



Inside this issue

Apostolic Milestones

The Fifteenth Station

Catholic Schools Week

When the Trocaire Boxes were distributed at the start of Lent you may have read the page attached to the envelope. It gave details of studies in the parish and opportunities for prayer during Lent. The studies were on the theme of the last days of Jesus before his suffering, death and resurrection. Our gratitude goes to the parishioners who prepared and presented those courses. They share an ambition of many of us to promote a better understanding of the Words of God – words which we always hear during the liturgies of Holy Week and Easter Sunday. As Saint Jerome (d.420) wrote “Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.” After the disruption of the Coronavirus, we will continue our scripture study.



In the bible readings at Mass during Lent so far we listened to God calling us to be sincere; to love our faith and to live it from the heart. This Easter, at the great Easter Vigil, thousands of adults throughout the world will still receive baptism and take their place among the faithful. In many cases the courageous people taking this step had to make sacrifices. One person said after his baptism he had the best night's sleep he ever had! Others risk persecution and even death because of their faith. Christianity is the most persecuted faith in the world. The converts followed a process called the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). We have to admire their sense of responsibility and realise the wonder of the faith in Christ that we share.

Also, our diocese, together with all Irish dioceses, have brought in extensive safeguards to limit the spread of Covid19. For most Irish Catholics, living with the Coronavirus will entail disruptions to our daily lives: not being able to attend Mass; physical separation from friends and family; not being able to go to work or school; scrapping travel plans and social engagements

However, just as our Lenten penance is meant to deepen our relationship with God and our solidarity with all who suffer as the Lord did, we can allow these sacrifices and inconveniences in our daily lives to direct our prayers toward those who have died and their loved ones, our attention toward those who are ill or facing financial hardship and our actions toward strengthening the common good, both at home and abroad.

The coronavirus poses a unique threat that knows no borders. As Catholics, neither does our love and concern for our neighbours.

We are an Easter people. Let's see how we can bring the light of Christ into the world – even at this most challenging of times. Happy Easter!

Fr Austin

We Are the Times...

Easter Sunday is a joyous time when we celebrate the risen Christ, as he vanquishes death in the resurrection. This year, with the Covid19 pandemic, our joy may have been overshadowed by fears for our families, friends and communities.

St Augustine wrote: “Bad times, hard times - this is what people keep saying; but if we live well, then the times will be good – for we are the times: such as we are, such are the times.”

Also, as we know, Italy like many other countries, has been badly affected by the Coronavirus and when he was contemplating a lengthy spell of confinement in March, Pope Francis sent this uplifting message to all:

“Tonight, before falling asleep, think about when we will return to the street, when we will hug again, when all the shopping together will seem like a party. Let's think about when the coffees will return to the bars, the small talk, the photos taken close to each other.

“Think about when it will all be a memory and normality will seem an unexpected and beautiful gift. We will love everything that may have so far seemed trivial to us. Every second will be precious – swims in the sea, watching the sun until late, sunsets, toasts, laughter. We will go back to laughing together.

Strength and courage – see you soon,” - Papa Francesco

Bryan and the Stella Maris Team –

(*Please be aware that all information in this issue was correct at time of writing, but as the global pandemic situation changes with each day, it is possible that some content has been superseded.)

Ways to Nourish Your Faith

(When public masses are suspended)

- Use the parish website to its maximum. Keep up to date with Diocesan announcements and parish news
- Use the live stream to join your priest for mass when public mass is not possible.
- Download the current issue of Living Faith (Daily Catholic Devotions) for readings and reflections. (Available from Amazon @ £2.31 for the Kindle edition which covers three months).
- EWTN (Eternal Word Television Network) is the main free Catholic TV & Radio station and it can be accessed on Sky Channel 588 or in a number of different ways for daily masses, news etc - there is also an app that can be downloaded to your phone. As well as this, you can tune into Radio Maria Channel 812 in your Freeview service – though the channel number may vary, depending on your configuration – scroll through and you should find it).
- You can also tune into live mass from Letterkenny on RTE News Now (Mon-Fri) @ 10:30am.
- It's very important to keep in touch with others by phone, Skype, Facetime, WhatsApp - Pray together at home by yourself or with family members.
- **St Vincent de Paul:** as always the SVP are available to help. Please contact them on 07508549572 if you are having difficulty at this time.

Spotlight on Our Pastoral Council

We may think that many of the groups and committees within our parishes are self-explanatory, but the mention of the "Pastoral Council" often provokes the question, "What do they actually do?" After serving on our council for several years, I can attest that at the heart of every Pastoral Council meeting is one question: "Where and how is God calling us as a Catholic community?"

Our council convenes monthly and in these meetings we are required to:

1. Review Pastoral matters: in other words, find out what's happening in the parish and ask what else could be happening.
2. Reflect: we pray, discuss and discern these matters.
3. Recommend: we suggest practical ways forward to enhance the mission of the Parish according to our planned Pastoral Themes.

The mission of Pastoral Councils has been developed and reshaped in recent times. Saint John Paul II encouraged decision-making as the result of consultation and Pope Benedict developed the notion of co-responsibility saying, "Co-responsibility requires a change of mentality, particularly regarding the role in the church of the laity, who should not be considered 'collaborators' of the clergy, but people who truly are co-responsible for the being and action of the church". Pope Francis added that he sees Pastoral Councils as an 'antidote to clericalism'.

We continually seek to respond to the needs of our parish and try to ensure that the initiatives that emerge, encourage the development of our faith and community and make us an outreaching and welcoming parish.

The Pastoral Council is also called to think about agenda items and priorities which affect the Pastoral Area Community, for example, the issue of changing Mass times in order to allow priests in one parish to cover Masses in another priest's absence. In this case, there was a need to think about the needs of our wider Catholic community.

In the past, the Pastoral Council recommended some now-permanent features in our wider community such as the Men's Shed and the Good Friday Walk of Witness in conjunction with the other churches in the community.

We have tried to support our faith through the provision of Lent and Advent prayer sessions and what we hope will become an annual Mass for the Sick of the Parish. We celebrated the World Meeting of Families with a Parish lunch in a marquee in the

Parish centre grounds and last year we brought an old tradition back with the Corpus Christi procession and Benediction in Dominican College followed by afternoon tea.

These events have been a lovely way to celebrate our faith and give us time to connect with our parish family. As keeping connected becomes ever more important we have also updated the Parish website and launched a Facebook page, so please do like us on Facebook and you will have access to parish communications and some additional prayers and meditations.

We periodically ask for volunteers to join the Council, which hasn't always been met with the greatest response, perhaps because people do not know what it will involve! Therefore, some new members have been nominated by others, whilst others are selected from parishioners. We encourage all parishioners to talk and share ideas with Council members and answer the call for us all to share our gifts and be co-responsible in making our church a vibrant and joyous place for all.

We ask you to pray for the Pastoral Council, that we might live out our mission statement:

"We welcome each parishioner and visitor a part of the Body of Christ, that all may feel cherished and confident to recognise and use their gifts in our community.

We believe that we all share the mission of Jesus Christ and that through God all things are possible. Through Christ may we live our faith, share our faith and deepen our faith."

Emer O'Keeffe – Chairperson, Parish Pastoral Council.

'You will be prayed for in Knock' A prayer in the time of the Coronavirus

Dear God,

In 1879 the Apparition at Knock gave
hope and courage to the people of Ireland
in difficult times.

We ask that Our Lady may now protect
your beloved people from the Corona Virus.

May its victims be strengthened by the spiritual
support of the Christian community and
restored soon to full health.

We also pray for the medical personnel who deal with the virus.
This we ask in confidence through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Our Lady of Knock, pray for us.
St. Joseph, pray for us.
St. John the Evangelist, pray for us.

by Father Brian Grogan SJ

Grandparents' Day at St Colum's

January 29th 2020

There was a huge turnout for the annual Grandparents' Day at St Colum's this year as school and parish took the time to celebrate the special bond of love and trust between children and their granddads and grannies. The main hall was packed to capacity as children, from P1 to P7, relished the opportunity to show off their artistic, dramatic and musical skills for a very appreciative audience.

Father Austin did the introductions and led the gathering in prayer on this happiest of days. Many thanks to all the children, their teachers and kitchen staff for providing such a lovely welcome for all the grandparents, aunts, uncles and other family members who came to the school.



Catholic Schools Week 2020

This year the annual celebration of our local schools highlighted the contribution made by children's families, teachers and ancillary staff to the vibrant life and educational opportunities enjoyed by the younger members of our

community. St Colum's pupils illustrated this with a striking art project in which each class found an original way to explore a different aspect of the theme as you will see here:



Outside the Chapel Gates

With Eugene Kelly

The King Comes to Town

The King (Elvis – not our lord) made a very rare appearance in our Parish Centre in February as part of a Lourdes Fundraiser organised to help some of our parish youth to travel as helpers on a pilgrimage organised for later this year. There was a great turnout and a fine night of vintage rock 'n' roll was enjoyed by a packed crowd of revellers. Fundraising targets were met and exceeded and will be available for this worthy cause whenever it goes ahead. Well done to the organisers for all their hard work and of course thanks to the King of rock 'n' roll himself!



Oops!

Two more bloopers from church notices;

"For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs."

"The Low Self-Esteem Support Group will meet in the hall on Thursday 7-8:30 pm. Please use the back door."

Yoga for Men

"Well I never!" "Did you ever hear the likes of it? Yoga for men?" This was the response of some people in the community when it was suggested that there should be a class teaching yoga to men only as any yoga classes in the area were composed mainly of women.

Can you imagine the surprise of the yoga teacher on Tuesday 25th February when over twenty strapping big men turned up for the introductory class?

Every inch of floor space was filled with beginners who were prepared to get in touch with their inner selves. The response was so positive that it was decided to have two classes at 9.30am and 10.30 am in Eoghan Rua club rooms on Tuesday mornings.

Several weeks down the line the class is something I really look forward to. Our teacher, E.B., is very gentle with us and encourages us

to do only what we feel comfortable with. There is nothing overly strenuous about the exercises and by the end of the class I certainly can feel the benefits. As has been demonstrated by the response to the classes, it is a worthwhile venture and is proving to be beneficial to our general well-being. Perhaps you might consider giving it a go?



John Paul II Awards Ceremony 2020

On Monday 10, February, 2020 the Diocese of Derry held their 13th Annual Pope John Paul II Award ceremony in the Millennium Forum, Derry City.

Archbishop Franz Lackner, the Archbishop of Salzburg, and Bishop Donal McKeown presented the Pope John Paul II Award to 549 young people from all over the Diocese of Derry and beyond.

The 549 young people who received their Award came from twenty second level schools including Loreto College, Coleraine, representing forty-seven parishes in the diocese and twenty parishes from outside the diocese. This year two people also received the Papal Cross Award.

Archbishop Lackner told the young people present of the great impact Pope John Paul II had on his life.

“John Paul II had and has a huge impact on my priestly life. In 1978 I was a United Nation soldier in Cyprus. By that time, I had lost the most precious gift given to me by my parents, the faith in Jesus Christ our Lord. At the same time John Paul II was elected Pope. And this had

a profound effect on me. As a result, I rediscovered my faith. And it was John Paul II who appointed me as Bishop in Austria. For eleven years I was Auxiliary Bishop in Graz and in charge of the young people. John Paul II was always in my heart.”

The Pope John Paul II Award continues to be the largest youth movement in the church in Ireland. In the last twelve years about 35,000 young people have enrolled to participate in the Award. In Derry Diocese since the award began 5,400 young people have received their Award.

Reverend Paul Farren, Director of the Derry Diocesan Catechetical Centre said of the Award,

“At a time when bad news is too often what we hear, the Award continues to be a Good News story in the Church in Ireland and beyond. For the most part it continues to be a quiet story that is not too loudly told. However, it does give powerful evidence that the church is neither dead nor dying- the church is alive and it is young.”



Dominican College Karate Kids

Portstewart Karate Club, which is based in our Star of the Sea Parish Hall, invited their chief instructor up from Cork to do a grading examination in February.

Five students from Dominican College successfully passed their 1st Dan Black Belt tests. (Students Keeva Campbell, Finn Tapster and Jenna, Jack and Abbie Douglas).

Mr Barry Tapster from Portstewart Karate Club explained, “It is an exceptional success for five students from the

same school to do so well and we are delighted with their achievement.”

It was a special day in particular for the Douglas family as members were awarded their Shodan Belt by the visiting chief instructor on Saturday.

Well done to all the DCP pupils and all those involved in the Portstewart Karate Club - we wish you all continued success.

Harry Gregg inspired my sermons to young people, says Bishop Tony

Bishop Antony Farquhar has told how his friend, the late Harry Gregg, provided the inspiration for his confirmation service homilies.

Lifelong football fan Tony Farquhar, Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus of Down and Connor, cheered Harry on as a young football supporter and later got to know him through the Milk Cup youth tournament, which he attends here on the North Coast each summer.

The pair became close and the Bishop, who attended the funeral of the Manchester United and Northern Ireland legend in Coleraine in February, revealed how he borrowed a line from Gregg's acceptance speech when he was awarded an honorary doctorate by the Ulster University some years ago.

"Harry told the students that when he was at school, a teacher had said to him: 'Gregg, you're stupid and you are a dreamer'. He then added to an audience who hung on his every word: 'I've proved I am not stupid and never give up on your dreams'.

"I thought it summed up perfectly what I wanted to say to young people starting out on life's journey."

Never give up on your dreams became the theme of Bishop Tony's homily to hundreds of children in his diocese on their confirmation days.

"It also gave me the chance to tell them the story of Harry Gregg," he added.

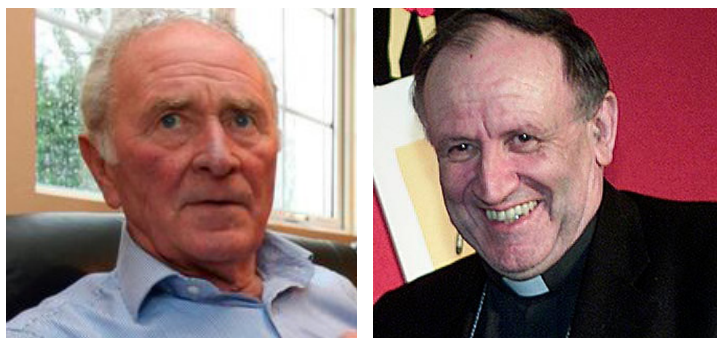
"He was renowned for his sporting prowess and for his bravery in the Munich air disaster. But he was also to be admired for the highest values and standards he lived by.

"Harry could be forthright and direct, as many have acknowledged in the tributes to him. He didn't suffer fools gladly. But he also had a warm and gentle side.

"I treasured his friendship and his company."

Bishop Tony, a well-known and hugely respected figure in Northern Ireland football at all levels, has been a regular attender at Windsor Park internationals since the 1950s when Gregg's career began.

"I was captivated by his fearless goalkeeping style,"



he said. "One of my earliest memories of him is in the infamous Battle of Belfast against Italy in 1957 which turned into a free-for-all between the teams. No one who was there could forget it.

"I was fortunate in later life to get to know Harry at the Milk Cup, which he helped establish, on his native North Coast.

"We became friends and one of the nicest Christmas presents I have ever received was a copy of his autobiography, which he arranged to sign for me one day at his house at Articlave..

"I was there for over two hours before he produced a pen.

"We talked and talked about football in particular and life in general. He was an incredibly learned and interesting man. I noticed a framed schoolboy international jersey had pride of place over his Manchester United and senior Northern Ireland shirts and always remember him explaining that if it hadn't been for that first jersey, there wouldn't have been any more."

Dundee United-supporting Bishop Tony's own football roots are in the universities game, being closely associated with Queen's and the University of Ulster at Coleraine. He has travelled the world watching football and at the World Cup in Italy in 1990 was famously instrumental in arranging for the competing Republic of Ireland team an audience with the Pope at The Vatican.

The bond between the Catholic Bishop and the Coleraine Protestant is not as unlikely as it may have seemed.

Gregg was ambivalent when it came to creeds. A regular churchgoer when he left Coleraine to begin his career in England, he once explained: "I attended church on a Sunday everywhere I travelled with United and Northern Ireland. If I couldn't find one of my own Protestant faith, I attended a Catholic service, because to me a church is a church."

(Reprinted by kind permission of Jim Gracey and the Belfast Telegraph.)



Apostolic Milestones

Portstewart Apostolic Group celebrated two notable milestones in the history of the group recently. Firstly, on the 28 November, the members and Fr Austin met to celebrate the group being in existence for ninety years. The gathering also marked the remarkable achievement of Mary McKeever, who has been a member of Portstewart Apostolic Group for fifty years and has worked tirelessly to support the missions – and continues to do so up to the present day.

Fr Austin and the ladies of the group also met on the 6th March at The Cromore Halt restaurant to mark the retirement of Marian McKenna as President of the group. Marian has been a member of the Portstewart Apostolic Group since she came to live in the town in 2001. Together with her husband, Kevin, she is leaving Portstewart and returning to their native County Tyrone. Marian and Kevin will be greatly missed from the Star of the Sea Parish, but we wish them every happiness in their new home. Please keep in touch and visit often, Mr & Mrs McKenna!



The Fifteenth Station

During the season of Lent many people pray the devotional 'Stations of the Cross' and the traditional stations end with Jesus being laid in the tomb. Some more modern Stations of the Cross have included an additional fifteenth Station, 'The Resurrection', which raised my curiosity to explore the connection and relevance of the Resurrection of Jesus to his Passion and Death on the Cross. Pope Benedict's second volume on Jesus of Nazareth, provides clarity in making these connections.

It was not uncommon for Roman soldiers to leave the bodies of those crucified on the cross, as a deterrent to others. The Jewish authorities on the other hand had made arrangements to remove the bodies and provide burials of the crucified because the next day was the Sabbath. We read in the Gospel accounts that a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea took the initiative and obtained the body of Jesus from Pilate for burial. Two details of Joseph's action give us clues to connect the burial of Jesus, as depicted in the fourteenth Station, and his Resurrection, as presented in the fifteenth Station. Joseph brought with him spices and aloes reportedly weighing 'one hundred pounds.' This is an extraordinary quantity and seriously out of proportion for an ordinary individual burial. It demonstrates that Jesus was no ordinary person and that his burial is marked as such in 'Royal' proportions- fitting for a King. Joseph was a man looking out for the 'kingdom of God' but his kingdom is not of this world. The other deep mark of respect shown by Joseph for the dead body of Jesus was that he laid Jesus in a new tomb, never before used.

We also learn from the Gospels that women, who had been part of the group who travelled with Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem, went early on the Sunday morning to the tomb, to anoint the body of Jesus with spices and ointments as part of the Jewish tradition - the anointing delaying, not preventing, a dead body from decaying. But, like the account of Joseph of Arimathea, the Holy Spirit got there first, and permanently prevented Jesus' body from suffering any decay. Jesus was raised from the tomb, his resurrected body not requiring any human anointing. From this new tomb Jesus was raised to new life, his human body not left to decay on earth. This has important meaning for humanity in terms of our mortality and our immortality.

No human was present at the actual Resurrection but we learn that Jesus appeared to a number of different witnesses revealing his new resurrected body. They witnessed something that was unprecedented and unrivalled in all human history. Jesus when alive had previously raised the dead, as in the case of his dear friend Lazarus. But Lazarus was restored to his previous way of life on earth to eventually succumb again to mortal death. The resurrected body of Jesus was different. From this new tomb Jesus was raised to new life. While those witnesses could experience the resurrected Jesus with human senses of sight, sound and touch, his new appearance was beyond this world and would have been very difficult for them to make sense of.

This takes me back to my schooldays some fifty plus years ago and to a visiting Mission priest who posed the question 'What did Jesus take with him back to heaven?' After a number of unsuccessful guesses and a few hints I eventually called it correct. 'His wounds?' I said. Wounds that were an eternal remembrance of Jesus' ultimate sacrifice for humanity. This has remained in my memory all these years. For those who witnessed Jesus' resurrected body it was real enough to convince them of the fact that he had been raised from the dead. It remained with them for the rest of their lives, some of which were cut short in martyrdom as they proclaimed this true fact to the world. Why did Jesus not appear to those who executed him or scoffed at him during his Passion and Death? Jesus died as he lived, in total humility and submission to the will of his Father. He resisted the calls for him to come down from the Cross and prove everyone wrong. In the same way he declined the challenge to directly confront those who did not believe in him or his mission. In his life he did not force his beliefs on anyone and this holds true through his death and his resurrection. In some way the facts of his Resurrection are sufficient to convince those who have faith.

Jesus' resurrected body was no longer subject to death and decay. Jesus had taken his human body and brought it to the Father. As Pope Benedict states 'The man Jesus, complete with his body, now belongs totally to the sphere of the divine and the eternal'. By the wounds of Jesus, salvation comes to all, as Jesus takes these wounds into eternity. Jesus' Passion and Death were the fulfilment of Jesus' total self-giving and obedience to his Father's will. He burdened himself with all of humanity's disobedience, sin and evil and nailed it to the Cross in a supreme act of sacrifice, so we could be restored to life in God. God is victorious over sin and evil. In

the same way Jesus was not raised from the dead just for himself but for all humanity. He brings our human body into a totally different level of existence, the supernatural aspect of which, is evident in his resurrected body. We might not fully understand every aspect of this event but we can be assured that it means one thing - proof positive of God's victory over death. The meaning of eternal life with God begins to take shape as we ponder Jesus' Resurrection.

This Easter let us bring to mind the fifteenth Station and remind ourselves of its connection and relevance to the Passion and Death of Jesus. St Paul tells us that if Jesus did not rise from the dead, Christianity is worth nothing. Jesus did rise from the dead so our faith has real value for how we live our lives in the Resurrection, as an 'Easter People'.

Kieran Hill

1 *Jesus of Nazareth, Holy Week. Pope Benedict XVI, Ignatius Press 2011*

2 *ibid*

3 *ibid*

4 *Jesus of Nazareth, Holy Week. Pope Benedict XVI, Ignatius Press 2011*





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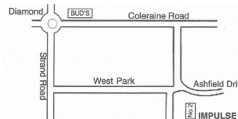
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Baptisms at Star of the Sea



Leo Crawford – baptised 16/11/19. Parents Aine and Brendan



Charlie Trimble – baptised 07/12/19. Parents Emma and Jamie



Mara Pinkerton – baptised 22/12/19. Parents Sarah and Adam



Stella Dempsey – baptised 19/01/20. Parents Lauren and Barry



Senan Woods – baptised 15/12/19. Parents Aine and Andrew



Thea Davidson – baptised 29/12/19. Parents Natasha and Adrian



Erin Woods – baptised 02/02/20. Parents Roise and John