Words & Deeds

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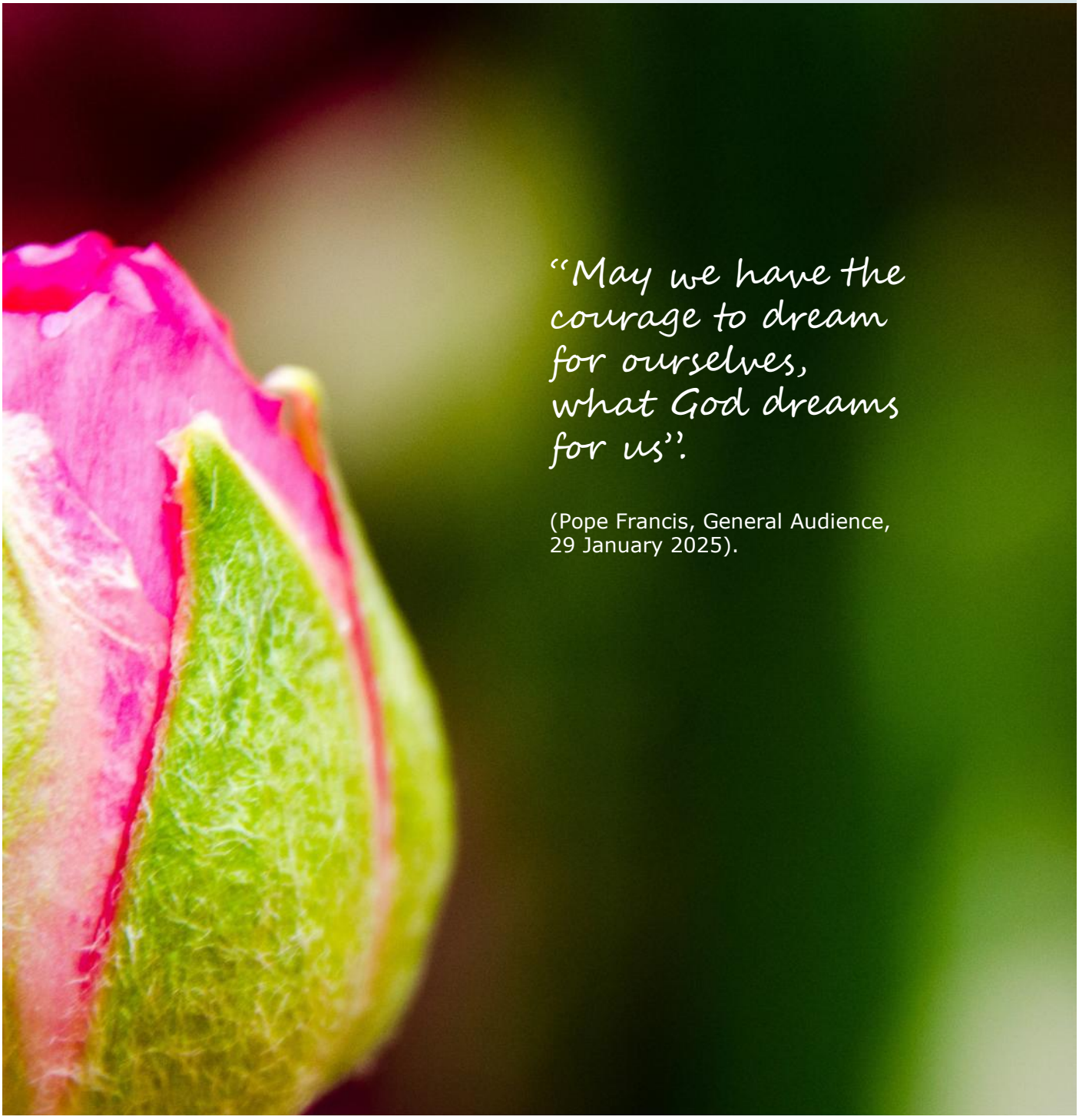

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The evidence of hope … 'Nano let loose'!

In this Jubilee Year we will hear much about *Hope* and discover first hand what it is to become *Pilgrims of Hope,* as we go about our daily lives. *Hope* as not just a word, but as a way of life.

In this issue of *Words & Deeds* it is clear from each of the articles shared *'that the roots of hope run deep'* and that almost every piece offers a practical translation of the legacy of Nano Nagle for our times.

Cynthia Bourgeault writes: *"Often we tie hope to outcome. This is not right. Hope is a primordial force that boils up from the centre of the earth (in our being) and gifts us the capacity to be fully present and fully strong in whatever circumstance. … It is a hope that comes to us as our natural birthright, as we stand quietly in wonder and simply breath—hope is what we breathe—the atmosphere of the Earth is Hope".*

In this issue, we share the evidence of Hope, through our Graced Journey, as 'Women of God' at our Province Gathering; celebrate with our schools and parish community, two hundred years of Presentation Life in Portlaoise, while recognising that those seeds planted, feed the journey into the future; with Scoil Chroí Naofa Athenry as they close one chapter only to open another, we honour their Presentation legacy, while moving forward with hope and determination into the future of Athenry Primary School; we recognise, and give thanks for one hundred and forty-five years of ministry to the people of Kilcock, and share the joy of fulfilling the practical wishes of Holy Angels' Day Care Centre for a much needed minibus.

Sr. Agnes Byrne writes "*Prophets are not people who tell the future, but people who see the real issues of the present",* waking up the world to what we are called to do. Srs. Anne McNamara and Louise Eustace share the experience of the 'Changing Face of Mission in Slovakia', as *'we participate in the unfolding mystery of the reign of God, by fostering the values proclaimed in the life & mission of Jesus",* and students and staff in Irish Presentation Schools continue with enthusiasm and energy, to look forward to the Challenge to Change Projects they will undertake in this new action-packed year. Brian O'Toole at the Presentation Justice Desk has shared some insights from the past year, and looks forward to the Jubilee Year and the potential it holds *"as the promise and hope"* for all those left behind by our society today. Living as *Pilgrims of Hope,* our Justice Day account challenges us to endeavour "*never to remain on the sidelines of this march of living hope"!* While Brian Fitzsimons (CEO of iScoil) shares the experience of this '*deeply impactful'* service while rolling out a new strategic plan for the next five years, to 2030.

'God never stops dreaming of us becoming men and women of hope, harmony and peace, as people who are not overcome by adversity.

May we have the courage to dream for ourselves, what God dreams for us'.

(Pope Francis, General Audience, Wed. 29 January 2025).

Passing on the Lantern

Once shared, light travels - annihilating darkness. "*It is with great hope that I pass on the IPA Lantern",* writes Sr. Ann Marie Quinn (the outgoing IPA Executive Director) as she welcomes the new incoming IPA Executive Director, Jessica Dewhurst. Also, taking up the Lantern of Nano's Light we welcome Karen Sacre, as Friends of Nano, International Animator. Mary-Ann Greaney, (FON International Animator for the past 3 years) shares her belief that it is not surprising that 18th century Nano is still relevant in the 21st century, and in her wonderful description says: *'Nano has been let loose'!!.*

"***Blessed are you who bear the light in unbearable times, who testify to endurance amid the unendurable, who bear witness to its persistence when everything seems in shadow and grief. Blessed are you in whom the light lives … ".***

(Jan Richardson—from 'Circle of Grace: A book of Blessings for the Seasons').

Foreword

Our Graced Journey as 'Women of God'

Images: *Sisters present at our Province Gathering in Mt. St. Anne's—7 December. 2024.*

Called " … to affirm that the face of our Earth home has changed, the face of religious life and of our Congregation has evolved bringing new challenges. During our time together courage and hope rose among us as we recalled the story of Nano … In the face of fear, chose to be daring; In the face of anxiety, chose to trust; In the face of impossibility, chose to begin".

[From the Direction Statement CG2024].

Image: *from the Direction Statement CG2024.*

When we planned our Province Gathering back in the Spring of 2024, we had no way of predicting what Mother Nature had in store for us, as we came together in Mt. St. Anne's on the 7th December 2024.

However, you braced the aftermath of the storm in your numbers, and even the lack of heat could not dampen the positive energy which was generated when we came together. There was a great feeling of unity, trust and friendship among us, while your feedback in the reviews, gave us great hope that the day had been in fact really worthwhile, despite the challenges.

The Staff and Community at Mt. St. Anne's reached out, beyond the call of duty, to enable us to hold the day, despite the power cuts and terrible weather. For this we are very grateful.

A special word of thanks

A special word of thanks to the Congregational Leadership Team members for their presence with us. It was a great opportunity for all of us to meet and get to know one another, as they begin as a new Team in Monasterevin.

As 'Women of God', called to the wild, unfinished edges, let us not be afraid to encounter those who most need our help.

[Text used is adapted as an extract from the introduction to the Update Newsletter for December 2024].

Celebrating 200 years of Presentation Life in Portlaoise

Image: *(L) Sr. Cecilia Molloy and (middle) Srs. Maureen O'Rourke, Anne Keating and Gabrielle Jin.*

Image: *(above) Presentation Sisters and parishioners in the Parish Centre to celebrate 200 years of Presentation Life in Portlaoise.*

From challenging beginnings in 1824, the Presentation Sisters unknowingly laid the foundation of future education in Portlaoise, as many other institutes were opened following their example.

Since the foundation of the convent in Church Street, Sisters have also lived in Tower Hill, O'Moore Place, Beechfield, Knockmay and Ashbrook Gardens.

A celebratory Mass to acknowledge the 200th year of the Presentation Sisters in the town, took place in St. Peter and Paul's church in Portlaoise, followed by a special reception in the Parish Centre.

Scoil Chríost Rí also celebrated this two hundred year anniversary of Presentation Sisters in Portlaoise. The secondary school had a special Mass on November 20th, to which we were all invited, followed by a celebration in the Parish Centre. They also invited Sisters Anne Lyons and Evelyn Byrne to share the story of Ven. Nano Nagle with the 6th Year Religious Exam (Theology) class as part of their coursework projects. The group heard of the courage and inspiring vision Nano had in tackling religious persecution, social justice and poverty in her time and how they too, could make a positive impact in our world today. *(See image below)*

Image: *(L-R) Sisters Anne Lyons and Evelyn Byrne with two 6th Year Students at Scoil Chríost Rí.*

From initial foundations …

The Presentation Sisters arrived in Portlaoise on July 3, 1824 to set up a school (Maryborough) and continued over the next 200 years to make a significant contribution to education, parish and community life.

Back at that time, Bishop James Doyle had wanted to *"promote religious instruction and provide education to the poor of the town",* bestowing the responsibility on Sisters Magdalen Breen, Angela Mooney and Chantal Wilmerding.

By August 1824 there were two hundred and sixteen children in the school. Despite the severity of the poverty in Ireland at the time, many sacrifices were made by both the Sisters and families, in order for the children to receive an education.

Classes were taught in disused buildings and coal-cellars of the church. However, gradually, with the generous donations of the local communities along with funding from the government, the buildings and quality of education improved rapidly.

Despite famine and other economic troubles throughout the 1800s, the children received breakfast in the school every morning.

"Great crowds gathered after Mass in the Parish Centre on 3rd July 2024. On this day in 1824 three Sisters arrived from Carlow to set up a house and school in Maryborough (as Portlaoise was called then). Celebrating 200 years at the heart of life in Portlaoise Parish".

Scoil Chroí Naofa, Athenry — a fond farewell!

Image: *This photo was taken by Staff Members in July 2024 on a visit by 6th Class girls (Scoil Chroí Naofa) as they bade farewell to the Sisters. (Taken in the convent in Athenry). The amalgamation of both Scoil Chroí Naofa and the Boys' Primary School in Athenry, now known as Athenry Primary School.*

Today marks a significant and poignant moment in the history of Scoil Chroí Naofa (SCN). As we gathered for the final time as the school community of SCN, we were filled with mixed emotions—gratitude, pride, happiness, and a touch of sadness. Our school which has stood as a beacon of education and community for so many years is closing one door to the past, and opening another to a new future. We celebrate the rich history and enduring legacy that our school leaves behind.

To me, Scoil Chroí Naofa is a special place in the heart of Athenry town. It is special for a myriad of reasons. It has the most wonderful children who continue to amaze us year on year with their talents and qualities, making our daily work so pleasant and fulfilling. It has a staff full of heart, energy and kindness who inspire, lift and support one another through everything, and a community of parents who work alongside us in everything we do. And of course we must acknowledge the existing, as well as the many previous boards of management, parent councils and school chaplains who shaped this school in so many incredible ways.

Our history

This special school began in 1908 when Joseph Canon, the parish priest at the time, invited four Presentation Sisters from Tuam to come to Athenry and establish a school for girls in Abbey Row. The first classrooms were simple, but they were filled with promise of a brighter future. Guided by the vision of Nano Nagle, their founder, the Sisters brought Scoil Chroí Naofa to the ground we stand on today. Over the decades we have seen countless students walk through the doors each leaving their unique mark and carrying forward the values instilled in them by both religious and lay staff.

Over the years, Scoil Chroí Naofa has been fortunate to have been steered by many caring and visionary leaders who embodied this very spirit of Nano Nagle, where the pupil was placed at the heart of all decisions made.

Throughout the years, our school has been a place of collaboration, innovation and inclusivity. We have adapted to changing times, embracing new technologies and teaching methods, always striving to provide the best education possible. The achievements of our pupils, whether in academics, sports, or the arts, have consistently brought pride to our community.

Memorable moments that define our journey

Today, we remember the memorable moments that defined our journey: our wonderful assemblies, Seachtain na Gaelige celebrations and sports

days; our weekly band practices and twice yearly performances; our special School Masses and in particular our whole School Mass on November 21st to mark Presentation Day; our many wonderful school choirs, camogie blitzes and quizzes; our numerous flags and committees; our social media platforms, and our many gatherings around the staffroom table with endless chats and fun.

Each of these events and traditions have contributed to the vibrant tapestry of our school's history. Our school has been more than just a place of learning, it has been a place where lifelong friendships were forged and cherished memories were made.

To the parents and guardians who have journeyed faithfully with us, the staff of SCN—thank you wholeheartedly for your unwavering support and trust always. Your encouragement and involvement in your children's education have been vital to their success. We appreciate the contribution you have made and the partnership you have forged with us.

The legacy of our dedicated teachers and staff cannot be overstated. Their commitment to education, their passion for teaching, and their unwavering support for every student have been the driving force behind our success. Many of them have spent the majority of their careers here, sharing the minds and hearts of many generations.

As we close this chapter, let us remember that the essence of our school will live on in all of us. The friendships we have made, the lessons we have learned, and the experiences we have shared will remain with us forever. The spirit of our school is not confined to a building—it is carried in our hearts and actions.

Let us celebrate the history of our school, honour its legacy, and look forward with hope and determination to the future.

As we say a fond farewell to SCN today, let us hold onto the memories and the impact our school has had on each of our lives. May the spirit of our school continue to inspire us all.

Cathríona Cronin, Deputy Principal, SCN (2012—2024)

INSIDE STORY

Athenry Primary School has been formed from an amalgamation of Scoil Chroí Naofa, Athenry and Athenry Boys School. Both schools had a long tradition of providing primary school education to the children of Athenry.

Athenry Primary School is a Catholic school for Girls and Boys. The school also has a Special class for children with Autism. There are currently 520 pupils attending the school.

The school offers a broad range of curricular and extra-curricular activities for pupils within the school, and currently operates across two campuses. However, design works have commenced for the full development of a brand-new 24 classroom school which will be located on the site of the Old Presentation College.

145 yrs of Presentation Ministry in Kilcock, Co. Meath

On 25th August 2024 the Parish of Kilcock gathered to mark 145 years of Presentation Sisters ministry to the people of Kilcock and surrounding areas, and to say farewell to the four remaining sisters, Catherine Brosnan, Péig O'Rourke, Bríd Kenny and Lillie O'Reilly. Presentation Sisters who had lived and ministered in Kilcock were invited back to mark the occasion. During the Mass tributes were paid to the sisters by Fr. George Augustine PP, and the Primary School Principal, Linda Daly. Bishop Denis Nulty sent a beautiful message which was shared by Fr. George.

The Secondary School Principal, Michael McDonagh read a poem in Irish composed by Sr. Fintan Davis RIP. Sr. Mary Hanrahan gave a reflection on the arrival of the sisters in 1879 and their subsequent involvement in the Schools and Parish. A framed picture of the original convent was presented to Sr. Mary on behalf of the Parish. Following the Mass, everyone was invited to the Primary School for refreshments and a sharing of memories which was beautifully prepared by the local organising committee. Later in the evening Fr. George invited the four Kilcock Sisters, the Provincial Leadership Team and the Organising Committee to a meal. It was a fitting celebration of our years of ministry in Kilcock but was also tinged with sadness.

Image: *The Presentation Sisters donating a new bus to the Holy Angels, Day Care Centre, pictured Sr. Mary Hanrahan, Sr. Maureen Miley (Child Care Assistant at Holy Angels), Sr. Concepta O'Brien, Sr. Anne-Marie Farragher, Sr. Louise Eustace and Sr. Cecilia Molloy, with Geraldine Connell, Manager of Holy Angels and Cllr. Fintan Phelan, Mayor of Carlow and chairman of the board of management at Holy Angels. (Photo: by michaelorourkephotography.ie for Carlow Nationalist Newspaper)*

A wish of Holy Angels Day Care Centre, Carlow is granted!

Holy Angels Day Care Centre, Carlow has been left *'blown away'* by the generosity of the Presentation Sisters, who recently donated a bus to the school.

The fully-adapted minibus can accommodate up to nine children and a wheelchair, a vital asset that ensures children from around the county get the transport they need in order to avail of the wonderful services available at Holy Angels.

"Sr. Mary Hanrahan (Provincial Leader) came to visit us back in February, and asked me to send them a wish list and to include everything we would like, from the dearest to the cheapest item," explained Geraldine Connell, Manager of Holy Angels.

"A few weeks later, they contacted us to say that they were going to donate €60,000 for a minibus … their kindness just blew us away, because transport is always a worry. It's not something that is covered by the HSE, so it's always a concern for us that a bus could break down or become unusable," said Geraldine.

The bus was recently officially presented to the school by the Presentation Sisters, and blessed by Fr. John McEvoy.

Holy Angels is a designated, specialised pre-school for children aged 18 months to six years with a range of disabilities. The Centre was founded by Sr. Columba Flavin, a member of the Presentation Sisters, who saw a need for such a day care service in the area. That connection with the religious order has remained strong over the decades, with Sr. Maureen Miley currently working at Holy Angels.

[Content of article and images courtesy of Carlow Nationalist Newspaper 31st October 2024].

"We have two fully functional buses on the road now, which is great and such a relief. It means that children from all over the county can avail of transport, because we have children travelling from Hacketstown, Rathvilly, Tullow, Borris, all over the county, and a lot of children would not be able to come to us without the bus service".

(Geraldine Connell, Manager of Holy Angels' Day Care Centre).

Nano's Legacy

For further information see: https://theholyangelscarlow.org/

Image: *Present at the launch: Sr. Concepta O'Brien (NEP Leadership Team, 2nd left) with Srs. Agnes Byrne and Mary McDermott.*

Waking Up the World!

In October last year a DVD celebrating the centuries long commitment and service of eleven different religious congregations in Drogheda, Co. Louth was launched by Cardinal Sean Brady.

Titled 'Life is Changed Not Ended', the DVD was the culmination of a long project that involved the co-operation of priests, sisters and brothers from the various religious communities that have had such a significant impact on education, community service and work for social justice in the town.

Commenting on the importance of the project, Cardinal Brady paid special tribute to Sr. Agnes Byrne, PBVM without whose passion and determination to see the project come to fruition, the DVD would not have been made.

The Cardinal went on to point out that the assembled sisters, priests and brothers represent generations of religious whose selfless dedication to a life in God, leaves a legacy that continues to have a significant impact in the lives of so many people in the town.

Sr. Agnes Byrne in her article in Intercom (June 2024) shared the following thoughts for reflection: *"The task of consecrated persons in our world is to be prophets: People who see the significant issues of the present. A prophet speaks the truth about human life, the wonder and awe we feel at ourselves when we understand what Christ has done in us".* And she continues:

"Prophets are not people who tell the future, but people who see the real issues of the present. In quiet reflection we need to take time to listen and hear what Jesus is saying to us. What is it that God, and the People of God are asking of consecrated life today?" At the Launch Cardinal Sean Brady reminded us that *'God's love is calling us, a call to take our light from under the bushel'.*

He said: *"With this video we are advised to look, see, discuss, reflect and respond".*

Sr. Agnes Byrne

'Religious Life Drogheda: "Life is Changed, not Ended"' is now readily available on YouTube. **The DVD 'Life is Changed Not Ended'** is also available to purchase from the Augustinian Shop, Shop Street, Drogheda.

"WAKE UP THE WORLD … Life is Changed, not Ended."

When He calls, God says
You are important to me
I love you.
Jesus tells this to each of us,
And from this comes joy!
The joy of the moment when
Jesus looked at me with love.
To understand and feel this is
The secret of happiness.
Feeling loved by God
That we are for Him,
Not numbers but persons,
And know that it is He
who calls us.

[From the words of Pope Francis in his letter inaugurating the Year of Consecrated Life 2015].

Image: *Sr. Agnes Byrne (Ctr.) with Cardinal Seán Brady (Archbishop Emeritus of Armagh) and Ms. Geraldine Mulvihill, Principal of Our Lady's Presentation School, Drogheda at the video launch.*

Image: *Flats in Bratislava.*

The Changing Face of Mission

As I sit here in Presentation Convent, Milltown, Co. Kerry, having returned from Slovakia in May, I am reflecting on the changing face of mission. Here, the famous 'Kerry Christmas Carol', written in 1892 by Sigerson Clifford of Cahirciveen, can often be heard recited or sung. The poem refers to an old custom, whereby every household would leave a lighted candle in their window on Christmas night to guide and welcome the Holy Family. Amazingly, the same custom holds in Slovakia where - following their liberation from the Communist regime - a brightly burning candle can be seen in the windows of row upon row of flats in Bratislava.

An extract from the poem reads:

Don't blow the tall white candle out
But leave it burning bright,
So that they'll know they're welcome here
This holy Christmas night.

Leave out the bread and meat for them,
And sweet milk for the Child,
And they will bless the fire, that baked
And, too, the hands that toiled.

For Joseph will be travel-tired,
And Mary pale and wan,
And they can sleep a little while
Before they journey on.

They will be weary of the roads,
And rest will comfort them,
For it must be many a lonely mile
From here to Bethlehem.

O long the road they have to go,
The bad mile with the good,
Till the journey ends on Calvary
Beneath a cross of wood.

Leave the door upon the latch,
And set the fire to keep,
And pray they'll rest with us to-night
When all the world's asleep.

~Sigerson Clifford (1892)

From the early 1990's much was changing in mainland Europe. Among these political and social changes was the birth in 1993 (through 'the Velvet Revolution') of the final two new states in Central Europe –the Czech Republic and Slovakia. At the same time Presentation Sisters were missioned – at first from the (then) South East Province and ultimately from the (then) Northern and South West - to this new country. In continuity with all Presentation mission, their vision was *'to ensure the continuation and extension of the work and charism of Nano Nagle and her companions for the education of the poor and the relief of those exploited by unjust systems*. (C1)*

During their early years, the Sisters encountered many very helpful people. These new-found friends and colleagues, having offered

*'C' References to the articles in *'Our Way of Life, Constitutions & Directives, Union of the Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary'.*

a warm welcome into their homes, hearts, families and schools, also enabled the sisters to get documents in order so that they could teach in the newly- formed Catholic schools. This was the only work they allowed to do in order to get a residency permit as Slovakia was not yet a member of the European Union.

Image: *Spišské Podhradie*

Throughout the thirty years of Presentation presence in Slovakia, a total of 15 sisters lived and worked there, located first in Bratislava, then moving from west to east, in Košice, Levoča, and Spišské Podhradie. Over time, they engaged in a variety of ministries, teaching English in Catholic schools and other establishments, faith community development, family support, a resocialization project for homeless men – Resoty - and finally in 2003, a Presentation project to help the Roma children and adults towards greater educational, social, cultural and spiritual development, as well as integration and participation in Slovak society. Mission, as the sisters understood it, implied active apostolic service.

The ministries of our sisters in Slovakia express fidelity to living the Spirituality of Being in Communion (Congregational Gatherings 2006 to 2024). The small beginnings of the first three sisters, Srs. Rita Carberry, Immaculate Power and Yvonne Jennings, called for creative ways of living community. They were followed over the years by Srs. Louise Eustace, Rosaria King RIP, Maireád Moran, Madeleine Houlihan RIP, Elizabeth Starken RIP, Anne McNamara, Eileen Tobin, Mary Lenehan, Marie Behan, Eileen Nash, Rosamma Arukonmala and Rupa Lourdhusamy.

In 1993, Slovakia was a fledgling democracy and the Catholic Church was emerging from its underground existence during 50 years of Communist persecution. Over the thirty years of their service, our sisters helped build the post-Communist church.

By 2023 it was apparent that, as far as being in person in Slovakia was concerned, we Presentation Sisters had done what we could do (cf. evaluation and reflection questions, CG2024 Direction Statement). Srs. Mary Hanrahan and Grace McKiernan as the Irish Provincials, on consultation and reflection, decided to close the remaining community. Of our four properties, two went on the market and were sold commercially. Two represent the changing face of mission and our enduring missionary spirit as Presentation Congregation.

An apartment in Hálova, Bratislava was gifted to a non-profit foundation, St. Elizabeth's, for accommodating refugees from the Ukraine. The two families from Dnipro residing in Hálova are well settled, immensely relieved and grateful.

The convent in Spišské Podhradie, built in 2006, was gifted to the Diocese of Spiš. The diocesan branch of Caritas have adapted this building for their purposes, and now manage it as a refuge for women and children. Since March of this year, when families began to arrive, the service is being developed to cater for individual and group needs beginning with security and health issues, and providing life-skills training and development.

Before leaving Spišské Podhradie, it was a source of real joy for me to witness the obvious relief of mothers at finding this haven in which they and their young children could be together in safety and hope. The Final Report from the Synod on Synodality begins: *'every new step in the life of the Church is a return to the source'.* Surely we may believe that our legacy in Slovakia, as well as the place it holds in our hearts and our history, is faithful to Nano's vision, as we have sought to '*participate in the unfolding mystery of the reign of God by fostering the values proclaimed in the life and mission of Jesus'.* (C2)*

Thank you to Sisters Anne McNamara & Louise Eustace for this article.

Annual Challenge to Change Seminars—2025

Thursday, 10th April—at the Lyrath Estate Hotel, Kilkenny.

Tuesday, 6th May—at the Tullamore Court Hotel, Tullamore, Co. Offaly.

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About Challenge to Change

Challenge to Change is a Development Education Project aimed at all students in Irish Presentation Schools.

An initiative of the Presentation Sisters **www.challengetochangeproject.com**

Project Facilitators

- **Mrs. Paula Watters**
- **Mrs. Mary Waddell**
- **Mrs. Breda Oxley**
- **Sr. Eileen Nash**
- **Sr. Margaret Mary Healy**
- **Sr. Evelyn Byrne**

Challenge to Change has been supporting and sharing the participation of students and staff in development education projects since 2004.

Ambassadors for change

Congratulations to all the many students and teachers who have participated in this year's Challenge to Change projects (2023—2024)!

The vision of Challenge to Change (C2C) is driven by the Presentation Charism and Ethos, which embraces the challenge of working with those who are furthest behind. Justice, human rights, sustainability and promoting right relationships are central to the Presentation mission.

"The hands-on projects undertaken, raise awareness of global inequality, as students understand how their local action can have a global impact. What better way to bring about learning, than to ground the projects in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a living plan for the future that connects us all". (From the Challenge to Change Year Book—2023 to 2024).

The projects undertaken offer a diverse and inspiring contribution to *'helping change happen'* on our doorsteps. E.g. by celebrating our connections around the world, exploring the true cost of Fast Fashion, investigating biodiversity, exploring SDG5—Gender Equality in relation to Girl Power, Helping the Homeless, Out of Sight, Out of Mind—Child Labour, and Operation Penguin Preservation, to name but a few of the wonderful topics researched and explored by our avid *'students of change'.*

In the words of the students:

"I learned so much doing the projects, and they taught us that other cultures and religions are very interesting".

"I thought it was really fun to learn everything, and it was probably one of my favourite things that I did this year".

You too can explore some of these projects in more detail and appreciate the wonderful photos at the **link to the Challenge to Change Year Book (2023—2024) HERE**

Let us continue with enthusiasm and energy, to look forward to the C2C Projects for this new action-packed year, remember to add the important dates to your diary for the annual **Challenge to Change Seminars in 2025.**

[The Images used, alongside the content of this article—are courtesy of the C2C Year Book 2023-2024].
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A 'Snapshot' of Justice Desk Work in 2024!

This article offers some short insights into the collective work in Justice by the Presentation Sisters' Justice Desk for Ireland and England during the past year.

As we contemplate the obvious lack of ambition in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the war in the Ukraine, the failure of the wealthiest countries to step up to their financial commitments to the loss and damage fund they openly agreed to at COP29, and the newly incumbent Trump Administration in January 2025, you might be forgiven for asking: *'Where can we find hope?'*

At each instance of our work, we have a call to action!

Ending violence against women & children

We have plans this year to prepare and offer webinars on racism, the rise of the right and how we can counter such a narrative with an alternative view.

Much of the work that is undertaken at the Justice Desk is framed by our International Presentation Association (IPA) commitments that were agreed upon at the 8th Assembly in Newfoundland in 2023.

Our UN advocacy focus remains our fervent hope, to end violence against women and children and this has been the inspiration behind our work, to shine a light on the issue of Obstetric Fistula.

People Smuggling/ Trafficking

More and more we are witnessing the movement of people, often for economic reasons but sometimes too because of conflict or indeed climate change. Where there is movement of people there is a vulnerability of those on the move, that they might be exploited by people smugglers and/or traffickers (they are two different things!).

During 2024, perhaps more than in any other year, I have been involved with the religious in Ireland (working with Act to Prevent Trafficking in Ireland (APT) as Treasurer, and in Europe (working with the Religious in Europe against Trafficking and Exploitation, (RENATE)), and as part of the worldwide Network to combat Trafficking, as a member of Talitha Kum.

In APT we are redeveloping our website and our *'cAPTives Programme'* that is being delivered in schools. We are also advocating for the timely implementation of the Third National Action Plan on Human Trafficking in Ireland, by attending, as stakeholders at the Department of Justice quarterly meetings. All of this work is hope-filled and promising.

Further afield in Europe, I am the Irish Board Representative on RENATE and in the last year we have successfully engaged in research across five countries (including England, to whom I have a responsibility at the Justice Desk) to assist legal practitioners who work for the victims of human trafficking. We find often that these legal cases are complicated, costly and time consuming.

Lawyers who take on this work are few and far between as the work can be emotionally draining. Given the heavy workload of all involved, a simple mistake can be catastrophic for the victims.

I was nominated by RENATE to attend the Talitha Kum Assembly in Rome, marking the 15th anniversary of Talitha Kum. I undertook facilitative training offered by Talitha Kum in advance of this gathering, as they had asked that I would be one of the facilitators at the Assembly.

Image: *Sr. Helen Lenehan and Brian O' Toole at an event with the Future Generations Commissioner in DCU Dublin.*

Image: *Brian O'Toole at a UN Poverty Day event speaking to the experience of trafficked victims.*

'Just' Work

Useful Resources & Links

The following are some useful links to actions, collaborations, & resources that are an integral part of the Justice Desk Update for 2024 from Brian O'Toole.

Act to Prevent Trafficking in Ireland

Altogether in Dignity Ireland (ATD)

'All I Want for Christmas is HOPE!'

Antenna of the Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network (AEFJN)

Coalition 2030

at COP29

England at the UN Commission for the Status of Women

Global Citizenship School

National Justice and Peace Network (NJPN) in the UK

Religious in Europe working against Trafficking and Exploitation, RENATE)

Safe Birth 4 All campaign

16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

3rd National Action Plan on Human Trafficking in Ireland

See: HERE *and* IPA Website HERE

By clicking on the blue links you will find a more detailed review of the work at hand.

Image: *Brian O'Toole (4th from Right) at the National Justice and Peace Network (NJPN) Executive at Wistaston Hall in Crewe, UK.*

The outcomes of this Assembly were once again filled with a hope for those who are furthest behind.

Living in Ireland means that much of what I do concerns Ireland, but I have a commitment to working for the Sisters in England, and most recently I have become a trustee of the National Justice and Peace Network (NJPN) in the UK. (See image above).

I have been involved with the NJPN for several years on the periphery, speaking at their conferences, and also offering workshops on both the SDGs and on Human Trafficking. This year I was invited to join the NJPN Executive and was delighted to do so, as this would give real purpose and weight to the work that I can now undertake for the Presentation Sisters in England.

Hope-filled collaborations

I continue to be inspired by the work of the Presentation Sisters across the world, and once again I can see hope.

From the very first day at the Justice Desk, my work involved collaboration between the Irish and English Provinces, but equally too, I was encouraged to reach out to others similarly engaged in the work of Justice, and to collaborate where our work and aims align.

As the chairperson of Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network (AEFJN) I represent the Presentation Sisters who are one of ten congregations to come together in this work.

In RENATE I collaborate with upwards of thirty-six Congregations, and at Talitha Kum I am part of one hundred and thirty-nine Networks all working together to advance the cause of those victims who can be counted amongst those 'furthest behind'. In all this collaboration there is the promise of hope.

One the greatest and perhaps most exciting opportunities that arose in 2024 was working with the Presentation Temporary Professed Sisters.

I met with them early in 2024 to help them understand a little more about the SDGs and how they related to all in our IPA world. Then later in the year I had this privilege renewed when I was asked to speak to the issue of Human Trafficking and our collective work in helping to make a difference for victims. It is at these gatherings that I continue to find genuine hope.

Built into the Jubilee Year is the promise and hope of freedom for those enslaved, freedom from debt and rest and restoration of the environment. It promises to be a hope filled year!

Brian O'Toole,
Director of the Interprovincial Justice Desk

To contact the Justice Desk, you can send your email to:
presinterprovjustice@gmail.com

‘Missionaries of Hope’: World Refugee Day 2025

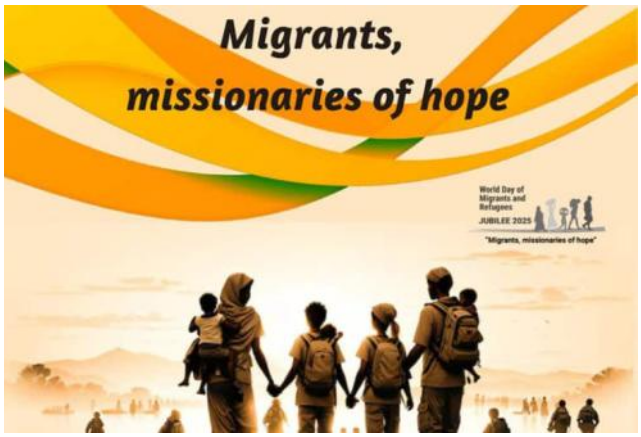
Pope Francis has chosen “Migrants, missionaries of hope” as the theme for the 2025 World Day of Migrants and Refugees.

“Migrants and refugees become ‘missionaries of hope’ in the communities where they are welcomed,” the statement from the Dicastery added, *“often contributing to revitalising their faith and promoting interreligious dialogue based on common values. They remind the Church of the ultimate goal of this earthly pilgrimage—the attainment of our future home-land.”*

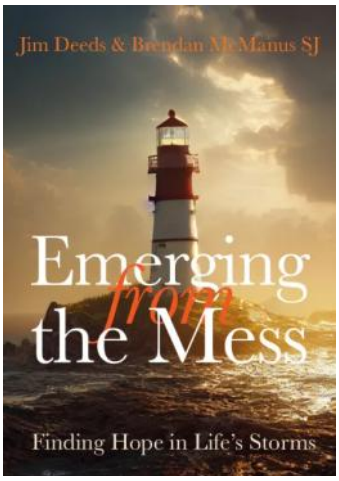
“In light of the Jubilee, the theme highlights the courage and tenacity of migrants and refugees who bear witness each day to hope for the future despite difficulties.”

This year, the world day will not be observed on the last Sunday of September as usual but will instead take place from October 4-5 to coincide with both the Jubilee of Migrants and the Jubilee of the Missions at the Vatican.

Image: *Migrants on a smuggler’s boat.*



Emerging from the Mess: Finding Hope in Life’s Storms



Emerging from the Mess: Finding Hope in Life’s Storms is essentially the experience of how suffering & pain alternates with great joy & fulfilment.

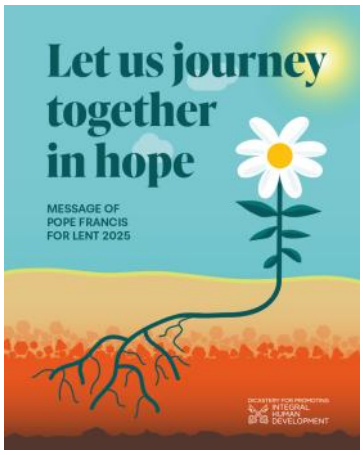
When we reach what we believe is the limit of our strength and endurance, we need to remember to hang on, to be patient & faithful in prayer.

This book’s challenge is to live every day like a resurrection day. It is all about gratitude: to see the absolute giftedness of every moment, the wonder of every encounter, the silver lining on every cloud.

The spirituality of St. Ignatius teaches us that God holds us close, loves us and desires the best for us. It is a solid foundation that we can build our lives on, an anchor in the storms of life that can bring us through even the darkest hours. This book can be used by individuals or parish groups as a daily prayer source and discussion topic. An invitation to consider ‘God in all things’.

(Available from Messenger Publications and online, as well as from most good bookshops).

Message of Lent 2025



The Message by Pope Francis is inspired by the **Jubilee 2025 theme “Pilgrims of Hope”**.

“This Lent, as we share in the grace of the Jubilee Year, I would like to propose a few reflections on what it means to journey together in hope, and on the summons to conversion that God in his mercy addresses to all of us, as individuals and as a community,” Pope Francis writes.

In his Message, he underlines that **to journey** *“evokes the lengthy journey of the people of Israel to the Promised Land”* and adds that *“a first call to conversion thus comes from the realisation that all of us are pilgrims in this life”*. This journey is made **together.** *“Christians are called to walk at the side of others, and never as lone travellers”, it is necessary “to walk together, to be synodal” because “**this is the vocation of the Church**”.*

(Pope Francis' Message for Lent 2025 has as its theme, “**Let us journey together in hope**”).

The reality of Ruhama's work in Ireland today

Mia de Faoite spoke about who Ruhama are and what they do. She explored what the sex trade looks like in Ireland today, explaining some of the complexities around human trafficking including legislation as well as the harsh realities of the sex trade itself.

Ruhama is an Irish NGO and registered charity that offers nationwide support to women impacted by prostitution, sex trafficking and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation. The organisation has extensive expertise in providing a wide range of specialist, holistic support services as well as advocating and engaging in policy work on issues related to prostitution, sex trafficking and the experiences of the women they work with. **See HERE**

In 2023 Ruhama worked with 1000—2000 women who were engaged in sex work. Approximately 90% were migrant, a complete reversal of the trend 10 years ago. The industry is heavily criminalised, and technology is a key facilitator.

Mia explained the trafficking mechanisms that are increasingly in evidence today including: Coercion, Targeting pre-existing vulnerabilities, Deception, Debt Bondage, Juju Witchcraft, Repeated Assault, Threats to a woman or her family, Lies and creating mistrust, Abduction, War & Conflict, Loverboy System.

Image: *Mia de Faoite, Training Lead at Ruhama.*

Image: *Dr. Jessie Rodgers Director of the Centre for Mission and Ministries/ Lecturer in Sacred Scripture at St. Patrick's Pontifical University Maynooth.*

Living as a 'Pilgrim of Hope'!

Each year our Province Justice Day is a landmark moment in our calendar, when we come together to listen, share, inspire and gain insight into key issues in our society today, that require our advocacy and action.

Our founder Venerable Nano Nagle was a tireless advocate for social justice, and we continue our commitment to Justice Work as expressed in 'Our Way of Life':

"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". (Our Way of Life)

The theme of this year's day was: **"Hope in hard times–open to non-violent resistance".**

The key contributors invited to the programme on the Day were: Dr. Jessie Rogers who brings international and ecumenical experience to her role as Director of the Centre for Mission and Ministries/ Lecturer in Sacred Scripture at St. Patrick's Pontifical University Maynooth (no stranger to Presentation Gatherings), and Mia de Faoite who is a survivor activist with over ten years' experience working as a campaigner and policy advisor on the issue of commercial sexual exploitation.

Mia is the Training Lead at Ruhama, Ireland's national NGO which supports women affected by prostitution, sexual exploitation and sex trafficking. Brian O'Toole, Director of the Presentation Sisters Interprovincial Justice Desk for Ireland and England spoke about Trafficking from the perspective of exploring what resonated with those present from Mia's presentation, asking: *"How can I be a Pilgrim of Hope?"* and then, *"As a Pilgrim of Hope, what can I do in Justice where I live and where I work?"*

This short piece gives a sense of the content and focus of the day from a few key quotations and information pointers from the presentations.

How do we live hope in action?

Dr. Jessie Rogers spoke about how 'Hope' is about solidarity, connection and partnership. It is the about holding the conviction that death and destruction will not have the final word.

In the words of Jürgen Moltmann (a German Reformed theologian who was a professor of systematic theology at the University of Tübingen (who was known for his books such as the *Theology of Hope, The Crucified God*, *God in Creation* and other contributions to systematic theology):

"Nothing in the world exists, lives and moves of itself. Everything exists, lives and moves in others,

in one another, with one another, for one another, in the cosmic inter-relations of the divine Spirit". (Jürgen Moltmann)

The Holy Spirit is the 'Spirit of Hope'.

How do we keep hopeful?

By *'Hopeful Imagination'*. There is a dominant consciousness, a dominant view of the world, so we must:

Criticise and challenge the dominant culture and ways of thinking.

Energise – create hope in new possibilities. Hope for the future allows people to live differently in the present.

Do Hopeful Actions – Jesus taught us about non-violence: *"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.'* But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous". (Matthew 5: 38 -45).

Non-violence takes back the agency & restores dignity. It sees the humanity in the oppressor as well as the oppressed.

Dr. Jessie Rogers offered the following powerful quotation from Evangelii Gaudium, as inspiration for our life as 'Pilgrims of Hope':

"Faith also means believing in God, believing that he truly loves us, that he is alive, that he is mysteriously capable of intervening, that he does not abandon us and that he brings good out of evil by his power and his infinite creativity. It means believing that he marches triumphantly in history with those who "are called and chosen and faithful" (Rev 17:14).

"*Let us believe the Gospel when it tells us that the kingdom of God is already present in this world and is growing, here and there, and in different ways: like the small seed which grows into a great tree* (cf. Mt 13:31-32), *like the measure of leaven that makes the dough rise* (cf. Mt 13:33) *and like the good seed that grows amid the weeds* (cf. Mt 13, 24-30) *and can always pleasantly surprise us.*

The kingdom is here, it returns, it struggles to flourish anew. Christ's resurrection everywhere calls forth seeds of that new world; even if they are cut back, they grow again, for the resurrection is already secretly woven into the fabric of this history, for Jesus did not rise in vain. May we never remain on the sidelines of this march of living hope!"

(Evangelii Gaudium #278 – Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis to the Bishops, Clergy, Consecrated Persons and Lay Faithful on the **Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World).**

See Full Text of Evangelii Gaudium HERE

May we endeavour never to remain on the sidelines of this march of living hope!

Human Trafficking

Brian O'Toole spoke about Human Trafficking. As Director of Inter-provincial Justice Desk for Ireland and England, Brian is Ireland's representative on the Religious in Europe Networking Against Trafficking and Exploitation (RENATE) Working Board and leader of the RENATE Law Research Team. In July 2024 RENATE launched their research on *'Legal Practitioners' work with Victims of Human Trafficking'* at the Bakhita Centre for Research on Slavery, Exploitation and Abuse, at St. Mary's University, Twickenham.

See Independent Catholic News article on launch HERE

Participants at our Province Justice Day in Mt. St. Anne's.

"I am content with weakness ....for when I am weak then I am strong" .
(2 Corinthians 12: 10).

Brian O'Toole—Director of the Interprovincial Justice Desk for Ireland and England.

About iScoil

Starting as Notschool in 2007, iScoil was named in 2009, and in 2012 became a registered charity.

The learning model, which has continued to grow and develop each year, uses the advances in digital technology to personalise and support students achieve accreditation & to progress to further education.

(see iScoil website HERE).

To download iScoil 2030 Strategic Plan see HERE for pdf document.

Image: *CEO of iScoil, Brian Fitzsimons (2nd right) with Margaret Grogan (Chairperson—(L) and former students Abi and Liam at iScoil AGM 2024 in Acorn Centre, Warrenmount.*

As the final weeks of 2024 draw to a close, the iScoil team is looking forward to a well-earned break and an opportunity to reflect on the success of 2024 and to consider some of the plans and challenges that await us in 2025.

In the last year, iScoil has provided educational access to more young people than ever before. All young people were referred by the State (Educational Welfare Service) having been out of school for significant periods of time. Despite having significant gaps in their education, students showed us that when given the opportunity to access an education that meets their needs, they engaged, thrived, and progressed. One parent recently emailed us to say:

"Thank you to the iScoil team for all the support with Mia this past year. It's been life-changing for the whole family but most importantly for Mia. You have all been amazing. Not only has iScoil helped Mia to further her education this year, but it also allowed her to heal. That was the most valuable thing anyone could have done for her. Not only for Mia but for us as a family. I'll be forever grateful for that. Thank you with all our hearts".

Feedback like this from students, parents/guardians, and support workers gives regular insights into the deep impact of the service. Former students Abi and Liam (pictured above), who attended and spoke at our AGM in early December, shared their experience of how iScoil changed their lives. The team, the Board, and the wider iScoil community are incredibly proud of their, and all our students' progress and achievements. They should be celebrated.

iScoil ethos and values

The mission statement of iScoil is inspired by Nano Nagle. This is, of course, taken from a very different world and time, but the ethos and values remain the same today. In establishing iScoil (formerly known as Notschool) the Presentations Sisters' goal was to set up an initiative that would respond creatively to the needs of those who were not benefiting from, or who had withdrawn from the mainstream school system. There was a desire to support young people to re-engage in learning through new and innovative methodologies and enable them to recognise and unleash their potential.

Image: *iScoil CEO and Directors at the launch of Strategic Plan 2030 in Nano Nagle Place, Cork City. From L - R: Brian Fitzsimons, Margaret Grogan, Sr. Grace McKernan, Sr. Gemma McKevitt, Liga Grazule, John Cahill, and Martyn Farrows.*

Image: *Nano Nagle Place (NNP), Cork City. (Image courtesy of NNP website).*

In 2007, distance learning was not a new concept. However, the ubiquity of digital devices in everyday lives and the increase in digital tools for learning, made technology an ideal tool to support those who were *'hard to reach'* and in need of a safe and supportive space to learn. On iScoil, technology is the tool that enables each student to engage in a learning experience that is unique to their needs and talents. Students progress at their own pace and learn through their interests in ways that are both manageable and challenging.

The success of the learning and teaching model is not the technology, it's the iScoil team. Mentors and tutors build individual education plans, set goals, and have a deep understanding of students' needs. They know when to push and when to pull back, and it is always done in a respectful, encouraging, and compassionate way, in line with the values of our founders.

Creating systemic change

Another goal in establishing iScoil was to create systemic change. For example, iScoil's in-school service has grown and developed. In recent years the support from the statutory agencies is evidence of some of this change.

A Department of Education review of out-of-school education is ongoing, and we're hopeful that it will inform future policy and governance of *'out-of-school'* or *'alternative'* providers. A place on iScoil is often the last chance for a young person to engage in education, and there is ample evidence to show that those who get a place engage, achieve, and progress. Young people want to learn, and if mainstream school is not a viable option, education provision must be made available. It's a constitutional right.

There is an opportunity for the mainstream to learn from iScoil, and build an education system that is centred on the learner and on the needs of young people.

Our team's commitment to at-risk young people is unrelenting, and we plan for 2025 with a sense of justice and hope in our hearts. In 2024, iScoil was able to accept more young people than ever before, but, unfortunately, there was a notable increase in the number of referrals to our service. We had to turn down several eligible applications.

Our new strategic plan, which was launched by the Directors in Nano Nagle Place (picture above), sets out goals and objectives to address this gap. We want all young people, who need a place, to access a quality education that they deserve.

Brian Fitzsimons
Chief Executive Officer, iScoil

Passing on the IPA Lantern

"It is with great hope that I pass the IPA lantern to Jessica. I am certain that IPA is in capable hands and will continue to flourish under her guidance". – Ann Marie Quinn PBVM, Outgoing Executive Director.

The International Presentation Association (IPA) is pleased to announce that Jessica Dewhurst has been appointed as the new Executive Director of the IPA.

Outgoing IPA Executive Director, Ann Marie Quinn PBVM, met with Jessica in the IPA NGO New York offices in October, to formally welcome her in person and to pass on the IPA lantern. We also bid Ann Marie a fond farewell and deep gratitude as she moves to her new role.

Ann Marie wrote these beautiful words of welcome and farewell, shared with her permission on the IPA website:

"In the spirit of Nano Nagle, this moment of passing the IPA lantern symbolises more than a transition of leadership—it is a profound continuation of the flame that has guided us in our mission of justice, compassion, and service to the most vulnerable. As the lantern is handed on, we are reminded that Nano's legacy endures through every hand that lifts her lantern, every step taken in solidarity with the oppressed.

With Jessica Dewhurst now carrying this light forward, we trust that the flame will continue to illuminate paths of hope and transformation for all".

[Message from the outgoing Executive Director, Ann Marie Quinn, PBVM].

Friends of Nano welcome their new International Animator

Image: Karen Sacre, International Animator for Friends of Nano.

We are delighted to introduce the new International Animator for Friends of Nano, Karen Sacre. Karen is the Coordinator for PBVM Union Friends of Nano in America. You may recognise her as a contributor to 'Nano's Echo'. Her long association with Presentation began as a student at school. Every Friday, Karen participates in the Interfaith Welcome Coalition ministry for asylum seekers passing through her city. She has lived and worked in many different countries & cultures, and taught English as a second language, so she understands the needs of our rich diversity. Karen will serve a 3-year term from 1 October 2024 to 30 September 2027. Thank you, Karen, for accepting the role. We wish you blessings in abundance.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude, to Mary-Ann Greaney for so generously giving of her time and talents to ensure the flourishing of the Friends of Nano across the globe. Mary- Anne has been International Animator of FON for the past three years.

[Images and text used above—courtesy of the IPA Website see https://globalpres.org/passing-on-the-lantern-2024/].

From the Postulator's Diary

Making Nano known and loved.

From 2023 onwards, requests and invitations have kept coming in diverse ways. These requests offer opportunities to spread the spirit, energy, passion and commitment of Nano Nagle and her relevance to our time; as we work towards her Beatification, should it be God's will to grant a miracle through her intercession.

I have been engaged with preparing and presenting to Radio audiences, Podcasts, Global Sisters' Report, Nano's Echo and multiple Zoom events.

A further source of joy was the invitation to facilitate two online 'Zoom' gatherings with the Conference of America Presentation Sisters (Dubuque) in October and November 2024. The focus was on the Spirituality of Ven. Nano and The History and Update on the Cause. These 'Zooms' were part preparation for the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the foundation of Dubuque, whose roots are Mooncoin, Co. Kilkenny. It was wonderful that they were opened to the wider members of the Conference of the American PBVM's, and Associates which was real privilege.

Face to face encounters

Face-to-face presentations have provided the opportunity to meet and interact with Sisters and Friends of Nano, in Newfoundland, England and Ireland. People are energised and amazed as they come to a new understanding, and correct knowledge of what is involved in the process towards Beatification and Canonisation.

Personally, I am helped knowing that the issue of the Cause is being clearly understood, and that people can, in any future situation, speak with confidence, competence and accuracy about this important aspect.

Please contact me if I can be of service. Email: postulator@pbvm.org
Tel: +353-868 932401

Secondary Schools

Religion as an exam subject has provided the opportunity to work with two of our Presentation Schools, (6th Year Theology Students in Portlaoise*, and with the Presentation Sec. School, Students in Listowel) for their Presentation Day Assemblies, as well as spending time with the Leaving Certificate students.

Due to the adverse weather conditions on 21st November, the Assembly was postponed, but I worked the following day with the group of students taking religion as an exam subject for their Leaving Certificate. Both groups had chosen the topic of Religion and Gender, taking Nano Nagle as their subject.

Audience with Pope Francis

I attended the annual 3-day Convention for Postulators in Rome. This year's theme was *'There is no greater love'.* (Jn.15) Over 300 Postulators were in attendance daily. We were granted an Audience with Pope Francis the day after the conclusion of the Convention.

This was the third occasion to have the privilege of meeting Pope Francis in person. Once again, I brought an image of Nano Nagle and spoke to it. Pope Francis was deeply engaged and looked at me and said, *"This is the woman",* I responded *"Yes, Papa Francesco, this is the woman."* He also requested prayers, saying *'I need them very much.'*

The following day when visiting the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, a member of the Dicastery re-iterated to me the importance of the congregation working on a miracle. Perhaps 2025 will be an auspicious year for us, when the Lord may use his Venerable Nano as an instrument of his healing grace to our world!

Sr. Anne Lyons

Image: Presentation Secondary School Listowel, Leaving Certificate Students with (L-R) Sr. Anne Lyons and Ms. Katherine Broderick.

Image: *Cairde Nano at Scoil Chríost Rí, Portlaoise.*

Image: *Sr. Anne Lyons speaking about Ven. Nano Nagle to Pope Francis after the Convention for Postulators (Rome, Nov. 2024).*

** See image on Page 5 of Sisters Anne Lyons and Evelyn Byrne with two 6th Year Students at Scoil Chríost Rí.*

From the Postulator's Diary : Waiting in Hope!

While it is true to say that there are many great favours attributed to the intercession of Venerable Nano Nagle, we continue to await the news (from any part of the world) of an 'alleged miracle'.

Should such good news arrive, it is important that the Postulator is informed and that all relevant data and material pertaining to the *'alleged miracle'* are carefully recorded and communicated to the Postulator. It will be the responsibility of the Postulator, in conjunction with the Bishop of the Diocese, where the alleged miracle occurs, to ascertain, if it deems investigation, toward the possible Beatification.

However, the next stage will only commence if the *'alleged miracle'* fulfils the required criteria cited in the process for Beatification: It must be instantaneous, spontaneous and complete. Such an *'alleged miracle'* effectively leaves physicians without a scientific or natural explanation to what has occurred.

Record keeping regarding a campaign of prayer

Accurate record keeping is vital especially to this stage of the process. May I appeal once again, that the requests from various quarters for a campaign of prayer through the intercession of Venerable Nano be thoroughly documented by a designated person among the group who initiate the campaign of prayer.

The records should include when the campaign of prayer began, who are the body of praying; the prognosis and diagnosis of the sick individual; and the ongoing observation of any progression towards healing which occur over this period. This data will be vital in any future situation.

I cannot highlight enough the importance of recording and forwarding to me data on favours received. These favours, provide a solid basis in showing how devotion to Venerable Nano is ongoing. In any future exploration of Nano's Cause – i.e. should we get word of an *'alleged miracle'* and the opening of an Enquiry of Investigation; all such record keeping will be vital to the progression of her Cause. Failure to have the adequate data may result in the Cause not moving forward. I request that you forward to the Postulator's email, any such recording so that they can be kept on file. Thank you!

Sr. Anne Lyons

Detail from the Icon of Nano Nagle created in 1984, by the Irish artist Desmond M. Kyne, commissioned by the Presentation Congregation as a fitting memento of her life during the bicentenary year of her death.

Towards Beatification

Beatification requires evidence and the approval of a miracle through the intercessory power of Venerable Nano Nagle.

What can we do to further this stage?

☐ Continue the great work that you are already doing to promote devotion to her.

☐ Continue to hold her up as a model of a woman who dared to give all and risk her life for God's world.

☐ Continue the ministry of Prayer through the intercession of Nano Nagle. (While we have other favourite saints that we admire and pray to; the Dicastery's advice is prayer solely through Nano especially in a very significant need such as healing for a seriously ill person).

☐ Continue to intercede with the Lord that if it is His desire and will for His Glory, Nano Nagle may be His instrument of healing grace and grant us the required miracle that will move forward the Cause of her Beatification and eventually Canonisation.

☐ Continue to carefully RECORD any campaign of prayer through Nano's intercession. Such records are vital and invaluable towards any future investigation of an 'alleged miracle'.

☐ Continue to record any FAVOURS that you learn of which are attributed solely through Nano Nagle's intercession. Every little piece of information is significant.

Contact me at: **postulator@pbvm.org**

A message of appreciation & gratitude to Presentation Sisters the world over.

"I met my first Presentation Sister (PBVM) almost half a century ago. I did not know it at the time, but as I look back over the intervening forty-five years, that February 1980 meeting was my first encounter with the Presentations' founder, Nano Nagle. So long ago, yet I can still recall with great clarity this major turning point in my life".

Mary-Ann Greaney (Right) pictured with Sr. Concepta O'Brien, NEP Leadership Team.

Sisters Julie Carmody and Eileen Kearney (Julie lives in Lucan, Co. Kildare, Ireland) now, and Eileen in Lima, Peru) had accepted an appointment as pastoral assistants in my parish. Both were in their 30's and came straight from teaching roles in the classroom. Their brief from the parish priest was to build leadership in the local area.

From simple beginnings

While the first two Sisters only stayed a few years, the early seeds that were sown set a clear pattern for the Sisters that followed. I will be forever grateful for the insight of the first two who identified with the many young mothers in the area, and organised structures and pastoral initiatives to support them on their journey of faith, and to build community.

In 1989, nine years after they arrived, the Sisters told the community they were moving to another area where the need was greater. Many experienced a sense of loss at their impending departure. A small group wanted to retain something of the spirit the PBVMs had brought with them, but were unable to articulate it.

I thought we may find the answer in whoever their founder was, so I asked one of the Sisters if there was anything written about the founder. I was given two books, *Walshe's Nano Nagle and the Presentation Sisters*, and Raphael Consedine's *One Pace Beyond*. I could not put these books down.

I was easily able to recognise Nano in the Sisters who had lived among us, and even more exciting was the experience of being able to recognise Nano in myself.

I found I could name many of the values that the Sisters had brought with them, that we wanted to claim and nurture after they left. Others in the small group were equally excited, and I was mandated to approach Sr. Julie Carmody who had become the PBVM Unit leader, and tell her what we had discovered, and ask if there was some way we could retain a relationship with them – the Associate Movement was born in Aotearoa New Zealand – now renamed as Friends of Nano.

I am confident I speak for many when I say our lives have been profoundly transformed.

The movement of the Spirit

One of the hallmarks of those early years was the authentic collaboration that took place between the Sisters and Friends of Nano. Together we explored what this movement of the Spirit may mean for both parties. We each named our hopes and fears, and shared dreams for the future. Julie had some excellent processes she used where all participants could tune into the inner voice of the Spirit and discern where God was calling us, and no group dominated. The Sisters were generous in their welcome and excited about the prospect of *'widening the tent'.*

In the 1950s Sisters came from Thurles, Tuam, and Kerry.

- Nano was primarily a woman of **prayer.** She was faithful to her prayer time and everything she did came from her relationship with God.
- She was **hospitable** and recognized the intrinsic dignity in every person.
- She did not wait until she had a grand plan and the money to finance it but **made a start** by stepping out into her own community, taking note of the most vulnerable and doing what she could allowing her apostolate to unfold.
- She recognised that **education is the key** to enabling people to help themselves.
- **She did not allow disappointments and setbacks to prevent her moving forward**.
- She was prepared to take **calculated risks**.
- She **collaborated** with others.
- She was prepared to **challenge authority.**
- She had a **succession plan** so that her ministry could continue after her death.

These values inform the way we live our lives and transcend culture, age, and geographical boundaries.

A message of appreciation & gratitude to Presentation Sisters the world over … /

Sr. Joy Puerta (Presentation Sisters CLT) with Mary Ann

> *'It is not surprising that 18th century Nano is still relevant in the 21st century. We are all familiar with what she did but what is significant for me is how she went about her ministry, that has created a blueprint for today'.*
>
> ~ Mary-Ann Greaney

They came to the end of the earth (as New Zealand was seen as being in those days) leaving all that was familiar to them.

Like all founders they were remarkable women and were to discover on arrival, that they had no-where to live, and in some places makeshift classrooms – like an old army hut that doubled as a church on Sundays. Others followed & most did not expect to ever return to Ireland.

The legacy left behind

Today there are only five PBVM Sisters left in New Zealand, but many more Friends of Nano who identify strongly with the charism, mission, and spirituality, living it in their daily lives.

As time goes by, it is clear to me that, as the Sisters have died or returned to Ireland, they have left a legacy behind. In my own area, where the brief was for the Sisters to build leadership, this has certainly happened. When I look around the parish and beyond, I see that those in current leadership were all part of the community when the PBVM's ministered here.

Some have initiated diocesan and New Zealand-wide events, and others created charitable trusts that cater for the most marginalised in the community.

L-R: Sr. Joetta Venneman (Dubuque USA), Sr. Lilly Pushpam (South India), Sr. Julie Watson (Ireland), Sr. Rosina Conrotto (San Francisco USA), Sr. Gabrielle Morgan (Tasmania Aust.), Juliette Toulon (Canada/ Dominican Republic), Mary-Ann Greaney (New Zealand). Present at the 10th IPA Assembly in Newfoundland, 2023.

Three of the most significant projects undertaken by Friends of Nano are: a school and early childcare centre for teen parents, (some as young as 12 years old), ministering with families of people in prison, and more recently the setting up of a housing trust that provides accommodation for more than 100 people every night. When I look further afield in places the Sisters ministered, I see a legacy of musical productions, care of creation, transporting fragile people to appointments, helping with their shopping, chaplaincy, establishment of community gardens, a recycling centre, and so much more. Much of what happens goes unnoticed and is not identified as Presentation. PBVM values have been mainstreamed – Nano has been let loose!

Nano let loose

I am mindful of other places around the world where sisters are aging & we read of convents closing and sisters moving away from communities where they have ministered for generations. I take heart in the story of my own community. If the sisters had not moved away, I doubt we would have had the impulse to explore what it was the sisters brought with them. Perhaps we may not have made explicit the legacy Nano left that has swept through the world. I note with excitement that in many places young women are still being called to consecrated life and wherever we live we are all part of the same PBVM family. Nano's spirit is flourishing. It is not surprising that 18th century Nano is still relevant in the 21st century. We are all familiar with what she did, but what is significant for me is how she went about her ministry that has created a blueprint for today.

A final word of gratitude must go to the thousands of women who have answered the call to become PBVM Sisters over the past 250 years. You have kept the flame alive, vibrant, and authentic. You have recognised the more recent movement of the Spirit, where God is gifting women and men with the charism and are happy to collaborate with us. Thank you for your acceptance and encouragement.

Mary-Ann Greaney

(Mary-Ann just finished her term as International Animator for Friends of Nano—see page 20).

The Feast of those who have dedicated their lives to God.

Sr. Miriam O'Malley, Sr. Maureen O'Rourke, Shantalla, Sr. Maura Murphy and Sr. Mary White, Presentation Road, in the opening procession of the Mass to mark World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life in Galway Cathedral, Sunday 2nd February, 2025).

"Celebrating the World Day for Consecrated Life, not only gives religious themselves an opportunity to reflect on their unique calling and path in life – it also gives us all the opportunity to give thanks to God for the presence, witness and service of religious men and women to the Christian community." – Bishop Michael Duignan, Celebration of the World Day of Consecrated Life 2025 for the Diocese of Galway and Clonfert.

There is a longstanding tradition in the Church that calls the Feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple – the "Feast of Encounter". The "Feast of Encounter" not just between Jesus and Simeon and Anna, but the "Feast of Encounter" between God and his people, between God and each and every human heart.

It is no coincidence that in 1997 Pope Saint John Paul instituted the Feast of the Presentation as a special day for those who have dedicated their life to God as religious men and women – as sisters, brothers, monks, nuns, members of religious orders and religious institutes. For the "Feast of Encounter" reminds us that the beginning of every vocation to religious life lies in a very personal encounter between that person and God. Not only does religious life begin with an encounter with God, it is nourished and sustained by encounter after encounter with God. The way of life and service of religious women and men in so many different contexts unfolds out of encounter with God. The focus, the purpose of such religious life is to bring others into encounter with God, so that they too can experience the joy and fulfilment that comes from a life lived in friendship with God.

Sisters Miriam O'Malley and Maureen O'Rourke (Shantalla), and Srs. Maura Murphy and Mary White, (Presentation Road) participated in the opening procession of the Mass to mark the World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life that took place in Galway Cathedral on Sunday 2nd February 2025.

Religious Life is indeed a varied gift that greatly enriches the Church community in many different forms of service such as in education, in prayer and in caring for the least well off among us.

"Let us pray that God will continue to give us the gift of religious life – of sisters and brothers, of monks and nuns, of religious orders and institutes of religious life in abundance. And, that like Simone and Anna we will also encounter God in the ordinariness of our everyday lives. Let us pray that that encounter with God will be "a light for those who dwell in the shadow of darkness". A hope filled encounter that will bring with it fulfilment and peace for our own often restless hearts. Amen".

As the Church celebrates the World Day for Consecrated Life, Pope Francis prays First Vespers with religious men and women, urging them to truly encounter one another and the Lord in the Eucharist. See **HERE**

The content of this article has been adapted from the Diocese of Galway, Kilmacduagh and Kilfenora Facebook Page. Images used—also courtesy of this page. Thank you also to Sr. Maureen O'Rourke for sharing the detail of the Sisters' presence at this Mass.

Pilgrims enter through the Holy Door at the inauguration of the Jubilee Year—December 26, 2024.

[Pope Francis inaugurates the Jubilee of Hope]

Rediscovering the joy of encounter

Jubilee years have always been of great spiritual, ecclesiasial and social significance in the life of the Church, ever since the first Holy Year in 1300.

Now celebrated every twenty-five years, God's faithful people have experienced this celebration as a special gift of grace characterised by the forgiveness of sins, and in particular by the indulgence, which is a full expression of the mercy of God.

During the last years not a single country has remained unaffected by the sudden outbreak of an epidemic that made us experience first hand not only the tragedy of dying alone, but also the uncertainty and fleetingness of existence, and in doing so, has changed our very way of life. In his Letter for this Jubilee Year, Pope Francis writes:

"We must fan the flame of hope that has been given to us, and help everyone gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit, a trusting heart and far-sighted vision.

The Jubilee can contribute greatly to restoring a climate of hope and trust as a prelude to the renewal and rebirth that we so urgently desire: that is why I have chosen Pilgrims of Hope as the motto for the Jubilee".

Pope Francis continues: *"May the voices of the poor be heard throughout this time of preparation for the Jubilee, which is meant to restore access to the fruits of the earth to everyone".*

Pope Francis recommends that while the spiritual dimension of the Jubilee calls for conversion, we should also embrace those fundamental aspects of our life in society as part of a coherent whole.

"I entrust to you the responsibility for finding suitable ways for the Holy Year to be planned and celebrated with deep faith, lively hope and active charity".

May the grace of the Jubilee reawaken in us, Pilgrims of Hope, a yearning for the treasures of heaven. May that same grace spread the joy and peace of our Redeemer throughout the earth. To you our God, eternally blessed, be glory and praise for ever. Amen

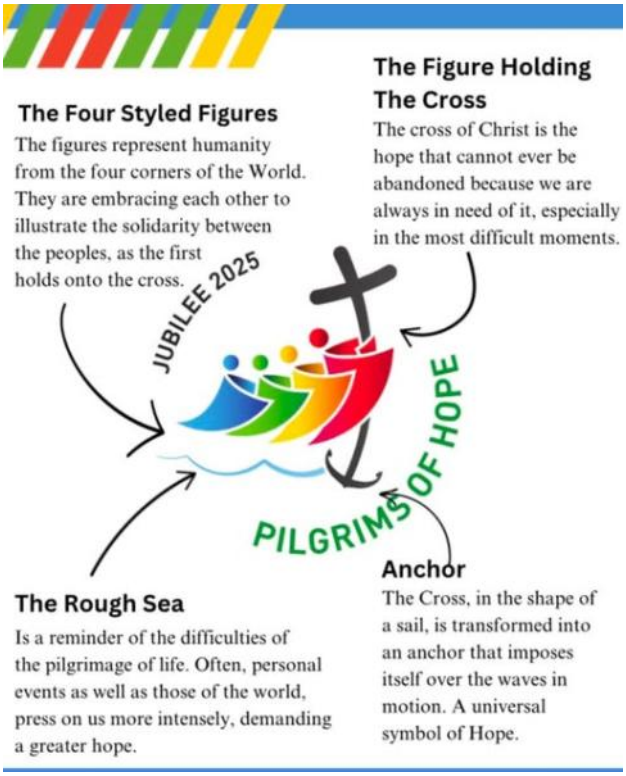
[From The Jubilee Prayer in Letter from Pope Francis].

Indulgences

Some religious activities that can earn one an indulgence are pilgrimage to holy sites, acts of charity and saying special prayers.

Pope Francis has introduced a new option: a call to fast from the internet and social media. He suggests individuals abstain *"in a spirit of penance, at least for one day of the week, from futile distractions (real but also virtual distractions, e.g. the use of the media and/or social networks)."*

[Indulgences are pardons believed to eliminate earthly suffering or time in purgatory – where the Catholic Church teaches that people who have confessed their sins are purified before entering heaven].



Soul Food

"..we are called to find our greater hope in Him, and then, without delay, carry that hope with us, as pilgrims of light amid the darkness of this world."

~ Pope Francis

(From homily by Pope Francis for the Jubilee Year, Dec. 2024).

In appreciation …

On behalf of the Walsh family I would like to thank individual sisters and communities for the support and care shown to us during and after the death of our sister, Sr. Agnes (USA). Your support by way of prayer, phone calls, and Mass cards has been very much appreciated. Mass will be offered for your intentions.

Sr. Bernadette Breathnach (Galway community)

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Sr. Katheleen Dooley and family would like to express their sincere thanks and gratitude to all who expressed sympathy, Masses, prayers, and messages of support on the death of our sister, Mrs. Marie Collins of Oranmore, Galway. Rest in peace. Her husband Tony and family, Sean, Julie, Michael, and Emma have been consoled with your expression of love and support. Mass will be offered for all your intentions.

Sr. Kathleen Dooley, (Mountmellick)

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My sincere thanks to all the sisters and communities who supported me in various ways, on the recent deaths of my sister, Carmel FMM, and my brother Paddy.

Sr. Brenda O' Rourke (Hospital, Co. Limerick)

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Sr. Attracta Heneghan (Tuam), with her family, wish to thank all who sympathised with them on the death of her brother Fr. Jimmy CSSP. Your presence at his funeral, your prayers, Masses and messages of condolence were greatly appreciated. In particular, I would like to thank the Warrenmount community for their support and help while Jimmy was in Tallaght hospital. Mass has been offered for your intentions. Go Laga Dia sibh.

Hope does not disappoint

On the World Day of the Sick the Church invites us to become *"pilgrims of hope".* The word of God accompanies us and offers us, an encouraging message: *"Hope does not disappoint"* (*Rom* 5:5); indeed, it strengthens us in times of trial. These are comforting words, but they can also prove perplexing, especially for those who are suffering. In these situations, we sense our need for a strength greater than our own. We realise that we need God's help, his grace, his Providence, and the strength that is the gift of his Spirit.

To *"those who are ill or who care for the suffering, in this Jubilee you play an especially important part. Your journey together is a sign for everyone: "a hymn to human dignity, a song of hope"* (*Spes Non Confundit*, 11). *The whole Church thanks you for this! I entrust you to Our Lady, Health of the Sick, in the words that so many of us have addressed to her in their hour of need: We fly to your protection, O Holy Mother of God. Do not despise our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us always from all dangers, O glorious and blessed Virgin". [Pope Francis, Rome, 14 January 2025].*

Blessed are you who bear the light

Blessed are you
who bear the light
in unbearable times,
who testify
to its endurance
amid the unendurable,
who bear witness
to its persistence
when everything seems
in shadow
and grief.

Blessed are you
in whom
the light lives,
in whom
the brightness blazes –
your heart
a chapel,
an altar where
in the deepest night
can be seen
the fire that
shines forth in you
in unaccountable faith,
in stubborn hope,
in love that illumines
every broken thing
it finds.

—Jan Richardson
from Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings for the Seasons.

Message of the Holy Father for World Day of the Sick - 11 Feb. 2025
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Who we are

Living in these times of great uncertainty
We dwell in possibility
Faithful to the promise of the fullness of life.

"I have come that you may have life and have it to the full". (John 10:10)

Called to live as consecrated women, we strive to witness to joyful, reflective, compassionate service, constantly calling ourselves to be aware of, and where possible to help those who find themselves on the edge, forgotten and neglected.

"The quality of our presence, our prayerfulness, and the gift of our lives are of untold value for Presentation life and mission" ~ Our Way of Life, C11.

We are sustained in our commitment by our contemplative practices, and our life and relationship in community.

(An extract from the Vision Statement of the Leadership Team, NE Province—August 2020).

Together with Presentation People everywhere, we continue to share in the dream of Nano Nagle (Founder of the Presentation Congregation) to:

Live Contemplatively ~ Walk Lightly on the Earth ~ Witness Prophetically

(Our Congregational Gathering (CG2018)

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

Social Media Links

And

Friends of Nano Group
@WhatAboutTheBees

Words & Deeds

The motto inscribed on the Nagle family's coat of arms was 'Not Words But Deeds'. Nano Nagle and the Presentation People who followed her example have always taken these words to heart. This motto can be said to sum up almost two hundred and fifty years of active ministry and mission as Presentation Sisters spread across Ireland, and eventually to other parts of the world. Wherever the Sisters went, they responded in practical ways to address the needs of those kept poor. They continue this outreach today. Presentation Sisters are currently present in 24 countries.

Sharing Words & Deeds

If you have enjoyed reading this magazine, please share it with someone else who may not be familiar with the life of Presentation People. If this is your first contact with the Presentation Sisters (NE Province) please visit our website or follow us on our Social Media platforms using the links on this page by clicking on the logos. An e-version of this magazine is also available on our website.

Contributors to this issue

The Leadership Team (NEP), Agnes Byrne, pbvm, Anne Lyons, pbvm, Anne McNamara, pbvm, Brian Fitzsimons, CEO iScoil), Brian O'Toole (Director of Interprovincial Justice Desk for Ireland & England), Cathríona Cronin (Deputy Principal (SCN), Mary-Ann Greaney (FON International Animator, (2021—2024), Maureen O'Rourke, pbvm, Margaret Mary Healy, (Challenge to Change) Margaret Agnew (Communications Officer, NEP).