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TRÓCAIRE FOR CHRISTIAN DIGNITY

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RATHMINES
FOLK MASS

FATHER
PAT WHITNEY

THE HEALING
SACRAMENT

WHAT
DO YOU
THINK OF
IRELAND?

LIVERPOOL'S
SPIRITUAL
LEADER

SOUTH
AFRICA:
RECORD
OF THE
CHURCHES





● Rathmines Folk Mass Group practise for the Sunday liturgy for three and a half hours each week. See story pages 3-4.

"What we have gained from being together and from learning to celebrate Mass as a group is now part of us. When we go out, we don't put that part away."

RATHMINES FOLK MASS

by James Sheerin



"A new breed of young Christians". "The spirit of the Group is the spirit of Christ."

"THEY INDICATE that a new breed of sensitive young Christians is emerging", the priest told me. "Sincerity is of their very essence. They have a tremendous sense of prayer and their own Christian living is obvious in their attitude towards one another." Attending the Folk Mass in Rathmines Church, Dublin (Six o'clock every Sunday evening; you need to get there in very good time!) and meeting the Group at practice suggests he's right. But it's not often you meet such thorough, open-hearted and good-humoured young Christians who give three and a half hours every week to preparing the Sunday Liturgy.

BEGINNINGS

Four years ago the Rathmines Folk Mass began with the Leaving Certificate class in nearby St. Louis's Convent School as the nucleus. Fr. Michael Walsh from Thurles was then a sociology student at U.C.D. and Chaplain at St. Louis's. With the priests in the parish, especially Frs. Brendan Quinlan and Joe Madden, he got the Folk Mass started. It has been going strong ever since, has inspired other Folk Masses in the city and through the country, and the prophets who saw it petering out when the novelty wore off have been confounded.

"In the beginning Fr. Walsh roped in a few of us along with the girls", says Dubliner Kevin McNamara (26). "At that stage I didn't really like Mass at all and it took an awful lot to drag myself to the six or seven o'clock on a Sunday evening. I just day-dreamed in Church and was totally bored. With the group I got to know more and more about the Mass and became more involved. Now after four years I realise how much it has done for me religion-wise: it has

brought me closer to the Church; it has really helped me to get to know people and become friends with them at the same time as it made the Mass more meaningful. It helps you spiritually and socially."

LITURGY FOR THE FLATLANDS

Rathmines is one of Dublin's flatlands. Fifteen to sixteen thousand young people live in flats and bedsitters in a parish which has hardly one hundred resident families. "We felt at the beginning that the young people here which they would experience and enjoy what the Mass really is", Fr. Joe Madden told me. "We were aware that if people were coming just to be entertained by a good folk group, it would be a failure; so we made it very plain that they were getting together to celebrate and receive the Eucharist. I'm sure you noticed the numbers receiving, their great reverence and the fact that they didn't rush away immediately afterwards." I had noticed. I had noticed, too, how the liturgy was enhanced, not swamped, by the music, and the community spirit shown even in



● Jean Vanier, first lay preacher, held them spellbound for 35 minutes.

IN THIS ISSUE

- A PERSONAL memory and a tribute to the man who established this magazine, and the missionary society for which it speaks. We are privileged to have Archdeacon John Finnegan, parish priest of Rathmullan, Co. Donegal, write on Father Pat Whitney.
- A SPECIAL centre-spread to TROCAIRE, set up in 1973 by the Irish Bishops as a sign of the Church's practical concern for the needs of the Third World.
- A PROFILE of the spiritual leader of England's largest Catholic diocese.
- WHATEVER YOU think, you need reconciliation. Read 'The Sacrament of Healing'.
- RAY GRANT'S page has thoughts for teenagers on thoughtlessness.
- FROM BRAZIL the first part of a story that brings the Basic Christian Communities down to the language of PETER OF THE CITY.
- AFTER RATHMINES Folk Mass you might like to read what Margaret Daly has to say on SINGING AT MASS.

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the courteous way two thousand people packed themselves into the church.

COMMUNITY

The Group has remained basically the same since it began. While the congregation always includes visitors, the majority are regular attenders, who have now come to know one another, who stay on talking outside the church after Mass and who have a sense of being united in a community liturgy. In conversation with the Group and the Congregation the words "community" and "friendship" are frequently used as might be expected from people who have overcome the loneliness of flatland. Kathleen Lawler, from Dublin, came into the Group "a complete stranger and found tremendous friendships and no cliques. This friendship is very much related to the Sunday Eucharist." Besides a greater understanding of the Mass, she has found a new self-confidence as part of the Group. "You don't have to stay behind a silent wall just because you are a newcomer." Chris O'Toole, from Rathgar, came to the Folk Mass and joined the Group "for no other reason than that it was a good Mass, that it has a drawing power and people feel they want to be part of it". Anne Marie Keogh, from Cabra, feels that "what we have gained from being together and from learning how to celebrate the Mass as a group is now part of us. When we go out and meet somebody, we don't put that part away. It just comes across because we believe in it and we're in no way self-conscious about being Christians." With John Lamont (nephew of Rhodesia's great Carmelite bishop) Anne has been organising week-ends for Folk Mass Groups. "We're quite involved in the whole matter of folk music as a way of expressing the Eucharist and the best way to use it."

NOT JUST FOR THE MUSIC

But the music is not everything, many in the Group insisted. "Music on its own isn't everything", as Diarmuid Fitzgerald from Roscrea puts it. Diarmuid, a university student at Belfield, came to the Group in a period of intense loneliness. "I was interested in folk music and Folk Masses and no sooner



● Bishop Medardo Mazombwe . . . celebrated the Rathmines Folk Mass on Mission Sunday.



● During a scripture service last Easter.

had I joined the Group than I felt at home and part of it. My loneliness was solved and I was lifted up and given a great commitment to the Mass." Diarmuid feels that Folk Masses he attended elsewhere, even some with professional singers, lacked the preparation and the prayerful community atmosphere generated at Rathmines.

INCREDIBLE SHARING

Another student, Dave Shanahan, from Drimnagh, told how he came to pray in this atmosphere. "When I joined the Group and went into the Sanctuary, it was very hard to pray. There were so many things to remember; when and where to start and stop singing what. Then a change took place when I realised it was not a question of bending my head and praying to myself. Now I am there with the Group and the congregation singing and in so many ways the centre of the Mass has become for us the Consecration and the proclamation afterwards, when he sing 'He is Lord . . .'. Then the sign of peace has grown to be a very basic intimate kind of thing, an incredible sharing, and really a sign of peace among the Group."

PERSONAL GROWTH

To suggest the Group is in any way introverted or self-centred is to touch their deepest charity as individuals, something they naturally find a little difficult to talk to a stranger about. Chris O'Toole put it this way: "As a group we have learned to praise and not to be afraid to praise, we've found something to believe in, we have learned to co-operate as Christians. There has been very personal growth in each of us. And part of this is a concern for the poor, for the North, for the situation in Rhodesia and other places. An awareness has grown in each of us and we do what we can as individuals to help all kinds of people." This 'awareness' makes John Lamont feel frustrated: "There's so much you want to do about people. We get letters every day from places like Rhodesia talking

about priests and their people being interned and interrogated. You feel so helpless and faraway! Even in the poor parts of Dublin there are people who might as well be in the Third World as far as we are concerned. It takes tremendous courage to give up a lot and give your life for others. Often all we can do is pray. That's not using prayer as an easy way out; I pray for greater courage to help others. You look at Jean Vanier and you'd love to be like him. But you know he's only one in a million and you realise that it's in your own personal way you have to find the courage to do what is wanted from you."

VISITORS

Jean Vanier was a recent visitor at the Rathmines Folk Mass and the first layman to preach there. He held them spellbound for thirty-five minutes and expressed a desire to come back some time and conduct a five-day retreat with them. He came across "as somebody who had reached the heart of Christianity", said Martin Dolan, a student from Clonliffe College. "His whole message was acceptance of people for what they are."

Vanier was only one of the hundreds of visitors who have felt inspired at the Rathmines Folk Mass. They have come, as Fr. Madden told me, from all over Ireland and from all over the world. On Mission Sunday evening, after a busy day in Longford, Bishop Medardo Mazombwe of Chipata, Zambia, was the celebrant. Like all the others he went away edified by the fervour and the friendship. He would agree with Martin Dolan "that the spirit of the Group is the spirit of Christ".

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