

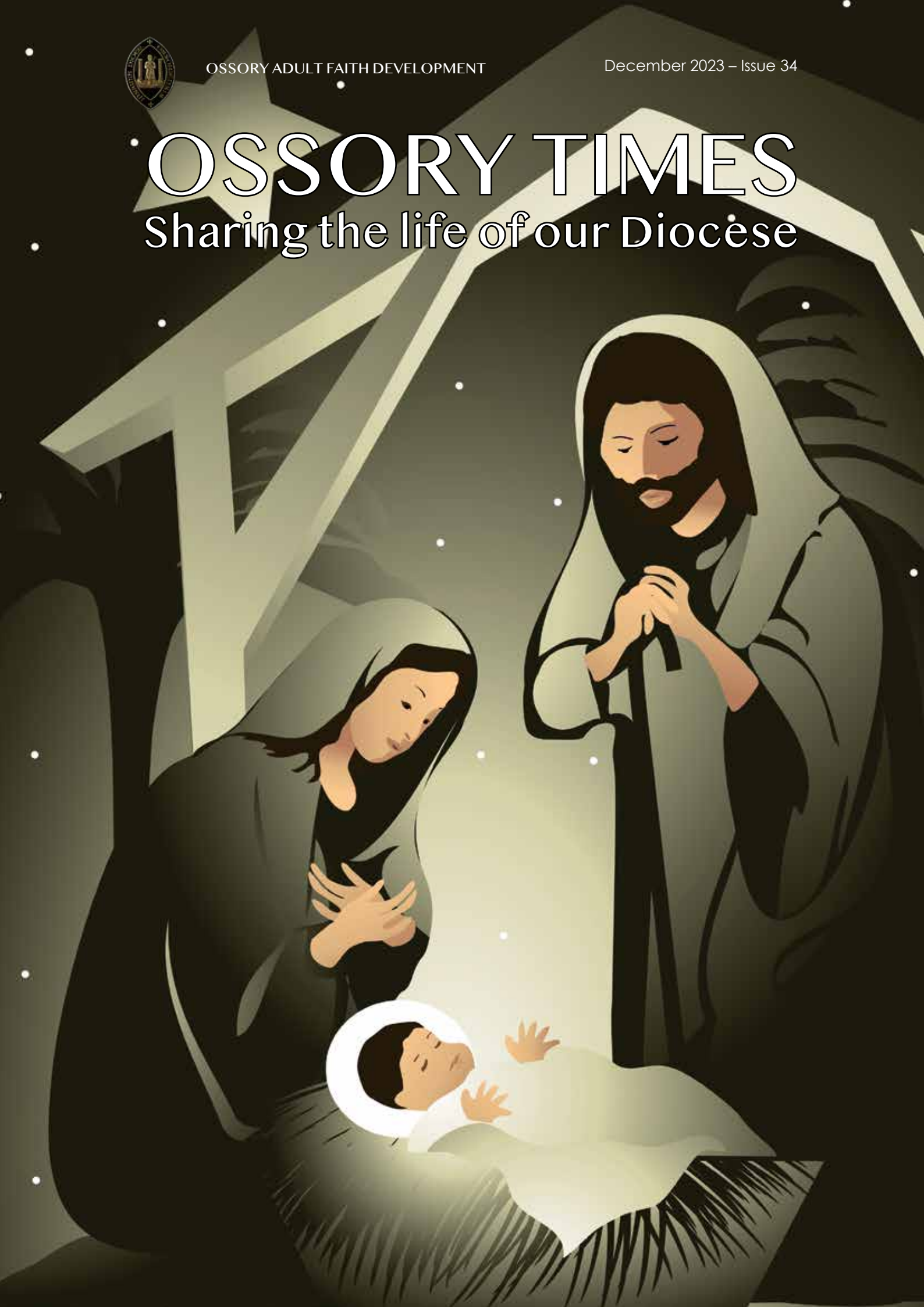


OSSORY ADULT FAITH DEVELOPMENT

December 2023 – Issue 34

OSSORY TIMES

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Editorial

We cannot help but notice how it is that the little infant we approach in the crib has his arms outstretched towards us. His gaze is on us who approach. He is not looking, as one would expect, towards Mary or Joseph for reassurance. His gaze invites us in. His arms welcome us. His smile reassures us, that all will be well.

As we look to the crib we already know of the cross that faces Jesus, but in the magic of Christmas that reality doesn't seem to matter. In this infant we see nothing but hope, potential and possibilities. In him we see God among us and, as such, we know all will be well.

This year, 2023, is the anniversary of the first "crib". It was exactly 800 years ago, in 1223, that Saint Francis of Assisi created the first Nativity Scene in the northern Lazio hill town of Greccio. He did this with live figures to bring Bethlehem close to those who would never have the chance to visit the birthplace of Jesus Christ. In so doing he gifted us all a most beautiful part of our Christmas celebrations. These cribs in our homes, schools, colleges and workplaces remind us of the simplicity of that which we are celebrating.

This Christmas the Irish Bishops have invited people to share images of their crib, be it at home or somewhere else, on social media so that we can together appreciate that wonderful reminder of that first Christmas.

At this time we also cannot but be aware of the ongoing devastation that is taking place in, and around, the Holy Land. As our minds recall that first Christmas let us not forget to pray for peace in the land that God choose. Sadly there are many other parts of our world suffering in a similar fashion. May humanity find peaceful solutions to the problems we have created and may the crib, and not the cross, shape our world today.

As always the pages of the *Ossory Times* try to capture a small aspect of the life of our Diocese. The people, activities, reflections and articles in this edition show that the flame of faith is very much alive in Ossory. Reflecting on that first crib, on one of the Advent faith development evenings which called us to think about our moral obligation to care for our world, the conferences which were a collaboration between Notre Dame Australia and St Kieran's College on the role of Catechists and on Catholic Educational Leadership, some further insights on the next phase of the synodal journey which took place in Rome recently, 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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CHRISTMAS RENEWS GOD'S BLESSING

Bishop Niall Coll

Joy and excitement are the typical experience of children as Christmas approaches. For many adults - parents and grandparents, of course included - Advent and Christmas are more akin to a long slow dose of paracetamol, designed to mask the symptoms of whatever makes us anxious and distressed in the normal patterns of our lives. Whatever the truth of that assertion, it is good to remember that in St Matthew's gospel Jesus opens the Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5-7) with eight proclamations, in the light of which I would like to suggest, as a friend of mine constantly advises, that the antidote to anxiousness and fear is blessing. These eight blessings are called the Beatitudes and they establish the character of a Christian, a disciple, one who follows and learns from and lives by the example of the one whose birth we celebrate each Christmas. To live with a sense of such blessing is a transforming grace. If a person feels blessed – in any of the ways we feel we can be, in our families, in parishes and communities, in our friends and colleagues, in the opportunities given to us – then we will not easily succumb to a sense that we are isolated, exposed or vulnerable. We will not easily become afraid.

What is, in every sense of the word, wonderful about the gospel generally is that Jesus blesses everybody even

though some people reject him. Jesus blesses the poor in spite of their poverty. He blesses the persecuted and those who mourn because their need is obvious. In Jesus' time, as in ours, poverty was seen as a judgement and an excuse to despise people who had nothing or were ill or disabled. Jesus would undo the fear such prejudice causes but he would do so in the teeth of the fear in us, that makes us look down on others so we can feel better about ourselves.

Jesus blesses the merciful and the gentle because they are the ones who, like God, know the justice each person deserves. They also know the mind and heart of God, though, and are willing to mitigate or forego altogether the 'satisfaction' we often imagine justice requires when people suffer the consequences of their own folly or their malice.

Jesus blesses those who hunger and thirst for what is right. He blesses the peacemakers and calls them children of God because they have immersed themselves in the creative passion of God who is never indifferent to us or the world we live in. And how we need our peacemakers now in the face of the terrible violence and human suffering which blots our world today be it in the Holy Land, Ukraine, Yemin and so many other theatres of conflict which receive

little or no notice in Western political discourse or media reports.

Advent and Christmas bring us to the one whose first thought is to bless us. In the biblical accounts of Christ's birth, we cannot deny that there is much bewilderment. There is compulsion in the orders of an imperial decree. There is Herod. There is a sense of obligation to God and to each other: in Mary and Joseph, in Zechariah and Elizabeth. There is the uncertainty of the various journeys to Bethlehem: Mary's and Joseph's, the

shepherds' and the Magis'. But, at the still heart of it is Christ, whose advent will not be postponed, and it is he who focuses everyone. Christ's birth is the renewal of our blessing in God, a blessing – and a healing – that has always been ours and which has never been taken away, for all that we may fear it has. That's the good news of Christmas and parents, grandparents, teachers, clergy and all who are anchored in the Christian faith have a privileged position to share it anew.

St Kieran's College Jubiliarians 2023



Continuing an age-old tradition on the first Tuesday after the 15th August, priests ordained from St Kieran's College, and now ministering throughout the world, gathered in the College Chapel for the annual priests' reunion.

The Mass of the Reunion was led by Bishop Niall Coll, his first as Bishop of Ossory. It was wonderful to see old friends and familiar faces come together for the reunion and to mark the jubilee of so many in Ossory and beyond.

...the environment and our duty of care to it has long been a subject for Church teaching.

"From Peace on Earth to Peace with Earth - Theology and Ecology"

Greg Campion

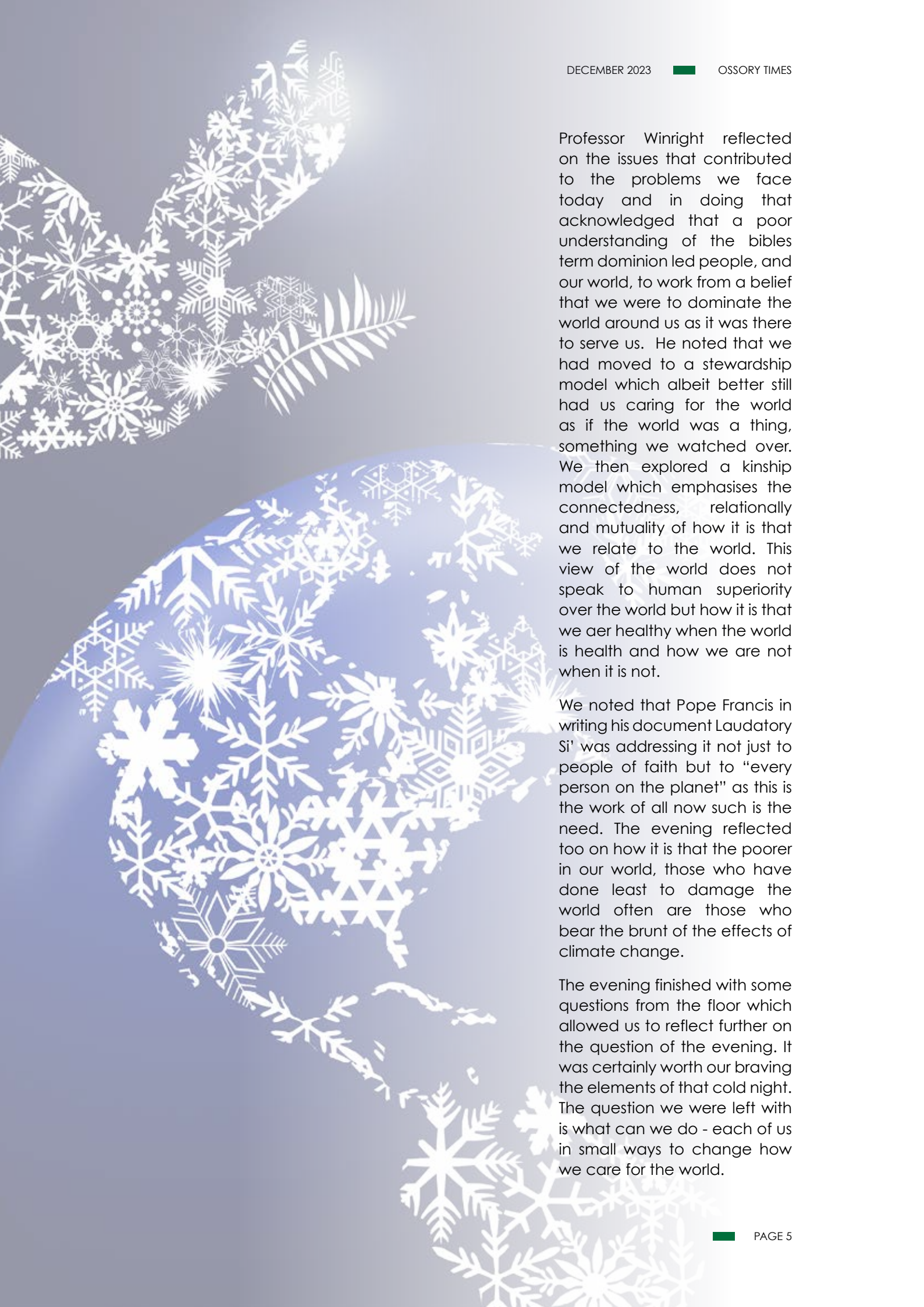
On the evening of Monday 11th December I was delighted to attend the first of the Adult Faith Development reflection Advent evenings held in St Kieran's College. This evening was to explore the imperative of our caring for the environment and it took as its title "From peace on earth to peace with earth". As if to remind us of its presence the climate made itself known to all of us who ventured out on this cold, wet and windy December evening.

Having made the effort we were not disappointed. Professor Tobias Winright was welcomed by Fr Dermot Ryan who promised that we would be in for an interesting evenings reflection - and it did not disappoint. Professor Winright had an obvious ease with this subject matter and his passion for our moral responsibility to care for the world in which we live easily came to the fore.

I was surprised that he began the talk some 60 years ago reflecting firstly on a

document written by Pope Saint John XXIII - *Pacem in Terris*. It surprised me to note that the environment and our duty of care to it has long been a subject for Church teaching. Pope Francis, we were told, is building on the work of previous Popes and their deep care for the world around us. We were amazed to see the number of Solar Panels installed at the Vatican in the time of Pope Benedict and we were told that such was Pope Benedict's interest in the environment that he was often called the green Pope.

We reflected on the three ages in which the world has lived: The land based age where humanity lived in harmony with the world around us; the industrial age in which humanity saw the world as a product to conquer, a problem to be solved and a resource to serve production; and ecological age of today in which our interdependence is so often emphasised - we live with and in the world.



Professor Winright reflected on the issues that contributed to the problems we face today and in doing that acknowledged that a poor understanding of the bible's term dominion led people, and our world, to work from a belief that we were to dominate the world around us as it was there to serve us. He noted that we had moved to a stewardship model which albeit better still had us caring for the world as if the world was a thing, something we watched over. We then explored a kinship model which emphasises the connectedness, relationally and mutuality of how it is that we relate to the world. This view of the world does not speak to human superiority over the world but how it is that we are healthy when the world is healthy and how we are not when it is not.

We noted that Pope Francis in writing his document 'Laudato Si' was addressing it not just to people of faith but to "every person on the planet" as this is the work of all now such is the need. The evening reflected too on how it is that the poorer in our world, those who have done least to damage the world often are those who bear the brunt of the effects of climate change.

The evening finished with some questions from the floor which allowed us to reflect further on the question of the evening. It was certainly worth our braving the elements of that cold night. The question we were left with is what can we do - each of us in small ways to change how we care for the world.

The Award is committed to helping young people enhance their spiritual, physical, emotional and social development through participation in school, parish and community activities.



POPE JOHN PAUL II AWARD

Gemma Mulligan

The Pope John Paul II Award began in 2006 in Derry Diocese as the creative idea of Fr Paul Farren. Since its launch in 2006, twenty-four dioceses in Ireland are running the award successfully with Ossory Diocese re-running the award beginning in January 2024.

The Pope John Paul II Award is a faith achievement award for young people between the age of 16 and 18. It is non-competitive, inclusive, flexible and voluntary. The Award enables participants to take an active part in the life of their Church – in the life of their community and society. It enables young people become more aware of the teaching and role of the Catholic Church in the world and to engage at a deep level with Christ.

The Award is committed to helping young people enhance their spiritual, physical, emotional and social development through participation in school, parish and community activities. As well as the feeling of personal achievement that a participant will gain from taking part in the Award, participation will help demonstrate the young person's commitment to a task and goal.

The John Paul II award is non-competitive, flexible and voluntary and requires an ongoing commitment. Awards are earned by taking part in parish and social activities – 1 hour per week over 8, 14 or 20 weeks. There are 3 Awards – Gold, Silver & Bronze. Those that have completed the Gold Award have a further option of completing the Papal Cross Award.



Many young people in our diocese serve in their parishes as ministers of the Word and Ministers of the Eucharist as well as members of the choir and other groups in the parish. This award acknowledges their commitment and encourages them in their active participation in parish life. Charities and voluntary organisations in our city and county receive support from young people who volunteer in charity shops as well as helping with fundraising events. Young people in Ossory partake in pilgrimages to Lourdes, World Youth

Day, Taize and Knock which helps deepen their faith and experience the Church outside of their own parish and diocese. All these ways of participation and service are recognised by the John Paul II Award.

Working together with the schools and parishes in Ossory the Award will begin in January 2024. If you are a Transition year student and interested in participating in the award contact Gemma Mulligan Pastoral Coordinator Ossory Diocese at Gemmamulligan@ossory.ie

Adoration at St Mary's Cathedral Blessed Sacrament Chapel

Pope Francis reminds us of the importance of Adoration. He notes we should not leave the Lord abandoned in the Tabernacle and that we can achieve nothing with our hands if we have not prayed on our knees.

So it is wonderful to see a busy Blessed Sacrament Chapel these past weeks as those who are volunteering to be part of our Adoration group come together.

Don't forget that you are free to join the Adoration prayer in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel every Tuesday and Wednesday and Sunday afternoons.

A sincere thanks to all those who are making this possible. Why not drop in to the Blessed Sacrament Chapel if you are passing.



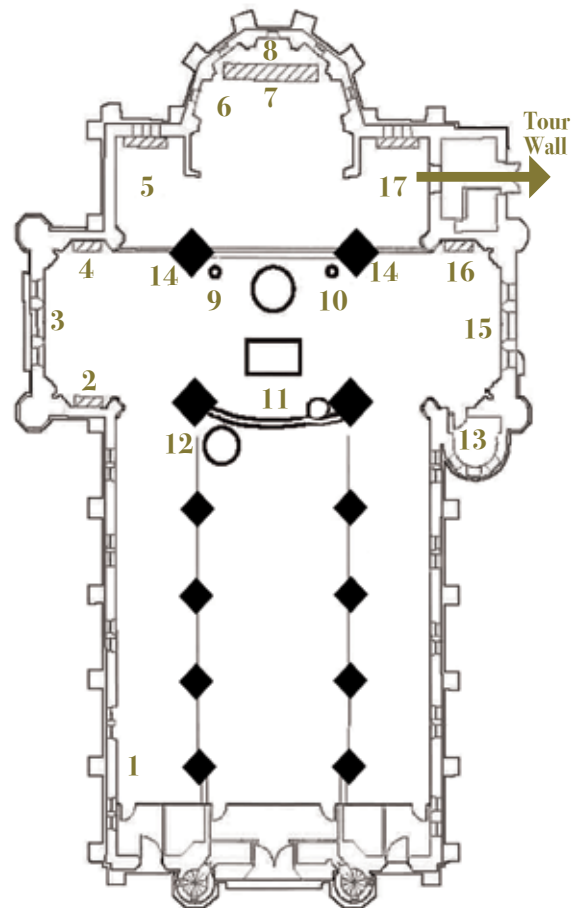
Scan the Code & Take the Tour



In an exciting new phase of the tour of St Mary's Cathedral we have now opened the sacristy corridors to the public. The sound of music playing subtly in the background invites pilgrims and passersby to continue from the body of the cathedral down this corridor, past the Cathedral Gift shop to exit by the Chapter house doors.

On that journey, however, people are invited to engage with the history of the construction, refurbishment and life of this wonderful cathedral. Many fascinating drawings, letters, lists, programmes and much more now adorn the walls in beautiful back-lit display panels which gently invite people to learn some of the rich history of St Mary's Cathedral.

The tour is open for the same times as the Cathedral is open and regularly the price of the tour is removed so as to make it accessible to all who pass by.



- | | |
|--|--|
| 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 |



There is something vibrant and energy-giving in searching for creative ways to reach a person's soul.

The “Good News” in Coon – Bringing the Gospel outside the Church

Pauline Haughey



Saint John XXIII was the Pope behind the initiation of the Second Vatican Council, the twenty-first Ecumenical Council, (1962-1965). In his opening address he called on people to “be filled with hope and faith. Do not be prophets of gloom.” He sensed in his time new ways to communicate the Christian doctrine were essential, ways that would reveal the attractiveness of the Gospel, and maintain its integrity (Irish Catholic Catechism for Adults). Those sentiments are still true today. There is something vibrant and energy-giving in searching for creative ways to reach a person's soul. To be able to say, “thanks be to God who always leads us in triumphal procession in

Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of Him” (2 Corinthians 2:14).

In the grounds of St Bridget's Church, Coon, Co. Kilkenny, a mural painting of the Vision of Knock was commissioned by a group of parishioners and completed in May 2023. It is situated on the gable wall of the Church Hall. There are multitudes of people who go on pilgrimage to visit the shrines of the world in which Mary, Mother of Jesus appeared. In Ireland Mary came too, but in a unique way to all her other appearances. In 1879 a living tableau appeared on the gable end wall of the Catholic church in Knock, Co. Mayo. It was a wet, gloomy summer's evening, word spread, and people gathered to look in wonder and awe, and to pray. The vision of this tableau lasted for two hours, it was a silent apparition, it was raining but no rain fell on the wall, the tableau of figures was lit by a heavenly light. The persons of Joseph, foster father of Jesus, head bowed, hands joined in prayer, Mary mother of Jesus, eyes and hands raised to heaven, John the Evangelist with the book of the Bible, hand gesturing as if in teaching. On the right of the figures stood an altar, a Cross rising behind it, surrounded by angels, and on the altar stood the sacrificial Lamb of God.

The Knock Vision recreated in this Mural is a visual reminder of the centrality of

our faith - the table of the Word and the table of the Eucharist. John, the Evangelist points to the scriptures, the 'table of the Word.' Jesus, the Lamb of God is on the altar, the table of the Eucharist. The cross of salvation rises from the altar to the acclaims of heavenly hosts of angels, giving witness to the Resurrection of the Lamb of God. Joseph points us to a 'praying life,' and Mary points us to the worship and praise of God. All these elements of Christian life come together in the Mass.

The Mural is an invitation to 'come and see,' a visual representation of the Good News. A stone tablet on the wall gives a brief account of the Apparition at Knock, with a request to pause, be still, and pray.

This mural has been covered in prayer from its inception to its completion. It has been blessed by our Parish Priest, Fr. Larry Wallace. It has been a work of collaboration of a small group of parishioners with our parish priest, and with the voluntary work and donations of the whole parish of Muckalee, and from people outside the parish.

It began with a 'thought' to have a visible statue in the grounds of the church. Prayerful discernment and talks ensued, the question we were asking the Holy Spirit's guidance on; what visible expression of our faith would speak to the people of our times? This was the answer, which found an affirmative response in the hearts of all concerned, unanimous agreement! That had to be the Holy Spirit's doing!

Fund raising began. The committee consulted with a local artist, and an artist who is experienced in mural work was commissioned to undertake the work, in collaboration with the local artist. A parishioner skilled in plaster and masonry undertook the preparatory work on the wall. As the artists began their work, people called by to see the work in progress and to chat. It was a meeting of neighbours, favourable comments

made, stories shared. People from the parish took ownership of the project. The artists trusted their work to God and to Mary's favourable intercession.

In the climate of diminishing numbers of people attending Mass, and the dwindling number of priests overseeing an increasing number of churches, it is possible our smaller churches may close, or services be fewer. The cemetery around the church will remain, people will continue with or without faith to visit and take care of family graves. The Mural of Knock will be a visual presentation of the Good News of the Gospel. The intention and prayers of the parishioners and priest, for all those who come into the grounds of the church are seeds, which we pray, in God's timing, will produce a harvest of hearts open to hear and receive the Good News.

"If God's grace does not help the builders, they will labour in vain to build a house. If God's mercy does not protect the city, all the sentries will circle it in vain." (Psalm 127:1 Passion translation). All our desires and prayers if not freely surrendered to the Master builder will be ashes in the wind. Into God's hands we place our labours; physical, creative, and spiritual. In Mary's words we say to God, "be it done according to your will" (Luke 1:38).

Notes:

This article was first published in 'Spirituality' Magazine, Volume 29 July/August 2023: Dominican Publications. Reprinted with kind permission of Fr. Tom Jordan OP, Editor.

Irish Catholic Catechism for Adults, 2014, p23: Veritas Publications.

The Knock Shrine is Ireland's International Eucharistic and Marian Shrine.

Dame Judy Coyne. *Providence, my guide. The heroic force in the Knock Shrine story.* Mercier Press, 2004.

St Bridget's Church, Coon, is in the parish of Muckalee, Diocese of Ossory, Parish Priest, Rev. Fr. Larry Wallace.

Artists: Eamon Byrne, Marley Irish



Update from Bishop Brendan Leahy and Bishop Alan McGuckian

16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops



In October 2021, Pope Francis announced a Universal Synod on the theme 'For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission.' Following two years of preparation, listening and dialogue at diocesan, continental and universal level, 365 people gathered in Rome to participate in its first assembly, which took place from 4 -29 October. Bishop Brendan Leahy and Bishop Alan McGuckian were the two bishop nominees of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference. A brief account of their experience is offered below. Their full report can be found online at www.synod.ie/bishopsreport

Experience: The two bishops said the 16th Synodal Assembly was a positive experience marked by a prayerful and calm atmosphere, even if divergent viewpoints were expressed. Those gathered represented a great variety of cultural backgrounds and convictions. They said, "The presence of 54 women, as full

members of the assembly with voting rights, was a significant milestone in the development of the Synod of Bishops. The young people present contributed in a spirit of freedom and with a passion for the Church. What emerged particularly was the realisation that synodality is not just about an 'event'...but is a 'process,'

a way of being Church, a style of interacting together in discerning what the Spirit is saying to the Church." Both bishops agreed that the Synodal Assembly was a deeply intense experience, spiritually, culturally and theologically. They said, "our first word in response is 'thanks' – to God for this grace, and to all who contributed so generously over the past two years to the Synodal Pathway in parishes and religious congregations, dioceses, movements and organisations. We offer a special word of thanks to the many people who accompanied the 16th Synodal Assembly with prayer.

Take-Away: The bishops said that the biggest outcome from the Synodal Assembly was probably the emphasis on the 'Conversations in the Spirit' (a discernment methodology). They said, "The four weeks were an intense learning with the constant repetition of this method. The desire emerged that this method would now spread throughout the Church. The way the modules or sections of the assembly worked was that we were seated at roundtables with a facilitator for each group. After a period of prayer to begin each session, each person was given four minutes to put forward their perspective on the specific top, without interruptions from others. This was followed by a period of silence and prayer. In a second round, each of us got four minutes to say what had struck us listening to the others, what had resonated positively for us, and what had prompted resistance in us."

Final Synthesis: A final synthesis report was prepared by the members of the 16th Synodal Assembly and published in English at the beginning of November. It reflects the many, many topics touched upon and provides a rich theological grounding

for synodality. There are numerous "nuggets of wisdom, insight and perspectives contained in the text. It would be well worth taking even just a section or chapter of this document and studying it individually or in groups (the full synthesis report can also be found on www.synod.ie)

Questions: The bishops said, "many questions were opened up at the Synod and require further examination. It was said that the experience of the permanent diaconate needs to be evaluated. This would also impact on the question of women and the diaconate. The topic of how jurisdiction and sacrament are linked needs to be explored further. This would impact on the issue of women and decision making/taking in the Church. The topic of how collegiality and synodality relate was keenly felt by some. Is there a danger that the teaching authority of the bishops both individually and as a College could be undermined? The theme of 'listening' came up often with the proposal that there be a ministry of listening in the Church, and a range of other controversial questions were named and discussed."

The full report from the bishops can be found at www.synod.ie/bishopsreport or through scanning the QR-Code below.



And yet the peace is more than just not
having violence...



MORALITY MATTERS

Michael Shortall

Give me a crash course in ... The United Nations Declaration on Human Rights



The Christmas lights are up. Cribbs sit on the mantlepiece. To-do lists are nearly complete.

And Christmas songs and carols play in the background.

Many of the songs are fun or nostalgic. Others can point to a Christmas message.

I heard on the radio earlier two Christmas songs of two former Beatles: John Lennon's "Happy Christmas (War is Over)" and "Pipes of Peace" by Paul McCartney.

We yearn for peace in a world that is torn apart by war, and violence of any type. It reminds us again of the reality of war is across the world, from the Ukraine to the Israel and Gaza, and other regions across Africa.

And yet the peace is more than just not having violence. Wherever there is injustice of any type, violence is never far away. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* says:

Peace is not merely the absence of war, and it is not limited to maintaining a balance of powers between adversaries. Peace cannot be attained on earth without safeguarding the goods of persons, free communication among men, respect for the dignity of persons and peoples, and the assiduous practice of fraternity. Peace is "the tranquility of order." Peace is the work of justice and the effect of charity. (paragraph 2304)

In other words, it requires respect of basic human rights.

Exactly. And this year is the 75th anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, accepted by the United Nations on December 10th, 1948. It was written in response to the horrors of the Second World War, and drafted by a committee representing many different cultures, chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt.

What does it say?

It begins by saying that denying human dignity and basic human rights is the basis of war. It says:

... recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world, [...] disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind [...]¹

What sort of basic rights does it say we have?

There are 30 articles in all.² To give an example, the first two articles refer to the common value of all individuals regardless of creed, race or gender. For example, Article One states "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience [...]".

The next set relate to the basic rights of freedom, life and security. For instance, they forbid slavery, torture, arbitrary arrest and defend due process, freedom of movement and political asylum. After that the articles are about equality and focus on equal political participation. as Article Twenty-Two states, the "economic, social and cultural rights [are] indispensable for his dignity and free development of his personality".

Rights-language is used a lot nowadays. Everyone seems to have rights to everything.

Part of the success of the document has been the widespread use of the language of rights since then. It has become a powerful way of talking about injustice, especially in addressing the causes of war. But the widespread use has also been a criticism by some. They use the image of money. Like money, there has been an awful lot of inflation of rights. Too many rights can undermine the value of the basic or core human rights named in the document.

But it is still an important document because it names what is fundamental to us all.

Absolutely, it reminds us of what is truly important. The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Therefore, every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities – to one another, to our families, and to the larger society. In the words of Pope St John XXIII: "Human rights are universal, inviolable and inalienable. Every person has the right to life and to the means necessary for the proper development of life." (*Pacem in Terris*, 1963) We pray then for those who work for peace.

We also sing hymns with the message of peace when we gather in Church during Christmas. One of my favourites is 'Oh Holy Night'. We sing:

**Truly He taught us to love one another;
His law is love and His gospel is peace.**

Ultimately, we believe that peace is a gift from God, and it requires real humility to receive and achieve, of the kind God reveals in becoming human.

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

1. For the text, see: https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Universal_Declaration_of_Human_Rights

2. For more, see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_Declaration_of_Human_Rights

Richard R. Gaillardetz Memoriam

Dermot Ryan



A number of years ago the Adult Faith Development Group here in Ossory invited the renowned ecclesiologist Richard R. Gaillardetz to come to the Diocese to speak on the Church of the future. Prof Gaillardetz was already planning a trip to Ireland for some public lectures and the Faith Development Group took advantage of the fact that our own Fr Liam Bergin was in Boston College and, as such, could make a personal ask of this great theologian. Richard willing came and enthralled those who attended St Patrick's Parish Centre in Loughboy as he spoke so wonderfully of the contribution of theology in shaping our Church and how it was not the Church of today he hoped to influence but the one his grandchildren would occupy.

Sadly, Richard Gaillardetz, the Joseph Professor of Catholic Systematic Theology at Boston College, died on November 7, 2023. His death came some 20 months after he was diagnosed with stage 4 pancreatic cancer. He died at the age of 65.

In life Gaillardetz was a prize-winning theologian and a much celebrated author. His funeral Mass was celebrated on 16th November at St Ignatius Church Boston College.

Gaillardetz was a respected and preeminent voice in the interpretation and reception of Vatican II and questions of authority in the Catholic Church. He was the author/co-author of nine books, editor of six others, and author of more than a 100 articles and book reviews. He was, as we were blessed to know here in Ossory, also a popular public speaker, addressing theological and pastoral conferences throughout the world.

His book *Teaching with Authority: A Theology of the Magisterium of the Church*, is a standard text in its field and has remained in print for a quarter of a century. An expert on ecumenical councils, Gaillardetz's *Keys to the Council: Unlocking the Teaching of Vatican II* (co-authored with Catherine Clifford) presents an accessible introduction to the vision of the Vatican II. His other notable works include *By What Authority? Foundations for Understanding Authority in the Church* and *An Unfinished Council: Vatican II, Pope Francis, and the Renewal of Catholics*. His publications have received numerous awards from both the Catholic Press Association and the Association of Catholic Publishers.

In September 2022, Boston College hosted a conference to celebrate the Gaillardetz's legacy as a scholar, teacher, and mentor. Hundreds of theologians and former students gathered for the event, entitled "New Directions in Ecclesiology: The Contributions of Richard Gaillardetz." The conference included an address by Dr. Gaillardetz, one he dubbed his last

lecture, on "Loving and Reforming a Holy yet Broken Church."

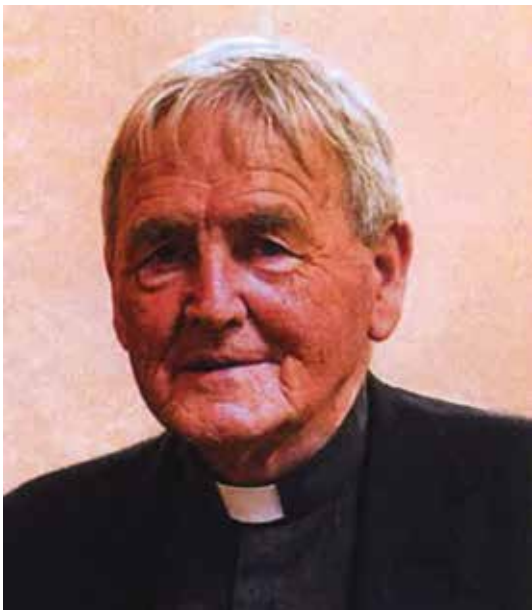
In that lecture, he encouraged his colleagues to continue the work of "meaningful and lasting ecclesial reform" and to "seek out a middle path between over-critiquing the Catholic Church as an institution and being over-trustful of its leaders"

In perhaps his most profound and final act as teacher and friend, he invited others to follow his illness journey via a blog he kept.

His posts touched upon both the personal and the medical, all shared through a decidedly Catholic, Christian, and faith-filled lens. May he rest in peace.

Fr Frank Maher RIP

Breda Campion



It was with deep sorrow that the parishioners of Johnstown/Crosspatrick learned of the death of their beloved PP of 31 years Fr Frank (Canon) Maher.

Fr Maher was born in Kilmanagh to the late David and Susan, both teachers. He got his primary education in Kilmanagh and then to St Kieran's College and later Maynooth, where he studied for the priesthood and was ordained on June 20th 1965. After his ordination he was assigned to St Kieran's College and later became curate of Clogh/Mooneenroe,

Ballyfoyle, Templeorum and Kilmoganny. He came to Johnstown as P.P. to replace Canon Frank Green, who had retired.

Fr Maher was a very conscientious priest who took his spiritual duties very seriously and was especially kind and comforting to those experiencing sickness, trouble, tragedy and bereavement. He officiated at numerous baptisms, weddings, funerals, communions and confirmations.

On the secular side he established the parish office, rebuilt the bungalow, where he resided in latter years, the meditation oratory in St Kieran's Church, an all purpose room in Crosspatrick school, extension to the graveyard at Crosspatrick and the beautiful Crucifixion grotto in the local cemetery.

He was a great source of solace to the sick and housebound, whom he visited on a regular basis, also the Sacred Heart Nursing Home and the local schools.

Fr Maher wasn't very well during the last few years of his life and eventually was cared for at the Sacred Heart Nursing Home where he died. He now rests in the graveyard at St Kieran's Church and will be forever remembered in Johnstown/Crosspatrick. Ar Dheis De go raibh se.

Both Notre Dame Australia and St Kieran's College, then, have, for obvious reasons, a keen interest in Catholic Education

Dermot Ryan

International Perspectives - Two Conferences



As November ended and Advent started two exciting conferences were held in St Kieran's College. These conferences were a joint venture collaboration between St Kieran's College and the University of Notre Dame Australia. The first initiatives, of what both institutions hope, will be many more to come. These gatherings were made possible as a result of the work of Prof Eamonn Conway in his capacity as the Inaugural Chair of Integral Human Development at Notre Dame Australia and Rev. Dr Dermot Ryan, President of St Kieran's College.

In welcoming attendees to both conferences we had an opportunity to

explore briefly the history of the College as the oldest Catholic College in Ireland and the resulting responsibility of all involved in St Kieran's to continue to promote the truly best of the excellence in Catholic education and service of the Gospel in all its forms.

Both Notre Dame Australia and St Kieran's College, then, have, for obvious reasons, a keen interest in Catholic education and as such a logical conference for them to host was International Perspectives on Catholic Educational Leadership. This gathering, which was quickly sold out, saw people from literally all corners of the country come to Kilkenny to be



part of the various sessions on offer over the three days. Leaders from many school and leading Catholic education bodies were in attendance to hear contributions from Prof Sally Egan, UNDA, who is the inaugural Senior Director of Strategic Academic Development in Notre Dame Australia; Mr Mike Shorten, CEO of the Bishop Hogart Trust in the UK which is leading and managing nearly 40 Catholic schools; Prof Eamonn Conway a priest of the Archdiocese of Tuam and the inaugural Chair of Integral Human Development at Notre Dame Australia; and Prof Renée Kohler-Ryan National Head of the School of Philosophy and Theology at Notre Dame Australia. Panel discussions also featured Seamus McMulconry, Gen Sec CPSMA; Alan

Hynes CEO of the Catholic Education Partnership; and Angela Mitchell Notre Dame Australia Association for Catholic Education. All attendees also took part in a most interesting keynote lecture on Values Driven leadership by Brian Cody, the current manager of James Stephens Club and former manager of Kilkenny GAA, arguably the most successful Irish sporting manager of all time.

The second conference was on the topic of International Perspectives on Forming Catechists, a timely contribution to this conversation now that Pope Francis has asked all local churches to explore how they can institute this ministry in a stable and permanent capacity. Addressing various topics at this conference were





Prof Leonard Franci Professor of Catholic Education at Notre Dame Australia, Bishop Kevin Doran, Prof Renée Kohler-Ryan National Head of the School of Philosophy and Theology at Notre Dame Australia, Rev Dr Eamonn Fitzgibbons, Director of the Irish Institute of Pastoral Studies at Mary Immaculate College, and Dr Alex O'Hara National Director of Catechetics and Executive Secretary to the Council for Catechetics in the Irish Episcopal Conference.

Each day was begun with Mass in the College Chapel and both gatherings came together for a moment of prayer on the Thursday evening led by Ms Gemma Mulligan Diocesan Pastoral Coordinator in Ossory. The College was a hive of activity throughout the conferences. Many side-bar conversations were had by attendees and contributors and it was obvious that new collaborations

and synergies were being born in these very days. The mood at both gatherings was very positive and optimistic and the real possibilities available to the Church in this new ministry of Catechists and to Education by the very best of Catholic Education came to the fore.

Sadly the gatherings were impacted by bereavements as Bishop Niall who was due to make a contribution had to depart as his father took poorly, and Linda Rainsberry who was also to contribute, suffered the loss of her father-in-law.

As these days ended it was obvious to all who attended that this must be merely the first of many similar collaborations between our two wonderful Colleges. In working together we can support the best of each other and then reflect deeply on the questions which impact us.



Meet Ailish Higgins, our new Director of Safeguarding



In recent months Ailish Higgins has started work with the Dioceses of Ossory and Kildare and Leighlin. She takes up the role as her predecessor Kathleen Sherry has moved to a new role outside the Diocese. She takes on this position after some very good work by Kathleen and the Safeguarding Committee here in the Diocese and she has really hit the ground running, already meeting with all the Priests at their General Conference and with many parishes and people involved in Safeguarding in our parishes and in our Diocese.

Ailish has been working in the area of health and social care for over fifteen years, starting out her career working with adults with additional needs in her hometown of Killeel, Co. Down. In 2008, Ailish travelled to Scotland to complete her Social Work degree, graduating in 2012 from Glasgow Caledonian University with a BA (Hons) in Social Work. On her return to Ireland, Ailish took up employment with the Northern Ireland Association of Mental Health (NIAMH) where she worked with adults with acute mental illness. From the year 2014 until 2023, Ailish has worked in the area of child protection and welfare with Social

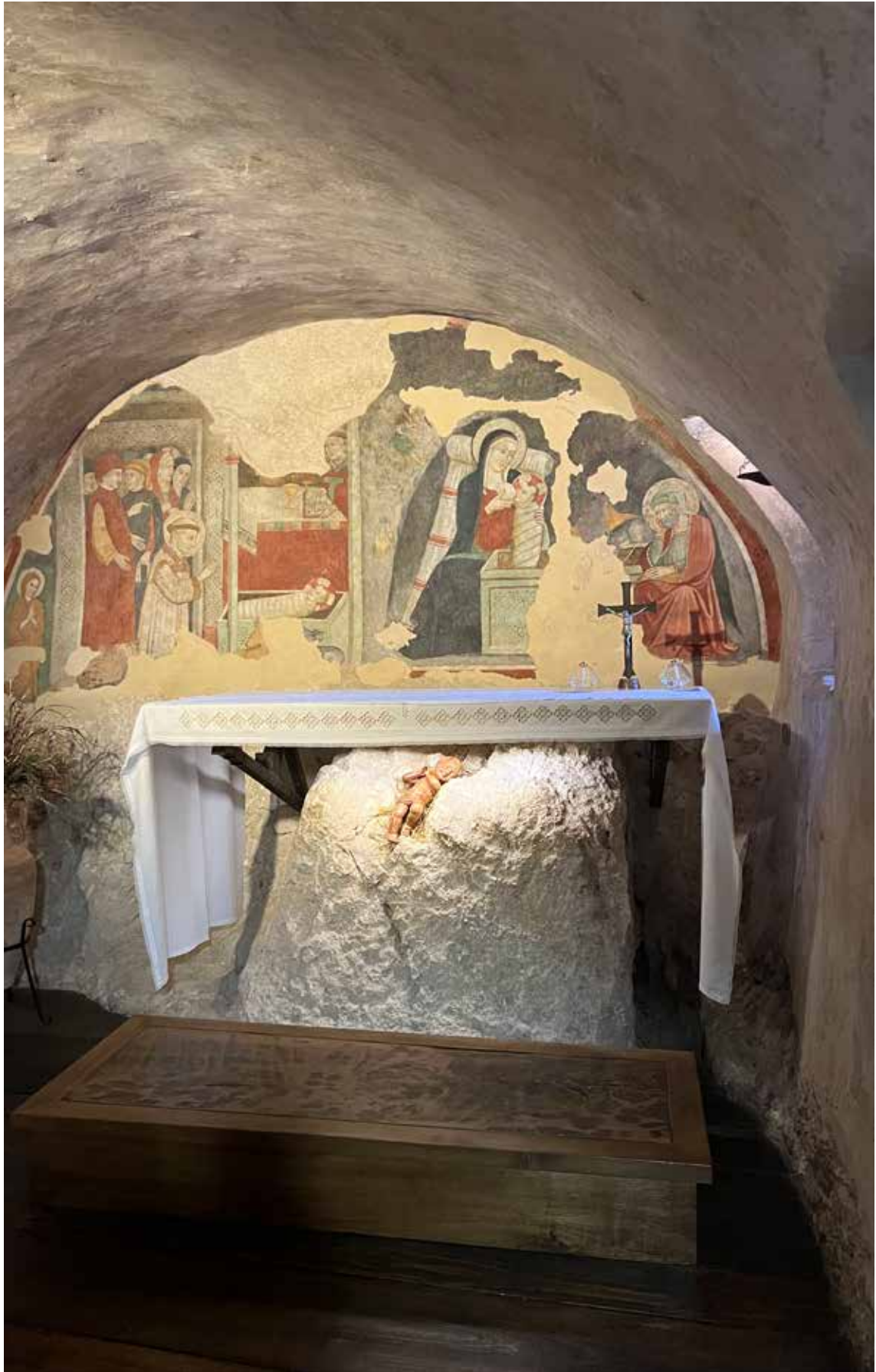
Work departments both north and south of the border. Most recently she had been working in Kildare and West Wicklow on the FAIM (Family Assessment and Intervention Model) Team, part of Insync Youth & Family Services.

Ailish has a passion for community organisations and the voluntary sector, especially in areas of addiction and homelessness, having worked with both Depaul Ireland and Focus Ireland at different periods since 2016.

Ailish believes the rights of the child is paramount. She is particularly passionate about advocating for children's rights and child protection, as well as being an active promoter of human rights, equality and empowerment, especially for those most vulnerable and marginalised in our society and she endeavours to bring that to her role as Safeguarding Director.

Coming from the Parish of Upper Mourne in the Diocese of Down & Connor, Ailish grew up actively involved in her own church community. Having fond memories of voluntary trips abroad to Romania and Uganda, being a member of her parish choir and parish youth group and is therefore committed to youth participation in the life of the Church. Ailish believes that youth participation is an integral part of Safeguarding.

Now living in Carlow, Ailish has taken up the role of Director of Safeguarding for both the Diocese of Ossory and the Diocese of Kildare & Leighlin. As she begins, Ailish would like to give a special mention to her predecessor Kathleen Sherry and hopes that she can carry on Kathleen's great work, as she now takes up the mantle.



He [St Francis] had been to the place of Christ's birth in Bethlehem in 1219 and wished that every Christian could share what he had experienced there.

Night is illuminated like the day, delighting men and beasts

Albert McDonnell

Could you imagine Christmas without the crib? After all, it is the reason for the season. The animals, the angels, the shepherds, Mary and Joseph and most of all the baby Jesus all speak to us in a way that few other images do. Peace, tranquility and simplicity are at the heart of the nativity scene. The Irish practice of taking home a little bit of the straw from the crib as a symbol of blessing unites us even more closely to this sacred season.

It might surprise some people to learn that for the first twelve centuries after Christ's birth the practice of placing cribs in our Churches and homes didn't exist. The custom goes back to St Francis of Assisi in the year 1223. Many people who visit Rome take the train to visit the beautiful Umbrian hilltop town of Assisi to explore the beginnings of the Franciscan dream. The first place outside of his native Assisi where Francis brought his new way of being Christian was the Rieti valley in the Italian heartland. It is said that on his

arrival Francis greeted the people using the simple phrase 'Buon giorno, buona gente' (Good day, good people). Not so many people from abroad visit the Rieti valley. The series of shrines linked to the saint are scattered across a chain of hills making them difficult to access without a car.

Driving from Rome to Rieti is a lovely experience. Your ninety minute journey begins with the hustle and bustle of a major city full of business, tourists, traffic

and often times impatient drivers. Once you leave the motorway behind it all changes. Your drive from chaos to calm takes you towards the mountains through spectacular scenery featuring fields of sunflowers, vines and olives. Peace gradually takes hold of your soul. Those who have the time can retrace Francis' steps by spending a few days walking along the hills and valleys visiting the places associated with him.

One of the most beautiful Franciscan shrines is located beside the small town of Greccio. It was here in 1223 that St Francis constructed the first nativity scene. He had been to the place of Christ's birth in Bethlehem in 1219 and wished that every Christian could share what he had experienced there. Then, as now, war made travel to the Holy Land impossible. Francis decided to bring Bethlehem to his people by recreating it in Greccio.

One of the first Franciscans, Tomaso di Celano, has left us a beautiful description of Christmas night 1223 in Greccio:

"With glad hearts, the men and women of that place prepared, according to their means, candles and torches to light up that night which has illuminated all the days and years with its glittering star. The manger is ready, hay is brought, the ox and ass are led in. Simplicity is honoured there, poverty is exalted, humility is commended and a new Bethlehem, as it were, is made from Greccio.

"Night is illuminated like the day, delighting men and beasts. The people come and joyfully celebrate the new mystery..... The holy man of God stands before the manger full of sighs, consumed by devotion and filled with a marvellous joy. ... Then he preaches mellifluously to the people standing about, telling them about the birth of the poor king and the little city of Bethlehem".

The description of the valley filling with light is especially striking. It reminds me of growing up in rural County Clare and seeing the countryside transformed on Christmas Eve as families placed a candle in each window of their homes to light the path of Mary and Joseph. Visiting Greccio, you can follow in the steps of Popes and many others down the centuries and pray at the cave which hosted the first crib and look out over the valley where 'night [was] illuminated like the day'.

The Franciscan movement had grown from the original six friars to over five thousand by the time Francis came to live in the hills around Rieti. While there he completed the rule which still guides the lives of all who draw inspiration from him. Parts of the beautiful Cantic of Creatures were also written during this period. By now Francis was approaching the end of his life and was in poor health. He experienced a great deal of suffering and underwent an extremely painful operation on his eyes while there.

The impact which St Francis has had on people is extraordinary. Within a decade of his death his movement had reached Ireland, which in those days was very much on the edge of the known world. Today his spiritual legacy is kept alive in Ireland by Franciscan Friars, Poor Clare Sisters, members of the Third Order and all who care for the poor and rejoice in the wonder of creation.

Greccio is twinned with Bethlehem, where Christ was born. This will not be a joyful Christmas there. The Holy Land is currently experiencing a long Good Friday that resonates more closely with the Slaughter of the Innocents than the birth of the Saviour. May Francis, courageous, generous, faith-filled man of peace, of the poor and lover of God's creation transform our hearts so that we may 'endure in peace'.

...a most welcome addition to our caring for clergy at all ages and all stages of life.

Our Diocesan Nurse

For the past year or more Moira Knowles has been working with the Dioceses of Ossory and Kildare and Leighlin as the Diocesan Nurse caring for clergy. This initiative, emerging from the Council of Priests in collaboration with the generous support of the Diocese and the Ossory Priests Society, allows for the care of medical clergy in their homes and parishes. She starting her work she has been a most welcome addition to the Diocese. Her gentle nature and depth of knowledge and experience has meant that she has helped wonderfully in many situations.

Moira qualified as a Registered General Nurse in Beaumont Hospital in 1990. Following graduation she undertook a Diploma in Family Planning and support in the Coombe Hospital 1994, and then a Diploma in Management in 1995. Moira has, over the years, many other Continual Professional Development qualifications and these include courses in Ear Irrigation, ECG, Phlebotomy, women's health and vaccinations.

Moira comes to her work in the Diocese with a wealth of experience that includes: working as an Ambulance Nurse; Coronary Care; and Intensive Care; along with Gerontology Nursing. Moira has also worked to establish Activities for in-patients and Day Care in care

patients in residential care situations. Moira worked in a General Practice for twelve years as a Practice Nurse and a further seven years with The Alzheimer Society Of Ireland as a Nurse Manager. It was in this latter role, as Nurse Manager within The Alzheimer's Society, that she undertook the overseeing of the day to day running of their Day Care facilities, providing information and support sessions within the Day Care Centres and in the community for the families of the residents.

Moira has established and manages her own Deep tissue massage/sports massage business. Deep tissue is used for chronic pain, increases blood flow and oxygenation of the tissues It improves circulation and flexibility while easing tension and reduces fatigue. In this work she also specialises in lymphatic massage (relief of swelling from tissue retaining fluid, decreases muscle toxins) and myofascial release therapy, a gentle constant massage that releases tightness and pain by releasing trigger points.

While working for two days a week as a Practice Nurse in Carlow she also now works with the Dioceses of Ossory and Kildare and Leighlin and she is a most welcome addition to our caring for clergy at all ages and all stages of life.



...in addition to these sacred days, we walk the beach of prayer and reflection amidst the blustery conditions of life and ministry each day...

Sand in our Shoes

Kieran O'Shea

In early January the annual priests Retreat for priests of the Diocese of Ossory will take place in Ballyvaloo Co Wexford. The Retreat house owned by the St John of God Sisters is located between Curracloe and Blackwater with Curracloe beach only a stones throw from the front door. The rhythm of the Retreat day combined with the experience of walking along the beach on blustery January days followed by the emptying of the sand in our shoes provides time for mind, body and spirit to breathe and to be decluttered! Nonetheless, the question must be asked if an annual short and graced filled hiatus from the vicissitudes of ministry, welcome though it may be, is enough to revive our drooping spirits?

The importance of taking time for Retreat as distinct from holiday time, for those in ministry should not be underestimated. It should never be seen as an optional extra or as a luxury. It is a necessity, a stimulus for renewing our enthusiasm for our Pastoral mission. In this regard Jesus himself shows us the way. How often

do the Evangelists recall that during his ministry Jesus withdrew to a quiet place on his own, but never being alone, as that time was spent with His Father. It was often before making important decisions such as choosing the Apostles or after exerting himself in proclaiming the Kingdom of God to a people hungry for God's healing and hope that he entered into these times of 'Retreat'. More recently participants in the Synodal assembly in Rome spent some days in Retreat before the Synodal gathering commenced. Timothy Radcliffe OP, chosen to give the Retreat remarked in his reflection on 2nd October that "Priests need a strong sense of identity, an *esprit de corps*". As the nature of priestly ministry evolves in the context of a synodal Church it is paramount that we take time and space to explore who we are and who we shall be, seeking to build a new fraternity among ourselves and with women and men on the same pilgrim journey guided by the Spirit who "teaches us the way we must go". (From prayer *Adsumus, Sancte Spiritus*)



In December 2014 not long after his election Pope Francis quoted a saying that described priests as airplanes! "They only make the news when they crash"! As the demands on a depleted presbyterate are growing and where there has been a paradigm shift in how people understand the mission of the Church and how the Church interacts with the complexities of the prevailing culture, the potential for crashing is real unless we continually immerse ourselves in the revitalising power of the life of Jesus of Nazareth and the rich scriptural and theological patrimony of the Church. It can also be said that as members of the ordained presbyterate we have a responsibility to our sisters and brothers in the faith community to be immersed in the Good News of Jesus so that we can transmit the Joy that comes from faith thus attracting others to Christ and encouraging them to embrace their vocation to service and leadership in the Church now and in the future.

Returning to the question posed at the beginning of this article and

contemplating all the aforementioned reasons in favour of making a Retreat there is a danger that we might consider a few days by the sea early in January as the antidote for all our spiritual ills, a remedy for our lax approach to ongoing formation and as a once in a blue moon spiritual workout! This however would be very foolish, similar to the tendency in these days to make new year resolutions that we know will not survive the arrival of first snowdrops. All would probably concur that opportunities for Retreats and days of Reflection should be provided more frequently and availed of more eagerly but unless, in addition to these sacred days, we walk the beach of prayer and reflection amidst the blustery conditions of life and ministry each day, Retreat experiences by the sea or other such tranquil environments can soon be buried under the shifting sands of time. An every day Retreat, time of prayer, meditation, contemplation, spiritual reading, whatever method corresponds with our spiritual temperament, ensures that we come face to face with ourselves, with the Lord, and the thinking and writing of many of our fellow travellers in the Churches tradition both past and present so that we can give to our sisters and brothers that which we ourselves have received from Christ and be more open to receiving from their lived experience of being the Baptised People of God.

Like the Shepherds in the Christmas story who "went back glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen" (Luke 2:15-20) we hope that we too will return from Ballyvaloo with the same spring in our shoes earlier filled with sand. Perhaps we might bring home some of that sand that empties from our shoes us as a constant reminder to empty some part of our daily schedule of the dust of the road so we can Retreat every day into that space that renews and reinvigorates us for mission.

Be assured of our January prayers on the Wexford coast!



As the world heats up, Malawi is being increasingly affected by drought and experiences extreme weather events like cyclones and floods.

Malawi

Gemma Mulligan



In November 2023 I was part of a Church outreach group, seven people from Ireland, who travelled to Malawi in Africa. Malawi is a small, densely populated country in southern Africa and it is one of the poorest twenty countries in the world. There over half the population live in absolute poverty. Malawi is known as “the warm heart of Africa” and it certainly deserves its title. The people are warm and friendly and their hospitality and welcome was an experience I will always remember. It is a country full of colour, which bursts through the beautiful

plants and trees, the smiling faces of the people, the music and dance and the breath-taking sunsets and sunrise. However, Malawi is particularly vulnerable to the impact of climate change. As the world heats up, Malawi is being increasingly affected by drought and experiences extreme weather events like cyclones and floods. In March 2023 cyclone Freddy triggered torrential rains that led to flooding, mudslides and massive devastation in the southern part of the country. In just six days, it dumped the rainfall equivalent to half an average



rainy season for that region. This in turn worsened cholera outbreaks in Malawi and neighbouring Mozambique. Overall, the cyclone killed at least 1,434 people: at least 1,216 people were killed in Malawi with 537 people missing and presumed dead. Cyclone Freddy displaced over 650,000 people from their homes.

In Malawi's traditional society, women are not treated equally. More than one third of women will experience violence in their

lifetime. In response to this Trócaire, with whom we travelled, runs empowerment programmes in schools for young people, boys and girls to help educate them against violence towards women and girls. We had on our trip an opportunity to see this wonderful programme in action in a local secondary school and meet the boys and girls who are participating. Confident, beautiful young people with bright futures ahead of them.



The work of Trócaire on the ground in Malawi is, in a real way, helping to empower women and girls to live a life of hope, to challenge inequality and to live free from violence.

The Lenten Campaign in 2024 is focused on Malawi. On our visit we had the privilege of meeting the family and village community which will feature in that 2024 campaign. We met a lead farmer who is supported through programmes in environmentally friendly farming and helping others to do the same. Trócaire is building resilient communities in Malawi. Providing emergency support during

natural disasters, while also tackling hunger and violence against women.

The work Trócaire does in Malawi and throughout the world really does change lives. If you still have a gift to buy this Christmas perhaps consider a gift at Trocaire.org it really will make a difference. I look forward to visiting parishes and schools in the Diocese before and during Lent 2024 to share more of my experience in Malawi and to help raise vital funds for the continuing vital work of Trócaire, the overseas development agency of the Irish Catholic Church.



St Brigid is the female patron saint of Ireland. She is also known as Muire na Gael or Mary of the Gael which means Our Lady of the Irish.

St Brigid

Ray Cleere

“From the early medieval period through to today, the life and legacy of St. Brigid have attracted the attention of numerous writers in Ireland and across Europe, from religious clerics to scholars of Irish sainthood. References to her foundation in Kildare have left their legacy in ink since the Middle Ages, with notable chroniclers of Ireland such as Giraldus Cambrensis making a point of recording its significance. The most comprehensive modern analysis comes in the form of Dr. Noel Kirsane’s, *Saint Brigid of Kildare; Life, Legend and Cult* (Four Courts Press : 2017) which is the culmination of an extraordinary amount of work of the origins of Brigid and her worldwide influence.”

St Brigid was born in AD450 in Faughart, near Dundalk, in County Louth. Her father Dubhthach was a pagan chieftain of Leinster and her mother, Broicsech, was a Christian. It was thought that Brigid's mother was born in Portugal but was kidnapped by Irish pirates and brought to Ireland to work as a slave, just like St Patrick was. Brigid's father named her after one of the most powerful goddesses of the pagan religion : the goddess of fire, whose manifestations were song, craftsmanship, and poetry, which the Irish considered the flame of knowledge. He kept Brigid and her mother as slaves even

though he was a wealthy man. Brigid spent her earlier life cooking, cleaning, washing and feeding the animals on her father's farm.

She lived during the time of St Patrick and was inspired by his preachings, and she became a Christian. When Brigid turned eighteen, she stopped working for her father. Brigid's father wanted her to find a husband, but Brigid had decided that she would spend her life working for God by looking after poor, sick and elderly people. Legend says that she prayed that her beauty would be taken away from her so no one would seek her



hand in marriage; her prayer was granted. Brigid's charity angered her father because he thought she was being too generous to the poor.

When she finally gave away his jewel-encrusted sword to a leper, her father realised that she would be best suited to the religious life. Brigid finally got her wish and entered the convent. She received her veil from St Macaille and made her vows to dedicate her life to God. Legend also says that Brigid regained her beauty after making her vows and that God made her more beautiful than ever.

News of Brigid's good works spread and soon many young girls from all over the country joined her in the convent. Brigid founded many convents all over Ireland; the most famous one was in County Kildare. As Abbess of that foundation she wielded considerable power, but was a very wise and prudent Superior. The Abbey of Kildare became one of the most prestigious monasteries in Ireland and was famous throughout Christian Europe.

St Brigid also founded a school of art including metal work and illumination, over which St Conleth presided. In the scriptorium of the monastery, the famous illuminated manuscript of the Book of Kildare was created.

ST BRIGID'S CROSS

Making a St Brigid's Cross is one of the traditional rituals in Ireland to celebrate the beginning of early Spring, on February 1st. The crosses are

made of rushes which are pulled rather than cut. They are hung by the door and in the rafters to protect the house from fire and evil. According to tradition a new cross is made on St Brigid's Day every year, and the old one is burned to keep fire from the house. Many homes have several crosses preserved in the ceiling; the oldest blackened by many years of hearth fires. Some people believe that keeping a cross in the ceiling or roof is a good way to preserve the home from fire which was always a major threat in houses with thatched and wooden roofs.

St Brigid and her cross are linked together by the story that she wove this form of cross at the death bed of either her father or a pagan lord, who, when he heard what the cross meant, asked to be baptised. One version goes as follows:

"A pagan chieftain from the neighbourhood of Kildare was dying. Christians in his household sent for Brigid to talk to him about Christ. When she arrived, the chieftain was raving. As it was impossible to instruct this delirious man, hopes for his conversion seemed doubtful. Brigid sat down at his bedside and began consoling him. As was customary, the dirt floor was strewn with rushes both for warmth and cleanliness. Brigid stooped down and started to weave them into a cross, fastening the points together. The sick man asked what she was doing. She began to explain the cross, and as she talked his delirium quieted and he questioned her with growing interest. Through her weaving, he converted and was baptised at the point of death. Since then, the cross of rushes has been venerated in Ireland".

ST BRIGID'S CLOAK

St Brigid went to the King of Leinster to ask for land to build a convent. She told the king that the place where she stood was the perfect place for a convent. It was beside a forest where they could collect firewood. There was also a lake nearby which could provide water and the

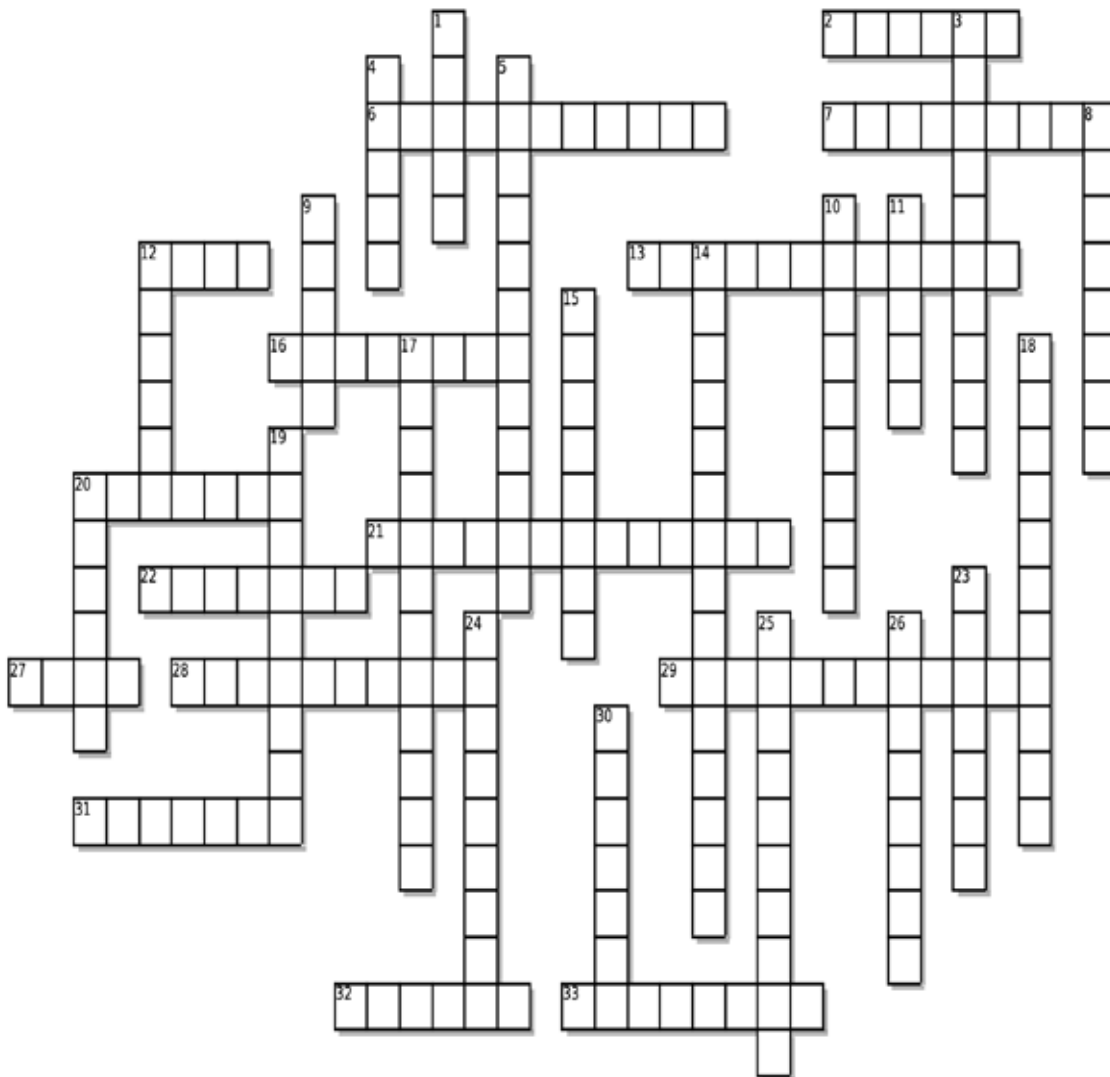
land was fertile. The king laughed at her and refused to give her any land. Brigid prayed to God and asked him to soften the king's heart. Then she smiled at the king and said: "will you give me as much land as my cloak will cover?".

The king thought that she was joking and because Brigid's cloak was so small, he knew that it would only cover a very small piece of land. The king agreed and Brigid spread her cloak on the ground. She asked her four friends to hold a corner of the cloak and walk in opposite directions. The four friends walked north, south, east and west. The cloak grew immediately and began to cover many acres of land. The king was astonished, and he realised that she had been blessed by God. The king fell to the ground and knelt before Brigid and promised her and her friends money, food and supplies. Soon afterwards, the king became a Christian and started to help the poor. Brigid's miracle of the cloak was the first of many miracles that she worked for the people of Ireland.

1,500TH ANNIVERSARY

St Brigid died 1,500 years ago in AD524 at the age of 75 and was buried in a tomb before the High Altar of her Abbey Church. After some time, her remains were exhumed and transferred to Downpatrick to rest with the two other patron saints of Ireland, St Patrick and St Columcille. Her skull was extracted and brought to Lisbon, in Portugal, by two Irish noblemen, and it remains there to this day. St Brigid is the female patron saint of Ireland. She is also known as Muire na Gael or Mary of the Gael which means Our Lady of the Irish. Her feast day is February 1st which is the first day of Spring in Ireland. The 1,500th anniversary of the death of St Brigid occurs on Thursday, February 1st, 2024.

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 2 You cannot serve God and this
 6 "The reason for this season"
 7 An abbey they serve
 12 Where Samson defeated the Philistines
 13 Another name for prayers
 16 The Kilkenny street they are on was named after their house
 20 One of the twelve
 21 Song of Songs... school motto
 22 Community settlement
 27 We do this on Ash Wednesday
 28 The heart of Mary
 29 Nano Nagle
 31 This is, Pope Francis reminds us, the most important Sacrament for us all
 32 Title for Jesus
 33 This saint gave us a bishop

DOWN

- 1 Jonah follower
 3 Adjective for God
 4 They kept this at St Mary's Cathedral before it was consecrated
 5 One of the gifts given
 8 The famous house at Loreto was carried from here
 9 This Kilkenny man built a white house
 10 This Argentinian heads up the Doctrine of the Faith
 11 Romero
 12 Our Lady for the aviation
 14 Fourth Luminous
 15 These areas help parishes work together
 17 The final Sacrament of initiation
 18 The grace of confession
 19 Here they waved palms at Jesus
 20 Superior of a convent
 23 God in three persons
 24 Harass
 25 Fourth glorious
 26 Prayer of the _____
 30 Where Francis made his first crib

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 1st March 2024 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 33 competitions:

Adult Crossword:
 Marie Fitzpatrick

Children's Wordsearch, age 8-13:
 Mairead Murphy

Children's Colouring, age 5-8:
 Emily Lawlor

Colouring Competition



For ages 5-8



Wordsearch Competition



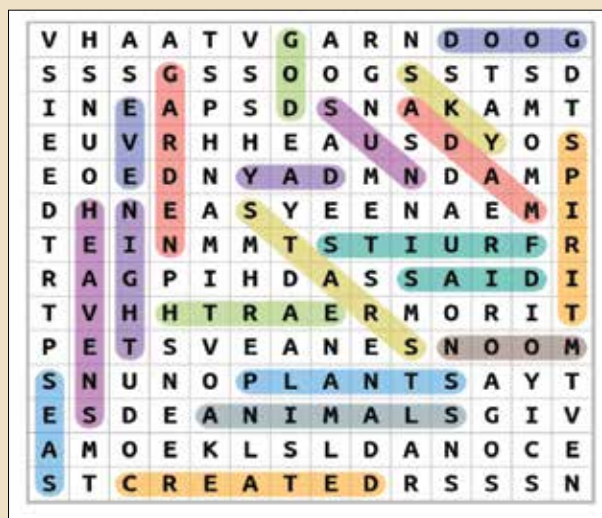
For ages 8-13

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

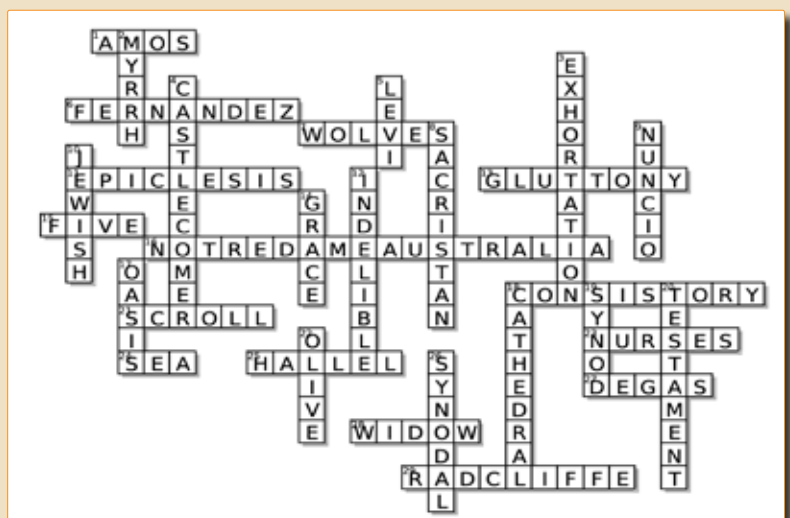
THE NATIVITY

BETHLEHEM	MYRRH	JESUS
NAZARETH	MANGER	WORSHIP
DONKEY	SHEPHERDS	JOSEPH
VIRGIN	PEACE	BIRTH
MESSIAH	STAR	HEROD
KING	CHRISTMAS	MARY
GOLD	FANKINSCENSE	STABLE
WISE MEN	ANGEL	BABY

Answers to Ossory Times Issue 33



Answers to Ossory Times Issue 33



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!

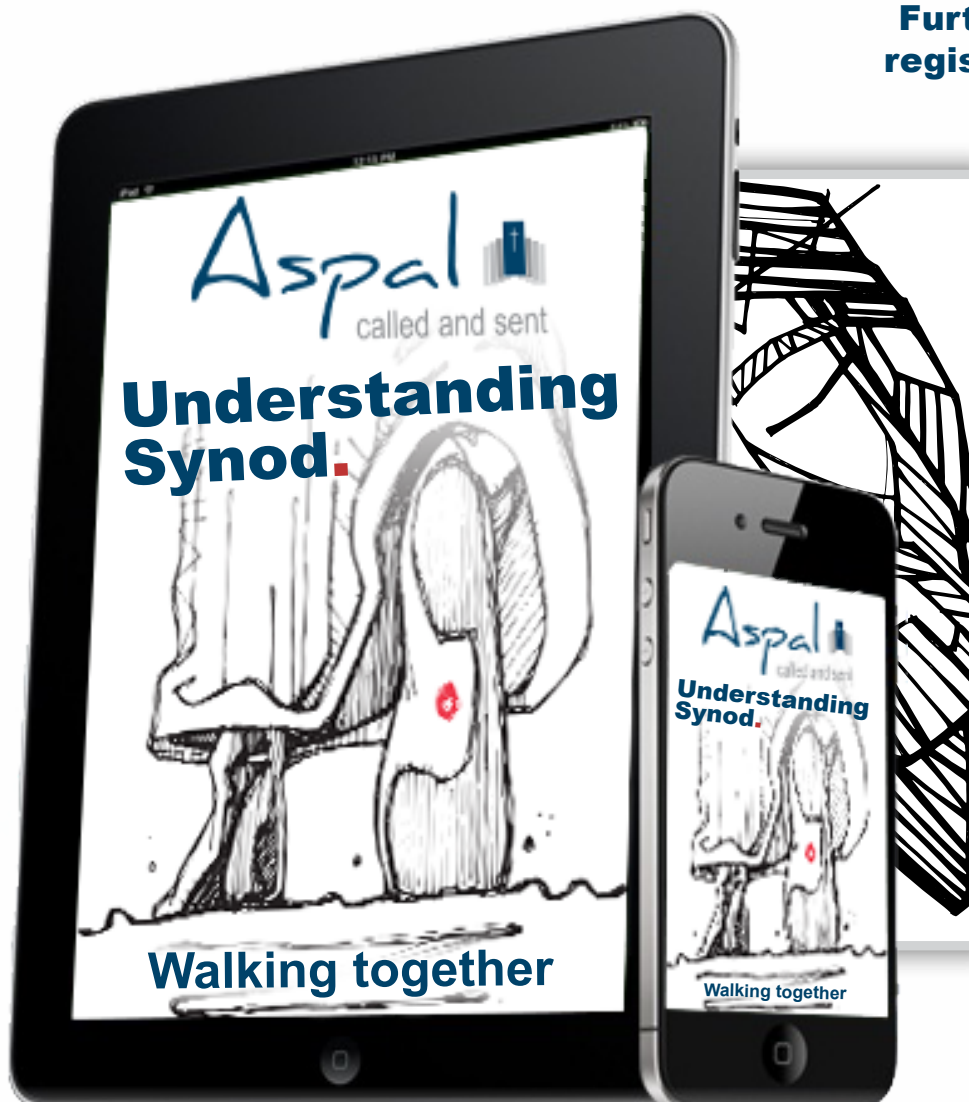


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