



Issue No. 37



Newsletter

December 2022



These early days of December are marked by the beginning of our journey through Advent. It's not a word you will find in many shopping catalogues. How many of us get excited about Advent and yet it is a season full of meaning and symbolism?

The word "Advent" is derived from the Latin "Adventus", a name which means coming or arrival. The prayers of Advent touch on each person walking in some darkness and also awaiting and anticipating a great light. It is a time for us to hear those quiet whispers in our lives of a God gently calling us from darkness into light. Advent is a reminder of how we need this light more than ever in our own lives, especially at these challenging times.

Life certainly moves fast and particularly in the run into Christmas. Time appears to be going faster and everything takes on an air of urgency. Waiting for many of us may not be our greatest forte and we go directly to celebrating Christmas without getting in touch with that part of ourselves that is reflective, trusting and hoping.

Joseph, the husband of Mary can only wait with her, loving and supporting her and their unborn child, but unable to accelerate the process. Unless we step aside from all of this and reflect on this great event and its relevance to us, take time to see where we fit into the bigger picture, we have failed ourselves.

The season of Advent is an opportunity to step aside. The sheer speed of life today can literally choke and block out those beautiful, simple and ordinary moments that no money can buy. Advent gives us the chance to appreciate that we are indeed on a privileged journey.



Br Rupert O Sullivan

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NEW VOICES ~ Br Colm O Mahony OSA

Those of us in religious life know all too well that nothing lasts forever. This is especially true of community life as for most of us change every few years is part of our lived experience. We may find ourselves being challenged to head a new ministry or try and support one that is failing, we may be asked to leave a secure and supportive community and transfer across country or even continent to be part of something totally different and new; to be a different voice. In all situations most of us trust in the Spirit and in the wisdom of those in leadership to guide us where we will be most needed. For the past number of years, the vocations Ireland Executive have been blessed with a different voice; the voice of our lay representative; Keilah Blohm.

Many of you will know Keilah from her work in the Irish Catholic and the skills she developed there transferred to her work with vocations Ireland. Others may know her from our various meetings and encounters where Keilah's radiant smile and positive attitude often helped us remember that God is still active and calling us all towards him. Through her work in the Irish Catholic, she has a deep insight into the challenges and opportunities facing not only the Church in Ireland but young people of faith. She has worked with many young people in exploring their faith journey and has always been generous to vocations Ireland with her time and gifts. As a woman of faith, she has been keenly aware of the challenges, difficulties, hopes and possibilities that the Church offers in our contemporary society. Keilah now returns back home to be closer to her family and pursue other opportunities and we wish her all the very best.

Keilah's role in vocations Ireland will now be taken by Michelle Robertson so we will have a new voice encouraging and challenging us in our work. Michelle is a lay woman employed by the OLA Sisters as their communications officer, so again she will bring a wide range of skills and experience to vocations Ireland especially in the area of social media. Michelle was born in South Africa and has worked in Ireland for the past 10 years. We look forward to her joining our team and she will introduce herself more fully in our January Newsletter. We are still looking for a lay male representative so if anyone knows of a suitable candidate, please contact Margaret or any member of the Executive.

VOCATIONS IRELAND SPRING CONFERENCE

WEDNESDAY 1ST February 2023

Mount St Anne's Retreat Centre 9.30a.m.-4.00p.m



SPRING CONGERENCE

1st February 2023

9.30-4.30

*Mt St Anne's Rereat Centre,
Portarlinton*

CROSSING A THRESHOLD TO NEW LIFE: THE CALL TO BE PIONEERS ONCE AGAIN



Lynn M. Levo, CSJ

Speaker:

Lynn M. Levo, CSJ, Ph.D. is a Sister of St. Joseph of Carondelet and a licensed psychologist, lecturer and consultant. Sister Lynn consults with religious congregations of women and men, dioceses and health systems on mutuality, transitions and stress, anger, managing conflict, aging and healthy personal, sexual and spiritual development across the life span.



Executive Presentation

Fr Colm O'Mahony is vocations director for the Augustinians in Ireland; student master for the pre-novitiate; and prior and bursar of the Drogheda community. He also serves as an Executive Member of Vocations Ireland.



Colm O'Mahony OSA



Facilitator:

Carolanne Henry is the Marketing and Communications executive, for Messenger Publications. As a communications and marketing professional. Carolanne has extensive experience in media, press and public relations, communications strategy design and event organisation.



Carolanne Henry



Bookings through Vocations Ireland

BANK TRANSFER DETAILS

VOCATIONS IRELAND Ranelagh Branch a/c 881984354 IBAN IE 60FI 9001 7281 984354 BIC No. BOFIE2D REF AC 23.2

POSTAL ADDRESS

Vocations Ireland AMRI Office, c/o Missionaries for Africa
Cypress Grove Rd. Templeogue, Dublin 6W D6W





Spring Conference 2022

Crossing a Threshold to New Life:
The Call to BE Pioneers Once Again

Congregation

Delegate's Name: _____

Address: _____

Contact No: _____

Email: _____

Payment Method: Cheque Bank Transfer



Special Dietary Requirements



Payment Details

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VOCATIONS IRELAND Ranelagh Branch a/c 881984354 IBAN IE BOFI 9001 7281
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CYMFed – Catholic Youth Ministry of England and Wales are hosting FLAME 2023 – the largest Catholic gathering of young people. Consider being a presence – see website for details and early bird booking.

<https://cymfed.org.uk/flame/>

PLANNING AHEAD

On Friday 25th November, some members of Vocations Ireland gathered together with Margaret in the AMRI offices to brainstorm event planning for the year ahead. Many events have been attended by Margaret and it is now time for congregations to take more ownership of their visibility and attendance at events.

The group had a really good discussion about the importance of religious being visible and at events where people – especially young people – gather.

With this in mind we came up with a few events to focus on. Starting with the Youth 2000 Christmas Retreat which Anne-Marie Whelan agreed to organise. Some of the religious present attended a young Catholic event in Trinity College following the Orientation workshop and will investigate further events like this where it might be possible to attend or even share vocation stories. We will work with Margaret and the AMRI team to plan for our presence at World Youth Day in 2023 and there is also the opportunity to attend FLAME in Wembley in the New Year. All of this planning is just the start of a conversation we plan to continue in the New Year and if you would like to send on any events that are happening in your area which other religious could attend, email the office vocationsireland1@gmail.com with the details and Margaret will send out an email to the congregations on your behalf.



"Wherever there is life, fervour and a desire to bring Christ to others, genuine vocations will arise".

(Pope Francis Evangelii Gaudium 107)

Attending a Youth 2000 Retreat is certainly a place where you will find life and fervor. Around 500 young people from all over the island of Ireland gathered together in Newbridge College on the weekend of 9th to 11th December for their annual Christmas Retreat. Despite the freezing weather conditions, the young people and their leaders participated in a wonderful weekend. Members of Vocations Ireland joined with them and were warmly welcomed by volunteers and participants.

On Saturday Sr Eileen O Connell OP, Sr Jacinta Okechukwu MMM and Br Anthony Bibin Kurian OFM Cap led a workshop on vocations and shared their own vocation stories with the young people. They answered their questions and had an amazing experience getting to know many young people from many different walks of life.

Youth 2000 really appreciated the donations made by many congregations in helping to fund the weekend. If you have not already done so, please consider supporting them with a donation to help them continue their mission.

<https://youth2000.ie/donate/>



.... a word from Margaret....

As we come to the end of the year, I give thanks for all our members in Vocations Ireland, and your commitment to Religious Life today. Many of you have supported and encouraged me during this year. It has probably been the toughest year I have experienced since I began but it has also been a very blessed year.

I was sad to lose two very important colleagues with whom I have worked very closely over the years. Sr Peggy McLoughlin from the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny and Sr Frances Kelly from the Sisters of Nazareth who passed away very quickly. Both of these women were committed to their congregations and to vocation ministry and were great examples of religious life. I learned much from them through their witness, joy, hope, and love of religious life. May they rest in peace.

In the past year, we closed our doors as Vocations Ireland Charity and opened them as a committee of AMRI. This of course involved physical moving, financial movement of accounts, setting up a new office and becoming part of a new team.

We also had to tend with Covid and the fall out with the difficulties that it brought to everyone's door. Many congregations sadly lost members of their communities, family members and friends. We had to dig deep and find new ways of doing things, new ways of connecting, new ways of being challenged and of challenging others.

July arrived and the doors were flung open once again and we tried to re connect. I was extremely busy July, August, September, and October. I visited some communities looking for help in preparation for the Ploughing Championships. Our Contemplative sisters were wonderful. They helped me delete old addresses on our prayer cards, so we did not waste them. They produced the bags of salt with the prayer cards for giving out at the ploughing. Both of these jobs were tedious, yet done with such a spirit of love and joy. Some of the communities took photographs of their eco-friendly gardens which I have used at the ploughing and at other smaller events. We have some very gifted photographers in our communities. We had a wonderful Conference for our Religious Brothers held in Mount St Annes with Br Pinto from India as the guest speaker. We celebrated the gift of brotherhood and with confidence we look forward to growing the understanding of this vocation today.

We held our Orientation Workshop for new and returning vocation directors, formators and leaders. While the numbers attending was very disappointing, I was enthused and excited by those who did attend. This group was one of the youngest groups I have had for training and hopefully will bring new life to Vocation Promotion.

We also had our National Conference which again was poorly attended with only 42 compared to normal numbers of between 80 and 100.

We have evaluated these drops in numbers and the reasons that appear to be coming up are.

1. Covid - some are still nervous of attending in person events
2. Everything was reopening and events were at that time being held too close together.
3. Chapters were delayed due to covid and many felt they would no longer be in their current role and therefore did not attend.

I will be putting out a calendar early in the new year of possible events. I will be trying to get a sense of whether you want live or online events. We are not currently in a financial position to offer Hybrid events as we need professional equipment and expertise to run such events. Some of us in AMRI are looking into this possibility for the future.

We also faced a huge difficulty in getting a venue as most retreat/conference centres are closed and hotel prices have shot up. We will need to look carefully at this issue for next year.

Currently the only places on offer are Mount St Anne's and Maynooth Conference Centre. If anyone knows of any other venues that could be a possibility, please let me know.

Last year our Vocation Music Awards was a great success despite it having to be done online. This proved to be very difficult and time consuming but thankfully we had Helena Connolly working in AMRI at the time who provided us with her superb talent and expertise. This year we have put together a recording of the top 10 winners and we hope to launch this at CYMFed Flame event in Wembley early next year. We will put this on our YouTube channel and a C.D. will be presented to the congregations who contributed financially to the Awards.

The Executive finished the year with three days in Roscrea praying together and reflecting on our new Mission and Goals for the future in tandem with AMRI's goals. I am looking forward in 2023 to working with Vocations Ireland in AMRI, bringing Vocations out from behind doors and encouraging our young people and our religious to engage with one another to seek new and vibrant ways of living religious life today.

May I wish you all a blessed Advent as we prepare for the arrival of the Christ Child and a very happy Christmas which I hope is a restful and peaceful one for all.

Margaret Cartwright

OFFICE CLOSURE

To facilitate Margaret's accumulation of leave due, the office will be closed from the 14th December and reopen on Monday 9th January. Office hours are 10.00a.m-5.00p.m. If I am unavailable to take a call, please do leave a message and I will return the call as soon as possible. 086 782 0149

