

To Nano Nagle

Take down your lantern from its niche and go out!
You may not dwell in firelight certainties,
Secure from drifting fog of doubt and fear.
You may not build yourself confining walls
And say: 'Thus far, and thus, and thus far shall I walk,
And these things shall I do, and nothing more.'
Go out! For need calls loudly in the winding lanes
And you must seek Christ there.
Your pilgrim heart
Shall urge you still one pace beyond,
And love shall be your lantern-flame.
Raphael Consedine pbvm



Each of us bears a share of responsibility for our communities, and hence for the world as a whole ... Everything we do, however small, affects the world around us.
Martin Hawes

PRAYER

- We acknowledge the traditional owners of this land – a rich land that sustained them and which they looked after well.
- We stand in solidarity with our ancestors in the faith – all those men and women who have gone before us and on whose shoulders we stand today. In particular, we remember Nano Nagle and the women who have lived the Gospel in her spirit over the centuries in many parts of the world.
- We acknowledge all those who have given their lives in working for a just, peaceful and sustainable planet.
- We acknowledge all with whom we live and work on this endangered planet, our brothers and sisters and all other species as well.
- We acknowledge each of us present in this group and we honour the dignity and wisdom of each one.

Candle Lighter 1



This is the light of Nano’s passion for those made poor and for the most vulnerable members of society – a passion that was directed at changing the social structures that kept them poor and oppressed.

All

We praise God and claim Nano’s power of solidarity with all those people who are poor, oppressed and broken.

Reader 1

They know her in the crowded lonely ways
Woman of welcoming heart, whose lantern sheds
Kind beams for eyes waste-misted by the weary
Raphael Consedine pbvm



miles.



Candle Lighter 2

This is the light of Nano’s charism which has inspired people in their struggles to build bridges of hope, justice and reconciliation in a world of poverty, suspicion and war – as peacemakers, lobbyists, community workers and good neighbours.

All

We praise God and claim Nano’s power to bring about dreams.

Reader 2

Hope frees us to live in the present with joyous rebellion against all that keeps life from becoming what God intends it to be. *Christine Vladimiroff OSB*

Candle Lighter 3



This is the light of Nano’s spirit, shining through hardship, hoping in life’s difficulties, living with generosity and compassion, and committed to justice.

All

We praise God and claim the power to live in hope, in freedom and in justice.

Reader 3



The story of Presentation Sisters has often been described as “from acorn to oak” – a small seed growing to a large leafy tree whose leaves provide shade and shelter and which, in time, bears fruit. It has been a Presentation tradition to plant a seed at the start of a new foundation. Presentation beginnings are usually small and fragile. Now, for many Presentation Congregations, their endings are also experiences of smallness and vulnerability.

Candle Lighter 4



This is the light of all those Presentation People who have committed themselves to eradicate poverty and injustice and who have built cultures of peace and hope where everyone is welcome.

All

We praise God and claim the power of our smallness and fragility.



Reader 4

On the 21 January 1799 the Annalist records that the three sisters who went to establish a community at the North End of the city:

Opened their small and inconvenient schools; into which were pressed a number of children, amounting to nearly 500, and these were the truly poor, abandoned, ignorant little ones. They also commenced the instruction of Adults, all of whom they found stupid and ignorant; and many amongst them who were unfortunately the victims of crime, were speedily reformed by the prayers and admonitions of their Sainted Instructresses.

These same sisters, the Annalist records, were obliged “to convert some old and worn sheets into inside garments; and the parlour chair covers, which had already done their duty well, into Neck-kerchiefs to exclude the cold, during a severe winter frost”. We are told:

Still was their courage undaunted – they always trusted to Providence.

Our early Presentation foremothers truly lived the spirit of Nano Nagle. After her death, Francis Moylan, Bishop of Cork (*Fire on the Earth* p 7), wrote of this small community who had been inspired by Nano Nagle:

Her spirit animates the Sisters that compose it.

CHARISM

- a gift spread through the Holy Spirit in the Church and in the world.
- A charism is a deep awareness of a Gospel value or values linked to a special need in the world. The Gospel value or emphasis remains constant over the history of the group throughout history. The area of need also remains constant but the specific expressions of the need may change over time, place and culture.

Charism is always at the service of mission.

MISSION

Father Anthony Gittens says that Mission is a job description of God. Mission is God's action. The Church doesn't have a mission; God's mission has a Church.

Presentation Sisters don't have a mission; we are the Presentation face of God's mission.

THE KIN-DOM OF GOD



The Kin-dom of God is central to Jesus' ministry. Jesus spoke about and embodied this dream. When he spoke about it he used the phrase "the Kingdom of God". Jesus lived in a Jewish culture where hopes for a saviour were expressed in political/military terms. The Jews hoped for a King like King David to overthrow their enemies and free them from oppression. Jesus did not talk about a political kingdom of this kind. Although he used the phrase "Kingdom of God" what he spoke of and embodied was a "kin-dom" of peace, justice and relationships of love that drew

people together into a new type of family or kinship group. Jesus expanded the idea of "Kingdom of God" into an inclusive partnership of universal love, justice and kinship. In recent years some scripture scholars and theologians, including many feminist theologians, have used the phrase "Kin-dom of God" as one that more accurately describes the mission of God as preached and embodied by Jesus. Moving away from the political and military overtones of the word "Kingdom", the phrase "Kin-dom of God" becomes the context for relating to each person and to every living thing as kin or family. Daniel O'Leary says that when we look at life from the perspective of the Kin-dom of God, it is *"a way of seeing that recognizes God's face in every face, a God who comes to us disguised as life ... This vision of God's reign among us has increased our sensitivity to issues of justice everywhere, to the care of the Earth, to engage with the destruction and exploitation caused by human greed."*

The Kingdom of Heaven in the Scriptures is like a banquet to which all are invited. No one is excluded. (Luke 14: 7-25) The only way we can miss out is if we exclude ourselves because we have other priorities or because we do not want to sit beside some of the others who have been invited.

The phrase "Kin-dom of God" becomes the context for relating to each person and to every living thing as kin or family. It is this relationship that makes a world of justice and love possible and desirable. In preaching God's mission, Jesus brought good news to those who are poor and



oppressed by unjust social structures, preaching a message of restoring right relationships that would make them kin with those who excluded them.

NANO NAGLE – THE FACE OF GOD’S MISSION TO THOSE MADE POOR



The South Presentation Annalist tells us “thus did she devote her person and her wealth to the gratuitous instruction of the poor and destitute little ones of the Lord.” As well as her work in the schools, Nano visited homeless and sick women in their homes, their garrets, their mud cabins bringing them her compassionate presence and whatever help she could and putting her life at risk as she trod the unlit alleyways of Cork at night by the light of a dim lantern. We cannot help but be reminded of Jesus’ story of the banquet to which all are invited as we read in the Annals of the first Christmas for Nano’s newly formed religious congregation. They invited 50 beggars – the poorest of the poor from Cork’s alleyways - to Christmas dinner and Nano herself waited on them and stood behind their chairs as they ate their Christmas meal. Nano, following in the footsteps of Jesus, engaged in the process of social reversal, bestowed favour upon those made poor and powerless and was a sign of hope that it was possible for all to be included as family in the Kin-dom of God. Not only did Nano, her first companions and our early Presentation foremothers preach the Kin-dom of God; they also embodied it in their own lives.

Again, we read in the Annals:

On entering their new abode they found it destitute of the most ordinary necessities. Three beds and a few chairs was the extent of their furniture; neither these wants, however, nor the frightful gloom of their habitation (which was situated in a narrow lane and without even the smallest yard or garden) could daunt the courage or depress the spirits of our heroic missionaries. On the night of their arrival, a potato in which was stuck a candle served the use of candlestick for two cells in the same dreary corridor. On the 21st of January our dear sisters opened their small and inconvenient schools into which were pressed a number of children amounting to nearly five hundred and these were truly poor. (South Presentation Annals 1799)



THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF NANO NAGLE’S ENGAGEMENT IN THE MISSION OF GOD – THE CHARISM OF THE FOUNDRRESS

1. A Passion for Those Made Poor and for Changing the Social Structures That Kept Them Poor

What was Nano passionate about? When we look at her life, where did she commit her time, her energy, her love? Pius O’Farrell (p. 85) says that “Nano had a tremendous sense of mission and purpose in life, specifically directed to the poor and the downtrodden”. There is no doubt that when we read the letters of Nano Nagle, the account of her work in the first Annals of South Presentation and her early biographers, the most distinctive characteristic of Nano’s engagement with the Mission of God was her passion for those made poor and for the most vulnerable members of

society – a passion that was directed at changing the social structures that kept them poor and oppressed.

Poverty was part and parcel of Nano's environment. This poverty was caused by political oppression and economic change in Ireland. Even though Nano's work began as the Penal Laws were coming to an end, ninety percent of Irish people in Nano's time were poor because of the imposition of the Penal Laws. It was in Cork, a city of poverty, lawlessness and penal servitude that Nano engaged in God's mission to the poorest and most disadvantaged of the city. Raphael Considine pbvm (*Fire on the Earth p 34*) notes:

The persons whom Nano knew herself called to serve were among the 'least ones' of Cork society. She had to choose to disregard the social barriers and attitudes of her times to assert their worth. To be 'in the situation of a schoolmistress' was lowly enough; to educate the very poor, and girls at that, was regarded by many at that time as a wasteful and harmful interference with the decrees of Providence.

Like many of her social class, Nano grew up seeing this poverty around her. What was it that led her to carry the pictures of these poor people in her heart and to be so disturbed by them that she had to act?

Changing structures involves changing the structures of our own attitudes and hearts and the structures of the way other people think, as well as setting up alternative social structures. Margaret Kelly pbvm (deceased) developed a sociological profile of Nano Nagle as a Prophet. In it she describes how, according to the German sociologist Max Weber, the prophet comes to birth in the experience of being called to mission. Implicit in the response to a prophetic call to mission is the notion of "breakthrough" signified in an attitudinal change on the part of the prophet. For Weber, this "breakthrough" or conversion is an internal reorientation born out of suffering or enthusiasm and leads toward a new orientation towards different problems and structures of 'the world'.

We can say that Nano had three major experiences of metanoia that set her on the path of changing social structures that oppressed those made poor. The first is the experience of seeing her sister Anne selling a bolt of silk for the poor. We are told that this seemingly insignificant event was the catalyst that led Nano to devote the remainder of her life to those made poor. A second experience of metanoia was her experience of entering an enclosed religious order to pray for the people of Ireland after the deaths of her mother in 1748 and her sister, Ann, in 1749. Being haunted by the memories of the poor that she had seen when living with her brother David in Cork led her to change the way she saw the poverty of Ireland and her role in addressing it. The third experience of metanoia that Nano had was the insight that she needed to found her own religious order that would assume responsibility for continuing her own passionate response to those made poor by unjust structures.



Nano expressed her passion for those made poor and for changing the social and political structures that kept people poor by setting up schools to educate poor Catholic children. In 1754, at the age of 36, she opened her first cabin school in the face of "opposition from every side" as she herself described it (letter to Eleanor Fitzsimmons 1769). Nano began with about thirty children in a room

that she had hired for them and with a mistress that she had hired to take care of them. In his biography of Nano Nagle, Bishop Coppinger records that she was absolutely terrified at the children's wickedness. But Nano faced her fears because of her passion and wrote in a letter to Eleanor Fitzsimmons in 1769:



I took in the children by degrees – not making a noise about it. In about nine months I had 200 children. When the Catholics saw what services I did, they begged that I would set up schools at the other end of town.

By 1769 she had two schools for boys and five for girls. In setting up and maintaining her schools, Nano defied the Penal Laws, the structures specifically implemented to keep Ireland's people poor and disempowered. By setting up and maintaining her schools, she was establishing new structures that would enable Irish children to grow in their knowledge of themselves, their inherent dignity and their rightful place in society, as well as in their faith. Her main concern with the growth of her schools was to ensure that they would continue to operate as schools dedicated to those made poor according to her own vision. This is what led her to successfully establish the Ursuline Order in Cork after much tedious negotiation and planning, some of which is recorded in her letters. At the age of 53 she thought she had set her schools on a firm footing. But within a short time Nano realised that to safeguard the works that expressed her passion for the poor she would have to found her own Society of Sisters. Bishop Moylan (Walsh p 89), reflecting on her decision writes:

As the Ursulines embraced the education of the rich with the instruction of the poor, Miss Nagle perceived they could not possibly carry on her favourite object, the instruction of the poor, to the great extent of charity she could wish ... The wants of the poor seemed to her to require a society of women who could consecrate themselves entirely to the instruction only of the poor.

In this statement from one who knew her so well, we find expressed beautifully the primary passion of Nano Nagle, the distinctive characteristic of her engagement in the Mission of God and her desire that this be the distinctive characteristic of the way her Sisters would engage in the Mission of God.

As we know, education was not the only way in which Nano expressed her passion for those made poor and for changing the structures that made and kept them poor. Raphael Consedine pbvm (*Fire on the Earth* p 47) describes the range of Nano's concerns:

Who were the poor through whom the on-going call to conversion sounded in Nano's heart and to whose service and evangelization she gave herself with so much insight, energy and practicality? They were, of course, the children of Cork's poorest districts, but they were also the sick, lonely and aged whom she visited and tended in the public infirmaries and in their garrets, the prostitutes whom she was slandered for knowing and for whom she longed to build a refuge, the elderly women for whom she did build a home, the Irish exiles in the West Indies for whom she trained catechists, the adults to whom she gave religious instruction. They were those 'disconsolate widows...forlorn orphans...reduced housekeepers...superannuated tradesmen, whose various afflictions she assuaged, whose tears she dried up, whose wants she so often satisfied'. In the last two cases, Coppinger's outmoded language hides a telling reality: 'reduced housekeepers' were people who, from

being able to 'keep house' were reduced to sudden poverty; 'superannuated' meant 'worn down by years and infirmity'. That is to say, Nano's poor were not all born poor.

Pius O'Farrell (p 86) refers to the works other than education carried out by Nano as "lantern work". She says:



'Lantern work' was not a step to evangelisation but an early and essential part of evangelisation itself. Nano helped the sick and consoled the wretched. The essence of Nano's social work was the caring process which fosters community. She added something – an indefinable warmth – to the social vision found in France. She added the leaven of deep compassion and joyful hospitality that reached its peak in her Christmas dinners.

Although often mentioned as a separate characteristic of the Presentation charism, hospitality is in reality an integral part of Nano's commitment to those made poor and an expression of the quality of her relationship with them.

Nano's biographer, Dr Coppinger (Walsh p 392), writes of the way in which Nano became criticized and looked down upon because of her passion for those made poor:

She has been bitterly cursed in our streets as a mere imposter; she has been charged with having squandered her money upon the building of houses for the sole purpose of getting a name, and with deceiving the world with her throng of beggars brats. Has it not even been said that her schools were a seminary of prostitution

(Dr Coppinger wrote the first biography of Nano Nagle in the form of an address to a group of philanthropists known as the Cork Amicable Society. The only known copy of the first edition, printed in 1794, 10 years after Nano's death, is in the National Library of Ireland.)

That Nano continued to serve those made poor and find new ways to change the structures that oppressed them in the face of such criticism is strong evidence of the depth of her passion.

That a passion for those made poor and for changing the structures that kept people poor is the heart of Presentation charism is beautifully expressed in the report of her death in the Hibernian Chronicle Monday 26th April 1784:

Last Wednesday the indisposition of Miss Nagle was announced in the sorrowing countenances of the poor of this city to whom she was the best of benefactors and patronesses.

2. Zeal

Mary T O'Brien pbvm in her Retreat Paper for the Conference of Presentation Sisters retreat reflects on the word "zeal".

Zeal is a strange word. To us it almost sounds archaic. Perhaps when we hear the word 'zeal' or the derivatives 'zealous', or even 'zealots', we think of some type of extravagant or even erratic behaviour. Perhaps we even associate it with a touch of fanaticism ... The zeal which Nano mentions ten times in her letters means fervour for a person or a cause, enthusiastic

diligence (en-Theos) or ardour. I like the word 'ardour'. It has fire in it. To be full of zeal for something or someone is to be all fired up, passionate and eager for a person or a cause. It is the very antonym of apathy.

Nano was not an apathetic person. She was all fired up in carrying out the many facets of her work. Another phrase she uses at least ten times in her letters is “all in my power”. Nano gives everything she does 100 percent because she is full of zeal for changing the way things are for those made and kept poor.



In her letters she uses the word “zeal” in expressing her admiration of others. Her brother and his wife are described as “zealous”. In a letter to Eleanor Fitzsimmons 29 April 1770 Nano writes: “I can’t too much admire your zeal...”. In talking about Dr Moylan in a letter to Eleanor Fitzsimmons she says “I always admired his zeal” . In another letter to Eleanor Fitzsimmons she describes Dr Moylan as having “such patience and zeal” (17 December 1770). This quality that she admired so much in others is one that characterised her own life. In her letter to Miss Fitzsimmons from Bath (20 July 1770) she says that it was with difficulty that she took time off to see her brothers because “it was so much against my inclination to leave my children, and only to serve the foundation I never should have prevailed upon myself” . Nano’s zeal gives her a wide vision as expressed in her words to Miss Fitzsimmons 11 July 1769:

... and my views are not for one object alone. If I could be of any service in saving souls in any part of the globe, I would willingly do all in my power.

She assures Teresa Mulally (21 August 1777) that “every assistance in our power we shall give towards having an establishment of this Society in the metropolis”. Her letters illustrate her zeal for establishing the Ursulines in Ireland and later for setting up her own Society of Sisters. The constant tedium of the business of overseeing building projects, the worry about finding suitable young women, the challenge of how those young women were to be trained and the constant worry about money were all managed because of her zeal for the Mission of God, especially as directed specifically to those made poor.

Nano knew the cost of such zeal, the cost of turning things upside down in the face of so much opposition and difficulty. She knew the personal cost. She wrote to Miss Fitzsimmons 17 July 1769:

... and in the beginning – being obliged to speak upwards of four hours and my chest not being as strong as it had been – I spat blood; which I took good care to conceal for fear of being prevented from instructing the poor.

There is a side panel on the left of the Nano Nagle icon showing a cross with pointed ends and below it a Tabernacle radiating light and Nano kneeling in prayer at the altar rails. “Doing all in her power” included spending up to four hours each morning before the Blessed Sacrament and as many in her cabin each evening. A letter from Eleanor Fitzsimmons to Teresa Mulally (Walsh p 389) tells us that she spent each Holy Thursday night in a vigil. And we know that on her deathbed it was found that her knees were badly ulcerated from kneeling constantly in prayer.

3. Courage

There is a panel in the Nano Nagle icon that describes the social and political reality of the society in which Nano engaged in the Mission of God. Each day she would have passed by the gallows of the South Gate Bridge where people were publicly hanged for crimes less serious than hers of setting up schools to educate Catholics. This panel in the icon presents another reminder of the fate awaiting those who broke the Penal Laws – emigrant ships that took those who transgressed the Penal Laws to the other side of the world to live in permanent exile as convicts.

At night Nano would have crossed Cork's North Gate Bridge to bring supplies to inmates of the crowded North Gaol. She guided herself by the light of a glimmering lantern. Cork's unlighted canals and waterways had no guard rails. The paths were dark and slippery. An account from 1770 said; "if the traveller by night escapes drowning, he has not reason to complain. It took great courage for Nano to go out into the night of darkness and lawlessness to carry out her "lantern works". We know that this was a regular activity undertaken by Nano. Dr Coppinger (Walsh p 389) writes:



How often have we seen her passing with steady composure through the rigors of every season to tend her little flock. How often have we seen her, after a well spent day, returning through the darkness of the night, dripping with rain, mingled in the bustling crowd, moving thoughtfully along by the faint glimmer of a wretched lantern, withholding from herself the necessities of life to administer the comforts of it to others..."

As well as the courage to face physical danger, Nano possessed the courage to put aside her own status and position to beg for her many works for those made poor when her own finances failed her. We are told that some of her friends offered to collect money for her but they did not collect as much as at first hoped for. So Nano took it upon herself to go begging. Tradition has it that she sat at the right hand side of the North Gate begging and her friends failed to recognise her.

And what courage does it take to start again at the age of 56, after twenty years of teaching, as the leader of a new Society of Sisters – the Sisters of Charitable Instruction of the Sacred Heart. We know that in this role there were many times where she was called upon to act with courage in the face of adversity. One of those occasions was when Dr Moylan objected to Nano's construction of a new convent close to the Ursuline convent. He warned Nano that he would destroy her new structure and ordered her to rebuild it on the other side of Cork. Nano, it is recorded in the South Presentation Annals:

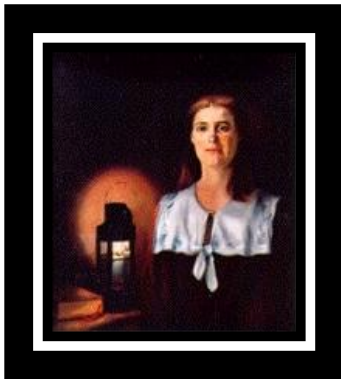
Mildly bowed beneath the pressure of Moylan's displeasure, only saying that, if he was pleased to drive her thence, she would never pursue her intended object in Cork – but would retire to some other part of Ireland where she would meet with no opposition and more encouragement to affect her purposes on behalf of those she always carried in her heart – the poor.

In the face of such courage Dr Moylan capitulated and never spoke of the matter again.

4. Trust in Divine Providence

Over and over again in Nano's letters she expresses her Trust in Divine Providence. This was her response to the seemingly unending challenges and difficulties that she faced in living her passionate dream to change the way things are for those made poor.

Where did Nano develop this great trust in Divine Providence? We know that one of Nano's few spiritual reading books that has survived was written by Nicolas Barre (1621-1686) and was titled *Lettres Spirituelles*. A predominant theme in this book is total abandonment to God who can be absolutely trusted in all things.



We can assume, however, that Nano's trust in Divine Providence grew out of her own life experience. Her decision to enter an enclosed religious order to pray for the people of Ireland was not the way. So she had to find another path. This path led her to engage in criminal pursuits on behalf of those made poor. She built and maintained schools, houses, projects. In order to safeguard her schools for the future she went to enormous lengths to establish the Ursulines in Ireland. When this didn't meet her main object of educating those made poor, she began again by establishing her own Society of Sisters. Money ran out, people deserted her and through it all Nano maintained a deep faith in the All-powerful God who enabled her to do the most extraordinary things for the mission of God. The following extracts from her letters express her absolute trust in God's Providence.

You see it has pleased the Almighty to make me succeed, when I had everything, as I may say, to fight against ... I began in a poor, humble manner; and though it pleased the divine Will to give me severe trials in this foundation, yet it is to show that it is His work and has not been effected by any human means. (to Miss Fitzsimmons, July 17 1769)

But the Almighty is sufficient and will soon make up this loss to us. (July 17 1769)

I can't too much admire your zeal and great trust in the divine Providence which I always looked on as the most settled beginning any foundation of this kind could have. (to Miss Fitzsimmons 29 April 1770)

Providence has ordered everything for the best in her regard to keep her for this place. (to Miss Fitzsimmons 13 May 1770)

We must think the Almighty permits everything for the best. You'll see with His assistance everything promises well. (to Miss Fitzsimmons 13 May 1770)

I must say every disappointment we have had the Almighty has been pleased to make it turn out to our advantage; though my impatience very often made (me) not submit to His divine Will as I ought. (to Miss Fitzsimmons 28 September 1770)

By degrees with the assistance of God we may do a great deal. (to Miss Fitzsimmons 28 September 1770)

It's all in the power of the Almighty; we don't know what is best for us and so ought to be resigned to the divine Will. (to Miss Fitzsimmons 17 December 1770)

The Almighty makes use of the weakest means to bring about His works. (to Miss Mulally 29 September 1776)

We must leave it to the Almighty; He (will) do everything of the best in it, I hope. (to Miss Mulally December 16 1778)

I don't approve of your desponding so much as I perceived in your last letter. Though (neither) you not I should not (sic) live to see it prosper in our time, yet I hope it may (prosper) hereafter and be of universal service to the kingdom. I comfort myself with this thought when I am most dejected at the many disappointments I have met with. (to Miss Mulally 31 January 1783)

THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WAY NANO NAGLE'S COMPANIONS AND OUR EARLY PRESENTATION FOREMOTHERS ENGAGED IN THE MISSION OF GOD



Nano's early companions and the first Presentation sisters continued to exhibit the characteristics that made Nano's way of engaging in the mission of God distinctively Presentation.

They continued their passion for those made poor. The focus of the lives of the early companions of Nano was recorded in the South Presentation Annals some thirteen years later:

Miss Nagle wished them to become the servants of the poor; and to be free to seek them out in their hovels of misery and want. For her there was not a garret in Cork which she did not visit and know – this was the road to be trodden by her congregation ...

After describing the “most uncommon act of hospitality” of inviting 50 beggars to Christmas dinner the Annalist states that “Since her death it has been carefully kept up in this Monastery, and it is to be faithfully adhered to while ever the Community shall have an existence.” This practice was adhered to until 1887.

The Annals also record:

It was her zeal for the salvation of souls, and her consciousness of the dangers which await the death bed of aged poverty that prompted her at this period, to erect an Almshouse near her Convent, where poor old women may spin out their last thread, and be assisted, when quitting this world. For this purpose, she took a house which she furnished, and sunk a sum of 200 pounds for their future comfort and support. Since her death, this Institution has been regularly kept up; and is placed under the superintendence of this Community, who are bound to administer every spiritual help, and to afford all the bodily comforts in their power, to its indigent and miserable inmates.

On the 21 January 1799 the Annalist records that the three sisters who went to establish a community at the North End of the city

Opened their small and inconvenient schools; into which were pressed a number of children, amounting to nearly 500, and these were the truly poor, abandoned, ignorant little ones.



They also commenced the instruction of Adults, all of whom they found stupid and ignorant; and many amongst them who were unfortunately the victims of crime, were speedily reformed by the prayers and admonitions of their Sainted Instructresses.

These same sisters, the Annalist records, were obliged “to convert some old and worn sheets into inside garments; and the parlour chair covers, which had already done their duty well, into Neck-kerchiefs to exclude the cold, during a severe winter frost”. We are told:

Still was their courage undaunted – they always trusted to Providence.

Our early Presentation foremothers truly lived the spirit of Nano Nagle. After her death, Francis Moylan, Bishop of Cork (*Fire on the Earth* p 7), wrote of this small community who had been inspired by Nano Nagle:

Her spirit animates the Sisters that compose it.

A PSALM OF REMEMBERING NANO NAGLE AND OUR PRESENTATION FOREMOTHERS

Left: For your openness to God’s spirit at work in your lives

All: We remember you and give you thanks.

Right: For opening your hearts to the cry of those made poor by unjust systems

All: We remember you and give you thanks.

Left: For your courage in responding to the needs of your times at great personal cost

All: We remember you and give you thanks.

Right: For bringing the light of hope to the dark places of ignorance and despair

All: We remember you and give you thanks.

Left: For bringing the light of compassion to the dark places of poverty, sickness and suffering

All: We remember you and give you thanks.

Right: For bringing the light of justice to the dark places of injustice and oppression

All: We remember you and give you thanks.



Left: For feeding the flame of your love for God by fidelity to prayer and contemplative action
All: We remember you and give you thanks.

Right: For believing that transformation of society towards God's dream of justice and peace was worth committing your lives to.

All: God of the generations,
When we set our hands to labor,
Thinking that we work alone,
Remind us that we carry
On our lips
The words of prophets,
In our veins
The blood of martyrs,
In our eyes
The mystics' visions,
In our hands
The strength of thousands.

Jan L Richardson, In Wisdom's Path



PRAYER FOR A BLESSING

May the blessing of light be upon us –

- * a blessing of light in our hearts, making them alert and responsive to the cries of Earth and the cries of those made poor;
- * a blessing of light in our eyes, opening them to the injustices around us;
- * a blessing of light in our minds, gifting us with an understanding of human hearts and social systems and how best to bring about God's transformative dream for the whole of creation;
- * a blessing of light in our actions, witnessing God's tender care for all, especially those who are most vulnerable and oppressed;
- * a blessing of light in our whole being, making us Children of God and People of Light.

Amen.

