



# Síolta



Presentation North East Province, Ireland

April 2015

Edition Number 3



*Primroses in Spring,  
taken in Emo Court, Portarlinton,  
by Sr Mary Rossiter*

## SOLAS

Solas a iomprann i gcónaí an fis

Solas a shoillsíonn i gcaitheamh na n-aois

Solas nár múcadh ariamh leis an gaoith

Solas thug dóchas do dhream buailte faoi

Solas sceith sólas in am na bPéin Dlí

Solas ar lasadh i gCathair Chorcaí

*Ise an solas, anois a's go deo*

*Gníomhaí a ghníomhaigh, a h-ainm - Naineo*

**An Bráthair B.C. Ó Maoleoin cfc**



## CONTENTS

⌘ Page 3: Greetings from the Provincial Leadership Team



⌘ Page 4: Easter Dawn in Portadown, Sr Yvonne Jennings, Portadown

⌘ Page 6: The Tapestry Hymn, Sr Eileen Glendon, Kilkenny



⌘ Page 7: Galway - Celebrating 200 years, Sr Anne Fox, Galway & Sr Yvonne Jennings, Portadown

⌘ Page 12: Nano Nagle Centre Slovakia

⌘ Page 13: The Mullingar Story, Sr Catherine Brosnan, Kilkock & Sr Annette O'Brien, Magnooth



⌘ Page 17: Carrickmacross Lace, Sr Anne Donohue, Corrib Park, Galway

⌘ Page 14: A Local History, Tramore, Sr Assumpta O'Neill, Dungarvan

### Galway Collage Pictures:

1. Nano Nagle Pageant performed by students from the 3 schools
2. Transition Year Art Students with the Triptych
3. Presentation Secondary School, Galway
4. Scoil Bhríde, Shantalla
5. Scoil Chroí Íosa, Galway
6. Gifts are brought to the Altar
7. School Choir
8. A large crowd gathered for the celebration
9. The President & his wife with Srs Anne Fox, Margarita Ryan, Helen Hyland and Sr Sharon Fagan (Newfoundland)
10. **L to R.** Sr. Anne Fox, Séamus Mc.Guinness, Ellie-Ann Conneely, Kelly Moran, Sr. Helen Hyland, Kevin Belton, Sr. Mary Deane
11. Sr Helen Hylands' address.



### ***Greetings from the Provincial Leadership Team***

It is in the spirit of the Easter season and of Spring that we introduce this *Sólta* number 3. Since the last edition we have indeed 'crossed over' into a new land! It seemed right to continue with the title, at least for one more issue, as some of the items were already in hand before January. Also because we see the present phase of becoming one province as very much a sowing time.

In this spirit, we want to assure you that our travels up and down the Province over the last two months have been undertaken very deliberately. We as PLT are agreed that we – the Province community - can only do good work together if we first of all establish or re-establish good connections and recognise that the project that is the North-East Unit is a shared endeavour. We want to pursue it in the hopeful spirit of our new Constitutions and Directives.

Country roads which were only lines on maps have become routes with destinations – pilgrim paths, one might say. Roundabouts and cross-roads have taken on a new symbolism. And Google Maps has done its bit in helping us discern which signposts are actually pointing in the wrong direction!

Invariably, we have returned 'home' to the table of PLT warmed by your welcome, inspired by your stories and alive with appreciation. We thank each one sincerely.

We acknowledge too that you have been gracious in your welcome to Mary, Anne and Fatima from the Congregational Leadership Team as they proceeded with their Visitation in the Province. All three sat with us too for a morning, and our conversation was encouraging.

We are, of course, fully aware of the challenging aspects of our Province and the imperative of good planning. Through our various portfolios we are progressing the tasks associated with *Our Way of Life*, fresh expressions of our charism, health-care, ministries, stewardship (both property and finance) communication and administration, all in context of the blending of services already in place while observing our duty of care and commitment to justice.

Just last Saturday, for example, there was the 'inaugural' event in Portlaoise, where 19 Sisters and 47 lay people requested support for the establishment of groups of associates/friends in new locations as well as re-vitalising existing groups, with a focus on the 'now' dimension of Nano and not limiting ourselves to history!

In the broader Congregational context we are also aware of enrichment through the arrival of Newfoundland. Some have been privileged to experience personally the characteristic vibrancy (not to mention Irish-ness) of their culture. The rest of us will hopefully get the flavour of that as time goes on.

Finally, we say thank you to all who have planned, contributed to and brought this edition of *Sólta* to completion.

Sincere good wishes and every blessing to one and all

*Bernadette Conception Manganita Maura Mary Anne*



***Planting an oak tree, gift of former SE Province, at Mount St. Anne's.***



## EASTER DAWN IN PORTADOWN

The magnificent Easter Ceremonies have just been celebrated by people all over the Christian world in every town and village. Here in Portadown we had a very special ceremony organised by Churches Together, a group of local churches comprising Presbyterians, Methodists, Church of Ireland, Quakers, Salvation Army and Roman Catholics. The local leaders of these churches meet every month to pray and share fellowship. Members of the local Jesuit community and Presentation Sisters also participate.

As was the custom for the past few years, on Good Friday morning members of the various congregations walked in procession from different parts of the town, stopping at certain points along the way to read extracts from the Passion narratives. Eventually, they all met in the town Plaza in front of St Mark's Church of Ireland and together they walked through the town carrying the cross as the Church bell tolled. The walk finished with readings and prayers back in the plaza.



There was a new dimension to the service this year when a group from St Mark's Church of Ireland constructed and erected a tomb in the Plaza. They also organised a rota of soldiers to keep guard every hour until the Easter Dawn Service. The tomb was guarded throughout the day and night with many people stopping to talk to and pray with the volunteers who kept guard.

At sunrise on Easter Sunday over 100 people gathered for a prayer service conducted by Bishop Harold Millar of Down and Dromore diocese; the stone was rolled back from the tomb, the church railings were festooned with white balloons saying ‘He is Risen’ and everyone present sang the joyful Alleluias of Easter around a blazing fire. Afterwards tea and toast was served by the local Methodist church and the



sharing continued into the early morning. It was a very meaningful celebration in a town that is more known for divisive marches and demonstrations and it was a witness to what is possible when we all join together in our common Christian commemoration of the Lord’s Passion, death and Resurrection. It is a beacon of hope in a divided community and we all pray that through rituals such as this we come to be more aware of what unites us as followers of Christ.

*Sr Yvonne Jennings, Thomas St. Portadown*



## ***Tranquil Waters***

Acrylic on canvas

by

***Sr. Carmela Fitzpatrick,  
Kildare***



## THE TAPESTRY HYMN

(Family Prayer from the Famine Years)



*At morning's dawn and evening's shade,  
Mary, to thee we call for aid.  
At every hour while swift it flies,  
Mary, to thee our souls arise.*

*Yes, yes, thy dear and sacred name,  
Till life's last breath shall be our theme,  
Mary! our guide from childhood's day,  
Mary! to thee, to thee we pray.*

*Oh! grant us, ere our course is run,  
Ere we appear before thy son,  
Ere we at his tribunal kneel,  
Mary! thy own sweet aid to feel.*

*Oh! shed from thy all radiant throne,  
The light that still must guide us on.  
Grant us Contrition's healing sigh,  
In grace to live, in peace to die.*

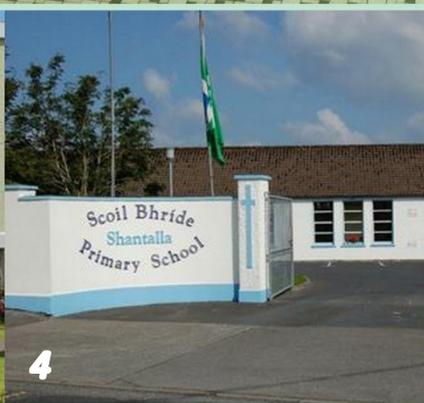
The Prayer to Our Lady, which in Mooncoin is called the **Tapestry Hymn**, was worked in cross stitch on native material by Mary Lucas, Corluddy, Carrigeen in June 1845. The Tapestry was presented to Knock by Mrs. Ellen Houlihan and is on display in Knock Folk Museum.

Mary Lucas' two sisters entered the Kilkenny Presentation Convent in 1842 and 1846. They both died very young and are buried in the Convent cemetery. Their grandmother, Mary Lucas, composed the prayer in the 1750's. It was recited twice daily by the family and we are told that when the country was racked by poverty and famine John Lucas and his relatives were producing large healthy crops of potatoes and other vegetables. John Lucas was able to donate potatoes and other vegetables to feed the poor of Waterford and Mooncoin. He also supplied food to the Presentation Nuns in Waterford who were running soup kitchens to feed the poor.

The prayer was set to music a few years ago by John Aldridge, resident organist at Knock Shrine. He got it at 1.00 p.m. and that very afternoon he played it for the 3.00 p.m. Mass. He said that it wrote itself! When the Mooncoin Sisters visit Knock Shrine each Summer he plays it for the Sisters by special request.

The Tapestry Hymn shows that the pupils at Mooncoin were taught the fine arts, including needlework, along with the more practical subjects.

*Sr Eileen Glendon, Kilkenny*



I loved the article in the November issue of *Síolta*, 'How the West was Won'. With George's Hill giving the inspiration and Kilkenny giving the personnel that makes us doubly blessed in Galway. With such generous prophets and doers for our foundation it's only right that we rejoice and give thanks on reaching our 200<sup>th</sup>!

The celebrations of the bicentenary of the arrival of the first Presentation Sisters from Kilkenny in 1815 and the ministry of education covering 200 years in Pres Primary/Scoil Chroí Íosa, Scoil Bhríde, and Pres Secondary took place on 26-29 March 2015. Everything seemed to conspire to make the weekend special and memorable. We had all around us spring's vibrant call to life and joy, our garden in a profusion of yellows, reds, greens and blues, our little cemetery cheerily announcing resurrection, our home refreshed following some makeover and St. Joseph's Church providing a welcoming space for our activities. Our Presentation houses in Galway were places of welcome for guests, neighbours, friends, relatives and Sisters. A special welcome was accorded to Sisters from Kilkenny and from Newfoundland, a foundation from Galway in 1833. Many people were at hand to happily share their skills, time and goodness of heart to design, plan and carry out a special calendar of events for the celebration.

On 26 and 27 March, in St. Joseph's Church, a pageant, "In the Footsteps of Nano Nagle" was performed by a cast from the three schools. Parents and guests expressed huge appreciation as they felt the story of Nano was truly amazing, its production rich in its depth and simplicity, and its message deeply moving and challenging. On the morning of 27 March, President Michael D. Higgins opened the historical exhibition, "Presentation Galway 200". He remarked that "through pictures, writings and personal stories we are poignantly reminded of the many lives that have been touched by the Presentation

Sisters and the Presentation schools here in Galway, a story that spans three different centuries ... " The exhibition, consisting of 22 panels, is a most attractive and absorbing work, as well as being a special and appropriate memorial. Saturday, 28 March was an open day for all past pupils of the three schools and was hosted by Pres Secondary. Past and present staffs and hundreds of pupils from Ireland and abroad mingled and reminisced in an atmosphere that was truly magical.

On Sunday, 29 March at 3.00pm we concluded our celebrations with Eucharist. We had the honour of having Bishop Martin Drennan, presiding, and of having Fr. Downey, Fr. Larkin and representatives from the Congregations in the city celebrate with him. The scriptural theme was LIGHT: fellowship with one another, oneness of heart. (1Jn.1:7) The focus was on Presentation mission depicted in a large, attractive triptych, a project, in collage, of the TY students. The choir and orchestra of Pres Secondary and the Ignite Gospel choir of St. Joseph's church shared the music and singing. It was superb, exquisite, touching heart and soul with life and joy. The words, 'The lamps are different but the light is the same' encapsulate the encouraging address of our Congregational Leader, Sr. Mary Deane. Our conversations continued over a celebratory meal at the Salthill Hotel.

People were magnanimous in seeing that everything was perfect, even to the smallest detail. One can hardly imagine the amount of collaboration, hard work, long hours, personal sacrifice, and huge support they put in which made all the above celebrations so life-giving. We remember them with the deepest gratitude and appreciation. The talent, generosity and enthusiasm of the Galway Schools is indeed acknowledged and celebrated. A new energy is palpable. A new season of hope and joy beckons. It's good to celebrate! To our Living God be the glory.

*Sr Anne Fox, Galway*

## GALWAY

### Bi-CENTENARY



The  
200<sup>th</sup>

Anniversary

of the Presentation Sisters coming to Galway and the founding of the first Catholic schools for girls in the city, was celebrated with great joy and pride at the end of March. President Michael D. Higgins officially opened the celebrations on Friday 27<sup>th</sup>. Referring to the Historical exhibition which he had earlier viewed in the school hall President Higgins said in his address that:

*“it reminds us of the very different Ireland in which the Presentation Sisters came to Galway, and of the long and diverse journey which has brought them to where they are today. Through pictures, writings and personal stories we are poignantly reminded of the many lives that have been touched by the Presentation sisters and the Presentation schools here in Galway, a story that spans three different centuries and has witnessed the Great Irish Famine, two world wars, Ireland’s long and difficult struggle for independence, and our growth and development as part of a united Europe”.*

He went on to say that *“The Order here has witnessed, and played a part in, the many important events which have shaped and formed modern day Galway; and has worked tirelessly and consistently to develop and improve educational opportunities for the young people of this*



Presentation to the President and his wife

*City despite the many obstacles it has encountered since its foundation in 1815.*

*The birthplace of that first convent in Kirwan’s Lane was at a time when Ireland was a very bleak country indeed, an Ireland of slums and with the regular danger of the rapid spread of disease, an Ireland where life expectancy was low and many women died in childbirth, and an Ireland where people went*

*hungry amidst bitter and unrelenting poverty. It was in such harsh conditions that the Presentation Sisters set up their first school in this city, not only educating the pupils that came their way, but immersing themselves in the care and needs of the children; in particular through – so far ahead of its time - the founding of the Breakfast Institute in order to provide meals for those who could not afford to feed themselves...*

*The Sisters have ensured that their schools remain faithful to the spirit of their foundress Nano Nagle and to the traditions which connect them to their past, whilst also responding to the changing needs of the 21st century. Nano Nagle is today regarded as one of the great pioneers of Catholic education. Her charisma is shared by Presentation Sisters working in communities across the globe, bringing education and medical care to some of the world’s most marginalised and oppressed people, and working tirelessly to break down barriers of prejudice and injustice. Just as the Sisters in Galway chose, in a different Ireland, to live among the poor in a spirit of compassion and community, Sisters around the world continue that tradition as they build their critical work on foundations of trust and friendship.”*

(The full text of the speech is available on [www.presgalway.ie](http://www.presgalway.ie))

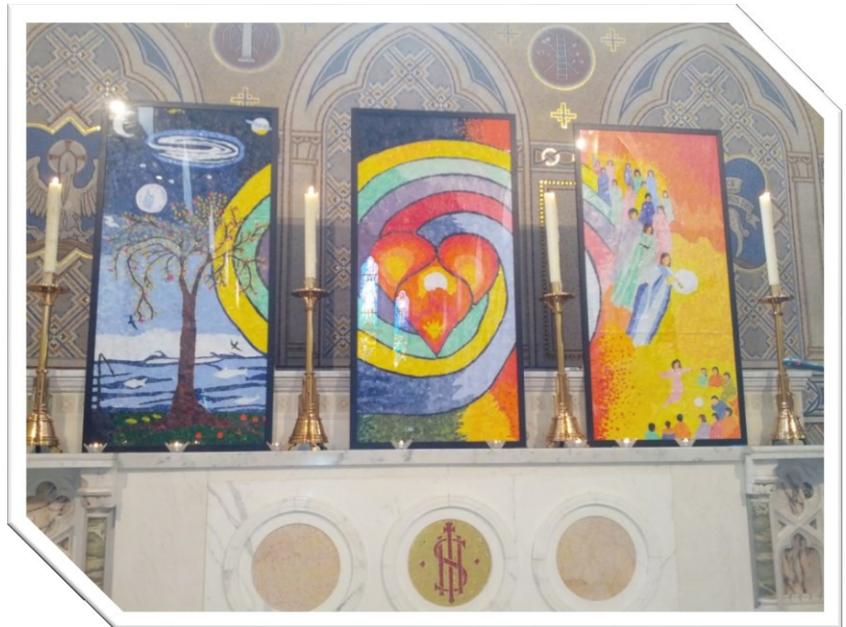
When the President had finished speaking Sister Margarita Ryan, Provincial, presented him with a leatherbound edition of the History of the Presentation Sisters in Galway, while his wife was presented with a bouquet of flowers. They then left to visit the convent where they were warmly greeted by a number of the older sisters who could not be present at the official gathering.

A very beautiful work of art was created by the Transition year students and was placed on the altar during the celebration of Mass on Sunday by Bishop Drennan. This Triptych was started as a Transition Year Art Project in October 2014. Tiny paper pieces were meticulously painted, cut and shaped by the Transition Year Students. The central symbol of the Heart represents the seat of divine and human compassion reaching out further to ever-widening horizons in the spirit of Presentation. The symbol of LIFE on the left panel represents respect for the wondrous bounty of creation beauty and colour in nature,

with which Galway city is amply endowed. The symbol of LIGHT on the right panel represents that where life is wounded and vulnerable, where need calls out, we are drawn into compassion in practical and effective ways, such as celebrated in this Bicentennial Celebration.

*The three parts come together to be viewed as a whole, thus making the bigger picture.*

After the Mass a beautiful meal was served to over 300 people in the Salthill Hotel and so ended a wonderful few days of celebration, a celebration which no doubt will continue well into the future.



***Sr Yvonne Jennings,  
Portadown***



***Remembrance***

**Acrylic on canvas**

**by**

***Sr. Cecilia Molloy, Kildare***



 GALWAY  
PRESENTATION  
1815 - 2015  
Celebrating 200 years  
SCHOOLS

Nano Nagle Centre,  
Slovakia celebrates  
10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

To mark the tenth anniversary of **Nano Nagle Centre, Spisske Podhradie, Slovakia**, Raphael Consedine's *Songs on the Journey* were translated into Slovak, and members of the Centre community were invited to represent through art their response to these inspiring poems.



So every once in a while  
God does it again  
God's "NOW" breaks planets open,  
bursts stars apart,  
shifts the continental plates,  
moves mountains and valleys,  
melts the ice-caps,  
sends forth a Sun.

It is incredibly disturbing –  
adjusting, adapting,  
stoking the fires of passion  
for God's endless possibilities.  
But a Word keeps calling:  
"LIFE!" Be in it with me,  
any moment, every moment,  
alert for God's "NOW!"

*Sr Raphael Consedine, pbvm*

**Now**

In the aeons of time  
there came a moment  
when God said: "NOW!"  
Light sprang from darkness,  
order from chaos,  
and where there was no life before  
life teemed.  
God saw that it was – GOOD!



*Vlastimil and Sebastian are twins and are 8 years old. Rudolf is 5 years old. Their sister Julie also attends the Pre-school and they have a baby brother Dominik. The twins have attended the Nano Nagle Centre since they were 3. They have learning difficulties but now Vlastimil and Sebastian have been accepted for Primary School for September 2015. Their mother Olivia – who is Czech - is very proud of them and they made their picture with her, using cotton wool, recycled paper and glue.*



*Sr. Louise Eustace was Director of Nano Nagle Centre from 2004 to 2013. Both Louise and Sr Immaculate Power are members of the Management Advisory Committee.*

*The Centre Director since 2013 is Sr. Anne McNamara (SW Province). NNC accommodates and provides essential back-up services to a preschool for Roma children, aged 3-7, and it also provides a home-work club, learning support and ongoing learning opportunities for school-going youth, Roma and others, as well as adult education in the wider community.*

## THE MULLINGAR PRESENTATION SISTERS' STORY 1825-2014

Mr Lynch, a merchant in Mullingar, gave a sum of money to Fr Michael McCormack in 1817 for the introduction of a community of nuns who would devote themselves especially to the education of the poor of his native town. (He didn't trust the banks of the day with this sum.) On 29 October at 5pm in 1825, three Presentation Sisters arrived in Mullingar at the canal harbour, Sr Clare Healy from Kilkenny, Sr Xavier Doyle and Miss Maria Nugent from George's Hill, Dublin.

Around 1880 a site was purchased for a school, convent and chapel for the Presentation Sisters with money donated to Fr McCormack by Miss Ellen Martin and Mr Lynch. The site included a fruit garden and sundial (now in Cathedral Museum) believed to have belonged to the Dominicans. Ellen Martin was the first Catholic teacher in Mullingar. (She is buried in an unmarked grave in Ballyoate Church.) On 2 February 1826 the three Presentation sisters joined Ellen Martin in school. The school building consisted of 3 storeys. Lessons in school included reading, writing, arithmetic, netting lace, spinning and knitting. Within two years the children's skills were recognised by orders from the business houses in the town. There was a large attendance of children from the beginning. Many girls walked five miles or more to school each day.

In April 1829 Bishop Logan received three women into the Presentation Congregation – Anne McCormack, Catherine Kearney and Miss Keena of this town. Admission to the ceremony was by ticket only. £200 was



raised for the school. The night of the big wind, 6 January 1839, the roof of the school and convent was blown off. In 1841 the legendary Irish Famine era, constitutional nationalist Daniel O'Connell, "The Liberator", attended a banquet in his honour in the newly built un-plastered extension of Presentation Convent. The new Cathedral in Mullingar was dedicated on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1836 to the Immaculate Conception by Bishop Cantwell. It was also the final profession day of several Presentation Sisters; Archbishop McHale was the preacher.

The Famine years of 1846-47 were dark and sad years. The people of Mullingar remembered the self-sacrificing Presentation Sisters who fed up to 100 children daily at the convent. Funds for this work of charity were provided by the Hevey Trust Fund and Bishop Cantwell.



### *Missionary outreach from Mullingar*

In 1850 the sisters answered the call of the missions. Presentation Sisters from Maynooth and Rahan were already in India since 1843. They invited the Mullingar sisters to join them in Madras to teach in the schools. Srs. Ignatius Murphy, Bernard Grey and Xavier Flattery answered this call and left Mullingar on the 8 September 1850. Twelve sisters from Mullingar went on Mission to India between 1850-1900. They are interred there. A plaque in the sisters cemetery in Mullingar pays tribute to them, may they rest in peace.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the number of Presentation pupils was increasing. It was decided to purchase Doherty's Garden as a site for the convent and to allow the old convent merge into the school. A parish bazaar was organised to raise necessary funds and £4,000 was raised towards this project. The 1950's were a busy

time for the Sisters – Scoil na Maighdine Muire was opened in 1957. In 1958 four sisters left Mullingar for the mission to Birmingham, Alabama (USA) at the request of the Bishop of the Diocese of Mobile where they established a school. They were Sr Gertrude Shortall, Sr de Lourde Grennan, Sr Dolores (Maureen) Waldron and Sr Rosario (Anna) Flanagan.

In 1959 Sr Catherine Brosnan, a native of Mullingar, entered the Presentation Convent. It had been 52 years since another Mullingar woman; Sr Columba O'Reilly had entered the convent in her hometown.

In 1978 Sr Annette O'Brien embarked on missionary work in Zambia and gave many years of dedicated service. She returned to Ireland in 1995. Between the years 1982-1986 Sr Assumpta Guinan RIP joined the sisters in Pakistan and taught in school in Peshawar.



*This 'foundation' table (brought by barge from George's Hill) was used at the farewell Mass. The chalice, a gift from the people of Mullingar to Sr de Sales Dawson on the occasion of her golden jubilee in 1905, was returned to the parish. It was also used at the Mass and will be displayed in the Cathedral museum. The list comprises the names of all the sisters buried in the convent cemetery.*

*The Second Vatican Council* mobilised renewed commitment to the charism of Presentation's foundress Nano Nagle. Many communities like Mullingar were autonomous, and directly under the authority of the Bishop. Following a process of discernment and prayer in 1975; groups of Sisters worldwide amalgamated and are now known as the "Union of the Presentation Sisters".

The first lay principals in Mullingar were Carmel Hickey appointed to the Senior School in 1991 and Valerie Moore in the Junior School in 2000. The charism of Venerable Nano Nagle endures among teachers and staff working with the children to grow to their full potential.

In 1994 the original Convent built in the 1920's was sold and converted to office use with the grounds becoming known as "Central Park". The Sisters then moved into their house in the grounds of Central Park.

In 2011 – Sr Terry, Superior General of the "Union of the Presentation Sisters" came to Mullingar to thank the parish for fundraising for floods and housing in Pakistan. She wanted to thank Presentation Schools for all the work they had done for The Missions throughout the years. She was assisted by Sr Rahanna from Pakistan and Sr Clementina from Zambia. They said thanks at all Masses in the parish. Sr Terry proclaimed that "if the sisters hadn't gone to India, I would not have been a Presentation Sister".

The sisters continued to work in the school and the parish. Sr Anne Pender was the last sister to teach in the Senior

School and Sr Annette O'Brien in the Junior School.

By 2013 there were just three Presentation Sisters left in Mullingar – Sr Assumpta Guinan, Sr Annette O'Brien and Sr Catherine Brosnan. In June 2013 Sr Assumpta passed away peacefully RIP leaving just two Sisters in Presentation, Mullingar.

In 2014 Sr Elizabeth Maxwell and the Provincial team decided to withdraw the Presentation presence from Mullingar. Almost 200 years of history looked set to come to an end with the departure of the last remaining two Presentation Sisters. It was with deep regret that this decision was received by the sisters and townspeople alike.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> November 2014 Presentation Day, Bishop Michael Smith celebrated a special Mass in the Cathedral of Christ the King to mark the departure of the sisters and to thank them for their dedicated service. The Bishop was assisted by Fr Pádraig McMahon, Adm. Fr Michael Kilmartin, Fr Paul Crosbie and Fr Joseph Naikarakudy.



**Bishop Smith, Sr Catherine, Mr Michael Tunney, Sr Annette, Fr Pádraig McMahon and Ms Valerie Moore**

Many former priests, who had served in the Cathedral, as well as impressive number of Presentation Sisters participated in the celebration together with teachers from both schools; past and present, the pupils from the schools; past and present, parents, parishioners and friends.

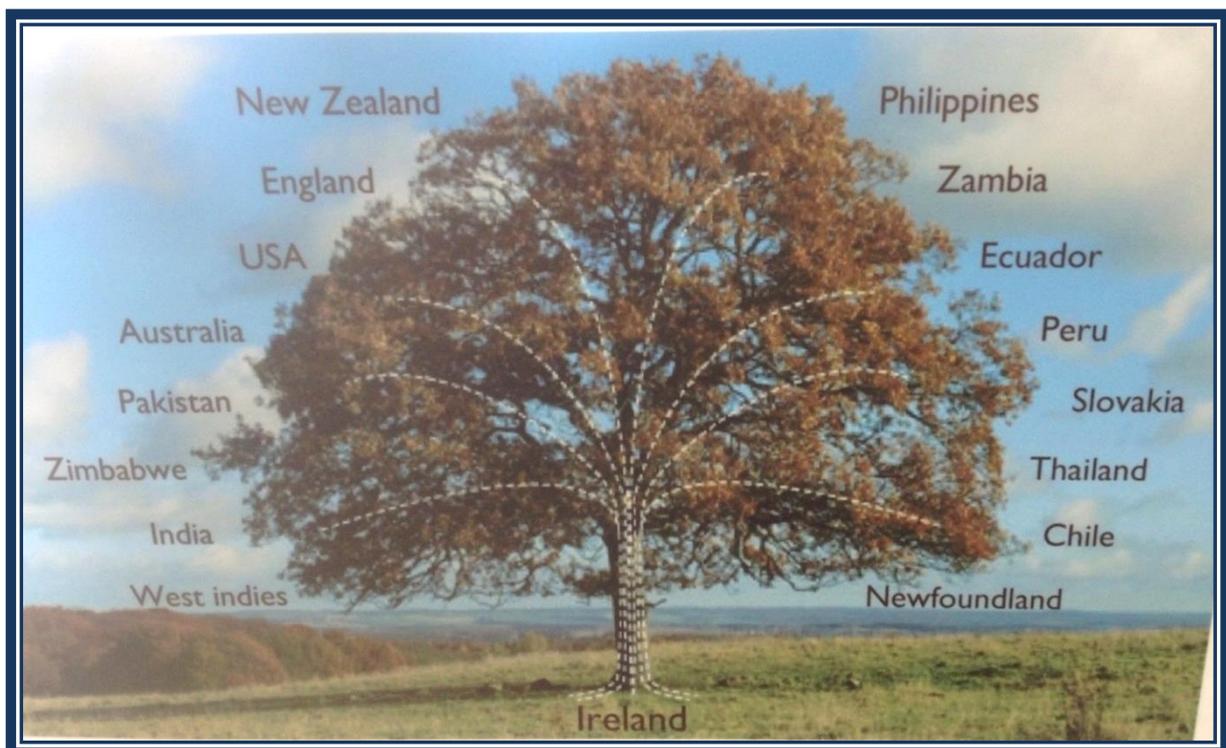


***Principal of Presentation Junior, Ms Bernie Beddows, while Sr Catherine presented a lantern to the Principal of Presentation Senior, Mr Michael Tunney.***

The lanterns which were presented to the current Principals are iconic images in our history representing the handing on of the tradition, ethos, and responsibility from the sisters to the lay teachers.

A civic reception followed. Cllr. Ken Glynn, Mayor of Mullingar, spoke of the significant positive impact of the Presentation Sisters on the education of children in Mullingar for nearly 200 years.

***Srs. Catherine Brosnan, Abbeyfield and Annette O'Brien, Maynooth***





## CARRICKMACROSS LACE

Carrickmacross lace is a delicate Irish craft dating back to 1820. The tradition is now carried on by the Carrickmacross Lace Co-operative, in Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan.

While on honeymoon in Italy in 1816 a Mrs Grey Porter wife of the Rector of Donaghmoynne, a village close to Carrickmacross collected samples of Italian appliqué lace. She learned the appliqué technique by copying the Italian samples, and by 1820 she had established an appliqué lace-making class which very quickly attracted a number of young women with an interest in mastering the craft. The craft flourished for the first twenty years but by 1840 it had gone into decline due to overproduction. After some time two other ladies revived the art and since the Carrickmacross area was badly affected by the Famine the lace-making made a great contribution to the survival of many families.

During the last years of the nineteenth century, as demand for the lace declined, it is possible that the art would have died out but for the intervention of the St. Louis Sisters. They founded a convent in Carrickmacross in 1890 and alongside their Primary School they set up a school of lace-making and the first ten years saw a return to prosperity among the lace workers of the district. In 1984 the St. Louis Sisters assisted in the formation of the Carrickmacross Lace Co-operative which maintains the tradition to this day.

It was during my novitiate years in Tuam that I became aware of the lace. In the sacristy was a very special alb which was referred to as the Carrickmacross Alb which only saw the light of day on very special occasions. Always it was handled with great care and no doubt the sisters at the time appreciated its delicacy and the hours of handwork that resulted in such a beautiful creation. This was the period before one could go on line to

find information on anything so I had to bide my time before I discovered the history of Carrickmacross lace.

Some years later I was fortunate to befriend a sister of St. Louis who provided all the information I needed regarding, history, materials needed and method of producing my own creations. Then when I started my teaching career in Presentation Boarding school in Tuam I had the opportunity to pass on my new found skill to some pupils there during their evening recreation periods. They produced quite a variety of pieces with black mantillas proving the most popular.

During my years in the Connemara Gaeltacht lots of my pupils in Scoil Chuimsitheach Chiaráin became interested in lace making. Some produced veils for their younger sister's First Communion and I know that these precious veils are framed and on display in their family homes to this day. Others also took on the challenge of researching the history and method of working the lace and produced smaller items (such as the item on the above right) as part of their Home Economics Projects for the Junior Certificate examination. A group of adults who attended a craft class in the convent each week were influenced by the work of the pupils and decided that they should try their hands at mastering the art. One of these ladies gave me quite a number of lace pieces worked by her aunt in Monaghan, that date back to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The collection includes collars, cuffs and a beautiful altar fall as seen above .

My hope is that this small effort at keeping alive a 200 year old Irish craft will help future generations appreciate some of the great talents and gifts that have been handed down to us from our ancestors.

Go dtuga Dia suaimhneas na bhFlaitheas dhóibh.

*Anne Donohue, Corrib Park, Galway*



A  
LITTLE  
LOCAL  
HISTORY

A few miles from Tramore in Co. Waterford is the ruined church and adjoining cemetery of Drumcannon. In 1963 the cemetery was closed to burials and ten years later a record of the grave inscriptions was made for the *Irish Genealogical Research Society*. They were published by Julian Walton in the 1992 edition of the Waterford historical journal *Decies*. At that time, Julian tells us, most were legible on a bright day but by now as can be seen in the accompanying photograph taken in June 2014, it would be difficult even to locate the tombstones. As Julian remarked, the publication of the inscriptions was *an important contribution to local history for in the case of many of the individuals buried here, their inscriptions may be the only evidence that they ever existed*. Among the inscriptions, it was a surprise to find the following: *Here lie the remains of Margaret Maria Ffrench of Rahasane County Galway, who died on 14<sup>th</sup> March 1816 in the 27<sup>th</sup> year of her age*. Who was this Margaret Maria and how did she come to be buried so far from her native Rahasane? After some research into the family of Nano's sister Elizabeth Nagle, it was fairly easy to identify Margaret Maria as

a grand-daughter of hers. (It would have been easier but for the fact that there were three Roberts in the story, a husband, a son and a grandson!) It was a bit more puzzling to guess at the reason for her being in Tramore. However, the likely answer seems to be that she came to stay at Tramore in the hope that her health would improve. As early as 1750, the small fishing village of Tramore began to expand into a seaside spa with the promotion of sea-water and coastal climates as a formula for good health. Its popularity grew as a permanent place to live for those who were in a position to do so, financially and otherwise. Many others, of course, spent extended periods there. The Grand Hotel was first opened in 1790/5 and has been continuously trading ever since. (It was recently sold for over half a million euro.) The idea that Margaret Maria came to Tramore in search of better health is of course made more plausible by her early death at the age of 27. The sea-water and coastal climate obviously did not have the hoped-for effect. In 1816, the year of her death, her grandmother Elizabeth (sister of Nano) was still living. She died two years later.

*The photograph included here was taken by my friends Tommie and Maura Sullivan.  
Sr. Assumpta O'Neill, Dungarvan*



*Sr Gabrielle celebrating her Jubilee with the  
'1950s' Group in Mount St Anne's  
Photo taken by Sr Anne Lyons*



