

The Sheaf



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ST. JOSEPH'S YOUNG PRIESTS SOCIETY

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SUMMER 2017

President's Report for the Year ended 30th June 2017

Thank God, in this past year we assisted in supporting, both spiritually and financially, the ordination of 176 Seminarians to the Priesthood worldwide, 14 of whom were Irish. Overall, we have also assisted 664 Seminarians during the past year, some 94 being Irish, with an expenditure approaching €800,000.

Despite the continuing decline in membership and subscription revenue over the last ten years or so, the Society is in a healthy state financially. Bequests are becoming an evermore important revenue source and I ask the members and benefactors to please bear this in mind. I would like to thank all our members for your continuing hard work and dedication to the Society and its aims. I would ask you to keep up the good work, as I know it can be trying at times. Please bear in mind that Holy Mass is offered daily for all our members and benefactors, both living and deceased.

During the year we had Mass celebrated in Maynooth with our members and Seminarians. This was a great success, with very positive feedback from the staff and Seminarians in Maynooth and those members who attended. This will now become an annual event, with its scheduling to suit the Seminarians.

The initiative launched last October for each branch to recruit just one new member has had limited success. I take this opportunity to appeal again to you to give your best endeavours to achieving this aim. Daily recitation of our "Prayer for New Members and Helpers", will most definitely assist you in your efforts.

During this summer, we recruited a young Communications student from DCU, Matthew McFadden, to help in updating our communication systems including Website, Email, etc. There will be more to report on this when the work is completed. You may recall that each branch was contacted regarding their access to Email, and I am happy to report that approximately half of our branches have access thereto. This will greatly enhance and speed up our communications and reduce our paper, printing and postal costs.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank you, our members, for your continued dedication and loyalty to this Society, in praying for vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life and in supporting the education of Seminarians, by your generosity. The need has never been greater. I also wish to thank the Trustees, my fellow members of the Executive

Committee and our Chief Chaplain, Fr. Séamus McEntee, for volunteering their time and energy in guiding this Society on the right path. I would also like to thank our office staff Brigid, Anne and Maria, for their trojan work and help throughout the year.

Finally, I wish to thank my immediate predecessor, Mr. George Dee, for guiding the Society during his five years in office and I take this opportunity in wishing him and his wife Cathy a happy retirement and continued good health.

May God Bless and reward you all,

John F. Murphy
National President

A Board of Priests meeting was held during the year, in order to consider applications for support and make recommendations to the Central Council. In the year under review, the number of students assisted in Irish Colleges is at 94. The number of students assisted overseas is at 570. Overseas students were broadly located as follows:

Africa	348	India	99	Philippines	28
South America	21	Eastern Europe	50	India/Pakistan/Others	24

A summary of their position over the last four years is as follows:

Year	ORDINATIONS			STUDENTS ASSISTED		
	Irish	Overseas	Total	Irish	Overseas	Total
2013/2014	18	159	177	120	738	858
2014/2015	20	139	159	114	586	700
2015/2016	13	107	120	111	590	701
2016/2017	14	162	176	94	570	664



This statue of St Joseph the Worker could grace the table at any branch meeting. A few copies are in stock at the Golden Rose shop opposite the entrance to the parish church at Knock. They were made in the People's Republic of China.

ONCE A PRIEST, ALWAYS A PRIEST

A young man had a vocation to the priesthood, so his bishop sent him to study in Rome. After being duly ordained priest and serving in the diocese, his bishop sent him to Rome again for further study. While there he used to visit a small church to say his office and to pray. At the door sat a group of beggars seeking alms, and one of them made him feel uneasy for some inexplicable reason. So he went back to him and asked, "Do I know you?" "Yes," said the beggar, "I studied for the priesthood with you here in Rome and was ordained."

The priest asked aghast, "Whatever happened to you?" He was told: "I encountered crisis after crisis in my life and eventually renounced the priesthood. I had my priestly faculties taken from me. I lost everything and am reduced to begging."

The priest could not forget the beggar and prayed constantly for him. The study course he was attending was drawing to an end and the students were invited to receive individual blessings from Pope John Paul II. They were forbidden to speak to him personally, but as the priest knelt to receive the blessing, his mind was so full of the beggar that he blurted out, "Holy Father, please pray for X who sits begging outside a church in Rome. He was ordained priest, but has resigned and his priestly faculties were removed." He hardly had time to finish as he was hustled away by indignant attendants.

A few days later the priest received an invitation and he hurried to the church and found the beggar. "Come quickly," he said, "We are to dine with the Pope." "Impossible," replied the beggar, "How could I visit him in this state?"

The priest helped him to tidy up and they entered by the great gates of St. Peter's, where they were met by Monsignor Dziwisz, the Polish secretary to the Pope. He conducted them to the dining room where His Holiness awaited them. After introductions, they sat down to a lovely meal. During dessert, the Pope signalled to his secretary who rose, and beckoning to the priest to follow him, they left the room. After about 15 minutes the Pope called them in again. Nothing was said about what happened in their absence.

As they crossed St. Peter's Square, the priest, overcome with curiosity, asked the beggar eagerly what transpired while he was out of the room.

The beggar related that when they were alone, the Holy Father turned to him and said, "Father, please hear my confession." In great confusion and distress he replied, "I cannot do that. I am no longer a priest." The Pope looked at him with loving compassion. Then he raised his right hand and wagging his finger he said, "ONCE A PRIEST, ALWAYS A PRIEST." After a long pause, he continued, "As Bishop of Rome and Head of the Catholic Church, I could restore your priestly faculties to you...but you would have to ask." The beggar, overwhelmed and close to tears, said simply, "Please, Holy Father..." Then the Pope heard his confession and restored his priesthood to him. Afterwards (John Paul) repeated his original request and he heard the Pope's confession.

After a pause for prayers and meditation, John Paul said: "When you leave here, I want you to go to the church where you have been begging and seek out the parish priest. I am appointing you curate in that parish, with special responsibility for the beggars who seek alms at the church door."

This article, titled "Once A Priest, Always a Priest," was written as a true story by Kitty D'Encer in Sicut Parvuli, the review of the Association of Priests of St Therese of the Child Jesus, Winter, 2006.



John Murphy (President), Fr. Séamus McEntee (Chief Chaplain) & Matthew McFadden at The Summit 2017 in Croke Park



Fr Vincent McMahon addressed the meeting of the Society's Central Council in the Interfaith Centre of Dublin City University on 13 May 2017. Seated are John Murphy, Rita Russell and Fr Seamus McEntee.



The attached photograph marks the presentation of a certificate from the Society to Miss Catherine Brooks at a Branch meeting in June 2017. Catherine was President of the Donaghmore Branch in the Dromore Diocese from 1996 until 2016.

Present in the photograph:

Front row from lt to rt. - Moira Conlan President, Catherine Brooks outgoing President and Cassie Morgan.

Back Row from lt to rt. - Ann Marie McNally, Kay Byrne, Mickey Sands, Josie O'Hare Diocesan Vice President, Patricia Smyth, Teresa McCrory, Mary Sands, Ann Grant Treasurer, and Margaret Murtagh.

Branch members not present: Roseleen McHugh Secretary, Rosemary Campbell, Pat Fitzpatrick and Fr Tony Corr Chaplain.

NEW OFFICE FOR VOCATIONS AT MAYNOOTH

Speaking at Our Lady's Island on the occasion of the Society's annual pilgrimage on 23 July, the Bishop of Ferns Dr Denis Brennan, announced the setting up by the Bishops' Conference of a new National Office for Vocations to be based at Maynooth. Speaking at Mass, prior to the procession around the island he said;

We have come together today to pray for an increase in vocations to the priesthood and Religious Life. In the familiar words of Scripture we ask that 'the Lord of the harvest will send labourers into the harvest.'

First of all let us be mindful and thankful for the vocations we have, priestly, religious and lay. This network of vocations, complementing and enriching each other, is the life blood of our christian family.

We have much to be thankful for, much to be grateful for, for we have inherited a rich legacy of faith and witness. We give thanks for the gift of our faith and we remember how it has grown over fifteen centuries from Patrick and Aidan, through suppression, persecution and scandal.

Not just at home but abroad as well. So many places have heard Irish footsteps bringing the Good News. This is our story and while we can take pride in it.....we must now add to it, we must write our chapter.

It may be helpful for us to realise that we are not the first generation of Christians to be concerned about the future. The walkers on the road to Emmaus were anxious about the future too.

All their talk was of the past 'we had hoped' they said. They didn't think they had a future, they thought it was over.

And then as Luke says their eyes were opened.....and they understood what the stranger had been saying to them on the road. In this broken world of ours faith has to be sacrificial, faith has to struggle, faith has to suffer and faith has to believe in the future.

An observation out of a book I am reading at the moment comes to mind 'religion is always dying, but it never dies.' In the face of the many challenges we face today we should not underestimate religion's ability to persist.



Rosaleen Garry, Breda Bergin, Alice Doolan, Thomastown Branch at Our Lady's Island on 23 July 2017

In the Year of Consecrated Life the Holy Father asked us to do three things:

- To look to the past with gratitude.
- To live in the present with enthusiasm.
- To embrace the future with hope.

I believe that this way of looking at life applies to what we are about today as well, reflecting on priesthood and religious life, past present and future.

Looking to the past should not be in the words of the Holy Father 'an exercise in archaeology' but an opportunity 'to give thanks for a journey which for all its light and shadow, has been a time of grace marked by the presence of the Spirit.'



Most Rev Denis Brennan Bishop of Ferns concelebrating Mass with Fr Patrick Cushen PP Ferns and Fr Kieran O'Shea CC Kilkenny, Ossory vocations director, on the occasion of the Society's pilgrimage to OUR LADY'S ISLAND

Speaking about living in the present with enthusiasm Pope Francis says 'none of us should be dour, discontented or dissatisfied, for a gloomy disciple is a disciple of gloom.'

Thirdly he asks us to embrace the future with hope whatever that future may hold or mean. This hope is more than a vague feeling that all our endeavours will have a happy ending.

It is the conviction that whatever happens the Kingdom of God will continue to be proclaimed and revealed. In Ch.43 v. 18/19

Isaiah says 'do not cling to events of the past or dwell on what happened long ago....watch for the new thing.'

Speaking of new things the Episcopal Conference has just set up a National Office for Vocations in Maynooth.

Its mission is to:

- Build a culture of vocations in the church in Ireland, a culture where vocations to the priesthood are talked about, prayed for, and encouraged.
- Promote the call to the Diocesan Priesthood.
- Co-ordinate and animate Diocesan initiatives.

It is envisaged that the new office will work in cooperation with Vocations Ireland, the office which promotes vocations to the religious life.

In this regard I would like to acknowledge and salute the work of the St Joseph's Young Priest Society, here in Ireland and abroad, and ask your prayers for the success of this new initiative.

In particular I would like to thank you for the contribution you have made to fostering and supporting vocations in the Diocese of Ferns, it is very much appreciated.

I finish with our Ferns Prayer for Vocations:

God our Father, we trust in your loving kindness. Bless our diocese of Ferns with many priestly and religious vocations. Give the men and women you call the light to understand your gift and the love to follow always in the footsteps of your Son. Amen.

ARCHDIOCESE OF ARMAGH PRODUCE NEW SOCIETY LEAFLET AND BANNERS



In June last year members of our Society in the Archdiocese of Armagh following discussions at Diocesan meetings launched a new Society leaflet and Banners.

The purpose of the leaflet and banners is to assist members and current branches to help further establish and promote our Society and help us in our efforts to attract new members, to highlight to the wider parish community of the importance of Mass, the need for Priests, to promote the Vocation to Priesthood and Religious Life and provide further information on how we currently achieve the aims and values of our society in parishes throughout our Diocese. The leaflet also contains an endorsement from Archbishop Eamon Martin of our work which provides our leaflet with a very personal touch, it also informs people on how to make contact with us if they wish to get involved in our Society or maybe start a new branch, it also promotes our own Diocesan Vocations website www.armaghpriest.com. To include some young people in the creation of our leaflet Years 8, 9 & 10 pupils from Drumcree College worked on a design to feature on both the leaflet and banners, Ava Sousa's design was chosen to feature on our material.



Following the introduction of our leaflet and banners, our Society has been promoted for one weekend in 5 parishes where we currently have an active branch, banners have been displayed in the Parish Churches on that weekend and our leaflets and Society Vocations Prayer was distributed to parishioners and the feedback has been positive among Priests and Parishioners. There has not been a massive increase on membership to our Society but it is important to make every effort to create a greater awareness of our Society and put the name of our Society out there in our Diocese and to plant the seed and encourage others to join us in our work, by promoting our Society in Parishes this has helped us to actively seek new membership. If branches achieve at least one new member it has certainly been worthwhile. Efforts to promote our Society in Parishes continues in the months ahead.

David Greer
Armagh Diocesan President

Recently Deceased

LOCAL BRANCHES

- Ardfield / Rathbarry** Kay O'Keeffe, Celia Minihan
Athea Molly White
Ballinascreen Brian Donnelly, Annie McSorley, Joe Conway, Mary Kelly, Annie McGovern, Ellen Doyle, Andrew Church, Rita McDonald, Mary Frances McWilliams, Conor Donnelly, John Joe Trainor
Ballymun, Our Lady of Victories Ellen Murphy
Bellaghy Margaret Diamond, John Stewart, Dympna Hughes
Bohermeen Ann Nancy Casserly, Tom Luddy, Jim Kavanagh, May Duffy, Seamus Farrelly
Caherdavin Billy Slattery, Marie Walsh, Dr Richard O'Flaherty
Carrickmore Oliver Kerr
Cleenish James McGillen, Teresa Higgins, Frank Corrigan, Mary Fitzpatrick, Jim McAloon, Peter Dolan, Peter Keaney, Teresa Murphy, Linda Greene, Pat Taynor
Curraheen Road Connie Begley, Ted O'Connor
Drumragh / Omagh Patricia O'Connor
Dundalk Bernie Wiseman, Bernadette Ward, Margaret Kearney
Enniskillen Shauna Reilly, Michelle Reilly, Mary McVitty, Mary Boyd, Philomena Kearns, Joseph Maguire, Theresa Murphy, Joseph Woods, Margaret Burns, Gabriel Dolan, Eamon Hoy, Margaret O'Doherty
Faughanvale, St Mary's Branch Philomena McLaughlin
Feohanagh Seamus Mullane
Killesher Pat Cox, Myles Bartley, Maureen Keenan, Oliver Jones, Hugh Murphy, Joe McGrath, Kathleen Gilbride, Maggie Moohan, Maura Cathcart, Hugh Murphy
Knockninny Patsy Murphy, James Waterson, Tom Curry, Eddie McGurn
Maghera Anne Madden, Annie Catherine Kelly, Margaret Bradley, Dannie O'Hagan, Billy McFaul
Middleton Sr Anthony Moloney
Monasterboice Anna Mulholland, Kitty Brennan
Newcastle West Josie Golding
Portadown Peter Hagan, Jim McKeown, May Mallon
Sandymount Sr Salome (late Lakelands)
St Brendan's, Tralee Sean Kelly
St John the Baptist, Clontarf Maura Martin
St John Vianney, Ardlea Eve Staunton
St Vincent's, Sunday's Well Hugh Casey, Denis O'Callaghan
Tournafulla Billy Sullivan
Trillick Kathleen O'Donnell, Colin Doran, Joe McQuaid, Mary McQuaid, Annie McKenna, Sean McCarney, Eamon Kelly, Tom Donnelly
Trim Maura Brandon

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Anonymous Donation €50



Therese Nagle writes: Photo taken at our diocesan meeting in Ennis on 5/2/2017. Our nine branches were represented, as Bishop Monahan was anxious to meet us with our Branch Chaplain Fr John McGovern and the diocesan Director of Vocations. We are blessed that Bishop Monahan is so interested in the Society's work and that he is such an approachable person.