

FROM THE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL



Congratulations to: Sr Consilio O'Regan
who celebrates her **Platinum Jubilee** on 7th May

and to

Srs Catherine Dunne, Lelia O'Shea and Dominique Treacy
who celebrate their **Golden Jubilee** on 19th May.

NEWS FROM EGC MEETING

Mary Jo McElroy

The EGC was a time for preparing for the General Chapter (Belo Horizonte, Brazil – June 2013). The facilitator was Chris Partisano (from USA) who was the facilitator when the EGC was in Noddfa and who will be the facilitator for the General Chapter. This is a great advantage as she knows RSHM very well. Jo Kennedy and Brett Nicholls from the Craighead Institute, Glasgow, took part in the first few days to go through the projections for Human and Financial resources for each province and helping us to look at planning for the provinces and the Institute. Unfortunately Serafina Helena from Mozambique was not present at the meeting as she got malaria just after arriving in Rome and was in hospital for the whole time we were at the EGC meeting. Serafina brought the news that one of the candidates in Mozambique had died of malaria just before she had left for Rome. We missed Serafina's presence and contribution to the meeting. We shared what we are doing in the different provinces in preparation for our Provincial Chapter and every Province was working on questions related to the identity of Apostolic Religious Life today, with its mystical and prophetic aspects. We shall hear more about details later!



The Provincial Chapter will begin at 3.00 pm on 26th October.

BEREAVEMENTS

Our sympathy and prayers are with:

Carlisle Community on the death of **Sr Eilish Breen** who died on 10th March at the age of 82 years and in the 63rd year of her Religious Profession

Sr Mary Eithne Kissane on the death of her brother-in-law, **Sean Francis**, who died on 11th March.

Sr Patricia Butler on the death of her sister, **Eileen Falconer**, who died on 14th March

Sr Marie Jean Barthès on the death of her brother, **Louis Barthès**, who died on 22nd March.

Sr Terezinha Cecchin on the death of her brother, **Luiz Cecchin**, who died on 30th March.

Sr Thérèse English on the death of her brother, **Tom English**, who died on 8th April.

Arrowsmith Community and Margaret Fielding on the death of **Sr Francis Fielding** who died on 31st March at the age of 90 years and in the 70th year of her Religious Profession.

The Sisters of the Eastern American Province on the death of **Sr Patricia Coatsworth** who died in Tarrytown on 1st March at the age of 82 years and in the 62nd year of her Religious Profession.

The Sisters of the Portuguese Province on the death of **Ir. Purificação Saraiva** who died in Lisbon on 7th March at the age of 87 years and in the 63rd year of her Religious Profession

TRIBUTES

SR EILISH BREEN: 1929 -2012

When Sister Eilish died on Saturday 10th March it seemed to many of us as though life could never be the same again. Her life-giving presence had supported us in ways we were never fully aware of. Her mode of presence was perhaps expressed in that reply of hers whenever anyone called her name, 'I'm here' - an echo of the response to God's call of innumerable saints and prophets before her, 'Here I am Lord'. It reflected a mind always on the alert to be of help. Her last action before she collapsed was to set about making tea for someone hard at work. No doubt that was the way she would have chosen to go.



Sister Eilish, or as she was known to her family, Elizabeth Anne Breen, was born in Belfast in 1929. She was still a young child when her mother died. Her father, left with 6 children, brought up his family with the help of his eldest daughter, May. Eilish did her own share of mothering to her younger brother Peter. She gave us a vivid account once of how she brought the reluctant scholar to school on his first day there, by promising him a ride on the rocking horse which stood in the classroom. Sure enough when they reached school the teacher sat him on the horse and left him to rock to his heart's content. There were no more protests after that. But how well, even at that young age, Eilish understood how to reassure a child. It was an art she was to practise all her life whether in coaxing homesick kindergarten children to eat their dinner or simply allowing nieces and nephews to enjoy her company by enjoying theirs.

Eilish was 18 when she decided to join the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Mary. At the end of her Novitiate in Ferrybank, Waterford, she was professed in 1949. Life in community brought her to a number of different places including Lisburn and Rathmore in the North of Ireland, Penmaenmawr in North Wales and Carlisle twice - once in St. Gabriel's School where past pupils remember her as an apple-cheeked Sister Dominic and then again for the last 23 years of her life. After the Second Vatican Council when religious were encouraged to return to their baptismal names, she took the Irish version of Elizabeth - Eilish.

Living and working in different communities gave Sr. Eilish a variety of experience. She was in the North of Ireland at the height of the troubles - her home country, but one at war with itself. To keep one's head in such a situation, to pursue justice and practise forgiveness can never be easy. Eilish remained free from bitterness. She was of course Irish to the backbone, but she saw others as individuals, not as representatives of a side or nation. As such they were worthy of her respect and love.

People often described Sr. Eilish as wise. She had a native wisdom, but during her years in the Retreat House in Penmaenmawr, she was immersed in that particular atmosphere of silence, prayer and discernment which foster the growth of wisdom. From Retreat - Givers and Retreatants alike she learned much. As the Gospel says of our Lady, she treasured these things in her heart. Eilish never became a Counsellor or Spiritual Director in the formal sense, but what a wealth of wisdom was at hand for those who came to her for help.

During the early period of Eilish's life as a religious prevailing attitudes tended to be narrow to the point at times of heartlessness. Eilish had an unusual capacity for the time for sorting out wood from trees in the tangled forest of religious observance. It might show itself in finding a second egg for the priest's breakfast when an ascetic superior had prescribed one. Whenever humanity was in conflict with rule, humanity won. Sometimes it was a matter of common sense prevailing. Sister Eilish and her great friend Sister Dolly were once caught in a thunderous shower when returning to Rathmore from the town. The driveway from the gate to the house is a mile long. So they hailed a taxi - a thing unheard of - and drove up to the front door in state. Their triumph was splendid until they had to ask the Superior for the fare.

Eilish's last years in Carlisle were perhaps especially fruitful. She had always been a superb cook and competent house-keeper. The intention was that now she should be free to take up outside ministry. And she did, only she kept up much of her former work as well. Increasingly though house-keeping became home-maker. She became a Eucharistic Minister and joined the St. Vincent de Paul Society visiting and bringing Communion to the sick and house-bound. She had a reassuring presence and a deep personal faith which touched the lonely, so often suffering from dryness or doubt.

Eilish was a great supporter of Ecumenism. One of the last events she attended was the Woman's World Day of Prayer at the Church of Scotland earlier this month. But what many of us were especially aware of was her presence behind every event in the house: the prayer groups, the Literature Class, the S.H.M. Extended Family, showing that every work of the house is done in the name of the Whole Community.

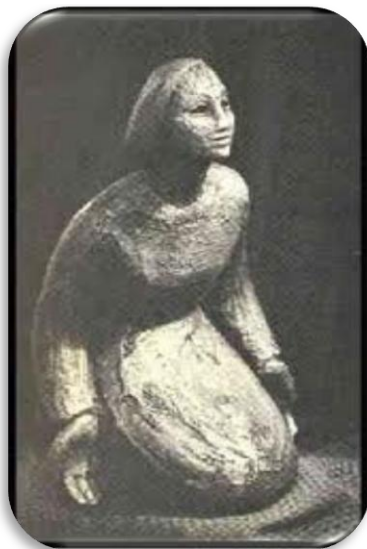
Eilish was deeply attached to her family. Each member was special to her, not only her brothers and sisters but their children and grandchildren to whom she will always be 'Aunty Lily'. Peter, the boy on the rocking horse, is the only sibling to survive her - sadly no longer able to travel. But Jean his wife who was so close to Eilish has courageously made the journey to be with us today as have so many of her nieces and nephews.

Everyone has some personal memory of Eilish. One person said to me, 'If learnt anything of humility I learnt it from her'. Another said after her recovery from illness some years ago 'I've missed her so much. To me she was always one of the lads - an odd way of putting it perhaps but it captures something of her genius for being all things to all men. She could laugh with the best of them or offer silent companionship, with equal grace. To few it is given to be so serenely and completely oneself.

Her death has felt like a devastation to us but I sense that her mission to spread unity and peace is not over. No one could have lived with Eilish without becoming a better person for it.

May she rest in peace.

Mary Lamble



SR. FRANCIS FIELDING: 1922 – 2012



Each of us here today has memories of Sr. Francis - Auntie Kathleen as she was known to my generation of the Grants and Fieldings. My earliest memories go back to those framed photographs of her and Auntie Jo that hung for years in our Grandmother's front parlour – fascinating pictures of both of them dressed like brides on their reception day or in the full religious habit on the day of their profession. Then there were the visits to the convent in Ferrybank – annually to see Auntie Jo, but only once every five years to see Auntie Kathleen, as she lived in far away Liverpool!

When things changed and they both came home **to visit us**, we got to know them better. Especially Kathleen, Sr. Francis, who until recent years greatly enjoyed her visit home, when she would spend lots of time with the family, chatting over a cup of tea - or something a little stronger if the occasion was right! Being in her company was always enjoyable – wit and good humour were never lacking, as all her family here today have experienced.

Francis spent the first decades of her religious life in the old Seafield community, and during those years she was a teacher and then head in St. Elizabeth's School, Bootle. It was after retirement from school that she began 'travelling'. She was sent first to Ferrybank and I remember vividly at a province meeting around that time, when the 'big issue' of sisters being sent to new places was being hotly debated, scripture being quoted etc, Francis with characteristic humour and frankness broke the atmosphere, stating "I was the one who stepped out of the boat!"

From Ferrybank she was sent to Manor Park, an inner-city parish in the East End of London, a place that was very different from Ferrybank, to be part of a new community and a new way of life there. She loved the people of Manor Park and was greatly loved by them. Her next move was to Morecambe, another new community, and while she was sad to leave Manor Park – and let it be known how she felt (!) - she soon made Morecambe her home and made good friends there too. Finally she came back to Liverpool and her presence here in the community was one of lightness, warmth and humour. It was here that she was well loved and cared for by the staff and the community in her final months and weeks.

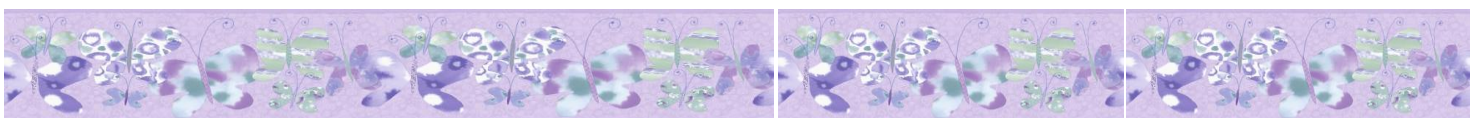
In **all** the places where Francis lived, people grew to love her because she spent time with them, talked with them, listened to them, and teased them. And in all of that time of being with them, people also saw something deeper in her, the strength of her faith.

The youngest of five children, Francis outlived them all, and so experienced the loss of each one in turn, beginning with the sad death of her sister Jo, Sr. Immaculata, in 1970 at a relatively young age, the loss of her mother a few years later, then of her brothers Michael (1988) and John (1989) and her sister Annie (1999). Less than a year ago she lost her nephew, our brother, Ned. Through both the good times and the hard times Francis' faith and courage sustained her. She grew old very gracefully – always enjoying life and always ready for banter and fun. Had she lived a few more weeks she would have celebrated her Platinum jubilee – 70 years of religious profession.

Francis, Auntie Kathleen, thank you for your long and fruitful life which affected so many lives for the better. We will miss you but we believe that you are already celebrating Easter in your new life with God, in the company of all who have gone before you. In the words of the late John O'Donoghue, poet, priest and philosopher we pray:

*May you continue to inspire us:
To enter each day with a generous heart....
To serve the call of courage and love...
Until we see your face again...*

Margaret Fielding



NEWS FROM THE REFLECTION GROUPS

RSHM from **BARROW, CASTLEMILK AND CARLISLE** - 13 in all – met together in Carlisle on Saturday 18th February for the first time as an area reflection group.



We had agreed to reflect and pray before the meeting on section 1 of “The Fire in these Ashes” by Joan Chittister.

This proved to be a very inspiring and thought provoking gathering with a rich sharing which was very helpful and challenging to all of us who met together.

Most of us agreed that Joan C’s book, though written in 1995, was very relevant to us today. The idea of rekindling the fire, Grieshog, as an allegory for religious life was seen as helpful in keeping the old fire alive for the sake of building new ones, a new flame bringing new life to the congregation.

Various questions were raised: “What burning desires for Religious Life do we have today?” “How do we emphasise ‘hope’ in the culture of today?” “How do we promote women as leaven in the church?” and others.

We agreed to meet again as a reflection group to try to develop some of these questions and to look at further sections of the book.

DUNMURRY/LISBURN REFLECTION GROUP

Foundation Day 2012



We met on 24th February in Rathmore Grammar School with the staff and pupils. Third year pupils had mounted a very interesting display on the life of the Founders and the coming of the S.H.M. sisters to N. Ireland. This was combined with the history of Rathmore School and the works of the various sisters who were part of the apostolate of education there since 1949. This was followed by a celebratory meal in Dunmurry Community.

On March 5th we met in Lisburn. We had reflected on Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 of “Fire in these Ashes”. There was a very rich sharing of thoughts from the book. All agreed they found the study interesting and inspiring.

Some Reflections

- **Only religious can renew Religious life. It will not die out in the future if it is alive in religious to-day.**
- **Each religious is a carrier of the charism which is a gift given for the life and vitality of the church.**
- **The need to bring a contemplative presence and courage to fan the flame in the grieshog.**
- **Our identity will be the quality of our presence in making the gospel alive.**
- **Our call to-day is to be faithful to the end not looking back or being concerned for the future but living in joyful hope.**



The new **JPIC** Team increased the number of “antennae” people with a view to capturing and developing the integration of JPIC issues into our ordinary, everyday living. Interesting information was received from one of the “antennae” sisters in Ireland and gives a ‘flavour’ of what is happening in one local area. See the JPIC section for details.



SUNFLOWERS

Anne Wells & Eleanor Dalton

The Sunflowers bloomed earlier than usual this year. We met during Easter week and were blessed with beautiful sunny, although a little chilly, weather. There were 23 of us in all and we were delighted to be joined by Ursula, Thérèse Marie and Dominique from France.

We appreciated Mary Jo’s news from the EGC meeting in Rome including an update on our Institute statistics and a report on how some of the younger sisters in our congregation envisage the future. Mary Jo Martin also gave a report regarding the International Treasurers’ meeting. We spent some time reflecting and sharing on the future of our congregation... in particular the challenges we face regarding mission, leadership and the possibility of being joined by a junior professed at a future date either from our own province or another.

On the Saturday afternoon we were blessed to be joined by Fr Diarmuid O’Murchu. He gave a short, challenging and insightful input asking:

- What theological consciousness sustains us?
- Do we have a Mission statement for the 21st century? Has it been internalised? How is it shared with collaborators?
- Acknowledging the age-profile/ personnel-profile of the group what needs to happen to reactivate commitment to the Charism? What might ‘passing on the torch’ mean for the group?

He invited our own questions either related to his input or questions we had raised earlier among ourselves and we had a very fruitful discussion. After supper we celebrated the Eucharist with him and the community in Noddfa chapel and were glad to be joined by the ‘Power clan,’ eleven of Patrice’s family who brought an added delightful dimension to the weekend and our celebration.



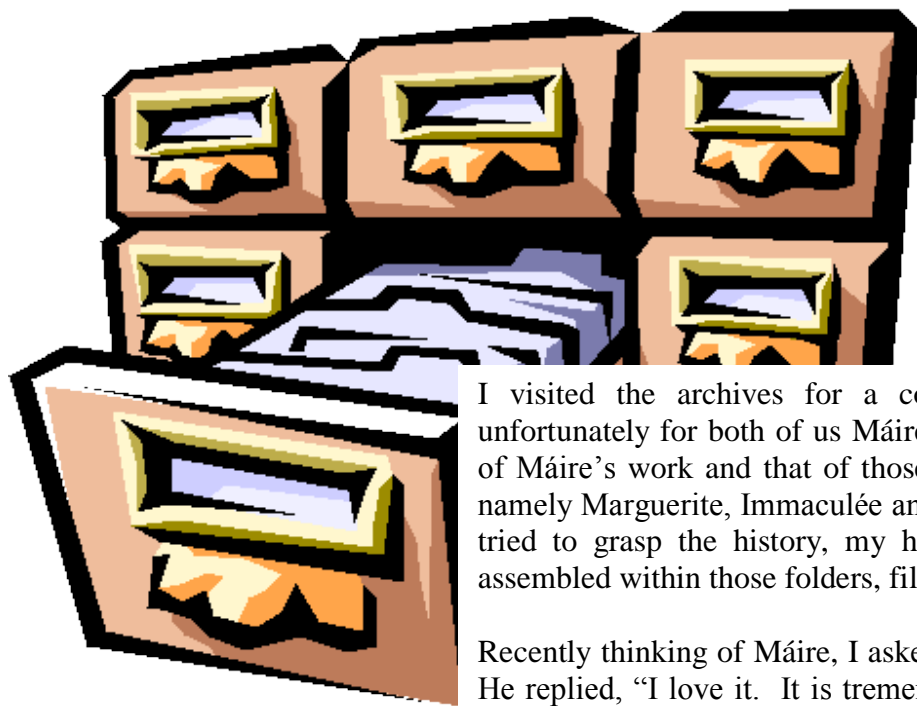
As always there was time to relax, to chat, to pray and go out into the sunshine and enjoy the stillness and peace of Penmaenmawr. Touching base with everyone, in the warmth of welcome from the Noddfa community, is always encouraging and hearing what people are doing stimulating. It is enriching to hear what is happening in the wider community and in different parts of our province.



Next years meeting will be two full days in Noddfa, beginning on the evening of Thursday the 4th April until the morning of Sunday the 7th April 2013.

THE PROVINCE ARCHIVES

Catherine Dunne

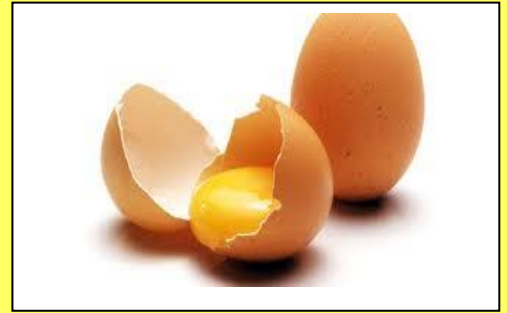


I visited the archives for a couple of days last week. Fortunately or unfortunately for both of us Máire was away. I think I grasped some glimpse of Máire's work and that of those, (ancestors) who worked there before her, namely Marguerite, Immaculée and Rosemary. As a 'lay person' going there I tried to grasp the history, my history, so painstakingly and systematically assembled within those folders, files and boxes.

Recently thinking of Máire, I asked the Irish SJ archivist if he liked his work. He replied, "I love it. It is tremendous here. The Jesuits have a great respect for their history". There in those rooms in Upminster, I too loved that I belonged to the vast spectrum of history represented there. Stored there were the stories of the lives of care and dedication to children, adults, the sick, parishes and to each other in community. Records of buildings which were extended or built with scarce resources helped by our sparse living, yet the standards and variety showed nothing spared. We can surely take comfort that the witness of such generosity from all, front of 'stage' or 'back stage' touched the hearts of many and is still 'Good News' in their lives.

LIFE

Reflections on an egg!! (A dream – so topical, just now!!)



So fragile!

So vulnerable!

Warm roughness! –
brindled, brown and speckled!

An egg, a small brown egg!

beautiful – and holding beauty,
beauty yet unborn – potential beauty,
beauty of wing,
of flight,
of hue,
of song.

Beauty of LIFE –

all life – my life – God's life in me,
God's life in others,
given me –
for what?

To crush it

break it – so easy, so very easy!
spoil its beauty,
kill its life –
(a slimy squashy mess!) –
offal – to be thrown aside in disgust.

So easy, - so very easy to be ungentle!

Or set it aside,

let it be – admire it,
render it sterile.

Never to wing aloft on the wind,
to turn, to glide, to sing ...
keep life imprisoned – enshelled
in a narrow cramping globe –
beautiful, but impotent.

Or nurture it – in patience

as a mother-bird, her egg,
in patient, quiet content
to wait the silent point of birth,
to wait and watch,
to warm it with my care,

to feel, to hear it

pulse and throb to life.

To know the thrill of creation

of CREATION,
of birth,
of flight,
of joy,
of mirth.

To wait in constant, listening, patient care

until, through death
beauty, life
springs forth –
and all is changed.

Maire Brid Mackey

