



# Newsletter

## Teams of Our Lady

### Irish Region



Equipes Notre-Dame

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### From the Regional Couple



Dear Friends in Teams,

As we write, we are nearing the end of the Lenten Season and looking hopefully towards Easter joy.

Like many of you, we have been moved by the images of the immense suffering of the people of Ukraine. In them we have seen the suffering face of Jesus. The parting of husbands and wives at border crossings.

The tears of a mother as she dispatches her children to an unknown destination. The unsteady gait of the frail elderly with just a walking stick for support.

As we know, these images are of real people and Jesus is the Real Person who is suffering within and alongside them. Jesus loves the tearful mother through the touch of her child, who tenderly reaches out to comfort her. Jesus cares in the generosity of strangers, who like Simon of Cyrene offer help, and are enriched by their giving.

The prayer of Julia and Valentyn, a Team couple from Western Ukraine speaks powerfully

*“We are learning to trust God in a new way, each day we learn not to despair, and we know that the light of Resurrection will come. This crossroad is for everyone, but we have to live it, like Jesus. God gives extraordinary courage and endurance. He makes us better, perfect in his love... we thank you God because we can suffer with you, the time will come, and we will rejoice together.”*

While in Knock recently, we prayed the Stations of the Cross in the Basilica. Each station, though depicting the horror and loneliness of Jesus' journey to Calvary, is illuminated by a shaft of light. We liked to think of this as the artist's portrayal of the Father's love. The love which accompanied Jesus at every moment, drawing Him inexorably beyond death to the victory of the Resurrection.

Teams Endeavour: The Retreat. In anticipation of the upcoming Retreats to be offered by the Sectors.

Saint John Paul II urges us: “Do not be afraid to give up your time for Christ.”

**Spring 2022**

**Issue 128**

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“Time has a spiritual dimension, which we must inhabit, and not simply control.”

(Apostolic letter Dies Domini 1998, No84)

See <http://equipes-notre-dame.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/THE-RETREAT-2017.pdf>

## **Diary of a Regional Couple!**

### Linking with the Wider Movement – Super-Region and ERI

January: Zoom meeting of Regional Couples from across the Transatlantic Region – Ireland, GB, Malawi/Zambia.

February: Support meeting with Super-Regional Couple

March: Zone Meeting with couples from across the Eurasia Zone, Ghana, S. Africa, Australia and New Zealand @7am! These meetings focused on getting to know each other a little, as well as sharing what is working well in our Regions and what challenges we face.

### Linking with the Region:

January: Meeting with Sector Couple for Mullingar.

February: Regional Team Meeting.

March: Meeting of the Irish Synodal Pathway Task Group, representing Teams of Our Lady, together with Mark and Anne O’Leary, Dublin Sector Couple.

### Linking with Sectors & Base Teams

January: Synodal meeting 1, by Zoom.

Meeting with Belfast Teams.

February: Meeting with RC for the Team being piloted on Zoom.

Synodal meeting 2, by Zoom.

March: Meeting with Galway Teams.

Thank you for supporting the initiatives of the Movement, for taking our calls and reading our emails but most importantly, for engaging with us in the work God has called us to, as Teams of Our Lady. There is much to do, and we are in the process of setting out some objectives for the term of this Regional Team. We rely on your efforts and the grace of God.

Finally, we pray that all of you will experience the power and joy of the Resurrection this Easter and beyond! Alleluia!

Brendan and Rosemarie Gavin

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## From The Regional Chaplain Fr. Richard Sheehy



How suddenly and quickly things can change: up until a few months ago we thought that Covid 19 was the biggest challenge the world had to face. Now, just as we seem to be emerging from that crisis, another has opened up with the invasion of Russian forces into neighbouring Ukraine. For the people of Ukraine, the shock must be unbelievable. One minute, like any of us, they are going about their daily lives: going to school or work, shopping or sitting in a café; the next their cities are being bombarded, and millions of people are being forced to flee their homes and seek refuge in other European countries. Western leaders have introduced sanctions and warn of shortages of wheat, oil and gas and consequently higher prices for basic commodities. Our world doesn't seem so stable and predictable anymore.

What is encouraging is the response of the countries surrounding Ukraine to the unfolding humanitarian crisis: opening their borders to welcome refugees, providing them with basic necessities and accommodation, or facilitating their onward travel to other destinations. Ireland too is already receiving several thousand refugees, and Irish citizens have raised significant funds for charities working on the ground in Ukraine or neighbouring Poland. Our natural empathy for those who are suffering is finding practical expression.

While filled with admiration for the courage and resilience of the Ukrainian people in defending their country against unwarranted aggression, the potential for the conflict to escalate into a more global conflict gives cause for deep concern. Pope Francis warns of the folly of international organisations spending more money on armaments and defence. He reminds us that the roots of war are always in the human heart. Peace is possible...but it cannot just be the goal, it has to be the way.

St. Oscar Romero, who as Archbishop of San Salvador courageously challenged the government and army for their oppression of the poor and was gunned down while celebrating Mass in March 1980, wrote '*We have never preached violence, except the violence of love, which left Christ nailed to a cross*'. He added: '*I cry out against justice, but only to say to the unjust: be converted!*'

We cannot pray for an end to the war in Ukraine, if we are not willing to seek peace and reconciliation in our own relationships. No one knows this more than married couples. It is through the regular experience of seeking and offering forgiveness that their relationship is renewed and deepened. The parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15), which is the Gospel for the Fourth Sunday of Lent this year, reminds us how difficult yet necessary this is. At our recent Tandem meeting (a Teams programme for couples who are engaged or recently married), our topic for discussion was forgiveness. Part of the reading material for our meeting contained the following quote: 'In a marriage, normal problems occur because no couple ever communicates perfectly, resolves all disagreements harmoniously or achieves ideal emotional closeness'. (Randall Schroeder, PhD, from the article, *In the Image of God: The Christian Vision for Love and Marriage*). *Being human means learning to forgive ourselves and others for our frailties and imperfections.*

Lent is our annual invitation to begin again, to renew our faith and hope, to turn to Christ and allow him to teach us how to practise love and forgiveness in all our relationships. 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those....' As we journey towards Easter, may our lives and relationships proclaim resurrection, hope and joy.

Speaking of new beginnings, the Teams annual Retreat is an in-person retreat this year and takes place on Saturday, 7th May. Spread the word....

## Tribute - Michael Flanagan



Michael and Pauline Flanagan joined with others to form a new Team – Belfast 5 – in October 1985. In doing so they brought a novel and refreshing outlook on life to all of us. Michael was in business in a Loyalist area of Belfast which speaks volumes for his open-mindedness and breadth of vision, not to mention his courage. Michael was completely opposed to any hint of sectarianism and mixed with all classes and creeds in both business and private life.

He was a man of high moral character and principle. He was a dealer and believed that when a deal was struck it was meant to be upheld. He believed in honest dealing and stuck to this even when, at times, it was to his financial detriment. He was trading in difficult circumstances during the unrest in the North of Ireland. He absolutely refused to pay protection money to any organisation. He survived with this principle.

He was keenly interested in the Arts. Over the years his business interests included an Art Gallery, an Antique Shop, and an Auction House. To say he had had a varied life would be an understatement. He had an immense fund of stories gathered from his rich experience of life. He had a great sense of humour which added to the enjoyment of the stories, some of which could not be printed here.

As an Art dealer Michael exhibited Rhonda Paisley's paintings and, as a result, he and Pauline established a personal friendship with The Late Rev. Ian Paisley and his wife Eileen.

He and Pauline were very generous and open-hearted. One example of this was the annual soirée in Belfast Castle which included Art Exhibitions and Cultural Talks. These were great nights out for many people without any commitment or cost. Members of the Team were always on the guest list.

In many ways during his life, Michael showed a tremendous capacity to forgive. We could all say that we aspire to forgiveness. Michael lived it.

Michael and Pauline had strong religious convictions throughout their lives and always sought to do the right thing in any situation. They met through the Legion of Mary. They were involved in Marriage Encounter and Engaged Encounter spreading their experience and joy in their faith and their lives.

As members of Teams, they played an active part in the Movement. They piloted a new Team in West Belfast. When acting as Responsible Couple Michael was very strict about adherence to the rules and to timings and other arrangements. Membership of the Legion of Mary was an influence here.

Throughout their lives Pauline was at Michael's side and was a solid support in the challenging times. This support and approval were, of course, mutual. Michael remained in the Team following Pauline's death on 16 December 2015 and played a full part in the life of the Team.

Following Pauline's death, Michael moved back to Belfast, having lived in County Down for some years. In so doing he demonstrated in the most powerful way his complete abhorrence of sectarianism.

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He bought a bungalow in a strongly Loyalist area of Belfast and lived there without incident until his death on 4 November 2021. The telling incident happened at his funeral. Whilst the hearse was parked outside his house a crowd of neighbours (obviously Protestants) gathered in the street to pay their respects and stood there in heavy rain for about 45 minutes until the prayers were said inside and the funeral cortege moved away. He had put his faith in them and they returned the compliment. In death as in life Michael made a difference.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a n-anamacha dílse.

Team 5

## **Tandem Teams has started off in Ireland!**

Tandem Teams is a project for young couples, both married and engaged, initiated by Teams of Our Lady in France in 1995. We are very happy to announce that Tandem is now up and going in Ireland too!

Two couples from the Dublin Sector, Pierpaolo and Ilaria Dondio and Mark and Anne O’Leary, engaged in the accompaniment of the first two Irish Tandem Teams.

They meet with the Teams monthly. The meetings are on Zoom, given the diversified locations of the couples - Dublin, Belfast, anywhere in-between and even from Newcastle, in the UK, and Poland!

There are 9 young couples involved and 2 Chaplains (Fr Richard and Fr Enda), plus the two accompanying couples. The meetings are always lively and very well participated, and feedback has been positive and encouraging... You can find some of our couples’ comments below!

The structure of a Tandem meeting is similar to that of Teams: there is a pooling on our past month, the discussion on a different monthly topic and a moment of Bible reflection and prayer. The difference is that the programme has a set number of meetings only (usually runs over 1½ years, and then it's finished) and the topic is not on a shared book but on different everyday life issues, ranging from the management of our time, our relationship with God and religion, to the allocation of chores in the couple, tenderness, conflict resolution and many more - an ideal way to start off your married life with the right foot. These themes do spark some nice discussion... and not only among the youngest couples!

The Tandem programme is a great opportunity to have some profound sharing on a diversity of topics in a safe and respectful context, with couples who find themselves at roughly the same stage in life. Tandem is a Christian programme open to people of every faith or none.

So, if you know of any young couple who may be interested in this programme, do not hesitate to put them in touch with us, at our email address: [tandemireland@gmail.com](mailto:tandemireland@gmail.com) or check us out at our website [www.tandemteams.ie](http://www.tandemteams.ie). You can also share the news with your parish!



“Tandem has been an amazing experience, helping us to grow as a couple and reinforce our belief in God” – Iliana and Mario, Belfast

Ilaria and Pierpaolo

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## Around the Region

### Dublin

#### Annual Retreat

The Annual Retreat for the Dublin Sector, the first “in person” retreat in over two years, is scheduled to take place on Saturday, May 7<sup>th</sup>, in Avila Retreat Centre, Donnybrook, starting at 10am. It will be led by one of the Carmelite priests.

We had originally hoped that it would take place during Lent, but that wasn't to be!

More details will follow nearer the time.

#### Synodal Process.

The drawing together of all the contributions received from Teams is currently taking place at Regional level, led by our Regional Couple, Brendan and Rosemarie Gavin. It is an unenviable undertaking. So, we wish them well in their task. In keeping with the prayerful, discerning nature of the process, we continue to keep them, the whole team and the ongoing process in our prayers. Meanwhile, it was great to see such a good Dublin Sector representation at the two Synodal Process Zoom sessions which took place earlier in the year, in January and February.

Anne and Mark O'Leary

### Mullingar

We, Richard and Pauline Sheridan are representing the Mullingar Sector. We are members of Team 3 for the last 30 years. We joined an existing Team and were welcomed with open arms. As a Team we are blessed to have as our chaplain Fr Frank Monks, Order of St. Camillus, Killucan.

In this Sector there are six Teams and while the passage of time is taking its toll on some of us the Spirit of the Teams is alive and well in Mullingar.

While we are unable to form an official Sector Team we have fantastic support from our own Team, Team 4 and all the members who have already served in the various roles within Teams. There is a wealth of experience here for us to tap into which we appreciate.

Please keep us in your prayers and be assured of ours.

#### 8th December:

Fr Phil Gaffney celebrated our 8<sup>th</sup> December Mass in the Cathedral of Christ the King; it was lovely to see so many Team members there. Fr Phil was a Team chaplain here in Mullingar in times past and now that he has returned as administrator to Mullingar, we know going forward he will renew the obvious interest he has in Teams and we thank him for the enormous effort he put into his homily for the Mass.

#### Team 3:

We were blessed to have Fr Frank celebrate our own Christmas Mass which we all agree officially starts the Christmas celebrations for Team 3 and our families. Thanks to Fr Frank for facilitating our meetings in the Chapel in St Camillus Nursing Centre during these strange times.

Fr Frank has added to his already busy schedule compiling wonderful videos for Pope Francis' monthly intentions which can be viewed on YouTube. (*Type Eucharistic Adoration led by Fr Frank Monks into the YouTube search box*) also check out <https://www.shalommedia.org/ireland/>

#### Synodal Pathway:

We enjoyed the Zoom meetings on Teams consultation on Synod Themes.

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It was lovely to see each other and hear the others' opinions.

**Congratulations:**

On a really happy note, we send congratulations to James and Joanne Keogh on their wedding (son of Elaine and Jim, Team 3). We wish them every blessing in the future.

Congratulations to Fr David Vard on his interview with Tommy Tiernan.

**Prayer intentions:**

We remember in our prayers the intentions of Jimmy and Maura Halligan (Team 9) and all our unspoken intentions.

Our condolences to Mary Cummins on the death of her brother-in-law Paddy; may he rest in peace.

We remember all our loved ones whose anniversary occurs around this time especially Michael McGovern. (Team 3)

**Galway**

January to March 2022 has been a busy time for Teams in Galway. We have been tackling the challenge of the Synod documents which all members have studied. Each Team articulated their thoughtful response to the documents. We are thrilled with the seriousness and hard work put in by each Team couple. The theme of "journeying together" articulates very well our Christian way of life. We depend on other people and other people depend on us. The idea of the "journey" is well described in Luke's Gospel Chapter 9.51 "Jesus resolutely turned his face towards Jerusalem". A lot happened on this well documented journey of Jesus. His journey culminates in his death and beyond. Perhaps the Synod is very much concerned with this "beyond". It will be interesting in the relatively near future for us Team couples to reread our individual reflections and note any changes in our attitudes. Most Team couples do hope for some changes in the attitudes of the Institutional Church in many areas. There has been some divergence between faith and the institution of the Church over the past number of years. This is mostly seen in our young people. We have hopes in the coming Synod.

In March 2022 the Galway Teams held a Zoom meeting with our regional couple, Brendan and Rosemarie. There was a good representation from the Galway Team couples. The chat and exchange of ideas was very welcome. It is important to remind us that we are members of a wider, national and international community. Hopefully it will not be too long before we can meet face to face.

Our sympathies to Manus and Maura Duggan on their recent bereavements. Maura's three siblings died. Siobhan McGill, Una McGill, Owen McGill.

Their deaths occurred so closely to each other that there was little time to grieve.

Also, Manus's brother Patrick Duggan died. Their Team community held a special house mass for the deceased. May they all Rest in Peace.

Please continue to pray for Eddie Lloyd who is in a Nursing Home.

Anne & Jack Hutchinson

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## **Prayer Intentions**

### **For those who have died:**

**Emer Cosgrave**, mother of Grainne Misteil, Team 42

**Paul Dundon**, brother of Fr. Paddy, Team 11

**Alain Boullier**, brother of Bernadette Blayney, Team 24

**Siobhán, Una and Owen McGill**, sisters and brother of Maura Duggan, Galway

**Patrick Duggan**, brother of Manus, Galway

### **For those who are ill:**

**Eddie Lloyd**, Galway

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We commend you to read the March Newsletter from the Leading Team (ERI), especially the contributions from the Spiritual Counsellor, Fr. Londoño and the couples from the ERI.

[Equipes-notre-dame.com](http://Equipes-notre-dame.com)

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We wish you the joy of the Risen Christ.

We would like to receive contributions for the Summer Newsletter by Sunday 29th May.

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