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### Celebrating Union Life

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Greetings and welcome to this edition of Celebrating Union Life. It is a Special Edition as it has a special focus celebrating the declaration of Nano as Venerable.

It is the season of Spring in this part of the world and there are many signs of new growth budding to life. For many of us, Spring is a time of renewal and growth, which brings with it a sense of optimism for the remainder of the year to come.

In recent months, as we experienced bad storms in this part of the globe, we were mindful of what the people of the Philippines experienced when on 8 November 2013; the worst storm in their history devastated their country. Typhoon Haiyan displaced an estimated four million people – a number equivalent to the population of some entire countries. In this edition Flerida Lawerence Demegillo (Friend of Nano) in her article movingly describes how our Congregation, touched by the situation and challenged by our mission to work for the poor and the needy, responded to the call of the sufferings of the typhoon victims. In Flerida’s words the motto of our foundress, Nano Nagle, “Not words but deeds” was given life.

We take a visit to Thailand to look at the work being undertaken with children and young people in Fang. This Centre gives children the hope of a better future through education and spiritual support.

In Ireland much attention has been focused on the declaration of Nano Nagle as Venerable, but there are other things to celebrate such as the Bicentenary of the Presentation Sisters in Drogheda. Sisters in the Co Louth town held a programme of events throughout 2013 and into 2014 to celebrate this remarkable milestone.

Of the recent exhortation of Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel), Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Westminster, reflecting on the document, notes that, “He [the Pope] encourages us to rediscover the joy, hope and enthusiasm of the gospel message. In this document the Pope says many encouraging, challenging and rather startling things about living the Christian life. For example he says: ‘There are Christians whose lives seem like Lent without Easter’.” The Pope also states that, ‘An evangelizer must never look like someone who has just come back from a funeral’.” Nichols comments further by saying that, “The Church has always taught that the evangelizer first needs to be evangelized; we cannot give away joyfully what we do not joyfully treasure. Lent, is an opportunity for us to recover again in a fresh and new way, a heart brimming with a joy and confidence in Christ and the power of the gospel, the gospel which changes lives and transforms our world.”

http://www.alivepublishing.co.uk/bible-alive-articles/the-joy-of-the-gospel

We ask God to guide our efforts at renewing our lives this Lent and pray that it will be a time of growth in the Spirit and in the spirit of Venerable Nano for all of us.

May we continue scattering God’s joy and love in all the circumstances of our lives. May you be blessed with hope, peace and joy at Easter and always.

Nuala

Congregational Secretary
When Pope Francis declared Presentation founder Nano Nagle Venerable on 31 October 2013 there was a huge amount of celebration amongst Presentation Congregations, friends and associates across the globe.

Congregational Leader, Sr Mary Deane, said: “We are delighted with the news. By proclaiming Nano Nagle as venerable, the Universal Church has recognised Nano as a woman of faith, hope and heroic virtue whose vision and work transformed the lives of so many. For our Sisters, Associates and Friends of Nano throughout the world, Nano has been and continues to be a source of inspiration and challenge as we respond to the needs of today in fidelity to the Gospel and in the spirit of Nano.”

Despite the date - Hallowe’en in Ireland - being one of the busiest news days of the year, Ireland’s National broadcaster RTE, hailed Venerable Nano Nagle on its television and radio news broadcasts and the following day all of the country’s national newspapers ran stories about Nano’s elevation to venerable.

From humble beginning in Cove Lane in Cork in the 1700s, Venerable Nano had arisen to take her place of belonging within the Universal Church.

The main international celebration of the International Presentation Congregation, took place, fittingly, on the Feast of the Presentation of the blessed Virgin Mary, 21 November 2013, in the Church where Nano herself used to pray in Cork, St Finbarr’s South Parish Church.

Many other celebrations and tributes took place around the world and in this special edition of Celebrating Union Life, we take the opportunity to share details of many of them.
Presentation Day 2013 - A Day of Reflection, Celebration, Hospitality and Pilgrimage

Presentation Day dawned bright and crisp in Cork city, Ireland, on 21 November 2013 and the breath of Nano could be felt in the sunshine that brightened a crisp winter morning. Sisters, associates and friends gathered for the International Celebration of the declaration as Venerable of the Presentation Sister’s founder, Nano Nagle with a day of reflection, celebration, hospitality and pilgrimage.

Events began with an intimate gathering in South Presentation Graveyard, where invited guests gathered for a service at Nano’s grave in South Presentation Graveyard. It was an inter-cultural and inter-congregational affair as guests from different countries and a broad religious spectrum gathered to honour Nano at her graveside.

After a moving prayer service, Bishop John Buckley, Bishop of Cork and Ross, and Sr Rosario blessed Nano’s tomb with holy water and then guests, led by the Army Band, processed towards St Finbarr’s (South Parish) Church for a Celebratory Mass.

The church was beautifully prepared and decorated in advance by the local altar society and it was bathed in low winter sun which streamed in through the windows and illuminated those gathered in the very church where Nano herself once prayed.

Those not present were also able to attend through a live stream, which began a few minutes before the ceremony commenced. Sr Mary Hoare, Provincial Leader of the South West Province, welcomed attendees and virtual visitors with warm words of gathering. Pupils from Scoil Aiseiri Chriost danced beautifully towards the altar bearing the flags of countries in which Presentation congregations are
This was followed by an opening procession of meaningful items. Sr Anne Lyons narrated the presentation of soil from Nano’s birthplace in Ballygriffin, water from the Cork rivers Blackrock and Lee, both of which were pivotal in Nano’s life, the Earthball, Presentation Book of Life, and South Presentation Annals. All the items remained on the altar for the duration of the service.

The Venerable Nano hymn, composed by Sr Cecilia Molloy for the occasion, then burst forth from the choir and the congregation joined in with great enthusiasm as the celebrant and concelebrants processed to the altar to begin Mass.

Bishop Buckley celebrated the Mass. Bishops Denis Nulty from Kildare & Leighlin and William Crean from Cloyne concelebrated along with a large number of priests with connections to Nano from Cork and other areas of Ireland.

A reflection after the Gospel was given by Sr Lucy Troy, Postulator for the Cause of Nano Nagle, who offered a moving tribute to Nano and the journey towards her declaration as Venerable.

Congregational Leader of the Presentation Sisters Union, Mary Deane spoke movingly at the end of Mass where she paid tribute to people who, in years past and more recently, worked tirelessly for the cause of Nano Nagle.

She said: “The flame was lit by Nano here in Cork over two hundred years ago and has since been carried all over the world. One of the privileges of my role are the opportunities I have to visit our sisters and communities throughout the world, to see, and to experience the many ways that Nano’s commitment to education, to the care of the vulnerable and powerless and to the transformation of unjust systems are being lived out today in the various contexts and in a world very different to hers.
I have been deeply moved and challenged by the ways in which Nano’s story is being shared and lived out today by countless women and men who have been captured by her vision, her passion and the witness of her life. Today we are called as followers of Jesus inspired by the life, vision and mission of Nano to continue to fan the flame."

Mary’s words were followed by a Missioning Ceremony in which representatives of Presentation Communities from around Ireland and the world carried a banner and accepted a lantern as a reminder to fan the flame and carry Nano’s light forward into the future.

Celebratory Mass was followed by lunch. It is not an easy feat to provide lunch for several hundred people but thanks to the organisational skills of local representatives of the Venerable Nano Steering Group it was achieved seamlessly at two different locations close to the Church.

Almost immediately after the service Pilgrimages in Nano’s Footsteps began at South Presentation Convent. Sr Una Burke, Sr Mary Leonard (Nano Nagle Commission) and many other sisters and friends shared places, relics and stories of Nano with hundreds of visitors until daylight faded and the day of Celebration faded into an evening of memories of a wonderfully fitting tribute to Venerable Nano Nagle.

The Venerable Nano Steering Group was made up of Sisters Frances Murphy, Lillie O’Reilly, Anne Coffey, Trinita Laffan, Una Burke, Mary O’Brien, Nuala Horan and lay members Noel Keating, David Rose, Aisling Harmey and Helen O’Donnell. The Venerable Nano Liturgy Group comprised Helen O’Donnell and Sisters Anne Lyons, Margaret Coleman and Cecilia Molloy.

[ Aisling Harmey ]

Joining Together in Person and Spirit

Many sisters, friends and associates joined the Presentation Sisters in person for the moving International Celebration in Cork on Presentation Day.

Eada Hogan, a pupil from Scoil Chriost Ri in Portlaoise was one of those who travelled to St Finbarr’s, South Parish Church and read a Prayer of the Faithful during the ceremony. She shared some of her experiences of the day with Celebrating Union Life:

“We journeyed by train alongside a hundred or more Presentation Sisters who were as excited about the day as we were. One thing that struck me was that everyone seemed to know each other and it occurred to me that these Presentation Sisters are not just part of a religious order, they are in fact members of a community. A loving, caring family that live their lives following the light of Nano Nagle.

Everyone was included in the ceremony, from primary school children, to sisters that had travelled from far and wide. As I

Sr Maureen Skelly, Sr Anne O’Leary and Sr Winnie Hartnett
stood at the lectern looking down at the congregation, I saw the pride in their faces, the joy that the Lady of the Lantern had finally been recognised for her achievements. The service was a true representation of the Nagle motto, Not Words but Deeds.

I learned about Nano Nagle in school but on the 21st of November 2013 in St. Finbarr’s South Church I was educated on the Presentation Sisters. The community of people who live just as Nano did, with profound strength, love and compassion.

On that day I realised that Nano’s flame would never be extinguished, that the light of the Lady of the Lantern lives on in all of us.”

Not there in person but present in a virtual sense thanks to the miracle of Live-Streaming were sisters Sharon Fagan from Newfoundland and Regina Daly from New Zealand.

Sr Sharon outlined the feeling engendered by sharing in the celebration from thousands of miles away: “As we viewed the event there were tears and smiles at seeing the dancers lead us into celebration, at knowing Sr. Elena Hoye brought the support of IPA to the event, at listening to the inspiring words of Lucy Troy and Mary Deane, at hearing of the involvement of the parishioners, and at watching the closing procession where we recognized our own Sandy Butler, who was present to represent our Congregation at this event.

When the first four sisters travelled from Galway to Newfoundland in 1833 to found the first foundation outside of Ireland Nano’s desire to be of service in any part of the world became a reality. As we watched Sandy and Sr. Kathleen Fahey, from the Galway community, carry the banner and lantern from the Church amidst so many other banners representing the various Presentation foundations throughout the world, we could certainly hear Nano saying once again "There is no greater happiness than to be in Union."

Sr Regina was equally moved in New Zealand: “For me, it’s difficult to find words to describe the joy in my heart when the live streaming began. There was such an exciting buzz as people gathered and greeted

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*A tweet sent out from the International Celebration by Colaiste Bride*
each other with great life and energy. The picture was really clear and apart from a little short pause once or twice, it went without a hitch. I prayed in thanksgiving for the people who made this possible for all of us.

Mary Hoare’s beautiful words of welcome gathered us all into one hospitable space and hearts were connected for this very special celebration. It was so moving to see the children arriving, dancing their way up the aisle with their little flags of the world. Energy from Ballygriffin was present too and it was so beautiful to see so many familiar faces as the ceremony unfolded with such ease, beauty, depth and joy. Cecilia’s song set the celebratory atmosphere and Nano’s words touched my heart: ‘I take such delight in knowing how my little dream has evolved right across the globe.’

Having the opportunity to participate in such a significant celebration was certainly a graced time, each moment brought its own beauty and inspiration and left me with so much richness to savour.

I felt the closeness of all those gone before us, I was full of joy and at times moved to tears. It will be wonderful to enjoy it again on video and to reflect more on Lucy’s inspiring words and Mary’s concluding address. Bernadette’s dance took me beyond words into an experience of oneness, a deep connectedness of the heart. The Missioning Ceremony captured the essence of Nano’s words “If I could be of any service in anywhere in the world….” Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the celebrations and congratulations to each one who made it such a meaningful celebration for all involved near and far.”

Presentation Communities around the world held, and continue to hold their own celebrations to mark the Declaration of Venerable Nano Nagle.

In this special edition of Celebrating Union Life we make a brief visit to some of those celebrations to share with readers.

**Ecuador: Latin America**

On a gloriously sunny February morning in Guamani Bajo in the southern outskirts of the city of Quito, Ecuador. It is the Feast of the Presentation of Jesus in Temple and the day that the Presentation sisters who live in Ecuador choose to celebrate the declaration of Nano Nagle as Venerable. A beautiful and worthy environment was created the evening before with the help of local people. Images of Nano had pride of place along with floral arrangements and delicately falling cloths to soften the surrounds.

Simplicity marked the liturgy and the story unfolded during celebration of the Eucharist, carefully prepared to reflect the day in its richness. Songs, readings and prayers captured the mood, symbols of the lantern, the globe and the heart were presented with dance and great solemnity.

The celebration came to a close when the celebrants Fr Neville and Fr Roberto called forward Margaret McCarthy, Eileen.
Quirke, Mary Ivers, Marcela Cruz and Catherine Codd for a silent reflection on Chris Skinner’s Nano Song, printed in Spanish in the Mass booklet and played in English at the celebration.

Breakfast followed and present were Tim and Phil Lane and Mairead King who had represented the Latin American unit at the International Celebration in Cork in November.

[Submitted by Sr Catherine Codd, Quito]

**Perambur: India**

The community at Perambur planned to celebrate this unique event in a special way that shared the joy not just amongst themselves but also with the extended community in the parish and school. A Eucharistic celebration was organised at the parish level, on the evening of the 20th November 2013.

Staff, students, parents, Friends of Nano, Sisters from other congregations in the parish and parishioners were all invited to join celebrations. The church – filled to capacity - was beautifully and artistically decorated with flowers and banners. A gold framed new picture of Nano was installed in a prominent place. The choir rendered melodious singing and Parish Priest, Rev Father Joe Andrew, celebrated the Mass. It was a solemn celebration with a welcome and introduction by Sister Agnela, Animator, to thank the people for their presence and to thank God for the exaltation of our Mother Foundress and to share in joy. At the conclusion of the Eucharist a souvenir of Nano and a piece of cake was distributed to all present. Special invitees were treated to a wonderful supper in the convent.

[Submitted by Sr Agnela, Animator]

**Egmore: India**

The Community at Egmore celebrated with a Eucharistic Celebration in November joined by staff of schools, pupils, parents, Friends of Nano, parishioners and members of other religious congregations from nearby convents and parishes.

A solemn procession was led by Community Animator, Sr Mary Augustine, carrying the picture of Nano and a lantern followed by representatives from various groups. The liturgy was carefully prepared and the Parish Priest, Fr Balasamy, gave a brief account of early beginnings in India and thanked all sisters for their services. After Mass souvenirs were distributed to all and special invitees joined the sisters for a meal. Another event organised to mark the declaration at Egmore was a special event held for the children from the nearby Arunima Home for the destitute and prisoner’s children from St Anne’s Convent in Pudupet. Around 25 children joined the sisters, Friends of Nano and teachers for a joyful celebration of games, a meal and the distribution of prizes and gifts for participants.

[Submitted by Sr Mary Augustine, South East Circle, Indian Unit]
Following the announcement by Pope Francis on 31 October 2013, Sisters in Patna shared the joy on Presentation Day, 21 November 2013 with the wider Catholic community in the area through a celebration at Queen of the Apostles Church in Kurji. Later in the day there was a gathering of the urban poor. The life of Nano was shared and people paid tribute to Venerable Nano who dared to listen and make a change in her lifestyle. Those listening were inspired to hear that when Nano’s funds ran out she had no hesitation in going begging in order to fulfill the mission she had taken upon herself.

[Submitted by Sr Dorothy Fernandes, Indian Unit]

**Zambia: Africa Unit**

The African Unit celebrated Presentation Day this year with an extra celebration for the declaration of Nano Nagle as Venerable. Four groups – Kabanga, Mongu, Kaoma, Kambangwe and Lusaka – started praying the Novena for nine days at a different member’s house each day. The Friends of Nano group lived their mission by building a small house for a local old lady and they came together on 21 November 2013 to roof this house, followed by the celebration of Mass there by Fr Mubanga. Money was also contributed towards food and clothing for the old lady.

On the same day sisters visited disabled children at the Mongu Cheshire Home and prayed with them and the planting of trees brought the celebration of Presentation Day to a close.

[Submitted by Sr Inez Fernandez, Africa Unit]

**Negros: Philippines**

After celebrating with pupils of Binalbagan College on 20 November 2013, sisters from the Talaban Community prepared for an outreach
programme and served lunch for prisoners of the Himamaylan City Jail together with lay associates, teachers and students. Simultaneously the sisters, lay associates teachers and some students from Binalbagan Community did the same in Binalbagan Jail.

That afternoon was a highlight of the Venerable Nano celebration as sisters started their programme with the community Pilgrim dance with the song entitled One. It was followed by messages, community singing, trivia games and a finale of interpretive dance by the Parolitas (Associates, Friends of Nano).

[Submitted by Sr Mildred Soldevilla, Talaban Community]

**Chennai: India**

A wonderful portrait of Nano was unveiled as part of Venerable Nano celebrations by sisters of the South East Circle who gathered in the Sacred Heart Matriculation HR Secondary School Hall last December. The Archbishop of Madras Mylapore, Most Rev Dr George Antonysamy unveiled the beautiful portrait on behalf of the South East Circle leadership team.

The Honorary Consul for Ireland in Chennai, Rajeev Mecheri, was a guest and spoke on how an individual’s contribution can bring about a transformation in society. The entertainment programme for the evening was prepared by Presentation Schools in Chennai and included musical performances and other delightful offerings.

[Submitted by Sr Margaret Power, South-East Circle, Indian Unit]

**Cebu: Philippines**

Though the congregation was rejoicing it was a challenging time for Cebu in the Philippines as the announcement of Venerable Nano came a mere two weeks after a devastating earthquake. Then only two weeks after the announcement a terrifying typhoon hit the region. Those to whom the sisters in Cebu minister were spared serious problems in the midst of these calamities but the sisters decided that instead of having a large meal for guests on Presentation Day that they would take the money and donate it to the victims of these natural disasters. The Sisters instead set up a Sacred Space in the Chapel and celebrated the Liturgy for Presentation Day followed by a Eucharistic celebration. The celebration was prayerful and joyful with the renewal of vows of the sisters, renewal of commitment for one year of the old Parolitas and the pledge of commitment of the 18 new Parolitas. This was followed by an agape meal shared by everybody.

[Submitted by Sr Evelyn Flanagan, Nivel Hills Community, Cebu]

**Spisske Podhradie: Slovakia**

On Presentation Day this year sisters in Slovakia held a programme of talks, speakers and Mass. It was a special day for Roma woman Marcela Bendikova, who has been working in the Nano Nagle
Centre in Slovakia with the sisters for the last five years, she started at the centre under an employment scheme and now works full-time in many different ways to help those in need including helping children who only speak Roma to learn Slovak so that they can qualify to attend school.

This year, Marcela gave an explanation of the Nano Nagle icon by Desmond Kyne to those attending. It was the first time that Marcela had ever undertaken a public speaking project and she said she felt a great sense of satisfaction from doing so.

[Submitted by Sr Anne McNamara, Slovakia]

Venerable Nano school celebrations

Celebrations to mark Nano Nagle being declared Venerable took place in Presentation Schools around the world and are continuing to take place.

Here we take a whirlwind tour through a selection of those celebrations.

Jammu: India

Jammu in India chose its 59th Annual Day on 1 November 2013 to mark the announcement of the declaration of Nano Nagle as Venerable. The theme of the special day befitted the previous day’s announcement as it challenged everyone to carry forward the lantern of light that can make people catalysts in society rather than followers of the crowd. The programme was centred around a symphony of the sacred elements with a special stress on the conservation of water.

At the grand finale vibrant participants echoed with one voice: “We are going to save the world tonight” and performed the song, Who Will Light the Lantern if We Don’t. The air in Jammu was filled with a sense of gratitude, love and devotion to the woman of grace, the woman of Light – Venerable Nano.

[Submitted by Sr Rosamma, Presentation Convent, Jammu]

Chennai: India

Sacred Heart Matriculation Hr Secondary School in Chennai hosted a combined celebration for all Presentation Schools in the region with a show that portrayed glimpses of
Nano’s life and times. An art competition was held in the school in January 2014 to commemorate the ongoing celebrations with the theme of “Nano Nagle – Our Inspiration.”

[Submitted by Sr Lisetta, Principal of Sacred Heart Matriculation Hr Secondary School]

Carrick-on-Suir: Ireland South East

As part of Bicentenary celebrations in Carrick-On-Suir a plaque was unveiled in the grounds of Presentation Primary School in December 2013. During the ceremony a lantern was lit by pupils Rachel and Jodie - who were the school’s representatives at the Venerable Nano International Celebration in Cork - to mark the declaration of Nano Nagle as Venerable.

[Submitted by Sr Veronica Casey]

Chennai: India

St Ursula’s Anglo Indian HR Secondary School celebrated Venerable Nano Nagle in January 2014 with a week of events that included powerpoint presentations, poetry writing, singing and painting and poster making. All classes were enthusiastic in their artistic portrayals of Venerable Nano Nagle.

[Submitted by Ms Jean D’Monte]

Clondalkin: Ireland South East

Scoil Bride in Clondalkin, Dublin, held ceremonies featuring a ceremony of light, parade of mask, passing on of words of wisdom, a prayer service, choir performance and keynote speech by Sr Gemma McKevitt. Representatives from the school attended the international celebration in Cork.

[Courtesy of Scoil Bride website and Twitter account]

Kilkenny: Ireland South East

where head girl Anna Walsh prepared and delivered a speech honouring Venerable Nano at celebrations. She said: “This year we have a very special reason to celebrate Presentation Day. Nano Nagle has been declared Venerable by Pope Francis. You can see that our Mass booklet is now entitled Venerable Nano. In our Church the title is bestowed on a person of exceptional goodness. It marks the completion of the second stage of the process for being canonised as a Saint. In time, please God, the titles of Blessed and Saint will be conferred on Venerable Nano. Today, in our Mass, we pray that an abundance of graces and blessings will flow to the Presentation Sisters as a result of the public recognition of this heroic woman.”

[Submitted by Anna Walsh, Presentation Secondary School, Kilkenny]

Chennai: India

St Kevin’s Anglo-Indian High School chose 7 February 2014 as a day to commemorate Nano Nagle’s declaration as Venerable. Celebrations began with a floral tribute and continued to an inspiring mime The Call, performed by students of class VIII which depicted the life of Nano Nagle as a woman of great faith, valour and strength.

[Submitted by Sr Vinita, Royapuram, Chennai]

Chennai: India

At St Aloysious AI HR secondary School in the celebration of the declaration was marked with the organisation of a Thanksgiving Eucharistic Celebration with sisters, students and former students, parents, staff members and Friends of Nano. The Celebrants were Rev Fr Patrick I Joseph, Parish Priest of St. Joseph’s Church, Vepery, Rev Fr Inbanathan, Assistant Parish Priest and Rev Fr Jebamalai, Parish Priest of St. Andrew’s Church, Choolai.

The Mass began with a procession with Sr.Mangalam, the community animator, carrying the portrait of Nano Nagle, the children dressed as sisters carrying lanterns, representing the 18 countries, the Community members and one representative from each category holding candles. As the procession reached the aisle, the history, life and mission of our Foundress was read. As the choir sang the hymn, “Nano, daughter of our God,” the sisters placed the lanterns and the candles at the picture of Nano Nagle and the statue of Mother Mary. Then Sr.Mangalam placed a garland on Nano.

[Submitted by Sr. Josie, South East Circle, Indian Unit]
Negros: Philippines

On 20 November 2013 the High School department of Binalbagan College in Southern Negros delivered a short programme in honour of Our Lady and Venerable Nano. The highlight of the programme was a parade of Nano’s lantern – one girl from each class section dressed like Nano and brought the lantern on stage. Later that afternoon the three school departments (Elementary, High School and College) along with sisters, faculty and staff of Binalbagan College gathered together for a Lantern Walk from the college campus and around the main streets of the town. Afterwards students went back to their campus for their taize prayer.

[Submitted by Sr Mildred Soldevilla, Negros]

Perambur: India

St John’s Nursery Primary School held assemblies and prepared environmental projects as part of their celebrations of Venerable Nano. St Joseph’s School in Perambur composed essays and poems on Nano’s inspiration, enacted Nano’s life history, displayed art work and visited local orphanages, old-age homes and the sick to carry on Nano’s good work.

[Submitted by Sr Agnela, Local Animator]

Castlecomer: Ireland

News from the Vatican that Nano Nagle was being declared Venerable got our classes thinking about the steps Nano took in her life to make the world a better place, in particular in the field of education.

During our assembly for the Feast Day, pupils, staff, Monsignor Ryan and Fr Campion were in for a surprise! Our principal, Margaret Maxwell, returned from Cove Lane in Cork with a slideshow of wonderful photographs. She took them on her visit to Nano’s first school, and generously shared them with us. Having re-read Nano’s life-story in class, and having studied the icon, pupils were familiar with what inspired her and her work. However, these photographs of Nano’s workplace – still preserved after 250 years, were a more visceral reminder of the challenges facing Nano as she set out on her path as educator.

Each November is a great opportunity to take pride and rejoice in the Presentation ethos. To highlight this, pupils presented the following symbols at the 2013 celebration: a book to tell us about Nano’s life story; a globe to remind us that the Presentation order is right around the world; a lantern to shed light on the power of education and faith; oak leaves – the symbol of the Presentation order; a bible - Nano followed the Gospel faithfully; a special candle from Ballygriffin – this reminds us of Nano’s upbringing – how close she was to nature. ‘Mary, Our Mother’ was sung to honour Nano’s devotion to Mary.

[Submitted by Presentation Convent NS, Castlecomer]
You didn’t have
to live like that, Nano.
You didn’t have
to spend all your days
and countless nights
seeking out the “the least” –
the little ones,
clad in rags, sniffing,
dirty and ignorant in the slums
and dark corners of the city.
No normal person, Nano,
would go to such lengths
to love.
But you were not normal, Nano.
You were possessed
and driven by God – calling you into
A great Love-conspiracy-
to make a difference
in a hurting world,
leaving all of us,
timid and doubting souls,
with a legacy of miracles –
born and forged from your
courage, determination and
deep, hidden suffering.

What divine seduction led you, Nano
to turn from wealth, privilege
and comfort
to take an untrod path
with the poor, the homeless and
the uneducated?
What kind of love-affair-
discipleship gone mad -
turned your life around,
propelling you from
light, glitter and glory
into darkness, terror and pain?

Your first response
to the horror of utter poverty,
was to enclose yourself
within safe convent walls in France-
to pray for the poor souls who
had filled your heart
with pity and compassion.

But it was not enough.
You succumbed, Nano,
to the Love-conspiracy-
the whisper in your soul
which would not let you rest -
safely ensconced within convent walls.
Reluctantly, yet with a deep
inner knowing of certitude,
you returned to Ireland
and your birthplace in Cork.

It was a violent and dark time
in Irish history.
Your people were living under
the ruthless oppression of
a brutal Penal Code
which deprived them of
their land and human rights,
leading to a desperate poverty and
wide-spread misery.

But your family – of noble heritage –
were rich and privileged, Nano.
You could have simply become
a generous philanthropist -
handling out food and aims
from behind your secure, warm walls.
That would have been safe,
commended, and applauded as
generous...
But it was not enough, Nano, for the insatiable
Conspiracy of Love
which had seized your soul and led you to later declare:
“Spend yourselves for the poor...”

So you began to steal out from your lovely home,
gathering the children from their hovels and their dark and dirty corners,
setting up secret schools to teach reading, writing and religious education –
honouring the fundamental right of all to education.

It was a dangerous business, Nano. Penal laws denied Catholic education and those who violated the harsh Penal Law could be severely punished. But you were driven by a far greater law, Nano – love one another - no matter what... no matter what...

And so you continued your mission, against all odds, and in the face of the fear and horror you saw all around. Eventually, supported and financed by your family, your schools grew and multiplied, offering education, alms and hope to hundreds of children.

But hostilities and criticism also grew and multiplied. Many perceived your work as a danger and threat that could bring down retaliation on the Catholic population from their Protestant oppressors. Undeterred, Nano, you responded: “The best works meet with the greatest crosses... we must expect to suffer.”

And indeed you did, Nano. Tirelessly, constantly you visited and taught in every school, your TB wracked body surrounded by the nauseous smell of the rags and the unwashed bodies of the children you came to love.

After school you visited the old, the sick and the hungry in their disease-ridden slums, returning, as night fell, clutching your lantern, to pray in the small mud hut that was now your home. There you prayed, Nano, hour after hour, the pain of your sickened body eclipsed by the ardent passion of the great Love Conspiracy that kept your soul shining in the darkness - sole witness to your whisper: “The Almighty is all sufficient...”

But in the silence of your vigil you came to know, Nano, that you could not continue alone. Your great service of love needed the hearts and hands of others...

And so began the community of dedicated women, known today as: The Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Your life and legacy, Nano, carried into the future - the light of your lantern now shining through the centuries.

Blessed are you, Nano, lover of the poor and lost, Blessed are you!

May your sisters continue to shine your light in dark spaces, loving one another, and keeping alive – your great conspiracy of Love.

Edwina Gately (2014)

Edwina is a poet, theologian, artist, writer, lay minister, modern-day mystic and prophet, and a single mother.
International Celebration in Cork
Sr Salome tells Celebrating Union Life the story of how a Centre in Fang, Thailand is enriching the lives of local children.

We have completed writing our founding history for Thailand which we sent to the Heritage Centre in Cork and our document concludes with the following quote:

“Hope is not that something will work well, But the certainty that something makes sense Regardless of how it turns out”

Vaclav Havel

It is this hope that is holding together this mission and urging us to visit a typical day in our life in light of the Direction of our Congregational Gathering 2012.

Since our beginnings in 1999 and in particular from 2006, after the appointment of the new parish priest, Claudio Cortie, we have been working in collaboration with a wider intercultural/international community of nine groups of people, Akha, Lahu, Lisu, Indian, Italian, Karian, Pakistani, Philippina and Thaiyai. Our people have their roots in immigrant tribes from Myanmar, stateless and looked down upon by Thai society.

Our day begins at 5.30 am when we wake up to the chirping of the birds which soon mingles with the chitter-chatter and laughter of 120 girls and boys aged between six and 17 who dwell at the centre. They get through all the processes of washing and dressing with energy and liveliness. Then, according to their age, they proceed toward their respective rooms to sing, praise and pray psalms to the creator God who has taken on the face and features of Northern Thailand, and who dearly loves and cherishes them. This is in contrast to what they experience in society outside their tribe.
They eat their breakfast of rice and soup somewhat quickly in order to be ready for school on time. Before leaving they come together again to greet all the centre staff by name: priests, sisters, wardens, helpers, catechists and cooks. Then, they pack themselves like sardines into the mission pick-up which makes four trips to get them all to school on time for school assembly at 8am. They eat their lunch in the school which is paid for by the mission.

After the day in school, learning through the medium of a new language - at home they speak their tribal languages - and sitting beside Thai children, they are happy to get back to the mission centre, between 3.50 and 4.45pm when they play for a while and then start cleaning up the places and rooms used by them and undertaking other chores. All are hungry by 6pm and ready for their evening meal.

Teachers from local schools, appointed by the mission, come to the centre at 7pm to teach or help them with their home-work, especially with the Thai language, mathematics and science. Usually Sisters help them with English homework. Then, they return to their respective study rooms where they are helped by their constant companions, four women, two men wardens and three helpers to complete the work and get ready for school the next day. At the end of a busy day they look forward to getting to bed at 9pm.

At weekends their activities include, Bible class, catechism lessons, extra-curricular skills like keyboard, guitar, Thai cooking, Thai dance, sports and bible club. Many of them can play the the musical instruments very well by the time they reach secondary school.

These are children who are used to fishing and hunting birds in the mountains and so life in the mission is a constant struggle for them. But, as years go by, it’s amazing to see them grow beautifully into adulthood.

Nearly all who have received their education through this centre are able to move to the cities and take a professional course of their choice in Don Bosco Technical Institute, Bangkok, Ban Marina sewing centre, Chiang Mai and other cities. Supported by the mission they secure a good job as soon as they finish their courses. Some of them are well placed in life, as nursing aids, staff nurses or running private businesses.
in tailoring. Boys usually work in companies in cities. One particular girl, Saen Chada, deserves a special mention here because she has graduated from college as a teacher and is now employed in a recognized school. In the evenings she gives free tuition to the children of her village, in keeping with a promise she made in her teens that she would work for the betterment of her own Akha community.

Thoughts of Venerable Nano Nagle rise up!

Sisters are responsible for the daily all-round development and all the activities for both children and staff in the mission, in collaboration with the priests and the staff. There are regular meetings to review, evaluate, plan and encourage wholesome growth in children. A Sister’s day involves the mission outreach programme from the centre, going to one or more of the seven villages, sometimes for overnight visits, of distances between 20 and 95 km away. Sisters, catechist and a carefully selected group of secondary school students, trained by sisters, go to some villages every evening after school to teach bible stories, catechism, as well as aspects of health and hygiene to children who go to nearby state schools. Our ministry also extends to the needs of women and children, nutrition, education and healthy family life.

The year 2012 was a very special and blessed year for us because for the first time we had a delegate participating in the Congregational Gathering. Later in October the first group of Friends of Nano Nagle was formed. They wish to name their group, ‘In Solidarity with the Presentation’. The title sounds beautiful in Thai. More good news followed when Sr Jennie Clifford and Katherine Loughman, GEE coordinators, visited us with a view to conducting GEE programme in our mission. We are looking forward to having GEE programme for our children.

Thailand is Buddhist and its influence is seen everywhere even in the remotest mountain village. Buddhist precepts are taken as recommendations for ethical conduct which is left to the responsibility
of the individual. Perhaps we are the only Presentation community of the Union in a mainly Buddhist environment and country. We walk the path together. Sadly, however, in present day Thai society, these children are exposed to the dangers of prostitution, while drug addiction and drug trafficking are widespread in the area.

What is of interest to us here are the teachings/writings of ‘engaged Buddhism’ on meditation (stillness), being peace/touching peace, mindfulness, the energy of being aware, aware of the now moment’s invitation to begin anew within ourselves and in our relationship with others. The teaching of the Buddha on developing an all-embracing love and compassion for all the universe in all its height, depth and breadth is inspiring for us.

The Direction of Congregational Gathering 2012 sheds a new light, a new understanding on our life, mission and ministry as we continue to journey together with these simple, loving people, God’s beloved. In them God reveals hope, strength and new life for a bright future and they in turn make this mission a place of laughter, love and care.

Just a story to end. The disciple asked the holy one, “How does one seek union with God?” The holy one said, “Well, the harder you seek, the more distance you create between you and God”. “What does one do about the distance”, the disciple persisted, “We understand that it isn’t there”. The holy one said, “Does that mean that you are saying that God and I are one?” The holy one said, “Not one, not two”. “But how is it possible?” the disciple said. The holy one said, “The sun and its light, the ocean and its wave, the singer and his song, not one, not two.”

KhokkhunKha, Thank you.

Ireland
Drogheda Bicentenary

Presentation Sisters in Drogheda have celebrated 200 years of serving the Louth town with a year-long series of events throughout 2013.

Friends of Nano who organised the Celebration.
One of the highlight events was a specially commissioned and composed Mass in honour of Nano Nagle sung as a Mass of Thanksgiving in our Lady of Lourdes Church on 16 November 2013 last with Cardinal Seán Brady as celebrant. 

Mass was concelebrated by Archbishop Eamon Martin, Monsignor Jim Carroll, PP and local clergy from surrounding parishes and religious orders. The Mass was composed by Music teacher Gráinne Diskin and participants included orchestra and choirs from the Presentation primary and secondary schools in Drogheda. It was attended by pupils and teachers from the past and present. The Gathering Hymn for the Mass, Educare, was composed by Ursula Murphy, an English teacher at the secondary school.

The first event of the Bi-centenary took place a couple of weeks early, with the launch in December 2012 of the calendar: Presentation Community Celebrating 200 Years in Education in Drogheda 1813 – 2013.

In April 2013, for the 229th anniversary of Nano Nagle’s death, a Prayer Service was held which incorporated the Seed Dance to recall the memory of Nano and the seeds sown by so many sisters. The service was held in St Peter’s Cemetery to mark the lives of the 96 Presentation Sisters who have been buried there over the years. Those sisters who lived and worked in Drogheda are recalled with affection and gratitude for the legacy that they planted and which continues to inspire and bear fruit. The seeds continue to grow and flourish in Drogheda through schools and other ministries.

May Day 2013 was celebrated by launching a Bee and Butterfly Garden in Presentation Primary School, Ballymakenny. The launch included a dance and drama on the life of Nano Nagle.

A commemorative plaque marking the first
Presentation School in Drogheda was unveiled at number 12 Fair Street on the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, 7 June 2013. The first school was originally established in the basement of the Fair Street building. Later that month on 9 June a special Mass was celebrated in St Augustine’s Church to mark the Bi-centenary.

Much of the summer in Drogheda was spent designing and preparing a Quiet Space outdoors at Our Lady’s College, Greenhills to mark a commitment to the requirement for quiet and reflective time in a busy world.

Autumn was a busy time with the preparation and launch of Nano Nagle Prayer Cards for all students. A limited edition of Nano Nagle mugs were produced by the Leaving Cert Applied class of 2013, this group was also responsible for re-naming the library in Our Lady’s College The Nano Nagle Library.

During this period an Exhibition of photos and memorabilia of 200 Years of Presentation took place at Drogheda Library on Stockwell Street.

November was a particularly active month with several events occurring back-to-back. The Mass of Thanksgiving took place on the 16th and on the 18th the Dominican Contemplative Sisters from Sienna Convent invited the Presentation Community to recreation, a meal and evening prayer to mark their connection with the Presentation Sisters. Presentation’s agreement to take over education in Drogheda many years ago allowed the Dominican Sisters in the town to become Contemplative rather than active religious. The late Sr Catherine Clinton was a past pupil of Sienna.

On 21 November 2013, sisters and friends travelled to St Finbarr’s South Church in Cork to join the international celebration of Nano Nagle’s declaration as Venerable. The following day on 22 November the Annual Presentation Day Mass took place in Presentation Primary school in Ballymakenny.

December was also a busy month as a permanent exhibition of photographs to mark the Bi-centenary was placed in Our Lady’s College. The Annual Christmas Carol Service, incorporating the 238th Anniversary of the founding of the first Presentation Convent in Cork, took place in Drogheda on 18 December.

Finally, celebrations continue into 2014 as the joint choirs from the Mass of Thanksgiving sang for the opening of Catholic Schools Week in St Peter’s Church Drogheda on 26 January 2014. The Mass was broadcast by RTE.

Future events are proposed, including the naming of the road in Drogheda linking the Presentation and Christian Brothers school Nagle Rice Road after Nano Nagle and Edmund Rice.
NOT WORDS BUT DEEDS

When the Presentation Sisters responded to the needs of victims of Typhoon Yolanda in the Philippines, their actions did not go unnoticed. Friend of Nano, Mrs. Flerida Lawrence Demegillo, tells Celebrating Union Life what a difference it made.

November 8, 2013 was a day of discernment among us Filipinos. It was a nightmare. Typhoon Yolanda had caused tremendous havoc to lives and properties. It was also a day of prayer and reflection. Worst was, it was a day of misery and hopelessness among the victims of the typhoon.

For them, the future is bleak and life seems difficult for one to rise up from the ravages of the flood. What was left was the faith and the hope that a glow of light will be seen in this moment of darkness; hope that someone will come to reach out and help them put together their broken pieces so that they can be whole again in order to move on. But who will?

In Northern Iloilo, Northern Negros, and in Camotes Island in Cebu, many of the houses were swept to the ground. The people are homeless. They just put up shanties of what remained from the typhoon. Aid came in the form of food, clothing, medicines and many others but not shelter to protect them from the heat of the sun and the rain. What they need most are building materials to put up again their houses.

Unknowingly and unexpectedly a religious Congregation, touched by the situation and challenged by
their mission to work for the poor and the needy, responded to the call of the sufferings of the typhoon victims. This is the Presentation Sisters of Blessed Virgin Mary (PBVM), founded by Nano Nagle. From all over the world, the sisters sent donations to the Filipino people. Through the Presentation Sisters Philippine Vice Province donations were sent to the Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines (AMRSP), Redemptorists and to the affected areas in Northern Iloilo and Camotes Island. They personally distributed materials to restore the totally damaged houses by providing galvanized iron sheets, ridge rolls, umbrella nails and pieces of marine plywood enough to put up a decent house.

In Northern Iloilo alone, more than 120 totally damaged houses were rebuilt. As the victims received the materials, their hearts were full of joy, hope and gratitude. Sr. Teresita Garabato represented the congregation in Northern Iloilo and with her were Sisters Elizabeth Tronsal and Marylene Florentino. In Northern Negros was Sr. Aquila Sy and in Camotes Island in Cebu was Sr. Nenita Robledo.

For me, this is truly an act of mercy and compassion. The motto of their foundress, Nano Nagle, “not words but deeds” was given life. It was indeed making Nano Nagle alive in these sisters who reached out to the typhoon victims. Their presence was also a blessing to them, giving hope so that these victims can dream again. Much more they were an inspiration that this time of their lowest moment, they can only cling to one thing, their faith.

To the Presentation Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary, may your tribe increase and thank you very much.
First Professions

Bhopal on 25 November 2013
SR Liby Mol Augustine
SR Jenitha Chelladurai
SR Hema Mary Mariadoss
SR Magdalene Mary Santhanam
SR Esther Vijitha Siluvai
SR Jayasri Vadhanayagam

Pakistan on 21 January 2014
SR Fouzia Saleem
SR Mehwish Ilyas
SR Mehwish Javed
SR Neelum Shaheen
SR Saima Fazal

Zambia on 15 February 2014
SR Peggy Mudonga

Final Professions

Zambia on 7 December 2013
SR Ireen Likukela Mate
SR Mbololwa Ilinanga

We celebrate that you choose to carry Nano’s lantern
The busy world is hushed
The fever of life is over
And our work is done

Cardinal Newman

In death life is changed not ended
Lord hear our prayers for our loved ones who have died.

Hold them safely in your love
as they rest with you in your kingdom of light, happiness and peace’

Requiescant in Pace

2013/2014
Blessings and thanks to everyone who submitted the stories and photographs that go to make up this special edition of Celebrating Union Life. We are aware that celebrations of Nano as Venerable continue in many and varied ways across the world. We ask that you continue to submit your stories and pictures which we can share through our various communication channels.

Prayer for Help Through the Intercession of Venerable Nano Nagle

O Loving Creator God you filled the heart of Nano Nagle with a tenderness rooted in the compassionate Heart of Christ for the poor and the vulnerable of this world. Nano, through your prayer of intercession, assist us in our present need. (Pause) We pray that, like you, we may live in communion with God and with all of our sisters and brothers and the whole community of life.

Amen