



# Extended Family Newsletter

Issue 25 - April 2016

At this time of Resurrection and New Life, we remember those in Lahore, Brussels and elsewhere whose lives have tragically been cut short through hatred and violence, and our sympathy and prayer go with their loved ones left behind at this time of loss and sorrow.

“I have come that all may have life and have it to the full” (John 10:10)

## Migration and Inequality

International migration is a powerful symbol of global inequality. According to the International Organization for Migration the number of refugees and “irregular migrants” to Europe reached a million in 2015, representing an unprecedented movement of people across international borders in search of a better life.

Whether measured in terms of wages, labour market opportunities, lifestyles or security and freedom from conflict, inequality drives migration. The greater the disparity in life chances, the more likely that people will seek to move internationally cross borders and continents; and domestically from rural to urban areas.

*(From ‘News from the UN’ no 69)*

## 2nd – 4th October 2015 - The Extended Family Noddfa Gathering 2015

Last year’s gathering took place between Friday, 2<sup>nd</sup> October and Sunday, 4<sup>th</sup> October. Twenty-seven people came down to that peaceful place in North Wales to meet for yet another weekend of thinking about what it is to be Extended Family and to share each other’s’ company. Most of the people came from the North of England as people from other parts of the Province were not able to come.

The theme for the weekend was *Continuing the Journey ‘That All May Have Life’: The Road Ahead?* and the various sessions throughout our time there addressed this theme in various ways. As usual, Friday evening and Saturday were input and reflection and Sunday morning was ‘the working session’, where we distilled all of what we had learnt and thought about.

On Friday evening Sr Catherine and Eileen Silvester led us in prayer and told us more about the Charism of Fr Gailhac.

On Saturday we started the day with Morning Prayer followed by Contemplative Listening, then Scripture Sharing and Contemplative Prayer. After lunch Sr Mary Jo gave us some input on the RSHM Journey, telling us about the work of the JPIC and the UN’s new Sustainable Development

Goals and linking this to Pope Francis' *Laudato Si* document. Most of us then made *The Cosmic Journey* in the grounds. So, all in all, a very thought-provoking afternoon. We then celebrated a beautiful Mass in the chapel with Fr John presiding.

After dinner, we had a feedback session *Where are you going?* where each of the Extended Family Groups present gave a brief report of what had happened in their local area and what their hope for the future are. We also had a report sent in by the Upminster EF. Finally, there was the traditional Saturday Evening Get Together, which has always, was time to let hair down. This year though, we had to get by without the entertainment usually provided by the inimitable Sr Pierre.

On Sunday morning we considered how we should continue our journey with group discussions & feedback.

In each of the times of prayer, and during Mass, candles were lit in remembrance of EF members who are no longer with us: Patrick Black, Carmen Smith, Ann McCardle, and Sr Andre. Also, the chapel was decorated with a wonderful display of cloths, candles, and pebbles, depicting the path of our journey in faith to God.

Kath Nolan produced a wonderful set of images and prayers to help us on our journeys. These were distributed to attendees in a leaflet which is attached to the email sending this newsletter so that you, too, can share them.

If you weren't able to be with us at this gathering, please watch out for notification of the next Noddfa Gathering and make sure you get the names of your EF group members down for some of the places available. It will be good to see you there.

(John Newby)

## 21st February 2016 – Meeting of the Extended Family at Seafeld

This meeting of the Extended Family was held on Sunday, 21st February 2016 at Seafeld, for a reflection on the Theme "Care of the Earth". We had a potted history of the beginnings, particularly in the UK, of the various groups who started the ecological movement and how they developed in spite of numerous obstacles along their ways. All of which, of course, now ties in with Pope Francis's *Laudato Si*.

We listened to a number of passages from the Pope's recent Encyclical and we each looked at two or three quotations from some of the 'movers' in the ecological movement such as Thomas Berry. After reading them everyone was invited to read out loud one of their choice and a discussion followed.

The group then watched a thought-provoking and informative video of the interconnectedness of all life on our planet. Kath ended the meeting with music and prayers, playing the song *What a Wonderful World*, the hymn *For the Beauty of the Earth* and giving us a very interesting version of the *Our Father* which she had picked up from a Presbyterian Church.

The afternoon ended with refreshments generously provided by the Sisters.

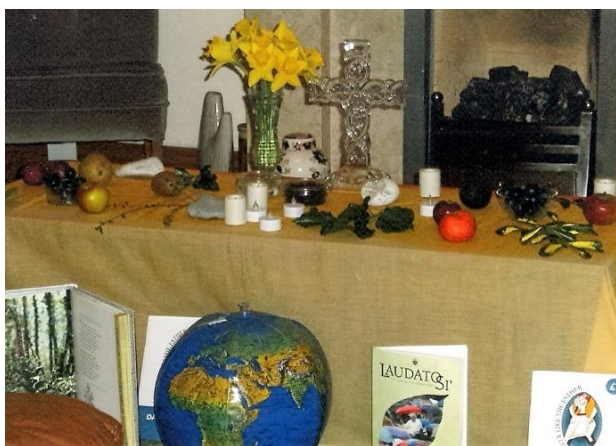
(Pauline McManus)

## 24th February 2016 - Celebration of Foundation Day at Lisburn

Our celebration this year was mindful of the Year of Mercy, Pope Francis's encyclical letter *Laudato Si* on care for our Common Home and of course gratitude for 167 years of Sacred Heart of Mary apostolic witness in the Church.

We invited 8 of our friends to join us in prayer and reflection. A lively discussion followed from readings from the encyclical.

Afterwards a beautiful meal was enjoyed by all. St Joseph's Primary school invited Sr Mary to give a presentation on the founding of the institute and the coming of the sisters to Lisburn. As well the work of Sr Veronica Brand was discussed and shown on YouTube.







Rathmore Grammar School invited the sisters from Dunmurry and Lisburn Communities to meet senior staff and pupils at morning Break time. To round off the Celebration, Dunmurry Community invited Lisburn Community for a lovely lunch next day and this completed our celebration of Foundation Day 2016.

*(Sister Kathleen McCarten)*

## 2 March 2016: Meeting of the Extended Family in Béziers

Although some people were unable to come, 26 of us learnt about the foundation of the Institute in America, after Ireland, Brazil, Mozambique and Portugal. We made the acquaintance of Mrs Sarah Peter, 'our American founder' as Père Gailhac called her, together with Mother St Basil and her six Irish companions who took up the challenge of adventure in this new country far from the Institute.



We were impressed by the works these pioneers carried out at Sag Harbor between 1877 and 1943. In June we shall be looking at the expansion of the work of education in the East American province under the impetus of Mother Joseph Butler.



Another high point of our meeting was reading the recent bulletins of our Extended Family. We learnt of the workings and effectiveness of the 'Saturday Brunch' in aid of people suffering, particularly in Syria. Congratulations to our friends of the Extended Family on the other side of the Channel!! We were most impressed by the results.

Our meeting ended with a time of prayer during which each of us received a "work of mercy" to try to carry out during Lent in this Year of Mercy. To support us in our action we heard Père Gailhac tell us in his letter of 8 February 1884: *It is only in the present that good is possible...Let us do good while we have the time...*

Our last meeting of the year will take place on 8 June 2016.

*(Sister Thérèse-Marie)*

## News from Furness

The Furness Extended family, based around the Abbey Road Convent in Barrow-in-Furness, is still alive and well, despite us having sent nothing in to the newsletter for the last two issues.

### **Monthly Prayer Meetings**

In recent times, our big step has been to set up monthly prayer meetings. This has been something we wanted to for some time now. It long been on our 'wish list' to arrange sessions where the Extended Family could get together with the Sisters to pray, but we never seemed to have the energy to get them off the ground. At the Noddfa Gathering last October, we made it one of our group aims for the coming year and, in January, we held our first of these prayer meetings. We were nervous about how many people would come, but just under 20 people came along. This week, we have just had our third meeting and 23 people came. This number of people makes for a cosy gathering in the Community Room at the convent and if we get too overcrowded we may have to decamp to the parish centre – but that wouldn't be the same. The convent is our family home.

Sister Pierre has been leading the sessions and, soon, other members of the family will begin to take over leading some of the future sessions. There is some nervousness here, because Sister Pierre is 'a hard act to follow'; but we will take up the challenge. Usually, our theme is taken from the main feast day of the week in which we meet (normally, on the first Monday of the month) or from the season itself. We are using different forms of prayer in each session, but always based around contemplative prayer. The sessions have been well received and a group

of regular attendees is establishing itself among the people who have been to each of the sessions.

Our thanks go to Kath Nolan from the Liverpool EF and to Eileen Silvester from the Carlisle EF for sharing with us what they do at their monthly meetings and to Sr Moira Lever for encouraging us to 'just get on with it'. Their encouragement helped us to get over the barriers that were holding us back.

### **Foundation Day Gathering**

Our other major activity in recent times has been our Foundation Day Gathering, which we held on Saturday, 27<sup>th</sup> February, on the Our Lady of Furness Parish Centre. Our theme was *Answering the Call*, which we took from the RSHM Chapter theme of *Continuing the Journey* and in support of developing our understanding of our individual journeys in faith.

Sr Pierre had discovered all sorts of presentation material among Sr Andre's personal effects. Among them were several PowerPoint presentations and bound copies of the slides, each of which showed the history behind the formation of well-known religious orders. We used this material and edited it down to a manageable size for our gathering, to deal with four saints and their foundations:

- St Dominic and the Dominicans
- St Francis of Assisi and the Franciscans
- St Angela de Merici and the Ursulines
- St Ignatius of Loyola and the Jesuits

Each of these great saints from the Middle Ages had seen the 'wilderness' in which the church was living at that time. They heard the call of God and had set out to do something practical about meeting the needs of the church and its people. Each of these individuals gathered a small number of people around them and from those small beginnings, great things have happened. All of them had come from wealthy backgrounds but renounced that to dedicate themselves to the work of their calling. All of them had the blessing and support of the Pope at that time.

Our guest speaker for the day was Anthony Millar, a fellow parishioner from the Holy Family church community in Our Lady of Furness and the leader of the Secular Franciscans in the Furness area. Tony spent some time telling us much about St Francis and his life, the development of the various Orders within the structure of the Franciscans, and the work and prayer life of the Secular Franciscans, the 3rd Order of Franciscans. Our gathering really appreciated the heartfelt way in which Tony brought alive the story of the great saint and his legacy.

Then, we related what we had learned from these stories to the vision and charism of Fr Gailhac and the foundation of the Institute of the Sister of the Sacred Heart of Mary. We could see that there are many parallels that can be drawn from the history of the Middle Ages to our own history as RSHM.

Each of the founders left us with their 'maxim':

- St Dominic - Hoarded, the grain rots: cast to the wind it brings forth fruit.
- St Francis - Exclude one of God's creatures and you will do likewise with people.
- St Angela - Live in harmony, respect each other God will be in your midst.

- St Ignatius - To contemplate and to give to others the fruits
- Fr Gailhac - That all may have life

We used these as the basis for our contemplative meditation and prayer session, and shared how we saw the 'wilderness' of today's church and society and where the call of God might be present today.

As always, we finished our gathering by going across to St Mary's church and celebrating Mass together.

A great sadness on the day was that Sr Pierre, having put so much energy into preparing the session, had succumbed to a very nasty chest infection and was forced to stay at home in the convent while the gathering went on without her. True to form, however, she had all of the material at home with her and she followed the programme step-by-step through the morning. She may not have been physically with us but she was truly with us in Spirit.

*(John Newby)*

## Many Activities for the Extended Family Carlisle Group

On Saturday 17 October 2015 we held a 'Saturday Brunch' - this was a very successful event and we managed to raise £1000.00. The aim of this event was to raise funds for Syrian Refugees and we were able to send £750 direct to Syria and we donated £250 to a local group who are transporting goods/equipment to a Calais project. Our donation was to be used to help with the cost of fuel for the vehicles.

In December we decorated a Christmas Tree which was to be part of the Christmas tree display held in Christ the King parish church, we decided that any monies we raised from this event would be donated to The Carlisle Flood Appeal. We raised £241.00 which was forwarded to the appeal.

Due to unforeseen circumstances the day of recollection which we had planned to take place during Advent had to be cancelled.

On 23 February we met in the convent for an evening of quiet prayer and the Blessed Sacrament was exposed in the chapel. It was a very spiritual evening as we meditated on the Lenten Gospels, we then moved to the community room where those who desired shared their thoughts on the scripture passages. The evening closed with a shared supper.

On 22 March we met in the convent for a period of meditation on 'The Stations of the Cross'. Greg Smith shared with us a DVD of the stations and we all felt this was a very moving presentation as we pondered each of the stations in turn. We then went to the dining room where we closed the evening with a cuppa and a chat.

Our next event is a fundraising event, again for the Syrian Refugees. We will hold a charity auction of 9 April in the parish hall.

*(Maureen Wilson)*

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As always thanks to the contributors and to Sister Thérèse-Marie for her work on the translations to and from French.

The newsletter is published in English and French versions. If you (or someone) else would prefer to receive the French version then please get in touch.

Could you contribute an item to the newsletter? Photos and articles – no matter how short – are always welcome and will be held for the next available newsletter. Don't delay - exercise your literary talents now! Contributions in English or French (both, even!) are equally welcome.

Electronic copy by email or as an attachment is preferable, as are digital photos - but handwritten copy and prints are welcome too. See below for the email and postal addresses:

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