

Bishop Denis celebrated mass for the opening of the Brigidine Chapter on Monday May 16th in the Church of the Holy Rosary, Tullow.

I am delighted to have been in a position to accept the invitation of Sr. Louise Cleary, the Congregational Leader of the Brigidines, invitation to join you on this Monday morning to offer the regular Morning Mass here in Tullow, and to pray a blessing on the Brigidine Chapter that commences today and continues until the end of May. You gather post Pentecost and at the very beginning of Ordinary Time in the Church. So much of life is lived not in the fanfare of the feast or the serenity of the solemnity but as the great poet Patrick Kavanagh reminds us in “the bits and pieces of everyday life”[1]. It’s in the everyday we are called to minister, it’s in the everyday we are invited to respond and it’s in the everyday we are asked to discern our calling.

Currently I am enjoying very much my journey of Confirmations, which concludes on May 24th. As part of their Confirmation preparation I invited the young candidates to write a letter to me telling me something of their life, their hopes and their dreams. They often mention the saint’s name they are choosing; if I had to write to the late Bishop John McCormack of Meath when I was being confirmed, I would have told him I was picking St. Brendan, the voyager as my saint’s name for Confirmation. Isn’t it wonderful that today’s feast is also that of St. Brendan! Among the 2,856 letters I received to date, was one from a boy who lives in Direct Provision in the Montague Hotel in County Laois who told me he lived there with his mother and prayed to St. Anthony each night for a home of their own. Doesn’t every one long for a home of their own, a home where faith is nourished and community built. You, the Brigidine family, have literally come to your own home here in Tullow.

St. James in our first reading reminds us “where you find jealousy and ambition, you find disharmony”[2]; while Mark’s gospel taking up the tone and sentiment of Ordinary Time presents what faced Jesus and his inner core of disciples in the immediate aftermath of the Transfiguration. Peter, James and John were stunned and amazed; it was likely that their exalted experience might cloud their vision so they are immediately confronted with an everyday life dilemma around healing a dumb man. They once again get to see and witness Jesus in action with those powerful words whispered only in their hearing: “This is the kind that can only be driven out by prayer”[3].

So as you gather here in Tullow in the place where Bishop Daniel Delaney birthed your Congregation back in 1807, your Chapter will look at many aspects of your ministry over 200 years later. Like other congregations, you no doubt will ask the question – if you were being founded in 2016, what exactly would your purpose, your mission, your charism be? Congregations like the Brigidines must always remember you don’t just have a glorious history to remember and to talk about; but you have a great story still to compose. We must all look to the future; the Holy Spirit at Pentecost yesterday sets out the challenge to all of us to do great things. Religious life is a sign, not just a calling. In the case of the Brigidines it is a sign rooted in St. Brigid, reaching out to the poor and the excluded. Where do we find the poor in 2016; who are the excluded in 2016?

Our life, our society, our world would be so much impoverished without the example and witness of Congregations like yours. Congregations that are immersed in parish life. Congregations that are birthed in the ordinary of church parish life, and in the ordinary of church time. Bishop Daniel Delaney saw a need and invited your predecessors to respond; today you must discern that need and respond appropriately. There is no need for market gurus, pr consultants or spin doctors; the honest witness of women like yourselves over the centuries continues to keep the flame of Brigid alive, continues in the words of Bishop Daniel Delaney “to do ordinary things extraordinarily well”. In this ordinary time of our church together may we all accomplish the extraordinary!

St. Brigid, pray for us. St. Brendan, the voyager, pray for us. St. Simon Stock, pray for us.

Readings

Kavanagh, Patrick: ‘The Great Hunger’. [2] James 3:16 [3] Mk. 9:29