



*PBM Tercentenary Pilgrimage August 2018
Newfoundland to Ireland – Celebrating Nano!*

*A Pilgrimage is an ancient religious practice.
The journey to the sacred place is just as important as the arrival.
A pilgrim is a traveler who has come from far away.
When you travel a new silence goes with you
and if you listen you will hear what your heart would love to say.
-John O'Donohue*

300 years ago the seeds of a dream born of God's own heart took root with the birth of Honora Nagle in Ballygriffin. In August of this year to mark the 300th Anniversary of the birth of our Foundress seeds of another dream took root as 40+ Presentation Pilgrims set out for Ireland from NL Canada, the first Irish Presentation foundation outside of Ireland in 1833, a "homecoming" in ways. Blessed to have with us many Friends of Nano, including many of our Associates, two Mercy Sisters and two Christian Brothers, all with such close ties to Nano, and our Archbishop, Martin Currie...



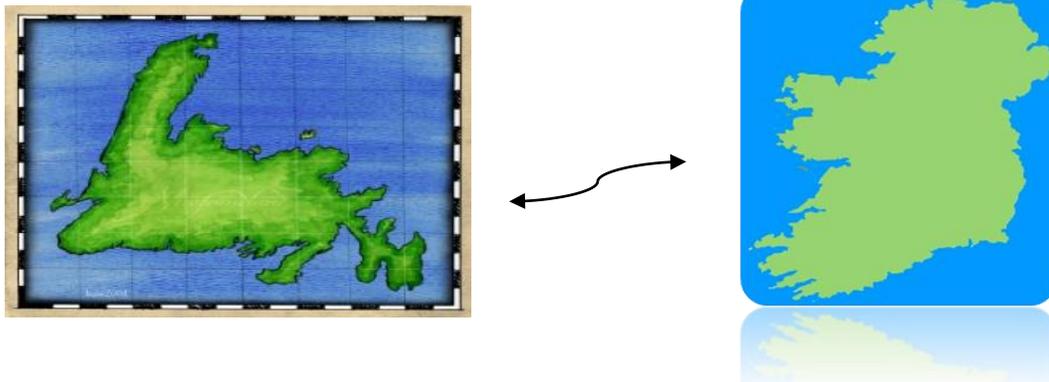
At the airport, set to go, sporting our Newfoundland tartan scarves, so

lovingly sewn by Sisters Marilyn Doyle and Marie Furey, and our 300th buttons! Some of our scarves made a permanent home in Ireland as thank you gifts.

With many others desirous but unable for the trip, our sending of a daily photo journal enabled those at home to do a "virtual" pilgrimage with us from day to day. The response was heartwarming and unanimous, "Just like being there!".

You can visit our Happenings page on our NL site at www.presentationisters.ca to enjoy some wonderful videos so kindly gifted to us by Sister Diane Smyth, RSM, one of our guest companions on our pilgrimage.

From an island to an island, like our first four women, only in reverse! Our pilgrimage was a time of moments savoured, hearts stirred, eyes warmed, of praying and pondering, of tears and laughter, of song and silence, filled with fun and a deep experience of community among each other and with all of our Sisters who welcomed us along the way, as well as the Mercy Sisters and Christian Brothers. Felt increasingly at home everywhere!



It was indeed like being transported back in time as we took a walk with Nano through her ancestral history as well as our Presentation history in Ireland. One of the most touching highlights for many, was being awakened to Nano's maternal ancestral history on our visit to Thurles, a first perhaps for most of us. Tasting, too, so much of Ireland itself, its people and its story...

Having landed safely and sleepily in Dublin, we made our way to Mount St. Anne's in Killenard where we were treated to a breakfast fit for kings and queens. Indeed everywhere we went our "cups of tea" were culinary feasts! Later that day at our Opening Ritual, so rich in symbols, Nano herself graced us with a visit, retraced her story, our story, in a way that stirred hearts anew, evoked tears and laughter, gifting each of us with a Lantern to light our pilgrim pathway.

From Mount St. Anne's we made our way day by day to Kildare/Monasterevin, Clonmacnoise, Athlone, Knock, the National Shrine of Our Lady, Galway, our "Motherhouse" away from home, Limerick, Ballygriffin, Cork, Thurles, Kilkenny, the home of our "Grandmothers", having founded Galway, and then Waterford, Baggot Street, George's Hill and Knowth. Something of a whirlwind experience yet profoundly memorable and touching. For some a first time experiencing Ireland, for all an experience of a lifetime. Each day was as wondrous as the one before!

No stone left unturned. Except missed the Blarney Stone!



Coming to a surprise full stop on the highway, we enjoyed some belly aching laughter as we encountered a classic Irish traffic jam en route to Ballygriffin. As one Sister put it, “Cows, cows and more cows, walking like novices in a straight line!”

Ahh, yes! To simply be in Ballygriffin, Nano’s birthplace, where she frolicked and played, her joy, wonder and delight still echoing in the hills and where our Presentation seeds were unknowingly first planted ... and also to celebrate there in the Chapel overlooking the Nagle Hills first a moving Ritual with Sister Mary Hoare and then Liturgy with Archbishop Currie, NL ...

Ahh, yes! To stand in Nano’s Parish Church in Killavullen, Cork, at the font where Nano had been baptized ...



Ahh, yes! To stroll through “Nano’s Cork”, to visit the gravesite of “Cork’s Nano”, to drink in our history so exquisitely captured in the new Nano Nagle Place ... then Liturgy St. Finbar’s Church with Archbishop Currie again celebrating ...



Nano Nagle Place ... Nano’s Gravesite ... her story then, our story now ... in awe!

Ahh, yes! To stand in the doorway where our first Sisters left from Galway ... to hear their annals being read, to linger in the quiet of the cemetery ... to stand at the grave of Mother John who, like Nano, had dared to be led by God when Bishop Mullock had first made his initial request ...



Ahh, yes! To visit Thurles and hear the stories of Nano's maternal roots and to wander through the family's historic Inch House ... with yet more echoes of the childhood laughter of Nano and her cousins ...

Ahh, yes! To visit our Kilkenny "Grandmothers" from whom Galway had been founded ... instead of a few dropping in, we all showed up at their door to their delight and ours ...



Ahh, yes! To browse the archival letters at George's Hill, some penned by Nano's own hand ... and Diane, RSM, to get to hold the Profession Registry, also containing the handwritten vows of Catherine McAuley, Mercy Foundress ...

Ahh, yes! To be so warmly welcomed at Mercy International at Baggott Street and to be blessed by two of our NL Mercy companions with "the oil of gladness" as we entered, and again so warmly welcomed and at home at the Edmund Rice Centre in Waterford, also the port our Sisters had sailed from ...

Ahh, yes! To experience the narrow streets and lanes of Ireland in those "Oh my God Moments!" when we closed our eyes and held our breath and wondered how this big bus would make it through that little space or those roundabouts! And gave thanks to God ... and to Greg, our amazing driver, when we did!

Before we knew it, our time for returning home was drawing near. Happy, too, for special moments with Emma and Sharon from NL who now make "there" home!



Our Closing Ritual found us amazingly assembled around the statue of “Our Lady of the Universe” on the grounds of the Parish Church of the Good Shepherd, near All Hallows in Dublin, when happenstance called for a Plan B. Fittingly, in our closing prayer we called to mind Presentation people world-wide with each country represented by their respective flags, feeling deeply our “Walking One”.

Our final evening en route to an Irish Night Out for a ritual of another sort, there appeared ahead of us a double rainbow, amazingly, again, to bless us on our journey home ... a surprise gift, it was said, from Denis, our NL tour guide and Greg our bus driver, an inimitable team for whom nothing was too much!



Our double rainbow blessing!



Closing with our Ode to Newfoundland!

As Sister Anne Fox of Galway shared in her reflection on our visit there ...

“The Celts believed in ‘Thin Places’, geographical locations where a person experiences a very thin divide between past and present times; places where a person is somehow able, possibly only for a moment, to encounter a more ancient reality within the present time.” (Sellner)
In hindsight I see ourselves in that reading. When we gathered to read from the Annals of 1833 and 1846 in the peace and quiet of the chapel, leading on out into the cemetery and garden, the ground on which we stood offered us one such ‘thin place’.

A moment spontaneous, profound, awesome, beautiful, unforgettable!”

Indeed our Pilgrimage to Ireland afforded us a wealth of such “thin places” ... and we bow in awe and gratitude as we so often did while there ... with heartfelt thanks for the awesome privilege and the graced gift ... deeply grateful to those who first conceived of the dream of our going and were midwives with so many others in its birthing.

From here to there and back again, seems like a dream sometimes ... treasuring the memories and continuing to carry the flame, kindled anew by the experience.



Gathering in Galway with our Sisters there and others from nearby areas