



Extended Family Newsletter

Issue 36 - April 2020

Mission Statement

At this difficult time, I must hope that this newsletter finds you in good health and send you every good wish for the coming Easter season. Keep hope in your hearts.

The Core Group wish to remind us all of the Mission Statement of the Extended Family. I have reproduced this as the final page of the newsletter in a format that may be printed for display, should you so wish.

The summer newsletter should have been my final offer after eight years as 'editor' but restrictions on meetings may mean that the next newsletter will not be until the autumn under a new editor. It has been a privilege to have read about all the activities of the Extended Family and I must thank you for your good wishes which I often receive.

Many thanks, especially, to all the contributors and to Sister Thérèse-Marie in sunny Béziers for her tireless work on translations for the French edition.

Peter Naylor

October 11th to 13th – Annual Gathering at Noddfa

The Gathering took place at Noddfa on the 2nd weekend of October, Friday 11th to Sunday 13th. This year's theme carried on the long-standing thread of "Our Journey in Faith", with the specific theme being "Following the Call".

This year demand for places was high and it looked, at one time, as if we would be oversubscribed. Eventually, 27 people were present, mostly from Carlisle, Barrow, Furness, and Liverpool. Sadly, at the last minute, illness prevented 3 people from being with us. Once again, this year, we were fortunate to have Fr Norman Johnson join us as 'our resident priest'.

The weekend followed what is now the traditional format: gathering on Friday afternoon before our evening meal, followed by the welcoming and introductory after-dinner session and then free time before bed. Saturday began with Morning Prayer and Adoration, followed by Capacitar and then the morning 'input session'. After lunch, a Scripture Sharing session was followed by free time and optional activities before preparing for Mass, celebrated in the Chapel with Fr Norman presiding. After dinner, there was the famous Saturday Night Social where people shared their talents and party pieces, with everybody joining in the singing. Sr Pierre –

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fresh from her convalescence at Arrowsmith House – treated us to a rendition of “Molly Malone”, the wheelbarrow being replaced by her 3-wheeled Rollator. Sunday also started with Morning Prayer, which was followed by three short sessions based on looking at the past, present, and future of the RSHM and the Extended Family. After reviewing and evaluating the weekend, it was time for our final meal together and then, all too soon, it was time to go home again.

As always, the prayer sessions were wonderfully prepared and led, were well received and appreciated as very spiritual, thought provoking, and moving. Celebrating mass in the chapel is always a special part of the weekend and, again this year, it was another uplifting experience. It is just like having a house mass for family and friends, celebrated with a priest who is also family member.

Some of the sessions, mostly led by members of the NEP Extended Family Core Group, are briefly summarised here:

Friday Evening – *“The Call – in Gailhac’s time and today”*, led by John Newby, looked at how Fr Gailhac and Jorge Bergoglio (Pope Francis) had heard and followed their call in the Church of ‘their today’ – in the late-19th and mid-20th centuries. This theme was inspired by the lines in the Prayer of the Institute that read:

“Help us to assume our commitment of fidelity to the mission of Christ in the church of today.”

While preparing the talk, learning about how each of these two great men had followed the Call, many similarities between their lives and the development of their vocation were found. There are, obviously, differences too. Some key points of their life stories and their journeys in faith were shared in the hope that we will be inspired by the example of Gailhac and Pope Francis, acknowledge that we – each of us – has been called, and that we will be committed to supporting each other (Sisters, Friends and Extended Family alike) as we strive to follow our own Faith Journey.

This session ended with an exercise to gather people’s thoughts by asking them to write a single word on a ‘Post-It’ note to describe what feelings Fr Gailhac and Pope Francis generate within them when:

- You hear Gailhac’s word being read or Pope Francis speaking
- You read their writings
- You pray their prayers
- You witness their example

The results of this will feature in a future Newsletter.

Saturday Morning – *“Hearing the Call through the Cry of the Poor and the Cry of the World”*, led by Eileen Silvester and Greg Smith, considered how Gailhac and Pope Francis were both focussed on the poor and how to meet their real-life needs: serving the needs of the poor in the places where they live is key to each man’s living faith. Readings from the letters of Fr Gailhac and the writings of Pope Francis were used to reinforce these points. Then, attention was turned to the Pope’s document, “Laudato Si”, and his views on how we should care for our common home, the planet on which we live, which we share with all of humankind. We were asked to think and to pray about how we could answer these calls.

Sunday Morning

“Mission of the Extended Family: Remembering the Past and Remembering the EF and activities during the past year”, led by Sr Catherine Dolan and Sr Moira Lever started with a look back to 2014, when the Extended Family was formed. Some extracts from the General Council letter were shared with the group and discussed. Sr Moira shared the Extended Family Mission Statement, which she helped to develop during the formation of the Extended Family by the founding Core Group. A copy of that is included in the Newsletter.

The group were then asked to share thoughts on their experiences as members of the Extended Family. After this, each EF Group present was asked to give an informal (and brief) summary of what activities their group had undertaken in the last year. As always, this led to more discussion and sharing. The results of this reflection were captured group by group.

Barrow and Furness

- The sisters leaving Barrow 12 months ago
- Continuing the prayer meetings
- A session looking at Laudato Si
- Fund-raising for the Holy Spirit Sisters’ Monze Mission Hospital and the Neo-natal Intensive Care Unit (following on from Sr Juunza’s visit in 2018) £2,000+ raised of the target £3,500.

Carlisle

- Maintaining and Developing links with Barrow
- Sr Mariana’s visit to Carlisle
- The Mozambique Disaster Appeal – Afternoon Tea raised £1,000+
- Mass at the Convent on Fridays
- The WhatsApp Prayer Group

Liverpool

- Gatherings to celebrate feast days on 24th February and 13th November
- Working with other groups: the Crisis Centre, Faith and Light, the Missions, RSHM in Zambia, etc, etc.

Penmaenmawr (Pen)

- Pen Family meetings at Noddfa
- Hosting visits to Noddfa by groups from Castlemilk and from Skipton (where the Sisters left many years ago, but the group still comes)
- JPIC Parish Group meetings
- Links with Brazil Community and Extended Family

“The Present – Reflections on the General Chapter” - led by Sr Ursula Canavan, Provincial Superior who told us about the experience of being at the General Chapter in Belo Horizonte in Brazil, gathered with the General Council and all of the delegates elected by the Provincial Chapters held in late 2018. In all, 44 members of the institute worked together for a month to determine the vision and direction of the Institute for the next 6 years.

The theme for the Chapter was:

*“Called to Continue the Mission of Jesus Christ:
firm in faith, vibrant in hope, rooted in love, one in
service.”*



At this point in November 2019, the results of the Chapter had only just been published and were not yet shared with all of the Sisters of the RSHM. So, understandably, Sr Ursula wasn't able to share them with us on the day. That news will come later in the year, after the Sisters have been informed.

Sr Margaret Fielding, who many of us know through her presence at previous Noddfa Gatherings and through her visits to give talks in our parishes, was elected as the new General Superior, to replace Sr Rosamund. Until recently, Sr Margaret had been working in Belo Horizonte as the Novice Mistress and she, along with Sr Catherine Dolan collated the output from our Provincial Chapter in Dublin, including the vision statement.

One thing that the Chapter had examined was the relationship with the Extended Family and, just as in the initiating letter and the Provincial Chapter outcome, the hope that EF members may be able to support the Sisters more closely was expressed and explored. It will be interesting to see what news emerges on this point.

“Extended Family - The Future – Reflections on what might be.” - led by Sr Moira Lever. Sr Moira led us in a 'brainstorming session' with a focus on ideas about what we could do in common as well as individual groups, again canvassing ideas from each group present.

Carlisle suggested:

- Wider use of WhatsApp groups for communication
- Using Pope Francis' Monthly Prayer as a basis for prayer meetings

Liverpool suggested:

- Support for Janet in Zambia
- The need for 'word of mouth' communications with people who do not or cannot use smart phones and computers or tablets

Barrow suggested

- Working to consolidate the Prayer Group meetings
- Working more with other groups
- Reaching out into the Parishes and to other nearby groups, like the Skipton group

Pen Suggested

- Looking into adopting the use of WhatsApp
- Developing a way of lending their extensive library of books about Gailhac to people who are interested in his life and works

Other points raised in discussion were:

- How to share knowledge about how to develop the use of WhatsApp
- How to better distribute the UN and JPIC information shared by Sr Dorothy

The need to find a new editor for the EF Newsletter since Peter Naylor, who has done this role for several years after taking over from Patrick Black, wishes to retire from the role early in 2020.

All of these points can be addressed by local groups and the Core Group in the coming year. As always, the weekend was made by gathering together with other Family members in prayer, worship and kinship.

John Newby

EF Representation on the RSHM Justice Peace & Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Team

Some time ago we were asked if there could be some representation of the Extended Family on the JPIC team. The team had a meeting at Noddfa on Ash Wednesday, 26th March 2020. Sister Mary Jo, Sister Ellen and Sister Dorothy were joined by Sue Black and Greg Smith. The meeting explored ways in which we could work together. The following is a brief summary of some of our thoughts and ideas.

- We would share information with EF groups regarding the work of the Team and their representation as a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) at the United Nations
- Raise awareness in planned EF activities of the Sustainable Development Goals
- Raise awareness in our Diocesan/Parish/School activities
- Be mindful in our own lives of our need to care for the earth.

If you want to find out more about the work of the UN, you can follow this link, which gives videos relating to the history of the UN

<https://www.un.org/un70/en/content/videos/index.html>

You can also find other UN videos on You Tube.

You can read about the work of the RSHM NGO at <https://www.rscm-rshm.org/how-we-serve/rshm-at-the-un/>

...and about the JPIC Team at <https://www.rscm-rshm.org/how-we-serve/working-for-justice/>

Greg Smith

Extended Family Group at Noddfa

The Sisters at Noddfa have, for many years, been given great support by an active group of Friends from the local area and beyond.

The Sisters are involved in Parish activities and since 2009 have supported the parish Justice and Peace group. There is a Mass every Thursday in Noddfa and two of the regular attendees expressed an interest in knowing more about the RSHM and becoming members of the Extended Family.

On Thursday, 20th February, at mass in the Noddfa chapel, three new members were welcomed into the Extended Family. They are: Noreen O'Neill, Gail Owen, and Bernadette Travers, who all

have long associations with Noddfa. In a simple ceremony during mass, they were each presented with a copy of the Extended Family Prayer Card and a copy of the inspirational 2004 General Council Letter that instituted the Extended Family. These were presented by John Newby, a member of the NEP EF Core Group, and Sister Ana Luisa Pinto from the Portuguese Province, who was elected to the General Council at the General Chapter in Brazil: both were visiting Noddfa.

We wish them well as the new group forms and grows, and look forward to meeting them at the Noddfa Gathering alongside our long-term Penmaenmawr resident and regular attendee, Margaret Green. Please remember the new group in your prayers at your local EF meetings.

John Newby

23rd February 2020 – Extended Family at Seafield

Eleven members met with Sisters Eleanor, Paula, Joyce and Gertrude at Seafield on Sunday 23rd February 2020. Four apologies were received.

Everyone was welcomed by Eleanor who started our afternoon Reflection on how in our age, where we have a breakdown in civilisation and past certainties have been lost, we can make God known to others. We cannot stay in the past and the aim of everyone must be to live life to the full.

Joyce read a passage from the Old Testament and one from John in the New Testament in the lead up to Eleanor playing a video of Sister Joan Chittister's interview with Oprah Winfrey about how in the United States they have begun searching and researching the way forward. Jesus lived in his age, Father Gailhac lived in his age following Jesus' way and we now have to live in our age but still as Jesus would have lived. So how we can bridge the gap between the ages? Throughout the video Eleanor stopped the tape and we had a general and interesting discussion on each of the points that Sister Joan had been making. As a follow-up her book "The Time is Now" was recommended.

Kath reminded us that we had suggested some time ago the possibility of a fund-raising event with the proceeds given to Janet Hardman who hopes to return to Zambia again this year. Janet's and her colleague's work all has to rely on self-funding. We would have to think again about whether such an event was possible this year.

Kath said that she would be attending a meeting in Carlisle next day where the Core Group are trying to build up a directory of the locations of all EFM Groups. In some cases where the RSHM have left the area, their EFM have continued their meetings but in others, of course, when the Sisters have left the EFM meetings have ceased. Planning is also underway for the October visit to NODDFA.

To conclude the Meeting, whilst playing the John Foley Hymn "*Earthen Vessels*", Kath reflected on its beauty and discussed the comforting message to us in each verse; i.e., "*moulded by God to be vessels*"; "*the love of God is the treasure in us*"; and "*a light has shone in the darkness*".

Kath read from Matthew's Gospel on The Last Judgment: ". . . *For I was hungry . . .*"; we prayed the "*Hail Mary*"; and hopefully we will all share the Light of Christ to all we meet, especially now that the Season of Lent is approaching.

Pauline McManus

News from the Extended Family in Furness

Monthly Prayer Meetings

The monthly prayer meetings continue to bring together a dozen or so people on the first Monday of each month. So far, 7 different members of the group have led our prayers, using different forms of prayer, including contemplative, reflective, Taizé, and scriptural prayer, and the Rosary. Sr Pierre always keeps in touch with the group in the days before the meeting. She's always keen to know what theme we are using and who will be leading the session.

It was a surprise to learn that the theme we were using for our December meeting was the same one that Sr Pierre had chosen to share with her Carlisle knitting group – "Advent seen through the eyes of Mary". A 'God-incidence' or the Holy Spirit at work? It's getting on for 18 months since the Sisters left Barrow and Sr Pierre led her last prayer meeting with us but, so far, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we have been able to keep the spiritual heartbeat of our Extended Family firmly beating on. It is interesting to note that when we 'skip a beat' in August, the main holiday month, everybody is glad to be back together in September. It will be good if we can build up to attracting the number of EF members that Sr Pierre used to draw to the sessions at the Convent.

Founder's Birthday Gathering

The Holy Spirit had a hand in setting the theme for our autumn Gathering. We were struggling to find a theme when a flash of inspiration struck during mass one day. Our theme at Noddfa last year was "Following the Call". I spotted our seminarian, Philip Wrigley (another Son of Carlisle), who was on placement with Fr Manny in our parish of Our Lady of Furness. "He's following the call", I thought. "Fr Manny, Fr Ajish and Deacon Steve have also followed the Call". The basis for our Gathering was struck. I only had to ask the question of them.

A great, unexpected benefit of our Gathering was that another parish activity, held in the Parish Centre in the morning, forced us to move to an afternoon session. Because of that, it made it much easier for people from outside the Furness area to travel and to come and join us. Sr Moira travelled down from Carlisle with Sr Catherine and Sr Pierre. Wanda Kruszynska, a regular at Noddfa, travelled up from Lytham and came along with her friend Kate Pearson (one of the Furness EF). And, last but not least, the Nolan sisters, Kath and Angela, and Sr Eleanor travelled up from "the 'Pool". As you can imagine, our shared table lunch after Mass allowed the chance for a good natter and a catch up on each other's news. It's a good job that we allowed a full hour for lunch.

Fr Manny and Philip were able to support us on the day and both spoke very openly about how they were called and about the very different paths they travelled through realising their vocation.

Philip spoke first and surprised us when he described the significant hurdles he has overcome to be accepted by the Lancaster Dioceses as a seminarian. Despite all of the trials he faced, he is deeply committed to completing his training and being ordained as a priest so that he can dedicate his life to serving God and his people.

Fr Manny then spoke and told us of path he took, commenting that he didn't suffer the same difficulties as Philip. His path seemed to be much smoother but, the difficulties he faced were much more about his own confidence in his desire to be a priest. He then shared with us a letter written to him by Sister Brenda, a Carmelite nun from Preston who befriended him and who had helped him to develop spiritually. He has kept her handwritten letter for more than 35 years. Her gentle words of encouragement and the way in which he read it moved all of us gathered there in to quiet amazement. Her words helped him to decide to follow his priestly vocation and his ordination in 1984 at Sacred Heart Church in Barrow – just across the road from the house in Pottery Street where he grew up.

Both stories were very moving, maybe in different ways, but each told us of the dedication that our seminarians and priests have to their vocation despite the difficulties they face. Their willingness to share their stories was very much appreciated. We are very grateful to both of them for sharing their stories with us.

As always, we finished off our day with scripture sharing, sharing readings that speak of the Call of God to his people and prayer.

So, after a shaky start to our planning, not knowing where we were going to, we had a very good Gathering and a really pleasant surprise at all our visitors coming to support us – for which we are very grateful. We shall have to adopt afternoon sessions as our model from now on.

Coronavirus Impact

Like the rest of the country, and totally unexpectedly, we have all gone into self-isolation or social distancing mode, with a few members going into full safeguarding mode. So, that has put paid to our monthly prayer meetings for the foreseeable future and probably to the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Mary Gathering in Carlisle in June.

So, we have gone into on-line communication mode and 'attending' live-streamed masses and other services from St Mary's church in Barrow. It seems strange, but it is vital in bringing together the parish community – and people from further afield, through family and Extended Family connections.

One thing that has been set up in collaboration with the Carlisle Group, and based on the EF Prayer Circle Membership is a WhatsApp Group called SHM EF Chat. This allows Extended Family members to communicate socially and to ask for help or support. At the moment, a lot of chat is from the Barrow group, but that doesn't stop its wider use across the Province.

The Prayer Circle remains in place for its originally intended purpose: asking the EF members to pray for your petitions. Because membership is increasing, it's time to produce a 'Users Guide' for both of the Groups, to make sure that the Prayer Circle is not used for Chat and vice versa. If you are a WhatsApp user and want to join the Prayer Circle or Chat groups, please email your mobile number to shmef.furness@gmail.com and you will be added to the group

The Coronavirus means there will be difficult times ahead for many people. I don't often agree with Boris Johnson, but I do believe that 'things will get worse before they get better'. One of the impacts of this crisis will be to unite us an Extended Family, especially in prayer and caring for each other. If you have any ideas about how we can better support each other, then please share those ideas among all the groups in the Province, using the Core Group and your contacts in each area.

Please God, we will weather the storm and still be here for each other when it is over.

John Newby

Noddfa Gathering 2020 – Friday, 2nd October to Sunday, 4th October

This year's Gathering is planned to take place over the first weekend in October. Obviously, these arrangements will need to be kept under review as the Covid-19 pandemic progresses and we will keep you informed of any changes.

This year's theme is taken from the outcome of the General Council. The Sisters are working hard to address what changes need to be made to the organisation and infrastructure of the Institute. So, the Core Group settled on "Change" our theme.

We are fortunate that Deacon Steve Donnan and his wife, Karen, have agreed to be our guest speakers for our Friday night opening session. Steve was ordained Deacon in 2017, so he and Karen and his family have been through great changes in their life. They will tell us their stories of going through these changes.

We will also have feedback from Sr Ursula about the changes that the Sisters are facing, and a session to learn about the changes in Mission that the Noddfa team has been through over the years.

Under normal circumstances, we would open the booking list to Extended Family members across the whole of the North European Province at the end of July and close it in mid-September to allow us time to finalise arrangements with Sr Patrice and her team. There will be 24 places available and, as always, these will be booked on a 'first come, first served' basis. Once we know what pandemic restrictions are lifted and the Core Group have reviewed the situation, we will let you know what the outcome is, whether we can go ahead, and what arrangements will be.

Little did we know when we chose the theme that we would all be facing up to the biggest and most unexpected changes that we have ever experienced in our lifetime. Whenever we do get to Noddfa, we will all have stories to share about how we've had to deal with change in our personal, family, community, and faith life.

Core Group

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 to the email address below.

Similarly, if you would no longer wish to receive the newsletter, please inform the editor at the address below.

E-mail: efnewsletter@outlook.com

SHM Extended Family Mission Statement

THAT ALL MAY HAVE LIFE

We, the Extended Family of the Sacred Heart of Mary, an international movement of people who share their vision, are called by the power of the Spirit and our shared concern for the well-being of other people to support them in their mission.

Challenged by the invitation of the sisters who work among us in our communities, by the Gospel, and by the injustice we see in our world, we are willing to respond to their needs and those of the people we serve.

Through their vision, we will place ourselves and whatever resources we are able to share into their hands so that we can also be of service to our brothers and sisters.

We will work with those who are most in need of justice enabling the powerless, the deprived, the marginalised, the voiceless to work for their own development and liberation.

We will join with them in the call to be community, to know and celebrate God's love for us and to make that love known to others.

As we become more deeply inserted in the realities of the Church and the world, we will use our individual and corporate talents to work creatively in diverse ministries for the promotion of justice.

Mary is our model as we seek to be open to the Spirit, to centre our lives in Jesus Christ, to be people of prayer and compassion and to give authentic and joyful witness to the values of the Gospel wherever we are.