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Editorial

Do not be afraid.... words that we often associate with people of faith in the scriptures: the Angel said them to Mary; these words were spoken to Joseph; Jesus repeated them to Peter; and on numerous other occasions we see them on the lips of these people of faith. Why is it that this words appear so often in our Bible? Is it because sometimes faith asks of us difficult things... like trusting, believing, and being willing to let go? In these weeks we see the next phase of the Synod in Rome. Pope Francis has asked that the voice of all be heard in our Church - we need not be afraid, we must simply trust that in this process that God will speak.

This Synod which is normally reserved to the Bishops, at the request of Pope Francis, has invited lay faithful, priests and religious from around the world to come together to discern the promptings of the Holy Spirit for the Church today. This is a continuance of the synodal gatherings we had in Ossory and in every Diocese throughout the world. Our ideas are carried there by the Irish delegation in attendance.

With such a variety of voices from every part of the world it was recognised that at this Synod tensions will exist - as each one tries to make their views heard. The Dominican priest Fr Timothy Radcliffe preached to all gathered in the opening days. He noted, in one of these addresses, that in English we say that "we fall in love, but we make friends" reminding those gathered for the Synod that difference is ok, variance is to be welcomed and that we won't fall into agreement, we will have to work to make it happen.

An exciting time for our Church and this Synod, and its associated moments, is once more well captured in our *Ossory Times*. These pages also contain so much more too - the schedule for an exciting collaboration between St Kieran's College and Notre Dame, Australia; reflections on local synodal moments; a wonderful new tour of our beautiful Cathedral; thoughts on Vocations; pilgrimages to Knock and on the Camino; a word from the Synod itself; a reflection on the plight of immigration 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:

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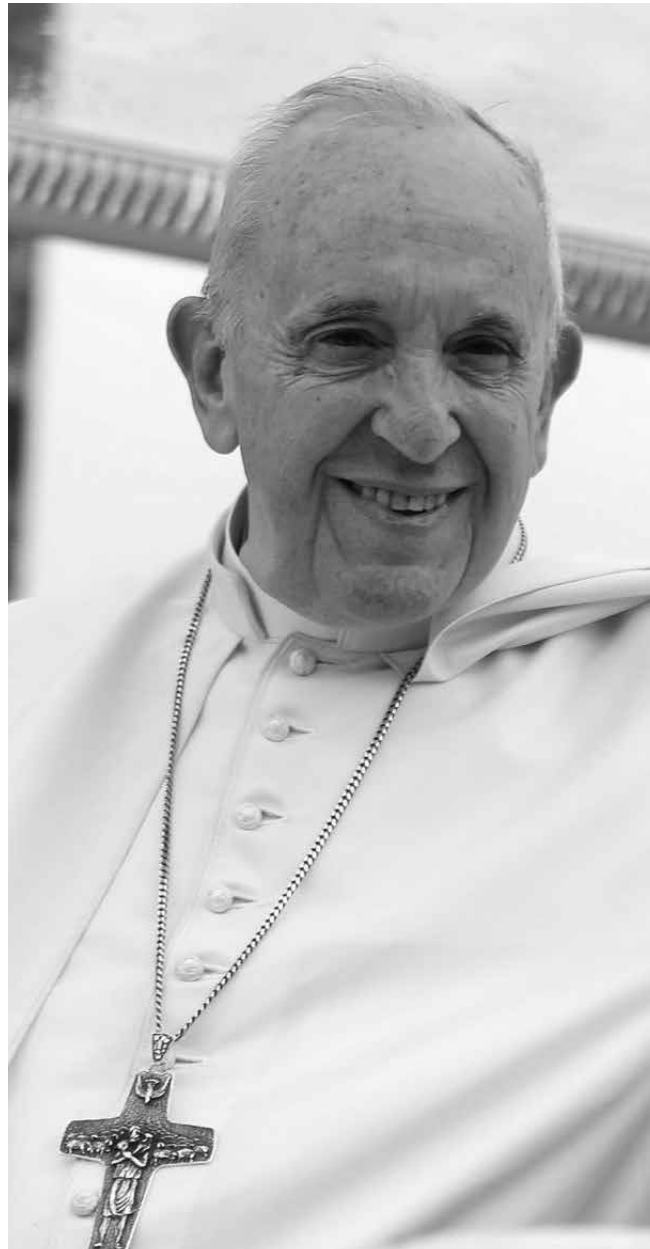


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"Laudate Deum"

**Apostolic Exhortation to all people of good will
on the climate crisis**



(4 October 2023) | Francis



1. "Praise God for all his creatures". This was the message that Saint Francis of Assisi proclaimed by his life, his canticles and all his actions. In this way, he accepted the invitation of the biblical Psalms and reflected the sensitivity of Jesus before the creatures of his Father: "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these" (Mt 6:28-29). "Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God's sight" (Lk 12:6). How can we not admire this tenderness of Jesus for all the beings that accompany us along the way!

2. Eight years have passed since I published the Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, when I wanted to share with all of you, my brothers and sisters of our suffering planet, my heartfelt concerns about the care of our common home. Yet, with the passage of time, I have realized that our responses have not been adequate, while the world in which we live is collapsing and may be nearing the breaking point. In addition to this possibility, it is indubitable that the impact of climate change will increasingly prejudice the lives and families of many persons. We will feel its effects in the areas of healthcare, sources of employment, access to resources, housing, forced migrations, etc.

3. This is a global social issue and one intimately related to the dignity of human life. The Bishops of the United States have expressed very well this social meaning of our concern about climate change, which goes beyond a merely ecological approach, because "our care for one another and our care for the earth are intimately bound together. Climate change is one of the principal challenges facing society and the global community. The effects of climate change are borne by the most vulnerable people, whether at home or around the world". [1] In a few words, the Bishops assembled for the Synod for Amazonia said the same thing: "Attacks on nature have consequences

for people's lives". [2] And to express bluntly that this is no longer a secondary or ideological question, but a drama that harms us all, the African bishops stated that climate change makes manifest "a tragic and striking example of structural sin". [3]

4. The reflection and information that we can gather from these past eight years allow us to clarify and complete what we were able to state some time ago. For this reason, and because the situation is now even more pressing, I have wished to share these pages with you.

1. The Global Climate Crisis

5. Despite all attempts to deny, conceal, gloss over or relativize the issue, the signs of climate change are here and increasingly evident. No one can ignore the fact that in recent years we have witnessed extreme weather phenomena, frequent periods of unusual heat, drought and other cries of protest on the part of the earth that are only a few palpable expressions of a silent disease that affects everyone. Admittedly, not every concrete catastrophe ought to be attributed to global climate change. Nonetheless, it is verifiable that specific climate changes provoked by humanity are notably heightening the probability of extreme phenomena that are increasingly frequent and intense. For this reason, we know that every time the global temperature increases by 0.5° C, the intensity and frequency of great rains and floods increase in some areas and severe droughts in others, extreme heat waves in some places and heavy snowfall in others. [4] If up to now we could have heat waves several times a year, what will happen if the global temperature increases by 1.5° C, which we are approaching? Those heat waves will be much more frequent and with greater intensity. If it should rise above 2 degrees, the icecaps of Greenland and a large part of Antarctica [5] will melt completely, with immensely grave consequences for everyone.

Resistance and confusion

6. In recent years, some have chosen to deride these facts. They bring up allegedly solid scientific data, like the fact that the planet has always had, and will have, periods of cooling and warming. They forget to mention another relevant datum: that what we are presently experiencing is an unusual acceleration of warming, at such a speed that it will take only one generation – not centuries or millennia – in order to verify it. The rise in the sea level and the melting of glaciers can be easily perceived by an individual in his or her lifetime, and probably in a few years many populations will have to move their homes because of these facts.

7. In order to ridicule those who speak of global warming, it is pointed out that intermittent periods of extreme cold regularly occur. One fails to mention that this and other extraordinary symptoms are nothing but diverse alternative expressions of the same cause: the global imbalance that is provoking the warming of the planet. Droughts and floods, the dried-up lakes, communities swept away by seaquakes and flooding ultimately have the same origin. At the same time, if we speak of a global phenomenon, we cannot confuse this with sporadic events explained in good part by local factors.

8. Lack of information leads to confusion between large-scale climate projections that involve long periods of time – we are talking about decades at least – with weather forecasts that at most can cover a few weeks. When we speak of climate change, we are referring to a global reality – and constant local variations – that persists for several decades.

9. In an attempt to simplify reality, there are those who would place responsibility on the poor, since they have many children, and even attempt to resolve the problem by mutilating women in less developed countries. As usual, it would seem that everything is the fault of the poor. Yet the reality is that a low, richer percentage of

the planet contaminates more than the poorest 50% of the total world population, and that per capita emissions of the richer countries are much greater than those of the poorer ones. [6] How can we forget that Africa, home to more than half of the world's poorest people, is responsible for a minimal portion of historic emissions?

10. It is often heard also that efforts to mitigate climate change by reducing the use of fossil fuels and developing cleaner energy sources will lead to a reduction in the number of jobs. What is happening is that millions of people are losing their jobs due to different effects of climate change: rising sea levels, droughts and other phenomena affecting the planet have left many people adrift. Conversely, the transition to renewable forms of energy, properly managed, as well as efforts to adapt to the damage caused by climate change, are capable of generating countless jobs in different sectors. This demands that politicians and business leaders should even now be concerning themselves with it.

Human causes

11. It is no longer possible to doubt the human – “anthropic” – origin of climate change. Let us see why. The concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, which causes global warming, was stable until the nineteenth century, below 300 parts per million in volume. But in the middle of that century, in conjunction with industrial development, emissions began to increase. In the past fifty years, this increase has accelerated significantly, as the Mauna Loa observatory, which has taken daily measurements of carbon dioxide since 1958, has confirmed. While I was writing *Laudato Si'*, they hit a historic high – 400 parts per million – until arriving at 423 parts per million in June 2023. [7] More than 42% of total net emissions since the year 1850 were produced after 1990. [8]

12. At the same time, we have confirmed that in the last fifty years the temperature

has risen at an unprecedented speed, greater than any time over the past two thousand years. In this period, the trend was a warming of 0.15° C per decade, double that of the last 150 years. From 1850 on, the global temperature has risen by 1.1° C, with even greater impact on the polar regions. At this rate, it is possible that in just ten years we will reach the recommended maximum global ceiling of 1.5° C. [9] This increase has not occurred on the earth's surface alone but also several kilometres higher in the atmosphere, on the surface of the oceans and even in their depths for hundreds of metres. Thus the acidification of the seas increased and their oxygen levels were reduced. The glaciers are receding, the snow cover is diminishing and the sea level is constantly rising. [10]

13. It is not possible to conceal the correlation of these global climate phenomena and the accelerated increase in greenhouse gas emissions, particularly since the mid-twentieth century. The overwhelming majority of scientists specializing in the climate support this correlation, and only a very small percentage of them seek to deny the evidence. Regrettably, the climate crisis is not exactly a matter that interests the great economic powers, whose concern is with the greatest profit possible at minimal cost and in the shortest amount of time.

14. I feel obliged to make these clarifications, which may appear obvious, because of certain dismissive and scarcely reasonable opinions that I encounter, even within the Catholic Church. Yet we can no longer doubt that the reason for the unusual rapidity of these dangerous changes is a fact that cannot be concealed: the enormous novelties that have to do with unchecked human intervention on nature in the past two centuries. Events of natural origin that usually cause warming, such as volcanic eruptions and others, are insufficient to explain the proportion and speed of the

changes of recent decades. [11] The change in average surface temperatures cannot be explained except as the result of the increase of greenhouse gases.

Damages and risks

15. Some effects of the climate crisis are already irreversible, at least for several hundred years, such as the increase in the global temperature of the oceans, their acidification and the decrease of oxygen. Ocean waters have a thermal inertia and centuries are needed to normalize their temperature and salinity, which affects the survival of many species. This is one of the many signs that the other creatures of this world have stopped being our companions along the way and have become instead our victims.

16. The same can be said about the decrease in the continental ice sheets. The melting of the poles will not be able to be reversed for hundreds of years. As for the climate, there are factors that have persisted for long periods of time, independent of the events that may have triggered them. For this reason, we are now unable to halt the enormous damage we have caused. We barely have time to prevent even more tragic damage.

17. Certain apocalyptic diagnoses may well appear scarcely reasonable or insufficiently grounded. This should not lead us to ignore the real possibility that we are approaching a critical point. Small changes can cause greater ones, unforeseen and perhaps already irreversible, due to factors of inertia. This would end up precipitating a cascade of events having a snowball effect. In such cases, it is always too late, since no intervention will be able to halt a process once begun. There is no turning back. We cannot state with certainty that all this is going to happen, based on present conditions. But it is certain that it continues to be a possibility, if we take into account phenomena already in motion that "sensitize" the climate, like the reduction

of ice sheets, changes in ocean currents, deforestation in tropical rainforests and the melting of permafrost in Russia, etc. [12]

18. Consequently, a broader perspective is urgently needed, one that can enable us to esteem the marvels of progress, but also to pay serious attention to other effects that were probably unimaginable a century ago. What is being asked of us is nothing other than a certain responsibility for the legacy we will leave behind, once we pass from this world.

19. Finally, we can add that the Covid-19 pandemic brought out the close relation of human life with that of other living beings and with the natural environment. But in a special way, it confirmed that what happens in one part of the world has repercussions on the entire planet. This allows me to reiterate two convictions that I repeat over and over again: "Everything is connected" and "No one is saved alone".

2. A Growing Technocratic Paradigm

20. In *Laudato Si'*, I offered a brief resumé of the technocratic paradigm underlying the current process of environmental decay. It is "a certain way of understanding human life and activity [that] has gone awry, to the serious detriment of the world around us". [13] Deep down, it consists in thinking "as if reality, goodness and truth automatically flow from technological and economic power as such". [14] As a logical consequence, it then becomes easy "to accept the idea of infinite or unlimited growth, which proves so attractive to economists, financiers and experts in technology". [15]

21. In recent years, we have been able to confirm this diagnosis, even as we have witnessed a new advance of the above paradigm. Artificial intelligence and the latest technological innovations start with the notion of a human being with no limits, whose abilities and possibilities can be infinitely expanded thanks to technology.

In this way, the technocratic paradigm monstrously feeds upon itself.

22. Without a doubt, the natural resources required by technology, such as lithium, silicon and so many others, are not unlimited, yet the greater problem is the ideology underlying an obsession: to increase human power beyond anything imaginable, before which nonhuman reality is a mere resource at its disposal. Everything that exists ceases to be a gift for which we should be thankful, esteem and cherish, and instead becomes a slave, prey to any whim of the human mind and its capacities.

23. It is chilling to realize that the capacities expanded by technology "have given those with the knowledge and especially the economic resources to use them, an impressive dominance over the whole of humanity and the entire world. Never has humanity had such power over itself, yet nothing ensures that it will be used wisely, particularly when we consider how it is currently being used... In whose hands does all this power lie, or will it eventually end up? It is extremely risky for a small part of humanity to have it". [16]

Rethinking our use of power

24. Not every increase in power represents progress for humanity. We need only think of the "admirable" technologies that were employed to decimate populations, drop atomic bombs and annihilate ethnic groups. There were historical moments where our admiration at progress blinded us to the horror of its consequences. But that risk is always present, because "our immense technological development has not been accompanied by a development in human responsibility, values and conscience... We stand naked and exposed in the face of our ever-increasing power, lacking the wherewithal to control it. We have certain superficial mechanisms, but we cannot claim to have a sound ethics, a culture and spirituality genuinely capable of setting limits and teaching clear-minded

self-restraint". [17] It is not strange that so great a power in such hands is capable of destroying life, while the mentality proper to the technocratic paradigm blinds us and does not permit us to see this extremely grave problem of present-day humanity.

25. Contrary to this technocratic paradigm, we say that the world that surrounds us is not an object of exploitation, unbridled use and unlimited ambition. Nor can we claim that nature is a mere "setting" in which we develop our lives and our projects. For "we are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it", [18] and thus "we [do] not look at the world from without but from within". [19]

26. This itself excludes the idea that the human being is extraneous, a foreign element capable only of harming the environment. Human beings must be recognized as a part of nature. Human life, intelligence and freedom are elements of the nature that enriches our planet, part of its internal workings and its equilibrium.

27. For this reason, a healthy ecology is also the result of interaction between human beings and the environment, as occurs in the indigenous cultures and has occurred for centuries in different regions of the earth. Human groupings have often "created" an environment, [20] reshaping it in some way without destroying it or endangering it. The great present-day problem is that the technocratic paradigm has destroyed that healthy and harmonious relationship. In any event, the indispensable need to move beyond that paradigm, so damaging and destructive, will not be found in a denial of the human being, but include the interaction of natural systems "with social systems". [21]

28. We need to rethink among other things the question of human power, its meaning and its limits. For our power has frenetically increased in a few decades. We have made impressive and awesome technological advances, and we have

not realized that at the same time we have turned into highly dangerous beings, capable of threatening the lives of many beings and our own survival. Today it is worth repeating the ironic comment of Solovyov about an "age which was so advanced as to be actually the last one". [22] We need lucidity and honesty in order to recognize in time that our power and the progress we are producing are turning against us. [23]

The ethical goad

29. The ethical decadence of real power is disguised thanks to marketing and false information, useful tools in the hands of those with greater resources to employ them to shape public opinion. With the help of these means, whenever plans are made to undertake a project involving significant changes in the environment or high levels of contamination, one raises the hopes of the people of that area by speaking of the local progress that it will be able to generate or of the potential for economic growth, employment and human promotion that it would mean for their children. Yet in reality there does not seem to be any true interest in the future of these people, since they are not clearly told that the project will result in the clearing of their lands, a decline in the quality of their lives, a desolate and less habitable landscape lacking in life, the joy of community and hope for the future; in addition to the global damage that eventually compromises many other people as well.

30. One need but think of the momentary excitement raised by the money received in exchange for the deposit of nuclear waste in a certain place. The house that one could have bought with that money has turned into a grave due to the diseases that were then unleashed. And I am not saying this, moved by a overflowing imagination, but on the basis of something we have seen. It could be said that this is an extreme example, but in these cases there is no room for speaking of "lesser" damages, for it is precisely the amassing

of damages considered tolerable that has brought us to the situation in which we now find ourselves.

31. This situation has to do not only with physics or biology, but also with the economy and the way we conceive it. The mentality of maximum gain at minimal cost, disguised in terms of reasonableness, progress and illusory promises, makes impossible any sincere concern for our common home and any real preoccupation about assisting the poor and the needy discarded by our society. In recent years, we can note that, astounded and excited by the promises of any number of false prophets, the poor themselves at times fall prey to the illusion of a world that is not being built for them.

32. Mistaken notions also develop about the concept of "meritocracy", which becomes seen as a "merited" human power to which everything must be submitted, under the rule of those born with greater possibilities and advantages. A healthy approach to the value of hard work, the development of one's native abilities and a praiseworthy spirit of initiative is one thing, but if one does not seek a genuine equality of opportunity, "meritocracy" can easily become a screen that further consolidates the privileges of a few with great power. In this perverse logic, why should they care about the damage done to our common home, if they feel securely shielded by the financial resources that they have earned by their abilities and effort?

33. In conscience, and with an eye to the children who will pay for the harm done by their actions, the question of meaning inevitably arises: "What is the meaning of my life? What is the meaning of my time on this earth? And what is the ultimate meaning of all my work and effort?"

3. The Weakness of International Politics

34. Although "our own days seem to be showing signs of a certain regression... each new generation must take up

the struggles and attainments of past generations, while setting its sights even higher. This is the path. Goodness, together with love, justice and solidarity, are not achieved once and for all; they have to be realized each day". [24] For there to be solid and lasting advances, I would insist that, "preference should be given to multilateral agreements between States". [25]

35. It is not helpful to confuse multilateralism with a world authority concentrated in one person or in an elite with excessive power: "When we talk about the possibility of some form of world authority regulated by law, we need not necessarily think of a personal authority". [26] We are speaking above all of "more effective world organizations, equipped with the power to provide for the global common good, the elimination of hunger and poverty and the sure defence of fundamental human rights". [27] The issue is that they must be endowed with real authority, in such a way as to "provide for" the attainment of certain essential goals. In this way, there could come about a multilateralism that is not dependent on changing political conditions or the interests of a certain few, and possesses a stable efficacy.

36. It continues to be regrettable that global crises are being squandered when they could be the occasions to bring about beneficial changes. [28] This is what happened in the 2007-2008 financial crisis and again in the Covid-19 crisis. For "the actual strategies developed worldwide in the wake of [those crises] fostered greater individualism, less integration and increased freedom for the truly powerful, who always find a way to escape unscathed". [29]

Reconfiguring multilateralism

37. More than saving the old multilateralism, it appears that the current challenge is to reconfigure and recreate it, taking into account the new world situation. I invite you to recognize that "many groups and organizations within civil society help

to compensate for the shortcomings of the international community, its lack of coordination in complex situations, and its lack of attention to fundamental human rights". [30] For example, the Ottawa Process against the use, production and manufacture of antipersonnel mines is one example that shows how civil society with its organizations is capable of creating effective dynamics that the United Nations cannot. In this way, the principle of subsidiarity is applied also to the global-local relationship.

38. In the medium-term, globalization favours spontaneous cultural interchanges, greater mutual knowledge and processes of integration of peoples, which end up provoking a multilateralism "from below" and not simply one determined by the elites of power. The demands that rise up from below throughout the world, where activists from very different countries help and support one another, can end up pressuring the sources of power. It is to be hoped that this will happen with respect to the climate crisis. For this reason, I reiterate that "unless citizens control political power – national, regional and municipal – it will not be possible to control damage to the environment". [31]

39. Postmodern culture has generated a new sensitivity towards the more vulnerable and less powerful. This is connected with my insistence in the Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti* on the primacy of the human person and the defence of his or her dignity beyond every circumstance. It is another way of encouraging multilateralism for the sake of resolving the real problems of humanity, securing before all else respect for the dignity of persons, in such a way that ethics will prevail over local or contingent interests.

40. It is not a matter of replacing politics, but of recognizing that the emerging forces are becoming increasingly relevant and are in fact capable of obtaining important results in the resolution of

concrete problems, as some of them demonstrated during the pandemic. The very fact that answers to problems can come from any country, however little, ends up presenting multilateralism as an inevitable process.

41. The old diplomacy, also in crisis, continues to show its importance and necessity. Still, it has not succeeded in generating a model of multilateral diplomacy capable of responding to the new configuration of the world; yet should it be able to reconfigure itself, it must be part of the solution, because the experience of centuries cannot be cast aside either.

42. Our world has become so multipolar and at the same time so complex that a different framework for effective cooperation is required. It is not enough to think only of balances of power but also of the need to provide a response to new problems and to react with global mechanisms to the environmental, public health, cultural and social challenges, especially in order to consolidate respect for the most elementary human rights, social rights and the protection of our common home. It is a matter of establishing global and effective rules that can permit "providing for" this global safeguarding.

43. All this presupposes the development of a new procedure for decision-making and legitimizing those decisions, since the one put in place several decades ago is not sufficient nor does it appear effective. In this framework, there would necessarily be required spaces for conversation, consultation, arbitration, conflict resolution and supervision, and, in the end, a sort of increased "democratization" in the global context, so that the various situations can be expressed and included. It is no longer helpful for us to support institutions in order to preserve the rights of the more powerful without caring for those of all.

4. Climate Conferences: Progress and Failures

44. For several decades now, representatives of more than 190 countries have met periodically to address the issue of climate change. The 1992 Rio de Janeiro Conference led to the adoption of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), a treaty that took effect when the necessary ratification on the part of the signatories concluded in 1994. These States meet annually in the Conference of the Parties (COP), the highest decision-making body. Some of these Conferences were failures, like that of Copenhagen (2009), while others made it possible to take important steps forward, like COP3 in Kyoto (1997). Its significant Protocol set the goal of reducing overall greenhouse gas emissions by 5% with respect to 1990. The deadline was the year 2012, but this, clearly, was not achieved.

45. All parties also committed themselves to implementing programmes of adaptation in order to reduce the effects of climate change now taking place. Provisions were also made for aid to cover the costs of the measures in developing countries. The Protocol actually took effect in 2005.

46. Afterwards, it was proposed to create a mechanism regarding the loss and damage caused by climate change, which recognizes as those chiefly responsible the richer countries and seeks to compensate for the loss and damage that climate change produces in the more vulnerable countries. It was not yet a matter of financing the "adaptation" of those countries, but of compensating them for damage already incurred. This question was the subject of important discussions at various Conferences.

47. COP21 in Paris (2015) represented another significant moment, since it generated an agreement that involved everyone. It can be considered as a new beginning, given the failure to meet the

goals previously set. The agreement took effect on 4 November 2016. Albeit a binding agreement, not all its dispositions are obligations in the strict sense, and some of them leave ample room for discretion. In any case, properly speaking, there are no provisions for sanctions in the case of unfulfilled commitments, nor effective instruments to ensure their fulfilment. It also provides for a certain flexibility in the case of developing countries.

48. The Paris Agreement presents a broad and ambitious objective: to keep the increase of average global temperatures to under 2° C with respect to preindustrial levels, and with the aim of decreasing them to 1.5° C. Work is still under way to consolidate concrete procedures for monitoring and to facilitate general criteria for comparing the objectives of the different countries. This makes it difficult to achieve a more objective (quantitative) evaluation of the real results.

49. Following several Conferences with scarce results, and the disappointment of COP25 in Madrid (2019), it was hoped that this inertia would be reversed at COP26 in Glasgow (2021). In effect, its result was to relaunch the Paris Agreement, put on hold by the overall effects of the pandemic. Furthermore, there was an abundance of "recommendations" whose actual effect was hardly foreseeable. Proposals tending to ensure a rapid and effective transition to alternative and less polluting forms of energy made no progress.

50. COP27 in Sharm El Sheikh (2022) was from the outset threatened by the situation created by the invasion of Ukraine, which caused a significant economic and energy crisis. Carbon use increased and everyone sought to have sufficient supplies. Developing countries regarded access to energy and prospects for development as an urgent priority. There was an evident openness to recognizing the fact that combustible fuels still provide 80% of the world's energy, and that their use continues to increase.

51. This Conference in Egypt was one more example of the difficulty of negotiations. It could be said that at least it marked a step forward in consolidating a system for financing "loss and damage" in countries most affected by climate disasters. This would seem to give a new voice and a greater role to developing countries. Yet here too, many points remained imprecise, above all the concrete responsibility of the countries that have to contribute.

52. Today we can continue to state that, "the accords have been poorly implemented, due to lack of suitable mechanisms for oversight, periodic review and penalties in cases of noncompliance. The principles which they proclaimed still await an efficient and flexible means of practical implementation". [32] Also, that "international negotiations cannot make significant progress due to positions taken by countries which place their national interests above the global common good. Those who will have to suffer the consequences of what we are trying to hide will not forget this failure of conscience and responsibility". [33]

5. What to Expect from COP28 in Dubai?

53. The United Arab Emirates will host the next Conference of the Parties (COP28). It is a country of the Persian Gulf known as a great exporter of fossil fuels, although it has made significant investments in renewable energy sources. Meanwhile, gas and oil companies are planning new projects there, with the aim of further increasing their production. To say that there is nothing to hope for would be suicidal, for it would mean exposing all humanity, especially the poorest, to the worst impacts of climate change.

54. If we are confident in the capacity of human beings to transcend their petty interests and to think in bigger terms, we can keep hoping that COP28 will allow for a decisive acceleration of energy transition, with effective commitments subject to ongoing monitoring. This

Conference can represent a change of direction, showing that everything done since 1992 was in fact serious and worth the effort, or else it will be a great disappointment and jeopardize whatever good has been achieved thus far.

55. Despite the many negotiations and agreements, global emissions continue to increase. Certainly, it could be said that, without those agreements, they would have increased even more. Still, in other themes related to the environment, when there was a will, very significant results were obtained, as was the case with the protection of the ozone layer. Yet, the necessary transition towards clean energy sources such as wind and solar energy, and the abandonment of fossil fuels, is not progressing at the necessary speed. Consequently, whatever is being done risks being seen only as a ploy to distract attention.

56. We must move beyond the mentality of appearing to be concerned but not having the courage needed to produce substantial changes. We know that at this pace in just a few years we will surpass the maximum recommended limit of 1.5° C and shortly thereafter even reach 3° C, with a high risk of arriving at a critical point. Even if we do not reach this point of no return, it is certain that the consequences would be disastrous and precipitous measures would have to be taken, at enormous cost and with grave and intolerable economic and social effects. Although the measures that we can take now are costly, the cost will be all the more burdensome the longer we wait.

57. I consider it essential to insist that "to seek only a technical remedy to each environmental problem which comes up is to separate what is in reality interconnected and to mask the true and deepest problems of the global system". [34] It is true that efforts at adaptation are needed in the face of evils that are irreversible in the short term. Also some interventions and technological advances

that make it possible to absorb or capture gas emissions have proved promising. Nonetheless, we risk remaining trapped in the mindset of pasting and papering over cracks, while beneath the surface there is a continuing deterioration to which we continue to contribute. To suppose that all problems in the future will be able to be solved by new technical interventions is a form of homicidal pragmatism, like pushing a snowball down a hill.

58. Once and for all, let us put an end to the irresponsible derision that would present this issue as something purely ecological, "green", romantic, frequently subject to ridicule by economic interests. Let us finally admit that it is a human and social problem on any number of levels. For this reason, it calls for involvement on the part of all. In Conferences on the climate, the actions of groups negatively portrayed as "radicalized" tend to attract attention. But in reality they are filling a space left empty by society as a whole, which ought to exercise a healthy "pressure", since every family ought to realize that the future of their children is at stake.

59. If there is sincere interest in making COP28 a historic event that honours and ennobles us as human beings, then one can only hope for binding forms of energy transition that meet three conditions: that they be efficient, obligatory and readily monitored. This, in order to achieve the beginning of a new process marked by three requirements: that it be drastic, intense and count on the commitment of all. That is not what has happened so far, and only a process of this sort can enable international politics to recover its credibility, since only in this concrete manner will it be possible to reduce significantly carbon dioxide levels and to prevent even greater evils over time.

60. May those taking part in the Conference be strategists capable of considering the common good and the future of their children, more than the short-term interests of certain countries

or businesses. In this way, may they demonstrate the nobility of politics and not its shame. To the powerful, I can only repeat this question: "What would induce anyone, at this stage, to hold on to power, only to be remembered for their inability to take action when it was urgent and necessary to do so?" [35]

6. Spiritual Motivations

61. I cannot fail in this regard to remind the Catholic faithful of the motivations born of their faith. I encourage my brothers and sisters of other religions to do the same, since we know that authentic faith not only gives strength to the human heart, but also transforms life, transfigures our goals and sheds light on our relationship to others and with creation as a whole.

In the light of faith

62. The Bible tells us: "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good" (Gen 1:31). His is "the earth with all that is in it" (Deut 10:14). For this reason, he tells us that, "the land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants" (Lev 25:23). Hence, "responsibility for God's earth means that human beings, endowed with intelligence, must respect the laws of nature and the delicate equilibria existing between the creatures of this world". [36]

63. At the same time, "the universe as a whole, in all its manifold relationships, shows forth the inexhaustible richness of God". Hence, to be wise, "we need to grasp the variety of things in their multiple relationships". [37] Along this path of wisdom, it is not a matter of indifference to us that so many species are disappearing and that the climate crisis endangers the life of many other beings.

64. Jesus "was able to invite others to be attentive to the beauty that there is in the world because he himself was in constant touch with nature, lending it an attraction full of fondness and wonder. As he made his way throughout the land, he often

stopped to contemplate the beauty sown by his Father, and invited his disciples to perceive a divine message in things". [38]

65. Hence, "the creatures of this world no longer appear to us under merely natural guise, because the risen One is mysteriously holding them to himself and directing them towards fullness as their end. The very flowers of the field and the birds which his human eyes contemplated and admired are now imbued with his radiant presence". [39] If "the universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely... there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person's face". [40] The world sings of an infinite Love: how can we fail to care for it?

Journeying in communion and commitment

66. God has united us to all his creatures. Nonetheless, the technocratic paradigm can isolate us from the world that surrounds us and deceive us by making us forget that the entire world is a "contact zone". [41]

67. The Judaeo-Christian vision of the cosmos defends the unique and central value of the human being amid the marvellous concert of all God's creatures, but today we see ourselves forced to realize that it is only possible to sustain a "situated anthropocentrism". To recognize, in other words, that human life is incomprehensible and unsustainable without other creatures. For "as part of the universe... all of us are linked by unseen bonds and together form a kind of universal family, a sublime communion which fills us with a sacred, affectionate and humble respect". [42]

68. This is not a product of our own will; its origin lies elsewhere, in the depths of our being, since "God has joined us so closely to the world around us that we can feel the desertification of the soil almost as a physical ailment, and the extinction of a species as a painful disfigurement". [43]

Let us stop thinking, then, of human beings as autonomous, omnipotent and limitless, and begin to think of ourselves differently, in a humbler but more fruitful way.

69. I ask everyone to accompany this pilgrimage of reconciliation with the world that is our home and to help make it more beautiful, because that commitment has to do with our personal dignity and highest values. At the same time, I cannot deny that it is necessary to be honest and recognize that the most effective solutions will not come from individual efforts alone, but above all from major political decisions on the national and international level.

70. Nonetheless, every little bit helps, and avoiding an increase of a tenth of a degree in the global temperature would already suffice to alleviate some suffering for many people. Yet what is important is something less quantitative: the need to realize that there are no lasting changes without cultural changes, without a maturing of lifestyles and convictions within societies, and there are no cultural changes without personal changes.

71. Efforts by households to reduce pollution and waste, and to consume with prudence, are creating a new culture. The mere fact that personal, family and community habits are changing is contributing to greater concern about the unfulfilled responsibilities of the political sectors and indignation at the lack of interest shown by the powerful. Let us realize, then, that even though this does not immediately produce a notable effect from the quantitative standpoint, we are helping to bring about large processes of transformation rising from deep within society.

72. If we consider that emissions per individual in the United States are about two times greater than those of individuals living in China, and about seven times greater than the average of the poorest countries, [44] we can state that a broad change in the irresponsible lifestyle

connected with the Western model would have a significant long-term impact. As a result, along with indispensable political decisions, we would be making progress along the way to genuine care for one another.

73. "Praise God" is the title of this letter. For when human beings claim to take God's place, they become their own worst enemies.

Given in Rome, at the Basilica of Saint John Lateran, on 4 October, the Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi, in the year 2023, the eleventh of my Pontificate.

FRANCIS

[1] UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS, *Global Climate Change Background*, 2019.

[2] SPECIAL ASSEMBLY FOR THE PAN-AMAZONIAN REGION, *Final Document*, October 2019, 10: AAS 111 (2019), 1744.

[3] SYMPOSIUM OF EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES OF AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR (SECAM), *African Climate Dialogues Communiqué*, Nairobi, 17 October 2022.

[4] Cf. INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE (IPCC), *Climate Change 2021, The Physical Science Basis*, Cambridge and New York, 2021, B.2.2.

[5] Cf. ID., *Climate Change 2023, Synthesis Report, Summary for Policymakers*, B.3.2. For the 2023 Report, see https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_SYR_SPM.pdf.

[6] Cf. UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM, *The Emissions Gap Report 2022*: <https://www.unep.org/resources/emissions-gap-report-2022>.

[7] Cf. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Earth System Research Laboratories, Global Monitoring Laboratory, *Trends in Atmospheric Carbon Dioxide*: <https://www.gml.noaa.gov/ccgg/trends/>.

[8] Cf. IPCC, *Climate Change 2023, Synthesis Report, Summary for Policymakers*, A.1.3.

[9] Cf. *ibid.*, B.5.3.

[10] These are data of the IPCC, based on 34,000 studies: INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE (IPCC); cf. *Synthesis Report of the Sixth Assessment Report (20/03/2023): AR6 Synthesis Report: Climate Change 2023* ([ipcc.ch](https://www.ipcc.ch)).

[11] Cf. IPCC, *Climate Change 2023, Synthesis Report, Summary for Policymakers*, A.1.2.

[12] Cf. *ibid.*

[13] Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* (24 May 2015),

101: AAS 107 (2015), 887.

[14] *Ibid.*, 105: AAS 107 (2015), 889.

[15] *Ibid.*, 106: AAS 107 (2015), 890.

[16] *Ibid.*, 104: AAS 107 (2015), 888-889.

[17] *Ibid.*, 105: AAS 107 (2015), 889.

[18] *Ibid.*, 139: AAS 107 (2015), 903.

[19] *Ibid.*, 220: AAS 107 (2015), 934.

[20] Cf. S. SÖRLIN-P. WARDE, "Making the Environment Historical. An Introduction", in S. SÖRLIN-P. WARDE, eds., *Nature's End: History and the Environment*, Basingstroke-New York, 2009, 1-23.

[21] Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* (24 May 2015), 139: AAS 107 (2015), 903.

[22] Cf. War, Progress and the End of History, Including a Short Story of the Anti-Christ. Three Discussions by Vladimir Soloviev, London, 1915, p. 197.

[23] Cf. SAINT PAUL VI, Address to FAO on its 25th Anniversary (16 November 1970), 4: AAS 62 (1970), 833.

[24] Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti* (3 October 2020), 11: AAS 112 (2020), 972.

[25] *Ibid.*, 174: AAS 112 (2020), 1030.

[26] *Ibid.*, 172: AAS 112 (2020), 1029.

[27] *Ibid.*

[28] Cf. *ibid.*, 170: AAS 112 (2020), 1029.

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] *Ibid.*, 175: AAS 112 (2020), 1031.

[31] Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* (24 May 2015), 179: AAS 107 (2015), 918.

[32] *Ibid.*, 167: AAS 107 (2015), 914.

[33] *Ibid.*, 169: AAS 107 (2015), 915.

[34] *Ibid.*, 111: AAS 107 (2015), 982.

[35] *Ibid.*, 57: AAS 107 (2015), 870.

[36] *Ibid.*, 68: AAS 107 (2015), 874.

[37] *Ibid.*, 86: AAS 107 (2015), 881.

[38] *Ibid.*, 97: AAS 107 (2015), 886.

[39] *Ibid.*, 100: AAS 197 (2015), 887.

[40] *Ibid.*, 233: AAS 107 (2015), 938.

[41] Cf. D. J. HARAWAY, *When Species Meet*, Minneapolis, 2008, pp. 205-249.

[42] Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* (24 May 2015), 89: AAS 107 (2015), 883.

[43] Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), 215: AAS 105 (2013), 1109.

[44] Cf. UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM, *The Emissions Gap Report 2022*: <https://www.unep.org/resources/emissions-gap-report-2022>.



Joint initiatives between St Kieran's College, Kilkenny
and the University of Notre Dame, Australia

International Perspectives on Forming Catechists /
International Perspectives in Catholic Educational Leadership
28th Nov-2nd Dec
2023
St Kieran's College
Kilkenny



Catechists Tuesday 28:11:2023	
Venue: 9.30am-10.45am	Dunne Room "Fan into Flame – Introducing the Ministry of Catechist in Ireland" Bp Kevin Doran
Venue: 11.15am-12.30pm	Dunne Room "The Gift to Contemporary Culture of knowing about Creation – Fall – Redemption" Professor Renée Köhler-Ryan, UNDA
Lunch Break	Lanigan Room Light Lunch Provided
Venue: 2.30pm-3.45pm	Dunne Room "Guiding Principles for Collaboration in Ministry" Prof Eamonn Conway UNDA
Venue: 4.30pm-5.30pm	Dunne Room Facilitated Session reflecting on the day's presentations led by Prof Renée Köhler-Ryan
Evening:	FREE
Catechists Wednesday 29:11:2023	
Venue: 9.30am-10.45am	Dunne Room "Christ the Teacher – the Model Catechist" Prof Leonard Franchi UNDA
Venue: 11.15am-12.30pm	Dunne Room "The Catechist as Teacher and Mystagogue" Prof Leonard Franchi UNDA
Lunch Break	Lanigan Room Light Lunch Provided
Venue: 2.30pm-3.45pm	Dunne Room "Beauty Ancient and New: Finding Christ in Beauty" Prof Renée Kohler Ryan
Venue: 4.30pm-5.30pm	Dunne Room Learning from

formation programmes
currently underway in
Ireland

**Rev Dr Eamonn
Fitzgibbon, Mary
Immaculate College;
Paula McKeown, Down
& Connor,**

Evening:

FREE

Catechists Thursday 30:11:2023	
Venue: 9.30am-10.45am	Dunne Room "When Jesus prayed, was he talking to himself? Explaining the humanity and divinity of Jesus today" Prof Eamonn Conway
Venue: 11.15am-12.30pm	Theatre Joint Session "Evangelization in a Pluralist Society" Prof Stephen Bullivant, UNDA
Lunch Break	Lanigan Room Light Lunch Provided
Venue: 2.30pm-3.45pm	Theatre "Evangelisation and Catechesis – success stories from the UK" Prof Stephen Bullivant, UNDA
Venue: 4.30pm-5.30pm	Dunne Room "Catholic approaches to Mindfulness and integrating these into daily life" Professor Renée Köhler-Ryan
Venue: 7.00pm	Theatre Public Lecture Forming Missionary Disciples in a synodal Church Cardinal
Education Thursday 30:11:2023	
Venue: 9.30am-10.45am	Theatre Welcome and Introduction "Inter-religious opportunities in

Venue: 11.15am-12.30pm	Catholic schools" Bp Niall Coll, Ossory
	Theatre Joint Session "Evangelization in a Pluralist Society" Prof Stephen Bullivant, UNDA
	Lanigan Room Light Lunch Provided
	Dunne Room "School evaluation and improvement within the context of a Catholic school" Prof Sally Egan UNDA
	Theatre "The Role of the Board in leading Catholic ethos" Mike Shorten, CEO, The Bishop Hogarth Trust (UK)
Venue: 2.30pm-3.45pm	Theatre Public Lecture Forming Missionary Disciples in a synodal Church Cardinal
Catechists Friday 1:12:2023	
Venue: 9.30am-10.45am	Theatre Relevant Insights for Catechists from the General Assembly of the XVI Synod of Bishops (2021-2024), Rome, October 2023 Profs Renee Köhler-Ryan and Eamonn Conway, both of whom were at the General Assembly of the Synod
Venue: 11.15am-12.30pm	Theatre Conclusion: Calling and Forming Catechists Panel discussion with presenters chaired by Prof Elizabeth Labone, UNDA
Lunch Break	Lanigan Room Light Lunch Provided

Evening:	FREE
Education Friday 1:12:2023	
Venue: 9.30am-10.45am	Dunne Room "Catholic ethos, leadership and virtues" Mike Shorten
Venue: 11.15am-12.30pm	Dunne Room "Developing leadership growth." Prof Sally Egan
Lunch Break	
Venue: 2.30pm-3.45pm	Dunne Room The responsibility of school leaders for staff wellbeing Prof Elizabeth Labone, UNDA
Venue: 4.30pm-5.30pm	Dunne Room Why do we Educate? Well-being in Light of the Coming of Christ." Prof Renée Kohler-Ryan
Venue: 7.00pm	Academy Hall Dinner Provided
Venue: 8.30pm	Dunne Room "Integral Human Development and the Catholic School" Prof Eamonn Conway
Education Saturday 2:12:2023	
Venue: 9.30am-10.45am	Dunne Room "A Christian ethos: making it real." Linda Rainsberry
Venue: 11.15am-12.30pm	Dunne Room Panel Discussion with Seamus Mulconry, Gen Sec CPSMA, Alan Hynes, CEO CEP and presenters Chair: Prof Eamonn Conway
Lunch Break	Lanigan Room Light Lunch Provided

* Schedule may be subject to change



EXPLAINING THE BACKGROUND TO SYNODALITY

Bishop Niall Coll

A decade after the closing of the Second Vatican Council, the distinguished Irish journalist and historian, Louis McRedmond (1932-2011), who had attended the Council's final session to report on it for the Irish Independent, expressed his dismay that the pace of conciliar renewal in the church in Ireland had slowed immensely (Doctrine and Life, October 1975). The first wave of reforms, he asserted, mostly confined to the liturgical field, had been robustly introduced by church authorities 'through pleading, flurry and exhortation,' and the people had happily, to the surprise of some, taken to them, especially the vernacular Mass, 'like ducks to water'.

By the mid-1970s, however, he believed momentum had stalled and that the church in Ireland was immobilised by its undue caution and fear of risks. Bishops and priests who had been willing to introduce reforms in the immediate post-conciliar context by then seemed resigned to not disturbing the people by pressing on with changes in other areas of ecclesial life. McRedmond playfully suggested an ironic reversal whereby the customary trope of a clergy-ridden Ireland was replaced by the barely imaginable one of a laity-ridden clergy. It was not, he insisted, that the people were opposed to change qua change, but that there had been little or no effort by church

authorities to convince them further of its ongoing value. Then, as we know well, during the decades which followed, as the rural society and economy finally gave way to an increasingly urban and industrial one, and the cold winds first of secularisation and then of the abuse crisis gathered force, talk of the Council, its teachings and indeed of faith in general receded as many people found a range of new interests and outlets for their energies.

Nevertheless, the Council, an event of the universal Church, continues six decades later to be of immense importance to the Catholic Church everywhere, as reflected in the publication of many new studies dealing with its shape and reception over recent years. It is clear that there are many people who share Pope John Paul II's affirmation at the end of the Jubilee 2000 celebrations that the Council should be 'a sure compass' for the Church in the twenty-first century.

Pope Francis is anxious that we now engage and reengage with the Council - that 'sure compass' - in the shape of the Synodal process which he has initiated throughout the universal church. Pastoral renewal of the church's inner life is to be undertaken, he insists, for the sake of a more effective witness to the gospel by the church in the world. The church, he

goes on, must renew the way it is present in the world so that it might more faithfully reflect the face of God.

As this edition of The Ossory Times goes to print, the Synod of Synodality has just got underway in Rome, a five-week process aimed at taking up Pope Francis' reconfiguration of the notion of 'synodality'. This means that the Catholic Church globally is entering a new phase in the reception of Vatican II. In proposing a synodal model of church - a church which listens, a church which is 'an inverted pyramid' where 'the top is located beneath the base ...', Francis is alluding to key Vatican II themes such as participation, the Holy Spirit and dialogue, aiming to fashion a new synthesis. McRedmond would surely be delighted that the work of the synodal process already underway in dioceses and parishes in Ireland and beyond demonstrates a church ready to engage with, listen to and persuade people and priests of the possibilities for real reform and renewal in parish and diocesan life.

It seems clear to me that committed Irish Catholics are aware 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. The synodal journey on which we have embarked will be of critical importance to the renewal of the life of the church in Ossory (and beyond) in the years to come. As the new bishop, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who participated in the Ossory Diocese Synodal Consultation process in 2020-21 leading to the publication of Our Synodal Journey: First Steps. I would also like to say that I look forward to working with the Council of Priests, the new Pastoral Areas of our Parishes, the Diocesan Pastoral Council and the whole people of God in Ossory in discerning God's will and building up a truly synodal church in the diocese.

'Adsumus' Synod Prayer

We stand before You,
Holy Spirit, as we gather
together in Your name.

With You alone to guide
us, make Yourself at
home in our hearts;

Teach us the way we
must go and how we
are to pursue it.

We are weak and sinful;
do not let us promote
disorder. Do not let
ignorance lead us down
the wrong path nor
partiality influence our
actions.

Let us find in You our
unity so that we may
journey together to
eternal life and not stray
from the way of truth
and what is right.

All this we ask of You,
who are at work in
every place and time,
in the communion of
the Father and the Son,
forever and ever.

Amen.



This medal is seen as a mark of recognition to persons in service of the Catholic Church...

Presentation of Benemerenti Medals



On Sunday 8th October at the 5.30pm Mass in St Mary's Cathedral Bishop Niall presented Benemerenti medals to two very deserving people. Every Eucharist is thanksgiving and this gathering was no different. At this Mass Bishop Niall presented the two Benemerenti medals to two people who have given immense service to the Church. Mr Eddie Talent for his years of service here in the Cathedral Parish and to Sr Helen Maher who has led the Diocesan Forum bringing the voice of the lay faithful, clergy and religious together to lead in our Diocese.

The Benemerenti Medal is awarded by the Pope to members of the clergy

and laity for dedicated service to the Catholic Church. Originally established as an award for soldiers in the Papal Army it was first presented by Pope Pius in the 1700s as a military decoration. Since 1925 this medal is seen as a mark of recognition to persons in service of the Catholic Church, both civil and military, lay and clergy alike. Curiously still today members of the Papal Swiss Guard may receive it for three years of faithful service.

In honouring Sr Helen and Eddie those gathered gave thanks to them, and through them, to all in our Church who give of their time helping our faith to come to life.

The feedback from parents was very positive, some parents even asking questions of their own faith because of listening to the sessions with their children.

MyFaith.ie

Programme of Preparation for the Sacrament of First Holy Communion and Confirmation

Olivia Maher

Two years ago, I introduced my parish to this programme for the First Holy Communion children in our three local primary schools. My own daughter was making her first holy communion that year and I was drawn to the very interactive and fun nature of the programme. I approached our Parish Priest about running this programme for the children in the parish and I volunteered to act as group leader along with him. I found the enrolment and set up very easy and there was great support from the MyFaith.ie office. The programme involves the children completing 20 lessons online with their parents over the course of the year. Alongside this, the children are given two workbooks to complete that supports their online lessons.

Once I received the children's login details and workbooks from the MyFaith.ie office, I organised a launch night with the parents and children involved. I used the PowerPoint on the MyFaith.ie website to explain the programme and demonstrated how to use it. Overall,

there was great enthusiasm for this kind of programme as it involves both the parents and the children journeying together to prepare for sacraments. It was also a lovely way for the parish to be involved in their preparation and be part of their journey. I believe the MyFaith.ie programme made the day of the First Holy Communion even more meaningful for all.

This programme includes a mass workbook that encourages parents and children to come together with the parish to pray on a weekly basis. The workbook helps make the content of the mass more meaningful for the children and encourages them to reflect on what they have witnessed at mass. I was able to stay in touch with the families involved through our monthly family masses. The children preparing for the sacrament read prayers of the faithful at these masses. This helped them feel part of the parish and supported them on this journey. I met the full group twice after the launch, where I planned some reflective time for the children as



a little bonus. I organised a session of Godly play for the children at one of our meetings. This was a new experience for the children and a lovely way for them to explore the Word of God.

The facilities on the MyFaith.ie website meant that I could keep an eye on how the programme was being used by the children and intervene if I thought there was a problem accessing the sessions. This monitoring tool meant that I could gently encourage the children along at their own pace. In my experience the children loved keeping track of their progress and seeing the sessions completed and their overall progress being logged. The programme is a fantastic way to encourage learning and exploration of their faith during this special year.

After a successful first year using the MyFaith.ie programme, my parish used the First Holy Communion and Confirmation programme the following year. This was equally successful and rewarding for all. I found that the Confirmation children

really enjoyed the extra input from the parish and were well able to manage the course themselves with a little input from me along the way.

I found the primary schools and teachers very supportive of this programme and some teachers even opted to use the workbook and the online session in some classes in addition to their curriculum. However, the programme is designed to be done at home with the children and parents working together. The feedback from parents was very positive, some parents even asking questions of their own faith because of listening to the sessions with their children. This programme of sacramental preparation is a unique learning tool for the sacraments that has a faith formation element tucked into very well-designed lessons. Today it is very important that we meet people and especially young people where they are at, and this programme does exactly that. I would highly recommend parishes to use Myfaith.ie as part of their programme for sacramental preparation.



ST MARY'S
CATHEDRAL



As you enter this space we invite you to slow down, to stand before the Lord and to bring to him your prayers. We have done that here for generations - and you, continuing that tradition are, then, most welcome.

Take the tour and interact with the history of this wonderful place.

Rev. Dr Dermot Ryan, Administrator, St Mary's Cathedral

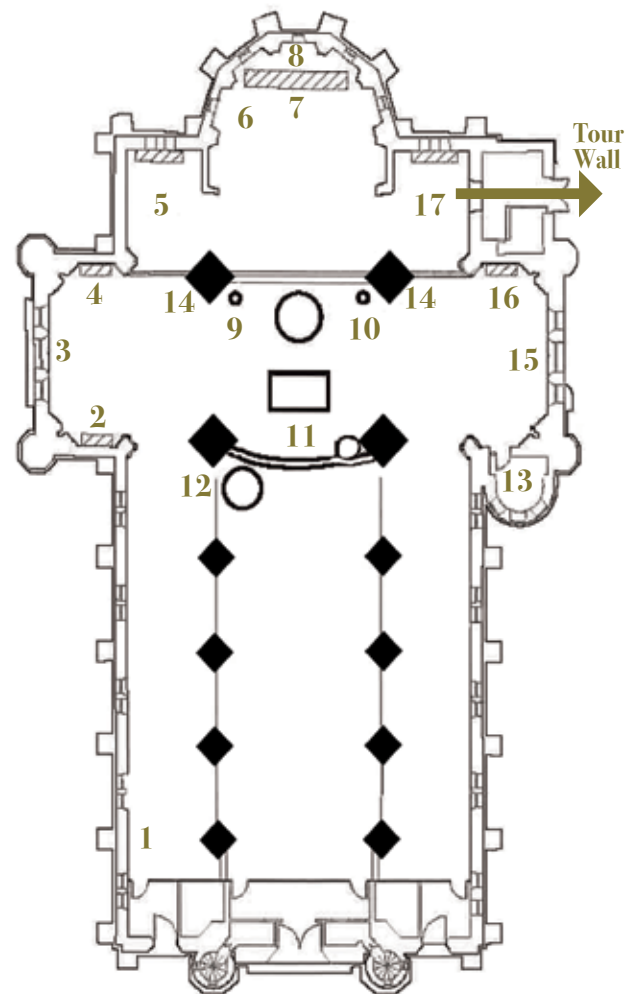
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ST MARY'S
CATHEDRAL



- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. The Stations of the Cross | 9. Statue of Our Lady |
| 2. St Victoria's Altar / Altar of St Margaret Alacoque | 10. Statue of St Joseph |
| 3. Stained Glass Window of the Sacred Heart | 11. Altar, Ambo and Baptismal Font |
| 4. The Altar of the Sacred Heart | 12. Aumbrey |
| 5. Our Lady's Chapel | 13. Baptistry |
| 6. Wall Mosaics in the Apse | 14. Statue of Angels |
| 7. The High Altar | 15. Stained Glass Window of the Assumption |
| 8. Sanctuary Stained Glass Windows | 16. Altar of the Little Flower |
| | 17. St Joseph's Chapel |

It is wonderful to see the history of this most magnificent building come to life...

St Mary's Cathedral Tour

Dermot Ryan

St Mary's Cathedral lies at the heart of the Diocese of Ossory, both literally and figuratively. It is, thankfully, a hive of activity. The parish here, like every other, is alive with people coming to celebrate, nurture and deepen their faith.

Sacramental preparation has begun for the children hoping to celebrate their First Holy Communion and Confirmation; Baptisms see us welcome new members to the family of faith and funerals see us celebrate the lives of those we are entrusting to the Lord. So this parish, then, is like any other save the fact that this wonderful Cathedral Church also has a steady stream of visitors through its doors. Since my arrival to the Cathedral in July last I am struck by the sheer volume of visitors who frequent the church. In fact, bar very early morning or late in the evening I have never been alone in the church. Even now that the summer season is fading behind us their persists a stream of visitors.

Those who come through the Cathedral all marvel at its beauty, as we have alone done, and they wander respectfully around taking in its many treasures.

The Cathedral church was built here in the time of Bishop William Kinsella. A small chapel in St Mary's Parish dedicated to St James's which was built in 1774 had

served as a cathedral for the Catholic population until Kinsella undertook this project. William Deane Butler, the architect for St Kieran's College, was chosen to be the architect for the new building that was to be St Mary's Cathedral. Work was begun in April 1843 and on 18 August the foundation stone was laid. When Kinsella died in December 1845 the walls were only seven feet high and it took successive generations to build this magnificent Cathedral. It was an ambitious project and a testimony to the faith of the people at that time - considering Ireland was entering the period of the great famine. Successive generations have undertaken works here - Bishop Freeman, in his time, carried out works on the Apse, chapter house and Blessed Sacrament Chapel. Bishop Dermot Farrell began further work on the sanctuary and this was completed under the guidance of Bishop Denis Nulty Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese before the arrival of Bishop Coll.

The question that remained was how best to bring this history to life. So as to

engage with the many visitors who enter the church the Cathedral Parish have created a tour of this magnificent building. This tour invites those who come to the Cathedral to engage with a series of QR codes delicately placed throughout the building. Each a point of information on some aspect of the Cathedral, our lives of faith, or its history.

It is wonderful to see the history of this most magnificent building come to life as people see who created the Hogan Angels and to whom they are dedicated - not just in name but in a manner that brings to life who these people were. Every step you take in the Cathedral allows you to interact with its past as does the sacristy corridor which also invites people to read and discover the history of our Cathedral Church.

In putting the tour together we priced and explored, several possibilities but in the end it was decided to build this from scratch, using the people and expertise from both the MyFaith and Aspal digital faith formation projects we were able to develop and construct this interactive tour. It is an exciting collaboration as, now, it can be offered to other churches, cathedrals and parishes. Maybe you would like to create an interactive walk in your parish? Or have some holy wells, or points of interest, come to life. This Aspal creation makes that possible for parishes.

The Cathedral tour costs €5 for a day's login - and one login suffices for all in your company. It will be available free of charge on various days throughout the year so why not visit St Mary's Cathedral and interact with the history of this wonderful space.



It is important the we know that we are called
for who we are...

Vocations - Taking a Risk for Christ

Mark Condon



VOCATIONS MATTER

The title, Taking a Risk for Christ, is the theme of the year of prayer for Diocesan Priesthood. A year when we pray especially for vocations to Diocesan Priesthood. It is a difficult call in the climate of today's Ireland. God and church have been sidelined for a more modern outlook on life, yet as a people very little has changed, we still have a deep desire for meaning and purpose in our lives, we still want to be useful, to be helpful.

Our young people have a great sense and passion for justice and breaking down barriers. Yet there seems to be an emptiness and a lack of fulfilment in their lives. Coming to know the reality of God gives us meaning, because we accept that we are created by God in love and for love. Created by God we are made in his image and likeness and hold in the core of our being an innate dignity with a capacity for loving service. St John Vianney, the patron saint of Priests speaks of Priesthood as the love of the heart of Jesus.

The call to priesthood begins with a heart that seeks more of God, longing to know him better and deeper. In this search the seeker discerns, begins to hear the voice of God calling them in their lives. For some this call is to serve him in priesthood, ministering in a diocese.

Diocesan Priesthood, is for the most part linked to parish, living and working closely with the people of God, helping them to grow in their relationship with God, building up the Kingdom of God in a particular place and building a Christian community focused on loving service of neighbour. The Diocesan Priest ministers in a particular way through the Sacraments, celebrating the Eucharist, gathering the community together in prayer, celebrating Baptisms, Funerals, Marriages, hearing confessions, visiting the sick and house bound with communion and the anointing the sick, bringing Christ at particular times in a particular way into the lives of the faithful. In these encounters the priest helps his parishioners to find in God, a faithful, generous and loving Father.

Being a priest is to go against the tide in many ways. It is a call that requires sacrifice, but it also offers so much more and these sacrifices are compensated by the purpose and meaning that embodies one's life, the contentment and rest the heart discovers, even in the depth of a difficult situation.

God calls you as you are and there is no expectation to give up the person that you are, there is change and growth, as we are formed into a deeper knowledge and relationship with God. However, it is important that we know that we are called for who we are, this answer to this call; this longing, is indeed to Take a Risk for Christ.

Life always offers difficult and daunting decisions, God will not force any one of us to follow a particular path in our lives. He calls, he offers insight, he provides the subtle hints and encouragement from those around us that recognise that deep within us there is an alternative way of living out our faith. A life that satisfies and confirms that which we know we must do, to find meaning and rest for a restless heart. It is the decision of the called not the caller that matters, the decision is ultimately ours, the journey is different for everyone, and there are no straight paths and no definite answers.

We must cast out into the deep and open our hearts and minds so as to allow that call to manifest in our lives. And ultimately if we decide to follow the sound of his voice, we will receive so much more than we sacrifice. God is the source and summit, the beginning and the end and it is through his calling of each of us that his plan for the world becomes a reality.

We take risks each and every day of our lives, each and every decision involves an element of risk and perhaps now is the time to Take a Risk for Christ.

If you are interested in finding out more Diocesan Priesthood please contact Fr Mark Condon, vocations@ossory.ie

Prayer for those discerning their Vocation

God, I know you love me and are calling me to choose life.

But sometimes, I am overwhelmed by the thoughts of my future.

Help me to listen to your call, in all the ways you speak to me:

through prayer and the scriptures,

through the Church and the

circumstances of my life,

through those who love and care for me,

and through my own hopes and desires.

Guide me to search openly and learn about life's choices,

so that I may respond generously to your call,

and choose the vocation and career

that will enable me to love

wholeheartedly,

and serve others with the special gifts you have given me.

God, today, I thank you for your love and for all things,

Amen.

Prayer for Vocations

Heavenly Father, we ask you to send labourers into your harvest and to bless all who strive to listen to your voice.

Inspire, in the hearts of men and women, vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and

consecrated life.

Bless our families with a spirit of generosity, so that those whom you call have the courage

to give themselves to your Church in faith.

Send workers into Your great harvest

so that the Gospel is preached,

the poor are served with love,

the suffering are comforted,

and Your people are strengthened by the sacraments.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

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 the risk for
Christ...



FR MARK CONDON
VOCATIONS DIRECTOR
VOCATIONS@OSSORY.IE



Everyone who undertakes the journey suffers enormously and a great many die...

Vehicles of hope, vehicles of death



CHURCH MATTERS

Albert McDonnell

The first trip that Pope Francis made outside Rome as Pope was to a little Italian island in the Mediterranean named Lampedusa. The previous occasion when Lampedusa was in the news was in 1986 when Gaddafi's military in Libya launched scud missiles at an American base there. I lived in Rome at the time. Even though the scuds missed their target and there were no casualties, the attack led to near panic across Italy.

The crisis that prompted Pope Francis' visit to Lampedusa in 2013 has generated a great many victims. The Pope's opening words when he arrived on the island take us to the horrifying core of the tragedy. 'Immigrants dying at sea, in boats which were vehicles of hope and vehicles of death'.

The United Nations estimate that 2,000 refugees have died attempting to cross the Mediterranean during the first six months of 2023 alone.

Waves of people leave their homes and communities in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia and travel vast distances in the hope of reaching the promised land of Europe.

They are attracted by the hope of a better life but also driven by extreme poverty, repression and injustice. Everyone who undertakes the journey suffers enormously and a great many die.

Strangely, the Irish media pay little attention to countries where English is not spoken or where there isn't a substantial

Irish community. We are more likely to hear about what is happening on the United States-Mexican border than in the Mediterranean Sea, which is the southern border of the European Union of which we are part.

For many decades, Ireland had a global reach that rivalled that of far larger countries. Our missionaries lived and preached the Gospel in much of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

The Irish missionary era is largely over, and it seems so also is our interest in the countries and communities that they served. Perhaps, the advent of African and Asian priests ministering in Ireland will help re-establish those bonds.

There are promising signs that our media are beginning to take a greater interest in Africa. The work of a young Irish journalist named Sally Hayden is especially impactful. She is an African correspondent for one of our national papers and has received numerous, prestigious awards for her work. Hayden recently published a book entitled 'My Fourth Time, We Drowned' which documents the experience of people making the perilous journey from Africa to Western Europe. It is a truly shocking book. It is based on her experience listening to people in places such as Libya, Sudan, Rwanda and Eritrea.

The dominant narrative in Hayden's writing is suffering, indifference and exploitation.

As citizens of the European Union we can fly almost anywhere we wish, so long as we can afford the ticket.

Our young people go to work in the Middle East or Australia to accumulate a deposit to purchase a home or simply for the experience. Citizens of the countries where Hayden lived and worked do not have that privilege.

They travel overland in the harshest of conditions at the mercy of people

smugglers. They sell whatever property they have before they leave to pay the smugglers. Many die crossing the Sahara where their bodies are left to decay. Women are sexually abused by those who purport to help them. Hayden recounts gruesome scenes of torture being uploaded on WhatsApp and sent to family members in Europe so as to solicit a ransom, often thousands of Euro. Libya, which lacks a functioning Government, has become a principal final point of departure for refugees seeking to reach the EU. Hayden's description of cruelty, detention centres and slavery in Libya should, melt even the hardest of hearts.

We are inclined to think that the present is automatically better than the past.

But history doesn't always progress, often the direction of travel is the opposite. Ireland has generated several waves of refugees down the centuries.

Mainland Europe was the destination in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and primarily North America from the nineteenth century famines onwards. The factors that led Irish people to embark on these trails of tears resemble the push-pull reasons that today lead so many Africans and Asians to risk everything on getting to the EU.

The situation that Pope Francis highlights so courageously and is reported on by Sally Hayden and others is dark. However, there are glimmers of light.

The resilience of the refugees themselves and the presence of Christ in the hearts of people of goodwill lightens the darkness. In Lampedusa, the Pope asked 'Has anyone wept?'. Rivers of tears flow in the desert, detention centres, on the beaches, in the boats and from the eyes of those who mourn.

May the Lord of mercy give us hearts of flesh.

Passing many pilgrims on the way the pleasantries of 'Buen Camino' was repeated again and again...

The Camino

The French Way - from Sarria to Santiago de Compostela 2023

Martina Lawlor

For centuries many hundreds of thousands of pilgrims from all over the world set out each year from popular starting points across Europe, to make their way to Santiago de Compostela. Most travel by foot, some by bicycle, horseback in another acceptable mode. Whether undertaking the walk as a religious pilgrimage, or for health reasons, or a spiritual retreat from modern life, the Camino is a unique experience.

The Way of St James is a network of routes that cross Western Europe through northern Spain and arrive at Santiago de Compostela in order to visit the tomb of St James, which is situated behind the main altar of the Cathedral. James, along with his brother John, left life as a fisherman when Jesus called him to be a "fisher of men". He followed Jesus as one of his disciples until Jesus was crucified. Following the crucifixion of Jesus, James made a pilgrimage to the Iberian Peninsula to spread the word of Jesus Christ. He later returned to Judea in 44AD where he was martyred. His remains, or relics, were transported by

his followers back to Galicia in Spain and are reputedly buried in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. St James the Greater is the patron saint of both pilgrims and the nation of Spain.

Sarria, being the last point of the various walks at which a pilgrim can start the journey and still complete the minimum requirement of 100km that's needed to claim the Compostela, was to be our starting point. The Compostela is the traditional certificate awarded to pilgrims arriving at the Cathedral of Santiago who have participated in the Camino. Our Pilgrim Passport, which we would collect sellos, or ink stamps, would provide proof to demonstrate that we would commence or walk in Sarria and the distance covered. Our days were marked by starting and finishing points with beautiful townlands and villages in between each location. After an early start and under the guidance of Fr Ollie Maher and Fr Joe Tynan, our Kavanagh Travel Camino de Santiago Pilgrimage Walk began in Sarria, passing through Barbadeo, Morgade, Mercadoiri and to



finish in Portomarin of the first day, passing through woodlands, gravel tracks with opportunities to stop for refreshment on the route. At the end of that walk of 23km we gathered and were returned to the hotel for a much need dinner and restful night.

Once more our group gathered the next day to start from our previous day's finishing point of Portomarin for another long walk of 25km to end at Palas de Rei. Along our route this day we passed through Gonzar, Hospital, Vendas de Baron and Ligonde. Passing many pilgrims on the way the pleasantry of 'Buen Camino' was repeated again and again, from pilgrims of all nationalities. and it was an uplifting contact with people when the climb could be sometimes arduous. St

James' emblem was the scallop shell, and still pilgrims to his shrine wear that symbol on their hats or clothes. Once more it was with welcome relief we returned to our hotel for dinner and a chance to get together for chat.

We had some relatively 'short walks' of 15km for two of our days crossing river valleys and lovely woodland paths. The first was from our previous finishing point of Palas de Rei to Melide, passing through Casanova and O Coto. Then the following day from Melide to Arzu. Similar in landscape to the previous day we passed through Bent, Castaneda and Ribadiso.

Continuing on our journey, and also securing the bonds of friendships being

formed, our next day's walk was from Arzua to Pedrouzo. Our route of 20km through Calzada, A Call, Salceda, Brea and Santa Irene, which brought us along downhill valleys and natural pathways with plenty of shade. Again it was with welcome relief we returned to our hotel for dinner and a chance to get together.

Ever nearing our destination, and approaching the edge of Santiago, today's walk was relatively short with a distance of 15km from Pedrouzo to Monte de Gozo, passing through Amenal, San Paio and Lavacolla. Monte de Gozo translates as the Hill of Joy, called this because it is the pilgrims' first sight of the Cathedral of Santiago as the spires stand tall from a good distance outside the city. Back at the hotel that evening we celebrated a beautiful Mass, with Fr Ollie and Fr Joe concelebrating, and many of the our pilgrim group as an impromptu choir greatly adding to the flavour and mood of the evening.

On our last day of walking, we set out on our last 5km with a steady step and a definite air of excitement, to arrive at St James Cathedral for the Pilgrim Mass.

Entering the square at the Cathedral is truly an uplifting experience with a real sense of achievement. The Cathedral, which was consecrated in 1211, has elaborately carved stone facades which open onto grand plazas within the medieval walls of the old town. Many groups were clapping and singing, others with flags of all nations being waved in joy at the reaching the end of their journey. Our group duly obtained our Camino Certificate from the Pilgrim Office, bringing our well-stamped Pilgrim Passport as evidence of having completed the Camino Walk. We then had free time to explore the beautiful city, which offered many magnificent sites and museums to visit, before returning to our hotel for our final evening. It was evident from the faces of our group, on that last evening, that all were content and satisfied with their efforts. We now return to our own lives, very much the better for having spent this time, together, or alone, walking, listening, sharing, singing, in a way that is unique to the Camino. The greeting of 'Buen Camino' could certainly be a greeting applied to our daily lives, and beyond The French Way.



Pilgrims now enjoy two days of prayer, reconciliation, meditation and peace, in this sacred place.

Ballyhale Parish Pilgrimage to Knock 2023

Caitriona Kenneally



On the weekend of July 15th-16th last, in keeping with a long-held tradition, the people of Ballyhale and surrounding parishes, embarked on their annual pilgrimage to Knock, Co Mayo.

For many years, this was a day trip only. Thanks to the stalwart work of organisers Frank & Mary Aylward, Fr Sean O'Connor PP, and an army of helpers, pilgrims now enjoy two days of prayer, reconciliation, meditation and peace, in this sacred place.

It was a grey and wet morning as we set off on our journey. Coincidentally, it was St Swithin's Day (July 15th). According to the old saying "St Swithin's Day if thou dost rain, for forty days it will remain". In our prayerful moments, on the bus, and in Knock, we prayed for some fine weather! We picked up pilgrims in the village of Ballyhale, and other locations along the way, including Kilkenny city, and Ballyragget, up north. In total, over seventy people

travelled; all were welcomed on board by our pilgrimage leader Fr Sean O'Connor. We made our way to our assigned seats, and the itinerary for the weekend, along with name badges and prayer sheets were handed out.

Newcomers were welcomed and friendships renewed, as this devout group traversed the midlands, and headed west to Co Mayo. En route, we recited the joyful mysteries of the rosary, prayed to Our Lady of Knock and Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and remembered those who had passed away since our last pilgrimage. We also prayed for vocations, and thanked God for the gift of our priests.

To sustain us on our way, we stopped for breakfast at the Tullamore Court Hotel, Co Offaly. Back on board, we settled in for the final leg of our journey; it turned out to be most interesting. Among our group of pilgrims was Mr John Joe Costin, acclaimed garden designer, landscaper and horticulturist; he

delivered a talk brimming with valuable information on the life of Monsignor James Horan.

When he was appointed Parish Priest of Knock in 1967, Monsignor Horan inherited a town in disarray. He recognised that the grounds and amenities were totally inadequate for the number of visiting pilgrims, as were the facilities for those with special needs. The only ground owned by the church was the land the Parish Church was built on. He purchased an additional 160 acres from adjacent farmers, built a bypass for the town, and created a number of car parks.

In 1975, he engaged our fellow-pilgrim, Mr Costin to prepare a landscape plan; the objective was to enhance and embellish this holy place and its churches. As is widely known, Monsignor Horan continued his great works by bringing an airport to Knock, progressing the building of the Basilica, and by inviting Pope John Paul II to visit the shrine in 1979. We thank Mr Costin for sharing his first hand recollections with us.

We arrived at our destination, the Knock House Hotel, on schedule, and were kindly greeted at reception. Following a delicious lunch of soup and sandwiches, the group enjoyed some free time to embark on their own personal pilgrimage. A shuttle buggy was available for those who needed assistance.

Visiting the Chapel of Reconciliation for confession is an important part of the pilgrimage to Knock, as is praying The Stations of the Cross, and reflection at the Apparition Wall. Mass cards for our Sick and Deceased families and friends were obtained, holy water bottles were filled, and some members of the group even fitted in a cuppa at one of the nearby eateries! The afternoon culminated at the Apparition Church, where Fr O'Connor celebrated Mass. He was assisted by Kay and Margo who did the Readings, Lily led the Prayers of the Faithful, and Eamonn was our Eucharist Minister. During the Mass, the congregation joined in the singing of some well-known hymns such as Soul of My Saviour, Hail Queen of Heaven and Holy God We Praise Thy Name. We left the church with feelings of spirituality, calmness, gratitude and peace. We then gathered on the steps of the sacred altar at the Basilica for the annual group photograph. This was distributed to us

on our homeward journey by Amy, our very helpful tour assistant; it is a lovely momentum of our pilgrimage and a big thanks to my who gave her all. Dinner at our hotel was next, followed by some music and dancing. After a good night's rest, we were ready for the final day of our pilgrimage.

The morning's itinerary included a free visit to the Museum at Knock. The visit was organised by one of our pilgrims Brigid Murphy. Situated in the grounds, the museum captures the compelling story of the Knock apparition. We were shown original handwritten letters written by people cured at Knock, and we stepped back in time to August 1879, an explored what life was like for the people of Ireland at that time. We read testimonies from the fifteen visionaries, and learned about the Commissions of Enquiry into the apparition. The hand crafted chair, used by Pope John Paul II during his mass in 1979 is now on display at the museum; we could look, but not sit!

The main Mass took place at 3pm at the Basilica, with Rosary and the Blessing of the Sick beforehand. The National Pioneer Association was welcomed at the mass, for their annual pilgrimage. The chief celebrant was Most Rev Michael Neary, Archbishop Emeritus of Tuam, whilst the homily was delivered by Fr Robert McCabe, Spiritual Director, PTTA. We joined in prayer for the promotion of sobriety and temperance. Fr Gibbons, Parish Priest at Knock coordinated the ceremonies, which culminated in an Outdoor Rosary Procession and the blessing of religious objects.

We then boarded the coach for the long trip home. The journey was broken by another stop at the lovely Tullamore House Hotel, prayers and thanksgiving with Fr O'Connor, hymns, and a beautiful rendition by our bus driver Pierce Kavanagh. Tired, but spiritually refreshed we arrived safely back in Ballyhale, Knocktopher and Knockmoylan, the three components of our parish in south Kilkenny.

We extend a very special word of thanks to Fr Sean O'Connor, Frank and Mary Aylward, Kavanagh Coaches, Ellen, our wheelchair accessible bus-driver, and the generous local sponsors who made this pilgrimage possible. And God willing, we look forward to our parish pilgrimage next year. Save the date; July 13th-14th 2024.



Here in Ossory we have been on this journey
in parishes since October 2021...

Ossory Together 2023

Gathering of the People of God An ecumenical prayer vigil to entrust to the Holy Spirit the works of the first session of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (October 2023) of the Roman Catholic Church.

Gemma Mulligan

On 30th September in St. Peter's Square in Rome, brothers and sisters in Christ are gathered together from all walks of life and from around the world. They included members of the Synod, young people participating in the "Together" gathering, leaders and delegates from different Churches and Christian communions, like Pope Francis, Patriarch Bartholomew of the Greek Orthodox Church and Archbishop Justin Welby of the Anglican Communion.

The leaders gathered before the cross of San Damiano cross, which is considered a symbol of Christian renewal and rebuilding. Here in Ossory Diocese in the communion of prayer with the Christian leaders and with many others throughout the world we gathered around the San Damiano cross with the young people of the diocese for Taizé prayer. In a special way we gathered to entrust to the Holy Spirit the Assembly members of the 26th Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome which began on the 4th October and will continue for the month.

As the People of God in Ossory we gathered again for Sunday Mass in St. Mary's Cathedral to continue to pray for the Synod, the Assembly members and for Christian unity. As we prayed, we kept in mind four expressions of gratitude for what God gifts to us. The gift of unity, the

gift of the other, the gift of peace and the gift of creation.

The Synod on Synodality is a significant moment in the life of the Church. It is significant because for the first time in the history of the Synod, Pope Francis has given women voting rights as well as changing the membership of the Synod of Bishops on the theme For A Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission. An additional 70 non-bishop members have been added who represent various groupings of the faithful of the People of God (priests, consecrated women, deacons, lay faithful) and who come from the local Churches. It is also significant as the journey began two years ago when Pope Francis invited everyone to come on this synodal journey. Every diocese in the universal Church on every continent in the world has contributed to this synod through the different stages or listening and discerning which happened along the way. Gatherings were held in parishes and dioceses and many other groups were invited to send submissions.

Pope Francis wants to hear every voice. Here in Ossory we have been on this journey in parishes since October 2021 and are part of the national synodal gatherings. As this important moment happens in our church we continue to pray.

Give me a crash course in ...

The possible referendum on “women’s



It's wonderful to think that it is over ten years since the first edition of The Ossory Times.

A lot has happened since then. We have seen a global pandemic, weather related tragedies across the world, mass migration, and new wars in Europe and the Middle East.

And in Ireland too. There has been a lot of change.

Some has been for the better, like the recovery from the 2008 financial crisis; others have been for the worse, like the ongoing housing crisis and inflation.

And then there has been a lot of social and legal change?

It surprised me when I checked this. In the last ten years or so, we have had nine referendums in Ireland!

And I believe that there is another one coming soon.

The government are currently working on a draft amendment.

How has this come about?

Back in July 2019, a Citizens' Assembly was held on Gender Equality.

Hold on. A Citizen's Assembly? That's another change. What is that?

Well yes, it's a new development. The first was held in 2013. It brings together 99 randomly selected members of the public to discuss and debate a specific issue. The members are asked to carefully consider a range of other views, listening to expert opinion as well as ordinary experiences. Out of the discussion a series of recommendations are made to the Government to consider.

duties in the home"



So what did the 2019 Assembly recommend?

It was asked to 'consider gender equality and make recommendations ... to advance gender equality'. It reported in June 2021 and made number of policy proposals, including amendments to the Irish Constitution.

The first was to put gender equality into Article 40.1 which says: "All citizens shall, as human persons, be held equal before the law ..."

The second set were about the family. It said that Article 41 should be amended, so that the protection it gives to family life be given to all types of family, and not limited to the marital family. It also suggested that Article 41.2 should be deleted and replaced with more neutral language and include other types of carers and types of care.

What does it say?

Article 41.2 recognises the woman's role in the home and that the state "should endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home."

Does church teaching uphold the value of family?

It certainly does. And it was influential on the original drafting of the constitution. The article in question begins: The State recognises the Family as the natural primary and fundamental unit group of Society ..." This is important because it places our close personal relationship of kin above any law of the land. Accepting that family life can disfunction, it is for the most part the best place in which children and individuals can thrive and support each other. In the words of The Catechism of the Catholic Church (paragraph 2207):

The family is the original cell of social life ... Authority, stability, and a life of relationships within the family constitute the foundations for freedom, security, and fraternity within society. The family is the community in which, from childhood, one can learn moral values, begin to honour God, and make good use of freedom. Family life is an initiation into life in society.

The law and social policy should support the family, rather than replace it. It has all sorts of implications for education, health, property and other things.

So what will the new wording be?

That is the problem. The government is struggling to find the right language.

Firstly, it is very difficult to define the family in a way that is all-inclusive. Secondly, it is difficult to define in law the nature of care. Finally, I think the government might be concerned about the level of constitutional responsibilities it will put on them. It may ask too much of them. And so the government has postponed the referendum for now.

So what about the old wording?

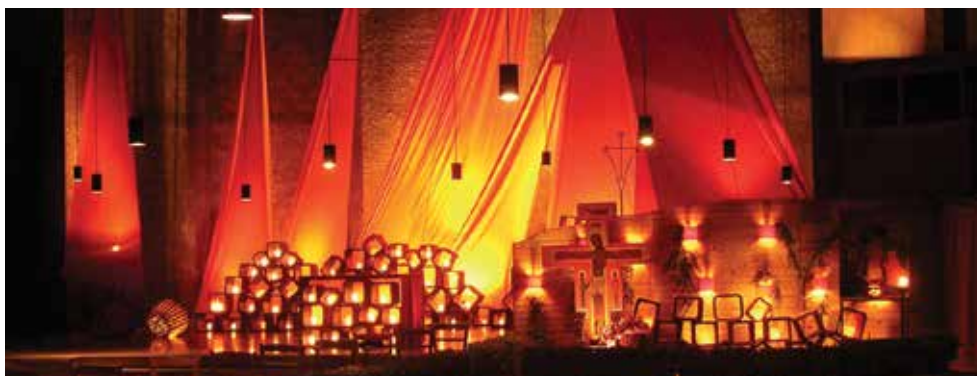
Well, it stays for the moment. For many, the language is very old-fashioned. Some have argued that it justified old laws in Ireland which women lost their jobs on becoming married, especially in the civil service. Many readers will remember those days, and we would not want them back. On the other hand, others have argued that this article has never

been tested in the courts in our current times. Many women – and men – say that they would like to spend time at home with family but are forced to work because of 'economic necessity'. What would happen if the government was taken to court for creating this situation? So many parents have to work long hours to pay enormous mortgages, child care fees, education costs, aware that they are missing time with their children. The government it could be said has failed in its constitutional, and indeed moral, responsibility.

Maybe we might come back to this when the wording comes out?

Looking forward to talking through many more moral matters with the readers of *The Ossory Times*.

Taizé Youth Programme 2024

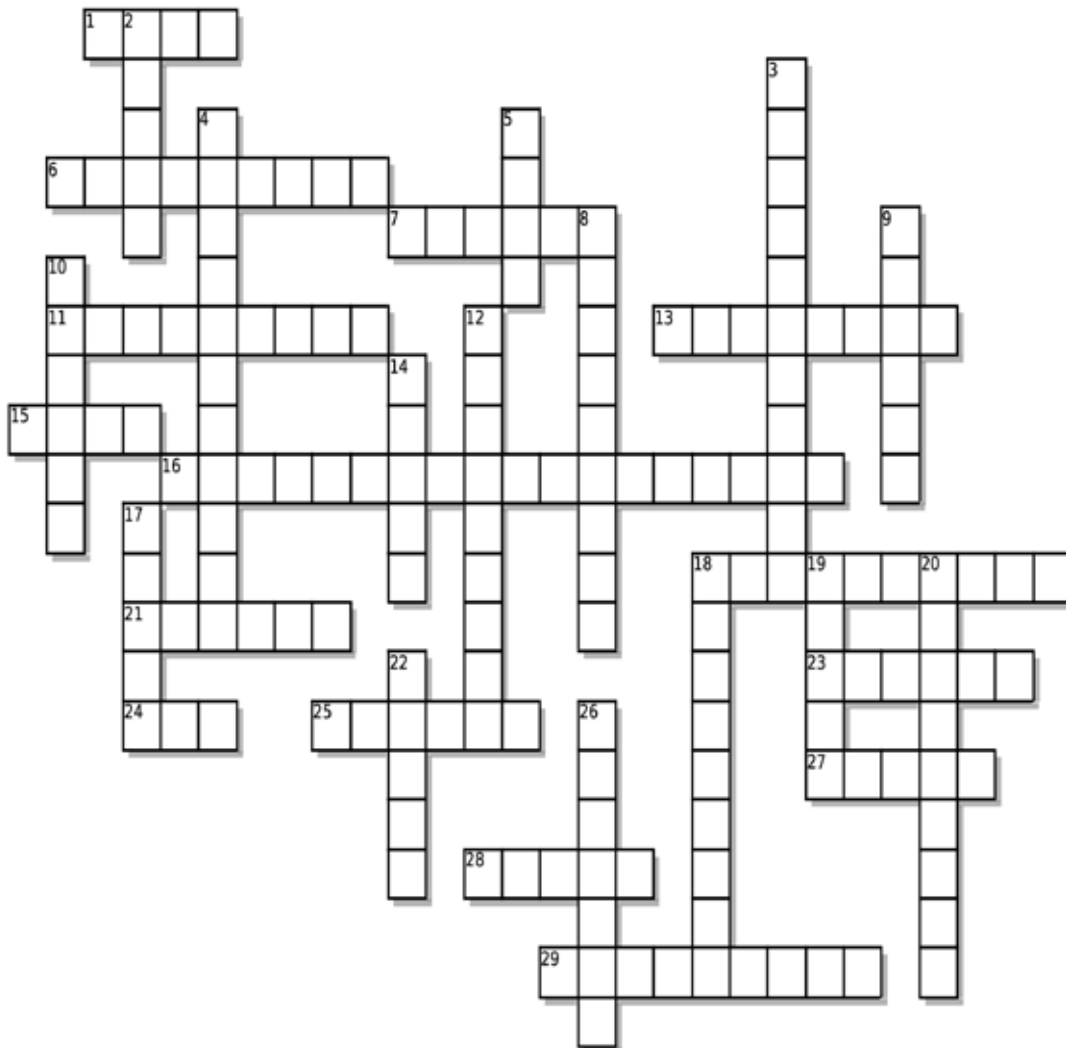


A youth trip to Taizé in France organised by Ossory Youth will take place from Sunday 23rd June to Sunday 30th June 2024. A week in the Taizé Community is an opportunity for reflection and contemplation and a little step back from daily life. But bringing people together is also the essence of Taizé and it is a week of meeting young people from different countries and cultures where new friendships are made. Tens of thousands of young people from around the world, including 25 from Kilkenny, will make the trip to Taizé next year.

The programme, which runs from November 2023 to June 2024 is open to Transition year, 5th year and Leaving Cert students. Closing date is Friday 27th Oct.

For additional information, including cost and application forms, contact Patrick Bookle, Ossory Youth at (056) 7761200, (087) 2129006 or pbookle@ossoryyouth.com

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1 He asked for justice to roll down like water
- 6 New prefect for the Dicastery of the Doctrine of the Faith
- 7 Lk 10:3 among...
- 11 Prayer invoking the Holy Spirit
- 13 One of the seven deadly
- 15 Chapter in Matthew where you find the Sermon on the Mount
- 16 College collaborating with St Kieran's on upcoming conference
- 18 At this we create cardinals
- 21 Meal for Ezekiel
- 23 Agatha is their patron saint
- 24 This can be dead or red
- 25 Hebrew liturgical prayer
- 27 French catholic painter of ballerinas
- 28 Jesus praised her generosity
- 29 He preached the opening of the Synod retreat

DOWN

- 2 Gift of a wise man
- 3 Laudate Deum is an apostolic one of these
- 4 From here Mgr Ryan retired
- 5 Son of Jacob
- 8 Caretaker of the sanctuary, sacred vessels and altar
- 9 Papal ambassador
- 10 The religion of Jesus
- 12 The mark that Sacraments make
- 14 Free and undeserved gift from God
- 17 Abraham was probably happy to see this in the desert
- 18 Mother church
- 19 Church council
- 20 The old or new
- 22 Biblical tree
- 26 This journey we are on

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 30th November 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 32 competitions:*

Adult Crossword:
Alice Carroll

**Children's Wordsearch,
age 8-13:**
Tom Doherty

**Children's Colouring,
age 5-8:**
Alfie Clarke

Colouring Competition



For ages 5-8



Wordsearch Competition



For ages 8-13

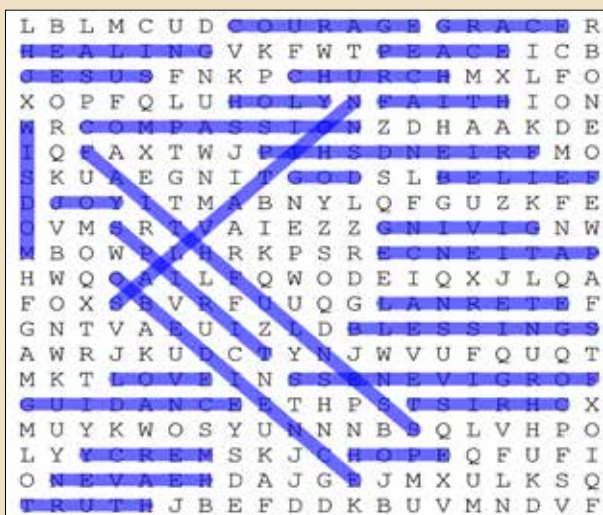
For ages 8-13

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

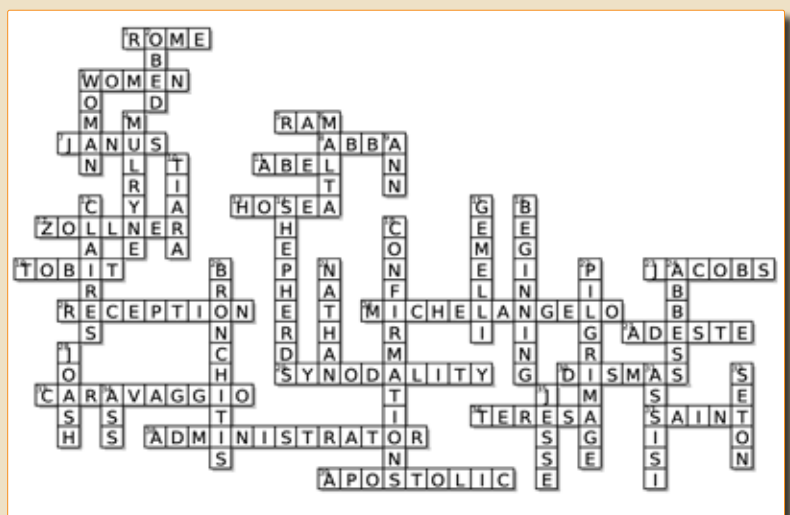
GOD'S CREATION

GOD	STARS	DAY
SUN	SPIRIT	PLANTS
GARDEN	MOON	EVE
NIGHT	ANIMALS	SAID
SEAS	EARTH	SKY
GOOD	HEAVENS	CREATED
FRUITS	ADAM	

Answers to Ossory Times Issue 32



Answers to Ossory Times Issue 32



ST MARY'S CATHEDRAL RESTORATION FUND DRAW 2023/2024



12 MONTHLY DRAWS

September 2023 to August 2024

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!

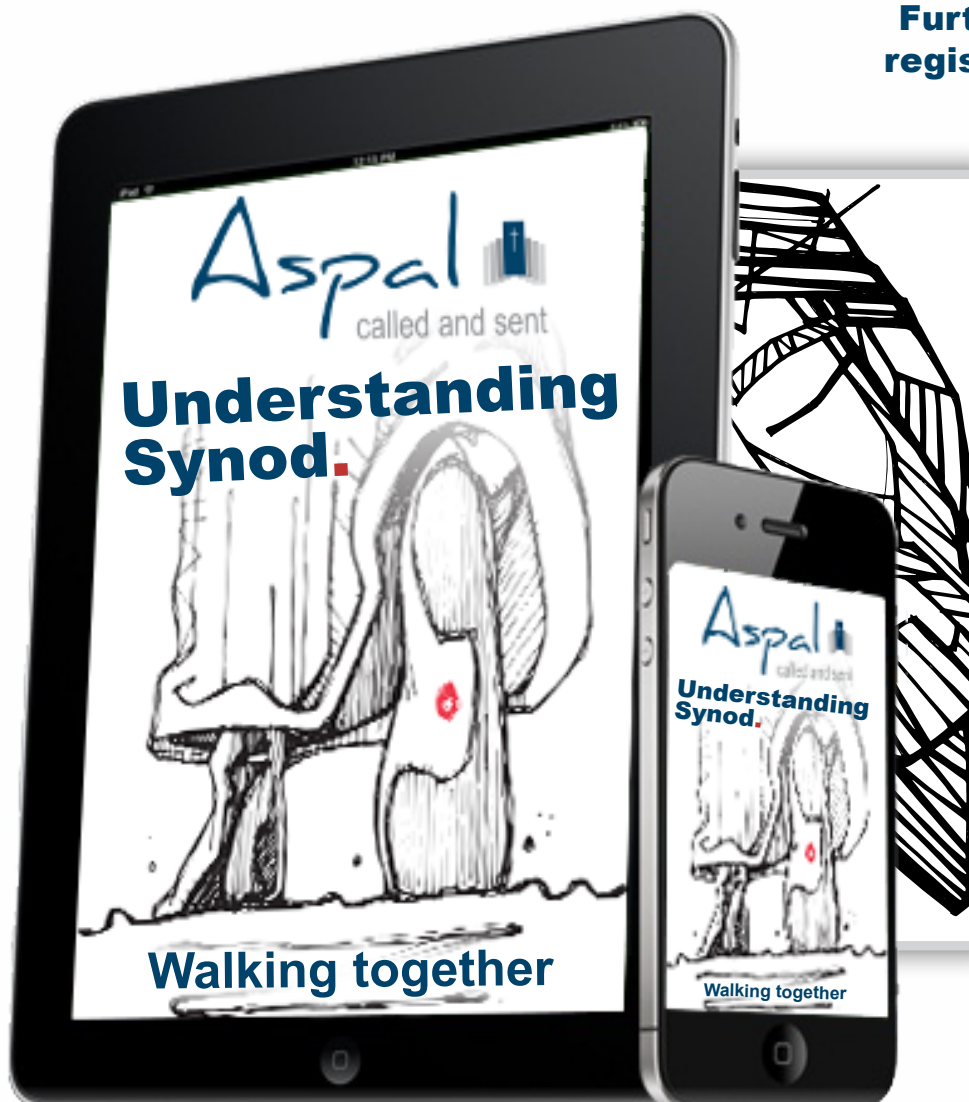


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