They came from all arts and parts, from Belfast, Bundoran, Carrickmacross, Dublin, Dundalk, Kiltimagh, Knock, to the banks of the Liffey where dreams are made or visions seen – depending on which meaning you give to our beloved word in Gaelic - “Aisling”, spelt now, I see, in the English form, Ashling. I am talking about our St.Louis Irish Associates, their companion-Sisters, and Uainin and Anne (K) and, not least, our guest-speaker (and much more!), Bríd of New York.

Wanting to get a good seat, one might be forgiven for hurrying past the centrepiece on your right, only to return there later and dwell on the beautiful earthfabrics speaking to us of the universe story (with captions to help), a golden symbol of the Risen Christ, the link from there to “our” Sint Unum, pictures of our founders and the altar at Turkenstein and a quote from our foundation-document: “Associates are companions on the journey, exploring with the Sisters the depth, riches and challenge of Sint Unum as we move into the new consciousness of an all-embracing God, the meaning of life and the universe” - a good teaching tool, surely, for new members and a good reminder for the more “advanced”. Over it all the light of Christ symbolised by the special Associate candle complete with its dedicated emblem.

After the gracious preliminaries, we pray. A lovely song starts us off – “There is a time....”. A reading adapted from Joyce Rupp tells me to toss away (my) old map - no Sat Nav or GPS here! My inner wisdom tells me “it is time for the pilgrim in me to travel in the dark, to learn to read the stars that shine in my soul”. Yes, according to Ecclesiastes, there is a time for everything... a time to feel lost and a time to find my way home. I feel greatly challenged already.

Brid gives us the first of two presentations on Abbé Louis Bautain as our inspiration through his spirit of prayer, his enthusiasm for the Gospel, his trust in Providence, each of these points so ably developed by Brid, with that rare combination of simplicity in the telling and depth in the meaning.
Then we told our own story, group by group, of “what it means for me to be a St Louis Associate”. Report after report spoke of the great value of praying together, sharing our hopes, our fears, our joys, our disappointments, our sadnesses – as we wished- in a safe and supportive environment, of being exposed to the best thinking of today on matters of spirituality, theology, faith, personal development, Christology, creation spirituality, ecology and the challenges facing us as Catholics and Christians in this secular age. Much credit was given to the sister-companions who accompany the Associates in this enterprise. Perhaps not enough credit to the Associates themselves who bring so much to the experience and to the Sisters.

The second half of the day took a step forward into Mission. In a ‘tour de force’, Brid spoke to us about the spirituality needed for Mission today, grounded in Bautain’s sensitivity to contemporary needs and, in turn, effectively linked to Pope Francis’ emphasis on service. Strong stuff for an afternoon! We were kept on our toes, so to speak, by the challenge to “put our gifts at the service of others”. We were presented with four ‘wisdoms’:

- Daily personal encounter with Jesus Christ;
- Reading the signs of the times (including asking myself what are the needs in my area?);
- Going out of myself to make room for others, and
- Placing the poor at the centre of Mission (the key to service). (The poor can be those lacking in spiritual or religious care as well as other forms of care.)

It was noted that that the poor also evangelise “us” and that we must pay attention to “their” spirituality. And so, a few pertinent questions were put to us: “What are the needs to which you can respond today?”, “Is there a call for us here?” We were invited to complete the sentence: “I feel called to...” and, after a few minutes, during which the Holy Spirit was busy, those who wished shared on an individual basis with the whole group. It was noted that the challenge is for me as an Associate as well as on a personal level.

Then our minds were directed towards ‘The Associates and the Future’. The question was, “Is there a hope that I have for our Associates in Ireland by 2017 (fiche bliain ag fás) and again by 2027 ?

Some of these hopes were:
- to be filled with God-consciousness ourselves and to share this with others;
- to step into the shoes of our sister-facilitators (a big challenge!);
- to be twice our present size in 2017 and to leave 2027 to God;
- to go out to young people;
- to further the involvement of women, e.g. in parish Retreats, etc.;
- to look around our own communities – are there lonely people?; and
- by 2027 to be still in existence as a group.

In the meantime to live the Gospel outside of our group so that people will be aware of us as a group and want to join us.

(Note: The point was made that we can talk about this again at a meeting).

Towards the end, we were referred to the saying on the hotel notepaper in front of us: “Do it now! Today will be yesterday tomorrow!” (author unknown).

**Conclusion:**

Remembering that “There is a time for everything under the sun...” and capturing the energy that the above question called forth in us, perhaps the challenge is to combine the urgency of the Apostle Paul and of Pope Francis with the timeliness of Ecclesiastes and Louis Bautain. 

Mary Jo. Hand
“God of the greenery of early Summer,
I always marvel at this season of newness.
In the conversations of the new leaves,
and in the rising freshness of the sap,
You are calling me to new beginnings.
I have scarred the earth in my hurry to
Succeed or impress,
and I have refused to lift my mind
from the Winter of revenge.
Sadly the world has its share of winter people,
who leave the world a bleak heritage,
But now as the trees are dressing for summer,
You invite me again to joy.”

The long incarceration in the darkness of Winter is
over now, and St Patrick’s
day has been and gone.
This lovely land around us
looks different now, and
things are happening under
our feet, that we could hear
if we listened hard enough..movings, shiftings,
little sighs, breathings, the
first snowdrop, the first daffodil, the first crocus, the
early birdsong, the first of
the cherry blossom! And
with a splash of enthusiasm,
Spring inevitably takes us by surprise once again,
dressing the damp earth in the loveliest of gentle and
fragile tiny flowers, the first lambs, pushing their
tender heads just up high enough to be noticed,
admired and welcomed, as fresh newly born signs of
hope. With this call from nature to come alive again,
it’s easy to forget that dark and dismal Winter, and
lift our spirits towards the sun, and the Summer.

Much has changed in our Region since our last issue
of Seo & Siúd in November 2013. We said goodbye,
and mourned the passing of Gabrielle, Maeve, Eileen-
Theresa, Bried, Carmel and Síle and gave thanks to
the God of the Resurrection for their long, blessed
and fruitful lives amongst us, and for the joys, com-
panionship, laughter and creativity they shared with
us over many years.”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 home”…

We continue to hold in our hearts, and before God, all
who are ill, have illness in their lives, and who are
caring for others. May the God of healing be their
strength and comfort.
Dromantine Retreat & Conference Centre is where I have lived and worked for the past nine years. Dromantine – the idyllic SMA (Society of African Missions) centre is located between Newry & Banbridge a mile off the main Dublin to Belfast road, within the rolling hills of Co. Down. It is a place of tranquil beauty with that beauty varying throughout the various seasons of the year. Living there, I have enjoyed -

The freshness of Spring
The lushness of Summer
The glorious splendour of Autumn
And the bleak beauty of Winter.

Walking almost daily in the beautifully landscaped grounds which include, farmland, woodland, lakeside gardens and a lake that shimmers in the moonlight and glistens in the midday sun I have savoured the special atmosphere of this oasis of peace. What a wealth of beauty in one small place on this planet – it is truly a tabernacle of divine presence. I have been privileged to enjoy this beauty for the past nine years and for this I am so grateful.

As Administrator of the Conference Centre I could so easily not have savoured all this beauty around me as life was very busy. I had responsibility for the smooth running of the Centre. Staff rostering, which I loved doing was the key to this, because once each member of staff knew where to be and what activity was required at any one time the whole place ran smoothly. The staff I worked with were all multi task and moved freely from one type of work to the other. They might make beds and clean rooms in the morning and then change and serve meals in the evening. I found the people I worked with generous and interested in the guests they served.

I answered all queries regarding bookings, followed up on these and the requirements necessary for the events whether day or residential. For longer bookings like Chapters or extended leadership training programmes a lot of planning was required with the groups concerned to ensure the smooth running of their event – room allocations, conference rooms, secretariat etc as well as meal requirements were in place.

I was very happy when I discovered that the mission of the conference centre included an ecumenical thrust. This I felt was in harmony with our St. Louis focus and motto. We have hosted so many different denominations in Dromantine over the years as well as non Christian religions – The SGI Buddhists have been here for retreat as well as some business people from Iraq. School staffs held days here as well as both Primary & secondary level retreats varying from 1 to 3 days in length. Parish Pastoral councils, the Permanent Diaconate training programmes, Theology courses Lay groups of varying kinds have all had their events in Dromantine. We were particularly delighted to host the Anglican Primates meeting here in 2005. I think this event opened up the way for the other non Catholic groups to come to Dromantine. Since that event Dromantine seems to be the place to go! Then in 2012 we had the Eco congregation Inaugural meeting here with some excellent and challenging speakers. This latter group planted trees while there, adding to the beauty of Dromantine into the future.

Dromantine has such potential into the future. It is strategically located for north/ south events. We have accommodated a few governmental groups from both sides of the island and hope this can continue. As the need for viability becomes more pressing in these difficult economic times Dromantine will have to engage in more secular events. The number of religious as we know is dwindling and so the numbers able to come away to places like Dromantine is reducing every year. It will be imperative to offer retreats and other spiritual nourishment to members of all Christian churches. Richard Rhor says that the future of the Churches is ecumenical so Dromantine needs to find a way of answering the needs of our time. My hope is that it can do that and maintain this beautiful place as an oasis for future generations.

I have been happy to be part of the journey and wish the SMA Fathers the guidance they need to answer the spiritual needs of people into the future.

Mary Connellan
This is an amazing read. A book about war, suffering, man’s inhumanity to man, about love, forgiveness, and seeking for the truth. It is a book about reviewing one’s life and having the courage to search and find redemption, in the most horrendous of situations. The book was written in 1996 but only recently has been made into a film, which is also worth seeing. The book is a true story, about the life of an exceptional man, Eric Lomax.

Eric Lomax was born in 1919, in Scotland, and died in October 2012. His early life, as he grew up in Edinburgh, was relatively conventional and predictable, but his fascination, boyhood preoccupation, and interest lay in steam engines, trains, trams, and cable cars of the 20th century. His youthful intrigue with the details of them, led to him knowing almost everything about them.

With the onset of WW2, he was conscripted into the British Army and sent to Japan. During his service, he had no choice but to build the infamous “Railway of Death”, the Japanese line from Thailand to Burma. Ironically this was to bring him in touch again with railways, in the most horrific way. When putting his vast knowledge of steam trains to good use, he was found with a contraband radio in his possession, and taken a prisoner of war, in Singapore in 1942.

What followed in the form of the tortures, to which he was subjected, makes for fairly harrowing reading. But what uplifts this remarkable book, is its compassion and humanity, and the tenderness of its narrative. Whether Lomax is reliving his childhood fascination with steam locomotives and trams, or describing the horrendous inhuman acts of torture, the prose is consistently imbued with an almost poetic, and innocent sense of wonder. The Japanese treatment of their prisoners of war, during WW2, is about as monstrous as it is possible to imagine. Curiously though, and despite some horrific personal experiences at the hands of his captors, Eric Lomax’s account, often with excruciating detail, is most memorable as an inspiring, humbling and remarkable reminder, of much that is good about humanity. He was affected physically, psychologically, emotionally, and on meeting his wife, who quickly sensed that all was not well with her new husband, encouraged him to face his demons, his nightmares and the trauma he endured, and make attempts to meet his captor. At times, Lomax seems detached from all he had endured, almost like his mode of survival, but he was anything but detached from the horrors inflicted on him. Instead he had absorbed them, at last, after so long being ruinously absorbed by them.

This is a difficult but compelling read, of a man who endured the utmost brutality in WW2, returning 50 years later to meet his interrogator, who himself had suffered horrific guilt over five decades, but Lomax had the courage to realise that the process of forgiving one of his captors, would ultimately help to heal himself. What is amazing about this story is the ability of the human spirit to move from a position of seeking revenge and demolition of the captor, to a dramatic and Christian gesture of profound forgiveness. This book is a lesson about reconciliation, letting go, and healing, and the resolute courage of one man, with the supportive encouragement of his wife, and therapist, to seek out his captor and forgive him. What seemed unattainable on page 269, when he writes “It is impossible for others to help you come to terms with the past, if for you the past is a pile of wounded memories and angry humiliations, and the future is just a nursery of revenge”, became for him a redeeming reality. It was ultimately a journey that both prisoner and captor had to travel, to come to terms with what had happened to both of them, in those prison camps.

At first, the elderly Lomax had revenge on his mind, as he contemplated meeting his former tormentor, Nagase Takashi, but Lomax walked forward and forgave his enemy. He took the high road, in spite of all the suffering he endured. The story ends with the reconciliation of the two men and an emotional moment for me, in recognising the strength that led him to find forgiveness in his heart, not an easy gesture, but hugely significant in his life.

I remember seeing this film about the same time as a saw “12 years a slave” which eventually got an Oscar, but I honestly felt that “The Railway Man” was by far the better film and more deserving of an award. The Sunday Times describes this film as “A profoundly and beautifully written story of heartrending honesty “….. I totally agree, and read it if you can!  

Méabh Ní Uallacháin
Over recent weeks, I’ve had a few politely persuasive invitations from Méabh to write something for ‘Seo agus Suid’. Her broad remit that went something like “well, what’s happening in your life now?”

So, where to start? I have been living in Enniskillen since Feb 2011 when I got a job in Loughan House Open Prison, in Blacklion. I worked there until my official retirement age last July. Maud Murphy worked there before me and left a glowing reputation. Working in an Irish prison was, to say the least, a bit different from working in a Brazilian one!

My week begins on Monday with “mother care” in Scotstown, Monaghan as part of the family rota of minding our mother on a 24/7 basis. At 93, she has advanced dementia and severe deafness and is living in the family home. We are 8 children, 6 boys and 2 girls. (I am the eldest). Our care plan involves everyone doing the best he/she can to make this ending phase of our mother’s life as comfortable and supported as possible.

For me, this whole process has been a time of coming home in many ways, coming full circle back to family – and as an adult who has been privileged to experience a lot of life in two other cultures – the US and Brazil. At times, it’s like being on a roller coaster, other times it’s grounding and calming. Most of it is good and blessed; some of it is difficult and stretching. All of it is human – and mystery.

I also work part-time in the Ashling Centre in Enniskillen, a counselling centre set up some 20 years ago by the Mercy Sisters in response to a need for local people to drop in and socialise. As time progressed, the Sisters became aware of the need to provide a more professional type of support in response to the kinds of issues that surfaced among the clientele i.e. depression, addictions, relationships, traumas/abuse, loneliness, etc. especially after the Enniskillen bomb which happened close to the Convent. It was then, that the Centre began specialised work with trauma victims of The Troubles. The present professional counselling service for adults and children now involves 11 counsellors and administrative/domestic staff. Referrals mostly come via GPs and Mental Health Services. The service is free (while inviting clients to make a voluntary contribution) and targets the most vulnerable and marginalised in the community. Funding comes from the statutory and voluntary sector involving a huge amount of time and energy from the Manager. I feel very privileged to be part of the counselling team in the Centre. It works to a high ethical and caring standard engaging in constant reviews of systems to ensure this. Group supervision, team and line management meetings are features of the support system for counsellors. In addition, we have periodic workshops on such issues as sexual abuse, stress management and addictions.

I also work one day per week in Omagh College in the SUSE programme (Steps Up to Sustainable Employment). This involves working with unemployed mature students hoping to get back into the work force. Most are vulnerable adults for whom continuous employment has become temporarily impossible mostly because of issues like redundancy, separation, addiction, depression, stress, bereavement, parenting young children etc.

I find work in the Ashling Centre and Omagh College rewarding and stretching. The dreams and struggles of vulnerable and poor people, never cease to inspire me. God’s spark of light in whatever the human situation is always a source of wonder and hope. I am always learning and being enriched and am often reminded of how privileged my life is.

Apart from the above, what I call my core ministries, I have a few other engagements that involve my attention on a monthly/or other basis:

I also work part-time in the Ashling Centre in Enniskillen, a counselling centre set up some 20 years ago by the Mercy Sisters in response to a need for local people to drop in and socialise. As time progressed, the Sisters became aware of the need to provide a more professional type of support in response to the kinds of issues that surfaced among the clientele i.e. depression, addictions, relationships, traumas/abuse, loneliness, etc. especially after the Enniskillen bomb which happened close to the Convent. It was then, that the Centre began specialised work with trauma victims of The Troubles. The present professional counselling service for adults and children now involves 11 counsellors and administrative/domestic staff. Referrals mostly come via GPs and Mental Health Services. The service is free (while inviting clients to make a voluntary contribution) and targets the most vulnerable and marginalised in the community. Funding comes from the statutory and voluntary sector involving a huge amount of time and energy from the Manager. I feel very privileged to be part of the counselling team in the Centre. It works to a high ethical and caring standard engaging in constant reviews of systems to ensure this. Group supervision, team and line management meetings are features of the support system for counsellors. In addition, we have periodic workshops on such issues as sexual abuse, stress management and addictions.

I also work one day per week in Omagh College in the SUSE programme (Steps Up to Sustainable Employment). This involves working with unemployed mature students hoping to get back into the work force. Most are vulnerable adults for whom continuous employment has become temporarily impossible mostly because of issues like redundancy, separation, addiction, depression, stress, bereavement, parenting young children etc.

I find work in the Ashling Centre and Omagh College rewarding and stretching. The dreams and struggles of vulnerable and poor people, never cease to inspire me. God’s spark of light in whatever the human situation is always a source of wonder and hope. I am always learning and being enriched and am often reminded of how privileged my life is.

Apart from the above, what I call my core ministries, I have a few other engagements that involve my attention on a monthly/or other basis:

Aisling Centre Support Group: for family members living with a loved one’s addiction(s)
Fermanagh Churches Forum a monthly ‘Faith and Friendship’ gathering that rotates around the local Churches and uses reflections prepared by Ruth Patterson. I enjoy meeting and listening to people from the different faith/cultural/political traditions who are trying to find ways forward in our common desire for peace in NI.

Lough Derg Counsellors: This was set up some 20 years ago by the Mercy Sisters in response to an invitation by the then Bishop of Clogher, Joe Duffy. It is a blessing to be on the island during the pilgrimage season. What sunsets! (The food/ accommodation are wonderful – for staff!) Maura Clerkin
On behalf of my family I want to express deep gratitude to all who sympathised and prayed for us, in our bereavements and thanks especially to those who attended funerals and came long distances. Holy Mass has been offered for all their intentions in Knock. Rosita

My family join with me in expressing our heartfelt thanks to you all for your various expressions of sympathy when our dear Mam, Maureen, died. R.I.P. We were really touched by all your phone calls, letters and Masses offered and indeed by your presence at Mam’s wake in her home and at her funeral. These expressions of love were a real comfort to us all. There is a huge gap in my life but I know my Mam is at rest. My family will never forget the support St Louis gave to me to enable me to look after Mam in her own home in her final years. It was a blessed time. The support I received all along makes me feel very humble and forever grateful. Mass has been offered for all your intentions with our sincere gratitude. Bernie Sheridan
To-day is a special occasion for us to extol our Almighty Father for His blessings on the Rathmines communities over one hundred years, especially on their educational ministry, and on their many other pastoral services to their brothers and sisters in the parish. To-day for us this is the acceptable time of thanksgiving to acknowledge the work of the Holy Spirit in His outpouring of grace, on our predecessors over the last 100 years.

How much planning and preparation went into this foundation from Monaghan in 1913. The late Archdeacon Fricker from Rathmines was one of the movers of this project, as well as Mother Antonia Farrell, who both accompanied the 4 foundresses to Charleville House, recently vacated by the Loreto Sisters and also considered prior to that, for a new foundation by the Holy Ghost Fathers. These 4 Sisters were Srs M. Gabriel McDonnell, Austin Dowd, Ethna Murray and Borgia McDonnell. (I wonder were the McDonnell Sisters related). What communities did these Sisters come from?

Here too we must remember the local ladies from the neighbourhood who helped to prepare the welcome for the sisters and were so caring and generous to them. Many priests from various religious congregations warmly welcomed the Sisters and assured them of their prayers and good wishes. I think here of Fr. Peter Dwyer S.J. who was from Carrickmacross and newly ordained in 1913. He came too on the 15th August and brought the lovely framed picture of “Our Lady of the Chair” by Rafael which we still have in our parlour. He also blessed the premises.

The year 1913 was a troubled one in Dublin, with rumours of impending power-struggles in Europe and in Ireland, and more especially the sad affair in Dublin of the Lock-out of 26th August 1913. Rathmines was determining itself as a separate unit from the city at this time. There were well built houses appearing along the main road here, the water-system had improved, the local library was opened in 1913 and in this year the first National pilgrimage to Lourdes took place, but there was no electricity as yet, or central heating, or mobile phones! There was only coal, open fires, chimney sweeps and pens and pencils!

Charleville House was built in 1859 by the famous Lord John Gray who was married to Anne Dwyer, of Limerick. He was a fine politician for Ireland and a great civic figure. The story has it that this house was in fact two houses, but Lord Gray had a family of five running about it, so what with servants etc, I wonder! The Sisters were blessed in having the field in front and gardens at the back. I love to think of the cow they had in this field to supply them with milk. In Dublin at this time there were 600 dairies, each one with their own milking cows nearby! How times have changed!

As the number of school-children registered began to increase, plans for expansion were afoot. The Loreto sisters had left a small hall or gymnasium at the back of the convent. This catered for the Junior pupils and the High School pupils. Eventually, Nos 7 & 8 on Grosvenor Road were purchased, then the new red-brick school, Assumpta Hall and Cuisle. Alongside these ministries, was the establishment of the fine National Primary School in Richmond Hill in January 1940. Boys from the neighbourhood were also registered there, and that boys school later became a Nursing Home for the Elderly in the parish.

From the beginning, great attention was given by the Sisters to the spiritual education of the children – preparation for the Sacraments, attendance at Benediction and Processions of the Bl Sacrament in the grounds, the Sodality of our Lady, all encouraged and inspected at times by the Parish clergy.

Another aspect of the Education provided was the cultivation of the fine Arts, especially Music, Domestic Science and Art. Operettas and dramas were produced and in later years, collaboration with St Mary’s College was a fairly regular feature. Musical association was forged with the R&R of Rathgar and what of the famous Cantoirí Óga Áth Cliath, still on the go! In fact, to-day, I think some of our sister-musicians, ex-pupils of Rathmines, are with us to mark this auspicious occasion. A very pronounced difference in our schools and ministries in 2013 is the multiplicity of nationalities attending. Of the 600 students enrolled in the High School about 10/12 % are of other nationalities, than Irish. This is reflected in the Primary School also.

Last but not least, we pay tribute to the hundreds of parents, teachers, nurses, benefactors, priests and St. Louis Sisters who toiled with great skill and love to establish Christ’s Kingdom here in Rathmines.

Micheál Hughes
Looking back on that lovely weekend in Co Wicklow, in the Dominican Eco centre of “An Tairseach” my sense is one of gratitude that we had that space together. Before we even got there something very special happened between the group of 18, that had chosen to go. On the encouragement of Fr Simon Sleeman O.S.B. who was coming to spend the weekend with us, we paused before we rushed into planning the days ahead, and began a process of dreaming of how we would like the two days to open out to us. This was in many ways new for us, as our tendency often would be to plan everything to the last detail!

We asked the question of one another “What is your dream for this weekend in November, this special time apart, this privileged space for St Louis, in our search for a world healed, unified, and transformed? Could we find this transformation and healing even within ourselves at this time? Simon had encouraged us to sit with these dreams and “see what lands “… a call to trust the Spirit, and one another.

From the fruit of this Contemplation, came many amazing and delightful words of inspiration, encouragement, both poetical and compassionate, words that were real, honest, caring and hope filled, shared with one another, and with Simon, on an email forum, in preparation for the days together. We asked one another how the weekend could best used, so that we leave on Sunday refreshed and renewed.

Simon returned many times to Psalm 91 The just will flourish like the palm tree, and grow like a Lebanon cedar, planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our God, still bearing fruit when they are old, still full of sap still green, and this echoed with us. He spoke of flourishing implying life, growth, vibrancy, creativity, energy, blooming, nourishing, coming to fruition, a new way of being in the world, and nurturing the inner life. Flourishing implies interconnectedness, as we cannot flourish alone and we are born into and exist in a web of relationships. If you seek true happiness, get connected, and seek a way of life where our hearts enlarge and grow, if not examine your own heart and see what is blocking this and killing the soul… A new way of being includes every aspect of my humanity, my mind, body and soul, and my darkness as well as my light. He quoted Hannah Arendt, who proposed that our natural condition is good, and BIRTH not DEATH as the defining moment of life. She emphasizes the actuality of our living rather than the inevitability of our dying. In spirit, we accompanied Gabrielle Mary, a friend to many, on her final journey that morning, and prayed with Pádraigín Ní Uallacháin’s CD

*May you go safely on the path of love,*  
*you who lived all life’s desire,*  
*Farewell my love, this day is ebbing,*  
*and the long night is now in full tide…*  
*Go mbeannaí an ghrían, an ghealach ’s an ghaoth duí;*  
*go mbeannaí Dia, gach spiorad is si duit…*

In a gentle but real way, Simon facilitated many of the dreams and longings we expressed before we went to “An Tairseach” and perhaps none more so than in our sharing of a Penitential Service on the Sat night. In crossing the tairseach/threshold, we moved from one room to another, from the darkness of sin, to the light of forgiveness. Holding a little light, in openness and honesty before God, we put words on our weaknesses, failings and darkness, blowing out the light as we did so, and sitting reflectively in the darkness, a symbol of how our sins blot out God’s light… then moving into the room of light, we picked up a lighted candle and shared our strengths, goodness, gifts, our willingness to care and love one another, and our desire to walk in the light. Simon then prayed gentle, healing words of pardon and forgiveness with us. This was indeed the highlight of the weekend for most of us. The Eucharist, on Sunday morning was a continuation of what we had gently begun in the Penitential service, and again a profound moment of communion with God and with one another, with music, prayer and light. It was good to be there that November morning. Yes, we partied a bit too! And on leaving, we felt we had grown in understanding, and appreciation of one another. We were grateful to all who had made us feel so welcome there, to Pauline and Simon who had walked with us, and we came away feeling “refreshed, recharged and renewed”…

*Méabh Ní Uallacháin*
Whether it was an instinct to tidy or an afterthought to find an apron to make the dinner, I’m not sure. Whatever made me rummage in what had long been called ‘the apron drawer’ in No 7 Grosvenor Road is anyone’s guess. A variety of shades, shapes and colours, not to mention the scent of yesteryears’ dishes greeted me as I persevered in my rummage. Searching for what I remembered of my long lost apron, I uncovered items of culinary dress even longer forgotten than my own, which immediately brought to the surface of my mind a gallery of faces from the near and distant past. I almost forgot the half-cooked dish I had started so arrested was I by memories called up by the multi coloured conglomerate of apron-strings long since folded and relegated.

Treasa OKeeffe looked chic no matter what she wore but in the kitchen she generally cut a dash in a frilly number that meant she could answer the hall door with her usual elegance, poise and charm. Some aprons I couldn’t quite match with faces but once washed and on the clothes line, I saw, with an upsurge of emotion, a procession of faces from the community annals. I took photos of the aprons since they create for me a visual story of a community that spanned over 30 years and gave voice to an intimate domestic life in community that peaked and plummeted with the ups and downs of table fellowship.

Into the washing machine they would go, I thought, till we see what next to do. As the colours unfolded I recalled the variety of signature dishes prepared and eaten with varying degrees of relish round the large pine kitchen table of Wakefield community over the years. It was quite a shock to recall the wearers of these aprons and replay some tapes from the past. Sifting through the pile I saw there Eustace O’Gorman’s old blue check apron that reminded me of her favourite ‘casserole dish’ which no one dared call ‘stew’. The memory of Ernaut O’Reilly rushing in from the Meath with her single-minded purpose of having bacon and turnip on the table for all by six p.m. was still vivid. Imelda Doolin’s spaghetti bolognais was always plentiful and spoke of table largesse in abundance while Marion Reynold’s lamb chops and carrots were more sparse yet equally tasty. Marion’s sky-blue front-apron was instantly recognisable. The sight of it reminded me of Mary in the gospel since Marion was expert at being contemplative in the oratory while the dinner cooked gaily on the stove at the same time. None of your brother Lawrence stuff of finding God in the pots and pans for her!—the oratory it must be… which the carrots did not always appreciate! But there was always an angel guardian to hand! at least nearly always!

…On a practical note, If you recognise your apron in the photo, please call at number 7 and we’ll fish it out of storage for you. You only have to pay the laundry bill we won’t charge for storage! *Una Agnew*
Sometime after Easter 1966 Mother Columbanus came on visitation to Kumasi. We were still adjusting to the new Louis Sandys head-dress. Say what you like about the old box, but in the tropics it did allow some air to circulate around your head, whereas the new “pot de chambre” look sat airtight on your crown and was an added menace if you had any unruly or straying locks to show! During the farewell party that ended visitation some of us did a song and dance routine, part of which had “on-stage Columbanus” wagging a finger as she admonished:

If you want to delight me, keep your hair out of sight, dear
Just because you’re out of your box
don’t mean you’re goin’ to wear frocks
And have your hair all sea-sick with waves
or follow ev’ry new craze
No! You’re St Louis and Joo le Voo-ly
you’ll keep your hair out of sight.

Those were quite early days in Vatican 2 terms when we were still pre-occupied with externals. A year or so later the plot had thickened. More serious themes were emerging and in 1967 in Kilkeel a monologue addressed to our Jesuit retreat director (unsent, I should add) the following sentiments emerged:

There was one thing you omitted, Father,tell us we’re COMMITTED
That is, given up, not LENT TO
Johannine AGGIORNAMENTO
Bid us flee Tridentine ghettoes.
Change to minis and stilettoes
For we’re Parousiac women
and “we must be in the swimmin’”, etc.

Why, you may ask, am I bringing these texts up now? Partly because 52 years on I find myself genuinely interested in Vatican 2 and what it was about. (I seem to wake up to the true significance of things long after I’ve lived through them.) Now I’m fully aware that retrospection has been getting a bad press of late, but it’s not always about nostalgia. It could be that as one grows older, looking back at the past may afford an opportunity to discover a different perspective on some of its less palatable, even painful moments.

The Tsunami of changes that hit us in the 1960’s-80’s certainly knocked me off my feet. Aged 27 at the start of the Council I might (to quote Jo O’Donoghue in New Horizons) have been among “the young and the brave who found those years exhilarating.” Not so. Jo goes on to sympathise with an older generation for whom “it must have been terrifying”. I was not terrified either; but there was a sense of having got entangled in an undertow of nagging self-doubt and fear. Was I all of a sudden in the wrong place? Quite honestly I was still very happy, thank you, trying “to be, like the Guardian Angel of the children confided to my care.” But was I in reality pulling back from being totally available?

Was that perhaps why I no longer seemed to be “in the swimming”? (It occurs to me as I write this that when we got the invitation to suggest titles for the Jo O’Donoghue book that one of mine was: Stepping out of the Boat. It underscores my overriding sense of those V.2 years as ones when I was afraid or wasn’t willing to take that risk.)

So what about those “funnies” I quoted at the start? That was me in the earlier years larking around but I can see with hindsight that even then, while I was giving the impression of being “cool” I was (granted unconsciously) projecting my own fears on to Mother Columbanus and the Rev. S.J. - he was openly hostile to the ethos of V.2. (Here you are free to interject: Come on, Kitty, less of the psychology!) But there were undertones of “where will it all end?” Would we indeed start following “every new craze”? Would Dieu le Veut no longer be the old, tried and tested mainspring of St Louis endeavour? Was I so mean-spirited that I was only “lent to” the new dispensation? I was out of my depth for sure. Small wonder then that sometime around the 70’s a poem, Not waving but drowning by Stevie Smith emerged on to the scene. It mirrored closely enough what was going on inside me. I Nobody heard him, the dead man

Poor chap, he always loved larking
And now he’s dead.
His heart gave way, they said.
Oh, no, no, no. It was too cold always
(Still the dead one lay moaning)
I was much too far out all my life
And not waving but drowning.”

Pt 2 (if you’re interested) will explore how a re-reading of certain chapters in New Horizons helped me to look at the past in a way that would “give comfort root-room” (G.M.Hopkins)

Kitty Fitzsimons
On the Street Where I Live

We had become, more or less, a middle-aged settled street where I live in Belfast until a few younger couples moved in. We hadn’t enjoyed the sound of children at play for a good while but things began to change year by year. One family had a baby girl and then another girl. Another couple close by, also had a baby girl and she had a little sister in due course.

When a house was sold in our street, a new family moved in – dad, mum and you’ve guessed it! - three girls. So now we had seven gorgeous girls to delight us.

Summer came dancing over the hills and the days seemed to last forever. The little lassies played in their front gardens and then, by degrees, were allowed to venture onto the foot paths. Each little girl had a bike and a helmet which were various shades of pink!

So up and down, down and up the footpaths they went past my house. The pink helmets bobbed up and down just above my wall. Peals of laughter! Shouts of wonder and excitement! Energy unbounded! The older folk smiled indulgently or stopped to ask them their names. The girls loved it all – what a sense of Girl Power and at such a tender age!

But then it happened! A few months ago a boy was born! Then some weeks later in a second family, another baby boy came among us. Still, it’s seven girls to two boys but watch this space!!!

Dympna O’Daly

Memories of Past Pupils’ Day Rathmines High School

2014 Jubilarians

**Platinum Jubilarians**
Nuala Burns
Sheila Duffy
Carmel Garvey
Benedict McKenna
Colmcille Stephens

**Diamond Jubilarians**
Eileen Beirne
Colette Corvin
Mary Healy
Kathleen Kelleher
Elizabeth McGoldrick (California)
Una McGuinness
Mary Prendergast

**Golden Jubilarians**
Anne Bolton
Hannah Boylan
Margie Buttitta (Brazil)
Maura Clerkin
Patricia Ebegbulem (Nigeria)
Mary Kelly
Irence MacGuinness
Alice McNally

**Silver Jubilarians**
Lucy Mary Afful Ghana
Perpetua Apo
Catherine Ologunabe
Felicia Ogundana

**Deceased**
Marie Rene Cox
Ethna Kingston
Clare Marshall
Dympna Moen
Linus Mohan
Eileen Nolan
Angela Woods

**Deceased**
Teresa McMahon
Bernadette Murphy

**Platinum Jubilarians**
Nuala Burns
Sheila Duffy
Carmel Garvey
Benedict McKenna
Colmcille Stephens

**Diamond Jubilarians**
Eileen Beirne
Colette Corvin
Mary Healy
Kathleen Kelleher
Elizabeth McGoldrick (California)
Una McGuinness
Mary Prendergast

**Golden Jubilarians**
Anne Bolton
Hannah Boylan
Margie Buttitta (Brazil)
Maura Clerkin
Patricia Ebegbulem (Nigeria)
Mary Kelly
Irence MacGuinness
Alice McNally

**Silver Jubilarians**
Lucy Mary Afful Ghana
Perpetua Apo
Catherine Ologunabe
Felicia Ogundana

**Deceased**
Angelina Lekwot