

Newsletter

Teams of Our Lady

Irish Region



Equipes Notre-Dame

New Regional Couple



Brendan and Rosemarie Gavin began their 4 year term of service during the mass on the Responsible Couples' Day on 2nd October. They were presented with aprons, bearing the Transatlantic Super-Region logo, symbolising their service and commitment to the Movement

Winter 2021

Issue 127

New Laois-Carlow Team



Rebecca and Sean, Bishop Denis Nulty, Stan, Sofiya and little David, Padraig and Ingrid (pilot couple). Missing from the photo: Amanda and Tom.

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From the Regional Couple



Dear brothers and sisters,

It is our privilege to begin our 4 years of service as Responsible Couple for the Regional Team. We follow gratefully in the footsteps of Jim and Elaine Keogh and those who have served the Movement in this role before us. So, not without trepidation, we take a deep breath and dive in!

These are uncertain times. However, we look to a young, betrothed couple, Mary and Joseph, who also experienced uncertainty. They too longed to celebrate with their families. Their plans were disturbed by the message of an angel, no less. That message was that they should not fear, that God had a plan and they were called to be part of it.

We find great encouragement in the attitude of Mary. Her response to the angel Gabriel inspires us; “I am the handmaid of the Lord, let what you have said be done to me” (Luke 1:26-38). Her trust displaced any fear or desire for control or perfection which might otherwise have overwhelmed her. Enabled by a life of prayer, she opened herself to God’s call and through her cooperation the Word became flesh.

Further inspiration comes to us from the wedding feast at Cana (John 2:1-12). Mary’s presence is one of service, being quietly alert. The embarrassing scarcity of wine did not escape her attention. Mary’s inclination was to act for the sake of the couple on their joyful day. Jesus’ first miracle was in response to Mary’s intercession. Imagine her joy, the joy of the couple, and indeed the rejoicing of all of heaven, as scarcity became abundance!

We are all invited to trust in the power inherent in God’s call to us. We must not hide our “talent”. (Luke 19:11-28). As we overcome our natural inclination to hesitate, or to wait for perfection, God rewards our efforts and makes up for what is lacking in us.

As we approach the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, we look forward to uniting in prayer and thanksgiving to celebrate the gift of Teams of Our Lady in our lives. Even though many of us will celebrate virtually, we can be sure we are gathered together by our Mother, who always takes our deepest prayers and longings to her Son. May she also lead us this Advent Season as we wait with her for the rebirth of Jesus in our hearts, homes and lives this Christmas.

We wish you and your loved ones health and blessings.

A promotional banner for a 'Marriage Masterclass'. The background is a photograph of a couple sitting on a beach, looking out at the ocean. A seagull is flying in the sky above them. The text 'Marriage Masterclass' is written in large, bold, blue letters. Below it, 'with Teams of Our Lady' is written in red. Below that, '1-8 December 2021' is written in blue. At the bottom, there is a red banner with the text '19 countries. 90 videos.' in white, and a blue banner with the text 'For married couples, dating couples and all discerning their vocation.' in white. The 'Teams of Our Lady' logo is visible in the bottom right corner of the red banner.

From The Regional Chaplain



It is an honour to have been asked to take on the role of regional chaplain of Teams for the next three years. Let me begin by introducing myself: I am a diocesan priest based currently in Glasnevin and I have been chaplain to Team 36 for the past ten years or more. A few years ago I was invited to join the sector team, which introduced me to a wider dimension of Teams. Just when I thought that chapter was drawing to a close, I find myself co-opted onto the new regional team. The phrase: 'man proposes, the Lord disposes' comes to mind!

I wish to thank my predecessor in this role, Fr. Peter Sexton, for his spiritual leadership in Teams, his thoughtful reflections in these pages and his inspiring homilies. Peter and I share the experience of having both worked as chaplains in Trinity College, where Peter continues to minister. It is a great privilege to work in a university setting: to accompany students during these years of study and exploration as they probe the deeper questions of life and to be infected and challenged by their energy and idealism. Mostly, the chaplain's role is about availability and presence.

There are similarities with the role of the chaplain in a Team. What impresses me about the structure of Teams is that it is lay led. Each team elects a couple to take on the role of Responsible Couple for the following year. Their task is to set the tone for the whole Team for the year ahead; to agree with the team the structure for each meeting, to organise the various tasks in advance, to know when to move on from one part of the meeting to the next, and to propose what the study topic might be for that year. The chaplain is there to support and to offer advice when asked, but not to lead. It can be a learning curve for a priest who likes to be in charge!

Of course the chaplain brings his own life experience, spirituality and familiarity with Scripture, which hopefully enhances the quality of the meeting, but Teams is essentially a form of peer ministry as couples encourage each other to grow in faith through their life as a couple and as a family. As Fr. Caffarel reminded an International Gathering of Teams: *'Let us never forget that the purpose of Equipes Notre-Dame is to help couples to become closer to God.'*

Advent marks the beginning of the new liturgical year. I think Teams is going through a time of new beginnings as well. It may appear as just a few green shoots, but isn't that how all new beginnings start out, and with the Lord's blessing and guidance...

We might be conscious of the ageing profile among the majority of Teams members (which simply reflects that of Sunday Mass congregations); individual teams may be diminishing in size or finding it more difficult to meet, especially since the onset of Covid-19. On the other hand, a number of new teams have formed in recent years, introducing a younger generation to the charism of Teams. There is also an increasing international dimension to Teams in Ireland, which again reflects the increasingly multi-cultural society. When my own team started out a little over ten years ago, we had two Italian couples, two Irish, one American, and one couple who were Slovak and Spanish! Many of the couples from Europe, Latin America and elsewhere bring with them a depth of faith and an appreciation of what it means to be a Christian that will undoubtedly renew our Irish Church.

Covid 19 might have impeded our regular gathering around the table, such an important aspect of the monthly Team meeting, but we discovered technology skills we didn't know we had and 'zoomed' in instead. Our annual retreat and our recent Responsible Couples' weekend were both very successful online events, and although we were disappointed we couldn't gather in person, the virtual gathering actually allowed more people to participate than might otherwise have been the case.

The Expansion Team came up with the brilliant idea of the online Marriage Masterclass, which will launch its third incarnation in early December and which now has an active facebook page and welcomes contributions from Teams members all over the globe.

Tandem, which is an adaptation of Teams for couples who are engaged or simply going 'steady', launched this year with two teams currently meeting accompanied by couples from the Dublin sector.

Shortly after I was invited to become Regional chaplain, I received a warm letter of good wishes from Bernadette Blayney. Coming from someone who with her late husband, John, was responsible for bringing Teams to Ireland over 50 years ago, I saw it as a wonderful reminder of our origins and an endorsement of our endeavours to reach out in new directions. Happy Advent!

Synodal Pathway

"Do they not know what they are doing" said an elderly man to me when Parish Pastoral Councils were first introduced. He wondered at the very idea of consultation with the laity. Having been raised in a church of pray, pay and obey it is not surprising that the idea of being given a voice is confusing to some Catholics. Not only has consultation not been part of our Church experience in the past, in many ways it still isn't so much so that it is not only the laity for whom it is a new idea; so why do it?

In a homily on 3rd June 2021 Archbishop Dermot Farrell said "We are invited to embark on a Synodal Pathway and the context is one of an ever-changing Church in an ever-changing World"

The vision of Church given by the Second Vatican Council is that of the People of God where we all play our part. Not just Ministers of the Word and Ministers of the Eucharist, but that we are all called through Baptism to be responsible for the wellbeing, growth and future of the Church to which we belong. In times past clergy may have been more educated than most but now in the age of the laity we are all called based on our life experience and wisdom to have a say and a voice that collectively can inform the future direction of our Church.

Among the challenging questions posed in the Synodal Pathway are:

How are we protagonists in the Mission of the Church?

With whom are we journeying?

What is our experience of authority, co-responsibility, participative decision making, team work, dialogue and having a voice?

What faith formation / education have we received as adults and what do we need?

Not only has Equipes Notre-Dame, as a Vatican-approved lay movement been invited to make a submission directly to the Vatican in advance of the Synod; we in teams have a long history of journeying with our chaplains and a team experience that includes ongoing formation and discernment. The inclusion of our wisdom and experience in the Synodal Pathway is therefore an opportunity not to be missed. To ensure that this inclusion happens we can do the following:

1. Pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Synodal Pathway and the Synod to which it leads.
 2. Take the opportunity given to us through Teams and any other opportunity to actively participate in the synodal process.
 3. Remember that whatever the outcome of the Synod, the ongoing renewal and revitalisation of the Church will be the responsibility of each and every one of us.
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The Multiplication Miracle: A Mega Marriage Masterclass

Ingrid and Padraig Lewis

Ingrid and Padraig are Leading Communications Couple for the Transatlantic Super-Region

One of our favourite Bible readings is the multiplication miracle: when – at the request of Jesus - someone's humble gift of 5 loaves and 2 fish fed entire crowds of people. Looking at this year's Mega Edition of the Marriage Masterclass that includes 90 videos from 19 countries around the globe, we can clearly see Jesus performing again his multiplication miracle, through the intercession of Father Henri Caffarel.

Although this year we advertised the call for videos very early in April, we had received only one video at the end of August. It was a very special video, made by a recently-widowed friend in Teams. The words of Jesus from the Gospel resounded in our ears as we were watching this beautiful video that moved us to tears: "Truly I tell you; this widow has put more into the treasury than all the others" (Mark 12: 43). We hoped that her video would be followed by others, but this did not happen. So, in mid-September, when the anniversary novena started, we asked Fr Caffarel's intercession as we prayed for a multiplication miracle.

Two months later, as we start the countdown to the third edition of the Marriage Masterclass, we feel so blessed doing the final preparations of this Mega Edition. We are amazed and encouraged witnessing God's miracle: the touching video of the widow multiplied into a wealth of submissions arriving from all parts of the world. The number of video-testimonies doubled from the previous edition, reaching the impressive number of 90 diverse and faith-filled videos. Also, 9 nations were added to its country count: Spain, Slovakia, Poland, Italy, Romania, Lithuania, Syria, Malawi and Ghana. These videos are ready to give testimony about the graces of Teams to countless people around the globe through the 3rd edition of the Marriage Masterclass.

What does this new edition add in terms of topics? Faye and Kevin, ERI Eurasia Zone Liaison Couple, discuss this year's theme of the Christian couple as leaven of renewal for the family and society. Another couple from ERI, Mercedes and Alberto, give their testimony about service and communication in Teams. Our Transatlantic SR leaders, Paul and Annette, provide an overview of the international movement Teams of Our Lady. Bishop Steve Lowe from New Zealand explains Pope Francis's apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, while Bishop Denis Nulty from Ireland discusses how the sacraments of marriage and Holy Orders are "inter-mingled" in our common search for holiness. The theme of "holiness" is also at the heart of the testimony of Paweł and Helena, the Responsible Couple for Poland/Central Europe SR. Pablo and Mária from Teams Slovakia share about the joys and challenges of multicultural couples in their trilingual video delivered in English, Spanish and Slovakian. Mircea and Teodora give testimony about their journey as a Tandem Couple, first as participants and more recently as coordinators of this project in Romania. Starting with the metaphor of "life as a dance", Piotr and Dzidzia (England) reflect on the endeavour Word of God, while Mario and Shelly-Ann (Trinidad & Tobago) discuss the "scary and the practical" aspects of the Sit-down. Along with their testimonies, there are numerous other new videos that discuss the endeavours of Teams: this is in fact the first edition that covers all six endeavours with much depth, richness and useful tips.

This 3rd edition of the Marriage Masterclass is not only bigger, but also richer, bringing so many new topics, perspectives and varied cultural contexts of our contributors. Thank God for each one of our video-contributors and for the amazing diversity of their videos. Also, thank you all for your video-testimonies, canvassing for videos, enthusiasm, kind words and all your support that made this event possible. All your efforts have been greatly appreciated.

We consecrate this Mega Edition, ending on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, to Our Heavenly Mother. Our Lady of Teams, pray for us, for all people in Teams and beyond, as we all strive to transform our marriages into living testimonies of God's love. Amen.

Reflections on the anniversary novena to Fr Caffarel

Ingrid and Padraig Lewis

Ingrid and Padraig are Leading Communications Couple for the Transatlantic Super-Region

The beautiful novena organised for the 25th anniversary of the birth to heaven of Fr Henri Caffarel was an unforgettable experience for us. One that enlightened and strengthened us. Firstly, the novena illuminated us, because it felt like an experience of discovery of Fr Caffarel, the beloved founder of our movement. It was the first time that we heard his voice and the passion he transmitted when speaking about Teams, marriage, the union of the two sacraments (marriage & priesthood) and, more generally, about love. We were struck to discover Fr Caffarel as a man consumed by love. A man in love with God. A priest whose love and faith were so great that he could not do otherwise than share those gifts, send them forth, so they could reach all corners of the world. A man who, as in the Gospel according to Luke (8:16), placed his lamp high on a stand "so that those who enter may see the light." His charisma, his words and the passion in his voice still resound in our ears much after the end of the novena.

Secondly, the experience of doing the novena provided us with guidance and strength during particularly challenging times in our lives. Actually, this novena came at the right moment for us as we were struggling with health issues, the stress of buying a house, various professional challenges and an intense working rhythm that left us drained at the end of most days. In addition to our worries, three weeks before the deadline for the Marriage Masterclass we had received only one video. The many months of work, emails, calls, seemed to be almost fruitless. We were overwhelmed, confronting the fragility of life and feeling - same as the apostles - that Jesus was sleeping while our boat was swamped by the heavy waves of a stormy sea. In this life storm, the presence of Fr Caffarel during the novena appeared as a luminous light house, pointing us in the right direction, showing us the path. He was there to remind us that God is waiting for us in the "luminous depth of our hearts". One phrase by Father Caffarel touched us deeply: "Live your prayer and pray your life." With that beautiful invitation in mind, we started to pray more intensely, entrusting to God everything that made our boat rock in the midst of the storm. Also, we fervently asked for the intercession of Fr Caffarel for our personal and professional needs. In a special way, we entrusted to Fr Caffarel the situation and future of the Marriage Masterclass. Shortly after that, the videos and the offers to make videos started to arrive. Also, we felt comforted and strengthened in our own personal struggles. Things started to happen and we were able to see how Jesus was calming our turbulent sea. Everything started to make more sense, even those aspects of our lives which are still uncertain and worrying.

To conclude, this novena helped us to see how Fr Caffarel's love extends beyond death and how his intercession promptly facilitates the gifts and graces that we need at a particular time. Thank you, Fr Caffarel – for the light you are to the world. For the guidance that you provided us, every step of our marriage, through the wonderful movement of Teams of Our Lady. For your reassuring presence when we are fragile and struggle along the way. For your intercession and graces when our 'boat' is navigating the storms of life. For all the couples and chaplains, throughout the world, with whom we share the joy and connection of being part of the same movement. With gratitude we thank you for your vision, presence and love. PS: Please note that the novena is still available on the Facebook page and the website of Equipes Notre-Dame International.

Responsible Couples' Formation and Team Training Day online, 2nd October 2021

The day was hosted by the Dublin Sector and led by the outgoing Sector Couple, Brendan and Rosemarie Gavin.

The keynote address was given by Kevin and Faye Noonan (Australia) from the International Leading Team (ERI). "The Christian Couple, Leaven of renewal for the family and Society"

Presentations were made in breakout groups on "Base Team Responsible Couple"- Andrew Fanthom and Emer Sinnott, "Expansion" - Padraig and Ingrid Lewis, "Sector Team Member" - John and Bernie Healy, "Accompanying Couple for a Tandem Team" - Pierpaolo Dondio and Ilaria Furlan,

After the reports from Newsletter, Literature, Website, Finance, Piloting Couple and a presentation from Fr. Richard Sheehy on the role of the Chaplain, there were addresses from Paul and Annette O'Beirne, Super-Regional Couple, and the outgoing Regional Couple, Jim and Elaine Keogh.

There were presentations on the Endeavours and this was followed by mass, celebrated by the outgoing Regional Chaplain, Fr. Peter Sexton, at the Church of Our Lady of Dolours , Glasnevin.

At the end of mass, Brendan and Rosemarie were presented with aprons, symbolising their role of service. They presented aprons to their successors, Mark and Anne O'Leary and Fr. Richard was presented with an apron as incoming Regional Chaplain.

The day concluded with mixed team meetings from 3:30.



Brendan and Rosemarie , moderators



Kevin and Faye Noonan, ERI, Keynote address



Paul and Annette O'Beirne, Super-Regional Couple

Continued on back page

Around the Region

Dublin

Sector Outing—Farmleigh House.

On Sunday, 5th September, Teams members gathered for the first time in two years. Organised by the Sector Team, it was a joyous occasion with many renewing acquaintances and relating experiences. A picnic was held on the lawn in front of the house. The weather was good and balmy. Two chaplains, Fr. Richard Sheehy and Fr. Frank Sammon, attended.



Responsible Couples' Day

The Day was hosted by the Dublin Sector online on 2nd October. See report p7.

New Laois-Carlow Team

The first Laois/Carlow Team started its meetings on the 16th of October 2021. The new Team, piloted by Ingrid and Padraig Lewis, is made up of three young couples and Bishop Denis Nulty (Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin) who took on the role of chaplain. It is a multi-cultural Team with a Ukrainian couple, one Irish and one mixed Brazilian/Irish, without forgetting the mixed Romanian/Irish piloting couple. From the very first meeting we were struck by the openness and deep sharing of all participants, resulting in a very joyful (and long!) meeting enjoyed by all. May God bring many graces and happy memories as they start this amazing journey of faith!

Padraig and Ingrid

Annual Sector Mass, Wednesday 8th December 2021, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, at 8pm.

The venue will be Church of the Guardian Angels, Newtownpark Avenue, Blackrock.

The celebrant will be Archbishop Dermot Farrell, Archbishop of Dublin.

The Sector Team decided on a large venue for our mass this year to ensure that there was plenty of space for people to feel as comfortable as possible. We were keen to ensure that we would have access to a webcam to facilitate those from the Sector who would not be attending in person. It also facilitates attendance online for others from throughout the Irish Region (and beyond!) who might like to tune in.

Normally, there is an opportunity to share refreshments after the mass. However, this year we feel that it is probably best, given current circumstances, not to provide refreshments. While it will be sad not to gather afterwards for a “cuppa” we hope that everyone will understand.

To access the mass online go to the website **www.newtownparkparish.com** and select the button “LIVE BROADCAST MASS”. Then on the picture of the stained glass window click on the button “WATCH NOW”.

We would like to introduce the new Dublin Sector Team.



Emer Sinnott and Andrew Fanthom from team 30 (12 years in Teams)



Anne and Mark O’Leary from Team 37 (13 years in Teams)



Fr. Paddy Dundon CSSp, long-time associated with Teams and has worked in Brazil, South Africa and Ireland



Katriona and Donal O’Keeffe from Team 42 (40 years in Teams)



Brigid and Gerard McQuaid from Team 40 (8 years in Teams)

We look forward to serving the Dublin Sector over the next three years.

Mark and Anne O'Leary

Belfast

The Christian Scriptures tell us a story of Jesus that points to a life beyond death. Michael Flanagan, one of the great characters of our sector, after a long illness, has joined Pauline whose death preceded his by 6 years. He journeyed with us in Teams for over 36 years.

At the graveside many individuals from Teams joined with others in praying the Magnificat, a favourite of Michael and Pauline.

Brendan and Moyra Bunting

Mullingar

We thank the Dublin Sector for the RC training day. The talks on the Endeavours were inspirational and the whole day was a great success under the guidance of Rosemarie and Brendan.

It is a source of great joy to Teams in Mullingar to be able to meet up again.

Team 3

We had a lovely lunch together at the end of the summer.

We are blessed to be able to have our meetings with Fr Frank, our chaplain, in the Chapel at St Camillus Nursing Centre.

Our annual Mass for 8th December will take place in the Cathedral of Christ the King at 7.30pm.

We remember in our prayers all our loved ones at this time of the year.

Pauline and Richard Sheridan

Galway

Galway Teams held our “summer “picnic this year on Sunday 12th September. The venue was Coole Park, Gort, Co Galway. It was great to meet our Team couples after the Covid restrictions. It was an enjoyable day for all.

We are back once again to experience sharing a meal together and meeting in the “flesh”. While our zooming experience was a blessing it is no substitute for the non-verbal face to face meeting. However, with the recent rapid spread of the covid infection we may have to resort to zooming later.

There is good news that Team 1 has added a new couple to their Team. They are Alvaro and Lupe Perez. We welcome them and wish them every blessing.

Some Galway Teams participated in the recent Responsible Couples’ event held on 2nd October. This was held on zoom. We are thankful to the couples who organised the meeting. In particular we were impressed by the couple sharing sessions. We were amazed at the knowledge and wisdom articulated by the Teams involved in our group and thank them for their openness. Finally, we were touched by the phrase “I am because we are, we are because I am”. It reminds us how much the Teams depend on each other.

We would like to ask for continued prayers for Eddie Lloyd who is in a Nursing Home. Also please pray for Toby Roche recently deceased who was brother-in-law to Billy Hyland.

Jack and Anne Hutchinson

Prayer Intentions

For those who have died:

Toby Roche, brother-in-law of Billy Hyland, Galway

Michael Flanagan, husband of the late Pauline, Belfast

For those who are ill or are recovering or for a special intention:

Eddie Lloyd, Galway

James and Maura Halligan, Mullingar

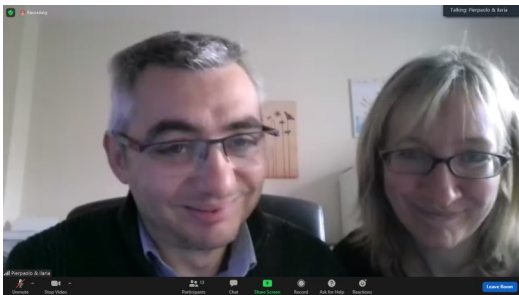
Responsible Couples' Day continued



Fr. Peter Sexton celebrating mass



New Regional Chaplain, Fr. Richard Sheehy, New Dublin Sector Couple, Anne and Mark O'Leary and new Regional Couple, Brendan and Rosemarie Gavin



Pierpaolo Dondio and Ilaria Furlan, accompanying couple for a Tandem Team

Thanks to Pauline Sheridan, Mullingar for screenshots.

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We wish all a blessed and happy Christmas and many blessings in the new year. We would like to receive contributions for the Spring Newsletter by Sunday 3rd April.
