



A group from St. Joseph's and St. Mary's traveled to Ireland last month.

## 26 Parishioners Travel To Ireland

By Evelyn Beck

Brother Henry Fulmer led 26 parishioners from St. Joseph's and St. Mary's, along with another parishioner from St. Anthony of Padua in Greenville, on a "Best of Ireland" tour from October 30 to November 9. The tour also included 18 individuals from New All Saints parish in Baltimore.

The weather wasn't great, with rain every day but one, but that didn't dampen the spirits of Renee McCormick. "I'm used to New England weather," she said. "Weather does not bother me." And there was a definite upside. "I saw more rainbows in those 10 days than in my entire life—gorgeous full rainbows from one side to the other," said June Kickham.

The group landed on Halloween, a holiday embraced by the Irish. June was struck by the weekend-long celebration, from an archway of black and orange balloons in the Dublin airport to cafes where skeleton brides and grooms lunched at tables to the many Irish adults decked out in costumes.

The tour—mostly by bus—started and

finished in Dublin, a city of half a million people. It also included a visit to the Waterford Glass Factory in Waterford. "They showed us how they blew the glass with the fire and made beautiful vases," said Beverly Webster. "They made all kinds of eagles, and there was a replica of 9/11 all in crystal. It took a couple of weeks to make just one article."

One of the most memorable stops for some was Blarney Castle, home of the legendary Blarney Stone, said to bestow the gift of "eloquence and persuasiveness" on those who kiss it. Delivering the smooch is actually quite a production, with tourists made to lie on their backs with the tops of their heads pointing down a tunnel and a man holding on to them to prevent falls. "It's actually rather scary," said June.

The day after that, the group explored the scenic 109-mile "Ring of Kerry" around the Iveragh Peninsula. Other stops included Killarney, the Cliffs of Moher, and the Connemara region, where St. Patrick fasted for 40 days. They also visited Knock, the site of Ireland's National Mari-

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## A "Grand" Time

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an Shrine, where an apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary—along with St. Joseph, St. John the Evangelist, a cross, a lamb, and angels—appeared in 1879 to 15 people.

Throughout the trip, they stopped in shops, where they observed the spinning and weaving of wool. They visited churches dating back to 400. And in pubs and cafes, they interacted with the locals. "Everyone was so friendly," said June. "They asked our opinions about Obama. Many want to come and visit the U.S.; their kids want to go to Disney World." Renee agrees. "The people were just wonderful," she said. "They're so welcoming. They never feel worried or concerned. They smiled and were always gracious."

The travelers also sampled the local cuisine, including mouth-watering bread served with every meal and Irish coffee made with Jameson Irish Whiskey. They stopped in butcher shops and in bakeries where scones could be bought for just 90 cents. They learned about how the Irish dig up the bogs and use the peat for fuel. They marveled at the majestic castles and at the stucco and stone houses with spotless exteriors, and they laughed at their knowledgeable tour guide John for his love of the word "grand."

One outing that some took part in was to a dinner theater. "They had the Irish dancers, the young Irish men and the girls so light on their feet they looked like they didn't touch the floor," said Mary Jo Schawe. "There was a four-piece band, one playing guitar, another the electric fiddle, another playing a couple different kinds of flutes, and



**The Cliffs of Moher**

another an Irish drum. Everybody seemed to be having such a good time. It was the most fun we had."

After driving through the hills of Donegal and then Sligo and Cavan, the group returned to Dublin, where they celebrated Mass before returning home. For Brother Henry, the Church of Adam and Eve, a Franciscan parish in downtown Dublin, was the highlight of the trip. "I learned that Franciscans had a long history in Ireland," he said. "There are a lot of Franciscan monasteries throughout Ireland, which means we had a history there serving the people. I knew we had a province of Franciscans there, but I didn't know how much impact we made in the country."



**Kissing the Blarney Stone**

Having concluded a successful tour of Ireland, Brother Henry is already planning the next parish travel opportunity. He will be spending a week in January on an educational and spiritual retreat in Jerusalem to learn about the holy sites and places with a goal of leading a journey there in 2016.

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