



# In Principio

## The Catholic Family


Superior's Letter

Culture Eats Policy for Breakfast

The Unmaking of Ireland

A Cradle of Faith

A Youth Summer Seminar

A detail from Giotto's fresco 'The Flight into Egypt'. The scene depicts the Holy Family and two angels. On the right, the Virgin Mary is shown in profile, wearing a red tunic and a light-colored mantle with a gold halo. In the center, a pack animal, likely a mule or donkey, is being led. To the left, two young boys, identified as angels, are shown in conversation. One boy, wearing a green tunic, is pointing towards the pack animal, while the other, in a red tunic, looks on. The background features a landscape with a large, light-colored rock formation and a blue sky with a few trees. The overall style is characteristic of the Italian Gothic period, with clear lines and a focus on narrative clarity.

Giotto's depiction of the Flight into Egypt with St Joseph leading the Holy Family. Our Lord sanctified the family by living thirty years of his life in a family environment. The family is not only the cornerstone of society, but is also crucial for the development of the spiritual life within that society.





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Gina Connolly

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# In Principio

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# Letter from the Superior

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Rev. Fr. Robert Brucciani, SSPX GBIS District Superior

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My dear faithful

Divine Providence has so arranged things that the “District of Great Britain & Ireland” finds itself constituted once more. “For better or worse?” you might ask! Well, perhaps we should turn to Romans 8:28 : And we know that to them that love God, all things work together unto good, to such as, according to his purpose, are called to be saints.

We bid farewell to the indefatigable Rev. Fr. Griego who edified, energised (and entertained) the entire apostolate of Ireland for the last four years, and we welcome the Rev. Fr. Patrick Abbet who, wide-eyed and fresh from fourteen years as a seminary professor, becomes the new prior of Dun Laoghaire. May they both be blessed in their new posts. May I be blessed too as the one answerable for making the Society in Ireland

achieve its purpose!

## The Society’s purpose

The Society’s purpose, as you know, is “the priesthood and all that pertains to it” (Statutes II.1). Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre founded the Society with this end because he saw the restoration of the priesthood as the most effective remedy to the unprecedented crisis of doctrine, liturgy and morals that afflicts Holy Mother the Church in our time.

The primary work of the Society is to form priests in our own seminaries. We now have six seminaries on four continents with about 250 seminarians. The “all that pertains to it” part of the declared purpose has, over the last 50 years, developed into an entire infrastructure of Catholic life: chapels, priories, parishes, schools,





universities, mission stations, retreat houses, retirement homes, publishing houses, and every manner of electronic media. This complex and extensive infrastructure, however, risks distracting the Society from its primary work of forming priests, but, such is the state of the Church, that, without such infrastructure, there would be few young men fit to enter our seminaries in the first place.

In effect, the Society is supplying for the moral absence of the official infrastructure of the Church. It struggles and it risks overstretching itself. Its survival and success depends on many things: ultimately God's grace, but, mediately, it depends upon the prudence of its superiors, the sacrifices of its members, ...and the families of its faithful!

## The family

The present edition of *In Principio* focuses on the family because, as an institution, it is under sustained attack from the forces of darkness in the world. The Prince of Darkness has a burning hatred for all that is in the image of God, all that is ordered to God and all

that leads souls to God; and, after the priesthood, the family is at the top of his list.

## Image of God

The family is in the image of God by being an image of the Blessed Trinity. Aristotle defines generation as “the origin, from a conjoined living principle, of a living being with a like nature”. And so, as the Father generates the Son, the spouses – who are a conjoined living principle – generate their offspring. Also, as the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son by an act of love, children proceed from their parents as the personified act of their love.

### Ordered to God

The family is ordered to God not only as the foundation of society which is ordered to God, but also as a domestic church – an assembly of the faithful with Christ at its head.

## Leading to God

The family leads souls to God by fulfilling the ends of the sacred bond of marriage which is the procreation and education of children for heaven.

## War against the family

The forces of darkness do battle against the family by attempting to smash the bonds that make the family and bind it together. Contraception destroys fruitful, self-sacrificing love within the family, infidelity inflicts grievous wounds upon it and divorce all but destroys it. Immodesty and promiscuity are the worst preparation for family life and religious ignorance renders it empty and supernaturally sterile. Unnatural relationships are a total negation of the family, but worst of all is abortion - this is hatred of God by the destruction of His most beautiful and innocent gift to the family. This sin is rendered more horrible still because it is held up as a right or a lifestyle choice or even healthcare.

My dear faithful, we live in a society where the forces of darkness reign supreme in the state and have even infiltrated the Church. The silence of official hierarchy of the Church in the face of the recent referenda on unnatural unions and abortion in Ireland, for example, are an historic and worldwide scandal. They have cooperated in sin.

## The fightback

The fight is not lost, however, for we, by the mystery of Providence, have all we need to make our families to be the foundations of a new Christendom. We have priests with supernatural power over the Corporal and Mystical Body of Christ; with power to teach, to govern and to sanctify the faithful; and we have seminarians who are waiting to swell their ranks. In fact, in Ireland we have five priests and five seminarians: the seminarian to priest ratio is 1 to 1 which is the highest in the world! It is a sign of, and the fruit of, self-sacrificing love in our families.

From my recent visits, I also see that Catholic Action is vibrant in Ireland too. Not only is it a necessary reaction to the horror inflicted upon this once - holy isle, it is a stimulus to a lively faith, a fervent hope and a burning charity by which future priests, religious, husbands and wives are formed in the image of God, ordered to God and are useful to God.





The Lefebvre family in 1910. A young Marcel is pictured on the far left.

Let us beg the grace from Mary our Mother that we may indeed love God through our families in these dark times, so that all things work unto good – as indeed they will for is this not the Island of Saints?

God bless you all.

In Jesu et Maria,  
Rev. Robert Brucciani  
District Superior

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# Culture Eats Policy for Breakfast

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By Fr David Sherry

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‘Culture eats policy for breakfast’ is a saying in the business world. What the saying means is that it doesn’t matter whether what you say is right or wrong, allowed or not allowed, what really matters is what actually goes on, what is actually done, and what you actually accept or tolerate. For example, if your policy at work is that pilfering stock is not allowed, but in fact, many do it without consequence, then the policy is dead, it has been eaten for breakfast. The children of the world are wise in their generation. Their lesson is an important one in bringing up children. All Catholic families have a policy that what is sinful is bad. But what is the culture? If Mum and Dad actually tolerate repeated deliberate sin (they sometimes rightfully turn a blind eye to weakness), the children learn that the policy is dead. If it is culturally acceptable to watch bad movies, then the policy to not

place oneself in an occasion of sin has been eaten for breakfast. That is why parents must have a few basic rules that they follow themselves and set an example, and that they enforce with their children, including the adolescent ones.

One of these basic rules is the saying of St Joan of Arc: ‘Messire Dieu, premier servi’ (‘My Lord God, the first served’). God and His Honour come first. A corollary or second basic rule is: it is never okay to deliberately commit sin. ‘Obvious’, you might say, but do we really make it central to the family culture? The ambient culture is soaked in sin, and some Catholic parents mistakenly allow their children to become infected. They reason (falsely) that I cannot have my children stand out and be seen as different from others. Rather, they should think things for themselves based on common sense



and the Faith. Let's take a practical example: movies and television programmes. Some parents allow their children to watch bad movies or television programmes simply because the movies are the latest blockbuster or because everyone else is doing it.

Firstly, we have to think. Whenever deciding to do or not to do something, we should always first look at the thing in itself. If it is bad in itself, we must not do it at all in any circumstance. If it is good in itself, then, before saying we can do it, we need to consider the circumstances. An example would be: should I tell a lie in order to gain a pay rise at work? Telling a lie is bad in itself. I cannot do it for any reason. There is no need to consider the fact that it will bring me more money because it doesn't make any difference. Another example would be: being an alcoholic, can I go to a bar? Going to a bar is not evil in itself so, all things being equal, I could go. Now I need to look at the circumstances: I'm an alcoholic. For me, it would be an occasion of sin to go to a bar.

So, applied to movies, firstly, we



should distinguish between good movies and bad movies. For this, we need to apply the same principle that we apply to all works of art or entertainment to movies, television programmes, theatre, video games, books, music and so on. Movies are in themselves indifferent unless there is something morally wrong with them. Generally, there are three things that can make a movie (or video game or book) morally wrong. They are morally bad if they glorify sin, if they are an occasion of sin or if they are graphically violent.

a) Glorifying sin means that the message of the movie or programme is that sin is good or at least desirable and beneficial. In Ireland in the 1970s and 1980s, divorce was unknown, and adultery and fornication were socially unacceptable. Then, the American soaps *Dallas* and *Dynasty* were broadcast to Irish homes, the guard dogs didn't bark and a lie was swallowed. 'Look at all these beautiful, rich people living in a beautiful country with big houses and big cars. They're committing adultery and nothing is happening to them. It can't be so bad.' Take another example, on Netflix, there

is a famous series called *Thirteen Reasons Why* in which the "heroine" commits suicide, and posthumously explains and justifies her mortal sin. These things are bad – they glorify sin. They corrupt the mind and the will, and deaden the soul.

b) Being an occasion of sin, means that the movie is actually apt to lead the person into actual sin, for example, most notably, movies that contain immodesty and impurity. I haven't watched the recent movie *Wonder Woman*, nor should I. It is an occasion of sin because the heroine is very immodestly dressed. This may not be a grave occasion of sin for women; it is for adolescent boys and men. Modesty is a protector of purity – to lose one's purity means to lose the state of grace and to be on the road to hell. Parents who do not train their children to avoid immodesty will probably have to explain on Judgment Day why their children lost their innocence and maybe – God forbid! – why they were damned.

c) Graphic violence makes a movie bad because it makes us, and in particular our imagination, used to what it should not be





used to. Our imagination does not know the difference between right and wrong nor between truth and falsehood. If you doubt that, consider horror movies. People watch them because they have the thrill of feeling scared. Although they know that the scenario is entirely fictitious, their imagination does not know and so they feel scared. Graphic violence is not theatrical violence, but rather extremely realistic bloody and gory violence.

In these three cases, it would be sinful to watch movies. Therefore, it is up to parents and educators to lay down and enforce rules in consequence. A side note: it is sometimes acceptable to watch a movie which glorifies sin – to see how the movie manipulates emotions and corrupts the truth. Our Grade 11 and 12 students and I watched

Silence, a most perverse movie. We learned how the movie-makers achieved their aim of justifying apostasy and promoting pantheism by subtle twisting and half-truths. The reason we watched it was because although it really glorifies sin, it was not a grave occasion of sin – it did not arouse the passions perversely, and any danger to the Faith was offset by the discussion with the priest afterwards. It would be wrong to watch a movie which is a grave occasion of sin for purposes of study – in fact that would be quite a good trick of the devil.

Let parents, teachers and priests remember: ‘culture eats policy for breakfast’. If something is sinful, then I cannot tolerate my children deliberately doing it. Let us pray to St Joseph and Our Lady for strength and wisdom!

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# The Unmaking of Ireland

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By Fr Leo Boyle

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It can very easily and cogently be argued that the family is at the heart of all current controversies in politics and morality, or what some have called the ‘culture wars’. The institution of the family has come under a ferocious and unrelenting attack, sustained over decades, from various quarters, aided and abetted by powerful magnates like George Soros and others in media campaigns that seem to have bottomless pockets.

A hostile media is indeed their preferred method of attack, and with the assistance of weak and spineless governments, their success is almost guaranteed. Chesterton, in defending the family in the 1930s, launched an attack on the Modernist notion of linking happiness with something called “liberty” and unhappiness with what is named “limitation”. However, he argued that the idea of perfect freedom and escape

from all limitations is a delusion. Liberty, he wrote, is merely the right to choose between one set of limitations and another. It is limitations that create all the poetry and variety of life. The wisdom of Chesterton is as counter-cultural today as it was on the day of his death in 1936.

The root cause of so many problems in a society like ours is a fundamentally flawed notion of the true understanding of what is meant by freedom. When this is accompanied with a grossly exaggerated claim to total independence, we have already begun to dig our own grave. We are committing a form of religious, cultural and political suicide. On the part of the Catholic Church this process is easily discerned through the alteration of the Faith in its once-sacred liturgy, its theology and its very soul. It is a painful reminder of our estrangement from



both nature and the supernatural, and represents the demolition of the family, the bedrock of a sane and stable society.

It is a constant refrain in liturgical prayer that ‘we may so pass through the things of time as not to lose sight of the eternal’. To put this another way, we can say that people who derive their name from Christ must reflect in their thought and actions that which is truly of Christ. The Irish nation for the greater part has lost sight of this truth. As a people, we continue to experience the most rapid decline from being – at least externally and maybe superficially – the most Christian nation to one openly and enthusiastically embracing the anti-Christian, secular humanist agenda.

This is most evident in the political class and the intelligentsia but in recent times has attained a strong foothold in the different layers of society, even among the least educated. A seismic change has occurred in the rejection of Christian values taught by the Church since post-Famine Ireland right up to the present era, culminating in the recent abortion

controversy, which indicating the irrelevance of the institutional church in our county.

One does not need to be a prophet to realise that this revolutionary change will continue to grow stronger and result in the further rejection of any Catholic approach to the great issues of life and death that remain as yet unresolved in terms of State legislation. More liberal laws will eventually be sponsored in the Dáil regarding abortion, euthanasia, gender identity, family and Catholic education in Church-run schools. It is conceivable that even religious education will come under the control of the State thereby further undermining the family’s right to be the prime educator of children.

Socrates, the learned Athenian, correctly observes that the unexamined life is scarcely worth living. Many today accept uncritically what is offered them and, like the proverbial lemmings, rush happily over the edge of the steep cliff.

Man, because of the way in which he is constituted, cannot





G.K. Chesterton 1874-1936

but pursue the truth of his being. Truth is the primary object of his intelligence just as goodness is the object of his will. In our time, there is incredible chaos and confusion in relation to these fundamental concepts. How far removed we are now from these essential truths because of the influence of dangerous philosophies and radically novel educational practices in our schools. Religion is even taught by people who do not believe or are even lapsed from the Faith. The principles of John Dewey are everywhere present in our educational system.

During the Second World War, Pope Pius XII remarked that post-war man would be more changed than the map of post-war

Europe. In Irish society, we have become the new breed of men he foresaw. We are men who have no need of God or His antiquated laws governing life and family. We have come of age and are fully human without Him or His Church. At best He is problematical, at worst He is a tyrant and we will be rid of Him. Yes, we spoke once of the problem in philosophy now we speak of God as a problem.

Sad to say this malaise is reflected in our New Catechetical approach to religion and it has borne its pernicious fruit in an ignorance of religious truth that is nothing short of alarming. No wonder the young are an easy prey to anti-Christian forces. The unseemly rejoicing at Dublin Castle



in the presence of the leader of the country, the exultant cheering at the prospect of the future slaughter of the innocent, is a sign of the times and the failure of religious education.

We need schools for un-learning as Fulton Sheen opined many decades ago. It is no wonder that we are powerless to fight anti-family measures that will wreak havoc on our nation. The young have voted no to life, and have rejected Catholic teaching on marriage and contraception, and they are the future of the nation. They are the leaders of tomorrow.

In abandoning the institution of the Church, as a large majority undoubtedly has, have they fully rejected God and His Christ? I am afraid it is a difficult question to answer. Only time will tell. However, the signs are ominous. One has only to consult the statistics on baptisms, marriages and confirmations. It does not make for pleasant reading and the demise of Christianity is virtually assured but for Divine intervention.

In his *An Intelligent Person's*

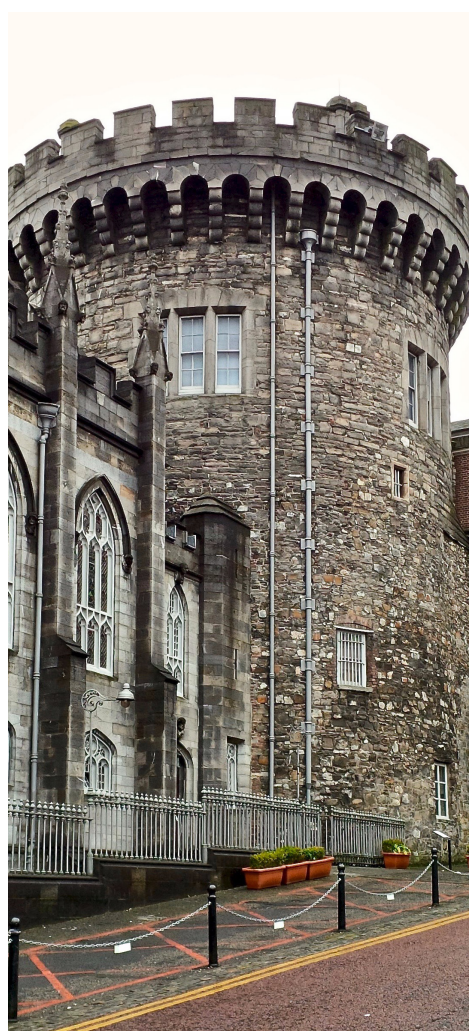
*Guide to Modern Ireland*, John Watters suggests that Modern Ireland, with the stress on modern, is indeed a place; it is, however, also more than that. It is a state of mind, an ideological construct and also a security blanket to protect from the Old Ireland. We are dealing with a New Ireland, not one that is in any sense recognisable. Waters has discerned something here which has escaped the intention of most if not all of the bishops of Ireland. Ireland has changed. A new social order without reference to Christ is being formed. The gestation period of this secular relativistic organism, this reincarnation of the Medusa, is almost at hand. This soon to be fully fledged new state, founded on the basis of a grotesque, as already mentioned, misunderstanding of the notion of freedom, has promoted and legitimised everything that stands in the way of Christianity.

We modern Irish, with notable exceptions still adhering to the truths of Divine Faith, are heavily influenced – not by the founder of Christianity – but by the unholy trinity of Marx, Freud and Darwin, as well as most

recently by the self-proclaimed Brights: Harris, Dawkins, Dennett and the late Christopher Hitchens. We are in no particular way overawed by the order and beauty to be found in nature but are more and more taken up with the disorder and the chaos within ourselves. The order of the day is self-esteem, self-analysis, introspection, a radical subjectivist affirmation of a scarred disintegrating personality. These prevailing characteristics are the debilitating symptoms of the disease classified as the narcissistic age.

Like so many other formerly Catholic European nations, we have turned our backs on Christ. We have passed from the realm of being in the ontological order – the most fundamental of all concepts – to the prison-cell of modern epistemology where we are more preoccupied with the processes of the mind than the acquisition of knowledge. The objective is no longer of primary concern. The subjective, the relative, commands the field. We are no longer realists in the sense of Aristotle or Aquinas, but pure Kantians, idealists. This radically affects our ability to see reality for

what it is and conforms our minds to it. It has to be admitted that this makes discussion, argument, genuine dialogue and honest persuasion of the truth very difficult,



Crowds celebrated outside Dublin Castle after the referendum result in May 2018



if not impossible.

Professor Alan Bloom in his work *The Closing of the American Mind* categorically affirms:

There is one thing a professor can be absolutely certain of: almost every student entering the university believes or says he believes that truth is relative. If this belief is put to the test one can count on the student's reaction: they will be uncomprehending. That anyone should regard the proposition as not self-evident astonishes them as though he was calling into question  $2 + 2 = 4$ .

The relativity of truth, the rejection of absolute truth, or of any truth applicable universally in every situation is not just a theoretical insight for the contemporary Irish but a moral postulate, a categorical imperative. This is now the *sine qua non* condition of a free democratic society where the needs of the individual person must be placed above the common good. Hence, the right to abortion, the right to gender change, etc. In this apparently irreversible climate, one can see how anti-family laws become desirable,

acceptable, worthy of vigorous promotion and of eventual legalisation through the constant pressure campaign resting upon individual rights, subjective needs, independence and the freedom to be whoever you want to be, the sacrosanct respect for differences however bizarre, transient or unnatural. The verse of Yeats comes to mind:

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer,  
Things fall apart, the centre cannot hold,  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.*

With the Renaissance and the assertion of the primacy of Reason, and the Reformation founded on the principle of private judgement, the Church has been in retreat from the modern world and a prey to the various forms



of Naturalism and Rationalism which have even penetrated into her bosom. In all of this we find the beginning of an explanation for our various conflicts with the established order and the increasingly minority position in which we find ourselves. We are outsiders who are considered dangerous and an obstacle to the post-Christian world that is considered the future. All vestiges of Christianity and its teachings are to be repudiated in the construction of the brave new world. The Church herself is cooperating in this strange new venture.

In 1967, at the University of Toronto, the celebrated Jesuit Henri de Lubac, in an important address, offered an interesting insight into what was happening in the Catholic world:

It is clear that the Church is facing a grave crisis. Under the name of the New Church, the Postconciliar Church, a different Church from that of Jesus Christ is now trying to establish itself; an anthropocentric society threatened with immanentist apostasy which is allowing itself to be swept along in a movement of gen-

eral abdication under the pretext of general renewal, ecumenism or adaptation.

Or perhaps an even deeper and more perceptive insight is afforded us in consulting the life and times of one Alfred Loisy, if we are to better understand precisely what is happening in our time.

But I do not think there is great hope to be nourished for Catholicism, nor that anything can be attempted under the Catholic label – if humanity is one day to arrive at a kind of religious unity it will not be probably in the profession of one of the actually existing religions but in the universal consciousness of human dignity, human right. Of human solidarity in the most exalted meaning of these words, that is to say, in a new ideal which will not be imposed from without like the revelation of an absolute personality, superior to the world but which will be the consciousness of a humanity, at last able to lead itself and see God face to face as is related of Moses.

That text of Loisy deserves word by word analysis for it is truly chilling and casts a blinding

light upon so much of the thinking of our century. It is the link between the world of atheistic humanism and the ever-evolving world of a New Catholicism close to apostasy. Here we have the key that unlocks the door to so much aberrant thinking that gives rise to the grotesque parody of God and man. Man bereft of grace will turn, and left to his own devices, will turn against man. He will construct a new world – a world unfolding before our eyes – a world built upon the ruins of the old to the detriment of his fellow man – man viewed as a commodity, man the expendable, man the experiment.

I suppose the temptation to despair is great but this is not, nor ever can be, a part of Christian vocabulary. Over one hundred years ago, Chesterton foresaw all of this. In what is surely his greatest poem ‘The Ballad of the White Horse’ we can see an allegory of our time. Through the plight of King Alfred, whose Christian kingdom was ravaged and pillaged by the Danes, we see our Christian world in mortal peril. In the first book of the Ballad, Alfred pleadingly asks the Holy Virgin if he



will ever succeed in recovering his home and country. In answer to his prayer, he receives a somewhat cryptic reply that includes two of the most famous stanzas of the poem:

*I tell you naught for your comfort  
Yea, naught for your desire  
Save that the sky grows darker*

*yet*

*And the sea rises higher  
Night shall be trice over you,  
And heaven an iron cope  
Do you have joy without a cause  
Yea, faith without a hope*

Our Lady leads us to a place She understands only too well – the foot of the cross. She does not in any way soften its bitter blow but only there is hope assured, something more profound than consolation, enduring hope despite the pain and affliction, rejoicing like all the martyrs in the infinite goodness of God. For those who bravely bear the cross in our time, dark and evil though the hour appears to be, this great trial will always point to an infinitely greater God who knows how to produce good from

evil. We never lose heart.

But you and all the kind of Christ  
Are ignorant and brave  
And you have wars you hardly win  
And souls you hardly save  
That though you hunt the Christian man  
Like a hare on the hillside  
The hare has still more heart to run  
Than you have heart to ride  
That though all the lances split on you  
All swords be heaved in vain  
We have more lust again to lose  
Than you to win again

After the cross the light of the Resurrection dawns; we are only seemingly defeated. In the cause of Christ we never lose.



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# Youth Seminar

St Patrick's Academy, Westport

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By Brigid Walsh

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From 24–29 June, a group of twenty committed young Catholics gathered at St Patrick's Academy in Co. Mayo for a week-long seminar on the theme: 'Living the Faith in Today's World'. The week involved a broad series of conferences given by the group's chaplain, Fr Ockerse, and several of the group's members regarding the crisis in society, its root causes, the crisis in the Church and some effective responses to the crisis. Two Dominican teaching sisters from France, Mère Marie Catherine and Mère Marie de l'Incarnation, also spent two days with the group, delivering talks on the religious life, marriage, motherhood and the importance of Catholic education. The group benefited from daily Mass, Rosary and Compline.

## Monday 24 June

The seminar began on Monday with a brief introductory talk by Fr Ockerse, outlining the purpose of

the week as an invaluable support to assist the group's members to remain faithful to their Faith in an increasingly anti-Catholic world. This was followed by a short silent recollection led by the chaplain, encouraging each one to reflect on the fundamental truths of the Faith, our faithfulness to these truths, and to pray for God's help and support in order to grow in grace and mature both spiritually and intellectually to become truly living members of the Mystical Body of Christ thereby becoming fit to work for the conversion of others. Fr Ockerse also emphasised the importance of developing both the intellectual and spiritual life, particularly through the daily practice of mental prayer.

## Tuesday 25 June

On Tuesday a series of key conferences on the crisis in society and the Church began. In the morning, Brian Ó Caithnia delivered an interesting assessment on the



decline of modern Irish society, with a particular emphasis on the rise of atheism and its links to the growing culture of death and specifically the abortion referendum defeat. This was followed later by a conference by Brigid Walsh on the root causes of this crisis, which can be traced back to a progressive abandonment of reality-based, God-centred Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy in favour of man-centred, subjectivist modern thought. The last conference of the day was given by Peadar Walsh, and discussed liberalism as one of the chief causes of the crisis in the Church, with a particular focus on the religious

liberty of Vatican II. Padraig Beglin delivered a short hot topic on the question of modern music, looking at the different components of music and analysing how they can be combined to produce music which is morally uplifting or downgrading. Activities of the day included a walk to a nearby lake in the afternoon, and highly competitive games of volleyball and dodgeball in the evening.

#### Wednesday 26 June

Wednesday brought with it glorious sunshine, and after Holy Mass and breakfast the group departed for Achill to cycle the Great Western Greenway. The group took in





the spectacular and varied scenery of rugged mountains, fields and coastal views along the route and stopped for a picnic lunch overlooking Clew Bay, finishing with a well-deserved ice cream in Newport town. Upon our return to the Academy, Charles Byrne delivered a very interesting hot topic on the New Mass, looking particularly at its roots in the liturgical movement and Vatican

II's Sacrosanctum Concilium. The important doctrinal differences existing between the SSPX and (former) Ecclesia Dei communities were also highlighted. This was followed by an enlightening hot topic on technology and social media by Dominic Sherry, where he explained the hidden risks and pitfalls

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# Cradle of Faith

## Family of St Thérèse of Lisieux

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By Gina Connolly

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*My parents always seemed to me to be saints. We were filled with respect and admiration for them. Sometimes I asked myself if there could be others like them on earth. I never saw any such around me.<sup>1</sup>*

Mother Agnes of Jesus  
(Pauline Martin)

On July 13 1958, Louis Martin, watchmaker and jeweller of Alençon in northern France, married Zélie Guérin, lacemaker and soldier's daughter. Together they would found the family that would give to the world and to God, one of the greatest saints of modern times.

Who were these 'incomparable'<sup>2</sup> parents, whose deep faith and unswerving submission to the will of God earned them the gift of five religious vocations amongst their children and the joy of knowing that their other four children (all of whom had died after baptism and before reaching the age of

reason) had already reached their celestial home? To attempt to portray, in succinct form, the lives of the parents of St Thérèse of Lisieux is not an easy task. It is to attempt a portrait of faith, a portrait of that supernatural faith which fixes its eyes wholly and without distraction on the life of the world to come.

In their youth, both parents had wished to enter the Religious Life but God had decided otherwise. Perhaps it was this ardent desire for the Religious Life which led to their initial decision to make of their marriage a purely fraternal union and to live as virgins in the married state. However, ten months after their marriage, the wise intervention of a confessor would mark a turning point in the relationship of this holy couple. Their plan for their marriage would now broaden and expand. Thenceforth, they would sanctify themselves 'in and by marriage'.<sup>3</sup>



They would concentrate all their energy on their familial responsibility and the focus of their earthly joy would be in raising sons and daughters for Heaven.<sup>4</sup> Zélie later explained this newfound focus in a letter to her daughter Pauline, with the frankness and sincerity which characterises all her correspondence:

When we had our children, our ideas changed somewhat. Thenceforward we lived only for them; they made all our happiness and we would never have found it save in them. In fact, nothing any longer cost us anything; the world was no longer a burden to us. As for me, my children were my great compensation, so that I wished to have many in order to bring them up for Heaven.<sup>5</sup>

Louis and Zélie agreed that all the children, whether boys or girls, should have “Marie” as their first baptismal name. Between 1860 and 1864, four girls were born: Marie-Louise, Marie-Pauline, Marie-Léonie and Marie-Hélène (who was to die at just five years of age). Then in September 1866, there arrived the first of two boys; little Marie-Joseph Louis was born.

He would not spend five months on this earth. After his death, a grief-stricken but resigned Mme Martin turned to St Joseph to beg him to intercede for her and to obtain for her the grace of conceiving the child for whom she longed. On December 19th 1867, Marie-Joseph Jean Baptiste was born but death was to strike again. In just over eight months, he would follow his brother to their heavenly home. ‘My dear little Joseph died in my arms at 7o’clock this morning’, writes Zélie, ‘I was alone with him. He had a night of cruel suffering, and I begged for his deliverance with tears’.<sup>6</sup>

Her words are a moving testimony to the deepest sufferings of a mother’s heart – and God now ordained that this mother would suffer still more. Her father’s death some weeks later and her sister’s serious illness would cause her further anxiety and grief. Yet in the midst of seemingly unbearable sufferings, her submission to the will of God was so complete that she could say to her husband, while awaiting the birth of their fifth daughter, Marie-Céline: ‘if God wills once more to take this one from me, I pray that it may not die



unbaptized, so that at least I may have the comfort of three little angels in Heaven'.<sup>7</sup>

With a deep faith and an unshakable trust in God's Providence, the two parents continued forward amidst their grief, their eyes firmly set on the attainment of that goal toward which the whole of their married life was ordered. They understood and accepted that there is no avoiding the Cross: 'it is certain that unvarying prosperity draws men away from God. Never does he lead his chosen by that road; they must first pass through the crucible of suffering in order to be purified'.<sup>8</sup>

Daily Mass, devotions, visits to the Blessed Sacrament and family prayer were all staples of family life in the Martin household, where the laws of fast and abstinence were also strictly observed. The faith of the father is best summarised by that fifth daughter Céline, who, born in 1869, would live to become her parents' biographer:

Everything which referred to Our Lord touched him deeply. One Christmas Day towards the

end of his life he said to Sr Agnes [Pauline Martin] at the Carmel parlour: "A little Child! A Babe! Ah! How can a person not be drawn to love the good God who so annihilated Himself! A Babe is so lovely!"<sup>9</sup>

"He would never tolerate" writes Céline, "a careless appearance, or any lack of modesty in dress. We should not have dared, in his presence, to have had short-sleeved dresses, only just to the elbow. What would he say of the world today? All vulgar or slang words were rigidly forbidden."<sup>10</sup>

Yet this was the father of whom Thérèse could say in her autobiography: 'Papa's affectionate heart seemed truly endowed with a mother's love'.<sup>11</sup> He was not strict in an autocratic sense, 'without being severe, he raised his children in fidelity to all their duties'.<sup>12</sup> Céline notes that he often recited that poem of Lamartine:

Man! Time is nothing for an immortal being.  
Unfortunate he who tries to store it up.  
Foolish he who weeps for it.  
Time is your sailing-ship and not your home.<sup>13</sup>



### Louis and Zélie Martin

And, indeed, the brevity of life was cruelly underlined twice more for this saintly family, in the deaths of two more of their children. On February 22 1870, without warning and without previous illness, little Marie-Hélène went to meet her Maker. No more than eight months later, in October 1870, a tiny Marie-Thérèse-Mélanie died, starved to death through the neglect of her nurse. The family was being prepared through immeasurable suffering for the birth of the “great saint” it so greatly desired. Again, the good parents weathered the storm, holding fast to their conviction that God does not give us more than we can bear. Besides, to have little ones in Heaven was for

them a true consolation and joy. ‘Four of my children are already well provided for’, Zélie would write, ‘and the others, yes, the others will also enter into the heavenly kingdom, laden with more merits, since they will have fought longer’.<sup>14</sup>

On Thursday, 2 January 1873, at half-past eleven in the evening, Marie-Françoise-Thérèse, the future St Thérèse of Lisieux, was welcomed into the arms of her loving family. Her godmother was her oldest sister Marie-Louise, who was then almost thirteen. ‘Ah’, said Cardinal Mercier in speaking of the Saint, ‘how glad I am to know that she [Thérèse] is the recompense of an exemplary family. We must nev-

er weary of repeating that everywhere'.<sup>15</sup>

“My father and mother”, declared Pauline, in the Process of Beatification, “possessed a profound faith. When we heard them talking together of eternity we were led, young as we were, to look upon the things of the world as pure vanity.”<sup>16</sup>

Thérèse was the last of the Martins’ nine children and their greatest joy. ‘How glad I am to have her’, exclaimed Mme Martin, ‘I believe I love her more than all the others, doubtless because she is the youngest’. She was a darling child, gifted with an intelligence beyond her years, sensitive and precocious, tender and easily moved. Without those ‘incomparable’ parents she might have been spoilt; in their loving and holy hands she became a great Saint.

The untimely death of Zélie Martin, while Thérèse was still but four years old, was to open a new chapter in the lives of the Martin family. It would be left now to Louis – after a move to Lisieux to be closer to his brother-in-law and his wife – to complete, with the guid-

ance of God, what their marriage had begun. He gave his remaining children to God, welcoming each vocation as it was revealed to him with the selflessness which marked the family from the beginning. It was Céline who would watch over him to the last, until she too, the companion of his latter days, was freed by his death to follow her sisters into the Carmel she so earnestly desired.

The marriage of Zélie Guérin and Louis Martin was gifted with four Carmelite sisters and a Visitation nun. Over their graves are inscribed the words of their daughter Saint: ‘God gave me a mother and father more worthy of heaven than of earth’. There is no more fitting tribute.

## Endnotes

1. Deposition by Mother Agnes of Jesus at the Process of Beatification of her sister Thérèse. In Piat, S.-J. 1994. *The Story of a Family: The Home of St. Therese of Lisieux*. Tan Books, p. 179.
2. Letter of His Excellency, Monsignor Picaut, Bishop of Bayeux and Lisieux to Fr Stéphane-Joseph Piat., 6 April 1945
3. Piat, *Story of a Family*, p. 48.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 48
5. ‘Letter of Zélie Martin to her brother Isidore Guérin, Nov. 1, 1868
6. ‘Letter of Zélie Martin to her brother Isidore Guérin, July 1872
7. ‘Letter of Zélie Martin to her brother Isidore Guérin’, 1 Nov. 1868.
8. ‘Letter of Zélie Martin to her brother Isidore Guérin’, July 1872.
9. Martin, Céline, 2005. *Father of the Little Flower*. Tan Books, p. 7.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
13. *Ibid.*
14. ‘Letter of Mme Martin to Pauline’, 4 Mar. 1877.
15. Piat, Stéphane—Joseph, O.F.M. “The Story of a Family”, Preface.
16. Piat, Stéphane—Joseph, O.F.M. “The Story of a Family”, *Ibid.*, p. 142.







St Declan's Way Pilgrimage (this page); parish barbecue in Cork (opposite top); Eucharistic Crusade camps (below).





# Calendar of Events

## October

5-6	Young Adult Outing (North)
10	Homeschool Day (Athlone)
12	Hill of Slane Pilgrimage
26	Eucharistic Crusade National Outing
27	Feast of Christ the King

## November

1	Feast of All Saints
2	National Young Adult Study Session
3	All Saints Party (Athlone & Cork)
9	ACSS Outing (Athlone)
14	Homeschool Day (Athlone)
16-17	Young Adult Outing (Athlone)

## December

8	Feast of the Immaculate Conception (Holyday)
12	Homeschool Day - Athlone



Confirmations in Dun Laoghaire on 22 July 2019



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# Priestly Society of Saint Pius X in Ireland

## **DUBLIN St. John the Evangelist Church**

1 Upper Mounttown Road Dún Laoghaire,  
Co. Dublin A96 P793  
T: (01) 284 2206

## **Saint Pius X House (District House)**

12 Tivoli Terrace S, Dún Laoghaire  
Co. Dublin A96 KV65  
T: (01) 284 2206

Resident:

Rev. Fr. Vicente Griego (Superior)  
Rev. Fr. Francis Gallagher  
Rev. Fr. Marcel Ockerse

## **ATHLONE Corpus Christi Church**

Connaught Gardens, Athlone  
Co. Westmeath N37 E671  
T: 090 643 3703

## **Saint Joseph's House**

Court Devenish House, Athlone,  
Co. Westmeath N37 NF77  
T: 090 643 3703

Resident:

Rev. Fr. Leo Boyle  
Rev. Fr. Patrick Kimball

## **BELFAST Saint Pius V Chapel**

78 Andersonstown Road Belfast, Co. Antrim  
BT11 9AN  
T: (028) 9445 3654

## **CORK Our Lady of the Rosary Church**

Shanakiel Road Sunday's Well,  
Co. Cork T23 T389  
T: (090) 643 3703

## **NEWRY Our Lady of Knock Chapel**

Unit 5 Richbrook Business Park, Mill Road, Bessbrook,  
Newry, Co. Down BT35 7DT  
T: (048) 30 825730



Society of Saint Pius X



S S P X

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