



Bish E-Zine Easter



WELCOME TO OUR E-ZINE

Dear friends of the Bish,

Welcome to our Easter E-zine. The long dark winter months have passed and with the last two weeks of increased sunshine there is optimism in the air. This is the first school year in over two years where it looks like we will complete fully in school. That is not to say that the cloud of Covid 19 has been very evident over the last 3 months. There have been more cases of Covid 19 among students and staff than at any stage over the last 2 years. We have been able to remain open, without having to send year groups home, thanks to the cooperation and commitment of staff in the Bish. They have been ably assisted by our talented PME students who have assisted the school in remaining open. While we remain cautiously optimistic that we will emerge from the cloud of Covid we do need to remain cautious in our approach to gathering in numbers.

There has been a gradual easing of the Covid restrictions in the school, we were delighted to be able to see pupils faces and this has helped with the teacher pupil interaction in class. It was very difficult to hear pupils behind masks. It has also been very positive to welcome some of our 6th year pupils back to the Nuns' Island campus over the last few weeks.

In our last ezine we spoke about the impending opening of our new Modular accommodation in the school yard. Unfortunately, they have still not opened due to a delay in the electricity connection. The new rooms were snagged by the architect this week and we expect to be celebrating their official opening after the Easter break. We are also expecting the completion of our new weights room over Easter and we look forward to its reopening for the final term in the school. The last term saw the official retirement of PJ Folan. There was a wonderful guard of honour for PJ in the school yard on Friday March 4th. One of the highlights was to see students waiting for an opportunity to congratulate and thank PJ.



John Madden - Principal.

Pj's successor is Ms Sarah Gleeson. Sarah commenced her Deputy Principalship in early March, we wish Sarah well. Sarah is the first woman to hold a leadership position in the Bish in our 160-year history.

Normal school life has returned in that students are preparing for upcoming Leaving Cert oral exams, projects in subjects such as DCG, PE, Geography, Economics, Ag Science and History have been submitted or are almost complete. We wish all of our 6th year cohort well over their final two months in the school. Our 3rd years have completed their application for transition year and we are delighted to see the programme grow to 4 classes for the year ahead. It has been great to welcome our Parents Council back to the school building and they have been busy with a range of initiatives that will continue into final term. We are all looking forward to our Colour Run on Friday 8th April to celebrate inclusivity and Le Chéile Day.

School sport has almost returned to normal and there have been victories and defeats for our sports teams. The old saying, "it does not matter if you win or lose but how you play the game" has never been more important. I have been lucky to see games in all of our different sports and Bish students and supporters have behaved incredibly well on and off the field. Pride of place probably goes to our swimmers who won a gold and silver in the all-Ireland swimming gala in the relays.

We also had victories in Maths competitions, entries in a language and music competition, engagement in 'Architects at the Edge' initiatives and Creative Engagement projects. The ezine will give a flavour of some of the wide variety of activities taking place.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the crisis in Ukraine that we are all witnessing from a distance. We all hope and pray that we will see a conclusion to the needless conflict as soon as possible. Thanks to the teachers, pupils and parents who organised a very successful fundraising day for Ukraine in mid-March. It was a wonderful success.

Thanks to all Bish staff for their commitment to the pupils of the school. Thanks also to the pupils, parents and families for their continued support.

Enjoy the ezine it shows that there is a wealth of rich activity, on top of the "bread and butter" of learning and teaching, happening in the school.

John Madden

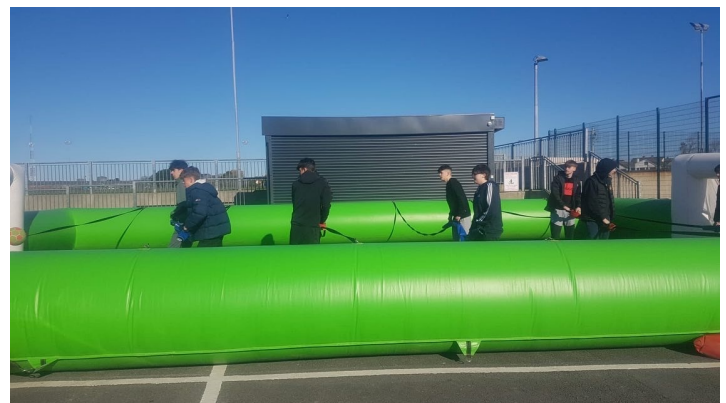
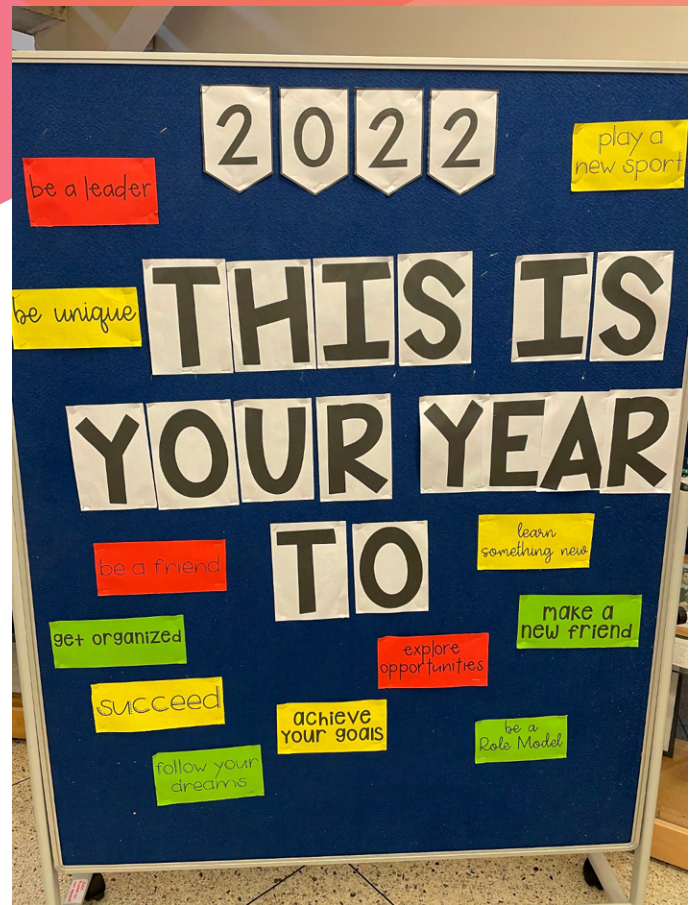


NEW YEAR, NEW START

Students were welcomed back to school after Christmas into a busy new term. Mock Junior and Leaving Cert exams were held, in February many of the Covid restrictions were removed and fundraising appeals were welcomed for Ukraine.

TRANSITION YEAR

There have been plenty of activities in TY over the past few months including their involvement with the Ukrainian fundraiser, CSI workshops, Astrobay Activities and the Future Leaders group were instrumental in the organisation of the Colour Dash as well.



AROUND THE SCHOOL



TY students taking advantage of the good weather.



As the weather improves, it's nice to see our surrounding areas being appreciated. 1B pictured here enjoying a walk during their Mindfulness class.



Our 6th Year Prefects celebrating some of their 18th birthdays. Ms. NicAoidh, as their Year Head, provided the cake!



An informative study skills session for our 6th Years via Zoom thanks to Ray Langan from RaysetheGame.



St. Brigid's Day crosses thanks to our 1st Year Art Students.



Lovely to see our students being able to play sports and have supporters at games again. A big cohort pictured here proudly painted blue.



All Ireland winning former Bish student Adrian Cronin training first year goalkeepers Patrick O'Connell and Aaron Hester.



Bish student Tommy Lillis got his first cap for Ireland in Wales (Ireland U15 vrs Wales) and scored a goal to boot! Well done Tommy.



Congratulations and thank you to our PME1 cohort who finished their placements in The Bish recently. We wish them the very best of luck in their PME2 placements next year.



Congratulations and well done to our PME2 cohort who also finished their placements with us in recent weeks.



Birthday celebrations for Mr. Spellacy pictured here with some of his 6th Years.



The Bish took 1st and 2nd prizes in the Connacht Irish Applied Maths Junior Problem Solving Competition in NUIG. Well done lads!



Stephen, Dumi and Louis enjoying the Flash Mob in the yard.

P.J FOLAN RETIRES

Written by Seamus Cahalan



It was with regret that the school learned this year that one of our Deputy Principals, Mr. P.J Folan, decided to retire after 38 years dedicated service to this school. Few people epitomize the Bish like P.J Folan. He did his Leaving Certificate in this school in 1979 and went on to study science in U.C.G. (now NUIG) after which he studied for his higher diploma in Education doing his teaching practice in the Bish, eventually to take up a position as a full-time teacher in 1984. P.J. served as a teacher until 4 years ago after which he took up the position as Deputy Principal in the school.

P.J. is a proud Old Mervue man. His brothers Jarlath and Kevin both attended the Bish as did his sons. Any school would have been lucky to have had P.J and thankfully he chose The Bish. As a teacher he was exemplary. Concentrating mostly on mathematics, thousands of young men passed through his classes over the years all achieving high grades and a great love of mathematics. But true to the outstanding teacher that he is, he wasn't happy to only engage with the students in the classroom. He was involved in many extracurricular activities which included the school musicals and school tours, he trained the school rugby teams and the team mathematics.

All who worked with P.J. found him a warm caring individual. He was mentor to all the young teachers that came to the school and was a great support to all his colleagues. It was little surprise that so many in the school were so saddened at the announcement of his retirement but it was also met by the good wishes that the hundreds of the present and past students paid to him.

P.J. made his greatest impact on the school when he took up the role of Deputy Principal 4 years ago. As he had done so as a teacher, he went above and beyond in his role as a D.P. He was never the type to 'Clock Out' at 5 pm and was generally working in his office late into the evening. Perfection was the standard for P.J and when he completed a task you knew it could not be improved upon. The past few years have been difficult for all school managers but P.J worked tirelessly with the welfare of the whole school community foremost in his mind. Indeed, the success of the Bish weathering the Covid crisis is in no small measure due to him.

We in the Bish wish P.J. and his wife Mary a long and healthy retirement. P.J, you can retire from school but you can never retire from being great.



NEW DEPUTY PRINCIPAL APPOINTED



We are delighted to announce Ms. Sarah Gleeson as the new Deputy Principal of The Bish. Sarah has worked with The Bish for the past 15 years in her capacity as Guidance Counsellor and English teacher. She is also the first female in a Senior Leadership role in Bish history. Sarah is greatly looking forward to her new role within the school and is committed to building on her relationships with students, parents and staff.

FLASH MOB



Fantastic to see the return of the 'Flash Mob' here in The Bish courtesy of our Bish Big Band Flash Mob who entertained the school cohort in March. Huge thanks to the lads themselves and to Ms. Cotter and Ms. Devine for their mentorship.

UKRAINE APPEAL - IRISH RED CROSS



We had a fantastic day in aid of the Ukrainian Appeal on Wednesday 16th March. There was a TY car wash, Yellow and Blue No Uniform Day and a Bake Sale. Huge thanks to the TYs, Parents Council, Student Council, Headstrong Committee and teachers Ms. Bruton, Ms. Doherty, Ms. Cotter and Ms. Devine for all their hard work. Also special thanks to Dillon Kitt and Cathal Joyce who kept us entertained with music in the yard. Over €1800 was raised in total.

GAELIC FOOTBALL



This was an extremely busy time for our Gaelic Footballers in the school. Our senior team won an historic first A championship tie v Rice College in Glencorrib on the 26th of January. We had fantastic performances on the day by Charlie Cox, Cian Carroll, Brian Mitchell, Joey O' Hara, Sean O' Connor and Jack Folan. In the Connacht A football semi final v St Colmans Claremorris it was a tale of two halves as the Bish dominated the first half only to lose out in the second by 2.16 to 1.8. The scoreline was harsh on our lads who battled for the entire game and our team missing some key players. Overall it was a fantastic year, capturing the Senior A League title after a sensational last minute victory over St Jarlath's College Tuam in the Airdome before Christmas. Our First years, Juveniles and Junior football teams all competed at A level over the past few weeks too and this bodes well for Gaelic football in the school for the future. A sign of this is having 6 players on the Galway minor football panel and 7 players on the Galway U20 panel. An Bish abú!

SWIMMING



Great excitement in the National Aquatic Centre. Intermediate relay team John Gibbs, Aleksandr McAleer, Senan McDonnell and Cillian McCullough won gold in the medley relay and silver in the freestyle relay. Well done also to David Lennon and Aleksandr McAleer who both represented Connacht in the Senior Schools Interprovincial.

GOLF



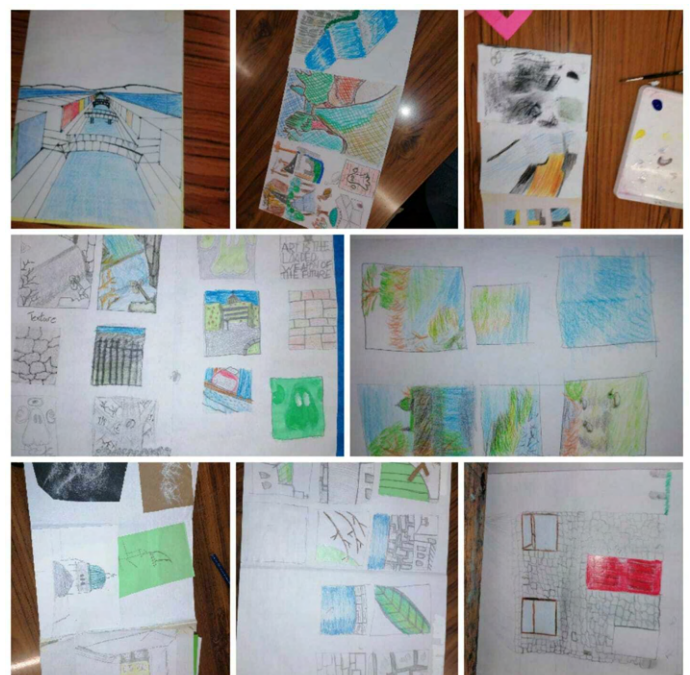
Well done to our Bish golfers who represented our school in the Connacht Irish Schoolboys Junior and Senior golf championships in March and April.

Our senior team played in Tuam Golf Club on Wednesday 30th March. Our team members were: Donogh McDonogh (5th Year), Luke Power (4th Year), Evan O'Toole (4th Year), Michael Greaney (3rd Year), and Daniel Browne (2nd Year). Although our team were unsuccessful, they did themselves proud in tough conditions on the day.

Our Junior team played the following Wednesday 6th April in Ballinrobe golf club. Our team members were: Micheal Greaney (3rd Year), Daniel Browne (2nd Year), and Karl McLoughlin (2nd Year). The boys brought home the Connacht pennant with a super score of 67 points (best 2 stableford scores to count). They will be representing Connacht in the Irish Schoolboys Junior National Championship in Milltown on Monday 25th of April and we wish them every success. Go Bish!

CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT

Creative Engagement is an Arts in Education programme. This entails an artist or artists coming into the school to work with the students. Our Creative Engagement artist, Alwyn Reville, has been working with our two second year groups imparting his skills, knowledge and enthusiasm to the students. The aim of the Creative Engagement Programme is to encourage students' creativity, initiative and expression. Students are busy working on their Waterways project with Mr. Reville, Ms. NicAoidh and Mr. Spellacy. They also got the opportunity to do a workshop with Mr. Mark Rainey from the School of Geography, Archaeology and Irish Studies NUIG and to take part in a discussion on creative and community spaces around Nuns Island. Our second Creative Project, Blast - Arts in Education, is a scheme to give pupils the opportunity to work with a professional artist on unique projects, to be originated and planned among the artist, the teacher and the school, under the coordination of the Education Support Centres. Our artist Jennifer Cunningham got off to a good start recently with 2 first year groups. They will creatively explore diversity and inclusion in the Bish.



BASKETBALL



It has been a busy season for the Bish Basketballers. The Senior team won both silver and bronze medals in the All Ireland Championships which in the context of 800 schools playing basketball is impressive. They were also selected to represent Ireland boys team next year in the bi-annual U18 International Schools Federation World Schools Championships along with Loreto Dalkey who were selected to represent the Ireland girls team.

The Junior (2nd Year) Basketball team won West Regional Silver medals and went to the playoffs round of 16 but were both defeated by St. Mary's Portlaoise in a thrilling and exciting game.

The Minor (1st Year) Basketball team won West Regional Silver medals and went to the playoffs round of 16 and defeated Patrician College Newbridge to advance to the All Ireland Quarter Finals in the National Basketball Arena in Tallaght on 25th April where they play Colaiste Eanna from Dublin.

Well done to Coaches Ross Conboy and Tom O Malley and to the team captains Joseph Coughlan (Senior); Eoin Cleary (U16); John O Sullivan (Junior); Luke O Reilly (Minor) and team members on a memorable year so far with all to play for.

RUGBY

The Bish were delighted to welcome Connacht rugby and former Bish student Dylan Tierney-Martin along with Connacht rugby and Irish International Finlay Bealham to the school for our junior rugby end of season awards. Dylan is currently adding to his caps for the province, and we wish him all the best on his come back from injury. Finlay is back at Connacht after his try scoring performance for Ireland against England at Twickenham. Thank you to both players for taking time out of their busy schedule. We wish them the best of luck in their upcoming double header versus Leinster in Connacht's first ever appearance in the knock out stages of Europe's Champions Cup.

Junior Rugby was back with a bang post covid. It was a very successful season for the junior team making the Connacht A league final with a narrow last-minute loss to rivals Marist. In the A cup, the Bish made it to the semi-final stage where they again met Marist. Yet again Marist came out on top. However, it marked the end to a very successful season for Bish rugby. We have a hugely talented bunch of players from u14 level all the way to senior level and all are very much looking forward to next season. The Bish are back where we rightly belong challenging at the top level in Connacht rugby.

Pic1: Finlay Bealham (Connacht and Irish rugby International) with Cillian McCullagh - Moment of the season award winner, for kicking the winning penalty kick in the Connacht League semi final v Summerhill

Pic2: Dylan Tierney-Martin (Connacht Rugby and ex Bish) with Conor Gibbs- Try of the season winner, winning try in the Berry Cup vs the Jes

Pic 3: Finlay Bealham with Eneko O'Grady- Junior Rugby Sportsman Award winner

Pic 4: Dylan Tierney-Martin with Nathan Tierney- u15 player of the year

Pic 5- Finlay Bealham with Paul Sharkey- u16 player of the year

Pic 6- Finlay Bealham and Dylan Tierney-Martin with some of the Bish Junior rugby squad

Other award winners who were absent on the day were Charlie Curling - Big Hitter and Players player of the year and Ciaran Noone - Most Improved Player.





POLITICS AND SOCIETY



5th Year and 6th Year PolSoc students had a fantastic day out in Dublin. They went to the Chester Beatty Museum, Dublin Castle and experienced the Croke Park Syline Tour Pitch and GAA Museum. Great to see the interest in this new subject.



ARCHITECTURE ON THE EDGE WORKSHOP



LE CHÉILE DAY

As a proud Le Chéile school, we wanted to celebrate the theme of inclusivity this year for Le Chéile Day. On April 8th, Junior School students had a Le Chéile Day quiz organised by Ms. Ní Fhéinne. Plenty of cookie vouchers from An Tobar Nua were up for grabs and great fun had. We also had our very first Colour Run. This was the brainchild of our Headstrong Committee and had been in the pipeline for well over a year. Together with the Student Council, TY Future Leaders group and the Parents' Council, the plan became a reality. We had two runs - one for Junior School and one for Seniors and they did not disappoint. Sincere thanks to everyone for their participation and inclusivity.



BISH WRITE OFF



Photos of the 'Bish Write Off' or 'The Donal Taheny Memorial Prize for Student Fiction' winners.

1st place- Barry Li for his entry 'the way back home', winning the €125 prize.

2nd place- Ross Bradley for 'the day everything changed', €50

3rd place- John Brosnan, for 'Routines' €30

The junior prize went to Oisín Forde in 2nd year, for 'Audaces Fortuna Iuvat', €40

1st year prize to Jack Woodings for 'Unexpected adventure', winning €25

The boys are pictured next to the Donal Taheny memorial plaque.

The Way Back Home

By Barry Li

It was raining a lot recently, more than usual. But the moon pulled the curtains and let those inhabiting earth to see out the window called “the sky”. Stars shone like full-blown carnations, fascinating and illustrious. The crescent moon sparkled like a silvery claw amidst the black. The night sky was a welcoming sight, it appeared like magic at each sunset, and assured to return as she dwindled in dawn’s first light.

I shifted a little against the crumbling stone wall as I felt the cold moisture from the soil creeping into my breeches. A harsh Winter wind swept across the plains tussling a frenzy of leaves abandoned by its tree. The foliage in the gust like sails in a storm.

I adorned the undisturbed silence, and its transient nature, yet imagining a world of constant noiselessness terrified myself and my humanistic nature. Would be I alone in this world just like O’Brien’s son, digging a grave for his parents? The mere thought sent an icy shiver down my spine. I sniffled as the gale nipped my face. As I took a deeper breath of air in, my nose curdled at the revolting smell of rot. The stench was utterly ubiquitous.

Overnight, a dense blue fog advanced over our puddled potato fields. An odour of decaying smells permeated the air. When the wind and rain died away, there was a terrible stillness. Within a month, food supplies on our Western seaboard were wiped out. The “*devil’s disease*” we called it. Many fled into the city leaving behind empty stone dwellings and a desolate lonely landscape. There was an estranged rumour speaking of people whipping themselves in a plea for God’s forgiveness.

I puffed a plume from my lungs, the moisture condensed into a small, misty cloud. It rose into the air before disappearing without a trace as if there was nothing to begin with. I rubbed my hands gently together, trying to recover the blood drained from my appendages with its trancing warmth. Bridget decided that we must remain here because of our kids, Aoife, Seán and Síle, she said they are our priority. However, as I recalled Bridget and I’s conversation this evening, my shoulders draped a down and I my eyes followed the oak leaves inching forward bit by bit around my sandals.

At first, I could not believe that she said that. It was utterly absurd to me. The statement was so unfilial and insane that one would think the devil wisped it to her. But, in the very end, I could not refute her claims. Perhaps, it was the right thing to do, to let the kids survive. It is the duty of parents to ensure their children live until they could fend for themselves. One less mouth would definitely mean more food for the kids, yeah?

I owe Bridget more than I could ever pay back. Constantly enduring my excessive habits. Overindulging myself with drinks was something that no one could do with. One time, after discovering I had taken all the money in the house to pay for my tab, Bridget had enough. The next morning upon sobering up with a migraine, Bridget had left. And the kids were gone too. I panicked. Scrambling out the front door I searched around the fields, in the local grocer and around the neighbouring farmhouses. By noon I discovered she went back to her parents. It took *oh*so many vows, and desperate cries even, for her to reluctantly come back home. Now, whenever I came back with a slurred speech and a boozy breath, she would do nothing, but shake her head full of disappointment.

The night was still serene with silence.

"So be it," I sighed, "it's for the good of the family." Propping myself back upright, I scornfully attempted to get up on my feet.

Trudging along the dirt road, I followed the only path in front of me. I paused once again to admire the beauty of the witching hour. I hoped to be able witness its charm and magnificence again in the future. I turned and continued walking. The moon could no longer illuminate the shadow before me.

I gently set foot in the cottage, closing the long putrescent and corroded door after my entrance. The interior was dark and spotty with soot. The weathered roof was inky after absorbing all that smoke. The house was jet-black, the only light coming from the kitchen. As I peered into the kitchen Bridget set down her knitting-needles on the table. She stood up swiftly causing a nearby candle to faintly flicker distorting the shadows in the room. She stared me dead in the eyes. I averted my gaze to the damp earthed floor, and then to the almost-flat vegetable sacks in the corner. With my shoulder leaning against the doorframe, I furrowed my brows and nodded. My head felt weaker with each nod. It took a moment, but Bridget came up to me,

"You made the right choice," she said as she walked past me and exited the room. I heard her footsteps come to a halt.

"It's about time you let go of that dying old hag," she added.

Softly, I opened the door to allow a slant of light into the room peering inside. The children were sound asleep on three miniature wooden beds lined up next to each. I carried the candle closer to the doorframe. It brightened their sweet and angelic faces making an aloof smile brighten my lips. A blanket rustled and Aoife sat up.

"Daddy?" she whispered.

I gave her the smile, "Go to sleep darling." I quietly closed the door as to not awaken the rest.

As I returned to my room, I heard a few dry coughs from the adjacent room. I glanced into the dimly lit room. The room was barren except for a bed and a bed-side table. On top the table a stub of wax carried a shrinking flame. The last dregs of light supplied enough visibility for me to see the woman lying on her side. She was facing away from the entrance. Heavy blankets covered her only to reveal her fossilized winter-white hair. The sluggish rise and fall of the covers were the only sign of life. A rough hazel cane leaned against the bed. My vision began to blur. A droplet of brine slipped off my cheek unnoticed.

Bridget fed the kids with some yesterday's scraps, she ushered them out to play in the fields. The trio waved exuberantly at me in the distance, and I waved placidly back. As my eyes traced the horizon, I noticed that the sun was nowhere to be found. It had broken its promise to steadfastly appear every dawn. A woollen grey shawl towered over the lands. It had blocked out all the sun's meagre rays of light. An irregular breeze rattled the front door. I closed the door, accidentally bumping into Bridget carrying a basket of soggy moist clothes. She stopped to pick up a rag that was dropped. Neither of us said anything. The silence was killing me. But answering my misery Bridget spoke, "Her meal is on the table." Still bending down, she lifted her head and looked at me.

"You know what to do, right?" she said, "Take her to somewhere she can't come back."

I put my hand against my forehead, "Alright, alright." I uttered under my breath.

I carried a bowl of watered-down milk, and a few peculiarly shaped spuds to my mother's room. I placed the food on the bedside table. She was already awake. She stared at the straw ceiling absentmindedly. I gently lifted her up and let her lean against the tattered bed board. Her face was worn by the passing of time; her eyes seemed unintentionally milky. After she saw the food, in a dry and crackled voice, she said,

"Leave them for the children, I'm not hungry."

"These are for you," I said, "after you eat, we'll go for a walk."

Having seemed to have understood something, she complied by eating the food without saying anything else. After setting down an empty bowl, I began helping her to get dressed. It was going to be a long day, so I got her clothed up warmly. Neither of us spoke a word until I told her to get on my back.

"The days are cold, put this on ya" she said.

I turned and looked at her sitting on the bed, she held a hand-knitted scarf in her hand. She must have knitted them herself as the yarn was loose at some areas but tight in others. Strands of extra wool hung out at the sides. Her deteriorating sight must have hindered her artisanship. I reluctantly draped it around my neck, it was a bit too long. But I could feel its warmth.

With my mother on my back, I walked and walked and walked until the day dimmed. We were silent for the whole time. My mind wandered as I trudged in the breeze. I had not been aware of where I was going, I just adhered to the only path in front. The sun still did not break through the thick layer of condensation in the atmosphere. Blisters began forming undetected on both of my feet. Both of my arms throbbed after being in persistent strain.

Her breathing was gentle but delicate as if a single outside interference would cause it to cease. She was also surprisingly light, as if a feather. As I thought of this, I envisioned the times when she was young, she would cradle me in her arms, and wrap me up with upmost care in a blanket. My throat began to constrict. In attempt to suppress the sensation I bit my lip hard. *It's for the kids*, I told myself again.

I snapped back to make aware of my surroundings. Upon the forest floor lie trees of yesteryear, fallen in storms long forgotten. The only hint of green was from the resilient moss that anchored on the humid soil. The deciduous trees' withered shedding littered the terrain. As if all the little creatures had vanished, there was no birdsong or any sudden movement. I strained to hear something else, anything other than the steady rhythm that pounded inside me.

A clatter disturbed the stillness of the forest. Then after a moment, another. The sound came at odd intervals behind me. Its abnormality gripped my curiosity. I decided to turn around. There was nothing, except, for a lone pebble on the dirt path. No, as looked further back, I could see more. They were lined up one after another tracing the path I took. Fury exploded inside me.

"What are you doing?" I questioned her irritably.

She was taken by surprise, and it caused her to drop some of the small rocks in her weak grip. Her reply stunned me, "Oh Padraig, after walking for this long, you're not even looking at where you're going," she sniffled, "I'm afraid that you would be lost, when you return by yourself."

My feet froze. My words broke up and all I could say were stuttering sounds. A hot tear streamed down my face. I squeezed my eyelids shut in hope they would stop. My breath became choppy as I stood there unmoving.

After coming back to my senses, I turned my head to look at her. She was making the same pained face I had. I glanced into the darkening sky. Then, I turned to face the path I came from.

"Let's go home, mother."

"Let's go back home together."

SOCIAL MEDIA

We are currently working on building our social media platforms to connect with current and past students more. Please follow our pages, like them and share them to keep up to date with latest news and events in The Bish. Thank you to all our contributors for this edition of the ezine.

A very happy Easter to you all!

Facebook St. Joseph's Patrician College 'The Bish'

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