

The Presbytery, Abbeydorney. 066 7135146

[abbeydorney@dioceseofkerry.ie](mailto:abbeydorney@dioceseofkerry.ie)

6<sup>th</sup> March 2022, 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent.

## Let's Talk

Dear Parishioner,

The article in the centre of this 'Dear Parishioner' was written by Triona Doherty. Her name has appeared many times in previous 'Dear Parishioners' when she wrote the 'Deep End' in Intercom Magazine. The other name that you saw under that column was Jane Mellett. Since the beginning of 2022, the 'Deep End' has been replaced by 'Points to Ponder'. The article by Triona Doherty in this 'Dear Parishioner' is taken from Reality Magazine and, as far as I know, she is making a bit of history because this article is her first as editor of Reality Magazine. A first for Triona and a first for Reality in having a female editor. I hope it is the start of something wonderful for her and for the readers of the Redemptorist magazine, Reality.

The title of Triona's article is 'Let's talk'. An invitation like that might bring the response from some people, **'Stop, we have too much talking! Can't we be a bit quiet and think and reflect about our life and what is going on in our world.'** I would not blame anybody for making that response to the invitation, 'Let's talk'. Likewise, I would understand a reaction like 'Talking is fine provided the subject is interesting and if those talking are ready to listen as well! Having devoted a good part of her first editorial in Reality to our experience of Covid 19 and how it has affected us, she leads us into a topic that you have heard mentioned in the church in the past few weeks. You have also got the chance to read about it in articles about the 'Synodal Pathway' and the Synod of Bishops in Rome in 2023.

Towards the end of her editorial, Triona O'Doherty wrote, 'The synodal journey, announced by Pope Francis, couldn't have come at a better time. The Irish Church has begun its own 'Synodal Pathway', asking the question, 'What does God want from the Irish Church at this time?' Real consultation and listening must shape these processes." When I put my name at the bottom of this page, I don't see myself as an editor but as one who likes to present the writing of others – some of it from magazines like Reality and Intercom and some from people like those who, in last week's 'Dear Parishioner' wrote about their Confirmation Day. **(Fr. Denis O'Mahony)**

Two videos caught my attention recently. The first was a sketch from Irish comedy trio, Foil Arms and Hog, entitled '*Post Pandemic Traumatic Stress*'. A teacher sometime in the future, is teaching his class '*early 21<sup>st</sup> century history*'. After a recap of the main events of 2019, he announces "Right today we are going to move on to 2022". "Eh sir? You skipped 2020 and 2021", pipes up a student. "Get out, Out now!", barks the teacher. Turning back to the class, he intones "All together now: it goes 2018, 2019, 2022, 2023..." The second was the Disney film Encanto. The story centres around the Madrigal family who, after a terrible tragedy, rebuild their lives and share their various gifts with the wider community. The *familia* is not without its dark side, however. Bruno, the estranged son of the matriarch Abuela, was banished from the family home after his own gift proved problematic. The film has an important message about the effects of trauma. **When issues are ignored or glossed over, the damage and division can last for generations, Encanto's biggest musical number is the catchy 'We Don't Talk About Bruno'.**

Having watched both productions within a couple of days of each other, I couldn't help but hum a hybrid version to myself: **'We don't talk about Covid'**. This March marks two years since COVID 19, coronavirus, lockdown, PCR and countless other terms forced their way into our vocabulary and our lives. Here in Ireland, shortly before the two-year mark, the announcement came that the majority of the restrictions were being lifted. My immediate reaction, after giddily contemplating future visits and occasions, was "Thank God. Maybe now we won't have to talk about Covid anymore." I know I am not the only one who is exhausted. The losses, the isolation, the restrictions and anxiety-induced news cycle has taken its toll on all of us. It's understandable that we might not want to talk about Covid anymore, at least for another few years, if ever! One has to wonder how we will look back at the years 2020 and 2021. Will they be swept under the carpet, dismissed as 'lost' years in an attempt to move on and 'get back to normal'? On an individual level, many people will need support as they step out into the post-pandemic world. Our society too, will bear the scars. In the western world, before the arrival of COVID 19 divisions were already

## Seeing your Life through the Lens of the Gospel

*John Byrne osa Intercom March 2022*

pronounced. The climate crises, political elections, social movements such as Black Lives Matter, the recent referenda facing Irish voters – all these issues polarised opinion, giving rise to aggression and in some cases even violence. **The pandemic brought new divisions as people rushed to take a stance on everything from vaccines to the remit of Government and individual rights and responsibilities.** In our personal lives when we are too tired or anxious to have the hard conversations, we find ways of papering over the cracks. We might add Covid to religion and politics as off-limit topics for dinner parties or family gatherings, but of course the chasms between us only widen if we don't at least try to understand each other.

**As a society, there are questions we need to ask ourselves. What have we learned in the past two years about who we are and what we value? What are our responsibilities towards others, particularly the most vulnerable members of society?** Our Church is asking these questions too. We don't know yet what the post pandemic Church will look like. It's being shaped right now in our families, parishes and dioceses as we emerge from the strange chapter of online liturgies and socially distanced congregations. The synodal journey announced by Pope Francis couldn't have come at a better time.

The Irish Church has begun its own Synodal Pathway, asking the question: **What does God want from the church in Ireland now?** Real consultation and listening must shape these processes. The difficult, awkward conversations are vital, including with 'those on the fringes' of the church, those who have moved away from the sacraments, those who have been hurt by the church and those who feel excluded. We cannot fall into the trap of 'not talking about' certain issues or acting as if they don't exist; this will only cause harm in the run. The Church is at a turning point, and there may be some false starts and missed opportunities but my hope is, when we look back on this time, we will see it as a new beginning when we read the 'signs of the times'. I'm conscious, as I step into the role of editor of Reality, that we are part of this process. It remains to be seen how the history books will judge the 'early 21<sup>st</sup> century history' but being at a turning point means there is hope, and that healing and change are possible.

**Triona Doherty Reality March 2022**

1. The temptations were a step for Jesus in his growing understanding of his mission and of his relationship with his Father. Can you look back at some painful experiences and acknowledge that you have grown through them, both in your knowledge of yourself, in your relationships with others and with God? Give thanks for the guidance of the Spirit of God in these times.
2. Sometimes, as with the COVID-19 pandemic, we are tested by events outside our control. What did you learn about yourself during the pandemic? Is there some way in which you grew through the experience?
3. Behind each of the temptations in the gospel story is a basic temptation to lose trust in God. Jesus resisted this because he recognised his complete dependence on his Father. How have you come to recognise your life and the whole world as gifts from God?
4. One can enter into each of the temptations singly. There may be ones that you have experienced:
  - the temptation to give priority to bodily needs and satisfactions
  - the temptation to power
  - the temptation to seek to be the centre of attention.
  - How have you grown through wrestling with these temptations?

### **Inflamed Knee Ligament Is Curbing Pope's Mobility (*Reality March 2022*)**

Pope Francis acknowledged that he is experiencing mobility problems due to an inflamed ligament in his right knee, which makes walking and going up and down stairs painful. He told he is weekly general audience on January 26<sup>th</sup> that he had been informed that the inflammation affects older people – *"I don't know why it happened to me,"* the 85 year-old pope quipped, drawing applause from the crowd. Pope Francis has long suffered from sciatica nerve pain, resulting in a pronounced limp, and he cited the new pain, explaining why he would not go down the steps of the Vatican audience hall to greet the pilgrims in the crowd. Instead, a handful of guests were brought up to the stage. The pope enjoys generally good health, though he had a section of his large intestine removed last July. He also had a part of one lung removed when he was a young man, after a respiratory infection.