



# FRIENDS

The Missionary Society of St. James the Apostle

June 2024



## A Synodal Church in Mission...

*Dear Friends,*

*"The mission of the Church requires the entire People of God to be on a journey together, with each member playing his or her crucial role, united with each other."*

Every year, on the third Monday in January, members of the St. James Society gather in Lima for our Annual General Meeting (AGM). We all look forward to these meetings as they provide us with time for reflection, renewal and renovation. We also meet up with old friends and new. This year we were eagerly looking forward to having our great friend, psycho-therapist, Fr. Cathal Gallagher, SSC. lead our reflection. We were shocked and saddened when Cathal died suddenly, just before Christmas. He was one of our own, all heart and a great friend. He will always be fondly remembered, wherever St. James priests gather.

*Diocesan priests serving the poorest of the poor in Latin America since 1958.*





Dr. Sheila Curran, RSM

Dr. Sheila Curran, RSM, an Irish Mercy Sister based in Dublin, kindly agreed to be our speaker at short notice. Sheila is well known to the St. James Society, having previously worked in Lima, Peru on one of our parish teams. Additionally, Sheila has been a presenter on previous occasions at our AGM. Sr. Sheila's theme focused on the Synod undertaken by Pope Francis at a global level. Sheila helped us to look at the Synod from a biblical context, as she posed the question, "What does it mean to seek first the 'Kin-dom' of God today"? Using the text from Acts: 15 we reflected on how the early followers of Jesus, struggled with inclusion and diversity. A Synodal church is "*walking with and listening to*" the Spirit in our midst, in our diverse and complex

world today. This is a huge challenge as there are so many very different, and often diametrically opposed, opinions and experiences, to be shared. Most of the participants at the Synod in Rome last October found that the concept of '*conversations in the Spirit*' and '*Listening to*' others was one of their most difficult tasks. It meant seriously listening to the other, not preparing a rebuttal while the other spoke. The difficulty, however, is that there is a big difference between hearing and listening. It is very easy to look and yet not see; to hear but still not listen.

The Synthesis Document states: "*The Church wants to listen to everyone, not just those who can most easily make their voices heard.*" Pope Francis talks about a Church that includes everyone, especially the poor and those on the margins of society. He has asked us to make the tent larger, so that all may enter - everyone, "todos, todos, todos..." At our meeting we decided also to enter into '*conversations in the Spirit*' with each other.



This year we have been blessed to welcome two new members into the Society of St. James. Fr. Melchor comes from the Philippine Islands and Fr. John is from the United States. Their bishops commissioned them to go out on mission, in spite of their own great need of priests. They enhanced our conversation as we recalled our journey as missionaries in Latin America.



As we shared our story, we became aware that what we now call *synodality* was part of our missionary experience in Peru, long before the term was used by Pope Francis. Likewise, the expression, "*Option for the Poor*" emerged as the Latin American Bishops gathered every ten years, beginning with the gathering in Medellín, in 1967, right up to the meeting in Aparecida in 2007. They reflected on the Vatican II documents in their own context, along with the Basic Christian Communities which emerged as a young Church in so many parishes.





*Discussion Groups*

Before each of the five general conferences of CELAM (Latin American Bishop's Conference) local bishops carried out a consultation with their people about what they saw as the needs of the church at the time. These were the places where the conversations in the Spirit took place, all over Latin America. Pope Francis' ideas about reform had been percolating in Latin America for over 50 years. This long period of formation of the vision of renewal, based on the spirit of Vatican II, was developed in the Church communities in Latin America, aided by the Liberation theologians such as Gustavo Gutiérrez, Leonardo Boff, and Pablo Richard. They, too, were *“walking with and listening to the spirit”* in the poor, the little ones, the forgotten ones, in the Basic Christian Communities.

Given our experiences, as well as our reflections together in small groups in the light of the gospel, we listened to each other with respect. At the end of our gathering we decided we would share our reflections on the Synthesis Document, with Cardinal O'Malley who is a delegate to the Synod. Listening more deeply to the call of the spirit, while reflecting on the Synthesis Document from the Synod, was an experience we truly valued. Each of us was invited to reflect on how we could use the experience in our own place of ministry.

As members of the St. James Society, we continue to walk the synodal journey sharing our wisdom and insights, listening to others, believing that mission is the co-responsibility of all of us. Participation in the synodal pathway affords us the process and the structure, as well as providing us with the formation necessary to help us fulfill our mission. May we continue to walk humbly with our God so that we may listen attentively to the Spirit which is poured into our hearts. We invite you, our friends, to participate where you can in the Synodal Pathway in your own context. We give thanks to God for your great generosity and solidarity.



*Fr. John Ahern, Sr. Sheila Curran*



*Bishop Robert Hennessey, Bishop Pedro Bustamante*

## Prayer for Vocations

*Loving God, you call all who believe in you  
to grow perfect in love by following in the footsteps  
of Christ your Son.*

*Call from among us more men and women  
who will serve you as religious.  
By their way of life, may they provide a convincing sign  
of your Kingdom for the Church and the whole world.*

*We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.  
Gracious and loving God, help the men and women of our world hear the call to serve You. Our needs are great and our people  
thirst for your presence.*

*Open the hearts of many, raise up faithful servants of the Gospel,  
dedicated,  
holy priests, sisters, brothers and deacons,  
who will spend themselves for your people and their needs.*

*Bless those who are serving now with courage and perseverance.  
Grant that many will be inspired by their  
example and faith.*

*We ask this through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.*

## Cushing & Cheverus Medal Presentations, at the AGM

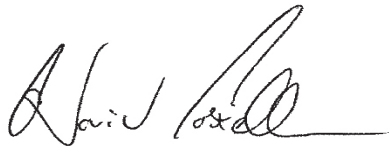
The gathering culminated on Thursday evening with concelebrated Mass during which the Cardinal Cushing Award was bestowed on Fr. Denis Parry, and the Cheverus Medal was presented to Ms. Ana Maria Ortega Sierra. (Both are pictured in the cover photo). Bishop Robert Hennessy, Auxiliary Bishop of Boston, was the main celebrant for the Mass, and we were joined by several bishops with whom we work with in Peru. Fr. David Costello was the homilist for the occasion. We were delighted to recognize Fr. Denis Parry's contribution to the St. James Society over the last 27 years of active service. The Cardinal Cushing Medal is the highest honor the St. James Society can give to those, who in one way or another, give selfless service to the Society. Fr. Denis is a worthy honoree.

We were also delighted that Bishop Hennessy could present the Cheverus Medal to Ms. Ana Maria Ortega Sierra. Ana Maria has been a valued member of the staff at our Center House in Lima, Peru, for the last 30 Years. As well as her responsibility with housekeeping she has been instrumental in caring for many of our priests during times of illness. In 2008, the bicentennial year of the Archdiocese of Boston, Cardinal Sean O' Malley OFM Cap instituted the Cheverus Award. These oval-shaped silver medals bear the image of the first Bishop of Boston. The award is conferred annually upon selected laypeople, religious, and deacons chosen for their great service over an extended period, to the church, to God's people and to their local community, in a quiet, unassuming, and perhaps, unrecognized fashion. This is only the second time the award has been conferred outside of Boston.

At the beginning of our celebration Cardinal O Malley joined us by video link and, of course, he addressed us in Spanish. His Eminence congratulated Fr. Denis and Ana Maria on receiving their respective awards. He also took the opportunity to greet the bishops present and to encourage all of us members of the St. James Society to continue to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ to our communities in Peru, and in doing so, to continue the vision of our founder Cardinal Cushing, of maintaining our presence among and service to the poorest of the poor.

*(Sincere thanks to Fr. Joe McCarthy for contributing to this newsletter).*

*With Every Good Wish in Christ,*



*Rev. David Costello, Director*



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