

Knock Shrine: Creation Walk

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The Dublin Georgian house that I live in and dearly love was built in 1833. We know the year because a plasterer left his signature and date on the fourth floor landing: D. Mulloy, August 1833.

How marvellous that, 190 years on, D. Mulloy is now known to the readers of *The Messenger*, and all because instead of painting over his signature, the first owners of the building decided to put a frame around his inscription, making it an item of interest to the Jesuits who began to live here in 1910. We can draw a parallel between this snippet of history and the story of creation, in terms of the signature left behind.

Pope Francis speaks of nature as 'a precious book' containing God's first self-revelation. Later, 13.8 billion years later in fact, came the second and even more precious book, the Bible, which began to be written about 2,600 years ago. Not surprisingly the later book largely eclipsed the first. But Pope Francis wants us to read the first book deeply: there, in every detail, we can find God.

God's 'First Book of Revelation' is one which everyone can read: it needs no translation, no knowledge of ancient languages: you don't have

to buy a copy. Everyone who has ever existed has had it to hand, just by looking at nature. This book reveals God as supreme artist: St Paul says that what can be known about God is plain since God shows it to us: 'Ever since the creation of the world God's eternal power and divine nature can be seen through the things God has made' (Rom 1:20).

Laudato Si' states that every creature manifests God; nature is a constant source of wonder and awe, a continuing revelation of the divine (LS, 85). In other words, just as D. Mulloy put his name on the wall of our house in 1833, the divine signature is written on every atom of creation. God wants to meet us in everything around us, and for us to recognise that the entire material universe is pulsating with boundless divine affection. Every living thing is 'a caress of God'. Awareness of this can bring joy and transform how we see and treat God's work of art!

Creation Walks are being developed in Ireland and convey in local settings the long journey of the universe from its beginning. Thanks to astro-physics we are now learning for the first time to read the early chapters. We don't know anything like



the full story, but it's embedded and coded in the material world around us, and every new scientific discovery turns a thrilling new page for us to read and to experience the divine presence, as if God were whispering, 'I made that! See my signature!'

The Creation Walk nearing completion at Knock Shrine, County Mayo, winds discreetly round the beautiful grounds of the shrine. It marks thirty stages of the cosmic journey: it is not a walk to rush through or 'to do' but to ponder and contemplate. Each stage gives a brief account of what was going on in a particular period of geological time and inspires wonder and appreciation of what our common home was like in the past and whose signature it carries. A suitable

response might be: 'Wow! Thanks!'

Each pause on the walk gives us a chance to realise that the natural world is silently pleading with the one million annual pilgrims to the shrine to play their part in protecting, conserving, and beautifying our common home. Nature is entrusting itself to our sensitive care. It is a place to fall more deeply in love with our God who caresses us with leaf and tree and bird and cloud and stone and sunbeam. We protect only what we fall in love with!

A companion booklet to the Knock walk: *Creation Walk: The Amazing Story of a Small Blue Planet* by Brian Grogan SJ, is available from Messenger Publications or at www.messenger.ie/bookshop