir Kieran GAA Club*.

Our monastic parish is a very holy and blessed place.

Fr Michael Reddan SVD.

Sunday 5th March - Seir Kieran's Day

St Kieran's day has particular significance for the people of Clareen and we extend a warm welcome to all those who wish to join us in future years in the celebrations of our Patron's great Feast Day on March 5th. This year has an added significance as we welcomed our recently ordained Bishop of Ossory, Bishop Niall Coll, to celebrate with us. Bishop Niall was the main celebrant at our Mass in St Kieran's Church at 11am and will then remain with us to make the traditional pilgrim journey to the three stations associated with the Saint; St Kieran's Well, St Kieran's Bush and the grounds of the monastic site. This is a tradition as old as Christianity itself and for generations, pilgrims have walked these same paths in the footsteps of St Kieran himself.

Every bishop chooses a motto which seeks to encapsulate his thoughts, prayers and priorities as he begins his new ministry. Bishop Niall has chosen the words 'Christ Jesus our Hope' and this theme was central to our celebrations. Indeed this motto truly reflects the faith and hope of Kieran's pilgrim people back through the mists of time and was there ever such need, in the history of humanity, as now, for such Christian hope? Our monastic parish is a very holy and blessed place. It holds a special place in the Diocese as it was from here that the Diocese of Ossory came to birth. Pope Francis who appointed Bishop Niall, wrote in one of his Encyclicals 'Fratelli Tutti' of the importance of fraternity and social

friendship. He reminds us that we share a common home and he reaffirms the dignity of every human person created in the image and likeness of God.

As we prepared here for our feast day and reflected on the life of St Kieran we experienced him speaking to us in our daily lives exactly as Pope Francis has suggested. St Kieran lived in a community of sharing. Is he not inviting us to recognise one another as travelling companions, truly sisters and brothers, bearing witness to Christ Jesus our hope as we journey through life? Kieran is depicted under our main altar in the church sending out his followers into society to be missionary disciples. Is he not putting into action in a real way what Pope Francis says in his encyclical; 'Let no ideology remove God from society'?

We have plenty of evidence to show that where God has been removed that society has ended up adoring idols which leads to a "throw away" culture which tramples on the dignity of others. This mentality gradually leads to the denial of freedoms of conscience and religion resulting in an impoverished humanity without hope or ideas to guide it.

It was wonderful to have Bishop Niall with us this year for this feast day so special for the people of this parish. Maybe next year you too might consider a pilgrimage to join us as we will once again celebrate the feast of St Kieran on March 5th.

Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue...

Dr John Teehan

Coill Chiaráin Saighre: A proposal from the Parish of Seir Kieran

In recent decades there has been enormous advance in public awareness and concern about the nature and extent of the environmental crisis that confronts us - in relation to biodiversity, global warming, resource depletion and so on - particularly among young people, whose lives will be most profoundly affected. Pope Francis' great encyclical on the environment, *Laudato si'*, has galvanised the Catholic Church's engagement with these issues, and is recognised as one of the most profound calls for serious engagement by us all. Indeed, what Pope Francis calls for on our part is nothing less than conversion when it comes to our attitude to the environmental crisis:

It must be said that some committed and prayerful Christians, with the excuse of realism and pragmatism, tend to ridicule expressions of concern for the environment. Others are passive: they choose not to change their habits and thus become inconsistent. So what they all need is an 'ecological conversion', whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them.

The ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion.

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. (*Laudato si'* 217).

Parishes here in Ireland, as in every other part of the world, are asking themselves what they can do in a concrete way by way of response: as individuals, as families and as communities.

The opportunity now presents itself for the parish to develop a unique project that would highlight the significance of St Ciarán and the place that carries his name and to which his fame attaches: and at the same time to focus on several themes that are of major contemporary concern.

The parish hopes to plant a field beside the school with propose that the field north of the school's playing pitch, along with the slope leading to native tree species, re-creating in miniature, *albeit* in a symbolic way, the forest that was here when St Ciarán arrived in Saighir in the 5th century. This wood would include all

the species native to Ireland, including those chosen to represent the alphabet in the early Christian centuries when Irish first became a written language.

One of the most evocative stories in the Lives of the Irish Saints is the account in the Life of St Ciarán of how he first came to Saighir, a place that was still covered in forest at the time, and established his first foundation here.

Ciarán set up his monastery in the wildwood, the labour for this arduous task provided by his first disciple, a boar that lived in the woods of Saighir. In the beginning, we are told, he was without human companionship, his first disciples being the animals of the wildwood: badger, fox, wolf and deer. This elevation of the animals to their full stature as other children of God, equal in dignity to ourselves though different by virtue of their different evolutionary journeys and destinies, pre-dates St Francis of Assisi by several centuries. But never in Catholic spirituality has this theme been more forcefully expressed than in several passages in *Laudato si'*:

The creatures of the earth were not created in the first instance for us to dispose of as we will, regardless of their place in God's plan. They are primarily for "the fulfilment of God's own unfolding plan for Creation". Our role is to further that plan: "so that our planet might be what he desired when he created it, and correspond with his plan for peace, beauty and fullness" (*Laudato si'* 53).

Together with our obligation to use the earth's goods responsibly, we are called to recognise that other living beings have a value of their own in God's eyes: "by their mere existence they bless him and give him glory" (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2416). Each of the various creatures, will in its own being, reflects in its own way a ray of God's infinite wisdom and goodness. Man must therefore respect

the particular goodness of every creature to avoid any disordered use of things (*Laudato si'* 69).

The ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us. Rather, all creatures are moving forward with us and through us to a common point of arrival, which is God (*Laudato si'* 83).

From the entrance to the proposed wood a path would follow a meandering course through the wood, leading to and linking five clearings, in each of which a human sized sculpture of each of the animals associated with Ciarán would be located. Great care would be needed in the selection of the artist's for these sculptures, which must be of the very highest artistic standard. No explanation beyond a sentence from the tale of Ciarán and his animal brethren would intrude in these clearings, though benches may be considered.

This would not be just another small amenity woodland, but one that picks up on and provides a living focus for key elements in the life of Ciarán of Saighir that would make it not just an important parish resource, but one that has the potential to be of national - and indeed international - significance. What is proposed here is a revision of an idea first discussed in the parish twelve or so years ago, when environmental awareness and concern were at a more lower level than they are now: and long before the publication of *Laudato si'*.

The ancient forest that was home to fox, badger and boar before the arrival of Ciarán has long disappeared from Saighir, and is represented in our day only by the network of hedgerows and scattered copses: but it can be symbolically restored: this new wood would be a symbolic restoration of the forest that covered the parish when Ciarán arrived here, and a focal point for experience of a habitat that is of central importance in our modern concern for the maintenance

and restoration of woodland biodiversity at home and abroad.

It would also be a symbolic expression of the parish's awareness of environmental issues globally, and a response at parish level to its concern. The project highlights the unique educational value of the story of Ciarán, his first monks, the woodland in which they lived in a way that is interesting and different, of much more than local appeal, reflecting something that is UNIQUE to this parish: something in which the school and the parish community as a whole can be closely involved.

In the longer term the wood could become the focal point of a long-distance circular parish walk that would link up with the monastic site, St

Ciarán's Well and Bush, Bell Hill and sites further afield. This would also have the ecumenical virtue of symbolically uniting the two main Christian denominations in the parish in facing this challenge that is common to us all. Pope Francis expressed the hope in *Laudato si'* that his words might 'address every person living on this planet, in order 'to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development'' (*Laudato si'* 3,13). In particular, this is a common challenge for all Christians. The great Protestant theologian Jurgen Moltmann wrote that 'the perception of the divine spirit in the community of creation corresponds to the new ecological understanding of nature which we seek'.



Project on St Kieran, capturing his love of nature, the work of the school children of Seir Kieran parish.

Vocations in Ossory

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

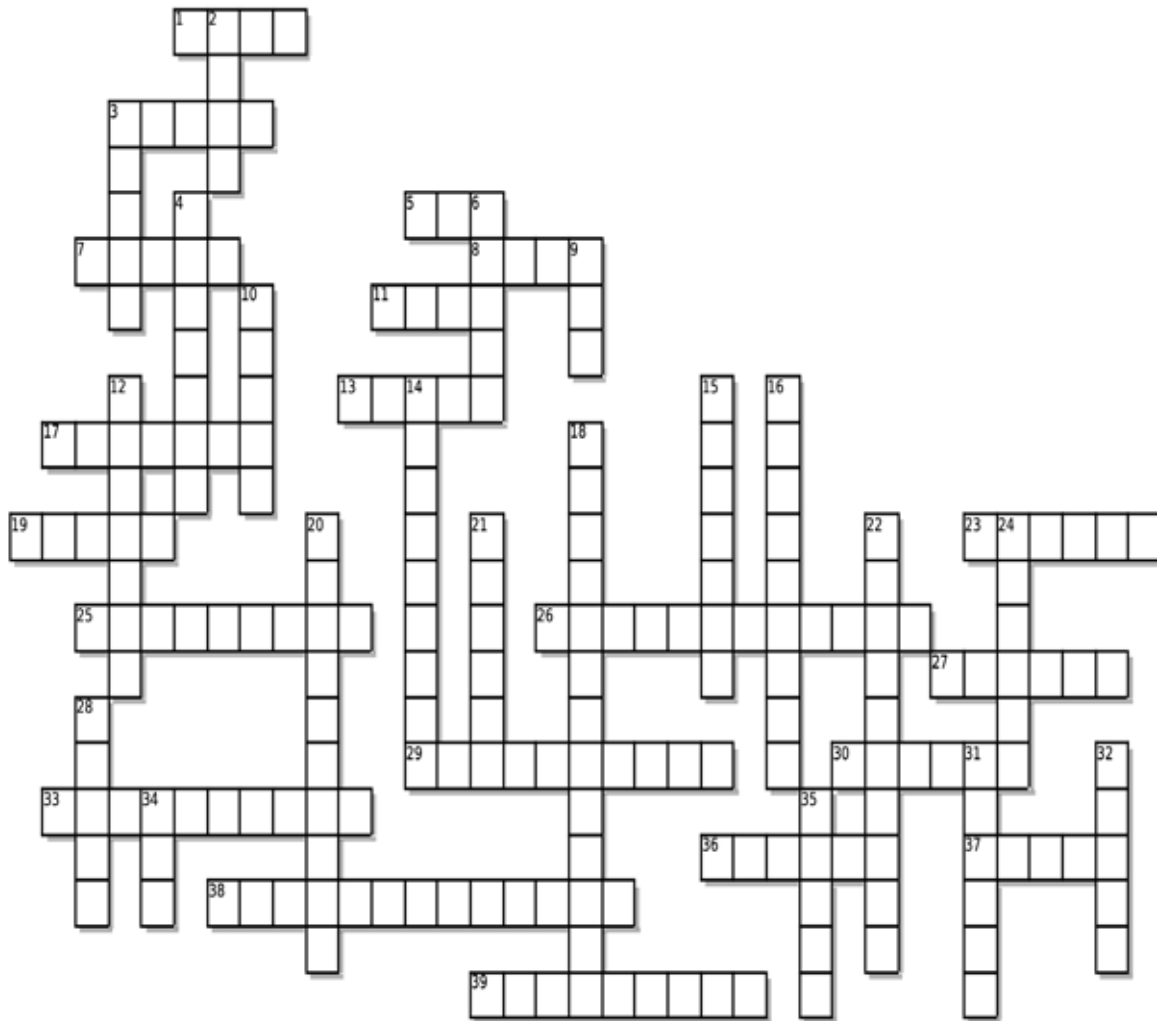
How do I know what life path
I should take?

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



FR KIERAN O'SHEA
VOCATIONS DIRECTOR
086 8272828
VOCATIONS@OSSORY.IE

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1 Priscilla and Aquilas left here because the Jews were ordered out
- 3 In Ossory Jessie Rogers reflected on their place in the Church recently
- 5 This animal was sacrificed in the Old Testament
- 7 Roman God of two faces
- 8 A name for the Father
- 11 Murdered by his brother
- 13 First of the twelve Minor Prophets
- 17 Founding member of Pope's child protection group - Hans.
- 19 Old Testament book
- 23 ... Ladder
- 25 A civil one of these was held to welcome Bishop Niall to Kilkenny recently
- 26 He placed Moses on the tomb of Pope Julius II
- 27 ... Fideles
- 29 Bishop Niall have talks on this recently
- 30 Patron saint of prisoners
- 33 A recent AFD pilgrimage saw many of his works
- 36 Saint of Avila
- 37 Peter or Paul for example
- 38 Bishop Denis was an Apostolic one of these for Ossory

39 A mark of the Church

DOWN

- 2 Father of Jessie
- 3 At the well
- 4 Former Red Devil now an OP
- 6 Site of Paul's shipwreck
- 9 Mother of Mary
- 10 Papal Crown
- 12 Poor ...
- 14 The visited Jesus
- 15 The Pope's hospital
- 16 In the... (Gen)
- 18 These are taking place now and in them we welcome the Spirit
- 20 This had the Pope in hospital lately
- 21 Old Testament Prophet
- 22 A journey taken in faith
- 24 Superior of Convent
- 28 Father of Gideon
- 31 Italian city of Clare
- 32 Founder of the Sisters of Charity
- 34 Samson killed the Philistines with the jawbone of this animal
- 35 Rod of

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 June 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**

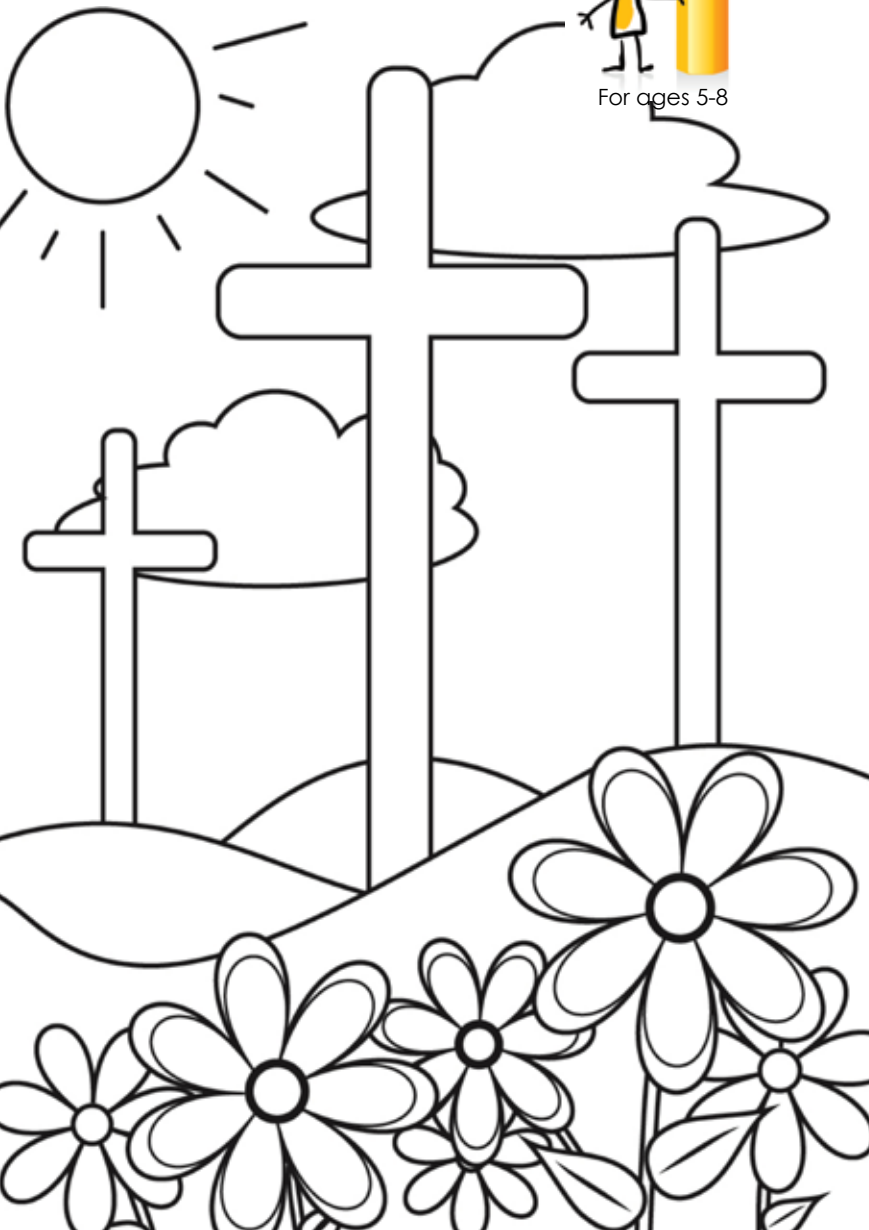
*Congrats to the winners
from the Ossory Times
Issue 30 competitions:*

Adult Crossword:
Mary Byrne-Smith

**Children's Wordsearch,
age 8-13:**
Finn and Ciara Dalton

**Children's Colouring,
age 5-8:**
Aoife Fitzgerald

Colouring Competition



Wordsearch Competition



For ages 8-13

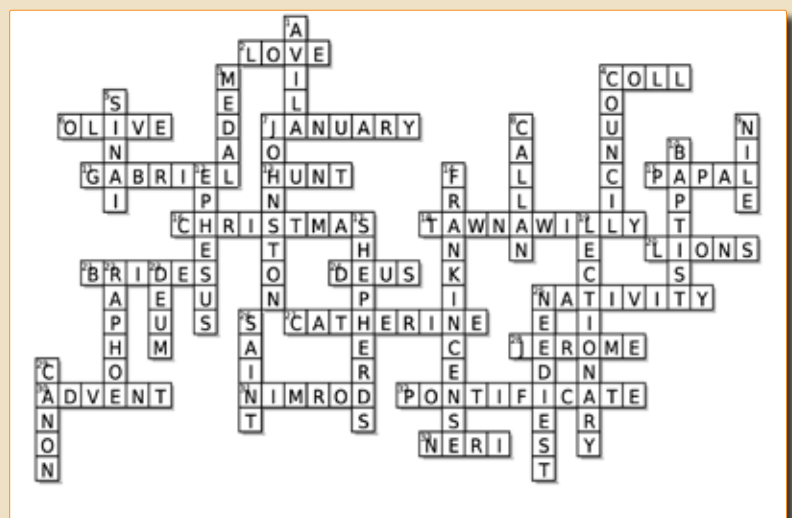
L B L M C U D E C O U R A G E G R A C E R
 H E A L I N G V K F W T P E A C E I C B
 J E S U S F N K P C H U R C H M X L F O
 X O P F Q L U H O L Y N F A I T H I O N
 W R C O M P A S S I O N Z D H A A K D E
 I Q F A X T W J P I H S D N E I R F M O
 S K U A E G N I T G O D S L B E L I E F
 D J O Y I T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

BELIEF	FRIENDSHIP	JOY
BLESSINGS	GIVING	LOVE
CHRIST	GOD	MERCY
CHURCH	GRACE	OBEDIENCE
COMPASSION	GUIDANCE	PATIENCE
COURAGE	HEALING	PEACE
ETERNAL	HEAVEN	SALVATION
FAITH	HOLY	SPIRIT
FAITHFULNESS	HOPE	TRUTH
FORGIVENESS	JESUS	WISDOM

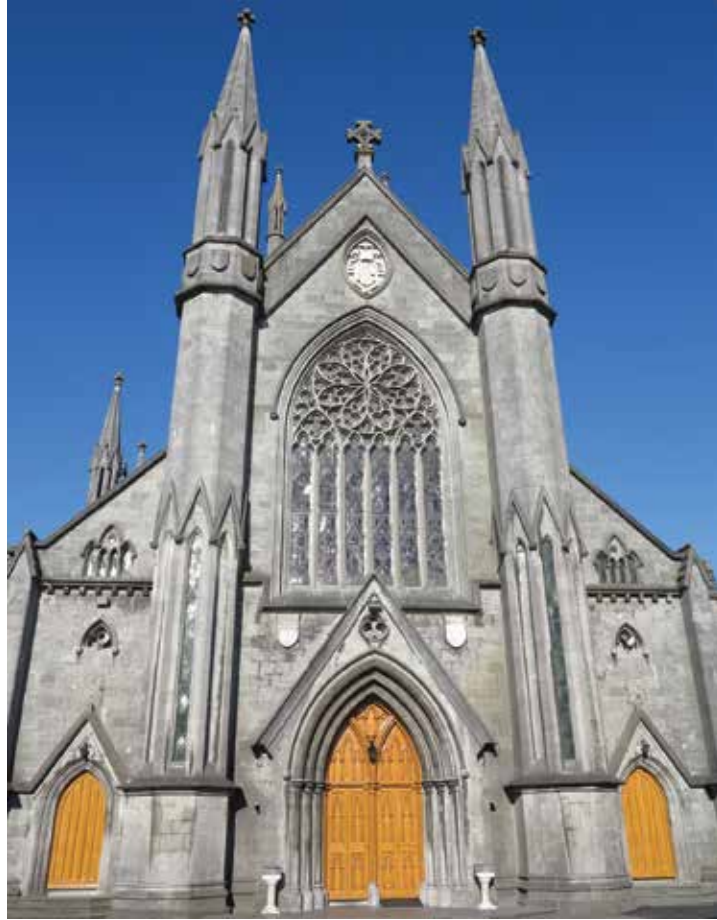
Answers to Ossory Times Issue 31



Answers to Ossory Times Issue 31



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

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

OSSORY DIOCESAN PILGRIMAGE TO LOURDES 2023

23rd -28th May 2023

PACKAGE DETAILS

Accommodation: Hotel Agena €879 per person sharing • Hotels Solitude/Padoue
€899 per person sharing • 1 x 20kg check-in bag & 1 x small cabin bag

Return bus journey to\from Dublin airport from Loughboy shopping centre car
park • Direct flight from Dublin to Lourdes • Transfer on arrival to hotel in Lourdes
• 5 nights hotel accommodation • Breakfast, lunch & dinner each day • Pilgrims
contribution for daily use of the train is also included in the fare • Transfer from hotel
to Lourdes Airport • Direct flight from Lourdes to Dublin

OPTIONAL

Single Supplement: €35 per night for Hotel Agena; €39 per night for
Hotel Solitude and Hotel Padoue

Travel insurance: If you do not already have travel insurance it can be
supplied at €39 per person up to 79 years; €78 per person 80 to 94 years

Contact

niamh@jwtttravel.ie or 01-6852244

www.joewalshtours.ie

