

# Join us in Halston Street for the Novena of Grace in Honour of St. Francis Xavier

## Be glad, rejoice, radiate joy!

**Novena of Grace,  
St Michan's Church,  
Halston Street, Dublin 7**



Wednesday 04 March	7:30pm	<b>Fr Bryan OFM Cap</b>
Thursday 05 March	7:30pm	<b>Greg Fromholz &amp; Br Martin OFM Cap</b>
Friday 06 March	7:30pm	<b>Mrs Elma Walsh</b> mother of the late Donal RIP
Saturday 07 March	6:00pm	<b>Paddy Pender</b>
Sunday 08 March	12:00noon	<b>Fr Richard OFM Cap</b>
Monday 09 March	7:30pm	<b>John McCafferty</b> Stories from the Capuchins
Tuesday 10 March	7:30pm	<b>Ger Gallagher</b> Diocesan Evangelisation Office
Wednesday 11 March	7:30pm	<b>Fr Paddy Byrne CC</b> @frpaddybyrne Portlaoise Parish
Thursday 12 March	7:30pm	<b>Fr Eugene Kennedy</b> Laurel Lodge Parish

## 12<sup>th</sup> March – Fr. Eugene Kennedy

### The Father's Love for each of us...

Our two readings, the letter from St. Paul with the question for all of us “with God on our side, who can be against us?” and the Gospel story of the Prodigal Son and his Loving Father give a glimpse of the Father's love for all of us.

For a few moments this evening let us look at a few suggestions about reconciliation.



#### Jesus did not come to condemn

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (John 3:16-17)*

#### Nothing can separate us from the love of God

*And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. (Romans 5:5)*

*Christ made His love towards us obvious by dying for us while we were still sinners. (Romans 5:8)*

*Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:33-35, 37-39)*

#### No need to fear God

*There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. (1 John 4:18)*

#### Have confidence

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us. (Ephesians 1:3-8)*

*But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:4-8)*

The message is clear:

Love one another.

Be reconciled

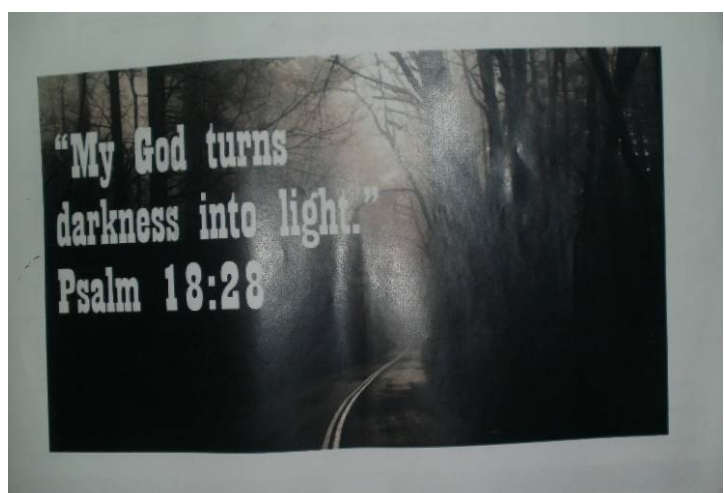
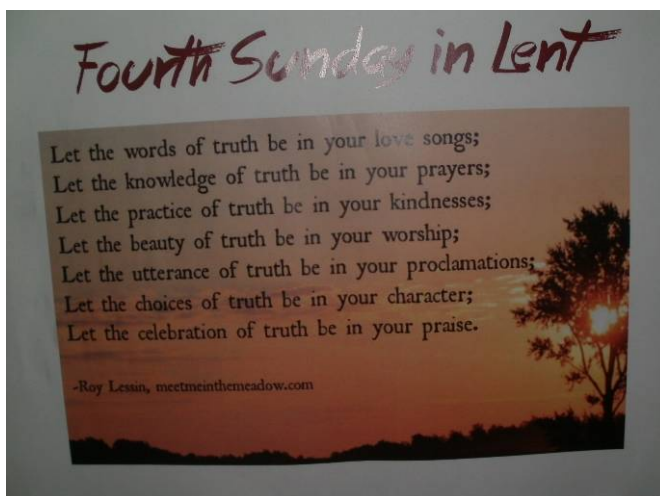
Forgive

Do not judge

No begrudgery

**A question for you! When did God forgive the prodigal son?**

He never had to forgive him because he never condemned him!



## 11<sup>th</sup> March – Fr. Paddy Byrne

### A Mother's Love's a Blessing

For the week that's in it,  
let's reflect on mothers.  
This Sunday, we celebrate  
Mother's Day – a chance  
for all of us to recognise  
the unconditional love  
they give their children.  
No matter what we do,  
they still love us. From the  
moment of birth, there is  
nothing that can take that  
love away – it's for life.



For some time, I considered my call to the priesthood and wondered if I was meant to join the Capuchin Order, but my mother was afraid I'd never be home again so she encouraged me to join the Diocesan Priesthood so that I wouldn't be sent too far away.

I was raised in Carlow Town with my twin brother Noel and lots of older brothers and sisters. I remember Noel and I would be fighting and my mother would never let us go to sleep without making up. When we would finish our night prayers, she'd ask us if we'd made up – "never let the sun go down on an argument!". And we'd shake hands (and then promise to kill each other the next day!!!)

My mother died relatively young after a battle with cancer. On her deathbed, she told us to look out for our older brother who had a number of problems. Four years ago, I hadn't heard from my older brother so I called around to his home and unfortunately I found him dead. Her last words were for her son who had been struggling with addiction for some time. Despite all the heartache that he must have caused her, she still keeps her last wish for him. They are both at peace.

For all mothers this evening, I dedicate one verse of this song – "A Mother's Love's a Blessing"

A mother's love's a blessing no matter where you roam  
Keep her while she's living, you'll miss her while she's gone  
Love her as in childhood to she's feeble old and grey  
Never will miss a mother's love to she's buried beneath the clay.





## 10<sup>th</sup> March – Gerard Gallagher

### New Saints for a New Millennium – Recalling the Religious Life that we are all invited to...

Nearly fifteen years ago, I can recall standing in a large field outside of Rome on a hot August evening when the aging Pope John Paul challenged the young people (all 2 ½ million of them) to become the new saints for the new millennium. I am not sure how many have. But I am sure that some have tried in some very simple and quiet ways to make a difference.



You see, he was only reminding the young people that in each generation we need to nurture those people who are making a difference. You see, people can make a difference even if its only one person choosing to do something different!

Maybe John Paul was thinking about some of the following people, who made a difference, by being the difference in the world that they lived in. Let's have a look...

***Even in his own day Cardinal Newman was seen as one of the giants of his time.*** When he died in 1890 at nearly ninety years of age, hundreds of tributes were published in many British papers and journals. Many who read them usually didn't pay much attention to the Church. One of the accolades recognized that a great spiritual figure had died. He was someone who had brought new wisdom to the question of religious commitment. All of the qualities admired in Newman were in fact dedicated towards one central goal. The guiding of passion of his long life was to make sense of the Christian vision for an age when belief in God seemed in deep trouble. Newman devoted much energy towards how we arrive at faith. He often spoke of the recovery of realizing our imagination, in the ordinariness of how we believe and on the extraordinariness of what we believe "we are acting on trust every hour of our lives... it is the things believed, not the act of believing them, which is peculiar to religion.



***Another holy person I have come to admire and love is Blessed Mary MacKillop.*** She was born into an emigrant family in Australia and in the midst of major challenges and felt a strong calling to follow God. She lived a life in conflict with the local Church leaders not supporting her style of mission. However she had faith in God and it was through the personal intervention of the Pope that she received the recognition to go to the peripheries of her world. One of the most motivating and known sayings of Mary MacKillop is never see a need without doing something about it. Her sisters lived the Gospel in a tough environment based on the pillars of *Poverty, Divine Providence, Own Nothing* and *Sisters would go where they were needed*. She often remarked, "God give me strength for what is necessary."



***One of our own is Catherine McAuley who was born in Dublin in the late 1700s.*** After the death of her parents Catherine and her two siblings moved to live with Protestant relatives. In 1803, she became the household manager and companion of friends of her relatives, the Callaghan's, an elderly, childless, and wealthy Protestant couple, at their home in Dublin and then at their estate in Coolock. After their death in 1822, she became the sole residuary legatee of their estate.



She inherited a considerable fortune and chose to use it to build a house where she and other compassionate women could take in homeless women and children to provide care and an education for them. A location was selected at the junction of lower Baggot and Herbert Streets, Dublin, and in June 1824, the corner-stone was laid by the Rev. Dr. Blake. On the feast of Our Lady of Mercy, 24 September 1827, the new institution for destitute women, orphans, and schools for the poor was opened and McAuley, with two companions, undertook its management.

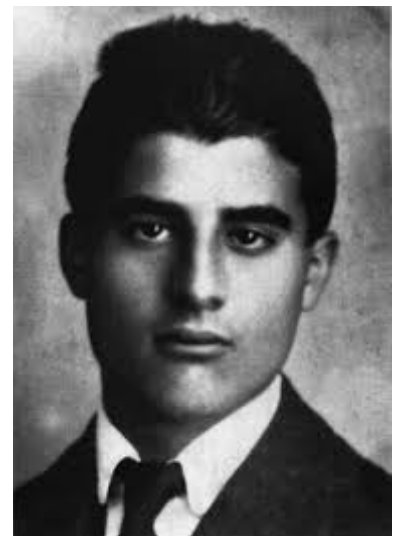
Catherine McAuley never intended to found a community of religious women. Her initial intention was to assemble a lay corps of Catholic social workers. In 1828 the archbishop permitted the staff of the institute to assume a distinctive dress and to publicly visit the sick. In the same year the archbishop desired Miss McAuley to choose some name by which the little community might be known, and she chose that of "Sisters of Mercy", having the design of making the works of mercy the distinctive feature of the institute.

She was clear that the members should combine with the silence and prayer of the Carmelites and the active work of the Sisters of Charity. It wasn't until 1831 that the community was formally founded.

Catherine lived only ten years as a Sister of Mercy, Sister Mary Catherine, but in that time she established twelve foundations in Ireland and two in England. At the time of her death there were 150 Sisters of Mercy. Shortly thereafter, small groups of sisters left Ireland to establish new foundations on the east and west coasts of the United States, in Newfoundland, Australia, New Zealand, and Argentina.

***Over in Italy Pier Giorgio Frassati was born in Turin into a prominent family and died at 24.*** His father, an agnostic, had founded the newspaper called La Stampa and was active in national politics.

Pier Giorgio Frassati was dedicated to works of social action, charity, prayer and community. He was involved with Catholic youth and student groups, the Apostleship of Prayer, Catholic Action, and was a member of the Third Order of St. Dominic. He would often say, "Charity is not enough; we need social reform." He helped establish a newspaper entitled Momento, whose principles were based on Pope Leo XIII's encyclical, Rerum novarum. He joined the St. Vincent de Paul Society in 1918 and spent much of his time helping the poor.



When he died in 1925 his family expected Turin's elite and political figures to come to offer their condolences and attend the funeral; they naturally expected to find many of his friends there as well. They were surprised, however, to find the streets of the city lined with thousands of mourners as the cortege passed by, out of the reverence felt for him among the many people he had directly helped during his brief life.

Frassati was called Man of Eight Beatitudes by Pope John Paul II, who beatified him on 20 May 1990

***Another Italian with an Irish connection is Chiara Badano was born on October 29, 1971*** to Ruggero and Maria Theresa Badano in the small village of Sassello, Italy. The couple waited and prayed eleven years to have Chiara. They considered her to be their greatest blessing. They tried to teach her to love and serve those in need. By the time she was in national school, Chiara was saving up her money to donate to the African Missions. In elementary school, she would give away her lunch time snack to another less fortunate classmate. Even when her mother started to pack her two snacks, Chiara would simply give both away



During the summer of 1988, when she was 16 years old, Chiara had a life-changing experience in Rome with the Focolare Movement. She wrote back to her parents, "This is a very important moment for me: it is an encounter with Jesus Forsaken."

During the summer of 1988, Chiara's life was changed again, this time because of illness. Chiara felt a sting of pain in her shoulder while playing tennis. At first she thought nothing of it, but when the pain mysteriously continued to be present, she underwent a series of tests. The doctors then discovered she had a rare and painful form of cancer. In response Chiara simply declared, "It's for you, Jesus; if you want it, I want it, too."

Throughout the treatment process, Chiara refused to take any morphine so she could stay aware. She felt it was important to know her illness and pain so she could offer up her sufferings. She said, "It reduces my lucidity and there's only one thing I can do now: to offer my suffering to Jesus because I want to share as much as possible in his sufferings on the cross. Chiara Badano died at 4am on October 7, 1990 with her parents at her bedside. Her final words were, "Bye, Mum, Be happy, because I am." Two thousand people attended her funeral; the mayor of Sassello shut down the town so people would be able to attend.

Archbishop Angelo Amato, the head of the Vatican Congregation of the Causes of Saints, said that Chiara was a great example of how the short life of the young could be lived out in great holiness and "today there are virtuous people, who in family, at school, in society do not fritter away their lives. Chiara Badano's feast day is celebrated on October 29. She was a patron of the Youth Space at the recent International Eucharistic Congress in 2012.

***Finally and closer to home I'd like to recall the amazing story of Donal Walsh***, the Kerry teenager who touched so many lives when he came to prominence through his writings and subsequent appearance on Brendan O'Connor's 'The Saturday Night Show' Donal who fund raised tirelessly while battling Cancer has now had *the Donal Walsh #Livelif Foundation* set up by his family in order to promote his anti-suicide message as well as forward his causes of providing age appropriate teenage facilities in hospital and hospice centers. I know his mother has been here over the past few days.



While he was battling cancer for four years, from the age of 12, he became very aware of the effect his illness was having on his family and friends. "I feel angry that these people choose to take their life to ruin their family and to leave behind a mess that no one can clean up while here I am with no choice in my sentence, trying as best I can to prepare my family and friends for what's about to come and to leave as little mess as possible." These words were taken from an article written by Donal as a call to his peers was to live life to the fullest. His television appearance touched a nerve for so many people both nationally and internationally and as his father Finnbar said "One of the things Donal did was he opened up the conversation, which is half the battle, and he just left it out there."

***You might be wondering why I am recalling all these amazing people.*** I have selected only a portion of some of the amazing people who have emerged and tried to make a difference in the world. You see anyone of us has the potential to do the same.

Pope Francis in my eyes has picked up some of this rich tradition of reaching out to those who don't believe. He has challenged all people to re-examine their relationship between the faith believed and the one expressed.

In this year of Religious – he especially surprised them when he asked them to "wake up the world". Why? Because I believe it is the religious people who have always surprised, annoyed and challenge the sleepwalking world. Think of Catherine of Siena who said, "Don't be satisfied with little things, because God wants great things!

Think about the actions of Francis – reminding us of the call to "never forget the poor". Sure doesn't this go back to Jesus' command in the Gospel "when I was thirsty, hungry and in prison..."

I began by mentioning Pope John Paul's words of challenge of being the saints of the new millennium. Its early days yet, but we are standing on the shoulders of great people who have made a difference to the world they live in. Dare to be great. Dream to make a change. But be the difference in the world today. As Pope Francis said – Wake Up.





## 9<sup>th</sup> March – John McCafferty

From the start the Capuchins and Jesuits – the two new kids on the counter-reformation block – got on pretty well. St Francis Borgia, General of the Society of Jesus, was so enthusiastic about the friars that he saw to it that a side-chapel of the Gesù, the great mother church of the Order, was dedicated to Francis of Assisi. In it the Poverello and his companions were depicted as Capuchins: bearded, barefoot and with pointed hoods.



I want to tell three short stories from the life of an Irish Capuchin tonight. This was Nicholas Archbold from south country Dublin, from Shankill, who was born about 1588/89, educated by the Jesuits as a boy and died about 1650 of the plague down in Wexford.

1. On a moonless night in November 1641, Archbold was asleep on the top floor of a three storey house in Bridgefoot St when there was an armed raid by English soldiers. He woke, crawled out of the window and onto the roof of the neighbouring house and jumped for it into a back alley. He hurt his hip against a tableframe lying outside but worse still was eventually arrested despite his leap of faith.
2. About 20 years earlier while a student in Charleville in northern France, Archbold and two of his Irish companions did some interior decorating and painted up the words 'Faith', 'Hope' and 'Charity' over their respective cell doors.
3. A few years before that in Paderborn, in the German Rhineland, young Nicholas was crossing the nave of the great church there when a voice yelled: 'there goes Nicholas the tall man with the small nose'. It was the devil. The devil lied, as the devil must lie. Archbold said it himself: 'since everyone knows I am a small man with a large beaky nose'.

This year 2015, almost four hundred years after these stories took place, is the year of consecrated life. Archbold was a Capuchin and this novena is dedicated to Francis Xavier, Jesuit. By Archbold's teenage years Xavier's relics and his novena had already reached Dublin.

Archbold's three stories come from the edge, from the margin

1. When he jumped from the window he was a man on the edge of society; a man in trouble with the law: his very consecrated life, his priesthood was against the law.
2. In France he was an exile because of that law and there - beyond the margins of Irish society - he was, with his companions, trying to create a new society, new relationships of faith.
3. In Germany here was a man whose interior life, whose intense prayer and meditation put him on the edge: on the frontier between the natural and supernatural, between heaven and hell, between good and evil.

Francis Xavier was even more clearly a man on the margins – a man who went beyond the known world, the Christian world of his day - to the 'Indies' as they called them – to India, Japan and to the gates of China. Far away from friends, family and fellow religious, cross in hand, baptizing till his arms ached. He was a superstar in his own day, the '*santo subito*' of his time.

Why was he there? What was he thinking? Francis Xavier believed, like so many others did since Columbus had discovered the 'New World' of America that there should no longer be a pagan world, there should no longer be boundaries, there should be no 'beyond'. When this happened – when the friars evangelised America and the Jesuits Asia and the Capuchins Africa – when the whole world was Christian – then, they really believed, the end times would come in the last judgment and bring on the kingdom of God.

Now, consecrated men like Xavier and Archbold didn't just go to physical margins and edges – into exile and mission – the very basis of their life was, in fact, to embrace the edge.

Three vows both then and now make up the consecrated life.

- **Obedience:** in our world of choice – the religious chooses the opposite and, as St. Ignatius Loyola wrote, becomes a lamb in the lion's paws of his superiors.
- **Poverty:** a renunciation not because material things are evil or tainted (all are God's creation) but because it pushes the person to the margins: to become mendicant, to be dependent, to beg.
- **Chastity:** pushes its practitioners to the edge of a society infatuated with fulfillment, not because sex is evil or because desire is depraved but because at the margin of desire, at the edge of the erotic there is something else – a glimpse of the kingdom.

The Church can make a big mistake with consecrated life. It often has done it. We start to think it better, we start to think it the premium level. Many of us lay people have collaborated in this by acting immaturely in relation to nuns and brothers and priests, by letting those servants of God become our masters and mistresses. Why? Because it gives us hierarchy. Because it gives us a system.

The people in today's Gospel [Luke 4: 24-30] had a system. And, as usual Jesus created mayhem. Banging on about Namaan the Syrian; he violates the code. Their system didn't accommodate foreign lepers, but God's system did. Jesus was indelicate enough to remind them of this.

Jesus. A man on the margin. An itinerant beggar. A man who parties with prostitutes and property developers. One day he's where there's drink and sex and money and the next he's playing the outcast leper himself, praying alone in the badlands.

Jesus is all over the place. He's always on the margin, always with the marginalized. He's a yo-yo of a man, bouncing back and forth from respectable dinners to dosshouses to deserts in a chaos of love and miracles.

We all experience the margins and the edges. Sometimes because of what we are or what we do and sometimes because of what happens to us until we start screaming: 'I'm on the edge, I can't take it any longer'.

I'm on the edge because I have nothing, I am hungry, I am sick

I'm on the edge because my child is an addict, is missing

I'm on the edge because my child is rich and hard and successful and doesn't care

I'm on the edge because my loved ones are dying or are dead

Recently the Pope warned his new Cardinals [Homily, 15 Feb 2015] - the successful men of the Church – that everything they did would stand or fall by their treatment of the marginalized, the people on the edge. *That's us, every one of us.* He told them to be like Francis of Assisi, to embrace the leper and accept every kind of outcast.

For Jesus, for Francis of Assisi, for Francis Xavier and now for Pope Francis the leper symbolises the very edge of society, the very edge of human endurance, the very same edge we find in all our lives. It's the same edge that the three vows of the consecrated among us embrace.

Why is the edge so important then? Why there?

Because at the edge everything looks different. Everything is different.

Because at the edge, in the sores and wounds of the leper, in our own sins and sorrows, in every dark hour our children bring us, in the face of evil itself – there it is. There we see the thing that those who followed Jesus from parties to prayers to passion also saw. There – on the very edge of light and darkness – is the kingdom of God, the kingdom that is both here now and is to come.

[O God ....

*by the preaching and miracles of the blessed Saint Francis Xavier:*

*grant mercifully to us,*

*that as we honour his glorious merits,*

*so we may also imitate his virtuous examples.*

*Through Our Lord Jesus Christ]* (Richard Archdekin, SJ. 1667)





## 8<sup>th</sup> March – Fr. Richard Hendrick ofm cap

We are now halfway through Lent and it is strange to hear today's Gospel where Jesus shows his anger in the temple – his Father's house. Well we are all temples of the holy spirit and today we are invited to see as deeply as Jesus does. When we accept the invitation, when we live as we are meant to, we grow more fully into the person each of us is created to be.

Lent is like the whip Jesus had to clear the temple. It is a time to stop, take stock and reassess – a time to put aside distractions. It is important to have these times away to encounter the divine presence.

If we are the bricks, the building blocks of the temple then we need wake up moments like Lent. Often we have such moments at a time of bereavement or personal loss and at times of illness and struggles. Sitting with people at a time of grief, there are regrets about the times not spent with the one who has passed away.

Every time we build space in our lives then we are making our own wake up moments. Perhaps for the second half of this Lenten season, we would build in these wake-up moments. Quietness over coffee instead of picking up the phone. Take some time to acknowledge God. we don't have to worry about the Presence of the Lord, but we could ask "How present are we to the Lord?" In my grandmother's house there was a motto hanging in her kitchen – a constant reminder of Christ's presence  
*"Christ is the unseen head of this house, the silent listener at every conversation."*





## 7<sup>th</sup> March – Paddy Pender

A friend of mine was deciding to leave religious life after ten years and as we talked, I was distracted by a line from the film *Out of Africa* – “the river must go to Mombasa”. These are the words spoken by the Kenyan farmer who reminds the Danish businesswoman that even though she believes she can change the flow of the river to accommodate her coffee plantation, the river must still go to Mombasa.

It stuck me that God sets a river for each of us in our lives and regardless of how we change the direction of the river or try to block the flow, the river must still go back to the source which is God. For my friend leaving religious life, it was hard for him to understand that he felt called to be in religious life and yet now he felt equally called NOT to be in religious life – as if God had changed his mind.

I’ve been reminded again and again of this quotation, especially at times when I have important life changing decisions to make. It reminds me that God’s plan for me, and God’s plan for each of us, is like a river which must find its way to the destination that God has decided for us.



How would this parish have survived but for tenacious people like Teresa Mulally and Fr. Mulcaile? Suppose they had ignored the ebb and flow of God’s call in their lives. Fr. Mulcaile might not have come to work in this part of Dublin in 1763 and served the Roman Catholic parishioners during Penal Times. He might not have risked his life to get involved in the education of the Catholic youth at a time when education was only offered to the Protestant Ascendancy.

And what about Teresa Mulally! A powerful and persistent lady who knew that the Roman Catholic poor of the city could not survive if they did not have proper education, risked her own life to secure that education. She too risked her life to bring this education to our ancestors and through her persistence, the following licence was granted:

“By THE TENOR OF THESE PRESENTS We, Robert, by Divine Providence Archbishop of Dublin and Bishop of Glendelagh Primate and Metropolitan of Ireland, to Maria Teresa Mulally, Frances Doyle, Brigid Doran, Clare Biggar and Mary Ann Biggar, all of George's Hill in the City of Dublin, literate, whereas you being Papists, or persons professing the Popish religion, are recommended unto us by the Minister and Church Wardens of the Parish of St. Michan in our said Diocese of Dublin, as persons duly qualified to keep a school within our diocese for the education and instruction of the children of Papists or persons professing the Popish Religion only, we do therefore by these presents give and grant unto you during our will and pleasure, full leave and licence to keep and teach a school within our said Diocese for the education and instruction of the children of Popish parents only, you having first produced and shown

unto us, our Vicar General, or his surrogate, a Certificate duly attested by the proper officer, certifying that you have taken and subscribed the oath of allegiance and declaration prescribed to be taken by an Act passed in the thirteenth and fourteenth year of His present Majesty, entitled 'An Act to enable His Majesty's subjects of whatever persuasion to testify their allegiance to him in such Court or Courts and in such manner and form as the same is by the said Act prescribed to be taken and subscribed; in testimony whereof we have hereunto affixed the seal of our Consistorial and Metropolitan Court of Dublin the 24th day of August in the year of Our Lord One thousand seven hundred and ninety-nine.

Many will dismiss the notion of following God's call as if it is something only directed at clergy, religious brothers and religious sisters. I did. But suppose Lord Chesterfield, back in 1745, hadn't listened to his call and shown pity on the Roman Catholics who were suffering and dying as they attended Mass in the makeshift chapels dotted throughout the city, then we would not have this church or parish. Although he was the Lord Lieutenant, the representative of the British Crown in Ireland, he showed his Christianity by permitting chapels in the city for the Roman Catholics to worship in. God's plan for us threaded through the life of one who was viewed as the enemy, and yet we cannot argue with the fact that we are here today because Lord Chesterfield responded affirmatively to God's call for us.

What of today? What about all of us gathered here today?

No one comes into being without the seed of faith being planted in them. That seed grows and matures as we grow and mature in faith. Our destination in life will be reached even though we may not be sure what that is just yet.

Did you ever find yourself stopping and listening intently to a radio interview? Or stopping what you are doing to watch a television programme? All of us have had the experience – even if we were not sure what was happening or why we were stopped in our tracks. That is the subtle message from God that this is the direction we are meant to be heading in. It's a wake up call or a nudge, and when we ignore it, it comes back in different ways until we answer.

Over Christmas many were struck by the images of the homeless queuing for food and decided to offer their time to help in the Day Centre. Others give their time to the Vincent DePaul.

The great gift is that we all have been called and in this Year of Consecrated Life, we are invited to acknowledge and affirm the great work of those who have formally and sacramentally given their lives to God's call in them. We are also invited to stop and reflect on how we hear our own call. Are we willing to sit back and let others direct the flow of the river, our true lives, or are we willing to go with the flow and find our true destiny – a destiny which will take us home to God – our source.

So as we leave this place, let us listen deeply to God's call for us and "WAKE UP THE WORLD"

## 6<sup>th</sup> March – Elma Walsh

I must admit that I wasn't too sure what to talk about tonight as Fr Bryan gave me free range, which can be dangerous for a Kerry Woman, but to be on the safe side I Googled what the Novena might be about and I came across this "The speakers will be reflecting God's call for each of us in this life & how everyone is urged to live their call fully, as Pope Francis says 'Wake up the World'" and also this is a Novena of Grace.



I believe that on the 6th April in 2013 a young boy of 16yrs *Woke*

*up the World* with grace when he spoke about his fight with cancer & told everyone how he really wanted to live & see the world, play rugby for Ireland and die when he was 100, but he also spoke about how his faith which was a huge part of him & how he accepted his challenge if he was to be used as a symbol for others to appreciate life.

I know Donal Woke the World up because in the past year & a half I have been asked to speak in over 120 schools, churches & clubs, Fionnbar would have a similar list. We only go to where we are asked, we have never asked anyone to have us at their event. The reason I believe we are asked to talk at so many events is to give hope to people, because Donal was a teenager who when he was on television gave hope to so many people, although aimed at teenagers his message was taken up by people of all ages, they saw the love Donal had for his peers in wanting them to live full lives & they saw the hope & love he encouraged everyone to have.

Donal knew this love & hope. He understood it and had complete faith in the love of God whom he believed would not let him down, Donal often said to his friends that God had him by the hand & when he dies he would be in God's arms, his faith & belief in this never swayed. Even after he was anointed, the priest Fr Padraig asked him was he afraid of dying and Donal's reply in a very weak voice was "No Father just a little nervous"

While Donal was a very special boy to our family he was just an average 16 year old boy getting on with life. Donal tried to make the most of the life he had left with his friends and even when he knew the cancer was terminal, he would hear of local suicides now so common in every town in the country. This troubled him deeply and led him to write his piece on suicide and which by chance was taken up in a local newspaper and then in turn the Brendan O Connor show picked up on it.

God works in mysterious ways and I can bear witness myself, that from a dying teenager so many young people & not so young people have told me that it has renewed their faith and given them inspiration to appreciate life, I'm sure Donal's own faith had no small part to play in this.

Donal was like any normal teenager of 16yrs. He had compassion & understood people's fears, especially those of his peers but he could also see with a little help they could overcome these confusing and disorientating feelings/thoughts by themselves, by talking, talking to someone a friend, a teacher, a parent, an aunt or uncle or phone one of the many organisations like Console, Pieta house, or Outreach they have open Doors.

"Suicide is a short lived urge" and with this in mind, we need to let children from a very young age know that in Donal's words "no matter how bad life gets there are no reasons bad enough to make them do this, if they slept on it or looked for help they could find a solution and they need to think of the consequences of what they are about to do." If we can get this message out at a young age where teenagers can speak freely in an open and non judgemental way about any issues they might have this we feel would be a key factor in promoting positive mental health.

I know Donal died from Cancer and I know what I did to keep him alive and with some form of independence. I know I did the best I could for Donal and I got the doctors and medical teams to do their best for Donal even though I know all this, I miss him desperately. I can't imagine what a parent of a child who commits suicide goes through. They didn't get that chance.

So if you know of a child who is upset or stressed just remind them of Donal's words

"So please as a 16 year old who has no say in his death sentence, who has no choice in the pain he is about to cause and who would take any chance at even a few more months on this planet, appreciate what you have, know that there are always other options and help is always there."

Everyone's life is both important & unique. Donal's Spirituality helped him cope with the illness he had, and may be today there is not enough emphasis placed on the positivity of Spirituality. We really owe it to our children and to advise them of the many empty churches of every denomination in every parish in Ireland and to go in there for 5 minutes, light a candle and shut the world out for only 5 minutes can make such a difference to a child's or anyone's day.

**Prayer is a personal conversation between you and God and nobody should be allowed take that gift from you or your child.**

About six months before Donal passed away he asked to receive Holy Communion every day, and he did, he had a routine of prayers he said (which included the Divine Mercy) and was not shy of telling his peers this. As a result of Donal speaking out about his faith, I have young people, some his friends others complete strangers, coming up to me telling me how they now pray and carry a rosary beads with them all the time, some have said Donal made praying "cool", for them, others seem grateful to have Donal as a link that brought them back to Prayer.

I also know older people who would have struggled with the basic prayers and now as a result of listening to Donal are saying the Rosary and going to weekly Mass.

Donal's message was a simple one really, it was aimed at teenagers but when it went out others listened and took up the challenge too, it is to live your life, the life he knew he would not be able to live.

Donal saw the great support and the good things he was leaving behind in life. The only negative he had for the last few months was leaving behind all these beautiful things. Donal fought for his life and to live it and he did, he made the most of every day he had. Here was a 16 year old who could have given up very early on and stayed in bed all day and no one would blame him for it, but



God gave Donal a challenge and he took it on. Donal asked his peers to appreciate Life and to Live it.

At the beginning I said Donal Woke the World and he did, but he also woke his father & myself up & gave us a lesson in life that I never knew we needed & it is to keep hope in our lives because I believe that without prayer & hope in my life, the journey over the past year 2 years would have been more of a hardship than it has been, I feel that prayer & a belief in God leads me to believe that Donal is in a better place and doing what he can to help people.

I am reminded through Donal in his simple but yet deep Faith that it is up to each of us to bring God with us through life to continually nurture the hope, love, strength and graces that God has given to us, & to renew our own Love & Hope & Grace in God and in the opportunities in living life.

A Journalist who met Donal wrote after their meeting

"In the twenty years of journalism, I have rarely, if ever, been affected as much by any encounter. The best way I tried to describe Donal was that I didn't feel he belonged in this World. His aura, his presence, made you feel he was in this world but not of it. This may sound odd but that's how it was and that's how it remains"

He interviewed Donal on his own and asked him about his faith after his interview he said it all made sense "Donal Walsh loved God, he had tremendous faith & it was his well of strength".

#### LiveLife Message

A few months left, he said. There it was; I was given a timeline on the rest of my life. No choice, no say, no matter. It was given to me as easy as dinner.

I couldn't believe it, that all I had was 16 years here, and soon I began to pay attention to every detail that was going on in this town.

I realised that I was fighting for my life for the third time in four years and this time I have no hope. Yet still I hear of young people committing suicide and I'm sorry but it makes me feel nothing but anger.

I feel angry that these people choose to take their lives, to ruin their families and to leave behind a mess that no one can clean up.

Yet I am here with no choice, trying as best I can to prepare my family and friends for what's about to come and leave as little a mess as possible.

I know that most of these people could be going through financial despair and have other problems in life, but I am at the depths of despair and, believe me, there is a long way to go before you get to where I am.

For these people, no matter how bad life gets, there are no reasons bad enough to make them do this; if they slept on it or looked for help they could find a solution, and they need to think of the consequences of what they are about to do.

So please, as a 16-year-old who has no say in his death sentence, who has no choice in the pain he is about to cause and who would take any chance at even a few more months on this planet, appreciate what you have, know that there are always other options and help is always there.

## Mountains

I live in a part of the world that is surrounded by mountains. I can't turn my head without finding a bloody hill or mountain and I suppose those were God's plans for me. To have me grow up around mountains and grow climbing a few too. And that's exactly what I've done, I may have grown up in body around them but I've fully grown and matured in mind climbing his mountains.

He's had me fight cancer three times, face countless deaths and losses in my life, he's had my childhood dreams taken off me but at the end of the day, he's made me a man.

I am always called brave, heroic, kind, genuine, honourable and so many other kind compliments, but I have to try and explain to everyone why I seem to reject them. I have never fought for anyone but myself, therefore I cannot be brave or heroic, I've only been kind because my religion has taught me so.

What impact could I ever make on the world if I was fake or how could I ever be honourable if I was not honoured to be here.

I am me. There is no other way of putting it, little old Donal Walsh from Tralee, one body, one mind with a few other cobwebs and tales thrown in.

I've climbed God's mountains, faced many struggles for my life and dealt with so much loss. And as much as I'd love to go around to every fool on this planet and open their eyes to the mountains that surround them in life, I can't. But maybe if I shout from mine they'll pay attention.

If I start to accept these compliments, I'm afraid of what I'll become. Will I be braver than YE? Will I be kinder than YE? More genuine than YE? Or more honourable than YE? Better than YE? No. I can never accept that there is a YE. We are all the same, we are all given one body, one mind. The only difference for me is that I'm looking from the mountain.

*Donal Walsh*



*5<sup>th</sup> March – Greg Fromholz  
and Br. Martin Bennett ofm cap.*



*Tonight the sermon took the format of an interview with Br. Martin interviewing Greg Fromholz. Greg, a native of the United States, has been living in Ireland for over twenty years. He is married with three children and works for the Archbishop in Christchurch Cathedral. Br. Martin invited Greg to share his views on Pope Francis, his life of faith and his hopes for the future. [Please note that these are notes based on the exchange and not a verbatim]*



Pope Francis is awesome and this Year for Consecrated Life is wonderful. But it is a year for more than the Consecrated Religious Life since we are all consecrated for God's work.

It's a tricky job to live your faith when you have family and work, but I see it as deciding to live intentionally. I don't call it mission work, but living intentionally here and now – embracing life as Jesus did.



How do you spiritually nourish yourself?  
I take time out every year in a hermitage – somewhere like Glendalough or Glenstal Abbey. I also try to have time out on a daily basis but this isn't always possible. But really, if I can't have a conversation with our creator then there's a problem.

And at home, how do you share your faith with your family?

At family meal times, when we eat together and the children are encouraged to ask questions – no conversation is off limits. Our hearts are oriented towards God.



Tell me something about your work with Emmanuel in the Helix where you offer spiritual formation to the students.

It was a great honour for me to meet the students to share my faith with them and to listen to both Catholic and Protestant share their faith with me – and their faith goes beyond the surface, it is very deep. These youngsters come together for the first time in





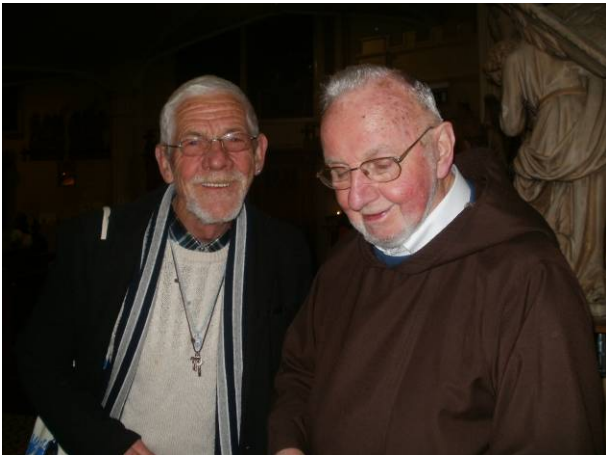
the morning, they rehearse, share their faith and by evening they sing as one BIG choir.

All lives are consecrated lives. We need to live life – a whole life together. We also need to keep opportunities open for our younger people to share in the faith community.

Have you a message for them?

Yes. Trust in your scars! We're all flawed and broken in some way, so trust in your scars.

Jesus didn't hide his scars. Jesus instead, invited Thomas to touch his scars.



Also, be open to grace from God. It is a huge grace knowing that we are living consecrated intentional lives – lives of good intentions.

Don't think about living intentionally – do it and continue to do.





## 4<sup>th</sup> March – Fr. Bryan Shortall ofm cap.



**“Sometimes the only way the good Lord can get into some hearts is to break them.”**

### **Archbishop Fulton Sheen**

Suffering is not a waste of time.

God understands your struggles and your pain and though sometimes you may feel like you're on your own, you're not.

Jesus Christ is with you every step of the way.



It is a way he walked to jeers, ridicule and abuse in his own time on his way to the cross.

Broken hearts are hearts that hear things clearly.

Sometimes when our hearts are full, there is no room for anything else to get in.

**“God's immense blessings can only fit into a heart that is empty.”**

### **St. John of the Cross**

When our hearts are empty, when we've nothing else to give, when all seems lost.

All of you know these feelings.

All of you are doing this Novena of Grace year in and year out for two things;

1. Because your mammy's and nanny's did it before you. They brought you as kids, it goes back a long way in the family.
2. You are doing it for a special intention. Asking god for something special.

God will fill your hearts with hope and joy.

God will heal and strengthen you. Especially when all seems lost.



In the words of St. John Paul II;  
“I plead with you;  
never ever give up on hope,  
never doubt,  
never tire, and  
never become discouraged.  
Be not afraid.”  
“The future starts today, not tomorrow.”

(Smiling faces at the end of the first night of the Novena  
of Grace in Halston Street.)

