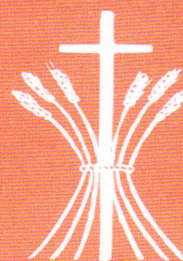




The Sheaf

ST. JOSEPH'S YOUNG PRIESTS SOCIETY

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SUMMER 2010

PRIESTHOOD - THE REALITY TODAY

"The reality today, as it has been from the beginning, is that priesthood started in the upper room on the first Holy Thursday night when Jesus having instituted the Eucharist, sent out his disciples with this incredible gift he had given them, to become a beacon in the world, to heal, to strengthen and to be the well-spring of new life and salvation. The reality of priesthood today, is that the priest is called to bring the community together to celebrate Christ's love for them in the Breaking of Bread, to heal them, to strengthen them and to send them out. This message needs to be heard loud and clear, because we need the Eucharist. It is the source and summit of our life and it is from where we gain our strength" said Fr Eamonn Bourke, Chief Chaplain to the Society, speaking in the Balmoral Hotel Belfast on Saturday 13 March.

Fr Bourke told how the lives of three people in particular influenced his reflecting on the reality of priesthood today.

Cardinal Nguyen Van Thuan. On 23 April 1975 Pope Paul VI named him Coadjutor Archbishop with rights of succession to the Archbishop of Saigon. The Communist regime did not approve. On 15 August 1975, he was detained and escorted to Nha Trang where he was held in house arrest at Cay Vong. Without ever being tried or sentenced, he was taken to North Vietnam where he was imprisoned for more than 13 years, nine of which were spent in solitary confinement at Vinh Quang (Vinh Phu) prison, then in the prison run by the Hanoi Police. Later, he was held under house arrest at Giang-Xa. During his years of imprisonment, with three drops of wine and one drop of water in the palm of one hand and bread in the other, he celebrated Mass from memory while surrounded by other prisoners to conceal him from the guards. He was in prison during the periods of office of four Secretary Generals of the Communist Party: Brezhnev, Andropov, Cherenko and Gorbachev.

On 21 November, 1988, he was released without reason either for his arrest or release, ordered to live at the Archbishop's House in Hanoi but forbidden to perform any pastoral work. In March 1989 he was allowed to visit his aged parents in Sydney, Australia, travel to Rome to meet pope John Paul II and return to Hanoi. He was made a cardinal in 2001 and died in 2002. His mother (President Ngo Dinh Diem's sister) died shortly afterwards. *The reality of priesthood today is the Reality of the Eucharist.*

Saint Damien of Molokai. When he was posted to Honolulu in March 1864, Damien found Hawaii in the middle of a public health crisis. Leprosy was thought to be both incurable and highly contagious, so the government passed legislation relocating leprosy patients to the island of Molokai. Damien, volunteered to Bishop Maigret to go to Molokai to tend to the lepers, arrived on 10 May 1873 at the secluded settlement at

Kalaupapa on Molokai; where Bishop Maigret telling him to minister from a distance, presented him to the 816 lepers living there. Damien saw that his first course of action was to build a church. Fr Damien however, could not minister from a distance, could not distribute Holy Communion from a distance, could not give absolution from a distance, could not anoint from a distance. He did not limit his role to being a priest: he dressed ulcers, built homes and beds, built coffins and dug graves. Within months the whole island was transformed, becoming a place of hope, of new life, and even of joy, not only because of Damien himself, but because of Christ in the sacraments of Baptism, Confession and Eucharist which Damien administered.

Fr Damien died on 15 April 1889. He was made Venerable in 1977, declared Blessed in 1995 and on 11 October 2009 was canonised Saint Damien of Molokai, patron saint of Hawaii, of lepers and outcasts, and heavenly intercessor for AIDS patients. *The priest in the world today is called to be a transformer.*

Saint Maximilian Kolbe. During World War II, Father Kolbe provided shelter to refugees from Poland fleeing the war, including over 2,000 Jews who he hid in his monastery. Fr Kolbe was also interested in amateur radio and used his broadcasts to spread the truth about Nazi atrocities. On 17 February 1941, Fr Kolbe was arrested by the Gestapo and sent to Pawiak Prison where he would pray for hours using cigarette paper to hold the Blessed Sacrament whenever he could. From Pawiak he was transferred to Auschwitz in May 1941. In July 1941 a man from Father Kolbe's barracks disappeared. He was later found drowned in the camp latrine. In retaliation, the deputy camp commander then selected ten men at random to be starved to death in the camp's notorious Block 13. When one of the men, began to lament for his family, Father Kolbe volunteered to take his place. During his time in the cell, Father Kolbe led the other men in prayers and hymns. After three weeks of dehydration and starvation, Fr Kolbe was one of three people still alive. He was always found sitting or standing in the middle of the cell. He was finally killed with an injection of carbolic acid. His remains were cremated on 15 August.

Father Kolbe was beatified by Pope Paul VI in 1971. He was canonised a saint, a patron saint of journalists and amateur radio, by Pope John Paul II in 1982. *The reality today is that the priest is called to be a man of prayer and sacrifice.*

Referring to a point in Pope Benedict's message for Vocations Sunday on 25 April, where the priest is called to be 'a man of God', Father Eamonn placed emphasis on the fact that the priest who is working hard all day and not spending adequate time in prayer, is building his own kingdom rather than the Kingdom of God. *The reality today is, what we need in our priests is spirituality, holiness and prayer.*



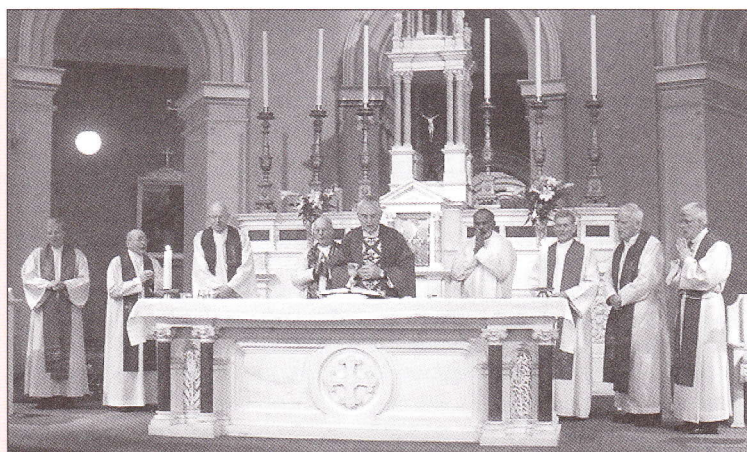
The President of the Society, Mrs Marie Hogan with Most Rev Noel Treanor Bishop of Down & Connor and his concelebrants, at St Peter's Cathedral, Belfast on Saturday 13 March 2010.



Students for the northern diocese who assisted with the celebration of Holy Mass in St Peter's Cathedral.



Processional line-up for the 'Year for Priests' celebration in Rathgar, Dublin



Mass at the Church of the Three Patrons Rathgar with Fr Gerry Kane PP as chief concelebrant



Despite a fall of 7.6% in branch subscriptions in the year to June 2009 and the likelihood of a greater fall in the current year, the Vocations Support Committee which met in November, was happily in a position on that occasion, to approve all applications for support that were under consideration on the agenda.

Seen here (seated) with Mrs Marie Hogan, president of the Society, are George Dee and Fr Paul Prior. Standing are Dominic Dowling, Fr Charles McDonnell, Pdraig O'Brien, Fr Pat Coffey, Fr Eamonn Bourke and Joseph Merrick.



Slemish Mountain in County Antrim about 1,500 ft above sea level, is where Saint Patrick was a slave in the fifth century. He escaped after six years, but later returned to devote his life to bringing Christianity to the Irish people. Seen here on pilgrimage on St Patrick's Day 17 March, in this photo taken by Fr Michael Spence, Rector of St Malachy's Seminary Belfast who accompanied them on their climb, are seminarians enjoying an ice cream on returning to the foot of Slemish
Front Left: Philip Mulryne (Down & Connor),
Back Left: Laurence Murray (Down & Connor),
Centre: Sean O'Donnell (Derry),
Back Right: Conor Mc Carthy (Down & Connor) and
Front Right: Brendan Ward (Raphoe).

Fr Frank O'Connor, Limerick, spoke at the Cork Congress in March on

PRIESTHOOD THE REALITY TODAY

The Ireland that I was born into and the Ireland of today are worlds apart. War and terrorism, advances in education and technology, work practices and economic 'boom and bust' have had their impact on us personally, as family, as society and as church. Also, as we explore the reality of priesthood in Ireland today, we are drawn to the horror of child abuse by some of our brothers. These vile crimes and the damage done to the children and their families weigh heavily on us with a sense of shame and deep sadness. These realities have an impact on vocations.

In view of what has happened it is tempting to do one of two things - to give up, or to circle the wagons and live in a siege mentality. Neither option is available to disciples of Jesus. We are called to be involved. Jesus turned towards Jerusalem and his passion, we too are called to turn towards the world, not away from it. I believe that we need to return to the past in order to face the future with confidence and hope, so that we can speak of Christ's love and of the richness of the Church's mission.

We return, not to a recent past, but taking our faith and our courage in our hands we return to the life of the founder of this magnificent Church of ours.

We stand before the crib, stunned by the incredible gesture of God who came as one of us. In the incarnation God bestowed great dignity on humanity.

We stand at the side of the Jordan as Jesus is baptised. We hear the Father; "This is my beloved son". When we are open and responsive to God's will, we too are the beloved.

We learn from the experience of Jesus in the desert not to give in to temptations of power, status or to demand signs from God.

We listen as Jesus speaks, we watch as Jesus heals. We come to accept him as our Saviour.

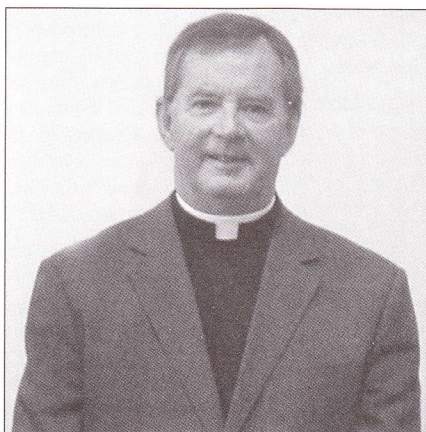
We sit at table as Jesus takes bread and wine, shares them and tells us to do this forever in his memory. This is why we need priests to fulfil this request of Jesus.

We are challenged by the washing of the disciples' feet to place ourselves at the service of others.

We stand at the foot of the cross as Jesus pays the ultimate price for love, faithfulness and truth.

We stand outside the empty tomb awestruck as the angel tells us; "He is not here, he is risen".

We stand as the ascending Jesus instructs us to "Baptise all nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit".



Fr. Frank O'Connor

Ever since that first Pentecost, we realise that the Spirit of God is with us, encouraging and guiding us to be the church of Jesus Christ. This is the church founded by Jesus Christ and built on Peter and his successors. This is our church in which we need to continue to build on the ageless truths of our faith but in a church that is loving, open, transparent and dynamic.

We need to speak of our love of God and of the profound dignity of every single person from the moment of conception to the moment of natural death. We need to build a Church that is always missionary at its core; a Church that calls us to witness to Christ in our local communities. It is here that we can speak of the challenge of restoring the beauty of our Church in the eyes and hearts of all, it is only then that we can speak of vocations. I believe there is much we can do to encourage vocations.

Many people, including our young people, have a sense of social justice that we can nurture. When we extend our awareness of the needs of the poor and the vulnerable, we invite our young and others to become involved. In this way we can introduce them to the God of love made present by the actions of his people. A church, a parish, a community that is aware and active invites people, young and old, to see that we are motivated by the love of God expressed in love of others. Vocations grow out of committed and caring communities. Vocations also grow when we show clearly the importance of the Eucharist in our lives, full participation in Sunday Eucharist and spending time with Jesus in adoration can encourage some from among us to consider a priestly vocation.

Another area of consideration is the role of education in the faith. Very few people study the richness of the teachings of the Church after they leave school. Adult education in the faith can make us more aware of the beauty of what we have. The experience and knowledge gained in the context of faith development may encourage some to consider the call to priesthood.

We must also take seriously the call of Pope Benedict to commit ourselves to the renewal of the Church. We are being called to be a humbler church, where priesthood is seen as a gift to the entire church not just to those who accept the call, where priesthood is seen as a vocation of service and not the conferring of status. It is above all else the role of the ordained priest to celebrate the Eucharist that Christ might be present, body and blood to strengthen us and by the other sacraments to be with us at key moments of our lives and the lives of our loved ones.

This beautiful Church of ours has a difficult road to travel. We need to face the present crisis with humility, courage and faith. We need to acknowledge and admit the errors of the past, reach out with love and support to all who have suffered, and in love and justice work to create a church in which all are treasured and protected. We need to work together, clergy and laity alike, women and men alike, at the decision making and planning tables of the church, with God's grace, to build a church that is open, loving and safe. We must struggle with all of our being to repair and heal the relationships that bind us all as sisters and brothers in Christ.

God still trusts us with the mission of making him known and loved.....if God trusts us, let us learn again to trust ourselves. Let us never, even for a moment, forget that we are blessed by God with many beautiful gifts.



Mary Dempsey and Seamus McConville in conversation at the Cork Congress on 20 March

Please and Thank You – they are the magic words

Fr Gerry Kane PP Harold's Cross, spoke in Rathgar at the 'Year for Priests' February celebration arranged by the Society's South Dublin District Committee.

A little boy asks his mother for sweets and she says "What are the magic words?" She had previously taught him what she expected him to say. He responds: "You're young and you're beautiful." He gets his sweets.

The magic words are, of course, 'Please' and 'Thank You'. And that is what we are doing here today. Saying thank you to God for the gift of priesthood. And saying please, as well. Please give us more priests. Please give us good priests. Please guide the priests we have. Please keep them faithful. Please make them holy. Thank you. Giving thanks for what we have received is good for the soul. It helps us to be humble.

We do not own what we have been given - priesthood. We did not invent it, create it, deserve it, or earn it. It is given to us for a purpose - to lead us to God. Priesthood does not belong to the priest either. It is a sharing in the priesthood of Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever. But each priest must incarnate in his own person, his own unique manner - with his own weaknesses getting in the way - the priesthood of Christ himself. That is why priests are so different; from each other and from generation to generation. Priests are challenged, in each generation, to preach the Gospel in a culture in constant change. And the role of the priest, therefore, as pastor, teacher, minister of the sacraments, or preacher, constantly evolves.

We have generations of priesthood here. From Msgr McMahon, who has borne the heat of many a long day, through the middle-aged and muddled like myself, to the young (and not-so-young) students from Maynooth, filled with enthusiasm and zeal and a desire to set their world on fire with the light of the Gospel. The circumstances these generations have faced or must face are different beyond belief. We are passing through the era of greatest change in the Irish church since Catholic Emancipation. Think about that! The greatest change in religious practice and affiliation in nearly 200 years. And it is disturbing. Change always is. The abuse scandals do not help. But God turns everything to the good for those who are faithful. Even this trauma, with God's grace, can bring about a humble and heartfelt renewal in our church that will give us strength and direction in the years to come. I can already feel it. Past the pain; past the humiliation; past the public shame.

Let us never be afraid. We follow One who went to the cross, not shouting "It wasn't me", but "Father, into your hands..." One who was obedient unto death. One who died precisely as an innocent victim. So, rather than objecting to the fact that we are to follow him in pain and humiliation, let's rejoice and take our lead from the Lord. It is our time, our role now, to make reparation, to repair the damage others have done. And thanks be to God that this time, our time, has arrived.

There are temptations - subtle, but not new. No more than the ones the Lord himself endured, they will seem reasonable - temptations always do. They appeal to our pride ("we know the way - we know better than the bishops"), our vanity ("the rest are wrong; lay people know nothing, the media is the problem"), our lack of obedience ("who needs bishops? or parish priests for that matter?, who needs structures or institutions?"), our weakness ("indulge yourself; you're fine as you are; don't try to change at all").

There'll be people, and groups, pointing everywhere - left and right, up and down, north and south. Saying contradictory things: This is the way. No, that is the way. That's a dead end. No, this is a dead end. Get back to the tradition. No, new wine, new skins. The church has been destroyed.

No, it has risen from the ashes. Don't read that. Don't read this. Be wary of them. No, be careful of those. Go back to what worked well before. No, get rid of what worked before. Do something new. No, stick to the old. Get off your knees. Get down on your knees. In the middle of all these contradictory voices, some people will be lost. Some will be lost in the scandals. Others tripped up by tree stumps. Some blinded, waiting for the sun to dance. Others no longer waiting for anyone or anything outside themselves. What noise there is at the moment! What clamour! What winds are buffeting our boat! What a variety of signposts! No matter what happens, I can guarantee the young priests here, and I'm sure Msgr McMahon and older priests will bear me out here, the one thing you won't be short of, as you exercise your priesthood, is advice. You will get it from everywhere!

How on earth are we to keep our balance in the middle of this? Well, quite simply. We do it by staying close to our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, whose priesthood we share. We begin by saying please and thank you. Thank you, Lord, for our vocation. Thank you for the support and the prayers of so many good people. Thank you for St Joseph's Young Priests Society. Thank you that the link between the local priest and his people is as strong as ever - that great strength of the Irish church. Thank you for young men with courage and enthusiasm who are giving their lives for the church. Thank you that we share in the priesthood of Jesus Christ, the same before during and after the scandals, the upheavals, the councils, the culture, whatever. And thank you for good people. Prayerful people. People with the heart and instinct of the Catholic. People who can tell the difference between scandals and the need for obedience to the office of priest and bishop. People who support and pray for priests. People who have been faithful, overcome their shock, kept their faith and continued their prayers.

Moses told the people to say: My father was a wandering Aramaean. Not my grandfather or great-grandfather. My father. That way they included themselves in the story. This was something that happened to them. He told them to repeat their story. To tell their story to each generation. Remember who they were. Remember the great things God had done for them. Remember their journey from slavery to freedom. And they did, generation after generation, put themselves in that story. This was their creed, if you like. It gave them hope, and direction. It looked to their past, and pointed to their future. We should do the same. Put ourselves in the story. Our story is the story of Jesus Christ, God himself. We tell that story in our creed. And we repeat that story and make it present in the sacrifice of the Mass. That is why we have priests. That is why we will always have priests.

As priests, may our zeal never become harsh. May our certainties never crush broken and delicate reeds. May we be humble in our service of our people, humble in following our Lord. Humble as we search together with other good priests pointing maybe in different directions. Because we all belong to the same Lord, whether we speak Greek or double Dutch to each other at times. May we be humble as we wander in our own desert, our own wilderness; humble as we are tempted in our own individual ways; conscious that the Spirit of God is driving us, to a future not our own. May we be humble and trusting as we become older and greyer. Because the Lord our God will never leave his flock untended.

The young boy whom I spoke of earlier, when he had finished his sweets, said to his mother. "I love you". She asked him "Will you love me when I'm old and grey?" He responded, "but Mum, *you are* old and grey, and I love you".

Let us stand for what we believe in.

Recently Deceased

VOCATIONAL BRANCHES

Civil Service Branch

Catherine Gardiner, Edward Daly, Frances Sheehan

Motor & Engineering Sean Lynch

LOCAL BRANCHES

Ardfield / Rathbarry John Joe Deasy, Joan Daly

Armagh James Oliver

Ballyphehane Alan Murphy, M Walsh, Maura O'Shaughnessy

Bandon Mrs Nolan

Blarney Elizabeth Murphy, Bill Twomey, Catherine Doran, Margaret Humphreys, Noreen Linehan, Mary Kelleher, Nora Minihane, John Hayes, Michael Doris, Mary Cronin

Caheragh Susan O'Donovan, Betty Cotter, Ann Wilson, Mary Keane, Damien Buckley, Noel Crowley, Murt Cronin, Babs Collins

Carriackmacross Florence Byrne

Cashel Mrs Fell, Mary Fahy, Ted Scannell

Christ the King, Turner's Cross Cyril Harrington, Gerry McAllen

Derrygonnelly / Botha Colm McGuinness, Harry McCauley, Frankie Burns, Rosaleen Hoy, Fr Albie Delaney

Dundalk Rita McCourt, Dickie Duffy, Dan Tumulty

Enniskeane Cornelius O'Sullivan, Fr Michael Kevin Nolan

Goleen Mary Lannin, John J Canty, John O'Driscoll, Denis Cotter, Hannah Spillane, Margaret Sheehan, Mark Lucy, Richard Goggin, Joseph Goggin, Nora O'Driscoll, Tricia McCarthy

Kilmihill Melly Enright

Kinawley John McGovern, P J McManus, Katie McHugh, James McBrien, Jannie Hussey, Patrick Greene, Gerard McCarron, John Joe Maguire

Lordship & Ballymacscanlon Dan Hickey, Margaret McMahon, Mary Woods, Kathleen O'Hanlon, Sr Linda McTiernan FMSA, Brendan McDermott, Mary McKeown, Mary Heary, Damian Halvie, Eliza Roddy, Sean Gallagher, James McNamee, Christina Malone, Anne Carroll, Kay Kerry, Mary Tasker, Sheila Doherty, Molly Keenan, Felicia McAulfee, Richard Gormley, Kevin Breen, Peter Cranny, Sr Rosalie O'Keefe FMSA, Oliver Crilly

Marino Margaret Ryan, Jenny McNamara, Julia Kane, Rose Parsons

Mountnugent & Ballinacree Paddy Lacey, Peter Hennessy Jnr, Brendan Kiernan, Eamonn Hussey, Ben Coyle, Peter Martin

Naas Branch Rosalie Mulvey, Peter Clarke

Oldcastle Angela Mulvaney, Michael Timmons, Peter Hennessy

Pennyburn Bobby Cleary, Eugene Brown

Portadown Rita Litter, Kathleen Bennett, John Thompson

Rochfordbridge Elaine Delemare, Kathleen Reid, Kathleen Mulvin, Julie Killeen, Paschal Whelehan

St John the Baptist, Clontarf Mary McGann

St Kevin's, Harrington St Brigid Hackett, Mary Brereton, Brigid Corr, Peggy O'Shea

St Patrick's, Dundalk Joseph Tumulty, Thomas Mathews, Patrick Garland

Templeogue Dymphna Malone

Tournafulla Sean Danny Curtin

Tubberclare/Glasson Rita McBrien