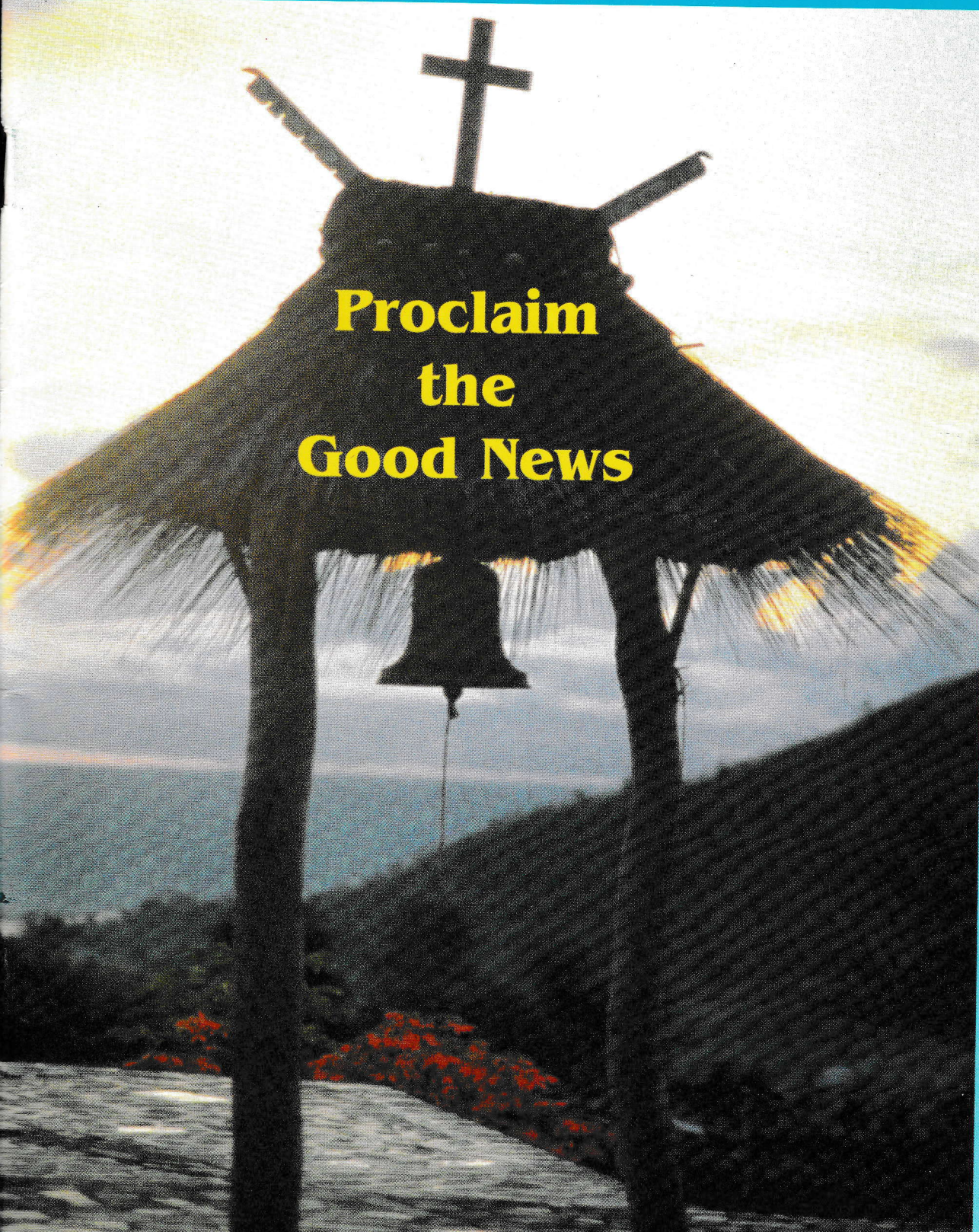


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**Proclaim
the
Good News**

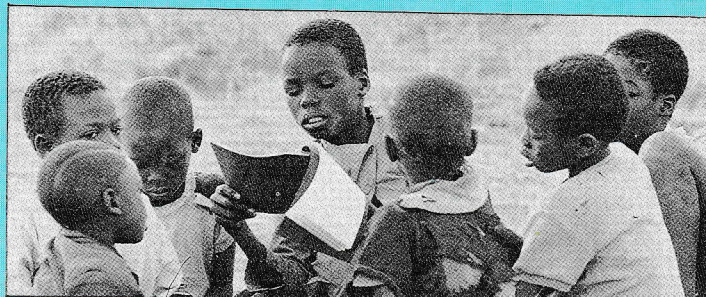
SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT-
BUT FOR WHOM?

CELEBRATING
THE GIFT OF
CREATION

A ROUTINE
NIGHTMARE



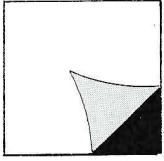
**SPECIAL
MISSION
ISSUE**



THE FIRST POOR CLARE



PAGE 26



Bhí mé sách amaideach dul ag tarraingt téide an lá cheana nuair a bhí spóirt anseo in Inis Meáin. Cé go bhfuil plaic agam ar an bhfuinneog dá bharr tá plan i mo thaobh freisin. Ar éigin atáim in ann cnaipí an phróisealaí focail a bhrú an t-ádh liom nach taom chroí a bhí orm, mé sínte le taobh na téide, sórt Cúchulainn ag tarraingt a anáil deireannach lena rópa ina lámha.

B'fhéidir nach raibh sé baileach chomh dona sin. Nach gcaitheann seanlead a

bheith ag casaoid? Agus ag tabhairt le fios ag an am céanna go bhfuil ar mo chumas breith ar an rópa i gcónaí, agus fir scór bliana agus níos mó ná sin níos óige ná mé a chloí. Níor chaill fear an mhacho ariamh.

Ní hé gur bhuamar amach is amach. Plaicanna don darna háit a fuairamar, ac3h níl sin scríofa orthu agus ní bheidh a fhios ag clann mo chlainne nach sa gcéad áit a tháingamar nuair a bhréas an rópa ag dul chun faide in aghaidh na bliana, agus an fhoireann a tharraingíomar ina fathaigh fir. Ni hiad an dream a bhuan a scríobhann an stair i gcónaí.

Bua morálach a bhí againn, mar a bhíodh ag foirne na hÉireann sular tháinig Jeaic inár dtreo. 'Dá mbéimis beagán níos óige... Dá mbeadh beagán tréanáil orainn... Faraoir nach bhfuil

tarraingt téide i gcomórtaisí luathchleasa na hEorpa'.

Níor rug mise ar rópa i gcomórtas le ceithre bliana fichid, ó bhuaigh seachtar againn comórtas i Maigh Nuad. Obair fíorchrua atá inti, níorbh ionann agus cábla a tharraingt nuair a bhinn ag obair do subconraitheoiri Birmingham. Is é an mantra a bhíodh ag mo chomhoibrithe ansin: 'Bí ag gnúsacht, ach ná taraing'. Níor thosaigh mé ag gnúsacht agus ag casaoid an uair seo go dtí go raibh an tarraingt thart.

Ag caint ar Bhirmingham, is ann a bhí mé cúig bliana fichid ó shin nuair a sheas an chéad fhear, gur fíós dúinn, ar an ngealach. Thíos i bpoll i bPerry Barr a bhí mise nuair a bhí céim bheag, céim mhór á thógail ag Neil Armstrong ar son an chine daonna.

The six o'clock evening bell was just sounding its first chime from the campanile. I was not going to be on time but then that was not unusual. Any temptation there might have been to sprint towards the chapel door evaporated as rain lashed the freshly relaid cobblestones. Even walking slowly I was conscious of how perilous it was to cross Front Square in five inch heels. Within recent months the stones had been lovingly lifted from their years-stiffened niches, individually numbered, preciously stored and when the sanded square was in scrunching readiness, each one had been returned meticulously and exactly to its former place. The idea had been to even out the generations weighted dips and hollows but within weeks of the relaying, the plumline levelled smoothness had dished and valleyed as if the entire square was trying to shake off a new, illfitting suit.

I was on my way to a small weekly gathering of Ministers of the Eucharist. We were about twenty, lay men and women recently appointed to this new Church ministry which involved us in assisting with the distribution of Communion at the daily masses in our University community.

I didn't always enjoy these meetings. The ease with which discussion descended into seething argument about some aspect of faith or doctrine always unsettled me. The debate on transubstantiation had been particularly fraught. That had been partly my fault. I had no conceptual difficulty with the Eucharist as cannibalistic famish-



Mary McAleese

ment. In fact, emasculated into mere symbolism, it lost all significance for me. The overwhelming drift of the conversation among the few who chose to contribute to the discussion was towards eucharist as symbol. I had grown impatient and more than a bit angry when our chaplain seemed to side with the majority view. But somehow to talk of desperation, of abject, naked need seemed incongruous here. Our obsessions, addictions, deep clefts and

dark edges held us silent hostage. We presented suits of Emperor's clothes to each other and guarded them with fairly consistent reverence.

What did we know of necessity? The question was swimming about my mind as I navigated the slippery stones. A lot more than we cared to admit but I was too cowardly to suggest that openly. I knew it though, as really as I knew and understood the inarticulate famine for Christ's body and blood which made pathetic vampires of outwardly pristine Christians. Two weeks earlier driving back from a London theatre I and a couple of friends had driven through Soho for devilment. From a grubby sex-show doorway a man had half stumbled onto the pavement and halted looking for his bearings as we drove past. In shocked silence we acknowledged by wide-eyed stares our shared secret. We knew him. A youngish cleric - he had once visited our church and said Mass. We were at least not naive enough to believe his visit to Soho was pastoral. The conversation in the taxi grew hysterical with irony, sarcasm and sanctimony. Deliver us from evil! Our own secrets burrowed deeper in panic in proportion to the exposure of this one man's quiet desperation, our faith props quivered as in the aftermath of a spiritquake.

Behind me on my desk in the gloomy new Arts Building a text sat open at a story which had intrigued me since my earliest days as a student. In the bare-walled concrete loneliness of that small study with narrow slit window, subtle

Tamall beag roimhe sin tharraing *Himac* mór anios cábla leictic amháin as sé cinn a bhí faoi talamh. Briseadh an cábla agus d'imigh ola de chinéal éigin as. Bhí orainne an cábla briste a bhí sé troigh faoin talamh a bhaint agus ceann nua a chur síos ina áit. Mar go raibh deifir leis an jab bhíomar ag obair ón ocht ar maidin go dtí a hocht san oíche seacht lá na seachtaine.

Bin i an samhradh is fearr a chaith mise í Sasana mar mhac léinn de chuid Mháigh Nuad. Bhí pá maith thall ag an am, chomh maith le cáin ar ais dár leithéide i lár an gheimhridh. Cén chaoi eile a bhéimis in ann deoch a ól sa Roost? Cheap mo chomhoibrithe a bhí ar an lump go raibh seafóid orm cáin ar bith a fóc leis an Rion, mar a b'fhacthas dóibh é, ach bionnann agus airgead sa

bhanc domsa é.

Obair chrua shluasiade a bhí inti, mar ní gnáthshluasaid a bhí againn nuair a tháingamar i ngar don chábla, ach sluasaid le himeall túbh nach ndéandadh damáiste don rubair a bhí thart ar an gcábla.

Is cuimhin liom fós Tipperary (ní raibh ainm ná sloinne ar aon duine again ach ainm an chontae nó an bhaile arb as dúinn in Eirinn) a bhí chomh maith lena shluasaid is a bhí sé le camán.

Chuirfeadh sé cloch bheag amach thar chloigeann an saoiسته, agus nuair a chas-fadh seisean timpeall déarfadh an Tiobraid Arannach: 'Nach bhfuil an diabhal ar na héanacha beaga.'

Ach ní spraoí ar fad a bhí ann.

Cuimhnim ar lá amháin agus cábla nua á tharraingt isteach againn, gur thug

saoiسته as Ciarraí de úafásach béil do sheanfhear lách as Acall a raibh an cuid is mó dá shaol caite i Sasana aige, faoi nach raibh sé ag tarraingt sách maith. An raibh aon neach eile againn ag tarraingt i gceart ach an oiread? Mar atá ráite againn '*Grunt, but don't pull*' a bhí mar mhantra againn. Níor oscail duine ar bith againn a bhéal leis an Acallach a chosaint. Airim náireach faoi sin go dtí an lá atá inniu ann. Bata agus bóthair a bheadh mar thoradh ar aisfhreagra ar bith, ar ndóigh, ach tá a leithéid de rud agus prionsabal ann.

Blain stairiúil a bhí inti sin, 1969. Mí ina dhiaidh sin bhí mé thíos i Londain ag obair do Cumann Siomóin i gKentish Town nuair a chuala mé go raibh arm Shasana imithe isteach go Doire. Is mó i bhfad tionchar a bhí aige sin ar ár saol anseo nó fear ar an ngealach.

recessed lighting and an apparent built-in fear of things natural, I read and reread the story of the crew of the yacht *Mignonette*. It was the summer of 1884. No doubt even then tourists and students, lecturers and clerics traversed this square to savour, sample, debate, dispute, civilities observed, souls and selves half-buried alive under layers of stage clothes, but the master and mate of the *Mignonette* were descending into nightmare. Sixteen hundred miles from the Cape of Good Hope at the height of a dreadful storm they found themselves with no alternative but to put to sea in an open boat. Three men and a boy. Dudley, Stephens, Brooks and the boy. A terrifying, snarling sea and land a thousand miles away.

They had no water and only two tins of turnip. On the fourth day they caught a turtle. In twenty days that was all they had to eat and for eight of those days there was nothing, nothing at all, except a haunting sense of bitter death and a nauseatingly unlikely hope that somehow it might be cheated. On the eighteenth day they had been an entire week without food and five days without water. The boy lay helpless, weakened and deathbound at the bottom of the boat. Dudley suggested they kill him so that the rest might live. Brooks dissented but after Dudley had slit the boy's throat, he like the others lived off his flesh and blood for four days. On the fourth day they were picked up by a passing ship. They were barely alive. Their condition was wretched beyond description. Gaunt, hunger-beggared spectres, they were

brought safely to the port of Falmouth and there charged with murder.

Lawyers love such a case. Extraordinary cases, particularly those which defy precedent, produce in some judges a theatricality of gargantuan proportions. Lofty clichés destined to grow into legendary insight, caressed from generation to generation, venerated as profound are studiously committed to paper with one eye on the accused and two eyes on posterity. Latin epithets, veiled references to Greek authors, a learned quotation (preferably from a deceased judicial colleague) and the scene is set for a classic judgement. The Queen versus Dudley and Stephens produced them all. There was of course compassion and understanding for the ghastliness of the circumstances. 'It must not be supposed that in refusing to admit temptation to be an excuse for crime it is forgotten how terrible the temptation was: how awful the suffering: how hard in such trials to keep the judgement straight and the conduct pure. We are often compelled to set up standards we cannot reach ourselves and to lay down rules which we could not ourselves satisfy.' However 'It is enough in a Christian country to remind ourselves of the example which we profess to follow...'

A century of lawyers have studied those words and wiggled and gowned, in tabs, wing collars and morning suits they have with sagacious noddings and tut-tuttings managed to deify the sentiment and dismiss or more accurately miss the essence. What a farcically diabolical

moment it must have been when the court having found them guilty of murder sentenced them to death. The sentence was of course later commuted by the Crown to six months' imprisonment without hard labour. An act of mercy. Be merciful unto us for we are sinners! Stephens emigrated to Australia where he prospered enough to have a flattering portrait of himself painted. A copy of it hung, bluetacked to one of my concrete walls. A pudgy bearded man, middle aged, closing in on the last of his pre-death life.

The sixth and final chime struck as I entered the side door to the room above the chapel. The sound of voices already filled the dark stairway. I was going to a meeting of the shipwrecked. Inside each there was a voice which knew and choked alone in that knowing but there was no Dudley to speak. Outside each there was a skin, impenetrable like an oilskin cape. You can catch rainwater on an oilskin cape but not much else.

'They had no fresh water except such rain as they from time to time caught in their oilskin capes... the boat was drifting on the ocean and was probably more than one thousand miles from land...'

CORRECTION

The gremlins had a field day with our article *That's the Spirit, Right Here, Right Now*, in our last edition. Claire Moloney wrote the piece while Mary Heffron wrote the review