

NEWSLETTER

All of us at An Tairseach wish you a joyful Christmas & Peaceful New Year



Organic Farm and Ecology Centre, Wicklow Town, Ireland. Phone: 0404 61833 * Email: info@antairseach.ie * www.antairseach.ie

From The Editor's Desk



'O Wisdom, you come forth from the mouth of the Most High. You fill the universe and hold all things together in a strong yet gentle manner. O come to teach us the way of truth'.

During the troubles in Belfast there were many different 'inter-faces' in the City where one side's boundaries came face to face with the 'other', but never the twain would meet. In some areas physical fences, large murals and/or territorially painted paving stones emphasized difference, separation and otherness - fault lines of ethnicity, religion and culture. Here in An Tairseach we experience the opposite and there is a growing consciousness that all members of the Earth community are interconnected and interdependent. We are all one! This is reflected



in a variety of ways in this edition of our newsletter.

St. Catherine of Siena observed that people 'have their own vineyard – but everyone is joined to their neighbour's vineyards without any dividing lines. They are so joined together, in fact, that you cannot do good, or evil for yourself without doing the same for your neighbours' (Dialogue). Charles Darwin's "idea of an evolutionary continuum—today reinforced by the science of genetics—is disturbing to a certain kind of religious sensitivity, to many other religious believers it is a beautiful idea, confirming the biblical sense of the unity of creation and interrelatedness of all members of the Earth community." (Haught: God after Darwin).

At the beginning of the liturgical season of Advent we hear from the prophet John the Baptist, a prophet, one who reads the signs of the times and calls others,

to be alert and to action; biodiversity loss, the devastation of single use plastics are surely signs of our times. It takes between 500 and 1000 years to create an inch of soil, a priceless commodity, which we need to care for. The emergent novelty in life's evolution is constantly revealing epiphany moments, if we have eyes to see and time for reflection to 'ponder all these things' and be amazed. Jesus tells us to "Wake up!" (Mt 25:13; Mk 13:33; 14:38; Lk 21:36). If we are asleep we are surely missing the wonder of what God is doing, the Vivifier, continuously creating. We, like Jacob, are encouraged to 'wake from our sleep and reply "Surely the Lord is in this place and I did not know it!" (Gen. 28:16). Together hopefully we can wake up, be attentive for the Epiphany moments of God-Incarnate at the heart of Creation. Together let us



wake up and be alert in reading the signs of our times and respond by living sustainably and gratefully on the earth.

I would like to thank all the members of St. Mary's community here, for their companionship, care and enthusiasm in this vital ministry. I offer sincere thanks to the loyal and dedicated staff in the Ecology Centre and to Janice and her staff on the Farm. In particular, I would like to thank the Centre manager Ms Kate Duggan for her commitment, attention to detail and good humour. On behalf of the staff I would like to thank Sr. Helen Mary (Chairperson) and the members of the Board of Directors – for contributing their wisdom, time and experience to the success of the project. Finally our thanks to the Dominican Sisters, the trustees of this project who continue to support us in so many ways. Go raibh míle maith agaibh to all.

Colette Kane OP





Laudato Si An Irish Response

Sean McDonagh and the ten contributors to the book Laudato Si' An Irish Response were invited to visit the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins at Aras An Uachtarain, January 18th 2018. For one hour they discussed many of the themes such as justice, ecology and spirituality which feature so prominently in the papal document Laudato Si'. The President was thoroughly familiar with the encyclical and highlighted the place it should have in challenging the economic, social and ecological policies which are doing such damage both to planet earth and human well-being. He felt that every teacher in Ireland should be given a copy of the book Laudato Si' An Irish Response.

Several of the contributors present regularly during the An Tairseach Sabbatical programme including: John Feehan, Donal Dorr, Cathriona Russel and Sean himself. All of us in An Tairseach would like to congratulate Sean on this publication and for all his consistant efforts to raise our awareness of the plight of planet earth and the cry of the poor.



Zen Retreat January

Eleven people participated in the Zen retreat which took place in January. Gerd Neubeck, of Djouce Farm in West Cork led it. Gerd moved to Ireland from Germany and set up Djouce Farm many years ago. Sr. Pauline reflects: We began, after we all met for supper on the Friday and were welcomed by Colette. After that it was complete silence until lunchtime the following Tuesday! We did seven hours silent meditation each day. The sitting was broken up with slow walking behind each other every twenty five minutes. That helped the circulation! Gerd gave a very good forty minute input each day. He was most encouraging and helpful. In the morning at 7am we had a fast walking meditation in the cosmic garden in the dark followed by an hour and a half of meditation in the meditation room then breakfast. We finished in the evening at 9pm and went to our beds! On one of the evenings as we finished, Gerd likened us all to long distance lorry drivers who had to keep alert to stay alive! We had to stay alert also all the time, as we stayed with 'the now' (not easy)

It was a great feeling when we finished! It reminded me of long distance runners or walkers or hikers . I felt like shouting with joy 'we made it'! In spite of not speaking, there was a strong feeling of support from the group throughout the whole retreat. I must mention the excellent meals cooked by Carol. As we were not fasting we were able to eat like gannets! Meditation makes you hungry! Will I do it again? Well this was my third time. I say (softly!) I hope so. As I look back, I feel the benefits within myself. And yes, it was worth it.

Pauline McGrath OP

Gerd Neubeck, is a teacher in the Zen lineage of Willigis Jäger/Kyo-Un Roshi (www.willigis-jaeger.de)



What some of the participants had to say

Sr Claire Jiaquin (China)

"Now, I know that religion or our faith is not only me and God but the whole universe. The universe is the body of God. Through the creatures, I see God's face and mystery. I feel that I am a little piece of the universe, all creatures are our brothers and sisters, without them, human beings cannot have a good life. Therefore, human beings have the responsibility to care for the creatures around us, and live a simple life. The prosperity of all creatures is the glory of God."



Sr. Claire (left) with Fr. Sean Mc Donnagh and Sr. Mary Dillan, Columban

Br. Brian Bond, a Christian Brother, Australia works at the UN in Geneva.

"The programme provided a valuable opportunity to take a step back from my current role and responsibilities and re-examine and renew my faith in an integrated way. I had been aware that I no longer believed much of what I had been brought up with, but my re-thinking had been somewhat piecemeal. A big value of the course for me was the opportunity to question and rethink my beliefs in an organised way. The new story provided a framework in which to do that. Having said that, although I have obtained greater clarity about some things, I probably come away with more questions than answers, but overall I am more comfortable in being able to live with a sense of mystery and the knowledge that I will never have answers to everything. In the final analysis something I think I always knew and believed was re-affirmed:-What is ultimately important is that I live simply and strive to be a loving person – everything else about what I believe or how I express or formulate those is secondary. beliefs



Br. Brian Bond (at computer)

Sr. Anne Curtis, a Mercy Sister from the USA.

"I had no idea about the quality and excellence of the presenters. I didn't expect there to be such substantial input. It was beyond what I had imagined. The breadth of the information as well as the continual deepening by each presenter was helpful in taking it in. I loved the different methodologies, lectures as well as hands on opportunities. I appreciated the use of right and left brained approaches. The dance, dream group and art were so welcome as complement to "head" input. I liked the 9:30 start and longer lunch break before an afternoon session. That gave good space to walk, pray, reflect. The prayer rituals were simple, elegant and meaningful, which I deeply appreciated. I hoped that my spirit and creativity would be refreshed and that happened. I wanted to deepen my own knowledge of the Universe Story and spirituality. I am pleased with all I received on that."

Sr. Anne (centre in picture below) is now Ecospirituality Coordinator based at Mercy By the Sea Centre, Connecticut.







The Spring Group 2018: people came from South Korea, China, Australia, Africa, Sri Lanka, United States, France, England, Scotland and Ireland. They have ministered in Pakistan, Myanmar, Kenya, New Zealand, Peru, Cairo, Brazil and Zambia.



Sponsor a Tree at An Tairseach

If you are at a loss to know what to give as a Christmas gift to someone who already has everything or who just isn't interested in more things why not contribute to the well-being of the planet and thus to the future of humanity by sponsoring a woodland with its potential to support birds, bees, insects and other forms of wildlife. Trees also mitigate climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and they create a place of beauty where children and adults can find their soul again by communing with the natural world.

An Tairseach has a lovely card, designed by Sr Pauline McGrath, which reads:: "As a Christmas Gift to you, a tree has been planted at the Dominican Farm overlooking Wicklow Bay."

To arrange for sponsorship please contact:

Sr Marian O'Sullivan,

An Tairseach,

Kilmantin Hill,

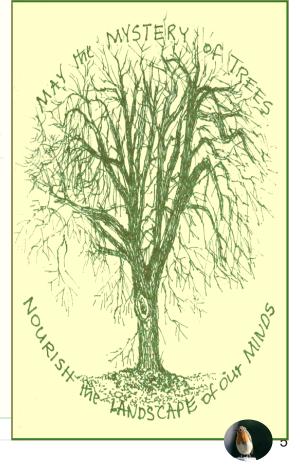
Wicklow Town

e-mail: marian@antairseach.ie

Cost of Sponsorship: €30.

This covers card and postage as well as

maintenance of the woodland.





From the Farm



What is Happening to our Beautiful Planet?

Recently the World Wild- Life Fund in conjunction with the Zoological Society of London produced the Living Planet Index which tracked the health of all 45,000 known vertebrates on land, in rivers and seas. Almost half of our wildlife has been lost in the past forty years. This loss has been driven by human consumption, habitat loss and climate change. We have been cutting down trees faster than they can regrow, catching fish faster that the oceans and rivers can restock, pumping water from rivers and aquifers faster than rain can replenish them, emitting more climate warming carbon dioxide than oceans and forests can absorb. Globally we would need 1.5 Earths to sustain this level of consumption. The level of consumption of the United States, if replicated globally, would require 4 Earths. Ireland's rate of consumption would need 3. It is up to all of us to do something, whether by planting trees, shopping locally, composting food waste, reducing our energy use, recycling as much



as possible or equally important, using every opportunity to raise our own awareness and that of others whom we can influence so that we begin to reverse the trend while there is still time. In the words of WWF chief Marco Lambertini "We are the first generation to know we are destroying the planet and the last one that can do anything about it" The words of Thomas Aquinas: "the Natural World is the primary revelation of the divine" come to mind. They were echoed a century later by Meister Eckhart when he wrote: "every single creature is a book about God". The massive extinction of species taking place in our time is a loss of so many modes of divine presence never to be repeated. Thomas Berry put it differently: "the planet will never again be as beautiful as it is today" What a shame!

Trees



Since 1998 we have planted trees on the farm every year so that we now have more than 12,000 native trees. Many of these have been sponsored by our friends as Christmas gifts or for some other occasion. For those who have lost loved ones it has been a comfort to know that something lives on in their name and continues to benefit the planet and its inhabitants both human and non-human. Your donations have contributed to the cost of maintaining the trees many of which are now twenty feet tall, full of berries and other fruits which provide food and shelter for wild life and are a joy for us to behold. This Autumn the colours were particularly beautiful.

This year we began planting a new wood in what used to be a hockey field abutting the Dunbur Road so we are calling it The Dunbur Wood. In the Spring we planted 500 native trees such a ash, alder, rowan, aspen and silver birch and crab apple. Because of the



summer drought some of these are struggling so we will have to see how they get on now that the rains have come. We are planning further planting in the Spring. Because this field is reasonably close by we are hoping to get the schools involved so that the children will have ownership of it and be able to enjoy it as it develops.

Solar Panels

When we opened the Ecology Centre in 2005 we installed a few solar panels in order to help with heating the water in the kitchen. They are still quite effective but now technology has moved on and the need to reduce our carbon footprint is even more acute. This year we, at An Tairseach, installed a further 11 panels on the roof of our farm buildings in order to provide electricity for the freezers and other equipment in the farm shop. There are now generous grants available in Ireland for solar panels and every little helps to reduce our very heavy carbon footprint.



Bees

Scientists are very perturbed at the rapid decline in the bee population worldwide as are we all. We need the bee to pollinate our food. So many of our crops rely on them –fruits, nuts, vegetables to mention but a few. It is estimated that in the US bees contribute €15 billion annually to overall crop production. Albert Einstein wrote "If the bee disappeared off the surface of the globe then man (woman) would only have four years of life left. No more bees, no more pollination, no more plants, no more animals, no more humans" A pretty strong observation and judgement.

We can all do something to help protect bees, whether by planting some wild flowers in a garden or window box, avoiding the use of dangerous chemicals, keeping our own hive or, if that is not possible, supporting



a local beekeeper by buying local honey.

Here at An Tairseach two of our staff, Janice Codd and Andrew Minion, have studied beekeeping with a view to producing our own honey and thereby helping the bee population. We invested in six hives this year and, with the help of our wild flower garden, have had some beautiful honey. Next year we will register as a Honey Producer and be able to offer our own honey for sale in our farm shop. It was a delight to observe the bees feasting on the great variety of wild flowers in our Wild Flower Garden throughout the summer.

Farm Shop and Markets

Our farm shop and markets continue to do well with a dedicated staff under the general guidance of Janice Codd, our Farm Manager. The shop is open five days a week and stocks every kind of fruit and vegetable, our own organic beef and pork, turkeys and hams for Christmas, organic cereals and all sorts of dried foods, as well as eco-cleaning materials. We now have four markets, Pearse St in Dublin, Bray and Kilruddery House on Saturdays and at Airfield Trust in Dundrum on Fridays.

Sr. Marian O'Sullivan

Farm Shop Opening Hours

Tuesday to Saturday: 9.30 a.m - 5.00p.m. Markets.

Kilruddery and Dublin Pearse St.: Saturday 10 a.m. -3.00 p.m. Airfield Trust, Dundrum: Friday: 9 a.m. -2.00 p.m.

Contact: Tel: 0404-61914 e-mail: farmshop@antairseach.ie



MIDSUMMER CELEBRATION



There was a fantastic festival atmosphere in An Tairsearch on Saturday for its Midsummer Celebration. Centre manager Kate Duggan said the day had been a fantastic success. 'Over 200 people from Wicklow Town and surrounding areas enjoyed An Tairseach's Midsummer Celebration on Saturday. The day was a huge success with a lively buzz at the local artisan food and craft market, 'art in the barn' for children, a summer solstice celebration and sell out Indian Cookery workshops by Sukhi's India.'

Past pupil of Dominican College Wicklow, chef Darina Allen, addressed a packed room about the importance and ease of growing 'just something' of your own and the huge benefits of added nutrition, as well as the enjoyment that this brings. The renowned cookery school owner highlighted how the aim of supermarkets is now to provide the maximum amount of food at minimum cost and the frightening statistics of the impact of this on our health. Everyone enjoyed Darina's insights and good humour and this was evident as they queued to buy a signed copy of her book 'Grow, Cook, Nourish'. Director of An Tairseach Sr Colette Kane said: 'We really enjoyed celebrating Midsummer with the local community and are looking forward to holding another event again soon', She thanked everyone for making the day such a success.

Wicklow People: Esther Hayden 30th June 2018



Board Members Gus Cullen and Tom Curtis queue to get a signed copy of Darina's book "Grow, Cook, Nourish".



Richard King created stunning stained glass windows depicting the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary in 1938, working from the studio of Harry Clarke - undoubtedly Ireland's greatest stained glass artist. The detail and colour elicit wonder and awe in all who behold them - believer or not.



Through a Face-book post by Kate, Richard King's family got to hear of the Chapel tour as part of the Mid-Summer celebrations. They had never seen this work of his before and so we were delighted to have them present and visit his work. Sr Jeanette even had a copy of a letter written by Richard to explain some of the work.





Evolutionary Consciousness



Sharon ZayacOP (left) a Dominican from Springfield, IL, has degrees in secondary education, hospital administration and Earth Literacy. Sharon was the Director of Jubilee Farm, the congregation's 164-acre centre for ecology and spirituality. During a retreat in July Sharon explored some of the great cosmological forces that shape the Universe and manifest themselves in our own uniquely human qualities.

Acknowledging these universal capacities within ourselves is key to transforming our current mechanistic worldview into one that embraces the whole of life as revelatory of the divine, thus building a future of promise and hope.

Evolutionary Consciousness Points to Ponder

Context is everything, and evolution is the context for everything.

"The most extraordinary fact about public awareness of evolution is not that 50% don't believe in it but that nearly 100% haven't connected it to anything important in their lives." *David Sloan Wilson*.

Our emerging understanding of evolution is so transformative that eventually every important area of human life will fall under its revelatory spell.

We are moving. We are not just being. We are becoming. We are not just in this Universe. We are caught up in its forward movement. Nothing remains static. We have for too long been captivated by the spell of solidity, the fallacy of fixity, the illusion of immobility, the semblance of stasis. *Carter Phipps*

The Universe is not a place where evolution happens, it is evolution happening. It is not a stage on which dramas unfold, it is the unfolding drama itself. *Loyal Rue*

Embracing an evolutionary worldview means we can no longer hold onto the cultural and religious absolutes that have shaped our lives up until now.

Taking on an evolutionary vision means that we, as a species, move into adulthood and acknowledge our responsibilities to facilitate a mutually-enhancing Earth-human relationship.

One of the key insights of evolution is the insight of emergence. Emergence occurs when something new is birthed that is just really unexpected.

- The emergence of stars and galaxies from gaseous clouds
- The emergence of carbon, the basis of all life, from imploded stars
- The birth of Earth from a fireball
- The emergence of life
- The emergence of human reflective consciousness

It will be our human creativity that will determine how Earth continues to evolve.

What might the universal power of emergence mean for us as humans? It means:

- We who are the Universe in the form of a human have the ability to imagine things that go far beyond our comprehension...what hope!
- We can free ourselves of the tyranny of worthlessness.
- Restlessness is healthy, a sign of life.

We are now living in another moment of emergence. Because of human actions, because of the many cultural choices we have made, the Cenozoic Era, which for the last 65.5 million years has shaped life as we know it, is at an end. We are at the beginning of the Anthropocene Era because humans are, indeed, creating what is becoming. How will we effectively participate in shaping this new era?

The greatest creativity happens only at the edge of chaos.



Climate Action Workshop



Climate Change is here!



In August we were delighted to host Raoul Empey of Sustineo in An Tairseach for an excellent workshop on

Climate Action. A diverse group of people including representatives from Wicklow Chamber of Commerce, the County Council, local businesses, Public Participation Network, eco-conscious citizens and faith groups gathered in the Ecology Centre.

Raoul presented disturbing facts and visuals on Climate Change and challenged us to think about how to reduce our collective carbon footprints. The talk was packed with powerful imagery, some of the content from former US Vice President Al Gore's Climate Reality Project. A lively discussion ensued and we hope we will take concrete steps to ensure a reduction in Carbon emissions. The future of the Planet and all future generations is depending on it.

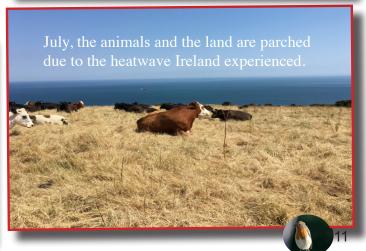
Sustineo is forging the path towards Ireland's low carbon future by implementing a variety of innovative projects. Low carbon projects are the tangible outcome of any sustainability programme, and the success of Sustineo's projects is due to a combination of passion, strong technical skills and commercial awareness. Sustineo provides the enthusiastic impetus to make challenging projects work. *Below:*

Environmental Awareness Officer Jim CalleryWCC





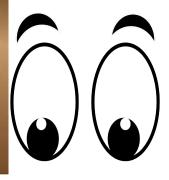




Teachers' Summer Course



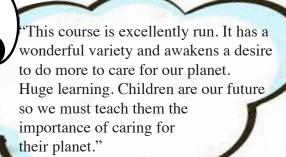
This is a Department of Education approved course for primary school teachers. Continuing Professional Development

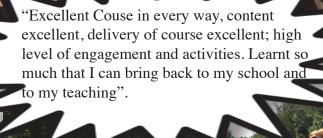


Teachers are taught the story of the universe, the effects of global warming and the necessity of environmental awareness and care. They are given tools to take back to the classroom to teach this to the children. This course was run for the first time in 2017 and was a great success and as a result, applications have more than doubled this year.

We are grateful to the Dominican Ministry Fund for supporting this course.

This is a thought provoking, solution based course. It reminds us as educators of the role we have to play in highlighting and being proactive instrumentalists in passing on the care of our planet to the youth in our care.







Independent.ie Digital Detox How I broke up with my phone

Amid growing awareness about the health risks of being addicted to screentime, writer Tanya Sweeney took some time out from constant scrolling to spend time in An Tairseach to experience a Digital Detox weekend.

There are many questions you can ask yourself to find if you have an unhealthy relationship with your phone. Do you check it at night? Do you worry about not being able to contact your friends and family? I asked myself these, and some uncomfortable home truths surfaced. I didn't just have an unhealthy relationship with digital devices - it was downright dysfunctional. And when I found myself forking out \$20 on a long-haul flight for wifi recently - just in case anyone was looking for me, and to pass the time - I realised that things were bordering on the downright unhealthy.



New research, commissioned by Deloitte, shows that 90pc of 18-75-year-olds - or about three million people - in Ireland now own or have access to a smartphone, a figure which ranks among the highest in Europe. Deloitte's researchers also found that 16pc of those aged 25-34 said they have arguments once or several times a week with their partners over mobile phone usage. Other research estimates that Irish people check their smartphone 57 times a day on average (compared to the European average of 41 times a day), with many spending five hours of the day staring at phones...

But a growing number of Irish smartphone users are becoming attuned to the benefits of 'digital detoxing'. Much as the name suggests, it's a process of not so much consciously uncoupling from devices, but fostering a more mindful, less dependent relationship with technology.

In the 'digital detox' workshop, we talk about our smartphone use, and what we might like to achieve from the weekend. Because there is no screen to escape into, everyone is hugely present, and we bond right away. That's not to say that being detached from our devices isn't hard. Several times over the weekend, it occurs to me to take a photo of something, or text someone, or to find out a fact during a conversation. During downtime, I reach several times for my pocket... and then I remember. Soon niggling feelings give way to a lightness. Even within a few hours, my breathing slows down. My anxiety abates. My mind is quieter... Perhaps to take our mind off things, or to remind us of life beyond our devices, Angie (Kinsella, Digital Detox Ireland) holds a winter wellness workshop, informing us about superfoods, fermented foods and foraging. A yoga class also helps everyone to reset. An informative astronomy talk by Lee Hurley of Astronomy Ireland is a subtle reminder that, in the overall scheme of things, we individuals are tiny, barely significant. A truism that, if you think about it, gets mangled everyday in the me-me-me world of social media. By 10:30 I fall into bed and rest like I haven't in months.

Interestingly, experts note that the blue light from technology devices has contaminated our sleep of late, as it interferes with melatonin production, which promotes restful sleep.

One of the most important points from the weekend – we do not need to be constantly, immediately available. "I find a lot of people will talk about using their smartphones as a distraction, or to kill time" says Angie. "But really, when you think about it, what is more precious in this life than time?"







Andy Leahy Diocesan; Josephine Okowri DC; Carmel Wallis Pres; Tim Galvin SPMS; Peter Roddy OFM; Arlene Flaherty OP; Monika Kilinganoa Mercy; Judith Routier FCJ; Kerry Crowley Diocesan; Paddy O'Rourke SMA; Mary Kilpatrick ND; Rosemary Lynch; Fatima Rodrigo Pres; Bernie Coughlin FCJ; Dot Johnson FMDM; Evelyn Geraghty Pres; Mary Michaud SHCJ; Bari Barivudu OP; Doreen Champagne

A Creed

I believe that 13.7 billion years ago our Creator God birthed the universe into being, and I believe

that the Creator continues to animate all life with Divine presence and transformational power.

I believe

that at a moment in the evolutionary journey of the cosmos the Creator's presence and love became embodied in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

I believe that in Jesus,
a new consciousness emerged in our world.
Through his communion consciousness
Jesus witnessed and preached
the Gospel of right-relationship among all beings.

Jesus pointed to the possibilities
that our innate relatedness
and capacity to love havefor the thriving of the Earth community
and for a sustainable peace.
I believe that as it was for Jesus,

the struggle to live and promote communion consciousness-the vision of the kin-dom of Godinvolves surrender of ego, a commitment to transform the destructive worldviews that dominate our day, and a willingness to engage the consequences of this visionnot alone, but within a community of empowerment.

I believe in the presence and power of the Spirit of God who Christifies the universe bringing forth creativity from chaos, hope from despair, and reconciliation from division.

I believe we are all called as Jesus was, to cultivate communion consciousness by living as members, not dominators, of the community of creation.

I believe that consciously living this creed and call requires a change of heart as well as a change of worldview.

I believe that living and proclaiming this creed Is truly a matter of life and death. Amen.





Pay Attention

The hardest lesson I ever learn

is to 'Pay Attention'

to the sacredness of the past seated deep within

the pains of loss, bereavements, missed opportunities

the fears of failures, weakness, struggles

to the blessedness of the 'Here and Now'

to the beauty, wonder, miracle, chaos

the grandeur, generosity, magnanimity, enormity

to the symbiosis, osmosis of the inner and outer cosmos

the threshold of evolving, manifesting, proclaiming,

synchronizing

the birthing, dying, rebirthing

The hardest lesson I ever learn

Is to 'Pay Attention'.

Life a Concoction

Life has been a concoction of numerous worldviews, thoughts, feelings, phases

Life became times of various

imprisonment, enslavement, blindness, deafness

Life at the age of wisdom

rewinding, reviewing, releasing, reimaging

Life revealing a sense of amazement

for all that has been - sorrow, pain, joy, love

Life now at the threshold of gratitude, compassion, surrender for just to be is a blessing, just to live is holy.





Ever Evolving Cosmos

I am the ever evolving Cosmos
I flared forth fourteen billion years ago
Einstein foretold I had a beginning
Hubble confirmed my vastness

Astronomers mystified by my pale blue dot a beauty amidst the unfathomable mystery a home for the whole community of life birthing, nourishing, cherishing, dying

Did you hear of the latest news sixty percent of her vertebrate animals wiped out in the recent past what may be the cause

Coz I am you and you are me coz you co-create with me won't you walk lightly on my beauty for you and your offspring to live.

Poems by Sr. Fatima Rodrigo PBVM Autumn Participant 2018



GIFT OF GOLD

Coming to An Tairseach
there was gladness n my heart,
I knew it was a gift of gold from the very start.
I learned about cosmology, and stars, and planet Earth
And gasped in pure amazement
at the true date of my birth!

The Cosmic Garden welcomed us for rituals and chants,

And every now and then we also did a little dance.

I loved the trees and sounds of birds, nature in its prime,

And the days when Mollie the cat came, too, always in good time!

Anthropology, Theology and the Mystics, too, All came our way, as the weeks rolled through, And we didn't forget to rest and to walk, And to deeply reflect upon every talk!

Celtic Spirituality at An Tairseach is supreme,
The weekly walk takes us out as a team,
excited to find ancient churches and wells,
And to savour the air where antiquity dwells.

I want to give thanks to An Tairseach's team, And to all those who taught us to build the dream Of helping our planet to heal and grow In sustainable ways, with a healthy glow.

Dot Johnson FMDM

World Meeting of Families & The Pope Visits Ireland







REACHING FOR MUTUALITY



One of the perennial questions for humanity through the ages, and even still today, has been the question of what exactly it means to be human as female and male. Since we have peopled the planet now for thousands of years, one might imagine that the nature of and relations between men and women would be clear by now – and so it is from the surface. However, if we delve more deeply into the structures of our communal, political and religious lives, all is not clear. Any parent who has struggled to help young girls and boys to grow into mature women and men, and any young couples who try daily to balance the claims of family, work, and relationship, will know from experience the hazards that abound in the field of human growth and relationships.

A brief look at our history may illustrate some of the problems, throw some light on contemporary problems, and perhaps highlight a way toward mature, respectful human relationship. Here I will look primarily at the pre-history and ongoing history of Christianity as generations of theologians and popes attempted to hand on Christian teaching on the subject, and "ordinary" men and women tried to live full human and Christian lives.

For most of recorded history, it was accepted that women were inferior to men in every way, physically, intellectually, and especially in the skills of leadership, learning and decision-making. This was true in all ancient religious and political traditions. This is not the place to delve into the origins of this situation, but it arose partly from a misunderstanding of human reproduction and the universal acceptance of the idea that men were entirely

responsible for the basic material of the new human being, and that women just provided the space in which the new life could grow. The discovery of the female ovum in the 18th century changed the biological knowledge, but not the entrenched human attitudes. This situation was internalized as divine and human reality by the vast majority of women, and men, seen as the "normative" human beings, continued to make, sometimes for better, sometimes for worse, the decisions that ruled human life.

The life of Jesus of Nazareth is a huge turning point in ameliorating this situation. The gospels illustrate that Jesus seemed to welcome women and men equally as disciples and apostles and to treat women with profound sensitivity and respect. Traces of this radically new attitude lingered on into historical Christianity, but by and large in the Pauline and post-Pauline writings, some modifications are made to this radically new vision of equality. Women are silenced and removed from leadership positions at a very early stage in Christian development, and the tendency to revert to the long accepted notions of the inferiority of women prevailed.

Eventually in the fourth century, Christian teachers such as Augustine of Hippo, tried to reconcile Gospel teachings, general cultural and religious understandings and the ancient double account of the creation of humanity in the first pages of Genesis. If women and men, he reasoned, were created equally in the image of God, the imago dei, then no one should call women inferior. On the other hand, the Adam and Eve story showed women, daughters of Eve, to be dangerous if not watched carefully. The result of his thinking was what has come to be called the doctrine of complementarity. This doctrine, which still prevails in the Roman Catholic and other traditions, is rooted in the understanding that men and women though equally created by God, have separate roles to fulfil in all visible societies, starting with the family. Eventually, when we are restored to God's presence, all will be equal again.

Most people and most Christians function even today as if this were the reality of the human community as designed by God. There are manly ways of being (strength, courage, leadership) and womanly ways of being (silence, gentleness, loving self-sacrifice), and if each acts out this prescribed role the all will be well.

The operative word here is prescribed.

Women, not being the teachers or decision-makers had no input into the delineation of these qualities. There is no doubt whatever that, biologically, women and men differ in very significant ways. It is the exactions of gender, however, that is the communal, political and religious understandings of how men and women should behave, that have invaded our imaginations, our ways of seeing and describing each other, and the expectations we have of women and men. The prescribed qualities of women and men are aptly summed up in contemporary understandings of femininity and masculinity, and whole commercial enterprises in cosmetics, for example, are based on the manipulations of these ideas.

The story does not end here, however. Contemporary women and men, though still enormously influenced by some dimensions of the old feminine/masculine dichotomy, are reaching beyond these imposed human limitations toward new ways of being human. The word mutuality is often used to describe these historically new experiences. One of the main problems with complementarity was that it identified only certain human traits as being masculine or feminine, so that both men and women were encouraged to use only about half of their God-given human qualities. Women were for centuries deprived of genuine intellectual stimulation, and forbidden to articulate their faith in public, while men were deprived of the whole gamut of experiences that surround the care of children – tenderness, nurturing, and the gentleness needed for the care of very young children. Mutuality, then invites both women and women to use the full range of their human qualities in an effort to be full human beings. This is an historically new enterprise and there are no real blueprints from history or institutional religion. The solutions are not obvious, even in events as common as choosing a slate of candidates for an upcoming election, or giving women leadership positions suitable to their gifts and learning. It is not a question of women fitting into established patterns, but of changing a whole structure, which is not exactly healthy for either women or men. The implications for religious life are enormous, especially in the fields of religious thought and leadership from which the contributions of women have been explicitly removed.

Fortunately there are many examples of men and women reaching for mutuality in their relationships, and sometimes against all the odds of the competitive marketplace, achieving relations approaching full human equality. But this is not easy, and, in general, is not supported by the worlds of finance, politics, big business or religion. Many people are left to make their individual choices to live fully human lives with only their own resources to carry them through. Mutuality in the religious field seems further removed, and will involve huge transformations in our perceptions of what the religious core of humanity is. But here also the gems of full human relationships are to be found in the Gospels, the lives of some saints and especially in the lives of the mystics. The life of a mystic is rooted in personal integrity and the possibility of a divine/ human relationship, which is transformative both of our own sense of identity and of our relationship with God. We are not left without resources, then, as we reach toward mutuality, a new stage of human evolution, especially at this moment of human thirst for peace, justice and integrity.



Mary T Malone

Mary T. Malone returned to her native Wexford in 1998 after living in Canada for over 30 years and teaching Feminist Theology and Women's Christian History in Roman Catholic seminaries and universities in the Toronto area. She is a prolific author and is a beacon of light for women in the Roman Catholic church. Mary was a regular presenter in An Tairseach and her work is still very highly regarded.





Looking to the Future



In May a gathering was convened with concerned stake-holders of the An Tairseach project primarily to give all the opportunity to be involved in developing a unified message. Ms Aisling Young-Hughes of the Marketing sub-committee facilitated the afternoon. Members of the Dominican Community were present, along with staffs of the Eco Centre and Farm. Some Board members also attended. Ms Su Power, the web-designer 'listened' in.

Two main objectives of the meeting were to help members reflect on 'one-project' and imagine how to promote the sustainability of the project into the future. Presentations were made on the history of the project to date and the financial situation. Discussion included the name / branding of the project for the web-presence.

In October the new Logo, brand name and website were launched. We hope this rebranding and the new web-presence will continue and enhance the vital work of the An Tairseach project well into the future.

Photos from top:

Janice (farm manager) Sr. Julie Newman Board member (retired at this meeting, founding member)

Ms Kate Duggan (Centre Manager) Ms Su Power (web-designer)

Sr. Marian O'Sullivan (Former Director & Chairperson, founding member) & Mr Bernard Keating, Board member (retired at this meeting)

Mr Noel Geraghty (Accountant), with Sr. Helen Mary Harmey Chairperson.













What's On in An Taisreach 2019

Sabbatical Programme

3rd March to 10th May 2019

Ten week Spring Sabbatical

8th September to 15th November 2019 - Ten week Autumn Sabbatical Exploring Spirituality in the context of an evolving universe, an endangered earth, in the Christian tradition.

Retreats

17th to 22nd June 2019

A Celtic Christian Journey of the Heart: Crossing the Threshold Home Presented by Deirdre Ni Chinneide

To journey through the Celtic world is to travel widely. The call to remember with this ancient civilisation, our ancestors, is to retrieve that which we have lost and longed for in these current times. During this five day retreat, Deirdre will guide and explore themes of soul loss, disconnection and the return home to the Spirit of God within.

15th to 20th July 2019

Laudato Si—Care for Our Common Home | What is Mine to Do? Presented by Anne and Terry Symens-Bucher

How can we find our soul's work in the world – our own unique and beautiful contribution to the web of life? How can we know whether or not we are doing our soul work? We will explore these questions and possible answers through prayer, poetry, song, Scripture and the Work that Reconnects (J Macy). We will use the lives of Saints Francis and Clare of Assisi as inspiration to find our own way in the world.

8th to 12th July 2019

Summer School: Knowing Our Place, from Stardust to Sand Facilitator Sr. Colette Kane OP

Private Retreats

Individuals and groups are invited to make their own private retreat at An Tairseach with use of both accommodation and facilities.

Contact: Centre Manager

An Tairseach, Organic Farm & Ecology Centre, Wicklow Town A67 YX 26 Phone: 353-404-61833. See our NEW website for further

details: https://antairseach.ie