

ST. MICHAEL'S PARISH

ENNISKILLEN

LISBELLAW



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NEWSLETTER

June 2014



Two of the three groups from Holy Trinity Primary School who received the sacrament of Confirmation from Bishop Liam McDaid on ??

It's been an unusual time for me since January 25th, when I fell and broke my ankle. It's the first time in thirty-five years as a priest that I've been laid up for so long. I am grateful for the good wishes of parishioners and the kind enquiries after my progress.

While I was off, I was lucky to be able to stay at my home place. (The parochial house has so many awkward stairs that it would have been impossible.) What a blessing home can be. It was a 'turn of the tables' for my mother to be making me tea again. I was blessed to have the care and company of my sisters and brother-in-law... and the (very enthusiastic) dog.

Through it all, one of the key times of every weekday was the 10 o'clock morning Mass from St Michael's Church. I watched via the Internet. It helped me to give my day to God and to still feel connected to the people of Enniskillen and Lisbellaw. It was hard to be so helpless - three steps on the crutches and I was winded - but the IMass helped me to put it in perspective and I was thankful anew to the Knights of Columbanus who, together with the parish, co-sponsor the webcam service in St Michael's Church.

While I've been off, my priest colleagues have really worked hard and generously as ever. Fr David ably took the leadership responsibility and Fr Raymond and Fr Joe really 'rolled up their sleeves'; and, working closely together, they carried the weight of the work - which has been the greater since we no longer have the compliment of full time priests to which the parish had grown accustomed. I would like to put on record my thanks to my fellow priests. And could I encourage any young man who knows that he is called by God to priesthood to please have the courage to respond. (The first step is to contact one of us priests.) My time off showed me again how thin on the ground diocesan priests have become. The need for them hasn't gone away, you know!

Thanks to all who work in the parish ministries, new and old. Thanks to all who contribute to parish life, both financially and by the goodness of their lives.



Monsignor Peter O'Reilly



"How marvellous it would be if, at the end of the day, each of us could say: today I have performed an act of charity towards others!"

Getting to know ...Father Joe

I was born near Ederney the year the Second World War ended, the eldest of six children one of whom, a baby girl, died in infancy. We lived on a small farm. Growing up in Ederney, life revolved around the church, the parish and the local Gaelic team. There was a strong community spirit which we saw when Fr McKenna set about building a new church in the 1950s. There was not much money around but everybody made a contribution as best they could and organised bazaars, whist drives, dances and raffles. The parish had produced a number of priests down through the years - Fr Kevin Cassidy and Fr John Eves to name a few - and was also cared for by many good priests. I admired these men for their dedication to the people who were sick or in trouble and their commitment to the parish community.



After attending Moneyvriece P. S., in 1957, at the age of 11, I went to St Michael's College in the old school in Belmore Street. The Diocese had taken it over from the Presentation Brothers and sent in five or six priests to teach there. The idea was to encourage young men to think about giving their lives to the priesthood. A number of fellas in my time there decided to become priests and only a few years ago a classmate from my own townland, Jim Mulligan, was ordained for the Westminster diocese, London - at the age of 60! In my third year, we moved to the new school in Drumclay. I travelled by bus for the first five years and then I spent one year as a boarder. I learned to play poker and I learned a few chords on the guitar. During the school holidays I went to dances in Carrickmore and the Silver Swallow and to various Carnivals in Irvinestown, Trillick and Fintona. I was always sure of a lift in Anthony McGrath's old van. One of my favourite bands was the Freshmen. I also liked Gene and the Gents (with Henry McCullagh on lead guitar) and, of course, Brendan Bowyer and the Royal. I even learned to do 'the Hucklebuck'.

At some stage in my teenage years, I became interested in being a priest like the men I had come across in the parish and in the college. It was a persistent call that would not go away (which I believe is the sign of a vocation). In 1964 I went to Maynooth College for seven years of discernment and reflection. Just after the Second Vatican council, it was an exciting time in the Church. Pope John XXIII wanted to renew and reform the church. There were great debates and the liturgy changed from Latin to the vernacular. There was talk of social justice and human rights. I liked that kind of talk because it was relevant to the situation in which I had grown up. We had high hopes for a new kind of church. Some changes came in the way the Church was organised. And there was a new approach to evangelisation and to the Missions. Much good has come from that and today the church is strongest in Africa and South America.

On 18 April 1971, I was ordained to the priesthood along with my cousin, Sean McGrath, in St Joseph's Church, Ederney, by Bishop Patrick Mulligan. (Sean has spent most of his life as a missionary in Brazil, with St Patrick's Missionaries) I remember that day very well. Loads of priests came from all over. To have an ordination in your own parish was rare enough and to have two men who were first cousins being ordained together was a rare occurrence. I remember the First Mass, the next evening, and then we had a dance in the local parish hall. The late Pat McGeegan, a friend, played at the dance. In the days following, we had a busy time, visiting the local schools and giving the blessing of the newly ordained.

In 1971 the Troubles were beginning. It was a difficult time for everybody and would be for the next twenty years and more. Sadly, many people lost their lives, including my own cousin, Michael Leonard, in 1973, and many other friends. Thankfully, we are now living in more peaceful times and, hopefully, the peace can be made stronger. I hope that the victims of the terrible conflict can find healing. We must all work to ensure that such violence never occurs again on this island.

I began my ministry with three months in Enniskillen parish in the summer of 1971. The Parish priest at the time was Dean Flanagan, (RIP) The curates were Fr John McKenna (RIP), Fr Eddie Murphy (still ministering in Newtownbutler at the age of 93) and Fr Peter McGuinness, who is now in a care home in Carrickmacross. I had much to learn about the priesthood and about parish life but it was in Enniskillen I first got to know what a priest does every day. I went from Enniskillen to teach in Monaghan Vocational School. After another year teaching in St Comhgalls, Lisnaskea, I spent some years in the parish of Monaghan and in the neighbouring parish of Corcaghan. I worked for a year in New York and then came back to Irvinestown for eight years. After that I served in Belleek/Garrison until my appointment to Enniskillen - back to where it all began forty three

years ago.

For me the last 43 years have been very interesting and very challenging. It is how we manage the difficulties that is the challenge. The years take their toll. I am not as fit as I was 43 years ago. I thank God every day to be alive and as well as I am. Someone once said that there are three stages in life: Stage one is when you are young. Stage two is when you are middle aged, and Stage three is when everybody says, 'You're looking well.' For better or for worse I am now in Stage three.

One of our great ministries as priests is that of Healing. I see myself in the words of Henri Nouwen as 'a wounded healer'. I think of the wounded people especially those wounded by the conflict. I have lived through difficult and dangerous times. I am grateful that there is now peace in our country and there is an opportunity to build a new country. It's such a pity that the economy is now in such a bad state and so many of our young people have to emigrate to find work. During the years I have experienced joys and sorrows. Joys were those times shared in celebrations with others. The sorrows were the times of sadness and loss, the loss of parents, relatives and friends. God is central in our lives, just like the air we breathe even if we are not aware all the time.

It is my firm belief that every saint has a past and every sinner has a future. Nobody is better than anybody else in God's eyes. So we should live in joyful hope without judging anyone. We need to continue to live our lives with enthusiasm for the Gospel of Christ and continue to be excited by the Word of God, to bring about the new world that Jesus announced and proclaimed when he announced that the reign of God was coming among us to lift us up and out of darkness.

Just last September I came to minister in the parish of Enniskillen. I like the team approach to ministry that we have here. I have been very happy so far and quite busy! I have been in many places in my time as a priest and worked in many parishes and in a few schools. It is always difficult to know what effect you have or what impact your life has on others. You just trust in God and leave it to God. The kingdom of God is growing amongst us.

At this time of my life my first thought is one of gratitude and appreciation. Thanks to God, thanks to all the good people who supported me with their prayers and good wishes. I am glad to have been a part of a great spiritual ministry and, hopefully, I have spread a little light and good humour along the way.

Uncle Knut was a priest.
He was a practical man, but Latin
was Greek to him.

.....

He was more an electrician
than a preacher. He began all his speeches
by saying 'I'm not one for long speeches'
and he was right about that.

He did not really have much to teach
his parishioners; they had their own troubles
with their births, with their love and death.
And he did not have words for such things.

But he had learnt how to repair
electric wires and he visited people in their homes.
and mended short circuits and defective
fuse boxes, he screwed lamps into place.

And wherever he had been, there was light.

I like these lines from a poem by the Norwegian poet
Knut Odegard whose uncle was a priest.



Pupils from Holy Trinity and Enniskillen Integrated Schools who received the sacrament of Confirmation from Bishop McDaid on Sunday ??

Sixteen Years as President



Tom Martin is congratulated on his new role by outgoing President Joe Maguire

I became President of the Enniskillen branch of St Vincent de Paul on April 6th 1998 after a lot of thought and promises of help and advice from former presidents Terence Maguire, Paddy Maguire and Hugh O'Kane. This gave me confidence to take on the role and, 1998 being very special for St. Vincent de Paul in Enniskillen as it was the 150th year of unbroken service to the people of the town and the Fermanagh area, I agreed to take the position for three years. Sixteen years later I was still in the job!

St Vincent de Paul has now been providing its service here for 166 years; a credit to those who started it all those years ago and to all of the people who have carried it on. However, we must not forget the people who supported us, without whom it would not have been possible to achieve what we have and to help people in the way we do.

In 1996 we opened a Thrift Shop in Forthill Street. This turned out to be a big success and brought in much-

needed revenue. We operated there for about twelve years with good success but by the end of that time we felt that we could do better by moving to new premises on the main street. This proved to be the best move we could have made as we soon trebled our income at a time when our support was needed more than ever. The demands for help increased to a whole new level with families unable to cope. This was the time when the Northern Ireland Housing Executive was taking out coal fires and replacing them with oil-fired heating, which was then cheaper. Quite suddenly the oil got very expensive and many could not afford it. This was where the extra money came in so useful – to help those in need to buy oil.

More recently, the influx of foreign nationals has brought greater demands on us but so far we seem to have managed the increased pressure successfully as we have never had to refuse any genuine requests from families or individuals. Times are very hard at present; benefits are being cut and, for many, money is scarce. We help everyone who comes to us as best we can. That help is not always financial; we provide a wide range of services, from providing basic but much needed furniture to helping people travel to hospitals.

We are only able to assist those in need because of the great generosity of the people of Enniskillen and the wider Fermanagh community and, as I come to the end of my time as President I want to thank all of those people who have been so supportive over the years. I appreciate very much the help and cooperation of those who have worked with me for the past sixteen years and I know that they will continue that work with my successor as President, Tom Martin.

Joe Maguire



Guides from the early 60's: Front: Capt Maura Hunt, Ann Goan, Philomena McCauley, Ann Gillen, Jacinta McManus, Carol Keavney, Freda Dooris and Martina Smyth. Back: Eileen George, Terry Murphy, Philomena Dooris,, Maureen Fallis, Maureen Savage, Anne Kearney, Capt. Pauline Farrell.

St Michael's Guides: 1963 - 2014

Over fifty years ago a young, energetic curate, Fr. John McKenna, came to this parish and enriched the lives of many young people by establishing the Scouts and Guides, opening up a whole new world to us. I joined the Guides in the early 1960's. The leaders were Attracta Galligan, Maura Hunt and Margaret Belford. Fr McKenna also formed a fund-raising committee to look after both Guides and Scouts. When we joined the guides we were given a yellow Guide Book and a small blue notebook. The latter was to record the money which we brought in each week towards our uniforms which cost about £5.00. The uniform was a brown pleated skirt, a brown leather belt with brass buckle and a yellow blouse onto which we sewed our patrol badge, patrol colours and company name tape. We wore a brown beret, a tie and a metal badge with St Fanchea and the Guide motto 'bí ullamh' (be prepared) on it. Boy; were we proud the first day we wore that uniform for our investiture ceremony in St. Michael's Church.

We attended weekly meetings in Abbey St. School. We were divided into patrols; mine was 'Chaffinch'. Frances Bradley was my Leader and Una McCaffrey the Assistant. Our captains were Maura Hunt and Pauline Farrell. After prayers we had a formal inspection of our uniform, shoes and nails. We played games and learned new skills such as Knots and First Aid and Sergeant



2001: St Michael's Guide Unit with chaplain, Fr Brendan Gallagher

Myles taught us how to march. Fr McKenna visited every week; before long he knew everyone's name.

Our first camp, in 1964, cost £2 10s (£2.50) and we started bringing in our money in January. We had to get onion bags in which to keep our sleeping bags (or two blankets). In preparation, we learned to pitch tents, tie knots and lashings, to make a fire and construct gadgets to make life easier. My first camp was in Cliffoney on Lord Mountbatten's estate. I have many happy memories of that week - an experience that led to many years of living under canvas, collecting wood, lighting fires, eating all kinds of burnt offerings, singing around the campfire and carrying buckets of water from the well. It certainly was an eye-opener for us sophisticated townies! Many camps later and everything has changed. We don't have many sites where we can light fires. We have flush toilets, showers, airbeds, gas cookers and lightweight tents but we still have fun and lots of it!

The Guide unit increased in size with the setting up of a company in Lisbellaw lead by Beatrice Whitely and Pat Farry. In the mid-sixties a section for girls aged 9 to 11, the 'Brownies', was formed. They wore a brown dress, brown beret and yellow tie. There were two companies, one led by Alice Farry (R.I.P.) and Ann Kearney and the other by Bridie McQuaid and Mary Colton. The Brownies enjoyed craft, games and singing. In those early years the Brownies camped with the Guides; later they went on Pack Holiday, staying indoors in parish halls, scout dens and, for many years, in a school in Dun Laoighaire.

The 'Cadets' was set up for older Guides (brown dress with a yellow Peter Pan collar and mock tie). We made the dresses under the guidance of Sisters Macarten and Sarto. In 1995 we set up a section for 6 to 8 year olds as part of a pilot programme for 'Cygnet' Guides. They were very colourful, wearing red and yellow.

The uniform has changed three times in the fifty years. The guides now wear a sky blue sweatshirt and navy trousers. The Brigin Guides wear a turquoise sweatshirt. It is a much more practical uniform. During those fifty years the Guides have travelled all over the country to camp. Some even ventured across the water to Wales, Scotland and the Lake District. Some represented the parish at World Youth Day in Paris and in Rome. We even produced a National Guide Commissioner, Bridie Dolan, who represented all of us at a World Conference in Kenya. Three of our Ranger Guides, Paula Tapster, Briege Blake and Catherine McGirr, worked as part of the service team at the World Conference in Dublin in 1999.

Now, fifty years on, we are writing a book about the events of those five decades. The Guides still meet but, sadly, the numbers are not the same. We have five Guides, eight Brigin Guides and three leaders. We would love to have more adult help. I'm sure many young women in the parish have many happy memories of their guiding days and would like to give this experience to others. This old Guide is becoming slow and weary!

Mena Blake

A life touched by Saint John Paul

A native of Irvinestown, I came to Enniskillen to teach in Abbey St Primary School in 1953. Sr Antonio was Principal for a year after and was then replaced by Sr John Bosco. We taught there with the help of numerous young nuns who 'served their apprenticeship' for a short time before we joined the staff and pupils of the Presentation Brothers Primary School.

My teaching years in Enniskillen were very happy and I still have a great affinity with the parents and past pupils, particularly those of Abbey St, where we worked and played among the people. We had no playground so we supervised the children as they played on the street. Few cars were about then, except perhaps the bread van of Austin Stinson.



I married Sean MacMahon, a Dublin man, who opened up a Radio/TV shop in Church Street where Leslie now has his bakery. We had two beautiful children, Brian and Carmel, and set up home in Derrychara, later moving to Drumclay Road.

In 1979 Pope John Paul II came to Ireland and excitement was very high with expectation of seeing him. We went as a family to the Phoenix Park and what a happy day it was. My brother Seamus and his family went to see him in Drogheda and his wife Margaret stayed at home with their youngest child, Stephen.

On our way back from Phoenix Park, Sean and Brian made plans to go to Shannon airport to see Pope John Paul's departure. Sean, one of the founder members of the Enniskillen Flying Club, had had his pilot's licence for years. I did not enjoy the small plane and avoided it when possible. Margaret, Seamus' wife, enjoyed flying and eagerly agreed to go with them on Monday, 30th September.

Disaster struck. When they hadn't returned near dark I alerted the authorities. After a lengthy search the plane and their bodies were discovered on Culcaigh Mountain. The cause of the accident was never really established but fog seemed to be the likely reason.

It was a dreadful time for Seamus and me. He was left with four children and I without any. We had a strong faith, thank God, and we muddled through it together, both teaching in our respective schools, St Joseph's College and St. Michael's Primary. No words could describe our loss. Unfortunately, tragedy struck again in December 2003 when we lost Stephen. He died suddenly, aged 29, leaving a wife and two small boys. Our faith was tested once again.

My Sister-in-law Norma came to live with me in 1983. She had had a very varied nursing career and spent a year in Rome. There she had made many contacts, particularly with priests in the Irish College. On the 10th Anniversary of our tragedy Norma suggested that we should go to Rome and, through her many connections in the College, she was able to get seats for the two of us in the front row at Pope John Paul's public audience. Bridie Drugan, from Enniskillen, a fellow teacher and friend of mine, along with another friend, Maureen Kennedy, were also at the audience. My great surprise and delight came the night before when some nuns from the convent of St Bridget, where we were staying, came dashing in to tell me that they had arranged for me to go to Pope John Paul's 6am Mass at his residence, Castel Gandolfo, and to meet His Holiness for a few minutes afterwards. I cannot express my feeling at that Mass and at the private meeting where he talked, sympathised with me and gave me his blessing. I felt that what my family had started out to do in 1979 I had completed.

Since Pope John Paul's death I have prayed constantly to him, especially when I needed help. I felt very emotional and grateful when I watched his canonisation on the TV. It is this strong connection and my love and devotion to Seamus, his children and grandchildren that gives meaning and fulfilment to my life. I look forward to their regular visits, particularly the children's. I hope to be re-united with my family one day and trust that when the time comes Saint John Paul may even help me along with my final journey.

Maura MacMahon

My Enniskillen Home

Hello, I am Elezabath; 19 years old. I was born in South India, in a place called Kerala, a very scenic area with beautiful landscapes, lakes and backwaters but have been settled in Ireland for the past 10 years. Coming to Enniskillen at the young age of 8 was a big step for me and of course a very exciting one too! To my surprise though, I settled into Enniskillen very well and rather quickly also, thanks to the approachable nature and hospitality of the Irish people. I started primary school in Erne Integrated, making my first bunch of Irish friends! And by the end of P7 I just about managed to understand the Fermanagh accent! My secondary education was in St. Fanchea's College, where I had the best 5 years of my school life with the staff and students there whom I always think of with much fondness as they have influenced me in so many ways. I finished my A Levels in Mount Lourdes Grammar School and it was then I actually realised how difficult studies can get! But, thanks to the supportive staff and some amazing friends, I made it through! Currently I am attending university in Leeds, studying for a BSc in Biomedical Science.



My involvement with St. Michael's Parish has helped me to get to know many wonderful people who had played a huge role in making me feel more at home here. I began my work with the parish at the age of 10, on my mum's initiative, as a shy, little altar server. This not only helped me to develop and nurture my faith but also became a pathway to making new friends in the parish, both young and old, clergy and lay people. As an altar server I most enjoyed helping out at the Easter ceremonies, firstly meeting up with other servers for our training sessions and walking through the aisle of the church at the start of Mass in almost complete darkness on Holy Saturdays! Thanks especially to the support of Fr. Noel McGahan, Jimmy Rogers and the parish people, I continued as an altar server for four years. The parish people always had a friendly approach and words of encouragement for me and I always appreciated their support. Then, under the training and encouragement of Fr. Martin and Cecilia Burns, I progressed from altar server to prayers of the faithful, being second reader and, finally, becoming Eucharistic minister.

Completing the John Paul 2 Award with other youngsters is a time I cannot forget; the many parish activities together, especially the Flower Festival. That was also an occasion that made me even more aware of how welcoming the people of the parish are towards young people and how much they appreciated our efforts. Having craic with our good humoured parishioners at countless coffee mornings and helping out at Faith and Light - acting out the gospel and dancing to great music with its members - all gives many beautiful memories to cherish and has helped me immensely to become who I am today.

Now that I am studying away from home there isn't the same opportunity to involve myself with our parish but I try to get involved as much as I can when I am back for holidays and I also participate in my church at Leeds. I always look forward to coming back to St. Michael's Church on my vacations and the parish people have been so welcoming each and every time. It makes me very happy to think that our parishioners still haven't forgotten the little altar server from India.

Elezabath Mathew



Pupils from Jones Memorial P. S. who received the sacrament of Confirmation on Sunday ??

St. Mary's Church, Lisbellaw

The land for the first Catholic Church in Lisbellaw was gifted by Sir Ralph Gore of Bellisle Estate around 1745. The church then had a thatched roof and stood parallel to the now Inishmore Road on the site of the current sanctuary. The only entrance to the church was from the Gola Road.

The building of the present St. Mary's, supervised by Fr. James Hughes CC, was carried out in the years 1858 – 1860. Most of the work was voluntary labour by parishioners. There was some assistance by the skilled stonemasons then engaged on the construction of the Clones to Enniskillen railway line which reached Lisbellaw about that time. Carrickreagh limestone from the western shores of Lough Erne was used in the building. A Professor Scott designed the main altar at the personal expense of Monsignor Smollen.

At the top end of the grounds there was a small thatched cottage occupied by the Whitley family before they moved to New Row in the village.

During the years when the Hughes family were responsible for the maintenance, a furnace was installed to supply heating in the church. James McMahon from Ballylucas looked after the cost of the installation of the coal-burning furnace, which was lit on Saturday evening and refuelled on Sunday morning. In those days, before the provision of electricity, candles were used and at Christmas time Jimmy Hughes would weave fine wire into candle holders around the church and these were attached to the walls with fine nails. Water was carried from a well at the back of New Row in the village.

The bell was tolled each Sunday morning for 11.00 am Mass on all but the first Sunday of each month when Mass was at 9.30 am. (These 'First Sundays' also had a Holy Hour from 6.00 to 7.00 in the evening.) Prior to the 11.00 am Mass the priest would celebrate Mass in Cradien. After the service in Lisbellaw, he would have breakfast in the home of Hugh and Paul McCahy, cooked for him by Josie Brady. The Hughes family lived on the Main Street in Lisbellaw and were caretakers of St. Mary's for many years, their son Jimmy, following in their footsteps and being a skilled worker, looked after all of the needs of the church until his death on July 22nd 1958.



St. Mary's in the 1980's

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Monsignor Gannon was responsible for the present opening onto the Cloughcor Road round about 1960. The church was refurbished and rededicated in 1987. One of the outstanding features of St Mary's is the painting of St Joseph by Dan O'Neill. The old church housed a decorative baptismal font at the rear where today the confessional is located. The font is now outside the front door.

Maureen Magee

Parish Mission Statement

We are called by our baptism to be disciples of Jesus; to love God and our neighbour. We seek to live our lives as faithful witnesses to Gospel values and to spread the Good News in a joyful, simple way, bringing hope, healing and support to each other along life's journey. We are a worshipping Christ-centred Community. We value respect and promote the dignity of others. We embrace difference and diversity rejoicing in the unique giftedness of every human person.