



Fr. Brendan O'Sullivan has led a pilgrimage to Medjugorje every year since 2000 and each year the group of our parishioners from Ballymacormack and Templemichael who travel with him gets larger. An early pilgrim remembers her first "holiday" with him.

"On a Hill That is Holy, a Lady Appeared...."

The opening lines of a well known hymn about Medjugorje ... that place of peace and prayer which has drawn millions of people from all over the world for thirty years now. The story is well known...six young people claimed to have seen visions of Our Lady, which began on June 24th, 1981. And to this day three of them still claim to have apparitions daily.

But none of this was made clear to me as I set out in September 2000 as part of that first pilgrimage group which left from Longford with Fr. Brendan. He told us very little – deliberately! We certainly didn't realise that we would be "on the go" for twelve hours, at least, before claiming our beds in the village!

"All I'll say is...that a pilgrimage to Medjugorje is – a holiday!", he declared, as the bus pulled off from the Cathedral car park. Hmmm...

There were twenty of us, some had been there before but most of us were wide eyed innocents who did not know what to expect. After settling into our digs, we walked up to the Church of St. James and I will never forget the peace which I experienced immediately in that place. It had just emptied of people who had gathered for the evening service and as we sat down it was like being enfolded in a perfect shelter of peace and love. The long journey, the tiredness, the nagging doubts within- none of it mattered now. "There is something good, very good about being here" I thought. That was enough for the first night.

As the week unfolded, there were plenty of challenges- very early mornings, up at cock crow to climb hills "before the Italians!" The sense of achievement and sheer relief when we got to the top of Cross Mountain remains with me still. We sat down at the base of the cross, savouring the restfulness of the place, so thankful that we were all in one piece! As dawn began



Group of parishioners who travelled to Medjugorje in 2010 with Fr Brendan.

to break over Medjugorje, I remember our group sitting on a wall along side a gathering of Polish pilgrims and we all joined together to sing "Silent Night".

This year, Medjugorje celebrates the 30th Anniversary of the first Apparitions and in the course of those years over 25 million people have come to this small village from all over the world. Most of them I suspect had the same questions, the mixed feelings that I had on my first visit there. My mother, an early pilgrim who braved it in the 80's when showers and facilities were very

basic, would only say – "Ah! Medjugorje! The valley of peace...."and she was right. It is a place which draws the heart- the faith of the people, the welcome, the music, adoration, prayer...all creep up on you and call you back again.

I'm very glad that Fr. Brendan took the notion to go on a "holiday" to Medjugorje in September 2000 and that I was part of it all. I know that many others feel that way too.

(P.S. Maybe now that he's a bit older, he might give us all a "lie-in" - do we have to climb the mountain in the dark every time??!!)

Rest In Peace



We remember all parishioners who have been called home to the Lord since our last publication. We commend them into the compassion and care of our God confident that they have gone to enjoy the light, happiness and peace of the eternal Kingdom. May they rest in peace.

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|----------------------|--------------------------|
| ■ Betty McGee | ■ Tommy Kane |
| ■ Annie McDermott | ■ Molly Shields |
| ■ Billy Masterson | ■ Josephine Keenan |
| ■ Brendan Farrell | ■ Brian McCartan |
| ■ Michael Powell | ■ Eddie Kelly |
| ■ Bernard Halligan | ■ Noel Meunier |
| ■ Chloe Coleman | ■ Conor O'Reilly |
| ■ Frank Devine | ■ Mary Hanaphy |
| ■ Kathleen McManus | ■ Edward Kelly |
| ■ Elizabeth O'Reilly | ■ Elizabeth Dolan |
| ■ Ann Doyle | ■ Kevin Gray |
| ■ Joan Sheehan | ■ Oliver McKenna |
| ■ Kathleen Jarrett | ■ Pamela Rogers |
| ■ Eileen Bradley | ■ Edward Sheridan |
| ■ Niall Jenkins | ■ Raymond Gill |
| ■ Patrick McLoughlin | ■ Padraig Gearty |
| ■ Annie Strange | ■ Jim Carr |
| ■ Lorraine Lynch | ■ Maisie Regan |
| ■ Marie Fox | ■ Annie Christie |
| ■ Mary Gannon | ■ Sean Byrne |
| ■ James Eddie Clancy | ■ Paddy Berry |
| ■ John Nolan | ■ Kathleen Ward |
| ■ Pat Maguire | ■ John Donlon |
| ■ Patrick Devine | ■ Colette Oates |
| ■ Anna McDonagh | ■ Peggy Reilly |
| ■ Colm Smyth | ■ Dermot O'Rourke |
| ■ Bernie Durkin | ■ Ann Campbell |
| ■ John Stokes | ■ Alice Briody |
| ■ Sr. Calasanctius | ■ Tommy Vaughan |
| ■ Nora Duignan | ■ Michael Duke |
| ■ Josephine Lulham | ■ Baby Michelle Curejova |
| ■ Kathleen Creighton | ■ Thomas Costello |
| ■ Veronica Quigley | ■ Billy Kett Jnr. |
| ■ Clodagh Brady | ■ Maurice McManus |

We Give Them Back to You

(attributed to Bede Jarrett)

*We give them back to you, O Lord,
 You who gave them to us.
 Yet as you did not lose them in giving them to us,
 So we have not lost them by their return to you.
 Not as the world gives do you give, O lover of mankind.*

*What you give to us, you do not really take away,
 For what is yours is ours also if we are yours.
 And life is eternal and love is immortal,
 And death is only an horizon,
 And an horizon is nothing but the limit of our vision.*

*Lift us up strong Son of God, that we may see farther.
 Cleanse our eyes that we may see more clearly;
 Draw us closer to yourself, that we know ourselves
 To be nearer to our loved ones who are with you.
 And while you prepare a place for us,
 Prepare us also for that happy place,
 That where you are we may be also for ever and ever.*

Amen.

Thank you!

Special thanks to Fr. Padraig Kelliher and Tiernan Dolan for all their work in updating the public on the Restoration Project through the Parish website www.longfordparish.com. The website is regularly updated with news on the various stages of the Restoration Project. Log on to see a wonderful trove of photographs of the various developments throughout the past year. Many of the photographs that appear in this year's publication are courtesy of Fr. Padraig and Tiernan.

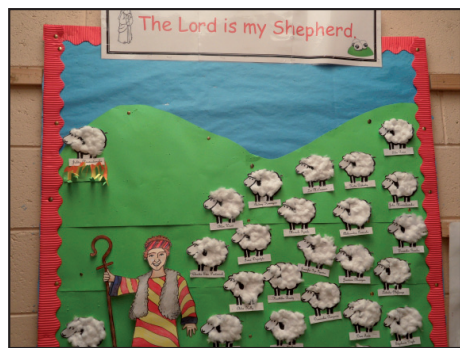
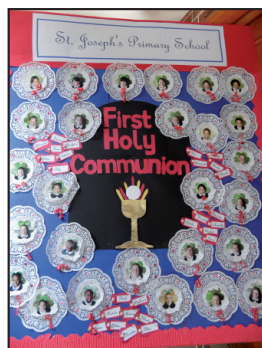
"Dia's Muire duit" from St. Joseph's N.S.

St. Joseph's N.S. has been a busy bustling hive of activity over the past year. The school, which has an enrolment of 373 pupils, welcomed sixty one four year olds into our three junior infants classes in September of this year. These children, from diverse cultural backgrounds, have happily settled and are well assimilated into school life as they greet visitors with the warm salutation,

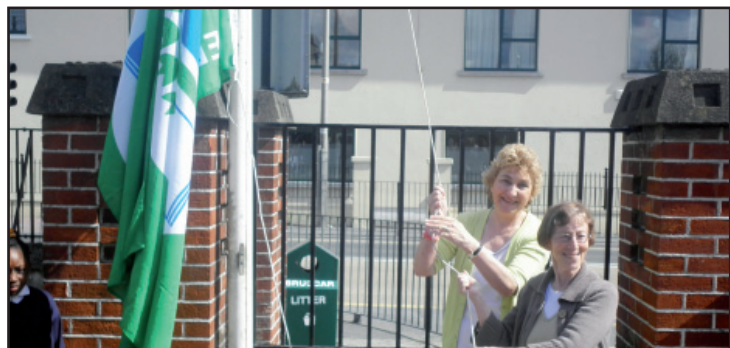
School Activities: Our 5th & 6th class children performed in the National Children's Choir in St. Mel's Cathedral Centre in association with St. Emer's, St. Dominic's, St. Theresa's, St. Mary's Dromard, St. Mary's Edgeworthstown, St. Brigid's N.S., Drumnamore National schools in May of this year. The highlight of the year was their performance in the National Convert Hall in Dublin to a full house. We extend our thanks to Miss Dolan for the great work in training the choir.

Green Flag Award: St. Joseph's raised its third green flag in May in recognition of the work done in water conservation. Given the most recent downpours and flooding we might question the reasoning behind water conservation in our country. However, recent climatic activity has demonstrated the extremes of temperature and climatic conditions that prevail in our country and so we need to take water conservation very seriously and develop systems strategies to conserve this gift of nature. Our Green School's team, under the capable leadership of Miss Kearney, has succeeded in achieving this goal and now embark on the path towards our fourth Green Flag, raising awareness of transport and travel.

Home School Community Liaison: Our school acknowledges the pivotal role of parents in the education of our children. We are fortunate to



Artwork which was created by pupils of St. Joseph's NS in celebration of First Holy Communion and Confirmation.



Guests of honour Patricia Fitzmaurice and Rita Canning who retired this year hoist the Green Flag.

have two home school liaison teachers, Niall Gannon and Andrea Kerr, who actively work with parents in school activities. Our 'Shared Reading' and 'Maths for Fun' programmes involve parents working with teachers in the classrooms with great success. We are currently in the process of re-vamping our parents room. A beautiful mural of a butterfly, designed and painted by parent and artist Pat Taaffe adorns the wall. We also have a computer for parents use and soon our new kitchen will be completed.

After School Activities: St. Joseph's provides a wide range of "After-schools Activities", Computers, Classes in Drama, Digital Camera and computers, Singing, Football, Basketball and Irish Dancing take place on a weekly basis. Our pupils really enjoy participating in the wide range of activities and look forward to the fun events of the afternoons. Our School Completion Co-ordinator, Shane Crossan has given huge support to our school in providing these services.

150th Anniversary of the Sisters of

Mercy in Longford. We celebrate this year the founding of Longford Convent of Mercy in 1861. We pay tribute to the great work of the Sisters of Mercy in Longford over the past 150 years. Their work of educating children, caring for the sick, attending to the poor and the marginalised communities of Longford and its environs have left us indeed a rich legacy.

As I write our fifth class pupils are engaging in a project on the Portrayal of the work of the Sisters in Longford. Project facilitator Chris Thompson, along with Mrs. Orla Egan and Miss Kathleen Maher plan to stage a drama on the work of the Sisters of Mercy, in mid December. Interviews have been conducted with the sisters and former boarders of the Convent, research has been undertaken in the local library and the drama is now unfolding.

Links with Local Community: Our Hospice coffee morning was once again a great success. Host and former teacher Mary Brennan raised €1000 at the event. Our thanks also to Tiernan Dolan, Goal who keeps us informed of the various projects. Proceeds of our no-uniform day go to this worthy charity. We were especially honoured to have a group from St. Christopher's working with us on our school gardening project last May & June. Our fourth class pupils worked along with our visitors sowing a wide variety of herbs, fruits and vegetables. The project was an exciting one which gave all an opportunity to work together in an atmosphere of respect and inclusivity.

Our school extends good wishes to all for a joyful Christmas and peaceful New Year.

Gúimís beannaichtaí na Nollag, agus siochán an linbh Íosa oraibh.