

ST. MICHAEL'S PARISH

ENNISKILLEN

LISBELLAW



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NEWSLETTER

November 2015



Mgr. O'Reilly addressing the Parish 'Gathering' in St. Fanchea's College

If you look at the diagram in the middle pages of this edition of the parish newsletter, you will get some sense of our parish life. I used this illustration when speaking at our Parish Gathering (our third) in St Fanchea's College on St Michael's Day, 29th September. It gave me and all present a chance to reflect on the development of the life and needs of the parish.

This meeting was the most recent step in a process that began for me in July 2011. After nine months as Parish Priest, I was so overrun with the demands of everyday parish life that I felt it was impossible to plan for the parish. In my view, parish development was not getting the attention it deserved. The day of 'expecting all things parish to be done by the priest' was gone.

Not that this was ever the full story. The heart of our parish remains our homes. The most important contribution that you and I make to the parish is in building up our home and family. Building up our home is building up our parish. However, every home needs support. Some of that help comes from the parish; from, for example, our parish schools, our training to be involved in things, and our preparations for First Confession and First Communion.

The parish offers other support from within it too. It helps connect us to the place where we come from. It offers a space in which to celebrate family events: the births, the deaths and the marriages. Our Sunday Parish Mass keeps the call to community alive and nurtures it, especially when it is well done. There are other particular helps that parishioners offer each other. Some of these are expressed in the diagram, with the people of the parish being the foundation of the parish, with the clergy and the Parish Pastoral Council being a part of that basic support. The four things that a parish is called to do to support family and parish life are listed also: Building Community; Developing Faith; Attention to Liturgy; and Reaching Out To Those In Need.

The journey that took me towards this current understanding of St Michael's Parish began back in July 2011 in the conversation I had with Fr Martin O'Reilly, Fr John Skinnader and some teachers. That conversation broadened out to include about fifteen parishioners (including the late Sr. Maureen McGurran, RIP, Convent of Mercy, who died before seeing it come to fruition). That led to the series of meetings that were held in St Fanchea's College in March and May 2012. We began, at the first meeting, by considering what would make for an 'ideal' parish. Then at the second meeting we considered the 'real' parish. Three parishioners spoke that evening from different experiences. That informed the third evening we had, where we looked at the gap between the ideal parish and the real parish. This made us better able to name the present challenge for the parish. On the fourth and fifth of those nights, in May 2012, we considered how this challenge might be met. It required people to take various initiatives (some already happening) focused on specific things (e.g. Vincent de Paul, bereavement, RCIA). It also required a group to keep the overview of the parish together with the priests, which is now the Parish Pastoral Council. On the final night, those of us present summed up our findings and made specific commitments to these initiatives.

Over time the Parish Pastoral Council has aimed to connect with parish ministry groups and to take an overview of initiatives that the parish presently needs. At our September Gathering I shared three things in particular that have emerged in recent times: establishing a Parent and Toddler Group; review of our parish spaces provision; and growing the Parish Draw. Those present at the St Michael's Day meeting were from across the parish, many from particular parish ministry groups. After group discussions, they fed back on these issues and also on some additional things. The main additional issue that emerged from right across the gathering was a need for a review of parish funeral Mass times. This became even clearer at the initial review of the meeting by the Parish Pastoral Council. So the clergy of us have reflected on that and we will be letting the Parish and the local undertakers know of the change in arrangements that we intend to make in the near future.

When initiatives are taken, they are reviewed and where feedback is widespread in favour of change, it is wiser to take such recommendations on board. Together with my fellow priests, I am very grateful for the time and energy of all who give themselves for the sake of the parish

A November Reflection



Fr. Joe McVeigh

The author Brendan Behan once spoke about his fear of death: *“Nobody likes dying. We know where we are, but we are not quite sure where we are going!”* This is probably a common enough reaction to death. In order to get to know a bit more about death and how to befriend it, I look for inspiration to those who have reflected a good deal and enriched our understanding of this great Mystery. One of these is the wonderful spiritual writer, John O’Donohue, who died suddenly in 2008 aged 52 years. I met him only once, about a year before he died. We had a great chat and a great laugh. John loved to laugh. John O’Donohue was a priest and poet, a native of County Clare, who wrote many books and articles on Spirituality and Death. He gave talks about the Celtic understanding of life and death all over the world. He lived in Connemara after he retired from active ministry as a priest. In a recently published collection of his writings, ‘Walking on the Pastures of Wonder’, John states: *“Death is the unseen companion, the unknown companion who walks every step of the journey with us. Death is a time of great Homecoming and there is no need to be afraid.”* He continues: *“Death is actually a rebirth; at our first birth, we came out of darkness of the unknown. Then came our life here, before we return at death into the unknown.”*

It is natural to feel a bit apprehensive about dying and going into the unknown. Even Jesus was apprehensive before his impending death, that is, until the experience of the Transfiguration. This helped him to get over his confusion about his own death by crucifixion.

John O’Donohue concludes: *“Death is going to come. No-one has been able to stop it yet! The Connemara people say: ‘Ni féidir dul i bhfolach ar an mbás’ - you cannot hide from death. We fear it because we do not know how, when or where it will come, but come it will. Yet we still have great freedom about the way we approach it. We should not think negatively or destructively about it, but rather see the possibilities that are in it. Of course there is lonesomeness in it. Of course there is fright in it, going into the unknown, but we have been given wonderful shelters about the belonging that is in it. It is not a dark end but the beginning of a path of new brightness. If we can learn not to fear death, we have literally nothing to fear.”*

As well as getting comfort and inspiration from the words of John O’Donohue, I like to reflect on the Communion of Saints. I believe that we are never separated from those who die, that we are connected by friendship with those who have gone before us. *“The ties of friendship do not unravel with death.”* The church celebrates this close connection and unending friendship in the wonderful notion of the Communion of Saints.

There has always been a great respect in Ireland for those who have died. You have only to look at the turn out at funerals. This close relationship with the dead goes back to Celtic times and to the celebration of Samhain each year at the beginning of November and winter. We who live in Ireland today have inherited that deep respect for the dead and that close affinity with those who have gone before us. We really are in communion with the dead in the Communion of Saints.

We still hold on to a vision of life beyond death. Those who have faith believe that life is changed not ended. We believe that death is not the last word. Those who have died belong to us in the Communion of Saints. We, who die in the Lord when baptised and who trust in God’s mercy during our lives, already belong to the great Communion of Saints. We believe that those who have suffered grievously in this life already belong to the Communion of Saints and will be brought by the mercy of God to their true home in heaven where there is no more hardship or suffering, only peace and joy. We who believe in the Communion of saints believe that those who suffer in this world from hunger and starvation, those who experience severe illness and those who are disabled will, after death, be brought to the place of eternal and everlasting peace. We all live in hope of a new and transformed life where there is no more suffering, anxiety, fear or corruption. Already, we belong to this communion of saints. I do not know what Brendan Behan thought of this idea but I believe that he too is now a shining light in that great Communion of Saints.

Fr Joe McVeigh

St. Michael's Parish Bereavement Group



Members of the Bereavement Group: (from left) Patricia Donnelly, Margaret Brewster, Bernie Keenan, Seamus O'Connell, Pat Illand, Sister Phil and Sister Gertrude

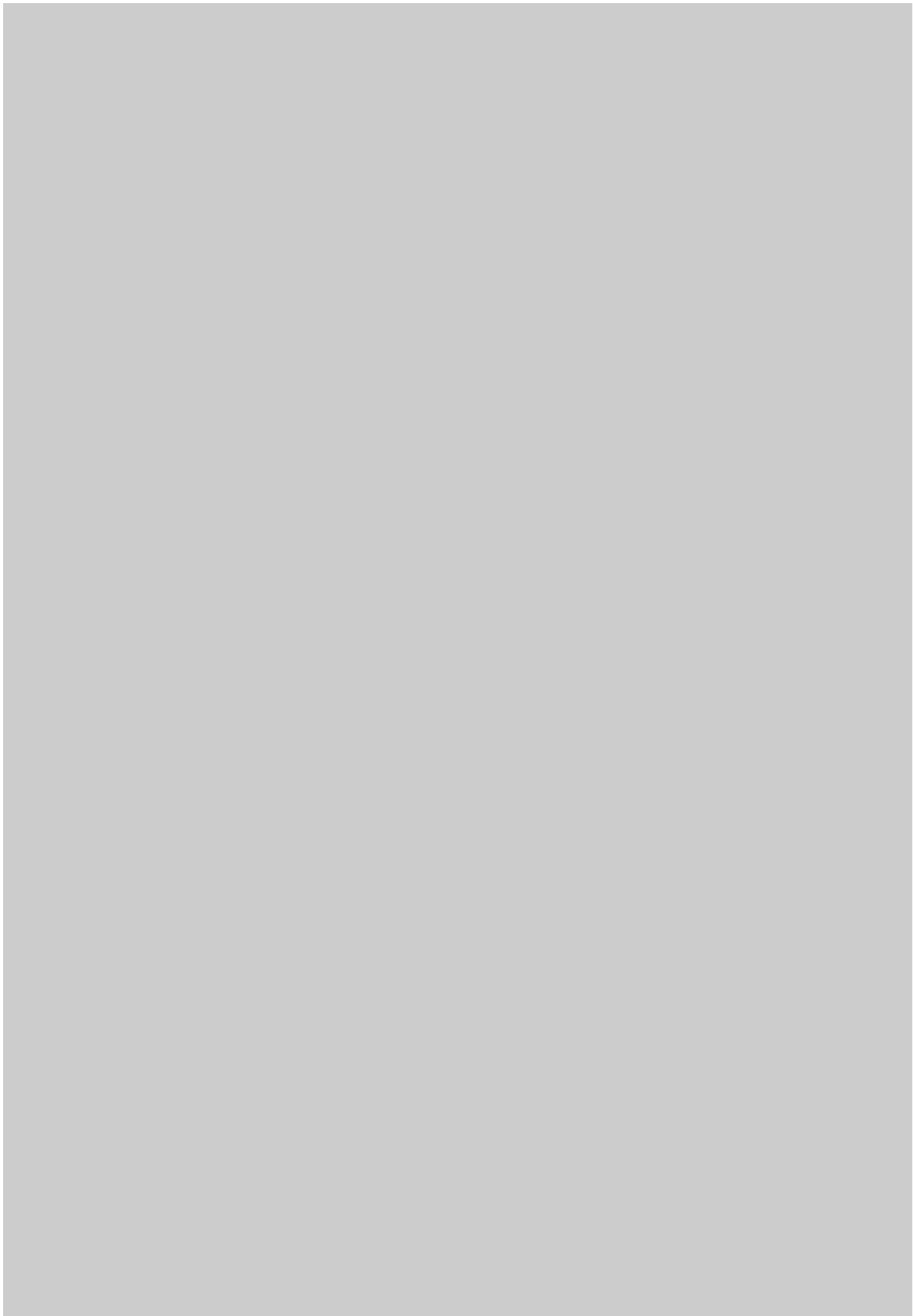
Since the Bereavement Group began, four years ago, we have been working quietly in the background trying to find what is helpful to bereaved people. We send a letter to the family of the deceased person about three months after the death. In the letter we express our sympathy on behalf of the Group and the Parish and promise to keep the family in our prayers. We offer a visit from two of the group to their home or, if they prefer, an opportunity to meet with them in the Parish Centre. After about ten days we contact them by phone for a chat and again offer a visit or a meeting. It is up to the family members to decide if they would like a meeting then or later. We give them the Parish Centre number if they wish to ring later. Some people don't feel that they need to meet while others are very glad of the opportunity to chat.

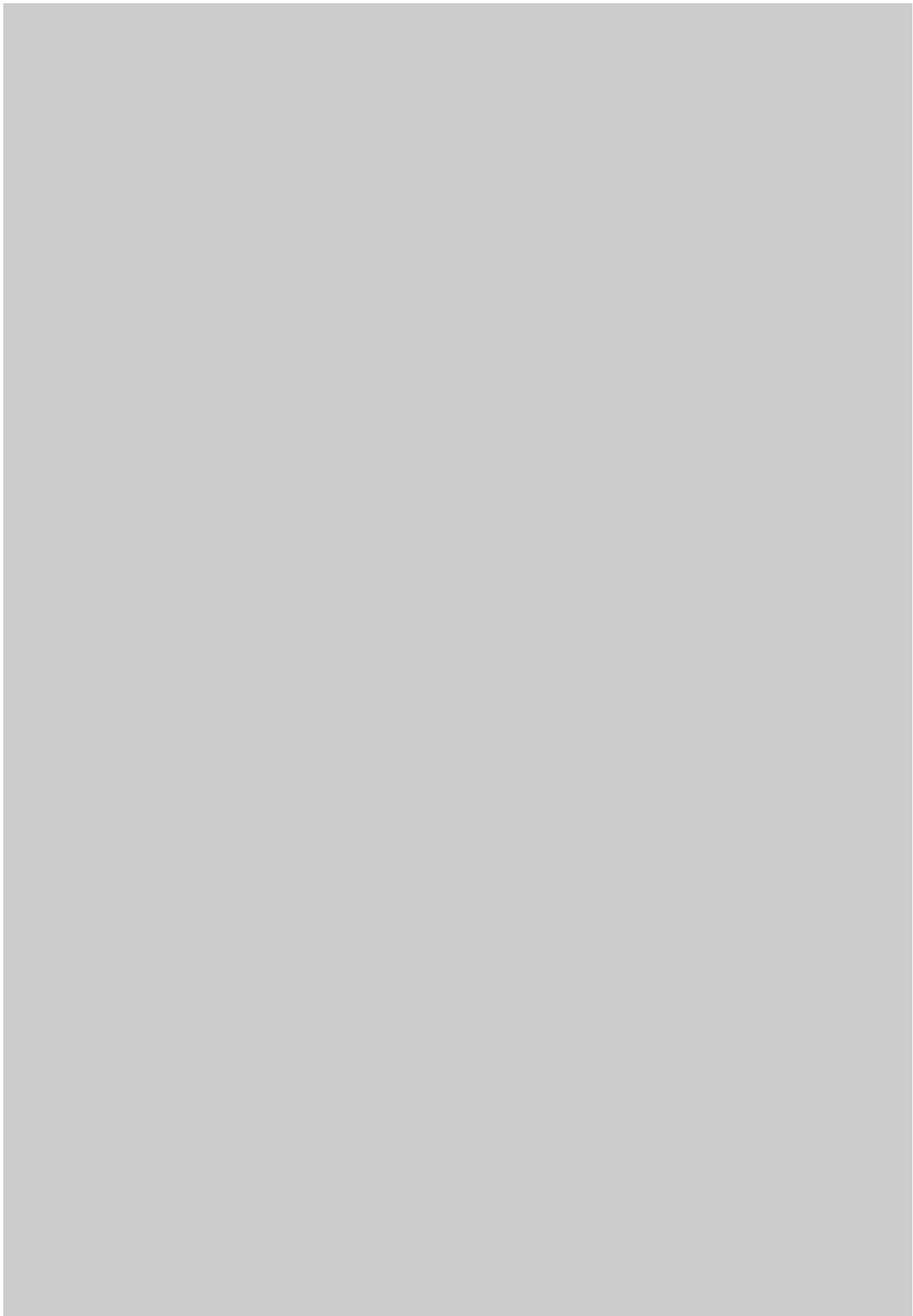
Each year, usually before Christmas, we have an Information Meeting about Bereavement and this has been very beneficial for those who have attended. However, some people are fearful about coming, mostly, I think, because they don't want to have to talk but there is no need for this fear because they won't have to speak unless they wish to. This year, we won't have this Meeting until later because some of the Cruse Team have been bereaved themselves.

Last Year, with the help of the local Cruse Bereavement, we organised six weekly meetings with a group of 8 - 10 bereaved people. The meetings, facilitated by two of our members, went very well and were much appreciated by those who took part. They were followed up by six further meetings of the same group as social events, e.g. a walk round Enniskillen or a walk in Castlecoole Grounds. We are planning for a new group to begin this autumn. To be accepted for this group experience you need to ring Cruse Bereavement in Belfast (028 90434600). Meetings this year will be held in Fermanagh House and not in the Parish Centre.

One new initiative that we hope to launch is a Drop-In-Facility for bereaved people. We plan to have this in the sacristy on the left side of the chapel for one hour, at 2pm. It will be facilitated by two members of the group and will commence on Monday 16th November. Thereafter it will be held on the second Monday of each month. If it seems to be helpful, we may consider having it more frequently, perhaps twice a month, or for a longer time each Monday.

We would be very grateful if we could have another few members for our group, especially some men. *Sr. Gertrude*





The Order of the Knights of St. Columbanus

The Order of the Knights of St. Columbanus is a voluntary organisation of Catholic laymen, committed to the service of Christ. The Order was founded in Belfast in 1915 by Canon James K. O'Neill with a view to bringing all Catholic men together in spiritual harmony and to assist with the promotion of the Catholic faith. Our membership is drawn from all walks of life in the community. The basic unit of the Order is the Primary Council. Primary Councils can be found in towns / cities across Ireland and they are at the forefront of many parishes. The National Headquarters of the Order are located at Ely House, Dublin.

The Primary Council in Enniskillen has been designated with the Council number 'CK107'. CK107 has twenty six members and they meet every third Thursday of the month in Ros Erne House, Enniskillen. Spiritual talks are given and presentations are made at these meetings while reviews of the press concerning spiritual matters are discussed as well. Moreover, members from CK107 actively support and assist with the stewarding of the Pope John Paul II Awards Ceremony every year in support of the Clogher don Óige group. CK107 continues to financially assist the missionary work of Fr. Brendan Shannon, with the Council most recently helping him purchase five water tanks for a village in Uganda. Further financial support has also been offered to the Irish Pilgrimage Trust through the hosting of a table quiz while the Council also hosts an Annual Coffee Morning every Christmas as a social / fundraising event for members, wives, family and friends. Members from the Council also facilitate the delivery and formatting of signal boxes in local households so that parishioners can have access to the webcam service in St Michael's Church during the Christmas season. Several members of CK107 undertook a sponsored pilgrimage to Croagh Patrick last year, thanks to the support of the Cooneen / Coonian Ramblers, with the money collected been allocated to Clogher don Óige and the Motor Neurone Disease (NI) charity. Members of CK107 recently participated in the Candlelight Procession organised by St. Michael's Parish.

One of the Council's main motivations during 2015 has been our planning for the centenary of our Order. It has been decided that the occasion should reflect Christian unity in our region with members from other faith communities being invited to join us in the 1400 Jubilee Year celebrations of the death of St. Columbanus. In September 2015, the Council helped facilitate the organisation of an Ecumenical Service on Cleenish Island. The Rev Geoffrey Bridle, the Rev Stephen Woods and Fr Seamus Quinn led this special service, together with parishioners from the surrounding area. A lecture on the life and legacy of St. Columbanus took place in St. Macartin's Cathedral, Enniskillen, on Thursday 12th November. The keynote speaker at this talk was Fr. Billy

Swan, who has delivered a range of informative talks on St. Columbanus and other aspects of Celtic Christianity. The Council also assisted with the Festive Evensong event hosted in St. Michael's Church, Enniskillen, on Sunday 22nd November at 8:00pm. This special service, to which all denominations were invited as St. Columbanus belongs to the time that pre-dates any divisions, took place on the eve of the anniversary of his death.



Local clergy from three different churches along with members of CK107 at the ecumenical service on Cleenish Island

Brian Treacy

Getting to know Deacon Kevin



It's a privilege to be asked to write this profile for the Enniskillen Parish Newsletter. My warmest greetings to all the readers and sincere thanks to the people of the parish for your warm welcome on my arrival here. New beginnings can be a bit daunting, but I'm happy to say that I feel very much a part of your parish community.

I am from Swann's Cross in Co. Monaghan, a small rural area in the parish of Aghabog. Home is an important place for me and I always look forward to spending time there with my parents and brother. I attended Latnamard National School and St. Macartan's College, Monaghan, before going to St. Patrick's College, Maynooth in 2004 to begin my studies for the priesthood. I have felt called to the priesthood for as long as I remember and it was something I talked about frequently as a child.

My initial three years in Maynooth were fulfilling and formative years for me, full of happy memories and blessed with wonderful people. However, I began to realise the enormity of the decisions that were looming for me and with direction from Bishop Duffy and the staff in Maynooth, I decided that I was too young to continue my studies for priesthood. In 2007, for the first time in my adult life I was no longer a seminarian!

That break from my studies lasted 5 years. During those 5 years my sense of vocation to the priesthood never diminished but I came to understand that there was so much I needed to learn about life before I could make such a huge commitment. In hindsight, I feel blessed to have been guided to make this decision. God's hand was certainly at work in my life and the experiences of those years have shaped who I am today in quite a significant and positive way. I had many fruitful experiences of work, both voluntary and paid, as well as personal and academic learning during those years.

The highlight, without a shadow of a doubt, was in 2011-2012 when Bishop MacDaid asked me to go to Dublin to work with Fr. Peter McVerry SJ, the well-known champion of the marginalised in Dublin city, especially in the North Inner City and Ballymun. During that year I also worked as a chaplain in Wheatfield Prison, a medium-security facility in West Dublin. These challenging experiences transformed my understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I learned to recognise Jesus' face in the faces of those whom society rejects, to get to know them and to enjoy their company. Fr. Peter often says "*unless you believe that you could be the drug-using prisoner and he could be the priest, there is no point in doing this work*". I believe it! What a blessing this insight has been for me.

After a period of discernment, I returned to my studies for the priesthood in 2012. 11 years after my first journey to Maynooth, I was ordained Deacon on May 31st, 2015. This is my final year of preparation for priesthood and my time is divided between my studies in Maynooth and practical parish experience here in Enniskillen. I am thoroughly enjoying the challenge, despite all the travelling!

My story is your story. Why? Because it is the story of God's desire for each one of us to reach our full potential and live our Christian vocation to the full. From time to time, it's important to ask ourselves 'Who is God calling me to be?' I firmly believe that answering that call is the only way to true fulfilment in life, no matter what the answer is.

May each of you come to experience God's presence with you on life's journey.



"We cannot live without forgiving one another, or at least we cannot live well, especially in the family. Every day we wrong one another. ... What we are asked, however, is to heal immediately the wounds we cause, to reweave the threads that we break in the family."

St Michael's Parish Gathering: 2015



A consultative Parish Gathering held in St. Fanchea's College on September 29th, St. Michael's Day, was attended by over 80 parishioners. Following an address by Monsignor O'Reilly, in which he spoke of the needs of the modern parish and gave a detailed presentation of the many groups and events which contribute to the very vibrant parish that is the modern St Michael's, attendees divided into groups to discuss possible developments and consider how members might become more involved in parish activities.

Among many suggestions which came from the groups (all of which will be considered by the Parish Pastoral Council) issues which got greatest significance were:

- ◆ the time of funeral masses
- ◆ the need for adequate Parish space(s) and
- ◆ initiatives to get greater involvement from young people



St Michael's Parish

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