

Archdiocese of Dublin

Education Secretariat

Post - Primary Diocesan Advisers Blog - February 2025

Dear Chaplain and R. E. Teacher,

Greetings to each one of you. I send you warmest wishes as I write the February Blog. May the signs of Spring which are just beginning to erupt all around us, showing signs of new hope and new beginnings, warm your hearts and lead you into renewed gratitude and enthusiasm.

I wonder if you were to ask your students to list as many sources of light they can think of, how many they would name. You might further ask them why light is so essential to our lives? Some of the students may answer that light is essential to show the way, to reveal, to warm, to warn, to celebrate and to heal.

I wonder too how many of the students added their own names to their list of sources of light. We through our Baptism, through our connection with Jesus, especially through prayer and the Eucharist, are light bearers. We can offer the beacon of hope and comfort to a darkened world. Jesus is always trying to catch our attention. Even the smallest things we can do will contribute to new life each day.

In February, the church invites us to focus on three great bearers of hope - Mary, the mother of Jesus as she presents her Son in the temple, Anna, the faithful servant who waited in the temple for the revelation of the Messiah and our St. Brigid who gathered communities around her to fan the flame of hope and weave into her cross, the lives and needs of the people around her.

As we begin this new month, could I invite you to reflect either personally or with your students on what it is in your life that you would like to be transformed in order for your flame of love to burn brighter? Let us hold that hope of transformation in our hearts as we journey through the days of February and may the light of the Gospel work its healing power in all of us.

*“Work on your strengths, not your weaknesses. How many of your New Year’s resolutions have been about fixing a flaw? And how many of those resolutions have you made several years in a row? Life offers so many chances to use one tool instead of another, and often you can use a strength to get around a weakness.”* **The Happiness Hypothesis – Jonathan Haidt**

**Le gach dea ghuí,**

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**Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network**



<https://www.popesprayer.va/>

<https://popesprayerusa.net/>

**Small Group reflection**

<https://popesprayerusa.net/popes-intentions/>

## ***February 2025: For Vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life***

**Let us pray that the ecclesial community might welcome the desires and doubts of those young people who feel a call to serve Christ's mission in the priesthood and religious life.**



## **POPE FRANCIS PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS**

LORD of the Harvest,  
BLESS young people with the gift of courage  
to respond to your call. Open their hearts to  
great ideals, to great things.

INSPIRE all of your disciples to mutual love  
and giving - for vocations blossom in the  
good soil of faithful people.

INSTIL those in religious life, parish  
ministries, and families with the confidence  
and grace to invite others to embrace the  
bold and noble path of a life  
consecrated to you.

UNITE us to Jesus through prayer and  
sacrament, so that we may cooperate  
with you in building your reign of mercy  
and truth, of justice and peace. AMEN.

## Introducing Young People to Vocation in a Religious Context

**Vocation** in a religious context is how God calls young people to serve Him by living a particular way of life that is freely chosen. God calls young people through Baptism and Confirmation to serve Him in a specific way of life. God calls everyone, some to a specific mission, personally designed for them. We can follow God's call as a single person, married person, ordained priest or a vowed religious. It is important to first determine which way of life God is calling young people to. This process of determining God's call for life is known as discernment.

**Religious or Consecrated Life:** A permanent state in life into which certain men or women freely commit themselves to a life of special service to Christ, marked by the profession of the evangelical counsels: poverty, chastity and obedience.

### Appendix A - Irish Catholic Catechism for Adults

In some of our schools, there is a tradition from one particular congregation which as teachers you can recall and bring to life for the students under the following headings:

➤ **Culture: What is the students' understanding of Culture?**

Culture includes the ethos, standards, values, attitudes and way of thinking of a people.

➤ **Vocation: What do the students understand by Vocation?**

Vocation is a relationship with God involving choice, decision making and a life - long commitment.

➤ **Discernment: A process involving prayer and reflection.**

This section can be covered with senior students. Discerning what God's is asking of us, needs reflection, attentiveness and time. When we experience difficulty seeing the will of God, we can refer to the Gospel stories as they teach us that what we need in decision making is patience and an openness of heart. We encourage students to make life decisions about the best ways to live their gift of faith.

The important thing is that each young person discern his or her own path **that** they bring out the very best of themselves, the most personal gifts that God has placed in their hearts.

(1 Cor. 12:7)

➤ **Religious Communities / Congregations**

Religious communities were founded in particular circumstances in a country at a particular time for a particular purpose. That influenced the founding story. Hermits and Consecrated people were at the very beginning of religious life. As time went by, religious life evolved in different ways. In the beginning, religious life was for the salvation of those joining. After the Reformation, the focus of religious life was on other people, serving the needs of the time.

In the various congregations, there are priests only, priests and brothers, brothers only, nuns and sisters.

### ➤ Terms used in all Religious Communities

Some of the main terms used are Charism, Mission and Ministry.

<p><b>Charism</b> is the soul of the community, that which gives it purpose, motivation and animates its action.</p> <p>A community's charism involves its history, traditions, rule of life, apostolate and spirituality, all of the heritage, which makes it what it is.</p>	<p><b>Mission</b> is the particular way of living out the charism, the reason for the first members coming together.</p>	<p><b>Ministry</b> is the way through which the mission and charism is carried out.</p>
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### ➤ Religious Vows

Vows of **Poverty, Chastity and Obedience** are taken in each congregation in accordance with the custom and practice of the congregation.

**Research / Project for State Examinations and for non-examination students, may include the following:**

- Foundation Story of the Congregation
  - Founder / Founders
  - Charism of the Congregation
  - Mission of the Congregation
- Ministry of the Congregation when founded, how it developed and has it changed?
  - Structure of the Congregation
  - Clothing / dress of Congregation
  - Prayer life of the Congregation
  - Community life of the Congregation

"We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves."

**APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION - GAUDETE ET EXSULTATE of Pope Francis on the call to Holiness in today's world**

## PSALM 139

The pressure to fit in and be accepted can lead many students to hide their true selves. They can respond in line with what they experience from society which is not always good for their personal growth, fulfilment and happiness.

### This Prayer to Be My True Self is inspired by Psalm 139.

It reminds us that we are created by God who loves us and knows us intimately. By having an understanding of this we can accept ourselves, allowing us to embrace our true selves without fear.

By exploring the themes of Psalm 139, we can gain a deeper understanding of our own identity and purpose.

We can find solace in the fact that we are known and loved by God, which can give us the confidence to be authentic in a world that often pressures us to be someone else.

Reflecting on being true to ourselves, accepting our weaknesses, strengths, qualities and talents will give us the confidence to live our values and beliefs, knowing that God created and loves us unconditionally.

### PRAYER

#### TO BE MY TRUE SELF

Father, you know me better than anyone else.  
You know me better than myself.  
You know what I am going to say before I say it.  
**You love me exactly as I am.**

You created me in my mother's womb.  
You made me the way I am for a purpose - your purpose.  
You had a plan for me before I was even born.  
**And you love me exactly as I am.**

Sometimes I want to run and hide my true self.  
Sometimes I don't want people to see the real me.  
But you are always with me wherever I go.  
**Loving me exactly as I am.**

Father, please grant me the courage to be the real me.  
Help me to be the child you dreamed I would be.  
With your help I can be myself.  
**Because you love me exactly as I am.**

Amen



# Meditation On Callings

John O'Donohue

The great law of life is: Be Yourself.



Though this axiom sounds simple, it is often a difficult task.

To be yourself, you have to learn to become who you were dreamed to be.

Each person has a unique destiny. To be born is to be chosen.

There is something special that each of us has to do in the world.

If someone else could do it, they would be here and not us.

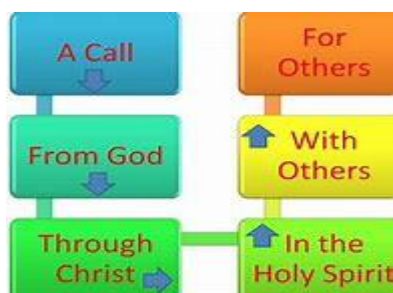
One of the fascinating questions is to decipher what one's destiny is.

At the heart of each destiny is hidden a unique life calling.

**What is it you are called to do?**

In old-fashioned language: What is your vocation in life?

When you find that you are doing what you love, what you were brought here to do, it makes for a rich and contented life. You have come into rhythm with your longing. Your work and action emerge naturally; you don't have to force yourself. Your energy is immediate. Your passion is clear and creative.



A new calling can open the door into the house of vision and belonging.

You feel at home in your life, heart and hearth at one.

# Hope is the central message of Pope Francis' decree for Jubilee Year 2025

The Jubilee Year began on Christmas Eve 2024 and will end in January 2026.

On the theme, "**Pilgrims of Hope**" Pope Francis invites us to rekindle hope and trust in the future. He is encouraging us to deepen our faith through acts of charity, penance and pilgrimage. This theme invites us to live the present moment in the light of hope. It encourages us to respond with renewed confidence to the many challenges and needs of the particular times in which we live.



**Light on the Journey of Life**

*We live in complex and challenging times.  
We long for love, peace, and justice.  
We are aware that there is a crisis of faith.  
We need hope when we feel powerless and  
discouraged.*



**The Spirit lives and acts in us**

*In the Spirit, there is hope.  
The Spirit builds the Kingdom of God among us.  
The Spirit frees us from worries and anxieties.  
With the gift of hope, we are granted new life.*



**Prayer as a means of Hope**

*Living with hope is an art that we have to learn.  
Through prayer our hope is renewed, knowing  
that God always listens to us.*



**Mary, Mother of Hope,  
Help us to sow seeds of  
Hope**

***"Hope is to trust that God,  
in his Goodness,  
will fulfil the promises  
He has made to us."***

**St. Vincent de Paul**



**Hope** comes to those who journey in hope. We put hope into practice. We live hope: it is the expression of a relationship between people who travel together. We travel with each other and we travel with God. Relationships, enduring relationships, take time. Hope will grow among us, when we journey with hope.

Excerpt from the Homily of Archbishop Dermot Farrell

St Mary's Pro-Cathedral  
Sunday, December 29, 2024

**Diocesan Pastoral Council**

The process has begun to establish a Diocesan Pastoral Council for the Dublin Diocese, which will be commissioned at the beginning of Lent 2025. Following from the Synodal and Task Force listening exercises, having a Diocesan Pastoral Council was seen as an essential part of moving forward.

In 2024, Archbishop Farrell set up a group to look at the requirements, statutes and membership of the Council. The work of the group can be seen on the Diocesan website under the Diocesan Pastoral Council tab.

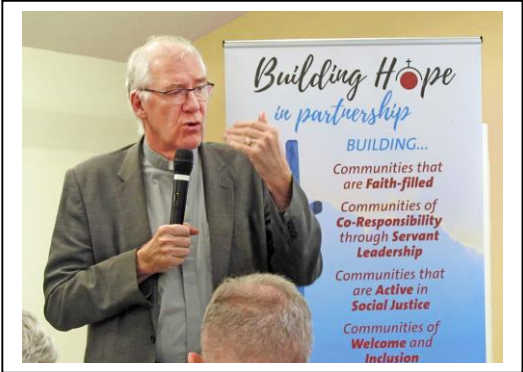
The function of the Diocesan Pastoral Council is to be a consultative group which works co-responsibly with Archbishop Farrell in designing ways and means by which the Diocese can best fulfil the mission of Jesus Christ.

It will be made up of the Archbishop and 21 laity, religious and clergy. The makeup of the membership will reflect the entire People of God with the good of the whole Diocese in mind. Those who will be on the Council are not representatives of areas or groups in the Diocese but fulfil the criteria for membership that has been set down.

The choosing of the nine lay members will be a five stage process of discernment. It began at the Deanery Meetings during the week of December 16th.

As the discernment process continues over the next three months, we ask the whole Diocese to pray for the work that is going on. We ask the Holy Spirit to guide all who are involved both the nominees and those engaged in the discernment process.

*Come, Holy Spirit, revive and renew us*  
*Come, Holy Spirit, inspire and enthuse us*  
*Come, Holy Spirit, unbind and release us*  
*Open our eyes to see God's grace around us*  
*Open our ears to hear God's voice within us*  
*Open our hearts to welcome God among us*  
*Send us out with joy to live the Gospel*  
*Send us out with peace to act as one*  
*Send us out with love to build up hope*



**Fr. Gareth Byrne**, Moderator of the Dublin Diocesan Curia  
Chairperson, Building Hope Pastoral Strategy Implementation Group



## Final Document - Synod on Synodality

### His Holiness Pope Francis

Communion  
Participation  
Mission



Pope Francis has declared that the final document of the Synod on Synodality participates in the ordinary Magisterium of the Successor of Peter, *“and as such I ask that it be accepted.”* He said he now gives this text to the whole church *“as an authoritative orientation for her life and mission.”*

The Catholic Bishops throughout the world, guided by this final document are asked to lead their churches and communities in building a synodal and missionary church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Pope Francis has also said *“at the various moments of the journey...we have listened to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Churches in this time.”* He said the final document *“reaps the fruits of a journey marked by listening to the People of God and the discernment of the Pastors. Allowing herself to be enlightened by the Holy Spirit, the whole Church has been called to read her own experience and to identify the steps to be taken in order to live communion, to achieve participation and to promote the mission that Jesus Christ has entrusted to her.”*

Pope Francis said that the synodal journey did not end in Rome in October 2024 but continues in the local church, treasuring the Final Document and that *“its application will need various mediations.”* He acknowledged that *“it takes time to arrive at choices that involve the whole church.”*

Addressing the bishops, Pope Francis has asked them for reports on how they are implementing this synod, ahead of their five - yearly visits to the Vatican that indicate *“what choices have been made in the local Church entrusted to him relation to what is indicated in the Final Document, what difficulties have been encountered, what have been the fruits.”*

# **SPRING** IS THE SEASON FOR NEW BEGINNINGS.

THE EARTH COMES TO LIFE AGAIN. EVERYTHING IN NATURE IS CHANGING AND PROMISING NEW LIFE. THE AIR IS FULL OF EXPECTATION.



Spring is a season full of hope, as new life emerges from the natural world around us.

When the snowdrops push their green spears through the earth  
I know that spring has arrived, and each year I think what a miracle it is.  
No matter how long the winter, how hard the frost  
or how deep the snow, Nature triumphs.  
No season is awaited  
so eagerly or welcomed so warmly as spring. . .  
Each year I am astonished by the wealth of flowers the season gives us:  
the subtlety of the wild primroses and violets,  
the rich palette of crocus in the parks, tall soldier tulips  
and proud trumpeting daffodils and narcissi.

Sheila Pickles

Let us notice the signs of new life and dance with joy in our hearts that God is with us inviting us to follow him on a new journey. But the journey also includes some cleaning out something like “spring cleaning”.

Spring is a time to ‘let go and let God’ help us to find what needs attention in our lives.

May there be a willingness in our hearts to see the light of day to rid ourselves of some things that are no longer helpful.

### **Suggestions for Reflection that might be helpful in our relationship with God and in seeking a way to renewal and new life.**

- ❖ Be alone with God at least once a day whenever you can find a few moments of quiet in a place conducive for meeting God. Ask for God’s help as you seek growth.
  
- ❖ Be willing to share your truth. God is always compassionate and understanding.
  
- ❖ Look into those places in your life that you have hidden even from yourself, those things that you don’t want to face. In sharing those areas with God, our Loving Creator, they are rendered powerless.
  
- ❖ Adopt a fearless stance as you rummage through the spaces and places in your life. Just as you do when you seek those things that need clearing from the garage or attic.
  
- ❖ Ask for God’s help in letting go of all the things that are no longer helpful to your life of Christian service and love.
  
- ❖ Pray for the courage to be faithful to surrendering what you need to let go.
  
- ❖ Enjoy the peace and freedom and your closeness to God.

Reflection is a gift we give ourselves. It is a way of cleansing and healing. It is not only useful during the Spring time or Lenten/Easter season but the Church in her wisdom has set aside this time as a reminder of what we need in order to continue growing.

**Adapted - Ursuline Sisters of Cleveland**



## The Hope of Spring



God, thank you for Spring and the hope of warmer, longer, brighter days.

Thank you for the coming of growth and life and birth.

Thank you that things are coming awake in the world.

This is what our calendar says, and we do see some signs that it is real.

But we also still struggle with the residual layover of winter.

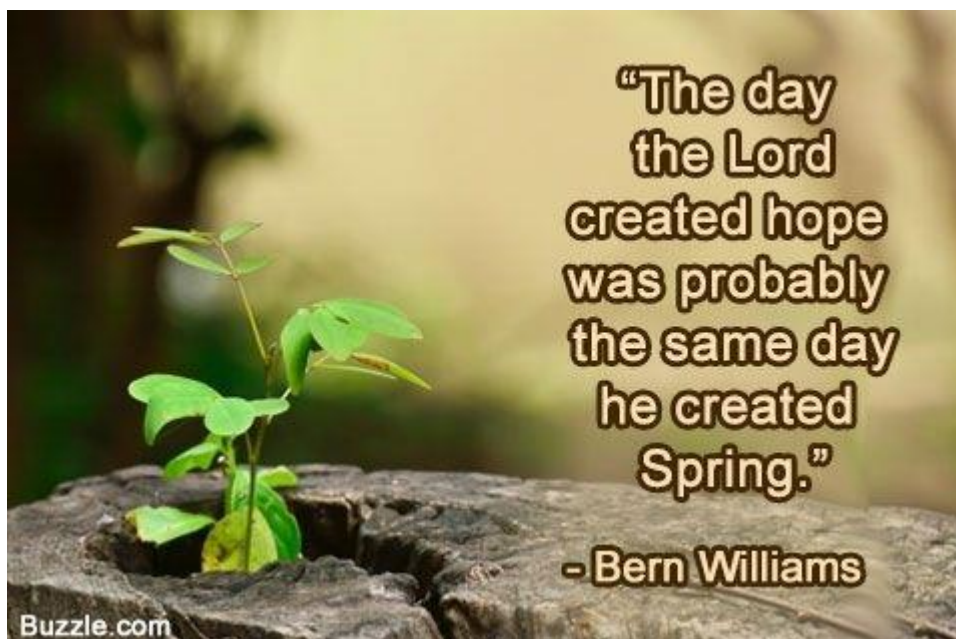
Now we ask that you bring into reality all that belongs in this season.

Your word says that we will have provision, and hope, and joy, and health and loving relationships here and now in this life.

We ask that what belongs in this season would become actual in our practical lives.

We hope in you and in your promises. We hope in your gift of Spring.

- Author Unknown



**LÁ FHÉILE BRÍDE: Saturday, 1<sup>st</sup> February is the Feast of St. Brigid,  
Secondary Patron Saint of Ireland.**

**It is also the first day of Springtime.**

We praise God for this great woman, St. Brigid - one of our heroines in our faith story.

Brigid was born in Kildare and lived in the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> and early 6<sup>th</sup> century. Her father Dubhthach was a price warrior, a man of noble birth. Her mother Broicseach was one of seven daughters.

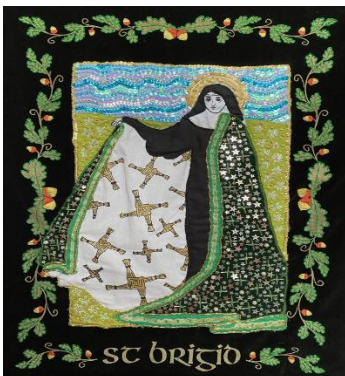
There was opposition from her father and brothers when she considered entering religious life. She did become a nun. It is believed that she travelled around Ireland bringing the message of Christianity whilst at the same time combining the contemplative life of a nun. Brigid was known for her kindness and love as she travelled to places in Connacht, Munster and Leinster. She made a deep impression throughout Ireland with holy wells and churches bearing her name.

Within a short time after her death around 524 A.D. she was venerated as the holy woman who founded a double monastery in Kildare.



### **St. Brigid's Cross**

Brigid's Cross is said to have originated when Brigid was caring for an elderly chieftain as he lay on a bed of rushes. Brigid made crosses with these rushes and explained the Christian story to him and encouraged him to unite his suffering with those of Jesus on the Cross.



### **Healing Tradition**

There is a custom of placing a piece of cloth called the Brat Bríde on the eve of her feast day on the grass overnight to be blessed by Brigid. This cloth can then be used to cure sore throats and headaches.

## St. Brigid's Eve

This night,  
they would hang the cloths  
for birthing and healing  
over the thorn branches  
for her blessing,  
that as she walked the land  
the Divine dew, twice sanctified  
by the dawn and the day both,  
might soak them sacred again  
and enrich them with this vigil's virtue  
for the passing of all pain.

This night,  
the stranger that knocked  
would be welcome and warmed,  
invited to stretch their feet  
before the fire  
and offer a story to the circle.

This night,  
our ancient abbess  
and lady of the light,  
she whose cloak enfolds  
the land she loves  
comes by.

For this night,  
is Brigid's  
night.



## **St. Brigid's Blessing**

**May no fire, no flame burn us.**

**May no take, no sea drown us.**

**May no sword, no spear wound us.**

**May no king, no chief insult us.**

**May all the birds sing for us.**

**May all the cattle low for us.**

**May all the insects buzz for us.**

**May all the angels of God always protect us.**

**Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord Jesus and the  
Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Sunday, 2<sup>nd</sup> February.**

CANDLEMAS (BLESSING OF CANDLES): February 2<sup>nd</sup> is known as Candlemas  
(also spelled **Candlemass** or **Mass of the Candles**)



**Presentation of Jesus at the  
Temple based upon the account  
of the Presentation of Jesus,**

**Luke 2:22-40.**

There is a tradition that candles are brought to the church, to be blessed and then used for the rest of the year at home or in the local church.

These blessed candles serve as a symbol of Jesus Christ, who referred to himself as the Light of the World: *'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.'* John 8:12

According to Luke's Gospel, the Presentation of Jesus and the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary took place in the Temple on the same day, 2<sup>nd</sup> February.

This feast marks when Mary and Joseph fulfilled the requirement of the law by presenting their new-born son Jesus at the Temple.

Mary and Joseph, as law abiding Jews, had to wait forty days after the birth of their son before going to the temple in Jerusalem to offer sacrifice and to thank God for Mary's purification.

Like all others coming to the Temple, Mary and Joseph needed an offering. Many families could not afford the required lamb and pigeon, so the law conceded that two pigeons or doves would suffice. Mary and Joseph had little money so they got either a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. These animals were sacrificed.



While Mary and Joseph with their son Jesus visited, the Holy Spirit guided a devout man Simeon to the Temple. The Gospel of Luke explains that the old prophet Simeon and the prophetess Anna were at the Temple that day. (Luke 2:22-38). They, like many others, had spent their lifetime waiting, longing for a Messiah, and the Holy Spirit had revealed to Simeon that he would not die until he had seen the Saviour.

Among all the children and mothers coming into the Temple, Simeon recognized Jesus as the Christ Child; he held Jesus and exclaimed this hymn of thanksgiving, *“Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in sight of all the peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel.”* (Luke 2:29-32).

When Simeon saw Jesus, he took the child into his arms and said, *“My eyes have seen your salvation,”* (Luke 2:30) and he blessed the family. The prophet Anna, who was widowed also gave thanks and told others of this child, that Jesus was the Messiah, the *“consolation of Israel.”*

Herod had learned of Jesus’ birth from the wise men whom they called *“King of the Jews.”* Herod feared the Israelites’ growing strength and ordered the execution of all boys of two years of age and younger in the region. An angel appeared to Joseph and told him to flee to Egypt. Joseph and Mary left, staying away until Herod’s death when an angel told Joseph that it was safe to return to the Holy Land.

**Sharing: A Thought from a Chaplain  
with a Question for us...**

We are all familiar with Mother’s Day and Father’s Day which we celebrate every year.

**Why is there not a Parents’ Day where we celebrate father and mother as a couple?**

It would be good to focus on both parents together, as we see the parents of Jesus, Joseph and Mary together make the long journey to Jerusalem to present their firstborn child in the Temple as the law of God required. In the image of Joseph and Mary presenting Jesus in the Temple, we have a wonderful model of husband and wife united in practising their faith and in raising their child in the faith. Joseph and Mary are presented as people who work together, encourage each other and do things together.

Husband and wife are companions on the journey of life, especially on the journey to our ultimate destination. Parents provide for their children with the basic necessities of life, what is more basic than belief and faith in God.

**Joseph and Mary show us the way by the example of their own lives.**

## St. Blaise

February 3<sup>rd</sup>

is the Feast of Saint Blaise and on this date the traditional Saint Blaise blessing of throats is offered.

St. Blaise was a medical doctor and probably what we might call today, a throat specialist.



There is no accurate historical evidence about St. Blaise's life. St. Blaise, a bishop and martyr from the third century, is the patron saint of diseases. He was born into a wealthy family and received a Christian education. Legend has it that Blaise was a physician, a healer, and that he sometimes healed those with ailments of the throat.

According to tradition, Blaise retreated to a cave and became a hermit. While there, he befriended some wild animals and cared for them. One day, Blaise was captured by hunters with the intention of putting him into prison. Whilst on this journey to prison, Blaise encountered a woman whose little boy was choking to death on a fishbone. Blaise healed him and the blessing of the throats on the 3<sup>rd</sup> February derives from that story. Blaise was delivered to the Governor and beheaded.

**We pray for those who are sick and suffering, for those who care for the sick, and for all who seek the blessings of good health.**

**As we remember Blaise, we think of all those working in health care in our hospitals and within our communities. Bless them with renewed energy and knowledge.**

**We pray too for those who have no voice in our society: the homeless, the migrant, the refugee, the elderly, the hungry and those with no family to support them.**



***Through the intercession of St. Blaise, may God deliver you from every disease of the throat and from every other illness: in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen***

**Traditional Blessing of the throat**



## The Story of a Teenage Survivor of Human Trafficking

**My name is Ngozi, I am a nineteen years old Nigerian girl living in Ireland for the past two years.**

I belonged to a very happy family of five children. My parents loved us and wanted us to have a good education. I looked forward as the eldest to going to college to study Science. However, my beloved father was killed in a motor accident. My heart broken mother had to find a job and from then on we knew what it was like to live in poverty.

A friend of my father whom we called Uncle offered to arrange for me to go Ireland where he said that I would get a well-paid job, be able to send money back to my mother and in time continue my education. I felt that I had a responsibility to help my mother, two sisters and two brothers and so I agreed to travel to Ireland with another seventeen year old girl and two men who were friends of the man we called Uncle. He assured us that they were trustworthy and that they would look after us.

It was dark when we arrived in Dublin. The men took our passports and documents and we drove to a house near to the airport. It was then that a terrible stage of our lives began we were beaten, sexually assaulted and raped by the two men. Bruised and traumatised we were told that if we did not cooperate they would bring our younger sisters to Ireland. To cut a long story short we spent the next two years being driven to towns in Ireland where we were sexually abused and raped each night by different men. I was often in utter despair. I was bruised and felt completely helpless. One evening when we were walking along a street in a town in which we had been a number of times I felt that two older women, whom we had seen on a previous occasion, were following us but I dared not look at them. Shortly after our arrival in the house, in which we were to stay and meet men, I heard a lot of commotion and shouting. Two police men were searching the house and found us both. The two women who had been following us had gone to the police. They had noticed how listless and withdrawn we looked, remembered previously seeing us and decided that something was very wrong.

We were brought to a safe place and cared for with great kindness, respect and understanding despite the fact that we could only stand and stare. We were numb and bewildered. Since then we received medical attention, counselling, and education I cannot go back to Nigeria because I am seen to have shamed and disgraced my family. In time I hope to see my mother and family. At present I am being helped to seek asylum in Ireland and am receiving counselling and other supports. I may be a survivor of human trafficking but it will be a long time before I recover from being sexually abused, being treated as unworthy of respect, and as someone without any human dignity. I would be terrified to give evidence in court against the traffickers knowing what their friends could do to my family in Nigeria.

## What can we do?



Become more informed about human trafficking in Ireland and be prepared to raise awareness among our family, friends and other people about the growth and impact in this form of human slavery and criminal activity in Ireland.

Pope Francis has also reminded us that unless people become informed about its reality and frequency and speak out about this awful crime against human beings it will continue to remain hidden.

## How can we become better informed?

Contact: [info@aptireland.org](mailto:info@aptireland.org) for a topical, relevant and informative **Education Programme – Captives**. It is an anti-human trafficking awareness raising programme that is freely available to all **senior level students in post primary schools**. (A.P.T. Act to Prevent Trafficking.)

### Reflection and Prayer to End Human Trafficking – Daily Prayer

God of hope and peace, touch our hearts and energize our ongoing efforts in abolishing this heinous crime against humanity so that every victim is freed and every survivor's life renewed.

You blessed St. Josephine Bakhita of Sudan with compassion for others. May her prayers comfort and strengthen the women, men and children who are in search of freedom.

We pray for the lives of all our brothers and sisters who are trafficked. May they be freed and find hope.

We ask for transformation of heart for those who inflict pain, anguish and grief on our vulnerable sisters and brothers. Give us generosity to stand in solidarity with others so that together we heal the hearts and lives of Your people.

*Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, forever and ever. Amen.*

## Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes - World Day of the Sick - 11th February



On this day in 1858, Our Lady first appeared to the 14 year old girl Bernadette Soubirous.

The World Day of the Sick was instituted on 13 May 1992 by Pope John Paul II and is celebrated on 11 February, also the memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes.

Because numerous pilgrims and tourists to Lourdes, claimed to have been healed at the Marian Shrine through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, Pope John Paul II chose the commemoration of Our Lady of Lourdes as the day of the observance.

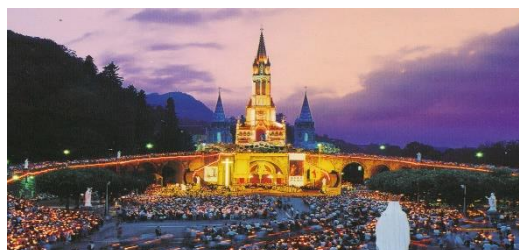
### How to observe World Day of the Sick

- Pray for the sick
- Offer support to the sick
- Appreciate healthcare workers

*O Mary, Immaculate Virgin, Woman of suffering and hope, be kind to every suffering person, obtain fullness of life for each one.*

Pope John Paul II

**Travelling in Faith and in Solidarity with the Sick** “Thousands of people from every nation across the world walk together, shoulder to shoulder; holding a candle and praying. By the time we reached the end the sun had just set and the candles are the only thing lighting. Then people raise their candles to the night sky in *prayer, thanksgiving and honour to our Lord. It is magnificent and simply beautiful.*” **Testimony of an Irish Girl, Aoife Daly**



## St. Valentine's Day - 14<sup>th</sup> February

**Valentine** lived in the third century and his name comes from the Latin word *Valens* meaning worthy, strong, or powerful. Valentine was martyred around the year 269. He is the patron Saint of love, young people, and happy marriages.



Shrine of St. Valentine, Whitefriar St. Church

In 1835 an Irish Carmelite by the name of John Spratt was visiting Rome.

Apparently his fame as a preacher had gone before him. The elite of Rome flocked to hear him and he received many tokens of esteem from the doyens of the Church. One such token came from Pope Gregory XVI (1831-1846) and were the remains of Saint Valentine.

On November 10, 1836, the Reliquary containing the remains arrived in Dublin and were brought in solemn procession to Whitefriar Street Church where they were received by Archbishop Murray of Dublin.

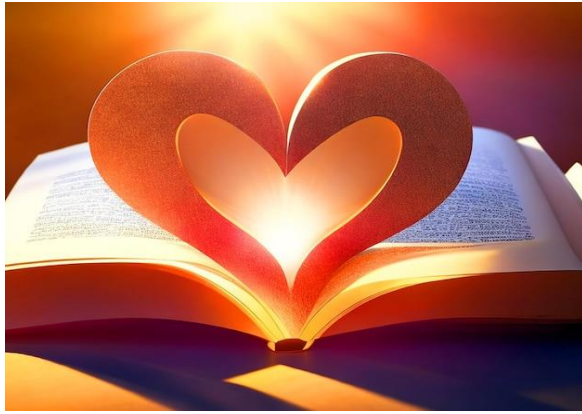
### What does LOVE mean?

**LOVE means putting others before ourselves and loving them as Jesus loved us.**

Every Valentine's Day should be a day to remember that love reaches out beyond our closest friends and family and should extend to all those around us. Every day is a day to let those around us know they are loved, remembered, and cherished not for what they do or for what they have but for who they are!

**"Love to be real, it must cost - it must hurt - it must empty us of self."**

***Mother Teresa***



## *Prayer Service*

*CELEBRATING,*

*Love -*

*Friendships -*

*Relationships.*

### *Introduction:*

St. Valentine's Day, 14<sup>th</sup> February, is the day when we celebrate our friendships and relationships.

**St. Valentine** lived in the third century. He was a bishop in the early church. He performed Christian marriages for young couples and helped Christians who were being persecuted. There was a prohibition on all marriages at the time except those recognised by the state. Valentine was told to renounce his faith and refused to do so. Valentine was jailed. The Roman emperor commanded Valentine to be put to death. While in jail, he is believed to have cured the jailer's daughter of blindness. Just before he died he wrote her a letter to the young girl which he signed "Your Valentine." When the young girl opened the letter she discovered a yellow crocus inside. As the girl looked at the crocus, she saw brilliant colours for the very first time in her life. Her sight was restored. Because of this Valentine has become **the patron saint of love**.

### *Opening Prayer*

St. Valentine's Day is a special occasion to celebrate the love in our lives while reflecting on God's love for us. We take time today to reflect on the vastness of God's love for us, a love so deep and unconditional that it surpasses all understanding. We are grateful for God's love that he has freely given to us. We thank God not only for His love but also for the ability to love others that He has instilled in us. Help us to see and appreciate love in all its forms - be it in friendship or family. Teach us to love as God loves, fully and without reservation.

### *Reading from the First Letter of St. Paul's to the Corinthians*

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, and it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres. Love never fails.

**The word of the Lord**

**Response:** Thanks be to God



*Questions and quiet time for Reflection read slowly with quite music. Group Sharing can be introduced here.*



1. Who is the most loving person you have known personally and why?



2. Who is the greatest example of human goodness you have heard or learnt about? What makes this person so special?

### *Psalm 139*

O LORD, you have examined my heart  
and know everything about me.

You know when I sit down or stand up. **Response: Fill us with your love, O Lord**

You know my thoughts even when I'm far away.

You see me when I travel  
and when I rest at home.

You know everything I do.

**Response: Fill us with your love, O Lord**

You know what I am going to say  
even before I say it, LORD.

**Response: Fill us with your love, O Lord**

You go before me and follow me.

You place your hand of blessing on my head.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,  
too great for me to understand!

**Response: Fill us with your love, O Lord**

### *In this Psalm*

- God knows everything about us. He knows our thoughts, our actions, and even the words we haven't spoken yet.
- God not only knows us completely but is also present with us at all times. There is nowhere we can go where God's presence cannot reach us.
- Even before we speak, God knows what we will say. He knows us better than we know ourselves.

## *Prayers of Intercession*

Loving God, We thank you for the gift of life. We ask you to bless our friendships. May we show compassion, respect and understanding with all those we meet each day.

Lord, hear us.

**Response: Lord graciously hear us.**

Loving God, Help us to call on the saints in our daily life. Saints have a way of helping us when we least expect it because they are with God in Heaven. They can see when we need help, but we can be too afraid to ask. Give us the courage to ask for their intercession in times of need.

Lord, hear us.

**Response: Lord graciously hear us.**

Loving God, As Mother Teresa said, "Love cannot remain by itself – it has no meaning. Love has to be put into action and that action is service." Help us to reach out to others in our school and at home.

Lord, hear us.

**Response: Lord graciously hear us.**

Let us pray to together: Our Father...

## *Closing Prayer*

God, You are the source of love and life. We place our lives in your loving care. Help us to grow in love and knowledge of you and of each other as we celebrate the feast day of St. Valentine.

Guide us by the light of your love, so that we may grow in body, mind and spirit. We ask this in the name of Jesus, Your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen



# Websites and Resources to Explore...



## Prayer Resources for the Jubilee Year



<https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&&p=4616864a492c0a79044851f317ac13e8d28ebb13be1940dbb2d8d538cd0c0346jmltdHM9MTczNzY3NjgwMA&ptn=3&ver=2&hsh=4&fclid=3a5185c9-f561-6922-3a5d-9194f481683b&psq=jubilee+year+2025+dublin+diocese&u=a1aHR0cHM6Ly9kdWJsaW5kaW9jZXNlMlI2p1YmlsZWUyMDI1Lw&ntb=1>

## Jubilee Year 2025 – Irish Bishops' Conference



To keep informed on information and developments, to download resources and to watch videos.

<https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&&p=f26b2017e44887acde3f14d7f6c9c663237ec43b1358288f6dec7c74dc585d09jmltdHM9MTczNzY3NjgwMA&ptn=3&ver=2&hsh=4&fclid=3a5185c9-f561-6922-3a5d-9194f481683b&psq=jubilee+year+2025+dublin+diocese&u=a1aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuY2F0aG9saWNiaXNob3BzLmllL2p1YmlsZWUteWVhci0yMDI1Lw&ntb=1>

*During the Jubilee Year – Year of Hope, you are invited to journey the pilgrim path of the four churches in the inner city – Westland Row, City Quay, Sean McDermott Street, St Mary's Pro-Cathedral— and St Kevin's Church, Glendalough. Called "Pockets of Hope" the pilgrim route leads you through Pope Francis's document "Hope Does Not Disappoint" from*

the opening lines in St Andrew’s Church to its conclusions in St Mary’s Pro-Cathedral, giving pilgrims time to ponder the richness of his witness to Hope.

Visit: <https://dublindiocese.ie/jubilee2025/>



## ‘Pockets of Hope’

Based on the message of Pope Francis for The Year of Jubilee 2025

**Hope Does Not Disappoint**

PH Cover 1 "Pockets of Hope"  
 Quotes taken from Spes Non Confundit Prius. Oves Non Disappoint! Bull of Indiction for the Ordinary Jubilee of 2025, 9th May, 2024, by Pope Francis.  
 This project on Pockets of Hope is created by Fr. Alan Hilliard and designed by Mary-Aoife Ding.

**Rome is preparing to accommodate an anticipated 32 million pilgrims during this Jubilee Year 2025.**

# JUBILEE OF YOUTH

## ROME 2025

### JULY 28TH - AUGUST 4TH

**REGISTER NOW**

- Return flights with 10kg bag (can upgrade to 20kg for an additional cost)
- Accommodation
- Pilgrim packs, including meal vouchers & transport ticket for Rome
- Diocesan Group T-Shirt & pack
- Insurance
- Preparation Program before, during and after Rome
- All events in Rome

**MORE INFO:**

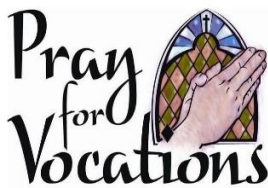
+353 86 104 0579

natalie.doherty@dublindiocese.ie

## About Us – Vocation Ireland

Vocations Ireland is an association of the Vocation Directors of the Catholic Religious Orders in Ireland. The association works to present religious life, apostolic, missionary and contemplative, as a life choice that is one way of following Christ and bringing deeper meaning and purpose to life.

<https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&&p=c2dce2493a9c236d306609d4e4ee95987ce0e290817d900d2605e147eff0260aJmldHM9MTczNzY3NjgwMA&ptn=3&ver=2&hsh=4&fclid=3a5185c9-f561-6922-3a5d-9194f481683b&psq=vocations+ireland&u=a1aHR0cHM6Ly92b2NhdGlvbnNpcmVsYW5kLmNvbS9hYm91dC11cy8&ntb=1>



# february

## PRAYER POINTS



HEYCREATIVESISTER.COM

GUIDED PRAYER POINTS THROUGH  
FEBRUARY WITH FREE PRINTABLE

<https://www.bing.com/images/search?view=detailV2&ccid=hXolgV6&id=79F308CB1A2360CD75B3914F5925A32160CA0E01&thid=OIF.uh7N2t3dkaA%2bwDBVa7bwppw&mediaurl=https%3a%2f%2fheycreativesister.com%2fwp-content%2fuploads%2f2023%2f01%2fFebruary-Prayer-Points-Vertical.jpg&cdnurl=https%3a%2f%2fth.bing.com%2fth%2fid%2fr.847c6896057a61c756dedc6680ffe84c%3frik%3d%26pid%3dImgRaw%26r%3d0&exph=1000&expw=1500&q=Pope%27s+intentions+for+February+2025&simid=7180926163738&FORM=IRPRST&ck=BA1ECDADDD91A03EC030556BB6F0A7&selectedIndex=27&itb=0>



## Daily Wisdom

Daily Reflections delivered right to your inbox

<https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&p=365f87a1ef225b599d5277054398c04fa5fd9f2064a687ff8005d489078c7d2fJmldHM9MTczNjI5NDQwMA&ptn=3&ver=2&hsh=4&fclid=3a5185c9-f561-6922-3a5d-9194f481683b&psq=wccm.org&u=a1aHR0cHM6Ly93Y2NtLm9yZy8&ntb=1>

## The World Community for Christian Meditation

Is a growing community of meditators in more than 100 countries, committed to developing a contemplative Christian life for our time and to dialogue between religion, science, business and art, body and mind. At the heart of this community is the meeting of many weekly groups, both physically and online, which introduce the essential teaching of meditation and help to deepen the inner journey. Personal transformation leads then to social and global transformation.



(PHOTO: LAURENCE FREEMAN, IRELAND)

**What does Jesus say about prayer?** The first thing he says, in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 6:5-8), is: 'When you pray, go into your inner room'. What does that mean? The heart. 'Close the door and pray there where your Heavenly Father is, and you will be enriched and rewarded.' The ground of being. Not the idea of God, but the real presence in that inner room. 'God is the centre of my soul,' as John of the Cross said. So interiority is the first element of Jesus' teaching on prayer. [\(Sources of Wisdom](#) by Laurence Freeman OSB)

## St. Brigid



<https://www.bing.com/videos/riverview/relatedvideo?q=st+brigid%27s+cross+tutorial+you+tube&&view=riverview&mmscn=mtsc&mid=969C7F792A7FAF1A1F45969C7F792A7FAF1A1F45&&aps=260&FORM=VMSOVR>

Instructions for Weaving the Brigid's Cross can be found on <https://brigidine.org.au>



### Traditional Prayer when hanging the Brigid's Cross:

“May the blessing of God and the Trinity be on  
this cross  
And be on the home where it hangs  
And on everyone who looks at it.”

### A Prayer to St. Brigid

You were a woman of peace.  
You brought harmony where there was conflict.  
You brought light to the darkness.  
You brought hope to the downcast.  
May the mantle of your peace,  
cover those who are troubled and anxious,  
and may peace be firmly rooted in our hearts and in our world. Amen

[A Prayer of Hope to Saint Brigid](https://youtu.be/IEzvYUnYPe8) <https://youtu.be/IEzvYUnYPe8>

## The Presentation of the Lord

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Hgycmwzw1k>

**A Long-Awaited Moment  
A Bridge Between the Old and New  
Mary's Yes: Humility and Sorrow at the Temple  
Candlemass Traditions: Celebrating the Light of Christ  
Living the Lessons of the Presentation  
Walking in Faith  
Reflections on the Presentation of the Lord**

<https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&&p=643d88064ea1e482fc655c35de17d513650719758079def8bedc69ded2ec548bjmltdHM9MTczNTM0NDAAwMA&ptn=3&ver=2&hsh=4&fclid=3a5185c9-f561-6922-3a5d-9194f481683b&psq=presentation+of+the+lord&u=a1aHR0cHM6Ly95b3VuZy1jYXRob2xpY3MuY29tLzlyODEvZmVhc3Qtb2YtdGhILXByZXNlbnRhdGlvbi1vZi10aGUtbG9yZC8&ntb=1>

## Human Trafficking – Ireland.ie

<https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&&p=f0dc7ecb471b7beb03704e8c0c3f7dc95a345346a1f3ce2a1d4bd6ce06d253e1JmltdHM9MTczNzY3NjgwMA&ptn=3&ver=2&hsh=4&fclid=3a5185c9-f561-6922-3a5d-9194f481683b&psq=human+trafficking+ireland&u=a1aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuaXJlbGZlZC5pZS9lbi9kZmEvdmlzYXMtZm9yLWlyZWxhbmQvaHVtYW4tdHJhZmZpY2tpbmcv&ntb=1>

## Videos of Pope Francis Message On World Day of the Sick 2025

[https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&&p=5e487327a5f1591f27b17771859f7f487073df7dc38c1eae93ec8268afb171c0JmltdHM9MTczNzc2MzlwMA&ptn=3&ver=2&hsh=4&fclid=3a5185c9-f561-6922-3a5d-9194f481683b&u=a1L3ZpZGVvcy9zZWYyZg\\_ct1Qb3BIK0ZyYW5jaXMrTWVzc2FnZStvbitXb3JsZCtKYXkrb2YrdGhIK1NpY2srMjAyNSZxcHZOPVBvcGUrRlJhbmNpcytNZXNzYWdlK29uK1dvcmxkK2RheStvZit0aGUUrU2ljaysyMDI1JkZPUk09VkrSRQ&ntb=1](https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&&p=5e487327a5f1591f27b17771859f7f487073df7dc38c1eae93ec8268afb171c0JmltdHM9MTczNzc2MzlwMA&ptn=3&ver=2&hsh=4&fclid=3a5185c9-f561-6922-3a5d-9194f481683b&u=a1L3ZpZGVvcy9zZWYyZg_ct1Qb3BIK0ZyYW5jaXMrTWVzc2FnZStvbitXb3JsZCtKYXkrb2YrdGhIK1NpY2srMjAyNSZxcHZOPVBvcGUrRlJhbmNpcytNZXNzYWdlK29uK1dvcmxkK2RheStvZit0aGUUrU2ljaysyMDI1JkZPUk09VkrSRQ&ntb=1)



## **DIOCESAN PILGRIMAGE TO KNOCK – APRIL 26**

As we begin our Jubilee of Hope, it's time to launch our 2025 Knock Pilgrimage.

The pilgrimage has grown significantly in recent years.  
In 2024, over 3,000 people from throughout the Archdiocese of Dublin took part.

This year the theme of the pilgrimage will focus on the Jubilee year, and we are inviting partnerships of parishes to join us from throughout the Archdiocese.

Partnerships who have not travelled to Knock in recent years are particularly welcome.

The pilgrimage will provide us with an opportunity to gather as Diocesan community of faith to celebrate the Jubilee year.

The pilgrimage takes place on Saturday, April 26, and will include workshops, outdoor walks, the Sacrament of the Sick and our pilgrimage Mass, which will be celebrated by Archbishop Farrell.

We hope to welcome more young people this year and encourage our parish partnerships to invite them to attend. It's a good time to consider booking your Partnership bus.

The Choir of Many Voices from throughout the Archdiocese will be back for a third year under the able direction of Ciaran Coll.

If you would like to join the choir (previous members will be contacted separately), or have any queries about the pilgrimage,

please email [knockpilgrimage@dublindiocese.ie](mailto:knockpilgrimage@dublindiocese.ie).



## **Alpha Youth Ireland - Introducing and Exploring the Core Ideas of the Christian Faith**

**Alpha Youth launched a new series in December 2024.**

**Sign up to get a free resource**

<https://alphaireland.org/alpha-youth>

If anyone would like to hear more about Alpha Youth, we encourage you to contact Gerard Hanley directly at [gerard@alphaireland.org](mailto:gerard@alphaireland.org) or on 0830112560.

Please visit their website for more information - [Alpha Youth Website](#).

## **Scripture Union**

**“The Way of St. James.”**

**Eight part mini series**

**A useful resource for non-exam senior Cycle RE**

**Each episode in this series is between 5.5 and 9 minutes long, with the exception of episode five, which is under 2 minutes.**

**Resource available: <https://nuafilms.com/the-way-of.st.james>**

**Videos of The Way of St. James - Scripture Union**

[https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&&p=2037e123503bf7edfb292aaf3e4a9680715edc8bba191569a257e2e40efa760bJmltdHM9MTczNzg0OTYwMA&ptn=3&ver=2&hsh=4&fclid=3a5185c9-f561-6922-3a5d-9194f481683b&u=a1L3ZpZGVvcy9zZWYy2g\\_cT10aGUrd2F5K29mK1N0LitKYW1lcytTY3JwaXR1cmUrVW5pb24mcXB2dD10aGUrd2F5K29mK1N0LitKYW1lcytTY3JwaXR1cmUrVW5pb24mRk9STT1WRfJF&ntb=1](https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&&p=2037e123503bf7edfb292aaf3e4a9680715edc8bba191569a257e2e40efa760bJmltdHM9MTczNzg0OTYwMA&ptn=3&ver=2&hsh=4&fclid=3a5185c9-f561-6922-3a5d-9194f481683b&u=a1L3ZpZGVvcy9zZWYy2g_cT10aGUrd2F5K29mK1N0LitKYW1lcytTY3JwaXR1cmUrVW5pb24mcXB2dD10aGUrd2F5K29mK1N0LitKYW1lcytTY3JwaXR1cmUrVW5pb24mRk9STT1WRfJF&ntb=1)

**For all other resources from Scripture Union:**

<https://nuafilms.com/all-series>

## Chaplains & R.E Teachers Retreat 2025

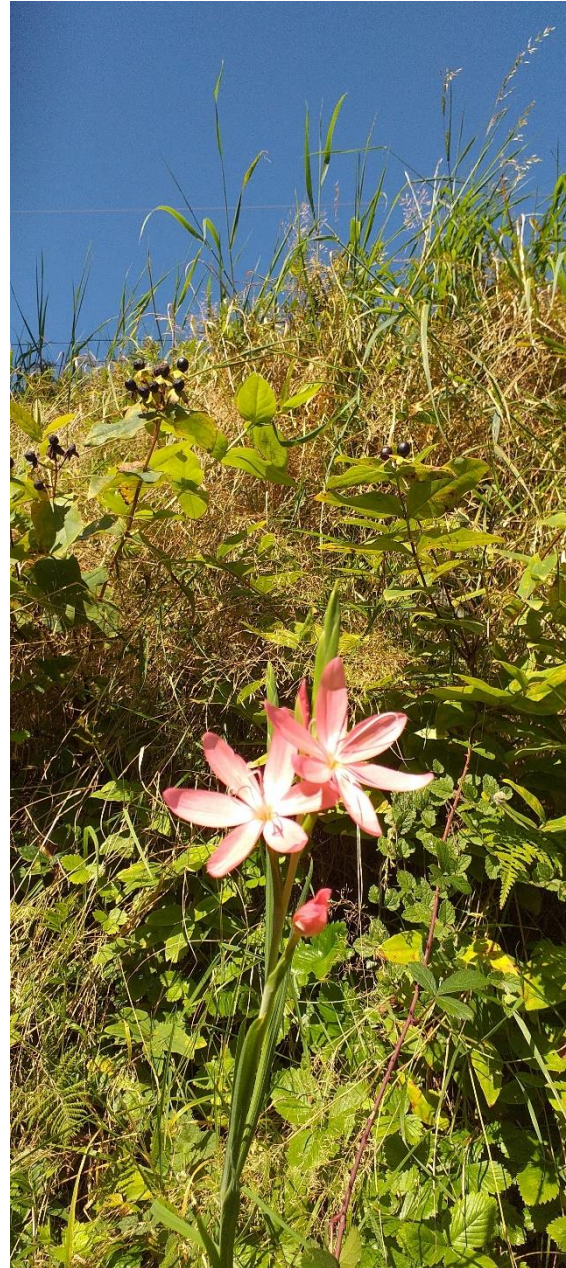
*You are invited to a  
Chaplains & R.E. Teachers  
retreat in Ovoca Manor.*

This retreat aims to provide a space for your personal spiritual development, learning through engaging workshops while also connecting with others.

The retreat aims to provide a much needed sense of support, refreshment and encouragement by spending time with like-minded people involved in R.E/Chaplaincy work in schools around Ireland.

This day will count as a CPD day.

*We hope to see you there!*



To find out more and to register:

[www.scriptureunion.ie/retreat](http://www.scriptureunion.ie/retreat)

**Date: Tuesday, April 29<sup>th</sup> 2025 - Over night option available**

**Time: 10.00 a.m. - 3.00 p.m.**

**Cost: € 30.00 per person - Lunch included**

**Venue: Densmore Lodge at Ovoca Manor, Avoca, Co. Wicklow.**

**Wicklow Y14TE27**

## To Conclude:



Let us seek  
New Life  
that reflects the  
touch of God

Loving God,  
Give us the  
strength to live  
our lives in a  
spirit of faith  
and hope

May we have  
the courage to  
tell others that:

Christ  
Has Died

Christ Is Risen

Christ  
Will Come  
Again

**Springtime**  
Echoes of the Heart  
Extract - Fr. Liam Lacey

May God's Spirit - Revive, Renew,  
And lift up Your heart -  
To Love And Life.

*With Every Good Wish,*

*Sr. Bernadette  
and  
Sr. Concepta*