

August 2021

There is a RTE radio programme called The South Wind Blows. I first discovered it years ago and I still love Philip King's very eclectic choice of music. It's broadcast from Dingle in the west Kerry Gaeltacht and in its own words it offers "music for the head and music for the heart"

Three years ago, a south wind blew someone very special our way and Nóirín arrived, bringing indeed, music for the head and music for the heart. We think of the south wind as being gentle, warming and fostering growth - and Noirín that is the very climate you created here in the Margaret Aylward Centre. You brought that beautiful but rare combination of values and skills. Having a vision is one thing, being able to bring it to fruition is an altogether different gift.

Under your direction this Centre has extended its reach to all corners of the globe - you have offered faith as an attractive, modern, relevant option for our world, as an answer to the questions of our times and as a support in lockdown days. We were offered the best of contemporary thinking in theology, ecology, spirituality, music indeed for the head and the heart. People were encouraged not just to think but to reflect, discern and pray, and on occasion to dance and to sing. The Centre was a place of welcome to all, a safe space to ponder and question. It was alright to be traditional but if your thinking was out on the edge, that was ok too!

John Henry Newman said, "to live is to change, to be perfect is to have changed often". Our ability to change with changing circumstances says a lot about us. The Covid Pandemic changed all our lives, but it is no exaggeration to say that it was the Centre's finest hour!! You gave us a most wonderful example of being creative with the given. The weekly 'hellos' that you sent out, with Geraldine's help, were a real connection and source of support, information, encouragement and joy.

The book clubs with Dermot Lane, Donal Dorr and Martina Lehane Sheehan gave more people the opportunity to participate than if the doors were open for years. Your expertise in technology and your generosity in sharing it benefitted us all and indeed gave me the courage to try things I would otherwise never attempt. You are an infinitely patient teacher.

Now you are going to the FCJs and we must remember that they are celebrating their Ignatius on Saturday next. They will find in you someone who already understands about finding God in all things, about the importance of a discerning way of life and sifting the spirits - not to mention of course some of Margaret Aylward's spirit and passion for the faith!

We are sorry to lose you, but we wish you every blessing and happiness. Today is the birthday of that great Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins and I want to use his words and entrust you to God's lovely, felicitous, providence.

Sr Rosaleen Cunniffe - Congregational Leader