

## God at work.

When the Jews gathered to celebrate the Passover Meal, the youngest boy would boy in the family would put this question to the head of the family: **"What's so special about this night?"** The elder would then tell the story about how God rescued his people and set them free from slavery. Every year when they gathered, they remembered these events and celebrated their special relationship with the God who saved them. Like the Jews, we too believe that God is still at work in our community here in Inchicore.

The origins of Inchicore go back to the establishment of the Railways. Over the years the people were bound together as a community, by the fact that most families had someone belonging to them working in the Works, as they were called, either on the trains or on the buses. CIE was a major influence in the community, providing jobs for life, good wages, training, trades, even houses. It provided a sense of stability and security which contributed greatly to family life. It also provided the foundation for building a real community of people, who knew one another very well and had a lot in common with each other.

If CIE was one of the foundation stones on which this community was built, the other foundation stone must have been the Oblates. The people of Inchicore developed a very special relationship with the Oblates from the time they arrived here over 150 years ago. Maybe this relationship goes back to the men from the works, who built the original wooden church here, in their own time after work. Over the past 150 years, the Oblates have become identified with Inchicore, just as Inchicore has become identified with the Oblates. People travelled from all over Ireland to visit the original crib before it was destroyed in a fire on Christmas Day 1948. Over the years people have come to the Grotto, bringing their special intentions and prayers for the sick, to Our Lady of Lourdes.

Older Inchicoreans have fond memories of the May processions and sodalities, which packed the church in those days. Many young men from Inchicore joined the Oblates and went to work on the foreign missions. St. Joseph's Boys club and Fr. Horan's Hall provided great opportunities for the young boys and girls to socialise and travel, engage in a variety of sports, music, drama and hobbies. During the 50s and 60s, the Mhuire became the

social centre where many young men and women found their future partners at the very popular weekly dances. Many of these couples went on to marry, settle down and rear their own families in Inchicore. The Basketball Hall replaced Fr. Horan's Hall and today provides opportunities for sport, variety shows and a wide range of services for young people, the scouts and people suffering from addictions. Scoil Mhuire gan Smal has provided primary education to many generations of school children in the community.

Over the years we have kept the flame of faith alive in our families and in this community by welcoming children in baptism, in asking God's blessing on those making their marriage promises, in coming together as a community to remember and celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus in the Eucharist, and when we remember and celebrate those who have gone before us "marked with a sign of faith". Each year the Lourdes novena continues to express our special devotion to Mary. We are also privileged to welcome the Kerala community from India, and people from the Philippines, Poland, Nigeria and other parts of the world who have found a home here among us.

In recent years however, we have experienced great changes and challenges in our community. With the winding down of CIE, a major source of employment in the area has been lost. The recent closure of the Bank of Ireland is the latest sign of a community that is threatened with losing its identity. What we have known as the Village of Inchicore has become run down, as speculators built blocks of apartments wherever they could make money. Numbers attending church have also become fewer, so that what was once a thriving community has become only a shadow of what it once was. The two foundations stones on which this community grew and developed have been shaken to their roots.

Tonight as The People of God here in Inchicore, we acknowledge the presence of God still at work among us, throughout the ups and downs of our journey but especially at this time of transition. We see signs of hope and new life in the message of Pope Francis, as he calls us to bring the joy of the Gospel to those who live in darkness. We are encouraged by all those working among us, to build the Kingdom of God, in their help, service and care for the needs of others but especially in their own families. Tonight we commit ourselves to keeping the flame of faith alive in our parish community for the coming year. We ask God to send his Spirit to be with us, so that despite the changes and challenges facing us at this time, we can continue to live in his presence, and witness to the presence of God still at work among us.