

Equipes Notre-Dame

Newsletter Teams of Our Lady – Irish Region



Dying and Rising

Issue 108

Spring 2017

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From the Regional Couple

Dear friends in Teams,

We are now nearing the end of the Season of Lent and looking forward to the very special Season of Easter. As we all know, Easter or Resurrection Sunday is the day Christians around the world celebrate the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Even before theologians sought to explain the death of Jesus, the early church saw his resurrection as an act of God and a focal point for Christian worship, observed on the first day of each week since the first century. Sunday was officially proclaimed the day of Christian worship in AD 321. Easter as an annual celebration of the Resurrection that lies at the centre of a liturgical year, has been observed at least since the fourth century. Even in churches that traditionally do not observe other historic seasons of the church year, Easter is the high point of Christian worship.

Piotr and Dzidzia, the Super-Regional Couple – Transatlantic, would like to attend the R.C. weekend this year. While we don't have a date or venue as yet, they are not available on September 23rd, October 7th or 14th.

We were delighted to have Paul and Helena McCloskey stay with us for a few days a little earlier this year (see photograph below). They attended the Retreat in Avila given by Kevin Egan and drawn from *Amoris Laetitia*, the Joy of Love. It was a wonderful Retreat and gave us lots to reflect on. Fr. Peter Sexton S.J., Regional Chaplain celebrated Mass in the evening. Paul and Helena are the Liaison Couple for Eurasia and their priority is to ensure that all members of Teams of Our Lady feel that they truly belong to the Movement while at the same time respecting the different cultures and traditions of the Zone. Some members come from sister churches including the orthodox one and others are from Protestant churches.

The Council for Marriage and the Family and the World Meeting of Families 2018 invited national representatives to attend a special consultation day on Saturday, April 1st 2017 for marriage and family outreach movements on the Island of Ireland at the Emmaus Centre, Swords, Co Dublin. It focussed on the contribution that marriage and family outreach movements and associations want to make to the WMOF 2018 preparations and supporting the ministry of marriage and the family.

We fondly remember Kitty Murrin who died on 27th December 2016 R.I.P. We had not heard of her passing and were disappointed to miss her funeral. May she rest in peace. She was a wonderful lady and will be sadly missed.

From Pope Francis (Laudato Si 89)

“All of us are linked by unseen bonds and together form a kind of universal family, a sublime communion which fills us with a sacred, affectionate and humble respect.”

Pope Francis (Laudato Si 89)

“We can hardly consider ourselves to be fully loving if we disregard any aspect of reality:

Peace, justice and the preservation of creation are three absolutely connected themes, which cannot be separated and treated individually without once again falling into reductionism.

Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful

pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth.”

Wishing you all a happy and Blessed Easter,

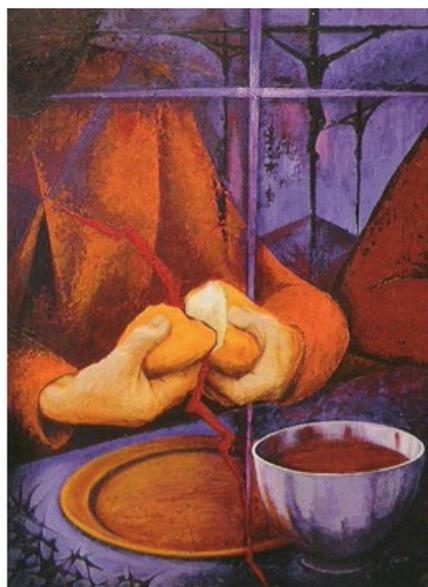
God Bless,
Breda and Tony Preston



Paul & Helena, Liaison Couple Eurasia



Group Photograph (taken by Paul)



Recognised in the breaking of the bread



From the Regional Chaplain, Fr. Peter Sexton SJ

Easter

Behind the city of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil is an enormous statue of Christ the Saviour – so huge and high that it is often covered in cloud, and so cannot be seen – but the statue is there all the time, seen or unseen. It is a powerful sign of the presence of the Risen Lord – always with us, seen or unseen. Karl Rahner, the great 20th century theologian, wrote that it is difficult to do justice to the mystery of Easter joy, precisely because it goes to the heart of all that it means to be human.

I was in Taizé once with a group of 17 year olds, and one of the boys had a sister gravely ill from an accident and in a coma. Her brother was trying to be macho about it and as the group of 20 of us stood around with Brother Roger (the founder of Taizé) I mentioned this fact. Br. Roger moved towards the young man, his face full of compassionate anguish, and wrapped him in his arms – and the flood gates opened. But it was safe to grieve sensing that the grief would not overwhelm him, because he was safe in the arms of a man of God. Br. Roger, whose constant refrain was that each human being is inhabited by the Spirit of Christ Risen. It was an electric moment - he revealed to us that day something of the meaning of the Resurrection.

Easter Sunday cannot be understood except through the darkness of Good Friday – it is precisely because Christ embraced on the Cross all that it means to be human to its darkest depths, and because of His trust in the Father and His love for us, that He drained the poison of sin and evil from the heart of humanity, and replaced it with His own heart so that despite all appearances the battle is won, Christ has overcome the world – is now permanently present in all our struggles – enabling us to do as He did on the Cross – fulfil the two great commandments of loving God and loving our neighbour – enabling us now, in Him, to accept humbly, to forgive gracefully, to respond generously, to laugh heartily, to pour balm compassionately on others' wounds, to be like Christ, a light for others in the darkness – our struggles now are, in the splendid German phrase, *ruckzugsgefachte* – struggles at the end of the line in a battle already won.

And that of course is the meaning of the Easter Gospel of the empty tomb – ‘he saw and he believed’ – what did he see? The empty tomb : he received the gift of faith – that God's word is trustworthy – he made the vital connection – between the empty tomb and the Risen Lord – a connection only possible to faith – to men and women of faith – not to our limited, rational, pedantic selves – he saw and he believed.

Hopkins wrote that ‘there lives the dearest freshness deep down things’ – and there are moments in our lives when the veil is lifted and we touch that dearest freshness: the birth of a child, the moment you realise that you are central to another person's life; a stunning awareness of the beauty of nature on a mountain top; a humbling awareness of the sheer goodness of another to you; a sense of delight at the harmony of your family. At these moments we realise we are made for something more.

And paradoxically enough in the opposite experience of great sorrow or pain we also realise that this cannot be the full story, that we are indeed made for something more. Psychologists often talk about helping people who are bereaved to find closure and to move on. This is not Christian speech, which offers resurrection as the meaning of Christian mourning – not 'closure' and 'moving on' Remembering is at the heart of Christian burial rites: the Resurrection of Jesus is the divine assurance that all will be well – that our beloved dead, whose memory we treasure for the rest of our lives in our hearts, are safe in God's hands, and that God's steadfast love is indeed steadfast – it alone endures forever.

In the Resurrection appearances over the 50 days of Eastertide certain key features recur :

- *His presence fills the disciples with peace and joy and creative energy after initial confusion and non-recognition;
- * He appears with the wounds of His passion, not gone but changed, transformed, no longer distressing but graceful;
- * He makes these brief appearances for just the 50 days as He was weaning them to live a life of faith after He left them in time and space to send His Spirit;
- * They and we are to find Christ Risen, no longer in Galilee and Jerusalem, but now PRESENT in the WORD – alive and active, in the COMMUNITY - where two or three are gathered in my name ...; in SUFFERING – this was a great help to the early persecuted Christians, and in the EUCHARIST - which forms and nourishes the Christian Community.

Nietsche, the German atheist remarked once that “the trouble with you Christians is that you don't look redeemed” – I often think he had a point! The invitation of Easter is to let in to our hearts His joy, because He has overcome the world – and that joy will be expressed in many diverse ways according to our temperament and circumstances – sometimes in serenity and peace, other times in courage and faithfulness in the most trying circumstances; other times in bubbling happiness, and other times saying no to despair. Let us pray this Easter Sunday that we may open our hearts to His joy and comfort, expressed in the simple word Alleluia, - not heard for the 40 days of Lent, but now repeated again and again in a peal of lavish joy that He is Risen - and pray that we learn to live our lives more convinced and convincing witnesses to the Resurrection, empowered to put our healing arms around the one suffering, empowered to bring light into others' darkness, and that we can hear echo in our hearts the delightful words of the Lord to Dame Julian of Norwich – ‘I can make all things well, and I may make all things well, and I shall make all things well, and I will make all things well, and thou shalt see for thyself that all manner of thing shall be well’.

Suggested Readings:

April : Luke 24 : 13-35

May : Ephesians 3 : 14 - 21

June : Galatians 5 : 22-25



KITTY MURRIN R.I.P. TEAM 4 MULLINGAR

It is with deep sadness that we write this tribute to Kitty, our much-loved team member for almost 30 years, who died on the 27th of December last.

Kitty was foremost a wonderful wife to Jimmy, (who died on the 8th of August 1995) and a wonderful mother to her two daughters, Linda and Jeanne.

After Jimmy's death, Kitty, in her natural humility, thought that it might serve our team better if she no longer stayed as a member of Teams of Our Lady, but to her credit, she continued with us and fully participated in the movement and was an active member up until the time of her untimely death.

Our beloved Kitty was in fact, longer a widow in Teams than she was a married person, and we knew how difficult this must have been for her at times. However Kitty always kept going, never defined by a sense of loss or regret. She always appreciated being in Teams and often told us that our team meant a lot to her, so we find some comfort at this time in thinking that our meetings and sharings made our relationships so strong that as she came near to the time of her death, she encouraged us, one and all to visit her and to have our last few words with her.

To describe her as an amazingly spiritual, accepting, well-prepared person is probably an understatement. In the face of her imminent death, she thanked God for all that He had given to her, and she accepted her final illness with dignity, courage and acceptance. She placed her utmost trust in the Sacred Heart... This proved a huge consolation for Linda and Jeanne.

When one thinks of Kitty it is always seeing her with a smile on her face, and a warm greeting for one and all. She was most sensitive towards others, and would go to great lengths to support and comfort those who needed it. She was very well read, and went to great effort to trace the early days of the Church. As a parishioner in Mullingar parish she was most supportive of all parish activities and in particular she gave great assistance to priests from abroad who wished to improve their skills in the English language. She took great pleasure in becoming the curator of the parish museum during her retirement from teaching, and she would read extensively so that she would be able to answer any questions which a visitor might pose.

She loved the arts- films, music and books and she travelled extensively. She was determined to do the Camino de Santiago de Compostela, and discovered "El easy Camino"- a form of travelling the route on bus mostly, and she relished the fact that she did get to travel to that part of Spain, despite her failing health at the time....

Needless to say, our team derived huge benefit from her wealth of knowledge on all matters, but it was always in an unassuming way that she disclosed her wisdom on matters spiritual and human.

As a member of Teams she contributed enormously both at local and national level. She is especially remembered for her heartfelt, well-researched and well thought- out contribution at a Teams event on "Being a widow in Teams." She reflected on the extent to which being a member of Teams had enriched her life, and it is significant that when her illness befell her suddenly over 18 months ago, that she was surrounded by members of Teams of Our Lady at our annual team retreat.

Kitty was originally from Belfast, but spent many years in Galway city. She came to Mullingar as a primary school teacher to commence her teaching career which lasted for 42 years. She immediately involved herself in parish life and indeed met her late husband Jimmy at a Legion of Mary event,

early in her teaching career. She served on the Parish Liturgy team, the Pastoral Council, and also as a Mass reader.

Perhaps it is no coincidence that Kitty died on the Feast of St John the Evangelist (27 December). Like John the Evangelist, she was youthful in her vigour and playfulness. Like the Evangelist, she stood at the foot of the cross in her final months and accepted Mary as her mother too. And, like the Evangelist, known in the Gospel as “the beloved disciple”, we can say with confidence and pride that Kitty was beloved to us and, undoubtedly, beloved by God. At the moment of her resurrection, may she with joy make the words of the Evangelist her own: “It is the Lord”.

Kitty was exemplary and we miss her greatly. No doubt she is smiling in her heavenly home, looking benignly on us all, and urging us to put our trust in God, no matter what life throws at us. May she rest in peace.

Assumpta O’Meara

Prayer Intentions

For those who have died:

Kitty Murrin, Mullingar

Margaret Kane, sister of Tony Lawlor, Team 39

Mary Casey, sister of Bart Flynn, Dublin

Brian Lenehan, Dublin

John Hegarty, Dublin, brother of Marian Crowley, Team 42

Dan Hegarty, Mayo, brother of Marian Crowley, Team 42

Margaret O’Meara, sister of Joe O’Meara, Mullingar

Mary O’Meara, mother of Joe O’Meara, Mullingar

Elsie Smyth, mother of Marie Gaffney, Mullingar

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From the Leading Team Eurafrica Zone: enlarging horizons

There are two dimensions to our service in the International Leading Team (ERI) as the “couple for the Eurafrica Zone.” On the one hand, we are members of the ERI and, as such, participate in their reflections, deliberations, activities and decisions. On the other, we are a “liaison couple,” with the responsibility of transmitting the Movement’s general orientations to the Super-Regions and of receiving from them their opinions and needs. We try to build a spirit of community and unity and to do it with humility because our mission is directed towards couples who already have a large experience of the Movement.

Our position is indeed very privileged: we are lucky enough to share in the reflection about the challenges for the future of the Teams, to help with the creation of activities and documents of general interest, to promote the Movement’s expansion in new countries... and the opportunity to see how all this takes form and progresses thanks to the faithful and tireless efforts of the Super-Regions.

As a member couple of the ERI, over the last two years, To and Zé gave us the task of updating the official document on **“Priest Counsellors and Spiritual Accompaniment in the Teams of Our Lady.”** Passionate work that led us to examine the early sources of the Movement. We followed the methodology that is specific to the Teams, that is collegiality. The final result is the product of several people’s efforts and ought at the same time be compatible with the charisma and the experiences undergone at the base of the Movement. This new document will contain three distinct parts. The first part, in response to a desire that Father Caffarel once expressed, **dives into the knowledge of the grandeur and mystery of the sacrament of orders**, into the significance of the priest’s presence for each Team, as well as into the idea of the “complementarity” of the two sacraments. In the second part, a reflection upon the **“art of spiritual accompaniment” through processes that enable growth** in the love and union with Christ, like those that occur in the life of a Team. A third and last part contains **criteria and proposals for organising and supporting the service of spiritual accompaniment** by priests and other companions.

As Liaison Couple for the Zone, our principal mission is to pray daily for the responsible couples of the 4 Eurafrican Super-Regions. In this prayer, we take to heart their projects, activities, conflicts and progress and entrust everything to the care of the Holy Spirit. Our duty is to be aware and up-to-date with the life in the Super-Regions, to know their history, their evolution, their “personality,” in order to better understand their aspirations and reactions to the Movement’s proposals and requests. For this it is essential to maintain regular contact and above all to establish fraternal relationships and mutual trust. Lending a deep and fruitful ear is easier when the human relationship is one of sincere and warm friendship, which does not prevent passionate debates and a critical spirit, all of which are also necessary. Consequently, just like any Liaison Couple, we need to go out and meet those who have been entrusted to us and also foster a connection between all of us.

This past year, we were able to visit two Super-Regions. August saw us in Togo and Benin, countries that today make up the most important centre of the Teams in the French-speaking African Super-Region. For over a week, we accompanied Roger and Emilia Agbozoh and Father Raoul N’Sougan to various celebrations (the 30th anniversary of the Teams in Togo), visits with bishops, meetings with Responsible Couples... We were able to appreciate with great admiration their capacity for organisation in the midst of economic difficulties, their fidelity to the Movement’s charisma and orientations, and their enthusiasm for spreading the Teams in all the countries in the region. In September, we went to Italy, to the national training session for the Sector Responsible Couples. We enjoyed a couple of magnificently organised days, with a very dynamic and creative programme. Also in Italy, in Genoa, the annual meeting for the Zone took place in February and this was a great occasion to exchange information and experiences.

We dedicated an important amount of time to getting to know thoroughly the activities for the international expansion of the Movement. Spain is working on the launching of Teams in Sweden, to be created from Spanish-speaking emigrant communities; Portugal is encouraging the way forward towards full independence for the Teams in Portuguese-speaking Africa; Italy is running and training teams in Albania and Romania; French-speaking Africa is spreading Teams to Ghana and Nigeria, two large neighbouring countries that speak English but have a common culture with Togo and Benin. For us, it is a grace from God to be able to accompany the work in the Eurafrika Zone from the ERI, and to see close up how the spiritual and geographic horizons of the Teams of Our Lady are being enlarged.

José Antonio y Amaya MARCÉN-ECHANDI

Liaison Couple for the Eurafrika Zone

Prayer Intentions *(continued from page 7)*

Eileen Fox, mother of Criostóir Fox, Mullingar

May Lynch, mother of Valerie Moore, Mullingar

Dumitru Aioanei, father of Ingrid Lewis, Team 41

For those who are ill:

Margaret Lamb's daughter **Máiréad**

Michael Flanagan's sister **May**

News from around the Region

Dublin

The Teams mass was celebrated on Friday, 9th December, at Avila. The Celebrant was Fr. Bill Fortune, chaplain to Team 21. Refreshments were served afterwards in a very sociable atmosphere.

A seminar on Project Growth was held on Saturday 28th January at the Disciples of the Divine Master at Newtownpark Avenue, Blackrock. There was a good attendance.

The Annual Retreat took place at Avila on Saturday, 17th February. The Theme was: Sit, Feast on your Relationship: Asking Contemplative Questions. It was directed by Kevin Egan. Mass was celebrated by Fr. Peter Sexton. Copies of Kevin's presentations were sent to the Teams in the sector.

A summer Outing is planned for Glendalough, including a conducted tour.

Details of this, Project Growth and preparations for the World Meeting of Families 2018 will be circulated shortly.

Gerry and Grace Mangan

Belfast

On 8th December we gathered at the home of Liam and Eileen Mc Kinney in Belfast for the feast of the Immaculate Conception. Fr Ephrem Blake C.P. (Chaplain to Belfast 5 Team) celebrated Mass. All members of the Sector were present except one couple who had a prior engagement.

After the Mass we enjoyed some lovely food and everyone joined in the entertainment. We enjoyed hearing some interesting stories and experiences not heard before from those present.

Due to illness of some members of the Sector a meeting to make arrangements for the Annual Sector Retreat will now be held during the first week in April. We hope to have it at a venue in Belfast on one of the Sundays during May.

The Regional Couple have asked us to consider hosting the Responsible Couples' Week-End in the Belfast Sector this year and this will be on the agenda.

Please keep in your prayers Margaret Lamb's daughter Máiréad who is due to undergo surgery soon.

Her daughter Aoibhean is to marry Gary during April.

Also keep in your prayers Michael Flanagan's sister May who is undergoing medical tests at present.

Ken, the eldest son of the Mc Mullans, is getting married in February 2018 to Joanne. His parents believe that this is an answer to ten years of prayer. They are overjoyed that their prayer has been answered.

Charlie and Maureen McMullan

Mullingar

The feast of the Immaculate Conception was celebrated with Mass on the 8th of December by Fr Frank Monks (Chaplain to Team 3) in St. Camillus's Nursing Centre Killucan; Father reminded us all that at Christmas time and throughout the year it is the little gestures that make a difference.

We had a lovely get together after Mass enjoying the "cuppa that heals" thanks to the Camillians whose hospitality we always appreciate.

Retreat:

Our annual retreat took place on the 26th March in The Verna Centre Mullingar. A special word of thanks

to Fr Lomán McCoy OFM, for facilitating the retreat.

The theme for the day was “The Word of God” focusing on the Gospel of the day, John 9: 1-14.

Fr Lomán was inspiring, he emphasised that “Teams” and groups like ours must keep moving spreading The Word of God.

We thank the Franciscan sisters at the La Verna Centre who made us feel so welcome in their home.

Information Evening:

In response to the email on *Project Growth* we are holding an information evening on **Thursday May 11th** at **8pm** at

The Family Centre
St Mel's Road
Longford
County Longford

We have the support of Fr Michael McGrath who is attached to Longford Parish; and are hoping to spread Teams to our neighbouring county. We are delighted that couples from Mullingar have already offered practical support and would appreciate any help available on the night, just being there would be encouraging to those who attend. Please keep us in your prayers on May 11th.

Sympathy:

Our heartfelt sympathy to Team 4 on the death of their beloved Team member Kitty Murrin, Kitty was a member of Team 4 for 29 years; may her gentle soul rest in peace.

We extend our sincere sympathy to the following Team members:

Joe O Meara (Team 4) on the death of his sister Margaret O’Meara and of his mother, Mary (in her 104th year)

Marie Gaffney (Team 11) on the death of her mum Elsie Smyth

Criostóir Fox (Team 11) on the death of his mum Eileen Fox

Valerie Moore (Team 4) on the death of her mum May Lynch

John Smyth (Team 1) on the death of his brother-in-law John Isdell

Please pray for the happy repose of their souls.

On a happy note, congratulations to:

Tom and Valerie Moore (Team 4) on the birth of their grandson Charlie in Perth.

Andy and Margaret Donohoe (Team 3) on the birth of their grandson Ciarán.

Pauline and Richard Sheridan

Galway

Our congratulations and blessing to John Mc Carrick on the christening of his latest grand-daughter Florence Emily McCarrick on Sunday 26th March. It is lovely to welcome another member into our Christian family.

The retreat is one of our Teams Endeavours and is an occasion for joy and celebration.

Our annual retreat was held on Sunday 26th March in Croí Nua in Salthill. It was a most beautiful day weather wise which contributed to a calm restful atmosphere. The event was well attended. Fr. Charlie Sweeney facilitated.

Fr. Charlie encouraged us to be forward thinking and to leave behind the negative thoughts, memories of the past. In the second half of our lives we could adopt an attitude of forgiveness to what has happened in the past. An integral part of the retreat was the penitential service. This included a reconciliation event. It is our (Anne and Jack's) opinion that the reconciliation sacrament in the church generally is misunderstood. It's healing power is not fully appreciated and felt. Our penitential service on the retreat was a unique and creative event in the hands of Fr. Charlie. We were encouraged to first of all forgive ourselves, then we can forgive others.

Our heartfelt thanks to Fr Charlie for a life giving retreat.

Anne and Jack Hutchinson

Mullingar - 8th December Mass and Annual Sector Retreat



Team members after Retreat Mass with Fr Lomán



Fr Frank Monks, Anne Gaffney, Mary Cahill,
Sr. Therese, Joe O'Meara & Frank Fagan

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