



Christmas Newsletter 2022

Welcoming in the 125th year of our Foundation!



Dear Friends

We are drawing to the end of the Advent Season, approaching the glorious festival of the Incarnation of our Divine Redeemer, and joyfully greet you all once again. Christmas is a time of light in the darkness, warmth in winter, richness in poverty, joy in the midst of suffering, welcome and hospitality in spite of homelessness, care in the face of indifference, love in response to rejection, patience under the harshness of governmental tyranny and domination: God and His Angels, and Mary, in the midst of sinful humanity.

During Advent we sing a beautiful hymn written by St John Henry Newman. The first two verses say:

Supernal Word proceeding from the Eternal Father's breast,
and in the end of ages come, to aid a world distressed.

Enlighten, Lord, and set on fire our spirits with your love,
That, dead to earth, they may aspire and live to joys above.

Whatever have been your experiences this past year with the hopes, desires and even fears it has placed in your heart, we pray that this letter from our community may in some way touch and fill you with the blessing of Christmas.

Fr Dermot Fenlon RIP

Since our last newsletter, as many of you know, on 17th August, we bade a sad and sudden farewell to one of St John Henry Newman's most devoted disciples: our dear chaplain of three years, Fr Dermot Fenlon RIP. Obituaries appeared in several Irish and UK newspapers (Irish Times, Irish independent, Telegraph, Sunday Times) noting his considerable academic contributions and achievements as well as highlighting

the noble character of his suffering life. A longer illustrated commemoration of his life was put together by several of his friends and can be obtained by writing to or emailing the above address. Therefore in this letter, our remembrance of Fr Fenlon will focus on the personal memories expressed by some of our sisters in their monthly community letter contributions (to our other houses) at the end of August:



Mother M John Baptist (from Co. Meath) wrote: "On 17th which is the Feast of Our Lady of Knock, our dear Rev Fr Fenlon passed to the Lord. He was very devoted to Our Lady and often spoke about the first Saturday devotions given at Fatima. He spent much time in prayer in our chapel, often praying the rosary. He came to be our chaplain on the Feast of the Sacred Heart in 2019 and the following March we went into lockdown because of Covid. We continued to have Holy Mass every day which we may not have had if we did not have our own chaplain. May his gentle Soul rest in peace."

Mother Mary John (from Nigeria) wrote: "On 17th, the Feastday of Our Lady of Knock here in Ireland, our dear Chaplain Rev Fr Dermot Fenlon passed peacefully to God in his 81st year and 40th year of his Priestly Ordination. On 16th I took Father's supper to him at 6.30..... He said to me "thank you Mother, God Bless you Mother." I didn't believe that this would be his last word to me. It was a great shock to all of us..... Oh,

what account will I be able to give about his life while on earth? Father has been our chaplain for three years. From the very first day he arrived in our community I saw him with a rosary in his hand. He was so devoted to Our Lady. Very prayerful. He was a Priest that knew he was ordained for the salvation of Souls. He was a Priest that lived out what he preached. He administered sacramental confession to the lay people whenever they needed it. In his daily homily he never ceased to encourage people to spend time with the Blessed Sacrament, that the white host is the real presence of Jesus, that Jesus is there as when he was with the disciples on earth, to pray the rosary and to practice their faith. After his daily Adoration, Father never failed to come up to the chapel at midnight for private night Adoration. Even when all the chapel lights were turned off he would be there praying. After having his dinner Father would go to the Bible Garden to make the Stations of the Cross at the hour of Divine Mercy. These were all his daily practices. In fact a saint has gone to God. Pray also that the Sacred Heart will send another chaplain like him. He was buried on 22nd, the Feast of the Queenship of Our Lady, whom he cherished so much. He was laid to rest at St Colman's cemetery in a fresh tomb beside our late M.M.Benedicta's tomb. His funeral Mass was concelebrated by Fr Vincent Twomey DVD, with six Priests concelebrating."

Mother Maria Gratia (from Nigeria) wrote: "After Holy Mass on 16th our Mother Prioress asked me to go and invite our chaplain and Fr Marius for my Profession. I went to the sacristy and told both of them that I am inviting them for my Monastic Profession. Our chaplain did not get what I said and tried to come closer and nearly had a fall. Fr Marius and I asked him if he was alright and he said "yes I am fine", and asked me to repeat what I had just said. I repeated what I said and he gave me a beautiful smile and said "I am looking forward to that". Then the next day he was gone. But I am counting on his prayers on my Profession Day in heaven... He was a very humble, gentle and holy man. We will miss him very much."

Mother M Helen (from Nigeria) wrote: "15th was the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We processed to the Grotto with blue candles singing songs to the Bible garden and two boys carried the banner. We said five decades of the rosary with a litany. Rev Fr Marius O'Reilly gave us a little talk on the importance of the rosary and our chaplain was with us. At the end we processed back to our chapel with song too. It was spirit-filled and everybody that came enjoyed it, Including Rev Fr Dermot Fenlon. On 15th he celebrated Holy Mass. On 16th he concelebrated with Rev Fr Marius, while on 17th our chaplain went to God in the morning, with a peaceful death. We said the rosary in his room and Rev Fr Aquin from the Cathedral Parish anointed him. On Sunday Father's body reposed in our chapel from 1.30pm to 7pm: the coffin was open. People came to say farewell, touching his body, praying and asking him to intercede for them. On Monday the funeral Mass was at 11am. At the end of the Holy Mass we all escorted him to the cemetery, to pay him the last homage, and came back home to serve refreshments to the people. Everybody was talking about what Father did for them. Many are saying this man was a saint. He wrote an email to Mother Prioress the night before he died about his illness: "I am not in the least bit upset. I do wish to thank you and the Congregation most humbly for the tremendous support of prayer. Our Lady's Assumption was a Blessed Day all round. She has rewarded you with visible results of what you are doing to make reparation to the Eucharistic Heart. May he increase his blessings on you, on the community and the Congregation as a whole." This email was written at 9.45pm and he was found dead in the morning."

Mother Matthias (from England) wrote: "The subject filling our thoughts at this time is the passing of our much loved chaplain – Fr Dermot Fenlon.... His loss has been felt very deeply by many local people, and we were surprised how many knew him through meeting him in the Bible Garden or in the nearby cathedral. His gentle, saintly manner attracted strangers to him. He was a great gift to our community, daily giving us outstanding homilies, and on several occasions valuable talks – one on St Benedict being especially memorable. The funeral was attended by all the Priests of the Parish and many local people. Our Bishop was unable to come but presided the day before at the Reception of the Body. His own Bishop of Portsmouth was also unable to come, but sent an appreciative letter of sympathy."

Here too are a few of the condolences left online:

"I learnt recently of Father Dermot's death. Dermot you taught me Church History at Oscott College in the West Midlands. I'm indebted to you for revealing to me so much of the Church's traditions and for your kindness and patience as you did so. I will always remember your kindness and generosity. Rest in the Lord's peace, dear friend"
Father Dick White

"We thank God for the prayers, wisdom and encouragement he often shared with us guests in the Cobh monastery. It was a privilege to have met this holy and humble priest. May his gentle soul rest in peace and may he continue to pray for us in heaven."

Maureen Mc Manus

"As a visitor to the Benedictine Priory Chapel and beautiful grounds I had some memorable conversations with Fr. Dermot. He was friendly, insightful and very wise and I learned so much from these short conversations. Father was a great priest and had a wonderful manner. He will be deeply mourned and sadly missed. My sympathies to the Benedictine Sisters and to Father Dermot's relatives. Ecce sacerdos magnus, qui in diebus suis, placuit Deo."

Maurice O' Brien,

"Sincere condolences to Fr Dermot's family. A wonderfully kind and faithful priest, whose sacramental ministry, particularly in the Confessional was greatly appreciated by me and by many others. May Our Lord reward him greatly for his faithful service as a priest, who was always faithful to the magisterial teachings of Christ's Holy Church, no matter the difficulties he may have faced. Requiescat in pace."

Joe Smiles

"Dermot was a loved friend of 62 years. I am so happy that his life ended peacefully among people who truly appreciated him. My condolences to his family, friends and the Benedictine sisters."

Ruth Dudley Edwards

Eternal rest grant unto him O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. May he rest in peace.

Finally we must say how overwhelmed we were by the outpouring of love, support and real practical help we received from our friends and the local community, James Cahill undertakers, Our Bishop Crean and the Parish Clergy throughout that difficult time which came upon us so unexpectedly. May God reward each one.

Father's month's mind on 17th September was a simple and moving occasion celebrated by Fr Stephen Cummins OP and a large congregation. Details of his anniversary Mass will appear in our next Newsletter.

Monastic Profession of Mother Maria Gratia of the Holy Spirit Okeke



On 8th October was the beautiful occasion of the Monastic Profession of Mother Maria Gratia. To facilitate numbers the ceremony was held in a marquee.

The Mass was presided over by Bishop William Crean. You can read his very profound homily on the Cloyne Diocesan website: News from the diocese – currently on page 2.

You can also view a recording of the ceremony on: <https://youtu.be/4eOfj-wVWDI>





The biblical number of twelve Priests concelebrated, including the Bishop. Once again we begged the Sacred Heart and St Joseph to provide the necessary good weather, and we received little short of a miracle since not only was that October day clear and dry, but the sun gave enough warmth for all to be comfortable in the marquee and to dine outside afterwards...not to mention singing and dancing! Our thanks again to our faithful team of staff and friends who took care of the catering and tidying the grounds, Toddy Stafford for seeing to the sound system, the Servant Sisters of the Home of the Mother for helping

with the music, Treasure Cove Jewellers for gifting the Profession ring (this is now the fourth ring donated over the past few years), and Fr Tom McDermott ADM for assisting us with extra vestments and vessels, and Michael Heaney of Cork livestream for a very discreet and professional service.

Celebrating 125 years!

As mentioned in our last Newsletter, our Congregation was founded by Mother Marie Adele Garnier (1838-1924) on 4th March 1898. Therefore **4th March 2023 will be our 125th anniversary**, and we have enclosed an invitation with this newsletter. The ceremony will be livestreamed into another room adjacent to our chapel to allow for extra numbers, and this will also be available online. We will send the link to our email mailing lists. (If you are not on one of these and would like to be, please send a message to the above address with the subject "subscribe".)



To mark this special year and in preparation for the centenary of our Foundress in 2024, we will re-launch our **monthly days of recollection** to reflect and pray with the life and writings of Mother Marie Adele. These will normally take place as before on the last Saturday of each month, beginning on Saturday 28th January 2023. Future dates will be published on our website and sent to our email lists. If you do not have access to the internet, please contact us to confirm.

Also in the spirit of our Mother Foundress' desire to spread the love and devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to console and make reparation to this most loving and lovable Heart for all that offends him, we hope to repeat the **Sacred Heart Novena** inaugurated last year, consisting of devotions, homily and Benediction each evening at 6.30pm from 7th to the 15th June. Further details will be published closer to the time.

The birth of our Congregation has much about it that reflects the incarnation: it was born as a fruit of our Foundress' deep listening and docility to the will of God. It came to birth in a silent and hidden manner in the shadow of the Montmartre basilica, but its birth was soon followed by exile to a foreign land. However the steady constant of the presence of the Heart of Jesus exposed in the Blessed Sacrament caused the little work to grow and develop. Step by step, and not without difficulties and setbacks, its destiny to be present as "little Montmarts" in all corners of the world is being fulfilled. Small though we are, we are encouraged by some of the promises our Foundress received from the Sacred Heart which were related by her contemporary, Dom Bede Camm, in his biography: "Should I allow this little Congregation to perish which I myself have founded?".... "God in his mercy intervened and seemed to show clearly that this was His work, sealed with the marks of his passion.".... "the Heart of Jesus then said to her that He had created the Congregation for His own honour and glory" "I find myself, as it were, carried by Our Lord, so that I traverse without danger and without fear these multiplied obstacles."

So it remains to thank you, our dear friends and benefactors for your prayers and practical support, which make you also a part of "the Little Work". We hope you can join us on 4th March, and until then we assure you of our daily prayers for all your needs and intentions. A Happy Christmas to you, and every grace and blessing for the year ahead.

The Tyburn Nuns at St Benedict's Priory

If you would like to donate to St Benedict's Priory please send a cheque made out to St Benedict's Priory to the above address or go to www.tyburnconvent.org.uk/stbenedictsprioryrenovations or www.benedictineadorerscobh.ie and follow the link or make a bank transfer to: Account Number 12884-131, Sort Code: 93-40-62 IBAN: IE61 AIBK 9340 6212 8841 31 BIC: AIBKIE2D. If you pay tax, you can obtain from us a CHY3 form and we can claim 40% tax relief.