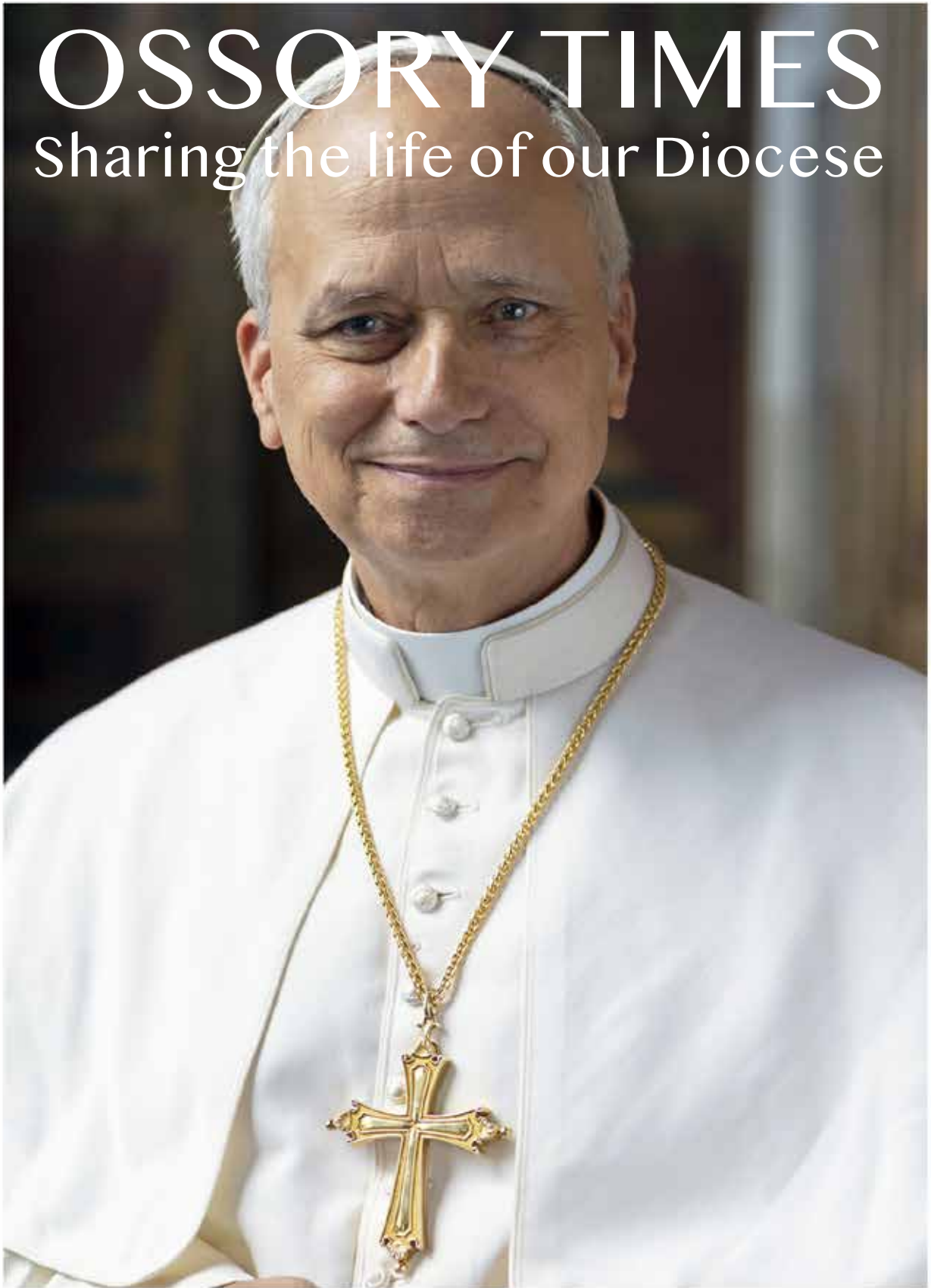




October 2025 – Issue 39

OSSORY TIMES

Sharing the life of our Diocese



Leo P.P. XIV



DIOCESE OF OSSORY

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2025/2026

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Editorial

Before writing an editorial I read the last - a reminder of the life of the Church and Diocese, at that time, when we published. Our last edition was filled with references to Pope Francis and his invitation to, and our living out of, the great Jubilee of Hope. It was as if he was to lead forever... It seems strange, then, to be already so comfortable with the gentle presence of Pope Leo as he now walks in the footsteps of St Peter.

There is change but there is a deep continuity. We are still very much on the synodal journey - that is the understanding of Church for our times, and that has not changed. In these days, too, we have seen the publication of Pope Leo's first Apostolic Exhortation, *Dilexi te* - a call to love the poor. It too is a continuation of the themes of previous papacies, and notably closely linked to the final Encyclical of Pope Francis, *Dilexit nos*, which was on the human and divine love at the Heart of Jesus.

So change does not need to be a new direction - it can simply be a new note, a new emphasis, a new focus, a new impetus for the life of the Church. May God, who called him, now sustain Pope Leo in his ministry and may we accompany him in our prayer.

To be called and to accompany is at the heart of our understanding of our being Church - in baptism we are called by God to take our place in this christian community. The current phase of the Irish synodal journey reminds us "that God is calling us to be; a Church of welcome and belonging, rooted in baptism, alive in mission, and open to the future that the Holy Spirit is preparing." I hope that these pages of the Ossory times show that to be the case here. I think they do - councils working together serving a common mission, priests celebrating a reunion of their days in formation, a parish celebrating 225 years of living the faith together, the Black Abbey 800 years on and so much more...

I am delighted, then, to welcome you to the latest edition of the Ossory Times. As always I trust you will 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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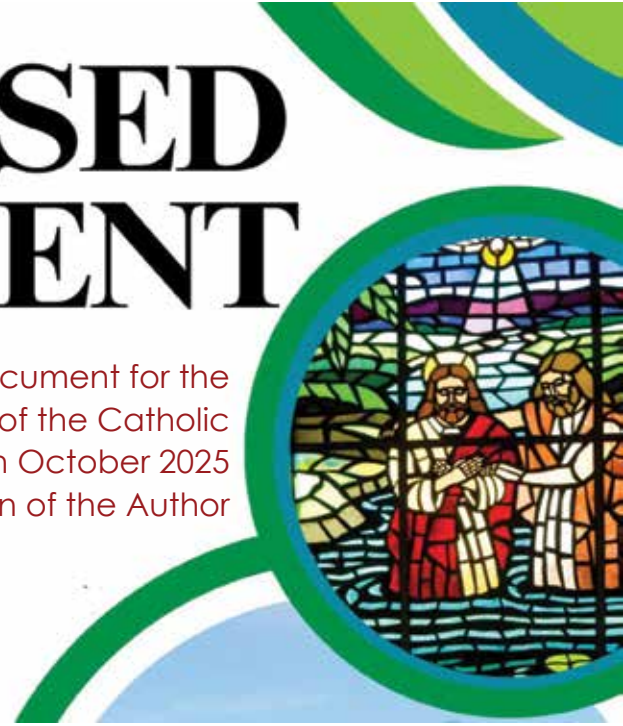
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BAPTISED AND SENT

Published in the preparatory document for the
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Baptised in Christ: Reborn for Mission (A Reflection Paper)

Liam Bergin

The Mass has been central to the Irish Catholic identity and experience. Every small village has a chapel; Mass rocks dot the country from Penal times. Devotion to and the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was central to our cultural and religious self-understanding. Vocations to priesthood abounded to ensure the celebration of this Sacred Mystery and of the other sacraments. Baptism has never formed the Irish Catholic imagination in the same way. Unlike many other European countries, no ancient baptismal sites have been found in our land. The contemporary emphasis on baptism as the foundation of Christian life and mission does not sit easily with Irish Catholicism.

This paper reflects on the renewed emphasis on baptism that was sparked by the Second Vatican Council and that

has been flamed by Pope Francis and the synodal process. It examines the baptismal anointing with the Spirit (the pneumatological dimension), the sharing of the baptised in the priestly, prophetic and kingly ministry of Jesus Christ (the Christological dimension), the new life that is bestowed (the soteriological dimension), the gifts that are poured out on the Christian community in baptism (the ecclesiological dimension), and the promise of eternal glory that is extended at baptism (the eschatological dimension). Other contingent matters such as the call of the baptised to promote reconciliation and unity, and to promote ecological justice are also presented. Suggested questions for reflection are also included under eight headings.



Inverting the Pyramid

"Baptism is the foundation of Christian life. This is because it introduces everyone to the greatest gift, which is to be children of God, that is, to share in Jesus' relationship to the Father in the Spirit.

There is nothing higher than this baptismal dignity, equally bestowed upon each person, through which we are invited to clothe ourselves with Christ and be grafted onto Him like branches of the one vine." These words from *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission*, the Final Document of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (2023) – hereafter FSC – reaffirm the centrality of baptism in the life and mission of the Church as proposed by Vatican II.

While an earlier draft of *Lumen Gentium* placed the chapter on the hierarchy before the chapter on the People of God, the conciliar bishops decided to reverse the order. This widely supported decision was intended to put an end to the pyramidal vision of the Church and to assert that all members of the Church are equal by reason of their baptism, prior to any subsequent differentiation.

The term "the people" has often been used to denote "the laity" or "the faithful" besides the pope, bishops, priests and religious. Vatican II intended the term "People of God" to refer to all the baptised, "from the bishops to the last of the faithful lay people" (LG 12). As Jesuit historian John O'Malley remarked, "the symbolism of the change was potent: the first reality of the Church is horizontal and consists of all the baptised, without distinction of rank. Only then comes the vertical reality, hierarchy." Indeed, as FSC notes, "The identity of the People of God flows from Baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

This identity is lived out as a call to holiness and a sending out in mission, inviting all peoples to accept the gift of salvation (cf. Mt 28:18-19). The missionary synodal Church springs from Baptism, in which Christ clothes us with Himself (cf. Gal 3:27)

and enables us to be reborn of the Spirit (cf. Jn 3:5-6) as children of God"

How have you experienced this inversion in Ireland today?

Anointed by God's Spirit

All four gospels record that Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist in the River Jordan, making it one of the most historically certain events in the life of Jesus. John preached a baptism for the forgiveness of sins as he gathered a community to await the coming Messiah. In the fullness of time Jesus, the Sinless One, went down into the waters of the Jordan in solidarity with sinful men and women, "to fulfil all righteousness" (Matt 3:15) and was baptised by John. The Synoptic Gospels describe the descent of the Holy Spirit and the voice of the Father that declared "You are my beloved son in whom I am well pleased." Emerging from the waters of the baptismal font, every Christian hears again that voice that was once heard on the banks of the Jordan. From this comes the reassurance that one has become a child of adoption (cf. Gal 4:4-7) and a brother or sister of Christ. Baptism is not a rite of passage into a privileged club. It is the sacrament by which believers, bathed in living water, enter the Spirit-filled community that seeks to manifest the reign of God the Father as Jesus did.

How could the centrality of baptism to Christian life be celebrated?

The New Testament writers shed little light on how baptism was celebrated. They simply presume that their audiences were already familiar with the rites of initiation. The word baptizein means to dip or to plunge and it suggests that the ritual was accomplished by a triple immersion "with the washing of water by the word" (Eph 5:26), in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38) or in the name of the Trinity (Matt 28:19). The Acts of the Apostles indicates that a laying-on of hands after the water rite was associated with the conferral of the Holy Spirit (8:14-20; 19:6).

Luke (4:16-21) situates the beginning of

Jesus' public ministry on a Sabbath day in the synagogue in Nazareth. Jesus was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah and found the passage where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord." He handed it back to the attendant as the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him. He then made the startling announcement: "Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing."

In the Jewish Scriptures the prophets announced that the Spirit of the Lord would rest on the hoped-for Messiah for his saving mission. Jesus asserts that this promise is now fulfilled in him. The descent of the Holy Spirit on Jesus at his baptism by John was the sign that he is the Messiah, the "one who is to come." He was conceived by the Holy Spirit; his whole life and mission are carried out in total communion with the Holy Spirit whom the Father gives without measure.

The Hebrew word "Messiah" means "anointed one". It is translated as "Christos" in Greek. Christ means "anointed one" and Christians are the "anointed ones" who share in the messianic mission of Christ. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we who are reborn in the waters of baptism are anointed to proclaim the kingdom of God. The anointing "Christifies" those who receive it as it bestows the gift of the Holy Spirit.

How can we give expression to the fact that we are all God's anointed ones?

Priests, Prophets and Kings

Anointing with oil is a very ancient and important ritual in the Judeo-Christian tradition. The Jews anointed three categories of people: priests, prophets and kings. Christians, by contrast, anoint everyone in baptism. Baptism gives all a shared, if differentiated, responsibility for the life and mission of the Church, and calls baptised and ordained to work together. All baptised members of the Church

participate together in the prophetic or teaching office, in the priestly or sanctifying office, and in the kingly or governing office of Christ. This participation in the threefold mission of Christ is not delegated from the ordained ministry but "finds its source in the anointing of baptism, its further development in confirmation and its realization and dynamic sustenance in the Holy Eucharist" (Christifideles Laici 14).

What are the implications of this sharing in the non-delegated priestly, prophetic, priestly mission of Christ?

Because of their participation in the teaching office, all the faithful, including those without a formal theological training, have an instinct for the truth. "God furnishes the totality of the faithful with an instinct of faith – *sensus fidei* – which helps them to discern what is truly of God" (Evangelii Gaudium, 119). Participating in the priestly office enables the full and active participation of all in the celebration of the liturgy of the Church where the whole assembly offers praise and thanks to the Living God. Participating in the kingly office empowers all the baptised to play an active part in the governance of the Church. Together, participation in the threefold messianic mission of Jesus Christ calls for a Spirit-filled community that listens, prays, meditates, dialogues, accompanies, discerns, decides and acts as all the baptised journey in Christ to God the Father (FSC, 29). Even as the difference between the common priesthood of the baptised and the ministerial priesthood of the ordained is recognised, the essential equality of the one People of God is maintained. Ordained ministers are to serve the community of baptised disciples in its responsibility for the one mission of the Church, a mission that takes on new requirements in an ever-changing world.

As the numbers of ordained ministers decreases, what are the implications for the baptised?

New Life as Daughters and Sons of God

The Gospel of John (3:1-6) records the meeting between Jesus and Nicodemus, a leading Jew who comes under cover of

darkness to speak with him. When Jesus declares that one must be born again, Nicodemus, with a certain sense of irony, asks how a grown man can be born again: "Can he go back into his mother's womb?" Jesus responds that one must be "born through water and the Holy Spirit."

The candidates for baptism who have received biological life in the womb of their mothers now receive new life in Christ and are born again as daughters and sons of God through water and the Holy Spirit. That is why the baptismal pond is referred to as a womb which begets people spiritually.

According to the account in Genesis 1, creation took place in seven days. The eighth day, then, was considered the day of the new creation. During the early centuries, baptisms were often celebrated in specially constructed buildings or baptistries. Many, like the baptistry at St John Lateran in Rome, were octagonal in shape. This was to give architectural expression to the belief that in baptism the catechumens are born again and become a new creation. Many contemporary fonts are octagonal in shape. Take a look at the new font in St Mary's Cathedral in Kilkenny!

In his Letter to the Romans, St Paul reminds the early Christian community that baptism unites them to the saving death of Christ and enables them to share his life: "You have been taught that when we were baptised in Christ Jesus we were baptised in his death; in other words, when we were baptised, we went into the tomb with him and joined him in death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father's glory, we too might live a new life" (6:3-4). When baptism was celebrated during the Easter Vigil, as it was for many centuries, this connection between the paschal mystery and the new life given in baptism was readily made.

The triple immersion in the waters of baptism referred not just to the Father, Son, and Spirit, but it symbolised participation in the three days that Jesus spent in the tomb before the Father raised him to life, an event

that would shortly be commemorated by the community at the Vigil. It was this new life that was communicated through the baptismal water.

Paul reminds us that new life with the risen Christ has already begun in those who have been baptised. Already now we enjoy the first fruits of eternal life. Despite our frailty and sinfulness, despite our weakness and brokenness, "nothing can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:39). The Church is the community of the baptised, a community of redeemed saints and sinners that witnesses to Christ's life now as it awaits the fullness of risen life at the end of time. Further, the Church is wholly present when the saints in heaven and on earth join in one "hosanna" to the Lord God Almighty.

How does the promise of eternal life that is offered in baptism shape the present life of the Church?

Diversity of Gifts

St Paul gives an impressive register of gifts or charisms that he found in the Church in Corinth and beyond. "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Cor 12:47). "Christians, individually and as part of ecclesial movements and associations, are called to bear fruit by sharing the gifts they have been given and to be witnesses to the Gospel. In the Christian community, all the baptised are enriched with gifts to share, each according to his or her vocation and way or condition of life." (FSC 57).

A glance down any of our churches on a Sunday morning reveals an equally striking inventory. There are prophets and teachers, athletes and healers; there are labourers and miracle workers, poets and florists; there are linguists and singers, listeners and sharers; there are leaders and dreamers, pioneers and settlers. No one

gift is more important than another, no one part of the body takes precedence over another. If one part refuses to function or is impeded in its rightful operation, then the whole body seizes up. Instead of boldly proclaiming the Kingdom, it limps blindly along, wracked by cancerous divisions. There is a variety of gifts but always the same Spirit. Within the diversity there is an essential unity.

By virtue of baptism, women and men have equal dignity as members of the People of God. "As many of you as were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:27-28). However, "women continue to encounter obstacles in obtaining a fuller recognition of their charisms, vocation and place in all the various areas of the Church's life. This is to the detriment of serving the Church's shared mission" (FSC 60). In the reform of the Roman Curia set out in *Predicate Evangelium* (2022), Pope Francis separated jurisdiction (governing power) from ordination (sacramental power), paving the way for lay and religious women to hold leadership positions that are expressions of their baptismal calling. So too, the question of women's access to diaconal ministry remains under review.

How can we harness the gifts present in the Irish Church today?

Creating Community

The Apostolic Tradition, a document from the early third century ascribed to the Roman priest Hippolytus, gives one of the earliest descriptions of the process that candidates underwent to become members of the Church. The candidates, or catechumens, were generally adults, with children baptised together with their parents.

A number of interesting points emerge from the Apostolic Tradition which may also speak to the Christian community today. First of all, while the catechumenate was a period of preparation for the adult candidates themselves it also served as

an occasion of renewal for the whole Christian community that accompanied them on this journey. This was heightened during the season of Lent as its original purpose was to be a period when the whole Church engaged in a time of intense prayer, fasting, and almsgiving with the candidates in preparation for their Easter baptism. Secondly, through the series of scrutinies, tests, and exorcisms that the catechumens underwent, the community was eager to evaluate and to encourage their spiritual and moral growth as they prepared to be members of the Church. The decision to become a Christian in a hostile world was not to be taken lightly. The fruits of faith and love should be manifest in the candidates. Thirdly, the celebration of the rites during the Easter Vigil accentuated its association with the paschal mystery and with the triumph of the Lord Jesus over sin and death. Today, the placement of the paschal candle beside the baptismal font and the passing of the lighted candle to the parents or godparents of an infant candidate recalls this aspect.

Hippolytus describes a lengthy process lasting up to three years. The very process of undergoing these rites formed and shaped the new members of the Church. Tertullian, a North-African contemporary of Hippolytus, wrote that "Christians are made not born." The ceremonies that the candidates underwent gave expression and shape to the lives of faith, hope and love that they desired to embrace.

What impact does the growing number of people in Ireland who are initiated as adults make on parish life?

Baptism and Reconciliation

In baptism Christians first encounter the mystery of reconciliation and the forgiveness of personal and original sin. Despite the great dignity to which we are called as daughters and sons of God, the sad fact is that Christians do sin even after they have passed through the waters of rebirth. That is something we acknowledge in the penitential act at the beginning of every Mass. Believers are constantly

challenged to configure their lives to the person of Christ, to encounter again and again the saving power of God's healing love, particularly through the sacrament of penance. Tertullian (+240) referred to penance as "the second plank following the shipwreck," a phrase taken up by the Council of Trent.

Pope Francis has also emphasised this connection. "The Sacrament of Penance is like a 'second baptism' ... [T]he day of our Baptism is the point of departure for this most beautiful journey, a journey towards God that lasts a lifetime, a journey of conversion that is continually sustained by the Sacrament of Penance. ...[W]hen we go to confess our weaknesses, our sins, we go to ask the pardon of Jesus, but we also go to renew our Baptism through his forgiveness. And this is beautiful, it is like celebrating the day of Baptism in every Confession" (General Audience, 13 November 2013). The need for healing, reconciliation, and the rebuilding of trust has a personal and communal dimension, particularly in light of so many scandals related to different types of abuse. The baptised have the privilege to know and the duty to extend reconciliation, to recognise mistakes, and to rebuild trust (FSC 46).

How do we awaken in the community of the baptised a need for on-going personal and communal reconciliation?

Saving Water

According to Catholic Social Teaching, water is a human right that it is due to all people. It is not an economic commodity that can be owned and traded for profit. Access to water is a right to life issue. Future wars are more likely to be about water than about oil. While oil may have substitutes or alternatives, water does not. In *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis recognises the insidious connection between poverty and access to water. "Yet", he insists, "our world has a grave social debt towards the poor who lack access to drinking water, because they are denied the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity" (LS, 30; italics in original).

The use of water in the sacrament of baptism makes an ethical claim on Christians to save the water with which they celebrate salvation. Water, like grace, belongs to no one in particular but is freely given for the wellbeing of all. Whenever politics or economics block general access to this universal right, the order of nature and grace is upended. The sacramental use of water calls on Christians to ensure uninhibited access to clean water for all God's creatures, that they may sip and be refreshed, dip and be renewed, and know the fullness of life offered to all by God who creates, redeems and transforms with this saving gift. Christians are ethically committed to save the water by which they celebrate salvation.

How do we sow a greater understanding of Catholic social teaching among the community of the baptised?

"Ite, missa est"

The Second Vatican Council underlines that the Eucharist is "the source and summit of the life of the Church." The parish community deepens its sense of its own identity as the Body of Christ when it celebrates the Sunday Eucharist, and as it draws from it the strength to live as disciples of the Risen Lord in a particular time and place. The retrieval of the centrality of baptism prompted by the synodal journey must lead to a deeper sense of the four-fold presence of Christ in the Eucharistic celebration. Christ is present in the assembled community, in the minister who presides, in the word proclaimed, and in the consecrated elements of bread and wine. It is precisely here, gathered in the Spirit as daughters and sons of the Father, and therefore as brother and sisters in Christ, that those who share a common dignity derived from baptism, are strengthened by word and sacrament to fulfil a common mission in the world.

"Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord."



Homily of Bishop Niall Coll
St Kieran's College Annual Priests' Reunion 2025,
19 August 2025

A question which presumably bubbled up in our young hearts was: whom shall I worship? However inchoately formulated it brought us to the seminary, to a place of discernment of vocation, most of us here present to St Kieran's College to which you return today for this annual reunion. Welcome.

Of course, that question is one which countless generations before us also asked. From the first commandment given at Sinai, God's word has been clear: "You shall have no other gods before me" (Ex 20:3). Yet, repeatedly, Israel was tempted to bow before idols that promised security, prosperity or control - the golden calf, the Baals, the empires of Babylon and Rome. And again, those idols brought only emptiness and slavery. After all, as our gospel today reminds us, such idols cannot help us pass through the eye of a needle to enter the Kingdom of Heaven!

We may think that talk of temptations to idolatry is outmoded, but the American theologian William T. Cavanaugh in his interesting new book, *The Uses of Idolatry* (OUP, 2024) reminds us that idolatry has never disappeared. Modern life has simply changed its objects of worship. He calls this "mis-enchantment": many in our society, he argues, no longer bow before God, but give loyalty to the idols of consumerism, the nation state, unrestrained sport and countless other false powers.

Consider consumerism. Our culture teaches us that happiness lies in purchas-

ing and upgrading, in defining our identity by what we own. But these goods never satisfy. As St Augustine taught, our hearts remain restless until they rest in God. What was meant to be gift becomes a trap; instead of possessing things, we find they possess us. The various idols have something in common: they promise control. They tell us we can secure meaning and salvation for our-selves - by buying, by belonging, by mastering. But the God revealed in Jesus Christ cannot be controlled. He is not a product, a project or a possession. He is the living Lord who calls us into relationship.

And yet, our longing - even when it strays - is not wasted. Every idol reveals a hunger for something more - for transcendence. We are made to worship. The tragedy is not that we desire too much, but that we settle for too little. This is why God gives us the sacraments. Where idols take creation and enslave it to our desires, the sacraments take creation and return it to its true purpose - as a gift that mediates God's presence. Bread and wine, water and oil, human touch and word of God's people - these ordinary elements become extraordinary in Christ.

Thankfully, our lives of ministry dedicated to Word, Sacrament and Service, whatever our manifold failures, personal and societal, have mediated God's grace, even in these most secular of times, encouraging a sense of transcendence, keeping hope alive. It is important to acknowledge this truth during this Jubilee

Year of Hope so close to the heart of Pope Francis.

My brothers, think of the Eucharist, the celebration of which has been at the heart of your own spiritual journey and ministry for decades. In the marketplace, bread and wine are commodities, bought and sold. On the altar, through the power of the Holy Spirit, they become the very Body and Blood of Christ, nourishment for the journey of life and the food of eternal life. Here is no idol we control; here is a mystery that draws us into communion with God himself.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your faithful commitment to priestly ministry. For the sacraments are not abstract ideas but concrete encounters. They are entrusted to the Church through the apostles, and through the laying on of hands to bishops and priests. It is the priest who, standing not in his own power but in the person of Christ, pronounces the words of consecration that no consumer market can imitate: "This is my Body... This is my Blood."

In an age of idols that promise control, the priest's life, well lived, reminds us that grace is never our own achievement, but God's gift. The Eucharist does not come from our creativity or effort. It is given through the ministry Christ himself instituted at the Last Supper when he commanded his apostles: "Do this in memory of me" (Lk 22:19). I don't need to remind you that the ordained ministry is not about privilege or status. Decades of ministry in Ireland, in a very changed culture, have taught us, if we hadn't already known, that it is about service - service to the Word and to the Sacraments, service that keeps the Church, the whole People of God, rooted in Christ and not in passing idols.

As we reflect today on and give thanks for the years of formation, accompaniment and friendship here in St Kieran's and our experience of ministry in Ossory and elsewhere I invite you now to ask how we as disciples, as priests will live faithfully in this age of idols?

I would suggest first, by seeing clearly. Ask: what holds my deepest loyalty? What

do I fear losing most? What consumes my imagination? These questions, as Cavanaugh argues, point us to the recognition of what we truly worship.

Second, by reordering our desires through prayer, Scripture, and sacrament. The ordained ministry safeguards these treasures for all God's people: proclaiming the Word faithfully, celebrating the liturgy, absolving sins, baptising and encouraging a deeper baptismal consciousness among our people, marrying, anointing, and above all, feeding us with the Eucharist. Without the ministry Christ entrusted to his Church, we would be left vulnerable to the idols of the age.

Third, by witnessing differently. In a consumer society, we must show by our simplicity and generosity that our treasure is in heaven. In a world of aggressive nationalism, so apparent in trouble spots like the Holy Land and Ukraine just now, we must show by our welcome and peace making that Christ has broken down every dividing wall. The priest leads this witness sacramentally at the altar nourishing all the baptised to carry it into families, workplaces and communities.

My friends, the world is weary of false gods. It longs for authenticity, for a joy it cannot find in possessions or power. Please continue to help your people to taste that joy by how you preach, celebrate the sacraments and serve your people. Remember that God is not an idol to be controlled but a Father who gives himself, a Son who offers his Body, a Spirit who fills us with life.

So let us keep ourselves from idols by clinging to Christ, and by cherishing the ministry in his Church that has been entrusted to us. Let us support each other in our priestly ministry here in Ossory and in every place where St Kieran's men serve. Please pray for and encourage vocations to the priesthood, and above all allow the Word we proclaim and the Sacraments we celebrate to transform us and our people from within. Then, our restless hearts will indeed find their rest.

Amen





**Bishop Coll's Homily at Mass celebrating the Canonisation of Blessed Carlo Acutis,
Church of the Immaculate Conception, Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny
7th September 2025 at 11.00am**

Today, in union with many Catholics throughout the world, we here in Castlecomer and throughout the Diocese of Ossory celebrate a remarkable young Italian man, Blessed Carlo Acutis. He died in 2006 at the age of 15, but his life still speaks to the Church, especially to young people and to all of us navigating life today in a digital age. Thus, he was canonised earlier this morning in Rome by Pope Leo XIV, together with another Italian, Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati.

Let me begin by saying that Carlo was not a mystic hidden away in a monastery. Reading a short biography of him by Anthony Figueiredo (Blessed Carlo Acutis: 5 Steps to Being a Saint, 2021), I learned that he was a teenager who liked video games, soccer and being with friends. He had both a sweet tooth and a good sense of humour and he sometimes annoyed his parents like any child might. In many ways, he was ordinary. But what made him extraordinary was his love for Jesus - especially in the Eucharist. And that is why he is of such interest to us.

Carlo was convinced that God had to be at the centre of everything. And he knew the best way to stay centred in God was through the Eucharist - Jesus truly present, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity (as taught by the Catechism of the Catholic Church). He said: "If people

understood the Eucharist, churches would be full." People would be coming to Mass in greater numbers and regularly. Interestingly, it was his discovery of the importance of the Eucharist, that led his parents, who had been the most inert of Catholics, to begin to attend Mass regularly. He evangelised his parents ...!

But what's especially interesting about Carlo's story is how he lived this devotion. He loved computers and was, it seems, a self-taught coder and designer. He built a website cataloguing

Eucharistic miracles from around the world. He used his skills not to seek attention, but to lead others to Jesus. That's what makes him the first so-called millennial to be beatified. He didn't escape the world - he engaged it with faith and holiness. He saw the internet not as a distraction, but as a tool for bringing people to faith in Jesus, what is known as evangelisation.

And that example is still alive today. I have recently been taking the time to discover ways in which Carlo's spirit is being carried forward in young Catholic "influencers" who share their faith online. On platforms like YouTube, Instagram and TikTok, many young people are boldly speaking about the Gospel in their own words. They discuss prayer, share



testimonies, answer difficult questions and show how Catholic faith can be lived with joy in today's world. This has been a revelation to me.

What makes their witness powerful is not polished production or viral fame - it's authenticity. In a digital culture often marked by filters, façades and fakeness, their authenticity shines through. These young Catholics, like Carlo before them, are not afraid to be real: real about their struggles, real about their joy and real about the hope they have found in Christ. In this way, the mission of Carlo continues.

Though so young he had a gifted turn of phrase: he once said, "All people are born as

originals, but many die as photocopies." Those young people who take a lead in sharing online about Carlo - "influencers" - are brave souls helping others discover their originality, their dignity in God, reminding us that we are made for more than passing trends or temporary applause. They echo Carlo's message that technology, when used well, can become a pulpit, a catechism, a means of sharing the Gospel message and a community all at once.

Carlo's sainthood, however, doesn't arise from the internet or from popularity. It comes from a life offered in love. When he was diagnosed with leukaemia, he accepted his suffering with grace. He said, "I offer all my suffering to the Lord, for the Pope and for the Church." He

didn't complain. He trusted. And he died with a peace that can only come from deep friendship with Jesus. Even in his final days, Carlo remained focused on others. He said he was happy to die because he had lived his life without wasting a minute on things that didn't matter.

So, what does Blessed Carlo say to us today? First, he reminds us, young and old, that holiness is possible - right now. You don't have to wait to be older, or smarter, or perfect. You just have to start

loving Jesus where you are, with what you have. You can be a saint in your classroom, in your office, on your farm, in your kitchen or even online. Second, he challenges us to take the Eucharist seriously. To stop being cynical, treating Mass as a chore or as a relic of bygone days that we've grown out of. We need to start seeing it for what it really is: the life-giving encounter with the living Lord. Remember, when we receive Jesus in the Eucharist, we are receiving the greatest gift of all, an anticipation of the heavenly banquet. Third, Carlo calls us, especially the young, to use the tools we've been given - phones, laptops, social media - not just for entertainment, but for evangelisation, for connection, for the promotion of friendship, holiness and community in our world.

St Carlo Acutis reminds us that being a saint doesn't mean being out of touch with the world. Rather, it means being deeply in touch with Christ ... in the world. He lived a short life, but he lived it well. And now, through his example, the Lord is inviting us to do the same. So let us ask for St Carlo's intercession today - especially for our young people, for those struggling to find meaning and direction in life, and for all of us who sometimes forget what really matters. May we as a people of faith, personally in our own hearts, and as a broader community of parishioners, fall ever more in love with the Eucharist, or truly love it for the first time. May we embrace our originality and resist the pressure to be copies of a world so misshaped by materialism, secularism and individualism. Finally, may we walk our own highway to Heaven - one Mass, one prayer, one act of love at a time - and as we do so may we allow ourselves to be orientated by those powerful words of Jesus in today's Gospel: 'Anyone who does not carry his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple'.

St Carlo Acutis, pray for us.

✠ Niall Coll, Bishop of Ossory





Rev. Msgr Kieron J. Kennedy

Monsignor Kieron Kennedy, Parish Priest of Freshford Co. Kilkenny, and Episcopal Vicar for Social and Family Affairs, died unexpectedly, but peacefully at his residence on Tuesday, 10th June, 2025 in his seventy-fifth year.

Born in Dublin where his father, Daniel, was a serving member of An Garda Síochána and where Daniel had met and married his wife Mildred Rochford, Kieron's early life was characterised by a number of family moves which would have been the norm for many members of the Gardai at that time. Kieron's father was a proud Kerryman from the Portmagee area and that connection to the Kingdom was sustained by family

visits over the years and was always important to Kieron. Kieron had an affinity with Jewish tradition through his mother, Mildred's, family, and that was reflected in the distinctive spelling of his christian name.

It was when his father was posted as a Detective Sergeant to Callan, Co. Kilkenny, that the then teenage Kieron started to attend St Kieran's College

Secondary School, Kilkenny and when an ongoing association with St Kieran's College commenced. That posting in Callan and attendance at St Kieran's meant that Kieron's calling to the priesthood saw him commence his studies as a seminarian for the Diocese of Ossory, which Bishop Peter Birch determined should be at the Pontificio Collegio Irlandese, the Irish College in Rome.

The young Kieron relished the opportunity to study in the Eternal City, and thus began a chapter in his life which he found both formative and fulfilling. Throughout his life he maintained a deep affection for the city and its culture, and, indeed, for the Irish College, which he felt had such a positive influence on his education and formation.

Following his ordination in Rome on 30th June, 1974, Kieron was appointed by the Episcopal Conference as Irish Director for the Holy Year 1975 celebrations in Rome, which in that year had Reconciliation and Renewal as the theme, an early recognition of the organisational and administrative skills that were evident throughout his ministry. Post-graduate studies followed at the Gregorian Pontifical University, again in Rome, before Kieron returned to Ossory, appointed curate in St Canice's parish in Kilkenny city.

In 1978 Kieron was commissioned to work with the archdiocese of Westminster, and the following five years saw him live and minister in London. Kieron would always say that the importance he attributed to the development of appropriate structures through which the church could support the marginalised and enhance its mission, was shaped by his experiences in the archdiocese. Appointed Diocesan Housing and Resource Officer, he worked with and ministered to a wide array of state and diocesan groups, including the London Voluntary

Housing Association, the Irish Episcopal Commission for Emigrants, the Irish Chaplaincy Scheme and the Catholic Housing Aid Society. He recognised that his particular strength lay in the administrative, striving to ensure that the organisational scaffolding was in place to support the mission of the diocese, and that appropriate governance was adhered to at all times in assisting the most vulnerable.

Kieron enjoyed his posting to the Archdiocese of Westminster: he often spoke of his work there as 'life-giving', and it was a productive and fruitful time for him. Recognising his gifts and talents, Bishop Laurence Forristal called him back to the Diocese of Ossory with a particular remit to work with Ossory Social Services, an organisation established by Bishop Peter Birch and with which Kieron would be associated throughout his ministry.

In the following years, while serving as Director of Social Services, Kieron was appointed Diocesan Director for Emigrant Services, Episcopal Vicar for Social and Family Affairs and Director of SOS (Kilkenny Ltd.), and he was also engaged in pastoral work in St Canice's parish.

His association with St Kieran's College was renewed in 1989 when he was appointed Administrator, and subsequently in 2004 when he became President of the College. In these roles, he worked to improve the facilities of the College, both the Seminary and the Secondary School, to upgrade the fabric of the buildings, and to enhance the profile and to expand the use of the College as a diocesan and educational facility; he was instrumental, for instance, in the establishment of the NUI Maynooth Outreach programme at St Kieran's which ran for many years.

He served as Trustee of the College and as Chairperson of the school Board of Management, supporting

management and staff in the running of the school, and he took great pride in seeing the St Kieran's College community flourish. He was involved in the initial discussions with the Department of Education and Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board on the reconfiguration of the campus and the school building project now in train.

While continuing his work with Ossory Social Services, in 2011, Kieron was appointed Administrator of St Mary's Cathedral. He very much enjoyed engaging with the parishioners of St Mary's and was integral to the life of the parish and to the conservation and restoration work in the Cathedral and Chapter House initiated by Bishop Séamus Freeman, SAC, which is still ongoing.

Kieron was involved in the establishment of the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, and the Cathedral Book Shop and Café, which brought new life to the Cathedral parish.

In 2018, Kieron was appointed Parish Priest of Freshford, again while continuing his many other ministries. He very much valued and respected deeply the welcome and the personal support he received from both its Church communities of Tulla and Freshford where he enjoyed serving and attending to the needs of his parishioners until his unexpected passing.

In his role with Ossory Social Services and as Episcopal Vicar for Social and Family Affairs, over the years Kieron was involved in various capacities with organisations too numerous to mention, often as a founding member as with the Kilkenny Support Services for the Elderly, the Counselling Support for Schools (CSS), Kilkenny Meals on Wheels, the Good Shepherd Centre, the Tar Isteach Housing Association and the Kilkenny Voluntary Housing Association, and his

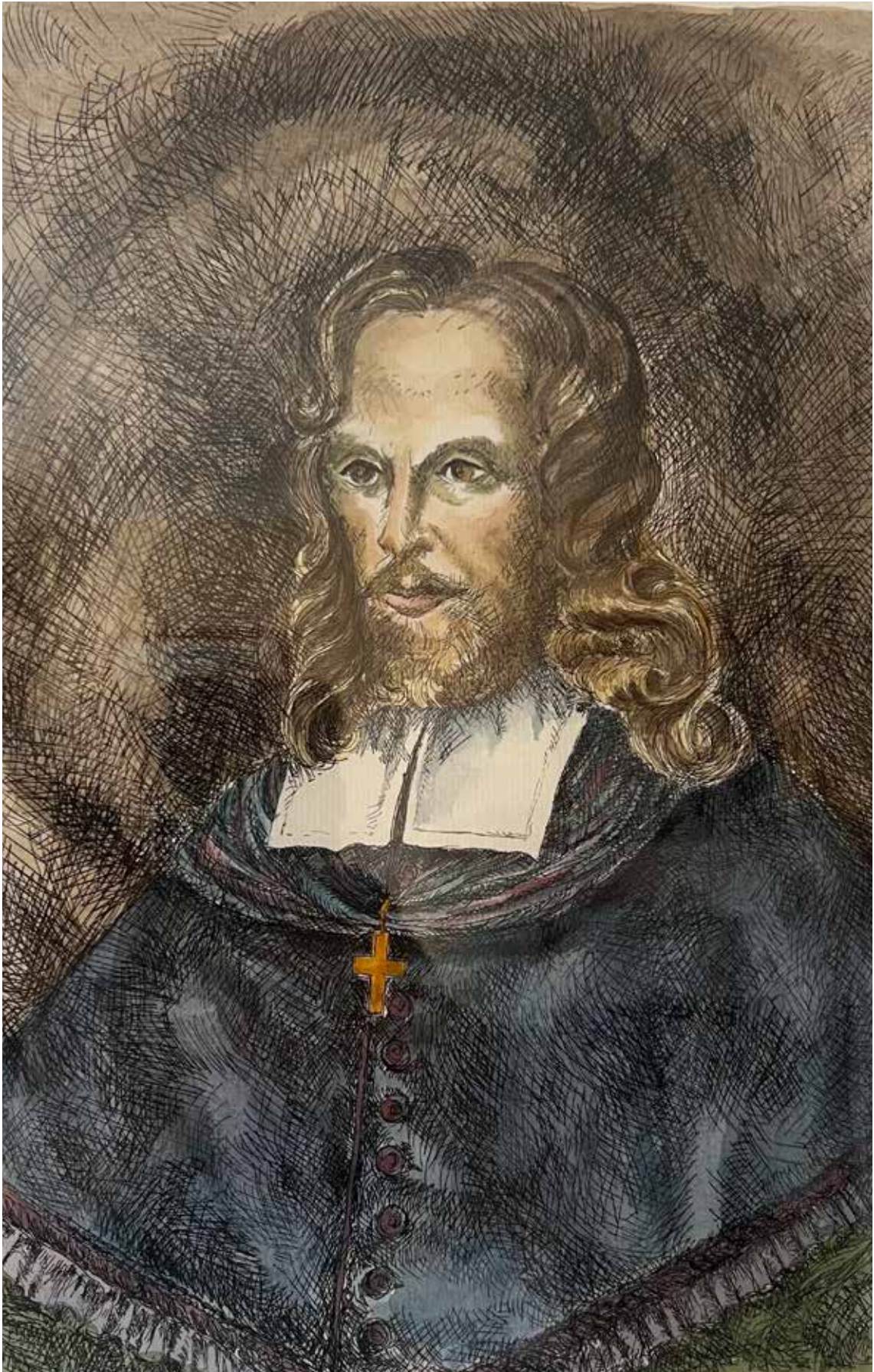
is a rich legacy of dedicated service. Furthermore, in his parish work and in his long association with St Kieran's College and through his involvement with numerous Diocesan Committees and organisations, he assisted so many in a respectful and dignified way.

Throughout his ministry, Kieron was driven by a strong sense of service and loyalty, even if it might mean that, on occasion, he could be unapologetically challenging and demanding of friends, family or colleagues alike, and some might say unrelenting at times in doing what he considered to be right and just. His work was characterised by an attention to detail and an insistence on high standards and structure, especially as it related to support for the marginalised, which he saw as intrinsic to the mission of the church, and his fifty-one years of ministry bore testimony to the motto of Ossory Social Services, 'Helping people to help themselves'.

It was fitting that at Kieron's Requiem Mass Most Rev. Niall Coll, Bishop of Ossory and priests, religious and people of the diocese, were joined by lifelong friends, Most Rev. William Crean, Bishop of Cloyne, who journeyed with Kieron since their student days in Rome, Most Rev. Jim Curry, Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster and Rt Rev. Monsignor Martin Hayes, Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Westminster, who were his friends and colleagues from his time in the Archdiocese, and by Sr Therese Gillis, Sister of Charity, his friend and co-worker from his early days at Ossory Social Services.

Kieron will be especially missed by his sisters Miriam and Dorothy, his brother Donal, brother-in-law Tim, beloved nieces and nephews Sarah and Daniel, Donal, David and Leah and sister-in-law Shelley.

I líonta Dé go gcastar sinn.



Twenty-four of Oliver's prison letters survive. They are among the greatest spiritual treasures possessed by the Irish church.



CHURCH MATTERS

St Oliver Plunkett

Albert McDonnell

This year we celebrate the fourth centenary of the birth of Saint Oliver Plunkett. He was born on 1 November 1625 and died a martyr for the faith on 1 July 1681. He was canonised by Pope Paul VI in 1975 when he became the first new Irish saint for almost seven hundred years.



The life stories of individual people are the building bricks of history. Oliver had an interesting and eventful life. He was born in Oldcastle, Co Meath to a land-owning Catholic family. In 1647, Oliver travelled to Rome where he studied at the Irish College on *Via degli Ibernese* (The Street of the Irish). The old college building still exists and the street has changed little over the centuries. He was ordained a priest on 1 January 1654 and remained in Rome teaching theology until his appointment as Archbishop of Armagh in 1669.

The situation of Catholics in Ireland varied a great deal during the seventeenth century. At times the harsh anti-Catholic laws were vigorously enforced and at other times de facto toleration prevailed. Oliver was ordained a bishop in Ghent (in current day Belgium) on 1 December 1669 and arrived in Armagh during March 1670. He ministered as Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland for nine years and nine months.

Oliver's written words provide a valuable insight into the man. Two hundred and thirty letters written by St Oliver survive.

Most were written to the Holy See in Rome reporting on the state of the Church in Ireland and the challenges he faced in his ministry. Italian is the dominant language. However, the letters have been translated into English and published by John Hanly together with an introduction by the late Cardinal Ó Fiaich. The ever-present fear of arrest by the English authorities is reflected in the fact that Oliver rarely placed his own name at the end of his letters relying on the expectation that those to whom he wrote would recognise his handwriting.

St Oliver lived and ministered in extremely difficult conditions. At times, fearing arrest he was forced into hiding. A great many Catholics had had their land and property confiscated and those who still held land were fearful. Civil unrest and violence were features of daily life. Peace-making was at the core of Oliver's ministry and he managed to persuade some of the perpetrators to lay down their arms. There were several localised famines. It is recorded that during the Ulster famine of 1674 Oliver offered to pawn his silver Roman candlesticks to buy bread for the hungry.

There were few priests in seventeenth-century Ireland. Many of them had received only a rudimentary formation. Some priests were among those forcibly transported to the West Indies to work on the sugar plantations. Several dioceses were vacant, or their bishop lived abroad for fear of the authorities. Finance was a problem. An improvised laity found it difficult to fund their church. There were also disputes, often concerning finance, among religious orders and between them and the diocesan clergy.

Oliver emerges from his letters as a busy, learned, saintly and resolute man. He sought to rebuild the shattered fabric of the Irish church. He travelled extensively not only in his own diocese and province but throughout the entire country. He was a reformer who demanded high standards of his clergy. Those who refused

his repeated invitations to abandon a unworthy style of life were deprived of office. He administered the sacrament of confirmation to over 10,000 adults and children. He worked to promote catholic education and opened schools in Drogheda. He understood the importance of structure and attended synods held to re-organise dioceses across the country. He suggested candidates for appointment as bishops. He favoured a reduction in the number of dioceses and proposed that the dioceses of Killaloe and Kilfenora be amalgamated.

In 1679 persecution intensified and a reward of £10 was offered for the arrest of a Catholic bishop. Archbishop Plunkett was arrested on 6 December 1679 and detained in Dublin castle. His first trial in Dundalk for treason collapsed. In October he was brought to London and his second trial resulted in his conviction on perjured evidence. His request for adequate time to bring witnesses and documents from Ireland to aid his defence was not accommodated. He was sentenced to a most cruel death by being hanged, drawn and quartered. He was fifty-five years old.

Twenty-four of Oliver's prison letters survive. They are among the greatest spiritual treasures possessed by the Irish church. The archbishop spent much of his time in prison in solitary confinement. He devoted most of this time alone to prayer inspired by scripture. Cardinal Ó Fiaich summaries his final letters in these words:

'It is in his final letters – from prison – that Oliver stands out naked in his saintliness, forgiving those who have brought him to his death, rewarding those who have been kind to him in a foreign capital, remembering the nephews and nieces for whom he felt responsible because of their father's illness, calmly looking forward to the moment when his soul will be united with God.'

Christ's presence in the world today —
a people sent, not alone, but together.

Together in Mission: A Synodal Collaboration of the Council of Priests and the Ossory Diocesan Pastoral Council

Dermot Ryan



On 27 September last, the Council of Priests and the Ossory Diocesan Pastoral Council (ODPC) gathered with Bishop Niall at St Kieran's College for a day of reflection, dialogue, and discernment. The gathering, facilitated wonderfully by Jim Deeds, with his unique style and gentle presence, was intended not just an exercise in some administrative coordination between these two bodies but rather a movement towards a greater embodiment of synodality as a

way of being Church in Ossory today. The goal, set for the day, was a renewal of the collaborations between these two bodies and a deepening sharing of our united mission. This is, as we noted, in the words of Pope Francis, early in our day "the path which God expects of the Church in the third millennium".

Rooted in the Mission of Christ

The day began with a clear sense of purpose. The scripture chosen, Luke

10:1–7, is the passage in which Jesus sends the seventy-two disciples in pairs, empowering them for mission together. Observing that the Lord sent workers, not alone, but together, we were reminded, at the outset, that all ministry – lay and ordained – is never the pursuit of some individual but rather always more fully a shared journey of faith when walked together. We were reminded too that it is Christ Himself who remains the centre of every synodal pathway – it is he who does the calling. It is he who sends.

Two Councils, One Mission

The day allowed all who gathered an opportunity to reflect on the distinct yet, obviously, complementary missions of the Diocesan Pastoral Council and the Council of Priests. While reflecting firstly in the company of their own groups, the dialogue quickly revealed a shared aspiration between the two councils to serve the Church's communion and mission in a coordinated way. It was noted, that, "when we are working well, we are working on the same issues". A recognition echoing the call of *Lumen Gentium* that the ordained ministry and the lay faithful, distinct in function yet united in purpose, build up one body when they are working together under one Spirit.

As the conversations deepened and the issues uniting the two groups were distilled, there was a recognition of the strength of a Church in which lay, religious, and clergy are well-resourced and empowered together: where pastoral areas are developed; communication strengthened; and ministries diversified. The dialogue leading to this was not abstract but deeply practical, expressed, as it was, through the emerging priorities that will hopefully now guide our ongoing commitment to pastoral renewal together.

As the day developed three core priorities were identified. These were not at the exclusion of others but merely

as a lightening rod for focus as we move forward. They were: Lay Pastoral Leadership; Adult Faith Formation; and ongoing Parish Pastoral Area Development.

Lay Pastoral Leadership

The development of lay leadership was seen as both a necessity for our Church today and a spiritual gift. The group warmly welcomed the ministry of Catechist instituted by Pope Francis and being brought to life in the Diocese now by Bishop Niall and spoke strongly of the continued need to promote this across our parishes and through the media, to ensure the selection of the most suitable candidates and, in time, the integration of this ministry into parish life. Training for Funeral Ministry, Baptism preparation, and other lay-led initiatives were also explored.

Faith Formation

Faith formation was also identified as a priority — for adults and, in particular, mention was made of teachers as a means of supporting them in their vital task of helping to form, in the faith, future generations. The proposals here included evening training for teachers, continued courses for adult faith formation, and the revitalisation of programmes such as Godly Play, Do This in Memory, MyFaith and other Sacramental preparations. Emphasis was also placed on evangelising through everyday encounters, finding, as one group noted, "moments where we come into contact with people who do not go to Church".

Pastoral Area Development

Finally, the gathering underscored the importance of continued support for, and the development of, the parish pastoral areas throughout the Diocese. There was a recommendation that each area might designate a key contact person to provide regular updates to their own area, fostering collaboration and shared learning between the pastoral areas

themselves. Training nights, newsletters, and improved administrative structures were also suggested, along with recognition of the “great work that has already been done”.

Our continued walking together in a synodal way...

Ossory has a long tradition of operating in a deeply synodal way. Sr Helen Maher who is coordinator of the Diocesan Forum, and members throughout the years of that Forum, countless chairs of the Diocesan Pastoral Council and the Council of Priests have worked tirelessly to ensure that the voice of all are heard and all are welcomed to partake in the mission of the Diocese - this day was but another step on strengthening us on that journey.

We concluded with some practical commitments: firstly, to the ongoing work of the Standing Committee of the two Councils to ensure a continued collaboration between both bodies; secondly, the sharing of agreed minutes between the two Councils to enhance dialogue and occasions for further collaboration; thirdly, the suggestion that on an annual basis a “regular” (normal) meeting, or two, be held together to allow a deeper union of the mission of these two groups.

This way of our walking together points to an horizon of hope: that through prayerful dialogue and shared discernment, all of us in the Church in Ossory may continue to be the sacrament of Christ's presence in the world today — a people sent, not alone, but together.

Prayers for the Pre-Synodal Assembly of the Catholic Church in Ireland

All Catholics are invited to pray for a special gathering that will take place this weekend in Kilkenny, called a Pre-Synodal Assembly of the Catholic Church in Ireland. This assembly is an important juncture on the journey towards a National Synodal Assembly to be held in 2026. Around 240 people will be in attendance and these are drawn from each diocese on the island, Religious Congregations and Church movements. A preparatory document, entitled *Baptised and Sent* - the fruits of listening sessions across Ireland last spring - will be the basis for discussion at this gathering, and for the next stage of the journey of renewal. Central to the document is a renewed focus on baptism as the foundation of our Christian dignity, unity, and mission and how baptism infuses the life and mission of the Church in Ireland today and into the future. You are invited to read this document by visiting www.synod.ie/baptised-and-sent-preparatory-document-available-now/

Please pray that the Holy Spirit will guide the conversations at Kilkenny, and those flowing from it, as we walk together as sisters and brothers of Christ, united by our baptism and filled with hope.





As we celebrate this special Anniversary in Slieverue we are reminded that we are not just a Church of the past but a vibrant and living Church of the present and future too.

Church of the Assumption, Slieverue

225th Anniversary

Fr Roderick Whearty P.P.

This year, 2025, is a particularly important and significant year for the people of Slieverue parish in South Kilkenny. This year the Church of the Assumption in Slieverue celebrates its 225th Anniversary. Replacing an earlier Church, the Church of the Assumption opened its doors in 1800 to the surrounding faithful population of Slieverue, Ferrybank and Glenmore. With the easing of the oppressive Penal Laws, the Church of the Assumption stood tall and proud as a real expression of Catholic revival in the early years of the nineteenth century. This new Church stood as a constant physical reminder of the strong enduring faith of the local Catholic population in this southern part of the Diocese of Ossory. In the dark days of famine, in times of conflict, this Church, in the heart of Slieverue village, stood as a constant reminder of God's perpetual presence in these times of struggle and conflict.

Though this beautiful and ancient Church and its surrounding Cemetery now speak of the passing of time, it also acts as a reminder of the good, faithful people whose shoulders we build on. In this time of celebration it is important that we remember the boys and girls, the men and women who walked these roads,

tilled these fields and who reared their families in these parts. We acknowledge their time here, the work they did, the sacrifices they made and the faith they kept. Though many of their names are now lost to history, we will forever be grateful for all they have left to us, especially our beautiful Church in Slieverue.

As we celebrate this special Anniversary in Slieverue we are reminded that we are not just a Church of the past but a vibrant and living Church of the present and future too. The lights flickering through the ancient windows of our Church act as a reminder to us that we too have a responsibility, duty and indeed a privilege to keep this light of faith burning brightly and to pass it on to the next generation. The people of Slieverue and the surrounding area are rightly very proud of their beautiful Church. As we today reap the benefits of all who have gone before us and as we celebrate today we acknowledge these past generations – their commitment, their faith and especially their resilience in times of hunger, conflict and the many challenges which came their way down through the past two hundred and twenty five years. We thank them.



The Slieverue Parish Pastoral Council were determined that this important milestone in our parish history should be suitably celebrated. It was important that all should in some way be engaged in this wonderful occasion. To this end the Parish Pastoral Council set about working on a series of events to mark this important occasion.

Firstly a Pilgrim Walk was organised. Carrying a lighted candle, the pilgrims made their way from the present Church in Slieverue to the ancient medieval Church of Rathpatrick, now almost entirely in ruins. Led by the light of the candle we were reminded of the strong link with the people of this ancient site down through the centuries. As we gathered and prayed we became more conscious of the strong and enduring faith of the people in this area.

Returning to Slieverue village we concluded our Pilgrim Walk with Benediction in the Church of the Assumption.

We are also a Church of the future. Nothing demonstrates this more than our

children and young people. During our week of celebrations pupils from our local primary schools in Slieverue and Ringville made their way to the parish Church. Here they were treated to a talk on the history of the Church of the Assumption as it celebrated its 225th Anniversary. It is hoped that these guardians of the faith into the future, deepened their knowledge of their local Church and hopefully also deepen their faith and their love for their local parish and Church.

It was also decided to have a Music and Song evening in the Church as a way of raising our voices to God in thanksgiving. A wonderful evening of music and song was had by all. The Slieverue Parish Choir, Simply Singing, Pupils from 5th & 6th Class, the Sacred Heart Church Ferrybank Choir and Ferrybank Folk Choir along with the Kilkenny Gospel Choir all came together to provide the evening's entertainment. A wonderful and fitting salute to our forebearers for their steadfast faith.

Finally on Sunday the 28th September Bishop Niall Coll was the main celebrant for our Mass of Thanksgiving, in the Church of the Assumption at 10.30am.



Led by local piper, Paul Burke and the parish choir, our celebration was truly a wonderful occasion. Our Mass was indeed a reflection of the day and joy of all involved in our celebrations.

At the conclusion of our Mass, Bishop Coll and the congregation proceeded to bless our newly erected Memorial to Babies who have died before, during and after birth. In this Year of Hope, this memorial stands as a reminder that even though these babies time with us was short, their impact on our lives will never

be forgotten. We will always remember them.

After the blessing of the Memorial stone, the congregation were invited to the local parish hall, St Mary's, for some light refreshments.

We give thanks to God for all that has been. We thank God for the priests and people of Slieverue – their commitment, service and faith. We look to the future with enduring hope and trust knowing that God is with us. God bless us all.





Why Sunday Matters

An invitation to reflect on Sunday Mass

As we journey through this Jubilee Year of Hope, we, the Irish Bishops, warmly invite all Catholics to reflect on the immense significance of Sunday Mass and, for those who have not yet done so, to return with renewed joy to the celebration of the Eucharist.

Sunday has always been the day of the Lord: the day of resurrection, the day of rest, the day of Eucharist. From the very beginning of our Christian faith, Sunday has been central to the life of the Church and remains the heart of Christian practice. It is on this day that we gather as a community, united in our love for Christ, to encounter the risen Lord and be nourished in body and soul.



Sunday Mass, St Clare's Church, Graiguecullen, Carlow

The Mass is not just a ritual, it is the source and summit of our faith. It is where we encounter Christ in His living presence, and it is through the Eucharist that we are strengthened to live as true disciples. Attending Mass on Sundays, or its vigil on Saturday evening, is not just an obligation; it is a profound privilege and a chance to experience God's love in a deeply personal way. As we come to this sacred celebration let us do so with hearts full of gratitude for the precious gift of Christ's presence among us.

How can you enrich your experience of Mass and make it a central part of your life?

How can young people best engage in our Sunday celebration?

Our invitation to reflect on Sunday Mass is presented through the lens of Synodality – Communion, Participation, and Mission – reminding us that the Eucharist is not just a personal encounter with Christ but also a communal experience that unites us all as the People of God. For deeper reflection, we have also provided thoughtful questions at the end of this message to guide your prayers and meditations.

Why Sunday Matters: Sunday Mass creates and celebrates **Communion**

What does it mean for you to have a real encounter with Jesus in the Mass?
What could it mean?



Sunday Mass is a vital encounter with the risen Lord, the One who gives our lives ultimate meaning and purpose. Through our baptism we bear the name 'Christian'. This identity shapes who we are and calls us to follow Jesus, who is 'the way, the truth, and the life' (*John 14:6*). Through the celebration of Sunday Mass, we experience a life-giving encounter and **communion** with Christ. Just as the two disciples encountered Jesus on the road to Emmaus and recognised Him in the breaking of the bread (*Luke 24:35*), so too we meet Him in the Eucharist.

Our identity as Christians is not solitary but shared. On Sundays, we gather not only as individuals but as the Church; the Body of Christ. In the celebration of the Eucharist, we affirm our communion with one another and with Christ. Pope Saint John Paul II emphasised that 'none is as vital or as community-forming as the Sunday celebration of the Lord's day and His Eucharist.' This gathering creates a bond of unity, solidarity, and love, as we come together to worship as one body, with one voice, in praise of God.

Why Sunday Matters: an invitation to **Participate**

The journey of faith often comes with its own set of challenges. Many, particularly the younger generation, feel disconnected from the Church due to past abuses and how these were addressed. Alongside this, the pressures of modern life, the increasing levels of anxiety and mental health difficulties – especially among young people – together with the lingering effects of the pandemic, have contributed to a sense of distance from the Church. However, Sunday Eucharist continues to be a source of hope, life, and profound meaning. It invites us to **participate** in the celebration of Christ's death and resurrection, the Paschal Mystery. In this sacred celebration, we have the opportunity to be transformed, to receive God's grace, and to become the best versions of ourselves. As we navigate life, with all its joys and struggles, the Eucharist offers us the community and support we need to flourish and grow in faith.

How can the scriptures proclaimed at Mass inspire us to love as Jesus loved?



Mass is not just a personal act of devotion; it is a communal act of worship. We go to God together. The Sunday Mass is where the Church is most visibly alive, and where every member of the community plays an essential role. Each person's participation is needed for the Church to truly live. It is important to gather physically for Mass, and although technology is helpful, it can never replace the tangible experience of being with the community as we listen to God's word and receive the Body of Christ. We invite you to consider how your presence at Mass can contribute to making the Church visible and alive.



Sunday Mass at Mount St Alphonsus Church, Limerick

We are deeply thankful to priests and all those who gather to celebrate Mass. Special gratitude goes to those involved in liturgical ministries, such as Ministers of the Word, of Holy Communion, Music Ministers, Sacristans, and Altar Servers. Encouraging the return of young people as Altar Servers is especially important and should be actively supported by their families and parish. The involvement of young people brings vitality to the liturgy and contributes hugely to their own faith formation.

Why Sunday Matters: Sunday Mass makes us **Missionaries**

The Sunday Mass is not only a time for worship but also for mission. Having listened to God's word and received the gift of Christ's Body and Blood, we are sent to live out our faith in the world as **missionaries**; sent to share the love of Christ with others. As we participate in the Sunday Mass, we receive not only spiritual nourishment but also the strength to live out our Christian mission in daily life.

How does your participation in Sunday Mass inspire you to live out your mission as a follower of Christ?

As the late Pope Francis reminded us, 'We do not go to Mass in order to give something to God, but to receive what we truly need from Him. In this spirit, we are called to approach the Eucharist not out of obligation, but with a deep desire for spiritual transformation.' This is why attending Mass on Sundays is so vital – it nurtures and nourishes our faith and prepares us for the mission to which we are called. We invite you to reflect on how your participation in Sunday Mass helps you to live as a missionary disciple, bringing the hope and joy of the Gospel to those around you, and to the world at large.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, many Catholics have faced challenges attending Mass due to health concerns. For those still unable to attend, the Church offers Communion to the sick and housebound. For those who can, it's time to return and celebrate the Eucharist together. While virtual options have helped, they can't replace the in-person experience of communal worship. Returning to Mass strengthens us as the Body of Christ, sharing in the sacred celebration.



Reflecting on our Sunday Mass

The purpose of this message is to encourage you to reflect on what is special about Sunday and what it means to you, and, if you no longer attend, to consider returning to Mass. How can you enrich your experience of Mass and make it a central part of your life?

We invite individuals, families, and parish groups to reflect on the following questions and to consider how you can contribute to a more vibrant and welcoming celebration of Sunday Mass in your community.



Photo: John McElroy

Easter Sunday Mass in St Mary's Pro-Cathedral, Dublin 2025

Questions for personal and/or family reflection

- How can I enrich my experience of Mass and make it a central part of my life?
- Is this message calling me to any change in how I spend my Sunday?
- How can I best engage more young people in our celebration?
- Who can I share this message and its contents with?

Questions for Parish Leadership, Liturgy Groups, Parish Pastoral Councils and other Ministry Groups

- What makes our Sunday celebration alive?
- Why do we think people in our parish go to Mass, or do not?
- Can we do more to explain and offer catechesis on the Sunday Mass?
- Do visitors feel welcome into our celebrations? Can we be more social?
- How can we be more welcoming to those who have found it difficult to return to Mass since the pandemic?
- What can we do in our local parish to help bring about a richer celebration of Sunday Mass for all ages?
- What has been the impact of online Masses on our parish celebration?
- Do we need to review Mass times or the number of weekend Masses?



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... priests from the Global South to come for a period to the West are at their most fruitful when they arise as the result of agreements between the respective bishops and dioceses involved.

Collaboration between the Dioceses of Ossory and Damongo, Ghana

✠ Niall Coll



The annual formation course for new bishops - often referred to, tongue in cheek, as 'the baby bishops' course' - which I attended in September 2023, some months after my episcopal ordination, one of those who addressed us was the Filipino Cardinal, Luis Tagle, the Prefect of the Vatican Dicastery of Evangelisation. In his memorable speech, he spoke at length, in line with the direction set by the late Pope

Francis, about the urgency of the Church everywhere realising that it is called to an evangelising mission. Turning his attention to the Western world, he noted both the effects of secularisation in terms of decreasing levels of church attendance and the increasingly multicultural nature of parishes throughout the West.

Underlining the Catholicity of the Church, Cardinal Tagle urged that there be

greater bonds of communion between what is often termed 'the old churches' of the West and the 'young ones' of the Global South. In particular, he urged Western dioceses to consider hosting priests from the developing world for a few years to give them an experience of church life here to help them develop expertise in facing issues which we have been encountering but which have yet to become as prominent in their countries. He pointed to matters like ministry in a secular context, developing parish finance councils and pastoral councils, safeguarding and developing structures for greater parish financial accountability. He also emphasised that the host dioceses would be enriched by the priests bringing to 'the old churches' something of their typical exuberance and freshness in terms of their approaches to evangelisation, liturgy, catechesis and so many other dimensions of life and ministry.

Cardinal Tagle was clear that individual priests should only be here in the West for a time and that after a term of say five years they should return to their home dioceses to enrich them by sharing their experience of the Western church and general culture. Moreover, he insisted that experience has taught that arrangements for priests from the Global South to come for a period to the West are at their most fruitful when they arise as the result of agreements between the respective bishops and dioceses involved, rather than a more loosely structured arrangement between a particular priest and parish.

I give you this background to help you understand better why I, following consultation with the Council of Priests, the Ossory Diocesan Pastoral Council and other Irish dioceses, decided to invite the bishop of the Ghanian diocese of Damongo to send two priests to us here in Ossory. Please note that I do not see this step as being merely about our attempting to fill gaps caused by

the declining numbers of priests here in Ossory, but it is undeniable that we certainly need more priests here. The need to promote vocations at home has lost nothing of its urgency.

A word about why the arrangement is being made with the diocese of Damongo. Both its bishop, Peter Paul Yelezuome Angkyier and I were delegates at another conference in Rome in 2024 which brought together bishops from both the Catholic and Anglican traditions (IARCCUM). On the fringes of that meeting, both Bishop Peter Paul and I decided that we would give consideration as to whether we might collaborate on his sending two priests to us in Ossory for a time. Then, in January last (2025) I spent a week in Ghana with Bishop Peter Paul, visiting many of his parishes and meeting clergy, people and religious. Based on that time together and our discussions we agreed that our respective Dioceses would enter into a formal collaboration.

All of this means that next week two Damongo priests, Fr Paul Tanko Kasu and Fr Felix Bonkaandaie Kuulare will come for periods of three to four years to work here in Ossory. Both have extensive experience in pastoral ministry and in holding offices of responsibility in their diocese: one has just stepped down as Administrator of the local Cathedral, St Anne's Cathedral, and the other has served in parishes and as vice rector of the junior seminary. Both will be appointed to Kilkenny City parishes as it was felt that an urban environment, at least for their first year here, would be more conducive. It is envisaged that after both Fr Paul and Fr Felix return home that they will be replaced by other Damongo priests and that our collaboration, God willing, will continue thereafter. I ask that you give them a warm welcome and support in whatever way you can throughout their time among us.

...these young people have shown that they have gone beyond themselves in serving their parishes and the wider communities.

John Paul II Award 2025

Gemma Mulligan

On Sunday, October 19th, 2025, thirty-three young people will receive the John Paul II Award at a special ceremony in St Mary's Cathedral. This marks the second year of the Award since its reintroduction to the Diocese of Ossory in 2023, following the global Covid-19 pandemic.

These young people have shown outstanding commitment to their parishes and to the wider community. They serve as Ministers of the Eucharist and Ministers of the Word, and many are active members of their parish choirs. Their generosity of spirit is also evident through their involvement in local charities such as St Vincent de Paul, the Jack and Jill Foundation, Enable Ireland, and the Annual Shoebox Appeal.

Beyond their parish commitments, they contribute greatly to community and sporting life — assisting with underage training, blitzes, and camps. They have also helped raise funds for worthy causes through cycling and running events, cake sales, tractor runs, and clothes recycling initiatives. Many of the award recipients have taken part in diocesan liturgies and pilgrimages to Lourdes, Medjugorje, Knock Shrine, and Taizé, deepening their faith and strengthening their sense of belonging within the wider Church.

In his message for the 40th World Youth Day, Pope Leo XIV recently reminded young people that “our deepest questions are not heard or answered by endlessly scrolling on our cell phones, which captures our attention but leaves

us with tired minds and empty hearts,” he said, adding that “The fulfilment of our authentic desires always comes through going beyond ourselves.”

In receiving their Awards on Sunday 19th October from Bishop Coll, these young people have shown that they have gone beyond themselves in serving their parishes and the wider communities. They stand as inspiring witnesses of faith, hope, and love in action within our Church and community. Huge congratulations to all the young people and their families, parishes and school leaders who support their participation in the Award.

Applications are now open for the 2025-2016 Award and encouraged by Bishop Niall Coll, Bishop of Ossory who notes that “It is a well-established fact that those who enter truly into the spirit of the Award are likely to grow greatly as people by demonstrating commitment to working with and for others, setting goals and fulfilling tasks. This helps them to be better Christians and citizens, people more able to care for others, enhancing their own sense of personal wellbeing and achievement”.

Through their dedication and service, these young people embody the message of Pope John Paul II written on the back of their Award medals: “Trust Christ: listen attentively to his teachings, fix your eyes on his face, persevere in listening to his Word. Allow him to focus your search and your aspirations, all your ideas and the desires of your heart”.

Biodiversity isn't just a technical term.
It's about the balance of life itself.



MORALITY MATTERS

Give me a crash course in ... Ash Dieback and Biodiversity

Michael Shortall

The evenings are drawing in again. Have you noticed how the seasons are shifting?

I was out for a walk the other day, I saw gaps in the hedgerows where trees used to stand.

Those bare patches? That could be Ash Dieback. It's a disease that's been devastating ash trees across Europe. Its now here in Ireland too.

Ash dieback? I've heard the name, but I don't know much about it.

It was first noticed in Eastern Europe in 1992 – Poland, then the Baltic States. The first signs were dark patches on the leaves during the summer, then dieback of the shoots and long gashes in the bark. Slowly, the ash trees began to wither and die.

So what was causing it?

It took fifteen years to identify the culprit: a tiny fungus called *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*. Spores travel on the wind for miles. When they land on a leaf, stick, and then grow into the tree. Inside the tree it blocks the tree's water system. Eventually, the tree cannot survive.

And it has reached Ireland?

Yes. It was first detected here in October 2012. It's spread quickly since. Experts say we could lose up to 80% of our ash trees. That would be devastating – not just

for our woodlands but for Irish culture too. Think of the ash hurley, the farmer's field boundaries, the parish lanes lined with ash. All of that is under threat.¹

That's alarming. What you've described is more than a forestry problem. It is a warning about biodiversity. Biodiversity is the sheer variety of life that sustains us. Pope Francis once said: "Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know... because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God" (*Laudato Si*, para 33).

So ash dieback is part of a bigger picture?

Exactly. Biodiversity isn't just a technical term. It's about the balance of life itself. When one species is destroyed, the effects ripple outwards. Losing ash affects wildlife, the landscape we love, and the communities whose culture and economy are tied to it.

But trees come and go, don't they? Why treat this as a moral issue?

Because our faith insists that creation is to be exploited recklessly. The Catechism is clear:

the seventh commandment enjoins respect for the integrity of creation. Animals, like plants and inanimate beings, are by nature destined for the common good of past, present, and





Ordination Tree, St Kieran's College

future humanity. Man's dominion ... is limited by concern for the quality of life of his neighbour, including generations to come; it requires a religious respect for the integrity of creation. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, para 2415).

In other words, creation is gift. We are stewards, not owners. When we allow biodiversity to collapse, through neglect or greed, we betray that responsibility.

So it's a question of justice too?

Yes. Think about the common good. When biodiversity is lost, the poorest suffer most. Farmers and others lose recourse. Future generations inherit a poorer, more fragile earth. Even hurler makers see their tradition threatened.

What would Pope Francis call that?

He would call it "integral ecology." Everything is connected. To care for the ash is to care for the people and creatures linked to it. To lose biodiversity is to unravel part of the web of life on which we all depend.

We are currently in a scientific race to find a 'cure' for ash dieback itself. But isn't there more?

Yes, we can plant native species, protect hedgerows, support biodiversity programmes, and resist the throwaway culture that fuels environmental damage. More deeply, we can change our spiritual attitude. We can see nature not as resource but as revelation. Psalm says: "The earth is the Lord's, and all it holds." To care for creation is to honour God.

That makes it sound like the death of the ash is a kind of parable.

Yes, and a painful one. Ash dieback shows us how fragile creation is, how interconnected our lives are with it, and how urgent our call to stewardship has become. If we learn from it, perhaps we can protect other parts of creation before it's too late.

So the lesson is that biodiversity is not a luxury.

Precisely. It's a necessity. To safeguard biodiversity is to protect human dignity, to strengthen the common good, and to give glory to God.

Happy autumn to all the readers of the *Ossory Times*. May the falling leaves remind us not only of loss, but of our call to cherish the beauty of creation.

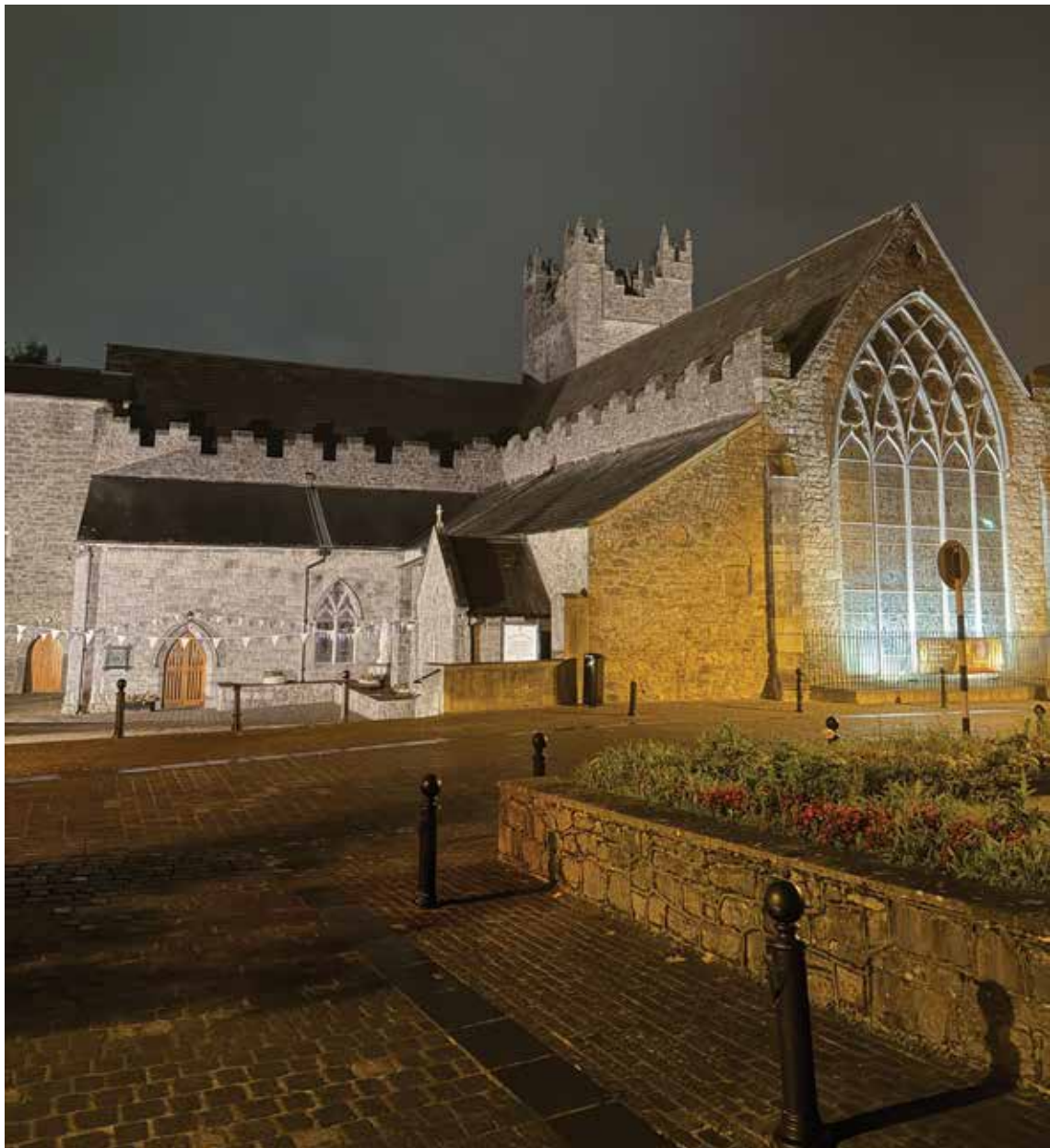
1. <https://teagasc.ie/crops/forestry/advice/forest-protection/ash-dieback/>



During those 800 years the Dominicans of the Black Abbey have served the people of Kilkenny City and beyond.

Ray Cleere

The Black Abbey serving Kilkenny for 800 years



Situated in the heart of the Diocese of Ossory, the oldest diocese in Ireland dating back to the fifth century, is one of the oldest churches in Ireland, the historic "Black Abbey." Founded 800 years ago in 1225 the history of the Black Abbey is marked by several reversals of fortune under different governments. The official title is "Abbey of the Most Holy Trinity", but it is known locally as the Black Abbey. It was to the Blessed Trinity that the Black Abbey was dedicated, and the symbolic piece of statuary in a recess in one of the walls of the church dates from the earliest days of the Dominicans in Kilkenny. It is one of the very few churches from very ancient days in possession of Catholics and in which Catholics gather round the Blessed Sacrament.

The Black Abbey derives its name from the black cappa or cloak which the Dominicans wore over their white habits during the Middle Ages, nor is it the only place in Kilkenny or elsewhere which preserves traces of them: Friar's Bridge, Black Bridge, Black Mill and Black Mill Street, all in the immediate vicinity.

There are many churches in Ireland as old as the Black Abbey, but they are historic ruins. The Black Abbey is the only original Dominican foundation in Ireland still in use after 800 years. For almost 300 years it flourished in a climate of peace and tolerance. There is a pre-reformation statue of St Dominic. It was carved from Irish oak before Henry VIII was born. It is the oldest known Irish oak statue of St Dominic. The features were scarred by the swords of the Cromwellian soldiers, and the arms were cut off at the shoulders. The remaining marks from the hacking of the Cromwellian soldiers swords are still visible.

St Dominic founded the Dominican Order more than 800 years ago. Eight years after his death in 1221, the Order he founded numbered 562 convents. The Black Abbey in Kilkenny City was founded 800 years ago in 1225 by William Marshall the younger (1190-1231), Earl

of Pembroke. Kilkenny was the third Dominican foundation in Ireland after Dublin and Drogheda in 1224.

The Black Abbey is situated in a valley beneath the shadows of St Mary's and of St Canice's Cathedrals. Beside it flows a small but very treacherous river called the Bregagh which once formed the two divisions of the City : Irishtown and Englishtown. It was 270 years old when Christopher Columbus sailed from Spain on his first voyage of discovery. It was more than 600 years old when the nearby St Mary's Cathedral was built. The Black Abbey is served today, as it was then, by members of the very old Order of St Dominic. When it is full to capacity the Black Abbey has seating accommodation for approximately 700 people.

At the entrance on the left are 10 stone coffins and slabs which were found during excavations. They belong to the 13th or 14th centuries. Three of them have inscriptions in Lombardic style asking for prayers for Robert de Sardalove, Walter Clancy and a Kilkenny merchant whose name is indecipherable. The 15th alabaster statue of the Holy Trinity was found in a wall where it was hidden for centuries.

The "Rosary Window"

The Black Abbey is a wonderful piece of history. Entering into the tranquillity of within, it is meditative and moving. Its most impressive feature is the wonderful five-light "Rosary Window". Its size and beauty are amazing. Its stonework was found almost intact at the restoration of the Church in the 19th century. Constructed in 1892 by Mayer and Company, Munich, Germany, it is the largest stained-glass window in Ireland and the last major work done in Ireland during the first half of the 14th century.

Lustrous stained glass shows fifteen panels depicting the five Joyful Mysteries on the bottom row; the five Sorrowful Mysteries above; and the five Glorious Mysteries

on top. The window clearly predates the addition of the five Luminous Mysteries by Pope John Paul II. The "Rosary Window" fills almost the entire south gable of the 14th century transept. It extends from the roof to the floor, holds almost 500 square feet of glass, and comprises 10,000 pieces of stained glass. It was a gift from Mr. John Hudson.

A major benefactor in Kilkenny City at the time John Hudson, (1804 – 1892), donated many gifts to the churches in the city. He provided the main altar in the Black Abbey in 1863 and the magnificent "Rosary Window" in the same church in 1892. John Hudson was buried under the same "Rosary Window" in the Black Abbey along with his wife, Anastasia, who predeceased him on January 11th, 1891.

800 years of memories

The Black Abbey was founded 800 years ago in 1225 by William Marshall the younger (1190 – 1231), Earl of Pembroke. He died in 1231 and according to legend he was buried in the Black Abbey. His brother, Richard Marshall was buried in the choir of the Black Abbey when he died of a battle wound in 1234.

In 1244 Geoffrey de Turville became Bishop of Ossory. In 1247 he granted by charter to the Dominicans of the Black Abbey the right of conveying from St Kenny's Well to their house as much water as would pass through a conduit at the well; that the circumference of the pipe at the well was no greater than that of the Bishop's ring, and that the outlet at the Black Abbey might easily be stopped by the tip of a man's little finger.

In 281 a Provincial Chapter was held in the Black Abbey. Further Provincial Chapters were held in 1302, 1306 and in 1346. In 1348 the community within the Black Abbey was affected by the terrible plague known as the Black Death which carried away approximately a third of the population of Europe. In less than three months between Christmas 1348

and March 6th, 1349, no less than eight Dominicans died in the Black Abbey. After the plague years, very few structural changes were carried out at the priory up until the end of the 15th century.

In 1487, Oliver Cantwell became Bishop of Ossory. He died on January 9th, 1526, and was buried in the Black Abbey. In 1507 the enormous tower of the Black Abbey, which still stands, was completed. It was built at the expense of James Shortall. There is an inscription in Latin on the base of the North Chancel arch, asking for "prayers for James Shortall, Lord of Ballylarkin and Ballykeeffe, and for his wife, Catherine White, who paid for the building of this tower". Their tomb can be seen in the nearby St Canice's Cathedral.

In 1543 King Henry VIII closed all the monasteries in Ireland. The Dominicans were forced to leave the Black Abbey and find places to stay in other houses. Their property was confiscated and the Black Abbey was turned into a courthouse. For the next 60 years the Black Abbey resembled a church only on the outside. In 1603 the citizens of Kilkenny seized the Black Abbey and returned it to the Dominicans. The community of three priests were protected by the citizens of Kilkenny but were again driven out by English forces.

Confederation of Kilkenny

In 1643 during the period of the Confederation of Kilkenny (1642 – 1649), the Dominicans again took possession of, and repaired the Black Abbey, and recovered its former splendour. During that period the Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Giovanni Battista Rinuccini, ordained Dominican students in the Black Abbey.

But that great effort did not last long. In March 1650, the English army under the command of Oliver Cromwell took Kilkenny in a siege. Many people died from epidemic and hunger, and many more fled before the city finally surrendered. The Cromwellians went to

the Black Abbey, broke the windows, the statues of the Saints, defaced all sacred images, pulled down the altars, and scattered destruction through the church. Those who happened to be in the church were murdered. A lieutenant of Oliver Cromwell, a Colonel Axtell sat in judgement at the high altar and judged and condemned to death every creature the soldiers captured. But he could not find any trace of the Dominicans who were in hiding locally. Only the walls and the tower were left standing. A bell, cast in 1647, was removed from the tower and taken to Market House in Dunlavin in County Wicklow.

In 1678 five Dominicans were in the Black Abbey. In 1744 the Dominicans in residence in the priory were dispersed by Magistrates although they were allowed to stay in Kilkenny doing parochial work for the secular clergy. In 1775 the original choir fell into ruin, and the stones were used to construct two-storey living quarters for the Dominican friars. That structure was used for 120 years. In 1778 Fr Laurence Shaw roofed and glazed the transept.

By 1776, the community of the Black Abbey was close to zero, but at the beginning of that year, the Dominicans retook possession of the Abbey, first by restoring it. In 1816, 40 years later, the Black Abbey was restored as a Dominican priory. On February 9th, 1816, Fr John Gavin, a Dominican, celebrated Mass in the Black Abbey. It was the first public Mass celebrated in the Black Abbey in 166 years since the Cromwellians took Kilkenny City in 1650.

On Trinity Sunday, May 22nd, 1864, the Black Abbey was reconsecrated by the Bishop of Ossory at the time, Edward Walsh, and was finally opened again as a house of prayer. In 1894 the new priory was built next to the Black Abbey.

On August 2nd, 1925, 100 years ago, the Black Abbey celebrated its 700th anniversary with the return of an ancient bell. The bell, which had been in use in

Dunlavin Town Hall, in County Wicklow, for 200 years, was presented to the then Mayor of Kilkenny, Senator Peter de Loughry, and replaced in the Black Abbey tower.

Floods

As far as can be remembered the Black Abbey was flooded every three or four years between November and March. In the flood of 1931, the entire church was submerged to a depth of six feet. Worse followed in 1940 when the water in the church reached the sacristy, and Mass had to be celebrated in the priory library. In November 1944, a few people who received Holy Communion had to wade to the altar rails. On St Patrick's Eve, Sunday, March 16th, 1947, Kilkenny City was destroyed by the greatest flood in living memory. The flood rose to ten feet in the church, burst in the hall-door of the priory, rose four steps up the main staircase and reached table height in the library, refectory and in the kitchen. Such was the force of the water that it ripped the Stations of the Cross off the walls. The Black Abbey was closed for three weeks afterwards. A native of Dunmore, in Kilkenny, Bishop Thomas Hendricken was a generous benefactor to many worthy causes. He donated £200 to the flood relief scheme in the Black Abbey.

In 1975, 50 years ago, the Black Abbey celebrated its 750th anniversary. The church underwent a major restoration and on February 11th, 1979, the restored Black Abbey was blessed by Bishop Peter Birch, then Bishop of Ossory.

800th anniversary

On Sunday, June 15th, 2025, Kilkenny's Black Abbey was full to capacity for a special Mass to celebrate its 800th anniversary in Kilkenny. The Mass was celebrated by Bishop Niall Coll, Bishop of Ossory. During those 800 years the Dominicans of the Black Abbey have served the people of Kilkenny City and beyond.

Vocations in Ossory

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

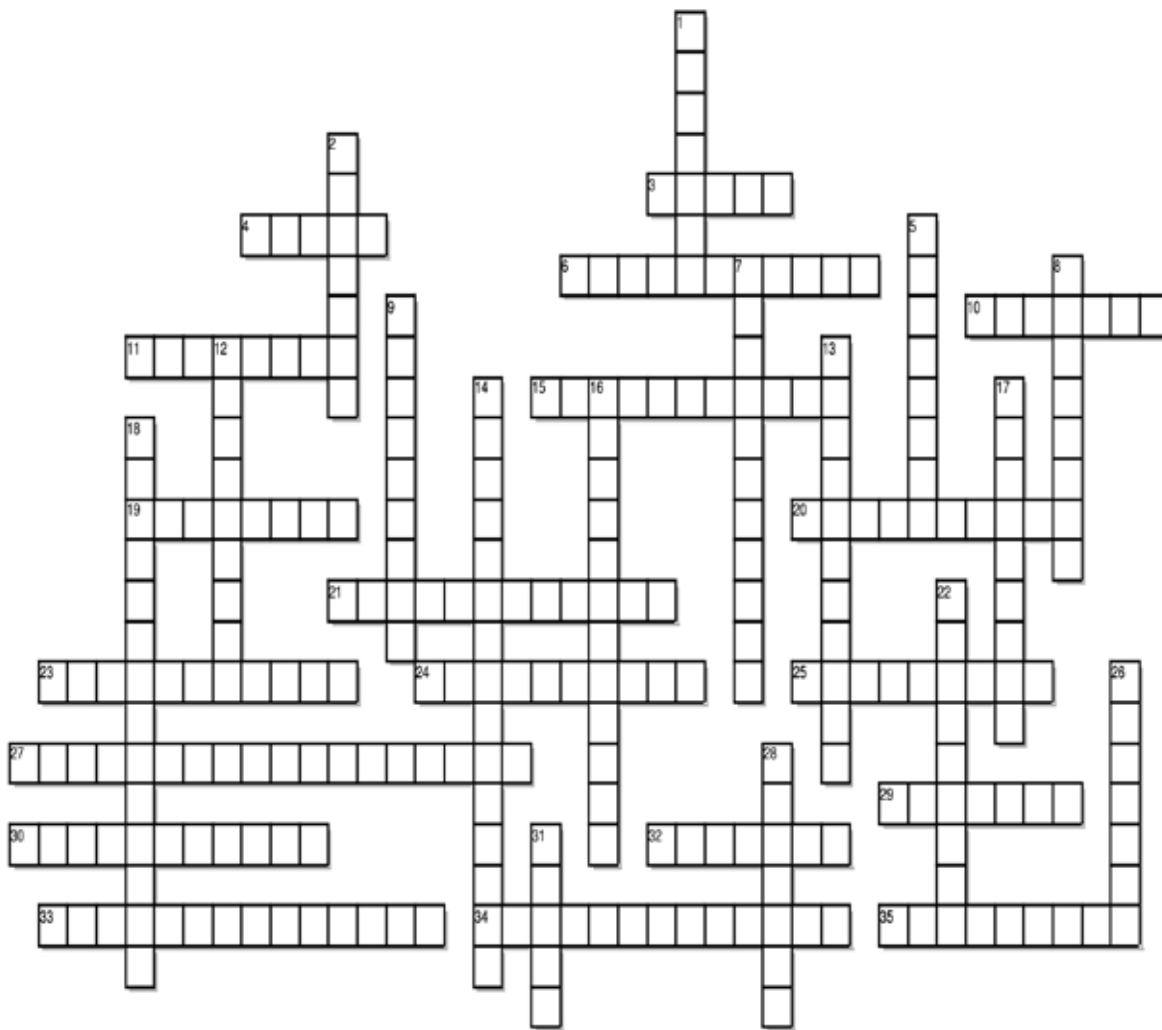
How do I know what life path
I should take?

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



Contact
FR MARK CONDON
VOCATIONS DIRECTOR
vocations@ossory.ie

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 3 Rite in the Catholic Church
 4 In terris
 6 Church teaching authority
 10 Paul wrote him a letter
 11 The road to
 15 An end to Mass
 19 Creed
 20 The ate what was forbidden
 21 Giving the Gifts of the Spirit
 23 Reasoned defence of the faith
 24 Retreat Centre in Wexford
 25 Carlo Acutis had a devotion to this
 27 Change that occurs at Mass
 29 Those Jesus came to call
 30 First Christian Roman Emperor
 32 From here Fr Paul and Fr Felix have come to us
 33 Change of heart and a return to God
 34 Gospel in a local context

35 Mother church

DOWN

- 1 Pope was prefect of this Dicastery
 2 Pope Leo
 5 Final coming of Christ
 7 Dillexi te was an Apostolic one of these
 8 At this time we remember our dead
 9 An epistle
 12 Order of St - think Pope Leo
 13 Site for St Kevin
 14 Helps plan activities and areas of focus for the Diocese
 16 The process of recognising a Saint
 17 Carlo Acutis was one - Pope Francis made it a stable ministry
 18 Spreading the Good News
 22 Type of Deacon
 26 This journey takes its next steps in our midst in these days
 28 The Roman...
 31 Religious offshoots

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 10th November 2025 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 38 competitions:*

Adult Crossword:
 Peggy Fitzgerald

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

**Children's Colouring,
 age 5-8:**
 Oliver Kenny

Colouring Competition



Wordsearch Competition



For ages 8-13

- WORDSEARCH -

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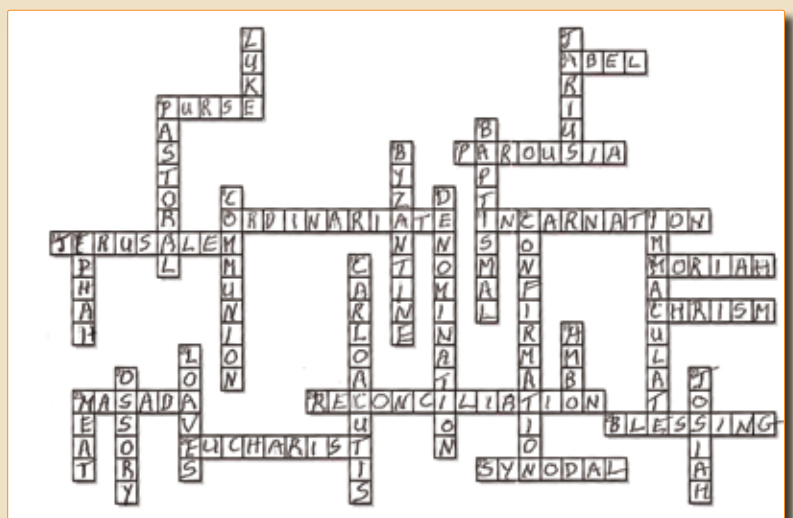
WORD LIST

APOSTLE	HEROD	LAMB	ROMANS
CHRIST	JAMES	LUKE	SERMON
CROSS	JESUS	MARK	SPIRIT
GOSPEL	JOHN	PAUL	TEMPLE
GRACE	KINGDOM	PETER	TITUS

Answers to Ossory Times Issue 38



Answers to Ossory Times Issue 38





ONLINE PARISH PROGRAMME OF PREPARATION

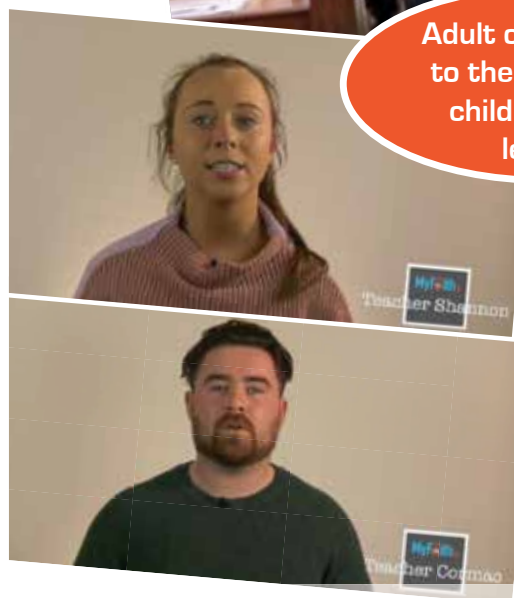
Reconciliation First Holy Communion Confirmation

- Recorded Lessons for Parents and Children, each step of the journey
- Encourages weekly Mass attendance
- Sunday by Sunday Workbook to encourage active participation
- Lent and Easter Workbooks
- Resources for monthly parish meetings to support the children
- Prepare for the Sacraments in a fun and interactive way

Teacher-led online
interactive classes for the
children with games and
challenges for each module



Adult online section
to support the
children in their
learning



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for the **Sacraments of First Holy Communion & Confirmation**



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HOW TO BOOK

To book, a 300 euro non-refundable deposit per person is due.
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