

Killaloe Diocesan Youth Ministry  
**Annual Newsletter**  
2019



## Foreword

I am so happy to have the pleasant task of writing a foreword for this first edition of our Youth Ministry Newsletter. There has always been a strong and vibrant tradition of engaging young people in faith matters in Killaloe diocese. Considering that, it has been a significant development to be fortunate enough to have the resources to appoint a full time Youth Director for a two year period. Since taking up her appointment Joanne O'Brien has worked diligently to support, affirm and facilitate the many different youth projects that are going on in the diocese of Killaloe. This attractive, well produced illustrated newsletter brings together some of the many strands of Youth Ministry in the diocese.

Symbols and logos can often unpack in a very condensed way the manifesto a person or organisation is trying to bring about. There is a feature on the new diocesan Youth Ministry Logo that explains the elements of that.

Pilgrimage and Youth Gathering Events are some of the key areas young people engage willingly with and there are a number of articles on various Taizé and Lourdes pilgrimages from the diocese along with the *Solas* gathering in St. Flannan's College and the Family Picnic in the Showgrounds in Ennis last May.

Chaplains play an important role in the faith life of students and there are two



*Bishop Fintan with the winners of 'Battle of the Parables' at Solas, January 2019.*

interesting interviews with chaplains who are currently serving in the diocese.

Sacramental and school programmes play an important role in preparing students for the rituals of the Church. An article on *Faith Friends* and the *JP II awards* explains the inspiration behind the good work they do.

Structure and organisation is important for any institution to thrive and flourish and there is a feature on the work of the *Mid Clare Youth Council*, *Boirne Youth Connect* and *Kilrush Youth Ministry*.

Prayer is the lifeblood of any faith initiative and the prayer efforts of the Nenagh Youth Mass and the Youth Prayer space in Ennis Cathedral is featured in this edition.

Well done to everyone for the excellent work in the area of Youth Ministry. May God continue to bless and enrich this worthwhile, important and essential work in the diocese. If we don't invest in giving time and energy to the young people of the diocese the great treasure of our faith will not be available to hand on to future generations and what a tragedy that would be!

My final words are to the youth of Killaloe diocese and I am going to quote Pope Francis. "Dear young people, the church needs your momentum, your intuitions, your faith. We need them! And when you arrive at a place where we have not yet reached, have the patience to wait for us." *Christus Vivit, Pope Francis #299*

**+ Fintan Monahan Bishop of Killaloe**

## New Logo

This is the new logo for Youth Ministry. The hands are a replica of the sculpture commissioned by Bishop Willie Walsh and created by sculptor Shane Gilmore to mark the millennium in 2,000 A.D. This sculpture sits in the grounds of the Cathedral in Ennis. The hands represent welcome, peace, cooperation, healing and faith.

The broken circle represents Jarlath's wheel. Bishop Fintan Monahan carried with him the beautiful faith filled story of St. Jarlath from Tuam. The story goes that when Jarlath had finished his studies as a monk, his Abbot St. Benin told him to

"Go, and wherever your chariot wheel breaks, there shall be the site of your new monastery." Jarlath's wheel broke in Tuam.

The story reminds us to have faith in God, to put our trust in him, even when we don't know what to do next, God has a plan. The two young people representing all youth in our diocese are reaching for the stars. Our wish for all young people is that they will become the best possible version of themselves. As Christ said in



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the Gospel of John: "I have come that you may have life and have it to the full." Jn 10:10

The hope is that this image will come to be known and recognised throughout our diocese, that young people from Kinnity to Loop Head will feel 'Connected' with their Christian family – the Diocese of Killaloe.



## Greetings from the new Director of Youth Ministry.

I am delighted to welcome you to Connected Issue1, the first Killaloe Diocesan Youth Ministry Newsletter. In October 2018, I stepped out of my role as School Chaplain in St. John Bosco Community College, Kildysart to take up the challenge of the new role of Director of Youth Ministry in the Killaloe Diocese. I feel privileged to do so and I am very grateful to be given this opportunity. When I was a teenager, I was blessed to have the faith handed on to me by my parents strengthened by two very faith filled teachers in St. Joseph's Secondary School, Tulla, Co. Clare. Their witness to the faith inspired me to dedicate my life to helping young people to come to know Christ and the richness of his message to us.

I have been busy since October getting to know and visit the many youth ministry groups which exist throughout our diocese. This newsletter is testament to the fabulous young Christian communities who meet regularly and share the Christian values of faith, hope, love, justice and prayer. These pages will illustrate their activities throughout the past twelve months.

I have also visited our neighbouring dioceses to investigate life-giving initiatives that are taking place for youth in other dioceses. I am grateful to Mia Joyce Walsh, my counterpart in Galway diocese, for her kind welcome to this new community and to Aoife Walsh from Limerick diocese who generously allowed me to come and witness their Anois – Meitheal programme. Meitheal is a Youth leadership Training programme based on a peer ministry model. College students are trained to be leaders to Transition Year students on a week long residential programme. Plans are underway to pilot this programme with five secondary schools, 40 TY students and 17 College students from our diocese in January, 2020.

Last August, I travelled to Knock with my students to welcome Pope Francis to our country. I don't know whether I could do this job were it not for his inspiring leadership. His chosen name,

spaces where they can encounter each other and encounter people of other generations. You don't need any special skills, but simply to listen, someone who actively listens to the needs of young



Joanne O'Brien in a meeting with the Youth Space coordinating committee. Left to Right, Kate, Méibh, Saoirse and Kirsten

his reminder that we should live simply, so that others may simply live, his commitment to care for the earth and his love for all people of this planet, but especially the youth, are always encouraging.

In his most recent letter to the youth: Christus Vivit, he reflects on the Synod on Youth in Rome last October. He says the "Youth are not the Church of the future, they are the now of God." (CV #178) We must recognise that Christ dwells in each young person in the milieu of their modern lives. The young people are the present of the church, not merely it's future. If we miss this, we loose out on the contributions they make today. We need to be aware that young people themselves are bearing seeds of divine life within them.

Pope Francis says "One of the most important things is to welcome young people and young adults, create

people and responds in kind; someone deeply loving and self-aware; someone who recognizes his or her limits and knows the joys and sorrows of the spiritual journey" (#246)

As a child, I remember my mother saying night prayers with my brother and me. The words of one of prayer were "Jesus send labourers in to your mission fields." The mission fields are no longer in far distant countries but rather here in our own towns and villages. I pray that many will answer a call to serve our youth.

Thanks to everyone who has welcomed me and for all the great work that has taken place over the last year.

May we continue to work together in these times of change and challenge. Beannacht Dé oraibh,

**Joanne O'Brien**

Director of Youth Ministry,  
Killaloe Diocese

## Volunteering Opportunity for Third Level Students

Will you be a college student in January 2020? Would you like the opportunity to be a leader in The Meitheal Leadership Programme for Transition Year students? Killaloe Diocese Youth Ministry are recruiting up to 20 third level students to work on a week long residential leadership programme which will take place from 6th – 10th January 2020.

*If you are interested in working with young people and developing communication and teamwork skills while having fun, then this could be the perfect opportunity for you.*

**For more information please contact**

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**Fr Donagh O'Meara 087 232 2140** [donaghomeara@gmail.com](mailto:donaghomeara@gmail.com)

## Taizé Pilgrimage



Our experience of Taizé goes back to 1990, however, Taizé as a Faith Community goes right back to 1940. Roger Schulz, son of a Lutheran pastor, a native of neutral Switzerland, made his way across the border into France hosting a dream to set up a Religious Community. He travelled to Cluny, in Burgundy, France. World War 1 by now was gaining momentum and France was suffering unimaginably.

For Roger, Cluny was the obvious place to travel to, hoping for inspiration from its history as the site of the largest Benedictine Monastery in Europe. While there, he saw a notice for a house for sale in nearby Taizé. He borrowed a bicycle and made his way up "The Hill" of Taizé.... The story begins.

Post war Taizé found Roger return with the first five Brothers who had made their life commitment to the Community, from this humble beginning the community has grown as an ecumenical community with over 100 Brothers from all continents.

Early in the growing community it became apparent that the ministry to young people was going to be at the heart of how the Community was to live out its mission.

In 1990 I made my first visit, probably, a little apprehensive at first.

By week's end I knew I had to come back, and come back with others. This we have done every year since. In the early years the age profile would have been 21-30.... What might seem counter culture to the times we have been living in, our

group is made up of 17 year olds over the last ten years. Early on we were a group who reached across the Island of Ireland, then across the Killaloe Diocese, while in recent years groups from around the country and also groups from within the Diocese have emerged and 'we' are mainly now bringing young people from the Ennis area.

While in Taizé for a week in early July each year we join with 3,000 young



people from all over Europe and beyond. The many blessings of this Pilgrimage I leave to some of the young people from trips over the years to describe.

"My lasting memories of our trip to Taizé include friendship, silence, simplicity. All these we were told were possible, and that we would love it. However, no one could have prepared me for how much so. Before I travelled I was unsure about meeting so many people, spending three times a day in prayer, experiencing silence for many minutes at prayer each day. Amazingly these moments became the best." Aoife.

"The Dalai Lama said, 'The planet does not need more successful people. The planet needs more peacemakers, healers, restorers, storytellers and lovers of all kinds.' I'd like to think that Taizé has ignited this spirit in me and the rest of the group." Eibhlín.

"Through Taizé, I've met a lot of people. I've made friends I'd never have thought possible. I've prayed in a way I'd never believed I'd want to. I've become aware of myself as part of a bigger world (you might call community) and I feel now I belong. When I came home I became aware of so much that I didn't need... yes, I've drifted back to many of my old ways but something remains as a reminder of what Taizé and our trip taught me.... That we can live together .... The 'parable of communion' I think are

the words used in Taizé. I know we lived together, wanting little and shared what we had... I think that's what it means." Aoife.

So, to conclude from my own perspective. What has happened over the years has been truly a blessing. Not



just the trip each year but the monthly gatherings for Taizé prayer on the first Thursday of the month at the Church of Our Lady, Roslevan. We peacefully sit together, sharing that sacred space to sing the songs of Taizé, a few precious moments of silence and then head back to our rollercoaster lives maybe a little better off for having shared the time together. Jerry





## Pope John Paul II Awards



Last November a large number of secondary school students across the diocese received Pope John Paul II Awards. This is a faith-based achievement award that was created to commemorate the late Pope John Paul II who held belief and confidence for young people. In order to achieve one of these awards all participants had to take an active part in the life of their local parish and community. The awards are earned by completing parish and social activities. There are three different award levels: Bronze, Silver and Gold. Each award requires a different amount of parish involvement and social awareness over 8, 14 or 20 weeks.

Those who have completed the Gold Award have the further option of completing the Papal Cross Award which requires 26 weeks of parish involvement and social awareness. Examples of parish involvement activities include reading at mass, basket collector, parish youth council and church choir. Examples of social awareness activities include volunteering at charity shops, faith friends, student council members and shoe box appeal.

This last year saw the largest number of students from the Killaloe Diocese receive Pope John Paul II Awards. The awards ceremony included an evening of music and speeches from guest speakers such as John Bourke from Elevate and Bishop Fintan Monahan. One student said on the night that this past year was a wonderful and fulfilling experience and that hope to continue on all the work that they started that year.

**Doireann Hanrahan**  
*St. Flannan's College.*





## Boirne Youth Connect

Every Friday night the youth of our parish meet in Ruan Community Centre from 7.30pm-9.00pm. It is an opportunity to meet up and enjoy time together and meet others their own age, sometimes with hot chocolate and treats!

Last year they were taken to the RNLI lifeboat station in Galway to show the work of important volunteers. We have guest speakers, exercise nights, dancing nights, pizza and movie nights and had an advent liturgy.

This Youth night is run based on the values of the NET Ministries ([www.netministry.ie](http://www.netministry.ie)) and at Easter time every year the group are taken to Donegal to participate in a Surfing Retreat run by The Net Ministries.

This Easter thirty-nine young people from Ruan will travel to Rosstown Beach to partake in a surfing retreat. All the youth find this retreat to be a very special time.

Boirne Youth Connect is open to secondary school students in our local area.

A big thank you to Ellen Jones and Mary Wynne for all the work they do leading Boirne Youth Connect.



## East Clare Youth Connect

East Clare Youth Connect have offered a number of different activities over the years which included: Guest Motivational Speakers, Retreats, Team Building Activities, Taize prayer, SVP Christmas Food Appeal, Fundraising Initiatives & Workshops with young St. Vincent de Paul & Trocaire, Youth Masses and Mindfulness Meditation.



## Prayer at The Cistercian College, Roscrea.

Every Thursday night during the school year, up to twenty boarding students of the Cistercian College in Roscrea meet for the Junior Legion under the guidance of Kathleen Tooher and Ann Harrington. We learn about Alfie Lambe, an Irish born Roman Catholic lay-missionary to South America.

The students are amazed at his courage at such a young age, we discuss what we read, and there is time for questions.

We also tell them stories about Frank Duff and his life working to establish the legion in Ireland and throughout the world.

The legion is devoted to Mary and prays the rosary.

The students made these comments about the meetings. "I have learned to pray" "It has brought us closer together as a group."





## Kilrush Youth Ministry

Kilrush Youth Ministry is a group of teenagers from our local area who come together every week with the help of our excellent leaders. We have approximately 35 teenagers in the group and 7 adult leaders. At our weekly meetings we discuss many things including our hopes for the future, how we can improve our actions and how we can fundraise for charities that we feel strongly about. Some things that we have participated

in include fundraising for Mary's Meals, a charity that hopes to provide food for young children in third world countries, which enables them to then receive a much needed education, something our group took for granted before discovering this charity. Our group feels that we have come together to do good things which our community has since recognised. Along with this, we plan for the future such

as visiting Taizé in France and climbing Croagh Patrick to raise further funds. This Summer twenty- nine of us will travel to on pilgrimage to Taizé in France. Through prayer and belief, we have not only learned new things in our Youth Group but also have made friends and memories for life.



In order for someone to know just what Kilrush Youth Ministry is all about, they must know what we do at our meetings each week. Usually just as the meeting begins, we light a candle. The light from the candle reminds us of God's presence. We take a few minutes to reflect, which is very beneficial to us. It is a special time to forget about the rush of everyday life and to thank God for all we are grateful for. Recently, Sr. Martina showed the group a friendship icon. At the start, we didn't know much about it but we have now learned that different things represent different aspects of friendship and the importance of it. The icon got us thinking about the ways each of us can make an effort to be a better friend, and be there for the ones we love. We also watch a film series each week called "NUA". Its aim is to encourage questions, acknowledge doubt and offer an engaging perspective

on our Christian faith. As a group, we often think deeply about our beliefs and make an effort to make sense of certain things we aren't quite sure about. Through this film series, we explore faith and spirituality in a fun and practical way. Other activities at our meetings include friendship building exercises and discussing topical events. We carefully plan for upcoming fundraisers such as bag packing to raise funds for our trip to Taizé in July. We plan Church collections for charities of a great cause such as Mary's Meals and discuss different ways the youth can take action and make a difference in our community. Everybody plays a role at our meetings but more importantly, no one is left out.

Ava Cullinan

## Sunday Evening Youth Mass in Nenagh



Back in the summer of 2016, a group of young members of the youth pastoral council came together to form a new Sunday evening mass at 6pm. This time would not be a traditional time for a Sunday mass within the diocese. They had a vision to create something new and fresh, wishing to engage young people in the weekly liturgical life of Nenagh Parish. The group divided into those who would proclaim the scriptures at mass, those who would distribute the Eucharist and those who would enhance the liturgy with beautiful music. It was amazing to see how this wonderful group committed themselves to growing the weekly celebration and while numbers started off small, the weekly attendance has grown and

grown. It is a wonderful source of hope to see such a talented group using their gifts to enhance the liturgical life of the parish and the community. The hope is always to encourage more young people to come along and join with the group, to spread the Good News of the Gospel with joy.

After mass, the group usually gathers to celebrate friendship and faith over food in the parish hall and have had many get-togethers to deepen their own spirituality. They also have engaged in social awareness campaigns within the parish, working on the annual food appeals with St Vincent de Paul and also raised funds for different charitable causes. Some have also managed to get away on pilgrimage to Lourdes and Taizé with the Diocese. It has been a real privilege to journey with this wonderful group of young people and it shows, with a little encouragement, how young people are so willing to contribute to the growth of faith in our parishes.

Fr Michael Geraghty



## Faith Friends

When I was in Transition Year, I was delighted to be given the opportunity to be a Faith Friend to pupils making their Confirmation. In Ennis, senior cycle students from Rice College and St. Flannan's College train to lead the Faith Friends programme with the Confirmation candidates from Ennis National School and The Holy Family Primary School.

It is a learning and growing experience of both the children making confirmation and those who are seen to be helping them on this journey of faith. Over three nights we discuss their faith and belief, how they belong to the Church community and what gifts and fruits Confirmation gives us. As a faith friend we are able to teach them outside of the classroom about their faith and discuss in an informal and fun way about the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit. The program is held over over three

evenings in which the children learn about what it means to make the sacrament. It also allows the children to talk about their faith. The program is informal so the children can explore and discuss their faith in a comfortable environment. Another positive thing about the programme is that when the confirmation candidate arrives in secondary school, they can see a familiar face on the corridor. It's been nice to act as a mentor and help our faith friends with their transition in to secondary school.

Here are some of comments from some of this year's Faith Friends leaders.

"The experience meant a lot to me and helped me strengthen my own faith as well as the 6th class student's faith. It helped me to develop a better understanding of my religion and my relationship with God. I thoroughly enjoyed the experience. I loved getting

to know the children and guiding them on the journey to confirmation." – Siobhán

"I never had this programme for my own confirmation and I really would have liked it, as it gives the children a more in depth knowledge of the sacrament. The programme enhanced my communication, teamwork and leadership skills. It was a great opportunity to work with younger people. The experience has sparked an interest in primary teaching for me." – Kieran

Thanks to Ms Black in St. Flannan's and Mr Cleary in Rice College and the wonderful team in Ennis Parish of Sr Betty Curtin, Brid O'Connell, Geraldine Cummins and Liz Mc Mahon for giving us this opportunity.

*Sarah Mc Carthy, St. Flannan's College, Ennis.*



## Mid Clare Youth Council



The Mid-Clare Youth Council or MCYC is a group of senior cycle students, who along with excellent leaders, mix faith, fun and social awareness. We organize various events and activities that aim to bring faith into the lives of young people. New members are always welcomed into the group.

Events that the MCYC have previously organized or have taken part in include an overnight stay in St.Flannan's College, the Killaloe Youth Faith Fest, Burren walks, organising a Christmas party for the Clare Down Syndrome Association, climbing Croagh Patrick, along with much more.

When activities are being organized, everyone's opinion is taken into account

and they are centred around us the youth, while also giving young people a way to express their faith. Often our liturgies involve calming prayers, enlightening reflections and lively songs. I have found each event and liturgy different to each other, all being peaceful and enjoyable.

The MCYC has made me feel part of a group and brings together other students of the same age.

Most recently, the MCYC got involved in a youth space which was a prayer space for lent, which was set up in the Cathedral in Ennis. An interactive space which has an aims to inspire and help people who pass through. Some of the MCYC along with the organising

group for the youth space met various times before the space opened to plan and build the various prayer stations. The team work involved in making this brought everyone closer together and brought out the creative side in everyone. Participating in the Youth Prayer Space is just one of many things the MCYC do and each activity brings with it new skills, experiences and friends.

The MCYC is a way to meet new people while professing your faith in an enjoyable way. Meetings occur every month in the Church of Our Lady in Roslevan and each month we leave with a smile and new ideas.

Tara O'Shaughnessey - MCYC





# World Meeting of Families Picnic Day



On a beautiful May Bank Holiday Sunday, a Diocesan Family Picnic Day was held at the Ennis Showgrounds, in preparation for the World Meeting of Families. Over 2000 people attended the free event, and enjoyed the many activities that were made available to them on the day. The event was open to all ages and there was an activity for every member of the family.

Events ranged from a Family Fitness Course, to a Vintage Car Show, Bouncy Castles, Petting Zoos, Tug-O-War, sacred spaces, stands from local organisations, face painting – the list goes on and on. While all of these events were running, a number of local bands, singers, dance groups etc. were providing entertainment to families who were enjoying their picnics in the sun. The main event, however, was the Best Picnic Competition. Families were asked to bring their own picnic and were entered into the competition, judged by Bishop Fintan and The Clare Rose, Clara Burke. It was great to see so many families take part in the competition, and the judges had a tough decision when picking the best picnic. Families from the Knockalisheen Direct Provision Centre were also invited to part-take in the festivities and were provided with picnics by other local families attending. Not only did it provide a family fun day out, it was also a lovely sight to see so many members from our community integrate, connect and share and recognise that family is something treasured amongst many people of the world. The MCYC along with a working group planned and organised the family picnic day and it was an amazing experience to be part of such a fun day.

The main aim of the day was to prepare and inform people of The World Meeting of Families. As a diocese we wanted to celebrate with all types of families in a relaxed and fun way. We were blessed to have the presence of so many who brought their own picnic, and it gave an opportunity to families to spend some quality time together and enjoy the day. There are some things you can't buy in life, and spending time with your family is one!!!

*Padraig Casey MCYC*





# Solas

On 18th and 19th January, 2019, we attended the Killaloe Diocesan Youth Ministry event called "Solas". It was an absolutely amazing event.

Upon arrival at 6:30pm on the Friday we all met inside the chapel hall and got name tags and signed up for the different Saturday morning workshops. There were so many teenagers from different schools in Clare.

It was really lovely to see so many new faces. There were tables full up with confectionery, cakes and fizzy drinks, as refreshments for everyone. At the beginning, we played enjoyable ice-breaker games, and it gave everyone a chance to get to know one another. We all then sat down in the canteen for a delicious Domino's pizza and chips etc. It was such a lovely treat for us all.

Once we were all fed and watered, we continued the night by playing "Battle of the Parables" where we were all divided into groups to put our own modern twist on each of the parables. My group got the parable of the "Prodigal Son". It was very funny and entertaining to watch everyone act out the different parables. That was my favourite activity. I had such a laugh with the girls and felt as if we all really bonded.

Towards the end of the night, as we unwinded, Bishop Fintan provided us with a lovely, candid candle lit prayer service. The atmosphere was so tranquil. After that, we were all assigned our different dorms to sleep in.

To end the night, we were delighted to have an 80's themed disco, Fr Jerry was the DJ. We all decided to get into our pyjamas for the disco. It was so relaxed because everyone enjoyed themselves, no one was judged and we could all just be our whacky selves.

We all danced and had great craic.

My friends and I being the real tea addicts we are, skived off down to the kitchen area to get a well-needed cuppa and a few bickies for ourselves! After the disco, we were all disco-ed out and soon after, we all fell fast asleep as soon as our heads hit the pillow.

On Saturday morning, we all woke up and enjoyed a fabulous Breakfast fry, provided by the friendly Flannan's kitchen staff. It was a lovely way for us to entertainingly reflect back on the night's antics, with everyone. After breakfast, we were all divided into the different morning work groups: There was a drumming workshop, a yoga workshop and two happiness / well-being/

Faith workshops. I thoroughly enjoyed the happiness wellbeing workshop, as I felt it thought me a lot about being more positive and I feel like I took a lot away from the day.

Towards the end, sadly we all had to pack up and say goodbye to everyone. I must end with saying, that I thoroughly enjoyed every aspect Solas, from the killer music, making new friends, the laughs, the yummy food and the workshops. It really was an extremely enjoyable night!



With huge thanks to Joanne for all the effort she put in to planning it together with Cora, Fr Jerry and Myriam. Thanks to Bishop Fintan for the lovely liturgy and for being on the judging panel with Sr Martina and Anna for the Battle of the Parables. It was a memorable night, and I would love nothing more than to do it all over again.

Elaina Byrne  
MCYC





## Youth Space in Ennis Cathedral



**For the first time ever, a youth space was created in the Ennis Cathedral for the duration of Lent 2019.** It was set up by a coordinating committee consisting of five young people from Clare schools. Méibh, Saoirse, Kirsten, Elaina and Kate were guided by Joanne and Lauren. After five weeks of hard work the space was finally opened on Friday the 8th of March with a liturgy in the Cathedral.

There are twelve prayer stations in total, each unique in their design. We did our best to highlight the meaning of Lent throughout the space. We ensured that there were stations which focus on the three elements of Lent; prayer, fasting and almsgiving. We also created prayer





stations on topics that are important to us, such as positive mental health and care for the Earth.



We are very grateful to students and teachers from Rice College, St. Flannan's College, Colaiste Muire, St. John Bosco Community College, Kildysart, St. Caimin's Community School, Shannon, St. Patrick's Comprehensive School, Shannon, and St. Joseph's Secondary School, Tulla. Each of these schools created at least one prayer station which we are both excited and delighted to see in our youth space. A massive thank you to all members of the Mid Clare Youth Council who created the very popular Prayer Wall and Gratitude Wall for the Youth space. The Youth Space was officially opened on Friday March 8th with a liturgy. We are very grateful to Antun Pasalic for all his work on the liturgy. A huge thank you to Egilis, the caretaker of the Cathedral who helped in a multitude of ways to build the youth space.

The coordinating committee aimed to have people leaving the space feeling lighter, refreshed and with a little more hope. Throughout Lent, people young and old visited the space daily and everyone had positive feedback. We were delighted with the response the Youth space received from the public. "Thank you for such an inspiring space." "A magnificent, inspiring prayerful space." "A smile rose up on my face!" "I am here again, it just calls me. It's a lovely place, relaxing." "Such a beautiful sanctuary, so appropriate – brings great meaning to Lent."

People left beautiful comments such as these, in the visitor's book and several of the prayer stations had to be replenished with more quotes and pebbles, a testament to the amount of people who engaged with the space. As Sarah Allen once said, "Every life needs a little space. It leaves room for good things to enter it".

*Méibh Dorgan on behalf of the Coordinating Committee.*



## Youth 2000

Youth2000 is aimed at 16 to 35-year-olds and gives them a chance to come closer to God and to fellow Christians by means of retreats and weekly prayer groups across Ireland (see [youth2000.ie](http://youth2000.ie) for more details). The Clare prayer group meets on Fridays at 7-8pm in the Poor Clare's Oratory in Ennis for adoration, prayer, song and reflection on the Gospel.

After the meeting there is the opportunity to enjoy a cup of tea and chat in order to meet like-minded young people and grow in fellowship. We are so grateful to the Poor Clare Sisters and the Franciscan Friars for their hospitality, encouragement and guidance.

We would be delighted if you would join us any time - the more the merrier!

**For more information please call or text 085 8442422.**

*Roisín mc Mullin & Sarah Leyden*





## From the Chaplain's Desk

### Interview with Fr. Pat Gilbert, Chaplain, St. Brendan's Community School, Birr, Co. Offaly.

#### When did you begin your ministry of School Chaplaincy?

I began ministry in a School Chaplaincy in September 1988.

#### Describe an average day in the life of a School Chaplain?

My day starts with morning prayer and Mass. when I get to school a considerable portion of the day is spent in class. I like that because students get to know you and how you operate and how you feel about issues. Students ask to meet me one to one on different problems that arise in their lives. I am involved in training soccer teams, music. Liturgy can be part of the day especially during September, November, Christmas, Lent and Easter. After school training, house and hospital visitation, funerals, meetings and preparation for the following day. I finish with evening and night prayer.

#### Do you find the young people in your school open to the Christian message today?

Yes, young people in our school are open and receptive to the Christian message. They are willing to discuss and debate religious and church issues and interpretation of the Christian message. Large numbers of them attend school liturgies and masses.

#### What are the major issues facing young people today?

The major issues facing young people are anxiety, worry and depression. Emotional insecurity is also another issue.

#### What helps young people cope and overcome these issues?

Talking through issues with someone they trust. Sharing their inner feelings and concerns. It's good to talk.

#### There have been massive changes in attitude towards the church since 1988, how do you see the church of the future?

I see the church of the future as it started in the beginning, small intimate faith strong gatherings of belief and service.

#### How do you nurture your own Faith?

I nurture my own faith in celebration of holy mass, in prayer and in meeting people. I have very good friends whose faith interaction and commitment is inspiring and sustaining.

#### What signs of hope do you see for the Christian message in today's world?

The greatest sign of hope for the Christian message in today's world is people. People are

spiritual beings they hunger and thirst for the spiritual. It's about LOVE. And we all need love and have a need to be loved. The Christian message is all about love. That's why it's so challenging and difficult. The spirit is moving in great ways. It's such an exciting time to be a believing Christian.





## From the Chaplain's Desk

### Interview with Nuala Murray, Chaplain, St. Patrick's Comprehensive School, Shannon, Co. Clare.

#### When did you begin your ministry of School Chaplaincy?

I officially began 13 years ago having taught religion and French up to that point.

#### Describe an average day in the life of a School Chaplain?

There is no such thing as an average day. There is a timetable and routine but after that any day can radically change given the nature of the job. All school Chaplains teach a certain amount. I teach French and religion both to LC exam level and therefore I know to a degree what I will be doing in any given day. However from a pastoral point of view I can spend the rest of any day interacting with outside care agencies, parents, management, year heads, voluntary organizations, clergy and of course individual students. Some times of the year can be busier than others and generally most chaplains find that the beginning and end of a term and exam times are very busy. Certain months can be busy, especially November, the month of Remembrance and the seasons of Advent and Lent. Major life events such as death can throw the whole day in a different direction and as Chaplains we learn intuitively to slow things down to a level of calm where individuals and indeed teachers and class/year groups look to the chaplain for guidance and support. It is not a job for the faint hearted!

#### Do you find young people in your school open to the Christian message today?

Absolutely! It is in the young people I work with that I find the face of Christ. The poet Kavanagh describes in his poem 'Street Corner Christ' the reality of finding Christ in the homeless beggar in the street and when I see the lengths young people go to support the marginalized in society today I know perhaps what they do not yet realize that they are truly Christian. The German theologian Karl Rahner once referred to such people as anonymous Christians and I truly believe that in today's world we have a lot of such Christians, people who are so generous and kind but would be surprised to realize that they are living the most basic Christian message 'love one another as I have loved you'.

#### What are the major issues facing young people today?

Predictably, social media, young people live in an age when there was never, not social media. The many problems it has created for them at many levels is a discussion for other people but as a Chaplain one of the greatest problems I believe it has created is a generation of people who can no longer sit in silence, who cannot go into a quiet room and close the door on a world and be alone with their thoughts without the temptation of 'checking' the phone endlessly. Where is that safe space? Where is that quiet moment? It is not a new problem but I think it has now reached a level where young people live lives at a level of 'availability' that is damaging and unsustainable. I know that I could not navigate the world that they live it with the levels of energy it demands.

#### What helps young people cope and overcome these issues?

I think to continue from my last point the realization that they are

living incredibly 'open' lives and sometimes just pointing that out to them can help them stop and consider alternatives or at least limit the amount of intrusion that they allow into their private space. Once they realize that they have options it gives them the permission to make choices for themselves. The peer group is very important; again young people can be so supportive and caring in a way that they were designed to be. Peer support, the support of responsible adults and having faith in Hope can generally see most students through the worst and best of times.

#### How do you nurture your faith?

In a word prayer. I have never known a time in my life when I didn't pray. I never remember starting to pray or being taught to pray so it came as a surprise to me quite late in my teenage years when I realized that not everyone spent most of the day 'talking to God'. I just always had that connection that I can take absolutely no credit for. When I say talked I suppose I mean 'tapping into' the reassurance that all life is meaningful and all expressions of life are manifestations of God. I can write that now having studied the language of theology but as a child 'I just loved God and knew that God loved me'.

From the point of view of chaplain, I do make personal retreats throughout the year and at the end of every school year I make an extended retreat up to two weeks either at home or abroad. I spent a few weeks once in a Benedictine monastery in France with a community of Sisters; it was the best of all possible worlds.

#### What signs of hope do you see for the Christian message in today's world?

When I hear this question I often think of what Gamaliel says in the Acts of the Apostles when the first early Christian communities were being persecuted. He said 'leave these people alone, let them go! For if their purpose is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop it'. I think we have to find a new way in today's broken Church to move forward and I think our hope lies in the words of Karl Rahner who I quoted earlier going back over 50 years ago 'the Christian of tomorrow will be a mystic or he/she will not exist at all'. I think when the storm of technology has passed we will pass into a more contemplative stage of being and see God at work where God has always been at work in nature, in all of life in all of the young people we encounter every day.





## Lourdes Pilgrimage

I've been going on the Killaloe Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes for a really long time. I started going with my family when I was a child and as of today I've been seven times. I can honestly say I've never had a bad experience. In my seventeen years on this planet, Lourdes has always held a special place in my heart. My mom used to go with her parents when she was young, and we began going back when I was a one year old baby. That was the first of many family trips to Lourdes for me.

My sister, Sally and I always observed the teenagers of the Killaloe Youth Volunteers or 'Yellow Bibs', as we would call them, with such admiration. We always vowed that one day we would be a part of that group. This year, I finally got the opportunity to wear a yellow bib and be a volunteer. I was so excited to see Lourdes from a different point of view. For years, I was comfortable, staying in the same hotel, eating the same eclectic menu and

meeting the same few people. It was wonderful to see Lourdes from a different perspective.

I was lucky enough to get to go on the pilgrimage with two of my best friends, Caoilinn and Rebecca, but little did I think that I would make many more friends for life. Sharing the Lourdes trip is a great way to bond with your peers from across the Diocese all whilst experiencing something so positive and fulfilling.

For me Lourdes will always about the connections you make with other people. The highlight this year was the relationships I formed with some of the assisted pilgrims. On the first morning when we were taken to the hospital to meet them for the first time everyone was so nervous, but

once we began talking all the tension disappeared. We got to know one another on a personal level throughout the week as opposed to just a helper and someone who needed help. We had great fun and banter on our daily trips to mass, the Grotto, the Baths, more mass, shopping and even more mass!

Every time you visit Lourdes it's a positive experience, but for me, this most recent trip has surpassed them all. I would strongly recommend the pilgrimage to any young person considering it. I assure you that you will make many wonderful memories and friends, young and old, for life.

Julita Fox.

