



YEAR OF ST JOSEPH

The Sheaf



ST. JOSEPH'S YOUNG PRIESTS SOCIETY

f SJYPS

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WINTER 2021

Meeting of The Central Council

The Central Council, the governing body of the Society, met for the first time in two years at the Ashling Hotel, Dublin on Saturday 16th October 2021. The meeting was held in accordance with government guidelines relating to the Covid-19 pandemic. 51 members signed the attendance book. There were 25 apologies.

Introducing the opening Mass, Fr Séamus McEntee, Chief Chaplain, wore the vestment presented to him at the World Youth Day in Panama in 2019. The Chalice he would use, he said, was donated to the Society by the

family of Fr Donal O'Sullivan, an army chaplain who died at the Somme in the 1914/1918 World War. Marie Morkan, Cashel Provincial President, read at the Mass.

As the Year of St Joseph comes to a close on 8th December, Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Fr Séamus devoted his homily to incidents in the life of St Joseph – some of his reflections on St Joseph as Guardian of the Redeemer appear on page 4.

John Murphy president of the Society, welcomed everyone to the meeting, and expressed his delight at our being

together after two years. He thanked Fr Séamus for the Mass and homily, and said he was delighted to see so many familiar faces. The most important work we could do as members of SJYPS is to continue with prayer. We should thankfully pray for what we have already received, he said, as he then led us in a Prayer for Vocations.

His report explained that in early June, he had contacted approximately 280 Religious Houses asking them, if not already doing so, to pray daily especially for vocations to Priesthood and Religious Life. He offered them prayer cards and directed them to our website. At the end of June he contacted our bishops requesting that they encourage priests to pray likewise from the Altar.

As a result of these approaches, he was invited to talk on Radio Maria Ireland about the Society, and he did so.

Finally, he reminded us of Pope Frances' blessing for the Year of St Joseph for members of the Society, thanking Fr Séamus and the Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Okolo for their help in making this possible, and a reminder, that branches must adhere to copyright law in any promotional material they might utilize on the Society's behalf.

The treasurer's report was submitted by Padraig O'Brien. Member's subscriptions at €203,000 was remarkable in such a difficult year for which money he expressed his sincere thanks. Rental income was down as the Irish Catholic newspapers the Society's largest tenant, had located elsewhere. Despite the difficult financial times, legacies helped the Society's work considerably as did a Covid-19 related grant of €5,634. Illustrated charts provided by Padraig gave details of income and expenditure; and also a comparison with income and donations over the past fifteen years, when subscriptions were in the region of up to €765,000 annually.

The General Secretary, Brigid Kelly, then submitted her report, as shown alongside.

Election of Officers:

The following officers were ratified unanimously, no election being necessary as the number of candidates did not exceed the number of vacant positions.

Vice Presidents:
Dominic Dowling; Marian Fennelly.

Secretary: Marian Fennelly.

Treasurer: Padraig O'Brien.

Executive Members.
The four Provincial Presidents, elected locally, David Greer (Armagh), Kieran Hickey (Dublin), Marie Morkan (Cashel), and Marie Dempsey (Tuam) and also Peter Tierney, Maureen Long, Tony Melia.

Appointments:

Editor of the Sheaf:
Thomas Murphy to assist Dominic Dowling, who has completed 25 years.

Auditor: Cunningham & Co.

Solicitors: Frank Friel & Co.

There followed a Holy Hour with Divine Mercy Prayer and Benediction led by John Murphy and Fr Séamus.

Other Business

- Mary Dempsey Cork requested that a 'Donate' button be added to the website.
- A breakdown of the number of students in each Seminary year was requested.
- Priests should visit schools to talk about priesthood.
- Michael McManus and Bernie Corry highlighted the importance of handing in bookmarks with the Prayer for Guidance to as many schools as possible. They cover Dublin Northside. It is greatly appreciated.
- It was suggested that Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament for Vocations should be done uniformly in every parish by members of the Society.

Conclusion

John wished everyone a safe journey home with special thanks to Brigid Kelly and Rita Russell for preparing the altar, Kieran Hickey for organising parking and Brigid and Maria for organising the day.

The General Secretary's Reports, show a significant reduction in the number of active branches over the last four years - from 353 to 250.

Year	Armagh	Dublin	Cashel	Tuam	Vocational	Total
2017/2018	140	79	84	41	9	353
2018/2019	134	74	78	38	10	334
2019/2020	120	65	70	29	8	292
2020/2021	94	59	66	23	8	250

The overseas registered students are broadly located as follows:-

Africa	370	India	87	Philippines	30
South America	18	East Europe	48	Asia/Elsewhere	30

The follow is a summary of the past four years

Year to 30 June	Registered Students			Ordinations		
	Irish	Overseas	Total	Irish	Overseas	Total
2017/2018	84	536	620	15	103	118
2018/2019	65	563	628	8	140	148
2019/2020	70	503	573	1	127	128
2020/2021	64	583	647	3	98	101

Due to Covid-19 the Society was unable to hold normal meetings of its Executive or its Central Council in the year to 30 June 2021. One-day Provincial Congresses had to be cancelled for a second year. The National Annual Pilgrimage to Knock and the Provincial Pilgrimage to Our Lady's Island Wexford were also cancelled, following government guidelines. Please God we will be able to resume our meetings and pilgrimages in 2022.

“THERE ARE VERY FEW YOUNG PRIESTS ANYMORE”

by Fr Albert McDonnell
Ossory Radharc na nOileán Pastoral Area

I was recently talking to a tradesman about doing a bit of work in my house. We discussed the job and as tends to happen, our chat wondered. He told me that very few young fellas were interested in learning trades nowadays. I said that was a great pity since the work done by tilers, block-layers, carpenters and so on was essential and fulfilling. He thought for a second and agreed with me. He added ‘sure the same is true for yourselves. There are very few young priests anymore and sure we need them too.’

The Government recently established a programme called ‘Generation Apprenticeship’ to encourage interest in the trades. The programme offers financial supports, accreditation and other incentives with a particular focus on female participation.

The Irish Bishops have taken various initiatives to encourage interest in the priesthood and religious life. They established a vocations office which provides resources on its website www.vocations.ie ranging from the testimony of priests regarding what attracted them to ministry, to prayers and reflections for those discerning a religious vocation. Dioceses have appointed vocations directors and committees. We have an annual day of prayer for vocations and there are branches of St Joseph’s Young Priests Society across all dioceses.

So far, these efforts have produced little tangible fruit. The tradesman is right ‘there are very few young priests anymore’. Writing in the Irish Catholic, the seminary rector in Maynooth referred to the decline in family and community support for



Pictured at the October Central Council Meeting (l-r): Thomas Murphy (New Proposed Editor of ‘The Sheaf’) with Christine Connolly, Ursula Nolan and Maureen Doody

vocations. He wrote about the difficulty in hearing the call of the Lord ‘amidst the cacophony of voices that clamour forattention in our busy and noisy world’. This decline of interest in things of the Spirit is accompanied by the six state reports regarding the dark side of the story of our church and country, in particular the outrageous abuse of children and women. These revelations transformed indifference into anger.

In 2018, when welcoming Pope Francis to Ireland, the then Taoiseach told him “religion is no longer at the centre of our society, but ...still has an important place”. There are people in today’s Ireland whose faith is at the centre of their lives, just as there are people without faith, or hostile to the notion. However, the Taoiseach’s assertion that religion is in decline rings true. In pre-pandemic days, looking around our churches one saw extremely few potential candidates for the priesthood. The number coming to Mass drops each year by upwards at 1% of the overall population. Of the few young or middle-aged men active in Church, the overwhelming majority have already made other commitments in life, mostly through marriage. In many mainland European countries

vocations tend to come from organised associations of young Catholics. These movements have never really taken off in Ireland, on the contrary existing Catholic lay groups like the Legion of Mary have declined steeply. Many people do not experience Church as welcoming.

As the tradesman said priests are needed. At my ordination in Kilmaley in 1985, Bishop Harty spoke of the declines in vocations and his fear that we would not have Sunday Mass in all our churches for much longer. History has proven him right. The network of priests across communities is already a thing of the past. Are the missing priests missed? People who value the sacraments miss them. Some miss having the priest involved in the community through sport, drama and so on. Still, these activities continue without priests. Communities miss having their ‘own’ priest who knew them well and could be especially supportive in difficult moments such as bereavement.

What of the future? Virtually nobody expects and even fewer want a return to the past. Too many priests crowd out the baptised and distorts the family of faith. On the other hand, priests are needed to celebrate the Eucharist, fan our faith into

a flame, proclaim God’s word. Many priests wonder why the witness of their life and ministry isn’t attractive anymore. Morale among priests is low and the lack of new candidates reduces self-esteem even further.

Maybe our vocations programmes begin with the wrong sacrament. Perhaps the focus should be on the many rather than the few. Baptism is key. The reshaping of our Church which Pope Francis is leading will, in time, prove transformative. Inclusive faith communities where everyone is respected, nourish all forms of discipleship without exciting one to the detriment of others. Words inspired by the martyred Archbishop Oscar Romero point towards a way forward:-

We plant a seed that will one day grow.

We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development.

We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities.

Fr McDonnell’s article was first published in April 2021 issue of Ossory Times. Reprinted with permission - Ed.

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.



Diocesan Reports from around the Country

by Thomas Murphy

It's always interesting to hear the reports of activities of the Society around the Country presented at each Central Council meeting. Highlights of reports received recently include the Diocese of Cashel & Emly where 12 branches are active. A Eucharistic holy hour was planned for Mission Sunday, 24th October in the Church of the Sacred Heart, Borrisoleigh. Branches are being encouraged to resume meetings in person. The President of Cloyne Diocesan Committee, Breda Daly, attended the Diaconal Ordination in her parish recently and spoke with the bishop and two diocesan clerical students. Ronan Sheehan was ordained a deacon for the Diocese of Cork and Ross on 25th September in the Cathedral in Cork City. Skibbereen branch had its annual Mass on 19th September in the cathedral in Skibbereen, celebrated by the most recently ordained priest of the diocese, Fr. Evan O'Brien, who gave an excellent homily praising the work of the Society. Six branches are active in the Diocese of Kerry. The President of the Killaloe

Diocesan Committee was invited to the Diaconal Ordination of Anton Pasalic on the 8th September in Ennis Cathedral by Bishop Fintan Monahan. In the Diocese of Limerick, special congratulations were given to Caherdavin branch for their hard work. They got most of the subscriptions collected.

In the Diocese of Ossory seven branches are active. Fr. Brian Griffin celebrated Mass for the Diocesan Committee and, using the words of Pope Benedict XVI, advised that 'the Church is not mine but His and He won't let it sink', to let go of fear and doubt, believe in the Divine Mercy prayer, do our best and let the Lord look after the rest. Trust in Him. Two young men from the Diocese are preparing to join the Franciscan Order. Phil Cooke stepped down as President of the Ossory Diocesan Committee after several years of hard work. Christmas and Easter letters were sent the Branches and Fr. Kieran O'Shea, Ossory Director of Vocations, met with members of the Diocesan Committee recently over a sociable lunch.

10 branches are active in the Diocese of Galway. Galway Diocesan Committee meetings were held on Zoom. It wasn't the same as an actual meeting, it kept branches and members in touch with each other. Fr. Martin Whelan, the Diocesan President and the Cathedral Branch organized a Quiz to raise some money for the Society. This was also held on Zoom. It was very interesting and good entertainment. The ordination of Fr. John Gerard Acton took place on 1st August in Galway Cathedral. He celebrated Mass for the Society on 8th August, also in the Cathedral. A large attendance of members was there. Fr. John Gerard gave all present his First Blessing. This lovely occasion was a great opportunity for members to meet with Fr. John Gerard and each other. On behalf of the Society, Marie Dempsey presented Fr. John Gerard with a stole.

Lastly, should they wish to do so, branches are free to send details of their activities direct to the Office for the Sheaf rather than wait for a quarterly report.

ORDINATIONS OF FR CALLUM & FR JUAN JESÚS

Fr Callum Douglas Young and Fr Juan Jesús Gonzalez Borrallo, Redemptoris Mater House of Formation, Dundalk (pictured) were ordained by Archbishop Eamon Martin on Tuesday 29th June 2021 in Armagh Cathedral.

Our President John Murphy and Maura Murphy Armagh Diocesan President attended the ordinations, and presented each with the St. Joseph's Young Priests Society stole.

I want to thank you so much for your prayers and support over the years of my formation for the priesthood. It is always very encouraging for me to remember that I am being accompanied by your prayers. I would like to thank you also for the gift of this stole on the day of my ordination, which serves as a permanent reminder of your closeness to me in my priestly ministry.

Please be assured of my prayers for you and of my gratitude for all that you do to encourage and support seminarians and priests to follow the call of the Lord to work in his vineyard. May the good Lord bless you all and reward you a hundredfold!

God bless, Fr Callum Douglas Young



Dear members of SJYPS.

I would like to say thanks to all of you for your support and prayers during these years, as well as for the stole given to me on the day of my Priestly Ordination.

May God bless you always.

Fr Juan Jesús



Reflection on St Joseph, Guardian of the Redeemer

Let us consider together what the biblical texts tell us about St Joseph. Though there are not many words, they have profound meaning for all of us as we seek to live a life of holiness, no matter what our state in life or vocation. They are of particular importance for men, but certainly apply to all men and women. In the infancy narrative offered to us by the Apostle and Evangelist Matthew, we find a unique focus on Joseph, the husband of Mary. After tracing the lineage of the Saviour from the perspective of Joseph, (Matt. 1:1-17) we are introduced to Joseph's response to God's invitation. This was Joseph's Annunciation.

We tend to forget that an angel also appeared to Joseph, to prepare him for the significant role he would play in God's saving plan for the whole human race. He was invited to exercise his human freedom, to give his assent to the Lord's invitation - and he did. His response to God reminds all men that actions speak louder than words; (Matt. 1:18-24).

From ancient times, Christians have reflected upon Joseph as a model of genuine virtue - and for good reason. His response to the angel teaches us how we are called to respond to God's invitations in our own lives. Though he was a man of few words, he spoke through his actions, and he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded. Joseph's response was action.

Joseph was a man for others. Though the Scriptures say so little about Joseph, even that absence speaks volumes. Why? Because to Joseph, he was not the one who was important, others were. He loved Mary above himself and his behaviour was just as a result of his love. He was prepared to do the right thing when she was found to be with child. He could have chosen otherwise. How refreshing this upright behaviour is in an age where men often cower in the face of difficulty.

Joseph was a man of faith and courage. Along with loving his betrothed, he loved his God courageously. He had a close, intimate personal relationship with the God of his Fathers. In fact, this just man was, in a sense, the last Patriarch, completing the lineage. Through his response of faith, he would receive the great gift promised for all men and women and hold in his arms the One that his fathers had only longed to see. God's messenger, an angel, visited Joseph in a dream.

He was ready to receive. He was disposed not only to the encounter but to the invitation it presented to pour himself out in love and for Love. He heard the message and, without hesitation, did what the Lord commanded! This is, in a real sense, Joseph's Fiat, his Yes, his exercise of human freedom to advance God's eternal plan. How refreshing it is to see such manly faith and courage, in an age often filled with cowardice and rebellion.

In so doing, Joseph is a model to all men who choose to walk the way of the cross. Joseph emptied himself of self - and became filled with the love and life of God. He gave himself fully to God through accepting his unique and specific vocation as a guardian of the Redeemer. The child Jesus, God in the flesh, was given to Joseph. A carpenter, Joseph taught this child how to work with wood. That was, after all, what he had to give. During these so-called hidden years Jesus was with Joseph and Joseph was with Jesus. Joseph uniquely participated in the mystery of God's plan of redemption through simply being the man he was called to be.

Since the fourteenth century there has been a specific day set aside in the Roman calendar to honour Joseph. He is viewed as the Patron of the universal Church, of all husbands and of social justice. He has also been designated as the patron of all workers,

this carpenter who taught the Word Incarnate, the Child Jesus, how to work with wood. This man was the foster father of the Incarnate Word of God and he loved Jesus with an exemplary love. This same Jesus who learned to work with wood from the hands of Joseph would, during his 33rd year save the world, through the wood of the Cross.

Over two millennia, the mission of Jesus has continued through His Body on earth, His Church. He has entrusted the work of that mission to all men and women who accept the invitation to empty themselves in order to be filled with the very life and love of God and then be used in His redemptive mission for the world. Through the fount of living water called Baptism, he invites each one of us into His new family, the Body of His Son, the Church. He still gives His message to men who, like Joseph, cultivate ears to hear and then choose to exercise authentic manly virtue and act out of courage.

He still invites us to turn the ordinary into extraordinary through cooperation and participation. He is truly looking for a few good men like Joseph, who will hear and answer the call to become holy priests and who will work in the workshop of the world that he created in order to recreate it anew in His Son. In this age so desperately in need of men of courage, let us as members of SJYPS, continue to turn Joseph, patron of our Society, and follow his example by courageously, humbly and faithfully loving Jesus Christ in all we do.

Let us continue to give our own 'Yes' to God whose love always invites participation through acts of service and of love.

Fr Seamus McEntee
Chief Chaplain SJYPS

Recently Deceased

VOCATIONAL BRANCHES

Bankers Branch Carmel Hughes

Motor & Engineering Eugene O'Meara

LOCAL BRANCHES

Abbeyfeale Kieran Curtin, Brenda Woulfe, Birdie Leahy.

Armagh Harry Mone

Ballymena - All Saints Winnie Dillon

Drogheda Mick Byrne

Dunamanagh Kathleen Quinn, Mary Cromwell, Phyllis Conway, Joe Phillips

Ennis Sean Dinan, Philomena Nugent, Kay Mangan, Ann Mullarkey, Dan Neylon

Merrion Square Sister Máire O'Carroll, Teresa Whittington, (librarian Central Catholic Library)

Killorglin Kathleen Mangan

Knockninny Rose Ann Murray, Fr Fintan McKiernan, Owen Shannon, Corina Leavey, Pat Doogan, Paddy McCormack, Nora Shannon, Bridie Cassidy, Tom McCaffrey, Kate Mohan, Teresa Gilleece

Lough Branch Mona Crean

Maghera Tony Flanagan, Martin O'Kane, Mary Glass, Anne Woods, Kieran McToal, Sarah McCusker, Colm Higgins, Orla Molloy, Nan McKenna, Gerry McLaughlin, Peter McKenna,

Mary Lagan, Bronagh O'Connor, Declan McFalone, Brigid Bradley

Midleton Nancy O'Sullivan

Our Lady Crowned (Mayfield) John Foley

Portadown Ann Moore, Stella Harbinson

St. John Vianney - Ardlea Tess Byrne

St. John the Baptist - Clontarf Carmel Hughes

St. Patrick's - Limerick Peggy McNamara

Templemore Sr Frances Fogarty

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Anonymous Donations €25, €15