Dear Sisters and Associates,
Welcome to our first issue of Seo agus Siúd 2011. At the beginning of this Spring, we look at our life’s journey with Jeremiah:
Stand at the crossroads and look,
Ask for the ancient paths;
Which was the good way? Take it
And you will find rest for yourselves.

Each New Year is a time to take stock, to ponder and to refresh our dreams.
Sadly, some sisters have finished their earthly journey. We remember with love and gratitude: Sisters Teresa McMahon, Lucy Akindiose, Hannah O’Gorman, Salome Moran, Marie Clare Commins and Juliana Nwabuzo. 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. We pray for healing and comfort for all who are ill, and we continue to pray for our Regional Leadership discernment.

Congratulations to our 2011 Jubilarians. May you have wonderful, joy-filled celebrations.

As Spring continues to break forth we listen to birdsong and observe the “host of golden daffodils”. May these experiences help us to hold hope deep in our hearts and allow it to breathe and expand in our lives. In the words of Macrina Wiederkehr: “May your hope stream outward to the world”. Barbara, Dympna, Mary, Méabh

On the 17th April Carina was presented with the Bene Merenti Medal by Cardinal Brady. Below is his address in St John’s Church, Middletown:
I am here today to present a medal, from the Pope, Pope Benedict XVI to Sister Carina Muldoon of the St. Louis Sisters.
Sister Carina came to work in St. Joseph’s Training School in 1967. There she worked tirelessly until 2000 on behalf of children with problems and special needs. She has also served, for many years, on the Board of Governors of St. Patrick’s High School, Keady. There she has always been interested in, and supportive and proud of, the achievements of the Middletown pupils.
In recent years Sister Carina has played an invaluable role in the work of safeguarding children in this diocese. Most recently, she has inspired everybody who knows her by the way she has accepted, and coped and recovered from a massive stroke.
For all of this we give thanks to God and to Sister Carina. We continue to pray for her and with her.
As we honour Sister Carina, we honour the Sisters of St. Louis for their commitment and contribution to the education and welfare of so many young people.
The conferring of this medal is, as the name suggests, well deserved. This is to honour and acknowledge the efforts of all those who are concerned for the welfare of young people and their future, especially for those who are deprived or challenged by their situations.
It is not surprising that Genevieve Beale chose Bundoran as the location for her first outreach from Monaghan. On brief visits to the seaside town during the 1860s she became aware of the utter poverty, indeed destitution, of a large number of the inhabitants. Her option for the poor was in this case an option for the poorest.

On December 8th, 1870 three sisters set up home at the west end of the town in the Marine Hotel. The buildings had to be converted and made reasonably fit for purpose. The billiard room for example now surplus to requirement got a new designation. The horse stables became the new dormitories. Ministry began quickly and a small boarding and day school opened. In addition to teaching, the sisters provided breakfast for as many as forty children on a given morning. Their desire to serve was evidenced by their involvement in the newly established parish where they taught the church choir, helped with liturgies and altar decoration as well as visitation.

Despite their hard work and generosity of spirit the financial situation was far from healthy. In today’s language they were living in negative equity. The Motherhouse supported them as did religious and lay benefactors. Sr. Francis Clare, much demigrated Nun of Kenmare, sent them £50. The financial future was still bleak illustrated by the story that Sr. Martha made dinner for four people with a quarter pound of lamb. She jokingly offered the recipe to anyone who would like to have it. It was becoming clearer to all that the foundation was not viable. The final blow came in 1884 when a storm blew away one of the protecting walls that buffered the house from the onslaughts of the wild Atlantic. This proved the catalyst for the decision to withdraw from Bundoran and return to Monaghan.

But the Bundoran dream refused to die; it merely rested until June 21st 1892 when 6 sisters returned to a new purpose built convent on Station Road. Interestingly, the convent was named Mount St. Josephs and the convent bell set on a pedestal over the hall door was called Maria Joseph. These titles were not all that strange when one thinks of Mother Genevieve Beale’s steadfast devotion to St. Joseph.

A national school opened in 1893 became known as St. Louis Convent National School and was in operation for the following 86 years, staffed by Sisters of St. Louis except for two lay teachers. It closed its doors in 1979 when the Boys and the Girls Schools amalgamated into a central school, St. Macartans.

There were interesting additions through the years. The Cocoa House is one which no past pupil appears to forget. It’s not the primitive building that evokes the fond memories but the mugs of steaming sweet cocoa coupled with a bun handed out for free on bitterly cold days. An Associate member recently recalled how her mother who worked in the Cocoa House would return home with the leftovers from the cocoa distribution and she said it was like Christmas Day in their house. Then there was the addition of the Cookery Kitchen where girls of twelve and thirteen were taught the skills of cookery and laundry. The henhouse nestled at the bottom of the steps was one of the first additions. The first residents were 6 of the finest chickens, a gift from Carrickmacross,. They were the founding group of many fine layers and broilers.

Over the years the convent changed in many ways. It changed its original name to St. Louis Convent. While it never belonged to the Institute the Sisters of St. Louis took full responsibility for its maintenance. When in 2004 a decision was taken to move from the convent to a housing estate the building was put on the market. A local developer purchased the house and grounds with a view to conversion and extension. Planning permission failed to materialise and the building is now derelict.
Four Sisters live in White Maple Housing Estate. It seems that numbers are back where they began. We are involved in the parish, facilitate Associate Groups and hopefully are a helping presence.

While I have written only about the convent because that was the scope of my personal experience, there were other fine schools operated by the sisters: Stella Maris Domestic Science College and Ard Lughaidh Secondary School. The sisters also ministered in St. Josephs and St. Marthas. Maybe some other person will be encouraged to complete the picture.

Marian McGreal

Anne Kavanagh back at her Old School

On St. Brigid’s Day, St. Fursey’s N. School in Haggardstown, near Dundalk, celebrated the achievement of being awarded a second Green Flag. The Green Flag is awarded to schools in recognition of the pupils’ efforts in conserving energy and improving and beautifying their environment. The principal, Owen d’Arcy, who was a pupil of Anne Kavanagh’s mother at the same school invited Anne and her sister, Phil, to the ceremony. Also present was, was GAA player Paddy Keenan who raised the flag and Frank Lynch, a well-known Louth football player of the 1950s. Both Anne and Frank started in the new St. Fursey’s School on the same day in September 1946. An apple tree was planted in the grounds to mark the occasion. This was followed in the words of the proud school website by “a great GREEN party to celebrate the wonderful achievement.”

L to R: Lily & Frank Lynch, Phil Sheridan, Teresa Sweeney and Anne Kavanagh.
A band-stand for a podium, a dancing area for our centrepiece, a festive room (set for a wedding) and we ourselves (Associates and Sisters) seated around three sides of the square created by the dancing-floor, looking up and listening most intently to Dr. Ursula King, of the University of Bristol, as she talks to us very earnestly about a 'New Vision of Oneness' -- Theology for the 21st. century--such was the setting in exquisite scenery and brilliant sunshine at 'The Killyhevlin' on the above dates.

A cat cried in the distance and later walked right through the proceedings as if she owned the place. One wonders what all these features symbolised? Next morning the scene was more 'intimate' and in a different space. After each talk, Sr Carmel Bracken (Mercy) brought us effectively through body-movements to her guitar music and song or via other 'native' instruments - a gentle form of dance to help us integrate what we had heard from Ursula, in the knowledge that body, mind and spirit are one whole.

But what of the content? Shall I say that it was not for beginners. By now, most of us have been at least introduced to the idea of Religion and Science mutually informing each other. Science has so much to tell us today about how the world, including ourseves, came into being. So, the faith of our childhood needs to become an adult faith for today. This is not so new to us : Louis Bautain held that Religion and Science and Ecology belonged together and are to be reconciled. Today we need to expand our consciousness, have a cosmic vision, renew our image of God, be embraced by and embrace the Larger God, exchange the love of power for the power of love, get to know the cosmic Christ and ...celebrate.. So, the music and the dance were more than appropriate after all !

A big 'thank-you' to the Co-ordinating Committee of the Associates :Brid Dowling, Catherine Brennan,Clare Buckley, Helen Power, Angela Crossan, for helping to open us up to this larger world-view. If anyone wants to know about recommended reading towards this end - just ask them.

Mary Jo Hand.
On 24th March, 150 students and teachers from the Irish St. Louis Schools participating in the St. Louis/WorldWide school linking programme met in the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Blanchardstown, Dublin. Travelling from as far away as Ballymena and Kiltimagh, nevertheless all had arrived between 10.30 and 11.00, and there was time to meet and greet over tea and pastries before beginning work. The purposes of the day were as follows:

◊ to give the students an opportunity to participate in one Development Education workshop
◊ to hear presentations from students in four of the schools share information about what they are learning from their Link School and/or their study of the Millennium Development Goals
◊ to give the participating teachers an overview of the available resources and an opportunity to see how the Links are developing.

After the welcome and introductions, half of the students participated in one of the four workshops, while the other half remained in the conference room for a round table session facilitated by Patsy Toland, Education Officer from Self-Help Africa. They had an opportunity to listen to fellow students speaking about their own experience and projects, and then had time in table groups to apply what they were hearing to their own situation. The four workshops were led by Education Officers from One World Centre, Eco-Unesco, Debt and Development Coalition and Children in Crossfire. After an hour and a half, the round table and workshop participants switched places.

It was very inspiring to see and hear what our young people are capable of. They are developing an understanding of global issues that previous generations could not have dreamed of, and combining that understanding with values that are very faithful to Louis Bautain’s vision – understanding and values that have been fostered by the teachers and Principals who have so generously embraced and supported this project.

Anne Murray
In the Spring of 2010, I was asked to give the keynote address at a Conference entitled *Mysticism without Bounds 2011*, in Jan 2011 in Banglore. India has always held an attraction for me and this was an opportunity to gain first hand experience. Aware of well established connections between Indo-European influences and Ancient Irish spirituality, I chose to present a paper on aspects of the Celtic mystical tradition. The title of my paper was: “God in Creation: ‘The God intoxicated Celt’”, taken from a phrase of the Scottish theologian, John Macquarie. By summer 2010 I had constructed the abstract for my talk and by October the paper was all but ready. I called on the expertise of Sr Anita Muldowney to improve my power-point presentation which she did, with her customary efficiently, artistic creativity, and no fuss whatever.

On Dec I flew to Bangalore, via Paris the Paris-Bangalore flight taking some 12 hours. At the airport, at 2.30 a.m, I was met by two Good Shepherd Sisters and never can I never repay these sisters for their care of me, since my suitcase had gone missing, every traveller’s worst nightmare, and I had to be ‘minded’ for 2 days and helped to do some essential shopping. I soon learned that in this strange Asian urban culture, I had no freedom of movement and had to be lifted and laid everywhere. I had several days before the Conference, so a trip to Kerala had been planned, to visit a friend, Sebastian Painadath SJ, retreat master and expert on Asian spirituality. I was booked on the night train to Angalmali, a few miles from his ashram, Sameeksha in Kalady. Travelling by train in India is an unforgettable experience. I was in a carriage of 6 people with 3 more across the narrow passage way. Mine was the bunk (or shelf!) on the lowest level so happily I did not have to climb to the top! It was a first class carriage but I had to be delivered right to my numbered seat, otherwise I would not travel. I’ll never forget the scramble through the evening traffic jams to the station. Horns hooting, rickshaw taxis, motor bikes: all in constant, frenetic motion. Srs Gracy and Gowthami got platform tickets to ensure I found my seat. They also ensured I made friendly acquaintance with my fellow travellers. Soon the train was eating up the miles through the night southwards towards Kerala. I cannot say I slept, but with all my worldly goods of the moment in a belt around my waist and in a bag under my head, a bottle of water and a biscuit as a snack, I did my utmost to rest. My luggage was stashed, safely I hoped, under my seat, my suitcase having come just before I left for the station. I had been warned that I’d have little more than a minute to get off the train early next morning, so I asked the lady in the bunk nearest me to warn me when my stop was to hand.

Father Sebastian had sent a Jesuit colleague to get me safely off the train; he arrived with a written note to prove his identity. I smiled at the thought of being stolen! This Fr Saji, a handsome young Indian found a rickshaw taxi to bring us to the ashram for breakfast. Imagine my delight to find a little hut of my own in a woodland enclosure, equipped with bed, blanket, mosquito net and joy of joys, a personal shower and toilet. A hot drink, and a warm rice dish restored my self-belief and optimism. I had after all survived a lap of my adventure.

Kerala, being further south and with many waterways is extremely hot and humid, much hotter than Bangalore, but the vegetation is beautiful, with jasmine, multi coloured bougainvilleas, coconut and banana trees everywhere. Inevitably, the mosquitoes are active and much attracted to Irish blood. I have scars to prove it. Armed with anti-insect spray, Anthisan ointment, lavender and tee-tree essential oils, I fought them off bravely.

Life in the ashram was gentle and prayerful with trees offering shade from the sun. Nearby the picturesque river banks teeming with vegetation and fringed with trees of all kinds gave the impression of an exotic holiday resort. Rice and small bananas are the staple food of the ashram with tiny cups of sweet, milky tea - not my favourite beverage. I longed for a large mug of Barry’s tea. The evening meal is late in India, and Mass at 6.45 am so I retired early, only to be awakened by the cock before dawn. Everywhere in India, in city or country, it seems, the cock and the Muslim call to prayer vie for the privilege of your wake-up call, at 4.30 a.m.

Fr Sebastian, has a passion for inter-spirituality so he brought me on a trip to Kalady the birth place of the great Sankara, whom he explained is the Thomas Aquinas of Hinduism. I walked to the top of his memorial tower; each landing depicts a scene in the life of the great spiritual master. I saw bare-footed pilgrims carrying their few belonging on their heads, tracing their pilgrim way in the steps of the master.
That evening I attended an evening prayer ceremony in a Hindu or Buddhist temple, I can’t be sure which; we knelt barefooted at the back, Fr Sebastian lost in meditation, me desperately fighting off the mosquitoes that were eagerly nibbling at my toes.

A trip to the famous backwaters of Kerala was arranged for Saturday. I saw the vast spread of rice fields, the people working in the noonday sun with tiny umbrella hats for protection and the glorious flowering plants and trees overhanging the river. The river people travel only by boat; they wash themselves and their clothes in the river daily while the children play in the water and on the river banks. Swimming is essential from birth. To see the women, at the various boat stops along the way, gracefully alight and embark, dressed always in their beautiful multi coloured saris and head shawls, the men, in long skirts tucked up for work (à la Ghandi) was a huge unforgettable cultural experience.

By Sunday evening it was time to take the train back to Bangalore. Another long distance night train journey with hundreds of miles devoured by the small hours. This time it was not a first class carriage, so I had to step over sleeping bodies to get to the exit on time. Before I left the carriage, a seller had come on board with a flask of sweet milky coffee a tiny cup of which I gratefully purchased for 40 rupees, less than 20 cents. With no opportunity to wash or put a comb through my hair, I stood on the platform, dishevelled but all in one piece.

And now for Christ College and the all important conference which was my real purpose for coming to India. Fr Sebastian had phoned ahead to have someone meet me at the Bangalore Station. I had to give the train and carriage number and even the precise location of my seat. Again I was warned to stand on the platform beside my compartment and wait to be ‘collected’. It was 3.45 a.m. and the train was on time. I could not believe my luck when I saw a tall handsome young Indian student, called Ando with my name on a placard, smiling in welcome as only Indians can. I was safe at last. Soon I was speeding though the always frenetic traffic of Bangalore to Christ College. Once inside the gates I was cocooned in a tight web of security, escorted to the female accommodation block, a splendid building overshadowed by palm and coconut trees.

Once rested and showered I was ready to be introduced to Dharmaram College; home to 300 clerical students and their resident professors, all Carmelites of Mary Immaculate. My room was an en-suite flatlet at the farthest end of the campus with microwave and fridge in place and plugs that wouldn’t work until, by some clandestine piece of previous knowledge, I remembered to insert a biro to assist the entrance of the plugs for phone-charge and hairdryer (Not be tried at home!)

The Conference was a massive and very formal event involving over 300 participants from all continents and nationalities. When I saw the formality of the opening ceremony, I was rapidly getting cold feet! After the greatest living expert on mysticism, Dr Bernard McGinn, outlined the history of Mysticism, I was next to speak. There were students on hand to assist in setting up. The PowerPoint behaved beautifully and the parallels with Hinduism struck lively chords in the audience. The Breastplate of St Patrick, Lúireach Phádraig seems to exactly parallel a Hindu prayer of the six or eight directions. Ár bPaidreacha Dúchais correspond to similar daily practices in the Hindu religion and the music of Seán Davy’s ‘The Deer’s Cry’ was a suitable opening for the lecture. Thanks to Benedictine scholar, an tAthair Seán Ó Duinn, I had been alerted to some interesting materials. My final section was dedicated to poets such as: Kavanagh, Heaney, Joseph Mary Plunkett, Nuala NiDhomhnaill and RS Thomas, and through references to them, I confirmed the notion that wisps of Celtic mystical insight still survives among the poets and artists of today, part of The Underground Cathedral thesis posited by Mark Patrick Hederman OSB in his recent publication by that name. Ending with a slide of Kavanagh’s Trinitarian tree from ‘The Great Hunger’, I was touching on a symbol close to the very core of Hindu mysticism where ‘all reality is an outpouring of divine energy and the tree is the root of divine life pulsating in the cosmic tree’. This picture shows (clockwise) myself, Fr Kurian P, Peter Tyler from Twickenham, Bernard McGinn, Fr Francis and Reimund Bieringer from Louvain university. In the background is the other Fr Kurian K, chief organiser of the Conference.

Every day I attended several short papers in a variety of locations and on an amazing diversity of topics, and each day, there was one keynote address for all...
Aspects of the world of spirituality were all around: the contrast with the contemplative simplicity of the Christian ashram which we had just visited was striking. Carol, from South Africa had planned to spend in the ashram for a few days. We escorted her to her hut in the woods. She was warned, partly in jest, that an elephant might occasionally look in at her through the window, since this territory first belonged to the elephants and they occasionally return to stake claim on their territory. They do not harm anyone, though they may occasionally knock down a tree that gets in their way. No one resents these gentle giants their rights.

The Conference concluded with a gala dinner courtesy of the catering department of Christ College, with exquisite dancing done in stunning costumes, courtesy of the Dance and Drama Dept of the college. Students come from far and near to study in this college which along with Dharmaram Pontifical College and Seminary occupies 80 elegantly landscaped hectares, property of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate.

The Sunday after the Conference was the feast of the Epiphany and Fr Kurian Perumpallikunnel, who had befriended myself and two other participants from South Africa, invited us to his parish where he celebrated Mass in the Syrian rite. As in most Indian churches, the women are on one side, the men on the other, with the men always receiving Communion first. As usual, all shoes are discarded at the Church door. Later that day we set off in Fr Kurian’s car to visit another ashram, two ashrams in fact, one Christian and the other a huge Hindu ashram where thousands congregated to participate in The Art of Living which is fast becoming big business in India. Just as we exited the temple, His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar emerged into the open, dressed in white and carrying a red rose. He had come to walk among the people, dispensing blessing, flanked by a decorated elephant, one of the sacred Indian animals, and escorted by a retinue of his disciples, all dressed in white.

The contrast with the contemplative simplicity of the Christian ashram which we had just visited was striking. Carol, from South Africa had planned to stay in the ashram for a few days. We escorted her to her hut in the woods. She was warned, partly in jest, that an elephant might occasionally look in at her through the window, since this territory first belonged to the elephants and they occasionally return to stake claim on their territory. They do not harm anyone, though they may occasionally knock down a tree that gets in their way. No one resents these gentle giants their rights.

Fr Kurian’s friendship with Celia Kurie and myself continues to be a precious and enduring legacy of my Indian adventure. We hope he will come to London next year, when Peter Tyler, another friend of ours from St Mary’s, Twickenham, hopes to organise a Conference on Mindfulness. Kurian is an expert on St John of the Cross and would grace any company of scholars with his mysticism, humour and erudition. He is a champion of the poor people of his parish for whom he is parish priest. Celia, who is English by birth, continues teaching Spirituality in South Africa and I feel sure we will all meet again.

On the final day of my visit I had to fulfil a promise and return some items I had borrowed from the Good Shepherd Sisters. I asked the security guard at the College gate to find a rickshaw taxi for me. Just as well I had phone contact with Gracy because I got lost and she had to take another rickshaw to find me! I had tea with her and said a final goodbye to my ‘good shepherdesses’ for whom I was nothing but trouble; yet they were graciousness personified. My taxi back was selected by Gracy herself. What amazed me about Bangalore was that however crowded the traffic, however fast drivers interweave and edge their way forward, with continuous horn-hooting conversation, there little road rage and only rarely a traffic accident. Speed does not seem to create wealth for the thousands of rickshaw drivers who line up daily waiting for a fare of a mere 40 rupees, the price of a cup of coffee in India.

There I was on my last big adventure, a trip into Bangalore in a rickshaw taxi. I wish I could describe the feeling of being alone in the midst of such frenetic activity. So ended my adventure in India. I hadn’t been ill, I hadn’t got lost or been robbed and I had learned so much.

 Una Agnew
Withdrawal from Beresford St. January 15th 2011

It all began with Mags!
Carmel has spent 20 years in Beresford and has created a wealth of courses enabling the people of the parish to pick and choose and continually enrich their quality of life. To mark her withdrawal, we had a little prayer service based on the man at the gate of the year.

I said to the man at the gate of the year
Give me a light that I may tread safely
into the unknown
And he replied
put your hand into the hand of God
This shall be to you
better than light
and safer than a known way.”
So I went forth
and finding the hand of God
I trod gladly into the night.

As I said above, it all began with Magdalena who received a thank you note for returning her tickets with subscriptions to Fr. Christopher OFM for his inner city parish. It was one of those extraordinary moments. Mags (as she was known by all) had a sudden certainty that this was her call. She was finishing her term in Dun Lughaidh and with a flash of light found herself saying “I can help there”. She made an appointment with Father Christopher who was warm and welcoming but quietly wondering how this “fragile looking elderly nun” could deal with the needs of a scattered inner city parish, or the flight of steps to the flats. But there was no going back. If Mags found a companion she would go. Step 2 was the team’s decision to ask Carmel to consider joining Mags and in December 1989, the community took over 37 Beresford St. The man at the gate of the year had opened a new gate. Carmel trained in pastoral formation and Mags in literacy and visited the sick and elderly in their homes.

Soon there was a plethora of courses available. For Fr. Christopher, whatever would contribute to the life of the people would be welcome and soon life was bubbling all over the place. Eventually a centre was provided. The little house at 37 was also a hive of activity. I counted the visitors in the first few years and there were over 400 callers. Wasn’t that some tea making!

The courses set up ranged from Scripture, prayer, literacy, and art. There were retreats, embroidery, dreams. Whatever was new in St. Louis Communities, like Enneagrams, Meyer-Briggs etc., Carmel imported into 37. Everyone knew their number on the Enneagram and whether they were introvert or extrovert and all the time there was this buzz of life. What they loved in the meetings was time to talk and share. Many spoke of their growth in confidence.

The art group actually went to Paris with Maire Muldowney to view the Impressionists. I heard a good story there As they were seated in the gallery on a viewing bench, one “miss know-all” (there’s always one!) said ‘I think the angle is better from over here.’ They turned on her in true Dub fashion “well if the curator fixed this seat, to the floor he must know better than you where it’s best to view it.’ That settled that! The Beresford exhibitions were an annual feature. Clare Maguire went faithfully for 10 years doing exquisite embroidery with the groups. There was hardly a subject that wasn’t on offer and hugely appreciated.

I was there one day when a lovely lady came to meet Mags and start her reading lessons. “I’m so nervous” she said as she came in. “Sure I’m nervous myself Mary”, said Magdalena and that was a lovely start. Beresford St. was about nourishing the person. That’s what it did all those years.

The door was always open to whoever called. I counted the first three years of entries in the annals. 403 callers, many SSls as well and nobody left without a cuppa. Wasn’t that some teamaking?

So finally, finally the man at the gate of the year lit a lamp in another direction. SSL have gone but will never be forgotten along that little old street. Blessings on you Carmel and on all who have passed that way.

Gabrielle O’Connell
Thank you, sisters, for your kind expression of sympathy on the death of my sister, Gertrude. Your kindness was much appreciated - your support, Masses, letters and attendance at the removal and the funeral. All of this was a great source of comfort and consolation to me and my family. Mass has been offered for your intentions. With thanks. Imelda Doolin.

Our Recently Deceased

Sr Hannah O’Gorman
Born: Oct 4 1913
Died: Dec 30 2010

Sr Salome Moran
Born: Nov 14 1917
Died: Jan 8 2011

Sr Marie Clare Commins
Born: Feb 10 1912
Died: Mar 3 2011

Anam Cairde

For the past two years, here in Dun Lughaidh, our Sisters have developed a special prayer relationship with the members of the Senior Classes. Each sixth year student is adopted by a Sister as her anam cara. At the beginning of the school year, the sister meets with her group of anam cairde so she can put faces on the girls she is supporting in prayer and the girls in their turn have an opportunity to converse with the Sister who is caring specially for them. Lines of communication are kept open during the year and at least one other meeting is organized before final examinations. The students and staff have expressed deep appreciation for this form of apostolate. Triona McGinty

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Acknowledgements

Dear Sisters, I would like to thank everyone most sincerely for your prayers, Masses, letters and phone calls when my brother Tim died. Your kindness and concern for me was much appreciated. Holy Mass has been offered for your needs. Pia Mulligan.
By the end of January there was still one more postulant to come. Sr Annie arrived to the excitement of the 15 "old girls" who all gathered around her to explain the ropes and see her "presents" prayer books, beads, relics! and various pious objects. But the most special was this big, black book. "What's that?" we said. "The Bible," she replied, "a present from the parish priest." Utterly staggered, we gaped. "Do you want it?" she asked. Out goes my hand for what Dublin children used to call "the lend of a loan." Away I went with the bible and hid it in my little box kneeler in the chapel, (second from the front on the left as befitted my rank of 3rd last postulant.

I had never held a bible. It was a 'protestant book". The only one I had ever seen was in the little protestant church near our holiday home in Skerries. In our child theology of those days it was gravely wrong to enter a protestant church. So we spent days and hours putting just one foot in the door and deciding it might be a "venial" but two feet would definitely be a "mortal". So we just gazed in at the big eagle bookstand with the huge bible but certainly not daring to go any nearer!

And here was a bible in my own hands, and actually given by a parish priest to a new nun! We postulants were all old girls now and novelty had worn thin. So much rubbing and scrubbing and waxing of floors. But for me there was new life. Sr Annie didn't want the bible and so for weeks and weeks I knelt, sat or stood with the congregation but totally absorbed in my bible. I was fascinated, and the Mass that used to be so long and weary was now not long enough as I slipped little holy pictures to mark my stopping places each day. The novice mistress, kindly Mother Teresa, may have been thanking god for such a fervent postulant. All I remember is my own absorption. Some names would have turned up in ordinary life like poor Job! My mother continually said she'd need the "patience of Job" to cope with minor family crises but we never bothered to ask who Job was. My mother probably didn’t know either. And here he was, loaded with all manner of diseases, trials and actually more of it his own fault. My mother wouldn’t have like that. Then came the reference to the Twelve Tribes of Israel. That figure I had heard, but here they were with names. I said “these are worth knowing” and off I went a few each day .. Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Juda, Dan Hephthali, Gad, Asser, blank blank Joseph and Benjamin. 10 out of 12 remembered 70 years on!! Not bad.

Then there were strange people like poor Mrs Lott who was turned into a pillar of salt for her curiosity. There was the unfortunate Jonah caught in the whale’s interior! And there was Methusaleh who lived to be 999 years! There were endless boring long stories but I skipped along happily in my “pick and mix” until finally the novelty wore thin and I gave Sr Annie back her book!

Down the years I often meant to ask Annie Matthias, as we used to call her, what did she remember of that early special “book club”. 25 years had to pass before the Old Testament in all its beauty and wonder became part of all our lives in the Renewal in the 60's. Bless you Annie, and thanks for the seed you dropped in 1940.

Note: In case I sound thoroughly pagan, our Religious Knowledge programme in school contained the 4 Gospels, Acts, Liturgy, Apologetics and Church History – but no Old Testament.

Gabrielle O’Connell
Who Would Have Thought?

Who would have thought
As day after day we faced
Snow-white landscapes
A lonely robin
Pavements deadly-iced
Failed heating and water systems
The earth cold, unyielding
That we’d ever be surprised again.
By that fragile first snowdrop
Followed by brave crocus and tulip
None of them giants in
the flower kingdom
And then as if to enforce the point,
Wordsworth’s “host of golden daffodils”
Arrived with a flourish.
Busy birds building nests
After this long Lenten winter.
Rebirth and renewal
Could be imagined and enjoyed again.
Creation had led the way
Gave us hope
New life unerringly came once more
To make us certain of realities
We do not see
“He is Risen” Alleluia!
And so are we Alleluia!

Dympna O’Daly