

The Hibernian

For Faith, Family and Country

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Thanking God at Christmas

Realising the gifts we take for granted

READ CATHAL Ó BROIN ON PAGE 3

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Inside view

Once again the Advent and Christmas season is upon us.

This is the time of year for optimism and gratitude. No matter what the world throws at us, as Catholics we can rejoice in the fact that our Saviour has won the day for us and all we need do is accept that and be thankful for it. Christmas provides us with the opportunity to celebrate the birth of Our Lord and acknowledge the blessings that we have and that we should enjoy.

Life, as we all know, is fleeting and quite illusory. Too often people are inclined to get bogged down in the cares and worries of the world and therefore lose sight of the real meaning of our existence, which is to worship God and ensure that His Will be done on earth. Ultimately, nothing else matters.

At present, a wave of doom and gloom is sweeping across human affairs and people everywhere are concerned about an impending economic downturn and geo-political uncertainty. As Catholics we should rise above all this and on no account succumb to despair. Such is the way of pagans. No matter what happens we have our Faith and this can only be strengthened by the times we live in. In addition, harsh economic and political realities can provide



Gerry McGeough

EDITOR

us with an opportunity to spread the Faith and rekindle it in the hearts of those who have become too materialistic over the years.

Remember, Our Lord choose to be born not in a luxurious palace, but in a humble manger, thus reminding us that spiritual wealth does not depend on worldly riches.

Use this Christmas season to re-establish and deepen bonds with relatives and friends and don't let the spending spree madness dampen the spirits, that's not what Christmas is about. Maybe a while longer spent in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament and less time wasted in the shopping malls would be beneficial.

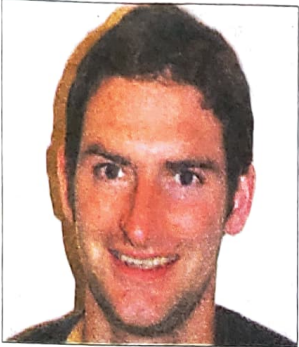
Finally, *The Hibernian* would like to pay tribute to all the people who were involved in the recent visit to Ireland by the Fatima priest, Fr Gruner. His message is crucially important and needs to be heard far and wide. Well done all. *Nollaig Shona Daoibh.*



One Feaster Feasting In December

Alan Robinson - 10 & 11

Thanking God at Christmas



Cathal Ó Broin

The run up to Christmas gets busier every year. The main streets of towns and cities become ever more frantic avenues of trade, as everybody prepares for the big feast. It seems that in this modern age, Christmas is as popular as ever. But it is not the same as it used to be.

There is no doubt that the true message of Christmas is not about shopping, but in many western countries this has become the main focus. People everywhere seem to love Christmas not so much for its true essence, but for its traditions, many of which are quite bizarre. At any other time of year, the idea of sticking a tree inside your



house, and then decorating it with lights and pieces of tinsel, would seem utterly daft! The notion that everybody on this day should all eat turkey for dinner, and then finish with pudding, could also be thought of as a little strange. And what about everybody giving each other presents to celebrate somebody else's birthday? What is that? Why do we give gifts at Christmas?

We do this, of course, because Christmas is traditionally a time of giving, a time of charity and of family. There is a danger, however, in our modern world of often gross materialism, that the tradition of "gift giving" can become somewhat insincere, and so it becomes a merely custom of "gift exchange". When this happens, the idea is that "I buy a present for whoever will buy me one". So much for charity and the true meaning of Christmas!

The other factor in the western world is that of "apples into the orchard". What gifts do we really need any more, and do we appreciate them? How many toys can a child play with? In times past, a boy would have been delighted with a cap gun, and a girl with a doll. Now it seems that many children are demanding an ever larger list of toys, and Santa Claus, it would appear, is duly obliging.

Of course, we now live in times of greater material

wealth, and it is only natural that in such circumstances people will buy more presents and have more food on the table for the feast. The problem is, however, that the more we have, the less we seem to notice how much we have. The problem with worldly abundance is one of appreciation.

The true spirit of Christmas is that of true abundance. We do not find this in worldly wealth, but in the spirit of poverty. Jesus Christ was born in a stable, and was laid on a bed of straw. He could, if he had wanted to, have been born in a palace made of gold. He could have asked to have been placed in a manger laid with the finest silk, and have demanded a fanfare by all the kings of the world, all bowing before His majesty. But no, Jesus Christ chose an entrance much more noble.

The Creator became man, to bring man back to Himself. He came with a message that would show us how to truly "live life to the full". He came to give us a treasure that surpasses all things - a wealth that makes all the gold in the world appear like granite, and all the silk, seem like straw. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven".

What is it to be "poor in spirit?" It is when our hearts are centred on God, when they are not

"...The customs of Christmas are all very nice, when they are seen in their proper context..."

attached to the passing things of this world. Then, Heaven itself is our inheritance. We then have a peace and a treasure that cannot be taken away from us - and so, we can appreciate all the gifts that God is giving to us for what they truly are, since we are not blinded by the world, but enlightened by the grace of God.

Everything we have comes from God. He truly gives us the gift of the present moment. (Is that why it's called the "present")? Ingratitude is painful and causes deep sorrow. Imagine if you went to great efforts to give somebody a gift, and they did not so much as say thanks. How many times does God give us good things? How many times do we ignore His generosity?

The customs of Christmas are all very nice, when they are seen in their proper context. Christmas is, of course, a time to be happy, but it is also a time, even more importantly, to be thankful.

When you think about it, life is a constant shower of gifts. Our bodies are a wonder to behold. Our cells are constantly reproducing

and repairing themselves, communicating and interacting with other cells, doing their job. "Thank you God for my cells, and all the work that they do."

Our hearts are constantly beating, pumping blood to every part of our bodies, and our lungs are breathing away, supplying our blood with oxygen essential for life. "Thank you God for every heartbeat and for every breath of air."

Our world is finely balanced to support life. The Earth is exactly far enough away from the Sun, and has an atmosphere that acts like an incubator, shielding us from harmful radiation, whilst at the same time allowing in the life-giving energy of the Sun. "Thank you God for the Earth."

We cannot absorb the energy from the Sun. This is a problem without plants. They take the energy from the Sun and store it so that we can eat them and get energy to live. "Thank you God for all the food."

How many times can we say thanks? How many gifts do we receive all the time that we are not even aware of? "Thank you God

for family, for friends..."
The list can go on and on.

God did not need any of us, but created us purely out of love. How thankful are we for this? The purpose of our lives is to be grateful, and to love Him back. God gave us life, which is great, but the greatest gift that He has given us is Himself. When Jesus Christ came into the world He changed it forever. The Christmas message is a message of hope and of unspeakable charity. The Nativity story shows us the wondrous nature of God - His profound intimacy and humility.

The Sacrament of Holy Communion is a gift that we may never fully comprehend, in this life at least. Christ, truly and substantially present under the appearance of bread and wine, humbles Himself even more, so that we may take the Creator of the Stars and the Sea into the stable of our soul. The Highest point of the Feast of Christmas must surely be at that moment when the Saviour of the world touches our tongue. How could we ever appreciate enough this mysterious honour above all honours? How could we thank God enough for coming to us, body and soul?

Christmas is a first class feast day. In order to truly celebrate this properly, we should think of the Kingdom of God. Our Creator



made us ultimately for Heaven, which will be the eternal feast. If, please God, we get there, all our joy will come from the vision, the glory, of God. Everything else, more magnificent than we could ever imagine here on

Earth, will only be incidental to this vision. We obtain Heaven by learning this on Earth - God comes above all.

This Christmas, let us truly treasure all the gifts that God is giving us. Let us

say thanks to God many many times, for our family and friends, for our food and fun. Above all let our thanks be to the humble Christ child in the manger, for coming on Earth, so that we all might have life, and live it to the full.

The First Desmond Rebellion

Gerry McGeough

The placename Desmond is an English rendition of the Irish *Deasmumhain*, meaning South Munster.

Munster, along with southern Leinster, came to be dominated by the Anglo-Normans from the late Twelfth Century onwards. Two dynasties in particular held a major sway over this part of southern Ireland. These were the Butlers of Ormonde and the Fitzgeralds of Desmond.

Over the centuries both of these families, while retaining a lip-service loyalty to the English crown, went more or less native and ruled their regions as feudal principalities; raising their own armies, dispensing their own law and living by a mish-mash of English and Gaelic customs as it suited them.

The rivalry between the Gearldines and the Butlers was both legendary and violent with each side ignoring all attempts by the Dublin-based English government in Ireland to exercise control over them. In essence,



they lived and behaved like the independent Gaelic Lords of Ulster, Breffni and north Connacht.

All of this began to change, however, following a pitched battle between the Butlers and Fitzgeralds at Affane in Waterford in 1565. The clash was seen as a direct challenge to the authority of the English Tudor monarchs who were trying to tighten their law and control in Ireland. The then ruler, Elizabeth I, wanted her provincial military governors to replace the local lords and exercise English law and custom along with the protestant religion in the regions. The

local dynasties, meanwhile, resented this attempted intrusion into their spheres of influence.

Following Affane, Elizabeth summoned the heads of both houses to London to give an account of themselves. The outcome of this was that Thomas Butler, the 3rd Earl of Ormonde and cousin of the queen, was pardoned while Gerald Fitzgerald, the 15th Earl of Desmond, and his brother John were flung in the Tower of London at Ormonde's urging.

Leadership of the Munster Gearldines then fell to James Fitzmaurice Fitzger-

ald. A military man, thoroughly Gaelic in outlook and a devout Catholic, Fitzmaurice was in no mood to acquiesce to the demands of English heretics who sought to confiscate vast tracts of land in order to colonise Munster with protestants from England.

The prospect of such land confiscations guaranteed Fitzmaurice widespread support. The important Gaelic clans of MacCarthy Mór, O'Sullivan Beare and O'Keefe rallied to him as indeed did a number of prominent Butlers. Fitzmaurice, a true Catholic soldier of the Counter-Reformation, also sent the

Archbishop of Cashel, Maurice MacGibbon, to Spain in order to seek aid from Philip II.

In June, 1569, James Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald went into open rebellion against the English crown. He attacked the English colony in Kerrycurrihy south of Cork city before attacking Cork itself. He then marched on the Ormonde seat of Kilkenny at the head of 4,500 men.

Thomas Butler returned from court in London to pull the other Butlers out

of the rebellion, while the English staged a pincer counter-attack against Fitzmaurice. Humphrey Gilbert, the English governor of Munster began to devastate the lands of Fitzmaurice's allies by employing brutal terror tactics against the civilian population. He excelled at lining the entrances to his camps with rows of severed Irish heads. A true English gentleman.

Fitzmaurice was forced back into the Kerry mountains from where he conducted a prolonged guer-

"..In June, 1569, James Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald went into open rebellion against the English crown..."

rilla campaign despite the fact that most of his allies had been forced to surrender by 1570. Although he succeeded in achieving a number of victories including the burning of Kilmallock and the capture of an English ship near Kinsale, he had only 100 followers left by 1573 and was left with no

option but to surrender after having been guaranteed that his life would be spared. The following year, however, his lands were confiscated and in 1575 he set sail for France in order to seek Continental Catholic help for another rebellion.

To be continued...



On the Nativity

The time now having finally come
When his birth was due,
Like husband newly wed
From his chamber he withdrew

Embracing his beloved spouse
With outstretched arms so deep.
Him the gracious mother then
In a manger lay to sleep,

Amid the stable's animals
Who there resided at their ease.
Men intoned their canticles
Angels sang their melodies,

Rejoicing in the wedding feast
Of two such spouses side by side.
But God as tiny infant now
In the manger wept and cried.

Tears were the only bridal gems
To adorn this espousal strange.
The mother watched in wonderment
To see such marvelous exchange:

For God was bound to human grief;
In humans boundless joy had grown,
Which to one and to the other
Before this time was never known.

St. John of the Cross

The Mystical City of God, The Divine History and Life of The Virgin Mother of God

By Venerable Mary of Agreda - Extract

The journey to Bethlehem

It had been decreed by the Immutable will of Providence that the Onlybegotten of the Father should be born in the town of Bethlehem (Mich. 5, 2), and accordingly it had been foretold by the Saints and Prophets of foregone ages (Jerem. 10, 9); for the decrees of the absolute will of God are infallible, and since nothing can resist them (Esther 13, 9), sooner would heaven and earth pass away than that they fail of accomplishment (Matth. 24, 35).

The fulfillment of this immutable decree the Lord secured by means of an edict of Caesar Augustus for the whole Roman empire, ordering the registration or enumeration of all the world, as saint Luke says (Luke 2, 1). The Roman empire at that time embraced the greater part of what was then known of the earth and therefore they called themselves masters of the world, ignoring all the other nations. The object of this census was to make all the inhabitants acknowledge themselves as vassals of the emperor, and to pay a certain tax to their temporal lord; for this registration every one was to go to his native city in order to be inscribed. This edict was also proclaimed in Nazareth and came to the hearing of Saint Joseph while he was on some errand. He returned to his house in sorrowful consternation and informed his heavenly Spouse of the news which had spread about concerning the edict. The most prudent Virgin answered: "Let not this edict of our temporal ruler cause thee any concern, my master and spouse, for all that happens to us is ordained by the Lord and King of heaven and earth; and in all events his Providence will assist and direct us



Pic by Jennifer Swindle

(Eccli. 22, 28). Let us resign ourselves into his hands and we shall not be disappointed."

Most holy Mary was capable of being entrusted with all the mysteries of her most holy Son and She knew of the prophecies and their fulfillment; hence, also, that the Onlybegotten of the Father and her own was to be born in Bethlehem, a Stranger and an Unknown. But She said nothing of this to Saint Joseph; for without being commissioned by the Lord She would reveal none of his secrets. All that She was not commanded to reveal She concealed with admirable prudence, notwithstanding her desire of consoling her most faithful and holy spouse. She wished to entrust Herself to his direction and arrangement without acting the part of those who are wise in

their own conceit, as Wisdom warns us (Prov. 3, 7). They therefore conferred with each other about the course to be pursued; for already the pregnancy of the heavenly Lady was far advanced and her parturition was approaching. Saint Joseph said: "Queen of heaven and earth and my Mistress, if Thou hast no order to the contrary from the Almighty, it seems to me necessary that I go alone. Yet, although this order refers only to the heads of families, I dare not leave Thee without assistance, nor could I live without Thee, nor would I have a moment's peace away from Thee; for my heart could not come to any rest without seeing Thee."

They at the same time resolved upon the day of their departure, and Joseph diligently searched

in the town of Nazareth for some beast of burden to bear the Mistress of the world. He could not easily find one because so many people were going to different towns in order to fulfill the requirements of the edict of the emperor. But after much anxious inquiry Saint Joseph found an unpretentious little beast which, if we can call such creatures fortunate, was the most fortunate of all the irrational animals; since it was privileged not only to bear the Queen of all creation and the blessed fruit of her womb, the King of kings and the Lord of lords, but afterwards to be present at his Birth (Isaiah 1, 3); and since it gave to its Creator the homage denied to Him by men, as I shall relate (No. 485). They provided the articles for the journey, which would last five days. The outfit of the heav-

only travelers was the same as that which they had provided for their previous journey to the house of Zacharias on their visit to Elisabeth. They carried with them bread, fruit and some fishes, which ordinarily composed their nourishment. As the most prudent Virgin was enlightened regarding their protracted absence, She made use of prudent concealment in taking along the linens and clothes necessary for her heavenly delivery, for She wished to dispose all things according to the exalted intents of the Lord and in preparation for the events which She expected. Their house they left in charge of some neighbor until they should return.

The most pure Mary and the glorious Saint Joseph departed from Nazareth for Bethlehem alone, poor and humble in the eyes of the world. None of the mortals thought more of them than what was warranted by their poverty and humility. But O the wonderful sacraments of the Most High, hidden to the proud, and unpenetrated by the wisdom of the flesh! They did not walk alone, poor or despised, but prosperous, rich and in magnificence. They were most worthy of the immense love of the eternal Father and most estimable in his eyes. They carried with them the Treasure of heaven, the Deity itself. The whole court of the celestial ministers venerated them. All the inanimate beings recognized the living and true Ark of the Testament (Josue 3, 16) more readily than the waters of the Jordan recognized its type and shadow, when they courteously laid open and free the path for its passage and for those that followed it. They were accompanied by the ten thousand angels, which as mentioned (No. 450), were appointed by God himself as the servants of her Majesty during that whole journey. These heavenly squadrons marched along as their retinue in human forms visible to the heavenly Lady, more refulgent than so many suns. She herself walked in their midst better guarded and defended than the bed of Solomon, sur-

rounded by the sixty valiant ones of Israel, girded with their swords (Cant. 3, 7). Besides these ten thousand angels there were many others, who descended from heaven as messengers of the eternal Father to his Only-begotten made man in his most holy Mother, and who ascended from earth as their ambassadors with messages and treaties from them to the heavenly Father.

With these wonderful favors and delights, however, the Lord joined some hardships and inconveniences which the divine Mother encountered on the way. For the concourse of people in the taverns, occasioned by the imperial edict, was very disagreeable and annoying to the modest and retiring Virgin-Mother and her spouse. On account of their poverty and timid retirement they were treated with less hospitality and consideration than others, especially the well-to-do; for the world judges and usually confers its favors according to outward appearance and according to personal influence. Our holy pilgrims were obliged repeatedly to listen to sharp reprimands in the taverns, at which they arrived tired out by their journey, and in some of them they were refused admittance as worthless and despicable people. Several times they assigned to the Mistress of heaven and earth some corner of the hallway; while at others She did not fare even so well, being obliged to retire with her husband to places still more humble and unbecoming in the estimation of the world. But in whatever places She tarried, how contemptible soever it might be considered, the courtiers of heaven established their court around their supreme King and sovereign Queen. Immediately they surrounded and enclosed them like an impenetrable wall, securing the bridal chamber of Solomon against the terrors of the night. Her most faithful spouse Joseph, seeing the Mistress of heaven so well guarded by the angelic hosts, betook himself to rest and sleep; for to this She urged him on account of the hardships of travel. She, howev-

er, continued her celestial colloquies with the ten thousand angels of her retinue.

Thus variously and wonderfully assisted, our travelers arrived at the town of Bethlehem at four o'clock of the fifth day, a Saturday. As it was at the time of the winter solstice, the sun was already sinking and the night was falling. They entered the town, and wandered through many streets in search of a lodging-house or inn for staying over night. They knocked at the doors of their acquaintances and nearer family relations; but they were admitted nowhere and in many places they met with harsh words and insults. The most modest Queen followed her spouse through the crowds of people, while he went from house to house and from door to door. Although She knew that the hearts and the houses of men were to be closed to them, and although to expose her state at her age to the public gaze was more painful to her modesty than to their failure to procure a night-lodging, She nevertheless wished to obey Saint Joseph and suffer this indignity and unmerited shame. While wandering through the streets they passed the office of the public registry and they inscribed their names and paid the fiscal tribute in order to comply with the edict and not be obliged to return. They continued their search, betaking themselves to other houses. But having already applied at more than fifty different places, they found themselves rejected and sent away from them all. The heavenly spirits were filled with astonishment at these exalted mysteries of the Most High, which manifested the patience and meekness of his Virgin Mother and the unfeeling hardness of men. At the same time they blessed the Almighty in his works and hidden sacraments, since from that day on He began to exalt and honor poverty and humility among men.

It was nine o'clock at night when the most faithful Joseph, full of bitter and heartrending sorrow, returned to his most prudent

Spouse and said: "My sweetest Lady, my heart is broken with sorrow at the thought of not only not being able to shelter Thee as Thou deservest and as I desire, but in not being able to offer Thee even any kind of protection from the weather, or a place of rest, a thing rarely or never denied to the most poor and despised in the world. No doubt heaven, in thus allowing the hearts of men to be so unmoved as to refuse us a night-lodging conceals some mystery. I now remember, Lady, that outside the city walls there is a cave, which serves as a shelter for shepherds and their flocks. Let us seek it out; perhaps it is unoccupied, and we may there expect some assistance from heaven, since we receive none from men on earth." The most prudent Virgin answered: "My spouse and my master, let not thy kindest heart be afflicted because the ardent wishes which the love of thy Lord excites in thee cannot be fulfilled. Since I bear Him in my womb, let us, I beseech thee, give thanks for having disposed events in this way. The place of which thou speakest shall be most satisfactory to me. Let thy tears of sorrow be turned into tears of joy, and let us lovingly embrace poverty, which is the inestimable and precious treasure of my most holy Son. He came from heaven in order to seek it, let us then afford Him an occasion to practice it in the joy of our souls; certainly I cannot be better delighted than to see thee procure it for me. Let us go gladly wherever the Lord shall guide us." The holy angels accompanied the heavenly pair, brilliantly lighting up the way, and when they arrived at the city gate they saw that the cave was forsaken and unoccupied. Full of heavenly consolation, they thanked the Lord for this favour, and then happened what I shall relate in the following chapter.

"The Mystical City of God" is available in four volumes from TAN Books, www.tanbooks.com. The above extract, and the chapter on the Nativity are both found in volume II. They can also be read online at www.sacredheart.com.

One Feaster Feasting in December



Alan Robinson

Years ago, when beer seemed to be getting worse and worse in England, someone started CAMRA [Campaign for real ale].

Some people of a traditional outlook started a group called CAMRAD; this was Campaign for a Real Advent. Sadly, even with religious people Advent has become a foretaste of Christmas rather than a preparation. Of course, it is not a Lent; the Church talks about the joyful fast, but it needs to have the spirit of joyful penance. Christmas is Christmas and Advent is Advent and just as we don't put up our Easter decorations and cards in Passion-tide, we do not put up Christmas decorations in Advent. This is really dan-



gerous and radical stuff. If you ever dare to read *The Sound Of Music* (quite a different thing from the film of the same name) you will remember Maria's shock that the Von Trapps didn't know how to live liturgically. She showed them how to make an Advent wreath, not with yucky purple and pink candles, but four good creamy-white beeswax ones. There is so much teaching in an Advent wreath. The circle showing God's love which goes on

and on and is ever-green, the four Sundays of Advent, the red streamers or ribbons reminding us of his redeeming Blood. An Advent calendar is a good adornment and another way to show that this is a special season. Advent calendars with chocolate bars almost defeat their purpose. We take it in turns for children to open a door each day.

I first heard an Cathedral organist in the North

explain the difference between Xmas Cards and Christmas cards, a distinction previously lost on me. He patiently explained that Xmas cards reflected the pagan world view of Christmas with fat Santas squeezing down chimneys while Christmas cards put the image of the Holy Child of Bethlehem at the centre. Enough said.

Five Fibbers Fibbing. I do get a little tired every year of that old story coming out

that *The Twelve Days of Christmas* is a traditional, recusant song to teach the essentials of the Catholic faith in times of persecutions. Sorry, it doesn't wash. Our Catholic forefathers wouldn't have chosen such twelve ecumenical things to celebrate over the Great Twelve Days.

Presents. I'd like someone to give me, but I have it already, Martin Mosebach's *The Heresy of Formlessness: the Roman Liturgy and its enemy*, published by Ignatius Press (don't be put off). If you get fed up with people going on and on about *Quo Primum* and "abrogation" and *Motu Proprios* and canon law, just buy this book. It isn't as difficult as it sounds. It is written by a poet and novelist and it is about the changes in the liturgy following the Second Vatican Council and how it has affected the ordinary people and their culture and feelings. It isn't just a moan and a whinge, it is beautiful, poetic and deeply religious. It's worth it just for the chapter on the Benedictines of Fontgombault. John Senior writes about them in *The Restoration Of Christian Culture* (IIS press, 2007) and this writing is in the same league. Buy a few copies from Southwell Books. Southwell books is a fairly new book service and they have a web site and will accept orders online, which is good for Irish Catholics. Failing all that, what about giving your

many friends gift subscriptions to *The Hibernian*; that will inform, cheer, entertain and maybe irritate them for a full twelve months of the year.

By the time you read this we will be well into the traditional Novena in preparation for the feast of our Lady's Immaculate Conception on December 8th. I once heard a good fellow give a talk about this and totally confusing it with the virginal conception and birth of Our Blessed Lord. Maybe it's good to brush up on our Mariology and explain it to our friends, children and family, in the nicest possible way. Lots of people have a custom of keeping this novena with some simple prayer or devotion, maybe the *Tota pulchra es Maria* or the *Litany of our Lady*. There is a church in London which was reckoned a target during the Second World War and the priests took a vow that they and their successors would keep the Vigil of the feast as day of Fast and Abstinence, begging the Lord's protection. They did and it was spared and even now the priests still keep up this promise. It is glorious feast and one on which we can put an even bigger effort into praying the Holy Rosary.

We try to live by, or have to live by, the Calendar and it is good if we can find a wall calendar with the feasts of the church marked. If we follow the Old Rite, we will try to find

a traditional calendar; The Angelus Press produce one, according to John XXIII's modern calendar of 1962. If we use an older Missal or have books like Dom Gueranger's *Liturgical Year*, we might prefer to have the traditional Calendar without any of the pre-Vatican II changes. Fr Eugene Berry (Our Lady of Fatima Chapel, 2566 Sable Blvd. Aurora, CO 80011, USA) produces the real thing. Send him \$10 or more and he'll send you one. They really are good.

One of the things so many of us find hard about modern life is the complete disregard for the proper seasons. Christmas is starting in early November and finishes, or so it seems on 24th December. We can show people that we know that Advent is a separate season and put up everything at the right time [as late as possible]. The crib is a focus of our prayer, reverence and devotion. Some people try to make a stable and put it up on Christmas eve and then assemble it in the evening, with the Holy Child being put in just before or after Midnight Mass. The rush of it all and the "lateness" is beautifully symbolic and links up well with the rush and panic of S. Joseph's arrival in Bethlehem and the preparations for a graceful and dignified birth. When do we take down decorations? Many good writers tell us that Christmas-tide lasts

for the full Forty days, until the day of Candlemass and the solemn Procession and entrance, with the blessing of the Candles.

Even if we find that it's too hard to keep everything up all that time, we might keep up a token, a picture, the crib, or an extra large card. If we can observe the great Twelve Days, with all those fine feasts during the Octave of Christmas that will be a grace and blessing.

If we can't then we can make a family commemoration of them at prayers, using the proper prayers and antiphons from the Missal. We are so privileged to be Catholics and it is sometimes only when we look at the liturgical seasons that we realise it clearly. It took a priest living in the north of France [how *The Hibernian* gets about these days, an international magazine, indeed] to spot the little joke about the man from Kerry wanting to know about the toasted cheese. Well spotted, Father, but thanks for checking with me. "Laughter", as Reader's Digest used to say, "is the best medicine". One old crusty type said "There's a lot of roamin' Catholics in this club, I can hear them talking and laughing together". Well, we do have a lot to talk about and even more to laugh about.

Happy Christmas ... to all our readers, whoever and wherever they are!

Hark the hearld angels sing! Time to buy expensive things!

Cian Ua Ruairc

Have you ever thought about how weird we all get at Christmas?

How many people do we meet who say "It's mad", "It's savage", "I'm jaded". I hear that if you say this in lovely Dublin 4 these remarks will be prefaced by Oh My God!; not a holy aspiration but an exclamation. Or as one priest in Derbyshire said at the beginning of the Solemn Midnight Mass, by way of a prayerful introduction, "I don't know about you, but I'm knackered". This is true and it happened in 1991.

Then after the Great Feast, you meet the same people and you ask them how it was and they say, "ah, you know, it was very nice, just the four of us, very quiet; I'm glad it's all over". It is a strange world. Many of us will be singing *The Twelve Days of Christmas* and *A Partridge in a Pear Tree* and all that sort of thing.

There are those who still believe, especially across the water, [Thank God we're surrounded by water] that this is a coded song with many hidden Catholic teachings. If you wanted a coded catechism

wouldn't you have put together a good selection of Catholic ideas from the bad old good old days.

The good news that in all these days of confusion and universal apostasy and imminent collapse of everything we hold dear, especially the banks and stockmarkets, I have found a spiritual director.

Isn't that just grand. It means that I won't have to think for myself, but just go and ask the S.D. and I'll be told what's right for me. I was there last week and asked about New Year's resolutions; for Advent, of course, being a liturgical type.

The S.D. went through all sorts of things and I carefully noted them down. To my enormous surprise there were Twelve, a real mystical number and I thought that I'd share them with you, without, naturally, revealing the name of the S.D. or even the place that one might be found. Don't try your local presbytery. My wife did and she was told to Thank God For Yourself.

The first one was to make more time for God. That's a

bit vague I said. I was told to try to start with a fixed time for a period of mental prayer, reading, reflecting and paying about a part of the Holy Gospel or a spiritual book. Get up quick; imagine the bed's on fire, and go straight into a morning offering.

The second was to make time for the family. When I get home I am inclined to rush to the TV set for the news, of course, and then accompanied by a little aperitivo take up the paper for a while. Now I am told that this is all wrong. I must remember that when I get home from work I have to change work and my work is now my family. These S.D.s are tough nuts.

The third, listen to my wife. Wives have a hard time these days and they don't often get a bunch of flowers on the doorsteps in the evening. They are often isolated and lonely and

they need nothing more than a pair of ears to listen to them in the evenings. Let's sit down and listen to all their moans, problems, activities and useful suggestions.

The fourth was to read more. Take down a spiritual book and read it for fifteen minutes daily. I could start with the newly reprinted and very old pamphlet by Frank Duff, *Can We Be Saints?* Well done Legion of Mary for making this tiny classic available for us. There is so much in its forty or so pages.

The Fifth, get to confession. Frequently. Sadly these days there isn't much of a queue in most churches, which gives us little excuse for not going. Four Courts Press (Dublin) does a good little booklet on frequent confession which certainly gave me some good tips on sins that were not mentioned at the time of my First Holy Com-

"...Wives have a hard time these days and they don't often get a bunch of flowers on the doorsteps in the evening..."

munion. We are adults and we need to take an adult look at our souls and sins. What about a family treat on the sixth day? Maybe an outing to a cinema or a rented DVD, why? Well, for no reason at all, just because we love our wife and family. Wives can do this for their husbands too.

On the seventh day I was to phone a friend, why? Well no reason, actually. I usually phone friends because I want something, but it's good to keep friendships alive and a good chat can be an apostolate. I was told to drink at home. Can I have a go about drink? When I was growing up we kept a bottle of John Powers in the house and that was about all. We weren't Pioneer types, but we certainly never talked about drink.

When I was sixteen and even later I would go, intoxicated in mind and curiosity to a pub and return fairly intoxicated in body. Not much harm was done, but it was often silly and often nasty.

When I met my brother-in-law, it was quite different. He had been brought-up by a family who kept lots of drink in the house and would have a few drinks once or twice a week at home. He was taught the virtue of temperance. I don't mean temperance with the drink; I mean temperance as a virtue, meaning self control and a regard for the things

around us. He was taught that it was just as bad to spend too much time on a book, in bed, on the internet, in listening to music as it was to have too much to drink. It showed a lack of balance and control.

Was he a screwed-up miserable, puritan lecturing people? Not a bit. He got married, had seven children, and became a solid, sensible, saintly type. He taught me about how important it was to be self controlled even in how long you chatted to someone on the way to work and how to hide this self control.

There's material for a book in this. We need to show out children that we can drink and enjoy it and know when to put the cork

back in the bottle. To do anything else is insulting to God who made the stuff and gave it as a gracious gift and an insult to the man who did his best to make the liquor. An early Father of the Church St Basil wrote: "If you have some wine, remember that he has created it to bring us merriment and comfort in affliction." Thanks St Basil.

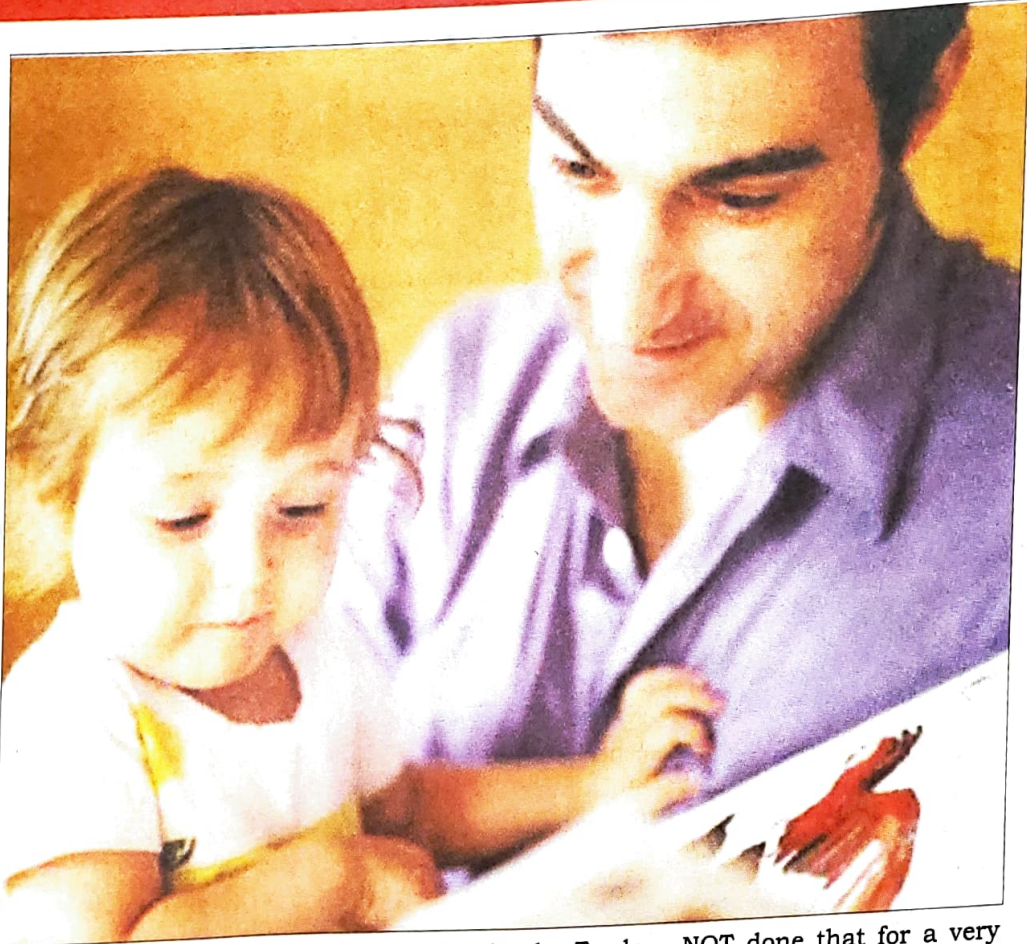
On the ninth day, visit the Blessed Sacrament. Many of us moan about the moving of the Blessed Sacrament from its proper place. Is this an empty, even if justified, moan? Do we actually try to visit the Most Holy even for a few moments each day?

On the tenth day, I should read to my children. I have

NOT done that for a very long time and it is a good suggestion. It's easy for children to think that praying and reading are for women when the dad hardly ever does it.

On the eleventh day, give a plug for Youth Defence. A Dominican priest described these young folk as the "Nobility Of Ireland". Can we send them a few spare Euros, ask for publicity material; put it at the back of the Church or in the local library. This could be our bit for Holy Innocents' Day.

On the Twelfth Day; well, celebrate, it is the Twelfth Day, the Feast of the Kings, Old Christmas Day and the Epiphany. Let's party and show people we know how to party.



Fr Gruner's Irish Tour

FATIMA PRIEST VISITS IRELAND AND SAYS THAT OUR LADY'S MESSAGE IS BEING IGNORED

The internationally renowned priest and Fatima Apparition expert, Fr Nicholas Gruner, completed a series of talks around Ireland in November. The Canadian-born priest spoke at venues in every province providing listeners with a deep insight into current developments that are having a profound impact on both the Catholic Church and society at large.

The central theme in each of Fr Gruner's lectures was that Our Lady's message, as delivered to three children at Fatima in Portugal in 1917, was being ignored. Specifically, Her request that Russia be consecrated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary has not been fulfilled. Earlier consecrations of the world do not count in this regard, Fr Gruner argues, as the request was quite definite in its reference to Russia.

In addition to this, Fr Gruner emphasised strongly that the famous Third Secret of Fatima has not yet been disclosed in its entirety, despite protestations to the contrary from leading Church officials.

Sr Lucy, one of the Fatima visionaries who went on to become a nun and whose death occurred in 2005, urged that this secret, which had been given to her by Our Lady in 1917, should be made public in 1960. When this did not occur, there was much consternation throughout the Catholic world. The Pope of the day, John XXI-II, read the secret but contended that it was meant for disclosure at a later time in the history of the Church and the world.

At the dawn of the new Millennium, the Vatican released a statement claiming that the secret referred to the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II

in 1981. In support of this contention, documentation was provided for public consumption in which reference was made to the killing of a Pope along with numerous Bishops and others on a hill crowned by a Cross. The fact that this description bore no resemblance to the 1981 attack on Pope John Paul mystified everyone, yet it was insisted upon that this was the Third Secret.

In the course of his visit to Ireland, Fr Gruner was able to shed more light on the mysteries surrounding the Third Secret. In the first instance, he acknowledged that progress was being made insofar as the Third Secret was now being openly and widely talked about.

The Canadian priest contends that the secret has not been fully disclosed and he cited the present Pope as having said, as the then Cardinal Ratzinger dealing with matters relating to the

essence of our creed, that the "Third Secret concerns dangers to the Faith...and therefore the world."

The Catholic Church, the "salt of the earth", is losing its flavour, Fr Gruner says, emphasising that we are no longer Catholics if we lose the Faith, which is being constantly undermined.

In a telling comparison with the popular trends in the Church since Vatican II, Fr Gruner noted that the fourth century Arian Heresy had duped ninety percent of the Bishops of the day and that these Arians introduced the sacrilege of Communion in the hand, now a widespread practice in the modern Church.

Altering the liturgy is suicide, Fr Gruner pointed out, noting that God will send a deceiving influence because people no longer love the truth, that the dethroning of Christ from the Tabernacle along with



Tommy Price, Fr Nicholas Gruner, John Vennari and Gerry McGeough, pictured at Ballyholland Harps GAC, Co Down Photo: Nicola Creaney

rebellion and apostasy were the prelude to the Chastisement referred to at Fatima.

This is a time of Apostasy, Fr Gruner said, and we must discern between those priests who are doing the work of God as opposed to the work of the devil. However, as with during the time of the Arian Heresy, a remnant will always hold on to the True Faith. Our first loyalty is to God and the Blessed Virgin and those who pray the Rosary every day and wear the Scapular will not fall into heresy. No-one can get to God or heaven

without being devoted to the Blessed Virgin, Fr Gruner said.

The famous Fatima priest was accompanied on his visit by John Vennari, the highly respected editor of the U.S.-based *Catholic Family News*, who also spoke at the various venues across Ireland.

Mr Vennari referred to an interview given by Sr Lucy on December 26th, 1957 in which she said that God will chastise the world and many nations will disappear. This would be a punishment from heaven for the non-consecration

of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

In a reference to the hallmark of Vatican II, Mr Vennari pointed out that "when God is thoroughly angry with His people, He sends them bad clergy". This extends to churches and sacred objects being taken away from a Faithless people in much the same way as icons such as *Our Lady of Victories* and so forth passed from the Eastern Church to the Western one once the former rejected the Pope.

Mr Vennari also made mention of the "Deceiving Influ-

ence" in the modern world, the loss of recognition of the immutability of Truth, leading to such nonsensical concepts as all religions being equal and the Heresy of Modernism, which was in the spirit of anti-Christ. In the course of his talks Mr Vennari left his listeners with the profound understanding that each person has a duty to save not only his/her own soul, but also the souls of those placed in his/her path.

The series of talks has been extremely beneficial and people across Ireland have been left with much food for thought.

On meeting Mary and learning to pray

PART IV OF A SERIES...

Padraig Caughey

I now see that in the course of a few minutes in Crumlin Road Jail my life was radically changed forever.

All that I did previously moved towards those moments and all that I did subsequently hinged on them. Even though the event I speak of happened some 25 years ago, it still causes tears to spring to my eyes when I recall what happened. Some of you will believe. Some won't. I can only say that I swear that what happened is the truth. Believe it or not as you will.

My unhappiness, desperate and dark, led me to actively plan my suicide while I was in jail. The only thing stopping me was the misery it might cause my family. However I hoped to carry it out in such a way that people would believe it to be an accident. One evening in May I returned to my prison cell and saw a newspaper cutting, a photograph of Padre Pio (now canonized), lying on the cell floor. How it got there is a bit of a mys-



Padre Pio during Mass

tery in itself. Neither my cellmates nor I were believers. I stared at the picture of Padre Pio and was disturbed. It showed him with the stigmata, the marks of Christ on his hands. The old fool, I thought, he must have done that with a screwdriver. But I was puzzled. I knew Padre Pio had the marks for many, many years. How then did he not get blood poisoning in the hot climate of Southern Italy? He could only perpetrate such a fraud with the assistance of all his brothers in the monastery. Also how come he seemed to fool all the doctors and never get caught on? It was a puzzle I couldn't unravel. The lights were turned out in my cell and I lay there still trying to figure it out. Finally I gave up. "If you're there Padre Pio", I said, "prove to me there is a God. If not I'll know for sure He does not exist and I will go ahead and kill myself." Suddenly, as quickly as that, Our Blessed Lady was standing there looking at me at the foot of my bed. To say I was astounded is an understatement. Tears ran down my cheeks like rivers. People I have told this to have been quick to ask me what she looked like. The important thing about Mary is not what she looked like but what she was - she is astoundingly holy. When the Archangel Gabriel, he who came from the very presence of God, saw her, he immediately said: "And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee:

blessed art thou among women." (Luke 1:28)

She is astonishingly, awesomely HOLY. I have had the great privilege to meet some very holy people in my life but Mary is incandescent with holiness. She shines with it. It is impossible to describe. Yes, Our Lady shines with holiness, blazes with it. In the Song of Solomon he refers to her as bright as the sun and fair as the moon. In this is indicated how like the moon Mary reflects the light of God and as the sun she blazes with it. There are no words to describe it. Stunning, marvellous, awesome, wonderful, entrancing... This is the very light the fire of the Holy Spirit. In scripture we see such an apparition described by St Luke and its effects on the onlookers in the Transfiguration (Luke 9:28-36) :

"And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.

And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering.

And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias:

Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.

But Peter and they that were with him were heavy

with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him.

And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said.

While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud.

And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.

And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen."

This was how Our Lady seemed to me, bright as a flash of lightning. In glorious splendour. I can understand too why poor St Peter wanted to build a tent there and stay forever. The joy, the elation you get at seeing such a thing.

I go to Mass every day and one of my greatest joys is to look at some of the holy folk I see there. They remind me of what St Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 18: "But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord, the Spirit'. While the light of holiness in people around us is pleasing, it is only a shadow of a shadow of a shadow of the light of the Holy Spirit, the light of heaven, the Mother of God, Queen of Heaven, the angels and the saints.

As Dante Alighiera said, "Our poor tainted nature's solitary boast".

I must have looked a sight staring, with two rivers running down my cheeks and my big foolish mouth lying wide opened, totally dumbstruck. One minute Mr. Knowing everything, next minute Mr. Realising He Knew Nothing! Our Lady spoke first. "Now do you believe?" I could only nod and say a sobbing, "Yes".

For how could I not? She was standing there in front of me. It sounded like a stu-

"...I lay there still trying to figure it out. Finally I gave up. 'If you're there Padre Pio', I said, 'prove to me there is a God. If not I'll know for sure He does not exist and I will go ahead and kill myself'..."

pid question in a way. Like do you believe there's a sky above you? But Our Lady was simply underlining the great grace I'd been given. To make me understand and appreciate the grace. She spoke like no one I ever heard before, with the greatest simplicity. Yet without emphasis you understood that everything she said was TRUTH. Utter truth and Spirit filled. The Mother of God spoke again. "Now you have faith, but faith without love is vain. Now you must forgive." Before my eyes came a kaleidoscope of people I hated and with each one came the simple question. "Do you forgive?"

Each time I did easily and completely. At the end Mary spoke again. "Now is there anyone at all you still hate, whom you do not love?" I thought. Suddenly the vast weight of the ages fell from my shoulders. For I realised that there was no one I hated no one who I did not love. What joy! What freedom! What release! I shook my head. "No, there is no one, I love them all." For the first time the Lady smiled. "Now you have the gift of faith and love. But these require the bread of prayer. You must pray. Pray the Rosary", and she held a pair of Rosary beads before me. But I was embarrassed and put out. For I had forgotten how to say the Rosary and, being in prison I had no Rosary beads and no way to get any quickly. I stammered, "I've forgotten how to say it". Our

Lady looked at me, then very solemnly and with great emphasis she said, "I myself will teach you", which she did over the years, as I will tell you later. Then she was gone and my life was changed forever.

What blows my mind is people like yourself who believe, even though you may not have seen. Especially at the time of the great sifting and apostasy when Satan's time is at its height and when if not for God's direct intervention, "even the good might be lost". (John 20:29) Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen, and have believed".

When Our Lady went away I was left alone, lying in the dark in my cell. Well not alone because my cellmate was sleeping soundly. It felt like the weight of centuries had been lifted from my shoulders. It was only when it had been removed that I knew what a huge burden my bitter hates had been. In my heart there was an intense joy and peace constantly welling up, a peace and joy, which has remained with me now for over a quarter of a century.

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled or afraid." (John 14.27)

"Thou dost show me the path of life; in Thy presence there is fullness of joy, in Thy

right hand are pleasures for evermore." (Psalm 16.11)

Years later when I was released from prison one of the prisoners commented on how I kept the whole prison wing laughing, I was so happy. In some sense I was drunk with happiness, a little like the disciples must have seemed when the Holy Spirit descended on them in prayer. When the Jews saw them, they thought within themselves that they had been drinking new wine and were drunk, and that their minds were depraved.

However I didn't at all forget Our Lady's exhortation to say the Rosary and although I had no Rosary beads I determined to say it every night in my cell before going to sleep. At first it seemed such a chore to me. It had been so long since I had said it that it was a real task to remember the mysteries. Nevertheless I felt drawn not only to say the Rosary but also to say it in a much differ-

ent way than I did when I was young. I was drawn to say it very, very slowly and prayerfully, carefully thinking of and meaning every word, opening myself carefully to each mystery. I'm afraid that in the past I had rattled of the Rosary in a quick mechanical fashion, now I sunk into it and let it flood me. In either case it was a great help to me to recall Our Lady of the vision and this spurred me on. Eventually I began to look forward greatly to my evening Rosary as a time of great blessing, peace and joy at the end of the day. In a real sense I was revisiting the Lady who had visited me. Then, one day, I decided to say the Rosary in the morning as well! Not as a task, as before but as a very real joy, as something to look forward too!

"Joy is prayer - Joy is strength - Joy is love - Joy is a net of love by which you can catch souls."
Mother Teresa

To be continued....



Mother Teresa

Skibbereen

mi re do re mi la so mi do re do la so la mi

Oh Fa - ther dear, I oft - times hear you speak of Er - in's isle. Her

4 la ti do ti la mi so fa mi re do re mi mi

lof - ty hills, her val - leys green, her moun - tains rude and wild. They

8 la ti do ti la mi so la mi re do re mi mi

say she is a lov - ely land where - in a saint might dwell. So

12 re do re mi la so mi do re do la so la

why did you a - ban - don her, the rea - son to me tell.

Oh father dear, I oft-times hear
You speak of Erin's isle
Her lofty hills, her valleys green,
Her mountains rude and wild
They say she is a lovely land
Wherein a saint might dwell
So why did you abandon her,
The reason to me tell.

Oh son, I loved my native land
With energy and pride
Till a blight came o'er the praties;
My sheep, my cattle died
My rent and taxes went unpaid,
I could not them redeem
And that's the cruel reason
Why I left old Skibbereen.

Oh well' do I remember
That bleak December day
The landlord and the sheriff came
To take us all away
They set my roof on fire
With their cursed English spleen
I heaved a sigh and bade goodbye
To dear old Skibbereen.

Your mother too, God rest her soul,
Fell on the stony ground

She fainted in her anguish
Seeing desolation 'round
She never rose but passed away
From life to immortal dream
She found a quiet grave, me boy,
In dear old Skibbereen.

And you were only two years old
And feeble was your frame
I could not leave you with my friends
For you bore your father's name
I wrapped you in my cóta mór

In the dead of night unseen
I heaved a sigh and bade goodbye
To dear old Skibbereen.

Oh father dear, the day will come
When in answer to the call
All Irish men of freedom stern
Will rally one and all
I'll be the man to lead the band
Beneath the flag of green
And loud and clear we'll raise the cheer,
Revenge for Skibbereen!



Fatima

- Still a Holy Place

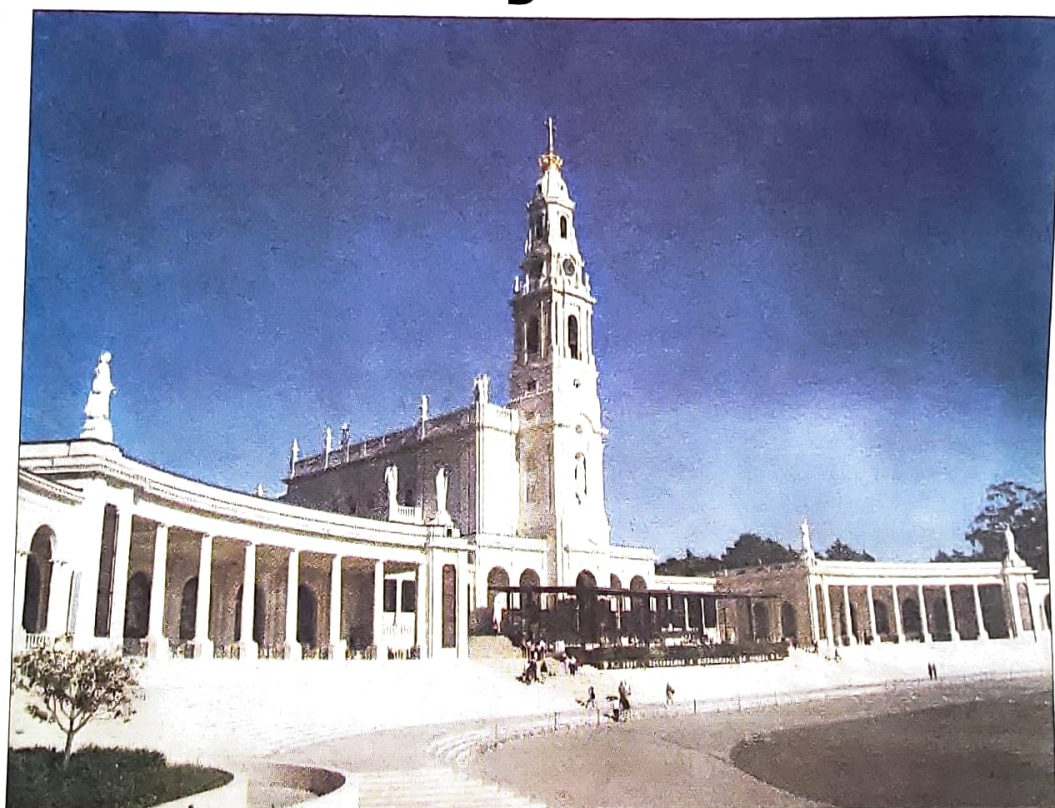


Martina Caffrey

The apparitions of Our Lady to three little shepherd children in Fatima delivered some of the most important revelations given to us by Our Blessed Mother.

Having just returned from a recent pilgrimage to Fatima, which also took in many other places in Portugal and Spain with ties to Fatima, I felt it was time to reflect on the messages given by Our Lady there.

Fatima has been downplayed for many years. We never hear much mention about it and the messages given there. When we do hear of Fatima, it is usually in a debate over



The Old Basilica at Fatima

whether the Third Secret of Fatima has been fully revealed or not. Many people have lost sight in the midst of this debate of the key message of Fatima.

The call for penance, prayer and sacrifice in reparation for the sins of the world were asked of the children by the angel who appeared to them

first and then by Our Lady. The children themselves sacrificed and suffered as much as they could to offer reparation to God for the sins of mankind.

We are all called to imitate them by fasting, penance and prayer. To coincide with this, Our Lady requested that Russia

would be consecrated to Her Immaculate Heart. She promised that if this was done, communism would be destroyed and there would be peace. As many of us know, this consecration was never done properly as Our Lady requested.

Russia has never been consecrated by name to

the Immaculate Heart thus not fulfilling Our Lady's request. We still await the consecration by the Holy Father in union with all the bishops of the world.

Knowing the message of Fatima and the story of the apparitions, visiting the places where all this took place is a wonderful experience. There is a peace and a prayerful atmosphere in Fatima which needs to be experienced.

As with many pilgrimage sites, commercialism has entered in as shops spring up in every corner trying to sell pilgrims everything they may want.

However, if you look past this, you can see the true worth of visiting Fatima. The vast open space of the Cova, the Capelinha, the golden statue of the Sacred Heart all captivate but the Basilica really dominates and draws all eyes towards it. It is a beautiful church both inside and outside and now contains the graves of all three of the visionaries, a sight which tugs at the heartstrings when we consider how recently Sr. Lucia finally joined her two friends, Jacinta and Francisco, in Our Lady's arms in Heaven.

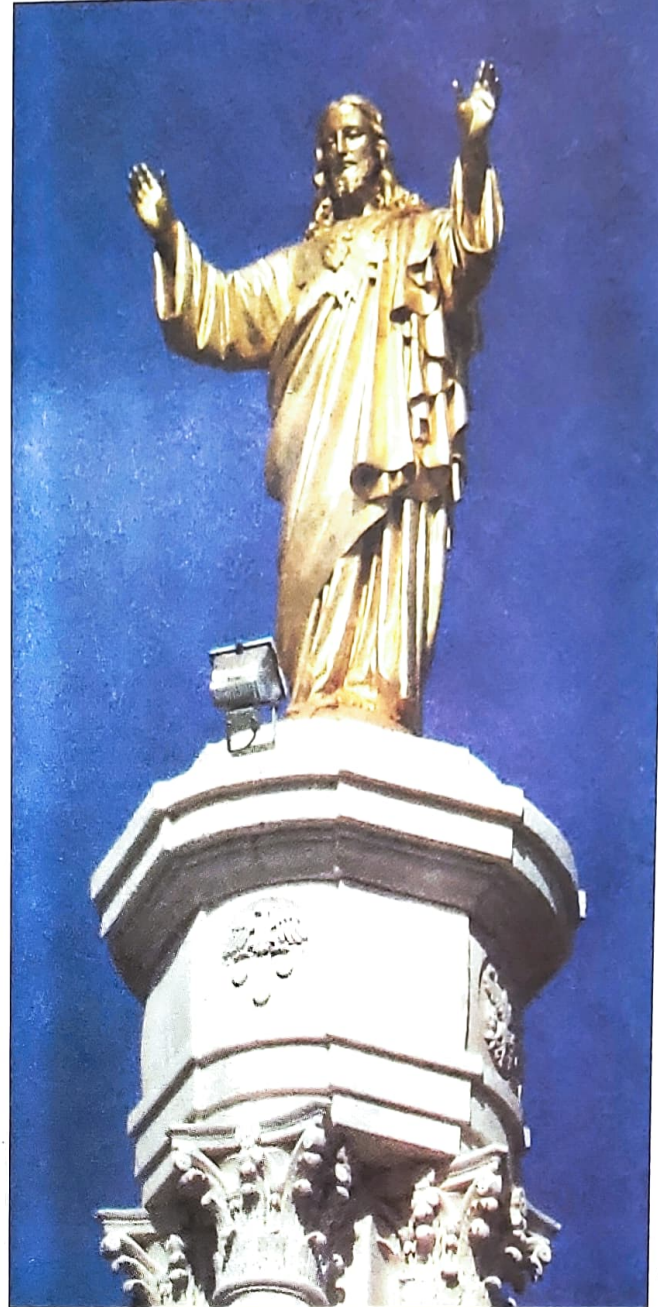
A visit to the village of Aljustrel via the Hungarian Way of the Cross is a day well spent as you see some of the places where the angel and Our Lady appeared to the children outside of the Cova. The houses of the

children are still standing and are open to the visitors to see the simplicity of life in which the children and their families lived.

The parish church in which the children were baptised and where they spent many hours in prayer is also a wonderful place to visit. If you have the benefit of a local guide who is passionate and knowledgeable about the history of the apparitions, as we did in Armando Mendes, you will learn new aspects of the graces given to the children.

One such grace was given to Lucia a couple of years before the apparitions began when she was allowed to receive her First Communion at an early age in the parish church. Moments after she received Our Lord in Holy Communion, she looked towards the statue of Our Lady of the Rosary which was in the church beside the altar. The statue then came alive and Our Blessed Mother smiled at her and inclined Her Head towards her.

Another thing which I learned was that of the seventh apparition of Our Lady at Fatima. When She first appeared to the children and asked them to come to the Cova each month, She mentioned that She would come seven times but October 13th, the sixth apparition, was the last public apparition in Fatima. Our Lady always fulfils Her promise and She appeared to Lucia a sev-



enth time after the other two children had died.

A few years after the apparitions, Lucia's bishop told her that she was to leave Fatima forever and become a nun in the Dorothean order. Lucia was distraught because she did not want to leave her family and Fatima where Our Lady had appeared to her. She was torn between her desire to stay in Fatima and her obli-

gation to obey her bishop. She was so overwhelmed that she ran to the holm oak tree where Our Lady had appeared and threw herself across the stone at its base in floods of tears. She didn't know what she should do.

Suddenly she felt a hand on her shoulder and looking up, she saw Our Lady standing there beside her. Our Lady told her that she had to obey her bishop

and leave Fatima as God had plans for her which had to be put in motion.

This seventh apparition teaches us the necessity of obedience, a lesson which Our Lady always is keen to emphasise. Lucia never mentioned these or any of the other graces she was given to anyone. It was only after Sr. Lucia's death when her diaries were read that we were able to find out the full graces and blessings given to this privileged soul.

It would be impossible to mention Fatima and the monuments there without mentioning its most recent addition. A new Basilica in

honour of the Most Holy Trinity was officially dedicated on October 12th by Cardinal Bertone. Those who have visited Fatima recently will know that this Basilica was being built and it is only since October that it is open to the public. December 2nd marks the beginning of the Masses and celebrations which will take place there every week. The new Basilica will be a contentious issue for many visitors to Fatima and will open the debate about the modernism which is seeping in to this shrine. There are some who will like it and others who will dislike it, particularly those who are more tradi-

tional. Without wanting to prejudice anyone, I will give my impressions of the new Basilica. We have to bear in mind, as our spiritual director on the trip reminded us, the new Basilica is now a part of Fatima and we have to accept its presence no matter what our opinion of it may be.

When you first approach the Basilica you will see a very large steel crucifix to one side of the church with bronze statues of the popes associated with Fatima (Pope John Paul II, Pope Paul VI and Pope Pius XII) around the Basilica. The new building is at the top of the hill directly opposite the old Basilica with panoramic views.

The main doors into the new Basilica are large golden doors with glass work on either side engraved with passages from the Bible in many different languages. Above the doors are golden panels with artwork depicting the images of each mystery of the Rosary. Around the Basilica are twelve large doors which are the main doors for the public to enter. The golden doors, I think, will only be used for big ceremonies.

Each of the twelve doors are dedicated to one of the apostles with a scripture verse of each apostle engraved on the door. Entering the Basilica, the sheer size seems immense.

There is seating for thousands of people on wooden

cushioned benches with fold up kneelers, all tiered and facing the altar. The Basilica is very modern and, in my opinion, designed inside more for attendance than spirituality.

The only religious artwork is behind the altar where on either side of the wall are golden panels with images of people. I think they are meant to represent the apostles and pilgrims to the shrine. In the middle of the wall behind the altar is a large black crucifix and to the left side of the altar is a large white statue of Our Lady of Fatima. All the artwork is very modern in style and would not suit the taste of many traditional Catholics.

It is when you cast your eyes on the altar that the words of St. Mary Magdalene from St. John's Gospel come to mind, "They have taken my Lord and I don't know where they have put him (John 20:13)." These words came to my mind as there is no tabernacle in the main body of the new Basilica.

It is possible that the tabernacle is kept in the sacristy which is a walled off area behind the altar but there is no physical sign of Our Lord present in the Blessed Sacrament in the new Basilica. In my mind, a church is not truly a church, a place to worship and be in the presence of God, without the Blessed Sacrament being present in the church, in the tabernacle.



A statue of Our Lady of Fatima is carried during the night procession

The new Basilica in Fatima left me wondering if it was designed to be a church or an ecumenical meeting hall. This is just my opinion and I urge you to visit the new Basilica yourselves, whenever you are in Fatima, with an open mind, so you can decide for yourselves whether you like it or not.

In spite of the modernism which has crept in, it is still a spiritually rewarding experience to visit Fatima. The faith of the people evident in the numbers present there even after the pilgrimage season and the peaceful atmosphere of the Capelinha and the old Basilica bring ease to the soul.

The international Rosary where pilgrims from all over the world gather with candles every night to pray the Rosary and show their love for Our Lady is an awesome sight and experience. It is these things that we should hold on to and make sure that they continue despite the modernism which may seep in in our current times.

We need to put our focus back on Our Lady and the messages She gave us at Fatima. We need to actively help Our Lady to fulfil Her request at Fatima for the consecration of Russia to Her Immaculate Heart. It is only then that we will see peace in our world and it is only then that communism and the anti-God



Inside the new Basilica at Fatima

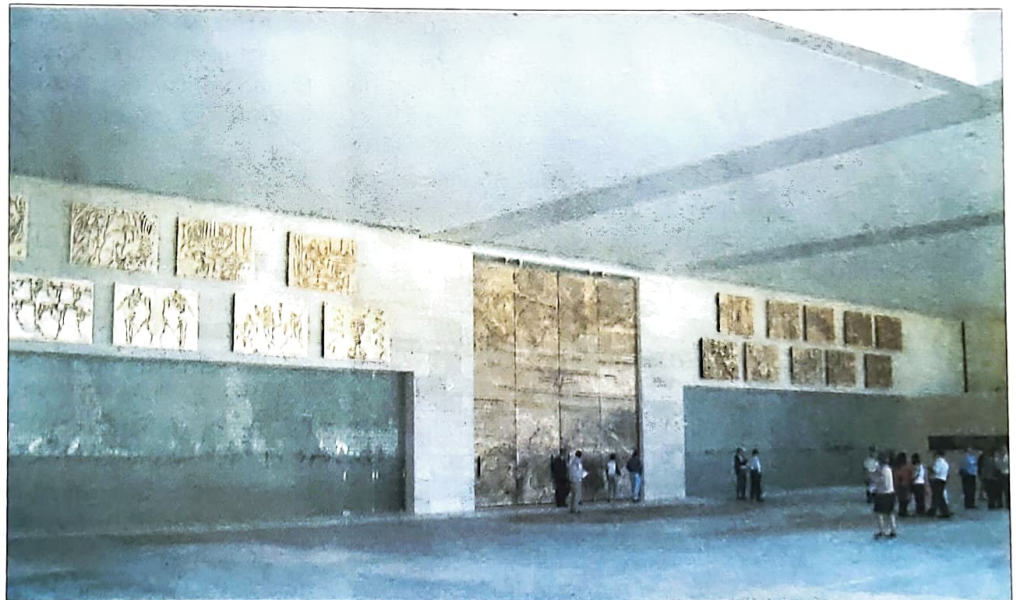
agenda, which it is so successfully spreading in our society, will be crushed.

Our Lady has given us so much through Her apparitions at Fatima. She has taught us of the necessity of prayer and penance.

She has shown us the need to offer reparation to God for the sins committed against Him. She has warned us of the consequences of our sins, but also She has given us the key to world peace. She has given us the solution

to bring about the triumph of Her Immaculate Heart.

It is about time that we realise the necessity and urgency of the message of Fatima and do all we can to answer Our Blessed Mother's call.



The front of the new Basilica

Litir on todhchaí



**Pádraig
Ua Corbaidh**

*An Doire Mór,
Baile an tSeandúin,
22ú Mí na Nollag 2015*

A Sheoirse,

Gabh mo leithscéal nár scríobh mé chugat roimhe seo, ach bhí brú orm le déanaí. Níl an saol chomh héasca sin mar iriseoir. Ach tá cúiteamh ann freisin. Bhí an deis agam bheith i láthair ag na mórimeachtaí a thit amach sna blianta deireanacha seo.

Ar aon nós, tá súil agam go bhfuil tú féin, do bheanchéile agus a chlann go maith. Maidir liom féin, níor bhraith mé níos fearr riamh.

Nach iontach go deo é; Éire saor aontaithe againn faoi dheireadh. Níos lú ná fiche bliain ó shin cé a cheap-fadh go dtarlódh a leithéid?

Ach is fada fadálach an turas a bhí ann. Ó lá sin i Londain. An lá sin i 1993 nuair d'eisigh John Major agus Ailbhe Mac Raghnaill an Comhráiteas Shráid Downing. B'é sin an tosú. Chuaigh rudaí ar aghaidh

go mall ansin go dtí Mí Feabhra 1995 nuair a eisíodh an Chaipéis Chreatlach i mBéal Feirste. Idir an dá linn bhí an bóthar tugtha do Ailbhe agus b'é John Bruton a sheas le Major an uair seo.

Ach sé mo thuairim gur an sos chogaidh a d'fhógair na hÓglaigh i Lúnasa 1994 a chuir ar bhóthar na síochána sinn. Óglaigh na hÉireann a d'fhógair sos ar dtús. Ansin bhí freagra dearfach ó Óglaigh na nDilseoirí agus chuireadar siúd sos chogaidh i bhfeidhm chomh maith. Ach go minic bhí sé deacair go leor a fheiscint an raibh nó nach raibh na sosanna ann i ndáiríre. Is mo rud a chaith amhras ar scéal.

Mar geall ar eachtraí a tharla chuaigh rudaí ar aghaidh fós níos moille. Bhí an chuma ar an scéal nach raibh síocháin i ndáiríre ó rialtas Shasana. Bhí na hAontachtaithe patuar faoi rudaí freisin. Bhí an dainséar ann go mbrisfeadh na sosanna chogaidh siar.

Mar is eol dúin bhris sos Óglach na hÉireann siar. Silim gur mé féin an chéad iriseoir a bhfuair leid go raibh Óglaigh na hÉireann chun tosú ar a bhfeachtas buamála arís. Ach nuair a bhí an scéal ar na nuachtáin bhí sé beagán do-chreidte. Ach fiú go bhfuair mé an leid bhain an buama ag Canary Wharf geit asam.

Is mó an t-athrú a tháinig ar an staid pholaitiúil le

níos mó na fiche bliain anuas. Tá Gearóid Mac Adaim as an saol poiblí agus Rónán Óg Ó Briain ina Uachtarán ar Sinn Féin anois; Sinn Féin atá athaontaithe arís.

Mar duine a bhí eolas aige "ón taobh istigh" tá a fhios agam gur rinne Rónán Óg éacht mór i bhforbairt na síochána. Nach eisean a d'oibrigh go foighneach chun chur ina luí ar na hÓglaigh sos nua chogaidh a fhógairt; 'siad sin na hÓglaigh a lean leis an troid nuair a dí-armáil na Seal-adaigh. Agus nár thaispeáin sé an fhoighne cheanna leis na hAontachtaithe. Agus ní turas éasca a thug an Páirtí Aontachtach Daonlathach dó. Ach sheas sé an fód. Agus nach bh'fiú dó an fhoighne go léir?

Ní dheachaigh rudaí ar aghaidh go réidh. Ní Éire aontaithe a bhí ó na Sasanaigh; ná ó na hAontachtaithe sa chéad dul síos. Agus níor chabhraigh robáil Bhanc an Tuaiscirt i 2004 muinín a chothú iontu.

Sna laethanta sin is roinnt na cumhachta a bhí i gceist. Rinneadh iarracht Éire a choimeád roinnte le Tionól Áitiúil do na Sé-Con-taetha ag Stormont. Go minic cuireadh an tionól céanna ar fionraí. Ach diaidh ar ndiaidh chon-nachtas nach raibh sa tionól céanna ach am agus airgead amú. Rith leis na Sasanaigh go mbeadh sé níos fearr gach ceangal le hÉirinn a bhriseadh. Is

ansin a rith sé leis na hAontachtaithe gur cheart dóibh a bheith ina bhfior-Aontachtaithe; daoine a chreid in aontacht na hÉireann!

Nach gcuimhin linn focail an dáin úd sin; "Tá an lá geal ag teacht..." Tá an lá geal buailte linn anois. Ba bhreá an radharc é na sluaite a fheiceáil ar na sráideanna i mBaile Átha Cliath agus na bailte eile; iad go léir ag ceiliúradh athbhunaithe na Poblachta. Ní raibh an ceiliúradh aon phioc níos lú i mBéal Feirste féin!

Silim gurbh é an spuaic-phointe, an oíche sin i gCaisleán Bhaile Átha Cliath. Is minic a bhí Fleá Stáit ansin. Ach an uair seo ócáid níos sona d'Eireannaigh a raibh ann. Agus mé i láthair rith sé liom gur ón áit seo ar uair amháin a rialaigh Sasana Éire. Mar chruthúnas ar seo tá portráidí de na monarcaí Shasana fós ann. Cé chomh fada is a mhairfidh siad ann anois?

Ba bhreá an radhairc é féachaint ar bhaill an rialtais ag an mbarrbhord. An fhaid is a bhí mé ag féachaint orthu rith m'aighne siar go dtí an t-am nuair a bhí cuid acu ina ndearg naimhde lena chéile. Níl a fhois agam cad é do thuairim faoin tslí a thit rudaí amach. Bóthar fad fadálach a bhí ann ó Shráid Downing i 1993 go dtí an Fleá i gCaisleán Bhaile Átha Cliath. Is minic a cheap mé go mbrisfeadh na cainteana siar. Agus is minic a dúirt

Eoin Mór, 'ní toil liom'. Nuair a thagann sé go dtí an t-am stair na tréimhse seo a scriobh gheobhaidh James Dedwood 'niche' do féin. Silim gurbh eisean an Rúnaí-Stáit a b'fhearr a raibh i dTuaisceart Éireann. Rinne sé a sheacht ndícheall cur ina lui ar na aontach-taithe gur cheart dóibh a bpáirt a ghlacadh in Éirinn aontaithe. Ní raibh leisce air eolas a thabhairt do na nuachtáin, rud a bhfuil ar eolas go maith agamsa féin.

Caithfidh gan dearmad a dhéanamh ar an Seanadóir George Mitchell. In ainneoin na deacrachtaí go léir níor thréig sé a dhualgas. Ag an tosú bhí deacrachtaí móra ann. Bhí moltaí déanta ag an Seanadóir nuair d'ais-tarraing an tUachtarán Clinton é go Washington. Bhí na moltaí sin feiliúnach go leor ach bhraith siad ar thoil na bPáirtí caint lena chéile. Ach b'fhada an lá nó go raibh Aontachtaíthe áirithe toil-teannach caint le Sinn Féin.

Níor thaispeáin George W. (an Bush óg) an tsuim chéanna i gcúrsaí na hÉireann is a thaispeáin Bill Clinton. Tá daoine ann, ar ndóigh, agus deireann siad gur chuir Clinton níos mó suime fós i Monica Lewinsky ná i cúrsaí Éireannacha! Bíodh sé sin mar atá. Ach nuair bhuaigh Hillary Clinton an toghachán don Teach Bán i 2008 bhí a fhois againn go raibh "an seó ar an mbóthar arís". Trua ar ndóigh faoi rudaí eile a bhaineann le Hillary.

Cuid blianta ó shin níor rith sé le daoine go mbeidh Rónán Óg Ó Briain ina Thaoiseach ar Éirinn Aontaithe. Agus fiú má rith sé leo, ar rith sé leo go

mbeadh Percy Russell ann mar Thánaiste? Dhéarfainn go mbeidh Eoin Óg Parsons sásta lena phost mar Cheann Comhairle na Dála. Beidh sé fós in ann smacht a choimeád ar ghnól Mac lena athair is ea Eoin Óg. Tá dea obair déanta ag Rónán Óg i roghnú Chomhaireachta.

A Sheoirse, níor shíl mé riamh go bhfeicfinn an lá nuair a bheadh Poblachtaigh agus Aontachtaíthe ina suí le chéile ag ceiliúradh athbhunaithe na Poblachta. Mar is eol duit agus do chách is fíor nach bhfuil sé fíor. Tá Aontachtaíthe i gcuimhacht arís. An uair seo tá siad ag glacadh pháirt i stiúradh Phoblacht Uile-Éireann. Agus an rialtas Uile-Éireann lonnaithe i mBéal Feirste! An Phríomh-Chathair nua!

Gabhaim do phardún as ucht a bheith ag scríobh faoi rudaí atá ar eolas ag an saol mór anois. Is eol duit go maith go raibh mé riamh agus i gcónaí dóchasach go mhairfinn Éire aontaithe a fheiceáil.

Bhí sé de phribhléid agam, mar iriseoir, a bheith i láthair ag na preas-agallaimh thabhachtachá.

Beidh mé i dteagmháil arís mura mbím ag obair ar scéal mór eile.

Beir bua agus beannacht.

*Do chara,
Peadar.*

I.S.

Is maith an iarracht í 'Lá na Poblachta' a bheith ar an 12ú Iúil agus é a bheith ina lá saor poiblí.

Glossary

todhchaf - the future	gach ceangal - every tie
leithscéal - excuse	rith sé leis - it occurred to
chomh héasca sin - that easy	(bh)fiar-Aontachtaíthe - true Unionists
iriseoir - journalist	bualite linn anois - with us now
cúiteamh - compensation	(arrived)
mór imeachtaí - big events	na sluaite - the crowds
maidir liom féin - as regards myself	ag ceiliúradh - celebrating
níos lú ná - less than	athbhunaithe - re-establishment
cé a cheapfadh - who would think	spualc-phointe - highlight
go dtarlódh a leithéid - that such	Fleá Stáit - State Banquet
(a thing) would happen	mar chruthúnas - as evidence,
fada fadálach - long tedious	as proof
comhráiteas - joint statement	monarcaí - monarchs
an Chalpéis Bhreoltach - Frame-	(Ina) ndearg nalmhde - deadly ene-
work Document	mies
sos chogaidh - ceasefire	'ní toil liom' - nol (not my wish)
Óglaigh na hÉireann - IRA	stair na tréimhse seo - history of
a d'fhógair - that announced	this period
(n) Dlíseoirí - Loyalist	a sheacht ndícheall - his best
i bhfeidhm - in effect	endeavours (his seven efforts!)
i ndáiríre - in earnest	leisce - reluctance
sosanna - cessations	In ainneoin - despite
amras - doubt	deacrachtaí - difficulties
fós níos molle - yet slower	moltaí - recommendations
na hAontachtaíthe - the Unionists	d'ais-tarraing - withdrew
patuar - lukewarm	feiliúnach - suitable
leid - clue	toilteannach - willing
a bhfeachtas buamála	níos mó suime - more interest
- their bombing campaign	an toghachán - the election
do-chreidte - unbelievable	a bhalneann le Hillary - connected to
staid pholaitiúil - political situation	Hillary
"ón taobh istigh" - "from the inside"	smacht a choimeád - to keep control
éacht mór - big achievement	roghnú - selection
i bhforbairt na síochána - in the	a chomhairleacht(a) - his cabinet
development of the peace	Poblachtaigh - Republicans
go foighneach - patiently	do chách - to everybody
dí-armáil - disarm(ing)	bríonglóid - dream
na Sealadaigh - the Provisionals	ní dhúiseoidh tú - you will not waken
Páirtí Aontachtach Daonlathach -	I gcuimhacht - in power
D.U.P.	I stiúradh - in steering, in guiding
an chéad dul síos - in the first place	lonnaithe - settled situated
robáil - robbery	an Phríomh-Chathair - the Capital City
múlnín - confidence	dóchasach - hopeful
a chothú iontu - to instil in them	p(h)ribhléid - privilege
roinnt na cumhachta - power sharing	na preas-agallaimh - the press
Tionól Áitiúil - Local Assembly	conferences
ar fionraí - suspend(ed)	t(h)ábhachtach(a) - important
díleadh ar ndialdh - little by little,	I dteagmháil - in communication, in
bit by bit	touch

The Manchester Martyrs

William Fitzpatrick

*One cold November morning in 1867
These martyrs to their country's cause as
sacrifice were given*

'Oh God save Ireland' was the cry

All through the crowd it ran

May the Lord have mercy on the boys

That helped to smash the van.

November 24th last marked the 140th anniversary of the executions of the 'Manchester Martyrs'.

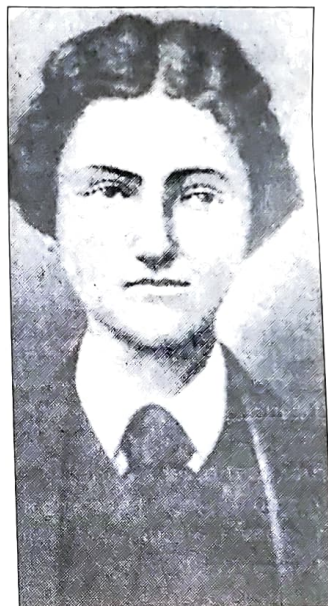
William Allen, Philip Larkin and Michael O'Brien were publicly hanged for the killing of Sergeant Brett during the rescue of Thomas Kelly and Captain Timothy Deasy, captured high-ranking members of the Fenian movement, who were being transported from a prison van bound for Belle Vue Gaol in Manchester. Kelly was the Fenian elected Chief Executive of the Irish Republic.

Fenianism was a revolutionary movement originating in the United States committed to winning Irish independence through violent means if necessary. The Manchester Martyrs were in fact innocent of the crime; the man who fired the fatal shot, Rice, escaped with Kelly and Deasy to America. The rescue had involved some thirty Fenians surrounding the van and trying to smash in the roof and gain access to the two prisoners, when this attempt failed the fatal shot was fired, allegedly through the lock thus mortally wounding Sergeant Brett.

Almost immediately following 'the noble hearted three' succumbing to 'England's fatal chord around them cast', the men were elevated to the quasi-sacred position of noble

Irish martyrs, joining the great pantheon of Tone and Bold Robert Emmet 'shedding their life's blood for Dark Rosaleen'. Their premier position in the affections and memories of the Irish public, safe and secure for decades to come was due in no small measure to the residual popularity of T.D. Sullivan's rousing ballad written to commemorate them 'God save Ireland'. This tune was to become the Country's virtual anthem for the next sixty years. It was written two days after the executions and was set to the old Yankee marching tune 'Tramp Tramp Tramp the Boys are Marchin'.

News of the executions and the subsequent outpouring of sympathy, song and story that followed created a large groundswell of hitherto non-existent support for the Fenian movement. Like so often in Irish history the executioner and hangman's rope did much to turn popular opinion. The fact that it was reported that Larkin and O'Brien suffered during their executions through alleged incompetence on the part of their execu-



William Allen

tioner no doubt did much to colour public opinion.

Chesterton wrote 'God bless the Gaels of Ireland, the men that God made mad, for all their wars were merry and all their songs were sad'. There is no denying the deep-seated connection between our national collective memory and the historical songs that have commemorated our all too often violent and tragic past.

During his trial Allen stated 'I want no mercy, I'll have no mercy, I'll die as many thousands have died for the sake

"...Like so often in Irish history the executioner and hangman's rope did much to turn popular opinion..."



Philip Larkin

of their beloved land and in defence of it. I will die proudly and triumphantly in defence of Republican principles and the liberty of an oppressed and enslaved people'. It was during their trial that the famous cry of 'God Save Ireland' was taken up by the men.

Yet what of the Ireland of today, are the 'Manchester Martyrs' still revered and remembered by the Irish public? Is there room or need in 21st Century Ireland to recall these men's lonely passing on a foggy chill November's morn? Should they be remembered? Has the recent armed struggle in the North forever tarnished and damned all apologists of physical force politics on this island? Is the legacy of the Fenians that of a free people in a free nation pursuing their self determination in a Republic that our ancestors could only dream of, or is it another legacy altogether?

Pearse wrote 'Oh wise man riddle me this, what if the dream come true'. He might just have pondered what if the dream proves untrue, what if it gets corrupted, hijacked, misinterpreted, tarnished, perverted, forgotten- what if the dream is not enough?

What is above debate is that the 'Manchester Martyrs' were part of the Fenian movement and once widely celebrated as patriot martyrs. They were part of a movement that sought Irish freedom, they fought for it, died for it and through there suffering and sacrifice inspired future generations to gain independence and create the Republic.

Pearse got it right: 'From the graves of heroes dead, spring living nations'. That later generations sullied the august tradition of Republicanism can hardly be the fault or blame of the Fenians. Clerkenwell was an accident, an aberration, it was not a campaign and policy of wholesale slaughter.

Revisionists would have a man believe that nothing in our troubled history warranted or justified the use of violence to gain our freedom. Yet, is it not the case that through bloodshed most nations are born and forged? Violence is abhorrent, is it ever necessary or justified?

The youth of today in this country are denied recourse to national pride or historic

heroes - vital components in the forging of youth to manhood. This is not a call for jingoism or the breeding of inveterate deep-set hatred and sectarianism towards any man or nation, but it is a call for common sense. If a nation turns its back on its history it ceases to be a nation, as the old Jewish saying goes 'to remember is to live'. What we need in this country is reasonable, fair debate when discussing the past and its possible legacies.

No one can deny that Allen, Larkin and O'Brien were brave men who died believing their sacrifice would aid future Irish generations. One can argue whether this was indeed the case, that their sacrifice did aid future generations, one cannot deny that physical force rebellion led to the foundation of the Republic. Revisionists can pontificate *ad nauseam* as to the possible myriad chains of events that may or may not have occurred if the tradition of physical force had not surfaced in Ireland, intermittently and at crucial stages of change during our turbulent history.

Yet, that is all convoluted conjecture and has no concrete substance or basis in fact, perhaps Sean O'Riordan put it most succinctly: 'Is níl laistigh d'aon daoirse, Ach saoirse oin daoirse sin'. 'And only the unfree, Can know what freedom is'.

Familiarity breeds contempt, sometimes soft liv-



Michael O'Brien

ing leads to soft thinking. Revisionism was a necessary breaking away and attack on the all too prevalent unquestioning, ultra-nationalist hagiographic histories in vogue before the 1960s. Yet one could argue that revisionism itself has become an unquestioned dogma, a sacred cow ripe for the slaughter. One could argue it is the very antithesis of modern, objective historical analysis. It is by definition unequivocally anti-nationalist, loaded in its intent and myopic in its outlook, ironically it has much in common with the tribal unquestioning jaundiced view of history it set out to smash.

Which or whether, a prayer or a thought towards the 'Manchester Martyrs' and indeed Sergeant Brett would not go amiss upon this Winter's day. God Save Ireland indeed.

Climbing the reek for the first time

Michael Fox

Well, I finally did it. After years of passing it by as I travelled the road between Westport and Louisburg in County Mayo, of pausing on other occasions and gazing up at it in all its awesome wonder, and having just two or three times ventured as far as the statue of Saint Patrick at its base, I have "climbed the Reek".

To be more precise, I have ascended Croagh Patrick the mountain so named in honour of Ireland's national saint, Saint Patrick, emulating the trek that he undertook to the summit of this striking mass of rock in the year 441 AD, and where he fasted for forty days. The tradition of pilgrimage to this holy mountain, in fact, goes back further in time, in excess of 5,000 years to be precise, from Stone Age

"Weather forecasts for the day... were dire and would-be pilgrims to the holy mountain were constrained to attire themselves with warm clothing and suitable footwear..."



A Quiet Moment at the Top

times to the present day, without interruption.

My climb took place on the last Sunday of July this year, this day being known

traditionally as, "Reek Sunday", the day which each year, regardless of prevailing weather conditions, draws huge numbers of pilgrims from County Mayo, from all over Ireland and from overseas, all enthusiastically following in the footsteps of Saint Patrick up "The Reek", many barefooted as he would have been, as an act of penance.

Weather forecasts for the day, born of the inclement Summer weather Ireland

has experienced this year, were dire and would-be pilgrims to the holy mountain were constrained to attire themselves with warm clothing and suitable footwear to protect against the elements. In regard to "footwear", pilgrims were advised, firstly, not to go barefooted and, then, discouraged from wearing unsuitable footwear such as "flip flops", Wellingtons, stiletto heels or football boots. One can only assume that such items of

footwear must have been in evidence unwisely on previous occasions, hence the advice now being given!

In the event, as the small party of which I was part set off up the mountain at the unearthly hour of four o'clock on the morning of "Reek Sunday", without even the light of a moon to illuminate our journey, the weather conditions were dry and mild, and with a lovely freshness in the air. Indeed, as the day progressed, it turned out to be one of the warmest and most glorious days that we have experienced in the west of Ireland so far this year. So much for weather forecasting and, **thankfully**, on that occasion the weather pundits "got it wrong"!

Our climb up the "The Reek" would, essentially, cover three "sections", the bottom section a steady climb, a middle part where the rocky ground underfoot largely levelled out, and a final steep ascent to the top of the mountain. However, no clearly defined well laid out pathway for this journey!

As we steadily climbed the first part of the path, having earlier paused at the statue of Saint Patrick at the base of the mountain to pray, we met, on their way down, a small but steady stream of returning pilgrims, those who had completed their climb up the Reek at much earlier hour than ours, and for some

their descent with carefully picked footsteps lit by little lamps worn on their foreheads, in fact, looking for all the world like miners returning from a "shift" down a mine! Gazing up the mountain one could see many such lights bobbing away, marking out the path down the mountain.

As we climbed higher the darkness of the night started to dispel and we were treated to a glorious sunrise. I soon started to warm up, from the task of navigating the rocky uneven path under foot (or under "boot" in my case, having heeded the advice to address the climb well-

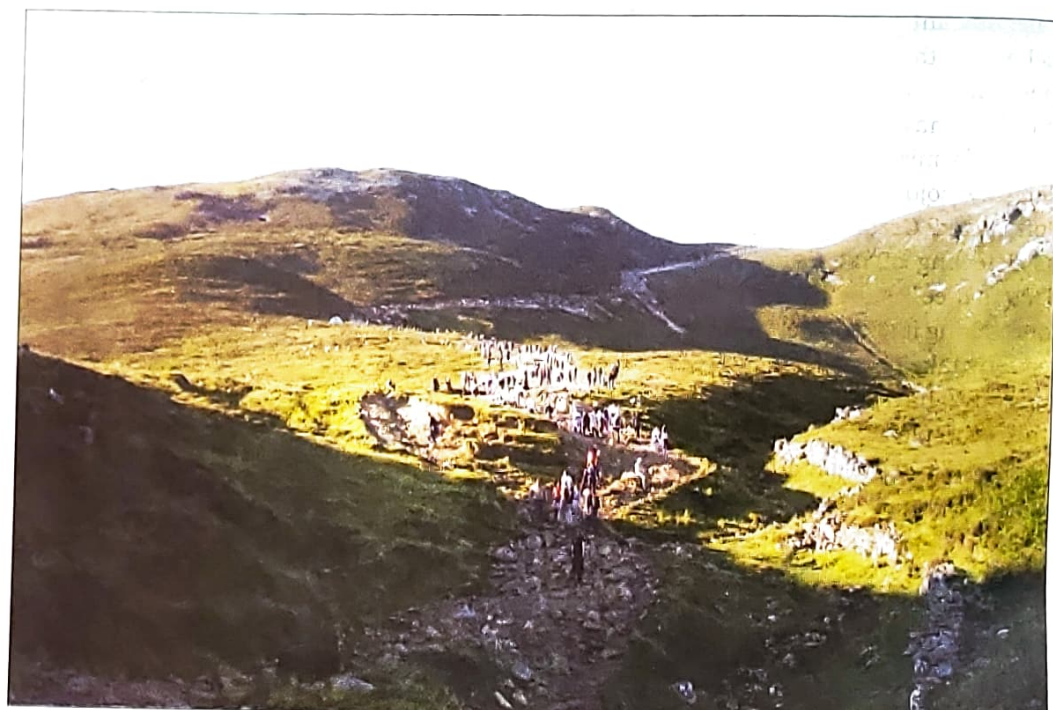
shod") and, of necessity, I threw off the coat I was wearing and left it, anchored with a stone, to await collection on my return from "the top". At the same time I pulled down the peak of the cap I was wearing firmly to shield my eyes from the strong rays of the rising sun.

The ascent became harder and more difficult as the muscles and ligaments in my "first timer" climbing legs started to tell me that they might not measure up to what was expected from them on this occasion. I am now facing a dilemma. Am I able to carry on? Shall I turn around,

and go back down? Various thoughts filled my mind. If I give up now, what will people think of me? What if I give up but say that I did complete the climb? Who's to know? That's the easy way out, but, then, I wouldn't be able to live with my scolding conscience afterwards. There was nothing for it but to press on, onwards and upwards and trust that I would "make it". Strangely (or perhaps not given where I was) I seemed to get a "second wind" and, renewed, I pressed on. Looking back down the mountain, I had in fact gained quite a bit of height on my climb.



Gradually, the climb eased with the path levelling out a little, at a point where it starts to curve around the back of the mountain. Here was a "reward" for getting this far, and welcome relief from the respite of the first part of the climb, with complaining muscles having a chance to recuperate, but not for long!



On this more horizontal section was pitched a "hospital tent" with medical staff standing by to administer care to anyone suffering any mishaps on their climb, and from where an Irish Air Core helicopter, ever hovering over the mountain whilst we climbed, could airlift anyone requiring greater medical assistance to the hospital in nearby Castlebar. Other tents had been pitched here also by Mountain Rescue Units, from various parts of Ireland and stationed out

along the length of the mountain path, ever watchful of the climbers, ever vigilant for anybody getting into difficulty on the mountain and requiring of their assistance.

Ambling along this middle part of the climb, muscles relaxed and "drawing my

breath", and looking up at the final section of the climb to be tackled to gain the peak of "The Reek", and the little white church at the top, one could almost be lulled into thinking that this last stage was no more than "a hop, skip, and a jump". I'll fly up that. Not so, as the final ascent was to prove, for the toughest part of the climb lay ahead!

The path started to climb again, sharply. Now, every faltering step is a marathon in itself. I am searching for firm places to place my boots. Will that rock hold if I stand on it? I am almost bent double at times, striving to gain height. Am I making any impression on this part of the climb at all, I ask myself. Looking down, most certainly, looking up, when, oh when, will the top of the little white church loom into view, and my journey's end be in sight?

At last, I am there. And there are the other members of my little group who completed their climb just before me. There is quite a crowd at the top already. My "prize" for reaching the pinnacle of this holy mountain, apart from the spiritual satisfaction sought and now gained, and a personal sense of fulfilment, are the magnificent views from here, on the bright clear day that was now "in it". Positively breathtaking, as one scans a vista taking in Clew Bay below, with its numerous islands (it is said there is one for every day of the year) set like jewels in a crown, and the range of mountains known as the Twelve Pins, the dominant feature of the Connemara landscape lying to the south of "The Reek".

Gazing out across a majestic landscape that has existed from before the time of Patrick one feels quite

"...The path started to climb again, sharply. Now, every faltering step is a marathon in itself. I am searching for firm places to place my boots. Will that rock hold if I stand on it? I am almost bent double at times, striving to gain height..."

insignificant in the overall scheme of things. One wonders also, what thoughts would have occupied Patrick's mind during his lengthy sojourn atop this lofty peak? Certainly, there is a feeling of "nearer my God to thee", standing there and taking it all in. Conversations take place with others who have made it to the top, pleasantries and anecdotes are exchanged, and there is much camaraderie amongst those gathered around the little white church.

It still being very early in the day, the frequent Masses which will take place during the day would not start for a while yet. Therefore, we decide to begin our descent of the mountain. Will it be any easier

going down? Certainly not, as I was to discover.

The journey down was just as, if not more, strenuous than the expedition up the mountain, with greater care needed in picking "safe" places to place one's feet, and the need for, on numerous occasions, to stand aside and make room for the pilgrims now ascending the mountain in great numbers. To those making the trek up the mountain, and enquiring of us going down, "Is it much further to the top?" and by way of encouragement to them (and with a little economy of truth), one would respond "not far, its only another half hour or so (or whatever)!"

On reaching its lower section, I looked back up the

mountain and, with the time still only about 8 o'clock in the morning, I could see a line of people strung out the full length of the path winding its way up and around the mountain all the way to its crown. A remarkable sight, indeed, and I did hear later that some 30,000 pilgrims had climbed "The Reek" that day.

Left here and there, and also draped over fences, were coats and other items of clothing discarded by climbers, the promised inclement weather for the day not having materialised and it now being warm and sunny. I noticed, placed on a rock, a solitary Mars chocolate bar and wondered if this had, in fact, been left there by

some charitable person for a passing pilgrim in need of an "energy boost".

Having again paused at Saint Patrick's statue to pray and to give thanks for our safe passage up and down Croagh Patrick we gained the level ground of the car park at its base. Nonetheless, even though I was now on "the flat" it still took a little while for my aching leg muscles to adjust to normal walking again.

The climb, for me as a first timer, was probably one of the toughest encounters I have experienced in my life so far and at times during my trek I did say to myself I couldn't do this again. As I now reflect on the experience, would I do it again? Most certainly.



A Letter to Priests: 'Stand up for the Truth!'

From a concerned young person

Dear Father,

One thing that I notice among the various priests that I have listened to is the failure among them to stand up for the Truth and the Faith. I could count on one hand the number of priests I know who would speak up for the Faith. I can't understand why it is so hard for priests to speak the Truth. Is it because they are afraid of what people would say? How they would react? Or is it that they simply don't care anymore? Think carefully Father, when was the last time you gave a proper sermon on sin, on the Commandments, on the Eucharist, on Heaven, Hell and Purgatory, on the necessity of prayer, penance and sacrifice. I am not talking about the more recent types of sermons that come up, that God is all loving and merciful, and everyone who believes in Him will be saved, that belief in God is the only necessity for eternal salvation.

We both know that this is modernist rubbish, a Protestantised version of the Catholic Faith. Remem-

ber in your youth, you were taught the utmost need for Confession, in order to cleanse the soul, that Catholics and other Christians are just as capable of going to Hell, as any other person, regardless of their belief in Christ. After all, even Satan believes in God. I have heard that Satan's greatest triumph is making people believe that he does not exist. If you take that into consideration while looking around at the world, I am sure that you will agree that many people are on the road to Hell and they don't even realise it.

Everywhere you look you can see the present sinful state of the world. Everyday there is yet another murder, another shooting or stabbing. There is no more regard for the sacredness of human life. There is a barrage of sexual and pornographic images from all sources. There is constant violence and war. There are people disregarding the Commandments and making a mockery of the God, the Church, the Bible and the Christian Faith. Apostasy has never been high-

er. There is rampant perversion and unnatural, immoral behaviour. Self-harm and suicide is becoming widespread. People are being driven to despair and they can not find a way out of it. Many ask what can be done about the world today.

That is where you come in, Father. We need to start on a local level. I do not know if you realise this, but you are ultimately responsible for the faith of those in your parish. If your parishioners are heading towards Hell, and you are not trying to prevent this, then you will be responsible for the loss of their souls. That could mean that you will end up there also. After all, many priests, bishops and cardinals are already there or heading there and you will make no exception. If you make a good attempt to save their souls, and

they do not listen, then it becomes their fault and not yours. Who knows, you might even reach some, bring them back to the Faith and save them from eternal damnation.

Don't expect much from the Catholic Hierarchy. With a few notable international exceptions, the current Hierarchy, rather than upholding and defending the Faith, seems to be trying to undermine and destroy it. This even applies to Ireland, where in recent times, has even one Irish Bishop stood up properly for the Faith?

You might ask what you can do about it. Well, Father, you could cut down on the social activities. What good are they doing? You need to go back to the old Penny Catechism and re-learn it. Start saying your breviary with

***"...Don't be disheartened
Father, your words will be
in the back of their minds,
and maybe it will come to
them when they need it
most and will save them..."***

more reverence and start praying Rosaries and doing Adoration. Pray like you have never prayed before, and do it slowly, from the heart. Re-learn Latin and use it in your prayers. Say the Mass slower and with much more reverence than before. Take the women off the altar. Have more Confessions. Begin teaching proper sermons on the Catholic Faith, on the Eucharist, on Sin, on Confession, on Heaven, Hell and Purgatory, on the Commandments and on the necessity of prayer (especially the Rosary). Speak out against the modern ideas of co-habitation, divorce and re-marriage, fornication, perversion, pornography, abortion, contraception, sodomy, murder, theft, blasphemy, desecration, profanity, sex education and anything else wrong in our society. Refuse Communion to those you know that are living in sin. Teach children the basic prayers and how to receive Communion properly.

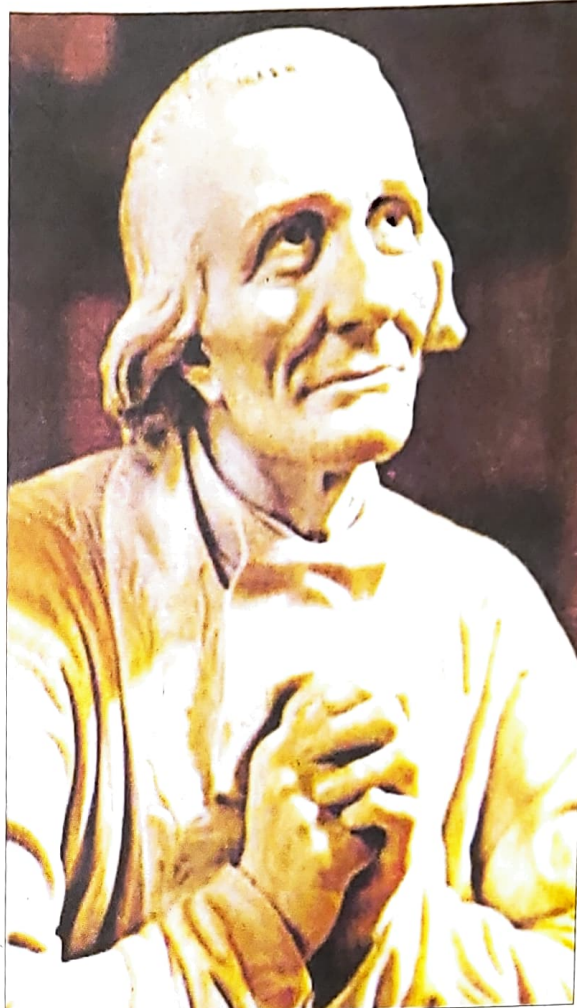
"Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake: theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake: Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets that were before you. You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is good for nothing any more but to be cast out, and to be trodden on by men. You are the light of the world. A city seated on a mountain cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but upon a candlestick, that it may shine to all that are in the house. So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

(St Matthew Ch5 V10 -16)

Now don't get me wrong, you will encounter much hostility, criticism, resentment, insults and even defamation. Attendance at Masses could drop. This won't be because you are doing anything wrong, but because the truth often hurts. People don't like hearing that the way they are living is wrong, or that they are heading to Hell. Don't be disheartened Father, your words will be in the back of their minds, and maybe it will come to them when they need it most and will save them. Remember the end of the Beatitudes (St Matthew Ch5 V10 -16) and take heart, Father. It is time to reclaim the Church from the liberals and the modernists. Stand up for the Truth!

Yours Sincerely,
A Concerned young person

Note: The author is a reader of The Hibernian. Details are with the editor and responses from priests can be passed on to her.



A SAINT FOR PRIESTS: St. Jean Baptiste Marie Vianney (the Curé d'Ars)

A Christmas Carol

The Christ-child lay on Mary's lap,
His hair was like light.
(O weary, weary were the world,
But here is all aright.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's breast,
His hair was like a star.
(O stern and cunning are the kings,
But here the true hearts are.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's heart,
His hair was like a fire.
(O weary, weary is the world,
But here the world's desire.)

The Christ-child stood at Mary's knee,
His hair was like a crown,
And all the flowers looked up at Him,
And all the stars looked down.

G.K. Chesterton

Common Purpose, the new way to spell Freemasonry

Ever wonder why is it that institutions like the Health Service never seem to work properly no matter how much money is poured into them? Perhaps what's going on in Britain can help shed some light on things...

Common Purpose is the glue that enables fraud to be committed across government departments to reward pro-European politicians. Corrupt deals are enabled that put property or cash into their pockets by embezzling public assets.

Although it has 80,000 trainees in 36 cities, 18,000 "graduate" members and enormous power, Common Purpose is largely unknown to the general public.

It recruits and trains "leaders" to be loyal to the directives of Common Purpose and the EU, instead of to their own departments, which they then undermine or subvert, the NHS being an example.

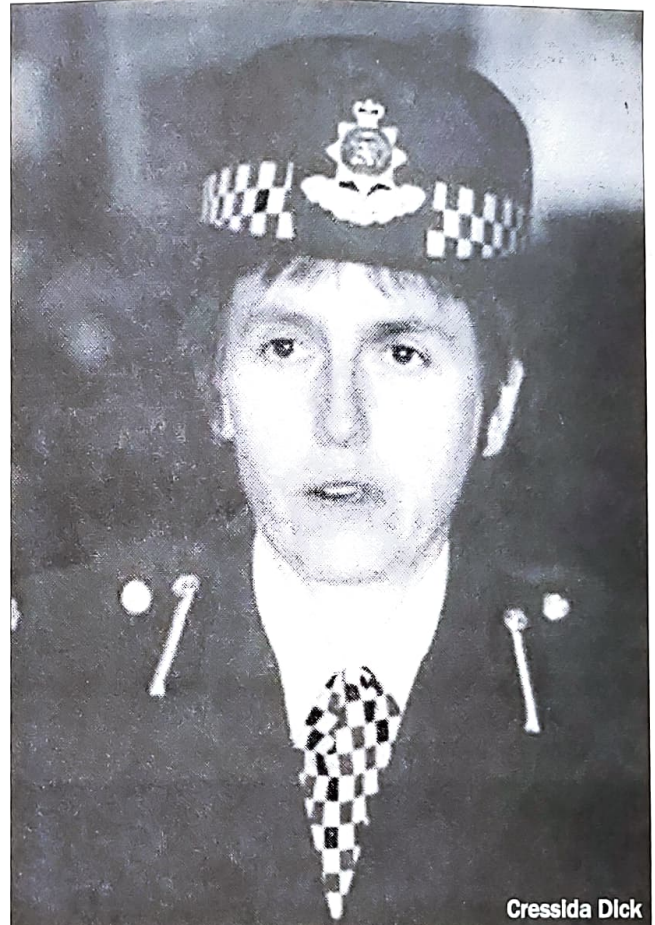
Common Purpose is identifying leaders in all levels of our government to assume power when our nation is replaced by the European Union. Unlike current leaders, CP leaders are taught to rule without democracy, and will bring the EU police state home to every one of us. It has members in the NHS, BBC, the police, the legal profession, many of

Britain's 7,000 quangos, local councils, the Civil Service, government ministries, Parliament, and it controls many RDAs (Regional Development Agencies).

Cressida Dick is the Common Purpose senior police officer who authorised the "Shoot to kill" policy without reference to Parliament, the law or the British Constitution. Jean de Menezes was one of the innocents who died as a result. Her shoot to kill policy still stands today.

Common Purpose trained Janet Paraskeva, the Law Society's Chief Executive Officer. Surprising numbers of lawyers are CP members. It is no coincidence that justice is more expensive, more flawed and more corrupt. And no surprise the courts refused to uphold the law, when a challenge was made to the signing of the six EU treaties, which illegally abolish Britain's sovereignty.

Common Purpose was backed by John Prescott's "Office of the Deputy Prime Minister" (ODPM), and its notional Chief Executive



Cressida Dick

was Julia Middleton. The Head of the Civil Service Commission is a member.

It is close to controlling Plymouth City Council, where it has subverted the democratic process. Local people cannot get CP's corrupt activities published, because the editors of local papers are in CP,

and refuse to let journalists publish the articles.

CP started in 1985; in the 1990s, with its members' cross departmental influence, it was involved with what then became the disastrous New Millennium Dome Company and the squandering of £800 million; it appears £300m of

this was diverted into the web of quangos set up by CP. There is a fraud case over this, stalled in the courts thanks to CP's influence in the legal profession.

Over £100 million of our money has been spend on CP courses alone, and its been hidden from the public. No published accounts, and members names are a guarded secret. It charges substantial figures for its courses. Matrix for example costs £3,950 plus VAT, and courses for the high flying 'leader' can be as much as £9,950 plus VAT. This money is ours, paid by government departments financing senior staff to become agents for CP, instead of loyal to their own jobs.

Common Purpose International (Ltd by guarantee) is registered as a Charity No 1056573 and describes itself as being involved in Adult education. Some charity.

Potential Common Purpose subjects are 'selected' for training. Are they susceptible to being converted; are they in the right job, with the right colleagues and friends? Do they have power, influence and the control of money? If the candidate has some, or all of these key attributes, then the local Common Purpose Advisory Board decides if they can do the course.

Trained leaders are encouraged to act as a network, enable other members' plans, and have meetings under the so called Chatham House rules. This effectively means their statements are not

attributable to them, nor can attendees reveal information heard at a Common Purpose meeting.

Council Officers are having quasi secret meetings with, for example, property developer Common Purpose friends. No agendas and no minutes. Common Purpose Graduates from the public quango sectors such as the Regional Development Agencies attend, and have the power to award large sums of public money to projects.

It is the worst national example of cronyism, closed contract bids, fraud and corruption. And unseen to the general public.

Common Purpose undermines traditionally effective and efficient government departments with an overwhelming influx of new language, political correctness and management initiatives. The talk is of empowering communities, vision, mainstreaming (sucking EU money into a project to sustain it), community empowerment, working partnership, regeneration and celebrating diversity etc etc. Documents appear about change, and reorganisation. In time confusion rules, and things don't seem to work properly. Management decisions are made that seem stupidly destructive. The organisational performance becomes sluggish. Undermining the NHS is Common Purposes' biggest success so far.

David Cameron, who is pro-Europe, uses the language of Common Purpose; he has appointed Ken Clarke, the most commit-

ted of the pro-Europeans, in charge of his "Democracy Taskforce" - rather like putting the cat in charge of the safety of mice.

Common Purpose specifically targets children from the age of 13, and more recently younger, for special leadership and citizenship training. Yes, it is active in schools, and again the average parent has no idea.

People have contacted us to speak of their experiences with Common Purpose. A common theme is its all sweetness and light, until you fail to follow the direction set by the CP leadership.

Then interesting things happen. Ladies in particular have been bullied at work, some have lost their jobs, some have become paranoid and depressed at the pressure from people ganging up on them.

A typical story is a husband describing the decline in his wife from the time she becomes a Common Purpose graduate. Loss of sparkle, enthusiasm, anxious and 'changed', and she initiated a divorce.

Other Common Purpose people lie when they are challenged as to their involvement.

Common Purpose candidates are given a two day residential course in which they are 'trained' in a closed residential environment, such as a small hotel. They are encouraged to reveal significant personal information about themselves,

such as their likes, dislikes, ambitions and dreams. Discussions are then controlled by the course leaders. Some participants have likened this to Delphi technique or the application of group psychology such as Cognitive Dissonance or brainwashing.

If you suspect Common Purpose is active in your organisation, or see a pattern of incredibly bad decisions, money being wasted, notice bullying, fraud, or threats, note the names of those involved (we've tracked down over a thousand) and please contact us. And publish the truth about Common Purpose as widely as you can.

All that matters regarding the European Soviet, which is increasingly forming itself as a Supra National Power is: WHAT is the Exit and Survival strategy?

"Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable." Sun Tzu

"To achieve One World Government it is necessary to remove from the minds of men their individualism their loyalty to family traditions and national identification." Brock Chisholm, when Director of the UN WHO

There is more clear evidence on youtube.com and Google, search for for "Brian Gerrish" / "Common Purpose" or check out David Noake's brilliant (comprehensive) website at www.euttruth.org.uk.

Keep vigilant!

Meditation: The Nativity of Our Lord

Christmas Day - The Savior Has Appeared

Presence of God

Behold, I am the feet of my Incarnate God, who has become a Child for love of me! I adore, I thank, I love!

Meditation

1. God is charity: He has loved us with an everlasting love! "I think God must have said to Himself: Man does not love Me because he does not see Me; I will show Myself to him and thus make him love me. God's love for man was very great, and had been great from all eternity, but this love had not yet become visible... Then, it really appeared; the Son of God let Himself be seen as a tiny Babe in a stable, lying on a little straw." (St. Alphonsus). This is the mystery of the Nativity; this is St. Paul's exultant cry: "The grace of God our Savior hath appeared to all men... The goodness and kindness of God our Savior appeared" (Ep 1st and 2nd Masses: Ti 2, 11-15 - 3, 4-7). These are the blessed tidings "of great joy" brought by the Angel to the shepherds; "This day is born to you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord!" (Gosp 1st Mass: Luke 2, 1-14). The text in today's liturgy, following each other in tones of increasing exultation, sing the praises of the sweet Child Jesus, the Word made Man, living and breathing among us: "Whom you have seen, O shepherds? Speak and tell us who has appeared on earth? We saw the new-born Child and choirs of angels loudly praising the Lord" (RB) "Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth exult in the presence of the Lord!" (RM). Our God is here in the midst of us, He has become one of us. "A Child is born to us, a Son is given to us... His name is Admirable, God, Prince of peace, Father of the world to come!... Rejoice, O daughter of Sion, sing O daughter of Jerusalem... Rejoice, ye inhabi-

itants of earth! Come, ye nations, adore the Lord!" (RB). Come! Come, adore, listen, and rejoice! Jesus, the Word of the Father, speaks to us a wonderful word: God loves you!

2. The three Christmas Masses place before us a majestic picture; the touching description of the birth of Jesus as man alternates with the sublime one of the eternal birth of the Word in the bosom of the Father; and there are also allusions to Christ's birth in our souls by grace. However, this three-fold birth is but one single manifestation of God who is Charity. No one on earth could know God's love; but the Word, who is in the bosom of the Father, knows it can reveal it to us. The word was made flesh and has shown to us the love of God. Through the Word God's incomprehensible, invisible charity is made manifest and tangible in the sweet little Babe, who from the manger holds out His arms to us. Today's Preface solemnly declares it: "O eternal God, because of the mystery of the Word made flesh, the light of Thy glory hath shone anew upon the eyes of our mind: that while we acknowledge Him to be God visible, e may draw us to the love of things invisible." Yes, this "Child, wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger" is our God, who, for us, has made Himself visible: our God, who shows us in the most concrete way His infinite charity. One can not contemplate little Jesus without being captivated and enraptured by the infinite love which had given Him to us. The Infant Jesus reveals to us God's love, He manifests in the clearest, most touching way. St. Paul says in the Epistle of the Third Mass (Heb 1, 1-12): "God, in these days hath spoken to us by his Son... the brightness of His glory, and the figure of His substance." Jesus, the Incarnate Word, in His silence as a helpless Child,



speaks to us and reveals to us the substance of God: His charity.

Colloquy

"O all-powerful and eternal Trinity! O sweet, ineffable charity! Who would not be inflamed by such love? What heart could keep itself from being consumed by you?"

"O abyss of charity! You have so closely bound Yourself to Your creatures that it seems that you cannot live without them! Nevertheless You are our God! You have no need for us. Our good adds nothing to Your greatness, for You are immutable. Our misfortune cannot harm You, O God, sovereign, eternal Goodness! Then what urges You to such mercy? Love- for You have no obligation toward us and no need of us. Then, O infinite God, who brings You to me, a little creature? No one but Yourself, O Fire of Love! Love alone has always urged You, and love still urges You!"

"O sovereign sweetness, you have deigned to unite Yourself to our bitterness; You, brilliance, with our darkness; You, wisdom, with our stupidity; You, life, with death; You, who are infinite, with us who are finite!" (St. Catherine of Siena)
O sweet Incarnate Word, O most

amiable Infant Jesus, behold me at last Your feet; let me contemplate You; permit me to delight in Your beauty, Your goodness, Your immense charity! In this little Child who smiles, and holds out His baby arms to me, I find Your infinite love, living breathing- for this Babe is You, O my God! How can I ever thank You for Your exceeding love? How can I ever make you a return of love?"

"You, who are so great and rich, have made Yourself little and poor for us! You chose to be born far from home, in a stable, to be wrapped in swaddling clothes, to be nourished at Your Virgin Mother's breast, to be laid in a manger between an ox and an ass. Today is the dawn of the new redemption, of the old restoration, of eternal happiness; today, the heavens have distilled honey throughout the whole world! Then, O my soul, kiss this divine manger, press your lips to the infant's feet and embrace them. Meditate on the shepherds watching their flocks, contemplate the angelic hosts, prepare to join in the heavenly melody, singing with your lips and with your heart: 'Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to men of good will!'" (St. Bonaventure)

Your Letters...

Keep Up The Good Work

Dear Sir,

Thank you for standing up for Faith and Family! I'm an American, but I follow news of the battles in Ireland for the continued protection of the unborn and the defence of our Catholic Faith. You have the prayers of Pro-life Catholics here in the States!

The tremendous moral and cultural degeneration brought about by contraception and abortion in America makes us pray all the harder that Ireland may succeed in defeating these evils, and never have to endure the horrors that are all too common here since the acceptance of contraception led to the legalisation of abortion on demand. (I stress the connection to contraception because a prominent American Planned Parenthood member has gleefully said that "As long as contraception is legal, abortion will be legal.")

Indeed, Pro-life Americans have found that we have to educate even our fellow Catholics about the Church's teaching on contraception, so successful have dissenters been in getting people to accept the culture of death.) Keep up the good work, and know that Holy Ireland will always be in our prayers!

*In Jesus and Mary,
Jennifer (Fionnait Sradag), U.S.A.*

Pictures Of Abortion

A chara,

It has recently been suggested that the showing of pictures of the reality of abortion amounts to "shock tactics", is a "switch-off", and is therefore counter-productive.

I'm not so sure.

Showing pictures of a happy, smiling baby is what everybody wants to do. Few, if anybody, take pleasure in showing anything else. Indeed, pleasant pictures is all that should be available.

Unfortunately, not all babies are smiling and happy, and with good reason.

Showing pleasant pictures is itself a "switch-off". Little attention is going to be given to reinforcing what people want to believe.

In addition, helping to hide an unpleasant truth is a further disservice to the unborn child, and to society.

Is mise

*Donal O'Driscoll,
Blackrock, Co Dublin*

Real Catholic Party Needed

A chara,

I have enjoyed *The Hibernian* magazine and as a Roman Catholic and nationalist, the insight into the faith has been wonderful. From a Southern point of view, the demise of the S.D.L.P. which would, I imagine, encompass the Coping Class, big farmers and business people, may not be a good thing for the Catholic population. The Protestant population has two large parties representative of the different groups within their tradition.

Sinn Fein in the South is regarded as a socialist party. The S.D.L.P. is a liberal one especially on morality. The idea that a 32-County Fianna Fail would return traditional values North of the border is seriously doubtful.

The problem is today's Catholics rationalise their faith to personal whims and

E-mail your letters to:
Info@hibernianmedia.com

causes and vote for parties not 100% Catholic. It's a problem in the Republic too.

*Is mise, Yours in Christ,
Daire Fitzgerald, Co Dublin*

The Hibernian Magazine
would like to wish
all our readers, and
their families,
a Happy and
Holy Christmas

Did You Know?

Section 65 of the Government of Ireland Act 1920:

(1) "It is hereby declared that existing enactments relative to unlawful oaths or unlawful assemblies in Ireland do not apply to meetings or proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Freemasons of Ireland, or of any lodge or society recognised by that Grand Lodge".

(2) "Neither the Parliament of Southern Ireland, nor the Parliament of Northern Ireland shall have the power to abrogate or affect prejudicially any privilege or exemption of the Grand Lodge of Freemasons in Ireland, or any lodge or society recognised by that Grand Lodge which is enjoyed or that by law or custom at the time of passing this Act, and any law made in contravention of this provision shall, so far as it is in contravention of this provision, be void".

The Parish Priest and the Seven Sacraments

Helen McClafferty

Last Rites refer to two distinct rites: penance and Eucharist, the last of which, when administered to the dying, is known as "Viaticum" a word whose original meaning in Latin was "provision for the journey." Extreme Unction is a name also attached to it when it was administered only to people in immediate danger of death.

The Last Rites and Extreme Unction is one of the seven sacraments and is associated not only with bodily healing but with forgiveness of sins. Only a priest can administer it. The Catholic Church sees the effects of this sacrament as a gift of the Holy Ghost that renews faith in God and strengthens against anguish at the thought of death and the struggle of death. It leads to spiritual healing with forgiveness of sins.

The Council of Trent teaches that the sacred unction of the sick was instituted by Christ Our Lord as a sacrament of the New Testament and that in accordance with St. James that the proper ministers

of this sacrament are the priests of the Church alone, that is a bishop or priests ordained by them.

The Council of Trent describes the effects of extreme unction as "the healing of the mind, and, so far as it is expedient, of the body". They refer to it as the "conferring of grace, the remission of sins". The effects is the grace of the Holy Ghost, whose unction blots out sins, if any remain to be expiated, and the consequences of sin. It strengthens the soul of the sick person by exciting in them a confidence in the Divine mercy, sustained by which the dying person bears more lightly the suffering of disease or illness. It is therefore a Doctrine of Catholic faith that sins are remitted by extreme unction.

Theologians agree that extreme unction may in certain circumstances be the only and therefore necessary means of salvation for a dying person. This happens when there is a question of a person who is dying without the use of reason and whose soul may be burdened



Rogier van der Weyden: Detail from Seven Sacraments Altarpiece (c. 1445-1450)

with the guilt of mortal sins for which they have only habitual attrition.

This brings me to the point of stressing the function of the priest in the parish community. One brings to the fore the centrality of Christ and how Christ

should always be prominent in the parish priest's missions, duties and responsibilities. The second Vatican Council teaches that the priest, acting in *persona Christi*, celebrates the sacrifice of the Mass and administers the sacraments.

The sacramental character that distinguishes them by virtue of their reception of Holy Orders ensures that their presence and ministry are unique, indispensable and irreplaceable. The presence of an ordained priest is an essential condition for the Catholic faith and not merely for the Church's effective political organisation.

An ordained priest who has experienced the light of faith in his soul must translate into deeds this decisively missionary calling. He must, especially understand and practice his calling by God zealously and readily. It's this awareness that the external salvation of many depend on the ordained priest faithfully manifesting Christ both in word and in deed. Ordained priests are called upon by God to tend to those God entrusted to them, not by constraint but willingly, not as domineering over those in their fold, but by setting an example.

In recent times the Church is experiencing problems of "priestly identity". In some

areas, these problems have progressed to the point of priests losing sight of what their profound and God given duties and responsibilities to their parishioners are. God's calling requires priests to be a source of unity and fraternal offering of self to all, especially the needy. It requires them to live the image derived from the Good Shepherd to live that image and externally manifest it in a manner recognisable to all.

Because of the ministry entrusted to priests, which itself is a holy sacramental link to Jesus Christ, priests have a further responsibility to be motivated to strive for holiness and become a living instrument of God's works, even if it means "going the extra mile".

Contemporary culture looks upon priests of today as "retired priests" - "do nothing priests" even sinful, uncaring, unreachable, non-Christ like. The priest therefore must always know what he has to do

and do it. As St. John Bosco said, "the priest is a priest at the altar, he is a priest in the school, he is a priest on the street, he is a priest everywhere."

In cotemporary situations some priests are led to believe their ministry is peripheral to life, where in reality, it is at the very centre of life since it has the capacity to enlighten, reconcile and renew all things. The priestly ministry, beset by many challenges, should always be in the midst of their people and carry out their precious office. The delicate and valuable offices they hold provide the opportunity to restore faith in those who may have lost their way and to give help to the needy and spiritual support to the sick and the dying.

On October 24, 2007 my sister passed away after a long illness. When I contacted the rectory of the Church (where my family have been parishioners for 52 years) requesting that one of the priests from my parish come to administer my sister the last rites, no one showed up nor did they call to say they couldn't make it. After the third phone call to the rectory, over a four hour period, I called around to other parishes in the area until I was able to get a priest, who happened to be a Chaplain in the United States Navy for 17 years and was very willing to help, although he had to

come a long distance to administer her the last rites. He made it just in time. As of the writing of this article, neither the pastor nor the priest from my parish would explain why no one showed up or even returned one of my calls? The Pastor had his secretary contact my family two days after my sister passed away to say "he was sorry but he had no excuse to give us why he and the priest on call did not respond to our calls that morning". They would not discuss it further?

I was brought up in the more traditional times of the Catholic Church and I have always felt that the Contemporary Catholic Church of today left a lot to be desired. Our parishes are being run more like political voting districts with our Pastors and parish priests acting as "do-nothing politicians" and "sales and marketing reps" for their Bishops.

My sister is now with God and thanks to the Roman Catholic Navy Chaplain, she did get extreme unction. However, to this I say, every priest should remember he is a representative of Jesus Christ on earth to ensure that he does not become spiritually barren, or transformed into a dry channel no longer capable of offering anything to anyone!

Helen McClafferty is an Irish-American Activist based in New Jersey, USA.

"...priests are led to believe their ministry is peripheral to life, where in reality, it is at the very centre of life since it has the capacity to enlighten, reconcile and renew all things...."

The Mass Rock

"There thou liest O Rock of the Mass, most splendid of Ireland's treasures: an
Imperishable monument, telling of Ireland's sorrow and of Ireland's glory!
For thou, O holy Rock of the Mass, art the Calvary of Ireland."
(W.J. Lockington, S.J., The Soul of Ireland)



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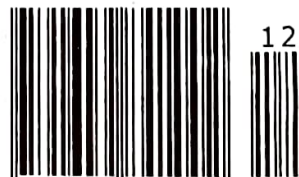
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