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28th Sunday in Ordinary Time, 10th October 2021.

Dear Parishioner,

The headline in Friday's newspaper '**More than €17,000 raised for foodbank**'. 'A GoFundMe page set up by University College Cork Students Union (UCCSU) to raise funds for its food bank had raised more than €17,00 last evening. The student welfare officer, Caoimhe Walsh, said more than 100 students were given provisions in a 50-minute period, before the bank ran out of supplies such as pasta, rice and tinned goods.' She said it was "so upsetting" to have to turn away students in need, many of whom said they had little left after paying for their accommodation. Ms Walsh rejected suggestions that students had money for alcohol but not food, saying "**The students who came to the foodbank yesterday are not the ones out partying.**"

Before I had come across the article that I have just written about, I had intended giving a mention to part of a letter that I received recently from a man (Samuel) in Kenya. Before I left Kenya to return to Ireland in 2,000, he moved from Kipkelion Parish where I was staying, to another part of Kenya, where I had helped him to buy a small plot of land. He got married a few years later but, sadly, after the couple's third child was born, his wife became very unwell and died. When the older of his two boys was lucky enough to get a place in secondary school, I helped him to pay some of the school fees due. He had further expense this year because the second boy was ready to go to secondary school. From the school reports that he has sent me, it is clear that both boys are very bright students. Their sister is still in primary school. In a recent email (a hand-written letter attached to an email and sent from an internet café), he spoke about the huge problems arising for people like himself, who have no regular income, because of a variety of price rises in recent months. He gave one example of the difficulty being faced by people in the area where he lives. **It is a good potato-growing area and those, who sell potatoes, use some of the money they get to buy fertiliser to be used in the growing of the maize crop, which is the staple food in the area. Unfortunately, to buy a 50 Kg. bag of fertiliser, one has to sell 15 bags of potatoes.** It is likely that many people will not be able to buy the fertiliser and, as a result, their maize crop will be poor.

I hope you will find the piece entitled '**An Interesting Adventure**', an account by a native of the parish, living in France for a substantial number of years but with strong ties with home, to be interesting. (**Fr. Denis O'Mahony**)

An Interesting Adventure: A few weeks ago, a photograph appeared in Kerrys Eye of a mother celebrating her birthday with some of her family. I was able to pass on my good wishes to Mary Leen, Rae, Kilflynn, at the Vigil Mass in Kilflynn in the company of her daughter Nora, living in France for a good part of her life, who had come for her mother's celebration. Because of the '*Covid situation*', she had not been able to come to be with her mother, as she had been doing before the corona virus upset the lives of millions in our world. **When I sat down the next day to chat about her life in France, I got an insight into what one might call an interesting adventure.** Nora worked in Tralee for a short time, after leaving school. A friend and herself went to France, to work and earn some money and then to travel in that country and, possibly, further afield, before returning to Ireland. Circumstances changed, when her friend found that she was so homesick, and returned to Ireland. Nora got a taste of different kinds of work – picking grapes in vineyards and working on oyster farms – where she met with people from different countries.

When she saved some money, Nora decided to visit Paris before she would return to Ireland. She had been keen to see some of the famous churches in Paris. These included the Church of the Miraculous Medal on the Rue de Bac, where the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to St. Catherine Laboure in 1830 and requested the creation of the medal, which became known as the Miraculous Medal. **A visit to the oldest church in Paris, Saint-Germain-des-Pres, opened in 543, caused Nora to change her plan to return to Ireland. As she came out of the church, she spotted a young red-haired lady sitting on the church steps, crying. She rightly thought this was an Irish girl, who explained that she was working in a hotel but, at that particular time, was very homesick.**

Nora did not see any way of helping this girl but when she asked her to accompany her to the hotel, where she was working, Nora agreed to do so. As soon as they got to the hotel, they met the lady who owned it, and she offered Nora a job there. She accepted the offer and spent six years working in that hotel, doing a variety of jobs, including working in the kitchen and in reception. During her time working in that hotel, Nora met her future husband, and, after the couple had a baby girl, she took time off from hotel work and combined care of her child with attendance at night classes in Business and Management. After getting a P. A. diploma, she was able to return to work and she worked in this field until she retired a few years ago.

As readers of ‘Dear Parishioner’ will know, I am always keen to hear about the experience of faith, and church life that people have in other parts of Ireland or in another country. Nora spoke to me about her experience since the family moved to a rural part of France. Because of her occasional visits home, it is natural that Nora found herself comparing her experience of attending Mass in France and in Ireland. **I would have expected her to say that those attending Mass in France were older people only but she said that is not the case where she is living.** She said people attend Mass as a family – parents bring their children – and she said she got a slight shock about ten years ago, when she attended Mass in Kilflynn, and saw that the congregation was much smaller than she expected it to be. Her experience of church-going in France reminded her of past years in Ireland, when people came early for Mass, dressed in ‘*their Sunday best clothes*’ and the atmosphere in the church was very devout.

There has been a lot of talk in Ireland in recent years about how to make our churches more welcoming. You will remember that, on a few occasions, in both churches in our parish, parishioners were invited to wait after Mass to meet other parishioners while enjoying tea, coffee, scones, apple tart etc. Unfortunately, that has not happened since the start of the Covid 19 pandemic, in March 2020, but I hope it may be possible to do it again in the not too distant future. **Nora told me that gathering in the church hall is very much part of her life, when the Mass is finished.** The majority of those who have been at Mass have tea, coffee, glass of wine etc. and they discuss the priest’s homily and talk about anything of interest, especially in relation to any needs, problems that parishioners might have etc. Volunteers always come forward, when there is a particular task or project to be undertaken.

Nora was keen to tell me about the time, back in 2013, when our present Pope, Francis, was chosen to take the place of Pope Benedict XVI. Like many people, who were watching TV that night, she was very struck by the very warm greeting that the new pope gave to those gathered in St. Peter’s Square, Rome. He gave his greeting in Italian ‘**Buona Sera**’ (Good evening). She was also very surprised, when Pope Francis invited all the onlookers in the square to ‘*Pray for me.*’ On behalf of all ‘*Dear Parishioner*’ readers, I sincerely thank Nora Leen for telling about her life in France and for giving an insight into church-life there. As always, an invitation is offered to any reader who might have a story to tell about a particular experience connected with church going. (*Fr. D. O’Mahony*)

*Seeing your Life through the Lens of the Gospel.
Fr. John Byrne OSA, in Intercom Magazine, October 2021*

1. We often get satisfaction from the things we own, clothes, cars, homes, gadgets or money. There would be something unnatural if we did not but what happens to us when our possessions begin to ‘own’ us, whey they take a hold of us, when we become obsessed with them? **Jesus seeks followers who have the freedom to let go of possessions in order to be a servant of others.** In whom have you seen this freedom? When have you experienced it yourself?
2. Growth implies change. That change sometimes means letting go of something we have at this moment: job, status, home, security, or something else we value. **There can be an apparent loss in letting go. Yet have you ever found that you gained by having the freedom to let go of something to which you had previously clung?**
3. The disciples thought that Jesus was making impossible demands of people following him. **He acknowledged that discipleship was impossible to us on our own efforts alone.** How have you experienced the benefits of the help of others and of God when you were faced with difficulties in life?

The month of October and World Mission Sunday (24th October) is a time for the faithful of the world to show their appreciation towards the work of overseas missionaries. The generosity offered will be used to support missionary activities in over 1,100 struggling dioceses, mostly in Africa, Asia and Latin America. (**Taken from Mission Month Toolkit, Missio Ireland**)

2020 at a glance
Kindness raised
€1,117,026 raised towards Mission Sunday.
€223,863 raised on behalf of the Pope Francis Covid-19 Emergency Fund.

Kindness shared
€942,000 sent overseas to help build and maintain struggling Christian communities.
€71,000 Irish Mass Offerings sent to priests in mission diocese.