

**World Meeting of Families 2018**  
***The Gospel of the Family: Joy for the World!***  
**Pilgrimage #2 (9 days / 7 nights)**

The World Meeting of Families is an historic moment of grace and a font of spiritual formation. Our faith journey through the spiritually rich Ireland will give us opportunity to come closer to God and gratefully consider the sacrifices and dedication of those who came before. As we visit the sites of the early Christian Church in Ireland, we will renew our commitment to the roots of our Catholic faith. The Masses and meditations we celebrate along the way will draw us together as a community and will remind us of our blessings and the call to stewardship as followers of Jesus Christ.

**Day 1: Sunday, August 19 Departure from the USA**

*Help me to journey beyond the familiar and into the unknown. Give me the faith to leave old ways and break fresh ground with You.” -St. Brendan the Navigator*

Our Pilgrimage begins with an overnight flight to Ireland.

**Day 2: Monday, August 20 Arrive Shannon or Dublin – Bunratty/Limerick**

*And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.” - 1 Corinthians 13:13*

We arrive at the Shannon or Dublin Airport and meet our Tour Manager who will escort us to our motorcoach for transfer to Bunratty Castle. Bunratty Castle is one of the most complete and authentic medieval castles in Ireland. Built in 1425 and plundered on many occasions, it was authentically restored in 1954 to its former medieval splendor and now contains mainly 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century furnishings and tapestries capturing the mood and the style of the times. Within the grounds of Bunratty Castle is Bunratty Folk Park where 19<sup>th</sup> century life is vividly recreated. Set on 26 acres, the impressive park features over 30 buildings in a “living” village and rural setting. Enjoy the tastes, scents, sights and sounds of this enchanting place as you stroll from house to house or around the charming village complete with school, post office, doctors house, hardware shop, printers, and of course the pub! We continue to our hotel in Limerick for check-in. Dinner and overnight this evening.

**Day 3: Tuesday, August 21 Cliffs of Moher/Burren Region**

*“He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly.” Acts 10:2*

This morning after a full Irish breakfast our pilgrimage takes us to visit the Cliffs of Moher. Situated on the Atlantic Ocean and bordering the Burren Area, the Cliffs of Moher are one of Ireland's most spectacular sights. Standing 230 meters above the ground at their highest point and 8km long, the Cliffs boast one of the most amazing views in Ireland. On a clear day, the Aran Islands are visible in Galway Bay as well as the valleys and hills of Connemara. To the south of the cliffs is Hag's Head and was once the site of a castle. The cliffs reach their highest point just north of O' Brien's Tower. Cornelius O' Brien, a descendant of Brian Boru (he who defeated the Vikings in battle), built a Tower at the cliffs in order to enjoy some tea with his lady friends. The Tower is adjacent to the seastack, Breanan Mór, which stands over 70 meters above the foaming waves and is home to some of the Burren's wildlife. We continue on to the Burren Region. The Burren, part of which forms the 100 square km Burren National Park, is a unique place. It is a Karst limestone region of approximately 300 sq. km, which lies in the North West corner of Co Clare. It is composed of limestone pavements, which have been eroded to a distinctive pattern. This pavement is criss-crossed by cracks known as



grykes in which grow a myriad of wild flora and under which are huge caves and rivers which suddenly flood when it rains. The Burren contains dozens of megalithic tombs and Celtic crosses as well as a ruined Cistercian Abbey dating back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. You will discover small villages abandoned during the famine period and green roads on which you can walk for miles without ever seeing a car. The flora on the Burren is a mixture Arctic and Mediterranean and rare flowers such as gentian, orchids and bloody cranesbill are the rule rather than the exception. Upon our return to Limerick, we enjoy dinner and overnight at our hotel.



#### **Day 4: Wednesday, August 22 Corcomroe Abbey – Galway**

*Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.” -Proverbs 22:6*

This morning after a full Irish breakfast, we travel to County Mayo to visit Corcomroe Abbey, once known as "St. Mary of the Fertile Rock" (a reference to the Burren's fertile soil) to appreciate its detailed carvings and other rich ornamentation, which are not commonly found in structures from this period. Corcomroe Abbey lies close to another interesting monastic settlement, a group of three small early Christian Churches which nestle in the pass of Oughtmana and which are dedicated to St. Colman. These lonely structures give us an idea of how the monks must have sought out isolated areas in which to become self-sufficient and live away from the outside world. We continue to Galway City, the fifth largest and the fastest-growing city in Ireland (also known as Ireland's Cultural Heart (*Croí Cultúrtha na hÉireann*)). Galway City is a delight with its narrow streets, old stone and wooden shop fronts, good restaurants and busy pubs. The city has attracted a bohemian crown of musicians and artists, which add so much to the character of the city. This afternoon, we enjoy a Corrib Princess cruise with tea and scones. We continue to our hotel in County Mayo for check-in and dinner together.



#### **Day 5: Thursday, August 23 Ballintubber Abbey and Knock Shrine**

*Our Lady of Knock, Queen of Ireland, you gave hope to your people in a time of distress and comforted them in sorrow. You have inspired countless pilgrims to pray with confidence to your Son, remembering His promise: "Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find." (Portion of Prayer to Our Lady of Knock).*

We begin our day with a visit to Ballintubber Abbey, founded by King Cathal Crobdearg Ua Conchobair in 1216. It is said to be the only church in Ireland founded by an Irish king that is still in regular use. Indeed, Mass has been celebrated here continually for almost 800 years; even after being damaged during the reformation, the roofless abbey continued to be used. In 1966 the nave was restored and reroofed in time for the 750th anniversary of the abbey's foundation, and in 1997 the Chapter House and Dorter area were restored and reroofed. A further restoration is planned for the entire east wing before the 800th year celebration in 2016. Perhaps it is interesting to note that the actor, Pierce Brosnan was recently married here, that the abbey marks the beginning of an ancient pilgrimage route to Croagh Patrick, once defunct but now reopened as a cross-country pilgrimage/tourist trail, and that legend has it that St. Patrick banished nine goblins here. We continue to Knock. On the evening of August 21, 1879, several people, including men, women, teenagers, and children whose ages ranged from five to seventy-five years, witnessed an apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Joseph and St. John the Evangelist. Behind them and a little to the left of St John was a plain altar on which was a cross and a lamb (a traditional image of Jesus as reflected in the religious phrase *The Lamb of God*) with adoring angels. We visit this important place of pilgrimage today, the sacred Shrine at Knock, often referred to as the "Lourdes of



Ireland." One and a half million pilgrims visit Knock Shrine annually, and it was visited by Pope John Paul II in 1979 to commemorate the centenary of the apparition. We will have an opportunity to see a portrayal of the aspects of rural life in Ireland at the end of the 19th Century and early 20th Century at Knock Museum, before returning to our hotel.

#### **Day 6: Friday, August 24 Clonmacnoise – Dublin/World Meeting of Families 2018**

*May you live all the days of your life (Jonathan Swift).*

We'll journey on to Clonmacnoise ("Meadow of the Sons of Nos,"), which was founded in 548 by St. Ciaran, and is a site of important pilgrimage, having been visited by Pope John Paul II in 1979. There is much to see in Clonmacnoise including a large round tower built in 1124 which was struck by lightning in 1135, and ruins of churches, the largest of which is the Cathedral, originally built in 909 by the King of Tara. Originally standing in front of the Cathedral is the remarkable Cross of the Scriptures which dates from about 900 AD and is one of the finest high crosses in Ireland. Also preserved in the museum and replaced with a replica in its original position is the South Cross, standing about 12 feet and decorated with abstract interlacing designs, spirals and bosses. It also has a bas-relief Crucifixion scene, which (unusually) appears on the shaft rather than the cross-head. The North Cross, whose style is similar to the Book of Kells, dates from about 800, but only the shaft and base survive. The excellent on-site museum includes a visual timeline of the site, the original high crosses from the site, and a fantastic collection of early Christian gravestones dating from the 8th through 12th centuries. We'll continue to Dublin for dinner and an overnight stay.

#### **Day 7: Saturday, August 25 Dublin/World Meeting of Families 2018**

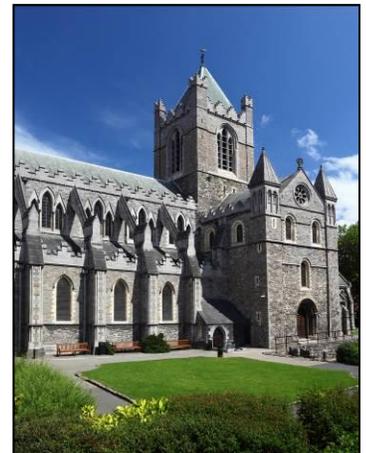
*Where there is sorrow, there is holy ground (Oscar Wilde, De Profundis).*

After breakfast this morning, we'll transfer to the city center to enjoy a panoramic tour of Ireland's capital. Dublin is situated at the mouth of the River Liffey which divides the city into north and south. Our tour begins with the north side, where we follow O'Connell Street, a main thoroughfare. We'll see the General Post Office (GPO), the Custom House (a neoclassical 18<sup>th</sup> century building housing several departments of local government), and Phoenix Park, one of the largest parks in Europe with its large areas of grassland, and (since the 17<sup>th</sup> century) a herd of wild deer. Along the south side of the river, we'll see sophisticated areas with shops and historic homes, including those of Oscar Wilde and Bram Stoker, a few of Ireland's world-famous writers. This part of the city is also dominated by Trinity College, home to the Book of Kells, a splendidly illuminated version of the Christian Gospels dating from the 9<sup>th</sup> century. The 680-page work displays such incredible workmanship, including extraordinary colors derived from shellfish, beetles' wings, and crushed pearls, that some historians feel it contains all the designs to be found in Celtic art. Trinity College faces the medieval district where Dublin Castle and two Anglican Cathedrals can be found. We enjoy the balance of the day at the World Meeting of Families Congress. Tonight, we return to our hotel for dinner and overnight.

#### **Day 8: Sunday, August 26 Dublin/Closing Mass of World Meeting of Families 2018**

*"I would like an abundance of peace. I would like full vessels of charity. I would like rich treasures of mercy. I would like cheerfulness to preside over me." -St. Brigid of Kildare*

After breakfast, we have the full day for independent sightseeing and exploration of Dublin. Later this afternoon, we attend the closing Mass of World Meeting of Families.



Tonight, we enjoy an evening of traditional Irish entertainment and dinner at the Merry Ploughboys Pub. After dinner, we return to our hotel for overnight.

**Day 9: Monday, August 27 Depart for Home**

*“Our loved ones merit our complete attention. Jesus is our model in this, for whenever people approached to speak with him, he would meet their gaze, directly, and lovingly.”*  
Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia (The Joy of Love)*

After a final Irish breakfast, we transfer to the Dublin Airport for our departure flight home.

This experience of the universal Church has deepened our call to love and serve our individual families, our parish community, and the world. A new journey begins!

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