



HOW FAR IS IT TO BETHLEHEM?

This is the question posed in the well known poem written by Frances Alice Chesterton who lived between 1875 and 1938. The poem is also known as **The Children's Song of Nativity** and it was set to music using a traditional English melody called 'Stowey' that dates back to the 16th *century*.



The reply to the question: *How far is it to Bethlehem?* comes in the second line of the poem: **"Not very far."** So it is never very far from wherever we are to Bethlehem - a place of birth, new life and blessing.

Bethlehem was hardly known at the time when Joseph and Mary went there. It was little more than a grazing place for sheep. It may well have been in a sheep shed or cave where the young couple found a resting place when the one and only inn was already full of weary travellers. Nevertheless, this humble place of hardly any significance then is now a place of pilgrimage and holds a hugely symbolic place in our Christian and Christmas memories.

Bethlehem is associated in the Scriptures with King Saul who ordered the building of the Temple in Jerusalem. It is also associated with David, the minder of sheep, who later became King David and who built the

Temple. He learned how to trust God while tending his flocks. Perhaps it was under the night stars in that area that he had the inspiration to write some of the Psalms associated with his name.

The story of Ruth and Naomi begins and ends in Bethlehem. Naomi lived in the region of Ephratha (which means Fertile) and when a severe famine came she set off with her husband and two sons to Moab to find food. Her husband Elimelech died there, her sons married but they too died there. Naomi went back towards her home accompanied by her daughter-in-law Ruth. Scripture tells us *"The two of them travelled on together to Bethlehem."* (Ruth 1:18-19) Naomi was old and somewhat disillusioned, almost devoid of hope, but her young companion kept assuring her *"Where you go, I go; and where you live, I'll live. Your people are my people, your God is my God; where you die, I'll die, and that's where I'll be buried, so help me God."* (Ruth 1: 16-17, The Message translation).

During these Christmas days let us remember those who are caught in difficult situations like Naomi and Ruth, like Joseph and Mary, and let us companion each other - old and young - believing that places of difficulty may also be places of new life with far reaching consequences. So, as the poem says Bethlehem is not very far away. Are we willing to turn towards it symbolically and seek its hidden treasures afresh these days?

With sincere thanks for your support in the past year as AMRI evolved. May this Christmas gift you and yours with peace, joy and blessings in abundance. May you know health, happiness and peace in the New Year

HOW FAR IS IT TO BETHLEHEM?

*How far is it to Bethlehem?
Not very far.
Shall we find the stable room
Lit by a star?*

*Can we see the little Child?
Is He within?
If we lift the wooden latch
May we go in?*

*May we stroke the creatures there
Ox, ass, or sheep?
May we peep like them and see
Jesus asleep?*

*If we touch His tiny hand
Will He awake?
Will He know we've come so far
Just for His sake?*

*Great kings have precious gifts
And we have naught
Little smiles and little tears
Are all we brought.*

*For all weary children
Mary must weep
Here, on His bed of straw
Sleep, children, sleep.*

*God in His mother's arms
Babes in the byre
Sleep, as they sleep who find
Their heart's desire.*



FROM AGM to CHRISTMAS

It is now almost four months since we gathered for the first AMRI AGM on 5th September 2017 at the Grand Hotel Malahide. On that day we listened to Ned Prendergast talk about *Open Ground - A New Landscape* which drew very positive feedback from far and wide. The 'new' Executive met the following day. Fr Aidan McGrath, OFM had been elected and we said goodbye to Sr Phyllis RSC who had been the Vice President. Soon Sr Brid Liston FCJ was co-opted to make a quota of 12 Directors, and Sr Kathleen McGarvey is now the new Vice President. Since then the Executive has been meeting regularly:

- 6th September
- 2nd November
- 29th November
- 13th December

The Executive has been reviewing the journey that brought CORI and IMU together, creating the new entity with all that is involved in

creating something new. The Executive has had guidance from John Guiney SJ. The Executive members, Staff, Web Team members and Margaret from Vocations Ireland came together for a Communications Workshop last August with Stillwater Communications. Staff have been meeting together and with Fr Marc Whelan (President) to create a forward path. Following much discussion we are now ready to embark together on the development of a Strategic Plan for 2018-2021. This will also involve membership.

PARTNERSHIPS

AMRI co-sponsors Companies with the IEC including COIMIRCE and Towards Healing. Members of COIMIRCE include the four Archbishops together with Marc Whelan, C.S.Sp., Geraldine Fitzgerald SJOG, John Hennebry OSA and myself. The AGM of COIMIRCE took place on 4th September, just before our own AGM. AMRI also appointed two new Directors to the Safeguarding Board: Srs Nuala O'Gorman RSM and Evelyn Green HF. Meetings between AMRI and IEC have taken place in October and November with a particular focus on the future development of COIMIRCE, Towards Healing and Towards Peace.

Work on creating a new **Memorandum of Understanding 2018/2019 and beyond** between the



two sponsoring bodies IEC/AMRI and **Towards**

Healing has taken considerable time but has now been agreed by both sponsors.

A **budget** based system rather than the present billing system will be in place from 1st January 2018. This has created a new role for AMRI which is the recipient of Pledges from the congregations involved with Towards Healing to date, and from Congregations choosing to support this initiative. This new approach means that congregations will no longer receive bills directly from Towards Healing. This was explained at the recent meeting held at Dunardagh, Blackrock on 29th November. Any queries in relation to this new system can be directed to me at the AMRI office.

A review of **Towards Peace** is also underway. This initiative was started by the Irish Bishops in 2011 and has an office in the Columba Centre, Maynooth. It supports survivors of abuse in their spiritual wellbeing.

The Staff at AMRI availed of training by the National Board on 20th November in relation to



implementing *The Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016*.

AMRI WELCOMES NUNCIO OKOLO

It was truly heartwarming to welcome His Excellency Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo to our AGM in September. I attended his formal welcome by the Irish Bishops in Maynooth on 3rd October and Fr Marc and I were present at a Mass of welcome at the Pro Cathedral Dublin on Sunday 12th November. Following his request to meet with the Executive this is now planned for the 1st February 2018 at the Nunciature.

MISSION MONTH 2017

AMRI was pleased to co-operate with **World Mission Ireland** in the series of events to mark Mission Month in October. This commenced with the viewing of the film on the life of Sr Paschal O'Sullivan IJ at the Irish Film Institute on 3rd October. The film is recommended viewing and it is planned to have it on DVD in the near future. Sr Paschal's relative created the story of this 101 year old missionary who spent 75 years in Japan.

Archbishop Kieran O'Reilly celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving for Irish missionaries in Maynooth on Sunday 8th October.



AMRI was invited to take an active role in the RTE Mass on Mission Sunday on 22nd October. Many of the students at the Religious Formation for Ministry Programme

(Loreto House) brought a truly international dimension to the congregation that morning.

RETURNED MISSIONARIES TRANSITION WORKSHOP

All of us staff at the AMRI office Cypress Grove Road welcomed 24 Returned Missionaries on 27th and 28th September to a Transition Workshop conducted by Dr Kevin Egan. This gave opportunity to reflect on years of active ministry in different parts of the world and the challenges faced in returning to Ireland.

There will be further opportunities to meet up again at the Christmas Party at Wynns Hotel on 19th December and to connect with other returned missionaries. With tickets in great demand (over 80 sold to date) this promises to be a most enjoyable gathering.

CO-ORDINATED PARISH PROMOTION PROGRAMME (CPPP)

This programme is well known to the missionary congregations who conduct weekly visits to parishes all over the country bringing awareness of mission and the need for continued support. AMRI receives permission from the Bishops for this, and a five year programme is in place 2017-2021. During the past year AMRI hosted three meetings for all involved giving up-to-date information on Garda Vetting for this process,

Charity regulations in relation to funding procedures, and also how best to proclaim the Good News about mission. Great credit is due to all involved in this demanding ministry and we thank them most sincerely for their co-operation with AMRI.

CONFERENCES

ABRI (Association of Bursars of Religious of Ireland) was founded 'under the auspices of CORI' and is now 'under the auspices of AMRI.' The theme of its 3 day conference held at Emmaus 13-15 November was *Stewardship Today to Sustain Tomorrow*. This was very well attended. The Agenda covered significant input on Charity legislation, Data Protection, the practice of good Governance, the role of the Bursar's office, Cyber Security and legal issues. Davy Charities, the sponsors of this event, have promised that the DVD's of the inputs by Sr Carol Zinn and myself will be available soon.

VOCATIONS IRELAND. The AGM of Vocations Ireland was held at Emmaus on Saturday 11th November. Input was given by Bishop Donal McKeown. Research conducted by Dr Noelia Molina on *Religious Vocations in Ireland:*



Challenges & Opportunities outlines some key findings in Ireland today. A copy of this research has been kindly provided for all our members by Margaret Cartwright and will be distributed in due course.



AMRI Guide to Retreats and Courses 2018

Thanks to the diligent work of Collette Bradford the 2018 Guide is now available. Copies are sent to all Congregational/Provincial offices, to

Bishops and to all advertisers. Further copies are available for purchase at the AMRI office. The **AMRI 2018 Address Guide** is also available and copies are enclosed with this mailing. Both books will be available on www.amri.ie in early January.

WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES



I was happy to convene meetings for Provincial Leaders/Bursars in Dublin on 4th October, in Cork on 19th October and in Ballinasloe on 22nd November. Information on how to contact WMF2018 was sent by email to all AMRI members. The website www.worldmeeting2018.ie carries

much information. We appreciate the gift of the enclosed icons for Leadership Teams which have been distributed to all parishes for Christmas.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Due to a request from many Leaders and in light of additional **GDPR** (General Data Protection Regulation) coming into effect in May 2018 an afternoon on **Data Protection** will be held at Daughters of Charity, Dunardagh on 23rd January 2018. This will be conducted by solicitor Miriam Matthews. Notification with full details will be forwarded by email on 3rd January.

Collaborative Leadership Development Programme.(CLDP).

A brochure about this proposed programme was included in the AGM folders. More detailed information was given at a meeting held at the AMRI offices on Monday 11th September which included a Skype call with Kathy Wade in the USA who has been directing the programme there. There is considerable interest in this programme so a further meeting will take place at the AMRI office on **Tuesday 9th January 2018.**



AMRI MEMBERSHIP

Since the AGM, life in the office has been very busy. The main task was to gather the details of all our members and begin to collect membership fees. It was agreed at the AGM that the membership fee this year would be greatly reduced, due to the fact that AMRI only came into existence in March and the organisation was very much in its infancy. Receiving and collating all the data was a huge task, and many thanks to all of you for your co-operation with this. So far we have recorded 7,771 members resident in Ireland in 2017, and still counting. To those of you who have not yet returned your membership form or fees, it's not too late!

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Using the information you gave us on your membership forms, we've compiled the new **AMRI Address Guide for 2018**. Hopefully, you will find this to be as useful a resource as we have over the past year. We've also produced the new **Guide to Retreats and Courses**, which was a much sought-after publication in 2017 and surely will be again in 2018.

GARDA VETTING

There has been a huge increase in the number of **Garda Vetting** applications sent into the office, most likely due to the new legislation coming into effect in January 2018. Sandra Neville has been managing all of these on your behalf. If you have any queries about Garda vetting please feel free to contact Sandra directly at neville.sandra@gmail.com.

AMRI FINANCES/2017 AUDIT

This time of year we're busy getting all the finances in order before the 2017 Audit happens in January. I've been working closely with an Accountant from Walsh O'Brien Harnett to ensure everything is in order, and trying to get the last few outstanding payments in before the end of the year.

Don't forget you can find a lot of useful resources on our website, www.amri.ie. Documents such as our Guide to Retreats & Courses, the Annual Report, the Guide to Stipends, list of Facilitators, and lots more are available there, as well as news, events and links to other organisations. There is also a gallery of pictures there! Please keep an eye on it for updates and if there is anything you'd like to put on our website please contact me with the details.

I wish each of you a happy and restful Christmas and look forward to working with you again in the New Year.



COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME MEETING

TUESDAY 9th JANUARY 2018
Venue: AMRI OFFICE 2.00-4.00pm
Open to all interested but booking is essential

DATA PROTECTION
for
RELIGIOUS LEADERS
with Ms Marianne Matthews, LLB
Millett & Matthews solicitors

Tuesday 23rd JANUARY 2018
Venue: Daughters of Charity Centre
Dunardagh, Blackrock.
Time: 1.30 - 4.30pm
Open to all Leaders but booking is essential



I am delighted to give you a brief summary of the activities of the Justice Desk since the AGM Report.

Housing and Integration in partnership with the Irish Refugee Council

I work with the Irish Refugee Council (IRC) on innovative solutions to house asylum seekers and refugees. Our project to date, involves the IRC leasing ten properties from Irish religious Congregations which are then sub-leased to individuals and families who are trying to exit direct provision or have come through the



Government Refugee Programme. The IRC acts as the 'landlord' and provides, in conjunction with local congregations, care and assistance to tenants under its 'holistic integration' approach. The

Government Refugee Programme.

The IRC acts as the 'landlord' and provides, in conjunction with

process is complicated and very time consuming as we aim to ensure all parties involved are protected. We also liaise with the Jesuit Refugee Service, Crosscare and the Irish Red Cross on this project.

In October members of Congregations who have offered properties met to discuss the project. This was a valuable meeting and a follow up meeting has been arranged for 10th January 2018. We are in the process of looking at ways in which we can consolidate this project into the future. I wish to thank all of those Congregations who have participated in this project to date and to Rory O'Neill from the Irish Refugee Council for his knowledge and skills which have enabled this project to develop.



Spirasi Befriending Project

The programme currently has a total of 21 participants who are supported by 19 volunteer befrienders. There are 7 clients waiting to join the programme. They are awaiting Garda vetting. This will bring the number of participants to 28 and the number of volunteer befrienders to 26 (23 female, 3 male). A meeting of Befrienders was held in Spirasi on 9th December. There were 29 attendees and the feedback was extremely positive. One of the unique aspects of this project is that it is intergenerational, cross-cultural and interfaith. We hope to extend this project beyond Dublin in 2018. I would like to express my gratitude to

Deirdre Markey in Spirasi, for all her hard work and we look forward to developing the programme in 2018.

NASC and Doras Luimni

I continue to work closely with both organisations. Our members are involved with these organisations by befriending refugees or teaching English as a second language in Cork and Limerick.



All these projects are looking for volunteers. All that is necessary is an open mind and heart. If anyone is interested

please contact the AMRI Justice Office.

AMRI Refugee Solidarity Fund

A second round of funding has been allocated to organisations who sent in reports and demonstrated how a second round of funding would help consolidate the work they were able to undertake as a result of having access to the AMRI Solidarity Fund.

The following projects have been allocated funding:

- Spirasi:** Befriending project.
- Irish Refugee Council:** Integration and Housing Project.
- Dun Laoghaire Refugee Project:** Educational Support and Mentoring.

Lantern Centre: Counselling and Integration Support Project

Doras Luimni: Proactive Integration Project

NASC Cork: “Connect” — holistic advocacy and support for migrant young people.

MRCI: The Sky is the Limit — securing rights for undocumented migrants.



The reports from projects funded in the previous round of funding are coming in and are available on request to leaders who donated money to the fund.

I want to thank Fr. John Kilcrann CSSp, and Sr. Margaret Lynch RGS, who are part of the funding committee, for the work they put into reviewing the reports and submissions.

JPIC Meeting in Rome

The Justice Coordinator attended the JPIC Workshop in Rome from November 15-18, 2017. The meeting offered an opportunity to meet JPIC Promoters from Leadership Teams based in Rome as well as an opportunity to network with organisations working with migrants, refugees and asylum seekers such as: Rete Migrant UISG, Talitha Kum and the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and the JRS project

in Rome. There was an expressed need for all of us to work more collaboratively and we are at present working on a proposal to the World Meeting of Families to address the following issues: for States to promote Family Reunification for Refugees and advocate for right to shelter for everyone, we believe to be a basic human right.

Dublin Interfaith Forum and European Anti-Racism Network

AMRI is a member of both groups and at present the Justice Co-ordinator is part of a team developing training for faith communities to work on issues related to racism. We wish to see faith communities build their capacity to address race related issues, find ways to support people who experience racism and work together in combatting racism in Ireland. This is an exciting project which will begin in January 2018.

Global Compacts

I sent in a submission on the UN Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, to the Department of Justice ahead of Stocktaking Conference in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. A copy of the submission is on the AMRI website.

The Irish Refugee and Migrant Coalition, AMRI is a member of this coalition. In October, we launched a newly-published report, *Pathways to Protection and Inclusion*, which proposed a new framework for the Irish Government to improve its response to refugees and migrants. A copy of this report is on the AMRI website.



Justice for Undocumented

I continue to work with MRCI in advocating for the regularisation of undocumented people in Ireland.

Communication:

I have a list of people who expressed a wish to receive regular emails on Justice Issues. If you are interested in having your name on the list, please send me your email address. Otherwise, please check our website for updates.

A huge thank you to all who have supported the work of Justice in the past year.

May you be inspired by the one who became flesh to break down the walls of exclusion in order to build a more just and equal world.

Happy Christmas to one and all.

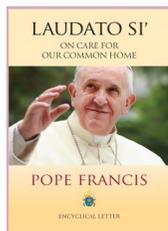


Update on Lay Mission Support Groups in Irish dioceses in Ireland

Returned Lay missionaries and Volunteers are now meeting on a regular basis in 8

dioceses across Ireland including Down & Connor, Dublin, Derry, Raphoe, Kildare & Leighlin, Cashel & Emly, Kerry and Meath. Working closely with the local Diocesan Pontifical Mission Societies Directors in various dioceses, a number of them have spoken in parishes during October Mission Month about their experience on mission overseas and were well received. This has provided an opportunity for lay missionaries and volunteers to share about their work overseas and their faith journey as well as connecting the local parish with the global Church and inspiring others to consider working overseas as a lay missionary or volunteer.

Over the past two months, most of the groups have been focusing on the Encyclical 'Laudato Si' as a focal point for reflection and discussion drawing also on their overseas experience and looking at practical implications in their daily lives. The networking in these groups and sharing of information provide opportunities for people to



become more involved in their parish, community and diocese. One lay missionary said that since she has joined her group lots of opportunities have opened up for her to practice her faith in a more meaningful way. One group is exploring how they can assist recently arrived Syrian refugee families, while people in another group have volunteered to teach English to newly arrived migrants. It hoped that over the next 3-4 months that most of these groups will be self-supporting and this will allow more work to be done in getting new groups off the ground in other dioceses.

If you know of any returned lay/religious missionaries or volunteers who might be interested in attending these regular gatherings please contact me at 083 8422468 or email me.

Fit for Life

Fit for Life classes have been continuing for some seasoned missionaries who have been making the journey each Wednesday morning to the Blessed Sacrament Chapel Centre in Dublin's city centre braving all kinds of weather. An average of 12-15 people attend each week. These classes have been especially tailored to meet people's needs and they provide ideal opportunities to meet up and have a cup of coffee or tea. The classes break for Christmas on December 13th.

UCD Volunteers Overseas (UCDVO) in partnership with AMRI

We are hoping once again to work in partnership

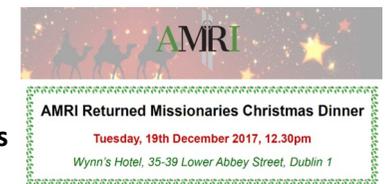
with UCD Volunteers Overseas (UCDVO) to facilitate a number of IT Skills Exchange workshops for recently returned missionaries in early 2018. This is an intergenerational project whereby UCDVO who are preparing to travel to Africa tutor recently returned missionaries in IT skills, and in return missionaries share their stories of working overseas to help students prepare for their work in Africa. Last year's programme was very popular. If you are interested in getting involved in next year's programme, please contact me on 083 8422468 or email jim.farrell@amri.ie.

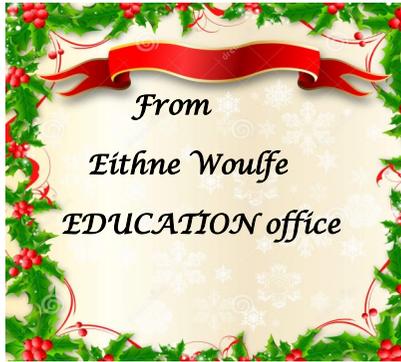


Transition Workshop for Returned Missionaries

This programme was run at AMRI, facilitated by Dr Kevin Egan on September 27th & 28th 2017. It was attended by 24 sisters and priests from different missionary societies and congregations. The objective of the workshop was to provide a space for participants to explore their experience of transition and draw on the collective wisdom of all for guidance in negotiating transition. The feedback from the workshop was very positive and the hospitality shown by AMRI was noted in the evaluation forms.

Thank you for your hearty response to planning Christmas Dinner on 19th!





2017 and Education in Ireland

The State has recently purchased the former Greyhound Stadium in Dublin's Harold's Cross with a view to creating an educational campus there, with planning already in process for a Primary school. Patron bodies will be invited to bid for the patronage of these schools, which will be leased to them by the State for some twenty years.

This development is a symbol of the increasingly active role played by the State in all matters educational, including funding. Inevitably, this paradigm change is reflected in Church/State relationships, where the Catholic Church has historically invested so much in Education on this island. Indeed, the educational landscape is rapidly changing for all involved in it, with for example, the State leasing schools and curricular reform at both Primary and Post Primary levels.

For schools in Catholic patronage/trusteeship, there is a similar dynamic, with consultation in process around greater cohesion at trusteehip and management levels at Post Primary level in Ireland, and the birth of the

recently established Catholic Schools Trustee Service in Northern Ireland .

Curricular Reform: This has been a focus at both Primary and Post Primary levels in 2017, with consultations at Primary level and the actual realisation of a new curricular approach at Post Primary level.

Junior Certificate: The new approach to Teaching, Learning and Assessment in Post Primary schools at Junior cycle (1st – 3rd. Year) represents a quantum change in the style of teaching, learning and assessment. The new **Junior Cycle** will feature newly developed subjects and short courses, a focus on literacy, numeracy and key skills, and new approaches of assessment and reporting. The introduction of specifications for subject areas will be gradual with English, Science, Business Studies already in play, with up to twenty four subjects eventually available. The new specifications will allow individual schools much flexibility and cross curricular approaches in how they design courses, a skill long practiced in Transition Year teaching and learning. .It is also potentially an opportunity for wider dialogue and engagement between faith and learning across the wider formal school curriculum.

Examinations will consist of in-school assessment and end of State examination Third Year. A major new component is the introduction of short courses and much more flexibility of subject choice for schools and pupils. The core subjects remain - English, Science, Maths, Irish, and R.E. is likely to remain a core that is a compulsory subject in Faith schools.

The core principles are encouraging, and of course, will dictate the experience of pupils and classroom culture:

Learning to Learn – How and What to think etc., Flexibility and Choice, Quality,

Creativity and Innovation, Engagement and Participation, Continuity and Development,

Inclusive Education, Well Being (of pupils, school, wider community and society).

Indeed, the new approach may finally end the influence of the 19th century Intermediate Education Act which introduced payment by results to schools and the resulting undue emphasis on results and rote learning. *This is a good example of the enduring power of earlier decisions even when the basis for them is long since obsolete!* It is now fifty years since Free Education and mass secondary schooling was introduced and it is only now that huge adaptation to student learning is being mainstreamed. *How slow we can be to read the signs of the times!*

Strategic Plan for the Future of Post Primary Trusteeship/Management Structures in Post Primary Catholic Schools

An **Implementation Working Group** under the direction of Executive Chair, Mr. Gerry Lundy, has been working on the Implementation process for this plan. The Chair will be contacting Trusts/Trustees in the near future with a view to following up on the consultation of early Summer 2017. This consultation raised a spectrum of issues. While agreeing on the need for greater coherence and alignment, and the urgency of resolving certain situations, further information has been sought on a range of matters. This is being addressed by the working group.

Executive Chair: Mr. Gerry Lundy is the Executive Chair of the Implementation Working Group. Gerry,

until recently Deputy CEO of the statutory Council for Catholic Maintained Schools in Northern Ireland, is familiar with Catholic Education services and structures across several jurisdictions and was CEO Designate of a then proposed Catholic Education Service for Northern Ireland. Unfortunately this post lapsed following the failure of the relevant legislation. He led the much respected and strategic Post Primary Review process of Catholic Schools in N.I. The outcomes of this process are resulting in significant and ongoing structural and system change across N.I. He has been lead associate to the Northern Ireland Commission for Catholic Education in setting up the new Trustee Support Service, and has recently been appointed to the N.I. Educational Authority. He has thus had wide experience in working with Catholic and other stakeholders in Education, and particularly, with both Management and Trustee interests. He was also an initial member of the Catholic Schools Partnership.

The Implementation Group comprises:

Sr. Marie Celine Clegg IBVM, Mr. Bernard Keely, and Fr. Paul Connell who were members of the initial group to develop this plan.

Dr. Eugene Duffy of Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. A theologian with a specialism in Ecclesiology, he leads the Post Graduate courses in Christian Leadership for Schools in M.I.C.

Dr. Tom Deenihan, Executive Secretary to the Council for Education of the Episcopal Conference, a current member of the Catholic Schools Partnership, a former CEO of CPSMA, and Chair of the Association of Trustees of Catholic Schools.

Mr. Sean McCann former CEO of the Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools,

Ms Muireann O' Briain SC, a former Chair and member of a Voluntary Secondary School Board of Management, and until recently legal adviser and Secretary to the Board of St. James Hospital, Dublin. Muireann has worked as a legal adviser to the Labour Court and as a jurist to a number of international agencies and enquiries.

A Business Advisory sub-group, will be set up in time to work with the implementation group, in finalising the Business Plan to include costings, funding, sustainability, HR, risk assessment.

Eithne Woulfe SSL (AMRI/Co-Executive Secretary of the Catholic Education Service Committee (CESC) will act as Executive Secretary to the above work.

NORTHERN IRELAND

The newly formed Catholic Schools Trustee Service is active with three committees in planning mode – Area Planning, Ethos and Governance. Interviews are pending for additional staff at administrative level.

This is a small organisation which is funded through a levy system and a grant from the Department of Education. However, tús maith leath na hoibre!



EDUCATION CONFERENCE FOR LEADERSHIP

Thursday March 8th 2018
Dublin area venue
Further details to follow





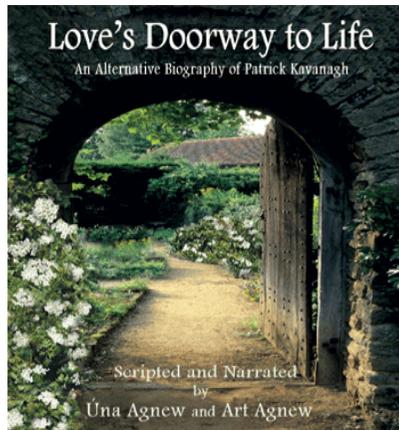
Advent

We have tested and tasted too much, lover-
Through a chink too wide there comes in no wonder.
But here in the Advent-darkened room
Where the dry black bread and the sugarless tea
Of penance will charm back the luxury
Of a child's soul, we'll return to Doom
The knowledge we stole but could not use.

And the newness that was in every stale thing
When we looked at it as children: the spirit-shocking
Wonder in a black slanting Ulster hill
Or the prophetic astonishment in the tedious talking
Of an old fool will awake for us and bring
You and me to the yard gate to watch the whins
And the bog-holes, cart-tracks, old stables where Time
begins.

O after Christmas we'll have no need to go searching
For the difference that sets an old phrase burning-
We'll hear it in the whispered argument of a churning
Or in the streets where the village boys are lurching.
And we'll hear it among decent men too
Who barrow dung in gardens under trees,
Wherever life pours ordinary plenty.
Won't we be rich, my love and I, and
God we shall not ask for reason's payment,
The why of heart-breaking strangeness in dreeping
hedges
Nor analyse God's breath in common statement.
We have thrown into the dust-bin the clay-minted
wages
Of pleasure, knowledge and the conscious hour-
And Christ comes with a January flower.

Patrick Kavanagh



Crib at AMRI Office December 2017

AFTER CHRISTMAS REFLECTION

When the song of angels is stilled
When the star in the sky is gone
When the Kings and Princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flocks,
The work of Christmas begins:

- * To find the lost
- * To heal the broken
- * To feed the hungry
- * To release the prisoner
- * To rebuild the nations
- * To bring peace among people
- * To make music in the heart

(Rathmines Folk group)