



AN OCCASIONAL NEWSLETTER FROM THE CHRISTIAN BROTHERS' COMMUNITY,
8 CROFTWOOD GROVE, CHERRY ORCHARD, DUBLIN 10.

Scribbles from the Margins 12

September 2017

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Second Birthday

Paul Hendrick

I attended a second birthday party recently. It brought me back to Good Friday two years ago – a date which will forever remain etched in my memory.

A neighbouring family were expecting their third child and had asked me if I would drive them to the hospital when the time came. I was delighted to be able to be of assistance.

The call finally came on Good Friday. No problem, except that I was attending a funeral in West Limerick, a 250km drive from Dublin. The expectant mother said that she would wait till I got back. There was no guarantee that Junior would decide to wait too!

When I arrived at Angela's house three hours later, her partner and herself were ready and waiting. I hoped and prayed that we would get safely to the hospital without having to assist with the birth of a

child in the back seat of the car. I'll have to admit that I disregarded bus lane regulations and speed limits on the Long Mile Road (which really lived up to its name!).

Thankfully, we made it, but without too much time to spare! A beautiful, healthy baby boy was born within an hour of our arrival at the Coombe Hospital.

Later that evening, I returned to the hospital to collect the proud father,



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Jamie, who was so elated and excited that he hardly knew what he was doing. He had been present at the birth of his son and described it as the greatest moment of his life.

The occasion was tinged with regrets too.

When his first daughter was born some years previously, Jamie had to leave the hospital just as his partner was being brought to the delivery room. He was the defendant in a court case – an appointment he dared not miss. Under the circumstances, he was granted bail by a sympathetic judge. When he rushed back into the maternity ward, his daughter was there to greet him. Too late.

Jamie didn't have the opportunity to be present for the birth of his second daughter – he was serving a prison sentence.



On the journey home from the hospital to Cherry Orchard, Jamie reflected on what he had missed in not being present for the birth of his daughters and swore that he would never, ever again touch drugs - a resolution which lasted for two whole days!

All of this was going through my mind at the party. The birthday boy spent the afternoon playing on the bouncy castle and trampoline with his friends. The day couldn't be long enough for the excited child. There was only one cloud on the horizon. Daddy was very much the worse for wear and spent most of the time slumped on a chair in the kitchen.

I couldn't help wondering what the future holds for the beautiful child who brings joy and happiness wherever he goes.

Winter Gifts



*He ran into the room
as fast as his two-year-old legs could carry him;
tugged at my sleeve,
dislodged me from the comfort of the couch,
led me to the front door
and sought the safety of my arms.*

*Together we opened the door
and stared in wonder at the snowflakes
floating through the street-lights
and gathering on the ground -
his second winter,
my seventieth.*

*He urged me out into the garden.
We delighted in the snowflakes
wetting our faces
landing on our tongues
sticking to our clothes
and vanishing.*

*We ventured further.
He brushed snow from the roof of the car;
squealed in delight at
its softness
its coldness
its newness.*

*All too soon,
the snow flurry over,
we returned to the warmth of the kitchen.
His childish prattle
surely told of wonder and surprise;
my silent thanks
were for his gifts to me -
the re-awakening of awe
and the fleeting chance to be
a seventy-year-old, celibate Grandad.*

Paul Hendrick

Retreat with a Difference

In May of this year, the Christian Brothers' Community in Cherry Orchard facilitated a retreat with the theme 'Searching for Mystery in Marginal Communities'.

We are very grateful to two of the participants, Raymond and George who have penned the following reflections on their retreat experience.

Where is God in all of this?

For some strange reason I said 'yes' to a retreat in an unknown part of Dublin, among strangers. Part of me was uneasy and vulnerable being out of my comfort zone.

From my first visit to Cherry Orchard a month before the retreat I remember a lady on the bus who helped me to find my way to the Brothers' house.

I remember the welcome sight of one of the Brothers who came out to meet me at the bus stop.

I remember the warm welcome from the Brothers.

I remember the horses, some of them grazing on the open 'green' patches of grass or standing motionless on hard surfaces tied to railings.

I remember seeing dirty, boarded-up houses, burnt-out cars and scorched tar marks on the pavement.

I remember seeing Garda cars patrolling the district.

I remember seeing empty bottles and beer cans left lying on the grass.

I remember seeing the Dublin Mountains in the distance.

I remember seeing local men planting flowers and shrubs in an effort to beautify the area.

I remember a large picture of an African Rubbish dump hanging on the wall over the fire place in the Brothers' front room. It depicts poor people searching through rubbish and filth, hoping to find discarded items that can be used to help them survive.



And I remember asking myself the question: Where is God in all of this?

During the retreat there were no visits to the Blessed Sacrament, no quiet oratory, no walks in well-kept gardens and grounds and no meals in silence listening to reflective music in a refectory. Instead, the challenge was to find God in the joys and struggles of people living in acute poverty, searching for mystery and in experiencing the in-breaking of God's salvation.

An important dimension of the retreat is the opportunity to meet with and respectfully listen to people's stories in their own homes or in the Brothers' house.

During the retreat, my eyes were frequently drawn to the picture of poor people at the margins in that African slum.

At the end of the week, the picture was beginning to say more to me.

The words of Pope Francis in *Laudato Si* echoed in my mind: "The earth, our home, is beginning to look more like an immense pile of filth".

And the question still lingers: Where is God in all of this?

Raymond Maynes.

A Different Retreat

I made a five-day, non-residential retreat conducted by three Christian Brothers in their modest three-bedroomed house in Cherry Orchard, west Dublin, in May. There were four participants – a parish priest, a sister, a brother and myself.

Everything about it was different - its content wasn't "spiritual" in the usual sense, but was profoundly and solidly "human". Input and direction was rich and varied with lots of visuals – pictures, posters, lights, cloths, music, books, texts, handouts together with much sharing of feelings and stories. Every voice was heard.

The retreat was quite informal. To step outside the front door you might speak to a child, a neighbour, an unemployed young person, or see a tricycle/cart on the footpath or a couple of horses on the grassy patch.



One of the retreat exercises was to spend some time in a local home and then reflect on the experience with the group. (Some of the 'hosts' joined us later for a cuppa in the Brothers' house).

We celebrated Eucharist on the last day and the retreat finished with a meal together in a local restaurant.

A most unusual kind of retreat, very challenging. Highly recommended.

George Whyte

Cherry Orchard Retreats

In May and July of this year, the Christian Brothers' Community in Cherry Orchard hosted retreats/workshops on the themes of 'Searching for Mystery in Marginal Communities' and 'Mystery Searching for us in Marginal Communities'. Both retreats were very well received.

It is our hope, if there is sufficient uptake, to offer two similar retreats during 2018 – one aimed at those who have never participated in one of our retreats and the other at those who have and who would like to return for a 'refresher'.

Elsewhere in this issue of Scribbles, two of the participants in the May retreat have put pen to paper to describe their experience.

For further information and provisional bookings, please contact either Seán, Martin or Paul.

There will be a maximum of ten places available on each retreat.



Outreach Fund

**Contributions
to the
Outreach Fund
are always
welcome**

The Outreach Fund, which is now in its third year, is geared towards our outreach in Cherry Orchard and The North Wall.

We started off our current financial year on 1st September 2016 with a balance of €1,441 in the Outreach Fund.

Since then we have received contributions totaling almost €6,845 for which we are extremely grateful.

The following is a summary of the expenses to date (1st Sept 2016 to 31st July 2017):

<i>Assessment for addiction treatment</i>	<i>€250</i>
<i>Prison Visits</i>	<i>€650</i>
<i>Help with Groceries & Household</i>	<i>€1,730</i>
<i>Poulshone Holidays</i>	<i>€500</i>
<i>Assistance with funeral expenses</i>	<i>€100</i>
<i>Others</i>	<i>€1,000</i>
<i>Bank charges</i>	<i>€ 45</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>€4,275</i>
<i>Balance</i>	<i>€4,011</i>

The Saturated Banal At Life's Raw Edge?

Martin Byrne

Coming up to Easter I was asked by a lad on the street
If I wished the legs broken of the fellow who robbed our house
'He's brought shame on all local drug users,' he said.
Discerning resurrection is not easy.

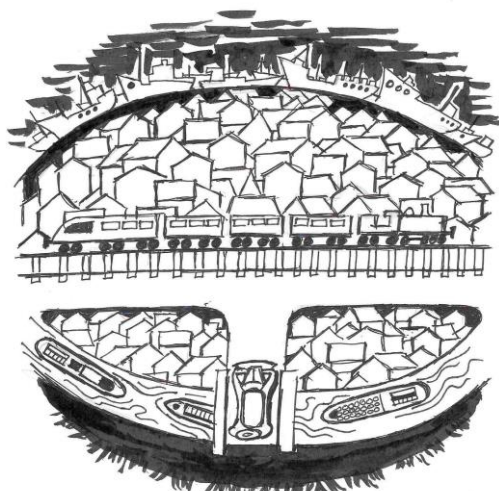
A not so easily packaged quiet, determined state of being
Where hopefully at times oneness, kinship, sticking-with and reaching out
Over-ride my prejudices and comforts and my not wishing to see.
Discerning resurrection is not easy.

Let's name shame and poverty with flesh and blood names
So that we do not deny it or leave 'them' out there to their own devices
Today my brothers and sisters inject in alleyways and sail in rickety boats from
Libya.
Discerning resurrection is not easy.

God's good time is not in resonance with our schedules or needs
Messy, complex, long-term irony, and yet still more inner city funerals to attend
Blood and tears and sighs and laughs and hopes and surviving.
Discerning resurrection is not easy.

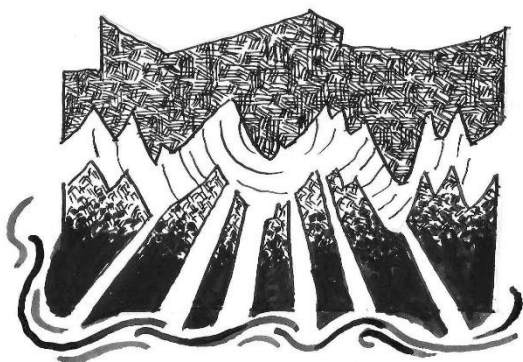
A powerless Christ marked by wounds says 'yes' to our unfair, crazy world
While a muted, resurrected God underwhelms within the shamed and marginalised
In saying my 'yes' to the North Wall I am changed and exposed to the heart of
love.
Discerning resurrection is terrifying

Though it leaves me exhausted and angry and powerless and drained
Knowing Tomo, Jennifer, Melissa and Emma I can't walk away
'Which side are you on boy?' becomes a recurring antiphon.
And then discerning resurrection gets a little bit easier.



*Yesterday I sang with
the folk group at noon
mass on Easter Sunday
in the St Laurence O
Toole's church and
wondered what difference
the resurrection
is making to history in
the North Wall. To be
born on Mayor Street
the world is your oyster,
but to be born a hundred
meters around the
corner on police-
protected Sheriff Street
your opportunities are
slim. Tomorrow I attend
another funeral on Sean
Mc Dermott Street.
Where is the evidence
locally for the coming of
God's kingdom and the
delivery from evil? How
in such tough surrounds
are our ordinary goings-
on impregnated and
changed by Christ's life,
death and resurrection?
Maybe the power of the
resurrection is in small-
ness and in fragility.*

On Good Friday each year, in rain or cloud or sunshine, the North Wall Folk Group takes a camino around the Howth cliff walk. Together in nature we chat and reflect and see our dockland home in the distant horizon. Singing regularly at the funerals of local young people we are aware of the impact of poverty on our community. As we walk we know too that children slave for cobalt in open mines in the Congo so that our mobile phones can operate. Christ is ever taken down from many crosses and somehow is with us.



The Torn Veil

Martin Byrne

2008's recession stress-tested the establishment's social conscience
 Showing it unable to protect the poor from poverty and from death
 It defined European solidarity in terms of protecting banks and bond holders.
 Now that the holy of holies is exposed buck naked
 This lob-sided, global order positions poor people
 Perpetually in the slow lane on the catch-up, starting blocks.

The homeless and the hungry on our city paths freeze to death
 Embarrassing the business people, politicians, passers-by and tourists
 Daily our moral option remains, "How do we whitewash these people out of sight?"
 Or bending to ask, "Would you like a nice cup of hot coffee and a dough nut?"
 These city streets speak out in lamentation and in light.
 As the terrorism of poverty degrades and offends our brothers and sisters.

My friends, the non temple-frequenting sheep, those with rough reputations
 The unclean and the contradictory, heal, confront and make do
 This unsung, broad church of humanity is a bottom-up game changer
 Often hidden in the plain pains and joys of lives most ordinary.
 In our privileged world where the vertical distrusts the horizontal
 Shafts of light break through the sundered veil in edgy communities.

Venturing into the uncomfortable land with poor people, we lose ourselves
 And are found by a God-mystery that subtly draws us into a search
 For hope and dignity and life and belonging and oneness.
 A living, felt sense that Christ is at the heart of our experiences
 Gracing us with ordinary, costly, crucifying discipleship on our streets
 Because the veil of the temple has been torn open.

The new monks of the North Wall are not always total paragons of virtue
 But have normal squabbling families, tattoos and take holidays.
 From sometime dangerously chaotic lives these oblates of humanity
 Are artisans of community, co-crafting redemption
 Desperately wanting people surrounded by poverty, crime and addictions
 To survive, to excel, to participate, to dream and to thrive.

The complexity of standing where compassion and desperation meet
 Is not the delusional church of some scholar of new consciousness
 Nor a slim, fit, streamlined, well-managed utopian vision.
 Rather, with people who continually struggle in life's ghettos
 We stand connected, inspired and in-date, speaking the unspeakable
 Exploring not wholly secular horizons of meaning with our North Wall
 neighbours.

A day when

Seán Beckett

A day when quiet rain falls gently. A day when time lingers and thoughts pass slowly. A day when tears are close by. A day when laughter is freely let go and songs are sung aloud with energy and passion a day of 'life'!



Whether you are rich or poor, the rain falls on you. Whether you are young or old, time passes for you. Does the storm at sea decide who is lost and who is saved?

Time is always moving along. There's a time to accept, to rejoice, to discover and to let go. There's a time to share and 'be in communion'. There's a time to be distant and 'afar'.



Have those who are struggling in life the freedom to choose time and how they spend it? How can those who are starving and dying under the desert sun even comprehend the idea of going on 'a sun holiday'?

Is time for those in prison about 'doing time' or an opportunity to take stock and make courageous decisions? How long is 'long' for those who are homeless as they wait for permanent accommodation? They hear, once again, of property prices and politicians' intentions to provide social housing.

How much are we aware? Do we notice? I think that it would be very sad and disturbing if we didn't notice. How 'hard and removed' we'd have become if we walked our earth and completely ignored and 'deleted' our suffering and forgotten sisters and brothers.



Even in the rain shower we can see a person sheltering, even in the snowfall we can see a person shivering, even with sunglasses on, our eyes are 'not blind' to those in need.

So what do we do with our noticing and our awareness? Can we go beyond noticing? Can we experience the discomfort, the despair or the loneliness of another? Can we be moved towards empathy?

Is it so difficult to reach out your hand and help a person who is unable to face another tough day? We need to be prepared to share

our umbrella and protect another from the deluge or from the intense burning sun?

Let's share our stories, our memories and our journeys with others. Let's not sing alone to our own rhythm. Let's link, interact and engage with 'the new, the strange, and the different' – all this is part of life, our life, others' life ... universal life.



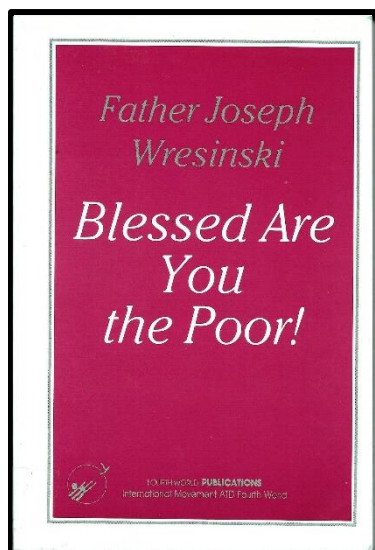
Seek the day when waves gently lap the shoreline, when bird song awakens the dawn and when a rainbow or two arches your dreams. Be in the moments of a child's smiles and wonderment. Be in the moments of laughter and of tears. This is the day to support another person to reach outwards and upwards so their personal flags of integrity unfurl and fly freely. Be in touch with your Earth as it cries, changes and celebrates.



Suggested Reading

Blessed Are You the Poor

Fr Joseph Wresinski



The Fourth World Movement was begun by Joseph Wresinski in 1956 and this year 2017 the hundred anniversary of his birth is celebrated. This book gifts us an opportunity to encounter the man and his vision. This book argues biblically, experientially and compellingly that the church of Jesus of Nazareth has no existence, much less authenticity, apart from poor people. Our church must care sufficiently for people who are poor, to the extent that the poor are centrally included in the church. The poor are the church, and we are only fully church to the extent that we stand in solidarity with the poorest of the poor and that we empower and allow the poor to define us as church. There are strong echoes and resonances here of Pope Francis' radical call for a church of the poor.

This book is a translation of the prophetic reflections of a man who was at home in the Gospel. His words are uncomfortable and they

challenge us to change. They powerfully reflect the gaze of Jesus from the eyes of forgotten, poor and marginalised people. This book consists of thirteen short but loaded gospel meditations.

Joseph was born of migrant parents in France with a Polish father and Spanish mother. He grew up in a family marked by social exclusion and extreme poverty. After joining the YCW he entered the seminary and was caught up in the Second World War. He was ordained in 1946. By 1956 he found himself working in the camp for the homeless in Noisy-le-Grand, near Paris. Together with the people in the camp he founded the Fourth World Movement which is now active in 116 countries, with volunteers of all faiths, philosophies and backgrounds. He died in 1988 and is buried at the Movement's International Centre. A formal Church investigation in to the cause for Wresinski's beatification was begun in 1997.

These meditations of Fr Joseph offer a fresh and revealing reading of the Gospel through the eyes of people who struggle. Jesus chose the most humiliated and abandoned to be his closest associates and messengers. When the Gospel is lived and is read by the poorest, then there is hope, inspiration and new life.

The life and these meditations of Fr. Joseph are a challenge to our indifference and our blindness. Where life, human rights and dignity are denied or squelched, then God is crucified. With Joseph and with Pope Francis, let's hope that soon we will hear the wisdom, the cries, spirituality, language, accents, theology, prayers and

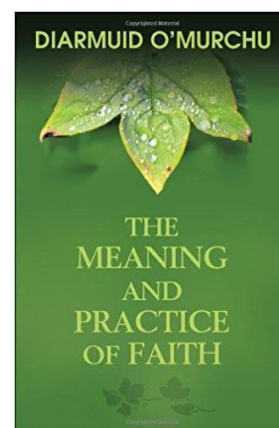
songs of poor people emanating from the centre of the church of Jesus of Nazareth.

Blessed Are You the Poor,
Fr Joseph Wresinski; Twenty-Third Publication, Paris, 1992

Martin Byrne

The Meaning and Practice of Faith

Diarmuid Ó Murchú



This book is for those adult Catholics who are searching for a deeper connection and involvement within their church. They may have experienced "*not being heard or being misunderstood*" as they struggle to express their faith in a nourishing and a meaningful way.

In this book O'Murchu offers to the reader great insights, understanding and empathy. He also offers questions for group meditation and sharing sessions as well as resource/input material. I like the terms he uses regarding 'believers'. He calls them 'adult seekers' and 'adult searchers'.

Adult seekers desire to move beyond "*passivity based on doctrinal acquiescence and submissive obedience*". They may struggle to trust their own intuition

to seek out other kindred spirits and move towards a larger global vision.

Along their spiritual journey or search O'Murchu lists the stages they may go through as:

- (1) inner questioning
- (2) substantial doubts
- (3) Cynicism
- (4) Drifting
- (5) Challenge
- (6) Attempting serious change
- (7) Exploring alternatives.

Difficulties and challenges which they may face along their journey are: understanding, paradox, disinterest, nonsense, and abstraction of faith theory and practice.

O'Murchu sees that adult seekers are taking personal responsibility to face their own human contribution to the mess they experience in the contemporary world; *"it is we who have created it, and it is up to us to resolve it"*. Adult seekers use creativity and imagination to explain and express the scriptural traditions for today's world. Formal religion will need to let go of its dogmatic certainties and trust the Spirit who blows where it will. Adult seekers long for a church *"that's egalitarian, empowering, and committed to effective networking"*.

Towards the end of his book, O'Murchu provides an idea, a picture, a dream of the changes and shifts that the future church may experience if it is to survive.

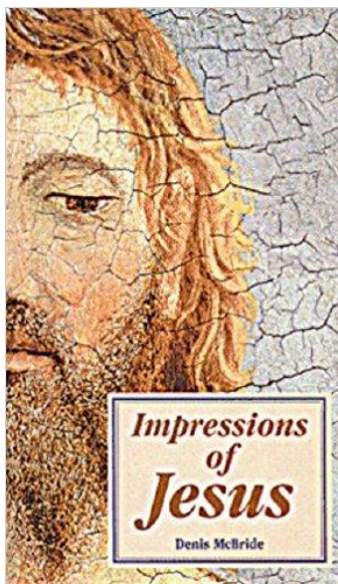
The Meaning and Practice of Faith: *A practical guide for adults who are more interested in being and doing the truth than in*

doctrinal statements about the truth, Diarmuid Ó Murchú; Orbis Books, Feb 2014.

Seán Beckett

Impressions of Jesus

Denis McBride CSsR



I first came across Fr Denis McBride CSsR while I was attending a renewal course in Hawkstone Hall more than twenty years ago. Denis is a scripture scholar with a spell-binding gift for story-telling. Such was his appeal that the elective classes he offered were invariably over-subscribed and the course participants looked forward to the Sundays when it was his turn by rota to celebrate the Eucharist. I can honestly say that those Sunday celebrations were one of the few occasions in my life on which I was sorry when the homily ended!

On first reading this book in Hawkstone Hall, I found it beautifully written, entertaining and thought-provoking. A more recent reading showed that its appeal for me had not dimmed over

the years – surely a good test of a book!

In the preface, Denis makes the interesting point that the writers of the Gospels were part of a people-centered process. It is probable that none of them were eye-witnesses to the ministry of Jesus. If this is true, they were introduced to the story of Jesus by other people. Each of them received and welcomed the message of salvation from earlier generations; each of them passed on, in his own creative way, the common tradition he had received. The early Christian community gave birth to the Gospels, not the other way around.

It is interesting to note, Denis says, that each of the evangelists proclaims the truth about Jesus by showing how his deeds and words affect the people around him.

Denis continues this process, though in a totally different format. He speaks about Jesus through the experience of those who related to him. Fifteen different characters are given a chapter each to tell, in the first person, the story of their encounter with Jesus. So, in the pages of this book, we meet *A Neighbour of Jesus, A Woman of Samaria, A Child ('Tiddler'), A Woman of Magdala, Simon the Pharisee, Martha, A Secret Agent, The Adulteress, A Disillusioned Disciple, Nicodemus, Caiaphas, Pontius Pilate, Judas Iscariot, The Good Thief and Mary, the Wife of Cleophas*.

To get a flavour of what the stories are like, let's have a look at the chapter where Pontius Pilate relates the story of his encounter with Jesus.

He begins by describing Judea as *'a home for displaced fanatics, a circus for religious exhibitionists. The people are backward, boorish, perverse, superstitious, priest-ridden. Most of the priests are honourable members of the lunatic fringe'*.

Pilate continues in this vein. Referring to Cain, he says: *'If Cain, patron saint of the disaffected, was condemned to be a wanderer and a fugitive, one thing is for sure: all his bruised descendants have ended up pitching their tents in this God-forsaken place'*.

The thoughts of Pilate on the Jewish Religion and on Roman Politics make interesting, entertaining reading. Later in his narrative, Pilate says as an aside: *'Some day, I believe, disinformation will become an art form'*. (Many of us, with even a passing interest in American politics, might be forgiven for thinking that 'today this scripture has been fulfilled in our hearing').

Having gone through the whole story of his wife's dreams and the 'trial' of Jesus, Pilate completes his story: *'I rise from the judgement seat and walk off the platform. I walk away from the crowd and the cheers and the sponsored hate. I head for the stables. I need a ride outside the city, outside this ring of madness, outside the reach of gods and dreams'*.

Other characters in the book tell their story in like manner, though not always with the same bite and cynicism.

I found the book to be an easy, worthwhile read in which Denis's deep knowledge of the scriptures is

almost incidental, yet it permeates each of the stories.

Impressions of Jesus, Denis McBride CSsR; Redemptorist Publications; 1992.

Paul Hendrick

A Final Note

Welcome to the September issue of Scribbles from the Margins, our twelfth issue.

As always, thanks to our readers who continue to give us feedback, support and encouragement.

A special thanks to Br Raymond Maynes, a Christian Brother in the Emmaus Community and Br George Whyte, a De la Salle Brother in the Ballyfermot Community, who made their reflections on the May retreat available for this issue of Scribbles. (Edited versions are on page 3).

A gentle reminder that, when the next issue of Scribbles lands on your desk, Christmas will be just a matter of weeks away!

Enjoy the read.

Seán, Paul, Martin.