Dear Sisters and Associates,

Once again we are in the lovely Autumn season when the foliage is in its full glory. Summer is over. Winter is on its way. Even though Autumn appears to be a season of death, it isn’t really. In a few short months these trees will sprout brand new green leaves, nourished by their roots far beneath the ground.

Sadly, we have had some deaths among our Sisters since our last issue: Rita Greene; Etheldreda Ryan; Eilis Jeffers; Matthias Boland, Mary Campbell, Carmel Mary Fagbemi and Clare Mulhern. We send our sincere sympathy to their families, communities and friends and thank God for the unique gift they have been to our St Louis family.

As you read this Seo Agus Siúd, you will be reminded of some sad, poignant events but also of many happy, encouraging moments over the summer. As nature takes a breathing-space before the busyness of Spring, we too can create a breathing-space for ourselves, a bit of quiet where we can hear God speak to us and be nourished and restored.

With our loving prayers, especially for all who may be experiencing illness, grief and vulnerability at present. Thank you for all your contributions – we couldn’t have Seo Agus Siud without you!

Barbara, Dympna, Mary, Méabh

The Story behind the flowers: First Eimear had an idea. She might have googled, tweeted, or joeduffed it. Better still, she printed it in The Mourne Observer where, amongst others, the Cavan observer in Newcastle spotted it and passed it on to the “set” in Dublin, who passed it on to Bronagh O’Hanlon (of the Fionnuala and Deirdre dynasty) who knew about it already and … Wait a minute what are we talking about here? What was this IT?

It was Eimear Cullen (Devlin)’s idea to trawl the deeps for her long scattered Kilkeel classmates of ‘63-’70 inviting them to Belfast to celebrate their 40th. As the project matured, the two sisters who had stumbled in on the act (they’d both been in Kilkeel in the 60’s) found themselves invited to be part of the Belfast Reunion. It was set for Saturday the 16th October.

Alas, the nuns had a prior engagement. However, valiant Ulster women both (and pozzies of ’52 to boot) they never flinched but set their faces valiantly towards the Boyne, relinquishing the tempting alternative. The Kilkeel girls gathered in Belfast might have been content to relay the sisters’ regrets but no! Kilkeel past students have a strong and touching loyalty to all that we St Louis sisters stand for and that is why, in the midst of their joyful reminiscing, they took time to honour and thank all of us as a body and to say it with flowers - a beautiful 2010 version of the Spiritual Bouquets of yore?

Floreant puellae Kilkeelienses!

A-nunny-miss (alias Kitty Fitzsimons)
Rev Sisters, Fr Sean, guests, friends and fellow parishioners, this is a special parish celebration as we thank God that we have been blessed with the presence of the St Louis Sisters among us for 135 years. The parish community welcomes you to the Market House and to the Mass this morning. A special welcome to Sr. Paulinus, who was born in this parish, attended the convent school and then entered the St Louis Order and is the only one that I know who can tick all those boxes. Today you are a very special guest.

The Saint Louis nuns came to Middletown at a difficult time when few people could afford to educate girls. I can remember as a child seeing my grandmother’s name, Roseanne Mc Ardle, written in beautiful italic script on a chart in the school corridor. She was a pupil in the late 1880’s. My mother was a pupil in the early 19920’s. My father also was a convent pupil for a year or two. Daddy was the youngest of fourteen children and when he was ready to start school about 1905, the Rev
Mother approached my granny Mallon to send Daddy to the convent to increase their numbers. Daddy often told how his big brothers stopped at the old boys’ school beside the parochial house and he walked an extra mile into Middletown as a 4 yr old.

I attended the school myself in the 1950’s. The school catered for girls from four to 14 or 15 years when they left school. There were four nuns teaching at that time with no lay teachers. They provided us with an excellent education. At that time the nuns had the St. Joseph’s girls resident in the school and we were mixed in the classroom as no distinction was made between the local girls and the St. Joseph’s girls. In earlier years there was a private secondary school, which helped to support the orphanage. Earlier the nuns had an industrial school and in recent times the Adolescent Centre. Always the St Louis Sisters were providing an excellent education, ahead of the times, seeing a need where there was a gap and it is a mark of the success of their work that today everyone gets the opportunity to avail of a first class education.

The first nuns who came to Middletown were pioneers who had to work very hard at everything to get the school established. My father told how the nun who taught him could be seen after school painting the fences. My mother told me that the nuns who taught her had to milk the cows in the morning before eight o’clock Mass. In the summer time the cows were on an out farm off the Mullinary Road across what is still called the nuns’ bridge.

In the early days the nuns had less contact with the people of the parish than they have today. Most of their time was spent in the convent, but in the evenings they emerged in pairs to go for a walk in the local countryside. They conducted Children of Mary meetings twice a month and organised the parish Pioneer Total Abstinence Association. After Vatican II there were changes in their lives, and we witnessed the appearance of the convent car. This meant that the nuns extended their sphere of influence as they could travel further afield to do their work. They became more involved in the parish, visiting the housebound, attending wakes, comforting the bereaved and quietly empowering, supporting and helping where there was a need. When we lost our curate some years ago, the sisters made the convent chapel available for daily Mass and Eucharistic Adoration as well as facilitating the parish faith sharing groups in the convent and helping with the parish choir. The sisters are an enormous support, empowering the parish to carry on with its work. Perhaps their greatest support has been their prayer for everyone, quietly and continuously in the background, which has sustained us over difficult times.

This is a happy occasion when we reflect on the sisters’ contribution to parish life and thank God that they are not leaving us and will continue to be part of our community in a new location in Doogary. It is a great place and I know that they will be happy there – my father was born in Doogary! This is a parish occasion and I wish to thank everyone who took part in the Mass, the men and women who helped prepare this hall, provided food or helped to serve it.

Finally on your behalf and on behalf of all who are unable to be present but wanted to share in this celebration, I wish to thank the nuns for all their work and prayers and wish them well as they begin this new stage in their journey. As Cardinal Brady said this morning, the best way we can thank them is to follow their example of prayer and service.

Finally on your behalf and on behalf of all who are unable to be present but wanted to share in this celebration, I wish to thank the nuns for all their work and prayers and wish them well as they begin this new stage in their journey. As Cardinal Brady said this morning, the best way we can thank them is to follow their example of prayer and service.
This week the Parish of Tynan / Middletown marks a historic event in the history of this parish – the departure of the Sisters of St Louis – the Sisters have been here for 135 years. Naturally there is much sorrow and sadness and loneliness. The bonds of friendship are strong. There are big shoes being left behind to be filled.

This weekend is a time to give thanks – to God, first of all – that there are people to be found who are prepared to give up so much in life in order to help others – people who left family and friends to come to Middletown to help children – children from all walks of life – rich and poor, bright and less bright. We thank God that the St Louis nuns came first to Monaghan. Obviously their reputation soon spread to Middletown where Father Quinn decided your ancestors should welcome the Sisters and they got on well together. There was farming and schooling and lots of things to be looked after. Sister Canice was surprised to learn that the first football jerseys for Middletown GFC were knitted by the sisters in black and white wool all those years ago.

Tonight we give thanks for all that the Sisters have done – but more importantly – we give thanks to them and to God for what they are themselves and what they represent. People who heard the call of God and took it seriously.

This is not a time for great sorrow but a time for great gratitude and great love. The Sisters have sown the seeds, it is up to this parish to make sure that those seeds stay alive and grow and ripen and bear fruit. This evening we are thanking God for the presence in this parish, over the past 135 years, of a very special group of people – the St Louis Sisters. They are people who have heard the invitation to holiness and have taken it very seriously. It involved a dying to self in leaving family and friends. It involved an emptying to self that becomes a radical experience of God’s love.

We wish the Sisters God’s special blessings in the next chapter of their life that begins now. We pray that the same freedom of spirit, which enabled them to come here in the first instance, will enable them to leave now.

Meeting of Associate-Facilitators

‘Transition’ was a word used more than once to capture what was going on at our Facilitators’ meeting in St Louis House on August 27. Prayer centrepieces on the floor representing Summer and Autumn, the circular formation of the group, and the graceful, rhythmic movement to music of the group around and between the seasons was a changed format in the erstwhile St Louis parlour and later St Louis Nursing Home oratory. A new energy coupled with a poignancy and sense of sadness was a heady mixture – was it the pain of new birth? – as we shared on the moment. Our inspiring text was put together not by the Sisters but by the Associates from the Associate Leadership Team – a text hitherto unseen.

The meeting that followed (always so real, worthwhile and energising) was greatly enriched by the additional energy, application, thought, judgement and expression of the three Associates who have joined the Sisters on that particular leadership team, Angela, Brid, Clare, not afraid of work and gifted with good judgement. Our new facilitators, both Sister and Associate, were most welcome too.

Associates facilitating our small groups, associates on the relevant leadership team, associates engaged in so many ministries including some directly linked with St Louis ‘works’ – that has to be good.

Mary Jo. Hand..
**Associates Day in Killyhevlin**

Sint Unum. All unity begins with working towards inner unity. Our inner world is always creating our outer world and if there is going to be change at the outer level, it has to begin with change of heart at the inner level. This hunger for personal integration is an aspect of our charism that answers a hunger/cry of our time.

Our facilitator for the day was Fr Jim Cogley. An array of magnificent wood-turning creations was on display for us. Jim then held high a beautiful circular piece for our attention. The presence of a bird was easily recognised in the carving. Jim asked if anyone could see another bird in the piece. Closer scrutiny, slowly revealed to all, that there was indeed a smaller carved bird captured in the carving. He then explained how this piece depicted, how sometimes, we need to spend time looking at something, to appreciate the true beauty of what we are looking at. This set the theme for a very enlightening and inspiring day.

Jim’s use of his wonderful gift of wood turning as a tool in the teaching and revealing of God's message for us all, was very memorable. We then enjoyed a beautiful lunch. All present agreed that it had proved a wonderful day and please God look forward to more of the same. Bundoran Associates

We had strange but amazing input about our inner selves all illustrated by the many wood carvings on display. The most interesting was the Cobra illustrating that much of what we inherit is positive like looks and talents. The cobra stands on a solid base. However we may find that we are not only being supported but poisoned by some part of our family history. This is echoed in “The Lord’s Prayer – forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

Fr. Jim left us some great quotations to ponder over:

- Anything we resist will persist
- We are specks of intellect on a sea of emotion
- People who are controlling will send others on a guilt trip
- You cannot live in the present if you are held by the past
- Life leaves us with a lot of baggage – do we stay with it or do we work with it?
- What other people think of me is none my business – my business is to be myself
- Identification with age and looks is a trap – inner beauty transcends. What Mother Nature gives Father Time will take away
- When we react we lose power.
- I am not what I do, I do what I am
- The first part of life is an outer journey. The second part is our spiritual journey
- Aggressive persons demand respect but never get it.
- The dividing line between good and evil runs never between classes of people but directly through every human heart

Many thanks to those who organized this enriching and transformative day for us.

Breege Connors (Bundoran Associate)
When Mary O’Connor welcomed us to the 2010 Education Forum, she used an extract from a poem by John O’Donohue to bless our ‘sacred space’ for the day:

May my mind come alive today
To the invisible geography
That invites me to new frontiers
To break the dead shell of yesterdays
To risk being disturbed and changed.

Then when Catherine Brennan introduced our 2010 Speaker, Alastair McIntosh, as a mystic, a prophet, a life-changing thinker, we began to feel that perhaps the call of John O’Donohue’s poem was alive in our midst. And we were indeed ‘invited to new frontiers’ and challenged as educators to ‘come alive to invisible geography’ and ‘risk being disturbed and changed.’

Alastair is a wonderful Speaker; he is a poet, broadcaster and performer as well as an academic and an activist; his vision of community is powerful, and strikes a chord with all who cherish Louis Bautain’s vision. Alastair speaks about the “triune basis of community” – community with nature, community with the divine and community with one another, or soil, soul and society. He opened up again for us an understanding of our own cycle of belonging, and offered hope and possibility for the work of regeneration which is so necessary in so many institutions at this time.

Alastair spoke passionately about education. He quoted a man who had influenced him greatly when he first worked in Papua New Guinea, Dr. Bernard Narokobi:

Welcome to the University.
The ancient, timeless, eternal
University of Melanesia.
The village,
Where courses are offered in living.

Is this what we are about as educators? If we fail to develop all of our young peoples’ humanity, we are, he suggested, participating in a form of child abuse.

In her vote of thanks, Dr. Eilis Humphreys of Le Cheile remarked that we tend to concentrate on ‘doing things right’ in our schools, but today we had to ask ‘how do we know we are doing the right thing’? She thanked Alastair for offering us so much to think about, and wondered if we as educators might be able to use his thinking about community, belonging and regeneration as a framework for our curriculum? Such a framework would demand that in teaching the subjects and skills needed to understand and live in our modern world, we would not neglect those subjects that help us to understand our past, (Alastair spoke about our ‘psychological history’), our community with the Earth, our community with the Spirit and our community with one another. This would engage the idealism of our young people, and the care they already have for the environment and for social justice. Alastair had challenged us to think about the Melanesian village where courses are offered in living and to try to live up to that ideal as St. Louis educators; but he had also offered us simple yet exciting ways for ‘navigating the future.’

Before lunch, we had a beautiful, meditative ritual on ‘Sint Unum/We Are One, performed together by the Monaghan Associates, teachers and sisters, including our Nigerian visitors. Anne Murray
St Louis Visit to Clonmacnoise

"Give me my scallop-shell of quiet,  
My staff of faith to lean on,  
My script of Joy, immortal diet,  
My bottle of salvation,  
My gown of glory, hope’s true gauge,  
And thus I'll take my pilgrimage."

Sir Walter Raleigh.

Thus we began our Pilgrimage to Clonmacnoise on the afternoon of June 15. There were about thirty of us taking part. It was perfectly planned and flawlessly executed due to the painstaking efforts of Marion Reynolds and her team of local helpers.

We gathered in The Radisson Hotel to check in and have a light lunch around midday. The function room we were using was already prepared and adorned by the spiritual director of the event, Sr. Moya Hegarty O.S.U. A centrepiece of matchless beauty depicted the Celtic year in cloths of every imaginable shade and pattern. Moya then set forth for us the essential elements of pilgrimage in a short prayer service. She encouraged us to find our spiritual selves in an appropriate seasonal space. Then we boarded the coach that took us to ‘Saint Kieran’s city fair’, standing above the floodplain of the Shannon, and, on that afternoon, shimmering under the lovely June sunshine. As we drove the short journey, Moya made available to us the “props of pilgrimage” mentioned in Raleigh’s poem above, and these were carried around and passed from pilgrim to pilgrim during the afternoon of prayer.

It was an unhurried affair with plenty of time for individual reflection, personal prayer, quiet sharing and guided commentary. A slot for the excellent audio-visual presentation was pre-booked for us to and gave us the history of the site in a user-friendly way. There was time too, to view the original stone crosses in the Interpretive Centre and browse through the information there. Here and there Moya was at hand to give clues to assist us in a fuller appreciation of pilgrimage in this great monastic site.

In conclusion we walked along the ancient pilgrim route to the Nuns’ Chapel where we remembered, among other things, poor old Devorgilla and her story, and shared reflections on David Whyte’s poem: The Faces at Braga, before the final walk in the glorious evening sun back to the coach, the hotel, showers and a lovely convivial evening meal together.

The following morning, awakening to a second sun-drenched day, we “dribbed and drabbed” to the dining room for a generous buffet style breakfast, before assembling at 11.00 am on the pier near one of the bridges of Athlone for an hour-and-a-half long conducted cruise on Lough Ree. We were served morning coffee and tea on board and treated to a colourful commentary on the local area as viewed from the boat. Once again, though the tone was lighthearted, we felt that ‘the journey can become a sacred thing.’

J. O’Donohue

Finally, it was time for lunch and departure. Amid the usual protracted farewells and thanks we went our separate ways. We were lost in admiration and appreciation for Marion’s thoughtful organizational gifts. It was an exceptional break in every way and we’ll all remember it for a good while to come. Our thanks to Marion, Moya, Darcrea, coach-driver, boat crew and not least, the staff of the Radisson who were unfailingly courteous and helpful to all throughout our stay. A special word of appreciation is due to Darcrea a local tour organizer from Athlone whom Marion met early on in the planning, who saw to many of the practical details of the trip, and was a gracious presence throughout.

Margaret Anne Agnew
We came from Ireland, England, France and California to celebrate our Diamond Jubilee in Monaghan where we had first met as Postulants in 1950/51. There have been many changes over the years. As a group we have ministered in 7 out of our 8 areas and between us we have a lot of experience to share regarding areas of work, culture, language etc. and we are still going strong. In 1950 we started our journey as 26 postulants. Two of us left during the postulancy and the remaining 24 of us became novices at the end of the year. Then in our Canonical year our beloved Francesca McKiernan died – may she rest in peace – and that left 23 of us who made our First Profession in August 1953 and then made our separate ways to our appointed destinations all over the world. Some of us didn’t meet again for 25 years. Over the years 2 of us returned to secular life, 4 of us have died, 3 are in Nursing Homes and Una Connolly living in California was unable to travel so just 13 of us gathered for Mass in Monaghan on 12th August. Vera Brennan was able to join us for the Mass which was celebrated by Rev. Fr. Hubert who had previously celebrated our Golden Jubilee with us. The celebration was quiet and simple and we remembered and prayed for everybody.

Afterwards we went out to the Westenra Hotel where a delightful lunch awaited us. We had a beautifully decorated room to ourselves and an ideal opportunity to chat and exchange stories. Josephine Fay had made a magnificent cake for the occasion and whilst we did it justice and even took a slice home with us, we chatted and enjoyed ourselves. We were invited back to the Convent for tea and later on in the evening those who had decided to stay overnight got together in St. Clare’s and reminiscences continued on the olden days and how as a group we had always got on well with each other.

The celebration was planned and organised by Marie Flanagan and Marie Celine and we are grateful to them for making it such memorable occasion. Maire Blair

Picture to yourself a decorated sitting-room with seating all round, a table of very tasty goodies along one wall, and a centre-table which would soon support the lovely iced-cake that only Marie does. “60” it said. Floral arrangements and bouquets arriving in, and the most delicate of serviettes for sticky fingers.

We tumbled out of three cars and there was Paul, the man-on-the-spot, to welcome us to Castleross Nursing Home. We went inside, and, amid much excitement, greeted the heroine, the ‘lady from Luxembourg’, our own Marie de Paul. She looked splendid and was ecstatic at seeing us as we hugged and congratulated her. She was ‘hostess’ as well as ‘heroine’. She told us, in no uncertain terms, how happy she was to have us. She told us she loved us and explained that her tears were tears of joy. And so they were. Seated in her own special armchair in our midst, she looked every inch a queen. She said we were very good to come, especially ‘the lady on my right’ – ‘she came all the way from Luxembourg, you know, and that was no small thing’. That was Soeur Monique (alias Phil), her friend from their youth, a faithful and loyal and goodly woman, for sure. ‘No small thing’ became...
Recalling the theme of Chapter 2009 ‘If you only knew the gift God is offering you’ the set of 1960 gathered in the Grand Hotel, Malahide to celebrate our Golden Jubilee. Our gathering ritual was sensitively and carefully planned by Roisin Hannaway and Brigid Dunne. The *Veni Sancte Spiritus* and reading from St John’s Gospel (14:27) contained our memories as we prayed for those who had influenced us in the early sixties and as we recalled those of the set who have moved on and are now in the arms of God. May Eileen Burns, Gretta McQuaid, Marjorie O’Leary, Kathleen Mulhern, and Mary Roche rest in peace.

We told our stories and as we blessed each other we prayed together that God may anoint us with love, heal our woundedness and strengthen us for service, eldership and discipleship. The rest of the time was spent enjoying a beautifully prepared lunch, telling more stories, renewing old friendships and enjoying each other’s company. As the day drew to a close we were served with tea and sandwiches, and then it was time to reluctantly say ‘Au revoir’. The sense of wellbeing we experienced that day will nourish us in the days ahead, and our awareness of each other will give us strength.

We thank all those who had Masses said for us and who sent us greetings. As we read your messages we felt held in a family that is much greater than our small unit in Malahide that day! *Marion Reynolds*
A Journey For Katey

In June Ann Matthews and I set out on a trip to Brazil to fulfil Katey’s dream. After a stop in Fortaleza and in Goiania with Margie, we journeyed north to Palmas. We were welcomed warmly by Sonia, a young girl from Barrolandia. We met with many of Katey’s friends, including Dom Felipe, the Bishop of Miracema. From there we journeyed to Manchete where Katey had worked. It was an emotional journey but deeply rewarding. The people gathered at their new Church and community centre to greet us. Their grief at Katey’s loss was palpable. It meant a lot to them that we came to be with them. Photographs and memories were shared.

The following day we went to Barrolandia where both Ann and I had worked. Again the warm welcome and hospitality were typically Brazilian. It was wonderful to see that the seeds we planted there had blossomed; the Parish is vibrant and alive guided by Sisters from the South of Brazil. In two weeks we covered a lot of mileage, but it was a rewarding journey. We returned home feeling enriched and inspired by the faith of the people that we met and the cherished memories they had of Katey. May her gentle soul rest in peace.

Joan Kavanagh and Ann Matthews

Acknowledgements

Sister Immaculata, Ramsgrange, and the family of the late Agnes Dempsey, thank you most sincerely for your kind expression of sympathy in their recent bereavement. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass has been offered for your intentions.

Sister Annuncia and the family circle of the late Kitty Power wish to thank you most sincerely for your kind expression of sympathy at the time of her death. Your support at such a difficult time will be remembered with great affection and gratitude. Mass has been offered for your intentions.

The family and friends of Katey Dougan wish to thank you for the support and love given to Katey and for your messages of sympathy, prayers and Masses on Katey’s death. Your kindness and support are deeply appreciated.

On my own behalf and that of my sister, Madge Reilly, her family and all the extended family, I thank you for your messages of sympathy and prayer, and for your presence at my brother-in-law’s wake and funeral Mass. Your support and concern are gratefully acknowledged and appreciated. Blessings. Catherine Brennan

Dear Sisters, The family of Clare B. O’ Sullivan thank you for your condolences on her recent death. We are comforted by your prayers, your presence and your support. We are very grateful to you. May God bless you. Mass will be offered for your intentions. Maeve

Dear Sisters, On behalf of my brothers, sisters and myself, I want to extend our gratitude to all of you, who supported us in various ways on the death of our beloved sister, Philomena. Our thanks to all who attended the removal and funeral Mass, sent Mass Cards, letters and cards of sympathy and made phone-calls. This support was a great consolation to all of us. Mass has been offered for your intentions. Consilii O’Saughnessy

On behalf of the Sisters in Nigeria, I write to express our heartfelt and sincere appreciation to CLT and all the Sisters in the Institute for the prayers, Masses, Cards and the various expressions of your sympathy and love on the death of our dear Carmel Mary Fagbemi. We felt very much supported and comforted by all the messages that rolled in from all the different parts of the institute. And much more, the Masses that have been organised and celebrated for her happy repose since she passed on. Patricia Ojo

Visit to Palmas by Katey’s Neices

This is a picture of the three of us at the Cultural Centre in Palmas. Here we met Katey’s friends whom she loved working with. We witnessed the hard work the young people put into preparing their music. The people expressed great warmth and generosity towards us and although we weren’t able to speak Portuguese, the saying “actions speak louder than words” was the case here for us. The whole trip was such a special experience and we feel so privileged to have finally visited Brazil and met the people.
The Annual General Meeting of the Friends of St. Louis Missions was held in Monaghan in May. Members from the Executive and from Monaghan, Dundalk, Kilkeel, Carrickmacross and Clones attended. Sr.Winifred Ojo from CLT was present in her leadership role. We were pleased to welcome, Theresa Peter (Nigeria) and Dorothy Abuah (Ghana), who were doing a Formation Course in Dublin. As always, a number of our Missionary Sisters attended.

The meeting began in St Louis House with a Prayer Service prepared by Sr Mary Clerkin and accompanied by Sr Agnes Mary. Two Masses had been offered, one for the living and one for deceased Friends – the cards were given to the President.

The Friends then held their meeting in St. Joseph’s parlour and the Sisters met in the Cloister. The two groups then came together and Sr Winifred addressed them and explained how the money collected was distributed. She told them how much the Sisters appreciated their help for their many projects and thanked the Executive and Friends for their great work and dedication. Sr Isabel also sent a card thanking them for their support.

One of the items on the Agenda was ‘The Future of the Association of the Friends of St Louis Missions’. The Friends decided that, because of their ageing and the new Charity Law, it would be difficult and expensive to continue, and so they would no longer function as an Association. Each area, if they wished, could do its own fundraising and send their collections direct to the Generalate. All agreed that the new interaction taking place between our schools in Ireland and their counterparts in Nigeria and Ghana was a positive development by way of supporting our Missions in another way. At the end of the meeting, the current President, Martin Hughes, presented a cheque to Sr.Winifred.

Srs, Maura Flynn, Nuala McCluskey, Mary Clerkin and I are deeply grateful for all the support we have received from the Sisters who were contact persons with the different groups as we worked together over the years. A special word of thanks to Sr Laserian for her help and cooperation in St.Louis House, and to Our Lady’s Community for their hospitality in hosting our Executive meetings for many years.

We welcome Srs. Ann Matthews and Siobhan Dillon to replace Sr. Mary Clerkin and myself and we wish them well. Sheila Finnegan,
Nine second level schools from the St. Louis Network in Ireland are now linked with partner schools in the St. Louis Network in Ghana and Nigeria. During the summer we organized introductory visits to West Africa for teachers from schools in Ireland that had not managed to make contact during the previous year. There was a sense of urgency about getting the links established before Budget 2010, as funding for the project has already been cut, and there are fears that there may be no fund at all next year. The good news is that the six SL Network schools in the Republic have got grants for 2010-2011, and the summer 2010 visits have hopefully ensured that the partnerships will take root.

The three Northern schools got a £1000 grant from the British Council for their preliminary visits under a grant scheme for international study visits with a view to linking. Grants for reciprocal visits and partnership work will be available when the schools are ready to apply. We received a grant from the Institute Common Fund to pay for tickets and visas for Andrew Finn from Kiltimagh and Peter Hoey from Dundalk; the Kiltimagh Board of Management paid for Louise O’Hora so that two Kiltimagh teachers could travel.

The enthusiastic group of teachers who have embraced the project in Belfast decided that seven of them would travel to Nigeria in June; one teacher got the British Council grant, they raised the travel money for the others, and also raised a very substantial donation for the Province. They had a very successful visit. They were based in Akure, and will link with the Junior and Senior Secondary Schools in Akure. However, they also want to support projects in the Province, so they got a chance to visit Oka to see the Primary Health Care programme and the outreach to children with disabilities; they also visited Ondo to see the Primary school which has just started and needs a building; they will raise funds for both of these and for vocational training in Mater Dei.

In early July, Caroline Curley who teaches in St. Louis Grammar School Kilkeel joined Enda McMullan and I on a trip to Ghana. We arrived in Accra and went from there to Kumasi via El Mina Castle on the coast, where we met Brigid Andoh and Cecily O’Flynn. We had an opportunity in Kumasi to visit the Cultural Centre and Museum as well as the Palace Museum – a wonderful introduction to the history and culture of Ghana. We also visited the Jubilee School as Enda had been in touch with Thomas, the Art teacher who has since visited SL Carrickmacross, partner school to the Jubilee School.

We stayed overnight in Mampong at the Bishop’s house and spent the following day visiting the Secondary School with Helena SSL. We got a good overview of the school which is a Co-ed Catholic school, not a St. Louis school; however, the sisters are committed to having a presence there.

Enda and I then went on to Nigeria and met Andrew and Louise from Kiltimagh and Peter from Dundalk in Lagos and travelled together to Akure which was our base for the week. From there we visited Ondo (linking with Kiltimagh) and Ikere (linking with Dundalk, as well as Akure and Owo. Andrew also got a chance to visit Ibadan, where his uncle had been bishop. The visits to the schools went very well, and planning is already under way for the WorldWise programmes to get started in both links.

After my commitment to the Education Summit and the Novitiate Workshop in Nigeria, I returned to Ghana to meet Niamh O’Brien from Ballymena. We travelled to Kumasi and then on to Oku in the Afram Plains. We spent two days there before beginning the journey back. It was a very powerful experience – the school was on holidays, but we met some of the pupils and teachers, and saw quite a bit of village life, including a funeral. We got back to Kumasi in time for a short visit to the Cultural Centre and Museum.

None of this would have been possible without the wonderful hospitality and co-operation of the sisters in Ghana and Nigeria. Neither would it be possible without the enthusiasm and sense of mission of so many of our SL teachers. And the reciprocal visits to the schools which got the grant last year would not be successful without the warm welcome in the Irish schools and the Irish communities. The family spirit has been heart warming – many thanks to all.

Anne Murray
On February 13th of this year, two weary travellers touched down in Kano airport after having spent a tedious twelve hours in transit, but oh! was it to prove worth it! Ms Cullen and I were about to embark on a journey of a lifetime, a journey, please God, that others too will make in the future. This week long trip to our sister school, St Louis Secondary School, Kano in the north of Nigeria was the culmination of two years work undertaken by Ms Capper and her TY class, who forged the link and secured the funding to make it happen.

We were in Africa. There was no doubt about that. Kano airport is like no airport I’ve ever experienced before. It is a crazy, chaotic place but I say so in the best sense of those words. The noise, colour and frenzy that greeted us is something we’ll never forget. It was infectious and we loved it. The customs arrangement in place was ad hoc and unorthodox to say the least, but it didn’t matter, we were “Sisters” from Ireland and we were welcome. We must have heard the words “you’re welcome” a thousand times over the course of our stay. As you can imagine, we found being mistaken for nuns terribly amusing! I can safely say that Nigeria leaves Ireland and her “Céad Míle Fáilte” in the halfpenny place, for the sincerity of the welcome extended to us is something that will stay with us forever. Smiles and the words “you’re welcome, you’re welcome” were undoubtedly a hallmark of our trip. Sr Catherine Ologunaba, the school Principal and Sr Fedelia, were waiting for us in the Arrivals Hall and from that moment forward we knew that were in good hands. We couldn’t lift a bag, not a thing as Ms Cullen and I were to enjoy celebrity status for the course of our stay.

It was after midnight when we arrived back at the convent but there was nothing for it but to have tea. That was it, we were right at home. What is it about tea, the great leveller? The other Sisters, Sr Anna, Sr Rosaline and Sr Vivienne were still up to greet us. We chatted, all seven of us into the wee hours. You can imagine the scene; we talked till we could talk no more. We were beat and we were shown to our very comfortable rooms. The net covered beds looked like something straight out of a film but sure, that’s a fact of life in Africa. Our rooms were so well kitted out. The thorough Sr Catherine ensured that we had an ample supply of insect repellent to ward off the little mites, as well as torches for when the electricity supply went out. This happened daily but the St Louis “gen” was only ever a switch away. This was to be the pattern for the week. Every single need, even ones we didn’t know we had, were catered for, as already stated, we were to be treated like VIP’s!

The following morning, we woke to the glorious voices of the happy clappy church choir at the ungodly hour of 5.45 am! Up we got, readied ourselves and off to mass with us. On entry to the heaving church we were struck by the absolute reverence and devotion displayed by the congregation. It was a throw back to a bye gone era in Ireland. a wonderful, a sight to behold, an “honours” mass, to quote Ms Dolan, with all the elements plus more again included. Our week was punctuated with prayer and worship but none of this was a chore; it was truly a pleasure. Sunday was spent acquainting ourselves with the campus, meeting the boarding students, and lots of “you’re welcome Sister” to be heard from all we met.

St Louis, Kano is indeed a unique place, for within its walls is the thriving local parish church, a convent and the best secondary school in Kano State, and who at the helm, but five remarkable St Louis Sisters of course. There is also an on site a Mosque to cater for the Muslim students as this is a legal requirement in the state. All the Sisters in Kano today are Nigerian born but their Irish predecessors are never far from anyone’s mind, for it was the Irish Sisters who paved the way a short sixty two years ago. The pioneering Irish Sisters needn’t worry as the St Louis flame is burning strong in 2010.
Sr Catherine and her team can be very proud of their model school as the structures in place and the education provided are second to none. The pattern of the school week is quite regimented with mass for all at 6.15am, followed by assembly at 7.15am where Catholic and Muslim prayers are said. Class proper starts at 7.30am and continues till 2.40pm, as that is the coolest time in which to work.

There are surely more similarties than differences between our students, as young people are the same everywhere. One difference however, was how the Catholic girls flock to the grotto of Our Lady for rosary at half past six each evening. Again, to quote Ms Dolan, it is the “honours” version as all five decades are recited. Intermittent bursts of song also feature. This is something that is done as a matter of course and not in a reluctant fashion. It is interesting to note that these girls aren’t lead by a teacher, nor were they putting on a show for visitors.

There is permanent exposition of the blessed sacrament in the school church. This is a place that many girls frequent for solemn prayer and again, they do so of their own volition. All of this is so far removed from the contemporary Irish context but we found it so interesting to observe, not to mention spiritually enriching.

It wasn’t all prayer either. We were dealing with very human women. We’ll never forget the “dodgy” dealing for currency in a hotel car park. Sure why would you go to the bank and convert currency through the usual channels! Now Sr Vivienne, probably our own age or maybe even younger than us, is one feisty woman when it comes to striking a deal. We don’t know how the traders in the market made any profit at all. We’re convinced that she secured some souvenirs for below cost! We would have paid double for the experience alone.

Sr Anna runs St Louis Primary School, a few miles away on the other side of town. What a fantastic place it is too. The little boys and girls there are in receipt of a truly holistic education. This is a private school but each year, provision is made for twenty four less privileged children. These children come from the rural areas and are identified by the local parish priest. We happened to meet some of the parents of these children when we visited and it was clear that they were delighted with the education and care their children were receiving.

Another highlight for me was Ms Cullen’s Irish dancing class. She had a class of thirty plus one. I was the “plus one” with my two left feet! When I think of it, ‘twas kinda crazy to be dancing the Siege of Ennis in Nigeria but as the Americans say, it totally worked. We have the treasured video footage to prove it. Well done Ms Lisa! By the way, we had dropped the Sr Lisa and Sr Collette titles by about day three. We were re-christened Ms Lisa and Ms Collette. Much more appropriate I think.

The week slipped away far too quickly, but didn’t the students organise a surprise leaving party for us the night before our departure. We were ushered into the school hall to the sound of a marching band and seated at the “high table”, no less! There really was no end to the special attention that we received. The girls put on a variety show, not dissimilar to our own Annual Christmas Show. We were overwhelmed by the preparations made in our honour. There also was a presentation of hugely symbolic art work on the night. The theme of these paintings is unity in diversity. This art work now takes pride of place in St Louis High School, Rathmines. Please take a moment to ponder its meaning for St Louis Secondary School, Kano is unquestionably a model for a more tolerant, accepting world. This of course harks back to the St Louis ethos. Different religions, tribes and cultures co-exist harmoniously in St Louis, Kano. I know that this is a theme that Ms Capper is keen to explore as the link develops. The next step, please God, funding dependant is a reciprocal visit by Nigerian teachers at the beginning of the the forthcoming academic year and perhaps a student exchange into the future. The link is so exciting and so timely too in the midst of “doom and gloom” to resort to an over used phrase.

We couldn’t have asked for better hosts, Sr Anna, Sr Catherine, Sr Fedelia, Sr Rosealine and Sr Vivienne. What a week! The memories will stay with us always. It’s impossible to truly convey the riches we have gained from our trip and I agree whole heartedly. I would like to finish now by thanking a few people, firstly Ms Capper, whose brainchild the project was, Sr Anne Murray for her tireless promotion of the link, Ms Morgan for her ongoing support and last but by no means least, my travelling companion, Ms Cullen. Collette Forde.
It's a long way to (or from) Clare as the song says and certainly in Sept 1940, it was very long indeed! when the Moloneys set out to deliver their precious Patricia away into the north. Untarred roads, prewar cars, few springs, no heaters! Wrapped in rugs, and complete with several boxes of sandwiches they set out at 9 a.m on 7th to arrive in Monaghan on 8th in time for the noon hour given for her arrival at St Louis to be gathered into the arms of the Order! (since rechristened Institute)

Before leaving Feakle a neighbour had reminded them that there was a girl from Feakle in a convent in Clones (they pronounced it as in BONES!) and they were to visit her on the way. So, hundreds of cold, cold miles later they arrived in Clones (as in bones). Mother, Father and Auntie waited in the car, no doubt almost turned to ice at this stage while Patricia was sent to enquire at hall door. When the door opened, there stood an old pal from Kiltimagh, Sr Gemma recently professed and changed to Clones (as in bones!) After mutual hugs, and feeling all was not lost, "I better go for Mother" said Gemma. Soon there loomed a very large lady lumbering to the hall door and enquiring re Patricia's business. So a full curriculum vitae was given and M. de Chantal (for it was she!) finalized the friendly(!) chat with the injunction "Well, you'd better get on the road or they won't take you if you're late!! At this stage, Father, Mother and Auntie are half iced in their freezing car, but set off to reach Monaghan where they planned to stay the night in the hotel to arrive in Monaghan for noon next day!

In Monaghan next day all was 'changed, changed utterly' as the poet said. They were ushered into St Louis Parlour, awash with white table cloths, silver and crystal. Lunch was served and all seemed it wasn't quite arctic after all!

Another early arrival was Nuala Doherty. Nuala was a mathematical genius already earmarked for assistant in a senior level maths class vacancy (no bother to Nuala who had learned Stocks and Shares in her Dad's primary school while I had never managed long division! What on earth made Nuala choose Jude for her religious name a year later! No hopeless case, our Nuala!

My own arrival was October 7th. We arrived to an almost episcopal lunch after which the novice mistress took me away to receive the veil and trimmings. I had told my parents I would not have my own name as Nuala Doherty had arrived ahead of me. So in due course, dressed in bonnet and cape, I was taken to the Mother Assistant who said "Well as we already have a Nuala, you can be Sr. Rose, and maybe you'd be our Little Flower." So slightly dazed and feeling I must be already halfway to the Vatican, I arrived back in the parlour. Mother Teresa threw open the door, announcing "here is Sr. Rose!" There was a sort of shocked silence. All had changed, changed utterly (once again to quote the poet), the look, the name, the gear! Suddenly my sister Ethna who was in 3rd year burst into loud sobs (which at least broke the silence!) Sr. Columbanus, the then headmistress who was also there, and a very no nonsense lady, took Ethna by the shoulder and deposited her out in the fresh air “to calm down and come in when she could behave”. Poor Etty. By then all had changed into the new reality - even more utterly than before

Another arrival that day was Edith (Madge O'Doherty) from the West and whom we called Schubert for all the lovely Lilac Time songs she used to sing and brighten those far off days. She was the life and soul of the group Síle Canty came later, and being part of the distinguished Canty dynasty had very high standards to maintain. But Sheila paid scant attention to family expectations and brought her own fun while life was still relatively simple! (Later on she followed in the family tradition of school principals!)

And there was Alphonsus Egan from the west. I recall the postulants concert where she stood up to sing 'Bould Kevin Barry which the novice mistress thought not quite ladylike and halted it with “That will be enough Sister”

Just a taste of the platinums still around, the others having already gone to celebrate, where each can sing her own song with the angels, alleluia alleluia.

Gabrielle O'Connell