



# Extended Family Newsletter

Issue 22 - April 2015

## Remembering

We mourn the loss of Sister Rita Arthur RSHM who died in New York, USA on January 16th 2015 – a woman of vision, commitment and faith who served as the cornerstone of our RSHM NGO Ministry from its foundation in 2006.

As Sister Brigid Driscoll said in the reflection shared at the Vigil Service on January 21st.  
*“Rita was by conscious choice a citizen of the international world and by deep commitment a member of an international Institute, the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary. For Rita the global dimensions of both cried out to be integrated and disseminated to the RSHM family. Making that happen -- by placing before us the RSHM Mission/Chapter Statements side-by-side with the UN Charter mandates and pointing out their many similarities –eliminating poverty, proclaiming the dignity of each individual, promoting peace --was the passion of her later years....For Rita life was never a path of caution but rather a journey of optimism, exploration and an ever-expanding horizon”.*

We honour Sister Rita’s memory and celebrate the strong mark she has left on our RSHM NGO ministry as well as on all those with whom she collaborated at the UN.

Our prayers and sympathy are with Eileen Silvester, her brother-in-law, Ian, and all the family, on the death of her sister Glenys Wilkinson who died in hospital on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2015. May she rest in peace. Many of you know Eileen from her work as a member of the Extended Family Core Group. At a recent meeting of the Group, Eileen shared a lot about Glenys and related how the family in the midst of their sadness had been aware of the presence of God during the time of Glenys’ illness and death.

We also keep in our thoughts and prayer the family of Ann McCardle who many of you would have met when visiting Penmaenmawr. Ann had been ill for a long time with many years of chemotherapy treatment. She died on 2<sup>nd</sup> April. May she rest in peace. Ann was a good friend and colleague to all in Noddfa and we also offer them our sympathy and prayer.

## 22nd February 2015: Extended Family Meeting at Seafield

Eight members of the Extended Family were welcomed to Seafield by Sisters Eleanor, Gertrude, Paula, Anne and Kathleen for an Afternoon of Reflection.

Eleanor opened the meeting and said that many apologies for absence had been received. She mentioned Sister Barbara’s bereavement and asked us to remember her and her brother Barry Bailey, R.I.P. in our prayers. Eleanor then handed over to Kath Nolan who led the afternoon’s

proceedings based around the “Litany in Honour of Venerable Fr. Jean Gailhac” and “In community for Mission”.

Kath invited everyone to introduce themselves to the meeting. She then played a John Foley hymn “Turn to Me” to get us into the presence of God and related this to Jean Gailhac’s philosophy and, in the present time, how it affects us this Lenten season. Kath said how comforting it is to know that if we turn to God we will be saved. She distributed copies of the Litany in Honour of Venerable Fr. Jean Gailhac and asked each person present to read aloud one line and then anyone who wished should comment on which particular quality of Fr. Jean’s had the most impact on them.

A brief discussion then followed on the amazing zeal and tremendous number of qualities which the Founder had possessed, which Kath pointed out reflect exactly the work of the RSHM and how impressive it is that so many women followed his example. Eleanor briefly referred to the 4 books which had been written about their Order and they are available to any members who wish to borrow them, one at a time.

Kath then turned to the Scriptures and we listened to Matthew’s account of “The Last Judgment” and Kath pointed out that Lent gives us a chance to come closer to God. She played a recording of “If there’s a next time, help me to change my ways” and stressed that Lent itself is a “next time” for us all. Kath also refereed the Archbishop’s Pastoral letter on the subject. Paula suggested that we should concentrate not on what “I” do for Lent but rather concentrate on seeking out, for example, the needy.

Next Kath read from the ICMF” and followed this up with another song by John Michael Talbot “No longer I but Christ who lives in me”. She pointed out what a huge responsibility it is to have Christ’s seed growing in us and how we must cultivate it. We should make a change in Lent in order to see what we can do to get closer to Him. Kath then finished with a Prayer “You are on the way but not yet there”.

Eleanor told us that Esmerelda and Bekim were no further forward with the residency papers from the Home Office. However Bekim is working at the Carmelite Convent two days a week; and they had held a lovely 1st birthday party for Dren who was now in better health.

As we were approaching Fair Trade Fortnight, Eleanor showed us a video tape about the subject. The meeting concluded with refreshments and hospitality kindly provided by the Sisters.

## 24th February 2015: Extended Family Meeting at Lisburn

A very happy gathering of our friends joined with us in prayer and celebration. Having given a short introduction on the beginnings of the Institute there was a service of prayer and music. Also as it was the beginning of Lent we shared on the DVD “In God’s Time” about Stones and Bread.

The sharing there and around the table afterwards was very enriching and enjoyable. It was an experience that our friends found very different for them and as they said fruitful.

We join in wishing you a happy celebration of this Easter season.



*Lisburn Extended Family Meeting*



## 4th March 2015: Meeting of the SHM Extended Family in Béziers

The 2nd meeting of the Extended Family was held Wednesday, March 4, 2015 at the Mother House. After discovering Lisburn, first foundation of the Institute outside of France, in November, we explored the foundations in Brazil.

Heather used a PowerPoint presentation showing the arrival of Mother Mary Aquinas and her two companions to open the first colleges in Brazil and plant the SCM seed in this great country. Difficulties did not lack and we admired the courage, perseverance and faith of those pioneers.

Today the sisters' commitment continues to bear fruit springing from this seed of life sown in 1911 in colleges but also through the social work with women, children and young people in the street.

Sr. Bernadette McNamara, who was part of the initial Formation team for three years in Belo Horizonte, shared with us a rich overview of the formation programme of novices, and their missionary experiences in the midst of the Brazilian people. Music and pictures allowed us to taste the joy of the Brazilian communities during the 2013 celebration of religious profession of three of our young sisters.

On March 4, anniversary of the departure for God's eternity of Mother St. Jean, Francine and Madou provided us with reflections of Mother St. John to read all together helping us interiorise her dedication in the service of mission.

Before sharing the meal, we ended our time of reflection with prayer prepared by Nicole, calling

***That All May Have Life***

us to "put on our apron" as Jesus and all the sisters who showed us the way of self-giving and service.

For our third meeting of the year in May, we will discover the foundation of the Mozambican Region.

## Spring 2015: News from the Extended Family in Furness

### **World Day Of Prayer For The Sick**

Members of the Extended Family joined with the Community at the convent on 11th February, World Day of Prayer for The Sick, to pray for members of the local community who are sick. Week of Prayer and Action the Consecrated Life – Sr Pierre shared the Prayer Intention leaflets for The Year of Consecrated Life with members of the Extended Family so that they could join in the suggested prayer intentions for the week. On the Wednesday evening of that week, members of the local core team, involved in the preparations for the Foundation Day gathering, joined the Sisters to share Evening Prayer

### **Foundation Day Gathering**

The Extended Family in Furness gathered with the Sisters from the Barrow Convent on Saturday, 28th February to celebrate Foundation Day and to learn about "meeting the real needs of poor persons" through the work of the Barrow Food Bank and the ways in which it reaches out to Struggling Families in the area.

### **Preparations**

The local core team used the NEP prayer leaflet for the week of 24th February to plan the shape and the content of the gathering and selected Struggling Families from Day 3 as the focus for our day. We were very pleased to get the Project Leader of the local Food Bank, Mrs Ann Mills as our guest speaker.

Invitations to the gathering were sent out through the local Parish Newsletters and flyers were distributed in all of the local churches after masses on the weekend prior to the gathering, adding that 'personal' touch to the invitations.

The invitations also asked people attending to bring donations of food for the food bank, as a means of individually and collectively meeting the needs of the poor, the struggling families of the Furness area. The food bank now has satellites in Ulverston and Millom, the other two main centres of population in South Cumbria.

Posters were given out too, to all of the Catholic churches and schools in the area and a leaflet was produced to inform people of the programme for the gathering and to support the prayer session.

### **The Gathering**

Introduction - Sr Pierre opened the day with a brief introduction that put the theme for the day into the context of the RSHM Charism, and the words of Fr Gailhac that emphasise the need to be 'servants of the poor'. She then introduced Ann Mills as an example of the 'Sacred Fire', which burned within and inspired Fr Gailhac, that inspires people to volunteer to work for the food bank and to support it with generous donations.



### **Food Bank Talk and Q&A Session**

Ann Mills spoke for a short while outlining how the food bank works and how the team works to beat would-be fraudsters. The voucher system that is in place makes sure that those people in real need are the ones who receive real help. She went on to tell us about the sorts of people and families who use the food bank, the great need for its service to the community, and some of the difficulties that they face in meeting those needs.



In the Q&A session, which lasted much longer, she talked about how many people use the service and how numbers had increased over the years, particularly at times when there have been changes in the benefit system. Ann also explained the difficulties of making up food parcels that meet the very different needs of families, of single people, and especially the homeless (who have few facilities for storing and preparing food).

The audience were very moved by some of the specific, real-life examples that Ann talked about during this session. Some of the causes of hardship and the personal difficulties experienced by many when coming forward to ask for help were moving too.

Ann also talked about the way the food bank works with other organisations to help people with other difficulties in their life. They run a drop-in centre to provide continuing support and also have Benefit Advisors who work in the drop-in centre. Quite often they will point people to other places where they can get help, for example, to learn how to cook nutritious meals with the food provided.

In recent times, the food bank has begun to work closely with the schools and the local poverty

commission to support families during school holidays, when the school kitchens are not open to provide free school meals. The fact that this work was needed and the number of children and families involved was another surprising revelation for many.



Many people expressed gratitude for the way Ann had clarified their understanding of how the three food banks operate in this area, the level of need that exists in our towns and local area, and the way that this is a real example of how to meet “real needs of poor persons and enter into caring relationships”.

### **Contemplative Prayer**

Our prayer was based on Reading for the day of prayer for Struggling Families and the scripture reading, “The boy Jesus in the Temple” (Luke2:41-50). It included a sharing session and prayers for families who have lost children in any way.



### **Outcomes of the Gathering**

The main outcomes of the gathering were:

Awareness – many more of us now have a clearer understanding of the real needs of people and a better appreciation of how the food banks work to meet those needs

Donations – the group donated 68.2 kgs of food to the food bank

Volunteers - several people ‘signed up’ to support the food bank with their quarterly supermarket collections

Extended Family Growth – with new people coming along for the first time and others expressing their desire to make their Commitment to the Extended Family.

### **Mass**

At Mass, presided by Fr Andrew Allman, the group made a Solemn offering of food gifts at the Offertory.



Our group also led the Prayers of the Faithful, which were based on the theme of ‘for struggling families, taken from the intentions of the week of prayer.

### **Thank You**

Thanks go to all who helped in any way to make this day a successful event

## **News from the United Nations**

The Commission on the Status of Women met at the UN from 9 – 20 March 2015. Twenty years after the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, the Commission reviewed the process on achieving the “Platform for Action”, the comprehensive and progressive blueprint for advancing women’s rights and gender equality that was adopted by 189 countries in 1995. In preparation for CSW 59 an unprecedented 166 countries submitted reviews of progress made in achieving the Goals of the Beijing Platform for Action. A declaration CSW 59 sought to “scale up and speed up” the implementation of the 12 Critical areas of action (see below).

In addition to the official 10-day meeting, member states and NGOs collaborated in organising 200 side events at the UN HQ while another 400 organised by NGOs from more than 100 countries around the world were held in 4 different venues close to the UN. Participants numbered close to 11,000 people from more than 1,100 NGOs, thereby setting a new record. The RSHM co-sponsored two side events.

### **Twelve Critical Areas of Action for Gender Equality**

- *Women and Poverty*
- *Education and Training of Women*
- *Women and Health*
- *Violence against Women*
- *Women and Armed Conflict*
- *Women and the Economy*
- *Women in Power and Decision Making*

- *Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women*
- *Human Rights of Women*
- *Women and the Media*
- *Women and Environment*
- *The Girl Child*

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As always thanks to the contributors and to Lizzie Black, Sisters Thérèse-Marie and Sister Bernadette for their work on the translations to and from French.

The newsletter is published in English and French versions. If you (or someone) else would prefer to receive the French version then please get in touch.

Could you contribute an item to the newsletter? Photos and articles – no matter how short – are always welcome and will be held for the next available newsletter. Don't delay - exercise your literary talents now! Contributions in English or French (both, even!) are equally welcome.

Electronic copy by email or as an attachment is preferable, as are digital photos - but handwritten copy and prints are welcome too. See below for the email and postal addresses:

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