



St Mary's
Parish
Haddington
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Serving
the
Community

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the
Family

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the
City

Blessed Boredom

Joy Clarkson

The summer of my fifteenth year was exceptionally hot, and I was exceptionally moody. In June I had gone to a summer camp, filled with unbounded expectations that my time there would offer all the freedom and companionship my burgeoning soul craved. I was, alas, to be disappointed. My best friend and I had a falling out, drama abounded, and the cafeteria food was remarkably bad. I returned home with all the unearned pessimism of a forty-five year old beatnik who truly had seen it all.

The result of this was a disgruntled boredom.

July and August loomed ominous, blank, and very, very hot. With nothing else to do, I set up camp. I scribbled down terrible poems in my journal. I taught myself to play Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah" on my slightly out-of-tune guitar. And something else happened: I began to pray. I began to pray about all that made me afraid and full of awe. I confessed my secret hopes and fears.

In the quiet emptiness of that stale room, I began to perceive a freshness and a fullness. That summer I discovered my interior world, and it has been precious to me ever since.

This winter has been a particularly severe one. As I write this, I am confined to my house for the fifth time in two weeks. I am perched in my childhood room, the one from which I sought escape that hot summer so many years ago. Perhaps, I think to myself, this is one of those blessedly boring days.

I fidget. I consciously reject the urge to check my phone. I close my eyes. I feel the warmth from my mug of tea radiate into my fingers. I listen to the muffled crackling of my candle, and the Celtic tune singing out of my computer's speakers. For a moment, it seems an enchantment has fallen over me, a deep quiet spreading itself over my soul like the snow on the hill outside. Into the emptiness, an abundant, lively calm flickers into life. I cherish it for a moment.

And then my phone buzzes. As I peek to see who it is (my doctoral advisor), a flood of notifications ping aggressively, the whole world seeming to tumble into my room through the tiny screen of my phone. The spell is broken. Slipping away into my internal world is not as easy as it used to be.

Some of this change is only natural, part and parcel with the transition to adulthood. I am responsible now, for myself and others. I have more work to do, and it is good work, and I am thankful for all this. But amidst this fruitful season, a worry hums in the back of my mind. Even in my few, empty hours, I cannot seem to defend my quiet moments. When I was fifteen, I had to seek connection, noise, and information. Now, constant connection is the norm. I have to seek quiet, stillness, and emptiness.

In the fourth century, a flock of Christians fled from the hustle and bustle of city life in the Roman Empire to seek silence in the desert. Perhaps they, like us, were worried about a world so flattened by the meaningless chatter of life, perhaps they too sought after blessed boredom. We now know them as the Desert Fathers and Mothers. They lived restrictive, simple lives, and sought to hear God and rid themselves of all earthly desires. It seems that all their circumstances were aligned for that kind of full silence I experienced my fifteenth summer. Nonetheless, like me, they struggled for a fruitful silence. Amma Syncletica, a Desert Mother, described the difficulty this way:

There are many who live in the mountains and behave as if they were in the town; they are wasting their time. It is possible to be a solitary in one's mind while living in a crowd; and it is possible for those who are solitaries to live in the crowd of their own thoughts.

Even the solitary monks were visited by distraction. They called it acedia, a kind of listless boredom, the hum of unproductive silence that led to distraction, anger, and sleep. Sometimes they called it the Noonday Devil, because after lunch, the monks and nuns found themselves easy prey to dissipation the whole afternoon intended for prayer could be stolen away by that dastardly devil.

It comforted me to read of their struggle, because they made me see that we are not the first generation to fight this battle. They longed to know God and to cultivate that sacred silence and blessed boredom,

and so do I. But befriending that silence was a struggle for them, just as it is for me. It made me realize that while smart phones and social media may impede our interior world, it is no real excuse. Impediments toward peace and quiet have always existed. Our shapeshifting opponent may have changed its guise from sleepiness to social media, but it is still there, doing all it can to rob our empty hours of their fullness.

We cannot give up the battle for holy silence and for blessed boredom. To pursue silence, boredom, even loneliness, is a radical choice in our world, but it was a radical choice in theirs as well. We must choose to turn away from the constant entertainment that vies for our attention. We must allow ourselves to be lonely. Silence has always been a battle. Prayer has never been easy.

And if, like the desert mothers and fathers, we desire to taste of the blessed boredom, the full emptiness, and the communicative silence, we too must flee to the desert, sometimes. We must find our hermitage in the modern world, even if it is a musty basement bedroom during a miserably hot summer.

Joy Clarkson is a doctoral candidate at the University of St Andrews. She also blogs at joyclarkson.com

Source: <https://www.plough.com/en/topics/faith/prayer/blessed-boredom>
Edited

A New Consciousness of the Divine

Evolution invites us to expand our consciousness of the divine mystery beyond the realm of human history and to see humankind [and all of creation] within the process of an evolving cosmic history. We come from the whole and belong to the whole. As church, as theologians, as citizens of the universe, therefore, we need an "option for whole," and by this I mean we need a new consciousness that includes our Big Bang expanding universe and biological evolution as part of our intellectual search for truth. Theology must *begin with evolution* if it is to talk of a *living* God, and hence it must include physical, spiritual, and psychological change as fundamental to reality. Einstein's discovery of relativity means that space-time is a dimension of the unfinished, expanding universe; thus, whatever we say about God is bound up with the universe. By extending the knowing process into the furthest realms of cosmic relatedness, being acquires new depth. Knowledge cannot be satisfied with human history alone; it must reach into cosmic history, if it is in search of truth. To see evolution as revelatory of the divine Word means that we come to see the various forms and rhythms of nature as reflective of divine qualities. This means moving beyond the static images of God that are so familiar to us and that remain irretrievably tied to an archaic understanding of the cosmos. We are invited, through modern science, to widen our theological vision, to awaken to a dynamic cosmos in which we are deeply related, and to seek the divine Word expressing itself in the rich fecundity of cosmic life.

- Ilia Delio

FRIENDSHIP CLUB

FIRST MEETING

PARISH CENTRE

MONDAY 9 SEPTEMBER, 22PM

New Members Very Welcome



MEETING

Monday, 5.45PM



Communautés
catholiques
francophones
dans le monde

Conférence des évêques de France

A New Chaplaincy at St Mary's

From today our parish will become the home for the chaplaincy of the French-speaking community in Dublin.

They will join the Ethiopian and Croatian communities who have already found their home here and have added much to the dynamism of our parish.

The chaplaincy, while integrated into the structures of the Archdiocese of Dublin, is part of the association *Communities of French-speaking Catholics in the World (CCFM)*, under the auspices of the French Bishops' Conference, the chaplains in Dublin being Fr Richard Sheehy and Fr Patrick Claffey

The French-speaking community masses will be held twice a month, at 12.30pm on the 2nd and 4th Sundays, and all are, of course, welcome. The formal opening of the new chaplaincy will take place on Sunday 22 September at the 12.30 mass, after which there will be a small reception. All Welcome. *Soyez les bienvenus chez nous!*

IN MEMORIAM

6pm: Mary Donnelly (Months Mind)

11am: Bernie Guerin (Anniversary)

Masses on 14th/15th Sept 2019

6pm: Tina Gaffney (Anniversary)

Masses and Confession

Sundays: Vigil, 6pm (Saturday), 9.30am, 11am, 5pm

Croatian Community Mass 6.30pm

Messe en français 12.30 (2^e et 4^e dimanche du mois)

Daily masses 10am and 12.40pm, Saturday 10am only

-Rosary daily after 10am mass

Adoration Blessed Sacrament, Weds 10.30-12.40

LAST WEEK'S COLLECTIONS

1st Collection: €1,252

2nd Collection: €2,860 (Crosscare)

Weekday collections: €672 (2 weeks)

THANK YOU

Contacts: Fr Fachtna McCarthy, Administrator, Fr Patrick Claffey C.C. Fr Josip Levaković C.C. Tel 01-6600075

Streaming and Website www.stmaryshaddingtonroad.ie email: info@stmaryshaddingtonroad.ie

Child Protection: <http://www.stmaryshaddingtonroad.ie/ministries/child-protection/> also www.csp.dublindiocese.ie

Streaming also at www.churchservices.tv/haddingtonroad

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