

Parish



Review

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YEAR ENDING **2011**

GOING THE EXTRA MILE

Another year has passed and again we are pleased to bring you our Parish Review with news of organisations, events and happenings around Longford and the people who made life a little better and brighter for the rest of us. And so many people give of their time to help others, to see them through a difficult phase, to lend a hand, give support and encouragement.

So we celebrate in these pages those among us who have 'gone the extra mile' and literally that's what some actually did, travelling various marathons raising funds.

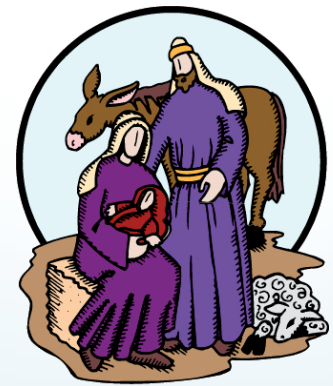
Looking back is the new going forwards so take time to reflect, it will point you forward. Ask, after you have read our Review, if you, too, can join in some of the volunteering so vibrant in our Parish and next year you will be one of the reasons we have a happy new year! We also include a special supplement on the 'work in progress' on the restoration of our beloved Cathedral.

We thank all who have contributed to our Parish Review of 2011 and we wish you a very happy Christmas and God's blessing in the New Year.

Parish Review Committee:
Tom Chapman, Tiernan Dolan,
Leo Donlon Fr Tom Healy,
Kitty Hughes, Sive McGuinness



Sinead, Aine and Senan Mc Weeney pictured here with Tamara Gervasoni after completing the GOAL mile on Christmas morning 2010.



Christmas Family Prayer

Loving God, on this Christmas Day we give thanks that Jesus your Son, has come into our world bringing us gifts of peace and joy. Bless us as we sit down together at this table for our Christmas meal. Bless the food we share and help us to remember those who are hungry. Be with our neighbours and our friends, those who are lonely, sick or away from home. We pray that our departed loved ones may now sit at your table in heaven. May the joy of this feast give us strength and light, now and in the days ahead. We make this prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Cathedral Restoration Project Advances



Throughout the year 2011 a great deal of thought and planning was invested by many people on the Cathedral Restoration Project. Diocesan Committees in consultation with the Design Team have advanced the plans for the internal design and improvement of facilities for the future.

Comprehensive investigation/trial works were undertaken throughout the summer months which will greatly inform the future restoration.

The refurbishment of statues and the entablature high up on the front façade work was undertaken with the assistance of the Heritage Council. This piece of art depicts the granting of authority over the diocese to St. Mel by St. Patrick.

An Open Day was held in Sept last when over 3,000 people took the opportunity to visit the Cathedral and see for themselves the extent of the fire damage. Also on that day plans for the future were on display at St. Mel's Cathedral Centre.

It is still hoped that the target of re-opening the Cathedral for Christmas of 2014 can be achieved. See the Cathedral publication for an overview of the many aspects of this complex, challenging and exciting restoration project.

"Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart, and wait for the LORD" (Psalm 27:14)

Trial plasterwork took place over the summer months. This picture shows the successful results.



St. Mel's Cathedral Choir

St. Mel's Cathedral Choir, under the direction of organist Fintan Farrelly, sing at 11.30am Mass every Sunday. The choir rehearses on Thursday evenings at 8.30pm St. Mel's College Chapel with

extra rehearsals scheduled in preparation for major events. The Choir is currently looking for new members. If you would like to be part of our choir please contact any of our members.



Above is St. Mel's Cathedral Choir whose members are also part of the County Choir pictured here under the direction of Fintan Farrelly.



Parish Newsletter 2011

JANUARY

The first newsletter of the New Year carried a warm 'thank you' to all who supported the Christmas card initiative of Tieran Dolan and the students of St Mel's College which yielded €4,945 for the Cathedral restoration fund. There were notes of thanks also from S.V de.P. Trócaire and Bethany House for our generosity during the recent very harsh weather. Some special Masses too - on 23rd the African Mass, the children's Mass on the 30th and the New Year Holy Hour on the 29th. The annual Church Unity Service was held in the Methodist Church, Battery Road, with the sermon given by Bishop Ken Clarke of the Diocese of Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh.

FEBRUARY

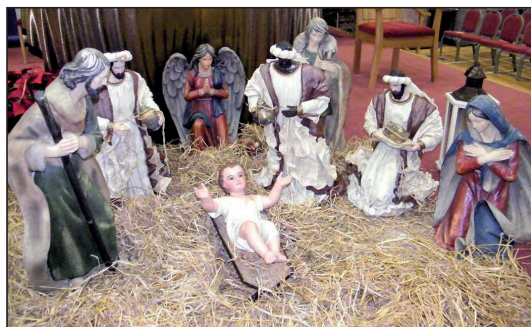
We marked the feast of Saint Mel, not only in our parish but throughout the diocese, on the 6th and there was a generous response to the cathedral Restoration Fund. On the 11th / 12th World day of the Sick there was an all-night vigil of prayer and a special Mass with Anointing of the Sick. The BRI support group met in Phoenix Centre to support those with acquired brain injury. The St Mel's Project Committee announced the appointment of architects Richard Hurley & Associates and Fitzgerald Kavanagh + Partners to design the restoration of the Cathedral. The Irish Blood Transfusion Service was in town and there was a six week bereavement course in The Family Centre.

MARCH

Lent began on the 9th with great crowds attending morning Mass in the Temperance Hall. There was Guided Prayer every Thursday and Eucharistic Adoration continued daily in the College Chapel, the meditation group met on Tuesdays and Longford Prayer group had a monthly Mass on Monday the 7th. *Accord* held a marriage preparation course and it was time for the Station Masses in the rural areas of our parish. There was a Pastoral Letter from the Irish Bishops 'Towards Healing and Renewal'. The Comboni Missionaries spoke at Sunday Masses seeking support and prayer for the Missions. On St Patrick's Day we wore the shamrock to Mass and enjoyed the parade in the town. The children of 6th class in our parish schools received the Sacrament of Confirmation. We remembered to put our clocks forward on the 27th and were invited to book early for the many pilgrimages planned next summer.

APRIL

The St Mel's Musical Society performance of *Cabaret* was a great success at Backstage. There was a special Jubilee mass on 2nd for all couples celebrating silver, golden and diamond wedding anniversaries. Catholic parishioners of African origin came together for their monthly mass in the College Chapel. A bus took parishioners to the Chrism Mass celebrated by Bishop Colm in Athlone on Holy



Nativity scenes at St. Mel's Cathedral Centre and St. Joseph's Care Centre.

Thursday and the Holy week ceremonies once again brought great crowds to St Mel's Cathedral Centre. *Trócaire* thanked the parishioners and clergy for standing in solidarity with the world's poor during this Lent.

MAY

On the 1st May the Sisters of Mercy invited all to join in their celebration of the 150th anniversary of their arrival in Longford. Bishop Colm celebrated the Mass and the Sisters published a book with an extensive pictorial and written record of the past 150 years - a much treasured history of their many generous works of service here in our parish. On the parish website you can now take a virtual tour of the Cathedral and also view photos of the many special ceremonies and events in our parish. The presentation of awards to Pioneer Jubilarians took place on Sunday the 12th.

The Rosary was prayed each Sunday of the month at the Market Square. Longford Community Resources offered a 'staying safe' minor repair service for older persons who would like help with small repairs in their homes. It was a special month for children of the parish who received their First Holy Communion and we enjoyed with the whole of Ireland the visit of Queen Elizabeth II and then President Barack Obama A chairde, is féidir linn!

JUNE

Ten good men set off on 3rd from Longford on an 860 mile relay walk in aid of the Irish Pilgrimage Trust. A Norwegian choir joined the County Choir for a concert in aid of Longford Hospice. There was sadness at the passing of Sr. Calasctius former Matron of St Joseph's Hospital RIP. We offered prayers for all students sitting exams. On Saturday 25th at the vigil Mass we marked the Silver Jubilee of Fr Tom Healy's ordination to the priesthood and the people of the parish joined Fr Tom and his family for the Mass and refreshments afterwards. The Corpus Christi procession took place on 26th from Battery Road around Lisbrack and the Demesne. We began the long preparation for the Eucharistic Congress next year with special prayers. Every Sunday night rain or shine there is Bingo in aid of SVP in the Temperance Hall. Irish Girl Guides celebrated their centenary with an exhibition.

JULY

The Design Team continued working on many



aspects of the plans for the restoration of the Cathedral and hopes are high that it will be completed by the end of 2014. Meantime damage to the statues over the front facade will be repaired with the aid of a grant from the Heritage Council. The Eucharistic Congress Bell, the symbol of the International Eucharistic Congress of 2012, arrived in the parish on Friday afternoon the 22nd. It was welcomed by Bishop Colm, Rev Paul Maxwell, Methodist Church and Rev Canon David Catterall, Church of Ireland. Many families played host to the children visiting from Belarus organised by The Friends of the Children of Chernobyl.

AUGUST

Young people enjoyed the Clonmacnois Youth 2000 summer festival celebrating their Catholic Faith. And families gathered in the summer sun to enjoy a Family Day at Flancare Park in aid of St Mel's Restoration Reserve Fund. This was organised by Longford Town Football Club and the great feast of music and craic was enjoyed by young and old. Mid month brought Leaving Cert results and the back to school preparations. Cemetery Sunday brought extraordinary numbers to the annual Mass and blessing of the graves in Ballymacormack cemetery on the 22nd.

SEPTEMBER

The annual diocesan pilgrimage to Knock was led by Bishop Colm. Longford Social Services celebrated its 40th anniversary. The boys in blue - *Longford Slashers* brought home the Connolly Cup for the second year in a row. Our parish received a beautiful Book of the Gospels from Tullamore Parish to be used when the cathedral is restored. And with sadness we bade farewell to Fr Nigel Charles as he took up his new appointment in Killashee- Clondra. Farewell also to Fr Merlyn Kenny who goes to Carrick on Shannon, he will be missed for his many lovely stories woven into his Sunday sermons. And a warm welcome to Fr Tom Murray our new curate. On Sunday 18th thousands flocked to the Cathedral open-day to see for themselves the awful damage caused by the fire and to view the proposed designs for its restoration.

OCTOBER

'A Day for Life' was celebrated on the 2nd the theme was 'a call to solidarity and hope in difficult times'. The 'Rainbows' programme for



Dramatisation of The Passion on Good Friday.

children who experienced loss commenced in the Family Centre. St Mel's choir appealed for new members as also did CASA whose work supports people with disabilities. While Saint Vincent de Paul offered assistance to those in need. There was a public Rosary every Sunday on the Market Square. And every Friday all were welcome for a cup of tea and chat after 10am Mass in the college chapel. People gave generously to the support of the missionaries on Mission Sunday. A time capsule was recovered from the statue of the Sacred Heart during restoration work on the front portico and it was sent to the national museum careful examination.

NOVEMBER

There were large attendances at special masses and prayers for the Holy Souls during this month including the annual bereavement ceremony on the 5th, the Rosary was prayed by the Legion of Mary every Sunday in the cemetery and the monthly Holy Hour 'a time to remember' on the 26th. Talks on the Gospel of Saint Mark were given by Sr Anna and Fr Padraig in the Pastoral Centre. The first signs of Christmas were sales of Tieran Dolan's special Christmas cards with proceeds going to the Cathedral restoration fund and preparation of 'Cathedral Echoes' a CD of reflective music and song by Fr Brendan and the Cathedral Folk Choir. The parish review committee invited community groups to submit their 'good news' for inclusion in this years review.

DECEMBER

The Advent wreath on the altar heralds the beginning of the new church year. A beautiful African mass was celebrated on the 3rd and on the 7th we had an all night vigil of *Prayer for Ireland*. Students from Scoil Mhuire and the College were very enthusiastic participants in a youth mass on Saturday 17th. The ceremony of Reconciliation in the church on the 17th and a real live crib in the grounds of the presbytery on the Sunday before Christmas together with a wonderful Carol Service by the County Choir in the Cathedral centre remind us of the real message of Christmas *peace and goodwill to all* at the end of another year.



Reflections on Today's Church

This is my fifth Christmas as a priest in Longford. Many changes have come about in that time: life continuously evolves in the parish. New initiatives are undertaken and, in other cases, circumstances dictate adjustments. That's the way of the world – nothing ever stays the same. Life around the Cathedral is much quieter now. People come to the presbytery for specific reasons – no longer the hum of people passing by heading for school, for the shops or dropping in to say a prayer and light a candle. But life has been very good to us all at our new home in St. Mel's College. Change is also suggested for the Irish Church in the new year. Despite the numbers in the pastoral team here at present and the over two thousand five hundred people who attend Mass at churches

in our parish each weekend, the future is very different. Quickly dwindling clergy and religious numbers will become very evident in a very short time. A lot less people will be coming to church too with every passing generation. Parishes have already begun to be clustered; dioceses are the next in line to be amalgamated. Profound change is on the way. In an evolving Church, and in a world that has never been more economically uncertain, it is the unchanging goodness, energy and enthusiasm of faithful people that best mirrors God's eternal love. May his Son bring you every grace and blessing in these weeks when we remember His coming into our world: He will provide. Happy Christmas to all of you in Longford and beyond!- **Fr. Padraig**



Fr. Padraig Kelliher and Colm Dardis of The Pastoral Council.

Parish Information

MASS TIMES
St. Mel's College Chapel
Weekdays: 8.00am, 10.00am
Advent/Lent/November/ December: 7.30pm
Cathedral Centre
Sundays: 7.30pm (vigil), 8.00am, 10.00am, 11.30am, 1.00pm
Holy Days
St. Patrick's Day & Christmas Day:
All Masses as per usual Sunday Schedule
Parish Churches
Shrovid: 10.30am
Curry: 9.30am
Epiphany, Assumption, Immaculate Conception, All Saints: 7.30pm (vigil), 8.00am, 10.00am, 1.00pm, 7.30pm. (No Mass in Curry or Shrovid)
BAPTISMS (4 weeks notice)
1st, 3rd, 5th Weekends: Sunday 1.45pm
2nd & 4th Weekends: Saturday 2.00pm
Book at Parish Office (043 3346465)
CONFESSIONS
Saturdays: 10.30-1pm, 6.30-7.30pm
Eve of Holy Days/First Fridays: 12.00-1.00pm, 7.00pm-8.00pm

Useful Contacts

St. Mel's Cathedral Presbytery: 043 3346465
Email: stmelcathedral@eircom.net
Primary Schools
St. Emer's 043 3341188
Gaelcoil an Longfoirt 043 3341360
St. Joseph's 043 3345700
St. Michael's 043 3345536
Melview 043 3346197
Stonepark 043 3346036
Secondary Schools
Scoil Mhuire 043 3346608
St. Mel's College 043 3346469
Templemichael College 043 3345424
St. Christopher's 043 3341769

ACCORD Marriage Support Service: Tel: 043 47222 (11.30am - 1.30pm)
Alcohol & Drugs Service: 043 3350988
Alcoholics Anonymous (AA):
Health Care Centre: Mon, Wed, Sat at 9.00pm
Family Centre: Tues & Fri 1pm, Sunday 11.30am
CURA: 090 6474272/1850 622626
Club '89: Family Centre, Tuesday, 2.30pm-4.30pm
Family Centre: 043 3346827
Longford Casualty: 043 3350142
Longford Gardai: 0433346741 / 999
Longford Mental Health Services: 043 3346992
Money, Advice & Budgeting Service (MABS): 043 3347705
MIDOC: 1850 302702
Mullingar Hospital: 044 9340221
St. Joseph's Care Centre: 043 3346211
Samaritans: 090 6473133
Social Services: 043 3350114
SVP Thrift Shop: 043 3346074
Temperance Hall: 043 3349548

Longford Prayer Group – Come Pray With Us!

Longford Prayer Group meets every Monday throughout the year, except bank holidays, at 8.00pm in St. Joseph's Hospital. We have talented musicians and singers, so each gathering involves plenty of hymns and songs of praise that the whole group sings. People have the chance to remember those who have asked for prayers and to pray for their own intentions. Usually on the first Monday of the month we celebrate Mass with Fr. Kelliher in the hospital chapel. For the last three years the group has gone for a day's retreat in the autumn to the picturesque 'Galilee' retreat house outside Boyle. It overlooks Lough Key and is run by a small team from the Sisters of Mercy. You would be more than welcome to join us at any time – come along with no obligation. Our gatherings at St. Joseph's Hospital, including our monthly Mass, are advertised in the newsletter every week – so you'll know what's happening in advance. We wish everyone a peaceful and blessed Christmas and assure you of our prayers in the new year ahead.

Meditation Group



The Mediation Group meet each Tuesday evening from 7.15 to 8.00 pm. Entrance through the front door of St. Mel's College. Beginners always welcome.

Christmas Greetings ...

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

We would like to take the opportunity to wish you and you families a very happy Christmas.

As 2011 draws to a close we are very aware that these are difficult times for many people with the recession affecting livelihoods and causing anxiety about the future.

The Gospel assures us that the very hairs of our head are counted – so precious and cherished are we to our God.

His call to us is not to be afraid. He is in control of all that goes on in our lives and since He cares for the sparrows in the sky and the flowers in the fields, He will certainly care for us.

This is a time to renew our trust in God and a time to be particularly caring of each other. So let us, this Christmas, ask the child Jesus to help us to be gentle, to be tender and loving with those around us and to all the people we meet.

Jesus, it is you who gives us hope. In the darkness of our world, your light has shone. Your coming in gentleness encourages us to hold out the hand of reconciliation, to help one another, to work for peace. We remember today the message of the angels; "Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace."

We wish you all a very happy and peaceful Christmas, that you and your families will know God's closeness and care over the festive season.

With every good wish,
Parish Pastoral Team: Sr. Angela Clarkson, Deirdre Dalton, Colm Dardis, Tommy Dolan, Fr. Thomas Healy, Fr. Padraig Kelliher, Stefan Macko, Anita Mollaghan, Bernie Mulligan, Fr. Tom Murray, Teresa Neville, Theresa O'Shea, Fr. Brendan O'Sullivan, Colette Skelly, Christine Treacy, and Kevin Victory.

'Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel'.

Isaiah 7:14



Parish Giving

Over recent weeks, new boxes of envelopes for the various Parish Collections have been distributed to the homes of our Parish.

We are very grateful to you for your continued generous support which enables us to sustain the life of the parish, maintain its buildings and meet the many expenses a parish of this size carries. Thank you to all who helped in the task of labelling and distributing boxes. We also thank our teams of counters.

In recent years we have been able to claim significant funds through the Tax Relief Scheme for Charities. Your use of the envelopes is greatly beneficial to us in the task of recording contributions which in turn enables us to claim this Tax Relief. Therefore we would encourage you to use the envelopes for your contributions.

It is also helpful to us if you write the amount of your contribution in the space provided. This year in order to minimise costs and workload, we have distributed boxes only to homes that we have a record of envelopes being returned from. We hope this will work our reasonably accurately; please understand that mistakes and omissions will inevitably happen. If you have not received your new envelopes by the end of December, extra boxes are available at The Presbytery. Thank you.

Busy Year for St. Christopher's School

St. Christopher's Special School had a disappointing start to the New Year as pipes burst in the school causing major damage to many rooms. Thankfully due to

lot of hard work we ensured that the pupils returned to school as planned following the Christmas break.

A number of pupils success-

fully participated in writing and art competitions during the year.

The school also partook in the Agri-Aware Incredible Edibles Garden Challenge 2011 and we received a Gold standard accreditation.

We have two pupils who received the sacrament of confession and First Holy Communion.

One pupil received a bronze President Award in June which is a National Award and a great achievement for the young person concerned.

Since starting the new school year in September we achieved first and second place in the special category of the Aisling Art Competition.

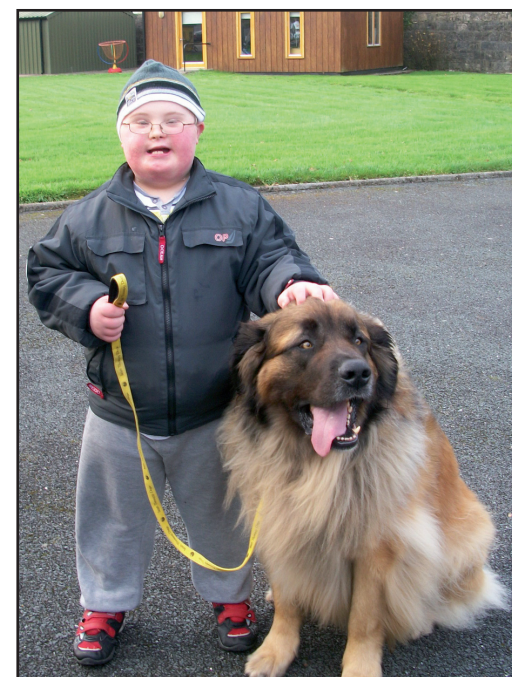
We have just begun a new program with the pupils and the Irish Therapy Dogs group. Tom and Tully join us weekly for a bonding session.

The planned school extension is making progress and it is hoped that planning permission will be obtained in the near future.

CASA TRIP TO LOURDES



Pictured above are some members of the Casa group who travelled to Lourdes earlier this year.



St. Christopher's have just begun a new programme with the pupils and the Irish Therapy Dogs group. Tom and Tully join them weekly for a bonding session.



New-look for Melview National School



The big news for Melview in 2011 is to finally get our long awaited extension.

Work began in June and was completed by September. We gained 3 new classrooms, 3 resource rooms and 2 new storerooms. We reclaimed our PE hall after 28 years. The rest of the school has also gotten a facelift to fit in with our bright new extension, with new flooring, doors, and heating systems. Our yard space has been greatly expanded. We now have 3 new tarmac yards. Roadside parking is a thing of the past as we have a large new carpark. Melview looks forward to a brighter and more comfortable future.

We hope to have the official opening on December 16th when all staff, students, parents, past and present will be invited to come and see the new Melview.

Melview NS has again been very successful in the sporting field in 2011.

In basketball our boys won both the League and Championship. The girls won the league and made it to the final in the Championship.

Melview's Gaelic team reached the B final and we won out Longford in 5 a side soccer. Our girls were triumphant in the A final in Indoor hurling and our boys won the B final.

Longford Cell Groups

In Longford Parish there is at present a network of four Cell groups. These are small groups of people who meet from September to June every second Wednesday in a person's home. The group prays, listens to scripture, shares faith experiences, prays for each other and socialises each time they gather. The meetings normally last one and a half hours. The four groups come together as one large group a number of times each year and the leaders of all the groups meet together regularly to plan the programme for the Cell groups. It is not easy to capture the essence of a Cell group. Suffice to say, here in Longford about 40 people continue to meet in groups of 8-12 people, trying to help one another to grow in faith and friendship. The only way to know if it is for you, is to give it a try! There is also a Cell Group in our neighbouring Parish of Killoe. They meet in Cullyfad Community Centre every second Tuesday night.

For any information please contact: Elaine Keogh; Joyce O'Hara 043 3331728; Bernadette Wall 043 3347771; Catherine Corkery 086 2622327.

— Mary Burns

Longford Town ICA Guild

Longford town ICA guild holds monthly meetings from September to June in the Family Centre (behind the Cathedral) on the first Wednesday of each month at 8pm. All women are welcome. Our current committee are: Jane Johnston (President), Patricia Guihen (Secretary) and Kathleen Kelly (Treasurer).

If you are interested in joining us, you can come along to meetings to decide if you would enjoy being a member of our group. We have great fun, a cup of tea, friendship and we also invite speakers in to discuss topics that members are interested. We also go bowling, swimming, aqua aerobics, dancing, a summer outing and a Christmas party night. We also visit patients in St. Joseph's Hospital for their birthday.

Every year we fund raise for local charity. This year we held a car boot sale at Flancare for the Children of Chernobyl.

If you would like to meet new friends or develop a hobby, feel free to come along and to bring a friend. For more details contact Kathleen @ 086-3194662

Longford Women's Link: 2011 – a year of change and growth



Elsie Moxham, Chairperson LWL, Professor Kathleen Lynch, keynote speaker, Adrian Green, CEO LCRL, Louise Lovett, incoming CEO LWL, Tess Murphy, outgoing CEO LWL, Pamela Latimer, Business Development Manager at launch of new Education facility

2011 marked a year of further growth in Longford Women's Link (LWL) with the opening of its state of the art education and training facility. This new building will enable LWL to expand on its unique approach to second chance education using the women's community education model.

It was a year of change as well with Tess Murphy retiring as CEO to be succeeded by Louise Lovett. We wish Louise and her team every success in continuing to offer the women of Longford the support they need to fulfil their potential in a safe and equal society.

Longford Women's Link offers a ladder of support to women in coping with the challenges of life. The woman experiencing domestic abuse, the migrant woman not sure of her rights and entitlements, the woman in need of childcare, the woman isolated and in need of friends, the woman looking for training to return to work or start her own business, the woman who would like a say in how decisions are made locally that impact on her and her family, all these women have benefitted from the services of LWL in the past year.

That is why we say we:

Save Lives – crisis support, domestic violence support, counselling.

Change Lives – Education & work Experience, Childcare & Transport, Group support

Transform Communities

–Manifest Group, Women in Business Network, influencing local policy.

If you would like to avail of any of our services or help in supporting our work in any way, please contact us at 043-3341511 or look us up on our website: www.longfordwomenslink.org

or you can follow us on:

www.facebook.com/lwl.longford

www.facebook.com/LongfordWomensLink

www.twitter.com/LWLLongford

Finally we want to thank all the people of Longford who supported our fund raising in the past year, the church gate collections, Santa in the Shopping Centre, Mother & Daughter lunch, Women's Mini Marathon, Golf Classic, bag packing in the local supermarkets.

Sisters of Mercy Celebrate 150 years in our Parish

■ FRANK GEARTY

On the 1st May, 2011, the Sisters of Mercy in Longford celebrated with the parish and extended community the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the first five Sisters of Mercy arrived in Longford Town in 1861. Earlier, in 1831 The Order of the Sisters of Mercy had been founded in Baggot Street, Dublin by Reverend Mother Catherine McAuley. The subsequent arrival of the Sisters in Longford Town was supported by Fr. Philip Maguire, Parish Priest of Clough, Kenagh, who donated £2,520.00 to Dr. Kilduff Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnois to help found a convent in Longford Town. The Sisters were first based in Keon's Terrace here in the town opposite the site where the Cathedral had been substantially completed in 1853. The first Superior here was Mother Mary Bernard Maguire who had been born in Newgrange House in County Meath, one of fifteen children. She had been accepted into the Sisters of Mercy in 1850



Marion Diffley, Sr. Evangelist and Mary Kenny pictured at the 150th Celebration.

on the feast of the Assumption and governed until 1872 when the foundation stone for the new Convent was laid. The sisters moved to the newly built Convent premises in St. Joseph's Road in 1874.

The anniversary was marked principally by a special Mass celebrated by Bishop Colm O'Reilly in St. Mel's Cathedral Centre. This ceremony was

a great success. Fr. Tom Murray gave a most interesting homily to mark the event and there were contributions from a number of the sisters. It was attended by many Sisters, teachers, past pupils of the school and other friends of the local convent community. This was followed by an exhibition detailing the history of the Sisters in Longford and surrounding

areas. The convent buildings were also open to the public for the Celebration. A book commemorating the past 150 years of the involvement of the Sisters in out local community was published and met with widespread acclaim. The book made possible with contributions from many excellent people from all fields of life and featuring wonderful layout and design by Noel Strange and the team at Turners Printing is still available for sale at local bookshops at a very modest price. It is full of interesting contributions and contains an extensive pictorial and written record of the past 150 years.

The Sisters of Mercy wish to express their deep gratitude to the people of Longford, Bishop O'Reilly and the local clergy, parish community, teaching staff past and present, students and past pupils, organising committee, and staff in the Convent itself for their support on this happy occasion.



150 Years of the Sisters of Mercy in Longford

In 1831 the religious order of The Sisters of Mercy was founded by Catherine McAuley in Dublin.

- 11th April 1861 five Sisters of Mercy from the motherhouse in Baggot St Dublin arrive in Longford and live at Keon's Terrace.
- 1861 Sisters taught primary school children at St Joseph's school in their house at Keon's Tce. Sisters set up Our Lady's Senior Academy for girls also at Keon's Tce.
- 1869 Three sisters leave Longford to open a new foundation, St Michaels, at Newtownforbes at the request of Lord Granard.
- 19th April 1874 Sisters take up residence in their newly built convent on St Joseph's Rd (Convent Rd) Longford.
- 1874 Our Lady's senior school St Joseph's Road.
- 1878 At the request of the Board of Guardians of the Workhouse three sisters move in to the Workhouse to help care for the poor and suffering living there.
- 1886 St Joseph's National School opened on St Joseph's Road
- 1880 Four sisters found a convent in Mohill at the invitation of Dean Eivers
- 1899 Mercy sisters ministered in The House of Industry set up by Bishop Hoare in the McGoev Hall.
- 1900 four sisters from Longford go to Edgeworthstown to found St Elizabeth's Convent and national school.
- 1911 celebration of the golden jubilee of the foundation of Convent of Mercy in Longford.
- 1927 Mother Magdalen purchased Featherstone House and farm in Ardagh and set up Ardagh College of Home Economics.
- 1944 at request of Bishop McNamee three sisters are appointed to the catering and nursing staff of St Mel's College.
- 1954 Sr Calasanctius the first religious appointed as Matron of St Joseph's Hospital
- 1957 New national school, St Joseph's opened on the Dublin Road. It was extended in 1975.
- 1958 Five sisters from Longford convent at the request of the Pallotine Fathers went to Ely, Nevada, USA and set up the Mission of Our Lady of Lourdes.
- 1961 Scoil Mhuire a new secondary and boarding school opened on the Convent Road, it was extended again in 1977.
- 1962 four Sisters of Mercy went to minister in The Little Flower Parish and Grade School in Reno, Nevada, USA.
- 1970s '80s '90s the Sisters were deeply involved, with many volunteers from the community and the help of the Public Service in setting up: the Social Services, Meals on Wheels, Longford Hospice Homecare, Ladies Club at Teallach Iosa and with our priests as members of the parish pastoral team.
- 2010 the Sisters end their service as teachers in our primary and secondary schools.
- 2011 Celebration of the 150th anniversary of the coming of the sisters to Longford and publication of an illustrated history detailing the many and various heroic, pioneering and inspirational works of the Sisters of Mercy in Longford and far beyond.



Sr. Dorothy brings flowers to the altar at Mass.



Bishop Colm O'Reilly pictured with Sr. Rosario and Niamh Mahon.



Sr. De Chantal showing the archives to Mrs. Bohan, Gretta Donlon, Marion Duffley and Betty Donagher.

"The quality of mercy ...

... is not strained.
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven,
Upon the place beneath.
It is twice blessed.
It blesseth him that gives
and him that takes"

■ PATSY FITZMAURICE

I'm told I was about three years old when I first saw a Sister of Mercy! I don't remember. In my boarding school years a dear old nun loved to remind me of the little drama. Two nuns, eyes downcast, hands swallowed up in wide sleeves, made their way from St. Elizabeth's Convent in Edgeworthstown to the local church. Fascinated perhaps, by their garb, I proceeded to run in front of them, and, looking at them in childish wonder, ran down the street announcing "nuns, nuns"! The drama, I'm told, was repeated, until, to their immense relief I'm sure, they reached the sanctuary of the church!

So it began my long association with the Sisters of Mercy. When I came to first year in September 1958 I had already experienced the care and commitment of the nuns, as we referred to them back then. My sister and I were prepared for county scholarships when our circumstances were difficult, to ensure our secondary education. We were assisted with provision of uniforms and other necessary items to get us launched in secondary school, all so discreetly done.

I clearly recall the big wrought iron arch then hanging invitingly over the gates, on what was then Convent Road, bearing the words Clochar na Trócaire. It was behind those gates I learned....determination and self discipline, developed and matured and blossomed under the watchful, caring eyes of the nuns, though I may not have appreciated it then. Like Caesar when he entered the city of Zela (Turkey) "Veni,Vidi,Vici".

Tomes have already been written about the great works of the nuns in Longford when times were hard and life was tough. What impressed me? The little un-noticed kindnesses remain with me to this day.... the nun, long since dead, who, noticing my gym-slip down to my heels, (some things don't change!), took me aside and in two minutes had moved the shoulder buttons, not a word spoken.

Their vast knowledge of their subjects, their skill in music and art and craft, but above all, their commitment to delivering the best all round education one could wish for and for no personal financial reward. Sufficient to add that they prepared generations of girls to face the world, equipped with faith and morals

and confidence and education, the best of everything they believed in. The nuns who taught us were mines of information. It was the age of pen and paper so all their work, when prepared, was written by hand. I often recall my late Latin/English teacher, her love of God and prayer and learning and teaching and us and languages....."and still they gazed and still the wonder grew, how one small head could carry all she knew". I remember her fondly still.

When the boarders joined the nuns for mass at 7 a.m. the nuns had already spent time in church chanting their 'Office'. Through my child eyes I saw an intriguing sight. At the top of the chapel knelt the postulants in their neat black dresses and pretty bonnets. Behind them were the white-veiled novices, heads reverently bowed, all watched over by the professed nuns and mothers in habits so different from today's sisterly attire. Church was a solemn place where levity was frowned upon and punishable at a later stage. The galleries lent themselves to hide and seek! I think lack of realization, not unbelief, made some of us disrespect the holy place. Now I can say with W.B. Yeats in his "Ballad of Fr. Gilligan", "Oh! God forgive, my body spake, not I "Prayer was at the heart of the nuns' commitment as they embraced Catherine McCauley's words" Prayer is a plant, the seed of which is sown in the heart of every Christian".

The nuns who looked after the boarders had a formidable task in dealing with ninety girls full of the joys of youth and living. Supervision for "us" was provided by a Rota of nuns at meals, recreation study and bedtime. At study the sister on duty sat silently at her desk correcting copies or preparing the next day's lessons but missing none of the side shows enacted throughout the hall. Some struggled with the weekly essay, e.g. "Faces in the Crowd" with "hand cold as a scribe in Winter" (Seamus Heaney) while whispers brought the sister supervisor rustling past unexpectedly "vapouring into her breviary". We did not appreciate it then but her sole business was to ensure each student worked to her full potential. All the day's happenings were up for discussion at night in the dormitories, where the rule of silence was supposed to be obeyed. Like Nicodemus in the bible on his night visit to Jesus, secret appointments were kept after lights out. This caused the sister on duty many a restless night. Perhaps the nuns brought the discipline of the convent to the boarding school but with the purest of motives. As the Dalai Lama said "this world is not perfect, there are problems...there is always a positive side to life"

My favourite part of the day was to escape from

study and stand outside the little chapel to listen to the sweet voices chanting....so aptly described by John O'Brien in "the Parish of St.Mel's".

*"How sweet the maidens voices ring while to and fro
the censers swing
And incense fills the air.
Adown the convent chapel aisle the sisters kneeling
file and file
Show all that's noble, pure and good in radiant
valiant womanhood"*

The nuns made a major contribution to life in Longford, nursing, furthering education, visiting the sick and bereaved, caring for the poor and underprivileged where needed, in the grim harsh realities of the fifties and early sixties. They did not spare themselves. We are eternally indebted to them. Their school was a haven of prayer and learning. That is how I remember them looking back.

The five years passed in a flash and in a little over a decade I returned to teach in their convent primary school, that fine establishment on the Dublin Road. Once again I witnessed the sisters works of mercy in their attention to the children in their care, providing hot lunches in school and clothes and footwear too if needed while delivering a quality education with commitment and enthusiasm.

In celebrating one hundred and fifty years recently with the nuns I accepted the invitation to visit the convent. I can best express my sentiments in quoting from "The Chapel" (William O'Brien, "Irish Fireside Hours")- "To kneel and pray in the same chapel, on the same bench, where one knelt more than half a century before, is an uncommon experience. An unearthly one as well, for the congregation of that day has vanished into the graveyard under the windows".

Later, in the little cemetery nearby, I recalled the May Procession and the Rosary and I had something of the sadness of a veteran wandering over a battlefield ... but not a sensation of gloom ... for the sisters rest awhile but their legacy remains. One can apply the epitaph of Sir Christopher Wren, designer of St.Paul's Cathedral..."Reader, if you seek their (his) monument, look around you".

From "The Book of Uncommon prayer":
Dear God, if the first woman you ever made was strong enough to turn the whole world upside down, all alone, ought not women together be able to turn it right side up again".



Sr. Beatrice and Mary Rose Donoghue pictured at the 150th Celebrations.



Sr. Elizabeth McNamee, former Principal of Scoil Mhuire.



Sr. Rosario, (aged 103) pictured with Fiona Lawlor at the 150th Celebration.



Tony Gilhooley

Another Year on my Journey to the Priesthood

■ TONY GILHOOLEY

As the old saying goes how time flies when you are enjoying yourself. I didn't realise I was enjoying myself that much - but I do realise time is flying - it seems so short since I put my few words together about my journey to priesthood for last year's review.

After I bid farewell to Longford at Easter 2011 I commenced a Clinical Pastoral Education course in St.

Vincent's Hospital in Dublin. This course lasted for twelve weeks and concluded in mid July. It can be best described as a training course in hospital Chaplaincy. It uses the model of organic learning where a small group of students work together to help and critique the experience gained by each student as they work with patients as Chaplain Interns.

In mid September I returned to

Maynooth to recommence the B.D. degree programme. My studies this year include a course in Systemic Theology regarding Creation and Grace and Mariology. In ecclesial history we examine the period from Medieval times to the Reformation. For scripture this year we study the Gospel of John and in Moral theology we take Bioethics which include topics like end of life issues, stem cell research, personal

conscience and Morality in Civil law.

My pastoral training this year will consist of a weekly visit to one of the prisons. I also have regular meetings with the Director of Formation and Spiritual Director so I have quite a busy schedule.

I have very fond memories of my time in your parish and I want to assure you that you have played a major role in my journey to priesthood.

'By Teaching We Learn'

Patsy Fitzmaurice remembers ...



On right is Patsy Fitzmaurice and eager students of St. Joseph's National School and below Patsy is pictured at her desk.

In an ever-changing world, to have served for over 46 years as a National School teacher is quiet unique and makes recently-retired Patsy Fitzmaurice one of a kind

■ BY PATSY FITZMAURICE



School). I was back in familiar surroundings... but not for long. I was offered a position in St. Joseph's in Longford, which I accepted, as my beloved daughter, Mary, was 4 years old and I welcomed the opportunity of having her attend a school in our parish.

1975, the year I was appointed to the staff of St. Joseph's, a very different scenario to the present one. I remember nearing that fine establishment on the Dublin Road that first morning with Mary (R.I.P.) feeling a pang for the little school I had left behind. However, the warm welcome afforded me by the then Principal, the late Sr. Scholastica Kenny, R.I.P. soon dispelled my fears and in no time I was settled and happy in my new surroundings.

The Sisters of Mercy made up the majority of teaching staff in those days, maybe 21/22 Sisters to 6/7 lay teachers. In keeping with the Mercy ethos the Sisters cared for under-privileged children by providing them with hot lunches and clothes and footwear where needed, all so discreetly done. They delivered a quality education with commitment and enthusiasm and for no personal financial reward. The enrolment was more than double the present number, about 800 children and every child wore slippers to keep the school clean. In the crowded yard the games of the day were 'Dusty Bluebells', Hopscotch' and 'Fox and Goose'. There was no basketball court or football training or trips to the swimming pool. There was no uniform and so the sea of colour in the yard was contrasted only by the black habit of the Sister on yard duty. Sr. Scholastica was the Principal and under her expert guidance children were taught in a caring, calm environment. There was no intercom, no photocopier and so everything was hand-written. Sewing, knitting,

crochet and cookery formed an important part of the curriculum and the sisters were particularly skilled in this area.

In 1976 a new extension to St. Joseph's was opened to accommodate the ever-increasing number of students. It was more glamorous than the existing building, having a washroom and cloakroom in each classroom, and a sports hall and a staff room too. The 'new' curriculum had been introduced in 1970 and with it many changes. The old 'buaite' of the Irish language was banished to be replaced by the present 'h' and a new style of 'peannaireacht' became compulsory. A 'holistic approach' and 'child-centred curriculum' was to replace the old methods where learning was based on repetition. Heretofore there was not much place for 'Mol an Óige agus tiocfaidh sí'. Still, teachers had been as kind as the system allowed with inspectors breathing down their necks.

Nothing is permanent and "the old order changeth...". This change came about almost imperceptibly at first. Sisters retired or resigned, to be replaced by lay teachers. Emphasis shifted further still from rote learning, from knitting and sewing, as computers and photocopiers edged their way into St. Joseph's. A new set of values evolved. Inspectors' roles became those of advisers. New religion programmes were drawn up with singing and dancing and mime and movement which would have shocked the older Sisters had they been around to witness such change. 1981 saw the retirement of Sr. Scholastica and the appointment of Sr. Beatrice Ruddy as Principal. An erudite, calm quiet-spoken lady with multi talents, she remained in this role until 1993 when she resigned and was replaced by our first lay principal, Mrs. Loretta Farrell.

Towards the end of the 1990s a revised curriculum arrived on the scene and with it the introduction of many new subjects, some of these would make former teachers despair... S.E.S.E. and S.P.H.E and I.C.T. and Drama and Visual Arts. Many days of training were held in St. Joseph's to prepare teachers for the introduction and implementation of this new curriculum. To do so it became necessary to introduce white boards and inter-active white boards and P.C.s and lap tops. Today's children, raised in this age of technology became more expert at the use of these resources than many of us 'older' members of staff, and many were like Jesus in the Temple...teaching the teachers. Gone forever is the blackboard and the 'chalk and talk'... 'all changed...changed utterly'. Still, despite the constant changes in education, under the expert guidance of the ever-smiling Mrs. Farrell the syllabus gets comprehensively covered and the standard of education in St. Joseph's is unrivalled. Her care for children from "every nation under Heaven" and her perfect understanding of her charges was, and is an inspiration to me, and her great sense of humour averted many a 'crisis'.

I derived my inspiration from the children. Their love of learning kept me going through the years. When I read to them and watched their wide eyed absorption, teacher and pupils were transported into a magical world all our own. I hope I fostered a lasting love of reading in them, a treasure throughout their lives.

My years in St. Joseph's were happy years, overall. I have a motley host of memories. I recall fondly the great occasions, Sr. Angela Bracken's production of "The Wizard of Oz", the various Christmas shows, the many performances of National Children's Choir under the direction of the very talented Miss Marie Dolan, the 50th anniversary of the opening of the present school, and who could forget the day the inspector's car went on fire? I have never seen so many willing hands help to quench that fire and send him on his merry way!

A great spirit of friendship exists in the school. I thank St. Joseph's for my livelihood as well as for happy times teaching there. I thank too the parents who entrusted their children to my care but my biggest thanks is to my students, working with them gave me such joy.

In the great tragedies of my life, when our son and daughter died, St. Joseph's, its staff and the Sisters of Mercy were a lifeline, a crutch. I am grateful to have had the privilege of being a member of staff and of teaching so many children over the years.

Ach níl in aon rud ach seal. Dá fhad'an lá tagann an oíche, ar aon nós an trathnóna - I Mí Meithimh se chaite d'fhág mé slán go deo ag Scoil Naomh Iosaf. In the words of Frodo, the old hobbit in "The Lord of the Rings"... "I will take the ring and go, even though I do not know the way".

Docendo Discimus. "By teaching we learn"
(Seneca c.4BC- 65AD)

Caring for the Pastoral Life of the Community

FR. TOM HEALY

One of the parish groups that I work alongside on a continual basis is the Pastoral Council of our parish. The council comprises a group of parishioners who meet with the Priests and Parish Sister every two weeks to reflect on and plan the pastoral life of the parish.

Once a year the Council take the opportunity to away for an overnight which we feel allows us extended time to give thought and consideration to the year ahead in peaceful and quiet surroundings.

While other groups look after different aspects of parish life such as communications, liturgy, finance, etc the particular focus of the Pastoral Council is to be concerned about the pastoral life of the community.

Most of the weekly life of the parish is organised by the Pastoral Council and among the issues addressed over the past year were: Parish Visitation, Youth Mass, Bereavement Ceremony, Cemetery Sunday, Children's Liturgy, celebration of Marriage Jubilees, Music in Church, All night vigils, Healing Mass, Reflective day for Parish groups, Reconciliation Services, African Masses, Live Crib etc etc.

Current members of the Pastoral Council are: Sr. Angela Clarkson, Deirdre Dalton, Colm Dardis, Tommy Dolan, Fr. Thomas Healy, Fr. Padraig Kelliher, Stefan Macko, Anita Mollaghan, Bernie Mulligan, Teresa Neville, Fr. Tom Murray, Therese O'Shea, Fr. Brendan O'Sullivan, Colette Skelly, Christine Treacy and Kevin Victory.

These are changing and challenging times for the Church in Ireland and as we look to the future it is well acknowledged that the Church will



Pastoral Council Members bid farewell and say thanks to Fr. Nigel Charles and Fr. Merlyn Kenny as they departed Longford for new parishes last September. Pictured l to r: Fr Brendan O Sullivan, Tommy Dolan, Sr. Angela, Fr. Merlyn, Kevin Victory, Fr Nigel, Anita Mollaghan and Fr. Tom Healy ADM.

Farewell to Fr. Merlyn and Fr. Nigel

The diocesan appointments of 2011 saw us bid farewell to Fr. Merlyn Kenny and Fr. Nigel Charles. Fr. Merlyn has been appointed to Carrick

on Shannon, Co. Leitrim while Fr. Nigel has been appointed as Administrator of Killashee and Clondra. We thank both of them for their

commitment to Longford parish over their three year term with us and wish them God's blessing in their new pastures.

have to rely more and more on the involvement of its lay community. I am very grateful to all our members for the generosity of their time and talent over the years.

Parish ministry is vast and varied and we

meet many new challenges in our changing Longford. I and my colleagues at the Presbytery are delighted to have the input and support of the Pastoral Council members as we gather for our fortnightly meetings at the Family Centre.

Welcome to Fr. Tom Murray



We say a warm welcome to Fr. Tom Murray who was appointed to the parish in Sept last. Fr. Tom is no stranger to us having spent many years teaching at nearby St. Mel's College. Fr. Tom is a native of Clondra. We wish him many happy years of ministry

among us in Longford parish.

Priests Areas

Longford Parish has grown hugely over the years. We now have in excess of 4,500 homes in our parish community. Now that we have four priests instead of five it is quite a challenge for the priest's to stay in touch and get to know the people and the homes of our parish. We find it helpful to sub-divide the parish for our ministry. Our working areas are as follows:



Fr. Tom Healy:

Dublin St., Convent Rd., Anneville Court, Grian Ard, Ardri, Ardeevan, Cluain Ard, Palace Crescent, Palace Drive, Templemichael Glebe, Ard Michael Avenue, Cloncoose, Coradoey, Carriglass, Kiltybegs, Kiltyreher, Knockloughlin, Derryharrow, Melview, Knockawalky, Clonrollagh, Foynes Court, Clonbalt Woods, Bo Dearg, Aghadegan, Clonbalt, White Linen Woods, Battery Road, St. Alban's, Tennis Court Lane, Church St., Fee Court, Abbeycartron, The Belfry, Woodlands, Brickfield.

Fr. Brendan O'Sullivan:

Park Close, Park Court, Park Corner, Park Road, Park View, Park Villa's, Legion Tce., Clabby Drive, Canal Bank, Canal Court, Canal Walk, Ferefad, Ballymakeegan, Lisduff, Clonkeen, Trillick, Crockaun, Trillick-a-Curry, Trillick-a-Temple, Garvagh, Farnagh, Prospect Woods, Campbell's Lane, Farnagh Glebe, Mullaghavourneen, Aughafad Heights, Shannon Vale, MacEoin Park, The Hollows, Glebe View, Ardan Alainn, Earl St., Deanscurragh, Butterfield, Springlawn, Ardnacassa Avenue, Oakvale.

Fr. Padraig Kelliher:

Killashee St., Harbour View, Harbour Point, Market Square, Canal Close, Fair Green View, Fair Green Lodge, Harbour Row, Annaly Crescent, Annaly Park, Garvey's Close, Garvey's Yard, St. Brigid's Tce., St. Michael's Rd., Annaly Gardens, Lanna Aoihbhinn, Congress Tce., O'Connell Tce., Ward's Terrace, Athlone Rd., Royal Canal Park, Railway Meadow, Western Park, Camlin Meadows, Farnyhoogan, Ballyminion, Gleann Riada, Clonterm, Cartrongeeragh, Knockaboy, Clonturk, Clooneena, Gowlan, Aughantrough, Churchlands, Canal Line, Stonepark, The Rocks, Ballagh Road, Dunbeggan, Silver Birches, Danesfort, Curry, Caldramore, Ballinamore, Corlogan, Caramanagh, Gurteenboy, Newtown, Brickeens, Knockatarry, Meelick, Doonameeran, Knockagowry, Clonany, Willow Park, Demesne, Rugby View, Pearse View, Lisbrack, Pearse Drive, Lisbrack Downs, Iron Roid, Cartron Breac, Richmond St, Mullagh, Aughterea, Lisanurlan, Mullollogher, Cartronlebegah.

Fr. Tom Murray:

St. Patrick's Tce., St. Mary's Tce., Dublin Road, Leader Park, Dun Darrach, Viewmount, Knockahaw, Ardnacassa, Ardnacassa Manor, Ardnacassa Lawns, Midara Gardens, Teffia Park, Kennedy Drive, Kennedy Parade, Glack View, Glack, Golf View, Pauric Columb Heights, Kilnasavogue, Cooleeney, Whiterock, Lisardowling, Aughtarickard, Cartronbig, Toorafin, Clonahard, Freeholman, Currabawn, Clonahard,

Lisfarrell, Clonahussey, Lisnamuck, Coolnahinch, Allenagh, Lisnamuck, St. Emer's, Minerocks, Oaklands Avenue, Oaklands Drive, Oaklands Grove, Oaklands Green, Oaklands Dale, Laurel Avenue, The Laurels, Geraldine Tce., Chapel St., St. Mel's Road, St. Mel's View, St. Mel's Court, Bannon Tce., Templemichael Tce., Connolly Crescent, Camlin Mews, Camlin View, Camlin Court, Connor Park, Riverside Court, Water St., Main St., Ardrum Court, Cameron Gate, Midland Court, College Park.



Pupils of Scoil Eimear pictured on a Nature Walk for Environment Week 2011.



Trick or treat for Temple Street.

Active year at Scoil Eimear 2011

TRICK OR TREAT FOR TEMPLE STREET CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL:

On Friday 28th October all was not as it usually is in Scoil Eimear! Both teachers and pupils alike donned costumes ranging from Witches and Vampires to Princesses and Kings, we even had a Banana for good measure!! It was all done in aid of the very worthy cause - Temple Street Children's Hospital. As a result of our 'Trick or Treat' for Temple Street we raised over €700 and we would like to extend a huge thank you to all who were involved in making the day such a huge success. We all had a 'Frightfully' good time.

CONGRATULATIONS TO MRS. NOELEEN ROONEY:

The whole school community joined in a number of celebrations in June to congratulate Mrs. Noeleen Rooney on her retirement, to thank her for her hard work and dedication over her years in Scoil Eimear and to wish her every good wish and blessing for the future.

STAFF NEWS:

As we bid a fond farewell to Noeleen, we welcomed Martina McCormack to her new position as principal. We also welcomed a new member to our staff in the form of Linda Hayes from Cornamaddy who is doing trojan work in 4th class. We congratulate Mrs. Annabelle Gacquin and her husband Jimmie on the birth of baby Isobel and also Mr. Roger Ward and his wife Linda Hackett on their wedding during the Summer. We remember in a very special way staff members who have lost loved ones in the past year, Mrs. Sinéad



Longford Slashers Dermot Brady and Brian Farrell visit with the Sean Connolly Cup.

Smith and her husband Frank who lost their son Cian and also his granny Dorrie Flynn and Ms. MaryJo Devine and her husband Matt who lost Frank Devine. May they rest in peace.

SILVER JUBILEE AND BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS:

We in Scoil Eimear are very lucky to have Fr. Thomas Healy so involved in our school life. Every year we enjoy fantastic First Communion and Confirmation celebrations, but this year it was Fr. Tom's turn to enjoy a few celebrations of his own! On 8th June he celebrated his Silver Jubilee and both staff and pupils joined him in a celebratory prayer service, while October brought a very significant birthday. We thank him most sincerely for all his wonderful work in the school and wish him continued health and happiness in the future.

CONGRATULATIONS:

Congratulations to our pupils who excelled

in the following areas: Swimming: Ronan Kenny has reached the U.11 All-Ireland Swimming Finals. They will take place on 11th December 2011. Good Luck Ronan.

Scór Winners: Aiden Skelly, Sarah Devine, Clodagh Lee, Sarah McCauley, Adi Barry, Seyi Omotosho, Shauna Tarmey, Laura Kenny and Davidson Moses.

Gaelic Football: The Scoil Eimear Team who have reached the Division 1B Final of Cumann na mBunscol League. This final took place on Wednesday 23rd November 2011 in Pearse Park and we won!

Congratulations to Longford Slashers who won Senior Championship: Scoil Eimear students were delighted when some members of the Longford Slashers team arrived into school to show off the 'Sean Connolly' Cup.

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??!!)

"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,

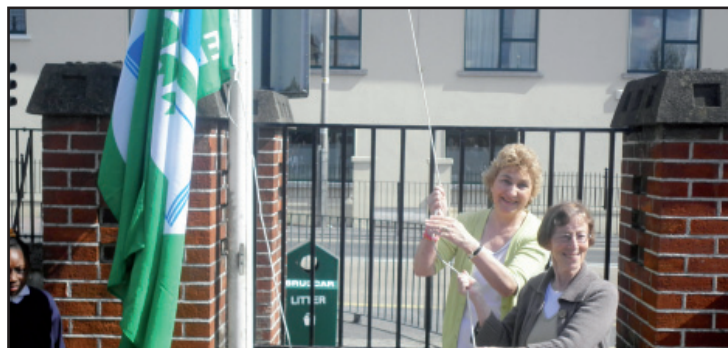
School Activities: Our 5th & 6th class children performed in the National Children's Choir in St. Mel's Cathedral Centre in association with St. Emer's, St. Dominic's, St. Theresa's, St. Mary's Dromard, St. Mary's Edgeworthstown, St. Brigid's N.S., Drumnamore National schools in May of this year. The 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 síochán an limbh Íosa oraibh.

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.

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



Abbie and Mischa Macko enjoying the celebration.



Leaders of Longford Boy Scouts who remember Fr. Tom's time as Chaplain to the Scouts.



Among the guests were Teresa Bohan, Rosaleen Cunningham and Rose Cunningham.



Christine Treacy and Lily Minnock pictured at Fr. Tom's Silver Jubilee.

Fr. Tom celebrates the Silver Jubilee of his Priesthood



■ FR. TOM HEALY

The Parish Review Committee have asked me to pen a few lines in this year of my Silver Jubilee as a priest. As I cast my mind back 25 years to June 1986 I am amazed at how quickly the years have flown by. In that time, fashions and styles have changed hugely; Irish Society has been revolutionised in many ways; and the Celtic Tiger made a hasty to visit and departed even quicker.

I recall walking up the aisle of the Cathedral on June 8th 25 years ago to be ordained on my own by Bishop Colm. In my eyes that Cathedral was a vast and beautiful space that mesmerised me and I could scarcely have known how intimately I would come to know so much of that building, the wonderful celebrations I'd be privileged to share in and in time, the massive restoration project that I would become a part of.

At the time of my ordination my family were resident in Strokestown, Co. Roscommon where we returned for a post-ordination celebration. On the next day I celebrated my first Mass (very nervously!) in St. Joseph's Church, Clonturk near Dromod, Co. Leitrim

My first Summer as a priest was spent in St. Mary's Parish in Athlone where I consider that I learned the 'ropes' for the first time. After a number of years in Maynooth College it was here that I carried out my first ceremonies and began to learn what it was to be a priest on the ground.

My first full time appointment was to the small community of Pullough, Co. Offaly (part of Ballinahown Parish) where I arrived with little more than two chairs and a very dodgy car on Sept 16th 1986! My appointment there was quite short, lasting just a year and a half. Pullough is a small close-knit community where I was really happy, coming to know the local people well and sharing much of their lives. I have great memories of the warmth, humour and hospitality of the people.

I began my ministry in Longford parish on 18th Mar 1988 and would never have dreamt that it would continue into its third dec-

ade as I write. I recall arriving Longford in a HiAce van and setting up home with Fr. Ciaran McGovern in Ardnacassa. I remember too the contrast between the small rural area I had left behind and the provincial town which was to become my new home. I think it took a little longer to come to know people and to put down roots.

I will always be very grateful for the wonderful experience it has been to be a priest in the Cathedral parish for so long. Life is busy and full in Longford and all of us who have ministered here over the years would say that we receive great experience in this particular appointment. I recall many Missions, Novenas, Televised Masses, Jubilee celebrations etc which it was a great privilege to be a part of. I would like to think that ours is an active vibrant community where many people play an active role in contributing to the life of the parish and I stand in admiration of them.

These are challenging times for the Church in Ireland and in Longford. Our ultimate task is to appreciate the gift of the Gospel and to try to live it generously and authentically, to keep faith relevant in the world today.

A major challenge of the moment is the aftermath of the Cathedral fire and the restoration project which is a mammoth task. Thankfully we have a great team on board and I look forward to a great re-opening in some year's time.

As I look back on my 25 years of priesthood, over 23 of them spent here in Longford, I am very grateful for the blessings of the years, for the example of Christian living, the support and encouragement we priests receive from our community. I say thanks to the Pastoral Council for the celebration of my Silver Jubilee last June. I also take the opportunity to express my gratitude to my fellow priests, staff and so many committee members and volunteers for their kindness over the years.

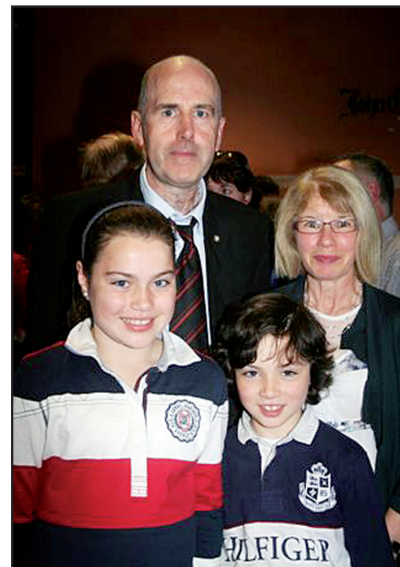
Longford is now where I call home; a place where I have made many friends and I look forward to continuing to minister here for as long as that may be.



Fr. Tom Healy celebrates his Jubilee Mass with Fr. Brendan and Fr. Mertlyn.



Fr. Tom pictured with his parents May and Rutledge Healy.



Gerry and Mary Reilly pictured David and Ruth Keenan.



Fr. Tom pictured with Joe Burbage at the Silver Jubilee celebrations.



Picture shows some of the Transition Year Students from Mean Scoil Mhuire performing in the St. Joseph's Halloween Party.

Scoil Mhuire reviews the year

SCOIL MHUIRE TY MEETS ST. JOSEPH'S SENIOR CITIZENS:
This year marks the 10th Anniversary of visitations from Transition Year Students of Mean Scoil Mhuire to the residents in St. Joseph's Centre, Longford.

The programme has gone from strength to strength and each year special bonds are built between the two generations. So far this year as well as chatting the residents each Wednesday the students have taken part in quizzes and a Halloween party. Plans are underway to hold a joint carol service and nativity play for Christmas and other exciting activities for St. Brigid's Day, Valentine's Day and Easter. We all hope that the programme continues to develop for the next 10 years and beyond.

SISTERS OF MERCY, LONGFORD

The Sisters of Mercy, Longford celebrated 150 years of continuous and dedicated service to the people of Longford this year. The seed of education was planted then also as Mean Scoil Mhuire had its beginnings in the same year. A school mass was held on the day to celebrate this special occasion. The Sisters of Mercy were welcomed back to share in these celebrations and afterwards commemorative medals were given to all board and staff members.

CHRISTMAS SHOEBOX APPEAL

Each year our Transition Year students work tirelessly to give back to those who are less fortunate. The Christmas shoebox appeal supports Team Hope and has been helping needy children in schools, communities, orphanages and hospitals all over Eastern Europe for over twelve years. We are proud to support this great cause and are currently getting shoeboxes full of gifts from our students as it may be the only gift they get this Christmas.

POETRY ALOUD

The National Library of Ireland has a long tradition of supporting post primary students. One of the ways it does this is by holding the Poetry Aloud competition each year. This gives students an opportunity to research and recite their chosen poems. This year ten girls went forward to the regional finals and we are delighted that three were chosen to progress to the semi-finals later in the year. Congratulations to Muireann Murtagh (6th year) Elina Mats (5th year) and Alannah Dolan (2nd year).

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Students of Mean Scoil Mhuire have been busy casting their votes in our own presidential election this year. To encourage students to participate seven enthusiastic presidential hopefuls took to the podium in the gym and persuaded us to vote for them.

EQUESTRIAN TEAM

Mean Scoil Mhuire's Open team of Joanne Whyte, Aisling McGrail, Rebecca Casey and Rebecca Yorke have won two first places and two second places in recent Equestrian events. Our novice team have won two second places in their respective events also. The equestrian panel includes Brionny Sainsbury, Evie Moloney, Maria Kenny, Shauna Farrell, Jade Hoare and Alice Whyte. This is a great result for all involved.

ACCORD – at the Heart of Marriage and the Family

ACCORD is the Agency of the Catholic Church concerned with promoting the sacrament of marriage and preparing couples for a life-long relationship with God and each other. The organization empowers people to care for their relationships and face the challenges of Christian marriage in today's world and affirms its value in an ever-changing world. ACCORD empowers couples through their pre-marriage course to explore and reflect on the essential elements of their marriage and the purpose and value of their choices in a committed relationship.

Relationship counselling is also provided for couples as well as individuals in a couple relationship, in a caring and confidential manner. The economic recession has exercised enormous pressure on marriages and families. Tragically too many people had put all their trust and energy in the job, the house and money as they took their relationships for granted.

Societal trends have changed dramatically over the past 10 years. In February, the Department of



Pictured are members of Longford ACCORD group.

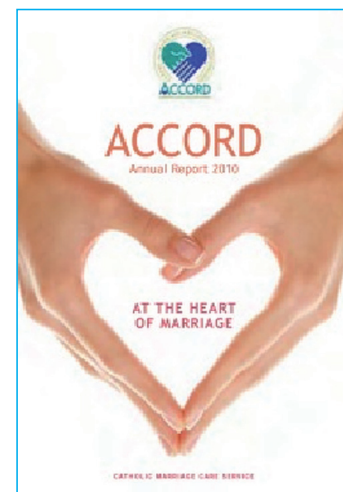
Social Welfare and Family Affairs launched the report "Family Figures" (a joint publication of the Family Support Agency and the ESRI) which was an in-depth analysis of family life in Ireland based on the 2006 census. The report showed: a fourfold

increase in Cohabitation 1996-2006; a sharp increase in numbers living with partner after age 25; a dramatic rise in lone parenthood for those with low educational attainment; and an increased rate of marital breakdown in late 30s age group. The report showed a downward trend in rates of catholic marriages, civil marriages and divorce. These facts present a challenging time ahead for the organization which nationally will celebrate its Golden Jubilee in 2012.

In 2012 it will be 50 years since our first Diocesan Centre opened in Belfast in the Diocese of Down and Connor. Since then the volunteerism, generosity of heart, vocational calling and professionalism of ACCORD people has grown and developed, so that in 2011 there are 60 Diocesan ACCORD Centres in 26 Dioceses. The 50th anniversary of ACCORD will be celebrated at a conference in Belfast on 11 and 12 March 2012. Locally the ACCORD Centre was set up in 1970 in Longford and has grown from strength to strength since.

Throughout 2011, the Longford Centre has continued to provide pre-marriage courses and relationship counselling via a strong network of committed and highly trained volunteers.

As usual, there were some comings and goings throughout 2011. Marita MacNerney, retired as administrator of the organization af-



ter 6 dedicated years and has been replaced with Mary Walsh. Fr Pat Murphy, continues as Priest Director of Longford ACCORD despite his move to Mohill as Parish Priest. All the volunteer counsellors and facilitators continue to respond to the needs of the organization in a professional and caring manner.

Throughout 2011, 188 people carried out the ACCORD Pre-Marriage Course "Marriage, A Journey not a Destination". ACCORD continues to provide the only church recognized pre marriage course. Our local Centre decided to reduce the cost of the Pre-Marriage Courses for 2012 from €170 to €140 per course in the current economic climate.

The pre-marriage preparation course calendar for 2012 is as follows:

Dates	Time	Venue
February 10 and 11	Friday 7-10pm Saturday 9.30am-4.30pm	Venue: Family Centre, Longford
Evening Course 5/8 March	Monday & Thursday Evenings: 6pm-10:30pm	Venue: Family Centre, Longford
April 20 and 21	Friday 7-10pm Saturday 9.30am-4.30pm	Venue: Family Centre, Longford
Evening Course 14/17 May	Monday & Thursday Evenings: 6pm-10:30pm	Venue: Family Centre, Longford
June 15 and 16	Friday 7-10pm Saturday 9.30am-4.30pm	Venue: Family Centre, Longford
September 14 and 15	Friday 7-10pm Saturday 9.30am-4.30pm	Venue: Family Centre, Longford
November 16 and 17	Friday 7-10pm Saturday 9.30am-4.30pm	Venue: Family Centre, Longford

The above courses can be booked on line at www.accord.ie or by contacting the centre directly on 043 3347222. Office hours are Monday to Friday from 11.30am-1.30pm.

New Diocesan Youth Director

All at the Parish Review say welcome to Anita Allen who has recently been appointed as the new Diocesan Youth director. Anita who is from Mount Temple is a graduate of St. Patrick's College, Maynooth from where she has a Masters in Pastoral Ministry. She has a number of interesting initiatives which she hopes to spearhead in the future. Among these are the hopes to initiate John Paul 11 Awards through which young people are invited to become active in their parishes and communities. Through these awards it is hoped that young people will become active members of their Catholic faith community and experience spiritual and personal growth.

Anita recently led a group of young people from our Diocese to Madrid for World Youth Day which she describes as 'an amazing experience which I will never forget. The kindness of others is something I shall remember fondly from the experience. The goodness people hold in their hearts overwhelmed me on

more than one occasion. Spending time talking with young people from all over the world about their lives and where Jesus fits into it on a daily basis filled me with such hope, a hope for the future of our Church'.

She continues 'We are our Church and if we want it to flourish then as members we must give support and guidance to our younger members. We must invite them into communication with Him; invite them to open their hearts and lives to the message of Jesus'. We wish Anita well in her exciting and challenging new role.

Further information on the Ardagh and Clonmacnois Youth Ministry is available at www.aym.ie.

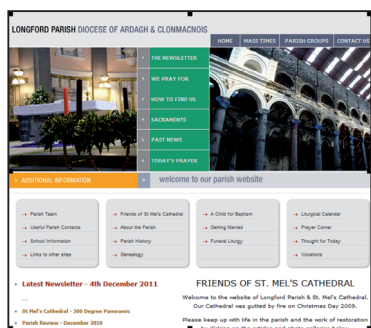


Chorister

*The boy soprano in the choral loft,
Awaits the organ call.
In muted tones, pure and soft,
His cadence, rise and fall.*

*And soaring above the hallowed space,
Suspended momentarily in time;
The timbre of an angelic voice
Exalting the heav'ns; divine;*

This poem was written by Ernest McCarthy originally from Longford as a tribute to the memory of Fr. Tommy Devine, former Choirmaster at St. Mel's Cathedral.



For further information on the Cathedral restoration and updates on progress go to www.longfordparish.com



Reflections on the Visit of the Congress Bell

— KITTY HUGHES

That rings a bell is a familiar phrase. When the Congress Bell visited the parish in late July like all bells it had a message, an invitation 'to come to the Eucharistic Congress, June 2012 in Dublin'. The organisers have chosen a bell as the key symbol for this the 50th Congress and the particular bell touring Ireland with this message of invitation is formerly from the Dominican Convent in Portstewart, Co Derry.

It is thought that bells were first introduced into the church in the 5th century. Part of the prayer to bless a bell goes: Lord, may your people hasten to your church when they hear the call of this bell'. We have Mass bells, funeral bells and joyful wedding bells. Every church has its Angelus bell and eager altar servers vie with each other to ring the smaller sanctuary bell used during Mass. In our own St Mel's Cathedral the chimes mark the hours and 'sing' a hymn at noon and six as they call us to pause and pray the Angelus.

Life is marked in many ways by bells. Early morning sees children hurry to school before the bell rings and in the afternoon listening eagerly for the same bell to signal the end of class for another day. It is no coincidence that the same word 'clog' is used in Irish for bell as for clock, for the bell marked time for many centuries. The 'clog teach' a round tower, was a familiar sight adjacent to ancient monasteries like the one still standing at Clonmacnois.

Campanology is the art of bell ringing and a campanile is a bell tower. In olden times teams of bell ringers pulled the heavy ropes of the bells and chimes to mark special occasions. On New Year's Eve crowds still gather to hear the chimes of Christchurch in Dublin traditionally ring out the old and ring in the new. One of the most famous campaniles is the Leaning Tower beside the cathedral in Pisa in Italy. The World Peace Bell in Newport, Kentucky is one of the largest bells in the world, though the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia sounded on 4th July 1776 to herald American Independence is probably more famous. Hear Ye! Hear Ye! was the cry of the medieval town Herald as he rang his bell and announced the news of the day or the orders of the Mayor long before the era of mass media. In those days too the curfew bell was the signal for all to 'cover the fire' and go to bed.

Children sing 'oranges and lemons say the bells of St Clements' an English rhyme referring to several churches in London and the solemn tones of Big Ben mark the hours over Westminster Parliament and are familiar to fans of the 'news at ten' on TV. The 'Lutine Bell' resides at Lloyds of London and news of a major disaster is said 'to ring a bell at Lloyds'. The last time it



Staff members at St. Joseph's Care Centre carry the bell to the Famine Memorial Garden.

rang was after the 9/11 attack in New York.

The telephone – invented by Alexander Graham Bell – a constant bell in today's world. Sporting events too use bells; boxers in the ring feeling the pressure often say they were 'saved by the bell' a saying said to have its origins during a medieval epidemic when a rope from a bell was placed in the grave lest the person was not dead but in a coma and could pull the rope and so be unburied and thus 'saved by the bell! Bells were alarms, the fire-brigade had a loud bell to demand a passage way to the scene of a fire. Sailors on watch told the time by the bells. In convents and abbeys each nun had a bell number and could be summoned by ringing their allocated number of peals.

It is said that prize winners in ancient Rome were presented with a bell and that may be the origin of

today's custom of winners receiving a cup – an upturned bell – as a trophy. Bells feature in art and literature. J F Millet's picture 'The Angelus' hangs in many homes. We sing of the Bells of Shandon made famous by Father Prout. Ernest Hemmingway wrote 'For Whom the Bell Tolls' and Bing Crosby starred in the film 'The Bells of St Mary's'. In Gray's 'Elegy in a Country Churchyard' 'the curfew tolls the knell of passing day' and the saintly scholar John Donne wrote in 1624 as part of a meditation 'No man is an island of himself alone .. Therefore ask not for whom the bell tolls – it tolls for thee'.

This year the Congress bell tolls for us. In 1932 our Grandparents flocked to Dublin in their thousands for the great public ceremonies – let us too in 2012 answer the ring of the Congress Bell. It's for you!

Just for a laugh!

The secret of a good sermon is to have a good beginning and a good ending; and to have the two as close together as possible.
– George Burns

After a very long and boring sermon the parishioners filed out of the church saying nothing to the preacher. Towards the end of the line was a thoughtful person who always commented on the sermons. "Pastor, today your sermon reminded me of the peace and love of God!" The pastor was thrilled. "No-one has ever said anything like that about my preaching before. Tell me why." "Well - it reminded me of the Peace of God because it passed all understanding and the Love of God because it endured forever!"

Two priests and a rabbi were discussing what portion of the weekly collection they kept for themselves. The first priest explained that he drew a circle on the ground, stepped a few paces back and pitched the money towards the circle. What landed in the circle he kept and what landed outside the circle god kept.

The second priest claimed that his method was almost the same, except that what landed outside the circle went to the priest and the money that landed inside the circle God kept.

The rabbi said, "I've got you both beat. I throw the money into the air and what god wants, God takes."

A pastor was leaving his area and was saying farewell to his congregation at the Church doors for the last time. He shook the hand of an elderly lady as she walked out. She said "Your successor won't be as good as you." "Nonsense", said the pastor, in a flattered tone. "No, really", said the old lady, "I've been here under five different ministers, and each new one has been worse than the last."

One beautiful Sunday morning, Samuel, a priest, announced to his congregation: "My good people, I have here in my hands, three sermons ... a \$100 sermon that lasts five minutes, a \$50 sermon that lasts fifteen minutes, and a \$10 sermon that lasts a full hour. "Now, we'll take the collection and see which one I'll deliver.

International Community in Longford Parish



Names: Kenneth & Jane Isah & family
From: Ishan, Nigeria
Arrived: Oct '02
First impressions: Good place to raise children
Miss most: Family



Name: Saavedra family
From: Mindando, Philippines
Arrived: 5 years, 8 months ago
First Impressions: Friendly people here
Miss Most: Family



Names: Biji Joseph and Leona Sebastian
From: Kerala, India
Arrived: 5 years ago
First Impressions: Nice and peaceful place
Miss Most: Family



Name: Pawelec family
From: Lublin, Poland
Arrived: Nearly 7 years ago
First impressions: Very small but peaceful and quiet
Miss Most: Family





2011 – CASA Celebrates 30 years!

It has been a successful year for the CASA group, no more than when CASA was formed thirty years ago, the same enthusiasm is present in every CASA gathering.

As in previous years, we continue to meet on a monthly basis and partake in activities such as days out, and fun days in the Family Centre where we have a social gathering including Mass, tea parties, disco's and games.

We participated in the CASA pilgrimage to Lourdes in July. We were joined by some people from the locality with special needs. The week was enjoyed by all, as they gained from the spiritual benefits of Lourdes.

In November we joined with other CASA groups in the Burlington hotel for the celebrations of CASA'S 30th anniversary. This was a lovely opportunity to meet friends, and socialize

while taking time to reflect on the years gone by, with fond memories of some members who are no longer with us.

We are grateful to all who helped us by participating in the marathon especially to the staff of Cameron who chose us as their charity. As this is the only source of funding we receive, it enables us to continue the work of CASA locally, as we look forward to the next thirty years of CASA!



A happy gathering of the CASA family.



Casa Members who took part in the Longford Marathon in late August. Standing from left: Miriam Concannon, Mary Lanigan, Elizabeth Lanigan, Therese O' Shea, Eddie Croghan, Eileen Meenaghan, Debbie Brennan. Front row: Caroline Gillen, Bernie Belton, Barney Kane, Donna Belton.

Highlights and Achievements at Templemichael College

As the new school year commenced we looked back at a very busy 2010/2011 in Templemichael College. It was a year of great change accompanied by steady progress and development within the school.

Great success was achieved once again by our students in the Leaving Certificate, Junior Certificate and also by our large number of Post Leaving Certificate students who excelled in a wide variety of courses. Many of our students are happily pursuing their ambitions in Third Level Colleges and we wish them all continued success in their studies. As always their success reflects their hard work the support of their families and the work done by the diligent team of teachers in Templemichael College.

Society is experiencing immense change both economically and educationally. We in Templemichael recognise the importance of creating and sustaining successful, confident, resourceful and highly skilled young people who have the resilience and ambition to pursue all opportunities. The students of Templemichael College are exposed to a busy educational experience involving both curricular and extracurricular activities. The following provides just a glimpse of some of the daily experiences in our school:

RETIREMENTS AND NEW APPOINTMENTS:

We extend a long and happy retirement to the following members of our teaching staff: Mr. Eddie Leavy, Mr. Gerry Moore, Ms. Noeleen Walshe and Mr. Brian Hyland. Their dedicated service has contributed immensely to the students of Templemichael College.

We welcome the following new members to the staff and we hope they enjoy their time in the school: Mr. Damian Wallace, Mr. Morgan McCaffrey, Ms. Lisa Anderson, Ms. Sarah Coffey, Mr. Shane Crossan, Mr. Oliver Fay and Ms. Caroline Naughton.

NEW UNIFORM/ SWIPE CARDS:

Ms. Nic Dhonnacha, the school principal, has introduced a new school uniform. Students now wear a navy jumper, grey trousers and black shoes. The excellent Art Department assisted the students to design the school crest. A new swipe card system is in operation



Art Competition – European Mobility Week. Left to right, Ms. Sinead McHugh, Jamie McMahon, Samantha Rossiter, Victor Appiah-Konadu, Ryan O'Kane, Paulina Narozna and Ms. Olive Wright



Templemichael College Student Council. Back row, left to right, Ms. Anna Marie Flynn, Nathan McKeown, Victor Appiah-Konadu, Philip Stewart, Ryan O'Kane and Usami Ali. Front Row L-R Bridie Flanagan, Jordan Hunter, Elizabeth Ojogbede, Sophie Hanafee and Principal Sorcha Nic Dhonnacha

tion in the school to monitor students as they enter and exit and to record attendance.

STUDENT COUNCIL:

The School Council had a very busy year. Two students from each year liaise with the school community and convey their concerns at the regular meetings. They were involved in organising several fundraising events and represented the school in Comhairle na nOg.

EDUCATIONAL TRIPS:

Students attend Leinster House each year as part of their C.S.P.E. Course.

Leaving Certificate Students have already completed their Field Study of the river Silles in Derrygonnell, Co. Fermanagh. This is a mandatory part of their Leaving Cert. Geography Course. Regular day trips to many of the Third Level Institutes and Universities are organised by the Career Guidance Teacher in Templemichael College. Speakers from many of the Colleges visit the school regularly to update students on relevant courses.

EUROPEAN MOBILITY WEEK/ GREEN SCHOOLS:

As part of the "Green Schools Initiative" the Green Schools Committee

successfully achieved the green flag for our water campaign last May. The Committee is currently pursuing the new initiative to encourage students to walk and cycle to school. This was incorporated with European Mobility Week. To celebrate this event an art competition was held in the school and the walls are adorned with eye catching posters.

COFFEE MORNING FOR POLISH PARENTS:

This new initiative provides the parents of our Polish students with the opportunity to meet and share experiences and to celebrate cultural differences. A translator was available to assist. This was a real success and we look forward to hosting further events.

SPORT:

Students are involved in many sporting activities both during and after school hours. They are currently enjoying Gaelic Football, Soccer and Swimming. The first year students are participating in the "JAWS Swimming Programme".

MS. READATHON:

Junior Cycle students once again have taken on the Ms. Readathon Challenge. This has become an annual fundraising event organised by the English Department and the J.C.S.P.Co-ordinator. All funds raised are forwarded to M.S. Ireland an organisation that provides essential support to people with M.S.

TASTES OF CHRISTMAS 2011:

After a very successful event last year Templemichael College once again hosted a "Celebration of Christmas Day Cooking" demonstration on Thursday, 8th December 2011. The well known author, broadcaster and chef Mr. Frank Moynihan amazed and impressed us with his delightful and easy to execute Christmas recipes. Local Christmas crafts were showcased along with freshly baked home-made produce and a beautiful range of gifts. It was a most enjoyable and informative evening. The proceeds will be shared between Templemichael College Development Fund and St. Christopher's Services Longford.

Finally the students and staff of Templemichael College would like to take this opportunity to wish you all

Nollaig Shona agus athbhliain faoi mhaise daoibh go léir.

Caring for People with Dementia

Longford Branch of The Alzheimer Society of Ireland



was founded in 1994 to work for and on behalf of people with dementia and their carers. We ensure they have the necessary supports and services to enable them to maximise quality of life, respecting the needs, rights and dignity of the individual.

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland exists to provide necessary supports to enable people with dementia to live as independently as possible within their own community. Our aim therefore within the Longford area is the provision of Dementia specific care and carers supports.

SERVICES PROVIDED IN CO. LONGFORD
The Alzheimer Society Longford Branch currently provides dementia specific care within Longford. We are dedicated to the principles of personhood, consultation with carers, innovation through research and development and partnership with local communities, state and voluntary agencies.

Our services currently include:

- We operate a Home Care Service where our trained workers care for people with Alzheimer's disease at home.
- In conjunction with a local Nursing Home in Longford we operate a day care Monday to Friday and a respite service. This service provides an essential respite to those families caring for their loved ones at home.
- We also have a day care service operating each Saturday at St. Joseph's care centre, Longford.

Families who wish to be considered for any of these services should contact: Breda at our local office: 043-3348402 or 086 3802183 or Samantha at: 086 6078584.

Our office is located at No 1 Church Street, Longford which is open from 9am to 5 pm daily. Tel: 043 3348402. Fax: 043 3342723.

Longford Victim Support

Longford Victim Support established in 1998 offers a free, confidential



listening service to victims of crime. Our trained volunteers provide emotional and practical support to those who have suffered at the hands of the criminal. We also provide Court Support to anyone attending court for the first time.

If you have been a victim of crime and feel you need help do not hesitate to contact us at 043 33 47422.

Corpus Christi Processions

50 years ago - An Altar Server remembers

■ HUGH DOLAN

For Mass servers in St. Mel's Cathedral Holy Week was the busiest period of the year. It was a mixture of palm, chrism, baptismal water, shrouded statues, Tenebrae, a darkened building, silenced bells, indoor processions, incense, candles. UNTIL ...

"The Corpus Christi procession will take place this year on Sunday June...." We were all attention as from the marble pulpit Fr Wall read out the route. It varied from year to year and must have caused consternation for the residents affected. It was the signal for "major tidy ups" as each area sought to look spic and span for the great occasion. It was down to Mick Hanawins, Matt Farrells or Providers to buy paint, distemper, whitewash or whatever was required to have houses and premises gleaming.

A frantic search took place for flags and bunting which had not seen the light of day since the last time the procession passed. Unprofessional language may have been used as it was discovered that the flag poles had been cut up to make goal posts and were "not fit for purpose". National and Papal flags were eventually located. The Eucharistic Congress flag evoked the most memories for older people but puzzled their children. "What's the blue flag for Mummy?" was a common question.

On the Sunday prior to the procession the assembly points for the various groups were announced...again the pulpit. Men's sodality was to assemble at the Temperance Hall, children at St. Mary's Terrace, Women's sodality at St. Patrick's Terrace. I was always intrigued by the instruction that "the children of Mary in their cloaks and veils" were to assemble on Convent Road.

The morning of the procession always dawned bright and sunny. Perhaps there were wet and windy days but the years have filtered them out.

The front of the Cathedral was decked out in a "brand new suit" and Jimmy Reilly was the tailor. Flags fluttered from the top of the portico. Lines of yellow and white bunting connected the same portico with the Cathedral railings. Tall flags flanked the entrance gates. St. Mel himself must have been impressed as he gazed down.

One year we were surprised to see loudspeakers being attached to ESB poles along the route and cable connecting them. Tony and Jack Farrell had devised a system whereby the prayers and hymns could be relayed from the Cathedral. To our ears it was like having our own *Radio Longford*. We lived opposite the Cathedral and my Mother sent over her record of Fr. Sydney Mc Ewan singing "Flowers of the May" to enable sound checks to be carried out. Be it in Teffia Park, St. Michael's Road, St. Mel's Road or Harbour Row the sound of that hymn booming out meant there was not much time left for preparations.

At 3pm the procession moved off led by the men of the Parish, rosary beads dangling from their hands. In lines of ten, old and young were an amazing sight as they made their way under a warm June sun. The children who had recently received their First Communion were particularly conspicuous- the boys in their new suits, rosettes in their lapels, hair recently cut. The girls were like brides, their white dresses and veils providing a contrast to the darker garb of the adults.



The Sacred Host in a golden monstrance was borne by Dr. Mc Namee, Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnois. The canopy under which he walked was carried by members of the Urban District Council and St. Vincent de Paul. The Mass servers flanked it on either side. The thurifer walked in front, turning at intervals to incense the Blessed Sacrament. Torch bearers provided a guard of honour. The awe and reverence was palpable.

Joyful mysteries of the Rosary were followed by the sorrowful and glorious. Thousands of voices answered the responses as Fr. O'Rourke's voice carried from the Cathedral via the loudspeakers. The Farrell brothers had done an excellent job again. Hymns interspersed the prayers "Sweet Heart of Jesus", "Holy God we Praise Thy Name", "Soul of my Saviour". The voices of the Cathedral Choir under Tommy Devine back at base filled the streets and the choir of men and women on the move joined in.

The route itself bore testimony to the hours of hard work put in by the residents. What a transformation. Altars and shrines had sprung up in every vacant space. Holy pictures from the miniature to the enormous were placed in every location. St. Patrick, the Sacred Heart, the Transfiguration, Pope Pius XII - a shop in Knock could not match the selection. In every doorway candles, night lights and small oil lamps burned before statues positioned on white cloth-covered tables. Lilies, Lilac, peony roses, flowers of every hue filled vases, jugs and any container available. Sparkling windows, spotless curtains, scrubbed paths-the passing of the Blessed Sacrament in front of your house was taken very seriously.

After about an hour and a half the first lines of the procession were within sight of the Cathedral. A temporary altar had been erected in front of the main door. Gradually the courtyard filled. Babes-in-arms, babes in prams, women with their heads covered, the weary and the cheerful packed in as the evening sun spread its rays. Latin hymns we associated with Benediction added to the solemnity: *Tantum Ergo*, *O Salutaris*. The Bishop raised the monstrance as the congregation knelt in adoration; the cold hard ground marking our knees. A final hymn-possibly "Faith of our Fathers"- and it was time to disperse.



Some of the scenes at this year's Corpus Christi Procession at Demesne / Lisbrack area of the Parish.

Hunger pangs reminded us it was tea time.

At 6 o'clock the joyful chimes rang out over Longford. Flags and bunting were being packed away for another

year. Religious pictures, candles, statues were back in their usual positions. Tony and Jack were dismantling the public address system. My mother had Fr. Sydney Mc Ewan safe again

in the record cabinet. Thursdays Longford Leader would feature some photographs to remind us of the Corpus Christi procession. Each of us had our own memory.



Caring for the Polish Pastoral Ministry

I'm Fr. Krzysztof Przanowski. I was born in 1976 in Kielce, Poland. I've been a priest for Kielecka Diocese since 2001. I worked for the Polish Pastoral Ministry in St. Audoen's Church in Dublin for the last few months. This is my first experience abroad and I've just started learning English. I'm learning new cultures and different ways of spreading the Word of God.

I came to Ardagh and Clonmacnois Diocese in July 2011. I live in St. Mary's Parish in Athlone and I look after Polish Pastoral Ministry.

The opening of Irish Church to Polish Pastoral Ministry is a huge gift and help. It's also a testimony of faith.

Every nationality has its own tradition and culture. Foreign language is also an obstacle in everyday life of emigrants. For the Poles the confession in Polish and community experience are very important. The Poles people celebrate church festivities in their own tradition that's why the presence of a Polish chaplain is so important.

Polish Mass is celebrated in four towns in Diocese: Carrick-on-Shannon - the first Sunday of every month at 2pm; Longford - the first and third Sunday of every month at 5pm; Ballymahon - the second Sunday of every month at 1pm. and Athlone - the second and fourth Sunday of every month at 4pm.

There is also a need for the other Sacraments and the preparation for receiving them.

The Polish people are grateful for the Pastoral Ministry. It's a great help and joy for them. They want to



Fr. Krzysztof Przanowski

develop the faith in their hearts.

Being a priest is a way of standing with other people. I try to be open to everybody around me. I promise to look for new and better ways of serving the Polish people here in Ireland far from home.

I would like to thank the Bishop and the priests for their kindness to the Polish Community. I would like to thank the Irish people for their openness and friendliness. May God reward you for your goodness. I pray for the Irish and Polish Nations and wish everyone lots of luck and every blessing.

God Bless you.

Fr. Krzysztof Przanowski
 – Polish Chaplaincy in Ardagh and Clonmacnois
 Athlone, 28,11,2011

Jestem ksiądz Krzysztof Przanowski. Urodziłem się w 1976 roku w Kielcach.

Jestem księdzem Diecezji Kieleckiej od 2001 roku. Przez ostatnie kilka miesięcy pracowałem w Duszpasterstwie Polskim w Dublinie przy kościele St. Audoen'a. To mój pierwszy pobyt poza ojczyzną. Podjąłem naukę języka angielskiego. Powoli poznaję nową kulturę, poznaję różne sposoby troski o przekaz wiary.

Do Diecezji Ardagh and Clonmacnois przybyłem w lipcu 2011 roku. Mieszkam przy parafii St. Mary's w Athlone i organizuję Duszpasterstwo Polskie w tej Diecezji.

Otwarcie Kościoła Irlandzkiego na Polskie duszpasterstwo jest dla nas wielkim darem i pomocą. Jest także drogą do wzajemnego świadectwa wiary.

Każda narodowość posiada swoją kulturę i tradycję. Inny język jest także barierą w życiu emigranckim. Dla Polaków ważna jest spowiedź po polsku oraz doświadczenie wspólnoty. Polacy organizują święta w polskiej

tradycji i obecność polskiego duszpasterstwa jest szczególnie ważna.

Polskie msze św. są odprowadzane w 4 miejscach Diecezji.

W Karrick-on-Shannon w pierwszą niedzielę miesiąca o godz. 2.p.m. W Longford w 1 i 3 niedzielę miesiąca o godz. 5.p.m. W Ballymahon w 2 niedzielę miesiąca o godz. 1.p.m. W Athlone w 2 i 4 niedzielę miesiąca o godz. 4.p.m. Ważne jest także sprawowanie sakramentów św. Istnieje potrzeba przygotowania różnych dokumentów, szczególnie dotyczących zawierania sakramentu małżeństwa.

Polacy są wdzięczni, za dar duszpasterstwa. To duża dla nich pomoc i radość. Droga wiary katolickiej w sercach Polaków dalej chce być rozwijana.

Być księdzem to droga radości z obecności przy człowieku. Staram się być otwarty dla tych, którzy są obok mnie. Obiecuję szukać nowych dróg jeszcze piękniejszej wspólnoty i współpracy.

Dziękuję za zyczliwość księdzu Biskupowi i księżom dla nas emigrantów. Dziękuję Irlandczykom za okazaną otwartość i serdeczność. Niech Bóg za to dobro wynagradza.

W modlitwie polecam Bogu naród Irlandzki i Polski. Życzę wszystkim ciągłego odkrywania miłości Boga.

God Bless you.

Fr. Krzysztof Przanowski – Polish Chaplaincy in Ardagh and Clonmacnois
 Athlone, 28,11,2011



Blessing the food with holy water.



Fr. Brendan and Marta who acted as translator before the ceremony.



The congregation look on at the Cathedral Centre.

Blessing of Food for the Polish Community on Holy Saturday



Children's goodies in this food basket.



Retrieving the baskets of food at the end of the ceremony.



Some of the 500 people present awaiting the start of the ceremony.



Children's goodies in this food basket.

ATTIC Youth Café, an Unstoppable Force for Longford's Youth!

Five years on from the opening of the ATTIC Youth Café in the Temperance Hall and what an amazing five years it's been. The ATTIC Youth Café in Longford was the brain child of the Temperance Hall management committee who felt after the newly renovated Temperance Hall was opened it was important to incorporate into the community hall a dedicated youth facility for the young people of Longford Town and surrounding areas. The management committee of the Temperance Hall established a working committee of community people to spear head the project and after a year of planning the ATTIC Youth Café was born. Initially the Café was a place for young people of Longford to meet and hang out on Saturday afternoons from 4pm – 8pm. This continued for over a year until *Foróige*, the national youth organisation based in Longford came on board with the project and decided that the facility was an ideal venue to engage with much more young people. With a team of dedicated volunteers, *Foróige* worked on opening the café on a daily basis at lunch times from 12:30pm – 2pm and afternoon programmes such as Drug & Alcohol education, Leadership, Citizenship and events. Drop In sessions were also introduced on Wednesday evenings for junior cycle and Friday evenings for senior cycle young people. To date the ATTIC Youth Café engages with over 500 young people in direct programmes and over 1500 in activity based events. The *Foróige* ATTIC Youth Café is open to all young people at Post Primary level and is free membership. This year the

ATTIC Youth Café brought All Ireland glory to County Longford when they were announced the "Permanent TSB *Foróige Youth Citizenship Top Teen 2011*". The Community were united in celebrations as the young people of the *Foróige* ATTIC Youth Café were announced winners live on TV3. This was an amazing achievement not only for the ATTIC Youth Café but also for the entire county of Longford.

The Parish Review gets a sneak peek into what the *Foróige* ATTIC Youth Café has been up to and what the future holds for this progressive facility **ACTIVITIES THROUGHOUT THE YEAR:** The ATTIC's success is very much down to the dedicated base of volunteers who give of their time to give back to the community in which we live. Activities in the ATTIC Youth Café include monthly Disco's for junior cycle young people where they can meet and socialise in an Alcohol & Drug free environment under the close supervision of trained volunteers. Longford Youth Factor is still a major attraction for young people throughout the county and takes place in January over four weeks. It is an X Factor style competition which showcases young people's talents to a live audience.

Summer time can be an exciting time for young people with school holidays, however it can also be a boring time with very little to occupy their time. The ATTIC appreciates this and annually organises Summer programmes and Camps for young people which involves trips away, arts and crafts, sports events and of course activity centres.



Picture shows ATTIC members on stage at The Helix having just won the Foróige Top Teens of Ireland award.



Ruth McGarry with Rachel Cheevers and Fiona Leahy join Martin and Syball on TV3's Morning Show after winning the Foróige Top Teens of Ireland.



Jim Maher, (Regional Youth Officer) pictured with Foróige Leadership group graduating from NUI Galway in October, were, Hannah Farrell, Louise Sheridan, Nikitta Cassidy, Rachel Cheevers, Grace Hogan, Luke Casserly, Ciara Linanne, Marie Claire Lgoe and John Farrell.

HYPE 2012 - Youth Festival in Longford!

After a very successful 2011, the New Year will yet again bring another first for the *Foróige* ATTIC Youth Café and for Longford as the Café host the first ever Youth Festival aimed at teenagers aged 13 – 18 years. The event has been aptly called HYPE Youth Festival 2012 and will take place in the grounds of the Rugby Club. *Foróige* clubs all over Ireland have been invited to the day and the event is expecting in excess of 5000 young people from all over the country to attend. This event is being organised by the ATTIC Management committee and *Foróige* in an effort to secure money to be able to purchase a premises for a state of the art youth centre in Longford town.

Programmes for young people:

The ATTIC prides itself in delivering non formal educational programmes to young people in Longford. The ATTIC Drug and Alcohol programme was developed in 2009 and delivers education and preventative pieces based on the needs of young people to enable them to make informed choices around alcohol and drug use. This programme also develops confidence and self esteem while challenging young people attitudes towards Alcohol and drug use. These programmes are delivered in an individual and a group basis and are tailored to meet the individual age and needs of the young person involved in the programme. This programme is incorporated into graphic design, photography, soccer and beauty workshops which encourages young people to participate while developing much needed life skills.

The ATTIC is proud to be at the heart of the community and annually young members of the ATTIC get involved in a citizenship project which encourages young people to identify a need in the community and try and bring about change in the community in which they live. The ATTIC first took part in the Permanent TSB *Foróige* Youth Citizenship programme in 2009 and were awarded for their efforts in developing the Longford Youth Factor competition with winning the overall award. In 2010 the ATTIC again entered the programme and were awarded a merit for their achievement with their novel idea a booklet for new first year pupils called "Are you ready for the next step". However the ATTIC took their citizenship project to

another level in 2011 by developing a discount card for local retailers to encourage young people to shop local, a recession themed project earned the ATTIC this year's All Ireland Top Teen award which was broadcast on TV3 in November.

ATTIC ON TOUR! INTERNATIONAL TRIPS

The *Foróige* ATTIC Youth Café annual trip abroad happens in early June with past destinations being Edinburgh 2009 & 2011 and London in 2010. This annual trip is organised for young people who give of their time effortlessly to the ATTIC, supporting programmes, events, organising events for their peers and supervise events alongside leaders. The ATTIC feel it is important for young people in Longford to get opportunities like this to travel abroad to learn new cultures and experience new things for themselves.

The *Foróige* ATTIC Youth Café has become a fundamental stepping stone in the lives of young people living in the town and surrounding areas as it gives them a fun safe environment for them to socialise under the supervision of committed volunteers where parents can be assured that their young person is safe and involved in something worthwhile. The café is a unique venture for Longford as it is a voluntarily led initiative where local community people have come together to provide this service to the many young people engaging with the facility.

Successes to date for the *Foróige* ATTIC Youth Café to date include; St Patricks Day Parade 2008, 2010, 2011, AIB Better Ireland Award runners up 2008, Permanent TSB Youth Citizenship awards 2009 and 2010 winners and Permanent TSB *Foróige* Citizenship All Ireland Top Teens 2011 winners.

So what's next for the *Foróige* ATTIC Youth Café?



Fiona Leahy, Ciara Fallon and Rachel Cheevers.

Leadership for Life Programme

The Albert Schweitzer "Leadership for Life Programme" was developed in the ATTIC in 2010. This programme is aimed at senior cycle members who wish to develop their leadership skills and public speaking abilities. The programme is designed to encourage young people to explore their dreams and visions and develop concrete ways of achieving them. Young people who take part in this programme can get the opportunity to graduate for NUI Galway with a foundation certificate in youth work and community action. The ATTIC are very proud to have nine of our members graduate from NUI in Galway last October.

New York here we come!

In 2012 The *Foróige* ATTIC Youth Café will be crossing the Atlantic Ocean as ten young people will travel along with volunteers to the Big Apple on a leadership exchange with All Hallows School in New York. This is a very exciting time for the young people in the ATTIC as it will be the first time a youth group in Ireland will get this opportunity to promote Longford and Ireland in the United States.



Co Longford Social Services 40th Anniversary Celebrations

On 15th September 2011 Co. Longford Social Services celebrated its 40th Anniversary at its head quarters St Joseph's Hospital. The hugely successful event began with Mass celebrated by Bishop Colm O'Reilly. This was followed by the unveiling of a memorial to the late Sr Calasanctius, our co founder. Guest speaker Denis

Doherty (former CEO, HSE) addressed the gathering and launched "Thoughts & Reflections" compiled by Padraic Gearty. This booklet is all to do with Volunteers helping Volunteers. Kieran Nugent, from Irish Red Cross, designed and launched our new Website on the night. www.mealsonwheelslongford.ie
 The organisation, founded in 1971

by Sr Calasanctius and Dr Gerry McDonagh recognised the need for a Social Service within the county. Padraic Gearty was nominated Chairman on its inception in 1971, a post he held for some 38 years. In 2009 Padraic resigned his post but not before he had assigned Donie Murtagh, Chairman and Denis Hughes, Assistant

Chairman. Both men joked "It is now taking two of us to fill the post held by one man for the last 38 years"! Sadly, 2011 has seen the passing of Sr Calasanctius and Padraic, two wonderful people who motivated and guided the entire force at Co. Longford Social Services. Today, 40 years later, the service has gone from strength to strength,

delivering over 48,000 meals in 2010, Chirophy Services for over 65's, visitation of the sick and elderly in their homes and the provision of transport to Day Care Services, Clubs etc. Further details of our services can be viewed on www.mealsonwheelslongford.ie or telephone 043 3350114/3350138.



Anniversary Celebrations - Co. Longford Social Services

Remembering Padraic Gearty RIP

Many people contribute to community life and whether that commitment and involvement be great or small, they all enrich the community in which they live. Longford has been particularly fortunate in that so many people, through various organisations, over many years, give so willingly of their time and talents to help make Longford the vibrant, friendly and forward-thinking town that it is. The late Padraic Gearty epitomised this philosophy, perhaps more than most, and his life-long involvement in the sporting, charitable, political, legal and cultural life of the town is without parallel. His was a life of leadership by example, full of optimism and positive thinking, that helped to engender a similar vein of thinking in the many individuals and groups he encountered and helped throughout his life.

He was a man with an innate sense of moral righteousness. He sought, as he always had, an understanding of the predicament or problem that confronted people and an analysis of how best to respond to it. On many occasions, often unseen and unheralded, his adopted stance, in sometimes difficult circumstances, showed outstanding courage, a reasoned and principled view of what was just and unjust. A very popular and affable man with a great sense of humour, he retained many life-long and lasting friendships with people from all walks of life. His involvement and untiring efforts for the betterment of Longford was surpassed only by his loyalty to his immediate and extended family.
Ar Dheis De go raibh a Anam.

Ni bheidh a leitheid ann aris - Sr Calasanctius

Sr Calasanctius born Susan Duffy in Dromard, committed her entire life to improving the lives of others, particularly the sick, the elderly and those who lived outside the margins of society. Her kindness and empathy led her to challenge many of the accepted norms of the time. These traits also drove her to transform or set up a number of organisations dedicated to the provision of services. Sr Calasanctius started her career of mercy back in 1946 when she was appointed a permanent nurse in the County Home, became Matron in 1954 and when she retired in 1983 she continued her works of mercy working full-time with Longford Social Services. As a Mercy sister and a member of the parish community she played her part through Longford Social Services which she started some 40 years

ago. Under the auspices of the council, sub-divisions were created and put in place, later to prosper independently:- Meals on Wheels, Hospice Homecare, The Millennium Cemetery, Tuesday Club (89 Club), Ladies Family Club, Community Information Centre, Laundry Services, Guesthouse scheme of 1974, School Breakfasts Clubs 1977, Stroke club and House maintenance/Repairs.
*"Sr Calasanctius was an inspiration and a legend, by whom we all of us have been led and driven, who refused ever to take no for an answer; by whom we have been motivated and guided, who has illuminated and given purpose and meaning to our lives of which at least some of us did not ever think could be possible."
 Padraic Gearty.*



Community Mothers – supporting new parents in the area

Community Mothers are volunteers who use their experiences as mothers as well as local knowledge to support and encourage new parents. We aim to be a very valuable, local resource helping to reduce the isolation and stress many parents experience by offering mother-to-mother support and encouragement. We achieve this through our home visiting programme for families with children under 5 years old.

There are many reasons why parents use Community Mothers : Feeling isolated in the community because of no family or friends nearby; Finding it difficult adjusting to the life of being a parent; Wishing to know what is happening in the local community but don't know where to start.

Parent and Toddler Group - Meet every Tuesday and Thursday from 11am - 1pm in Harmony House Community Centre. Activities include hand painting, arts and crafts, story/

music time, bouncy castle, outings. New parents are always welcome and can come along and make new friends over a cuppa.

INFANT MASSAGE CLASSES

Baby massage is an ancient art. It is relaxing for the baby and improves sleep patterns, enhances development and boosts immunity. It can also help with relaxation. Above all baby massage is mutually enjoyable and fun. The effect of massage are immediate but can last a lifetime.

The co-ordinator is Elaine Keogh, Harmony House Community Centre, St. Michael's Road, Longford. Tel: 043.3348754 Fax: 043.3332110 or check out our website. www.cmums.ie for further details.

Pictured top right are members of Community Mothers group. Pictured (bottom) right are members of Longford Community Mothers pictured along with their children.



Rainbows – “it doesn't have to hurt forever”

Rainbows offers support for children and young adults grieving a death, separation, divorce or any other painful transition in their family.

Rainbows provides this help through trained facilitators, who become their loving listener. The experience of sharing their own story, when they are ready, gives children the opportunity to learn to reach out to others for support. This lesson, hopefully, will remain with them for life.

The Rainbows programme offers healing topics with which we assist children in the building of self esteem. Through these topics we aim also to direct them towards a healthy acceptance of the changes that have taken place in their lives.

This programme is available to children and young adults aged between 5 and 18 years old, who have experienced separation or death. It provides a confidential space for young people to express and understand their feelings regarding their experiences. It is free and there are both Christian and secular editions available.

We at Rainbows believe “it does not have to hurt forever” and since it is necessary for emotional healing to take place, the purpose of rainbows is to provide these young people with an opportunity to share their feelings in an acceptable environment supported by trained caring compassionate facilitators.

Indeed such is the success of the programme that we were delighted to welcome back recently children who had gone through the rainbows programme and are now returned as trained facilitators.

Rainbows programme is facilitated by Sr. Angela and her team including Anne, Rachel, Philomena and Elizabeth, within Longford parish at the Family Centre.

If you wish to join us at Rainbows please contact 043-3346827.

Cumann na bhFiann Longfort

“Promoting a love of the teanga” Gaelige amongst our teenagers still flourishes vibrantly, here in the heart of our county, as Cumann na bhFiann (Ireland's largest Irish Language Youth Organisation) provides a safe and well supervised environment for them to do so.

Every Friday evening Cumann na bhFiann organize two clubs, An Óg Cumann to cater for primary school goers, and a Sean Cumann, for secondary school students. Emma Ni Loinsigh from Ballinalee has been in charge of the Club for the past 3 years and commented that the Club has had a waiting list since before the Halloween break again this year. We have quite a long waiting list on both the Óg and Sean Cumann this year which is great. Parents and teachers alike really see the value of the work we carry out here.

Of course the fluency that students gain in Coláiste na bhFiann gaeltachts during Summer months greatly aids them as they return to both school and the Cumann in September. We make the Cumann appealing to all age groups through the different trips and activities we get up to throughout the year.

For further information on Cumann or Coláiste na bhFiann log onto www.cnb.ie or call 01 8259342.

Beatha agus sláinte ó Ghaelscoil Longfoirt!

Tá pobal na scoile idir dhaltai agus múinteoirí ag treabhadh an ghoirí i gcónaí i dtimpeallacht spreagúil thaitneamhach. Bíonn an Ghaeilge mar theanga phobail na scoile idir na páistí, na múinteoirí, na bhainistíocht agus na tuismitheoirí. Tá na daltaí i nGael scoil Longfoirt mar chuid de ghluaiseacht dhomhanda dhátheangach.

Tá Gaelscoil Longfoirt an-bhródúil as a gcuid seirbhísí ICT atá curtha i bhfeidhm sa scoil le tamailín anuas. Most classes are enjoying learning interactively with our new touch-screen interactive whiteboards. As we all know the children of today have been born into this age of technology and they are generally very comfortable and capable users. The prevalence of ICT requires us to ensure that all children are capable of full participation in this digital world. We are also in the process of creating our new website to include a blog, wiki and podcasting.

PEIL 2011 - GIRLS DIVISION 1 VICTORY IS HIGHLIGHT OF YEAR

After narrowly missing out on last years final Gaelscoil cailíní had a point to prove in 2011. After an unbeaten league campaign which saw wins over Newtownforbes, Colehill, Edgeworthstown and St Emer's, challenge matches and many training sessions the cailíní finally made it to the Cumann na mBunscoil Division 1 Final in Pearse Park.

A fantastic spirited team performance saw us through in a tough game in which we were losing at halftime. Longford Goalkeeper Damien Sheridan presented the medals to the team. Our excellent captain Eimear Ní Bhriain was our Player of the year while Chloe Ní Fhlanagáin received her Player of the Final trophy. The brilliant Aileen Ni Fhinneachta won defender of the year. Ace goalscorer Rachel Ní Bhaoil took the golden boot home and the fast and fearless Orla Nic Cháimhín received the young player of the year award.

Our mixed team represented our school very well this year in Division 1. They put in some excellent performances and had a brilliant last minute victory over local rivals St Emer's. Captain Iarla O Súilleabháin was our player of the year just ahead of the talented Proinsias Mac Thiarnáin who was last year's defender of the year. Both players have been fixtures on the Gaelscoil team for many years and both were on



Ag baint taitnimh as an sneachta!



Maith sibh, a chailíní!

our cup winning team last year. Nathan O Tuathail won the coveted Golden boot award for his excellent scoring exploits. The fearless Terence Ó hEigeartaigh was our defender of the year and the skilful Dylan Ó Muiri won the young player of the year award.

SEACHTAIN NA GAELIGE

Bhí spiorad gaelach na scoile le feiceáil agus le cloisteáil timpeall na háite i rith Seachtain na Gaeilge i mbliana. Bhí na páistí agus na múinteoirí go léir an gnóthach ag damhsa agus ag canadh don seachtain! Bhí taispeántas dramaíochta den scoth againn le linn na seachtaine i mí Márta.

Mar chuid de Sheachtain na Gaeilge tháinig daltaí ón gcéad bhliain ó Choláiste Teampaill Mhíicil agus léigh siad scéalta i nGaeilge do na páistí i rang a dó. Chuaigh páistí ó rang a cúig isteach go rang na naonáin bheaga, na naonáin mhóra agus rang a haon freisin ag léamh scéalta.

Bhí lá iontach ag na páistí i lár na seachtaine nuair a ghléas siad ar fad i nglas. Bhí an ghrian ag scoilteadh na gcloch an mhaidin sin agus chuaigh gach rang amach go dtí an clós don chéilí mór. Bhí maidin bheomhar agus taitneamhach againn. Bhain idir mhúinteoirí agus daltaí an taitneamh go deo as Ballaí Luimnigh, Ionsaí na hInse, An Damhsa Mór agus An Dreoilín agus as imeachtaí Sheachtain na Gaeilge. Táimid ag siúl cheana féin leis an mbliain seo chugainn.

LÁ SPÓIRT

The highlight of the Summer Term in Gaelscoil Longfoirt is our Lá Spóirt which takes place each June. We are fortunate in having the fantastic facilities at Slashers available to us on this day - Mile buíochas! 2011 saw a new departure for us as “Sports Days ‘R’ Us” brought their expertise and helped us organise a wonderful day for all.

SCHOLASTIC BOOK FAIR

Each March heralds the arrival of the much loved Scholastic Book Fair to Gaelscoil Longfoirt. We organise the date each year to coincide with ‘World Book Day’ on which every páiste dresses up as their favourite character from their favourite book.

FÍS/FILM-MAKING

Last November the sixth class students from Gaelscoil Longfoirt were given the chance to experiment with video-making. Enthusiastically they all put their heads together in order to write a script, which was then displayed through pictures on a storyboard. Each

group sourced a selection of props and costumes before setting out to film.

The sense of achievement and pride was evident on each face. The hard work was then over and the time had come to invite their biggest critics to view the premiere of their productions. The parents were welcomed to walk the red carpet, munch on popcorn as they were seated in the VIP area of Gaelscoil Longfoirt's newly transformed cinema!

ATHCHÚRSÁIL/RECYCLING

We are currently working with Sheffield FC in an initiative to help children in Africa. The Boots for Africa appeal aims to help develop the skills and fitness of disadvantaged children and provide more children with the opportunity to play football.

It is our aim to collect as many unused and/or unwanted football boots as we can and send them on to Sheffield FC.

We are collecting old and unwanted mobile phones and sending them onto The Jack and Jill Children's Foundation who recycle them and this provides direct funding, to families of children with brain damage.

GAIRDÍN NA SCOILE

Gaelscoil Longfoirt started their first ‘Gairdín na Scoile’ in February 2011. Four raised beds were made and placed in our Garden. Each class had a vegetable to grow. Naionáin Bheaga and Naionáin Mhóra had lettuce to plant, Ranga 1 & 2 had peas, Ranga 3 & 4 had radish and ranga 5 & 6 had potatoes and onions.

These started in the classroom and after a few weeks there were planted in the raised beds. The children enjoyed planting these and getting dirty! They also decorated their raised beds with colourful butterflies, lady birds and also windmills.

We have a compost bin in our school garden. Every day pencil parings, fruit skins and tea bags from the teacher's kitchen are collected and placed into the compost bin. After a few months these turn into compost and is used in our school garden.

MARY'S MEALS BACKPACK PROJECT:

We have been involved with The Backpack Project for a few years now. We have collected many old backpacks and schoolbags and filled them up with school supplies and clothes and they have been sent onto children in East Africa



Couples who celebrated their 25th and 50th Wedding Jubilees.



Margaret and Jimmy McLoughlin who celebrate 50 years of marriage are photographed here with family members and Bishop Colm.

25th and 50th Wedding Jubilee Celebrations



Bernadette and Michael Wall pictured with their son Micheal and Sharon McDermott and Bishop Colm.

My Fond Memories of Longford Parish

Fr Paul Kangkai from Jalingo Diocese in Nigeria spent three summers with us in Longford Parish – 2006, 2008 and 2010. The following are some of his musings on this time among us.

■ FR. PAUL KANGKAI

There is a saying in Nigeria made popular by one of our best known playwrights Ola Rotimi that “until the rotten tooth is pulled out, the mouth must chew with caution.” I have not lived long enough in Longford to qualify to capture the heart and soul of the community. However, my brief visits to St. Mel’s Cathedral since 2006 have given me a glimpse of what it entails, hence my reason for taking the cautious path.

Let me begin by stating that the year 2006 was my first ever visit to Ireland. But it was not my first time meeting Irish people. As a matter of fact, I first encountered Irish people at my infancy, at baptism. Coming from the north eastern part of Nigeria, Taraba State, it is fairly easy to know why I encountered Irish people early in life.

In the first place, the north eastern part of Nigeria is the most backward part of the country, that is, if economic and sociological indices are factors to be considered. It is equally a vast geographical area with complex terrain of rivers, streams, hills, forests in good proportions. Nigeria has the geographical space of 923,768 square kilometres with the north occupying quite a sizable part of it. The country covers the distance of 1,040 kilometres straight from the coast to the northern limits. The sheer size of the area to be evangelized was so big that the SMA ceded the north eastern part of Nigeria to the Augustinian Order.

Thus, by dint of their Christian faith, courage, hard work, perseverance and determination, the Augustinian fathers and later sisters and

their collaborators went about the uphill task of implanting the faith in this virgin territory. Were it not for their doggedness in the face of crushing weather conditions and new cultural experiences, I would probably like many from that part of the world, remained illiterate or have become a Muslim since Islam had a longer presence in the northern part of Nigeria.

Fortunately for me, I benefited from the education the missionaries offered in the schools they ran. Consequently, quite early in life I heard names of cities like Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Waterford, Galway etc.

It turned out that 2006 was at the height of the golden age of Ireland in recent history, the “Celtic Tiger” years. I was moved by the infrastructural developments taking place. One got the feeling that the entire country was being rebuilt. The mood was upbeat. Occasionally, figures were released about the latest number of millionaires in the land. I recall reading somewhere that the Irish were the second richest people in Europe. On top of this, the summer of 2006 was magnificent with long dry and sunny days than any I have experienced since then. It was as if the “gods” conspired in my favour or as they say here, I brought the sunshine with me.

How did I find my way to Longford? It was quite simple. I was introduced to Fr. Tom Cox through a mutual friend of ours Sr. Helena McEvilly FMDM who incidentally was working like myself in the city of Jos. We worked previously at a rural village called Yakoko between 2000 and 2001. The sisters ran a rural hospital while I was the parish priest and chaplain to the hospital. I was thrilled to be communicating with Fr. Tom Cox whom I first encountered from reading his column in the INTERCOM. I loved his style of writing because it was witty and down to earth.

Eventually he introduced me to Fr. Tom Healy and Bishop Colm O’Reilly who graciously invited me to the diocese. I arrived in June and was met by Fr. Tom Cox at the airport in Dublin. The re-

ception was out of this world. It felt like we had known each other for years. By the time we arrived in Longford he had hinted me on what to expect.

St. Mel’s Cathedral was the first landmark that caught my attention coming into Longford town from Dublin. If the outside is beautiful the inside was truly magnificent. It was a building that one would naturally like to pray in. I marvelled at the expertise and careful attention to details in the Cathedral that was built over a century and a half ago. It was also well kept. However, the best asset of Longford town is its people. St. Mel’s parish was the lens through which I was able to draw that conclusion. I was warmly received wherever I went.

Church participation and attendance was quite impressive. It was far better than what I had been reading in magazines and journals about the dwindling numbers of church attendance in the churches of the northern hemisphere. I was taken aback by the large number of young people attending Sunday mass. Similarly, I was captivated by the number of people turning up for private contemplation and prayers before the blessed Eucharist every day. It was one of the lasting memories I took home.

Those familiar with the Nigerian Church know how silence is difficult to come by. Thanks to our Pentecostal brethren who sometimes view silence as a manifestation of the lack of the presence of the Holy Spirit. One could not miss the strong sense of community. This came out visibly at christenings, funerals, weddings, sports and local festivals.

I observed that the summer liturgy of 2006 was generally quieter than normal. Nevertheless, in 2008 when I came for my second visit the summer liturgy was greatly improved upon. There was more music in the Sunday liturgies. It was apparent that the number of participants had increased. Many renovations had taken place in the Cathedral and there was a feeling of newness about it.

Unfortunately, the national mood had changed.

The economic meltdown had set in. The virus of corruption hitherto synonymous with developing countries like Nigeria had caught up with the industrialized world. We saw the globalization of corruption. The global financial crisis caused by the greed of politicians, bankers, and their associates was more severe than was initially anticipated. Interestingly, I found people in Ireland friendlier and more receptive than in previous years. Indeed, the depth of the human spirit is far ahead of what money can buy.

My visit in 2010 came after the tragic fire at St. Mel’s Cathedral. The fire robbed the Presbytery of its life. Ironically, the Presbytery had been renovated a few months earlier. It was a deserted place with the occasional presence of construction workers.

Looking at the burnt building from outside was misleading. The destruction inside seemed to me like one that could only be caused by a huge explosion. It was a monumental loss of inexplicable proportions. Knowing how the people and priests zealously looked after the building it was unmistakable their collective sense of loss.

I was pleased that within a short time an alternative was found for the ruined Cathedral at the Cathedral Centre. The Cathedral Centre is beautifully conceived, especially the fact that the parishioners are seating round and close to the altar. Most significantly was that the bonding that the Cathedral gave the community would not be lost.

From a personal point of view, as impressive as the Cathedral Centre is, it does not feel the same way as in St. Mel’s Cathedral. Having to celebrate mass at the Cathedral Centre gave me the opportunity to enjoy daily walks in and out of St. Mel’s College, something I did not do in previous visits. It is a beautiful setting for private prayer especially for saying the Rosary.

Fr. Tom Healy updates me of the latest happenings at the Cathedral. I look forward to the day that the Cathedral would be reopened so that the bond it has always brought to the community in Longford would not be lost.



Longford Parish Celebrates First Holy Communion and Confirmation





Belinda McKeon – The Early Years in Stonepark N.S.

EAMONN BRENNAN
 STONEPARK N.S. (1981 -2009).

If you take the Athlone road from Longford town you will pass Stonepark N.S. and Curry Church. A mile or so further on there is McGiff's cross where you turn right for Newtowncashel. Just before Mc Giff's cross you will pass the townland of Clonanny. Clonanny is known only to those who live there and its immediate neighbours. It's like any rural farming townland but from now on it is forever captured in print by Belinda McKeon.

Mark knocked three meadows the first warm evening and Tom followed after him with the turner whipping up the long blades of grass setting them down as neat as potato drills. As Mark began to bale two mornings later Tom took the child to the edge of the meadow to show her the way it was done: the lines of grass the huge yellow bales lurching out of the red machine and the shape of her father in the tractor cab, a hand on the steering wheel his head turned to watch the progress of the bales hitched behind. Solace 2011.

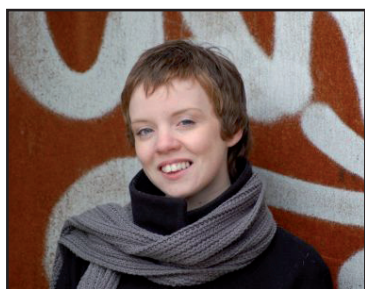
Belinda is the author of *Solace* for which she won the Irish Book Awards as best newcomer. Belinda the eldest child of Oliver and Angela McKeon grew up in Clonanny with her sisters Rebecca and Alice and her brother Michael. Belinda attended Stonepark N.S. Stonepark was a five teacher school then with each teacher teaching mixed classes. Mixed classes bring their own vibrancy to the day with the different age groups complementing each other. There were five of us in Stonepark then; principal Anthony Casey, Deputy Principal Eilish Mulligan, Marian O'Reilly, Pat Hanley and myself. We shared learning support teachers with Melview, Mary O'Boyle and later Margaret Walsh. I taught Belinda in fourth class and I remember her as being popular with her classmates with a good sense of humour and full of beans like any nine or ten year old.

Undoubtedly it was clear to all of us who taught her that she loved to write stories. The weekly English essay was the highlight of her week. Two features stood out in her essays; one was her original ideas and the other her expression of those ideas. When Belinda had time to spare in class she wanted to write more stories. She read a lot too but more than anything else she wanted to write.

The first story I remember Belinda writing was a Halloween story. The preparation was done, the vocabulary discussed with ghosts, goblins and ghouls appearing on the list. Rather than the usual offering Belinda went off on a tangent. Her story was the story of Jonathan and Penelope – a story of love and tragedy. They had attended the local school in a previous century. Later in life they marry but tragedy struck and they died young. Now their spirits lived on under Stonepark school where they were united forever.

There were many stories like this, it didn't matter whether it was the school tour, a day at the seaside or my favourite pastime; one was always assured of an interesting read and her consistency of expression was always evident.

One of the highlights of the school year for the pupils was the arrival of the Christmas annuals... Sugradh Spraoi, Siamsa and Sonas were a series of Christmas annuals full of puzzles, quizzes, games and art pages. They were delivered to the school in early December every year. The pupils got to do them in class which was a nice treat. That year when I taught Belinda the money was collected and delivery



Author Belinda McKeon

date agreed. Bad weather threw the schedule into disarray and the pupils waited anxiously for over a week. Everyday the pupils asked for their annual and a few of the more vocal ones wanted their money back, others talked of strike! I enjoyed the banter and was trying to spot the next James Larkin. I pointed out to one boy whose father was a builder that the builders don't always come on the day they promise. He quickly replied 'true, but they don't get paid in advance like you'. That same boy once told me when I was trying to get to the bottom of some devilment 'that he had the right to remain silent'!

Unknown to me while all this was going on Belinda was writing an account of the events. Like a true journalist she had an account full of detail. It had narrative, direct speech, indirect speech, short sentences, long sentences direct quotes and humour. Without being conscious of it, this nine year old girl was showing us her future. I remember saying to her after reading it that you can be a journalist as well as a writer.

The year continued on and the stories kept coming, the pupils knew as well that her stories were different and they liked to hear them read out loud. We entered her stories in competitions and among her first successes were the winning of a competition sponsored by Longford Library. Her story 'The Ghost in the Library' had all her imaginative traits. She also had a story published in a book sponsored by McDonald's Restaurant called 'The Bees Knees'.

Finally I want to finish with what Belinda wrote about Stonepark national school at the launch of 'A Hand in the Future' a collection of poems from Stonepark school published in 2008.

when I was a pupil in Stonepark N.S. my classmates and I were just as immersed in poems and stories as we were in spelling tests, in comhrá, in long division, in games of football and rounders in the school yard. In our classrooms, we were encouraged to create our own worlds, to imagine our own possibilities, to play with words and ideas in the same way that, on our first day as Junior Infants we had played with marla and the stickle bricks. At Stonepark our teachers did not just teach us how to read and write, they taught us how to unlock the great realm of pleasure and possibility within the acts of reading and writing. Within those words printed on the page and within those pages yet waiting to be filled with words: our words. The teachers in Stonepark allowed us to hold on to our wonderful unblinkered perspective on life no matter where we went what we became or what we did. Belinda McKeon 2008.

I think the above piece from Belinda captures the beauty and the possibilities of the Primary School and what teachers can do.

Stonepark NS gave Belinda many opportunities to write but her unique talent and determination to succeed made it happen for her.

Wishing Belinda every success in the future.

Stonepark NS

Last September saw us welcome our new Junior Infants to the school. They are all settling in very well and enjoying "big school." They have made lots and lots of new friends including Rocai Rua, Snake, Inky and Bee. The following Junior Infants joined Stonepark NS last September: Abigail Gibbons; Abigail Macko; Amy Barry; Andrea O'Connor; Bradley Malonne; Callum Duggan; Charlie Flanagan; Cora Nulty; David Cowan; David Maher; Teagan Elliot; Hailie Jai O'Rourke; Jack Tiernan; Jessica Gorman; John McDonnell; John Nevin; Kate O'Connell; Katie Reilly; Lara O'Connor; Liepa Vilkiene; Lucy Jones/Donnellan; Maria Gorman; Patrick Clancy; Phoenix Nowell; Rachel Fitzpatrick; Roisin Warde; Ryan Stokes; Saidbh Nerney; Shannon McDermott; Shirley Dempsey; Stephen Carroll.

We are all very happy with the new playground which was built across the road from the school.

Third Class wrote some poetry about the Queen's State visit to Ireland. They wrote and published a collection of poems called "New Roots" which they subsequently sent to the Queen and to the then President Mary McAleese.

The received a wonderful personal letter from the Queen and also a letter from President McAleese. Miss Leavy was delighted that the Queen would write to us.

We held a Jersey Day for GOAL. A big thank you to everybody who contributed to the GOAL Wear Your Jersey Day. We collected €413 euro. Well done.

Stonepark NS played in the Division 2 League Football Final recently in Pearse Park. The team played excellently, and had won all their matches up to the final. However we did not come out on the winning side this time. The whole panel is now really looking forward to the championship next year.

Our Girl's team played a Camogie blitz in Mostrim in October. They are really looking forward to the Girl's Camogie and Football competitions in the Springtime. Congratulations to the boys and girls from the Swimming team Tadhg McNiven, Eve Nerney & Emer Kyle, who competed in the *Connachts* in Galway recently. Thank you to their manager Mr McNiven and congratulations to Tadhg who made it through to the All Irelands.



Flor Leen, Michael O'Sullivan and Killien Burns pictured with the Stonepark Senior team who beat Fermoy in the Division 2 League Final : Matthew Duffy, Niall Flynn, Paul McKenna, Adam Ryan, Jamie Preece, Tadhg McNiven, Robert O'Connell, Gerard Flynn, Rory Howlin, Jack Carey, Diarmuid Sheahan, Dylan Smith, Rian Cox, Feidhlim Maher, Darragh Maher, Christopher Gibbons, Conor Campbell, Andrew Dillon, Jordan Rohan, Callum Healy, Cian O'Nuallain, Niall Donnelly, Michael Nevin, Jack Magan, Liam Elliot.

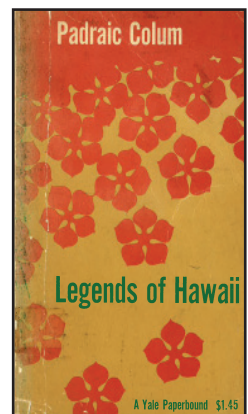
A gift for President Obama: Padraic Colum's Legends of Hawaii

MARY CARLTON REYNOLDS

2011 was not a great year for many people living in Ireland because of the ongoing economic crisis but for one memorable week in May we all parked our problems and basked in the excitement of two historic visits to our shores. Our first visitor was the Queen of England followed a few days later by the arrival of the first black President of the United States Barack Obama and his lovely wife Michelle.

We especially shared in the joy of the small town of Moneygall as they welcomed President Obama of the 'Moneygall Obamas' to their town and dreamed of what it would mean for Longford if we could find a way to bring one of the most powerful figures in the world to our town. Sadly Barack Obama did not come to Longford but he did leave Ireland with a special gift which should make all Longford people proud of our rich literary heritage. An

Taoiseach Enda Kenny presented President Obama with a beautiful first edition of a book written by one of Longford's most gifted storyteller's Padraic Colum. Many of us will know Colum's delightful story *The King of Ireland's Son* but we might be less familiar with the book of folktales written by him in 1937 called *Legends of Hawaii* which was presented to President Obama. Padraic Colum was invited to Hawaii in 1923 to make a study of all the folklore collected by Polynesian scholars in Honolulu and from these he chose the nineteen enchanting tales that appear in this book. These folktales which have been treasured by Hawaiian adults and children from time immemorial have been beautifully retold by Padraic Colum. We hope that *Legends of Hawaii* by Padraic Colum will have pride of place in the White House Presidential library as indeed they have in the special Padraic Colum Collection in our County Library in Longford.



Padraic Colum's Legends of Hawaii



Pictured are pupils from Scoil Eimear and Stonepark with visiting French exchange students.

St. Mel's College

By now all our students who have moved on to Third Level are well settled into their courses and we ourselves have just returned from our Hallowe'en Break. Students have got into the rhythm of the school year and Transition Year students are on work experience.

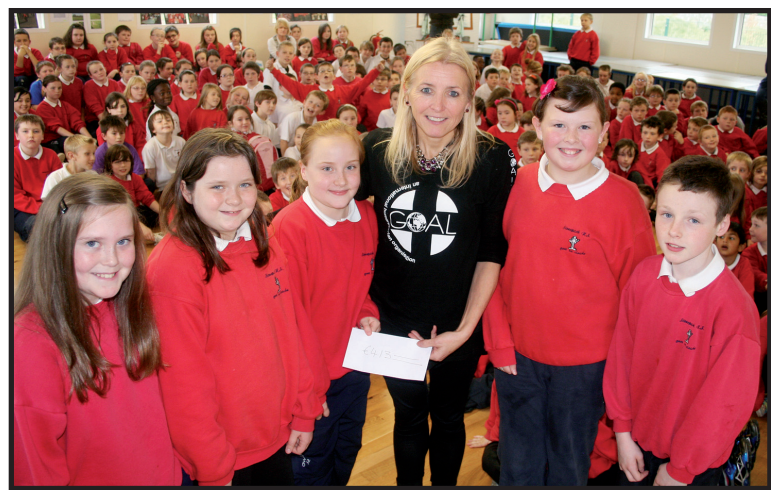
As I write a storm is thundering up the avenue, echoing the daily economic forecasts. We wait with bated breath for the latest budget news. The news is not good. However, within the boundaries of the College we all find sanctuary. Life throws challenges at us when we least expect them. Some of the surprises we receive are not the most pleasant. But it's important that the young men in our care are equipped with the skills needed to cope with the vicissitudes of life. We can pass on to the Celtic Cubs in our care some of the coping skills we were forced to learn in the lean eighties. Adversity must not be seen as an enemy for often in the midst of adversity we find opportunity.

The sporting campaigns have begun and we are having some early success. On behalf of all teams and athletes I'd

like to say a special thank you to all our coaches who put in so much extra time, on a voluntary basis, to work with our sportsmen to prepare them for competition. In these times of cutbacks and austerity it is good to see that the spirit of volunteerism is alive and well in the College.

We would like to say goodbye and thank you to a man who gave thirty eight years service to St Mel's. Our Guidance Counsellor Pat O'Doherty retired this Summer after long and loyal service. On behalf of staff and students, past and present, we wish Pat a long, happy and healthy retirement.

Finally as we enter the season of Advent all staff send warm wishes to every family who is, or have been associated with the College. We hope that despite the present economic downturn we can turn to our most important assets for support and joy. Friends and family are the richest currency we will ever have. As we gather during this holy season to celebrate and to glow in each other's company we may realize what real wealth is and how rich we are.



Maura Lennon, GOAL receives €413 from the proceeds of Jersey Day, Stonepark National School.

GOAL Grows in Longford

■ TIERNAN DOLAN

Nature never ceases to amaze. Despite the horrendous snow and ice last winter, the snow-drops popped up on time in the spring to herald the arrival of the magical new growth. Similarly, despite a massive fall in incomes locally, support for the aid agency GOAL continues to grow and defy logic. For the second year in a row, walkers and joggers turned out for the Christmas day GOAL Mile in record numbers despite the snowy freezing conditions. This Christmas day will be the 16th event in a row and again a huge crowd will gather at Connolly Bks at noon to help the poorest of the poor in the developing world.

Every year seems to throw up a different massive disaster in some part of the world. Earlier this year, parts of Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya were

ravaged by drought leading to a famine on a huge scale. As ever, it's the elderly, the young and the poor who suffer most in the most unspeakable manner. But once again, the incredible generosity of the people of Longford shone brightly as thousands of euro was donated locally which was used by GOAL to help the unfortunate people in the Horn of Africa.

Throughout the town and county of Longford hundreds of people, young and old support the work of GOAL through a vast array of fundraising events, from cake sales to donations from 50th parties, from jersey days to quiet donations. GOAL may be doing the work on the ground but its vital work could not continue without the continued and valued support of the generous people of Longford.

So on behalf of GOAL, a simple but sincere thank you.



Class 111, 2nd year, St Mels College had a Jersey day in October 2011 to raise funds for school children in Calcutta, India to help provide them with running water for a school over there. The boys raised €850 which will make a huge difference to their fellow students who are less fortunate.

Aisling Children's Arts Festival 2011

The 14th Annual Aisling Children's Arts Festival took place during the last week of October. As usual the week started off with a Family Fun Day in St Michael's Boys School. We realise now that the rain does not deter children and their families from having fun. Children participated in a huge variety of workshops, took part in traditional carnival games, scaled a mobile climbing wall and held lizards, snakes, owls, hedgehogs from the Animal Roadshow.

The highlights of the day were the two family shows featuring Jason Maverick, the winner of the Rotterdam International Street Theatre Competition and Jack Wyse, the first ever Irish Winner of The Street Performers World Championships. The girls from Scoil Mhuire ensured that all the children had their faces painted while the boys from St Mel's helped with the circus skills workshop. ... And that was just day one.

The Backstage Theatre was busy for the week hosting a variety of shows and exhibitions for the festival. On Monday night Whitehall NS and St Teresa's NS, Killoe held a photography exhibition in the Atrium Gallery. On Tuesday night it was the turn of Kilasonna NS and St Mary's NS, Edgeworthstown to take to the stage to perform the play that they had written and produced themselves under the guidance of Chris Thompson and Doug Fox Roberts. One of the high-



Children enjoying the exciting activities at the Aisling Free Family Day.

lights of the week was undoubtedly the performance of The Adventures of The Kings of Ireland's Son. This provided a great opportunity for three local youth organisations,

The Aisling Children's Arts Festival, The Attic Youth Club and Backstage Youth Theatre to work together under the guidance of Padraig McIn-

tyre and Shane Crossan to produce a play based on the work of Padraic Colum. Almost 600 children participated in the workshop programme which started on the Family Fun Day and finished with a full day of workshops in the Temperance Hall on Saturday. The festival is organised by a small voluntary committee compris-

ing of Fiona Jackson, Colette Meally, Nora Horan, Teresa Mc Guinness, Moe Reynolds, Angela Crossan, Aine O Suilleabhain, Sive McGuinness, Rosie O'Hara, Brid Nevin, Patricia Mc Kiernan and Maria Gray. They are able to organise the festival due to the generous sponsorship of local organisations and businesses.

Good Neighbours in St Mary's, Clonguish and St Joseph's

Since the fire at St Mel's Cathedral we have been made very welcome at St Mary's Church Newtownforbes for many ceremonies. We are most grateful to Fr Ciarán McGovern and the people of the parish for their generosity and patience in allowing us use their beautiful church. Everyone very much appreciates the lovely dignity, respect and co operation they experience on what are very emotional and often difficult days in family life. We wish all in Clonguish a very happy Christmas and peace and joy in the New Year.

Many families too, have held family funerals in St Joseph's Hospital Chapel since the fire at the Cathedral. We are very grateful to all at St Joseph's for their generous help and co operation towards families and community on funeral days. Your good work and gentle kindness is very much appreciated by all in our Parish. May you all have a happy Christmas and peace and joy in the New Year.





**St Martha's Hostel,
 Knockahaw,
 Dublin Road, Longford.**

**Society of
 St Vincent De Paul**

Telephone: 043 33 48062

St Martha's Hostel provides temporary accommodation for homeless men. We provide accommodation and food in a warm, safe environment.

We offer support and links to other service providers and to follow on accommodation.

The hostel operates on a 24-hour day, 7 days a week basis and all staff are welcoming and friendly and confidentiality is assured.

Staff are fully trained in areas of homelessness.

If you find yourself in need of our support please contact the above number.

"Hostels are no longer just about providing shelter, they are a stable force for the person at a time of crisis in their lives"



**Bethany House,
 Women's Hostel/Refuge,
 Longford.**

**Society of
 St Vincent De Paul**

Telephone: 087 7497043

Bethany house offers accommodation to women and their children who find themselves homeless because of domestic abuse or other crisis related issues.

It operates on a 24 hour day, 7 days a week basis and all staff are welcoming and friendly, confidentiality is assured.

We provide safe accommodation that meets the needs of women who are homeless and we provide support and links to other service providers and to follow on accommodation.

Staff are trained in areas of:
 • Homelessness
 • Domestic abuse & Advocacy
 If you find yourself in need of our support please contact the above number.

"Hostels are no longer just about providing shelter, they are a stable force for the person at a time of crisis in their lives"

Active Year for The Legion of Mary

The Legion of Mary has been in Longford for many years and was founded in Dublin in 1921 by the Servant of God, Frank Duff. It grew out of the St. Vincent de Paul Society and is to be found in almost every country in the world. The Legion of Mary is a lay apostolic organisation at the service of the Church under ecclesiastical guidance and its spirituality is based on the teaching of Saint Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort. It has over 3 million active members, many more auxiliary (praying) members and its handbook is translated into over 90 languages.

Its work in Longford consists of visitation of homes, hospitals, the elderly in their homes and the distribution of Catholic literature and other good works. The members try to encourage people in their faith and always work in pairs. Many couples have met through the Legion and a group in Cork has reported 5 marriages!

We are fulfilling in a special way our apostolic duty by becoming members of the Legion of Mary and adhering to its rules and systems. A sense of peace, joy, and a feeling of being forever young comes with membership, for when working for Our Lady, we receive blessings which only she knows

how to bestow. New members are always welcome.

The following groups meet in The Family Centre, St. Mel's Road, Longford:-

Our Lady of Mount Carmel: Friday, 4-30pm, (Young peoples' Praesidium); Virgin Mother of Good Counsel: Thursday, 7-30pm, Our Lady of Perpetual Succour; Wednesday Morning, 10-30am; Our Lady of Seven Sorrows, Monday, 6pm. (A Slovakian group); The Patrician Group (discussion), First Saturday every month, 8-30pm. See also www.legion-of-mary.ie

ST. MEL'S CHOIR FROM 1960's



St. Mel's Choir from the sixties, pictured from left to right: front row: Liam O'Connor, Fr, Sean O'Rourke, Johnny Clabby, Tommy Devine, Tom Forkan. Middle row: Johnny Farrell, Paul McGuire, Kevin Farrell, Vincent Clabby, Gerard Carroll, Johnny Danton and Brendan Bartley, Back row: John Reilly, Charlie Gallagher, Tommy Carroll, Des Brennan and Roderick Murphy.

Longford Credit Union



"Not for profit, not for charity, but for service" - this is the ethos of the Credit Union Movement. Longford Credit Union is in existence for the past 40 years and has embodied this ideal in all its dealings with its members. In doing so, it has been a force for good in all sections of the community.

The Credit Union is a financial institution WITH A DIFFERENCE. Involved in Longford Credit Union, and its sub-office in Edgeworthstown, are over 30 volunteers who meet weekly and monthly to serve on the Board of Directors, and numerous other committees. There are over 500 Credit Unions in Ireland, and with an average of 25 volunteers per branch, that results in a total of approx. 12,500 volunteers working wholeheartedly for the members of their respective communities. The standard of living in today's Longford is light years away from the Longford of 1969. Then, people saved in shillings and borrowed in pounds for such basic essentials as cookers, washing-machines, fridges, First Communion, fuel, etc. These loans were paid off and another item earmarked. In an era before credit cards, the Credit Union provided a lifeline to many people who simply had no other way of borrowing money. Longford Credit Union is proud to sponsor Co Longford School's Soccer League, Backstage Theatre and a number of smaller local initiatives. We have also been involved with local Car Dealers since the introduction of our popular Car Draws in 1998.

The Credit Union's commitment to young people also extends to our annual Poster Competition and Schools Quiz. In addition, a free draw is held for our young members every two months.

Longford Credit Union appreciates the commitment of its Manager, Staff, Board of Directors, members of Edgeworthstown sub-office, and various committees. We pay tribute to past Credit Union personnel and those who are no longer with us. Long may the Credit Union tradition continue.

SVP Society of Saint Vincent de Paul

St. Mel's Visitation Conference, Ozanam House, Chapel Street, Longford

SVP CHRISTMAS APPEAL

Dear Friends,

2011 has been a busy year for St. Mel's Visitation Conference of SVP. The support we have been able to provide is entirely due to your generosity to this conference. It has been rewarding for us so that many good and kind people have placed their confidence in us. Any assistance we have provided to clients was carefully considered and deemed necessary by our members.

Last Christmas we prepared and distributed in excess of 150 hampers to families in need throughout the county. We support five local schools with breakfast clubs, school books and uniforms and in some cases we give assistance with transport charges. Some third level students are assisted with fees and parents trying to pursue third level courses are helped with crèche fees.

Fuel and ESB bills are a constant cause of anxiety. Families are supplied with food and back up support in times of emergencies including sickness and funerals.

We operate a 24 hour helpline 043 33 42084. We help with after school activity clubs and sport camps and we support the elderly as far as possible with short holiday breaks, visitation and minor home maintenance. We arrange basic cookery and money management courses in our centre and with God's help and your continued support we will be available to every man, woman and child in Longford who may be in need in 2012.

The future unfortunately looks bleak, but hopefully we will make a difference.

This year we are encouraging donations of either cash or non perishable goods. Toys and luxuries are low on our list of needs. Good quality furniture is always welcome as is help with transportation. The cost of providing our services in 2011 has amounted to approximately €160,000. All of our services are free and our members all work on a voluntary basis. New members are always needed. Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and any donation, large or small, will be much appreciated.



Please complete the slip below and forward with donation to above address. Thank You.

Please tick if you wish your donation to ... remain anonymous ... or be receipted ... Please contact the Society if you do not receive your receipt within two weeks. All donations will be acknowledged in the local papers.

Name:

Address:

Amount:

**24 HOUR
 HELPLINE
 043 33 42084**



'And with your Spirit' Missal Introduced

Over the last few months we have been introducing a third edition of the Roman Missal. This is the prayer book that we use at mass. Vernacular language has only been used within the liturgy for less than fifty years, which may seem long to us individually but in the context of the prayer texts themselves is quite a short period of time. Many of these texts go back to the 4th and 5th centuries.

Translation is a very difficult task because while you might get the overall sense of the text across in another language many of the subtleties of the prayers may be lost. The desire of this edition of the missal is to have a translation that is truer to the

original, rather than one which only gives an idea of the text.

It also includes many new elements that were not included before, or had been omitted from the last edition. One of the important developments is a whole new Proper of Irish Saints, 72 in total. These have new prayers and in some cases scripture readings that also give a deep appreciation of the depth of spirituality that has been handed down the centuries to us.

In some cases the new phrases in the missal bring back to mind prayers that some of the older generation recalls, like in the passage 'Behold the Lamb of God', Lord I am not worthy that you

should enter under my roof'. This is a clearer link to the line of scripture that it is based on where Christ meets the Roman Centurion who had the sick servant. The depth of language might not always seem so clear but invites prayer and meditation to reveal its meaning.

One of the signature phrases in the new text is the response to 'The Lord be with you: *And with your spirit*' is a phrase that was always used in most other European languages. This acknowledges that when we gather the Spirit of God is with us, indeed we do not gather but in the Lord's name.

While there is criticism of the text there are also many positives as well. It tries to present an ancient

tradition of prayer that will over time become apparent to us in our age. One of the interesting things is that the text in Irish is also being launched this Advent, this Order of Mass has very little change in it because when first translated those who worked on it remained faithful to the Latin text.

The "dismissals" that we now use help us to see what our celebration of the Eucharist is calling us to be, as it tells us to, '*Go in Peace, Glorifying the Lord by our Life*'.



DAY FOR LIFE MESSAGE

*A call to solidarity and hope in difficult times
Rejoice in hope,
be patient in suffering,
persevere in prayer (Romans 12:12)*

Day for life this year reflects on what it means to live a full and happy life. It takes as its starting point the words of Pope Benedict during his recent visit to England, when he said "Happiness is something we all want, but one of the great tragedies in this world is that so many people never find it, because they look for it in the wrong places. The key to it is very simple – true happiness is to be found in God. We need to have the courage to place our deepest hopes in God alone, not in money, in a career, in worldly success, or in our relationships with others, but in God. Only he can satisfy the deepest needs of our hearts." (Pope Benedict XVI, *The Big Assembly: Address to Young People, Twickenham, England*)

In a culture that often measures happiness in terms of pleasure, success and money; many are thinking again about what brings true meaning and joy to life. The recent upheaval in banking and the economy in particular has left many individuals and families facing an uncertain future.

As a Christian, the deepest joy in life does not come from what I have or what I can achieve. It comes from the knowledge that even before I was formed in my mother's womb I was known and loved by my Creator (Jer 1:5; Psalm 139): that from the first moment of conception to natural death I am loved personally by God and have an eternal future. It comes from knowing that every minute of life is enfolded by God's loving care and that life itself will not end in emptiness. As Blessed John Henry Newman once wrote, "God has created me to do him some definite service ... He has not created me for naught. 'God has a plan for me and that plan is for good, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope' (Jer 29:1-14).

God's love offers a life that is 'truly' life because it is a life not measured by achievements but in the very fact that I am – and that I am eternally loved. In the certain knowledge that 'nothing can separate us for the love of Christ' (Rm 8:39), my life can still be rich in meaning and constant in hope in the face of setbacks, suffering and even death itself. God's love gives us the possibility of persevering day by day with patient joy, spurred on by hope, in a world which by its very nature is imperfect.

When setbacks do come, the friendship and care shown to us by others becomes a vital source of comfort, meaning and hope. Building a culture of life also commits us to building a civilisation of love: it involves showing practical solidarity and concern for those around us who are in need. A society that protects those who are vulnerable and weak contributes to our shared happiness: a society that shows love and concern for others who are in



need enhances our quality of life.

One of the most striking examples of this is found in the story of the Visitation. In a most extraordinary act of generosity and selfless concern for others, St. Luke tells us that Mary, having just received the news that she has conceived a child through the power of the Holy Spirit, set out across the hill country of Judea to give support to her cousin Elizabeth. In one of the most powerful affirmations of the sacredness of life in the womb, Luke tells us that as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child in her womb 'leaped for joy' (Lk 1:44). We are also told that Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months, enough time to help with preparations for the birth. At the news of the birth 'the relatives and neighbours shared their joy' (Lk 1:58).

What is particularly striking about this story is the joy that follows the news of new life and the practical help given by family, friends and good neighbours. A culture of respect for life is essential for a civilisation for a civilisation of love. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI:

Openness to life is at the centre of true development. When a society moves towards the denial or suppression of life, it ends up no longer finding the necessary motivation and energy to strive for man's true good... The acceptance of life strengthens moral fibre and makes people capable of mutual help.

As a society we have a strong tradition of good neighbourliness and of showing mutual help. Day for Life is an opportunity to ask ourselves if there is anything more we can do to be of help to our neighbours, to improve the quality of life of others and of society as a whole, especially in these financially challenging times.

By embracing a culture of life, and standing with those marginalised and deemed 'useless' or a 'burden' on society, we can turn the values of our con-

sumer society upside down. We can contribute to the happiness and quality of life of all by ensuring respect for the life of every person, from conception to natural death. We can work toward creating a civilisation of love, rooted in a culture of life, by reaching out to those who are suffering as a result of the long recession.

Day for Life 2011 is a call for us to work for a society in which all are valued as created, loved by God, redeemed by Christ: not for their fame, or power or what they own but for their intrinsic worth. It is a call to rediscover the truth that our deepest happiness and joy comes from the knowledge that we are all loved by God from the very beginning, and that by trusting in God's love, through our setbacks and difficulties, our own "joy will be complete" (Jn 15:11).



Day for Life Prayer

*We thank you Lord for the gift of life.
Help us to appreciate the unique dignity
of every person and the individual
contribution they make to the world,
in fulfilment of the task you give them.*

*Enable us by your grace to promote their
wellbeing, serving you in one another
in a spirit of generosity
through Christ Jesus Our Lord. Amen*

*Only the great certitude of hope that my
own life and history in general, despite all its
setbacks and failures, are held firm by the
indestructible power of Love, and that this
gives them their meaning, and importance
only this kind of hope can then give the
courage to act and to persevere*

Pope Benedict XVI

IEC 2012
50th INTERNATIONAL
EUCHARISTIC
CONGRESS
PRAYER

Lord Jesus,
You were sent by the Father
to gather together those who are scattered.
You came among us, doing good and bringing healing,
announcing the Word of salvation
and giving the Bread which lasts forever.
Be our companion on life's pilgrim way.

May your Holy Spirit inflame our hearts,
enliven our hope and open our minds,
so that together with our sisters and brothers in faith
we may recognise you in the Scriptures
and in the breaking of bread.
May your Holy Spirit transform us into one body
and lead us to walk humbly on the earth,
in justice and love,
as witnesses of your resurrection.

In communion with Mary,
whom you gave to us as our Mother
at the foot of the cross,
through you
may all praise, honour and blessing be to the Father
in the Holy Spirit and in the Church,
Now and forever.
Amen

50th International Eucharistic Congress – June 10th- 17th

Next June will see Ireland host a Eucharistic Congress. These are events that take place every four years in various venues around the world. The last congress in Ireland was in 1932, shortly after the founding of the Irish State. This is an international event that will see many thousands of people from around the world come to Ireland for the week of events with some of these visitors also touring around the country in the days before hand.

The purpose of the Eucharistic Congress is to highlight and explore the significance of the Eucharist in our lives in the way it is celebrated, in the call to adoration and in our commitment to the way we live our lives with the call to social justice.

The week itself will take place from June 10th until June 17th. Most of this will take place in the RDS, the last days mass celebrated in Croke Park. Each day will begin with morning prayer and different workshops with numerous speakers from different parts of the world, these include the Prior of Taizé, Leader of Focolare, the artist Imogen Stuart, as well as John Bruton, Peter McVerry, John Waters, Monica Browne and many more.

Each late afternoon will have a major speaker on the theme of that day and a celebration of the Eucharist in Simmons Court arena. At night various cultural events will take place in Dublin as well as family activities.

Booking for the seven days, three day or one day event can be done online at iec2012.ie. Also if you would like to volunteer to take part as a helper during that week you can do so online.

As a diocese we are arranging a variety of activities and events based on the theme of the Congress; The Eucharist: "Communion with Christ and with one another. Notice of these will be given out soon."

Longford Toastmasters

Develop good speaking and presentation skills, advance your communication, listening and teamwork competence, meet interesting people and make new friends, just some of the reasons people join a Toastmasters club. The Longford Toastmasters group offers a proven and enjoyable manner in which to practice and perfect speaking, listening and communication skills.

With regular participation in a fun and supportive group you can become a more accomplished speaker and leader. The confidence you gain will benefit you in all walks of life, you will be amazed at your own potential.

Daniel Coyle is presently P.R.O. for Longford Toastmasters.

Daniel joined Toastmasters two years ago and finds it most enjoyable and beneficial to him personally. Meetings he says are friendly and relaxed with a break for tea and a chat mid-way.

Longford Toastmaster meetings are held in The Longford Arms Hotel on the first and third Thursday of each month, time 8.20pm. Visitors are always welcome and there is no obligation to join.

For further information contact Daniel, on 086 1559163.

Visit www.toastmasters.org.



Pictured are John Farrell and Alan Portbury, with area Governor, Jon Woodford at the Division final of the Humorous Speech and Table Topics Contests held recently in Athlone.



Christmas Wordsearch



stocking

Santa Claus



snowman

gift



cake



decorations



gingerbread



reindeer



tree



j b v s w z s o s a i z g o z n
q m h a a h c w i z n u m k q a
q z s a s n o w m a n a c c n d
i w l b n b t j t d k c i n a m
j d j i o e k a c h p o m w g f
h a b z i e c n c q g b v w t k
p e v n t h y g b l f n s p g v
r r c e a i v q j z a z t d o r
b b j a r s l q x l u u b u g t
y r z r o v t c v n x w s m i v
k e c l c l j o z p o q x r f i
n g j z e e p k c q s i v m t g
a n k i d e u y b k n l o v z v
q i t z u r q m n r i z d r c h
f g l l z t g q z a c n t b h w
o c e r e i n d e e r i g k c i

Not Only Christmas Day

Lord, this is my prayer
Not only on Christmas Day
But until I see You face to face
May I live my life this way:

Just like the baby Jesus
I ever hope to be,
Resting in Your loving arms
Trusting in Your sovereignty.

And like the growing Christ child
In wisdom daily learning,
May I ever seek to know You
With my mind and spirit yearning.

Like the Son so faithful
Let me follow in Your light,
Meek and bold, humble and strong
Not afraid to face the night.

Nor cowardly to suffer
And stand for truth alone,
Knowing that Your Kingdom
Awaits my going home.

Not afraid to sacrifice
Though great may be the cost,
Mindful how You rescued me
From broken-hearted loss.

Like my risen Savior
The babe, the child, the Son,
May my life forever speak
Of who You are and all You've done.

So while this world rejoices
And celebrates Your birth,
I treasure You, the greatest gift
Unequaled in Your worth.

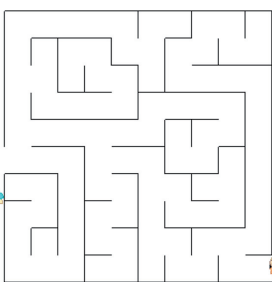
I long to hear the same words
That welcomed home Your Son,
"Come, good and faithful servant,"
Your Master says, "Well done."

And may heaven welcome others
Who will join with me in praise
Because I lived for Jesus Christ
Not only Christmas Day

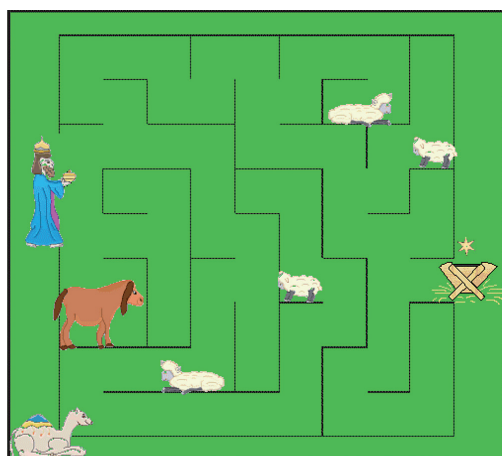
-- Mary Fairchild

Matthew 1:21

Help the angel get to Joseph and tell him the good news of Jesus.

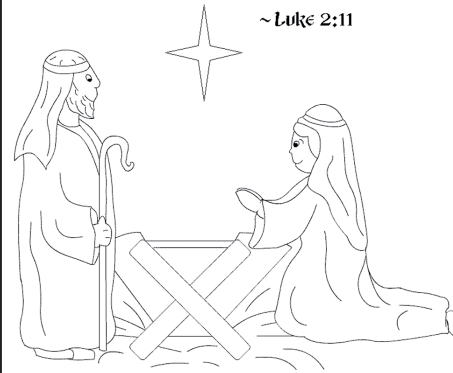


And she shall bring forth a son, and you shall call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins.



For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.

~ Luke 2:11



The Very First Christmas Day

His parents had no money, although He was a King—
An angel came to Joseph one night as he dreamed.
"Don't be afraid to marry her, this child is God's own Son,"
And with these words from God's messenger, their journey had begun.
They traveled to the city, their taxes to be paid—
But when Christ was born they found no place for the baby to be laid.
So they wrapped Him up and used a lowly manger for His bed,
With nothing else but straw to place beneath the Christ-child's head.
The shepherds came to worship Him, the wise men traveled too—
Led by a star up in the sky, they found the baby new.
They gave him gifts so wondrous, their incense, myrrh, and gold,
Thus completes the greatest story of a birth 'twas ever told.
He was just a tiny baby, born in a stable far away—
They had no reservations, and no where else to stay.
But His birth was so majestic, in a simple sort of way,
A baby born in Bethlehem on a very special day.
It was the Savior born in Bethlehem, on the very first Christmas Day.

--Brenda Thompson Davis

Christmas Search



- | | | | |
|------------|-----------|------------|----------|
| Angels | Fruitcake | Nativity | Snowman |
| Candy cane | Gifts | Noel | Star |
| Chestnuts | Glitter | Ornaments | Stocking |
| Children | Jesus | Peppermint | Tree |
| Cookies | Jingle | Reindeer | Wisemen |
| December | Joseph | Shepherds | |
| Decorate | Manger | Sleigh | |
| Frosty | Mary | Snow | |

Andy's Bhoys Longford Celtic Supporters Club



Andy's Bhoys Longford Celtic Supporters Club has been in existence now for over 13 years and is based in Kanes Bar (Murph's) on Ballymahon Street. In line with Celtic tradition the club has raised in excess of €15,000 over these years for local charities.

2011 was no different when in January we presented a cheque for €1031 to the local branch of the Irish Heart Foundation from proceeds from our Annual Christmas Draw.

In April the club held a successful Easter Draw which saw a cheque to the value of €549 being presented to St. Christopher's.

Our 2011 Annual Christmas Draw which takes place in December will also see a local charity benefit with the Longford Branch of Multiple Sclerosis benefiting from the proceeds of the draw.



Andy's Bhoys Longford Celtic Supporters Club Christmas Presentation to The Irish Heart Foundation: Back Row: Andrew Duke (Club Pro) – Susan Reid (Celtic Club) – Keith Curran (Murph's Bar) – Mick Hand (Club Treasurer) . Front Row : Gerry Reid (Club Chairman) – Mairead McMeel – Jackson (Irish Heart Foundation) – Marie Hand (Irish Heart Foundation) – Eddie Curran (Club Secretary).

Every Young Players Dream Can Be Achieved – in Longford RFC

Every Young Players Dream – Longford RFC is going from strength to strength each season, with our numbers increasing, due to Leinster Winning the Heineken Cup and Ireland Playing in the Rugby World Cup in New Zealand in September. Rugby is now one of most popular sports in Longford for both girls and boys at mini's level, where the age ranges from U6's to U12's. There is a great buzz around the Club house on a Sunday morning at 10 am with future stars of Longford rugby taking to the pitches as young as four years old in all weather conditions, with some preferring very muddy conditions, coming off the pitches when training is over, grinning from ear to ear at how dirty they got at training.

The Mini's have had several blitzes so far this season, with Longford RFC hosting the Midland Area Blitz in October, with over four hundred players attending, to play against other clubs in the Midland Area. Your children are the Future of Longford RFC minis and youths; the youths and mini section would not operate so well unless we had your tremendous help and support each year. Youths Players U13's, U14's, U15's u16's, U17's, U18's, U19's, train on Wednesday evenings at 7.20 pm. To facilitate players coming in from North Longford, we run a bus from that area every Wednesday night. All enquiries to mariakeelty@gmail.com for either Mini players or youth players.

Girls Youths Rugby - Youths rugby for Girls started in September, with players from U13's to U18's training with Coach Karen Lennon on a Wednesday night at 7.30pm. Such was the demand from enquiries received, with numbers increasing week on week, training is now on once a week.

Longford Ladies rugby is very strong in Longford RFC, since it started five years ago and hopefully we will have future stars in Girls Rugby. We have already had one Leinster Player Sharon McKeown, and Several Connacht players also over the last five years. This season alone we have had three Connacht Provincial players, Karen Lennon, Yvonne Dowd, and Marie Hanley. The future of women's rugby in Longford RFC is very bright indeed. All enquiries to Karen on 087 7449228.

PARENTS COMMITTEE - We are at present setting up a Parents Committee to help with the running of Longford RFC Youth/Mini's well into the future. We would like parents to come on board, with fresh Ideas, helping on match day or at Blitz days, to voice your opinions, or to become a Coach and attending coaching courses. Make yourselves known to Hilary Davis royhilarydavis@eircom.net Oliver Scott, 087 8034426 (after 6pm) Hugh Connolly, hugh@cpf.ie, 087 2410982, or any member of the Youths committee, as your children are the future of Longford RFC and hopefully the Seniors of tomorrow, or email admin@longfordrugby.com



Action from Longford 1st XV vs. Mullingar 1st XV.

Heineken Cup Champions Leinster Visit Longford RFC - August the 4th 2011 will be long remembered for many years to come, Leinster European Rugby Champions came into town and did a pre-season training in Longford RFC. The crowds had travelled from as far away as Wexford, Cavan, Monahan, Galway, Dublin, Edenderry and Tullamore, to watch the squad being put through their paces. Some of the children were very funny, "Look at them boys, they're huge" "I'll be on that squad one day" was spoken like a true pro, at six years old.

Irish and Leinster Mascots - Longford RFC are very proud of two of our Mini Players, Oran McGuinness, an U11's player, who represented our club as mascot with the Irish Squad at the first autumn international in the Aviva Stadium Ireland vs. Samoa; Oran will have very special memories of that day for years to come.

Young Seamus Hanley was the mascot for the Leinster vs. Ulster game he is one of Longford's U8's Mini's players, who is a Massive



Finbarr Mc Gowan receiving youths Player of the season award from Martin Maguire LRFC President.



Seamus Hanley, Mascot at Lenister Vs Ulster match with Leo Cullen.

Leinster supporter, he goes to all of the matches, he promotes Longford RFC where ever he goes. Seamus was the star of day, Leinster or Longford RFC could not have picked a better Mascot.

Irish Youth Selected - Finnbar McGowan played last season on the Longford U19's team, and on Leinster Youths U18's squad while in school in St. Mel's College and studying for his leaving certificate. The Leinster U18's team won the inter-provincial Cup. Finnbar went on to represent our club on the international stage as an U18's Irish Club Youths squad. He received the highest accolade given at our Youths awards night last season "Youths player of the Season".

Finnbar is now playing with UCD and the Leinster U19's squad, and hopefully Finnbar will be in the mix for selection, for the U20's Irish Squad.

Leinster Youth In Longford RFC - U17's Player Thomas Kennedy has been called up for

selection, with the U17's Leinster Development Squad. This is great honor and achievement for this young sixteen year old. He was on the Midland Team last season. Thomas has played at Mini's level since he was four years old, is currently playing with the U17's team which is being coached this season by Cecil Bennett and Oliver Scott. He is also playing rugby for his School, Moyne Community School where he is being coached by PE teachers Paul Prior and Brian Reilly. Everyone at Longford RFC wishes him continued success over the coming season in Longford RFC and with the Leinster U17's Development Squad.

MIDLANDS SQUAD - Congratulations to two young players from our U16's squad, Joe Bennett and Thomas Maguire who are playing on the Midlands Squad.

Thomas only took up Rugby less than a year ago and is an eager learner, Thomas also plays rugby for his school, St Mel's College where he is being coached by Stephen Coy Jr. Joe and Thomas are on the Current U17's team which is being coached by Cecil Bennett and Oliver Scott.

Start of Selection Process - These Youths players from Longford RFC are also competing for places on the Midland Squad against Seven other clubs in the Midlands

The comprehensive selection and coaching programme began last April when nominated players from the eight clubs took part in a skills screening.

The Strengths of Longford RFC - A very important point worth mentioning, Longford RFC is a small club in the Midlands, where players from Longford RFC are competing against other very large clubs in Leinster to secure places on the Leinster youths squad. Over the last ten or twelve years Longford RFC has had three Irish Youth Players and nine players on the Leinster Youths Squad; a fantastic achievement for Longford RFC. The standard of Coaching in Longford is of the highest standard, by which both the, Coaches, Players, Parents dedicate their time, week in week out, improving Players skills, strengths, Fitness, game play. The Longford U17's teams or previously U18's over the last four seasons, have reached the Leinster Finals, or the Leinster Semi-Finals, our U13's squad last season got to the Leinster Semi-final of the Cup in the Premier Division. Individual players can be seen training in the evenings or at the weekends, such is their commitment to training, eating correctly, doing exactly what their mentors is teaching them whether it's at Longford RFC or at Leinster Training. They just want to be like their Heroes, of Leinster and Irish Rugby that's why, It's every young Players Dream in Longford RFC, whether you are 6 years old or 17 years old.



Some of the winners of the Longford Open Tennis Week 2011.

Longford Tennis Club 2011

Longford Tennis club had another successful year in 2011. No sooner had the ice cleared and the weather improved at the start of the year than players sprung back into action.

Two club championship events were held in April and September. Both events ran very smoothly as members arranged matches between themselves. After the finals of the April event a very successful barbeque was held at the club.

The Open week was held in July once more. There was a great variety of winners this year throughout the Senior event. Noel Strange triumphed in the Mixed Doubles event. The star of the show in the Junior event was Spaniard, Harrison Gonzalez

who won all four competitions he entered. Players travelled to other clubs for various tournaments as well. Longford's Tomasz Kowalewski won the Mens A Singles in both Cavan and Athlone. Junior and Adult coaching continued throughout the year. The summer camps held over four weeks in June and July again saw excellent numbers. An open day was also held at the end of July to show off the facilities and encourage new membership.

Finally a Tennisathon for charity was held at the end of November.

Longford Tennis Club welcomes new members all year round and if anyone is interested contact 086-0366527.

Longford and District Schoolboy/girl League

2011 was another successful year for the Longford and District Schoolboy/girl League. Our representative teams took part in tournaments in Limerick, Galway and Mullingar. In Limerick we reached the Kennedy trophy final only to lose a penalty shootout to our neighbours from Cavan. In Galway we played in the Umbro Cup for the first time and again we lost a final on penalties this time to Larne Schoolboy League.

Our Girls section under the guidance of Aisling Conway is growing every season. This season we have teams from Westmeath, Leitrim and Cavan joining the local clubs. The Girls also took part in the prestigious Gaynor Cup in Galway and again covered themselves in glory.

The highlight of the year was the opening of the Shane Brennan Pitch on 16th April. A huge crowd turned up for this historic occasion. Home Farm brought five schoolboy teams from Dublin to the event. The action started early and football was still being played late into the evening.

On the club front we continue to go from strength to strength we now have 25 Clubs covering Longford Leitrim, Cavan, Westmeath and Roscommon. Clubs play in the leagues from U/8 fun league to U/17. Most of the Clubs also enter the SFAI and Connacht Cups. The players really enjoy the Cups as getting an away draw can mean a trip to anywhere from Roscommon to Donegal.

Another highlight is our 7 a side finals. John Moloney has been running the small size game [7 a side] for some years now and has settled on the May



Junior Supporters' Club member Myles Dolan was delighted to meet former Man Utd and current Longford Town player Keith Gillespie at a game during the summer. Myles received a special Supporters' Club award from Keith.

bank holiday for the finals. The atmosphere at the finals is unbelievable with lots of colour and big crowds to make it a really special day.

In conclusion, Longford and District Schoolboy/girl League is making an important contribution to the Longford community. Every weekend sees young players of all ages playing matches. Behind every team is a network of parents, coaches, clubs and committees, all striving for the betterment of the community in which they live.



The Longford U 13 Kennedy Cup side that played in Limerick in June.

Still Scoring for De Town

The Republic of Ireland soccer team have qualified for Euro 2012 so brace yourself for a huge amount of over the top media frenzy in the months leading up to kick off in June. Flancare Park is a long long way from the multi million euro Stadia of Eastern Europe which will host over rated and over paid international players.

Yet the small band of die hard Supporters' Club members could hold their own with any international outfit. On the pitch, Longford Town FC have greatly improved their League standing, while off it, we're doing our best to support the club in every way possible. Being aware of the drastic economic situation locally, the fee for joining the Supporters' Club has been slashed by half while efforts to raise vital funds have been doubled. We pride ourselves on having the best value Clubhouse in the entire League while still maintaining the highest standards of fare. And it was nice to see this highlighted in the recent book on the League of Ireland "Just Follow the Floodlights" Apart from our Clubhouse activities, we host an incredibly popular Car Boot Sale every Bank Holiday Monday as well as holding numerous raffles and various fundraising events. The annual Golf Classic is also a hugely important part of our fundraising calendar which seems to stretch from January to December. And then we host the end of season awards ceremony as well as the monthly Player of the month awards.

Supporting Longford Town FC is far from the glamour of the international



This year our dear friend and member of the Supporters' Club and Longford Town FC president John Donlon passed away. John was Mr Soccer in Longford, having played for the club at every level before serving in administration. John Donlon was a wonderful ambassador for Longford Town FC both in Ireland and in Europe and is pictured here with the chairman of Sheffield Utd when they visited Longford in 2007.

Green Army team but Longford without the Town is unthinkable and so the struggle will never end.

Sadly at the end of our season, we lost one of most respected Supporters' Club members, John Donlon RIP. John played with distinction for De Town and then happily served at every level in administration right up to being the President of the club when he passed away. John

loved every aspect De Town from the Youths team to the senior team. There was hardly an event he missed and he attended matches right up to the end, despite failing health. No wonder he was called Mr Longford Town.

Roll on the season of 2012 when we'll be supporting the red and black from Flancare Park to Donegal and back. C'MON DE TOWN.



The U 12 Longford team that took part in the Umbro Cup in Galway during August.



Pictured at an early morning training session are Orraith O'Brien, Laura Kenny, Aideen Skelly, Sarah O'Boyle, Ciaran Madden, Gerry Quinn, Ciara McNevin, Aoife O'Brien, Sinead McWeeney and Brian O'Boyle.

Successful year for Longford Swimming Club

2011 has been an extremely successful year for the swimming club and its members.

The club, which was reformed in 1992, continues to go from strength to strength, in competitive terms and in coaching children with skills that will enable them to continue to ex-

ercise for fitness, for the rest of their lives.

Another huge benefit is the strong friendships that are forged between the young people outside of the pool. We had great success in the pool, with several medals won in Provincial & All Ireland competitions and national

community games finals. Our young swimmers compete in a sport that is very competitive nationally & internationally and more than hold their own at that level. The club coaches deserve great credit for all of the work that they do, bringing members from basic swimming levels to national

and international competition. The coaches of the younger swimmers also get huge assistance from some of our former club members who give up time every weekend to help out. The club would not survive without the support of the parents, who play a very important role in supporting

and supervising swimming sessions throughout the year.

Also, we would like to thank the management and staff of the swimming pool for all their assistance during the year. Anyone wishing to join is very welcome, details are available at Longford Swimming Pool.

Two in a row for Longford Slashers!



The Senior G.A.A. Club in our parish, Longford Slashers, again captured the Sean Connolly Cup, the Senior Football Championship title in 2011 and this victory brought to 15, the number of senior championship titles won by the Longford Slashers Club. This was a fantastic achievement considering it was following on from their great success in 2010. Would it be possible that they could achieve 3 in a row, which they last achieved back in 1989, 1990 and 1991. The club is constantly upgrading its facilities at Farnyhoogan in order to ensure that the youth of the parish are properly catered for in their quest to play Gaelic games. During the past year, the numbers of girls playing ladies football and camogie increased substantially and this adds greatly to the large numbers of our youth partaking in Gaelic games.



Slashers U-10 who travelled to Edenderry

Back row, left to right, Michael O'Brien, Ronan Kenny, Cian O'Nuallain, Matthew Duffy, Phelim Maher, Mairtin Kenny, Tadhg McNevin, John Nelson, Darragh Maher, Jerry Sheahan. Front row, Aaron Nelson, Donal Sheahan, Darragh O'Connell, Ronan Sheahan, Mark Roe, Stephen O'Brien, Liam Morgan, Sean Morgan.

ship final win over Edgeworthstown was the outstanding performance of the year considering we were missing 8 players from the squad on final day. This squad also represented Longford at the All Ireland 7 a side competition in Kilmacud Crokes and acquitted themselves quite well on the day getting out of the group stage. The U16's had a successful year winning the Summer League. We were defeated in the Semi Final of the championship with half the team away on holidays when this game was played. The minors qualified for the championship semi final in their 1st year in this competition. This team was essentially an U17 team as all players are eligible again next year. This was the first year we had a Senior team and they played in the Junior league where they performed quite admirably

considering they started from scratch this year. We also took part in the championship where we were beaten by eventual winners Rathcline.

CAMOGIE SECTION

Longford Slashers Camogie club is growing in numbers every year and this year they hosted their first U8 & U10 blitz with many teams travelling from Westmeath to take part. The U8s won all games with the U10s only beaten in their last game. The U12s got through to the semi-final of the Westmeath league and put on a very brave performance. Our U14 squad represented their county in the 2011 All Ireland Feile held in Galway and a great time was had by all. Anyone interested in joining the club should contact Pauline Gray on 086 8880545.



On the Big Walk were the following: Vinny Finn, John Farrell, Tom Maguire, Noel Maguire, Pat Reid, Jim Gallagher, Padraig O'Meara, Adam Cahill, Thomas Gibbons, Brendan Corcoran.

The Big Walk, Longford to Lourdes

The Big Walk of 2011, thank God, was a success all round, both for participants and the beneficiary. On the Big Walk of June 2011 were the following: Vinny Finn, John Farrell, Tom Maguire, Noel Maguire, Pat Reid, Jim Gallagher, Padraig O'Meara, Adam Cahill, Thomas Gibbons, Brendan Corcoran.

The team completed the 1100km walk in relay stages over nine days. This tremendous success was not without its tireless dedication from all involved, but particular attention out to be paid to Mr. Tom Maguire of Maguire's filling station, Stonepark, Longford. Essentially, without Tom Maguire, the walk would not have worked and we are so grateful to him for his *inestimable* contribution. The team would like to pay tribute to the people of Longford, Leitrim and the surrounding areas and to those overseas who contributed so generously to the cause. Thank you to Collette Reynolds of Hair Square, Longford, Shannonside Northern Sound and The Longford Leader (In Particular Dessie Connolly), for their constant diligence with regard to the effort between August 2010 and June 2011.

young adults with special needs, and also go on pilgrimage to Lourdes annually, and have done so for the past 40 years. In June 2012 a group of special people plan on mirroring our efforts and walking from Carlow to Lourdes. For further information on the 2011 or the upcoming 2012 walk log onto www.thebig-walk.ie

This walk was about the ordinary man achieving the seemingly impossible. We did just that. Pilgrimage begins with effort in the face of a tireless and seemingly insurmountable boundary. Prayer and community were our rod and our staff. Thanks to all involved.

The Big Walk raised €23,000 for the Irish Pilgrimage Trust: www.irishpilgrimagetrust.com providing respite care for children and

MINOR SECTION

Longford Slashers Minor Football Club caters for approximately 160 boys from the parish, ranging in age from 5 to 18. The Club runs an under 6 Nursery which introduces children to Gaelic football and we enter teams at every age group from under 8 to under 18(Minor). The Club currently have 70 Garda vetted coaches and officials.

Our main focus is to develop the skills levels of all our players in a positive, healthy and safe environment while also encouraging enjoyment and fun.

2011 was a very successful year for the Minor Club with our under 14 team winning the Feile competition, League and Championship. Our Minors won the Special Minor League, while our under 12 team reached the Division 1 Final. Our Club held a number of very successful Blitzes during the year at under 8, 10 and 12 level with Clubs from Tyrone, Roscommon, Cavan and Dublin participating. We also attended Blitzes in Cavan and Offaly.

LONGFORD SLASHERS LADIES SECTION

We had a very successful year in all age groups this year. Our U8/10 age groups had a few challenge games throughout the year against both local & outside opposition. Our U 12 team won the championship again this year after a hard fought final against Ballymahon/Forney. The U14 squad did a clean sweep winning both the championship and the summer league. Our champion-



Pictured here are pupils from St. Michael's National School who were delighted when Slashers won the County Final.



Ecstatic ATTIC members pictured on stage at The Helix having just won the Permanent TSB Foroige Top Teens of Ireland.

Full and Active Year at The Temperance Hall

This past year has once again seen The Main Hall and other rooms alive to the sound of young and old enjoying various activities, music and laughter. We've had a busy and successful year in the Temperance Hall which started off with our Pobal employment scheme being renewed and ended with us winning the Tidy Towns "Best Civic Building 2011". Both awards are testament to the community spirit and pride that is alive and well in the Hall! Many people comment on how well the Temperance Hall looks and the warm welcome they receive when they visit; this is down to the tremendous staff working there. Donal, Jason and Jack care for the Hall as if it was their own home while Michelle and Carol, the first people you meet, greet all hall visitors with a friendly face and an extremely helpful attitude.

We congratulate the Attic on their huge achievements this year and in particular on becoming "Ireland's Top Teens". High above on

the hall stage is the motto "Temperance Hall- At the heart of the Community" and so it is very heartening to see this community spirit being fostered in all of the Attics activities; the award they won was for a business discount card.

This is their way of encouraging their friends to shop local and inspiring them to support local businesses in the present economic climate. In this they are leaders and here the students have become our teachers. The ATTIC continues to go from strength to strength and we, the Temperance Hall management committee, are proud to be associated with such a positive initiative for the young people of our community.

The Parish Review for 2011 presents what is best about our community and it celebrates the successes of so many voluntary and community groups who work tirelessly in our parish. Many of those groups meet in the Temperance Hall weekly and we thank them for adding to the life and vibrancy of our facility.

A special word of thanks to the dedicated Temperance Hall Management Committee for their management of the building and its facilities on behalf of the parish community. It is not easy to run and finance a building of its size while trying to keep costs down for its users and behind the scenes they quietly beaver about doing just that. This year we secured a Heritage grant from LCRL to replace some of the windows and work will commence on that project in early 2012. And so 2012 promises to be yet another exciting and busy year for the Temperance Hall, Longford!.

Sacraments – 2012

FIRST CONFESSIONS -

St. Mel's College Chapel		
Gaelscoil	Monday March 5 th	6.15 p.m.
Stonepark	Tuesday March 6 th	7.00 p.m. (Curry Church)
Melview	Tuesday March 6 th	6.15 p.m.
St. Emer's	Wednesday March 7 th	6.15 p.m.
St. Michael's	Thursday March 8 th	6.15 p.m.
St. Joseph's	Monday March 12 th	6.15 p.m.

FIRST HOLY COMMUNIONS

Cathedral Centre		
Gaelscoil	Saturday April 28 th	11.00 a.m.
Melview	Saturday April 28 th	2.00 p.m.
Stonepark	Saturday May 12 th	11.00 a.m.
St. Michael's	Saturday May 12 th	2.00 p.m.
St. Emer's	Saturday May 19 th	11.00 a.m.
St. Joseph's	Saturday May 19 th	2.00 p.m.

CONFIRMATION - Cathedral Centre

Stonepark	Saturday March 3 rd	11.00 a.m.
St. Joseph's	Saturday March 3 rd	11.00 a.m.
Melview	Saturday March 3 rd	3.00 p.m.
St. Michael's	Saturday March 3 rd	3.00 p.m.
St. Emer's	Sunday March 4 th	3.00 p.m.
Gaelscoil	Sunday March 4 th	3.00 p.m.

Commitment Ceremonies - Cathedral Centre

Melview	Sat January 14 th	7.30 p.m.
Gaelscoil	Sun January 15 th	10.00 a.m.
Stonepark	Sat January 21 st	7.30 p.m.
St. Michael's	Sun January 22 nd	10.00 a.m.
St. Joseph's	Sat January 28 th	7.30 p.m.
St. Emer's	Sun January 29 th	10.00 a.m.

Services of Light - St. Mel's College Chapel

Gaelscoil	Tues February 7 th	6.30 p.m.
Melview	Tues February 7 th	8.00 p.m.
St. Emer's	Wed February 8 th	6.30 p.m.
St. Michael's	Wed February 8 th	8.00 p.m.
St. Joseph's	Thurs February 9 th	6.30 p.m.
Stonepark	Thurs February 9 th	7.00 p.m. (Curry Church)

The Cathedral Silver Circle Draw 2011

As the final draw of year twenty eleven of the Cathedral Silver Circle draws nigh and at the conclusion of the awarding the 510 prizes, Christmas turkeys and sweet cakes, we say Thank you to all who supported the draw each week, during the year by writing your name and giving a Euro per line.

During the year we lost one of the team, Fr Merlyn Kenny who was in charge of the Presbytery each Monday night or evening during his time as curate in Templemichael parish, due to his appointment to Carrick on Shannon parish. We wish Fr Merlyn well in his new appointment and hope that he will enjoy working with his former colleague Fr Garvey - they were teachers together in St Mel's college many years ago.

We can easily speculate that one of Fr Merlyn's homily stories from Templemichael will be of his memory of the great fire that engulfed the Cathedral on Christmas morning, 2009 and the black carbon footprints it left on the newly extended and refurbished Presbytery in the days that followed.

One of our founding members is Micheál McCreanor ... a man who has given decades of faithful service to the Draw on all his Monday nights collecting the tickets from the shops down the years. Micheál now arrives to the draw with a new friend his 'Walking-Stick' and looking rather aristocratic. We wish Micheál with his new friend many years of companionship so that he will continue to lead us each night in the new year. Micheál can reflect now on his agile years and all the Tuesday mornings when he collected the Monday night's draw takings and deposited the bag of notes and coins to the bank and returned the deposit slip for the records.



Micheál McCreanor

We congratulate Alex Jones, one of our constant supporters and a winner in many Silver Circle draws by purchasing his lines in Hughie Doyle's and Monaghan's Butcher shop. Alex graduated to RTE to spin the wheel a few Saturday nights ago and won a handsome prize from its circumference. Alex a Leitrim man is very well known in Longford town where he was a student in the Vocational school.

We are also looking forward to the coming year as the first 'New Column' has been fitted in the Cathedral heralding the commencement of the long road to restoration.

Now that we are on the eve of the 50th anniversary of the Silver Circle or its Golden Jubilee (it was set up in February 1962) your continued support is very much appreciated, especially from the older members who have supported the DRAW for the last fifty years. Stay in to win!

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Email: thetemperancehall@eircom.net

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