

Equipes Notre-Dame

Newsletter Teams of Our Lady – Irish Region

From the Regional Couple



Bishop Mark Davies (born in Manchester in Lancashire in 1959) in a recent publication says: we need to take marriage seriously as a great social good, and recognise that children flourish best when they have the gift of a mother and father in their lives. We need to propose anew what Pope Francis now calls “the Gospel of the Family”. Let us never be afraid to speak of the good news that is marriage! Thank you for the witness you have given to this Gospel of the Family. Returning today to the Altar conscious of the hopes of your youth and the frailties of the years, may you always believe anew in the love that is revealed in the Sacrifice of Christ made present in the Sacrifice of the Altar. This is the measure of the love you have sought to live in the vocation of marriage: the Holy Sacrifice, the Holy Eucharist which inexhaustibly strengthens the unity and love, the faithfulness and witness of Christian Marriage.

Given the current trends and the consequent very real threats to the Sacrament of Marriage, we must redouble our efforts in reaching out to married couples through the Teams of Our Lady and encouraging them to join with us in promoting the unity and love, the faithfulness and witness of Christian Marriage. We attended a wonderful and uplifting retreat in the Avila Carmelite Centre, Dublin. It was organised by the Dublin Sector Team and included the celebration of Mass on Saturday and Sunday. Our congratulations and thanks to the Sector Team for their excellent organisation and management of the event. The Presenter was Fr. John Fitzgerald MSC, (Missionaries of the Sacred Heart), Cork. The Theme was ‘Contemplative Attitude towards the Heart’ and our thanks to Father John for his excellent and uplifting presentation.

Michael and Sheila Foley have retired as Treasurers and Billy and Ann Hyland from team 1 in Galway have been appointed as their replacement.

Issue 100

Spring 2015

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On behalf of the Irish Region, we extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to Michael and Sheila for their many years of service and their careful stewardship and management of the Teams Finances.

Great work is being done by the Dublin Sector Team and we take this opportunity to express our thanks and appreciation for their innovativeness and hard work in the promotion and development of Teams in the Dublin Sector.

Míle buíochas daoibh go léir.

Breda & Tony Preston

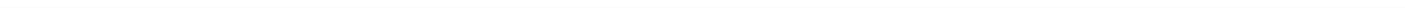
New Treasurer Couple

Billy and Ann Hyland of Galway took over as Treasurer Couple in January.

Any outstanding contributions should be sent to them at:

19 Rockhill Avenue, Salthill, Galway. (091 528409)

Please do not send cash through the post.





From the Leading Team

To Serve with Joy

Calling a Lebanese couple to liaise the Central Europe Zone seemed surprising because we are from the other side of the Mediterranean; but for us, it was an avant-gardist sign of the interest that the Church has for Christians in the Middle East.

Our Zone stretches from West to East and from Northern Europe, passing by the Middle East to finally include Mauritius; on top of the two Super-Regions France-Luxemburg-Switzerland and Belgium, there are 5 regions: Poland, Germany, Lebanon, Syria, Mauritius and isolated teams in Belarus, Hungary, Lithuania, Slovakia, Ukraine, Rumania, Norway, Jordan, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Qatar, which require particular attention to the different specific features and cultures.

We learnt that *what is extraordinary is not the fact of meeting someone else but the fact of creating a relationship with them*. Masses and prayers always precede our trips. The couples' warm hospitality has allowed us to experience this relationship and to augment our capacity to listen.

In Munich in 2013, we experienced a very precious moment: all that was necessary was to listen, open our heart and *“don the spirit of humility to overcome obstacles,”* while in Poland it was an apostolic commitment that was driven by a strong sense of service. In Hungary, the number of teams grew from 12 to 18 and the Responsible Couple, who is dedicated to transmitting the riches of the Movement, committed to translating the documents and study topics. We found the warmth of their welcome and the sense of hospitality of these Team members very touching.

In March 2014 in Namur, our Belgian friends told us about that they were worried about the aging of the Movement and asked us to pray for them. Today *they hope against all hope*: ten teams are being piloted and couples have come forward offering their services to the Movement.

Within the zone, *“everyone is concerned about each other.”* The Super-Region France-Luxemburg-Switzerland responded generously to the requests and appeals of the regions attached to the International Leading Team and the isolated teams for the expansion of the Movement, the distribution of numerous documents and the hosting of couples at training sessions.

Our isolated Teams make great efforts to translate into their mother tongue; they appreciate the richness of the international nature of the Movement and are keen to deepen their spiritual life and know a little better the thinking of Father Caffarel. Since they have few occasions to open up and blossom in their own countries that are non-Christian in the Middle East or non-religious in Europe, couples find the monthly meetings to be a haven of trust and mutual help. In Jordan, the beauty of the ecumenical spirit amazed us when we realised that the members of the 9 Teams belonged to different churches. But what moved us the most was to see the Team members in Abu Dhabi and Dubai. These are Syrian and Lebanese couples who have emigrated because of the war and who wish to persevere in their spiritual life despite two major obstacles: the lack of priests and the lack of freedom to worship outside the parish buildings.

In Syria, the scattered Team members meet as and when they can. They mutually help each other despite the dangers inherent in moving around and circulating.

In the Middle East, the Teams have to deal with the dangers of fundamentalist Islam, which encourages them to emigrate; Lebanon remains a refuge for Christian Arabs and its Church represents a dynamic presence and a link with the universal Church for them.

At the end of our second year of service, we have a deep conviction: when **“unworthy servants”** experience joy in their relationship with their brothers and sisters, they allow the Spirit to transform them so that they can navigate upon the ocean.

Mahassen & Georges Khoury
Couple for the Central Europe Zone



From the Spiritual Counsellor

My dear couples,

Our Movement is committed to moving forward in keeping with the rhythm of the Church and its Synod. The Church is seeking, in the light of the Gospel, *“to discern the ways in which the Church and society can renew their commitment to the family founded upon the marriage between a man and a woman.”*(*The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelisation, Relatio synodi*, 4) From where I am writing, I contemplate all of you, dispersed in the four corners of the world, in various cultural contexts, but all united in the desire to correspond to the thought of God, who is manifest in the concerns of the Church’s synod.

In his address to the participants at the Third World Congress of Ecclesial Movements and New Communities on November 22nd, Pope Francis offered three suggestions for their journey of faith and ecclesial life:

First, “preserve the *freshness of your charism* always renewing the *‘first love.’*”

Second, respect *“the way of welcoming and accompanying men and women of today*, in particular, the youth, because every person has their own time, their own path, and we must accompany this journey.”

Third, strive for *“communion. (...) For the world to believe that Jesus is Lord, it needs to see communion among Christians.”* Be in communion too with the Magisterium of the Church and in particular with the Holy Father.

These are three points that interest us and more particularly interest our Movement: faith to the first love; welcome and help in the decisions that each person must make; maintaining communion with the Church and above with the Holy Father, who has the supreme responsibility for the universal service of charity.

With respect to our Movement and taking in to consideration Pope Francis' first recommendation, I have insisted, since the beginning of my service, on two Endeavours that belong to our spiritual method: the Sit-Down and Conjugal Prayer.

The Sit-Down, thanks to the Lord's presence, allows the couple, like Mary who listened to him, to share their thoughts on their life and to enlighten it with the Gospel's light, and thereby fortifying even more their union in the Lord.

In *Conjugal Prayer*, I advise you to say the rosary to Our Lady. Thanks to this simple prayer, which leads directly to the heart, you nourish your union in the Lord and you can be faithful to the 'three altars' where you celebrate the mystery of love, which is stronger than death:

the altar of the Eucharist where you take the Body of the Lord, without which we can do nothing (Jn 15:5)

the nuptial chamber, where according to the Lord's will, you become one flesh, one heart and one soul, in a chaste and pure love, that is open to the fruitfulness of life through collaboration with God to people the heavens and the earth

the altar, which is the *table* around which you get together to eat in joy and simplicity.

Dear couples, please commit to living faithfully and generously these two Endeavours. They allow the cultivation of the union of your hearts and become an effective prophetic sign for the Church and the world today.

I ask for abundant graces for you all. May the Lord, through the intercession of the very Holy Virgin Mary, our Mother and protector, bless and keep you forever.

With fraternal friendship,

Father José Jacinto Ferreira de Farias, SCJ

News from around the Region

Dublin

'Spring is sprung, the grass is riz....' Anonymous

As we emerge from the dark days of winter, it is a joy to hear birdsong, even before dawn and to feel the warmth of the sun on bright days. Praise the Lord.

Retreat: Our annual retreat was held in Avila on 7th & 8th March. Presenter was Fr. John Fitzgerald of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in Cork, who spoke on the theme of *'Contemplative Attitude towards the Heart'*. There was a period of Exposition on the Saturday, followed by Mass, in which he incorporated a healing part - a most beautiful end to a day of reflection. On Sunday, Fr. John brought Mary to life as he shared the reality of some of the events of her life as told in the Gospel stories.

The Teams Memorial Book, edited and compiled so beautifully by Liam Clare for the Gathering last August, was on display for the first time in Dublin during the retreat. It was a good opportunity for us to browse through it and recall past members. Before Mass on both days it was processed into the chapel. We hope to have it displayed at Teams events for the future. Other sectors also have copies.

Project Growth:

Thank God, in the last 5/6 years, the Dublin Sector has added 5 new teams. We currently have 18. However, because of the age profile of our members, the number of couples in some teams is shrinking and, in the next few years, undoubtedly, further depletion will occur. As a response to this situation, the Sector Team is embarking on a new idea entitled 'PROJECT GROWTH', continuing the expansion begun in recent times. As a first step we contacted all Sector members, giving them an opportunity to become involved, asking them to respond with their views to our Questionnaire - questions like *'What are the most important things that you gain from Teams?'* and *'How do we grow Teams in Ireland?'*

We have had a good response so far. There will be lots of food for thought at the next sector meeting!

Synod of Bishops on the Vocation and Mission of the Family are meeting again in October. We are fortunate to have Gerry Mangan on our sector team, who shared his insights on the Synod, including the document – *"Lineamenta, The Vocation and Mission of the Family"* which posed many questions and invited responses. On behalf of Teams, (as a voluntary body we are entitled to make a submission), Gerry compiled a draft response, which was circulated through the Irish Region for consideration. Modifications and recommendations sent by you to Gerry in early March have been incorporated into the document. As we write this, the final response is being sent forward to the Bishops' Conference in Maynooth. We are most grateful to you Gerry for your time, effort and generosity in preparing this document on behalf of Teams.

Joe & Áine Clayton

Belfast

Our December 8th Celebration was very enjoyable and was held in Michael and Eithne Clenaghan's home. 18 people attended, including Fr Ephrem Blake and Fr Gerry Cassidy. Fr Ephrem celebrated Mass.

Afterwards we had nice things to eat, sandwiches and buns, cake, mince pies etc. Then because Fr Ephrem had had a significant birthday in November, we had a birthday cake complete with a few candles, and we sang happy birthday to him. After that we had mulled wine, both alcoholic and non-alcoholic with some of the delicious birthday cake. This was followed by entertainment, led by Charlie and Maureen McMullan who did a brilliant job. First of all Charlie read out candid questions at random, e.g. name 2 good qualities of your spouse; and this followed by a quiz for each individual to answer on his/her own sheet. The two people with the highest scores received prizes!

It was great to see such a good attendance. We were all happy to see a big improvement in the health of Gerry Mulhern and Maureen McMullan.

The next important Teams event will be our annual retreat which will take place at the Passionist Retreat Centre, Tobar Mhuire, Crossgar, on 10th May 2015. This retreat will be led by Fr Gareth Thomas CP, and the price will be £27 per person including a 3 course meal and all tea/coffee breaks. We hope to have a good attendance at this beautiful venue.

We were sorry to hear of the deaths recently of John Clenaghan, Michael Clenaghan's brother, and of Evelyn King, Lynn Jordan's mother. May they rest in peace.

Moyra and Brendan Bunting

Galway

Galway Sector are hosting the R.C. weekend this year and all R.C. couples and chaplains are warmly welcome in the West. The dates are 3rd and 4th October, 2015 and we would ask that you put these dates in your diaries. R.C. weekend will be in Croi Nua, Rosary Lane, Taylor's Hill, Galway. Some Team members would remember being there the last time Galway had the R.C. weekend. The venue is very suitable and the M.S.C.s are always very welcoming and helpful.

Galway Sector had their Team Retreat in Croi Nua on Saturday 21st March. It was organised by Team 3 and facilitated by their chaplain Fr. Eugene Barrett, O.F.M. We were delighted to welcome Breda and Tony Preston, Regional Couple and we thank them sincerely for their presence. Fr. Eugene gave two talks on the original prayers which were an integral part of the Eucharist in the 2nd and 3rd centuries. The talks gave us an insight into how little the wording of the prayers have changed over the centuries. In the discussion which followed we felt the link and connection with the early church. After a communal lunch Fr. Eugene gave another talk on a completely different topic – 'Ageing and the Spirituality of Letting Go' which we found both very challenging and at the same time spoke to us about the reality of our lives. We were challenged to 'Let go and Let God.' 'It's not addition that makes us holy, but subtraction'. Galway Sector thank Team 3 for the great effort they put into making the retreat a great success. Congratulations to Joan and Enda Colleran, Team 3 on their first grandson, Cathal who arrived on Valentine's day to the great delight of his mum and dad, Heather and Eoin Colleran and much to the excitement of his sisters Aoibhín and Saoirse. Joan travelled to North Carolina to welcome the newest member of the clan into the world. Our annual outing will be to Coole Park on the last Sunday in June. We hope to have Mass there at 12 noon and this is followed by a picnic and a walk in the Park. All are welcome.

Máire and Brendan Kelly

From the Regional Chaplain

Fr. Gerry Cassidy



A NEW DAWN

God has raised Jesus from death to new life, to the astonishment of all but Mary, who had trusted completely the promise of the God to whom she had said yes, The gift of resurrection turns us around, makes us view everything differently, it challenges our doubts, fears, our attempts to control life.

We discover in the risen Christ a friend who consoles and never leaves us, but continually invites us to new places in our life's journey. We are empowered by our experience of the risen Christ, and we move as servants of Christ into a world in need of transformation and change.

April 2015

John 20:1-18

Are there areas in my life and relationships that I am experiencing new life after a time of struggle and loss? Do I allow myself to be surprised? Am I a surprise to others in loving ways?

May 2015

Revelation 21:1-7

Is my faith and hope in the risen Christ the foundation of my peace and happiness even though my life continues to have struggles and suffering as part of it?

June 2015

Romans 6:3-11. Romans 14: 7-9

How does my faith and hope in the resurrection help me to be more compassionate and understanding of the struggles of people within The Church?

Prayer Intentions

For those who have died:

John Clenaghan, brother of Michael, Belfast.

Evelyn King, mother of Lynn Jordan, Belfast.

Vincent Bailey, brother of Una Moore, Dublin.

Ann Doyle, mother of Meiread Ashe, Dublin.

Mary Duffy, sister of Carmel Cunneen, Dublin.

For those who are ill:

Caoimhe Wills, grand-daughter of Paddy and Anne Scott, Belfast.

Rebecca Haughey, grand-niece of Michael Clenaghan, Belfast.

Belfast Sector Retreat

Venue: Passionist Retreat Centre, Tobar Mhuire, Crossgar

Date: Sunday 10th May 2015

The Retreat will be led Fr. Gareth Thomas C.P.

Cost will be £27 pp which includes a 3 course meal and tea/coffee breaks.

Contact: Moyra and Brendan Bunting 048 90775048

Dublin Sector Retreat – 7/8 March, 2015

Liam Clare

Some fifty Teams members participated in the annual retreat at Avila Carmelite Centre, on the week-end of 7/8 March 2015. Despite a heavy cold, Father John Fitzgerald MSC presented the retreat with a charismatic enthusiasm, a wonderful sense of humour and a powerful Kerry accent.

Father encouraged us to stand back and review our situation in a changed world, where things may not always be sorted out in the way we would wish. He guided us to a series of new insights, based on themes such as love, hope, faith, healing, various types of prayer, and Our Lady from a biblical perspective.

One of the Masses we participated in was a ‘healing Mass’ during which we could be anointed as Father prayed over us individually for healing.

The reaction of the participants in the retreat seemed generally to be very positive, as we left to address once again the challenges of our daily lives, thanking all who had contributed to the successful organising of the event.



Group taken after Belfast 8th December Mass

LES AMIS DU PÈRE CAFFAREL

Association loi 1901 pour la promotion de la cause de Canonisation du Père Henri Caffarel

Letter to Correspondents March 2015

Miracles and Graces

Dear Friends,

An important stage has been reached on the road leading to the beatification of Father Henri Caffarel: the diocesan enquiry that was closed on last October 18th was handed over to the Congregation of the Cause of Saints in Rome on November 10th. We now await the decree of validity, which will say if the enquiry was conducted according to the Church's rules. The next stage will be the writing of the 'positio': using the enquiry as a basis, it entails highlighting the life, virtues and holiness of Father Henri Caffarel. This part usually takes a long time because of the precision needed to describe the future saint's life.

For today, **here are two requests:**

We all must ask the Lord to produce a miracle through the intercession of his servant, Father Caffarel.

A miracle is a physical healing that is instantaneous and definitive. A miracle is the 'confirmation from heaven'. It confirms that which the church wishes to proclaim: the holiness of God's servant, who can then possibly be received as an example by the faithful.

If, through praying through Fr. Caffarel, God intervenes in an extraordinary fashion in someone's life that would confirm Fr. Caffarel's holiness.

We also need to ask the Lord for graces through the intercession of Fr. Caffarel.

Many people indeed ask a saint to help them in the multitude of events in their daily lives. Fr. Caffarel is often asked to intercede with the Lord for problems that couples may have, for reconciliation between people, but also for other, more material or physical, things...

Asking him to intervene with God shows that Fr. Caffarel is present in our daily lives and that we believe that his action, which was so fruitful on earth is also (even more so) fruitful now that we believe he is in heaven in God's presence.

We would be very grateful if you would let us know about the graces you receive, for they are signs of Fr. Caffarel's presence in our midst. It is in the midst of these graces that God will give a miracle to his people.

May the Lord bless you all!

Fr. Paul-Dominique Marcovits, o.p.



Belfast Teams celebrate Fr. Ephrem's birthday after 8th December Mass

Editors: Paddy and Jacinta Quigley

jacintapaddy@eircom.net

Please note: Deadline for submissions for Summer Newsletter is Sunday 31st May
