

NEWSLETTER



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



From the Editor's Desk

The year 2020 marked 150 years of Dominican presence in Wicklow, the 50th anniversary of Earth Day and, it is five years since Pope Francis's encyclical Laudato Si was released. However, it will go down in the annals as the year of a global pandemic because of the Corona virus, Covid-19. Celebrations gave way to cocooning. In his address at the Columbia University on 'The State of the Planet' the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, urges us to stop the 'assault on our planet' and he connects Covid recovery with our planet's repair. Fr. Sean McDonagh, a frequent presenter in An Tairseach, also sets before us startling statistics, impelling us to hear the cry of the land, the cry of future unborn generations.

Sr. Pauline gives us a flavour of the seasonal celebrations that occurred throughout the year, how we creatively adapted things in order to work alongside 'Covid-compliant' requirements! The project of An Tairseach has many elements and Manager Ms Kate Duggan explains succinctly some of these in her item entitled 'Social Enterprise'. As always there are some snippets from recent participants on the Sabbatical programme and in this edition, we read of two examples about how the work of An Tairseach is spreading in Argentina and Africa. Good news indeed!

The story of An Tairseach was written by Sister Marian O'Sullivan, the first Director of the Centre, partly to celebrate the presence of Dominican Sisters in Wicklow for 150 years and also to tell some of the history of An Tairseach. The publication is entitled "In Communion With the Sacred Universe – the Story of An Tairseach". A virtual launch was held on 4th October, feast day of St. Francis of Assisi and the culmination of the season of Creation. Included here is the address given by Sr. Elisabeth Healy, Congregational Prioress. We are very grateful to Sr. Elisabeth and her Council for all their support.

In an article by Ms Mary O'Riordan, former Principal of Holy Rosary, we return to that great day of Celebration for 150 years of Dominican presence in Wicklow. Deo Gratias. We know evolution is on-



going and we witnessed this on the campus with the transition of Holy Rosary Primary School into the Le Chéile Trust. Also, in the handing over of keys of the school from Ms Mary O'Riordan, Principal since 2004 to the new Principal Ms Fiona Wickham.

I would like to express our sincere gratitude to all our benefactors, this year in particular as we have received some very generous financial gifts from several Dominican Congregations in the USA. We are so grateful especially because of the loss of income this year and all the extra expenses to be Covid-19 compliant. We are grateful of course to the the Dominican Sisters of the Cabra Congregation for their unstinting support to this most needed ministry. I would like to thank the management team of Sr. Helen Mary, Ms Kate Duggan and Ms Janice Codd, for all their enduring support and help in the running of the programme and An Tairseach. Also, I am so grateful to Ms Helen Maher, graphic designer and companion in so many ways. Thanks too, to the animals of the farm and to Bobby and Billy (ponies) who delight us continuoulsy by their very presence.

Go raibh mile maith agaibh

Sr Colette Kane OP (Director)





150 Year Celebrations

In February 2019 Wicklow Dominican Campus Committee, with representatives from Dominican Convent, An Tairseach, Dominican College and Holy Rosary Primary School, started to plan for events which it hoped would take place throughout 2020 to celebrate 150 years of Dominican Sisters in Wicklow Town. The Committee's vision was that 2020 would be a memorable year for Dominican Sisters, pupils, staff, parents, grandparents and the entire community of Wicklow.

for the lectern and the frill for the altar were kindly given on loan from Falls Road Belfast. The opening hymn, Laudare, Benedicere, Praedicare was sung by Dominican College Liturgical and Holy Rosary School Choirs. Past-pupils and Dominican Sisters were very moved by the cameo of the Dominican Sisters which was dramatised by the pupils in Ms. Tyrrell's 3rd class. Sr. Elisabeth Healy O.P. Congregation Prioress of the Cabra Congregation, who gave the homily, inspired all present with



The current community in St. Mary's Wicklow: Srs Margaret Purcell, Jeanette Kiely, Marian O'Sullivan, Helen Mary Harmey, Pauline Mc Grath, Julie Newman and Colette Kane

Some of the events planned were a Mass of Thanksgiving to open the year, participation in the Saint Patrick's Day Parade, an Open Day in Holy Rosary Primary School and Dominican College, a Midsummer Celebration in An Tairseach on Foundation Day and a possible Campus Concert as the grand finale in December. The enthusiasm, excitement and energy of the committee was palpable at an interview with Declan Meehan on East Coast Radio on Wednesday the 8th of January. The celebrations began as planned on Friday the 17th of January with a Mass of Thanksgiving @11am. in Saint Patrick's Church celebrated by Fr. Donal Roche ADM. and by Fr. Pat O'Rourke CC. Invitees including Dominican Sisters from various convents, clergy, members of the Boards of Management, principals of Dominican Schools and Wicklow Town Schools, pupils, past-pupils, staff representatives of both schools, the community of Wicklow and other guests were warmly welcomed. The Dominican vestments, the Dominican crest

her meaningful interpretation of the Beatitudes which she ensured would be understood by pupils and engaging for the adults present. The altar was dressed devoutly and the gifts presented by the Ember Leaders (student faith leaders). The high notes of the final verse of the recessional hymn, The Dominican Magnificat raised the roof.

The Mass was meaningful, reverent and a fitting tribute to the Dominican Sisters, past and present, a celebration that will be remembered by children and adults. Séamus from the Servants of Love recorded the Mass and the DVD is a lovely souvenir. After the Mass beautiful refreshments were kindly provided by Fr. Donal who arranged to have them prepared by the wonderful members of the Parish Hospitality Committee in the Pastoral Centre and appreciated greatly by the guests. Photographs were taken by Peter Loughlin who mingled between the tables of guests enjoying chatting.

Celebrating the Past... Inspiring the Future

The committee received thank you emails, cards and text messages from guests, staff, past pupils commenting on the lovely celebration. Some of the comments:

"The 8 little Dominicans stole the show while they enjoyed their role thoroughly"

"We, the present Dominican Community, felt we were honoured guests joining with the whole community of Wicklow to give thanks for all that has been achieved over the years through the hard work and dedication of countless sisters, teachers, co-workers, parents, Board members, friends and of course most important of all by the pupils."

"Chruthaigh agus rinne sibh gaisce"

"A great start to the anniversary year"

"The occasion, full of joy and prayerfulness, was an amazing showcase of the talents and enthusiasm of the students of both schools"

"It was a wonderful celebration of Catholic Education in Wicklow"

"It was very obvious that the committee worked very well together to make the celebration to be one that won't be forgotten"

"It certainly was a day to remember...such a joyous occasion in celebrating 150 years of Dominican Education in Wicklow"

Little did we know on the afternoon of the 17th of January how grateful we would be that we arranged to have our Mass on THAT day as it would be the ONLY Dominican Sisters 150 years in Wicklow event possible to celebrate the past and inspire the future. Who could have predicted that 2020 would become a year to be remembered not just in Wicklow but throughout the world for a pandemic? Le gach dea-ghuí,

Mary O'Riordan

Pictured right: top down

Fr Donal Roche, Srs Caitriona Geraghty, Veronica McShane, Maris-Stella McKeown.

Sr. Celine Mangan, Nicola and Lisa Murphy

Srs. Margaret Purcell, Martina Phelan and Geraldine Smyth

Srs. Edel Murphy, Victor O'Riordan, Pauline Mc Grath





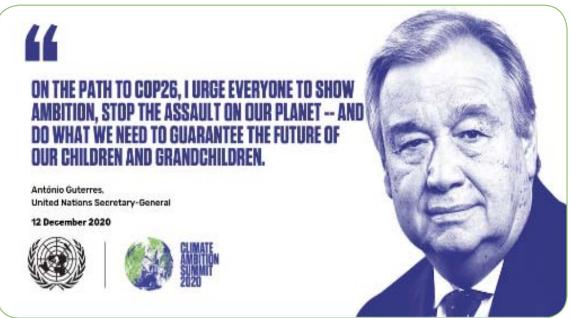








The State of the Planet: UN Secretary General António Guterres



I invite you to read an address given on the 2nd December. It is a thorough synopsis of where we are on the planet and a plea for human beings to change. It is a very difficult read because it makes it clear that we are on the verge of collapse and cannot and must not fail in this moment to do our part. The Secretary-General of the UN makes connections between climate change and the pandemic, Mr. Guterres has a global perspective, not just a national one, and behind these words is a prophetic call to act now for Earth and future generations, for the poor, for the excluded. Towards the end, he offers words of hope, that the changes needed are within our power but there can be no delay. His voice echoes the voice of all prophets through the ages, urging, compelling humanity to 'repent' to turn around and change patterns of thought and action. His words echo Pope Francis's call to Ecological conversion.

"COVID recovery and our planet's repair must be the two sides of the same coin"

Dear friends,

Let's be clear: human activities are at the root of our descent towards chaos. But that means human action can help solve it. Making peace with nature is the defining task of the 21st century. It must be the top, top priority for everyone, everywhere. In this context, the recovery from the pandemic is an opportunity. We can see rays of hope in the form of a vaccine. But there is no vaccine for the planet. Nature needs a bailout. In overcoming the pandemic, we can also avert climate cataclysm and restore our planet. This is an epic policy test. But ultimately this is a moral test.

"The trillions of dollars needed for COVID recovery is money that we are borrowing from future generations."

Every last penny. We cannot use those resources to lock in policies that burden them with a mountain of debt on a broken planet. It is time to flick the "green switch". We have a chance to not simply reset the world economy but to transform it. A sustainable economy driven by renewable energies will create new jobs, cleaner infrastructure and a resilient future. An inclusive world will help ensure that people can enjoy better health and the full respect of their human rights, and live with dignity on a healthy planet. Read more here:

https://www.irishtimes.com/news/environment/the-state-of-the-planet-is-broken-un-s-stark-warning-on-climate-change-1.4425744



Summer Retreat Facilitors: Sr. Colette Kane and Niamh Brennan

"I can't breathe"

During our summer retreat in July entitled 'In Communion with the Sacred Universe' we contemplated and prayed for all life struggling for breath. Because of Australia's 'Black Summer' bushfires, it is estimated that three billion Koalas, Kangaroos and other animals were killed or displaced (Fr. Sean Mc Donagh). This is a staggering statistic. There have been 75 million cases of Cornavirus worldwide, the virus primarily attacks the respiratory system. 1.66 million deaths have been recorded, again this is a staggering statistic. We prayed for George Floyd and BLM (Black Lives Matter). All lives matter, all lives need air, all life needs O2.

At the start of this pandemic there was much debate as to where the virus came from. Currently all the daily news-talk and debate is focusing on 'miraculous' vaccines. Others are asking the more probing question 'why'? and several have made the connection between the pandemic and climate change; connections between the loss of biodiversity/ wild habitats and the treatment of animals and the need for 'pathogens' to find hosts and homes. If we are to read the signs of the times, we must continue to explore and learn from the message of this virus. Indeed, the last few decades have given us a host of such viruses: SARS, MERS, Ebola, HIV, Zika and H1N1. Sean Mc Donagh maintains that because of the way humans are

colonising every ecosystem we can expect more frequent pandemics because degraded ecosystems favour creatures such as bats and rodents which carry these diseases to the human population.

So, in the words of Joanna Macy 'what is ours to do?' It is clear that there simply cannot be a return to business-as-usual once the vaccines, produced by the pharmaceutical industry, roll out. An unfamiliar vocabulary has become the new norm: social-distancing, self-isolating, cocooning, pathogens, zoonosis, species-jumping viruses. Diarmuid O Murchu, like Sean McDonagh and Antonia Guterres, urges humanity to 'Wake up'. We better get the message and we need to do so quickly, for the sake of all lives on the planet. All Life Matters!



O'Murchu argues in an article called The Death and Resurrection of Sr. Corona(virus) for ACTA (A Call to Action) May 2020 that the 'most cost-effective way to protect humans is not by discovering new vaccines but by humans themselves learning to protect all life-forms with their authentic ecological niches.' In order for resurrection to follow the suffering and for a sustainable future he proposes eight changes necessary. These include: recognising our status as Earthlings, born out of earth; treating earth as a living organism and not a collection of objects; becoming egalitarian co-operators rather than brutal competitors; recognising the shadow side of religion - control and power, no longer makes any spiritual sense; exploring an empowering spirituality that is more earth-centred and collaborative.

Theologian Elizabeth Johnson too states clearly "We need to fathom that the human species is embedded as an intrinsic, interdependent part of the magnificence of this universe, not as lords of the manor but kin in the community of life, charged with being sisters and brothers, friends and lovers, mothers and fathers, priests and prophets, cocreators and children of the earth that is God's good creation." 1

During the year Ireland lost a great leader, Mr John Hume, winner of the Nobel prize, and the Martin Luther King and Ghandi prizes for peace. As an advocate for the poor he used his education to be a voice for the poor. A visionary some have compared to Charles Stewart Parnell. Truly an 'imaginal cell', one who dreamed of how things might be especially when he taught a whole generation it is 'better to live for Ireland than to die for Ireland'. How might we be imaginal cells, reimagining how we live on planet earth? One enormous challenge ahead of us is to attune to the rising in consciousness crying out for 'ecological conversion'.

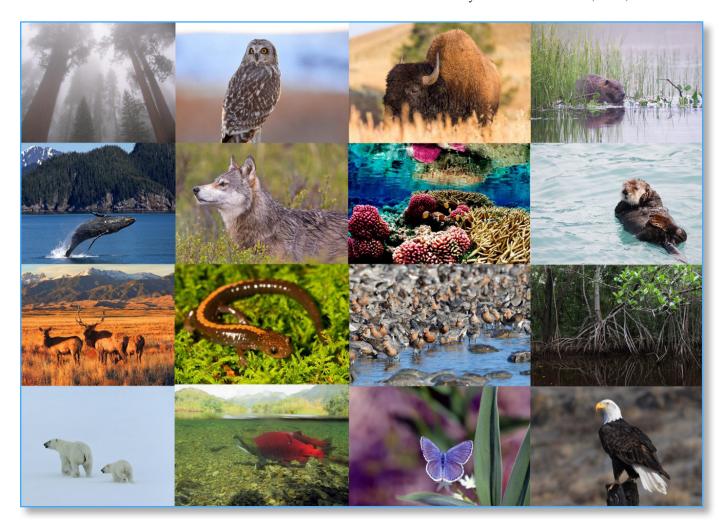
An old Latin maxim *Lex Orandi*, *Lex Credendi*, *Lex Vivendi* (As we worship, so we believe, so we live) is very pertinent at this time. Let us pray that by our behaviour we lift our knee from the neck of mother earth and prevent the asphyxiation, the crucifixion of the community of life and work for resurrection. Living in ways that will make the wilderness, the acidification on the oceans, the desertification of land, bloom again for the sake of all future existence on the planet, human and the whole community of life. The future of the planet is in our hands.

Sr. Colette Kane

Diarmuid O Murchu's article:

https://www.acalltoaction.org.uk/news/798-the-death-and-resurrection-of-st-corona-virus?highlight=WyJkZWF0aClsImRlYXRoJy4iLCJkZWF0aCdzIiwicmVzdXJyZWN0aW9uIiwidGhlIiwiJ3RoZSIsIm9m

1. Elizabeth A. Johnson, 'Losing and Finding Creation in the Christian Tradition', *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth and Human*, edited by D. T. Hessel and R., Radford Ruether. Cambridge Harvard University Press: Massachusetts, 2000, 8.





Spring Sabbatical



Quite a year!

This has been a very different year for us all, no matter where we are. There has been so much change so quickly. As I look back of the year since Covid-19 took hold of everything, I recalled with regret, that we did not celebrate the Spring equinox at all!! I had forgotten that. Our newly arrived group of just two weeks, decided that the wisest thing was to close the course and leave. It was heart-breaking for everyone, but wise. I think we were all in shock at the speed of change that had happened and so the Spring equinox celebration did not happen.

The summer solstice coincided with the 150th anniversary of the Dominican Sisters coming to Wicklow. What should have been a huge celebration, never happened because of the virus. Instead the community, just seven of us, celebrated it. It was a memorable and very precious occasion for us small and all as it was. I remember it with deep gratitude. Sr. Marian looked up the annals and gleaned all the information she could about the seven sisters who arrived on June 20th, 150 years ago. She gave each of us a name of one of the sisters prior to the ritual.

Having celebrated the summer solstice in the cosmic garden, we went next to the cemetery. We called out each sister's name and stood at her grave, if she had been buried there, or at the grave of the foundress if she was buried elsewhere. Sr Marian spoke about each sister in turn and the community member holding that name said something about

her and prayed for and to her. It was a most moving experience. We blessed all the graves with great gratitude and respect. This was made all the more poignant, because our beloved Sr Vivienne, a former key member of the 'An Tairseach' community had been laid to rest in the cemetery only a very short time before. She died in Santa Sabina, our care home on June 1st and it was her request, that she be buried in our cemetery here in Wicklow.

We celebrated the Autumn Equinox with the new group of twelve participants on the Autumn programme. They were all Irish because of the pandemic and people from overseas being unable to travel. It was the first time the celebration was not open to the public. We missed the locals, but it was great to have it and the new group rose to the occasion. It is now a lovely memory of harvest and all that has grown here this year.

Hallow'een / Samhain, was the next celebration. Because the group was confined to 'An Tairseach' at weekends owning to Covid-19 they gave a lot of thought and creativity to the 'character' or 'object' they were portraying, from the universe story. We all did our best to observe social distancing. Even the 'party/gathering' after the celebration of Samhain was with each person at a distance from the other! It was so strange! There were no Hallowe'en games of any sort for the first time ever, just people chatting and enjoying that.

Yes, it has been quite a year!

Sr Pauline Mc Grath

"Lockdown"

Yes there is fear.

Yes there is isolation.

Yes there is panic buying.

Yes there is sickness.

Yes there is even death.

But.

They say that in Wuhan after so many years of

You can hear the birds again.

They say that after just a few weeks of quiet

The sky is no longer thick with fumes

But blue and grey and clear.

They say that in the streets of Assisi

People are singing to each other across the empty squares, keeping their windows open so that those who are alone may hear the sounds of family around them.

They say that a hotel in the West of Ireland Is offering free meals and delivery to the housebound.

Today a young woman I know is busy spreading fliers with her number through the neighbourhood So that the elders may have someone to call on.

Today Churches, Synagogues, Mosques and **Temples**

are preparing to welcome and shelter the homeless, the sick, the weary

All over the world people are slowing down and reflecting

All over the world people are looking at their

All over the world people are waking up to a new reality

To how big we really are.

To how little control we really have.

To what really matters.

To Love.

So we pray and we remember that

Yes there is fear.

But there does not have to be hate.

Yes there is isolation.

But there does not have to be loneliness.

Yes there is panic buying.

But there does not have to be meanness.

Yes there is sickness.

But there does not have to be disease of the soul

Yes there is even death.

But there can always be a rebirth of love.

Wake to the choices you make as to how to live

Today, breathe.

Listen, behind the factory noises of your panic

The birds are singing again

The sky is clearing,

Spring is coming,

And we are always encompassed by Love.

Open the windows of your soul

And though you may not be able

to touch across the empty square,

Sing.





Social Enterprise



An Tairseach has many elements. It is a registered charity, a company limited by guarantee and a social enterprise. A social enterprise is an organisation or business that puts the interests of people and planet ahead of profit. It is a business that is driven by a social or environmental mission and reinvests profits into creating positive change. This is certainly true of An Tairseach whose goals are environmental, ecological and social. As a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee An Tairseach is governed by a voluntary Board of Directors and we are very grateful for their expertise and time. Our Trustees are Dominican Sisters, who had the foresight and courage to initiate and grow An Tairseach at a time when the decline of our planet was not widely accepted. The Dominican Sisters continue to provide significant financial, practical and moral support to the project and it is because of them and our dedicated team of employees that An Tairseach continues to grow and develop into the future.



The local community of Wicklow is very important to us at An Tairseach and we are proud to be able to provide employment in both the Ecology Centre and farm for the people of Wicklow.

"Providing organic and nourishing produce at a fair price for the local population of Wicklow is at the heart of what we do and conservation of the land surrounding the town of Wicklow ensures continued biodiversity and protection of green space for future generations."

An Tairseach is involved in many community networks including the County Wicklow Public Participation Network (PPN) and Wicklow Naturally. County Wicklow PPN is a network of community groups that focus on environmental, social inclusion and other community activities across the county. Wicklow Naturally is a collaboration of local food and drink providers and An Tairseach sits on the Wicklow Food Poverty Network which is a sub-committee of Wicklow Naturally. This sub-group is working on initiatives to alleviate food poverty in Co. Wicklow.

In the Ecology Centre, renting rooms to community and voluntary groups at a reduced price has allowed many different social inclusion groups to provide support to their members in our calm and nourishing environment. We are aware of how many of these groups have had to suspend face to face services over the past year and we very much hope to welcome them back to An Tairseach in 2021.

An Tairseach currently receives much of its funding from the government agency Pobal through a funding stream called the Community Services Programme. This funding targets those on the live register to bring them back into employment. While we are very grateful for this funding, it does not unfortunately cover the cost of all personnel needed for the project, or the upkeep of the beautiful but very old building that An Tairseach is. 2020 has been a challenging year for us all and no less for An Tairseach. Fortunately, as an essential service, the farm and shop has been able to stay open throughout and has continued to provide expert care of the land and animals as well as serve the community with a continued supply of organic produce. Unfortunately however, the Ecology Centre has had to close its doors for a total of 4 months this year and many retreats, talks and groups who were booked to use the Centre have had to cancel. This has resulted

in a significant loss of income and we are most grateful to our friends and supporters who are able to provide support at this time.

If you feel able to make a donation, please contact us at:

info@antairseach.ie
Kate Duggan





Autumn Sabbatical



Michael McCabe SMA, Mary Guckian, Noel O'Leary SMA, Leo Traynor SPMS, Cathy O'Gorman HFB, Bridgette Cormack FMSA, Margaret Henessey LCM, Anette O'Brien PBVM, Mary Conway RSM Carmel Bateson HFB, Cecilia Foley CP, Pauline O'Shea

I was delighted to be able to participate in the Autumn programme from September to November. It was a very enriching experience both in Spirituality and Ecology. Never before have I heard and learned so much about the evolution of the Universe. The Spirit of God is present in the world and is with us from the beginning of Flaring forth to the present day. The new Cosmic story helps me to understand and appreciate that all life is sacred and that all of creation is about relationships. Every person, animal, birds and plants have a right, value and place on the Earth. Each with their own beauty in some way shows forth the glory of God. I was also made aware of all the destruction in the world of the forests, pollution, waste, loss of Biodiversity, global inequality and the effects that all of this has on people in poorer areas. The challenge for me to be more aware and reflective on how I live my life in communion with other people and bring about change in a positive way.

Margaret Hennessy

What the programme meant

"An Tairseach is a unique experience which will challenge you intellectually, emotionally, spiritually and physically. It will broaden and deepen your spirituality and Christian vision of life. it will enrich your understanding and appreciation of the presence of God in all things, and of the interconnectedness of every created thing and of the immense mystery of which you are part. It will raise many questions for you which will keep you spirituality alive and open to the future."

Michael Mc Cabe

"This programme brought me into a new zoom of looking at the reality of the world at this time – as Pope Francis invites us to do if we are to save our common home for our future children."

Annette O Brien

"You cant miss this opportunity of living in and hearing about the Universe Story, told in many mediums – covering cosmology, Bible through an ecological lens, poetry, art, dance, prayer, trips, Laudato Si, community living, awareness of climate change, Celtic Spirituality and 'Creation, evolution and faith'. You will be a changed person."

Carmel Bateson

"It is an opportunity to 'embody' the learning in a very profound way. It is very inspiring to witness the work of the Spirit alive and well in the Sisters of An Tairseach"

"The programme is a life changing experience".

Mary Conway





Going Organic - A Missionary Option

Fr Leo Traynor a Kiltegan missionary priest, working in Africa, recently attended the Autumn programme in An Tairseach. He wrote the following request, inviting his conferes to consider buying and, or going organic.

The subject of choosing organic produce I would argue is a missionary issue - if by missionary - we mean witnessing positively on critical issues that affect all God's people. Whatever happens in our next chapter one thing remains - it is our individual



decisions that witness to our being missionaries, it comes down to our everyday choices. One among many choices could be to promote organic food in all our mission houses. We can be practical missionaries by every bite we put into our mouths and how we use the land and gardens we have. There could not be a more practical way to protect our earth and our health.

Why choose organic?

Organic produce is grown in healthy living soil. Healthy soil means healthy vegetables and fruit and that means a healthy you. You are what you eat!

Non organic produce is grown with artificial fertilisers and often many pesticides. Artificial fertilisers kill off the life in the soil and the produce is watery, not tasty and has less nutritional value. Add to this, fertilisers make plants more prone to disease by boosting growth artificially and so then more pesticides are needed. Then we eat them! For example - potatoes, they are sprayed many times in a season with fungicide against blight. Then they are sprayed again with glyphosate to dessicate the ops before harvesting. That is what we are eating

when we choose commercially grown potatoes. As far as possible we should be eating seasonally and locally. Each mission community we have, wherever you are, should try to check the food source. Most especially our large communities like our Kiltegan community and our formation communities should. But all of us need to know our food source. Then support local growers and encourage them to grow organically. Often nations are importing so much produce that could be grown at home. Apparently in Ireland we are importing 60% of our potatoes!



Another issue ahead of us is the supply chains. These depend on oil and supplies of oil could get disrupted very easily in future. Generally, organic producers are more aware of local biodiversity and how important it is for wildlife and people too. We need balance between what we call pests and their predators. If we interfere in food webs with chemicals, we lose that balance. In many countries we are losing wild habitats and species very rapidly.

We should all use organic seeds, as the way they are produced supports the planet. Putting our money where our mouths are is a powerful position to take when it comes to the 'food industry'. Spending our benefactors and parishioners money in the organic

for our soil and therefore for the many generations to come. So I leave it there. The choice lies with each of our communities and it really is a missionary issue.





Chairperson's Report AGM: Extracts

The Centre

The Spring Sabbatical was cut short after two weeks into the course due to the pandemic of Covid 19. The centre closed down according to Government restrictions.

A great deal of thought went into whether we could open for the Autumn Sabbatical 2020. Credit is due to Ms Kate Duggan and Sister Colette Kane who weighed up the pros and cons and it was decided to risk it while endeavouring to safeguard staff, community, lecturers and participants. It was a risk and a brave one. A retreat was held in July which paved the way for what was needed for the Sabbatical. It entailed good planning, detailed preparation on everyone's part and in particular on management. I would like to mention by name, Aidan, Nicola, Lisa, Kate, Colette and Pauline who took on the challenge of running the course with the extra anxieties due to Covid. It was the first time that the community could not be fully present to the participants though all helped out on a limited basis, for example – wisdom circles, library, safeguarding and farm walks.

Some lecturers were nervous about coming in person so that zoom and webinars were introduced. The use of this technology has been used more for meetings and will be explored further for courses and events

The Farm

Thankfully the Covid restrictions did not affect the Farm and so the Farm Manager and Staff were able to continue working. It was only the Tus volunteers who weren't able to come to work. The Farm Shop did very well with extra customers. Janice created a box scheme for elderly customers which was a success well done.

Janice has taken good care of the cattle and pigs and the growing of vegetables continued. David Greene and Andrew Minion did a superb job erecting new tunnels near the Cottage. They also made new raised





beds alongside the tunnels. A new refrigerated van has been bought which will make a big difference for bringing goods to the markets. Helen Maher from the marketing sub-committee has done a beautiful and eye-catching logo for the new van.

We have paid a deposit on a new shed which is to come in March 2021. This shed is to harvest the honey and prepare it for selling. There are strict regulations for this and we have to have a registration certificate for it. Helen Maher has designed lovely labels for the jars. This year was not a good year for the bees and honey due to the dry summer. Our plan for 2021 is to have the bees, hives and honey in good shape so that the new equipment will be used to good purpose and provide income from the honey.

The other successful venture this year was the virtual book launch of In Communion with the Sacred Universe: the story of An Tairseach. This story as you know was written by Sister Marian O Sullivan, partly to celebrate the presence of Dominican Sisters in Wicklow for 150 years and also to tell some of the



history of An Tairseach. The virtual launch was a first experience for us. And a great success. Great plans had been made on the campus for the celebration of 150 years of the primary and secondary schools and the Centre but the Virus had other plans!

Sr Helen Mary Harmey





Good News!

Did you know that there is a movement called "Climate Case Ireland". In June 2020, they took the Irish Government to the Supreme Court for failing to take adequate action on climate change – and won! Climate Case Ireland is the first case of its kind in Ireland and only the second case in the WORLD in which the highest national court of law has required a Government to revise its national climate policy in light of its legal obligations. A historic victory for climate justice!



CLIMATE CASE IRELAND

More good news

Congratulations to Jane Mellet, a former participant of the An Tairseach programme. Jane is currently a member of the Laudato Si Working Group, under the umbrella of Trocaire. She took the lead on the Season of Creation Liturgical Resources for 2020 in conjunction with members of the Laudato Si' Working Group. This group supported Fr. Dermot Lane's 6 week book club for his new publication: "Theology & Ecology in Dialogue, The Wisdom of Laudato Si". This was run in conjunction with the Margaret Aylward Centre for Faith & Dialogue and the participants were from many parishes around the country. This series of webinars had 95 participants each week with 125 tuning in for the final session. A hugely powerful space, discussing Laudato Si' and its implications for all aspects of church life. Fr. Dermot is a member of the Laudato SI' Working Group.

Jane was also involved with the launch of Fr. Donal Dorr's new book: "A Creed for Today: Faith & Commitment for a New Earth Awareness". Fr. Donal has a very strong connection with Trócaire that goes back to the 1970's. He requested Trócaire to be involved in the launch. It was a great success with 260 attendees from Ireland and many African countries where Donal has worked as a Kiltegan Missionary. Donal's book has a specific section on the role of faith communities in addressing the environmental crisis. Donal often presents here in An Tairseach during the Sabbatical Programme.



Congratulations

to Sr. Pauline McGrath O.P. who celebrated her Golden Jubilee in 2020. What a year it was!

'Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit' Ad multos annos

Sponsor a Tree

Last year we began planting a new wood on the farm close to the Dunbur Road so we are calling it The Dunbur Wood. We are inviting our friends to contribute to the cost of developing the this area and planting trees and shrubs as a way of offsetting our carbon footprint which in our Western way of life is way beyond what the planet can sustain in the long term. We suggest a contribution of €30. For this you will receive an appropriate card which can be given to a friend at a time of joy or sorrow. We have cards for bereavements, birthdays, congratulations on a special occasion such as the birth of a baby, a graduation or a wedding. We are very grateful to all our donors whose names are commemorated in our Tree Registers.

To contribute to the development of the Dunbur Wood as an educational facility for biodiversity, please download and return Tree Sponsorship Form from the website https://antairseach.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Tree-sponsorship-form.pdf





Book Launch



I am reminded that Sister Marian was Prioress General when she and her Council were inspired to begin commissioning sisters to write the history of the Congregation. This has resulted in a fine body of work, the stories of our

Congregation's Dominican mission as it unfolded. So I find it eminently fitting that she herself would write the story of An Tairseach. She has, along with community and colleagues produced a beautiful and captivating book which gives the inspiration, the struggle, the growth of An Tairseach since its inception. Having spent 7 years in Wicklow and being 'a Wicklow woman' myself, I take great pride in what has been done by the Congregation since 1992 to raise consciousness of saving the life of the planet - the most urgent need of our time. An Tairseach has done all it can, through its ethos and ministry to aid that 'profound interior conversion' referred to by Pope Francis in Laudato Si and referenced by Dr. John Feehan in his introduction.

We read in the acknowledgements at the beginning of the book that 'An Tairseach is a project of the Dominican Sisters who are supportive of its use of land for educational purposes, the protection of biodiversity, sustainable farming and opportunities to experience the healing power of nature.' As Dominican Sisters we take pride in the fact that the land was NOT sold but was used in a sustainable way to create the organic farm and shop, the conservation area and the education centre. The

beautiful photos in the book will give you a good idea of the setting for this ever developing ministry which has benefited from the efforts of all involved over the past years. 'From little acorns...'

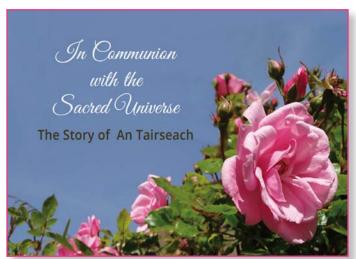
I hope when you read the story of An Tairseach you will not only admire the dedication of those who have worked so hard to ensure that the land and the buildings flourish and teem with life and joy, but you may be moved to contribute in whatever way is possible to what the book names as 'This Environmental Challenge'.

My thanks and congratulations to all who are and have been involved, over the years and to the many sabbatical participants who have brought their passion, experience and knowledge all over the world. I end with the words of Hildegard of Bingen

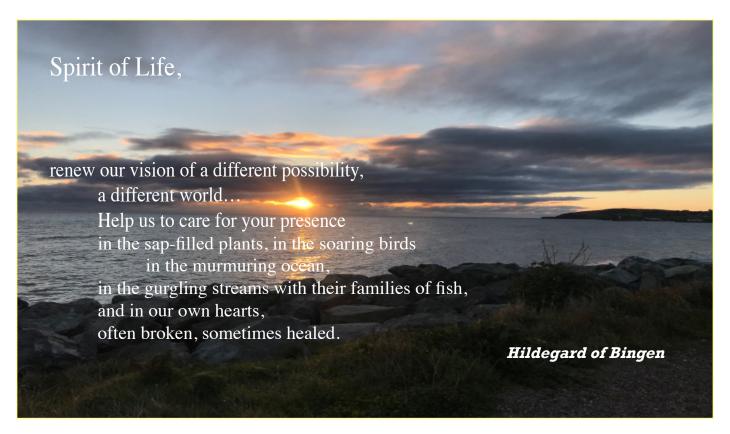


brought to us by Mary T Malone, a frequent lecturer at An Tairseach (see next page)... Once again, on behalf of the Congregation Council congratulations, thanks and good wishes.









"To each of the team of An Táirseach, congratulations on a really beautiful evening on Sunday.

I found my smile getting wider and wider as the evening unfolded, soothed and warmed by the contribution of each one from the start to the finish. Míle buíochas for all you have done, against the odds at times, to build a centre which has taught so many of us about the wonders of the world we inhabit and for living out of that vision, in truth and in integrity.

I hope you are enjoying the fruits of that lovely evening and the response to the beautiful history you have produced, which has recorded the story of An Tairseach. Long may you prosper!"

Bairbre de Búrca

"Dear, Beloved An Tairseach Sisters, thankyou so much for that wonderfully moving and inspiring presentation! It was such a gift! I found the sharing of the former course- participants particularly moving and a great tribute to all your love, inspiration and generosity. May you be richly blessed! and may we all endeavour to stay in tune with our wonderful, pulsating, loving, creation-energy and respond generously."

Noreen

"Thank you, Colette. That was a beautiful presentation today for the launch of the book. I'm sure a lot of hard work and anxiety went into the

preparation. It went off without a hitch. It was great to be able to participate. Virtual events that more people can be part of are in a way a gift of covid-19. Thanks again."

Liz Ferguson

"Thank you, Sister Marian and everyone who participated in Sunday night's story of An Tairseach. Both this programme and your lovely booklet give us some insight into the hard work involved in reaching An Tairseach's success. I am grateful to all the Wicklow Sisters who work in An Tairseach. You help us to appreciate the wonder and beauty of creation. May the Lord continue to bless each of you in all your endeavours. Sincerely"

Rosanne OP

"I really loved the book launch, and seeing you all again brought tears to my eyes... but lots of gratitude to my heart.! It was so lovely to see the video clip you presented and to know that the work is being so appreciated in so many parts of the world still.

We are just celebrating our 140th anniversary of coming to Whanganui, Aotearoa/NZ ... so it was extra lovely to share your history at this time when we are recalling ours. Gratitude is surely the memory of the heart and I have many love ones and much much gratitude.

Arohanui pumau, (Constant large love!)
Blessings on your present and the years to come"

Marie



Holy Rosary now in Le Chéile Trust







Dr Humphries, Srs Colette Kane, Helen Mary Harmey Margaret Purcell Ms Mary O'Riordan Dr. Aine Moran, Srs. Jeanette Kiely and Julie Newman OP.

On 24th February a ceremony was held to mark the transition of Holy Rosary Primary School into the family of the Le Cheile Schools Trust. Ms O'Riordan, (former) Principal, staff and many students celebrated the ocassion with readings, music and a very meaningful ritual. Dr. Eilis Humphries and Dr. Aine Moran represented Le Cheile. The Dominican Sisters were thanked for their immense contribution for 150 years of education in Wicklow town.

Ms Mary O'Riordan wrote:

"Shortly before I retired as principal of Holy Rosary School on the 24th of February, Dominican Sisters, Le Chéile Trust, the Board of Management, staff and pupils participated in a Le Chéile Trust Joining Ceremony. Le Chéile Trust is committed to maintaining and strengthening the ethos of participating Religious congregations. Holy Rosary School maintains its Dominican tradition, is now under the "umbrella" of Le Chéile and is in the capable hands of principal Fiona Wickham.

I sincerely thank the Dominican Sisters for their support and kindness during my 15 years as principal.

I wish everyone connected to Holy Rosary School, Dominican College, Dominican Convent and An Tairseach health, happiness and peace at Christmas and during 2021.

Le gach dea-ghuí."

Mary O'Riordan



Handing over the keys Ms Mary O'Riordanm (right) Principal 2004 - 2020 Ms Fiona Wickham Principal 2020 -



Sabbatical Snippets



Caminata Cosmica

Caminata Cosmica in the Centro de Meditacion Argentina, Entre Rìos, Victoria with the two Veronicas, Veronica Banchero, Sr Veronica Rafferty OP

In 2016 Fr. Martin Hunter O.P. returned to Argentina after attending the Autumn Sabbatical that year. He brought with him the text of the Cosmic walk, originally designed by Sr. Miriam T MacGillis. The Cosmic walk attempts to provide some sense of the vastness of the time and space of the universe while conveying the sense of sequence in the earth's unfolding process. The events chosen for this are arbitrary, but with the help of a guide, one can trace the universe story by walking from the central point, representing the Flaring Forth, to the last and outer stone of this time-line which brings us to the present day.

At a meeting Martin along with some Dominican sisters explored possibilities for creating a beautiful place for cosmic understanding. As a result of this and in collaboration with Ms Veronica Banchero a beautiful meditation garden, incorporating the 'Caminata Cosmica' has been created. The two Veronicas have been working on getting the message out. Especially up-loading mini-movies onto a Youtube channel. Srs Colette Kane and Pauline Mc Grath have participated in conversations live stramed on Veronica's youtube channel. Recently,

Fr Dan Troy SSC, working in Whuan, China and past participant on the programme, was also in conversation with the two Veronicas.

Congratulations to all involved in succeeding in creating a beautiul place for cosmic understanding.

"A Better Earth - Stories for Young People"



This book has been inspired by the encyclical of Pope Francis entitled: LAUDATO SI: On the Care for Our Common Home, May 24th 2015 and my personal love for creation. It is my hope that this will inspire young people to love and care for God's creation more and by so doing improve their relationship with themselves, the whole of creation and God.

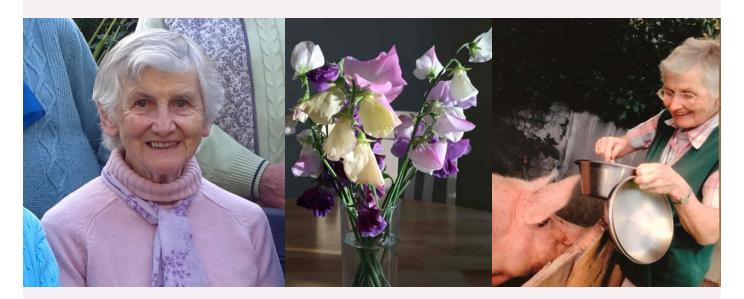
My gratitude goes to my Congregation: Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary, my congregational leader Sr. Franca Onyibor who proposed a sabbatical on Ecology to me and encouraged me to go for it. The programme opened my eyes to the beauty and wonder of God in the created universe and the harm humanity is doing to it.

I thank the class of autumn 2019 and staff of An Tairseach (Irish for Threshold) Ecology centre for their love and inspiration. They inspired the writing of the story in chapter one 'mother earth' and the poem 'No longer the same'.

Sr Bernadette Nyam



Remembering Sr Vivienne



1st June marked the death of our dearly beloved Sr. Vivienne O'Beirne. Many of you will have fond memories of her working in An Tairseach. Sr. Vivienne was involved in the setting up of the Ecology Centre from its beginnings in 2005. She was responsible for everything to do with the household arrangements: bedrooms, laundry and dining rooms, sparkling tea pots and gleaming butter dishes. You will remember the beautiful floral arrangements all around the Centre, in particular the fragrant and colourful sweetpeas. She retired from the Centre in 2017, aged 86!!

Vivienne joined the Dominican congregation after she left school in Sion Hill, Blackrock. She qualified in Home Economics and taught in St. Catherine's College of Home Economics and in St. Anne's. She put what she learned in St. Catherine's to good use throughout her varied ministeries and assignations. Vivienne was the person to organise and supply kitchens and equipment for the centres for the sick in Cape Town and Port Elizabeth, setting up the sabbatical community house in Via in Miranda, Rome and the centre in An Tairseach. These tasks were done with a great eye for detail, comfort, generosity of spirit and beauty. Vivienne had a tenacity and a strong will which characterised a strength underneath her mild and gentle manner.

Sr Vivienne was a good listener, thoughtful and kind, - nothing was too much trouble. In her compassion she would go to great trouble for anyone. She was what one would call a "people's person", expressed in so many acts of kindness: a

phone call, visit, card, pot of jam or marmelade, flowers, a promise of prayer, a listening ear and, in latter years, a tree planted. Vivienne got her love of trees from her father and was very proud of his legacy to Avondale where he was the Instructor in the school of forestry there. Her ministry with the tree project in An Tairseach was carried out meticulously and gave her great interaction with a wide range of people.

Vivienne was blessed with a deep faith and a gift of prayer. She loved her year in Narragansett, New York and her time in the Dominican Ashram. She had the ability to combine a very active life with a deep prayer life. Many came to Vivienne when they needed prayers for various intentions, for she had a great belief in the power of intercessory prayer.

Her time in leadership either as Prioress or when she was a member of the Council Geneal revealed her care for the sisters and for those with whom she worked. Many generous deeds were done quietly for sisters and their families. She is a legend in her own family circle for her thoughtfulness, for the cards for every occasion and landmark. All the generations say with great affection, "Auntie Anne never forgot us". It was Vivienne who raised the issue of care for our sick and frail sisters and the necessity of having a centre for them. It was a topic close to her heart, as was spiritual direction and the Scriptures.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam dílis.

Sr. Helen Mary Harmey



Organic Farm & Ecology Centre

AN TAIRSEACH is the Irish word for threshold and it suggests a new beginning, an alternative and more sustainable way of working with the land as well as a renewed relationship with the whole community of life, human and non-human.

What you will find at An Tairseach:

A Centre for Ecology and Spirituality
Retreats, Sabbaticals, Courses & Workshops
Organic Farm & Farm Shop
Tranquil and comfortable en-suite accommodation
Well-equipped meeting rooms for hire



Ecology Centre

Tel: 0404 61833 Email: info@antairseach.ie **Organic Farm Shop**

Tel: 0404 61914

Email: farmshop@antairseach.ie



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