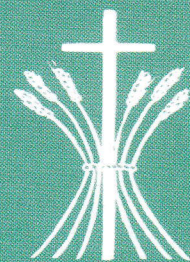


The Sheaf

ST. JOSEPH'S YOUNG PRIESTS SOCIETY

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SPRING 2013

Be joyful, be hopeful, be prayerful!

This is a shortened version of a 45 minute address entitled 'The Doorway of Faith' given by Dr Andrew O'Connell (a layman working with the



Presentation

Brothers), at the Armagh Provincial Congress held in Monaghan on Saturday, 20 April 2013.

A few months ago the Presentation Brothers held a vocations weekend for men interested in the vocation to religious brotherhood at their house in Glasthule in Dublin. On the Saturday night the group of discerners joined the Brothers to watch a movie called 'Nine Days that Changed the World'. The film is about Pope John Paul II's nine day visit to Poland in 1979 which is believed to have set in train a series of events which contributed to the eventual crumbling of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the end of communist rule in Eastern Europe.

The following afternoon, Brother Andrew Hickey, the Province Leader of the Presentation Brothers gave a moving address to the young discerners and to the Brothers. He said that as a young boy growing up in Cork it was accepted wisdom that once a country turned communist it would remain so forever more. Communism was very powerful and deeply feared. But as we know the Holy Spirit had another plan. Without warning, a Polish cardinal was elected Bishop of Rome and the rest is history.

In a similar way, Brother Andrew pointed out, we are trying to make sense of the prevailing winds of our time - secularism, materialism, post-modernity, falling Mass attendance and diminishing numbers of religious vocations. We may

be tempted to believe that this is how it always will be. However, the Holy Spirit has a habit of surprising us!

Look at the surprise of recent months: Who predicted a Jesuit Pope called Francis?

So, while there is much to discourage us we should never be fatalistic nor should we despair.

For those of us who have an interest in promoting vocations the challenge of the Year of Faith is to be faithful to our own vocation as laypeople in the life of the Church.

We are called to be hopeful. We are called to be hopeful even when there are very few signs of hope around us. Our hope is rooted in the certainties of the Incarnation and the Resurrection - the promise that the crucified and risen Christ is with us and has won for us eternal life. Nancy Griffith had it all wrong when she told us that God is watching us from a distance. He's not. He's not watching us - he's walking with us.

Young people discerning a vocation will be impressed by happy priests and religious. So too will the work of evangelisation be aided if we are joyful people. Being joyful does not mean that we ignore the pain and suffering which are a part of our lives. Instead it means living in such a way that those who look at us will say 'there is something different about that person'. Let us not condemn the culture. Let us outclass it.

A friend told me that she attended a house party in Dublin last summer. It was the week of the International Eucharistic Congress. Over a drink, one of her friends complained that she had to stand every morning and every evening on the bus to and from work because of the crowds going to the RDS. And, she observed, 'they were all

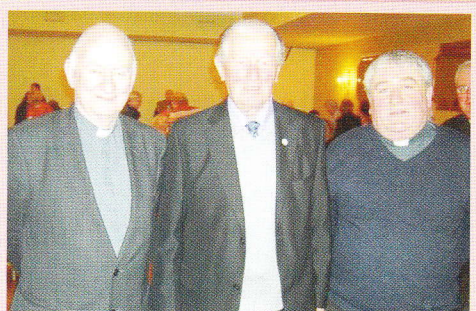
so happy'. What a great tribute!

Let us be hopeful, let us be joyful and let us be prayerful. Let us continue to work for a culture of vocations within the church and a greater awareness of the call of the Lord among our young people.

Let us pray with St Paul that 'the word of the Lord may speed on and triumph' (2 Th 3:1). Amen.



George Dee president of the Society, Anne Marie Gallagher director of Vocations Ireland (Vocations Ireland is an association of the Vocation Directors of the Catholic Religious Orders, Congregations and Missionary Societies with communities in Ireland), Bernie Corry Dublin Diocesan Committee and John Murphy, Dublin Provincial President at the Divine Mercy Conference in April.



Bishop Donal Murray, George Dee and Fr Eamon Purcell at the Cashel Provincial Congress in Limerick.

Report on the 2013 Dublin Provincial Congress

Theme: Porta Fidei - Doorway of Faith.

The Dublin Provincial Congress 2013 was held at All Hallows College, Dublin on Saturday 23 March beginning with Mass at 11am celebrated by our Chief Chaplain Very Rev John Gilligan. In his homily Fr John thanked us for the work that we do, as many young men would not have fulfilled their vocation to priesthood without our spiritual and financial help. He encouraged us to pray for each other and to keep up the good work.

The Guest speaker was Mr Lorcán Price BL who is associated with Catholic Comment, a group of lay people set up in February 2012 specifically to deal with questions from the media, relating to the Catholic Faith in the lead-up to International Eucharistic Congress and beyond, in a calm non-confrontational manner.

Often Catholicism is misrepresented in the media as being old fashioned, to be resisted; but Church teaching has not changed, society has changed and witnessing to our faith is an opportunity to attract the attention of a sceptical public to what Catholics really believe. This in turn could click with someone who is not of our beliefs - for that person opening the Doorway of Faith. The Church is counter-cultural at the moment but that will change again.

During the Eucharistic Congress, Catholic Comment handled 22 requests for spokespersons for television, radio and print media from Ireland and overseas. Young participants like Lorcán who are not afraid to bear witness to the truth are surely our hope for the future of the Church.

During question time, Fr John was asked about the Permanent Diaconate of which he is the Director for the Dublin Diocese: these are often married men to be ordained deacons who will help out in the Church, but they will not replace priests as deacons do not celebrate Mass or the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Aidan Gallagher chief executive officer of EWTN in Ireland asked Lorcán for details of training programmes for speakers in the media. The original training consisted primarily of three full weekends under the tutelage of experienced personnel. There are plans to hold another training programme, as some 300 people have expressed an interest and almost 150 people attended a recent open meeting in the Green Isle Hotel.

Another member raised the question of the Church being lost and in need of direction, - to know where we're going. She gave the example of religious education being delivered in schools and then nothing thereafter! Dominic Dowling replying on the need for adult education in the faith said he attended a talk on one of the 'Seven Deadly Sins' recently and was amazed at how rich Church teaching is on the sin of Gluttony. We learn all the time!

The question was also asked 'why do we need power?' It is much better to be humble.

The President of the Society, George Dee welcomed everyone and began by thanking in a special way Fr Kevin Doran for a job well done in organising the International Eucharistic Congress - and also everyone who helped in any way with our stand in the RDS. He mentioned that the Holy Spirit has given

us a new Pope - our foundress Olivia Taaffe would be delighted with a Jesuit as she had hoped her own son would become one before his early death. George stressed that we have a wonderful Society and it is great to be part of it, and if proof were needed, it came recently in a letter from a Bishop in Africa offering the services of two of his priests for three years to our country in return for all the support he has received from the Society. Quoting from St John, he said 'we are loved by God no matter what'. Faith is a gift to be accepted or refused: the Doorway of Faith was opened by St Patrick, and given to us through baptism.

The following thoughts and ideas were shared and discussed at the Open Forum:

- Faith without good deeds is no use.
- 'I believe O Lord; help my unbelief'. One member who thought his faith was not very strong found himself praying fervently during a storm.
- Unless we accept the gift of faith, it is still in God's domain. We should allow God to guide us.
- We are all called to Mission: we should do it like the butterfly not the bee.
- We are about promotion.
- The whole community needs to take responsibility for vocations.

Vice President, Dominic Dowling who represents the Society on the National Council for Vocations headed by Bishop Donal McKeown, spoke of three distinct elements in supporting priestly vocations:

1. Promotion, which is the Society's brief and we should not get involved outside of that.
2. Accompaniment, provided by Vocations Co-ordinators in each Diocese and Religious Congregation.
3. Spiritual Direction, provided in the seminaries.

He concluded by reading the inaugural talk of Pope Francis on Saint Joseph delivered on 19 March, the feast of St Joseph.

Congress ended with a decade of the rosary led by Provincial President John Murphy who had arranged the day and acted as moderator throughout.

Marian Fennelly, Dublin Provincial Secretary.

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St. Joseph's Young Priests Society
in your Will***

FORM OF BEQUEST

I give and bequeath to St. Joseph's Young Priests Society, 23 Merrion Square, Dublin 2 the sum of €.....for the charitable purposes of the Society and I declare that the receipt of the General Secretary of the Society shall be sufficient discharge to my

Executor

*The Cashel Provincial Congress took place this year in Limerick on 13 April.
The keynote speaker was Bishop Donal Murray on how the Door of Faith can be opened so that the Word
really touches people's hearts in the challenges facing the Church today.
Perhaps however, it was his concluding remarks on the responsibility that the whole community has in
accepting responsibility for the Church, along the lines of the message of the Synod on the New
Evangelisation last Autumn, that could most interest readers of The Sheaf:*

CO-RESPONSIBILITY

Pope Benedict often spoke of the importance of the role of the whole community in the life of the Church, the role of every member of the Church in opening the door of faith.

He said last August:

Co-responsibility demands a change in mindset especially concerning the role of lay people in the Church. They should not be regarded as 'collaborators' of the clergy, but, rather, as people who are really 'co-responsible' for the Church's being and acting.¹

That is a key question for our time. What can be done to ensure that all members of the Church feel a real, practical sense of responsibility for the life of the Church? To put it another way, how can we encourage everybody to see that they have a role in the Christian community's welcome to children, to strangers, to those whose lives are difficult, a role in the whole community's mission to spread the Gospel, its mission to be concerned for the poor and for justice, and so on. How can we become more aware that we are all in the same boat? One of the key things in Vatican II is the stress on realising that it is not just missionary societies and congregations who are meant to be missionary; it is not just Catholic schools and teachers who teach children their faith, it is the whole community, and first of all their homes that are the places of mission, of evangelisation and catechesis.

As Blessed John Paul said in Limerick:

...there is no such thing as an ordinary (layperson),
for all of you have been called to conversion
through the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.
As God's holy people you are called to fulfil your
role in the evangelization of the world.²

A particular instance of this, of course is the question of vocations.

For many people, and perhaps in a particular way for younger priests, the prospect facing us looks very depressing. Vocations have all but dried up in Ireland. It looks as though Ireland could decline in one generation from an abundance of priests to the kind of situation that exists in many parts of Latin America. I think of a parish in the suburbs of Lima where for several years, two Limerick men were the only priests serving 120,000 people. *[By the way, the Church is not dead there! A Limerick priest observed that, 'There they are with over half the population of our diocese and with thirteen Mass centres, and they are happier than any of us!']*

People come with instant solutions, 'why not go to Poland or Africa and get thirty young priests, and we would be fine?'

But first we have to ask the obvious question. Why is it that our Christian community doesn't produce vocations? Is it that a secularist world drowns out any sense of a religious vocation? If so, do we simply sit back and watch the tide going out, or do we set out to create some sort of antidote to what is basically an empty philosophy that sees no meaning to life other than to give in to the temptations in the desert: possessions, popularity and power?

Is it that the 'public opinion' of what is, after all, still a predominantly Catholic community, is basically unsupportive towards anyone who might be tempted to become a priest or religious? Catholic families are more than ready to contribute to the education of seminarians, and more than ready to pray for vocations, but might some of the same people be appalled if a son or daughter announced that they thought they might have a vocation? *[I know that many parents and friends are aware of the difficulties and challenges that face priests and religious today may well feel that their son or daughter would be strong enough to withstand the pressures.]* Reservations are understandable, but is it just a matter of reasonable concern or is it resistance to the very idea of any son or daughter of theirs following a religious vocation? If most of the people of the parish would be unhappy about a vocation in their own family, then why should anybody be surprised that there are no vocations?

Might a young person growing up in a Catholic parish be afraid of what the reaction might be if they were to mention to friends or family that he or she wanted to be a priest or a religious? At least in the case of Baptism the community says that it is welcoming; in the case of a religious vocation, even an initial word of welcome might be too much to hope for!

WE ARE ALL DOORKEEPERS

The response to all of these challenges lies in the community as a whole and every member of it, in a community that prays, in a community that puts its prayer into action, a community that creates an atmosphere in which people feel welcomed, encouraged and supported, and where they can glimpse find a faith that touches their hearts and gives meaning to their lives. We are all part of the community whose task it is to bring the Good News to the world.

The theme of this Year of Faith is Keeping open the Door of Faith. For this Congress you chose the theme Opening the door of Faith. Perhaps the motto for all of our parishes and associations of faith should be **We are all doorkeepers!** Long ago the people of Ireland called to Saint Patrick: 'we beg you, holy youth, to come and walk among us' with the message of the Gospel. We who received our faith through him hear the same challenge. Blessed John Paul said to seminarians in Maynooth:

The Catholic faith of Ireland today was linked, in God's plan, to the fidelity of Saint Patrick. And... tomorrow some part of God's plan will be linked to your fidelity - to the fervour with which you say yes to God's word in your lives.³

Perhaps it would be good for all of us to apply those words to ourselves.

1 BENEDICT XVI, *Message to International Forum for Catholic Action*, 10 August 2012.

2 JOHN PAUL II, *Homily in Limerick*, 1 October 1979.

3 JOHN PAUL II, *Maynooth*, 1 October 1979.

REPORT FROM TUAM

The Tuam Provincial Congress took place in Knock on Saturday, 6 April 2013 commencing with Mass celebrated by Fr William Purcell who was also the keynote speaker in the afternoon. Fr Purcell is the National Co-ordinator of Diocesan Vocations and spoke very favourably of his late Assistant Director - Fr Muirdeach Tuffy RIP. Fr Purcell reminded us on this 'Divine Mercy Weekend', how God is Total Mercy. We are loved by God unconditionally. God is Love, Compassion and Tenderness. We need never worry about death, since we go back to God from whom we came. Divine Mercy is offered to us so let us come home. This is the Year of Faith. Pope Benedict urged us to live the year as a Pilgrimage of Prayer 'Faith is the evidence of things unseen - the assurance of things to come'.

Michael Carty, Tuam Provincial President, welcomed everybody present - especially George Dee our National President. George was very encouraged by the International Eucharistic Congress last June, which was organized by Fr Kevin Doran, a past Chief Chaplain to the Society. George said it was worth while having a presence at the Congress for the week. He recommended a video on the Society which was made in time for the Congress - it is well worth watching! Olivia Taaffe's son died at the

age of 24 yrs and as Olivia hoped he would become a Jesuit Priest, she must be very happy now with our new Pope Francis! George mentioned a letter from Bishop Augustine T Ukwuoma - Bishop of Orlu Nigeria, offering to send us two newly ordained priests to help out if needed. We were to read the letter, (which I duly did) and was amazed at the bishop's sincerity! This is certainly 'prophecy being fulfilled'.

The Constitution has been updated to ensure the smooth running of the Society. We should study it and pass it around. Maureen Keogh said not to be put off by the fact that most of our members are in their 60s Olivia Taaffe was 63 when she set up the Society! At a Q&A session Maureen Conway from Ballina suggested we should pray for the beatification of Mrs Taaffe. Something to think about or pray about!

To return to Fr Purcell, who I must compliment as one of the most articulate speakers I've ever heard at any congress ...he just held our attention continually - bless him! He said we were in Knock that day because God wanted us there. Sometimes we look back on our lives with regret. Don't do that. . . look back in gratitude. Be aware of all the good God has done for us. Freedom from fear can only be found in God. Vocations come from faith and prayer. 'More things are

wrought by prayer, than this world dreams of - *Alfred Lord Tennyson*'. The one thing that never grows old is prayer! Mrs Taaffe never lost trust in God. God will never abandon us ...look at all the Saints - faith is caught not taught. Remember the saints, see something in their lives that touched them and live it! Never give up. Remember Pope John Paul II. 'Fear not - launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch'.

Of course Fr Purcell is delighted with Pope Francis and said he would be going to visit him in Rome in July- with other vocation directors, which he was looking forward to with gusto!

Just to say we enjoyed a lovely lunch in the Knock House Hotel. George Dee was very appreciative of all the mass cards & messages of sympathy received following the tragic death of his eldest son Jeremiah. George said he couldn't thank each one personally but hoped we would understand. Mrs Dee and all the family were very touched by the support.

I recon there were about 100 delegates at the Congress. All in all it was indeed a day well spent, worth thinking about and remembering with renewed zest for the Society!

Connie Gunning, Secretary, Galway Diocesan Committee.

Recently Deceased

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Local Authorities	Isabel Edwards
Transport Branch	Dermot Ryan, Doreen Ryan

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Ardee Sr Paul, Noel Callan, Bridie Carrie, Katie Dunnin, Vera Callan, Sara Halpenny, Edward Donaghy, Betty Rafferty
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Baldoyle May Britton
Ballagh / Ballyleague Frances McCormack, Teresa Donlon
Ballinahinch / Killoscully Jane Hayes, Anastasia O'Brien, Biddy Lynch
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