I put this little book together in order to explain, simply and briefly, our spiritual inheritance as Irish people as that is expressed in the wealth of prayers that have come down to us from our ancestors. Hence the title ‘Our Sacred Heritage’. I wanted it to be user-friendly and as beautiful as possible so that it would be worthy of its content. The prayers in the book are gathered under the following five headings that indicate the main strands in our ancestors’ theology (their understanding of the faith) and spirituality (how that understanding impinged on the lives).

1. The Blessed Trinity
This is the central mystery of our faith. We see in prayers addressed to the Trinity a deep respect for God, a desire to praise and give thanks in all the circumstances of life.

The prayers show a natural, homely relation with God. Though he is ‘the great God of glory’, he is at the same time a caring, gentle, approachable God who can be trusted both for his gentleness and power to protect us in our every need.

2. Christ
Christ’s person, his work, his Passion, Death and Resurrection are at the heart of the Christian life. No wonder, then, that many of the prayers are directed to him. The title ‘king’ is often used of him, but this is not a title that distances him from his people. He is our royal friend, so we can use endearing terms to him as we would to any close friend. The prayers show a deep personal love for Christ and an appreciation of all he has done for us in his Passion. There is an understanding of our ongoing need of forgiveness and grace. A great regard is shown for the Mass as a way of bringing the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ close and personal to us.
3. The Communion of Saints
This is one of the loveliest doctrines of our faith, emphasising as it does the special bond that exists between all members of the Body of Christ, both living on earth and gone before us ‘ar shli na firinne’. There is a close bond between the human person and God, this world and the next, ourselves here on earth and our beloved dead, who, because they are with God, are not far from us. Mary is especially honoured in the prayers and her care and protection frequently sought. She is praised for what God has done in her.

4. Spirituality
What is meant by spirituality is how our ancestors expressed their faith, how they practised it, how it impinged on their lives. We get an insight into the importance of eternity for them and of this life as a preparation for it. We glimpse their consciousness of our human weakness and our need of God’s grace and forgiveness. Indeed there is an understanding that repentance itself is grace. And there is a deep, confident reliance on God in all the circumstances of life. It is a lay spirituality, based on the home and its rural background.

5. The Nearness of God
This is the most significant feature of Irish spirituality and is based on the faith that God is interested in us and in all that we do and cares about us. He is ever-present to us and very close. We have many brief prayers which were said before and during work, making every time of the day and every occupation holy. There are expressions of desire to live in union with God and be patient and kind to one another.

The sample prayers in this little book show us how our ancestors lifted their hearts to God in love and faithfulness. Though our lives to-day are lived in a different world, they still have the capacity to lift our hearts too to the same loving God and nourish our relationship with him.  

Éilís NiThiarnaigh

Éilís introduces Ar Naomhoidhreacht
Dear Sisters, On behalf of Sean and myself, I want to thank you sincerely for your care and support on the sudden death of our dear mother, Annie. Our thanks to all who sent Mass and sympathy cards, made phone calls, visited the house and attended the funeral. Your kindness and concern have been a source of great comfort to us and deeply appreciated. Mass has been offered for your intentions. Pauline Haughian

One Person…One lifetime… so many beautiful memories… The Kavanagh family wishes to express their heartfelt “Thank You” for the wonderful support they received when their beloved Joan died. We were deeply touched and consoled by all the Masses, letters, phone-calls, and visits. All these expressions of love were such a source of real comfort and solace to all of us. They have sustained us well during our very sad time. In deep appreciation Mass has been offered for all your intentions. Please accept our heartfelt gratitude, Carmel, Eamon, and Oliver

Thank-you sisters for your many expressions of sympathy on the death of my brother Dónall. All the family unite with me in thanking you for your prayers, messages of sympathy and masses offered. A special word of gratitude to all those who attended Dónall’s funeral mass. Mass has been offered for your intentions. Búíochas croí. Fionnuala Ní Chuill

Sr Theodore would like to express her heartfelt thanks to all the Sisters, Associates and friends who gave such support and help during her recent illness. The Masses, prayers, cards, books etc were much appreciated. She will have Mass celebrated for all of you in gratitude. You are all warmly remembered in her prayers

In Spring I found myself being psychologically backed down a very dark alley, against my will. I simply refused to believe that my dear brother Leo was very ill, and was moving gently and peacefully into other arms that were already reaching out to him from Heaven. Leo died and I was lonely, but the St. Louis Sisters gathered from near and far, by warm silent hugs, prayers, presences at home, Mass and graveside; by being present sending letters, phone calls, texts etc. What a quiet blanket of prayer and consolation! After six months I am in daylight again. May dear Leo enjoy all the happiness available in Heaven. Vera McGrath

My family join with me to thank you for your many expressions of sympathy when our kind John died. Special thanks to those who visited during his time in repose and funeral Mass and also for your thoughtful letters, Masses and cards. May God reward you. Mass will be offered in Knock for all your intentions. Sheila Jordan

I want to thank the Sisters for their sympathy wishes on the death of my brother, Jim. He is the last of my five brothers and was next to me in the family. Thank you for Mass cards, sympathy cards, letters and phone messages. I will have Mass offered for you. Marian McGreal

My family joins with me in thanking you for your prayers, calls and concern for us during Ann’s short illness. At the time of Ann’s death we very much appreciated your prayers, Masses, phone calls and letters. They were all a great support to us at such a sad time. A special thanks to all who made the long journey to Kanturk to be present with us at Ann’s funeral. My family was very impressed with the Louis – there aren’t many of them around Kanturk. And I was very proud to let them know and see that I belong to another loving and caring family. Again many thanks, Noreen Murphy

On behalf of myself and my family sincere thanks to all the sisters for their wonderful support at the time of Brendan’s death. Their presence at the removal and funeral mass as well as the many mass cards and messages of sympathy were much appreciated. Go méadaigh Dia bhur stór. Breda O’Hanrahan

Acknowledgements
In this the dark time of the year, the reality of the losses we have experienced in our lives, and more especially during the past year perhaps, become more poignant and heartfelt. As a Region we have been touched by many losses in recent years, some poignantly in our families, some within our communities where, as the groups get smaller, the loss is felt very deeply. The finality of death is all around us and can be particularly lonely for many at this time of year. The absence of a loved one at Christmas, is particularly pain-filled and acute, perhaps amplified by the endless celebrating during the festive season, where in the midst of all that noise and glitter, the heart can feel so empty, so lonely, so lost.

As I watched the leaves falling this past autumn, I was reminded again of the shortness of our days, and with what speed the Springtime of our lives gives way to the Summer, and followed on by the Autumn, and so soon it is Winter again. I know that I am in the Autumn days of my life right now, and much as I would love to hold on to all that is Spring and Summer in me, nothing can be reversed, and like the changing seasons, time and tide wait for none of us. Like the rest of humanity I have to face death in my family and friends, and ultimately my own inevitable death, my winter, at a moment unknown to me, somewhere in the future. I am consoled by the words of Albert Camus who said in *In the depths of Winter,* *I finally learned that within me, lay an invincible Summer ... and I try to hold on to that hope.*

Loss is with us all during our lives in one way or another, and yet when the great loss comes with the death of someone close to us, we are never ready, never prepared for it, or for the shock, desolation and sadness of that day, that will forever be etched in our hearts and minds. We experience loss in leaving childhood behind, leaving home, loss of employment, loss of health or wellbeing, loss of relatives, loss of a good friend, loss of reputation, loss of innocence, loss of energy, loss of pets...and on an almost daily basis, we are touched by loss, to the greatest loss of all, in the separation created by death. In fact it is the reality of death that gives meaning to our existence, because it is a constant reminder to us, that life is fragile, short, and precious.

We need to trust ourselves that we can come through this loss and go on living life, remembering the words of Christ” *I have come that you may have life and have it to the full*”. We may not even realise it, but we have an immense inner reservoir of goodness and strength, and it may only be when we are thrown onto the vast tides of loss, that we discover it.

We also need the gift of others, to learn to accept their compassion and kindnesses, and allow ourselves to be comforted by them. We need the gift of wise listening friends, providers of endless cups of tea, and sometimes the care of skilled medics or counsellors. We need to be able to lean on others, who are stronger than us at that point, and not be afraid. At a recent conference on suicide, Mr. Enda Kenny T.D. said “ *What actions do we take, to mind ourselves when we feel our stores are running out? Do we have someone to turn to when we feel hunted by life? Or when depression imprisons us or anxiety tortures us? Or when loneliness devours us heart and soul, so the very essence of us feels every bit as starved as the endless days, with their sly ambition to become a famished “forever” …strong, and yet...*
tender words from a politician, who is personally aware of the deaths of so many young people in Ireland.

In the pain and loneliness of loss, God may seem very far away. In the cold desolation of grieving, we need to fall back on our faith, however weak and confused it may be, and trust that the Christ is holding us in his huge arms, and encouraging us not to be afraid. Do not be afraid for I am with you ...When you pass through the waters, I am with you....these promises are being breathed into our weary suffering hearts, by an all loving and caring God, who knows that we are suffering. I have a little prayer of St Thomas More on my table Thank you, Lord, for all you have given me, for all you have taken away, for all you have left me ….gratitude in the face of loss.

Finally Let Go…after a death, we yearn to return to what was familiar, what has always been there, and yet everything has been changed, changed utterly, and will never be the same again. We make it difficult for ourselves to move on, if the heavy chains of guilt, blame, hatred, anger or resentment keep us bound to the past.

When we try to open ourselves to the unfolding process that we are now a part of, the possibility of transformation is drawing us upwards to let go, birth to death and then to rebirth. Cherish all that was, and the future holds the seeds of new growth. I think this is what John O’Donohue means when he writes” The beauty of loss is the room it makes for something new, it makes vital clearance in the soul. You will move through the grey valley of loss and come out again into the meadow, where light, colour, and promise await to embrace you”.(Eternal Echoes)

May the Christ of all consolation, who knew great sorrow in his own life, comfort and strengthen all who are grieving for a much loved one at this time.

Méabh Ní Uallacháin

On Saturday, August 30, the Irish Associate Facilitators gathered in the “state-of-the-art” Pastoral Centre, Monaghan Town.

Happily, the facilitating group consists now of both Sisters and Associates. The co-ordinating group of four (ALT) was running the day and Marion Reynolds was facilitating part of the proceedings. The ambience was delightful and the coffee and scones, on arrival, (even if you were late) were heartening. The buffet lunch was delicious. I think there was a good mix there of the charisms of leadership, administration and service (you know what I mean !!)

We prayed around some very inspiring extracts – from Scripture and poetry – concerning “the journey”, uncertainties, the “unrehearsed future”, as we addressed the need for more leadership from among the Associates themselves for obvious reasons of personnel and appropriateness.

Small groups deliberated on how we see the future for Associates. In general, we saw a need to expand further, become more visible in Church and society, and for the Associates to assume leadership themselves. All wanted the St.Louis charism to continue on into the future and recognised that it lives in people. It was very re-assuring to have present at our meeting four Associates who are willing to assume the responsibility of leadership for the next few years. More anon!.

We lauded and applauded the current Leadership team for their continuous and inspiring leadership – it is hard to realise that next year’s meeting will see a different group. Much appreciation was expressed towards Catherine, Angela, Brid and Pauline for their hard work and so much creativity.... It was what they call “a good day”.

Mary Jo Hand
The Christmas Whist Drive in Dublin
Highest score 2014
Highest score 2015
To be defended in 2016

Our Thanks to Our Three Organisers
At 5 a.m. on August 10, 1972 I was awakened by a phone call from a British Army Officer asking if I could come down to the School and open up for a search. I questioned the need for a ‘search’ and the reply was ‘we are finishing in La Salle and would like to see around your school.’ Sr. Clare Maguire, the vice principal and myself went down and were met by two army officers whom we guided round the building. Thanks to the dedicated maintenance staff everything was in perfect order, and ready for the reopening the following month. At the end of the tour one officer commented ‘It is a beautiful school, Sisters. Sorry if it has to be yours.’

‘St. Genevieve’s is strategically well situated’ said an officer to Sr. Clare and myself ‘Well situated for what?’ we thought as we grew more concerned and horrified. We soon learned that it was for a military take-over of part of the school by the ‘Royal Fusiliers’ and ‘Royal Green Jackets’ Regiments for what became known as ‘Operation Motorman’.

Because of the deterioration in the Northern Ireland situation, particularly in West Belfast, additional troops had to be brought from England. There was no place to house these men. All city centre accommodation including empty warehouses etc. were in use so it was decided by the Northern Ireland Authorities to occupy some schools while the children were still on holidays. They asked which section of the school would cause us least inconvenience. It was a very serious decision for Sr Clare and myself and we reluctantly replied, ‘If you must take over then use the Assembly Hall with adjoining showers, toilets and the Canteen.’ This was a huge loss of facilities for our 800 girls school. I asked them if they had daughters, how would they like them to be educated in what would become a military camp site. The response was a definite, ‘Wouldn’t like it, Sister.’ I replied ‘Neither will the parents of Andersonstown.’

Following breakfast back at the Convent and a chat about the morning’s events with the rest of the Community, Sr Clare and I returned to St. Genevieve’s where a number of soldiers were waiting to carry out an intensive search of all the rooms, unlocking presses, cupboards and searching practical equipment of all kinds, cookers, freezers, etc. It soon became clear that the reason for the search was army anxiety that bombs might have been planted by the IRA prior to the take-over for ‘Operation Motorman’. All morning the military kept coming and going. The Assembly Hall became a large dormitory filled with rucksacks, camp beds and chairs. They lost no time settling in and by 12.30pm a substantial lunch was ready for them all in our Canteen. The Royal Fusiliers had made themselves ‘at home’ and they were shortly be joined by the Royal Green Jackets.

Outside the grounds were being turned into rough gravel parking spaces for the army trucks, saracen tanks and vehicles. Sandbags were being unloaded to protect the front glass entrance against possible snipers from across the way. It didn’t matter that the herbaceous border and rose bushes were being destroyed. My request to a young soldier to go easy on the flowers fell on deaf ears. ‘They’ll bloom again next year, Madam,’ he retorted. The ‘Madams’ – Sr. Clare, our keen gardener, and myself were not amused! But we were helpless and there were other priorities needing attention. Little did we realise the more disturbing and destructive events that were to come.

A week later on a Sunday night after we had returned from a celebration in Monaghan of Mother Colmcille’s Silver Jubilee, we were awakened at 3am by two horrifically loud explosions quite near. We feared the worst because of the proximity of the blasts and fallout, but at that stage were frightened to leave the Convent to go and see. A couple of hours later a phone call from the Commanding Officer...
confirmed our worst fears. A bomb had been planted at La Salle Gym and also a rocket fired at St. Genevieve’s Assembly Hall which was a direct hit at the British soldiers sleeping quarters.

Fortunately, there was no loss of life. We were invited down to the school to view the destruction. Srs Barbara McArdle, Luca Henry and myself went and we were horrified at the extent of the damage. All windows in the Assembly Hall and throughout the school were smashed, badly-torn curtains were blowing in the wind and there was glass everywhere. It was like walking on ice! Building rubble and muddy water poured down from the big rocket hole in the roof and underneath lay our fine piano which was badly smashed and oozing dirty water. Our Lady’s oak statue presented by the girls in May, 1970 remained intact on its wall bracket by the stage, despite the flying glass and masonry.

Before calling us the soldiers had allowed themselves sufficient time to move with bag and baggage and take over another area of the school, a 3-storey classroom block. They put up galvanised sheds and facilities in the adjoining play area, all regardless of the consequences for the school.

We had great moral support from Church authorities and other bodies but neither the Church nor the Education authorities could do anything to move the army out. We were really powerless with regard to objecting or reclaiming the occupied area. ‘Operation Motorman’ was the rule! The Antrim Education Authority had the windows repaired without delay and to replace the occupied 3-storey block the Education Authority had 20 temporary classrooms erected on the tennis courts and front grounds – one was used as the Staff room – not an ideal situation for teachers or children, but every effort was made to make school life as normal as possible. The courage and determination of the staff was extraordinary and deserving of special admiration and gratitude.

The bishop of Down and Connor, William Philbin was away at the time and on his return he came immediately to see the situation and support La Salle and ourselves. He was shocked and horrified at the destruction in both schools. It happened that a senior officer Major Gordon Llyod was in St. Genevieve’s that afternoon so there was an opportunity for the Bishop to have a serious discussion with him about the situation. As together they viewed the destruction from the first-floor Library window the Major tried to assure the Bishop saying ‘It’s a temporary measure, Father,’ but Bishop Philbin insisted that there was an air of permanency about it and that he would be contacting William Whitelaw, the Secretary of State, immediately, which we understand he did, as the army began to move out before Christmas, sooner than expected.

The school re-opening was, of course, delayed as meetings were held with the Board of Governors and representatives of the Teachers’ Union with consideration being given also to the views of parents. A final significant meeting took place at Stormont Castle between the interested parties and the Under-secretary of State, Paul Channon. It was frank and cordial – with afternoon tea! but the urgency of an Army withdrawal was highlighted. The decision was then made to reopen the school two weeks late in mid-September.
Reopening the school didn’t come easily and a number of parents objected to the continued Army presence. However, they relied on the good judgment of the Boards to do what was best for the staff and students and were realistic and co-operative. The campus could have become a very volatile situation with the De La Salle Boys at one side of Saint Genevieve’s and the British Army on the other but thanks to the good order and discipline maintained by Brother Cornelius and his staff there were no ‘encounters’ or ‘incidents’ with the army. The girls and their teachers kept life as normal as possible and safely got on with their studies, the older girls beginning their ‘A’ and ‘O’ Levels and other courses.

Horrific and disturbing as this whole experience was, I recall with admiration and gratitude the docility and resilience of the students: the trust and co-operation of the parents, and the loyalty, tenacity and professionalism of the teachers who, though deprived of some of their rightful teaching facilities, continued to maintain their usual high standard. The Clerical and Maintenance Staffs were also excellent in very difficult circumstances.

The Army finally moved out after 3 months and restoration work at the expense of the Home Office and British Army began very soon afterward. This was a huge undertaking and the repairs and reinstating of facilities were not fully completed until the Summer term of that year. What a job inside and outside! We were reinstated fully by May 1973 and enjoyed some fun and happy celebrations to mark the return to full normality. The flowers did bloom again under Sr. Clare’s watchful eye! The seed of grain had fallen to the ground to give new life, and St. Genevieve’s and La Salle would long outlive ‘Operation Motorman’ and continue to flourish.

Mona Lally

Our Recently Deceased Sisters

Sr Joan Kavanagh
Born: 25 April 1941
Died: 15 May 2014

Sr Patricia Moloney
Born: 17 Mar 1922
Died: 18 July 2014

Sr Maeve Dolan
Born: 1 June 1929
Died: 14 Sept 2014

Sr Breda Broughton
Born: 5 Aug 1933
Died: 6 Sept 2014

Sr Pia Mulligan
Born: 15 Nov 1925
Died: 23 Dec 2014

Sr Maddie Kelly
Born: 16 Nov 1912
Died: 28 Dec 2014

Sr Colmcille Stephens
Born: 22 Aug 1926
Died: 29 Dec 2014
On 3rd October 2014 a wonderful and historic event took place in Dublin 15. Le Cheile Secondary School Tyrrelstown was officially opened.

It was a brave decision on the part of the new Le Cheile Trust to apply for patronage of a new school so soon into the life of the Trust. It was also an exciting decision, and an opportunity to work out what a newly founded Catholic secondary school in Ireland in the 21st century would be like, based on the vision and values of the Le Cheile Charter. This is the first Catholic secondary school opened in Ireland for nearly 30 years. The journey from application for patronage to the opening of the new school has involved a lot of vision, faith, commitment, collaboration and hard work. Imagine then, the joy of those founding members of the Le Cheile Trust and Le Cheile Office who were able to be present at the opening Prayer Service and Blessing.

Part of the opening ceremony featured the pupils ‘building the school crest’ as we listened to readings and reflections on what the Crest means. At its heart is the Trinity Knot. In the Le Cheile school crest this reminds everyone that they are special in the eyes of God and of one another, and that they are protected by the love of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Around the Trinity Knot are seven people of different colours, all connected to one another and all reaching outwards, symbolising the unity in diversity of the school community, coming together from different countries, different faiths and different family stories. Finally, the last piece of the crest is a circle containing the school motto Welcome Wisdom Witness, symbolising unity and the confidence of being enfolded in the love of God.

Welcome is a special quality because it is a sign that love does not exclude; wisdom is special because we are reminded to grow not just in knowledge but in understanding of how to use our knowledge to make the world a better place; witness is important because, like the ‘Inspiration People’ after whom the classes are named, we are all called to “let our light shine in the sight of everyone”.

Roughly 10% of the students in the new school have Irish parents while the other 90% have parents who have immigrated into Ireland. There are twenty-two nationalities. There are students who are Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Mormon, Christian and Catholic. When drawing up the Le Cheile Charter in dialogue with their schools, the founding congregations were very aware that: Some students from other faiths and from other Christian denominations will have enrolled in the school. Their different traditions will be respected. They will be encouraged to grow in knowledge and appreciation of their own traditions. The work of Faith Formation is through invitation, not coercion. It recognises that individuals are at different places in their personal faith journeys. (Le Cheile Charter)

There are more than sixty schools in the Le Cheile Trust. Le Cheile Secondary School Tyrrelstown is the first to be founded by the Trust rather than by one of the member congregations. The Board, Principal, pupils, parents and teachers there are aware that they belong to a big family in Le Cheile. They remember the founding visions of the fourteen congregations and they pray that they may build on their inspiration. 

Anne Murray
The 6th of January, traditionally recognised in Ireland as ‘Nollaig na mBan’, is always a special day in Louisville, Monaghan and this year was no exception. An air of celebration and bonhomie prevailed, as Agnes Mary and I entered the dining room for a ‘cuppa’ after the 10am. Mass in Joseph’s Church. Maura Flynn, with the help of some Sisters, was making the final touches to the beautifully decorated refectory. Anne Jordan, Mary Kearney and Enda Mc Mullan joined us and we were soon reminiscing about the three brave women - Srs Clemence, Marianne and Genevieve, who, 156 years earlier, had made it to Monaghan!

The door bell rang and in came Sisters from Our Lady’s, followed shortly after by Bishop Mc Daid, who arrived to celebrate Mass and join us for dinner. In his Homily the Bishop acknowledged the contribution we Sisters have made and continue to make in the parish and all over the world. He also encouraged us to follow the ‘Star’ in our lives. We included you, and all your needs, in our prayers.

The dinner, prepared for us by Gabrielle and Breda, was much appreciated, while Lorraine from Aramark was nearby overseeing all. The sun beamed through the windows and the first snowdrops peeped up in the garden outside. I was in awe and wonder. We were being guided and blessed with the same ‘starlight’ which guided the three Wise Men and our three Founding Women.  

Maire Cannon