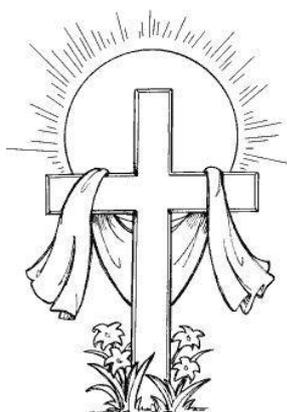




Extended Family Newsletter

Issue 30 - March 2018

Easter Greetings from the Core Group



Lord, the resurrection of Your Son has given us new life
and renewed hope.

Help us to live as new people in pursuit of the Christian
ideal.

Grant us wisdom to know what we must do, the will to
want to do it, the courage to undertake it, the
perseverance to continue to do it, and the strength to
complete it.

May the blessings of Easter be experienced by all

Best wishes from the Core Group: Sr. Catherine, Eileen & Peter Silvester, John Newby & Kath Nolan

A THOUGHT FROM GAILHAC

“May the grace of God always be with you. May it direct you in all things and fill you with love”
(Béziers 1877)

SAVE THE DATE

Our Noddfa weekend this year will be 9-11th November, planned for after the Provincial Chapter.

Meeting of the Extended Family in Seafield - Sunday 25 February 2018

Thirteen members of the EFM (including three new) met with Sisters Eleanor, Gertrude, Paula and Marie at Seafield. Nine apologies were received, including one broken bone, one suffering pneumonia, and one member in Malawi.

Eleanor welcomed everyone and introduced the Guest Speaker she had invited, Janet Hardman, who gave us a most interesting, lively and informative insight into her life and career to date. Janet is a Special School Teacher and, in conjunction with teaching, she studied and graduated in Reflexology. A phone call to the Reflexology Society to explore the avenues in which she could pursue her new skill, Janet was put in touch with Lorraine Senior from Essex and they have been working closely together since. Lorraine set up a Company, Functional Reflex

Therapy, and Janet was given approval to introduce their system into her own School with great results. (Eleanor and Janet had been friends since they met when Eleanor was visiting Special Schools and through the friendship an opportunity had arisen last year for Janet to go out to Zambia to visit St. Malumba's Special School in July. There, in one short week, great success was achieved.)

Janet explained and demonstrated to us the methods used in Functional Reflex Therapy to help those with special needs and showed us all the "tools of the trade" they use in each session. She displayed some African cards and crafts, a beautifully-illustrated book about St. Malumba's and showed us video pictures of the choir there. Janet plans to retire from Rowan Park School in the next few weeks and devote her time to helping Lorraine build up the Company. They are both attending a National Reflexology Conference in Nottingham in a couple of months where they hope to have the opportunity to recruit more Reflexologists to join F.R.T. Janet and Lorraine will also return to St. Malumba's later in the year, this time for 3 weeks.

Eleanor and the group thanked Janet for her excellent presentation.

Kath Nolan brought the meeting to a close with a short Reflection and a beautiful song by John Michael Talbot "*No longer I but Christ who lives within me*". We reflected on the lyrics to consider what actions we take, particularly during Lent, to show Christ not only within us but shared with others. Kath's reciting of the poem, "*The Telephone*" by Michael Quoist helped us to think about the art of listening. "If we don't listen, we don't learn". Some questions to think about: Do we have dialogues with others, or do we end up with a monologue? Have we communicated? (Kath took her reflection on 'listening' from Sister Roz's letter which she wrote for Foundation Day).

We prayed for the Repose of the Soul of Frank Murphy, and for those sick members who had sent their apologies.

Pauline McManus

The Extended Family in Carlisle – November to March

We haven't been very active in the past few months.

On November 15th some members of our group were involved with organising a 'Noodle Night' which was very successful. The proceeds from the evening are sent to Sr Madeleine for work in China.

We met in St Gabriel's Convent for Advent Prayer on December 5th and spent an hour in prayer focussing on the Advent passages from the 4 Gospels. We then had a time for sharing our thoughts from these readings.

The Stations of the Cross were held on February 19th. Meeting in the convent chapel, we were joined by the sisters and other invited friends of the sisters who wished to share in our Lenten prayer. Greg showed a very moving video of 'The Stations of the Cross' which gave us time at each station for meditation, lasting about one hour in total. We ended the evening in the sitting room with the usual refreshment and a chat.

Maureen Wilson

Foundation Day Gathering in Furness

Celebrating 120 Years of the RSHM Presence in Barrow and Furness - Past, Present, and Future

The Theme for our Gathering, “Past, Present, and Future” was chosen to commemorate the arrival in Barrow of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Mary, in November 1897 and to celebrate the service they have given to the people in this area through their work in the schools and in the parishes of local towns over those 120 years.

Invitations were sent out far and wide. On the day, 72 people signed in to the hall and yet more came along just to be at Mass with us. We had pupils who were being taught by the sisters in the late 1940’s through to the time when Our Lady’s School closed in 1979 and merged with St Aloysius School to become St Bernard’s Comprehensive School. Some people had travelled from afar to be with us for the day: Sr Ursula, the Provincial Superior, had come from Ireland and travelled up with Sisters Paula Murray and Kathleen Buckley from Liverpool. 7 people from the Extended Family in Carlisle travelled down, including Sr Catherine Dolan and Sr Margot Gaitskell from St Gabriel’s Convent. Together with Sr Pierre Dullaghan, Sr Joyce Attwood, Sr Anne O’Connell, and Sr Moira Lever from Barrow, we had 9 Sisters with us. Sadly, Sr Eleanor Dalton from Liverpool wasn’t able to join us because she was taken ill.

While we were planning the event, there was concern about the future of the Barrow Convent. Would it be closed? Only weeks before the Gathering, we learned the sad, but not totally unexpected news that it would be closed in September this year, bringing to an end the Barrow RSHM Community after 121 years. That news certainly heightened the atmosphere of our gathering.

The Gathering

Our day was broken down into 5 parts: 3 of them looking at the Past, Present, and Future; our Thanksgiving Mass, and the Shared-Table Lunch.

John Newby welcomed everybody to the Gathering and outlined the day ahead of us. He then introduced three of the Sisters who have a special place in the RSHM and The SHM Extended Family: Sr Ursula Canavan, who is our current Provincial Superior; Sr Catherine Dolan, who was the Superior General who brought the Extended Family into being; and Sr Moira Lever, who was one of the Task Force of 6 Sisters, which developed the framework and guidelines of the Extended Family.

The Past

This was the topic of the morning session.

Sr Pierre talked about the Foundation of the Institute in Beziers and how the vision of Fr Gailhac had grown from its humble beginnings into an international organisation involved in educating children in many countries. She explained how the sisters came to be in Lisburn, Liverpool and then Barrow.



Then Sr Pierre talked about the Sisters who had been well known in Barrow, especially those whom past pupils had asked about when talking to Sr Pierre beforehand. Every now and again, a 'buzz' would go around the room when the names of some sisters were mentioned. She also recounted a tale of being sent to help out in Barrow in 1952, soon after she was newly qualified. Most of her time was spent in Chetwynde, working with the little ones. Sr Finbarr, one of Barrow's famous nuns, wanted to take her to see St Columba's school on Walney Island (which is close by, just to the west of Barrow itself). Sr Pierre was imagining a boat ride across to the island, and quite looking forward to that treat. "Imagine", she said, "my disappointment when I found myself on a bus going across the Jubilee Bridge instead of getting my boat ride".

Sr Joyce then told us of her memories of working and living with various sisters during her life as a teacher in various parts of the country. Her moving story focussed on the times when one Sister, Sr Margaret (previously Sr Alexis) generously gave her support and encouragement when she needed it most at three key points in her teaching career. Sr Joyce remained in contact with Sr Margaret throughout her life and would frequently visit her in her retirement.

Many of the people present could relate to the tenderness and care that Sr Margaret gave to them during their time at Croslands. One former pupil commented that they had never seen Sr Margaret get angry with anyone – a measure of her gentle and understanding personality.

Thanksgiving Mass and Lunch

Our day was centred on our Thanksgiving Mass in St Mary's church. Fr Manny Gribben presided and his homily reflected on the dedication and service of the Sisters and the way in which they had lived the charism of Gailhac "to make God known and loved" and had nurtured the faith of generations of local children.

Our shared-table lunch was the time to have a bit of a reunion for past pupils. Judging by the noise levels in the hall, lots of memories were being shared. There was time, too, to look at photo albums from the convent and some pictures brought in by past pupils, including a whole school photograph from 1947.

***The Present and The Future** - The afternoon sessions addressed the Present and the Future of the Institute and the Extended Family.*

The Present

This was addressed in a 3-part session, comprising: input from two speakers; group discussion; and sharing. The theme for this part was based on the question, "How did the education you received influence the decisions you made later in life?" It was really looking at the journey from the past to the present.

Margaret Egan was our first speaker. Margaret, along with her younger brother, had her primary education at Chetwynde. She then went on to be a pupil at Croslands and, after qualifying as a teacher, became a member of staff at Croslands, teaching German. She also rose to become the Deputy Head of the school and was involved with the organisation and implementation of the merger of Our Lady's and St Aloysius schools to become St Bernard's Comprehensive School. Margaret taught German until she retired and had taught many of the past pupils in the room.

Margaret talked of the support she also had from Sr Margaret when she was head and shared some stories of life in the staffroom and classroom, including her time at St Bernard's working with the Sisters who taught there in the '80s.

Pat Hurley followed. Pat went to St Columba's Primary School, when under the headship of Sr Finbarr, and on to Croslands. After qualifying as a teacher, Pat returned to St Columba's as a member of staff, and, after Tom McPeake (Sr Finbarr's successor) retired, Pat was appointed Head of the school and worked there until her retirement.

Pat's tale of life at Croslands, and how it shaped her life, related how life at school in the '60s was very different from today when the National Curriculum dominates and Standards, Targets, and League Tables affect how time is allocated and what is taught. With many teachers and retired teachers in the room, there were buzzes of agreement throughout Pat's talk.

Sharing

Armed with memories stirred by Margaret and Pat, the sharing began. There was a great hubbub in the room as memories were talked about and experiences shared. Eventually, we were able to listen to what had been distilled by the groups around each table.

The common themes emerging were:

- The compassionate and caring nature of the Sister
- Their strength of character: - good role models for the girls
- Their celebration of the talents of the pupils and their encouragement to be strong and achieve your dreams
- How many past pupils went into caring professions and teaching

We finished the sharing session with Pat Hurley finding herself leading the singing of School Song.

A spontaneous bit of remembrance, with a lot of people joining in.

The Future of the Institute of the RSHM



Sr Ursula talked about the future of the RSHM and all of the things that are impacting on the Institute, especially in Europe, its birthplace. She explained where the Institute is strong and where it is growing, mostly abroad in South America and in Africa. Even so, the numbers passing through the Novitiate, which is based now in Brazil, are still small when compared to the past, just like they are for priestly vocations.

She went on to explain the difficulty she had in making the decision to close the Barrow convent, and how it was done in consultation with all of the sisters involved at each of the convents affected. Sr Ursula said that this was the first of many changes to the structure of the Institute within the North European Province. So, yet more difficult decisions are to come.

Sr Ursula also spoke about the situation with the Mother House in Beziers and the wider-scale steps being taken to simplify the organisation of the whole Institute through the work of

Provincial Chapters later this year and the next General Chapter, to ensure that the Institute is fit for its future mission as part of the 'church of today'.

The Future of the SHM Extended Family in Furness

John Newby said that, following the announcement that the Barrow Convent is to close in September, the most frequently asked question has been: "What's going to happen to the EF when the Sisters go?" The short answer to that is that the EF in Furness will continue. In what form and doing what are two questions to which answers still have to be worked out and agreed by EF members.

In the short-term, it will continue with the planned activities on its calendar, which include another trip to Beziers in mid-May this year, and the Provincial Noddfa Gathering in November, as well as the monthly prayer meetings and regular EF gatherings.

In the longer-term, the group has to get together to work out those answers to the question "What does the future hold for us?" and decide what it is able to do once the Sisters are no longer in Barrow with them – and then plan it, organise it, and get down to doing it. The Spirit will guide!

John likened the situation to any other family, where people move away to other parts of the country, or even abroad. Many extended families are spread up and down and across the UK – or even overseas - but that doesn't stop them being family, even when it is hard to accept the change and the difficulties it brings.

"Although the future is uncertain, having been touched by the charism of Gailhac and his Sisters", John said, "The Furness Family have to accept the change that faces it and find out what "unlooked for" things will emerge for us, to sustain us as part of the SHM Extended Family".

John concluded by saying: "Looking to the future with a positive mind, I can say:

- The Sisters aren't leaving us.
- They are just moving to somewhere else and we are stopping here.
- We'll still be family.
- We'll try to do what we've always done to celebrate that.
- We'll still have family get-togethers – at your place or ours.
- We've just got to work out what we'll do, and when and how we can be together."

Summary, Farewells and Thanks

The day ended, after a brief summary and thank you session.

Peter Silvester from the Carlisle Family kindly gave a vote of thanks to the Furness Family for organising what he called a 'wonderful day' and asked that we strengthen the links between us to help us in Furness to keep the Extended Family alive in both places.

Our final act was to join in prayer, led by Sr Pierre, using the Prayer of the Institute to reflect on the charism that we, the Extended Family, share with the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Mary.

After the event – we recognise that thanks need to be recorded and given to:

- all of the speakers, who gave up their time to prepare and present their sessions

- all of the past pupils who came to join the Extended Family for our celebration
- all of the people who travelled to join us, especially Sisters Ursula, Paula and Kathleen who came from Liverpool, and our Carlisle Extended Family.
- all of the people who stopped behind to help us clear the hall
- and last, but not least, our Kitchen Gang, who worked so hard and so long to look after us that they weren't able to join in much of the activity in the hall.

Sr Pierre and John Newby

As always, thanks to the contributors and to Sister Thérèse-Marie for her 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.

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