

December 2014

DÚCAS



Irish American Cultural Institute Newsletter

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Welcome to the latest edition of the IACI e-news. Founded in 1962, the IACI is the leading Irish American cultural organization. The IACI is a federally recognized 501(c)(3) not-for-profit national organization devoted to promoting an intelligent appreciation of Ireland and the role and contributions of the Irish in America.

Sincerely,
Carol Buck
Irish American Cultural Institute

Save the Date—IACI Washington's St. Patrick's Day Ball



Each year, the IACI honors a distinguished Irish-American for their contributions to arts & culture, community, heritage, or business with the presentation of the Annie Moore Award. Annie Moore, a 15 year old from County Cork, Ireland, was the first immigrant processed at Ellis Island on January 1, 1892, and is representative of the contributions of the Irish to this country. The Irish American Cultural Institute conceived and developed the project that resulted in statues of Annie Moore being placed at Ellis Island and Cobh, her departure point in Ireland.

This year's honoree is John A. Brennan, MD, MPH is the Executive Vice President for Barnabas Health and the President and CEO of Newark Beth Israel Medical Center and the Children's Hospital of New Jersey. The award will be given at the IACI Washington's St. Patrick's Day Ball, Saturday, February 28th, at the Madison Hotel, Morristown, NJ.

IACI O'Malley Art Collection Part of New Exhibit



Japanese Bridal Kimonos from the 1930's, part of the IACI O'Malley collection will be part of a new exhibit entitled THE PARALLAX VIEW. This one-person show by Alan Butler featuring works from the University of Limerick's Art Collections. In this exhibition, the artist interweaves pieces from the collections with new works that have been produced through the outsourcing of labor to individuals and apps online, at various stages of the creative process.

Normally housed at the University of Limerick, Through careful excavation and consideration of the collections, Butler has made a selection of works that do not necessarily relate to each other, but investigate ideas in his own practice, society and contemporary cultural production.



The Power of Irish Wisdom

By Renee' Gatz, Author of Wise Words and Witty Expressions
www.reneegatz.com

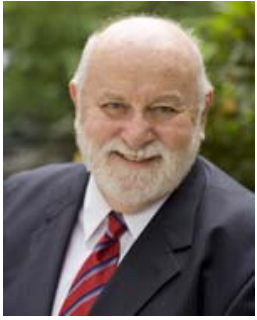
Every soul is born with a purpose as well as the talent and the abilities necessary to inspire others while evolving its own spirit. Each soul is also as unique as a snowflake. While we may share certain talents and abilities, how those talents and abilities unveil themselves and how they affect others or ourselves are indeed very different. Some souls will impact a great number of people and other souls will impact a very small number of individuals. Some of us will understand early in our life what our talents are and how to utilize them. Some of us will take much longer to have our gifts and purpose revealed. However, like a snowflake, each soul is uniquely beautiful and of significant importance for its individuality and contribution and, therefore, cannot be even marginally diminished through comparison.

Although we understand intellectually that it is not possible for two people to have the same exact purpose or gifts any more than two identical snowflakes can fall from the sky, it is a very human response to sometimes look at others and wish we had their life and their gifts. By doing so, we momentarily allow ourselves to believe that our own life would be more meaningful if we were someone other than our self. Allow this to be a fleeting thought that comes to you in a moment of weakness. See the thought as an opportunity to remind yourself that if you could put down your troubles and pick up someone else's, you would want to pick up your own troubles again. By imagining that you have discarded your troubles, you will realize that you have to let go of how much you have invested in your growth, how hard you have worked to overcome your challenges, shape your talents and that you will no longer be of service to those who have benefited from your experience. Stepping into someone else's life would feel very uncomfortable, as if you were wearing clothes that do not fit. When you imagine that your life will be like another's and that you will cease to be, you will begin to realize just how much your work matters, that your life does have meaning and that your contributions are important.

It would also not be uncommon to think that another is more talented and happier because they possess talents and experiences you lack. When you find yourself heading down this road of thought, remind yourself that there is a difference between admiring and being inspired by the life and talents of another and using their success as a way to negatively measure the value of your own experience and contributions. Stop for a moment and remember not to compare yourself to anyone else. Instead look to those you are admiring as models of inspiration to help you achieve the goals you have established and remember that you have gifts that can be of value to them.

As you go through life's highs and lows, remain mindful that your unique purpose is of significance. Your contributions matter. Your talents and gifts matter. You are here to touch and be touched by the lives of others and to learn and grow from your experiences. As long as you draw breath, you will grow and evolve and have something to offer. Your journey, contributions and how you utilize your talents and gifts have an important impact. Therefore, take the time to make thoughtful decisions that align with your purpose and that leverage your God-given talents in a way that is meaningful to you and others. It would be a great disservice to your fellow man and your personal growth and happiness if you were anything other than your true, unique self.

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Irish Christmas Customs

By Raymond Aumack

Though the main point of a Christian Christmas is the recollection of the Birth of Jesus, it seems fitting that there are cultural accoutrements to the celebrations of the Incarnation event that add something to the joy of our own celebrations. For instance, the Christmas tree comes from Germany. Christmas card exchanges come from the English. We have many customs that come from Ireland that may still be celebrated in our homes. They started with our ancestors and continue to this very day, though most of us have no memory of why we do these things.

Christmas in Ireland is a day for family celebration. Like we do in America, as much of the extended family as possible gathers under one roof for the big Christmas dinner. It is a season of celebrating friendships. It is a season of reconciliation. It is a season of joy and laughter. In the ideal setting, the grudges of the year are set aside and new beginnings are made.

Candles were always a symbol of Christmas. Jesus is the light of the world and candles throughout our home symbolize that for us. However, we still put candles, albeit electronic candles, on our windowsills at Christmastime. These were a symbol of the availability of light, heat, and food to the wandering traveler. We did this in the home of my childhood and we still do in my home at Christmas. The President of Ireland's home at Dublin's Phoenix Park has a light in the window every night of the year to welcome home the Irish of the diaspora. This might go back to the days of Brehon Law where just about the only sin you could commit was to forbid hospitality to a stranger.

Something similar to this is the empty seat and the dinner table at Christmas. This might symbolize a lot of things such as the passing of a loved one in the course of the year. But originally, the seat was for the possibility of a visiting stranger on Christmas day. We did that at home when I was a child until the family became so big that we needed the chair for all the family guests. I host a monthly luncheon for my high school classmates (St. Peter's Prep, '55) and we always leave a vacant chair for the wandering stranger. I do the same with my Irish heritage group, the Last Friday Group, with whom I have been having breakfast once a month for the past thirty years. We always have a chair for a wandering stranger and sometimes it becomes occupied.

When I was growing up, well into my teenage years there was very little Christmas programming on TV. Instead we had the constant picture of a burning yule log in a fireplace against a background of religious and secular Christmas carols. I guess the purpose was to have quiet time for meditation on the Christmas event. In Ireland the yule log is a centerpiece at the table with candles inserted in it.

Many homes in America are frequently decorated with glossy-leaved holly with its clusters of red berries. This can be traced to early settlers from the south of Ireland. They came to the United States during the Great Potato Famine. Holly grows wild in the south of Ireland and at Christmas time houses are lavishly decorated with holly.

St. Stephen's Day, The Day of the Wrens

During Penal Times, a band of sleeping soldiers was about to be slaughtered by a company of British fusiliers. A flock of wrens suddenly descended pecking on their drums, wakened them, and staved off a tragic slaughter. Every year at Christmas time groups would go home to home with blackened faces like we would do on Halloween, carrying the icon of a wren on the end of a stick, chanting the "The Wren; The Wren." They would be rewarded with a few pennies at each home they visited. That became the precursor to our custom of Christmas Caroling. I used to take my children Christmas caroling and each year for several years a group of us would go from room to room singing Christmas carols at the local hospital. Every year I go to a Christmas Concert presented by our outstanding parish choir. I used to sing with that choir and to sing was the highlight of the Advent season.

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Irish Christmas Customs (*continued*)

The Irish Sea Swim for Charity

Every year at Christmas time a huge crowd descends on the Sandy Cove area of South Dublin in the shadow of the James Joyce tower. They fearlessly strip down and dive into the frigid Irish Sea to raise money for Irish charities. Celebrities and the unknown, the rich and the poor, men, women, and children all take part in the annual swim. The Irish Sea is arguably to world's coldest body of water in July so imagine it on a December day. A friend, one of Ireland's leading financial entrepreneurs, does this every year. He once told me that sometimes the air is so cold, the water actually feels warm.

St. Stephen's Day Races

My friend lives nearby to Sandy Cove in a cull de sac off of Leopard Town Road. If you continue west on Leopard Town Road for only a few miles, you will come to the racetrack for the St. Stephen's Day horse races. These races are every bit as prominent as our Kentucky Derby and horse racing is one of the country's leading sports, another fitting gathering for the Christmas season

The Christmas Crib

The Crib is a prominent decoration in most homes at Christmas. The crib is the fruit of the imagination of St, Francis of Assisi. It is as much a centerpiece in our homes as is the Christmas tree, the mistletoe, or the wreath on the door. It is very much a component of Irish spirituality at Christmas. The crib can be put up as early as December 8th but the figure of the infant is not placed in the crèche until Christmas Eve.

The Spirituality of the Season

The Irish have never forgotten the spirituality of their celebration. The most crowded place in Ireland on Christmas Eve is any Church at Midnight Mass. The Church doors have not seen many of them since the previous Christmas, but there is magic in the memory of the birth of Christ and everyone wants to be part of it.

The Church in Ireland has gone through hell in the last couple of decades. It was hit particularly hard by the clerical sex abuse scandals. There were scandals associated with other religious institutions such as convents, orphanages, and schools staffed by nuns and brothers. The Church once had an ironclad hold on the people and, unfortunately, the preservation of that hold took precedence over the pastoral needs of the Catholic people. Power is intoxicating and the church was drunk with it. Those days are gone. That unhealthy imprisonment has been broken. A spiritual sobriety, nurtured and nourished by the Spirit now reigns throughout Ireland.

However, the gates of hell have not prevailed against it. The pending doom of the Church in Ireland was prematurely announced. People are starting to come back to Church and to an environment for Christian growth that was intended by the Spirit. Faith runs through our lives as surely as blood flows through our veins. It is part of the faith of Patrick strongly centered on the Christ, the anointed one, whose birth we celebrate with this season.

We are grateful to Pope Francis for redirecting the Church from a bureaucracy to a spiritual plane and showing us the way by the way he lives.

Each week, I publish the Sermon I Wish I Heard. It reaches over 4000 people each week in seven countries including many in Ireland. The feedback from Ireland is fantastic. The Irish people are starving for the word of God. Maybe someday I will publish some of the letters I get from Ireland.

We have seen that many of the Christmas customs we continue in America actually have their roots among our Irish forebears. Christmas is a major part of our religious and spiritual heritage. Many of the customs we continue are part of our Irish heritage.

Woman's Day, Little Christmas

We have one last custom that will please at least fifty percent of the population. The Feast of the Epiphany, January 6th, the holiday's end for many of us, the beginning of the Christmas Feast for the Eastern Churches, is known in Ireland as Woman's Day .

Continued

Irish Christmas Customs *(continued)*

All the women in the country deserve and get a day off. It is a day for lunch with drinks with friends, a stop at the spa, an afternoon alone in the bedroom with a good book or a long winter's nap. In most households, it is the woman that makes the Christmas celebration. She is the one who not only prepares the meals and special dinners; she also greets and feeds the guests. She bakes and provides baked goods most of which go out the door with the guests. She is the coordinator of the decorations for the two week event. She does all the cleaning up after guests leave. It is a thoughtful and welcome tribute to the women who generate the excitement of Christmas and whose thought, planning, and cheerful giving fill the home with joy and the delight for the celebration of Jesus birthday.

And then there is Santa

There is one Christmas figure that is iconic, Santa Claus. Every country in the world claims Santa Claus. Yes, Virginia! There is a Santa Claus. St. Nicholas of Smyrna, England's Father Christmas, the vivid imagination of our own Clement Moore, and figures from every country of Europe all symbolize Santa Claus. I suggest that the real Santa Claus is the one who poured himself into our humanity; made himself one with us, sacrificed himself to free us from our sins, and opened for us the gates of heaven. Is there a greater gift giver? I think not. He does not have a snow white beard nor does he have red and white clothes. He doesn't have reindeer. He is warmed by sheep and cattle. He is wrapped in swaddling clothes and is lying in a Bethlehem manger. When he travelled, he went by donkey.

Nollaig Shona Duit (Merry Christmas)

Central New York Chapter News

December Activities:

Monday, December 1, 7 PM Pop's Media Café, Shoppingtown Dewitt - Comhrá Practice your spoken Irish in Irish Language Conversation. For more information contact thetrumps@twcny.rr.com

Tuesday, December 9, noon, Room 222, Onondaga Free Library. CNY-IACI board meeting. CNY-IACI members welcome.

Monday, December 15 - The CNY-IACI's crew will volunteer at the Samaritan Center, helping to serve a hot dinner to our neighbors in need.

Saturday, December 20, 10 AM to 1PM - 54 Ely Drive, Fayetteville - Music Group practice session. Contact ainep-eterson@localnet.com for details.

Looking Back:



On November 20, CNY-IACI and Le Moyne College were honored to present a talk by noted author and Irish Famine historian Dr. Christine Kinealy. She spoke November 20 on "Women and the Great Hunger: Invisible Victims and Heroines." We're pleased that the event raised \$717 for Concern Worldwide USA, which helps people living in extreme poverty in 28 countries make lasting improvements in their lives.

Dr Kinealy is one of the world's foremost authorities on the Great Irish Famine of the 1840s. This event, long neglected by historians, was pivotal in the history of Ireland and had far-reaching effects on the United States as well.

The issues raised by a re-examination of the Famine by modern historians are of vital importance in today's world, and Dr. Kinealy has been an important figure in bringing the lessons of the Irish Famine to modern readers.

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Central NY Chapter News *(continued)*

Christine Kinealy is a highly regarded writer and lecturer. In 1984, she earned her Ph.D. from Trinity College, Dublin, writing on the introduction of the Poor Law in Ireland. Kinealy has written extensively about the Great Hunger and its impact, most notably in her book [This Great Calamity: The Irish Famine 1845-52](#) and has spoken to both the US Congress and the British Parliament on the Famine. She is the author of many books on Irish and Irish-American history as well as numerous scholarly articles, and is Professor of History and Director of Ireland's Great Hunger Institute at Quinnipiac University.



Dr. Kinealy and CNY-IACI secretary Natalie Trump



President Ted Furze talks with attendees by print of a Famine Ship



Dr. Costello-Sullivan of Le Moyne and audience members

Looking Forward:

Sunday, January 11, 2015 12-4 PM Féile na Bliana Nua - Our New Year's party.

Join us for a fun-filled celebration of the New Year, and of Irish and Irish-American culture!

Inn of the Seasons, 4311 West Seneca Turnpike, Syracuse. Buffet luncheon, followed by entertainment by the McCarthy Family and others. Bring us your 'party piece' and add to the fun! Adults \$25; 12 and under \$12.

Reservations required by 12/21/2014; send check made out to CNY-IACI to: Ann Peterson, 108 Merz Ave. Syracuse, NY 13203

Tuesdays, February 3, 10, and 17th, 2015 7 PM Irish Film Series, hosted by Dr. James MacKillop. This year's offerings are:

Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1979) February 3

The Boys and Girl from County Clare (2005) February 10,

Langrishe, Go Down (1978) February 17

Nollaig Shona Daoibh! Merry Christmas!