

# A Light in the Darkness

An Teaghlach Naofa

Family means everything to Irish people. We are recognised the world over for our love of family, our warm hospitality and welcome. There is something very endearing about Ireland, the beauty of our country and the warmth of our people. This is true for so many who come to visit of us, to meet up with relatives or search for their ancestral homes, visits sparked by stories of warm memories of family life in Ireland, of faith and love. St. John Paul described Ireland as the “island which is so dear to my heart, this land and its people which is such a consolation and strength to the Pope”. Increasingly, people of many nationalities choose to make their home in Ireland.

Family photos take pride of place in our homes, cherished memories of special days. A wedding, the baptism of a child, first holy communions, confirmations, birthdays, Christmas times, and of loved ones who have gone before us. Often photos we most cherish are taken on days we received the sacraments and when we gaze on these, the light of Christ shines through. We each have our own family album imprinted in our heart. Families have sorrows and weep too, just as Jesus and Mary wept at the death of St. Joseph. Sadly, many families are broken, families where the faith has vanished like a morning mist. For a family to be happy and at peace, it needs to put God in the first place. “The family that prays together stays together”.

To welcome new life is deeply embedded in our Christian heritage. We are privileged to grow up in a country that has always cherished life in the womb, values instilled in us by our parents to welcome each new life as a blessing from God. Most of us can recall, as children, the joy of the arrival of a new baby into our family and going to meet a new baby brother or sister or new cousin and being filled with wonder. I remember well, Dad bringing the four of us to meet our baby sister and being amazed by this beautiful little baby soon to be coming home in time for Christmas. Take a moment and think back to a childhood memory when you met a newborn baby for the first time. Pope Francis tells us in his message for Lent, that we must not let our love grow cold.

Today the heart of our nation is breaking as we face unprecedented evil. Never before has God’s gift of family, His plan for creation, been so savagely attacked. Last week, a direct call for Westminster to legalise same sex marriage in the North, already defeated 5 times in Stormont. In the South, the terrible threat of the scourge of abortion strikes terror into the very heart of Ireland. The plans for a holocaust of Irish babies are chilling. We, the people of Ireland, cannot let this evil happen. “May Ireland never weaken in her witness, before Europe and before the whole world, to the dignity and sacredness of all human life from conception to natural death”.

Leaving our shores, St. John Paul told us that we are each “called to a strong Christian commitment: to permeate society with the leaven of the Gospel for Ireland is at a point of decision in her history. The Irish people have to choose their way forward”. And he asked, “will it be subjugating the dignity

of the human person to the totalitarian domination of the State?” St. John Paul warned us, “Satan the Tempter, the Adversary of Christ, will use all his might and all his deceptions to win Ireland for the way of the world. What a victory would he gain, what a blow he would inflict on the Body of Christ in the world, if he could seduce Irish men and women away from Christ. Now is the time for testing for Ireland”. Did families listen? Did our Church listen? This warning sadly came to light in May 2015, when Ireland shocked the world by voting for yes to same sex marriage. St. Paul tells us, “The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so they cannot see the light of the Gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Corinthians 4:4-5). St John Paul also gave us the solution “that every home in Ireland, may remain or may begin again to be, a home of family prayer”.

Our Lady has given us clear signs that it is She, the woman clothed with the sun, who if we pray to her, will crush this evil in Ireland. In the South, the Eighth amendment was written into the Irish constitution after fervent prayer. It was the Rosary that placed the Eight Amendment and it is the Rosary that will protect it. In the North on 11 Feb 2016, Stormont voted no to abortion on two counts, on the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. Our Lady who told St. Bernadette, on the feast of The Annunciation, I am the Immaculate Conception, showed her hand. On 8 December 2017, Marie Stopes in Belfast closed their doors, on the feast of The Immaculate Conception. Our Lady is with us and she is calling us to penance and prayer. The theme of the 1954 Family Rosary Crusade across Ireland led by venerable Fr. Patrick Peyton, “You are all beautiful O Mary, you are the joy, you are the honour, you are the glory of our people”. Mary is our morning star, our guiding light, and she will lead us through this darkness.

Sr Lucia of Fatima, said, “Our Lady is the one who enlivens the faith in spirit, the confidence in souls and lights the flame of charity in their hearts. Our Lady moves those who are indifferent, giving light to the blind and attracting unbelievers”. The best gift we can give to Our Lady is the gift of the rosary and to live the message of Fatima, to pray the rosary daily for the conversion of sinners and salvation of souls and to consecrate ourselves to her most Immaculate Heart. Our rosaries, prayed with the heart are like roses to her. Let us shower her with roses through fervent prayer of the rosary and offering all our suffering and sacrifices to her for the conversion and salvation of Ireland.

Ireland like many catholic countries knows persecution. Cromwell came on 15 August 1649 with 3000 troops and slaughtered thousands but he could never break the spirit of faith. Addressing the House of Commons in 1654 he said, “All is not well with Ireland yet. You gave us the money, you gave us the guns. But let me tell you every house in Ireland is a house of prayer and when I bring these fanatical Irish before the muzzles of my guns they hold up in their hands a string of beads and they never surrender”. In April 2016, David Steele came

to the North to tell people of the six counties we are “ridiculous” for adhering to 1861 legislation. A man responsible for some 9 million murders of babies in the UK since 1967 considers us backward! The beautiful Irish ballad, Galway Bay, written by a former Irish Doctor, working in England, Arthur Colohan, comes to mind. The much loved song made world famous by Bing Crosby for the film “The Quiet Man”, lilt “Strangers came and tried to teach us their ways, and they scorned us just for being what we are, but they might as well go chasing after moonbeams or light a penny candle from a star!”

“Every people, every country, every diocese, has its holy places in which the heart of the whole people of God beats, one could say, in more lively fashion; places in which Christ dwells in a special way in our midst”. One such place is Emmanuel House of Providence, built on the 6th century monastic site of St. Brendan in the Diocese of Clonfert. Emmanuel House is a light in the darkness. Many come here each year, seeking peace and the healing balm of Christ. Clonfert in Irish means “meadow of miracles”. Devotion to Our Lady of Clonfert, was long established here for centuries.

On Sunday 18th March 2018, we will journey to Clonfert, as pilgrims with The Holy Family of Nazareth, to pray for Ireland. We will begin with a prayer at St. Brendan’s grave, followed by a Rosary procession to Emmanuel House for a prayer vigil of adoration, the stations of the cross, scripture, rosaries and mass for the Solemnity of St. Joseph. Importantly, we will unite in prayer with the All-Ireland Rosary at mass rocks and monastic sites. Children are encouraged to come dressed as their favourite Irish saint. There will be a blessing of roses for the sick if you wish to bring roses. Prayer petitions will be brought to the Holy House of Nazareth in Loreto. Relics of The True Cross and St. John Paul will be available for veneration. Join us in the heart of Ireland to entrust our nation, to The Holy Family of Nazareth. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, Holy Family of Nazareth, pray for us. “Arise, shine, for your light has come and the glory of the Lord rises upon you” (Is 60:1). May His light, shine out of Ireland and may our nation, once again, be a light to the world.

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## Vigil for Ireland




Come and pray for our nation in the heart of Ireland; uniting with the All-Ireland Rosary

The Lamb will Conquer



Pray a novena to St. Joseph starting 11th March '18  
Bring roses for blessing for the sick

### Emmanuel House, Clonfert

Sunday 18th March 2018 1.45 p.m. - 7 p.m.  
(Park by 1.30 p.m. in time for Rosary procession)

In honour of The Holy Family on the eve of the Solemnity of St. Joseph  
Celebrant: Fr. John Mockler SDS

“They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with Him are called and chosen and faithful.” Revelation 17:14

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