



Extended Family Newsletter

Issue 29 - November 2017

News from the Extended Family in Furness

The Gathering in Carlisle for the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Mary

An early morning start was needed to get up to Carlisle in time for the 10am mass and the start of the Gathering. It was good to be together again with 'our friends in the north'. No doubt, there will be a full report on the day from the Carlisle Extended Family, so I will just comment on a few memories of the day. It was good to hear again from the young men from the Cenalco Community in Dodding Green, near Kendal (Fr Manny Gribben had invited them to come to Barrow, maybe two years ago). Fr Loughran gave a good introduction to the formation of the community, which happened while he was PP in Kendal. I never realised that the community existed entirely on providence – I cannot imagine doing that myself – but their trust in the Lord is a great gift. The testimony of the two young men was so open and revealing. They told their personal stories and the difficulties and joys of being community, supporting each other with prayer and practical help at all times. It is impossible not to be moved by their stories. They also told us how they are working hard to develop the buildings at Dodding Green, converting an old barn into meeting spaces and workshops - new facilities that help the community to grow. Much food for thought on the way home and afterwards.

Monthly Prayer Meetings

Our evening prayer meetings on the first Monday of each month continue, when we gather at the Abbey Road convent to pray with the Sisters. We have just passed our second anniversary of the start of these local gatherings, which emerged from the 2015 Noddfa Gathering. Usually, we have a reflective prayer session, which always include some music. Sr Pierre's quiet leadership of the sessions leads us into the peace and quiet of our times for reflection: these are appreciated by all who come. Afterwards, there is always a chance to stay behind for a cuppa and a biccyy or cake. It's noticeable that, nowadays, people are stopping longer and spending more time together. That's always a good sign. Long may they continue, please God.

An Unexpected Family Encounter

On 28th October, Steve Donnan was ordained Deacon by Bishop Michael in a wonderful service at St Mary's church in Barrow. He and his wife, Karen, have long been involved with the Faith and Light movement. Imagine our surprise when we bumped into Sr Eleanor and her group from Liverpool who had travelled up for the ordination. A lovely and totally unexpected encounter after being with Sr Eleanor at Noddfa earlier in the month. Another God-incidence. The whole event was a wonderful demonstration of being Church.

What's Next for Us?

Our next Gathering will be on Saturday, 11th November in the Our Lady of Furness Parish Centre in Barrow. Our Founder's Birthday Gathering is called "Endings and Beginnings", and the theme is based around acceptance of change. The theme emerged from our concerns over the future

of the Mother House but we were reminded by Sr Pierre of all of the changes that Fr Gailhac had to face in the development of the Institute – the failures as well as the successes – and the challenges that have been faced all the way through the existence of the Institute as it strives to maintain its “commitment of fidelity to the mission of Christ in the Church of today”. As always, we will have some input and time for scripture sharing and reflection before we go to the lunchtime mass at St Mary’s.

In February 2018, on 24th February, we hope to make our Foundation Day Gathering a celebration of the 120th Anniversary of the RSHM’s presence in Barrow. As we did for Sr Rosamund’s visit last year, we will be inviting past pupils of all the schools in Barrow who were taught by the sisters to come and join us. Hopefully the ex-Croslands pupils’ groups will work their networks and gather a lot of people together. It would be good to have some of the Sisters who worked in our schools come and join us too. We will be asking for stories and photos to be shared. So, start off the search now so that you can send them in early in the New Year.

Sr Pierre Dullaghan and John Newby

News from the Extended Family in Carlisle

We have held meetings on 15 June and 31 August 2017 which have started with a prayer and finished with tea and biscuits and short social time.

24 June 2017 – ‘That All may have life’ - ‘From Darkness to Light’

We invited speakers from ‘Cenacolo’ This is a residential programme for people rebuilding their lives following Drugs/Alcohol abuse. We are fortunate as our Parish Priest Fr Loughran is the chaplain for the community, based in the North West of England. The day commenced with Fr Loughran giving a short introduction to the work of Cenacolo, the Community was founded by Mother Elvira Petrozzi an Italian nun in 1983. Cenacolo gives hope and an opportunity to live an addiction-free life, there are currently some 60 houses worldwide offering help to those in need. Fr Loughran then introduced us to two young Italian men who are currently being helped by the project, they spoke about the work they do. They work on the land and are self-sufficient. They help each other to regain their self-esteem and self-confidence.

This was a very informative session and the 30/40 people who attended the event were very impressed with the young men and the work of Cenacolo. We finished with a shared lunch the whole event was a great success. We held a raffle and the sum raised was given to the Cenacolo Community to help with their project.

6/7/8 October 2017 - Noddfa Weekend

7 members of our group along with Fr Norma Johnston travelled to Noddfa for the weekend. We all thoroughly enjoyed the weekend which we found to be thought provoking listening to the work being undertaken by Extended Family members from other areas and of course our Saturday night social was a great hit. All looking forward to the next meeting.

21 October 2017 – Sr Moira’s 40th Jubilee Celebration

The event took place in the local parish centre where sisters from Carlisle, Barrow and Castlebar came together along with Sr Moira’s family from South of England and Scotland along with Extended Family members and friends of Sr Moira. The day started with Jubilee prayers followed by a very enjoyable shared lunch. The day was rounded-off with entertainment by

Sister Pierre telling her funny stories and then a communal sing along with Greg on the guitar. A lovely afternoon.





Monday 22nd October 2017 - Visit of Sister Madeleine

We were delighted to have Sr Madeleine come again and give us an update of her experience in China and the Catholic Church there, we were joined by the Sisters and friends of the sisters. She explained that the Church in China is managed and that there is a 'Registered Church' of approx. there are 12 million. There is also an Underground Church, however there is one Catholic Church. At present there are important ongoing discussions between Beijing and the Vatican.



There are 5 denominations present in China – Protestants who have a thriving church but from February next year they have been told by the government that they can no longer hold 'House Meetings' – the government do not like group meetings. Then there is Catholicism, Taoism, Buddhism and Islam. It is important to remember, that at present, it is a very 'sensitive' time in China.

Sr Madeleine visits China as a friend to Religious Congregations. She passes on to them what she herself has received. During this visit she was with three Congregations. The Sisters of St. Joseph in Beijing was her base. The sisters invite her to come to help them. She comes as their friend.

In Beijing there is the Vincentian Church – also known as the North Church – here the Sisters of St Joseph work. They work for the Diocese of Beijing. Sr Madeleine showed us a photo of the new convent which was built for the sisters by the government – a magnificent building and she told us that the government is pouring money into Beijing diocese for the repairs and refurbishment of old church buildings. The sisters work mostly with the church finances, Catechesis and work in the local factories and they also have a home for the elderly. They do not work in Schools.

Sr Madeleine said she had been told that there is plenty of work available in the church in Beijing for other religious but that it can only be work that the present Chinese sisters are unable to do themselves. She was also advised against working with the underground church.

Tianjin Area: The Sisters of Charity of Tianjin. There are 31 sisters the order was founded by a Vincentians. The sisters have a home for the elderly where 3 sisters work caring for 12 residents who have not children to care for them or they are poverty stricken. The sisters do all the work required in the nursing home except for the cooking, they employ a cook. The congregation also work in a 'Youth Programme' in the country area. They also work in the practice of Chinese Medicine and with lepers.

Handan is situated 440km south of Beijing, Here the Sisters of Consolation of the Holy Spirit live and work. There are 267 sisters in the congregation. They only wear their 'Habit' on a Sunday at Mass which is at the very early time of 7am. The youngest sister is 27 yrs. and the oldest in her 60's. The sisters are mostly trained medical people i.e. Doctors, Nurses and Chinese Medical Practitioners.

Three sisters work in a Youth Centre which is located within a walled city about 3/4hour drive outside of Handan, in a very poor area. The sisters have a convent in this area which was built and funded by a German foundation.

Ten minutes from the convent is the Youth Centre, children go here during the school holidays and stay for one month – mobile phones are taken from them, they are not allowed. During this month the children study Catechesis.

There is also a small church in the walled city built by the founder of the congregation who was a bishop and whose mother was martyred for her faith.



It was here in Handan that Sister Madeleine along with a Vincentian Priest gave a retreat to the sisters (this was the reason Sister Madeleine was invited to China on this occasion). Sister gave sessions on Prayer and then along with the Priest held a Healing Service to which the sisters were very responsive. (Sr Madeleine required an interpreter as the Chinese sisters speak Mandarin.)

Two photos of the retreat participants



Sr Madeleine also shared with us a work she is involved in within the RSHM congregation. A programme called 'LEAVEN FOR MISSION'. This is a Renewal and Leadership process for sisters in the thirty-five to sixty age range. The sisters are from the Region of Mozambique, Zambezi Region, The West American Province, The East American Province and the Portuguese Province. Twenty-seven of the sisters are Portuguese speaking, six are English speaking and three are Spanish speaking sisters. The first part of the programme was held in Fatima, it went well. It is an ongoing process. We will hear more about this another time.

Maureen Osborne

Noddfa, October 2017

On 6th October EF members from Barrow, Carlisle and Liverpool received the usual warm welcome from Sisters Patrice, Pauline and Bernadette. We were also fortunate to have with us Sr Catherine and Fr Norman from Carlisle, Sr Kathleen from London, Sr Eleanor from Liverpool, Sr Pierre and Sr Moira from Barrow and Provincial Sr Ursula from Ireland.

It is always a treat to have tea, coffee and homemade scones on arrival. After a delicious evening meal Kath Nolan welcomed everyone and we each introduced ourselves. Kath had brought lovely fabric butterflies for each of us. These were pinned on to fabric around Fr Gailhiac's words - "That all may have life". Kath explained that she would later stitch them on to form a banner. Part of the weekend theme would be to reflect on and appreciate God's natural world, hence the butterflies.

Following this, Sr Moira and Sr Catherine reflected on the Superior General's letter and the extended family from its inception. We were reminded of the guidelines for the extended family.



Banner based on the theme for the weekend

Morning prayer on Saturday was led by Kath and the theme was “I chose you to go out and bear fruit”. We had a very spiritual reflection on this theme. John Newby then took us to Beziers! Those of us who had been there felt very nostalgic and were reminded that Beziers is the cornerstone of the RSHM.

Sr Eleanor and Sr Pierre recounted their Beziers experience then some of us shared our experience. This was followed by an account of Galhiac’s presence in the world today from Kath, Sr Eleanor, Sr Kathleen and Sr Patrice. We were moved by their accounts of working with prostitutes, women who are victims of violence and people with learning and physical difficulties.

The afternoon enabled all to have a quiet reflective time and later we had scripture sharing and contemplative prayer. Fr Norman celebrated Mass at 5.30. Mass in the chapel is always very special and we were very fortunate to have “our own” priest!

Saturday evening is always a time for a social gathering. There was much music and laughter, the latter being mostly provided by Sr Pierre!! She and Ann Newby performed “There’s a Hole in My Bucket” which was hilarious. I wonder if when God spoke to Sr Pierre about vocation He meant she should go on the stage!!

Sunday’s morning prayer and reflection was led by Sr Moira. The title was “Turned Towards God Totally and Undividedly” and the theme was Where is Gailhac today? Sr Moira had chosen lovely music which we all found so moving.

The final session was a complete surprise and brought all the spiritual experiences of the weekend together. Sr Patrice took us through Capacitar movements. It is similar to Tai Chi and reinforced the reflection on God's creation. Sr Bernadette taught us a dance to music which originated with Native American Indians. It is a stately dance and complemented the Capacitar movements we had been doing. Sr Patrice said that Capacitar is helpful in her work with alcoholics.



Noddfa Group, 2017

Following a review of the outcomes of the weekend with John, we had our final prayer and lunch before departure.

I must mention the wonderful catering provided by Sr Patrice and her team who work so hard to prepare and serve the most delicious meals and we all are very grateful. Thanks also go to Sr Pauline and Sr Bernadette who provided our refreshments as well helping to serve meals and clear up after us. Thank you and God Bless all of the staff and sisters.

Sheila McLarnon

Note from the Editor

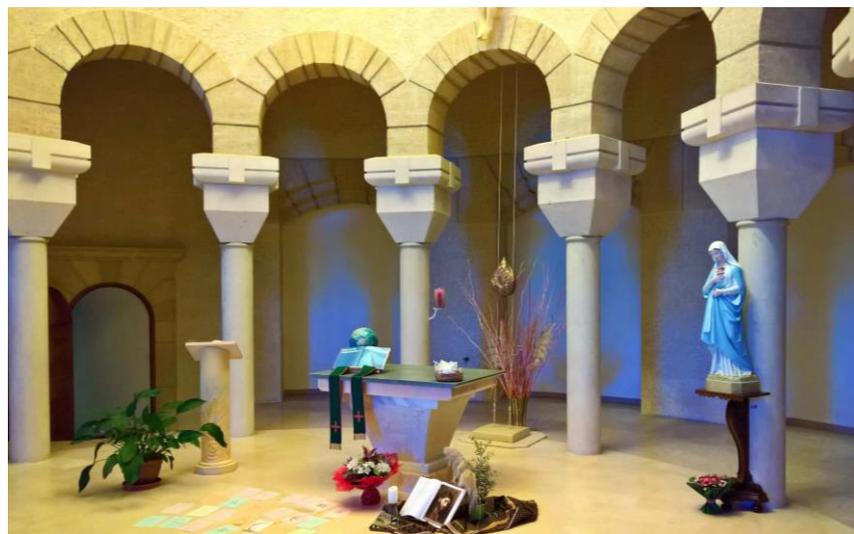
Although not a member of the Extended Family myself, I have come to learn much about it through assembling these newsletters and invitations to Extended Family events, most of which I have been unable to attend due to being frequently away from Carlisle, but when I have, I have been grateful for the warm welcome.

In September, throwing caution to the wind and putting our trust in Ryanair and French air traffic controllers (I know!), my wife and I were able to pay a brief visit to Sister Thérèse-Marie and the Mother House in Béziers while we were spending a few days in Occitanie. We were warmly welcomed by Sister Thérèse-Marie and were grateful for the time she spent showing us around and telling us something of the history of the order and the impressive work which now goes on in the Mother House.

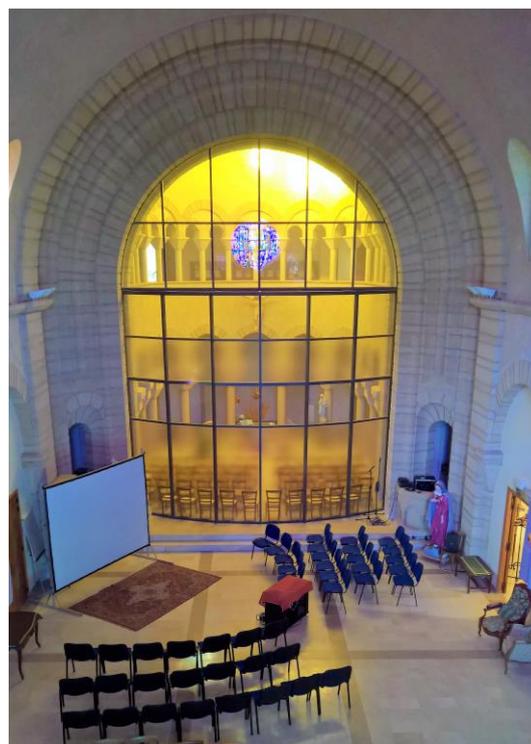
Whether you have been to Béziers or not, I hope you might enjoy the photos overleaf:



The Mother House, rue Ermengaud



The Chapel



Formation Centre

That All May Have Life



Rose Window



Béziers through the westbound train window

Peter Naylor

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

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