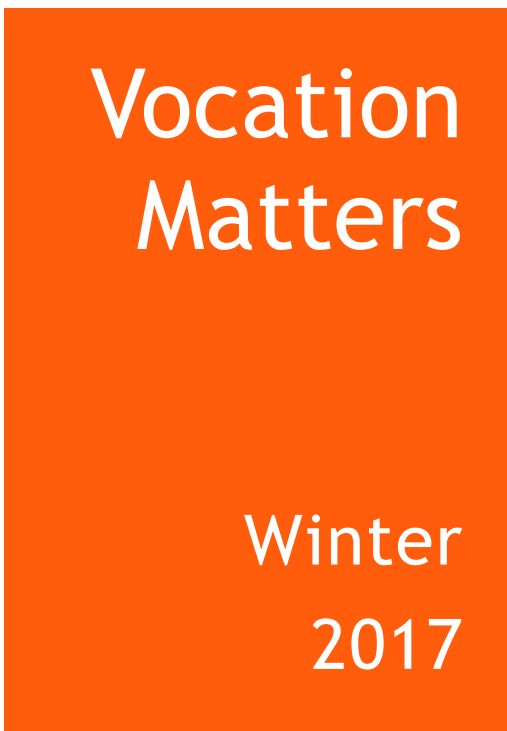




Celebrants -Mass of Thanksgiving for Priests – 26th Nov 2017 – St. Andrew’s Westland Row
Principal Celebrant and Homilist – Fr. Damian Farnon

NEWSLETTER OF NATIONAL VOCATIONS OFFICE



IN THIS ISSUE

Chile to Westland Row

“Did our hearts not burn within us...” Luke 24:32

by Eric Cooney

I have just returned from a Diocesan visit to Chile. For a long time, a number of Diocesan priests from the Dublin Diocese have spent time working in various parishes along with the Columban Father’s Missionary Society.

Over the course of the week we gained an insight into both the political and social transformation that has taken place over the last forty years and learned of the challenges facing the church in Santiago.

A highlight of the trip for me was our daily celebration of the Eucharist. One of the days we decided to dedicate our mass to all those diocesan priests who had served in Chile and those in our group who knew these men, shared about their lives, their faith, their warmth, humor and their compassion. It was a wonderful liturgy which lasted over two hours. Hearing the stories of these men was inspiring. I commented afterwards how I felt it was somewhat like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, who said to each other “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road?”

The weekend I returned home, I participated in a Mass of Thanksgiving for the Gift of Priesthood. The mass was organized by the St. Joseph’s Young Priests Society and held in St. Andrew’s Church on Westland Row.

In his homily, the principal celebrant, Fr. Damian Farnon spoke about his journey since being ordained and about the care, inspiration and example he has received from a number of priests during this time. He mentioned a number of them by name and spoke about their qualities and aspects of their priesthood from compassion and gentleness to spirituality and homiletics.

Just like in Chile, my heart “burned” as I listened to Fr. Damian as he described these priests. The thought has been with me over the last few days that it would be helpful from a vocation’s perspective, to find a way to tell the stories of priests whose lives and dedicated service have made an impact on people.



National Diocesan Vocation Formation Course 2018

The formation training course for Vocation Directors and those involved in vocations promotion is scheduled for June 24 to 28 in Knock. Fr. Willie Purcell provides some additional information about the team of US based priests who will be coming.

Page 2



Regional Meeting - Thurles

A number of Vocations Directors in the Muster region met in the Pallottine Retreat Centre in Thurles on 31st October.

Page 4

National Diocesan Vocations Formation Course

Knock - 24th to 28th June 2018

by Willie Purcell



The first National Diocesan Vocations Directors Formation course will take place in the **Knock House Hotel** from Sunday (evening) June 24th to Thursday (lunch time) June 28th 2018. I am happy to confirm the team for the Formation Course.

The team of priests are:

- **Fr. Chris Martin**
Vocations Director (St. Louis)
- **Fr. Jeff Eirvin**
Vocations Director (Portland, Oregon)
- **Fr. Paul Hoelsing,**
Vice Rector (Kenrick-Glennon) Seminary in St. Louis
- **Fr. Brett Brannen**
author of 'To save a thousand souls' and 'A priest in the family'

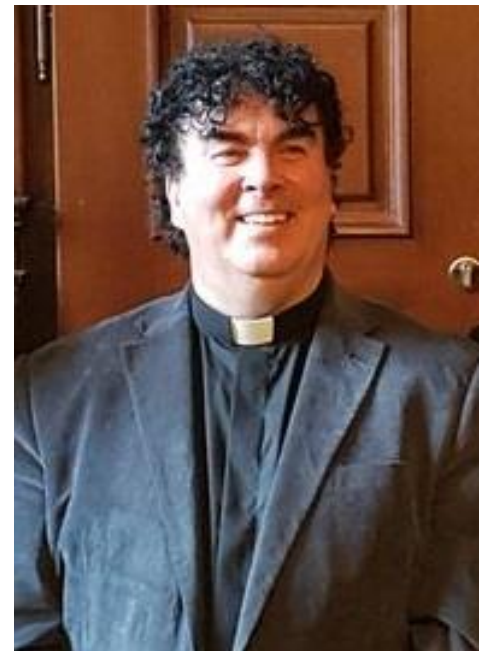
We are truly blessed in Ireland to have such a great team come to us. This is the first time that the National Vocations Directors Formation Course has moved out of the USA. I am grateful that after three years of planning this course - it is now coming to fruition.

This is an important gathering for all of us who are involved in Vocations Ministry in Ireland. My prayer is that this is the beginning of an annual formation course that will empower us in our work as vocations directors.

I ask you to keep the formation course and team in your prayers over the next number of months.

'I am quite confident that the One who began a good work in you will go on completing it until the Day of Jesus Christ comes.'
Philippians 1:6.

The course will commence at 6pm on Sunday 24th, to facilitate many of you who will have parish commitments on Sunday morning. Rev Eric Cooney in the National Diocesan Vocations Office will be in contact with you with registration details.



Fr. Willie Purcell
National Vocations Coordinator



A Priest's Prayer for Vocations

Heavenly Father,
from my mother's womb you have known me
and loved me more than I can ever know.

I ask for the grace and courage to live a holy life,
I pray that your hand will guide my decisions
and that your mercy be extended through me
to all you have called me to serve as their priest.

I pray that that my life will give you glory
and that I may never seek my own glory instead of yours.

I pray for the wisdom
to know your plan for me in my life
and like Mary your mother and my mother
I ask for the grace, courage and strength
to say yes as your plan unfolds in my life.

Give me the grace to find you in every person I meet.
May all whom I am called to serve
discover in me your goodness and love
so that each person through me may be led to you.

Let the witness of my life
inspire men with faith, hope and love
to hear and answer your call to priesthood.

Through my priesthood may they come to know you
as the Good Shepherd who sees deep into their hearts
and knows them for who they are.

Let my humble service as your priest
call forth generosity of spirit and openness of heart
in the lives of those you are calling to follow you as priests.

Amen.

Fr. Willie Purcell.
National Vocations Coordinator.
2017

Regional Meetings

by Eric Cooney

On October 31st, we met with a number of Vocation Directors from the Dioceses in the Munster region in the Pallottine Retreat Centre in Thurles. The meeting commenced with a light lunch, after which we had an hour of silent prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, which was led by Bishop Cullinan.

I provided a short recap on the results of the survey which I sent out in September. In summary the key learning's from this were:

- Majority of vocation directors surveyed would welcome training and the opportunity to meet together.
- Most vocation directors felt supported by the priests in their diocese and were welcomed into schools.
- There was a strong demand for professional, well designed promotional materials.
- Majority felt that Vocations were not prominently promoted on their Diocesan Websites. Whilst most dioceses had vocation information on their site, it was typically nested underneath a sub-menu, for example, listed under Sacraments.

There was a healthy discussion and exchange of views on how a Vocations culture might be created. Suggestions included encouraging every parish to have a person or group focused on vocations, encouraging regular prayer for vocations etc.

I referenced statistics from the US that 80% of seminarians attribute their choice to enter the seminary to the encouragement or nurturing from a priest. Yet the same survey showed that less than 30% of priests in the US had ever personally invited or encouraged a person to consider that that may have a calling to priesthood or religious life.

It is planned to hold further meetings with the vocation directors in the remaining diocese early in 2018.



Fr Shane O'Neill, Fr Willie Purcell, Fr Noel Kirwan, Fr Joe Walsh, Fr Billy Meehan, Rev Eric Cooney & Bishop Phonsie Cullinan

NEWS SNIPPETS

Rev Martin Shanahan



Martin Shanahan was ordained on Sunday 26th November as a deacon for the Diocese of Killaloe by Bishop Fintan Monahan in the Cathedral Ennis. Martin worked for over thirty years with the ESB. His wife, Margaret Mary died in 2011 and he has one son Eoin who is currently a third level student. He entered Maynooth to study for the priesthood in the Diocese of Killaloe in 2015. Martin now enters into the final stage in his preparations for his Priestly Ordination next summer.

New Priests for Dublin



Archbishop Diarmuid Martin has ordained Fr Bill O'Shaughnessy and Fr James Daly for the Dublin Diocese. Fr O'Shaughnessy has been appointed to Springfield and Jobstown parishes in Tallaght and Fr. Daly has been appointed to Skerries.

Dying of Survival or Hope for the Future?

This is the title of a review by Fr. Alan Neville MSC, (Vocations Director for the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart) of a research report on the challenges and opportunities facing Religious Vocations in Ireland. The report identifies the disconnect between the young (the Millennials and the iGeneration) and religion. The report opens with the following introduction by its author – Dr. Noelia Molina::

"The Irish Catholic Church today is facing the loss of its institutional legitimacy. The Irish Catholic Church began losing its authority and moral hegemony in late 1970s. This process suffered a further demise with the acceleration of Ireland's rapid economic growth and was exacerbated by the public documentation of the Church's myriad sex abuse scandals (Dillon 2015)".

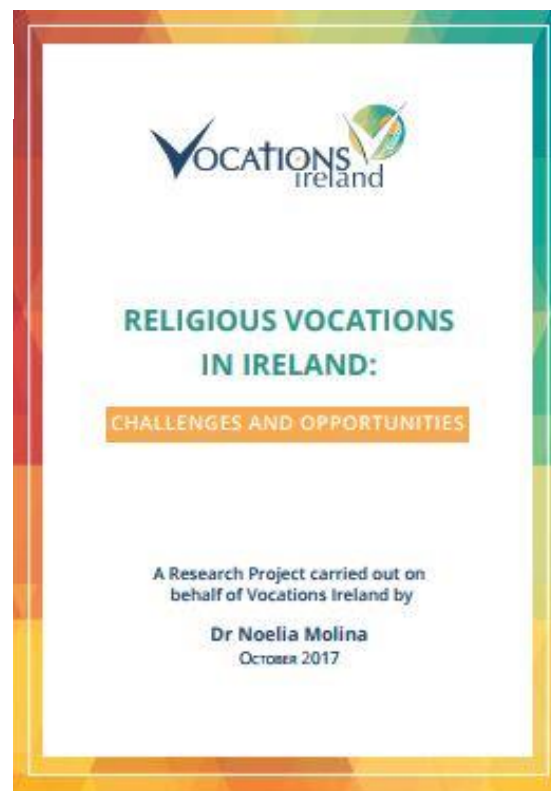
The main objective of the research is to find ways of nurturing a culture of vocation in religious life in Ireland and states the following aims to uncover the main objective of the study:

1. To explore the challenges that the Irish Catholic Church faces in relation to religious vocation.
2. To explore the opportunities that the current social and cultural climate offers for religious vocation.
3. To review, assess and offer recommendations on how to nurture a culture of religious vocations in Ireland.

In his review of the report, Fr. Neville says the following:

"The piece of research commissioned by Vocations Ireland makes for unsettling reading. It points to a cultural reality where most of our young people are disconnected from our Church, and what is more worrying is that it does not seem to bother them in the least. Our absence from schools, hospitals, and parishes goes largely unnoticed. We on the other hand have lost ourselves in a rhetoric of managing decline and gratitude in diminishment. While the work of writers like Twenge (2017) points a disconnect between millennials and the iGeneration and religion, she also remarks on the iGen's felt desire for something that transcends their everyday reality. How can we enter into this space with a message that can be seen as out of date today, while we believe it to be timeless?"

The full text of Fr. Neville's review and the report itself can be found on the Vocations Ireland website (www.vocationireland.com)



Fr. Alan Neville, MSC



Praying about the Priesthood

The following are some resources which may be helpful to someone who is trying to discern whether that have a vocation.

- Is God calling me to be a priest?
- How can I know for sure?
- What's the best way to make such a momentous decision?

As you contemplate what to do with your life, be confident that God has a specific plan for you, and that you can discover it through prayer.

Authentic prayer

Authentic prayer goes beyond saying a couple of Our Fathers and Hail Marys in a church pew. Put simply, the deepest kind of prayer is a heartfelt conversation with Christ. In fact, prayer helps us to achieve union with God, which is the vocation of all Christians. No matter which vocation God has in mind for you, it is essential that you learn to pray well. While you can pray about your vocation anywhere, it is often helpful to pray before the Blessed Sacrament at your parish church.

Read inspiring Scripture passages

Prayerfully reading scripture can spark a great conversation between you and the Lord. Here are a few suggested passages to get started:

- Matthew 19: 16-30 Jesus' encounter with the rich young man
- John 1:35-51 The calling of the first disciples
- Luke 14:25-33 Following Christ no matter what the cost

Contemplate life changes

Everyone, no matter how holy, can always live more perfectly. Think about the things in your life which may be holding you back from making commitments to God. Start with the little things – but don't be afraid to tackle the big ones!

Talk to God about your friends and family

If you make the decision to begin studying for the priesthood, your parents may not understand. Your friends may be sceptical. If so, ask God for guidance in these relationships. Remember that Jesus himself had family and friends who didn't always understand him; he can sympathize with what you are going through.

Confront your fears and ask for courage

For a healthy single man, considering a celibate life without the comforts of a wife and family is difficult, since our nature draws us toward family life. Many men are afraid seminary will be too challenging or that public speaking will prove too difficult. Speak to God about these concerns, then ask for courage and peace. If you confront your fears now, with God's help, your discernment will be much less complicated.

Ask God to show you your strengths

If God is calling you to priesthood, he will have given you certain qualities that will make you a good priest. Spend some time examining your personal gifts, and then imagine how you can use them to help others as a priest. You may discover you have a lot to contribute to the Church!

In the end, spending time with Jesus should be like a conversation with a good friend. Speak to Jesus from your heart and then listen. You're not likely to hear anything with your ears. Instead, "hearing" results in an increase in understanding, acceptance, and willingness to follow God's path for your life.

Prayer is the surest way to know what God wants you to do with your life – and to gain the grace and courage to do it!



National Vocations Office

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