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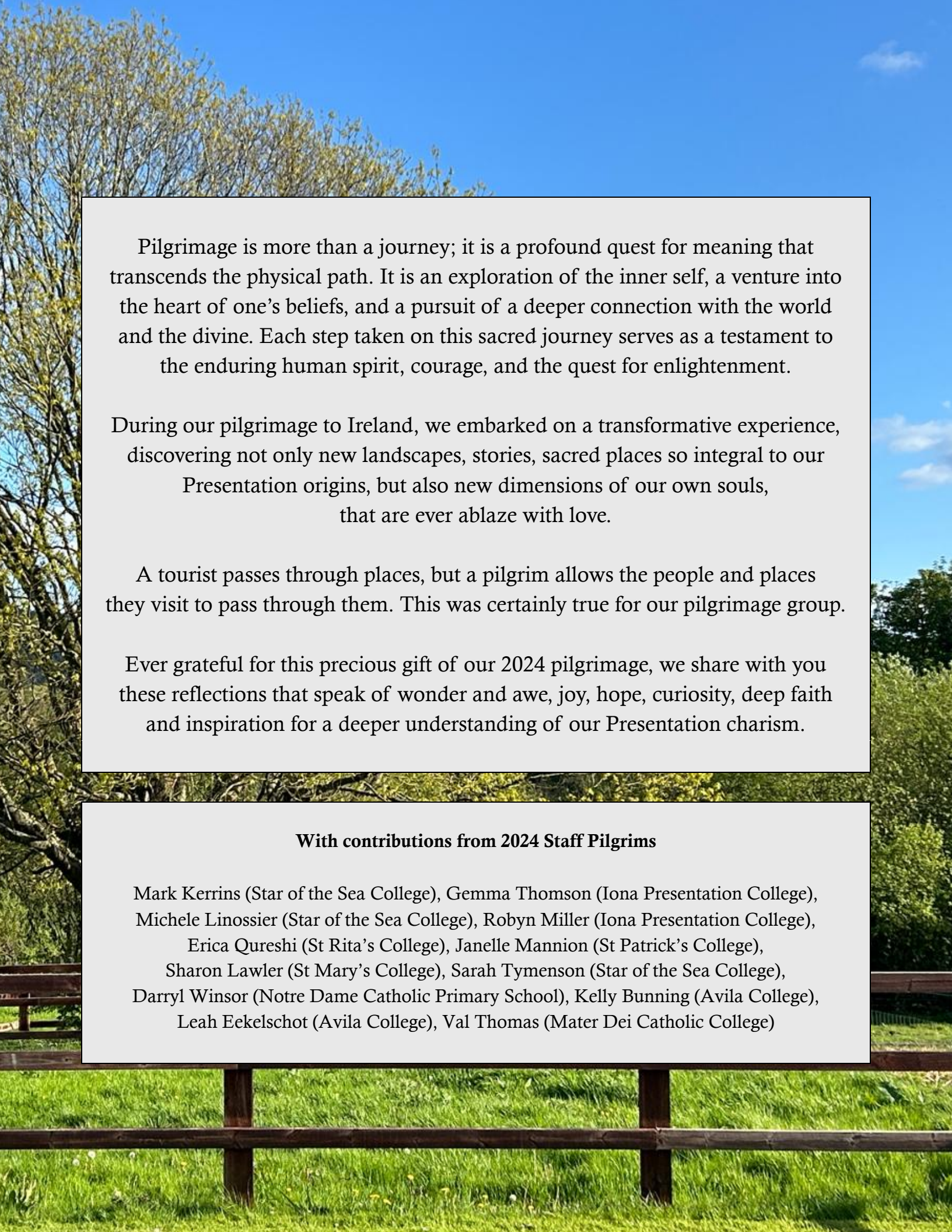
Nagle Education Alliance of Australia

2024 Pilgrimage to Ireland

Walking in the Footsteps of Nano Nagle

PILGRIM REFLECTION





Pilgrimage is more than a journey; it is a profound quest for meaning that transcends the physical path. It is an exploration of the inner self, a venture into the heart of one's beliefs, and a pursuit of a deeper connection with the world and the divine. Each step taken on this sacred journey serves as a testament to the enduring human spirit, courage, and the quest for enlightenment.

During our pilgrimage to Ireland, we embarked on a transformative experience, discovering not only new landscapes, stories, sacred places so integral to our Presentation origins, but also new dimensions of our own souls, that are ever ablaze with love.

A tourist passes through places, but a pilgrim allows the people and places they visit to pass through them. This was certainly true for our pilgrimage group.

Ever grateful for this precious gift of our 2024 pilgrimage, we share with you these reflections that speak of wonder and awe, joy, hope, curiosity, deep faith and inspiration for a deeper understanding of our Presentation charism.

With contributions from 2024 Staff Pilgrims

Mark Kerrins (Star of the Sea College), Gemma Thomson (Iona Presentation College), Michele Linossier (Star of the Sea College), Robyn Miller (Iona Presentation College), Erica Qureshi (St Rita's College), Janelle Mannion (St Patrick's College), Sharon Lawler (St Mary's College), Sarah Tymenson (Star of the Sea College), Darryl Winsor (Notre Dame Catholic Primary School), Kelly Bunning (Avila College), Leah Eekelschot (Avila College), Val Thomas (Mater Dei Catholic College)

Built on Deeds

Building Community Through Loving Service

Community is not built by wishful thinking. It is not achieved by dreaming. It does not come about simply by longing for a place of friendship, meaningful relationships, and solidarity. Neither is community achieved only by prayer.

Community, that fragile gift of commonality, is built on deeds. It comes about when people are prepared to love and serve each other. It emerges when we are prepared to find meaningful common goals and purposes. It grows when we can continue to find sufficient reasons to journey together. And it becomes rich when it encourages diversity within unity.

We cannot have a life together unless it comes to expression through practical care and service. And it cannot be sustained unless we respond to the call to lay aside our pride, priorities, and position and clothe ourselves with the garment of humility.

The secret of community lies not in its creative and enthusiastic genesis. It lies not in its great moments of celebration and revelation. Rather, it lies in the daily rhythm of faithful and joyful service.

"Dare to Journey with Henry Nouwen" by Charles Ringma

"Children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and truth."

(1 John 3:18) - from the Second Reading, 5th Sunday of Easter, April. 28, 2024



Days 1 – 4:

DUBLIN

Our pilgrimage began on Sunday evening with a short ritual led by our spiritual companion, Sister. Maria Lazzaro pbvm, followed by dinner at Ireland's oldest pub.

Our first full day was spent visiting the oldest Presentation school in Ireland at Georges Hill. Lunch was provided by the Presentation Sisters residing at Georges Hill. Our afternoon involved an exploration of Presentation history and a delve into the archives with Sr Marie-Therese King pbvm.

The International Presentation Symposium, hosted at the Presentation Sisters' Acorn Centre in Warrenmount was an outstanding experience of collegiality, friendship, learning and passion for Presentation education.

We heard innovative presentations and sharing from both Australian and Irish Presentation schools and were introduced to some of the other Presentation initiated or collaborative ministries including iScoil and work with Prison Ministry.

A highlight of the occasion was the visit from Ireland's Education Minister, Norma Foley for an address and a formal 'cutting of the cake'. She was a "Pres girl" and had previously taught at a Presentation school.

Our final day in Dublin, before heading to Ballygriffin was spent visiting Colaiste Bride Presentation Secondary School, Clondalkin. We met with the delightful students and staff and heard about the ways in which they uphold and engage with Presentation charism. We then travelled to Kildare visiting Saint Brigid's Well, before arriving in Ballygriffin, the birthplace of Nano Nagle. We were treated to a traditional Irish roast lovingly prepared by the Sisters that care for the place. Our first evening at Ballygriffin concluded with a reflective gathering led by Maria.

Reflections from our Pilgrims

“I pondered my arrival in Dublin and the aspirations for this pilgrimage: to pause, pra, reflect, and deepen my connection to the Presentation spirit.”

“The spiritual guidance provided by Maria helped me to consolidate my thinking and gave me the necessary space to unpack what I had experienced in a safe environment with my fellow pilgrims.”

“This journey beckons me to trust, let go, and allow divine guidance.”

“They say that a pilgrim is best equipped with an open, listening heart.”

“It was incredible to see originals of Nano’s letters at the George’s Hill convent in Dublin. I felt like the years between me and Nano vanished just for a moment.”

“Time for reflection and socialising together to deepen the experience was carefully woven into the fabric of each day and when the pilgrims gathered for dinner that night at Dublin’s oldest pub, there was an opportunity to get to know each other and to cement our path as pilgrims.”

“I contemplated how our evolving demographic challenges us to continue Nano’s mission with creativity and adaptability, echoing the call to be a living expression of God’s mission as Presentation People.”

“Minister Norma Foley’s address underscored the ethos of being “OF Pres and FOR Pres,” resonating deeply with the symposium’s theme of embodying Presentation values in education.”



Days 4 – 6: BALLYGRIFFIN



For most of us our first day at Ballygriffin began by taking the “Cosmic Walk” within the grounds of Ballygriffin.

The Cosmic Walk is a series of 16 reflections on the creation story celebrated through sculpture and word.

Our morning was then filled with discussion on the history of Ballygriffin and its significant connection to Nano’s childhood.

Sister Anne Lyons pbvm shared an inspiring workshop with us based on the Icon of Nano Nagle and explained her role as Postulator for the Cause of Nano Nagle.

In the afternoon we visited Monanimy Castle, where we searched the graveyard for Nagle names, visited Killavullen Church where it is understood that Nano was baptised, before participating in a moving liturgy at the Mass Rock where Catholics went to Mass during the time of the Penal Laws.

On our final day at Ballygriffin, the 240th anniversary of Nano Nagle’s death (26th April), we were privileged to join the Presentation community across Ireland in the celebration of “handing over the keys” of the Ballygriffin property back to the Presentation Sisters.

My dear Australian Pilgrim Teachers,

Greetings and love to each one of you. I take such delight in knowing how my little dream has evolved right across the globe and you are a wonderful expression of that dream. And I remember the beginnings... the journey... the fidelity of our God.

You see it has pleased the Almighty to make me succeed, when I had everything as I may say, to fight against... I began in a poor, humble manner; and though it pleased the divine Will to give me severe trials in this foundation, yet it is to show that it is His work and has not been effected by any human means... I can't too much admire your zeal and great trust in the divine Providence which I always looked on as the most settled beginning any foundation of this kind could have.

Providence has ordered everything for the best in her regard to keep her for this place... We must think the Almighty permits everything for the best. You'll see with His assistance everything promises well.

I must say every disappointment we have had the Almighty has been pleased to make it turn out to our advantage; though my impatience very often made (me) not submit to His divine Will as I ought. But the Almighty is sufficient and will soon make up this loss to us. By degrees with the assistance of God we may do a great deal. ...It's all in the power of the Almighty; we don't know what is best for us and so ought to be resigned to the divine Will.

The Almighty makes use of the weakest means to bring about His works. We must leave it to the Almighty; He (will) do everything for the best in it, I hope.

I don't approve of your desponding so much as I perceived in your last letter. Though (neither) you nor I should not (sic) live to see it prosper in our time, yet I hope it may (prosper) hereafter and be of universal service to the kingdom. I comfort myself with this thought when I am most dejected at the many disappointments I have met with.

With God's assistance everything promises well. I am so proud of you.

With my love and blessing.

Nano Nagle

Reflections from our Pilgrims

"Ballygriffin was the beating heart of the Presentation story."

"There was much to reflect upon, to be grateful for and to ponder in response to the riches of the pilgrimage experience."

"Today was not just a celebration; it was a profound affirmation of faith, history, and the power of collective commitment to Nano's vision."

"Sister Anne Lyons explain the 'dance of the spirit' in the Nano icon, to immerse oneself in the bucolic lands of Ballygriffin and to sit by the Blackwater River and ponder, just as Nano did as she contemplated what path to take in her life."

"The Icon was described as 'opening the veil of mystery in our lives'. Through that exploration, we were immersed deeper into Nano's own story and encouraged to reflect on our own faith and heart response, as Sr Anne posed the question 'How do we hear the heartbeat of God?'"

"Sister Anne Lyons showed us the many ways that we are each connected to the Nano story and the richness that we each bring to this story."

"The stunning beauty of Ballygriffin, the Nano and children statue no longer just a photo."

"The tranquillity of Ballygriffin and feeling the presence of Nano, where it all began, in this place of such significance for each of our school communities."

"Nestled along the Blackwater River its picturesque grounds now incorporate a Cosmic walk: a creation story celebrated through sculpture and word."



Having travelled to Cork the previous evening our first day was spent at the nearby ports of Cobh and Kinsale. This was the departure point for many of the Presentation Sisters as well as many of those of us with Irish ancestry.

Some of the highlights of this visit were the imposing St. Colman's Cathedral in Cobh, and the warmth and cosiness of family-run "The Tap Tavern" in Kinsale.

Day 8, our Sunday in Cork, was a special day. We celebrated the Eucharist at the Tomb of Nano, which was a sacred experience for all of us as pilgrims.

This was followed by gourmet lunch at Ballymaloe House.

On Day 9, we returned to Nano Nagle Place (where we had celebrated Mass) for a series of presentations from the various Presentation Ministries housed within Nano Nagle Place. This was followed by a guided tour of the museum and a liturgy at Nano's tomb led by Sister Prema and Sister Margaret. Sister Bride walked us literally in the footsteps of Nano. We retraced some of the laneways of Cork that Nano would have walked, from South Presentation Convent to North Presentation Convent. We visited some of Nano's other schools along the way, including the school in Philpott Lane. Our arrival at North Presentation Convent will be a precious memory for us all. We were welcomed by the Sisters with such joy and warmth who had prepared us a delicious lunch for us to enjoy. It was Presentation hospitality in all its glory.



Reflections from our Pilgrims

“Witnessing the various ministries of the Presentation Sisters in Ireland today is testament to their ability to keep current, relevant, and focussed on those who are in need.”

“The significance of her work still guides Presentation people today to seek out the most vulnerable and act. The many different organisations inspired by Nano that we encountered, and their creative approaches have resulted in outcomes that support people to live their best life. It is truly inspiring.”

“Mass at/on the tomb of Nano at Nano Nagle Place. A deeply spiritual experience that was significantly enhanced by sharing it with the other Pilgrims. I felt this was a time of great cohesion and connection within the group.”

“The deep significance of gathering around Nano’s final resting place, with her tomb used as the altar for mass, is difficult to capture in words. Suffice to say that it is a beautiful experience that will be etched into the hearts and minds of the pilgrims forever, an unbreakable bond with Nano and her legacy for those present for eucharist on that spring morning.”

“We walked the same cobblestoned roads and laneways that you walked. We passed by the places that were once schools where you taught.”

“These Sisters taught us what Presentation hospitality is really about. They each welcomed us with a handshake, a hug and a big smile.”

“These extraordinary women embody Christ’s vision and Nano’s way for a better, stronger and more just world.”



Days 10 – 11: KILLARNEY

Today we took “the road less travelled” where our incredibly able bus driver, Billy took us down narrow laneways into the Kerry countryside with our final destination being Killarney. We visited the beautiful lake and chapel at Gougane Barra; the village of Kenmare and journeyed along parts of the Ring of Kerry.

This was the only day that we had experienced any rain. In the evening toasted the birth of a pilgrim’s grandchild at a traditional Killarney Whiskey Tavern.

The next morning whilst some of us further explored the town of Killarney a group headed to the Abbey at Muckross House. It is mostly in ruin, but this fifteenth century former Franciscan Friary was a spiritual gem with its “sacred tree”. We travelled through the historic village of Kilkenny towards the evening’s destination Brooklodge and Macreddin Village in County Wicklow in preparation for our visit to Glendalough.

Reflections from our Pilgrims

“Each landscape a testament to the beauty and diversity of God’s creation.”

“Today has been a journey of both physical travel and inner reflection, reminding us of the beauty found in both movement and stillness.”

“The ruins of Muckross Abbey were a stunning reminder of our link to an ancient faith.”



Days 11 -12: GLENDALOUGH AND DUBLIN

The last day of our pilgrimage took us to Glendalough, the monastic settlement of St. Kevin.
There are few words that can express the sense of sacred
and the natural beauty one experiences on pilgrimage in Glendalough.

We continued our journey to Portarlington to Mount Saint Anne's Retreat Centre to
experience the "Heart Aflame" which encompasses a sense of the global Presentation mission.
The exhibition was accompanied by a talk given by Sister Elizabeth Maxwell pbvm.

Maria led us in our final reflection in a gentle way, weaving together the threads of our
pilgrimage and all departed for Dublin feeling an overwhelming sense of gratitude for the journey
that was. We gathered for a final meal as a pilgrimage group before going our own separate ways
the following morning.

Reflections from our Pilgrims

*"I have never been to somewhere so naturally beautiful ... my time amongst God's
Country with God's People."*

"Glendalough, a place where the natural world intertwines seamlessly with the sacred..."

*"At Glendalough, I embraced the challenge of the Celtic Cross, aiming to encircle it with
outstretched arms and make a wish, a symbolic act of openness to the blessings of this
journey."*



KEY LEARNINGS

These excerpts have been compiled from individual reflections from pilgrims and give a sense of the deep impact this pilgrimage has had on our personal and professional formation.

“Listening to the words of fellow travellers on the journey, the transformation that we had taken individually and collectively was evident. There was commitment to a future of “deeds, not just words” that builds and empowers others to carry the lantern forth in new ways, mindful and grateful for Nano’s leadership and that of the Sisters who went before us; and those with whom we journey alongside in our own lives.”

“The opportunity to follow in the footsteps of Nano Nagle and the Presentation Sisters was an incredible privilege and clarified why her story still resonates 240 years later.”

“You have invited us all to move “one step beyond”: to be generous; hospitable; humble; to seek out the other; to be kind and to love.”

“There was much to reflect upon, to be grateful for and to ponder in response to the riches of the pilgrimage experience.”

“Sharing the journey with my fellow pilgrims was a unique experience which enhanced and deepened my understanding of how Nano continues to inspire the work of Presentation people today.”

“I feel a sense of responsibility to ensure that this story, message and charism is not lost. It is too important and too powerful.”

“I have also been reminded about the importance of faith in this encounter with Nano. Her work was all because of her relationship with Christ. When we tell her story, we must stress the importance of this.”

“Echoing the call to be a living expression of God's mission as Presentation People. Personally moved by these discussions, I found myself contemplating how to better serve marginalized communities and integrate justice into our educational mission.”

“I reflected on how pilgrims allow places to permeate their souls, transforming the journey into a profound experience of both giving and receiving. The reflections shared by others were diverse, thought-provoking, and filled with a deep sense of gratitude—a testament to the richness of our collective pilgrimage experience.”

“We as pilgrims, hold a sacred responsibility to “light the lantern” in our schools so that students and staff are imbued with Nano’s charism.”

“In the chapel, Maria wove together the threads of our pilgrimage, fostering a sense of unity and gratitude among us all. As we gathered for our final supper in Dublin, sharing memories and reflections, there was a palpable sense of transformation within the group.”

“It has been a privilege to share this journey with such inspiring companions, and I carry with me a renewed sense of purpose to guide my Presentation leadership and share these experiences back home.”

“When I take up my role of leadership on my return, I want to act to ensure our work at the College continues to support the most vulnerable in creative ways that have an impact.”

“It was much more than walking in the footsteps, it was discovering the heartbeat of Nano – of living love - very much alive and real – full of possibility, founded on God’s love, with a desire to enable and empower those who have little or no voice and all who encounter and experience life with them. It was very much the passing - not of the baton, but rather a sharing of the lantern – well lit - with hope, compassion and life!”

“With thankful hearts, great joy and renewed zeal, we prepared to return to life beyond the pilgrimage; transformed forever and truly blessed to have shared this unforgettable experience

A Pilgrimage to Remember

A Poem by pilgrim Darryl Winsor

Fourteen intrepid Aussie tourists
From states spread far and wide
Pilgrims together; nuthin' to be missed
One step beyond; let's stride!

Days in Dublin to get our bearings
School visits to see how the land lies
A symposium with speed date pairings
Has created cross-continental ties

So off from the delights of Dublin we roam
With Sharon's luggage still a missin'
On to the serenity of Nano's home
In the small town of Ballygriffin.

Our bus was driven by Billy
With commentary as we went
Some things, though, were a little bit silly
Which caused Kelly to speak up and vent

Sister Anne updated Nano's path
Canonisation is our wish
It would be such an easy task
If it was up to Janelle, the Bish!

Has Nano's miracle finally been found?
Has our pilgrimage played its part?
Cause Sharon's luggage has hit the ground
In the airport at sleepy Hobart!

A Golden event to remember the day
When Nano's farm was bought back
The room was full of a sea of grey
With the Aussies in the cupboard, keeping track

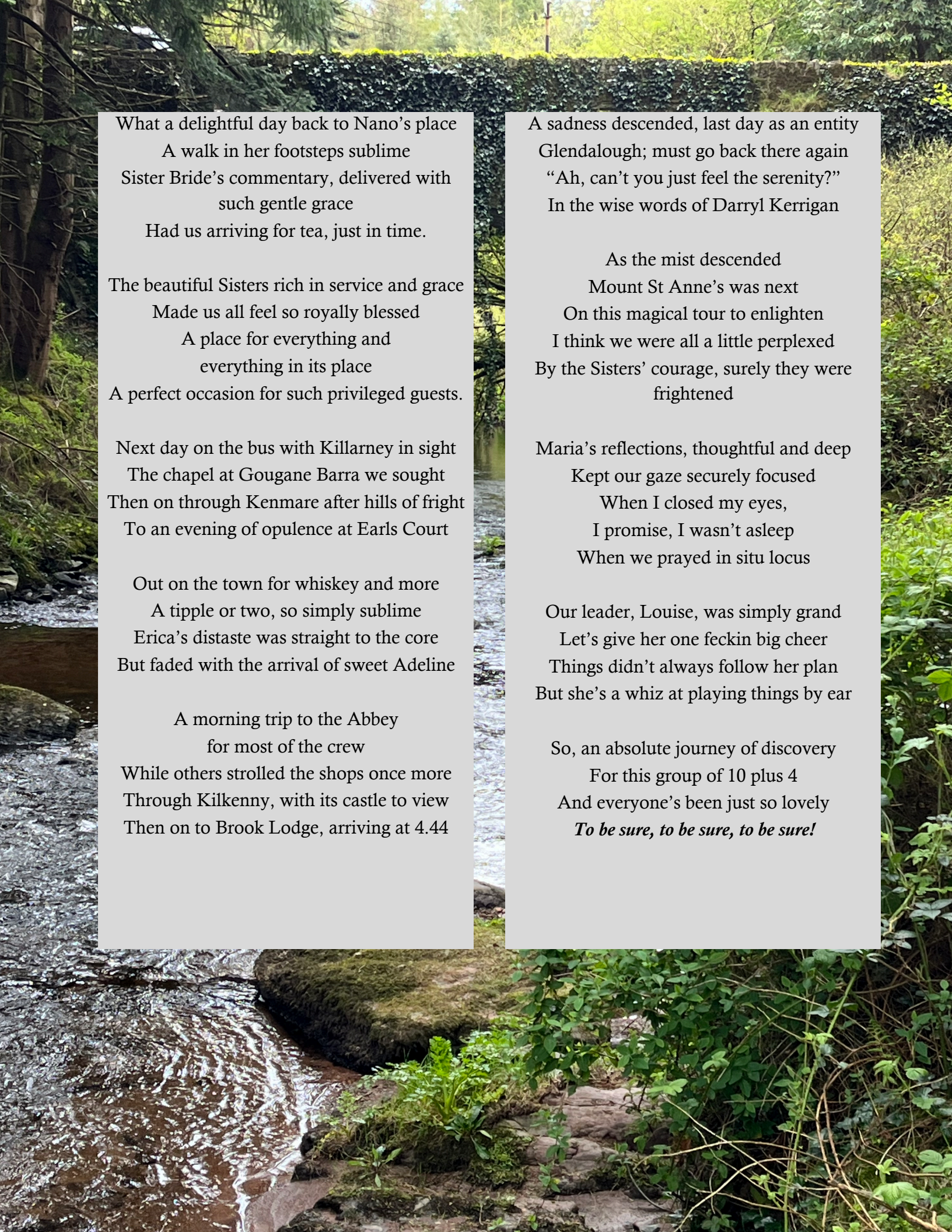
The quaint village of Cobh was next on our list
With history: Titanic, Lusitania and more,
Birthday beverage with lunch,
but no one got "lost"
It was as cold as a mother in law's kiss, for sure!

Then on to Kinsale for a quiet afternoon stroll
Where the craft shops were such a hit
With bank balances experiencing quite a hole
As they melted away...just a bit!

Mass on a tomb, now that's a first
So sacred a time on this curious journey
Michael's gentle, thoughtful and moving verse
Led us to the echo of Nano's urgings

Lunch at Ballymaloe, now that was posh
Irish faire at its absolute best
With an array of desserts so filling, by gosh
But don't reverse desserts
'cause you just get stressed!

Sin é pub for a great evening
Full of fun, frivolity and games
But who would have been believing
There'd be a proposal from Proddy boy, James.



What a delightful day back to Nano's place
A walk in her footsteps sublime
Sister Bride's commentary, delivered with
such gentle grace
Had us arriving for tea, just in time.

The beautiful Sisters rich in service and grace
Made us all feel so royally blessed
A place for everything and
everything in its place
A perfect occasion for such privileged guests.

Next day on the bus with Killarney in sight
The chapel at Gougane Barra we sought
Then on through Kenmare after hills of fright
To an evening of opulence at Earls Court

Out on the town for whiskey and more
A tippie or two, so simply sublime
Erica's distaste was straight to the core
But faded with the arrival of sweet Adeline

A morning trip to the Abbey
for most of the crew
While others strolled the shops once more
Through Kilkenny, with its castle to view
Then on to Brook Lodge, arriving at 4.44

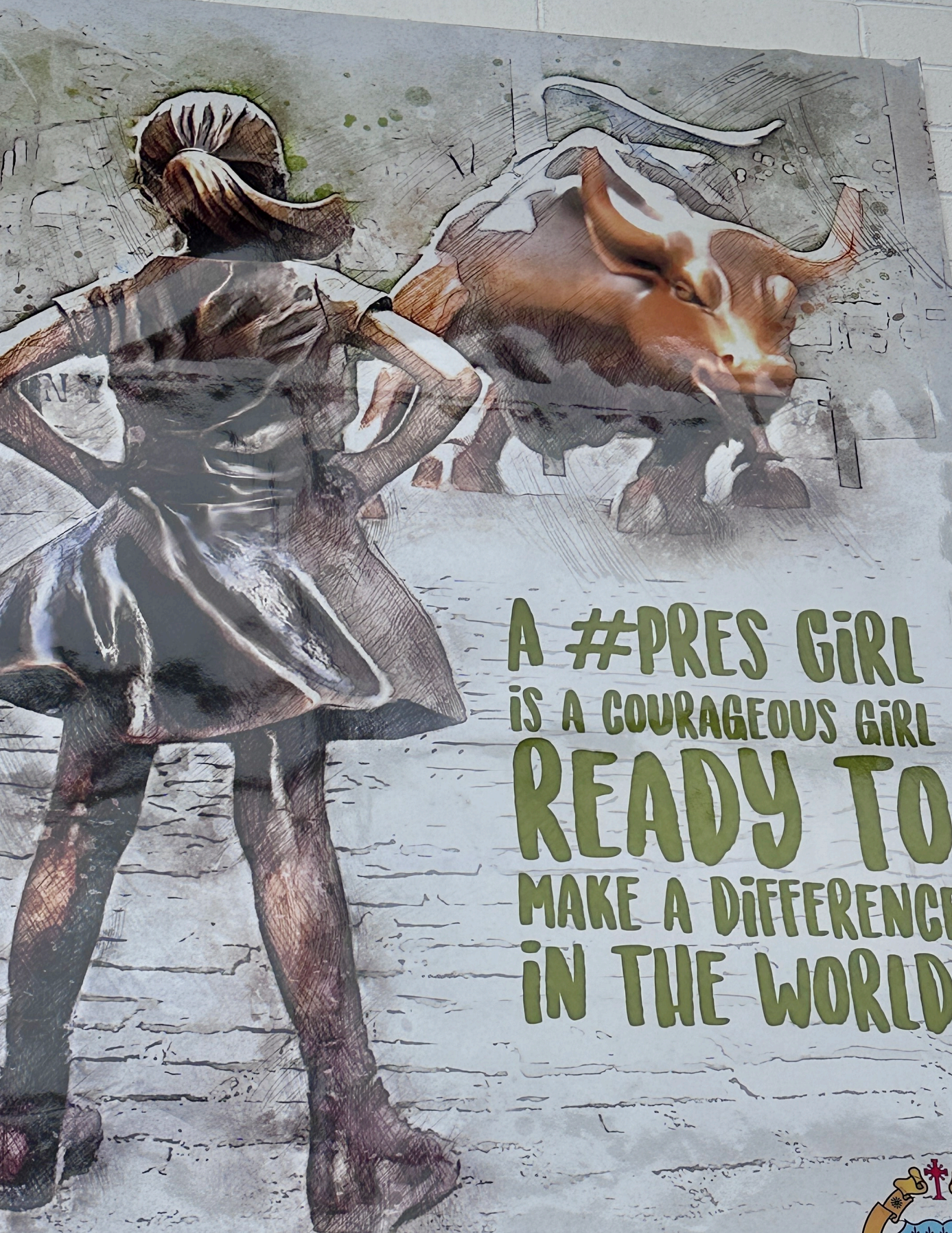
A sadness descended, last day as an entity
Glendalough; must go back there again
"Ah, can't you just feel the serenity?"
In the wise words of Darryl Kerrigan

As the mist descended
Mount St Anne's was next
On this magical tour to enlighten
I think we were all a little perplexed
By the Sisters' courage, surely they were
frightened

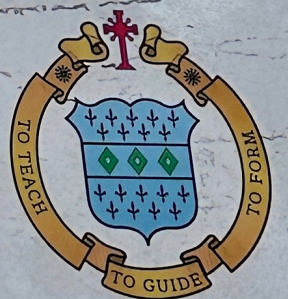
Maria's reflections, thoughtful and deep
Kept our gaze securely focused
When I closed my eyes,
I promise, I wasn't asleep
When we prayed in situ locus

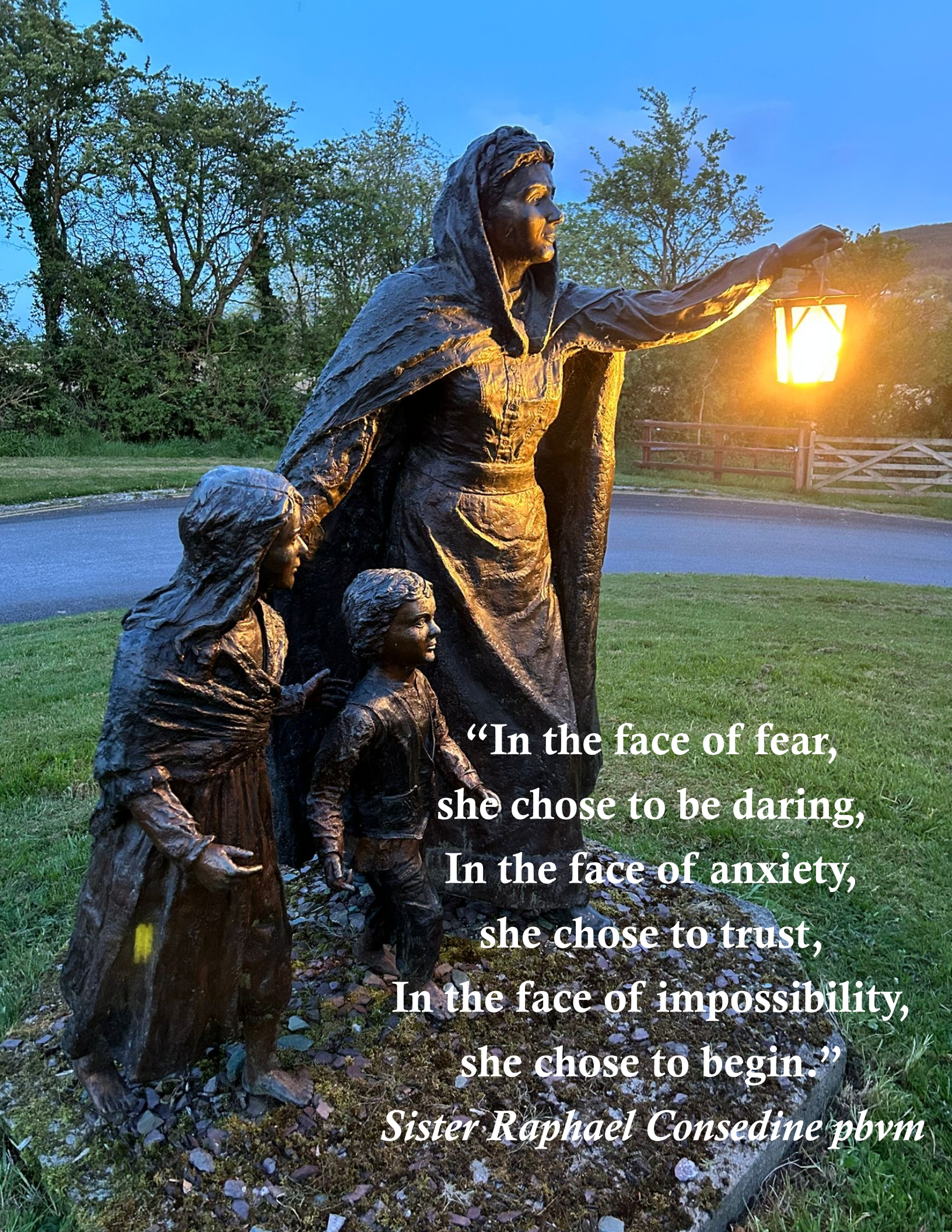
Our leader, Louise, was simply grand
Let's give her one feckin big cheer
Things didn't always follow her plan
But she's a whiz at playing things by ear

So, an absolute journey of discovery
For this group of 10 plus 4
And everyone's been just so lovely
To be sure, to be sure, to be sure!



A #PRES GIRL
IS A COURAGEOUS GIRL
READY TO
MAKE A DIFFERENCE
IN THE WORLD!





“In the face of fear,
she chose to be daring,
In the face of anxiety,
she chose to trust,
In the face of impossibility,
she chose to begin.”

Sister Raphael Consedine pbvm