



The Sheaf

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

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Archbishop Eamon Martin celebrated Mass on the Solemnity of St Joseph, 19 March 2026, in St Patrick's Church, Banbridge with members of the Society in the Dromore Diocese. The Parish Priest of Seapatrick Parish, Banbridge - Fr Andrew McMahon - concelebrated. During his homily, Archbishop Martin both thanked the Society for its continued and faithful work in praying for vocations and reminded us all of our shared vocation as disciples of Christ. In particular, he commended the quiet faithfulness and service of St Joseph as a model for the continued work of the Society in the diocese and across the country



Senior pupils from St. Patrick's College Banbridge, who participate weekly in the Vocations Society of St. Joseph's Prayer Chalice Programme for prayers for Vocations to the priesthood.

Clare McCullough

Father Flanagan Visitor Centre, Ballymoe, Co Galway

In March 2026 Father Edward J. Flanagan was declared Venerable and this marks a significant milestone in the journey toward sainthood for one of the most influential Catholic social reformers of the 20th century. This declaration, made by Pope Leo XIV, formally acknowledges Father Flanagan's life of heroic virtue and his unwavering commitment to the dignity of every child.

For the community of Ballymoe, for Ireland and for people across the world, this recognition is both a source of deep local and national pride and a powerful reminder of the profound impact one individual can have through compassion, courage and conviction. Father Flanagan's life stands as a testament to faith in action - demonstrating how belief, when lived fully, can transform lives and challenge societal norms.

Best known as the founder of Boys Town in the United States, Father Flanagan dedicated his life to the care and protection of vulnerable children, regardless of race, colour, creed, background or circumstance. His pioneering approach affirmed that, with simple guidance, love and opportunity, every young person has the potential to flourish. His message remains as relevant today as it was during his lifetime. His cause continues to progress. People in Ireland and around the world are encouraged to learn more about his life, reflect on his example and seek his intercession. This latest development offers a renewed opportunity to celebrate his legacy and to share his story with new generations.

At the heart of this legacy in Ireland is the Father Flanagan Visitor Centre and Memorial Garden in Ballymoe, (F45 Y260). The Centre serves as a living mission of the Parish and Diocese, offering visitors an insight into the life, work and enduring influence of Father Flanagan. Through carefully curated displays and a peaceful memorial garden, the Centre provides an inspirational experience for visitors.



The Visitor Centre welcomes individuals, groups and schools, making it an ideal destination for those interested in history, faith, social justice and education. Admission is free. Donations are accepted and the facility offers step-free access throughout. Visitors are encouraged to allow 60–80 minutes to fully experience the Centre and Garden.

Father Flanagan prayer cards, a Novena and medals are available at St Croan's Church and at the Visitor Centre, offering a tangible way for people to connect with his spiritual legacy.

This recognition of Father Flanagan as Venerable is not only a historic moment but also an invitation - to remember, to reflect and to be inspired. His life continues to resonate across generations and borders, reminding us all of the power of kindness, faith, and unwavering belief in the goodness of others. As Father Flanagan himself often said "there is no such thing as a bad boy".

To visit, please call 087 7665219 or search www.fatherflanaganvisitorcentre.ie
Main St, Durrow, Ballymoe, Co. Galway, F45 Y260.

Sr. Clare Crockett – The Derry Nun

The beatification cause of Sister Clare Crockett, an inspirational young Irish religious sister who died in 2016, formally opened last year with a ceremony at the Cathedral of Alcalá de Henares, in Madrid, Spain.

The ceremony marked the beginning of the diocesan phase of the process, in which an elected tribunal will investigate her life, virtues and reputation for holiness.

She died in an earthquake in Ecuador, aged 33. She is now titled "Servant of God," the first step in the Catholic Church's path to sainthood.

More than 100 people travelled from Derry, to attend the event, including Bishop Donal McKeown and South American Cardinal Fernando Chomalí Garib, the Archbishop of Santiago de Chile. In Derry, 500 people gathered at a cinema to watch the ceremony broadcast live.

Sr. Clare's story is a striking example of someone who had a conversion experience

and dedicated their life to Jesus.

She was born on 14 November 1982. As a charismatic and fun-loving teenager, she was frequently partying, drinking and smoking.

Her life changed when she attended a Holy Week retreat in Spain in 1998, with a focus on the Eucharist, Marian spirituality and outreach to youth.

She recalled later that when she arrived in Spain she was "very superficial and a wild child." That changed when she took part in the Good Friday Adoration of the Cross, kissing the feet of Jesus. It was the start of a long journey of conversion and healing that led to her joining the Servant Sisters of the Home of the Mother.

Despite initial struggles to leave behind a life of superficiality, she entered religious life in 2001 in Spain, making her first vows in 2006 and her final vows in 2010. Known for her infectious joy and dedication to others, she served in Spain, the United States and Ecuador.

Sister Clare died on 16 April 2016, when a 7.8-magnitude earthquake, struck the school in Playa Prieta, Ecuador, where she was teaching music. Five postulants also lost their lives in the collapse.

A documentary about her life, "**All or Nothing: Sister Clare Crockett**," has amassed over 4 million views on YouTube in Spanish and English and her story continues to inspire vocations and deepen faith worldwide.



Recent Ordinations



Fr Anthony Moffett was ordained last January for Dromore Diocese. His first Mass, was held on 12th January 2026 at Newry Cathedral, Co. Down. During this occasion, Fr Anthony received a stole from the Vocations Society of St Joseph. It was presented by the President of the Dromore Diocese, Veronica Ward.

Fr Stephen Sherry on the occasion of his recent ordination.



Fr Stephen is a priest of the Diocese of Clogher. Originally from the parish of Tullycorbet, he has served in the Diocese since his ordination to the diaconate in June 2025. He was ordained to the priesthood on Good Shepherd Sunday, 26 April 2026.



Fr Conan McGonagle FSSP was ordained in St Cecilia's Cathedral, Omaha, Nebraska, USA, by Archbishop Thomas Wenski on 28 May 2026.

A native of Limavady, Co Derry, he celebrated Holy Mass in various parishes in Derry Diocese the following week and was presented with a Stole from Vocations Society of St Joseph, by Christina McLaren, Derry Diocesan President.



Following his ordination to the sacred priesthood by Bishop Donal McKeown in St Columb's Church, Derry on the 14 June. Fr Stephen Baxter was presented with a Stole from Vocations Society of St Joseph. He is pictured with Nora Canning, Glendermott Branch, who made the presentation and Christina McLaren, Derry Diocesan President VSSJ.

The Story of a Vocation – Fr Aidan Walsh, OFM Conv

I was born on the 17th of August 1936 in the North Strand area of the city of Dublin and baptised at St Agatha's Church, North William Street, Dublin. I was only five years old when my mother died in 1941. I was brought up by the French Sisters of Charity at Saint Theresa's Orphanage in Blackrock, Dublin, where I received my First Holy Communion. At about the age of 10, I moved to St. Vincent's Orphanage in Glasnevin, Dublin, for older boys. It was run by the Irish Christian Brothers and this is where I received my Primary and Secondary school education. I also received the Sacrament of Confirmation at St Columba's Church, Glasnevin.



In 1953, I left school and got a job in an electrical shop in St Andrew's Street in Dublin. It was a sales shop, selling electrical bulbs. After three years, the shop closed. I then went to work as a postman in Dublin.

It was during this period of my life that two events occurred which made me reflect on the possibility of a vocation to the priesthood. The first event was through the encouragement of a friend. I joined the Legion of Mary and was an apostolate. I enjoyed it, as this introduced me to the ways of prayer helping my neighbour in their needs, like visiting the sick and disabled. The second event that happened was the opportunity to visit Lourdes. It was in 1958, which was the centenary of the apparitions of Our Lady to Saint Bernadette. We travelled to Lourdes by hitch-hiking lifts and we stayed in youth hostels, located in different towns in France. As far as I remember, the journey took about a fortnight. These two events in my life, helped to turn my mind to the possibility of a vocation to the Priesthood. I am sure it was through the intercession of Our Lady of Lourdes that I received my vocation.

After seeking advice and guidance, I applied to go to Mungret College, Co. Limerick, which was run by the Jesuits. It was 1959 and I received help from the Society which was much appreciated. They had an apostolic school where young men who needed further education could attend. Here they began their studies in preparation for entering a major seminary. After three years of study, I went to Saint Patrick's major seminary and thus to complete my studies and preparation for the priesthood. However, after some time there I became unsettled in my vocation and so I decided to take time out. I went to work as a bus conductor in Dublin. However, after three years working there, I decided to try my vocation again.

During this time, I was in touch with Fr Fritz O'Kelly OFM Conv. and he encouraged me to join the Conventual Franciscans of which he was a member. He was stationed at Saint Clare's Parish, Manchester. In the meantime, Father Fritz informed the Vocation Director, Fr Jarlath McDonagh OFM Conv. about my interest in joining this Order. He came to see me in the bus station in Dublin.

He then made the usual arrangements for me to join the Order.

I am so grateful to Fr. Fritz and Fr. Jarlath for all the encouragement they gave me when I was discerning my vocation. And so, I entered the Novitiate of the Franciscans in 1966 at Beaumaris, North Wales. The next year after finishing my Novitiate and making the simple profession on 31 August 1967, I went to the Franciscan seminary at east Bergholt, Colchester, England. I was there from 1967 to 1971. It was run by the OFM Franciscans. On the 31 August 1970, I made my Solemn Profession at All Saints Friary, Barton, Manchester. I was ordained at Saint Claire's Parish, Manchester in 1971 by Bishop Tommy Holland, Bishop of Salford. I celebrated my Golden Jubilee of Ordination in 2021.

Deo Gratias

Fr Aidan Walsh OFM Conv.

+++++++ National Synodal Pathway Update. +++++++

The National Synodal Assembly, will take place in October 2026. Working groups from across the country are reflecting on the key priorities identified through the synodal process, helping to shape the next stage of the Church's journey in Ireland. To learn more and view the latest video update from Fr. Declan Hurley, Chairperson of The National Synodal Pathway and Patricia Carroll, member of the National Synodal Pathway and Pastoral Coordinator for the Archdiocese of Dublin, please check the following links: www.theway.ie/the-irish-synodal-pathway-progress-and-purpose/ also www.synod.ie

RECENTLY DECEASED & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

VOCATIONAL BRANCHES

Parish Branches

Abbeyfeale Peggy Kirby.

Ballinlough Peggy Long, Fergal Crowley.

Caherdavin Michael Carey.

Carrigaline Mary Cotter.

Cashel Moira Foley, Kathleen Kennedy, Patricia O'Dwyer.

Drogheda Mary Hodgins. Mary Black.

Eniskillen Dermot Patrick McCarroll, Catherine Anne McCarroll, Sr Rose Marie Keenan, Chris Hoy.

Faughanvale (St Mary's) Bernie Ogilby, Joseph (Joe) Feeney.

Knockninny Vera O'Connor, Eileen Murtagh, Oisín Cassidy, Fergal Murphy, Seamus Reilly, Teresa McCourt, Tom Best, Anna May McManus, Bernadette Kearns, Violet Hughes, Brigid Shannon, Mark Flanagan, Eugene Murphy, John Murray, John Kearns.

Limavady John Brady, Margaret McLaughlin, John McLaughlin.

Maghera Eamon McKee, Kathleen O'Neill, Michael McKeefry, Tom Russell, Monica Heaney, Joanna Convery, Willie Sweeney, Geraldine Kerr, John O'Kane, Monica O'Donnell, Kathleen McNeill.

Portadown Seamus McCaffrey, Martha Leonard.

St. John the Baptist – Clontarf. Anne Cassidy, Brid Coffey.

Anonymous Donations €500, €400, €50