

ST. MICHAEL'S PARISH

ENNISKILLEN

LISBELLAW



Volume 1, Issue 8

NEWSLETTER

December 2015

“In switching on the light of the Nativity scene, we wish for the light of Christ to be in us. A Christmas without light is not Christmas. Let there be light in the soul, in the heart; let there be forgiveness to others; let there be no hostilities, which are dark. Let there be the beautiful light of Jesus. This is my wish for all of you, when you turn on the light of the crib.”

Pope Francis



We, the priests of St Michael's Parish, Enniskillen, wish all our parishioners a happy and peaceful Christmas. We hope and pray that this will be a time of rest and relaxation. Christmas is another reminder of God's love for all of us, for all human beings and all of creation. That is why we celebrate. We are privileged to belong to the one amazing human race and to enjoy the wonders and beauty of Creation. We are conscious that not all people in our world are allowed to enjoy God's creation nor are they able to celebrate Christmas. We would want to see the leaders of the world work more diligently to end the war on the poor which results in poverty and hunger. Pope Francis reminds us of our responsibilities to the poor in the world and in our midst. We are grateful to those in St Vincent de Paul and in all the other charitable organisations for their care for the poor and marginalised.

Christmas is a time when families get together to renew their friendships and enjoy each other's company. It can be a stressful time for some because of all kinds of different pressures. It can be a lonely time for others because someone very dear is missing. The loss of loved ones is felt most keenly at Christmas.

We extend good wishes to the clergy of all Christian denominations in our parish and to all those who belong to other Christian denominations who celebrate the Nativity at this time with us. We extend good wishes to all who have become distant from our church and who may have lost contact. You are always welcome here. We wish the youth of the parish a Christmas filled with joy. We would like you to enjoy the company of your peers without endangering yourselves in any way. We would like to see the peace process continue to develop and the creation of a new society based on openness, tolerance and mutual respect.

We are all celebrating the birth of Jesus who grew up to be the One who was to give his life for peace and justice in the world. We would want to see a greater commitment from the political leaders in our world to building a peaceful, non-violent world. Pope Francis is urging us all to work to build a more just world and to care for the poor, the hungry, the prisoners and he is urging us all to care for the Earth and to put an end to pollution and waste. We ask the Holy Spirit to guide us and give us the courage to be like him and to be true disciples of Jesus whose coming to the world we celebrate at this time every year.

Happy Christmas to each of you and to all your loved ones at home and abroad!

Nollaig Shona!

Monsignor Peter, Fr. Raymond, Fr. Ian, Fr. Joe and Deacon Kevin.

Getting to knowFr. Ian



It's not often, as a priest, that you get a second bite at a parish apple. Once you've ministered in a parish, it's rare to return a second time. This gives me added reason to be thankful for my return to St. Michael's. It's 18 years since I last lived in Darling St and while much has changed, much remains the same. My accent is still hard to place, thanks to a childhood spent in both London and Monaghan. I still try to take life as lightly as it will allow me and still consider any day without laughter a failure. I'm still a Liverpool supporter (thank God for that sense of humour!!); I still love music, be it Rock, Pop, Classical or pretty much anything in between. I'm still a Trekkie, but one who is just as excited about the new Star Wars movie! The biggest change for me personally is that when I was last here, I wasn't even 12 months ordained and now I'm marking 21 years of priesthood. Before coming to St. Michael's for the first time in 1995, I spent 8 months as a priest in Bundoran, and the years between my two stints here were spent in Aghlurcher parish, ministering in Lisnaskea and Maguiresbridge. Last year, I marked my 20th anniversary of ordination by taking a sabbatical, basically a break from day to day ministry and it allowed me some the time to travel, write, reflect and

consider the journey I'd been on and the one that lay ahead. More than anything else, it offered me some much needed perspective on my life and it's something I would recommend to everyone who gets or can create the chance. From time to time, we all need to stand back from the busyness of life with its routines and habits to re-evaluate our priorities, clear away any unnecessary clutter and refocus ourselves for the road ahead, even if we're never truly certain of what that road will be or where it will lead us.

While all those years of wonderfully varied experiences allow me to reflect on how I've grown and changed as a priest, pop me in a cinema seat or a comic book store and I'll soon revert back to the excitable geek who's never far beneath the surface. My twitter page says that I'm living a life inspired by Stan Lee, James T. Kirk and Jesus Christ (Google the first two if you don't know them!). From a very early age, the sense of wonder I found in movies and comics was equalled by what I found in the Bible stories and as I got older and discovered more and more in those stories, I realised that the adventure of faith was just as exciting as anything I'd ever seen on screen. In 1988, I entered the seminary in Maynooth at the age of 17 and was ordained a priest on the 3rd Sunday of Advent, Gaudate Sunday, in 1994, so December has a special meaning for me; my birthday's in December as well!

Faith in God for me, as for most of us, hasn't always been easy; personal challenges, frustrations and losses affect us and make us ask increasingly difficult questions, but they have also reminded me that, as in any loving relationship, we start and end with that simple realisation: we are loved by God, completely and uniquely. Our lives as Christians should, before anything else, be a response to that love. Hopefully, this Christmas can be, as well as everything else, our response to God's love through kindness and compassion, forgiveness and understanding, patience, generosity and mercy. I'm looking forward to continuing my re-acquaintance with St. Michael's parish over Christmas and into the New Year and with all those who make it the truly Christian community it is. I want to thank all of you who have made me feel so welcome since I returned in September. It's good to be back.



"Mercy and forgiveness must not remain beautiful words, but be realised in daily life. To love and to forgive are the concrete and visible signs that faith has transformed our hearts and they enable us to express in ourselves the very life of God - to love and forgive as God loves and forgives"

The RCIA Group: Another Of Our Parish Ministries...



Dympna Clarke, Bridie Flanagan, Maria Quinn, Sr Rose McQuaid, Angela Rooney and Treena Potter

You may not have noticed, but some local adults do ask to be received into the Catholic Church. Two years ago, we had nine candidates. Last year we had five. This year we had four, and four more have come forward recently. Some ask because they are married to a Catholic and wish to attend Mass together. (Please note that you don't have to become a Catholic in order to marry a Catholic.) Others ask because they grew up in a family (or country) that didn't make space for religion.

Over the years, the local Sisters of Mercy, the Passionist Fathers, individual local teachers, or local parish clergy provided the instruction and help when requested. What is new is that three years ago a new group was formed to provide parish-based help. It's called the RCIA group: Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. Some of the group are in the picture. There are others: John James Treacy is a founding member and others, including Ownie and Ann Curry, have offered help to the group: .

When someone makes the request to become a Catholic, they are invited to a 'meet-&-greet' session with some of the RCIA team. They can bring a friend along too. One of the parish clergy may also attend. It's a way to get to know one another and to swap stories over a cup of tea. Conversations are a key element from there on. Candidates continue to meet with some of the RCIA team over time. Those who have roots in one or other Christian Church will already be familiar with the Bible. Conversations also involve the candidate's own questions, prayer, the Creed, Church worship and sacraments. While Easter is the ideal time for being received into the Catholic Church, other times are possible. Since Baptism by water and the usual baptismal words are common to all Christian Churches, a person is not baptised again if they have already been baptised in the usual way. Our RCIA team members describe their experience as '*wonderful*', '*a privilege*', '*a joy*', and a '*renewal of their faith*'.

If you or someone you know would like to be received into the Catholic Church, please email the parish or call at the Parish Office during opening hours. See back of this newsletter for contact details.



Aisling
centre
Hope Healing Growth

Aisling Centre
37 Darling Street
Enniskillen
BT74 7DP

t: **028 66325811**
e: info@theaislingcentre.com
w: www.theaislingcentre.com

Pastoral Areas of Clogher Diocese

On the evening of October 22nd the parish pastoral councils of St Michael's and Pobal (Tempo) came together in St. Fanchea's College for the first of what is intended to be a series of ongoing meetings. The get-together provided an opportunity for members of the two parish councils to get to know each other, to compare how each group works in supporting its community and, in so doing, to benefit from sharing experiences.

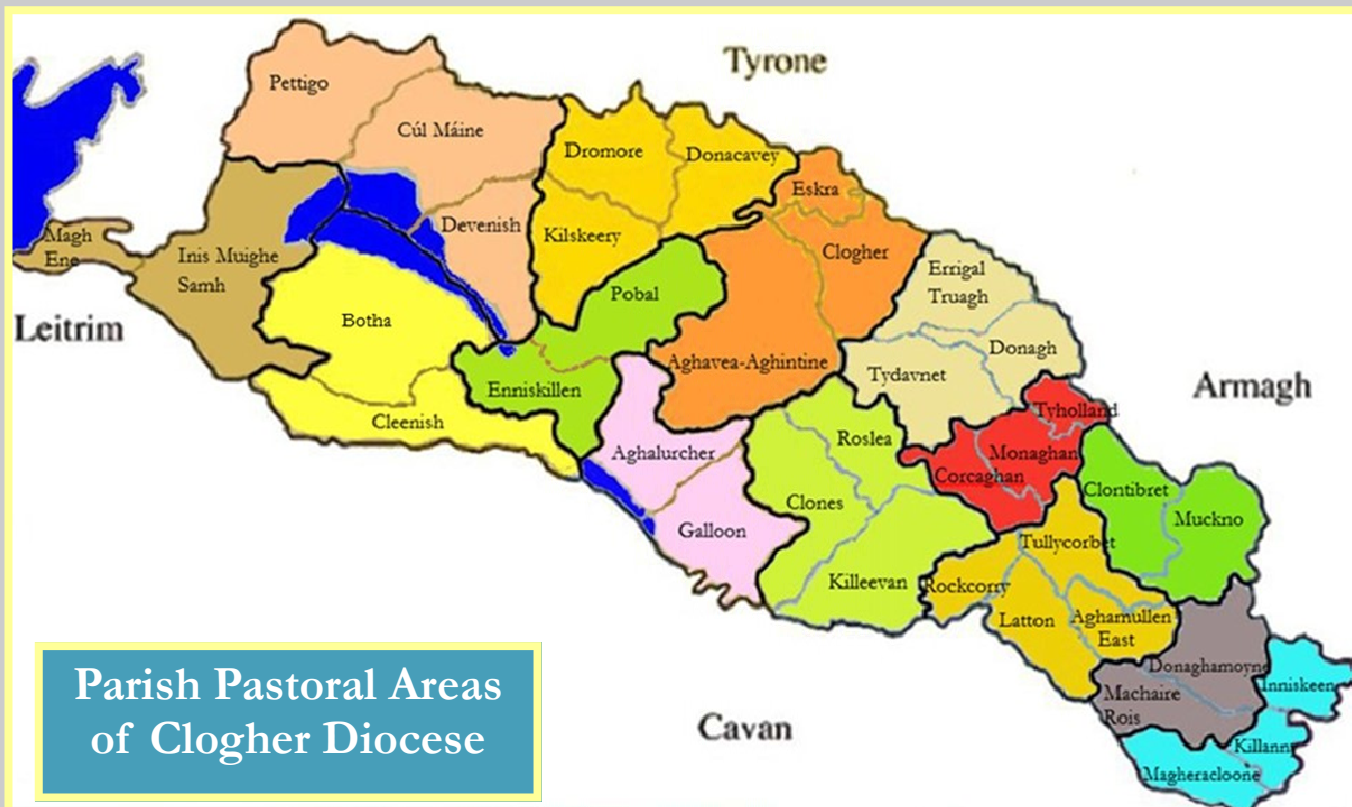
The Enniskillen/Lisbellaw parish and that of Tempo now form one of fourteen Pastoral Areas of the Clogher Diocese. Each area combines two, three or (in one case) four parishes to facilitate the sharing of the experience, expertise and skills which are available within the communities. The development is a recognition of the need to identify the great range of talents available and, while maintaining the unique identity of each parish, to encourage a wider sharing of those talents and, by creating bigger pools of abilities, to enable and encourage the greater involvement (and greater motivation) of more parishioners.

There are many practical ways in which collaboration and teamwork between the laity of parishes can benefit the people of today's Church – cooperation in the training of Readers and Ministers of the Eucharist, provision of pre-sacramental courses, preparation for special events The wider areas provide greater scope for contributions from those with particular skills in organising, planning and motivating. As we move through The Year of Mercy, inaugurated by the very symbolic opening of the Holy Door to St. Peter's Basilica by Pope Francis on December 8th, there will be many doors opening to those called to work together – to use and develop their special gifts for helping the sick, encouraging young people, promoting prayer groups and adult faith formation and supporting the work of those, such as the Baptismal and RCIA Teams and Bereavement Groups, who already do so much despite having too few members – doors opening up to opportunities to work for the Kingdom of God.

The Pastoral Areas also have potential to assist the work of our priests in a time when fewer clergy are available. Priests of each Area meet monthly to consider how they can be mutually supportive. The consequent strengthening of links facilitates meeting those needs which arise when a priest is ill or absent from his parish or when a special event requires extraordinary clerical resources.

Encouragement and help for the developing collaborative working is provided through the Clogher Pastoral Support Group (CPSG). It consists of eight members, four of whom, Martin Donnelly, Eileen Gallagher, Rev. Macartan McQuaid and Mary Thompson, are mainly involved with the northern part of the diocese while Gary Carville, Rev. La Flynn, Deborah Lynch and Claudine Marron work with the parishes of the southern half. One member of the CPSG is assigned to each Pastoral Area and is available to attend meetings and to give whatever help is possible.

In the development of the Pastoral Areas, one can see further evidence of the changing role and greater involvement of the laity within the Church, as envisaged by Vatican II. That increasing contribution is also a reminder of the importance and steadfastness of local communities: our priests come and go but countless families at the core of our parishes have been there for generations. They, please God, will be there for many more generations, providing and taking pride in our churches, our schools and all of those other elements, tangible and intangible, on which our parish communities are built. The developing Pastoral Areas are strengthening the foundations on which those communities are supported.



Year of Mercy: Dec 2015 - Nov 2016



The Holy Father is a very good and clear teacher and he realises the need to emphasise an important theme from God's revelation, so we can understand it better. During this Year of Mercy, he wants us to reflect with him on how to know and experience God's mercy in our lives.

The theme of *mercy* is significant and timely. Biblical experts tell us it is the trait of God most often mentioned in Scripture: God is slow to anger and rich in *mercy*. It is the gift we most often ask from God. We think, for instance, of the psalms, "*Have mercy on me, O Lord!*" or the plea of the blind beggar to Jesus, "*Son of David, have mercy on me!*" - indeed a virtue God wants all of us to have.

We want *mercy* from God and He wants us to treat one another with *mercy*. We especially ask *mercy* from the Lord when we have hurt Him by our sins; we ask *mercy* from another when we apologise for hurting them; and we show *mercy* to another when they ask pardon for harming us, and we forgive them.

What is really important is to be in complete awe of God's lavish *mercy* upon us. If I am gratefully and humbly aware that God is ever *merciful* to me, a sinner, I'm more likely to be *merciful* to others.

However, there are two slight obstacles when speaking about *mercy*! These obstacles are never on God's side.

The first obstacle to God's *mercy* on our part is when we conclude our sins are so terrible that we can never receive God's *mercy*. This can cause us to feel alienated from God, abandoned to wallow in guilt, to feel scared and ultimately to *despair*.

Like Jesus, Pope Francis reminds us that God wants nothing more than to have *mercy* on us. It's ours for the asking! All we have to do is admit our sins in confession, tell God we're sorry, ask His mercy, and tell Him that, with His help, we will do our best to change. To show dramatically how much He wants to give us His *mercy*, God our Father sent His Son, Jesus, who died on the cross to erase all of our sins.

The second obstacle to God's *mercy* is that some may feel they do not need God's *mercy*! They may say, "*I'm okay, you're okay! Mercy is only for people who have a tendency to feel guilty about everything! But not for me, thanks, I have no sins...*"

This is the opposite of *despair*, and is called *presumption*. We take God's *mercy* for granted, ignore it, or, most often, figure we don't need it.

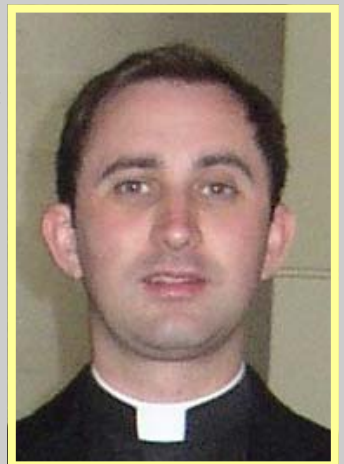
Obviously, the *Year of Mercy* speaks to people in both extremes. To those in *despair*, Pope Francis reminds them that the "good news" is found on almost every page of the Bible, that God's mercy is limitless, generous, ours for the asking, and nobody, nowhere is exempt from it.

To those of us in *presumption*, the Holy Father is like St John the Baptist, warning us about a comfort and self-congratulation that leads to complacency and spiritual indifference.

So perhaps we should try to focus on a healthy middle ground, between *despair* and *presumption*. St Peter was a good example of this. He denied His Lord and best friend three times when Jesus needed him most. Yet he then wept bitterly, repented, and accepted the *mercy* he knew his master had come to bring.

He is a model for this *Year of Mercy*, *St. Peter*! Let's accept the invitation of his successor, Pope Francis, and walk that road to salvation, avoiding the two ditches, *despair* and *presumption*, on either side!

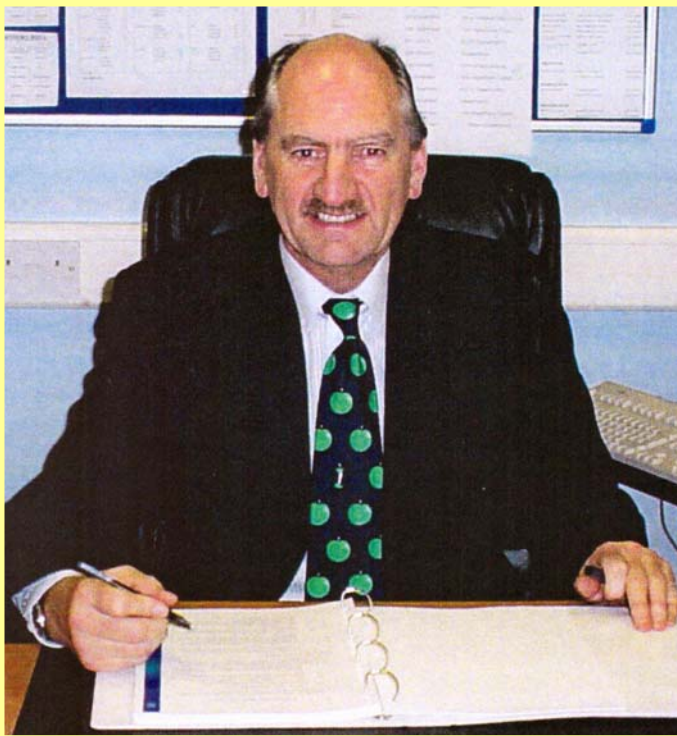
Fr. Raymond



24 Hours for the Lord ... 4th and 5th of March 2016

Pope Francis has asked every parish to mark this Jubilee Year of Mercy by celebrating 24 hours of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament when the Sacrament of Reconciliation will be available.

Remembering Nasturtiums



Joe Corrigan

I grew up in Cornagrade at 87 Derrin Road with six siblings, the children of Hughie and Lizzie Corrigan. In many ways, it was an idyllic childhood - materially modest but spiritually and emotionally rich. Home life was affirming, with priority given to education and faith formation. We never had a car and didn't have a television or telephone until I was ready to leave home at 18, but in retrospect we had everything we needed. The streets and fields were our playgrounds and they were safe, apart from the odd tumble, scrap or scrape.

Sister Clement, later Sister Helena Hunt, was one of my first and best teachers (High Infants.) I still remember, after almost 60 years, her praising me in front of the class for being able to read the word "*nasturtiums*" in a story about red and yellow flowers growing out of an old discarded boot, and I walked home a foot taller than usual. A few years ago, I discovered she was living in a nuns' retirement home outside Lurgan and decided to visit her. I wanted to tell her she was the first teacher who made manifest for me the old adage that "*pupils might not remember what you taught them but they will never forget how you made them feel*". She did not recognise me at first, not least because I had hair where my face used to be and skin where my hair used to be. When I told her my name, she immediately said, "*Ah, Joe Corrigan! I remember you*

reading the word 'nasturtiums' correctly in my class - you always loved the reading".

I was incredulous, and quite moved. What recall, and what interest, after almost 55 years! She told me who sat beside me, in front of me, and behind me in the classroom, and much more. Her gentleness and kindness while teaching us to read provided a standard to aspire to all through my teaching career. Sadly, she died shortly after our brief re-union.

In St Michael's College, what a delight it was to be introduced to Shakespeare's sonnets, Thomas Grey, Oliver Goldsmith and the mighty odes of John Keats. "*A Thing of Beauty is a Joy Forever*" declaimed the guttural voice of Colm Gillespie, a wonderful teacher of English who inspired us to read far beyond the boundaries of the 'A' Level syllabus, and constantly challenged our opinions and assumptions in a way that was often provocative but never patronising. (Across the town from St Michael's, on another hill, stood the girls' school, Mount Lourdes, where my wife and sisters went. Many a poetry book was delicately defaced, with the letter "j" changed to the letter "b" in Keats' 'Endymion' which now read, "*A Thing of Beauty is a Boy Forever*".)

After graduating from Q.U.B. I stopped off in the new city of Craigavon for a year in 1976 with my wife, Maureen Fallis from Riverside, before our intended return to Enniskillen. Don't ask us what happened - after 40 years we are still here! I retired last year after 37 years in Lismore Comprehensive School, a co-educational, comprehensive school of 1150 pupils, firstly as a teacher of English and for the last 14 years as Principal. My life's work has been to try to deliver the fine, rigorous and value-driven education I enjoyed, to all of the young people of the area in which I live, irrespective of ability, aptitude and interest on the basis that while all children are not equal, all are of equal value.

St Michael's parish provided many opportunities for me as a young person growing up in Enniskillen. Serving as an altar boy at the early morning Latin Masses introduced me to the richness of language and liturgy. Being asked to be one of the first lay readers at the Holy Saturday night Easter celebrations in front of a packed church while still a schoolboy was terrifying, but very good experience for public speaking later on. Fr Peter McGuinness's encouraging me to help others led to many interesting conversations with infirm and elderly patients during visits to the old County Hospital. Tom Morris filling the church on Christmas Eve with his rendition of 'Silent Night' stays with me still.

One day during my first year in St Michael's College, the 'town boys' were asked to wait after school. Fr John McKenna invited us to a meeting which was to set up the first C.B.S.I. troop in Enniskillen. This led to many happy years of involvement as a scout, and later as Assistant Scout Leader, working with inspiring and selfless parishioners like Seamus Doris and Ronnie Fallis. Many years later, Fr Frank Kearney came to see me as a young teacher in Lismore to ask me to start a C.B.S.I. unit in Craigavon based on what he had heard of my scouting experience in St Michael's - the clerical grapevine was obviously alive and well then!! I did start the 7th Dromore C.B.S.I. unit with a few other local enthusiasts and am happy to say it is still thriving.

The best preparation for the future is the present well attended to. At the end of his great novel 'Nostromo' Joseph Conrad wrote: *"For life to be large and full, it must contain care of the past and care of the future in every passing moment of the present. Our daily work must be done to the glory of the dead, and for the good of all those who come after us."*

Part of our task is that of the keeper of the flame. The small number of people I have mentioned here do duty for many in St Michael's parish, not least my heroic parents, who showed their care of the past and their care of the future *"in every passing moment of the present."* May God continue to bless St Michael's parish for many years to come.

The Men's Shed Movement

Men's Shed is a project for men aged 60+ to share skills, socialise and connect with their wider community.



Men's Shed patrons (average attendance = 20 per day):

Back -Seamus Creggan, Paddy Gilgunn, Drew Young, Art Cassidy & Damien Daly.
Front -Jim Curran, Gabriel Murphy, Liam Flynn, Jimmy Magee & Anthony McGirr

I have been an active member of Men's Shed for several years and it has been an enriching experience. I found it most helpful after my wife died: I found companionship which helped me greatly.

Men's Shed originated in Australia following a national conference on the theme of Men's Health in 1995. It was formalised as a movement there in 2007. Since then the movement has spread to other countries including Ireland, Wales, England, Scotland, Greece and Finland. The basic idea of Men's Shed is to enrich social interaction in the local community and thereby increase the quality of life for men who

are retired or unemployed. It is estimated that in the south of Ireland there are up to 300 sheds with almost 10,000 members. In the north there are 42 Men Sheds. It has been an amazing success story and provides a much needed outlet for men who have retired from full time employment. The Enniskillen Shed will be extending the programme of activities in 2016. There will be IT, Upholstery, Music and Complementary Medicine, as well as the woodwork, basket-weaving and gardening activities already existing. A group of men concerned about Prostate cancer has been formed from the Shed. We call ourselves 'the Fermanagh Prostate group'. Soon there will be two other sheds in Fermanagh - in Belcoo and Lisnaskea.

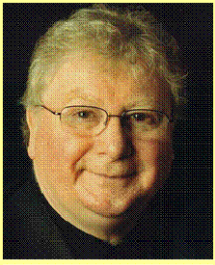
Men's Shed brings together men to share their skills, have a laugh and a cup of tea while working on practical activities of their choice. It is a place for members to be themselves, a place to work at your own pace, a place to exchange ideas and learn, a place for members to support each other and build friendships. The brochure for Men's Shed states: *"Men's Shed is not a formal training programme; it is not a health programme; it is not a Sports club; it is not a service for men but activities organised by men; it is not an information service but you can ask for the information you need. It is 'somewhere to feel at home, have a laugh, socialise, pursue practical interests and stay active! It is about 'a group of men working on projects of their own choosing and at their own pace and in a safe, friendly and inclusive venue."* Raymond Funston is another example of those who have found the Enniskillen Men's Shed a great help: *"I enjoy the craic and the company. It is great for people who are retired and have nowhere to go. I am proud of the fact that the Fermanagh Prostrate group started in the Shed. I enjoy the art, woodwork and the day-trips away."*

Paddy Gilgunn

Opening Hours: Monday: 9.00am - 1.30pm, Tuesday: 9.00am - 3.30pm, Wednesday: 9.00am - 1.30pm,
THURSDAY - CLOSED, Friday: 9.00am - 2.30pm

Who can join? Men over 60 years. Membership is free. If you are curious to find out more drop into the local Enniskillen Shed at Drumcoo (on the New Horizons site) or contact Sonya Slevin at 078 66384117

“We are the Caretakers of Creation”



Fr. Joe McVeigh

Pope Francis speaks of the crisis in our world caused by climate change, pollution and the use of fossil fuels and he says these affect the poor most severely. He says we have been abusing the earth and the atmosphere for many years. He calls on us first of all to listen to the Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor which are closely connected. He calls on us to think of all of Creation and to think of the future generations.

Pope Francis keeps reminding us that we all have Responsibilities for the earth and for one another; especially for the poor and oppressed in our world. He writes in *Laudato Si*: *“Only by cultivating sound virtues will people be able to make a selfless ecological commitment. A person who could afford to spend and consume more but regularly uses less heating and wears warmer clothes, shows the kind of convictions and attitudes which help to protect the environment. There is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions, and it is wonderful how education can bring about real changes in lifestyle.”* (Paragraph 211)

Pope Francis wants to see people taking action and changing lifestyle even in small ways because if many people act in reducing fossil fuels and waste and if people reduce the use of electricity and fuel it will make a difference and it will make the world a safer place for future generations.

Christmas is a time to renew our faith in God’s love for us and to care for Creation. It is a time to give thanks to God for Creation and for the coming of the Christ. God’s earth blessed by Christ is for all of humanity. We are custodians for a short while. Then we hand it over to the next generation and they will hand it on to the generation after that and on and on until He comes again. For now, we, each one of us, are the Caretakers of creation.

The publication of the encyclical in June was deliberately timed to make an impact before the United Nations summit on Climate Change held from 30th November till 11th December 2015. The heads of world governments met in Paris to draw up a new agreement to replace the Kyoto agreement of 1997. It is the 21st Conference of the Parties, hence the name COP21. The decisions taken at that Conference are already published and will encourage us all to be attentive to the words of Pope Francis and to renew our efforts to make this world a safer and a more just place for all and for the generations to come. It is now up to us to make the changes.

Aisling Centre Birthday Party

The Aisling Centre celebrated its 25th birthday with a party in the Enniskillen Hotel on December 2nd. It was a party for all who in any way shared the Aisling journey.

It was a great joy for me to be part of Aisling’s 25th birthday party. I looked forward to meeting up with all those who shared those early days when we survived on a wing and a prayer; those who helped build a strong foundation on which the centre has been able to grow beyond our wildest dreams. Today the centre is bigger and more professional. So many have contributed to this growth and development, but most importantly, the heartbeat of the Aisling Centre remains the same the open door, the warm welcome, the deep respect for each person who crosses the threshold and the continued pursuit of hope, healing and growth. I think too of those who were part of our journey and are sadly no longer with us, especially the members of the Rainbow Club who added so much laughter and life to the centre we have much to celebrate and many memories to share.

Edel Bannon

St Michael’s Parish

www.st-michaels.net

Rev. Monsignor Peter O'Reilly, PP

Telephone : 028 6632 2075

Email: pp@st-michaels.net

Rev. Raymond Donnelly CC

Rev. Ian Fee CC

Rev. Joseph McVeigh CC

Telephone: 028 6632 2075

Presbytery, 4 Darling Street.

St Michael’s Parish Centre

28 Church Street , Enniskillen

Open: Monday to Thursday: 9:30 – 4:30

Friday: 9.30 – 2.30

Tel: 028 6632 2075

Email: parishcentre@st-michaels.net