



diocese
of limerick
our catholic community



'ONE DIOCESE, MANY STORIES'

LIMERICK DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY

5th October 2019
Rathkeale House Hotel

Everyone has a story...



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Foreword

Pope Francis often uses the word “synod” to describe the Church. The word emphasises that we are on a “journey together”. It is good along to the journey to share stories, news and experiences. It’s what we read in the Acts of the Apostles – whenever the apostles returned after a missionary journey or experience, they shared the fruits of what they have lived and seen with the community. In doing so, they encouraged and built up those listening to them.

I am delighted we have this booklet to prompt us to share our stories of what God is doing among us. These are some of our Diocesan stories. I am grateful to all who have contributed. There would be many others and I hope in time we’ll get other opportunities to hear of them. Our new Diocesan website will also be a big help to us for communicating more with one another and with others.

When I met Pope Francis a few weeks ago along with a group of 30 bishops from around the world, he reminded us of the importance of Evangelisation. The Church exists to evangelise. Indeed, its very identity is Evangelisation. We have Good News to share so let’s keep spreading the Word. People have a right to hear of the Gospel. Deep down it’s what they are searching for. I hope you enjoy reading this booklet and thanks again to all involved in its preparation.

+ Brendan Leahy

Introduction

When we started planning the Diocesan Assembly for 2019, we considered the different ways in which we could use the time together as a Diocese. As a Diocese we are faced with a changing landscape; the changing profile of our clergy and our actively participating lay faithful requires us to re-think how we organise ourselves and how we respond to the needs of our faith communities. The introduction of Team Ministry and the new Pastoral Units and the affirmation of Parish Groups across the Diocese is a first step on that journey. Change is difficult and can evoke a sense of worry and fear in us. Yet, in the midst of this we are aware of the richness of experiences across the Diocese, the many green shoots of new growth and hope that are emerging.

Back in 2000, at the beginning of the new Millennium, the Diocese held a story-sharing event where parishes and other groups active in the Diocese shared their stories of initiatives and activities. It was an event that generated a great sense of hope and optimism and offered encouragement for parishes and other groups to identify areas where they could take action.

We felt that as we are three years on from the Synod and the publication of the Pastoral Plan, that this would be an opportune time to hold a second story-sharing event to take stock of what is happening in the Diocese across each of the six themes of the Synod and the Pastoral Plan and to create an opportunity for each of us to learn from the experiences of others.

We issued an invitation to parishes and other groups included in the Diocesan Pastoral Plan to share their stories of initiatives and activities they are undertaking. This booklet provides a summary of the stories shared. We hope that they will be a source of inspiration for new ideas and initiatives in your parishes and pastoral units.

Rose O'Connor
Pastoral Implementation Manager

Community and Sense of Belonging Theme

“For the majority of us, the quality of our relationships with other people remains the most important area of experience and the yardstick by which we measure happiness and contentment”¹ Therefore experiencing good quality relationships makes sense emotionally, psychologically and socially. For us in the Christian community the quality of our relationships makes deep theological sense, and it is into this milieu of relationships that the theme Community and Sense of Belonging will take shape and become expressed.

In Baptism we are all welcomed into the Christian community and conferred in our dignity as children of God. As children loved by God and in whom God delights, we are called to be disciples of God’s infinite love. Jesus reminds us “It is by your love for one another, that everyone will recognise you as my disciples.”² Therefore the test for us as a community of believers is how do we love? And who do we love? We have a clear indication of how to love and who to love in the person of Jesus portrayed to us in the Gospels. From the outset of his ministry in Lk 4:18-19 Jesus sets out that his love is not for the privileged few but is particularly for those most afflicted, oppressed and dispossessed in society. To be a follower of Christ is in the imitation of his love.”³

The following stories are shared under the Community and Sense of Belonging Theme:

¹Howe, D. Attachment theory for social work practice,1995.

² Jn 13:35

³ Extract from Vision Statement for Community and Belonging theme for Synod 2016

Lectio Divina; Small Christian Communities: Newcastlewest Parish

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What need were you addressing?

I suppose it would be true to say that it was only when we got into attending the sessions that we gradually realised what need the Lectio was addressing in us. The people who attended initially were people who were 'looking for a bit more' in the area of spiritual nourishment. We just trusted our parish priest when he suggested that Lectio Divina, if we gave it a chance, would help to respond to the spiritual hunger we were experiencing. We can see now looking back that we had a desire to listen more attentively to God's word and, for some people, it was specifically a desire to be able to make more sense of the Scripture Readings, especially the Gospel at Sunday mass.

What did you do?

The first move towards starting a Lectio Divina Group was a notice which our Parish Priest put in the Parish bulletin in September 2004. There were probably very few people, if any, who had heard of Lectio at that time. However, the note which the bulletin carried, giving a brief explanation of what it was, aroused curiosity in a number of people and about 15 turned up for the opening session on a Monday evening in October 2004. That was the first experience of Lectio Divina for most of those who turned up. There was good interest in it and a willingness to explore it further and it was decided to meet again the following Monday evening from 8pm to 9pm. Interest in it grew gradually, the word spread and we have had Lectio Divina every Monday evening since then in the Parish Centre in Newcastle West except on the Monday after Christmas each year. There are various methods of practising Lectio Divina. We will just outline here the method we follow. Our meeting starts with a prayer composed by Cardinal Martini who often filled his Cathedral in Milan at 4pm on Sundays leading a Lectio Divina session. After the prayer we read the Gospel of the previous Sunday and allow a few minutes for sharing on that. Then we read the following Sunday's Gospel together, then we have 3 individual readings. After that we pick out words and phrases that strike us. Then our leader gives some context and background and we read it for a fifth time. Then we move on to the mediation and relate it to our lives.

How did it go?

Well I suppose the fact that it has lasted over the years- 15 years so far – suggests that it has gone well and that it does indeed address a need that many experience. There are probably about 40 people who attend – some seldom miss a session, others attend from time to time. The normal attendance at a session would be 22 to 24 but during the summer it would be 16 to 18.

With regard to all 3 questions there would be more to say but perhaps that would come out in the discussion.

Welcome and Hospitality: Cratloe Parish

Contact person: Noreen Ramsay

What need were you addressing?

The Cratloe Pastoral Council in 2010 decided that being welcoming as a parish was a key priority. This led to a number of initiatives one of which was offering a cup of tea or coffee after Mass.

We recognised that we were very good at providing hospitality on special occasions like First Communion, Confirmation and our bereavement Mass but we wanted to encourage a gathering of the community after Mass on an ordinary Sunday.

There is a natural tendency for people to pause and chat after Mass with people they know. Stopping for a cuppa helps people to mingle more and new parishioners or visitors are included in the chat.

What did you do?

First, we invested in a solid fold away table, 4 catering flasks, milk jugs and a large plastic box to hold all the supplies together. The capital outlay for basic equipment was less than €200. We are still using all these items 9 years later.

We don't have an indoor space to do this, so we decided to have a popup on the driveway outside the church gate. Being weather dependent we only hold teas from April into late September or early October. We do it once a month. More often and people might take it for granted!

We don't charge for the cup of tea/ coffee and biscuits. There is a generosity in this that seems appropriate.

We have a rota of about 15 people who take turns (3 people at a time) to make the tea and coffee beforehand and serve it. One person takes on the role of getting supplies. Costs for supplies work out at about €12 per Mass.

How did it go?

It went very well, and we are now doing this for nearly 10 years. We have had very good feedback with people really enjoying the opportunity to chat with neighbours and friends while the children run around with their friends. There is a lovely friendly atmosphere and it is great that everyone is not straight into their cars after Mass. We are particularly busy on "Memory of Me" Masses and after an anniversary mass.

We have had a core of people involved with new people joining in over time. It is not an onerous task as most people may only do it once or twice a year.

We used to buy sweets for the children, but we find they are just as happy with the biscuits and a soft drink. Oreos are a major hit.

In the last 2 years we have made it a bigger occasion on the feast of Corpus Christi. The Corpus Christi procession makes its way over to the school after mass and is followed by tea with home baking, music and face painting in the school hall. This has been very well attended.

Because of the portable nature of our equipment we are also able to provide teas after our graveyard Mass and this year after the Mass at the grotto on the 15th August. The scouts put up a tent and cooked sausages for us!

In recent years we have made an effort to source eco-friendly compostable cups. This is getting easier and less expensive to do.

This is the way we have done it. It's not the only way depending on your parish circumstances, but it does not need to be difficult or expensive to do.

In some ways it is a very simple thing to do – offering a cup of tea/ coffee and a biscuit – after Mass.

Our experience is that it greatly enhances the sense of community in the parish and does welcome and include people. At a spiritual level it deepens the experience of communion which has just been celebrated in the Eucharist.

Local Pilgrimage: The Well at Barrigone: St Senan's Parish (Shanagolden / Foynes / Robertstown)

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The pagan Irish just like the pagan Romans, worshipped many Gods. Manannán Mac Lir was their God of the Sea, and each river and stream had its own particular deity (divine status). Springs, especially strong springs in arid regions were specially venerated and to such springs, the people came to worship and revere. We can assume that the well at Barrigone was one of these revered springs to which the local people came on certain days in each of the seasons.

St. Patrick

Time passed and in 432 A.D. St. Patrick came to our land bringing the Christian message to our pagan ancestors. Patrick would first bless the Well and hence the term ever since "The Blessed Well". Patrick wise man that he would not denounce or forbid the ancient practice of Well visitation, rather would he give it a new and Christian interpretation.

Muirdeabhair the Wise of Disert

The years again slipped by. The practice of praying rounds was established and then one day the holy monk Muirdeabhair arrived and built his hut and oratory beside the singing waters of that spring sanctified and baptised by St. Patrick. The Martyrology of Donegal records speaks of him as "Muirdeabhair the Wise of Disert. Muirdeabhra in Úi Conaill Gabhra" The Feilire(or Calender) of Aengus refers to him as a "Synod diadera" Obviously this man was regarded throughout the land as a wise and saintly Priest. Úi Conaill Gabhra was the ancient petty kingdom of modern West Limerick, comprising of the modern baronies of Upper and lower Connelloe, Shanid and Glenquin. Disert Muirdeabhair:- The Irish word for "Disert" signifies a lonely uninhabited area, so Disert Muirdeabhra means the lonely uninhabited area of Muirdeabhair. Today that area is the townland of Dysert no longer a lonely or uninhabited spot. A variation of Muirdeabhair is Murigeadáin and the neighbouring twin townlands of Muirgeadáin Thuaidh and Muirgeadáin Theas -----Morgans North and Morgans South obviously commemorate Muirdeabhair. In all probability the districts of Disert and Muirgeadáin once formed one parish and the ruins of this parish church are today seen in the beautiful cemetery of Mount Pleasant with the parish church in Muirdeadáin so wrongly called Mount Pleasant today. The name Mount Pleasant was brought by the Sands family from Newtownsands (Moyvane) to Morgans and applied to the hillock at the back of their home, where the Keane family live today. In later times the Franciscans of Askeaton Abbey ministered to the parish and cared for the little Church in Morgans. The English version of Muirdeabhair is Morgan and if the Irish name does not come easily on the tongue why not speak of St. Morgan his feast day is 3rd. November.

How the Blessed Well got its name

The name of Muirdeabhair would seem to mean "Disciple of Mary" from which we gather that he had a great love for the Mother of God. So too, had St. John the Evangelist(The Beloved Disciple) and so we begin to see the name Barraig Eoin make sense. A "Well" in Irish is "Tobar", and a "Blessed Well" in Irish is "Barraig". A famous well in Morgans is called locally "Toberawhora" obviously Tobar Mhuire, or Mary's Well. Muirdeabhair dedicated his "Barraig" to St. John, (John in Irish "Eoin") so Barraig Eoin means "The Blessed Well of St. John"

Today the people of the Úi Conaill Gabhra and from far beyond come to pray the rounds on the feast of The Assumption – Lá Fhéile Mhuire so bFomhar | (Our Lady's Day in the Autumn)

The Rounds of the Well

A stranger may ask what prayers are said by the many, slowly walking around The Well:--- A Pater, Ave and Gloria(Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be) are said each round and the old people would pick up seven pebbles and drop one each time round, at Béal na Barraige (Mouth of the Blessed Well). It is customary to drink a glass of water from The Well on completing the rounds and to massage the eyes with the moss from the sides of The Well. But it was not all prayer. Friends met friends from far and near. The news of the year was discussed, feuds were healed, and matches arranged. The local Pub (Corbetts) did well on such occasions with musicians supplying entertainment for everybody and their payment was a few pints, there were also some sweets and trinket stalls set up for the day.

The Well today

The Blessed Well back then was a much different place than what it is now. The Blessed Well is below tide level so when the tides are high. The Blessed Well get covered by the tide and hence the water is very salty, but when the tide has ebbed The Blessed Well returns to its glistening fresh wash once more. The area around the well would have been muddy and stony. Back in the 1952. The Walsh family from Foynes who owned the surrounding land and who had a lorry, surrounded the Blessed Well with a concrete platform and built a wall around the well and steps leading down into the well. This work was done under the direction of Fr. Tom Cussen C.C. and the Parish Council.



Mass was celebrated for many a year at The Blessed Well, but the practice fell away, and in 1976 our late Parish Priest Canon Enright gave the Pattern Day an entirely new status when he began the practice of saying Mass at 3pm at the Well again. The Mass was said on a Table and the congregation faced the river in great numbers to hear the Word of God. Later on, there was a temporary canopy erected and disassembled every year. Nollaig O' Seachnasaigh (Noel Ó Shaughnessy) who was steeped in tradition and loved all of the Irish folklore dearly wished to have a permanent covered Altar erected for the celebration of the annual Mass on 15th. August. Sadly, he died 3rd December 1996- Ar Dheis Dé go raibh an am dílis. But the people of the surrounding area came together and worked tirelessly and voluntary to erect a cement Altar with roof and two windows and the Altar facing the people high above the tide level(but the tide knows its own limits and will flood the building but no damage is ever done only a tide mark on the paint work which can be easily rectified). The permanent covered Altar was erected, and Mass was celebrated on 15th. August 1997 but sadly Nollaig O' Seachnasaigh did not live to see it but he set the plans in motion and the people of the area carried them out. There was a Plaque on the wall of the covered Altar in his memory, but it was damaged, and it is going to be replaced with a stone one. In 2009 again I link—Disert and Muirgeadán (Dysert and Morgans) in Mount Pleasant Graveyard, Morgans, the Allen Family from Askeaton were erecting a new headstone on their father's grave and were removing a beautiful cement statue of Our Lady, they donated the statue to The Blessed Well and we placed the statue up high on a pedestal and she was painted and she looks out over The Blessed Well and onto the congregation of people gathered for the annual 15th. August Mass. The statue is too high for the tide to do any damage to.

In April 2019, Leo O Shaughnessy (son of Noel O Shaughnessy) was gifted a sum of €2,000 from a local councillor to improve The Blessed Well. A few meetings were held by the people involved in cleaning the Well for the Pattern Day. It was decided to replace the cement circular platform with new cement, put a cement slip way down from the road to the Well, and put steps up to the Altar

and down into The Blessed Well. There were two platform of cement put at either side of the Altar slightly lower than the platform around the Blessed Well for the Choir and other laity to assist at the Mass. It was also decided to face the original Blessed Well with stone and put new rails on the top of The Blessed Well and going down into the Well. The work was carried out by Michael O' Neill, Kilcornan. The work that was



carried out, over-reached the gifted sum of €2,000 and, with grateful appreciation, the committee of The Robertstown/Barrigone Fun Day donated the remainder and there was no debt in all this great work done.

So, let us pause and consider the wonder of it all. For nearly two thousand years people have come to this hallowed place – our pagan ancestors, our Christian Féile - and as the lengthening shadows of a Roman Castle (Dysert) steal over the rich if stony fields of Disert Muirdeabhra, let us pray that a thousand years hence the people of the Conaill Gabhra and of the Hy Fidhgente will still come to pray their rounds ar Lá Fhéile Mhuire sa bFomhar – on Our Lady's Day in the Autumn.

The Community of St Senan's Parish continue to work together to this day to keep this wonderful tradition alive.

Trócaire - making the story local: Limerick Diocese Trócaire Volunteer Group

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What need were you addressing?

Trócaire were looking for Volunteers to help spread the story of their work to as many parishes as possible. I decided to volunteer for two reasons:

- One, because even though people are aware of their work it is just one of the many things that they come across in their day, maybe an Advert/ Facebook/ story in a paper etc and then kind of fades into the background. When I heard a speaker at our Mass it made it more personal and they also thanked the people who contributed in any way, however big or small, to any of their campaigns.
- The second reason was because of a 'Thank You' phone call I received from Trócaire. I had been contributing to both Concern and Trócaire through Direct Debit & when finances were tight, I began cutting down on expenses. I just happened to delete Trócaire's and thought no more, until I received a call to say Thanks for the contributions I had made. Of course, then I deleted Concern and went back to Trócaire.

Originally, I did not even dream of speaking at Mass. I was going to spread the word through our weekly parish notes in the local paper and through our parish Facebook and Web page.

What did you do?

Trócaire have lots of information that can be used - from their web site or through people like Marie-Anne & Karen and through their office. I used this information to highlight their Lenten, Christmas campaigns and the various emergencies that arose during the year, to write a little bit about them and keep it in people's minds. It just makes us realise how lucky we are and that we have so much, in comparison to the stories from other countries.

As I was used to reading at Mass, I decided to ask our local priest if I could speak about the Lenten campaign one year – of course he was delighted!! I know this is not for everybody and need only be done if someone is happy to do it. For me, I find that they actually have a prepared text for those occasions, which makes it so much easier.

After speaking on one occasion, our local teacher asked if I would come to the school and give a talk to the students. This particular teacher, has over the years, always got her students to do something for Lent. This presentation was a bit more daunting as you never know what children could ask and if you will have the answer!! Trócaire have a presentation that can be downloaded onto a USB and most schools have laptops and projector screens now. Again, there is a prepared text to go with this.

How did it go?

I found the Mass speaking easy enough to do and saw that people picked up the leaflets afterwards, which I was delighted with. The important point, I think, is to stress the 'Thanks' from the Organisation and the people who they have helped. I think telling the stories of the children or families is what brings it home to people as they can compare with their own lives.

The School presentation went very well. I was surprised with the questions they asked, and they seemed to take it all in – even the very young ones. The teachers here had made them aware of Trócaire and it showed. I only got to do one school talk this year, but it would be great if more could be done. When children are young, they take in so much and it is great to influence them and make them aware of how lucky they are and get them to think of others who are less well off.

Laudato Si; Caring for our Common Home: Salesian Sisters

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What need were you addressing?

The group was formed with the aim of:

- providing opportunities to raise awareness; develop new theological insights and deepen knowledge of the universe story
- sharing information
- reflecting on experience
- enabling change

What did you do?

- We formed a Cosmology Group, currently consisting of 11 members.
- We meet once or twice a term in order to update ourselves, discuss relevant topics, share information regarding local/national events and plan our own events.
- We organise two seminars each year-in Spring and Autumn. (Samples added)
- We have an Opening Ritual, Input, Reflection and sharing and discussion in each seminar
- Two members of the group have facilitated school retreats on themes relating to the universe story
- We provided resources to Secondary School RE teachers
- We contributed weekly to the Diocesan Newsletter

How did it go?

- In our group we have a good mixture of reflection, sense of purpose and planning.
- Attendance at seminars has been very good and the feedback is always positive.
- Cosmology Group members are responsible for all aspects of planning and responsibilities on the day. We evaluate at the end of each seminar.
- Events cover costs of venue, speaker and hospitality.
- Some people are frequent attendees...but we always have new participants...elders by and large...
- Most of our attendees are women....
- By way of challenge we need a greater coalition with similar groups locally and nationally
- We need to attract a wider audience
- Even though we publicise widely it is a challenge...
- We feel there is a huge need to create awareness of care for the earth.
- The new story challenges our inherited belief systems, our liturgies and rituals...

Samples of Seminar Topics:

- ✚ "Be the Change"-Cosmology Group
- ✚ "Origins of the Universe"-Br. Mark McDonnell
- ✚ "Systems that impact on Planet Earth"-Cosmology Group
- ✚ "Laudato Si"-Sean McDonagh
- ✚ "Intergenerational Justice"-Cosmology Group
- ✚ "Ecology and the Fourth Gospel"- Margaret Daly Denton
- ✚ "The New Cosmology-Birthing a New Theology"-Diarmuid O'Murchú
- ✚ "The Impact of Plastic on our Oceans"-Paul Connelly
- ✚ "Lifestyle and Consumerism"-Cathriona Russell
- ✚ "Climate Change-A Limerick Response"- Niamh Brennan-19th October 2019

Traveller Outreach

Contact person: Fr. Pat Hogan Mobile: 0876522746 Email: pkfhogan@gmail.com

What need were you addressing?

- Build sustainable, warm and trusting relationships with Traveller families, especially those who are most marginalised.
- **Support** and resource the personal growth of individual Travellers and their families.
- **Work in partnership** with Travellers to promote their participation as equals in the search for solutions.

What did you do?

- Chaplain role supported by Limerick Diocese with initial funding from LEDP
- Collaborative / partnership work with Traveller Support Worker, Bedford Row Family Project, funded by Regeneration
- Outreach work & visits to all 10 sites & to families in houses in order to build & develop trust & relationships
- Co-operation with Travellers, the civil authorities, local health & social services & relevant voluntary agencies to promote the welfare of individuals and families, especially in respect of housing, health & education needs
- Listening to and included individuals and families in identifying real needs and worked together on them – worked with Travellers, not for them
- Engaged with needs of individuals and families as opposed to entire “Community” needs

How did it go?

- The story has only begun to be written – early days, will need to a long-term endeavour
- Welcome for the project by all families and in all homes
- Trust & relationships developed with families & key stakeholders
- Outcomes being achieved that would not have been deemed possible at the outset
- Positive developments in all areas of need – housing, health, education...
- Voices being heard
- Members of the community becoming more active in shaping their future

Missionary Outreach; Synod Group of Frontline Workers

Contact: Bernie O Grady Mobile: 087 6432917 Email: bernie@bedfordrow.ie

What need were you addressing?

The theme we were established around was Community and Sense of Belonging.

We recognised that many people are working across agencies daily with people who are disenfranchised in our society. We believe that the Gospel message has hope and inspiration not just for those working in this area but for those we come in contact with daily. “We have a treasure of life and love which cannot deceive and a message which cannot mislead or disappoint. It penetrates to the depths of our hearts, sustaining and ennobling us. It is a truth which is never out of date because it reaches that part of us which nothing else can reach. Our infinite sadness can only be cured by an infinite love.”¹ (Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel*).

We believed that establishing a group through invitation, explicitly around Gospel values was creating a way for a model of Church to be in the future.

What did you do?

Through a model of invitation, we invited those we were working with across agencies to be part of a group, explicitly based on Gospel values to come together.

We deliberately had no agenda and continue to have no agenda or desired outcome. We meet four times yearly; each meeting takes one and a half hours followed by lunch. The model of each meeting is gathering and reflective sharing on our work and experiences.

We have invited people with expertise in scripture to lead us in reflection on a particular Gospel piece finding relevance in our lived experience. Outside of this we meet with different reflective pieces both scripture and other to ground us in our reflection and discussion.

Initially we had our meetings in the variety of agencies that are reflective in our group to give the group a sense of the spread and depth of our working. In the last year we have met in the Diocesan Centre and this affirms the place of the Diocese in our group.

How did it go?

While we have no intended outcomes in our group, connections have been forged and different initiatives have been supported in our agencies.

In a world and working environment that is more often competitive and outcomes driven this group holds a different perspective. This model has continued to have value for the members of the group. Our core purpose is clear, we are a group coming together around Gospel values, this grounding is sufficient, and we trust its leading and direction. Perhaps we are like John’s disciples in the Gospel who asked Jesus where did he live? Jesus answered, ‘Come and See’.

Pastoral Care of the Family Theme

“That the family is the basic building block or unit of society was signalled to the Jewish people by the commandment: Honour thy mother and thy father (Exodus 20:12). Our ancestors in faith recognised that the stability of the community depended on the stability of the families that comprise it. Our response to authority and government derives from the quality of the parent-child relationship. The lessons and principles learned from honouring and respecting parents make possible a society stable enough to promote development of the whole person.

3,000 years later, the United Nations, in describing the family as “the smallest democracy at the heart of society,” reflects the conviction that democracy is a way of life that needs to be learned and practiced. Family, as the heart of society, is democracy’s learning place.

The Christian vision goes much further. It states that family life is sacred and its activities holy, and that the family can be described as the “domestic Church.” The basic needs of humans for security, for a sense of belonging and a sense of identity, are intimately linked to family and to home. In the family context, that which is deepest and most intimate in terms of human satisfaction and of human pain can be experienced.

The family, ideally and potentially, is the school of human enrichment, where everyone is someone, where everyone belongs and has a place, where each is appreciated for the unique individual he or she is. It is also the school of Christian belief, where faith is caught, if not always explicitly taught.

For all these reasons Pope Francis, told the Synod on the Family, “The Lord is asking us to care for the family, which has been from the beginning an integral part of his loving plan for humanity.”

The then ombudsman, Emily O’Reilly, spoke at an ACCORD conference some years ago about the parents of a young woman who was troubled by depression. They began to slowly bring her back to church events and not because they were particularly religious. “I wanted to show her,” said her mother, “that she is not alone, that she is connected, that she has a community all around her.”

Connectedness and community: the twin goals of pastoral care that we can all buy into and strive to bring people back to. In the process we might also find the key to renewal of the Church in our Diocese and our country.”⁴

The following stories are shared under the Pastoral Care of the Family theme:

⁴ Extract from Vision Statement for Pastoral Care of the Family theme for Synod 2016

Family Fun Days: World Meeting of Families Diocesan Committee

Contact: David Bracken Mobile: 087-2247701 Email: david.bracken@limerickdiocese.org

What need were you addressing?

The preparations for the World Meeting of Families in 2018 provided an opportunity to engage with families in a different way as a Diocese. We wanted to create occasions that would offer something to all generations and facilitate them to spend time together as a family in a celebratory way combined with an opportunity to pray together as a family.

What did you do?

Two major family fun days were organised.

A family fun day held at Mary Immaculate College on the 8th of October 2017. This event drew huge numbers with a variety of fun and games for all ages. The event culminated with a family Mass celebrated by Bishop Brendan.

A World Meeting of Families Street Party was held in August 2018. Large crowds, young and old, attended a three-hour long Limerick Diocese Street Party on St John's Square from 3:30 p.m., with some 700 people then gathering in St. John's Cathedral for what Bishop Brendan described as a "deeply meaningful and spiritual" ecumenical prayer service. The events were held in the diocese to mark the commencement of the global event in Dublin and arrival at the weekend of Pope Francis.

The Street Party – officially opened by Sr. Helen Culhane, founder of the Children's Grief Centre in Limerick, and her ambassador Olive Foley, wife of the late Munster and Ireland rugby legend Anthony Foley – saw young and old enjoy a host of activities, from face painting to street entertainment and food stalls.

The ecumenical prayer service in St. John's was led by Bishop Brendan and Church of Ireland Bishop of Limerick and Killaloe Kenneth Kearon. Also, in attendance were Rev Ruth Watt from the Methodist Church, Adare, Dean of St. Mary's Cathedral Niall Sloane and Canon Patrick Comerford, Church of Ireland, Rathkeale.

Mayor of the City and County of Limerick James Collins was also in attendance, as well as a host of other civic representatives.

The service included prayers in different languages representing Limerick's fusion of cultures and ethnicities, while the 'Hands in Harmony Deaf Community Choir' were also involved, as were various other choirs and youth groups from Kilfinane and Rathkeale. Among those leading the prayers were couples who represented the Diocese at the special Pro Cathedral ceremony celebrating the family attended by Pope Francis.

How did it go?

Both events were very well attended. We were blessed with good weather which made all the difference. They were joyful occasions, with a lovely family atmosphere that brought multiple generations together. They certainly demonstrated that faith and fun can be successfully combined!

Visible Reminders of an Invisible Light Initiative: World Meeting of Families Diocesan Committee

Contact: David Bracken Mobile: 087-2247701 Email: david.bracken@limerickdiocese.org

What need were you addressing?

The Visible Reminders series of art exhibitions found its inspiring spark in the Diocese of Limerick's engagement with World Meeting of Families. Some twenty-five artists from a variety of disciplines participated in various strands of the project, each reflecting on aspects of family life. For many centuries the Church and artists have worked together creating some of the greatest works in Western art. The underlying hope for the project was the renewal of this partnership, providing new insights for our families and our communities along the way. The project title was taken from T.S. Eliot, 'Choruses from the Rock'.

What did you do?

Visible Reminders invited artists to reflect on the theme of family, primarily using the collections of the Hunt Museum and Limerick Museum as a source of inspiration. The works were displayed in both Museums in early 2019.

Contemporary Art in Churches, a project begun in 2015, was expanded to churches throughout Limerick. A small-scale work was displayed in the church with an accompanying description of the piece and the artist's spiritual values considered from a twenty-first century perspective.

Art in Schools invited submissions from secondary schools in Limerick encouraging students to interact with the museum collections to forge works of their own in response to the exhibition theme.

While Narrative 4 Ireland invited writers to pen a short story or poem based on the theme of family. The Limerick-based artist, Maurice Quillinan, curated all the various exhibitions.

How did it go?

The series brought many people and institutions into dialogue. The Diocese, the Hunt Museum and Limerick Museum; participating artists and second-level students and the wider public enjoyed a very fruitful encounter throughout, an encounter with the other and with the Divine. To quote Simone Weil, 'In everything which gives us the pure authentic feeling of beauty there really is the presence of God'.

Free Dinner Trust

Contact: Siobhan Wheeler Mobile: 087 2209647 Email: siobhanlocke@gmail.com

What need were you addressing?

The primary need addressed is food poverty. There were basic meals available in Limerick for those who needed them from Monday to Saturday through the St. Vincent de Paul and the Novas soup run; but not on Sundays. We decided to address this, and in doing so provide a full Sunday lunch free of charge, as a gracious gift.

A place to meet and gather and simply to be indoors sheltered from inclement weather on Sunday afternoons was simultaneously provided. This in turn alleviated the loneliness experienced by so many, mainly elderly people living alone.

What did you do?

We established a dining room where all and any are welcome but especially those disadvantaged by homelessness and poverty in Limerick. We serve a three-course meal - a choice of 3 main dishes with a vegetarian option, followed by dessert and tea or coffee. Diners may stay as long as they wish and may have as many servings as they desire until they are satisfied. Doors open at 1.30pm when food preparation is complete and remain open until 3.30pm after which the clean-up takes place.

We now operate from the Youth Service Café in Henry St. having started out in Mallow St. hall. The Free Dinner is a registered charity (no. 20102166), governed by trustees of which there are currently seven. We are heavily dependent on our volunteers of all ages and all walks of life. We encourage cross over between the roles of diner and volunteer, with some diners becoming regular volunteers and all volunteers encouraged to at least have a cup of tea and a chat with those sitting at the tables. Volunteers operate as teams, some preferring to come regularly on the same Sunday each month and some dipping in and out of teams as their schedule permits. We encourage overlap between teams so that the Dinner operates as one community.

How did it go?

From strength to strength initially as we built up the teams from one, so that a meal is available every Sunday and on Christmas Day. It seemed that everything we needed was readily available, food suppliers, volunteers, premises and funding. There was a strong sense of Holy Spirit's involvement, provision and guidance.

Over the years, there have been hurdles to surmount. The need to comply with increasingly onerous food safety legislation and charity registration included drawing up and implementing various policies and to the employment of a suitably qualified chef and security personnel. We now have two who job share. Needing to relocate, it took effort and persistence to locate suitable premises and additional funding was required.

We serve approximately 100 diners per Sunday.

The desire to be one big inclusive, happy family remains. As with most families, we achieve that less than perfectly.

Children's Grief Centre

Contact: Helen Culhane Website: <https://www.childrensgriefcentre.ie/>



The Children's Grief Centre is a support service for school-aged children and young people affected by loss through death, separation or divorce. We provide a safe and supportive place for children and young people and their families who are grieving. The service is provided by trained and experienced people.

A key aim of the Children's Grief Centre is to raise awareness and understanding in relation to the loss children feel following bereavement or separation. We provide grieving children and young people with a place and space where they are given the opportunity to look at feelings associated with loss and learn that they are not alone. We aim to help children to overcome the obstacles that prevent them from leading full lives.

In addition, the Children's Grief Centre strives to educate the community that grieving is an important part of life and is essential to an individual's ongoing growth and development.

Young People Theme

“In a culture that tended to ignore and devalue children Jesus affirmed and welcomed them. He went out of his way to heal children (Luke 8:49-56, Matthew 15:28 and 17:18, Mark 5:41-42). His openness towards and affection for young people meant that people brought little children to him (Mark 10.13) and he placed His hands on them, blessed them, and prayed for them (Matthew 19:14). Jesus also encouraged this saying let the children come to me (Mark 10:14-16). He elevated the importance of children by encouraging people to be like them (Mark 10:15, Matthew 18:3) and he reminded people that to receive a child is to receive Christ (Mark 9:34-37). To feed the five thousand Jesus used the five loaves and two fish of a young boy.

Pope Francis continues to emphasise the importance of our young. He talks about the importance of passing on to them lasting values that make life worth living; He wants us to awaken in them their greatest potential as builders of their own destiny, sharing responsibility for the future of everyone. He calls us to encourage the generosity which is typical of the young and help them to work actively in building a better world, as he believes that young people are a powerful engine for the Church and for society.

We often ask, ‘What are we doing for the youth?’ and we tend to absolve ourselves of taking action, presuming that asking the question fulfils our duty. If we don’t bring our young people to Christ who will? In as much as we fail to actively and wholeheartedly welcome, embrace, empower, include and celebrate young people we fail to be the complete body of Christ.”⁵

The following stories are shared under the Young People theme:

⁵ Extract from Vision Statement for Young People theme for Synod 2016

Youth Ministry Programmes: Diocesan Youth Ministry Team

Contact: Aoife Walsh Mobile: 086-0857429 Email: aoife.walsh@limerickdiocese.org

What need were you addressing?

For young people:

- To belong and be part of a community
- To encounter Christ and experience faith
- To feel accepted for who you are
- To be affirmed
- To develop real connections with people and to build relationships with others
- To have role models
- To learn and grow in self-awareness
- To foster and develop new skills
- To have a purpose and be of service to others
- To have fun in a safe, secure environment free from judgement
- To be silent and have time for reflection

What did you do?

Anois Leadership Training Programme - aimed at Transition Year students. Residential Programme with helps to develop leadership skills such as listening, teamwork, decision making and planning. Run in January 2019 – 8/9 students from 14 schools across Limerick City and County took part in this year's programme in Co. Laois with 50 volunteer leaders from third level leading workshops, games and activities.

Lourdes Youth Pilgrimage – 109 young people took part this year. Gives young people a great opportunity to be of service and to disconnect from their phones! They work during the week bringing patients to and from religious services and shopping trips etc. The Pilgrimage also incorporates preparation beforehand and an opportunity to connect with families afterwards when we repeat the closing ceremony with is always led by the youth group.

Brú Na Gráige – Residential event in the Gaeltacht near Dingle. Our focus here is on community, mutual accountability and fáilte, foghlaim and guí or friendship, faith and fun! It also offers a great opportunity to connect with nature and the wonder of God's creation.

Muintearas Íosa Events (Halloween / Christmas / Easter) These events help us to build on the relationships formed at Anois and other residential events.

How did it go?

Anois – Great feedback every year and more and more requests for places. Next year Killaloe Diocese will run a pilot programme following on from their Youth Directors experience with us this year. Many of the young people who attended continued their involvement with us at other events throughout the year.

Lourdes - A spiritually uplifting experience for young people and always great feedback from young people and parents. Young people completed a review about their experience, and these are some of their responses to the questions "What was the best part of the trip for you?"

John Paul II Award: Kilfinane Parish

Contact: Sr Patricia Coughlan Mobile: 087 055 0195 Email: patriciacoughlan@hotmail.com

What need were you addressing?

- The main need we were addressing was the lack of youth involvement in both the Church and the Community, predominantly at second level.
- Taking a look at students in primary school they have multiple opportunities to get involved at Mass through the sacraments of Confession, first holy Communion and also confirmation. Not forgetting the opportunity to altar serve at mass.
- We saw in our own community there were sufficient opportunities at primary school level but at second level there was a gap.
- There was a worrying lack of youth involvement at mass but also in the community. I think it's fair to say there was a lack of community spirit also amongst the youth.
- Anti-social behavior ties in with the lack of youth involvement in community and church as they lean towards alternatives to pass the time.
- In summary we were addressing the need for a means of young people to get involved and get active in their local communities and parishes, discouraging anti-social behavior and giving them a voice and a say in their local communities and churches.
- After all the youth are the future of our church and communities.

What did you do?

- The John Paul II Award was the perfect chance to give the youth an opportunity to get involved in church and community.
- We had heard about it in the media but interested people were too young at the time to get involved so we mulled on it for a year.
- The Award was not yet launched in our Diocese, so we requested that the Diocese of Killaloe adopt us for the award – they gladly did, and we were extremely appreciative for it.
- 5 students from Scoil Pol Kilfinane trialed the award each earning the gold award and without a doubt the award has gone from strength to strength ever since.
- To briefly explain what the John Paul II Award is for those of you who may not know the JP2 awards are an opportunity for young people to get involved in their parish and community for a number of weeks and get a sense of what it means to be a volunteer and enables them to give back to their community.
- They can complete the gold, silver or bronze and get involved in parish activities such as reading at mass, joining the church choir or becoming Eucharistic Ministers. They can give back to their communities by joining the Tidy towns committee, stewarding and a wide range of other activities.
- During the 2016 Synod a proposal was put forward by the Knights of Saint Columbanus to pilot the Award in Limerick. The Diocese of Limerick, seeing how successful the trial of the Award was in Kilfinane, asked Kilfinane to be the first pilot of the Award in Limerick with 17 young people taking part and receiving awards.
- The official launch of the JP2 Award in Limerick and the first awards ceremony in took place in Scoil Pol Kilfinane in 2017.

- Representatives from all across the Diocese were invited to the launch to come and see what it was all about.
- The Diocese saw what a success it was in Kilfinane and now other parishes have got involved with more schools getting involved year after year.
- Each parish is different and operates the award in a different way to suit each parish needs but all follow the same principle of community and parish involvement for the benefit of others.
- In Kilfinane they were eager to get involved in the local tidy towns committee, our local hearsay festival which draws different nationalities from all across the world, Fleadh Ceoil Luiminigh which was held in Kilfinane for two consecutive years.
- They also spoke to confirmation classes and pastoral councils to promote the award with very positive feedback.
- At mass there are a number of JP2 awardees in the choir, reading at mass and giving out community. Two members are on the Pastoral council and this allows the youths voice to be heard.
- There is a bond among the youth and it's nice to see that once they have completed the award the involvement continues in church and community.
- See the below link to get an idea of what is involved in the award
<https://www.facebook.com/dioceseflimerick/videos/730403593815216/>

How did it go?

- The JP2 Awards went very well because stable pillars were in place.
- There was an eagerness and determination from the youth to get involved in their local communities and parishes.
- The commitment they show is exemplary and admirable.
- However, it takes a stable coordinator to oversee the youth and ensure they are cared for and nurtured while doing the award.
- It is important that there is an element of trust between the youth and the coordinator, so that the correct hours are being completed to earn the award.
- There has to be trust and support between:
 - The community
 - The coordinator
 - The youth
 - The parish priest
 - The school
- The young people develop as young adults and mature developing a wide range of new skills and values which they carry on into other walks of life.
- At the end of the award each young person writes a reflection of what it means to be a baptised member of the Church and it's nice to see the positive impact it has on the young people.
- In conclusion The John Paul II award is an excellent way for young people to get involved in church and community. Sharing ideas, beliefs and views. The involvement doesn't stop after completing the award it continues.

Junior Pastoral Council: Askeaton/Ballysteen Parish

The JPC was set up on Holy Thursday, 28th March 2013. At the beginning it consisted of four from Fifth Year and five from Transition Year. Its purpose was to provide a forum for our young people to voice their own opinions and to represent the views of the other youth in the parish.

The JPC is re-formed each September, with a fresh intake of new members, mainly from Transition Year. Those who are now Leaving Certs may leave or remain on until Christmas, the decision being left to each individual. For this reason, the membership numbers vary each year and even during the year. It has gone from a highest number of 20 to a lowest number of nine (in its first year). We have always had an almost equal number of boys and girls.

It is particularly important that the JPC is involved in the decision-making process that affects themselves and not just in the implementing of decisions made by others. For this reason, the JPC elects its own chairperson and secretary. Furthermore, and crucially, it sets its own agenda.

The central focus of the JPC is to come to know Jesus Christ better as a friend and to express his spirit of service in the community. The meetings are often held on a weekly basis during school term, though any particular JPC may decide to hold them less frequently. The meetings decide on and plan the activities of the JPC. As well as this the meeting will always include some prayer, usually a reflection and discussion on a passage of Scripture, and sometimes a discussion on a topic of general interest. We end with refreshments.

Because the JPC makes its own decisions, each year it tends to take on different activities. These have included: Youth Mass, visiting the nursing home, leading children in a Liturgy of the Word during Sunday Mass, raising money and buying presents for the homeless, organising a colouring competition at Christmas or Easter for children in the local National Schools, cleaning the Spiritual Garden of Remembrance, pilgrimages, participating in the Holy Week ceremonies. Most recently some members have participated in the Pope John Paul II Awards.

Altar Server Ministry: Bruff/Grange/Meanus Parish

Contact: Fr John Daly / Eileen Irwin Tel: 061 382290 Email: jgdaly2013@gmail.com

What need were you addressing?

We were seeking an ongoing connection with children in the parish following on from the 'Do This in Memory of Me' programme and receiving their First Holy Communion. We want children to have the experience of being involved in Church and give them a first taste of being involved in their parish. We want to encourage them to feel that being involved in Church is something normal to do. We also want to engage with young parents and build relationship with them.

What did you do?

We developed a formation programme that runs over 6 weeks on Fridays after school. Parents are invited to stay if they like as it's open and they can watch from gallery without distracting the children. The training covers the following:

- Week 1 Introduction to all the names of items and places in the Church
- Week 2 Altar servers training for weekly service
- Week 3 Training for funeral services
- Week 4 Training for wedding services
- Week 5 Teamwork and Team development, Gown sizing
- Week 6 Enrolment Mass for all servers

The training is offered in both parish Churches. We ran a recruitment process to get children involved.

Outside of the usual serving at weekend Masses we also invite the children to serve at special Masses, for example the School Mass to help build their sense of connection and involvement. Our philosophy is to encourage the children to be participants rather than spectators in life.

We also involve the parents in the process which helps us to connect with them as a family. The link with parents is very important.

As part of how we engage with the children in their role as altar servers we seek to raise awareness of Laudato Si and being environmentally friendly in how we do things, for example using real cups that can be washed rather than using plastic cups that have to be thrown away, collecting the parish leaflets for recycling.

How did it go?

We have had varying degrees of success with the initiative in terms of getting children involved. Our key aim is to try and keep the connection with children after First Holy Communion and to give everyone a chance for involvement.

Our focus is to support young people as much as possible. The children that are altar servers today can be involved in years to come as readers and in youth ministry programmes such as Anois and Muintearas Íosa.

Our engagement with young parents provides an opportunity to invite them to also get involved in parish ministries and helps with identifying potential pastoral council members.

We have shared our training template and approach with other parishes within our pastoral unit and are supporting them in developing altar server ministry in their parishes.

Ultimately, we see our role as sowing seeds, the results of these seeds may not appear until later in life, but we sow them in the hope that they will bear fruit. We have had the experience of one young woman who had moved from the parish, returning to request to have her wedding in the Church where she was baptised and where she served as an altar server. We never know how much a positive experience of being involved in the Church and parish will impact on someone.

Faith Formation and Education Theme

“Catholic education and faith formation are broad terms that cover the many ways, contexts and approaches in which people are helped to grow and mature in faith and in relationship with Jesus Christ as part of their ongoing faith journey. Faith formation is a life-long process that can take place in a variety of formal and informal settings. It is more than schooling. It begins in the home, continues in the school and matures through involvement with the Christian community in the parish. Since the Second Vatican Council, particular attention has been given to the centrality of education and faith formation in the life and mission of all members of the Church Community.

Catholic Education

“A Catholic vision seeks to sustain and enhance people’s capacity to discover the meaning of life in the context of God’s love.” (SGN, 28)

Education is an endless journey on which people are transformed through personal encounters and deep relationships. The Church’s vision for education is founded on a particular understanding of the world and of the human person in the world. Catholic Education is education imbued with the spirit of God, alive and active in each of us and in our communities. In essence, the vision of Catholic education is to form people of love, care and compassion; with a care for beauty and wonder; with a sense of hope; who will build up the common good by serving the world with their gifts.”⁶

The following stories are shared under the theme of Faith Formation and Education:

⁶ Extract from Vision Statement for Faith Formation and Education Theme for Synod 2016

Programme of Formation for Lay Pastoral Ministry and Leadership

Contact: Éamonn Fitzgibbon Mobile: 087 6921191 Email: eamonn@ldo.ie

What need were you addressing?

Synod Decision and Pastoral Plan

This Programme is a direct response to the Diocesan Synod 2016 and the ensuing Diocesan Pastoral Plan. “The diocese will commit to a faith development strategy prioritising adults. A central element of that strategy will be the training of volunteer lay ‘catechists’, ‘animators’ or ‘coordinators’ to deliver this strategy at a local level.” *Moving Forward Together in Hope*, Limerick Diocesan Pastoral Plan, 2016 – 2026, Based on the April 2016 Diocesan Synod.

What did you do?

This programme is designed and developed as an initiative across a number of dioceses in the Southern Province (Cork and Ross, Cashel and Emly, Kerry, Killaloe, Limerick) in association with the Irish Institute for Pastoral Studies at MIC Thurles. It provides training for those who are interested in working as volunteer catechists or lay pastoral workers at parish and pastoral unit level.

The programme is practical and theoretical and is grounded in pastoral spirituality. The programme runs for 30 months. The programme normally runs one weekend per month (Friday evening and all-day Saturday for 8 months per annum).

After an initial six-month period of discernment, the candidate enrolls in a credited Certificate in Pastoral Ministry.

Formation includes:

- Prayer and Spirituality (Spiritual accompaniment and days of recollection)
- Pastoral Formation (A practical pastoral placement)
- Personal Development (Mentoring and personal growth)
- Study (Successfully complete an accredited programme entitled Certificate in Pastoral Ministry (Level 6, 36 Credits) over a two-year period).

How did it go?

Recruitment for the programme will begin in Autumn 2019.

Godly Play Storytelling: St John's Parish

Contact: Sharon Collopy Mobile: 087 271 3921 Email: sharon.collopy@hotmail.com

What need were you addressing?

Children have an innate sense of the presence of God but unfortunately this is not always explored and cultivated within them in the family home, school or church. The Godly Play approach was designed almost 50 years ago as the result of a lifetime of research and practice by theologian, author and educator The Rev. Dr. Jerome Berryman.

What is Godly Play?

Godly Play is a gentle way to invite children to listen to God's word and explore its meaning for their lives. It does not tell the children what to think, or give them 'the right answer', but humbly sets up a safe and sacred space in which to proclaim Holy Scripture in a way that facilitates children's hearing, understanding and response. A Godly Play session begins with getting ready to hear and listen deeply to Scripture. The Godly Play style of storytelling uses words coupled with movement of the story materials, so that the Scripture is proclaimed both verbally and visually. Together we make time to ponder meditative questions (that are designed to have neither a right nor wrong answer!) and the children are then invited to work with art materials or the story materials as they continue to engage with the story. After this creative response time, the group comes together again to enjoy a snack and finish the session with social interaction.

How can Godly Play be used?

Godly Play can be used in children's play and pray groups, schools, hospitals and parent / children groups, as part of a home-schooling programme or family worship, as part of Sacramental Preparation or adapted for use in children's liturgy. Training in Godly Play offers the tools to welcome our children as individuals, and the language with which to share our faith. The training teaches how to create a space to enable children to make connections, gives the confidence to admit we don't always know the answers, and helps to slow down the pace and to be open to the unexpected.

What did you do?

In June 2018 I attended a Godly Play Core Training workshop, held in the Irish Institute for Pastoral Studies, in St. Patrick's Campus, Thurles.

Over the course of 3 days we developed our practice and understanding of the art of Godly Play. The training follows an action / reflection model of learning.

There is a mixture of trainer-led presentations in each genre and participant storytelling presentations. Each day explores one of the primary genres of Godly Play:

- Sacred Stories
- Parables
- Liturgical Lessons

Workshops in the core module also cover details of how to set up a Godly Play environment, the theology and spirituality of childhood, and time to explore your own concerns and questions.

In Godly Play, we prepare a special environment for children to enter in Parables, Silence, Sacred Stories & Liturgical Lessons in order to discover the depths of God, ourselves, one another and the world around us.

Godly Play Storytelling Session

An ideal time for a session is one hour but this can be adapted to suit the environment and context within which you share. Two adults, a storyteller and a doorperson, guide the session, making time for the children to do the following:

- Enter the space & be greeted
- Get ready for and enter into the story
- Respond to the story through shared Wondering
- Respond to the story with their own work, either expressive art or with other materials, reading, writing or just being in silence
- Prepare and share a feast
- Say goodbye and leave the space

On day one of my core training I knew that Godly Play was something very special. I personally was so impressed and deeply moved by the space created, the language and methods used, and by how sacramental imagination was nurtured within us all. I was listening to and looking at these stories unfold in the most profound ways within me, whilst still using a very simply language. These were stories that I had heard many times before but, within this Godly Play context and environment, it was as if I was truly hearing them deeply for the first time. I was hooked and couldn't wait to get started.

How did it go?

Having completed the core training module I then began my own Godly Play journey by deepening my knowledge through reading material and also through online YouTube Godly Play videos, which were created by the Godly Play Foundation. With a focus upon the Churches liturgical calendar, I handmade and sourced some story telling materials for the Godly Play stories of Advent & The Mystery of Christmas.

Then I reached out to my local Parish Priest and also the Principal of the local Primary School asking for their cooperation and support in beginning to share these stories in both the parish and school context.

To date I have brought Godly Play to three schools, by way of Sacramental Preparation, and I have also told the Godly Play Advent story at both parish & diocesan level.

Personally, I am still a relatively inexperienced Godly Play storyteller, but I have found that each time I tell a story I become more confident and I am learning to trust the process.

I have had both really good and not so good experiences within the school setting. Sometimes the children were disruptive and found it difficult to stay quiet during the storytelling, but on the whole, I have found the children to be wonderfully engaged with Godly Play.

Presently I am reaching out to more schools within my own Pastoral Unit and beyond, with the hope of sharing Godly Play with as many children as possible.

St Ita's Faith Camp: Abbeyfeale Parish

Contact: Martina O'Sullivan Mobile: 087-2788834 Email: mjrcos@gmail.com

What need were you addressing?

I did not realise the need until I brought my 2 children to Ardmore in Co Waterford to experience the first faith camp in 2012. My daughter was 7.5 years and my son was 5.5 years.

When I saw the whole process of how the kids "caught" the faith through ...faith lessons, drama, music, sport, art, daily mass, children's adoration and most of all FUN, the desire was in my heart to give the children of Abbeyfeale the same opportunity to experience the tender love of Jesus for them. I felt that this was a game changer in terms of these young kids developing a real personal relationship with Jesus and Mary. It was the "Rolls Royce" of evangelisation but the kids didn't even realise they were being formed in their faith as they had such joy and fun during their days and its peer to peer as it's a lot of young teens from Youth 2000 who deliver the lessons. It was not a chore and it didn't feel like school and Fr Patrick Cahill (who began the camp with Margaret Meehan in Ardmore) is very clear on this point. Kids have an innate sense of respect during the whole week.

What did you do?

FERVENT PRAYER. I needed to pray for courage and strength to take this journey. I was also praying for my parish priest whom I had to meet with to ask permission.

I asked Fr Patrick Cahill would he come to Abbeyfeale if we had the camp. He said Yes. Met with PP... He said YES. I was in contact a lot with Margaret Meehan in Ardmore getting advice. I also asked a girl who was the backbone of the Ardmore camp if she would come to Abbeyfeale. She Said YES. I had to get teen volunteers....so we got a lot of the Youth 2000 volunteers who were familiar with this camp come to Abbeyfeale. Fr Patrick brought 2 Brothers and 2 Sisters from his order.

We now needed accommodation for these people. We put out a request for host families. I completed all the vetting and safeguarding process for all volunteers. I asked the Principal of the Boys school if we could have the school for the 4 days... he brought it to the board of management, they agreed.

I printed off application forms and posters to advertise. Dropped forms to local schools. Did an interview on local radio to publicise. Prepared the school. Bought all the resources for the camp. Bought all the food to feed all my volunteers as nobody brings lunches.

Duty roster had to be made out to cover the various events. We have just had our 7th camp in Abbeyfeale. Before each camp I write to 10 Poor Clare convents each year asking them to intercede night and day during their adoration for the children, volunteers, parents, grandparents of these kids.

How did it go?

It went so well the first year that Fr Patrick and his team said when camp had finished that it was the easiest camp they had done. This was the final camp of the summer and this was their 4th camp so they came exhausted. When I told them that I had written to the Poor Clares for intercessory prayer they all agreed "That's the secret". They felt the power of that prayer.

We had 40 kids the first year. Kids went home every day with beautiful Artwork, singing all the beautiful songs they had learned going out the gate. One boy said this was my fourth camp this summer (the other 3 camp were GAA, THIS WAS BY FAR THE BEST CAMP OF ALL!!!!) So, I didn't need any more reassurance than that.

We just had our 7th camp in Abbeyfeale this year. Kids who came young are now volunteers and are leading faith lessons in classrooms now. Another great aspect is That our teen volunteers are taught how to teach the faith lesson to the younger kids the previous evening by Fr Patrick. They use various props to help the kids enter into the bible stories. So, our teens are being evangelised also by Fr Patrick, his Brothers and Sisters and they pass on the faith to each other through personal testimonies.

This camp has many layers to it.

God always rewards faithfulness.

Faith and Film: St Saviour's Parish

Contact: Grégoire Murphy

What need were you addressing?

People who attend Mass at St. Saviour's come from many different parishes and therefore there is not a territorial community. Consequently, we have been working to build a sense of community among those who attend the church. We also have received feedback from parishioners that they would like opportunities to learn more about the faith. The Cineforum, Catholicism Series, Friday Films, and Rise Up for Men all helped build community and give those who attended a deeper understanding of the Catholic faith.

What did you do?

My story at Saint Saviour's is divided into four chapters, four separate stories if you will. Each chapter has the theme *faith and film*, but you will notice that the influence of *film* increases with each chapter. Why four chapters? I wanted to give something of a flavour of the numerous initiatives happening at Saint Saviour's. Parishioners will of course comment that the question should in fact read: *why only four chapters?* This is the telling of my experience from just four of these many initiatives. What need was being addressed here? All four were invitations to engage with and deepen one's faith, and to make contact with others on the same journey. In stories one and four, I simply responded to the invitation, in the other two stories, my role was that of a facilitator.

Chapter 1. Prayer and a Pint

The story of a professional footballer discerning a vocation to the priesthood had caught my eye, and not just any footballer, a former Manchester United, Norwich City and Northern Ireland international no less. With each step, enters seminary, ordained a deacon, then the priesthood, a little more of the story was revealed. I had watched a short documentary film online with clips of goals scored and then of a priest in a Dominican habit juggling a football. When I heard the Sisters had invited him to Limerick to give his testimony, I knew I had to be there. Fr. Philip Mulryne celebrated Mass in Saint Saviour's and then we proceeded to Flannery's pub on Catherine Street for sausages, chips and a pint to listen to his story... how he had lived his boyhood dream and found there was still something missing and how his sister was never impressed by the material trappings that came with his success. She knew all along he was destined for the priesthood! Much of the question and answer session focused on chastity and the transition to becoming a priest. Many were concerned for and wanted to know what happened to his girlfriend. When the subject turned to the vow of poverty and how he coped, Fr. Philip quickly replied that he had had to sell his Ferrari!

Chapter 2. Men Rise Up

Men Rise Up is a thirty day program challenging men to know and live more fully our vocation as sons, brothers, spouses and fathers. The Sisters had spotted a gap in their work... ministry specifically for men, and I was asked to facilitate the program. Following the recommendation of a friend, I had just undertaken it myself. Now, a dozen men took up the challenge. So, what did we do? Each day we committed to watching a short video on the theme for the week. The four weeks considered our identities as sons, brothers, spouses and fathers. Once a week, in a slightly longer anchor video, we heard the powerful testimonies of men whose lives and faith were both tested, a soldier coping with decisions made on the field of battle, the loss of a child and the resulting impact on a marriage, a child of divorce's relationship with his father. Each day also included some reading

material, a relevant quote from a diverse group including Thomas Merton, Van Morrison and John Paul II and a further reflection, and finally the challenge. This could be to simply be still for sixty seconds, to read that day's Gospel, or to say something out loud and repeat it. But each day we took what we had learned and put it into practice so as to begin living it as part of our daily lives. Each man undertook the challenge remotely, but we connected daily and met up weekly for encouragement and mutual support. The powerful testimonies of transformation from within our own group upon completion of the challenge were ample evidence of the program's effectiveness.

Chapter 3. Catholicism Series with Fr. (now Bishop) Robert Barron

Saint Saviour's is blessed to have a choice of rooms in which to host events such as this one and the Sisters have ensured that the projector, screen and sound system do justice to the productions presented. The Catholicism series ran over ten weeks in the Terence Albert O'Brien room, on Thursdays after the one o'clock Mass and again as a repeat on Friday evenings, to maximize the potential overall audience. Each of the episodes lasted just under an hour. Catholicism is a ten-part film series exploring the Catholic faith. Robert Barron presents a broad tapestry of God and the Church with each episode touching on a different facet of the faith, Jesus, the apostles, Mary, the saints, prayer, the sacraments... It is a journey to the very heart of the faith that captures something of the universality of the Church. The cinematography is simply stunning. The viewing of the film was always preceded by a welcome, tea and biscuits, a short prayer and was followed by a lively group discussion. To this end, there is a study guide complete with prepared questions to assist facilitators. There seems to be a thirst for this kind of opportunity and the team has been approached about running the series in other parishes and we are starting a follow up series *Catholicism: the Pivotal Players* this October.

Chapter 4. Cineforum at the Dominican Church

Life is Beautiful, *The Blind Side*, *The Jeweler's Shop*, *Wonder Woman* and *Emma* were the featured films at the once a month *Cineforum at the Dominican Church*. *Wonder Woman* was included at Sister Mara Grace's insistence! These Saturday film evenings also took place in the Terence Albert O'Brien room at Saint Saviour's. The flyers, I came across mine online, were professionally crafted and promised film, food and discussion. The team made good on their promise of food, with pizza, sweets and of course copious amounts of popcorn. Although in this case the target audience were adults, there are plans afoot to run a *Cineforum* with families in mind. And the carefully selected films certainly generated much discussion. *Life is Beautiful* for example is a sensitive treatment of a father's attempt to shield his son from the horrors of the concentration camp in which they are interned... delicately done, but by way of a comedy no less! *The Jeweler's Shop* is a study of marriage based on a play written by Karol Wojtyla before he became Pope John Paul II. During the discussion period, you are privileged to revisit the films through the eyes of others, hearing many perspectives including a faith perspective and deepening your understanding of the issues arising in the process. The film evenings were hosted by a lay person and the involvement of the laity is going to be key to the continued success of such a growing portfolio of initiatives. The film evenings are popular, and the *Friday Film* is a regular feature of life at Saint Saviour's.

Liturgy and Life Theme

“Liturgy is a word used to describe the public prayer of the Christian community. It includes all kinds of prayer offered in public and not just the sacraments. The very first document produced by the Second Vatican Council in 1963 was The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy and the first impact of the Council’s work was found with the liturgical changes that followed. The Mass, and eventually all of the other sacraments and public prayers of the Church, used the local language, rather than Latin.

More fundamental changes occurred, however, because greater emphasis was placed on the reading of the Scriptures in all of the Church’s public prayer. This was a reminder that God first speaks to us, awakens us to his word of love and then invites us to respond. All of our prayer is an acknowledgement of God’s love and a response to it in praise, thanksgiving, as well as in petition.

The second important change that occurred in the liturgy at the time of the Council was that renewed emphasis was placed on full, conscious and active participation of all who were present in the assembly. When the Council emphasised these points, it was also drawing attention to the fact that Christ is present in the assembly of the faithful: “where two or three are present, there am I in the midst of them”. It was also highlighting the fact that Christ is present in his word. At the end of each reading we proclaim that “this is the word of the Lord”. Our Catholic horizons were being stretched. We were now beginning to appreciate what other Christians since the Reformation had always valued, the Bible as God’s word addressed to us. None of this compromised our belief that Christ is present to us in a very special, intimate way in the Eucharist. Rather our vision was being enlarged and enriched to see and welcome the presence of Christ in so many other different facets of our prayerful gatherings.

In other documents produced by the Council, notably The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, the fact that all the members of the Church share in the priesthood of Christ was brought to the fore. Through our baptism we are given a share in the priesthood of Christ. By this is meant that we all called to “offer a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to God”. So, while the ordained priest has a unique role in presiding over the Eucharist and other sacraments, all members of the Church share a common calling to praise and worship God, in prayer and service. Because all the baptised share in this common priesthood, any member of the parish community can lead the community in prayer, especially if there is no ordained minister present.”⁷

The following stories were shared under the Liturgy and Life theme:

⁷ Extract from Vision Statement for Liturgy and Life theme for Synod 2016

Children's Liturgy: Raheen Church

Contact: Colette O'Byrne **Mobile:** 087 2438292

What need were you addressing?

Under the theme Liturgy and Life, a proposal was put forward to develop liturgical resources and music for Family and Children's Masses. This proposal received widespread support at the Synod and was expressed under the theme, Liturgy and Life in the Diocesan Pastoral Plan whereby the diocese would support and resource parishes in choosing from proposals such as this.

What did you do?

In September 2018 the Children's Mass in Raheen celebrated 20 years. This event was marked by a radio recording and the Mass was broadcast on RTE Radio One Extra on Sunday 30th September. The Children's Mass takes place on every second Sunday at the 11.00a.m. Mass. The Mass is led by a group of committed adults who meet every two weeks to review the previous Sunday's Mass and plan for the next one.

The Liturgy features the following:

- Specially adapted readings suitable for children
- Prayers of the Faithful composed by the team and read by the children
- Commentaries on Offertory Gifts and Symbols appropriate to the Mass theme
- Hymns sung by the Children's choir and Music
- The children come forward at Communion time and receive an individual blessing

Every Thursday evening a rehearsal takes place in which the children learn and practice the hymns, practice the readings and rehearse the offertory procession.

After the Mass the children and their families gather for teas and coffee in the Parish centre. Each child is given a picture of a Bible scene to bring home and colour, also, a Children's Mass leaflet (produced by Redemptorist Publications) is distributed.

How did it go?

Among the many benefits of this liturgy are the following:

- The children are actively involved and participate in the Mass
- The children grow in confidence by virtue of reading and singing at Mass
- The children become familiar with the parts of the Mass
- It is truly a family occasion as parents and siblings come along
- It is very much a community/parish occasion

Congregational Singing: Patrickswell/Ballybrown Parish

Contact: Fr Michael Cussen

What need were you addressing?

Under the theme Liturgy and Life two proposals were brought forward to the Diocesan Synod in 2016. Proposal No 49 was entitled “Develop and Support Congregational Singing” and Proposal 64 was entitled “Liturgical Music – Develop and Support Cantors in local communities”. These proposals translated into a Core Strategic Action in the Diocesan Pastoral to foster congregational singing. It is generally agreed that liturgically it is the preferred option if the congregation sing – preferred even over a choir or a soloist. However, it is rare to hear a congregation sing!

What did you do?

In the church in Patrickswell each Sunday morning at 11.30 John O’Shea acts as cantor and successfully leads those gathered in singing the hymns. A leaflet is distributed before Mass and a brief practice takes place prior to Mass. It is notoriously difficult to get an Irish congregation to sing but somehow John manages to do so.

How did it go?

For some reason it works!! It is difficult to say why but a lot of the reason for the success of this initiative is the skill of the leading cantor. He gently encourages and sings in such a way that people can easily join in. Indeed, sometimes the cantor goes silent or very quiet in a way that people hear their own voice and sing a little louder.

Dawn Mass at Killeery Pier; Liturgies Outside Church Buildings: Loughill/Ballyhahill Parish

Contact person: Gerard Reidy Mobile 087 258 2963 Email: greidy1952@gmail.com

What need were you addressing?

As a pastoral council we are always looking at new ways to engage people and offer them a positive faith experience.

What did you do?

We organised a Family Mass, initially we held one every Sunday and then we moved to monthly Masses. We involved families in readings, bringing up the gifts. We invited a young girl in the parish to help organise the Masses.

We organise a Harvest Mass every year, we get people to bring up fruit, vegetables, hay etc. Every first Friday we have exposition of the Blessed Sacrament after the 9am Mass in Ballyhahill. We are aiming to expand this to Loughill every Tuesday in the month of November. Mass is at 6pm, we will have exposition of the Blessed Sacrament from 6:30pm to 8pm. We are hoping that people will come and spend half an hour there in prayer. Our parish has been touched by deaths by suicide; there is a real need for healing.

On Easter Sunday morning, we have a Dawn Mass at Killeery Pier, the practice was initiated by Fr Tim O'Leary and resurrected by Fr Austin. This year we held the Dawn Mass at 5:30am, the Mass started in darkness and finished as the dawn was breaking. The birds started singing and took over! It was a fabulous experience.

How did it go?

The Family Mass was successful initially, it was very difficult to sustain it as it was the same families involved all the time. One thing we have learned is that it is best to keep things short and sweet and not drag them out too much. If you keep repeating the same thing it loses its appeal.

The Harvest Mass goes well, people like to get involved. It is a way of engaging with the agricultural community.

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament is very well attended in Ballyhahill; it is early in the morning. Our experience is that trying to do things in the evening is more challenging; this is why we will just have exposition for the month of November, we won't let it drag on.

The Dawn Mass is a huge success, it draws a totally different group of people to the normal weekend Mass group. There are a lot of young people going to this Mass, it appeals to them. There is something about the attraction of being around water. One man, who had not been at Mass for a very long time, came to the Dawn Mass. He spoke to Fr Austin afterwards and said he had such a profound experience and would return again. Interestingly, it does not impact on the attendance at the Easter morning Mass, people still come to that, some people go to both. The Dawn Mass attendance has gotten so big that we have had to recruit car park attendants to assist people with parking. We start with a big open fire, that is another draw for people. We have everything well set up at this stage with a gazebo for the altar and our own sound system. Afterwards a breakfast is provided for all the helpers, this is rotated with us and our neighbours.

Technology and Digital Media: Mungret/Raheen/Crecura Parish

Contact: Fr Richie Davern

Last year we installed a couple of technology hardware and software items which have proved very useful in our liturgies and which are also very appreciated by the congregation.

- Firstly, we have now **live streaming on the WWW** of the sanctuary area. Housebound need smart TVs in order to be linked up to this if they wish to see it and for many of the housebound, they are not tech savvy. However, this facility has proven very invaluable for family occasions such as weddings or funerals when far away family are unable to attend; they can now join the celebration on the net and this has been a great consolation, especially at a time of bereavement. A parishioner who was spending Christmas in Texas last year joined us live to enjoy the Christmas Carol Service and it meant everything to her as she really missed being away from home for Christmas.
- The second item we installed was a **projector**. We were fortunate in Raheen to have a good-sized surface area on the sanctuary back wall wide enough to act as a screen. There was no need to install a separate screen. We can project straight onto the wall. We use this projector to put up the words of the hymns so that everyone can join in the singing, and it certainly seems to have improved participation. You need someone to have prepared the slides on a laptop and you need someone to operate the laptop during the Mass to move on the screen. I am sure remote control could be used, but we have not tried that. You can also show videos for particular occasions, such as for Trócaire, Mission, Creation Season. There are any number of resources online that can be used to enhance the message being delivered. Like everything, used in moderation it can be very beneficial. If overused I am sure the comments would surface about "Spiritual Cinema". You need to download the video you are going to use onto the laptop if you do not have a YouTube account.

New Models of Leadership Theme

(crosslinked with Liturgy & Life and Faith Formation & Education Themes)

“The meaning of Christian leadership was made clear by Jesus himself:

“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant...; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many” Luke 22: 25-28).

We are meant to be a community made up of people who serve the Lord, serve one another and serve all humanity. The Church exists in order to be “a sign and instrument ... of communion with God and of the unity of the entire human race”.⁸

We need to look at new models of leadership for two reasons. Firstly, because we are living in a very different world from the one most of us grew up in. St John Paul pointed out during his visit to Ireland:

Every generation, with its own mentality and characteristics, is like a new continent to be won for Christ. The Church must constantly look for new ways that will enable her... to carry out with renewed vigour the mission received from her Founder⁹.

During our preparation for the Synod, we have become more clearly aware of the challenges we face– the growing gap between the affluent and the deprived, the shortcomings in our welcome to immigrants and refugees, the challenge of caring for the earth, our common home, the decline in vocations to religious life, foreign missions and priesthood, the growth of a culture which sees little role for faith except in the private sphere, the difficulties and obstacles many people face in living their faith.

We also need to look at new models because the concept of a leadership which depends almost exclusively on the priest cannot continue. The Eucharist is the summit and the source of the Christian life, but we cannot expect a resident priest in every parish.

The important thing in searching for new models of leadership is to keep clearly before our minds what this leadership should be doing. It is about the ways in which we inspire our communities and guide our communities to arrive at a shared vision to enable us to “serve the Lord, serve one another and serve all humanity.”¹⁰

The following stories were shared under the theme of New Models of Leadership (cross-linked with the Liturgy and Life and Faith Formation themes):

⁸ VATICAN II, Constitution on the Church, 1.

⁹ JOHN PAUL II, Homily in Knock, 30 September 1979.

¹⁰ Extract from Vision Statement for New Models of Leadership Theme for Synod 2016.

Baptism Team: Granagh/Ballingarry Parish

Contact: Marion O'Connor

What needs were you addressing?

Some years ago, at a meeting to review the future needs of our parish we realised that while we had in place significant preparations for First Confession and First Holy Communion, Confirmation and Marriage, we had little 'structured' preparation for probably the most important Sacrament of all- the first Sacrament, Baptism.

In the context of a new and developing situation, where the connection with our church community for many young parents was not always what it traditionally had been, we realised that, with the growing shortage of priests, , this preparation was going to be more and more important in the future. We as the Faith Community in the parish needed to take some responsibility in this area

Having identified this need, we explored with Sr. Margaret and Fr Dan how we, as a community, might be more supportive of our young parents requesting Baptism. It became obvious to us that the first priority was that this was a time that they would feel really welcomed by the community.

We also felt it would be great for them, in the lead up to the celebration of Baptism, to have the opportunity to explore the significance and richness of the Sacrament. We realised that sometimes parents can be quite nervous and unsure of their role on the day. We felt that this might not always facilitate their best experience of the joy and grace of Baptism

Having identified this need, we set about putting together a 'Welcome and Information' evening for parents requesting Baptism for their child. The Granagh /Ballingarry Baptism Parish Welcome and Preparation Programme was born. We began with a team of five willing volunteers

What did we do?

We were fortunate to have Sr. Margaret in our parish at the time. Under her guidance, the five volunteers embarked on a Formation and Training Programme for ourselves over a number of weeks. The experience opened up for us a new appreciation of the richness of the Sacrament and we knew that it would be good if our young parents had access to what we had received. At the end of our Formation Programme we certainly didn't see ourselves as experts, but we were willing and had come confidence that we could share the story

This is a synopsis of what happens when a parent requests Baptism in our Parish:

[This is in no way prescriptive, it is just what works for us].

One member of our team takes care of the Administrative Side. She is the first point of contact for parents. She liaises with the parents and the Baptism Team. She takes the bookings. Baptism Welcome and Preparation takes place monthly in Ballingarry Church, from 8.00pm to 9.00pm, usually on the first Monday night of the month. But if this is a Bank Holiday it moves to the second Monday.

We now have eleven members on our team. We have a Rota in place. Three team members share in delivering the programme

On the night we create a relaxed atmosphere and we ensure the couples feel really welcomed. We take a few minutes at the beginning to chat with them, introduce everybody and warmly share

stories about their babies with us and with each other. To ensure it is not impersonal we don't take more than four couples. We average between one and three couples per night.

Beginning at the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan, we share in story form, how Baptism was celebrated in the early centuries ; We dip into the next period, when, as victims of intense persecution for their faith, they had to seek refuge in the Catacombs often putting their lives on the line for their Faith, we look at how we arrived at where we are today.

The purpose of this is to show the evolution from 'adults only' Baptism to Infant Baptism, the central place of Easter, the central role of the Community and the huge importance of 'sponsors' etc.

We take time to look at all the symbols used in Baptism and the significance of each; water, white robe, holy oils, candle, bible, crucifix. The special significance of each symbol is explained.

We do a little walk around the church explaining why the priest meets the parents at the door and his words of welcome to the baby; *'The Christian Community welcomes you with great joy'*.

We take them to where the Word of God is shared, to the Baptism Font and conclude at the Altar and as we go, we explain the different movements.

Then we all adjourn to the sacristy where over a 'cuppa' together we give them their 'Pack' which contains sample Readings, Prayers of the Faithful, Application Form and all the little things that they might need for their celebration. We try and ensure nothing is left to chance and that there will be no surprises to 'throw' them on the day. We find that having our own Large Container with everything we need for the night [down to the Kettle etc!] is very important to ensure there are no unwelcome surprises for ourselves.

We see ourselves as being there to help and support the parents to have the very best experience from their upcoming Baptism. We are not there to preach, to judge or to question.

Finally, on each Easter Sunday we invite all the babies baptised since the previous Easter back to our Easter Masses where they are presented by their proud parents to the Parish Congregation who give them a great welcome. This brings to fruition the words spoken to them at the door on the day of their celebration:

"The Christian Community in Granagh Ballingarry welcomes you with Great Joy."

How did it go?

The programme has been running very successfully for over 10 years now. People appreciate our help as they know we are lay people, just like them. It is a privilege to know that we have helped to make their child's Baptism ceremony more meaningful, relevant and inclusive for a family on such an important day.

Lay Led Liturgies: Glin Parish

Contact: Glin Parish

What need were you addressing?

When Fr. Tom was absent from the parish it was decided that we would have a morning service including Communion as there is a big group attending morning Mass in Glin.

What did you do?

Two people attended the training provided by the Diocesan office. We used the sheets provided by the Diocese and the Liturgy was led by one or two people.

How did it go?

People were pleased with the Liturgy and almost all the people that come to Mass attended it.

This story will be expanded on during the Storytelling at the Diocesan Assembly

Funeral Team: Templeglantine/Tournafulla/Mountcollins Parishes

Contact: Parish Office

What need were you addressing?

A funeral is a very personal experience. Key elements must be support and hope. Bereaved family must know that not only have they the support of the priest, funeral director, the support of the community but also the support of the funeral ministry team. We must also be able to offer the bereaved hope and consolation through our prayers, actions and listening. We must be sensitive to the needs of the grieving family. Every family believes that their loved one deserves to have a meaningful celebration of their life.

What did you do?

I spent some time in prayer and then visited the home of the bereaved, offered my sympathy and support together with that of the community. I lent a listening ear to the family as they spoke about their deceased family member. I offered practical information regarding organisation of funeral ceremony and prayers in the home and funeral home. I gave them examples of scripture readings, prayers of the faithful and spoke to them about use of symbols for the funeral Mass of their loved one. I offered to drop back when the family members had looked through these readings and prayers.

On the 2nd visit I took part in recitation of Rosary with the family members leading it, thus helping them to feel their involvement and helping them feel that they were not being rushed into “letting go” of their loved one. I helped the family with their selection of readings and prayers of the faithful. I helped with the selection of symbols of the person’s life, thus personalising the Liturgy while remaining faithful to the spirit and prayer of the Liturgy. I gave them guidelines regarding eulogy – duration of eulogy, keeping eulogy in context of faith of the deceased and context of funeral liturgy. I have assisted with prayers in funeral home and reception of body in the church.

How did it go?

The family felt immense support from the Liturgy, clergy, funeral director and funeral ministry team. They felt cared for and supported.