

Issue No. 33



Newsletter

May 2021

Living with Covid-19.

Br Rupert O Sullivan Presentation Brother

Covid-19 continues to be a challenging and worrying time for people. It is a time of trial, but also a time of grace. Among the bearers of grace are our front-line workers, especially our medical personnel. One of the most human aspects of the pandemic is the way in which it has stirred our gratitude for our healthcare workers, especially those who are caring so well for us in our communities.

When the lock-down happened in March 2020, our community of six Brothers prepared for what we imagined would be short-lived but how wrong we were. We put a daily schedule in place to support one another during the pandemic. Avoiding unnecessary stressors is helpful. The daily diet of news updates and social media can be a draining experience. Engaging in more life-giving activities decrease stress. Healthy-eating, exercise, connecting with friends and family where possible, up skilling, physical activity, and maintaining a daily rhythm is important.

Morning Prayer is followed by breakfast. Some tune into morning mass, while others attend to their own personal or community responsibilities. I believe prayer and meditation often reverse the effects of stress, something we all have in common. Meditation can be a natural form of relaxation, and all prayer reminds us of the meaning of life and our intimate connection to God and others.

In the afternoons, there is the option of a walk in the park or attending to our garden. In the evening, we gather again for prayer, followed by time for evening meal. Sometimes, there is a zoom meeting to attend to. Before retiring, there is an opportunity for reading, listening to music, or catching up on the news of the day. Personally, I like consistency and as we settled into a new normal just like everyone else there were highs, lows, laughs, arguments, time to relax and time to be together.

Here in Killarney, our community lives in the midst of nature. We are blessed with a spacious garden to the rear of our residence with a green-house to boot. Not everyone is so lucky. The garden and green-house demand much attention, especially during the Summer months; there is grass to be cut, hedges to be trimmed and plants to be attended to, not to speak of green fingers for the fruits and vegetables, all organic of course!

How nature thrives in the absence of human activity! How ironic! Creation begins to heal itself! It is not a co-incidence that Pope Francis launched a year-long celebration to mark the fifth anniversary of his environmental encyclical, 'Laudato Si,' noting that its message was as prophetic for this time as it was in 2015. Apparently, Pope Francis once called the encyclical his, 'love letter to the earth'. As I reflected on this beautiful encyclical again, I believe that human exploitation of the natural world and the pandemic are inextricably linked. More recently, Pope Francis noted too while writing his latest encyclical "Fratelli tutti", covid-19 erupted exposing other viruses and false securities of our world. He states, we cannot go back to the world the way it was prior to the pandemic. This is our chance to build a new society based on loving our neighbour and in "Fratelli tutti", he outlines his vision for what that society might look like. He points to five takeaways for his vision particularly relevant for us religious in our time.

Personally, I enjoy the opportunity to see and experience things in a different way. I realise it is not the same for everybody. I was familiar with Skype before the pandemic, but now it's zoom and I feel I am zoomed out with virtual meetings. While it is a very useful facility, nothing can replace the human, social interaction with one another, family and friends. We have to ease ourselves into the new reality with compassion for ourselves, our families and for one another in these strange times. This is a marathon, not a sprint, and if covid-19 is teaching us anything, it's about the need to be kinder to ourselves and how we live our lives in the future. We need to take things at a slower pace, if possible. We are here, we are healthy, we are grateful, and being busy every hour of every day is not necessarily something to be proud of.

I like the following blessing by John O'Donohue from his book of blessings, 'to bless the space between us:'

*This is the time to be slow,
Lie low to the wall
Until the bitter weather passes.*

*Try, as best you can, not to let
The wire brush of doubt
Scrape from your heart
All sense of yourself
And your hesitant light,*

*If you remain generous,
Time will come good;
And you will find your feet
Again on fresh pastures of promise
Where the air will be kind
And blushed with the beginning.
Book of blessings – John O'Donohue*



Please continue to promote this among your wider contacts and networks.
The website is <https://www.vocation-music-award.com/uk/>

Please pray for this project.



www.vocationsireland.com/

AGM 2021 by Br Colm O Mahony OSA

Vocations Ireland had its Annual General Meeting on April 14th using the modern convenience of “zoom”; which has become an integral part of many of our lives in this current pandemic. While most of us still prefer a face-to-face encounter, ‘Zoom’ does allow us at least the opportunity to come together in larger numbers and discuss, share and catch up with each other. Some 35 religious signed up for the AGM representing both male and female congregations and Orders, apostolic, missionary and contemplative. The AGM began with Margaret Cartwright presenting her report on the activities of Vocation Ireland over the past year. While it may have seemed that not much was happening, Margaret and the other members of the Executive were still working away behind the scenes maintaining contacts, organising conferences and talks, supporting Vocation Directors and much much more. There continues to be wonderful collaboration between Vocation Ireland and our UK and American counterparts and this has opened up many of our conferences to a much wider audience. After Margaret concluded her presentation Fr Malachy presented Vocation Ireland’s financial situation which thankfully remains healthy. There have been huge challenges for most congregations and Orders over the past 12 to 15 months and Vocations Ireland is extremely thankful for the level of support it still receives from our members. These pressures will continue as we journey through the last stages of covid-19 and its aftermath. Other challenges will also need to be addressed such as the decline in membership, congregations amalgamating communities and even regions and the withdrawal of some groups from Ireland.

There was only one specific item on the AGM Agenda that needed approval by the members present and that was to formally agree that Vocations Ireland would dis-continue as a separate charity and instead come under the charitable status of AMRI. What does this mean in a practical way for Vocations Ireland, our members and our missions to promote Vocations to the Religious Life in Ireland? In reality it means very little change. Two charities cannot share the same charity number so it was felt it would be easier for Vocations Ireland to wind down as a distinct charitable entity. We would now become a “desk” within AMRI fulfilling the same mission as before but with shared offices and resources. All our finances are ring fenced for vocation work and we will maintain our logo and identity. What will benefit us is that we are now collaborating directly with leadership in our various congregations and Orders. We will have a voice on the AMRI Executive and be able to promote and challenge policy around vocations in Ireland. We will have specific office space and facilities to host meetings, etc. The proposal was accepted unanimously with most agreeing it was best for us to consolidate our work with each other in this new and dynamic way while fulfilling the Pope’s call for greater collaboration among the religious to work together not just on Vocations but on other important topics as well. Watch this space for new projects, conferences, supports and as always please let us know your thoughts on Vocation promotion, possible speakers, conference topics, etc.

Come...share our stories...



The Cork Regional Group of Vocations Ireland are running a series of Congregations sharing their Foundation Stories on Zoom. There are currently 10 congregations signed up – and they will share two congregations’ stories every second Wednesday for May, June and July. For more information to join in the zoom or to get involved in sharing your congregation story - email eavopost@gmail.com

REGIONAL GROUPS: Moving forward

I am conscious that we have Regional groups in Cork, Dublin and the West of Ireland. This has always been a difficulty for me as I do not feel the entire membership are represented at Regional level. It was difficult to form regions that would cover all the geographical areas of Vocations Ireland. However now with the arrival of Zoom I think we have more of a possibility. I will work with the Executive to draw up a plan where geographical areas could meet through zoom.

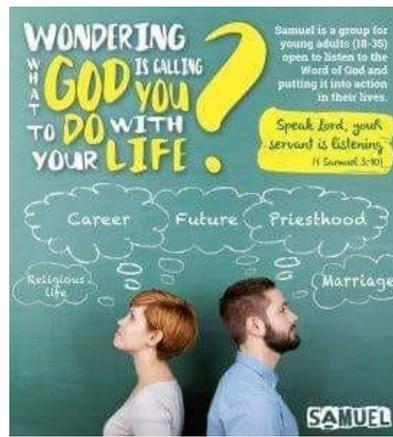
Some regions would prefer that we keep the regional meetings for nourishment, and support of Vocation directors while others like to use it to encourage members to become involved in Vocation promotion projects.

We plan on trialing a Vocation Promotion Project group. The purpose of this group would be to look at projects such as Vocation Café's, visiting schools on zoom, vocation music projects, Samuel groups and other possible projects. This group would meet 3 or 4 times per year to review current projects and consider new projects and see who is interested in getting involved in the projects. This will give vocation directors the opportunity to work together and maybe not feel so alone. With this in mind I will send out an invite to everyone in September to attend an open meeting on zoom to explore this further.

Spring Conference

Over 65 people participated and the feedback was excellent. Thank you to everyone who returned their evaluation forms and group notes. We will go through these carefully to help us decide what we do next. Some suggestions made so far were: Invite other Religious from different cultures to speak briefly about their experiences of living in in other cultures; Some lived experience in the Irish context may be helpful; The need to explore high culture and low culture more deeply; Leadership in Intercultural communities; Mission & intercultural community living today; Build awareness & competence in Intercultural sensitivity; The intercultural Journey of Jesus.

The Video presentations from the Spring Conference and Autumn Conference last year will be uploaded to our website in the Members only Section. Members of Vocations Ireland can obtain the login from Margaret Cartwright.



Some time back an invitation went out to Vocation Directors to take part in a conversation on the possibility of organizing Samuel Groups for Young People in the autumn via zoom. There was good interest and initially two conversations took place. A further invitation was extended to the group to take part in two evenings of training. This happened on Tuesday the 18th and Thursday the 20th of May.

A group of ten took part in the training. This consisted of input on the following:

- The Process leading to the formation of the group e.g., Advertising (How, Where), Responding to Enquiries, Application Forms, Conversations with the Applicants, Date for first meeting.
 - Meeting with Co-Leader- The Leadership is shared each month.
 - The Format of a Samuel Meeting- 3 main elements: Hospitality, Lectio Divina, Topics/discussion
 - Speakers are invited e.g. Deacon, Married Couple, Chaplain, Religious, sharing their stories and it might also include sharing topics like Ways of Praying, Images of God and Discernment.
 - Assigning/Matching a Spiritual Director to the Young people/Follow up where appropriate
- The participants had an opportunity to experience in some degree what a Samuel Group might be like – Lectio Divina, Reflection, Sharing our Image of God, Discussion.

The sharing at the sessions was very enriching and gave us all an insight into the experience of being a participant in a Samuel Group. The shared experience of both Anne Marie Whelan and Sr. Agnes Cullen UJ, was engaging, passionate and life-giving. Both of them had lots of good advice to offer from their experience of leading Samuel groups both in person and more recently via zoom.

It was a privilege to have been part of the sessions. All of us look forward to the next steps involved in forming the Groups.

So, calling all Vocation Directors for your help:

- If you know any young person who might be interested, please give their details to Margaret Cartwright.
- Keep an eye out for information on the Groups as details are finalised
- Distribute Posters to suitable venues e.g., parishes, colleges, share on social media.....

Rita Wynne RSC



NRVC INTERNATIONAL REGIONS

Vocations Ireland is one of the international regions of NRVC and as a result we have benefited from two very good webinars. Last Saturday we had Sr Nathalie Becquart, Under-Secretary to the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops speak to us on Synodality. Many of you have already heard Sr Nathalie speak in different forums on this topic. Sr Nathalie reminded us that the Covid-19 crisis is an eye opener that highlights interdependency and the urgency of synodality. The church needs to change and go on a synodal journey, becoming a discerning church, a church on the move, a church on pilgrimage, from a clerical church to a synodal church, a relational church, an inclusive church, a dialogal church, a generative church, a pluricultural church, communion, participation, mission, protagonism, co-responsibility, discernment.

Sr Nathalie reminded us that as religious you are already experienced in the process of synodality. The challenge of creating a new leadership style, the experience of religious life, a certain vision of authoritative service, chapters, community discernment, mandates, circular leadership, a new style of leadership, co-responsibility and participation, accompaniment and empowerment, a new relationship to the power, an exercise of the authority as an empowerment to liberate the liberty, the true sense of authority, a generative force to activate and liberate the freedom.

Sr Nathalie is a religious woman, Pope Francis is a religious and many of the recent appointed bishops are also religious. I think this in itself should encourage us to use our gifts, experiences, voice to enable change in our church in Ireland today. Do not wait for the Bishop or Parish Priest to ask you to do something. Use every opportunity you have to enable change through prayer, through the many wonderful initiatives that religious are involved in all over Ireland and indeed all over the world. Together we can make a difference.

Designed by Whova



European Conference on
Religion, Spirituality and Health

May 27 - May 28
Virtual

Speaking at
Spiritual Accompaniment and Marginalisation in the
Vincentian Tradition: An Exploratory Study

PhD
Waterford Institute of Technology, Waterford,



Éibhlís NicUaithuas

Congratulations to
Sr Éibhlís NicUaithuas DC
who will be speaking at
the European Conference
on Religion, Spirituality
and Health at the end of
the month.

REMINDER OF NEXT WORKSHOP

We will have Lynn Levo 's workshop on Psychosexual integration on zoom **27th September-1st October.2021**

In September depending on where we are at with COVID we will begin to negotiate the following workshops:

Orientation for new or returning vocation personnel.

Vocation Ethics

Behavioural Assessments

Cultural

I will be sending out one last communication at the end of May. This will include booking form for the workshop and the password for the member's only section of the website. This is where you will find details of workshops, webinars, conferences and booking forms. You will also find presentations from conferences held this year. It takes a long time to send video's and PowerPoint presentations to everyone who attended the conferences and many people have no access to applications. Therefore we will upload these to the website for you to view. This has been done with permission of the speakers.

The member's only section is where we want you to visit regularly. We will use this space for newsletters, resources and things of interest only to vocation personnel and not the general public.

I will continue to work from home until July when we finally join AMRI. We will then evaluate how the office will operate. The office will be closed from **5.00p.m. on Thursday 24th June and Reopening on the 19th July in the AMRI office** This is to facilitate annual leave and the actual physical move of the office. We will need to set up some new systems and procedures before getting to busy with our normal work load. Thank you in advance for your patience and cooperation during this time

*Margaret Cartwright
Director Vocations Ireland*

Temporary Change of Address:

During the restrictions for Covid-19 please send any mail for Vocations Ireland to my home address. An Post will no longer re-direct mail. Thank you for your help.

Margaret Cartwright

36 Cloran Court

Athboy

Co Meath

C15 H2C3



Vocations Ireland, AMRI Office, C/O Missionaries of Africa, Cypress Grove Road, Templeogue,
Dublin 6W YV12 Phone: 086 782 0149

Email: info@vocationsireland.com Web: www.vocationsireland.com Charity Registration Number: CHY 16272