



# REDEMPTIO

NEWSLETTER OF THE CLONARD RECONCILIATION PROJECT June 2009

## Together on a Journey

*Benedict Drasch*

I'm a 20 year-old from Germany, on a gap year in Belfast from September 2008 to August 2009. Through the year I have worked with the Clonard Youth Ministry team. In January 2009, under the guidance of Youthlink, two Belfast youth groups started a programme called "Kairos" on good relations and cultural diversity. One was from St. Paul & St Barnabas Church of Ireland in Tigers Bay, North Belfast, and the other was from Clonard Monastery. I became part of the Clonard group.

Coming from a German cultural background, the whole purpose of the program was new to me. It was strange to see young people at the same age thinking of each other as being different.

The early meetings focused on our own identity and prepared us to meet the other group. The first time we met the group from Tiger's Bay was for a drumming workshop. Over the next meetings we had different activities: bowling, a walk encircling the peace line on Good Friday, and a visit to the Indian Community Centre.

A highlight of our time together was a residential in Newcastle, County Down. Activities there included high level rope



*Crossing the Peace Wall: Falls/Shankill Good Friday Walk 2009*

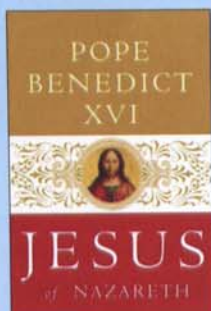
courses, mountain climbing, canoeing and bouldering. We also engaged in general discussions and group work on some of the following topics: mutual understanding, moving beyond sectarianism & racism, global citizenship and the concept of democracy.

We also enjoyed together a visit to Stormont where two local MLA members - Fra McCann, Sinn Fein, and Fred Cobain, Ulster Unionists, gave us a tour of the building and answered questions about their lives as politicians in Northern Ireland.

As the Kairos programme comes to an end I realise how much I have enjoyed being part of this group. The program was a great success and encouraged young people from two completely different backgrounds to engage with each other, spend time together and think about the situation in this land and what can be done about it.

For more information on Clonard's Youth Outreach Programme contact Brendan Dineen in Clonard on Tel: 028 9044 5960 or email: [youthministry@clonard.com](mailto:youthministry@clonard.com)

## Tribute to Pope Benedict!



A Presbyterian minister emailed to Fr Gerry Reynolds this remarkable tribute to Pope Benedict and his book "Jesus of Nazareth"

*"On Sundays I am doing a series on Jesus of Nazareth. Guess what - I am using Pope Benedict's book. I have read it through and underlined bits that impressed me and that covers most pages! It is the best book on the life and ministry of Jesus I have ever read.*

*I would like to email Benedict and express my sincere appreciation to him. I cannot speak highly enough of this fruit of his Biblical study of Christ.*

*It is an entirely Biblical exposition of a high standard that anyone would certainly benefit from spending time with.*

*As I read it I was saying to myself, only someone who truly knew the Lord - in the full sense that we Presbyterians mean by that - could write as he has. I embrace him as a brother in Christ who has warmed my heart and I trust will warm the hearts of my congregation. Wait till I tell them who wrote the book!"*

The Redemptorist Motto "Copiosa apud eum Redemptio" is the Latin for "With Him is plentiful redemption"

## A Journey in Understanding



Fr Tom Layden, S.J.

Six heart to heart conversations on what Catholics believe, introduced by Fr Tom Layden S.J. and chaired by Shankill ministers from the Church of Ireland, Presbyterian and Methodist Churches, constituted a wonderful breakthrough in Shankill/Falls relationships in April and May 2009 - an undermining the walls of Separation!

The conversations took place from 7.30pm to 9.00pm in Shankill Library, 298 Shankill Road every Tuesday from April 21st to May 26th. After Fr Tom's opening presentation Catholic and Protestant joined in small group discussion for about 25 minutes. A plenary session followed in which Fr Tom commented on issues and questions raised in the small groups. There was never a harsh or hurtful word spoken.

In each meeting we focused on a doctrine that in some degree divides Catholic and Protestant:

- a) *Being Born Again - What Catholics believe about Salvation*
- b) *The Word of God - What Catholics believe about the Bible*
- c) *The communion of Saints - What Catholics believe about the Virgin Mary*
- d) *Our Departed Loved ones - What Catholics believe about Prayers for the Dead*
- e) *The Bishop of Rome - What Catholics believe about the Pope*
- f) *Holy Communion - What Catholics believe about the Eucharist*

A relaxed cuppa ended each meeting in which conversation continued informally. We invariably ran over time. It was usually 9.30pm before everyone was away from Shankill Library. The library managers - Heather, Mark and Ian - were immensely tolerant of our time-keeping! We are very grateful to them. Their welcome set the atmosphere of the meetings.

## My Confirmation Journey

Megan Graham

I have rarely taken the easiest road when it comes to my faith and the Catholic Church. I spend a lot of time thinking about my faith, trying to figure out what I believe and why, and I question nearly everything I am told about what it means to "be Catholic." As a result of this, of teenage rebellion and being told too often that I didn't belong in the Catholic Church, I put off being confirmed for a long time, and effectively left the Church itself for the last seven years.

I moved to Belfast from the States to start a postgraduate program at Queens University in September 2008. I continued to struggle with my lapsed faith throughout my first

semester here. I hadn't been to a Mass since my grandfather's funeral five years ago, and was still uncomfortable joining the Catholic community because of my difficult past with the Church. But Jude Dugan, a friend I had met my first day in Belfast, continued to encourage me to question why I had left and to consider giving the Church another chance.

This past February, I decided that I would attend Mass with him one Sunday at Clonard, in hopes of coming to better terms with my faith and my place within the Church. That morning, I met Fr Gerry Reynolds who was very welcoming. Within a couple of weeks I was introduced to the unity pilgrims, wonderful people who on

Sunday mornings go to various Protestant services after attending Mass. Before long, they were inviting me to other interchurch events and I began to see the Church community in a new and much more positive light.

The pilgrims have incredible faith and a firm dedication to creating positive change in Belfast. They work tirelessly to bring Catholics together with Protestant people to bridge the divides that separate people in Northern Ireland. It didn't take me long to realize that I wanted to be a full member of the same church as these warm and welcoming people.



Megan with Jude and Father Gerry

In early April, I decided that I wanted to complete my initiation into the Church by being confirmed. Throughout the process, the pilgrims and Fr Gerry supported me, helped me grow in my faith and encouraged me during my moments of doubt and nervousness. On 29 May I was confirmed by Fr Gerry in the community oratory at Clonard. Friends from both the unity pilgrims and Queens attended the Mass. I don't know where the story goes from here, what road my faith will take in the future, but I do know that Clonard and the unity pilgrims will always feature as prominent bedrocks in my journey.



### New Ecumenical Commission

Among the new appointments by Bishop Noel Treanor to the Down and Connor Ecumenical Commission are two Clonard unity pilgrims, Marie Gough of St Oliver Plunkett parish and Ed Petersen, coordinator of Clonard's Ecumenical and Peace Ministry. Other new members are Paul McCourt, Alpha coordinator, Fr Feargal McGrady, PP Derriagh, Fr Tom Layden, SJ, and Sr Anne Bickford, RDS. The Commission met for the first time on May 5<sup>th</sup>.

*Lord Jesus Christ,  
bless every gathering of your Church  
in the Shankill and in the Falls.*

*Send your Holy Spirit upon us,  
the source of love and truth,  
the giver of joy and peace.*

*Beloved Lord and Saviour;  
take away the walls that separate us,  
and enable us to meet one  
another in you.*

*Be the cornerstone of your  
Church among us,  
so that knowing the Father's love  
we may serve him together as one  
family. Amen.*



## Pentecost in Dromantine

Billy Gallagher

"Reconciliation in Scripture and on the streets: No sitting on the fence" - that challenge was the theme of talks in Dromantine on Pentecost Sunday by Rev. Ken Newell and Fr Gerry Reynolds. Ken spoke about examples of reconciliation from the Bible - ordinary people called to get off the fence - Noah, Abraham, Moses, Ruth and David. It struck a chord with me. So did the Christian brotherly love between Rev. Ken, a Presbyterian minister, and Fr Gerry, a Catholic priest. All the different parts of the Body of Christ are needed to make the Body complete.

Fr Gerry spoke of his great sadness at the wall dividing the monastery from the people of the Shankill Road and of the heartbreak of people going from the Clonard neighbourhood to murder Denis Taggart, a Protestant man. With Sam Birch, a Methodist Minister, he crossed the divide to visit the home of the murdered man and attend his funeral. That began the shared ministry of members of Cornerstone Community visiting bereaved families of murder victims on both sides of the wall and attending their funerals. Because both sides of the community are part of the body of Christ Fr Gerry began to build new relationships with the Shankill people through their churches.

After the talks we had time alone to reflect on how each of us could get off the fence and work for reconciliation. God has armed me with three special tools to do this. The day at Dromantine helped to sharpen them:

- 1) A smile to show I'm glad to meet my brothers in Christ;
- 2) A handshake to establish friendship;
- 3) An ability to hug (to be used carefully) to demonstrate the love between Christian friends, friends that I already have and friends that I hope to make when I get off the fence for good!

## In Communion with the Founders!

On May 30th - the eve of Pentecost - we held a prayer vigil in Clonard from 9.00pm to midnight. It was an initiative from within the Catholic tradition to create a prolonged time of "waiting in prayer" which would link with the celebrations of the Global Day of Prayer on Pentecost Sunday. .

We reflected on our communion in God with three great "founders" - John Calvin, founder of the Presbyterian Church, John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Church and Alfonso de Liguori, founder of the Redemptorist congregation. Each of them was a wholehearted Christian, full of the Holy Spirit. Each was a great theologian whose influence continues to this day. With every part of their being each loved the Church, the Bride of Christ and yearned to see her radiant in the beauty of God's grace.

Fully united with God in heaven, the founders beckon the Churches towards an ever fuller communion with one another on earth. Their example inspires us; their faithful friendship warms our hearts; their prayer supports us all in the journey of faith.

Rev. Ron Savage, emeritus minister of Stormont Presbyterian Church, helped us to ponder the message and gifts of John Calvin. Rev. Wesley Blair, minister of Ballynafeigh Methodist Church, highlighted John Wesley's reconciling message "If your heart is as my heart, give me your hand". Fr Sean Moore, Redemptorist son of Alfonso de Liguori, emphasised his founder's moral teaching on the primacy of conscience.

Besides short talks, there were chants, readings from Scripture, organ music, silent periods, a prayer for the world and three processions, the first to the Book of the Gospels, the second to the triumphant cross and the third to the water of life. There were also breaks for refreshments at 10.00pm and 11.00pm. One who stayed for the three hours wrote a word of thanks to Clonard which summed up everyone's experience of the vigil: "I was pleased and blessed on the May 30th evening. I believe the Lord was with us and the Holy Spirit hovered over the gathering". Deo Gratias!



John Calvin



John Wesley



Alfonso de Liguori

## Shankill Ministers at Clonard Novena



Archdeacon Barry Dodds



Rev. Jim Rea



Rev. Noel Agnew

Relationships are changing radically between the Christian churches in Belfast. Three ministers of Shankill congregations will be guest preachers at the Clonard Novena on June 23rd.

These are the times they preach:

**Archdeacon Barry Dodds**, Rector of St Michael's Church of Ireland at the 7.00am, 8.15am, 9.30am and 11.00am sessions.

**Rev. Jim Rea**, Shankill Methodist Church at the 2.00pm, 3.30pm and 6.30pm sessions.

**Rev. Noel Agnew**, minister of West Kirk Presbyterian congregation, at the 9.30pm and 11.00pm sessions.

The changed relationship between the Shankill Churches and Clonard goes back to small beginnings. There were the seeds of friendship and mutual understanding sown by the fortnightly prayer meetings in Clonard Monastery in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Then came Cornerstone inter-church Community which grew out of these meetings and was set up on the Springfield Road peace-line in 1982.

The Shankill/Falls clergy Fellowship followed in the later 1980s. Forthspring - the Community Together - was established at the Springfield Road Methodist Church in the early 1990s. The Clonard unity pilgrims began their visits to the Shankill Churches in 1995 and have continued to this day, bearing new fruits of friendship and mutual enrichment year by year.

The Novena theme for Day 7 - June 23rd - is "Lord, that we may see! Can we really change our vision? Yes we can!" The scripture readings are: Ephesians 4.11/16 and Luke 19.1/10. We continue to undermine the dividing wall. "The walls of separation do not reach to heaven!"

### Clonard Monastery

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## TOGETHER ON SUNDAY

Where seeds are planted!

Since September 2008 our unity pilgrim visits have planted seeds of reconciliation among 36 congregations. These seeds, planted in good soil, will bear fruit in God's good time. We list below, Sunday by Sunday, all the visits that were made.

**September 7<sup>th</sup>** with Springfield Road Methodist Church

**September 14<sup>th</sup>** with Fitzroy Presbyterian Church

**September 21<sup>st</sup>** with St Comgall's Church of Ireland, Rathcoole

**October 5<sup>th</sup>** with St George's Church of Ireland, High Street and Ulsterville Avenue Presbyterian Church

**October 12<sup>th</sup>** with Shankill Road Mission Presbyterian Church and St Michael's Church of Ireland, Shankill

**October 19<sup>th</sup>** with Westbourne Presbyterian Church, Short Strand and Great Victoria Street Presbyterian Church

**October 26<sup>th</sup>** with Donegall Road Methodist Church and St Simon's and St Philip's Church of Ireland, Donegall Road

**November 2<sup>nd</sup>** with St Peter's Church of Ireland, Antrim Road and Good Shepherd Church, Monkstown

**November 9<sup>th</sup>** with Woodvale Presbyterian Church and Shankill Methodist Church

**November 16<sup>th</sup>** with West Kirk Presbyterian Church and Ballygomartin Road Presbyterian Church

**November 22<sup>nd</sup>** with Antiochian Orthodox Church, Antrim Road

**November 23<sup>rd</sup>** with Fitzroy Presbyterian Church

**November 30<sup>th</sup>** with Townsend Street Presbyterian Church and St Simon's and St Luke's Church of Ireland, Millfield

**December 7<sup>th</sup>** in partnership with parishioners from St Comgall's, Bangor, with Kings Fellowship Church, Bangor and Hamilton Road Presbyterian Church, Bangor

**December 21<sup>st</sup>** with Shankill Mission Presbyterian Church for their "Nine Lessons and Carols" Service and with Fitzroy Presbyterian Church for their Carol Service

**January 18<sup>th</sup>** with Townsend Street Presbyterian Church

**January 25<sup>th</sup>** with St Bartholomew's Church of Ireland, Stranmillis and Windsor Baptist Church, Lisburn Road

**February 1<sup>st</sup>** with Fitzroy Presbyterian Church

**February 8<sup>th</sup>** with St Matthew's Church of Ireland, Shankill and Woodvale Methodist Church

**February 15<sup>th</sup>** with Woodvale Presbyterian Church and Glengall Street Methodist Church (Belfast Central Mission)

## Unity Pilgrims in Ballymena

The priests of Ballymena have invited the Clonard unity pilgrims to present the unity pilgrim challenge to the people of All Saints parish at the June 27/28th Sunday Masses. We plan to preach at all the Sunday Masses and to distribute Fr Paul Couturier's prayer for the unity of Christ's disciples. We yearn and pray that the unity Jesus prays for in John 17 may be realised in Ballymena.

On Sunday July 5th, by arrangement with the various ministers, pilgrim volunteers from All Saints will be with Ballymena Church of Ireland, Methodist, Moravian and Presbyterian congregations for their Morning Worship. Some Clonard pilgrims will accompany the Ballymena neophytes on the day. The distance to travel is short. The meaning of the journey is profound.

**February 22<sup>nd</sup>** with Westbourne Presbyterian Church, Short Strand and Great Victoria Street Presbyterian Church

**March 1<sup>st</sup>** with Donegall Road Methodist Church and St Philip's and St Simon's Church of Ireland, Donegall Road

**March 8<sup>th</sup>** with Ulsterville Avenue Presbyterian Church, Springfield Road and Shankill Methodist Churches

**March 15<sup>th</sup>** with Connor and Kells Presbyterian Churches and St Šaviour's Church of Ireland, Kells

**March 22<sup>nd</sup>** with St George's Church of Ireland, High Street and St Stephen's and St Luke's Church of Ireland, Millfield

**March 29<sup>th</sup>** with Kilmakee Presbyterian Church and Springfield Road Methodist Church

**April 5<sup>th</sup>** with Carnmoney Presbyterian Church

**April 19<sup>th</sup>** with Westbourne Presbyterian Church, Short Strand

**April 26<sup>th</sup>** with Fitzroy Presbyterian Church and Springfield Road Methodist Church

**May 3<sup>rd</sup>** with Glengall Street Methodist Church and Sandy Row Methodist Church

**May 10<sup>th</sup>** with Townsend Street Presbyterian Church and St Stephen's and St Luke's Church of Ireland, Millfield

**May 17<sup>th</sup>** with Ballycrochan Presbyterian Church, Bangor

**May 24<sup>th</sup>** with Lowe Memorial Presbyterian Church, Finaghy and Springfield Road Methodist Church

**June 7<sup>th</sup>** with Shankill's St Matthew's Church of Ireland, West Kirk Presbyterian Church and Woodvale Methodist Church

**June 14<sup>th</sup>** with Shankill Methodist Church, Woodvale Presbyterian Church and St Paul and St Barnabas Church of Ireland, Tiger's Bay