Orfhlaith Carmody works in RTÉ. Her mother, Bláthnaid Nicholson, was at school in Monaghan in the late nineteen forties and often regaled her daughter with stories of life in the boarding school as she remembered it and the pranks she and her friend, Bridin Ni Dhuibhne, used to get up to. Bridin’s younger sister, another Bláthnaid, was a pupil in the school in the early fifties.

Orfhlaith was doing some research in the archives of RTÉ last year (2009) and came upon a bundle of old photographs of Monaghan in the long ago and of the Sisters on holidays in Bundoran. She realised that she had come upon the makings of an interesting documentary and contacted the three “girls” above. They gladly agreed to co-operate and spent a week in the school last August putting the half hour programme together. I believe they had actually produced eight hours of reel!

It seems that Orfhlaith requested that a sister would take part in the programme. When Mary O’Donovan asked me if I would be willing to go on the programme my immediate reaction was: “Can’t you get someone younger?” However, the makers of the programme wanted a sister who had been at school at the same time as the others taking part, so I agreed to do it. As it happened I had arranged to be on retreat that particular week and so had only a half day to give. What was asked of me was to show the three past pupils around the Heritage Centre.

We started the day by being made up and having our hair curled to make sure we looked our best for the camera. The other three had to make sure each day that they wore the same clothes and exactly the same jewellery in order to keep the continuity of the programme intact. I just followed instructions in showing my “guests” around the Centre. In the course of our visit I saw some things I had not known to be there, such as old laundry bills in Sr. M. Rita’s handwriting. The only request I made of the RTÉ team was that I could show the “girls” Genevieve’s little black purse with its three French coins, which I consider the most precious possession of the entire Centre. They were very moved by it.

Altogether it was an interesting and happy experience. However, as I did not know what went on the other days of that week or what the “girls” had said I was quite nervous when the programme finally came on air. I need not have worried. Their loyalty to the school and their positive attitude towards it gave us all a lift at a difficult time for religious in our country. Go raibh maith agaibh.

Éilis NiThiarraigh
It’s been a long, hard Winter and a very difficult year on many levels. So these few lines from the Song of Songs seem especially relevant:

‘The winter is over; the rains have stopped; In the countryside the flowers are in bloom. This is the time for singing; The song of doves is heard in the fields.’

Nine of our Sisters have died since our last issue. We remember with much love and gratitude: Sisters Maureen Kelly, Philomena Cassidy, Rhona Toolan, Anne Kelly, Bernadette Murphy, Dympna Moen, Lonan Dolan, Eugene Mulligan, Katey Dougan. We offer our sincere sympathy and prayers to all their families, communities and friends and to all our Sisters and Associates who have been recently bereaved.

At the end of February, it was good to meet and work with so many at the post-Chapter weekend in Dromantine. The closing of our Nursing Home in Monaghan was a very poignant occasion at the end of March and yet there were blessings sprinkled everywhere, as we remembered all the love and care given and received there over many years.

We hold in prayer all who are ill or have illness in their lives at present. May they all have the healing and comfort they need.

We wish our 2010 Jubilarians joy filled celebrations. May the Summer be kind to us all as we enjoy time to be refreshed in soul and body and may all that has been Cross to us, flower during this lovely season.

With love from Barbara Dympna Míabh and Mary

In appreciation of the coming of the St Louis Sisters to Ireland one hundred and fifty one years ago, the Belfast Associates made a contribution to VITA i.e. a charitable organization which works towards building sustainable livelihoods. Our contribution meant that an Oak Tree was planted in Marlay Park, Rathfarnham, Dublin and ninety Moringa Trees (also called Miracle Trees) were planted in Ethiopia and Eritrea. These trees will provide fuel, food or medicine for many families in these countries. From little acorns, grow ....

Sr Dympna Moen
Born: 19 April 1926
Died: 11 Mar 2010

Sr Anne Kelly
Born: 3 Nov 1917
Died: 16 Mar 2010

Sr Maureen Kelly
Born: 3 Oct 1932
Died: 10 Jan 2010

Sr Lonan Dolan
Born: 12 April 1922
Died: 17 Mar 2010

Sr Eugene Mulligan
Born: 30 April 1921
Died: 26 Mar 2010

Sr Katey Dougan
Born: 21 May 1947
Died: 12 April 2010
Dear Sisters, On behalf of the Foley Family and myself, I wish to express my deepest gratitude to all of you who sent Mass Cards and kind expressions of sympathy, on the deaths of my beloved brother, John, and my dear sister-in-law, Linda. Many thanks to those of you who attended Linda's removal and funeral Mass and to those who phoned and called to the Mission House. The Foley Family and I say heartfelt thanks. Mass will be offered for your intentions. Sincerely, Kathleen Foley.

Concepta, Treasa and Ursula would like to thank you for your prayers, Mass cards, letters and kind messages of sympathy on the death of our brother, Regis. Your kindness and support are deeply appreciated and have been a great source of comfort to all the family in this difficult time. Holy Mass has been offered for all your intentions with our sincere gratitude.

We wish to thank you most sincerely for your kind expression of sympathy on the death of our dear brother Michael, the youngest member of our family. Our family and Michael’s family thank you for the Masses, phone calls, letters, prayers etc received during the last few months. We are deeply appreciative of your kindness and thoughtfulness. Mass has been offered for your intentions. Breda, Nora and the Broughton Family

Jane Vereker wishes to thank you for your support, sympathy, prayers and Masses, at the time of Jack’s death. They were a great consolation to me. Mass has been offered for your intentions.

My dear Sisters,
On my own behalf and that of my family, I wish to thank you all for your messages of sympathy, prayers, and Masses, and for your presence at Ann’s wake and funeral. Your concern and support helped us through very sad and difficult days. Mass has been offered for your intentions. Frances Faul

It is with a very sad but grateful heart that I say ‘Thank you’ agus “Go raibh maith agaibh” to so many in the Irish Region for all your kind support during our recent tragic loss in the family. Your presence at Aoife’s funeral or in her home, the many Masses, and letters, cards of understanding care and sympathy in this most heartbreaking of moments, helped all of us to carry our pain and grief with dignity, and believe that lovely Aoife was more than the manner of her going. Her life with us over 30 short years was full of joy, giving, fun and caring, and our family and her friends in Ireland and in Chelmsford, are the poorer for her passing. No words can ever return Aoife’s lovely presence to us, but the support we have received goes a long way in helping us to lift up our hearts, and our eyes to the light of the Resurrection, as Easter approaches.

Pádraigín composed a song after the Omagh tragedy in 1998, and now sung at Aoife’s funeral, gives us some hope and courage to move on…

“I’ve seen the joy now and I’ve seen life’s sorrow, seen the pain in your troubled eye, But the tears are gone now and the grief is over, and this night I’ll be safely there. No more to be now where the dark clouds gather, find me where the soft winds blow, For the tears are gone now and the grief is over and this night I’ll be safely there.”

Méabh Ni Uallacháin SSL

The community at Dún Lughaidh would like to express their heartfelt thanks to all the sisters who rallied around so generously to help us care for and console Sr Lonan’s and Sr Eugene’s relatives and friends during the sad days of their funerals. RIP. Each of you has earned a special warm place in our hearts and prayers. Many thanks for all you did and may God bless you.
On 25th February 2010, all the Sisters of St. Louis in the Dublin area were invited to a Tea Party in St Louis High School Rathmines in honour of the sesquicentenary of the arrival of the Sisters in Ireland. The Concert Hall had been beautifully decorated by the Student Council, and they were part of the welcoming committee as well as gracious Tea Party hostesses.

Mary Morgan (Principal), with the Staff, Parents Committee and Board of Management, were assembled to give a warm welcome to the sisters and the many former teachers who had returned to celebrate with us. The Principals of the St Louis Infant and Senior Primary Schools, as well as Fr. Richard Sheehy, Parish Priest and School Chaplain, were also there as the St Louis story in Rathmines parish and schools was remembered.

On arrival, each of us was presented with a Programme of Events, which included –

- Introduction by Master of Ceremonies, Bridin Gilroy (recently retired from St Louis High School Staff, and a former student)
- Welcome by the Principal, Mary Morgan (a Kiltimagh past pupil)
- Grace by Fr. Richard (celebrating his fiftieth birthday)
- Refreshments catered by the Galloping Gourmet, and time to socialize
- Entertainment - wonderful music, with individual and group performances from staff and students
- Poem “God’s Grandeur” read by Denis Grace, one of the English teachers.
- Short address by Bridin Gilroy
- Presentation of a gift to the St Louis Sisters by the Head Girl, Ella Adler (see picture). Ella’s mother and grandmother, both past pupils, were both in attendance. The gift was accepted on behalf of the sisters by Clare Maguire
- Response on behalf of the Sisters of St. Louis
- Final entertainment - an inaugural performance from the Staff Choir, specially founded for the occasion, and worthy, surely, of a much longer life! They sang ‘What a Wonderful World’, with extra verses composed for the occasion, finishing with the lines “I see times to come, I see the glow, the flame you lit, so long ago, and I think to myself, what a wonderful world.”
- Concluding comments followed by Staff Trad Group with a toe-tapping medley.

It was a wonderful evening, a time of joy, gratitude and mutual appreciation. Meister Eckhart said “If the only prayer you said in your life was ‘Thanks’ it would suffice”. Thanks were said in abundance in many ways that evening, and there was a great feeling of completeness and blessing. God and the ancestors must have been well pleased. We the living felt their presence with us, and our hearts rejoiced as we joined in the celebration and gratitude for all that has been, and acknowledged in joyful hope all that may yet come.
It is difficult to find words to express all the feelings we, sisters of St Louis, have experienced this evening. From the moment we arrived, you have enfolded us with welcome, warmth, friendship, music, laughter and affirmation.

We are truly grateful for the invitation to this Tea Party – an invitation given on the double, as the January date had to be cancelled due to the freezing weather and school closure. We had already shared our appreciation for the kindness behind that invitation, and if a new date had not been found, we would have still had grateful memories – you would have had, as we used to say in Irish, ‘bhur gcuid agus bhur mbuiochas’. But a new date was found, the invitation was renewed, and we have had our Tea Party.

As many of us are aware, there is a ‘tea party’ movement sweeping across the U.S. We might not agree with its aims, but one of its purposes is to ‘safeguard the Constitution on which we were founded’. And this Tea Party also serves the purpose of cherishing ‘that upon which we were founded’. When the Sisters of St Louis in France celebrated the 150th anniversary of the French foundation, a book entitled ‘Words to Live By’ was produced based on the Archives in France. These were words that have been treasured down the years wherever St Louis life has been lived. Two of those words come to mind in a special way this evening.

The first word is ‘family’. Family spirit has been one of the words on which we were founded. We are so happy to be here this evening as part of the wider St Louis family. We, the Sisters of St Louis have been central stage for many of the 150 years we are celebrating. Now we are the older members of the family, and not so central any more. It is a great joy to us this evening to be here, cherished in the wider family, knowing that there are younger family members who will write the next chapter of the story. The new link between St Louis Rathmines and St Louis Kano is just one of the new strands which will be woven in this exciting future. We look around at hearts as we look back together at the Rathmines story, and about faith and hope as we look around at the St Louis family assembled here and know that the next chapter of the story is in safe hands.

We want to say thanks for this delightful Tea Party, for the food and fellowship, but above all for the generous impulse that led you all to invite and entertain us. You, Principal, Staff and Students, have been here since early morning. At the best of times this would be something to praise and appreciate; in the current climate of cutbacks and criticism of the Public Service, it is truly remarkable. If only what we have experienced here this evening could be perceived by the media and wider community, if people could know what an educational community can be like. However, we know, and we are enriched by this experience. How could we not trust Providence? The next chapter of the St Louis story will be written, and in God’s Providence, we can believe that ‘the best is yet to be’ Go raibh mile maith agaibh go leir.

Anne Murray
Sharon Tracey-Dunne was born in Inniskeen on a farm next to Patrick Kavanagh’s, later her family moved a few miles away to Hackballscross. She was a music teacher in St Louis Secondary School, Dundalk, when the 1995 cease-fire took place. Sharon had a big idea – a bit mad at the time – and that was to establish the Cross-Border Orchestra of Ireland.

She accessed a rusting store of high quality musical instruments in Dundalk, to these were added a second cache from St Louis, Monaghan. And as peace took hold, a flood of volunteers came forward. “Anybody who put a hand up, I put an instrument in it”, Sharon said. However, her vision also encompassed cross-community involvement in her orchestra. She wrote to many Protestant schools in the North but there was a poor response at first and much suspicion.

That has changed. The C.B.O.I. now has Lambeg Drums and Bagpipes – a fusion of cultures and traditions on our Island. Last year in Rome, the Orchestra played a specially-commissioned “O’Neill Suite” first, in a Catholic Church, then in a Presbyterian one to mark the four hundredth anniversary of the Flight of the Earls. They also performed in Armagh to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Belfast Agreement.

Sharon acknowledges how honoured C.B.O.I. is to work with distinguished Irish Tenor, Emmanuel Lawler and to have internationally-renowned Gearoid Grant, as lead conductor. The current membership is one hundred and seventy – ages range from 12 – 24.

C.B.O.I. has spread its wings as far as Chicago, Washington, Carnegie Hall, New York, Boston, San Francisco as well as many European venues. 2010 will see them perform in Shanghai and next year, in the Sydney Opera House. There are countless standing ovations and several awards for excellence wherever they go. Many youth choirs at home and abroad have sung with them. President Mary McAleese is one of many who have paid tribute to this group of young people and their leaders, “They are real ambassadors”, boldly celebrating culture and diversity and contributing to peace.

Hopefully, much needed funding will continue to sustain this 14-year-old orchestra, their inspirational founder, Sharon, and all who, wholeheartedly, have supported these hundreds of young people through the years.

You can read lots more about the Cross Border Orchestra on their website: www.theboi.org/
I agreed to write this piece with not a little trepidation, as I am very aware of the many Sisters in the Irish Region now who have lived and laboured there for years and know far more than I do about Nigeria. To you I say forgive my naivete! As soon as I heard of the Mobility for Mission initiative, I was utterly fascinated. I began immediately to do a bird's eye view of the Institute, and decided to choose a place where I had never been. This was how Nigeria came to be my choice. I picked Kano where there is a long-established Secondary School and where I could do some teaching. What a good decision that was!

Our Nigerian Sisters are so hospitable and did everything possible to make my stay happy and enjoyable. Every Community I visited showed the same welcome. They love visitors, especially visitors from St. Louis in Ireland - from their mothers and grandmothers! That same spirit of hospitality is evident too in their own communities. All the Sisters feel at home when they visit any house in their Province. It was very impressive for me to see this "Ut Sint Unum" in practice.

Another huge learning for me was to see at first hand the fruits of the hard work of our early Missionaries. Of this I had been totally ignorant, except for names of places, and photos in Magazines and Newsletters. Many times I had stood in the crowd outside St. Louis House singing 'Go Ye Afar', but once the car had disappeared from view, we hurried back to our work! Until I went to Nigeria, I would have had no conception of the enormous developments they started then. To-day, we have be many well-established Schools, Hospitals, and Clinics, Health Care Centres for women and for the destitute. As I visited different places, which, up to then were only names to me, I was utterly amazed by the sheer scale of their achievements. My amazement, I must confess, was mingled with some guilt, that our returned Missionary Sisters were hardly welcomed home by me, never mind being congratulated on their magnificent contribution to the life of Nigeria and its peoples. At this late stage, I salute you all and, as the Nigerians often say "Well done" on your wonderful life's achievements. What foresight, what vision, what energy, what generosity it is all a testament to! We at home and our Nigerian Sisters owe you all an undying debt of gratitude.

All these projects begun many years ago are being constantly evaluated and developed by the Sisters. They are so talented, so highly educated and so forward-looking that they spare no effort to maintain very high standards. Many of the Sisters I talked to have at least three jobs on hand. As well as their main ministry, many are involved in work with Aspirants, Formation, Friends of St. Louis, Associates, Membership of the Conference of Women Religious in Nigeria - the list is endless. In their local area too, many are active in Parish work, helping the Priests with Liturgies, Sacraments preparation, R.C.I.A. to name just a few. Whenever I commended them for all their involvements, they would invariably reply: this is how we were trained or we're younger! I got the distinct impression of a Province which is vibrant, full of vitality and certainly devoted to enhancing the quality of life for their people.

With all this activity, however, the Community life of the Sisters is equally impressive for its prayerfulness. During my three months there living with them in Community, the Divine Office - Morning and Evening prayer - was never even once omitted - not even on Final Profession Day. It was edifying for me to be part of this prayerful recitation - always varied with tunefully sung Psalms, Magnificat or Benedictus. Like everything in Nigeria, it was slow and meditative. Side by side with this spirit of prayer went Community celebrations. They love to sing and dance on any occasion. As the picture shows, I was a slow learner and lacking in the rhythm needed to join the dance! The biggest celebration by far we had during my time there was the Final Profession Ceremony in Akure Cathedral. I was formally welcomed by name and place of origin from the pulpit. The formula for taking the Vows was also according to the Constitutions of the Sisters of St. Louis, Monaghan, which I found very moving, and gave public expression to the continuity of the Sisters of St. Louis, Nigeria. Bishop Allonge greeted me personally on his way out, while remembering all of you who had once worked in his Diocese. Five
beautiful girls, all in their 30's made Final Vows that day, all trained and ready to return to their ministries in various schools and hospitals. Needless to say, the dancing and singing went on until late into the evening.

I did some teaching in English and French. I loved the students there - they were so eager to learn, so diligent, so respectful and so appreciative. They begged me many times to stay longer, or if not to allow them to escort me to the Airport. I quickly became aware of how much they loved their school and how fortunate they considered themselves to be in having gained admission. The aspects of the school they and their parents most valued were the high academic standards, the firm but fair discipline and their hard-working teachers!

So, all of you, Sisters, now returned home for many years, rejoice and be glad for the progress and the on-going success of the school you started in 1948 and worked in for many years. I felt very proud to have been associated with you all - many of you are still remembered by name, despite the lapse of years. Your spirit lives on in the lives of the Sisters you trained and educated to continue your work there.

I will finish by encouraging any of you who are willing and able to visit Nigeria, even for one month. It leaves a lasting impression; it widens your horizons, and you see life differently. This came home to me very forcibly at the recent L & P meeting. While the graph for us in the Irish Region is undoubtedly on a downward curve, the Missions begun by us in Nigeria in the 50's are growing and spreading daily - meeting new needs with vigour and energy as they arise. For over 150 years in the Irish Region our graph has been on the ascendency. The fruits of our dedication and commitment are now flourishing in Nigerian guided and directed by our St. Louis Sisters. So, rather than focus on our own graph in isolation, which might leave us with a gloomy picture, let us turn our minds to where we have a bright future alive and prospering in another continent. Deo Gratias!  

 Cáit Gibbons

---

**Did you know........... from the Archives**

- The Annals of the Congregation record that the retreat which began on December 20, 1892 was made in common by sisters and children.
- That in 1891 the census revealed that were 147 people in the Convent - all included.
- That to usher in the new century the Sisters had midnight mass on December 31, 1899. The choir sang the Te Deum at the opening and Quid Retribuam at the close.
- That in November 1904, 18 sisters from Carrickmacross went to Monaghan to elect a new Rev. Mother. They left Carrick at 7 a.m., went by train to Inniskeen and on to Clones, where they had a 20 minutes wait. They arrived in Monaghan at 11.15 where they were met by a number of cabs.
- That in January 1888 it was decided to change the name of the convent from Lakeview to Louisville.
- That in January 1891 the Community began saying Office in choir.
- That the first St Louis Convent in Bundoran was situated on the site of the Imperial Hotel. It opened in 1870 and closed in 1884.
- That in December 1898 a small Lending Library was opened in Bundoran Convent. This was a pioneer in the field.
- That on November 1897 permission was given to the sisters in Carrickmacross to go out of doors without their bonnets except when travelling on a journey.
- That on December 8 1892 - the Golden Jubilee of the Foundation of Congregation des Dames de St Louis in Juilly - a novenea was made in Monaghan, Bundoran and Carrickmacross in honour of St Francis Xavier to ascertain whether or not sisters should be sent on a foundation to the United States.
- That on May 1894 because of increasing illness in the community the doctor recommended eggs for breakfast.
- That in July 1862, Srs Josephine Fahie and Dominic Sweeney went to Lough Derg to take charge of the hostels there.

Researched by Sr Miriam Cummins
and contributed by Deirdre O’Connor
We gather here today in the Convent Chapel in Monaghan to remember and give thanks – welcome to each of you who has come. I would like to begin this introduction with a poem from our Monaghan poet, Patrick Kavanagh. It is called Beyond the Headlines and speaks poignantly of our experiences in St. Louis Nursing Home in recent times:

Then I saw the wild geese flying
In fair formation to their bases in Inchicore
And I knew that these wings would outwear the wings of war
And one's simple thoughts outlive the day’s loud lying.
Don’t fear, Don’t fear, I said to my soul.
The Bedlam of Time is an empty bucket rattled,
’Tis you who will say in the end who best battles.
Only they who fly home to God have flown at all.

Last year the Sisters of St. Louis celebrated the 150th anniversary of our arrival in Monaghan. During those years, we ministered to and, in turn, were cared for by the people of Monaghan. When we set up the small medical unit in St. Louis House in 1976, that caring took on a new facet. In the beginning sisters from other areas of the Institute as well as from Ireland spent their last days by the lake. In 1982, as the needs of the Sisters in Ireland increased, the “Unit” as it was then called was expanded. In 1994 we applied for registration as a Nursing Home with HSE and this took effect in 1996. This registration continued until recent years, as you know. In 2008 circumstances and requirements from various authorities resulted in the decision to close our Nursing Home.

During the last two months between January 25 and March 25, we were involved in the process of transition with our sixteen elderly sisters. Tears and heartbreak on the part of the sisters in Monaghan, the staff and friends, accompanied each poignant move. We are particularly saddened by the reality of the last line of Kavanagh’s poem – three sisters, Sisters Anne Kelly, Lonan Dolan and as recently as yesterday Eugene Mulligan flew home to God.

Words cannot express our deep gratitude to the many people who were involved with the Nursing Home since 1976. I mention groups rather than names: the witness of all the sisters over the years who were cared for in the Nursing Home, the staff who gave such dedicated and caring service to each and every one of them, the Sisters and nurses who undertook the Management of the Nursing Home, the Sisters of St. Louis from Monaghan itself and from across the Region who regularly visited and supported the sisters in the Nursing Home, the doctors, nurses, carers, the members of our maintenance, catering, cleaning and laundry staff, the members of the Board of Management who gave advice and expertise on an ongoing basis, the many business and professional people of the town and
surrounding area who have provided a wide range of services to the Nursing Home, the solicitors, consultants and professional personnel who accompanied us in these recent times, the priests of the area who provided valued spiritual help to the residents... the list could go on and on.

The celebration of this Mass of Thanksgiving is our way of showing how much we appreciate your being a part of the wider St. Louis Family in the last 36 years. All of us, in the words of the poem will continue to pray for “our wild geese” who have flown to new bases and we will keep each other in prayer in these times of transition.

Anne Kavanagh

Mary Kelly and I were part of a group from the Women’s Institute visiting Arus an Uachtarain. The President was delighted to see two St Louis Sisters from Northern Ireland, as it recalled many happy days when her own children were at school in Kilkeel.

Constance Farrelly

After a delicious tea we had a tour of the house and saw the lovely piano on which the late Lucy McAl-\n\[\text{list}\] \text{er} \text{played “The Glens of Antrim” for the President on a previous visit with the Women’s Institute.}

Constance Farrelly
I loved the experience at Dromantine. I felt that there had been a seismic shift in the content presented and how we worked our way through it. Even when, afterwards, I met one or two sisters who hadn’t found the experience that helpful, I went on feeling good about it. Mainly, I think, because I lean towards processes that focus in on relationship and Dromantine last time was all about right relationships, beginning with right relationship to the self.

This can often come across as a sort of pursuit of selfishness but nothing could be further from the truth. Getting to know and, more importantly still, to accept one’s real self is a lifetime’s hard work. Coming up to 75 I can testify to its being a work still in progress, full of humps and hollows of emotional turmoil and mental confusion, with the occasional eureka moment that makes it all worth while. For a while, at any rate.

This is getting far too abstract. Let me go back about 20 years to a summer retreat in Montenotte, Cork, with Donogh O’Shea, O.P. It was one of his pottery retreats where we were led “out of our minds and into our senses” Not that Donogh would have put it that way, (the quote is a Fritz Perls pearl, he of the Gestalt Therapy school.) Anyway, as I was saying, there we were in the pottery shed working instinctively with clay or sitting in the garden being still, while enjoying the sun and the butterflies and the flowers. “Be still and know that I am God”.

Six days we spent sitting and knowing. And on the 7th day webiblically bounded forth to take our rest, downed our artistic and spiritual tools, so to speak. And as we walked down the hill and talked, what should catch my eye but a big Factory sign: KNIT AND SEW. Now you may think, so what? And you’d be right. So what? Well, this is what it said to me: This surely was the other side, the necessary complement to our week’s retreat work. There we had been SITTING AND KNOWING and here we were now and the clear message was: KNITTING AND SEWING. Back to porridge, if you like to mix your metaphors.

Now all of this is somewhat personal, idiosyncratic even. Still you must see it’s an interesting word play, a turning of sounds inside out –to some purpose, I suggest. Isn’t life a very personal and complexly patternedsequence of moments made up of knitting and sewing and sitting and knowing? Mind you it’s more tempting to spend the greater amount of time on the knitting and sewing bit, the making of new things, new plans… the patching up, picking up lost stitches, “pulling the slipped one over the knit one.”(Rest in peace, dear Sister Monessa, I never did finish that toe of a sock!) But let me not lose the run of myself completely. All I’m saying is that coming up to shock those a cúig, I’m more into the “sitting and knowing” phase of life. Mind you there has to be a balance. All prayer and no work would make Kitty an even duller contributor to Seo agus Siúd. Maybe dull is not the mot juste. This has been a bit of mad meandering and sure what’s the harm in that? As long as you know you’re wandering! Be gentle, gentle reader. All to the contrary not with standing!!! Kitty Fitzsimons
The weekend of April 17 saw more than 400 women and men religious walk the way to Malahide, Co. Dublin. Because of the volcanic ash hovering over Europe, this action of “walking” showed itself in many creative ways. Rather than travelling by plane from England or the US, two speakers Timothy Radcliffe OP and Lynn Levo CSJ walked the way with the group through conference calls. Another speaker, Gemma Simmons CJ, travelled by train and ferry from London to get there. Some of the registered participants from the UK were unable to travel but the numbers swelled with substitutes who were waiting for a place.

St. Louis was well represented by these sisters: Ann Concannon, Marie du Rosaire Divers, Caitriona Gibbons, Mary Jo Hand, Triona McGinty, Eilis Ni Thiarnaigh, Winifred Ojo, Maeve O’Reilly. Eithne Woulfe, a member of the staff of CORI and Anne Kavanagh, a member of the CORI Executive were also there in various roles.

Here is a sampling of the comments made by the St. Louis participants on their experience of the conference, which celebrated the Golden Jubilee of CORI:

The Conference was a lovely experience. I never before saw so many religious gathered in one place! The opportunity to attend was one of the most inspirational, informative and enlightening experiences I’ve had in recent times.

The Conference showed me that religious have a wealth of experience which would be of value to the Conference of Bishops in the light of the current church models

President McAleese challenged us “while we accept that we personally did not cause the problems in our society, we will commit to be part of the solution”

The Conference gave me a lot of hope and energy as we engage with the signs/realities of the present time and discover new ways of witnessing to the hope and faith we bear as people who believe in God and are followers of Christ.

There are values in Religious life which attract new members but we have to be ready and open to find new metaphors to communicate this value to the present generation and welcome them in their search.

I appreciated hearing some of the speakers have the courage to name failings in the Church. Timothy Radcliffe said “I have a lot of sympathy for those who leave the Church at the moment. I detest all sorts of aspects of the current Church but I could not leave it.”

Michael Crosby OFM Cap. took a courageous stand in challenging the Church’s culture of clericalism.

I was challenged by the acknowledgement of the place of imagination, metaphor and dreams in our expressions of Religious Life. Above all I was invigorated by the confirmation of the value and beauty of consecrated Religious Life.

The contribution from Robert, a victim of institutional and sex abuse brought tears to my eyes.

We have food for thought and reflection for many years ahead.

I just cannot find the words to do justice to the impact of the Conference on me. From the tour-de-force of the technology which enabled us to listen to and respond to Fr. Timothy Radcliffe OP or Sr. Lynn Levo, CSJ as if they were present in the vast hall, to the exchange of name-tag at the end for a neat volume of the talks we had heard, it was a testimony to the efficiency and effectiveness of CORI. Great credit is due to all concerned - volcanic ash is not going to stop them. It is good to belong to that body who represent me and you ‘urbi et orbi’.

The image from the Emmaus story “Jesus himself drew near and walked with them” was lived out through all aspects of the Conference – ritual, liturgy, speakers, interaction and the wonderful atmosphere in the Grand Hotel in Malahide.

Anne Kavanagh
Last November the Gate Lodge at St Louis Convent Ramsgrange was formally handed over to the St Louis Day Care Centre. Mary O’Donovan and Noreen Hurley represented the Trustees and the Region at the handing over ceremony.

Below is a short history and description of St Louis Day Care Centre by the Day Care Co-ordinator.

St Louis Day Care Centre has been up and running since 1996 and is a hive of activity with more than one hundred Senior Citizens from within a twenty mile radius of the area availing of its services.

The building was originally the national school and was given to the organization for a day care centre in 1994 by the Sisters at a nominal fee. It was renovated and restored with funds raised by the local Easter Market, an annual event raising thousands of pounds over the years. It took place thanks to an excellent and hard working committee many of them St Louis Sisters, some of whom have since passed away. The remaining members continue to give their valuable help and support to the centre. In 1985 ten houses were built to house the elderly of the parish. In 2008 a large garden room was added and this is a wonderful asset providing space for many more activities.

Now once again thanks to the generosity of the St Louis Sisters we are in a position to extend our facilities. In November of last year a very memorable occasion took place at St Louis Day Care Centre when the sisters donated the Gate Lodge and adjoining grounds to us for an extension which will benefit the Senior Citizens of the five adjoining parishes. Planning has been received and it is hoped to begin the work very soon.

The St Louis Sisters are still very involved with the centre and their wonderful daily contribution is much appreciated. That evening Fr James Furlong, Chairperson, accepted the donation on behalf of Senior Citizens Concern. In his tribute he remarked how he had worked in a number of parishes over the years and always felt there was something different about Ramsgrange and eventually he worked out what it was. Every family in the parish had been influenced by the sisters, who had left their mark and in their own quiet way touched the lives of so many with their Christian values and Christ’s love and long may that influence last.

We thank the St Louis Sisters for their generosity and support over the years. They have made a big difference to the lives of many people. Mile buiochas a shiuracha agus Rath De oraibh go leir.

I am a Sion Sister, a friend of Hannah Boylan, Clare Mulhern and Dympna O’Daly. One day when visiting Hannah in Monaghan, I was invited to a “Concert” in the Primary School where the children were putting on a play about your first three sisters coming to Monaghan. The children really brought the story to life – I understood it and the difficulties the Sisters encountered through the eyes of the children. The singing lent reality to the story. I thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon, especially as I know that our Founder and yours where such firm friends, so we feel that we are related to you. I also felt very privileged to be present at the enactment of your beginnings in Ireland. Unfortunately, I could not be present at your 150th Anniversary celebration in Monaghan, but we were represented by some Belfast and Dublin Sisters that day.

We have the 150th Celebration of our First Sisters’ arrival in London in June this year, and hopefully some of your Sisters will be able to join us.

Mary Cannon (Sister of Sion)
### Platinum Jubilarians
- Matthias Boland (Ireland)
- Síle Canty (Ireland)
- Nuala Doherty (Ireland)
- Alphonsus Egan (California)
- Patricia Moloney (Ireland)
- Gabriel O’Connell (Ireland)
- Edith O’Doherty (Ireland)

### Deceased
- Realino Cafferty
- Lonan Dolan
- Odile Flannagan
- Alban Messenger
- Ivor Morris
- Veronica Murray
- Mary Rice
- Aidan Ryan

### Diamond Jubilarians
- Elizabeth Beirne (France)
- Máire Blair (Ireland)
- Vera Brennan (Ireland)
- Thérèse Mary Byrne (California)
- Una Connolly (California)
- Josephine Fay (Ireland)
- Anne Finegan (California)
- Marie Flanagan (Ireland)
- Josephine Henry (Ireland)
- Christina Keogh (Ireland)
- Anne Killeen (France)
- Claude Lynch (California)
- Maeve McDevitt (England)
- Philomena McGuinness (Ireland)
- Salome Moran (Ireland)
- Clare Mulhern (Ireland)
- Marie de Paul Neiers (Ireland)
- Marie Celine O’Byrne (Ireland)

### Deceased
- Anne Breslin
- Osyth Gomerall
- Philomena Higgins
- Maureen Kelly

### Golden Jubilarians
- Marilee Davis (California)
- Brigid Dunne (California)
- Fiona Fulhan (Ireland)
- Frances Gates (Ireland)
- Roisin Hannaway (Ireland)
- Michele Harnett (Ireland)
- Monica Lindon (Ireland)
- Anne McCourt (Ireland)
- Marion Reynolds (Ireland)
- Luana Walsh (Ireland)

### Deceased
- Eileen Burns
- Kathleen Mulhern
- Mary Roche
- Gretta McQuaide

### Silver Jubilarians
- Josephine Apiagyei (Ghana)
- Veronica Buah (Ghana)
- Augustina Kwakye Agyirey (Ghana)
- Helena Owusu Fosua (Ghana)

### Cats, see the interconnectedness of everything as they contemplate the world with an open and expectant heart.