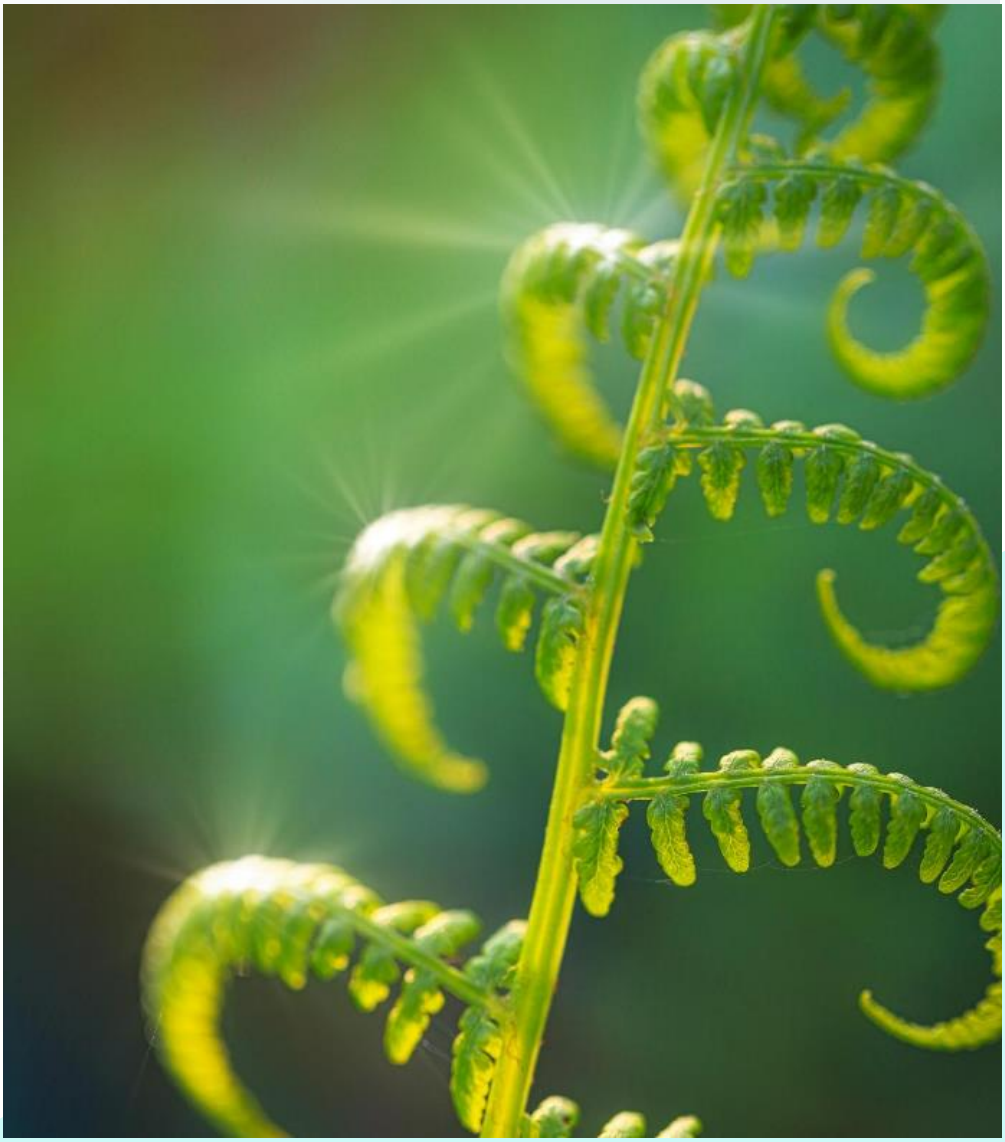
Presentation Sisters North East Province (Ireland)

Bachlóga

Volume 3: Issue 3—Summer 2020



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" … we have a responsibility for doing 'all in our power' to ensure that the song does not stop with us".

Foreword

The North East Province was still in its springtime when the title 'Bachlóga' was chosen for our seasonal communication that would gather buds from across the length and breadth of the new Unit. And for five years, in a spirit of cross-community storytelling, it did just that. Each issue offered vignettes of burgeoning action for justice, told of responses to the cry of the poor, shared concern for our planet, gave personal anecdotes, and heralded the growth of new shoots that hopefully will flourish into the future. Bachlóga was a bearer of good news.

But none of us could have foreseen the unprecedented blight that was about to descend upon our global garden, a blight that would bring normality, as we had known it, to a halt and plunge all of us into an unprecedented winter of uncertainty.

"For weeks … it has been evening. Thick darkness has gathered over…our cities; it has taken over our lives, filling everything with a deafening silence and a distressing void".

It was easy to identify with those words of Pope Francis, as all of us felt the uncanny strangeness of lockdown while the virus spread across the world touching people of every country, creed and colour, rich and poor alike.

In prayer, Pope Francis reflected on what we had come to regard as 'normal' and he lamented sadly:

"Greedy for profit, we let ourselves get caught up in things, and lured away by haste. We did not stop at your reproach to us, we were not shaken awake by wars or injustice across the world, nor did we listen to the cry of the poor or of our ailing planet. We carried on regardless, thinking we would stay healthy in a world that was sick".

But, of course, we had to stop, we were shaken awake; and yet the question remains: 'Even now, are we listening?'

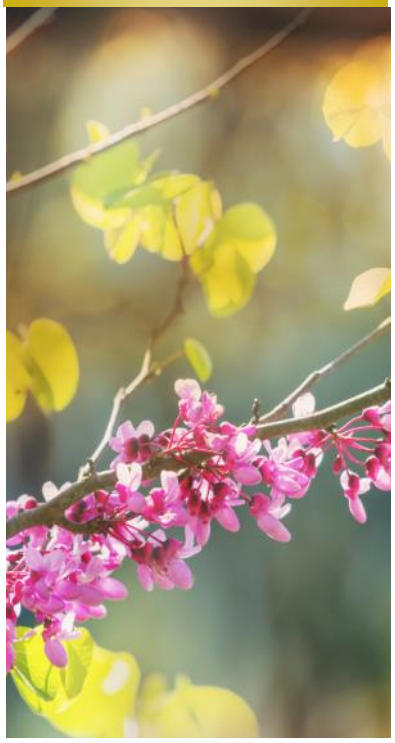
Like every crisis, Covid-19 has the potential to be totally devastating or to instigate a new beginning.

As Easter people, we can only trust that, beyond the *"thick darkness"*, a new sunrise will dawn, just as the new springtime of 2020 resurrected into a profusion of fresh buds of hope and promise at a time when humanity was floundering around in the *"distressing void*".

If the pandemic has achieved anything, it has highlighted the global interconnectedness and interdependence of all peoples.

ctd…/

"…the title 'Bachlóga' was chosen for our seasonal communication that would gather buds from across the length and breadth of the new Unit".



Foreword ...ctd/

Called to real Eucharistic living

A tiny virus called us to real Eucharistic living, made us appreciate the ordinary things in life, and even succeeded in drawing many back to prayer.

But is it likely that the world will now try to retrieve its soul from the clutches of greed and godlessness; or that a new connectivity will move humanity to fight against racism, to heed the voice of the poor, and to live sustainably so that all mankind can live with dignity?

Let us hope that the great pruning delivered by Covid-19 will yield a rich harvest of human compassion in a post-crisis world. And, as gardeners in the global garden, may we play our part at this time of re-seeding.

As we carry our baskets filled with blessings:

- let us reach out across the garden wall to offer buds of welcome, inclusiveness and hope to the stranger;
- let us continue our efforts to seek out those who hunger, not only for food but for justice, peace and human dignity.

And, as we stand at the headland looking back over the furrows of our days, may we find peace in knowing that, even in small ways, we have brought Easter to the margins.

Thank you ...

And now, I say 'thank you' to all who contributed to Bachlóga over the past five years, and I offer a special word of appreciation to the co-editors, Sr. Anne Codd and Margaret Agnew, who worked assiduously to produce those interesting and beautifully crafted editions. Well done for harvesting so creatively the buds and blossoms of the Province!

My final words are words of deep gratitude to you, Sisters of the North East, for all that you have been and for the friendship and support that you have showered on us over the past five and a half years. Covid-19 has deprived us of the opportunity to tell you in person what a blessing it has been to know you and to work with you.

My fervent prayer for each one is that 'bachlóga' of peace, of joy, and of God's abiding love will bloom abundantly in your hearts.

"Let us hope that the great pruning delivered by Covid-19 will yield a rich harvest of human compassion in a post-crisis world. And, as gardeners in the global garden, may we play our part at this time of re-seeding".

A Heart for Education

It is a bit like growing a garden, the ground is tilled and prepared and then the seeds are planted.

At the first appearance of the blooms and flowers people marvel at the novelty and remark on the beauty of it all. However, as times passes and more flowers of different kinds appear, the garden becomes a beautiful landscape that people become accustomed to as a background against which life happens every day.

Working alongside Sr. Margaret Mary Healy in the Acorn Centre I got to know something of her work in relation to Challenge to Change and Presentation Education.

This interview with Margaret Mary I hope is a brief insight into the life and work behind this inspiring backdrop that we take for granted - education for all.

Beginnings ...

Margaret Mary's contact with Presentation life started early. She attended Presentation primary school in Waterford, and moving on to attend Presentation Secondary school. This was for her, a move from a very large primary school to a very small secondary school in terms of space and student numbers. The Secondary School was part of the original convent building that had been designed by the renowned architect Augustus Pugin. The space used had been the original primary school set up by Presentation Sisters and Margaret Mary remembers that there was still a semi-circle of nails evident in the floor, to mark where the children would have stood for lessons.

When Margaret Mary began to study there she was one of twenty-eight first years with a grand total of sixty-three students in the school. By third year, this initial starting class of twenty-eight had diminished to fourteen; and by sixth year there were only two of the original students remaining – Margaret Mary and Sr. Maureen Power (now currently about to leave Fethard). So one could say one hundred percent of the sixth year class entered Presentation!

In terms of the local social history at the time it would have been rare indeed for girls to go on to secondary school as by seventh class they would have gone straight to work in the factories. *As Margaret Mary said: "This is the how and where my initial connection to Presentation life began"*. She describes the Sisters as being very committed to teaching, not just in the classroom. Extra-curricular activities were encouraged.

Margaret Mary entered the Presentation Community there in 1963. One of her first introductions to teaching was with the seventh class which she recalls was made up of some neighbours and some girls older than her. Then she moved on to teach infants, when someone got sick! Margaret Mary eventually went to UCC to qualify as a teacher. As she said: *"I had never any thoughts about doing anything else. I just love teaching. Even when I eventually became Principal I built in time to continue teaching in the classroom every day".*

"We did unusual things for the time, such as typing and shorthand after school in second year – often at lunchtime, and there was school on Saturday mornings".

As a teacher in Secondary Education

The profile of students attending the Secondary School was one of social and economic disadvantage. They were drawn from the very large housing estates at the time with high unemployment. This meant their teachers had to look at ways of delivering education to the students that would be of benefit to them in their lives. The first alternative programme introduced was Community Based Learning. This led to Senior Certificate and eventually Leaving Certificate Applied.

The staff were very committed and interested in the students and they were ready and willing to develop a curriculum for them that made demands off them outside *'chalk and talk'*. No text books were available for these programmes at that time.

"Recognising our particular student needs we had to become inventive with the use of the guiding principles. Any assessment needed to be practical, not just written, so that it was possible for the students to build up credits. Group work and cooperative learning were essential elements. Final examinations consisted of written, practical, portfolio work and interview".

> *"Challenge to Change has provided another level of experience for students and schools as they are exposed to methodologies that they would never have embraced".*

Also in the Secondary School they had been running a six year cycle (four years Junior Cycle and two years Leaving Certificate) but at the time the Department wanted to have just a three year Junior Cycle, so Margaret Mary explains that because they had seen the huge benefits for their students, they had to '*argue the toss'* for a four year cycle to continue. This in the end was only made possible by the creation of a fourth year education plan that would have been similar to today's transition year: one could say *'thinking ahead of its time!!!'*

In 1973, a Sister on the staff began work as a Home/School Liaison teacher in the secondary school. As such a post was not yet recognised by the Department of Education, this sister forfeited her incremental salary for four years to respond to this urgent work. Margaret Mary describes how the staff were committed and focused on the students and their needs. Also around that time there was a move beginning to link parents in, and to get them involved in the education of their children.

Part of the '*this newly devised fourth year programme'* for example, linked in to the local Belmont Hospital. Staff devised a programme for a shared PE class which was a really practical experience of give and take. Staff also devised a link with the local Christian Brothers School to deliver an attractive leaving certificate programme in Home Economics for the boys, while the girls went down to them for Woodwork Classes. The work around this fourth year content involved a lot of creativity as well as requiring the development of relationships and links with local businesses and organisations, sharing and collaborating and thinking on one's feet for the benefit of the students. Most of the students attending 'the secondary' came from families who had been unemployed for several generations. Margaret Mary spoke about her experience of the reality of education in this environment as being about

Nano's Legacy

managing one challenge after the other – but that she also saw it another way – recognising that every single challenge presents an opportunity.

The Presentation Education Office

Margaret Mary was next asked to join the Presentation Education Office in Dublin. In practice this meant that quite a lot of the projects devised for within the school context started out as a project for the Parent Partnership Project (PPP) – these were really a forerunner of the Challenge to Change, Margaret Mary says, even if we did not know it at the time! She recalls, they used the template and guidelines developed for the PPP and adapted them to suit other initiatives.

The number of foreign nationals coming to Dublin in 2001 was increasing exponentially and there was panic about how the present curriculum could meet their needs given that their first language was not English/Irish. The Joint Managerial Body invited a number of Inner City Principals to meet up and this led to the 'Learning for Young Non-national Students' (LYNS) which was initially targeting second level students, particularly unaccompanied minors. Building on the learning from LYNS, the Christian Brothers, Sisters of Mercy and Presentation Sisters started an intercultural project at primary level and involved the Department officials in delivering workshops for teachers. This new project was run in clusters in Dublin and eventually replicated around the country in response to need.

These initiatives were much appreciated by Principals and teachers who were challenged to meet the needs of the newcomer students.

"In 2002/2003 the Challenge to Change (C2C) project grew out of these experiences we had had of this intercultural work coupled with our own commitment as Presentation to respond in practical ways to disadvantage and unmet needs".

Liam Kilbride and Margaret Mary worked with the schools they already knew and who already knew them, in the South East Province. After three to four years, Sr. Evelyn Byrne asked if schools in the then Northern Province could participate. The project has since been embraced by more than thirty-seven schools in the North-East Province.

Margaret Mary explains: *"We were aware that the input by the student needed to be creative and this was also giving freedom to the schools themselves to develop something relevant to them and the student needs. There was no forcing of topics on them".*

C2C today is a Development Education Project which embeds the Presentation Ethos – putting the Sustainable Development Goals into practice. The SDGs have provided a framework and basis on which to move ahead from local to global.

Margaret Mary has continued to provide an experience of applied education that enables its proponents and participants to manage and take control of their own lives so that they can play their part in their communities and in the world at large.

Sr. Margaret Mary Healy

INSIDE STORY

Margaret Mary spoke about how the progress she experienced praying, living, working in and providing for this kind of education was really down to the people she experienced working with as fellow teachers and colleagues. It was down to teamwork. The challenge of adapting from the provision of a totally academically orientated education unearthed a passion, focus and creative capacity that recognised that: *"to every problem there has to be a solution".*

She says looking back, if something did not work, we looked for other ways of doing it – a problem solving mentality:

"Ideas are there – only to think them".

Brian Fitzsimons (CEO iScoil) with Dr. Eemer Eivers (ctr) & Ms. Margaret O'Donoghue (iScoil Office Manager)

iScoil – an innovative online learning service for young people

The story of the seeding and growing of the iScoil project that is realised and recognised today as providing an innovative response to the clearly identified needs of young people, is none other than a familiar echo of Nano Nagle's legacy articulated for current times.

The iScoil service from its formal foundation in 2009 to the present time (after an initial two year pilot phase as NotSchool.Net Ireland) continues to provide inclusive and practical interventions in response to educational disadvantage experienced by young people today.

Brian Fitzsimons heads up the current iScoil team as CEO. He describes iScoil today in one word - as 'thriving'!

"The only limit to your achievements is the reach of your dreams and your willingness to work hard for them" these are the words of Michelle Obama, who also said that her educational journey went hand in hand with her development of self-confidence. This strikes at the heart of why iScoil is so impactful".
(Brian Fitzsimons, CEO iScoil—2019 Annual Report).

Blended learning *offers a style of education in which students learn via digital tools and online media as well as traditional face-to-face teaching. Early school leaving and educational disadvantage is acknowledged by communities around Ireland as a barrier to young people achieving their potential. iScoil's first blended learning centre was set up in 2010.*

From vision to reality

The non-profit online learning service that is iScoil, has been the recipient of two very significant funding awards in recent months. In the first instance they teamed up with senior management from Tusla's School Completion Programmes (SCP), and submitted a successful funding application to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. The funding they received is allowing them to scale their blended learning model with nine new School Completion Programmes (SCPs) in communities around Ireland.

Independent researcher, Dr Eemer Eivers, has been charged with researching the impact of this partnership. As Brian says:

"We're hopeful the findings will support our plans to grow our service. A number of Youth Services are now paying for iScoil places, and this strategy is allowing us to grow our service and work with more young people, who, without iScoil, would have no access to education".

iScoil has also secured funding from Social Innovation Fund (now Rethink Ireland), which enables them to top up all philanthropic donations with an additional fifty percent of funding. This includes donations from the Presentation Sisters.

Nano's Legacy

IScoil Staff with Senior Management from Tusla and Co-ordinators from School Completion Programmes at an iScoil Planning Day in the Acorn Ctr.

Alongside this, iScoil has nurtured a very positive collaboration with the Department of Education and Skills. During the Covid-19 lockdown the iScoil team delivered a training to Home Tuition teachers to support them move their teaching online. Since then iScoil has secured additional DES funding to deliver double the number of @home student places in 2020/21.

How does iScoil work?

The iScoil model is student-centred and is underpinned by technology-enabled learning. Each student has an individual education plan which is designed based on their interests, needs, and abilities. Our teaching teams work together to set individual goals which are aimed at challenging each student on a daily basis. Students log on every day and complete work on their learning plans. Mentors are on-hand to support students, families and centre-based Support Workers, while tutors work directly with students, to guide them through their courses.

Partnership is a key element to success and iScoil works closely with individual families, blended centre partners, Tusla Educational Welfare Offices, and local services and agencies to put in place the best possible education provision for young people.

Brian is very clear. *"Leading iScoil is a privilege".* He shares that every few days they hear stories and receive feedback from students, families or centre partners about iScoil's positive impact. This, he says is invigorating for everyone involved.

"At the heart of our success is our talented and committed team, who go far beyond the normal course of duty to deliver the best possible service to our students".

The founding message of iScoil is one of respect, innovation, and inclusivity, and the Board of Directors and team is proud to carry on the vision of Nano Nagle in providing much needed support for society's most vulnerable and at-risk young people.

INSIDE STORY

2019 marked ten years since iScoil was founded by the Presentation Sisters. During that time, the second chance of an education of which more than 400 young people availed, is a ringing endorsement of their generosity, vision, and unwavering commitment to educational disadvantage.

On this 10 year anniversary, it was a fitting tribute, that iScoil was held up as a model of best practice under Sustainable Development Goal 4, at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum in July 2019.

PARTNERSHIPS

The number of agencies with which iScoil has formed partnerships continues to grow.

Responding to the need for a creative solution, iScoil partners with local services and agencies to create a safe place to learn, where young people achieve accreditation and progress. Our current partner agencies include, for example, Regional Youth Services, Garda Youth Diversion Projects and School Completion Programmes.

THE STAFF TEAM

The iScoil Staff Team is made up of a Central Team based in the Acorn Centre Warrenmount, Dublin 8 alongside Mentors and Tutors who work from various outreach locations. See **https://iscoil.ie/our-people-partners/**

iScoil – an innovative online learning service for young people ctd…/

What does it mean for the students?

Before students start on iScoil, they have been out of mainstream education for at least six months, and in some cases, it's been years. Students are aged between 13 and 16 years old, and many have had a negative experience in education. Getting a place on iScoil is often transformational for these young people. When students are given the time and space to learn in a supportive environment, the results are astounding.

SOME CURRENT FIGURES

iScoil has worked with a record number of 97 full-time students in 2019/20. (Up from 73 in 2018/19, and 58 in 2017/18).

All full-time students were referred by Tusla's Education Support Service and at the time of referral, young people were out of school for at least six months and attending mainstream was not a viable option.

Fifty-eight (58%) logged in from Blended Learning Centres. Of the students who finished iScoil during the year, 90% of students achieved at least one QQI Level 3 course and the majority used the experience and qualifications to progress to further education, training, or employment.

"We see so many students join us with low confidence and little or no self-belief. When students engage and learn about things they're interested in, and when they see positive feedback and receive meaningful accreditation and certificates of achievement, the results are amazing.

Our students are proof that all young people want to learn. Each year we see so many students with a renewed mind set; a belief that they can learn and a desire to further themselves and progress in education. They are the real heroes in the face of adversity". ~ ***Brian Fitzsimons***

Challenges today

Brian shares that iScoil's greatest challenge in current times is sustainability and securing the resources they need to respond to the demand for the service. During 2019/20, despite working with more young people than ever before, iScoil turned down more Tusla referrals than ever before.

Many of these young people have no access to education and this can have a detrimental impact, during their formative years and beyond. iScoil will be launching an ambitious strategic plan this year and the goal is to significantly increase the number of young people we work with.

Educational policy in Ireland is very clear; stating that vulnerable young people should be taken care of. The challenge for the system is to follow through on commitments to promote equity of educational opportunity for all young people. This requires the allocation and appropriate investment of sufficient resources, especially for those whose participation in mainstream education is not viable.

Website: https://iscoil.ie/

PRESENTATION SISTERS: Without the Presentation Sisters, iScoil would never have happened, and they continue to provide generous financial support. The contribution of the Sisters however goes well beyond finance and can be seen in the work of the Board and ongoing advice and individual support.

The way ahead: Women and educational leadership

Sr. Zabaria Peter, continuing in Nano's footsteps ...

As Sr. Zabaria Peter, pbvm prepares to return to Pakistan after spending a year of study in Ireland as one of the first PiNNacle scholars participating in the UCD Masters Programme in Educational Leadership, it seemed a fitting time to catch up with her to share her experience of this year of study.

At the time of the online interview Sr. Zabaria Peter was living with the Sisters of Jesus and Mary (Goatstown, Co. Dublin) for convenience of access to UCD, however, her base Presentation community has been Maynooth with Sisters Annette O'Brien, Dominica Murphy, Pius Madden, Martha Clarke, Eithne Cunniffe and Mary McDermott.

Zabaria shared that from the outset of her arrival in Ireland she never felt homesick – testimony to having been cared for and supported so well. There has also been many opportunities to speak to the Sisters in her community in Pakistan. In terms of her own personal growth she says she has learned a great deal from this journey.

Beginnings

As far back as she can remember Zabaria wanted to be a Presentation Sister. The youngest of eight children (in a family of five sisters and three brothers) Zabaria was born and grew up in Josephabad (originally Khushab) a Catholic village in Punjab, Pakistan.

Presentation Sisters first came to the village in 1957 where they set up and ran a small dispensary started by Sr. Brigid Reynolds (now NEP) and then later managed by Sr. Stephen. Each of the Peter children was delivered by the Sisters (many of whom though elderly) are still alive today. School in the village was only as far as 8th grade (so no 9-11th grade) which meant that to continue education it was necessary to go on to attend the Presentation Boarding School for four years in Sargodha. Zabaria did this. She completed her 9th and 10th grade and 1st and 2nd year (Leaving Certificate equivalent) there in 2005. However, When she was living as a boarder the desire was also very strong that she would become a teacher.

About the PiNNacle Project & Presentation Sisters

The PINNacle Project is an innovative research project in educational leadership.

Sr. Margarita Ryan, speaking at the launch, by the UCD Foundation in December 2018, highlighted the initiative and support of Presentation Sisters NEP for this *'explicit mission to work for the transformation of unjust systems, the Integrity of Creation, and the flourishing of humanity and earth'.*

The PiNNacle Project aims to build teaching capacity in the developing world. This project will identify and promote what is best in teacher education for women teachers in developing contexts and provide generous Masters scholarships for women teachers from pilot schools in India and Pakistan to study at UCD. It is led by Professors Deirdre Raftery and Marie Clarke in UCD's School of Education.

Nano's Legacy

Zabaria with her parents at the airport as she leaves for Ireland— 29th June 2019.

In 2005 Zabaria joined religious life with four others in her year group, making her first profession in 2008. There were 12 convents in Pakistan and she recalls how she spent almost each year from 2008 to 2015 living in a different community alongside completing the necessary studies and formation programme, while all the time deepening her vocation and religious life.

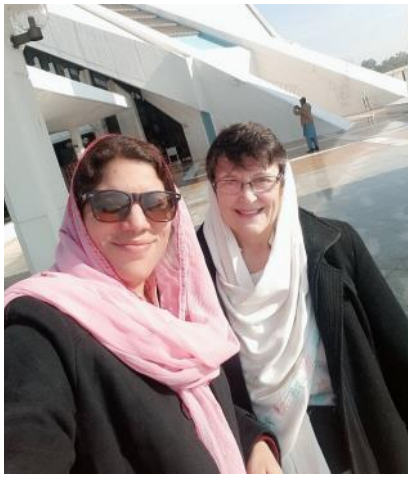
In preparation for her final profession it was planned that as part of a group of three, they would travel to India to spend three months together with five Indian Sisters also completing their final profession. In the end they were only granted a visa for 45 days, but Zabaria describes these days as a very special period in her life. In 2015 she made her final profession.

Zabaria described her father more than once throughout the interview as a sage – a wise man – saying, *"You need support from you family in Pakistan for all that you do. My older sister and brother never wanted me to be a Religious Sister as they saw it was too tough a life. This is why my parents are a big strength for me*". Perhaps the hardest thing about this life as a Sister, she says, is that you have to live with people in community even if you don't want to or like to – you don't get away with it. The vow of poverty is challenging - but we have all the luxuries really, she says, as she acknowledges all of the many blessings that have arrived to her without any planning at all on her part.

A family send off.

Both her parents are 65 years old now and in good health but now living on their own in the village where they have reared their family of eight.

After her final profession Zabaria then completed her Bachelor's in education in Sargodha University as a regular student. She started her responsibilities in the leadership as a teacher, Coordinator, Vice -Principal and Principal from 2017 to 2019. She then went on to become Principal at St. Teresa's Girls High School Rawalpindi, a position she held up until her departure to Ireland to join the pioneer PiNNacle Programme at UCD.



Srs. Zabaria and Anne Codd at Islamabad Mosque, 5th January 2019 following the Unit Gathering in Pakistan

The PiNNacle adventure

Zabaria describes how Sr. Emer Manning told her about the idea behind the PiNNacle programme and invited her to think about going to Ireland to study.

Zabaria speaks about receiving this opportunity and the many other blessings she recognises in her life, against the backdrop of her village childhood. She recalls with some humour the comment by Sr. Pius Madden (in Pakistan for 27 years & now NEP) who knew well the reality of village life for so many in Pakistan) and asked, as they would have asked of Jesus: *"Is it possible that anything good can come from Nazareth [Josephabad]?"*

Zabaria describes speaking to her parents about this opportunity, something she has done at each stage of her Presentation journey and receiving their blessing to go

to Ireland. It was almost like a sign from heaven then, when it took only 3 weeks to get the visa to travel!

She admits it was very challenging in the beginning when she arrived in Ireland for the pre-sessional course of the PiNNacle Programme at UCD (7 initial weeks in advance of the main course starting with almost 100 Chinese students in her class) in the summer of 2019.

Zabaria was at lengths to acknowledge the tremendous support received during this time and onwards for the duration of the course programme, from Ruth Ferris UCD's Project Manager and Sr. Bernadette Flanagan (NEP PLT).

She explained that being present at The Pre-Sessional Course really helped her familiarise and acclimatise herself to returning to an academic environment and a diverse cultural experience. (Zabaria already holds an MA in Educational Planning and Management (EPM).

She explains that returning to full-time education "*There is a lot to read and comprehend as well as getting used to academic writing again. I also made new friends and it has been a really good experience".*

Speaking about her experience of participating as a pioneer in the first PiNNacle Programme – Zabaria said:

"This project will help not just Presentation Sisters but will enable all female leaders in developing countries to get the same quality of education.

The Presentation Sisters had already set up their own In-Service Training in Pakistan thanks to the commitment and passion of Sr. Julie Watson (current Congregational Leader) for all that she had done to provide In-Service Training for Presentation Staff in the neighbourhood schools over many years – with an open invitation extended to schools to participate". "Training of In-Service Trainers is vital as once you take this opportunity then it means others can benefit".

L-R: *Ruth Ferris (UCD Project Manager with Zabaria.*

"Experiencing the internationality of my course, I came to realise that amidst the incredible diversity of culture – we held a lot of observations in common. To be able to mix and discuss education across diverse cultures and backgrounds was invaluable (e.g. students came from Spain, US, Nigeria, Palestine, Vietnam, China etc.". (Zabaria Peter)

Talking about her experience in UCD Zabaria said:

"I felt starting out on this innovative programme that I am making history. When I started the course they said 'we are experimenting on you'. I have received so much support from Sisters and UCD Staff – all so reliable and so willing to help.

I was also fortunate enough to have two very special people as Supervisor's for my thesis on 'The Impact of Female Leadership in the Developing World' – focusing on our own Presentation Leaders".

Zabaria acknowledged that she had also benefitted greatly from the generous opportunities offered to her by Marie Therese Kilmartin (Principal, Coláiste Bríde) when she was on placement E.g. the opportunity to observe the practical use of IT/Technology in a school setting and being enabled to attend the CEIST Trust Conference in Hodson Bay Hotel with other staff members as part of the Deputy Principals Network Meetings 2020 (Athlone). The theme of the conference was: *'The Future of Faith Schools: looking at the challenges facing faith schools'.* Being present meant that she learned a great deal that will be of benefit when she goes back to Pakistan.

The Inside Story

Speaking about the constraints & similarities she observes between educational provision here and in Pakistan – Zabaria highlighted some key points:

- In Pakistan there are usually between 48 – 50 children in a class
- There are over 200 million people in the country.

Her mother never went to school as education was never a priority for women in Pakistan, while Zabaria's father is still studying through Distance Education.

In Pakistan girls typically marry at 15 years of age. Boys get all the educational opportunities, while women have a largely domestic role. This gender pattern has an influence and impact on how leadership roles are experienced within this culture. It impacts on how a woman can become a leader in a male dominated world. E.g. nursing is viewed as providing a viable opportunity for women as there is a stipend paid – so you can support your family, as the father is often the only one earning.

When Zabaria was born as the 6th girl in her family her father never commented. Girls do not generate income & are regarded almost as a misfortune – Now families are not so large –there are not so many children because of the cost. Her father however, she says, was blessed with the arrival of another boy after her".

Zabaria pictured (left) with Sr. Emer Manning and above with friends.

Constraints and similarities

It is an enormous task for Presentation Sisters and others to both receive and provide female education. There are no co-educational schools. It will take years more to make any change to this as a lot has to change in mentality especially in the tribal areas where they don't send their children for education even if it is free – as there is no income from this. There has been a lot of work in the tribal areas by the Presentation Sisters.

The country is 98% Muslim. A great many children come to our Presentation Schools as everyone wants a convent school education where the girls are secure and safe.

Her parents gave their blessing to her when she followed the call to become a Presentation Sister despite the external perceptions and challenges to such a choice from a societal, economic and cultural perspective. *(see detail in 'Inside Story' opposite).*

In conclusion

"I have learned so much from this Project. This year I have gained an insight into how to apply the techniques studied into our education system. I have also understood the deeper meaning of leadership and mentoring in a school environment. I will be able to empower women with their leadership qualities and how they can learn in a positive atmosphere. I also gained an understanding of the more effective ways of teaching in a classroom environment with the little resources we have and with huge number of students. I will be able to introduce new ways of teaching and learning, various activities that can build up the confidence of the students and which will motivate them to learn and apply that learning in their daily lives".

Zabaria will finish her thesis in August and will then be able to return to Pakistan. In conclusion she says: *"I am very grateful to the North East Province, the Leadership Team and all the Sisters who have helped me a lot in so many ways. Special thanks to Sr. Bernadette Flanagan for accompanying me in my dealings and correspondence, as well as to the Project Manager Ruth Ferris from UCD. It was lovely to study in UCD and get experience internationally with fellow students. PiNNacle is a very good initiative that has been developed and I would hope and pray that this will continue, and that more and more people will be able to benefit".*

Sr. Zabaria Peter

We are part of a changed and changing world …

Our mission is to speak and act
in partnership with others
for global justice
from a contemplative stance
in a spirit of oneness
with the whole of creation.

2017 IPA Assembly

Our Vision as IPA is:
"A World in which the oneness and sacredness of all life is honoured"

The content of this article has evolved during phone conversations with Sr. Ann Marie Quinn, pbvm Executive Director of the International Presentation Association (IPA). At the time, Ann Marie was working from her Community House in Warrenmount, Dublin 8. She had returned earlier than anticipated from New York, due to the rapid development of COVID-19 pandemic.

"As Presentation people […] Our foundress Nano Nagle had a global vision at a time when people were only beginning to discover the extent of the world's boundaries. We know that to carry out the mission of Jesus in the spirit of Nano Nagle in today's global context we need to think globally, and act globally and locally in partnership with others".

Some background

Up until this point of return, Ann Marie had been actively involved in the UN's 58th session of the Commission for Social Development. This was on the theme of *"Affordable housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness"* which took place from 10th – 19th February 2020. The International Presentation Association (IPA) NGO Representative, Dr. Despoina Afroditi Milaki, and IPA Programme Action Leader, Sr. Mary Therese Krueger pbvm, were also present at this event as part of the IPA team.

Speaking about the IPA's participation in this important forum, in an interview with Chris Herlinger of the 'Global Sisters' Report', Ann Marie said:

"… the global focus on homelessness was evident in both the attention paid to the problem by the UN member states and in the participation of religious congregations and non-governmental organisations from throughout the world".

It is worth noting in this context that NGO Representatives at the UN had worked for more than two years in getting the United Nations to address the issue of homelessness and affordable housing. In fact, the 10 days of meetings resulted in an outcome document which, they say, affirmed many of their concerns about this growing global problem. Another Irish 'Quinn' woman - no relation - Sr. Jean Quinn, Daughter of Wisdom (DW) and Executive Director of UNANIMA International was a leading advocate in this event. (see HERE)

Sr. Jolanta Kafka (President, (UISG) Rome meeting at the UN in New York with Sr. Ann Marie Quinn.

In a Spirit of Oneness

About the IPA

The commitments from the 2017 IPA Assembly are:

To respond to the cry of Earth and to people made poor by embracing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in a human rights framework, addressing the issues of:

- Women and children
- Care of Earth, and
- Indigenous people

(each as is relevant to our local regions)

The IPA uses its consultative status at the United Nations to influence policies at the UN on behalf of people and Earth made poor and advocates for systemic justice in collaboration with other like-minded NGOs and religious organisations at the UN.

See: HERE *and* IPA Website HERE

***L-R:** Dr. Despoina Afroditi Milaki, (IPA) NGO Representative with IPA Programme Action Leader, Sr. Mary Therese Krueger pbvm and Sr. Ann Marie Quinn, pbvm (IPA Executive Director)*

Indeed, Ann Marie reiterated the importance of collaboration amongst Religious working at the United Nations in New York. Furthermore, she instanced the visit in February this year of Sr. Jolanta Kafka, President of the International Union of Superior Generals (UISG) who met with Religious at the UN, to explore the possibility of enhanced collaboration between those Religious present at the UN and the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) activity of UISG based in Rome, and in other parts of the world. (see HERE)

A Presentation presence

In September 2018, Ann Marie took up what was then a new post of Executive Director of the IPA. The creation of this post arose out of the IPA Assembly (2017) Commitment 2: *'to determine an appropriate organisational structure for IPA to achieve its mission'.*

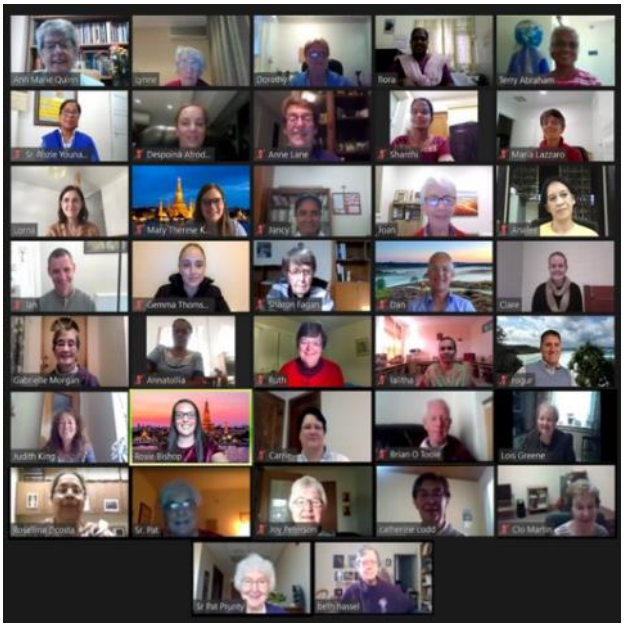
Aside from an on-the-ground presence at the UN when required, e.g. annual events and relevant Commissions such as the Commission for Social Development, the Commission on the Status of Women, and the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, Ann Marie has been working to shape the governance and operational procedures of IPA, working alongside a newly-appointed IPA Team. The aim is to enhance the proactive and responsive nature of IPA.

One of the first undertakings for the IPA Board of Directors and IPA team was to honour Commitment 5 of the IPA Assembly, namely *'to develop a strategic plan for IPA'.* This work resulted in **'Education and Action for Justice 2020 – 2022 Strategy'**. (*Note: Presentation Communities have received a copy of this document, and your Community Justice Links have a digital version for sharing*).

International Gatherings of Justice Contacts

Ann Marie explained that it had been intended to convene two gatherings, one in Chicago and the other Bangkok in April and May 2020 respectively, as opportunities for the IPA Team members to meet with the IPA Justice Contacts representing twenty countries. As a result of the unfolding global impact of

We are part of a changed and changing world … ctd/



A 'Zoom' Gathering of IPA Justice Contacts

the Coronavirus emergency, these programmes were redesigned to take place online.

One objective of the gatherings was to build up the capacity of the Justice Contacts (in the case of Ireland and England that person is Brian O'Toole who is Director of the Presentation Sisters Justice Desk for Ireland & England) to work within the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) structures of their Congregations and Units i.e. in the Australian Society, American Conference and our own Union. Their purpose is to support local action in promoting the Sustainable Development Goals 2030. In this way, it is hoped, the connections between local, national and global justice issues become clear, and the work of IPA at the UN gains credibility.

The gatherings were also intended to open up and examine the overall IPA Strategy 2020-2022 and develop an Implementation Plan which would enable the Justice Contacts to support it to come to life in practice in each local context. Finally, the gatherings were to work together towards agreeing a specific issue on which IPA would focus, so that it would be as effective as possible in its advocacy work at the United Nations.

"My life has always been coloured by this action of Nano's: from acting in my local community for those experiencing day to day poverty of life … ". (Sr. Ann Marie Quinn)

A passion for justice

Networking and partnership-building for collaboration are also important elements of Ann Marie's brief as Executive Director; to these she is no stranger, given her past experiences of ministry. (Ann Marie celebrated 50 years as a Presentation Sister in 2018.) The only difference now is that the span of the work is from local to global and global to local, and takes place across countries, continents and cultures, within a common partnership in mission: *'to speak and act in partnership with others for global justice from a contemplative stance in a spirit of oneness with the whole of creation'.* The move to working online, necessitated by the pandemic, also tapped Ann Marie's experience from the foundation days of iScoil as a means of online learning.

Ann Marie says that her passion for justice work came from

In a Spirit of Oneness

Justice In A Pandemic

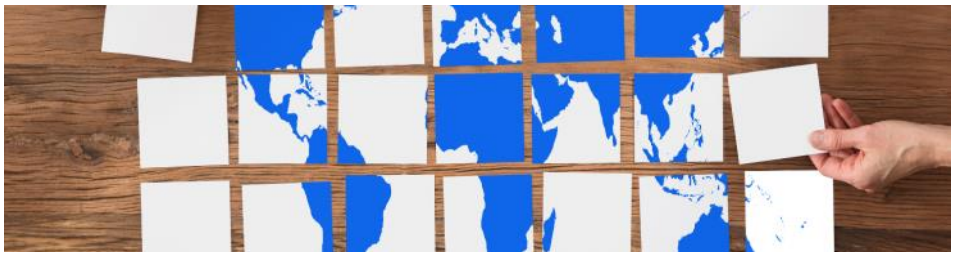
In the current Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, Justice in a Pandemic – April 2020,[1] the foreword states.

"*Justice Systems are vital to responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and mitigating its worst effects. A new briefing by the Taskforce on Justice, co-chaired by Hina Jilani calls for urgent action to ensure justice for all in this public health emergency".* In her foreword she states:

"For better or for worse, justice systems & justice workers are on the front-line of this pandemic. If we get our response right, societies will be better able to confront the pandemic effectively and fairly. That will build the foundations for reset and recovery. If we get it wrong, it is no exaggeration to say that people will die unnecessarily".

(see HERE - Report; Justice In A Pandemic)

Note:
[1]The Pathfinders are a group of 33 UN member states, international organisations, global partnerships, civil society and the private sector. They work to accelerate action to implement the SDG targets for peace, justice and inclusion (SDG16+). In September 2017, the Pathfinders launched the *Roadmap for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies*. An updated version was published at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July 2019.



her family values. From the earliest days she always remembers being *'impressed by Nano's call to work with the poor'* and by the fact that Nano Nagle (founder of the Presentation Congregation) was ready and willing to leave a very comfortable life to commit herself to working for those 'made poor'. *"My life has always been coloured by this action of Nano's: from acting in my local community for those experiencing day to day poverty of life, as a Primary School Teacher and then as Principal of an inner-city school, to working for the Centre of Systemic Change, to the creation of 'out of school learning opportunities in the establishment of iScoil in its early days and onwards to Leadership".* But as she said: *"The journey has always been the Christian journey identifying with 'whatever you do to the least' – concerned not solely about how we look after ourselves".*

We are all living now in a changed and changing world as we live together in solidarity locally and globally as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The inequalities and vulnerabilities of the least in our societies have never been more evident. But they cannot all be blamed on Covid -19.

In the **Justice for All** report released last year, the Task Force on Justice noted that 1.5 billion people had a justice problem that they could not resolve. Now, as well as before the pandemic, marginalized communities – already poorly served by systems that are not just – face the highest risks, as do vulnerable groups. The pandemic is widening this justice gap, with the problems that many people face increasing sharply and the ability of justice actors to respond declining.

As the world continues to focus on how to tackle the coronavirus pandemic, Pope Francis is beginning to think about how to "resurrect" humanity when it's all over, saying he hopes people will have the *"necessary antibodies of justice, charity and solidarity".**

In the words of Pope Francis:

"This is not a time for indifference, because the whole world is suffering and needs to be united in facing the pandemic. May these, the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters living in the cities and peripheries of every part of the world, not be abandoned". **Pope Francis, Urbi et Orbi – Easter Sunday 12th April, 2020 – Rome.** *(see HERE)*

These are questions for all of us.

Sr. Ann Marie Quinn

*(These words were published April 17 by Spanish magazine *Vida Nueva* in a meditation titled "*Un plan para resucitar*" - "*A plan to resurrect*." Much of the text is a meditation on the women who went to the tomb of Christ after the resurrection and had their sorrow turned into joy upon witnessing Christ's victory over death (see link to article HERE).

Your people will be my people

"I found that I had worked myself out of a job using all human and divine energies at my disposal – so what now?"

This was how a new doorway to twenty-nine years of ministry in Latin America threw itself wide open for Sr. Catherine Codd.

Catherine was home from Ecuador on holidays, and I was truly blessed to be able to spend some time in conversation with her.

This article shares a few of the very special insights and experiences that Catherine so generously shared.

Her experience is a beautiful interweaving of so many seemingly single strands of work, study and ministry into a rather special *'tapestry of life'* that could not have come together but for her spontaneous, generous and open response to circumstance - a particular trait of Presentation Life.

One door closes … and another opens

Catherine loved teaching. From the late 1960's to early 1990's she taught Maths and Science. As a secondary school principal, she played her part in the negotiation process and the change required in education as the shift from voluntary secondary to community school structures was taking place in Ireland. As free education for all came in, the 'all girls' Presentation boarding school responded to the call. Catherine was ready to welcome the resulting co-ed local school that developed little by little. She was principal of the same when amalgamation with the local vocational school became part of Irish Education Rationalisation policy. While actively contributing to help enable the amalgamation process to be a total success in human terms, in practical terms, this success meant that her post as principal would no longer exist.

As Catherine said: *"Teaching was my life and soul up until then, and I was totally fulfilled in this".* But, she said, it was clear that it was now time in this historical and evolving context to say: *"Well done Presentation Sisters you have now played your part in preparing the path for the laity to take their place in providing education".* She said she felt it was hugely important to hand over all of this experience and expertise in education with grace, pride and trust.

Coincidentally, this was also a particular period of discernment by the Presentation Sisters in the Northern Province (1990) in relation to their mission to Chile (New Zealand had founded this mission but no longer had the personnel available to sustain it at this time). The decision was made to take on this mission, and Catherine was asked to go to Chile.

So quite literally one door opened as another was just closing!

Chile

Life & Ministry

About Ecuador

Ecuador is a country in northwestern S. America, bordered by Colombia on the north, Peru on the east and south, and the Pacific Ocean on the west.

Ecuador also includes the Galápagos Islands in the Pacific, about 1,000 kms west of the mainland. The capital is Quito.

The territories of modern-day Ecuador were once home to a variety of Armerindian groups that were gradually incorporated into the Inca Empire during the 15th century. The territory was colonised by Spain during the 16th century, achieving independence in 1820 as part of Gran Colombia, from which it emerged as its own sovereign state in 1830.

The legacy of both empires is reflected in Ecuador's ethnically diverse population, with most of its 17.1million people being mestizos, followed by large minorities of European, Amerindian, & African descendants.

Spanish is the official language spoken by a majority of the population. Thirteen (13) Amerindian languages are also recognised, including Quechua and Shuar.

Plaza Grande in the old town of Quito, Ecuador

Catherine pointed out that in human terms at this mid stage of her life, this could seem like total madness or else a providential juxtaposition of circumstances that could make the seemingly impossible possible. Catherine highlighted two things that struck her at the time, firstly that she had no Spanish, and secondly that she had just completed a course in Spiritual and Pastoral Theology in Toronto. She said this latter experience enabled her to *'think beyond'* as she caught a glimpse of the *'freeing power of the Word of God'*. Up until this point Catherine explained:

"I was doing a job well and being a good person, and then this invitation arrived to move me beyond all of this".

She explained that she had discovered Theology as a practical and lived theology where the power of God was evident in the incarnation of the Good News.

"It seemed to me that it moved the Word of God from the realm of theory to a position of having an incidence in life here and now". She expressed it as: *"the power of the Word in the now" .*

In retrospect, Catherine said that her ministry in Chile and then in Ecuador has enabled her to recognise the transcendence, permanence and solidarity that 'faith lived' gives to the lives of those she lives and works with.

With the people

So Chile beckoned, and after a four month language course in Bolivia, Catherine arrived 'down country' in local plantations in Chile with the rural and farming community. Any idea of having attained proficiency in a language and the attendant confidence in communicating came to an abrupt end when she met the farmers and attempted to speak with them. These local farming people could understand neither her accent nor the language which was not in their local dialect.

"I felt a total sense of devastation and kept asking myself – What have I done? I cannot even talk to these people'? I realised as a school principal back in Ireland that I had been almost automatically bestowed with a certain level of prestige, responsibility and power from within my own society and that all of this (not even consciously registered at the time) was now

Your people will be my people …/

behind me".

Catherine described this as a very real experience of living disempowerment – totally dependent on those farming people around her, to help make her understood. It turned everything on its head and back to front. As she said: *"It led her to understand that one of our great strengths in ministry is to work in a second language, as you can never arrive again to the same position of relative power or control, by bringing unconsciously with you all that you left behind. It means you need always with simplicity to ask those you are with what is the best way?"*

Now, almost thirty years and two countries later, Catherine says she still speaks Spanish with an Irish accent, even though she has worked on local radio, works hand to hand in the community and in the Mission Formation School.

She still naturally references those around her to know how to say things in their cultural context. She describes it as a realisation that respect for the language and culture of a people reminds them that they are in fact the owners of their own place.

Farmer in cocoa plantations.

Their life is our life: "Your people will be my people". (Ruth: 1 16)

Catherine describes her life in Ecuador today, as day to day living as neighbour, shoulder to shoulder with the people, where "*our life is their life - their life is our life."*

Catherine is now the Diocesan Director of Mission Formation and Animation in the Archdiocese of Quito which comprises 200 parishes. The aim of this formation is to:

"*… form mission animators to be truly disciples and missionaries of Jesus, committed to the process of evangelisation undertaken by the universal Church."*

She speaks of her work which enables the formation of catechists and mission animators to take place from among and with their own people. *"We don't do it – we facilitate them with the skills and the understanding of "how" and "why".*

Faith formation is done mainly in the parish context and is supported by a cohort of lay catechists who work with the children, youth and parents. Formation in Faith is a realisation for them of the personalisation of God's unconditional love for them, and enables them to claim their own lives and know that they have been invited *"to be with him and to*

""I am content with weakness ….for when I am weak then I am strong" .

(2 Corinthians 12: 10).

Life & Ministry

Cooking at a street market.

Nano's Children

The local people around them see themselves as having no entitlement to anything and very often their questions give an indication of how they see themselves, and how they see you. Catherine said she could not count the number of times she has been asked: *"...but why would you come from another country and choose to be here with us?"*

The Sisters have supported many families to follow a path through to education and faith formation encouraging them and often providing financial assistance through donations to make this possible. E.g. She said, when we see a family with nine/ten persons living in wretched conditions in one house, we say immediately, *'but these are Nano's children'*, and then we seek them out and search for ways to restore their self confidence and sense of being *of value. "We are able to do this, one by one".*

be sent" to provide this for others in local Faith Community and *"to the ends of the earth".* The programme of formation in the Mission Formation School takes two and a half years to complete, so it is a huge commitment of time and energy.

Currently in the Archdiocese (at last count) there are about three to four thousand catechists trained in accompanying the faith formation of the local parish communities of whom an estimated 600 have also participated in Missionón Formation.

Catherine remembers that she drew huge encouragement and comfort from something her Provincial Leader had said to her when she was leaving – *'... remember that no matter how tough it is, give it two years, and remember you are always welcome back'.* She felt there was a tremendous freedom and security in this, as well as it bestowing on her the courage to give this experience of a new mission the time it needed as well as to be patient and ready to learn anew.

These are Nano's children

Formation in Quito has as much to do with empowering and supporting these people to make their way through and out of the dire circumstances in which they find themselves as it has in passing on knowledge. Catherine says that where these people live, their life circumstances are in many cases the result of the insatiable desire of others for "more and bigger".

"Living among them day to day we can see their inherent dignity and sense of worth as well as experiencing at first hand the beauty of their own story and language" she adds. She sees this as a reflection of their dignity as children of God and, *"We confirm with them, by the way we live, that nobody is worthless"* she adds.

Catherine describes the ever evolving nature of her experience, saying that when Pope Francis chose to visit Ecuador, Bolivia and Paraguay in July 2015 he did so as he recognised these countries as being amongst the poorest and most marginal nations of a region that was home to 40% of the world's Catholics. She remembers that towards the end of one of his addresses Pope Francis mentioned Ecuador's four major natural emblems - the peak of Chimborazo, the Pacific coast, the Amazon rainforest, and the Galapagos Islands - asking Ecuadorians to be "constantly struck" by the nobility of the people and the country's singular beauty. He said:

"May you never lose the ability to protect what is small and simple, to care for your children and your elderly, [and] to have confidence in the youth". Catherine also remembers him saying very clearly to them – 'Don't ever forget where you come from'.

Your people will be my people …/

Mission Formation and the implications of the Amazonian Synod today.

In answer to where she sees her commitment to Mission Formation in the implications of the Amazonian Synod. Catherine explains that the Preparatory Document for the Pan-Amazonian Synod (issued by Pope Francis on October 15, 2017) the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops was called to reflect on the theme: '**New Paths for the Church and for an Integral Ecology'*** recognising that *'new paths'* for evangelisation must be designed with the 'People of God' who live in this region: inhabitants of communities and rural areas, of cities and large metropolises, people who live on river banks, migrants and displaced persons, and especially for and with indigenous peoples. (*instrumentu laboris1*)

The Amazonian Synod

This Synod took place from the 6-27th October 2019 in Rome, and the final document has been addressed to the whole world, calling us to new ways of thinking, acting and relating to all cultures, forms of life and cosmo-visions.

"*It calls us to integrate rather than separate, incarnate rather than dominate, appreciate rather than exterminate. It calls us to coherence and transparency, to sharing rather than exploitation*" - surely an exact description of the Mission of Jesus - (Lk 4: 18).

The final Apostolic Exhortation **"Querida Amazonia"** (2nd. Feb 2020) calls for a missionary Church reaching out, a church that serves and accompanies the peoples (of the Amazon in this case) a Church that is samaritan and merciful, living in solidary with all peoples, no matter their colour, culture, class, age, or creed knowing that there was a place at the table of God for them.

"I am excited by all this" she says, as she describes how she felt at once identified with all that was happening around her and with the commitment as Presentation Sisters to the Spirituality of '*being in Communion',* reminding us that we are all one sacred community knowing too, that:

*"There is no lesson in the fern except uncurling slowly, one green frond at a time; learning to do well in dark places; letting growth come from the underside of things" (*Kathleen Cain: Congregational Gathering 2012).

Catherine has always sensed the resonance that exists between the back history of her own country (Ireland) with all its land difficulties, land-lordship, poverty, and hunger (famine) and how this somehow mirrors the story of the Ecuadorian land culture or at the very least, has provided her with a clear inroad into understanding and sharing the lived experience of these people. *"True, when I first arrived, I wasn't ready for the contrasts, the beauty of the place, the Eco diversity and the poverty, but I have had no regrets. Every step I have taken has prepared me for the next one – at no stage have I ever feel misplaced or lost".*

Sr. Catherine Codd

First Global Assembly for the Amazon 2020

The 1st Global Assembly for the Amazon was on July 18-19th, 2020 and was promoted by the Coordination of indigenous organizations of the Amazon Basin (Coica), the Pan-American Social Forum (Fospa) and the Pan-American Church Network (REPAM).

The virtual event included Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Guyana, Venezuela, Brazil, French Guiana & Suriname.

"Ecocide, ethnocide and terricide" are "worse than the virus", because they carry "a colonial and capitalist system which does not understand care of life". "There is no more time", the document continues, "we must unite in the diversity of peoples' knowledge and in the culture of care".

(see HERE and

New Paths for the Church & for an Integral Ecology - Preparatory Doc. 2018).

Final Document of Amazonian Synod (Querida Amazonia)

A Gallery of memorable moments

… along the landscape of a PLT journey…

Inaugural Assembly March-April 2016—Srs. Eileen Nash and Áine Walsh (the most junior and senior by profession) light the lantern from the Province Candle.

Remembering that special moment when we lit the flame of hope that spread like wildfire across the new Province, filling our hearts with love joy and compassion. Let us not quench that light but rather continue to live in its glow.

Margarita

A day to remember with the German Lutheran Pastors

This group of German Lutheran Pastors visited the Acorn Centre in October 2017 and filled the Centre with heart-warming laughter and a spontaneous rendition of *Laudate Omnes Gentes*. The singers left a lasting impression on me and brought home to me that we have more in common with other religions than we have difference.

It was an experience of openness, encounter and hospitality which we dreamed of, experienced and worked for as a leadership team.

Maura

On May 10th 2018 the schools in the West celebrated the legacy of Nano Nagle at Knock Shrine. It was a celebration of joy, passion, commitment, emotion and enthusiasm (through mime, song, dance and sacred music) of the legacy of Nano and the Presentation Sisters. Staff, students, parents, CEIST members and Presentation Sisters from the Province gathered for this event. It was one of many of the most wonderful memories I've had from the past five and a half years.

Concepta

Nano 300 Celebrations at Knock Shrine

Rahan on the banks of the Royal canal in Co. Offaly was the convent where I made my first profession.

I have chosen this picture as it reminds me of the Presentation contribution to education in so many areas of the world. The first sisters to India went from Rahan and the 200 weekend celebration was organised by the local people and blessed with glorious weather.

The first sisters to Rahan came by barge on the canal. The rivers and canals of Ireland were the main means of transport in the past, today they continue to play a major part in all our lives as recreation areas and places of natural beauty.

Reconstructed class room in Rahan during their bicentenary celebration.

Our journey as Presentation Sisters continues to flow as our rivers and canals do, ever the same yet changing all the time too. As I journey across the Atlantic to the Rock (Newfoundland) I carry a most precious treasure in my heart.

Mary

I will always treasure the memory of our presence at the World Meeting of Families in 2018. Our backdrop included the amazing mural painted by the Men's Drop-in at The Lantern (originally a Presentation Ireland project, and still a key component of ministry at Nano Nagle Place).

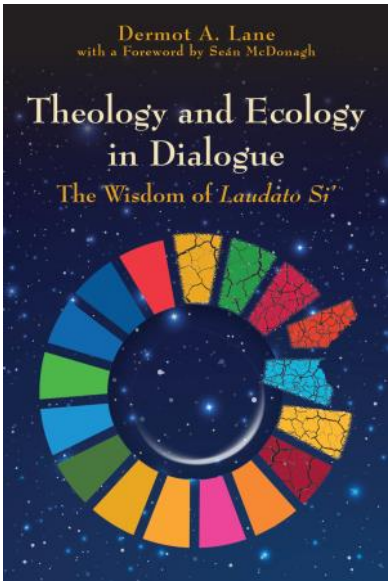
The strength of the design and the vibrancy of the colour attracted a huge number of visitors from near and far, and I delighted in telling the story of the men's journeys in from darkness towards the light, which powerfully illustrate Nano's legacy.

Anne

Nano 300 Resource Morning at Mount St. Anne's

Blessed to have the opportunity to lead the celebrations for Nano300 ... a memory from the past five and a half years that will enrich for many years to come.

Bernadette



Building bridges between Theology and Ecology

When the encyclical by Pope Francis, **Laudato Si': On Care for our Common Home** was released in May 2015 it broke new ground – or rather, it became an invaluable tool in opening up 'old ground' to new insights. At that time even its accessible language and layout deferred from past encyclical documents, in an effort to make it accessible to all. It was variously described as a 'game-changer', a 'wake-up call' and a 'prophetic challenge for the twenty-first century' – and not just by Christian faith leaders.

Indeed, many international figures associated with the climate debate, such as Al Gore, Lord Nicholas Stern and Jeffery Sachs spoke of the influence of Laudato Si' on COP21, the United Nations conference on climate held in Paris in December of that year.

May 2020 is the fifth anniversary of this ground-breaking encyclical (happening as it does against the back drop of an unimaginably changed world in which the experience of the life lived in a COVID-19 pandemic environment provides a stark daily revelation of just how interconnected and interdependent we are spiritually, humanly, environmentally).

It is against this global and local landscape that Irish priest and theologian Dermot Lane has recently published a new book, **Theology and Ecology in Dialogue: The Wisdom of Laudato Si'**. The content sets out to build clear bridges between theology and ecology. "[It is] *born of the conviction that underlying all other issues, climate change is the major challenge facing humanity today".*

David Lane asserts that theology must renew and reimagine itself and engage with the debate in the public forum with a view to initiating new, transformative practices in society, in politics, and in religions.

'This book builds bridges between theology & ecology', 'It challenges theology to re-imagine who we are, who the Spirit is, who Christ is, where creation is going, and what is the role of liturgy in society—all in the glare of the climate crisis'.

The topic and the content has relevance for a broad spectrum of interests – activists, policymakers, educators, and theologians, indeed all of us!

Dermot A Lane is a priest of the Archdiocese of Dublin, former President of Mater Dei Institute of Education, Dublin City University, and recently retired pastor in Balally Parish.

'This book builds bridges between theology & ecology', 'It challenges theology to re-imagine who we are, who the Spirit is, who Christ is, where creation is going, and what is the role of liturgy in society—all in the glare of the climate crisis'.

Theology and Ecology in Dialogue: The Wisdom of Laudato Si' by Dermot A. Lane and with a foreword by Seán McDonagh SCC is published in Ireland and the UK by Messenger Publications. It is available on the Messenger Publications online bookstore and all good bookshops. Priced at €19.95/ £17.95 **CLICK HERE FOR FURTHER DETAILS**

Soul Food

Fern

There is no lesson in the fern
except uncurling slowly,
one green frond at a time;
learning to do well
in dark places;
letting growth come
from the underside of things.
~ Kathleen Cain

(Irish Poetry Now—Wolfhound Press, 1993)

Five reasons for optimism

On 13 June, when we were three months into the coronavirus crisis, Fintan O'Toole wrote in the Irish Times: *'as the pandemic has unfolded, it has created, along with all the suffering, five reasons to be cautiously optimistic about the prospects for progressive politics'.*

To begin, O'Toole highlights the centrality of the nation-state in terms of boundaries, structures and approaches. While the idea of 'the nation' may be contested in light of obvious globalisation of issues, he observes that *'it's what we have to draw on when we need solidarity and mutual responsibility'*.

Next he observes that *'the strongmen are weak'*, as he names (and shames) those governments which are *'headed by right-wing populists who came to power by presenting themselves in one form or another as the embodiments of "the people". 'In this death-ridden circus'*, he states, *'the strongmen have been revealed as clowns'*.

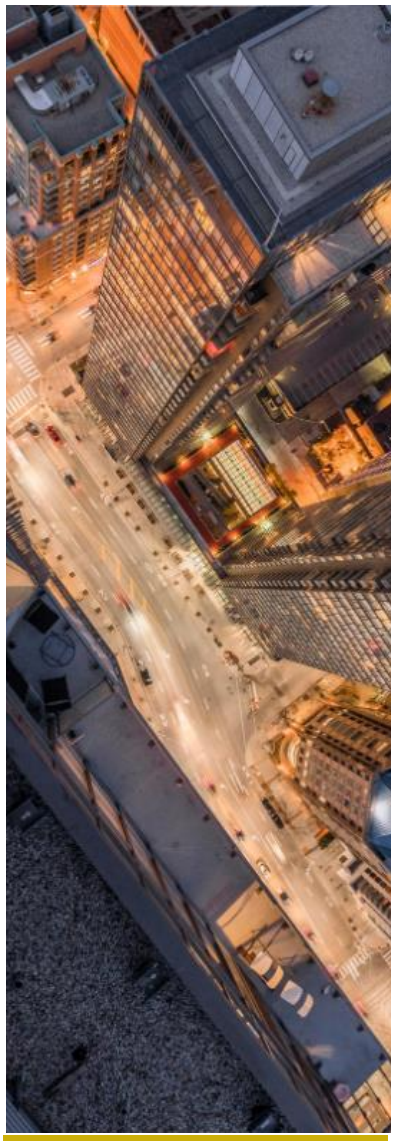
The third reason we may hope for a better world, according to O'Toole, is that in times when truth can so easily be sacrificed to performance, it is increasingly clear that *'there is such a thing as [factual] information'*.

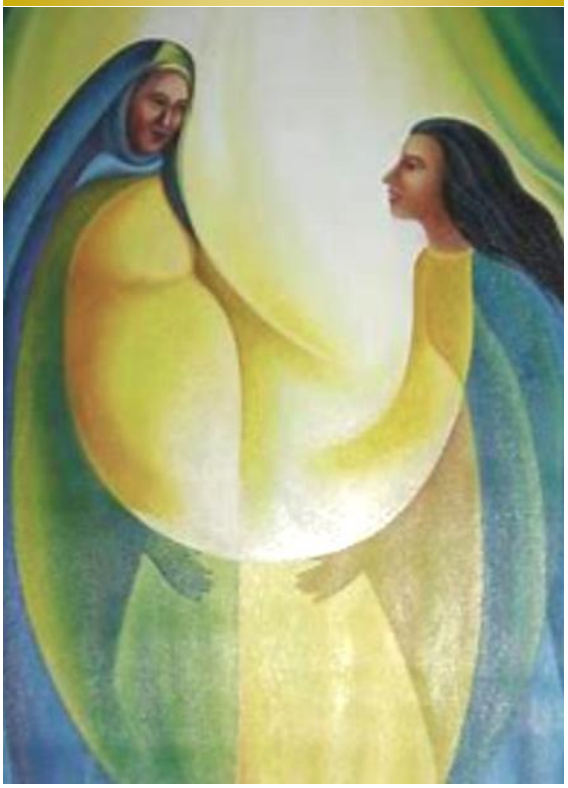
Moreover, there is also such a thing as society; this, in the face of *'loss of community, diminution of social capital, the replacement of a common social sphere with social media algorithms that deliver only the news we want to hear'*. Many, many people continue to risk their own safety, and the majority have proven compliant with necessary regulation, all for the common good.

Finally, in O'Toole's view, the need for well-directed government for the sake of personal safety and economic recovery has become abundantly clear. The question is: can truly democratic leaders emerge, read and rise to this opportunity?

Sr. Anne Codd

(This insightful piece is unfortunately now "paywalled" on the internet (meaning that only subscribers to the Irish Times online may access it). However, Anne scanned it at the time, and will happily forward it by email to anyone who would like a copy. Just send an email to: Margaret@presprone.com).





Who we are

We are a community of women rooted in stillness and contemplation, committed to developing caring and meaningful relationships in education, community outreach, charity and international missions.

We are committed to living sustainably and we promote justice, peace and equality.

We live out the vision of Nano Nagle, the distinguished Irish woman who started her congregation, by responding creatively to ever changing social challenges.

Our daily work involves creating innovative responses to unmet needs, participating in diverse educational services and making a difference in many small ways to people's lives, especially to those kept poor.

"We are an international group of Sisters who aim to be mystics and prophets in today's world".

Presentation Sisters North East Province (Ireland)

Presentation Provincialate
Acorn Centre
Warrenmount
Blackpitts
Dublin
D08 W2X8

Phone: 01 416 6010
Fax: 01 416 5787
Email:
secretary@presprone.com
Web:
www.presentationsistersne.ie

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And

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You can contact us by email or phone, or make contact with a Presentation Sister in your local community.

We are not hard to find.

Bachlóga contributors

If you wish to contribute an article or have an idea for a feature article, to help this make this magazine the best it can be, please send material to Margaret@presprone.com or by post to: Margaret Agnew, at the address above. We look forward to hearing from you. Each issue would be nothing without images, so thank you to all our photographers too numerous to list here—you know who you are and that your work is appreciated.

Contributors to this issue: The Province Leadership Team, Margarita Ryan, Ann Marie Quinn, Zabaria Peter, Margaret Mary Healy, Brian Fitzsimons, Catherine Codd, Anne Codd, Margaret Agnew.