



YEAR OF ST JOSEPH

# The Sheaf



ST. JOSEPH'S YOUNG PRIESTS SOCIETY



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SUMMER 2021

## BUILDING HOPE

The members of St Joseph's Young Priests Society in the Archdiocese of Dublin would like to take this opportunity to welcome our new Archbishop, the Most Reverend Dermot Farrell, and wish him well in his new role. At the same time, we would also like to extend to his predecessor Archbishop Diarmuid Martin good wishes for a fruitful and happy retirement.

We know from our parish notices and the diocesan website that the new archbishop has wasted no time in setting up a task force entitled, **Building Hope**. It aims to assess the needs of the archdiocese following COVID-19 and into the future. This I believe is very positive for the diocese and we look forward to the content of the report when it becomes available.

The work of St Joseph's Young Priests Society was mentioned by Archbishop Farrell in his homily on Vocations Sunday 25th April and by the Archbishop of Armagh Dr Eamon Martin in his homily for the Chrism Mass on the 31st March. It is wonderful to get such encouragement coming from both archbishops.

We are all very aware that a shortage of vocations in the Dublin diocese is a problem going forward, especially bearing in mind, I think it is correct to say, that the average age of the clergy is now very elderly. Hence the need for the **Building Hope** task force.

We can relate this shortage of new entrants to the priesthood to an aging membership of Saint Joseph's Young Priests Society. Despite our efforts to attract parishioners to join our parish branch network and contribute to the valuable work that our members do in prayer and support of vocations to the priesthood, it is very difficult at the present time to get people who will commit to prayer and monthly meetings, they will however contribute to our funds, which of course is necessary too, but that is as far as it goes. Perhaps this reluctance to commit oneself is a symptom of our modern age?

Our current membership is for the most part in the older age group and while very active and doing great work on behalf of the Society, they need to be infused with new members just like the clergy, so that their work will carry on into the future. Due to COVID-19 of course, we have not been able to meet since March 2020, and while quite soon we will return to Mass in our churches, the Parish Centres will not be available for some time to enable us to have meetings. In the meantime, while we wait for the time when we can return to our normal meeting schedules, you might please include with your daily prayer for vocations a prayer for new helpers. One can obtain a Prayer Card in the office, but if you haven't got one to hand, this is the prayer.

*God, our Father, You send the power of the Gospel into the world as a life-giving inspiration.*

*Fill with the Spirit of Christ the members of our Society whom you call to live in the midst of the world and its concerns.*

*Touch the hearts of our fellow Christians that among them we may find dedicated helpers who by prayer and sacrifice and through membership of the Society may help to bring all people to Christ Our Saviour. Amen.*

Until we are able to meet together again, every good wish for the future. While we wait let us ask the Holy Spirit to guide and help us to come up with creative ideas as to how we can encourage more parishioners who will participate in the future of Saint Joseph's Young Priests Society.

*Pauline McHugh*

President, Dublin Diocesan Committee

### *A Prayer to Saint Joseph*

*To you, O Blessed Joseph, we have recourse in our tribulations, and while imploring the aid of your most holy spouse, we confidently invoke your patronage also.*

*By that love which united you to the Immaculate Virgin Mother of God, and by the fatherly affection with which you embraced the Infant Jesus, we humbly beseech you graciously to regard the inheritance which Jesus Christ purchased by his blood, and to help us in our necessities by your powerful intercession.*

*Protect, O most provident guardian of the Holy Family, the chosen children of Jesus Christ; ward off from us, O most loving father, all taint of error and corruption; graciously assist us from heaven, O most powerful protector, in our struggle with the powers of darkness; and as you once rescued the Child Jesus from imminent peril to his life, so now defend the Holy Church of God from the snares of her enemies and from all adversity.*

*Shield each one of us with your unceasing patronage, that, imitating your example, and supported by your aid, we may be enabled to lead a good life, die a holy death, and secure everlasting happiness in heaven.*

*Amen*



- If you would like a few prayer cards with either of these prayers for your friends, please phone the office.
- For photographs of 2021 Ordinations at Pontifical Irish College Rome, log onto [www.sjyps.ie](http://www.sjyps.ie)

# Skibereen Branch,

*in the diocese of Cork and Ross*

Over the years, Irish people earned the slogan of *Céad míle fáilte* (a hundred thousand welcomes) and the name of being charitable to people with less. During the 1900s, several charities were established and some wealthy families on occasions would give their support. One such family was the Taaffes of Smarmore Castle, Ardee, Co Louth.

Husband and wife were devout Catholics. Miss Olivia Blake before her marriage to John Taaffe travelled extensively in Europe. On one journey, while visiting Maranville in France, Olivia came across a publication called *La Gerbe* (The Sheaf). This showed how a group of people helped young men to be seminarians and also arranged contributors to finance their education. Back in Ireland, Olivia lost her only son at a young age. Her husband John Taaffe also pre-deceased her. As a widow she devoted more of her time to the Church.

In 1895, Olivia started an English language version of *La Gerbe*. At that time, she knew a young man who was an altar boy in Dun Laoghaire and wished to become a priest, but was from a family of limited means. With the help of Olivia, the readers of *The Sheaf* contributed enough to send the young man, the first of many students, to study in Mungret, Co Limerick. After two years, ten students had been enrolled at Mungret by Olivia and her friends. That was the start of St Joseph's Young Priests Society, the same as we have today, where in the year to June 2020 the Society assisted in financing the education of 573 seminarians, 70 of whom were Irish. The ten boys in 1896 were the first students of the Society, the funds of which were at that time devoted to the education of Irish men in Irish colleges for work as priests on overseas missions.

In 1916, the Irish Bishops approved a formal constitution for the Society and Pope Benedict XV sent his apostolic Blessing. Subsequent expansion needed a revision of the Society's constitution and in October 1947, a revised constitution was approved and adopted. Chaplains were appointed to the branches, a Board of Priests was established to select the students for the Society, and a greater emphasis was placed on the spiritual aspect of members involved. Then, in agreement with the thinking of the Second Vatican Council, the 1947 constitution was replaced by a new constitution, which was approved and adopted in June 1973. One of the proposals was the setting up of Diocesan Committees to administer the affairs of the society in each diocese. This catered for the rapid growth of the Society in the years thereafter.

The Society was in existence in the Skibereen area for a brief number of years in the 1960s. In 1974 Michael Waugh and the late Barney O'Connor, together with Mary McCarthy, decided to re-launch the Society in Skibereen. In the intervening years, Mary McCarthy served as President, Secretary and Treasurer. Her voluntary work is on-going.

The mid 1990s were the golden years. Michael Waugh, our President at the time, sent on average £4,000 to the Society's House in Dublin. In 1995, the media reported that 96% of Irish people attended Mass on Sundays; 15 years later, attendance was nearer 20%. The contributions to St Joseph's Young Priests Society began to fall from the turn of the century. By 2010, donations were only a trickle.

We in the Skibereen branch decided we would have to make a huge effort to make the branch viable. We started by having an



*John Deasy, Skibereen President, presenting a gift for 45 years service to Mary and Jerry McCarthy. Michael Waugh is on the right. All four have been presidents of the branch*

annual church gate collection. These were our main stay for a number of years until permits for same were cancelled. We then held an annual coffee morning to raise funds.

The financial year for all St Joseph's branches ends on June 30. For the year ending 2017/18 the Skibereen branch sent €900 to the central fund in Dublin. In 2018, we decided to have a Christmas appeal at local level and got 40 new subscribers. For year ending 2018/19 we sent to Dublin €1,100. Over the two years some people contacted did not subscribe. We listened to their views and problems and agreed with them.

The turning point for our Society in Skibereen was 2019. In July 2019 we held a Flag Day that yielded €1,651. We then got a permit to hold a Christmas appeal to raise further funds. We discussed at one of our monthly meetings to 'run' a door-to-door collection. I volunteered to give it a try. At the end of November, I delivered the appeal letters by hand to selected homes around Skibereen. About a week later I called back and got a fantastic reception. Most contributors would ask me into their home for a chat. When the small chat was over, talking turned to religion in the Church of today, and priests in general — including our Fr Chris and Fr Michael. The consensus was that we are very lucky in this town to have two priests who are so well liked in the community. The people I spoke to were speaking from the heart. I was so pleased to hear so much positive thinking.

One story I heard I must relate. A lady contributor told me she was talking to a priest from a large parish the previous week. He told her he "found the going tough" at the moment. I enquired if he was re-thinking his calling, or pressure from his superiors? The reply I got really surprised me. She said: "John, most of us will have to endure two or three close family obituaries in our life-time. The priest in the story had to attend two, three and sometimes four obituaries a week." That was a lot of sadness and grief that priest had to endure, trying to comfort all the families involved. This story was so enlightening for me.

We were lucky to have our Christmas appeal before COVID-19 became widespread. We in Skibereen had to cease our voluntary work at the end of February 2020, four months earlier than normal, but we still sent €3,650 to the central fund in Dublin. We now have 130 paid-up and praying members in Skibereen. Yes, Skibereen is a hard-working, and a positive, thinking, helpful and very charitable town, a great place for anyone to live in.

*John Deasy*

President, Skibereen Branch.

*Remember us  
in your Will*



*Should you desire to include the Society in your legacy bequests, it is advisable to consult your solicitor when making or amending your Will.*



# The Irish Synod – Companions on the Journey

As we begin to emerge from the devastating effects of COVID-19 with a sense of hope and optimism for the future, many organisations including the Irish Church, see this as an opportunity to take stock and plan for the future. The Church in Ireland has been changing for many decades as we know and the Pandemic has brought additional challenges. But are opportunities emerging as well, and can we turn stumbling blocks into stepping stones? What does God want from the Church at this time? This is the key question the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference considered when it announced on 10 March 2021 a new Synodal Pathway for the Catholic Church in Ireland which will culminate with a National Synodal Assembly within the next five years.

The process coincides with preparation for the 2022 General Assembly of Bishops in Rome which has as its theme: *For a synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission*. So, the next two years of planning and preparation, are seen as a period of **prayer, listening, consultation and discernment**, involving a nationwide consultative conversation on this theme. This will allow individuals, parishes, religious orders, associations, universities, movements and organisations such as SJYPS, to share their views and insights about the Church in Ireland - past, present and future. Discussions, debates, information sessions, and education programmes on the meaning and process of synodality are planned which will help explain what the process is all about. A task group made up of lay men and women, young people, religious, priests and bishops will be established to plan and oversee the initial steps along the synodal pathway. Writers, theologians, and lecturers will be invited to prepare papers for sharing and discussion in the initial two year phase. In addition, the conclusions of the Bishops General Assembly in 2022 along with an expected Apostolic Exhortation emerging from it, by Pope Francis, will help form and shape our own National Synod.

The Irish Bishops are acutely aware of the many challenges and opportunities that will go to make for a Synodal Pathway approach of preparation leading to a National Synod. Some of the **pivotal topics** that provide a context and a framework for the Irish Church of today and tomorrow are rooted in Pope Francis' recent Apostolic Exhortation, *The Joy of the Gospel (Evangelii Gaudium)* and his encyclicals, *Laudato Si* and *Fratelli Tutti*. In these documents, Pope Francis invites us to show **solidarity with the poor**, the excluded, and those **"on the peripheries"**, the margins, who yearn to hear the Good News. Pope Francis is convinced that the Church is only Church if



Fr Séamus McEntee  
Chief Chaplain  
St Joseph's Young Priests Society

it is there for others, so we are to go out and create a **"culture of encounter"**, social friendships beyond our own confines. During his visit to Ireland in 2018 for the World Meeting of Families, Pope Francis encouraged us all to be open to the work of the Holy Spirit "who constantly breathes new life into our world, into our hearts, into our families, into our homes and parishes". He said that with each new day and with every new generation, comes a **New Pentecost**, and a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit, sent by Jesus, to be our Advocate, Consoler and Encourager.

We are all aware that over the past fifty years there has been a huge decline in the practice of faith, accompanied by a decrease in vocations to the priesthood, religious life and sacramental marriage, while on the other hand, there has been an increase in the **secularisation** of society. Reports into the **shocking revelations** of institutional and clerical abuse and Mother and Baby homes in Ireland has deeply traumatised and wounded many people. There is a need to promote **peace** within a divided island of Ireland as well as create a **culture of welcome** and integration for migrants and those who want to come and live here. There is a need for openness, **transparency** and **accountability** in the Church. In light of the COVID-19 Pandemic, a new light has shone on the potential for supporting and renewing the faith within the **family as "domestic Church"**. We are aware of the many talents, gifts and energy of our **young people**. How do we connect with them as Church, forming and enabling them to be missionaries to each other and to the world? There is a need to listen to the concerns of **women engaged in Church life** and acknowledge their contribution as well as

articulating new models of co-responsibility and leadership involving lay people in the Church, both women and men. Those in leadership, indeed all the baptised in the Church, are according to Pope Benedict and Francis are, "no longer to be seen as collaborators of the clergy but truly recognised as **co-responsible**" in building the Kingdom of God. The voices of those who have left the Church behind, or felt abandoned, ignored, excluded or forgotten, also need to be heard.

Synodality is a favourite theme of Pope Francis and its implementation in the Church is moving ahead with varying degrees of success. He sees himself as a listener and believes that we should listen to the different and differing voices and try to learn from them and harmonise them. For Francis' synodal vision, a synodal Church listens and requires a new way of operating, not as hierarchy but as **'companions on the journey'**. It requires real engagement with all members of the Church, "discerning with our people and never for our people or without our people" and it reflects his desire to be a less clerical Church preoccupied with rules and one where pastors are to "keep connected to the 'base' and to start from people and their daily problems. The synodal pathway invites us to 'journey together' as pilgrims in faith, in communitarian discernment, working out together the 'navigation map' as it were, listening to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church of our time, which is facing rapid transformation. Synodality is about listening intently to each other, conscious of our God-given gifts and then through engagement, reflection and praying together, we discover the best ways for every baptised person to fulfil the Church's mission by proclaiming to the world, God's love and salvation in Jesus Christ.

Pope Francis has set the tone and believes the search for truth is best undertaken together, fostered in a climate of dialogue and honest debate. He has a wider agenda to reform the Roman Curia, Bishops' synods, and even the Papacy itself, but he is also clear that Synods are not instruments to change Church teaching but are rather a way to help apply church teaching more pastorally to current times. As we embark on the synodal pathway, the Irish Bishops have asked for our prayers at this crucial time in the life of the Church, may it be a time of renewal, reform where needed, and may it bring new hope for all the People of God in Ireland.

Fr Séamus McEntee  
Chief Chaplain  
St Joseph's Young Priests Society

# Vocations Sunday with Fr Willie

We have learned many things from COVID-19. We have learned the importance of family, friends, community, going to church, the appreciation of the simple things in life, and the changing of the seasons. As we look out our windows, the smiling faces of family, friends, neighbours, community members and parishioners greet us from a distance and we appreciate the generosity of those who perhaps left a gift at our door to cheer us and let us know they are thinking of us. We have also learned the importance of quiet spaces, time alone and perhaps the opportunity to pray in our homes, or on line - and find God in the silence and even the loneliness of these days. While Covid 19 has taken many things from us, it has not taken our dreams. We dream of the day when we will have some normality and return in a new way to what we once knew.

In his message for this world day of prayer for vocations Pope Francis presents to us St Joseph a man who not only believed in his dreams but found his vocation in them.

The Gospel of Matthew recounts four dreams with which God inspired St Joseph, each of which represented a difficult call from God. After each dream Joseph had to change his plans and take a risk, sacrificing his own plans in order to follow God's plan for him in complete trust. Every vocation whether to marriage, single life, priesthood, diaconate, consecrated or missionary life succeeds by trusting completely in God and allowing God's unfolding plan to be manifest in our lives.

Like St Joseph and our Blessed Mother having the courage to say "yes" to the Lord always surprises and never disappoints. Though it seems strange to us that he would put so much trust in dreams, St Joseph let himself be guided without hesitation.

In his message for today Pope Francis asks 'Why?' Why did St Joseph do this? He did it "Because his heart was directed to God, as it was already inclined towards Him. God's call to each one of us happens in the



Fr Willie Purcell, National co-ordinator of Diocesan Vocations Maynooth

same way, without putting pressure on our freedom". "He does not overwhelm us with dazzling visions but quietly speaks in the depths of our heart, drawing near to us and speaking to us through our thoughts and feelings." All God asks of us is loving service and faithfulness to His call. That's our vocation. As we accept God's call in our lives we realise that our vocation cannot be passive, but requires us to move forward and take risks by abandoning ourselves to God's grace.

Our Gospel today talks of Jesus the Good Shepherd, a good shepherd after the heart of God has the heart of a good Samaritan who seeks out those in need. Everyone who is entrusted with the care of others in prayer and service is a good shepherd. That's you and me regardless of our situation in life, whether we are active or inactive. Therefore priests, deacons, religious, parents, neighbours, teachers, our sick, frontline workers, media personnel and caregivers, among others, are all good shepherds.

We become good shepherds by loving those entrusted to us, praying for them, spending our time, talents and blessings for their welfare, and guarding them in times of difficulty, worry, sickness and fear.

Our local parish, our religious community, our seminary, our convents, our homes, our schools, our hospitals, our nursing homes, our prisons, our work place is our sheepfold, and we need men and women, priests, sisters and brothers and committed lay people who have courage and faith to lead us safely into the presence of God.

The Church uses this year's Day of Prayer for Vocations to encourage and affirm those who are discerning their vocation in life. We all share in the responsibility of fostering vocations through the witness and prayer of our lives. Pope Francis reminds us that every faith community must continuously pray for vocations both in the Church and in their own families.

On this World Day of Prayer for Vocations, let us begin, or continue, especially in these pandemic times to pray for an increase in vocations to priesthood, diaconate and religious life and to thank God for our own vocation, that with grateful hearts we might inspire others to dream the dream that God has for us and for them and live that dream in whatever vocation He is calling us to live.

Saint Joseph did not do astonishing things, he had no unique charisms, nor did he appear special in the eyes of those who met him. He was not famous: there are no words attributed to him in the Gospels. And yet, through his ordinary life, he accomplished something extraordinary in the eyes of God.

May Saint Joseph, protector of vocations, accompany all of us with his fatherly heart!

*Fr Willie Purcell*

National co-ordinator of Diocesan Vocations Maynooth

## Recently Deceased

### VOCATIONAL BRANCHES

**Irish Bacon Trade Branch** William Noonan

### LOCAL BRANCHES

**Ardfield / Rathbarry** Babs O'Driscoll, Eileen Feen, Paddy Hegarty, Mary Collins, Sr Elma Hurley, Neily O'Donovan, Jimmy O'Regan, John Scully, Gerardine Hayes, Nell McGeoghan, John Hurley, Paddy Coughlan, Mary Wycherley, Denis O'Donovan, Gerald Barry, May Crudge, Matt O'Sullivan

**Ballinascreen (Draperstown)** Cassie Toner

**Ballinlough** Terry Kelly, Una Hurley, Denis and Sheila McCarthy, Canon Michael Crowley

**Ballyfermot - Our Lady of the Assumption Branch** Celia Mills

**Ballyphehane** Tilly Chute

**Belturbet** James Enright, Michael O'Reilly, Charles Cunnea, Fr Corrigan, Tom Fitzpatrick, John Mulvaney, Seamus Minogue, Jim McElgunn, Oliver McPartland,

Paddy Corrigan, Cliff Russen, Gene Donohoe, Kathleen McDonald, John Curry, Josephine Curry, Sidney Emery, Monica Donnell

**Bishopstow Branch** Dorothy O'Connell

**Drogheda** Maureen Rice

**Dunamanagh** Margaret Quinn, Mary Conwell, Joe Phillips

**Enniskillen** Mary McCormick, Patricia Dolan, Eamonn Dolan, Tommy Howe, Sr Anita McKenna, Eileen Cunningham

**Foxrock** Frank Meehan

**Kilkishen** Delma Carroll

**Killester** Mary McArdle, Noel Dodd

**Killorglin** Marie Melia

**Knocknacarra** Eileen Morris

**Knockninny** Nicola Donnelly, Imelda McAvinue, Vera Reilly, Brendan McGovern, Nick McCabe, Frances Gunn, Dominic Hughes, John Tom McAvinue, Ann McBrien, Brigid McAloon, Margaret Gilleece,

Sarah Ellen Reilly, Mary Murphy, Sean Drumm, Cyril Gunn

**Moycarkey/Borris** Jane Gleeson

**Portadown** Fr John McKeever, Sheila Murphy

**St John Vianney - Ardlea** Rose McElwain, Veronica Dalton

**St John the Baptist - Clontarf** Brigid (Bea) Henry, Fr Joseph Finan

**St Patrick's - Cork** Mary Moore, Jim Egan

**Templeogue** Kathleen Reynolds (former Secretary of the Society), Maureen Joyce

**Templemore** Peter Denny, John Walsh, Bridget Kennedy

**Trillick** Roseanne McAleer, Thomas Gray,

John James Moran, Mary Ann Garvey, Jimmy Murphy, Mary Bridget McCaffrey, Michael McAleer, Mary Hunter, Herbert McElholm, Charlie McDonnell