

### A Visit to Texas

In 1950 the Irish Pallottines began apostolic work in Texas, starting in what was then the Diocese of Amarillo. Now Fr Connie Ramirez lives in retirement in Lubbock, and the Pallottines continue to work in two parishes in the Diocese of Fort Worth. On my first visit to the USA, I arrived at Dallas-Forth Worth airport on August 20th.

Since my time there was limited, I spent most of it in Stephenville, Diocese of Forth Worth, where Fr. Matthew Sanka, SAC resides, ministering in St. Brendan, St. Mary's, De Leon and Comanche. There is lot of work both pastoral and development going on, all done in collaboration with parishioners in the four Churches I visited. It is great to see the spirit of collaboration at its best in those places. It was for me a very good and a totally new experience.

I made a brief visit to Weatherford where Fr. John Karanja, SAC is stationed. John is a Pallottine from Kenya. Over a cup of coffee we enjoyed chatting about the joys and challenges of working in a territory diferent from our own. The people whom we worked with, however, made us feel very welcome: that is the beauty of being a missionary.



By the time this Newsletter gets to you it will be Christmas. I take this opportunity to wish you all a happy and blessed Christmas. I also extend my special thanks and prayers to everyone I met for the duration of my stay in Texas. Thank you so much for your faith, prayers and generosity. You are all wonderful people.

This is what a friend of mine said to me after I shared with him my experiance in Texas, "Martin, welcome back! Glad you enjoyed the experiance of America. People really help us to feel the joy of being a priest".

God Bless you all.

Fr Martin Mareja SAC

### Bag Packing

Sincere thanks to the staff and helpers who took part in the bag packing events in Dunne's Stores in October, in support of our missionary activity.

### Apostolic Work – Killaloe Diocese

On the 18th of October I attended mass at the Cathedral of Sts. Peter and Paul in Ennis to celebrate 60th Anniversary of the Apostolic Work Society in response to the invitation extended to us by Mrs Mary Duggan and in appreciation of the assistance given to our missions for many years. I was so happy to have met and prayed with the women who have worked so hard and assisted by their prayers, vestment making and financial aid.

### Promotion Work – Cork and Ross Diocese

On behalf of the Pallottine Missionaries, I wish to thank Bishop John Buckley, the Priests and all the faithful in the Diocese for their generosity and support of our work in the missions. Be assured of our prayers in our daily masses.

### Ordinations

The Pallottine family, Mother of Divine Love Province, looks forward with great joy to the ordination to the priesthood of Deacons Alan Bukenya and Simon Sserufambi, which will take place on the 1st of November. Dedan Munyinyi and Cyril Ingosi will also be ordained to the diaconate on the same day in St. Vincent Pallotti Parish,

Archdiocese of Arusha, Tanzania. I thank you for the contributions you have made towards their training. Please keep them in your prayers.

We wish all our readers and benefactors a happy and holy yuletide celebration.

**Please Help the Pallottines.**

Please cut out this form and return it with your donation.  
Please remember the Pallottines in your will. Thank you.

**MY GIFT TO THE PALLOTTINES**

Dear Fr. Martin Mareja, SAC  
I enclose an offering of ..... to help the Pallottines' mission to evangelise, educate and empower people.

**PLEASE USE BLOCK CAPITALS.**

Name .....

Address .....

Send to

**Fr. Martin Mareja, SAC**  
**Pallottine Fathers Missions**  
**Thurles, Co. Tipperary, Ireland**  
**Email: palmissions@gmail.com**

If you would like us to acknowledge your donation, please tick this box.

Registered Charity Number: 20011826

# Pallottine Voices

The Society of the Catholic Apostolate

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In This Issue: Christmas Thoughts – An Uncertain Journey – A Missionary in Ireland



### A Christmas Thought Liam Doran

Archbishop Fulton Sheen, in his 'Life of Christ', wrote that when " finally the scrolls of history are completed down to the last words in time, the saddest line of all will be – there was no room at the inn".

There was room for everybody who could pay, but not for an unborn child and His mother and thus the Saviour of the world was born in a stable.

The world would have expected its Saviour to be born in a palace, or at least in a comfortable hotel. Instead He was born in the humblest of shelters, a stable. "He came unto His own and His own received Him not..."

Reading again chapter 2 of St. Luke's Gospel, I am struck by the fact that there is nothing in it of anything said in the stable that first Christmas. Luke is the only evangelist to give a detailed account of the Nativity, yet he tells us nothing of what was said silently by the three kings, who laid down their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, and silently went away. There must have been other visitors, children from the village street, curious as children are, about this new arrival in this strange place. Or the workman, who night after night, would come to the stable to check on the animals.

And so He who is to be the Saviour of the world, is born in a stable where the people apparently do not speak. And while still an infant He became a refugee, as Herod sought to kill Him when he ordered the massacre of all male infants under two years of age. Mary and Joseph fled with Jesus to Egypt, until an angel told them that evil Herod was dead.

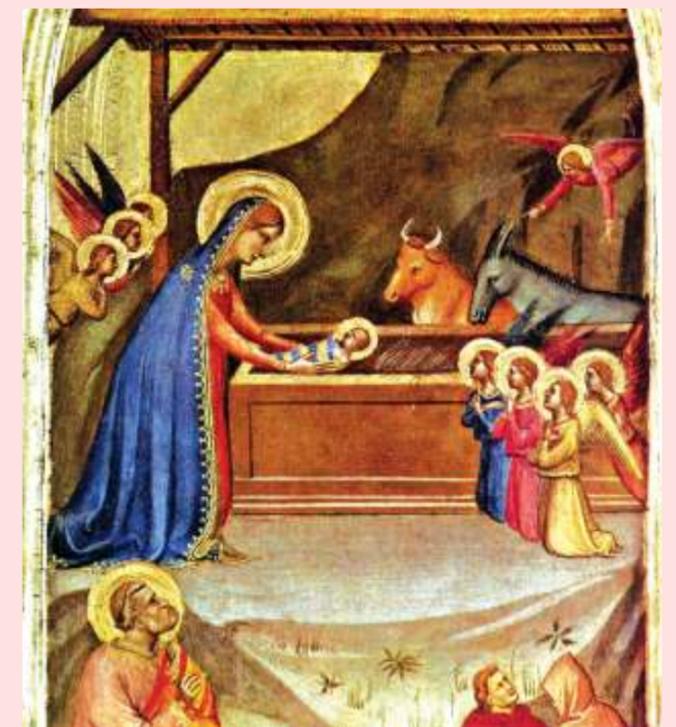
These thoughts of homelessness and refugees came to my mind as I watched the tragic drama on TV of the desperate people fleeing Syria and other countries to escape poverty and persecution. I am lost in admiration for the navy crews who have rescued so many from their overcrowded, flimsy crafts. Sadly thousands have not been so lucky: it is heartbreaking to see the pictures of bodies of little children who have perished. We would all like to be out there, and feel helpless and frustrated and angry because we can do so little as individuals to stop this tragedy.

Our governments have an obligation to take in as many refugees as they can. I know this involves a lot of international co-operation. The Irish government has indicated the number it can take. It is only fitting that Ireland plays

its part, for 170 years ago Irish people were seeking refuge abroad to escape the catastrophic famine.

Governments can, and must take urgent action. Christmas spent behind the wire of a refugee camp is a reproach to all of us. But we, as individuals, can do our own bit this Christmas. We can donate money, food and clothing in response to the various appeals that seek to alleviate this crisis. We can all spend a little less on ourselves. In doing so, we will be putting a bit of Christ back into Christmas.

An eminent Scottish writer once said, "you can take the world and divide it into five continents; you can take a compass and mark off the four cardinal points, north, south, east and west; you can be like Caesar, and divide all Gaul into three parts, but you can only have two types of people – the givers and the getters."



There are many spheres in which the ordinary Christian can offer no expert advice. But we can proclaim that the earth is the Lord's in all its abundance, that we are stewards, not owners, that all God's children should share in that abundance. Nobody should starve in this world, and a world that lets one child go hungry or without shelter is a very sad world indeed. Christmas gives us the opportunity, in the name of the Child born in a stable, to make our own contribution to alleviating the suffering of others.



## An African Pallottine Missionary in Ireland

### Fr Martin Mareja SAC

I got off the plane at Dublin Airport to begin my new assignment as Director of Pallottine Mission promotion on the 6th of October, 2012. Fr. John Kelly SAC, who had worked in Tanzania for many years, met me at the airport. I still remember the Swahili words he said to welcome me, “Karibu sana Ireland” (You are most welcome to Ireland). I then realised that Ireland was now my new home and that I was among friendly people.

Three years have passed since then. Over these years, I visited three dioceses, Ossory, Limerick and Cork & Ross to do promotion work for our missions. The visits to different parishes and my encounters with the parishioners meant a lot to me, now working as a missionary in a country that once sent out so many missionaries to Africa.

It also meant a lot to me meeting the relatives of Irish missionaries and lay volunteers working in the missions including in my own country, Tanzania. I could see also how much my visit meant to them. What struck me most, however, was that the Irish people still have huge love and respect for the missions. My visits were also a way for me, on behalf of our Society, to express our sincere gratitude for their help and support received over the years.

Our missionary work is still going on. The Pallottine Secretary General for the Missions in his recent letter for the Pallottine Mission Sunday, says “Listening to the Spirit as Pallottines, we have started these last few years the opening of new missions, including that of Peru. The celebration of our Pallottine Mission Sunday this year is dedicated to this new mission. Such a mission is a model and an example of the Pallottine international missionary collaboration, because it involves two of our entities: the United States Province of the Immaculate Conception and the Brazilian Province of Saint Paul Apostle, as well as the Cenacle Sisters founded in India by our Pallottine confreres.”

As I put together these few ideas, I would like to remind you, our friends, helpers and benefactors, that there are still good people looking forward to hearing the joy of the Gospel. This is the message Pope Francis shared with us in his Apostolic Exhortation ‘Evangelii Gaudium’, (Joy of the Gospel) addressed to bishops, clergy, consecrated persons and the lay faithful, on the proclamation of the Gospel in today’s world. He says, “The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner

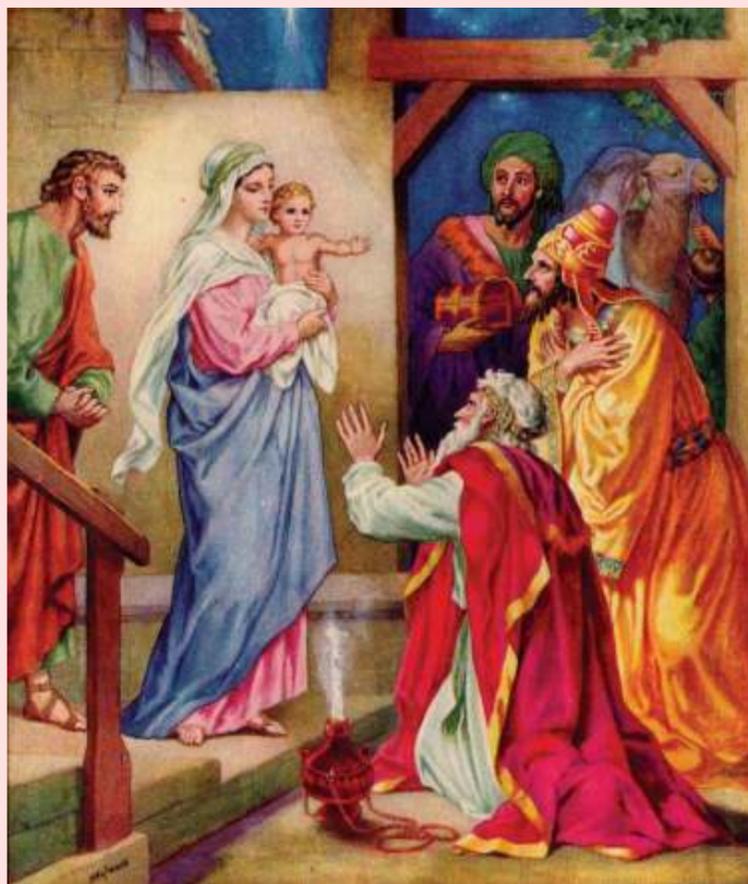
emptiness and loneliness. With Christ, joy is constantly born anew. In this Exhortation I wish to encourage the Christian faithful to embark upon a new chapter of evangelization marked by this joy, while pointing out new paths for the Church’s journey in years to come.”

As I reflect on the words of Pope Francis. I am reminded of the importance of the feast of Christmas in which we celebrate the birthday of our Lord Jesus Christ from whom the mission of the Church originated. How can one relate what the pope says with the feast of the nativity? The feast of the nativity is one of the most joyful events in the Church for all of us who have accepted the offer of Salvation. “Fear not, for behold I bring you the good tidings of great joy, which shall be for all people.” (Luke. 2:11)

St. Vincent Palloti says “The love that the heavenly Father has for all persons moved him to send his son Jesus Christ so that all of humanity might be saved. Jesus, therefore, did not come on earth to fulfil his own plan, but rather, as he himself affirmed several times, he came to do the will of his Father.”

Pope Francis encourages and exhorts all Christians to become missionaries in the work of the Church. He challenges each one of us to come up with the best ways to love others and to reach out to those who are on the margins.

The Pallottine Mission Office wishes you all a happy and Holy Christmas.



## A Journey to God Knows Where

Liam O'Donovan SAC



### My Vocation Story

Discerning a vocation: a mess of confusion, a deserted wilderness, a foggy night, a fear of incompetence. That has been part of my experience.

This not so dramatic story is for those who have heard even the faintest voice calling them to something they think impossible and unimaginable

### Tell me where you come from and I'll tell you...

Growing up on a farm in south Kilkenny, the youngest in a family of five children, faith was a huge part of my upbringing. Rosary at home, Sunday mass, moving statues, prayer meetings, and pilgrimages are all part of my memories. By their example, my parents instilled in me a personal sense of Jesus and Our Lady. But I never remember having a strong desire to be a priest—even if I might have said it to please.

### Where am I going?: A Directionless Youth

My teenage years began a prolonged period of confusion in my life and a feeling of being lost in the world. Faced with all the temptations that come a young person’s way, I was captured by a sense of excitement. Let the party begin! But as time went on my faith and the sense of God never fully left me, but it felt inconvenient at times. “God must love me,” I thought, “but I’m failing Him and He’s not well pleased with me.” More and more the fun lifestyle left me with a feeling of emptiness and loneliness—even God seemed remote.

As for my future, I didn’t have a clue. After finishing school, I tried accountancy, then a number of different factory jobs, and I eventually found a weekend job that allowed me to go back to college to study electronic engineering. During my final year, under the pressure of exams and assignments, I found myself praying—a habit I had lost as a teenager. While praying to Our Lady I was shocked when I heard myself saying, “If you get me through these exams I’ll give ‘your thing’ a chance” and something inside me knew that I would not be doing electronics for the rest of my life. On the one hand, the thought of priesthood terrified me—it seemed ridiculous and impossible. On the other hand, something about it excited me.

### I'm not going there: A Uncomfortable Light

From that time on I began a secret prayer life. Hidden from family and friends I grew more and more in the conviction that I was being called by God, called to share this Rediscovered Gift. Eventually, I mustered up the courage to go to a Franciscan priest in Waterford: “Father, I think I’m called to the priesthood.” This was a decisive step for me; just to say those words to another made it seem more real and possible.

Coincidentally, that same week my aunt asked me to go on a retreat with a community called the Foyers of Charity, a request I accepted as providential. That retreat was full of light. The words of Marthe Robin—the foundress of the Foyers—resonated with me: “Everyone can and must achieve his vocation.” When I heard that the Foyer was looking for lay members to join, it was the perfect solution. A year later I joined: I had discovered my dream life. However, I was continually disturbed by the question of priesthood. On one occasion a priest doing one of the Foyer retreats, pulled me aside to say, “I have never said this to anyone before, but you’re meant to be a priest.” This question kept arising for me, both interiorly and from outside. It really aggravated me: “That’s rubbish. I found my vocation and I’m happy. The priesthood is beyond anyway.” But why did it keep niggling?

### Ok then, let's go: Risking for God

After two grace-filled years with the Foyers, it became clear to me that I was being called elsewhere. I turned for advice to my uncle, a Pallottine priest. Strangely after a number of meetings, and prayer in between, I told him, “No, the priesthood is not for me after all.” The call was so dim, and the fear so extreme that I could not take that final step. He said, “That’s fine, but would you go and talk to Emmet (the Pallottine vocation director) before you leave”. Bizarrely, I left that meeting with Emmet having agreed to join the Pallottines that following September. I came away knowing I had to take the risk.



It has been worth it for me; I don’t regret it for a minute. It has gradually become clear that God is leading me (down a crooked path, it must be said) to become a priest with the Pallottines. The guidance, fellowship, and support of the entire community has been vital for me personally. Even though it has been joy-filled in the main, it doesn’t mean that the obstacles are gone either. Doubts, uncertainties, trials, a sense of unworthiness and fears of being incapable and incompetent are still there. But God doesn’t need the strong; He is strong in my weakness. Even though the path be uncertain and the destination unknown, with God as your guide it’s a journey you’ve got to risk taking.