

Daily Encounters with Christ

CONSECRATED LIFE 2019

The Irish Catholic



Greg Daly

A mosaic that

The variety of consecrated life in modern

God has created me to do him some definite service; he has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another," Blessed John Henry Newman famously wrote, and for those dazzled or baffled by the variety of consecrated life lived in Ireland alone, these are words worth remembering.

For Bro. Kevin Crowley, surely Ireland's most famous Capuchin friar, the example of St Francis of Assisi has been key to driving him in his work with Ireland's most vulnerable.

"Francis himself was a lover of the poor and the marginalised and creation," Bro. Kevin says. "That was one of the things that inspired me. When I saw the need for helping people who are in the streets during the daytime looking in dustbins trying to get food out of them, I thought of us as Capuchins and Franciscans being followers of St Francis – St Francis wouldn't be at all pleased with us if we didn't do something to help these unfortunate people."

This has encouraged him throughout his life, he says, adding that his life as a religious has empowered him to help others.

"For me without prayer life, it certainly wouldn't be possible for me to do what I'm doing, and also from the generosity and goodwill of people who have helped me along the way to provide food and the means for what we're doing here in the centre to help them in many ways," he says.

Poorest

Fr Peter McVerry similarly says his life as a religious, and in particular as a Jesuit, allows him to dedicate himself to a remarkable degree to Ireland's poorest.

"From a practical point of view, being a Jesuit you've a freedom to work in a way that you wouldn't be free to work if you had a family to look after and a wage to earn," he says.

"So I'm free – I'm available 24/7, I can live in Ballymun, I don't have to worry about the kids growing up and getting into negative peer pressure. Being a Jesuit gives me a freedom to work in a way that I wouldn't be able to do if I wasn't a Jesuit," he says, adding that it must be recognised that many people do social



“Just as the Good Shepherd leaves the 99 to go in search for the one, we seek to ensure that no-one is excluded, no one is left behind”

justice work with huge commitment without living lives like his, "but obviously if you have a family and you depend on income, you do that in a different way".

The Ignatian focus on Christ himself is key to what drives him in his work, he explains.

"From a spirituality point of view I have an understanding of the Gospels and the mission of Jesus – I wrote a book called *Jesus: Social Revolutionary*," he says. "For me Jesus had a dream and he dreamed of a world where no one would be hungry and not be given food, where no one would be thirsty and not be given water and so forth. So for me the reaching out to people, revealing the God of compassion by being the compassion of God is at the heart of my spirituality as a Jesuit."

Sr Phyllis Moynihan, vocations director for the Southern

and South-Central provinces of the Sisters of Mercy, makes a point of looking back to the example of Catherine McAuley in explaining her work in the Limerick of today, pointing out that other orders of Irish women can tell a similar story.

"The Sisters of Mercy were started over 150 years ago, and at the time Catherine McAuley set about responding to the unmet needs of her day, when there was great poverty, and one of her main concerns at the time was education for women and children."

Over the years, she says, the sisters have maintained a focus on disadvantaged people on the margins wherever they live and work, and though they have generally moved out of education and nursing they remain side by side with the marginalised in Ireland.

"You will always find us

living with the people in parishes, working with them," she says. "Here in Limerick we're working with prisoners and their families, and with Travellers. You will find us under the radar working away and being with the people in various areas regardless of age."

Experience

The congregation may be aging, but that doesn't necessarily stop them, she stresses, pointing out that the sisters currently have two women in their 90s who are still actively involved in ministry, and speaking with pleasure of how a new sister, Maire Hearty, made first profession just in October and is currently studying theology and spiritual direction while getting pastoral experience in the Darndale in Dublin.

Care for the poorest isn't simply a matter of social services, Sr Phyllis explains,

citing Catherine McAuley's observation that "our centre is God, from whom all our actions spring as from their source". The order continues to matter, she says, "because people are always in need of mercy and compassion".

Similarly based in Limerick, Sr Margaret Lynch of the Good Shepherd Sisters explains that apostolic religious life is characterised by the centrality of their distinct mission to our lives, and with her congregation focused on women, with a mission of reconciliation and compassion.

"For me this means that it is a mission to bring to wholeness," she says.

"Just as the Good Shepherd leaves the 99 to go in search for the one, we seek to ensure that no-one is excluded, no one is left behind. It is a call to life, the life of radical inclusion that Jesus lived as he ate with tax collectors, touched

lepers, and spoke with women, which was unacceptable for a good Jewish man at his time.

"For us as a congregation this leads to work with the homeless, the refugees, to work in prisons, with people suffering from addictions, with people all over the world who are considered outsiders from their society in any way. We live this mission out of our own experience of a God who

loves us and calls us into wholeness ourselves as he teaches us to love and accept ourselves, integrating all our weakness as well as our



Sr Maire Fahy.

shines

Ireland is dazzling

strengths."

Describing this form of consecrated life as "an integral part of the Church's life", she says it's a way consecrated religious can preach the Gospel with their lives to people of all religions and none.

With apostolic religious in Ireland now having in the main left their roles in hospitals and schools etc, as the State has now taken up that baron, Sr Margaret says that in seeking to serve new needs they increasingly are called to work in advocacy and justice work, "naming the injustices in society that keep people marginalised and excluded and calling for change at every level from poverty, to global warming to the call for women's voices to be heard at every level of the Church".

Not everyone is called to such a life, of course, and there are those who are called to live lives serving God largely separate from the world.

Sr Marie Fahy, abbess of the Cistercian community at Co. Waterford's Glencairn Abbey explains that her community, in following the Rule of St Benedict and the traditions of the Cistercian Order, "continue a long line of monastic living from the Desert Fathers, Celtic monasticism and 12th-Century Cistercian life right up to the present day".

“Everything else the monks do to fund their lives is simply to enable them to fulfil that task, he says, adding that the vow of stability is an important witness too”

"The point of monastic life is to seek God's face, to know Christ Jesus, to be conformed to him, and so become our true and best selves," she explains. "The means offered by monasticism to attain this goal are: silence and community; liturgy and *lectio divina*; manual labour and creative industry, with a strong emphasis on hospitality."

In explaining how people might feel called to such a life, she says: "God takes the initiative and touches the individual person so that this desire for intimacy with God is born in their hearts. Then the person looks around for a place where they feel they



Sr Louise O'Rourke with Fr Bryan Shortall OFM Cap.

can best respond to God's call to a deeper love and fuller life."

Such lives, dedicated to continuous prayer and continuous conversion, contribute profoundly to the life of the Church, she maintains.

"Growth in holiness enhances the whole Church in a hidden way," she says, adding: "Monastic life also offers a witness of stability, simplicity, chastity, care of the environment, and provides a place of prayer for all who come."

Bro. Martin Browne of Co. Limerick's Glenstal Abbey makes a similar point, noting that the classic definition of Benedictine life is that it's the search for God under a rule and an abbot. "The regulation, literally, the application of the Rule, is about providing some sort of scaffolding for that to happen," he says.

Different monasteries do this differently, he says, with different monks having a range of different tasks.

"Some people in a monastery are engaged in very public ministerial work, some are involved in pretty mundane administrative and opera-

tional things inside their houses, some – obviously – are old and retired and do little formal work, but for us the Hours of the Divine Office that we sing during the day are described by St Benedict as the *Opus Dei*, the work of God.

"So that is our first work; regardless of what other tasks we might have in the monastery or what works or ministries the monastery might have, our fundamental job is to be in the choir several times a day, singing the Psalms together," he says.

"Clearly it isn't something for everybody – it's a particular calling," he continues, dismissing the notion that monastic life is a flight from the world and pointing out that today's monks tend to be very much in touch with people in the world at large.

Modern society

"By being here and praying, first of all we're saying that God is important and that giving time to God is really important," he says. "I think that's a really important witness for modern society,

where God is easily forgotten and the idea of taking faith seriously can seem less reasonable and less obvious than it did in the past.

"So, there's an importance about the fact that there are people who are literally consecrated to pray."

Everything else the monks do to fund their lives is simply to enable them to fulfil that task, he says, adding that the vow of stability is an important witness too.

"One of the vows we take is a vow of stability: we bind ourselves not just to consecrated life in this place, and again in the modern world where lots of things are transitory, there's an important witness there, in binding ourselves to this place, in sticking at the life, in sticking at being here at a time often when culture tells you to move on more often and to move on if things become challenging."

Monasteries have always been places of hospitality, he adds, pointing out that today's emphases on mindfulness and meditation testify to a deep need for places of

quietness and stillness, where attentiveness matters.

"Monasteries have always been places of stillness and attentiveness," he says. "The first word of St Benedict's Rule is 'listen'."

Sr Louise O'Rourke of the Sister Disciples of the Divine Master is a member of a pontifical congregation that has a Benedictine spirituality but is driven to be communicators after the fashion of St Paul.

"We are Benedictine in inspiration in that we follow the Benedictine motto: *ora et labora*, work and pray," she says. "But our family is part of the larger Pauline Family, inspired by the figure and teachings of St Paul. We're called to be communicators to the people of today like St Paul was in his time."

"Our form of consecrated life is that we are an apostolic congregation but with strong contemplative tones, we like to say we are contemplative in action, and active in contemplation."

The sisters were founded in 1924 by an Italian priest, Blessed Fr James Alberione, who had seen the power of media in the world of Mussolini, and who over time established 10 different religious families – "so there was something for everybody, but the main issue was to bring Jesus through the most effective and fastest means of communication".

Tasked especially with Eucharistic adoration and with an emphasis on liturgical beauty, the sisters have a special role in praying for the more active religious and clergy, Sr Louise says.

"The beauty, I suppose, of religious life is that there's something for every mission of the Church, and the Holy Spirit always rises up a group be it big or small for some kind of need in the Church," she says, adding that "as Mary walked with Jesus, we were called to walk along with priests".

“We’re at the coalface of the city: St Benedict went away from the sin of the city, but St Dominic went into it, and brought the elements of the monastic life into the heart of the city”

Nowadays, she adds, it tends to be recognised that priesthood is not simply a clerical role but is a baptismal calling shared by everyone.

One especially attractive feature of the order, she says, is how close it is to its roots: new members study in the

formation house in Italy, and even now can speak to older sisters who knew Blessed James, who was alive as recently as 1973.

"I know that people have this thing at the moment of trying to discover and retrace your roots, but for us it's very easy because we have it all at our fingertips in Italy," she says. "We try to keep out students together because, again, in having a peer group you can live together and pray together and form each other."

Heritage

If the Disciples of the Divine Master has the advantage of being able to remain in such direct personal contact with their founder, Ireland's Dominicans, meanwhile, can point to a heritage stretching back over 800 years.

Fr John Walsh OP, prior of the Irish province's student house on St Saviour's on Dublin's Dominick Street, notes how the late Dublin-born Archbishop William Barden of Ispahan in Iran, used to say Dominican life was like walking on a tightrope.

"It's a tightrope between the contemplative and the apostolic life," Fr John says, "because the daily life is the monastic element – dedication to the choral office, the observances in the house, the cloister, the habit, refectory prayers, silences, and there's study and contemplative prayer, that pushes us out to preach."

This life of study and prayer pushes Dominicans out to preach in the world, Fr John says, explaining that the monastic regular life at home is a key way in which Dominicans differ from Jesuits and others.

There's a real need for such vocations in the modern Church, he says, contrasting this with the 'Benedict Option' as famously promoted by American author Rod Dreher.

"We're the reverse of what he was saying: we're the contemplatives in the city," he says. "We're at the coalface of the city: St Benedict went away from the sin of the city, but St Dominic went into it, and brought the elements of the monastic life into the heart of the city."

Maintaining that the monastic structures equip young men of today to engage with and respond to modern ways of thinking, Fr John says "there's a Dominican option".

There are Carmelite options too, and Vincentian ones, Oblate ones and Pallo-tine ones, and many more.

Consecrated life in Ireland is a mosaic, and even now it's a mosaic that shines.

Poor Clares Carlow

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VISION AND MISSION

Our Mission is the living of the Holy Gospel according to the charism of St. Francis and St. Clare, living in obedience, without anything of our own, in chastity and enclosure and in total dependence on the Providence of God. Our life is dedicated and committed to a life of prayer for the Church and the world. This is the fount and focus of our life. Our vision is to be co-workers with God and a support for the frail and failing members of His Glorious Body through a committed life of prayer and union of mind and heart among ourselves. This is our vocation as Enclosed Poor Clares and we rejoice in it.



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Religious of Jesus and Mary

Religious of Jesus and Mary (RJM) was founded in 1818 by Claudine Thevenet in Lyons, France to promote the education of the young.

They came to Ireland in 1912 and currently have 7 communities in Dublin, Mayo, Galway and Sligo. The sisters work in schools, catechesis, chaplaincy, counselling and prayer guides. RJM work in 28 countries. The Irish Sisters are presently in Africa, Haiti and Pakistan.



JM Sisters working in various areas of education in Gabon and Cameroon



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Sisters Rose Kelly and Nazareth, recipients of the 2019 William Jefferson Clinton Haven Award for their work in Haiti

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A Life Set Apart

Consecrated means “set apart.” Those called to consecrated life are “set apart” by God for a particular way of life in which “we see the hand of God who, in his Spirit, calls certain individuals to follow Christ more closely, to translate the Gospel into a particular way of life, to read the signs for the times with the eyes of faith and to respond creatively to the needs of the Church”. (Pope Francis, “Apostolic Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis to all Consecrated People”)

Henry Blackaby's oft-cited quote, “The reality is that the Lord never calls the qualified; He qualifies the called,” has certainly held true for the OLA sisters. They were founded in 1876 when the SMA missions in Africa had developed to a point that it became necessary to have a community of Women Religious to cater specifically to the needs of the African women.

The death toll on those early missions was high and the young women who were called to Africa left, knowing that there was very little chance that they would ever return. The SMA priests who wrote from Lagos inviting the Sisters did so with brutal honesty, “In Lagos you die. Let them come quickly, those who wish to give souls to Jesus and Jesus to souls.”

Yet, they went; following a call that could not be ignored.

“It is a radical calling to a radical life; but the hand of God is evident in each individual journey.”

Each person's call toward consecrated life is unique, and the response to that call is seldom an easy one. As has been noted by many, it is a radical calling to a radical life; but the hand of God is evident in each individual journey. It is evident in the small, hesitant steps and the large, confident steps. It is evident in the stumbling and the falling and in the getting back up. God's hand

directs the path towards discovering where the Spirit is leading.

This discernment of God's calling on their lives requires more than just listening or looking for signs, it requires grave consideration, prayer and sacrifice. It also requires direction from a trusted guide who can assist with identifying truth from wishful thinking. The process of discernment is tough, unrelenting and ongoing. It is all too easy to weave God's will into the shallow needs of the ego.

In Sr Mary Usifoh's case, confirmation of her calling came in many forms, including conversations she had as a young girl, “Two different people at two separate times told me that it would be good for me to be a Sister.”

For some it is an easy decision, with little doubt as to what the voice of God is saying. Sister Anne Cahill had always dreamed of helping the disadvantaged in Africa and, being a good mathematics student, thought that she could marry these skills with her dream by assisting those who were weak in the area of math. As she advanced through secondary school, another dream took over, “I fell in love with God, or rather God's love for me became an overwhelming experience.”

“It is no trivial thing to interrupt the path you are on and radically change the direction of your life.”

For others it can be a confusing time, a time of doubt and questioning. It is no trivial thing to interrupt the path you are on and radically change the direction of your life. This is evident in the surprise expressed by some of the sisters when you speak to them of their vocation, “God wants me to do what?” is often the initial response.

Consecrated life throughout history has always been sensitive to the great needs of humanity, specifically the poor, the helpless, the innocent, the victims of violence.

Spending time with the sisters, it becomes clear that consecrated life

is not an end in itself, but it serves to sanctify the individual and to build the body of Christ. These sisters are missionaries, and this adds another dimension to consecrated life. They are ‘set apart’ especially for Africa's women and marginalised; called to the peripheries, pushing back the frontiers and bringing Christ to the very edge.

When you suggest that they have led, and are leading extraordinary lives, they seem baffled, surprised that anyone would consider their experiences to be extraordinary in any way.

These remarkable women are profoundly humble. Discretion is a way of life and the grace of their charism is evident in all that they do. They act with a powerful gentility, so clearly touched by the Spirit, that they think nothing of the fact that they are involved in works that would leave an ordinary person exhausted and broken hearted.

Contemplatives in action

They are teachers and doctors and psychotherapists; they hold Honours degrees, Masters degrees and PhDs. They work on the fringes, spreading the gospel, not from the pulpit, but by the very acts of their lives. They describe themselves as contemplatives in action, each action taken directed towards their interior relationship with God, allowing the Spirit to effectively shape the entirety of their lives.

Be it teaching children and ministering to the sick in Ghana, building schools and running HIV/AIDs programmes in Tanzania, working with migrants and refugees in Ireland, their focus is always on the women of Africa.

Sr Ann Fallola OLA, in a recent essay noted: “[The OLA sisters] defied all odds, even death, and their mission opened the road to education and social inclusion of women in many parts of Africa; I myself am a direct beneficiary of the heroic sacrifices of these valiant women missionaries.”



Sharing in Our Mission

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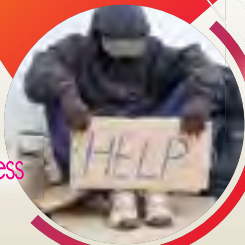
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Centre image is of Sr Cecelia Cadogan knocking on the door of mercy at Mercy International Centre, Dublin

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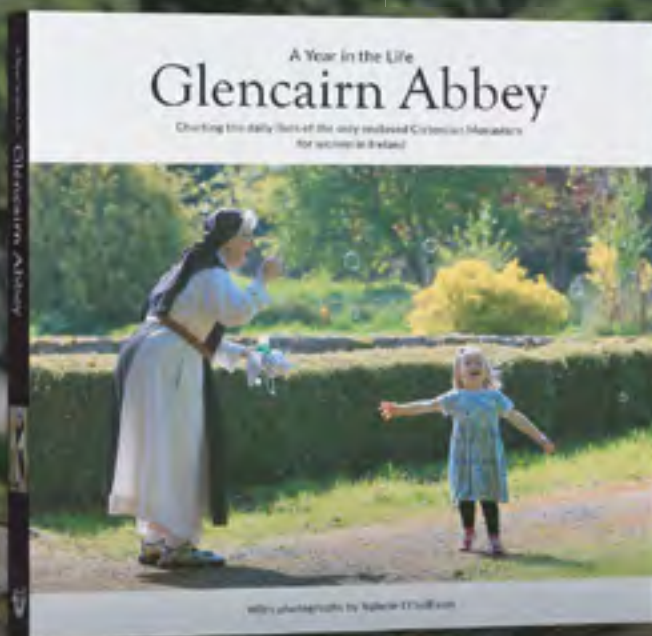
A Year in the Life: Glencairn Abbey

With photographs by Valerie O'Sullivan

PRICE:

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A Year in the Life: Glencairn Abbey portrays the mysticism and rhythm of the lives of the Sisters of St Mary's Abbey. Having answered the desire to dedicate their life to God with others, the Sisters follow the Rule of St Benedict, which consists of a balance of contemplation, community, work and reading. This beautifully produced book intertwines the seasons of nature and liturgies of the year. The royalties go towards the Abbey's building project.

THE CAPUCHINS

A life of Prayer and Service in the footsteps of St Francis of Assisi



OVER 400 YEARS OF SERVICE IN IRELAND

The Capuchin Franciscan Friars were founded in Italy in 1536 with the desire to return to a closer living of the rule of St Francis of Assisi. Capuchins arrived in Ireland in 1616 and since then have become an intrinsic part of the Irish story.

Today in Ireland we have Friaries in Cork, Dublin, Donegal, Carlow and Kilkenny as well as Irish Friars serving overseas in Zambia, South Africa, New Zealand, South Korea and California. Wherever we are found our mission is the same, to be an authentic Gospel presence as Brothers of the People.

SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How do I know if I am called to be a Capuchin Friar?

The process of discovering what God is calling you to is called discernment. It oftentimes begins with a feeling or an experience or encounter that invites and compels us to seek deeper relationship with God, others, and all of Creation. This takes time, patience, prayer and guidance. It requires of us that we open our hearts and begin to trust in God in a whole new way. In many ways, it requires a step into the unknown.

Who can help me discern my vocation?

The Irish Province of the Capuchin Franciscans takes the discernment process very seriously. We are committed to helping men discover their call by means of a comprehensive vocation accompaniment programme. This programme enables people explore the questions they have and to discover some new ones. The aim of accompaniment is to walk with you as a brother as you discern, listen and reflect, offering sound guidance and practical support. Each and every vocation journey is blessed and unique.

Do you wear a habit?

Yes! Capuchins wear a simple brown habit and white chord. The cord has three knots that serve as a reminder of the three vows we profess.

What are the vows that you take?

We take three vows: poverty, chastity and obedience. Poverty allows us to develop a deeper respect for the world around us and for all the good things that God provides. Chastity encourages us to live with hearts centred on God and obedience invites us to listen deeply to God's plan for us.

How long does it take to train as a Capuchin Friar?

Our training is known as formation and usually takes between six to eight years. A Friar in formation will study, work, pray and minister while growing into what it means to be a Capuchin Friar in the world today. Formation is an exciting and deeply meaningful time.

Was Padre Pio a Capuchin Friar?

Yes, the Capuchin Franciscan Order are blessed to have many saints and St Pio is certainly one of the best known, particularly in Ireland. Saints like Pio, all went through a time of discernment, in fact it was something they did throughout their lives. As St John Paul II reminds us 'we are all called to be Saints'.



That's great, what do I do now? I'd like to find out some more.

To arrange a conversation with our Vocation Promoter, simply e-mail: capuchinvocation@gmail.com

You can also visit the vocation page of our website www.capuchinfranciscans.ie



Missionaries without borders



Irish religious are still making a difference around the world, **Greg Daly** is told

Being a missionary is a life choice, and it is a choice for life – the notion of retiring doesn't even enter into the equation," Heydi Foster, CEO of Misesan Cara, tells *The Irish Catholic*. Citing the example of one 90-year-old sister who in the last decade has set up internationally recognised schools in Haiti, she continues: "Missionaries do not retire at 65 – they keep working to make a difference in the world."

Misesan Cara means 'friend of missions' and Heydi explains that the Faith-based organisation is tasked with supporting 91 Irish missionary organisations around the world, channelling funding from the Government and private donations to help missionaries in the work worldwide.

"We accompany our members to work with the most vulnerable and marginalised – we were set up to work with the vulnerable," she explains, citing how last year Misesan Cara supported 263 projects in 51 countries, working with 1.5 million direct beneficiaries. The knock-on effect of this is, of course, incalculable.

Support

"It was very surreal to come back to Ireland after being in Sierra Leone," Heydi observes of a recent trip. "I was there visiting the Sisters of the Holy Rosary and the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny. We wanted to visit them and see how communities are rebuilding their lives after the Ebola outbreak that started in 2013."

The effects of this outbreak have been devastating, she says, citing the example of one 19-year-old who lost 19 family members, and pointing out that Sierra Leone is one of the world's poorest countries anyway. While support from the Irish Government is vital for the religious working there, she stresses "We need additional support – there are so many orphans."

"It is one of the things that the Sisters of the Holy Rosary are doing. They are working with a lot of the communities, working with families who have lost everything."

The ebola virus didn't just kill individual people, she reiterates. "It destroyed entire communities, whole families and communities," she says, detailing how missionaries such as the Holy Rosary and Cluny sisters are helping rebuild the ravaged society.

While none of the seven Holy Rosary Sisters currently working in the slums of Freetown, Sierra Leone's capital, are Irish, being instead from Nigeria and Kenya, Heydi is quick to underline how the community is an example of Ireland's missionary activity and its legacy.

“In Sierra Leone, like in many other countries, a child who has a disability is seen as a burden on the family”

"They were set up by Irish sisters, so Irish missionaries are still making a difference around the world," she says, adding that "they still have the Irish connection".

Some distance away, meanwhile, Irish sisters are hard at work in rural Sierra Leone.

"The Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny have a school for the hearing-impaired in Makeni, which is, depending on the traffic, about three to four hours from Freetown – it's very rural," she says. "They're running this school that addresses the needs of children that are hearing-impaired, some of them are deaf, and they have been there for a very long time. It's run by Sr Mary Sweeney, a lovely Irish woman from Dunloe in Co. Donegal, with a group of volunteers. She has been training teachers there to work with children that have disabilities. It's a fantastic school."



Sr Mary Sweeney and Heydi Foster (facing away from camera) chat with pupils at the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny School for the Hearing Impaired in Makeni, Sierra Leone. Photo: Sam Whelan-Curtin

“Missionaries do development a little bit differently: for us it's about the long-term approach, it's about dealing with the whole person”



Heydi Foster.

Such schools are especially needed given how disabilities can lead to children being shunned in the country.

"In Sierra Leone, like in many other countries, a child who has a disability is seen as a burden on the family and often times these children are abandoned, so then imagine a child who already has a disability having survived ebola!"

“Heydi emphasises that such religious carry on with their work heedless of their age”

Both groups of sisters have been playing vital roles in the country since the ebola outbreak, she explains.

"I was visiting them because during the ebola outbreak, both the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny and the Sisters of the Holy Rosary supported families that had absolutely lost everything," she says. "The Sisters of the Holy Rosary provided a number of life-saving services in the form of medical care, food, social support, and – really important – ebola prevention information."

Noting how Sr Mary Sweeney has been in Makeni for over 40 years, Heydi emphasises that such religious carry on with their work heedless of their age, and says that they go where they're needed.

"Missionaries don't see a border, they don't see barriers," she says. "They overcome all of that. Missionaries do development a little bit

differently: for us it's about the long-term approach, it's about dealing with the whole person."

As an example of this this, she points to one sister who has worked in Haiti, Gambia, and Sierra Leone.

"Sr Louis Marie O'Connor, who is 90 years old, is an absolute powerhouse. She has set up a number of schools with connections in Sierra Leone and Haiti. After the earthquake she went to Haiti and realised there was absolute devastation, and decided to set up not one or two but three schools, starting in 2010," she says.

"Right now she's back in Ireland getting ready to go back to Sierra Leone – she's incredible," she adds. "Sr Louis Marie was one of the first Cluny sisters I met when I first started working with Misesan Cara, and during the ebola outbreak she was the one securing funding to send to Sr Mary in Makeni, and five years on Sr Mary is working to support survivors, because there's a lot of social stigma around ebola, and people need help to access vital services."

The list of missionaries and missionary groups that Misesan Cara is working to support around the world is genuinely staggering, a powerful reminder of the good religious can achieve when working as Christ's hands in the world.

Heydi cites the examples of the Jesuit Fr Tony O'Riordan, a proud Corkman who is fondly remembered in Limerick and now based in South Sudan.

"He is working in four of the most remote, isolated, and perhaps dangerous parts of the world. He's working with refugees and internally displaced persons in Maban County, around the Blue Nile," Heydi says. "When I was there in June of 2018, there were around 154,000 people, now it's just under 200,000 people."

In the same country, she adds, another prominent Irish religious is Sr Orla Treacy. "She's a Loreto sister who continues to dedicate her life to working with refugees and educating girls in South Sudan," she says.

Sr Gina Herrity, meanwhile, is in Haiti with Viatores Christi. "She is working with children who have been abandoned because they have a disability. She is doing remarkable, life-changing work in Haiti," she says.

"In Peru we have the Columbans, we have the Good Shepherd Sisters working in India, we have the Presentation Sisters," she says, adding that the Daughters of Charity are "doing absolutely brilliant work in Kenya" where they are helping to care for those suffering from HIV and AIDS. "There are so many both male and female congregations," she says.

"The Irish know both sides of this story: we know what it's like to be displaced, we know what it's like to have lost everything, and Ireland as a country, for such a small country is such a generous country, with a very long and proud tradition of supporting poorer countries."

"It's that Irish legacy," she says.