



Adorers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Montmartre OSB

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Christmas Newsletter 2020



*"Jesus, Mary, Joseph, I love you,
Save Souls!"*

Dear Friends,

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given;
and the government will be upon his shoulder,
and His name will be called
"Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."
Of the increase of His government and of peace
there will be no end*

Isaiah 9:6,7

The past year has been one that perhaps we wish to see fall behind us and give way to a better future, and yet deep down we know that in many ways the future is in our hands. As people of Faith we know that unless the past year causes all of us, the whole human family, to search our hearts and open them to our Creator and the action of the Holy Spirit, there is no guarantee of a better future, at least in the short term. Yet as people of Faith we can also know the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah deep within us: By spending time in prayer, particularly before the Blessed Sacrament we can experience a new birth of Christ in our hearts. Even if we have not prayed much up until now, this Advent and Christmas 2020 is a time of special grace: we can begin to listen to his wonderful counsels, feel protected by His Divine power and might, entrust ourselves to His unending, unconditional Fatherly love and receive His princely gift of Peace. We can allow Him to govern our lives in such a way that nothing can disturb us, however much we may have to suffer.

Here are some hints on prayer from the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

- "Only when we humbly acknowledge that "we do not know how to pray as we ought," are we ready to receive freely the gift of prayer. "Man is a beggar before God". (No.2559)
- "God calls man first. Man may forget his Creator or hide far from his face; he may run after idols or accuse the deity of having abandoned him; yet the living and true God tirelessly calls each person to that mysterious encounter known as prayer." (No.2567)
- "a distraction reveals to us what we are attached to, and this humble awareness before the Lord should awaken our preferential love for him and lead us resolutely to offer him our heart to be purified. Therein lies the battle, the choice of which master to serve." (No.2729)

We are surrounded by confusion, conflicting information, rumour, division even at times among friends and family. Only one thing can reunite the human family, and that is prayer of the heart. Someone once described the heart as "the place where you cry from". In the words of King Solomon: "O Lord my God...give your servant...an understanding mind...that I may discern between good and evil..."(cf.1 Kings 3:9)

Prayer is the life of our community, so it is not surprising that in the past year our activities have been focussed very much on prayer for the urgent needs of our world, for those who are suffering through sickness, hardship and deprivation, mental illness, loss of loved ones. They have also been focussed on providing support and encouragement to the praying community as best we can. Thankfully Churches

have been allowed to remain open in recent months and the faithful were able to come and spend time in Adoration in our chapel, many testifying to the immense consolation this has brought them.

We thank God for the charism of our Mother Foundress, the Servant of God Mother Marie Adele Garnier, who wished to establish centres of Eucharistic Adoration all over the world – truly a Saint for our times!

During the Christmas Season in 1871 she was in desperate situation, fleeing from an invading Prussian army and camped out in the town square of Laval, Burgundy. Gazing up to heaven she was amazed by the countless number of stars that filled the sky, far more than she had ever seen before. She did not know until the following morning, that close by in Pontmain our Blessed Lady was appearing to some village children with her message of HOPE: **“Pray, my children, my Son allows Himself to be moved.”** Shortly afterwards the army retreated. The promise of Mary was fulfilled in more ways than one, as France saw real conversion to the Sacred Heart, and great acts of reparation made to Him for the sins committed against Him during the revolutionary years, including the government funded building of the Sacre Coeur Basilica where our Congregation was founded. The Feast of Our Lady of Pontmain is on 17th January. The promise of Pontmain extends throughout the world, as does the spirit of Montmartre.



Despite the events of 2020, **our Congregation has had the joy of many Monastic Professions**, including that of Sr. M Stella, who made her final vows in France at the end of the first lockdown. Some of you knew her as she received her habit in our novitiate here in Ireland. In a joint ceremony M.M.Hilda also celebrated her Silver Jubilee, which had been postponed since January. M.M. Euphrasia, M.M.Jude and M.M.Thomasina also made their final professions on different dates at the Mother House, M. M Walburga in Australia and M.M Cecilia in New Zealand. Another great event in our Congregation was the Diamond Jubilee of R.M.Mary Xavier on 30th October. As she had been our Mother General for 40 years, it was a unique occasion and celebrated at the Mother House with immense joy, but also livestreamed so that we could all witness the beautiful Mass and the moving moments when Mother renewed her vows and sang her suscipe. Our communities also had the joy of speaking with Mother via skype which was a new adventure for us all!



Above: R.M.M.Hilda and M.M.Stella
Below: R.M.M.Xavier singing her Suscipe



Back here in Cobh there were one or two events, planned and unplanned, that took place during the easing of restrictions in the summer. **The first (unplanned) event concerned our apple trees.** It began when we had the disappointment of discovering that our apples had been harvested from our orchard by trespassers, and we made the matter known to the local community. To our amazement the story attracted a lot of attention, and a local TD promptly arranged for the replacement of our apples by the Office of Public Works! We were even more astounded to receive a call from RTE asking if they could make all this into a story to be featured on the national news. Somewhat embarrassed we were inclined to refuse, but since the incident had already been spoken of on RTE radio we began receiving messages from the public and realised that people were interested even just to know of our existence! It became apparent that people needed to hear a bit of good news and something to lift their spirits so we agreed to the interview, assured by the journalist Jenny O’Sullivan that

Nuns' prayers answered as replacement apples arrive

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Some of the sisters at the Priory of St Benedict waving off OPW staff as they dropped off some boxes of apples

it was just intended to be a story of local good will to lighten the atmosphere in the midst of all the dismal news. By this time we understood that God was going to bring a lot of good out of a thoughtless act, and the message we wanted to convey at this time was that He can indeed bring good out of any evil! We felt that in the 5 minute broadcast on the 10 o'clock news, this message was in fact conveyed and our monastery and community came over well. A good number of you are reading this newsletter for the first time precisely because you saw us on the news, and some of you have even visited us already! We received so many kind gestures, including deliveries of apples from big fruit firms, and from local gardens, as well as orders for our preserves. We

made jars, and jars and jars and jars.... of chutney and apple jelly, and suddenly our chutney became the ideal gift "as seen on TV". Best of all was the testimony we received from a Parish Priest of the powerful effect the broadcast had on his parishioners simply by hearing the word "FORGIVE"! Despite the fact that we had such a small thing to forgive, almost nothing, the word itself touched the harsher realities of their lives and provided them with a powerful remedy for their grievances.

We take this opportunity to thank all our friends who have supported us this year, since during this time of increased hardship for many, we found ourselves able to expand our self-sustainability by investing in goats, chickens and a poly-tunnel, as well as saving for the fuel we will need to get us through the winter. Yes, our building, heating and lift projects still have a way to go, but gradually we are making progress in saving what we need.



L: Volunteers at the Resurrection Garden
 R: Restored Altar in the Resurrection Garden
 Below: Eucharistic Procession

The second (planned) event was our Bible Garden open day in August. This was the opportunity for our volunteers and garden workers to show the local community what they had achieved, particularly in the stunning restoration of the resurrection garden. The event opened with a Eucharistic Procession



through the Bible Garden concluding with Benediction in the Resurrection Garden. Under the circumstances this was a very moving occasion, in which our Lord and Saviour was glorified surrounded by his beautiful creation and we received His blessing to strengthen us for the months ahead. We thank all those who have contributed in time and labour, materials and donations towards this ongoing project which is now gaining a great deal of attention locally. Our latest phase has been planting thousands of bulbs ready for the spring, and local schools and families and the YMCA are helping with this!

We usually have something to tell you in connection with the historical side of our "Old Admiralty House" but this time it is the sad news we received of the death of the last admiral's daughter, Mrs Yvonne Fox. Her Father was Admiral Sir Ernest F.A. Gaunt, and she was born in this house shortly before the British evacuated it in 1921. She visited our community a few times over the years and kept up a lively

correspondence, particularly with Mother Mary Vianney. Her last visit was at the age of 99, and three years later at the age of 102 she wrote: *"When three years ago I had the pleasure of visiting you with my daughter, Frances Mary, we enjoyed the most glorious weather and sitting on the wide balcony overlooking that splendid harbour I could visualise my parents of an evening looking across the water to the island. I also remember my not very good nanny trying to ensure my unfailing obedience by telling me that a nasty giant lived on the island."* When her eyesight began to fail her, Mrs Fox mastered the use of voice recognition technology and continued to correspond with us. In 2019 we received a long account of her pilgrimage to Lourdes aged 103! In February of this year she dictated: *"I am indeed blessed as your prayers, too, escort me on The Way. Thanks to my iPad, set up by my son, I can have the mass readings read daily. Our generous volunteer drivers get me to church during the week to whichever of our three churches have the privilege of a weekday mass."* Her last email showed her acutely aware of the needs and sufferings particularly of her grandchildren and all young people in these times of crisis, and praying for governments and scientists to be able to make the right decisions. She died peacefully on 30th October. May She Rest in Peace. A requiem Mass will be held for her in Shrewsbury Cathedral on 14th December and Mass has been offered for her in our Monastery.



Yvonne Fox with her Son Joseph

Although our Christmas Fayre cannot take its usual form this year, our sisters and helpers have still been hard at work making beautiful decorations, cakes and, of course, apple chutney, jelly, and other preserves. Under the current restrictions **we are opening up our stalls over three days, 15th – 17th December** from 10.00am to 4.00pm. Santa will also be around outside with his sack from 3.30pm until 5.00pm on each of these days.

Most importantly we wish to assure you of our continual prayer to God, particularly through the intercession of our Blessed Mother, for an end to this current crisis that we are facing. We earnestly unite ourselves to our Primate, Archbishop Eamon Martin, as he calls All Ireland to observe the **First Five Saturdays as requested by Our Lady in Fatima, beginning on Saturday 5th December**. She asked through Sr Lucia: *"See, my daughter, my Heart encircled by thorns with which ungrateful men pierce it at every moment by their blasphemies and ingratitude. Do you, at least, strive to console me. Tell them that I promise to assist at the hour of death with the graces necessary for salvation all those who, in order to make reparation to me, on the First Saturday of five successive months, go to confession, receive Holy Communion, say five decades of the Rosary, and keep me company for a quarter of an hour, meditating on the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary."*

While we pray that it will from now on be possible for all of us to receive the sacraments, we know that in case of impossibility we may make a spiritual communion and as best we can a perfect act of contrition instead.

We wish each and every one of our friends and all those who read this letter a most Blessed and Happy Christmas, enfolded in the Peace which the world cannot give. Know that you are in our prayers and always loved by God.

The Tyburn Nuns at St. Benedict's Priory

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