



Parish of Greencastle, Co. Tyrone (Diocese of Derry)
 St. Patrick's, Greencastle Our Lady of the Wayside, Broughderg
Fifth Sunday of Easter – Day of Prayer for Vocations [Year B] (6th May, 2012)
 The Parochial House, 164, Greencastle Road, Sheskinshule, Omagh, BT79 7RU
 Website: greencastleparish.com Tel: (028) 8164 8474 Email: greencastlepp@yahoo.com

Liturgy Schedule for the Fifth Week of Easter [Year B] (7th May, 2012 – 13th May, 2012)

Saturday Evening (5th May) <i>Do This In Memory</i>	St. Patrick's	5.30pm Confessions 7.35pm Public Recitation of the Rosary 6:00pm Vigil Mass
Sunday 6th May Fifth Sunday of Easter [Year B]	St. Patrick's Our Lady of the Wayside	9.00am Mass (Missa Pro Populo) 10.30am Confessions 11.00am Mass
Monday 7th May – Thursday 10th May Fifth Week of Easter		NO MASS: Fr. Hasson will be attending the Annual Priests Retreat
Friday 11th May Fifth Week of Easter	St. Patrick's	7.35pm Public Recitation of the Rosary 8.00pm Mass
Saturday 12th May Fifth Week of Easter	St. Patrick's	9.35am Public Recitation of the Rosary 10.00am Mass
Saturday Evening (12th May)	St. Patrick's	5.30pm Confessions 5.35pm Public Recitation of the Rosary 6:00pm Vigil Mass
Sunday 13th May Sixth Sunday of Easter [Year B]	St. Patrick's Our Lady of the Wayside St. Patrick's	9.00am Mass (Missa Pro Populo) 10.30am Confessions 11.00am Mass 9.30am-4.30pm Solemn Annual Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament 4.30pm Evening Prayer and Benediction

MASS TIME CHANGE: Please note that due to First Holy Communion on Sunday 20th May Mass at Our Lady of the Wayside Church will be at 9.00am and Mass at St. Patrick's Church will be at 11.00am.

Weekly Offerings: Thank you for your generosity to last week's collection which amounted to £830.
Annual Trócaire Lenten Appeal: Our parish contribution reached a total of £3,940.
Please remember the parish when making your will. If you are a taxpayer please consider a Gift-Aid declaration, your contribution will be worth 25% more to your parish.

Diocesan Purposes Collection: This will be taken up on Sunday 6th May (today).

Remembering Our Dead: We pray for **David O'Hagan (Maryville)** whose Requiem took place on Friday, we extend to his sisters and brother and their family circle our deepest sympathy and support. We also pray for **Rose Hollywood (Crouck)** whose Requiem took place on Monday and **Paddy McElhatton** and **Gareth McNamee** whose anniversaries occur at this time

Pope Benedict XVI's Intentions for May (please remember these in your personal prayer)

General – The Family: That initiatives which defined and uphold the role of the family may be promoted within society
Missionary – Mary, Guide of Missionaries: That Mary Queen of the World and Star of Evangelisation, may accompany all missionaries in proclaiming her Son, Jesus.

International Eucharistic Congress 2012 – Calling all our young people! Do you want to make a practical contribution to International Eucharistic Congress 2012? Do you want to remember this Historic occasion by being involved in the production of a Parish Banner? Become involved? Come along to a preliminary meeting in St. Patrick's Church Monday 14th May at 7.00pm.

Pioneering Total Abstinence Association – Council Meeting: Tuesday 8th May at 7.00pm in St. Patrick's Church.

During the month of May members of the Legion of Mary will lead us praying the Rosary 25 minutes before the beginning of Mass each day. Please join them or make the Rosary your special family prayer during this month

Gaeltacht Summer Course – Irish Language Scholarships: Contact Sinead Wamock on 07849 394 001 for details.

Diocesan Voices for International Congress: If you are a member of a church choir and would like to be involved in the Opening Mass for The International Eucharistic Congress on 10th June in Dublin please contact Sister Perpetua on (028) 7135 1233 for details. *Individuals, small groups and whole choirs will be welcome, it promises to be a wonderful occasion.*

Susan Bradley thanks all that sponsored/walked on the 15th April at Glenhull for the Rutledge Foundation, raising £960.

An Bruach Dearg Community Centre – Annual Guest Tea: Saturday 12th May at 8.30pm. *Music by Cascades*

Next Sundays Readings: Acts of the Apostles 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48; Psalm 97:1-4, r/v 2; 1 John 4:7-10; John 15:8-17; (Lectionary I, page 536) **(Sunday: Year B) (Weekday: Year 2)**

Lotto Results: A – L – R – S – V (1 person with 4 letters winning £100) **Next Jackpot:** £7,450

6.00pm Saturday Vigil Saturday 5 th May The family of Kieran Mulholland	Offertory Gifts Rota Fifth Sunday of Easter	9.00am Sunday Morning Sunday 6 th May The family of Ryan Gumley
Saturday 12 th May The family of David Morris	Sixth Sunday of Easter	Sunday 13 th May The family of Kira Donnelly
Saturday 19 th May The family of Megan Coyle	Feast of the Ascension	Sunday 20 th May The pupils of Our Lady of Lourdes PS

First Eucharist (First Holy Communion) is scheduled for the 11.00am Mass which will take place in Saint Patrick's, Church Greencastle. 9.00am Mass will be in Our Lady of the Wayside Church, Broughderg on this date.

Guidelines on Use of Modern Technology when Working with Children: - Use of photography and video

The use of photography and video is an issue of great concern among those working with children. The Diocese recognises that every parish has their own arrangements in relation to its use in schools, youth groups and for the sacraments however the guidelines have been devised below to aid parishes and diocesan groups:

- It is always good practice to seek *written* permission from a parent or guardian before taking any photographs or video footage of children. This written permission must be sought from the parent/guardian or the person who owns the photograph before it can be displayed on promotional materials or websites. This can be incorporated in the registration form when a child joins a group (template permission Resource 10);
- Neither names nor any personal information should be displayed alongside any photographs;
- Special consideration should be given where taking photographs or video footage might be misinterpreted, or the images could be seen as provocative (e.g. beach trip or gymnastics display etc.). It is not to say, however, that with the right planning, these events cannot be recorded and enjoyed.

Photography and video recording are important methods of recording social activity and providing an historic record – illustrating and validating important moments in people's lives. This process is a powerful and personal one, and therefore we must respect the rights of everyone to make the choice whether or not to be photographed. *The notice comes from the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures – and is published On behalf of the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee.*

Solemn Annual Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament: This will take place in St. Patrick's Church, Greencastle next weekend. Please feel welcome to attend at any time throughout the day to pray for your personal needs or blessings as well as those of our wider parish community and world. To ensure a continuity of worshippers I invite people from the named townlands to take responsibility to ensure presence at specific times. **Teach us the lesson of silence, of prayer, of quiet – Lord hear us**

Time	Townland	Time	Townland
10.00am	Glenhull / Aughminacroy	1.30pm	Binnafreaghan
10.30am	Monanameal / Alwories	2.00pm	Cashel / Brackagh / Leaghan
11.00am	Crock / Coneyglen	2.30pm	Teebane / Camanrancy
11.30am	Aughascribba	3.00pm	Crockanboy
12.00pm	Broughderg / Evishession	3.30pm	Maryville / Sheskinshule View
12.30pm	Formil East	4.00pm	Sheskinshule
1.00pm	Formil West	4.30pm	Concluding Prayers and Benediction

Important Upcoming Dates for your Diary

Sunday 13th May	Solemn Annual Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in St. Patrick's Church, Greencastle.
Sunday 20th May	First Holy Communion for Year 4 pupils of Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School, Greencastle will take place at the 11.00am Mass in St. Patrick's Church – the 9.00am Mass will be celebrated at Our Lady of the Wayside Church, Broughderg.
Sunday 1st-17th June	International Eucharistic Congress Dublin
Saturday 30th June	Public Prayers for the remembrance of the Dead at St. Patrick's Cemetery after the Vigil Mass.
Sunday 1st July	Public Prayers for the remembrance of the Dead at Our Lady of the Wayside after 11.00am Mass.
Sunday 22nd July	Mass will be held outdoors at the Mass Rock in the townland of Formil in thanksgiving for the blessings received during the Eucharistic Congress. Parishioners from Badoney Lower, Castlederg, Cappagh, Drumragh, Drumquin , who along with us in Greencastle helped prepare for the Congress over the past two years. Please invite our neighbours and friends to join us on this pilgrimage. <i>Be aware to respect that it may be too challenging for anyone with a physical disability</i>

Lough Derg Pilgrimages One Day Retreats: Places are still available (€30 includes boat fare and light lunch): 7th, 8th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 25th, 26th, 27th and 29th May. *Thursday 3rd and Thursday 17th May are quiet days*
Introduction to Angels: Friday 4th May ♦ **A Sense of Healing & Calm:** Sunday 6th May ♦ **Reflection Day:** Thursday 10th May
 For further information on any of these events or to make a reservation contact The Lough Derg Office, Pettigo, Co. Donegal. Tel: (028) 6863 2391 (from NI) or email info@loughderg.org. Visit loughderg.org for other events.

Lourdes Pilgrimage – Urgent Request for Services of Doctor: To help provide care for the sick from 1st to 6th July. It would be appreciated. *Contact Sister Perpetua on (028) 7135 1233 or the Diocesan Lourdes Pilgrimage Office on (028) 7126 0293*


Carmelite Retreat Centre (Termonbacca, Derry) – Celebration to Mark 25 Years of Marian Devotions:
 Sunday 20th May, beginning at 11.00am and ending at 5.00pm with Marion Carroll as guest speaker
Admission is by ticket only, costing £8 including a Buffet Lunch
Booking is necessary and can be made by contacting the Carmelite Fathers Office on (028) 7126 2512.

Help the Red Cross Care for Older People in Your Local Community:
 Can you spare a few hours a week? No experience necessary. Full training provided and volunteer expenses reimbursed. Current mileage rate 45p per mile. (028) 8225 1116

Special invitation to Young People to the 50th International Eucharistic Congress: Young people from 17 to 25 years of age from all across Ireland are invited to celebrate their faith at this summer's International Eucharistic Congress 2012 (from 10-16 June) in an event that is being described as one of the most ambitious youth ministry programmes ever presented in this country. 'Go! Be Church!' is the name of the Youth Programme, where around 2,500 young people will gather and experience a lively and international Church while rediscovering the meaning of communion. Come and participate in this event with workshops, dramas, interactive catechesis, concerts, social activities, games, art, fun and much more! Booking is required and youth can register as individuals or groups on www.iec2012.ie/registration. For more information on the youth programme go to www.iec2012.ie/youth. **Liturgical Music for the 50th International Eucharistic Congress 2012 announced:** The musical repertoire for each of the liturgies of the Congress from 10th June to 17th June has now been released. The goal of the music programme for IEC2012 is to encourage the entire assembly to participate as fully as possible in the liturgies of the week. A core choir will lead the music each day with the participation of many others gathered in the RDS and, on the final day, in Croke Park. We hope to involve choirs and singers from all Ireland. It is important for choirs to register for the Congress as soon as possible if you wish to sing in the Congress liturgies as part of the massed choirs. We suggest that you register as a group, giving your choir name as the group name and send an email to our offices. To book for the Congress go to www.iec2012.ie/registrations or call 01 2981122. To download the music for the Congress go to www.iec2012.ie/music

Our Parish cemeteries are special places providing a focus for our prayerful remembrance of the dead. Please cooperate in their maintenance and care with respect, dignity and honour. Remove flowers and wreaths that have withered. Please do not dump them anywhere in the graveyard. Ask Monumental Sculptors who have completed their work to take rubble away and not dispose of it at the side of the cemetery.

Family Care Society – Adoption: Could you make a child happy again after a difficult start in life? Family Care Society is presently seeking adoptive families who would be interested in parenting children aged under 8 and who need the love and attention of a caring and understanding family. Could this be you?
For more information contact Family Care Society on (028) 9069 1133 (Belfast) or (028) 7136 8592 (Derry) email@familycaresociety.org familycaresociety.net

The 50th International Eucharistic Congress 2012: This will take place in Dublin from 10th to 17th June under the theme *'The Eucharist: Communion with Christ and with one another'* and expects 25,000 pilgrims to participate each day, both from Ireland and from overseas. It is an international gathering of people, which aims to promote an awareness of the central place of the Eucharist in the life and mission of the Catholic Church; help improve our understanding and celebration of the liturgy and draw attention to the social dimension of the Eucharist.
 These aims are achieved through a programme of pastoral preparation in the years leading up to the Congress and the actual week of the Congress that consists of a programme of Prayer, Eucharist, workshops, discussion groups, catechesis and testimonies, cultural events, a youth space, tours, exhibitions, a Eucharistic Procession, a massive closing ceremony in Croke Park and more.
For more information visit iec2012.ie

How to book for the 50th International Eucharistic Congress (IEC2012):
 Call the IEC2012 Booking offices on (01) 2981122 | Book Online on the website at iec2012.ie/registration
 Download a paper booking form from the Congress website and send the completed form to
 CSSL, 3rd Floor, Paradigm House, Dundrum Office Park, Dundrum, Dublin 14
 Advance bookings are open until the 9th of May. After that date all bookings are onsite the RDS. **BOOK NOW!**

IMPORTANT DATES FOR THE DIARY IN 2012

International Eucharistic Congress				Dublin	Sunday 10 th – Sunday 17 th June
Sacramental Celebrations					
Sunday 20th May		St. Patrick's	11.00am First Holy Communion		
Feast of the Ascension					
Solemn Annual Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament					
Sunday 13th May		St. Patrick's			
Sunday 2nd September		Our Lady of the Wayside			
Derry Diocesan Society Masses in our Parish					
Tuesday 22 nd May	Wednesday 11 th July	Thursday 30 th August	Friday 19 th October		
Weekday Masses will be celebrated at 10.00am in St. Patrick's Church unless a Requiem is needed					
Public Prayers for our Deceased (Cemetery Sunday) (30th June and 1st July)					
Saturday 30th June		St. Patrick's	Directly after 6.00pm Vigil Mass		
Sunday 1st July		Our Lady of the Wayside	Directly after 11.00am Mass		
Friday 2nd November		St. Patrick's	8.00pm Commemoration of All Souls (remembering all who died during the year)		
'Do This In Memory' liturgies for candidates preparing for the Sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion					
Saturday 5th May		Fifth Sunday of Easter	6.00pm Vigil Mass		
Sunday 20th May		Feast of the Ascension of the Lord	11.00am First Holy Communion		
Saturday 9th June		Feast of Corpus Christi	6.00pm Vigil Mass		

<i>Prayers for your personal and family use at this time</i>	
<p>Prayer for the Diocese of Derry at this time God our Father, We your people of the diocese of Derry, Turn to you in prayer, as our ancestors have done, In good times and bad, since the days of Saint Columba and Saint Eugene, Saint Lurach and Saint Mura. Although aware that we are unworthy of your grace, With confidence in your love we ask your help. Support and care for our bishops in their retirement, Give courage and vision to those who are called on To administer the diocese at this time. Grant your wisdom and discernment to those Charged with the task of choosing your next bishop. We ask you this in the name of Jesus, Your Son, our Lord. Mary Mother of the Church, pray for us, Saint Lurach pray for us, Saint Mura pray for us, All you saints of the diocese pray for us. <i>Fr. Kieran Devlin P.Em (Badoney Lower, 2012)</i></p>	<p>International Eucharistic Congress Prayer 2012. Lord Jesus, You were sent by the Father to gather together those who are scattered. You came among us, doing good and bringing healing, announcing the Word of salvation and giving the Bread which lasts forever. Be our companion on life's pilgrim way. May your Holy Spirit inflame our hearts, enliven our hope and open our minds, so that together with our sisters and brothers in faith we may recognise you in the Scriptures and in the breaking of bread. May your Holy Spirit transform us into one body and lead us to walk humbly on the earth, in justice and love, as witnesses of your resurrection. In communion with Mary, whom you gave to us as our Mother at the foot of the cross, through you may all praise, honour and blessing be to the Father in the Holy Spirit and in the Church, now and forever. Amen.</p>

Vincent's, Castle Street, Omagh: Vincent's is the only SVP shop in this district. It depends on donations from *you*. Our customers really appreciate your gifts, especially good quality clothing. The shops profits are a steady source of income towards the work of SVP (St. Vincent DePaul Society). We realise there is a lot of competition from commercial and charity sources for your donations. We thank you for your ongoing support and appeal to you to continue to support SVP work in the seven SVP conferences in Omagh and district.
Please leave your donations at the shop or place them in the blue bin near St. Patrick's Church, Greencastle. Our SVP van can collect larger amounts of goods or furniture. Our shop number is (028) 8224 9839.

The Glorious Mysteries (Sunday and Wednesday)	The Joyful Mysteries (Monday and Saturday)	The Sorrowful Mysteries (Tuesday and Friday)	The Mysteries of Light (Thursday)
The Resurrection	The Annunciation	The Agony in the Garden	Jesus is baptised in the Jordan
The Ascension	The Visitation	The Scourging at the Pillar	Jesus at the wedding feast of Cana
The Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles	The Birth of the Lord	The Crowning with Thorns	Jesus proclaims the Kingdom of God and calls us to conversion
The Assumption of our Lady into Heaven	The Presentation in the Temple	The Carrying of the Cross	The Transfiguration
The Crowning of our Lady as Queen of Heaven	The Finding of the child Jesus in the Temple	The Crucifixion and Death of our Lord	The Last Supper and Institution of the Eucharist
During the month of May members of the Legion of Mary will lead us praying the Rosary 25 minutes before the beginning of Mass each day. Please join them or make the Rosary your special family prayer during this month			

International Eucharistic Congress – Schedule: Are you interested in travelling to the Eucharistic Congress in Dublin? The Opening Ceremony of the Congress will take place on Sunday 10th June. Various events with specific themes are held throughout the week:

Monday	Baptism	Tuesday	Marriage/Family	Wednesday	Priesthood
Thursday	Reconciliation	Friday	Anointing/Healing	Saturday	Our Lady
It is intended that transport will be made available for any person wanting to attend the Congress on any of the weekdays. Meals will also be facilitated for people travelling. If you wish to make a booking to travel on any of the days, or require further information, please contact the one of the following numbers during office hours:					
St. Patrick's Pennyburn (Derry City)		(028) 7126 2360		<i>Booking should be made before Tuesday 29th May.</i>	
Draperstown (South Derry)		(028) 796 28248			
Omagh (Tyrone)		(028) 8224 2092			

Final Mass of the Congress (Sunday 17th June): Many people from the diocese have applied for tickets for the final Eucharistic Congress Mass (Statio Orbis) in Croke Park. These tickets will not become available until the end of May. For people who have applied for tickets and who intend to travel by bus, made available by the diocese, further information on time and place of departure, payment for transport / meals will be made known in parish bulletins on Saturday 2nd/Sunday 3rd June.

Rouskey Community Centre – Upcoming Events:

Art Class with Martin McGrinder	Changed to Monday 7th May from 12.00am to 2.00pm Names are still being taken
Beginners Computer Class	Begins Thursday 19th April at 7.30pm
Zumba for over 50s	Begins Friday 20th April at 10.00am
Contact Bridie for more information on (028) 8164 8706 or 07847 459 428 or leave message on phone To hire the centre or equipment contact Sheena on (028) 8164 8186	

ACCORD Marriage Preparation Courses (St. Columba's Pastoral Centre, 48 Brook Street (028 8224 2439)):
11th and 12th May, and 1st and 2nd June
Couples are encouraged to complete their course six months before their wedding date

Age NI – Digital Switchover Scheme: Age NI is one of the partners in the digital switchover scheme for Northern Ireland in the run up to switchover this October. We are now recruiting for volunteers to help with the home visit service, where older and vulnerable people get that little bit of extra help from volunteers. It is a Northern Ireland wide scheme.

20th Anniversary Tour: A very special Fr. Liam Lawton 20th Anniversary Concert will be held at Strule Arts Centre, Omagh, on Wednesday 9th May. Tickets are on sale from the theatre directly or box office at (028) 8224 7831 or (048) 8224 7831. Also online through struleartscentre.co.uk For more info available from liamlawton.com

Our Lady's Shrine, Knock, Co. Mayo – Pilgrimage Season: Sunday 29th April – Sunday 14th October.
See poster on church notice boards or visit knock-shrine.ie || T: (00353) 94938 8100 / F: (00353) 94938 8295
Knock Summer Youth Festival: Sunday 28th July. Book now at knock-shrine.ie/youthfestival

Seeing your life through the lens of the gospels – John 15:1-8:

- In a relationship, connectedness is important. Relationships cannot be taken for granted and need time and care to be life-giving. What does your experience tell you of the truth of this in your relationships:
with God;
with your friends;
with your family;
with communities or groups to which you belong?
- 'Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit.'
In what ways do you see that you have been 'pruned' by the experiences of life, or by the word of God, to be a more fruitful person? Perhaps you have also experienced the need for 'pruning' in significant relationships in your life.
- The parable also reminds us that we are not the source of our own life. It is a gift from God, from our parents and from all who have nourished us. Give thanks for those who have been a source of life for you.
- God is glorified by our being fruitful. When has human fruitfulness reminded you of God at work in our world?

John Byrne OSA (john@orlagh.ie)

Tuesday's Child – Evening of Jazz with The Met Quartet: St. Patrick's Hall, Camus Parish, Strabane on Friday 11th May, featuring Mark Bradley, Michael Bradley, Aidan Dunphy, Peter Doherty and Special Guests. Tickets are £10 and a light supper is provided. Tickets are available from the website at tuesdayschild.ie or emailing us at info@tuesdayschild.ie or phoning Berni Bradley on (00353) 87914 2131 or (087) 917 6166.

All proceeds to our food programme for children in Gaza
Orla Sheehan (Chairperson) Tuesday's Child Char. Reg. No XT1055 tuesdayschild.org.uk or la@tuesdayschild.org.uk
tel 02890502725 mob 07545452362

Upcoming Events (May-June)

Belfast City Marathon Monday 7 th May	Belfast marathon is still open for entries for all fitness levels to the walk, relay, run, wheelchair race and fun run. Why not sign up and raise funds for Tuesday's Child? We will send you a fundraising pack and T-shirt to help you get started. If you want to get active and make a difference we would love to hear from you. <i>To register visit belfastcitymarathon.com</i>
The Met Quartet, Strabane Friday 11 th May	Dance the night away to the fabulous Met Quartet, Donegal's premier jazz and blues band. The band are playing in Camus Parish's 400 seater Hall, Strabane. Tickets £10. <i>This is our first event in Strabane and we are really looking forward!</i>
Dublin Flora Women's Mini Marathon (10k) Monday 4 th June	Never done a marathon before? This is a great one for beginners. <i>To enrol in the 10k marathon go to dublinwomensminimarathon.com</i> <i>For a full list of up and coming runs and marathons please visit our website at tuesdayschild.ie</i>
An Evening with Elvis at The Empire Thursday 28 th June	Ireland's two top award winning Elvis tribute acts, Ciaran Houlihan aka Eireann Elvis and Tom Gilson aka GI Blues Elvis will perform at The Empire Music Hall, Belfast. Tom sings rock and roll hits from the young Elvis, while Ciaran sings hits from the Las Vegas era. Ah huh huh and tickets just £10

Get active and change the life of a child today Last week Tuesday's Child funds rescued 200 street children from city dumps in Nairobi and enrolled in primary school where they get breakfast, lunch and a chance to learn and grow. It doesn't take much to make a big difference. Want to organise your own event? Why not do something in your town or parish to help children in one of our projects around the world. Everything you raise, we give. No salaries, no administration cost, are taken from funds raised.

Loose Change Campaign 2012: Having a Spring Clean? Please support our loose change appeal for children. Every pound or euro you raise we give. *Details on our websites at tuesdayschild.org.uk or tuesdayschild.org.uk*

Questions people ask:

Q. What did Jesus mean when he said to the disciples 'you are pruned already'?

A. The vine, like many other fruit-bearing plants, receives two prunings. At the early pruning a certain number of shoots are selected for development while the remainder are lopped off. Close to harvest time, the second pruning cuts off the underdeveloped fruits to the benefit of the stronger ones. The disciples had survived the first pruning at the end of John Chapter 6 when they chose to remain with Jesus unlike those who walked away because they rejected his promise to give his flesh to eat and his blood to drink, the promise of the Eucharist.

Fr. Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap (silvesteroflynn@gmail.com)

The Deep End – How Does Your Garden Grow?

Have you ever seen a vine close up? I remember stopping at a French vineyard on my first ever trip abroad, fascinated to set eyes for the first time on the rows upon rows of vines, heavy with clusters of ripe grapes.

If you haven't had the good fortune to visit a vineyard, think of an apple tree laden with apples, or a fruit bush ripe for picking. Imagine the many factors that must come together so that the tree can bear fruit – the sunlight, rain, nutrients, and of course the proper pruning from a prudent gardener.

We are now some weeks into the Church season of Easter. During Lent we went through a pruning process of sorts. We cut back on areas of excess, and weeded out some bad habits. What are the unhealthy habits that need to be pruned back in our lives, in order that more loving thoughts and actions may emerge?

The symbolism of the vine works on many levels. A branch that is separated from the tree cannot flourish on its own; it must be connected to the vine from which it gets its nourishment. Each of us must remain firmly rooted in Jesus.

And if you look again at the vine plant, often its branches are so entangled it can be hard to know where one ends and another begins. There is no way of untwisting them to locate individual branches. We note that Jesus did not address himself to an individual saying 'You are the branch'; rather he spoke of branches. We are a community, and we grow together.

Triona Doherty, Athlone, Co. Roscommon (trionad@gmail.com)