

# The Sheaf

Vocations Society of St Joseph  
(formerly St. Joseph's Young Priests Society)

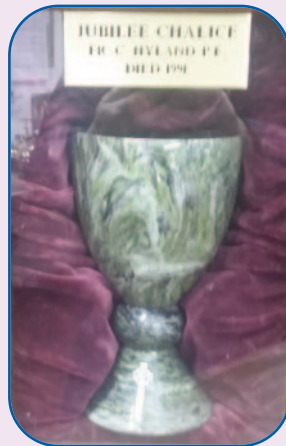
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## The Connemara Prayer Chalice - Promoting Vocations at Leixlip, Co Kildare

In June 2024, at the annual collection for the St. Joseph's Young Priests Society, members of the Leixlip Confey branch (at both churches) launched a new prayer initiative for vocations. Parishioners in both communities were encouraged to sign up to take the Connemara marble prayer chalice into their homes for a week to pray for vocations using a specially prepared prayer booklet. This encouraged not only prayers for vocations to the priesthood and religious life but also encouraged prayer in the family home.

Over 70 families participated in this initiative and the prayer chalice now sits in the Sacristy in Our Lady's Nativity Church. The first parish priest of this church, the late Fr. Christopher Hyland, was appointed from 1971 to 1988 and died in 1991. The parish presented Fr Christopher with a Connemara chalice on the occasion of his Jubilee in late 1980. The late Kieran Hickey, Secretary of the Leixlip branch and former Dublin Provincial President, researched ideas to promote and pray for vocations. He found several articles in the American church where special prayer chalices and crucifixes had been used



*The Connemara Prayer Chalice*

successfully to promote Vocations to the priesthood across the USA. The Society also introduced this initiative to other branches, the Clondalkin branch being one of them. Back in 2016, Kieran sought permission to use the Connemara chalice to be given to families for a week. Only seven families participated. A small prayer leaflet was given to each family at the time, with the chalice to pray daily for Vocations.

More recently, Father Gregory O'Brien PP, gave his support and prayed each Wednesday at Mass for the family who had the chalice. He prayed with the congregation the Vocation prayer to Saint Joseph at the end of Mass. This continues every Wednesday in Leixlip. The 70

weeks of collecting and delivering the chalice was hard work but worth it. The two people bringing the chalice around to new houses would pray with the family and give advice on using the prayer booklet. They also selected an appropriate place for it to be displayed and encouraged daily prayers for vocations.

Great credit goes to the late Kieran Hickey and his son Joey, for carrying out this important work. The Leixlip/Confey branch encouraged other branches to give this chalice or crucifix prayer initiative, a try in their own areas. More information can be sought from Head Office in Merrion Sq., Dublin 2.



*Kieran Hickey, RIP*



## RADIO MARIA IRELAND

### Christmas Fundraisers

#### Radio Maria Ireland - Volunteering

Interested? Radio Maria Ireland is a not-for-profit organisation relying on the support of its volunteers in different areas. Opportunities include answering phones, praying on-air, promoting Radio Maria in your local community or hosting a

coffee morning in aid of the station's evangelising mission. If you would like to find out more, get in contact with Radio Maria Ireland via phone (01) 4123456 or via email to [info@radiomaria.ie](mailto:info@radiomaria.ie).

Radio Maria Ireland is available on digital television via Saorview Channel 210 or at [www.radiomaria.ie](http://www.radiomaria.ie), or on the free Radio Maria App, via Alexa and Google or, for those without digital connectivity, use the landline at (01) 437 3227. They are now on DAB Radio (but only in the Leinster area).

#### Christmas Fundraisers

Belfast – 11 December – Beechlawn Hotel, Belfast

Dublin – 19 December – Lucan Spa Hotel

\*From 6.00 p.m. – late. \*4 course meal. \*live entertainment.

\*raffle & more!

Bookings: [www.eventbrite.ie](http://www.eventbrite.ie) search 'Radio Maria Fundraisers'

For more info (or bookings of 4+ tickets) call: (01) 412 3456.

#### VOCATIONS SOCIETY OF ST. JOSEPH, CLOGHER DIOCESE

The Diocesan AGM on Sunday, 5 October 2025, commenced with Mass said by our Diocesan Chaplain, Fr. Raymond Donnelly. He was assisted by Rev. Stephen Sherry who was ordained Deacon this year and will please God, be ordained a Priest of our Diocese early next year.

The following is an extract from the Annual Report of our Diocesan President, Betty Montgomery.

#### President's Report:

After another successful year I congratulate all of you our genuine supporters. Attendance at our Diocesan meetings gives me great hope for the Society. We all have the common aim to pray earnestly for vocations to the Priesthood especially in our Diocese.

Many of you feel that your numbers are small but don't be despondent. The Lord said, 'Where two or three are gathered in my name there am I in the midst of them'. We are not a business where success depends on numbers. You are a prayer group in your Parish whose success depends on its prayer content. The more genuine prayers are said for vocations, the more men will answer God's call to Priesthood.

I pay tribute to Fr. Raymond Donnelly. He works in a very busy Parish. He works endlessly in his capacity as Vocations Director in the Diocese. He is ably assisted by Fr. Leo Creelman. We are honoured that both these priests are so committed to the Society by giving up their Sunday afternoon to enrich us with the most important prayer of all, the celebration of the Eucharist.

I also thank Seamus, our Secretary, for his precise minutes of our meetings and getting notices out and to Dymrna who accounts for the financial business of our Society. I thank the Enniskillen and Monaghan branches for providing us with refreshments and preparing the rooms.



*Pictured above are Fr Raymond Donnelly, Diocesan Vocations Director, who celebrated Mass at our Diocesan Meeting assisted by Rev. Stephen Sherry. Rev. Stephen was ordained a Deacon in June and will be ordained a Priest on Vocations Sunday in 2026.*

Finally, I congratulate Stephen Sherry on the occasion of his Diaconate. I wish Stephen well and look forward to his ordination to the Priesthood next year. Please continue to pray for Stephen. Pray also for Danny and Marty that they will be happy on their journey to Priesthood.

I ask you not to forget to pray for the Priests of our Diocese who do so much to attend to our spiritual needs at a time when their members are depleted. It has been a pleasure to lead you all over the past year and I thank you for your support of events and meetings.

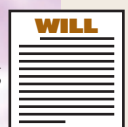
**Betty Montgomery**  
*Diocesan President.*

#### Carols by Candlelight, Knock Basilica

**Knock Basilica invites families, pilgrims and friends to gather in quiet reverence and joyful anticipation. Carols by Candlelight takes place on Sunday, 21 December at 8.00 pm. Free admission. No booking required.**

#### LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

Should you desire to include the Society in your legacy bequests, it is advisable to consult your solicitor when making or amending your Will.





# Studying Theology – a Reflection on returning to Study during the Pandemic

by Rosaleen Fitzpatrick

My studies in theology began during the pandemic in 2020. It was during this challenging time that I considered retirement with options to fill my spare time. Ironically, it was my daughter of indeterminate beliefs who encouraged me to consider theology. Having recently returned to my faith I had more questions than answers. After a Google search I phoned The Priory Institute, Tallaght, which was a leap of faith and trust and therein began a learning journey which would inspire and stretch me intellectually and spiritually. It would be a journey of pleasant surprises and God moments!

The Priory Institute provides programmes in theology at certificate, diploma, degree and honours levels. They also provide audited courses for those who do not seek accreditation. The courses are a mix of in person attendance and online learning. Studying for the degree course would entail learning two subjects and a journal per semester. The first semester includes a module on 'Learning to Learn', invaluable for someone like myself who hadn't previously studied at third level.



Undeterred I embarked on my first semester with the excitement and anticipation of someone going into first year in secondary school.

Despite zoom meetings my classmates and I managed to forge bonds over calls and group chats after lectures. This was a Godsend when trying to grapple with the theories of ancient philosophers and Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologiae. The lecturers were always on hand to support us via Moodle (the Priory's intranet for students). The modules were spiritually formative and mind expanding.

The lecturers were so accommodating that I continued with a determination that surprised me. Although journaling was sometimes a chore, it was to prove invaluable coming up to exam time. More importantly it would count for marks.

Over four years of study modules included: Introduction to Theology; Scriptures from the Books of the Pentateuch to the Gospels and the letters of St Paul; Christian Anthropology; the God of Christian Faith; Church and Sacraments; Life and Justice Issues, Theology of Philosophy and the Theology of World Religions. Although we studied world religions, it is a course with a distinctly Dominican ethos rooted in Christian values. When I eventually met my classmates in 2022, I was impressed by the number of young people studying theology. In faith matters worldwide, Ireland is beginning to show green shoots. I am indebted to my daughter, still on her journey and Fr Philip McShane RIP who took my initial phone call. "I did go the whole hog and I am the better for it!" I graduated on 15 November 2025.



*Presidents together: Congratulations to George Dee, former President (pictured with Marian Fennelly) on the occasion of his recent 94th birthday. He is still playing cards in the local every Friday night. We acknowledge with great gratitude his lifetime of dedication and service to the Society.*

## PRAYER FOR DISCERNMENT

Lord, I really want to do something worthwhile with my life.

I look around me at the world in which I live.

I see so much that is good, but I see too, people who are lonely and in great need.

In my heart I hear your call inviting me to share your love with others, give me courage.

Make me generous and help me to follow you. Amen.

[www.franciscans.ie](http://www.franciscans.ie)

For more information, contact:

Friar Liam Kelly, OFM,

Tel: 087 396 0262.

**Lena Corrigan, Enniskillen Branch**

RIP, 18 August 2024

Lena was one of the founder members of Enniskillen Branch of VSOSJ from 1989. Her devotion to the work of the Branch was exemplary and Lena was always on the lookout for new members. Lena served as President of the Branch for many years.



She was dedicated to her role and regularly attended meetings in Monaghan & Dublin and loved to connect with members from all branches throughout Ireland.

Lena is sadly missed by us all in the Enniskillen Branch.

She truly was a great and faithful advocate of the Society. May she Rest in Peace. Our Lady of Knock & St Joseph pray for her.

- Dympna Clarke

**Pope Leo's Monthly Intention  
'For Formation in Discernment'**



*Let us pray that we might learn how to discern,  
To know how to choose paths of life and  
Reject everything that leads us away from  
Christ and the Gospel. Amen*

## Recently Deceased & Acknowledgements

**Parish Branches**

**Arklow:** Mary Byrne.

**Armagh** Mrs Bridie Fox, Seamus Knipe.

**Ballinascreen** Fr. Seamus O'Neill, Mary McCullagh, Sr. Regina McCullagh, Cathal McWilliams, Susan McAuley, Mary McAuley, Sheila McAuley, Stan Heron.

**Balinhassig** Anne Crowley

**Ballinlough** Peg Mulcahy, Paddy Kelly.

**Ballinspittle** Con O'Donovan, Connie Manning.

**Ballymena - All Saints** Mary Martin.

**Ballymun Our Lady of Victories** Mary Deegan.

**Borrisoleigh** Mary Hennessy, Mrs Mary Lanigan Ryan.

**Clontarf (St. Anthony's)** Al O'Donoghue.

**Clontead** Mary Hemlock.

**Delvin** Bernadette Fox.

**Dunamanagh** Rosaleen Gormley.

**Enniskillen** Lena Corrigan, Bea Gallinagh, John Bannon, Eileen Bannon, Sr Rita McCrystal, Maggie Keown, Jennifer Tierney, Rose McKenna, Chrissie Tierney, Benny Grainger.

**Faughanvale (St Mary's)** Colm Kearney, May McColgan, Fr. Michael Keaveny, Kathleen Malone.

**Fethard** Mary Hennessy.

**Goleen** Jimmy Downey.

**Maghera** Barney Ledgewood, Ciaran Kelly, John McCusker, Danny Convery, May McGuigan, Rosella Heggarty, Jack Murray, Mary Dorrity, Brendan McPeake,

Eoin McCusker, Maureen Wade, Rose Tohill, Michael Convery, Mary Cassidy, Lorcan Porter.

**Newcastle:** Bernie Sharry.

**Rosscarbery** Margaret Daly.

**St. John Vianney, Ardlea** Bernard Carolan.

**St. Patrick's Kilkenny** Phil Cooke.

**Templemore, Co. Tipperary** Nell Maher, Bríd Lawlor

**Thomastown:** Frances Roche.

**Tracton** Carmel Murphy, Agnes Ashcroft.

**Trim, Co. Meath** Bridget McCable, Sr. Margaret, Sisters of Mercy.

**Anonymous Donations**  
€500