



Equipes Notre-Dame

Newsletter Teams of Our Lady – Irish Region



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Group taken on Sunday at RC Weekend with Bishop Michael Smith, Teams Chaplain, Mullingar, who celebrated the closing Mass



Setting, with symbols illustrating the Teams Movement; Peter and Andrina Finch, from the new team in Mullingar “New Kids on the Block”



From the Regional Couple

Dear friends in Teams,

As we are nearing the end of November and the very special season of Advent, it is appropriate to remember our dear departed and to keep them in our prayers. It is also a time to review our strengths and our weaknesses and to set our goals for the New Year. The season of Advent offers us a very special opportunity to reflect on our lives, how we relate to other people and how we can improve. Most importantly, Advent provides an opportunity to review, think about and reflect on our relationship with Jesus the new baby, born of the Virgin Mary in the manger, the Son of God most high. The mystery of the Incarnation is the central mystery of our Christian faith. The simplest and best way to engage with Advent is to begin and end each day by seeking the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit and entering deeply into the mystery of the season and sharing it with others.

“Today, in the cathedrals and sanctuaries throughout the world, the doors of mercy are being closed. Let us ask for the grace not to close our eyes to God who sees us and to our neighbour who asks something of us. Let us open our eyes to God purifying the eye of our hearts of deceitful and fearful images, from the god of power and retribution, the projection of human pride and fear. Let us look with trust to the God of mercy, with the certainty that “love never ends” (1 Cor 13:8). Let us renew our hope in the true life to which we are called, the life that will not pass away and awaits us in communion with the Lord and with others, in a joy that will last forever, without end. And let us open our eyes to our neighbour, especially to our brothers and sisters who are forgotten and excluded, to the “Lazarus” at our door. That is where the Church’s magnifying glass is pointed. May the Lord free us from turning it towards ourselves - Pope Francis – Homily, 13 November 2016”

It was our great privilege to have the opportunity of attending the Irish Bishops conference in Drumcondra, which launched the preparations for the World Meeting of Families on 22nd October last. Teams of Our Lady were well represented and one of the main features was a film in which couples gave an account of their various movements. Maureen and Pat Seery (Team 38) represented the Teams of Our Lady in Ireland and gave an excellent presentation on behalf of Teams. We take this opportunity to express our very grateful thanks and appreciation for all of their efforts and hard work in the preparation and delivery of what was an excellent and uplifting presentation.

The Responsible Couples’ Weekend was hosted by Mullingar in October and our thanks and appreciation to all for their great efforts and hard work. As many of you may be aware, Teams of Our Lady was set up in Mullingar in 1979 under the stewardship of the outgoing Sector Couple, Oliver and Anna Marie Leavy. They had been encouraged by Fr Christy Fox of the Mill Hill Fathers, to set up Teams in the Midlands. Their first Chaplain was the then Fr. Michael Smith, who is now Bishop of Meath and still remains as Chaplain to that first team. Mullingar became a separate sector in 1989 and there are now six Teams established there.

We take this opportunity to express our thanks and grateful appreciation to the Mullingar Sector Team for their great efforts and hard work in preparing for and hosting this wonderful and very special event in the life of Teams. Our thanks and appreciation to Oliver and Anna Marie Leavy for the great work they have done since they first set up the Teams of Our Lady in Mullingar in 1979.

We take this opportunity also to express our thanks and appreciation to Stephen Cummins for his excellent presentation at the Responsible Couples' weekend. It was very well received by all and contributed significantly to the success of the Weekend.

Gerry and Grace Mangan, Sector Couple for Dublin have prepared an excellent synopsis of Amoris Laetitia, which they presented at the R.C. Weekend and which can now be used by Teams as a Study Topic. Gerry and Grace have been doing excellent work in the Dublin Sector and we take this opportunity to acknowledge and to express our thanks and appreciation for their great efforts and dedication in the further development and progress of the Dublin Sector.

Our thanks and appreciation to our Regional Chaplain, Fr. Peter Sexton S.J. for his guidance and input to our movement throughout the year and to all of our Teams Chaplains for their guidance and to all who have helped in so many ways, our grateful thanks and appreciation.

We are looking forward to meeting many of you at the Dublin Sector Mass on 9th December and we wish all of our Teams and their families a happy and peaceful Christmas and many Blessings for the New Year.

God Bless,

Breda & Tony Preston

Love is (1 Corinthians 13)

**If I decorate my house perfectly with lovely plaid bows
Strands of twinkling lights and shiny glass balls
But do not show love to my family I'm just another decorator.
If I slave away in the kitchen, baking dozens of Christmas Cookies,
Preparing gourmet meals and arranging a beautifully adorned table at mealtime,
But do not show love to my family, I'm just another cook.
If I work at the soup kitchen, carol in the nursing home,
And give all that I have to charity,
But do not show love to my family, it profits me nothing.
If I trim the spruce tree with shimmering angels and crocheted snowflakes
Attend a myriad of holiday parties and sing in the choir's cantata,
But do not focus on Christ I have missed the point.
Love stops the cooking to hug the child.
Love sets the decorating aside to kiss the husband.
Love doesn't envy another home that has co-ordinated Christmas china and table linens.
Love doesn't yell at the children to get out of your way.
Love doesn't give only to those who are able to give in return,
But rejoices in giving to those who can't.
Love bears all things. Believes all things. Hopes all things.
And endures all things. Love never fails.
Video games will break, pearl necklaces will be lost, golf clubs may rust.
But giving the gift of love will endure.**

From Stephen Cummins, Mullingar



From the Regional Chaplain, Fr. Peter Sexton SJ

Advent: a reflection

In his Advent poem Patrick Kavanagh writes : “we have tested and tasted too much, lover – through a chink too wide there comes in no wonder”.

The season of Advent leading into Christmas is surely about wonder – a sense of awe at what God has done in sending His Son to become one of us. And the liturgical season’s function is both to celebrate this wonder and awaken our jaded and weary hearts to its reality and meaning for us.

One September when I was in Lourdes with some students on pilgrimage, I took a break from them and went walking in the hills outside the town. I came across an elderly man and a young boy, grandfather and grandson. The boy was holding a boomerang in his hand, and the grandfather had just said something like this is a waste of time, it won’t work. But just as they came near me I heard the boy say to his grandfather: ‘un peu d’espoir Papa, un peu d’espoir -the boy teaching the man about hope! And at that moment the elderly man smiled at me. It was a delightful moment! And that is what the Advent season is meant to kindle in us: un peu d’espoir.

In hard times we tend to lose sight of our dignity and our destiny – so the work and power of Scripture and its celebration in the liturgy is like the water-diviner with the gift – to find and touch the hidden well of mystery within us – and teach us to say with the psalmist: I thank you Lord for the wonder of my being.

Our culture, the pressure of our lives, the rampant commercialism in our faces can marginalise or even eliminate the awareness of what we are here for, of what this time is all about.

Someone wrote that Advent is not about waiting for the baby Jesus as though nobody told us he had already arrived. ‘The Advent moment reminds us that we are coded for God; we are programmed for heaven – and seeks to help us make sense of that intense and disturbing imperative for a completeness that always eludes us.’

The three comings of the Lord are the context for these weeks of Advent : the first coming of Christ in history looked forward to especially in the words of Isaiah – it is vital to taste the darkness of our world without Christ, a salvation-less world – we are nothing without Him.

The Second and final coming in mystery, as the Gospel teaches, can come at any time, when everything will be revealed in the glory of Christ. And hence the urgent call to us to embrace in Advent faith his coming today and now – the third coming - into our lives by ‘staying awake and not being coarsened by the cares of life’, but on the contrary living out this active Advent faith, in the words of St. Paul ‘making more and more progress in the kind of way you are meant to live, the life that God wants, and as you are already living it.’ A recurrent phrase in the Fathers of the Church was: ‘nunc coepi’ – today I have begun – or today I begin again – it is not too late. St. Paul thanks God for the gifts given to the community - ‘ the witness to Christ has indeed been strong among you’ - but reminds them that they are not there yet – ‘we wait in hope and in love and in faithful service.’

Coarseness that dims and even quenches the spirit in us is a feature of our contemporary culture. In this season of Advent it is the call of the Gospel to us Christians to stay awake and live differently witnessing to Christ's presence in the world by the quality of the standards of our living and our values,

however unfashionable or politically incorrect.

Karl Rahner in his reflection on Advent in *The Eternal Year* writes: ‘The only thing that must live in you is a humble, calm joy of faithful expectancy which does not imagine that the tangible things of the present time are everything. Only humble joy, like the joy of a prisoner, who will stand up even while he is still imprisoned, because, lo and behold, the bolt has already been torn off the door of his dungeon, and so freedom is already guaranteed. Is this joy this Advent joy so difficult? Is resignation and hidden despair really easier? Ask not, doubt not. You have, my heart, already chosen the joy of Advent. As a force against your own uncertainty, bravely tell yourself, It is the Advent of the great God.’

Scripture :

January : Jeremiah chapter 29, verses 11-14

February : Ephesians chapter 3, verses 14-21

March : 1 Corinthians, chapter 13

Prayer Intentions

For those who have died:

Rebecca Haughey, grandniece of Michael Clenaghan, Belfast

Sinéad Killough, cousin of Michael Clenaghan

Regina Britton, sister of Anna Marie Leavy, Mullingar

Fr. Eoin O’Malley, Benburb, former chaplain

WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES, 22-26 AUGUST, 2018

The World Meeting of Families (WMF) takes place every three years and is coordinated by the Vatican's Dicastery for Laity, the Family and Life issues. (An Irishman, Bishop Kevin Farrell, former Bishop of Dallas, has recently been appointed head of the Dicastery.) Established by Saint John Paul II in 1992, the WMF's aim is to strengthen the sacred bonds of the family unit across the globe. The first WMF took place in Rome in 1994, the International Year of the Family. Every three years since 1994, families from all over the world are invited to come together to share experiences, to dialogue, to pray and to work together and grow as individuals and as family units. The ninth WMF takes place in Dublin in August 2018.

Preparatory Conference

This special Conference took place on 22nd October in DCU, St Patrick's Campus, Drumcondra. Over 600 delegates attended from all over Ireland, including representatives from over 20 organisations whose mission is to support the sacrament of marriage and offer pastoral outreach to families. Teams were well represented at the Conference and other organisations represented included ACCORD, Cana Ireland, Catholic Marriage Encounter, Couples for Christ, Catholic Grandparents Association, Nazareth Family Institute, Retrouvaille and Society of St. Vincent de Paul. We (Teams) had our own stand and literature to distribute. There was a lot of interest in Teams and we hope to have sown seeds that could help with future recruitment.

A highlight for us was the Video presentation at the Conference of groups, movements and associations that work to support families in Ireland. Maureen and Pat Seery (Team 38) did the presentation for Teams. It was excellent – clear, lively and committed – and made a big impression. Well done, Pat and Maureen. The link to the video is

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DGpx3FK9Spw>

and is well worth seeing.

Archbishop of Dublin, Diarmuid Martin said in his address that Pope Francis spoke to him about the WMF 'as a gift to the Irish Church. It should be a high point but a high point within a process which should help us dispassionately to look at the inadequacies of our pastoral work for families. You will remember that phrase: "We cannot enlighten reality without first having listened to it" But we cannot be satisfied with simply listening: we have to enlighten also. Our listening should not be just at the negative.'

He went on to say that 'family is about love, no matter how imperfect and failing: it is about a love that enriches lives. I am thinking about the love of spouses, the love of parents for children. We have great families who would never think of themselves as great: they simply do their best. Where would any of us be without the love and generosity we received from our parents. This is not something old fashioned: it is something more necessary than ever. As we get ready for the WMF we should above all recognise what we ourselves and society owe to our families.' He concluded that 'when I find myself at a gathering like this...I realise also that together we will accept this gift and challenge of Pope Francis in such a way that he will be proud of us.'

Archbishop of Armagh, Eamon Martin, stated that 'the Catholic Church in Ireland, and throughout the world, is a "family of families" – a network of believers, homes, communities, parishes and dioceses. In choosing to come here today we are affirming that we believe in family'. He went on to say that 'In choosing Ireland to host the WMF, Pope Francis has given a gift to our Church and our country

which we have accepted with humility and openness to the graces that it can bring. My hopes for the WMF keep coming back to that word “connection”.I pray that Ireland’s hosting of the WMF will enable families to “connect” and “reconnect” at a whole variety of levels, both with each other and with the wider “family of families” that is their Church’.

For more on the World Meeting of Families, 2018 see

www.worldmeeting2018.ie

Getting Connected

This was one of the sub themes of the Preparatory Conference for the WMF on 22nd October. One key way of doing so is through the use of the various media. We need to communicate among ourselves as a Team, within the Sector, Region, Super-Region and worldwide. But we also need to witness to those outside Teams on what we gain from our participation in the Teams movement in relation to our marriage and family relationships and our relationships with our Church and ultimately with God. We especially need to communicate effectively with married couples, who potentially may be attracted to joining Teams. We have tried to make some progress on this in recent months in the context of showcasing Teams at the WMF Preparatory Meeting. We have produced business cards with a short description of Teams, clear references to our website and space to insert the name and phone number of a contact person in Teams. We have also produced a flier drawing attention to the study guide on Amoris Laetitia, but with a view also to drawing attention to our website. We have made changes to the website to make it more attractive and user friendly. The home page in particular has been refreshed with a view to reaching out more effectively to potential new members. We would like to thank the Literature Couple, Liam and Eileen McKinney, for all their time and assistance with the printed material. A special word of thanks to Stephen Condell, who manages our website, for his time, patience and expertise in making a big series of changes over a short period.

We would urge you, in particular, to have a look at the website and let us know what you think and how it can be further improved. Any suggestions would be most welcome and appreciated. Copies of the new literature will be available at upcoming events and can be obtained directly from Liam and Eileen McKinney email mckinneyteamslit@aol.com or in some cases in Dublin from Gerry and Grace Mangan email mangan42@gmail.com.

Gerry and Grace Mangan

Fr. Eoin O’Malley RIP

Fr. Eoin O’Malley, who was a former chaplain of Team 25, died on 13th of November at Benburb. He was a friar and priest in the Servite Order for sixty two years. May he rest in peace.

News from around the Region

Dublin

Responsible Couples' Weekend

Responsible couples from the Dublin Sector were full of praise for the weekend hosted by the Mullingar Sector. There was the warm welcome, superb organisation, and excellent venue and catering. Stephen Cummins gave an inspiring series of talks in his own inimitable way that held our attention and interest throughout. Bishop Michael Smith joined us for part of the weekend and for the Mass during which he gave an inspiring homily. Well done, Mullingar, you have set a high standard for the rest of us in future years.

Teams Mass

This will take place in Avila, on **Friday, 9th December**. It will be followed by Tea/Coffee. Don't forget to bring something to share with the tea/coffee! We hope there will be a big turnout for what is always a most enjoyable get together in the spirit of Christmas and family.

Retreat

Our retreat is taking place in Avila for **one day on Saturday, 18th February, 2017**. Please put the date in your diary. We are hoping for a big attendance for what 'offers the rest, renewal and readiness to face again the challenges of life' (from our website). This year we will be urging you to indicate whether you are attending, as this greatly helps with the organisation, catering etc. Needless to say if for any reason you have not been able to register, please still come on the day and you will be accommodated.

The themes for the Retreat will be drawn from Pope Francis's *Amoris Laetitia, The Joy of Love*. In line with the Retreat format, the intention is to take a reflective, contemplative approach to the themes. The retreat will be conducted by Kevin Egan. Kevin has lectured for many years in psychology and pastoral theology at All Hallows College. He is married to Bernadette and has a private practice as a psychotherapist and supervisor in Boyle Co. Roscommon. He is a regular contributor to the Furrow and has published *Remaining a Catholic after the Murphy Report* (Columba Press, 2011).

Pope Francis's Apostolic Exhortation - *Amoris Laetitia: The Joy of Love* (AL)

We mentioned in the last Newsletter that we aimed to hold a Dublin Sector gathering on AL. This was before we had read it in full! Given its length and the range of issues covered we concluded that it would be very difficult to do it justice in the course of a seminar lasting a few hours. We have taken a number of other initiatives. Gerry Mangan gave a talk introducing AL at the Responsible Couples' Weekend in Mullingar outlining in broad terms the themes covered with suggestions on how it could be used by individual Teams as their study topic at some stage. We have also prepared a study guide on AL, reference to which is now prominently displayed on the home page of our Teams website.

This provides guidance on the nature and scope of AL, a suggested reading plan and overviews of each Chapter, mainly using quotations from AL. References to the sections from which these quotations are drawn are given in brackets after them. Having read the guidance on each section you could then read sections in the AL, in which you might have a particular interest to get a more detailed understanding. We hope this guide will be of some assistance. AL will also be a basis for the themes in our Retreat (see above) and in the context of the seminar on Project Growth. We may then decide at a later date to have a focussed seminar on it. Suggestions in this regard are most welcome.

Project Growth

As you know an excellent survey of Team Members was carried out by the previous Sector Team in 2015 to gather ideas and suggestions on how best we can grow Teams in the Dublin Sector. In the meantime it was announced that the World Meeting on Families would take place in Dublin in 2018. Pope Francis published *Amoris Laetitia, the Joy of Love*, (AL) in April this year. We had intended having a meeting to discuss Project Growth this Autumn, but then a special Conference was announced for 22nd October to formally launch the preparations for the World Meeting of Families, which will take place in Dublin on 22-28 August, 2018. Teams were invited to participate and have a stand at the Conference, together with all the other voluntary organisations that support marriage and families (see below). As mentioned above many Teams are beginning to study AL, with the assistance of the Study Guide and becoming familiar with its contents.

We now have all these developments to take into account in considering how we can grow Teams in our sector, especially in the period up to the WMF and beyond. We are planning to hold a seminar early in the New Year on this theme. We think that a Saturday morning might be the most suitable. We are looking for a suitable venue and will be in touch as soon as that is organised.

Gerry and Grace Mangan

Belfast

A short while ago our sector team met to make final preparations to celebrate the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

We all look forward to this occasion which will be held this year in the home of Liam and Eileen McKinney, Belfast. Fr Ephrem Blake CSsR from the Passionist Retreat Centre, Crossgar has kindly agreed to celebrate Mass for us. It is a lovely occasion to share both a spiritual and social gathering with all those involved in Teams in the North.

We ourselves attended the Responsible Couples' week-end in Mullingar. It was four years since we attended an RC week-end but from the moment we arrived we were made so very welcome by couples we knew from the past and those we were meeting for the first time.

The main talks were given by Stephen Cummins who many would know is a member of a Mullingar Team. We are blessed to have someone like Stephen with his gifts to lead a Retreat. During the first session he covered the endeavours in a very helpful and challenging way. The second session referred to the Pope's document to Teams and went on to focus on Mercy and Love – too detailed to cover adequately in this article. The third session included a short video entitled "Sharpen the Saw" to illustrate how we might sharpen our teams in the context of Love and Mercy.

During this time of year we remember our loved ones who have passed on to their eternal rest. We remember how much they influenced our lives and faith and pray "Eternal rest grant unto to them O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon them and may they rest in peace."

We remember in our prayers a grandniece of Michael Clenaghan's called Rebecca Haughey who died at the young age of 18 years and a cousin of his called Sinéad Killough who died after a short illness.

We also remember our dear friend Pauline Flanagan whose first anniversary occurs on 16th December.

Margaret Lamb is celebrating the birth of her first grandson born to her daughter Róisín and husband Sean. He was baptised Eamon Joseph Martin on 6th November by Fr Gerry Cassidy CsSP in St Gerard's Church, Belfast.

Paddy and Anne Scott's granddaughter Caoimhe who had been ill for some time has now made a good recovery and has gone to London to take up employment. They wish to thank everyone in Teams who kept praying for her during her illness.

Charlie and Maureen McMullan

Mullingar

We in Team 3 are the incoming Sector Team for 2016-2017, Elaine and Jim Keogh are our responsible couple, Fr Frank Monks, Margaret & Andy Donohoe, Betty & Michael McGovern, and Pauline & Richard Sheridan make up our Team.

Thanks to Team 1, and in particular to Anna Marie and Ollie for looking after us all last year and for steering the organizing committee through the planning and hosting of the R.C. weekend.

Our sincere thanks to all the Teams members and the Chaplains, who joined us and contributed so generously to the weekend here in Mullingar, Our thanks also Fr. Paddy Dundon for leading us in Morning Prayer and to Bishop Michael for celebrating Mass with us.

A special word of thanks to Stephen Cummins for his wonderful presentation titled "Concrete Points of Commitment" and for reminding us that we need to "Sharpen the Saw" giving us the tools to do this in the following passage:

It is in the stillness that we allow God to speak. So much of our communication with others is focused on what we want to say. Listening is as much a part of good communication, if not more important, than having our say. The same applies to our relationship with God. If I am constantly talking to God when does He get a chance to talk to me?

How does God talk to me?

In the silence. As I offer him the opportunity to speak to me by sitting still, in front of the Blessed Sacrament in Church. In the quietness of the home without distraction.

On Sunday or any other day that I attend Mass. Listening to the word of God and what it might have to say to me.

Choosing through the endeavours to pray or read a scripture passage. Having read a passage of scripture to sit with it and let it speak.

The annual retreat is another opportunity to sharpen the saw.

Fr Frank Monks led a pilgrimage to Rome; quite a few Team members and friends travelled with him and had a wonderful time retracing the steps of St Camillus and Saint Pio, and had the pleasure of being in the presence of His Holiness Pope Francis.

Margaret and Andy Donohoe fulfilled a lifetime ambition visiting the Holy Land.

Pauline and Richard represented the Mullingar Sector at the Bishops Conference on the World meeting of Families and had a wonderful day, encouraged by the number of young people there. The Teams of our Lady was very well represented and a video presentation by Maureen and Pat Seery made them feel proud to be members of Teams of Our Lady.

We are looking forward to seeing many Team members, family and friends to help us celebrate the Feast Day of Our Lady's Immaculate Conception on **Wednesday the 7th of December at 7.30pm at St Camillus Nursing Centre Killucan** ; Mass will be celebrated by Fr Frank Monks.

Prayer Intentions:

We remember all those loved ones we have lost during the year, all who are sick and lonely and especially those who have no one to pray for them.

We especially remember Regina Britton, sister of Anna Marie Leavy. May she rest in peace.

Richard and Pauline Sheridan

Galway

Anne and Peter Costello are back after a fascinating pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the Holy Land. This has been a great experience for them. Team 2 who are eagerly awaiting a full report on their amazing trip.

Anne and Jack Hutchinson's daughter Jean was conferred with a B.Comm Degree in NUI Galway on 19th October. The 'nest' is now empty for Jack and Anne as Jean has taken a job in Dublin.

We celebrated Emmie Lloyd's first anniversary a few weeks ago. A mass was celebrated in the Jesuit Church, Galway by Fr. Colin Garvey (of Team 2). It was a beautiful family remembrance occasion. Emmie and Eddie were a well-loved couple in Teams and contributed greatly to the movement in Galway and beyond. Our prayers go to Eddie and family.

Teams in Galway came together to celebrate a Mass for the beginning of the Team Year. Fr Eugene Barrett said the mass in the Abbey Church. We had a lovely social evening afterwards. Thanks to all who supplied the goodies and thanks to the Franciscan Community who supplied the venue.

Congratulations to Owen and Brid Quinn on the birth of their new grandson Jack Robert (10th October 2016) also to his doting parents.

Wishing all a very happy and peaceful Christmas.

Anne and Jack Hutchinson

Editors Paddy and Jacinta Quigley, jacintapaddy@eircom.net
