



October - November 2013

THE HARP

Bulletin of the Divine Word Missionaries, Irish-British Province



Irish President visits Central America

The President of Ireland, Mr **Michael D. Higgins**, visited Mexico, El Salvador and Costa Rica in October.



Among those he met, while in Mexico, was our confrere, **Eddie Elliott** SVD from Ringsend in Dublin. In this charming picture, the two are seen in an animated conversation, while in the background, the RTE news reporter, Mr Davin Power, is waiting to interview the President.

President Higgins knows the Divine Word Missionaries well as he once taught Sociology to our students in Donamon while **Kevin**

Keenan SVD is currently working in the Galway parish where he worships while at home.

In El Salvador, he gave a moving speech in which he remembered the many Church personnel and others whose lives were cut short or who were tortured during the years of oppression in them. Among the examples of victims of unjust oppression that he referred to was our former confrere, **Patrick Rice** from Fermoy. He was tortured and imprisoned in Argentina because of his work for Justice there under the military dictatorship.

I would like express my appreciation to the President's Office for enquiring from me whether we have confreres in the places that he plans to visit. On this occasion he had also wanted to visit our confreres in Nicaragua but that visit was unable to go ahead at the time. (Editor)



FAREWELL PARTY

Before returning to Papua New Guinea recently, **Michael Donovan** SVD was honoured by his friends and relatives in **Union Hall**, West Cork. In our picture, Michael is shown holding the trophy won by his local hurling club which brought great satisfaction to him. He is accompanied by his three brothers. They are from left to right: **John; Michael; Fachtna** and **Teddy**. Several hundred people attended the enjoyable social and dance in the GAA Community Hall in the village. **Liam Dunne** SVD thanked everyone for their loyal support of Michael.

PROVINCIAL NEWS

Frank Power SVD (Jamaica) will mark his 40th anniversary of Ordination on December 9th. **Patrick Twi SVD**, R.I.P. from Ghana, who had studied in Maynooth, was also ordained forty years ago.

Fr **Liam Lawton** (Carlow) the well known singing priest and class-mate of **Pat Hogan SVD**, in Maynooth Seminary, was invited to Donamon for a fund-raising concert by Mrs **Catharine Coughlan** recently. An enjoyable night was had by all. A special thanks to Catharine and her generous team of volunteers.

The **Haddington Road** parish hosted a concert of Classical Music in November to raise funds for the repair of its organ. **Pat Claffey SVD** is the administrator there. The orchestra came from the **Irish Academy of Music**.

Deacon **John Z. SVD** was awarded his B.D. in Theology at St Patricks College, Maynooth, by **Cardinal Sean Brady**, on Nov. 9th.

Home-Leaves: Among those on, or about to come on leave, this month are: **Alan Meechan SVD** (Philippines); **John Ryan SVD** (PNG) & **Liam Hayes SVD** (Argentina). **Frank Power SVD** (Jamaica) was here for his mother's funeral. **John McCarthy SVD** (PNG) is due to come for medical attention. **Binoy Matthew SVD** returned from his home-leave in India. He is back in Arklow parish.

Our confrere, frater **Joseph SVD**, is getting on well in Port laoise. The local priests are delighted to have him because he is able to minister to some Chinese people who are in the local prison.

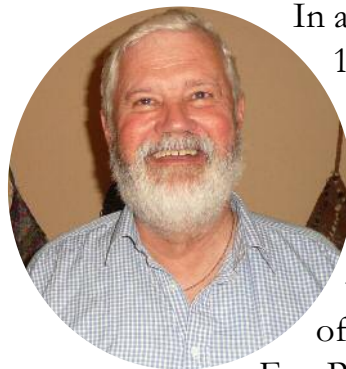
At the end of November the **SVD Mission Awareness** in the **Diocese of Killala** will come to an end. It has been a busy year for **Pat Byrne SVD** who visited 16 parishes. Our thanks to him, as well as to **John McCarthy**, **Jerry Lanigan** and **Gary Roche** for their great efforts. Full report in the next issue of the HARP.



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Farewell To City Quay!

Paul St John SVD recalls his time in City Quay Parish



In a solemn mass on the 10th of November, 2013, the Divine Word Missionaries handed back the parish of City Quay to the Archdiocese of Dublin.

For Paul St John SVD it was a special moment. He had been its administrator for most of that time. The Editor of the HARP took the opportunity to ask Paul to look back on his time there.

Ed: Paul, could you tell us, how did we the SVD get involved in City Quay Parish?

Paul: I started working in City Quay on the Parish Renewal program in 1991 for one day a week. It was at the invitation of the then Parish Administrator, **Ben Mulligan**.

Ed.: You had previously been in Mexico. Was it from there that you came into the parish?

Paul: No! At the time, I was a director with the pre-Novitiate program which was located in the Passionist Monastery of Mount Argus. It was a formation course for people interested in the Religious Life at that time.

Ed.: Were you satisfied with that work?

Paul: Not really! After all, I joined the SVD in order to be a pastor among the people. The invitation to come and minister in City Quay enabled me to remain in touch with the pastoral work that I loved.

REMEMBER IN PRAYER

The Holy Souls

Mrs Therese O'Riordan R.I.P. (Cork)

Bishop Tony Burgess (Wewak, PNG) RIP

Mrs Susan Byrne RIP. (Shannon)

Mrs Joanna Power RIP (Leopardstown)

Sr Helen Courtney RIP (Ferrybank)

The people and clergy of Killala Diocese

Ed.: What was it like working there then?

Paul: My work consisted of working in the area of Parish Renewal and in the parish development program. This meant doing Catechesis, home visitation, Adult Human development and so on.

Ed.: I remember that you also worked in the Prison Ministry. Can you tell me something about that?

Paul: That's right! In 1995, I took up the post of prison Chaplain in Mountjoy, Dublin, at the suggestion of our then Provincial, **George Agger SVD**.

Ed.: How did that come about?

Paul: Unfortunately, at that time, there were no longer any candidates pursuing the religious life option with us and so there were no longer any postulants to care for. Effectively, I was out of a job! Or, to put it another way, I was free to take on another job!

Ed.: So what happened then?

Paul: In 1998, the Society of the Divine Word, were invited to take care of a parish in the Dublin Archdiocese. We were given two options, Cherry Orchard on the west side of the city or City Quay, which is located in the centre of Dublin, on the banks of the River Liffey. The then Provincial, **Brian O'Reilly** let me make the choice.

Ed.: How interesting! So, you chose City Quay.

Paul: Yes, and as result, I became the first SVD Administrator of City Quay parish in September 1998.

Ed.: What do you mean by saying that you were the administrator? Were you not the Parish Priest?

Paul: No! You see, City

Quay is one of the four, what are called "mensal parishes" in the diocese. A mensal parish is officially a parish of the Archbishop, so technically, I was the administrator for him.

Ed.: How long did you stay in the Parish?

Paul: I remained in City Quay until September of 2012 at which time **John Owen** took on the role of Administrator. He will be there until the 10th of November 2013, on which day we, Divine Word Missionaries, will hand the parish - the Parish of the Immaculate Heart of Mary - to the Archbishop of Dublin. In fact, a diocesan priest was appointed already in September to replace John!

Ed.: Paul, did any other confreres assist you in the parish over the years?

Paul: Indeed yes! During my time there, I was accompanied by John Feighery for six years; Mick Redden, Mike Ancheta, Rudy Montades, Norman Davitt, Brian

O'Reilly and by Tom Morrison. John Owen has been working in the parish for the past three years.

Ed.: Paul, I imagine that at such a moment, many thoughts must be coming back to you. What would be some of your best memories?

Paul: I can say that City Quay parish was personally very significant for me already before I went to it at all because it was there that my Grand-Parents, on my mother's side, got married. My grand-father, Con Dalton, lived for a while on Creighton Street and worked within the parish, so!

I would also like to say that in my time there, I made some very good friends. One friend, who was known to everybody was **Bernie Coughlan**, the parish secretary. She saw to it that we had a very welcoming parish house. We had an open-door policy where, as well as accompanying the parishioners on their human and spiritual journeys, we also served those on the margins, such as those who were

homeless because of their various problems. We welcomed many who were ex-offenders or drug-addicts.

Ed.: So, overall, were you content?

Paul: On leaving the Parish, one of the parishioners came up to me and told me that my presence had brought Hope back into the Parish. For those words I was very grateful. They summed up and expressed well for me the reason for which I had been placed there in first place.

Ed.: Thank you, Paul.

(Editor's note: Paul is now a curate in the parish of Balbriggan, in County Dublin).



The scene at the final mass in City Quay, on November 10th, 2013, which was celebrated by **Archbishop Diarmuid Martin** along with Provincial **Pat Byrne SVD** and the administrator, **John Owen SVD**.

In his homily, the Archbishop acknowledged the presence of the Society of the Divine Word in the parish for the past twenty two years and all that the different confreres had contributed to the area over the years. His final word was for the people of the parish, whom he encouraged to keep it alive.

God's Tailor and the Year of Faith

by Mick Reddan S.V.D.



Faith is a word much bandied about whenever religion is a topic conversation. We speak of Faith as being a “gift” to “have” which can be “lost” or “found”. It can even be “handed on” or “tested” by adversity. It is the subject of countless homilies which bounce around churches from pillar to pulpit over the bowed heads of the “Faithful”. Did you know that Pope Benedict had actually designated 2013 as a Year of Faith? As we come to the end of this Year of Faith maybe it is a good time to ask ourselves what “Faith” means to each of us. The Old and New Testaments are peppered with the instances of man-kind’s struggle with faith. Remember when the children of Israel abandoned belief in God for the more tangible excitement of the Golden Calf or when the apostles swapped faith for despair and ran for cover after Christ’s crucifixion. But there were also stories of great unshakeable faith as when Abraham resolutely prepared to sacrifice his son or when Jesus acknowledged the absolute belief of the Roman Centurion that He would heal his servant, even from afar, saying “I have never found faith like this even in Israel. Go

home now and everything will happen as you believed it would”.

Talking Faith is one thing but as the apostles proved by their pell-mell rush to lock themselves into the upper room, living it is another. If we are very lucky in our lifetime we may be blessed to meet living examples of deep and uncomplicated Faith. And if we are blessed we may have the wisdom to recognize such people and let their grace into our lives.

One such human being for me was **Mattie Sweeney**. Mattie was deaf and mute from birth and I first got to know him when I entered **Donamon** seminary in September 1972. He was the resident tailor there and, being the son of a tailor myself, we immediately became friends. Mattie never missed daily Mass and Communion. He was a shining example for us young men then aspiring to the religious life. Apart from his regular private visits to our chapel in Donamon, he would join us in midday prayer and again at 6pm prior to cycling home to **Fuerty**. Mattie Sweeney’s daily work and his faith in **Jesus Christ** blended so well with the result that there was no contradiction in his Christian living.

Mattie loved hurling and faithfully followed the fortunes of the **Athleague** team with whom I proudly played. I had a great fan in Mattie and when the going got tough on the field-of-play his broad smile and “thumbs up” gesture from the sideline would always spur me to go the extra mile.

And so it was, in life generally, Mattie’s signs were always signs of encouragement. They were life-giving signs that spoke with a warmth and depth that the spoken word could never relay, for Mattie spoke the language of the heart.

The readings at his funeral mass were indeed aptly chosen. The Gospel read was *Matthew 13:10-17*, which says that “the reason I talked in parables is that they look without seeing and listen without hearing or understanding. The heart of this nation has grown coarse, their ears are dull of hearing and they have shut their eyes for fear they should see, hear with their ears, understand with their heart and be converted and be healed by me.”

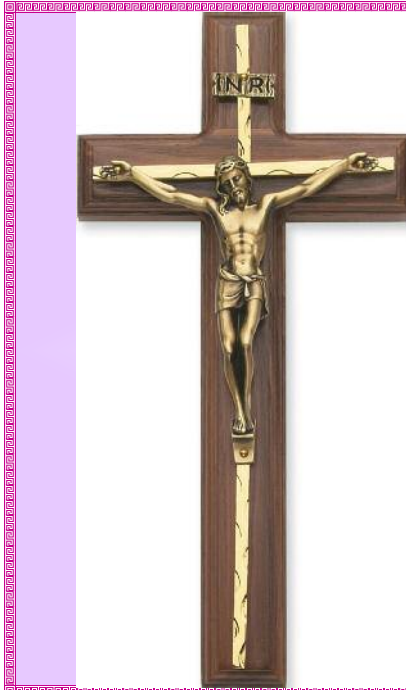
On our playing fields today, on the streets and across the whole spectrum of Irish Life, we have certainly grown coarse. We have a highly educated population and yet our impoverished use of the English language seems to require that we pepper our every conversation with the most foul-mouthed swear-words. Mattie Sweeney never uttered a word, yet you knew by his encouraging signs and his life giving gestures that words are at times simply the tools of fools who can find no better way to express themselves.

Mattie taught us sign language in his tailoring room in Donamon or walking with him around the grounds. About four years before his death, Mattie was paralyzed by a stroke and could no longer use sign language. I felt angry to think that a man who had been so faithful to God and who had carried his cross so willingly should now be deprived of his only means of communication. Mattie, as if reading my thoughts gestured to me to take something from his pajamas pocket. I took out his crucifix and blessed him with it but Mattie continued to gesture and in the same pocket I found a little prayer-card titled “The Cross in My Pocket”. As I read it I began to cry. Mattie smiled, hugged me and then lay

back on his bed to patiently and silently await the Lord's final call. Strange to think that as Mattie tailored in his little room in Donamon, we students in the room above him had to study the "Five Proofs of the existence of God" by Jacques Maritain. Today I don't remember

one of the "five proofs" of the great Frenchman, however, I do remember a deaf, mute tailor and his proof, "the Cross in My Pocket". Mattie Sweeney was born on the Feast of the Annunciation and he died in the Sacred Heart Home, Roscommon, on the feast of the

Sacred Heart. It wasn't ever a question of celebrating "Faith" for a "year" with Mattie, nor was it one of celebrating it for a week or a month. It was the tireless job of stitching each individual moment of faith lovingly into the fabric of a life well lived.



The Cross in My Pocket

I carry a cross in my pocket
A simple reminder to me
Of the fact that I am a Christian
No matter where I may be.

This little cross is not magic
Nor is it a good luck charm
It isn't meant to protect me
from every physical harm.

It's not for identification
For all the World to see.
It's simply and understanding
Between my Saviour and me.

When I put my hand in my pocket
To bring out a coin or key

The cross is there to remind me
Of the price he paid for me.

It reminds me too, to be thankful
For blessings day by day
And to strive to serve Him better
In all that I do and say.

It's also a daily reminder
Of the peace and comfort I share
With those who know my master
And give themselves to His care.

So, I carry a cross in my pocket
Reminding no one but me
That Jesus Christ is Lord of my life
If only I'll let Him be.

*Lord, have mercy upon the holy souls who have gone before us on the way of salvation.
By your holy cross may you set them free.*

“Make the symbols big! Let them speak”

Frank Power SVD

These were some of the first words that Bishop **Donald Reece** told his priests and deacons early on in his ministry as Bishop of the Diocese of **St. John's-Basseterre**. They are words I have not forgotten and words I have tried to carry into deeds.

I remember the first time he came to celebrate Confirmation in the parish I was administering. When it came to the point of placing the Chrism on each of the young people, he dug his thumb deep in the oil and 'smeared' a good amount on their foreheads so that the oil ran

freely down the eyebrows and nose. When I saw this, I beckoned to one of my altar servers to bring a purificator. He did and I was about to wipe the oil off the nose and eyebrows of one youth, when the Bishop made a definite signal that said "desist".

When he sprinkles the congregation with holy water, he makes sure that the 'sprinkler' was good enough to make sure that everyone got a good wetting and was a serious reminder of their baptism.

When I moved to the cathedral parish in **Antigua**, there was a baptism pool in the newly-built cathedral. And the effect on the church gathered for the Easter Vigil when those adults and young people were

'lowered' three times into the water was spiritually very uplifting. And for me as the priest, it really did feel like we were baptising someone, dying to sin and rising (out of the water) to new life, wet through and through.

So you can imagine my joy when I came here to Morant Bay in **Jamaica** and found a beautiful cross-shaped pool in the church. Easter vigils (and other times of baptisms) have become truly conversion-experiences for many people. Those looking on want to be baptised 'over', and all feel the call to renew their own baptism promises. "Make the symbols big..."



ELPHIN

When the SVD came to Ireland in 1938 they had to find a place to to get established. After a lot of searching, they were welcomed to the Diocese of Elphin and the first heroic members, who were all from Germany, took over and repaired the ruined Donamon Castle.

Today, the Bishop of Elphin lives in the town of **Sligo**. This led me to wonder often, where is Elphin and what is there now? I recently visited the place for the first time.

It is a big village. In the middle of the village is the location of the former Elphin Cathedral. Is this the original holy ground of the diocese?

The famous **Goldsmith** family are buried there and the song-writer, **Percy French**, has many associations with the place.



While doing Mission Awareness in Knockmore, Co Mayo, **John McCarthy** SVD was pleasantly surprised to meet **Margaret Peggy McHale**, a lady who worked as a volunteer in the diocese of Aitape, Papua New Guinea, over 30 years ago. It was her first time to meet someone from PNG.

SVDs open new church in MADAGASCAR

After much struggle and perseverance, our confreres in the island of Madagascar have celebrated the opening of their beautiful new Church in **Ampitatsimo**. It is a true gift to the people of which they are justifiably proud. The 36 beautiful benches and the 40 chairs were funded jointly by the people themselves and by the **IBP mission office**.



This is a very lively Christian community. Shortly after the opening, 99 children and adults were baptised. At the beginning of September, 20 couples had their marriages blessed in the sacrament of marriage. The pastor, Fr **Sibi**, SVD, who is from Indonesia, wishes to thank all who made it possible to build and furnish the new church, on behalf of his people.



LET US ENTRUST OUR
FILIPINO
SVD CONFRERES,
OUR HOLY SPIRIT SISTERS,
THEIR FAMILIES AND THEIR PEOPLE
TO THE LORD
AND SUPPORT THEM IN THEIR NEED

SSpS Corner

The Missionary Sisters of the Holy Spirit have decided to open a **European Novitiate** in Rome in March 2014

Rio di Janeiro: Sr. Ewa SSpS of Farnham in the U.K. and a friend, escorted 15 young people and an adult from their parish to the **World Youth Day** in Rio, Brazil. These 15 young people worked really



hard in advance of the occasion to raise funds so that they could attend the event. Sr Ewa and her companion, **Pauline**, held so

many meetings and reflections in the convent to prepare the young people for these days. They even had the experience of sleeping in the convent sitting room in order to get used to living in limited comfort and facilities. Their parents were really supportive and encouraged them all the way in their preparations. It was such a great experience for our young people to join the 3 million young people from all over the world in Rio. And of course, meeting Pope Francis was just marvellous. After the Youth Day we stayed on for another 10 days in one of our SSpS houses in Brazil to help the sisters in their mission work.

We pray now that the wonderful experiences and the solidarity of so many friends may continue to inspire and deepen their faith and the inner joy which they experienced, so that they will be instruments in God's service in the future.

Correction: Sr **AnnIta** (Kilkenny) is ministering in **Antigua** and not in Jamaica as reported in the last issue.

The Sisters are preparing for the **General Chapter of their Congregation in 2014**. Their local Chapter took place in Birmingham in October.



R.I.P.

The death took place in Cork, at the end of September, of **Mrs Therese O'Riordan**, the mother of **Tony O'Riordan SVD**, Dublin.

Mrs O'Riordan had been sick for some time before her death.

She is survived by her husband, Tony and their three children.

Therese was known for her art work and for her beautiful roses. Fr Tony SVD was the main celebrant at her funeral.

Mrs Susan Byrne (Shannon)

The sudden death of Mrs Susan Byrne took place in the nursing home where she had been resident for a short while.

Her son, **Pat Byrne SVD**, was the main celebrant at her funeral mass in Shannon, which was attended by **Kieran O'Reilly SMA**, the bishop of Killaloe, as well as by many priests and people.

May they rest in peace.



Mrs Joanna Power (Leopardstown, Dublin)

The unexpected death of Joanna took place at the beginning of November after a short illness. She was the mother of **Frank Power SVD** who works in Jamaica. Frank was home for the funeral which took place in the chapel of the Leopardstown Park Hospital. **RIP.**



WELCOME

George Kudzo Adzato SVD of Ghana, has been appointed to work in the Irish-British Province.

George, who is 33 years of age, studied philosophy under **Pat Moroney SVD** in Tamale and then studied Theology in Kinshasa, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. From Ho in Ghana, he is expected to arrive in the IBP in the second half of 2014 upon the completion of his studies and after his ordination.



Members of the Tuam Apostolic Work Society from right to left: Brig McAndrew, (President); Mary Finnegan and Gabrielle Maloney who are all from Castlebar. Next to them are Julia Cahill and Elizabeth Meagher of Tuam. For all that all the Apostolic Work Groups have done for our missionaries in 2013, we say **“Thank You!”**

John Rowland, Castlebar, with some of the gifts that he provided for Fr Phonsie Flatley SMA (Nigeria) through the Apostolic Workers. It is love for Christ and His mission that inspires people like John to support missionaries.



Some of the women and young ladies helping to build their new church in Madagascar! The church alive and happy!



Some of the fine vestments made by the Tuam Apostolic workers. All over the country, the members make and provide many things that missionaries require. Tuam is also blessed to have two Church of Ireland ladies who do beautiful embroidery for their altar clothes.



The view of the ancient monastic site of **Clonmacnoise**, as one travels up the Shannon river from Athlone. This year the IMU arranged a lovely outing to the site. Over 100 religious, two bus-loads, turned up for it.



John McCarthy SVD, (Provincial of PNG) with his sister **Eileen** and **Victor Roche SVD**, Secretary of the Bishop's Conference of PNG, during a visit to Glanmire, in Cork.