

IMPACT IRELAND 09: BACK^o_{he} CROSS

Impact Ireland 09 Vision: 'Back to the Cross'

At the heart of the Christian message is Jesus' death on the cross. The cross has become the symbol of the gospel. First it is an historical event when once and for all Jesus on the cross reconciled the world to God and defeated sin and death. But also as an example of supreme sacrificial love it confounds and confronts the selfishness of the world and presents a radical alternative calling us to take up our cross and follow Jesus.

Ireland is a religious nation. Ancient Celtic stone crosses dot the landscape placed in ancient times to share the message of the cross and to call people to reflect on and respond to its message. The cross today is also found in churches, hung on rosary beads, and hanging as jewellery around necks. But many in the nation have forgotten its message and true power.

Through Impact Ireland 09 we want to get back to the cross. Together and as we go out into different communities we want to ask and share answers to:

- Why the cross? Why did Jesus have to die 2000 years ago? What did it achieve?
- What is its message? What does it mean to us today as individuals and as a society? Is it relevant and important today?
- How do we respond to the cross? What difference should it make in our thinking and our behaviour? What does it mean to follow Jesus and take up our cross daily? What does it mean to be crucified with Christ?

As we wrestle with and embrace the message and implications of cross, we believe that it will transform individuals and communities bringing hope, reconciliation and mobilising people to love God and their neighbour.

Impact Ireland 09 Strategy

From 7-21 July 2009 we hope to see over a hundred people join us from around the world to participate in teams working with local Christians and churches across Ireland to lovingly present the cross again to individuals and communities, calling them to reflect on its meaning and implications; and to demonstrate the cross in our lives by sacrificial love and service.

7-10 July 2009: Initial Training and Orientation onboard Logos Hope:

Participants will gather for three to four days in Cork for training and orientation onboard OM's newest ship LOGOS HOPE which will be in Cork at the time. Participants will engage afresh with the cross through teaching, reflection, prayer, worship and discussion. We will study and reflect on the cross, celebrate it, and encourage one another to take up our cross and follow Jesus. We will also prepare for our time of outreach through team building, practical skills training, cultural orientation, and in prayer and worship.

11-19 July 2009: Outreach - teams head out across the nation:

1) Church-based Teams.

Churches around the country will host a team of international participants to work alongside church members in a programme of outreach into their community. OM Ireland will provide ideas and support in planning this programme in advance of the outreach.

We want the programme to focus on the cross through proclamation and sacrificial service:

Proclamation: Open air witness focussing on the cross and that encourages the public to consider or reconsider the cross and its message in an interactive way. In previous generations passion plays were popular ways in some countries to present the story of the passion – what would a modern passion play look like? Churches could run youth or kids clubs based around the message of the cross. OM Ireland will provide ideas and materials for such programmes.

Sacrificial service: We can demonstrate our own willingness to lay down our lives for God and others and take up our cross through acts of service in the community and helping meet the needs of individuals and the community. In a society where self-interest seems to be the driving force, how can we deny self and show love for our neighbour and our enemy and what impact could that have on a community?

2) Travelling Teams (Cross-county teams)

Teams will travel to different regions and spend the week travelling to different towns and villages in that region (a day in each?). Minimal line-up with churches or local Christians in each town will have been done beforehand to encourage their involvement with the team and to set up basic accommodation and feeding of the team in each place and even to get some media coverage of the visit.

Each team will carry a large wooden cross which would be the basis of outreach in each town. This could be set up in the open air in the main street or other public site; or maybe taking it (with permission) into youth clubs, pubs/bars, shopping malls – wherever there is freedom or a welcome. The cross itself would become a talking point to ask people about their views on the cross and its message today. Each team would also be given training and resources in other creative ways to interact with and engage the public in conversation and discussion.

This year is the 40th anniversary of the start of Arthur Blessitt's call to carry a wooden cross around the world. Find out about his remarkable experiences on his official website:

<http://www.blessitt.com/>

20-21 July 2009: Debrief and Departure

Teams will re-gather after the outreach at Lacken House to share together their experiences, to debrief and to thank and praise God for all He has done and to pray for the nation of Ireland.