



S S P X



In Principio

Joy to the World



*Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I say, rejoice.
Gaudete in Domino semper: iterum dico gaudete. (Philippians 4:4)*

Nativity: Antoniazio Romano (c. 1430 – c.1510)



In Principio
Bulletin of the
Priestly Society of Saint Pius X in Ireland

Publisher
Fr Robert Brucciani
Saint Pius X House 12 Tivoli Terrace South
Dún Laoghaire, Co. Dublin

Editor
Gina Connolly

Layout
Fr ? & Anthony Haughey
Frequency
Quarterly

Suggested Donation €3
to cover printing expenses

The SSPX relies solely on the donations of the faithful.

To donate to the SSPX in Ireland
Society of St Pius X
Permanent TSB
Account no: 26190763
Sort code: 99-06-04
BIC: IPBSIE2D
IBAN: IE66 IPBS990 604 2619 0763

Cheque donations may be made out to
‘The Society of Saint Pius X’
12 Tivoli Terrace South Dún Laoghaire, Co. Dublin

PayPal: info@fsspx.ie

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In Principio

Society of St. Pius X in Ireland



Joy to the World

Rev. Fr. Robert Brucciani

The birth of the Christ-child gave joy to the world two thousand years ago, and continues to give joy to the world today, and yet the world does not rejoice. How is this so?

To answer this question, we must understand that there are three types of joy:

- joy of passion
- natural joy of the will
- supernatural joy of the will

Joy of passion

The joy of passion is that bodily feeling arising from the possession of a particular good as apprehended by the sensitive power. It is the happy emotion we have when we possess a good which delights the senses (e.g. chocolate). It is a physical joy born of sensitive love.

Natural joy of the will

The natural joy of the will is altogether superior, being that **perfection of being** arising from the **possession of a good as apprehended by reason**. It is a spiritual joy born of natural love. It may be accompanied by a feeling of joy,



Adoration of the Magi (Sandro Botticelli
c.1445 - 1510)



but not always. When, for example, an athlete wins a gold medal, he will have a spiritual joy of triumph accompanied by feelings of euphoria, but when he was training for the event by running up a muddy hills in the cold, driving rain, the spiritual joy from the exercise of virtue would only be accompanied by feelings of pain.

Supernatural joy of the will

The highest joy is supernatural joy of the will. This is the **perfection of being resulting from the possession of the greatest good, which is God** by the exercise of the supernatural virtue of charity.

By natural love, a soul will love God as knowable by reason, but when the will acts by supernatural charity, the will loves God with the same act of love with which God loves Himself. We say that the will participates in the Divine act of God loving Himself. And, as God is the same as His actions, we can say that, by an act of supernatural charity, a soul **participates in the very being of God**; the soul possesses God by participation in God. As St. John the Evangelist says:

And we have known, and have believed the charity, which God

hath to us. God is charity: and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him. (1 Jn 4:16)

This possession of God is in proportion to the intensity of the act of supernatural love, and its fruit is joy: a spiritual joy which St. Paul numbers among the “fruits of the Holy Ghost”, the plenitude of which he himself is unable to describe:

That eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him. (1 Cor 2:9)

Like natural joy of the will, supernatural joy may or may not be accompanied by feelings of joy. The physical suffering of the martyrs, for example, caused no feelings of joy, but their total gift of self to God gave them the greatest spiritual joy possible in this life. Only Catholics can fully understand this truth. Only Catholicism can reconcile joy and pain.

Joy to the world, but no joy of the world

When our Saviour was born, the joy of those who believed that He was both God and man was a supernatural joy of the spirit. Beholding



the child in His mother's arms certainly evoked feelings of joy in the hearts of the shepherds and the Magi, but the supernatural joy of participated possession of Supreme Goodness by supernatural charity was for them a premonition of the beatitude.

The world of course knows none of this and, despite all its revelry, it does not rejoice. The world seeks a joy of the passions: pleasure that soon turns to ashes. There are a few, admittedly, who attain to natural joy from the exercise of natural virtue as they contemplate the crib, but these too will be unfulfilled at Christmas, for they are made for supernatural love of the Christ Child, not just human love.

The world will revel and will be disappointed as it counts the cost on Boxing Day, but if we have prepared for Christmas by a mortifying Advent, we will share in the joy of the shepherds, the Magi and the angels, not just for Christmas Day, but for Christmastide, and by God's grace, for all eternity.

Joy to the faithful of Ireland

My dear faithful, as this is the last editorial I will write before I leave for my new post in Switzerland

on 1 January, please accept my prayers and wishes that you attain to spiritual joy this Christmas and ever after.

Thank you for your spiritual and temporal generosity over the last four years. I have been carried by the prayers of so many, and the generosity the faithful in both life and death have enabled our Society to continue the work of our holy founder, and to move closer to the mission of our saintly patron, to 'Restore all things in Christ.'

Pray for your priests, encourage vocations in your children, love one another. Make Ireland great again in the number of its saints and scholars.

Finally, be good to my successor, Rev. Fr. David Sherry. With your help, he will be the instrument of Providence to bring perfect supernatural joy to every heart.

With my blessing,

In Jesu et Maria,
Rev. Fr. Robert Brucciani



Joy...	Fruit of...	Definition		Other Names	
of the passions	Sensitive love	The feeling arising from the possession of a particular good as apprehended by the senses (eg. chocolate, a warm coat etc.)		Pleasure	
of the will	Natural Love	The state of wellbeing arising from the possession of a good as apprehended by the reason (eg. victory, the love of another etc.)	by oneself	Elation	Happiness
			by someone loved	Joy of Benevolence	
	Supernatural charity (The Holy Ghost)	The state of perfection arising from possession of the greatest good by participation in Supreme Good (by sanctifying Grace)	in this life	Spiritual Joy	
			in heaven	Beatitude	

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SAVE THE DATE
SAVE THE DATE
31st AUGUST 2024
SSPX ANNUAL CONFERENCE
Sheraton Athlone Hotel
Details to follow soon



God's Meteor: Alfie Lambe

Mary-Jacinta Murphy

Edel Quinn (1907–44), legionary of Mary, is a household name among Catholics and exemplifies the Irish type of holiness in which shrewd, practical common sense and heroic faith vie for first place. Irish holiness is typically so interwoven with everyday life that ecstasy seems out of place: the Irish saint lives consciously in the arms of his heavenly Father and lives by a faith so natural, that it seems an instinct rather than a high degree of the infused virtue. Upon the Irish mystic, God bestows no grace of levitation; why lift to heaven one who finds God so well upon the ground?

Less well known than Edel but certainly of the same straightforward and attractive stamp is another Legion apostle of the same era – Alphonsus ‘Alfie’ Lambe from Tullamore. Born in 1932 into a

good Catholic family, he was the youngest of eight children. Unsurprisingly in the Catholic Ireland of the 1940s, he had decided to enter religious life by the age of thirteen and actually entered the novitiate of the Christian Brothers at the tender age of sixteen. Contemporaries who shared in the life



Alphonsus Lambe (1932 - 1959)



of this novitiate remember him as a normal, ordinary young fellow, not distinguished from the ‘others’ by anything in particular¹. Novice masters will recognise that trait as a healthy sign of Alfie’s spirituality, for, in fact, the more a novice fades into the background of a religious house, the truer he is to religious life. Indeed, Alfie had a vocation, but not exactly the one he thought.

Disillusionment

For alas! most keen disappointment was in store for the generous young man. Despite his obvious suitability to the order, he was dismissed on the grounds of poor health: he suffered fainting spells and his superiors naturally saw these as a sign of physical unfitness for their life. We can only imagine the young man’s feelings as he returned home – his dreams shattered and ambition unrealised. How could he settle into ‘ordinary’ life again? How could he find joy in a mundane or, worse, a worldly existence? When once his wagon had been hitched to a star, was he now to harness it to something on the ground?

His true vocation

Of course not. God had not taken Alfie from the novitiate to disap-

point him, but to open up horizons undreamed of by the youth. Alfie would consecrate himself to God, but his cloister would be the roads of South America; his classroom, the many branches (praesidia) of the Legion of Mary, which he would help to found; his habit that gentle demeanour, which would win all hearts to Our Lady and earn him the nickname ‘*El Corderito*’, which aptly, given his surname, means ‘The Lamb’. This lad, too frail to plod along in a homely novitiate in his native air, would prove to be a ‘giant’², a ‘meteor’ of the apostolate. But all this was in the future. For the moment, the eighteen-year-old had taken a job. He had to first do his apprenticeship in obedience and disappointment.

Enter the Legion of Mary





The Legion of Mary, founded in the early 1920s by Frank Duff, was widespread in Ireland by the 1940s. As a novice, Alfie had attended a talk in Dublin by Duff. What could be more natural than Alfie – who was very devoted to Our Lady in an undemonstrative way – joining the Legion in his hometown? Furthermore, the firm in which Alfie worked unexpectedly closed and so the newly unemployed young man decided to give his services full time to the Legion. He moved to Dublin and became an indoor brother³ in its hostel for homeless men. This post and place, worthy of its own article, was only a launching pad for Alfie. He had tremendous success in developing the



Frank Duff, Founder of the Legion of Mary, (1889 - 1980)

Legion in Ireland and came to the notice of Frank Duff.

Envoy to South America

Next, Alfie was sent as an envoy of the Legion of Mary to the vast continent of South America. An envoy's job demanded strength and resilience, both physical and mental. Envoys needed to be independent and tactful, for their work was to persuade reluctant clergy to demonstrate the wonderful uplifting effect of the Legion on parish and diocesan life. The position also entailed organising and administering the vast machinery of the Legion for the spiritual task of helping the hierarchy to convert the nation. No rule book could teach an envoy how to proceed; fitness for the role was essentially a blend of spirituality, toughness and charm, which was God's gift to Alfie. Academic induction into the role was pretty non-existent; the apprenticeship was thoroughly practical. Alfie travelled to Colombia in July 1953 and had acquired enough Spanish by November to develop the apostolate.

One wonders as to the musings of the Christian Brothers, at this time, if and when they noticed the incredible progress of the teenager thought too



frail to cope with religious life. We know God is not risible; otherwise, one might suspect Him of possessing a sense of humour and of displaying it in Alfie – a kind of giant joke on the Christian Brothers! Perhaps we should rather say that our sense of humour reflects God's wisdom and proportion? A wisdom and proportion that chooses the weak things of this world to confound the strong.

The Midas touch

It might seem astonishing that a youth of twenty was sent on a task that demanded such creativity and self-reliance but, in fact, the Legion of Mary had already proven itself to be a force that engenders heroism and maturity in the young. At the same time as Alfie was motoring by lorry and flying by air through South America, all the while fighting Liberalism and Communism via the Legion, teenage legionaries in China were heroically opposing the Communist regime there⁴. Although Alfie did not face the same dangers as these Chinese legionaries, he did face enmity and opposition from anti-clerical and liberal governments. Notwithstanding, within a few months, and after only a little accompaniment by a seasoned legionary, Alfie had set up several curiae (higher-level

councils of the Legion) in Ecuador. He even set up praesidia in the largest prison in Quito. By Autumn 1955, the Legion had visited all the dioceses in Argentina. The highest council of the Legion, the concilium, explicitly recognised Alfie as 'the key to the continent'⁵ of South America. Where Alfie went, doors opened. No one could resist the Corderito. He had the spiritual Midas touch.

'Terrible as an army in battle array'

Against the hostile forces that would wrest Catholics in South America from the Church, the Legion of Mary was truly 'terrible as an army set in battle array' like its heavenly commander. Against the red tide of Communism engulfing the world surged the red flame of the Holy Ghost, ever active in His spouse, the Blessed Virgin Mary. And Alfie was the spark that enkindled the flame. Yes, Alfie's progress through South America was indeed meteoric. The cardinal nuncio in Argentina described him as, *a star, one of those which in full summer in the limpid clear nights rapidly cross skies leaving a trail of light and disappearing, and*



*that light remains to the eyes of all Argentínians.*⁶

As the cardinal had watched Alfie work in violent conditions to establish praesidia in vast territories where the climate was inhospitable and the language unfamiliar, his words are no hyperbole but a convinced testimony.

One faint spark

‘Yes, one very little spark can produce great lights in the Church’⁷, commented St Thérèse, struck by the symbolism of a weak lamp used to light the community candles. ‘Who, then, can glory in his own works?’⁸ deduced the saint. Alfie certainly realised too that the amazing fruits of his work were supernatural. Refined and forged by suffering and disappointment, Alfie attributed nothing to himself but remained gentle, humble and modest – quite as if he knew at a deep level the reality: the superabundant fruits of the work were all God’s.

The flame burns itself out

Like his legionary sister Edel Quinn, Alfie’s progress was destined to be as brief as it was meteoric. Within six years, his task was

completed. Having learned other languages, including Russian, Alfie’s great heart longed to be sent as a missionary to Soviet Russia, but his health suddenly collapsed. Aged only twenty-six, he was diagnosed in December 1958 with a particularly virulent form of cancer. He died within a few weeks, on 21 January 1959, after receiving the last rites from the cardinal who had invited him to set up praesidia in Córdoba, Argentina. Alfie, tormented with stomach trouble, completed the setting up of five praesidia there before his collapse and death.

He died on the Feast of St Agnes, the virgin saint also called ‘Lamb’. The parallel was obvious. Alfie had been all for God, just as St Agnes was. Indeed, his untarnished purity of life was the foundation and irresistible spur of his apostolate and the secret charm that opened all hearts. His purity was also a beautiful link with Our Lady, and was necessary preparation for serving Her. Alfie was always proud to tell his audience abroad that ‘my native language is the only one in the world that has a special name for the Mother of God’⁹. (There are two Irish translations for the name Mary: Máire and Muire, with the latter reserved for Our Lady alone.) In another delicate providential touch, it was the Christian Brothers



who buried Alfie in their vault in Buenos Aires, claiming in death the one who had loved them in life and who had stepped out of their ranks at God's mysterious call.

Notes

- 1 ArlingtonRegia, 'Servant of God, Alfi Lambe biography', [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7JUDlQAA-kQ>].
- 2 Duff, F. 1981. *Victory Through Mary*. Praedicanda Publications, p.256.
- 3 Legionaries refer to each other as 'brother' and 'sister'.

- 4 For more details on the young legionaries' combat in China, see Hu, R. 2011. *Joy in Suffering*. SSPX Korea.
- 5 Duff, *Victory Through Mary*, p.248.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p.257.
- 7 St Thérèse of Lisieux. 1952. *Novissima Verba: the last conversations of Saint Thérèse*. Neumann Press: Minnesota, p.53.
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 'Alfie "El Corderito" Lambe' [pamphlet], Legion of Mary (Ireland), [https://www.legionofmary.ie/images/uploads/files/Alfie_Lambe_Pull_Up_Banners_x_3.pdf].

Notes from Élisabeth Leseur article, pages 16-19 .

- 1 ArlingtonRegia, 'Servant of God, Alfi Lambe biography', [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7JUDlQAA-kQ>].
- 1 Ruffing, J.K. 2001. 'Elizabeth Leseur: a strangely forgotten modern saint'. In A.W. Astell (ed.) *Lay Sanctity, Medieval and Modern: a search for models*. Notre Dame Press.
- 2 Leseur, E. 1919. *A Wife's Story: the journal of Elizabeth Leseur*. Translation of *Journal et Pensées pour Chaque Jour de Élisabeth Leseur* by V.M. New York: Benziger, p.118.

- 3 'Élisabeth Leseur: she loved him to the end', *Incarnation and Modernity*, 25 Feb. 2014 [<https://incarnationandmodernity.wordpress.com/tag/felix-leseur/>].
- 4 Ruffing, 'Elizabeth Leseur'.
- 5 'Saints: Elisabeth Leseur', *H.M. Magazine*, 2 Mar. 2021 [<https://www.homeofthemoth-er.org/en/magazine/selected-articles/saints/12575-elisabeth-leseur>].
- 6 'The Conversion of Doctor Felix Leseur', *One Small Rose*, 12 Mar. 2020 [<https://onesmallrose.com/2020/03/12/the-conversion-of-dr-felix-leseur/>].



Élisabeth Leseur – A Felicitous Faith

Gerard Brady

Were I to see all the sick at Lourdes cured, I would not believe in a miracle.

(Émile Zola to Dr Gustave Boissarie, President of the Lourdes Medical Bureau, 1892.)

Dr Felix Leseur had travelled to Lourdes after his wife's death in 1914 in order to carry out research into the apparitions and cures at the Marian shrine. He was an avowed atheist and was as dedicated to his faith as his recently deceased wife had been to hers. Her death freed him to pursue his anti-religious interests and he wasted no time in doing so. However, unlike Émile Zola, who witnessed not one but two miracles on his visit to Lourdes and remained resolutely unbelieving, Felix left Lourdes a believer. This was not due to his witnessing miraculous cures but, as he came firmly

to believe, the prayers and sacrifices of his late wife.

Servant of God Élisabeth Arrighi Leseur was born the eldest of five children in Paris in 1866 to a wealthy, middle-class, practising Catholic family of Corsican descent. In 1889, Élisabeth married Felix after being introduced to him at a soirée two years previously. Before their marriage, Felix revealed to Élisabeth that he had lost his faith while a medical student and was attending Mass only to please his mother. Élisabeth agreed to marry him if he promised not to interfere with her own practice of the faith and he agreed. After the wedding, their life in Paris was lived among the archetypal set of the Belle Époque.

Élisabeth, well-to-do by birth and marriage, participated in a social group that was cultured, educated,

and largely antireligious. So secularized was the circle around her husband that she herself was gradually led away from the active faith of her childhood, and absented herself from the sacraments and personal prayer for a period of time.¹

By 1898 – ten years after the slow erosion of a conventionally pious faith, grounded in the catechism learnt in her childhood – Élisabeth was no longer attending Mass. When she was beginning to have serious doubts about her faith, Felix gave her Ernest Renan's *Life of Jesus*, an atheistic attack on Christianity, to feed her growing doubt. However, the book had the opposite effect. She found that it spurred her to begin a serious study of the Catholic religion, beginning with the Gospels. By the end of 1898, she was again firmly established in her faith and deepening it through prayer and study. Her husband actively tried to discourage this development but was unable to weaken her faith. She continued to pray and read before she began to record her experiences in a journal more than a year later. Her piety became anchored in a deep relationship with God, fed by a profound grasp of Christian doctrine and the liturgical life of the Church.

Added to these difficulties between the couple was the matter of Élisabeth's health. She had never been physically strong, having contracted hepatitis as

a child and suffering from frequent bouts thereafter. Shortly after her marriage, she was afflicted with an abdominal abscess from which she never fully recovered. In 1907, her health deteriorated to the point where it became difficult to walk and she was forced to direct the activities of her household from a chaise longue. After this date, her husband abandoned his attempts to convert her to atheism and even accompanied her to Mass. Even though he held no belief in the Lourdes apparitions, he took Élisabeth there, viewing it as a way to support her in dealing with her condition.

A concomitant result of her illness was the couple's inability to have children and this was a heavy emotional burden for them both. Élisabeth did not, however, allow herself to dwell in self-pity and was clear in her own mind what this would mean. She wrote in her diary:



Élisabeth Leseur (1866 - 1914)



I must ... watch and improve my health, since it may be an instrument in the service of God and of souls. But in this illness that I am afflicted with, the precautions I am obliged to take, the discomforts it brings and the privations it imposes, there is a plentiful source of mortification ... To speak as little as possible of myself, and without affectation. Always to take part in others' joy or sadness ... In days of illness and physical prostration everything must be done with especial care, and outside sensation must be kept in abeyance by great recollectedness. Not to allow myself the slightest movement of impatience, and to fight unceasingly the temptation to irritability ... To ask Jesus that there may show in me a little of the sweetness and gentleness of His heart. To forget myself for all. To renew every day from our Savior my too-soon-exhausted store of tenderness, strength and serenity.²



Élisabeth and Félix Leseur

This diary she kept secret from her husband was to be instrumental in the conversion of her husband to the faith. He was to write later in life,

When I married Élisabeth, I was profoundly anti-religious. I had been raised Catholic but lost my faith in medical school. Materialistic influences, assisted by my own passions, carried me on to paganism and atheism. I searched for weapons against Catholicism. I set myself to attack Elizabeth's Faith, to deprive her of it, and – may God pardon me! – I nearly succeeded.³

My beloved wife, Élisabeth, prayed incessantly for my return to the Catholic Faith. Daily for this intention, she accepted and offered up all her sacrifices, trials, sufferings, and at the end, even her death.

But she did this secretly. She never argued with me; she never spoke to me of the supernatural side of her life, save by her example.

I have, since Élisabeth's death, learned to appreciate the power of her silence. God heard the constant prayer it concealed, and, when her sacrifice was accomplished, completed the conversion that was begun in me by her influence and by my reading her diary, which I found after her death...

In 1911, Élisabeth had surgery to



remove a tumour and then had radiation treatment. By July of 1913, she was confined to bed and in May 1914, she died in her husband's arms, succumbing to cancer.

Her spiritual life, carefully hidden from those around her, was one of dedication to the salvation of souls, primarily that of her husband. Writing to her friend Soeur Gaby in December 1911, she stated: Try, my dear sister, to smile at all that He sends: joy or sadness, illness, consolations or heavy aridity of spirit... this is how it is for me – these small social duties, totally external, often weigh heavily on a soul desirous of being more with God. There is, deep within me, an ardent desire for retreat, for a life hidden and silent that the world and even Christians don't understand. But I have made of this 'superficial' life, accepted, and led with apparent good grace ... a most intimate oblation to God. It is a constant source for me of renunciations and sacrifices; and since this takes place in secret, I hope that these poor offerings will benefit and serve souls well⁴

'After Élisabeth's death', Felix wrote in the prologue to Élisabeth's posthumously published 'spiritual testament', *when everything around me seemed to fall apart, I discovered the spiritual testament that she*

*had written for me, as well as her journal. I read and re-read it, and a revolution began to occur within my entire being. I discovered that Élisabeth had made a sort of bargain with God. She offered Him her life in exchange for my return to the faith. I remember that one day she said to me with absolute certainty: 'I will die first. And when I die, you will be converted; and when you are converted, you will become a religious.'*⁵

It occurred precisely as she prayed it would and three years after her death, Felix returned to the Church. In 1919, he entered the Dominicans and in 1923, he was ordained a priest. A man who was to become a world-famous apologist for the Catholic faith wrote in later years,

*In the year 1924, during Lent, I, Fulton J. Sheen, made my retreat in the Dominican monastery in Belgium. Four times each day, and 45 minutes in length, I made my retreat under the spiritual guidance of Father Felix Leseur of the Order of Preachers, Catholic Dominican priest, who told me this story.*⁶

Élisabeth Leseur, Servant of God, pray for us.

Notes relevant to this article can be found on page 15



The Story of Our Lady of Liesse

Richard Greene

Coincidences in our life's journey can often be described as God-incidents. I first came across the beautiful name 'Liesse' in the following way. When my eldest daughter was born, as it was in the month of May on the feastday of the Visitation of Our Lady, I asked my sister-in-law, Mary, to be her godmother. I also asked what her baptismal name was and she said 'Liesse' (French for joy, jubilation or bliss). 'What a beautiful name!' I said, 'Where did your parents get that name from?' She told me that her uncle, Fr James Fox, who had baptised her, had come home from France, where he was a parish priest, and asked that her baptismal name be Liesse.

Fr James was ordained a priest in the 1930s for the Dublin diocese but, on hearing that there was a shortage of priests in France, he

volunteered to serve there instead and arrived in France in 1939. Whilst serving as a priest in northern France, it was invaded by Nazi Germany. The French resistance was very active in his area but, in turn, the Gestapo was ruthless when the resistance killed some of their personnel. The Gestapo would kill any young men or even the local priest in a village or town whom they suspected of being responsible for the military action. During the occupation of France, Fr James often went into hiding and regularly sought refuge in Laon Cathedral, which is dedicated to Our Lady of Liesse. He believed Our Lady brought him safely through the war and occupation of France by Nazi Germany.

A few days after my daughter Liesse was baptised, I was asked to take a religion class and decided I would teach the students about



St Jean-Baptiste de La Salle as it was a De La Salle school, named in honour of this saint. To prepare, I read a short booklet about his life. I was amazed to discover that when,



Jean Baptiste de la Salle (1651 - 1719)

after much work and preparation in training young men to be teachers and imparting to them the skills to educate impoverished children – at a time when there was no education for the poor – de La Salle decided that they should make a pilgrimage to the Shrine of ‘Our Lady of Liesse’ and place the order under her maternal protection.

The historic pilgrimage took place the day after Trinity Sunday in 1786, when de La Salle and the brothers took their first vows. They made the pilgrimage to the town of Liesse-Notre-Dame, walking

all through the night and again pronounced their vows at the foot of Our Lady of Liesse. De La Salle declared: ‘I want Mary to be the Director and Queen of our schools’.

The town of Liesse-Notre-Dame is situated approximately 45km northwest of Reims and is in the diocese of Laon. There is a beautiful basilica there dedicated to Our Lady of Liesse. The second chapel on the left-hand side of the basilica is dedicated to St Jean-Baptiste de La Salle. The stained-glass window was offered by a superior general of the order, Br Gabriel Marie, after his miraculous cure from serious tuberculosis, a cure which was attributed to Our Lady of Liesse. Also in the basilica is a beautiful statue called the ‘Black Madonna’, the modern reincarnation of a much more ancient statue, which, unfortunately, was destroyed as a result of the fanatical hatred of religion promoted during the French Revolution.

The story of Our Lady of Liesse began in the year 1110 AD when three brothers from Laon (17km from Liesse-Notre-Dame) left for the Holy Land, in order to offer protection and care for Christian pilgrims being harassed by Muslim invaders. They were members of the Knights of Saint John of Jerusalem, later known as the Knights of



Malta, whose great church, castles and fortifications can still be seen today in Malta. In 1134, they were taken prisoner and brought to Cairo in Egypt. The sultan, who captured them, promised to spare their lives if they converted to Islam, but they refused. In response, he sent his daughter, Princess Ismeria, to persuade them to apostatise and the four of them entered into a debate about their religious beliefs.

Ismeria would not have understood the veneration of sacred images and icons, which, to Muslims, are false and idolatrous to venerate. The three knights tried to convince the young princess that the sight of the Virgin Mary's beauty and per-

fection gives to the heart such great "joy" ("liesse") that is impossible to convey in words. Princess Ismeria asked to see such a statue and the three knights promised to carve one for her.

That evening, they prayed with intense fervour and asked the Lord and Our Lady for help. On waking the next morning, they saw a most beautiful statue of Our Lady that had mysteriously arrived in their prison cell, apparently carved by angels. They immediately agreed to call her 'Notre Dame de Liesse', meaning Our Lady of joy or Jubilation or Bliss. (There is no precise English translation.) When the princess first viewed the statue, she was overcome with awe because, the night before, Our Lady told her in a dream that the princess herself would release the prisoners and become a Christian. Ismeria obeyed these instructions and fled with the prisoners, carrying the statue with them. Exhausted after a long trek, they fell asleep near the Nile. When they woke, they discovered that the angels had transported them to a well in France on 2 July 1134.

When they discovered how close to home they were, they were so overcome with joy that they forgot the miraculous statue. They soon retraced their steps and discovered



Our Lady of Liesse



that the water in the well had overflowed and covered the statue of Our Lady of Liesse. Unknown to them, this was the exact time when Our Lady had blessed the water and turned it into a miraculous healing well. Since then, this place – the Black Madonna’s sanctuary – has been an important site among Our Lady’s holy places, with its own small chapel located about five minutes from the basilica in Liesse.

When the three knights and the princess collected the precious statue and started to head back to the village, the statue suddenly became a heavy burden and they soon realised that Our Lady wanted this spot to be her permanent home. They called it Notre-Dame de

Liesse and later built a chapel for her right there. Many miracles were obtained through praying before the statue and it attracted large numbers of pilgrims. Before long, a small town had sprung up.

Princess Ismeria received baptism at the hands of the bishop of Laon and took the name ‘Mary’. Some scholars suggest that the princess’s former name, ‘Ismeria’, could be a union of ‘Isis’ and ‘Maria’, which may explain why an Egyptian princess was so taken by a statue that could call to mind the statues of the Egyptian deities Isis and Horus. The present-day basilica of the Black Madonna was built between the late fourteenth and late fifteenth centuries. Once, one of the portal stones was engraved with this inscription:

As a monument of their piety and their gratitude to the Virgin Mary, this holy temple was built in 1134 by the knights of Eppes. It was rebuilt in 1384 and enlarged in 1480.



The Church of Liesse-Notre-Dame
(Szeder László CC - BY - SA - 4)



Irish Pilgrimage to Lourdes '23

Clíodhna McAteer

The pilgrimage before the pilgrimage – Friday, 27 October

Our pilgrimage began with individual journeys to Dublin Airport on a fairly dry but windy Friday. Each of us embarked on our separate voyage via bus, train or car before navigating through Ryanair check-ins and Terminal 1 security. Although I personally knew this pilgrimage would be no Chartres – though, a busy schedule in its own right – it did include its own, what felt like, 72-mile walk to the very corner of Terminal 1 to reach the Ryanair wing and our departure lounge. Many souls in purgatory were released that day, I can assure you.

The smooth flight – by Ryanair standards at least – to Bordeaux felt a little lighter (we were already missing a

pilgrim). This wasn't helped by the typical Ryanair descent (drop) to the runaway from 30ft (at least). Cue more souls in purgatory to be released! We completed another Chartres-esque pilgrimage to the bus



The Lourdes Basilica

(it seems the French love Ryanair as much as we do), then met up with the UK contingency and together embarked on the last leg of our journey



to Lourdes. We sneaked into the hotel in the dead of night, bed and sleep called, and we answered.

The true pilgrimage begins – Saturday, 28 October

After a relaxing morning of exploring at our leisure on Saturday and an interesting lunch in the hotel, we set off for Mass in the Basilica of Saint Pius X. All the stops were pulled out to bring life to the underground concrete cave – no doubt Pope St Pius X would not have approved of the monstrosity – but it was the families, the sisters, the choir, the vestments and the ceremony that brought life to the dead space. Feeling like heaven itself had filled the upside boat, most of the group split off to view the Stations of the Cross and a couple of us went to choir practice to prepare for the days that followed.



Approximately 10,000 at every mass

Feast of Christ the King – Sunday, 29 October

The Feast of Christ the King rolled round pretty quickly after a more substantial night's sleep and once again, the basilica came to life with pilgrims speaking aloud the Rosary, as directed from the altar. Every pew and space was filled with families, young people, the sick and the elderly. Elgar and Monteverdi from the choir - and the congregation joining in the parts of the Mass filled the space, inviting heaven down to earth once more and carrying everyone off to the grotto in a procession, followed by the Rosary. This was followed by lunch, then Vespers, a beautiful Eucharistic procession with the Blessed Sacrament, Benediction and a blessing of the sick. While the basilica would normally have gone dark and been locked up for the night, the candles continued to burn throughout the night as Eucharistic adoration took place from 8:30pm to 7am on Monday morning. This was observed mostly in silence, with occasional reflections being recited in French. Although I personally didn't understand the French parts – admittedly, I can only just about speak my own language – it certainly added to the reverent atmosphere. It wrapped me in a bubble of peace that carried me to bed and put me to sleep.



Homeward-bound pilgrimage – Monday, 30 October

Waking up with the knowledge that it was the day we were to leave this holy place was not a pleasant feeling. Surrounded by such reverence and having easy access to such holy ceremonies, we found ourselves in a bubble disconnected from the world – a bubble that is as hard to take with us as it is to leave behind.

Resolved to make the most of the last morning, I armed myself with a cup of French coffee (not as nice as Italian, but I wouldn't tell them that!) and entered once more into the transformed cavern of the basilica. Warming up the vocal cords with our choral mistress, and with the Rosary echoing on the other side of the door, my sadness settled and I was filled with anticipation. The notes of Handel's 'Ave Maria' and Bruckner's 'Tantum Ergo' carried through the air throughout the Solemn High Mass. The congregation confidently joining with the Mass parts again is a spectacle I will not forget in a hurry and it will resonate with me for a long time to come. Another wonderful procession, albeit in the rain, to the grotto, followed by the Rosary, finished our prayerful celebrations.

After a quick dash around the shops before lunch to get the all-important presents for home – God forbid you



The Grotto at Lourdes
come

home empty-handed! – and to find a wayward passport, we all boarded the bus after checkout with full bellies and began our pilgrimage home. A hope and a prayer got us to Bordeaux in time for our English crew to catch their flight and we began our march through the terminal to the dark corner that housed our Ryanair departure gate. Quiet time to chat and reflect was broken with boarding and off we took. We did not have as smooth a flight on the return journey with a 'landing' from 45ft this time to help a few more poor souls to heaven from purgatory, though we had made sure that all pilgrims made the return trip safely.

With hugs goodbye shared and promises of seeing each other soon exchanged, everyone once again split off in various directions to finish



their pilgrimage home through howling winds and lashing rain.

Post-pilgrimage reflections

A couple of days were needed to recover from the busy few days and the long days travelling. Cue long hours over cups of tea and lunch, reminiscing and recanting beautiful moments and funny stories. My next big job was to unpack the gallons of Lourdes water to be blessed and handed out to friends and family.

The first Irish group to join the self-directed pilgrimage to Lourdes since 2017 was brilliantly organised by Thérèse McKeown and her secretary, Anthony Haughey; they even supplied maps and a detailed schedule. All Thérèse, our guide, was missing was a flag to physically guide the way – I'll be sure to pack the Armagh flag next time! And although we lacked a chaplain, it was made up for with reverent ceremonies, processions, prayer and plenty of craic. What more could you want?!



The Pilgrims



CCR Outing, Dublin, December



CCR Outing, Dublin, December



CCR Outing, Birr, October



Trivia night at Glendalough



All Saints party in Cork



All Saints CC Athlone



Rosary Procession Glendalough



Rosary Procession Glendalough



Gaudete Sunday Fundraising Dinner, Kilkenny





Weddings in 2023

Matt Keating and Helen Jennings



Nicolas Rossi and Kathryn Corrigan





Belfast children's Nativity play



Belfast children's Nativity play

Priestly Society of Saint Pius X in Ireland

DUBLIN St. John the Evangelist Church

1 Upper Mounttown Road Dún Laoghaire,
Co. Dublin A96 P793
T: (01) 284 2206

Mass Times
- Sunday 9am & 11am
- Monday - Friday 11am & 6:30pm most days
- Saturday 11am

Saint Pius X House

12 Tivoli Terrace S, Dún Laoghaire
Co. Dublin A96 KV65
T: (01) 284 2206

Resident:

Rev. Fr Patrick Abbet (Prior)
Rev. Fr Leo Boyle
Rev. Henry Willioud
Rev. Fr Jules Doutrebente

ATHLONE Corpus Christi Church

Connaught Gardens, Athlone
Co. Westmeath N37 E671
T: 090 643 3703

Mass Times
- Sunday 10am (check website, can be 4pm)
- Saturday 10am
- Friday 6:30pm

BELFAST Saint Pius V Chapel

78 Andersonstown Road
Belfast, Co. Antrim
BT11 9AN
T: (028) 9445 3654

Mass Times
- Sunday 12noon

CORK Our Lady of the Rosary Church

Shanakiel Road Sunday's Well,
Co. Cork T23 T389
T: (090) 643 3703

Mass Times
- Sunday 11am (check website, can be 4pm)
- Saturday 11am

NEWRY Our Lady of Knock Chapel

Unit 5 Richbrook Business Park,
Mill Road, Bessbrook,
Newry, Co. Down BT35 7DT
T: (048) 30 825730

Mass Times
- Sunday 8:30am



FSSPX Northern Ireland



FSSPX Republic of Ireland

Society of Saint Pius X



S S P X

The Society of St. Pius X is an international priestly society of common life without vows, whose purpose is the priesthood and that which pertains to it.

Since its foundation by Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre in 1970, the Society has formed priests according to the immemorial teachings of the Catholic Church. By offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in the traditional Latin rite and administering the sacraments according to the traditional rites in vigour in 1962 (before the Second Vatican Council 1962-5), the Society's priests perpetuate what the Church has taught and done throughout its history. By the exercise of the teaching office of its priests, the Society fights against the errors that presently afflict the Church.