

Equipes Notre-Dame

## Newsletter Teams of Our Lady – Irish Region

### From the Regional Couple



We were taken by Liam Hickey's "*Jesus' Story*" in a recent version of Focus on Sunday which goes as follows: "We have three special friends, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. They are a circle of love. God the Father makes the sun shine on everyone, good and bad, everywhere. God the Son came at Christmas to be our friend. God the Holy Spirit gives life and breath to all the world. So we pray 'Help us to be caring like The Father, make friends like the Son, and be a light of love like the Holy Spirit'".

We are looking forward to the summer and hope the weather will be kind and we all have a nice break. Before that of course, we have the Dublin summer outing in Slane and the Galway outing in Coole Park as always on the last Sunday in June and we hope to join you all then. In September, we have the International Gathering which will be held in Rome this year. It will run from Saturday, September 6<sup>th</sup> to Friday, September the 11<sup>th</sup> and all Regional Couples are invited to attend and we are being blessed with an Audience with Pope Francis. This will be preceded by an ERI meeting which will commence on 31st August and conclude on 3<sup>rd</sup> September. It is considered essential that all Regional Couples attend, as the Movement can only grow through the exchange of ideas and experiences.

This Gathering has the purpose of deepening the study of service and formation of the Regional and Provincial Couples not only through the exchange of experiences but also through reflection on common problems and also giving as much information as possible about the Movement's guidelines for the coming years. We will keep you all in our prayers during this important Gathering.

Míle buíochas daoibh go léir.

Breda & Tony Preston

## Issue 101

## Summer 2015

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## **Congratulations to John Blayney on his 90th Birthday**



John and Bernadette with their six children,



11 grandchildren and great-grandchild, Alexander, at John's recent birthday celebration.

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## From the Leading Team



### EURAFRICA ZONE: FRIENDSHIP AND COMMUNION

Some time ago, we had our first personal meeting with the Eurafrika Zone in our capacity as Responsible Couple for Spain. It was a lovely meeting at Vasco and Ana's, our predecessors in the International Leading Team (ERI). We discovered the richness of sharing experiences on the international level. Syria was still part of our Zone and Samie and Amer recounted the first episodes of the current catastrophe there. We also discovered the beauty of the local teams' warm welcome. How could we not come home to our regions without the desire to proclaim and advance on the path marked by the Lord to the Teams of Our Lady!

We inherited a style of **community open to meeting and solidarity**. Material mutual aid is a distinctive characteristic of the zone, even during this period of great European economic crisis. The layout of the zone facilitates that.

There are only five couples: the responsible couples of the four Super-Regions (Italy, Spain, Francophone Africa and Portugal, to which belong the Portuguese-speaking countries of Africa) and us, as the liaison couple with the ERI. We can meet at least twice a year. It is not unusual to see couples from different Super-Regions visiting each other with the aim of working together on training or organizational workshops and this strengthens our ties of friendship. After the last International College in Medway, we spent together for five days in the great town of New York. Thanks to Father Javier Grande, Spiritual Counsellor to the Spain Super-Region, we experienced unforgettable moments, like the mass celebrated in Central Park, surrounded by pedestrians. Common sense and strength emerge when a priest is part of the group!

We all have **different cultural expressions in our practice of the same faith**, which are signs of the universality of the Church. We also find differences in the dynamics. For example, whereas the number of teams has stabilised in the European countries, this number has increased by 56% since 2008 in Africa. The whole Movement needs to contribute to the continuation of this development. There are also differences in the challenges facing couples and the family, which the Church is studying now. In Europe, the dominant ideologies lead to the rejection of religion, to a lack of respect for life, to a fear of compromise, to increasing numbers of divorces... This has not yet arrived on the African continent, even if the threat still exists. However, Africa suffers from its own inherent threats: the dignity of women and children, erroneous concepts about marriage, new and old forms of polygamy, ethnic conflicts, etc.

At the beginning of this year, there were over 3200 teams in the Eurafrika Zone, which means more than 38000 members and 2300 Spiritual Counsellors. Each Super-Region has its own aims, but all share the fundamental values.

The **training challenge** exists and we are all involved in the progressive implementation of the plan suggested by the ERI. The Portugal Super-Region opened the way and shared its experiences and material in a selfless manner, without forgetting the necessities of the regions of Africa, that one day will work independently. The French-Speaking African Zone placed a special accent on training Responsible Couples, so that they can achieve their aim of allowing the correct functioning of all teams in all the countries belonging to their zone. Spain and Italy gradually adopted their own programmes, with special attention to the gatherings of 'new Teams.'

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The **expansion challenge** also exists. New territories and countries need the Teams of Our Lady on all continents. The Italy Super-Region is one of the strong points of the Movement in its expansion towards European countries where there are Christians, but no teams, like in Albania, Croatia and Slovenia.

The **last challenge is the one of ‘New Evangelisation.’** Spain and Portugal share the desire to put together a project to accompany couples who live on the margins of the Church, with the aim of valorising the community spirit of the Teams: their capability to listen and welcome, their deep understanding of the value of marriage as well as the pedagogy of love that has been developed as well as its ecclesiology.

In the Eurafrica Zone, we would like to live and experience a true spirit of communion, and to work so that our Teams, living communities, made up of priests and couples, may be the reflection of a united and missionary Church.

José Antonio & Amaya MARCÉN-ECHANDI.

Liaison Couple for the Eurafrica zone

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## From the Spiritual Counsellor

### Missionary Disciples

In my last letter, I spoke about the importance of two Endeavours in particular—the Sit-Down and Married Prayer—as being fundamental means to promote and bring alive the mystery of married love. One can never insist too much on these points. You have understood, given my insistence, that they are fundamental points in the methodology of our Movement. These Endeavours help us experience our charism to bear witness to the mystery of the sacrament of marriage and to the ideal of holiness in the couple in the Church and in the world.

The vocation of holiness, my very dear couples, is an intrinsic part of the Church’s mystery and mission. Vatican II contributed much to this idea. The authoritative Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, dedicated a whole chapter to the subject of the universal vocation to holiness, which concerns not only a group within the Church, but also every Christian. From the Holy Father to the simplest of the faithful, we are all called to holiness.

This sensitivity to the universal call to holiness has also been a fruit of our Movement, whose charism and vocation consisted, from the beginning, in seeking out the means to live and experience holiness within the couple. “Let us seek together,” was Father Caffarel’s response to the first couples, when they came to him asking him to help them in their quest in 1947.

Just like the horizon, which gives meaning and direction to our existence, Holiness is not just a question linked to our personal choices, as another alternative that we could choose would be.

According to Scripture and humanity’s tradition of wisdom, only two paths are possible: the path of life and truth, which lead us to Goodness, to the supreme Being, who is God; or the path of falsehood and therefore Death. In Scripture, we come across this sentence: I place before you two paths: life and death (cf Dt 30:19). Follow the path of life and you will live, whereas the other one, even if it seems easy and attractive, distances us from ourselves and lead us to death, the destruction of man and his relationships, just as we see today in the crisis of families and societies in a profoundly sick world.

In the pragmatic document of his Papal ministry, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis insists on the statement that we all, according to our state, must be ‘missionary disciples.’ (EG 120) This means that we are sent to bear witness to those who live beside us, to the joy of being the Lord’s disciples, who loved us and who gave himself for us, according to St Paul’s words. (Ga 2:30)

I truly hope that this letter finds you well. Receive my cordial salutations and may the abundant graces and blessings of God be upon you.

P. José Jacinto Ferreira de Farias, scj

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**Prayer Intentions**

For those who have died:

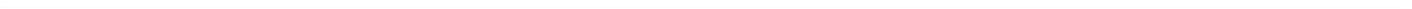
**Norma Costello, mother of Peter, Galway**

**Mary Udris, mother of Fr. John, Great Britain**

For those who are ill:

**Caoimhe Wills, grand-daughter of Paddy and Anne Scott, Belfast.**

**Rebecca Haughey, grand-niece of Michael Clenaghan, Belfast.**



## News from around the Region

### Dublin

#### Project Growth:

In an effort to look critically at how we might expand Teams, the Dublin Sector Team embarked on a new venture entitled PROJECT GROWTH, which we outlined in the last Newsletter. Having circulated all Sector members with a questionnaire seeking their views, a 3 page document collating responses was compiled. Copies were posted to all.

The question : *How do we grow Teams in Ireland ?* elicited wide ranging responses, such as Parish-based initiatives, reorganisation within the movement and having a presence on social media. It is hoped the report can be a basis for further growth. A sincere 'thank you' to all who took time to respond.

**Congratulations** to John Blayney who celebrated his 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday recently.

**Summer Outing :** We are most grateful to the three teams in Navan and Dunshaughlin for organising our **Summer Outing on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> June**. This year's venture is to **SLANE village and Hill of Slane**, where St. Patrick is said to have lit the Pascal Fire. A coach is organised to bring the 'Dubs' to Meath. Fr. Declan Hurley, chaplain of Team 38, will be our guide, walking with us across the Boyne Bridge, up through the village of Slane, introducing us to some of the history of the village and in particular the Hill of Slane and its significance as a site of national and Christian heritage.

After completing our walk, everyone will meet up in the Parish Hall in Slane, where we can enjoy a packed lunch and spend some time together. We pray that the weather will be kind.

**Responsible Couples Weekend:** The Annual Regional Conference for R/Cs is to be held in Galway this year – 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> October. It is the Responsible Couples for the year 2015/16 who attend at the start of their term. For our younger teams, a few R/Cs may be attending for the first time. It is the main event in the Teams year, when R/Couples benefit from training and update on the various aspects of teams life, experience the wider movement and meet couples from all sectors in the region. Further details are elsewhere in the Newsletter.

Joe & Áine Clayton

### Belfast

Our annual retreat was held on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May in the Passionist Retreat Centre, Crossgar. It was well attended. Fr Gareth Thomas (C.P.) led the retreat, which was very original and enjoyable. (See Charlie and Maureen McMullan's excellent account in another part of the newsletter.) The start of the retreat woke us all up! Each of us was asked to draw a picture or write a word or words which would show our idea of God. Some of us shared what we had drawn or written. Then we were asked to draw or write on how God thinks of us. Fr Gareth did an excellent job throughout the day which ended with Mass. We enjoyed the hospitality and tasty food in the retreat house, and it was good to be welcomed by Fr Ephrem (C.P.) chaplain of Belfast 5.

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We are very grateful to our sector team, and Margaret and Gerry Mulhern, for their help in organising the retreat. Thanks also to all those who attended, making the day so enjoyable.

We are very happy to tell you that Caoimhe, Paddy and Anne Scott's grand-daughter, has been found by the doctors to be clear of cancer cells, following her recent stem cell transplant. We thank you for your prayers, and ask you to continue to pray for her as she starts to rebuild her life. Please also remember to pray for Rebecca, grand-niece of Michael and Eithne Clenaghan, who is still undergoing treatment for her illness.

Last of all we are very happy to tell you that Charlie and Maureen McMullan have agreed to take over from us as Contact Couple for the Belfast Sector. Go raibh maith agaibh, Charlie and Maureen!

Moyra and Brendan Bunting

## **Galway**

We are looking forward to welcoming all Responsible Couples and their chaplains to the R.C. weekend in Galway on the 3rd and 4th October - the first weekend in October. The R.C. weekend will be held in Croí Nua, Rosary Lane, Taylor's Hill, Galway. You are all assured of a warm welcome in the West. The weekend is not residential so Team members will need to arrange their own accommodation of which there is plenty available in the city and Lower Salthill and the Ardilaun Hotel is nearby too. Some Team members will be able to offer accommodation in Galway. Please let us know if you need accommodation with Team members and we will do our best to accommodate you.

Owen and Breedge Quinn of Team 3 welcome with great joy their new granddaughter Hannah Robin Quinn, daughter of John Paul and Roberta Quinn. While Owen and Breedge have other grandchildren, Hannah is the only one in Galway and that is a great joy.

Norma Costello, mother of Peter Costello, Team 2 in Galway, died on the 13th May; She was 97 years of age and enjoyed good health and loved participating in family events until a few months ago. She was cared for lovingly at home until a few days before her death. She was blessed with thirteen grandchildren and four great grandchildren with whom she had a wonderful relationship. They were blessed to have had her in their lives. She will be greatly missed. Galway Teams members offer Peter and Anne and the extended Costello family their sincere sympathy on their great loss.

We wish Billy and Anne Hyland of Team 1 in Galway all the best in their role as Treasurers for Teams in Ireland and we thank the outgoing Treasurers, Michael and Sheila Foley.

Galway summer outing will be to Coole Park on the last Sunday in June. Mass will be celebrated at 12 noon in the Walled Garden followed by a picnic. All are welcome and we would love to have Sligo and Limerick Team members join us.

Máire and Brendan Kelly

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**From the Regional Chaplain**

**Fr. Gerry Cassidy**



## **Christ the Consoler**

**How can I create the desire to encounter Christ as one who consoles me in my sadness and discouragement? Let us consider the role of consoling which Christ our Lord bears, and consider how friends are accustomed to console friends.**

### **July 2015**

**Luke 24:18-35                      The journey to Emmaus,**

**Does the Lord's presence in my life cause my heart to "burn within" me as the disciples experienced on the way to Emmaus? Where do I direct this passion?**

**How often do I make time to "be there" for a family member, colleague, or neighbour?**

### **August 2015**

**Acts 10: 34-43**

**We walk through life's struggles and joys, not alone, but with other people. Who are my mentors in times of consolation and desolation? To what extent have I continued this blessing by quietly being a mentor for others?**

### **September 2015**

**1 Peter 1: 13-21**

**What disappointments, hurts or failures are roadblocks preventing me from moving on with my Life? Would viewing them as a share in the light of the Death and Resurrection of Jesus give me the freedom to entrust them to God?**

**Do I relate my eventual death with the resurrection of Jesus?**

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## **ANNUAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

**As you know, we are encouraged to give, where possible, one day's pay or whatever you can afford. Contributions are normally collected at the June assessment meeting and can be forwarded to your Sector Couple or directly to ourselves at:**

**19 Rockhill Avenue, Salthill, Galway. (091 528409)**

**PS Do not send cash in the post.**

**God bless,**

**Billy and Ann Hyland**

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## **Responsible Couples' Weekend**

**3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> October 2015**

**Croí Nua, Rosary Lane, Taylor's Hill, Galway.**

**Registration Saturday 3rd October, 2015 at 9.30 am.**

**The R.C weekend will conclude with Mass on Sunday at 12.00 noon followed by lunch.**

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## Belfast Retreat

The Belfast Retreat was held on Sunday 10 May in Tobar Mhuire, Crossgar. The retreat was led by Fr Gareth Thomas of the Passionist Order and was one we will remember with fondness.

Fr Gareth had a soft lilting Welsh accent and although he admitted that he was not a singer he compensated for this by his inspiration, joy and humour.

It was interesting to start the day by taking time to think about how we see God and later to look at how God sees us. We could do this by either drawing a picture or by writing our responses in words. This exercise led us into remembering that there is nothing we would not do for one of our own children. Likewise we were also reminded there is nothing God would not do for each one of us his children.

We were then allowed a quiet period to pray before the Blessed Sacrament. What a great privilege this is in our Catholic faith. During this period we were able to avail of the sacrament of reconciliation.

Very often we ask ourselves why God is absent in the bad/evil events which take place in our world today. To consider this point of view we looked at seven different newspaper stories. In most cases we were able to see that the Holy Spirit was present in some form or other.

After a lovely lunch we spent a very enriching session of Lectio Divina. The story of the Prodigal Son was chosen to read and meditate upon. Many sharings were offered into this well known passage of scripture. Above all it was accepted that the mercy shown by the Father towards the younger son is what we all hope to enjoy when our day of judgement comes.

The day ended with the joyful celebration of Mass. So thanks to Fr.Gareth for making our time at Tobar Mhuire so worthwhile.

Charlie and Maureen Mc Mullan



Group taken at Belfast Retreat

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## **The Pope asks for prayers for the Synod on the family**

Vatican City, 25 March 2015 (VIS) – On the solemnity of the Annunciation, during this Wednesday's general audience held in a rain-soaked St. Peter's Square, the Pope announced to the faithful that today would be a special catechesis, a pause for prayer during his path of reflections on the family.

“On 25 March, the Church solemnly celebrates the Annunciation, the beginning of the mystery of the Incarnation. The Archangel Gabriel visits the humble girl from Nazareth and announces that she will conceive and give birth to the Son of God. By this announcement the Lord illuminates and strengthens Mary's faith, as He will also do for her spouse Giuseppe, so that Jesus may be born in a human family. This is beautiful: it shows us how deeply the mystery of the Incarnation, as God wished it to be, includes not only conception in the womb of the mother, but also the fact of being welcomed into a true family. Today I would like to contemplate with you the beauty of this bond, of this, God's condescension, and we can do so reciting together the Hail Mary, which in its first part includes the words the Angel addressed to the Virgin”.

After praying the Hail Mary with all those present, Francis commented that today in many countries is the Day for Life, and that twenty years ago on this date St. John Paul II signed his encyclical “*Evangelium Vitae*”, in which the family “occupies a central role, inasmuch as it is the womb of human life”.

“The word of my venerated predecessor reminds us that the human couple has been blessed by God since the beginning to form a community of love and life, to whom the mission of procreation has been entrusted. Christian couples, by celebrating the sacrament of Marriage, indicate they are willing to honour this blessing, with the grace of Christ, for all their life. The Church, for her part, solemnly commits to caring for the family that is thus born, as a gift from God for her own life, in good times and bad: the bond between the Church and the family is sacred and inviolable. The Church, as a mother, never abandons her family, even when it is debased, hurt and humiliated in many ways. Not even when it gives in to sin or drifts away from the Church; she will always do everything to seek to cure and heal it, to invite it to convert and be reconciled with the Lord”.

If this is her task, the Pontiff observed, then it appears clear how much prayer the Church needs in order to be able to carry out this mission. “A prayer full of love for the family and for life. A prayer that knows how to rejoice with those who rejoice, and to suffer with those who suffer”. The Holy Father explained that he and his collaborators had decided to propose a renewal of the prayer for the Synod of Bishops on the family, and asked all present to continue to recite it until October, when the Synod assembly dedicated to the family is due to take place.

“I would like this prayer, like the entire Synod path, to be inspired by the Good Shepherd's compassion for his flock, especially for those people and families who for various reasons are 'harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd'. In this way, supported and inspired by the grace of God, the Church will be able to be even more committed, and even more united, in her witness of the truth of God's love and His mercy for the world's families, without exception, both inside and outside the fold”.

“I ask you, please, to ensure that your prayer is not lacking. All of us – the Pope, cardinals, bishops, priests, men and women religious – we must all pray for the Synod. We need this, not chatter! I encourage even those who feel distant to pray too, and those who are not used to doing so. This prayer for the Synod on the family is for the good of all of us. I know that this morning an image has been given to you, which you now hold in your hands. I invite you to keep it and carry it with you always, so that over the coming months you can recite the prayer often, with holy insistence, as Jesus asked us. Now, let us pray together:

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Jesus, Mary and Joseph,  
In you we contemplate  
The splendour of true love,  
We turn to you with confidence.

Holy Family of Nazareth,  
Make our families, also,  
Places of communion and cenacles of prayer,  
Authentic schools of the Gospel,  
And little domestic Churches.



Holy Family of Nazareth  
May our families never more experience  
Violence, isolation, and division:  
May anyone who was wounded or scandalised  
Rapidly experience consolation and healing.

Holy Family of Nazareth,  
May the upcoming Synod of Bishops  
Re-awaken in all an awareness  
Of the sacred character and inviolability of the family,  
Its beauty in the project of God.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph,  
Hear and answer our prayer. Amen”.

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Please note: Deadline for submissions for Autumn Newsletter is Sunday 31st August

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