



Equipes Notre-Dame

Newsletter Teams of Our Lady – Irish Region



Members of Mullingar Sector make the Way of the Cross at their Retreat at Multyfarnham

Issue 104

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From the Regional Couple



Dear friends in Teams,

We hope you are all well and looking forward to Easter. Some of us have lost dear ones and we remember them in our prayers at this time and ask the Lord to have mercy on them. With this being the season of Lent and the year of mercy, we feel the following by St. Peter Chrysologus, Early Church Father is appropriate:

Prayer, Fasting and Mercy (By St. Peter Chrysologus, Early Church Father)

Saint Peter Chrysologus declares that Prayer knocks at the door, fasting, fasting obtains, mercy receives. His sermons were so inspiring that he was given the title “Chrysologus” (Greek for Golden worded) and was eventually declared a “Doctor of the Church”. He declared: “There are three things, my brethren, by which faith stands firm, devotion remains constant, and virtue endures. They are Prayer, fasting and mercy. These three are one and they give life to each other.

Fasting is the soul of prayer and mercy is the lifeblood of fasting. Let no one try to separate them; they cannot be separated.

If you have only one of them and not all of them together, you have nothing. So if you pray, fast; if you fast, show mercy; if you want your petition to be heard, hear the petition of others. If you do not close your ear to others you open God's ear to yourself.

If you want God to know that you are hungry, know that another is hungry. If you hope for mercy show mercy. If you look for kindness, show kindness; if you want to receive, give. If you ask for yourself what you deny others, your asking is a mockery. Show mercy to others in the same way, with the same generosity, with the same promptness, as you would wish others to show mercy to you. Therefore, let prayer, mercy and fasting be one single plea to God on our behalf, one speech in our defence, and a three-fold united prayer in our favour. Let us use fasting to make up for what we have lost by despising others. Let us offer our souls in sacrifice by means of fasting. There is nothing more pleasing that we can offer to God, as the psalmist said in prophecy: *A sacrifice to God is a broken spirit; God does not despise a humbled contrite heart.*

Offer your soul to God; make Him an oblation of your fasting, so that your soul may be a pure offering, a holy sacrifice, a living victim, remaining your own and at the same time made over to God. To make this acceptable, mercy must be added. Fasting bears no fruit unless it is watered by mercy. Fasting dries up when mercy dries up. Mercy is to fasting as rain is to earth.

However much you cultivate your heart, clear the soil of your nature, root out vices, sow virtues, if you do not release the springs of mercy, your fasting will bear no fruit. When you fast, if your mercy is thin your harvest will be thin; when you fast, what you pour out in mercy, overflows into your barn. Therefore, do not lose by saving, but gather in by scattering. Give to the poor and you give to yourself. You will not be allowed to keep what you have refused to give.”

The new Super-Regional Couple, Dzidzia and Piotr, who have taken over from Antony and Janet Denman, are to visit Ireland around end May and will attend our next Regional Meeting to be held on Sunday 29th May 2016. They are looking forward to meeting the Ireland Regional Team and we ask everyone to attend if at all possible.

The Swanwick International College is to be held from July 23rd to 28th 2016. We have been invited to attend and to participate in round table discussions about piloting new Teams in Ireland. The Teams GB Gathering will take place from 30th September to 2nd October 2016 at the Hayes Centre, Swanwick in Derbyshire.

We wish you all the Blessings of Easter.

Breda & Tony Preston

From the Spiritual Counsellor



MY DEAR TEAM MEMBERS,

In my previous letters to you, the background theme over the years has been concentrated on two Endeavours touching on the spirituality of our movement. Namely, the *Sit-Down* and *Married Prayer*. I hope that all of you have managed to internalise these two points and that you have put them in to practice, because in truth, they are terribly important for your growth as couples as well as for your growth within a *Team*, since the Team is a community whose spiritual and human life develops in direct proportion to each couples' commitment to be faithful to the methodology of holiness that is characteristic of our Movement. In the current conditions of our society and the Church and in the context of the celebration of the extraordinary synod on the family and new evangelisation, our Movement's contribution is essential and the Church expects much of us, so that it may be the catalyst and the efficient sign of hope for the world, a hope that is truly concrete and alive.

Today, I would like to draw your attention to the importance of *personal* or *individual prayer*. Personal prayer is truly the *breathe of the soul*. Father Caffarel set the example, since he himself devoted a large amount of his day to prayer and he was in the habit of saving three months of the year for meditation and prayer, because he knew that if his life was not well anchored in prayer, his spiritual and apostolic life would be seriously compromised. Jesus told us that we ought to pray ceaselessly and the liturgy also invites us to raise our hearts to God: the opening dialogue to the Preface of the Eucharistic prayer, *sursum corda! Habemus ad Dominum! Lift up your hearts! We lift them up to the Lord!*

According to Tertullian (160-220), a Christian ought to recite the *Lord's Prayer* at least three times a day: morning, noon and night. St Therese of the Child Jesus was so moved by the prayer that she was not able to go beyond the opening words of the *Our Father!* Have we ever managed to fathom the depths of what it means to have the possibility of addressing God as a father, in the same manner as Jesus does, he who introduced us to this Trinitarian intimacy? That is why in this letter, I urge each of you to cultivate the spirit of prayer, by setting aside a moment in your daily life when you can speak to God in the intimacy of your soul.

Sometimes people regret that they are not eagerly awaited in their prayer. St Augustine had a very interesting explanation for that. We are not expected or awaited either because we are *bad*, or because we ask for *bad things*, or because we ask *badly*. Following in Jesus' footsteps, let us restrain ourselves and only ask that we not be led *into temptation, but deliver us from evil*. (Mt 6:13) In the end, we ought to ask the Lord to deliver us from *sin*, the single bad thing that can happen to us! Ultimately, let us ask the Lord that his will always be done, because we do not know whether health or sickness, life or death is better for us. Let the Lord make the decision and let us ask for the grace to see a *sign* of his visit to our house in everything!

I beseech the abundance of God's blessings upon you during this time of grace, given over to the synod on the family, the catalyst of hope and peace. My very personal greetings to each and every one of you!

Father José Jacinto Ferreira de Farias, scj

Spiritual Counsellor to the International Leading Team



Mullingar Team members at their Retreat on 28th February

News from Around the Region

Dublin

It has been a busy 4 months for us and the new Sector Team since we formally took over from Joe and Áine Clayton and their colleagues in the previous Sector Team at the Regional meeting on 31st October. We would like to begin by thanking the Sector Team, our Regional Couple, Breda and Tony and the Regional Team and, not least, all the Teams in the Sector for your support and encouragement.

Bereavements

We extend our sympathy to Shane McDermott, on the death of his wife, Suzanne, mother of their two teenage children;

We also sympathise with Breda Preston on the death of her brother, Pdraig McDonagh, with Katriona O’Keeffe on the death of her father, Cornelius Smith and with Kevin Halloran on the death of his brother, Donal.

Liaison Couples

One of our first acts as a Sector Team was to appoint couples to liaise with each Team in the Sector. Their tasks include liaising with the responsible couple regarding any developments at Sector level that Teams need to know about and to encourage participation in Teams’ events. The Liaison couple is also the point of contact for the responsible couple and/or other Teams’ couples who wish to relay any developments or give feedback to the Sector Team. Liaison couples normally attend at least one meeting of the Team they are liaising with each year at the invitation of that Team.

Each couple on the Sector Team are liaison couples. Two other couples, Joe and Áine Clayton and Kevin and Martha Wade, who previously were liaison couples, have kindly agreed to continue to liaise. Each couple have been allocated Teams to liaise with and will also act as the liaison couple for their own team. The Liaison couples will meet in April/May to discuss their experiences, but with all reports and exchanges being anonymised. They may also share good practices they came across, again totally anonymised, that might be of interest to other teams.

The 8th December Mass

This took place in Marianella, Orwell Road, a pastoral centre run by the Redemptorist Order. Teams in the Dublin Sector had celebrated their 8th December Mass in Marianella on many occasions over the years. Sadly Marianella was scheduled to close permanently in February, 2016 with the site being redeveloped for housing. We decided to celebrate the Mass there for the last time and pay tribute to the Redemptorist Order for their hospitality over the years. The Mass was celebrated on the day itself (Tuesday) by Fr. Peter Sexton SJ, the Regional Chaplain. There was a very good attendance and an enjoyable social get together afterwards.

Annual Retreat

The annual retreat for the Dublin Sector took place in Avila Retreat House, Donnybrook, on 20th February, 2016. It was decided this year to just have a one day retreat, as some younger couples in particular found it difficult to attend for two days. It meant also that the fee per individual could be set at a lower rate overall.

The attendance was 50. A number of couples could not attend due to illness or unavoidably being away. The Orlagh Retreat Team, Dr Bernadette Toal and Fr. John Byrne, OSA, conducted the retreat. The overall theme was *Our Marriage, Our Family, Our Community*. There were three presentations – *Being a Believing Christian in the Contemporary World*, *Challenges to the Family, through the eyes of Pope Francis and the Synod on the Family*, and *Introduce Lectio Divina on the Sunday Gospel*. In each session a dual presentation was given by Bernadette and Fr. John, followed by questions and answers, group discussions, and periods for reflection. The “chat” continued during tea/coffee breaks and lunch. The feedback was very positive both in relation to the presentations, format of the sessions and the one day duration. The retreat concluded with the celebration of Mass by Fr John Byrne. The Mass included special prayers for the repose of the souls of Team members and relatives who had died over the past year. The prayers also asked God to console their families on the particularly tragic and sudden deaths of their loved ones.

Upcoming Developments

The Sector Team at its next meeting on 9th April will consider the following:

- Organising the Summer Outing

- Progressing *Project Growth*

- Considering Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis, due in coming months

- Role of Teams in upcoming World Meeting of Families (2018).

We very much hope that as many Teams as possible will be able to attend the Summer outing, and bring family members and friends along. We aim to give as much notice as possible. We may consider organising a brief get together to discuss the other issues and events. Should you wish to give us your views and suggestions on any aspects do not hesitate to contact us or any other members of the Sector Team.

Gerry and Grace Mangan

Belfast

The Mass on 8th December was held in the home of Declan and Deirdre Kennedy and was celebrated by Fr. Gerry Cassidy. Although the numbers were small, all enjoyed the chat and the lovely food afterwards.

Plans for our annual retreat are being finalised at the time of writing. The date is likely to be 8th May and will be led by Fr Brendan Mc Convery CSsR. As it is being held in the month of May the theme will be based on Our Lady. The venue for the Retreat has still to be finalised.

The Mc Mullans celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary on 22nd February and enjoyed very much the company of Team members and friends at a meal out in Bangor. Their Parish Priest agreed to give them a blessing on the day.

They were also blessed with two new grandchildren. They were born within 4 days of one another in January. One is called Áine Mary and the other is called Christy Charles.

Belfast 1 Team are about to commence a new Study Topic entitled “A one great act of Fidelity” by Ronald Roheiser. Belfast 2 Team are continuing with the Teams’ study topic for 2014/15 entitled “Discerning the signs of the Times”. Belfast Team 3 study topic is entitled “Journeying with Jesus” by Fr. Denis Mc Bride CSsR.

Charlie and Maureen McMullan

Mullingar

First of all we are happy to see that the days are getting longer and warmer.

We had our Retreat on Sunday 28th February in the Franciscan Friary, Multyfarnham, Co. Westmeath. Fr. Liam McCarthy OFM took us in charge, and said the opening Mass at 10-30 while giving Teams a great plug to the attending public. After Mass a short break for tea and biscuits was followed by his first talk in the Sanctuary on the theme of Mercy. He advised us that we must always keep the Door of our heart open. After lunch we walked the Way of the Cross along the outdoor large humansized figures (see photo) a local tradition. Thereafter we had a quiet time, a pause for reflection and an opportunity for Confession. Fr. Liam gave us another talk and we finished with Benediction.

Mullingar Sector will host the RC weekend in October this year. A meeting was arranged for March 21st in the Park Hotel with a view to getting a committee together for same and each Team was encouraged to have two persons delegated to attend.

Slán, Regards,

Oliver and Anna Marie Leavy

Galway

The Galway Sector celebrated the 8th December with Mass in the Franciscan Abbey. Fr. Eugene said the Mass and we enjoyed a social gathering afterwards in the Abbey.

Our Annual Retreat is planned for Saturday, 21st May in Croí Nua. It will be facilitated by Fr. Michael Screen and 'Mercy' has been picked as the theme for the retreat. Team 1 are the organisers this year.

Eddie Lloyd has had a hip operation and is recuperating at the moment. We look forward to seeing him on Salthill Prom again soon.

There have been a number of new arrivals in the families of Team 2. John McCarrick has two new grandchildren. Caoilfhionn had a baby daughter in South Africa in January, she is called Helen Marielle. Muireann had a baby son in Dublin in February, he is called Blaise Patrick John. Peter and Anne Costello are grandparents for the first time. Their grand daughter, Erin Áine Rose was born in France in March.

Spring has arrived at last in Galway and we are looking forward to some better weather.

Peter and Anne Costello

Pauline Flanagan RIP

It was with great sadness that we heard of the death of Pauline Flanagan, wife of Michael, on 16th December 2015, after a short illness; although Pauline had had some health issues for some years. Pauline and Michael have been in Équipes Notre-Dame for a long time - since the 1980's when they joined Belfast 5. Later they were Sector Couple for Belfast Sector for three years. And last year Pauline and Michael were both active on the Belfast Sector Team.

There was a large attendance at Pauline's funeral Mass, which took place at St Malachy's Church in Castlewellan, Co Down. Many members of Teams were present, including a number from Dublin. Several priests who knew Pauline well also attended the funeral Mass which was concelebrated by Fr. Dan Whyte and two other priests. It was a beautiful Mass, and the Mass booklet we were given showed three important influences in Pauline's life. These were the Legion of Mary, Marriage Encounter, and Équipes Notre-Dame; and they were shown in a pictorial way as the Legion Tessera (leaflet), and the logos of Marriage Encounter and Équipes Notre-Dame. Fr Dan Whyte gave a very warm and comforting homily where he pictured death as a meeting with God, welcoming us like a mother lifting up her baby. The hymns and readings at the Mass were very inspiring; especially the First Reading from the Book of Proverbs ending with the words: "let her works praise her in the city gates". We will all miss Pauline very much, especially those who were in the same team. She was a warm and loving person who was generous in every way. We offer our sincere and heartfelt sympathy to Michael and the family.

May she rest in peace. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam dílis.

Brendan and Moyra Bunting

From Michael Flanagan

I first saw Pauline in 1965 at a reception for English members of The Legion of Mary who had given up a week of their holidays to do house visitation in Belfast. The Legion was a big influence on us at that time and indeed its principles would guide us on many an occasion since.

We were married for seven years when we went on a Marriage Encounter weekend which proved to be another big influence on our lives.

Some 30 years ago we joined Teams of Our Lady which was a great aid in helping us to develop our faith and Sacrament. Pauline found it almost impossible to say no. She had a great gift for involving others in conversation and getting the best out of people. She was fearless in standing up to those who she believed were spreading scandal or gossip.

Pauline died on the 16th December 2015. May her great Soul Rest in Peace.

My strongest feeling on Pauline's death was one of pride that I had known her.





From the Regional Chaplain

Fr. Peter Sexton

A Good Friday reflection :

“Past all grasp God - throned behind death with a sovereignty that heeds but hides, that bodes but abides”

In these words Hopkins seeks to express something of the ungraspable mystery of God lovingly present but hidden in death.

A headmaster of Eton, asked once what do they do at his school, replied somewhat cryptically, “we try to teach the boys to die well”. Not a bad reason for running a school ! Teaching others how to die well turned out to be the final vocation of Maximilian Kolbe, the German-Polish Franciscan, in Auschwitz. A prisoner had escaped and the deputy Camp commandant decided to starve 10 prisoners to death as a deterrent to others - and when one man cried out in anguish about his wife and family, Kolbe offered to replace him in the sealed cell. The group survived for 3 weeks - with Kolbe encouraging the others and leading them in prayer and song, to the disbelief of their captors. He was the last to die - they had to kill him with a lethal injection - a true disciple of his Master.

The Cross, which, until Christ, was the ultimate symbol of human wretchedness and cruel despair, has now, because of Christ, become the ultimate symbol of unselfish and enduring love - the Cross that crowns our churches, the Cross that is displayed with pride by Christians the world over, under whose sign we begin and end our lives.

In the gospel read on Good Friday we hear to our astonishment Christ fulfilling the 2 great commandments actually on the Cross : When God appeared least like Father and had seemingly abandoned His Son, Jesus, instead of cursing God in despair said : ‘Father, into your hands I commend my spirit’; and when we human beings behaved in the most wretched way imaginable, Jesus, instead of cursing us, said : ‘Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.’

Christ's embrace of the Cross has enabled Christians down through history to follow Him in this profound trust in the Father, and in this radically unselfish love of others. As the French writer Paul Claudel wrote: ‘Christ has come, not to explain suffering, but to share it and to fill it with his presence.’

For us Christians, of course, the end of the story is not Good Friday - as it seemed to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. The end of the story is Easter Dawn - and it is precisely because the Father raised Jesus in the power of the Spirit that even in our darkest times we are henceforth Easter people - and can say with Hopkins again : ‘Enough! the Resurrection, a heart's clarion! Away grief's gasping, joyless days, dejection....Across my foundering deck shone a beacon, an eternal beam - In a flash, at a trumpet crash, I am all at once what Christ is, since He was what I am - and this jack, joke, poor potsherd, patch, matchwood, immortal diamond, Is immortal diamond.’

Suggested Readings:

April : Philippians 3, 8-14

May : John 2, 1-12

June : Ephesians 3, 14-21

“OPENING THE DOOR OF MERCY” – 5th March, 2016

Gerry Mangan

This was the title of a Conference organised by the Bishops’ Council for Pastoral Renewal and Adult Faith Development. In my experience it was unique in that participants were mainly from lay Movements and New Communities in the Church that are recognised as having an important contribution to make to pastoral renewal and adult faith development. Joe and Áine Clayton and myself (Gerry) represented Teams at the Conference (Grace was attending the Regional Meeting which was scheduled for the same day).

Conference Speakers

The Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Charles J Brown, spoke to the Conference on “Pope Francis and the Year of Mercy”, quoting from a Zoe Williams article in the Guardian on the prevalence of narcissism and the “me generation” and the growth in the availability of pornography, casual sex, and the incidence of alcohol and drugs abuse. He contrasted this with the vision of Pope Francis and those of the founders and members of a number of Christian movements on the love of God as revealed through His mercy. He specifically mentioned Cursillo, Centering Prayer Movement, Couples for Christ, and Focolare in this context. Michael Conway, a Professor of Theology in Maynooth spoke on mercy and the underdeveloped heart. He quoted St. Augustine who said that there are many Church members with hearts outside the Church, and many outside the Church who have hearts in it. We can only fully know the truth and experience life to the full through a combination of heart and mind. He quoted Blaise Pascal’s famous insight that “ the heart has its reasons that reason knows not”. He also warned of the dangers of familiarity in relationships – “ The familiar precisely because it is familiar is not known.”. This could apply to the elder brother in the parable of the Prodigal Son who did not recognise and understand the love he was receiving from his Father.

The third talk was given by Susan Gately on “The Movements/New Communities – Oases of Mercy” Susan is a freelance journalist and a member with her husband of the Focolare Movement. She has written and published a book on the movements and new communities. Teams featured prominently in her book based on interviews with Joe and Aine Clayton among others. In her talk using power point she expertly explained the nature and purpose of a range of new movements and communities related to the Church in Ireland.

Lay Organisations - Marriage and the Family

Each of the talks were excellent, but the most striking experience for me was meeting and networking with those movements and communities with stands in the Conference Hall. We had our Teams stand, banners and leaflets. We worked to ensure that virtually all participants learned of Teams, We in turn learned much about other movements, particularly in relation to marriage and the family. Some of these organisations, like Teams, had their origins abroad and remain part of an international network. I think that it might be of interest for team members to provide below a brief description of the organisations we encountered, with web references where more information can be obtained.

COUNCIL FOR MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY: The Council for Marriage and the Family was established in 2010 by the Irish Bishops with the purpose of assisting them in their mission, specifically as it relates to marriage, families and family life. It strives to do this in a number of ways, including encouraging and supporting the spiritual and pastoral care of marriage and the family in parishes and dioceses. Website is www.catholicbishops.ie and information on the Council can be obtained under the headings Pastoral Care – families and marriage **ACCORD**, Catholic Marriage Care Service provides marriage preparation courses for couples choosing to get married in the Catholic Church. It also offers a professional counselling service for couples and individuals to explore, reflect upon and work to resolve difficulties in their marriage and relationships. Website: www.accord.ie

CANA: provides a six day programme (Cana Week), where couples have the opportunity to experience the importance of their marriage and to strengthen their marriage. Cana is a ministry of the Chemin Neuf Community, an international Catholic Community with a strong ecumenical commitment. Website is www.canaireland.org and can also be visited on Facebook and You Tube.

CATHOLIC GRANDPARENTS ASSOCIATION: grandparents have no agenda other than what is best for their grandchildren and, in particular, helping them to find their way to a loving, forgiving, non-judgmental God. This is their duty, responsibility and vocation from which they can never retire. The Association supports its members in pursuing this vocation in a variety of ways, including through pilgrimages. Website: www.catholicgrandparentsassociation.org

CURSILLO (pronounced Kur – see – yo) is the Spanish word for ‘short course’ and for this movement ‘A Short Course in Christianity’. It is a lay Christian Movement in which the members try to live their Christianity in the environments they find themselves and by their witness influence others and act as Christian leaven in homes, neighbourhoods and workplaces. The focus is on the person of Jesus and the movement is Catholic. Website: www.cursillo.ie

MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER: organises weekends for married couples which are essentially residential workshops. The aim of the Weekend is to create a warm relaxed atmosphere in which husband and wife can explore and share their feelings, hopes, joys, fears, needs and differences, while at the same time learning how to improve their communication and listening skills and to deepen their relationship. The weekend is for couples with good marriages who are open to the possibility of something more, but is not a substitute for couples who may need counselling. Marriage Encounter started in Ireland over 40 years ago coming from the USA. Website : www.marriageencounter.ie

NAZARETH FAMILY INSTITUTE: The Institute provides non-residential weekend pre-preparation and training courses for couples planning marriage and a Catholic Church wedding. It was founded formally in 2004 by the Community of Nazareth. It grew out of the experience of members who had been active in the service of Catholic/Christian Marriage and family life since 1974. Website: nazarethfamilyinstitute.org

PARISH CELL SYSTEM OF EVANGELISATION: Don Pigi Perini is founder and president of the International Service Body of the Parish System of Cells of Evangelization. He got to know this method, adopted by Fr. Michael Eivers in Florida in 1986. Parish cells draw their inspiration from the commission of Jesus, ‘Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations’. For this reason, they call every parishioner to a deeper faith in the One who sends them, and form them to go and ‘make disciples’ within their relationships of home, neighbourhood, parish and places of work and leisure. Living out this commission leads to an ever increasing number of cell communities. In this way, small supportive and evangelistic units of 4 to 122 people come into existence within the parish. This leads to the parish becoming a community of communities and a centre of missionary outreach. Each cell meeting has a number of elements: a time of prayer; reflection on Scripture as God’s word; sharing evangelistic moments since the previous meeting; formation in faith and fellowship. The Holy See officially recognised the Cells on 12 April, 2015 and met over 5000 members in Rome the following September, including 150 from Ireland.

RETROUVAILLE: It is a French word meaning rediscovery. Its programme offers tools needed to rediscover a loving marriage relationship. It began in 1977 as a French language weekend for hurting marriages. It was adapted to English by the Community in Toronto. It has spread throughout the USA, South America and many other countries around the world. The programme started in Ireland in 1996. Retrouvaille is a live-in weekend and follow up programme for married couples. The emphasis is on a new technique of communication between a husband and wife.

It is for couples with marital problems including those who are considering marriage separation and those who are already separated or divorced who still want to save their marriage. Retrouvaille states that it “offers hope, support and skills to married couples experiencing pain in their marriage, it gives them a new sense of worth”. Website: www.retrouvaille.ie

Lay Organisations - Evangelisation

Other organisations represented at the Conference are mainly focussed more generally on evangelisation. They included *Alpha Ireland*, (www.alphaireland.org, and www.alphayouth.ie), *Catholic Comment*, (www.catholiccomment.ie), *Faith for Life*, a course designed and delivered through a partnership agreement between the Archdioceses of Dublin and Liverpool (www.evangelisation.ie and www.liverpoolcatholic.org.uk/formation), *Focolare* (www.focolare.org), *Knights of Columbanus*, *Net Ministries Ireland*, a Catholic youth ministry that encourages young people to love Jesus and embrace the life of the Church (www.netministries.ie), *Pathways Programme, Exploring Faith and Ministry*, Two Year Programme (one night a week), Office for Evangelisation and Ecumenism, Archdiocese of Dublin (www.evangelisation.ie), *Scripture Union Ireland*, (www.scriptureunion.ie), *Spirit Radio*, (www.spiritradio.ie or tune in at FM: Dublin 89.9 Cork 90.9 Limerick 89.8 Galway 91.7 Waterford 90.1 Naas/Newbridge 92.2 Dundalk 90.4 Bray/Greystones 90.1, and MW. 549 Ireland & Northern Ireland.

Pope Francis: small communities and movements in the Church

Pope Francis in para.29 of *Evangelii Gaudium* (Gospel of Joy) stated in relation to the small communities and movements in the Church that they “are a source of enrichment for the Church, raised up by the Spirit for evangelising different areas and sectors. Frequently they bring a new evangelising fervour and a new capacity for dialogue with the world whereby the Church is renewed. But it will prove beneficial for them not to lose contact with the rich reality of the local parish and to participate readily in the overall pastoral activity of the particular Church. This kind of integration will prevent them from concentrating on part of the Gospel or the Church, or becoming nomads without roots”. The Conference illustrated the important contribution that the organisations represented are making and can make to the Church and perhaps the importance of greater involvement in parishes. This Conference could be a first step in enabling movements like ours in Ireland to cooperate together in following the direction indicated by Pope Francis while maintaining and pursuing our own vocation and mission. Pope Francis has also put particular emphasis on marriage and families in the life of the Church. A recent publication on young Catholics in America stated that “the single most important measurable factor determining the religious and spiritual lives of teenagers and young adults is the religious and faith commitments and practices of their parents”. Support for marriage which Teams and many of the organisations listed above provide, can have a crucial role in meeting this challenge. Developing this further is something that Teams here in Ireland may wish to consider in the context of Project Growth, the upcoming Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis on the families and perhaps our participation in the World Meeting on Families in Dublin in September 2018 and in the run up to that in the coming years.

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