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for the sacraments throughout the year. The teachers had prepared the children so well and each child participated fully in the liturgy and music. Both occasions were truly beautiful and holy.

Fr. Michael suggested a return of the Corpus Christ Procession this year, so a final meeting of parents and parish co-ordinators was held to organise the children's involvement in this. As Fr. Michael was going to be on annual leave on the feast of Corpus Christ, the procession was organised for the week before, Trinity Sunday. The children came

to mass dressed in their Holy Communion clothing and equipped with petals to scatter during the procession. A simple summing up of the year was organised by the parish programme coordinator. Children brought forward symbols of their Faith Journey so far and a short explanation for each symbol was given. The families took an active part in the liturgy and a parent read a Post Communion Reflection which has been a feature of the Parish Programme this year. Finally, accompanied by a simple chant organised by Denis Geoghegan, the children led the procession around the outside of the

church, scattering petals as they walked. Once back inside, all participated in a short Benediction led by Father Michael.

It was a lovely culmination to the year and Fr. Michael and the parish co-ordinators would like to thank everyone who was involved in making the Parish Programme a success this year! They look forward to starting again with the new cohort of young people and families who will be preparing for the sacraments in 2018-2019.

## HARRY CLARKE & HIS OUGHTERARD WINDOW



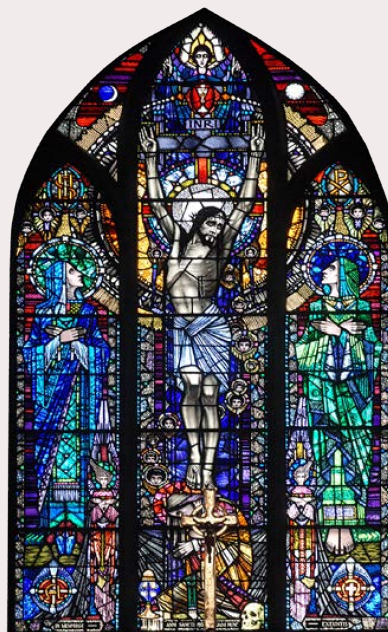
Harry Clarke (1889-1931) was Ireland's greatest stained-glass artist and book illustrator. His religious windows still emanate spiritual power and beauty in Catholic and Protestant churches all over Ireland. The books he illustrated were very popular in their time, two of the most successful being Hans Christian Anderson's "Fairytale", and "Tales of Mystery and Imagination" by Edgar Allen Poe.

Joshua Clarke, Harry's father, an 18-year-old English Protestant, arrived in Dublin penniless in 1877. He was hard-working, ambitious and shrewd. He saw that church building was at its height and was attracting skilled workers. He converted to Catholicism

when he married Bridget MacGonagle, a Catholic from County Sligo. Within a few years he had his own company "Joshua Clarke and Sons". He had two daughters, and two boys Walter and Harry who were born, coincidently, on March 17th St Patrick's day two years apart: Walter in 1887 and Harry in 1889. The boys were very close to one another and were alike in many ways: tall, good-looking, gentle and whimsical, and were educated at Belvedere College. By coincidence they married two sisters, Margaret and Minnie Crilly from Newry, and by tragic coincidence they died in their early forties within six months of each other.

Harry was somewhat shy and studious but noted for his clever caricatures. Although Joshua had little formal education and no particular interest in art, as an entrepreneur he could see that the production of stained glass would ideally complement his church decoration firm, so in 1892 he opened a glass studio in rooms in the spacious family home in North Frederick St., Dublin. Harry was fascinated and spent so much time there that by the time he was 14 he was proficient in the craft.

Fortunately for Harry, Joshua admired his talent, recognized his potential, and fostered it in every possible way. Harry studied art and stained glass at the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art where he won the highest award for his work. He studied the stained glass of the mediaeval cathedrals of France during his stay in France. On returning



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to Ireland, Harry used Joshua's studio facilities for which he paid his father, but he only took on commissions in his own name. He gained a reputation for his highly distinctive work.

When Joshua died in 1921, Harry took over the running of the business as well as his own work, which meant he had a permanent work overload leading to a serious deterioration in Harry's health in the late 1920s. Although Walter assisted Harry in every way possible, time had run out; in July 1930 Walter died suddenly of pneumonia and Harry, already ill with TB, died in Switzerland six months later in January 1931. He was buried there at his own request but there is no longer any trace of his grave: in keeping with local practice, it had been "vacated" in 1950 and the headstone destroyed.

The Harry Clarke studios continued to design and execute windows in Harry's style and supported two Clarke sisters, two Clarke widows and nine grandchildren until 1973, when Harry Clarke Stained Glass Ltd finally closed due to a lack of business, as, following the Second Vatican Council, church expenditure emphasised education rather than the embellishment of churches.

## Harry's Most Famous Windows

For almost a century, people have had coffee, many without realizing it, under windows designed by Harry Clarke in the room called after him on the ground floor of Bewley's in Grafton Street, Dublin. Others will be familiar with the exquisite windows in Newport, Achill, Lough Derg, and other churches throughout Ireland. The 11 windows depicting Irish Saints in the Honan Hostel chapel, Cork, are regarded as his best religious work. This chapel must be seen, especially now as the whole chapel, a treasure trove of the finest in Irish arts and crafts in the early 20th century, has

been lovingly restored.

We in Oughterard have our own treasure in the exquisite Harry Clarke window behind the altar of the Church of the Immaculate Conception, installed in 1932-34 by Archdeacon Mark Conroy P.P. as part of his comprehensive renovation and extension of the original church. Visitors are most welcome to visit the church and take a look. To inform your visit, here is a short explanation of the window, written by Fr. Alan Burke, former parish priest in Oughterard.

## Symbolism of the Harry Clarke Window at the Church of the Immaculate Conception

The window features three distinct panels: the Crucified Christ in the middle with St. John: His Mother the Blessed Virgin Mary on the left and St. Mary Magdalene in the right panel. Both women adopt the position associated with adoration and reverent submission before higher power. Above Our Lord's head is the image of the Father and behind His head is the image of the Dove - the Holy Spirit. This represents the Most Holy Trinity of which Christ makes up the Third Person. All Christian action is done in the name of the Most Holy Trinity and every Sacrament of the church reflects the Trinity in some way. The Father wills the death of the Son who hands on the Holy Spirit to continue the work of salvation and to affirm the life of the church. Above the INRI inscription is the chalice. The Chalice is ready to receive the Precious Blood of Christ. It reminds us that the action of the Mass at the Consecration re-enacts the sacrifice of Calvary and Christ continues to pour out his Blood for the salvation of all.

To the left of the angel of comfort is the crescent moon and to the right, the

sun. This suggests that God's watchful care over us covers all of time: God is watching over us night and day. The large circle taking in all three panels represents the globe of the earth: All of God's creation is redeemed by the sacrifice of Christ. The circle is mostly in golden yellow. At the apex of the left panel is the entwined letters IHS. This stands for In Hoc Signum meaning "By this sign (you are saved)". It can also signify Jesus, hominem salvator meaning 'Jesus saviour of mankind'. At the apex of the right panel, there are two Greek letters for Ch and R. They are the monogram of Christ, being the first three letters. So these two sets of letters identify, as if that were needed, the central figure in the depiction: it is Christ.

The colour gold or yellow always represents divine grace. Christ is wrapped in golden light as He hangs upon the Cross; he is a man but also Divine, from him alone comes grace. The Blessed Virgin is wrapped in blue. The colour blue symbolises redeemed humanity. Mary is already redeemed by virtue of bearing Christ. By comparison, Mary Magdalene is clothed in green, symbolising humanity yet to be redeemed. The Virgin is depicted wearing shoes; the Magdalene barefooted. In the Old Testament, Moses is commanded to take off his shoes on holy ground. Shoes symbolises the state of worthiness and the Blessed Virgin is the only human worthy of Christ. This understanding dates to the earliest times of the church and draws on language used in Greek prayers.

St. John features in a kneeling position under Our Lord. He too holds his hands in submission before the power of the Cross. It was into the care of St. John that Jesus entrusted His Mother. At the Crucifixion, St John stands for all humanity. So it is all of humanity that is entrusted to the maternal care of the Blessed Virgin and, in response, all of humanity is invited to consider Mary as its spiritual mother. An urn of spiced ointment stands ready at the

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bottom left of the main panel. This is to be used to anoint the corpse of Christ when his body is deposed from the Cross. On the bottom right of the central panel is the skull. This stands for the first person created by God: Adam. Adam gave way to sin and so tasted death.

That is the same fate that befalls all Adam's heirs: we will all die and face corruption in the grave. Christ is foretold in the Bible under the image of the 'Second Adam' whose sacrifice will undo the damage and loss incurred by the first Adam. The Second Adam (Christ) will revive all the heirs of the First Adam and bring them to the new life of heaven. He can do this by the power of his Cross. In the Creed we pray, 'He descended to the dead'. This was so that he could bring to life again

all who died waiting for the Saviour and all who will die believing in the Saviour.

Under the feet of Our Lady is the first letter of the Greek alphabet: Alpha. On the opposite panel is the last letter: Omega. This signifies the beginning and the end of all time and this language is used when blessing the Paschal Candle every Holy Saturday night: consecrating every moment of human existence to Christ and offering it all up for sanctification. We are also encouraged to remember that this life will have an end and our focus should remain on the life to come.

The two ranks or choirs of angels are represented in the window. The small faces in the bubble-like panels are the Cherubim, those innocent ones

called to God before their time. They are often represented as babies in Christian art. By contrast the taller angels, near the legs of the Blessed Virgin and Mary Magdalene are the Seraphim. They are messengers of God who feature in Biblical stories of visions and visitations. The presence of angels in art points to the mysteries of the life to come: we cannot fully comprehend them here, but they invite us to reflect on what we shall be like in the new life of heaven.

The Latin inscription along the bottom of the window reads, 'In memory of the Holy Year 1933-1934 in which I am now made'. Sacred Art works are often referred to in that way as 'I'. They speak directly to the viewer and thus invite the viewer to fully interact with the scene before them.

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